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Transpersonal Space/Time Through the Arts

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As transpersonal researchers and practitioners work to articulate the meaning of transpersonal individually and collectively, I suggest conceptualizing transpersonal space/time as real in a physically felt sense. This embodied knowing is best practiced and expressed through the arts. The premise is situated within a larger field using the term *liminal* as a parallel meaning construct for transpersonal I present my own work referencing a range of disciplines where scholars and practitioners using the terms liminal, transpersonal and others, artfully express their understanding of extra-ordinary experience. A personal example through creative writing is offered demonstrating the way my body/mind inquiring into images of the Holocaust engages the shadow side of the transpersonal.

Keywords: *transpersonal, liminal, arts, expressive arts therapy, arts-based inquiry, felt sense, threshold experience, theater, art and science, Holocaust studies*

This article explores the experience of physically stepping into and leaving the transpersonal when we engage in the arts. It is offered through both a personal lens and the theoretical constructs that have helped me make sense of and articulate what I first learned through doing and feeling. I didn't always call this experience of entering alternate space/time *transpersonal*. I called it initially *liminal* and still do sometimes. Although I first found the conceptualization of the transpersonal disembodied, overly described in prosaic language, I have come to feel over time that, when described poetically, this term best fits my experience.

I am an arts-based researcher. My inquiries are conducted making art in the in-between of things. Of hybrid origins and nomadic traditions, life on the outside looking in is familiar. I am also an expressive arts therapist and my sessions are orchestrated to artfully move beyond what is given and assumed. When I make art—primarily as a writer and an actor—moving away from the ego is the source of both inspiration and information. When I witness art and its making I am actively engaged in merging my self into others' realities, acknowledging my own is merely a fragment. Concurrently, I respect my own experience. Knowing through my own body is how I know things.

My Transpersonal Experience

My experience of transpersonal space/time is as a physical, vibrating multiverse. It is inside and

outside. I feel differently when I am in the transpersonal soup than when I am not. My perceptions change. I taste, feel, see, hear and touch differently. I am in a state of readiness and openness. I am alert and aware of my present reality as well as meta-reality: conscious that I am conscious. I am a supple body in the subtle interactive field—"a kind of energy field ... (where I am) at the threshold of an awareness of archetypal process" (Schwartz-Salant, 1982, p. 133).

In transpersonal space/time I am often impatient with details and sometimes intimately concerned with them. I am ready to engage and ready to witness. I experience entry into transpersonal space as physically real, as stepping into another room or moving from indoors to outside. The quality of air thickens. Time passes differently. Transpersonal space/time is not me removed from my experience observing reality outside of me. Transpersonal space is an embodied state, a physically experienced space/time me being here.

My wakeful knowing of transpersonal space/time feels in some aspects as described by Malamud (1993) as part of lucid dreaming: "a self-reflective cognitive set and awareness of freedom, safety, and insulation from ... consequences, combined with vivid perceptual experience, access to 'autonomous processes'" (p. 77). While expressing through the arts when in the transpersonal, I am "safe from consequences." When I encounter a nightmare in transpersonal space/time as when I engage with the

disturbing images an artful frame protects me. When in that space/time I feel energies changing and images arriving to touch my body they can sometimes cause too much pain unless I dance or write a poem containing the images within the arts. It is dwelling “both in material and immaterial dimensions of experienced reality” (Eigen, 1993, p. 74). When I am acting in a play or movie I am both in what happened to me and in what has not. Surprising things occur with my fellow actors and the audience or crew and this happens in transpersonal space and time. Each moment is creative including moments of imaginative tragedy. Each moment in transformative space/time is held in art as I surrender to the painting, to the music. It is real—it is living experience. “It is the irreducible (irreconcilable?) co-presence of immaterial and spatial dimensions of lived experience (reflectively elaborated) that defines human consciousness. In systems language they are correlatives. They require each other but cannot be equated with each other” (Eigen, 1993, p. 136). Material and immaterial co-exist. I am me and beyond me.

Theater and film taught me this, both as audience and performer. I am held in that liminal space/time while engaging with art. Liminal was the first term to resonate and describe for me what I knew in my body. This word touched me deeply. It is from the Latin *limen*, threshold, and connotes elegantly for me as an expressive arts therapist, performer, audience, and arts-based researcher the moving presence that is the transpersonal space/time realm. I have found the terms liminal and liminality are used in artistic, psychological, and scientific discourse and exploring their meaning has helped me understand where I sometimes dwell and how the arts access and return me from the areas that surround and enter my self.

Liminal

Liminal is a term that has gained much currency in contemporary discourse. Popularized by anthropologist Victor Turner (1969) and building on the work of Arnold van Gennep, who researched indigenous initiation practices, the term liminal has been used by anthropologists to describe a time and space when/where the young men went to perform their initiation rites. Here, outside the bounds of their daily cultural conventions, initiates underwent a transformation through dangerous and rigorous rituals. When they returned to their communities, they were considered to have undergone a transformation and become adults.

This tradition unfolds in a less-demanding way in the post-modern world when people go to meditative retreats, marathons, seminar trainings, and sometimes a particularly meaningful vacation. One returns and friends say, “You’ve changed.” Liminal space/time was articulated by Turner (1969) as a gap between ordered worlds that is crossed in a transition rite sanctioned by a culture. He differentiated between *liminality* and *communitas*, the latter being more connected to culture and communal obligation.

Mystics, scientists, healers, and artists grapple with how to re-enter communal participation. From time immemorial humans have tried to communicate the journey to what is called the transpersonal where the extra-ordinary occurs. Contemporary discourse using the word liminal, whether it is held in the cave, ashram, laboratory, artist’s studio, or therapist’s office, focuses on the *in-between* of known territories. Those of us who identify with the in-between as transpersonal (rather than above or beyond) tend to focus on what happens when the world that is known to be meets the world that is becoming. The way to communicate and make our work useful to ourselves, our clients and the world, is best done through the arts.

As other transpersonal inquirers/practitioners, I work to free myself from concepts that validate as real only what has previously been categorized. I honor new experience with my five senses that measure and separate us, from them and those. I appreciate data that occur inside me and inside others. I am interested in what things mean to us inside and how we perceive concrete facts of outside.

The site of inquiry for embodied, artful, transpersonal inquirers/practitioners is where inside and outside meet. The in-between transpersonal is a space/time that cannot be seen by either the eye or the micro/telescope, heard by the ear, tasted by the tongue, touched by the skin, smelled by the nose. ... And yet, in this liminal space we bring our bodies to it and can sense everything through them. The transpersonal is a state of being/becoming and so are we when we enter. The images and archetypes, the gods and goddesses and their children the muses, live in this imaginative very real space. Art begins here and waits for us to make it known on Earth.

More About the In-Between

As I inquire across disciplines to understand my experience, I find liminal space/time described the

same ways as making art. It usually means a disordered place of engagement with the unexpected and surprising, where the outcome is unknown. Liminal space/time is called by cultural theorists *hybrid* (Bhabha, 1994), by social theorists the *badlands* (Hetherington, 1997), by philosophers as *smooth* and *nomadic* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), by psychologists *transitional* (Winnicott, 1971) and by artists as *transmediated* (Knill et al., 1995). Everything is complex and simple there. It is juicy. It emerges and finds you. This space/time is known as an in-between site of potential newness—often frequented by the discontent with the present order. Hetherington (1997) has pointed out other names for the liminal: representational space, paradoxical space, obligatory points of passage, heterotopia (p. 68) marginal space and third space (p. 41). What appears in this third space—the images—are sometimes known as “the third” a ‘gift in the space of encounter’” (Knill et al., 1995, p. 131). Liminal spaces demand an alternate way of ordering to the everyday, said Hetherington (1997); “They act as a dangerous and polluting margin, danger in the symbolic sense of the mingling of the sacred with the profane, and as such liminal spaces tend to be clearly demarcated and associated with their own practices” (p. 34). The best way is the practice of art!

Others see the liminal not as a *marginal space*, that is demarcated, but rather as smooth or nomadic, running through society in the manner Deleuze and Guattari (1987) called *rhizomic*, through the creases of society. Creases are not marginal, on the edge, but rather liminal, in between. They run through the actual and conceptual centers of society, like faults in the Earth’s crust. Creases are places to hide, but more importantly they signal areas of instability, disturbance, and potentially radical changing in the social topography” (Schechner, 1988, p. 164). Art pops up out of the transpersonal. It surprises. It is natural and our nature. We move to a strange attractor and evolve to a new iteration when we make and/or witness (as well as are witnessed by) art.

Liminality is seen through systems theory as “the breakdown of systems described by Prigogine ... (leading) to ‘dissipative structure,’ smaller units that retain their own order and purpose” (Hall, 1991, p. 35). Expressive arts therapists say, “The image has a life of its own.” The images live in transpersonal space/time and are attracted to us there. New things with their own purpose manifest through and in us in the here-and-now.

Transpersonal Space/Time Through the Arts

Art Makes Transpersonal Real

Where is love?
Is it somewhere up above?
Is it over by the willow tree
That I’ve been dreaming of...
(lyric from *Oliver*, the musical)

The physical manifestation(s) of experiencing the transpersonal are already being researched by inquiring into prayer, psychedelics, meditation, chanting, near-and after-death, and other areas of human experience. These studies tend to document physical results in humans from being there: decreased stress-levels, increases in well-being, acceptance of self as well as dying and bereavement and other beneficial phenomena. These results are increasingly recognized in larger fields as real, that is, scientific, validated through controlled studies using quantitative measures, qualitative inquiries interviewing the effect of transpersonal/transformational experience, and mixed studies using quantitative and qualitative measures. What has been less explored is the physicality of transpersonal experience itself.

The arts have physically demonstrated humans’ ability to transcend ourselves since our recorded history began. They exist in real-time in their physical *beingness*. When we make or witness art it is through our bodies. It is a physical experience. It is a way of knowing the transpersonal and at the same time validating the existence of the transpersonal as “real.” The transpersonal through dance, song, and photographs can be known in a phenomenological way as a thing itself. We do not have to measure or argue that art exists. The art forms speak for themselves. If we write the transpersonal in artistic language—in images—we make the experience of transpersonal more understood to ourselves and cross-culturally to others.

Theater is my closest experience knowing and showing the transpersonal. Theater is described by Richard Schechner (1994) as a liminal experience where/when performers carry their audience across a *limen* to another consciousness (p. 171). The audience and actors are transformed by having crossed through the liminal or having entered a liminal state and emerging differently. The transformative power of theater has been described by stage director, Ariane Mnouchkine, as:

something (that) unites the actors, the audience, the music, which is really of the order of the spirit, which

stems from the possibility of forgetting oneself at a particular moment, and no longer being anything other than listening, when the musicians, the actors, the audience are all ears. This is dependent upon total discipline, an absolute rigour and a magical freedom (interview in Williams, 1999, p. 209).

My research, therapy, and art practices are conducted in this magically creative field that is not me yet accessible to my five senses and the sixth sense: the one that knows someone is standing behind me or that a dear friend will call that moment. The embodied experience of the transpersonal is described poetically by artists, scientists, and mathematicians because it is poetical. It is a space/time that cannot be visualized that the mathematicians put imaginary numbers in. It is a quantum, implicit field that does not exist in linear time; being ever-present, waiting for an artist/witness to make its products—the images—manifest as an observation/perception so they can present themselves as a theory or a painting. Bohm (1998) reminded that scientific language, *theory*, and artistic language, *theater*, come from the same Greek root meaning *to view* or *spectacle* (p. 43) and I have found when scientists describe the liminal/transpersonal they tend to wax poetic.

The experience of the transpersonal space is most eloquently understood through the language of the arts: not prosaically but rather poetically. Transpersonal space/time is a field of both implicit order and disorder. It is a pulsating, living, evolving space that creates patterns and becomes chaotic to create new patterns. It needs presenting in many colors and swirls held by the order of an art form so it can be held in its moments. When I experience this transpersonal space/time I am creativity: polyphony and what for me is peace: noisy, exciting, steady, surprising, dangerous, illogical/logical, loving, destroying, deeply engaging.

Transpersonal is Poetic

Transpersonal space/time is real. I know it in my body. It is intense/dense in this space and afterwards I need to recover from being there and sometimes, if I am feeling fragile in my identity, I do not want to go there at all. It is a space readily shared in the moment with others who have a way to access it and sometimes it is exquisitely busy without another soul around. In transpersonal space we, and all that is not yet created, can bounce and jolt and scare and anger and delight each other. The space is boundless and can contain everything. In this research

and practice domain everything is going on all at once with everyone and everything and sometimes we fit and sometimes we don't and that in itself means everything fits. "We are thus in the act of fitting an ever-changing reality so that there is no fixed or final goal to be attained. Rather, at each moment the end and the means are both to be described as the action of making every aspect fit" (Bohm, 1998, p. 86). Transpersonal space is whole and fragmented. No end is in sight.

Transpersonal space is poetic/aesthetic (not anaesthetic) space. We feel. It is a wild beauty, in the sense of play. We are not looking for solutions to problems when we play, we are exploring. Transpersonal is a sandbox, a jungle gym, a haunted house of mirrors. The beautiful and the disturbing are held and each has its own beauty because everything is possible. It is beauty

that has no practical use: it never tells us what to do. It carries no directive action, but forces us to go beyond the useful, encounter the unexpected, and become aware of the unsolvable riddle of our existence. We lose mastery in the presence of beauty because there is no mastery to hold on to. The mastery is one of being there and acting. (Jacoby, 1999, p. 61)

In this space, where there are patterns, there is chaos and disorder and it is where images hurtle at us unbidden and we dance and sing and leap with them in wonder and awe. We search for ways to express what we feel, hear, see, touch, smell, taste, and think in the transpersonal because it is all too much to hold. We need to titrate, to record, ground, remember and we often want to share what we experience. The most accurate expression and container of the sensing of this being in the transpersonal is through the arts. The affective therapist, artist and researcher must themselves see, hear, touch, taste and smell their own experience. They want to affect those they wish to receive their work. Our insides are our outsides in relationship. As the mime, Jacques Lecoq said, "There is a link between inner and outer space [...] I indicate passions in space" (quoted in Williams, 1999, p. 104). Inside and outside are not relevant in the moments of inquiry and practice in transpersonal space. "When one is most alive and real, can one locate experiencing as simply inside or outside?" (Eigen, 1991, p. 70).

The transpersonal space/state is called *makyo* in meditation practices and author, psychotherapist and Zen master Mary Jaksch (1999) advised we must pay attention to our bodies in transpersonal space/time.

She described the transcendent state as physically taking the form of dramatic vision or unusual sensations. It is a state of readiness, movement, of becoming. It vibrates and sings: it is art for art's sake. Transpersonal space is/are *plateaus*—"continuous, self-vibrating region(s) of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward an external point or external end" (Bateson quoted in Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 22); they can emerge anytime and anywhere:

Between things does not designate a localizable relation from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one *and* the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle. (p. 15)

Transpersonal is Sensual

The disciplines of both art and science struggle to find ways to present what we know about transpersonal space/time. We find our disciplines growing closer as we try to describe what happens there. "It is no longer even appropriate to group biological, physicochemical, and energetic intensities on the one hand, and mathematical, aesthetic, linguistic, informational, semiotic intensities, etc., on the other" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 109). We in our multiplicity along with the entire multiverse are made up of vibrating particles each of us in our own otherness. "All I can tell you is that we are fluid, luminous beings made of fibers" (Castaneda quoted in Deleuze & Guattari, p. 249). When we gain access to the transpersonal we are in the process of transforming as we cross the threshold into our alteration with the liminal plane, the quantum field.

Particles and waves are the physical metaphors of scientists. Mathematicians talk in the image of the goddess *chaos*, formerly known as *disorder*. Artists and therapists know that we with our clients enter states of chaos in our lives and work and this leads to creation and temporary equilibrium. Artists and expressive arts therapists express this continual (dis)equilibrium in a multitude of artful ways. Our becoming/emergent knowledge becomes artful when the artist/therapist or client defines a boundary—draws that first line, takes the initial step onto the dance floor, sings the first note, writes the first line—and presents a manifestation of what s/he artfully knows. "A boundary is not that at which something stops but ... from which something *begins its presencing*" (Heidegger, 1975, p. 154). A transformative process gets a kick-start in this new beginning.

Transpersonal Space/Time Through the Arts

When we make or witness art and it works, we experience the finding of the "just right" rhythm and the notes. Transpersonal is art. All is right. It is order and disorder, particle and flow. We need to move around in it to survive. Homeostasis alone does not account for evolutionary survival. We need the transpersonal means to shake things up. When we go to the transpersonal we allow a fissure to open and enter the experience of the extra-ordinary. We need this bewildering complexity of things: order and disorder. "The arts as a reflection of human existence at its highest have always and spontaneously lived up to this demand of plenitude" (Arnheim, 1971, p. 56). Therapists, artists, and all evolutionary thinkers know things need shaking up. We must make music and move our bodies until something new emerges. And then shake again. We must stay in our bodies, grounded in who we are. We do both/and in order to learn as we straddle realities.

What chaos and rhythm have in common is the in-between—between that which is milieu, rhythm-chaos or the chaosmos: *Between* night and day, between that which is constructed and that which grows naturally, between mutations from the inorganic to the organic, from plant to animal, from animal to humankind, yet without this series constituting a progression ... (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 313).

The liminal state is an opening to the cosmos. It is not a time/space for ordinary worldly endeavors. Here we do not fight, flee, problem-solve, attend lectures and learn lessons, or any other ancient and modern measures for coping. There is no goal or prescribed behavior. It is time-out. It is a time for play—not the everyday. When we are in the transpersonal, making art, it is "as if." When held within art there are no actions but those that can immediately be undone and changed. Later we can apply what was learned through messing around. In transpersonal space/time there is always Take 2 and re-writes.

The transpersonal is a time/space accessed and experienced by me through my body. It is aesthetic: a "felt sense" (Gendlin, 1981) that is

a distinct response, with a bodily origin, to an occurrence in the imagination, to an artistic act, or to the perception of an art work. When the response is profound and soul-stirring, we describe it as "moving" or "breath-taking" ... Our language suggests a sensory effect associated with the image ... (and)

demonstrates the imaginal, sensual and surprising aspects of the response. (Knill, 1995, p. 27)

Getting in Touch

This is how I am in transpersonal space/time. My body engages there. It is not only a head experience but also a subtle field, a physical sensual involvement that includes my head. Transpersonal space is a “somatic sensational field (with) its own sort of infiniteness This ‘beyond’ is built into or encoded in the self and has its own developmental journey” (Eigen, 1993, p. 267). This somatic field pulses around and through me.

Transpersonal space is potentially omnipresent. Whenever I allow myself to experience a moment as being/becoming art then I have physical access to transpersonal space. When I respond either as *actor* or *spect-actor* (Boal, 1995) I am actively invited into the space between the artistic creation and myself (Gadamer, 1998). I am seized by the beauty of the moment made artful—and sometimes it is horror as in Picasso’s *Guernica*. This engagement is “something required by every composition, graphic or musical, in drama or in reading. There is constant co-operative activity here” (Gadamer, p. 27). This kind of aesthetic response is not a removed state of being, a quiet contemplation of a timeless object. It is active, experienced, felt. “Aesthetic drama compels a transformation of the spectators’ view of the world by rubbing their senses against enactments of extreme events . . . (it is a) reflection in liminal time during which the transformation of consciousness takes place” (Schechner, 1994, p. 172). On the space/time continuum, liminal space is *now-time*:

a “space of time” of recognition and transformation. It doesn’t carry us to a utopian or paradisaic beyond, or to the “remove” of (traditional) aesthetic contemplation. Rather in now-time we are palpably, mimetically immersed in the unrecorded history of our social existence—in the conflicting loops, freeze-frames, vanishing, fragmented memories, in the very “accident and repetition” . . . that (traditional) aesthetic time banishes. (Diamond, 1997, p. 147)

Now-time aesthetic experience arrives when any moment in physical reality is felt and appreciated. Whenever we identify the moment as a *work* through attending to it aesthetically, then we respond as with a formal work of art: we become participatory in a dialogue

with what we encounter (Gadamer, 1998). Transpersonal space/time is and is not an illusionary realm. It is here and now, part of the in-between of the continuous experience of our everyday, physical world. When we allow ourselves to engage in this liminal experience we are touched by it and we as well as our world are transformed. Whether through the modes of art and/or science, it is always ourselves who enter into a state of reflective thought/feel that “involves us in an *imaging* process . . . (and therefore) a relatively higher degree of learning” (Lee quoted in Bohm, 1998, p. xvi). This is learning through *imag(in)ing*, wherever it is applied. We are capable of engaging creatively with the world and our lives whenever we allow the images from the transpersonal access to our experience. “All that is known about the world through scientific research, and indeed in any other way, depends ultimately on living human beings who are capable of intelligent perception” (Bohm, 1998, p. 92). When we allow ourselves access to the transpersonal, all of us can perceive and frame our world as artists do. We can then intelligently learn and express new things.

Art is Science and Mathematics

Scientists and mathematicians (Crick, Denton, Dorst, Fondi, Gehring, Goodwin, Jacob, Lorenz, Schutzenberger, Weyl) are describing the sensual world as artists (Laszlo, 1996). Physical reality can be seen as “a stupendous network of interaction and communication: a subtle but ever-present whispering pond” (Laszlo, 1996, p. xx); “space and time, light and gravity, mass and energy have all been explored by physicists and artists, sometimes at the same time, sometimes one preceding the other, but seldom if ever in conscious knowledge of each other” (p. 117).

Artists often anticipate the discoveries of science (Shlain, 1991). Artists and scientists remain in relation to each other in explorations of inside and out and discover new ways for pursuing knowledge of whom and where we are. Our inquiring body/minds are vibrating structures engaged in vibrating structures with each other. “Human bodies, the same as other living organisms are embedded in this (“etheric,” “mental,” “spiritual”) field and are constantly interacting with it” (Laszlo, 1996, p. 211). Bumping and jostling in transpersonal space/time, we encounter the images that create us. We are connected to everyone “through a constant two-way *flow of images, thoughts, impressions and feelings* (italics mine), and these shape (others’) minds whether they realize it or not” (Laszlo, 1996, p. 221).

Thought is also an image: a verbal image (Ricoeur quoted in Kearney, 1998). When we can encounter thought poetically, we are in a transpersonal state and are able to engage our thinking itself as an image. Consciously shaping what we find in liminal space—those images of thoughts, impressions, and feelings—artists, scientists, and philosophers grope to engage with our data and present our discoveries on Earth. “Poetry does not fly above and surmount the earth in order to escape it and hover over it. Poetry is what first brings man onto the earth, making him belong to it, and thus brings him into dwelling” (Heidegger, 1975, p. 218).

We are all in a universe akin to a cosmic, vibrating symphony says string theorist Brian Greene (1999). This symphony is the transpersonal and there is no better way than musically to access it. Quantum physicists and chaos theoreticians perceive our physical universe as the epitome of poetic grace in which everything ultimately fits together with elegance. It follows that making poems puts us closer in touch with grace.

If we held everything in the world as one symphony, a symphony that included dissonance, would we stop destroying ourselves? Would we then avoid more of Auschwitz?

Transpersonal Shadows and the Arts

Images of evil and wickedness are alive in transpersonal space/time. Accessing the transpersonal we can be exposed to them. If the images are not quarantined we can be infected and we become not “good” when we return. I am haunted by the disturbing images of Auschwitz, both of suffering and perpetrating. This research site chose me and I have had to surrender to the inevitability of recurrence. I need a HAZMAT suit.

When I have access to transpersonal space/time I am open to the images that are attracted to me. Be it a painting, a movie, or a music piece I experience the pleasure and the pain of being a human who responds to the physicality of experience. I am especially vulnerable to the awe-inspiring encounters with the extremes of suffering. As a therapist and artist I need to titrate these experiences in transpersonal space/time in order to survive and be able to take action. I need the arts to shape my awareness of evil and help remember the existence of goodness. I need to experience what comes and be creative with it.

The sensations of pleasure and pain when in the transpersonal are real. To live creatively with being disturbed I need tools not to be overwhelmed. When an

opening presents itself for access to the transpersonal it is important for me to acknowledge the opportunity has arrived for an engagement in the in-between of things. I work to embrace everything that arrives and stretch to include it.

Everything in the transpersonal has not yet been manifested on Earth. Being human I can decide consciously how much to encounter and what to bring into the everyday. When I am able to live reflexively I live with an awareness of transpersonal space/time when I am functioning in the “normal” of Newtonian space. If I can do this consciously in the transpersonal, I do not need to engage nor enact the disturbing images in my actual home or elsewhere on the planet. In co-living with transpersonal space/time with the support of the arts I can be with all the images in reverence for what they hold be it pleasant or disturbing. In the imaging world of the transpersonal, in the frame of wonder and awe at human capabilities to create and destroy, all can be held in reverence and beauty. We are able to create a Hannibal Lecter and the Sistine Chapel. Said expressive arts scholar and practitioner Paolo Knill (1995):

Beauty is not bound to the “pleasantness” of the theme or object presented. Beauty radiates through the ways and means that the emergent is allowed to approach us. It moves us when we witness the painting, movements, sounds, rhythms, acts and words ... in the artistic process, where pain is the subject that attracts our attention and empathic curiosity. The power of the artistic process allows us to approach the painful, the suffering, the ugly, the repulsive and the destructive. (p. 115)

If we discover horror in transpersonal space/time responding with our bodies, thoughts, feelings, and sensations we must work very hard to find ways to engage and create. It is not the end of poetry when viciousness visits. We must make poetry. We need both ethically and aesthetically to take action to shape our findings for presentation. Attention must be paid for our own well-being and others’. If we humans do not engage with psych(physical) pollution it will fester inside/outside us, overwhelm and destroy what is good here on Earth. We cannot become anaesthetized ourselves to human hate and its products. The potential for enacting evil evolves in the flow of transpersonal space/time and through images’ affective power arrives inside and outside us. Helene Cixous, philosopher, poet, and playwright,

proclaimed the need for not staying silent in the face of *unspeakable* atrocity.

Once there is art, of whatever kind, there is transposition, there is metaphor, and language is already metaphor. Theatre is another kind of metaphor. But this is not only a question about theatre, it's about art in general. And it's the question of the word placing itself on that which would otherwise be only silence and death. It's a huge problem. It's the problem of the poet. Can a poet permit him or herself, and does s/he have the force to speak about that which has been reduced to silence? Wouldn't this be blasphemy? Isn't it a necessity? Isn't this exactly what we must attempt to do, knowing all the while the paradox, knowing there is a price to be paid on both sides: something is lost but something else is safeguarded. (Cixous quoted in Williams, 1999, p. 158)

We need art to digest the beast and not be poisoned. The in-between gives us access to the whole's fragments and this includes all of human existence. Gathering fragments is our task. We need help, those who are pulled to the shadow side of the transpersonal and feel a call to respond to the fragments that reside there.

My Research and Practice

My engagement in transpersonal space/time is a physical mind/body experience. I know I enter into and exit through it with my body/mind. So in transpersonal space/time I pay attention to my body as a source of knowledge. I read *The knowing body: The artist as storyteller in contemporary performance*, by Louise Steinman (1995). I begin to understand my way of knowing about knowing through the *proprioceptive* system and its three main sources of input.

Kinesthesia is the feeling of movement derived from all skeletal and muscular structure (and) includes the feeling of pain, our orientation in space, the passage of time, and rhythm. Visceral feedback consists of the miscellaneous impressions from our internal organs. *Labyrinthine* or *vestibular* feedback, the feeling of our position in space, is provided by the cochlea, an organ of the inner ear. (Steinman, 1995, p. 11)

Through proprioception I look in back of my eyes, behind my ears and under my skin. I enter my own body to inquire into its movement and rely on my body to express what I know moving my colored-pencils,

trusting my fingers to type. I learn to observe the “flicker of the mind, the distraction of my consciousness ... to pay attention to messages from (my) lymphatic system ... to observe the stream of thoughts filling (my) mind” (Steinman, 1995, p. 21). I move into the uncanny where the familiar becomes unfamiliar, through my knowing it differently in the transpersonal. In transpersonal space/time I put things together through *bricolage* where we make do with whatever is at hand (Levi-Strauss quoted in Steinman, 1995, p. 62). I absorb images through my entire physical self, not only my eyes.

We are accustomed in our visually oriented society to reducing imagination to visual images alone. Because we understand the term *image* in a visual way, we often neglect imagination's other sensory aspects. In fact, isn't it true that humans typically *imagine* not only visual images, but also sounds and rhythms, movements, acts, spoken messages and moving pictures—even tastes and tactile sensations. Imagination is the visiting place of soul, where the depth of Psyche is revealed. (Knill et al., 1995, p. 25)

In my therapy and art practices, everyday experience assaults me with disturbing images and opens the transpersonal to me. In this initial tsunami I strive to chase these images maintaining contact with everyday reality remembering “the epiphanies, the unfamiliar and the wondrous, coexist with the familiarity of what we see everyday” (Steinman, 1995, p. 71). As a transpersonal inquirer and a performer, I perceive myself, similarly to other creators of performance (to borrow from Steinman, 1995), as a “citizen of primal cultures ... cultivating the ability *to see with the whole body, [my] whole body remembers, [my] whole self dreams*” (p. 73). I work to stay grounded in practice. Spalding Gray described his theater experience of improvising similarly to how I feel creating with others. This liminal state is

a flow of feeling that I could not name because the flow, which was directly connected to the physical flow of body movement, happened so quickly and in a continuum that it was more difficult to pin down and name. There was only direct unmediated expression ... for the first time I experienced being held together with a group of performers by something other than words ... At last I had room for internal reflection. I could think as I moved. I began to have a dialogue with myself. My thoughts

were freer because they were not tied down to a psychological story line of a particular text. At first I was just moving and experiencing direct feeling ... but as I did this more and more, and got familiar with it, there was more room for reflection. (Gray quoted in Steinman, 1995, p. 110)

When I make or receive art I am open to transpersonal space/time and images. When the images contain evil I must create so I can hold them. If I want others to know what I know I must artfully transmit the information to audience or client so they too can receive. I must perform my communication. Resonating with Leeny Sack, a child of survivors who practiced embodied research for her solo performance piece, *The Survivor and the Translator: A Solo Theater Piece about Not Having Survived the Holocaust*, I do hope to make a difference in the world by passing on what I know of the dark side. The transpersonal shadow needs to continue coming towards the light. The underbelly of transpersonal territory beyond the ego threatens our well-being. The arts are the way to work with the monster.

In Sack's performance piece, she reflected on images of events that occurred in her family but not to her. "In the space between not remembering and remembering is the recognition" (Sack quoted in Steinman, 1995, p. 143). To create her theater piece Sack used the following methodology for researching the liminal, the transpersonal space/time between history and imagination.

Sack enlisted the aid of a witness, Chloe Wing. Wing was the midwife (similar to a therapist) to the process of creating the work. Sack would go to the studio every day. She brought some props, a pillow and a blanket, an old suitcase, and a pair of headphones. There was a folding cot in the studio. At each session, she lit two candles—one to protect herself, one to protect Chloe Wing. She had decided there would be a bed in the piece. In one session she realized she wanted to get into the bed. She would go in and warm up and then she would experience a huge exhalation.

In the bed, the experience began to be integrated: I decided I wanted to spend some time in bed. So I spent a month in bed. I would go to the studio, warm up, and then get in bed for three, four, five hours; maybe I would say something, maybe not. There used to

be lots of silence in the piece, because that's how we worked on it. It was "what we were doing." It was my sensibility, the bed space. I spend a lot of time in bed anyway, just staring at the ceiling and thinking—I think most people do, women especially (Sack quoted in Steinman, 1995, p. 141).

Sack's theater piece is described by professor of English, Vivian Patraka (1999), as

[giving] the sense of changing, transferring, or transforming from one place, state, or form to another: the performance enacts a kind of bearing witness to the very limits of the process of translation (even as we absorb information) and to its inevitable deformations and inadequate equivalencies. (p. 25)

The arts are limited in their attempt to transmit knowledge that is gathered in transpersonal space/time but they are the very best we humans have to capture our own and the arts' inadequacies. To engage my own research calling, the images of Auschwitz, I must work to present both the *goneness* and the *historical real* (Patraka, 1999). I enter the *Holocaust performative*, a term adapted by Patraka from Judith Butler's definition of the performative as "that power of discourse to produce effects through reiteration" (Patraka, 1999, p. 6). For Patraka, the Holocaust performative supplements Butler's definition by also insisting on the *historical real* as well as *discourse real* about the Holocaust. The Holocaust discourse/performative real

disallows the kinds of questions, methodologies, reading strategies, theoretical paradigms, and observations that we typically might deploy in relation to representation, forcing us to ask new questions and re-ask old ones. What are our own stakes (including not only scholars and playwrights, but also readers and spectators) in thinking and writing about these events? (Patraka, 1999, p. 7)

The Holocaust in transpersonal now-time performative real is where I enter in my and its physicality. When dealing with the Holocaust and other events beyond ordinary understanding, I must tread new ground. This space/time venue with no ordering is where Auschwitz is now: the space between history and memory, between history and art, between ethics and aesthetics, between researchers and what is researched. Ways of inquiring must suit this space.

Suppose that an earthquake destroys not only lives, buildings and objects but also the instruments used to measure earthquakes, directly and indirectly. The impossibility of quantitatively measuring it does not prohibit, but rather inspires in the minds of the survivors the idea of a very great seismic force ...

Auschwitz is the most real of realities in this respect. Its name marks the confines wherein historical knowledge sees its competence impugned. (Lyotard, 1988, pp. 56, 58)

Competence resides in our physical bodies in pain when we approach Auschwitz in transpersonal space/time. Patraka (1999) presented Auschwitz as giving us the *economy of bodily injury* as the truth of the human species as opposed to *fragile culture*. In Auschwitz images were prevented “from crystallizing as images of desire and/or nightmare and ... (broke) out into sensation (suffering) and denial (horror), into a blasting of sight and sound (fire, uproar)” (Kristeva quoted in Patraka, 1999, p. 91). The body/mind was acted on in violence in the Holocaust and continues to be violated in the everyday of our planet. The body/mind necessarily becomes a necessary instrument for inquiry into violence and must be protected through the arts. Deb Margolin, not a child of participants in the Holocaust, whose childhood was mapped by film images of atrocity portrays (in her theater piece *I/Not I*) “the live Jewish body in the present as it grapples with the history of slaughtered Jewish bodies from the past” (Patraka, 1999, p. 103).

Margolin embodied thought to remember Auschwitz. When I engage with my body/mind artfully with the disturbing images of Auschwitz I remember “how liberating and limiting our words, our bodies, and our memories really are” (Patraka, 1999, p. 108). There is release and there is entrapment. I engage with both the physical reality of transpersonal space/time and the physical reality of my imaginative body in it. In doing so I acknowledge the limitations of my personal mind/body. I am a very limited co-creator with the disturbing images of the Holocaust and still try through creative engagement to shape what I find to bear their weight. I try to live between hope and despair, knowing I “cannot trifle with the gaps between and within” (Eigen, 1993, p. 242). I am trying in my own inquiring and practice to live embodied in transpersonal space/time between horror and creativity.

Writing to Ground Auschwitz

I learned about the Holocaust in my mother’s kitchen. It was in the 1950s and I was ten. I had recently discovered I was Jewish when Sonya Marishewski and Kathleen O’Hallahan called me a “dirty Jew.” They caught me in the changing room in Toronto at the Bathurst Heights High School swimming pool and started punching me. I denied I was one and still slippery from my swim I got away and ran back into the pool. I didn’t know what a Jew was. I asked my mother if I was one and Mom, in the clipped tones she used when uncomfortable, said yes. Up until then, I thought I was like everyone else in the neighborhood. We got presents at Christmas. Nobody I knew mentioned God.

A few weeks later I was sitting at our kitchen table with my orange juice, soft-boiled egg, and Fry’s cocoa—too much milk and not enough chocolate or sugar—reading the socialist paper we subscribed to. In that period of life I was mainly plowing through the Nancy Drew series but in the morning read whatever was in front of me. My attention was caught by a photo. It was a heap of skeletal bodies. As an adult when I translated a survivor’s testimony for publication I made up a word for this heap: a Jewpile. The caption said the photo was taken at somewhere called Auschwitz. I asked Mom what was Auschwitz. In the kitchen my mother was at the sink with her hands in soapy water from my brother’s and father’s dishes. She didn’t turn around. She told me Auschwitz was a place where fascists killed people in the Second World War. There was no more explanation though I think she may have said something about corpses being the inevitable result of a capitalist society.

Slouched at the yellow and green laminated plastic table surrounded by shiny Mr. Clean counters I shivered. I knew my body responded to those bodies. To this day I walk around feeling that grainy black and white horror-movie picture of horror, large and small bones flung every which way.

In my twenties I brought my obsession with this image and others to therapy and my psychiatrist told me genocide is not uppermost in most people’s minds. But since that day at the kitchen-table genocide has been uppermost in mine. I’ve tried to work it through but it hasn’t worked

In my neighborhood growing up in Toronto—before my parents moved to get away from the influx of too many Jews—there was no synagogue. In the fall

during what I later learned were “the High Holidays” crooked old men in black appeared. After I found out I was somehow connected to them I decided to follow their trail. They had set up a place for prayer in a parking garage of one of the apartment buildings. I went to spy on the strange creatures and kneeling on the concrete next to the building peered down through a small open window into the surprisingly packed underground sanctuary. I listened to them droning wrapped closely in their prayer shawls. The end of these Holidays, Yom Kippur, was the best. I smelled the sweat and the smelling salts they used to keep from fainting as they fasted from sundown to sundown and begged forgiveness from a God. There was some excitement as one keeled over from a mixture of heat, hunger, and fervor, and had to be helped outside to get some less sanctified air.

I started to imagine what they looked like naked and saw their bodies as those skeletons in the newspaper. I began to sway in their rhythm and got teary. I breathed that pungent fragrance of their strange reality until dusk and they were purified and went home for dinner. I didn't feel clean after the experience. I made my way home after I'd scraped off tiny pebbles that had clung to my legs from kneeling so long. I wondered both how the old men were in any way connected to me and that I missed their mournful bodies the next year when my family moved further north beyond the last subway stop at Eglinton Station.

Our family has no pictures of relatives in long black kaftans and side-curls or even ones from Western Europe of stylishly dressed figures in the tailored suits. It figures there must have been some family left behind to be obliterated after my great-grandparents from Russia, Lithuania and Latvia made it through the Jewish quotas to Canada. There are no family stories of anyone before arrival in North America other than grandparents' sketchy fragment about untraceable Eastern European towns with Jews no longer left in them. I have no verifiable blood claim as a survivor or a child of survivors of the Holocaust.

But the images persisted. I found out about a Belgian, Didier Polleyfeyt, who wrote, we don't live in a time *after* Auschwitz, we live in the time *of* Auschwitz. Beryl Lang, a Holocaust scholar, said the evil that is Auschwitz is an historical phenomenon existing in time and space evolving in the present. Paul Ricoeur, a French philosopher, confirmed my knowing that evil is in process and evolving in its complexity. Auschwitz broke

the mold. Evil made a quantum leap. It founded a new paradigm. Human beings are operating in a transformed system.

When possible I go to the Jewish Film Festival. The movies start late—Jewish time they say—and I often have to stand in line in the rain even if I have a ticket. But they serve you snacks while you wait and everyone is very friendly. One time at the Bloor Cinema in Toronto I saw a movie, “The Grey Zone,” with a standing-room only audience including the second balcony. It was with an actor I adore, Harvey Keitel, who was the aboriginal in the movie “The Piano.” In “The Grey Zone” he is a Nazi commandant who gets a Jewish doctor to help with the evil Dr. Mengele's “scientific” experiments. The Jewish doctor could save his wife and child this way. The main plot was about the rebellion of some Jewish men—the Sonderkommando—who staffed the mass gassings. The Sonderkommando's job was to soothe the victims into undressing for the gas chambers by telling them they were going for a shower. Twenty minutes later this elite team removed the corpses and hosed the place down to remove the residue and the bodies. Then they slid the corpses into the ovens on iron pulleys to disappear in the fire. Their last task was to scrape out the ashes and put them in dump trucks to be buried in mass graves. In return the Sonderkommando lived a few months longer than other inmates under much better conditions: plenty to eat, beds, clothing. ... They held their minds together by forgetting their own and the victims' bodies quickly and by saying they didn't do the actual killing. They hadn't actually poured the Zyklon B pellets into the hole on the roof of the chamber and released the rat poison and closed the cover of the hole quickly to get maximum cost/benefit. The Nazis did that. This Sonderkommando crew described in the movie managed to rebel and blow up one of the gas chambers (with explosives smuggled to them from the women's camp) before they all were killed.

That year I felt I did a courageous act going to the Jewish Film Festival. Because of threats there was very visible security. It had been suggested to the film festival organizers that the word *Jewish* not be displayed on the marquee of the theater. The organizers said the off-duty policemen cost quite a bit of money and asked everyone to donate beyond the price of a ticket. I did.

When I read and write about what evokes Auschwitz, I am often stuck, paralyzed. I don't know what to do. My tongue cleaves to the roof of my mouth and my right hand seems to have lost its cunning—and

yet, I receive images and my body responds. What to do?
I witness and make art.

One cold November I felt I must visit Auschwitz
and went on a meditation retreat there in Poland. Here's
a poem I wrote about it:

I leave the rusty rail tracks
and enter the children's barrack
shivering inside on my knees
feel the molding concrete
smell the rotting wood
in shameful supplication

I beg

Please take me
Now
Let me die
No longer witness
amongst the tiny ghosts

No luck

I place the jellybeans and sparkles
my friend gave me for the journey
in the circle with other food, candles and toys
She knew I would need them in Poland

Without a sound
still shrieking
I try to mourn

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