

# room 2.22

A Sketchbook for Analytic Action

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**ROOM 2.22** | A Sketchbook for Analytic Action



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A sketchbook for Analytic Action  
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**Jorgelina Corbatta** was born in Argentina. She has a licenciatura in Philosophy and Letters from the Universidad Nacional del Sur, Bahia Blanca, Argentina; a master's and a PhD in Hispanic Literatures from the University of Pittsburgh; and graduated as an academic analyst from Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute. She is now professor emerita of Latin American Literature and Culture at Wayne State University, where she was previously the director of Women's Studies. She is also academic associate faculty at the Michigan Psychoanalytic Institute. She has taught courses on contemporary narrative and film, Latin American literature and culture, women's studies, literature and psychoanalysis at universities in Argentina, Colombia, Chile, the United States, Sweden, France, Belgium, Austria, and Spain. In 2004 she received a Research/Teaching Fulbright Award from Universidad de los Andes, Bogotá, Colombia. She has six books published and more than one hundred articles in peer-reviewed journals. She is currently writing a book on "fiction/auto-fiction and intertextuality" (in Spanish) and working on an autobiographical piece. In 2017 she received the IPA/IPSO International Psychoanalytic Award for her paper "The Quest for, and the Denial of, Intimacy in Luisa Valenzuela's *Dark Desires and the Others* (IPA/Buenos Aires, July 2017). In addition, she has received several awards for teaching, directing graduate students, and conducting research.

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**Jeanne Parr Lemkau** served in the Peace Corps in Nicaragua from 1971 to 1973 and considers that experience the most formative of her adult life. She is now a practicing clinical psychologist and professor emerita of the School of Medicine of Wright State University. There she taught behavioral science and introduced global health and international service to medical students. She is a student of the health care system of Cuba, an activist against the US embargo of Cuba, and the author of a memoir called *Lost and Found in Cuba: A Tale of Midlife Rebellion*. Jeanne lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

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**Kelin Perry** is an artist and architect born in Charlotte, North Carolina. She graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture from SCI-Arc in 1979 and has since practiced architecture in Atlanta, Georgia, where she currently lives. Perry's art centers on found materials, which she uses to evoke a sense of the fragility of beauty and the passage of time. She has cultivated a reverence for the unseen, discarded, and forgotten. Perry uses paint, paper, and other media as well, but the use of reclaimed materials is central to her work. Perry has been in group shows at Lowe Gallery as well as group shows and a solo show at Hathaway Contemporary in Atlanta. She has also been included in several shows and residencies at M. David & Co. in Brooklyn, where she is currently represented.

**Ashley Renselaer** is an author, a poet, and an artist from Culver City, California, who attends high school at Windward School. Some of her recent work has appeared or is forthcoming in the *Lily Poetry Review*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Bindweed*, the *LOUD Journal*, and *Passengers Journal*, among others. She has been recognized in the Live Poets Society's High School Poetry Contest, the National Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, and the *New York Times*. She believes in the transformative and cathartic power of storytelling to create a vision for the future while appealing to hearts and minds.

**Shelley Rockwell** is a training and supervising analyst in the Contemporary Freudian Society and the Washington Baltimore Center for Psychoanalysis. She has a long-standing interest in the relationship between literature and psychoanalysis, particularly in poetry and the work of a poem both in the reading and making, which invites a truthful look at the inside and outside of experience.

**Loren Sobel**, MD, earned his medical degree from the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine and completed his psychiatry residency at the Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic at the University of Pittsburgh, where he served as chief resident for psychotherapy training. He is an originating faculty member at the Western Pennsylvania Community for Psychoanalytic Therapies, where he teaches psychoanalytic theory and technique, faculty-by-invitation at the Pittsburgh Psychoanalytic Center, and volunteer clinical faculty member at the University of Pittsburgh, and serves on the board for the Clinic Without Walls, a low-fee clinic that provides psychodynamic psychotherapy to the community for those who are uninsured or underinsured. He provides ongoing supervision and consultation to psychiatry residents and psychotherapists in the community.

**Liliana Zavaleta** is a visual artist who was born in Lima, Perú. She grew up in the United States and has lived and studied in Europe, the Near East, and South America. Zavaleta obtained her university degrees in French and Latin American Literature. She also studied at Parsons School of Design and was an award-winning art director before dedicating herself to her art work. Today she works full-time on her two- and three-dimensional visual work, dividing her time between Upstate New York and South America.

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## Struck Anew

“The lightning has shown me the scars of the future.”

—WS Merwin

Shock occasions change. Five years ago ROOM flashed into being as an immediate response to the 2016 US election. Psychoanalysts who had never written before felt compelled to write.

ROOM has remained a participatory community platform, grounded in a psychoanalytic understanding of how change happens. Each issue archives a new moment. Each is a “working-through” of that which has already passed.

But now we are struck anew. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine occurred during the final weeks of production of this anniversary issue. Still, the questions posed by the contributors in ROOM 2.22 are eerily prescient and speak collectively for all of us. Each looks toward a future none can envision.

“What has really happened to us?”

“What am I called upon to do?”

“What do we do when there is no hope?”

“What is at stake for our future, our children? What kind of society do we want them to live in? What kind of people will they become? How will they live their lives?”

“Where do we belong? Where is our home or place? How do we see ourselves in this world?”

These are some of the questions posed by the mental health professionals, academics, poets, theologians, and artists in this anniversary issue. Each is looking toward a future none can envision.

In her essay **Speaking the Impossible**, Rockwell calls upon the poets and philosophers to help deepen our appreciation

of what it takes to grasp what we are going through. The work of a poet and of the analyst, Rockwell believes, is to absorb the rawness of reality without judgment, contradiction, or correction before even attempting to metabolize and digest its significance. In his essay, **It’s History**, Kyrie Mason asks if it is even possible to “take in history’s impenetrable scale without being overwhelmed?” Mason concludes that parts must always be withheld or arbitrarily left out. Jorgelina Corbatta describes how a part of her history was “hidden in plain sight” for decades in **The Day I Learned I Was a Woman of Color**. She revisits two harrowing migrations, her analysis, and a long academic career spent analyzing the writings of “...intellectual pariahs traveling around the world, looking for a home to replace the (home) that expelled them. Societal shifts brought” on by the pandemic and by George Floyd’s murder gave Corbatta access to her personal history as one of a woman of color.

From across the world and from another angle, Fang Duan’s **A Celebrity Family Saga: Psychotherapy Shatters the Chinese-Speaking World** shows how seismic cultural repercussions can also occur when personal histories and political histories surface and collide. Duan shares the story of Chinese power couple Lee Jinglei and Wang Leehom to illustrate the transformative power of one woman’s experience in psychotherapy to impact a nation. Lee Jinglei’s “newly developed voice of conscience” touched the hearts of tens of millions of people by offering a vision

of “harmony and restitution through the deconstruction of old cultural ideals.”

**Remembering Lydia** is also an homage to the power of a single woman and the impact her raised voice had on the future of her entire village. Looking back over half a century, Jeanne Parr Lemkau recalls her days as a Peace Corps volunteer. “[Lydia] was sunbaked and wrinkled beyond her forty-seven years, always in a dress that was ragged and worn but freshly pressed with an iron she heated on a wood fire.” A fence had been mounted that blocked Lydia’s village from having access to clean water, but Lydia “knew where a fence should not be.” There are reasons Lemkau is remembering Lydia today. “If Lydia, born into crushing poverty that she could never escape, could use the full force of her personality to take down an unjust fence,” she thinks, “what am I called upon to do?”

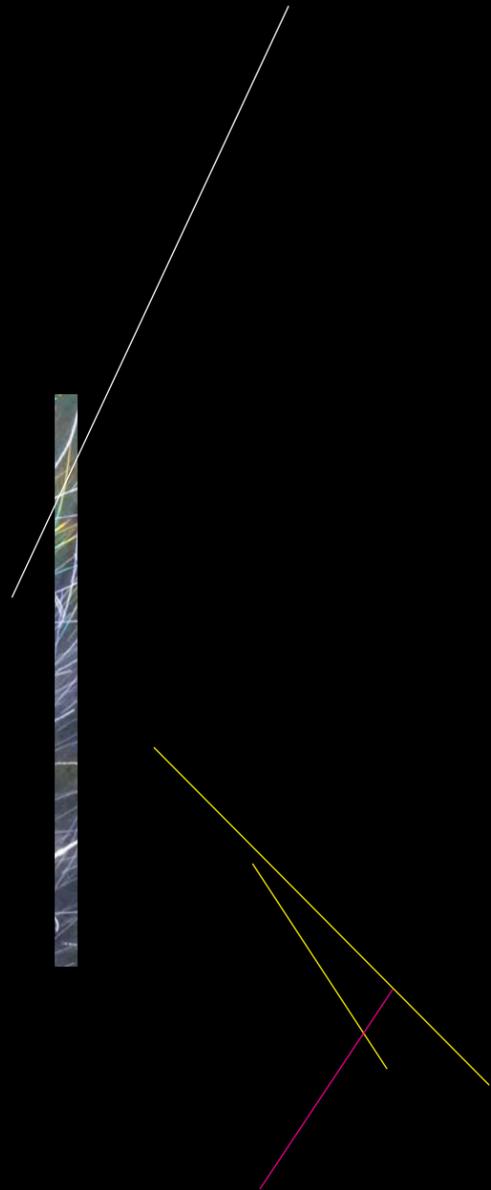
That question, “What am I called upon to do?” is writ large against the accumulated traumas we are collectively experiencing. It is a through line in this issue.

For Christina Nadler and Loren Sobel, it is the crisis of the pandemic that has occasioned a deeper understanding of what, as analysts, they are called upon to do. In **(Re)Locating Analytic Space**, Nadler says she does miss in-person sessions, often desperately, but “that loss and desperation must not be merged in our minds with the medium through which the work is conducted. Tele-analysis is not the problem,” Nadler has learned. “The pandemic is.” Rather than a weakness, Nadler has embraced virtual work as a rigorous challenge as she begins her first year of analytic training. The pandemic has posed a different challenge and a different kind of loss for Loren Sobel. In **Circling** he turns a terrifying airplane trip into an allegory for “how massive, how unfathomably traumatic, this pandemic storm has been.” As the plane Sobel was on dramatically reascends to avert a crash landing, “each individual’s seemingly

solitary world gave way to a collective sharing. Suddenly we were all very aware of one another. It felt like all of us—together—became one body unit, contained and situated within the rattled fuselage.” When he is at last able to return to work in his office, Sobel is overcome by the depth of connection he feels, along with an intense sense of loss. “A grief surely of the time but not solely belonging to this time.”

For LaMothe, the question “What am I to do” is quite literally an existential one. **Hope in the Anthropocene Age** is “situated against the backdrop of the current and looming disasters linked to the climate emergency.” If hope is linked to the desires, needs, and visions of society, which LaMothe argues it always is, then in the Anthropocene Age, capitalism, nationalism, and a new imperialism have shaped and distorted hope itself. For LaMothe, the slow accretion of horrors that anthropocentrism has wreaked upon the earth and our civilization lends particular poignancy to the question “What would I do if the world were to end tomorrow?” Drawing on Hannah Arendt and Martin Luther, LaMothe concludes that what is required is a new vision for the future, founded not on hope but on “radical care for other human beings, other species, and the earth...”

While we can’t see the shape of our future, nor grasp the enormity of its scars, this most recent horror points once again to our need for a place of care: for democracy, for reason, and for ourselves. ■



## The bird and the hour AFTER BILLY COLLINS "LITANY"

We are the bird and the hour, the session  
     and the fee. We know we are the commute  
 and the dream, but we are also the trees in Central Park  
     and the eyes of the feral girl.

We are even the boiled-wool blanket  
     covering her shoulders. We are the bird  
 in flight, the bird on its perch; we might even be the hummingbird  
     tuning its magic stillness, treading air, but let's be clear:  
 we are not the birds in formation flying south or north.

We have never been a chapter in a textbook  
 or even a case study in a handout. We could be an out-of-print  
     book found at a street sale but probably not the unframed  
 print in a bin farther down that same street.

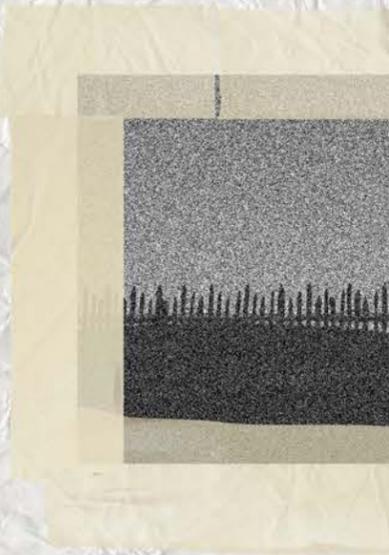
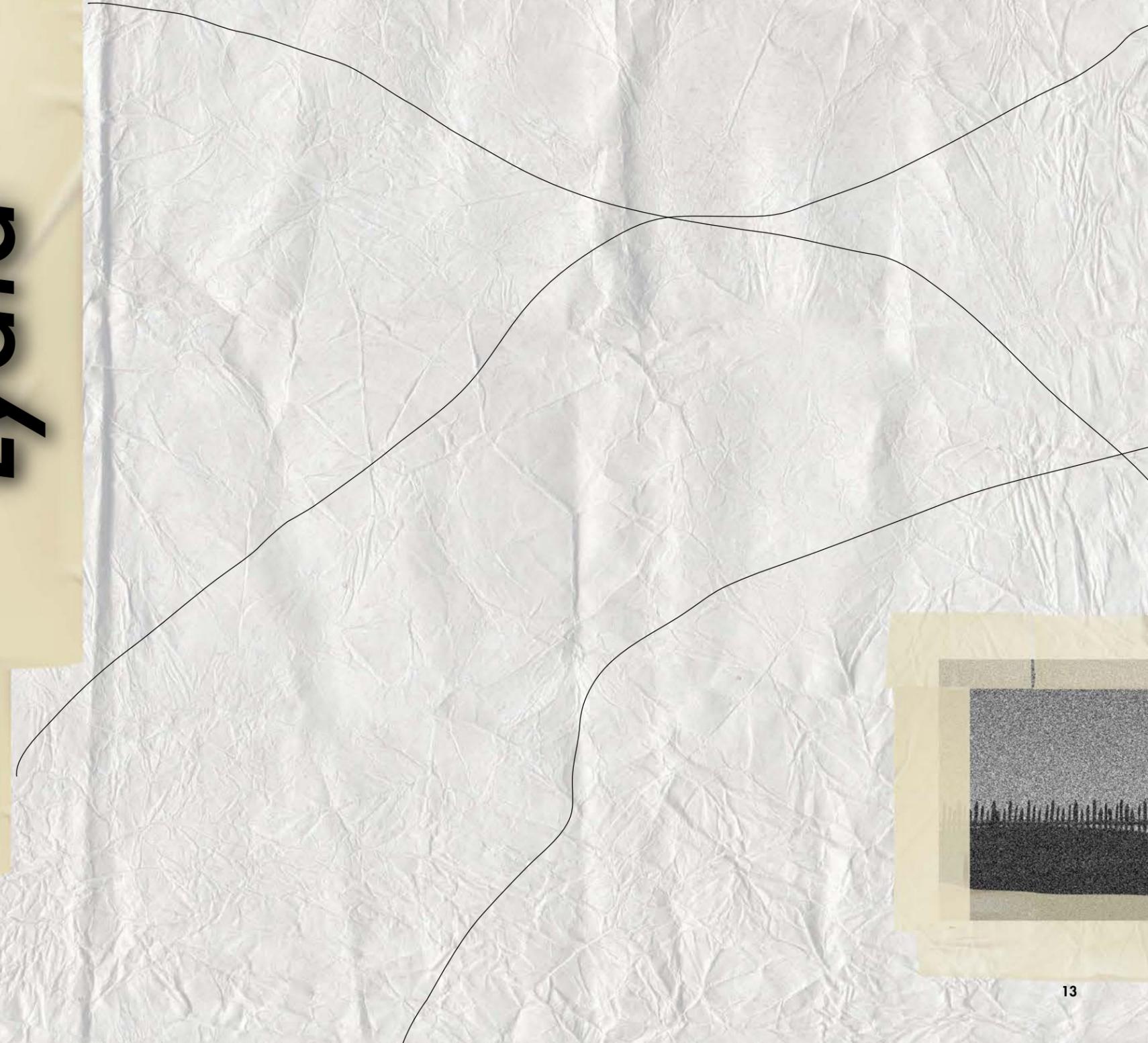
I like to think of us as the fire between the logs, the grain  
 in the wood, and the way we don't hear a squeak  
     in the newly repaired gate. We can be the tapered fingers  
 of the unusually tall Japanese pastry chef, the open mouths  
     of the choir, the boarding pass for the flight home.

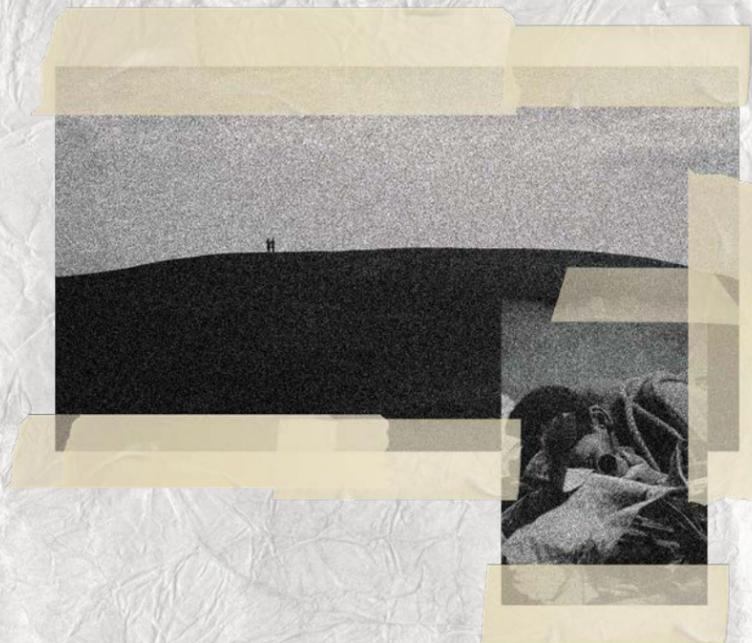
Can we be pastries on display in the bakery window  
     and the man who stops to admire them?

Okay, I know, let's be the children who watch the man  
     looking at the pastries as he decides, *Not today,*  
 and walks on carrying his closed umbrella.



# Remembering Lydia





Whenever I dismounted at Lydia's home of gray boards and dried palm grass, her son hastened to hitch and water my horse while Lydia offered me lemonade and a spell of rest. Then she would walk with me among the shacks of her community, introducing me to other villagers and discussing her concerns about the health needs of her town. Upon returning to her home, she always fed me. I was always famished from the morning on horseback and foot in the relentless sun. She would sit me at the small table in her simple kitchen, where she toiled over the fire, serving me heaps of black beans and rice, fried platanos, and coffee made from beans she had just toasted in a clay pot.

Most of what I learned about life in Nicaragua, I learned from Lydia. Not five feet tall, she was a wiry woman of indigenous ancestry. She took me into her care from the very first time I visited the impoverished town of Las Pilas. She was sunbaked and wrinkled beyond her forty-seven years, always in a dress that was ragged and worn but freshly pressed with an iron she heated on a wood fire. Despite her diminutive size, she was the fiercest of advocates on behalf of her village.

I was a Peace Corps volunteer, and it was 1970. I had come into adulthood on the swell of Kennedy-era idealism intent on changing the world and had no idea how the world beyond North American shores would change me. Nor how the experience would cause me to ponder the oppressiveness of fences even fifty years later.

My horseback commute took me to remote villages on the isthmus between the two volcanoes that composed the Ometepe island in Lake Nicaragua. I worked with campesinos, providing them with health education, distributing donated food, and monitoring the health

and development of their children. From lunches with Lydia, I learned that half the children in Las Pilas died from malnutrition, parasites, or infectious diarrhea early in life. There was no source of potable water. Getting water required villagers to walk several miles down muddy trails to the shores of the lake, where they bathed, watered their animals, washed their clothes on lava rocks, and filled their tins with water for cooking and drinking. The burden of getting water fell on the women and children, while the men tended their small plots of frijoles or wielded machetes for land-owning patrons. Children dropped out of school to attend to the chore on bare feet.

Safe water was only possible with the added burdens of gathering wood and boiling the water—luxuries of time and resources that few could afford. I knew without asking that Lydia always boiled the water for the lemonade or coffee that she served me.

When I arrived one afternoon, a humming throng of men and women was gathered outside Lydia's house. Amid the commotion stood Lydia, uncharacteristically agitated. Turning to me, she explained that the patron who owned the land on either side of the trail between Las Pilas and the lake had erected a fence across the trail, blocking the only direct access to water from the village. A young man had cut the wire fence to restore access. He had been arrested and taken to jail in the nearby town of Altagracia.

Lydia dug her tiny feet into the dusty ground. Raising her voice to address the crowd, she spoke, her voice quivering with barely suppressed rage. "I may be poor and meant to be poor, but I am a human being and I have my rights!" On the heels of this pronouncement, she waved the crowd toward a bus leaving for Altagracia. By

sundown, the mass of protesters had reached the mayor's office. The prisoner was released, and access to water was restored.

Lydia had never heard of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but she understood in her bones the link between health and human rights. She knew where a fence should not be.

In those days, Nicaragua was tightly controlled by President Anastasio Somoza Debayle, whose family dynasty—with US support—had ruled the country since 1937. His pseudo-democracy was toppled by the Sandinista revolution of 1979. Subsequently, under Daniel Ortega, the country established a system of socialized medicine that achieved significant decreases in infant mortality and increases in longevity. These gains were fleeting, however, cut short by the US-backed Contra War that resulted in the defeat of the Sandinista government in the elections of 1990.

Twenty-three years after completing my Peace Corps service, I joined a delegation to study health care conditions under the new government of Violeta Chamorro. Our group visited the country's only public psychiatric hospital on the outskirts of Managua. There, I encountered another fence.

The hospital buildings were shabby, stucco structures scattered over several acres of dusty grounds with occasional mango trees. The medical director escorted our group around the hospital, commenting as we walked. The dormitory for patients was basic: open to the air, mattresses bare of sheets, few chairs, no reading material, no television. Patients wandered by, vacant and disheveled, some muttering and gesticulating in a language that I recognized as more psychotic than Spanish. It was hard to imagine what people could do besides wander. There had been a half dozen assaults on staff the previous month, a problem the doctor attributed to the lack of antipsychotic medicines to subdue agitated or hallucinating patients. I winced at the sight of a machete lying on a table within easy reach of anyone.

In the room dedicated to pharmaceuticals, we found none of the psychiatric medicines that would have been standard stock in the United States. No antipsychotics or antidepressants. Incomprehensibly, Fleet enemas were in abundant supply.

Conditions had deteriorated since the defeat of the Sandinista government. Under the Sandinista government, our guide explained, there had been more medicine. Now-extinct teams of family and occupational therapists and foreign delegations had offered training in innovative approaches to the mentally ill. No one from the new health ministry had taken enough interest in this public hospital to even visit, although desperate families continued to abandon family members to their care. The morale of his reduced staff was low. Privatization of facilities was the new priority, encouraged by US business interests and the policies of the International Monetary Fund.

I thought our tour was over when I spotted the fence: new, chain-linked, six feet high and made taller still by strings of barbed wire. On the other side of the fence stood what looked like a generously sized home that encircled a courtyard where several ornate wooden rocking chairs sat empty, their beauty reflected in the polished tile floor. We peered in while the doctor explained that this was a new private hospital—for people who could pay. Here, people could receive therapy with psychiatrists and social workers, medicines of all kinds, and programs of occupational therapy. There were currently few patients, he offered, because most people with resources still preferred to fly to Miami for treatment. I knew that, if in a world where Lydia and I needed psychiatric care, we would end up on opposite sides of this fence.

My fingers lingered on the chain links as I contemplated the obscenity of the view—from either side of the fence. Obscene but honest. There was no geographic cushion separating the realities of the haves and the have-nots. Just a fence, and one you could look through, at that.

And I ponder. If Lydia, born into crushing poverty that she could never escape, could use the full force of her personality to take down an unjust fence, what am I called upon to do? ■



Untitled 5  
2020  
mixed media on paper  
30 cm X 23 cm / 12 in X 9 in

Since childhood I have self-identified as an outsider: born in Perú, I moved to the United States when I was a child and have lived on several continents during my life. "Caught between worlds" is an idea that has fueled the shifting realities that have become the main focus in my artistic landscape. Displacement, territoriality, and relocation within space and nature, the search for a home or place are themes that personally interest me, while also mirroring my reality. People today are no longer confined to a limited geographical area or connected only to a specific group. We feel displaced or have relocated — moving, migrating either by choice or for necessity.

My paintings, drawings, and constructions are dreamlike fabrications that have the effect of producing in us an uncertain relationship with the environment, an uncertainty with our own lives and perhaps what we had always thought was real. I knew I didn't want to confine myself with the traditional definition of "place" as just meaning a building or structure but rather to begin a visual dialogue in my work that would fall between metaphor, architectural space, and recalled places or feelings.

I want the viewer to question public and private space, to question their everyday living experiences and even their own personal memory. Where do we belong? Where is our home or place, and how do we see ourselves in this world?



Construction 06  
2020  
mixed media on canvas, found wood, plastic figure  
40 cm X 60 cm X 5cm / 15.5 in X 23.5 in X 2.5 in



*Alienation Series: Roadblock 2*  
 2020  
 acrylic, egg tempera on canvas  
 31 cm X 42.5 cm



*Alienation Series: Map 1*  
 2020  
 acrylic, egg tempera, charcoal on paper  
 38 cm X 27 cm



*Atlas Drawings 32*  
 2021  
 acrylic on printed vintage paper  
 15 in X 11 in



*Atlas Drawings 6*  
 2021  
 acrylic on printed vintage paper  
 15 in X 11 in



*"I will not bear the cross  
for you anymore."*

*"From now on I will treat myself well,*

*I will have another life, I will*

*be strong, reliable for my children*

*and the best possible example."*

# A Celebrity Family Saga

Psychotherapy Shakes a  
Chinese-Speaking World

Lee Jinglei, the ex-wife of Wang Leehom, a Mandarin pop superstar for the last two decades and an immaculate top idol in the Chinese-speaking world, has emerged in their recent public divorce row as a darling among the netizens on the Chinese social media platform Weibo and Instagram. In a series of lengthy online posts, she told her side of the story: the abuse and humiliation she suffered from her philandering ex-husband and his family as a stay-at-home mom raising three children alone and the unequal terms of their divorce. She invited the public to think about the cost of raising children for single women and questioned gender inequality and celebrity culture. Her words, nicknamed the “hammer of the thunder goddess” (her name “Lei” is pronounced the same as “thunder” in Mandarin), have been praised as pointed, thoughtful, and provocative, liked by tens of millions of men and women. People thanked Lee for “defending the dignity of women and mothers.”

A question Lee asked of her ex-husband—“Is it true that you have been treating me as a birth-giving machine?”—resonated not only with those concerned about women’s rights. It also touched the official nerve at a time when China is trying hard to make women bear more children in the shadow of population decline, which, ironically, speaks of the efficacy of the government’s one-child policy (1980–2015). To address a prospective existential crisis of radical decrease of birth rate, the government has been aggressively promoting “family values” and “social ethics.” In this context, the government sees the celebrity culture of money worship, hedonism, and extreme individualism as a dangerously decadent Western import that must be tackled in order to build a birthing-friendly environment. Party leadership criticized Wang indirectly, and Chinese state-run media called for his permanent ban. Businesses quickly cut ties with him. Wang issued public apologies, vowing that he will take a break from performing to focus on becoming a better father, better son, and a better role model for the general public. In her last post, on December 23, Lee addressed her readers by saying, “I hope this thing ends as is; I hope we can all soothe our hearts’ injuries, live a peaceful life, and become the change we wish to see.”

Many factors contributed to this nearly perfect resolution of a celebrity family saga, leaving a deeply satisfying sense of catharsis and edification. What is interesting for my psychoanalytic thinking is the decisive role psychotherapy played in the unfolding of the story.

As various forms of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis have become ever more popular in the non-Western world, I believe it is worth exploring how psychotherapy is and could be used, with Lee as a case example. Let’s first see how the story unfolded.

On December 15, Wang announced on social media that he and Lee divorced due to their different visions about the future. He avowed that their marital life was “simple and pure” and asked the media not to pry further. However, soon reports of his philandering and soliciting of prostitutes came to light. Wang responded by indicating that the real reason for the divorce was conflict between Lee and his mother, not because of his chaotic sex life.

In a Weibo post on December 17, Lee first expressed gratitude to people who sent messages of warmth and comfort to her in her difficult time and said she had made the most difficult decision in her life in “coming out,” because only in facing what’s going on could one possibly go back to point “zero” and have a chance of “rebirth.” She hoped her sharing her journey would help people reflect on their lives and not suffer what she suffered due to lack of awareness. She pointed out how, out of beautiful visions of love and family, she quit her job and her own life to get married and become a stay-at-home mom. After their marriage, she made Wang and their children the focus of her life, juggling endlessly between roles of “mom, nanny, helper, driver, teacher, partner, and assistant.” She invited society to think about how much a homemaker should be paid, asking if the income from the job she gave up before marriage should be taken into consideration. She confronted Wang about his emotional abuse, lack of care for his family, infidelity, and patronizing of sex workers. She lamented that as an adult man, Wang, “not being able to make decisions about his work, personal life, and finance,” has been using her as “a chess piece” to protect himself. Now again, “in order to defend yourself, you tried to redirect the topic by lying about me... I will not bear the cross for you anymore,” she announced.

Lee further articulated a manifesto of healing, for herself, her ex-husband, and larger society, hoping “each of us would have our own rebirth.” About herself, she said, “From now on I will treat myself well, I will have another life, I will be strong, reliable for my children and the best possible example.” For Wang, she declared, “I hope you could be honest with yourself, not paying attention to how you are looked at. I hope you admit

*“I hope this thing ends as is;  
I hope we can all soothe our hearts’ injuries,  
live a peaceful life, and  
become the change we wish to see.”*

your own problem and stop blaming others for your own mistakes, to feel regret, change... I hope you could focus on your music to heal the world.” For the public, she hoped for more reflection, not only on the cost of homemaking for women but also on the use of media as a marketing tool for a good public image. She called for responsible role models for the future generation, not false idols generated for marketing purposes.

But Wang was not ready for the edification. He went on to emphasize that he and Lee had seen five therapists because for years he had been living in “fear, extortion, and threats” for which Lee was responsible. To prove his innocence, Wang had his eighty-year-old father Wang Ta-Chung issue a handwritten letter, claiming that Lee, as a calculating gold digger, had used pregnancy to force him into marriage. The letter also announced that “Leehom absolutely did not cheat” and “is not a scum.”

In response, Lee again challenged Wang to “take responsibility” for his own behaviors, not rely on his eighty-year-old father to defend and lie for him in public. She wanted everyone to see their therapist’s “professional analysis” and posted two messages to her and Wang from their therapist. The message to Wang reads: “You’re on the wrong track. You’re in a blame pattern, not taking responsibility... Treating your wife as if she had a mental illness, and describing her in this way to others, has been part of the problem contribution on your part... [It] is also mentally abusive.” The message to Lee was apparently a response to Wang’s request for a change in therapist. “He’s hoping to find a therapist who would agree with him that he is normal and good and [his] wife is crazy/horrible to him... This has to do with his patterns of gaslighting you...to make you think you are crazy, or not qualified, etc.” In a couple of days, Wang issued his apologies and a break from public appearances.

While it is debatable whether a psychotherapist’s notes should be posted on social media as a weapon, in this story most people did not seem to have an issue with Lee’s appropriation of the therapist’s words to defend herself and tear apart Wang’s defenses. To me, psychoanalysis/psychotherapy is greatly honored by playing a part in

Lee’s gesture of “mariticide” (killing of the husband). In the context of the traditional Confucian values of “three obediences” (to father, husband, and son), perhaps a married woman in the Chinese society has to commit this crime in order to be emancipated and assume a position in a world with others, in addition to the crime of Loewald’s “parricide” (symbolic killing of the parents) as a developmental necessity for the child to become a member of the adult society. “I have been deeply trapped in being a victim, too busy and depleted in trying to defend, prove my innocence, not having the time and energy to talk about what should be talked about.” Now, with the assistance of “professional analysis,” in my imagination, Lee seems to be smashing the old social shackles of a woman’s anonymity and establishing herself as an equal human being with rights and dignity.

In short, Lee’s story seems to be saying that through her encounter with her psychanalysts/psychotherapists as new objects, new others, new role models or exemplars, something preciously different, other, a vision of healing and new possibilities is introduced and grown, and she is emerging as a new person. Hers could be understood as a case of the effective use of therapy in the change of an individual mind and remaking of a person, presenting and representing to the world a new, more viable way of being oneself and relating to others. In this psychotherapy-informed/transformed new way of being and relating, Lee responds to the calls of her times to defend her own rights and the dignity of many others, envisioning a life in a fuller, more expanded sense. Her newly developed voice offers a vision of a new harmony and restitution through the deconstruction of oppressive, damaging old cultural ideals about self and others, possibly leading to a new space, a space more friendly to human birthing and rebirthing. By contrast, her ex-husband, Wang, did not appear to be so lucky, entangled in family romance with his same old folks and resisting psychotherapy. Hopefully, he will also see a “rebirth” through the ripple effects of the efficacious psychotherapy that Lee went through. ■

# Hope in the Anthropocene Age



Most of the graduate students I teach are preparing to work in the Catholic Church. Many of them think, without question, that hope is always a good thing. This is understandable, given that they, like Christians from other denominations, believe that hope is a virtue and despair a vice. I remember chatting with a student about this during a break. At one point I said, “There are some situations in ministry where there is no hope.” A student who overheard the conversation piped in from across the room, with some degree of categorical annoyance, “There is always hope.” I am fairly confident that the student who responded would find it difficult to care for people who are in despair. In speaking with students, my intention is to problematize hope, as well as to acknowledge the emotional challenges of sitting with people in their hopelessness “without irritable reaching after fact and reason”—that is, without defending against their own feelings of hopelessness and helplessness that are evoked by the situation. The danger is that students will project their particular hopes onto others. When students ask, “What do we do when there is no hope?” they are implying at some level that caring is necessarily contingent on hope. This too is a problem.

Outside the walls of academia, the problems of hope are evident in the public-political realm, especially when situated against the backdrop of the current and looming disasters linked to the climate emergency. Before identifying some problems with hope, it is necessary to say a bit about what comprises it. Briefly, hope consists of desires or needs, visions, motivations, and actions that are largely shaped by the ethos (e.g., narratives and practices) of the society in which one resides. A person’s present desire is linked to a vision that is shaped by the collective narratives of their society. Joined to this ethos is the means/action that a person employs to realize the vision. It is important to point out that in daily life we often confuse hope and wishful thinking because both contain desire and vision. Yet the vision for wishful thinking comprises unrealistic and unattainable illusions. In addition, unlike hope, wishing usually lacks any realistic actions or means for attaining the vision.

When it comes to climate change, there are various hopes and a good deal of wishful thinking at play. Both

are problematic, yet hoping is at least as dangerous as idle wishing for a magical engineering fix to the problems we face. When it comes to hope and climate change, we need to ask whose desires, needs, and visions are being enacted: Who benefits from these actions and visions? What means are being employed to reach the vision(s)? Are the desires, visions, and means of hope contributors to climate destruction, or are they obstacles to effective climate action? In my view, they are three major hegemonies that shape and distort hope in the Anthropocene Age<sup>1</sup>, namely capitalism, nationalism, and a new imperialism.

Capitalism, which has its roots in sixteenth-century England, has become a global phenomenon that is responsible for structuring societies around the world. It is a hegemonic ethos, despite the wildly diverse cultures that are now in its grip. For centuries, capitalism has shaped the hopes of many. The desire for wealth or well-being became associated primarily with profit, and endless profit became the vision. The means of attaining wealth/profit are fundamentally instrumental, though they vary in destructiveness and levels of exploitation. The brutal exploitation of slaves to realize the hopes (for wealth) of white plantation owners is only one example of violent instrumental means of securing profit. Today there are more “acceptable” means of exploitation, which entail distributing wealth toward the top 10 percent. Still, human beings are not alone in their suffering as a result of the hopes of those who embrace the visions and means of capitalism. Other species and the earth itself have fallen victim to the instrumental means of capitalist exploitation. Mountaintop removal, fracking, animal experimentation, and factory farms are just a few examples of the damage that has been and is being done to other species and the earth to achieve anthropocentric aims of profit.

Capitalism and its apparatuses create a normative unconscious vis-à-vis exploitation and illusions of control and superiority. In other words, a capitalistic-inflected hope splits off the needs, desires, and sufferings of the objects of exploitation, whether they are human beings or other species. This said, despite centuries of destruction and exploitation, some economists continue to believe that capitalism is our only hope for reducing the effects of climate change. This is wishful thinking

and perhaps an unconscious attempt to maintain the privileges of capitalist classes while denying or disavowing capitalism’s long, bloody, and destructive history. Clearly, to place our hopes in capitalism is a problem and a distortion not only because capitalism is a major contributor to climate change but also because it is a key obstacle to climate action.

Capitalism should not get all the blame. The ethos of nationalism structures the hopes of numerous citizens in most countries. The desire, in part, is for a shared identity, which is fundamentally exclusionary, not only concerning othered human beings but also othered species. Linking one’s identity to a collective national identity is joined to an unconscious desire for a sense of going-on-being even in the face of existential threats. Thus, though an individual citizen will die, the nation will continue to exist. Nationalism, in terms of shared identity, is usually accompanied by the illusion of superiority. We believe “our nation is more exceptional than your nation.” None of this is benign, because the rise of nation-states depended on political violence, and here we see the means of enacting nationalistic hopes comprise varied iterations of violence, which occur between and within nation-states. Hope with regard to the apparatuses that establish and maintain nationalisms is deeply flawed when one faces the realities of climate change. All nations, all peoples depend on a biodiverse earth. We are all residents of the earth. Yet nationalism obstructs this view and impedes, along with the apparatuses of capitalism, cooperation toward achieving a habitable earth. If we place our hopes in nationalism, we will continue to rely on violence and exclusion, while denying the existential truth that all life depends on a viable earth.

The third of this unholy trinity of hope is a new imperialism that is evident in the machinations of the United States, China, and Russia. Imperialism is tied to nationalism, though it is a pernicious form of nationalism because it seeks to dominate other nations, whether through political-economic threats or outright violence. The three major culprits share, in part, a desire and vision to maintain and extend political, economic, and military control over other states. Collectively, these three nations promote exceptionalism that is

exclusionary to outsiders. Those who place their hopes in imperialistic visions correspondingly disavow the destruction done in the name of one’s imperium—destruction to other human beings, other species, and the earth.

These three systems intersect in myriad ways and, at their base, promote anthropocentrism, which is a collective type of narcissism. The core problems are that the visions that determine hope are restrictive to select groups of human beings—excluding othered human beings, other species, and the earth—and that the varied means of attaining the visions are violent. To rely on these three systems in offering hope in the Anthropocene Age represents a hope that, in the long run, is tragically doomed.

The above is not necessarily a counsel of despair. A remedy exists. Erik Erikson posited that hope emerges from the struggle of trust-mistrust between parent and baby. Central to this struggle are the parents’ consistent caring actions, which give rise to children’s presymbolic organizations of anticipation or hope. Care precedes and is the foundation of hope, but care is not contingent on hope. There are numerous examples throughout history of people caring for one another amid hopelessness. It is not radical hope we must seek but a kind of radical care that is not dependent on hope. Martin Luther, I suspect, was thinking of radical care when he said, “If I knew the world was going to end tomorrow, I would plant an apple tree today.” To plant a tree in the face of the end of the world is an act of radical care, which depends on courage—the courage to care without hope. As Hannah Arendt wrote, “Courage is required because in politics the primary care is never for life itself but always for the world.” The remedy is radical care for other human beings, other species, and the earth, and this remedy requires a collective courage. ■

<sup>1</sup>Scientists Paul Crutzen and Edward Stoermer, decades ago, coined the term “Anthropocene Age,” which refers to a new period of geological history wherein human beings, in general, are responsible for global changes in the environment.



## When a Child Wakes

When a child wakes with the morning gold in this land, his mouth  
prays, rebels against bloodstained news from perching on the

twig of his ears, dirges from becoming a classical song on the  
lips of everything he encounters that day, blood from smearing

the walls of naive houses that always remain a graveyard  
as ravenous bullets unleashed by minds devoid of empathy

feast through the chest of their inhabitants.

A mother— phenomenal canary on the tamarack of compassion— sits

by a weary wooden door in front of her bungalow, pining, munching prayers  
in her mouth like hot yam for her daughter's safe return, with fane undesecrated,

with pride unstolen. A father— cynosure in the sky of dismay— grips courage  
by the throat before leaving for work, kisses his wife on her forehead like a warrior

marching to the warfront, implores her to saddle the horse  
of fate with prayers, for his head to return unsevered.



The Day  
I Learned  
I Was a  
**Woman  
of Color**

One afternoon, several years into my tenure at Wayne State University, I got a phone call during my office hours from a journalism student who wanted to meet with me. When I asked her what it was about, she explained that one of my colleagues from the English department had given her my name because she thought it could be interesting to interview me, as “a woman of color,” about my experience at Wayne. When I heard that, I thought, *A woman of color?* Is she talking about me, or has she confused me with someone else? Of course, according to the US classification of people (White, African American, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, other), there probably was no confusion at all. I, as a Hispanic, must be a woman of color. It was a technical fact that became a tag.

The realization of being seen as a woman of color shocked me deeply. I, who used to introduce myself to my university students and everyone else who showed curiosity about my origins as a second-generation Argentinean with paternal grandparents from Italy and maternal grandparents from Spain? The statement was usually accompanied by the pun “The Mexicans descended from the Aztecs, the Peruvians descended from the Incas, and the Argentines descended from boats,” meaning descending from the ships on which our ancestors arrived from Europe. Give me a break! I was not, and I could not be, a woman of color.

It is important to mention that this experience had been comfortably hidden from my memory until recently. More precisely, until the appearance of the COVID-19 pandemic—an unexpected nightmare reinforced by the “I can’t breathe” uttered by George Floyd. This, in appearance, was just another case of a Black man killed by a white police officer but powerful enough to trigger—in the middle of the pandemic—an explosion of anti-racist manifestations not only all over the United States but around the world. Still... why was I able to remember that interpellation just at this precise moment? The self-awareness of being a foreigner with an accent and with different cultural parameters has always been there and yet... An answer could be that, in the middle of such a political and sociocultural turmoil, my perception of being considered “other” suddenly coalesced by putting together fragmented and dispersed parts into a whole. Everything came to the surface, accompanied now by the

conviction that my feelings of segregation were not an illusion. They were true but, more important than true or false, there was the emergence of a new feeling: I was not alone anymore. I felt validated, with no shame but a new sense of belonging.

“Hidden in plain sight,” like Poe’s purloined letter? Or, better, something that has been forgotten (or repressed) coming now to light, according to the Freudian definition of “the Uncanny”? Probably both, as with everything that has to do with remembering/forgetting events from our own life. What is likely new is the total uncertainty in which we are now living, the pressing curiosity about the future, and the unescapable need to revise our past. And that is exactly what I started to do—triggered by the expression “a woman of color.”

Hidden in plain sight... because of that, my most successful literature classes at the university have always been those about Latin American writers in exile or, a more recent seminar on exile, migration, and psychoanalysis. It took me quite some time to realize that teaching those courses was my professional tool (should I call it my mask?) to analyze and try to understand my own condition as “other.” For that reason, they sounded persuasive and attractive, not only to foreigners like me but for everybody else. Those were the most successful courses during my whole academic career.

Early on, during my first migration living in Medellín (Colombia) and teaching at the University of Antioquia, I discovered Julia Kristeva’s text about being a foreigner and León and Rebeca Grinberg’s on the psychoanalysis of migration and exile; since then they accompanied me along the road. Moreover, Julia Kristeva (who presents herself as a “European citizen of French nationality, Bulgarian by birth and American by adoption”) became my intellectual guide, my model, and my idol. She was a linguist and a literary critic, a philosopher, a psychoanalyst, and a fiction writer who became famous not only in her adoptive country, France, but all over the world; I could not have chosen a better model to imitate.

Hidden in plain sight. Because of that, I started my career as a literary critic by writing a book about narratives dealing with the military rule in Argentina between 1976 and 1983. That was my way of understanding what happened in my country after the arrival of the military government in 1976 that forced me and my family to leave. Also, because of that I have been

“pregnant,” for more than nine years now, with a book manuscript in which I analyze authors from Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay who were forced by Southern Cone authoritarian political regimes to migrate and become foreigners—sort of intellectual pariahs traveling around the world, looking for a home to replace the home country that expelled them. All these authors found their home, as I do now, by writing. Most of them write autobiographies or, rather, “auto-fiction”: sort of fictionalized post-analysis autobiographies, while doing analysis as a way of understanding, mourning, and (hopefully) healing the trauma of migration. In those cases, writing and psychoanalysis go hand in hand because the experience of narrating one’s own story in the presence of the other (the analyst) serves as preparation for writing it.

“Something that has been forgotten/repressed is coming now to light.” To talk about these topics is very painful. Because of that, instead of writing about myself, I chose to do literary criticism (a total of six books and more than one hundred articles) in which I dealt with other people’s writing, hiding and, at the same time, indirectly exposing myself through their words—feeling safe by vicariously analyzing their experiences.

I started this piece by talking about an episode in which I became a woman of color—a subspecies of the “other,” and how it has been, until recently, deeply buried in my memory. Although, as I discovered after George Floyd’s death and its intersection with the pandemic, it was always hidden in plain sight, either in the courses I taught or in the literary criticism I wrote. Migration, foreignness, exile: topics I carefully handled from the safe zone of teaching/writing about others while I was exploring my own life. But there was a place in which all of that came out and came back repeatedly, mostly unmasked, in a long process marked by a lot of pain and defensive energy. That place was, of course, one of my analytic sessions in which I saw myself through the eyes of my analyst, focused on the conflictive interaction with my family, mainly with my mother and sister... All of that is true and constitutes the core of my whole identity, and yet... What I resented then and can see more clearly now is that during my analysis, my quest was never really placed in a sociocultural and political context. Valid as the psychoanalytic frame of self-knowledge is, it did not totally acknowledge my personal reality of having left Argentina with my husband and two young

sons because of an authoritarian regime, living for eight years in Medellín, ruled by the rhythm of guerrilla fighters and narco-dealers, dealing with the responsibilities of making a living and bringing up two sons as a single mother (after their father fell ill and returned to Argentina), then moving to the United States, where I struggled to adapt to another culture, another language, and different values and attitudes.

Here are only a few examples of my struggles to adapt to US culture. Every time I was stopped by the police while driving, I always got a ticket—regardless of how much I tried to explain my situation and whether I was at fault. My impression was that my accent put me in a disadvantaged position. And my use of language—English, so different from Spanish, French, or Italian, which I quite master. I have studied English—British English—since I was very young, but it did not help me with the American colloquialisms, nor with the accent. That accent that moved people politely—or not—to ask me where my accent came from and demanded with some irritation that I say it again. Or when I would get physically closer to people to help them understand my English, they would immediately move far away. The notion of privacy, so important in American culture! Once, just after my arrival at Wayne State University, trying to inform myself about practical matters, I asked a colleague about his salary. His answer was startling: “In this country we don’t ask about other people’s salaries.” “In this country” is a phrase I heard often.

“Hidden in plain sight” and “Something that has been forgotten/repressed is coming now to light.” The ritornello of those two statements provides not only some rhythm to this piece but, mainly, hits the heart of my experience. Now, coming back to them, it is easier for me to understand how much the pandemic and the anti-racist movements stirred up repressed memories of humiliation and pain, circling the original feeling of not belonging and rejection. As conflicting and ambivalent as these feelings still are, I have started to reconcile with the tag put on me, with the way I am seen in the United States. After George Floyd’s cry for breath, those feelings resurged to reassure me that—as a woman of color—I am not alone anymore, although there is still a long way to go, personally and socially. ■

# IT'S HISTORY

All of us are regularly asked to engage with the past in some way. The world is saturated by history.

But, then, a simple question: What is history? Ask fifty people and you'll get, typically, fifty shades of the same answer: History is something about a past. Whether as myth or memory, narrative or science, or found in gradients in between each, the most common denominator is a starting place in an ambiguous past, a "before now," which is given meaning only insofar as it is connected to other things either similarly before now or, sometimes even more strangely, to things happening "now" or "later." Obviously, this is a plain observation, an easy, even trite, simplification of the facts at hand; for those not entertained by simple linguistic reductions, however, an interesting bit comes into play when we ask a follow-up question: What is the use of history?

Nietzsche wrote, "The question of the degree to which life requires the service of history at all, however, is one of the supreme questions and concerns in regard to the health of a man, a people or a culture." The question of history's usefulness is an old one. One answer, coming from Foucault, paraphrasing Nietzsche, is that genealogy (history's less stuffy, more freewheeling younger sibling) ought to be put to the task of untangling the binds that restrict history to domination, and exclusion. In this sense, history—as the "before now"—isn't so much "for itself" but exists only insofar as it is able to deconstruct a repressive narrative and illuminate the parts of the story that were otherwise missing. Ultimately, to White, paraphrasing Foucault (still paraphrasing Nietzsche), this project hopes to "return consciousness to an

apprehension of the world as it might have existed before human consciousness appeared in the world, a world... which is neither orderly nor disorderly."

Of course, astute readers will at once notice what I am doing, I am paraphrasing the paraphrases of paraphrasers. As some will notice, I am grossly reducing Foucault's reading of Nietzsche, while also simplifying White's reading of Foucault and White's reading of Foucault reading Nietzsche. Others may comment that I have forgotten to mention historians such as Thomas Carlyle, Leopold von Ranke, and Fernand Braudel; Hegel is missing, as is Marx, as is Gadamer, as is Jameson. I have not mentioned any women, nor anyone not of Anglo-European descent or anyone lacking in an increasingly more niche educational background. Likewise, I have not offered any mention of the means or methods that would even allow the keeping and analysis of history, such as writing, books, education, or ideological impetus. The list could go on, but the point is this: In order to be apprehended, history must be paraphrased (and must always leave not a few people out of the "in club"). Most astute readers might have picked up that not everyone would pick up all the names dropped above.

Perhaps history itself is like television snow and our understanding of it is the same as picking a few dots and lines out to see a smiley face. The real past, the before now prior to comprehension, isn't cleanly demarcated; those lines—Agricultural Revolution, Middle Ages, Modernity, etc.—were, after all, drawn by us. This isn't to say that things didn't happen, that the past is unknowable, but it is to say that parts are always withheld or arbitrarily left out in order for it to be comprehensible. Really, we must draw those lines while always being aware of them or risk being overwhelmed by history's impenetrable scale.

As a young historian, I am beginning to understand that history cannot be correctly paraphrased or condensed. Our understanding is "never absolute and never complete"—an always already broken tool that we don't realize is broken—but as Heidegger tells us, we are still thrown into a world that is conditioned by happenings that came before us and that, in turn, calls us to respond to it. No sort of linguistic or existential turn can completely amend the facticity that something was before now, is now, and will, potentially, be now and otherwise. The scale of this real past and the problems that have bubbled forth from it don't allow it or us to

fit comfortably within a singular ideological box or definition. History is the clay we use to shape the tools and toys of life for whatever purposes we see fit; it is "as much poetical as it is grammatical."

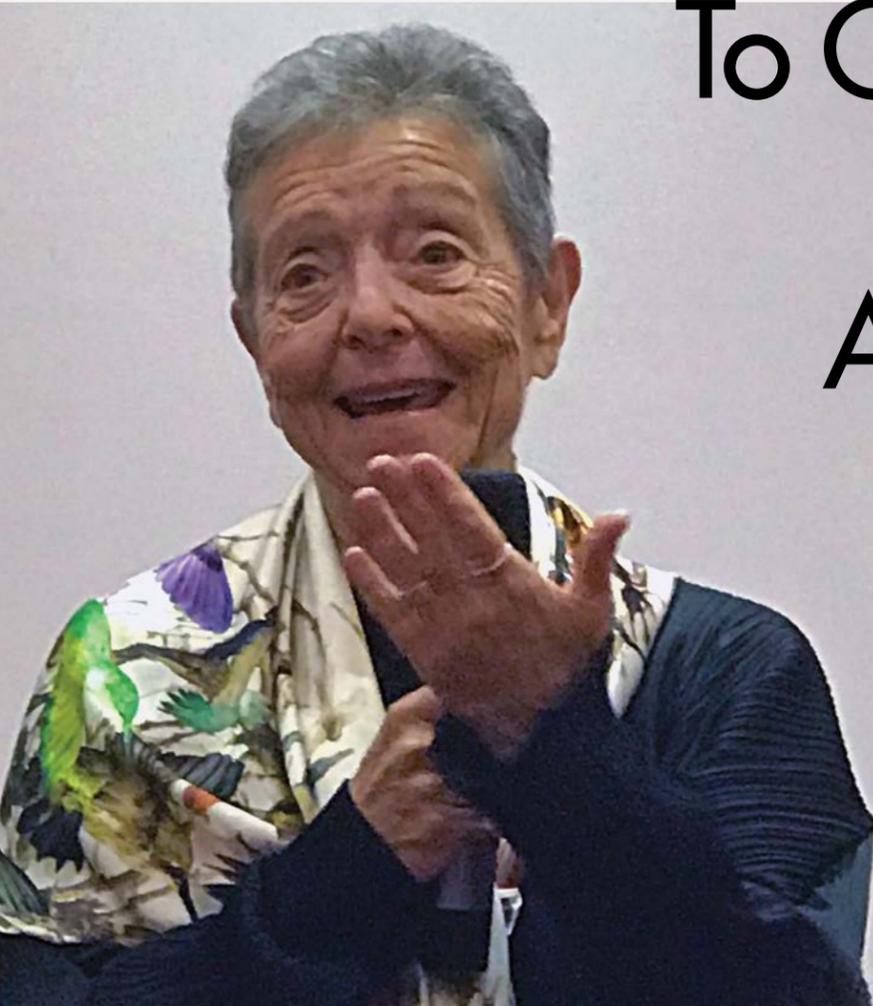
Contemporarily, in forms such as BLM and anti-racism activism, climate activism, even the proliferation of cancel culture, the resurgence of right-wing populism, one can see the various iterations of historical understanding as a (broken) tool. Each of these movements is activated and energized by history; whether it is by the right or the left or otherwise, as a tool, a toy, or even a weapon, history is necessarily cherry-picked in order to be functional for a specific means. This is not a recent phenomenon, but the vast information dump of the internet and adjacent technologies enables the flat, fecund plain of history to be picked up into more and more idiosyncratic forms. Something happens, and it calls for its response—a new nonprofit, a new -ism—or the reverse: nothing is happening and before it was, now a revival, a soft reboot,

a repetition with a difference, or something else entirely, ad infinitum.

History as television snow asks us to be creative enough to make faces out of random dots and lines. But the problems of the past—the risk of eye strain—also require us to look away from time to time, to look away and draw inspiration from elsewhere or otherwise be willing to see a different sort of pattern in the mess. History—and our ability to use it—is limited when we put it into boxes, when we stare at it so it can't change and make it give us morals and a means to some ultimate, comfortably prophesied end. We must always be interrogating strict narratives of the past and the presents and futures that come with them, not to reject them but to recognize the vast plurality of cohabiting pasts and potential, unpredictable futures. It may be true that the present has an obsession with the past, but this obsession itself—in its vast plurality and arbitrariness—could be the mechanism for novel action in the present and future. Maybe this would allow us to see and understand ourselves and our world with greater range. We would be seeing our many mistakes, our half successes, and our surprise triumphs. With this range, perhaps, we'd be emboldened to not only understand more but to act and act more boldly, more definitively, as if in a dream. ■

# Bringing Psychoanalysis To China

## An Interview with Arlene Richards



**Fang Duan:** As someone from China who is now learning psychoanalysis in the US, I am very curious about your “reverse” journey. What brought you to China?

Arlene Richards: I always wanted to visit China. I am Jewish. Several of my good friends here in the US spent years of their childhood in Shanghai, China. During WWII some Jewish people fleeing the Holocaust ended up in Shanghai. They were welcomed and treated very well. The Chinese people shared food with Jewish refugees when they barely had enough for themselves. I am very grateful and I want to do something for the Chinese people as a way of giveback.

**FD:** The relationship, remote or not, started early. You have personal reasons to bring psychoanalysis to China.

AR: Yes, I do. I first visited China shortly after Nixon’s visit in the late 1970s with a group organized by the American Psychoanalytic Association. To our surprise, when we visited the Shanghai No. 1 Mental Health Hospital, we saw quite an amazing system of care: they had “heart-to-heart” talk (individual therapy), family therapy, and in community therapy they even invited neighbors. They tried to understand every aspect of the patient’s mental and emotional disturbance. And there were also many activities, including music, dance, and occupational therapy. Unfortunately, these services were available only to the very “valuable” few.

**FD:** Very sophisticated.

AR: Yes it is. Then in 2006, I received a phone call from Dr. Tong in Wuhan. She had read my work on female psychology and development. They had a big problem they thought I could help them with. Young women, only daughters of a class that had power in China, were dying by suicides. These women were expected to continue the family line. Also, because their parents had achieved so much, they were expected to excel and make their parents proud. Not everyone is equipped to accomplish that much. Besides, many of these only daughters did not grow up with their parents who had been busy working. Now as adults they felt they could not measure up and were terribly depressed. They were hospitalized, and some even took their own lives in the hospital. It was such a disaster for themselves and their families.

**FD:** It looks like your idea of primary female bisexuality becomes obligatory in this context. Ideally, girls develop in such a way as to realize their bisexual potential or different aspects of their personality without too much gender restriction. Now these young women felt they had to do both and be everything. An impossible situation.

AR: That is exactly what happened. An unsustainable situation. Then I flew to Wuhan with my husband. For two weeks we gave lectures, did supervision and interviews. It was very successful. By the end of the trip, we were given a lovely banquet. I was seated next to the governor of the Hubei province, who had his own reasons to be grateful. We chatted. The governor told me that his biggest regret in life was that he missed the childhood of his only daughter. He hoped one day he could be a grandpa and watch his grandchild grow. He would not miss any milestones. He talked with such eloquence and passion. I was moved and said, “This child is going to be lucky.” I shared that I was raised by a grandpa because my mother was busy at work when I was little. It was an arrangement that worked for all. The governor was very interested. I then recommended a book I was given to read as a child when I told my mother other kids at school were teasing me: “You don’t have a mother and you only have a grandpa.” In this book the little girl Heidi was sick. She was sent to live with a grandpa who did not put any pressure on her. Grandpa simply looked after her and enjoyed her. Heidi got well. The governor responded, “Is this what psychoanalysts do?” I said, “Yes it is. This is what we do.” The governor said, “This is a good thing. I will build you a new hospital.”

Within six months a new five-story building for Wuhan Tongji (meaning “Sailing in the Same Boat to Cross a River” in Chinese) Mental Health Hospital was finished. This building houses our new Sino-American psychoanalytic training program.

Since then we have been travelling to China to train mental health professionals twice a year in the spring and fall, each time for two weeks. In between we continue the work on Zoom, and last year, due to the COVID, the program was disrupted, but we tried to pick it up entirely online. We have graduated two three-year classes, each of two hundred fifty students. Now for the third class we have five hundred students. The students selected for training are usually heads of the local hospitals or psychiatric departments and they go back and teach their staff what they learn at the program.

FD: I heard this Sino-American program is very influential in the Chinese mental health community, along with a Norwegian program and a German program, all following a “train the trainers” or “teach the teachers” model. What is significant to me is that this program was established through a personal connection you made with this governor. I think perhaps the “personal” element is what makes psychoanalysis especially appealing to a society that does not traditionally emphasize the individual and the personal.

AR: Somehow it happened. In China, things happened from top down. In the beginning the issue was with the only daughters of people on top. Unfortunately mental illness is quite an equalizer.

FD: I think psychoanalysis helps people understand we are more alike than different on the inside, despite all those external categories of distinction. Psychoanalysis has become quite popular in the Chinese mental health community and academia. Based on your experience, why do you think people in China are embracing psychoanalysis now?

AR: I think it has to do with trauma, trauma of violence and trauma due to radical social changes from China's recent and long history. Just from the last few decades there have been wars, political movements, great famine, cultural revolution, and then came reformation and opening up. The society is changing so fast, as if the ground on which people stand is constantly shifting. Trauma happened on such a large scale. Almost every family was affected. It seems that so much destruction or disruption is built into the fabric of the society. Several decades ago a six-year-old went to school and he came back only to find his beloved grandma hanged herself in the kitchen. Is it surprising now this man suddenly lost his high functioning and developed a debilitating fear? As we just mentioned, “becoming a woman” could be such a complicated, heavy issue for an entire generation of only daughters. But it is not something they talk about openly.



FD: Recent China has seen this spectacular burst of energy and, at the same time, so much psychological damage. There is so much need for psychological assistance. What is the most challenging part in your psychoanalytic work in China? Do you experience any “culture shock”?

AR: The major issue is shame. Compared with patients I see here in the USA who are more troubled by guilt or conflict, my Chinese patients are more troubled by shame. They worry about how what happened may look to others. They feel ashamed that they need help, especially psychological help, as if they should just toughen up and get over their pain on their own. It is often very hard for them to talk about what they went through. Left unspoken, these unspeakable, unmentionable traumas from the past remain so alive, motivating. The impact could be disastrous.

FD: The experience of shame is also prominent in my psychoanalytic work. I think the wound of shame is more pervasive, global, and it cuts much deeper, damaging people's core sense of humanity. I don't think injury at this level could be easily mended by short-term or cognitive treatment. It takes psychoanalysis as a change agent at the ontological level to bring about lasting transformation. How do you work with shame? What sort of technique do you think is most helpful in your work with the Chinese colleagues and patients?

AR: I would not say it is a matter of technique. I think it is more a delicate touch, a respectful, learning attitude. To make them feel valuable. I try to make them feel they have valuable things to say, their thinking and feelings are the most important things in the room. I ask them to help me understand what it is that I am not seeing. If I have an interpretation, I check with them: “Did what I said match up with how you feel?” When I get a negative reaction, I say: “Here, I was wrong again.”

FD: Talking helps. And you have a very gentle, affirmative approach, relating at a deeply human level. Thank you very much.

AR: Thank you. ■

# (Re)Locating Analytic

**D**istance is nothing new for psychoanalysts. Except for all the unimaginable newness, of course. The profound losses to be reckoned with for the training—and frankly, the life—I had imagined having before the pandemic. But I have been distant before this. Distant from myself when swept into an enactment. Distant from my patient when I don't join in their fantasy. Distant from my analyst when they don't collude in mine.

I am being trained in working at a distance. Sometimes it seems like we primarily think of training at this point in time as “distance psychoanalysis while in training” when, in fact, we are being trained in working at a distance. This, too, is nothing new.

The IPA continues discussion toward the creation of policies on “tele-analysis and supervision” in training. IPA institutes collect data to report on member opinions on tele. Committees, boards, institutes, and associations debate and survey.

What is it telling us about the state of psychoanalysis that the IPA would have us turn toward numbers and data at this time? As if data could possibly be a way to fend off the collapse of a society and field as we knew it, and a collapse within our own minds in the face of such trauma and losses? Surveys asking questions about in-person requirements for analysis speak to a desperate collective fantasy of managing what is not manageable. These debates and surveys also speak to a wish to portend an end of the pandemic or at least the “state of emergency” of the pandemic. We, as a field, are getting ready to return to what we cannot return to.

To be at a distance is to still be at, to still be located, not completely untethered. This has always been the analyst's task. Training at this time offers strengths that analysts who trained in decades past, who will likely decide policy, may not have. There may be a disadvantage, then, for those with the most experience in the field. They

have not had the bizarre privilege of being a candidate at this time, with multiple weekly supervisions, classes, personal training analyses, advisers, readers, and more as support. Policies regulating tele-analysis may speak more to a wish for that kind of support.

Analytic work is to communicate through a distance and create a space for two people to meet. With my patients, I practice making this space and hold my own body in mind, and theirs as well. We did this in the room and we do this when we can only see our mediated digital faces on a screen. We are not doing digital and disembodied analysis, as analysis never could be disembodied; Freud refused that mind-body dualism. In just the patient's voice alone, we can learn to listen for trembling, stumbling, stalling. The speed of their speech can help us hold their bodies in mind, even if we can't see them. We feel our own bodies shift as they slow down or speed up, anxiety rises and subsides.

My task as an analyst is to have a mind that is capacious enough to hold both my patients and myself through a digital frame and through all sorts of distance. I don't see that as a weakness in my training. I see that as a challenge, and I see that as demanding even more rigor than in-person work might have. My supervisors would never let me compromise my work or myself by not expecting, and nurturing, my analytic mind. This is the rigor I was promised at the outset of training. And this is the rigor in which I am still being trained.

Any preoccupation with a requirement of in-person work is a distraction. I, too, sometimes welcome distraction from the pain of this pandemic. But no location or setting can ensure an analytic process. That is the work of training. As a patient and an analyst, I miss in-person sessions, often desperately. But that loss and desperation must not be merged in our minds with the medium through which the work is conducted. Tele-analysis is not the problem; the pandemic is. ■

## Space

# Circling

Looking out the window from my airplane seat, I anticipated seeing the familiar landmarks of the valley city below—Phoenix, Arizona—as they came into view during the flight’s descent. It was one of my first trips home since leaving the state to start medical school. The flight seemed unremarkable up to that point. To my surprise, as I looked out the window, expecting to locate known terrain, the scene from the window, effaced the familiar. Instead of mountain ranges with a city below, we were in a cloud. Was it fog? Was it a rain cloud? I don’t recall the flight having been turbulent at all. In retrospect, the burnt-orange hue of this particular cloud should have raised alarm. This particular cloud was given its strange hue from the sunlight reflecting off the sand saturating the surrounding cloud, and the sandstorm was about to make our landing perilous.

The plane assumed the familiar position right before landing: the nose tip up, the wheels jet out, prepared. But then there was a sudden change into the unfamiliar. The body—my body—has a way of communicating when it’s thrown from the familiar, dislodged from regular rhythms. I quickly felt disoriented. A second later, as my mind caught up to what my body already knew, I started to worry. The plane rolled. The left wing dipped toward the ground, and the right wing went skyward. And then I felt the left wheel of the plane bounce on the tarmac. Jostled and confused, I felt my angst amplify as it became clear that the plane was now ascending skyward.

In the (re)ascent, each individual’s seemingly solitary world gave way to a collective sharing. Suddenly we were all very aware of one another. It felt like all of us—together—became one body unit, contained and situated within the rattled fuselage. The sense of a collective synchronizing of breath, a collective shudder, a collective silence. Once we were at a new stable altitude above the sand cloud, the pilot came on the speaker and said, “Well, we’re going to circle around and try that again.” The embodied sense of connectedness continued in the silent breathing that lingered through the (re)approach.

When we landed, this time safely, there was a collective sigh of relief.

I am writing this at a time in the pandemic where many of us are circling in a similar holding pattern: dislocated from the familiar, trying to know when, if, and how we can (re)approach the familiar. We know, despite the uniqueness of this pandemic storm, that even when we touch down to familiar coordinates, for those among us fortunate to touch down (again), that we touch down changed. We are never in the exact same place twice.

After a fifteen-month hiatus from in-person meetings, a fifteen-month (re)ascent away from the familiar, I walked into my analyst’s office for the first time this summer. I parked my car in the familiar spot and walked down the familiar sidewalk. I entered the familiar lobby and sat in the familiar waiting room. “Not much has changed,” I thought, rather naively (and defensively), as I moved through these old spaces. I made my way to the couch and tried to settle in. I’m not sure what I had anticipated feeling in this (re)approach, but I hadn’t expected this. Within a few moments of the opening of the session, I found myself vigilantly perceptive to my surroundings.

I found myself looking at the texture of the walls in her office, the details in the spines of the books on the shelves, the hue of green in the plants. I noticed the familiar fragrance in the air. But more than anything, it was the sounds in the room that ushered in something both comforting and deeply sad—at the same time. In the silences between my speaking and her speaking, I could hear us both breathing. And in the moments between our breaths, I could hear the still sound of silence. I had heard these sounds before, I was sure of it, yet I had forgotten about them. None of these audible inaudibles were perceptible to me in the many months we sustained our work through phone sessions. Only in the registering of these audible inaudibles, the shared—and unwittingly lost and now shared again—sense of being together in the room, did I realize how much I missed being with my

analyst in her office. And as I began to realize this, it struck me in a completely new way just how massive, how unfathomably traumatic, this pandemic storm has been. I was overcome with an intense sense of loss. Grief surely of the time but not solely belonging to this time.

The following week I began to see some patients in person again after a fifteen-month hiatus. Ash is a twenty-five-year-old man with whom I’ve worked for the past four years. This patient came to me after several years of treatment in a large university system that started when he was a child. Over the years of his treatment, the desperate (and real) need for symptomatic relief from debilitating anxiety and self-injury lured everyone’s attention away from the context of his surroundings and created a hyperfocused gaze on him, his body, his symptoms. All the while, and unbeknown to any of the providers involved, both parents were helplessly consumed by their own severe, but highly functional, self-inflicted behaviors. As Ash was taught distraction techniques, assigned workbooks for how to cope with “irrational negative thoughts,” and medicated (sometimes heavily) for his “excessive worries” and self-injuries, the utterances of his symptoms were left untranslated, and his deepening sense of brokenness amplified.

Working with Ash has been uniquely painful for me, even noxious, in ways I still struggle to comprehend. Our circling(s), ascents and descents, have always felt turbulent. I am aware of my reluctance to approach him. It is as if I see the storm ahead and run the other way. Ash’s storm clouds contain something more than virus particles, something more than sand. As I see the self-inflicted wounds on his skin, Ash’s body tells me that his storm clouds are composed of the most violent of assemblages: viruses and sand for sure but shards of glass, too.

Ash walked into my office and sat on the couch. He began to speak. There was no mention of this being the first session back after fifteen months, nothing about the time spent apart, nothing about the experience unfolding in the room together. The way he picked up from where

he left off in our previous remote session made it seem as if this moment was not in fact happening. Shocked by his seeming lack of awareness of the uniqueness of this (re)approach, I considered interrupting him but decided against it. I said a few words here and there but did not draw his attention to this omission. I held off, in part, because of a growing awareness of something utterly surprising occurring internally for me as he continued to talk and as I continued to listen. There was no return to the familiar noxious experience in me, the experience I had come to associate with Ash himself. Far from it. Instead, the sound of his voice (was it his voice?) as he spoke to me sounded warm, welcoming, deep, unrecognizably rich and melodic in tone. His speaking took my breath away. I had never noticed his voice in this way before. How was this even possible? Despite the surrealness of what was unfolding and despite my previously conscious experiences of aversion when sitting with Ash, I realized I missed him.

Speechless and almost moved to tears, I sat there in awe of the moment. And then, suddenly, Ash stopped talking. He looked around my office and said, “I’m sorry, I’m having the strangest experience... I’m just realizing what it feels like to be back in your office.” I ask, “What are you noticing?” As he continued to look around, now taking in something about the moment, he says, “The sound of the fan, the feel of the couch, the sound of your voice...it’s all...it’s all really comforting. I forgot how comforted and safe I felt here. I’ve really missed this. I’ve missed you.”

For the first time in this treatment, there was a meeting of this sort between us, a sharedness. A sharedness of what is, what was, and maybe what hadn’t yet been. We were both moved to tears, for the first time, together. The shared—and unwittingly lost and now shared again—sense of being together in the room. Something had changed in the many months of circling in between. I don’t yet know what. What I do know is that in this particular (re)approach, we both landed together, changed and connected. ■

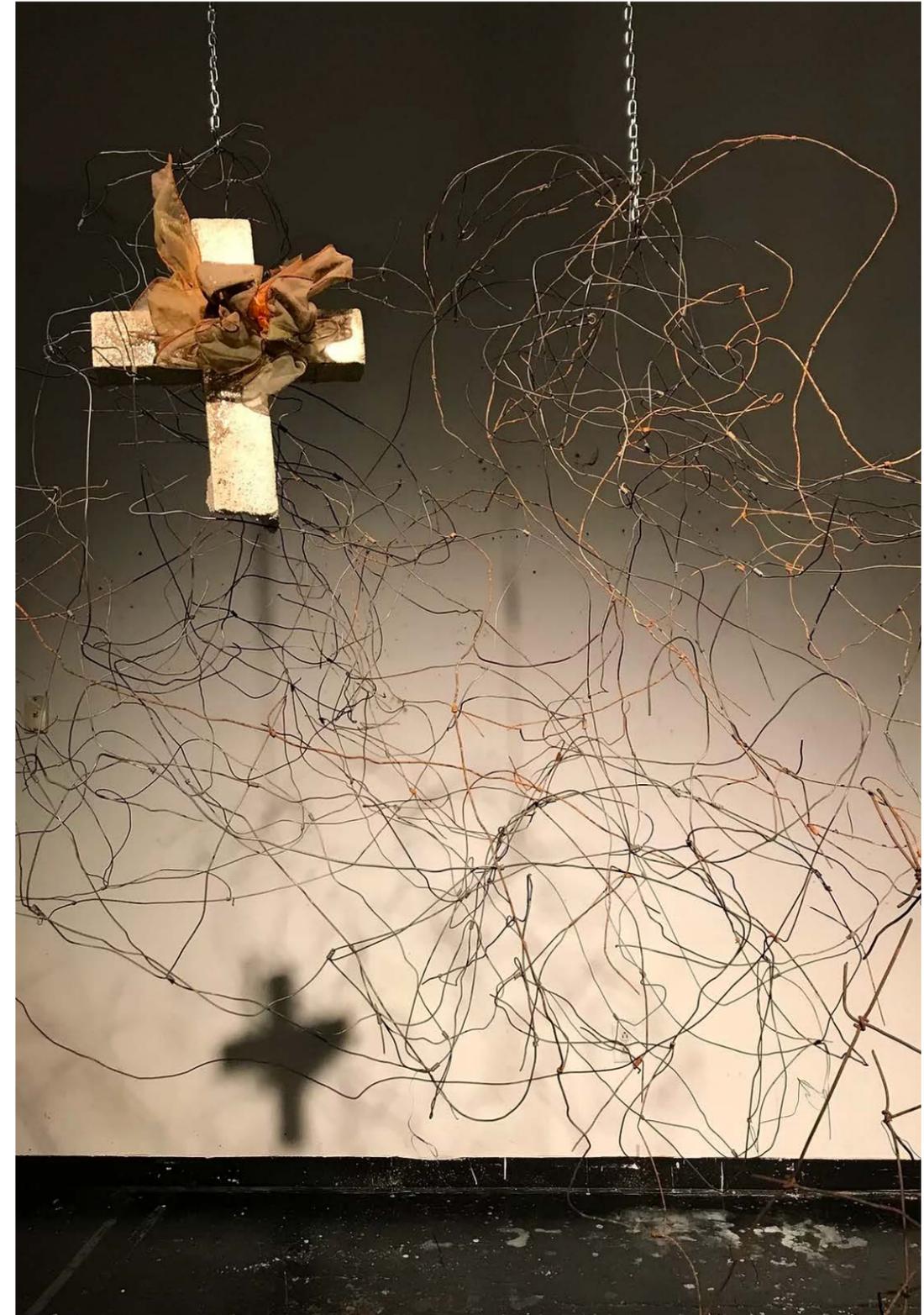
The events of the past several years have brought many of us to a place of collective understanding in an elemental, deep-in-the-bones kind of way that truly anything can happen. My current work resides in this space of the loss of innocence, where beauty and its destruction inevitably coexist. The trajectory of my life, as with most of us, has borne witness to moments of unfettered joy as well as profound loss. I have experienced guileless innocence, beauty, deterioration, and death. These elements are fundamental and irrefutable markers of my life.

I have cultivated a reverence for the unseen, discarded, and forgotten. I make use of found materials and ephemera to evoke a sense of the fragility of beauty and the passage of time. I see these elements as having their own unique spirit and life, their own heartbeat. I use paint, paper, and other media, as well, but the found objects are central to my work.

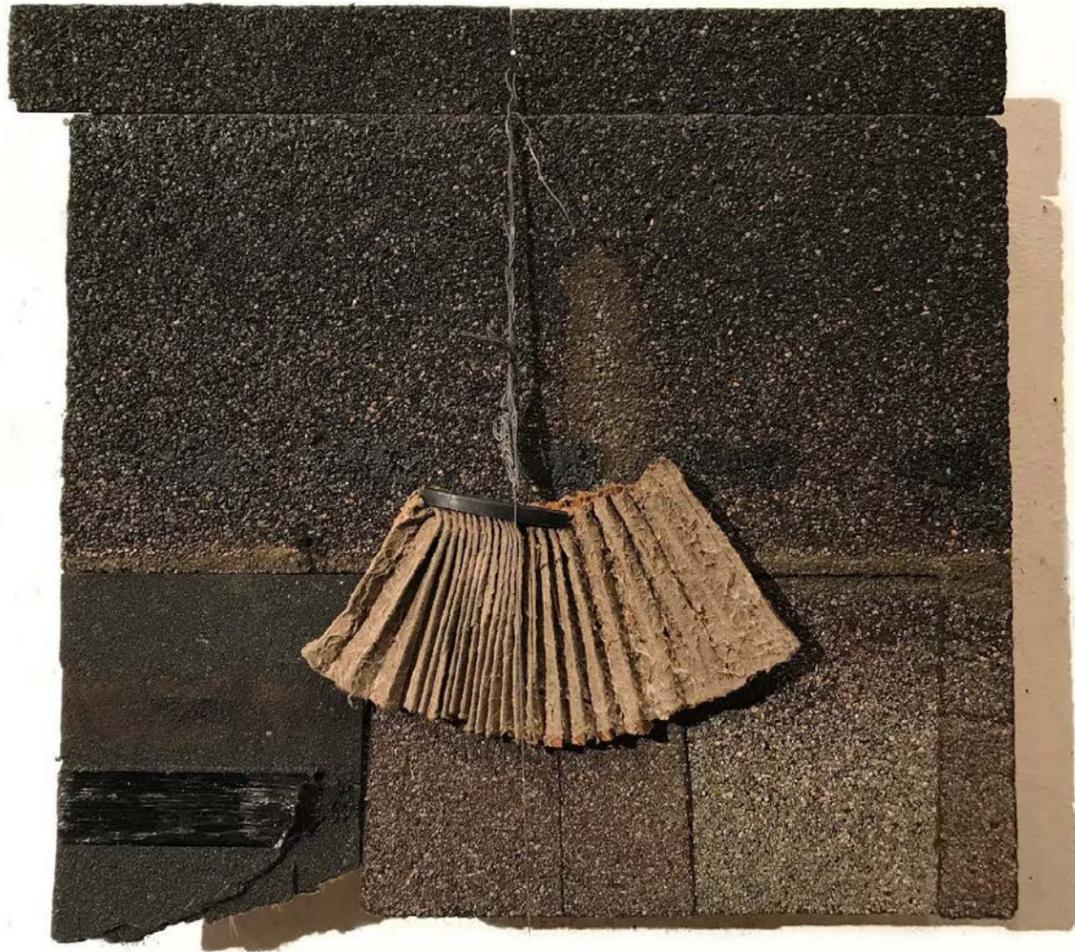
My practice as an architect for many years is integral to what I make. Three-dimensional pieces embed themselves in my work on the wall or suspend from the ceiling to tell their tales. My pieces are stories. I use my materials with reverence. Much of my work evokes or alters without insisting on this reading. The soul of my work speaks to my deep roots growing up and spending most of my life in the South. There's blood in the soil here. I feel it and I honor it.



*OLA IN FLIGHT*  
Found window curtain and found wire  
98" x 25" x 8"  
2019



*ABSOLUTE SILENCE*  
Found wire, found materials, and discarded cemetery cross  
Variable size  
2020



ASPHALT SHINGLES WITH CAR FILTER  
 Found Materials on panel  
 15" X 15 3/4"  
 2019



BUILDING BEING DEMOLISHED IN D.C.  
 2017



FOUND TARP  
 Found object



LANDLOCKED  
 Paint and found materials on panel  
 39" X 43"  
 2019



*FLOWER FIELD*  
Encaustic with Mixed Media on Panel  
24" X 68"  
2015



Open your phone's camera and scan to visit the artist's website

# Speaking the Impossible

I live directly across the street from our neighborhood elementary school, and on 9/11 I sat on this school's playground with my young children as they circled in a mix of playfulness and aimlessness. They knew something terrible was around: delivered home from school at midday and now this playground eerily empty. A security guard, full of intimidation, questioned me: why were we there, where did we live, etc. Shocking to me. All of us scared. I pointed to our house directly across the street and explained I wanted to take my children away from the images, the endless rerunning of crashing towers and falling-off people.

Galway Kinnell (who lived in sight of the towers for twenty years) in his poem (2002) "When the Towers Fell" described the attack as follows:

The plane screamed low down lower Fifth Avenue, lifted at the Arch, someone said, shaking the dog walkers in Washington Square Park, drove for the north tower, struck with a heavy thud, releasing a huge bright gush of blackened fire, and vanished, leaving a hole the size and shape a cartoon plane might make if it had passed harmlessly through and were flying away now, on the far side, back into the realm of the imaginary... The towers burn and fall, burn and fall—in a distant shot, smokestacks spewing oily earth remnants out of the past.



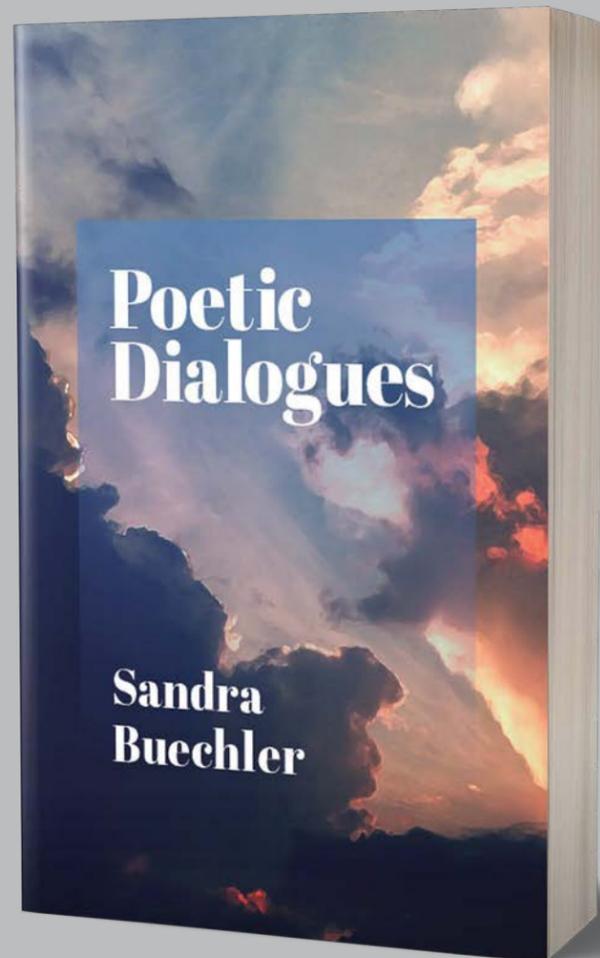


PHOTO: JIR KORPA

## The Way of It

Listen. This is the way of it:  
we open our eyes & it rains  
splinters of ice. Sharp digs  
that you can miss if you duck. I want  
to be more like a shield: something  
that prevents. Something that keeps  
other things warm and unharmed. I am,  
however, a sieve, letting things  
through. A leaking pipe. A kind  
of window screen at the mercy of the  
winter wind. We open our chests &  
out blows the litany of needles &  
narratives. Listen. This is the thumping  
sound of hooves in my blood & yours  
there is only one way to make love  
there is only one way to save the world.

IP Books



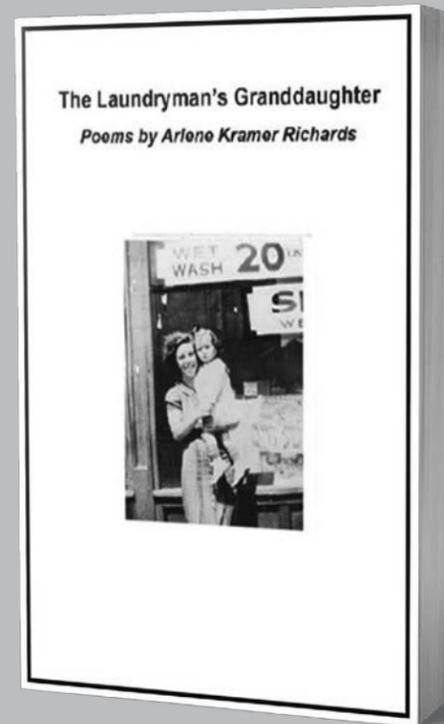
*Poetic Dialogues:* by Sandra Buechler

Poetry lives on many thresholds—between ideas and feelings, known and unknown, poet and reader, poet and other poets, poet and other observers of human beings. Its status as a permanent visitor allows it to speak with more than one accent. Put another way, it does not owe its total allegiance to reason, or rules, or pure emotions, or any one realm. It straddles them all.

Just as an outsider (to a culture, or a family, or a profession) can sometimes see what insiders fail to register, so poetry notices what others miss. It sees the stars in ways that might not occur to the astronomer, and it sees human beings in ways that might not occur to other students of human behavior.

For more information or to purchase this book:

Click here or scan the QR code



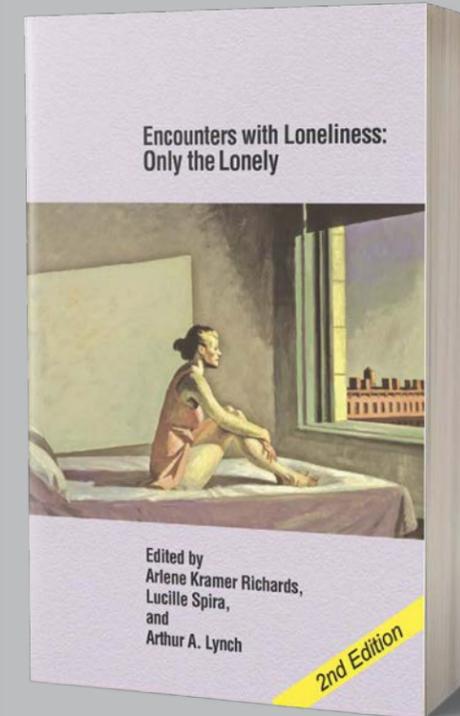
*The Laundryman's Granddaughter: Poems by Arlene Kramer Richards*

Arlene Kramer Richards writes poetry when confronted with the most difficult aspects of life, for example, about the Holocaust, the tortures conducted in the stadium of Santiago, Chile, and about her mother's death. She helps us reach areas of our humanity we were, perhaps, afraid to fully acknowledge and feel.

—Nancy Goodman

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*Encounters with Loneliness: Only the Lonely*  
Edited by Arlene Kramer Richards, Lucille Spira and Arthur A. Lynch

This book is primarily based on Symposium 2012: On Loneliness, which took place at Mount Sinai Medical Center in March 2012 and also on the discussion group—Towards an Understanding of Loneliness and Aloneness in Women (now, Towards an Understanding of Loneliness and Aloneness)—at the American Psychoanalytic Association meetings in New York City, which was started by Arlene Kramer Richards and Lucille Spira.

Special announcement: *Encounters with Loneliness: Only the Lonely* has won the 2014 Gradiva Award for Anthologies!

From the foreword by Harold P. Blum: "This remarkable anthology of fascinating papers on loneliness is unique in the psychoanalytic literature. Although loneliness is a universal ubiquitous experience, it has not previously been discussed in the rich variety of its sources and manifestations. There have been scattered valuable papers on loneliness in the past, but never before brought together in a kaleidoscopic collection allowing a survey of different definitions, approaches, perspectives, and conclusions. This anthology includes different avenues of investigation, varied approaches, multiple dimensions,

clarifications, and understandings, as well as questions and controversies about loneliness. The four sections of the book, Loneliness, Creativity and Artists; Clinical Dimensions of Loneliness; Loneliness/Solitude in the Psychoanalytic Training Process; Loneliness and Life Events, testify to the encompassing scope of the inquiry into this relatively neglected yet very important subject. A great many otherwise lonely ideas resonate with each other, enhancing our understanding of the breadth of this topic.

For more information or to purchase this book:

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room  
**ROUND  
TABLE**

**APRIL 3, 2022/12 NOON EDT**  
LIVE VIA ZOOM

As so many writers in this issue describe, we live in a world of cascading crises. Since the 2.22 issue was completed, war has erupted in Ukraine, while widespread famine in Afghanistan continues, and democracy is under threat all over the world. With three authors from *Room 2.22*, we will talk about our lives during this time, focusing on finding guidance in the poetry of extreme experience and in understanding the challenges of fighting despair while preserving a capacity for hope and care.

To receive the Zoom invitation link, please join our mailing list by visiting:  
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**Roundtable Organizing Committee**

Elizabeth Cutter Evert  
Richard Grose

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Essays | Poems | Creative Writing

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Max. 1500 words

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## Sunflower of Peace

Our mission is to mobilize support and aid for orphans, internally displaced persons, and those most affected by the current situation by providing medical assistance, educational opportunities, and basic necessities. We believe in spreading social change throughout communities, schools, and homes.



Right now we are sending first aid medical tactical backpacks to critical areas in Ukraine. Here is a description of the backpacks: Each backpack has the ability to save up to 10 lives. Each backpack is designed for groups of 5 to 10 people and includes a variety of first aid supplies: bandages, anti-hemorrhagic medicine like Quikclot and Celox, medical instruments, and a means for survival in extreme conditions.

For more information about our non-profit organization, visit [sunflowerofpeace.com](http://sunflowerofpeace.com)

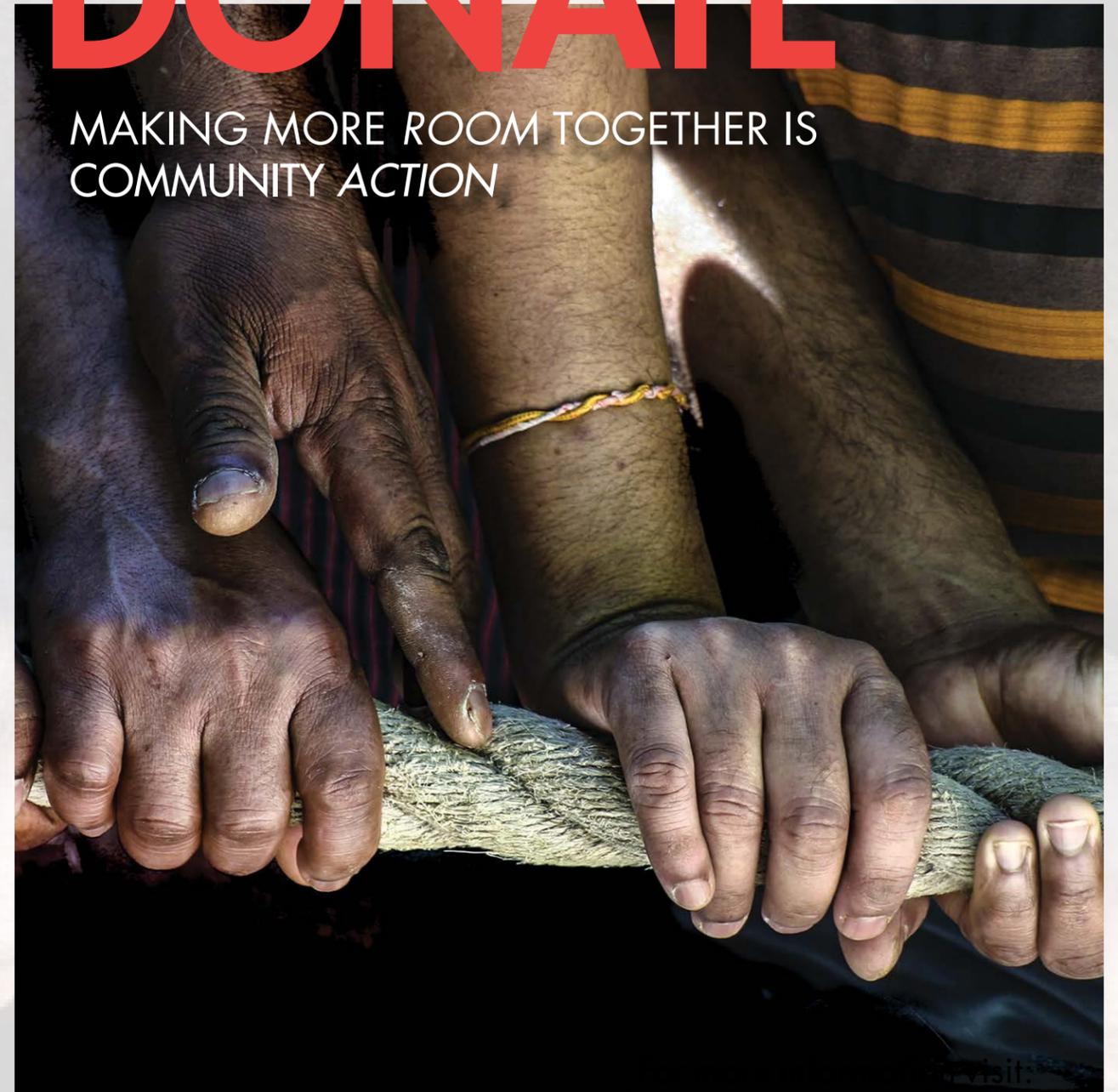
Contribute your tax-deductible donation toward sending medical tactical backpacks to critical areas in Ukraine by clicking here or scanning the QR code.



The success of our mission is only possible through community involvement and support. Please continue to help us make ROOM. **No amount is too small; everything is appreciated and needed.**

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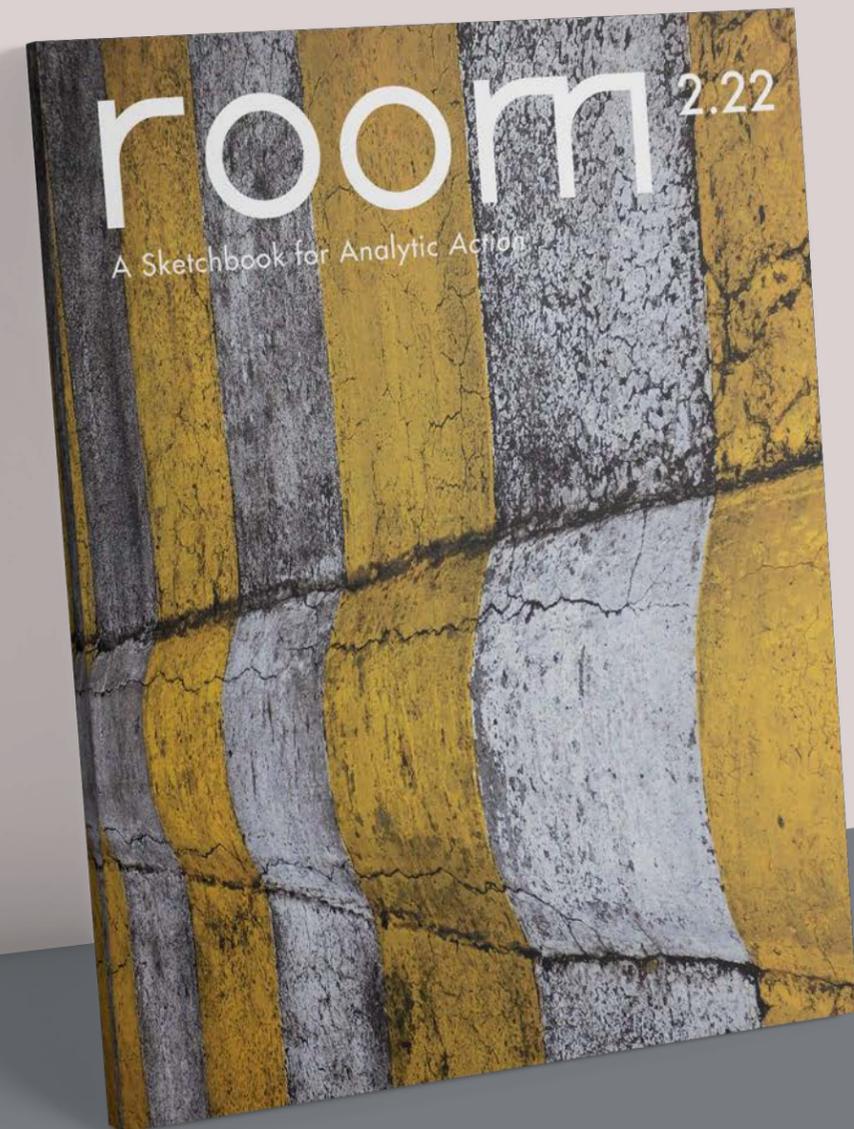


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**ROOM: A Sketchbook for Analytic Action**

was started as a newsletter by a group of New York-based psychoanalysts in response to the trauma of the 2016 US election. Since then ROOM has become an award-winning, interdisciplinary magazine that is a forum for mental health professionals, poets, artists and activists to engage in community-building and transformation by shedding light on the effect our cultural and political reality has on our inner world and the effect our psychic reality has on society.



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