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A sketchbook for Analytic *Action*

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Umi Chong • William F. Cornell • Karim G. Dajani • Santiago Delboy • Richard Grose • Anton Hart • Mark Singer • Betty P. Teng • Jane Lazarre • Susan Kassouf • Brent Matheny • Dinah M. Mendes • Celeste Kelly • Jo Wright • D. Dina Friedman • Linda Hillringhouse • Jacqueline Shatz • Elaine P. Zickler

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A sketchbook for Analytic *Action*
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Richard Grose, PhD, is an associate member at IPTAR and is secretary for the IPTAR Board of Directors. He is an associate editor for ROOM and is the moderator of the Room Roundtable. He is developing a psychoanalytic theory of culture, which would include an account of the way pleasure functions in American culture. He has a private practice in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis in Manhattan.

Anton Hart, PhD, FABP, FIPA, is a training and supervising analyst and on faculty at the William Alanson White Institute. He is a member of the editorial boards of *Psychoanalytic Psychology* and *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*. He has published papers and book chapters on a variety of subjects, including psychoanalytic safety and mutuality, issues of racial, sexual, and other diversities, and psychoanalytic pedagogy. He is a member of Black Psychoanalysts Speak. He teaches at the Manhattan Institute, Mount Sinai Hospital, the Institute for Contemporary Psychotherapy, the Cleveland Psychoanalytic Center, the National Institute for the Psychotherapies, the New York Psychoanalytic Institute, and the Institute for Relational Psychoanalysis of Philadelphia. He serves as co-chair of the APA's Holmes Commission on Racial Equality. He is in full-time private practice of psychoanalysis; individual, family, and couple therapy; psychotherapy supervision and consultation; and organizational consultation in New York.

Mark Singer, MD, is a psychiatrist on the faculty at New York Medical College, where he teaches medical students and psychiatric residents. He also teaches at the Manhattan Institute for Psychoanalysis and the National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis, where the focus of his teaching has been on the dyadic and triadic treatment relationships between therapists, psychiatrists, and patients in the context of shared clinical work. His essays on themes of nostalgic experience, affective memory, and the passage of time have been published and presented widely. He is in practice in New York City.

Betty P. Teng, LMSW, MFA, is a psychoanalyst and trauma therapist who has worked with survivors of sexual assault, political torture, domestic violence, and childhood molestation, both at Mount Sinai Beth Israel's Victims Services Program and the Bellevue Program for Survivors of Torture in Manhattan. As one of the authors of the *New York Times* bestseller, *The Dangerous Case of Donald Trump*, she has written on the trauma of Trump. Betty is cofounder and cohost of the psycho-political podcast *Mind of State*, and she currently sees patients in private practice.

Jane Lazarre's works include the novels *Inheritance*, *Some Place Quite Unknown*, and *Worlds Beyond My Control*, and the memoirs *The Mother Knot* and *The Communist and the Communist's Daughter* (Spanish language editions by Las Afueras of Barcelona) and *Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness: Memoir of a White Mother of Black Sons*. Two recent essays on race in America are "Once White in America" *(TomDispatch)* and "Where Do They Keep the White People" *(TruthOut, ROOM 2.17)*. An essay on the work of Tillie Olsen recently appeared in *Lilith*. Her collection of poems, *Breaking Light* (Hamilton Stone Editions), is forthcoming. She serves on the board of directors of the Brotherhood Sister Sol, a social justice youth development nonprofit organization in Harlem, New York. Website: Janelazarre.com

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Jo Wright is a psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, and writer in New York City and Connecticut. A large part of her analytic work has been with children and adolescents struggling with learning and regulatory disorders, and with women of all ages struggling for autonomy and voice. Born in England and raised in Australia, Jo came to the United States as a young doctor to study psychiatry and psychoanalysis. With her late husband, the psychoanalyst Richard Gottlieb, she raised two sons and enjoyed gardening and sheep-farming on their Connecticut property.

Elaine P. Zickler, received a PhD in English literature from Bryn Mawr College, specializing in seventeenth-century English literature and critical theory. Her dissertation was on the writings of Donne and Freud, tracing the history of Freud's thinking to the practice of moral theology. She has organized international conferences on children's literature and psychoanalysis, and has taught courses in women's literature, gender and sexuality, French theory, and Laplanche at the Psychoanalytic Center of Philadelphia, where she is a member and on faculty. She has a private practice in Moorestown, NJ.

Poets

D. Dina Friedman has published widely in literary journals and received two Pushcart Prize nominations for poetry and fiction. She is the author of one book of poetry, *Wolf in the Suitcase* (Finishing Line Press), and two young adult novels, *Escaping into the Night* (Simon & Schuster BYR) and *Playing Dad's Song* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux BYR). She has an MFA from Lesley University and teaches at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Website: ddinafriedman.com

Linda Hillringhouse holds an MFA from Columbia University. She was a first-place winner of the Allen Ginsberg Poetry Award (2014), a second-place winner of *Nimrod*'s Pablo Neruda Prize for Poetry (2012), and was nominated for a Pushcart Prize (2020). Her work has appeared in *Lips, New Ohio Review, Paterson Literary Review, Prairie Schooner,* and elsewhere. She has received fellowships from the Macdowell Colony, Yaddo, and the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts. Her recent book of poetry, *The Things I Didn't Know to Wish for* (New York Quarterly Press) was shortlisted for the Eric Hoffer Book Award Grand Prize in 2021.

Artist

Jacqueline Shatz's work has been exhibited at the June Kelly, Monique Knowlton, and Kouros galleries in New York City, and she has curated and organized exhibitions, including CollageLogic, last presented in 2012 at Hampden Gallery at UMass in Amherst. She is a recipient of a NEA Individual Fellowship, a Craft Alliance New Techniques grant, and several NYFA SOS grants. She has been artist-in-residence at the Kohler Arts/Industry program, where she created a series of music box sculptures and collaborated on sound and sculptural installations for Glyndor Gallery at Wave Hill and on Governors Island. She had a show at the Garrison Art Center in 2015, exhibited at Carter Burden Gallery in 2017, was in an exhibit at Centotto in Bushwick with Thomas Michelli and Jim Herbert, and was also included in two group shows at David & Schweitzer (Bushwick). Her work was included in the group show *Beasts of Brooklyn* at the Green Door Gallery, curated by Elisa Jensen, as well as *Flowers and Monsters* at Temporary Storage Gallery, curated by Meer Musa. Jacqueline Shatz is a 2018 recipient of a Tree of Life Foundation Individual Artist Grant and a 2020 recipient of the Gottlieb Foundation Grant. She has a BFA in painting and an MFA in sculpture from Hunter College.

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Close Up

Before we are born, everything is open
In the universe without us. For as long as we live, everything is closed within us. And when we die, everything is open again.
Open closed open. That's all we are.

—Yehuda Amichai 1924 - 2000

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Editorial
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"An urgent sense of the possible contributed to my pursuit of psychoanalytic training over a decade ago, back when CO_2 levels were still below 400 ppm. At the time, my analyst and my own analysis were introducing me to an unanticipated world of depth, beauty, and tolerable terror from which I rarely wanted to surface." So begins Susan Kassouf's essay, "**A New Thing Under the Sun**." Kassouf quickly recognized that her new profession did not lend itself to thinking about the "more than human" environment, let alone climate catastrophe. "There was no useful language to describe what I was sensing," she writes, so she creates the word she needs. Elaine Zickler understands Kassouf's drive to find the right words. "We grasp for available language to explain what we see and what we do: the language of biology, the language of neurology and brain science, the language of quantum physics, even, as with Lacan, the language of linguistics." Her essay, "**Psychoanalysis in a Lyric Mode**," leans on the genius of Virginia Woolf to show how language can push us to the borders of our being. Zickler has come to see psychoanalysis as "an answering art…(it) is the responsiveness of the analyst to the stranger who speaks to us from her strangeness; it is the response that reveals our own strangeness as well."

Bill Cornell gets the transformative power of words. "I found myself thinking," he recounts in "**Words, Voice, Body**," "about how often I *see*, I *feel*, how my voice and words land in the bodies of my clients, how often their words and voices land in mine, and of how the unspoken language of our bodies informs and enlivens our words. Spoken words that land in the body of another or written words that can be heard in the voice of the author capture the fundamental physicality of language, the embodiment of speaking." In the late '60s, as a student at Reed College, Cornell heard Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, and other Beat poets give readings. Their photographs hang in his office today reminding him of what it means "to listen, to write, to speak, and to stand outside the borders of the normative."

Standing well outside the "borders of normative," Karim Dajani stumbled, as Kassouf did, into a lacuna of existential significance in the course of his psychoanalytic training. While Kassouf stretches the boundaries of our psychoanalytic understanding to the "more than human," Dajani's "**From Beirut to San Francisco: A Psychoanalytic Journey**" pushes psychoanalysis to take into better account that which is breathtakingly human. "Culture is like the air we breathe; it animates our bodies," he writes. "Culture or the collective, paradoxically, gives us the necessary tools to realize our individuality. If the air we breathe is full of toxins—oppression and marginalization—then the self we make is full of those toxins as well." Like Kassouf, Dajani wants us to recognize anew the levels of connection we share with our environment. "We have been slow to analyze this dimension of our being as the societies we live in have also been slow to recognize the way systemic racism is baked into the air we breathe. But is recognizing and analyzing enough? Systemic racism is a virus and its not-yet-discovered vaccine should first be given to the most fortunate. But if offered, would we take it? Or would we be too afraid of what it might do to us?" This is the question Singer poses near the end of his striking memoir essay "**Bear with Me**." This is the question that demands our attention.

Santiago Delboy and Jo Wright's essays also describe the infiltrating power of culture. "Three hundred years of colonialism shaped ways of being and relating that remained deeply rooted in a split social psyche, even after the Spaniards were long gone," writes Delboy. In his essay, "**Of Fruit and COVID**," he has returned home after many years to care for his mother, who is ill with COVID. "Lima is always strange. It is at the same time a place I no longer recognize and one that I recognize too well, a city where I don't fully belong, yet one that belongs to me in visceral ways. The air breathes differently as soon as I leave the airport, when I am hit by Lima's penetrating humidity and feel surrounded by familiar languages, meanings, and cadences. Something shifts inside of me…as I relate to this simultaneously new and old world… Why am I just standing here? Why do I feel so lost? Why can't I think?"

Jo Wright's thinking is rekindled by the racial reawakening of America. In "**Assisted Passage**," she recalls an idyllic childhood on the edge of the Australian outback: "[T]he musical rustling of wind in the ghost gums…learning to swim in the turquoise sea, family picnics among carpets of wildflowers when the winter rains and spring sunshine caused the desert hinterland to bloom." But there are other memories "of shirtless, shoeless Indigenous men clustered around the back doors of the town's pubs in the afternoon; the faces and names…of two Indigenous Australian girls in [her] primary school class, their absence after sixth grade." Like Delboy, Wright's reverie becomes momentarily confused—what had stopped her from seeing this then? But if she had, she writes, "If I had wondered, who would I have asked?…Would I have asked my parents, who, as they became acculturated to the rough Australian country-town life, seemed to adopt the views of the adults who gathered around the kegs in the backyard barbecues?"

If to be human, as Anton Hart says in "**Radical Openness Part 2**," "means [to be] largely unconscious of one's thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and tendencies," then what can we do? How can we "detoxify ourselves and our world" from the things we are largely unaware of? Hart suggests we must "proceed in dialogue with perpetual humility and uncertainty." Along with humility and uncertainty, the authors in ROOM 6.21 are getting in close to get clarity. It is hard to find a clearer illustration of radical openness in the clinic than Mendes's description of her work with an anti-Semitic patient in "**Moving Boundaries**." "Slipping out of my own boundaries felt expansive, but also somewhat disloyal and even transgressive, because while it released me temporarily from my own psychic confines, it also invited an abandonment of an essential identification and allegiance and a crossing over into another subjective experience that was inimical, at least in part, to them." Then, taking a step back to think about how this permeable membrane has come to be, she writes, "We all contain multitudes and begin life with a profusion of possibilities for identification that inevitably succumb to constriction and suppression in the process of development and socialization."

"**White Mother/Black Sons**" illustrates this developmental insight writ large and playing out in heartbreaking relief. Jane Lazarre writes, "What was this *whiteness* that threatened to separate me from my own child? How often had I failed to see it lurking, hunkering down, encircling me in some irresistible fog? I wanted words that might be helpful to him, offer some carefully designed, unspontaneous permission for him to discover his own road, even if that meant leaving me behind. At the same time, I wanted to cry out, *don't leave me*, as he had cried out to me when I walked out of day-care centers, out of his first classroom in public school. And always this double truth, as unresolvable as in any other passion, the paradox: she is me/not me; he is mine/not mine." Lazarre's anguish is as big as our country. It is the anguish that brings us to our knees.

"Crossing over to another's subjective experience" is one thing. Allowing one's own subjective experience to be objectively visible is quite another. Umi Chong describes what we might imagine Lazarre's Black children have felt. "It is an agonizing and grueling process to become visible because it entails decentering my analyst's whiteness," Chong writes in her essay "**Remaining to be Seen**." "Decentering" herself and being seen then extends her work with her white patients. "How do I convey that it seems without my body and phenotype in plain sight, in only hearing my voice, my Asian-ness seems to disappear? … Vulnerability in this racial context is a paradox—it is because of this uncertainty that it is safer and necessary to be visible, to emotionally show myself, and to want to be fully seen and heard. That is—to be fully represented in the particular ways my humanness is racialized as an Asian American—if not only for the opportunity to relinquish these ghosts from my own mind, let alone for my generation."

"There's a way in which everything feels more personal," writes Celeste Kelly in their essay "**Reframed**." "More human-to-human than it ever has (at least for me, in my short time practicing). We are sitting in the same mud, swimming in the same water, trying to stay afloat and acclimate, together." Is it the same mud? Well, yes and no. Kelly, a queer newly minted psychotherapist, knew that their ambivalence to exhibit their pronouns on the Zoom screen came, in their words, "not only from the bumps along the road of my own identity development, but from a conflict within our field as a whole…These pronouns are intentional and important…How badly I want, have always wanted, to be fully seen in that regard, and how often I have defensively moved away. A part of me holds great shame about that, and it's hard to write. As much as I've wanted to be 'out and proud,' more of my life has looked like 'out and ambivalent.'"

Whether being chased by a literal bear, seeing pronouns on a Zoom screen, visiting a sick mother in Peru, or imagining the world of her Black child, each author in ROOM 6.21 gestures toward radical openness. One by one, they bring us up close to their particular experiences of disillusionment, confusion, heartbreak, shame, fear, and guilt. None of them have abandoned hope. And Bill Cornell sums up why. "In writing, in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy at its best, our words convey a voice—a deeply personal voice, a voice that both listens and speaks from one's own body to the body of another, to land in the body of another, to take residence, to come more alive, to awaken, to challenge, to cherish one another." ROOM 6.21 is opening up. ■

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CENTO: I KNOW YOU'RE TIRED, BUT COME. THIS IS THE WAY

When a loved one opens their mouth, our world swells
like dawn on a pond. Have you ever tried to enter
the long black branches of other lives? We give
because somebody gave to us. I don't know
your war or your kitchen table, but peeling potatoes
can be a form of prayer, the song that says
my bones are your bones—up and stuck,
or down and struck. I enter my life
the way words entered me. Some days, all I have
left is a crab claw etching the remains—
the voice of every part of my body,
a hook shot kissing the rim.

Sources: Edward Hirsch, Amy Horowitz, Maria José Jiménez, Ada Limon, Brad Aaron Modlin, Mary Oliver, Alberto Rios, Lindsay Rockwell, Rumi, Ocean Vuong, Yanira

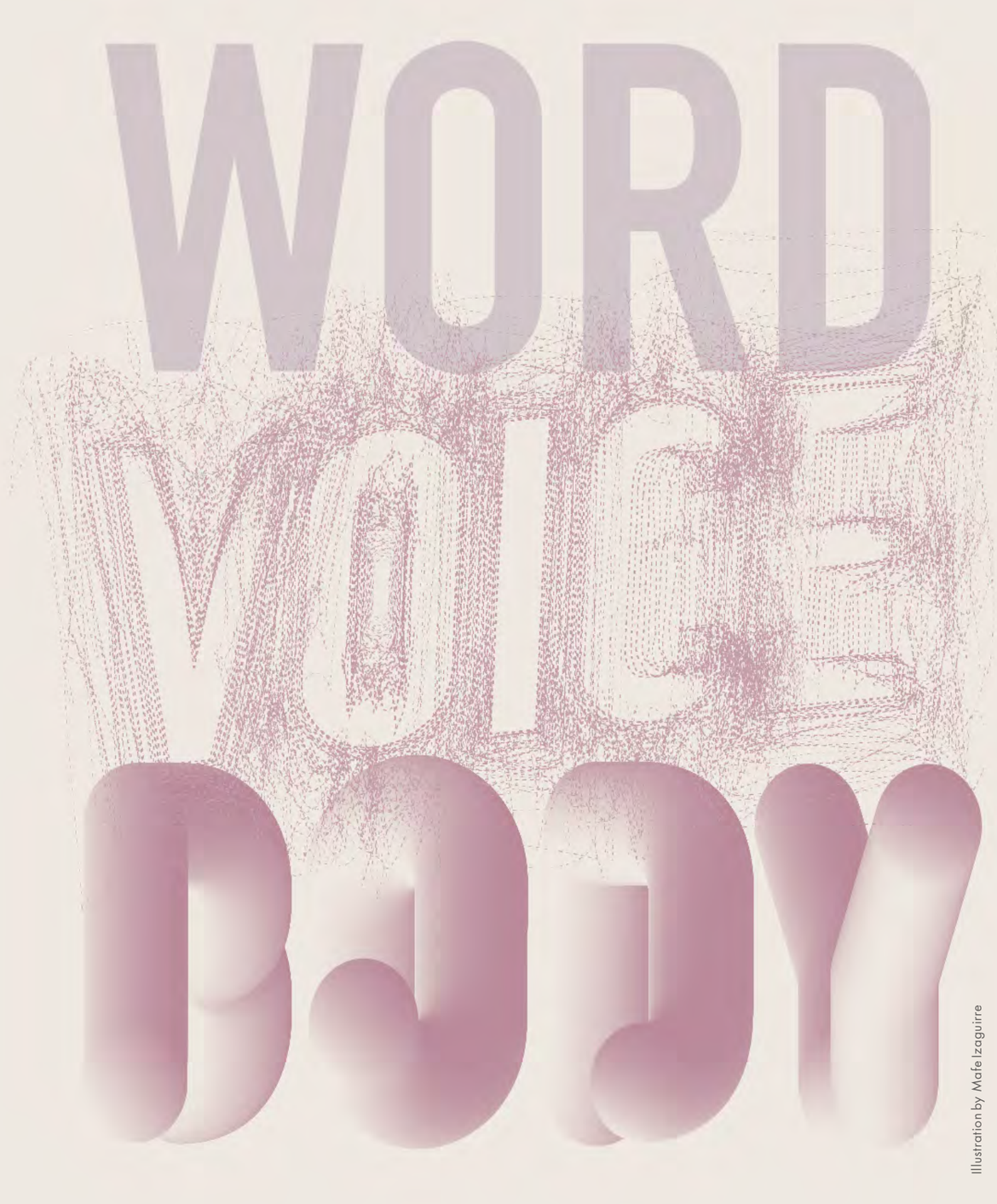

Illustration by Mafe Izaguirre

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As an article or essay that I am writing is nearing completion, I take the essential step of reading it aloud to myself. I have found that this practice helps me identify phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that feel awkward in the mouth, which I then imagine to be awkward in the ear of the readers. In the ear of the readers? Readers read with their eyes. But I have come to know, to feel, that when writing truly works, comes alive on the page, a reader is listening as well as seeing, *hearing* my voice. It is so very easy when writing to get lost in/entranced with one's ideas. Writing, especially professional writing as most of us have been trained to do it, can so easily fall into expressions of disembodied intellect—words on a page, thoughts with no voice, ideas with no body.

I have known that my sense and experience of writing have been deeply influenced by my experience of poetry—not only of reading poetry but also hearing it *spoken by the poet*. As a student at Reed College in the late '60s, I had the opportunity to hear Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, Philip Whalen, and other Beat poets read their work. Photographs of these poets hang on the wall in my office to remind me of what it means to listen, to write, to speak, and to stand outside the borders of the normative. Theirs were voices of challenge—whispering, laughing, shouting, weeping, protesting—so resonant and alive.

The structure and form of contemporary poetry is, in part, an effort to create on the page the quality of the voice. *Stanza* is derived from the Latin for *room*, and the stanzas of a poem are like separate rooms that a reader is invited into, a place to pause and listen. The line breaks mirror and evoke the pauses in the breath and the voice as one speaks. In hearing (and seeing) a poem read aloud, the "rooms," the words, and the pauses on the page reverberate in the ear and through the body.

Recently, I heard an interview with the Vietnamese-American poet and author Ocean Vuong, entitled "A Life Worthy of Our Breath," his voice tender, fierce, at times caustic, funny; the impact of his voice on both the interviewer and the audience was audible, palpable. He spoke of the nature of literature and language:

> It [language] does begin and end in the body. Language is something we carry, and for a long time in our species we have been carrying it. Reading is fairly new. Even in the Library of Alexandria, people read aloud in it. So, if you went in the library there was a hum of voices. Being able to articulate and talk to each other face to face like this, having the sonic reality, to see how your words land in someone's body, it is so important.

"To see how your words *land in someone's body.*" This phrase left me breathless and took me to the edge of tears in a cascade of memories and associations. I was first flooded with the memories of writing eulogies in preparing for the deaths of my father and then of my sister, words that I was able to read to them before they died; these were eulogies that I hoped would land in and penetrate the hearts and bodies of our families.

Then, suddenly, I found myself thinking about how often I *see*, I *feel*, how my voice and words land in the bodies of my clients, how often their words and voices land in mine, and of how the unspoken language of our bodies informs and enlivens our words. Spoken words that land in the body of another or written words that can be heard in the voice of the author capture the fundamental physicality of language, the embodiment of speaking. Danielle Quinodoz (2003) coined the term *incarnate language*, describing "a *language that touches* as one that does not confine itself to imparting thoughts verbally, but also conveys feelings and the sensations that accompany those feelings." Bollas (1999), in an essay on embodiment in psychoanalysis, speaks of the capacity for "sensualization" as "the realization of the body's capacity to receive and convey such communications, expressive of one's inner reality through incarnated being and also as a receiver of the other's equally sensualized intelligence" (p 155). Listening to, or reading, Ocean Vuong is truly an immersion in a sensualized intelligence.

Ironically, as was pointed out by the interviewer, Krista Tippet, this was to be Vuong's last public talk before the onset of the COVID lockdowns. And so, inevitably, I thought of what we have all lost this past year with our voices aimed at and filtered through screens rather than bodies. Family, friends, colleagues, clients suddenly held at a distance. Last March, as the lockdowns and quarantines were set in place, I made a decision quite different from that of most of my colleagues. I offered to each of my clients the option to continue in-person sessions at my office if they preferred that to remote sessions via phone or computer. To my surprise, the majority chose in-person sessions, and most of those who started remotely gradually chose to come in person, while all of my professional meetings and seminars remained remote. This arrangement allowed me the daily experience of the contrasts between in-person and virtual sessions. As a body-centered psychotherapist, I have come to learn of the vitality of therapeutic processes that actively, intentionally evoke and involve a full range of domains of experience (i.e., cognitive, emotional, relational, imaginative, tactile, motoric, sensate, visual, auditory, sexual, receptive, aggressive). I could witness and feel how Zoom/Skype-mediated sessions (now anointed and sanctioned with the amazing term "telehealth") strip away so many of the domains of experience, the multiple facets of incarnate conversation. In common with so many of my colleagues, I tried to minimize, apologize for the losses of speaking in seminars to postage-stamp-sized heads accompanied by sidebars of rolling "chats" as a substitute for spoken conversations. I have come to see the "Zoom fatigue" of which so many complain as a consequence of the efforts in virtual sessions—conscious, unconscious, and somatic—to compensate for the lack of spontaneous, bodily communication that foster sensualized intelligence.

In writing, in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy at its best, our words convey a voice—a deeply personal voice, a voice that both listens and speaks from one's own body to the body of another, to land in the body of another, to take residence, to come more alive, to awaken, to challenge, to cherish one another. ▪

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Jacqueline Shatz, *Eidolon* 11″ x 8″ x 4″

Jacqueline Shatz, *Fleur*, 9″ x 6″ x 6″

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A New Thing Under the Sun

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An urgent sense of the possible contributed to my pursuit of psychoanalytic training over a decade ago, back when CO_2 levels were still below 400 ppm. At the time, my analyst and my own analysis were introducing me to an unanticipated world of depth, beauty, and tolerable terror from which I rarely wanted to surface. At the same time, and still today, I was struggling to take in my lived experiences of marked changes in the weather along with a larger body of scientific research, which described climatic apocalypse in my lifetime. In my professional life—which spanned many years in the nonprofit sector as well as higher education—people were teaching, learning, and talking about smart, sustainable policies to reduce our carbon footprint, to mitigate and adapt. And yet, I wondered, what was everybody feeling? How were they sleeping at night? How did others handle what environmentalist Aldo Leopold described as "a new thing under the sun," namely one species mourning the death of another or, in this case, the human species now mourning its own present and future?

Apart from those regular fifty-minute sessions below the surface, I did not know how to ask others about their interior lives or speak about mine on our rapidly warming planet. Then, and now, I sensed that analytical mindedness might make it possible to bring our interior lives, our psyches, into these discussions about mitigation and adaptation, about loss on unprecedented scales. Then—and now—I believed that doing so might help upend our contemporary era, aptly named "the Dithering" by cli-fi writer Kim Stanley Robinson. There was no common language for grief, for dread, or for our lack of acknowledgment of something terribly new under the sun. As W.R. Bion reminds us in his 1957 essay on the "Differentiation of the Psychotic from the Non-Psychotic Personalities," "problems can be solved because at least they can be stated whereas without [articulated speech] certain questions, no matter how important, cannot even be posed."

Once in training, I was surprised to learn that while my new analytic friends, colleagues, and mentors may in general have been concerned as citizens about the climate, such concern did not necessarily translate into analytic theory or practice. Moreover, I was not a little disheartened to see how difficult and non-intuitive it was for me to integrate what I was learning about analysis with my own existential concerns. Or as Bion might say, I could not approach the problems because I had no language in which to pose the questions. Slowly, I began to realize that the foundational framework of psychoanalytic thinking as it was taught at many institutes did not lend itself to thinking about the more-than-human environment, let alone climate catastrophe. Those moments when the more-than-human environment emerged explicitly (for example, in the thinking of Freud, Ferenczi, and Searles among others) were not a part of the canon taught to candidates nor a part of clinical training. Not only was the climate catastrophe, or environmental degradation more broadly, missing, but the more-than-human environment itself was literally kept off the couch and out of doors. How were far too many of us so assiduously able to block out anything material, both within and without, of which we were comprised, on which we were dependent? There was no useful language to describe what I was sensing at the time—namely, a general lack of recognition of a more-than-human environment in psychoanalytic theories and practice.

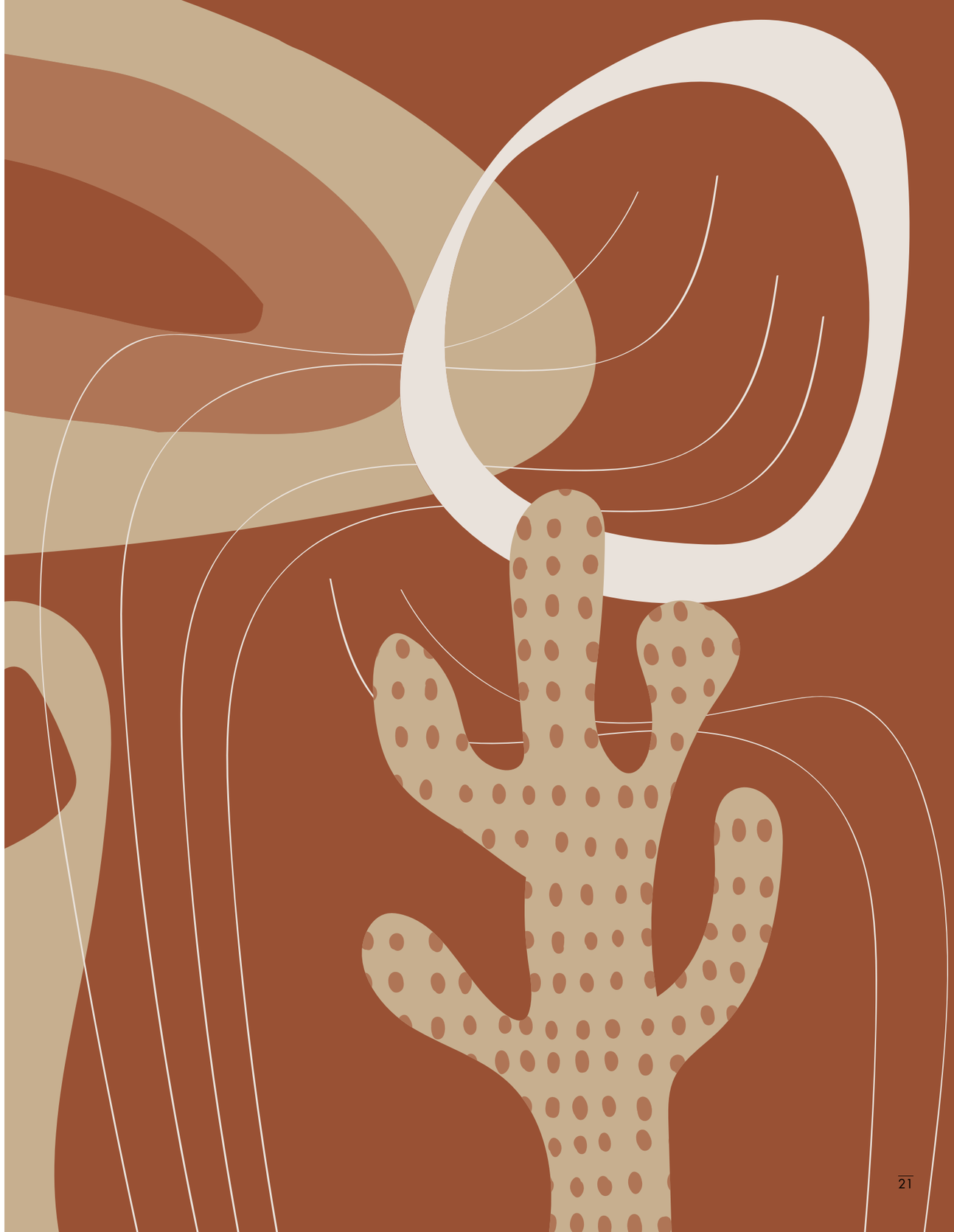
In the Bionian spirit of articulation, I want to offer a neologism for now—the anenvironmental orientation, that is, an orientation to oneself and the world that brackets out the more-than-human environment. It was this orientation, I believe, that I was bumping up against in myself, in my psychoanalytic training and in the culture at large. Relying on the Greek prefix *an* meaning "without" or "lacking," I understand *anenvironmental* to describe something without or lacking the more-than-human environment, in much the same way that we understand *amoral* to mean "without morals" or *anaerobic* to mean "without oxygen." The idea of an orientation is indebted to Erich Fromm's ideas about nonproductive social character orientations (such as the authoritarian, narcissistic, and marketing orientations). Fromm, a psychoanalyst and a sociologist, was interested in what Lynne Layton might call "normative unconscious processes" or those character orientations that a particular economy and society require of its members in order to sustain it, often at the expense of their own or others' well-being. For example, as Fromm conceived of it, the authoritarian character orientation was socially sanctioned in Nazi Germany, symbiotically enabling and sustaining the fascist state.

What might comprise a socially prevalent and sanctioned, albeit often unconscious, anenvironmental orientation in certain psychoanalytic traditions and in the larger culture, symbiotically enabling and sustaining our neoliberal world order? In broad strokes, I suggest that an anenvironmental orientation means:

- a sense of self that in the face of the more-than-human environment feels invulnerable, independent, and impermeable—We no longer recognize how our spaces allow us to remain safe from and unexposed to the elemental, how they allow us "climate control" over our surroundings to the narrow temperature band in which humans can flourish. Is this dissociation? Disavowal? Foreclosure? All of the above in shifting combination?
- an immaterial sense of self, separate from our mortal, organic bodies, the atmosphere they require to live, and the multicellular life-forms of which they are comprised.
- an incapacity to mourn—It is perhaps not surprising that, if we cannot recognize a more-than-human environment, then we refuse to acknowledge and cannot mourn our shared, often unequal, degradation and likewise our unequal complicity in the process.
- a repetitively lived experience of omnipotence in relation to the more-than-human environment—We drive fast; we fly far. Figuratively and literally, our power is always on and flowing. This intense experience of omnipotence may be peculiar to our now-waning era of petromodernity.
- a stance of innocence, ignorance, insulation, and irresponsibility—We can remain unaware of the human and more-than-human costs of supporting and sustaining an anenvironmental orientation. Indeed, many of us are literally insulated from the people and places suffering most severely from the effects of environmental destruction and the related effects of climate change. Our view of reality remains pathologically limited and limiting.
- an obsessive focus on the interpersonal and intrapsychic which perpetuates an unreconstructed notion of our human exceptionalism—This focus feels especially prevalent in psychoanalytic theory and, likely, practice. For example, we might wonder about the Kleinian focus on the breast as the infant's only source of nourishment, as if air, field, tree, stream, or ocean were not also relevant, if perhaps in less immediate and obvious ways.
- an unrelated sense of self in terms of big space and what cultural theorists Astrida Neimanis and Rachel Loewen Walker call "thick time" (that is, time that stretches across past, present, and future)—Despite relating to ourselves and others in intensely intrapsychic and interpersonal ways, we show relatively little interest in how the environmental past affects us, how our actions influence others currently living on the planet or how they will affect future generations. This seems one area, among many, where psychoanalysis can make a unique contribution, since analysts work with a conception of the psyche, the unconscious, as inhabiting big space and thick time (that is, a sense of psychic space and time that reaches across geographies as well as the past, present, and future).

As may be obvious, the anenvironmental orientation calls to mind already extant psychoanalytic theories, albeit ones not always brought into dialogue with the more-than-human environment. It can function as a toxic and intoxicating counterphobic defense against our dependency, as a reading of Harold Searles might suggest and toward which Stolorow and Atwood gesture in their "myth of the isolated mind." An anenvironmental orientation exhibits qualities of a Kleinian manic defense, protecting us against defensive guilt for our excessive environmental destructiveness. We can also see in it a primitive Winnicottian position in which the more-than-human environment is riddled with projections rather than seen as existing in its own right. Or we might recognize Freud's definition of psychosis, in which the id refuses to adapt to reality.

Happily, as a growing body of innovative psychoanalytic work shows, the field's predominant anenvironmental orientation is rapidly becoming untenable (for example, see https://climatepsychology.us). Neither analysts nor analysands can pretend to live as if the more-than-human environment exists only beyond the couch, if it is acknowledged at all. The zoonotic spillover of coronavirus, wildfires erupting on every continent, rising coastlines, among other things, promise that what Fromm called the "pathology of normalcy" cannot continue in what is today a world with CO_2 levels soaring beyond 417 ppm. Perhaps the neologism of the anenvironmental orientation can prove useful for now, helping us to recognize, name, and dismantle a pathological psychic and cultural dynamic that has become far too normal. And perhaps the phenomenon it describes is at least one extinction to which we can actually look forward. ▪



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From **Beirut** to **San Francisco**

A Psychoanalytic Journey

"AWASSNI, AWASSNI." The man screamed these words before letting out a guttural cry. Awassni is Arabic for "he shot me." It had been some years since the war began, and most of us had learned to distinguish sound more keenly. We can tell, from the sound alone, how far the bullets are being fired from, the types of exploding shells and likely shrapnel radius, the type of warplane buzzing above our heads. Depending on the distance of the warplane, we learned to anticipate the time it took for a missile to reach the ground in a fiery explosion. Death, destruction, mayhem, and the screams of people dying and grieving would inevitably follow. This one was close. I looked out the window to see a man dying on the ground. I was too young and scared to walk into the streets to help. Even if I did, more people would be shot and lie dying on the pavement that day and the next.

Lebanon is burning in civil war. But the people have to live, so they walk the streets despite the fact that most roofs have active sniper dens, shelling is indiscriminate and unpredictable, and checkpoints where people who are identified as belonging to a different sect or large group are beheaded on the spot punctuate the streets of every neighborhood, and Israeli warplanes fly over on a daily basis, occasionally firing missiles on us.

The streets are dangerous, and the people are on the verge of collapse. How does a child live in a collapsing world? The Mediterranean Sea is a stone's throw from our house, so I spent much of my time in it dreaming of a better world. Earlier that day, I had gone to the sea to play a game that I often played, particularly when I was sad. I would walk out onto a rocky area on the sea's edge. The rocks were jagged, their crevices full of thorny sea urchins. In various parts of this rocky terrain, holes are formed, presumably from years of erosion. The holes are narrow openings that cleave the rocks. Crashing waves fill the holes before the water retreats, creating a "sharook," which is a type of suction that pulls you into the sea's depth. Getting in and out of the sharook without getting seriously injured or killed was the aim (maybe) and the thrill. I waited for a coming wave and dove into the sharook's rising water only to be sucked deeper into the sea. On the way down, my twelve-year-old body was thrashed on the rocks. I felt helpless and out of breath. I wondered if I was going to die. I resisted and, with all my might, pushed my way out of the water and onto land again. My legs were scraped and the bottoms of my feet riddled with sea urchin needles. I hobbled home. My mother was genuinely frightened, but she cared for me as she screamed and cried.

That night, I had a dream that I was sucked into a sharook and my body got stuck in the rocks. As my breath drained and I felt myself slipping, a voice

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came into my ear. It commanded me to breathe. How do you breathe underwater? *Breathe*, the voice replied. I did and my lungs filled with air. I felt buoyed with hope and a sense of mystery that has remained with me till this day. Deep inside, I knew that I would find my breath even when my body is shredded on a rock and submerged under the sea. I will breathe even when a violent death is likely. Poseidon, with all his might, told me so.

The unlikely journey from Beirut to San Francisco was long and painful. It paved the way for an even more unlikely journey of a traumatized Palestinian kid becoming a psychoanalyst at the San Francisco Center for Psychoanalysis. To do so, I had to learn to breathe in impossible places.

When I matriculated at SFCP in 2005, the culture of the place and of the field was committed to the idea of the unconscious being an individual biological phenomenon. Culture and the social were treated as external to the unconscious and, therefore, not part of psychoanalysis proper. The way that played out in classes, supervision, and our own training analysis was that pain and the meaning of emotion were always located in the individual and between the individual and the family. Genuine suffering that came from outside my body and my family walls was largely overlooked or shoehorned into conceptions of the mind that did not include the constitutive links of culture and history. I was willing to take this stance on good faith and out of a need to fit in. I applied it to myself and to my patients. But it did not work as well as promised. My experience and my observations surely pointed to culture, context, history, and the social writ large as deep links in the very structure and function of my unconscious. Trying to fit into a worldview that denied the powerful and ongoing impact of the sociocultural was like trying to survive being thrashed on rocks and pulled into the sea.

I responded to this problem by studying. I pored over the literature. I chronicle the evolution of my thinking about this problem in academic publications elsewhere. Here, I will communicate a few observations and link them to a story we are all familiar with.

Psychoanalysis has struggled with how to understand the link between the individual and the sociocultural surround. The debate about the role culture and the social play in structuring the unconscious goes back to the very inception of the field. Analytic scholars across continents, cultural systems, and languages were arguing that culture and the social are not superficial or cosmetic aspects of the unconscious but constitutive, meaning they structure the way we unconsciously think, perceive, and attribute meaning to ourselves and the world. Their voices have been consistently marginalized from our history, theories, and curricula.

The marginalization of analytic scholars who argue for the centrality of the group and culture in the organization of individuals is a repetition of a trauma that originates in the social. European and American societies are struggling with their history and cultures as they pertain to issues of race, oppression, and power. The systemic marginalization and oppression of minority groups (BIPoC, women, LGBT+Q, immigrants, etc.) hurts our national collective and retards our social evolution. Similarly, the systemic marginalization and oppression of analytic voices who challenge the dominant group's assumptions and praxis hurts the field, retards our evolution, and diminishes our relevance. The way we are is operationalized in the cultures we use, and the cultures we use reflect the way we are.

Culture is like the air we breathe; it animates our bodies. Culture or the collective, paradoxically, gives us the necessary tools to realize our individuality. The sociocultural is breathed into us from the very beginning. It constitutes the deepest layer of our unconscious while lying in plain sight. If the air we breathe is full of toxins—oppression and marginalization—then the self we make is full of those toxins as well. We have been slow to analyze this dimension of our being as the societies we live in have also been slow to recognize the way systemic racism is baked into the air we breathe.

A biblical story comes to mind. In the beginning, God fashioned clay into the form of a human body and blew breath into it. Divine breath animated the clay and turned it into a human subject, Adam in this case. Adam, our first human, is made from clay (body) and breath (material that comes from outside of it). This is a shared idea. It finds representation in the social unconscious of individuals and groups who have inculcated it. This applies to me as well. Here is my modified reproduction of it.

Initially, the ideas of air and breath can be assumed to be universal phenomena or objective observations of reality. All people need air to breathe, and breathing is essential to life. If you cannot breathe, you will not live. This is a universal truth.

Digging a bit deeper, we can see that air and breath are actually variable and contingent phenomena. The air we breathe is not the same; it varies from environment to environment and is contingent on human activities and constraints. Breathing the air in New Dehli is not the same as breathing air in London, Bangkok, Beirut, or San Francisco. I am not talking about levels of pollution here. I am talking about culture being the air we breathe.

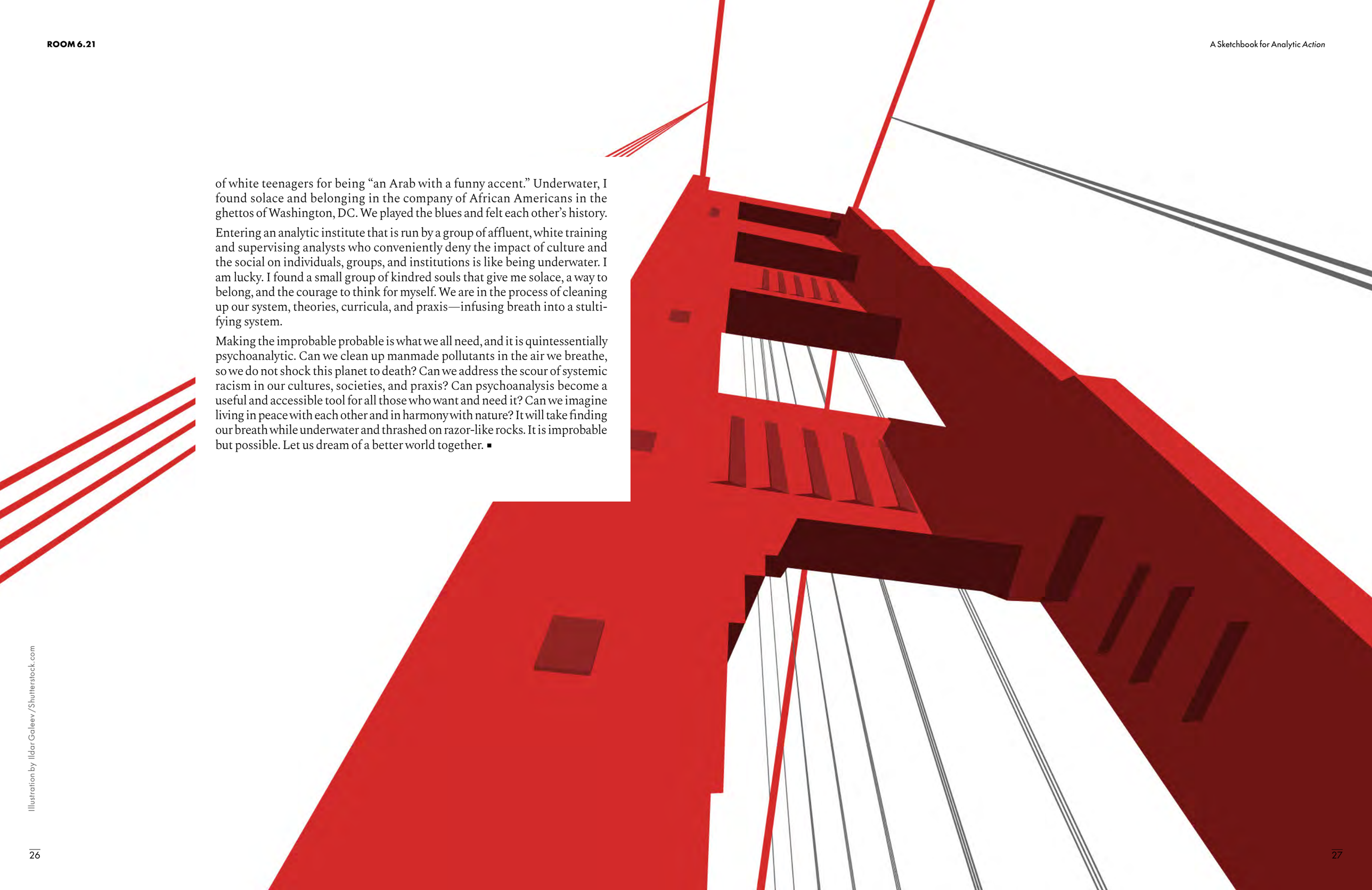
When I first immigrated to the United States at the age of fifteen, I had to learn to speak English and to find my way in a culture that felt painfully foreign. This painful sense of foreignness, weirdness, and deeply unfamiliar ways of being filled the air and came into me with every breath I took. Thirteen years after immigrating to the United States, I took my first trip back to Beirut to see my ailing father. When I stepped out of the plane, the air was thick and hot. It carried with it distinct smells, sounds, and sensations. It enveloped me. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, came the Muslim call for prayer. It was blasting from a nearby mosque. The rhythmic sound, the words, the cadence filled the air and came into me with every breath I took. It felt painfully familiar. The social is the air we breathe.

Dreaming is mysterious. In a dream, I was shown how to breathe while underwater. I did not know then that it was a message from the future. I barely survived the war and I barely survived coming to America. Much to my surprise, in the United States, I was perceived as a brown inferior other. I was beaten by groups

of white teenagers for being "an Arab with a funny accent." Underwater, I found solace and belonging in the company of African Americans in the ghettos of Washington, DC. We played the blues and felt each other's history.

Entering an analytic institute that is run by a group of affluent, white training and supervising analysts who conveniently deny the impact of culture and the social on individuals, groups, and institutions is like being underwater. I am lucky. I found a small group of kindred souls that give me solace, a way to belong, and the courage to think for myself. We are in the process of cleaning up our system, theories, curricula, and praxis—infusing breath into a stultifying system.

Making the improbable probable is what we all need, and it is quintessentially psychoanalytic. Can we clean up manmade pollutants in the air we breathe, so we do not shock this planet to death? Can we address the scour of systemic racism in our cultures, societies, and praxis? Can psychoanalysis become a useful and accessible tool for all those who want and need it? Can we imagine living in peace with each other and in harmony with nature? It will take finding our breath while underwater and thrashed on razor-like rocks. It is improbable but possible. Let us dream of a better world together. ▪



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Assisted Passage

The news photos—the bulky container ship straddled across the straight blue gash cut through yellow sands—prompted memories of my wonder and curiosity when, as an eight-year-old in June 1956, I gazed down from the deck of the P&O liner *Strathaird* at those sandy banks along the Suez Canal. I knew little of the world beyond the urban slums of northern England. Knew nothing of the lives, cultures, languages of the peoples I saw on my family's journey aboard that migrant ship from England to Australia. Knew not that the opportunities awaiting us in Australia were inextricably linked to the color of my skin.

I have long since lost the insulated comfort of that naivete.

All of the passengers on the *Strathaird* were white, beneficiaries of the Immigration Restriction Act (a.k.a. White Australia Policy), the law passed in 1901, when separate British colonies became the independent Commonwealth of Australia. Non-Europeans would be barred from citizenship by a dictation test in any European language of the government's choosing. In 1945, in a push to "Populate or Perish," Australia began the Assisted Passage Migration Scheme to encourage British immigration, providing passage for only ten pounds per adult. Postwar austerity, ongoing rationing, and extreme class rigidity led many British working families to uproot themselves and seek a better life on the other side of the world. Would-be immigrants were required to have a trade or profession, promise of a job, or a sponsoring family. My young parents, having no skills, money, friends, or family in Australia, found a sponsoring family in Geraldton, a small rural town on the Indian Ocean coast, three hundred miles north of Perth. There began our "better life."

To my schoolgirl perception, everyone in town was the same, the notable distinctions being between the newly arrived Poms (the slang appellation for new British immigrants like us), the second-, third-, and fourth-generation Australians (also of British and Irish stock), and the few non-British European families—all white, nearly all working and lower-middle class.

I have abundant memories of my childhood there—idyllic images of endless sunny days, of the musical rustling of wind in the ghost gums; memories of breathless after-school games on sandy streets and learning to swim in the turquoise sea, of family picnics among carpets of wildflowers when the winter rains and spring sunshine caused the desert hinterland to bloom. Though I left Australia over four decades ago, some of my dearest friends remain those from my school years in Geraldton.

But there are other memories—indistinct, not as pored over and enlivened as many of my childhood recollections. Memories more like shimmering ghosts in the periphery that seem to lose credibility when I turn my gaze upon them: ramshackle camps in the scrub on the outskirts of town; rough shacks of corrugated iron and scrap lumber; dark-skinned figures, skinny dogs. All briefly glimpsed from the back seat of the family car as we drive by. Back then in the fifties and early sixties, these "camps"—or reservations—were the homes of the Indigenous people, to where they had to return by the daily 5:00 pm curfew or face jail if caught. Other hazy images appear now—shirtless, shoeless Indigenous men clustered around the back doors of the town's pubs in the afternoon; the faces and names (Kathleen and Margaret, whose surname was the same as major agricultural company with stockyards in town) of two Indigenous Australian girls in my primary school class, their absence after sixth grade.

These images suggest I was aware of the differences between their lives and mine. I have not forgotten the harsh epithets, derogatory monikers by which these people were referred to—words I would never have spoken and cannot record here. Yet absent in my memories are the impressions these observations made on me. Did I not wonder, seek to understand the terrible things I observed?

If I had wondered, who would I have asked? We were not taught about the modern situation of the Australian Aboriginal peoples in school, nor about their history. Australian history began with the arrival of Europeans, the stories of the heroic white male explorers braving the oceans to map the coast, dying in the desert as they explored the interior. Would I have asked my parents, who, as they became acculturated to the rough Australian country-town life, seemed to adopt the views of the adults who gathered around the kegs in the backyard barbecues? If these adults talked about the Indigenous people at all, it was to decry the latest government policy of closing the camps and moving them into "transitional houses" (small iron-fenced bungalows with louvred opaque windows rather than glass panes), which were built on spare lots among the rows of State Housing Commission affordable housing where we lived.

"They don't know how to live in houses," I heard adults declare. "They need eons to evolve to the level of European human beings." I also heard: "They're closer to apes."

Perhaps it takes a more exceptional child than I to question the attitudes and milieu in which she finds herself and upon which she totally depends. We were a small close-knit family, in a totally new environment, with no extended family. I depended entirely upon the care and attention of my stressed, struggling parents. Those impressions seem to have been locked away in my mind to revisit at some future safer time, in some faraway place. I joined Vietnam War protests in Perth, joined South African apartheid protests in Melbourne, but have no awareness whether there were contemporary protests against the mass incarceration of Aboriginal men, the removal of Aboriginal children from their families, the desecration and mining of sacred sites, the ongoing impoverishment and inequality of the Australian Indigenous peoples. I left Australia for the United States before I could witness the growing political activism of Australia's Indigenous peoples and the attention of more white Australians to their egregious plight.

Shortly after beginning a psychiatric residency in the Bronx in 1974, I attended a local church service, hoping to meet ordinary Americans. As I slipped into an empty seat on the aisle of the crowded church, I became acutely aware that I was different from everyone else. *Had I transgressed an unwritten law*? Everyone was Black. I was not. For the first time, I became acutely aware of whiteness as a thing that defined me. Amid many friendly smiles and handshakes at the end of the service, the minister asked where I was from. My accent surely revealed I was a foreigner, but it was my whiteness that gave me away. If American, I would have known. In that place and time, white people didn't attend Black churches.

In forty-six years living in the United States, I've learned much—from friends, African American literature, narratives of enslaved Americans, from my work. I've gained a political and historical education into the deep roots of slave and colonial capitalism that persist today, seen the recent return of white supremacy and racial hatred in the mainstream of American discourse, hatred that perhaps was not expressed as freely in my first years here (although a Black man was killed and hung from a tree by KKK members as recently as March 1981).

Now, as I reexamine my childhood in that provincial town on the edge of the Australian outback, I know the terrible history of oppression, genocide, removals suffered by those Indigenous peoples whose distant ancestors settled the Australian continent before modern humans settled western Europe and whose more recent ancestors—indentured stockmen on great Australian cattle and sheep ranches—were given surnames of the pastoralist for whom they worked. Indigenous Australians are the proud keepers of possibly the oldest continuous human culture in existence. They have awoken to the imperative of claiming their rights and seeking reparation for the wrongs done to them. However, as here in the United States, oppression continues in many forms: economic, incarcerative, unequal education and opportunity.

As I finish this essay, I look out of my window at the pair of cardinals nesting in the lilac bush that is just starting to bloom and at the light green haze of spring foliage in the trees beyond. A year ago, I retreated from the ravages of the COVID-19 pandemic in New York City to work remotely with my patients from my Connecticut home. Safe, comfortable, able to work in beautiful surroundings, I am acutely aware of and deeply grateful for the privilege inherent in my journeys—my migrations across national borders, across boundaries of class, through barriers to education and enlightenment.

This awareness—difficult to achieve—is uncomfortable to own. ▪

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Of Fruit and COVID

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I stood in front of the granadillas for what felt like an eternity, holding an empty plastic bag in my right hand and a shopping basket in my left. (A granadilla is a small South American fruit, with a round orange hard outer shell, and a white velvety layer in its interior, holding black seeds swimming in a gelatinous sweet pulp). The people at the store, likely rushing to get out of there as soon as possible, felt like ghosts that somehow managed to get around my inert body. My stupor probably looked like a staring contest with these fruits. Their passive silence did nothing but increase my confusion. Perhaps I was waiting in vain for them to give me some clarity, whether an answer to my shopping nightmare or something that would help me make sense of the last few days.

All I seemed able to know at that moment was that I was standing still. I could feel my feet firm on the ground yet anchored without any freedom of movement. Everything else was a blur. My experience of permanence and continuity was questionable, as my sense of temporality was warped. My subjective sense of time was not only out of sync with that of the external world, but it had also lost any remnant of linearity. Any possibility of "going on being" was compromised, and my mind was at the same time frozen and wandering aimlessly in circles.

In slow motion, questions without answers started making an appearance: *How do I know which granadillas to get? How many should I buy? Today is Friday, but all the stores will be closed on Sunday because of COVID, right? Do I even want granadillas? What am I doing here? Granadillas leave trash behind and can be messy. This is all such a fucking mess. Where does my mom keep the trash bags? Should I get that too, just in case? What else should I get for when she comes back from the hospital? When is she coming back?*

I broke out of my daze for an instant and looked at my watch. I realized that I had been at the grocery store for at least fifteen minutes, and all I had to show for it was a bottle of yogurt in my basket. I had been wandering on autopilot through the aisles of a store that was too crowded to be safe, probably knowing implicitly that my decision-making was impaired, and hoping that my hunger or my desire could lead the way. I looked at my shopping basket again and felt shame. *Why am I so useless? Am I a child who can't survive on his own for a couple of days? A teenager who doesn't know how to buy groceries? What's wrong with me? Why am I just standing here? Why do I feel so lost? Why can't I think?*

I was unable to think. I knew the prior days had been incredibly difficult, but only now did I feel slapped from within by the reality of my disjointed experience. It was not hard to see why I was feeling this way. I had abruptly left Chicago, where I live, a week earlier. I took a plane to Lima (Perú), where I grew up, after finding out that my mother had been diagnosed with COVID.

After spending a third of my life abroad, going back to Lima is always strange. It is at the same time a place I no longer recognize and one that I recognize too well, a city where I don't fully belong, yet one that belongs to me in visceral ways. The air breathes differently as soon as I leave the airport, when I am hit by Lima's penetrating humidity and feel surrounded by familiar languages, meanings, and cadences. Something shifts inside of me: a distinct constellation of self-states comes to the fore as I relate to this simultaneously new and old world.

This, however, was a trip like none other. What usually is a well-planned and pleasurable event had, for the first time, a sense of urgency and consequence that was hard to fully grasp. The experience of going back was unrecognizable. I felt fragmented as my mind was pulled in multiple directions, from the uncertainty about an unknown future, to the fear and anxiety that the virus introduces when it invades our most intimate spaces. In my mother's presence, I was hypervigilant about the physical distance we kept, the risks of closeness, the amount of time together, about anything I touched and everything I breathed.

While the main anxiety in my mind was linked to her health, it was impossible to forget the grim reality of Perú's COVID catastrophe. Perú is the country with the highest death rate (per million people) in the world. One of every two hundred people have died. As I write these lines, in April of 2021, one person dies every four minutes. The health care system, already extremely precarious, collapsed a long time ago. ICU beds were scarce to begin with and quickly disappeared. Oxygen tanks were unavailable or inaccessibly overpriced. Vaccination has barely started in a process plagued by inefficiency and corruption.

None of that happened in a vacuum. The pandemic pulled the curtains from Perú's "miraculous" economic growth, exposing its increasing inequality and injustice, part of the dissociative fantasy that financial growth on its own creates social development. While this fantasy was engendered by decades of a neoliberal model, it would be wrong to blame neoliberalism alone for this disaster. As political analyst Alberto Vergara suggests, the coronavirus crisis in my country condensates converging long-term trajectories that gave shape to contemporary Perú.

Three hundred years of colonialism shaped ways of being and relating that remained deeply rooted in a split social psyche, even after the Spaniards were long gone. Frank Wilderson reminds us that colonialism is a relationship dynamic, not something bound to a specific time and place. Our following two hundred years as an independent republic did little to change those dynamics in any meaningful way. The system remains unable and unwilling to break out of denial and dissociation.

This backdrop was present throughout my visit, contributing, even if unconsciously, to the heaviness of this experience. It was now part of a life-or-death situation that touched me personally. The day before I went to the grocery store, I took my mother to the hospital for a CT scan. I waited outside, as only patients were allowed in the COVID area. An ominous sign was placed on the street door, reading: *Available COVID ICU beds: 0*. As blunt as these words were, perhaps a modern rendition of Dante's "abandon all hope," we were privileged that this tangible manifestation of reality took the form of a corporate-looking sign outside this reputable private clinic. For many others relying on public health care, the sign was not a piece of paper but rows of sick bodies waiting for their turn outside of a collapsed hospital.

My mother came out after a few minutes to tell me that they suggested she stay in the emergency room for a few days under observation. It was shocking and relieving at the same time. I only found words to ask her what she needed me to bring: a phone charger, a couple of books, and her toothbrush. In the cab back to her apartment, a disturbing thought came to mind: *Was that the last thing we said to each other?* After dropping off her things at the hospital and going back to her place, I finally broke down and wept.

I went to the grocery store the day after my mother was hospitalized. My pragmatic attempt to plan for the weekend perhaps masked the need to mother myself, to compensate for her absence and cope with the fear of losing her. (I did not know at the time that she would be discharged a few days later, leaving the virus behind and starting a slow but steady recovery.) My legs were moving, but I was numb by the time I stopped in front of the granadillas. I have wondered why this happened then and there, but I don't have a final answer. I suspect that I felt overwhelmed by the weight of this whole experience, to the point of becoming unable to think, when I found myself across the aisle from fruits that, for the last fifteen years of my life, I have only seen in my mother's kitchen. Right then, there was no escape.

I could not make up my mind about the granadillas, so I decided to leave the store without any. I came to terms with my momentary lapse into madness and walked away. What seemed like an easy enough mission felt like an impossible labor, but one I understood I didn't need to complete that day. If I was going to walk aimlessly, I would rather do it under the heaviness of the summer sun. ▪

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6.21.8

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Radical Openness, with Anton Hart

An Interview •Part II

Brent: Can you speak more about the role that loss plays in situations of radical openness?

Anton: The concept of loss or losing is important because it speaks to the ways that opening oneself up and allowing oneself to be moved is not just a benign thing to do; it involves relaxing one's grasp of what one thinks one already knows, including about oneself, and taking the risk of losing one's previous understandings. The reason that such losing is risky is that we use our acquired understandings to secure our personal sense of continuity of being. That is, we protect ourselves from destabilizing surprises by approaching new situations on the basis of what we already know, what we have already learned. In this way, we minimize the crises that might be expected if we encounter something (or someone) new and unexpected, since the new and the unexpected always carry with them the threat of disrupting and destabilizing our ways of getting through time and surviving as we were before. I believe that discontinuity of experience—of thoughts, feelings, self-states—represents, ultimately, an existential threat for every person. And so I proceed with a way of describing dialogue that intends to highlight, rather than obscure, the real risks involved in pursuing a stance of radical openness.

Betty: Brent's question about loss and radical openness's proposal "of losing the understandings to which we have been attached" causes me to ask if radical openness requires us to adopt a skeptical stance toward our own assumptions, especially about another person. Is this also what we might aim to lose? For me, "assumption" has associations with implicit and explicit bias, and to epistemology (i.e., all that we think we know). Is this what we might aim to lose?

Anton: Yes, Betty, I think you have understood what I am trying to get at here. But maybe, rather than a sense of skepticism turned toward oneself, I would prefer to think of it as a sense of personal mystery or maybe also personal humility and fallibility. Psychoanalysis demonstrates, in so many ways, that to be human means being largely unconscious of one's thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and tendencies. So losing the understandings which we may have been attached to might mean letting go of the certainty that we just know who we are, what we think, that we know what we are up to, in any given moment. Values and ideologies are interesting in the sense that they often seem to serve as hiding places for aspects of a person that run counter to the values that are being held or the ideologies that are being espoused.

So, yes, I think that aspiring to a stance of radical openness does map to trying to surmount one's biases, but inasmuch as such biases are not always conscious, it is hard, if not impossible, to directly counter or remove them, even if we try to do so. As such, radical openness asks us to consider that we may very well be biased or prejudiced in ways that would be unfathomable or even unimaginable to us and to proceed in dialogue with perpetual humility and uncertainty.

Brent: You speak of the importance of trust being established relationally rather than being presumed. Even under hypothetically ideal circumstances, the relation between analyst and analysand and the relation between two political interlocutors are different in kind. The analytical relation is necessarily asymmetrical, right? There is a set of reasons why one person is on the couch and the other is not. In political dialogue, we might hope that the relation is more egalitarian. Does this difference in the structure of the dialogic relation have an effect on how trust might get inculcated in the political case versus the clinical one?

Anton: Trust between two people can be such a fragile, fleeting thing. While I do think that trust must be established rather than presumed, I also think that whatever trust might be established in a given dyad, it is probably best not to regard it as simply constant or permanent. There are so many ways that anxieties may be elicited in a dialogue, particularly when it is a dialogue about something important and possibly polarized, and when those personal anxieties reach certain proportions where a threat of emotional overwhelm becomes present, defensively mistrustful feelings are bound to emerge in one or both of the dialogic participants.

The psychoanalytic situation does seem to require certain asymmetries in order to proceed with sufficient safety for the patient (something I have been thinking about and writing about for quite some time), but the inherent symmetries in the psychoanalytic relationship are also inescapable: there are two participants in an analytic process, and while one of them may be on the couch and another sitting up in a chair, both are subject to the vastness of unconsciousness and both, therefore, must realize that, in any given moment, they do not know what they, themselves, are up to, at least not entirely. The analyst's personal analysis while undergoing psychoanalytic training, for example, is not for the purpose of the analyst's overcoming of unconsciousness. Rather, becoming an analyst requires extensive personal analytic experience in order to help analysts gain tolerance for their own senses of personal unknownness, in combination with greater fluency and openness regarding emergent, surprising personal and relational experience. The psychoanalytic situation is a special instance of dialogue, one in which the matter of necessary trust itself will intentionally come up again and again over the course of the ongoing conversation. Encouraging patients to say whatever comes to mind—to speak freely and openly and to free-associate—always inherently involves exploring with patients why they can't say everything that comes to mind, and this gets into the territory of the shame-related and other dangers presented by the analyst, the reasons that the patient might not feel inclined to trust.

Political dialogue, to the extent that it focuses on political "issues," is not set up to take the necessary repeated excursions into the territory of how things might be emerging as dangerous for one or the other dialogic partner, and this renders the establishment and maintenance of trust and the openness that might accompany such trust less likely. So, when looking at political dialogue, the concept of radical openness might be drawn upon to alert us to the idea that openness, trust, and safety are all intertwined and that, if we are to make any headway in cases of polarized difference of political perspective, we will have to be attentive to the necessity of finding ways of addressing the breakdowns of safety and openness that are likely to come up rather regularly. We can't just focus on the contents of the different viewpoints or emphasize the importance of civility of discourse and hope that good-faith, open conversations will be possible.

Brent: I want to ask about the role that care plays in radical openness. When you say that radical openness requires us to take the other "into our care," what does that mean to you? Do I take the other's desires as our own? ("I see that you want x, therefore I will act as if I want x.") Or, maybe their wants and needs become a reason for me to act? ("Because I see that you want x, I ought to act to bring x about.") Or perhaps not their desires but their flourishing becomes a concern for me.

Anton: Emmanuel Levinas talks about the ethical (and, in his case, spiritual) calling that is occasioned by looking into the face of the other person. In the moment of seeing the other's face, Levinas argues that our ultimate ethical calling is elicited. On such occasions, our capacities for caring rise up and orient us toward the other's needs, concerns, and, perhaps, desires. With the phrase "taking the other into one's care," we might mean that the other's concerns become my own concerns as well, as is the case in a relationship between, for example, parent and child. I like your proposal of substituting "their flourishing" for their desires, because "desire" connotes something maybe more immediate and, perhaps, more erotic too. When I "take the other into my care," I want for them what will be best for them, but I retain a sense of humility about my ability to know what would be best. ▪

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Psychoanalysis in a *Lyric Mode*

All I can do is assert—with more passion than proof— a psychoanalytic mode that is more lyric than rational, more metaphysical than scientific. It has long been commonplace in our profession to say that Freud always hoped psychoanalysis would find itself on firm scientific footing, in which case his speculations would be replaced by biology and chemistry. My reading of Freud's disclaimers about psychoanalysis is that it was his way of deferring the scientific question to some future time, thereby clearing a space for his more theoretical and often hypothetical, philosophical, and even novelistic pursuits. In my reading, he is being a bit sly, coy even. What struck me in my recent reading of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* was that Freud quite offhandedly writes that even should we find a firmer basis in science for psychoanalysis, the fact is that we are always having to rely on what is a figurative, metaphoric language because that is what science has to do. That is, we grasp for available language to explain what we see and what we do: the language of biology, the language of neurology and brain science, the language of quantum physics, even, as with Lacan, the language of linguistics. In his psychoanalytic writing, Freud tried out a variety of languages to get at psychoanalysis from different perspectives: the biological, the psychological or behavioral, the sociological and anthropological, the evolutionary or "phylogenetic," the novelistic, the historical, and even the mythic.

Thinking now of Laplanche's explication of the concept of "leaning on"—as in the human sexual drives "leaning on the vital order" of the whole body in its anatomic and biological functions—it occurs to me that our theory is also, by necessity, having to lean on the languages available to us and, in particular it seems, the scientific languages available to us. But we are not single-celled structures, nor electrons under a microscope, nor brains, nor computers, nor completely constructed like a language. Any attempts to approach who we are as human beings and what we do as psychoanalysts from one scientific language or another will be both exciting and partial, both illuminating and limited. Here is where some notion of the meta nature of psychoanalysis has to enter into our conversation. If, as Laplanche contends, we are always attempting to translate the residues and effects of an enigmatic, unrepresented series of signifiers implanted in us as infants, and this constitutes us as the neurotic, sexual, driven human beings we are, then we escape the confines of traditional, positivist science, even as we escape and contest the confines of our biological bodies in

our very humanity. We are never just bodies or brains, but we are also nothing without them; psychoanalysis is not about biology or neurology but seeks to theorize science itself on its own terms. I think that is what Freud says in his offhanded way, that science itself depends always on another figurative language and is always in translation.

Laplanche writes that Freud, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, tries to biologize psychoanalysis, but in my reading, he is also psychoanalyzing biology, speaking of cells as if they could be narcissistic and engage in object relations and even perform self-sacrificial acts in the service of the survival of the larger organism. What I appreciate most about Freud is that he really comes to no conclusions at all but merely lets us in on his thinking as he writes, taking us with him as he tries out different ways of thinking about the enigmas of the human mind, of consciousness and unconsciousness, of memory, of sexuality, of creativity, of death and mourning, and so on.

Just today, I finished reading the sixth and final volume of Virginia Woolf's Letters, which ends with her suicide notes to her sister, Vanessa, and her husband, Leonard. Woolf had just finished her last novel, *Between the Acts*, and its publication was announced on the Hogarth list for the following spring when she decided to remove it from submission—an action that she didn't live to perform.

That novel was about village theatricals, of the writer as dramaturge, attempting to extract from the rustic cast of amateurs the voices she has heard in her own head and written down, in this case a dramatic production of the whole history of English literature. At the end, she, Miss La Trobe, is an outcast, as her audience and cast go back to their village hearths and leave her outside, alone, with nothing to comfort her but the words that keep coming to her: "She raised her glass to her lips. And drank. And listened. Words of one syllable sank down into the mud. She drowsed; she nodded. The mud became fertile. Words rose above the intolerably laden dumb oxen plodding through the mud. Words without meaning—wonderful words." And we can hear in this final effort of Woolf's both her struggle as an artist and her descent into madness. What is so poignant and almost unbearable to me is the proximity of these two states for her: the way she represents, in this final novel, the struggle to translate the flow of meaningless words into living art and the struggle to fight the psychosis that manifested itself in voices speaking to her. She articulates the fragile boundary between symptom and sublimation—to use our language—but also the common ground, so plainly evident both in this text of hers and in its position as her last novel, written as she was in the process of breaking down, so that she questioned its value herself at the very end. Was it a work of art? Was it a contribution to this history of literature that she had taken upon herself to reread from start to finish in the last months of her life? Or was it only a testament to the madness that was flooding over her, rendering all things solid into liquid, and presaging her own death by drowning? "It was strange that the earth, with all those flowers incandescent—the lilies, the roses, and clumps of white flowers and bushes of burning green—should still be hard. From the earth green waters seemed to rise over her. She took her voyage away from the shore, and, raising her hand, fumbled for the latch of the iron entrance gate."

Both Woolf and Freud, in his later works, were responding to a crisis in civilization itself, bookended by two world wars. For Woolf, the crisis was both external and internal, as if she both embodied and ensouled a literary tradition and an artistic spirit that, in her fragile form at least, could not survive the twin assaults of psychic and cultural breakdown. The writing both survived and engendered new forms and ways of writing. In Yeats's poem "Leda and the Swan," the transspecies rape of Leda by Zeus as a swan produces nothing less than the whole of classic civilization. The annunciation is another version of this trope, in which the Holy Spirit enters Mary's ear, impregnating her and engendering all of Western civilization. Laplanche's template is the same one. The individual in her prehistory is assaulted from without by incomprehensible even otherworldly or demonic messages, a rape, but one that is rapturous—as in Yeats's poem and the iconography of the annunciation—engendering unique infantile sexual fantasies and their adult sequelae.

The trauma that Freud inflicted on the human psyche at the turn of the twentieth century remains the one we grapple with as analysts. What he wrote still remains to be translated in our own practices, as it has engendered its own world of enigmatic signifiers manifest in the utterly unique strangeness of our separate lives. Art is the ongoing attempt to map the contours and depict the colors of that strangeness, to record the language of it, the words that come to us, voiced in our families from before we know what they are, the "wonderful words without meaning"; from the streets we walk down, floating in fragments into our ears; from our dreams, suspended at times as both aural and spatial objects that we unpack in analytic hours into threads of nonmeaning again; from the "suprasegmental phonemes" or the surrounds of the words, the spaces, gaps, intonations, the melodies of sentences, interrogatives and exclamations, the music of those voices. Psychoanalysis—as I've come to think of it and to practice it—is an answering art, is the responsiveness of the analyst to the stranger who speaks to us from her strangeness; it is the response that reveals our own strangeness as well. ▪

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White Mother Black Sons

I am the white Jewish mother of Black sons. My older child was called "the N word" for the first time in Fire Island, New York, when he was three years old.

The younger one was called "the N word" for the first time in Massachusetts when he was six.

By the age of eighteen, he'd been interrogated by police in New York City and in many other places for walking, running, riding a bike, once on the road to Providence, Rhode Island, with his father, who quickly instructed him to put his hands on the dashboard in plain sight, as he'd instructed him and his older brother not to run on the street, especially at night, not even on our block, trying to catch a bus. He had been disciplined by white teachers for pointing to racism in classic white literature that would later be accepted by literary scholars. Now the cofounder and executive director of a nonprofit serving Black and Latinx youth, like most of his staff and youth members, he has been *stopped and frisked* many times.

My older son, an actor in Hollywood, is never called for auditions of characters assumed to be white. He is Black. A brown-skinned man like his brother and their father, the shade of their brownness irrelevant.

In 1995, home for a visit from college, my younger son and I are talking about race and his classes in African American studies. "I am Black," he tells me. "I have a Jewish mother, but the term biracial is meaningless to me," and, evoking the history of racial so-called "mixedness" going back to slavery with its long history of rape by white slaveholders of enslaved Black women, "I reject the identity of the tragic mulatto." He continues to explain his beliefs, and when I say, "I understand," he tells me gently, "I don't think you do, Mom. You can't understand this completely because you're white."

I remember being stunned—by his vehemence and by the idea. Like most mothers, I have strongly identified with my children. Like other writers of my generation, I have used the experience of motherhood to try to comprehend the human conflict between devotion to others and obligations to the self, the lifelong tension between the need for clear boundaries and boundless intimacy. I have experienced difficulty but also reparation in mothering children myself. But that day, standing in a darkened room,

facing my son, I felt exiled from my not-fully-grown child.

Fierce possessiveness lies at the heart of motherhood right alongside the more reasonable need to see one's children become themselves, and this emotion nearly choked me, obliterating vocabulary, my feelings too threatening to find easy language, minefields lining opposite sides of the road of my motherhood of this beloved son. What was this *whiteness* that threatened to separate me from my own child? How often had I failed to see it lurking, hunkering down, encircling me in some irresistible fog? I wanted words that might be helpful to him, offer some carefully designed, unspontaneous permission for him to discover his own road, even if that meant leaving me behind. At the same time, I wanted to cry out, *don't leave me*, as he had cried out to me when I walked out of daycare centers, out of his first classroom in public school. And always this double truth, as unresolvable as in any other passion, the paradox: she is me/not me; he is mine/not mine.

As my son is not me and not mine, I am not his and not him—a harder truth for mothers to absorb, for social confirmation is rare and historically recent. Maternal mythologies about ultimate responsibility and perfect goodness are still pervasive and, despite our studied and even internalized understanding, often controlling. As mothers of grown-up men and women, let alone mothers of infants and children, we can still crave the ideal—to be all that is wanted of us, harmonically in tune with our children's desires, perfectly responsive to their needs. Instead, we often face the reality of dissonance, difference, and resistance—aspects of love as threatening at times to our adult selves as to the shadowy children we always, in some way, continue to be. Growing up as Black men at the end of the twentieth century in the United States, my sons had to integrate our differences and separate identities with our deep attachments and similarities in order to preserve love and reconfirm commitment. But I learned early that embedded in the psychological demands all children face, my children faced a powerful injustice—the forces of racism, dangerous to growth of both spirits and bodies. Over time, making my way through a thick fog of denial I came to call "the whiteness of whiteness," I became a student again, learning from my children, our Black family, and from books about an American history and experience I, like most white Americans, comprehended only in a shallow and general way. Being the white mother of Black children afforded me an opportunity—what felt like a demand—to face the dissonant realities that belong to all relationships between mothers and children, and this part of my identity became one location for relearning at all levels of awareness: I study and teach the history and literature of race, and continue to explore the forces in human character that have found brutal expression in white American racism. I write race and matters of race into much of my work in fiction, memoir, and essay. Then I dream myself as a woman of "mixed race," scars on my face, like adolescent acne, like ritual cuttings, signs of battles survived.

In a society pervaded by racism rooted in the still-unconfronted history and consequences of fourteen generations of American slavery, five more of apartheid/Jim Crow, this engagement converges with familiar maternal dilemmas, clashing currents between separation and attachment. I remember my body containing and nourishing their lives, and I remember their own lives, suddenly outside of me. I want my children to know me and love me as I really am. Yet there have been times when I have wanted more than anything to be Black for my sons. Social and political realities entwined within my private and intimate life, and my children knew it before I did. How could I protect them then? How many mistakes had I made? As a mother, my first conscious response to all this was, of course, guilt. But guilt is often a mask for anger, and anger, acknowledged and specific, can open consciousness that may be both painful and redemptive.

Speaking of parental love, impotence, failure, and effort, James Baldwin, a great American writer who understood the wounds of racism better than anyone, wrote:

> When one slapped one's child in anger the recoil in the heart reverberated through heaven and became a part of the pain of the universe. [But…] it was the Lord who knew of the impossibility every parent in that room faced: how to prepare the child for the day when the child would be despised and how to *create* in the child—by what means?—a stronger antidote to this poison than one had found for oneself.

Like all Black Americans, Baldwin was forced to comprehend racism in all its obvious and insidious aspects in order to survive. Pushed into compassionate understanding of Black parents, he sought to forgive his own stepfather, whose brutality had caused his son to hate him. Through imagination to expression in language, his courage and brilliance sent his personal transformation into the public world.

I move back and forth between the interior world and the world in which my sons, now my granddaughter, as well as other children live—a world that includes pleasure and joy but also violence, racism, and injustice. Inspired by Baldwin and other African American writers, I try to imagine the interior lives and outside pressures on others, beginning with my sons but extending from them to encompass a broader world.

What do I want as a mother? Compassion for all the feelings this most profound, varied, and complex life experience gives rise to; for institutions,

significant others, therapists, our children to listen to our words, not to interpret too quickly, not to reduce one thing to another.

After the blindness of whiteness is gone, the time of passing over begins. We must face American reality—from revising curriculum at all levels of education, to many aspects of social and economic policy, to matters of personal identity and choice. There is no easy escape from racism or racist history, but skin of various shades of brown is still only skin of various shades of brown. Imagine the grace of that ordinary enlightenment ending the great evil of color and culture remade into race and class.

Into the beautiful complexities of our identities, history sears like a knife. And white Americans must be told that Black Lives Matter, a radical rallying cry and a lamentation that such words must be said at all. ▪

• Portions of this essay were published in different form in: Lazarre, J. *Beyond the Whiteness of Whiteness: Memoir of a White Mother of Black Sons* (Duke University Press, 1996)

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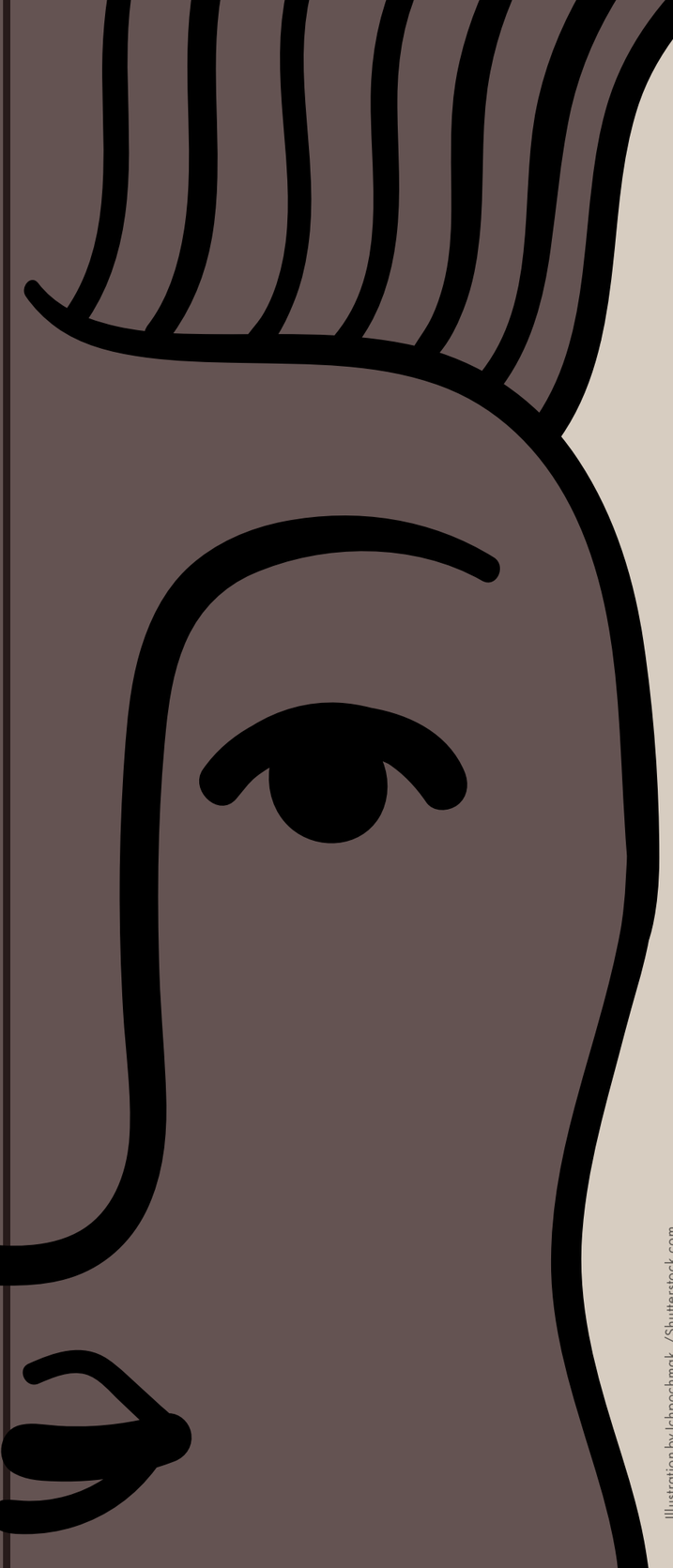

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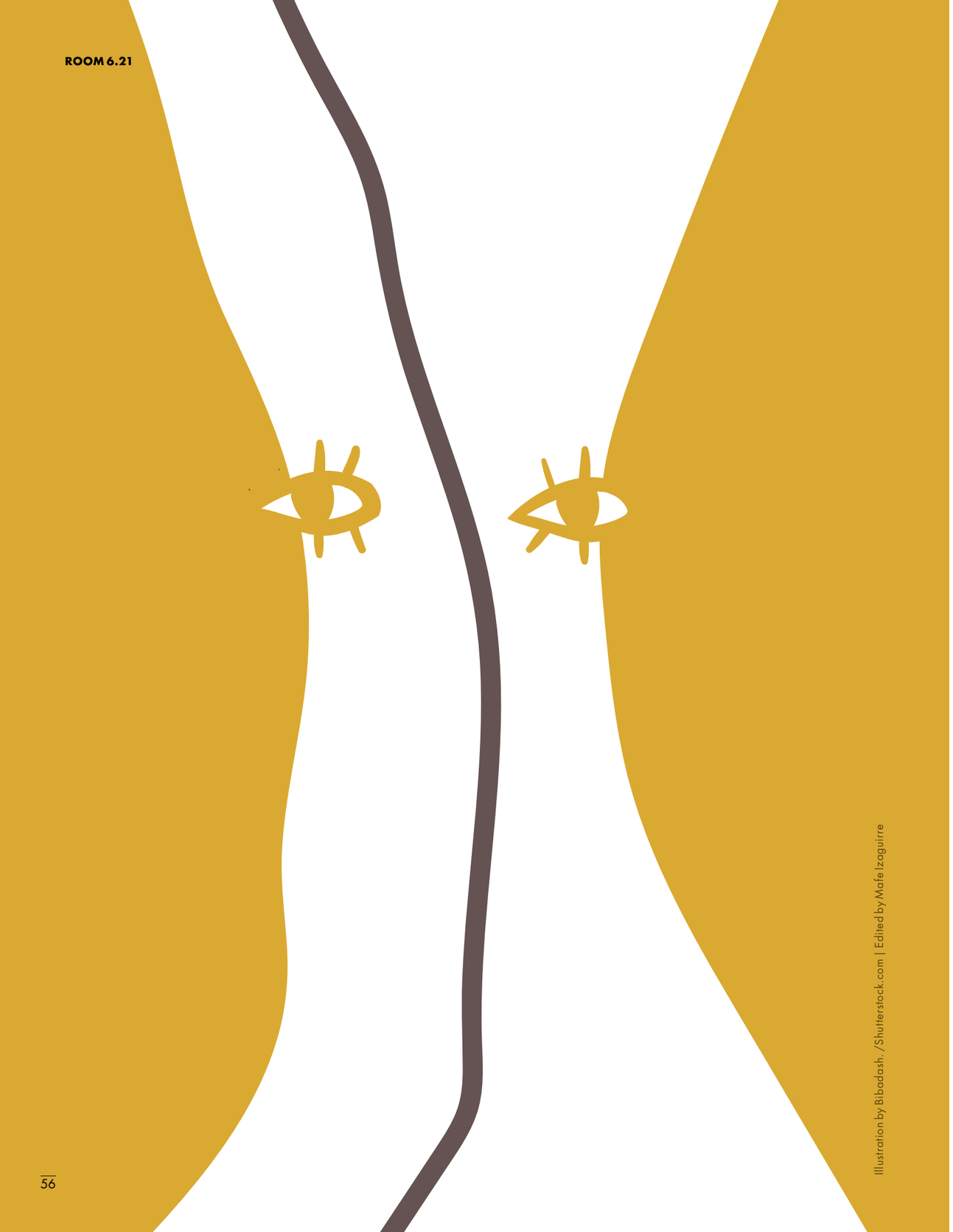
Jacqueline Shatz, *Slipstream*, 9″ x 6″ x 6″

Jacqueline Shatz, *Mare*, 10″ x 7″ x 8″



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Remaining To Be Seen

It is Tuesday at 4:00 pm, and it is time for Ben, a white man in his early thirties. He often refers to himself as "strange" for feeling out of step in not holding popular, mainstream views like most of his friends. He feels like that is due to a lack in him, and this lack makes him feel on the outside of things. He does not feel lacking or strange to me but familiar. I find myself holding him in warmth and fondness.

It is our first session of the week. He recounts a conversation he had with friends. It is about the rise of hate crimes against Asian Americans and how these hate crimes are not getting enough news coverage. Then he asks me, "Dr. Chong, are you okay? How are you doing with all this?" In that instance, I feel simultaneously seen and wanting to remain unseen. Both positions feel vulnerable to me.

I can feel my emotions well up. I am relieved we are on the phone and Ben cannot see my eyes tearing up. There is so much. How I want to answer is so vastly far from how I need to answer. That is when my mind goes to thoughts that have been banging around my head since my own analytic session on Friday and the weekend plenaries at the American Psychoanalytic Association (APsaA) meeting.

It would be too much to share my painful anguish, now having to process a racial enactment that my analyst and I are coming out of and starting to understand together. How do I convey that it seems without my body and phenotype in plain sight, in only hearing my voice, my Asian-ness seems to disappear? I have become white. But more than that, I am being centered in whiteness, and being constructed against the norms of it—and my lack of it. It is an agonizing and grueling process to become visible because it entails decentering my analyst's whiteness. I start decentering by having the courage, and the nerve, to say in response, "So thinks and says the white man."

This lack of representation remains as I search for Asian-ness in the APsaA plenaries. The generalities along with the particular aspects of being a racialized object, seems limited to the Black and Brown experience. And, now, finally in the mix, whiteness has arrived at APsaA, rightfully taking its place as the racializing subject. whiteness is no longer being held invisible. But where is my Yellowness among Black, Brown, and white? It feels like I have been subsumed as part of one of these groups or have been made invisible again.

Within the Asian American community, there is a hyperawareness about not being seen. And that this impoverishment can begin to feed on itself and even become protective, as it did for my parents and previous immigrant generations. For them, they felt being visible was a vulnerability and weakness—why expose and risk yourself to be seen, given the uncertainty of how your humanness will be responded to beyond our sheltered enclaves? For me, vulnerability in this racial context is a paradox—it is because of this uncertainty that it is safer and necessary to be visible, to emotionally show myself, and to want to be fully seen and heard. That is to be fully represented in the particular ways my humanness is racialized as an Asian American—if only for the opportunity to relinquish these ghosts from my own mind, let alone for my generation.

My mind returns to Ben. He wants to see me and inquires about the current state of my racial condition. In a mixed tone of gratitude and anguish, I share it has been painful to see these awful racial crimes transpire and how they have gone on too long, and so overlooked. I feel his asking helps, and it shows me he wants to make things better. But I know there is vulnerability, too, in his asking me his question. There is a part of him that wants to be visible.

We are well into the hour. I turn my attention to Ben, as he tells me about his lack of being seen as a particular kind of white man. A white man who is at odds with his community in searching for what the notion of whiteness means and entails, while at the same time, he is deeply at odds within himself, grappling to come to terms with how whiteness is being characterized by others.

How our work ahead takes shape—to find the words to fathom what has been impoverished and to fully represent our humanness in the process—remains to be seen. ▪

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Reframed

"I was thinking to myself, *I can't wait to tell them. They're going to be so excited!*" Or maybe the patient didn't say *excited*—maybe they used a different word. I can't exactly remember because my mind got stuck on *them/they're.* It took a moment before I realized the patient was referring to me. They referenced me not as *her/she* but *them/they.* My preferred pronouns. I was moved, for a moment, out of the shared space of the session, out of the patient's experience and into my own. Something caught in my throat, my eyes watered just a fraction, and my heart skipped a beat. I felt fear; I felt gratitude. I slowly settled back into attunement with my patient, and though they remained on the screen, many miles away, I felt closer to them than before.

When I see patients, my "name tag" on virtual platforms includes my pronouns in parentheses: (they/she), out in the open, for all patients to see. And yet, how strange to be seen. Something feels uncomfortable about it that makes me believe it's imperative.

I started in private practice for the first time last summer, August 2020. My first job post-postdoc, post-license, midpandemic. I decided to be out in my bio on the group practice website, stating for all to see that I am a queer clinician who loves working with the queer community. It took me hours to write. I went so far as to submit a draft with no mention of my identity whatsoever, only to retract it immediately. As I typed, backspaced, typed, backspaced, the task began to feel like a reenactment. How badly I want, have always wanted, to be fully seen in that regard, and how often I have defensively moved away. A part of me holds great shame about that, and it's hard to write. As much as I've wanted to be "out and proud," more of my life has looked like "out and ambivalent."

And yet, a still bigger part of me knows I'm not alone in this, as a queer person and as a psychodynamic/analytic clinician specifically. I know that my ambivalence comes not only from the bumps along the road of my own identity development but from a conflict within our field as a whole. I mean, of course, there is harm historically and currently inflicted by psychologists on queer folx. We (psychologists) have ostracized us (queer folx) as mentally ill and morally corrupt; we (psychologists) have caused irreparable damage to us (queer folx) via conversion therapy. Again, these pronouns are intentional and important—I am both subject and object here.

But I mean more than this. I think a particular kind of person becomes a dynamic clinician or an analyst. This particular kind of person might understand what I mean when I name both fear and gratitude in the same moment of being seen head-on, a therapist in the headlights. Perhaps they understand the split intimacy of knowing the deepest parts of a person, their patient—and in some ways being known quite profoundly in return—while ultimately remaining unknown, unseen, the blank screen. For no matter how we may eschew the traditional analytic notions of neutrality in favor of relational, intersubjective ways of being and feeling with the patient, there is a boundary. There is a power dynamic. There is an imbalance. And it keeps us safe. It keeps us—or parts of us, at least—utterly unknown to the person sitting across from us (or the person sitting in front of a screen looking at a projection of us).

Part of that is so painful. Is there one among us who hasn't ever wished for some part of their self to be seen by their patient, freed from the frame? Another part of that, we must admit, is a huge relief. We can sidestep; we can evade; we can avoid feeling stuck in the headlights of intimacy. Someone once told me when I was a kid that we pursue a career in what we feel most deeply lacking. Yikes. There's a lot I disagree with there, but I'm trying to hold on to the grain of truth: being known for all of who I am has always been hard. And I imagine other folx who find themselves in this *ROOM* may join with me here.

Now we see patients amid a pandemic, violence, societal upheaval. Everything feels blasted apart—literally we were all torn apart from each other by mandates for quarantine and social distancing. And yes, clinical work feels so distanced over the internet. We are so very far away from our patients. And also, we've never been closer.

There's a way in which everything feels more personal, more human to human, than it ever has (at least for me, in my short time practicing). We are sitting in the same mud, swimming in the same water, trying to stay afloat and acclimate, together. The safety of the typical frame has collapsed, and we're being truly *seen* as never before. This means everything from disclosures made of practical necessity (pets and babies making unplanned guest appearances on screen) to a heightened transparency of feeling through the same phenomenon with patients in the same moment (no way to fall back on the eternal advice of "doing our own processing first").

It feels uncomfortable in the way that makes me believe it's imperative. Over the last year plus, we have been forced to face head-on what we previously worked to evade. We have been subjected to a staggering loss of life wrought by an administration that refused to face reality. Centuries of racism have erupted in renewed violence, injustice, terrorism. We have been forced by technology to witness the extremes of the racism that we, white people, turn away from daily. We can't not see it anymore—though, unfortunately, there are many of us who still try. There is a time and a place for analytic neutrality, but perhaps this sociopolitical moment is not it.

I didn't make the conscious connection at the time, but I see it now. I don't know if my choice to come out at work would have happened in the same way if it hadn't been for the last year. It felt imperative to come out to face the discomfort that comes from naming a reality that not everyone will accept.

It is not lost on me that clinicians of color face this discomfort every single day; it is impossible to not disclose the color of one's skin. It is not my intention to equate sexuality with race and ethnicity but only to name that it is an incredible privilege that I have the choice of disclosure at all. It is also not my intention to assert that all queer clinicians *should* come out. Even the notion of coming out is a western, white concept—to have the power to decide what of yourself to share implies ownership and autonomy over that self (binaohan)—and it does not feel like the best choice for everyone.

The last year plus will be an indelible reminder that our frame is ultimately a fantasy. And while in many ways it is one of the most essential elements of our work, we cannot hide behind it. Nor do I believe I want to. When it collapsed, I experienced both fear and a wish granted. I experienced a closeness with my patients that felt radically different—uncomfortable in a way that reminds me how brave it is to face one's reality and wonderful in a way that reminds me how worth it it is to be seen. ▪

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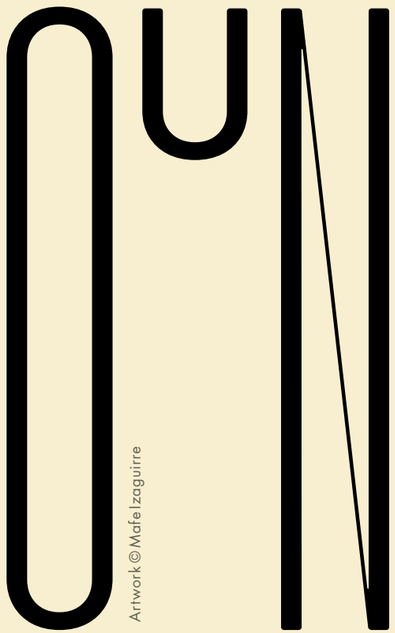
MOVING BOUNDARIES



Many of us have had the experience of standing in front of the window of a hospital's newborn nursery, a partition that simultaneously protects and allows visitors to gaze at the variety of human life displayed within. The tiny creatures, hatted in little ski caps, are only hours to days old, yet how distinct they are from one another as they sleep, squirm, smile, grimace, and cry. It's fascinating in those early weeks, especially if the infant is a familial one, to watch the play of expressions that crosses its face and then shifts, calling to mind now the contemplative gaze of one relative and then the loopy smile of another—features that over time will coalesce into a more stable facial configuration. It's as though, for a brief while, the newborn phenotype reflects the multiplicity of its genetic constituents that will shortly disappear from view and go underground.

The first psychoanalyst to single out and explore the process of identity formation was Erik Erikson, who classified the stages and challenges of identity development and highlighted the "identity crisis." In his view, the formation of both personal and group identity—national, racial, ethnic, and religious, among others—is shaped equally by the elements that are allowed in and incorporated and those that are left out and expelled. *Disidentification* is the term coined by the psychoanalyst Ralph Greenson to depict the process in which the little boy turns away from maternal identification in the course

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of his masculine gender identity consolidation. But as we all know, if the unconscious is a bottomless reservoir and in line with Erikson's intimation, what becomes of disavowed and discarded identifications?

Identity establishment and alignment are keynotes of our cultural discourse, signaling cohesiveness and allegiance as well as diversity and fluidity. The LGBTQ umbrella represents members of the population who identify neither with the majority sexual orientation nor with traditional gender categorization and roles, but racial identification is in a comparable state of flux. In an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* about the racial and ethnic categories used by the US Census, the former director of the Census Bureau commented, "The race question [on the census] is incoherent because race is incoherent" (November 28, 2020). The census findings that over 10 percent of babies born in the United States today have one white and one nonwhite parent, and that 26 percent of Hispanics marked the box for "other" when asked to identify their race attest to the shifting nature of racial experience. Following the 2020 election results, Kamala Harris was heralded as the first woman and the first Black American, as well as the first Southeast Asian American to assume the role of vice president, and we were witness to her intersectional embodiment of both a multiplicity and a coalition of identities.

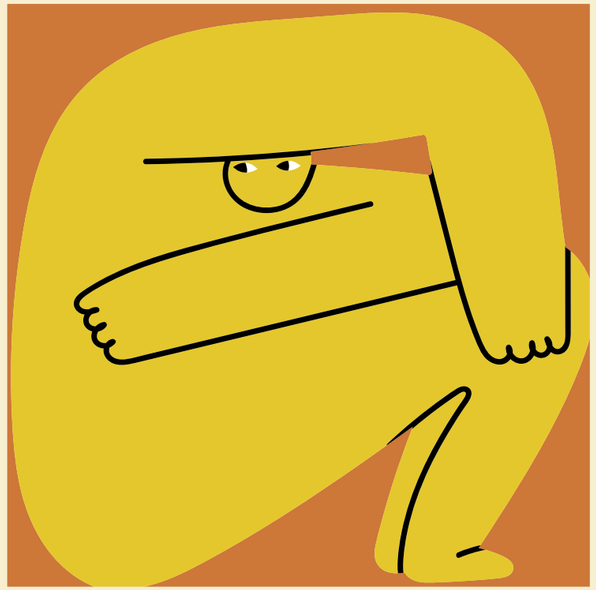
Some identities carry more freight and valence than others, as the contemporary reevaluation and reimagining of Blackness unquestionably does. Historically degraded and otherized, nonwhite skin color has become a badge of unity, protest, and pride. James Baldwin's observation that "Black is a tremendous spiritual condition, one of the greatest challenges anyone alive can face" accentuates the complexity and layers of meaning that inform Black identity. When Barack Obama became our first Black, African American president, his designation as such seemed self-evident, despite the fact that he is technically biracial. But as a white person, I found myself searching at times for his white half and wishing it could be recognized and named because I too wanted a part in identifying with him, and I felt excluded. Although I recognized that my dose of otherness and exclusion was just a microscopic, and even ironic, reflection of the experience of most Black people in our country, I took some comfort in the thought that Obama's wide-ranging capacity for empathy and the breadth of his identity had been shaped also, unlike the experience of so many Black people, by positive contacts with white people.

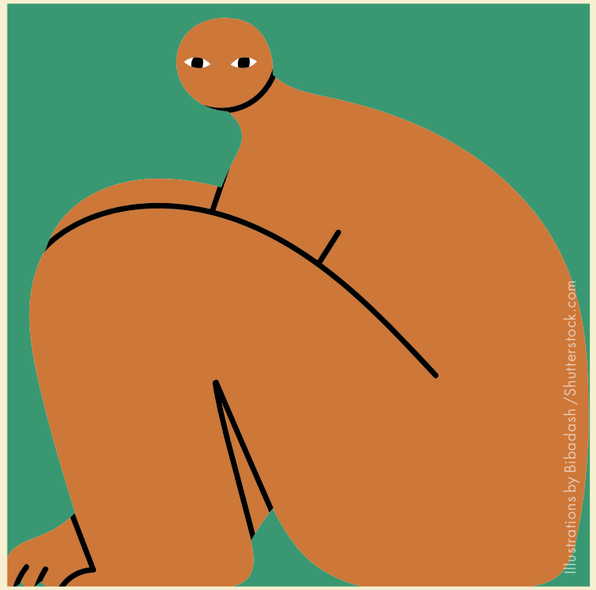
As psychotherapists and psychoanalysts, we are familiar with the fluctuating identifications that unfold in the course of deep-running therapy and with the psychic change that is revealed in the emergence of new self-representations and the relinquishing of old identifications. In my own clinical work, there was one therapeutic encounter in particular that stimulated in me an unanticipated stretching of boundaries. The patient in question, a self-described "brown girl," was an accomplished professional who had persevered in the face of numerous obstacles and instances of mistreatment by significant people in her past. From the outset, she made it clear that she would prefer to be seeing a therapist who was a better match with her racial and cultural identity. As we continued to work together, her comments became increasingly dredged in anti-Semitic insinuation. I felt assaulted and on several occasions responded defensively

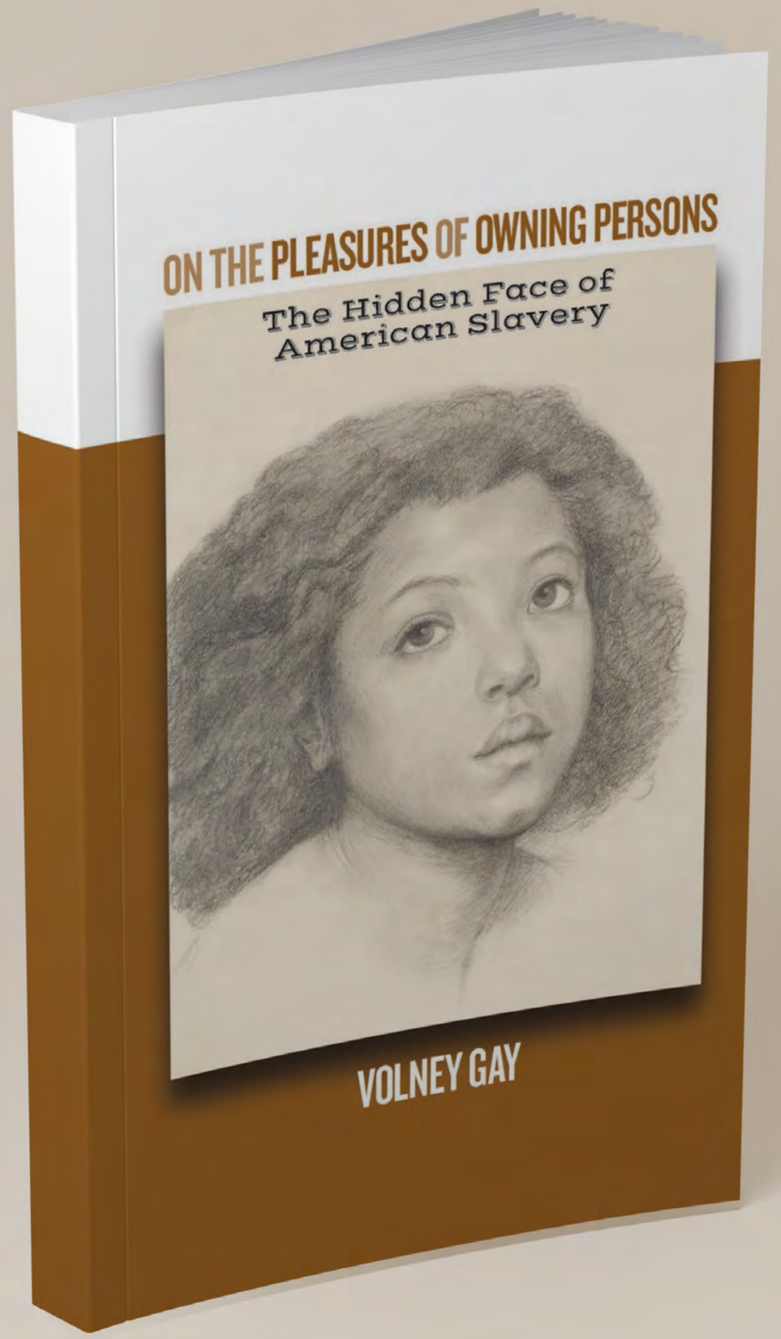
and angrily, entangling us in arguments that threatened to end the treatment. I was concerned that both the treatment and I would fail, but I was also intrigued by this patient, whose tenacity and sense of integrity led her to express her views, no matter how distasteful they might be to me. Not lost on me also was a generosity of spirit that coexisted alongside her anger and rancor and was at moments directed toward me too.

After a number of mutual provocations that showed no signs of diminishing, I began to sit back, literally and figuratively. I considered that, in addition to the real experience that had fueled this patient's anti-Jewish sentiment, her anti-Semitic barbs might be understood both as a transferential vehicle for expressing aggressive feelings—and a test of my ability to withstand them—and as a projective replay of her own subjection to baleful otherness. Over time, I noted in myself a gradual buildup of relative immunity to her anti-Jewish asides (she remained quite vigilant about my potential reactivity), which I was coming to hear with a certain dispassion and even curiosity. I was aware that I seemed to be sliding out of the template of my Jewish identity, with its associated loyalty and chauvinism (although it was clearly an identity susceptible to self-criticism, or else why would I have felt so defensive to begin with?) and gliding into an inhabitation of my patient's perspective, as I imagined it. This slipping out of my own boundaries felt expansive but also somewhat disloyal and even transgressive, because while it released me temporarily from my own psychic confines, it also invited an abandonment of an essential identification and allegiance and a crossing over into another subjective experience that was inimical, at least in part, to them. Adding to the unfamiliarity and novelty of this experience, it more than once expressed itself viscerally—by the rise in me of a sensation of antipathy toward what I sensed as my own bleached-out skin color and a yearning for the warmth and saturation of my patient's skin color. The imagined and partially embodied release of boundaries and identifications that I experienced had a lasting impact on me, while at another level, the actual relationship with the patient gradually grew more trusting and closer.

The psychological definition and clarity necessary for early identity consolidation are achieved via a selection process in which some parts are left in and others renounced. The parts excluded are disavowed, often depreciated, and sometimes infused with hatred. The psychoanalytic constructs of penis envy and womb envy attest to the devaluation that infiltrates what is experienced as missing from and Other than oneself and exemplify the continuous psychic struggle to balance the poles of admiration/envy and love/hate. We all "contain multitudes" and begin life with a profusion of possibilities for identification that inevitably succumb to constriction and suppression in the process of development and socialization. But in favorable circumstances, psychological development that progresses over the life span may be accompanied by a loosening and reordering of previously fixed boundaries and identifications and manifested in a personal identity that is more inclusive, encompassing, and richer. ▪







Available on IPBooks.net

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Book Review by Richard Grose

On The Pleasures of Owning Persons: The Hidden Face of American Slavery by Volney Gay

***O**n the Pleasures of Owning Person*s by Volney Gay (IP Books, 2016) is a book written for white Americans. The author is a professor in the Departments of Religious Studies, Psychiatry, and Anthropology at Vanderbilt University and is a training and supervising analyst at the St. Louis Psychoanalytic Institute. He employs what he calls "applied empathy" to give an account of the minds of American slaveowners through understanding the pleasures they derived from owning slaves and the ways in which they tried to deal with the contradiction between owning slaves and seeing themselves as freedom-loving Christians. He positions his book as part of the effort to understand the effects of hierarchies that the powerful have created, focusing here on the divided minds of the powerful.

In simplest terms, *On the Pleasures of Owning Persons* is a look at the meaning of slavery in the United States as viewed by a very well-read psychoanalyst who is trained in understanding conflict and defense. The book has three parts: the facts of slavery, the contradiction contained in the US Constitution, and four different resolutions to this contradiction. That contradiction, deeply felt in the Founders' debates on the 1787 Constitution and dominating national life until the end of the Civil War, with profound aftereffects extending into the present moment, was the bifurcated view of African slaves as both persons and property. As persons, they would be subject to the precepts of Christianity and those of the Declaration of Independence, beginning with "all men are created equal." But as property, they had no more rights than horses and cattle.

Gay mentions the well-known misgivings that American heroes such as Washington, Jefferson, and Madison had about slavery, although their conflicts did not lead to emancipation during their lifetimes. But Gay is equally interested in our conflicts as we try to reconcile our reverence for a figure like Washington and his record as a slave owner. There are no easy resolutions to these conflicts: he tells us the story of Washington selling a rebellious slave named Tom to the West Indies, where slaves did not survive long. From the title and on through many parts of this book, there is much to make white Americans uncomfortable.

Gay discusses the ways in which Southern slavery apologists tried to resolve the inherent contradiction, from arguing that slavery civilizes and improves slaves to arguing that, although regrettable, slavery makes possible a very high level of culture that justifies it, among many others. He discusses the defensive idealizations that Southerners engaged in after the Civil War. They argued, falsely, that the war had not been fought for slavery but rather for the defense of Southern women. They also cultivated a rosy nostalgia for the Lost Cause.

Gay achieves something like an epic portrait of our profound national conflict, ranging from uneasy consciences to blatant fabrications and dissimulations by authorities, to rancorous legal disputes, to the awesome Civil War itself. There is something Tolstoyan about this portrait.

Before beginning his account of the pleasures of owning slaves, Gay describes how he has benefited from white privilege. He gives us a brief autobiography, recounting how he began life in a struggling lower-class family but found his way up by means of voracious reading and hard work, becoming a professor in multiple university departments. Specifically, he always felt at home with his white teachers, he never felt malice directed toward him, he didn't have to contend with shame for ancestors, and he always felt and was allowed to feel entitled to his success. He also shows how much easier it was for him and his wife to begin middle-class life than it has been for very many African Americans. Thus, his discussion of the everyday pleasures of slave ownership begins with an analysis of the dependence of his everyday pleasures on white privilege. He lets his white readers draw whatever parallels they may.

He does not do this, but for the purposes of this review, I will group the pleasures he describes of slave owning into four categories: social pleasures—being admired socially, feeling you are a member of an elite, knowing that however far you fall, there are those who will always be lower than you; domestic pleasures—being served, being treated with respect, affection, and even love, having many people working for your betterment, having abundant free time for leisure activities, play, and culture; economic pleasures—knowing that your wealth will steadily increase as your slaves reproduce; and sadistic pleasures—knowing that you have complete control over the minds, bodies, and spirits of other human beings.

Gay argues that only by understanding the many pleasures that slavery brought to slave-owning families can we ever understand why it was so deeply rooted, costing so very much when it was uprooted and leaving so many persistent traces—no merely economic arrangement would have generated this scale of ferocious attachment.

It bears mentioning that his account of the pleasures of slave owning owes much to the account of pleasures in psychoanalysis. Gay calls on his white readers to consider pleasure as pleasure regardless of the moral judgments that can be made, in just the same way that Freud called on his scientific readers to do a very similar thing in his discussions of the pleasures of sexuality. For both, setting aside conventional moral judgments makes it possible to think about the meanings of pleasure.

Gay describes his book as "an essay in applied empathy." He goes on: "It is based on the assumption that the better we understand slave owners, the better we understand our shared history. To do that we must conceive of ourselves in their circumstances, making their choices, using reasons and justifications that felt valid to them." It is important to acknowledge, however obvious it may be, that Gay is empathizing with individuals who were committing what he elsewhere calls "a great crime and a great sin." The first thing to notice here is that there can only be applied empathy for slave owners if the pleasures of moral judgment and moral distancing are suppressed and our common

humanity is affirmed. This seems to be both a logical precondition for any knowing of the other, as well as a moral good, acting against a cultivation of moral superiority and the emotional isolation that can accompany that state.

This application of empathy also implicates psychoanalysis. Freud offered his patients a place where everything they said would be received empathically, that is, without judgment. Gay is applying that principle to our national history. There is no patient here, but the principle of nonjudgmental empathy is applied for the same purpose as it is applied in the consulting room: to achieve greater understanding.

Interestingly, the model for applied empathy was perhaps best given by Lincoln. In the first debate with Stephen Douglas, in 1858, Lincoln said, "Let me say I think I have no prejudice against the Southern people. They are just what we would be in their situation. If slavery did not now exist amongst them, they would not introduce it. If it did now exist amongst us, we should not instantly give it up."

By beginning his book with how he benefits from white privilege, he invites his white readers to join him in seeing our situation as similar in certain ways to that of the slave owners. This can be viewed as yet another consequence of applied empathy.

At a time when the left is calling for reparations for African Americans and for drastic steps to address the climate crisis, the right digs in with absolute rejection of any such measures. The racial component of that rejection is well known and implies that the right is not willing to give up perhaps the last remaining social pleasure of slavery: that they will always have Blacks beneath them. But Gay points to a very different component—the defense of pleasures. For example, there are individuals who say that whatever is happening to the climate, they don't want to give up [fill in the blank], which is reminiscent of Washington, Jefferson, and Madison, all of whom were uneasy about their owning of slaves, yet all of whom found it impossible to forgo the pleasures that slavery provided.

Gay implies a connection between pleasures and the willingness to go to war to defend them. He shows that a threat to the arrangements that provide basic pleasures can be met with a ferocity that can suggest the desperate rage of a hungry infant. ▪

Slaves cutting the sugar cane on the Island of Antigua, 1823. British Library.

Illustrations by Evgeny Turaev and Jorm S /Shutterstock.com | Edited by Mafe Izaguirre

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Even though a virus is blind, we have learned, yet again, that like so many oppressive things, it disproportionately finds its way to those who are already suffering.

I feel privileged that, during the coronavirus pandemic, I was able to escape the confines of traumatized New York City and spend the autumn of the fateful year of 2020 living and working remotely as a psychiatrist in Vermont.

One September day, I was hiking up Magic Mountain. The wide grassy trail was bounded by tall trees whose leaves were raging with color. It was as if I was alone on the mountain. I felt small in a good way. Having climbed about an hour up, in the quietude of the moment, I decided to return a patient's call. We had just started to talk when, shockingly, our conversation was crashed by a huge black bear barreling out of the woods ahead. I was about forty yards away on open grass.

Three things came to mind about bears: they can climb trees, they can run fast (about thirty miles per hour), and you're not supposed to run when you see one. I don't how the math works out as to how long it takes to cover forty yards at thirty miles per hour, but it's not a long time. Images of burly dudes wrestling bears into submission in the wilds of Yellowstone came to mind. But being a New York City Jew, the prospect of staring down an enormous frickin' bear seemed out of the question. I wasn't channeling strongmen out west. More like Upper West Side. I felt like the bear even knew I was Jewish. I joke now, but I wasn't laughing then. When it seemed as if the bear wasn't looking, I started to run. Like my life depended on it.

Peering over my shoulder, I saw that the bear was mercifully running in the opposite direction. I had a long way to go, but I kept running until I arrived at the base of the mountain, where I told a local guy I had just run away from a bear. He smiled knowingly and then pointed out what, in my fear, I had failed to realize. "You weren't running away from the bear," he said. "The bear was running away from you."

A couple of months later, I returned to the city, while the pandemic continued to ravage much of the country and the world. As hoped-for treatments for COVID-19 continued to prove themselves weak compared to the virus, the desperate need for a vaccine grew. And then, rather miraculously, it arrived. But who among us would be the fortunate ones eligible to get the vaccine soon after it became available? The answer to that question would in large part be driven by race and the historical repetition of social inequity. Inequity that, like a virus itself, insidiously

grabs hold of society's least fortunate souls and replicates.

Being a psychiatrist made me eligible to receive the vaccine in the early stages of its distribution. While the rollout was replete with inequities, many would rationalize, as I did, that although it was not a perfect system, we shouldn't make perfect the enemy of good. And forgoing my opportunity to get the vaccine didn't necessarily mean that another person more in need would get my spot. There were even reports that some batches of the vaccine were being wasted, having not been used in a timely manner by those deemed eligible. And it was good, after all, to get as many people vaccinated as quickly as possible. I could live with that. Although, we could say the same thing about education—the sooner more people get educated, the better. But it's a lot better to be on the side of getting one than having to wait for the benefits to maybe never trickle down. Like all viruses, treatments for inequity remain elusive, and prevention seems to offer the only hope. Systemic racism is a virus and its not-yet-discovered vaccine should first be given to the most fortunate. But if offered, would we take it? Or would we be too afraid of what it might do to us?

With all of that in mind, I ambivalently opted to get the COVID-19 vaccine early on, when it was, I suppose, my turn. The vaccine site was in Harlem. Walking there on the day I was to get my first dose, I came upon an empty Morningside Park and I proceeded alone down its long, steep stairs. Some months before, those stairs were the scene of a grisly murder of an eighteen-year-old white woman who was a promising Barnard freshman. My daughter too was an eighteen-year-old college freshman at that time, which made thinking about that tragedy unbearable. Three Black teenagers were charged in the crime. Sadness and fear gripped me as I further descended those godforsaken stairs, and I started to run—like my life depended on it.

Approaching the vaccine site, I came upon a long line of people that stretched for several blocks. Before taking my place in line, I checked to make sure it was the correct line. It wasn't. That line was to get tested for the coronavirus. It was a long time to wait to get tested, but more importantly, for those people, it would be a much longer wait to one day get the vaccine. The person waiting at the front of the line to get tested was an elderly Black man. He likely had been standing on that line for hours. Wearing his mask, he waited patiently for his turn. I was escorted to an adjacent line for those getting the vaccine. That line only had one person on it. I was second in a line behind a young white woman. She too could have been my daughter. My original rationale for getting the vaccine when I was eligible, despite being less in need than so many others, involved the notion of only cutting a figurative line. Standing there at the vaccine site forced me to confront a more literal one. Like so many rationalizations for my actions that are knowingly complicit with one form of systemic racism or another, they are harder to justify when the face of inequity is standing just a breath away.

That man deserves to get the vaccine before I do was my thought as I looked at him with pity. But, easy for me to say from my safe and lofty perch atop the wrongful system of inequity. A system that allowed me to adjudicate the order of things in the first place and where switching places now was no longer an option. And from that position of power, it would later cross my white privileged mind that even if well intended, I may have been guilty of seeing the forbearing and rule-abiding elderly Black man through a patronizing lens, a view that, by extension, can—worse yet even if unwittingly—include the racism reinforcing and dreadfully degrading notion of that man being a "good Black." The defense attorney for Derek Chauvin, in emphasizing George Floyd's illicit drug use, seemed to be implicitly suggesting that Floyd was a "bad one." We should be loath to consider all such distinctions. They are dehumanizing. And they don't matter. *All* Black lives do.

The comedian Dave Chappelle, speaking seriously, has another way of getting at that point. He implores white people to perform random acts of kindness for Black people. But he specifies that the white person must do this act of kindness only if the white person feels that the Black person *doesn't* deserve it. Because as Chappelle notes, those people, too, surely didn't get what they deserve.

Walking home along Frederick Douglass Boulevard, I encountered a Black man arguing with the police. He appeared to be homeless, was agitated, and seemed to be markedly intoxicated. Fearing his behavior, I hurriedly ran south toward my home on the Upper East Side, passing by him as he began to quickly stumble north into Harlem. And just as our paths crossed, he defiantly said, "I'm not the real criminal around here."

It was his way of reminding me that I wasn't running away from the bear—the bear was running away from me. We have a long way to go to get to systemic justice. We should run toward that like our lives depend on it. ▪

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Like Living in An Epilogue

Remember the days of the week, the way the sun
rose and fell, the duplicitous stars, the afternoons
that leaned against the house like summer screens,
the spellbound waves, the trees that loved me
with indifference.

I saw how words kept everything from floating away
or coming too close. I saw a stone release its ghost
and did not fall to my knees. I saw the past like moonlight
on the blanket of childhood, a place where no one knew
and no one said. And that's how I became unworthy of prayer.

But I have not turned my back on gravity, its kindness,
its solicitous grip, nor on the clouds that comfort and obscure.
I am sure I have not met the good me. Maybe she lives
in a dwarfed world in the bath of a newborn, or more likely,
in dark refusal to just walk away.

Sharing a Letter from Brazilian Analysts

Illustration by Kursat Unsal / Shutterstock.com

I started my psychoanalytic learning and political activism in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. It was the spring of 1981, a time of turmoil and search for personal and collective freedom. I migrated from Brazil to the United States in 1990 with my husband, daughter, and all twenty-four volumes of the Brazilian edition of the works of Sigmund Freud. A decade later, I became a dual citizen. Today I live in Austin, Texas. My daily analytical work occurs in Spanish, Portuguese, and English with people spread throughout the Americas. Geopolitics matters very much in my work. It is rooted in these experiences and bearing in mind how necropolitics is occurring in Brazil that I want to share an important analytic action: a petition letter.

This "Letter to Brazilians" was written by analysts who choose to express indignation and claim protection from the State for its citizens. It was published by SBPRJ (Brazilian Society of Psychoanalysis of Rio de Janeiro) in 2020 and republished in March 2021. I am grateful to the SBPRJ Board of Directors for this letter. (https://www.sbprj.org.br/single-post/carta-aos-brasileiros). As of June 7th 2021, the total deaths by COVID in Brazil surpass 473,495 people, an unimaginable horror.

To visit the link, scan the code with your smartphone.

Denise Lemos Zaborowski, PhD.

Letter to Brazilians

We, psychoanalysts of the Brazilian Society of Psychoanalysis of Rio de Janeiro – SBPRJ, join the doctors of Rio de Janeiro and all scientific institutions in repudiation of the authorities' negligence in the face of the terrifying situation we find ourselves in, with the daily loss of more than 1000 lives and stories, causing an unprecedented collective trauma and grief that is difficult to elaborate.

The disdain shown by this administration for its people, its health, and the scientific community can be evaluated by the thousands of deaths that we count and by the place we occupy in international statistics in the fight against the pandemic.

We are not just facing a political issue. At stake are the character and ethics of a government official who evidently does not have the minimum conditions to hold office. We need to fight the "Banality of Evil" that has taken over part of Congress, public institutions, and Brazilian society.

We are astonished at the militarization of State institutions, at the frequent speeches by the federal government and its supporters / followers based on the logic of the necropolitics that propose

the rupture of the democratic order, as well as attacks and threats against institutions and social groups. They are attacks on otherness, difference, desire, and culture, concepts that are essential to humanity and psychoanalysis.

The sentence of the Minister of Health, from a Brazilian saying, "Those who can rule, and those who have senses obey," is frightening because it reminds us of the blindness caused by the identifications clearly exposed by Freud in *Psychology of the Masses and Analysis of the Self*.

As psychoanalysts, we cannot remain silent, disregard, or deny that we are facing a context in which a sharp blade hovers over our heads, causing anguish worse than or equivalent to that arising from the threat of death by the pandemic, as it is insidious, silent, and a train-bearer of Thanatos, smothering Eros.

Some sectors of society minimize the consequences of the pandemic in the social, health, political, and ethical fields and we ask ourselves: at what price, what is the price of silence?

Mass vaccination, so far, is the best tool to curb deaths and combat COVID-19 effectively.

Our motion is against the illusion of early treatment. Pro-vaccine now, mask-wearing, social distancing, assistance to vulnerable populations, for the defense of democracy and the federal constitution.

Rio de Janeiro, March 2, 2021

SBPRJ Board of Directors, 2021-2022 Biennium

Signatories:

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2. Espaço Brasileiro de Estudos Psicanalíticos – EBEP/Rio
3. Laço Analítico/Escola de Psicanálise
4. Sociedade de Psicanálise da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro – SPCRJ
5. Formação Freudiana
6. Instituto Cultural Freud
7. Grupo Brasileiro de Pesquisas Sandor Ferenczi – GBPSF
8. Sociedade Portuguesa de Psicanálise – SPP
9. Escola de Psicanálise dos Fóruns do Campo Lacaniano – Brasil – EPFCL – BRASIL
10. Intersecção Psicanalítica do Brasil (IPB)
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ROOM: A Sketchbook for Analytic *Action* promotes the dialogue between contributors and readers. ROOM's first issue was conceived in the immediate wake of the 2016 US election to be an agent of community-building and transformation. Positioned at the interface between the public and private spheres, ROOM sheds new light on the effect political reality has on our inner world and the effect psychic reality has on our politics.

ROOM *Live!* Our First Fundraising Gala

Your donation is vital to sustaining ROOM and is fully tax deductible.

July 15th at 8:00 pm EDT

LIVE MUSIC

Eric Chasalow
and Barbara Cassidy

LIVE PROSE

Lara Sheehi

COMMUNITY ACTION

Engage! Empower! Transform!
Envision making more ROOM!

LIVE POETRY

Eugene Mahon
Abraham Velazquez Jr.

Illustration by Kotoffei / Shutterstock.com | Edited by Mafe Izaguirre

ROOM Live! is a celebration of creativity, activism, and psychoanalysis.
JOIN US for a live-on-Zoom celebration of poetry, music, and prose featuring a few of ROOM's own players.

To buy tickets visit: https://www.analytic-room.com/room-live-gala/

What if I can't make it to the ROOM Live! Gala? Can I watch it later?
If you bought tickets for the gala but are unable to join us on July 15, don't worry. We will make the recording of the event available to you for two weeks.

JOIN US!

We are pleased to invite you to

ROOM ROUNDTABLE VIA ZOOM

What does it mean to be radically open to the strains and struggles of being alive now?

Join with ROOM authors on **Saturday July 31 at 12:00** for the Room Roundtable as we think together about the impact of words, the power of culture, and the difficulty of discerning differences and boundaries both internal and external. All of this will be considered in one way or another under the aegis of being radically open.

Registrants will receive a Zoom invite. We hope to see you with us.

To receive the invitation, please join our mailing list by visiting:

analytic-room/subscribe

Roundtable Organizing Committee

Elizabeth Cutter Evert
Richard Grose

SCAN with your smartphone to join our mailing list and receive *ROOM* invitations and updates.

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Think, then *Write.*

OPEN FOR SUBMISSIONS ***ROOM* 10.21**

Essays | Poems | Creative Writing

We welcome clinical, theoretical, political, and philosophical essays, as well as poetry, creative writing, memoir, and announcements.

Length: Max 1500 words

VIA SUBMITTABLE

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