

A painting of a forest at night. The background is a deep, dark blue. Several tall, slender trees with dark trunks and bare branches are scattered throughout the scene. A network of thin, golden-brown lines, resembling a wireframe or a scaffolding structure, is stretched across the trees. In the lower half of the painting, three figures in long, flowing white dresses are visible. They appear to be interacting with the wireframe structure, with their arms reaching out towards it. The overall mood is mysterious and ethereal. The artist's signature is visible in the bottom right corner.

POIESIS

A Journal of the Arts & Communication

Volume 21, 2024 • Next Steps, New Beginnings

M. L. Jones



The European Graduate School
EST. 1994

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Prof. Dr. Christopher Fynsk, President EGS

June, 2024

POIESIS

A Journal of the Arts & Communication

Volume 21, 2024

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Dedicated to José Andrés, founder of World Central Kitchen, and to all those who risk their own lives providing aid to others in times of catastrophe.

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Pilar Sousa

Cover image: *Untitled*, by Pilar Sousa, 107cm x 148cm, acrylic on canvas.



Beyond the Threshold

Pilar Sousa

The painting is not resolved—or it never will be.

Will I be their witness, their creator, or will they (the paintings) be the ones who create me, witness me, and shape my being and my existence? I don't know yet, but certainly my capacity to dream and to live is awakened when I create them or when I come into contact with them.

I need to go out into the world and respond to a call.

How to go beyond the threshold?

To pass the open threshold that will allow me to come out into the light again.

To maintain and to fuel the budding creative spark.

Many questions or issues will forever remain a mystery.

You are at the end of an arduous journey and the beginning of another on the calm shores of clear water.

I am part of a wide world with which I also have responsibilities.

I am responding aesthetically to a situation in the world that deserves attention and that produces tremendous indignation and helplessness in me.

Something rebels and reveals itself in me: By painting like this, I feel my strength and my rage, and paradoxically, something revives in me. As if that woke me up, I feel strong and vital again.

I do what I do because it makes me feel vital and real, and because I feel that my images need to come out of confinement to be seen and responded to by others, in order to continue transforming themselves and transforming me.

I remember the way I felt when I was immersed in an aesthetic experience and/or a poetic relationship in the world. Although, as the painted images show, the landscapes and states vary and are not exactly happy or festive. The possibility of being able to imagine and paint them made me feel alive, sensitive and creative.

While I walked a lot through various states and spaces of my mind, I painted alone and spontaneously. In this process, a series of images of women and children emerged in various closed and open spaces, often linked to loneliness, orphanhood, memory and the difficulty of remembering. All of this connected me with sad and painful feelings, and painting gave them its own shape. This transmitted to me a feeling of vitality, creativity, fluidity and, in a certain sense, strength and joy.

The water shines blue below; blue the sky above... sandy hills on the horizon. Sensation of air, of spaciousness... and of a certain uncertainty that opens on the horizon.

Where has your vital Being been in space and time? Your soul longs for it and time passes.

How to be more present in the present and more alive in life?

When I get lost I find myself.

I inhabit an intermediate zone / In which I want to find you / From which I want to leave with you and with everything / To give back to the world and to the life what has been given to me / To give more of what has gone / and more of what was prematurely taken from me / I want to do that, before it's too late

I am / I am on the shore / I am at the window / Beyond the threshold / I am, you are / Coming out of the depths of the river / From the leafy waves / From the anchored ship / From the unknown paths / From the desert sections / From the fecund forests / And also from the gloomy ones / I am coming out / From the ice / From the intricate labyrinth / From absence / From isolation / From fresh water / From psychoanalytic diving / From emptiness / From termina-

tion / From chaos / From the interrupted and eternal embrace / From the infinite liminality / Of childhood / Of adolescence / Of the dark house / Of the light house / Of Pompeii / Of the children's room / Of melancholy / Of laughter / Of puberty / Of adulthood / Of sadness and / Of happiness / I am entering and leaving / all those places / all those states / I carry them In-scribed inevitably in my skin and soul / I am / I am with myself / I am with you and with others / I am / I am doing something / With the pain / And with what was lost / For others and for myself / To give, to receive, to recover / and to return something / I am present / And I feel alive

Texts written by Pilar Sousa, selected by Martin Zavala

Pilar Sousa (1958-2022)

Pilar studied psychology at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú; art and art history at the University of Bloomington, Indiana; completed a Master's Degree in Art Therapy and Humanities at the University of Richmond, Virginia; and she also completed a Master of Arts in Art Therapy at Norwich University Vermont College. She studied psychoanalysis at the Peruvian Institute of Psychoanalysis. She was a teacher at TAE Perú (Terapia de Artes Expresivas Perú) and was an active member of its community, as a supervisor, thesis advisor and artist. She worked as an art therapist, psychotherapist and psychologist in private practice. In 2017 she participated in a group exhibition in Lima. She passed away in November 2022. A year later, in November 2023, a full exhibition of her work, with nearly forty paintings, drawings and an artistic video, was held at a gallery in Lima.

Editorial Introduction

Stephen K. Levine

What does it mean to begin, to make our next step a true beginning, one in which we are not just repeating ourselves but instead are introducing something radically new into the world?

We begin with *poiesis*. The gospel according to John says, "In the beginning was the Word (*logos*). And the Word was with God. And the Word was God." In Greek, "Word" is *logos*, from which, following one line of thought, we could derive "logic." In a logical sequence, one thing follows another. There are no breaks; but a true beginning is a break, a break in history. We can see this clearly when we think about breaking the sequence of violence. After the Shoah or Holocaust, many of those who came to Israel wished to make a new beginning, one in which genocide could never happen again. "Never Again" became the slogan for that new beginning.

In this issue of the *POIESIS* journal, Gaza is never far from mind. The poems remembering Rachel Corrie in the journal were inspired by the acts of a young woman who was herself dedicated to breaking the cycle of violence. She went to Gaza to testify that another way is possible. We know that she was broken, broken by the Israeli bulldozer which buried her in Gaza. Can the poems become a memorial to her, one which interrupts us in our lives and helps us begin again in a new way? Remembering would then be a true beginning.

Human rights experts consider the current bombardment of Gaza to be a form of geno-



cide. The irony of history, then, is that the descendants of the people who were themselves victims of genocide are now the perpetrators of it. This is history repeating itself—but with a vengeance. The American philosopher George Santayana said, “Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it.” It seems that those who can *only* remember the past will repeat it as well.

It must be, then, that we need a different kind of remembering, one that escapes repetition. *Denken* in German means to think. *Andenken* is to think on, to remember. In his meditation on Hölderlin’s poem, *Andenken*, Heidegger uses the word *Andenken* to indicate a new way of remembering. For him, only the poets have this capacity to re-member, to meet the past as it comes towards us and to show us the possibility of a true beginning, a way that could bring us back to who we are and show us where we have to go. In the journal, it is only after the poem remembering Rachel Corrie that such a possibility emerges. The poem, “Vision of Rachel,” imagines a future in which the driver of the bulldozer and Rachel could meet—and even dance. This would indeed be a new beginning.

To truly remember is to begin again. We break the cycle of history when we are capable of such an act of remembrance. This is what we call *poiesis*. The aim of the *POIESIS* journal is to remember who we are and what we have done, so that we can begin to go on a different path, a path that, we would say, is the path of non-violence. In Taoist thinking, this is called *wu-wei*, “non-doing.” It refers to the kind of action which occurs without the imposition of the will, without trying to force anything to happen but rather to allow it to happen. It is the difference between the bulldozer which destroys homes and the testimony of Rachel Corrie which reminds us that another way is possible, that we could build a new home to dwell together in peace. This, then, would be a break in the history of violence—an act of *poiesis*.

We like to say that *poiesis* is always possible. Is this true? Only our writers and readers can tell. Our hope is that the journal will inspire us to take that next step of *poiesis* and make a beginning for all.

In the Rearview Mirror: Homage to Herbert Eberhart

Margo Fuchs Knill

Your passing
brought your life back
home
to my mind, imagining
sentences, phrases, questions,
embedded in your curious smile,
resurrected today,
“What else?” “How could I imagine this?”
“Tell me more”

Your journey will continue
in other dimensions and within us.

Dr. Herbert Eberhart (7/12/1933 – 12/12/2023) was the co-founder of EGIS, The European Foundation of Interdisciplinary Studies, the former funding body of the European Graduate School (EGS).

EGIS Publishing House

He supported research in the field of expressive arts by research-led teaching and established the publishing house EGIS Verlag. To mention a few of his books which have been fundamental in the development of the field: *Kunst wirkt* (2007), *Kunstorientiertes Handeln in der Begleitung von Veränderungsprozessen* (2005), and *Überraschung als Anstoss zu Wandlungsprozessen* (2004). This book contains important articles by the Founding Director, the late Paolo Knill.

This last time, death suddenly hits us. In retrospect, the conversation we had in the Spring of 2022 turned out to be the last one. I told you that the book *Lösungskunst* you co-authored together with Paolo Knill was to be translated to English (*Solution Art*). "Ah, good," you said. However, you had more important things going on in your life. You were in love again after some years of being a widower. With excitement in your voice, you told me about your engagement party and your plan to remarry soon. This is Herbert, I thought, always turning, as sunflowers do, towards the sun. Your wish to be able to celebrate your 90th birthday came true, and shortly afterwards you peacefully fell asleep forever.

"The good future"

For Herbert, it was never too late to come up with new visions for the future. His theorizing and teaching were rooted in the solution-focused approach developed by Michael White and Steve de Shazer. His research allowed him to meet and work with de Shazer in person. I remember how Herbert offered us demonstration sessions during continuing education retreats and introduced the "miracle question" which might lead to a "good future." Whether it be through active imagination or artistic shaping, a shift of attention away from the crisis or challenge has a dissolving effect on the issue that was presented. Yet he always was clear that turns and shifts towards a solution cannot be forced and may occur in unexpected ways.

Ten years ago,

EGS celebrated Dr. Herbert Eberhart's 80th birthday. He was the first Chairman of the Founding Organization EGIS 1990 and stayed on the Board of Trustees for 32 years until his retirement. Herbert taught for the Division of Arts, Health and Society AHS since the inception of its Summer Schools. He was a clinical psychologist, supervisor, coach, consultant, author of numerous books and an expert in systems theory and the solution-focused approach.

The EGS founding Rector Paolo Knill honored him in his Laudatio in the following way:

"We could list his achievements endlessly, from being a child psychologist to becoming a Professor at a College of Social Work, from building houses to building organizations, from leading projects to leading and consulting colleges—and we still would miss the essential exquisite attributes he incorporates.

He was a master of building foundations that hold and are well anchored on solid ground.

He was also an exceptional master in challenging our convictions while trusting our resources to reveal him- or her-self. He believed firmly in the power of imagination and loved to be involved in the arts. One could learn from him to ask the quite right questions that raise our curiosity more than the need for a simple answer.

Dr. Herbert Eberhart was always an exemplary practitioner and educator. He was instrumental in defining, with Paolo Knill, the expressive arts methodology of "intermodal decentering" (*registered as Intermodal Decentering IDEC®*) at EGS. Many participative and collaborative learning structures, now practiced world-wide in our network, were developed by him. At the same time, he was the one who took visions very seriously while being clear and pointed about the understanding of the real. I would say he understood the principle of artistic shaping, the dialogue with what is shaped,

perfectly well. He was a master of shaping relationships between people and organizations. He was the one who said, "It's not only about shaping, it is also about nourishing the soul. That's what art is."

Let's remember one of his masterpieces, which was how he gave the last touches to the EGS Campus Building Project: *Steinmatte*. His name would later be on the plaque—'the honoring poster'—at the entrance of the plenum hall in honor of his 70th birthday."

In the Rearview Mirror

The last book by Herbert Eberhart was published in 2019. In contrast to his other books, *Im Rückspiegel (In the Rearview Mirror)* presents, through dialogues with his colleague Andreas Bürgi, their world view, and their notions of time, relationship and spirituality. What is an almost ninety-year old psychologist saying about "God and the world," about his approaching death and the idea of an after-life?

Herbert was a direct person, not shying away from speaking up and contradicting, yet he was a careful thinker and practitioner of active listening, a method he also applied as a co-author.

Beauty, spirituality and the expressive arts

Herbert Eberhart offers us an interesting hypothesis for further reflection when he proposes that the experience of beauty and the spiritual experience may be close to each other. For him, the spiritual experiencing is sensual. In a similar way, he sees beauty in connection to artistic shaping as a *touching beauty*.

According to Herbert Eberhart, spiritual experiencing has something to do with letting go and surrendering, surrendering to the flow. He uses the term "flow" in relation to both, spirituality and the arts. Indeed, a change agent cannot impose a flow. Herbert considers it to be the responsibility of the professional to accompany and help shape the process, to convey a sense

of security, offer ideas and build on the self-organizing forces of the client.

This surrendering to the artistic process is impacted by the nourishing force of beauty. Spiritually speaking: we may be connected with something overarching, or what he calls the "*größerer Zusammenhang*" (the larger context). This kind of connectivity opens up new perspectives, strengthens and indirectly makes change possible.

When he talks about artistic shaping, he mainly thinks of improvisation, a fleeting from moment-to-moment experience which can only happen once, yet is a continuous becoming and passing, a process of self-forgetfulness and presence, and of allowing oneself to be led. We may also speak about this as, "trusting the process." Herbert Eberhart lived in theory and practice as a professional change agent, with the attitude of not knowing better than those he was working with. Even though he was a firm facilitator and leader, humility was crucial for him when he says that spiritual experiencing cannot be forced nor predicted, but is a gift.

In *Rückspiegel* he withholds any speculations about a hereafter and leaves any content open, for—he wants to be surprised.

The image of flow, systemically approached, cannot be thought of without current, swirling backwater, the river bed, and an incline which allows the flow to flow. Here I see potential for further discussion—when working with the notion of flow in expressive arts, how do we deal with the current? Shouldn't we include in the teaching how to survive a swirl, namely by fully surrendering to it until it pushes you up.

Herbert, you fully lived. Curiosity was your guiding star. You gave us more than tools, you were a role model in living the theory you co-created, always looking for options, for the "What else," and for the enrichment, the "There is more to it," asking "How should I imagine this?"

Now, it is up to us to ask the questions—how do we keep going with an attitude of curiosity

and risk-taking and challenge our categorizing and judgmental minds?

Thank you, Herbert, for showing us how different views can enrich each other and lead to a third—the *Lösungskunst* (Solution Art), a riddle you and Paolo opened up for further research. I will take it.



I love the “flow of the creative.”
I love to let myself be carried by this flow.
I love the full presence which it requires and takes you into
“a timeless and
spaceless realm of being.
I love the interaction between people who surrender to this flow.”

–Herbert Eberhart in *Rückspiegel* (2019), translation by MFK

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To Moisten the Heart: Reflections from Community Art

Martín Zavala, Odette Vélez,
Mónica Prado and Ximena Maurial

I long for fresh air. The dawn, the sunset, the tides, the cycles of the moon, nature and its presence, the ancient stones, the green leaves, desert-forest-beach-mountain, foods, fruits and their aromas, taste; all of this reminds me that we inhabit this world shrouded in mystery, that there is something that transcends the horns, the blows, the everyday lies. I long to escape from this asphyxiation although I know that I too pollute the air that we breathe, because my exhalation—my response and actions as part of this society—cannot be simply a filter that helps purify the air we breathe. (Zavala, 2019, p.261)

In the last four years, many events have impacted our lives in a special way. The pandemic left millions of people grieving and revealed the precariousness and business of health systems. The war, first in Ukraine and later in Gaza, demands the imposition of force in favor of particular interests and values. Climate change reached emergency scenarios worldwide with the highest temperatures recorded to date. The earthquakes in Turkey and Syria left thousands of dead and revealed premeditated failures in the construction of houses. Various far-right

movements came to power in Latin America and in Europe, among other impacts.

Within this panorama, in Peru we live in a particular situation of enormous instability, with recurring disrespect for laws and rights, and with poor defense of the lives of the citizens. There have been six presidents in the span of five years. Mafias and misgovernment. During this time, waves of protests broke out across the country to express disapproval of the attempts to break the democratic system. We have been experiencing social despair for months. Marches and countermarches. Fifty people killed for no reason. Directly shot. Deaths that receive no regret or sorrow from any state institution.

We coexist in a system that imposes violent forms of relationship between human beings and the world. It seems that human life—and all life in general—is no longer a right nor considered sacred. In our country, as well as in the world in general, a way of relationship has been established where justice or treating each other well does not predominate.

How does this violent context impact us? How does it become present in our bodies and psyches, minds and souls?

Sometimes our body shakes and speaks. Various symptoms and pains emerge: muscle tension and contractures, insomnia, dizziness, loss of focus, chronic fatigue, breathing difficulties, among others. The body resents it. Difficult emotional states arise: apathy, indifference, bad mood, pessimism, frustration, sadness, helplessness, fear, guilt, anger. Sometimes we pretend not to feel anything. We become as if we were deaf and dumb. We hide our feelings or deny them by acting as if everything is fine. We anesthetize ourselves to survive and continue walking. We bite our own hostility, that which we receive daily in the streets of our city, that which inhabits us and inhabits the world, that which sleeps with us every night.

20 Other times, we express what we feel: we breathe deeply, we talk, we write, we cry, we scream, we smash our emotions against someone or against ourselves. We react to what we

experience. Excess appears, the possibility of abuse and damage: the transgression of the limits of coexistence. The aggressive tendency, an innate and autonomous instinctive drive in human beings, constitutes the greatest obstacle that culture stumbles on (Freud, 1986). Violence takes up space, hits us and nests within us. We debate whether to hide what we feel or express it, sometimes violently. Sooner or later, all that darkness disturbs us and intoxicates or poisons our bonds. What to do with those emotions to get out of this violent circle and how to respond to this reality with a different language?

I breathe in the same air as does my country, and that inevitable transfusion causes me to become that from which I seek to distance myself. How should I respond to my everyday surroundings if I wish to live using a different language, a language devoid of that harshness? Breathing in violence affects my perception, and so I see only that which is violent. Where does one find eyes for beauty when living amidst gunshots? (Zavala, 2019, pp.259-260)

We recognize that our environment shapes us because we are part of the system in which we live, we are within the cultural fabric that we build daily. And, at the same time, we also know that we can respond imaginatively and creatively to this difficult context.

But isolating and oppressive walls do not extinguish the light of human reason, much less if it has had centuries of exercise; nor do they extinguish, therefore, the sources of love from which art springs. Within the isolating and oppressive walls, the Quechua people, quite archaized and defending themselves with dissimulation, continued to conceive ideas, creating songs and myths. And we well know that the isolating walls of nations are never completely isolating. They threw me over that wall, for a time, when I was a child; They threw me into that abode where tenderness is more intense than hate and where, for that very reason, hate is not disturbing but a fire that drives us. (Arguedas, 2024)

As Arguedas mentions, the arts come from a vital source that allows us to respond to what we have experienced and brings us closer to beauty. They are part of human nature. In them

we can find a great strength that opens the possibility of transforming pain and responding aesthetically in a community, as the Quechua people have done for millennia, like many other ancestral cultures.

Within our field we give place to images that come from artistic practice. These creative actions are expressed by longing to recognize the enchantment of the world. Our work as expressive arts facilitators makes sense when we go in search of those images. Our challenge is to persist on the path of inviting ourselves to move the imagination individually and collectively.

The vitality of the imagination is frequently experienced within groups and communities that are given the freedom and support to create. The community of creation is an energizing force that acts upon the people within it. As the Romantic poets observed, the life of imagination is furthered by an environment where "flying sparks" pass amongst people and ignite new ideas. This interactive and participatory dynamic also occurs within the individual imagination. The community of creation that we discover in the company of other people exists within ourselves. (McNiff, 2017, p. 23)

Faced with this complex landscape, in March 2023, about to start a new academic year in our school of expressive arts, we saw the need to embrace this challenging context and we put it at the center. We decided to respond aesthetically, to imagine multiple ways to go through that moment, to foster new expressions to continue with life. The educational space allowed us to meet as a community and, thus, recognize the hostility in which we live and also discover something different, perhaps hope and peace, guided by the arts.

Community art

22 One of the first activities at the beginning of the academic year at TAE Peru is the Community Art. Generally, we leave the city and the urban environment, meeting in

spaces where nature predominates. We make art in community with current year students, alumni who wish to participate, and the team of teachers. Together, we put community artistic creation at the center of the learning experience offered. The community art allows us to respond artistically to the natural environment, accepting different ways of doing so. In this experience, we learn and feel together, in connection with the images that arise.

This kind of community art has the objective of strengthening the resilience of the community to establish and retain well-being... One could also say, metaphorically, that community art is designed to strengthen the "immune system" of the community, so that members, or member clusters, can respond early to conflicts before they escalate. (Knill, 2017, p.213)

This time, as in some previous years, the social and political reality, with its overwhelming presence, was included. Not bringing these facts to the community of students was to ignore the reality in which we live, risking to leave it aside, disregarding it. Given the social circumstances mentioned above, we intended to remember the pain that what we experienced caused us. To name it. To look at it. To give it a place. To not avoid the sadness and frustration of living in the midst of so much violence. To recognize, in the midst of this, our privileged situation. To moisten our hardened heart tired of so much war. Giving flowers to sorrow. Responding creatively to sustain ourselves as a community. To evoke a song. Singing and dancing in choir. Having a space to purify what contaminates the soul, giving ourselves time to flow between sounds.

As Ellen Levine reminds us:

When human beings find themselves in "dire straits" situations, the experience of the capacity for making or shaping, for taking action and feeling effective, is lost. It is precisely the task of expressive arts to bring individuals, groups and communities back into the experience of *poiesis*, the capacity to take effective action in the world... By engaging in the art-making process and by shaping works that have a life of their own

–songs, dances, paintings, poems, plays, stories–human beings are also taking part in the fundamental work of being human (2011, pp. 37-38).

Upon arriving at the place, we created an altar. In the center of the space, on a hand-woven Andean blanket, we placed a white stone heart immersed in a small container of water. We moistened the heart of stone. We accompanied the center with three whistling vessels, that whistle and share their sound when the water inside of them slowly moves. Eight bowls of water allowed some rose petals to float. On the columns of the place we hung several photographs of the recent protests and rallies in our country. Rose petals were offered at the foot of them. The work setting, surrounded by gardens and trees, was ready to receive us: “The communal artwork can touch or move the community members. All the senses are engaged, and therefore the art-work makes sense in its beauty” (Knill, 2017, p. 217).

Then all the participants arrived and, after welcoming them and making a brief introduction, we began to invoke water by singing an indigenous song, an ancient and traditional song from the northern Andes of our country. A song in Quechua –Agwa sukur / Succor water–,



a language that none of us understood. A song that is sung at the baptism of girls and boys from that region of the Andes, a moment of gathering to share and celebrate life. We chose a traditional and ritual song of the life cycles. To be born again –among the ashes–. To receive a baptism. Music, singing and dancing to continue being. Community melodies and rhythms. We invoked the soul of water, that mother who wets us and cleanses us, so that she can succor us from so much pain.

Agwa sukur

Chaynulamiqa shamushaniqa,
 kananqa aligriqa kashunqari,
 agwa sukurrunchikta,
 chaynulami kashunqa,
 manamiqa tyimpu kashanchikta
 qunqashunchu,

chaynulami sigishunqa,
 chaynulami sigishunqa tantalamiqa
 tantalami sigishunqa,
 tudituqa tunun waqan,
 tyimpu kashanchiktaqari,
 manami qunqashunchuqa,
 wamraykunami tantala kaypi.

Agüita de socorro

Así nomás he venido,
 ahora hay que estar alegre,
 agua de socorro,
 así nomás seremos,
 no hay que olvidarnos del tiempo
 que hemos sido,

así nomás hay que seguir,
 así nomás seguiremos juntas,
 sigamos juntas,
 todos los tonos suenan
 del tiempo que hemos sido,
 no nos olvidemos,
 mis hijas están juntas aquí.

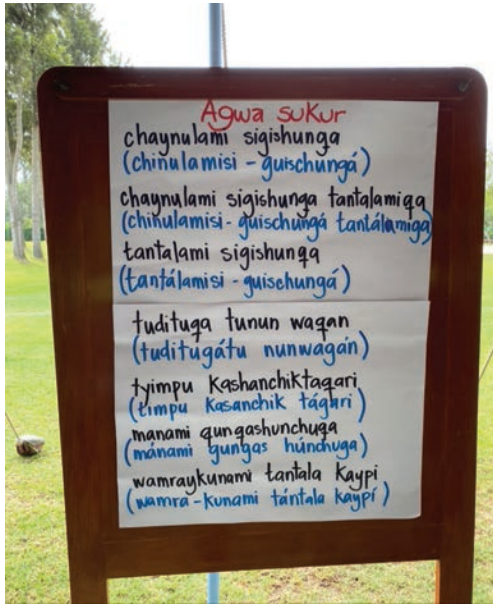
Succor water

Just like that I have come,
 Now let's be happy,
 succor water,
 that's just how we will be,
 we must not forget the time
 we have been,

just like that let's continue,
 just like that we will still be
 together,
 let's stay together,
 all tones ring
 of the time we have been,
 let's not forget,
 my children are together here.

At the beginning, we learned and sang a part of this song. This song talks about the importance of being present, of having come “just like that” –as we are–, without forgetting the time we have been. We sang without trying to understand each of its verses but simply being held by its essence, its form, its tones, its rhythm, recognizing its intention for the community.

From different angles of the place, we could all read the lyrics of the song *Agwa sukur* written in Quechua on cardboard. Since it was a language that we did not know, we decided to write a phonetic guide under each verse, to know how to pronounce each word. Little by little, as we sang, we discovered its sound. We sang together, pronouncing unknown words that twinned us. The song began to emerge as a weave. We were guided by the sound and the certainty of being a choir: we were not singing alone; all the voices were together. A large circle of beings holding the melody. Time stopped. The photographs of what happened, just two



months before, in the protests in our country, witnessed our singing. There, in the middle of nature, were these images, as responses of pain and vitality, showing the hostile environment we inhabit.

Then, in a next step, we took a moment to walk, to recognize the images and to respond with postures of our bodies to the movements and actions that they showed us. Little by little, our bodies responded with movements of their own to the actions that these images presented. Afterwards, we joined the different body postures explored to create movement phrases. Each of us let the body and its movements guide our walk and gradually invite us to dance, giving rise to a choreography.

Then we formed four groups that would cross the space from four opposite directions. Each group, from a different corner, began the final choreography. Thus, with our own dance, we moved from one corner to another, mingling, coming closer and apart from other, each time. We moved forward. We retreated. While the choir sang and the constant rhythm of drums sustained the dance, we moved, leaving one spot to reach another. Between sounds and bare



feet, we sang in Quechua. Between movements and displacements, we were seen by the environment and its images. The movements chanted in their own language. The intensity of what we experienced left us touched, in silence. When we finished we lay down on the floor to breathe and rest.

Inhaling and exhaling what we experienced together, supported by the floor, accompanied by the serene sounds of the whistling vessels, was important. Afterwards we slowly rejoined, and we had individual time of free writing in the garden to share what we experienced in small groups. Finally, we made a large circle for each group to poetically name the resonances of the community experience.



According to Knill (2017), in the improvisations of a community art, new connections are made, we enter a practice "...until the whole ensemble becomes one connected company" (p. 214). Thus, in our community art we were a choir and an ensemble of dancers who responded to images of pain, creating new images of connection and togetherness. We released our song of hope to the wind so that we could then find new words that allowed us to contain the experience of inhabiting our suffering country. Through art, we created a new way of intertwining and, at the same time, of being a community. In that sense, we didn't get lost, and we had a safe place to get to. We created together "food for the soul" because every creative experience is concrete and at the same time close to the soul in its emotional resonance.

Beauty emerged from our chants, from our encounters and crossings in dance. New views, resonances and contacts appeared. We did not change reality but we did respond to it aesthetically. We learned a new language, which implied a cognitive commitment and, at the same time, we danced together, which implied a commitment of our bodies in movement, and we inevitably resonated emotionally. All our senses were engaged.

Songs of water: resonances in community

Wherever a work of art is given and received in an authentic manner, a community springs into being. (Levine, 2001, p.53)

In a context like the current one, coming together to make art as a community is betting on the vitality brought to us by the creation and the authentic presence of all the people gathered together. It is a sensitive encounter where the imagination manifests itself artistically, summoning beauty as hope, bringing us closer to the uncertainty and mystery that life entails. Expressive arts teaches us to trust the process. The world appears like this with another face because it has looked back at us. As Atkins and Snyder say (2018), the world responds, it stops being an object, and we experience it in communion:

...the idea of a skin-encapsulated individual self expands to become part of earth, air, fire, water and all of the other living beings of the world... The word "communion" suggests that our interrelationship with the world is both intimate and sacred. (p.117)

To build community. To know we are accompanied. To learn together new languages that carry the voices of our ancient culture and our ancestors to create new containment weaves. To recognize pain and its various repercussions on our being. To not become numb and to not ignore our surroundings. To listen to our emotions, to name them and to share them so that they are expressed, and they can find a creative and transformative riverbed. To assume responsibility for responding aesthetically, cultivating the imagination and, above all, responding communally through creative action. To generate a collective resistance that invokes the arts and the forces of nature in community, as indigenous peoples did and do from their ancestral wisdom, to breathe better and to free our voices.

To build languages
accompanied
of our ancient culture
To learn together new languages
To recognize pain
to not ignore our surroundings
To listen to our emotions
to name them
responding aesthetically
To generate a collective resistance
arts
to free our voices

May our songs of wounded hearts and desire for beauty be heard, may we dance with creative force so that the rage that inhabits us does not poison us and instead preserves our vital energy. To moisten and to soften the hardness, the stone shell that forms in us as a way to

protect ourselves, to isolate ourselves from such violence. To respond to the harshness of the world without the impetus of omnipotent action or the reluctance of impotent inaction.

The images of our singing and our dance remain inscribed in all the people who participated. The song of *Agwa sukur* is now impregnated within us and we are impregnated by it. Every time that song arises in our minds, the entire group experience returns to our hearts, moistening it.

where do you come from succor water?
to bless my tired feet
to breathe with us
to ring our memories
and give us joy

I open my arms
I stretch my legs
I move forward
we move forward
in sway
we surrender before you

madrecita agua
protect us from oblivion and indifference
moisten our hearts
with the petals of your heartbeat ¹

¹ Aesthetic response of Odette Amaranta, teacher at TAE Perú and at EGS.

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Clearing Space for Wildflower Season

Jenna Montgomery

The threshold is there, right there
Open to all who lend their attention.
The gates have withered.
Attention is a commodity.

Behind the gates - dry, hard, barren
Desperately waiting
Begging
I can almost touch it.
Can you?

To cross through is something more
Timeless, even

With leaf-bearing branches stripped from the gates,
You and I
sweep the sky
making space for the light to come through

Fields and pastures come to life
A newly sprouted carpet to run and dance upon
making place with the emergent

Tossing our shoes aside, baring our toes and ankles
Tender blades of grass, first tickle then poke
sharp until they bend under our weight

Chasing our steps, they spring back
elated and excited for what is to come.
Wildflower season will soon be here.

One morning while getting to know some new watercolour pigments, I had a decentering experience. It began as just a curious exploration of what the new pigments looked like on the paper. There was very little skill involved. I applied the paint in loose horizontal lines. Once I



knew what these pigments were, I started varying my marks and the experience became more playful. Soon enough the little painting we see here emerged with something to say. Willing to stay with it, I moved into playing with words. The poem was the result. Now as I sit with this poem and painting, where I'm coming from and what is meaningful to me is reflected back.

The community spaces that I knew prior to the pandemic are starting to reform and take life again. However, it has been slow, and there are valued communities that are still missing. I support the building of community but have never seen myself as a community builder. This little decentering exercise has shown me a door, and through that door, I can see that I do have the skills to build community, and I can start by clearing space. Once again, the principles of expressive arts have helped me to uncover the door to my own wisdom.

Jenna Montgomery is a Canadian artist and polymath who currently resides in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, on treaty lands where reconciliation is still a work in progress. She has a CAGS in expressive arts leadership from the European Graduate School and is interested in the interplay between art, nature and community.



Untitled 14/11/2023 by Dorota Solarska

Dorota Solarska is a writer and a painter. Her third book was published in Poland in 2022. She also writes articles and theatre plays and contributes to *Poiesis*, *Kuckkucksnest* and *Silne* magazines. Her artworks are exhibited in Switzerland and Poland. You can access them via Instagram, @doraoutsiderart.

Vital Tinkuy: A Journey

Judith Alalú and José Miguel Calderón

The Vital Tinkuy journey arises from the impulse to integrate the research we each did for our doctoral dissertations at the European Graduate School: Calderon, *Tinkuy: The Encounter Between Peruvian Imaginary and Expressive Arts* (2015) and Alalú, *A Journey in Search of Vitality: Contributions to Expressive Arts Therapy* (2023). At the end of our research, we discovered many similarities and concordances, as well as differences that we found interesting to explore. We decided to first present our findings from this encounter during the summer session at the European Graduate School in Switzerland in 2023. In making the presentation, we found new surprises regarding the integration of our two investigations. We realized that something new was emerging, which we called Vital Tinkuy (encounter): A journey.

Judith Alalú's research work was related to vitality and its contributions to the field of Expressive Arts Therapy.

Judith

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The struggle for what is vital, proper to being alive, was from the beginning of my life something that needed to be taken care of. The latent question as a personal motivation was:



Who was I? How could I find what really belonged to me? I associated vitality with the freedom of the human being and the inner search: What do we have to free ourselves from to really be ourselves? What personal exoduses would we have to make in order to feel free? How can we find what really makes sense to us? Do vital images exist? What are vital images and how can they help us find that meaning?

A human being who is alive should ask himself questions that allow him to reflect on the existential meaning of his being. An existence that has purpose, that makes us feel like we are vital beings. I wondered how I could answer these questions, and for this purpose throughout my thesis project I gave a central value to my expressive art based research. My own creative process subsequently led me to explore theory and approach different routes of thought. It was the arts that taught me where to start and in which I trusted to guarantee a coherence between my own vital creative process and what I was discovering from a more reflective and theoretical place.

In parallel, I conducted semi-structured interviews with nine former students of the institution TAE Peru, asking them about their experience as students in relation to vitality in their learning process. I also worked with a co-research group (participatory research) with six women art therapists in the city of Barcelona, who experienced a workshop on vitality that I called "Journey." They then responded to my research questions from their own experience.

As part of my theoretical research, I conducted an exploration on vitality in an artist who had caught my attention because of the vitality of their works: Francis Bacon, Karel Appel, Jean Dubuffet, and Antoni Tapies. I was able to understand the theme of vitality and how they understood the creative process from their work. I also ventured into imaginary dialogues between my own artistic work and the works of these painters. All these approaches helped me to further enrich my perception of vitality.

The theme of my research was born then with the need to understand vitality and to rec-

ognize which are the elements that define it and how the Expressive Arts can help to nurture this vitality. This is what I propose towards the end of my research, the image of the spiral, with different dimensions to consider in the understanding of vitality in our work as Expressive Arts Therapists in different contexts.

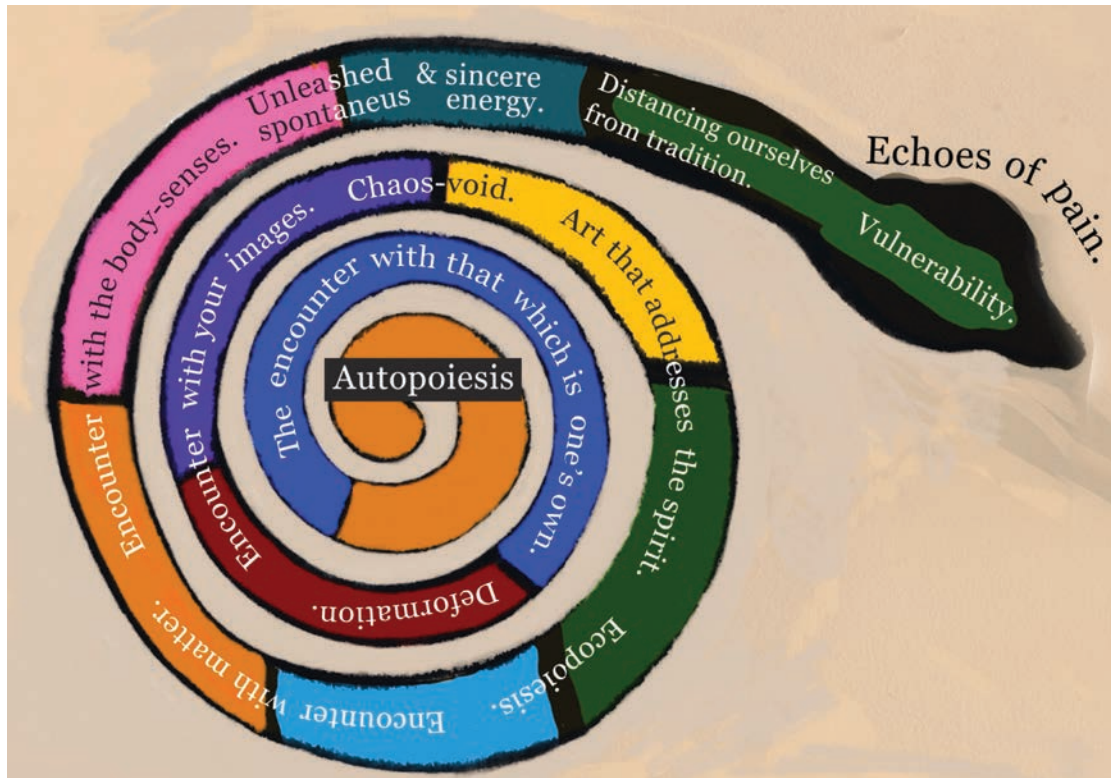


Image by Judith Alalú

40 José Miguel's work was related to the encounter between expressive arts therapy and Peruvian reality and culture.

José Miguel

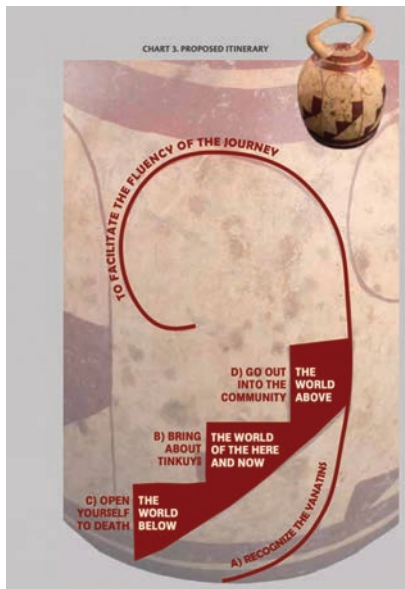
In *Tinkuy: The Encounter Between Peruvian Imaginary and the Expressive Arts*, I sought to explore the encounter between the expressive arts and what I later called the Peruvian imaginary. I wanted to investigate how the expressive arts can be enriched by the history, geography and culture of my country, Peru. What is it like to do expressive arts therapy in Peru? What issues should be considered, what challenges and possibilities exist? My starting point was to explore how the encounter occurred in myself; how the Peruvian imaginary inhabited me. I defined the Peruvian imaginary as the geography, history, world-view and arts of Peru. For this I conducted an arts-based research process where I was able to explore through the creation of a performance my own encounter with the Andean world view guided by the principles of the expressive arts. It seemed important to me to start with myself and deepen how I live the imaginary before being able to carry out the research.

At the same time, I also investigated the Andean world view through the iconography of the Mochica culture. The Mochica culture developed more than two thousand years ago in northern Peru. I investigated the journey of Ai Apaec, a deity or mythical hero who has been represented in various ceremonial ceramics of this culture, including images that tell the mythical story of Ai Apaec in search of the regeneration and continuity of life in his community. These images have reached our days through ceremonial vessels.

As part of my research I also conducted a PAR (participatory action research) with teachers from TAE Peru in order to explore together the encounter I was investigating.

All this allowed me to arrive at what I called the "session vessel," where everything discovered in the research crystallizes. The session vessel arises from the heroic journey of Ai Apaec, from my own performance that I did in my arts-based research process and from what I investigated with the teachers of TAE Peru. The session vessel proposes to make expressive arts

experiences from the Peruvian imaginary, that is, taking into account the Andean world view that proposes a constant journey between different realities: the world here, the world above and the world below.



From Judith's spiral and José Miguel's session vessel came the proposal of the vital tinkuy journey. It is a proposal for a journey towards the encounter with our own vitality. The journey is guided by the principles of the expressive arts enriched with the vision of the Peruvian imaginary.

The idea of the spiral/serpent is associated with skin change and regeneration. It is also associated with the possibility that the journey is cyclical, a constant invitation throughout our lives to make this journey. The scroll and the ladder that appear in the session vessel also allude to the permanent interrelation that exists between the different realities/dimensions proposed by the session vessel and the journey that Ai Apaec makes.

The vital tinkuy journey has eleven moments which we will describe here. This journey can be proposed to groups, communities and individuals with whom we work in the expressive arts. In turn, each of the moments that we are going to describe can inspire encounters or proposals in the processes of change and transformation guided by the expressive arts. The journey in some respects is also a new way of understanding the expressive arts from an expanded foundation, where other theories and worldviews support the transformation.



Image by Judith Alalú

able to ask ourselves how we have internalized power differences in ourselves. What aspects of ourselves exert control and domination over others? How is the coloniality of power actualized in our relationship with others in the space of transformation?

Echos of pain / coloniality of power

To be able to consider the past, the wound, the ancestry, in the processes of transformation in order to make visible what could be keeping us away from the encounter with our own voice. To bring them into the therapeutic space to explore them and at the same time transform them in the present moment from the place of imagination. Encouraging in this way, as the psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas (2008) said, is "the impulse of destiny" in people and communities.

It is also important to be aware of those aspects that continue to exert pressure on us, limiting our freedom. The term "coloniality of power" is suggested by Anibal Quijano (2014), a Peruvian sociologist who emphasizes that the consequences of the conquest are still in force in Latin America. It is important to be

The proposed image was created by Judith Alalú where she integrates in one character

both Atahualpa, Francisco Pizarro and Jose Miguel as a third character. Atahualpa representing the sovereign Inca and Pizarro representing the conqueror. It is a “tinkuy” image that speaks of the integration of our different parts in search of a resolution and balance of characters exercising different power.

Distancing ourselves from tradition / *Kay pacha*

Distancing ourselves from tradition is a phrase that invites us as therapists to go in search of new and original ways in our imaginative work with the arts. To be able to play and venture beyond the routes we usually work with when we make art. Also, to encourage the clients or communities that seek our help to the possibility of de-centering from the narratives we know to go in search of new and inspiring surprises from imaginative reality.

In the Andean worldview, *Kay pacha* means the world here and now. It is the world of the community, of the everyday life from where Ai Apaec sets out on his journey. The journey towards vitality or decentering in an expressive arts session begins in the world of here and now, at the beginning of a session with the filling-in. It is where we become aware of our echoes of pain and the effects of the coloniality of power. In the world of here and now, we address the challenges in the filling-in and the intention for the journey/session. The journey alludes to a process of adventure into the unknown, in which we leave our safe zones to begin the transformation in search of regeneration.

Vulnerability / *Uku Pacha*

Keep in mind that vitality is also constituted by those painful and vulnerable moments. As expressive arts therapists, we must be able to sustain, deepen and recreate these moments of pain. We need to get into contact with our own “shadows” as therapists and with the people we work with in the processes we facilitate, as suggested by James Hillman (1983) in his presentation of archetypal psychology.

Uku pacha in the Andean world-view refers to the world below, the world of the dead, of the ancestors, of the shadows. Ai Apaec enters the sea because the sun has gone in his community, and he goes in search of re-generation, to bring back the light to dispel the shadows. The depths of the sea allude to what we cannot see daily, to the unconscious, the archetypes, what connects us to our vulnerable parts. It is in the depths that Ai Apaec fights with different sea monsters that he must face. Another aspect to take into account is what parts of us must remain in those depths so that the tinkuy and the movement of the journey towards other dimensions can continue to take place.



Image by Judith Alalú

Unleash spontaneous and sincere energy (play) / Exchange of treasures

This phrase *Unleash spontaneous and sincere energy* invites us to pay attention to the construction of processes where the experience of play is present. The therapist must create a space for creative exchange (the transitional space of experience) that allows the people we work with to create their “own destiny” or to find the “aesthetics of movement” proposed by Christopher Bollas, encouraging in this way the search for the true self (Winnicott, 1971) or the nuclear being (Bollas, 2008).



In the image, Ai Apaec is already old (hence his wrinkles) playing and exchanging gifts (represented by the lima bean) with the one who will be his successor. Ai Apaec transmits his legacy to his successor. This leads us to relate the transformation processes that expressive arts facilitators establish, as an exchange of resources, as a space of play where I give something so that new possibilities can emerge. What are the gifts of our patients? What should our clients and communities offer to open new possibilities in their lives?

Encounter with the body, senses / *Kamaq*

We must take into account the integrated totality of being, paying attention to our own corporeality and the information that comes from our senses in the encounter with the others we accompany. We must constantly resonate with the sensations that come from an inhabited body in relation to another and facilitate experiences with the imagination, considering this bodily exploration. If we start from this connection, we will know better when to propose experiences that have to do with the integration of the body as a therapeutic resource.

Kamaq in Quechua means creator, doer or giver of life to all things. It is a vital energy that animates: How do we connect with that energy in the creative processes of transformation? Where does *kamaq* dwell? Are we expressive arts therapists doers of *kamaq*? Our work in-

volves mobilizing a vital creative energy through the senses and the body.

Encounter with matter

Working with the materiality, with the essential forms, before reaching the creation. Discovering the pleasure of staying with textures, gestures, stains, sounds, scribbles, small movements before being able to reach more elaborate creations or what we call in expressive arts therapy: “the Third”. Staying at this level of exploration is important to connect with the “vital images” that can later appear in the creation.

Ecopoiesis / Imaginary *Pacha imaginaria*

As therapists we must be able to integrate in the processes not only the intra-psychic world (our past or ancestry) but also be able to go to meet the world we inhabit. To be able to generate in ourselves as therapists and in the others with whom we work, that possibility of interconnection between the inside and the outside. To be able to approach to generate beauty from this place of co-creation with the world.

The *pacha* in the Andean world is everything: it is nature, space, time, it is the bond that the human being has with nature, with its creative and transforming capacity, with its mythological vision of the time and space he inhabits. The imaginary of a place is related to this vision of the *pacha*. The *pacha* imaginary leads us to take into account the myths of a place, the diverse forms of creation of its inhabitants (present in their work, their arts and crafts), the relationship they have with nature and with the community. In our work as expressive arts facilitators we must listen to the *pacha* imaginary of the place where we work. To inquire how our patients and we ourselves have internalized that imaginary.

In the next image we see Roni Wano, a medicine woman who sings to water and nature in the jungle of Peru in Javier Corcuera’s documentary, *Sigo Siendo* (I am still being). She tells us:



"The birds sing, too, and speak in different languages. Some of them are happy, others are melancholy. If you can't understand them, you don't speak their language, you just think they're singing for the sake of it" ([I'm Still Being](#), 2013).

Art that addresses the spirit / *Hanan Pacha*

To meet the transpersonal in the arts, that information that brings new symbols, sensations, perceptions, and that connects us with what goes beyond ourselves.

Hanan pacha or upper world in the Andes represents the spiritual world and the place where the various deities live. In the heroic journey that Ai Apaec makes, he is decapitated at one point. Then a shaman in the form of an owl heals him and transports him to the world above. To access the world above, there is a process of death and transformation. As we mentioned before, something must remain in the world below, in order to connect with the world above linked to the transpersonal.



Image by Judith Alalú



Encounter with your images / Ai Apaec the doer

Through decentering we can go to the encounter with the “vital images,” those essential and honest images that emerge in this encounter. We as therapists must also be in contact with our own vital images over time through our personal creative processes.

Ai Apaec is an image of a vital and ancestral facilitator of expressive arts, who seeks to make, regenerate, transform, germinate, and mediate between worlds. A doer who is open to multiple transfigurations. As expressive arts facilitators we

make, respond, accompany journeys, promote encounters and honor the multiplicity of images that inhabit us. Let us continue as expressive arts facilitators to travel Ai Apaec’s journey again and again.

Chaos, Void / Tinkuy

Tolerate moments of uncertainty, where forms are not yet found. Encourage in the people who come to us for help processes where chaos and emptiness can be accommodated without having to quickly arrive at possible creations. We must as therapists be able to tolerate the “not knowing” and embrace the moments of creative search both in ourselves and in those we work with.

Confluence of two rivers: This is one of the images that best represents the tinkuy. In the meeting of two rivers, whirlpools, friction, chaos, disorientation, destruction arise and then give space for a new river to emerge. The tinkuy brings the hope that something new will emerge in

this world after an uncertain and perhaps painful process. Catherine Allen (2002) states:

Tinkuy are powerful, dangerous places, full of liberated and uncontrollable forces, a mixture of different elements that brings something new into existence and this new being is endowed with vitalizing force" (p.205).

Deformation/ Multiplicity



Image by Judith Alalú

To be able to encourage processes of deformation, taking into account the possibility of: decomposing, dripping, fragmenting, dissolving, reconstituting and blurring the stories, images and processes experienced in the encounter. These ways of approaching deformation can be incorporated and thought from different artistic languages and can help us to go to the encounter of the "vital images" and our own multiplicity.

Ai Apaec is represented in multiple forms, as a woman or as a man, as well as various types of animals, plants, and geographical spaces. He is a god of multiple forms since, as we have seen, he is actually a kamak, a vital energy that can animate people, animals, fruits, vegetables or other things. Vitality, deformation and multiplicity are the routes that open in the processes of transformation.

Here ends the journey that emerged from the encounter between our two investigations. All these dimensions are constantly interrelated and generate a continuous movement towards the encounter with oneself and the possibility of constant transformation (autopoiesis).

It is a journey guided by the Peruvian imaginary and different perspectives of change which lead to a profound regeneration. This is an invitation to expressive arts facilitators to initiate or propose transformation processes following the journey of the vital tinkuy.

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José Miguel Calderón Director of the PhD program in Expressive Arts of the European Graduate School, Switzerland. His doctoral dissertation was titled "Tinkuy: The Encounter Between Expressive Arts Therapy and Peruvian Imaginary." He has received a master's degree in theoretical psychoanalytic studies at University College, London. Degree in clinical psychology from the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. Therapist and expressive arts supervisor. He has led several community projects. His interest is focused on Arts Based Research and on the exploration of movement and creative writing. Co-founder of TAE Peru Institute.

Judith Alalú Co-founder of TAE Peru Institute. PhD. in Expressive Arts at the European Graduate School. Faculty member at EGS. Graduated in clinical psychology from the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. Therapist and supervisor of expressive arts. Art is essential in her life, especially painting, which is the artistic language that she has explored the most. She has held two individual art exhibitions and a group one. She is co-author of the painting and poetry book *Vital Exodus*, and co-author of the book *Dolor y belleza. Imágenes desde las artes expresivas en el Perú*. Now living in Barcelona and co-founder of TAE Barcelona.

Is that Girl...?

Judith Greer Essex

Music is pumping, she puts on her face.
Undergarments hold her in, spandex and lace.
Tall stilettos shiny black
Short dress with plunging back
Dangerous as a heart attack.
Is that girl horny?

Yowling like a cat in heat
Lips are pouty, breath is sweet.
Bracelets jingle on her arm
Struttin' like a fire alarm.
Watch out, man, she'll do you harm.
'Cause that girl might be horny.

Hips swing, sweater clings.
Face bright, pants tight.
Laugh giddy, smile pretty.
I tell ya people have no doubt.
That girl is horny!

On Poiesis: A Philosophical Dialogue

James Chaytor and Stephen K. Levine

The following is a transcription of a dialogue that occurred on email between James Chaytor, a doctoral student in Toulouse, France, and Stephen K. Levine.

Jan. 22/24

James: I think when we talked about my doctoral project I mentioned my interest in Gilles Deleuze. I still feel that many facets of his philosophy—ontological, political, ethical, aesthetic—dove-tail very nicely with the philosophical foundations of the Expressive Arts, as you laid it down in *Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy*. I hope also that there will be some interesting resonances with your work on Taoism.

Steve: I think of Deleuze these days in terms of the concept of nomadism which he wrote about. He seems to be saying that we are always moving away from where we are; we are nomads. If we think about this in reference to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the conflict seems to be about whose homeland is it, Palestinians or Israelis? What if we talked about it not in terms of an identity which is rooted in a place but is rather in transit? That is why so many people are now talking about the diasporic, an identity that could be carried with you wherever you are. What if we could talk about the Jews as a diasporic people?

James: I very much like the idea of diasporism as Jewish identity. It feels quite beautiful and expansive. It implies the counterpoint: hospitality. Surely the Jews must have been made welcome and cherished at certain points in history? However, the situation seems so wounded and explosive—not to mention the elements of perverse irrationality—that it would be a brave person to make such a proposition. Would it not be seen as questioning the legitimacy of the State of Israel?

I think that Deleuze brings to the Expressive Arts the possibility of grounding the cosmos in *poiesis*. Rather than *poiesis* as a leavening force in a structured world, the cosmos univocally *is poiesis*, and structure, such as we experience it, is a fragile crystallization at the margins. Perhaps that is what you always meant by *poiesis*, given your work on Taoism.

I admit that I failed to pick it up in *Principles and Practice*. Have I just made a fool of myself?

Steve: You definitely have not made a fool of yourself. Lately, though, I've been thinking of *poiesis* not as the structure of the universe, but as something that we need to enter into at certain points of history, crisis points. There's always a place for instrumental rationality, getting things done. But at the same time, it's not enough. *Poiesis* requires non-identity, the liminal place where opposites coincide. Then something new can emerge, the Third.

Identity always excludes the other. That's the problem with the nation state. But no more

so with Israel than anywhere else. Once it exists, as does Canada or the United States, we have to take account of it. And there has to be room for something outside as well. That would be the diasporic identity, beyond the State. That is my thinking at this point. I really don't believe anymore in permanent revolution. What do you think? I am glad to continue our discussion.

Jan. 23/24

James: In each of these threads that we have taken up, the question seems to be the relation of form to formlessness, or more modestly, structure to openness. That is the big question, right? How do we negotiate this relationship in our lives? Chapters 14 and 25 of the *Tao de Ching* deal with formlessness. Chapter 14 approaches it as the groundless ground of being, and chapter 25, perhaps more pragmatically, in levels of structuration—so we deal with the practicalities of life whilst knowing that, ultimately, they are formless.

The notion of *poiesis* that excites me is, in Deleuzian terms, both immanent and univocal; it is not a transcendent principle but is the very stuff and process of the universe. This means that the workshop space is a microcosm of the cosmos, governed with respect to emergence by the same laws as all other processes in the Universe. In other words, it models the complex adaptive system, as a unit of change and growth, as explored in Brian Massumi's work on Deleuze. So, to participate in this process is already to come home! We no longer "trust the process" as an act of faith, but because there is nothing but the process! Far from instrumentalising the art process in order to achieve "impact," we are welcomed into an "ecology of practice"—a term developed by Isabelle Stengers. The microcosm of the space of practice evolves the way it needs to evolve, in a way that honours the individual and the collective. The resulting art is in turn a part of the wider macrocosm and, like a seed-crystal, will participate in the emergent processes of the wider whole.

Perhaps we can talk about *poiesis* in two ways: First, on the micro scale, as the emergence

of new form, the Third, which is the final phase of the iterative process of decentering, liminality, and the re-emergence of new structure. Over a series of “takes,” each take is an ingredient of the next, so we can see that *poiesis* operates across scales; the micro affects the macro, then further from the therapeutic space to the “real world,” as in a stack of Russian dolls. Second, the way the poietic process emerges from other poietic processes constitutes, ultimately, the immanent and univocal play of *lila*, a Sanskrit word which, in Taoist terms, refers to “the rise and fall of the 10,000 things,” or “Reality” itself—we could call this *Poiesis* with a capital “P.”

We could also apply the notion of scale to the other thread of our conversation; the State of Israel. We mix it up on the political stage, which involves States, identity, etc., as a game that is bounded (micro), against the boundless backdrop of reality (macro), because we know that ultimately we have no set identity and that we are not separate individuals. So, does the diasporic “identity” allow one as a Jew to hold the idea of the State of Israel more lightly, and could that be helpful?

Perhaps this could be taking us to a different dimension in regard to therapeutic practice: *Poiesis* is no longer just our ability to respond in the face of difficulty, but the ability to abide in that potential, without necessarily taking action. Rather than a quietism of weakness (as critiqued by Nietzsche), this would be a quietism of power—perhaps even a state of “beatitude,” as in Deleuze’s reworking of Spinoza.

Thanks so much for the conversation, Steve, it seems to have an emergent quality!

Steve: I am thinking about, what is the phenomenological or experiential basis of these speculations? I live in the world, and I go about my business, which definitely is not a question of *poiesis*. It’s more like a “to do” list. I go to the grocery store and buy stuff for dinner. Is that *poiesis*? I guess you could say that if I were to do it in a certain way, it could be. Perhaps this has to do with *wu-wei*, “not doing,” that is, doing it spontaneously without effort., The

way Chuang Tzu describes the butcher cutting a piece of meat, so skillfully that it almost seems as if it does it itself:

“The Dexterous Butcher”

Translated by Arthur Waley (*Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, 1939)

“King Hui of Wei had a carver named Ting. When this carver Ting was carving a bull for the king, every touch of the hand, every inclination of the shoulder, every step he trod, every pressure of the knee, while swiftly and lightly he wielded his carving-knife, was as carefully timed as the movements of a dancer in the *Mulberry Wood*..

“Wonderful,” said the king. “I could never have believed that the art of carving could reach such a point as this.”

“I am a lover of Tao,” replied Ting, putting away his knife, “and have succeeded in applying it to the art of carving. When I first began to carve I fixed my gaze on the animal in front of me. After three years I no longer saw it as a whole bull, but as a thing already divided into parts. Nowadays I no longer see it with the eye; I merely apprehend it with the soul. My sense-organs are in abeyance, but my soul still works. Unerringly my knife follows the natural markings, slips into the natural cleavages, finds its way into the natural cavities. And so by conforming my work to the structure with which I am dealing, I have arrived at a point at which my knife never touches even the smallest ligament or tendon, let alone the main gristle.

“A good carver changes his knife once a year; by which time the blade is dented. An ordinary carver changes it once a month; by which time it is broken. I have used my present knife for nineteen years, and during that time have carved several thousand bulls. But the blade still looks as though it had just come out of the mold. Where part meets part there is always space, and a knife-blade has no thickness. Insert an instru-

ment that has no thickness into a structure that is amply spaced, and surely it cannot fail to have plenty of room. That is why I can use a blade for nineteen years, and yet it still looks as though it were fresh from the forger's mound.

"However, one has only to look at an ordinary carver to see what a difficult business he finds it. One sees how nervous he is while making his preparations, how long he looks, how slowly he moves. Then after some small, niggling strokes of the knife, when he has done no more than detach a few stray fragments from the whole, and even that by dint of continually twisting and turning like a worm burrowing through the earth, he stands back, with his knife in his hand, helplessly gazing this way and that, and after hovering for a long time finally curses a perfectly good knife and puts it back in the case."

"Excellent," said the king of Wei. "This interview with the carver Ting has taught me how man's vital forces can be conserved."

Steve: So the potential is always there. I suppose you could say that it is the underling reality. It's the same thing in therapy or in group leadership, we know that the potential for going into *poiesis* is always there. The possibility for example, in therapy, of decentering from the problem and moving into play or art-making.

Can we say that we have an experience of a potential? Or is it that we have it available as a habit? I'm starting to think that there is something to what you're saying.

I still think it would be a jump from our experience to taking a metaphysical position. Unless you feel that we can have an experience of a potential?

As I write this, I think, is it something that you feel or something that you think? I'm a little confused here.

But then I ask, is it the feeling that's confused or the thinking? Or both?

And is confusion a bad thing?

Maybe it's the appropriate response!

Confusion is the bringing together of two or more things without being able to distinguish them clearly or prioritizing one over the other. Maybe it is like what John Keats called, "negative capability," the capacity to hold two contradictory ideas in the mind at the same time, "...without any irritable chasing after reason." Keats thought this was the essential characteristic of the artist.

Lately, this sentence has been going through my mind: "We are all non-binary." I think that's the meaning of *poiesis* that you are speaking about. And we can always emerge from that state of formlessness into form. As I like to say, *poiesis* is always possible.

Another word for this is "history." And history never ends.

James: I think you have just answered your own question. If people can have this experience of potential that we are talking about, then they may choose to abide in that experience without taking action (action being the emergence of formlessness into form). I think I can feel that potential in your expression, "diasporic identity". Perhaps you could say that the experience of potential is The Goose that Lays the Golden Eggs - so people can actually have the Goose, rather than just the eggs (which would be the specific solutions).

Steve: We don't know now what will happen with Israel. Many Jewish people, including myself, are calling for a cease-fire and saying, about the bombing of Gaza, "Not in my name!" I don't know what we will say or do next, but I hope we will always be open to the creative response that we call *poiesis*.

James: I hope so too... Could we make that *Poiesis*, with a capital P?

Steve: Yes!

James Chaytor trained as a painter and stone carver before moving to Peru in 1999 where he did a training in the Expressive Arts, getting his Masters from the European Graduate School in 2015. He is currently writing his Doctoral thesis on applied theatre at the University of Toulouse.

No, Soup!

Reflections on Judaism, Antisemitism and Zionism

Stephen. K Levine

When Ellen Levine and I moved to Toronto in 1971, there were several Hungarian restaurants near where we were living. Although we enjoyed the food, at the same time, we were always hesitant to go there, since we shared a common prejudice that Hungarians tended to be antisemitic. One evening, we went to one of the restaurants with a couple of friends, sat down and waited for someone to take our order. After a while, the waiter came over and stood near the table. He was a tall, powerfully built man with an imposing presence. He stood there and said, in a very loud voice, "Jews?" We were shocked and looked at each other, not knowing what to say. After a few moments, he repeated himself even more loudly this time in an impatient tone, "Jews!?" Finally, I looked up at him and replied, "No, soup!" It turned out he was asking us the usual question in a restaurant of this type, namely, "Did we want juice or soup?" He then went into the kitchen to tell the staff.

62 Growing up in Brooklyn just before the Second World War, I was not very much aware of antisemitism. Everyone in my middle-class neighbourhood seemed to be Jewish but not very observant, except for those we called the "Black Hats," members of a Hasidic sect. The neigh-



bourhoods in those days tended to be self-segregating. There was a black neighbourhood on the other side of Eastern Parkway and an Irish neighbourhood somewhere to the south of us. We rarely ventured into either one, fearing some sort of violence, except when we walked to Ebbets Field where the Brooklyn Dodgers played baseball. My parents belonged to Union Temple, a Reform Temple at the end of Eastern Parkway, and would drag me there on Sundays for formal services, at which a robed choir would sing. The service meant nothing to me, but I had no choice except to be there. My mother and father had emancipated themselves from many of the rituals followed by Eastern European Jews. They didn't keep kosher, and we would go out to Chinese restaurants and have roast pork and shrimp, two traditionally forbidden foods. At the same time, they also had a strong sense of themselves as being different from the mainstream non-Jewish population, the "goyim." They were eager to become "real" Americans. When I was a teen-ager, they would ask me if I wanted to change my name to something not so Jewish-sounding as Levine, or perhaps I would like to have a "nose job" like my sister, whose nose now looked like a ski jump. My brother bought into this attitude. I used to joke that he was the only Jewish kid in Brooklyn who actually asked to go to military academy for high school. Once there, he became a member of the wrestling team, also a not very Jewish choice at that time. When he went to university, he changed his clothing style to a more conventionally "goyishe" one, wearing Brooks Brothers suits with button-down shirts and ties. When I followed him later at the University of Pennsylvania, he took me to Brooks Brothers and outfitted me suitably. Later, he married a woman named Faith whose Jewish family had, ironically, converted to the Episcopal church. Recently, I have come to think of these choices as stemming from "internalized antisemitism," in much the way that we now think of older people who do everything they can to look younger may be suffering from "internalized ageism." A good example of this is in the Presidential race in the United States, where Biden has to demonstrate vigorously that he is not too old for the job.

I was never tempted by any of these choices with regard to antisemitism. Shortly after the war, I would lie in bed at night and try to think of ways that I could have assassinated Hitler

and thus prevented the Holocaust. However, I was never able to kill him—either the gun had jammed, or it was Hitler’s double not Hitler himself or something else prevented me from killing him. Eventually, I came to discard all these fantasies, because I realized that history could not be changed.

On a personal level, I never myself directly experienced much antisemitism. Nevertheless, I knew that antisemitism was part of Jewish history. At least from the beginning of Christianity, when the Jews were blamed for the martyrdom of Jesus, Jews had been persecuted, put into ghettos, kept out of many professions and were often victims of pogroms in which they were slaughtered. Since the destruction of the second temple in Jerusalem, they became an exiled people, doomed to wander the Earth in search of a home. The longing for a return to Zion, the promised land, even became part of their prayers, as the ritual expression, “Next year in Jerusalem,” was repeated no matter where they were.

In the 20th century, this wish became a possibility. After the Holocaust, most Jews realized they could never have a home in Europe. Zionism, the return to the Holy Land, became the basis of a political movement. The nations of Europe, for their own reasons, were only too happy to facilitate this process. “A land without people for a people without land” became the slogan for a nationalist project, conveniently overlooking the fact that there were indeed people in this land. Although there were those like Martin Buber who called for a binational state, the absolutely conflicting goals of the Israelis and Palestinians, it seemed to Zionist leaders, could only be resolved by the force of arms. What the Israelis subsequently called the War of Independence, for the Arab peoples was regarded as a Nakba, a catastrophe. The new state of Israel either drove the resident Palestinians out of the country or subjugated them to second-class status. The Holy Land thus became a home for the Jewish people but now was the site of a longing for return for the Palestinians.

Rights, stating that we have planted three olive trees in Palestine in honor of our grandchildren, Gloria and Leo, with these words, "For living together in peace, two peoples, one land." As we used to say, "From your mouth to God's ear!" As I am writing this, the war in Gaza continues. After the invasion of October 7, 2023, in which some 1200 Israelis were killed and 240 taken hostage by a surprise attack from members of Hamas, the dominant group in Gaza, the Government of Israel under the control of Prime Minister Netanyahu seems to have decided that the only thing possible is to retaliate with maximum force. At the time of writing, some 33,000 people from Gaza have been killed, the majority of whom were non-combatant women and children, with no end in sight. It is not clear when the killing will stop.

I had always thought of the Jewish people as victims of persecution. Now it seems that they are also the victimizers. Perhaps this is no different in families, when perpetrators of domestic violence turn out to have been traumatized by someone in their own families when they were young. The long history of antisemitism, culminating in the Holocaust, has left its mark. What seems to be different now is that it was the Jews who were always without a home, doomed to wander throughout the generations. The wandering Jew became the metaphor for their historical status. The creation of Israel, the promised land, was meant to put a stop to this, but it came at the expense of the Palestinians who now have become the ones longing to return.

"Two peoples, one land." Is such a thing possible? Does land even belong to us or is it, as indigenous people say, that we belong to it? And what is it about land that it became a signifier for identity? Is identity itself the problem? If I have an identity, it must exclude yours. Israeli or Palestinian? Do I have to choose? Can I? Aharon Shabtai, refusing to make such a choice, ends the title poem in his book *J'Accuse*, by stating, "I am a Palestinian Jew." Rejecting the logic of identity in which a third is not given, he becomes a both/and or as we would say today, he becomes queer.

In the email dialogue I had with James Chaytor in this issue of the journal, we raise the

question of under what conditions can we become this third? Is this something we only touch upon in certain situations where identity comes into question, and where we come together, as Victor Turner put it, in a state of liminality in which *communitas* can arise? I recall such a situation at EGS, when there were classes that included both Palestinians and Israelis. At first, the students from the different groups could barely speak to each other. One of the Palestinian men still had six bullets in his body, and some of the Israeli women's husbands or other relatives had been killed in the second Intifada. The teachers worked hard to help them participate together, but their mutual enmity was finally only overcome at an after-class dance party when the infectious drumming of the Palestinian men got everybody moving onto the dance floor. After this, the barriers came down and students from the different different groups were able to participate in a mutual learning process. Some of them became very close to each other. There were even romantic relationships which, unfortunately, had to end when summer school was over. There was the sense that members of the two different groups were in the same world, a world that no longer separated them but in fact brought them together. We have to ask, is this the natural condition of relationships which only become antagonistic under certain conditions? Or is that only a dream? Personally, I refuse to choose.

Stephen K. Levine is a poet, philosopher and clown. He is the editor of the *POIESIS* journal and author of many books in the field of expressive arts, including the recent, *Philosophy of Expressive Arts Therapy: Poiesis and the Therapeutic Imagination*. Friendship, for him, is essential to life.

A Very Regrettable Accident:
Remembering Rachel Corrie

Stephen K. Levine

Rachel Corrie deserves to be remembered.
She was 23.
She went to Gaza to stop the breaking of homes.
A home is a place of refuge.
There is no refuge in Gaza.
Homes are destroyed to discourage others,
to take out their heart.

On February 14, "we stood in the path of the bulldozers,
and were physically pushed with the shovel
backwards, taking shelter in a house
...the bulldozer then proceeded on its course,
demolishing one side of the house."
We were still inside.

Rachel Corrie was 23.
She left her home in Olympia, Washington,
to go down to Gaza.
She wanted to see for herself.

On March 16, the bulldozer came
to break up the doctor's home.
Rachel Corrie stood in front of the machine,
speaking to the driver through a megaphone.
She wore a bright orange jacket.
The bulldozer kept coming.
"We were shouting and waving our arms at the driver,"
said Tom Dale.
The bulldozer kept coming.

Rachel Corrie dropped to her knees.
She knelt in the dirt of Gaza.
The bulldozer kept coming.
She began to stand up, but was trapped
beneath the dirt and the blade.
The bulldozer buried her in the dirt of Gaza,
the earth of Gaza.

Her arms and legs were broken.
Her skull was broken.
Broken in Gaza.

The Israeli army said it was
"a very regrettable accident."
Captain Joseph Dallal said the driver could not see her.
The army said the soldiers were faced by
"...protesters who were acting very irresponsibly,
putting everyone in danger."

Rachel Corrie put herself in danger.
She left her home and went down to Gaza
to provide refuge.
A shelter, a sanctuary, a home of one's own.

The bulldozer knows no refuge.
The army recognizes no sanctuary.
The government claims all homes.

The body of a young girl is buried in
the dirt of Gaza.
The land of Gaza shall be her land.
The people of Gaza shall remember her.
This poem shall be a home for her.

Rachel Corrie deserves to be remembered.
She left her home to offer refuge
and found a place of rest.
The land of Gaza is now her home.
It is now our home.

We will not let the homes be broken.
We will go down to offer refuge.
We will kneel down and find
our place of rest.

Vision of Rachel
Stephen K. Levine

This is how I want to see you
Standing with your back to us
Megaphone in hand
Standing in front of the bulldozer
Refusing to move

I know you knelt down
I know you slipped
When you tried to rise
I know you were crushed
And crushed again

But this is how I want to see you
How I want to wear you
How I engrave you into my skin

Stand firm, Rachel
Do not move

He can see you
He can hear you
He has the choice
To be human or not
To kill or not

Your peace is strong
It is fierce
It is living in us

We stand with you
And will not move

Someday he will step down
He will walk over and kneel before you
He will rise and embrace you

And we will sing,
Rachel, we will sing

As you, and he with you
As you, and he with you
As you, and he with you

Dance

Dream

Elizabeth Gordon McKim

You bison
You buffalo
You teeth
You fiery
You furnace

You trek
You track

You gaze
You gaza

Elizabeth Gordon McKim is a poet/teacher/spirit/singer...

She knows a few things. The things that she knows
Shall never be hers/ they shall only move through her
And move beyond.

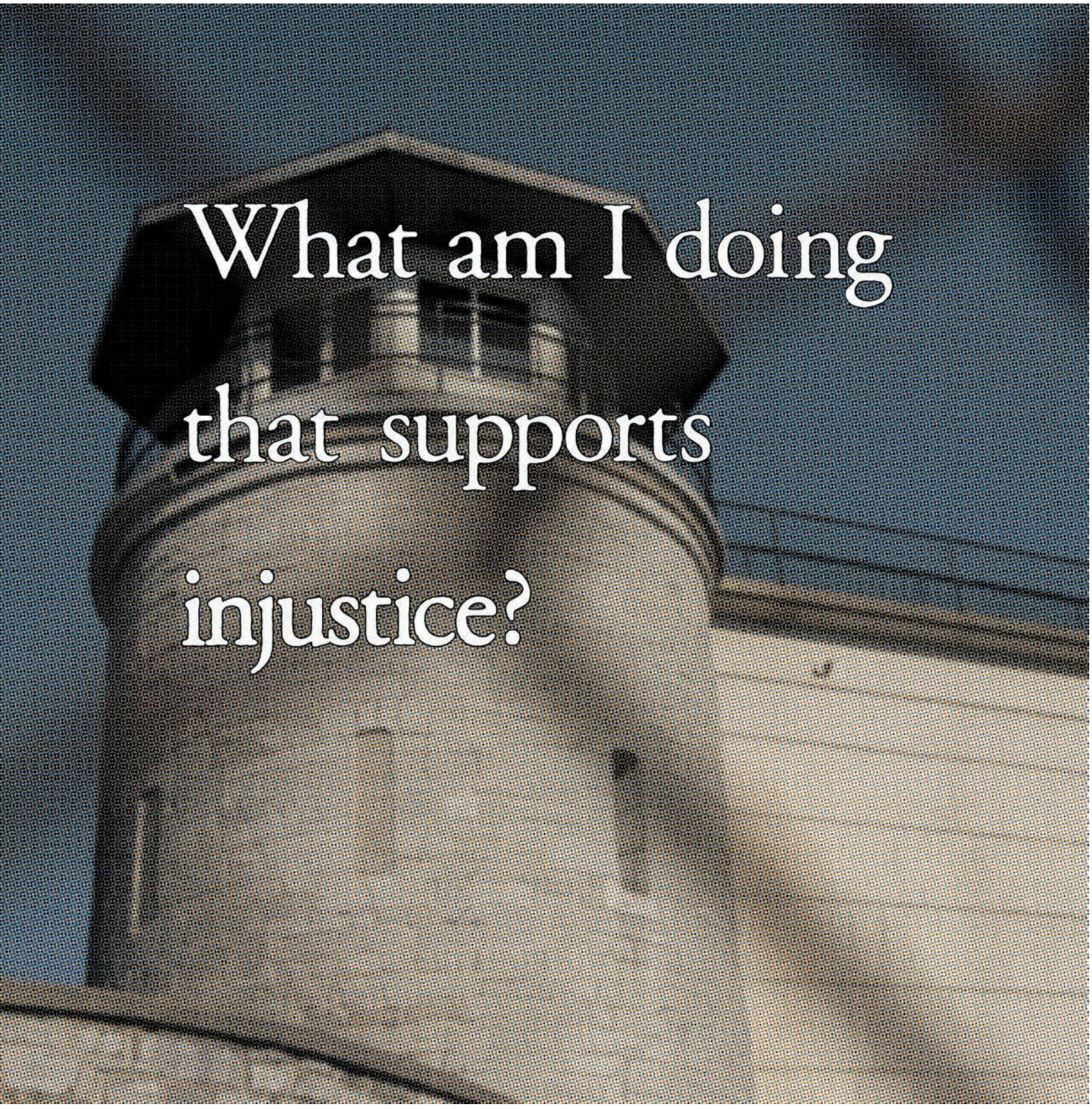
She is the poet laureate of the European Graduate School and the Jazz Poet of Lynn, Massachusetts. Her latest book, published by Leapfrog Press, is *LOVERS in the FREE FALL*.

What Am I Doing?

Simon Glass

The following selected images represent a 2022 body of work, entitled *What am I doing...?* They are found images with text.

Simon Glass is a Toronto-based visual artist. He is a Professor in the Faculty of Art at OCAD University in Toronto and teaches photography and cross-disciplinary art. His artwork has been exhibited widely in group and solo exhibitions throughout Canada and internationally.



What am I doing
that supports
injustice?

A close-up, low-angle shot of a tank's main gun barrel. The barrel is angled upwards and is firing, with a large, bright orange and yellow flame and a thick plume of white smoke emerging from the muzzle. The tank's turret and tracks are visible in the foreground and background, rendered in a dark, grainy, halftone-like texture. The overall scene is dramatic and emphasizes the power of the weapon.

What am I doing
that supports
international
conflict?



What am I doing
that supports
state sanctioned
brutality?

War Torn

Tamar Reva Einstein

Jerusalem, January 2024

War Torn

The white pristine canvases

Were purchased

"Damaged"

One

With a long slash across

Left to right

Right to left

If you write in Arabic or Hebrew...

Ripped

As if someone had accidentally moved it across

A sharp edge

One

With a triangular gash

As if someone had pushed it against

The corner of a glass coffee table

A perfect rupture.

The canvases were bought from a small beloved art supply shop

In Jerusalem

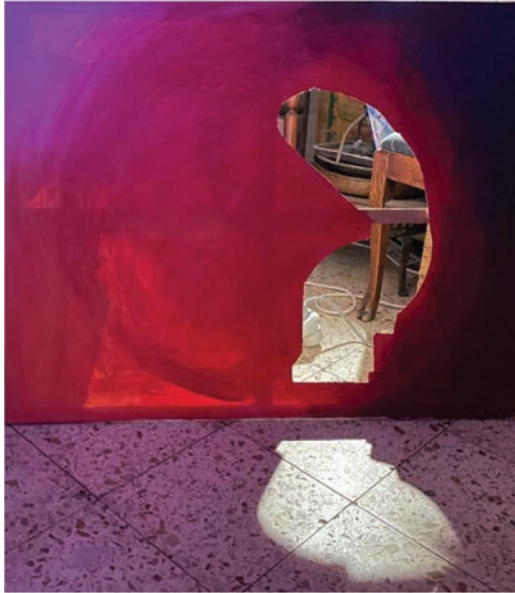
About to go out of business

At an enormous discount

Damaged = Cheaper, worth less...

I put them aside.

Then one day took them out
They were calling out for repair
It was around the Jewish New Year
New beginnings
Time for fixing
Tikkun
Tikkun Olam?
I answered
I slued, adhered, layered, patched, fixed, and gessoed.
The canvases seemed perfect.
I began painting on one
In light deserty, fleshy colors
Sunlit tones and hues
I put it away.
When the atrocities of
October 7th occurred
I was frozen
Then the war
Frozen.
A few weeks ago
I took both canvases out
Needed to take away the fixing
The light colors.



Expose the altering
And I removed he patches
Leaving the original Rip and Gash to witness
I then began
Pulling
Ripping
Cutting
Wounding
My anger defrosted
I was aflame
The canvases torn
As we all are now
Here in these parts
Of the Middle East
I painted them in a state of deep sorrow
Broken hearted
In colors of bruises
As we are all bruised
Dripped red paint
That sloshed on the floor
Both canvases were left bleeding
The easel too
Still had red tears of blood
We are war torn
We are war torn
We are war torn.



Afterthoughts:

These paintings are photographed at home, at night, we can see the objects that are around them. We can see the light, that causes bright shadows....

I live with these images; I live with these objects.

I live with this war-torn ness.

–Tammy

TRE Tamar Einstein, Ph.D, has been an Expressive Arts Therapist since 1987 when she completed her Master's degree at Lesley College. She went on to study at EGS, and back to Lesley for her doctoral studies. Her degrees and multifaceted studies have allowed her to bridge visible and invisible cultural borders in Jerusalem with poetry, painting, movement, photography and more as a passport. She considers the *POIESIS* community home for soul work rooted in the arts.



Travelers Series #1, by Ellen Levine

I Can't Look Away: An Interview with Ellen Levine Wayne Skinner & Francine Wynn

Introductory Comments

I asked my friend, Francine Wynn, to join me in this project after the two of us encountered a painting in the living room of Ellen and Steve Levine. The rooms of their house are alive with art. But one, over the mantle, caught our attention in an arresting way.

The painting, brightly coloured in blues and teal and reds and greens, is split across the middle with a line of muddy shapes. As you look more closely, it becomes clearer these are people, a line of humanity strung out from one side of the painting to the other, moving from who knows where to who knows where. All of these alluring colours and shapes that make up most of the painting drew us near only to unsettle us, leaving us wondering and questioning.

Ellen shared with us that it was one of a series of paintings about refugees and migrants she has been making for some years now, evoked by her concern as an artist, as a teacher, and as a member of the human community in these difficult times. We ask if we can return and have

a fuller discussion with her about her artwork. Ellen kindly agreed, allowing us to tape and transcribe the exchange. What follows is a transcript of our conversation, edited and abbreviated, to which I have added some brief afterthoughts.

Many people involved in expressive arts will know Ellen. She has for years studied, practiced, and taught psychotherapy, with an interest in working clinically for over forty years with children and parents, particularly those coming to a public agency who lack the financial means to pay for therapy. Seven years ago, she started a program in a public school bringing the arts to children who have been refugees, who have been in migration for many years and who have lost years of schooling. This and much more we learned in our lively conversation with Ellen, including the fact that she started painting when she was nine years old. For the purpose of this article, we have kept our focus on several paintings that are part of an extended project concerned about the plight of migrants, refugees, people in the process of fleeing, displaced, homeless.

WS

Toronto, January 2024.

Francine (FW): We're keen to know how your work as an artist developed.

Ellen (EL): At first, it was totally exploratory. I had no idea what I would do...and then a sort of style started to develop. Gradually, I started noticing the recurrence of images that I was attracted to. Most of my painting was done in Martha's Vineyard by the ocean.

FW: So, is that where you tend to paint?

EL: My paintings have always been very influenced by the forms of the ocean and sea and beach and where the water and the land meet. Yes, I'm also very fascinated with where the water meets the sky. My paintings usually have horizons, like something's meeting and encountering something else or there's something under the water that's mysterious or strange.

FW: When I was looking, it reminded me of the work of Betty Goodwin. There's something that resonated with these themes of under and above ground, that something is happening below, though there's a mystery to them.

EL: Yes, that was always in my paintings, probably from the beginning. My early work involved all round forms. Colors. I love colors, especially those colors: greens and blues.

When I started, there was a period where I was just very open, and then I started paying more attention to photographs that I was seeing in the newspapers. I've always been political and very concerned about the world. Initially, I developed a whole series of paintings that incorporated images of people holding photographs, showing photographs of people and their hands. I don't know why I started noticing that there were a lot of photographs like that. It was about remembering or not, just calling attention, bearing witness, testimonials—here's this person! I had a whole collection of these, and I started putting them into paintings. There was a long period where I was working with those...

Wayne (WS): ...the hands, that's what you were looking for?

EL: I kept finding them, and people kept sending them to me. It would be someone showing a photograph. It says somebody might be missing. It might be a disappeared person or a missing person. Or someone who died and was very important. A photograph. Of a face. Of a person.

I was putting them in landscapes. That was a preoccupation for a long time. Then it



morphed into, more recently, I would say, refugees. There just were so many images in the newspapers about refugees and masses, masses of people traveling, travelers, migrants.

People leaving home and trying to find somewhere safe to go, where are they going? Trying to find something. So that's been a preoccupation for the last eight or nine years, I would say, and in terms of painting, that's what's been happening.

But I started to feel like I have to do more than just paint around this issue. Painting just seemed to lead me into my own personal response. I would show the paintings as much as I could. I wanted other people to see them. And people found them very touching, moving.

FW: Has your painting changed?

EL: The images, the photographs. I think that if you looked at my work in a trajectory, you'd see changes.

WS: These artworks of yours that we are looking at here show a deeply empathic engagement with the images, a wanting to bear witness, to bring them forward, amplify them. With this project and your work in expressive arts with immigrant and refugee children in a school program in Toronto, you're wanting to take action. To do something.

EL: I really felt that I needed to. That I just had to get beyond myself. Not just alone in my studio, metabolizing it in my own head. Yeah. So it does change.

WS: Some people make a distinction between empathy, concern for others, feeling how it must be for them, and compassion, which is not just being able to feel with, but to care, to do something on behalf of the other person.

FW: How might you see things? What you're looking at or touched by?



EL: I don't know. That's a good question. I'm not sure.

WS: You would be entitled in a certain sense to say, my project is just the empathic one of showing, bearing witness and drawing people's attention to the plight of refugees and migrants.

EL: I have a friend who's very emotional, and she came to my show. My friend stood in front of my paintings, one after the other, and just cried. I loved that response. I think what I do in the paintings is to bear witness, but there is also protection: I'm actually not just showing, I'm trying to help these people, somehow, be seen. Give them a ladder, give them a window, some warmth, something to hold on to.

FW: It sounds like a lot of your painting has, for want of a better word, been political.

EL: Yes, that's where it's evolved, I think. I can't look away from these images. And this idea of people traveling and risking their lives to go to a place that they think might be safer, whether it is or not, I don't know, but it's got to be better than where they're coming from. And then all the resistance to immigrants at this moment in history.

It's just so horrifying. And I have to pay attention, I can't turn away. I had a show two summers ago in the States. Some of these paintings were in the show. To go along with the paintings, I had a table on which I put accounts, stories of people traveling and what they experienced. I wanted viewers to read, not just look at the images, but hear the stories.

FW: They need to be told.

EL: Yes, because all these people are real, just real humans. It's like the Middle East conflict right now. The media was so quick to put out all the stories of the hostages. But who's heard the particular stories of the people of Gaza? And each one, when I do hear their stories, I think people have to hear these stories.



June 14, 2023 #1, by Ellen Levine

WS: They're not demons, just people.

EL: But even that assertion is contested, which describes the predicament in all of this. I keep wanting to articulate that, whether it's contested or not.

WS: You're not willing to let go.

EL: Right. I think we have to hear these stories and pay attention to the human aspect of life. Both sides. I don't want to neglect either.

WS: In that sense, is there a painting that you are particularly drawn to yourself, among the paintings you have made—one in particular? If you were wanting to bring somebody into your concern, what would it be?

EL: One in particular? Not really. Each one has a series connected with it. I do one image and I do it a lot of times. Many iterations of the same image. Like the one with the line of people. I've done it so many times.

In mid-June last year, there was an incident with a boat off the coast of Greece, I don't know if you remember this incident, where the Greek Coast Guard apparently sat there and

watched the boat sink with about 700 people on it. They just let it happen.

FW: So this is the boat. This is the boat with the people on it.

EW: Yes. Then, in another painting, I took the picture and cut it up into many jagged pieces. That is really unusual for me. I wanted to show the horror of the situation rather than provide comfort which is more usual for me. Normally, in my paintings, I protect all these situations. That's usually what I feel like I'm doing when I'm painting with those photographs.

But this to me is just horrifying. How could I not remember that story? That's what happened to all these people, this boat. And presumably, they drowned. They drowned...

This next photograph (next page) inspired a whole series. When I saw the photograph, I couldn't believe it because you don't see the boat, right? There's so much vulnerability,



June 14, 2023 #2, by Ellen Levine



They're just so vulnerable there...

FW: But this idea of wanting to get them out. A way out. Who knows what's going to happen? Are they ever going to get to where they're going?



Where Are We Going? Series #1, by Ellen Levine

EL: I don't know. I don't know.

FW: Where do you find the images—in papers and magazines?

EL: Newspapers. That's it. We all see these images in the newspapers, and we say, oh, look at that for a moment. And then we turn the page. And since Instagram, everything just flicks by.

Here's another one that caught my eye (left). So many men standing on the edge of the boat looking out. I fogged them up. They're just looking. They're looking out. The question is: What are they looking at? It was really interesting to me. So, I put that in a whole series. I call it: "Where Are We Going?"

In this series of paintings, I put together many pieces of the same photograph. And I put them onto the panel. I copy them. Again and again. And this is on a wooden panel. I don't paint on canvas so much.

FW: So there's treasures here. Yes, look at that. And a window.

EL: Often my paintings have windows.

FW: That's a beautiful painting.



Finding Refuge #3, by Ellen Levine

EL: This is another series that I did. The boat is going off the painting, and there's another boat full of people in the background. I put them in a hopeful sunset. That's a series of about three paintings.

The other versions have different colors.

This is a series I did, too (right). Tons of people in a small boat. And then I just added the part on the right side and made it even larger, giving them a ladder and a window.

FW: You're fearless.

EL: What do you mean?

FW: I think you just take things on.

EL: I do want to; I can't just sit there.

WS: The iteration and reiteration of your artwork, staying with and repeatedly going back to it, what do you have to say about that?

EL: It's like I can't stop with just one. I don't know. I just need to play it out. And then this new image came (the full boat and the broken-up boat). But I am finished with that. I think I am finished with that. I don't feel compelled to keep working on it.

FW: Going back to this wasn't too much?

EL: I think it was just like acknowledging the horror. What else can you do? At least with these other paintings, I can give something. To give something, that's it.

FW: And in fact, you give color. Color and holding.

EL: It's a holding environment that I want to create. And a lot of it comes from Martha's Vineyard. My experience of the landscape there, which has always been a holding space for me personally. Because it's so loving and gentle.

WS: In those two or three



By Sea Series #4, by Ellen Levine

paintings in the last Poiesis journal—you talk about the Vineyard there. And the rock and having to walk 20 minutes to get there. But you use words like unsteadiness and dread. There's an apprehension in what you're seeing, too. There again, this idea that you're not prepared to walk away from the reality of it. Most people would just change the channel. But you're, you're coming back and doing this; it's not the same thing as turning away or tuning out. It's a different approach to the same situation.

EL: (talking again about the full boat and the broken-up boat) This was one I had to do, but I feel like it's too literal. I also don't like to just be so literal. They're not representational in the classic sense. No, not really. But to me, that's very literal. That's what happened.

FW: And even worse...

EL: So, I needed to do that. But I don't think I will continue in that way.

WS: You've accomplished something.

EL: I got something out of my system, oh, but that's not the whole story. You can't just stop there. You have to show what happened next. I don't know what happened next. To those guys. I don't know what happened next to those people. It's a mystery to me, but I know it has to be like this: there's no follow ups. In the news, it's a minute or a few seconds of news and on to the next thing.

WS: We know that all those people drowned. This is like Icarus falling out of the sky in Brueghel. You're capturing and holding that moment. This disaggregates that terrible situation.

EL: Of course, I could have done a next one where all the bodies are dead under the ocean, but...

WS: ...but actually there's an energy here, right? it feels turbulent.

EL: They're being tossed. This is a moment where it's broken up and they're being tossed around. Of course. Then there's the other moment where, maybe, that would just be a black canvas. I don't know.

WS: But, no, this does take it to another level.

FW: I'm just imagining the chaos...

Coda

As our conversation ended, after talking about Ellen's career as a therapist, an educator, and an artist, she whimsically made the following comments...

EL: I haven't talked about my kids and everything. All that. They're really the artists in the family, I would say.

WS: They're your biological children, but it sounds like you've got other progeny, because you and Steve, you've been teachers.

EL: You're right. We have a lot of progeny out there in the community that we formed here in Toronto, definitely. It's so lively and it's all about sharing. I always have felt like I wanted to do that.

Afterthoughts

These are stories told in paint about people in distress, in turbulent circumstances, facing the gravest danger. As a therapist and a teacher, Ellen talked about her desire to help refugee children develop resilience. As an artist, she admits to a preoccupation, perhaps an obligation, to reach out and connect with the people in the images around which her art is built. Hers is



Detail-Travelers Series #1, by Ellen Levine

an adamant refusal to not let go, a refusal to lose touch with refugees in their most vulnerable circumstances; instead, she reaches out through her art to speak on their behalf and to offer protection. Each such painting holds up the suffering, the danger, the pain that is at the heart of this project about refugees and migrants, calling the viewer into the torment and the turbulence of others so different from us, so far away.

In 1946, Martin Heidegger presented a paper he called *Wozu Dichter?* ("Why poets?"), drawing on a line from a poem by Hölderlin: ...*what are poets for in a destitute time?* Heidegger was concerned with two poets, Hölderlin and Rilke. Yet there are key ideas in his essay that open a more extensive view of *poiesis* as a way of thinking that relate to these paintings by Ellen Levine.

Heidegger, following Hölderlin, says this is the age when the gods have taken flight, have become fugitive, no longer feeling welcome in a world made inhospitable and unholy by human deeds. We have lost our way; as the gods flee, there is no one to guide us, to help us understand that the time is now destitute *because it lacks the unconcealedness of the nature of pain, death, and love* (97).

We keep turning away from the true nature of pain, death, and love. *To be a poet in a destitute time means: to attend, singing, to the trace of the fugitive gods* (p.94). Heidegger is referring not just to current events when he speaks of "time" and "destitute time." He means epochal time, the time in which, to use his phrase, "we moderns" live. Which means, even more emphatically, it is present time. And it is in the here and now of this turning away that this artist takes her place and paints.

"To attend to": to address, to be in the service of and, in attending, to make the distant, the hidden, immanent. To see and to share, to become unsettled by the violent un-homing of strangers who are far away. To not turn away from pain, death...and love. By refusing to turn away from the plight of homeless refugees, artwork—*poiesis* in whatever form it is expressed—participates in the singing of the truth of these destitute times.

We others... (Heidegger says), *we others must learn to listen to what these poets say* (94). But how? If we now know what poets and artists are for, how do we others learn to not turn away, but to turn into the truth of pain, death, and love? If for this artist, there is an imperative, *I can't turn away*, what is it that will guide us, we others, so that we can learn to listen and see?

We have first to learn that the making of poetry, Heidegger suggests, *is a matter of thinking. Let us make the poem an exercise in poetic self-reflection* (99-100). The artist's self-reflection shows itself in the artwork, be it poem or painting. The power of the artwork is to draw "we others" into a fuller relationship with pain, death, and love. This, in a destitute time, is the

work of art, so that mortals may become *aware of and capable even of their own mortality* (96).

Ellen Levine's project becomes, through the work of her art, to draw we others, the viewers, into a desperate, uncanny communion with these others, the refugees, the fugitives, uprooted, homeless, on the long path, in the boat, in the water, looking out for rescue, safe passage, welcoming harbour. These paintings incline the viewer to the unsettling pain and suffering that we others, we moderns, we mortals, are so easily disinclined to face. They call us near to the fugitive, the displaced others. They are loving acts, where love is not just a state but an action, showing itself in a giving that starts with reflection, awareness, and caring and then calls us, we others, to what we need to be aware of—and capable of—especially in a destitute time.

Reference

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Wayne Skinner, MSW, RSW, is an educator and clinical consultant who for 40 years worked at the Addiction Research Foundation and then the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health as a therapist, clinical director, educator, and research collaborator, with academic appointments in Psychiatry and Social Work at the University of Toronto. He has authored and co-authored articles, book chapters and books related to working with and supporting people affected by addictive behaviours and mental health challenges. A member of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers, he is currently engaged in projects focused on the importance of interpersonal skills and compassionate dialogue in engaging people in person-centred care.

Francine Wynn RN (retired) PhD. In her academic work in the Lawrence Bloomberg Faculty of Nursing, she drew from the work of Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Nancy, Agamben and Winnicott to critically open up the suffering of patients and the threats to relational work in clinical

settings. For 30 years she integrated cinema, poetry, literature, painting and sculpture in her lectures and creative arts based projects and in her clinical seminars.

Ellen G. Levine, MSW, Ph.D., ATR-BC, REAT is co-founder of and faculty at The CREATE Institute in Toronto, a training program in expressive arts therapy and Professor and Core Faculty at the European Graduate School in Switzerland. She is an author, co-author and editor of a number of books, including *Tending the Fire: Studies in Art, Therapy and Creativity*, *Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy: Toward a Therapeutic Aesthetics*, *Art in Action: Expressive Arts Therapy and Social Change*, *Play and Art in Child Psychotherapy: An Expressive Arts Therapy Approach*, and *New Developments in Expressive Arts Therapy: The Play of Poiesis*. Currently, Ellen has an online practice which includes supervision, therapy and training.

In dieser zeit / In this time

Hjördis Mair

Die Wirklichkeit
hat sich verändert
Steine liegen nicht mehr
einer auf dem anderen
wie gewohnt

Reality
has changed
Stones no longer
lie one on top of the other
as usual

Die Geschichten der Vergangenheit
verschwinden hinter
dichtem Nebel
und Türmen
von schwarzem Rauch

The stories of the past
disappear behind
dense fog
and towers
of black smoke

Erinnerungen stolpern
durch die Felder der
alten Gewissheiten
tasten verzweifelt
nach Halt

Memories stumble
through the fields of
old certainties
grope desperately
for support

Erstarrt
fand ich den Glauben
auf den wir
ein Leben lang
vertrauten

Frozen
I found the faith
on which we
trusted
a lifetime

Stille

Ich strecke
meine Finger aus
Langsam
Zurück zum Glauben
der Vergangenheit
unter feuchter Erde
und hoffe
ihn wieder zu finden
behütet
unter dem modrigen Geruch
der Verwesung

Tränen aus Wut
auf meiner Brust
Ich stehe auf
für meine Wahrheit
Reiße die Mauern ein
Vertreibe Staub und Nebel

Silence

I reach out
my fingers
Slowly
back to the faith
of the past
Under humid earth
and I hope
to find it again
sheltered
under the musty smell
of decay

Tears of rage
on my chest
I stand up
for my truth
Tear down the walls
Dispel dust and fog

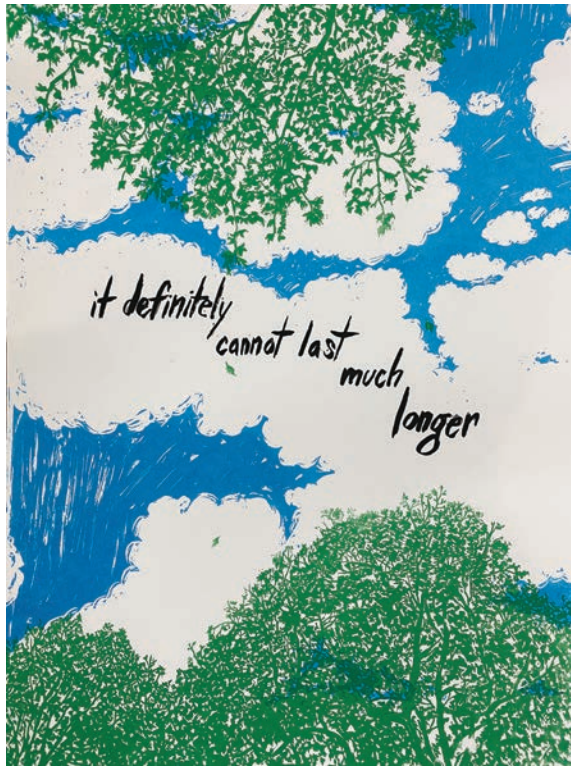
Ich atme
durch die Dunkelheit
Reicher Boden
unter meinen Füßen
Die ersten Schritte
auf verbranntem Boden
auf neuen Wegen
jeden Tag

I breathe
through the darkness
Rich soil
beneath my feet
The first steps
on burned ground
on new paths
everyday

Ich schulde es
allen verwundeten Wesen
Ich schulde es
den Erinnerungen
der Zukunft
und den Geschichten
des Jetzt
Ich schulde es
der Hoffnung
der nächsten Generation
Ich schulde es
Mir selbst

I owe it to
all wounded beings
I owe it to
the memories
of the future
and the stories
of the now
I owe it to
the hope of
the next generation
I owe it to
Myself

Hjørdis Mair, Expressive Art Therapist, M.A./CAGS EGS. She is Co-Founder and teacher at the Institute in InArtes, Zürich and was Director for the last seven years. Her focus on teaching is through poetry, biography and intermodal processes. She is Co-Founder of the Prevention-Project, "Kinderprojekt BARCA," where she works with children and youth whose parents struggle with mental health issues.



Erik Ruin is a Michigan-raised, Philadelphia-based printmaker, shadow puppeteer, paper-cut artist, etc., who has been lauded by the New York Times for his "spell-binding cut-paper animations." His work oscillates between the poles of apocalyptic anxieties and utopian yearnings, with an emphasis on empathy, transcendence and obsessive detail. He is a founding member of the international Justseeds Artists' Cooperative, and co-author of the book *Paths Toward Utopia: Graphic Explorations of Everyday Anarchism* (w/ Cindy Milstein, PM Press, 2012). Current projects include the Ominous Cloud Ensemble, an ever-evolving, collectively-improvising large ensemble for projections and music.

An Incantation for Social Justice

Lynn Ditchfield

Expressive arts in education promotes interdisciplinary, cross-curricular, cross-age collaborations, and resource sharing of ideas and projects with arts at the core. Education advances the spirit of teaching by encouraging inquiry, engagement, and investigation of diverse perspectives. Education challenges entrenched thinking, not by telling what to think, but by offering opportunities to think critically. Expressive arts therapists and teachers who reflect on social justice issues act as change agents. They facilitate critical thinking, enabling others to find their voice, build cultural resilience, and help shape local and global communities.

Practitioners of social justice today are under attack for addressing critical issues affecting our lives and communities. Attempts to acknowledge the presence of past injustices to elicit new thoughts and perceptions are censored, academic freedom is threatened, books are banned. By standing on the shoulders of wisdom warriors, sharing resources, and using the arts to counterattack, we can face these challenges and move forward.

Throughout my decades as an educator, the three philosophies of liberatory pedagogy, arts in education, and expressive arts have guided and expanded my practice. For the research methodologies of my dissertation on awakening critical consciousness, I relied on scholars rep-

representing all three fields. For example, Sara Lawrence Lightfoot pioneered the social science research methodology called “Portraiture,” blending art and science, aesthetic and empirical description, narrative and analysis. The researcher acts as a fine artist who creates a portrait of a person, a concept, an issue to give insight and perspective as an artist might illustrate the essence of their subject on canvas. Jessica Hoffman Davis expanded Portraiture for researching community arts organizations (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffmann Davis, 1997). José Miguel Calderón (2020) developed Expressive Arts-Based Research which contains checklists of essential components that often overlap, harmonize, and resonate with the essence of Portraiture.

Additionally, a new approach designed to awaken critical consciousness emerged by blending these foundational theories and practices that enhance each other. The Arts-Based Creativity Approach to Transformative Learning (ABC Approach), valuable for educators, therapists, and healthcare providers, was inspired primarily by Paulo Freire’s liberatory pedagogy combined with Paolo Knill’s basic principles of expressive arts.

The Arts-Based Creativity Approach to Transformative Learning (ABC Approach)

Paolo Knill (1932-2020) used his background in musicology, aerodynamics, structural mechanics, and psychology to become the founder and founding Rector of the European Graduate School. In *Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy: Toward a Therapeutic Aesthetics* (2005) and other writing and teaching, Knill developed a therapeutic model, “the architecture of a session” for expressive arts therapy, which inspired the framework of the ABC Approach as a model for education.

In both models, participants express concerns about an issue or problem (*Filling In– questions and concerns*). They then enter an imaginal reality, a liminal space, a nonjudgmental, safe encounter with the arts at the core through play, art-making, or ritual (*Decentering– arts exploration*). They emerge from the process with new perspectives and resources to better compre-

hend the original issue or problem (*Harvesting–drawing conclusions/ activating knowledge*).

The theories of the Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire lay the groundwork for the overall intention of the ABC Approach. *Conscientização* (the emerging of consciousness, expansion of awareness, empowerment, transformation) is the definition of transformative learning. *Praxis* (the continual cycle of reflection and action, action and reflection) is a result of *activating knowledge*. Critical creative thinking, as in *arts exploration*, can lead people to understand power relationships in order to ultimately seek common goals.

The purpose of the ABC approach is to stimulate awareness and to foster active participants who interact in the world. “Knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry [people] pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (Freire, 2018, p. 72).

Three Stages of the ABC Approach and Application

The three stages of the ABC Approach are: (1) *questions and concerns*, an introduction of critical issues; (2) *arts exploration*, engaging in arts practice; (3) *drawing conclusions/activating knowledge*, where insights and connections emerge.

In the initial stage, *questions and concerns*, critical issues are introduced (for example: racism, forced migration, gender bias, economic inequities, climate change). This stage provides an opening to relate the focus subject (i.e. a class, a session, a workshop) to concerns about the critical issue. For example, a biology class analyzes the scientific and ethical history of eugenics in the context of racism, ableism, and antisemitism; a Spanish class studies climate migration examining the historical relationship of Latin America and the US; a workshop about alcohol use disorder addresses the effects of systematic racism; a community art class explores images of homelessness to journal artistic solutions to economic inequities. Because of the intersectional relationship of critical issues, there is a logical link to every subject concentration.

Each participant briefly states their main concerns and anxieties about the issue in focus with questions from their life experience and practice. This is a time for listening, *not for discussion*, comments, or feedback, but where common concerns emerge.

The second stage, *arts exploration*, may be introduced with a *warm-up* or *check-in* activity as a catalyst to promote active listening, create connection, and access curiosity. A warm-up can also serve to familiarize participants with the materials used in *arts exploration*.

Arts exploration takes the participants away from ordinary reality into a liminal space of openness, improvisation, play, and creativity. Multimodal arts activities done either individually or collectively facilitate the process. The lessons and supplements in *Borders to Bridges: Arts-Based Curriculum for Social Justice* (2023 <https://borderstobridges.org/>) provide examples that allow freedom of expression in a supportive environment, free from judgment. Setting time limits for art activities—for example, twenty minutes to create a collage, four minutes to make a poem, ten minutes to write a song—makes it possible not to overthink or worry about lack of skill, but rather to focus on sensitivity, respecting the artwork being created. *Arts exploration* allows time for creative flow indirectly or directly relating to the subject matter and issues presented in the initial stage.

Participants may express *artistic responses* and *reflections* (*i.e. aesthetic responses*). A designated partner or the whole group can respond to the artwork in a constructive, non-judgmental, non-interpretational way, sharing what they witness with curiosity by appreciating the value of the images created.

In the third and final stage, *drawing conclusions/activating knowledge*, participants come together to express how their perceptions about the critical issues have changed after experiencing the *arts exploration* process. By sharing new understandings of the issues and subject material introduced during the initial *questions and concerns* stage, participants become

grounded again in ordinary reality, reintegrating new thoughts and feelings. Any observations and *artistic reflections* gleaned from the *arts exploration* stage can be shared. Participants may also be invited to comment on the whole experience with a word or phrase. A list, a poem, song, or dance from the words elicited from the group can be shared as a ceremonial ending.

In *drawing conclusions/activating knowledge*, ideas for social justice projects can arise in a mutually supportive manner. New perceptions lead to planning the next phase of investigation, collaborations, displays, or presentations. The issues from the initial stage which may have appeared to be overwhelming are put into perspective, and a gathering of resources and collective empowerment transpire.

The ABC Approach follows the same framework to design curricula, coursework, discussion groups, syllabi, training, and research. The initial stage, *Questions and concerns*, presents issues arising from theory to practice. *Arts exploration* provokes new perspectives and ideas for practice. *Drawing conclusions/activating knowledge* creates an exchange of resources, collective attention, and development of skills to practice social justice work.

Grounded in theories of liberatory pedagogy, arts in education and expressive arts, the Arts-Based Creativity Approach to Transformative Learning can generate healing exchanges to explore and engage with complex critical issues.

Intertwining Philosophies

What follows are brief descriptions of a select group of cultural critics, philosophers, theorists, scholars, and professors from among many social justice educators that inspired the creation of the ABC Approach. Expressive arts therapists individually, in communities of practice, or with a cohort in professional development workshops and courses, can benefit by examining the concepts explored by these visionaries. Many educational theorists are either trained in psychology or work closely with people in other helping fields, while many expressive arts

theorists are educators as well as therapists. The intertwining of philosophies gives strength to those in the quest of a more just, humane, and vibrant society.

Visionary Voices of Wisdom Warriors for Social Justice in Education (in alphabetical order)

Each description contains concepts that can be transferred and applied to expressive arts to broaden the field.

Poet, Professor **Elizabeth Alexander** writes in *The Trayvon Generation* (2022) "Sometimes we forget that remembering people, and making their work and legacy available, indelible, and strong, is hard work. The scholars, teachers, artists, meaning-makers, family storytellers, work against forgetting" (Alexander, 2022, p. 57). Professor Alexander states that art and history "outlive flesh... offer us a compass or a lantern with which to move through the wilderness and allow us to imagine something different and better" (Alexander, 2022, p.124).

Chicana/feminist/queer cultural theorist **Gloria Anzaldúa** (1942-2004) in *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) challenges either-or thinking and describes a non-binary in-between state of identity as cultural collisions originating from colonial conquests. She outlines the nuances of navigating two worlds where learning to negotiate the "choque" [clash] means gaining skills and a sharp intelligence for survival. An opportunity for genuine exchange of gifts and resources can emerge from an understanding of polarities.

Social anthropologist **Gio B'atz' (Giovanni Batz)**, K'iche' Maya, explains in "The Ixil University and the Decolonization of Knowledge" essay (2019) the Ixil worldview in which the whole community benefits from education, whereas Western education benefits the individual.

Gilberto Q. Conchas and **Nancy Acevedo** coauthors of *The Chicana/o/x Dream: Hope, Resistance, and Educational Success* (2020) follow Anzaldúa's theoretical framework challenging traditional notions of success, documenting "testimonios" of students overcoming obsta-

cles to achieve academically. Cultivating a sense of belonging heals the *herida abierta* (open wound) caused by exclusion, marginalization, racism, sexism, homophobia, invalidation.

Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the concept of Critical Race Theory (CRT) in 1989. She sought to challenge the role of structural racism in the law and to rethink the ideological effects of discrimination and deficit-informed research stemming from the legacy of slavery. To explain how race intersects with other identities such as gender and class, she coined the term “intersectionality.” As co-founder and Executive Director of the African American Policy Forum (<https://www.aapf.org/>), Crenshaw counters censorship of teachers and librarians with joint initiatives like the “Freedom Readers Campaign” bus tour that delivered thousands of banned books to more than two dozen cities from Minnesota to Florida.

Angela Y. Davis champions the interconnections of human rights issues and the need for unity among the different calls for justice and equity to heal a wounded and divided society. Davis recognizes the power of the arts as a transformative process. In *Abolition. Feminism, Now.* (2022), written in collaboration with other scholars, Davis makes the case that linking the past to the present with a collective response that interconnects critical issues to resolve lingering inequities opens the pathway to freedom.

Jessica Hoffmann Davis promotes interdisciplinary collaboration of ideas and projects with arts at the core. Davis advocates for non-arts educators to value arts education which is steeped in scholarship, culture, history, and vital learning opportunities that other subjects don’t provide. Davis’s books and essays, notably *Ordinary Gifted Children* (2010) and *Why Our High Schools Need the Arts* (2008) emphasize narratives and storytelling where students learn to express emotion, feelings, and empathy to stimulate imagination, leading to invention, agency, and self-discovery.

Eleanor Duckworth plays with learning material as phenomena full of wonder, surprises, and excitement. *The Having of Wonderful Ideas and Other Essays on Teaching and Learning*

(1996, 2006) addresses critical exploration through noticing, listening, and valuing process and complexity. Her approach as a cognitive psychologist to learning and teaching is influenced by her early work as a student of and assistant to Jean Piaget, known for his theory of cognitive development, and researcher/translator for developmental psychologist Bärbel Inhelder.

Christopher Emdin celebrates youth culture by connecting academic content to world events that affect students, engendering a love of science and math through hip-hop. His social media and books include *STEM, STEAM, Make, Dream: Reimagining the Culture of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics* (2021) and the Science Genius initiative showing how to engage all learners, particularly traditionally marginalized urban youth of color and Indigenous people.

In his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970, 2018), **Paulo Freire** (1921-1997) postulates that the “banking method of education” (in which teachers mechanically “deposit” information) anesthetizes and inhibits creativity. The antithesis, “problem-posing education,” promotes regard for human dignity based on a respectful relationship of teacher and student. Freire’s theories are foundational to the Arts-Based Creativity Approach.

Maxine Greene (1918-2014) defined aesthetic education and sparked student-centered, inquiry-based, reflective, experiential learning-by-doing. In lectures and essays, including “Towards Wide-Awakeness: An Argument for the Arts and Humanities in Education” (1978), she shows how the arts are a fundamental learning tool serving humanity and democratic values.

Nikole Hannah-Jones challenges opposition to academic freedom. From her experience in a high school class on the African-American experience, she writes, “Sitting in that class each day, I felt as if I had spent my entire life struggling to breathe and someone had finally provided me with oxygen” (xviii). Hannah-Jones documents a side of history often neglected. She reframes U.S. history, centering on slavery and its legacy, drawing on family history: “My dad was born into a family of sharecroppers on a white plantation in Greenwood, Mississippi,

where Black people bent over cotton from can't-see-in-the-morning to can't-see-at-night, just as their enslaved ancestors had done not long before... [It] was an apartheid state that subjugated its Black residents—almost half of the population—through breathtaking acts of violence” (8). In “[The 1619 Project](#)” series in *The New York Times Magazine* (2019), podcasts of the series (2020), the anthology of essays, poems, photography, and short stories, *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story* (2021), and a six-episode [TV docuseries](#) (2023), Hannah-Jones explains, “Much about American identity, so many of our nation’s most vexing problems, our basest inclinations, and its celebrated and unique contributions spring ...from the contradictions and ideological struggles of a nation founded on both slavery and freedom” (xxix).

Cultural critic [bell hooks](#) (1952- 2021) counters the rise of white supremacy in the US by showing the power of art to inspire dialogue. In her book [Art on My Mind: Visual Politics](#) (1995), she states “Art constitutes one of the rare locations where acts of transcendence can take place and have a wide-ranging transformative impact” (9). ... “In a democratic society art should be the location where everyone can experience the joy, pleasure, and power” (138). She blends liberatory education and art with antiracism, feminism, non-binary sexual identity, Black-Christian-Buddhist thought, and activism rooted in the hopefulness of seeking knowledge in [Teaching Community: A Pedagogy of Hope](#) (2003).

Robin Wall Kimmerer delivers the antidote to profit-driven “extractive” technology, mixing traditional Native stories honoring the earth with ceremonies of reciprocity and mutual respect for other beings past, present, future. She is an enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, botanist, and environmentalist. In *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (2013) and *Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults* (2022), Kimmerer contrasts Indigenous philosophy and wisdom with Western practice in agriculture.

Gloria Ladson-Billings shifts the research narrative, advocating for culturally sustaining pedagogies, culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy in *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children* (1994, 3rd edition 2023). Excellent

teaching can counter the damaging effects of trauma and gaps in educational opportunities. Honoring the “education debt” the system owes students who are poorly served means acknowledging systematic racism and economic inequalities. Her work, notably *Justice Matters* (2024), explores the roots of interconnected societal injustices and offers ways to champion social change.

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot promotes nuanced storytelling by accepting ambiguity and multiple meanings for interpretation, capturing complexity, and undermining stereotypic thinking. *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (1997) co-authored with Hoffmann Davis, demonstrates a search for “goodness” through a constructive vision reflecting the possibility of transformation and healing rather than emphasizing deficits and pathology.

H. Richard Milner IV addresses issues of race, gender, and other forms of discrimination, and opposes “neutrality,” “colorblindness,” and the “myth of meritocracy.” He shares equity-based teaching mindsets valuing family and community in his and free online M.I.T. Open Learning Library *Becoming a More Equitable Educator* (2020).

Professor **Viet Thanh Nguyen** from a trauma-informed perspective reveals the dreadful consequences of war, colonial powers, diaspora, and migration in his lectures, novels, and memoir, *A Man of Two Faces* (2023).

Héctor Tobar explores the connections of Black freedom struggles, transgender rights, immigration policy, and images of “alien” that have shaped racial identity and “whiteness” in the U.S. while recognizing that a profound cultural shift is creating a new collective identity in *Our Migrant Souls: A Meditation on Race and the Meanings and Myths of “Latino”* (2023).

Eve Tuck (Unangax̂) presents Indigenous social thought and perspective on trauma and resilience and the effects of settler-colonial power in North America. She proposes “*rematriation*” of curriculum studies by identifying harmful practices to re-story deeply embedded

knowledge based in sovereignty and well-being. She is an enrolled member of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island, Alaska, and contributing writer and editor of *Who Decides Who Becomes a Teacher? Schools of Education as Sites of Resistance* (2019).

Isabel Wilkerson parallels the rigid caste and race systems of India, the United States, and Nazi Germany in *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (2020), made into the film "[Origin](#)" (2024) by Ava Duvernay. In the book *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (2010), Wilkerson gleans stories from interviews with hundreds of Black migrants who fled the South of the United States from 1915-1970 during the Great Migration.

In this time of social upheaval, when the road forward seems dangerous, collective voices for transformation emerge. Social justice visionaries, the arts, and art-making guide us to become change agents building an equitable, hopeful future.

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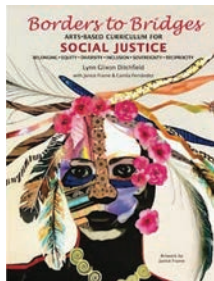


Image left: cover of *Borders to Bridges: Arts-based Curriculum for Social Justice—Belonging, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Sovereignty, Reciprocity*; cover artist [Janice Frame](#).

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Words with Kinship to Poiesis and Why We Need Them Now

Liza Hyatt

I practice *poiesis* in my creative process. I assist art therapy students as they learn to let creativity guide the way. I help therapy clients rediscover the healing found while creating. Through these overlapping aspects of my vocation as an expressive arts therapist, I increasingly appreciate how the word *poiesis*—the process through which creativity changes the creator as they are creating—points us toward the unnamable interplay between our personal life-energy and the creative energy of life itself.

Throughout history, humanity has called this interplay by many names. We have a recurring urge to describe, through words and images, our ineffable experiences of connection to life, the universe and creation's unnamable energy. I feel this urge in myself, witness it in therapy clients, and find it in expressions left to us by spiritual seekers from diverse traditions. In our current era of environmental and social crises, we need to reconnect to real belonging within life's interplay. This reconnection will be aided by relearning and revivifying the language through which we experience the creative mystery at the core of our existence.

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We now anxiously reside within collapsing Industrial Age systems. We feel mired within our



collective inability to comprehend and move toward the societal changes we need to make. We feel increasing disorder, disintegration and despair. A client in an art therapy group for trauma survivors recently expressed what everyone feels to some degree, "As I see what is going on in the world right now," she said, "I wonder, why bother? Why bother growing, healing, letting go of the things I do to stay numb? I've worked so hard to feel more alive, but the world is falling apart." Other group members responded, sharing that they too feel despair yet also long for more wholeness, not just individually but in our world. Following this discussion, each client made art expressing this longing, images of picnic blankets laden with food to share, of sitting in a forest meditating, of hugging their partner and the dog they rescued.

As a writer, I love words. I search for words that illuminate for me how people can move toward a more courageous, playful relationship with life's creativity despite the lostness and confusion of our time. I savor words found within diverse spiritual traditions. I look for their root meanings, their original vitality, which, over centuries, have often been distorted, lost, or even twisted to mean something contrary to their original wisdom. I enjoy discovering old words, like *poiesis*, that are being reclaimed and brought back to life because they express something essential to many people in our current age. I am on the lookout also for unexpected, new ways of describing our experience of creative interplay with life.

These reclaimed and new expressions reassure me that those who seek out interplay with life's creativity find their way back to it, despite Industrial Age forces constricting our authentic, wild soulfulness. When I unearth the vitality in old words or find new vital expressions of personal connection to creative mystery, I feel the same delight as when I come upon native ephemeral yet perennial wildflowers blooming in woodland remnants, despite encroaching commercial development. I delight in finding perennially wise words that still bloom with untrammelled wildness, if given space and shelter. In this way, I have come upon several old and new words that share a meaningful kinship with the word *poiesis*. We need to keep them alive, especially now in our era of complex struggle and change.

My engagement with *poiesis*, both as an illuminating word and as a practice, began by reading Stephen K. Levine's writing. In his teachings about *poiesis*, Levine connects *poiesis* and the process of creativity to the *Tao*, a word from Chinese philosophy meaning "The Way" (2019). Followers of the *Tao* practice being in relationship with being, putting aside willful action and doing, in order to more fully enter the creative energy of non-doing, and increase the capacity for deeply receptive presence. From this, I understand *poiesis* as "The Way" followed by expressive arts therapists, both as our personal practice to learn from the creative process, and as our practice of being deeply present to our clients' creativity.

Levine also connects the creative wandering of *poiesis* to *sauntering*, a word whose origins come from the knights of the Middle Ages on their journeys to the holy land—à *la saint-terre*. (2019, p. 92) Saunterers are those who leave old habits and self-concepts behind as pilgrims who are significantly changed by the journey, by wandering through both natural and human landscapes. As artists searching for healing and growth, we saunter by wandering within the creative process. Creative sauntering is therefore a contemplative exploration that asks us to lose ourselves in it and enter its liminal place of transformation, its holy land. As a sauntering practice, *poiesis* is a pilgrimage, a journey opening into an ever-deeper relationship with living.

In her book *Church of the Wild: How Nature Invites Us into the Sacred*, Victoria Loorz (2021) connects sauntering to being in conversation with the divine indwelling at the center of everything. She also has been on the lookout for the many names by which this interplay, or conversation, with life is named afresh in our era by diverse people, including a Vietnamese Buddhist monk, a Native American botanist, a Welsh poet, a Jewish agnostic quantum scientist, and a Black leader of the Civil Rights Movement:

What Thich Nhat Hanh names the web of interbeing is aligned with what Robin Wall Kimmerer calls sacred reciprocity. David Whyte calls it the conversational nature of reality, and quantum scientist David Bohm uses the term implicate order. Martin Luther King, Jr. called it

an inescapable network of mutuality, which he said was “tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.” (2021, p. 105)

Through these expressions, I see that as we learn to experience creativity as *poiesis*—a journey that shapes, changes, and creates us—we become receptive to the web of interbeing and mutuality. We enter a conversation with the creative process, its art materials, our feelings, impulses, sensations, insights, the world around us, and the creative life-force itself. We discover that each of these points of connection are somehow connected to all others in the web of life.

The word *web* reminds me of *Indra’s Net* from Hindu cosmology, a net which “has a multifaceted jewel at each vertex, and each jewel is reflected in all of the other jewels”—an image which describes “the interconnectedness of the universe” (Kabat-Zinn, 2000, p. 225). We can imagine both the art-maker and the art they create as each one of those multifaceted jewels, each a singular point of life, somehow connecting to and reflecting the whole of creation.

Poiesis can also be connected to an ancient Celtic word reclaimed by modern seekers following the path of poets, bards and druids. They describe an experience of *awen*—an old Welsh word meaning flowing spirit, creative fire, source of inspiration (Billington, 2017; Manwarring, 2006). *Awen* reminds us that such flow emerges from the creative process itself. Instead of waiting for inspiration before we start creating, we simply begin and practice being sensitive to what is emerging. Through this relational *poiesis*, the flowing spirit, the *awen*, awakens and pulls us into its stream.

Within ancient Greek philosophy, from which *poiesis* comes, I have found it shares kinship with the word *logos*, as it was originally used in the writings of Heraclitus. Here Heraclitus seems to use the word *logos* quite similarly to how Taoist philosophers understand the Tao. As Loorz states:

Heraclitus developed *logos* to conceptualize the way the world functions as one collective, which he called the *kosmos*. *Logos* is the principle or power that shapes and creates all things, immanent and embedded in all that exists. He saw things not really as things, but as processes. *Logos*, he intuited, is the relationship between all things, holding them together. Later Greek philosophers would use the word *logos* to describe this relationship-between as a process of dialogue (2021, p. 107-108).

Centuries after Heraclitus, we find *logos* connected to the Holy Spirit and Christ within Christianity, especially in the New Testament passage with which many are familiar: "In the beginning was the *logos*." In this passage, *logos* is now usually translated as *the word*. This translation reveals a long history of distortion of the original meaning of *logos*, by which over time Western culture grew to equate *logos* with reason, logic, law, and "the word" as in established, unchanging order and truth.

In the first centuries of Christianity, the word *logos* in this New Testament passage was translated from Greek to Latin as *sermo*, which means conversation: *In the beginning was the conversation...* In this translation, I hear poetic insight that the universe has always been creating itself as a divine relationship, a dialogue, a deep listening and responsiveness between creation and what is being created. This poetic expression of a divine conversation at the heart of creation was lost, Loorz explains, in the 4th century, when for the purpose of empire-building, the Latin translation *sermo* was replaced by *verbum*, meaning "word." as a means of enforcing the single, supreme authority of the empire (2021, p. 109-117). The invitation into a creative conversational relationship with divine indwelling life was lost. The imperial Church wanted its followers to obey the word of those in positions of power.

Reclaiming the word *logos* as an expression of a conversation between life's creative energy and what is created, a conversation that has been alive since the universe began, and that is active in all that has been made flesh, challenges us to see *logos* as more than reason or

logic originating from mind separated from body. This divide, which has existed for centuries in Western culture, pits reason against desire, thinking against feeling, rationality against sensuality, spirit against flesh, in a system of duality that privileges mental abstraction and oppresses embodied ways of knowing.

Poiesis, however, is a process of embodied knowing, of physically playing with matter, engaging with matter through our hands, our bodies, our senses, and being changed—emotionally, psychologically, even spiritually—by what occurs within this meeting of bodies. In *poiesis*, healing occurs because what has been divided, mind vs. flesh, reason vs. emotion, is brought together again in engaged conversation. The creative process repairs this conversation. We remember our innate capacity to form connections, to deeply listen, to communicate with all that makes us human, mind listening to body, body attended to by deeper mindfulness, thinking responding to feeling, feeling illuminating thought, sensuality revealing wisdom that rationality alone misses and yet, with the help of the senses, recognizes as essential to life.

There is another ancient Greek word whose deep meaning bears kinship with *poiesis*, and that is *eros*. *Eros* expresses desire, longing, sensuality, and passion. *Eros* seeks deep connection and relationship. *Eros* loves and unites us in love. *Eros* conceives new life through love and gives birth through love. *Eros* reminds us that the creative process is gestation, a shaping of something newly alive which needs liminal space, a womb, in which to grow.

Poiesis is full of *eros*. *Eros* is what makes me hear the morning thunderstorm, go to the window to see rain cascading over green leaves, rush out in my nightgown to feel the cool water bathing my skin, and dance upon moist earth with bare feet. *Eros* is what remembers that rain dance as I paint green watercolor pigment onto paper, as I write a poem that says that tears are rain, opening all the new leaves in my heart. The creative process of *poiesis*, alive with *eros*, liberates us to hear again the desires of body and heart and to follow them. We learn to hear what pleasure activist adrienne maree brown calls “the deep orgasmic yes.” She describes

choosing to live in response to this yes:

I began to make decisions about whether I wanted to do things in my life and in the movements I am part of by checking for my orgasmic yes. And to feel for resistance inside, the small place in my gut that knows before I do that something is not fit for me and will not increase my aliveness (2019, p. 23).

By listening for this inner yes, our creative process comes alive, brimming with *poiesis*, pregnant with the possibility of increased depth, vitality, and wholeness. By connecting *eros* to *poiesis*, I understand *poiesis* as a process of saying "Yes!" to becoming more fully alive.

This enriching collection of words from diverse languages and cultural perspectives helps bring *poiesis* alive to me in its fullest dimensions. This collection of words contains ancient words and their original meanings: *eros*, *logos*, *sermo*, *awen*, *Indra's net*, *sauntering*, *pilgrimage*, *Tao*. This collection of words also includes the words we need now, to translate perennial wisdom into modern language, and to express this wisdom anew: conversation, dance, web of life, interconnection, interbeing, interplay, creative flow, inspiration, orgasmic yes, mutuality, relationship. The richness and vitality of these words, gathered together, reveal the enduring awe with which humanity experiences life's creative mystery. Gathering these words has given me courage and hope.

We live in an era in which all people need to engage in empathic conversation, repair divides that diminish our humanity and spirit, and regain reverent relationships with creation, especially Earth's interdependent creatures and ecosystems. We live at a time in which humanity must undergo the most challenging process of collective change we have ever navigated. We are tasked with leaving behind completely the Industrial Age systems we are caught in. We must find our way through a vast collective liminality that will shape us into the Earthlings of the future, into people capable of living in new ways and of creating new, more compassionate

cultures unlike anything we can yet imagine. This requisite change is a process of *poiesis*, which we must undergo collectively.

Growth, creative transformation, and healing are painful and even frightening. Many people—when faced with needed change—try to avoid growth rather than readily embrace it. Our current era’s requisite collective growth, transformation, and healing will be experienced by most people as overwhelmingly terrifying. As expressive arts therapists, committed to a life-long personal practice in *poiesis*, we have much to offer humanity to help shift our collective fear of immense change toward recognizing that the long, painful decades of societal transformation which we are entering are times of *poiesis*. As we move forward into the coming era, we can see more fully and act more courageously by rooting our understanding of *poiesis* into the broader context of language offered in this reflection. We can live assured that our way of *poiesis* is an engagement in sacred conversation and a participation with the interplay of life with life. With this deeper context and the assurance it brings, we can more wholeheartedly encourage others to enter the profound metamorphosis that lies ahead for human society and life on Earth.

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Wind

Barbara Caffery

When the King banished the newborn babes to a tiny island with only mute women to care for them, he waited for them to speak Latin, as he had proclaimed that it was the natural language of man, and when they did speak, they sounded like the birds and the waves and the wind.

Once upon a time someone had a thought that the earth was not flat and the bravest poorest sailors set out against the wind to prove the roundness of it all, and though some of them lost their teeth, while others lost their minds, they did not fall, they did not tumble.

I want to think a thought that no one has ever thought. I want to write a line that no one has ever written. I want to speak the language of the wind.

Barbara Caffery, PhD, graduated from the New England College of Optometry in 1977. In 2009, she completed her Ph.D. in Vision Science at the University of Waterloo. She is now retired from clinical practice but continues her research projects at Toronto Eye Care. Barbara's once-secret life as a writer began with failing at fiction, transitioning to creative non-fiction, and then to her current love, poetry. She is enrolled as an MFA student at Pacific University in Oregon, with a goal of graduating in 2026.

Pray That You Get One Ball to Hit, I Mean Really Hit, Out of the Park
(In honour of the Jose Bautista bat flip, Toronto 2015)

Barbara Caffery

It is a wonder that we do not drop dead every day.
Things are so complicated.
There is the heart to pump and the clots to rid.
There is the air to breathe and the legs to move,
just right, so we go forward when we need to get to work.
A miracle really.
And all of this happens on auto-pilot.
Well, not when the a-fib kicks in.
Not when you reach the top step winded and bent.
But most of the time- auto.
That is why I am always shocked when someone is shocked about someone dying.
My shock comes from the fact that everyone is not already dead.

So while I am lucky enough to have the auto-pilot working,
I wait for my homerun pitch, just like Jose Bautista.
I wait for my bat flip moment.

Recall, if you will,
his walk to the plate,
rosin rubbed carefully on the bat handle,
Drake's "Trophies" blasting,
black eyes staring down the pitcher.
There he was,

scuffing the dirt,
destroying the batter's box,
burrowing feet one inch deep.
Think of the silence that fell as he awaited the pitch.
flapping the right elbow three times,
biting down on the mouth guard,
relaxing the grip.
Recall the millisecond when he read the four seamer,
inside half and low, and the swing, oh the swing.
And long before he heard the crack
he knew in the marrow of his bones
that this one was leaving the park in an arc
to be caught by an angel, who stopped playing her harp
to gather her sisters together and toss it around.
There was this pause, hearts still as deer, then the flip.
And the victory trot on the trembling earth.

All this I want, once, but maybe more.
And though my flips will look more like a near perfect poem,
the bloom of a spring dahlia or the smile of a newborn babe,
I want to gather them,
to tote them up for the day when my auto-pilot fails and I lie
with machines doing all that pumping and breathing
and remember what it was to feel alive, to send messages to the angels.

Beyond Art History: Unloading the Canon with Phenomenology

Wes Chester

There is a long-standing educational competency in the curriculum of EGS that asks practitioners to be familiar with the artists, artistic traditions and “isms” of modern art. Those artists and “isms” are reported upon by the field of art history. That indicates a need to examine what art history is and how it works within our field. Let’s begin with a traditional definition. The Institut d’Études Supérieures des Arts, an internationally recognized contemporary school in Paris that trains art historians defines the field this way:

Art history does not consist in simply listing all the art movements and placing them on a timeline. It is the study of objects of art considered within their time period. Art historians analyze visual arts’ meaning (painting, sculpture, architecture), at the time they were created. Also, another of art history’s missions is to establish authorial origins of artworks, i.e. discovering who created a particular artwork, when, where and for what reason.

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This traditional viewpoint of the art historian casts them in the role of an external analyzing and categorizing agent, who provides an aesthetic, anthropological/cultural context to accompany that analysis. In addition to identifying the artist making a work, they go so far as to say "...for what reason..." an oeuvre was produced. This sorting exercise produces an extremely powerful and exclusive kind of list: a *canon*. The canon validates important works that are worthy of study and excludes (by absence) everything else. This kind of art history is modernist in its conception, an evaluative and meaning-making project. It is highly bound to Eurocentric colonial and post-colonial thinking.

I hasten to point out that there are sincere efforts at reform, none more significant than the effort towards globalization. This is imagined to take place through the development of a global standard that would act as an inclusive formulation across cultures and art forms. It is a task pursued by the faithful with the same kind of zeal that certain physicists pursue a theory of everything (TOE) to unite the unreconciled mathematical rift between classical and quantum mechanical views of the universe, and it is so far equally (un)successful. Paula Barreiro López, a lecturer in the Art History Department at the Universitat de Barcelona, writes:

The structures of colonial, Western, imperialist thought that have persisted up until now are part of our disciplinary and sociopolitical structures. A "diversification of thought patterns" in art history (as in globalisation itself) is still a distant horizon. (2017, p.52)

It is certainly true that globalisation of the field is widely sought, but Barreiro López notes that, "The globalisation of art history is directly connected to advanced capitalism and the interests of a market that is always on the look-out for new spaces for expansion..." (2017, p.48) Based upon this critique, it's clear that simply seeking globalization will not fully answer the crisis that the field of art history is facing. There has been progress over the last several decades, and art history has become more inclusive and responsive to the distortions introduced by its

own biases and cultural constructs. Still, Daniel Savoy, Associate Professor in the Department of Art History and Digital Media Art at Manhattan College notes that the field of art history remains in a crisis of canon, writing "...the canon has been one of the largest thorns in art history's side over the last half century." (2020, p.2) Savoy traces the canon crisis to the publication of Linda Nochlin's paper, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* in 1971. (Savoy, 2020, P.2)

According to Savoy, Nochlin was the first to trace the inequity in art history to the field's very epistemology. (Savoy, 2020 p. 2) Here we may turn to Jonathan Harris, Head of the Birmingham School of Art at Birmingham City University and Professor in Global Art and Design Studies, who points out that the epistemology of art history is a Western colonial and nationalistic construct:

...art history, as a discipline, remains broadly a Euro-US-centric discourse that originated in the era of nation-states and nationalism. Its traditional armory of concepts, presuppositions, values, research methods and evaluative frameworks remain rooted in this historical development (though modernism, before globalization, started to put the entire edifice under significant strain intellectually and institutionally). Critical studies of globalization in culture and art, and critical analyses of the ways in which these are now being studied, have to start with this recognition and its consequences. (2017, p.29)

In his article *Toward an Inclusive Art History*, Savoy concludes that the field may only recover as a multi-generational project, asking, "...how long would this gradual (and traumatic) metamorphosis take? Fifty years? A century? Longer?" In the best case scenario, art history will be rehabilitated by an eventual and undefined "paradigm shift." (2020, p.13) Savoy goes on to suggest that the canon crisis might only be dispelled by another crisis, forcing a refocusing of the field from the crisis of inclusion to some other burning issue. I feel it is best to reject any solution that maintains the basic necessity for differentiation, evaluation and commodification,

and seek another path.

I propose that the study of classical, canon-based art history is neither practical nor a satisfactory contribution to students' education. I pose an alternative that is native to our field: pursuing a phenomenological approach to all images, historical and contemporary. This, to quote Harris, might change "our research methods and evaluative framework" (2017, p.29) in a way that the field of art history is not yet prepared to do.

Our theory of praxis holds a structured way to encounter, dialogue with and take aesthetic responsibility for client images. I believe this may be a path towards a restoration of the living, non-canonical relationship with all art. It holds the possibility to celebrate the power of images that approaches the entire premise of art history in a different way. Rather than studying art history, might our students instead encounter *historical art*? This is not a semantic trick. Adopting the study of "historical art" welcomes any image, regardless of the canonic narrative's evaluative impulses, or categorizations. Artifacts need not "belong to an -ism" nor be assessed for their designated cultural, religious or monetary value. Students need not be impressed by the cultural significance of any artist or artwork. Oeuvres housed in museums or on refrigerator doors might be encountered with equal attention and interest, and both may be valued equally as sources of inspiration.

This does not dismiss the canon. It merely opens it to admittedly subjective aesthetic preference and an *unmediated* encounter with the image. Can we, through this common exercise, encourage as a field, the broadening of the palette, rather than the habit towards exclusion? Can we stop reading the museum curator's statement verifying the significance of an image and encounter it viscerally, with our embodied senses, free of classification, commodification or evaluation? Can we decolonize the artifacts of diverse cultures, discovering the raw power inherent in the visual form, without the careful interpretive history that almost always proceeds from an outsider's mindset, as an explanation, or an assignation of meaning?

Can we give up the value-laden differential between client art and “fine” art? Can we even stop seeking beauty from images (our own and others) and start seeking the wisdom that comes from encountering both the familiar and the strange, the comfortable and uncomfortable, without evaluative bias? Rowesa Gordon, long-time co-director of CREATE Toronto, once told me that the job of an artist was “to disturb the comfortable and to comfort the disturbed.” Maybe that is the best description of the job of art, both historic and contemporary.

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Untitled, by Pilar Sousa. Mixed media on canvas, 2021, 110cm x 110cm.

Slammed: Affliction of the Last Call

Avital Ronell

A point of departure began gradually to develop before rolling on me as an inevitable avalanche. Crackle. I guess I needed a break. I was there, at the farm in Alsace, as he put it together with the film crew, his final work. Puff, puff. The sense of being breathlessly pressed bears the name of Pierre Alferi's last ciné-poème: "Avalanche."

The world's unworlding struck me hard, coming from afar and internally wound—like the fateful call that arrives from beyond, but also from within me. In *Sein und Zeit* it's not so much a matter of taking or declining the call, but about how Being goes about delivering a hit, a *Stoß*, which in Levinas shows up as a persecution/caress, in *Bataille* as laceration, and the point, in each case, is to assess how *Dasein* takes it, this hit, the prod and push. Sometimes there's no measure. We're just *slammed*. Nowadays, in Heideggerian synchrony, one says, "Hit me up," meaning: "Give me a call." Derrida analyzes the gift of that hit in *Geschlecht III*, in terms of gendering dents and seizures of identity, formed by trauma, where the term "*Geschlecht*" in the German language covers species, genus, gender, and sex: We are hit, jolted, even whacked (Peggy Kamuf) into our freeze-points and positionality. We are cajoled and jolted, aroused to the tune of our guilt by the call of Being (Christopher Fynsk, Reiner Schürmann, François Lyotard, Edouard Glissant).

The jolt of unworlding, inflicting damage, is also a way of *worlding*, says Heidegger. Akin to the feeling of doom, it hits after the gods have fled and one is left to one's miserable scrap of unholy existence, biding time, witness to the expulsion of Mnemosyne, Mother of the nine muses: Miss Memory, Heidegger calls her, indicating a figure without which nothing can be pulled together and temporality is at risk.—Well, admittedly, these motifs constitute more of a mashup involving borrowed premises from Friedrich Hölderlin, Paul Celan, and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, stating the way they endured injustice, irreparably slamming. One looks to poetry to expose one's rage and to know, as Arendt says via Goethe, the true sting of one's trauma in poetic repetition. Ach! On the ground, one laments, one goes to the streets; at home and at work (assuming these are available to the roaming Dasein), one signs petitions, one folds in supplication and holds still near the agony. One puts up one's fists and *Faust*.

So, "where were we?" asks the scholar.

Shuttling between time zones, I'd been hoping for some respite, whatever that means anymore, when crushed by the aggravation of aggression and brutality to which the vulnerable have succumbed. On all sides unjustifiable incursion advances, brandishing ugly signs, raptorial resolution.



Hölderlin's "As When"

I understand (to the extent that one can do so) how another year has phased out, giving way to its replacement figure and a manic, if short-lived, sense of renewal. On December 31, the predictable surge of jubilation, in truth a widely practiced disavowal of melancholic grief at year's end, occurred on my corner of existence in Times Square, where time squared presents a cipher of unreadability, bearing an anxious sense of possible futures or their flagged occlusion. In many ways New Year's Eve evokes a "holiday" in the sense disclosed by Heidegger

when reading Hölderlin on the motif of vacating time in the hymn on *Feiertage* ("As When on Holiday"). NYE does not in itself constitute a holiday, but delivers a quiver, setting the existential lens for a glimpse into an accelerated relation to time that functions "as when" or "as if" on holiday, at once a suspension and acknowledgement of time, a drop into another dimension, blunting the following day before resuming a familiar pace. In the meanwhile, something has happened. The date, part of your signature, changes as the past takes a passage.

The poet Hölderlin approaches a sense and meaning of holiday that opens temporality in the mode of fiction, steered by *presentiment*, charting a reflective relation to the future: "As when on holiday"—"Wie wenn am Feiertage"—makes us ask how that poetic appointment *takes place*, the "as when?" Does it even take place, or is this suspension of time within time clocked by the privilege of poetic language, as when Homer called down the gods on a poetic timer that lets them be in and through language and its finite rollout. The becoming-temporal of mighty eternal is one of the themes of Wim Wender's "Wings of Desire" and, in part, of "Anselm" as well. The recent film explores art as broken history, firmed in time, witnessed by poets Paul Celan and Ingeborg Bachmann, punctuating Anselm Kiefer's oeuvre. In "Wings," time's restart has the angel falling into earth-bound mundanity, becoming a demigod in Hölderlin's lexicon, a being that carries a mark of fallenness—the lapse of a divine temporality surrendered to a terrestrial time zone, facing death according to a mortal metronome of measured being. Peter Falk's character has chosen becoming over being, set loose among mortals. He visits the *Bibliothek*, the library in Berlin, which binds the immortals to time.

For us, less caught up with celestial de-transition and the fall into time, a pretend-holiday such as New Year's Eve closes off a temporal corridor, prompting a flickering violence to the psychic capacity to think time, to relinquish calendrical meter in view of ontological instability—the common predicament of timed creatures and their trembling lot. One drinks a lot, inviting a dash of oblivion. Both Heidegger and Derrida turn their thought to holiday and anniversary, reflecting on the interval in the suspensive pause of time. When time rounds in on itself,

it marks a generalizable, if singular, return, snagged in aporia and the need to time out. There are different ways of appropriating the lapse in time, anticipating how one lapses or blinks out only, unknowably, to return differently, maybe as a ghost of oneself or someone's memory trace. Lacoue-Labarthe stayed with Hölderlin's thinking of the *caesura* and Nancy sets a related timer in terms of the syncopé—the unscheduled snippet, a beep and bleep, the *arché* of an unaccounted for moment and its shadow. This irregularity is not a matter only of philosophical hijinks or poetic watchfulness, musical tempo before coming to a full stop. How do we handle, or even note, lost time? Another way to ask about time's intermittent absconding might revert to a matter of the heart, in terms and the clock uniquely set by Nancy. Sometimes we have weak pulses, we pulsing beings. To what extent have we introjected disjunctive timing, the murmur of Nancy's beating heart and other moments when one appears to hit a colossal pause in life, a deadly memento that belongs neither strictly to life nor to death? *Tic toc*.

Gone

Our sense of timed being has quickened and attached to the finitude of the earth itself, assigning dread on our beat, and shaking appalling populations of earth-dwellers with the prospect of irreversible planetary fragility, figuring a massive life-form on the brink of collapse. Like Goethe on *Abschied* (parting), Hölderlin has pointed out that truth occurs at moments of departure. Projected with unavoidable insistence, the end—of the mortal, of gods, of earth herself—to a certain extent is prompted by and attached to desire, called up as revelation. Christianity pitches the end as good news (“the end is near”). I am tempted to bolster these fast-paced reflections with proof or viable demonstration, authorized by the co-belonging of philosophy and psychoanalysis. This would take us far afield. Let us instead keep these thoughts as a hypothetical for the libidization of collapse—the implications of a human *drive to extinction* that calls for a thorough-going analysis of self-destructive runs and the urge, intermittently avowed, to clock out. The terms of Dasein's discoverable complicities with disastrous outcomes and “epic fails” are still up for grabs, though hardly mysterious, in terms of ecologi-

cal disaster, climate change, ethical sloth, finite being, all questions concerning technology, or political snuff outs—obsessions dropped into other work orders I've put in, together with others in the cohort, whose edges are for the most part recovered from the start-up considerations of Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and Blanchot's *L'Indestructible*. It is difficult to deny that humans (or what still counts as human after Kant gave out their pink slips and Nietzsche finished them off, Heidegger hitched up Dasein, and so forth)—the “humans” like to have a blast, lean into and get a rise from the rumor of their own decimation. Humans check in as daredevils, in some ways remain susceptible to the extreme sports of self-testing. In terms spelled and spilled out by Melanie Klein, they like to pollute the good breast, an object that rolls with and on Mother Earth. No matter how upwardly morphed or educated, no matter their propensity for successful sublimation and attaching to other modes of averting disaster, they still count on the countdown, the ticking down where the suicidal rush sits at the negotiating table, impatiently awaiting their arrival. There are many timelines for approaching suicide, and different ways of accomplishing the end. From Monteverdi to The Doors, we have found ways to say and sing, “This is the end, my friend.”

My own contributions to these mutating dynamics attempt to track how we manage a stock of unconscious knowledge and rhetorical anxiety that struggles with the advent of an inescapable downturn, an “eve of destruction,” in many ways called forth, craved by Dasein's blowups. The sacred component of holiday (*holy day*) in Hölderlin, which freezes mortal scheduling, tries to give us a “day off”—off scale, off duty, off the mark to the extent that the holiday (the “as when” on holiday) grants reprieve, overriding for the moment an unconscious billing system that tabulates the squeeze and knowledge of destructive encroachment. For a brief interval of suspended self-interrogation, as when giving oneself a break, we celebrate a temporal push forward by turning back, edging ahead, devoting oneself to burying the past, as does Nietzsche in the non-page that opens *Ecce Homo*, a critical autobiography that turns in on itself, cutting against its lifeline while moving ahead. As in the song still sung in Anglo-American precincts of celebratory pledges, one asks for forgetfulness (“should old acquaintance be

forgot," etc. with "forgot" on obsessive repeat). The opening paragraphs cut the signatory, F.N., some slack, letting him bail on his life story in order to affirm life. He liked to "molt," shed skins, instigate forgetfulness, peel down identities, relations, attachments—he made it a *duty* to shake anything that claimed a substantial hold on him. While celebrating his birthday anniversary, he put himself on furlough, granting himself a flicker of freedom by scrambling out of Wagner's *Ring*, among other holding cells. Among regular mortals, one seeks to compensate for the sublimated stretch of joyful reprieve by holding oneself to an oath: one composes a list of "resolutions."

In the meantime, it's become 2024 on the Christian calendar. This time around—"anniversary" implies rounds and rings (*annulus* and band), the advent of return with a difference—the new year's temporal advance seems confounding to anyone who has been exposed to the shakedown of the last year—and to the fearful anticipation of this year's yields in terms of global politics and an ever-expanding range of unconstrained violence. The spread of *unworlding*—the homecoming of shameless acts, passive halts and lawless allowances—has seized on all living and inanimate beings inescapably, with brutal resolve, involving the unleashing of rhetorical violence and unprincipled technological release. Driven by new morphs of greed and power, refreshed by disinhibited strains of cruelty and indifference, our narcotically stuffed nations, prompted by authoritarian instincts, and scrambling for hyped up supremacies, issue themselves extended licenses for the exercise of civic voracity and a biblical refill. Still, the prophetic analyses of Freud's pessimism and Derrida's smackdowns of metaphysical strongholds should help us sort through some aspects of what afflicts us today in terms of political dissolution. Nonetheless, a question formulated by Lacoue-Labarthe remains pertinent here: Why do we turn to *politics* as a remedial frontier or adequate dispensary for addressing our despair? Whom can we address any more? Lacoue reminds us that Celan continued acts of crucial address, but without the presumption of a response: ("O *einer*, o *keener*, o *niemand*, o *Du!*"). Understanding the depleted choices associated with address and discursive structuring practices—the pathetic way we barely manage our being-in-common—I would like to

consider the wounding lash of things and language, reflecting on the force of what can be said and implemented with destructive intent—that which comes, in fact, according to the premier analysts, from a primal store of aggression. In Freud's considerations of primal overreach and the will to extinction, he placed the *Aggressionstrieb* ahead of the death drive, which replaced without effacing the latter. In other words, the aggressive impulse formed the basis for shooting beyond the pleasure principle. Freud appears to have demoted aggression, without suspending its significance, in his subsequent formulations, but we still have access to its various articulations and subsidiary branches, including types of envy that continue to stoke aggressive impulses, including those that feed different yet persistent types of racism. Lacan points out that *Lebensneid* is way up there in terms of the unconscious inscription of aggressive human poses—the propensity to envy another's life involves the imagined life-capture and robustness of the persecuted other. This envy, handled adeptly by Melanie Klein as prime attack mode, goes so far as to outline the origins of racist overdrive—a pump of rage, getting back to Lacan, that posits the other's imaginary endowment, packaged and managed by the argot of culturally coded BDE, the “big dick energy” ascribed to the *enviable*, if threatening other. The paradoxical status of the persecuted as enviable is still something to contend with, along with other internalizations, imaginary identifications and fabrications of the false self, borne for the most part of fear.



Lament

For now, anticipating a sequenced wrap up, let me scale down to my size, offering an autobiographeme as metonymic size-up, a portrait of despondency, in the preliminary style of cards on the table. Besides the aforementioned unworlding, the destructions and genocidal rage visited upon Gaza, but also the ongoing undermining of Africa, Haiti, Ukraine and other peoples and sites of aggression, the women and queers of the worlds, the courageous stand-

alone men and Alexei Navalny, the unspoken roster of the trafficked and disenfranchised, I have a more personal affiliation with the region of stagnated *Lebenslust* (zest for life), of which I was always in short supply. Some cultures prove capable of manifesting affirmations of life despite hardship and perniciously calculated throwdown. I do not hold a membership in these, and have a melancholic drag on my sails. In the last parts of 2023, I came up against a wall of true discouragement, though, linked to the incomprehensible loss of my great friend, Pierre Alferi. I showed up, as one can. I led myself around his fragility, offering too little, I felt, but tirelessly so. Besides chores, and, despite it all, conversation, lucid and ennobling, when he was not wiped out, there was not more than furtive stabs at hand-holding, hand-wringing, existential handovers among the surprisingly disciplined team of friends and family, and, o, the abyssal gaze into his eyes, when I'm summoning strength or whatever along the edges of recalcitrant surrender to the inevitable.

Our final months together were mixed with sudden surges of false assurance, a kind of gift of hope, wobbly yet luminous, pulse-quickening, and waves of anguish. We were in defeat, in our reciprocal solitudes, ambivalently poised between intrusive embrace and care—in the wretchedness of not knowing what to do, yet holding it together—as though, as if, *comme si* we were not losing out to tormented incompetency—sometimes one worries about taking too much space in the face of impending disaster, extending one's stay in a zone of departure and remoteness. Also, there was the problem (the glory) of Pierre's pride, his gentle reticence. One is always at risk of humiliating the ailing other who still needs to feel independent. Pierre had a small community of friends who rotated tasks of caretaking urgency, the aforementioned team. Jeanne Balibar had offered Pierre her apartment, centrally located in Paris, where I made tiny meals and spent nights while she was out filming. There were other helpers, including the cat, Rubin, who minded having his sovereignty impinged upon. He would sit on top of the dining room table, glaring at the intruders. Amazon dropped off medical supplies routinely in the afternoon and the nurses would come on their bicycles the following day to administer the drugs, install equipment, and check the vitals, such as they were. Bleep, bleep. The tension was

great, yet Pierre needed me, he had informed me by letter when the diagnosis hit, he needed me to manifest joy and deliver a portion of that Heideggerian "serenification" that I'd attached to during our experience of co-teaching. The letter included an abbreviated playbook: "Do not overreact or exaggerate."

After the initial *Schockerlebnis* to his instruction, the traumatic decimation described by Walter Benjamin, there was a resentful counter-move on my part, I think, or a sort of displaced introject of resistance. Then I realized that maybe it wasn't a bad idea to have my marching orders so distinctly spelled out. I guess Pierre knows me, after 44 years he knows I follow injunctions with an obsessional neurotic's precision. I had to pull it together, also for the others who were on the brink of collapse, if not in quiet denial. Pierre had kept the diagnosis mainly to himself, or he minimized its drastic forecast, in part to protect the kids. I was supposed to decelerate the effects of horror that were bound to paralyze everyone around him. Stage 4. Stage 4. My beat included handling the political anxiety of finding oneself in a country that prohibits assisted suicide. What an improbable assignment, feigning cheer in the face of impending doom. Stage 4. Where could I turn? Nietzsche valued the tragic sensibility of the Greeks, which manifested as cheerfulness, an art of the superficial for which Nietzsche advocated.

"Life is too hard," Freud says somewhere. He's right: Too many slams, irrevocably on target. Each time unsurvivable. And if you don't have an address that is not vacant, or on permanent vacation, you're done for. "I'm done," says John Donne, more than once, donning his name as that of finitude. It's small wonder that I crashed and am still burning. I barely crawled through that portal of desperate sizzle to New York, narrowly operational, intending to ride out the pain, teach, drop, slump, stare, phantomize a community of mourning, review every moment spent with Pierre. I begin to absorb the range of his nobility as he faces down the gruesome attack of disease. When I say "ride out the pain," I do not mean to suggest that the wound would be in any significant way cauterized, though committing some of its effects to language makes me self-question, as if I were angling for a finality of pain, seeking a sneaky

entry into the “*wie wenn*” that writing supplies. One is strained by the futile ambivalence of leaning into muteness and intimate discretion or, on the other hand, pushing oneself through the exigency of some sort of reinscription, a gesture affined with care and commemoration, however the shortfall of means. Nothing could catch up with the mortal sting of losing Pierre. Still, I was granted magical students and exalted assignments last semester, reminding me of the times we had taught together, maneuvering through a class in rhetorical dispute and notable discursive squabble—Pierre was not a Derridian, but a philosopher praised by Deleuze for his early work on William of Ockham before turning to poetry, cinema, novels, sci-fi, and drawing. I loved watching the films of his ciné-poèmes, all the way to the end, when he produced the catastrophic “Avalanche” piece together with Rodolphe Burger. I’d sit in the farmhouse in Alsace the last January of his life, watching them rehearse, participating as second camera person and cook for the crew. I served Ayurvedic teas to calm the nausea and, in between services, I’d photograph Pierre lighting up a joint, writing, resting, watching a film in somber attentiveness, with his earphones on his delicate head. He looked especially beautiful. In Paris, he and Jeanne, when she wasn’t herself involved in filming, would project films against her living room wall. They would retire to the word, “living room,” which began to chafe against my own sense of anguished comfort. We weren’t *living* in death’s antechamber, yet the intensity of each arrangement and the sum of all futile reach-outs, intensified life in the sense that Bataille delineates, scraping existential bottom in dread and quiet over-stimulation, unable to cut our engines at night but alert for Pierre’s cries of pain that he endeavored to muffle. Sometimes he could no longer stifle his cries and I would run to find air. I mean, I precipitated toward him, trying to devise a position from which he could breathe. We were in *Atemwende*, caught in the agony of the “I can’t breathe,” as when the police are choking out a persecuted prey. The sense of injustice was unbearable—as Jean-Luc Nancy has said, *nothing justifies suffering*. Unless, in a way, as when you’re a Christian or Hegelian, you have found a lever for the justification and sublating upgrade of suffering, a clever dialectical swerve. Those standstill nights were merciless, squeezing us to nonexistence. Pierre told me to go find the yellow dossier and pointed out (again) the DNR stipulation, making me swear up and down not to have him re-

vived. I told him I'd let him go. Then I wavered, changed courses. I told him that his time had not yet come, not tonight, that I would breathe for him and, holding him against me, I became an iron lung. After a long spell of nervous peril, his breathing resumed lightly. The next day, early at sunrise, I called Jean Derrida, Pierre's brother, to take over for me. We increased the dosage of morphine drops, added to the stack of fentanyl and heroin patches; we made phone calls, we pulled Jeanne out of her endless rehearsals, we called in the nurses, we clamored for a doctor. After a few setbacks and frustrating lurches, we "succeeded" in making the necessary arrangements. We went to hospice.

I don't remember how I returned to New York, nor what gave me the strength to pull up from the wreckage. The odds were grim that I could make it through the semester. Spent and dispirited, I was done for. Donne for. *Donner la mort* for. Emotionally benched, I showed up anyway. I chose a text that takes place in a dark den, curling cigar smoke that one could nearly smell, as Poe set up the mathematician-poet's puzzlement. Pierre had liked detective narratives and wrote some splendid ones himself. He liked New York, though one hot summer it had nearly pushed him over the edge. The heat, the noise, the pollution of stagnancy and pileup; the portentous meltdown with your skin sticking to the car seat if you were lucky enough to get a ride out of town. At least, I tell myself, people in New York scoop the poop, unlike their counterparts in Paris who, understandably on some scale, disdain such debasement. Just a few weeks after his departure, I started lecturing on the *Purloined Letter*-series for undergraduates and "Autobiographical Crash Sites" for the graduate seminar, weaving in out of the syllabus's flashpoints, staggering but weirdly on point. This is what literature was for, holding you steady in face of the instabilities sputtering loss, hitting you with unreadability and an uncommon need to crack improbable cases, riding the aporias that poetic language frequents, and refusing to offer a dialectical summation of disparate events. I had considered taking an unpaid leave of absence, but had missed the official deadline for bailing. By some uncalculated transcendental intercept, this teaching-on-empty wager turned out to be a granting, a *favoring*, as Heidegger would say, but what does he know. However, on this point he appeared to know

and say—maybe as an off-chance spark of the Catholic “as when” of grace, of being-outside-the-law, or sidestepping any law of expectation and calculability.



Time off

In the mode of non-arrival and stubborn stagnancy, I idle through the early months of 2024, remembering the checkpoints of his decline. Flashbacks to the dreary hospital system in France, giving ample reason to the depleted hospital workers and doctors on strike. Reverse into August, the month of Pierre's *disparition*. I come up against another development of Hölderlin's "*Wie wenn am Feiertage*," understanding that holiday in the poetic lexicon also opens the time of mourning, a laceration in being, the doling out of time and withdrawal, receding the pace of so-called daily life. I begin to understand why Americans are, as a rule, avoidant of holidays, giving up vacation days as a matter of existential self-protection. It is hard to describe the vacuity of August when everyone in Paris has gone on leave, securing the fetishized vacation. Psychoanalysts and doctors abscond as a matter of course. Symptoms go into storage and wait it out. Psychotic behaviors freeze and neuroses give it a rest. I don't know how the French culture accomplishes such a full-stop. We go on shooting sprees and stay overheated. The French respect their *Feiertage*, non-adjustably set. Last summer they backed into the predictable remoteness and quiet zones of summer residency, leaving me and a few stragglers to care for him. Stunned by my inability to deactivate the vacation plans of others by a rhetoric of persuasion or manipulation, I learned that the adherence to "les vacances" is part of an ideological inheritance, hard won, handed over by Léon Blum, and not about to be surrendered by anyone in the class struggle. It may be related in terms of passionate political adherence to the strike pushbacks on retirement schedules. Who wants to hang out in the beauty of life only when body-broken, exhausted and exploited from years of overwork, ask the French? Lycée pupils protest with signs demanding retirement at the age of thirteen. Why put off retirement to when you can barely crawl or count on a libidinal fix in times of legalized

leisure? I have explored the implications of retired existence in Rousseau, Goethe, in the vacating force of some of Heidegger's work, thematized as the prelude to thinking in *Was heißt Denken?* How are you supposed to hear the call of thinking if you're not idling, floated by rigorous leisure but wiped out by alienating labor and arthritic discomfort, to speak with the other ones, in Marx & Co.? Kant has something to say about the pastures of retirement and a twilight of adherence to the hobby horse, the pleasures taken in planting and painting—the privilege of non-productivity and the suspension of value-prodded activity. Benjamin and Jünger give way to a drug-treated consideration of retreat, taking the “toxic” out of intoxication, an Anglo-American Puritan-tinged term that ruins it all, according to Jünger.

But this was different, I thought, inducing a tortured affliction, the experience of dread: Paris emptied. Even the top-dog oncologists were off duty, in pursuit of rest, leaving rookies to man the fort. At this point, I am admittedly too riled up to offer a prudent if displaced analysis of vacation as part of a material-ontological rights of nerves, to speak with Walter Benjamin and Karl Kraus, who pursue themes that enervate and consternate, instigating nervous conditions that act as highly efficient theoretical boosters. Still bound to motor instigators, Lacoue-Labarthe, riding with Celan, says to *keep the upset*, urging us, on the basis of the poet's phrasing, to stay rigorously with what is *upsetting*. I have other tendential urges placed along my nervous system, which require me to stay close to the *revolting*, in terms set by Albert Camus. There is work to be done in order to internalize and make revolution by means of wounded steadfastness, claiming the thoroughly “revolted” person described by Camus. Sartre, for his part, was keyed into *nausea*, holding down another convincing naming of shakedown and nervous disorder that can be associated with the chronic stomach upset of Nietzsche, the philosopher-expectorator. Deleuze says that Nietzsche reverses dialectics by his motion sickness. He spits it out, if only to demonstrate how conditions, particularly the “human condition,” can keep one's stomach turning—which, for Nietzsche, is part of thinking, another cipher for *thought*, recalling the rumination of the cow. Chewing the cud, thinking it through, the cow as non-dominator, poses an experience of slow but determined revolt, modeling a life-force at once serene and

ejecting, compelled by thought's slow pacing. The point is that many things in art and politics make Nietzsche want to throw up, prompting him as he adopts a new philosophical pose to be tailored by Benjamin, Kraus, and so many other critically upset rejectors. The stomach upset remains necessarily ambivalent as the genealogical inciter to thought, marking a motivating disturbance that does not quit the thinking being. Analyzing lead glitches in Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, Derrida asks why it's a matter of wanting to throw up, situated on the scale of desire: *l'envie de vomir*.

I returned from Paris to New York in late August, defeated by the protocols of an uneven struggle, roped and troped into a heightened sense of tragic injustice. I would have to get a grip, feign and strain to snap out of it, maybe meditate, and, though in identification with the departed friend, find a split-off part that still gave signs of carrying on, a *Lebenszeichen*, no matter how falsified and rote my restarts become. Despite an achievable teaching schedule and a renewed non-aggression pact with my writing habits, I am basically whiling away, reviewing my options for further indulging philosophical disgust and material abandon. *Ach!* The stomach turns.

Time, as in Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain*, does not move. In the past, disgust kept me at it, cajoling, forcing me to write through fits of rage, providing a misfit's training ground. Now I am idling, stranded mostly between my imaginary asylum and the hospice where we spent our last days together. On the day of admission, because it was my turn to pick up the reigns again, I showed up at hospice ahead of schedule. I am tightly wound by Teutonic *Pünktlichkeit*, punctual to a fault, that is, early, missing my appointment by nervous precipitation, walking rounds like a ghost, dissipating into the air of expectancy, ahead of the clock, waiting, locked and loaded, stupidly wasting energy in the mode of readiness. It's the essence of the human, say Heidegger and Beckett, to wait. The clock is running down. *Enter Avital*. Pierre asks me if I have enough oxygen. He becomes agitated, coaxing me to share his oxygen mask, attached to a tank. He shows concern. I'm not paying attention to myself, he worries; I would suffo-

cate. "I have enough oxygen, Sweetie, I promise." He was not convinced. After a few minutes, I add, "You are my oxygen." I sail into *Atemwende*, as happens, I note, when he becomes breathless, in near respiratory arrest, refilling his lungs with poem glitter, I say some lines that speak to his agitation. "Avi, I can't breathe." Pierre's Mom, Marguerite Derrida, had met her husband, Jacques, that first time in a sanatorium while she was recovering from tuberculosis. Jacques and Marguerite's brother, Michel Aucoutrier, were on a skiing vacation, students on a break from the *École Normale Supérieure*. In the mountains, while taking the slopes, they were checking on Marguerite. I wanted to bring Pierre with me to the mountains last summer. He agreed in principle on the excursion, but we had to abort the plan. The air in Saas-Fee was thin and restrictive; we would need the assistance of a helicopter if something happened, as surely it would. The more I thought about it, the more the reasoned complications increased. It was a great and terrible idea at once. I was looking for a healing sanctuary, familiar and remote, powered by the Alpine sublime. It became necessary to understand how the mountains that had cured Marguerite would compromise Pierre, clenching part of an ambivalent structure of the asylum's inhospitality that I tried to fathom. I became interested in the very concept of asylum, what it had meant for Lacoue-Labarthe, Lenz, Nietzsche, Walser, how Foucault figured it in the *Birth of the Clinic*, all the clinics and institutions of history, starting maybe with Hölderlin's makeshift asylum in the *Turm*, the tower in Tübingen that Pierre and I had visited together with Larry Rickels, the tower where the great poet was looked after by the ever gentle caretaker, Ernst Zimmer. The Zimmer family were the only ones, at the time of his passing, to mourn Hölderlin. I leave to the sidelines the open wards of our time, the loony and trash bins of the unhoused, the right to asylum of badly exhausted migrants.

While Pierre commits to starts and fits of consciousness, traveling to other regions where I can't yet follow, where it is impermissible for me to adapt his schedule for booking out, his eyes widen, though he is not awake, and I start thinking about where we are right now, in the hospice-asylum-sanctuary that Jeanne had upgraded us to earlier that day. We had been stalled on a waiting list to be assigned a bed in one of the institutions. On the brink of losing

the expectation of minimal salvation, we were contacted. Something became available, a bed had been freed up. We were almost sent to a dilapidated institute on the outskirts of Paris, I balked. With unexpected New York verve, I announced, "That won't happen." Even Pierre cracked a smile—he'd been granted a lapse of split-second awareness. Jean D. gave me a puzzled look. On my request, he called Jeanne, put me on the line. She was at first confounded by the task I assigned, and then followed the directives to "use your connections." "I have none that I can think of." "You do, I know it. This is your city. You're hyper-connected." "Ok, ok. *D'accord.*" After hanging up, she suddenly remembered that she had gone to school with the now President of France's funerary arrangements, or whatever—the top of the line of final arrangements and the sitting director of hospices. She got us admitted in no time. Waiting at his bedside while the nurses pumped up the dosage, adjusted the drip—I had noticed that, even when unconscious, he was agitated and grimacing, indicating, I thought, an obstinate reserve of pain—I started a *rêverie* about how people, at the end of their ropes, were granted asylum. I sought a distraction. Just a few hours before, when I said what a nice room we were in, and how did they select the colors, Pierre responded, "This is where people come to die." The last sheath of denial slipped away. Somehow, I resisted that thought, intently focused on getting pain relief for my beautiful friend. We had maneuvered around France's refusal to allow for end-of-life accommodations. I could not obtain the "kill pill" that ends it all for Californians who are done. That would have been Pierre's weapon of choice. The heavy sedation began to take effect, releasing him. He looked resolved, and strong, his finely chiseled face did not seem to soften. I wouldn't call it a peaceful departure. Two days ago, still at Jeanne's, he had told me he was resolved to end it all now, and that I shouldn't feel sorry for him. His solitude was immense.



The Asylum

Back in New York, there's a contested influx of migrants. I seek them out to offer food supplies where I can and some cash. Since the Pandemic, NYC had become an open ward.

My Washington Square Park now serves as a heavily policed area dawning each day on quiet seizures of crumbing bodies, vacant looks, crack zombies, suburban boys, featuring the hustle of all manner of dealers. De-institutionalized yet circumscribed by intrusive policing, the park serves a population of end-of-lifers, depleted, unaffected mumblers and shouters, mostly zoned out. They reflect a limit of resignation, the end-stop of civic despair. Often the drugs don't work as I imagine they're supposed to, and an addicted straggler howls in pain, bent over and upwards at once, contorting in a roar. *Where's the relief, I wonder?* A different shaping of despair works over the reconditioned immigrant worlds whose arrival one wants to welcome with the assist of a strong and effective urban syntax. Asylum seekers are exhausted at the start-gate, humiliated by overburdened limits placed on their very existence, faced by a nearly uniform cold front that accompanies and blocks their very movement, deemed intrusive, inhibited by a downward turn in historical spurts of generosity. In the guise of care, whether or not inflected by phenomenological *Sorge*, a mean-streak dominates the portrait of the withholding well-meaning as well as the conventionally mean-spirited, steadily overdosing on the growing pathology of greed. Hannah Arendt put an alert on cultures of compassion from the watchtower of a nearly Nietzschean impulse that saw, with genealogical determination and inherited Greek acuity, the anger behind political affect, a disparaging attitude propelling a rhetoric of compassion. For her part, Arendt chooses justice over *compassion*, the sum of which too often amounts to a do-nothing self-congratulatory but unconcerned stance. In our day compassion can give way to the protection of a false self, functioning in support of an impervious community or anticipating the returns of a religiously pitched service. The aporias of the *withdrawal of compassion* invite further analysis, to be sure. (I am not against compassion; I just don't trust it. Ditto, Arendt.) Cicero links compassion to fear; Arendt basically sees it as a replacement practice for genuine intervention, justly led. Even the guise and lexicon of pretend-compassion have been thrown off by civic presumption and rude dismissal. Let a micro-example of the spreading tendency suffice here: Nowadays self-help books have begun earnestly teaching how *not to care* or "give" a f^&k for the miserable predicament of others. Running parallel tracks with sociopathic cruelty, the cold shower/*Schauer* (horror) of calculated

disregard routinely gets folded into pretend-ethics and prescriptive dogma. And sometimes the coldest snap of moralism is concealed in the package delivered as "Compassion," which clears the sender of active duty, exempting their brunt of infinite responsibility. "Compassion," in these instances, functions to blanket icy material indifference, comparable to Derrida's reading of Kantian respect or to Deleuze's Ice Age of sexual difference: in both cases, there's something too cold there, leading to a frost-bitten masochistic politics. As said, such a series of assertion requires more analysis than can be pursued here. I have explored some of its edges and freezing points when analyzing the *disappearance of authority*, another Angst-laden philosopheme donated by Arendt, Alexandre Kojève, and, with a different ideological tilt, Herbert Marcuse. For now, I do not want to disregard the complicated claims of compassion that Hannah sees with reason and resolve as a way of avoiding *doing justice*. What are the institutions of compassion that nonetheless cooperate with such avoidance?

Let me proceed by brief metonymical example, making an appeal to literature at this time, where the asylum as institution is subsumed, to a large degree, by modern penitentiary culture or its leakage into other structures of containment, including schools and religious sanctuary. Our underlying penal colony, when recast in the form of compassionate upgrade, is dosed out and papered over by medicalized precepts and considerations of comfort, creating a strange balance between the need to isolate and recesses of social encounter. Thomas Mann's asylum, a slice of world-historical behaviors, foreign languages, ideological adherence, erotic curiosity and culinary hierarchy, treats modalities of infection, tubercular suffocation, the drops and peaks of feverish contortions, social implications and historical forecast that institutionalization inscribes. Bourgeois yet steeped in decay, decline and weariness, the mountain resort, as last resort, captures the unavoidable if extreme contours of finite being. World history comes up for examination, retrieving the vocabulary of decadence, decline, and delusional setback, tinged with salvation and false hope, in addition to tracking a wide range of the *Weltgeist's* prowl and finite itineraries in contaminated precincts. Attentive to the mesh of subtle agitation and terminal phasing in the history of rupture, Mann is interested in the way we go in search

of relief, measuring illnesses of pandemic proportions, including encroaching types of political malignancy. Hans Castorp is studying to be an engineer, lazily interested in the instruments of gauging disease, including a tool called the “silent sister”—a thermometer without indicators or readable inscriptive currency. Only the trained eye of a doctor can size the unreadability of an infection that hits everyone, often asymptotically. Little Hans thinks he is there by choice, as visitor who drops by to check on his cousin. But the spread of germs (and Germanity) implicates everyone: We’re in this together, put on deferred notice by the silent killer of a common disease. No one gets away with a clean bill of health or the mystic cleanse of cultural purity. Our subjection to ruthless infectious ambush is primed by language. This is Thomas Mann’s territory, pivoting on the hinge of speech that portends immunodeficient defeat. Spitting blood, the novel speaks French, Russian, English, ground in the narrator’s German, part of a geo-typology of decadent decline, the fatigue of mother tongues, with each tooth exposing the yellow stain of a once opulent culture responsible for ongoing penal colonization. One could be inching toward Kafka’s Castle, listening for the clang of asignificatory bells, on the way to language, following the land-surveyor’s path, where language bristles.

To the extent that we are creatures of language, we start by coughing—a pre-linguistic death knell to which the newborns are treated by a slap on their baby backs. We have trouble breathing. Birth and death cough up an existential stay that declines as it takes off. The cough rattles Castorp, piercing his body that receives an event of infection. There are elements of one’s exposure to malignancy and the origin of language that bring around a “Death in Venice” reflection on the geopolitics of an exhausted body, stoked only by repressive remnants of a disarticulated libido, the other bestseller written by Mann, riding romantic tropes on the back of finitude, where thick strawberries ooze when reaching the tipping point of their vitality, becoming rotten. The trope of “something rotten in Denmark” gets relocated by Mann to Venice, to micro-territories of libido on the Lido, retracing Goethe’s *viaggio*—what I have called in my first pre-tenured book (to my detriment), Goethe’s *Genitaliensche Reise*—the genital phase of Goethe’s journey. Thomas Mann picks up the relay. The two protagonists discover, in the

groundbreaking *Italienischer Reise*, among other figures and referential-autothanatographical assertion, the lure of sexuality, a tie-up of Eros and Thanatos, because Gustave von Aschenbach, like Goethe, are going for the thrill kill of libidinal tourism—the discovery of repressed splinters of self in the foreign. But they are coughing, first and foremost, and while drawing a last breath. They traverse the broken field of self-estrangement, recalling Benjamin, stoned in Marseilles, who upgrades the excessive strawberry in Venice to “Haschich in Marseilles.” We note the aristocratic “von” in Aschenbach and the Gustave, affining the protagonist electively to Flaubert, another thanatographer of the emergent bourgeoisie and its stupid forays down there, in the codified South, where the heat is on and the death drive swings into high gear, which I ask you to hear in cahoots with the German homonym as *Gier*—lust, greed, avarice, longing, *Habsucht*, *Lust*, *Sinneslust*, *Verlangen*, etc., swinging over to what we did not know about ourselves. The southern hemisphere has long vectorized an illicit supply line and its crash sites of desire for German texts, including those of Kleist and Nietzsche, among so many others who escaped periodically the Germanic stranglehold. The incursion of corollary lustful philosophical appropriation tends to book a shuttle to Greece, the not so-repressed origin prompting another kind of archive fever. Let me cut off here in a run for another type of asylum, if only on the layover plan.



Fatigue and Archive Fever

Our works, too, seek asylum, where in a second round of dying off, they are laid to rest. Books and contested journalists require their own Magic Mountain, no matter how sublimated to dusty bins, or to the dust bins of has-beens. The status of contested thinking is settled, if at all, as a matter of power and the archive. Whoever controls the archive, writes Derrida, has loaded up on considerable stores of political power. (In the United States, archives and library outlets are being closed down, and books in schools are removed, banned. In France, they tend to go about archival shutdown in less psychotic ways as bookstores dig in.) I cannot get

into the aporias of the archive here—its immunodeficiency, how archive incites amnesia, promotes forgetting or distortion, is accomplice to certain forms of foreclosure and collapse. It is not fortuitous that Derrida made the disruptive continuum of *immunopathology* part of his work and thought when visiting the asylum of Metaphysics. Nearly all of philosophy's envoys are obsessed with the imponderables of strength, health, and the limit of beings in view of their fractured worldings and finite reach.

When Blanchot launched the *Entretien infini* (The Infinite Conversation), a title which can also be understood as “infinite maintenance,” the text showcased two weary interlocutors, exhausted by Metaphysics and a muted back-history of quarrel. On the whole, philosophical thought no longer sirens in emergency supplies of meaning, but finds itself fatigued—perhaps setting up the precondition for gaining ground in the wearying nonsense of turf wars, when signs of a meaningful release are surrendered according to nearly impossible rules of engagement. The motif of fatigue saturates the works of Levinas, Deleuze and Beckett, and appears at the tail end of Lyotard's reflections, offering a way out of the fight zone, but does not cancel part of a losing streak inherent to literary fatigues and philosophical contest (Benjamin reminds us to measure the difference between a contest and a test). Yet, the appearance of throwing in the towel—a surrender to weighty opposition—is also part of the technique of the champ, Mohammed Ali, his rope-a-dope technique, which consists of wearing down your opponent by letting them beat you up until they are too exhausted to land another punch. Only after holding a tai chi caliber of resistance, when letting the opponent come apart by means of their own energy of rage—only then can you rise up and deliver the precision hit. Mohammed Ali, who was arrested for opposing the war in Viet Nam, taught us how to take a beating and manage deferral; in other words, when to roll with the punches, how to absorb invasive attack and contain social malignancy.

Are we in a match, though? Do we even have a referee, as Platonic dispute required? —Or are we condemned to twirl in rigged and uneven playing fields, irreparably set? On a rhetori-

cal-defensive level, I recommend that we hold steady, regardless of the odds stacked against the rigors and aloneness of thinking, keeping us out of bounds, in the *Dis-tanz*, the dance of distance and difference. Heidegger has warned against a view of thinking that indulges polemics, covert war attitudes, or practices of refutation: Thinkers cannot be refuted, but must be protected, spoken for, advocated. Nor are they part of a game that can be simply called off.

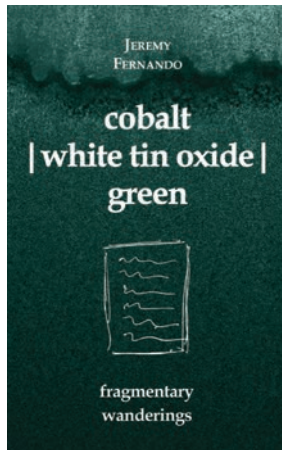
Some of these stand downs, however successfully realized or theorized, belong to thinking's temporality, presented by Hölderlin's hymn, inducted by Rousseau's *rêverie of far niente*. The softening of thinking, its inherent modesty is outlined in Lacoue-Labarthe's essay of that title. Modesty in thought, I am suggesting (softly), involves the laying to rest of "Wie wenn"—"as when on holiday," carrying grief through gentle flexes of *Andenken* and *Denken*, remembrance and thinking.

As disciples of Nietzsche and Ali, let us exercise desistance, a sister to remembrance, trying to remember that many others, with delicate immune systems, are worn out quickly by the requirements of athletic vitality. (—But don't forget that, despite the odds and the logic of desistance, there are those of us who are still itching for a good fight, a responsible riposte. *Ja, ja.*)

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Excerpts from cobalt | white tin oxide | green: fragmentary wanderings

Jeremy Fernando



The following is an excerpt from *cobalt | white tin oxide | green: fragmentary wanderings* (Tachikawa: Bunker Press, 2024) which is, in many ways, my love letter to Lisbon. The work is also a meandering meditation on my longing to read and write; whilst never being sure what writing nor reading necessarily even entail, let alone mean.

In other words, reading writing thinking walking—without necessarily distinguishing them, nor reducing them to the same—as *poiesis*.

It is dedicated to—and in loving memory of—Pierre Alferi.

—Jeremy Fernando, February 2024.

reading | writing | walking | friendship | touch

—for Pierre Alferi—

Somewhat ironically for somehow who, instinctively really so who knows whether it is true or just the first thought which springs to mind, like a cat out of a tree, so *danke* to the *denken* pouncing on me here, for someone who tends to describe himself (less myself, descriptions are always in the third person, maybe they are set up as distractions so one can flee into the shadows), for someone who calls what he does writing, I see myself, first and foremost, as *someone who reads*; *reading* being an encounter, so a relation prior to any attempt at assimilating what is being read to the one who reads (with infinite thanks here to my dear teacher, the late great reader, Werner Hamacher, for helping opening me up to not just the possibilities in reading but to *reading itself as a possibility*). Which means that not only can I never quite claim to know what I've read, but that in opening myself to what I am reading can never quite ascertain how it has changed me, perhaps even after it has done so (as it inevitably does).

Reading—writing—perchance to dream

Writing is my primary mode—of not just expressing thought, but of thinking itself. And I try to maintain the possibility of conceiving writing as *scribere*, scratching—onto, into, out of—tearing, opening; as an attempt, perhaps even a quest, at maintaining the question in what is inscribed. And this relationship—between what is posited and the question which remains—is something that I attempt to explore intensely, to intensely explore.

Or, perhaps, it explores me and I writhe.

For, being open to possibilities means that I have to concede I am never fully in control of my thoughts, my writing.

Sometimes whatever is written is strange, unfamiliar, other, to me—a fragment of me, sometimes it also fragments me. Like when I am reading, re-reading really, what I ostensibly have written here: it all seems slightly odd, as if it were the hand of someone else who had inscribed this text; and it might well have been another.

Nor can I ever quite control how it will be read: I can only write, read, and leave it to be read.

So, writing as *auto-da-fé*, an act of faith that writing has even taken place: for all of us know, somewhat instinctively, that there is a difference between *something written down* and *writing* (which is probably why we all balk at emails; are suspicious of *les communiqués*, one has good reason to be wary of anything reeking of the police; also why we should raise our eyebrows as anyone who calls themselves a writer).

Much like reading.

For one can only read, open oneself to *what one is reading* and perhaps even more importantly *to the possibility of reading itself*, after which, as my beloved grandmother would say, *que sera sera*.

Ah, to dream.

*

When is it time to stop reading and start writing?

A question I hear all the time, particularly when someone you are conversing-with catches on that you do some writing; right after the moment someone spies you scribbling things down at a bar, café, restaurant, in the park, on the bus, in a tram, while riding a train, in a book that you are reading, especially in a book you are reading.

It's almost as if one has to be surreptitious when you are writing.

A question one hears all the time: as if *writing* and *reading* are separable — not that they are the same thing.

But that one can only know that writing has taken place by first reading.

Or, as Marguerite Duras would say, in a far more elegant way than I ever could, "*et lire, c'était écrire,*" and *reading, it was to write*. So, not just that to read is to know there were writing, but that *reading itself is writing*. Which does open another, rather delicious, possibility: when you read, whose writing is it that you are reading? An impossible question to answer, certainly not with any certainty, so perhaps one which we can continue to dance-with, in an "infinite conversation," as Maurice Blanchot would say, an eternal foxtrot in my tiny mind.

And if you are wondering about the quotations, citations, echoes of the writings of others that appear here, about why so many show-up in all my writings, the only thing I can say is that all of my thoughts, notions, scribbles, inscriptions, come from elsewhere, and owe a deep thanks to my teachers. For, I'd like to think that thinking (*denken*) should always also entail thanking (*danken*).

And here, I shall defer to yet another of my far more elegant friends, the inimitable Singaporean writer, Adibah Mustafa, who describes my work—in her typically deeply-generous manner (one that I'm not sure I deserve, but shamelessly will accept) as thus: "at the heart of Fernando's approach is the exaltation of citation and annotation: each one constitutes in itself a longing to remember and to relate, manifesting as an act of translation, for it gathers something from 'there' and carries it over 'here,' where it quickens, as much as it's quickened by, a new fit and form."

After all, friends have an effect on you, can sometimes open a question in you, might well affect you, unveil a new register, perhaps inseminate a thought in you, might even infect you—somedays, I dream that *my writing is syphilitic*; a boy can only dream.

However, once we open the dossier of friendship—of affection, love even—it always already brings with it its own risk. For, as Jacques Derrida continues to teach us, “to have a friend, to look at him, to follow him with your eyes, to admire him in friendship, is to know in a more intense way, already injured, always insistent, and more and more unforgettable, that one of the two of you will inevitably see the other die.” Where, to call someone *my friend* is to already open the wound where one day, one of the two of you will have nothing to call but the other’s name.

And not just because *the author is dead* (unless one is taken by authorship, authority, and notions of originality—*auctor*—the author is always already dead) but that one day, the day will come where, we will have to come to terms with the fact that *the hand who inscribes is no more*.

And, where perhaps, the risk of reading, reading-writing, writing-reading, writing to what I am reading, is that one always already opens oneself to being wounded.

Where what we write, inscribe, might well be the scars of readings that write us.

Which is not to say that you should stop, far from it: in fact, as Hélène Cixous would say, “if you want to read, jump, do not set yourself so much as a comma.” And when you read, as a dear student of Hélène and Jacques—the singular Avital Ronell, my dear dear teacher, Avi—would add, would continue, “do not hesitate to read the scars that crater the textual body!”

Caress them. Feel them. For reading writing, writing reading, is always also a matter of touch: there will always be writhing.

After all, as Anne Dufourmantelle, dear, dear Anne, continues to remind us, “being completely alive is a task, it’s not at all a given thing. It’s not just about being present to the world, it’s being present to yourself, reaching an intensity that is in itself a way of being reborn.” On

July 21, 2017, Anne died whilst attempting to rescue two children caught in dangerously turbulent waters off Pampelonne beach in Ramatuelle. Lifeguards eventually reached the children, who survived; but she could not be resuscitated.

Risk, Anne never lets us forget, risk is an essential part of life, an integral part of living, of being alive.

*

*Ma grande affaire est la maintien ou le retour
de la vie dans ce qui s'arrête.*

–Pierre Alferi

*

So I plunge, in my own small way: pen into the inkwell...keeping in mind that writing is staining (*pingah*), and sometimes the one that can be stained is oneself, that one can be tarred with the very brush that one is attempting to write with, that one can be painted as being *beyond the pale*, as unacceptable, as *persona non grata* due to the inscriptions one leaves behind...even without name, anonymous, *address unknown*, these post-cards have a way of finding their way back to you, *returned to sender*.

And independently of the script one is attempting to bring forth, one should also bear in mind—even if it remains a burden on one, chases one-off stage-left—one should hold on to the fact, that one can only write in an attempt to write.

For, writing comes to one—from somewhere else, everywhere else, anywhere else; often-times in spite of oneself. Hence, even as all writing can only happen through the self, one's self is—and can only be—the medium through which it occurs. Where, the only thing one can do is attempt to respond, attend to, the possibility of writing itself.

By being in front of a keyboard, by having a notebook on me.

By reading.

*



*

Sometimes, I dream of being able to just read and write, and not have to bother about quotidian concerns like rent, sustenance, being able to sustain myself. Least of all employment or, perhaps even worse, book sales: it's a terrible feeling when one is more concerned about whether people are buying one's works than if said works are of interest to anyone as works; that is the moment you turn a work into a mere product, when writing becomes that most hated of contemporary terms, content.

Sometimes, I dream of having a patron; a boy can only dream.

But then, at the same time, one can't help but wonder if it is possible to separate the patronage of your work from you being patronised: moreover, after which there is certainly no possibility of a free-hand, of emancipation...daddy will always be holding your *manus*.

And your manuscript is always also going to bear the mark of her or his signature: whether anyone else can see this signing-off, underwriting, being a different, somewhat irrelevant, question. Whenever you read your own script, you will see their imprints smudged all over it.

*

It has taken me years to admit—perhaps only to myself—that I don't care about writing something important, something significant. That my only hope, wish—dream even—is to write something beautiful.

A boy can only dream.

*

So, when is it time to stop reading and start writing?

Maybe never.

Jeremy Fernando reads, writes, and makes things.

He works in the intersections of literature, philosophy, and art; and has written more than 30 books. Exploring other media has led him to film, music, and the visual arts; and his work has been exhibited in Seoul, Vienna, Hong Kong, Lisbon and Singapore.

He is the general editor of Delere Press; curates the thematic magazine *One Imperative*; is the Jean Baudrillard Fellow at The European Graduate School; co-creator of the private dining experience, People Table Tales; and the writer-in-residence at Appetite, the sensorial laboratory exploring the cross-roads of food, music, and art.

twenty twenty-three

Jeremy Fernando

the only thing that
continues to surprise me
is that we are still

surprised that we still
continue to claim to be
surprised each time this

happens as if the
surprise would save us having
to acknowledge that

we would much rather
remain surprised than to not
devour prizes

peoples lands so *this*
is no doubt a perfectly
*ordinary year*¹

*I wake up in the morning and I wonder
why everything's the same as it was*

~Skeeter Davis²

1 Closing line to the poem '一九八九年' by Yang Lian, translated into the English as 1989 by Brian Holton. Yang Lian taught at The European Graduate School as a guest at Judith Balso's seminar, *Poetry & Philosophy*, in August 2005, where he also performed a reading of this poem in the Mandarin as part of his evening lecture.

2 Sylvia Dee & Arthur Kent, *The End of the World*, single by Skeeter Davis, New York: RCA Victor, 1962.



The Death of the Translator: On Walter Benjamin and the Future of AI Translations

Anders Kølle

The increasing use of AI technologies in multiple industries and sectors has recently spread to the publishing industry as well, prompting the first Danish publishing house, Nightingale, to translate an English novel into Danish by AI. Given the substantial savings in time and money that such machine-generated translations offer and the high level of accuracy they already guarantee, the future of AI translations look bright, while the employment possibilities of traditional translators appear more and more precarious. Unable to compete with the technologies on the pure and easily measurable level of efficiency, the translators are forced to find other expressions and proofs of their worth. But what to say? Why are human translators to be preferred – which is to say: how does the question of AI translation translate into a concern, a problem, a loss? Translators today are forced to make a very difficult translation: They must translate the value and importance of their work into a language and a vocabulary that is clear to publishers and readers alike, making the stakes understandable to all. The problem they must solve is in short: How to translate what the death of the translator will mean to the future of literature?

Image opposite (diorama): *Reading in the Ruins*, Freda Guttman, from *Notes From the 20th*, multi-media installation 2004. Photo: David Mason

If one is looking for a clear and univocal answer in Walter Benjamin's famous essay, "The Task of the Translator," one is left disappointed. Benjamin offers no easy explanation of precisely where the value of the translator lies. While there can be no doubt that translation to Benjamin is more than a simple transmission of information, moving concepts from one language to another like one moves furniture from one house to the next, it is much harder to grasp what this "more" of the translator's task is. What raises the translator above the duties of a mere copyist and reproducer of meanings appears linked to the way the translator is, according to Benjamin, part of a literary and creative act: far from simply repeating the words of the author the translator is actively recreating the original work. In the translation, the original work is reborn and called to life again—or it enjoys, in Benjamin's formulation, its "afterlife."¹ This recreation requires not only a translation of sentences and words and the ability to find a good and safe passage from one language to another. What it requires is nothing less than an understanding of the author's artistic pursuits and the ability to continue these pursuits in a new language. The poetic callings of the author are also the callings of the translator who must do his utmost to answer these calls. Intention thus comes to supplant imitation as the task of the translator is placed in the service of these higher demands. What matters is not fidelity to a sense that remains tied to individual words and their particular constellations but fidelity to poetry's essential nature.² Paradoxically, this means that a translation that seemingly differs greatly from the original in terms of sense may, in fact, be its most accurate and precise translation if what it reaches through its distances and apparent detours is the intentions of the original text. In Benjamin's own formulations: "The task of the translator consists in finding the particular intention toward the target language which produces in that language the echo of the original."³ Such productions must, as Benjamin continues, necessarily have the totality of language in mind, since only in relation to language as a totality can the original's unique position and particular intentions in that language be found. What needs to be translated is therefore something that will forever escape the translator of simple sense, who works from sentence to sentence, who moves steadily from one word constellation to the next, and who never looks beyond the horizon of the immediate task. Such poor and mistaken translation

is lost in its own literalness and will betray the original by staying too faithful to its most apparent sense. Bad translation saves the transmission, saves the passage but loses the work it is carrying across. And good translation? How to define good translation then? As Benjamin concedes: "If the task of the translator is viewed in this light, the roads toward a solution seem to be all the more obscure and impenetrable."⁴ Indeed, one may wonder if Benjamin's good translation is definable at all? If what needs translation is never directly stated, never contained or circumscribed by any individual words but rather what the words and the work in their totality reach for, then the task of the translator would appear to be to say what is unsayable, to translate what is, in fact, untranslatable and bound to be missed in any and every tongue. The translator's job is, in this sense, to pass on something unpassable, to communicate a lack and an impasse of communication. In Benjamin's own words: "To be sure, such translation no longer serves the cause of the text, but rather works in the interest of languages. This case demands boundless confidence in the translation... For to some degree, all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines... The interlinear version of the Scriptures is the prototype or ideal of all translation."⁵

There can be no doubt that today's AI translation fails to meet Benjamin's high ideals and difficult criteria in several ways. Not only is the question of a work's intention beyond the machine, but the machine is bound to a literalness that never rises above the most immediate completion of the most immediate task. Fidelity is measured on the level of sense and accuracy of transmission, not on the level of poetic pursuits and higher artistic endeavors. To AI, a text is necessarily what is given and presents itself entirely as given, exhausts itself in the given, rather than what awaits the translator as a potential and as a rebirth of the original between the lines. From Benjamin's perspective, the AI translation can therefore not produce more than a poor translation: its accomplishments are also its very failures since it fails to make apparent what does not pass—something that, if we interpret and translate Benjamin correctly, would be nothing less than literature. If Benjamin's essay and thoughts on translation are rarely evoked in today's debates it is likely because his ideas are difficult to render in a language of commerce and performance where

language itself seems reduced to a pure information tool. Translatability appears here, from the perspective of commerce, not as a mysterious and ambiguous question but as a simple fact. As soon as one text exists, its possible translation exists as well. There are no abysses to be crossed, no impasses to be passed—only a repackaging of a content that is always ready to be wrapped in a new language and sent on. Every possible word and sentence already has its match in whatever tongue it may be and this match therefore needs no invention or creation but only the locating and pinpointing of where precisely it is. If one should have any doubts or concerns about AI translations, those are therefore limited to simple but annoying mismatches in the equation, causing words and sentences to miss their mark. In an article in *The Publishing Post* the writers Niina Bailey and Lucy Clark describe the issue in the following way:

One of the main concerns a lot of people have over the use of AI is that it will produce inaccurate work or errors. For example, ChatGPT will sometimes provide factually incorrect information and because it does so confidently, people are more likely to believe it. This is a significant problem with using AI for translation as AI struggles with the complexity and nuance of language. Google Translate, the most well-known translation AI, will often translate things wrong because it translates text literally and word-for-word, failing to take into account the context of words. Translating texts wrong is even more likely with regard to literary translation, as the language is often more complex than in regular speech.⁶

Although, as Bailey and Clark make clear, the complexity of literary works thus enhances the risks of mistranslations and may still prove too challenging to AI technologies, the problem itself is easily describable and easily detectable since it manifests itself as a match and as an equation gone wrong. A simple look at the original should suffice to see how and where the problem arose. Beneath the wrong translations are the stability of the languages themselves and the right passages and equations only waiting to be found. The task of translation is therefore not fundamentally opposed or incompatible with the workings of machines but only

awaiting the proper level of intelligence and sophistication of these machines. Literature is in principle as translatable as any other text, for although language may vary in difficulty it does not vary in its fundamental communicability and transmissibility. As Bailey and Clark continue:

Within the publishing industry, AI could replace translators, at least partly. Publishers could use AI to initially translate a book and then only hire a translator to fix the mistakes the AI makes. You might think that that is still a long time away from happening, but the technology is improving and translation AI is learning, which makes the publishing industry more likely to use it.⁷

We seem here to be touching upon an ideology of language that is every bit as clear in its optimism as Benjamin's is clothed in ambiguity and obscurity. What the belief in AI translation is founded on is an unquestionable faith in the possibility of everything's matching and equation without residue or remainder. Mistakes can be fixed, and machines will in time learn to fix them since the right translation is in principle always available—which is to say: Everything is passable into something else since nothing is ever outside the possibility of translation. Benjamin's concept of rebirth and recreation of the original in and through the translation is here confronted with a simple concept of reproduction that requires no creative gifts or sensibilities. One may therefore feel compelled to ask what it truly is that AI translations translate? Clearly it is neither the poetic intentions nor the poetic strivings of the author which, as Benjamin teaches us, are only sayable as that which escapes any saying—as a continuous and unfinished pursuit that hides in the silence between the lines. But is it the work? Is it the book? What would be the difference between the two? And more importantly: What would a work of literature be without the intentions of its author and without the slippages, inconsistencies and insufficiencies of language itself? This question, however, seems not to arise in a discourse and in an ideology that has already made its equations. Hence the strange mixture of naiveté and brutality that characterizes the current debate: the naivety with which the belief in transmission is masked and passed on as a non-belief, a non-ideology and stated as a simple, undeniable fact—and the brutality by which this naiveté is subjecting literature to its one-sided logic. The future success

of AI technologies is, as Bailey and Clark make clear, only a matter of time since the criteria by which this success is to be measured already guarantee their future success. It is a prophecy without the need of any prophets. The equation will work since only what can be equated will be equated. One possible answer as to what AI translations truly translate would therefore be the very ideology of communicability and translatability itself. Literature is translated into the omnipotence of translation which the machines—even when sometimes mistaken—continuously confirm. It is a human ambition and a human ideology disguised as a game of pure matching and called forth as a strictly mathematical and therefore strictly calculable and measurable machine performance. What we get is the passage and the passing through this passage that literature is pre-ordered to pass like everything else. What we get are different translations of the mighty power of translation itself. The book, the work, the author are deemed to play only secondary and strictly auxiliary roles in this larger game of transmissions. The ultimate mastery of communication is a dream untouched and unshaken by any questions or difficulties singular poetic works may pose. There is no room for anything to be missed or lost in this future palace of a passage through which all languages will pass.

Strangely enough, we seem from the side of AI to approach something quite similar to what Benjamin in his essay describes as a “pure language” and to his ultimate dream of a language capable of integrating “many tongues into one”⁸—a dream in which “languages themselves, supplemented and reconciled in their way of meaning, draw together.”⁹ As Benjamin explains in his essay:

In translation the original rises into a higher and purer linguistic air, as it were. It cannot live there permanently, to be sure; neither can it reach that level in every aspect of the work. Yet in a singularly impressive manner, it at least points the way to this region: the predestined, hitherto inaccessible realm of reconciliation and fulfillment of languages.¹⁰

Would the digital language used by today’s computers not likewise appear to draw to-

gether different languages and to integrate many tongues into one? Is it not a reconciliation of human tongues that AI translations produce and offer—or to use an expression from Giorgio Agamben: the pure possibility of any relation whatever?¹¹ Why not at least entertain the possibility that AI comes strangely and surprisingly close to realizing Benjamin's ultimate dreams? Many AI and computer enthusiasts would likely agree that today's technologies truly do lift translations into a "higher and purer linguistic air"—the language of 0's and 1's—the language of mathematics—and that the digital revolution can, indeed, be described as the awaited fulfillment of languages. Unrestricted by individual concerns, uninhibited by human interests and interventions, AI appears to offer a higher region and a cleaner air where all human misapprehensions and existential hiccups and quarrels will finally be resolved. And yet, despite these apparent similarities, despite such easy and swift parallels to be drawn, we hesitate to believe Benjamin would join today's AI appraising choir. A seemingly minor difference but one of crucial importance lies in the special significance Benjamin places in the only partial and never complete reconciliation of languages. The good translation "points" to this higher sphere, it approaches it and may even reach it in certain aspects but it never reaches it fully and completely. The "predestined, hitherto inaccessible realm" remains precisely predestined instead of realized and inaccessible to any individual work and translator. As the Romantic writer and thinker Benjamin is, the good translation finds its worth through a pointing to the translation's and the original's beyond that it can grasp only as a hope, only as an intention, only as a passage that never lets the work, the book, the author or the translator pass. The passage shows itself by denying its use and by promising to continuously defer any promises. But paradoxically this very denial and deferral is not where the translation stops but where it begins and finds its true purpose. As Benjamin says: "For to some degree, all great texts contain their potential translation between the lines."¹² Literature and its translations have a future not despite but because of their shortcomings and failures. To rob literature of its misapprehensions and silences is to rob literature of its very conditions of existence. But since one silence is as untranslatable as another, AI translations will never know the unsayable from the futureless, the pointing from the stop of hoping and pointing.

Endnotes

1. Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator." Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 1, 1913-1926*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996, p. 256.
2. Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator", p. 258.
3. Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator", p. 259.
4. Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator", p. 259.
5. Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator", p. 262-263.
6. See: <https://www.thepublishingpost.com/post/the-effect-of-artificial-intelligence-on-translation-in-the-publishing-industry>
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Memories of the Future:

Speculative Fabulations on the Future of the Opuntiae Cactus & the Cochineal Insect

Roseline de Thélin

Memories of the Future is an ecopoietic project, part of the “SoS Cochichumbas” action, a collective of women artists based on the island of Ibiza (Spain) who decided to raise awareness through the arts about the disappearance of the Opuntiae cactus/Nopal, Prickly Pears, or Chumbera in the Balearic Islands and mainland Spain, due to a plague of Cochineal.

This collective undertaking was born from the realisation of our emotional and aesthetic connection to this beautiful cactus. For us, it had always been part of our landscape and our memories—it seemed indestructible and yet all of a sudden it was dying. We wanted to do something about it.

The project began with researching the history and context of the Opuntiae cactus, as well as its relationship with the Cochineal insect. Why is this seemingly indestructible cactus disappearing suddenly? What is the origin of the plague? What is the history of this plant and its predator? We first discovered that the Opuntiae cactus was originally from Mexico, and imported 400 years ago to Spain and Europe, following the conquest of Mexico by the Spanish,



because of its intimate relationship with the Cochineal insect which produces a precious and coveted carmine red pigment.

This research took me on a journey from Ibiza to Oaxaca, Mexico, the cradle of the Nopal/Cochineal golden match, and progressively shaped as a visual storytelling inspired by Donna Haraway's writings and vocabulary (*Staying with the Trouble* 2016) to imagine possible or impossible "futures" or "speculative fabulations," weaving ecology, history, artificial intelligence and expressive arts.

Memories of the Future explores the web of interconnectedness shaping our world through the lens of the symbiotic relationship between the Opuntiae cactus and the Cochineal insect. This inter-species relationship serves as a gateway or "contact zone" for "tentacular thinking" (Haraway 2016) spanning across the historical ties between Mexico and Spain, colonization and cultural hybridization, the intricate play between nature and culture, biodiversity and human/non-human interactions.

Tentacular thinking: the historical and ecological context of the project

To tell the story of the Opuntiae cactus and the cochineal insect, we must start by honouring the "cosmovisión" of indigenous cultures in Central America who perceived the cosmos as a harmonious and interconnected entity where plants, animals, insects, humans, and celestial bodies, coexisted in a delicate balance. This world view emphasized respect for all forms of life and the natural environment. Plants, animals, and insects held sacred significance and were revered for their symbolic importance and roles in myths, rituals, and ceremonies. The indigenous "cosmovisión" is spiritual rather than exploitative and offers valuable insights into sus-



tainable living, ecological stewardship, and holistic approaches to health and well-being.

Indigenous peoples in Mesoamerica possess extensive knowledge of plants, herbs and remedies derived from their observations and interactions with the environment. Both the Nopal cactus (*Opuntia*) and the Cochineal insect (*Dactylopius coccus*) have historically been significant and respected resources among Aztec, Mayan and local indigenous cultures since the second century BC. The Nopal cactus features on the Mexican flag and is depicted in many ways in traditional and folk art.

Both its pads (nopalitos) and fruits (tunas) are great sources of food rich in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. It is a natural anti-inflammatory and is used in traditional medicine to treat wounds, digestive issues, and diabetes. The cactus also provides materials for construction; its fibres were used to make ropes and adobe. Today it is used to create a vegan leather.

Indigenous cultures in Central America have been mastering the art of breeding the Cochineal insect on Nopal's pads for centuries. The insect, particularly its female, produces carminic acid, used as a valuable natural red dye for textiles, wall paintings, pottery and ceremonial body painting as well as in natural medicine. Cochineal played a role in indigenous rituals and in artistic expressions. Its vivid blood-like red hue symbolized life, vitality, and sacredness.

Following the Spanish conquest of the Aztec Empire, the carmine red Cochineal pigment became a highly valuable trade commodity and a source of immense wealth for the Spanish Empire. Red has always been a powerful symbolic colour, representing love and war, blood and sacrifice, beauty and anger, revolution and progressive forces. Cochineal dye became the popular red pigment used to colour clothing for royalty, the church, European nobility, and lavish



interiors. It also became the preferred carmine red colour for European painting schools and a natural food colorant.

To exploit the cactus' potential for breeding the Cochineal insect and produce the coveted red carmine dye, European colonizers imported the *Opuntia* cactus to Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia. This is why today this cactus is present in all continents' temperate and hot climates. In many of these regions, the *Opuntia*'s myriad other uses remain often unexploited or even unknown. Today in many countries the plant is la-

belled as invasive due to its remarkable resilience to heat and drought. The cactus reproduces itself not only through self-pollination and seeding but also through fragmentation; any pad falling on the ground can root and grow a new cactus. The *Opuntia* cactus also has the ability to hybridize with many other cacti, creating hundreds of sun-species. Its rapid reproduction can potentially endanger more fragile eco-systems, as has been the case in Australia where the cactus, imported to host Cochineal insects for dye production, has spread over hectares and hectares of land.

However, the Carmine Cochineal insect (*Dactylopius coccus*) has never endangered the cactus before in our region; what was happening now in Spain? We then discovered that the origin of the plague was due to the introduction of a new strain of lethal Cochineal (the *Dactylopius opuntia*) by the Spanish preservation administration to eradicate the *Opuntia* cactus from a nature reserve where it was endangering other native plants and eco systems.

The propagation of this new breed of Cochineal, coupled with a staggering 50% decline in insect diversity in Spain, many of which are natural predators of the cochineal, is what actually



contributed to the plague that is decimating the *Opuntia* cactus not only in Spain but also in Morocco and could potentially spread to other European and African countries. This is a notable loss of an amazingly resourceful plant that has been part of the aesthetic of our Mediterranean landscapes for the last 400 years.

Artistic exploration: Artificial Intelligence, surrealism, hybridization and shifts of perspective

What if the *Opuntia* Cactus and the Cochineal insect were to play a central role in our future?

This question started to inspire possible or impossible narratives for the future of these two species. These narratives became prompts that I fed into an Artificial Intelligence Image Generator (Mid-journey) to create series of “speculative fabulations” scenes.

“Speculative fabulations” are a type of imaginative storytelling that enables us to unfold new worlds through what could take place in the future or could have taken place in the past. “Speculative fabulations” enlarge our perception of history, fantasizing stories that re-shape possibilities, creating characters and myths, to shift our perspective in the face of global and local ecological crisis. (Haraway 2016)

For this project, I collaborated with Artificial Intelligence Image Generators that produce hybrid images from written prompts. Algorithms search the internet for available images related to the “prompt” and combine them into seamless “collages” in an unpredictable surrealistic and aleatory fashion. At the heart of surrealism is the idea of pushing beyond the limits of the human conscious mind to explore the irrational and the subconscious, as well as freeing the imagination from pre-conceived ideas. AI art, in creating unexpected connections



between previously unrelated images, is questioning the possibility of a new kind of human/machine collaborative imagination.

Some will argue that AI art reduces the artist to a typist and is “offering the fruits of creativity without the effort, the search and the self-doubt” (Rob Horning, *Art in America* 2022). This has not been my experience on this project, as working with AI demanded many trials and errors to finalize artworks. Others defend that AI-generated art offers a fresh perspective on surrealism. “By using algorithms, AI can create images and compositions that might

never have occurred to human artists, but still need the artist’s creativity and imagination to be truly innovative.” (*Surrealistly* 2023) AI art is born of a new type of creative collaboration between humans and machines.

In *Memories of the Future*, the created artworks imagine a world in which the *Opuntia* Cactus and the Cochineal insect are central to our past-future evolution. The generated images or “speculative fabulations” scenes are produced from a hybrid blend of artificial intelligence, digital manipulation, and hands-on analogue craftsmanship. As arts-based research, and by engaging with AI, the project aims to experiment with processes of artistic hybridization, crossing between heterogeneous medium/techniques/modalities, and tests how they shift our perspectives while expanding creative and imaginative possibilities.

Memories of the Future wishes to sensitize the public to the aesthetic and emotional relationships we have with our landscapes, the fragile equilibrium of our biodiversity, and the complex network of historical, cultural and ecological connections we are weaving with the plants and insects that surround us. Through this project, we realize that our landscape is the result

of 400 years of cultural and ecological hybridization, enlarging our perspective on the role that these processes play in our evolution.

Many questions remain open. What will be the impact of Artificial Intelligence on art and creativity? Between curiosity, hope, fear and ethical questioning, how will Artificial Intelligence impact our evolution? Will Artificial Intelligence help us address some of our global and local ecological issues? Will AI, a pure product of our imagination, be our saviour or our curse?

Weaving digital and physical: the final artworks

The project comprises four physical artworks (60cm x 60cm), each featuring 25 miniature “speculative fabulations” scenes, woven in strips of printed and hand-painted canvas with vintage ribbons, in Rococo frames.

Each of these four pieces explore one of the following “futuries” or “speculative fabulations” themes:

Witness of Change fabulates a world in which the Opuntiae Cactus is the main plant species of our planet, flourishing and flowering on all continents and land types. In each image, the silhouette of the “payesa,” the traditional peasant woman from the island of Ibiza, a disappearing human species, an archetype of ancient knowledge close to the land, becomes a witness of the ecological changes happening around her. She also used to be part of our landscape and I have embodied this character in a live performance (Nostalgia 2019). The silhouette was drawn from photos of this act.

Hybrid World fantasies imaginary global transportation and trade of Opuntia cacti across seas and continents, reshaping our planet’s landscapes with all types of hybrid species.

Planet Nopal invents a world in which the Opuntiae cactus is central to life on earth, pro-



viding energy and food for humans, animals, cyborgs and humanoids, as well as medicinal products, cosmetics and fibre, to create all kind of objects.

Living Red revisits and re-invents the myriad uses of the Cochineal red pigment, which is notably less toxic (though not vegan) than synthetic red pigments. It can be employed in food, medicinal products, cosmetics and fabric dyeing.

The project also includes:

A video with the full series of the miniature scenes. <https://youtu.be/UiqGEt-NV30>

A physical world map collage (160cm x 120cm) that will be finalised in a participatory way during the exhibition. The map will gather visual information relevant to the Nopal/Cochineal's history worldwide. Participants will be invited to imagine their own "speculative fabulations" from the miniature scenes and images, and collage them on the map.

Memories of the Future is part of my doctoral research on "Hybridization & Perceptual Shifts in Artistic Creation."

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Image opposite: *Witness of Change*, by Roseline de Th  lin, miniature scenes cut and weaved in canvas strips, printed and painted, with vintage ribbons. 60cm X 60cm, in a Rococo frame.

Developing Human Bonds with Nature Through Photography

Alexander Kopytin

An “environmental turn” in the arts is currently taking place. The arts play an increasingly significant role in the environmental agenda of humankind. Along with science, the arts present and make their attempt in their own way to solve key issues of the human relationship with the world of nature, they have their own means of designating and solving environmental and human problems, their own methods of socio-psychological reflection, they have their own ways of thinking and acting.

As a form of visual art, photography can reflect the environment and provide an opportunity to focus on natural objects and processes, help to find meaning in the environment, frame and reframe the reality of nature, and render the complex dynamics implied in nature. Photography can empower humans, help them to appropriate and personalize the environment and even come to more actively participate in its design, management and restoration.

Environmental or nature-based photo-taking practices represent a growing segment of the expressive and creative arts, based on the new understanding of the role of nature in providing public and environmental health and establishing more harmonious and supportive relationships of humans with nature.

The role of photography in providing meaningful human connection to nature

There are many reasons why photography can be a valuable means of nature-based practices:

1. Photography helps to explore and change people's perception of nature, to develop environmental consciousness and knowledge.

One of the significant effects of photography is that "...the camera invariably gives people or objects some kind of distinctive meaning, relevance and status." (Sontag, 1990, p.28). Photography can help people to come to a new perception of nature and recognize its *meaningfulness and beauty*, even if people initially didn't recognize such qualities. This is also true when we confront a "dark" side of nature. When we are focused even on the most depressed, sad and colorless environment and start looking beneath the superficial exterior of things or places, we can often see some spark of life, some healthy and unique aspects that characterize them. As Berman (1993) puts it, taking photographs "...brings out the inherent qualities in the miserable, the poor and the oppressed, so that they become dramatically interesting. This is a paradoxical aspect of photographs that has echoed in therapeutic work" (p.37).

Sontag (1990) commented on the effect of photographic selectivity in the following way: "While a painting or prose description can never be other than a narrowly selective interpretation, a photograph can be treated as a narrowly selective transparency. But despite the presumption of veracity that gives all photographs authority, interest, seductiveness, the work that photographers do is no generic exception to the usually shady commerce between art and truth" (p. 6).

As President of the "Golden Turtle" International Wildlife Festival, underwater photographer Andrey Sukhinin puts it, at present "photography promotes environmental values. Influencing the feelings and emotions of people through the positive energy of creativity which is



Photo 1: Michail Korostev. Indian elephant. Andaman Islands. India.

perhaps one of the most accessible and effective channels for involving people in environmental protection, developing their ability to see the beauty of the natural world and understand its life and connection with human beings." Photography uses social and cultural codes that are understandable to everyone on any continent to communicate our common goal to preserve the ecosphere. Sukhinin emphasized the role of Festival as an educational program aimed at photographers of all levels, from beginners to experienced professionals. The wildlife photography festival provides this target audience with the widest opportunities for communication

and exchange of experience." (Kopytin, 2022).

Another wildlife photographer Michail Korostelev believes that the main thing that he came to understand is that many animals do not deserve a very bad reputation. It turned out that if he does not disturb them, observing them carefully and with respect, do not forget that he is their guest, then they do not show aggression, do not attack, and let human beings be included in their environment. Thanks to this understanding, Korostelev can shoot hippos, crocodiles, bears and sharks underwater.

Through photography, he even found a common language with animals and a kind of dialogue, in which the two sides understand each other is possible. 'Sometimes animals do not want to communicate, often they just pass by. Sometimes fleetingly look eye to eye. But there are also long-term interactions. Sometimes it's just a game. But sometimes there were significant contacts.'

2. Photography helps people to feel in control of the environment and participate in its management and restoration.

Since the goal of ecotherapy and eco-arts is to facilitate people's interaction with the environment in order to achieve not only health-promotion for themselves, but also environmental health outcomes, photography can be used to promote human beings' active position in their relationship with the environment and develop their perception of themselves as those who are able to exert a certain amount of influence on it. Environmental psychology

supports the idea of *participation* and strives to enhance citizen involvement in environmental design, management and restoration. Nature-based photography can support achieving these goals. This can be a result of people's better understanding of environmental issues and their relation to personal and community agendas. Often photography reflects various natural scenery and environmental public activities in order to bring public attention to environmental problems and ways to resolve them.

Photo-taking can even help people to feel safe and in control of the situation, whenever it evokes uncomfortable reactions as a result of being confronted with difficult outdoor situations and less "beautiful" and pleasurable sides of nature. Sontag (1990) emphasized that "To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and, therefore, like power" (p.4).

3. Photography supports ecological personalization and subjectification of nature.

Our perception of the constructive human interaction with nature through photography can be enriched by the concept of the *personalization* of the environment (Heimets, 1994). This concept is related to psychosocial aspects of human experience, a sense of territoriality, belonging, ownership and control over spaces and objects. Personalization can also be understood as a human behavior that aims to express certain distinctive features of the individual in the environment. Environmental photography can be understood as an *ecological form of personalization* based on the empathic and supportive human interaction with the world of nature. Photography and other activities involving creative personalization of the environment can promote an environmental ethic and a more active and participatory position in people's relationships with the world around them, as well as supporting their self-esteem and empowerment.

which means that natural objects and environments are perceived as having their own subjectivity and are able to be in some form of reciprocal relationship and in dialogue with humans. Subjectification implies both empathy and identification with natural objects and perceiving them as sharing similar qualities with human beings.

An arts psychotherapist and photographer, Carolina Herbert (2022) has a passion for how the expressive arts, especially photography, can support us to respond to the complex challenges we face in our world today. She believes that slowing down and focusing in on a landscape—a moment when light brushes the earth alight after a storm or gazing into an animal's eyes in the wild—can be an awakening of our relationship, with the earth becoming experienced as real: "In times where we are increasingly disconnected or even separated from the wild, the therapeutic use of photography can draw us back into the intimacy that is at the essence of our nature. It can restore hope and a relationship of compassion, care and appreciation of beauty." As a photographer, she sometimes feels "fully present to this sacred relationship, when there is no longer separation with nature, we are of one spirit, one breath—such is this mystical participation, this union, this communion."

4. Photography helps to develop individual and group ecological identity

Through nature-based photography, development of new



Photo 2: Monna Makkonnen and Miina Savolainen. "The Loveliest Girl in the World," 2006.

characteristics of people's identities, in particular, ecoidentity, can be supported. According to environmentally-grounded personality theory, one's relationship with nature occupies a special role and is a vital factor in healthy personality formation and functioning. Thus, establishing an Earth-based sense of Self, an eco-identity based on human identification with the world of nature, has the same significance as one's relations with people. Our emotional bond with nature and the attachment of human beings to nature, together with

our bonds with other people, are integral to the psychological growth of a person, beginning with the early developmental phase and ending with the final stage of the human lifespan.

Revealing and developing eco-identity can be achieved, in particular, through realistic or *symbolic/metaphoric self-portraits*, when people perceive natural environments or objects as representation of themselves. In order to support the formation of healthy ecological identities of children and young people, a Finnish photographer Miina Savolainen (Savolainen, 2016) developed *empowering photography*. While working in child welfare, she started “The Loveliest Girl in the World” project that spanned over a decade. It was the children and young people who could define how they were to be viewed in the photos. The natural environments chosen by them presented fictional and symbolic worlds through which they could express their inner experience of themselves and others. Nature offered consolation, beauty, protection and embracing arms, and enabled the children to look at and overcome pain and loss. In the fairy-tale-like photographs, each individual’s right to believe in her own worth and wholeness through healthy bonds with nature was brought into view.

Another photography project dealing with eco-identity is “Eyes as Big as Plates” based on an ongoing collaboration between the Finnish-Norwegian artist duo Riitta Ikonen and Karoline Hjorth. Starting out as a play on characters from Nordic folklore, “Eyes as Big as Plates” has evolved into a continual search for modern humanity’s belongingness to nature.



The series is produced in collaboration with retired farmers, fishermen, zoologists, plumbers, opera singers, housewives, artists, academics, etc. Since 2011 the artist duo has portrayed seniors in Norway, Finland, France, US, UK, Iceland, the Faroe Islands, Sweden, South Korea, Czech Republic, Japan, Senegal, Outer Hebrides, Tasmania and Greenland. Each image in the series presents a solitary figure in a landscape, dressed in elements from surroundings that indicate neither time nor place. Here nature acts as both content and context: characters literally inhabit the landscape wearing sculptures they create in collaboration with the artists.

5. Engaging in environmental photography supports mindfulness and a sense of physical presence in the environment.

Some environmental photo-taking activities can be considered as a way of developing somatic awareness and an embodied sense of self in one's relation to the environment. This effect is most obvious as a result of environmental photo-taking activities which balance time between mindfulness and creative expression, when emphasis is placed on meditative journeys as a form of mini-pilgrimage in the "green area." Often, the projective nature of photo-taking activity enables a person's identification with natural objects and environments on a physical level.

Mindful photo-taking activities can be integrated into ecotherapies and support the goals of ecotherapies by fostering reconnection and a return to experiencing ourselves in the here and now as embodied beings. This requires attention to physi-

cal sensations in their relation to mental states evoked by one's presence and interaction with the environment. It should be emphasized that the healing powers of nature are enhanced by the degree of mindfulness and mental focus one brings to these interactions. People can immerse themselves in a state of presence in the environment and use photography to explore experiential awareness and practice mindful attention by documenting responses to sensory stimuli. For instance, they can be asked to take pictures of what they move toward as pleasant and to also photograph what they experience as unpleasant, in ways that are used in a new mindfulness-based art therapy intervention [30], which represents an example of a palliative environmental program.

Through environmental photo-taking activities, people can be encouraged to immerse themselves in a kind of meditation, with their absorption in physical and emotional processes on the one hand, and attentiveness to the environmental stimuli on the other. They can walk or act mindfully, keeping a sense of their presence in the environment with immediate experience in the here and now, appreciating their physical contact with the natural objects and sensory qualities of the "green space" with its "field effects."

Mindfulness-based environmental photo-taking activities can include an introduction with mindfulness instruction and emphasis on the role of attention in health. Warm-up exercises involving breathing and relaxation and exploratory walkabouts in certain environments can be introduced as helping to provide deeper effects.

6. Photography as a means of confronting nature experiencing distress and illness.

At present, the obvious ecological losses associated with the disappearance of species, landscapes and ecosystems, changes in weather conditions, disruption of the usual way of life or loss of livelihood become more evident and often reflected through art, especially photography. By doing so, photography provides modest but compelling acts of

regeneration, an adaptive response to healing not only of human beings, but of the multitude of places on the planet that experience distress and “illness.”

The arts become a front row seat to witness the happenings of our planet. As Sarah West (2022) puts it, the dramatic happenings of our planet, politically and environmentally “have been paired with a deeply cultivated, loving, personal relationship with the lands and waters, and stimulate people to center their life around advocating for creating spaces where we can heal—ourselves, our communities and the land—and fold us back into the web of connection. This intense connection with the earth has also meant a lifetime of experiencing eco grief.” The visual scenery of planetary and ecosystems’ damage evokes ecological grief as an emotional response to various environmental losses, especially among those people who until recently sought to maintain close ties with the natural environment and attached increased importance to this connection.

French artist Philippe Echaroux gained worldwide fame in 2014 thanks to the project “Painting with Lights,” in which he used a digital projector and light “graffiti” to project photographs of indigenous people’s faces unto tree crowns as a screen. With this project, in particular, he defended the tropical forest in Brazil, 600 hectares of which were destroyed as a result of predatory logging. Every day, 300 trucks loaded with logs leave this area. This means that 600 hectares of forest were cut down. And this continues,



Photo 4: Philippe Echaroux. "Painting With Lights" (2014).
Light projection onto the forest: light "graffiti."

despite the fact that, according to the Brazilian constitution, cutting down forests on the territory of indigenous peoples is prohibited. The projection of a face of indigenous people onto the trees of a tropical forest creates the impression that the forest has acquired its own agency.

7. Environmental photography facilitates narrative activity

Narrative construction can be an effective way to assist with appropriation and personalization of the environment via photography. When people create and tell stories that concern their relationship with the environment, they have rich possibilities to discover and maintain their individual or group identity, formulate complex earth-based meanings and bring their intentions and the sense of a goal into the narrative.

Creating narratives as a part of phototherapeutic environmentally and nature-based activities can activate these inherent qualities in people. Different photographic material can be used to facilitate narrative activity. These can be photo-albums or other personal collections of pictures, photos taken in various environments to illustrate certain events. Significant memories and biographical meanings can be revealed, for instance, when people are showing and commenting their photographs related to certain places and natural environments.

Since photo-taking is a process, a result of it can be a series of photographs able to facilitate narration based on a sequence of micro- or macro-events that took place in the process of picture-taking and are reflected in the photographs. These could be natural processes observed by a person and related to her/his inner reactions. Thus, one of effect of photo-taking during some periods of time can be story-making that helps with a sense of cohesiveness of their lives and perception of natural objects and ecosystems.

Nature-based photography can include some special activities facilitating narration, such as photo-journaling or keeping photographic diaries, illustrating personal stories, or some cultural and archetypal themes, poetry, or myths with photographs. People can present their narratives together with a series of pictures selected from those taken during their outdoor journeys. Creating narratives is also possible with the use of people's collection of personal photographs or albums, as a result of their choice of the most significant photographs or a series of photographs related to their experience of the environment.

According to the plot of "The Private Moon" art project, a man saw a Moon falling from heaven into the attic of his house. He covered the Moon with a blanket, drank tea with her, treated her to apples, and then transported her across a dark river to a bank with lunar pines, descended into the lower world, and then returned back, illuminating the path with his personal Moon. Together with the Moon, the man crossed the boundaries of worlds, fell into sleep, and became a mythological creature that can live in the real world as if in a fairy tale.

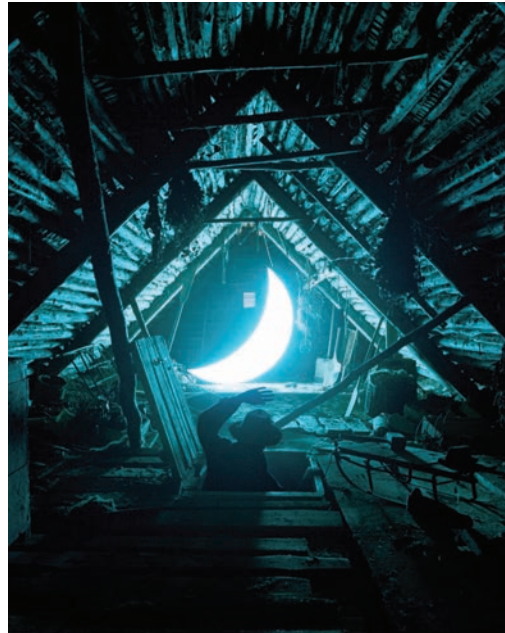


Photo 5 and 6: Leonid Tishkov, "The Private Moon" project.

The romantic fairy-tale quality of the project is ambiguous: it allows us to see the world in a new light, to introduce notes of poetics, mystery, fabulousness, childhood, tenderness, care, reciprocity, contemplation into a person's perception, and highlights everything around. A meeting with the Moon revives in us the ability to perceive the world as a living universe, sharing with a person the feeling of loneliness, pain, and the joy of meeting and living together, and wandering. In order to tell his story, Leonid Tishkov constructed a lantern in the form of a moon and made many photographs of it installing it in different locations, including those that experience ecological problems in order to direct people's attention to them.

Conclusion

Photography embraces various forms of creative activities able to support public and environmental health and establish more harmonious and supportive relations of human beings with nature. This article presented environmental, nature-based applications of photography and information on how photography helps to explore and change people's perception of nature, to feel in control of and to appropriate the environment, maintain and develop ecological identity, to facilitate narrative activity in order to integrate various aspects of experience concerning people's relationship with nature, and to develop mindfulness and a sense of physical presence in the environment.

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Hiking Kolob Canyons

Zion National Park, 2018. For Michael Sowder.

Andrew Sofer

Above these finger canyons, streams carve rock
into cliffs of crimson Navajo sandstone
where red-tailed hawks and New World sparrows fly.

Star closest to Heaven says the scripture
sacred to those Mormon pioneers
prospecting here for timber, livestock, God.

By then the Spanish priests had come and gone,
their dream-vision of trekking overland
from Santa Fe to California mission

evaporating in the desert heat.

Before *them*, Kolob was sacred to the Paiute
who named these cinder cones the Markagunt,

highland of trees—a forest-world above
the craggy plain where Ancestral Pueblo walked
until, a thousand years ago, they vanished.

Crossing Hurricane Fault, which first gave rise
to this great plateau of lava dams and lakes,
we're hiking in the Kolob wilderness

as if we, too, could forge a sacred trail
and make Zion a promised land once more
by mending the cracked bowl of earth and sky.

Note: According to the Book of Abraham, a sacred text of the Latter Day Saints, Kolob is the heavenly body nearest to the throne of God.

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Untitled 1/23/24

Elizabeth Gordon McKim

*An avatar
Chews on our dreams
Spits out the husks
Scrapes our ceiling
Dances widdershins on
Our doorstep
Down on the gulf
It was always coming up
Mistral mistral
We shout down the bones
Call up
The hawk turned
Willawaw
Round our burning
Century
Clock-wise
In the eye
Of what we know
Is on its way*

The Light Walk: Walking Upstream to Re-Source

A Duet by
Carrie MacLeod & Isabelle Roch

Preamble

For a panoramic view of the Expressive Arts field, we scattered an array of books on the floor to see where we've come from. We reminisced about the roots, first impulses, and foundations that have shaped the trajectory of our lives. And then we paused, placed the books aside and asked what is emerging for the years going forward. We left the books on the floor and brought our inquiry into the waterways. Leaving what was familiar, we entered into an alternative space and time.



Barefoot in a mountain stream, we instinctively started to walk upstream. And so our quest began. We wanted to know the next stage of *poiesis*, and for this, there was nothing bet-



ter than to set out on a journey, in the heart of the elements. With all of our senses engaged, attentive to every step on this uncertain and slippery ground, we advanced towards the source. Thoughts bounced from one of us to the other until new insights were brought to light. Our shared journey sparked the necessity of collaboration, and we made discoveries alongside one another

that wouldn't happen if we had been on our own. We have been ambling upstream as friends and colleagues every summer for almost two decades. The waterways have coaxed us again and again to reveal new insights from the depths.

Going upstream asks us to reduce the distance between thought and action. This phenomenological friction upends our assumptions and perceptions. We are no longer carried by mainstream currents, but are ushered into unknown tributaries and pools of friction. This living *poiesis* is a progressive discovery and a conscious search for the not-yet-known, a journey of side-stepping into unlikely spaces. We are poised to embrace this visceral score as we move through the countercurrents one stream at a time. This is not merely a metaphorical exercise, but an ongoing living inquiry fuelled by insatiable curiosity and playful postures. We are live-streaming in the real sense.

Between each summer, the upstream findings inspire a series of art-analogue exchanges throughout the year. Traces from these excavations are scattered here as images, poetic whis-

pers, and place-based contemplations. The living inquiry that follows is an aesthetic response born from the fluid qualities of seven streams. You'll find inner and outer migrations, uncharted waters and imaginal terrain.

Dear reader, we invite you to traverse with us upstream. Pack your un-belongings and un-said longings. Leave your heavy baggage and hands-free devices behind. Come and join us as we embark on new tributaries through spaces of un-knowing. Get to know the ledge, discover knowledge at the edge, and find your footing on slippery stones. Move the bottom of your feet across the silty rock bed until submerged ideas are overturned. Wade into the centre of the stream with us to decenter your assumptions. Open your body to the friction of the countercurrents and welcome the unexpected re-sources that surface along your way.

1. Already Gone, not yet Arrived

This faint Horizon
Already gone and not yet
arrived in this dawn



The visceral impulse to move upstream is not a subversive or rebellious act, but is more like an instinctive response. We don't plan our itineraries in advance. Every summer, we simply start walking in the direction that makes the most sense. The friction of water continues to be a primary informant. We're not in a rush to find definitive answers or to revisit pre-given algorithms. Our bodies simply push up against the cross-cutting currents with all of our senses in tow. We cannot get ahead of ourselves here.

From this posture of readiness, we begin to notice passing forms that arrive with their own fictions and fallacies. We catch a tiny glimpse of what exists between perception and possibility, as "...the eye focuses itself on the tiny gap; the place wherein creation is possible, the fraction of space that lets the mind wander and wonder. The space in which anything, everything, is possible and which draws the viewer closer and closer" (Paris, 2006, p. 191). Over time, the undefined gaps and ambivalent routes become our trusted allies. We embrace the discomfort of a walking discipline that is not set in stone.

Fractured lines of time carved along the banks offer cues for where to go next. We are stopped in our tracks by a rippling light that shimmers in our peripheral vision. Unfamiliar life-forms on the plated rocks follow us with their animated gestures. Their luminous glow beckons us into an imaginal dance between shadow and light. This radiant language is born from a nomadic community of silent lives and we wonder: is this merely a reflection of the water or a silhouette pointing us to another realm?

The dancing messengers beckon us into ways of knowing that are out of bounds. We look around in all directions and check our bearings. We sense that we are being witnessed by more-than-human kin and something else is being asked of us here. Our well-worn habits are being reassembled in a shared kinship of an elemental world. Amidst these "'silent lives,' the enigma becomes even more acute and, in this very measure, the astonishment deepens" (Jacottet, 2001, p.57).

The Living Inquiry: Vitality

Your body simply moves. You evolve in the background, like a faint horizon that flickers before fading away. I feel as if I've caught you unaware, not yet arrived and already gone. The space where you evolve attracts me. Everything seems possible here.

I feel as if there's a curtain between the living space where you are and where I am. I feel

trapped in two dimensions. I want to open it. I want to understand what seeing means.

You're just passing through as an ephemeral and silent life. I caught you by chance, barely. It might just as well not have been. Untouchable, unpredictable and ephemeral, you possess a vital force that has its own sensitivity, and I can't grasp it. And my amazement grows.

2. The Ugly Duckling

Asymmetrical
Dance is not to be dismissed
This is the fine line



We come face to face with the counter-currents and gain an immersive perspective. The stream is a verb, a lively happening, and a movement that finds its way through all of our senses. We wonder how to retain our sense of balance if we leave some of the ugly constructs of the mind behind. This is not easy when we hear the mind asking, "What am I supposed to do then?"

This body of water is our body of fluid knowledge for the time being. There is an echo in the water that reverberates from descendants who have asked the same questions. Many have passed through these waters and have left ripples of wisdom in their wake. Yet the mind is stubborn and creates a wall out of fear for its own survival. "Look, mind, instead of being

a wall which tries to stop the flow, can you try to be an asymmetrical witness?"

A more encompassing view comes into our line of sight when we become permeable to the ebbs and flows. The undulating currents remind us that we are not here to avoid turbulence, but to face uncertainty with bold courage. This quiet revelation emanates from a casual conversation between gestures and posture. "So, if we follow the rationale underlying the principle that whatever we make depends on what we have, it is possible to say that gesture depends on and derives from posture" (Fernandes, 2015, p.138). This somatic dialogue introduces new stepping stones from which to navigate impasses and inclines.

The Living Inquiry: Asymmetry

I'm looking for balance. I simplify, I build, I resist. You're in the flow. You're in the river and the words are flowing.

I think and create logical chains to hold on to so I don't lose my mind. You escape and go off on a tangent. You take all common sense with you.

I exhaust myself by reconstructing all the notions that keep me upright. My symmetries falter.

I create a wall out of fear and survival, while my heart smiles at the idea of being your silent witness. I step aside and open a way for you inside me.

3. The Tables are Turned

Archive the lost days
So that we can remember
Life without a mask



We are no longer the centre of our story when we move upstream. Rather, we interface with ancient storylines that seamlessly carry us into future waters. As we fall in step with the counter-rhythms of friction, we are reminded of what is at stake if our natural instincts become extinct themselves. We belong to an intricate system of waterways that span across space and time, and each stream shows us more-than-human ways of moving. Even as we falter and lose our traction, the counter-currents invite deeper modes of rumination. Is this what a watershed moment is? When the tables are turned and collective agency transfers from the Anthropocene to a grid of tributaries? The stream's intelligence becomes our inherited timepiece from which to mark the fleeting days.

We are practicing how to move with chaos when we push through temperamental waters. The counter-flow presses against our bodies, and we are brought to our knees. From a humbled place, we can finally hear the water songs that unfold around us. The flow of musicality moves in subtle increments, as, "The general is not given at once, it is constituted in the repeated apprehension of the particular" (Laërce, 1999, p. 1160). New repertoires emerge as repositories through the rocks and offer signs of hope and lament. We are not only making ourselves known here, but this sensory biosphere is making us.

The Living Inquiry: Animated Archives

I waste my days in a polarized world where duality reigns supreme. You live a life without masks. Most of the time, I compare, sometimes I dialogue. I remain locked in a universe of emotions that I feed. I play with memories.

Curious about the moment, you poke holes in my beautiful archives as you carry out your living investigation. My life is driven by all my accumulated memories. They orbit around me, and I'm the center of attraction.

You contact the lost archives of the living world. You know the reason why humanity and the earth are together. You know our reason for being on earth.

4. No Trespassing

Shelter in this place
Now is the time for safety
To cling to fierce grace



We are code-switching here. Sedimentary layers of tectonic movement serve as the database of history in this place. Timely storylines are streamlined through the cracks as water crosses boundaries and surrenders to the crucible of change. There is more happening here

than meets the eye. Hierarchies in the ecosystem are being rearranged by climate warming trends. We tread through the imprints of erosion and muse at how water forges a path despite existential angst. As the stream winds its way through fabled corridors, it whispers, "Prepare yourselves for the precarity of the world."

In times of upheaval, we tend to cling to familiar terrain, default to known worldviews and erect protective walls. The convergent streams point to an interdependent web of willing witnesses. This decentralized network combines unwanted residue with treasured resources, where, "Animate and inanimate, moving and stilled, are not in this sense diametrically opposed as much as part and parcel of an inter(in)animation" (Schneider, 2011, p. 145). We learn from these fluid veins that move nutrients across borders and boundaries without a sense of duty or disdain. Somehow this lifeblood exudes remarkable intelligence through histories in the making. Streams are not limited by nation states, border walls or citizenship claims. Water comes and goes on its own volition and exhibits multiple forms of belonging on the way.

The Living Inquiry: Dog Intrusion

I follow the fence, I follow the path. I've made my own itineraries, in my thoughts and in my life, and I follow them. I follow my line. My map of the world. I follow it.

You create your map as you move. You know the rules to break and those to respect. You know the game. You play with the unknown and see where it takes you.

I don't know the risks, I don't know where the danger lies. I have no idea. I act totally unconsciously. I pour myself into the digital world, a world seemingly without consequences. I'm anxious, I sense danger.

216 You have a fierce grace, and the dogs stay away. You don't fit into their world. And this, for you, is non-negotiable. Your boundaries are clear and solid.

5. Upside Down

Reservoirs retain
watered down desires
Ocean receives



The confluence of waterways brings our narrow desires into full view and turns them upside down. In this surprising turn of events, we pause to reorient ourselves. We vacillate between mind, body and elemental mystery. Fluid itineraries cannot be travelled in haste, but ask us to slow down and return to a remembered place. We are habituated by anthropocentric interpretations, and want to expedite our learnings in this seemingly groundless reality. We flounder with impatience and become entangled in our own thought patterns. The flesh of the stream listens patiently and receives our free form ideas without conditions.

The acoustic ecologies are composed with a lilting cadence as crosscurrents move in rhythmic relations. These affective ledgers beckon us to listen without judgement and speak without knowing where our next words will come from. Mysterious arrivals and departures enter through improvisation. Our senses are heightened as spontaneous happenings catch us off guard. Each twist and turn holds cues for pace and possibility. As the stream diligently travels to its source, we are also looking for a hospitable place to land.

The Living Inquiry: Desires

My desires are reflections of light flickering on the black screen, and I chase them endlessly. I want to be somewhere else, somewhere I'm not; beyond myself. I'm restless.

You're here. You come and find me for a moment. You draw my agitation, my art of "on the spot."

I neither move forward nor backward an inch. Fascinated by the light of my desires, I'm out of the real flow. You're like a shooting star, reflecting one of the billions of possibilities that flow can create. You remind us of the beauty of flow.

There's nothing at the end of my desires, so I return to the flow and follow the stream into the ocean.

6. To Overstep the Mark

Discharge the substance
That is blocking the real flow
Of effortless breath



Every stream comes with an origin story, dialect and a dream of home. We tread lightly as we listen for intonations to determine the direction of flow. The bedrock of this meandering praxis is always shifting under our feet. This instability makes room for expansion and distilla-

tion as passageways open to worlds yet to be known. When we stumble into this confluence of waterways, we encounter a multiplicity of languages that overlap and converge. Fluid thruways carry each currency with care without watering down their essence. Multiple futures emerge through the interwoven spidery water webs.

New life forms cling to the edges and come along for the ride, but they too must respect the repertoires that already exist in the biosphere. Could this be a living barometer in a world where our over-extended reach has created monocultures of despair? Could we head to the warning that, “The more globalism trumps language differences—by ignoring, soliciting, or engulfing them—the more passionate these protections and usurpations become. For one’s language—the one we dream in—is home” (Morrison, 2020, p. 22). Differences are indecipherable when the dynamism of each stream is swallowed by the mammoth mainstream.

We touch into the visceral consequences of being twice removed from the natural world. Our priorities start to reverse when the upstream swells offer a paradigm shift. The lineage of this ancient lore brings us more fully into the present. The embedded laws in each tributary could put tribunals in their place as the order of biodiversity re-replaces mainstream mistakes. This is a generative space to learn about equitable exchange.

The Living Inquiry: Metamorphosis

You walk on the black curtain of reality as I know it. You walk on the other side of the stage, where illusion is created.

I am the fascinated spectator who sees herself dancing, living and crying with the puppet on stage. I am the puppet on stage.

You unveil the backstage. No magic, just hands, tools and energy. Bolts, canvas, glue and

hammer: raw materials for colorful, ephemeral worlds. Here, the rules are different. Construction, deconstruction, lost objects, found objects.

You create the conditions for the event. Life on stage goes on. I want to join you. I want to create worlds in the darkness of night.

7. Inner Fire

Inversions take time
Warmth comes from the inside out
Petticoat wisdom



Walking upstream is disorienting and calls for an inner compass that is attuned to every sense.

To gravitate upstream is to immerse in the unsettling and unanswerable questions that mark our days. It is to name the forgotten and abandoned ones. It is to bypass the expedited routes of normative convention. It is to listen to underwater influencers beyond social media streams. It is to move beyond alienation and enter into shared spaces of aliveness when deadening distractions persist. It is to take aesthetic responsibility for the residue that we leave in our wake.

Are you still walking with us, dear reader? Thank you for accompanying us on these uncon-

mon routes. You've likely felt discomfort from the fierce raging waters. You may be shivering by now. Take some time to warm up, to look around, and to see where you've come from. Listen carefully for the undertones of the aquifers. Look for the compositions of light that are carried freely by the water. Inhale the humid air that hovers just above the bubbling mist. Exhale all the reasons why you should be anywhere else but here. Breathe deep into the waterways to ignite the imaginal flame that is just within reach.

The Living Inquiry: Laughter in the Fire

I followed the sound. You told me to come in. The sound came from all directions. A beautiful madness. I put myself at the point of resonance of all these sounds.

We met on the stairs. A gravitational attraction born of this between-worlds, this place of passage, this spine.

Without consciousness, I'd be destroyed, torn apart, driven mad. Together, we dance in this flow of energy coming from all directions and going in all directions.

Just a pure sound, a breath, a perfection that's out of my hands. I develop a new sense of direction. And I laugh, a breath of oxygen in the middle of the fire.

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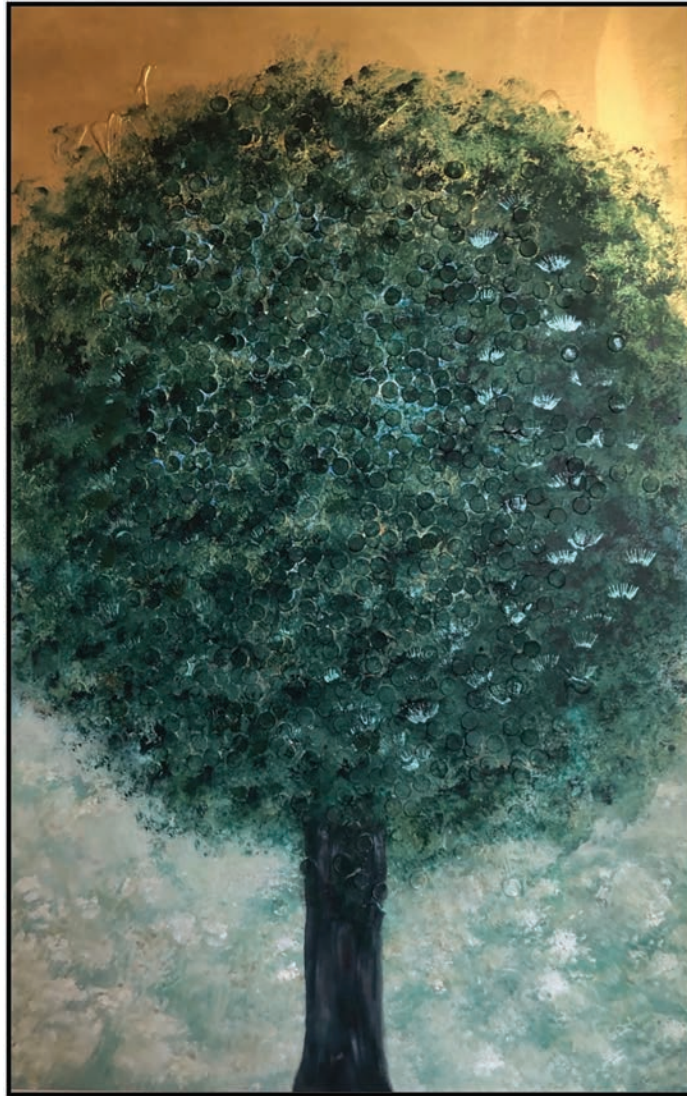
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Carrie MacLeod is an interdisciplinary artist and scholar-practitioner who has worked worldwide with communities, non-profit organizations and educational institutions for three decades. Her work moves at the intersections of conflict transformation, peacebuilding, involuntary migration, decolonial memory practices, and performance. Carrie is on the faculty at the European Graduate School and the Vancouver Art Therapy Institute. She is grateful to live on the traditional territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́lílwətaʔt (Tsleil-Waututh) nations.

Isabelle Roch, PhD, is Director of Synopia, a Swiss-based supervision-coaching training institute. She played an active role in the creation of the arts therapist profession in Switzerland, and is a member of the quality commission for the federal examination. As a supervisor and coach, she supports teams in nurturing their interactions and creatively meeting challenges.



Tree, by Barbara Hielscher. Acrylic paint on canvas, 70cm x 110cm.

Barbara Hielscher, CAGS, Ph.D. Cand. Assistant Dean of the Arts, Health & Society Division of the European Graduate School EGS, Faculty Member of the EGS and Director of the Expressive Arts Institute Berlin, Germany.

Winter Solstice
Nancy Mackenzie

Behind us, the sun
or what's left of it.

Brahms motifs at play
and lullaby memories almost nigh.

Night rising from ground
to Jupiter, bold as the barn-light beacon.

We turn to Buster, Paxton, and Windy,
small horse herd in the north paddock,

each of us reverent of sky-change
knowing darkness with its agency

ages us slowly. We know ourselves as one,
as breath, as twilight, our bond

as embers warming the belly.
This glow, what's left of it

lingers and grows, yearning,
already, to ride again.

You can see it
in our eyes.

Antiphony
Nancy Mackenzie

Dark morning rain on backyard deck deepens its pitch and tone
calls forth frog-song amid a bottle-picker's timbre beyond the fence.

I turn my head to discern Hailstork's "Sonata da Chiesa," or cranberry fantasia?
Wonder if by peering for sound of the backyard's soft dove, love leaves.

I love the high grey clouds hours later, after closing that door
and south, from the second floor, my heart absorbs goldening Green Ash.

My thought dips and rises with wind through roses, Lombardi poplar,
a vole's cathedral of blanket flowers; rapid finches flit yellow through boulevard trees.

From my north-facing window, the raspberries add their red refrain
anointing my feelings with a semi-permanent dye, a tattooed fugue.

Just for today, let me be this world of my castle-making
and honour these gods, as I would ancestors, with my response.

Nancy Mackenzie is a horsewoman, poet and novelist. She has published four books of poetry and a novel with Ekstasis Editions. Nancy has a company called Bronze Horse Communications that offers literary and technical writing and editing services. She has been editing novels and memoirs for literary clients; editing government standards documents for the City; and writing about education for a First Nation in Alberta. Nancy is extremely grateful for the characters in her life, and loves this quote from Terry Pratchett: "If you don't turn your life into a story, you just become a part of someone else's story."

The Albatross and Me

Judith Greer Essex

When Steve Levine, editor of the *POIESIS* Journal, put out the call for material on the theme, “Next Steps, New Beginnings,” I contemplated my life: What is beginning and what are my next steps? Brain fog and lack of direction for my future seem my daily atmosphere. I have no secure footing, no definite plan. That unsettling reality crawled into my lap. Then came an image of the wandering albatross.

On occasion, an animal comes to me, either as a living creature or as a mental image. It says, “Hello,” and we have an encounter. When this happens, I consider it seriously: the circumstances of our meeting, what I was doing when we met, what it was doing, and what sensations, emotions, thoughts, and memories I might have concerning our meeting. I do not consult a book on animal medicine—someone else’s traditions and ideas. Instead, I consult zoological information about that animal: young or old, male or female, at rest or traveling, endangered or safe. I want to know the individual. The unique visitation by this being and our relationship can reveal its significance to me. I sit with the image and move in a way reminiscent of the animal, as if it had my body or as if my spirit could live in that body. Looking at many photographs of it, imagining myself in its body and locale, I draw it. This kind of research takes many hours. My journal holds my reflections. I glean and gather what messages I might receive from my four-legged, finned, or feathered family that can translate to my current reality.

As I contemplated the life of the albatross, at home in the sky, soaring for years at a time, sleeping on the wing, it brought me some measure of peace. Here was a creature who lived without knowing the next step. Could I take a lesson from the albatross?

illuminated journal Jan 24

my island - 21st Gift
Left & Right

- Shene Ron
- Cheryl Turner
- David ca A
- Kate B
- Eliz McKin
- Michele Gray
- Ellen P



Wandering

POIESIS January 2024

Next Steps

- on mid-flight
- What if there are no stepping stones
- What if the path is obscured?
- No thoroughfare
- No greenlight,
- No right of way
- No north star,
- No map
- No guide

~~What if this~~ ~~mid-flight~~
 What if this ~~mid-flight~~ was ~~the~~ ~~limin~~
 The bitter limin

~~What~~ like Dorothy's house,
~~was~~ sucked up into the swirling
 swept away!

Pulled from ~~my~~ moorings
 Adrift on a ~~Sea of pain~~
 With but a pea of comfort?

Uprooted *our* life
 A refugee in ~~my~~ own country.
 No direction home.
 Like a rolling stone's

~~like~~ A tumbling tumbleweed
 Blown across the desert plains

long for the earth,
 For the soil of my own place to
 cover my feet,
 For the sands of the Pacific to

~~I want my~~ ~~cotton~~ chair and bed
 • I want my feather pillow.
 • My teacup and warm slippers.

~~For you,~~ ~~on~~ the feather, float
 The seed pod ~~hated~~
 The odd leaf twirling.

In Mid-flight

There are no stepping stones.
The path is obscured.
No thoroughfare
or right of way
No green light
No north star
No guide
No map.

This is the bitter limin

Like Dorothy's house,
Sucked up into the swirling cloud
And swept away;

Pulled from moorings,
adrift on a rogue wave;
Uprooted—
A tumbleweed tumbling,
No direction home.
I long for
My feather pillow
My teacup and warm slippers

A feather is floating
A seed pod flung
The odd leaf twirling
No
 next
 indicated
 step.

I'll go then with the wandering albatross,
Winging across the endless blue
Soaring
No need for land
 Vast sea
 Vast sky

Soon enough I'll see the nodding calla lilies
Out the window by my writing desk
Soon enough
 Exhausted
 Relieved
 Home.

Judith Greer Essex Ph.D. LMFT, ADTR, REAT. A professor at the European Graduate School in Saas Fee, Switzerland and founding director of The Expressive Arts Institute San Diego, Judith teaches community art-making to facilitate large groups of people to cooperate and create together. In addition to community art, her special interests include embodiment, improvisation, women's issues, and androgyny. She has led development workshops and consulting for Sharp Hospital Coronado, Toyota University, Mercy Hospital palliative care team, GSDBA Chamber of Commerce San Diego, Alliant University, and San Diego Repertory Theater, among others. Jessica Kingsley Publisher will release her book *Mastering Expressive Arts Therapy: A Practitioner's Guide* in Fall, 2024.

Culture-oriented Expressive Arts Therapy: Intermodal Expressive Arts Therapy Seen from the Perspective of Vygotsky's Cultural-historical Psychology

Varvara V. Sidorova

I graduated from the Department of Psychology of Lomonosov Moscow State University, where the Vygotsky-Leontiev school of consciousness research emerged and has continued to develop. In 2018, during their last visit to Russia, Paolo Knill and Margo Knill visited the Department of Counseling and Clinical Psychology and held a lecture, meeting with students of the Moscow State University of Psychology and Pedagogics, where I have worked as an associate professor in this department for more than 20 years. I was prompted to develop the ideas of culture-oriented expressive arts therapy as an attempt to combine Vygotsky's cultural-historical psychology; the domestic school of consciousness research, especially F.E.Vasilyuk's approach; and the methodology of expressive arts therapy as developed by Paolo Knill. The following is part of my PhD from the European Graduate School, defended in December 2023.

The idea of mediation

One of the main postulates of cultural-historical psychology is that all mental functions and mental processes develop and proceed through the mediation of cultural factors and in the presence of a cultural carrier. Thinking, speech and, more broadly, the work of consciousness

are formed or molded by culture; that is, culture gives them form—both human culture generally and specific cultures. Children who are raised by animals do not acquire specifically human forms of consciousness; it is not enough to be born a human being, you need to be educated and nurtured in a human environment. The guarantor of the perception of this purely human environment is at least one carrier of human culture—an intermediary. Culture itself, including cultural characteristics such as speech, tools, and works of art, also becomes an intermediary in the formation and development of mental processes and the work of consciousness.

The concept of mediation is one of Vygotsky's main themes. In *Thinking and Speech* (2001), he shows that mediation exists at the stage of the development of internal speech in children and is an important part of mastering other mental operations, including reading, writing, counting, and categorization. To master mental operations, a child needs to perform them many times with intermediary objects to internalize them. Thus, by manipulating objects, children learn to perform mental operations—for example, a child may learn to count by counting sticks.

Vygotsky was the first to progress from asserting the importance of the environment for development to identifying a specific mechanism of the environmental influence that changes a child's psyche, leading to the development of higher mental functions specific to humans. The mechanism he identified was interiorization—primarily the interiorization of signs—that is, artificial stimuli created by humans to control their own and others' behaviour. The child's mastery of the connection between sign and meaning and the ability to use speech as a tool marks the emergence of mental functions that distinguish human from animal behavior.

The use of psychological tools to mediate the development of the human psyche is also characterized by the fact that the use of the sign, which marks the beginning of the development of each of the higher mental functions, initially always takes the form of external activity—namely, a shift from intersychic to intrapsychic processes. This transformation happens in

several stages. The first stage is connected with the fact that a person (an adult) uses a certain means to control the behavior of the child, directing the tribe's involuntary functions. During the second stage, the child becomes a subject and uses the same psychological tool to direct another's behavior (believing that other to be an object). During the third stage, the child begins to apply to himself (as an object) the methods used to control behavior that others have applied to him and he to them. Thus, Vygotsky writes, each mental function appears on the scene twice—first as a collective, social activity and then as the child's way of internal speech and thinking. Between these two outputs lies the process of internalization, which turns the function inward (Vygotsky, 2001).

Productive development of experience in the context of intermodal expressive arts therapy

Vygotsky primarily investigated the development of cognitive functions. But imagine that we are talking about the internal mental work of consciousness associated with inner experience. Vasilyuk distinguished inner experience as a complex work of consciousness aimed at the production of meaning. He wrote that

the term "experience" is not used by us in the usual sense [employed in] scientific psychology, as a direct, most often emotional form of giving the subject the contents of his consciousness but to denote a special inner activity—inner work with which a person manages to transform certain (usually difficult) life events and situations to restore the lost mental balance, in a word, to cope with a critical situation. (Vasilyuk, 1984, p. 3).

For Vasilyuk, experience is part of the mental work of consciousness, simultaneously connecting multiple processes and aspects of consciousness (e.g., cognitive, sensory, and emotional processes). Therefore, we can talk about the productive work of the experience that leads to the resolution of contradictions and emergence from crises: "It is this general idea of the production of meaning that allows us to talk about the experience as a productive process,

as a special work" (Vasilyuk 1984, p. 9). Vasilyuk emphasizes the "creative nature of the experience" (p. 9), but sometimes the work of experience can become unproductive, accompanied by a cyclical stream of thoughts and repetitive exhausting feelings leading to dead ends, meaninglessness, and the absence of "meaning." Vasilyuk correlates "successful" and "unsuccessful" experiences with coping and psychological protection. Successful experiences—flexible, realistic, purposeful, and conscious—contribute to the growth of adaptive capabilities when the goal is adaptation to reality. Unsuccessful experiences occur involuntarily, unknowingly, and unrealistically, without accounting for the holistic situation and perspective.

Paolo Knill (1995) speaks about this impasse, comparing problem-oriented and art-oriented approaches. He compares the problem with a dead end, stagnation, or a frozen state and argues that decentering through an art-centered process could provide an escape from the impasse of problematic thinking and experience. Thus the transition to the realm of art and manipulation of objects allows you to "get meanings"—to see meanings that themselves are often born and manifest themselves in the realm of art. Also, Paolo Knill and other authors, referring to the Polish psychiatrist Dombrowski, discuss the positive disintegration of the psyche, which leads to the next level of integration and mental development; this also happens in the realm of the arts. "The creative act helps to connect the integration of the multitude and the differentiation of unity, providing a 'positive' disintegration" (Knill et al., 1995).

Paolo Knill introduces the concept of "the Third" to designate the unexpected meanings born in a creative act. For example, this "Third" can be unexpected streaks of paint that produce a new image that is embedded in the system of meanings and provides hope, a sense of beauty, and meaningfulness. Knill speaks of the Third as the presence of something more, both among us generally and between the therapist and client.

Guided by the logic of Vygotsky's cultural-historical psychology, the translation of the experience into the language and realm of art and, subsequently, the creation of an art form,

contribute to the generation of more productive experiences. The external manipulations that create the art form become a substitute for internal processes related to the work of experience. As expressive arts therapists say, "By creating art, we create meaning" (making art-making sense). Creating something new in the realm of poiesis offers a way out of the impasse and generates new meaning.

The work of experiencing is carried out during the creation of an art form—for example, with the help of a piece of paper (for a drawing) or with the help of the body (for dance). We work "close" to the problem (Knill, 1995): the client can choose to stay with the material of the problem, and the therapist can offer a direct transition to the realm of art, keeping in touch with the material of the problem or problematic experience. The therapist can suggest that the client draw or dance a problem to translate all or some of it into movement.

According to Knill (1995), although the work in the realm of art may seem distant from the problem and we are dealing with decentering, it contributes unconsciously, whether we want it to or not, to escaping deadlock and triggers and helps us to realize the cumulative work of experience, which is carried out at many levels of consciousness. The work of experience is carried out whenever we draw, crumple paper, move or dance, write poetry, or create art in some other way. We are simultaneously creating something new (external work) and performing the inner work of consciousness. Generalizing, we can say that the transition to the realm of expressive art and intermodal transitions between types of art in the presence of the Other lead to the birth of the Third and contribute to the productive development of experience and the birth of new meanings.

The development of experience in the realm of the expressive arts can be considered in more detail using the model of the structure of the image of consciousness (the psychosemiotic tetrahedron of the structure of the image of consciousness), in which movement through the stages of aesthetic analysis can be compared with the movement along the poles of the

tetrahedron. This results in the development of the image of consciousness and the development of experience.

Intermodal transfers contribute to the self-development of consciousness and the productive work of experience

In intermodal expressive arts therapy, we help the self-developing stream of consciousness unfold, supporting and strengthening this unfolding through intermodal transitions. For example, we can ask a person to draw a line on a piece of paper, and then draw a line in the air with their hand that mimics the movement of the line on a piece of paper. Then we might ask the client what the movement reminds them of—for example, a rocket taking off, a snake crawling on the ground, a snail, a road, or a horizon line. Next, we might ask the client to write a fairy tale or a story about this snake, snail, rocket, or road. Invariably, the story will somehow relate to experiences and themes that are important to the client, whether or not they realized that fact initially. Thus, the language of art permits the tuning and self-development of consciousness. In a sense, this process resembles the free associations used at the dawn of psychotherapy, but these free associations have been translated into art.

The word “translation” is important: it’s not by chance that throughout my dissertation I have used metaphors relating to languages and translations from one language to another. In expressive arts therapy, there is a translation from the language of consciousness—the language of the psyche—into the language of a particular kind of art, in which bodily processes and cultural codes are involved, allowing a unique translation to occur that is a healing step in itself.

In this respect, Knill speaks about the substitution model, referring to substituting a solution for a problem and its replacement by the solution to an artistic problem (Sidorova, 2020). But if we look at the substitution model from the perspective of Vygotsky’s theory of medi-

ated psychology, then we are talking about the fact that external actions with an art object can replace internal actions and mental experiences. The dialogue with the art form becomes a kind of internal dialogue with the self. We are dealing with the indirect solution to internal problems. In German, Knill's book in English is *Solution Art*, and that is what we are doing in the realm of the expressive arts. By replacing or transferring the problem to the realm of art, we find an art-based solution that contributes to the productive work of experience and the birth of a new meaning that is experienced at the mental, sensory, and bodily levels. This new experience is already being integrated into the real life of the client.

Knill (2005) calls the last stages of the architecture of the session, "building a bridge to real life." At that point, we can ask how this experience in the realm of art helps to answer a question or request, cope with an experience, or look at a situation in a new way. We have gained new experience, expanded the repertoire of play, and escaped a problematic impasse through the mediation of art.

To sum up:

1. Translating the language of experience, the language of the internal reality of the problem into the languages of art on the territory of expressive arts and decentering, creating and changing the art form during the session, contribute to a more productive work of experience.
2. Intermodal transfer promotes the self-development of consciousness and the productive work of experience.
3. As suggested in Knill's substitution model, substituting an artistic task for a problem and experience results in a solution to the problem in the realm of art, followed by the transfer of the discoveries back to the realm of literal reality.

If we define intermodal expressive arts therapy from Vygotsky's perspective, then we can see it as an indirect solution to problems achieved through internal work and dialogue with the self, which take place and become visible through dialogue with the art form (the Third) in the presence of an intermediary (the Second or Other) and lead to the birth of new meanings.

**Culturally specific means of consciousness adjustment,
art as a means of tuning consciousness, and art forms as mediators**

As we continue to validate the idea that art is a means of tuning consciousness, we return to Vygotsky, who called art a "social technique of feelings." Culture offers channels for a culturally mastered way of experiencing, and art provides similar channels that guide and tune the work of consciousness. Vasilyuk, in *The Psychology of Experience* (1988), speaks of

specific cultural means of experience that embody the historically accumulated experience of experience. Their development involves stages and a deep restructuring of consciousness. This is possible only if there is Another Person – a person whose image embodies a worldview that corresponds to the cultural means of experience to be mastered. (p.24)

The arts are a way of tuning the work of consciousness in a culturally specific manner that affects perception, social and emotional responses, bodily reactions, and the process of experiencing. Here we must concretize each type of art (dance, fine art, music, etc.), using one or another modality of perception to adjust the work of consciousness. But one way or another, no matter what language art uses (e.g., the language of the visual arts or the language of music or dance), the artist, dancer, performers, and perceivers, undergo internal work of consciousness that connects the artistic language with images, meanings, and feelings to give birth to personal meanings, connect with emotions, and force the body to respond; this process involves all of the dimensions of consciousness.

We distinguish four levels of the tuning of consciousness:

1. The nature of the art form. The modality of the art form is a means of adjusting consciousness and perception according to the language and the type of perception dictated by a particular type of art (listening to music, looking at a painting, physically empathizing with dance, reading or listening to a poetic text, etc.). For example, clay can encourage the establishment of a subtle contact with the body and strengthen individual processes, leading to deeper self-knowledge. Dance, especially in a group format, encourages communication and socialization. We can call art forms methods of tuning consciousness.

2. The art framework. The art form itself, which belongs to one or another kind of art, becomes a frame that channels the work of consciousness, supporting various dimensions of the work of creation. For example, if you draw a circle or a mandala, the circle becomes the frame that is phenomenologically lived by everyone in different ways. But we can understand and keep in mind that the proposal to draw in a circle can strengthen the experience of connection with the center and the external boundaries, as well as experiences associated with transpersonal dimensions and connections beyond the body, unless the therapist uses group drawing in a circle as a means of communication and working with a community and urges the participants to pay attention to the intersections and interactions of the circles.

3. The individual adjustment of consciousness through art. As artists, dancers, actors, musicians, spectators and viewers know, a change in consciousness that we can call tuning occurs during the creation and perception of a work of art. In the expressive arts, our work often allows us to modify the process—for example, slow down, speed up, see something new, or escape from stereotypes—that is, change the state of consciousness. For instance, poetry can elicit a more accepting state of consciousness by removing internal contradictions.

4. The culturally specific art form. An art form born in a particular culture directs, adjusts, and channels the work of consciousness, creating conditions (perceptions, experiences, emotional reactions, etc.) for the generation of certain states of consciousness. For example, Japanese Gagaku music and a symphony by Tchaikovsky will create completely different states of consciousness and invite the listener's consciousness to do different work.

Let's take a closer look at the last point.

Traditional art forms as culturally specific means to tune consciousness.

Each traditional art form is a culturally specific means of tuning consciousness. After all, every art form, and sometimes even a type or genre of art, was born in a particular culture and carries meanings and pathways that it can pass on by acting as an intermediary. As a result of globalization, images recorded on paper with media such as pastel, watercolor, or gouache are widespread. But a rectangular sheet of paper is far from the only support for an image—for example, you can draw on trees, scrolls, or the body. Each of these drawing methods bears the imprint of its culture. Consider *varli*—the traditional Indian art of creating images using cow dung and rice flour on the walls of houses. This method of making images is a guide to or mediator of the experience of certain states of consciousness. Such an art form could not have arisen, for example, in Muslim countries, where excrement is perceived as unclean, or in Russia, where the climate is too cold to allow the material to dry out. Or take the traditional Japanese Gagaku court music that has existed since the 9th century or Japanese Noh theater and compare them with European classical music. Gagaku music elicits a special state of consciousness or rather slows down the viewer's consciousness: performances last for hours, and the music, accompanied by dance, is intended to affirm the laws of Heaven and Earth. It is very difficult for a European listener to perceive in it emotions such as those they might find in Tchaikovsky's music. We return to the idea that art is a culturally specific means of tuning consciousness.



Fig. 1 Russian circle dance on the opening ceremony of the 8th International Expressive Arts Festival in Russia "Breathing Roots".

For example, the Russian round dance, like many circular dances, offers the experience of cyclicity, connectedness, unity, and movement in a circle. There are vast numbers of traditional round dance patterns, and each has a certain meaning.

Indian traditional drawings of mandalas and the patterns on the ground known as *kolam* or *rangoli* are invitations to a deity and connections to the earth. They allow viewers to live a kind of dialogue and experience unity with their surroundings.

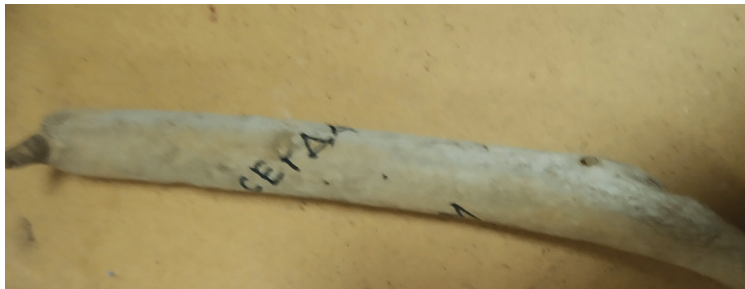
Simultaneously, they recognize variability and impermanence; patterns drawn with rice flour disappear quickly under the feet of passers-by or are dispersed by wind or insects.

Art forms of a particular culture adjust the work of consciousness, expanding its repertoire and allowing you to build new relationships with the body, nature, and others. Any act of creation, such as writing a poem, producing a drawing, or participating in a dance, becomes a mediator, helping consciousness to establish a connection with certain realities. It is not essential to use only traditional art forms, but the latter contain encrypted collective meanings that begin to be mastered and lived on a subjective level during interaction with them. Such art practices do not need to retain every feature of the original traditional art form; in expressive arts therapy, the form itself can be modified while retaining important features. For example, in my practice, I have used a technique based on a Tibetan prayer drum ritual, in which the text of a prayer is rolled onto a round surface. Clients can write poems on round sun-dried sticks. I call



Fig. 2 Drawing on the Earth kolam, during Russian-Indian EXA retreat in “India Lines of life” (with Krupa Javery and the author)

Fig. 3 Example of a poetry stick



these “poetry sticks”—and the texts can be read repeatedly as mantras or prayer.

In expressive arts therapy, we can use art forms born in the bosom of clients’ cultures or subcultures. These can be modern digital cultures; we can use photographs, Instagram Stories, or social networks; the latter are contemporary manifestations of the invisible Indra network, enabling resonance and contact.

The art form as a connector and frame

Any art form, be it traditional or modern, is a guide or a means of communication that has certain dimensions. Depending on the context of its use (e.g., time, place, culture), an art form can serve as a conduit for communication with various aspects of the inner and outer world and, at the same time, a means of adjusting consciousness. Traditional art forms offer connections used for centuries, a kind of beaten track; they are agents of connection to cultural knowledge, directing the psyche and consciousness to certain experiences and states. Such use of art forms as intermediaries can involve quite specific tasks. For instance, shamanic figures



Fig. 4 Masks made by EXA students in Russia (Kazan program).

and attributes in many cultures are used as intermediaries and guides in communicating with the spirits of ancestors and the other world. Masks become conduits of the archetypal energy of those who fill them.

Mandalas indicate and become a kind of entrance into transpersonal experience. Russian Beregini dolls indicate a connection with the genus, helping their creators to establish their personal inner connections with the defenders of the generations.

According to cultural-historical psychology, art forms nurtured in the bosom of a particu-



Fig. 5 and Fig. 6 Beregini dolls made by Russian and Indian EXA students (Swahansa EXA Institute India and Russian EXA Institute "Arts and Consciousness" 2024)

lar culture (that is, culture-mediated tools) adjust consciousness and transmit experience. But for this to take place, a subjective personal connection must take place through the art form, that is, these cultural meanings must be experienced and appropriated, embedded in the viewer or creator's universe of meanings. We are not talking about mindless copying and replication of the art form but rather developing new states of consciousness through contact with the art form. Even if we create something completely new, the art form becomes a means of communication with ourselves, others, and the world.

For example, after a training group class in which we sewed Beregini dolls, one of the participants said, "For me, it was a meeting with a deep dimension of myself as a woman; I never suspected before that it was in me; I named the doll Maria."



Fig. 7 Beregini doll Maria.

To summarize:

1. An art form belonging to a particular culture becomes a means of tuning consciousness.

2. The art form plays the role of a mediator in meetings with various cultural realities. A dialogue with an art form in the process of creation or an interaction with an existing art form helps an individual to appropriate and live on a subjective level the experiences collectively mastered by culture, as well as create personal paths and connections for experiencing and communicating with oneself, others and the world.

3. A traditional art form can become a frame that guides the work of consciousness, leading to the subjective development of new experiences and expanding the repertoire of play of consciousness.

4. Art forms of traditional cultures can be used in expressive arts therapy.

Culture-oriented expressive arts therapy

Expressive arts therapy can use art forms from various cultures in a therapeutic context. I introduce the term culture-oriented expressive arts therapy to focus readers' attention on the possibilities for using traditional art forms of various cultures in the context of applied intermodal arts therapy. I also take the first steps to describe and theoretically substantiate the possibilities of practical work and research at the intersection of culture, art, and expressive arts therapy.

Culture-oriented expressive arts therapy can take three possible directions. The first direc-

tion uses world culture, with culture understood in a broad sense. This cultural layer is integral to our lives because our consciousness, as mentioned above, is inseparable from its cultural foundation. From the bottomless cauldron of world culture, the therapist can draw endless inspiration, stories, scenarios, and strategies. In considering world, or universal, culture, we do not distinguish between traditional, "primitive," and highly developed cultures. The features of rituals are similar across cultures, so intermodal therapy uses generalized rituals, working with myths and reviving ancient and/or modern archetypal layers of consciousness. Although the practice of appealing to cultural traditions has been largely lost in modern urban society, intermodal therapy can partially replace these traditions, creating a healing space of communication in the realm of art, in which people feel united with one another and accepted.

All of us, in addition to belonging to a universal culture, belong to a specific culture. Thus the second direction in culture-oriented expressive arts therapy is the study of the cultural characteristics, art forms, and traditions of one's native culture, which are filled with meanings and fill those who come into contact with them with meaning. This direction is especially relevant in many contemporary societies that are cut off from the earth, ancestral roots, and traditions.

The third direction followed in culture-oriented expressive art therapy is the use of a range of cultures and art forms in a therapeutic context. Given the prevalence of multicultural societies and globalization, many people encounter representatives and "life forms" of other cultures. When we get to know others, we get to know ourselves, so by experiencing the traditions of different cultures, we understand our own culture better and expand our consciousness.

Why can experiencing the living traditions of other cultures be therapeutic? As mentioned in previous chapters, culture forms a special type of consciousness. It draws invisible paths and scripts for consciousness: for thinking, perception, and memory. People who go beyond their cultures are "expanding the repertoire of play"—"play" is understood here as a way of being in the world.



Fig. 8 Tea bowls inspired by Japanese tyawan made by Russian Exa students.

Different cultures and art forms of different cultures create contexts for feelings, experiences, and the work of consciousness. For example, when I conduct a class on modeling Japanese tea bowls, I notice a change in consciousness and a special object experience among Russian participants who tend to escape into the world of ideas (myself among them); this shift can extend to an attentive attitude to everyday things and the self.

To sum up, culture-oriented expressive arts therapy makes use of the following:

1. Culture in general and contact with the universal cultural layer, which is similar across many cultures;
2. The traditional native culture to which a person belongs but is often not deeply familiar with (this is true for almost all modern cultures eroded by globalization);
3. A different culture and its art forms for “expanding the repertoire of play,” gaining new experience, exploring the world and getting decentering experience.

In the practice of intermodal therapy, we focus on working with the client’s native culture and different cultures, bearing in mind that the universal culture is a single global network. The myths and mythology of different peoples are similar—fairy-tale heroes often follow similar paths in different cultures—and the features of rituals are similar, suggesting a single universal consciousness. The fact that we are part of this global information and cultural network makes our work at the transpersonal level possible, and our work has resonance at the global level (Rogers, 2015).

Cultural sensitivity and cultural responsibility in expressive arts therapy

An important condition in the work of a therapist or a practitioner of expressive arts therapy applying a culture-oriented approach is personal responsibility, which is akin to the aesthetic responsibility that Knill mentions (Knill et al., 1995). The therapist or practitioner must treat seriously the origin, history, and features of the cultural norms and rules associated with a particular traditional art form. This responsibility extends to the sociocultural context of the work. A practitioner of expressive arts therapy should approach the choice of an art form with awareness and attention, taking into account the context and content of this art form, as well as the context in which it will be applied. By context, we mean various features of the group or

population with which the therapist works (gender, culture, religion, profession, etc.).

A practitioner of expressive arts therapy should be culturally sensitive (Milton, 1998), especially when working with representatives of other cultures and diasporas, taking into account the delicate and sometimes painful moments associated with belonging to and sharing the stories of a particular culture or subculture. Also, an expressive arts therapy practitioner must achieve a balance between sharing knowledge about a particular culture or subculture but at the same time remaining non-evaluative—that is, not perceiving it as good or bad—and avoiding ideologies, political views, and generalizations. It is by staying in the territory of phenomenological research that we can explore the totality of phenomena that are born when the framework of traditional culture meets the personal and unique consciousness of each of the participants and the group as a whole. Along with intercultural sensitivity, practitioners of expressive arts therapy must exhibit cultural awareness, cultural competence, and skills in cross-cultural communication, and should be guided by these qualities in choosing an art form.

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Agamemnon
Barbara Caffery

Today I was met at the airport by a man
A towering, black-suited greeter
With a tricky accent that I could not name.
His job was to welcome me and take my luggage to the waiting car.

"My name is Agamemnon"
was his opening remark
And I was stunned by such a name
Such a name to live up to.

Think of starting a war
Sacrificing your daughter for wind
Pissing off your best warrior
Getting knocked off by your wife.

Think of all the students
who cursed your name because they had to read
The Iliad and it seemed so remote
and so very old-fashioned, inexplicable, silly.

And he told me of his Italian Catholic mother
And his Spanish Jewish father
And the fights over the parmigiana
And the celebration of everything.

He told me that his father farmed high in the hills of Brazil
But his mother needed the city and the ocean
And how they moved down that hill to the seaside.

And he told me of the six siblings
And how they scattered over the earth
And how his mother still cooks everything and
scoots the children out of her kitchen
Because when she stops cooking she will die.

And I loved him from the naming
And his spirit and his love of his daughter
And the fact that he was waiting one more year
For her to finish college before he
And his wife would travel
Go places and see things.

Perhaps to Greece for his namesake
To see where the ancient daughter's blood was splattered
To wonder why his mother loved his name
To celebrate a life of greeting and hauling luggage
And having visitors fall in love with you.

[context, or autoethnographic fieldnote of a poiesis]

Gracelynn Lau

like someone telling you metamorphosis is a process where the caterpillar completely breaks down into molecules but you are a dying butterfly;

like a tornado sweeps through your village every season but it never kills you and you sit amidst the ruins staring at the cracks and broken highways don't even want to stand up;

like a time traveller trapped in a gap between worlds looking at time passing, while the whatever inside continues to deteriorate.

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These were the only words I wrote after I collapsed. For three months there were no words but dead silence. These words were written on the back of a Traditional Chinese medicine prescription. On my way to a Chinese medicine doctor appointment, I saw a butterfly



on the sidewalk, dying. On the front side, the doctor prescribed fifteen kinds of Chinese herbs. My diagnosis was spleen deficiency and depressed liver stagnation, with syndrome of dampness retaining in the spleen and the liver, which caused excessive heat. I remember the doctor said, overthinking hurt the spleen; and “When you’re depressed we should work on your liver”.

I remember googling two of the fifteen Chinese herbs: Grass node in the stomach of cow and goat (牛羊草結) and Chicken gizzard membrane (雞內金). How can some half-digested grass found in the stomach of livestock stabilize my unpredictable mood swing, hyperventilation and heart palpitations?

I wanted to tell the doctor that he should focus on regulating my parasympathetic nervous system. I wanted an herbal formula that can magically turn my breathing back to normal so I can take longer exhales to calm my vagus nerve. I wanted to challenge him with Polyvagal Theory. I wanted to tell him I had worked on increasing the “window of tolerance” to feel all undesirable emotional tensions and sensations in the present moment, as suggested by Peter Levine and many trauma experts. That I had developed a healthy relationship with my frontal lobes and amygdala, diligently and compassionately. That I had established many inner “islands of safety” within the body (van der Kolk, 2015: 247) through art-based practices and co-regulation with fellow therapists in my trusted circle. That I could explain my anxiety symptoms in trauma-informed languages based on widely cited literature. And, I wanted to tell my Chinese doctor, nothing had really worked and I had given up. *Does it mean the unprocessed emotional residues are kept in my liver and spleen?* I wanted to know, but I did not have the mental strength to summon any words and utter them, so I remained silent.

For three months there were no words but dead silence. A friend played an hour of piano just to accompany me in that silence. Another, also trained in expressive arts therapy, sat with me for two hours every week only to wait for a chance I might have the strength to entertain any curious impulse. My community had me in the weekly heart circle, although all I could do to participate was lying flat on the floor, over Zoom. One thing I did to entertain myself through

that time was to re-watch all the recorded talks from the Collective Trauma Summit and every recording from a trauma-informed leadership training course. As if being well-versed about my situation in robust neuroscience vocabularies was a different kind of professional development.

When I saw a butterfly on the sidewalk, dying, those words arrived out of nowhere. Sitting at the Chinese doctor's office, I jotted down those words on the back of the prescription. As I was transported from the dying butterfly to a post-tornado damaged village in the imaginal, I vaguely remembered the Chinese doctor's assistant saying something like: "Add 4 1/2 bowls of water into a ceramic or clay pot, soak the herbs bundle for 15 minutes. Then over high heat, bring the herbal medicine to boil; switch to gentle heat and let it simmer for 40 minutes, until the liquid reduces to 1 bowl."

I took home five paper bags of Chinese herbs bundles to make batches of decoction. My treatment was hilarious—benefitting *qi* for invigorating spleen and dispersing stagnant liver *qi* to clear heat and eliminate dampness. Perhaps far too hilarious, it made me laugh my way home. First laugh in three months.

I don't know if it was I who had finally let go of the inner therapist agenda, or the agenda had finally let go of me, or the dying butterfly, or the poetic verses, or the "grass node in the stomach of cow and goat," later that night when I watched the 4 1/2 bowls of liquid slowly evaporating, I stopped trying to fix myself, or the world, or any problem. I stopped trying to be in control.

I don't know if you have ever had doubts about the method of expressive arts therapy, not being able to see it as magical as before, or at odds with yourself about it. If you have, you're not alone. I'm with you. At my lowest of the low, I questioned my capacity to respond to the emotional messiness I found myself in. I questioned our capacity to respond—we human beings as a species—to the messiness we find ourselves in. Even though *poiesis* promises an innate

capacity to respond, the response might not be effective, or timely.

And, even though the response might not be effective, *poiesis* promises an innate capacity to respond. In *Poiesis: The Language of Psychology and the Speech of the Soul*, Stephen K. Levine (1997) discussed the ways in which sharing a presentation of one's suffering through artistic forms in a group and being witnessed by others, can be an act of *poiesis* akin to "bearing a gift to the feast" (Levine 1997: 58-59). The following poems, the watercolour paintings and photography is me bearing my gift to the feast. I made them over eleven months, on a slow journey to move in and out and through burnout.

Japanese American artist and theologian Makoto Fujimura says, "The path of creativity gives wings." If we have the audacity to ask: How is our culture doing? It is unlikely to stay out of some kind of angst or doubt. But as Fujimura puts it, "The essential question is not whether we are religious, but whether we are making something. When we stop making, we become enslaved to market culture as consumers... The act of making is the antidote to our current malaise [...]" (Fujimura 2021: 24).

Even though the response might not be effective, *poiesis* promises an innate capacity to respond.

I wonder if the best gift we can bring to a time like ours, is more therapeutic methods or the awareness to behold beauty itself, whether we need more therapists, or more imagination. The post-punk and alternative rock musician Nick Cave recently said in an interview: "it is the audacity of the world to continue to be beautiful, and continue to be good in times of deep suffering [...] it was sort of not paying me any attention, it was just carrying on, being systemically gorgeous. You know, how dare it. But then you have it." "[...] it feels like an active kinda cosmic betrayal for this to be going on." (Tippett, 2023).

May we each find our way of *poiesis* to join this active kind of cosmic betrayal.



every door is a welcome home, and goodbye. you close one door and enter into the next until you find another door to open, and close. every new moment arises is another liminal and another and another. you behold the thin layer, decide which way to lean in, for now, for how long, back and forth in stillness, to stay or to shift. every moment is collaborating with you; you can dance with it, or tune out, say no, and walk away and it never leaves, never goes away, and there it is again another moment, another breath. the intangible is incredibly tangible, so simple it makes you laugh with it and at yourself.

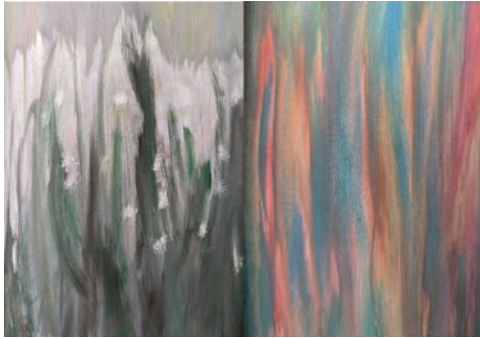


1

When numbing seems to be your only option

When life seems to have survived a deadly storm
and you found yourself staring into the ruins alive
but half dead; you have nothing left in
you to stand up in the rumble of chaos.

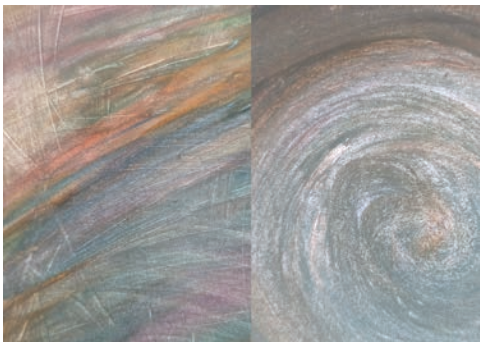
When your heart slowly hardens
by the darkening of our times
and unfulfilled promises,
being exiled from that which you have held dearly for decades.



When darkness becomes too comfortable
turning on the light hurts your eyes;

May the light of daybreak warm your spirit;
May refuge come to seek you in exile;

May you find the strength to walk the parched places of your heart;
May you hear the whisper in the rumble:
the bleakest place is where the invisible grace
meets you most profoundly.



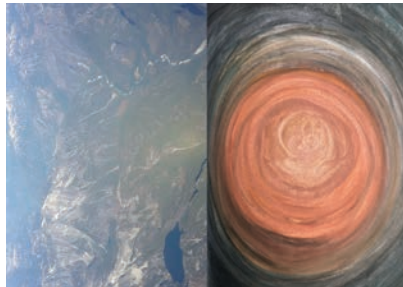
When you've meticulously calculated all possibilities
to eliminate every worst case scenario and
life still takes you in the other direction;

When your past lays claim to your present and future
and your eyes are captivated by the rear-view mirror;

When the seeds of bitterness germinate
like invasive species from another kingdom;
and you look in the mirror but
don't recognize the face anymore.

May the call to your destiny wake up in you;
May your limitations humble your heart but do not crush your spirit;
May faith grow in you to live in the tension of the already and not yet;
and in disorientation may the wall come down around you
and you will cease to do this alone.

May you be in awe by the miracle that you are
still being breathed by this breath of Life today.



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Without Words This Morning

Tina Overbury

The sun
has crashed
across the floor
I tuck my toes up
under my blanket
because they're cold

I pretend not to notice

This morning
meaning and moaning
chased my naked back
down the stairs
and the drapes
flashed open to the ochre blue calling my name

the words are so cold this morning
I want to hide my fingers in my mouth

May I have no sound today?
I place my hands where I can see them
nothing to touch today
nothing to hear
not another—yes
There will be no more “yes” today

I take to outside
knees to the ground
skin to sky
letting the wind lick
the parts of me
the stretched parts
the reaching parts
the hovering parts
I open to you

I'd rather be naked here on the rocks
than feel the sun
go out

I am deaf now
so I wait

I am not good at it,
waiting
I want to bury my face in the earth
rip my elbows into the grass
take the reeds
between my hair
and let the dirt
claim me

I want to fall
until I stop
falling
until
rest
happens
and the shaking stops

Just fucking stops for awhile

no sun
no smashed fruit to stain my throat

I have nothing to say
and that is hard,
dangerous
and brave,

By now
the sun
has bled out across the sky to me
and into the ocean

Where I can swim,
leave this place
of solid land
and paint drenched floor boards

once again
I can be
naked,
wet and warm

to hear

and maybe
this time
with my mouth open

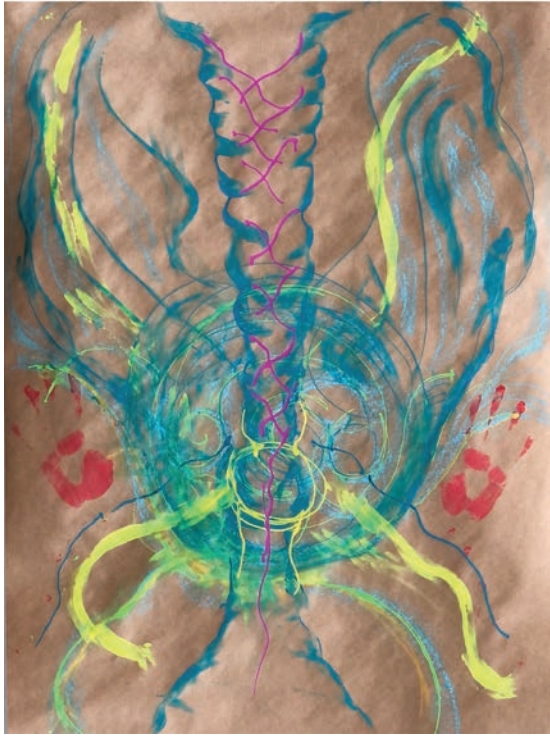
Tina Overbury is an Expressive Arts Therapist in training, currently studying at WHEAT (Winnipeg's Holistic Expressive Arts Therapy Institute). Tina works with narrative and story structure as a vehicle for human connection. She is of Irish and French Canadian, and British descent with her ancestry from the Isle of Éire, and her family heritage from Chambly, Quebec, land of the Kahnawake Mohawk Territory.

Everything
Sophie Brender

There are people in meetings on the seventh floor
And there are women ripping their hair out
There are masses of bricks tumbling down
And there are phones pinging full of messages
There are windows shut that never get opened
And there are orchestrated underwater hunts
There are awards to recognize excellence
And there are needles being reused
There are daisies exploding with potential
And there are open organ surgeries
There are factories for stuffed animals
And there are the colours of chameleons
There are deaths that are relieving
And births that bring burden

There is the spit of blasphemy
And there are thousands of petals arranged to honour
There are specialization-specific scholars
And there are wanderers who forget their names
There is a place that is all silence and stillness
And there is a place where they all demand attending to
There is grilled cheese and tomato soup
And there is a pounding at the door
There is a quiet squeak
There is a roaring shriek
There are homes for sale
And there are storms
And there is more
And there is more
And there is more

Sophie Brender is a multidisciplinary artist, actor/dancer/performer, care-giver, mystic and Expressive Arts Therapist in training. Her previous training is in physical and devised theatre. *Everything* was inspired by the tension and awe felt in holding the multiplicities of the world. She is a celestial event with muddy feet.



by Eda Çakaloz



by Zinnur Günay

Just as the sea responds to the moon, the rhythm of the earth and the forces of the cosmos, we, like all living creatures, do not move across the earth's surface; rather, we are moved. In essence, we are movement.

–Liz Koch

From Our Ground, To Begin Again and Again Through Our Fluidity

Beliz Demircioglu İnanç and the Expressive Arts Institute Istanbul Class of 2023

In the last month of 2023, I came together with a group of participants as a part of their training at the Expressive Arts Institute Istanbul. They had already gone through EXA workshops concentrating on visual arts, digital arts, drama, nature, contemplative photography, poetry, writing and music. This was their last workshop in this part of their training, and it was created around embodiment, presence, encounter, movement and dance in EXA. As we began, some participants were eager to move while others were more timid and shy about movement. As the facilitator of the workshop, I am writing this text in the first-person plural, knitting my intentions and observations, together with the participants' written and oral feedback, reflections and remarks.

The Ground

We have gone and are still going through the earthquake that affected at least 15 million people in Turkey, its growing ripples, the wars around the world, our inability to create major shifts, the economic depressions on top of the personal ones...

We begin with the body...
We begin simply,
Not that the body is simple,
Listening,
Not that listening is simple,
Simple?
Simple that is more complicated than the complicated at times...

On the first day, we concentrated on working with our bodies individually. Letting them touch the floor, giving ourselves permission to just lie down and move, if the movement desires to be freed and, if not, to let it just be. We held space for self-compassion and gentleness in order for it to arrive through melting the armor that has been built in between. Gentleness transformed our perception of time. Once we respected the body's right to just lie down and actually be held by the

floor, the movement arrived on its own time. We moved, and the floor held us, carried us, mirrored our rigidity, softness and much more. As we introduced more of our "skin-scape" to the ground, we could trust more. The more we unheld ourselves internally, the more gently the floor held us—or so we felt. When we honored the question "What do I need?", many answers rose on to the surface including our need to feel our weight more.

The Fluidity

The soft and gentle release of our holding gifted us with more sensations of our inner volume. We used our sensations, imagery and movement to connect with the ever-nurturing fluidity of our bodies. As we took this road to become more simple and to be able to relate to what is actually in the "now," we witnessed the natural flow of our bodies as well as our restrictions and resistances.

We held space for ourselves: strong emotions, sensations arrived. I supported the participants when they needed it. Tears and movement started flowing, preparing us to deepen our awareness of our longings. The movement transformed into images. Colors, textures, strokes and shapes moved on the canvases.



By Aslı Duru



By Merve Nur Çınar

Gentleness is political. It does not bend; it grants no prolonging, no excuse. It is a verb: we perform acts of gentleness. It aligns with the present and concerns all the possibilities of the human. From animality it takes instinct; from childhood, enigma; from prayer, calming; from nature, unpredictability; from light, light.



Asli and Merve images together,
titled "Bathing in Alchemy"

The Connection

In the second day of the workshop, we concentrated on relational space. I introduced Somatic Dialogue as a "theme near" approach in the decentering section of the workshop. Created by Berrak Yedek, Somatic Dialogue is a soft and mindful movement improvisation practice that opens space and provides an opportunity for individuals to enter into an intimate dialogue with themselves and with the world surrounding them. It is a gentle and effective approach that I find truly unique in the way it can support an EXA practitioner. Its witnessing technique uses structured ways of touch. These offer an immediate opportunity for a facilitator and/or therapist to physically realize their own ways and patterns of listening. This practice enables gentleness to flow in and to shape our perspective of looking into ourselves and to the other.

We worked in duos. Each one of us received the movement (listened with our hands and spine), as our partner was moving, and we changed positions with our partner again and again, building our dialogue.

As we moved and received movement, questions became lively: Am I feeling my physical alignment fluidly as I am listening? Am I grounded? Am I letting what I listen to travel in my body and move to my periphery in order to connect to the air as well as to the ground? Or am I holding the movements I receive in as if I am a limitless container? Do I shape or intervene without the need? What happens in me as I listen? What happens to me and to the other

when I physically constrain a body part a little and the flow breaks?

After building our somatic dialogues, we looked at how our images that had arrived on our individual journeys the day before would like to relate to each other. How would they want to shape their connection?

In the last circle of the group, we realized that as we took a step to ourselves, we took a step to each other both individually and as a group. The group felt more connected.

We began with the body...

We began simply,

Not that the body is simple.

Listening

Not that listening is simple.

Simple?

Simple that is more complicated than the complicated at times...

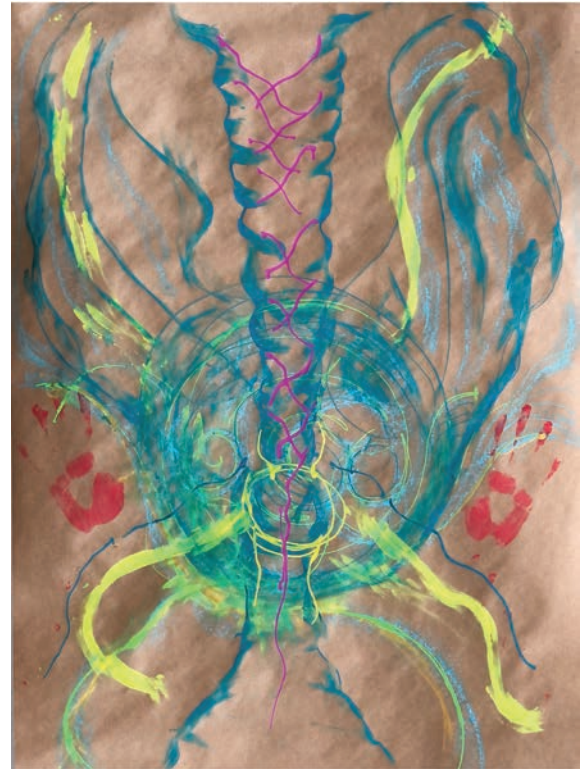
Body as our unique geography,

Our "skin-scape,"

The variety of our inner volume,

The fluidity that forms us in our bones, organs, muscles, ligaments, connective tissues, veins...

The fluidity that forms our cells...



By Eda Çakaloz



By Saliha Koç



Their images together titled "Conjoined Centres"

We can begin
From our ground
Through our fluidity
We can choose to lie, to stand, to take a step
We begin again and again through connecting to our body's topography...

As I finish the writing process of this sharing, a poem that had arrived through another EXA workshop based on nature a few months ago is echoing in my ears and creating new meaning:

Homecoming

Soil is the womb of water

Touch the bottoms of my feet, Mom
Be my soil until I meet the earth
Be, so I already know
That the ground is alive
That we are shaped together

When does a touch, a hold
A lap become an embrace?
How do we nestle in an embrace
Like settling into being

Soil is the womb of water
Mom, YOU touch the bottoms of my feet
Be my soil until I meet the earth

Stones that can crumble and turn into sand
Reality that can crumble and turn into sand

In the trace of what unites us
While the road walks itself in us
Soil is the womb of water

–Beliz Demirciođlu İnanç

Kavuşma

Suyun rahmidir toprak

Ayađımın altını tut anne
Yeryüzüyle buluşana dek, toprađım ol
Ol ki şimdiden bileyim
Yerin canlı olduğunu
Birlikte şekillendiđimizi

Bir tutuş
Tutuluş, ne zaman kucak olur?
Nasıl yerleşilir kucađa
Varlıđa yerleşir gibi

Suyun rahmidir toprak
Anne ayađımın altını sen tut
Yeryüzüyle buluşana dek, toprađım ol

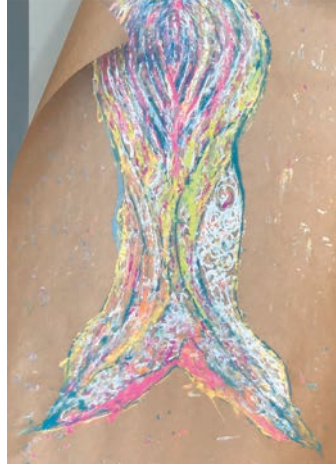
Taşlar ufalanabilen kumlaşan taşlar Gerçeklik
ufalanabilen kumlaşan gerçeklik
Bizi birleştirenin izinde

Yol kendini yürürken içimizde
Suyun rahmidir toprak

–Beliz Demirciođlu İnanç



By Zinnur Günay



By Şeyma Çeliksoydan



Their images together titled
"Lost Fish"

I would like to thank the members of the Expressive Arts Institute Istanbul Class of 2023 for their dedication, sharing and love.

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Next Steps, New Beginnings: Cyclical and Chronological Notions on Beginnings through the Magnifying Lens of Poetry

Margo Fuchs Knill

Nur wer sich verändert, bleibt sich treu.

Only those who change remain true to themselves.

–Wolf Biermann

(translated by MFK)

New beginnings may be longed for and welcomed. They may take us by surprise when we are perfectly comfortable with our lives. They may resurrect out of great suffering, crisis and challenges. They may appear in sneaky ways and force us to undertake substantial changes. New beginnings may serve Chronos and the notion of aging, cycles of illness and recovery, or the shades of falling in and out of love. They can be imposed due to politics, catastrophes, unstoppable developments, or stirred by the drive for improvement, the need of the young generation to make it differently and better, or by inventions.

Who or what constitutes the next, the step into the new? How do we know? We, bound to our planet? Bound to have been birthed into an, “It began”?

Creation myths are great indicators about new beginnings. Let me take an exemplary look at the notion of new beginnings through the most recent novel by Salman Rushdie who, in 2023, received the prestigious German Peace Prize. With *Victory City*, he created a magical realist epic about myth-making, and the permanence of story-telling and poetry. It is a story-telling book about a book of poetry. Through the narrator, Pampa Kampana, a whole city comes to life. How can such a giant new beginning happen? Pampa Kampana, the blind poet, miracle worker and prophetess, first heard a voice: ...It was an enormous voice, like the thunder of a high waterfall booming in a valley of sweet echoes. ... Pampa Kampana was terrified, of course, but also reassured (2023, p.7). She then used seeds, and the gift of whispering. She tells: ...“They just needed someone to whisper their dreams into their ears. Everyone came from a seed, she added. Men planted seeds in women and so forth. But this was different. ... Her solution was fiction. She was making up their lives, ...whispering through the streets into the ears that needed to hear them. She was writing the grand narrative of the city, creating its story now that she had created its life” (2023, p.31).

The notion that a voice, an otherness, is giving a message to initiate a new beginning, is quite common. Within expressive arts, we look at this phenomenon in an intermodal way. We can “see” it as well as a “hear it,” and it may whisper, call, shout, speak or chant poetically, in images, movements or acts. Synonyms would be to follow your intuition, to trust yourself, to follow your bliss, your imagination, your dreams, where your heart wants to take you or to have a felt sense.

...At any time you can ask yourself: At which threshold am I now standing? At this time in my life, what am I leaving? Where am I about to enter? What is preventing me from crossing my next threshold? What gift would enable me to do it?...

–John O’Donohue

New beginnings can be viewed in a chronological way. There is a before, a threshold and an afterwards. Yet, how do we notice a threshold? We may find ourselves (professionals and clients alike) preoccupied with back and forth meanderings and intensified emotions. We may feel confused, scared of the new and of the loss of "good old routines," excited and dreaming up next steps, or sad, accompanied with islands of hope.

We may also call this place a space between, not fully here anymore, and not yet over there. A time of unbalance or being thrown off is also marked by vulnerability, by exaggeration or understatement. John O'Donohue reminds us to take our time, to listen inward, and he reassures us that—when giving it complete attention, an inner voice is calling us, and the time has come to cross the threshold. In the field of expressive arts, the attention-giving can be productive, a mindful and contemplative act through shaping a work of art, whether it be through writing, image-making, movement, enacting or playing music.

This beginning has been
with you for a while, a silent
witness to your struggles and
longings, accepting its place
in the dawn of the change.

This beginning caught your
affairs with your routines
noticed how they turned hollow
mere practice for its own sake.

Don't hold back what has been
growing in you, matured from a
vague idea to a loud calling.

Your fear of the unfamiliar
is a good place to start—
give your adventurer a chance
gather courage
ready yourself for discoveries
trust what awaits you
bring it home.

Aren't endings and beginnings somehow bound together? When I undertake steps to end something, am I not at the same time begin-ending? Victor Frankl, the founder of Logotherapy, has a quite different notion from the chronological view. He postulates that what has passed is not lost yet forever held in the past.

What does it mean to take the next step? Automatically, we may connect it to stepping forward. Yet, how do we know that it is a step forward? We humans are bound to recurring cycles, seasons, day and night, waking and sleeping, earthlings bound to live on a circling a-round. Phenomenologically speaking, we can say that a step directs us, gives us a direction. With this one direction I exclude other directions. In expressive arts, we also say, it is on the way, or, something is moving. Good. To have a direction is a fair beginning.

We cannot step out of the changing, the world is changing, in a macro- and micro-sense. We may develop a healthy balance between accommodation and assimilation, to use Piaget's terminology, to adapt, yet at the same time also create; be the shaped and the shaper as well.

In the midst of uncertainty
I am your next step.
I have you get up and receive
the newness of the morning sky
clouds are lifting, shifting, chasing
each other, playing hide and seek
with the next.

The chronological view of life brings us undoubtedly to an end. We step forward on the time line called development, from childhood to adulthood, to seniority and ultimately - death.

Victor Frankl's idea that nothing is lost brings us to a cyclic view, as we can observe in nature with its seasons and transformations. Steve Bourget, an archaeologist, claims that humans are in an unsolved paradox between the two notions: the chronological view which pragmatically has us die, and the cyclical view we observe around us. He said, at a lecture given in Schaffhausen,¹ that humanity has been trying to bend these separate notions together, more or less successfully. For instance, some religions stay with one view and proclaim a cyclical notion like resurrection or rebirth.

I am curious to further observe these two phenomena of chronological and cyclical notions. Who knows, humans may develop new perspectives?

Let's see how Salmon Rushdie dealt with the two notions. At first, he attributed to Pampa Kamapana the gift of unchanging youth. However, she

¹ Nov. 30 2023, Lecture by Dr. Steve Bourget at the Museum zu Allerheiligen: The Discovery of the Lord of Ucupe

actually began to suffer from her eternal youth and longed for signs of aging. Pampa Kamapana survived generation after generation but had to painfully witness how husband after husband passed away. Also, she didn't want her own children to look like a grandmother to their own mother. In the end, at age two hundred and forty-seven years, she is ready to die. She says:

...Nothing endures, but nothing is meaningless either. We rise, we fall, we rise again, and again we fall. We go on. ...Death is close now. ...I have finished telling it. Release me (2023, p.337).

Here is her last testimony to us:

...Only these words describing those things remain. ...I myself am nothing now. All that remains is this city of words. Words are the only victors (2023, p.338).

Let me give the final word to Salman Rushdie. He finds the interaction between the historical and the fabulous to be a creative one, and the worlds that are being made when these things mingle makes a third thing, which is art². We need stories (epic or poetic) to understand ourselves. He wrote Victory City right before he was stabbed and lost an eye. At the Peace Prize Ceremony in Frankfurt, he said that humans need storytelling to find out what it means to be a creature on this planet. We are ourselves stories, we have a beginning, middle and end—this belongs to us. Stories (prose or poetic) mean something to us, because they are in us.

2 YouTube "Salman Rushdie Reading from Victory City," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVL2t62vwoI> accessed Jan. 28, 2024

Tell Me, She Said

Tell me, she said:

What is the story you are telling?

What wild song is singing itself through you?

Listen:

In the silence between there is music;

In the spaces between there is story.

It is the song you are living now,

It is the story of the place where you are.

It contains the shapes of these old mountains,

The green of the rhododendron leaves.

It is happening right now in your breath,

In your heartbeat still

drumming the deeper rhythm

beneath your cracking words.

It matters what you did this morning
And last Saturday night
And last year,

Not because you are important
But because you are in it
And it is still moving,
We are all in this story together.

Listen:

*In the silence between there is music;
In the spaces between there is story.*

Pay attention:

We are listening each other into being.

–Sally Atkins

I personally cultivate a cyclical poetic practice to explore the idea of new beginnings. The notion of a chronological time-line is high-lighted by markers, such as New Year's Day, Valentine's Day, All Souls' Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, or Birthdays, and many more. Such markers can serve as islands of time, out to recreate a-new begin-ending.

Dedication to my Birthday

It waited
without really waiting.
It wanted
without knowing.
It entered
without me noticing
to have me do
the undoing
to have me begin (again)
the conversation.

I am in the act
I am the act and
the action, the actor
and the acted upon—
I am the learner
and the learned—
shape-shifting the shift
anew
for this conversation
I am part of it,
for this conversation
called life.

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Margo Fuchs Knill is a professor, psychotherapist ASP, expressive arts professional and poet. She is the Founding Dean of the MA Program, Division of Arts, Health and Society at EGS, and a member of the original Core Faculty of the European Graduate School (EGS). She was an Assistant Professor at Lesley University, Cambridge, MA. Margo works in private practice and teaches expressive arts internationally at training institutes in Europe, Russia, Asia, Latin America and the US. She is the author of numerous poetry books, such as *Leben will leben. Love Survives*, and has contributed numerous book chapters on poetry, poetics and expressive arts. She is co-author of *Minstrels of Soul: Intermodal Expressive Therapy*, as well as a contributor to *Foundations of Expressive Arts Therapy: Theoretical and Clinical Perspectives*. Her latest book, together with Sally Atkins, is titled *Poetry in Expressive Arts: Supporting Resilience through Poetic Writing* and has been translated to Chinese.

When We Love
Elizabeth Gordon McKim

WHEN WE LOVE

We love strongly

And now we are strangely
Alone and strangers to ourselves
And our selves are a whole fleet
Of small crafts setting
Sail to a faraway
Country we've only seen
In a guide book we only smell
When the windows are open
Only name through our blind lids
Only hear at night when a single
Bell rings, only taste a tiny berry
Held by a small child born by a single person
At the first and final moment
Of hello and good by

*O you gotta go now
O well you're going o
Well you're
Gone—*

"The beginning is always today."

-Mary Shelley



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