

POIESIS

A Journal of the Arts & Communication

Volume 20, 2023

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Art-making: Midwifing the Third

Dorota Solarska

Cover image: *Yeliao*,
by Dorota Solarska,
(digital painting, 2022).



When I heard my first diagnosis: bipolar disorder, nine years ago, my world seemed to end. Life as I knew it was over. When the diagnosis changed to schizoaffective illness (a mixture of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder), I thought that my brain was depriving me of its remaining, already scarce, pieces of sanity. I began to look for some, even tiny, sources and resources that could give me the feeling that I still might have control over my life. I started painting.

4 For me, painting or drawing is always a journey to the “Unknown,” one that requires trust in the process and letting go of the rigidity of the “Known.” Usually, when I reach for a brush, digital pencil or marker, I have no clue where I’m going and what’s going to emerge from my

actions. It's like a dance with the image—a very special one, because it's the image that leads me, not the other way round. My brain, my heart and my hand cooperate to allow a being to be born. Am I a mother? Am I a midwife? Am I a birth-channel?

Parallel to painting, I turned to writing. Up till now, three of my books were published; two of my theatre plays were staged; my lyrics made it to a rock album; articles, blog and poems reached a broader audience. Writing, though, feels different from painting. Already, sentences, paragraphs and scenes knock on the door of my consciousness, and I seem to have no choice but to let them out. They are the loud and demanding babies of mine, fruits of marriage between a creative process running deep and my tongue. Words, sentences, paragraphs, scenes that I am unable to hide, hinder or stop. I just have to let them out and let them go. But again, it's not like, "I know them." It's more like, "They know me."

People keep asking me if I'm a "professional artist." I always give the same answer: "I paint and I write." I feel like a verb, not a noun. Besides, how could I call a "profession" something that feels like a necessity, similar to breathing, almost automatic and crucial to my existence?

I don't like to talk about my mental state as a "mental health issue." We don't call talking about, let's say, cancer or Parkinson's, as "physical health issues." I don't enjoy beating around the bush. I'm mentally ill and if you want to talk about it with me, we'll talk about mental illnesses. "Do you see yourself primarily as an artist or as a mentally ill person?", a journalist asked me in an interview. Why can't I be both?

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.

Editorial Introduction

Stephen K. Levine

In the midst of crisis, what is emerging? Can the answer be: *poiesis*? When we are pushed into a corner and seem to have no alternative, then we are forced to respond in new and creative ways. Crisis brings out the best and the worst in human beings. A good example is the situation in Ukraine. When Russia invaded, Ukraine could have capitulated. Russia is a much larger state with vastly greater resources. Resistance seemed hopeless. In fact, Russia assumed the war would be over in a few days when they would occupy Kyiv, the capital. The West offered to help President Zelenskyy move to safety in exile, but in his well-known reply, he said, “The fight is here; I need ammunition, I don’t need a ride.” We have to think back to his career as a comic actor playing the President of Ukraine on television to realize what a transformation he underwent. This is truly *poiesis* in action.

But of course, though *poiesis* is always possible, it is not inevitable. If we think about the greatest crisis confronting humankind, that of climate change, we see that not everyone has responded creatively. Many have ignored the situation, while others have even profited from it. The world is indeed burning, as Greta Thunberg reminded us, but this doesn’t that mean

that we have all come together to put out the flames. Countries issue noble proclamations but continue to burn fossil fuels at the same or greater rate. US President Biden declares an end to fossil fuels, then opens up the Arctic to oil development. Many of the G7 countries sign agreements to lower fossil fuel consumption, but continue to develop their economies as before.

And yet there are others who are seeking alternatives, joining social movements that can make a difference, pressuring governments and corporations to change, and cutting consumption personally, even going off the grid entirely. *Poiesis* requires a choice, there is no necessity to it. In Biblical terms, "The Lord has put before you life and death. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live." To follow the path of *poiesis* is indeed to choose life.

In this issue of the *POIESIS* journal, we can see many examples of those who have chosen this path. As Shaun McNiff reminds us in his essay, there is a "terrifying beauty" in creating anew. Why terrifying? As everyone who chooses to create knows, we have to encounter the empty page, the blank canvas, the silence before music comes. *Poiesis* confronts us with the nothingness that exists before the new comes into being. To choose life is to choose to bring something into the world that did not exist before. Sometimes this choice comes from an abundance of joy, sometimes from the necessity of facing the terror. The cover art by Dorota Solar-ska shows us the face of this terror and the way she has chosen to transform it. Margo Fuchs Knill looks at climate change and finds hope, even the possibility of a resurrection of nature, in a poetic response. In Nafi Salah's images and account of his process of creation, we find the possibility of playing in the ruins and putting them together in a way that courts beauty. And in coming together to mourn the death of a dear friend and fellow teacher, the faculty of TAE Perú testifies that even in death it is possible to choose life. Similarly, Hjørdis Mair chooses to cross the threshold between darkness and light to find treasures in the ruins that give her new hope. Even in Ellen Levine's images of migrants adrift at sea, there is a ladder or a place where they can climb out to be on solid ground again. And Tamar Einstein mourns the ruinous political situation in Israel but vows to welcome peace when it comes again "with mint tea and roses."

In the poetic co-respond-dance between Elizabeth McKim and Stephen Levine, we see the enduring power of friendship and love even when war looms before us. Gracelynn Lau uses the image of hydrophobic soil, earth that resists water, to ask how we can use *poiesis* to bring new life to our own culture wars. Stephen Levine testifies that we can protest the destruction of the earth in a poetic way. And when the planet itself seems to be in peril, and the pandemic is taken to be a sign of global catastrophe, we can still, as Liza Hyatt tells us, “keep vigil for the earth,” and choose to go through a liminal process of initiation to meet as Earth Monks who practice *poiesis* and keep the creative fire of humanity alive. Stacie Birkie Greene shows us the damage we have wrought in her images of endangered birds. By entering into her dreamscape to witness the ecstatic dance of cranes, Alexandra Fidyk celebrates the chaos and the potential that contain the possibility of a new beginning for human beings on this earth.

For this 20th issue of the *POIESIS* journal, we decided to look back over the years and reprint some of the articles from past issues. Accordingly, we have chosen essays from the 2008 journal that were in a special section called, “The Image Today.” In “The Image (that took me) Today,” Sabine Silberberg, working in a harm reduction centre in Vancouver, demonstrates that even used cigarettes can be transformed into powerful images when they create links between therapist and clients. Brigitte Anor’s “Dancing with Meanings: The Endless To and Fro Between the Image and Myself” dances with the horrific image of one of those who chose to throw themselves out of the window of a burning tower after it had been attacked in 2001. “Dancing” with this image, she re-plays it to take away the pain she feels when viewing it. Finally, Nina Ross in “Seized by Beauty: The Imaginal Basis of Art Therapy,” emphasizes the essential role that beauty has in the expressive arts. James Hillman’s dictum, “Stick to the image,” is enough for healing; we do not need to go further into interpretation. We also asked Shaun McNiff about his essay in the section, “Witnessing and Responding to Art with Art,” but he thought our readers would find the piece from 2006, “The Terrifying Beauty of Creating Anew,” more relevant today. There is always fear in artistic expression, but when others witness the beauty in our work, we feel accepted for who we are. The role of the therapist or facilitator is to help

this transformation to happen.

In the last section of this issue, we introduce readers to two new books: *Sentir le monde et existence* (Sensing the World and Existing) by Jacques Stitelmann, and "Solution Art," by Herbert Eberhart and Paolo Knill. Brigitte Anor presents Stitelmann's work on modality, which expands our concept of the person by focusing on all the different ways in which the modalities of the senses bring us in contact with the world, and Margo Fuchs Knill shows that Knill and Eberhart's focus on solutions takes us out of being "problem-tranced" and opens the imagination to possibilities that would otherwise not be available. We hope that the excerpts from both books will motivate readers to explore these new perspectives further.

Most of all, the images and poems in the journal show us that even in the midst of crisis, a creative response is always possible. This is, we believe, the power of *poiesis*.

In the Midst of Crisis— What is Emerging?

Margo Fuchs Knill

Open the Door
Listen.
Wait.
The sadness in your heart
will be surrounded by song.
Silence will turn to joy.
And in the middle
of all your longing,
a sweet smile
will break your face
into tears.

Looking back, I feel like I grew up idyllically, intrinsically connected with nature. As kids, we proudly planted carrots, onions, strawberries, we cut chives and parsley for the salad, harvested apples, pears, apricots, quinces, hazelnuts and linden blossoms for tea, basil and rosemary for cooking, berries for breakfast or dessert, and looked after the flowers in the garden. My father taught me how to dig up the garden, weed and rake the leaves in Fall. Together with the neighbor kids, we climbed trees, built tree houses, played in the woods, strolled along rivers and creeks, built snow men and snow huts. However, winters with snow belong to the past, the glaciers are receding, and Switzerland risks losing its important reservoir. The global warming creates landslides, as in the village of Brienz which moves downslope by over a meter every year. Houses develop cracks, streets become impassable, and holes open up in the pastures. The issues are known, the climate crisis is accelerating, life on our planet becomes poorer step by step, biodiversity declines.

What is our responsibility as expressive arts professionals? At a symposium on climate crisis and the role of the arts, specifically literature, Tiphaine Samoyault (2022) from the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* in Paris demanded that we need to rethink our way of living, and act differently. We humans cannot anymore exploit with impunity undisturbed rivers or trees and reduce nature to resource, scenery, or a reserve. But who gives the river, the tree a voice?

Samoyault (2022) claims that literature has always given a voice to the silenced, to that which does not speak or has no voice. Yet nowadays, as we are facing climate change, can literature still fulfill this role? Can poetry, storytelling and other forms of prose speak for nature, for other species which do not speak our language? Can we do that without already exploiting and speaking in their place? How to allow them their own expression rather than giving everything a human voice, like La Fontaine did by having his fable animals speak as human beings? New perspectives need a new vocabulary, and a new way of working with language enhances different perspectives than the anthropocentric voice.

Literature is actively dealing with ecology and the climate crisis, as many texts show. There have been new genres and terminology developed to specifically address the issues, such as “literary biodiversity,” “eco-literature,” “eco-poetry,” etc.

As a poet, I contemplate poetically, reflect what is emerging until I am corresponding to it. Nowadays we also talk about being in “resonance.” Let me share the idea of poetic response and eco-poetry through excerpts from my own poetic explorations.

I

Climate change

In me
a no-man’s land
inhabited by rough thoughts
and the ebb and flow
of worldly images,
the flood of TV news

Climate change
in me
a tireless adaptation,
the migration of animals
plants and–us
on the run
passing and being passed by

There, in the cold light
of guilt, shame and rage
I stare into day-break
recollecting my
faith in the good.

II

I wake up, walk around my room, look outside the window—
suddenly the morning sky. Fog is lifting, giving way to the sun to light
up the blue fabric to a heavenly glow. Suddenly, I remember the last
lines of *The Journey* inviting us to save our lives, “to save the only life
you could save” (Oliver 2020, p. 350).

Who finds me?

Sky, our bringer of water,
snow and ice
what shall we do?
Sun burns, mighty glacier
weakens, thaws out,
giant sea
boils with rage,
storms, thunders
erupts, wallows, swallows
our islands of joy.

Sky, our bringer of water
I stand exposed
at the edge of no return.

Almighty sacredness
fluid and substantial
fenceless and holding
my step into the next
shall not happen unnoticed

For the sake of the struggle
Behind us, and ahead of us,

I ought to be troubled
I ought to strengthen faith
given to me, neglected by me

I ought to call back
the prayers gone by the wind
with my own voice,
my own other voice.

III

It is already dark. And silent. My mind still awake. I read in the newspaper that new words have been developed. A war is not a war, yet a "special operation." Explosions are called "*chlopok*" in Russian,

meaning a harmless bang and also cotton¹. Unfortunately, the war goes on. Which war? Whose war? Is this how it goes, toppling the climate crisis with another existential threat?

Where is hope?

Truly,
I could close my eyes
and still see
you,
glacier, in agony, see
your raging floods.

Truly,
nature obeys
its great intelligence
its greening power
its majestic silence
its ancient expansion,
contraction, eruption
and transformation
in its unlimited timing.

In autumn, trees lose their lungs
and have them grow back in spring

¹ *Tagesanzeiger Magazin*, November 19, 2022.

day and night, creatures move
crawl, stalk, hop
creep, swim, or fly
eat and are eaten up.

Truly,
I live in a mysterious
place called earth
too large to understand.

Let me keep company
with amazement
this door opener
to beauty.
Let me practice the vocabulary
of love
and say "Look!," "Come!,"
as long as we can embrace
each other
as long as the water drop
is running down our window
to the world.

IV

November hits. Harsh and icy. The last leaves had to let go. Tumbled lightly, in an innocent, playful last dance. To be held. To rot and

become earth. To give space to the new, Spring. A first candle light.
A slight disbelief—Christmas, again? Another year. Another year of
what? And the kids. Everywhere. On sideways, benches, in supermar-
kets, play grounds—of course, play has to rule the world. Please help
my doubt, faith is with me.

Tree, our daily breath

Especially now
It is my turn
to respectfully say
you
tree for life
in quiet exchange
you
breathing leaf
sprout, green,
wither, shrivel

you
heavenly earthling
standing firm, bending in the storm
without breaking
rooting down
and
branching up

interconnection
at work
a mysterious
must

protecting, savoring
the dance of the
in and out
of my heart-filled chest

V

Is the emerging announcing itself? Has it already emerged, yet we fail to see it? Or have reasons to not see it? Is the term “emerging” itself misleading? The emerging as a turning point? A quite strange image: a point turns. Pointing the turn. Peak and loss at once. You bring it to the point and have to let go. Turn, to become without direction—a circular move rather than a move forward or backward. Turning point, an image that brings a focus. We humans set up chances to turn—point. New Year. Birthday. Wedding. Divorce. Migration. Emigration. Moving. Settling down. Giving birth.

The emergent has us in its grip. Whether we are aware of it or not, whether we like it or not, it makes us act, or not. Await or not. Adapt.

The time of awaiting

We have been born,
loved and raised,

we matched the world
towards a future
gone to a past

we walk the trampled
world, attend weddings
and burials
shy fear away
adapt and
readapt

we shape and
are shaped

rock tumbles
mountain collapses
glaciers crack up
breakdown

species die
out
trees split
roads are ripped

heart pounds—
loud enough?

VI

We are in the midst of climate crisis. We are the climate crisis. The climate crisis is us. Sally Atkins reminds us that we forget what we know, again and again. Yet when we remember, we are called to hear praises, "sung by the dying flowers" (Atkins, 2010, p.50).

The sleepless eye

The eye of the mountain
tears at night
ice splits, river spills
spits its watery milk

sun stings, pinches
the eye of the mountain
blinded

terminal silence
settles
the rising of the first sign
my own shortened breath
my cells stiffened by grief

however
I have a pact with our scared life,
our sacred, shaken life

and I need a shelter
a small place for peace
to wake from shock.

Eye of the mountain
imaginary of the world,
its fissures, its beauty:
weep for us.

it must be possible
to walk with bittersweet joy
through the immense
galaxy of adaptation,
after all,
it is not about death and dying
it is about the resurrection
of new life.

Dedicated to All Souls Day and in memoriam
of Paolo Knill, founding rector EGS



Growth is nevertheless emerging.
Mixed media, January 2023,
Margo Fuchs Knill

Dedicated to the Emerging New Year

My life is held by daily routines
from day to day, year to year
I shake hands, agree and disagree
laugh and weep, brush off
greed and need.

But the climate changed
my hope is flooded
I cannot change back
the world
that changed,
changed me.

Yet now, as the old year
drifts to memory, and has its
spirit pierce through each living cell
a sense of new beginning
enters me
I am intact, my mind is
free to travel wherever it wants
the possible lies in my hands,
freed of must and time
I am the beginning
now
and now again.

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Margo Fuchs Knill is a professor, psychotherapist, expressive arts professional and poet. She is the Dean of the 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 *(Von nun an) 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*.

In the Midst of Crisis—What is Emerging?

Nancy Mackenzie

An earwig falls from the new winter coat
she'd hung on a front door hook
lands at my grandson's feet.

Not all truths are ugly.
As it wriggle-jigs towards the sofa
he pulls his toes up, says *I don't like those*.
We watch it bump into the sofa fringe
before disappearing back into the dark.

Oh, she says, shaking the navy blue coat.
It's kind of big for him, but I hope it will fit.
Finn and I look at one another. I say, *An earwig,*
by way of explanation, and, *You'll have to remember*
to shake things out before putting them on.

As if shaking things up could bring any more truths
to the surface. But it does. Clearly. We, or at least, I
am not welcome here, with the people she's chosen to live with.
Finn and I sit on the sofa in the living room.
No one is coming to greet us. The other family's children have vanished
to their parents upstairs, or out to the baseball diamond
in the after-school afternoon. She paces little circles
in front of us, using body language to get us to move.

I've rented an Airbnb nearby and she already has their weekender bags in the car, along with my carry-on from the airport. We go to the historic rental, the Millinery House, where Finn says *Someone died here*.

Certainly possible. The place is 150 years old.
The widow raised nine kids here
supporting them by making hats.

We pick up where we left off
two months ago,
before she announced they were moving 2000 miles away
after living with me for 1,610 days. Most of the days of Finn's life.

Over the 3-day weekend, he and I, heartbroken but brave,
hold hands when walking,
laugh when sharing meals,
lay side-by-side in my bed for story time
share confidences when she's in the shower.

Back home now in my quiet house,
it's those that wake me at night

the chime of sorrow in a child's voice
Grandma, I want to come home with you.

After Crisis, What Emerges? Key of G Major

Nancy Mackenzie

Maybe you step out of time
into the dark and morose rhymes
of a poet afraid of death.

Or, inside the void of those dark and morose rhymes
You spy a fire ceremony
where olden understandings
imparted through ritual and ceremony
warm you, forehead, heart, and womb;
and ancient DNA speaks up through the flames,
reveals who you were
before you were born.

But that was then.

Now, you are in time
facing the music
dancing, if you're able
with a horse, if you're lucky.

Are you good? You practice stillness
so that what can emerge from heartbreak
is a way of moving through the world
without leaving any wake. Yes,

invisibility offers oneness with spirit,
a way to keep secrets so that only wheels,
not arrows, of time, offer maps

so the future can reach back
and find you, your distinct key a vibration
(far apart from the songs of the family of origin)

so the future can reach back, pull you out of now.

Your fall from time
lands you at the feet of a new dawn.

Nancy Mackenzie is a horsewoman, poet, and novelist. She has published 4 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. She is currently working on a fantasy/science fiction novel. 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".



Nafi Salah

My work always begins with a stroll through the streets of my city, Paris. This is where I find my inspiration, both material and spiritual. "Material," because I feed on everything that our modern society throws away: pieces of wood worn out by time, smashed mirrors, disjointed furniture that I snatch from the dumpster, wall posters half-peeled off that I tear down from walls or even those half-calabashes that I found one day, orphans, on a sidewalk corner; "spiritual," because I am particularly sensitive to the scenes of daily life around me, a mother shouting at her child, two lovers on a bench, people in a hurry from the metro, a homeless person begging, a red, yellow or green protest demonstration...

Each object thus collected enters my studio with its history, the traces of a past that I do not know and that I can thus freely reinvent. I do this by fleshing out the signs of an accident, a knot in the wood, a color that has rubbed off in the thickness of the posters pasted on top of each other before the wall pushes them back, a word that suddenly arises, a back of a chair on which only a piece of armrest remains...

image left: Untitled, 35cm x 40cm acrylic on bitter-apple (gourd), 1998.

My gesture then consists of letting myself go through all these feelings, then channeling and digesting this external hubbub which will become internal momentum. Only then can I restore it, in a twisted and stylized form, trying to capture its essence.

Often, characters impose themselves, because what interests me above all is human beings and the way in which links and communication are created between them - the more the period was tormented, the more the question of what social fact becomes significant. This question has been there since the beginning; it was perhaps the trigger for my painting, when I drew my inspiration from characters from my childhood in a small Kurdish community living in Zakho, a city in Iraqi Kurdistan, a person who had to leave his native land. Today, I am still looking for what being human is: where can it be placed without getting lost in our panicked modernity? For this, I dig into what we are getting rid of, this degraded but authentic back room, revealing what we are much more than the smooth window displayed for everyone to see. I try to draw threads between yesterday and tomorrow, hope and despair, through a present in which we are spectators and a future in which we become actors.

27/02/2023

image right: *The Kiss (Le Baiser)* 150cm x 150cm acrylic on street posters ripped on wood, 2014.



N. Saba



Born in Iraqi Kurdistan, **Nafi Salah** immigrated to Jerusalem at the age of two with his family. After a childhood in a difficult neighborhood, he chose to join a kibbutz at the age of 14. He stayed there until he was 18 years old. He began a career as an actor, then as a director in the early 1970s, and represented Israel in 1974 at the Interdrama festival in Berlin. From 1977 to 1980, he lived in Toronto, Canada, where he studied plastic arts at the Ontario College of Art.

Returning to Jerusalem in 1980, he made several visits to New York, during which he deepened his knowledge of African art and worked, in the English through Drama project, with groups of black South Africans then undergoing the harsh laws of the apartheid regime. In 1988, he left Jerusalem for Paris, where he trained in the technique of engraving.

His move to France also corresponds to a turning point in his life as an artist: from that moment he devoted himself entirely to painting, with, from time to time, a few small deviations towards the theater. He has been a member of the Taylor Foundation since 2017.

Instagram: [atelierdenafi](https://www.instagram.com/atelierdenafi)
www.facebook.com/atelierdenafi

Image left: Untitled, 160cm x 160cm acrylique on ripped street posters, 2016.



Death, Mourning and Offering: A Group Testimony from an Expressive Arts Experience

Odette Vélez V., Martín Zavala G.,
Mónica Prado P. and Ximena Maurial M.

We live in a time of great psychological demand. It seems that the pandemic is over. Nevertheless, we have the impression that death has remained the protagonist, along with fear, helplessness and hopelessness. The last two years we have not had the opportunity to perform face-to-face mourning rituals to be able to sustain ourselves collectively. It seems challenging to bet on what is vital in these times, although we know that death also has the ability to open a window in order for us to love life.

We are writing this text shortly after losing Pilar Sousa, a dear friend and co-worker, with whom we shared our souls for the last nineteen years. She was an active member of our

TAE Perú¹ school, and she died of a fulminating cancer in just four months. We are writing together because it helps us to better contain our pain. *In this text we speak to you, Pilar*, and we speak to the world, because we know that expressive arts allows us to be present, to respond aesthetically, without neglecting our suffering.

If we do not grieve what we miss, we are not praising what we love. We are not praising the life we have been given in order to love. If we do not praise whom we miss, we are ourselves in some way dead. So, grief and praise make us alive. (Prechtel, 2015, p. 37)

The news hurricane

Pilar is no longer physically with us, and we need to talk to her. The unexpected death of our beloved friend with such short notice has been, as always, violent, and could become a traumatic experience for us. We are aware that trauma experiences can leave us emotionally fragmented, and we need to find meaning in what we have experienced, as it is often incomprehensible to our minds. Understanding this is difficult for us, because we are part of a culture that often desperately wants everything to stay the way it is, so we end up believing that things will always stay the same. Although we know that everything changes and nothing really lasts, we are inclined to believe in permanence because it gives us security (Rimpoche, 1994). In addition, in societies like ours, where Western thought predominates, we do not understand death as part of life, but as its opposite. We have learned to deny it, to be afraid of it, as something outside of a greater continuum. Plus, this lack of preparation to navigate death feels worsened

1 TAE Perú (Terapia de Artes Expresivas Perú) is an institute which offers a study program in Peru and other Latin American countries. Since 2004, through these studies, along with therapeutic treatment, various courses and workshops, TAE has spread the theory and practice of the expressive arts in therapeutic, educational, organizational and social change contexts. TAE Perú is affiliated with the European Graduate School (EGS). www.taeperu.org

by the deep void left by the friend we just lost. Writing this text now, two months after Pilar's departure, helps us to continue accepting it. Time has a curious effect on how we remember what we have experienced.

In the arts, we remember by imagining, and this is possible because memory itself is the shaping of the experience of an event, with all the selection, emphasis and amplification that shaping implies. "I remember" really means, "I re-create"; I play it again in a different way. (Levine, S., 2009, p. 50)

We want to start by evoking how we learned the news about her illness. It is difficult to bring ourselves to that first moment. Going back to the beginning of the end of her physical presence brings us distant, blurred and uncertain images. Maybe we just want to remember the person in her vitality and in the most pleasant moments we shared with her. We tend to push the pain away, to forget it and, at the same time, we need to keep naming things to find meaning in what happened, to build up memory. Where do people who die live? Who was Pilar? Who is Pilar for us and for our community of expressive arts?

Some of us are in Lima, preparing the Expressive Arts and Peruvian Imagery seminar that we will soon offer in Cusco, in the city of Ollantaytambo, to a group of TAE students. Others of us are in Switzerland, at the EGS summer school in Saas Fee, giving various expressive arts seminars to a group of international students. We are resuming face-to-face encounters after two years of the pandemic, although Covid is still very present and the post-pandemic environment is strongly felt. In this context, Pilar, we hear that you are not in good health.

You are sending us various voice messages. Something has happened, you have had a delusion, a confusion, your brain is not working well and you are in the hospital. They are doing medical examinations, and it is not yet known what's wrong. You are not clear with us

about what's going on, and you only mention the impossibility of continuing with your supervision group, the need to inform them and to find a replacement for you. Later on, you tell us that it is very likely that you have a brain disease. You're still in the hospital waiting for the results. You request us to be discreet until the diagnosis is confirmed. How can this be happening? You were in very good health until recently. We can't believe it. Maybe it's just a stress episode, and it's a matter of rest.

Our minds try to make amends. We want everything to be well, quickly under control and in balance. We are looking for some way to help: we do research about doctors, we share references of people with similar experiences and we try to find out about new treatment possibilities. We want it to be something temporary, and we want it to be solved. We feel hope for your recovery, even knowing how delicate the situation is. It is our way of responding to the shock of the news. It is overwhelming, so we feed the desire that nothing changes, that things will continue as before.

What is our life but a dance of ephemeral forms? Isn't everything constantly changing, the leaves on the trees in the park, the light in the room as you read this, the seasons, the weather, the time of day, the people you pass on the street? (Rimpoche, 1994, p.48)

We kept talking about this between us, nonstop. As days went by, we were invaded by more questions. What was happening? What news did we have? What new actions were to be taken? We were missing information. Messages came and went about the various opinions of the doctors. Days later, Pilar's husband explained to us that brain tumors had been detected and that the treatment had to be started without delay. Chemotherapy. Radiotherapy. Tablets. The days passed, and it was increasingly clear that it was an inoperable cancer. The doctors indicated that medicine could no longer help her and that the end was near.

You are hospitalized. We receive new messages from you. Your brittle voice, broken and almost breathless, announces fear. We send you messages and photos of flowers, skies, trees. We imagine all the doors opening in favor of your health, your laughter, your generous heart. Uncertainty traps us. Where are you Pilar? Where are you? We still can't visit you because the hospital doesn't allow it due to its Covid prevention protocol. We come to you through a dear friend who manages to see you. She tells us that, in the midst of your sadness and daydreams, you name us and you keep us very present. We know your diagnosis is serious. It is a branched tumor and we imagine it full of exploding lianas. Your brain seems like a minefield and we can't do anything. Bombs in your head and splinters piercing our hearts. We just have to wait.

The first two months were filled with bewilderment; we were only able to collect scattered information about Pilar's health, and we integrated it little by little to understand the situation. The reality of the events led us to share with friends and colleagues what was happening. We became spokespersons and slowly created a weave that allowed us to sustain our concern. The sense of belonging to a community made us feel accompanied in the face of such uncertainty and to look for ways to restore ourselves. We remembered that, in the phenomena of imagination, play and arts, a restoration ritual allows us to search for a cultural bond that does not necessarily imply a complete cure of the affliction, but does contain it (Knill, 2018). This certainly held us.

At the beginning of the seminar in Ollantaytambo we decided to tell the students about your illness. We put all our love and good thoughts for your recovery at the center. We receive new voice messages from you in which you remember a Community Art at the beach, with some handkerchiefs in the wind; you also mention something about breaking the parameters and getting out of the frame, out of the therapeutic setting. You say we have to meet soon because you really miss us. Your thoughts are fuzzy. There are certain moments of greater lucidity. You cry as well. It makes us shudder to hear your voice pierced by the uncertainty of

what you are experiencing...disoriented and losing control. You are aware of what is happening and also scared. What is going to happen? You don't have the strength for rational conversations, and you don't want these to be your last days. Listening to you, we are short of breath, but we continue breathing. We imagine holding your hand, grateful to be with you even at a distance.

Pilar's serious illness brought a clearer awareness of our condition as mortals, questioning us about our way of living and our priorities in life. Everything lost some sense and confronted us with what is essential. The fragility of life became evident as an invitation to review our own existence.

Only in birth and death does one step out of time; the Earth stops its rotation and the trivialities on which we waste the hours fall to the ground like glitter dust. When a child is born or a person dies, the present splits in half and lets you glimpse for an instant the crack of the truth: monumental, burning and impassive. Never does one feel so authentic as living at the edge of those biological frontiers: you have a clear awareness of living something very great. (Montero, 2013, p. 9).

The intensity of this moment made us turn to the network of close people. When we met, we remembered, we expressed emotions and accompanied each other, taking care of Pilar and keeping her from oblivion. We recognized ourselves as part of a community that shares ties that honor life and value love.

Your birthday arrives. We do a full moon ritual asking for your health. We try to contact you, but you are no longer responding. At the end of August, it is your husband who answers us from your cell phone. He tells us that we can send you messages and images and that he will show them to you. Chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatments have finished. Soon you will return to your house, and we will be able to visit you. We only have to wait a little more. We don't want you to die. We want to see you and hug you.

Acceptance of death

“so much love and yet no power against death” –César Vallejo

When September arrived, we coordinated the first visit to Pilar without delay, since she was already at home. Her husband told us that she needed loving company and that, despite the fact that she had moments of more presence than others, it was good that we could talk with her. We decided to go together.

Pilar, you are in bed, well tucked in and taken care of, with your beautiful big eyes looking at us as you always did, smiling and affectionate. There are beautiful flowers and various gifts around you. You greet us and acknowledge us with joy. You are thinner. Your voice has changed a bit, and at times it seems that the wind has taken away your words. A part of you is no longer here in the same way. You speak to us from a dreamlike and imaginal place. We let ourselves be lulled by your images, and we play with you. You talk to us about wires in the head and camel teeth, you also ask us curiously about “the girl.” You move your right hand and show us her dance. You also tell us about your leather jacket and the bolero knitted by your mother. You tell us that there is nowhere to go, only here and now, enough of the demands. You are thirsty, you drink water and you also ask us for a little piece of chocolate. Sometimes you close your eyes, you’re tired. It’s time for us to go. We say goodbye and you offer us many hugs. We are finally here with you. We wanted so much to see each other again. Now we leave, embraced by you.

It has been a gift to finally be with Pilar after these months of uncertainty. Seeing her, touching her, listening to her, without expecting anything, willing to immerse ourselves in the tides of her words and allowing ourselves to be surprised, to be curious about everything that she communicated to us. Something changed after this first meeting. Her words taught us the importance of the here and now, of joy and play. Being totally present helped us to focus our attention on her and on everything we felt, as well as on the atmosphere we created with her, receiving everything that was emerging at the moment (Atkins, 2014). We laughed and played together. We wanted to continue visiting her, so after a week we came back.

Pilar, here we are again. We have come to play with you again. You receive the butterfly that we have brought for you and you put it on your chest. You happily receive the flowers and the book we have brought for you as well. Your vibrant voice wants to have fun. You're here with us, wanting to be playful. You talk to us about meditation classes, you ask us about theater, and you laugh when you recall that we have performed together. You speak of integrating, of creating a bridge between the arts and the neurosciences, of continuing in ecopoiesis. We breathe together. We take you by the hand, in a small circle. We talk about love, about our daughters and sons. We give you a kiss. You are tired. We can't play so much today, we just have to be. Come back soon, you say to us.

Despite the fact that the visits were short, it was a blessing to encounter Pilar. Playing together was a balm to us. It did not change the harsh reality, but it allowed us to enjoy the moment. The days passed and the disease progressed. The treatments no longer made sense. The time for palliative care had arrived. Pilar gradually withered away. We had to start accepting that she was leaving this world. Our heads knew it, but our hearts didn't. Many people asked about her in classes and at work meetings, almost on a daily basis. She was always present in our thoughts and prayers.

We have come to see you for the last time. You are asleep, induced by a medicine that appeases your pain. We caress your arms and your temples tenderly. Sleepy, delicate, vulnerable girl. You know we are here with you, taking care of you. Girl sniled around your hand, perhaps looking for another childhood. We contemplate your dreaming body eager for the horizon. We remember your phrase: "There is no place to get to." We kiss your forehead. We whisper in your ear how much we love you, how grateful we are to have met you. Pilar, thank you for so much. You give us a sigh back, a deep and calm breath.

The time had come to communicate that her departure was near. Thus, we began to imagine her absence and to recognize the sadness that this brought us. We began to accompany each other making art together. A group of students and graduates organized a ritual in a park



near her house. They made a beautiful collective visual creation, and then handed it over to her husband and her son. The teachers also made an offering with colored phrases, with words and wishes for her, giving her all our love. Every day we lit candles for Pilar. We started saying goodbye to her.

Where are you Pilar? We speak to you knowing that you listen to us, we continue to make room for you. Your sweet gaze of blue eyes stays here with us.

The offering

...each one gives what one receives,
then one gets what one gives,
nothing is simpler
there is no other rule
nothing is lost,
everything transforms...

–Jorge Drexler

Years ago, Pilar had a dream that she wrote:

Many years ago, I dreamt that I was walking with the TAE Perú teachers along the banks of a fresh river. We walked slowly, contemplating the water and the trees with green leaves and grayish shadows. Aware of the beauty of the moment and that it was ephemeral, I enjoyed each movement and each moment of togetherness. Suddenly, I felt—with sorrow and with some fear—that the moment to let go had arrived. However, when I let myself be carried away by the river I felt very good. I told myself and my friends from TAE that I felt like a fish in the water, as I moved forward, feeling my body flowing in it.

Indeed, we are inclined to feel death as loss, as something that takes life away and leaves us with an absence. However, nineteen years together with Pilar, sharing the arts, studying, teaching and practicing the expressive arts, leaves us with innumerable marks and memories that emanate from a vital source that seems endless.

On Thursday, November 3 at 1:30 in the afternoon, Pilar left. The inevitable happened. Time stopped and the crack of truth appeared. We relit the candles to accompany her. Once again, we wanted to see photos, hear messages and read unpublished texts from her, as if wanting to capture the last traces of her physical presence. We shared words of love and farewell.

Despite everything, it was difficult to say goodbye to Pilar.

Disarmed, empty, silent... between memories and whispers, here we are. You mothered us. You always welcomed us with love in your home. Pilar, your paintings. Pilar, your smile. Pilar, your writings. Pilar, the sky of your gaze. You are here with us, we accompany you on your departure, wherever you go.

The next day, the wake. Hugs and conversations with family, with friends, with the expressive arts community, facing the sea and the horizon on a sunny day. The flowers, the words of affection, the beautiful collage that Pilar's son made with various photos about her life. That same day a seminar began in TAE, and at the beginning we gave time for everyone to make a creation in her honor. We formed a center with all the images that emerged. A day later, the cremation. The last good-bye. Applause for Pilar and moving words from her husband and her son. We held each other in tears.

Beautiful Pilar, we took some roses home, we will always miss you.

That same night we met again. We needed to be grateful for everything we had lived by, doing the best thing that we knew how to do: responding creatively through art, play and ritual. The strength of wanting to honor Pilar through beauty moved our souls. We decided to organize a tribute to appreciate her legacy. We started to imagine it together.

We have found the unpublished texts of your research based on the expressive arts. We have read them again after five years; we are excited about your creations and reflections. Soon we will make you a beautiful tribute. And we will also organize an exhibition with your paintings next year. We know it was your wish; we will accompany you to fulfill it. We keep dreaming with you.

Reviewing Pilar's unpublished writings was like having a dialogue with her again, with her thoughts, images, desires, frustrations, questions, and dreams. This dialogue helped us to

imagine each part of her tribute and to repair her absence. It was like bringing her here and now again. Getting together to talk about her and her homage was a healing ritual in itself. The ideas were coming quickly, and the ritual was smoothly being shaped.

We imagine reading some of your writings aloud... a butterfly in the center to fill it with flowers... music and songs... photos... some of your paintings... some creations that the students and graduates have made together with you... a free space to thank you... We want to celebrate you.



We invited the entire community, Pilar's family and some of her friends and her patients. The tribute will be held one month after her departure, in a beautiful space generously offered by a teacher of TAE. We were all eagerly anticipating the ritual. Some people sent messages to be read because they couldn't be there that day. After a few weeks of work, everything was almost ready.

Teachers arrived early to prepare everything. The space begins to be filled with beauty: the butterfly drawn in the center, the flowers in the baskets, two paintings of yours around it, your son's collage, the creations that the students and graduates have brought, the projector and the screen to see your photos, musical instruments, chairs, tables and many more details. We are nervous. The sun has risen. People begin to arrive: teachers, students and graduates from various years, your friends

and your family. The music starts playing. We are ready. We gather around the butterfly that is protected by your paintings. The Tibetan bowl sounds. The fire is lit. We take a deep breath and welcome everyone. We name you and read your dream. We contemplate you through various photos of our life together and loving words that we have written for you. We began to populate the butterfly with flowers, slowly, while we sang, "Zamba de la esperanza," "Todo se transforma" and "Stand by me". The butterfly has been lovingly inhabited by flowers with our hands and voices, now it needs to fly. Some people offer words of love and gratitude for you. We read your poem. We applaud you. Pilar, fly high, you will always be here with us.

How powerful rituals are, even more so if they are created in community. This tribute was a collective poetic act. Beauty emerged from the first moment. Together we created a sacred space and time where we were able to honor Pilar, remember her, mourn her, thank her, sing to her and wish her a good journey of transformation. Magic arose. It was moving to see so many dear people gathered in a circle, attentively witnessing each part of the ceremony, especially the moment when each one of us came to choose the flowers and delicately put them inside the butterfly, painting it with colorful petals, to the sound of the songs. It was refreshing to be together, to encounter and hug each other, feeling a single grateful heart. That day we were able to share the marks that Pilar has







left in each one of us, with the sadness of her departure and also with the joy of having met her. Making art together, around a large butterfly, not only gave us the chance to say goodbye to her, but also allowed us to move, like in a great choreography, to transform our pain. The collective action sheltered our memories, sustained us and left deep resonances in us. It was a love offering.

Thank you for everything you taught us. So much of you remains in us. Your images stay alive. We accompany you to cross the threshold of death from the flight of our butterfly.

Pilar is no longer physically with us; after the ritual, we continue to live with her absence but with less sadness. We still mourn her and we will continue to miss her, but something feels different now. The ritual and our testimony through this writing constitute a poetic act that allows us to honor her and to begin to build a new relationship with her.

Pilar, as you say in your poem, you are present and we feel you are alive:

(...) I am
I am with me
I am with you and with others
I am doing something
with the pain
and with the loss
For others and myself
Give receive return
Recover something
I am present
and I feel alive

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Threshold

Hjørdis Mair

An adventure is a crisis that you accept. A crisis is a possible adventure that you refuse, for fear of losing control.

–Bertrand Picard, the first person to fly in a solar-powered air balloon around the world.

Where there is ruin, there is hope for a treasure.

–Rumi

My eyes grope across the step
Between light and dark

This image of the threshold as a border between light and dark,
a place of decision, where I want to stay.

I turn towards the dark, the hidden and the incomprehensible
and discover unexpected glimpses of light.

A slow accustoming of the eyes to the darkness,
shadowy outlines carefully take shape.

An equally slow getting used to the light,
that sometimes flashes unexpectedly
and reminds us of the other side of the threshold.

And then, at some point, daring to take the step into the light,
after a long time in the dark.

This step that means life,
allows to see again the beauties of the present,
opens the view for the future.
The threshold—a place that allows light and darkness to share a common existence
and makes our identity complete.
The image of the threshold—a bridge between the fragments of life,
where light and shadow play with each other,
knowing that one cannot be without the other.
Hope can grow again,
even in times of despair and need,
when the inkling is awakened
that somewhere there are treasures resting in the ruins...
and only the way over the darkness into the light
makes them visible.

Meine Augen tasten über die Stufe
Zwischen Hell und Dunkel

Dieses Bild der Schwelle als einer Grenze zwischen Hell und Dunkel,
ein Ort der Entscheidung, wo ich mich aufhalten möchte.
Ich wende mich hin zum Dunklen, Verborgenen und Nichtverstehbaren
und entdecke unerwartete Lichtblicke.
Ein langsames Gewöhnen der Augen an die Dunkelheit,
schemenhafte Umrisse nehmen vorsichtig Gestalt an.
Ein ebenso langsames Gewöhnen ans Licht,
das manchmal ganz unverhofft aufblitzt
und an die andere Seite der Schwelle erinnert.
Und dann, irgendwann den Schritt ins Helle zu wagen,
nach einer langen Zeit in der Dunkelheit.

Dieser Schritt, der das Leben meint,
die Schönheiten der Gegenwart wieder zu sehen erlaubt,
den Blick für die Zukunft öffnet.
Die Schwelle—ein Ort, der Hell und Dunkel eine gemeinsame Existenz
zugesteht
und die Identität des Menschen erst vollständig macht.
Das Bild der Schwelle—eine Brücke zwischen den Lebensfragmenten,
wo Licht und Schatten miteinander spielen,
im Wissen, dass das Eine ohne das Andere nicht sein kann.
Hoffnung kann wieder wachsen,
selbst in Zeiten der Verzweiflung und Not,
wenn die Ahnung geweckt wird,
dass da irgendwo Schätze in den Ruinen ruhen
und nur der Weg über die Dunkelheit ins Licht
sie sichtbar macht.

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.



The Crossing—Series #6

Ellen G. Levine

In the last few years, my paintings have been a personal attempt to respond to the world-wide refugee crisis. Millions of people are travelling the earth, leaving home and setting out on perilous and often deadly journeys to escape war, famine, oppression, abuse and persecution. I have seen pictures in the newspapers, movies, videos and read many things about this situation, drawn to it by fascination with what I have seen as the human capacity to persist, to endure and to draw on resources in order to face extreme adversity. Some of the images that I found spoke loudly to me: “Do not turn away!” “Others need to see this and to take it in!” “Cut me out and copy me!” Since I began painting in a more sustained way about 30 years ago, I have been preoccupied with the particular landscape of the ocean and its relationship to the shore—the meeting point between water and land. I decided to incorporate some of these photographs into paintings of landscapes and to see what would happen.

I was drawn to images that showed masses of people travelling

on foot or by boat. I copied the image many times to emphasize the enormity of the problem, trying to imagine the hardships and dangers of these journeys. Somehow I imagined being there and giving the travellers something they could hold on to. In this painting, I have provided them with a window from which warm light is emanating, giving a sense of hope. In some of the other paintings in this series, I have put a ladder or both a ladder and a window. What helps people in this situation continue to go forward? What are they going to? Is it a real or imagined place or both? What keeps them going despite obstacle after obstacle? These are the questions that I am left with in the end. The painting cannot answer these questions, but it can make me and others who see it look again, think about the situation, enter into it and respond to it more deeply by imagining it.

“The Crossing—Series #6” by Ellen G. Levine, 2022,
mixed media (acrylic, oil stick, pencil)

Photo credit: Santi Palacios—New York Times

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The Tender Torch

Kristin Briggs

In the mist of all our crises
Can we see what's in plain sight?
Let us hold the tender torch
As though it were first light.

We love—as all who have before us.
Verse and chorus, tempo and rhyme
We also wail into the dark—
Seeking answers, craving time.

The advancing creak of floorboards
Singing through our feet.
We put our faith in them to hold,
Their song of warning, sweet.

Adrift upon a sea of fear
Yet driven to face the wind,
We hold steadfast until it's clear
Together we are strong-limbed.

Recognition is gold—
The gold of morning light,
The nectar of our yesterdays
Is tomorrow's gown of white

Sun rises again.

And we are here to see it—ahh,
The sun, our faithful witness
Returning and returning
With you, we rise again.

In the midst of all our crises
Can we see what's in plain sight?
Let us pass the torch, so tender,
It is, indeed, first light.

After Our Elections (With a bow of gratitude to Maya Angelou)

TRE Tamar Einstein

Humans leave me perplexed
Spewing red hot hatred
From podiums
Allotted to them as leaders.
Volcanoes of rage
That leave too much space
For dread.
I will not pack my belongings
My prayers for peace, salaam, shalom,
In an emergency escape survival bag.
I will stay put
In Jerusalem
Up high on this holy mountain
Above the noxious fumes and flames
Along with many others
Who will pour holy Frankincense, Myrrh, and rose-scented water
Down the stony terraces
And cool the overheated politicians down
And once again
The walls of Jerusalem
Will blush golden peach at sunset.
Bold orange and fuchsia peace.

Questions about Peace

TRE Tamar Einstein

So many BIG questions
About such a tiny word:
Peace.
What does it look like?
Does it have a scent?
Would you know it
If you bumped into it
At the supermarket?
Peace is elusive
Mysterious
Shy
And sometimes feels extinct.
But I see you
I smell you
I know you live amongst us here
In your city
Jerusalem
And I think you are probably exhausted
So, rest and be restored.
I am patient
I will be waiting to welcome you
With mint tea
And roses.
And I will recognize you.
Though we have never met face to face.

Who is Me and Who is Thee? A Co-Respond-Dance

Elizabeth Gordon McKim and Stephen K. Levine

Dear Steve,

I am sending you the poems I chose yesterday for the Poiesis Symposium 2/13/2023

The first one is with 10-year-old Paolo on the roof of his family house on the Swiss/German border. The boy wears a helmet and searches the sky for enemy bombs. He is so young and terrified and undefended against the terrible love of war. The anger comes later...

He Dreams of the Bombs and the Bombs Come

At a certain moment by no one's clock
The child can not yet tell time
The scarlet bird stops its innocent play
And turns without warning into the city's bomb
What can the child do but scream but hide inside
A silver hut where he sees out where no one sees in
Where the dream is a dream of petals flying off
Of faces cracked and howling of the body
The human body doing a charred unnatural
Dance

*The next poem from Israel in 1982 during the war with Lebanon
With Paolo and Margo Knill and me: performing and teaching and hanging on and in and out...
As teacher with a circle of Israeli women who felt they had no voice
In the face of this unending war in which so many of their loved ones were engaged,
I asked them to choose four words and weave their poem around these words.
As teacher and learner I did the same*

*Each night we would hear the helicopters coming
Into the kibbutz to take the young soldiers into the heart of war*

*My smoke is in your fire
Your fire is in my burning world*

SHELL JACKET WOMB VASE

poem for the women of Israel 1982

Sh Sh Sh no shell shock of war will cut her down
No jack ack no jack ack of war no jack hammer of war
She wears a jacket of peace she holds
A vase of sound her song will circle her round
She will not sharpen perpetual weapons of war
Not for her husband not for her lover not for her son
She will not bear the bomb she will not wear the war
She is wo/wo/wo is woman she will say no more
To these wars that have no end
She holds a vase of sound her song will circle her round
In the dum dum woman voice in the kol in the vox in the voce
We will say no we have made our choice
We will not bear the bomb we will rejoice we will not sharpen perpetual weapons of war

As this day on which I'm writing to you, February 13, is the eve of Valentine's Day, I will close with this poem:

VALENTINE

When love rides side saddle
Over the bad lands
When love smiles on the ruins
Soaking the sad lands

Will you gamble on love
I ask you again
Will you still welcome love
And begin to begin?

When love calls collect
Will you answer the call
When love's outta work
Will you give love your all?

Will you gamble on love
Through tears and through time
Will you still welcome love
For this old valentine?

When love surfs the tsunami
When love's on the lam
When love is the loser
Of poetry slams

When love's been laid off
And the check book kicks zero
When love's quarantined
A broken down hero

When love is indifferent
When love bursts your bubble
When all you can hear
Are the cries from the rubble

When love suffers two earthquakes
When Ukraine brings a break-up
When love makes you human
When love is a shake-up

Will you gamble on love I ask you again
Will you gamble on love to the end of the end?

I will close this letter to you, Steve, with a healing poem from my years in the Expressive Arts and Creative Arts in Learning at Lesley University...I am so grateful for our common work and play through the years.

Love to you and Ellie, and your kindness and welcoming to me over years; and Greer who put this symposium together with grace and sorrow and a little bit o' magic. Sorry my words were in the darkness (IT difficulties) but maybe that was meant to be: beyond my control: the surprise.

THE HEAVY OBJECT

Many times I heard the voice
Of the heavy object. Behind closed doors
Through small holes, across frontiers at dawn.
Many times I was too tired to meet
That heavy object
Much less to move it
At those times I stopped
Wanting a cool forest its resting places
My legs were too tired to carry me
And I slept
Balancing small perfect circles
On the outside edge of my dreams

I turned and turned with the heavy object
Until it became green and manageable
Until we could call each other by our real names
Until we could dance with each other
Until we could hold each other and weep
Until we could regain what we knew as children:
A real bird a mountain a snail all coral in the shape
Of a realizable mountain a circle above another circle below
And three roads leading to the sky
And the sky completely empty of any object
Completely free

With connection and community all ways. And lasting love for Paolo and his beloved Margo. We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us.

From your eternal friend, Elizabeth Gordon McKim

*Poet Laureate EGS and Jazz Po o' Lynn
2/15/23 13 Willow St.,
Unit 401, Lynn, Ma 01901 USA*

Dear Elizabeth,

Thank you for your letter and the warm words that you addressed to me. I am reminded of the lines in one of your poems:

Give the love, the lasting treasure,
Give it in full measure.

You always gave the love—as a teacher, a poet, and a friend. I remember so well the class in poetry that you taught at Lesley College in 1985-86. Your enthusiasm and devotion to the students came through very clearly. I felt inspired by you to return to the poetic impulse of earlier years, and I've continued as a working poet ever since. I do remember also the snake woman you brought to class, who spoke to us with the snake twined around her neck. Was

it really a cobra? I'd like to believe it. And your dear friend, Etheridge Knight, the prison poet who you loved so dearly and so long.

All those years at Lesley and, more recently, at EGS. You have inspired so many to continue on the path of poetic expression. What I loved most about your work is that you encouraged us to speak the words out loud. You have revived the oral tradition of poetry which was there at the beginning with the wandering minstrels and has come back to us in rap, hip-hop and spoken word. You are truly the jazz poet of Lynn, Massachusetts, as well as Saas Fee, Switzerland and everywhere people may gather.

In your own words, Elizabeth, here is a prompt you used when teaching children in schools:

Who is me and who
Is thee and so what and so
That's it? Poetry!

Song is truly the only victory. All the violence and hatred will be forgotten, but your melody will linger on. Let's keep singing as we go down this path of life together.

With love forever to my heartfelt friend,
Steve

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*.

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.

Hydrophobic Parched Lands

Gracelynn Lau



These two images were generated by AI on one of the popular AI art generator platforms, NightCafe Creator. I used the “text to image” option with a single sentence prompt: a warrior mama matriarch in the underwater world who is afraid of everything, is also a wise man with a long beard in the human world walking to his studio now. I typed in the prompt and selected a modifier called, “cubist,” which automatically generated a few more keywords added to the prompt—abstract cubism Euclidean Georgy Kurasov Albert Gleizes. In about five minutes the image was fully developed.

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The prompt’s imagery arrived in a recent collaborative expressive arts studio session. The images came to us as a gift. It took us through portals of imagination, full of surprises the



whole day, and it continued to speak and provoke us creatively days later. I wanted to see what AI would do with it, and the result surprises me. I'm surprised that an algorithm can capture our imagination to generate images meticulously in such a short time, online, for free. I'm also surprised that the bountiful and generative images visited us in a playful studio session are translated into one abstract-art image. The produced image is impressive, but compared to the possibilities opened to us by the original imagery through the creative-play decentering experience, it does not bring as much joy and nourishment. It closes many portals of imagination.

As I look through the AI art generator platform, I realize that countless images and avatars are being generated every minute; people who create these images are experiencing multiple lives in different metaverses simultaneously as they navigate human experiences in the offline world. The lines between realities are blurring. I suddenly realize, perhaps many are living “decenteringly” in their own alternative world experiences. Those worlds, and the images invoked in those worlds, are cross-pollinating the landscape of imagination.

Paolo Knill speaks about regular artistic play and decentering experience as *diet and medicine* for the human psyche (Knill et.al., 2005). As imagination metabolizes, the soul finds nourishment. In the turn of sophisticated technological revolution and images-saturated fast culture of our time, will we become consumers of images, being consumed by that which we consume? Will we still be able to be taken by the joy, surprises, and mysteries of images when they visit us in our imaginal world?

Recently I re-watched the documentary *M.C. Richards: The Fire Within*, in which both M.C. Richards and Paulus Berensohn spoke of imagination as a receptive process: imagination, intuition and inspiration are three muses that “live at our ears,” as Paulus said (Kane & Lewis-Kane, 2004). We live in a time where worlds and images are fighting for our attention and imagination. If I’m cramped in creating, coming up with the next, tapping into, inquiring about and so on, there would be no place for imagination and images to arrive and linger; I would have no ears, in M.C. Richards’ words, to “hear the inaudible.”

The landscape of imagination: a battlefield on hydrophobic parched lands

A few years ago I was a garden coordinator in the farm team of an ecovillage on the west coast of Canada. In two greenhouses we grew ten varieties of heirloom tomatoes, basil, snow peas, and hot and sweet peppers, along with a seven-acre vegetable garden where we planted all kinds of greens, berries and fruits. Among all the garden tasks in the summer season, my farm manager and I were most concerned about the watering schedule. For a few summers, we had severe drought warnings and local water restrictions for a whole month or two without any rain; although we drew from the well, we often had to ration our watering. We set up a drip-irrigation system on a timer in every garden bed and arranged for volunteers to check each bed twice a day to hand-water the plants if necessary.

One morning we were walking through the garden for a weekly inventory check. As I was cooling myself down in the dry heat “nature sauna,” while smelling the fragrance of fresh tomatoes, I heard my farm manager change her tone of voice. “Someone has not been watering.” She dipped her finger in one of the tomato beds, “the soil underneath is dry like sand.” “No way, the topsoil looks moist on the surface and the hand-watering duty roster has all been checked,” I remember saying, perplexed. I put my finger a few inches deep into the soil through the surface of wet organic matter, and there it was, sandy bits mixed with unrotted organic matter that did not feel like soil!

The soil becomes *hydrophobic*—repels water rather than absorbs—and when the soil dries out like this, it is difficult to re-moisturize. This happens when soil microbes and fungi die off from water deprivation. Later we discovered that the drip-irrigation on this bed was malfunctioning, and we fixed it, but the image and the sensations of sandy soil hidden beneath the wet surface have been etched in my heart forever.

Hydrophobic: repelling that which nourishes us

Once the soil is deprived of water for too long, a layer of the soil particles repels water, even though the soil body needs water. The ability to absorb water is degraded and needs to be repaired. It's a "phobic" reaction, almost biomechanically reacting to that which nourishes it.

The image of *hydrophobic* soil prompts me to wonder about soil health in my inner landscape of imagination. Images, like water and nutrients, feed the soil. There are times I consume or create images daily; I fill the month with studio practice, workshops and gatherings where I work primarily with clients and participants through images; the topsoil looks moist on the surface, and yet I still feel malnourished, at risk of being hydrophobic. It makes me wonder: What exactly happens with images in a decentering experience to bring nourishment to the soul? Where does the magic actually happen?

Am I treating images and imagination too habitually? Has the overflowing flood of daily images in the online and offline worlds passed the threshold so that it desensitizes me and keeps draining without retaining? Am I still able to hear the inaudible and to glimpse into the invisible? What feeds my *poiesis*? What am I feeding with my *poiesis*? Have I touched carefully and felt what's underneath the surface of my expressive arts practices? When was the last time I was so decentered in my *poiesis* that it completely consumed me and enabled me to welcome the unexplored? Am I looking after my soil of imagination?

The metaphor of hydrophobic soil invokes these questions about how I look after my own

soil—not only for myself as an expressive arts therapist but also for the people who come into the expressive arts spaces I offer, because how I tend my own soil might enable them to look after theirs. The quality and depth of my imagination might become part of the container where they feel safe enough to risk wandering into their imaginal land of the unknown. It also reminds me to be tender and generous with those who come into my spaces, to carefully feel their soil with them, because theirs might be incredibly fertile and rich, or unpredictably damaged and toxic, perhaps hydrophobic.

Poiesis care on cultural parched lands

The hydrophobic soil image also speaks inaudibly but loudly to me in the field of settler colonialism and decolonization discourse in North America. My journey as a PhD. candidate in Cultural Studies in the last few years has been one that wrestles with languages and images that seem to me to be harsh, dry and military. Critical frameworks in cultural studies provide valuable tools for us to interrogate the intricate power dynamics and apparatuses that create and uphold systemic injustice throughout history. Settler colonial theory, for instance, names the operational structure and ongoing nature of settler colonialism. Indeed, the critical lens helps us to identify the nuances of settler privileges and the different ways in which white and racialized immigrants are benefiting from the operation of settler colonial states. And yet, the languages used in argument/discussion/analysis prompt us to position ourselves as academics and artists confronting a dominating construct, authority or ideologies, having to defend our position against criticism. The languages used in the field captivate imagination.

I often found myself in an environment that smells like gunpowder on a battlefield, where politically correcting fingers point at each other and at different groups, calling out those who are no longer allies, or pushing for the next robust methodology to prove somebody's wrong. The images of dismantling, resisting, confronting and defending result in the imagination of walls, barricaded zones and ruins. I see the image of cultural critics or cultural interrogators in

the ideological and social justice warrior front; I find it difficult to *envision* other images to engage with, both culturally and critically. After critically reviewing what had been done terribly wrong, what vision (seeing) is there? What other images are available (speaking)?

“Be a border-stalker” in-between borders

As I look through my research about the colonial history of Hong Kong, I have to ask myself: why am I being so harsh to my nation and my ancestors? Why can't I be more kind and generous to approach our generational failures? Then artist and theologian Makoto Fujimura's vision of the borderlands in culture wars came to me as fresh water to hydrophobic soil.

In a podcast interview about his book, *The Theology of Making*, Fujimura speaks about the current cultural phenomena with the image of tribal zones and borderlands: The normative structures that protect the tribe are no longer operative in the reality of our world today. People who may be able to stay safely within their tribal normative structure are no longer able to; they find themselves being exiled from the very ideals that they held a decade ago—that which was applicable before is no longer now. Fujimura describes artists as “border-stalkers” who dwell between tribal zones: “So if you're a border-stalker in this chaotic world, what you experience is actually the margins enlarging; people you would not normally expect to be in the borderlands are there now. We have to be aware of that. We have to serve them as artists”(Sandefur, 2022, 34:10).

Fujimura's image is a gift, giving me a way of visioning to see the space between divides as spaces of exile, where people who found themselves there are now lost, uncomfortable and unfamiliar, looking for nourishment and ways to make sense of their experiences. These people are already “decentered” from the normative narrative that once was secure and familiar to them. All of a sudden I realize I am someone who has a thriving habitat in the borderlands. In this chaotically painful cultural wars of indigenous genocide, racial injustice and undoing colo-

nization, I can offer my wandering in the deep wounds of the culture of my people; I can show them the way in which I navigate these borderlands. I can offer myself as a gift, without pretending that I have perfected the map of navigating as prescriptive remedy or methodology but as someone motivated by love and generosity. The images of the eagerly hunting/defending warrior and the anxiously inquiring researcher have now shifted to the images of tending troubled souls and intellectual minds.

The gift of *poiesis*—care in the land of imagination

An image is more than the imagination and is powerful. It has the power to shape our seeing, which shapes realities. It shapes our imagination of what is and what can be. Losing the ability to see is losing the gift of visioning into what has yet to be seen and what remains invisible.

In the last few years, I have been exploring ways to apply expressive arts therapy in my cultural studies research process, and if I said expressive arts therapy is a robust research method, I would be lying to you and myself. But *poiesis*, as a way of seeing, shaping and being in the world, brings incredible curiosity and kindness, and the necessity of imagination to the table, or the battlefield. It helps me find movements from the paralysis stemming from culture wars.

Poiesis is my way of being in this parched borderland to shape and be shaped by this hydrophobic soil where I found myself. How do I care for this land? What do I add to the ecosystem of the soil? How to cultivate it into a place of nurture toward creative growth? How do I care for fellow dwellers in exile in the borderlands? What food do I bring to those who are hungry and lost in the imagination-deprived parched places? What do I feed myself? How do I care for myself with *poiesis* to take in the nutrients that I'm dying to have for survival? What nourishment is missing for me/us to thrive?

A new way of seeing, in both cultural studies as a field as well as in my own research, is about seeing and visioning beyond what is, using generative languages to provoke imagination in the field of dull and hostile images/languages. For me, expressive arts therapy is not a robust research method, because it is so much more than a method. It has far more to offer to call and bring us back to humanity's imaginative and creative gift. In expressive arts therapy, now is the time not only to assume this innate creative capacity but to work backward to use this way of working to advocate for this very assumption as good news—because it is indeed good news in the wounded culture of today.

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413: *Poiesis* in Action

Stephen K. Levine

Highway 413 is the name of a road outside of Toronto proposed by the Premier of Ontario, Doug Ford. The road would be built on the Greenbelt which circles Toronto. In the election in which he became Premier, Ford stated he would never build such a road. A few days before he publicly announced the building of the road, some developers bought parts of the real estate the road would be on, giving rise to the suspicion that they had inside knowledge of the road being built. Some of these developers subsequently attended a social gathering that Ford hosted for his daughter.

In the face of such environmental degradation, cronyism and breaking of promises, there arose a great deal of public opposition to the building of the road. I had recently joined an organization called SCAN (Seniors for Climate Action Now), founded on the notion that elders need to support young people who have taken action to oppose climate change. In this case, we publicly demonstrated our opposition to the proposed road by marching on a highway near where it is to be built. I joined the demonstration together with my son, Gabriel, and my grandson, Leo. The photograph shows us walking together, accompanied by a poem I sent to the members of SCAN.

413

Stephen K. Levine

"Four thirteen," we chant,
the group of us walking,
on the uncomfortable shoulder of a highway,
cars honking as they pass,
the sound of approval, support, solidarity,
a word unknown to those in charge
who strive mightily to build
yet another highway
in the green belt of Ontario.

"Stop Four Thirteen," we chant,
Elders, Seniors, Grand-folks.
They build and we chant,
as if our voices alone
could stop the destruction,
speaking truth to power
power that refuses to listen, cannot hear.

But still we walk.

Here we are, the three of us,
father, son, grandson.
Is this the Holy Spirit?
I do believe it is,
brooding over the bent world.

And we shall be redeemed,
yes, in spite of everything,
I do believe that we shall be redeemed.
"Three generations!" I shout to all around.

And death shall have no dominion.
Yes, though I stop here
and cannot move another step,
yet death shall have no dominion,
no dominion over love,
no dominion over our love
for the earth.

Keeping Vigil for the Earth:

Poiesis and New Monasticism in Response to Global Liminality

Liza Hyatt

Covid-19 made us participants within a global human-behavior experiment, in which we witnessed our species' erratic reactions to rapid, systemic change. We saw throughout society our panic, rage, denial, addictive numbing, and narcissism, as well as our adaptability, altruistic sacrifice, compassion, and creativity.

As I watched these reactions, I was grateful for my 35 years as an arts therapist helping trauma survivors reclaim vitality. To sustain this professional role, I have needed to also maintain personal practices of creative contemplation. This dual-path of action and contemplation is innate to all compassion-maturing spiritual vocations.

My arts therapy vocation has given me well-honed fluency in the experiential practice of *poiesis*. It has also instilled deep respect for the psyche-driven process of initiation, which I

have witnessed in both clients' and my own life-transitions. *Poiesis* is creativity responding to the unknown, a way of learning by making from what is at hand (Levine, 2019, p. 41). Initiation is psychological and spiritual maturation in response to the unknown, an evolving of a deeper, more communal self by dying from too-small self-concepts of the past (Weller, 2020, p.10).

My ability to recognize active states of *poiesis* and initiation helped me recognize the collective *poiesis* of the pandemic propelling us out of old, limiting habits, into a de-centered place where we had to be creative. This collective *poiesis* changed us from within as we felt our way toward our most resilient response. Likewise, the pandemic thrust humanity into collective initiation, requiring us to grow up suddenly and respond to each other with more humane cooperation and compassion.

Both *poiesis* and initiation push our psyche into liminal space where what we knew before no longer makes sense and must be shed. The pandemic propelled humanity into a collective liminality, for which most individuals and our society have little trust, tolerance, or patience.

To me, the pandemic revealed how most people in modern society are ill-prepared to surrender to the greater liminality, change, and cultural transformation required of us by the larger environmental crisis. Ready or not, humanity is entering a centuries-long collapse of our unsustainable economic systems and their unjust, oppressive social frameworks. To emerge from the devastation and mess we have made and become capable of forming equitable, humane, and earth-revering cultures during this liminal collapse, humanity must undergo a species-wide initiation, maturing from self-destructive, Earth-plundering adolescence into wiser adult stewards of planetary health.

This species-wide initiation will be a generations-long process. None now alive will see humanity come out the other side, if we survive at all. There is also no guarantee that the needed maturation will occur. Humanity has never changed at this scale before. Wes Jackson

and Robert Jenson point out that we have “very few examples in history of a complex society choosing to scale back,” and describe the daunting task that lies before us as “a down-powering on a global level with the goal of fewer people living on less energy, achieved by means of democratically managed planning to minimize suffering” (2022, p.21). We will live out our lives as one of 8 billion plus people grappling confusedly with the unfolding chaos that this global down-powering will bring. At best, we can choose to respond with as much restraint and creativity as possible to this crisis. Without knowing if our efforts will be enough, we must join a swelling tide of participants in the “Great Transition,” as Duane Elgin names our most mature response, contrasting this transition with our other options, which he names as a crash into total collapse, or hunkering down in the seeming safety of authoritarian control (2020, p. 35).

While contemplating my final decades spent in collective liminality, I began naming the era we are entering the “Dark Night of the Earth,” intentionally connecting this unfolding crisis of the global soul to the “Dark Night of the Soul” from John of the Cross. Through poetic vigils of grief and longing, he found redemptive love amidst traumatic torture and imprisonment (for daring to go against the empire-serving church) in the 16th century, the time when the earth-plundering forces of our current economic systems were beginning to overtake the world (Starr, 2002). Seeing our predicament as a crisis of the soul on a global level highlights the spiritual imperative of our era. We must commit ourselves to living through these times as those keeping vigil for the Earth.

At first impression, it seems far too passive to keep vigil in the midst of the most complex crisis humanity has ever faced, while our unsustainable yet entrenched power-systems consume Earth’s life-support matrix. But as I practice the components of an authentic vigil and see their inherent connections to *poiesis* and initiation, I realize that vigil-keeping for the Earth is an extremely necessary stance, enabling us to live as those, “in recovery from Western civilization,” to borrow Chellis Glendenning’s phrase (1994).

Every deeply practiced vigil involves: an acknowledged experience of rupture or death; an expression of grief and mourning through embodied ritual; an honest and thorough examination of conscience; a mindful engagement with unknowing and liminality; a return to reverent communion with a larger whole of mystery and beauty; and a longing attention to the possibility of rebirth and healing (Hughes, 2013; Sabak, 2017).

Connecting *poiesis* and initiation to vigil-keeping reveals how essential the wisdom of expressive arts therapists is to our time on Earth. Through *poiesis*, we can help each other paint, sing, sculpt, write, and dance our grief. Through our training in treating compulsive numbing, ego-defenses, and dissociation, we can help each other examine our conditioned behaviors and begin the addict's initiatory recovery-journey from trauma-perpetuating capitalism. We can teach each other to enter creative arts contemplative practices that increase patience, trust, our ability to see beauty, and our playful engagement with slow, liminal states of change. Through communal arts experiences, we can also access states of collective joy, wonder, awe, reverie, imagination, improvisation, healing, and increased wholeness.

In calling for expressive arts therapists to live as vigil-keepers for the Earth and guides, helping our fellow earthlings undertake a species-wide initiation, I encourage our profession to leave the confines of medical-model treatment and expand into the world. We must respond to the suffering of individuals, while also serving the whole of humanity, the needs of future generations, and the planet itself as we live amidst growing global liminality.

We must join together as localized small groups of creative contemplatives, committed to becoming elders who recognize the collective initiation at work and who assist people around us through this painful process. I see us gathering as initiates, sharing processes of creative *poiesis* the way Buddhists gather to meditate and mystic dervishes engage in whirling dance. I place our vigil-keeping lives into the context of a new monasticism, an interspiritual movement calling for contemplatives to live and work not in cloisters but through an embodied spiritual-

ity connected to the world and its needs through sacred activism (McEntee and Bucko, 2015, p. xxii; Charis Foundation for New Monasticism and Interspirituality, 2022). I join with Creation Spirituality theologian Matthew Fox and his colleagues (2018) who advocate that Earth-lovers form spiritually innovative communities as part of “The Order of the Sacred Earth” and with expressive arts therapist Christine Paintner who invites us to become members of a “Holy Disorder of Dancing Monks” (Abby of the Arts, 2022, “Monk Manifesto” section).

For three decades, I have longed for such community but attempts to manifest it have faltered amidst our society’s fragmenting forces. During pandemic isolation, the need for an authentic community became for me non-negotiable. To begin creating it, I called together a small group of friends, including expressive arts therapists, an environmental activist, and a public defender, all committed to growing our community of creative contemplatives. We have met monthly, virtually and in-person, over the past year and are working collaboratively to deepen our experiential practice of *poiesis* and tend the components of authentic vigil keeping. We call ourselves, with both humor and seriousness, “Earth Monks.” As our community building deepens, we are preparing to bring new members into our local group and to guide others through a formational workshop series to create communities of *poiesis*-practicing, initiation-fostering, vigil-keeping Earth Monks in their own bioregions.

Looking back at the pandemic’s impromptu human-behavior experiment, I am awed by the *poiesis* it activated in my life, vastly enlarging the soulful courage from which I live. Before the pandemic, I floated in empty-nest, postmenopausal lethargy and diminished sense of purpose. Choosing to respond to the pandemic’s crisis as a *poiesis*-laden time lit within me a creative fire whose kindling, I now realize, I have slowly gathered my entire career. Fueled by the creative synthesis of *poiesis*, initiation, and authentic vigil keeping, I find I am just now arriving at my life’s fullest and most meaningful work. It is my hope that expressive arts therapists around the world feel similarly called to assist humanity through our species-wide initiation. I hope too that we meet each other in the world as fellow Earth Monks, courageously singing, painting,

sculpting, and dancing our way deeper into the liminality we must surrender to during the growing Dark Night of the Earth.

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California

Judith Greer Essex

The word itself is an incantation
I got caught in a knot in her necklace

From the air
The fabric of her raiment
Is a quilt of textures.
Pleated, folded
Box pleats
Knife pleats and sunray
Gathered and smocked.

White crochet edges
The hem of the coastline
Ric-rack in and out.
A deckle edge to the state
Rugged ragged—rough.

Her palette earthy elegance
Sequoia green and golden desert sand
Dotted with silvery lakes
Jewels of poppy red and lupine lavender.
Smooth and glossy
Mossy

Seamed where the rivers ran.
Now tiny humans live in the
Wash.
Califia. Oh, Califia.
I live in your thrall.

Judith Greer Essex, PhD, is Professor at the European Graduate School, Switzerland, teaching philosophy and community art in the doctoral program. Founder and director of the Expressive Arts Institute, San Diego since 1997, she is a daily dancer and a sometime poet, currently writing a book on expressive arts.

Healing Song for Monsters and their Descendants

Dorota Solarska

I

Hello all my beloved Monsters.
Come and sit here by the fire.
Uncles, fathers and grandfathers
Someone's sons and someone's brothers,
Smelling nice, for today's Sunday.

Today no one will get hit.
We will eat a soup together.
We might even chat a bit.
We might even—

But tomorrow all you Monsters
In your suits, on the floors,
Yelling crawling breaking throwing
Masters of Transforming!

You will make us close our eyes
Stop our hearts, freeze our minds
And believe we should not cry
If we do, then we may die.

II

And now you come, poor old beggars
Shadows with the hungry eyes.
Thus, I'm burning sage tonight.
Come on, Monsters, to the light.

Let it warm your hands at least.
No more hands of frightening beast,
But of a man, who lost his soul
Many, many years ago,
And sank in a sea of Grief.
It was easier than to live.

Bless your souls, that so alone
March through skies, so far from home.
May you find a peace, unknown
to your children, who go on.

Bones

Dorota Solarska

Dragging my grandmothers' bones
Dragging them through meadows and valleys
Singing to the skies
Singing out all goodbyes

Dragging my wedding veil
Dragging my children that
Never came to me
Never were to be

I am coming
To see you

Touch my wrinkled hand
Look into my eyes
That have seen so many
Summers without you
Will you recognize my face
Will you come out to greet me

Dragging all the memories
Of the people who've been walking before me
I take each step so slowly
I take each sigh so deeply

Leaving my hopes and fears
Somewhere in the neighborhood
Leaving my mothers' dreams
About life that I could have

I am coming
To see you

Touch my wrinkled hand
Look into my eyes
That have seen so many
Summers without you
Will you recognize my face
Will you come out to greet me

Mom: Please Call God

Ani Kalayjian

I enter your room, and find you lying down in a fetal position,
Blanket wrapped up to your neck in the month of July.
I greet you and begin a song and dance, "*Pari louys, pari louys, inchbeses aysor?*"
Meaning, "Good morning, good morning, how are you today?"

You respond by saying "Where is the baby? No one is taking care of the baby, she needs help.
Please call your grandmother, tell her that her baby is waiting for her."
I begin reorienting you, "Mom today is July 28, 2019, you are my Mom; I am your daughter.
Your Mom, grandma, passed away long ago."

You rush to say, "I know you are my daughter, but the baby needs your grandmother."
I then get you out of bed, fix your hair, dress you up, and we go for a short walk.
You tell me about the light you saw in your dream, the angels gathered all around you.
Then you ask me perplexed, "What happened? Why am I still here?"

How can I make sense out of the non-sense? Although I have dedicated my life
To find meaning, creating a new silver lining, as well as helping others create meaning;
How can I help you, my Mom, transition peacefully?
How can I make sense out of this senseless physical existence?

"I don't know, Mom. Sometimes our bodies linger
Between earthly and ethereal worlds until we resolve our earthly matters.
Earthly issues may impact our final transition. Let's think together,
Mom, is there anything that you need to resolve?"

You look at me perplexed and say: "*Amaan Aghchiges* (Oh, my daughter) I don't know."
I then want to move on to our lighter routine, connecting with relatives, siblings, etc.
I ask you, "Who should we call today, Mom?" Mom said, "God."
I am surprised, as you usually say, "Call your sister, brother, or call my sister."
I ask you again: "Mom, seriously, who should we call?
Zarmine, Kevork, Vasken, or aunt Jacklyn?"
You repeat firmly, gazing up to the ceiling: "Call God."

I then hold your hands, they are so cold and bluish (as her heart struggles),
I rub your hands, and we pray together,
While I turn my face away from you,
Trying to hold my tears back in vain!

Until tomorrow, when we visit again,
We start again, searching, asking questions to God, with no response.
We start over, again and again,
As nothing we speak or share is sustainable when one has dementia.
I am sorry, Mom!

Ani Kalayjian, PhD, international consultant, Fellow of the APA International Division, Fellow of SPSSSI, Psi Chi Ambassador, Fellow of New York Academy of Medicine, author of six books and over a hundred research articles, 35 years of leadership within the United Nations and its NGO community working closely with others in the USA and 50 countries to expand human rights, peace-building, conflict transformation, nurturing emotional intelligence. Poetry is her passion, and it nurtures her own healing.

Holy Mother

Bob Bradley

*holy mother, now you smile on your love, your world is born anew, children run
naked in the field spotted with dandelions...*

–Allen Ginsberg

Only you holy mother know the silence
Found everywhere when nothing is left.
Holy mother, only you flaunt the
planet's blue breath.
Your solitude ropes the sea's first foam.
O mother holy one
Your birth scatters shadows with dreams.
Your blade of stars slices snowcaps
And the mountain-bound child-to-be is born
in the last standing drop of rainwater.

Holy mother only you offer forest
And hillside. Feed red fire deeper
than the cellars of night's orphan-
Farms. Cool in summer. Filled through
autumn bounty. Blind horse bucking stall.
Bursting seed to bear colt sodden
With birth film. Thick tongue rakes
Young fur. Tender thing.

O mother holy one of life all paths
lead down the mountain. Lead on through
Death's only door. Afterbirth chaos
Becalmed. Legions of dove song.
Tear open the thought.
Rip fire from the sky.
Lightning splits dewdrop.

Only you holy mother only you.
Distant river. Song of heaven's enigma.
Grow inside your voice. Rondelle of
Earth. Restless as bulbs. Globes
of throbbing electrical fruit.
Legs that dream and walking that travels.

O mother only you chase the sun round dawn's
Horizon fling the moon-star fruit.
Night's lullaby. Aurora bedarling.
Still, small voice the
moon-wind
whispers that only
you holy mother
know the silence
Found everywhere
when nothing is left.

A spoken word version of *Holy Mother* is available at:
<https://soundcloud.com/bobbradley/4-holy-mother>

Bob Bradley received his MFA from the University of Virginia (1985). In 2012, Talking Rock Works published his “The Moon is Always Local: Selected Poems 1983–1999”. Since 1993, he has lived in Nashville, TN. His music, art and social design portfolio can be accessed at www.bobbradley.com.

One Thing at a Time

Autumn Slaughter

I run my finger against the bottom of the plastic take-out container
picking up bits of soft chocolate icing, edible happiness smearing across its tip.
a quick Google search will promise me that chocolate is everything—
the anti-aging secret, the key to winning a Nobel prize, a currency that can buy devotion.
a cursory glance promises all of these unreal things. does not even hint at the true miracle
now making its way toward my tongue.

This is a gift from the Aztec god of wisdom. Accumulation of millennia of history.
The sun is in this mouthful. the rainforest is here. the ingenuity of generations. an entire people
summarized in these molecules.

And I refuse to wonder about its future. If the energy of generations will find its way to my hips.
if the scale will know I ate this bite. If years from now I'll appear on fat fame tv and
lament, "If only I had not had the chocolate!"

And I refuse to wonder about the cost of bringing me this bite. Was the Amazon destroyed?
The carbon output enough to promise my extinction. Have I doomed my unborn children?

I refuse to wonder.

Because some of those things are absurd, and some are uncontrollable.
And this chocolate is beautiful. And it is here. It is now.
And all I can do, is my best
to enjoy the goodness in front of me.

Autumn Slaughter, PhD, is a poet as well as a clinical psychologist with the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. Her poetry has appeared in TEDx shows, *Scissortail Sings*, *Oddball Magazine*, and *The Pointed Circle* as well as other publications.

Untitled
Susan Teare

I once wore the skin of a wolf,
Protective, rough and warm
Now buried
Beneath the ice and snow

The ground has fallen away from me
My bare feet have forgotten the feeling of dirt,
Gritty between my toes
Wet cut grass from a summer dew.

Above, tall trees bend,
Sorrow in the wind,
Their covered roots,
Silent and neglected.

I once wore the skin of a wolf,
Protective, rough and warm
Now buried
Beneath the ice and snow



Artist Statement

I create emotive, primal, and sensory-based experiences in spaces using a variety of materials and mediums. My art is integrated with the natural elements and seasons, awakening the sacred energy of the divine feminine. The lived experience is embedded, entangled, and unfurled in light, rain, fire, forests, snow, fields, birdsong, and the wind. The regenerative and cyclical nature of my art connects me and others to our natural surroundings, creativity, and community. Layers of existence establish the groundwork for me to express the essence of my own embodied experience through my art. My process contributes significantly to the work I do to increase awareness about mental health and the health of our earth.

Susan Teare is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Educational Studies at Lesley University in Cambridge, MA, after completing a certificate in Arts in Health, also at Lesley. She has a BA in Art History from Bowdoin College in Brunswick, ME, and an MFA in Photography and Media Studies from Maine Media College in Rockport, ME. Susan is a SEA Facilitator, having received her training and certification in Social Emotional Arts through UCLArts and Healing. She is a member of NOAH (National Organization for Arts in Health) and IACAET (International Association for Creative Arts in Education and Therapy).

Stacie Birky Greene



I have always been preoccupied with the natural world, which continues to be the main subject of my artistic work. I find myself particularly drawn to the paradoxical issues of nature's power and fragility, and its often-fraught relationship with humanity. This has led me to my current project exploring endangered birds and, more recently, birds that have become extinct in my lifetime and the lifetime of the Endangered Species Act. When I took on this project, I started by conducting 6 months of research in order to create a database. I consulted the NAT's Philip Unitt during this phase in order to verify that I was on the right track, and have subsequently been in touch with amateur ornithologists to better understand the challenges of tracking and recording species populations, particularly in remote regions of the world. I update this database on a biannual basis in order to account for the fact that this field is constantly changing.

Image this page:

"Specimen Drawer: Endangered California Skulls", 2019, junk mail and acrylic on found drawer

Image opposite page:

"Endangered: Gunnison Sage-grouse", 2021, ink and watercolor on artist-made paper



The impetus for this project came from listening to an NPR "The World" story called "In Punjab, Crowding Onto The Cancer Train," by Daniel Zwerdling, May, 2009. The story centers on the Indian farm town of Bathinda. In post-Green Revolution there was a disturbing increase in the number of villagers getting cancer. The first sign of trouble was in the 1980s and '90s, when the peacocks were disappearing from the fields. Excessive use of pesticides was killing the peacocks and causing cancer in the population. This story started my project of researching endangered birds. I wanted to highlight how human activity has contributed to the loss of these species, not just to mourn the loss of a beautiful creature, but also to provide awareness

regarding the implications these events have for humanity's survival.

Human consumption and waste are conspicuous threats to the environment, and for my project to have the necessarily pointed weight, it was important to choose materials that would provide commentary. Thus, I have drawn my series of endangered birds on paper I made from junk mail delivered to my home. For my series on extinct birds I have drawn on reclaimed wooden rectangles that are tiled to form a mosaic—a fragmented image represented a lost species. I am also creating a series of Specimen Drawers, after the drawers of animal skins, eggs, skulls, etc. found in Natural History Museums. This series speaks to the future of these species if we don't act.

Originally from Colorado, **Stacie Birky Greene** earned degrees in Art and Art History from the University of Kentucky, and pursued other studies in Florence, Italy and the Art Institute of Chicago. She recently presented "...and then the skies were silent: Endangered and Extinct Birds," a large solo show at the Martha Pace Swift Gallery. Her installations include "Junk Mail Takes Flight," at Art Produce, featuring 1000 origami cranes made from junk mail, and a large mosaic mural at a Lemon Grove school. Her work has appeared in galleries and festivals across the country and internationally. Stacie is a member of FIG and has taught art to children and adults in San Diego since 1998.

Image opposite page: "Extinct Wild: Guam Kingfisher", 2022, ink and watercolor on wood



Crane Dancing: Centring as Expressive Arts Practice

Alexandra Fidyk

Dreamscape¹

I was near the shoreline—where grasses reach waist-high; young blades sway in the breeze; their warm bitter fragrance rides the wind. It was near dusk, when twilight begins to transmute all things. I had been walking for hours through native grassland, when I ascended a slow sloping knoll. I had a feeling, before seeing it, that something extraordinary was near.

Initially, I was struck by the subtle shades of parakeet, olive, and pine, which differentiated grasses—bearded wheat, foxtail, brome, and timothy; then, the buzz of flying life among stalks and leaves; and the blue of Old Man’s Lake—an accurate mirroring of the northern Saskatchewan sky: Australian opal. Soft trumpeting in synchrony with prancing; an almost indiscernible sound now dominates my senses.

As my eyes adjust, it takes a moment to comprehend the scene. Its rarity makes it unimaginable. It might best be described as ecstatic dancing. Agile bodies adorned by exquisite feathers—cool slate, soft steel, muted silver—gorgeous wings, extending several feet in all directions and directing the evening air; fine boned legs prance, defying their appearance; bodies sweep; wings arc; wryly necks bend as if independently partnered. Each element fraternizes with the other.² Each in harmony as a whirling whole. Sufi dervishes dancing.

The scene must reflect the origins of ritualistic dance. Raw energy. Trance. Youth in the woods, discovering the rapture and disorder of bodies edged to the limits of endurance and desire. Dust kicks up; ancient sand lands lightly upon feet and legs. White and black blur—a mass of goose grey throbbing. Red flashes through *jetés*, *assemblés*, and *temps levé*.³ Sun-rays pierce wet amber; radiate gold. From this centre, the eye focuses the whole.⁴



One dancer.

Dreamscape Ruminaton

This dream symbolizes my life in the moment. External elements intermingling—teaching, writing, research, psychotherapy, reading, and training, after a decade of intense treatment for chronic tick-borne illness. Complete bodies of theory and practice, defined by distinct fields, requiring years of focus, dissolve. Ingested, their borders grow porous, not only by somatic,

intuitive, expressive, and contemplative processes, but also by testimony and witnessing. A process of nearly two decades reappears as flash synaesthetic images.⁵ Joy resounds because each touches the other, amplifying capacities and softening boundaries, including my own. Just as each crane⁵ leaps, *sautés*, spins—following its own heart—they marry in rhythm and breathe as one.⁶

The movement is witness. I see that the culmination of years of discipline, sacrifice, suffering, and loss has stilled. From an elongated, slow undoing, a seed has been birthed. Almost imperceptible, a seed centres. A centre we cannot go beyond. We can only go through and down, down, down, as a 20-year descent with chronic illness has required.⁷ Only now has a long darkness silvered—a movement of other directions. Darkness describes a time when light and fire disappear and all things move with unbearable slowness. Northern decay. Earthly encasement numbs by coldness and isolation. Here, life force dissolves.

Of this movement, Jung (1989) says, “the center is the goal, and everything is directed toward that center” (p. 198). Richards (1966) extends this image: to centre is to “create a condition of balance between the outside and the inside” (p. 55) where the centre, any single point, not a measured one, affects the whole. By virtue of the dream, I realize that through dance—authentic movement governed by instinct, attunement, and adherence to an ancient call—comes freedom. “Centering is a discipline of surrendering,” of receiving and integrating where stillness can arise at the same time as spinning (Richards, 1966, p. 56). Centring is a discipline and practice that becomes an art. It is thing and action, “moving in from the outside toward a center which is not a space but a function, a balance, a feature distributing the center itself from within outwards. By undergoing a change on the inside,” the work, the dance, comes into centre (p. 56). Seeing the dance in this way illustrates the partnering that can unfold between personal and communal. Affirming that the pairing of human and more-than-human, personal and collective prevents the overlooking of the archetypal world and its contribution to the potential of healing. “Psyche must include the entire spectrum—from instinct to arche-

type" (Harris, 2001, p. 22). So must we. "Everything in the world has its own centre, that place where the sacred manifests itself in totality" (p. 22). Feather with leg, bone with wing, loss with acceptance, suffering with attendance. In this dance, the definition and contrast of white and black lose their edges. They transfuse and interanimate. They round; they blur, and, *if* grace appears, they centre.

Dreamscape as World Abiding

To go into the dance, we must be able to let the intensity—"the Dionysian rapture and disorder and the celebration of chaos, of potentiality, the experience of surrender—[move;] we must be able to let it live in our bodies, in our hands, through our hands into the materials" with which we work⁸ (Richards, 1964, p. 12). Just as the dreamscape, Crane Dancing, offers an experience on a sandy knoll with trumpeting unconscious material mingling with outer events, the tangled-sensorial-haptic-image reframes my outdated narrative to revitalize my engagement in the communal (local, academic, psychological, organizational). Too often, we glimpse murmurings, invested with change-agency, but have not done preparatory work (or even know that it is necessary) to hold the coursing ready to infuse the parts. Richards reminds us of the readiness required for centring to happen: "We must be steady enough in ourselves, to be open and to let the winds of life blow through us, to be our breath, our inspiration; to breathe with them, mobile and soft in the limberness of our bodies, in our agility, our ability, ... to dance, and yet to stand upright" (p. 12). 'To dance'—yes, and 'to stand upright' when forces pull us slant—to align body, heart, and mind with the Self when, for example, burning forests, human brutality, and divisive politics push against our inner axes. 'We must be ready enough in ourselves' with self-awareness (inner world), relational, and somatic skills not widely known by children, youth, and many adults. Providing opportunities for communal art-making, ritual, and creative expression—movement, music and sound, haptic engagement (stitching, darning, building), and storying—can initiate pleasure and connection that might ward against physical and psychological suffering. Expressive arts practice can return imagination to us so that the "imaginative

projection of our own possibilities” and those of the world become available to us (S. Levine, 1992, p. 41). Such practice enables us to restore balance with the world and faith in a natural or divine order—beliefs often shattered by trauma. For many, trauma, illness, and loss have wounded our imaginative capacity. When curiosity and playfulness are impaired—common under prolonged stress, fear, overwhelm, and interpersonal injury—connection is hampered, broken (van der Kolk, 2015; Stanley, 2016). Bridging mediums to the imagination and imaginal, as with dream, pastiche and visual art, become limited, if accessible at all.

To go into the dance is kin to the manifestation of the union of complementary opposites, a *coniunctio*—body and imagination, ego and Self, and the “unstruck sound beyond the realm of the senses—silence” (Markell, 1998, p. 107). Silence—belonging to both the conscious and unconscious realms—holds, organizes, and witnesses when it appears archetypally in sand playing, even drumming, and dancing. Ego is experienced in dance as “I move”—awareness that the subject performs the movement—and a notably different experience of “I am moved”—when in spontaneous movement the Self moves the body (Whitehouse, 1999). Sometimes the sensations of moving and being moved occur simultaneously—an occurrence where we can experience full awareness of both happening—as happened when I ascended the knoll and became a dancer with the extraordinary movement of cranes dancing—here Self as subject directed me and Crane Dancing. Body movement in dance therapy has been likened to body movement in sandplay therapy where psychic content moves through eyes and hands in the creation of sand images (Chodorow, 1999). In both cases, as viewer and listener, we can partake in the inner world of the other where our own inner images interact with the dancer’s or player’s where we become a witness-participant encouraging psychic transformation. Such engagement reflects the relationship between parts and whole, sounds and silence, movements and stillness, where we meet the Eastern understanding of the “fullness of emptiness”—“an experience of *being a witness in the body itself*” (Markell, 2002, p. 111, emphasis in original).

Witnessing also appears in sand images of “eyes”—symbols of anticipated change in the

physical body where “a new development in the ability to see from the perspective of the Self rather than the ego” emerges (p. 110). In many cultures, the eye is the centre,⁹ the symbol of the Self, of wholeness. In the Eastern view, it is “not only a means of expression but also produces an effect” (Jung, CW13, para. 36). Its age-old effect lies hidden in the symbol, derived from the “protective circle” (para. 36). “Just as the eye bears witness to the peculiar and spontaneous creative activity in matter; the primordial image expresses the intrinsic and unconditioned creative power of the psyche” (Jung, CW6, para. 748). The eye, long revered, is associated with second sight, prophecy, and vision. As mandala, the eye “symbolizes the centre of order in the unconscious” and “may well stand for consciousness looking into its own background” (Jung, CW9i, para. 593). Eye images sculpted in the sand,¹⁰ as play, meditation, or therapy, point to new consciousness (with a positive aspect) and “most frequently appear after the constellation of the Self, as the process unfolds at the vegetative level of the natural, instinctual life” (Markell, 2002, p. 110). Importantly, eyes indicate that “the transformation itself is being perceived by the receptive mind, revealing at the deepest level that the body-mind has been openly and directly present. This in itself is a wordless or preconscious process” (p. 110).

As in the symbolism of Crane as waterbird, equally agile in air, water, and earth, I am reminded of the years attending illness, trauma, and psychological complexes whereby the dream evidences integration underway between upper and lower, thought and emotion, air and earth—the intertidal zone where “consciousness and the unconscious meet concretely” (Weinrib, 1983, p. 69). As I am learning in my sandplay process,¹¹ letting my hands work in earth loosens unconscious material to form images and scenes of importance to my consciousness. This unfettered play—as I did in my youth building with sand and clay, and today in training, gardening, and writing—mediates between complementarities such as “horizontal and vertical dimensions, the mysterious and the concrete, matter and spirit” (Markell, 2002, p. 108). Play unites in the same manner as dance—a centring process of inner and outer, a “centroversion”: “the innate tendency of the whole to create unity within its parts and to synthesize their differ-

ences in unified systems” (Neumann, 1954, p. 286). A movement that keeps us out of binaries and in the paradox and synergy with the mystery of existence.

We are confronted daily by openings that will lead us deeper into connection and relational consciousness. For many who have lost contact with their sensations, emotions, curiosity, and imagination, beginning is not easy and not for everyone. When we tend our local and global communities with others, in sustained effort and care, body and art-centred practices bring greater purpose to living. Here, I offer, through my own practice, an entrance through image, sound, story, silence, movement, rhythm, harmony and synchrony as ways to co-become—“a subtle blending of the *actual*, the *magical*, the *symbolic* and the *anticipatory*” (Markell, 2002, p. 230 emphasis in original). How might the synaesthetic image of Crane Dancing aid in returning our bodies and creative expression to our work? To go into the dance is to let the centre of the dance meet the centre of you. Centre to centre—guides our movement.

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Endnotes

1. This dreamscape offers a pastiche of an excerpt from Jung's (1989) *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. Pastiche is a literary technique that leads to the creation of an original work yet in the style of another author and the structure of the text. Imitating the authorial choices of a writer can be an effective way to demonstrate appreciation of their artistic work. This technique encourages close attention to rhythm, form, and affect; as well, it pays homage to Jung's art by writing of the very thing of his life's work: dreams, symbols, and psychological maturation. Of relevance, this dreamscape imitates structure and syntax as a way to illustrate that even form is rooted in image.

2. While this movement focuses on dance, it becomes more complete with a vast sensorial interplay of colour, light, texture, image, sound, silence, rhythm, synchrony, and its unfolding story and meaning-making. The dreamscape impacts deeply due to its synergistic relations that extend beyond any one element. The combination of these elements embodies the substructure of Expressive Arts Therapy which utilizes various arts that transition from one modality to another, unfolding as a composite through imagination and play. Expressive Arts Therapy is a "circumscribed form of psychotherapy grounded in arts-based methodology and 'bottom-up' approaches that [accentuate] the sensory-based qualities of movement, music

and sound, visual arts, dramatic enactment, and other forms of creative communication” (Malchiodi, 2020, p. xi). I use this therapeutic modality to introduce “expressive arts practice” as pedagogy, which engages learners in two or more conjoined expressive modes (i.e. dance, sound and visual image) within a lesson as a meaningful teaching-learning strategy.

3. Five types of ballet jumps include: 1) *Sauté* is any jump from two feet landing on two feet; sometimes, one foot to the same foot; 2) *Temps Levé* is a hop from one foot to the same foot; 3) *Jeté* is any jump or leap from one foot to the other; 4) *Assemblé* is a jump from one foot landing simultaneously on two feet; 5) *Sissonne* is a jump from two feet, landing on one foot (Hungerford, 2016).

4. There is one more layer to reveal in this dreamscape that also centres the eye. In 2005, at the foot of the Rocky Mountains, I met with a Blackfoot shaman who initiated a vision quest. Sitting upon his enormous buffalo hide with sweet grass burning, we journeyed into the past. ...When we returned, I carried a shiny wet amber eye, framed by sleek grey-brown feathers, capped with white and red. As visionary, seer, he saw me dancing with cranes. It was on this day that I was gifted with and by Crane.

5. Here, “synaesthetic image” conveys a multi-sensorial haptic experience where seeing, hearing, orienting (balance, temperature, etc.), touch, and feeling occur but not as separate perceptions. Image does not mean visual only. Image is always embodiment and emplacement.

6. Revered by many First Nations across the Americas as a storytale bird, as one of the oldest living bird species, the Sandhill Crane claims the longest successful tenure on earth, a pre-eminent position in the world of birds. The Sandhill stands “as an emissary from an ancient and largely unknowable age” (Grooms, 1992, p. 39). “We owe it the respect due a time traveler, whose eerie yellow eyes have witnessed the birth and death of glaciers and the innumerable scramblings of the North American species” (p. 39).

7. The Crane Dance has been performed at fertility rituals since pagan times. According to myth and historical accounts by Plutarch, and described in detail by Homer in *The Iliad*, this is the dance that gives meaning to dance as ancient ritual, possibly one of the first where men and women danced together (Price, 2001).

8. This 20-year descent does not contradict the ten years of intense treatment referred to earlier in the paragraph. I lived and suffered for nearly a decade (September 2001-December 2009) with undiagnosed lyme disease and multiple co-infections, manifesting as separate illnesses. Once diagnosed and confirmed by extensive testing, aggressive treatments required a decade before the spirochete entered remission (April 2019).

9. By “work,” I do not imply a job, task or externally required responsibility. Rather, I intend a calling, a thing-ing, which gives our lives joy and purpose.

10. Across cultures and eras, children begin drawing with circles, vertical and horizontal lines. When drawing what can be likened to a face or person, the eyes are large spherical shapes. The eye has been associated with the third eye and inner sight, healing, medicine wheels, protection, mandalas, circles, and soul, as well as transformation and wisdom.

11. As a requirement for Sandplay Therapy training, I amplified a symbol of importance to me and drew connections between it and my therapeutic practice. I amplified Crane. In doing so, I found significance not only in therapeutic terms but also in philosophic and pedagogic ones. That is, the ancient presence of Crane speaks to resilience, evolutionary adaptation, and the power of eco-education. The symbol amplification brought to the foreground the complexity of species longevity, as well as impact on personal life though studying an image in depth through multi-modal means (sonic recording, documentary, lived experience, myth, story, archival documentation, and so on).

Image

Crane Dancing, digitally rendered by A. Fidyk

Alexandra Fidyk, PhD, Award-winning educator and researcher, Professor, teaches in the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta, Canada. She engages with youth and teachers on issues of wellbeing, love, and suffering through relational, ecological, body- and creation-centred processes. Her transdisciplinary scholarship integrates poetic inquiry, hermeneutics, process philosophy, Buddhist thought, and life writing. This educational experience, coupled with her training and practice (trauma-specialized) in Jungian Somatic Psychotherapy, Integrated Body Psychotherapy, Somatic Experiencing, Sandplay Therapy, and Expressive Arts Therapy, underscores a newly launched Trauma-Sensitive Practice Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies. Contact: fidyk@ualberta.ca

Dolphin Bird
Nancy Corrigan

Knowing is in the Clay
Squeezing, pressing, smoothing, roughing it
Letting it speak
Where did you come from?

The sculptor senses imbalance
Shapes so varied and obscure in their whims
A base shaken, unable to support
But there you came
Beautiful, atop an armored bird.

The sculptor is the painter
Polishing away the slick and slide
No more naked to the touch.

Giving way for what it's undergoing
It's in the clay
This Knowing
But this beauty rises from this unstable base





Holds her womb with tiny wings
Her tail is gracious
Unfolding in fragility and strength

"I have come" she says.
"Trust, for I am beauty
From the deep. I rise so high
With the rising and the setting of the sun."

Now, in reflection,
The human world rests
And can receive her grace
And lets it resonate
In unknowing

There is, in the falling and the climbing,
A line of knowing,
A society woven amongst
The ice, the rain, the earth, the water, and the sky.

Nancy Corrigan has been a painter/art facilitator since 1978, on the Roster for Alberta Artists in the Schools, Festivals and founding artist for the Staff Artists on the Wards at the University of Alberta Hospital. She engaged in studies for Expressive Arts Therapy in Canada with World Arts Organization, Malta Intensive Trauma Training, the European Graduate School in Switzerland, graduating with distinction 2020 Master of Arts in Arts, Health, and Society. Her thesis became an art book, *Drawing on Life Stories: A Phenomenological Inquiry into the Sensing of Beauty*.

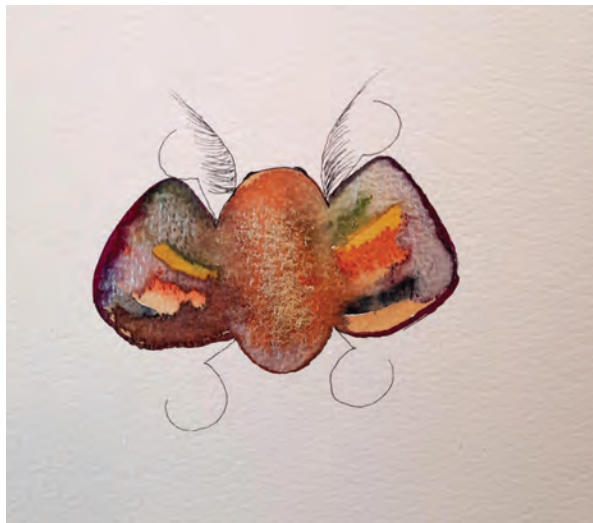


Daily Practice

Tamar Einstein

I often imagined having a daily practice, a ritual based in the arts. In 2017 I painted a water color bird and decided that day to do this each morning for a year. Thus a contemplative, creative morning custom was born.

After completing 5 years, of 5 topics (birds, bugs, underwater animals, trees, magical creatures) for 365 days each time, I chose to repeat the topics every 5 years: a revisiting.



Now, in 2023, I am in the midst of cycle two of the bugs.

Each morning I wake up, make a tea, fill my water container, take the brushes to the table, bring the watercolors, and open the boxes (they are a multicolored, multicultural feast for the eyes and soul: Russian, French, German, British, Japanese), take out the pad of A5 size 300 gram paper, and make a brush stroke. Then I play, improvise, add dry pigments, pen work. Once done, I sign the painting, and photograph it before sending it off to two separate groups of people who have gradually asked to witness the daily surprises.

One of the ripple effects is that at least two of the people who receive them have begun to write poems and give titles to the work.

So....art begets art.

No surprise there.

The Image (that took me) Today

Sabine Silberberg

Note: This article was previously published in Volume 10 of *POIESIS* (2008), in a special section titled "The Image Today."



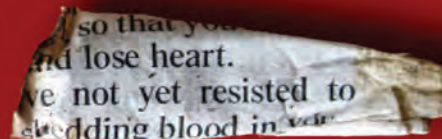
An image in our path.

The one we stumble over.

No studio. No intention.

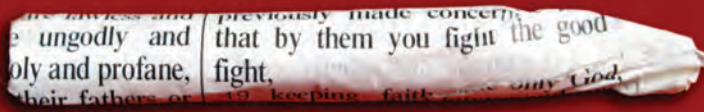
The fast-food version of a creative process.

What do we not see even though we are looking at it?



*H*e fishes cigarette butts out of ashtrays. He rips the papers open and pulls the filters off, collects the tobacco on one of the free daily papers. It's a smelly business, and I am glad I am not sitting right next to it. I am talking to someone else here on the patio, glad the sun is out and around for a few moments, rare in the Vancouver Spring. He is calling my name. "Check this out!" I walk over and look at the cigarette. "It's this," he says, and pulls out a thinned Korean-English dictionary, a make-do solution since money for rolling papers ran out. "Snapshot," it said on the cigarette. "Snide, sarcastic." We look at it together, a moment of surprise; we laugh. The next step seems obvious.

I barter, with a regular cigarette. Cigarettes are currency and you don't just take them away, not in the name of art either. I take a close-up of it, have a print made, and frame it. Then I follow him around to write down thoughts or comments or associations for the artist statement.



"Felix (roller of dog ends):

'I read more since I started rolling my own. I smoked three bibles already in my life, in jail. That means I have read the bible three times, not bad, eh?

Recently I branched out into Asian dictionaries.

I have thought about smoking Keats' sonnets, but I decided not to smoke poetry—my step-brother is directly related to Keats, so that's a no-no."

I hang the photo and the statement close to the nursing clinic in the Centre. People comment on them a lot.

Things shift a bit. He begins to talk about art project ideas. He cares more about his hair and how he dresses. Others address him as the one who rolls these cigarettes and tell him that it's cool. It becomes a "thing."

For the next six months, he brings more cigarettes into my office, some half-smoked: "Damn, I forgot until it was almost too late!" Eventually it looks like enough to show them together, and we have an exhibition opening at the Centre for his series of seven prints. He is nervous about possible responses and jokes around during the opening, asking people whether they notice that they're really paintings. Staff and clients read, comment, take time and pay attention. He likes it.

What is the context here? Dr. Peter Centre, Vancouver, Canada. We are situated in a day health program for people living with HIV/AIDS and who are most at risk for declining health. They are typically faced with multiple challenges in the areas of health, mental health, housing or homelessness, other detrimental social circumstances, and many of them also face active addiction.

One of the factors that make this program unique—not necessarily so much in Vancouver, but in the bigger context of North American approaches to substance use and its treatment philosophies—is the application of harm reduction principles. Harm reduction is often controversially discussed because it is rooted in accepting that there is no drug-free society, and in pragmatic approaches to risk factors inherent to the use of substances. What this translates into is an ongoing intent to "meet people where they are" by lowering thresholds and removing obstacles that traditional health care does not necessarily recognize as such. Harm reduction philosophy suggests not to take challenging behaviours personally, but to view them instead as symptoms of chemical dependence. Clients are frequently in states of intoxication and therefore, their schedules often change—this does not necessarily inhibit engagement. Conversations about drug use, then, are a part of reality rather than something to be checked

at the door. And why am I going into this detail here?

It matters when the arts are introduced in this context. My experience has been that with a lot of flexibility and varied offers and invitations to creative experiences, clients can become intrigued and absorbed in the process. It can be a scary experience, in particular because life on the street can have a high degree of chaos and unpredictability. The uncertainty of the creative process is not necessarily attractive in this context. And for some, especially with a history of stimulant use such as cocaine or crystal methamphetamine, attention span can be incredibly short and therefore difficult for what is traditionally viewed as focus on art-making. The excitement of art and imagination lingers for a few moments, and then fades, compared to the extreme rush that the drugs hold, or when met with the pacing and restless states of the body. Much depends on perspective here, on how we view engagement, what expectations we have for the duration of creative processes and their outcomes, and on a broadening of understanding of relating.

The therapeutic relationship itself has become a creative endeavour for me, taking the approach of a surfer, waiting until the next big wave arises, and then dedicating all energy to being present in the moment. The moment becomes the main stage. Any goals and plans and agendas may inform the interactions, but are to be applied with caution. Too much of an investment in either superimposing what I “know” to be the better choice for someone else or a big investment in making a difference via changing the other, can lead to severe disillusionment. This attitude of letting go also simultaneously holds all possibilities. Everything may or may not happen. This therapeutic stance has required me to repeatedly let go of preconceived ideas, hidden and overt agendas, and—in order to build relationships—has also required an ongoing, honest look at the conditions within what I consider to be “meaningful encounters” can occur.

Now I do enjoy the not-knowing, the surprises, the re-framing of what even brief encoun-

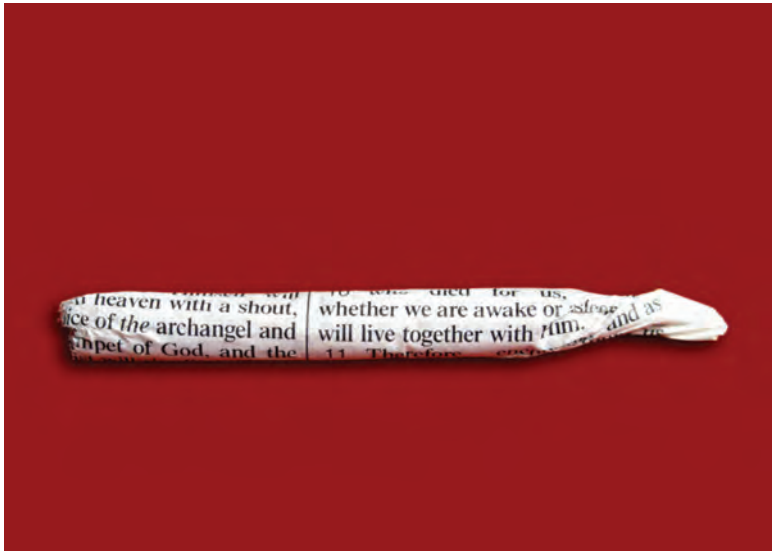
ters can entail and the ongoing creativity of attempting to find new avenues of engagement, which are successful here and there. At the end of the day, I appreciate the chaos and unpredictability—it is the raw material that calls for shaping: what do art and connection *really* look like? My work does require a fair bit of investment: particularly when things feel tired and tried; despite all resolve not to expect much, disillusionment can set in on some days. But new angles and surprises in the work have kept me personally and professionally alive here.

The changing of perspective and trying on new lenses in order to get to different perceptions is an approach and vocabulary that is familiar from the realm of photography. It reminds me of what Michael Wood spoke about in a contemplative photography course I took. Wood has developed photography as a visual medi-



tation practice, an offspring of his studies of Tibetan Buddhism. He teaches this approach all over North America and Europe. He tells the story of his own development with this practice, says that he confined himself visually to his backyard, voluntarily, for six months. Rather than manipulating things to appear to be more than they were, Wood aimed to step out of the “visual drama,” as he calls it, in order to encounter the world as it is in its most basic aspects. “The experience of seeing is brought back to being undistracted and present. The visual world can

then be perceived directly, without the burden of our habitual likes and dislikes, associations, memories, all of which obscure clear perception," he states on his website (www.miksang.com). Viewing things this way has brought life back to my involvement with photography; it has helped open up a way of looking at things as if I know nothing about them. Which, interestingly enough, links (I believe) with the therapeutic stance of availability in the moment, which I learned about within a harm reduction environment.



And there we are, back on the patio. Back with the smelly tobacco, re-rolled in whatever paper was around and smokable. And back to what was a moment of beauty to me. A flash of perception: that art can just happen, that it can reveal itself, and all it takes is to recognize it and claim it as such. And a flash of perceiving what presents itself,

only differently. What if the habits of discernment shift, and what I see is not just garbage and poverty and making-do? Is it distasteful to find beauty here, a sentimentalization of the margins, and of coping strategies? If this image intrigues me, what else can I find where I usually don't look or dwell?

This photo is an invitation to spend more time being present, with my senses, to wake up

to what I see every day. To stay longer with what I want to dismiss. To open up again to what is around me and to let myself be found and taken. And it engages me on other levels, inviting contemplation. It begs the question of what deserves to be framed and thereby elevated, presented with style, with value. It also provokes thoughts about all frames—the “frame” of Felix’s acknowledgement of the cigarette as different, the one of my mind that recognizes the “Kodak moment,” the frame within the actual camera through which colour and sizing were selected, and the frame around the finished print—layers of choices at every juncture, perceptions, decisions. The aesthetic perspective here is applied to what is commonly considered ugly; it is a reversal of its own sense of order, a dipping into the anaesthetic. And in the middle of these thoughts—whatever happened to the relationship between the roller and the image, the involuntary artist and his oeuvre?

It seemed obvious that applying attention, and thereby value, had an impact. And I say this with caution, with much careful attention not to exaggerate the effect of a few photos on the wall on someone’s life. The impact might simply be that he is paying more attention, that he is applying attention to himself and what surrounds him. Is “paying attention” then possibly an important term here, the essence of the process? Both connection and art appear to hold it as a core element, a quality of being present, of being attuned to the moment and to what surrounds us. That is certainly true for photography as an art modality, with photos often described as a “frozen moments of time,” with a quality of stillness and a selection of fractions from life, from what is experienced as perpetual movement. It is also what makes photography attractive to me, the slowing down and surrendering to a narrowed angular focus, the tight frame of the lens. It provides relief and a break from an often overwhelming complexity; even the need for nuanced discernment is narrowed to a small window.

While photography brings attention to what is right there, right now, and brings it to a point, it simultaneously belongs to the realms of both imagination and reality. Every photo is taken by a poetic documentarian. And therein lies its power for me. The imagined becomes

real, is real already in its visibility. The poetic representation of a dialogue with an aspect of life becomes reality. What you see is what you get; what you imagined and then photographed now looks like it exists. And this is where photography can be an ally in contemplation of what is. A powerful ally that makes visible what is and what could be, especially within a context that is permeated with the need for social change.

This is where the image leaves me, with a loose knot of all these strands of thoughts. “Meeting people where they are,” as the harm reduction philosophy suggests, emerges together with contemplative notions of perception as an increased availability in the moment. This sense of conscious presence and applied attention provides an invitation to play together, to imagine the surroundings differently, to reframe and to leap from moment to moment with impulses and flashes of perception. It might not matter whose art it is, whose image, but to take the opportunity for collaboration and poetic riffing and losing oneself, ourselves, in possibility—and in the opportunity of being found.

What if we don’t take pictures? Don’t look for them. Just find them.

What if the picture takes us?

I am taken. By the picture. Occupied.

Cigarettes. Butts.

Sabine Silberberg, PhD, spent 15 years working in inner-city HIV/AIDS care in Vancouver, BC, learning about intersectionality through harm reduction work. She is faculty of arts-based therapy degree programs, locally and internationally. Recently relocated to BC’s North to unceded Lheidli T’enneh lands, she engages with winter as a poetic state, and cold as a modality. Currently she focuses on trauma and thriving, and on embodiment as a necessary practice in decolonizing therapy work.

Dancing with Meanings

The Endless To and Fro Between the Image and Myself

Brigitte Anor

This article was previously published in *POIESIS* Volume 10 (2008) in a section titled “The Image Today.” Below is the author’s reflection on her essay now in 2023:

“More than 15 years have passed since the writing of this text and more than 22 years since this 9/11 photo was taken. The essence of a photographic image is to know something about the future of the subject that the subject doesn’t know when the photograph was taken. We have the advantage of acquiring a perspective with time.

In this paper, I end the article by declaring that I will probably have encountered other poignant images which would have an impact on my subjectivity. In terms of pure grammar this statement was what is called the future perfect simple. Today, I can say with certainty that the future of these days was not simple and especially not perfect...”



Always the photograph astonishes me, with an astonishment which endures and renews itself, inexhaustibly.¹

A few weeks ago I put the famous photographic image “Falling Man” on my desk. From that moment I have been constantly looking at it with wonder because of the contrast between its esthetic, minimalistic form and its dramatic content. Confronted with this image, my thoughts wander in many directions and I feel, at each glance, how varied my reactions to it can be.

My interaction with the photographic image feels like a dance led by the music of my subjective world. In view of the fact that the subject of this photographic image is a grave one, this is not a merry dance but a complex, painful one. In this dance the image and myself are both active.

According to the basic model of understanding of a text described by Gadamer,² this interaction is an almost endless chain of mutual influences. It is a conversation in which the reader and the text are in constant flux. The understanding of a photographic image, just like that of a text, involves the self-understanding of the reader as well as the understanding of the text.

In my dance with the image on my desk, my prejudices play a crucial role and I know that my gaze can neither be innocent nor neutral. Moreover, sometimes, against my will, I tend to neglect my dancing partner in a disrespectful way: I step over the image and jump into the world of deduction, speculation and fantasy.

In order to control this wild dance, I need to structure it by asking four questions: What do I see in this picture? What do I know about this picture? What do I feel when confronted with this picture? What associations arise in my mind when I look at this picture?

What do I see in this picture?

In order to really see, I have to be attentive to the rhythm of my companion, to look at each detail of the image in its own right. This stage is particularly difficult for me because I have to forget what I already know about the falling man. I have to take a step back, using the visual data only. Few people are able to look at photographic images in this way. This requires a special skill that we use sometimes in a museum or an art gallery where the photographic image is looked upon as an art object.

When looking just at the form of the falling man, the first thing that attracts my attention is the composition created by the play of light and shadow. The frame is divided into two almost equal parts of clear and dark parallel rods. This underlines the geometric balance and the symmetry of the straight lines.

I see the silhouette of a man. He is perfectly vertical in accord with the lines behind him. He looks like an arrow in the middle of the image. His arms are by his side; his left leg is bent at the knee. He is wearing a white shirt and black pants. The poor quality of the print in the newspaper prevents me from judging the texture, the brightness, the scale of colors and the contrasts of the image.

After this short, constrained pause, in which I force myself to just look, I come back to the irreversible step I made when my eyes, guided by my curiosity, read the title: "The Falling Man 9/11."

From this moment on, I can no longer disconnect myself from the represented subject and the information about the tragic context. Now, what I see can no longer be merely based on intrinsic visual data. When I look at the vertical lines I now see the steel bars of the long rows of windows. When I look at the left of the image, I now see the North Tower of the famous twins and to the right, the South Tower. When I look at the character I "see" that he is going to die.

What do I know about this picture?

This is the photograph of the man who jumped or fell from the North Tower on 9/11 taken by the photographer Richard Drew, when two planes hit the World Trade Centre at 9:41:15 on the morning of September 11, 2001. The subject was one of the approximately 200 people who had been trapped on the upper floors of the building and apparently chose to jump rather than die from the fire and smoke. This knowledge is based on the caption which appeared in the newspaper with the photograph.

And yet, is it clear? Did this caption help me catch the essence of the image or, on the contrary, at this stage, being overwhelmed by so much knowledge, did I feel that I had lost contact with my partner? Where was the paradoxical charm of the photographic image that first presented me with a reality that was both obvious and mysterious? Where were the characteristics of the image which, by virtue of being a slice of space as well as time, conveyed a seductive opacity?

The steps I had taken into the graphic and verbal spheres offered me two different angles which were necessary but still not adequate. I now needed to survey the world of my feelings and listen to my own tempo.

What do I feel when confronted with this picture?

What I see, what I know and what I feel have a reciprocal impact on my dance with the image. It is an improvised dance. For a moment I close my eyes and an entire life emerges from the image. I am not far from the illusion of reality. Even though the photograph is silent I can suddenly hear many sounds: the sound of screaming voices, the booming of collapsing buildings, the ambulance sirens. I can also hear the din of controversy provoked by the publication of this picture and I even listen to the music of the novels and films that have been based on it.³

When I open my eyes again, the bent leg of the man falling headlong attracts my attention. Faced with this detail, "...I feel that its mere presence changes my reading and that I am looking at a new photograph, marked in my eye with a higher value."⁴ This is exactly what Barthes means when he refers to the *punctum*. The photograph's *punctum* is "that accident which pricks me."⁵ It is the unintentional detail that could not be taken away and that "fills the whole picture."⁶ This printed element confirms contact with the image. It creates an intimate link between me and the victim.

The second *punctum* which takes my breath away is provoked by the fact that I know that this man is going to die shortly.⁷ The knowledge that in a few seconds the protagonist will strike the ground and die on impact wounds me. In fact, when I look now at the picture, I know that the falling man is already dead, and "I observe with horror an anterior future of which death is the stake."⁸ This "catastrophe which has already occurred"⁹ forces the photograph into an unreality, a hallucination of sorts. The fragile photographic image represents the snatching of a single instant out of eternity, an endlessness in which I have no part.

This feeling of helplessness rouses in me many associations.

What associations arise in my mind when I look at this picture?

I seem to have two kinds of reactions to this photographic image. The first is mostly intellectual and is evoked by the title and the text. I will express it verbally.

The second is mostly artistic and is evoked mainly by the visual stimuli. I will express it visually. I call it the "artistic rebound."¹⁰

In this state of mind, the first association which comes to me is the fall of Icarus. Before the "Falling Man" photograph, I feel the weight of humankind's indifference to suffering. This is my personal approach: I could focus on Icarus' megalomaniac impulse and compare his desire to approach the sun to other human ambition, but I prefer to underline Icarus' loneliness. I feel the same in front of Breughel's painting of Icarus' fall. Breughel depicts the ordinary events which continue to occur, despite the death of the mythic figure that is seen drowning in a dim corner in the bottom right area of the sea. Icarus' legs are still encompassed in a halo of foam, but no one is paying attention to the drama unfolding around him. Sailors on their ships, a fisherman, a shepherd, a labourer—each one continues, unperturbed, with his occupation.

My second intellectual association is *The Fall* by Albert Camus¹¹ which underscores a similar solitude. Here the message is even more pessimistic: there is no light accessible to the human being. No possible happiness, no hope. It is the ultimate meaninglessness of human existence. In this book, Clamence, the hero, was not far from a young woman who one night jumps into the cold Seine. He describes this moment in the following words:

The silence that followed, as the night suddenly stood still, seemed interminable. I wanted to run and yet didn't move an inch. I was trembling, I

believe from cold and shock. I told myself that I had to be quick and felt an irresistible weakness steal over me. I have forgotten what I thought then: "Too late, too far..." or something of the sort. I was still listening as I stood motionless. Then, slowly, in the rain, I went away. I told no one.

The distress of the falling young woman is transferred to Clamence, the witness. The same helplessness and fatigue overwhelm me before the image of the falling man: it is too late and too distant for me as well. The only thing that I can still hold onto is a piece of paper, an image.

Suddenly, I feel the urge to transform this image. Immediately, I turn the image upside down because it is unbearable for me to see the man with his head aimed at the ground. Then I take scissors and glue, but I hesitate: do I have the right to touch it? Isn't it a kind of sacrilege? Isn't it disrespectful of the dead to express my desire to protect him in this way?

I think about a different possibility. I could use the Photoshop program. This program gives me the illusion that my interference is less violent and invites me to reframe the sad reality by manipulating the image *ad infinitum*. The world of speculation, dreams and fantasy become accessible.

As a first step, I try to slow down his fall. I give him an umbrella.

Then I want to soften those cold steel bars of the long rows of windows and transform them into a soft net that will receive him gently.

But ultimately, I would like so much to give him some rest, to help him to leave this rigid vertical position and find ease in a relaxed, horizontal position.

We live in a time in which we are exposed daily to newspaper images: a range of moments cut in space and time. Some of those photos, such as "Falling Man," have become a part of our



collective memory, in general, and a part of the story of my life, in particular. Today, the bent leg, the umbrella and the soft net form a part of my personal visual repertoire, and they are embedded in my mind without any finality or complete elucidation. In the future, I will no doubt encounter other poignant images in the newspaper which will have an impact on my subjectivity in an unending, ongoing sequence of dance steps. But for now, I continue to dance with the falling man.

Endnotes

1 R. Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (London 1984), p. 95

2 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, New York: Crossroad 1989.

3 *Falling Man* is the title of Don DeLillo's most recent novel, published May 2007. In Wikipedia, we read that "9/11: *The Falling Man* is a documentary about the picture and the story behind it. It was made by American filmmaker Henry Singer and filmed by Richard Numeroff, a New York-based director of photography... The picture plays an important part in the book *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* by Jonathan Safran Foer. The last fifteen pages of his text comprise a flip-book

collection of images of a similar man falling upwards toward the top of the World Trade Center." www.wikipedia.org/wiki/the_falling_man

4 Barthes, C.L., p. 42.

5 Barthes, C.L., pp. 26-27.

6 Barthes, C.L., p. 45.

7 "The *punctum* is he is going to die"

Barthes, C.L., p. 96.

8 Barthes, C.L., p. 96.

9 Barthes, C.L., p. 96.

10 When an image is poignant, we feel the need to give an "artistic rebound." Jacques Stitelmann describes the "artistic rebound" as a phenomenon that occurs when a work of art touches us and bounces back transformed by its *élan*.

11 A. Camus, *The Fall*, Vintage Books, New York, 1956.

Brigitte Anor, Ph.D., is an Expressive Arts therapist and the founder of the Photo Therapy Institute in Jerusalem. The program was built upon the belief that both the use of the camera and the photographic image itself have the power to generate an emotional experience that itself can foster personal, interpersonal and professional growth. The theme of her doctoral thesis at EGS was "The different roles of photographic images in the narration of our lives: *From Submission to Rebellion*."



This article was previously published in *CREATE: Journal of the Creative and Expressive Arts Therapies Exchange*, Volume 4, 1994. Minor editorial changes were made and re-published in *POIESIS* Vol 10 (2008) in a section titled "The Image Today." Below is the author's reflection now in 2023 on her essay:

"It's wonderful to have read my article again, written many years ago. Especially relevant as I am finishing my book, *Intimacy With Images: Art and Depth Psychology*.

"In my book, I make many of the same points, going deeper into the importance of Poetics as a basis of the work. I also have examples of image work both with my own, and with clients' art work. Meeting imagination with imagination is still and always the method. Like cures like. We enter and reside in imagination with imagination. We let the images speak in their own ways. We tread with humility and reverence. We open to their grace, love, and guidance. Listen and reflect, there are worlds within worlds in your own creations, closer to you than almost anything. Visible with inner sight and senses sharp. Allow yourself to be moved, startled, and surprised!"

Seized by Beauty: The Imaginal Basis of Art Therapy

Nina Suzanne Ross

Influenced by the work of both James Hillman and Shaun McNiff, I have been working on applying the perspective of archetypal psychology to the field of art therapy. This has led me to inquire into an imaginal base for practicing art therapy. In this essay, I ask, “What makes for sensitivity or responsiveness to images?” and “What qualities promote a turn or twist in our normal ways of perceiving that encourage us to feel closer to images?” I have also synthesized ideas that not only address these questions, but represent how to come to images with sympathy and sensitivity. These ideas refer to qualities of perception— ways to help us enter into the life of the images. They are: *poetic seeing*, *concreteness*, *love and appreciation*, and *dissolution*.

Poetic Seeing

When I was a child and an adolescent growing up in Bronxville, New York, my friends and I used to frequently visit the grounds at Sarah Lawrence College. There seemed to be a mysterious air surrounding this place. There was a particular spot I went to during each visit,

where there was a statue of St. Francis of Assisi. He had birds resting on his shoulders, and a calm, compassionate look on his face. The statue was housed in a small alcove, which made the spot feel even more secretive. Time after time, I felt that this statue was alive. I talked to it, worshipped it. It gave me comfort and solace.

What makes an experience of sensing that objects are alive? Is it only what we project onto them, or is there a relationship occurring between the seer and the object? Whatever the case may be, it is clear that during these moments, life is vibrant. We find ourselves participating in the world differently. Life takes on a poetic quality, one that stirs the imagination. The poet Karl Shapiro says,

The rational person is least able to understand poetry. He does not perceive, as all other people perceive, including children and primitives, that poetry is a way of seeing things, not a way of saying things. Poetry is "different" not because of meters and figures of speech, but because it is a way of seeing a thing differently. (*Poets Work*, p. 100)

In feeling that the statue was alive, I was experiencing a poetic state of mind, which is the ability to see "differently," according to Shapiro. To experience something as alive, a switch out of ordinary perception is necessary. For example, when we see an object in our usual or ordinary way, it appears as it is. However, if we can penetrate through the object, past its utilitarian familiarity, we reach into new areas of perception with it. Then it is possible to have a relationship with the object beyond the ordinary. The difference between the two is reflected in Cartesian dualism: the world as dead matter versus the world as ensouled. Ensoulment can be thought of as a stronger degree of attention mixed with a dose of imagination, or what psychotherapist Douglas Belknap has called "realism that shines with another dimension." John Dewey, in *Art as Experience*, says that the poetical, in whatever medium, is always akin to the animistic. Animistic seeing makes it possible to penetrate into images as if they are alive. This is a necessary prerequisite for imagework.

For example, if someone paints a picture of a red horse, I want to leave my ordinary perception of red horses aside (if I have any), and work towards entering into a relationship with this particular horse. I want to position myself in such a way that the horse can talk to me and suggest to me who and what it is. I really have to believe that the horse has its own kind of aliveness in order to do this. Then I can believe that my soul is interacting with the horse's soul, and that the interpretation that occurs is based on a relationship between us.

This style of interpretation relies less on intellectualization and more on sensitivity into the aliveness of the particular images. The philosopher/poet, Gaston Bachelard, who has influenced many psychologists, has said,

...the psychoanalyst, victim of his method, inevitably intellectualizes the image, losing the reverberations in his effort to untangle the skein of his interpretations. He understands the image... that's just the point, he "understands" it. For the psychoanalyst, the poetic image always has a context. When he interprets it, however, he translates it into a language that is different from the poetic logos. (*Poetics of Space*, pp. xx)

Bachelard's work serves the essential role of reminding us that first and foremost, psychic images have poetic ancestry, and that if we are to regard them as such, we must honour their poetic nature.

Concreteness

In his article "The Poet and the Muse," Herbert Read finds it strange that there is a distinction between sensation and imagination. He finds that, more often than not, we do not realize that imagination can be concrete. Artists, crafters of imagination, are completely concerned with materiality and concreteness. They turn their images into concrete form. For those of us who work with the interpretation of images, we might best serve the artist and the art by being concrete and sensuous in coming to meet the images. Many artists mistrust psychologists and

critics because they feel that the search for meaning becomes too analytical, distanced, and intellectual; unfortunately, they are often right. To them, psychologists are people for whom the sensual body is often absent. Unless one can feel one's way into shapes and forms that are vividly concrete, one may have a difficult time in seeing art. But when one can perceive the vibrant reality of a colour, or the perfect voluptuousness of a curve in an object, no longer is there a question about meaning. It's only when we're not caught, not engaged, that we want an explanation. For example, when experiencing beauty, do we wonder what beauty means, or are we happy (and blessed) just to be in its atmosphere, just bearing witness to it?

Language used in the interpretation of images should match the specificity and detail of the visual images themselves. Susan Sontag, in her article "Against Interpretation," delineates the possible pitfalls in the interpretation of art. She describes what is needed not to usurp the work of art:

What is needed, first, is more attention to the form in art. If excessive stress on content provokes the arrogance of interpretation, more extended and more thorough descriptions of form would silence. What is needed is a vocabulary for forms. The best criticism, and it is uncommon, is of this sort that dissolves considerations of content into those of form. (p. 12)

Her statement tells us that there is much more to look for besides the content of a work. Atmosphere, or context, is missed when content is given too much attention. Psychology, like art criticism, has been stuck in a narrative genre, looking only for the causes (content) of the psychic material, without regard for its representation or manifestation (form). There has been too much focus on reading works of art only in terms of the artist's life, as biographical statements of pathology.

Recently, immediately following a performance given by performance artist Laurie Van Wi-

eran, I sat in the audience for a question and answer period. Laurie had performed in a dance piece in which she played LaLa, a character she described as, “a circus performer—young and bratty, passionate and pathetic.” A man from the audience asked Laurie many questions about LaLa. He wanted to know how LaLa related to Laurie’s personal past history; he commented that LaLa seemed infantile and in pain. After having been absorbed in a world distinct from her own, Laurie seemed stunned by his questions. She remarked, “I don’t know the answers to your questions—ask LaLa.” LaLa, to Laurie, is an autonomous character, the same way that a writer writes the life of a character but isn’t that character. The questions that were being asked were too direct, given the timing and circumstance; they killed the mystery of experiencing the uniqueness of the character on her own terms.

In the creative process, many artists talk about forgetting what they have previously learned as a necessary step in seeing more precisely. The artist Kiki Karatheodoris stated, “Part of seeing is forgetting—forgetting what we think we know about the subject, what we have been taught, or what we think we know about drawing itself.” Forgetting stops our minds from knowing. At this point, one is confronted with the object itself, and one’s knowing is arrested. The more one sits with the image as it is, the more one can see and appreciate it: its voice, tone, texture, and shape appear with authority and autonomy.

What keeps this “being in the presence” of a thing from happening? One artist’s reply was, “The fear of losing control.” Not knowing can make us feel dumb, but the most extraordinary experiences that I have ever had, in which things were revealed to me, all had the quality of bearing witness, of just being there. Until we can suspend the need for meaning, we can’t experience direct revelation. Why can’t meaning include sensual, or as Sontag says, erotic responses? Why does meaning, for us, refer most often to content (history)? Why can’t, as Douglas Belknap has said many times, seeing be an end in itself? If it were, we wouldn’t always feel the need to “dig deeper” to where the “true” meaning lies. We would trust our visual and feeling capacities as ways of seeing the image. Rudolf Arnheim, in *Toward a Psychology of Art*, said,

We must not be caught by the prejudice that the mental layers most remote from consciousness are the “deepest” ones, and that, therefore, they are the most valuable for artistic creation. (p. 177)

Oscar Wilde expressed the same feeling in a different way when he said, “It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible” (quoted in “Against Interpretation,” p. 3). If we trusted our responses more, we might acquire ways of speaking about art that would describe exactly what it is we are seeing and sensing. Staying with this description could be a way into the image; we could enter the image to a point where it would reverberate. Little symbolism is needed when this is done. One’s own description itself, as it stays close to the image, enlivens it. Symbolism, on the other hand, takes us away from the particulars of each image, tending to make the particular into the general.

An art therapy student came to me once with a painting made by a four-year-old child. The student said that a therapist was concerned that the child might be depressed because there was a lot of black in the picture. The student wondered if this is something that she should be concerned about. I asked her to describe what she saw in the image, and to express her sense of it. She went on to describe the big black shape that was covered by green paint, and how on top of the green paint there was red paint. The red paint extended into the blank part of the paper. The red looked particularly energetic and loosely painted. I asked the student to describe the child as she painted. “She was really having fun,” she said. We also talked about how, at the age of four, many children love to layer paint, and also to make muddy-looking messes. Is this depression? The student said her gut doesn’t think so.

It is not easy to be unarmed before a thing. Something in us leaps to a kind of paranoia. Matthew Lipman has said, “For half a century now we have been exhorted, by Rilke and by Hofmannsthal, by Husserl and by Heidegger, to return to things themselves, but the way to them is difficult.” (*What Happens in Art*, p. 65) Perhaps things themselves scare us! Things contain

such precision, detail and unique life energy that perhaps we reject that power of life. Mostly, though, I think that we are untrained in regarding things, because we are overtrained in regarding ourselves. We are usually at the centre of our attention; thus, we can't see too far outside of ourselves. A story from James Hillman's article, "Anima Mundi," illustrates this point:

When asked, "How was the bus ride?" I respond, "Miserable, desperate, terrible." But these words describe me, my feelings, my experience, not the bus ride which was bumpy, crowded, steamy, cramped, noxious, with long waits. Even if I noticed the bus and the trip, my language transferred this attention to notions about myself. (p. 85)

In another article by James Hillman that appeared in the magazine *Sculpture* (March-April 1992), he said, "It takes a lot of courage to open your heart to beauty. Now that's a big sentence, but why it is so hard to let yourself be seized, without irony, without making a statement or being part of a contemporary movement?" His question is a good one. In art therapy training, we were, I felt, too concerned with making a diagnosis to the detriment of staying with the image and being seized by it; following it even if we didn't know where it was leading us.

Love and Appreciation

Art's purpose is to inspire, and is a "joy unto itself." Therefore, any method that seeks to appreciate art should have enjoyment as its goal. When we seek to enjoy an image, we are not called to be analytical. The best we can do is to learn how to enhance our capacity to "drink" in the image. Hans Hofmann called this capacity empathy. He explained that empathy was the primary quality needed not only to produce art, but also to "experience art, to enjoy art, and particularly to criticize art." (Hofmann, p. 67). In terms of formal art education, empathy is the intuitive faculty to sense the formal and spatial relations of the picture, as well as the plastic and psychological qualities of form and colour. But, even without this formal training in art, art education or art criticism, therapy could also rest on empathy—what the picture makes us do,

what emotions it evokes in us, as well as precise description of what we see before us. Reacting to images emotionally, and perhaps physically too, would not be as concerned with meaning as it would be with response.

The artist Agnes Martin, a painter in her late 70s, places utmost importance on responding to images. She says,

You must discover the art work that you like and realize the response that you make to it. If you are not an artist, you can make discoveries about yourself by knowing your response to work that you like. Ask yourself, "What kind of happiness do I feel with this music or this picture?" The response to art is the real art field. ("Agnes Martin," *El Palacio*, Fall/Winter 1989.)

I am struck with her emphasis on the importance of awareness; to how one responds to art work. Even without knowing art history or art criticism, responsiveness is open to everyone. Art education could rest on sensitizing people, allowing them to familiarize themselves with feeling the nature of images, and in giving them encouragement for trusting that as a methodology, or a way "into" the image. Douglas Belknap, referring to my particular interest in painting, has called my tactic, "Dream the painting onward," after Jung's statement "Dream the dream onward." We become receptacles for their energy, having become inspired by them. It becomes our responsibility, as therapists, critics, or educators, to carry enthusiasm through ourselves, transmitting what we feel to others. Having allowed the image to have its own personality and vitality, we want to teach others to do this as well.

Poet C. Day Lewis echoes the emphasis on response in this definition of what critics should do: "The critic has one pre-eminent task, the task of easing or widening or deepening our response." Responsiveness requires participation from the viewer, the ability to be in relationship with the work. James Hillman talks about this as the ability to surrender oneself. When we

surrender, he says, we are in a place where we can become stopped by beauty. Being seized by beauty creates a “gasp.” The word “aesthesis” originally means “to breathe in.” He points out that people are reluctant to be affected in this way, as they avoid being moved or touched. By the same token, Suzanne Famljak, of *Sculpture* magazine, states that much of art criticism itself avoids the rapt attention of artistic experience, turning instead to deconstruction or other styles that she claims are “built on the fear of influence.”

Responsiveness allows impressions of the whole image to be felt in one’s entire body. I see this approach as based in the body, because we are not necessarily thinking about the images. There may be impressions and dialogue taking place, but not analysis. We are sensing the image, feeling its life, receiving it, and responding to it in the ways we feel moved to respond. Perhaps it is this way of approaching images that Susan Sontag was referring to when she called for “not a hermeneutics, but an erotics of art.”

Love is central to the imaginative process. It evokes interest in the image or object. It is a feeling that pulls at one, making it necessary to investigate something, to work at it in order to bring it to life. Art educator Seonaid Robertson, in her book *Rosegarden and Labyrinth*, notes that Stanley Spencer spoke of the necessity for the artist to see his or her subject in a way that would enable him or her to love it. Love, interest, and curiosity lead us into the image.

I recently looked at a photograph of Ansel Adams standing beside his darkroom. His face appeared open and relaxed. I imagined the great love that he must feel for his images, his extraordinary care for them. The love that artists have for their images can teach us all something about non-personal love. Loving or appreciating a thing heals us precisely because we are not concerned with ourselves.

One should love without ownership because non-personal love releases us from ourselves. Paradoxically, we grow larger and beyond ourselves as a result. Robert Frost captured this

sense of the creative when he said, "All the great things are done for their own sake."

Judith, a dancer who is interested in working out a sense of her emotions as opposed to learned techniques, told me about her struggles with illness. She said, "I finally found the proper attitude when I began to make something of my illness." Instead of trying to fabricate inauthentic movement, or stopping her movement entirely, she decided to work with being ill. What this created for her was a richer emotional vocabulary in her dancing, because she stayed with pain or discomfort. In this way, she showed love, appreciation, or gratitude for what was a given in her life at the time. I'm sure that it was difficult for her to love the illness. Perhaps acceptance is a better word here. Acceptance implies not fighting, not wanting things to be different, or not concealing the illness, but, in a sense, serving it by allowing it to speak.

In an example of giving for the life of "others," the painter Franz Kline stated,

You don't paint the way someone, by observing your life, thinks you have to paint, you paint the way you have to in order to give, that's life itself, and someone will look and say it is the product of knowing, but it has nothing to do with knowing, it has to do with giving. (Franz Kline, *Art News*, 1981, p. 8)

Painting, to him, is giving-that's-beautiful. There's little self-reference in his statement. Giving, as one makes art, enables loving the images to happen. When I make a photograph, I am only interested in realizing the image, articulating it and crafting it well so that its expression can be captured in the truest way.

Dissolution

There is an emptying of ourselves, a humility that occurs before an image. Giving ourselves over to the image, we abandon our own agenda. We adopt the image's point of view, letting our eyes move behind the image's eye. From this vantage point, we see how the image sees

and what it sees. We can feel the world that it inhabits. There are two things that happen in this type of experience: dissolution of the ego takes place, and as a result of this, there is an immersion into the image.

Immersion is like being a sponge to experience—we become saturated with whatever the theme or mood of the experience is. We can absorb and try different points of view when we are immersed. We become influenced and shaped by the phenomenon; for example, when a potter works with clay, he or she may literally have to sit and feel the clay, fondle it, and speak with it for a long time before knowing what shape is to emerge. There is great value in this kind of submergence. It makes us even closer to images by being dissolved into them. This is the way that a dream feels. During the dream, there is no “I” and then “it.” I am in it, and can’t get out of it until it releases me.

It is because of this immersion that detail, precision, form, and other necessary elements of art can be seen so accurately. We know what an image is and what it needs when we can feel into its nature. Feeling its nature, we work from within our experience in a dialogue with the art work. Helen Frankenthaler states, “When one made a move toward the canvas surface, there was a dialectic and the surface gave an answer back, and you gave it an answer back...” (*Frankenthaler*, p. 36)

In this statement we can recognize how absolutely alive the canvas was for Frankenthaler. It was not just making strokes on a canvas: her canvas talked to her in quite an extraordinary and fascinating way. She was highly receptive to the nature of the paint and waited for its answer to her questions. She was in an active relationship with the canvas. The object, canvas, etc, may disapprove if one does something to it that it does not deem fitting to its composition. We have to be sensitive to these nuances, for these are the qualities of aesthetic judgment. Aesthetic judgment is hard to define. That is because it is based on a relationship that one has with things in given moments. Knowing when to add more colour, when to end, or when to insert a

new figure are all decisions that are made as we relate and actively engage the object. There is an immediacy to these decisions. Engaging the object may take many forms—listening to it, talking to it, staring at it, touching it. What all of these things have in common is caring for it in some way, or attending it, as the old word *therapeia* connotes.

Conclusion

The psyche speaks poetically; when we apply a poetic understanding to our images, we are in closer connection with the way that Psyche expresses herself. We have more of an opportunity to be closer to her speech. When we speak diagnostically, we have less of an opportunity to be close to Psyche's speech, because she herself doesn't speak in those terms; they are not inherent to her native vocabulary. Poetic understanding leads us to the use of metaphor, puns and analogies. It is essential to use these tools of language in working psychologically because what we do in image work is to make likenesses between things. For example, visiting the moon as an image may be like going to a place that is different from the earth. We don't take the moon as a literal place, but as a metaphoric one. Engaging in poetic language makes available to us the richness and depth in language; the possibilities of language become more expansive with poetic speaking and listening.

To be concrete means to be descriptive. Particularity is to be favoured over generality. Detail and precision, either in drawing or painting an image, or in verbally expressing an image, are important to characterizing the image. In art therapy, when interpreting a picture, if we are working out of concreteness, we will describe exactly what we see in the image. We will try not to label the image, but to stay with the details. We will also try to recount the experience we had while making or viewing the picture.

Loving an image will evoke a caring feeling towards it. When we care about a thing, we treat it respectfully, with honour and dedication. Caring for one's images makes us appreciate

them, and enables them to appreciate us. Loving the psyche and its productions will give us a feeling of respect for the experiences that it brings to us.

Dissolving ourselves in an image allows us to become closer to the image. Closeness to the image allows us to feel into its nature, to feel what kind of world the image is evoking. Dissolution also helps put subjectivity and self-concern aside, allowing immersion into the image to take precedence over personal stories about the self. In both dissolution and immersion, loss of subjectivity or personalism is experienced. The focus is on reading the image and trying to decipher what it is telling us in all of its rich, mysterious, archetypal language.

These qualities of perception—poetic seeing, concreteness, love and appreciation, dissolution—increase our sensitivity and responsiveness to images. They bring the image alive and bring us closer to it. To practice art therapy on this imaginal basis will enable us to be “seized by beauty” and truly open to the aesthetic nature of our work.

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Untitled, by Gopika Dahanukar, mixed media, December 2022

The article "The Terrifying Beauty of Creating Anew," by Shaun McNiff, was previously published in *POIESIS* Volume 8 (2006). Below is the author's reflection in 2023 on his essay, followed by the re-publishing of the original article, with some minor editorial changes.

The Beauty of Authentic and Natural Expression

Revisiting Rilke and the
Terrifying Beauty of Creating Anew, 2006

Shaun McNiff

When revisiting my brief 2006 essay, “The Terrifying Beauty of Creating Anew” for re-publication in *POIESIS*, I was struck by the provocation of the title joining beauty and terror, together with the recoil often felt regarding the latter in the current era. In the earlier journal issue, I was invited to write an introductory essay reflecting on the following passage in Rainer Maria Rilke’s *Duino Elegies*—“For beauty is nothing but the beginning of terror/ which we are barely able to endure, and it amazes us so...” Contributing authors were then asked to respond.

Stephen Levine conceived the idea for the journal forum and acknowledged the tension and questions Rilke's passage is apt to generate, and asked if it is possible to experience relationship between what may appear to be radically different or paradoxical conditions. In keeping with Nietzsche's affirmation of extremes and the necessary relationship between them—echoed by Rilke who said if his demons leave, his angels will too—I embraced the challenge then, and once again now.

Reflecting on what was published seventeen years ago, I realize how much of what I have written since was anticipated in this terse piece, which has often been the case with *POIESIS* inciting the articulation of new positions—and who knows what might be taking shape now in this *terrifying beauty* redux. I am grateful for these opportunities since ideas and positions reliably emerge through the writing process. As with art, the outcomes are not known in advance and develop through the discipline of creation. Invitations to create, as we know from our work in helping others, generate responses that would not otherwise happen.

The 2006 essay raises issues that were later explored in more depth—approaching artistic expression as a force of nature, as accessible as breath; the connection of resistance to expression and risk; the discipline of nonjudgmental witnessing of the expressions of others and perceiving depth on their surfaces vs. searching for hidden contents; and the interdependence of all experience, good and bad, within the ecology of creation (McNiff, 2015).

But I now realize the primary message of the earlier publication is revisioning beauty to include the most authentic, raw, evocative, and natural expression experienced consistently in the studio groups I lead. Paolo Knill, who often discussed beauty with me and in his teaching, felt the same. The idea of beauty is large and best kept free of fixed definitions. Here I am suggesting one of its “aspects” manifested in the work we do. Although beauty cannot be exclusively attached to terror, Rilke invites questioning of idealized assumptions about its definition...

I do not intentionally introduce terror, fear, or other discomforting states when inviting artistic expression and discourage content suggestions of any kind. As I have learned, the challenging conditions and their histories are unfailingly there for studio participants, and we do our best to hold, affirm, and appreciate what comes forth. I reliably feel a truly sacred awe and wonder when entrusted to witness these expressions that happen so naturally when people are given unconditional support and affirmation in authentically expressing themselves. These moments reinforce the superficiality of psychological and artistic typologies while demanding complete and compassionate attention to the uniqueness of what happens in the moment. When the discipline of presence permeates a studio group, a distinctly sacred and healing space is created.

I had not experienced this dimension before being introduced to the use of art in therapy. Over the years it grew progressively in the studio environment, and I looked beyond myself and my context for understanding. A complementary aspect of the beauty unique to individual persons and moments is that which transcends the personal and is arguably authentic and natural to the human community, now and in the past. We are moved and inspired by what others do, and have done, and respond in our infinitely unique ways which again define the making of art.

The current era's emphasis on affirming human differences has resulted in less attention being given to shared humanity. We can do both, and more, while appreciating the necessary interdependence of all things. Elinor Gadon (1925-2018) who I include in the 2006 article was a noted scholar of world cultural and art traditions who strongly supported our work with artistic expression in furthering well-being. As Elinor so effectively demonstrates, we study the larger landscape of history and worldwide practice to better understand, advance, and deepen what we do now. We are influenced and affirmed by what others have done in other times and places. Good ideas and practices have always eluded enclosure. The creative spirit perpetually pollinates and is defined as furthering new connections between previously separate realms—precisely the point we make in calling for a more inclusive and interconnected community of

endlessly variable art forms in healing (McNiff, 2023).

Mary Caroline Richards, in her celebrated book, *Centering in Pottery, Poetry, and the Person* beautifully asserts the autonomy of creative processes and access to them.

Ideas do not belong to people. Ideas live in the world as we do. We discover certain ideas at certain times. Someone enjoys a certain revelation and passes it around. A certain person's courage inspires a similar courage in others. People share their culture: there are enjoyable resemblances that make us feel like a community of fellow beings, fellow craftsmen—using a tradition and contributing our own impulses to it (1989, p. 28).

As I constantly advise students, I fear the suggestion, maybe with a certain terror, of others working just as I do. Study what others do, now and in the past, exploring inspirations and criticisms, and then practice in your unique ways, as I always strive to do, for better or worse. This is a defining feature of art, and perhaps beauty, which is authentic to you and connected to the larger human community.

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Finger Painting
5-30-22,
Digital painting
by Shaun McNiff

The Terrifying Beauty of Creating Anew

Shaun McNiff

People frequently feel real terror, what I call “art trauma,” when expressing themselves artistically with others. I have misgivings about the widespread use of the word “trauma” in our society today, so I do not apply this term lightly. I know there are many people who have a real terror, in the sense of acute fear, about showing themselves when dancing, singing, or showing a painting, and these conditions are linked to distinct wounds and past injuries that are vividly remembered today and embedded in their nervous systems.

Over the past thirty-five years, I have encountered the terror of artistic expression with such consistent intensity that I often say to myself, “Why do I persist in doing this?”

Even experienced artists can have shaky knees when they find themselves in situations that invite expressions outside the more circumscribed routines of their studios. It is the newness

and the uncertainty that arouses fear and emotional agitation. The things I do in my work with people are always geared toward the unfamiliar, and perhaps for some, threatening aspects of creation. I have learned that important and transformative processes tend to happen when we step outside habitual and comfortable areas. In this respect, experienced artists as well as complete beginners can be threatened when asked to create in totally new ways—painters responding to images through voice or movement; dancers using their voices while moving or moving in response to paintings.

As the convener of the creative process, the person who asks others to express themselves spontaneously in new ways, I can quickly become the suspicious provocateur, asking people to let go, *trust the process* (1998), and welcome whatever emerges.

If I get psychological here, I can say that people are projecting fears onto me as their leader, the one who is responsible for introducing the angst. This happens even when people really want to work with me and travel distances to do so. Since it occurs so regularly, there must be a necessity to it, a purpose, something that is much larger than me and them. I go through it year after year because it feels like an essential part of the process, necessary agitations that further new creation.

People tell me how there were times at the start of a group studio when they wanted to get in their cars and drive home. They say how important it was for them to stay, and how that moment of decision was a turning point in seeing the vital role that resistance plays in creative expression. “The resistance is the path I need to take,” a group member said to me. “It is telling me where I need to go.”

These struggles can be viewed as a vitally important element of transcending the self-absorption that places too much emphasis on what happens inside of us. James Hillman emphasized how emotions can possess and control, and we further this condition by perceiving

them as belonging to us, as our inner nature. He encouraged approaching them as *others* with whom we interact (1992, pp. x-xi). I say something similar when trying to help people relax with their expression—“Imagine yourself *being in creation* rather than having it all inside of you together with the attendant responsibilities and controls? Creativity is an energy that is in the world and our discipline is one of tapping into it, becoming part of it, opening, and letting go, being carried by the streams of creative energy that exist within an environment, and shaping the expression.” As soon as we see creativity as something that is both inside and outside of ourselves, a significant burden is lifted. But, like any other relationship, we have a reciprocal part to play in relating effectively to this creative process.

When I view creativity as a community and environmental force, there is more shared responsibility in terms of its cultivation. All things good and bad exist inside and outside people. In my experience, terror of expression is a condition of being stuck inside ourselves and afraid, sometimes realistically, of responses from external environments.

But all too often we become unnecessarily trapped within fears. There is a certain madness connected to this egocentrism when we possess emotions and forces, like creativity, that also belong to the world. The pathology is quite universal and common, and maybe this is part of its necessity. It afflicts us all, and when it strikes, we might heed the words of the poet Theodore Roethke:

When I go mad,
I call my friends by phone:
I am afraid they might think
they're alone.

In my studio groups we generally tend to get beyond the egocentric terror of expression by openly expressing our fears to one another, through a process like what Roethke describes. If the terrors of expression do not come out into the daylight in this way, their destructive pow-

ers amplify and become frantic and ultimately dangerous. I work hard at creating a safe environment where difficult and threatening feelings and images are welcomed as participants in a larger process, where all the players have something to offer, where the nasty figures may be the creative and even lovable agitators that we need, rather than adversaries that come to harm us.

The shift in the group experience happens when the terror is expressed authentically and creatively. These moments become distinctly sacred and beautiful because we show our most vulnerable qualities, the things that we fear the most, and trust the people around us to hold and witness expressions without judgment. As Stephen Levine says in his exploration of trauma transformation, we go back into the hurtful material and live it in a new way rather than repeat the wounds (2001). The group has a very important role to play in creating an environment where people feel support in taking these risks. I have always worked in groups because of the great power they have to generate this space of creation and transformation.

As with other potent medicines, the group can also cause harm and easily take a turn toward the destructive and truly terrifying things we may have experienced in the past and that we see being played out on a daily basis in the world. Leadership is a never-ending challenge for me and constant source of fascination in terms of the creative vitality and healing that groups can generate.

The sacred and transformative moments of communicating the most difficult aspects of our experience paradoxically happen when other people see truly deep beauty in our expression of them. It is galvanizing, even a bit redemptive, to have others connect beauty to areas where we might feel fear, shame, vulnerability, or distaste. Our views and self-perceptions are turned upside down and inside out. Nothing is what it used to be. Feelings of pain and terror generate expressions of beauty.

said to me in a conversation, "The transformative experience is one of going beyond the fear of Kali to a love of Kali." Gadon helped me realize how Kali embodies what might first seem to be the conflicting aspects of taking life and making it, terror and beauty. She writes of how "In loving her [Kali], with all of her contradictory ways, the devotee overcomes the fear of death" (p. 83). I see how this happens again and again in my work with the creative process.

The terror/beauty interplay is not always pleasant: in fact, its very power is typically based in upheaval. For example, anger is often the liberator of the most authentic expressions. Strong paintings often happen when I get frustrated with what I am doing and then erupt with forceful gestures through which previous difficulties and failed efforts make a necessary contribution to the final picture. Many of us are terrified by our anger, not realizing how wondrously creative it can be if we put it to use in the service of beauty.

When we express terror and fear and have it accepted and appreciated by others, we shift from a dread of raw expression to a love of it and an appreciation of its characteristics. In this context, beauty becomes authentic expression, what is uniquely ours and cannot be compared to anyone else's (Hufgard, 2001). We practice perceiving our creations as radiant manifestations of life, with awe, maybe truly experiencing them for the first time.

The perception of these qualities requires an absolute focus on witnessing others with a sense of sanctity. Artists need to do the same thing in viewing their own work. We all need to get out of ourselves to engage sensibilities and expressions more deeply, relaxing uncomfortable memories we often attach to ourselves with psychic glue. Experience is a river, and we can see ourselves being carried by it rather than trying to keep its sometimes-torrential flows controlled within ourselves.

Liberating expression is all about seeing the beauty outside and inside, lightening grips on obsessions and fears, and laughing at the madness of what we all too often do to ourselves.

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Pink Squares,
Digital painting,
Dorota Solarska

Sentir le monde et existence (Sensing the World and Existing)

Excerpts, with a book review by Brigitte Anor

Sentir le monde et exister
(english translation)
by Jacques Stielmann
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The *POIESIS* journal is pleased to present the new book by Jacques Stielmann in French, *Sentir le monde et exister* (Sensing the world and existing), published by Editions du Rebond, Geneva 2022.

The following contains a review of the book by Brigitte Anor, an English translation of the back cover of the book, and two extracts from the book with a Table. Note that the Table reprinted here is different from the one printed in the book. After the book was published, the author wanted to revise his formulation. The Table printed here is the revised version.



painting by Brigitte Anor

Review by Brigitte Anor

This book is an in-depth reflection on the concept of modality in art therapy with a look at early childhood. The research is based on the clinical experience of Jacques Stitelmann, psychotherapist and art therapist, and on the work of his team.

Modality concerns the way of existing, of expressing oneself, of feeling life and contact with the world. It is the dimension in which the subject deploys its existence in time and space in terms of corporeal-

ity, image, sound, word, flavor, smell, imaginary scenic fiction or quantity. This polyaesthetic experience is the dimension of the poietic field that we find in the human practices of play and creation and that human beings mobilize to engage in relationship, in particular, the therapeutic relationship.

If there are already studies on modality concerning the life of adults, the look at very young children in the book is innovative. This exploration enriches our understanding of the concept of modality by immersing us in the observation of the very first moments of existence. To this contribution in depth, the book adds a contribution in the breadth of the field by offering us new modalities such as those of flavor, smell and number.

Thanks to the cases presented, we understand how, during this first slice of life, the baby encounters the world: first according to the sense dimension (smell, taste, body and movement, sound, image, etc.) and how later the culturally-oriented elements are involved, elements such as words, numbers and stage play.

The book describes the impressive flow in which the young child opens up to the world, and the expressive flow, where he actively gives shape to the world by an activity of taking hold of it, of modeling the world on which he leaves his mark.

We observe how modal abilities develop and become more complex as the child grows. We note that it is possible, even frequently, to live each moment of existence in several modalities; however, it is not possible to experience them all at the same time. Everyone has favorites and more comfortable ones, oriented according to their personal life story or innate predispositions.

We also discover that, during the development of the modal capacities, sufferings can lodge themselves preferentially in one or the other modality, injuring or rigidifying it, while thus protecting the other modalities from pathological or other mechanisms that bring suffering.

This observation gives us important tools for the construction of the relationship between therapist and patient: it allows us to deploy a therapeutic alliance in the same modalities at the same time and, in particular, at the beginning of the therapeutic relationship, in living modalities, not hindered by suffering or pathology. This approach allows therapists to direct their listening, their presence and their interventions with sensitivity and respect for patients while stimulating the deployment of their own resources and helping the patient to transform his existential situation and increase his capacity for joy.

Jacques is someone I like to walk with when our paths cross on the globe. He doesn't talk much, but a single little thought on his part makes me see, taste, smell and appreciate landscapes that I thought I knew in a completely different way.

The encounter with his book also encouraged me, by observing the newborn child, to obtain tools to better understand the adult.

Reading this book is also a step back in time. Almost 30 years ago, Jacques and I were part of one of the many waves of students who listened with admiration to the words of Paolo Knill. We felt ready to enthusiastically apply these revolutionary methods to our own students, to our future patients and above all to ourselves. Personally and professionally, I enthusiastically embraced the concept of modality but without really asking myself the question of the genesis of these modal aptitudes.

Since then, I have met quite a few newborns: mine and then those of my children. How is it possible that I didn't think of putting on the babies around me the filter of the gaze that Paolo had taught me to put on other beings?

Thanks to the study of modalities, Jacques Stitelmann has opened my eyes and made me feel the mechanism by which we come into contact with the world and unfold into existence.

Back cover of the book

Sentir le monde et exister is a book about how to establish contact with the world and to deploy our existence in it. By alternating theory and practical examples, the author develops the concept of modality, a fundamental concept in art therapy and in therapeutic accompaniment through creative action.

The author first situates the place of art therapy in psychological care and existential development and then presents the concept of modality in the fields of art, philosophy, anthropology, psychology and art therapy. He also shares research conducted on the development of modalities in early childhood that allowed him to deepen and refine the concept of modality. He concludes by providing methodological elements for the therapeutic use of modalities.

The author presents the discoveries resulting from this research on the modalities, such as the impressive or expressive flows of the modalities, the stages of the development of the modal aptitudes, the existence of modalities more specifically related to sensoriality or culture, the distinctions between intermodality and multi-modality, the entrenchment of pathology in certain modalities, and the intermodal passages and gateways.

Two excerpts from the book:

1) The concept of modality (pp. 19 to 34)

Modality is the way of apprehending the world and of deploying oneself in the same existential gesture. It is thus a modality of existence. It gives form to the world and to oneself in

color, sound, gesture, odor, taste, word, scene or numerical dimensions. Here is an example taken from an account of a walk I took in the Swiss alps, in the Val d'Hérens, a few years ago:

I walk in a forest with undulating ground, the dirt path is covered in places with dry leaves or larch needles. Roots emerge from the ground here and there. I feel my breath as the path takes an upward slope, I feel the muscles in my thighs, the sweat that begins to bead on my temples and in my back. My attention is all directed to my body, the world exists at the edge of my body, fresh air temperature, muscle tension, my heartbeat. I am in the body modality, the world is corporeal, my existence is corporeal, it rises, it heats, it beats, it tends. It is hard or soft under my feet, cool between the skin and the air. Then the sweat flows from my temple to my cheek, then to the corner of my mouth. I feel the saltiness, the pungency, a little dusty. My attention then shifts to the flavor of modality, everything becomes flavor. The saltiness of my sweat, a slight lemon taste of the water I drank a few minutes ago, the memory of the sea water during a swim crosses my mind, then an aftertaste of the coffee drunk in the morning just before leaving. A smell catches my nostrils, a smell of burnt wood that I attribute to a fireplace placed between some stones on the edge of the path that continues to climb. I become a smell. A musky smell comes from the undergrowth, a fox. I recognize the smell, I leave the path and try to follow the animal trace, animal myself. Everything is smell, no more taste, no more body, I am caught by the smell of the world that opens, everything is only odor. Then I sense the pine on my right, the wild garlic below towards the small brook, the resinous needles which emanate with each of my steps. And always the twisting flow of the fox's scent. A dark spot in the hollow of a root. A burrow? I think I see a beige tuft, slightly orange, between some shrubs. I enter another world, a world of color, shadows, light, round or angular forms. I forget the smell a little, there is only the image which attracts me here and there. The loss of the musky smell signals me that I am going in the wrong direction. What to believe: the

image or the smell? In which world should I deploy myself?

A small cracking sound on my left twists my head. I enter the world of sound and look for the source of the light cracking. I stop, don't move anymore, try not to produce any sound myself. The rapid knocking of a spotted woodpecker against the trunk of a tree on the upper right, a chainsaw far behind me, barely audible, then again the small cracking sound on the lower left, more like a light crushing of dry twigs. All my attention is concentrated in this direction, eyes closed, body motionless. Ah, my heart beating too loudly. Chirpings just above, the wind stirring some branches and whispering. I am only sound, the world is only sound.

I imagine myself as a wild animal, as a primitive man, all senses open, a piece of the world open, identified with the world, bird, fox, larch needle, I even imagine the nakedness of my body in contact with the environment. An imaginary scenario suddenly unfolds in my mind, caught in the grip of the scenic and fictional modality. And if I lived 30,000 years ago, would I be a homo sapiens, a neanderthal, in which region of the world would I live?

A few words come to mind: primitive, past, fox, path...the world of words is mine for a few seconds.

Then I come back to myself, to sense my existence. Lost the musky smell. But several modalities seem to dance together in my consciousness of existence. As if I belong to several worlds at the same time. Then I wonder, where is the path I was taking a few minutes ago, or a few hours ago, I don't know very well anymore. I compare the slope, the trees, to

find it, I evaluate the distances: some tens of meters along the mountain-side, the three big trees below, the two rounded hills in the background. I measure, compare and count in order to find my way back, I am in the number modality.

I find my way back by feeling the quality of the ground under my foot, the soft earth, the needles of the coniferous trees, the slight slope that modulates the posture of my body, I find the body modality and continue my walk.

The book thus allows for a deeper understanding of the concept of modality, particularly with regard to its appearance and use in small children, between birth and the age of four. When we talk about modality in art therapy, we think mainly of adult patients and consultants, because the first authors who introduced this concept worked mainly with adults. There is an acknowledged lack of research about its appearance in childhood and its fine mechanisms.

Modality, a typically phenomenological concept, is still little theorized. It appeared in the field of expressive arts therapy under the pen of Paolo Knill, who speaks of expressive modality and especially of the modality of the imagination (Knill 1995, 2019). This is a concept that I have developed in several publications (Stitelmann 2009, 2015 a, 2015 b). In order to fully understand its significance in art therapy, it is interesting to study the linguistic charge of the word on the one hand and its history and usage in neighboring fields: psychology, philosophy, arts, on the other.

For the Larousse French dictionary, modality is the particular form of an act, a fact, a thought or an organization. It has as synonym the manner or the

circumstance. In linguistics, it is the set of forms allowing the speaker to indicate the way in which he/she considers the content of his/her statement. It is also the way in which the predicate is related to the subject of the proposition in which it appears. It is also a coordination of several sounds in a musical mode. We can deduce from this the idea that modality is the singular organization of a form, compared to other forms, and that it can be relative to the speaker.

For the CNRTL (CNRTL: *Centre national de ressources textuelles et lexicales*, a French organization that makes linguistic data available online), in homeopathy, modality is the set of signs that distinguish the characteristics of one remedy from others. In music, it is the character of a piece according to whether it belongs to a minor, major or other mode (medieval, Gregorian, ancient Greek). In philosophy, modality is the form of a predicate, according to whether it suits the subject or not. In metaphysics, modality can contain three ideas: first, it can be the essence of a concrete thing in different forms of existence, like light, which can be a spark coming out of a lighter, a star twinkling, the redness of the sun rising. Secondly, it can be the particular form in which a thing or phenomenon presents itself. Thirdly, it can be the particular conditions under which a thing is performed or realized.

For the *Encyclopædia Universalis*, the logico-linguistic notion of modality designates, in the classical sense, all the modifications of the meaning of a proposition by expressions allowing one to affirm this proposition as necessary, possible, impossible or contingent. "Modality" is also used in the broad sense to refer to any modification of the meaning of a proposition by the addition of adverbs.

The term "modality" differs according to the field in which it is used. In many scientific fields, it has different meanings, often morphological or procedural, sometimes referring to the speaker. In law, the modality expresses the modes of origin or realization of a commitment or an obligation. In statistics, it expresses values presented by an individual or by groups relative to a qualitative variable. In psychology, it expresses different modes of access to the

information available to a living being within the framework of sensory perception. In phenomenology, it expresses the existential dimension in which the encounter of a human being with the world takes shape.

All these meanings seem to me to express three major ideas:

-Actions can be carried out in particular ways.

Example: to validate a contract, one must specify points 1 to 6, then date and sign. Or, in the field of art therapy: to lead an art therapy workshop, one must first propose a warm-up, then an expressive, decentered moment and finally a moment of reflective speech.

-The proposals put forward by the speaker may be qualified by the same speaker according to his or her experience of the proposal. The qualitative aspects of these connotations are expressed by the term "modality."

Example: this apple is good. Or: do you want to do this action, or can you, or do you have the right to do it? Or: I always go on stage with stifling stage fright. Or, in the field of art therapy: when I meet with my patient, I try to be as open as possible.

-Each substance and each situation has intrinsic particularities and essential attributes that the term modality seeks to express. Modality would thus be what specifies a substance and differentiates it from others.

Example: this painting is blue. Or: this piece is a sonata. Or: ice is a solid modality of water, or: their relation is intimate; it unfolds in a fine and elaborated sound modality.

If these three meanings can concern art therapy, the first one is oriented on a technical and

procedural dimension which is not specific to our field of study.

The second is more interesting because it allows us to consider how the speaker, for example the patient or the creator, exists and experiences his or her production, the way in which he or she is turned towards the situation, the action, the relationship or the proposition expressed. This second meaning can also express the way in which the therapist, the spectator of the work, encounters the work as well as the partner in the relationship. We are here in a phenomenological posture; the object approached is considered as a vis-à-vis towards which we are turned and towards which we direct our attention and which is also oriented towards us with its own potentialities and its limits. The modalities can then be considered as being related to Husserlian intentionality, where the world and its objects exist only as a construction of our consciousness.

In the third sense, the modality presents the phenomenon in its own and singular dimensions and attributes. This allows us to apprehend the phenomenon in a sensitive way with the benefit of a living understanding of the phenomenon, of ourselves and of the other persons linked to it.

The concept of modality: some points of reference in the history of Western thought

Aristotle distinguishes two logical modalities: necessity and possibility. Classical logic distinguishes four of them, which are opposed to each other: possibility and impossibility, contingency and necessity. Each modality has given rise to the development of different logics of thought. Aristotle also distinguishes three ways or modalities of developing knowledge: *theoria*, which is an approach carried out in a conceptual and rational way; *praxis*, which is an approach carried out in practice and the act of doing; *poiesis*, which is carried out in creative action.

In his work *Ethics*, Spinoza differentiates between substance, attribute and mode. Subs-

tance is that which is self-defining, that which exists in the very act of existing, apart from an observer or the contact he may have with it. The attribute is what the intellect or the consciousness perceives or understands of the essence of a substance. The mode is the affection of a substance, the manner in which a substance shows itself, that is, that which is other than that substance, but which is relative to it. The attribute is the real modality of action and expression of the substance and not an interpretation made by the understanding using its own categories. The attribute constitutes and reveals the essence of the substance. For Spinoza, the essence of God, i.e. everything that exists, has existed or will exist, is to occur bodily, in the form of space, and mentally, in the form of thought. As the attributes distinguish the different modalities of substance, they define it in its different forms of appearance.

Spinoza radically distinguishes substance and attribute on the one hand, from mode on the other. The mode is only a momentary form of appearance of a thing. The material quality of a painting, its paint, its liquidity, is not part of the substance "painting," but defines a mode of it; whereas color is an attribute of painting, it defines its substance, it is a dimension of painting itself; there is no painting without color. For Spinoza, it is essential to differentiate, on the one hand, substance and attribute, and on the other hand, mode. To have a true and deep knowledge of things, the mode is secondary, while the attribute is essential. My definition of modality is close to Spinoza's definition of attribute (Spinoza, 1994).

Hans Prinzhorn, an author often located at the roots of Art Brut and art therapy, with his concept of *Gestaltung* expresses the notion of a vital impulse and an impulse to express the living, a will to be, a will to take shape, a vital openness, which unfolds in several ways, according to different expressive modalities: geometrization, physiognomization, symbolization, decoration (Prinzhorn, 1922).

Erwin Straus, in his book *The sense of the senses* (Straus, 1935), makes the difference between the study of the neurological regions and sensory organs which allow us to have

sensations and the feeling as modality "to be in the world," to exist. He differentiates on this occasion the hearing, action of an organ of the senses, from the listening, which is the existential orientation of the human being towards the sound phenomena. There would exist for this author two great modalities of existence, the first, pathic, and the second, reflexive and linguistic. With the concept of the pathic, Straus underlines the similarity of human feeling and animal feeling. The latter is presence, expression, action, attraction or repulsion, it feels without reflexivity.

For Straus, it is with the appearance of language that the feeling will sometimes extract itself from the pathic to lead to a reflection carried out on the world, on itself and on the feeling itself. Whereas in the pathic, one is, one feels, one does not feel sensations; with the acquisition of language the having of the sensations develops.

For Straus, existential experience is above all a question of feeling. Psychic illness corresponds to a lack or a distortion of the feeling; the treatment of this illness consists in the experimentation and the deployment of the feeling more than in the linguistic comprehension of the disorder or in a treatment of the psychic, chemical and physical dimensions of the bodies.

Straus says that modality corresponds to two slightly different notions: on the one hand, the form that the encounter with the world takes, the feeling or sensing of the world, according to the sensory dimension in which it unfolds (sound, taste, image...) and, on the other hand, the two forms of pathic or linguistic existence, which are two different ways of existing. In art therapy, when we underline the two major times of an intervention, expression in the creation and reflection in the time of reflective speech, we underline the use of the two modalities, pathic or linguistic, of the experience of living. When we speak about the modalities as I do in this text, we speak about the pathic or reflexive aspects when they are deployed in sense forms of different quality (sound, taste, gestures, images).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, speaking about different languages, goes on to develop a reasoning similar to the one of Straus, by underlining that the deep comprehension of a phenomenon does not result so much from reflection on it and its rational explanation at a distance, but that it emerges rather in a movement of the body, an expression of this phenomenon, lodged at the level of language in which it takes place (verbal, sound, gestural, pictorial). This process lets be born, in the same gesture, the world and oneself. For Merleau-Ponty, verbal language, anchored in the cultural sphere compared to the imagined language, sound or taste, comprises a particular difficulty because it is easy to express there a spoken word, a word already formed, and more difficult to express there a speaking word, a word which lets be born and which opens the world as well as the perception and the transformation of oneself at the time when it is said (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 1964).

To give form to a speaking word in the word modality is the very function of poetry, says the writer Yves Bonnefoy (Bonnefoy, 2010). The different languages that Merleau-Ponty talks about are close to the concept of modality presented in this text.

Later, Henri Maldiney is going to deploy and to deepen the phenomenological glance in an assemblage of the pathic of Straus, of the *Gestaltung* of Hans Prinzhorn and of the lived corporality and the different languages of Merleau-Ponty (Maldiney, 1973, 1993, 2003). Without calling them modalities, this author also approaches primarily the formal qualities of the phenomenon in connection with the various senses, on the fact that they are not studied or analyzed physical senses, but lived and experienced ones.

In his research on the parent-baby relationship, Daniel Stern has emphasized the relational adjustment of the partners which is based on a common or complementary rhythmicity and on the encounter carried out in common fields of experience: sounds, gestures, smells, images... (Stern, 2003 a and 2003 b). These common fields of experience correspond to the modalities as I define them.

David Le Breton, in his book, *La saveur du monde* (The Flavor of the World), whose approach is situated between anthropology and phenomenology, underlines the strong cultural dimension of sensoriality, which does not depend only on the physical and biological capacities of the body which feels, but which is anchored in the cultural sphere which predetermines what is to be felt. While studying different sensory dimensions, he explores them insofar as they are pre-modeled by the subject's culture and insofar as they participate in shaping his or her sense of existence (Le Breton, 2016). This is for me one of the essential aspects of the concept of modality, which does not equate to a bodily, material or cultural dimension, but concerns all these levels of reality as lived experience.

In psychoanalysis, since Melanie Klein and Anna Freud, many practitioners have added other means of expression to that of verbal speech to carry out the psychoanalytical process, notably with children, who have not yet sufficiently developed the reflexive capacities linked to verbal language, which is too abstract to think and express themselves with, or with adult patients who do not have sufficient capacities for verbal language because of their psychic illness. Thinking in images, sounds, gestures and dramatic staging has a recognized place in therapeutic tools.

In a psychoanalysis impregnated with phenomenology, Donald Winnicott developed the "squiggle," a method of participatory patient-therapist drawing, to establish a relationship based on the sensitivity of thought in images and in play. This method involves a bodily, pictorial, and scenic presence of both partners (Winnicott, 1975), (Stitelmann, 2015).

In an existential experience-oriented psychoanalytic school, Margaret Mahler's work in the 1970s showed that the earliest strata of a child's psychological development are rooted in sensoriality as a foundation for the development of relationships, thoughts, and emotional life (Mahler, 1980).

Françoise Dolto, psychoanalyst of the Lacanian movement who studied particularly the

child's life, estimates that all is language, that all expresses and can symbolize and connect, whether it be the words, the gestures, the sounds or the images. This author particularly underlined the bodily anchoring of the verbal word, its bodily knotting (Barral et al., 1999).

Marion Milner, psychoanalyst and painter, has emphasized the therapeutic importance of using non-verbal expression, such as drawing, painting or symbolic play, in order to develop a thought in image, capable of reviving the capacity for symbolization which is hindered by the psychological illness. In order to go beyond the mind-body division and to consider the phenomenon of the creative experience in itself, Milner also defined the use of a malleable medium, both materially found in the world and in the psychic material of the therapist's mind. This malleable medium allows the psychoanalytic relationship to unfold and offers the symbolization process sufficiently transformable material on which to act (Milner, 1976, 1988). For Milner, it is the most archaic parts of the psyche that are mobilized in pictorial thinking, whereas verbal thinking mobilizes the most elaborate strata of the psyche. This is why she believes that the most serious disorders, rooted in the oldest levels of the psyche, benefit from being treated by non-verbal relational means.

Gisela Pankow, a psychoanalyst also inspired by phenomenology, has facilitated the patient's expression and encounter with non-verbal tools such as modeling clay, a concrete and transformable material that can elaborate and transform the problems linked to the patient's most archaic bodily and mental experiences (Pankow, 1993).

More recently, Antonino Ferro has developed a method of child psychoanalysis based on creative action carried out in different modes, forming his thought from the theories of Wilfred Bion (Bion, 1979), Umberto Eco and phenomenology. For Ferro, the game, the drawing and the dream are anchored in the same existential matrix and in the relational field (Ferro, 2000).

René Roussillon, following Marion Milner's lead, theorized the concept of malleable medium, useful for doing therapeutic work related to the early phases of psychic development,

when verbal abstraction capacities are weak and existence unfolds primarily in a bodily, material, and concrete manner (Brun & Roussillon, 2013, 2014).

In the same line of what is readily referred to as the Lyon school of therapeutic mediations, the different senses are explored therapeutically through the use of different expressive mediums. But it is clearly a question here of mediality rather than modality, as we shall see later, that is to say, of an approach above all psychological which uses the material as an intermediary and support for the movements of psychic growth. Most of it happens on the psychic level, which is activated through the senses in contact with materials (Brun and Roussillon, 2013, 2014), (Brun, 2011).

2) The concept of modality in art therapy (pp. 35-46)

In expressive arts therapy, Paolo Knill, art therapist, musician and community art choreographer, introduced the concept of modality or modality of the imagination, to underline a particularity of expressive arts therapy, which is to allow the patient to express himself and the patient-therapist relationship to unfold in different dimensions. Knill first proposed considering six modalities, linked to the arts and sensory capacities: movement, sound, image, word, act, rhythm (Knill, 1995, 2019). He differentiates these modalities from the arts practiced in art therapy, asserting that each art, as a cultural phenomenon, emphasizes one or the other modality or intermodality, and cannot be practiced without one or the other. In personal conversations, we agreed that rhythm was not a modality in itself, as it was present in all modalities as a form of appearing. Similarly, he followed my proposal to add the modalities, flavor and smell, in order to integrate these sensory dimensions not yet valued in his theoretical model of modalities. Modality is for Knill a phenomenological concept, he speaks about the modality of the imagination, the imagination being the singular form of existence of the artistic and creative moment.

Other art therapists speak of expressive modalities in a weakly conceptualized or confused way, considering this term as a synonym of mediality or art. Their reflections are of little interest

in the elaboration of my research.

In my book *Formes et modalité (Forms and Modality)*, I recounted exploratory research on the concept of modality in art therapy, which helped develop a stronger conceptual soundness for it (Stitelmann, 2015). Here is an example for understanding the concept of modality in art therapy:

A patient has painted a life-size silhouette on a sheet of cardboard, standing in front of the wall to be painted. He comments on his painting, pointing out the light and flowing material of the paint on the limbs, while it is thick on the trunk of the figure. Our attention is turned to the pictorial qualities of the silhouette, our relationship passes by the perception of the quality of the colored paint, more or less liquid or thick. Then he comments on the brownish red painted in the center of the abdomen, he talks about the density of the color, he likes this density, a strength, a certainty, that he connects to the density he would like to possess in his feeling of existence. He says he feels himself rather like the limbs of the character, almost transparent, almost non-existent. Then he takes a step back, gets closer, tries to imitate the posture of the painting, mimics the dense red by clasping his hands in front of his abdomen, then mimics the floating, swinging, dangling arms. Our meeting is then carried out in the body modality, on which we focus our attention. I feel his words in my belly, in my arms, whereas previously I felt them through my eyes, in colors, in images. From a quality of color, I pass to a quality of body posture, of body density.

It is only if I can feel and exist in the modality in which the patient carries out his expressive deployment that I can accompany him and that he can feel understood or accompanied. In this example, not only did he and his work unfold between image modality and body modality, but my own feeling, as well as our relationship, did the same.

The object and the subject are born together in the unforeseen encounter that takes shape

in a modality. Thus modality cannot be limited to the sensoriality of the subject, nor to the materiality of the object, nor to art and culture. Modality is the dimension in which the meeting between the world and the subject unfolds, it is the dimension in which the subject unfolds its existence. The modality is the dimension of the poietic field.

I propose to study modality as an attribute of existence, in Spinoza's sense, that is to say, as it concerns both the way in which an event unfolds, the way in which we turn towards it, the way in which we experience it, the way in which it meets us and the way in which it participates in making us feel we exist and transforming us.

Living is a polyaesthetic experience. Each human being has a natural access to all the modalities, it is possible, even common, to live each moment of existence in several modalities; however it is not possible to experience them all at the same time. As the examples given above show, in a single moment, only one, or even two or three modalities at most, are experienced in the foreground, the others are pushed into the background of attention.

When several modalities are experienced in a connected way, we can speak about intermodality. Intermodality is a quite particular notion which is raised by the total arts, such as the opera or the cinema, because they are given in several modalities at the same time. Therefore they can be difficult to access, but they have a great aesthetic power. Here is another example to grasp the concept of intermodality, taken from the account of a museum visit:

Looking at a painting in a museum, I can see its colors, a wide spectrum and a blue-green dominance, the rhythm of its strokes, nervous, short and disparate on the side, longer, wider and vertical in the middle of the painting, I can recognize figures, a man, a child, a cloud. My memory, my imagination, my capacity of emotional resonance unfold from the visual contact with the painting. In this moment, a few seconds, a few minutes, perhaps a little more, I live in the image modality, the world and I exist

in the form of an image. I no longer feel my body standing in front of the painting, I no longer hear the sounds of the floor creaking as other museum visitors walk beside me, I no longer smell the encaustic or the trees in bloom in the park in front of the museum, I no longer perceive the taste of the thyme-scented fish I ate for lunch, I no longer perceive the guard who calmly strolls through the space dressed in his uniform as the flow of visitors pours from room to room. I live only in colors, in lines, in rhythms of spaces in connection with the painting. Memories emerge from the depths of my memory, images, resonances of childhood or youthful landscapes associated with affects of that time, which I feel present in the painting.

But I can also leave this image modality and experience the same painting from the musical instrument, a lyre, that the child in the painting carries without playing it, yet I hear the sounds of the strings in my imagination, and I also hear the birds whistling in the grove of trees in the background of the painting as well as in the park that adjoins the museum, I am disturbed by the creaking of the floor of the other visitors, a little girl is crying, her voice reminds me of my daughter, as a child, a few years ago, and I no longer see the colors of the painting, nor its rhythmic arrangement of lines, dots and colored surface. I perceive the external and internal world in terms of sounds, of sound quality, of rhythm, of low and high tones, of resonance.

With each change of modality, I have the feeling of entering another world, a parallel world. The external and internal environments change while being the same, they are similar but they are not the same; they are experienced differently, as if they belonged to other realities. Being immersed in one modality excludes

the possibility of the other modalities for a more or less longer time, a few seconds, a few minutes. By mastering an intermodal movement, it is possible to pass from one world to another according to one's will or desire and to remain there for a longer or shorter time.

It is difficult for non-musicians to hear several melodic lines played at the same time in a symphony. It is difficult for people who write little to perceive the rhythm of the words, the meaning of the words, and the sound texture of the words all when reading a poem at the same time. It is difficult for a non-actor to feel the voice and body of an actor on stage, the character, and the person of the actor at the same time. The work takes us in on several levels, but paying attention to several levels at once is difficult. It is even more difficult to perceive at the same time aspects of the same phenomenon that can be extended into several modalities, such as the musky smell of the fox at the edge of a softwood-lined dirt road, the nuanced greens of the hardwoods, the sounds of different birds, while thinking of primitive life. Do we often remember the music of a film? And yet it strongly orients the emotional climate of the characters and the scenes given in the image.

Sometimes, doors open between the modal worlds, new bridges appear. In the example given earlier, the colorful garment of a visitor passing by my side takes me out of the world of sounds and launches me back into the world of color and the world of the image; the rhythm of the little girl's crying reminds me of the rhythms of the tree trunks in the background of the painting, and a door opens to the world of the image again; the walk of a woman passing by my side traces a wavy line that moves in space, and a door opens to the world of bodily movement. At each door, I have the relative freedom to pass into the other world or to remain in the one I am in.

If each human being has the capacity to travel and develop in all these worlds, each one has preferred and easier ones, oriented according to his personal life history or innate predispositions. I am sensitive to the world of images, I am particularly sensitive to colors, to

the rhythm of lines, to the unfolding of spaces in front of me; I am also sensitive to the world of sounds, a noise that is too loud offends me, an involuntary sound can appear to me as music, the voice of an interlocutor appears to me in its range as much as in the meaning of the words used; I am also sensitive to the tastes and smells that play at the edge of my feeling of existence. On the other hand, words given in a foreign language struggle to touch me and the grasp of their meaning is difficult for me.

Each of us can encounter the world in all these modalities and “specialize” in some of them, developing particularly a capacity to exist in them. This of course also applies to therapists and their patients.

The classical therapies are essentially deployed in the word modality, privileging the reflexive approach; the arts-therapies add other existential modalities, it is one of their main particularities, and privileges the creative and expressive existential action, to which they add in a second time a reflexive complement.

If each one of us possesses the capacities to exist and to develop in all the modalities, if each one of us has developed some of them more than others, the clinic shows it with insistence, the suffering of living is lodged in a priority way in one or the other modality, leaving the other modalities more or less free to the enjoyment of living. This idea will be developed further on. For example, during psychosomatic disorders, the patient can feel his suffering bodily whereas the sound, the image or the word can be free for his existential deployment and for carrying out the therapy. In another example, a paranoid delirium strongly disturbs the scene, and word modalities become unavailable for therapy, whereas the image or sound modalities can be accessible for being in relationship, for creating and for unfolding life.

It is now useful to differentiate between the modality of mediality, sensoriality and art, each of which has different points of view, concepts and vocabulary.

Table: Modality, art, sensoriality and mediality: a comparative table

MODALITY Existential life		ART Cultural level	MEDIUM, MEDIALITY Material of the world, tools	SENSORIALITY Body capacities
Principally sensory-based	Smell	Perfumery Beauty, gastronomy, aromatherapy, fragrance, smoke	Distillation, bottle, diffuser, dispenser, essence	Smell
	Taste	Cooking Gastronomy, tea, wine, beer, chocolate, tasting	Food, plants, smoke, baking, distilling, Containers, Utensils	Taste
	Body	Dance Rhythm, gymnastics, mime, circus, martial arts	Body, space, floor, mirror, props, partner	Touch, proprioception, synesthesia, movement
	Image	Painting Sculpture, photography, video, collage, comics, fashion, sewing, land art, engraving, digital	Brushes, pencil, pigment, colored paste, paper, wood, stone, tools, apron	Sight
	Sound	Music Concert, song, nursery rhyme, DJ-ing, sound effects	Instruments, breath, air, voice, silence, score, resonance, noise	Hearing
Principally culturally-based	Word	Literature Poetry, story, novel, fable, myth, scenario, slam, rap, song	Language, paper, pencils, books, body, computer, voice	Culture, sight, hearing
	Scenic play	Theater Performance, clown, puppet, mime, mask, festival, circus, event, ceremony, parade	Roles, characters, scenario, playing space, public, lighting, props, costumes, make-up, sets	Culture, sight, hearing, image, body
	Number	Calculation Mathematics, algebra, geometry, perspective, golden ratio, anamorphosis	Concept, paper, pencil, computer, numbers, operations	Culture, sight, hearing, image

These are four angles of approach frequently used to think about art therapy. Arts, sensoriality, mediality, modality, are based on different levels of reality and on different conceptual backgrounds.

The Arts are part of the cultural level, they are codified by the cultural field, have their own concepts and methodologies, a financial market and a logic oriented on aesthetic innovation measured by the yardstick of art history and its theories. The child with a lyre in my previous example takes on a very different place and meaning if it is a 15th century European painting or a 19th century painting, or if it comes from ancient Greece, pre-Columbian Latin America or is by a 20th century outsider artist. Art therapists from the artistic professions like to use this approach, which helps to consider the creative process in itself, and finds its place with ease in the orientations, social link, promotion, rehabilitation, pedagogical, cultural and artistic realms. The creations are willingly offered to the public, often restricted, they are even sometimes sold. On the other hand, this angle of approach is generally excluded or minimized in the therapeutic, psychotherapeutic, care or supervision orientations.

Mediality invites us to focus on the material, the non-human aspect used to carry out a creative process or to develop a caring relationship. Each material and each tool has its own potential, its own limits, its own malleability; it is interesting to know them well in order to approach them judiciously in art therapy. Cutting, gluing, sawing, nailing, painting with a wolf or pig hair brush, applying color to paper or wood, plucking a string or banging a drum, reading poetry or telling a story, dancing on the floor or jumping, all of these allow us to experiment with very different acts and resonances. Art therapists who come from arts or crafts backgrounds are particularly sensitive to mediality. If it offers a formidable means of sensing the qualities of materials, the risk is to consider the artistic dimension

of art therapy as a simple materiality or tool, which would be intended above all to accomplish a process of another, more important order, psychological for example, which indeed sometimes benefits from being mediated by these materials and tools. The risk incurred is then to devitalize the power of the potentials and the limits of the materials in the process of creation and to preserve only a utilitarian use of it.

Sensoriality concerns the capacities of the human body to feel the world as well as possibly the psychological and anthropological resonances related to these sensorial dimensions. In situations involving sensory disabilities, it is useful to consider this angle of approach, which is frequently put forward by art therapists relying on the medical or psychological model. I remember a blind friend of mine who described to me what she “saw” of her environment, she visualized distances, sizes and materials of human bodies or materials that surrounded her by situating herself in space in a bodily, acoustic and visual way. The risk of this angle of approach is to understand the relationship to the world as well as the human being by selecting physiological capacities detached from the global experience of living.

The phenomena of creation and of human and societal transformation clearly exceed the sensory, material or cultural levels. As Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Erwin Straus showed us a long time ago, these angles of approach risk denaturing, devitalizing, the human phenomena, whereas we must approach them in a more holistic way, by respecting their singularity and their living dimension. This is why the angle of approach by the modalities is interesting and essential.

Modality, the subject of this book, concerns the way of existing, of expressing oneself, of feeling life and contact with the world. It is a phenomenon of the arts and personal development. This angle of approach has its own vocabulary and is particularly apt to illuminate in a respectful way the artistic phenomena associated with the phenomena of human transformation, whether developmental or therapeutic.

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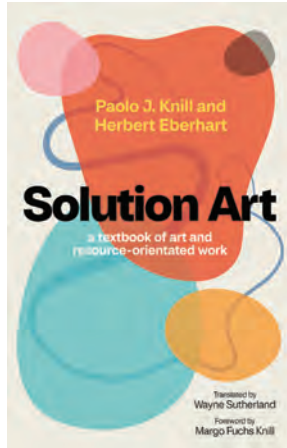
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Solution Art

Foreward by Margo Fuchs Knill
and an Excerpt from the Book by
Paolo J. Knill and Herbert Eberhart



Solution Art: A Textbook of Art- and Resource-Oriented Work
by Paolo J. Knill and Herbert Eberhart
Translated by Wayne Sutherland
Jessica Kingsley Publishers, London 2023
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Editor's note:

The *POIESIS* journal is proud to introduce to English-speaking readers this foundational work in the field of expressive arts. Paolo Knill and Herbert Eberhart, long-term collaborators, have presented an overview of the method of expressive arts in the fields of therapy, supervision, coaching, and consulting. As most of our readers know, expressive arts methodology focusses on finding solutions rather than dwelling on problems. As Paolo Knill often said, if all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail. An approach that focusses on the problems and the

suffering of the client, rather than looking for solutions based on their resources, will often get stuck going over and over again what has happened in the past (a condition that we can call being “trauma-tranced”). However, solutions can never be anticipated in advance through rational analysis. Rather, the authors maintain, it is only by the use of the imagination that new possibilities can emerge. In the expressive arts, the imagination is set free by turning away from focusing on the problem, by decentering through imaginative play. In this way, new and surprising possibilities may emerge.

In this book, excellently translated by Wayne Sutherland, an EGS doctoral graduate, Knill and Eberhart provide a presentation of the theoretical and practical foundations of the resource-oriented and solution-focused method of expressive arts work. *Solution Art* is a companion piece and a further clarification of *Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy: Toward a Therapeutic Aesthetics*, by Knill, S. Levine and E. Levine. In our opinion, the two books should be read together.

We have chosen two excerpts from the book that we consider particularly relevant. The first is the “Foreword,” by Margo Fuchs Knill, Paolo’s long-term partner and collaborator, which gives her view of the work as a whole. The second, titled “The Origins,” is a chapter from the later part of the work, which presents the theoretical framework of the solution-focused method of expressive arts in its origins and in comparison to other ways of working.

We hope these excerpts will motivate readers of the POIESIS journal to read *Solution Art* in its entirety. We are confident they will find in it a perspective that will be invaluable for both their understanding and their practice of expressive arts in whatever field in which they may work.

SOLUTION ART

Foreword by Margo Fuchs Knill

Yes
must be more than an option.

*Let's get up, every day
and hold the Yes
in front of us
a shield of kindness
I am here with you,
my sister, my brother,
my global family.*

*Let's get up, every day
walk through the fields
without kicking the grass.*

*Let's give each other
another chance
and act differently
replace the "must" with "we can."*

*How else could we look spring
gracefully into her blossoming eyes?*

–Margo Fuchs Knill

Let's face it—we are challenged worldwide by a pandemic crisis, still. What used to work doesn't work anymore, and the new direction is up in the air. Fear and uncertainty are spreading due to economic and social disruptions. Job loss, poverty, and mental health issues are on the rise: from depression to insomnia to increased levels of alcohol and drug use to violence in families. On the other side, times of heightened challenge are also periods of heightened creativity, innovation, and modernization. In *Solution Art (Lösungskunst)*, Paolo Knill and Herbert Eberhart present how their art- and rhetoric-based methodology enables struggling people to have a voice. Knill and Eberhart's professional coaching, consulting, and supervisory work, based on a theory of practice, empowers clients to have a say in their own development and build their capacity to generate new solutions.

We can proudly say that the field of expressive arts is established globally, in theory and in practice. To date, many schools and practitioners are well trained in applying the arts within mental health practices and institutions, international communities and organizations, conflict transformation and peace-building initiatives, sustainable development, and climate action movements.

The content—the arts—is crucial; however, maybe even more so is the professional change agent's ability to be skillful and efficient in communicating what s/he is going to do and why. Knill and Eberhart emphasize that this takes more than being expressive and passionate about creating with the arts. Professionals have an ethical and esthetic responsibility towards their clients, their artistic process, and their product. Without a depth of understanding about this responsibility, expressive arts practitioners risk, albeit unintentionally, causing harm to those they aim to help. A phenomenological and resource-oriented analysis allows a multisensory approach to meaning-making rather than reducing the artwork to a "problem-tranced" reflection. This demands nonjudgmental, inclusive language when facilitating a session, a rhetoric that invites new perspectives and validates the diversity and uniqueness of each individual, team, or community seeking help.

This book is about both the verbal *and* nonverbal levels of expressive arts, for they are intertwined. Language is power; artistic expression is power. Moving forward, the only chance we have to successfully address personal, communal, organizational, institutional, and global crises is to evolve how we communicate about them; how we communicate *through* them. The authors serve as role models, presenting readers with experiential wisdom about how to approach the development of linguistic skills *while* working with the arts. They use language in an explorative, enriching, even orally traditional way, yet with scientific precision. Their style helps to avoid theoretical jargon as well as lengthy, over-simplified lists of dos and don'ts.

Even though an expressive arts professional focuses on works of art and the process of creating, there is no way around language. Language matters—even more so when you tap into nonverbal realms. Professionals cannot avoid cultivating clear, clean, and supportive language when facilitating sessions. Doing so is vital in protecting the emerging work of art from what Shaun McNiff calls “image abuse.” Even though the expressive arts methodology is different from a “talking cure,” it, too, takes well-educated verbal skills to make a session effective. Knill and Eberhart thus introduce the notion of “linguistic enrichment.” They show how change agents can refrain from platitudes and generalizations by employing an explicit, differentiated, rich language that also strengthens esthetic, sensorial resonance. Different use of language creates a different reality for the client, a reality nourished by life quality.

I must admit, I have been skeptical about whether a translation of *Lösungskunst* could relay the dense and lively content of the book. Gratefully, I am taken by how this translation makes the original content shine forth sharply, fundamentally capturing its novelty of thought and the beautiful simplicity of argumentation. The translator, Wayne Sutherland, masterfully carves out the different rhetorical styles. *Solution Art* is more than a translation of something previously written; it is a new *oeuvre*, an artwork in and of itself, because it captures the dynamic, dialogical spirit of the authors.

Solution Art is an inspiring hands-on textbook that offers a thorough foundation for further research. The book is not only *about* a solution-based language and resource-oriented use of expressive arts; it *embodies* a theory of practice by sharing lived examples of dialogue, discourse, case study, and lecture style. The reader is even welcomed to “attend” a passionate, interdisciplinary symposium facilitated by Knill and Eberhart. They show the professional and the layperson alike methods for activating potential and gaining new insights. Their concept of *decentering* is precise yet able to describe more than just technique, grounding in arts-based mindfulness the notion of *the third*, and artistic co-creation.

It is precisely the hybrid linguistic style of this textbook that propels a forward-thinking urgency. *Solution Art* speaks to the academically interested person as well as to the practitioner who wants to see it work in practice. It connects with anyone who loves to excavate the expressive arts field’s multiple foundations, critically reflect on its philosophical underpinnings, and advance the work further. *Solution Art* satiates the reader who seeks a shortcut to understanding the definitions of expressive arts key terminology.

Humans have always turned to something else, a third force, when they find themselves at a dead end. Knill and Eberhart unlock creative thinking. They emphasize that understanding the question itself already gives answers. I am convinced that our contemporary world—especially as we learn from the Covid pandemic crisis—needs this kind of thoughtful balance between encouraging innovative advancement and establishing a well-considered theory of practice. This open-ended textbook helps the relatively new field of expressive arts to stay fresh and exciting.

Paolo Knill is known for his strong ability to “break circles,” let go of what is no longer working, and let the new in—“to not calcify,” as he would say. Herbert Eberhart is known for his endlessly youthful curiosity, for never being satisfied with an easy answer, for always seeking

the deeper, truer questions. *Solution Art* is about more than “searching and finding solutions.” In this book, we learn about methods that allow sustainable change by letting go of seeking it.

Schaffhausen, December 2021

From Chapter 8: The Origins

8.4 Focus on Solutions and its criticism of other methods

People need patterns of order to deal with the world and the large number of impressions. These are patterns of action, patterns of thought, and patterns of emotional reactions. This statement is valid for the individual human being in everyday life and for his handling of problems. It also applies to science and religion.

Every pattern runs the risk of becoming absolutized and rigid. Absolutized patterns produce tyranny, rigid “law and order” situations, or fundamentalism. Rigid patterns are a basis on which pathology and destruction thrive.

Based on its conviction that perspectives other than the usual ones are possible in every situation, Focus on Solutions explicitly or implicitly relativizes and criticizes procedures that focus on an unquestionable “scientificity” of their approach.

The theoretical basis of systems theory and constructivism opens the Focus on Solutions approach to a diversity of perspectives. Systems theory also guards against using so-called “typical” Focus on Solutions questions as a method in a recipe-like manner. In contrast, the basic attitude of the professional person and her flexibility in shaping the process is more critical. Thus, Focus on Solutions strongly criticizes standardized, engineer-like approaches. On the contrary, it emphasizes the importance of surprises and strives to be attentive to them.

Structuralism, dominant in the social sciences and medicine in the Western world until recently, seeks the “actual” beneath or behind the surface of things. Therefore, counselors and therapists are urged not to be seduced by what is presented but to search “deeper.”

The Focus on Solutions working approach criticizes this structuralist position, as is prevalent in many psychoanalytical approaches, for example. It is strongly oriented to what clients themselves present; it takes clients “at their word.” It moves on the “surface” and strives for what is revealed to be presented in a phenomenological way as concretely and richly as possible.

This makes Focus on Solutions work very sensitive to language. In the verbal expression, the frame of thinking of the human being is revealed, or more generally and philosophically expressed: the nature of one’s being-in-the-world. This criticizes the everyday behaviorist view that a problem is primarily about facts. From a Focus on Solutions perspective, it is not about the facts but about the meanings these facts have for a particular person.

The way a person expresses himself manifests the meanings he attaches to a thing, a person, or a circumstance. In the counseling situation, verbal expression plays a prominent role in addition to facial expressions and gestures. If one speaks in a different way about a known object, the connection between meaning and expression can now be used in the opposite way: “If I change the (verbal) expression, the meaning will change as well.”

This connection is leveraged in the Focus on Solutions approach. By asking a client about new, unfamiliar aspects of a situation, the counselor elicits corresponding responses from the client. The meaning of the situation in question changes for the client.

This indirectly criticizes methods that bring to the fore the holistic experience of situations in the here and now. Focus on Solutions counters this view by saying that a change in verbal expression or, more generally, a change in behavior also changes the experience, which ultimately also changes what has been experienced as fact. This applies to the present and the future

as well as to the past. The connection, however, is not a mechanical or linear one. The changed articulation triggers an irritation that has the potency to change the experiential quality of the memory, as well as the concrete experience. The nature of the change, however, cannot be directly influenced. If the quality of experience of a remembered, actual, or even expected event has changed, then in effect this event itself changes as well.

However, the most obvious and probably most important criticism is the view that in a problematic, difficult, or even pathological situation, the problem, difficulty, or pathology must be dealt with directly.

The fact that this attitude is so dominant and can be found almost everywhere is probably due not only to the underlying linear-mechanistic treatment logic (record and evaluate problem; determine cause(s); find corresponding antidote; use antidote and “finish” problem; conclude), but also to the fascination that something problematic exerts on almost all people. Problems are annoying, unpleasant, or disruptive. So what could be more obvious than to get rid of them as quickly as possible? However, problems can also be so oppressive and burdensome that they force people to deal with them intensively. And sometimes problems are so bizarre, strange, and incomprehensible that it is self-evident that dealing with them should be left to an expert. All this makes problems interesting and attractive, especially for people who are not directly affected by them.

The basic premise of Focus on Solutions is that the solution—or, rather, the solving—is independent of the problem. It is not the problem itself that needs to be addressed, but the exceptions and the client’s strengths in general. This seems strange to many at first sight compared to what has been said above. And the conclusion from this—that the client is, in a certain sense, the expert in dealing with the problem—is unfamiliar and by no means attractive, especially for those who are in a difficult situation.

With this implication, Focus on Solutions criticizes the traditional medical approach. Traditionally, the counselor (medical doctor) sits in the expert chair: "After all, he has studied it." In the traditional medical model, which is by no means unique to medicine, the solution is sought outside the client and outside the relationship that has been established between the professional and the client. Either the solution sits in the mind of the counselor (e.g., in his experiences, his knowledge), or it sits in an abstract, higher-level system (e.g., in the science of the relevant field).

The disruption that Focus on Solutions makes in this regard is radical. It seeks the solution in the client, in her experiences, in her experience, and in her (fellow human) environment. And it shapes the counseling relationship in such a way that solutions can show up.

In this context, the counselor's diagnostic efforts take on a new significance. A provisional process- and context-related diagnosis takes the place of an ascertaining and thus often fixing and labeling diagnosis. In many situations, such diagnoses could instead be called feedback. Feedback can be helpful, especially when given in the form of compliments. These are preferred in the Focus on Solutions approach. However, more important than all forms of diagnoses and feedback for Focus on Solutions is that something new is set in motion. It is towards this that the efforts of the professional person are directed.

On time, beauty, music, love—
For Paolo Knill

Jeremy Fernando

I

To read, to write, to touch—ah, perchance to dream
aye, there's the rub.

Always hoping that the genie gives one something; but never quite being able to forget—as
one shouldn't; even as forgetting happens to one, so one might well inadvertently do so—that
one might not always like the gifts one is given.

Not that one ever quite knows where gifts come from—
if they even come to one, or if they are only gifts when seen, at the point they are named, so.

And that one might not even recognise a gift when it first arrives.

Like many moons ago, in the fairie mountains of Saas Fee, when Paolo Knill whispered to me
—as I was reading whilst eating—*bien manger*. At that moment, I didn't quite know if he was
referring to the food or to the text ...

...now I realise that it was to both.

That he was teaching me—that when eating, and when reading—to always *chew well*. For, as Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin remains to remind us, “*Dis-moi ce que tu manges, je te dirai ce que tu es.*”

I’d like to think this was how the idea came to me, came to be in me. But as John Banville tries to never let us forget, “In art, origination myths are common, and enduring.”

But, as Paolo might well have said, could well have said, probably would always say, and continues to say, *stories are everything*.

And that there is no time between friends ...

... *tout comme il y a une intemporalité à bien manger,
et lire.*

II

Art is fundamentally useless.

Which is precisely why those in power have always been fearful of it.

For, one should try not to forget that the first to be shot are often poets, painters, writers. Not because they actually do anything, but that precisely by *doing nothing* they give—allowing all echoes of gift to resound—they open the space for us to imagine something else, to dream of something other.

And by entwining art with use, all that is done is to tie it down, is to attempt to moor it, *l'enfermer dans les murs*, form it such that it conforms, shape it such that it maintains itself in a stable state, lash it to the stake.

Moreover, we should bear in mind that we are in a relationship with what we read, what we see, what we stand before. And, even before this encounter happens—prior to the act of encountering—one has to first open oneself to the possibility of the encounter, open oneself to the work. Without necessarily knowing what encountering a work of art even is, let alone means.

Thus, to claim that art has a use is to diminish it, to enchain it to value, production, logic, ratio, reason.

For, the gamble that is taken each time one picks up a book, looks at a painting, watches a film, hears a song, listens to a poem, watches a dance, stands before something that is made, created, brought forth, the risk one runs in attempting to attend to a text, is the possibility of falling—along with all the potential disasters this entails—in love.

Where the stake in art is one's very self.

Which might be why Milan Kundera calls it *the unbearable lightness of being*: for it is the refusal to be grounded, to be pinned down, to be known, that is unbearable, that continually provokes us, challenges us, perhaps even tears us apart.

And, it is perhaps symptomatic that there is a "crisis" in art whenever states are obsessed about, and with, concocting an identity. For, if art is about an openness to the unknown, is about possibilities—it is of the order of difference rather than identification, sameness.

In other words, art is always anti-stasis, anti-state.

And more than that, it is always also a challenge to the self, to our selves: it is a call to attend to the possibility of another, of something that is more important than us.

And like any call, it might well lead us to dash ourselves on the rocks.

Herein lies its danger.

And its beauty.

III

Perhaps like another Paul, our dear friend Paolo will always remain to remind us that *the only law is love*.

Except that, instead of bringing love before the law, our Paolo would probably maintain that *love is the openness to the possibility of another*;

... which also means that *to love is to risk for, only love can break your heart*.

And, I suspect that our Paolo would have embraced the *blindness* in the, of the, within any, revelation—and would not turn a blind eye to the possibility that insight not only brings with it a moment of *non-sight*, but that *blindness is both the limit and condition of seeing, of sight*; in particular, a seeing that turns inwards, that sees into itself.

All whilst trying not to forget that the self is always only, and always already, in relation with *others, all others*

—mitsein—

and where one opens oneself to another by *encountering the other*—

in her otherness, in his unknowability ...

by listening, attempting to tune ourselves to,
perhaps even attuning ourselves with,

their otherness;

thus, in full acknowledgment that one might always remain blind to the other.

But still, one attempts to reach out,
tries to touch.

Keeping in mind that even in his blindness, Saul heard—
even if it were only he who did, only he who could do so. Where perhaps, one might even
posit that it was *only because he was blinded that he could attend to—listen to—the call.*

And here, one should bear in mind—even as this might remain a burden on one—the
reminder of our dear friend, Werner Hamacher, that *listening entails ceasing to hear.*

Where, what one might well be listening to be a *silent sound*:
not an absence of sound—far from it—but *silence in sound* itself.



Where, before hearing the sound from the trumpet, one already opens—has to already open—oneself ...

to the possibility of the music

of Paolo's thought:

his thought as note; his notable thought

of a sound that we not so much cannot hear,
but which might not quite have yet reached us

to a music that will always be with us—
and for which I will always remain immensely grateful.

Yes

Stephen K. Levine

In spite of everything, I still
believe in love, in courage, in self-abnegation,
in all the old virtues that
take you out of yourself,
your desire to live forever.

Yes, I confess,
I am a believer unto death,
unto the lonely grave
in the solitary earth
that lies unvisited,
but ready to be seen
and prayed back into life.

For what is love,
if not a belief
in everlasting life,
in spite of all its disappointments,
most of all, its end, our end,
and our eternal, irrevocable,
beginning over again.

"An adventure is a crisis that you accept.
A crisis is a possible adventure that you refuse, for fear of losing control."

–Bertrand Picard

The first person to fly in a solar-powered air balloon around the world.

In the midst of crisis, what emerges?



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