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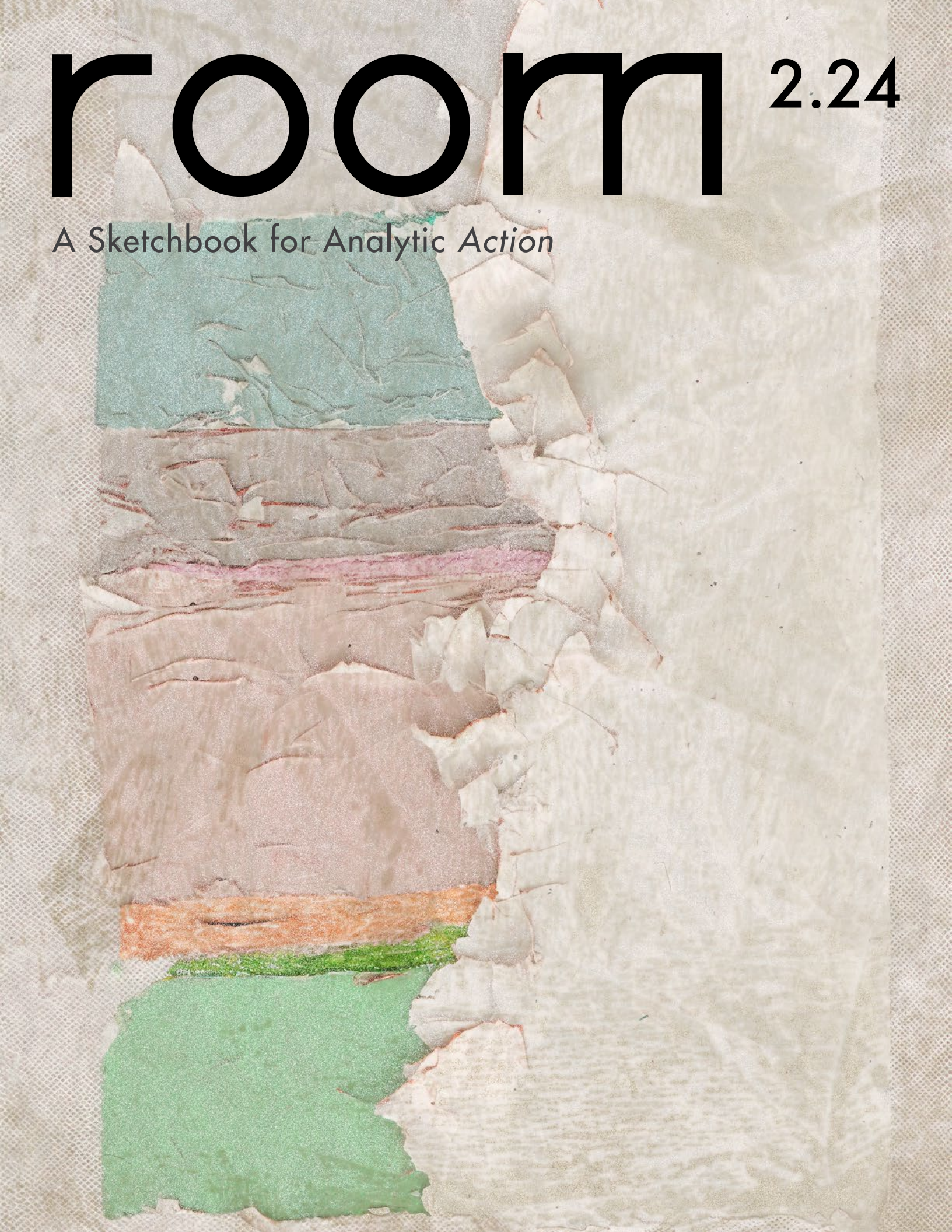
A Sketchbook for Analytic *Action*



ROOM: A Sketchbook for Analytic *Action* is an open, global, public forum in which individual experience shared through essays, art, creative writing, poetry, and community projects enrich our understanding of the social and political world. We believe that the exquisite singularity of individual expression has universal relevance. *ROOM*'s unique approach offers greater familiarity with psychoanalysis as a lens for social discourse.

Cover photo by Jensenart

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A Sketchbook for Analytic *Action*
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Contributors

Shari Appollon, LCSW-R, is a Haitian American psychoanalytic candidate at the National Institute for the Psychotherapies, a private practice clinician based in Brooklyn, New York, and the associate director of clinical services at NYC Affirmative Psychotherapy, a remote group practice that provides affordable long-term therapy for LGBTQ+ adults with an emphasis on the BIPOC community. Shari is the recipient of NIP's 2020 Educators' Award for her paper "The Triple Entendre," which was later published in *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, and she was runner-up for Division 39's 2020 Candidate Essay Contest for her paper "The Parable of the Sower." Shari's favorite pastimes include playing and coaching lacrosse and engaging in herbalism.

Ann T. Augustine, LICSW, MSW, MPP, has been a practicing psychotherapist for more than twenty-five years. She is a graduate of Smith College School for Social Work, where she has taught both policy and practice courses. Ann specializes in the treatment of trauma and loss in her private practice and clinical supervision. Additionally, she works as an organizational consultant with a focus on nonprofit DEIA work. For more information, please see annaugustinelicsw.com.

David Bloch was born in Warsaw. His life journey took him to Siberia, Uzbekistan, back to Poland, to Israel, the Netherlands, and finally the United States. He graduated from the Royal Academy in The Hague and lives and works in New York City.

Aaron Bourne, LPC, NCC, maintains a private practice serving the greater Washington, DC, area. He has taught psychodynamic and humanistic psychotherapy at numerous universities and institutes over his twenty-year career. He is currently a faculty member of the Institute of Contemporary Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis's Couples Therapy Training Program. He is a Gulf War veteran and a retired Air Force officer.

Karim G. Dajani, PsyD, is a clinical psychologist and psychoanalyst in private practice with a specialization in treating bicultural individuals. His research and writing include publications on psychological resilience and culture. He focuses on the role culture plays in determining an individual's role within a collective and on the experience of cultural dislocation.

Mohamad Khayata was born in Damascus and holds a degree in fine arts obtained from Damascus University. As a result of years of displacement, Khayata's work deals with concepts of migration, memory, and identity. Evolving from photography to encompass mixed media, painting, sculpture, and music, he often combines more than one medium with photographic work to produce a multilayered exploration of identity and nation. Many of his pieces include the ongoing metaphorical—and literal—theme of the patchwork quilt, which reflects his desire to stitch Syria back together. He has shown his work in solo and group exhibitions across Europe, the Middle East, and the United States, including at 392RMEIL393, Beirut; Journeys Festival International, Leicester; VC & Oxfam, London; British Council, London and Brussels; the Beirut Art Fair; and Artplex Gallery, Los Angeles.

Delia Kostner, PhD, is a psychologist and psychoanalyst in private practice in Amherst, New Hampshire. She completed her psychoanalytic training at the PINE Psychoanalytic Institute and is currently a faculty member at the Boston Psychoanalytic Society and Institute. Her research and writing interests currently encompass what psychoanalysis has to teach us about our current environmental crises. She is co-editor of an upcoming volume *Climate and Beyond in the Consulting Room*. She is an amateur naturalist and avid outdoors person who spends much of her free time hiking and exploring the hills and mountains near her home.

Adrienne Pilon is a writer, editor, teacher, and booster of literary magazines. Recent work appears in *The Tiger Moth Review*, *Susurrus*, *Open: Journal of Arts and Letters*, and elsewhere.

Eyal Rozmarin, PhD, is a psychoanalyst and writer. He was born in Israel-Palestine and now lives in New York. He writes at the intersection of the psychological and the social-political about subjects, collectives, and the forces that drive them and pull them together and apart. He is co-editor of the book series Relational Perspectives in Psychoanalysis and on the editorial boards of *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* and *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*. Eyal teaches at the William Alanson White Institute and the Psychoanalytic Institute of Northern California. His upcoming book is titled *Belonging and Its Discontents*.

Jill Salberg, PhD, ABPP, is faculty and supervisor at the NYU Postdoctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis, the Stephen Mitchell Center for Relational Studies, and a member of IPTAR. She is the editor of and contributor to *Good Enough Endings: Breaks, Interruptions and Terminations from Contemporary Relational Perspectives* (2010) and *Psychoanalytic Credos: Personal and Professional Journeys of Psychoanalysts* (2022)**.** She has co-edited with Sue Grand *The Wounds of History: Repair and Resilience in the Trans-Generational Transmission of Trauma* and *Trans-generational Trauma and the Other: Dialogues Across History and Difference* **(**2017); both books won the Gradiva Award (2018). Their co-written book *Transgenerational Trauma: A Contemporary Introduction* is forthcoming in May 2024, published by Routledge. She is in private practice in Manhattan and online.

Lava Schadde is a second-year PhD student in the philosophy department at the CUNY Graduate Center in New York City. They are interested in social and political philosophy and feminist and trans philosophy and will dabble in critical phenomenology and ordinary language philosophy. They especially like to mull over the interrelations between embodiment, ontology, and language. Before joining the Grad Center, Lava received their bachelor's degree in philosophy and history from the University of Zurich and studied philosophy in the master's program at the Free University of Berlin.

Sara Shaheen was born in spring and raised in the mountains of the Galilee region in Northern Occupied Palestine, holds a master's degree in clinical psychology, and is currently doing her clinical internship in Jerusalem, where she lives today. Her passion for writing poetry started when she was ten, and she's been writing ever since.

Isaac Slone is a psychoanalytic candidate at the Contemporary Freudian Society in New York City. He is also currently training in the three-year Anni Bergman Parent-Infant Program. He received his BA and MA from the New York University Gallatin School of Individualized Study, where he studied the relationship between psychoanalysis, music, and literature. At NYU Gallatin, he was honored with Interdisciplinary Academic Excellence Awards for his undergraduate work on the relationship between narrative theory and concepts of identity formation and his graduate work on psychoanalytic technique and performance studies. He is the director of programming of *ROOM: A Sketchbook for Analytic Action*. He writes and lectures on James Joyce, the Grateful Dead, and Phish.

Katherine J. Williams, art therapist and clinical psychologist, was the director of the Art Therapy Program at George Washington University, where she is now associate professor emerita. Her poetry has been published in journals and anthologies such as *Poet Lore*, *Passager*, the *Northern Virginia Review*, *3rd Wednesday*, the *Delmarva Review*, the *Broadkill Review*, the *Widows' Handbook*, *How to Love the World: Poems of Gratitude and Hope*, and *The Wonder of Small Things: Poems of Peace and Renewal.* Her first poetry collection, *Still Life,* was published in 2022. Some of her poems have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize.

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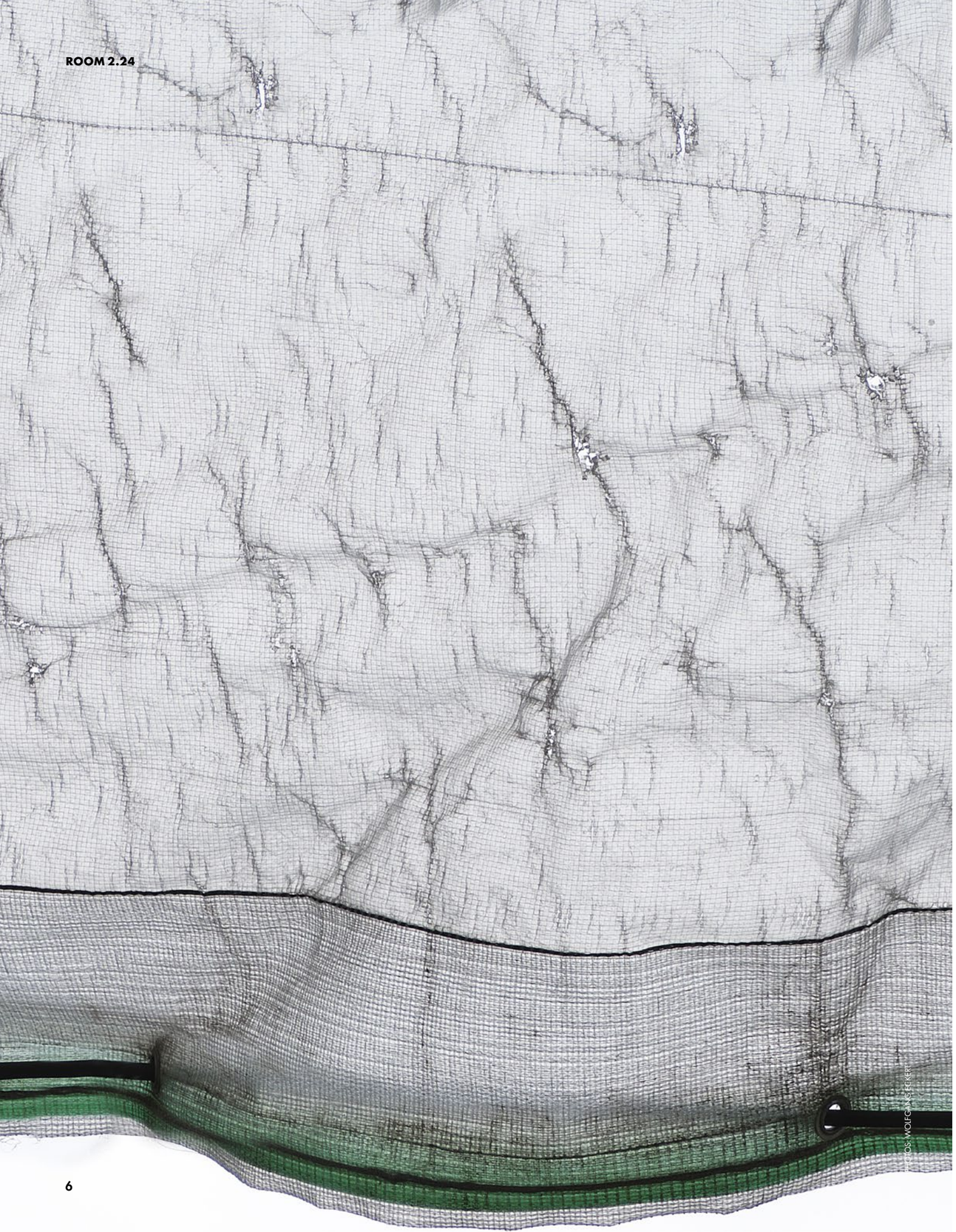


PHOTOS: WOLFGANG FEIKERT

Hattie Myers
hattie@analytic-room.com

Beginnings

For things to reveal themselves to us, we need to be ready to abandon our views about them.

—Thich Nhat Hanh

"...Karim and I are planning to meet tomorrow...to see what we might do together. I'm guessing we'll have some ideas. I—we—will be in touch." —Eyal
"...We need a new language, a new ideology, a new analytic praxis... The responsibility to help move in this direction is on our shoulders. Who is going to do it if not for us? And yet, it is like trying to build the pyramids of Giza. Unimaginable." —Karim

As kids, Karim Dajani and Eyal Rozmarin grew up within hours of each other, one in Beirut, the other in Tel Aviv—to parents who were born in what had been Palestine/Israel. From an astute understanding of the unconscious process, they have written, separately, about belonging and unbelonging and about the interpolation of culture on our beings. Now they meet, for the first time, to write about the impact the current catastrophe in their homeland is having on their souls, about the trauma and resilience in their families' histories, and about the relevance of psychoanalytic thinking today. In a profound illustration of "analytic action," Dajani and Rozmarin are embarking together on a project that they hope will culminate in a new angle from which to understand our human condition.

"It is very hard to find a beacon in such dark times. I am glad we have decided to talk to one another while acknowledging how impossible it might be," begins Karim Dajani. "I am trying to survive a sepsis of the soul because the toxicity is overwhelming." "The word 'sepsis' feels right," responds Eyal Rozmarin "...We are also part of it, this war, this conflict, this colonial nightmare... It's hard to sleep at night. Yet our roofs are still over our heads.... We have the entire fields of humanities, social science, and theory to engage with but we need to look up and out." Together they are **Crossing Divides**.

From *ROOM* to room we never can predict how our community will fill this space, and we are often surprised. In the midst of the violent societal crisis unfolding in Russia and Ukraine, in Israel and Gaza, and with the pending election looming over the United States, it was striking, this time, that the submissions for *ROOM* 2.24 received were, for the most, quieter and more inwardly focused. The authors recall how the grip of class, gender, race, and geopolitical history held them so tightly that it was, at times, actually difficult for them to "look up and out."

Born in 1966, a year before the miscegenation laws banning interracial marriage were overturned in North Carolina, Ann Augustine explains how "racism and the adoption practices of the time, including efforts to race match, made finding a home for (her) difficult." In **A Sea of Mothers**, she writes, "...my life has always revolved around mothers and mothering—what it means to have a mother, to lose a mother, to be mothered, to mother. In **Second Chances**, Delia Kostner recalls what it meant for her to have been part of the first generation to have control over reproductive rights. As a young adolescent in 1974, she was enveloped by a "lively swirl of women who provided [her] with the guidance and intimacy [she] lacked at home." She writes, "My life was my own; my autonomy was declared inviolable. I knew I was obligated to pass this gift on."

Shari Appollon's **My Mother's Haiti** and Isaac Slone's **Rights of Passage** illustrate two different kinds of internal anguish children can experience when, from the start, belonging and not belonging are intertwined. "My mother was a proud Haitian woman, and remarkably critical of her fellow countrymen..., I could not comprehend as a child, nor as an adolescent, why her words did not match her actions," writes Appollon, recalling the distinctly Caribbean warmth of her family. For Slone, "There were few resources for someone [his] age and seemingly even fewer

that took up gender identity outside a conversation about sexual orientation." Slone recalls, "Perseverance meant compromising and learning to feel comfortable enough presenting as male solely to feel more socially integrated." There are always invisible layers, as Aaron Bourne's **Backstory** makes clear. In one of the few submissions *ROOM* has received dealing with the classism inherent in our field, Bourne writes, "Retaining contact with the stark contrast between where I come from and where I find myself today helps keep me grounded." Seeped in different political and cultural marinades, these memoirs are about ways of beginning and beginning again. Looking "back and in" goes hand in hand with looking "up and out." These writers are looking in to locate their minds in an intersubjective world.

But, as Freud taught, "looking back and in" is ribboned with unconscious resistance. Addressing the unintegrated and painful past of national trajectories, Jill Salberg looks at the grand-scale implications of this resistance in **Fascism Amnesia: A Failure of Witnessing**. "Every episode of mass violence is enabled by willful obliviousness and collective denial," she writes. "Disappeared memory and history erased remain fascism's best weapon." Asking, how we can wake ourselves to the traumatized burden of history, Salberg finds her answer at Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo. Here, every Thursday, week after week, in the midst of totalitarian regimes, generations of mothers and grandmothers gather to protest and remember Argentina's "disappeared" children. Today, the cumulative and acute trauma within ourselves and within our nations present enormous challenges to finding ways to continue to hold space open for thought and memory.

ROOM's medium is the message.

Last month I received an email from a reader, Denni Liebowitz, who wanted to share with me some words that had inspired her "as Torah," she said, ever since she had first read them in the 1980s. These words, by the American poet Adrienne Rich, were, "profoundly relevant to what has been intensely occupying my thoughts and feelings—the real unbearable on-the-ground facts of Israel's war against Gaza and the complexities taking place in that Holy Land for everyone." "Adrienne," Denni told me, "was writing about her experience of coming into contact with her Jewishness in a new way. Hesitantly at first, she empowers herself to Belong and immediately engages with an ancient teacher, Rabbi Hillel. She extends and deepens his questions, responding with a question of her own, rendering a beautiful integration that makes the old new."

"If I am not for myself who will be for me? If I am only for myself what am I?

"If not now when?" —Hillel

To which Rich added,

"And if not with others, how?"

I shared Denni's email with the *ROOM* editorial board because it's why we do what we do in *ROOM*, and I realize, while closing this editorial, I also want to share it with you because, from the beginning, it has been *ROOM*'s readers and writers who have made this virtual space for thinking and remembering possible. Our next submission cycle ends on May 5. As we begin 2024—our seventh year together—let us continue to find new ways to look up and out. ■

Karim Dajani
karimdajanisf@gmail.com

Eyal Rozmarin
eyal.rozmarin@gmail.com

Crossing Divides

Dear Eyal,

It is very hard to find a beacon in such dark times. I am glad we have decided to talk to one another while acknowledging how impossible it might be. The Palestinians in Gaza are being mass-murdered and ethnically cleansed as I write these words. And the basic humanity of the Palestinian people is being systematically erased via a coordinated campaign of suppressing any mention of their humanity, their history, their plight, their pain. I object.

What is unfolding in Gaza is linked to the unbelievable suffering your people were made to endure. The fact that Israel is creating a humanitarian catastrophe by decimating a helpless population does not change the basic facts of anti-Semitism, dispossession, and the genocide your people endured in Europe. The active position of fomenting genocidal intent and engaging in genocidal actions is linked to the passive position of having been exposed to genocide after a millennium of racist oppression. Are we doomed to repeat and in the process break the whole world? It is not looking good right now.

Much has been written about "the conflict." None of it has reduced it or made it less malignant. To think that you and I, two individuals, can move the needle toward recognition and cooperation is...necessary despite the impossibility.

I am interested in taking the issue up analytically. The typical ways have failed. We need something new. I feel some glimmer of hope here, as I think our nascent conversation will help me learn more about psychoanalysis, cooperation, and liberation.

I came into the field of analysis because I thought the ideas were fascinating, and the opportunity to help people reach new depths of understanding and new ways of engaging the world and expressing themselves drew me. More importantly, I came into analysis looking for personal liberation. You see, I have been obsessed with freedom ever since I can remember. My first memories are of being a very small child lying down next to my father's body, listening to the radio and talking about Palestine and the day we will live there again in freedom. Freedom became a guiding principle, an unabating desire.

The materiality of my earlier life was spent running away from oppression and toward freedom. I had the problem of being stateless, a refugee, a person who belongs to a dispossessed and hated group. Then the problem of surviving Lebanon's civil war. War restricts freedom. For years, I was not able to move beyond a two-mile radius. Then the problem of poverty. Refugees escaping war and dispossession who do not traffic in violence and arms face bleak economic conditions. Again, all these constrictions are social in nature. They come from outside of me. They are about collective actions and movements that are beyond my control; and yet these material constrictions structured my mind, shaped my feelings, and defined my horizon (to a large degree). They were imported into the deepest and most intimate aspects of my "individuality."

With a belly full of pain, a mind torn asunder by war, dispossession, subjugation, and poverty, an irrepressible curiosity, abundant energy, and a deep desire to learn everything about *everything*, I became a student of psychoanalysis alongside other liberatory disciplines such as Buddhism and Sufi Islam.

At first I thought perfecting my body and cleansing my mind would liberate me from psychic pain, a pain I carry deep in my soul. I became a karateka and lived a disciplined life of practice, meditation, and study. I learned a lot. My abilities and capacities expanded. I made friends, cohered a self capable of existing between two worlds, and managed a constant feeling of dislocation. With time, I began to see the contours of a successful American life.

In pursuit of a more perfect individuality, I kept studying and striving. I got a doctorate, developed a full private practice, became faculty, taught scores of students, made some money, and bought a house. My friends, many of whom are psychoanalysts, were doing the same things as me. Everyone was in pursuit of a more perfect life, more success, more distinction, more individual achievement and satisfaction.

Despite all the promises of what psychoanalysis can do for me and all the toil and treasure spent, a virulent strain of psychic pain remained lodged deep in my soul. What is the source of it? How do you address it? Why is it that my training and my personal analysis are not touching it? For a long time, I thought it was due to my defectiveness and inferiority.

Wa Do Ki Kai is the name of the karate-do system I learned from Jorge Aigla in New Mexico. It means to learn from all things. Karate-do is a system that comes from collectives. It is transmitted by individuals to other individuals. Its internalization is personal. It shapes your body and your perception of your body. From that practice, I learned to trust my body and to see my emotions as sources of information about the state of my body in relation to others around me (and in me).

As I faced the reality of my pain, I had to look inside, because the dominant narrative and praxis were not helping. I had to trust my body, my own mind, my own movement, and my intuition. I had to lean on the disciplined practice and inquiry that I had learned from Sensei Aigla and other notable teachers I was fortunate enough to know and work with.

As I was becoming an international man, a successful man, a liberal thinker, a person capable of working across the spectrum of difference, I was seen by my collective of successful analysts in San Francisco as a fellow analyst, an intelligent individual who is hardworking. My difference was relegated to ideas like *quirky*, *unusual*, *unique*, *troubled*, *narcissistic*, and so on. No link was ever made between me as an individual and my occupied, dispossessed, humiliated, and oppressed collective. No conception was ever introduced or considered that the radius of my pain included transindividual elements: included collectives, cultures, and history.

"The self is made up of non-self elements" (Thich Nhat Hahn). I heard these words uttered during a meditation retreat. They came back to me. Maybe the pain in my self is linked to elements that are not my self. The breath that animates the self comes from where? Is it yours? The people who are your mother and father and the people who birthed and loved them are where? Are they outside your self? Are you, in some real way, discontinuous from them, a unique entity who dwells in a separate body? Are the bodies of helpless Palestinian people being incinerated in Gaza, thousands of people decomposing in rubble, outside of me, are they separate from me? Can I really live my life here as though they are over there, far away from me? They are in some real sense because I can eat when I am hungry and sleep in a quiet bed when I am tired, while they are being starved, tortured, and killed. But with every breath I take, a sharp pain seeps in, and a residue stays and builds. Their

agony is inside me. Their screams are in me. Their desperation cloaks my being.

Being Palestinian in a field that is mostly Jewish and mostly committed to a Zionist political ideology is not easy. For many years, when asked where I am from, I would respond: I was born in Lebanon. The response is true, but it fragmented me. Liberty or safety? To say I am Palestinian, which I am—it is a hard fact—I risk fragmenting my social and professional world because *Palestinian* is relegated to a dubious category of human being. We can be human as long as we do not have a history, a claim on Palestine, or any palpable anger toward Israel. Basically, we can be human if we disavow our ethnicity and history.

This is a multifaceted problem—social, moral, material, ideological, collective—but is it also an analytic problem? In other words, can what we know and are learning about the social basis of consciousness help us understand and cope with this problem? Can it help us recognize one another across a divide? Can it help us make and use the psychoanalysis we need but do not yet have?

I am an individual because I have impulses, desires, drives, defenses, and a particular character. I am also an individual because breath was given to me, because people came together to conceive me and raise me, because I acquired cultures and languages that I use in the most intimate of ways but that came from outside, from others, from collectives, and from history. The psychoanalysis we have is one that helps us mitigate our impulses and engage in ethical dyadic and familial relationships. That is good. But the psychoanalysis we need is one that helps us see what is hidden in plain sight. We are made up of collectives and are dependent on shared systems of meaning-making to cohere a self and engage the world. In other words, the psychoanalysis we need is one that teaches us how to be human across the spectrum of human differences, between collectives and ideologies.

It has been very difficult for me to think and write during these few months because the thousands of dead children who are lying in the rubble of blown-up buildings in Gaza are decomposing in my body, my very unique separate self. I am trying to survive a sepsis of the soul because the toxicity is overwhelming. Can you help me locate these dead bodies, give them a proper burial, grieve them, and find a path toward something new together—a way to live together in historic Palestine, where we are all free from the River to the Sea?

Karim G Dajani
Made from Palestinian Parents

December 27, 2023

Dearest Karim,

The word “sepsis” feels right. To know that Gaza has been bombarded by the Israel-American war machine with the equivalent of two nuclear bombs, with so many dead and injured, most of its population displaced, and 70 percent of its buildings destroyed; to know that the majority of Jews in Israel-Palestine (and far too many people in the so-called West) feel it justified and that a coalition of fear and fearmongering, of political interests and power, is leading this insanity while doing its utmost to deceive us that we must - we are indeed being buried under the rubble of a very dirty bomb. There are no good enough adjectives to describe the feeling. The heart needs an ICU, but the hospital is in ruins.

We, you and I, are lucky. We live behind, not under the killer jets and the guns. Behind, where these jets and guns are being manufactured and sold at a handsome profit that then goes on to grease the wheels of American politics. We are part of this madness in having people with whom we belong whose lives are destroyed or just deeply traumatized. We live from one earthquake to the next, in never-ending aftershocks of hate and violence. And yet there is so much life and beauty there as well, and this, too, animates us. We are doomed but also fortunate to belong together in Israel-Palestine.

We are part of it, this war, this conflict, this colonial nightmare, as immigrants who are now subjects of a money-weapons-ideology apparatus to which we cannot help but contribute. Our tax money pays for the bombs that our people are using to kill one another, that my people are using to kill yours, that is. The Iranians and Qataris are paying for the weapons Hamas is using on us.

It is hard to sleep at night. Yet our roofs are still over our heads. Unlike most of the Gazans, unlike the 200,000 Israelis who live near the border with Gaza and Lebanon, who have been evacuated since Hamas and now Hezbollah attacked.

The net of attachments holding me in place, already torn and burning before this war, is now so damaged that I don’t know if it could or should ever be repaired. I have dreams that I am arguing with people in ashen underground spaces. The images of death and destruction and helplessness that are coming out of Gaza are so undigestible that they remain repressed even in my sleep. But I look. There are brave journalists reporting on the carnage on Instagram. The last one I saw was of a dying baby with shrapnel lodged in his forehead. I saved that image.

Who to blame? Israel, Hamas, the United States, Iran, the money-military-industrial complex, the oil kingdoms, the religious fanatics, the political-ideological-financial conglomerations they serve? Clearly all the above, and the people who operate them - in faith, misguided or not - or because it is simpler to follow orders: soldiers, workers, educators, journalists, bureaucrats, social-media creatures, artists, politicians. But what are the forces that control these big collective machines and the people who participate, who are perhaps trapped in them - the forces that make them so destructive, so dangerous that they risk the existence of humanity itself?

For me, the war between the Jews and the Palestinians, or perhaps better said between the totalitarian-supremacist Jews and the totalitarian-supremacist Palestinians, is a morbid symptom, a scapegoating process, where our civilization manifests its terminal sickness, yet again. Sad for us,

very sad. But it also means that we, Palestinians and Jews, are the ones urgently tasked with trying to understand this sickness. History, as its catastrophes pile up in front of us and over our heads, demands it. And we need to survive. It is for us to ask: What is it about human society, about civilization, that makes us so cruel to one another, so senselessly destructive, so dangerous to ourselves?

Freud tried to tackle this question, especially after living through WWI. He started with "Thoughts for the Times, on War and Death" and ended, though hardly finished, with *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* and *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Like the astrophysicists who could not understand why the heavens behave as they do until they surmised the existence of black holes, he had to invent the death drive, that black hole of the soul. But since then, perhaps because the task is so daunting and because psychoanalysts are no more immune to the allures of tribal ideologies than other people, our psychoanalytic trajectory has been a constant retreat into the entrails of family romance and the parent-child dyad. If we started as a renaissance of sorts, striving to make the unconscious conscious, we found ourselves in an interminable Rococo, enamored with psychological interior decoration. Oedipus became a cathedral. The mother-infant relation was painted from as many angles as that of Mary and Jesus. This tendency is now, thankfully, slowly reversing. At least it seems so from where I stand. People are tired of being seen through unquestionable prisms of social domination. We have our feminist mothers and sisters to thank for this change. They opened a gate that the rest of us, otherwise than hetero-European men, can now pass through.

And as I write this line, I think of those tears in the fence around Gaza through which mayhem broke out/in on October 7. I then think of an Israeli friend who told me yesterday that the good news of the week was that her son's friend was injured in Gaza - good news because he was not killed and is now out of that hell. Then I think, my nephew is seventeen. Next year, if he does not refuse, he will go into the army. This is my family, as I write to you. If it were me, I would do anything I could not to go. I managed to get myself out of the army when it was my time. It was 1980. It required all my willpower and taking some big risks with my sanity and family. Some things broke. It remains the worst time of my life. And yet this is my family, these are my people, and although I have deep, gaping disagreements with most of them and belonging with them is sometimes excruciating, I will not write them off.

I write to you from New York, where I came, or escaped to, and yet from within their midst also. They, who object to the occupation, who object to this government of criminals and yet feel they need to congregate and fight, even as they know that the choices made for them are tragically wrong. Something about collectivity, about the call of the tribe, of the blood, of the group's history (sometimes borrowed or imagined), even as it is now holding to perhaps an illusion of immense power and a wish not to lose it (the power, the illusion), and the manipulation of all those by forces in and around the group…

It feels crucial to me to understand these forces, these bonds. Partly in order to defuse them - because I think it would be better for all of us if we were less viscerally loyal, less attached, more discerning, more fluid. I wish we could all be less binary, more trans in identity, able to resist the violent, dysphoric indoctrination, to sometimes say to our collective families "No!" Our loyalties can clearly drive us mad, collectively mad. I hope you can help me.

How I wish we'd heard about Israeli soldiers refusing to go into Gaza, as already in my time there were soldiers who refused to serve in the occupied territories. But there seem to be none. The collective trauma of the October 7 attack is massive. The atrocities, and the army's failure. I cannot begin to imagine the extent of the trauma exploded into people for three months now in Gaza. Are we destined to see these two people harden even further? I am encouraged to see dissenting voices becoming louder. There are demonstrations in Israel to stop the war. Jews demonstrating, that is. It is too dangerous for Palestinians, even those who are citizens of Israel, to show any dissent. People are being arrested for Facebook posts, fired from their jobs, harassed by neighbors. It is dark, as dark it can be in the worst of times. Do you have family members back in Palestine, 48 Palestine, the West Bank, Gaza, reporting to you what things are like for them?

As the psychoanalysts that we are, I believe it is our task to revive our original ambition, to strive, from our angle, to understand the human condition, which also means human society - the forces that pull people into communities and drive communal life. These forces are lodged deep inside us. They make us who we are no less than our biology. We are bodies with minds in societies. We are bodies with societies in mind. We have the entire fields of humanities, social science, and theory to engage with, but we need to look up and out.

The pain you write about, and its equivalent in me, but not only the pain, our entire existence as subjects in this civilized madness, they tell us that Beirut and Tel Aviv, that all the places and stories that held us, that were told to us and then told us to ourselves - they are as important to who and how we are as that Kleinian breast.

That breast, under a dress, that was bought in a shop, where the shopkeeper looked at you this or that way, as they do among your people, spoke with you in a particular accent and tone, reminded you of someone you used to know as a child, the scents, the landscape, the feelings come back - but you have to run home to feed that baby, the baby you named after your grandfather who came from another country, but you never met him, because he died in that war…

It is between our parents' bodies and the collective industrial death machines that keep destroying our holding environments, between the will and desires of life - so strong, and the scar tissue that forms around these desires, making them harder, twisting them into hate - it is in the infinite instant between love and hate that we need to find each other.

Eyal Rozmarin
Israel-Palestine, New York

January 7, 2024

Sara Shaheen
sarashaheen54@gmail.com

Valley With No Name

There is a valley behind our home
Way deeper than it looks, that brims with night
Pregnant olive trees and ancient carob segregations,
handmade cages,
My grandma managed to pickle most of its fruit, flowers and birds,
turning what she couldn't into jams,
selling what she couldn't stuff into a jar to the neighbor and
cursing the rest.
Everyone else searched for sun kissed houses
On lands elsewhere
As if the stones here got too soft with violence
As if the sun here doesn't work anymore.
Since I stopped fearing its water, I only felt like swimming
But the summer valley did not welcome me.
Soon more Saturdays will come and
It will be filled again with heads turning
Attending weddings turned funerals turned weddings
Turning into a funeral
With only partial consolation.

Border patrol patrolled the near bakery
Mixing bread and bullets,
Turning sugar into salt,
They stormed the streets named after martyrs,
Stained with sorbet and redemption,
And we started baking our bread with ashes.
"It's probably better if we sleep during the day," my aunt said,
with her usual worried eyes
Dark eye circles are known to pass through our family DNA
A gift from the ancestors
Effortless war paint
"If anything happens don't wake me up," my mother said
Never stopping her hectic cleaning,
how is that even possible
but I try to let her sleep.
A sound came from the south;
"I just want someone to bury me."

Heavy rains during a heavenly timed fall
Sprouting hummus ingested with hate—braiding bridges above
The space where words of the three languages I know hang midair
paralyzed
Where my tears hang midface,
paralyzed,
I tried occupying it with something
other than losing
As pain wheelchairs itself in.

According to color theory
We are dying
And statistically speaking
We are being pushed out
Prematurely
Vehemently
out of the tunnels of life
lungs still premature
an entire nation forced into weakened incubators
Fresh out of the womb of history books.

Today our eyes see it all—aired out
On the big screen
Propped up next to the young trifoliate orange tree
On small screens held by wrinkles,
And on medium sized screens my cousins use to learn
The alphabet of the heavy-tongued valley.
What more will come with winter?
The map whispers to me while the bullets bid me good morning.

PHOTOS: JAROMÍR KALINA

Shari Appollon
shari@talktoshari.com

My Mother's Haiti

On September 9, 1989, my mother boarded her return flight to JFK with my father in tow. Another completed trip to her motherland, Ayiti, was embedded in her body. There was nothing particularly special about the trip, per se, as it was not precipitated by a wedding, funeral, specific family visit, or any of the other myriad reasons those known as immigrants in the United States revisit their true origins of home. In my mother's words, she went to "enjoy her country" and a month later was returning to her *second* home. The second home that required her to mother her three children in a very specific way based on the white gaze. The second home that provided the option to work twelve-hour shifts, four days a week, toward earning the most income anyone in her bloodline had ever earned, to her knowledge. The second home that seduced her into assimilation toward tasting the tantalizing American pie.

Four hours after takeoff, my freshly traumatized mother touched down hyperventilating with tears pouring down her face and declared that she would never step foot on a plane again. Turbulence, lightning, looming death, screams, thunder, overhead baggage everywhere, loss of control in the sky. Pure terror! She passed in February 2023 having kept her word. Her trip in 1989 was, in fact, the last time her feet touched the island of Hispaniola.

Ayiti is on my mind as the news circulates stories of strife, poverty, and chaos consuming not only the island but my fellow brethren inhabiting and migrating from the country. What would be the tone of my mother's comments at the blocked canal of the Massacre River? In what new or familiar ways would she express anxiety at the mention of yet another hurricane or earthquake decimating Haiti? My mother was a proud Haitian woman, and remarkably critical of her fellow countrymen while understanding the ins and outs of imperialism and the deep-rooted impact of colonialism on modern-day "freed" countries. Nevertheless, my mother, Monique Toussaint, was a fan of victim-blaming, disavowing her own feelings of inferiority superimposed on her as an immigrant with an accent in the city that never sleeps. She would listen to Haitian news on the radio station 90.5 AM and criticize all those in power for allowing the "downfall" of her country, then spend hours cooking a traditional Haitian meal for my siblings and me. Blan diri, sos pwa ak pwol. Artists such as Levoy Exil, Hector Hyppolite, and Myrlande Constant hung on the walls in our home, and literature written in French, Creole, and English overflowed from her massive bookshelves, filled with the likes of Edwidge Danticat, Willy Apollon, and famous Voodoo folklorists. Skah Shah, Tabou Combo, and Alan Cavé sang to us on Saturdays as my siblings and I cleaned our home from top to bottom. Ayiti engaged our senses from the moment we woke up to the second we fell asleep in the home my mother and father adored as first-time home buyers. I could not comprehend as a child, nor as an adolescent, why her words did not match her actions. Did she love her country? Undoubtedly. Then why the constant critiques and harshness? Why is it I never heard her utter a sentence of gratitude, warmth, or positivity toward the first land she called home unless recalling a small cluster of memories from her childhood? Perhaps my memory is foggy and I am only a recorder for what was shared with me.

As children, my siblings and I were not allowed to travel to Haiti, out of fear that we would be kidnapped. For that reason, my grandmother lived in my mind as an omnipotent super-being in that she visited Haiti each and every year and managed to avert the mystical thugs who I feared would take her away with the request of a large ransom in return. She returned safely and magnificently rejuvenated each and every year, always offering to take me with her in the future. We both knew that was never going to happen, but I found solace in the gifts and stories she returned with. My grandmother was a tight-lipped religious woman, but on those returns in August, her storytelling came alive and matched her omnipresent generosity with sweets I did not have access to in the States. Caramels, mints, and, oh, the peanut butter, all with a specific "Haitian" taste. It was reminiscent of Christmas in the summer! Those stories inspired me to finally break through my mother's fear barrier. Hence I declared a month before my twenty-eighth birthday that I would be visiting Haiti with my father / her ex-husband. At this point my grandmother was deceased, and my mother relented and gave me a list of things to bring back for her. Lwil maskriti, fresh djon-djon, and water from Saut-d'Eau. The experience was transformative and similar to that of one who takes part in Aliyah or Hajj; I felt as though I had been called to the Promised Land and immediately felt an increase in my already-cemented Haitian roots after two weeks of exploring the various terrains of my ancestors.

I now reflect on those political talks with my mother, which were encompassed with judgment masking deep care, and am in touch with her river-deep, mountain-high longing to smell the air in Port-au-Prince, to touch the bark of the mango trees in Hinche, to taste the warm cornmeal direct from a fire built by hand in Maissade. She missed her motherland, but it was too threatening to her sense of self as a permanent US citizen with a terrorizing fear of flying to allow the yearning, nostalgia, and deep care to fully emerge. My mother's defensive positioning was working full force to protect her from that which she knew as an embodiment of permanent separation. The loss of her motherland mirrored the ways in which she handled the loss of her actual mother, Agnes Toussaint. The consistency was astounding. I reflected on this with her during her last days of life as we joked about ways I tried to lift her out of her melancholy.

"Mom, what about Klonopin? What if I get you a prescription so you can fly?" Those comments didn't elicit a verbal response ever. In place of words, she would suck her teeth and cut her eyes at me, ending the conversation before it began. In her last month of life, we were able to joke about those attempts toward me moving her into a different way of being. What I realized as she lost the ability to speak and withdrew into herself, at the mercy of colon cancer, was the magnitude of experiencing. I was given the gift of truly experiencing her not only as my mother but as a person with real trauma and loss as memories embedded in her body. She recognized my efforts to help her as love despite the lack of externalized movement on her end. The parallel process of experiencing the loss of my mother while my mother experienced the loss of her mother and her motherland. The earth remembers, as does the body.

Ayiti translates to "'the land of high mountains.'" Haiti is the English pronunciation of a land once traveled on by Taino Indians before any boats docked with enslaved West Africans. Present day, I find solace in a deep knowing, on a soul level, that my parents loved their country of origin and gave their all towards instilling values and understanding towards of my ethnocultural history. My Creole is choppy and barely comprehensible, the Haitian meals I cook are usually under-seasoned, and I haven't been back to Haiti in over ten years. And yet the presence of my mother's face in photographs or the scent of one of her many favorite perfumes instantly pulls on centuries-old memories tucked away in my bones. I am grateful for the experience, Ayiti Chérie. ■

Above the Fray
2020
acrylic on canvas
100x50 cm

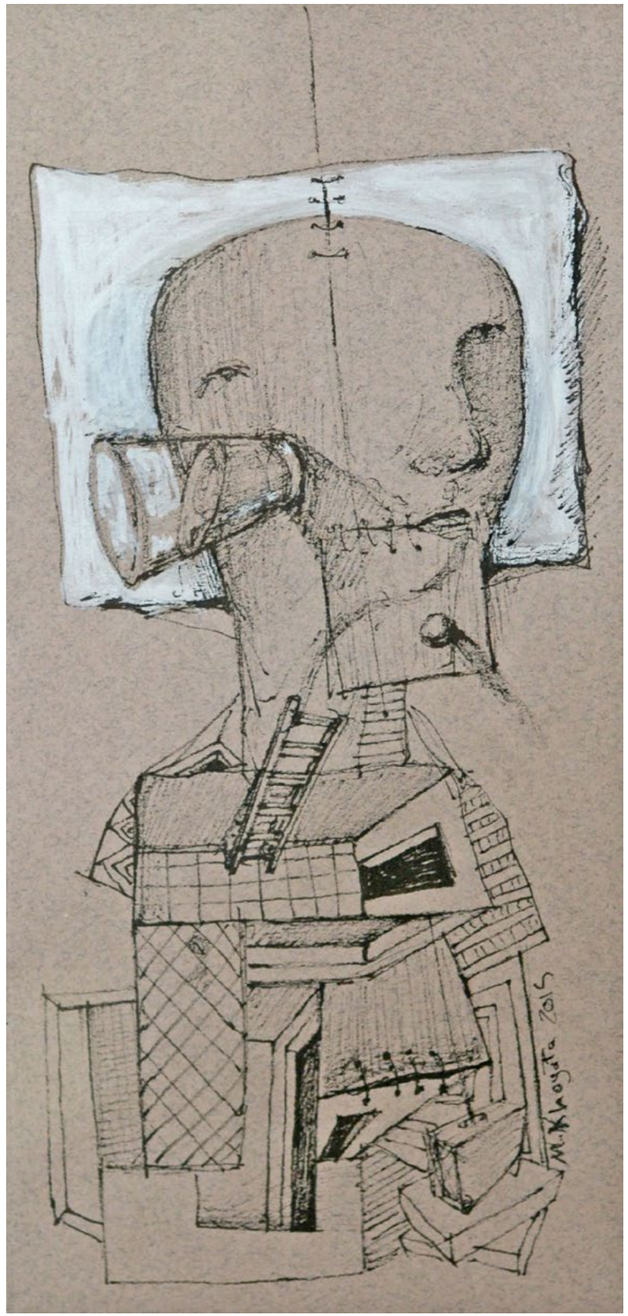
Above the Fray
2019
acrylic on canvas
120x100 cm

"Above the Fray *marks something of a shift and perhaps a feeling of escapism from all this focus on war, uncertainty, and terror. I've been fascinated by the technical challenge in painting clouds and how to achieve that almost magical sense of intangibility. The clouds represent an escape from all the corruption and the suffocating rules that are strangling Lebanon. I also like the idea that clouds are travelers, like so many of us caught up in the endless cycle of displacement."*

— Mohamad Khayata

"Beirut comes with its own challenges and being Syrian here can be difficult. That feeling of being connected to an old life can also lead to a feeling of being fractured – of having a line that divides the life that you are living now with the life you left behind. I explored this in my series Walking on Thread *(2015)."*

— Mohamad Khayata



Walking on Thread
2015
ink on paper
20x10 cm

The Blue Room
2013
acrylic on canvas
120x100 cm

“Bits & Pieces was also significant because it marked a shift from photography to painting, and, ultimately, the combination of the two. The paintings I made for the show depict people wrapped in a quilt, or maddeh – the quilts I painted comprised ‘patchwork’ of ruined buildings, broken glass, and so on. The paintings depicted broken pieces of furniture, doorways, and luggage–symbols of a broken Syria. The quilt represents my family maddeh, left behind, an object of comfort and home that now embodies fears and uncertainty, but also a desire to sew the country together, piece by piece. These quilts can be found in the most humble of houses across Syria and it was in them that I found the perfect medium to gather and combine stories: memories are patched together and brought back to a whole capable of giving voice to those who are so often unheard, or simply to reveal their stories.”

— Mohamad Khayata

Hot Air Balloon
2013
acrylic on canvas
140x120 cm

Aegean Sea
2016
acrylic on canvas
80x60 cm

Aegean Sea
2016
acrylic on canvas
200x200 cm

Jill Salberg
jillsalberg@gmail.com

Fascism Amnesia: A Failure of Witnessing

Conversations like the following were happening more frequently: *"Where could we go? Where will they let us in and let us work? Is it safer to try someplace nearby or best to go farther away?"* Or this: *"Three generations of my family have lived in the same house in the same town. All of a sudden we are told to leave and walk out with a single suitcase."* (Story by Irene Fogel Weiss, (*The Guardian* 2015) as told to Kate Connolly)

Listen to this excerpt from *The Atlantic*, December 2022, by Gail Beckerman titled, "What It Feels Like When Fascism Starts." She writes, "Among the many Holocaust anecdotes I heard again and again as a child [...] none was more common than the tale of the brother who stayed and the brother who left. [...] One brother couldn't bear to abandon his small shop, parents or homeland, while another brother packed a suitcase at the first inkling of danger and set off [...]. The more impetuous one lives. The takeaway: when the social and political barometric pressure begins to drop, when you can feel that tingling: Leave."

Can you tell what year these are from? Is it the 1930s in Germany? Or is it 1970s in Argentina? Or 2017/2018s in the United States? I raise this because in many ways, in many places in the world, "we" have been here before, and we certainly know how things can turn out. Though I was born in the United States post-WWII, many historical residues flood me. I am aware of how endangered many are feeling, and there is a foreboding in me, barely contained, just beneath the surface.

Since 2020, early in the COVID pandemic, we have seen imploding racism, increased anti-Semitism, anti-Asian attacks, increasing weekly incidences of gun violence and mass killings (in the United States we have *more guns* owned than the number of people), the banning of books, the overturning of the legal right of women to choose to end a pregnancy, and hatred of immigrants. These are all examples of reemerging deeply oppressive forces and the ways that regimes of power exert control over minorities, their most vulnerable citizens.

Consider all of this with the push to restrict what can be taught to children; in Florida there are the anti-WOKE, Don't Say Gay laws; in many states there are extreme abortion bans and violence toward transgender people, and in Texas, there is a move to remove any books in schools or libraries that make parents feel uncomfortable, such as books about slavery, critical race theory, or gender and sexual diversities. When you ban teaching history and attack the news, memory is foreclosed. Amnesia becomes instilled.

A *New York Times* article states that ex-President Trump plans, if restored to the presidency in 2024, to "centralize more power in the Oval Office" by "increasing the president's authority over every part of the federal government." He and his cohort of advisers envision a "president" who cannot be checked by Congress or the courts. I don't know which is more terrifying, the blatant plan to seize and centralize power or the public attestation Trump made that he would be a dictator on day one. Who are the many who would and do support this? And further, with the ongoing refusal to address the growing climate emergency, with instead a focus on power, not safety of our life on planet Earth, well, my terror is building.

Judith Herman (1997) coined the term "episodic amnesia" to describe how the field of psychology (and I would add psychoanalysis) briefly considers trauma and then looks away, episodically remembering and then forgetting completely. The events of the world over the past few years suggest a broader understanding of this amnesic process. I view it as a kind of refusal to allow memory that is filled with terror, with pain and great loss, into awareness. It is a negation of the anguished process that is necessary for true transformative healing to take hold. Empathy exhaustion ensues, and too often we all look away.

These moves toward fascism suggest a further disavowal of how far from a humane world we have moved, a kind of amnesia surrounding the trauma history in the United States and the world. The currents I am pointing to of hatred and violence with suppression of diverse points of view or historical facts are, I believe, the reawakening of a fascism that never went away. The dissemination of what was once considered fascistic propaganda has now found the light of day in the term "alternative facts," or real news being called fake news, with conspiracy theories having enormous currency. How do we awaken ourselves from the amnesic response to the traumatized burden of history? How do we live with a sense of terror and yet mobilize?

Disappeared memory and history erased remain fascism's best weapon. In the world as it exists, the proto-fascist leader purports omnipotence, forcing helplessness and weakness into the minority group to be victimized. Which part of the split would any of us need to inhabit to stay sane in this kind of world? This simultaneous diffusing of victim/perpetrator processes into the collective rests upon a failure of witnessing, an aborted mourning process of the atrocities of prior generations. Now, you may respond that this is categorically wrong; look at the Holocaust testimony projects that Dori Laub and others created, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, or the Genocide Studies graduate program at Yale, which takes testimonies from Rwanda, Cambodia, and elsewhere in the world, or the vast data from the legacies of the World Wars. And now the war in Ukraine, where they are fighting on some of the same battlefields as WWII with Putin's propaganda saying they are purging more Nazis while the Ukrainians are relentlessly fighting for their lives and freedom. And the fighting in Israel and Gaza, where misinformation and propaganda abound. We must ask, how did the cry of "never again" become "yet again"?

Fascistic leaders opportunistically capitalize on our internal unsettledness, our unexpressed grievances, losses, and longings. While the witnessing we have accomplished has been very important, have we gone far enough? Or have we failed to witness fully the evil and destruction and meet it with profound grief and with what Watkins (2018) coined "deserved shame"? Can we respond to our shame and be more moved toward reparative social justice? Has it remained too much on the surface? Where are our communal obligation to each other and the recognition of how inexorably linked our lives are now and to prior and future generations?

I want to offer an example of what a deeper and fuller witnessing has been. During the Argentinian state terror unleashed during the dictatorship years, in 1977 a group of grieving women were trying to find the whereabouts of their arrested daughters and their babies, some of whom gave birth in captivity. In writing about the effects of Argentinian social and political life on psychoanalysis, Volnovich (2017) writes:

"Just as Argentines were scarred forever by state terror, so were we all shaken by the presence of the Mothers and Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo (Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo). They opened a space, a gap, a crevice through which the ability to think could flow. They put a desire, a boundary opposite to overwhelming totalitarian power."

This is taken from the Abuelas' website:

"These children are the children of our children, who have also disappeared... We, the babies' grandmothers, tried desperately to locate them. Thus, in 1977, the NGO called Abuelas [Grandmothers] de Plaza de Mayo was established, dedicated specifically to fighting for the return of our grandchildren. [We] push for investigating our children's and grandchildren's disappearances, in hopes of finding them."

Their relentless search embodies an impossible feat: mourning a loss that is not confirmed but felt in the silence. The Abuelas insisted a crime—kidnapping and possible death—had occurred, and they held on to memory despite loss. In 2017 I had the opportunity to go to the Plaza de Mayo on a Thursday when the Abuelas and others who joined them demonstrated. They march with pictures of their children and loved ones. In their continuing insistence they chant and sing, "We will not forget you."

Their persistence over these many years has been remarkable. Not just because it started during the military takeover and threatened their own lives, not just because they sought out every legal avenue they could and when thwarted went to the international level, not just because with the technology of science and gene mapping, they could now find matches from their DNA to their grandchildren, and not just because they have reunited over 120 grandchildren with their biological families. In their insistence on the longevity of memory and mourning, they were standing up to the autocratic military regime that refused accountability for its crimes.

Witnessing needs to be in the service of defying and refusing fascistic amnesia. Every episode of mass violence is enabled by willful obliviousness and collective denial. Actions can derive from love or from hate, from reparative wishes or destructive ones. The urgency of restoring attachment and repairing damaging ruptures is crucial. In the aftermath of atrocity, cultures rarely offer survivors a reflective, recognizing container for their Big History trauma. Without working through processes for the social, political, racialized, or sexualized traumas that entail fully remembering with recognition, we cannot expect fascism to remain in the past. ■

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Ann Augustine
annaugustinelicsw@gmail.com

A Sea of Mothers

A few years ago, when I was going through a terrible separation that ended in divorce, I had a dream. I was deep in the ocean when I saw myself as a baby. A panic rose, and I reached out to save the baby, but she said, "I'm fine." I woke with an unexpected sense of peacefulness at my core, aware of this basic trust in life and a deep knowing that love exists.

Now, this might make sense had I had a different early life, perhaps a secure base with little tumult or loss. But that was not my beginning. In fact, before the age of one, I'd already had at least three mothers —maybe more, depending on how you define the role.

My first mother was Carol, who carried me to birth. Carol had become pregnant after a brief affair with my father, a postdoc student from India. The relationship ended shortly after he learned of my existence. When I met Carol in my late twenties, she told me the story of becoming pregnant at twenty-three, hiding the pregnancy under big flowing dresses, and giving birth to me alone in her room after class one day. She said that when her mother came home, she commented that Carol didn't look well. Still trying to hide me, Carol replied, "I think I have the flu." A moment later, the lie was blown with a cry from the other room.

Perhaps Carol had not considered the consequences of getting pregnant, let alone the implications of having a brown child, but her decisions came to dominate my early fate. I was born in 1966 in North Carolina, a year before the miscegenation laws banning interracial marriage were overturned. Not only were interracial relationships illegal, but they were socially unacceptable to many, including my maternal grandmother, who upon seeing me said I was "too dark" and brought me to the hospital that same day.

I imagine myself as an infant alone in that hospital. I can almost feel the care of the many strangers who attended me during those early days—the nurses who fed me, the doctors who made sure I was healthy despite having had no prenatal care, and the others who might have held and soothed me as I cried.

Then, at three days old, I was placed with another mother, a foster parent who cared for me for the next ten months. The first time I remember hearing her name, I was twenty-four years old. My adoptive mother (more on her later) was telling me the story of coming to get me. We were on the plane to my new home when I started screaming what was likely one of the few words I knew, "Nona, Nona." Even now, recalling her name, my eyes tear up… Without any actual memories of her, not even a faint recollection of her face, her smell, her voice, I feel Nona loved me.

Me, at age 5 with my adoptive mother, Betsy, both in homemade dresses (circa 1972).

PHOTO (PREVIOUS PAGE): DIMITRIS VETSIKAS

I later learned that Nona had wanted to adopt me but was "too old." She was fifty-one, younger than I am now. I also learned that as I neared the second half of my first year, I was blessed by another mother of sorts, my state-appointed social worker. Racism and the adoption practices of the time, including efforts to race-match, had made finding a home for me difficult. Perhaps concerned that I would end up lost in the system, knowing that it gets harder to be adopted as children age, my social worker had found a placement for me through the Pearl Buck Adoption Agency in Pittsburgh, PA. Pearl Buck was herself an adoptive parent and a persistent advocate for special needs, transracial, and international adoptees.

So, at almost eleven months, I met my adoptive mother, Betsy. To her, I give the title "mom" because she raised and cared for me throughout my life. Mom was insecure about being a mother.

Perhaps this was because, like me, she'd lost hers so early. When she was four years old, her mother was killed by a drunk driver. Mom and her siblings were raised by a nanny and then a stepmother, when her father remarried. Once, when I was about ten or eleven, she told me she worried she wasn't good enough, that somewhere there might be someone better. Despite her insecurities, my mom loved me fiercely. Endlessly supportive of my creativity, explorations, and adventures, she cheered me on throughout my many trials and tribulations, and, above all, she stayed. Right until she died a few months ago, I never once doubted that she would be there if she could. For someone with my past, there are no words to describe what this means.

Looking back, I see that my life has always spiraled around mothers and mothering—what it means to have a mother, to lose a mother, to be mothered, to mother. As a new social work graduate, I found myself working as a child and family therapist in a local community clinic. There I saw mothering front and center as I watched the powerful interplay between secure attachment, trauma, loss, and neglect.

I remember the first time I heard a mother say she wished she could send her daughter away and the feelings of working with another mother who did just that. I remember watching the many mothers who desperately fought to get their children back from social services and the ones who never did. And I myself became a mother just a year after entering the field. Like all the mothers I'd ever known, I, too, struggled: loving, trying to love, failing in unique and universal ways, and rising to love again.

In those early years, I hid that I had been adopted, let alone in foster care, afraid of facing the criticisms I heard so readily doled out by colleagues and providers about others who had shared my fate. Recalling all this, I feel a mix of gratitude and anger. While I'm grateful that our field unearthed the impact of this type of trauma and loss on a young child, I feel frustrated with what seems like a lopsided understanding, creating unnecessary shame for people like me. It's not that I don't see the pain—I do. For me, losing Nona, and all the other losses, rests inside, tender yet mostly hidden except for when they appear in both predictable and sometimes startling ways. Yet as I look at pictures of myself as a child, I think, *This is not the look of a child who is broken.*

It may be that my security comes not simply from a "good enough" mother, as Winnicott theorizes, but from "good enough" mothering—a multitude of mothers who created a collage of mothering and a patchwork of sufficient "reliable holding" for me to draw on. I also wonder whether there is a different kind of security that grows in the gaps of not having a mother—that some of my security comes not in spite of, but perhaps because of, these early losses. As I look back, I know that in the free-falling, I grew a sense of being carried—not by any one person, but by life itself.

It feels important to mention that I am well aware that my fate could have been drastically different—as it is for so many. This awareness was compounded by hearing the frequent comments to my mother about how wonderful it was that she took me in, as though she'd saved me. She always said that I was the gift. Despite her protest, for years my work was fueled by a feeling that I owed a debt I could never repay.

Recently, something has shifted, and I feel as though the debt has been paid. I'm not sure what changed. Though the burden has lifted, the gifts of mothering remain. Beyond formal bonds, I still feel the ways I mother and am mothered each day at work, at home, and in simple daily exchanges. And I find myself afloat in a sea of mothers with all the complexity that this implies. ■

PHOTO: NOTHING AHEAD

Sara Shaheen
sarashaheen54@gmail.com

a waterbottle in gaza

I'm empty
We're all are
In an hour or so, the donkey and the boy will come to take us to the sea maybe,
Maybe when we'll make the way back, it will be long enough,
hot enough for our new water to turn into crystals
Clear, sharp,
Easy to remove
The little girl with the green eyes, which are not scared anymore only tired,
Comes to suck on my neck again, I don't know what she needs more right now
water or her mother.
It's been almost an hour, the little girl comes and goes,
kicks some of us and goes, licks some of us and goes,
and the boy and the donkey do not come,
No one comes, they're all dead where they come from.
We stay empty,
I stay empty.

PHOTO: MATT HEYWARD/NDLE

Katherine J. Williams
k.j.williams@verizon.net

AFTER THE SKY RAINED MEN AND HOSPITALS CLOSED DOWN

How as usual, water fills the kettle, slips into the cup. There is a door. The lock opens with a click. Grey sidewalk lies long and flat. Slick in its plastic sheath, the newspaper slides, tossed from a car that glides along alphabetical streets. Air, with only customary pollutants. Crisp toast and jam. I'm old and cleaning closets to prepare for death. I find a yellowed note with words crossed out, from my daughter when learning to write.

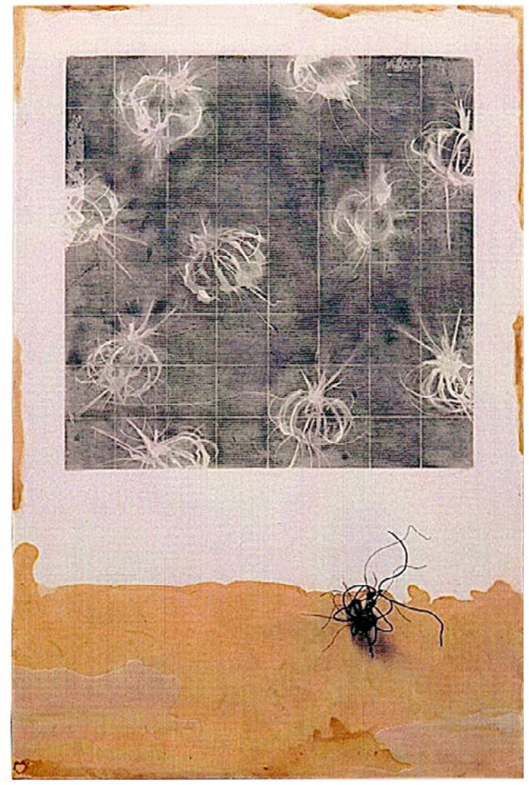
There they danced in an open field
until the sky rained men and automatic fire.

Last night they danced in an open field until the sky rained men and automatic fire. Right now it is seven hours later in Gaza's rubble.

Untitled
2022
acrylic on wood
9″x12″

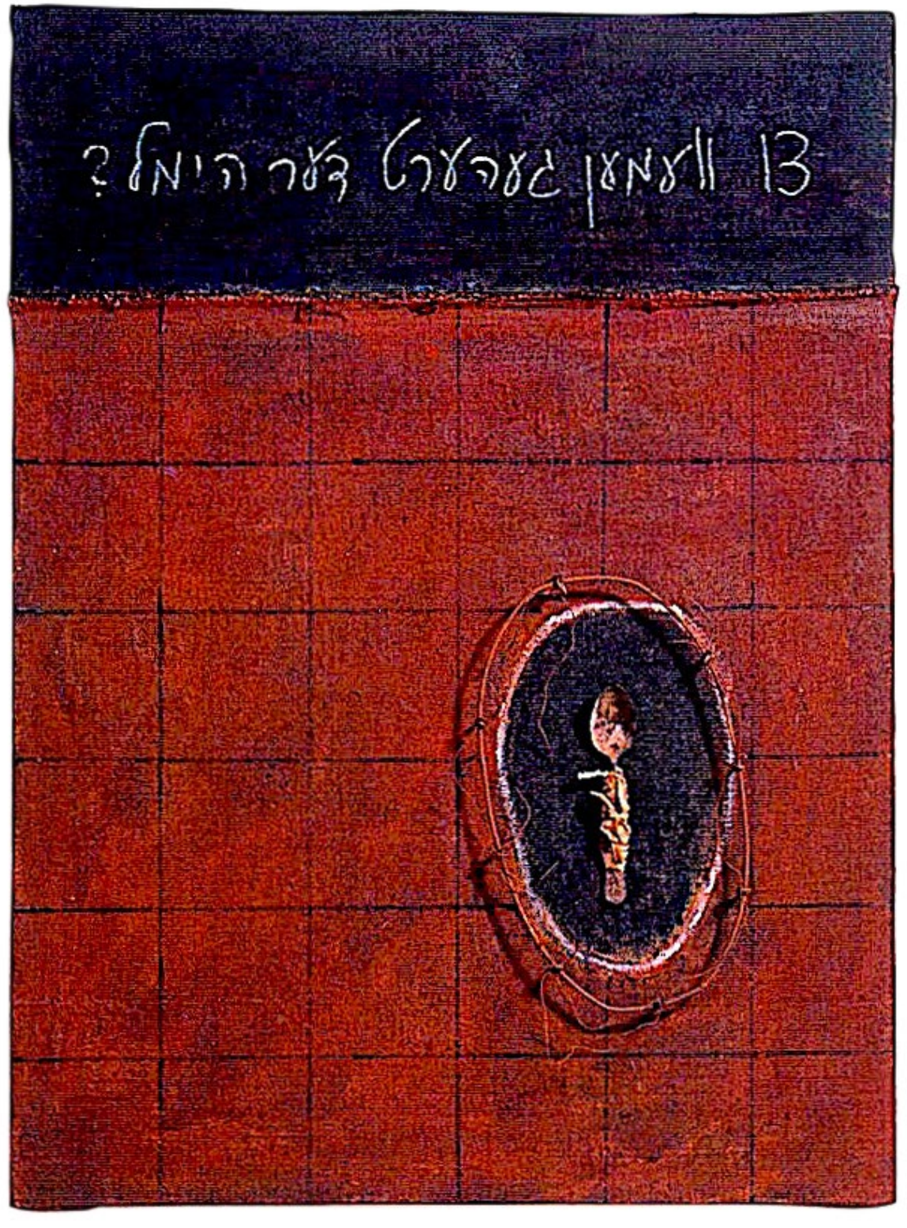
David Bloch
davidblochart.com

I started to paint in order to process my memories from World War II and the years immediately after. Then I continued to paint because I had to—I couldn't do without it. I work in small format on purpose, strongly believing in an intimate face-to-face conversation between myself and the art in progress. I hope for the same dialogue between the finished artwork and the viewer. To see how parts of my life are expressed in some of my work, please watch a movie called Black Milk, *directed by Ofra Bloch.*



Sparkles of Memory
2011
glue and graphite
20″x30″

My Heart Is Full of Fear
2009
acrylic and glue
16″x20″



To Whom Does the Sky Belong
2002
acrylic on burlap
30″x40″

A Memory of Childhood
2017
acrylic and glue
14″x22″

Refugees 2
2006
acrylic and ink
14″x22″

Refugees through Time
2007
acrylic and ink
12"x27"

Lava Schadde
lschadde@gradcenter.cuny.edu

Gender Without Identity

By Avgi Saketopoulou and Ann Pellegrini

AVGI SAKETOPOULOU AND ANN PELLEGRINI'S book *Gender Without Identity* (2023) brings into dialogue psychoanalysis with trans and queer, gender and sexuality (TQGS) studies. For someone like me, working mainly in philosophy and TQGS studies and fascinated by the differing (dis)avowal of identity in these fields, the title of the book sparked my interest—what might it mean, I wondered, for the question of gender identity to be raised instead at the intersection of TQGS studies and psychoanalysis? And what fruits might such a dialogue bear? To be sure, such a confrontation comes at a critical time for both disciplines. As the authors make clear, such a dialogue is essential if psychoanalysis is to transform itself into a discipline that can do justice to its trans and queer patients. Further, some crucial lacunae of scholarly work done on gender, sex, and sexuality are highlighted, and the authors insist that filling in these gaps will require us to take seriously what psychoanalysis has to offer to theorizations of gender and sexuality.

This book successfully steps into such a dialogue between these disciplines, raising rather than answering questions for scholars working on queer and trans studies and opening up a critical political perspective for the future of psychoanalysis. *Gender Without Identity*'s heart piece is its first chapter, a longer version of the previously unpublished Tiresias Prize–winning article titled "A Feminine Boy: Trauma as Resource for Self-Theorization," initially intended for publication in the prestigious *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* before its acceptance was rescinded due to its reckoning with psychoanalysis's failures to do justice to its trans and queer patients. The chapter offers a targeted critique of the resistance psychoanalysis displays toward grappling with the complexities and challenges that trans and queer subjects present for the discipline and simultaneously suggests that theorizations of gender in queer and trans studies are potentially insufficient.

For one, the authors take issue with the prevalent understanding of nonnormative genders employed in psychoanalysis, understood as having developmentally gone astray through traumatic experiences or the "wrong" forms of socialization. Such an understanding naturally gives way to the idea that if such trauma and socialization may be reversed, nonnormative genders may be "brought back into normality" through the "right" forms of conversion therapies and thereby "cured." The authors counter such an understanding—one they hold to be widespread in psychoanalysis—by pointing out how such a conception of gender subscribes to a heteronormative understanding of the gender binary, relegating trans and queer subjects to the margins. Due to this marginalization, psychoanalysis has consistently failed to assume and afford the same psychic complexity to its nonnormatively gendered patients versus normatively gendered ones. The conceptualization of gender the authors centrally contend with is one where nonnormative gender is roughly described as something "one is born with," something fundamentally immutable, nonpathological, and therefore needing no therapeutic treatment. Such "born this way" conceptualizations allow for asserting a given core gender identity and hold much power in political discourse. This is due to them allowing for the assertion that those who are trans and queer are born that way, that their identities are not a product of trauma and therefore pathological and curable through the proper treatment. While criticisms of "born this way" conceptualizations are increasingly more widespread in TQGS studies (see, for instance, Fausto-Sterling (2000); Bennett (2014); Draz (2017); Bey (2021)), their purported political viability makes them attractive and pervasive, especially among queer and trans people themselves, affording them much traction in academic and public life.

The authors find both these conceptualizations unsatisfying and ask, *What might it mean to instead theorize trauma as an integral part of the ontogenesis of gender (not just nonnormative genders, but all genders!), and what might the implications of such a hypothesis be on the couch and in the world?* They argue for a different way of understanding gender, one that takes seriously the developmental impact of trauma on the subject's formation of their gender and sexuality, without the necessity of implying that some genders are a deviation from a normal developmental teleology of gender. In short, then, the authors aim to show that "trauma produces more than misery, even as misery is neither to be denied nor diminished" and that "trauma might have a share in the constitution of queer and trans life" (viii). Gender is reconceptualized as a form of self-theorization or "autopoiesis" in the face of the trauma of "being breached by the other, by *otherness*" (ix), trauma that is ubiquitous and a fundamental part of the becoming of any

subject. Still, such experiences are painful and challenging, and gender, or better, one's *gendered sense of self* is an aspect of self theorizations that contend with different familial and societal impositions of gender, race, religion, disability, as well as intergenerational transmission of trauma. Crucially, these processes of gender ontogenesis do not merely extend to subjects with nonnormative genders and sexualities but to all subjects—heteronormative gender and sexuality hereby are self-theorized to the same extent as nonnormative genders and sexualities.

Such a focus on ontogenesis—that is, of the becoming of certain genders and sexualities—is concerned with the agency and autonomy that becoming trans and nonbinary and becoming queer and gay necessitates. The authors put this point eloquently when they write that "[a]s long as the subject is able to modify what was handed down to them intergenerationally, gender is not pathology. To say this differently, no gender is unspoiled by trauma or uncontaminated by parental conflict. It is what the child *does* with those experiences (of trauma, intergenerational transport, etc.), how they are 'spun into gender,' and whether such spinning acquires some autonomy from the original intrusion that determines whether one's gender will feel viable, whether it will acquire the density of feeling like one's own" (29–30). By bringing the psychoanalytic concept of enigma to bear, gender is conceptualized as something spun out of one's trauma but also developed as a *new* aspect of the self, something belonging to the subject.

The authors are navigating fraught political terrain, and the stakes of their claim are high—but so, they argue, is the potential payoff for psychoanalysis and TQGS studies. Resisting the idea of there being something bedrock about gender identity should grant psychoanalysis the chance for "discussing more openly *and with less shame* that gender, *all gender,* is both delightfully stranger *and* more savagely violent than our theories can imagine" (xxiv), thereby opening the door for trans and queer patients. Further, they hold that the reconceptualization of gender and sexuality also points in fruitful new directions for theorizing gender in TGQS studies, while acknowledging many TQGS scholars' disinterest and plain antagonism to psychoanalysis due to its history of rampant homo- and transphobia and heteronormativity.

Should theorists working in TQGS studies return to psychoanalytic work? Is this bridging work imperative and worthwhile, and what makes it so? Two reasons come to my mind. First, the authors' astute reckoning with the processes of *becoming* trans and *becoming* queer and their turn toward the psyche of gendered subjects more generally points to the importance and potential of thinking not just about the ontology but also the *ontogenesis* of gender—a question neglected in much of TQGS studies. How do trans subjects, queer subjects, come into being? Also, how do they come into being not as a self-contained potentiality that unfolds itself autonomously over a lifetime but always in and through dynamic relation to the other? Second, by focusing on the ontogenesis of gender, the authors bring sexuality back into the conversation on gender and sex by taking sexuality as central to the gendered becomings of subjects.

While the authors make a strong case for reevaluating the relevance of psychoanalysis in light of recent trans and queer-affirming directions it has taken, I remain still weary of some of their approaches. For instance, the authors claim that psychoanalysis is necessary for understanding the ins and outs of the individual life and the self. Thus, they write that "psychoanalysis, perhaps more than any other discourse, is capable of navigating nuance and offering depth to think about how gender and sexuality accrue their psychic density, how they come undone and get redone" (161). But we are left with no more argument for such a claim. Plausibly, psychoanalysis will sometimes offer a potentially helpful hermeneutical tool kit for understanding the gendered self-theorizations—aspects of the psyche—of subjects. But why should we assume that psychoanalysis will be most beneficial in providing insights into understanding how our psyche works? While the psychoanalytic approach helpfully redirects one's focus toward understanding the psyche, worries about the theoretical baggage of psychoanalysis remain, as the authors still bring some psychoanalytic concepts and developmental ideas to bear (such as the "infantile sexual" or "sexual unconscious" of the parent that comes to bear on the child's development) with which we might wish for more legitimization and critical engagement. As someone not always convinced by the theoretical tool kit of psychoanalysis, I find myself wondering why I should accept such a way of thinking and explaining at all, apart from acknowledging that such concepts present contingent ways of theoretically understanding certain phenomena about ourselves as humans and have proven to be useful hermeneutical tools in therapeutic contexts. Maybe the theoretical psychoanalytic approach of the book is potentially worth engaging in more for the questions it raises than for the answers it offers, although those answers might sometimes be (contingently) helpful in the treatment room for elucidating a patient's self-theorizations. But this is less a critique of the book than questions and skepticism that might helpfully be brought to bear in future work.

One thing I immensely enjoyed and that makes this book an indispensable read is how it models a form of theorizing done at the messy edge of praxis. In the second chapter, "On Taking Sides: Clinical Encounters with Nonbinary Genders," the authors contend with what it might mean to affirm patients' self-theorizations of their genders and sexualities. They argue that certain purported questions, such as whether analysts should accept their clients' self-pronounced pronouns, are not theoretical questions to be debated but affirmations of making possible future self-theorizations of their patients. It is not a *theoretical* but an *ethical* stance the analyst must take toward their patients. This affords the patient what the authors call the "dignity of belief" by taking their self-theorizations seriously and allows for the development of an "ethos of deep care for queer and trans life" (161). Such theorizing, stemming from deep practical engagement with human others, can helpfully redirect our gaze toward what matters in theorizing and speaks to the authors' commitment that psychoanalysis, as theory and praxis, be transformed. Their work evidences that it is not just about enriching psychoanalysis with insight from TQGS studies but about turning the process of psychoanalysis on itself, letting it step into an analytic process with other disciplines. If such a transformation of psychoanalysis is on the horizon, then I believe TQGS studies should turn toward such transformative processes sooner rather than later. ■

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Isaac Slone
isaac@analytic-room.com

Rights of Passage

In the elementary school common room, boys congregated in one area, and girls congregated in another. I stood in the middle, grappling with a painful sense of disconnection. Folding in with either group was impossible. I was alone in noticing the binary division. As a younger person, I felt uncomfortable in my male body. I often wore women's clothes. I loved borrowing my mother's red boots. I was interested in exploring and talking about gender identity. Other eleven-year-olds were not. I was confused for a girl, but I didn't mind. The school psychologist took notice and asked to meet with me to express her concerns that I was deeply disturbed and seeking attention. This I did mind.

It was painful that my peers and the adults at school did not show interest or attempt to understand or think with me about what I was going through. There was no framework imparted at school for what I was experiencing. It was not something my peers grew up with a tolerance for or understanding of. There were few resources for someone my age and seemingly even fewer that took up gender identity outside a conversation about sexual orientation. It was a time when I'd come home from school, throw my book bag to the ground, and scream and cry.

I took refuge in *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*—two staples of queer cinema that the adults in my life considered to be inappropriate for a younger person, further relegating these feelings to a space of something potentially illicit or only to be taken up when I was older. These films were and still are examples of how these feelings were fuel for finding creative expression, community, and a more unconstrained experience of oneself. I had the chance to perform in *Rocky Horror* and *Hedwig* at a small rock club when I was thirteen years old, playing the lead drag roles in both. My mom took me to have my corset tailored. She still cites the performances as more important events than my bar mitzvah.

With the help of my analyst at the time and my family, I persevered. Perseverance meant compromising and learning to feel comfortable enough presenting as male solely to feel more socially integrated. The unspoken rationale was kind of like "It'll be easier and less confusing for everyone else if you suppress this part of yourself." I don't fault anyone for that; my journey with this has been less painful than that of many others.

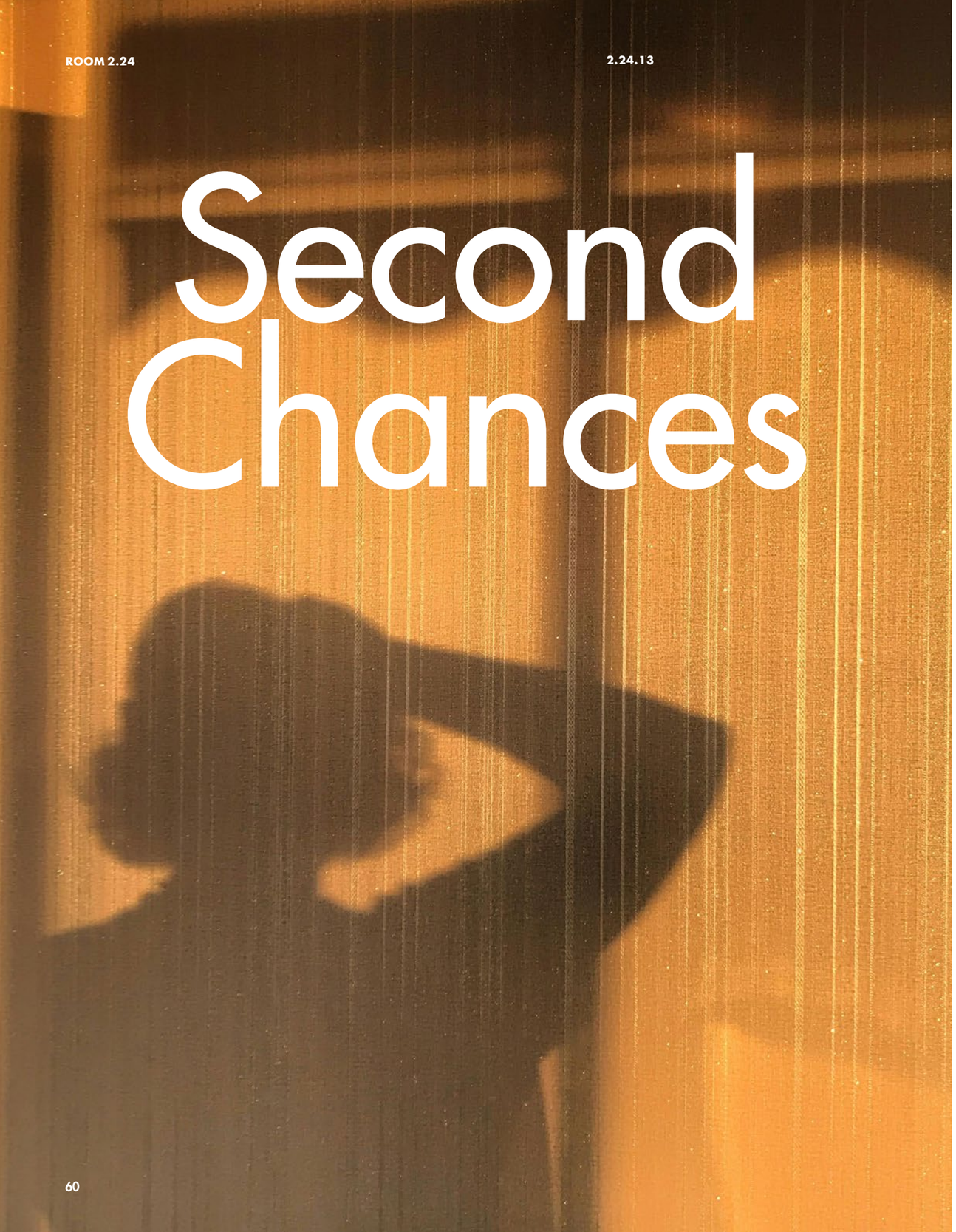
As gender identity and nonbinary identity have recently become more socially acknowledged and discussed in my circles, I have sometimes felt bitter and as though I have moved on from those considerations. As the social current changed, I found myself aligned with the perspective that once perpetuated my sadness. I found myself with defensive thoughts like *This is surely just a superficial fad* and *Why would I use different pronouns for someone who presents enough like their sex assigned at birth?* I recognize this bitterness as a negation. It is overwhelming to revisit silenced parts of myself and painful memories of feeling out of control, alone, and different. It was even harder to feel as though others were being met with the kind of understanding and acceptance I longed for and to consider others striving and struggling with coming into themselves authentically. I'm on a new path, working to have a more embodied relationship with these parts of myself.

I also write this piece in response to those who do not believe school is a place to discuss gender identity. If my peers and I had grown up with room for these feelings and questions, made possible in part by the adults we looked to teach us about the world, it undoubtedly would have made a difference. Some attempts at curricula will get it wrong. Conversations about gender identity will provoke anxiety and confusion and require families to discuss difficult things. Contributing this personal narrative feels like a step in that direction. ■

PHOTO (PREVIOUS PAGE): MARLENE LEPPÄNEN

The author as Hedwig in a production of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, 2008.

Second Chances



Delia Kostner
deliakostner@gmail.com

The room was tiny and austerely furnished with two chairs, a table, and a cheap worn carpet. It was a dark icy midwinter Chicago afternoon, and my patient Susan was dressed in a halter top and low-slung jeans. A coat with a faux-fur collar was draped casually over her shoulders.

"You're not pregnant, so that's good," I said. She shrugged, not registering the relief I expected. As a peer counselor and educator in the teen clinic, I wasn't typically involved in any aspect of pregnancy testing or counseling. But that night we were short-staffed, and when another young woman, devastated by the news of her pregnancy, required more than the usual amount of attention, the social worker handed me a chart.

"I see no harm in giving her positive news. Just see that she understands how to use the birth control we've prescribed." The social worker, Kathy, was young and unbelievably cool and, like several other women at Planned Parenthood, had become a mentor and protector.

In those days pregnancy tests were complicated. They took over a week to process, and results were conveyed in person to avoid any breach of privacy.

Susan squinted at me. "How'd you get this job?" I was dressed in straight-legged jeans and Earth shoes and wore little makeup. I knew I looked too young to inspire the confidence I was trying to convey.

I shrugged, feeling a little uncomfortable. "A teacher told me about it. I'm interested in counseling."

I was a junior at an academically rigorous high school. Community service was encouraged, and when my biology instructor told me about a volunteer opportunity at the clinic, I jumped at the chance. Planned Parenthood correctly believed that girls of a similar age could better understand each other's concerns.

By all rights I shouldn't have been in this position. I had just ducked under the razor wire of the most harrowing time of my life. I would see this only in retrospect. The convent school I had attended for nine years had summarily dismissed me for truancy and failing two classes. This new school had miraculously offered me admission despite my abysmal academic career. I had not yet heard the term "acting out," but I knew my behavior was complicated. This school was my second chance.

"You didn't really want to be pregnant, did you?" I asked, looking up as I slid a packet of birth control pills across the desk.

"Wouldn't matter. My boyfriend said he'd take care of it. And me." She smiled and slid the pills back.

"You would probably have to leave school if you got pregnant," I said. Again she shrugged.

I motioned toward a basket of condoms.

She laughed. "I don't know who *you're* fucking, but my boyfriend wouldn't touch *those* with a ten-foot pole."

I flushed. "Then don't sleep with him until he does. I'm guessing that'll change his mind," I blurted. But her wariness melted into a conspiratorial smile.

Predictably, this job did not please my mother, and I was surprised she did not resist my participation more. She and I had chafed for years. I resisted her mores, aligned as they were with the Catholic church I was fleeing. Early in my freshman year, she had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. In the wake of her diagnosis, she seemed to forfeit the forward trajectory of her life and yielded completely to the disease, disappearing step by step into her misery. In a moment of weakness, my father confided that she was unlikely to live to see me graduate from high school. I couldn't believe she might die. In the cold reality of life without a mother, I disconnected from my family and sought solace elsewhere.

At the clinic, I became part of a lively swirl of women who provided me with the guidance and intimacy I lacked at home. They were my family as my family became increasingly unavailable. Women ran the show. It was a heady time. It was 1974, the *Roe v. Wade* decision just made abortion legal, and an earlier state law gave teenagers free access to reproductive health services. There was enough funding to never turn anyone away for lack of money.

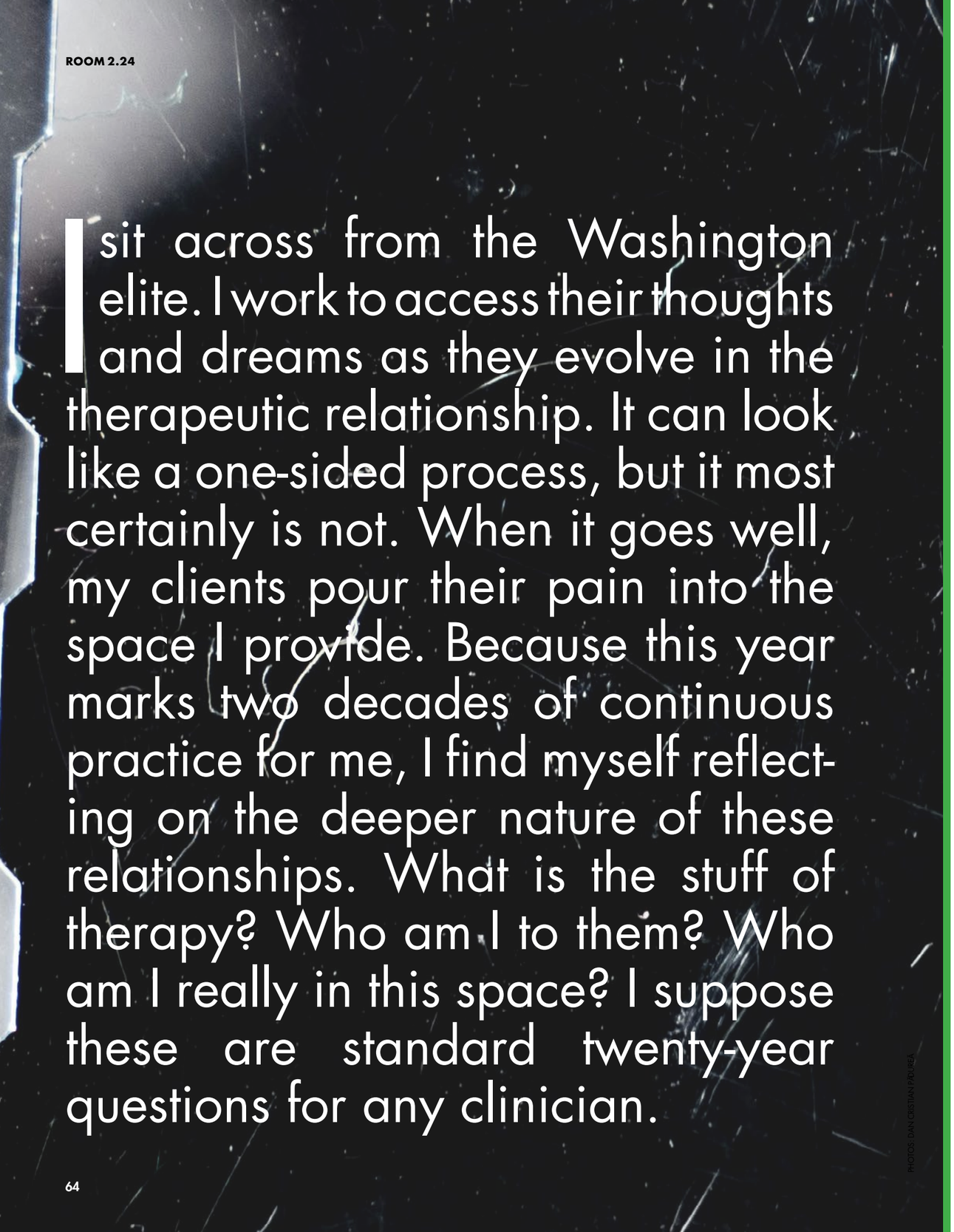
The first edition of *Our Bodies, Ourselves* sat on the counter in the front office where I answered phones and scheduled appointments. I read it cover to cover, then started again from the beginning. In its pages I found a world in which bodies weren't shameful and where women had agency. I would be among the first generation to fully control their reproductive destiny. But more than that, I found that my future wasn't predetermined by biology, religion, parental expectations, or past misdeeds. My life was my own; my autonomy was declared inviolable. I knew I was obligated to pass this gift on.

I leaned across the table. "Listen, you've been granted a reprieve. Use it. Finish school. Sleep with whoever you wish; just do it safely and take control of your life."

Susan reached for the packet of pills. I slid a handful of condoms across the table. She smiled and stuffed them into her coat pocket. ■

Aaron Bourne
aaron@aaronbourne.com

Backstory



I sit across from the Washington elite. I work to access their thoughts and dreams as they evolve in the therapeutic relationship. It can look like a one-sided process, but it most certainly is not. When it goes well, my clients pour their pain into the space I provide. Because this year marks two decades of continuous practice for me, I find myself reflecting on the deeper nature of these relationships. What is the stuff of therapy? Who am I to them? Who am I really in this space? I suppose these are standard twenty-year questions for any clinician.

PHOTOS: DAN CRISTIAN PĂDUREȚ

My clients know me as their therapist, and they benefit from the big-hearted professional that I want them to see. I think they see me as a strong and caring man. I give them my warmth and my intelligence.

But, like everyone, I have a backstory. My therapeutic persona is not rooted in wealth or capacity. Far from it. I may look and play a particular role for many. But in me there is still a nearsighted fatherless boy who was raised by a poor inner-city girl. While people in my carefully decorated waiting room enjoy the classical music I have provided for them, they unknowingly are waiting to see a man whose mother cleaned hotel rooms and was paid under the table so she could get food stamps. My mother walked home with me in her arms after my delivery. My first crib was a dresser drawer lined with bath towels.

To this day, all five feet of her are tenacious and irrepressible. There is a look in her eye that says it all. It is something like an MMA fighter who knows they will have to be choked out before they tap out. While she cannot truly understand my career ambitions (she has an eighth-grade education), she is responsible for much of what my clients enjoy. As I reflect on how she helped make me who I am today, I realize that at six feet, two inches tall, and with a frame that shows my dedication to the gym, I try to look like what was always in her heart.

Yet that is one of many parts of me. It is a part of myself that I have developed. After all, I can choose what to read and how much to work out. Like all therapists, I have been fired. I have even decided to not offer my services from time to time. Yet, for the most part, my clients engage in our process.

But twenty years is twenty years, and we romantics are certainly prone to reflect. Like a warm blanket on a cold night, I often feel my success covering up what I want to keep out of the cold. My memories of the never-ending winters in Rochester, New York, and the smell of poverty: stale beer, cigarettes, and garbage. Oh, how I love my therapeutic blanket. It is thick with contemporary theories of how to practice, how to be, and when to say what needs to be said. I have access to the finest therapeutic minds in my area for supervision and consultation, and I feel the warmth they offer.

An esteemed colleague of mine has an inscribed rock in their office that reads, *A good family makes a good person.* The connotation of the message is innocent enough, but it makes me want to pull the blanket up clear over my head. Oh, how I want to warm that cold little boy who, by any objective measure, did not come from a "good family."

My adult brain both remembers and understands how my family suffered from addiction, mental health problems, and poverty. I know they lacked access to resources and the knowledge of how to preserve what little they had. My young vulnerable brain remembers the cold, those long winter nights, and my mother's struggle. For me, shame has always felt like standing alone on a rotting porch next to the garbage and beer bottles in the dead of winter. I don't know if I dreamed of the life I currently have as a child, but I hope I did. Retaining contact with the stark contrast between where I come from and where I find myself today helps keep me grounded in my practice, where I benefit from both the warm strong man and that cold little boy. ■

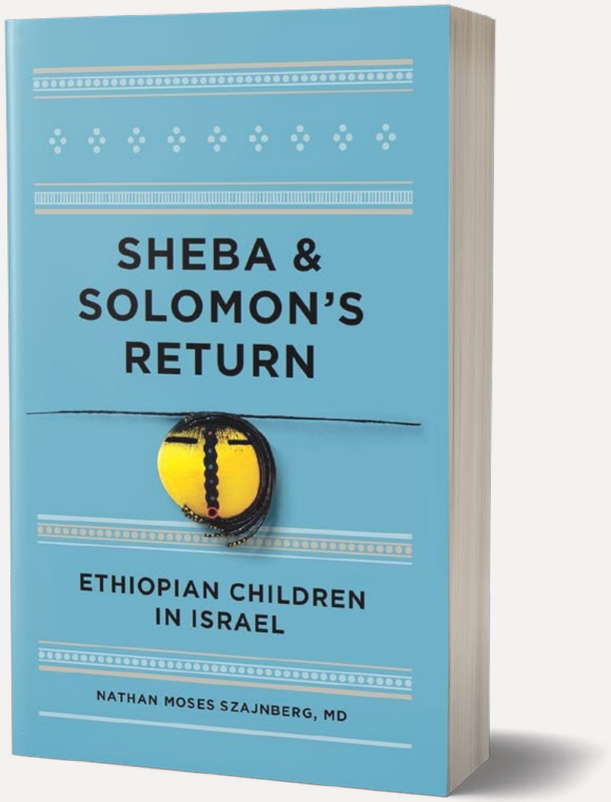
Adrienne Pilon
pilonadriennei@gmail.com

The Deep Away

"In Sweden hundreds of migrant children, facing the possibility of deportation, have been diagnosed since the 1990s with what is known locally as resignation syndrome. Some remain inert for years." (*The Economist*, Oct 24, 2018)

"This [Resignation syndrome] is a disorder that causes an impenetrable comatose state, but where there is no disease to explain it.... Until very recently, people with this syndrome came exclusively from families seeking asylum in Sweden." (*The Guardian*, April 12, 2021)

Hypnos, too, traveled in a state
of nether, the waters of Lethe lapping
at his feet as he nestled between Dreaming
and Death, hidden from creeping daylight
by a sweet oblivion, a magical suspension
between worlds. A deep away.
His statue once stood in a hall of Gods.
We saw him there: mute, marble, winged,
nearly alive, a sentry in the old city where
buildings crumbled under the weight of bombs,
all turned to dust or tarred with the ash
of a thousand fires. Or perhaps, all saved:
swaddled like babes, or like mummies
in white linens, cradled in wooden crates,
awaiting transit to another state.



Sheba and Solomon's Return:
Ethiopian Children in Israel
by Nathan Szajnberg

In this book, Ethiopian-Israeli children reveal their inner lives, hopes, and fears with pictures and drawings. Their mothers and fathers were all born in remote Ethiopian villages. Most mothers were married by thirteen and never attended school. Their life stories are filled with sibling deaths, shepherding at eight or nine, and the lengthy, dangerous trek across Ethiopia through surrounding lands to Israel. You will read of their compelling lives and how parents and children live in different worlds from each other. Some mothers literally see the world differently than their children. These children display their creativity as they freely draw and tell their life stories.

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Shari Appollon: *My Mother's Haiti*
Ann Augustine: *A Sea of Mothers*

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40 | التعاون Taawon

Taawon (Welfare Association) is a nonprofit, civic organization launched in Geneva in the year 1983, upon the initiative of a group of Palestinian and Arab economists and intellectuals. Taawon has become one of the largest organizations operating in Palestine and the diaspora camps in Lebanon, whereby it touches the lives of more than one million Palestinians on an annual basis, with half of these beneficiaries being women. Since its establishment, Taawon has invested funds reaching nearly US $900 million, dedicated to development and relief programs.

Taawon works to achieve these goals in partnership with various civil society organizations through purposeful planning and outlining policies that hold high professional standards; this process is guided by the policies that are achieved in its field of expertise, particularly the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant international laws issued by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and its Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

TOGETHER WE STAND WITH GAZA
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GAZA'S ORPHANED CHILDREN ARE OUR COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY
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Standing Together

The current sociopolitical reality in Israel is unbearable. Unending occupation feeds violence, fear, and hatred between Israelis and Palestinians. Economic inequality is widening. Poverty is deepening. Israel's Palestinian minority faces increasing discrimination. Women, Mizrahim, immigrants, the LGBTQ+ community, the elderly, and people with disabilities are marginalized socially, economically, and politically. Working people must labor for ever-longer hours at stagnating wages while the cost of living continues to soar even higher.

Rather than seriously address these problems, our political leaders use fear and racism to divide us. Instead of providing genuine security solutions, they deliver never-ending wars. Rather than serve the majority, they look out only for the rich. Our government is increasingly disconnected and corrupt. Israeli society is in a deep crisis.

Nevertheless, we find room for hope.

In this moment of crisis, the central action of Standing Together is the preservation of solidarity and relations between Jewish and Palestinian citizens in Israel, as well as leading the call for a ceasefire and hostage-release deal to save innocent lives in Gaza and to bring back the Israeli hostages.

You can strengthen our mission by:

1. Sharing a message of humanity to combat the calls for revenge and more bloodshed.

2. Raising awareness about the horrific situation in Gaza and the West Bank, and promoting the idea that there is no military solution the only way to guarantee

freedom, safety, and equality for all in Israel/Palestine is through a political solution—a just, sustainable peace.

Share the message of humanity.

Social media is not something that happens adjacent to wars. It is used as a front in the war by both Israel and Hamas. People form their opinions and understand how they should react to events via the messages they see on social media.

Here is what you can do:

1. Join our WhatsApp group where we share our social media posts in English, so that people can help amplify them: https://bit.ly/3s3Jia7

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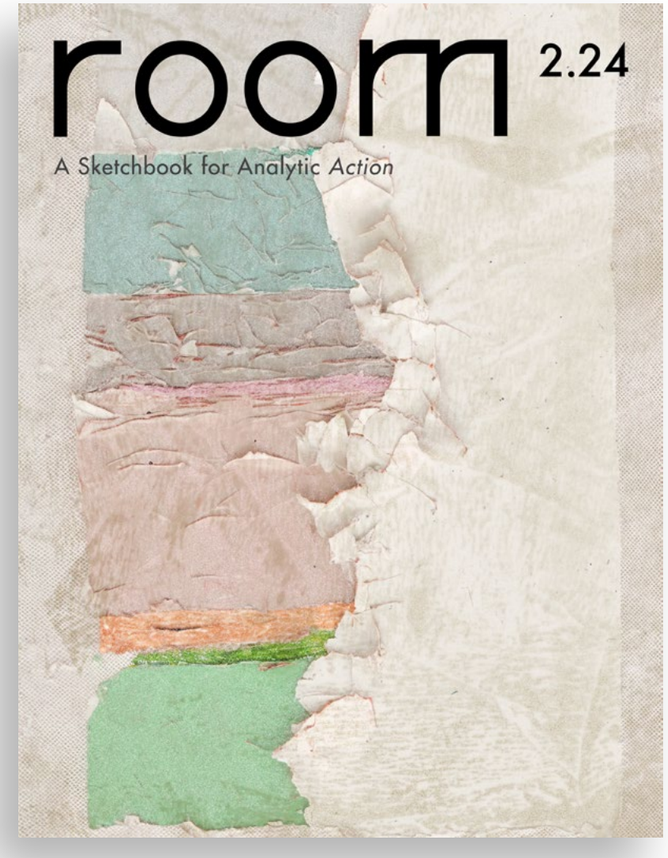

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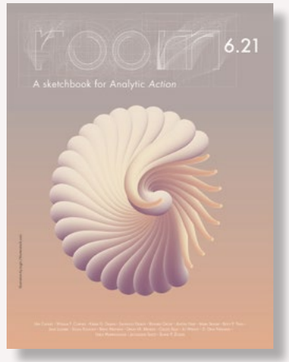

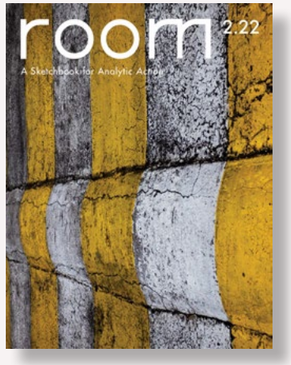

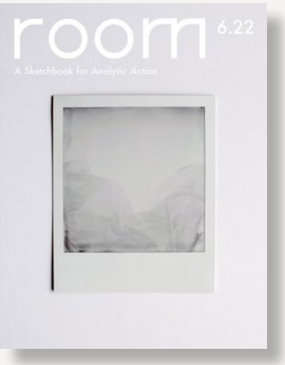

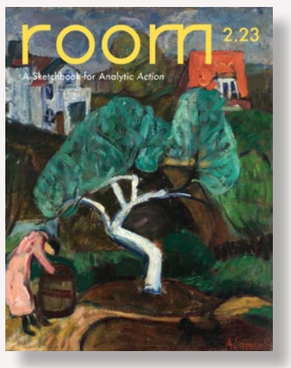

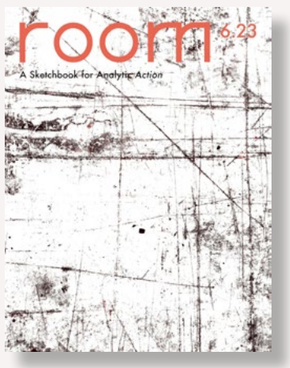

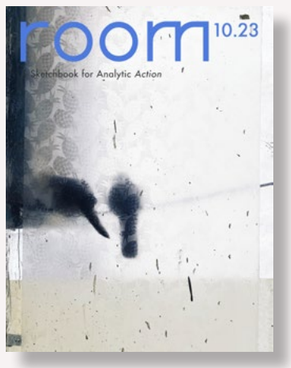

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