

The Sur-Reality of Healing;

Work of Magic in Art

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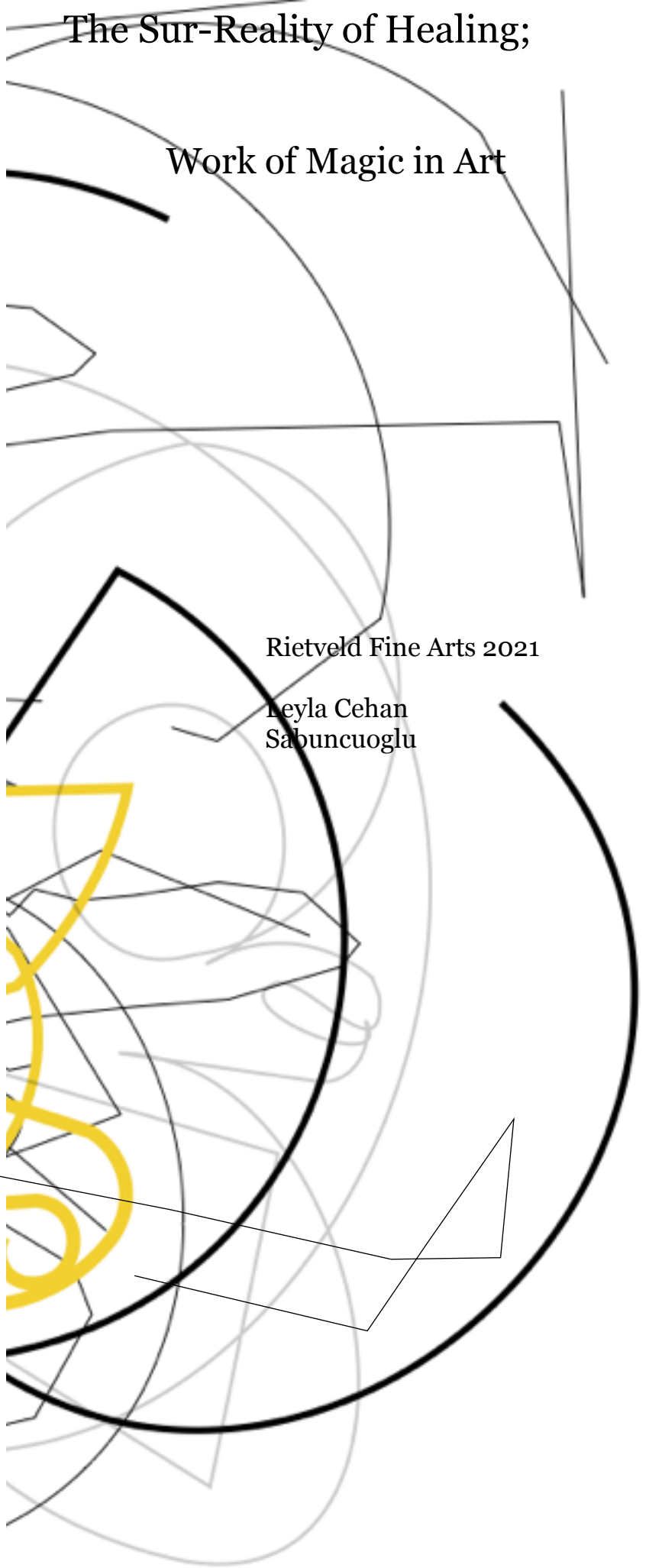


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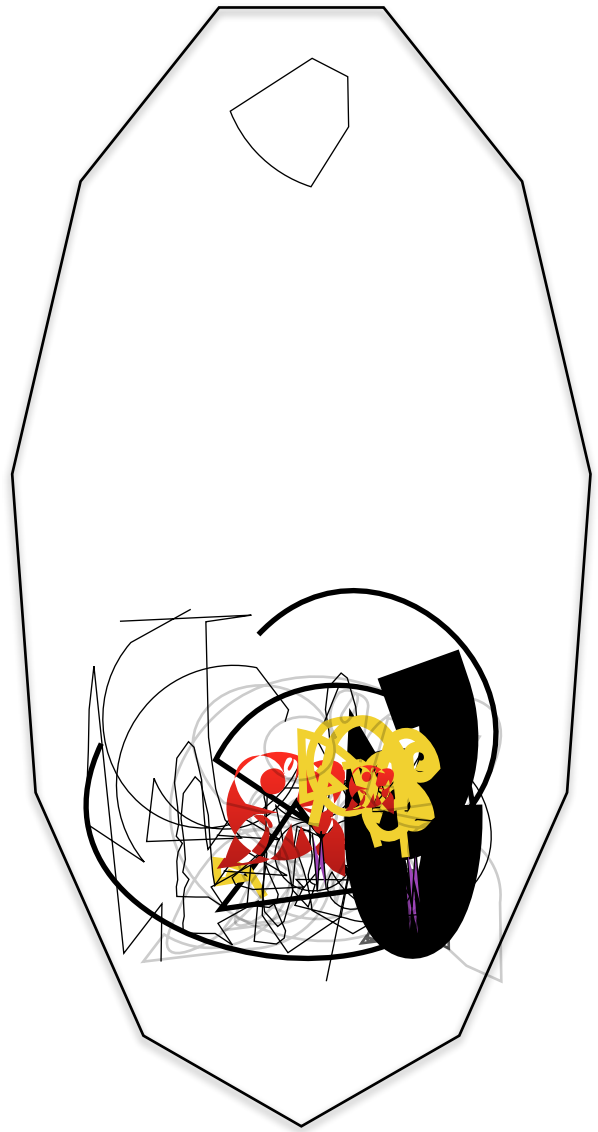
Introduction

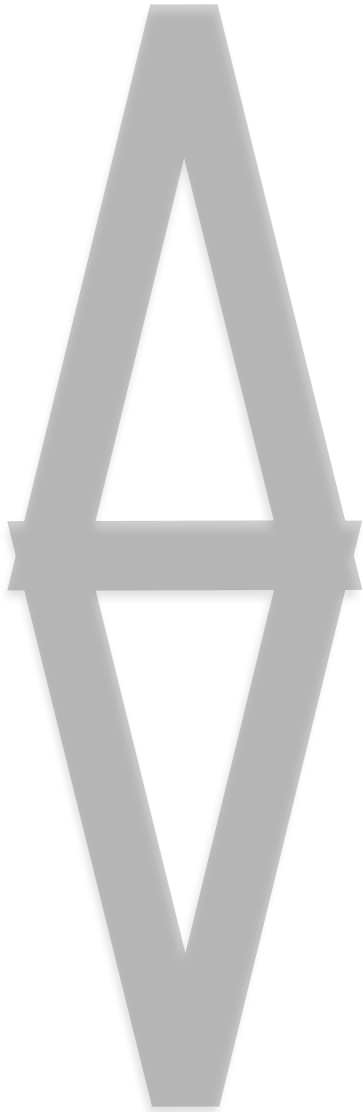
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Transformation and Time / Will and Time





form of collage, if one wants. In installations of the sounds, I look into how bodies travel through the fields which carry the sound, how attention moves through space-time, and test the limits of our making-meaning. In my heart of hearts, I hopelessly hope that this transformation of sound data and its perceptions has a healing effect upon the wounds we carry. In this thesis I will look into the process of healing the psyche through art-making and question the potential meanings and ways of healing or transforming psychic wounds. In part one I think around psychic wounds, and the meaning of healing. Then, I go into alchemy and its symbolisms around transformation, through the psychoanalytical translations of ancient alchemical texts. In the second part, I look into the practices and works of Leonora Carrington, Max Ernst, and Alejandro Jodorowsky, as examples of a certain kind of art-making, one which is much informed by alchemy, and carries intentions and possibilities of healing, both for the maker and the viewer.

Introduction

In the audio part of my practice I take recordings of real life; speech, conversation, machinery, animals, water etc., and collage them with surreal elements; such as oscillators, which make sound out of silence. This form of working helps me to understand myself and people better, to recreate affectations of lived moments, as well as having the power to create new moments which did not pre-exist the editing. It is a

Part One: On Wounds and Their Healing

In between multiple jobs and study, when I lift my head and look around, I see a lot of faces carrying wounds. And I don't claim to see them all. A bunch of stupid daily arguments arise from triggered scars. Many of us cannot connect and love — whatever that means. Many of us carry wounds of institutionalised/systemic racism, sexism and ableism, and group violence.

Even the most privileged carry wounds; of childhood trauma, stress, neglect, and not being seen. The human psyche is strong yet fragile, and we are all wounded; be it a lost limb, or a scratch that keeps itching. As we wear our masks and continue, we become our masks. It seems there is no other way.

The question of whether healing is possible or not, stands urgent. Healing, for me, means taking conscious action and building methods to keep in touch with the underlying wounds beneath our behavioural mechanisms and thought patterns; becoming-whole. If there is no such possibility and one can never become woundless, then maybe coping mechanisms and distractions are our only way to keep living with painful events and the wounds they cause. Whereas if there is hope in healing, these things would be standing in the way of one's transformation towards a more sustainable, desirable condition. Or a balance could be found in between. But before I can contemplate on the possibility of healing, I should lay the syntax in which I think of these things.

Any healing would take place in time. As well as any wounding. Basically, all events.

Therefore it is important to understand the workings/effects of time on the psyche. Gilles Deleuze mentions two kinds of time, or time perception in *The Logic of Sense*¹: Aion and Chronos. Aion is the fragmented, linear time, and Chronos is the spherical, ever-present time. Both are infinite. But Aion is

characterised by a split, it forever splits towards past and future, the present moment is the split. Chronos, on the other hand, is the ever-expanding present moment. How an event looks on time depends a lot on how we view time. The agent's position within time determines all directions as well as the shape and sensation of events. This recognition of the present self-position is crucial in order to process the past and heal into the future. Or maybe, heal into the past and transform the future. Same thing, differently put.

Now I want to identify two realms: the material and the psychic. But I cannot, because they intersect at each and every 'me'. The psyche expresses itself into matter, through actions of material bodies, creating events in which multiple dynamics are at play on multiple levels. Take a simple situation such as: Emily eating an apple. Emily's digestive system functions in an observable manner within matter and the apple's composition is totally changed, to the point that it loses the integrity of the apple completely. On the other hand, Emily's psychic composition evolves from desire and hunger to pleasure and satisfaction. These are also observable within matter through brain imaging technologies. But, if I then said that there is no such a thing as the psychic, I would be decreasing the experience of hunger to a few neurotransmitters in the brain.

Anyone who knows hunger can tell you otherwise. Psyche and matter are intertwined through all motion, which is,

¹ Deleuze, Gilles, Constantin V. Boundas, Mark Lester, and Charles J. Stivale, *Logic of Sense*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, an Imprint of Bloomsbury Plc, 2015)

in one way or another, a transformation. Healing is a positive transformation carried out by a sentient agent, a 'me'. A me at any given moment has a psychic and material composition. A physical wound would be a disturbed organic tissue, and it would in most cases already be in a healing process. As an open wound interacts with oxygen, our blood clots to stop us from bleeding, our immune system does its automatic function to clean the wound; it proliferates, fills the wound, and creates new healthy skin tissue. When an event disrupts your psychic composition at a given time; whether by ripping something off, damaging or distorting something, or intruding it with unwelcome material, the psychic tissue is wounded. Something is lost, a wound is imposed.

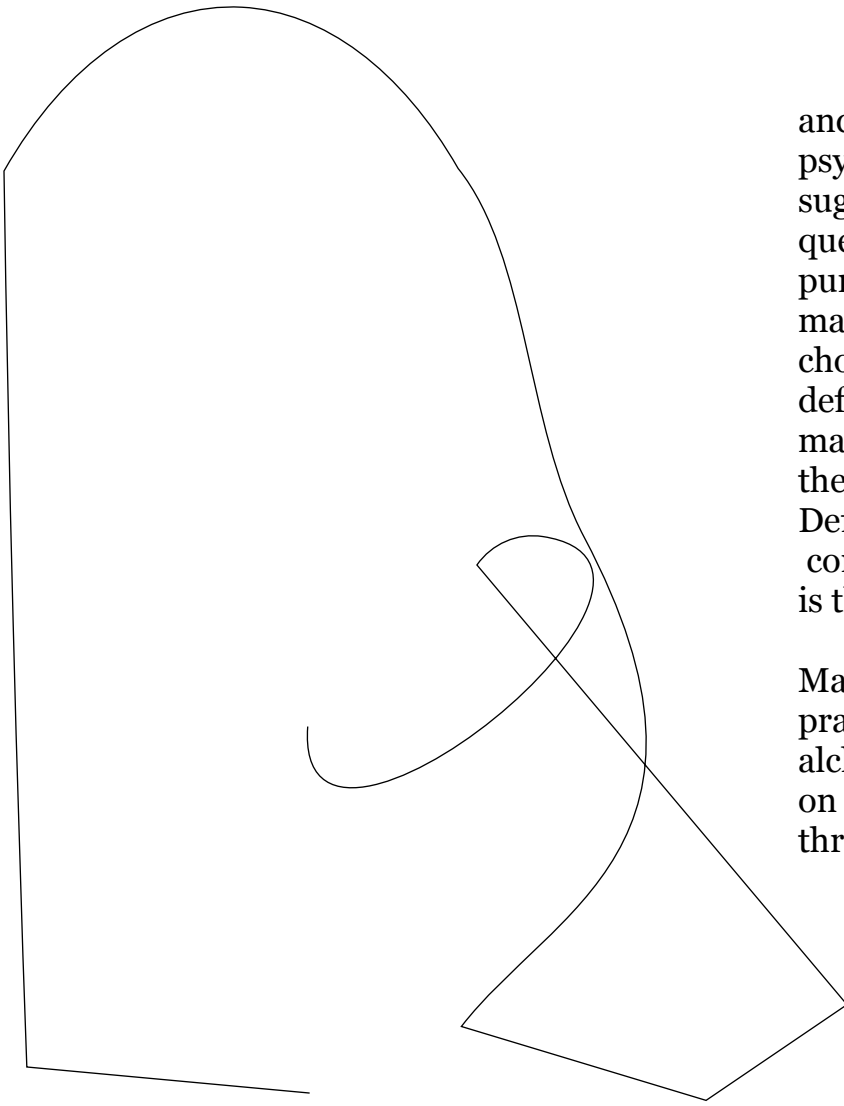
A scar is the trace; the emotions that still arise when reminded of an event that deeply hurt us, on a social or psychological level. But also, though maybe not the wound itself anymore, the echoes of the scar tissue are the mechanisms that work in our psyche, which was developed to protect the open wound at the time; the behaviours and ways of thinking which have been formed with fear or pain are not yet processed, healed. When it comes to genetically affected/determined mental imbalances like schizophrenia or bipolar, the wound itself might be long buried in matter. I prefer to think in terms of wound and scar, to describe that part of one which is not joyfully functional, rather than illness.

I myself have been diagnosed schizophrenic at one point and forcefully

institutionalised. Later on, a neuroscientist at a party told me that the whole illness stands in balance on top of a single wound. Intuitively, I believe that, or would like to, at least.

The definition of 'mental illness', as used at present, signifies a set of disrupting behaviours; which are symptoms rather than the wounds themselves. I believe these symptoms are mechanisms that the body/psyche built at a specific time to protect an open wound caused by an event. Or multiple wounds, caused by multiple events.

I hear myself entering an immense ocean of a topic, but at this very point I hope to focus, or re-focus a little. In this writing, I will ponder around the concept of psychological healing, but through the lenses of: First, what ancient alchemists thought of as transformation and healing. Second, I will walk with surrealist and occultist artists who practice their art as a form of magic, which heals and transforms. Eventually, I hope to deepen my understanding of what it means to heal as a being, and be legible to the reader as I go along.



and creates a balanced and chosen self. A psychoanalytical reading of alchemy suggests that as the king-sulphur and queen-mercury are separated and then purified to be conjoined again, the mature psyche is formed. This is a choosing of what is 'pure', one's own definition of 'essential' femininity and masculinity. Or a bringing together of the opposing poles of psyche, purified. Defining, purifying, and constructively conjoining poles into one complete self is the task alchemy carries.

Many individuals and societies have practiced and produced literature of alchemy. I have done most of my reading on the alchemy of Herbert Silberer through M.E Warlick. Warlick states:

Silberer incorporated the theories of both Freud and Jung in his alchemical equation. The masculine and feminine archetypes, the King and Queen of the alchemical process, represented the parents and the associated psychological turmoil of childhood that must be "destroyed" or overcome for the process of individuation to begin.... In the final phase, the alchemical Androgyne appeared as a fusion and transformation of the King and Queen.

To Silberer, this represented the mature, healed and balanced psyche but purged and resolved of all conflicts.²

Part Two: Roots in Alchemy

Some take alchemy as an early form of chemistry, some as a philosophy, some as pure charlatanism. In this chapter I want to approach this knowledge from the perspective close to that of psychoanalysis. Alchemy can be taken as the conscious participation of the agent in their growth; the transformation of life by the living. One rids themselves of models and patterns set in childhood,

² Warlick, M. E, *Max Ernst and Alchemy: A Magician in Search of Myth*, (Austin: University of Texas Press 2001), p. 45

What we know as alchemy today, derives from ancient metallurgy and a mixture of Egyptian-Hermetic, Greek/Hellenistic, Arabian, and Christian philosophies.³ It is impossible to get a direct and exact sense of what the work of it is. Partly because it is coated in symbolism, or it is built with a symbolic language and therefore is inseparable from its symbols. One symbolises many, where many symbolises one.

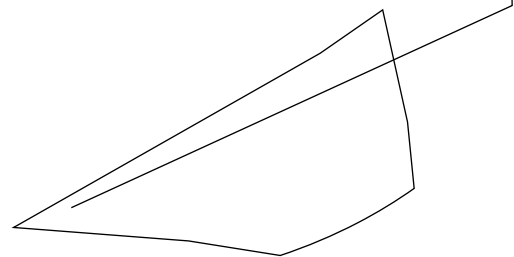
In the ancient era of alchemy, it was believed that metals had gross and fine aspects, or body and soul. First lead, then mercury was held to be the base material or soul of all metals. The idea was to fix this soul in some medium, to end up with a rather precious metal like gold. This medium was called the Philosopher's Stone. "Here came In the Idea of a universal medicine. Alchemy desired indeed to produce in the Philosopher's Stone a panacea that should free mankind of all sufferings and make men young."⁴

Silberer then emphasises that from this point on, in alchemical literature, philosophic mercury (*mercurius philosophorum*) no longer refers to the metal quicksilver, but to an imperceivable principle. A tincture of gold was added to the mixture in order for it to ferment, as the alchemists believed that gold brings more gold:

Furthermore, the tincturing matter was conceived as male and the matter to be colored as female. Keeping in view the symbol of the corn and seed, we see that the matter into which the seed was put becomes earth and mother, in which it will germinate in order to come to fruition.⁵

But again, the symbolism is not simple. For this female mercury to be fixed and fermented with male gold, there are other symbolic approaches which Silberer narrates, from philosophies of Ibn Sina and Paracelsus, such as "The principles mercury, sulphur and salt - their symbols are ☿, ♁ and ♀ -were frequently also called spirit, soul and body."⁶

Here salt becomes body, the element of fixedness, which Paracelsus adds to Ibn Sina's golden couple; mercury (essence of metal), and sulphur (metal's combustibility which allows for its transmutation), making them into spirit and soul, in an equation of three. Yet, in

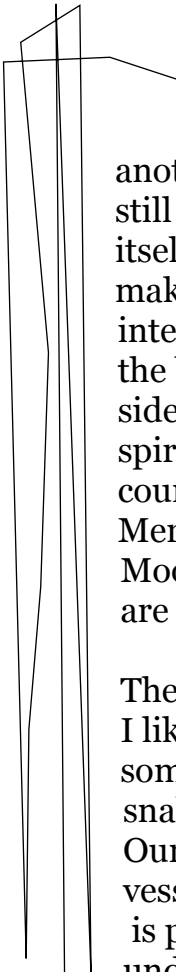


³ Silberer, Herbert, *Problems of Mysticism and Its Symbolism*, (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company 1917), p. 112

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113-114

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 115

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 117

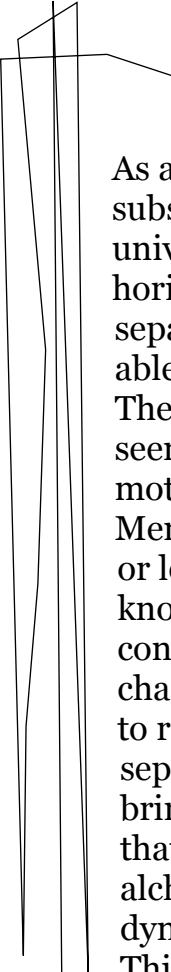


another equation of two, our mercury is still the bride and this time not gold itself but sulphur is the groom, in the making of baby gold. Then I must interpret it as an equation excluding the body; mercury being the feminine side of the psyche, which they called spirit, and sulphur being the male counterpart, which they called soul. Mercury and Sulphur. Eagle and Lion. Moon and Sun. Queen and King. These are other ways they named the poles.

There is yet another symbolism which I like best. The egg. The egg is somehow held parallel to the dragon or snake which bites its tail: the famed Ouroboros as the hermetically sealed vessel in which the Philosopher's Stone is produced, the great work is undertaken. But, if I'm allowed to confuse things further, the egg is also synonymous to the stone. That is to say that healing is cyclical. But in my opinion, there is an egg, circled by two snakes. One goes in an upward spiral and one down. And, somehow, they are parallel.

Now there is one more concept which changes meaning over time: prima materia. It means the cause of all objects, and is seen by some as taken out of mercury. But later it means the raw material from which the Philosopher's Stone is produced, in which case it is not described as the cause of the World but the World itself.

I believe there is not much difference between all of these definitions beyond a matter of perspective and perhaps the social circumstances of the times that the literature was produced.



As a matter of thought, this substance, is kind of the fabric of a universe made up of vertical and horizontal yarns. So we must separate the yarns first. To then be able to weave them to one's liking. The yarns of our universe are the seemingly linear and wavelike motions of space and time. Memory, including bodily 'storage' or learning of emotions are the knots of the fabric. Memory contains many 'now's which are all charged and linked. One can begin to recognise or name them, separate them. This process of bringing awareness to the entities that make us is the process of alchemy, in which the process is in dynamic equilibrium to the stone. This symbolism relates to the psyche and its processes. Such as the feelings and sensations of alienation and disintegration, and on the other hand sublimation and transcendence. Or better put, disidentification and identification. One can decide, with the help of the word 'I', what one is and what one is not.

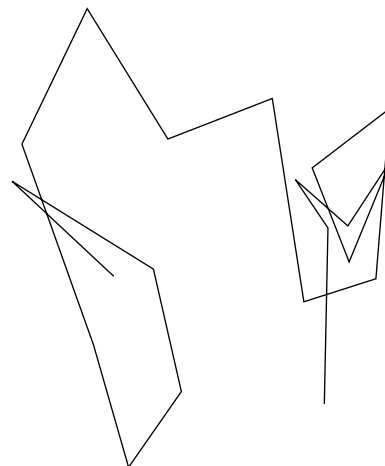
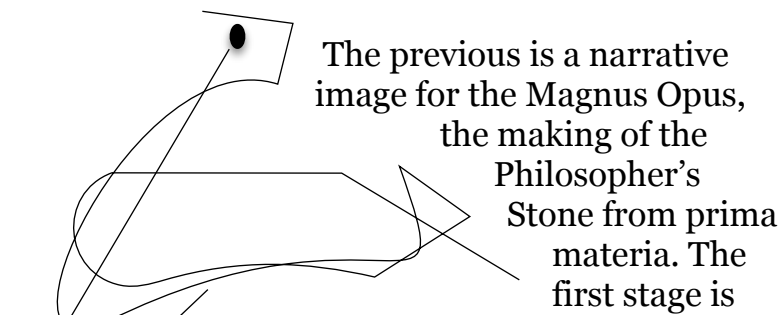




Fig.
1.3. Athanor and alchemical animals,
engraving from *Musaeum Hermeticum*

(Frankfurt: Lucas Jennis, 1625): 447.
Courtesy of Glasgow University Library,
Department of Special Collections.



The previous is a narrative image for the Magnus Opus, the making of the Philosopher's Stone from prima materia. The first stage is

Nigredo, represented by the crow, it is the blackening, or the rotting of a substance under a prolonged gentle moist heat in the furnace, with a cauldron within its tower to heat the vessel or the egg. Matter calcinates and dissolves, leading finally to the putrefaction and blackening. Imagine a substance first separating to its polarities. Then, there is an iridescent phase, represented by the peacock. The substance is thickened and turned to powder. It then goes through **Albedo**; whitening, represented by the swan. This is the purification of each polar aspect. Now that we have the feminine in one bowl and the masculine in another, they can be separately sublimated. Finally, the two opposites are conjoined, and this stage is called reddening, **Rubedo**, represented by the pelican/phoenix who mythically picks blood from his chest to feed his babies and who rises from fire. This is the stage where the polarities have purified and can conjoin to make a purer, better matter, from the primal matter.

This process of identifying different aspects of the self, purifying it from conflicts and trauma, and resynthesising one's being is very similar to any form of therapeutic practice now. From psychology, to self-help. Yet, what highly interests me is the vivid use of symbols

in describing processes, that the structure is built upon symbols. This frees the conscious mind from dealing with dull mottos of self help that at times renders one self-obsessed and actually blocks transformation by admitting it to a non-existent linearity and binary of good and bad.

Psychoanalysis works with the symbolic language of the unconscious, such as dreams. But the difference is that alchemical symbols are created in the conscious mind in order to change the subconscious workings. Whereas dream analysis takes dream images as symbols shown by our unconscious and analyses them consciously. Carl Jung writes:

Because there are innumerable things beyond the range of human understanding, we constantly use symbolic expressions and images when referring to them (ecclesiastical language in particular is full of symbols). But this conscious use of symbolism is only one aspect of a psychological fact of great importance: we also produce symbols unconsciously and spontaneously in our dreams.⁷

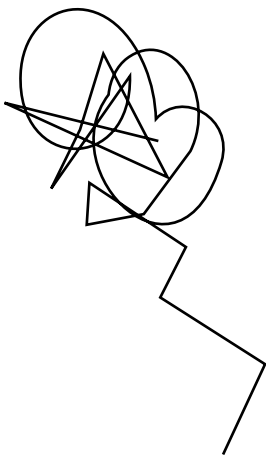
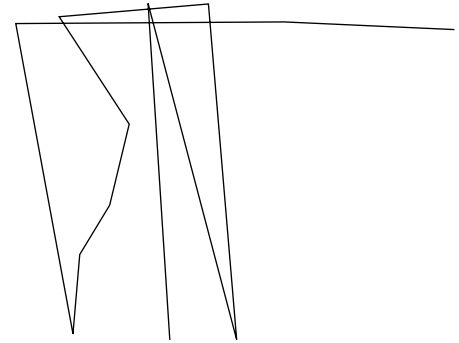
Freudian psychoanalysts used free association, where a patient rambles about their dream, to find out what the patient is avoiding, which is the unconscious complex behind the real meaning of the dream symbols. But Jung suggests that we should not fixate on the

⁷Jung, Carl, *The Undiscovered Self* (Princeton University Press, 1990) p. 419

complex, instead, one should keep the actual dream-image, or dream-text close, for the dream itself contains information about intuitions or emotions which were formerly unconscious.

Dreams can help us understand the greater picture of ourselves, not limited to our consciousness. Alchemical use of symbols, via artistic creation, can help us interfere with the unconscious and cure or aid the harmful or obstructive entities — the wounds in the unknown part of the psyche.

From here I want to sail to the art world, where alchemy and occultism, and the psychoanalytic take on these, have influenced multiple figures and groups, and their artistic activities.



Part Three: Surrealists and the Magical Healers

The word Surrealist usually refers to the group led by Andre Breton and the many artists associated with them. French Surrealists were active between World War I and II, starting in the 1920's. In this section I will look at a few of the artists openly associated to the movement, but moreover, I will consider other and more recent artists who are not part of this movement. Due to their practices, these artists are the magical healers who keep on nurturing the surrealist plant. Surrealism has in itself many discussions and positions, but what interests me here is their use of methods for healing the self. For this reason, I will focus on Max Ernst, Leonora Carrington, and the filmmaker Alejandro

Jodorowsky whose films made in the 1970s continued the saturated symbolism of the Surrealists in film.

Leonora Carrington described the canvas as an empty space, and a painting as a visual world, which is different from an intellectual game or language. This makes me think that the Surrealist painters dived into this other visual world through the machinic connection between the brush, paint, and hand, and could move things around in the psyche. If you accept that the outer conforms to the inner, you could move things around in the world. This is not to say that language cannot do that, but that painting can do it in a different way. I would like to discuss, in language, what painting can do.

Carrington was a strong and independent woman, who grew up in a

very rich family and went to art school. She met Max Ernst and they became lovers. She learned a lot from Ernst, but when she lost him, after he was taken by soldiers in September 1939 during the outbreak of World War II, she had to sell their house to pay the debts and leave. She was devastated. Due to her mental state, she was tricked by her family and locked up. Then, her world started to darken.

She always painted mythologies. She had her resources in many esoteric traditions, but she also created her own myths in her paintings, taking from her dreams. I see this as a way of processing her life, in light of magic. *Down Below*, 1940, is a painting she made after what was probably a very traumatic experience of being tied down naked for days in the asylum. Can the painting be a



way of processing this experience? And how? What do these characters, whom she seemingly paints herself into, do for her?

Let's take a look at *Down Below*, a very famed painting of her from her hospital period. I see in this rather dark painting a penetrating light, a resilience of imagination. In a sense, this painting is a self-portrait, with each figure standing for a side of Leonora, coming together in the scenery, gathering and creating Leonora. The second figure from the left, at the back, seems to me as if it could be her visible state at the time; an alienated, tortured woman, losing her grip on reality. Her gaze is twisted, focused to the void. Her own void maybe. Then my eyes slide to the third figure from the left. This one is looking more at us. I see this figure as the surrealist attitude in her, unbothered by the tragedy she's going through, posing in sheer absurdity. The beaked woman on the very left must be the magician, in the frame, yet looking at the frame, ready to transform. The vamp figure in the centre, wearing a horned mask and holding another patterned mask, is perhaps her ego at the time; chilled, rebellious and thoughtful, aware of her sexuality, strong. She seems to confide in the figure to her right, the surrealist attitude. Then there is the horse and the winged woman. To me, they resemble what might be happening in her rather higher realms, with her connection to the intuitive, dark feminine archetype. These two figures look less of flesh, more like hallucinations, not posing, but very present in the picture.

We do not see the figures interacting, but they are aware of each other's presence, composing something together. There, for the time being, facing us. They seem to hold a secret, or pieces of a secret. Although not every single one, as a group. They are also aware of our gaze. At this period Leonora is institutionalised and being observed under the cold gaze of psychiatrists; this painting stands as a response. A transformative response I believe. It harbours a mixture of conforming to the situation, rebellion, despair, resilience, and still joy in mystery. In their being together, the figures are performing a ritual, of transforming Leonora's pain, through the interaction with the viewer's gaze. The viewer was Leonora herself at a certain point. This comes to say that as she painted this, she engaged herself with these figures, her multiple selves, or layers of her state at the time. I believe there are seven entities in and of this painting; one being the painter's physical self, who then leaves to make space for the viewer. Once the painter is substituted by the viewer, a new infinite set of relations and interactions take place between the six and the one. In a sense the viewer can internalise the group, become a part of the group, and turn the relationship inside out. I find myself struggling to define in language how the magic of the painting precisely works.

From *Down Below*, which marks the period of war, institution and the loss of her lover Max Ernst, I want to move on to Ernst himself, another artist involved with Surrealism. He was Leonora's first

love and first mentor, a fellow artist, and an artist much more famed than her; in color of patriarchy, but also due to being an earlier artist and inventor of many techniques. Now, after they have both died and left an oeuvre behind, I view them as equals. But obviously, at the time, this was not the case.

Before I get into the works of Ernst, I want to briefly mention women in Surrealism and the figure of women artists. As some sources say, Surrealists were men who viewed women as muses, one even said women shouldn't make art, for they are art. But there were many key women in the movement, like Leonora Carrington and many others. Surrealists, in the end, did give the topic of binary relations some thought and some developed a more egalitarian approach to women and femaleness. Max Ernst was one of the latter I believe.

Ernst was highly into the mystical, like Carrington, from early childhood. His father was a painter, but of a very different style, and he received a diverse and rich education. I want to take a look at his practice through *Une Semaine de Bonte*⁸, an alchemical novel of prints. This book is a sort of magic item in my life. But also for other anonymous internet writers I came across, it is a book usually found and lost, and not bought. This is a non-objective observation and nothing more of course. Yet the book is magical in other ways. It

marks a journey of seven days of a week of mercy.

I was mesmerised when I first googled Max Ernst, as my art teacher suggested him to me at 16. Later my fascination grew as I experienced some of his work on a mushroomed trip to the Pompidou. Later when I attempted reading about him, although scholars wrote on his oeuvre extensively, I couldn't find much except some obscure website that stated he used his practice to heal himself psychologically. This possibility triggered me immensely.

In Warlick's words:

Silberer's discussion of Jung's theory of "introversion" had a particular relevance for Max Ernst following his return from the war. Emotional scars

from this experience were lingering described as "recurring moods of introversion and withdrawal alternated with the erstwhile animation and sparkle. As with his readings of Freud, Ernst transformed Silberer's discussions of parental conflict and adult resolution into visualizations of his own psychological evolution.⁹

Three years ago, I mysteriously found *Une Semaine de Bonte*, a series of

⁸ Ernst, Max, *Une Semaine de Bonte*, (...)

⁹ Warlick, M. E, *Max Ernst and Alchemy: A Magician in Search of Myth*, (Austin: University of Texas Press 2001), p. 46

collage books by Max Ernst. The book was originally published in five books in 1934. Each book has a cover page that states a day of the week, a publishing date, an element, an

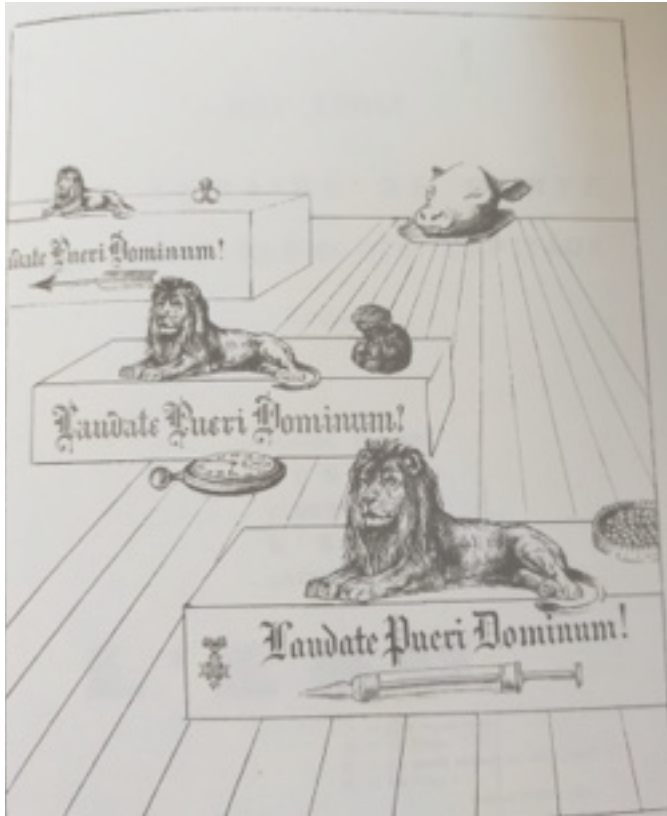
'example', and a quote. The first book is Sunday, second Monday, third Tuesday, fourth Wednesday, and the fifth and final book is Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. Each book contains a series of images made from clippings of old books and catalogues, and is painted on.

According to the introduction in the version I have, which is a single book; *Sunday* had a purple cover and was dated April 15, *Monday* was green and dated April 16, red covered *Tuesday* and blue *Wednesday* were both dated July 2, and the final book of *Thursday, Friday, Saturday* was yellow and dated December 1. Aside from that all the images are black and white as they are



cut-ups of old prints. The full title of the series translates as: *A Week of Mercy/ Goodness - or - Seven Deadly Elements*. We have one week, but fragmented into time. This is to show the non-linearity of time. The colours, may be an emotional association or a correspondence between the elements and chakras. That makes Sunday the crown chakra. Monday is the heart, Tuesday root, Wednesday throat, and the rest of the days the solar plexus. When thought of in relation to the elements assigned this makes little sense though, because although Tuesday and Monday sort of hold, and even Wednesday, with the element blood and the example Oedipus, can be read as a comment on human expression and it's inevitability to bring about complexes, yet Sunday is purple and has the example of the lion of Belfort, I give up on this argument.

The first book, *Sunday* is assigned the element of mud and the example of the lion of Belfort. All the preceding images somehow contain a lion. The lion is the male counterpart of the prima materia in alchemy. And mud is the prima materia in its first form. The Lion of Belfort is a patriotic statue made by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi after the French-Prussian war. I see here a humorous remark on patriarchy and patriotism. At the beginning of the chapter there is a quote by Alfred Jarry. The quote mentions the ermine. The ermine traditionally symbolises purity and moderation. In the collages, the lion is seen engaging in activities of little temperance. Jarry is the author of *Ubu Roi* and a pataphysician, a manifester of the absurd. Maybe Ernst, by collaging these symbols, is commenting on the



absurdity of the binary, from within the symbolic realm which needs a sort of binary to exist. Later the lion is committing murder and after that we only see the lion as a statue, a sketch. This points at the multiplicity of meanings the lion can hold.

I read this chapter on the primary level as a comment on the corruption of the dominating figures of the time. There are again, so many symbols. In the last image; an arrow, a needle, and a pocket watch lay beneath each of the three lion statues. Direction, injection, and time. Behind, is a sacrificed cow's head. This image points at the irrational system of monumentalising and sacrificial offering. The lion is a statue but it is also the first lion that is a real lion, and not a man-lion. The symbol is given back to nature.

The second book is *Monday*, its element is water, and its example is, again, water. The quote from Peret follows:

-What do you see?

-Water.

-What color is it?

-Water.

In the collages, water is seen penetrating through all interiors. This is the water of emotions, of memory, of illusion, and of intuition. Also in Yogic tradition, water is the element of the heart chakra and it governs emotions. The collages in this chapter depict various situations, usually between man and woman. Although a bit



binary, this chapter illustrates the fluid motion with which emotions transform situations. Water is seen inside and outside human figures, which is to say that emotions do not generate from within but are around and about, penetrating and being penetrated.

The third book, *Tuesday*, is assigned the element fire, and its example is the heart of the dragon. At the heart of the dragon are exchanges, whispers, and deals made out of sight. The fire dances in a most subtle manner and makes motion go on. Above all there is humour in these collages. Humour pointing at the tragicomedy of life. The dragon, or the snake, as I mentioned in the part of alchemy, is interchangeable with the egg. It's heart? A mystery. Fire, heats up the cauldron. The colour of *Tuesday* is red... I must admit my confusion, but this is a satisfying confusion for it only allows multiple meanings and connections to be made.

The fourth book is *Wednesday*, blood. The example is Oedipus. A funny detail in this image is that we see the fur of the ermine, maybe, on the right image, hanging on the wall. Sunday lingers into Wednesday. A bird headed man is coming into a room where a girl suggestively tries to conceal something, a dead man? And on the left is a bird-headed woman with a whip, and a boy is trying to stop her from whipping him, but they don't look all so serious.



Somehow the two images seem mirrored by our gaze.

What Ernst does in the making of these images is portray various exchanges and situations, but by adding symbolic elements he transforms them. It is possible to argue that by bringing new and surreal perspectives into interactions, one can heal the wholeness which such situations and interactions divide in 'reality'. Certain human schemes can be reinterpreted, sublimated. Ernst must have had his own process of healing while making this series: a deconstruction and



reconstruction of images. But it is not only him who benefits from the created images. The viewer is allowed to experience the image and interpret it according to their own perspective; be puzzled, and gain new perspective in the process of looking. In fact, it is not a deciphering that is expected of the spectator of surrealism. It is this floating about, opening new windows in the psyche, and maybe closing some. It is the suggestion of infinite possibilities, all existing simultaneously, separately, and in an ever expanding relativity. The viewer is invited to a journey of free association, and, at their own will, can synthesise or analyse the meanings which fold and unfold. Meaning is not omitted, but our rational faculty is

invited, not so gently, to do some stretching.

I apologise to Ernst for omitting the yellow chapters and a thousand other possibilities his collages offer,

but I must move on now to Alejandro Jodorowsky. Jodorowsky is a renowned film director, actor, and poet. His films *El Topo* and *The Holy Mountain* are vibrant with surreal imagery and poetic language. He is also the inventor of Psychomagic.

Jodorowsky is interesting because he embraces poetry as a healing act and moves towards theatre and acting,

carrying poetry into the different durational realm of movies. His film *The Holy Mountain* is a psychedelic waterfall of images, which ends with a twist that speaks a philosophy of images. The camera zooms out, and the alchemist says “We are only images”. Right before that there is a violent series of scenes just before the peak. Pain, torture, violence, and disgust are portrayed as the final step before the comical enlightenment. There is also a quite horrific androgynous figure, who represents the ‘perfect’ ideal of the alchemical androgyne, but it is quite a scene to look at.

But before that, there is a place called Lotus Island. There they have a Pantheon Bar, where enlightenment is in service of entertainment. There they do drugs and they cross the mountain horizontally. A very well crafted theme; there was corruption, as well as ambition.

When I think of power I think of corruption too, regarding the times we live in and the history we know of. Power in essence exists in many forms: of attention, of love, of presence, of energy, of knowledge, of status, money, and more. In any form, power yields to a field and a system, upon which we all are points, organs, parts. We engage in various dynamics through which power flows. Body, as the intersection of

matter and psyche, becomes the field. Power is felt in intensities. When one’s sense of self experiences ‘power’ they tend to cling to it. This corrupts the power into an all consuming monster, or makes the person into a comical tyrant.

Again, Jodorowsky’s film, like Ernst’s collages, can be read in multiple manners. I find Lotus Island to be a lovely illustration of the art world today per se. Because arrogance, corruption, bragging, pretension, yet a lighthearted cuteness is present. But our characters are not ending up on Lotus Island. They run away from there and go through the torturous peak. When on top, they see a round table with nine fake figures; the figures that the alchemist said were ruling the world. The alchemist lied to them. There is no one ruling the world. Then they sit there. But then, again, surprise. The fourth wall breaks. The alchemist goes “Camera! Zoom out!”. The audience is directly addressed and Jodorowsky gives his speech about the world being but images. Yet he does not say it is meaningless. Only that there are a multiplicity of meanings and perspectives one can choose from, and that it is beautiful.

In his earlier film *El Topo*, we witness the main character on a quest to fight four great gunmen in a desert full of esoteric items. Each of these gunmen are peculiar characters with their own adornments and private lifestyles. They are all portrayed as virtuous and

enlightened men, and although our character is also portrayed virtuous, he cheats all of these superior gunmen in order to win, and he does. Before he embarks on this quest though, the movie starts with him bringing a kid into the desert on a black horse, he tells the kid to bury his mother's picture and his first toy. Now that he is seven he is a man, announces the man. Later we see a village full of dead people. Our character



and the kid trace the massacre back to the Colonel, a corrupted figure. The Mole (our character) castrates him, takes his woman on her demand, but leaves the kid to his man. Like this and so forth, each scene is set as a poetic ritual, but he performs so many rituals that in the end there is not a single goal. All is an ode to the beauty and complexity of life. I see Jodorowsky's films as humorous attempts at enlightening and healing the viewer and himself.

Psychomagic is Jodorowsky's magical therapy technique, which he talks about in the book titled *Psychomagic*. The book includes a part of

Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro's speech, written three years before the Surrealist manifesto:

Apart from the grammatical meaning of language, there is

another magical meaning, which is the only one that interests us . . .

The poet creates, outside of the world which exists, a world which should exist . . .

The value of the language of poetry comes directly from its separation from spoken language . . .

Language converts itself in a ceremony of conjuring and presents itself in the luminosity of its initial nakedness, unconnected from all prefigured conventional dress.

Poetry, the ultimate horizon, is, at the same time, the edge where the extremes rejoin, where there is neither contradiction nor doubt.

Reaching this last border, the usual sequence of the phenomena breaks its logic, and on the other hand, there where the land of the poet begins, the chain is soldered together in a new logic. The poet takes you by the hand to drive you

closer to that last frontier, above the point on the great pyramid, toward that field which extends beyond what is true and false, beyond life and death, beyond space and time, beyond reason and fantasy, beyond spirit and matter . . .
 There is, in his throat, an unquenchable inferno.¹⁰

This passage beautifully demonstrates the healing possibility of poetry, and the corruptible power of language. Later Jodorowsky talks of the poetic acts he practiced with his friends, like daily performance pieces. He describes these acts that can take a therapeutic form, when intended to create positive change. He compares this with some violent poetic acts, and eventually associates the poetic act more with the positive ritual. He references Breton's idea of going out with revolvers, which becomes terror, arguably not poetry. Although the poetic act does not need to serve an intention, it needs to be beautiful in itself. He exemplifies this with a haiku written by a student and corrected by a master.

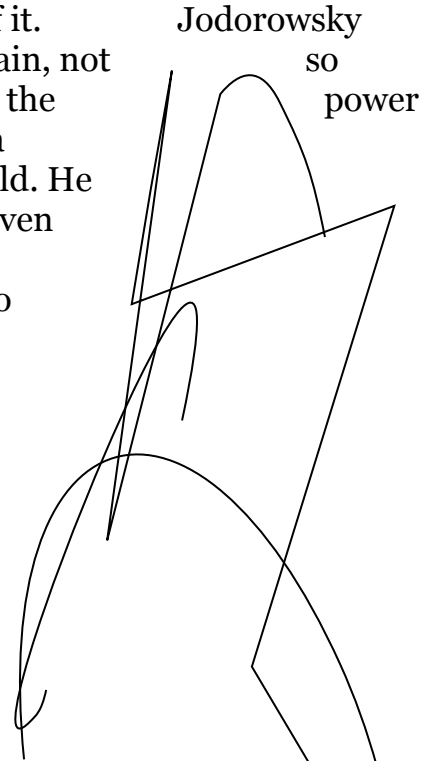
A butterfly:
 Take away the wings
 and it turns into a pepper!

was corrected into

A pepper:
 add wings
 and it turns into a butterfly!

In my opinion a pepper is not less positive than a butterfly. It depends on

what context you encounter one or the other. A butterfly in my fridge would not be nice. Or if the pepper in my curry turned into a butterfly... But this approach of constructive poetry is a way for language to take social responsibility and be put into healing use. The same can be applied to the curation of art pieces or the making of collages. Contextualisation of a word or an actual object adds meaning and thus power to the motion of it. Jodorowsky invites us, again, not gently, to put the in service of a beautiful world. He transforms, even violence and suffering, into humour, into beauty.



Transformation and Time / Will and Time.

I think the human psyche transforms in a way that it hides from itself in the curves and folds of time.

Here I mean an internal time, felt time. This time, we feel with every blink and every pulse. Listening to this time is connecting with time. Because the inner

¹⁰ Jodorowsky, Alejandro, *Psychomagic, The Transformative Power of Shamanic Psychotherapy*, p. 27

time is the immersion of the self in the super complex of all encompassing time.

There are multiple things happening on multiple levels. These levels are known or perceptible to us in forms of verbal thoughts, perceptions, images, sensations, emotions, and states. It is a vast origami project. And our selves are within these folds. It is impossible to spot the totality of the self, by any given time-bound self.

Me at the moment, the me here cannot grasp me totally. On the other hand, it (me) can argue that in the course of any time-bound event, there is not another totality but itself. This is just to say that me is a motion, it changes. They change themselves, the 'me's. And all of this happens in the larger sense of time. The smaller sense of time is the link to it, the larger time.

In opposition to my thesis, I hold the idea that it is not possible to consciously change oneself, or to heal oneself. Here you witness my contradiction or loop. I cannot overcome it, so I shall carry two opposing truths. One: nothing changes. Two: everything changes.

One: nothing heals, all is corrupted.
Two: all is healing.

Through the experiences that we go through, we learn. We learn to cope. One mechanism for coping is burial. We bury pain. We continue.

Healing suggests a betterment. A becoming healthy of what was sick or harmed. There is not a general better or worse, or a sick or healthy but only

individual damages that create other imbalances in the systems that we are. It is possible to perceive a damage as a change. It is possible to see a change as a healing. Since there are individual hurts, we still can talk about healing, a betterment of a certain mechanism or process taking place in the psyche. Although it is difficult to find the generator of the problem when all other organisms inside and outside are interconnected but at the core — if there is a core — every healing is a change. Even actual scar tissue heals by creating new skin and tissue. And how does change come about?

What are the conditions for change and how does a will take place in change of the self?

The only possible thing is to be changed by what comes about. A yoga teacher, Gregory Lennon, once told the class, quoting from where I do not remember: “Real listening is allowing oneself to be changed by what is heard.” Learning is different from a conscious learning. The subconscious processing of events leads to a pattern learning. We develop reactions to certain things in the light of previous living of actions and reactions. We learn to process loss, rejection, pain, exchanges, and events of all kinds. In time these patterns can become obsolete and not serve us well anymore, and on the contrary, harm us. Then we need to take a conscious effort to switch these mechanisms, to better adapt them, to heal that part of us that is harmed and harming us. We have to face the pain we buried. We have to listen.

I repeat here, change takes place in time. A will has to insert conscious action,

resistance, and awareness, as well as repetition into time. But maybe the most important: patience. Patience waits patiently to be learned.

What is patience?

My ex-boyfriend spoke French and he had made the wordplay with patience as “Peace Science”. I found this very funny. This influenced my vision of the art-making process. In my years in the Rietveld, or just in life, I am learning to be patient with myself, patient with the process, and patient with the work, which are all maybe one and the same. In English, patient also has another meaning. Like: a mental patient, which I have also experienced. This is a very different, but simultaneously not so different form of patience. My experiences at mental institutions and my experiences in the Rietveld, at this point in time, leave me with the following observations:

- Current institutional methods undermine the use of symbols, and misunderstand the meaning of a patient. It is: “one that is patient, one who bears with time”.
- When pain infiltrates itself into time, one needs resources of love to heal the psyche.
- Sleep is healing. We sleep over a long day and wake up new. In sleep our cells repair and reproduce more than when awake. Maybe dreams are a reflection of that physical healing and digestion process.
- Art-making proves a tool of transformation. But even that is often corrupted. Because art always has material. Even non-material art has psychic material. Thus matter is

doomed by motion, or matter is blessed with motion. Maybe the whole of life is a wound, and once healed, motion will cease to exist. Or maybe, not. Probably not.

- Art-making is not creation, but transformation. Nothing is original. Just like there is no original wound, but woundings and healings on multiple levels.
- Multiple layers of knowing contain multiple symbols and things are interlaced beautifully beyond our grasp. Healing is always a possibility.

My conclusion is that there are no conclusions and that it is all an ongoing process. It is a challenge to stay with words with positive connotations, such as healing, and although sometimes it feels like nothing is better or worse, I must be taking that challenge, to decide, really.

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