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**The Hong Kong Polytechnic University**

**Department of Applied Social Sciences**

**In Search of Community Performance through the Arts**  
- an alternative journey into the landscape of the body

**HO YING FUNG**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

September 2008

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HO Ying Fung

**To my Son**

## Abstract

The thesis is an *abstract* of the reality as I once perceived. It is *the* reality-in-the-making through the act of writing, an *action* research beyond practice and thinking. It *IS* the ultimate “state-of-affair” on “word-chasing,” interweaving hypothesis, stories, memory, ad hoc events, images, learnt facts, unspecified assumptions, observations, beliefs, values, conventions, taboos, attitudes and so on and so forth, re-contextualizing reality of the bodily community and its performances as unfolded through the arts from word to word and beyond, hoping to provide alternative insight for teachers and social workers in moments at (or before) work.

This thesis is written in a *foreign* language, formulated by a man grown up confusedly in a land colonized, half Cantonese, half English, forever seeking his innately Chinese presence under the roofs of social institutions shaped by colonial frameworks. Such “foreignness” has transformed the writing in the form of a surgical knife, ripping open the colonized carcass in the process of making philosophical acquisition, as if, in Chomsky’s words, “a kind of discovery procedure” (*On Language*, 2007:131), re-constituting the personal constructs once endeavored and the best possible transformation that are found essential or critical to the constantly refinable way of living-to-be. Thus, the act of writing, often with units breaking down into fragments, never intends to normalize the discourse but rather to seek alternative landings that could best reflect the findings unveiled in the process of wordplay – a theatricalized contemplation beyond surface dreams, structures and living conditions once encountered (and encountering still), like making mobilizing shift, forever re-inventing alternative principles for thought-in-the-making along the stream of consciousness made available or affected at times, with priori often ambiguous and inconclusive. The re-mapping of rules and schemas, including ad hoc approximations, would become part of the transformational rules constantly re-defined (or compromised) from chapter

to chapter, re-examining viewpoints passed on or left undiscovered long buried in the landscape of an individual body-mind.

As the reader of living experiences, I am making this particular thesis as a specific time journey hoping to generate alternative dialogues with readers, as another individual creative counterpart, through ecological self-play, an indivisible process in pursuing the next possible resolution to be for the often enigmatic individual (pre-)conditions. Therefore, it is *a* thesis conceptualized through the known as well as the unknown or yet to-be-known, hoping to remap a possible dream-world through the arts in order to make sense out of the *real* world we are living in or perceiving at times, which could, subsequently, become alternative resources for better reflection among human services providers, especially those in the education and social services professions.

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As a major part of the social art practice explored in the thesis is drawn from experiences in Theatre Fanatico's *Drumming Voices Creative Workshop*, *Remapping Hong Kong Community Arts Project* and the tutorial workshops I have been holding for Dr. Ho Kwok Leung's course on *Contemporary Social Issues*, I am truly grateful to the trust of Dr. Ho, the supervisor-in-chief for the studies, and the special contributions from all the participating bodies, including students, parents, teachers, artists, and social workers for their inspiring *performances* and *findings* provided thereof throughout the research period.

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*Special note:* All names of family members and related participating bodies are not real for confidentiality. They would either be in pseudo names or initials as dedicated.



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## Introduction: A Sketch of the Vinculum

I see the monuments  
of ancient broken stone,  
but if I touch  
the stone scar  
your body responds to me,  
my finger recognize  
suddenly, shivering,  
your warm sweetness.

— *The Earth*, Pablo Neruda

### ***Beginning with the Phenomenological writing self...***

I. Thinking. Time. Ticking. Beginning – to write! My forearms. Suddenly feel like a pair of rhizome<sup>1</sup>, lying horizontally against the computer keyboard, exerting their *roots* into the “mud of thought,” and sending up shoots through the monitor, “surveying, mapping, even realms that are yet to come” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987:5) ...

I. The performing body. Writing. A matter-producing action (Cheng, 2002:69). Like assembling fragmented thoughts and personal stories. Interacting. Self-reflecting. Against meta-narratives.<sup>2</sup> With strata of materials, naturally in me, or artificially formulated by others, validating segments or intensities, with historicity retrieved through reconstruction and selection. Fingers. As if, measuring the living units. Case by case. Minute by minute. Constituting the lines of thought through the very act of writing motion. All these seem distantly echoing Deleuze & Guattari’s perception of writing. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987:3-4) It becomes the most immediate phenomenon

of the self-being. Moving the body-mind through keypunching. With ever-changing rhythm, reflecting the tempo of voices and images drifting in and out of the interiority and exteriority of the lived/living body. Writing literally means a particular act of living, by choice, through specific moments in particular space.

I. Here forth. In search of the form and body of this particular paper. Through stream of consciousness, I ride on the multiplicity of measurable lines of words, making special contact with the self through immeasurable thoughts. **Writing becomes *the method***. Also an art. The ultimate ground of a phenomenology of art is experience.<sup>3</sup> **And art, as experience** (Dewey, 2005), **becomes my fundamental frameworks in re-building thoughts and perception**. Through special windows. Looking. Searching. Researching. Collating. Dividing. Combining. Mixing. Editing. Re-editing. Fixing. Framing. Analyzing. Philosophizing. Spacing. Timing. Trailing. Drifting. Selecting. Idealizing. Counting. Sculpturing. Reflecting. Theorizing. Through abstract mind games. Making *dialogues* with the self. Re-emerging the sense of community woven beyond the vinculum of bodily system. **It is often through the most mundane encounters and small stories of daily living** (Bamberg, 2004b & 2004c) **that draw my special attention**. No experimental or institutionalized settings. Away from empirical domain. Writing means allowing narrativity to go beyond talk. Touching silence – the non-verbal aspects of everyday interactions!

Writing becomes a process of cognizing the self! And so are the other matters and other minds that keep drifting around. “Constructing meanings not just by taking information in, but also working it over, and ‘putting it out’ (in verbal and non-verbal

actions), [allowing the self] as central organizing apparatus, the mind, simultaneously as the producer and interpreter of meaning entities.” (Ibid, 2004b) The alphabet becomes chess pieces, formulating strategies...

It is more than the finger exercises...

***The act of writing*<sup>4</sup> is in itself the dimension of discovery.** In Deleuze and Guattari’s terms, writings are like “lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories; but also lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification...with lines and measurable speeds, constitutes an *assemblage*.” (1987:3-4) It is an act leading to a series of alternative act of thought and selectivity. **Writing literally becomes a way of thinking and process of mediating, echoing the Chandler media theory approach (1995), making meanings and connections of experiences given shapes by all kinds of media, in the context of “a phenomenology of human-machine relations,” (Ihde, 1979) through newly devised or selective frameworks to mediate the act of writing in search of self-revitalizing perception.** It is also an act of *bricolage*, as suggested by Lévi-Strauss, like a “dialogue with the materials and means of execution” (1974, p. 29) in the process of creating something that “speaks” not only with things but also through the medium of things (Ibid, 21). **This very act of writing is in fact being carried along further on and transformed into *theatrical framework* (Goffman, 1986:123-155), flowing in and out of the bloodline of creativity I have been engaging in the past 30 years working in theatre to re-discover alternative cross-disciplinary acts in studying the innovation of self, an important foundation in bettering community performance.** Thus, the writing, as the foundation of my research, would

present “an *insurgent performance*, which necessarily implicates me, the writer/agent, in the theatrical matrix of time-space-action-performer-spectator.” (Cheng, 2002:69) Echoing the substances and processes taken in my research, I hereby follow that particular spirit in art and theatre, theatrically searching for the final stage of thoughts and findings...

Each word. Each line. Bound to the language of things<sup>5</sup>. Each moment. Accidentally, or purposefully, (co-)related to objects. With names. Signs of things. Agreed by some convention<sup>6</sup>. Each thing. By origin embracing no word<sup>7</sup>. Yet word. Each bearing image(s)/mark(s) of perception/thought. Each becomes a small *monument*<sup>8</sup> in life. Moving in segments. “Self-constructing, self-effacing, self-extending space according to the infinity of its production.”<sup>9</sup> *Words. Become the actors. And also spectators. Creating a community of play.*<sup>10</sup> Self-transforming in the process. This is an *action* research through these living theatrical segments, with voices uttered in words and non-words, bearing shapes metamorphosing through lines, planes, circles, pauses, spaces, repetitions, or intercutting spheres of bodily motions and experiences. Each paragraphs. Composing. Or de-composing thoughts and stories (including segments where one gets stuck with actions going nowhere). Surfing through the ever-moving totality of spacetime. Retrieving fragments of re-discoveries between then and now...

It is December 31, 2005 and the time is 0655 (Hong Kong time) as I start keying this line of English alphabets onto my computer. What specified above might be a time of no significance, only measures depicted for social reference to history as human enjoys recording, according to the quantified time conception translated from the Gregorian calendar. Not mentioning its relative meaning in the chronology of my time lived, i.e. among the 17,625



days with approximately over 1,827 million heart beats, which keep counting, or its insignificance in terms of light years the solar system has been surviving, since I was born in the ninth month of the year 1957 till this very moment, the time as perceived in units can also be seen as coherent indicator to the ever-needed-tuning and re-conditioning system of my getting-rusty body clock, at least so it seems to me according to my present presumptuous subjective conception of time. While the numbers may signify, through quantification, the intervals of events interrelating my past, the present and the time to come, the measurement beyond can underline more than simply a conceptual numeralized framework in comprehending the accumulative and multitude of diverse experience and senses my body has taken into account, as the strength of heart beat signifying my time lived and to live. The ever-changing condition of my body has always been leaving me marks of monuments and scars for thoughts, tying up a multi-layered system of vinculum along veins and tissues built, lived or grown stagnated within my body. They talk to me, and I them, as if constantly contemplating from one to the other. They constantly intervene my system, plus the ancient voices keep yielding to the community from within, “My life time is much more than I think to be.”

It is dawn. A shaft of pale blue light is gently washing the dusty window. And the dust, or some would prefer to say dirt, responds, with tiny dotted reflection, coated the window glass with a sheet of misty white. I sit at the center of my study, with the left hand holding a cup of warm water. I enjoy this moment, gingerly breathing the surrounding into me. It moves me. These things. This space. This time. This light. This gentle coolness in temperature. My body responds, especially the aching muscles soothing up along my deep breath. I drink. My body responds too, feeling the stream of warmth making its own time channel into the stomach. The actions derived from these estimated 100,000 billion body cells seem playing me a morning song, celebrating the beginning of yet another new journey in time. Its melody surfs through the body systems, gliding along bones, organs, glands and tissues, unknotting my head, neck, limbs, through the thoracic inlet to the depth of the diaphragm, and beyond the brim of my pelvis. It is not the first time dawning on me the magic of such tiny living moments, be they happen from outside in or inside out. They have been there helping me invent new score for life. Time. Affects me deeply. People say it is a sign of age. I would rather say it is, and always has been, a passage of life. Such daily living phenomena commonly denoted as ‘nothing usual’ have always served me well. They are the basis of my observations. And such acute sensitivity to tiny things has made up the major reservoir of resources in

creativity, and also ‘make-beliefs,’ of my life. It is the tool of my work, not only as a theatre-maker, also a teacher as well as a social being... <sup>11</sup>

As a theatre-maker, I work with hundreds of stories relating to human conditions. Through specific reflections of time, space, light, texts, sound and images, a moving vignette of human silhouettes evolving in languages, movements and signs driven and articulated through living bodies and surrounding objects would be found relatively hanging or suspended in, as Albert Einstein’s wording, *spacetime* (1916). All these things have a *life* of their own, generating in me some unusual ideas and possibilities of dialogues among humans/objects-in-the-world. As a teacher, it is often these ‘common’ physical phenomena that inspire me to observe the needs of students, quivering from moving bodies biologically, psychologically, socially, politically, ethically, and personally, making specific transformation from one moment to another, and above all, one generation to another. As a social being, I see how much loss and gain the body attained through the obsession of organizing tasks and events in different place and time, capitalistically driven, or consumed, by a market economy, often ignoring the recognition of these tiny existing phenomena that keep altering our state of consciousness. Through the searching of the significance in the chronology, periodization and interpretation of an individual body time and history often inspire me to review the meaning of being human. What more would I know than the body of my own, its experience, and lived time? The paradox is: **if I am to leave my body behind, what is left in ‘ME’ then? Could I talk about my consciousness without the presence of my body?** What remains to be most intriguing question is: ever since *ancient stones* left their marks in the backbone of my DNA, how have I come to

realize the ultimate life span of human evolution dwelled upon me as a being (or at least till now), or as ‘a surviving machine’<sup>12</sup>, in the words of biologist Richard Dawkins, at this age of postmodernity, when so popularly believed now, that ‘globalization,’ ‘consumerism,’ the ‘fragmentation of authority’ and the ‘commoditization of knowledge,’ with their ever-trivial-sounding intellectual connotations often proved to be too sophisticated for common folk, have all placed great effect on our body-mind, whether they are there at will or not? **I can only write according to the perceived limited experiences as lived (and still living) within my bodily system, which is my *first*, and *most immediate*, context in making any observation or judgment over people and things around me. In other words, it is through this *first-tiered experience* I take it on as the working foundation of my body-mind.**

Two lines of an old song written by American pop singer Carole King suddenly dawns on my consciousness with a different dimension: *I feel the Earth move under my feet. I feel the sky tumbling down.*<sup>13</sup> As I meditate, doing my *qi gung*, i.e. breathing exercise along the meridians of my body, I can feel the Earth, the Sky, and me realigning together as a connecting whole, like a tree, with roots under and branches above, rooting down to earth and stretching open to the Sun. I start wondering how disintegrated my body has become. Drowning from the whirlpool of intelligence compartmentalized, I often find various parts of my body unhooked and their needed linkages lost, with the lymphatic system desperately looking, not only for alternative intelligent and emotional outlet, but also for spiritual and bodily relief from the impact of new media, information and cybernetic technologies that have drastically overtaken

the natural rhythm of being. Sky, Earth and Human! This ancient Chinese interpretation of the universe, back-dated as early as Laozi's *Dao Te Ching*, signifies the central spine of *qi*, which is reviewed as our inner biological energy flow in contemporary eyes, is seeking its new route inside the postmodern body frame, searching for an alternative landscape to free the body from being totally consumed by a material-driven social engine. Reviewing the community built within the body system seems to be drawing the center of my attention in the past ten to fifteen years, hoping that some insightful rationale may be derived, and subsequently some revitalized living sites for the biophotons in course of search of life-then and life-to-come. I breathe. And I see. I touch. I sense. I digest. I begin to understand more, at least to the best of my knowledge, about the becoming of me, without getting lost in a society 'preoccupied with the future (and also with safety), which generates the notion of risk' (Giddens 1999:3), where such 'notions of risks' are often over-shadowed by systems of rules and meaning governed by the ever-proliferating commercial value in potential profit-making off daily commodities. It is only through the understanding of such past and present adversities do I see more room to understand others. When I see the Earth, the Sky (or the Cosmos) and the Human in these people whom happen to crisscross or bypass me in life, the lyrics of an old Red Indian dance song, recorded by John G. Neihardt during his visit to Black Elk, flows into my mind,

“With visible breath I am walking.  
A voice I am sending as I walk.  
In a sacred manner I am walking.  
With visible tracks I am walking.  
In a sacred manner I walk.”<sup>14</sup>

I see where my work lies, as everything streams down to focus upon the flow of fingering at this particular moment, punching rhythmically on the computer keyboard. I breathe on, deep and sound, to the inner music composed along my living timeline. This paper would be an examination of such a life like mine, as lived (infinite past), and still living (simply being there), to the possible-to-be (finite future), through the platform of the arts. **This paper starts with *me* from the very first word to this very moment, and expands from then on; it searches through being (and other beings) lived or come about in specific time and space, sizing up the possible birth of an idea in revelation to the birth of the physical body, pre-shaping and at the same time igniting the birth of idea(s) for a possible methodology and perspectives looking into the grid of the self and the ever existential field of living (Chapter 1). It seeks to theorize (in spite of the approximately 16.1 years asleep in my existing lifespan, which does not necessarily imply a time wasted) upon the experience-interwoven in dream, art, literature, cinema, dance, theatre, education, social work and, most of all, the living itself, formulating a perception of community performance that lives through the spring of alternative journeys into the landscape of the body. It is from the first-tiered experience (the *apparitional self*) since birth which leads me onto the immediate second (the *synthesized self*) and the often-belated third tiers (the *innovative self*) of experiences integrally interacting among one another to formulate the eventual body of this paper. It is precisely these 3-tiered experiences, as if a *community* from within, and their interactive nature that open me up to the fundamental remapping of an individual – a lived/living body that could transform one’s “personal knowledge”**

**(Polanyi, 1964) and “experiential learning” (Dewey, 1957; 1958; 1997; 2005) into potential better community performance through the arts (Chapter 5).**

I here forth begin with traces through my voice, and trailing along my tracks, my manner and my experiences through the very act of writing, **assembling organismic encounters in textual, visual and audio planes and dimensions of multiplicity, drawing lines of reflected phenomena witnessed in my upbringing, my theatre works and educational workshops, re-evaluating measurable substances dismantled from different speeds and quality of observation.** And, such traces would also be filled with voices and trails of the others through daily encounters. And I realize: The Dawn of civilization arrived long ago. Only I was asleep. From dawn till now, the taste of Earth has given the moisture to live on. I am finally awake (at least to my belief). I let my search remount on a free flowing pedestal, riding through the container of time and space, till the blood in me one day dry. I would hear Neruda’s warning, “Stay on the road. Night has fallen for you. Perhaps at dawn we shall see each other again.”<sup>15</sup> Before Dawn, I have to dive deep into Night and **research its traces of performances made, and the phenomena that once fueled such performances...**<sup>16</sup>

**On the word *performance*:**

***per-***: a prefix meaning “through,” “thoroughly,” “utterly,” “very”: *pervert*; *pervade*; *perfect*.<sup>17</sup>

***form***: a word of multiple explanations (44 results in *Dictionary.com*) over its meaning(s) and application(s), ranging from appearance to shape, body to condition, manner to dimension of object, fine arts to philosophy, logic to crystallography, assemblage of things to document, method/procedure to conduct, physical condition to conformity of usages, grammar to linguistics, building trades to usages with object, etc.<sup>18</sup>

***perform***: to carry out; execute; to go through or execute in the proper, customary, or established manner; to carry into effect; fulfill; to act (a play, part, etc.), as on the stage, in movies, or on television; to render (music), as by playing or singing;

to accomplish (any action involving skill or ability), as before an audience; to fulfill a command, promise or undertaking; to yield a profit; earn income, etc.<sup>19</sup>

**My interpretation:** *To perform* means *the act to try being thoroughly or to make genuine attempts to perfectionalize (or idealize) the best way to know how through a particular form of material(s) and being(s) selectively focused at specific spacetime*. A performance is a particular series of act by individual(s) to perform based on thoughts inspired by available form(s) of experiences set out as above described.

**The performance(s) in all of us:** “If all the world’s a stage, then each of us is a performer. Each day, we act out individual roles and take part in private and collective rituals handed down by society. In our relationship with others, we hide behind masks with presumptive/adopted personae; and when we interact with the objects, spaces and environments around us, we follow established patterns of behavior set down by history and convention, playing out performances everywhere we turn. In such a world, it is no surprise that the line between art and life is sometimes blurred...These [performing] artists take this thought and present works in which ordinary people, members of the public or the audience attending an art exhibition become the main protagonists of the piece. Sometimes the artists aim simply to capture the roles and rituals of our daily lives; at other times, they create situations and scenarios that invite us to behave in certain ways. In these cases, the spectator becomes not a passive observer but an integral part of the creative process, enacting and completing the work and revealing the artistic potential in all of us.” (Hoffman & Jonas, 2005: front jacket leaf & 157) Goffman describes that “a performance, in the restricted sense...is that arrangement which transforms an individual into a stage performer, the latter, in turn, being an object that can be looked at in the round and at length *without offense*, and looked to for engaging behavior, by persons in an ‘audience’ role.” (1986:124, *my italics*) In performance, it is filled with the language of the theatre, in which human conditions are unveiled with sociological details. Instead of putting things in the perspective of “art performance,” something as if “a totalizing concept” or “a prescriptive label” (Cheng, 2002:274), I would rather put it as “performance through the arts,” which implies “an immense field of divergent and evolving

activities” that requires one to “approximate [territories] of repeatable [or *revisable*] observations in the course of reorienting [/redesigning] the telescope.”  
(Ibid, *my added brackets*)

### ***Performance-in-the-making through the act of writing***

Today is January 1, 2006 (which would be a day beyond reach or comprehension by the end of the paper). I feel exceptionally great this morning (and God knows how many such ‘good’ mornings would follow) with a mind setting to start a *journey* long anticipated, regardless of the body still aching from vigorous *tui-na*, an ancient Chinese method in massage, I had two days ago, or the long accumulated unattended back pain from poor posture and injuries induced at work all these years. While muscles along my spine are tense with acute tinkering pain as usual, my body-mind seems to be fit and in sync, at least to my perception as such, with my anticipating working mode. (I would also gather for each *tui-na* I would be undertaking from now on would, in one way or the other, deepen my thoughts and understanding of the state of vinculum existed in my body systems.) In fact, I have been waking up exceptionally early the past couple of weeks, still making the effort to cope with jet lag off the traveling I previously made from Toronto-Seattle, with distant images of old friends and close relatives still very much at the back of my mind. (Such frequent bodily experience of ‘migration’ on planet Earth has in fact projected a great deal of physical, mental, and spiritual imprints on my body-mind ever since I first left Hong Kong back in 1976.) Yet my brain, loaded with reflective (and, very likely, refracted) images accumulated over people encountered in all these years of traveling and working in theatre, schools and universities, is somewhat on the verge of ‘blinking,’ desperately looking for its media of contemplation, with thoughts ever



provoked by discourses and stories told by both ancestral and living scholars, philosophers, scientists, artists, novelists, historians, theorists, journalists and, above all, colleagues, friends and relatives. My heart, my mind, and my body are striking, or has long been striking, a tune I can no longer resist re-examining through and out.

French Phenomenologist Gaston Bachelard once wrote, “A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability. We are constantly re-imagining its reality: to distinguish all these images would be to describe the soul of the house; it would mean developing a veritable psychology of the house...imagined as a concentrated being. It appeals to our consciousness of centrality.” (1994:17)

Sitting in my study of approximately 80 cubic feet in size, filled with books, movies (all in compact form of DVD and VCD), photo albums, printed papers, off-beat furniture, an old guitar, a dust-filled theatre set model, boxes of model-making tools and raw materials, old company files of theatre records and collections of notes, handbills, and remembrances, I suddenly feel surrounded by watchful eyes that have long resided at specific corner for years, with angles periodically shifting at a distance. Objects, at one time or another, that had once been interweaving fragments of big and small events of my life, silently reinforce some living statements or consciousness in me never exposed, yet still burning, with human conducts remained only semi-explored. I suddenly recall a quotation of Kafka specially depicted in a book called *The Heart of Listening* (Milne, 1998). It floats across the room and reaches the back of my mind, as if saying: “You don’t even need to leave your room, remain sitting at your table and listen. Do not even listen, simply wait. Don’t even wait, be quiet, still and solitary. The world will fully offer itself to you, to be unmasked it has no choice. It

will roll in ecstasy at your feet.” (Ibid, 138) A Greek mythic *Psyche* vision seems to be emerging through walls, daily utensils, undercover of books, shelves, and drawers, in acute form of burlesque, haunting me as I intend to move onto some epistemological territories. I see:

Bertolt Brecht<sup>20</sup> in funny costume, holding Marx’s *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*<sup>21</sup>, waving at me on the set of the deserted design model I made for “*Dreaming Plum Blossoms Away*,”<sup>22</sup> an opera with a libretto, inspired by Milan Kundera’s *Immortality*<sup>23</sup> and Tang Ti-sheng’s Cantonese Opera *The reincarnation of Lady Plum Blossoms*<sup>24</sup>, I co-wrote a few years back; Marquis de Sade<sup>25</sup>, with a white-painted face, suddenly be-neighbored a naked Pierre Klossowski<sup>26</sup>, drawing their ‘utopia of evil’ on the mind map I drafted for my up-coming theatre production; Foucault<sup>27</sup>, tending an eighteenth century wig, lazily holding a glass of red wine, sitting by the window mocking me wearing the gloves of Mr. Not-so-crazy-after-all; Beckett<sup>28</sup>, Sartre<sup>29</sup> and Handke<sup>30</sup> all appeared in buffoonish blue, joining hands, lining up for a cup of ‘No-Return-for-the-Third-World-coffee’ at a nearby StarBucks with no exits; Karl Popper<sup>31</sup>, with the mask of Hegel<sup>32</sup>, finally meeting his long begotten friend Buddha<sup>33</sup> at far corner, hissing at my conduct unbecoming; Picasso<sup>34</sup> and Merleau-Ponty<sup>35</sup>, looking through Magritte’s *Human Condition*<sup>36</sup>, endlessly arguing over some minute details of another painting called “The Invisible” hanging on my wall; Artaud<sup>37</sup> and Aristotle<sup>38</sup>, dressed like Balinese dancers, digging out all my theatre pamphlets to re-paste a collage of “The Vague and the Visible”; Laozi<sup>39</sup> and Mao Zedong<sup>40</sup>, crawling out from their Beijing operatic outfits, looking for new refuge in my CD rack by throwing movie discs at me like Frisbee; A broken score for Cao Xueqin’s “*Dream of the Red Chamber*”<sup>41</sup> is heard humming through my small refrigerator, as if waiting for the tattooed-all-over John Cage’s approval<sup>42</sup>; Peter Brook<sup>43</sup>, in his imitated costume depicted from a drawing of a Shaolin monk, secretly mimicking Méi Lánfāng’s operatic act<sup>44</sup>, as if interpreting an Andy Warhol<sup>45</sup> cult movie scenario; Strindberg, Ibsen, Jarry, Shakespeare, Joyce, Dante, Goethe, Zhuangzi, Fassbinder,

Pasolini, Godard, Genet, Fromm, Van Gogh, Bacon, Kahlo, Pollock, Barthes, Confucius, Beauvoir, Derrida, Deleuze, Sontag, Durheim, Nietzsche, Freud, Paz, Einstein, Feynman, Hugo, Xao Yu, Li Bai, Mishima, Jelinek<sup>46</sup> and many many other, all in masks, waiting in line for their final parade over my bookshelf, cross-examining the thickness of dust over stacks of books long deserted in vain....

If Austrian phenomenologist Edmund Husserl were still around, he would probably pop up right away and place the above names as mentioned or linked into units of intentionality, calculating such possibly *improper* acts of mischief exhibited, be they intentional or filled with propositional meanings sprung from intuitive imagination or inconsistent perception, with these “big names” carrying distinct properties being objectified as extension of human concepts. (2000) Would these *names* not be raised with an intention to question the existing closed unity in scientific research that often forgets the “concatenations of grounding connections stretch beyond the delimited field” (Ibid, 55) of knowledge? While I may be putting on a *dream* play with intentional juggling of images and words, my mind has already got on the winged horse visiting Gustave Flaubert and his letter once written to Mlle de Chantepie in June of 1857, exactly 100 years before I was born, “Read in order to live!”<sup>47</sup> Be they intentional or not, the acts of reading have somewhat played interesting tricks on the mind. How the pages read turned into performances that pushed us through memory of humankind and elongate our path into yet another culture boiler made of shadows often intrigues me a great deal. **What knowledge can be counted as MINE seems to be a conglomeration of emaciated body experiences declaring an uphill battle against ghosts buried in all these names.** Would these great minds as perceived only

shadows of nature, “strutting and fretting upon the stage,” as William Shakespeare once wrote in *Macbeth* (Act V, Scene 5), running errands for God? I don’t mean any disrespect for these great souls as individuals. I am simply more interested in such existing beings as a whole in view of nature. I am also interested in their nominal effects, be they intentional or not, upon common souls; I am also curious how the common souls, off specific time and situation, once, thrice, or numerous, affected by such ingenious minds. Most of all, I am particularly alluded to *the effect of the bodily phenomena as specifically experienced by each of these worldly figures and how they affected their consciousness-in-the-making* then, like the life long poor health of Proust, the suicide of Camus, Van Gogh and Deleuze, the cancer of Stan Brakhage, the drug overdose of Fassbinder, the 35 operations undertaken by Frida Kahlo, the depression and alcoholism in Jackson Pollock and the AIDS-infected Foucault, etc.

**Can we possibly isolate these adverse bodily effects (or social phenomena as perceived in individuals) from the making of these intellectual minds and contemplate only with their works and ideologies? If we do, in what nature would their theories sit upon when deleting the presence of the “otherness,” i.e. their once-suffering body? Had those “infected self” helped, induced, or propounded the unusual loads of intellectual properties that later “haunted” us all in the aftermath of their phenomenal death? Or were they only besieged by the social or political “bacteria” off sprung at real life situations of specific age and time, all manifested by the accumulating appropriations of “pessimism” that eventually built up an array of toxic bio-chemicals within their body cells, desperately seeking an alternative landscape for alternative survival? Did the sufferings give birth to their wonderful ideas, like the saying of 20<sup>th</sup> Century painter Francis Bacon, “Chaos breeds images?”<sup>48</sup>**

Or their physical births were in fact significant no matter what without accounting their personality-and-history-in-the-making? In view of these questions, **I see the fantasized tapestry as made up above is only an aria sung by ghosts, alive and sound, forever inter-humming a tune with the building of the present, digging new thresholds in our real life situations, contemplating through objects, signs and systems of living.** While the above questions would remain only as a part of the thinking process to drive toward a subject of more immediate concern for this particular paper, i.e. the possibility of betterment in the self, the likely equilateral meanings beyond the questions may be indeed applicable to all ordinary people in the course of acquiring better self-education. **For common folk, the bodily chaos and daily phenomena as experienced should be as significant as those great thinkers if we allow the *benefit* of equilateral thinking, at least with beliefs held true to each of the individual bodily systems that tries to make sense out of one's daily encounters in the course of developing one's sense of the self and therein seeking alternatives to empower the self to better community performances. It is precisely through such equilateral thinking that I am to set the foundational perspectives of my investigation into the self and the discoveries of the importance of self-innovation through the arts thereof in the span of the past fifty years of the lived body *personally and directly* linked with.**

I do not intend to play with images cast upon me from *ghosts*, distantly echoed by Ibsen's play of the same name in 1881<sup>49</sup>, hanging onto past-idealized beliefs, haunting the present. But if these *ghosts* were indeed all parts of me, silently transmuting in form, thus content, through the stretch of human timeline, with the voices I heard, or

still hear now, within or outside the body-mind, could they be, or indeed were, virtually real? Are they still constantly contemplating with events or happenings, making specific correspondence through beings, objects and space according to the consciousness I will, perceive or deny at time? Then would such *ghosts* be constantly loading new positional or non-positional consciousness to my state of being, summing me up and moving me into successive spacetime ever reflected on? How empty would such a theatre space be, as if this paper-to-be, inviting *ghosts* for new audience to engage in dialogues I have been building among Hong Kong youngsters, parents, teachers, social workers, professionals and theatre-makers? When the previous seconds in writing have already engaged in ghostly chat with shadows, would they all eventually fade in time, transporting knowledge of the consciousness right through itself, monstrously emptying themselves into walls, houses, streets, buildings, and eventually into themselves, *nauseating*<sup>50</sup> (Sartre, 1938)? Or is it only the effect of *ennui* enigmatized by rhetoric infiltrating objects with philosophized value and signs, delusively re-mapping the body landscape seeking its emancipation from constituents of consumption and display of commodity? **We each carry our own set of *ghosts* in our upbringing, with values and beliefs long prescribed by ancestors, parents, teachers and scholars in books, with effects constantly interacting with daily experiences and encounters, which shape up *the apparitional self* in us all (the word *apparition* is inspired by the apparition witnessed by Shakespeare's *Macbeth* [Act IV, Sc. 1] before his fatal defeat in his final battle). The particular experiences that constitute our consciousness thereof are indeed becoming the "situation of affairs," in Husserl's term, likely passively consuming the presentation of the self and drawing *ghostly* vision in our learning. The**

**unbecoming of such “ghostly vision” would be the subject of my investigation if we were to re-establish any insightful alternatives in education and social services.**

It was only a few weeks ago when I witnessed some ghostly lectures, tempering materials on adolescent problems, with a bundle of aging theories, supplied solely for the sake of knowledge consumption, no longer applicable to the present. Yet such “ghostly talk” does often reverberate in our society, especially in an age when pseudo-productivity dominates. They sound as if constantly seeking to make transformative interpretation of the social world, through “selected experience,” highlighting the meaning of “specific actions” carried forth in the temporal process of interacting to a “specialized” reality, regardless whether their values are still sound or appropriate to the flowing consciousness of the mass or individuals as lived or to live. As for *hidden youth*<sup>51</sup> who silently tiptoeing their fingers on electronic devices in their secluded home, searching for their sense of existence filled with simulated images created by adults, such ghostly talk may not mean anything but solely *silencer* as simulated in the form of electronic games, forever setting out to *regulate* any potential disruptive elements, most likely targeting *kids* to be the subject of suppression, in view of stipulating control, or gross profit, of market consumption. Under such circumstances, would my search of community performance be validated through time when everything seems to be turning into the realm of a hyperreal, no longer that of a territory, but only a referential being or a substance perceived through digital space where “the flux of tiniest disjunctive unities are perceived in cybernetic atom of signification” (Baudrillard, 1988:143) metaphysically distinguished by the educated few? How should common folk then perceive and locate their body performance of such an age fostered in hyperreality, searching in a world replaced by a copy world, which relying heavily on sign exchange values based upon things with no inherent meaning? (Baudrillard, 1983) When our body is overwhelmingly consumed by such values of plastic modality, either repetitively performing in cybernetic-Emperor’s new clothes or being re-structured in the sphere of product consumption, do we really see our body merely an extension of a commercial

landscape conceptualized as capitalistic commodity, leaving nature insignificantly bounded in the remaining bodily tissues of risk consciousness, with only a *performing self* seeking the best way possible for self-governance under the massive influence of consumer culture? What are the real ghosts in us then, when constantly putting the body in display and opening to the latest regulation of desires, be they repressed or gratified by the producers of goods and services, mean only another effort in developing “sustainability” in a new system of personal demeanor to the taste and continuity of the market-oriented economic institutes? These questions emerge as if there was indeed “an ‘visible centre’<sup>52</sup> exerting undeniable power over the ways we live, eat, think, work, exercise, play, and relate to others, but cannot be fully described.” (Cheng, 2002:3) They remain “invisible” to most common folk when a top-down educational system is still prevailing, allowing serious knowledge discrepancies flowing from science/philosophy to society. For as long as scientific or philosophical understandings stay superior, the feeble reflections made by layperson should provide alternative justification if we were to build any better community for the benefits of all. Thus, it seems vital for us to rethink how this “centre” is being envisioned in the “marginalized” youth/individuals and relocate the nature of such *hidden marginality* through particular studies of the lived self as embodied. Time keeps ticking. The questions remain hanging in mid air, without any niche to draw the needed feedback from common folk. I may have yet to learn *dancing like a Wu Li Master*<sup>53</sup>, **allowing the tacit being to recharge new insight from my body preserve of bio- and physio-diversity if I were to act upon such particular issues in the existing ecosystems so as to better self equip the body and soul for any possible further searching. In view of the bodily movement charted with ways “in” and “out” of daily endeavors, I have yet to keep open dialogues with these ghosts hidden in you and me if I were to meet the challenges of mounting bridges for better access of science and philosophy in self-education.** The gap between layperson and scientists/philosophers is often beyond reach; it leaves little room for effective transmission of scientific/philosophical understanding to common folk, especially when such understanding may not seem practical enough to daily living....<sup>54</sup>



Ironically, as I move on, to the least till this particular paragraph, the “precision” in time and space as superficially described at top of the first page would have already turned into nothingness, or turned into *remains* validated as *precession of simulacra*<sup>55</sup> for the “yet-another-Brave-New-World-to-be” as eventually decoded through pre-recorded digital data, likely to be a post-postmodern model, or *ghost*, of Aldous Huxley, hereafter. In making way for a journey to abstract from reality once lived and experienced, and into building yet another reality-to-be in the process of writing, the peculiar time-play would seem to be falling into another realm of reality, forever counter-playing with the immediate experience of time and those that already passed. In view of the *third eye*<sup>56</sup> *mocked up* on my forehead between my eyebrows, reminiscing those suggested in India culture, with ancestral eyes looking *ghostly* down upon my shoulders, I have often wondered if Bergson was right when he said, “the constant state of becoming, and the same feeling, by the mere fact of being repeated, is a new feeling” (Bergson, 1959). Yet such particularity (or *as-a-matter-of-fact-not-so-particular-or-not-particular-enough-kind-of-particularity* according to spacetime theorists) of spacetime (superficial as it may appear to be) here at present in my studies and the becoming-to-be would have already or constantly making shifts into tiny-yet-another-insignificant-fragments of historicity of time. In the logic of my instantaneous perception of a spatiotemporal state of being, my search of the subject set forth (or any likely related subjects), as a matter of fact, would forever undergo its own changes, which consequently make my *research* an act only through a series of phenomenological beings and matters, demarcating levels of experience(s), actively and passively through planned or projected activities, fallen instantaneously into the trap of the ever-protruding time and space. Would such an act only signify a

*performance*, or an attempt so distantly mirrored by the profound act of French novelist Marcel Proust at the previous turn of the Century in his great novel *In Search of Lost Time*<sup>57</sup> (as if imitating a *great* man's footsteps) forever tracing illusively over past beliefs and events at the prompt of each fragment of the specific strangling presence of spacetime and temporality of body-mind, hoping to gain some insight to feed the next possible living moment-to-be? Or like trailing along Samuel Beckett's characters, in the line of Georg Buchner, Jean-Paul Sartre, and later Peter Handke<sup>58</sup>, forever searching for any possible existing signs (or knowledge rather) to justify the cruelty of the existing and everlasting presence till death? Are these "new feelings" then? Or only wordplay reshuffled in different heads through a series of rearrangement of pre-existing perceived phenomena? How such elements contemplate within me then, with a body-mind traveled through particular spacetime, from 1957 till this very moment (which would have already passed by the time this book reach the readers) in a colonized territory? Or seeking the key for unlocking those chains of genetic black boxes long hidden, as suggested by Richard Dawkins' theory of DNA, the long history of human intelligence genetically inherited through billion years of evolution, seeded there to be unveiled? **I do not intend to seek answers for all these questions. They can only serve as "my guiding shadows," as if projected through reflections found in reflective memory of the *evolutionalized* cells. Yet it is these questions that set off the actions-to-be in search of the possible innovation in the lived/living body-mind.** As Alfred Schutz suggested, "Through such reflectivity, one imagines a project as completed in future perfect tense, that is, what will have been realized after one's acting, and this project establishes the in-order-to-motive of one's action." (Barber, 2002) In other words, by exploring the *past* factors, including all those impounded by

*ghosts*, that preceded all past decisions made in my life and work, before and after, I would locate the situational causes of motives put forth under specific social, political, environmental and historical circumstances as lived and to live. While I do think it is important to committing oneself, as a social actor, to “some first person, participating ethical position,” it is as vital for us to go along side balancing one’s observation with the Schutz’s “objectivating attitude of the nonparticipant, third person observer.” (Barber, 2004:127) It is often among such irreducible logics: those of poetic meaning, everyday practical life, and formal logic" (Ibid, 139) that often drown me into a series of dialogical play with the self. Henceforth, I, as a temporal being, can only, to the best of my honesty, retrace along trails of my lifeline off-tracked from my spatial and temporal parts as existed and to exist, to recapture all those significant (or insignificant) moments left undeciphered, hoping to reduce some insightful truth of a particular individual living through a specific frame of spacetime. **Such trails belay not only the ghosts’ footsteps, but also those of characters created, related or encountered, who are always in search of an author, as in the eye of Pirandello<sup>59</sup>, delineating alternative routes, or a *temporal self-action theory*, to re-map the body landscape and search for workable innovative sites of the living spirit.** In the black boxes of the lived time, all the remembered “having-just-been-thus-kind-of-events” accounted in the consciousness of a *specious* present may be necessary to be re-examined, revealed and further developed into alternative planning actions to be realized in the future...

Brazilian educator Paulo Freire had once warned us,

“Men submerged in the historical process are characterized by a state...described as ‘semi-intransitivity of consciousness’...cannot apprehend problems situated outside their sphere of biological necessity...Man is an open being...semi-intransitive consciousness means that his sphere of perception is limited, that he is impermeable to challenges situated outside the sphere of biological necessity. In this sense only, semi-intransitivity represents a near disengagement between men and their existence. In this state, discernment is difficult. Men confuse their perceptions of the objects and challenges of the environment, and fall prey to magical explanations because they cannot apprehend true casualty.” (2006:13)

In other words, to Freire, what makes one “permeable” is the transitivity of consciousness. If we were to take part in educational work, one could never be naïve and drowned into the part of a mass. One has to progress to the stage of critical transitivity that allows the needed depth in the interpretation of problems. (Ibid, 14) As a teacher or a social worker, such sensitivity seems to be fundamental to avoid any potential distortion of perception or any preconceived notions that may affect the quality of observation, analysis and dialogues made thereof in carrying out educational work accountable for the social and personal constructs of individuals. Thus, **the ability to make an in-depth studies of the self would be critical and fundamental as preliminary preparations to approach/transform the self creatively in the process of making any educational workshops with co-learners. The sensitivity of the phenomenological self being would mean the basic platform for education service provider to be able to practise reflexively, allowing experiences and theories the needed space for constant reflection and re-construction.** As John Dewey believed, the continuity growth of the educator would “account for the continuously evolving structure of the educational situation, in terms of both internal

attitudes and external conditions.” (Gill, 1993:22) Acknowledging the situations as engaged and experienced of *the self* would benefit the quality of interaction with *the other*. *Without the conceptions of the phenomenological situations as experienced in the past, which are in fact inseparable from the constitution of actions in the present, one would only refrain to task-centered actions and easily dismiss the entrenched and complex issues of individual(s) that deserve in-depth understanding.* **The performing self here is in fact situating the conditions of observation over the performing other there. Staying away from making thorough and critical of the personal and social bearings one has been carrying would easily fall into models of generalization over services for other.** In this age heavily influenced by managerialism and consumerism, so many people are driving at short-term piecemeal and avoiding any in-depth or long-term participation in education; the quality of learning would be diminished by “naïve intransitivity and massification.” (Freire, 2006:15) Thus, **the research hereby conceiving over the lived body of the phenomenological self is an intention to re-strengthen the observation and judgment exercised over the equally phenomenological other by allowing the self the means of reflexivity and transformation through art play.** As I write, I hear the distant calling from Dewey: “we live from birth to death in a world of persons and things which in large measure is what it is because of what has been done and transmitted from previous human activities.” (1997:39; also cited by Gill, 1993:24) Indeed we cannot ignore such facts, neither that of the self here nor those of the other there.

**This is in fact a paper specially written for teachers, social workers and parents.**

**In the course of re-examining stories once constructed to the bodily system as**

**lived, I am hoping that by researching the self through theatrical frameworks and**

**reframing the potential critical reflection of the body-mind through the use of art**

**and the creative synthesis I thereupon personally encountered, I would be able to**

**devise some alternative routes in rediscovering the tacit power remained**

**undeciphered among many individuals in need of strengthening their living**

**capacities and potentialities, something that echoes *the strengths perspectives*, i.e.,**

**as Saleebey (1997:4) and Healy (2005:151-171) once discussed, “to mobilize**

**[individual] strengths (talent, knowledge, capacities) in the service of achieving**

**their goals and visions and the [individuals] will have a better quality of life on**

**their terms.”** (Ibid, 152) Weick and *et al* (1989:354) once so described, “...a strengths

perspective is a strategy for seeing; a way to learn to recognize and use what is already

available to them [the service users]. The professional person thus becomes a translator

who helps people see that they already possess much of what they need to proceed on

their chosen path.” *When many teachers, social workers and parents, often dismiss the*

*importance of self exploration over their past, be they in form of stories, actions or*

*beliefs, are entrenched with established analysis and solutions to problems in*

*cultivating learning, the bounds of preconceived values and judgment would often turn*

*their endeavor into slavery rather than mastering the needed flexibility and reflexivity*

*in alternative paths to better the lived body through re-discovering self-innovation.* In

re-establishing alternative thinking styles and working patterns, ??? could be vital for

one to reconceptualize the role of creativity in self-empowerment. Thus, *making up*

*rules*, like the way many theatre-makers would do through hypothesis, *as one goes*

*along* (Sternberg, 1985) would mean the necessities in *re-questioning societal norms, truisms, and assumptions* (Sternberg & Lubart, 1995:7) through a paradigm of multicentricity with the particularities of social condition as unveiled in each finite being.

**On Theatrical Framework:**

**Theatre:** In ancient times, it implied an open-air place for viewing spectacles (1374). Or, in generic sense, it is a “place of action.” (1581)<sup>60</sup> According to results in *Dictionary.com*, it could mean: a room or hall...used for surgical demonstrations; dramatic performances as a branch of art; the quality or effectiveness of dramatic performance; field of operations, etc.<sup>61</sup>

**Framework:** It means “a skeletal structure designed to support or enclose something,” “a frame or structure composed of parts fitted and joined together,” the construction of frames,” or “work done in, on, or with a frame.”<sup>62</sup> *Frame*, as Derrida put it, can be viewed as apparatus (2004:326), i.e. the tool of investigation that is assigned to determine the perspectives of construction/deconstruction of viewpoints taken place “within the general movement of the apparatus” (Ibid.). *Work* is the operation, often echoing Barthes’ suggestion that it can easily get caught up within a process of filiation, often postulated or pre-determined by the surrounding world value<sup>63</sup> if the effort and labor are not being carefully evaluated. It could also mean the extension of the self through practice, play and activities that relate to production. When the two words are placed together and transformed into a *framework*, it can be somewhat “contradictory” or “conforming” to one another, with a “skeleton” counter-acting upon each other to induce a process of critical thinking necessary to the setting up of any conceptual approach in viewing particular subject/object to be studied thereof.

**Theatrical Framework:** To me, it means *creating alternative insight in viewing human condition(s) through devising new perspectives of play or*

*art-in-action in an open and empty space, allowing some surgical look into hidden corners of the human psyche and bodily systems by making hypothesis or fabricating opportunities to “play the world backwards.”* (Goffman, 1986/1974:133) *Being in an empty space* (Brook, 1968) *means allowing the body-mind to re-organize any potential preconceptions and freeing the bodily system through play. It also implies the employment of alternative objects superimposed onto past experiences to re-examine their validity and re-narrativity either through new angles or knowledge of different dimensions.* As *Tao De Ching* (Chapter 11) expresses the wisdom of emptiness:

We join spokes together in a wheel,  
but it is the centre hole  
that makes the wagon move.

We shape clay into a pot,  
but it is the emptiness inside  
that holds whatever we want.

We hammer wood for a house,  
but it is the inner space  
that makes it livable.

We work with being,  
but non-being is what we use.

*(translated by S. Mitchell, 1995<sup>64</sup>)*

In other words, it is precisely through the “re-organization of the inner world” under the umbrella of the arts that allow individuals to “get a clear view of the relation an individual can have to other kinds of doings” (Ibid.) through the magic use of play devised in emptiness – a *theatrical space* made imagination possible to free up the body-mind in the process of re-discovering self innovation. In *Theatre of the Absurd* (Esslin, 1961), “it strives to express its sense of the senselessness of the human condition and the inadequacy of the



rational approach by the open abandonment of rational devices and discursive thought.” Yet do bear in mind that in the course of devising such frameworks upon individual(s), including the self of teachers, social workers or parents, the “situation,” “rules” and “condition” to be set up should vary according to particularity of circumstances and person(s) involved. One should avoid generalization in adopting such frameworks if we were to gain any valuable strengths out of participants. **The questions to be explored then would be: under theatrical frameworks, would one be able to open up alternative perspectives in viewing one’s lived body and the experiences thereof as encountered? If one is to draw on phenomenological findings through theatrical play, would one have the same courage to first re-examine how such play could work on the self before applying it onto others? How would it be possible to transcend the play experience into new strength, allowing creative and innovative synthesis to take place?**

*Beyond spirit mounted to specific particularity....*

Working on the second floor of a rented old yellow country house built in the 1960’s, locating precisely at 22°30’14.12” N and 114°67’11.36”E at the elevation of 17 feet above sea level (with the “ever-ready” information provided by Google Earth), i.e. a small village off the north side of the New Territories, Hong Kong, a former British colony retained as a Special Administrative Region by the People’s Republic of China (a sovereignty drawn onto the world map only since 1949) eight years ago, what kind of a map have I witnessed in the past 49 years of my life<sup>65</sup> and what would I *see* from here and now? While exposing my living position may mean haphazard these days when many can acquire the use of space satellite through world-wide-web-sites, especially in face of the “over-exposed” media presence of politicized “terrorism” *and* the ever-propagated globalized economic exploitation, the geographic *precision*, when added with temporal measurements, may provide my existing state an angle never

quite imaginable back in ancient time. From the late 1950's till this opening decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the district I am living in has drastically been transformed from rural to suburban. With the emergence of constant social uncertainty throughout the past decades, I see myself leading a life off an unusual social backdrop of economic *success*<sup>66</sup> that has been deliriously pursued and rectified by the Hong Kong Government, and yet politically "SARilized"<sup>67</sup> into a culturally unsound social being, branded with a problematic Hong Kong identity long colonized with values leftover from British rulings. Under the spell of a free-market-craving economy, i.e. "strategically" open for all to fight and grab their favorite piece of *profitable* meat, and a lack of sophisticated cultural vision, who would know how the oh-so-easy-access to modern technological consumption would eventually pace up the condescending morals of humanity? With the superstitious market-oriented outlook, the monstrosity of managerialism has genuinely transformed the daily living spirit of the entire city, leaving little room to re-gain the needed balance of the natural body. How many uncontested young soul can be found dangling along the demoralized social ditches, including our Education System, where filled up with electronic gimmicks and artifacts, trapping their spirit in the wavelength of the ever-fluctuating Hang Seng or Dow Jones Index? Where to go from here onward if we do not make ways to retrieve the bodies possibly "lost and locked" in a Foucaultian "vision" of "modern disciplinary" society, where "idea of normalization, i.e. discipline through imposing precise norms, is pervasive in our society: e.g. national standards for educational programs, for medical practice, for industrial processes and products" (Gutting, 2003)? These are the questions not to be easily answered. They serve as the fundamental social, political and cultural backdrops that could affect the observation of teachers and

social workers when designing their educational grid for learners. **We have to forever bear in mind the notorious social bearings all learners have to undertake at particular space and time in view of any likely development or construction in “personal knowledge” (Polanyi, 1964), all under particular social influence, or *habitus* in Bourdieu’s word (1977), seeking its subjectivity through the long stretch of objectivity often operating with limitations bound by neglected social conditions. Indeed, the particularity of *habitus* that once colonized our patterns of thought and behavior did leave insurmountable prints along the living disposition of many Hongkongers. The internalization of such colonial culture without knowing it does create a long series of psychological and physiological dilemmas in the experience of learning under the umbrella of such particularized social structure. Therefore, studying the daily living systems among individual(s) within the scope of such *habitus* would remain to be part of the un-ignorable process, especially in designing the theatrical frameworks to seek and potential transposable or transformable perception and action within the self. They are important frameworks for us all to keep the level of critical consciousness and conscientiousness for transformative learning of participating learners.**

Foreshadowed by the introduction of computing engineering half a century ago, Hong Kong has been chasing the world economy at large and have undergone changes at a pace never quite dreamt of, at least physically speaking. As an example depicted by Stephen Hawking in his popular *best-selling* science book *The Universe in a Nutshell* (2001), he revealed to us the exponential growth in computing from 1972 to a conservative estimate of 2007 would be from the infant size of Intel 3,500 to

astronomical figure of Intel 10GHz: 400,000,000. It means that the speed and complexity of computer double every 18 months and indefinitely growing. Imagine one day when biochemical molecules and electronic circuits truly intercourse, i.e. a marriage of genetic engineering and computing, what kind of life form would we be leading then? At the pace things are rolling, as Hawking “excitedly” speculating, we are not too far away from seeing the severing clashes of biological-electronic interface. Within two decades, as our “most-beloved-scientist” icon stresses, a thousand US dollar computer would be as complex as the human brain. What kind of social perspective should I be working upon in face of the “bombardment” of upcoming technological advancement, forewarning the progressing monstrous overload of simulated data generated through the mass and computing media, which would likely be massively exploited by the BIG business to keep up-grading their annual GNP, subsequently drowning many young minds into the ever-expanding matrix of systems in magnifying growth of produce of objects? I am not going to make guesses or foretell tales through speculations made out of simulated objects and images as often over-proximated by the mass media. Wherever we look for the meaning of life, we would seem hitting the wrong buttons, or imprecise words. Before any *grand* economic system came at hand, the world, member of the solar system off a chain of yet-to-be-defined-galaxy, had seemingly, as least scientifically by far speculated, long established itself in a *fixed* order of nature. In other words, it looks as if we, such moving body of living organisms, were nothing but “destructive” agents to set the world in motion. Were we, human beings, invented for setting off these value systems to imbue things with meanings? What can we, the makers of values, do if we are unable to accept the opposite of what exists? Or should we not simply learn to get back

to the basics where we may relocate our footsteps, trying to understand what have gone foul and flop-sided? **Out of the vast world of knowledge external, and chaotic, to the self, we may have to slide back to the ontological seat of re-mapping one's self nature, through researching one's identity conditions and character traits, including the effect of others' thoughts, in order to recover the liberation of the self, where a community from within could be retained and nurtured, placing one's "disabled" self away from "external and manufactured risks"** (Giddens, 1999). The ancient skeptical ethics of Laozi, as stated in the first line of his famous work, *Tao De Ching*, "names that can be named are not constant names," which in fact distantly echoed by writing of Walter Benjamin in queries of *naming* (Bullock & Jennings, ed., 1996:62-74), may throw us some contemporary metaphysical insight on philosophical elaboration, re-examining the "unnaturalness" of socialization and cultivation of our age dominated by the goals of power and knowledge. I am not advocating the "ambiguity" as often rather difficult to be translated in Laozi's; I'd rather **explore the possibility of re-building conceptualized actions of newly perceived temporal and spatial nature that can liberate and re-installate one's body-mind by asserting alternative "narrative structures" and re-defining its "status of spatial syntax"** (de Certeau, 1988), **renewing the web of meanings spun around the moving body. Or as the ancient Greek, through re-building "the aesthetics of the self," as Foucault put it, we may be able to recover "the self's creation of a beautiful and enjoyable existence."** (Gutting, 2003)

The spirit, embodied in bodily systems mounted to specific spacetime, with particularity heavily affecting the energy as unfolded, could be beyond daily

comprehension among ordinary people. Yet, **it is precisely the synthesis taken place within such bodily system of each individual that deserves further exploration if we are to build up any sound performance within the community.** It is beyond the apprehension of the community as a whole but rather the community from within the body-mind lived in each of us that call for special attention here in this paper. **It is the historicity of the lived body and the communal effect of interacting organism on individual mind and spirit that constantly seek alternative expressions other than those recognized by norms. The situated self as framed and propounded by circumstances out of personal control seems constantly looking for innovation of self empowerment in order to gain the needed insight to counter off the daily pressing social and political situations filled with strange occurrences,** yet never having the courage to, like Shylock Holmes, take on everyday life as something “decidedly undecided.” (Highmore, 2002:2) Figuring out everyday living would mean looking into the depth of daily *experiential synthesis* taken place within each individual, beyond the likely effect of ghosts play to invent alternative creativity to daily observations and actions, including the repetitiveness of boredom and emptiness in modern living.

### ***In Search of Alternatives for Community Performance***

Having been working in theatre for over 25 years, I see myself constantly evolving with personality-on-the-move, through all the work, including productions and books, publicly and privately exhibited or published, and the people I worked with. I find myself, and others, exist in the context of a series of recovering or newly discovered

consciousness, or consciousness that has partly lost and partly enhanced through the course actions taken at various time and places. The specificity of my upbringing and everyday encounters has put me through distinct (and yet often corruptibly blurry) experiences, constantly passing judgmental reflection upon acts committed, denied, or vaguely tempered. When all quotations denoted from other beings (be they sprung from renowned and distinguished scholars, scientists, philosophers, novelists, historians, or muttered by members drifting in street corners, school halls, rehearsal rooms or family closets) would at time seem inappropriate or not totally equivalent to the precision of thoughts or experience as perceived, drawing such quotations throughout this paper would on one hand seem disrespectful and irresponsible to their original meanings, and yet totally necessary on the other as their voices had long been intertwined, consciously or unconsciously, into the daily living by direct or indirect interventions made by family members, relatives, friends, teachers, as well as economists, politicians, promoters, educationists, artists, and media players, etc., and subsequently consuming bodies that fluctuating the markets. I always believe **even the life of a common folk off the street conglomerates a series of phenomena that reflect the axis of our time, past and present, interacting with commodities, rules, social and political infrastructures with or without the influence of past and present thinkers-in-the-making, which all depends on the primary engagement of each single being at heart.** Jean Baudrillard once said in a conversation with Francois L'Yvonnet, "It is for each person to have their own ideas, but above all to have a form, for ideas can be plundered, their content can be siphoned off anywhere! Form is something else. It is up to everyone to have an original form." (Baudrillard, 2001) This paper is in search of **ways, through theatrical frameworks, to retrieve each of our**

**“original form of being” through self-actions; it is to re-discover that freedom in re-creating one’s self-knowledge through replacement, or re-routing, of values over our everyday practices, map-making and embodied syntax (Kuppers, 2001).**

To ordinary folks, reality does not have to be viewed or defined through microscopic analysis the way scientists and philosophers do. Their experiences are not at all univocally relative to the knowledge that they get of them, but to each to his or her specific relations to the world at specific spacetime. As such, I see my body no more than a carcass, flensed with simulated images of the past proliferated through books, signs and specific experiences undertaken, forever contemplating with the present, and fiddling a projected future, through the mirrors of my eye and others, looking for a mind free at will, yet overwhelmed with a strong sense of *nothingness*. It is as if on one hand, I see my spirit surfing in a circle to the power “n,” hanging onto the “emptiness,” or nothingness, that ancient Chinese philosopher Laozi advocated centuries ago, which can be interpreted as a state of mind, AND body, to allow the needed “openness” to all kinds of possibility; on the other, I am disturbed by the “nothingness” of “the body in the midst of the world as it is for *others*” (Sartre, 1943), henceforth often alienated to the mind, as suggested by the late French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre. In the midst of such thoughts, seemingly contradicting and yet coherent in many ways to one another, my question, as well put by Arthur Danto, remained would be: if what we thought as philosophical truth may one day be restricted to only specific historical moment, can one’s philosophy still be indemnified against future history? (Danto, 1999) While many philosophers were (and still are) mostly driven to attain a timeless philosophy of truth that could stand through the



future, I have indeed no interest to attain such far reaching or idealized “timelessness” but rather the specificity of the moment of “indeterminate performance” that called for at specific spacetime. **To my experience, it had/has been through such moments of “indeterminateness” could I, and many other, re-discover the potential originality as a living form, performing to the wonders of the moment, not worrying about the distraction off smoke emitted from inadequate theories** (especially when all theories, from past to present, are interdependent upon one another through a web of matrix in the course of delineating, formulating or validating any likely coherency). The bird of wisdom, as Hegel’s words<sup>68</sup> reminiscing at the back of my mind, takes flight only with the falling of the dusk. At dawn (at least to my present frame of mind), I could still be free to explore as is, painting gray upon gray and let history run its course on the subject philosophized....

I search. I perform. I make sound. Through series of events. Of inconsistent and indifferent multiplicities<sup>69</sup> (Badiou, 2005:23-30). Being. Looking – for transcendental moments (be they logical or illogical, consistent or inconsistent). All arise respectively from actions as ignited from those preceded or indeterminately self-generated at times, when each arises accordingly from its own center of existence. Hence I do not simply search solely through the action of researching, I also search for each of the moment when actions arise, stagnate or fall, interacting or corresponding with the guiding center of my personality-in-the-making where the source of ethical impulse that links me, the individual, to society and, most of all, back to True Nature. Through searching, I am to reinvent myself by means of a “vibratory activity” (Bernstein & Hatch, 2001), as those of an orchestra, seeking the unique form of community performance within

the body-mind, and subsequently to the social community as a whole. Gadamer suggested, “All performance is primarily interpretation and seeks, as such, to be correct. In this sense it, too, is ‘understanding,’ which belongs to the being of that which is understood.” (Gadamer, 1975) As he further stressed that “*the experience of the work of art* always fundamentally surpasses any subjective horizon of interpretation, whether that of the artist or of the recipient,” the act of *performance* in seeking such a *community* in me is an experience wholly dwelled from within and henceforth into the totality of my self-understanding, subjectively and objectively, that I am here to *perform* a search and make the *world* a stage, which is often superimposed in *theatrical frameworks* as set forth in the course of reflecting the world value as perceived under particularity of social conditions versus global climate. I act upon the stage, on a day-to-day, or moment-to-moment, basis, not only with, but also against, private and collective rituals and conventions handed down by society. I also interact with individuals, masked with different persona, searching for moments to unmask their pattern of behavior in the mirror of their faces. I search through play, time, space, objects, and the ever-changing environment around, with each hanging onto a history or phenomenological existence of their own. I search through chaos, and the ever-clustered interdisciplinary territories disintegrated and skeptically pre-mapped and then compartmentalized by the prevailing power and profit-making cravers: CEOs, business corporate builders, politicians and policy-makers, etc. **I search through theatre, where new observations and confrontations are to be made through individual actors in weighing the pluralistic world webbed around, from modernization to globalization. I search through these actors, who perform, or act, as German dramatist Bertolt Brecht perceived, “to gain insights into characters... of**

*alterable personality* (my italics).” (Brecht, 1965). **I search through the body-mind in me, delineating through a specific line of history passed down by ancestors, in a territory over-blown with immeasurable social phenomena, half “west” and half “east” (or one quarter “west,” one quarter “east,” one quarter “east-west” and one quarter none of the above), that wiped away a people colonized, mentally and physically.** Albert Memmi (1967) once said in his book, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, “In order to witness the colonized’s complete cure, his alienation must completely cease. We must await the complete disappearance of colonization—including the period of revolt.”<sup>70</sup> I search through my journey to the west and then back home east, with experiences colliding, clashing, and yet harmonizing, through cultural values long defied by politicians and capitalistic competitors, under the stress of the ever-growing, or at the same time destructive, market-oriented global economy, drastically transforming the sociology of human development. I search through self-narratives that are often set on marginalized edges, indeterminately seeking interactive performances among the visible and the invisible in a world largely dominated by money.

In the course of searching and researching, **I seem to be seeing a *community* in me, within my body-mind, interwoven with tales told by passers-by. The community, long structured within my anatomy, constantly seeks to shape my performance.** The universe within my body may have quietly, or reluctantly, setting up its own ever-spontaneous system, a bodily community, to take on the ever-changing superfluous challenge of the external world, and subsequently, casting its influence on the position of my fingering exercise on the computer keyboard. Yet how should my fingers play

on? A distant echo from the great avant-garde composer John Cage is heard, “I would really prefer it, if you didn’t take it so seriously, but rather, play whatever come to hand when you get to each piano without knowing what you are going to do until you get there.” (Bernstein & Hatch, 2001) An advice Cage once wrote to the pianist Margaret Leng Tan in early August of 1992. I am sure if I *were* to take on such *advice*, a series of “careless” and “irresponsible” assumptions will fall upon my readers right away, especially those intend to take my research writings seriously and academically. Yet I do intend to take on such an advice *seriously*, especially on the *indeterminate performance*<sup>71</sup> Cage did promote. Let sounds be sounds as if let words be words. As Tan later discovered that it was simply “to draw spontaneously on the reservoir of possibilities at the moment of performance to make *a true indeterminate performance*, the outcome of which would be different each time and unpredictable....” (Bernstein & Hatch, 2001) While writing a discourse on specific subject of knowledge, to many, should never be equal to piano-playing, yet *how my fingers move on to the next sentence and my thoughts over-flow to the next possible fragments of “re-discovered” knowledge would seem to be an event performed instantaneously to the flip of my ever-self-activating body-mind fluid, consciously and subconsciously counter-proposing ideas and possibilities of knowledge to that I once missed, learnt, experienced and encountered. I write on, as if I play on, to the truthfulness of that particular frame of body-mind to a specific time and space unveiled in the course of creating an alternative synthesis of paradigms that is coherent to the subject of exploration through the arts. It is precisely from that extensive experience of attaining the true quality of “indeterminate performance” throughout my career as a theatre-*

*maker, a teacher and a “social worker,” i.e. a person who works in the society, am I eventually to abstract and build my theory of self-actions hereafter.*

**Community:** Instead of taking the word in the sense of “a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, shared governance, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage,”<sup>72</sup> or a relationship which produces a strong sense of shared identity, or common interests which is not dependent on physical location (O’Donnell, 1992; Hawtin, Hughes and Percy-Smith, 1994; Harte, 2000), I would be taking it on as “an assemblage of interacting bodies within the biological bodily system.” If one cannot settle the “community interests” or “associated properties” within the bodily system, as already *possessed* predeterminately, or, as Popple analyzed, that community work theory is “rather a clutch of theories which can broadly be divided into categories related to macro-theories of society,” (1995:32) common individual may have intrinsic difficulties to learn or appreciate the word and its related nature in sociological term. Therefore, **the community performance as proposed hereafter would spring from the bodily community from within, i.e. the biological elements living within the bodily region under relatively similar “environmental conditions” of the self being, interacting with one another based on interdependent organismic community interests. It is a concept elaborated from ecological perspectives.** I treat it as a foundation for the building of the eventual self-awareness of any potential social community, where, similarly, “intent, belief, resources, preferences, needs, risks, and a number of conditions may be present and common, affecting the identity of the [inhabited members] and their degree of cohesiveness.”<sup>73</sup> Of course, it does not mean working towards such “small” individual gains and improvements through innovative workshops would indirectly weaken any potential collective actions for the bigger community. I see the importance of the **empowerment of the internal community within the self as the foundation for any radical change of the community outside before putting the self in context of a regional or national community level,** where only filled with incomprehensible ideologies and domains of education, egalitarianism and politics often redefined on “multiplicity of discourse which

may or may not be articulated into the current hegemony of the state,” (Sayer, 1986) something that are fairly alien to the daily living of common folk.

### ***Behind Theorizing alternative Social Practices through Art***

God knows if my work would be, as the renowned scientist David Bohm described in *On Creativity*, the art of a scientist – “to find in the reality in which he lives a certain oneness and totality, or wholeness, constituting a kind of harmony that is felt to be beautiful.” Just when Bohm recognized that the scientist is perhaps not basically different from the artist, the architect, the musical composer, etc., who all want to create this sort of thing in their work (Bohm, 1996), **in building such a paradigm of wholeness (Bohm, 1980) and creativity, I have decided to allow the freedom of an art-maker and a theatre practitioner to re-define an alternative path in creating the *scientific research* as set forth. Art would be depicted, not in the sense stereotypically viewed as solely functioned on self-expression and communication, but rather representing performance made through specific observations and sense of reasoning, engineered and realized through specific materials and craft at specific structured space and time frame. Through participatory, ephemeral, process-oriented, provisional and conceptual strategies (Hoffman & Jonas, 2005) evolved in performance through the arts, I also see a chain of alternative schematic forms in the process of writing, lifting me up to conjectures and refutations through tentative trials and error eliminations, as inspired by American philosopher Karl Popper, over materials lived, experienced, imagined, observed and deciphered through the *theatrical frames* specially devised to revisit my own past, with perspectives I equally shared with participants in my**

**educational workshops.** Reflecting my 49-year<sup>74</sup> Hong Kong experience would mean an important platform to infiltrate the social psyche of the body-mind besieged under specific political, social and cultural background, seeking not only to understand the place my bodily system inhabited, but also the works and products (including the people) through it embodied or realized. **The arts would serve as an alternative apparatus for setting up alternative platform, or bridges with alternative view, to provide teachers, social workers and parents alternative angles into social work and education, through which hoping to derive a series of tentatively applicable “cross-disciplinary methodology” (be it possibly in modes that could be ‘non-method’ driven) thereupon.** While it was in the teaching of art to children that the revolution in modern education made itself first felt, (Gombrich, 1995) **I see,** as inspired by the Austrian Art Education pioneer Franz Cizek (1865-1946), **not only “the need to have people’s talent to unfold in freedom till they were ready for the appreciation of artistic standards,”** (Viola, 1936) **but also the need to unveil repressive thoughts and emotions that would help many to unleash a new sense of community built within the body-mind, allowing them to perform and reconstruct an identity** (Goffman, 1959) **and thus reinforce the language** (Austin, 1962), **and get to know the multi-disciplinary nature of the world at large** (Goldberg, 1979). The paper about to come to senses would be a literary painting of a human tapestry, unwinding the learning mind through history of events, emotions and intelligence of specific human body-mind. It would be **a portraiture of a subjective being *in-search-of-better-self-through-art-frameworks*, interweaving through the streams of consciousness, depicting new insight on alternative ways of charting,**

**surveying, scanning the landscape of the human body-mind peculiarly nurtured in a place like Hong Kong.**

If I *am* to re-examine my body ontologically through “being-in-itself” to “being-for-itself” and “being-for-others,” as suggested by Sartre (2003:103-126; 330-374), I would probably get myself trapped totally within the still debatable philosophical boundaries and shift too far away from common comprehension, since the paper is supposed **to develop a *practice theory* on re-building the sense of an innovative self for ordinary people**. From Aristotle, Hegel, Heidegger, Sartre to Badiou and all relative philosophers alike, not mentioning the roots of Chinese influence from Laozi and Confucius, in search of the concept of consciousness in relating to the mind-body, the course of building a grand narrative and linguistic-construction of the sense of existential being is in fact quite alien to the everyday understanding of common folk who does not necessarily comprehend the idealism, i.e. the *grand* picture, and likely absurdity behind the discourses as unfolded. If these philosophers are truly here (and there) to better furnish the layperson, not the intellectual elite, the possibly comprehensive language of the lived/living body, should there not be a *toolbox* to provide alternative rendition of every individual self and allow each set of body-mind the needed reflexivity and insight of emancipation? Through the inspiring work of Frederick Matthias Alexander<sup>75</sup> on examining the psycho-physical mechanism of the body-mind, it would put me yet to another level of research no longer secluded in areas over the ontological body but the alternative routes for better everyday understanding of the possible roles of science and philosophy in daily living other than meta-narratives. I gear my focus not heavily on books, but rather the phenomena of



living being in everyday life that could be re-opened for re-examination. As a result, the physical work with actors/participants in theatre the past 30 years have helped me set forth the creative workshops I held for young people, teachers and social workers, through which **to develop some possible tools to furnish ordinary folks the needed innovation in problem solving for the self.**

To Sartre, he suggested an investigation into the interiority of consciousness is impossible<sup>76</sup> where actions of human beings as viewed would be bound from *engaged* knowledge, with consciousness “always pass beyond the existent, not toward its being, but toward the *meaning of this being.*” (Ibid, 18 / original italics) Alexander would on the other hand free us back to an internal investigation of our own physical body, especially on *physical habits* and *mental habits*, through reviewing its reactions often arbitrarily induced by the habitual separation of mind and body. “Alexander found that habits, whether ‘physical’ habits or ‘mental’ habits, are all psychophysical in nature. He observed that how we think about our activities determines how we coordinate ourselves to do those activities, and, equally, how long-held habits of excessive tension and inefficient coordination affect how we feel and think.” (Goldberg, 2002) In a way, the subjective *being* as questioned by Sartre and the body as re-unveiled by F.M. Alexander would not necessarily contradict each other but rather take me to another level of consciousness in researching on the phenomenological landscape of the body-mind and the community performance driven inside that are very much synonymous with community changes on the outside. In fact, instead of isolating the studies solely on the duality of such proportion, **I would make the search** not entirely on metaphysical level but rather **on the phenomenological sense of daily being as**

**unveiled through art activities, especially those re-examined through theatrical frameworks.** What Sartre and F.M. Alexander, as well as many others, would help trigger the studies of living interiority as constituted by individual self-being and the nature of observations on such individual(s). What Sartre proposed has in fact put forth some warning signs for me in my investigations: “metaphorically, I am too close to my interiority to see it for what it is...because I am my interiority and if A is close to B then A is not B,” (Priest, 2000:131) which means that the design of theatrical frameworks to unveil individual interiority would only be beneficial to the first person singular, i.e. the participating body within the private actions activated thereof. In other words, the ability to acknowledge the participating self the consciousness of the being-in-actions through theatrical frameworks would be the essential cross-disciplinary learning to be explored hereafter, something “outside” the prescribed “professional disciplines” as proposed by institutions. The work as inspired by Alexander would be the related experiential learning thereof as endorsed by Dewey as part of the *constructive conscious control of the individual*.<sup>77</sup> As a theatre director, I can easily understand the impact of physical injury<sup>78</sup> once encountered by F.M. Alexander as an actor. The amazing thing is his power of self-examination thereafter to overcome such physical phenomenon left untackled by physicians and the findings of sources in the use of self through self-transformation based on discoveries of the body-mind once got trapped in one’s habitus without granting the needed attention. Thus, **it is the innovation of the self behind such personal journey of self-discovery, rather than the “techniques” as invented, draws my initiatives to build up an alternative coherent practice theory for social workers and teachers in cultivating the power of self-exploration through play.**

As the matrix of support and inspiration for art and theatre is mainly devised from the living phenomena of the community, working with theatre-makers, and others through arts-in-education, stories and performances, owned and presented by these people, would become a major resource of meanings to be deciphered and valued in the course of materializing ideas and concepts deduced from science, philosophy and everyday living. The observations, actions and findings are not simply out there for the taking. They are all *sacred* in their own special ways through which we could map out the fault lines of our forever shifting community, a place long buried in the deep tissues of our body-mind and actions thereupon driven. **All actions, as such depicted in workshops, performances, and creative art works, represent some “definitional ceremonies,” according to anthropologist Barbara Meyerhoff (1986:267), a form of community autobiography through which we could gain perspectives in the nature of beings transmuted in a society like ours. Beings, with significant boundaries, social networks and norms, call out for actions through specific performances, through which meanings that were entangled once would float into all kinds of directions, allowing us to re-open living voices, expanding a theory paper into the realm of difference, mounting on “the gap between the unsayable and the said,” (Kuppers, 1998) looking for an alternative landscape to make flights. The act of theorizing would be an exploration journey of the self and the other, seeking a combination of thinking and intervention through art-in-performance as a means of dealing with individual reality in an alternative form of *social intervention*.** As Brecht suggested in *The Messingkauf Dialogues* on how Marxism posited such method, it may lead us to certain judgments of phenomena,

certain predictions and suggestions for practical action (Brecht, 1965), not altogether as perceived back then, but likely re-opening up some missing channels in empowering community performance within the body in the years to come. In face of the existing globalized market economy where the perception of art is indeed heading into an abyss of control and calculation oriented reasoning, crucified by military-like organizational discipline endorsed by globalized enterprises, I have yet to be more specific in articulating the potential alternative social functions of the arts for a society burnt up with uncertainties fueled by experts, media elite, often with social policy and education system that reinforces elitism<sup>79</sup>. Therefore, **mounting a grid for this paper would be like putting on a theatrical performance in a series of meditation in five acts: Chapter 1, *Beyond the Sky of Birth* (or *The contemplation of Re-birth out of Infinite Multiplicity*); Chapter 2, *Ghosts Play* (or *Apparitional Synthesis of Body-Mind in 14 parts*); Chapter 3, *DreamWorks* (or *Beyond the Crest of Daily Dreamscape and its Timely Effect*); Chapter 4, *Drumming Voices* (or *Marrying Ideas in Transformative Landscape of the Body-mind*); and Chapter 5, *Remapping the Mapped* (or *Rediscovering the community within the polymathic self...*). They flow one onto the other, contemplating my way to discover all the possible actions in the course of “playing,” something that have been serving as the core of my work designed for such purposes, hoping that new spirits may be revived in due course. Thus, the chapters to follow would be a series of “performances-of-words” mounted on theatrical frameworks, not self-absorbed, but rather, as to our ancient ancestors’ beliefs, developing a dialogical play with the world where everything, be they mundane or minute, in life, things and beings, *matters*.**

When art has long been stereotyped in our society as something “extra” and “lack of true function for the economy,” it would often be superficially discarded and classified as “impractical” for making a living among many parents, teachers, and social critics. It is often misinterpreted and only called in for window dressing of cultural parades for elites. Consequently, the teaching of art and theatre and the use of such in education have been weak and inactive or purely on a vocational training basis.<sup>80</sup> In view of the consultation paper delivered by the Committee on Performing Arts released on November 2005 in Hong Kong, it rarely touches the social and cultural needs for the profound and sublime. For these people in power, they often find the life-expression of great art to yield for the organic group consciousness easily irritating and unsound to our society, with the exception when they find it “marketable” to their own benefits. Yet, contrary to what the popular culture promotes, that members of the Committee strongly advocate, as something conventional, normal and safe, a good artist is often set out to raise the community consciousness to its collective instinct and, as the great poet William Wordsworth perceived, allow the work to penetrate into the *tragic* significance of life. I believe each human could be a special kind of artist in respect to the latent bigger-than-life-expression often concurred in the course of one’s daily performance, if only if one is willing to cultivate a mind for such spiritual values. In a city shaped by social hegemony that so often instituted inequality and oppression, by allowing only economic gains (no less political as well) often mean to discourage any seeking from collective action, not mentioning the liberating wishes among art-makers and those who are hungry for social, political and cultural changes. Consequently, art and theatre activities have mostly been retained and categorized only through *productivity*; they are often patronized through level of success and competitiveness in

the market. Many have even been struggling to gain their effectiveness in utilizing whatever existing technological devices available in order to pump up the needed energy for sponsors' attention. As social and art critics are shifting from structuralist methods to focusing on popularized study of processes, performance off a hamburger-eating contest would likely enter the eventual major art scene, not only drawing its viewers into "activity concerned with the acquisition of power, or gaining one's own ends," (Rosendale, 1996) but also fabricating a wider spectrum of art-for-consumption that has already infiltrated the arts and media market. All arts festivals are extensive signs of such exploitative grandeur. Eventually, an art maker would diminish to beliefs of the capitalists, as Herbert Read described, "he must evolve a design that is cheap to produce and easy to sell, which means that he must disguise his cheap materials with veneer and varnish and other shams...such is production for profit." (Read, 1963:17) Should art simply vanquished as is? And faded into meaningless actions? Should art-in-action be set out to retrigger the 100 trillion connections that made and packed in the neocortex of our brain, revitalizing the deadening engine of the body-mind? I have decided to go **back to the basics, through simple play, to rejuvenate the sacredness of everything that bypassed our frame of being. This paper is an attempt to share with the readers experience cooked in performances, re-evaluating the ever-present creativity and cross-awareness in human hood.**

The arts, unlike the science that looks for and find factual answers to questions related to our physical world, help to explore our emotional and spiritual needs, and subsequently help to shape our physical environment (Preble, 1973). **Like science, art also requires disciplines in search of human concepts of reality, only that such**

**reality is often not presented in words, but more than words: out of human desires and emotion, fears and fantasies** (Read, 1963). Rainer Maria Rilke once echoed and wrote in *Letters to a Young Poet* (February 17, 1903, my bold fonts) to his young correspondent, “I can't give you any advice but this: **to go into yourself and see how deep the place is from which your life flows; at its source you will find the answer to the question whether you must create. Accept that answer, just as it is given to you, without trying to interpret it. Perhaps you will discover that you are called to be an artist. Then take the destiny upon yourself, and bear it, its burden and its greatness, without ever asking what reward might come from outside. For the creator must be a world for himself and must find everything in himself and in Nature, to whom his whole life is devoted.**”<sup>81</sup> While it may be a major struggle to attain any “artistic grandeur” or “achievement-by-the-capitalists-scale,” there is hope to retain art as the vital cultural bridge in narrowing the spiritual gap that had gone afoul and almost incomprehensible when the rise of institutional governance set out to debilitate any possible face-to-face interactions or mutual interconnections among common citizens. There is hope if the idea of the self could be renovated through a different façade, other than those evaded by the ever-over-powering existence of organizations.

Do we need to turn to philosophers all the time to understand the idea of the self? If “self awareness,” as Julian Paul Keenan defined, “is the ability to reflect on one’s own mental state and the capacity to regard the self as a different entity from the others,” (Keenan, 2003:5) **the studying of *self* throughout my career in theatre and creative workshops with young and old folks alike had brought me to a series of specific**

*community performance* that reflect our place and age. The distinctive quality of each of their performance brought forth through workshop processes and representations made out of installation, puppets, dance, theatre, story writing, wordplay, games, percussions, photography, masks, video, web design, and mime etc. would take us into their sphere of living, unveiling their physical and social experience consciously or unconsciously omni-folded. In the process of seeking an objective confirmation of their receptive subjectivity experienced in social situations, people participated in the process of arts-in-the-making, be they audience or spectators, would be bound by the complexity of a series of relations propelled through reflective images, distantly delineated through specific acts of performance, which are often not revealed as “product-for-sale” but rather specific stages of presenting their shifting views in life. Recordings of such performances would call for a vital part of this paper so as to allow us a deeper look into the role of the arts and its alternative aspects in re-defining the community living organically within the body.

### *Meditation times Five*

I see this paper in the form of vinculum embrangled in five acts, a continuing search for *family secrets* and its *effect* after my previous endeavor in *The Seventh Drawer*<sup>82</sup>, a play I wrote in search of my father back in 2002. In picking up threads from my previous artistic journey, the search made here would be another aspect of examination over a life, and a body, once lived and to live. Through play, as the basis I designed my research through action-performance-made-in-the-arts, I am here to delineate the thoughts, the ideas, the history and the body I once intensely engaged, entangled, and



eventually emancipated, where bodies and minds of others, be they met in theatre, schools, workshops or everyday encounters, were crisscrossed. **This paper is not as straightforward, or as structured, as conventional thesis writing; much of the distinctive value may lie precisely within the fabrics of the notable stream of consciousness it displays, and the poetic and theatrical system as adopted, strongly echoing the methodology of narratives and workshops as held, in search of a world once entrapped in obstructive prejudices and dogmas.** Henceforth, I take the liberty of drafting such a framework to build an imaginary scaffold for my paradigm, mounting an elaborating grid *in search of a theoretical self-action system of body-mind, which can be freely adopted for self-education and social services as an alternative approach for self-empowerment.* **My excursions into the intellectual domains would ultimately guide me to the conceptions of a missing horizon that may be bountiful, an alternative sense of autonomy in learning for teachers, social workers and students in the years to come in rebuilding a new sense of reality by reconstructing their own autobiographies through art-play.**

In John Dewey's words, it would be my attempt to explore "experiences as art," through which, as proposed in his book *Art as Experience*, "successive parts flow freely, without seam and without unfilled blanks, into what ensues," most of all, "no sacrifice of the self-identity of the parts." (Dewey, 2005) To Dewey, "the course of art in education should be continuous with natural impulses, community values and ordinary-normal everyday experiences which influence the work of art in a multitude of ways." (Cannatella, 2007) I would here forth further explore something beyond the "art experiences" as perceived by Dewey. Instead, **I intend to set art in**

**theatrical frameworks, not to limit its dynamics and value but rather to surpass the unrealistic sentiment of “treat[ing] works of art as a kind of sublimated Aesop’s fables,” (Dewey, 2005:360) reconstructing the body-mind in valuing the natural preciousness of ordinary experiences in daily living.** Thus, it is through the theatre/art platform which facilitates learners’ seeking of alternative possibilities of living options never realized and yet might be realized. In Dewey’s final words in his above-mentioned book, *“Art is a mode of prediction not found in charts and statistics, and it insinuates possibilities of human relations not to be found in rule and precept, admonition and administration.”* (2005:363) *It is in fact an educational tool to nourish individual understanding of the self and the lived body-mind, where possibly seeded “the power of what is most deep-lying” and “below consciousness.”* (Ibid, 74)

Thus, here below set forth are the backdrops for the *plays* of action research through the arts, free willed, thought and unthought, winded and unwinded, which are all subsequently to be deciphered and interiorized, re-exploring the underlying humanity and experiences once crude or yet-to-make-profound, empirically and transcendently speaking, imprinted along the finitude of footsteps made in life, where historical forces that are organic, economic, linguistic, etc. constantly operating on the very heart of the self-as-being and the self-as-itself. What I am about to *think* may not be what I really *am*, especially when the content of reality as lived, including those perceived and remained unperceived; what I am about to expose may be, or in fact *is*, often more than the content of my working, living, and speaking, and all those beyond, through theatrical frameworks I often use for creative workshops. The ineliminable *other* of the

unthought and the unsung mind would always be part of the living phenomena, pulling me into the paradoxical being of searching for systems of ideas, human and things, as *origins* and the *originated*, through the arts embodiment of explorations on textuality of time, space, and actions, delineating an alternative system of self-actions, a landscape re-liberated for the body and the mind. The following are **the *backdrop*** of a man preparing such *play mediation* in five *Acts*:

### ***1. Beyond the Sky of Birth***

In exploring the ordinary “oneness” in a common person and the phenomenon of inescapable socio-biological processes taken places from the very beginning of physical existence, I set out to retrace the mystery behind birth through the story of my own birth. If all birth of ideas spring from the birth of particular bodies, would the multi-layered presentation of the self since infant to adulthood, be it socially constructed or culturally conceptualized, not underline any serious implications for us to understand the development, or acquisition, of “oneness” perceived or strived for at times or in due course? In the course of reclaiming the sole rights to narrate one’s personal story, should we not be aware of narrativity too grand, with subject probably too alienated to the common body-mind? If being ordinary could still be an *extraordinary* experience, how should we re-proceed in studying the process of formation of this ordinary oneness cultivated in us and sorting the possible paths of oneness there are possibly comprehensible, with accessible innovation to overcome common problems in daily living? If the theatre begins with an empty space, it may be a perfect place to re-examine the birth of a physical body and the ideas given birth to thereof...

*Since the “origins” of me, I “recognized,”  
started with a birth that also signified death  
(My mother died on the very next hour after delivering me to this world), the  
search of the birth of a Body, or the  
Birth of a Child, had somewhat substituted by the birth of death,  
Acutely bringing me an early conceptualization of  
a “short-and-yet-full” life cycle: infinitely irreversible  
(which modern biotechnologists may optimistically disagree)<sup>83</sup>,  
an essential test  
to all human...  
When the sky of birth was indeed once painted grey,  
with feet abandoned, and a mother crucified,  
would sunlight, bright  
and yet without feeling it,  
have long left its scar on my chest, my brain, my thighs,  
and my bed of upbringing,  
reshaping the route of biochemical substances in me,  
channeling my cognitive and moral development in repressive corners,  
“speculating” a life,  
that corresponds only locations built in dreams,  
or caught in the cul-de-sac of “eternity?”  
The drama brought forth from life-death trauma at birth  
had eventually  
given me the birth of ideas:  
What happened inside my mother’s womb  
was a room, a space, a world,  
a “subject-in-process,”<sup>84</sup>  
a series of chain relationship  
that preceded my birth!  
Being an artist in theatre,  
implanted with  
unsettling passions and healing wounds  
stirred by birth,*

*I follow many-a-path paved by playwrights,  
rediscovering the clues of character life  
once contained,  
as if following their experiential patterns,  
including prenatal ones,  
seeking their behavior templates  
for postnatal references...  
Wound of Mother,  
barely healed and then taken leap into dream actions,  
mixing bliss and pain, silently  
raging wars in the old survival fairground of the living.  
Life before Birth long began...  
Life after Birth begets new birth after all...*

*I  
re-visit  
the idea of a conceptual Birth  
through  
the birth of  
a creative workshop;  
the experience rejuvenated the once disillusioned daily deeds,  
transcending anxiety into new confidence, giving  
birth of yet more ideas that  
nurture rebirth of new feelings to  
the self-as-being...  
Such being-in-itself  
have long had its fingers, toes and teeth  
rooted deep  
in the tissues of  
the world before Mother's womb,  
flowing through Time  
in umbilical blood...  
Even now, I can still see,  
in Mothers' Womb, the Sky of Birth*

*that buries the cries of the protesting, philosophically,  
the whirlwind of alternatives (or the lack of one)  
from the long line of prenatal order.*

*I  
still hear  
the child in me  
playing the mother,  
forever wondering where the tummy pain would go  
even if I were told to lie down...*

*I am glad I didn't! Not until death...  
knowing that  
I still have to dub  
new templates  
for many-an-unborn-child-to-come...*

*I learn to pay attention to child play ever since.... even when it doesn't fit the "development model," as commonly identified by our society; even when it is consumed by commercials, as displayed and fabricated around every household and street corner; even when it becomes scarce and almost holy, as not many people value*

*the innocent birth of*

*a simple idea!*

*The freshness and openness in children gives birth a sky  
vast and bright, which is mostly missing,  
or suppressed,  
in adult world,  
where often caught only with ideas formed  
and rarely "give place  
to those in the process of being formed"<sup>85</sup>...*

*In the Sky of Birth,  
an ever-going process of  
re-arrangement of cells forever yielding...*

*the human body,  
as a community within an entity,  
reverberating  
with  
innumerable unsettling feelings,  
as if “Window Water Baby Moving”<sup>86</sup> still,  
unveiling the beauty of birth in human...  
and the community performance thereupon following...*

## **2. Ghosts play**

If the act of storytelling and the making of artwork could become transformative acts to synthesize our body-mind, how are we to reopen routes to make better contact with the ghosts in us all? Would allowing the self to unfold alternative methods in narrating past stories and experiences mean the innovative effort to seek new source in life? This chapter would set out to examine the possible variables in re-articulating particular human emotions and issues through innovative spectrum, through which to transform untouchable family knots and stories into resource for continuous transgression in the name of *apparitional synthesis*. Through 14 floating segment of thoughts over casual things and thoughts along side with the sublime provided by scholars, from death, family closet, to ancestral trail, we are to revisit the family events and portraits to re-examine the scaffolding of upbringing through the living pigments of shame and feelings beyond normal comprehension of the bodily system. It is an effort of painting silence to unravel the rite of passage in living.

*I had been told not to rage wars with “ghosts”  
when  
I was still very small.*

*It took me years to learn to play and make friends with “ghosts.” While the “ghost” of my mother has taken different shapes since her death, as if still burying a “living” fetus, silently pretending the absence of a womb, waiting for its date of “no-pain-delivery,” my body, with emotions seemingly forever “fetus-sized,” responded only to calls “interiorized.” I had developed a web of active inner-monologues through silent observations, deciphering the walk of ghosts, with stories unfolded in the mean streets, squares, houses, schools, churches and temples, revealing stories told and re-told under the constant recurrence of “wickedness” and “foul play” due to missing life-experience, rebelling to unlearn through ideologies, philosophy, theatre, folk lore and thoughts told by others...*

*Until one day I discover*

*The ghosts in others and me*

*...that*

*evoked a sense of reality within*

*the body untackled*

*...All actions were, at times, as if*

*acts of exorcism,*

*dwelling upon wishes for the birth of new spirit,*

*and*

*re-direct new acts of defense*

*against the dispossessed*

*...In following*

*Ibsen’s tradition, I created my own theatre of “ghosts,” taken along with me a Pasolinian effect with a touch of Beijing Opera, to make things said, played, or shouted, only till then will my body-mind be “able to free itself, and begin my discourse on reality” (Pasolini, 1996). I have made such a discourse on “exorcism” through a series of performances through reflective self-actions. I put forth such “revitalizing” actions to everyday practice, seeking to re-map the landscape of a “wake” for body cells once haunted by ghosts. I learned, and am still learning, to rework my body in “ghostly” chat with all “little friends” I have still been hosting in my flesh. I learnt to recover the production of free energy that required for vital cellular metabolism, as if re-issuing new enzymatic and structural “protein” to my brain cells. I learnt to*



*play with the unmediated “ghosts” through acute observation and intervening the brain wave, re-locating the displaced perception cast upon my viewfinder by “others,” transforming them into new agencies to metamorphose the unbecoming of “finitude” in life.*

*I created workshops “playing with ghosts,” freeing from one’s omni-zest for epistemic security. It seeks to re-materialize the body-mind properties introspected or conceptualized both by the self and the other. I gather new information among performance made by actors, teachers, students, social workers, and all observed friends, enemies and others, and re-disclose the “partitions” once built in the making of the self. It is a “no-magic” and “no-nonsense” system of “make-believe,” opening up new ventilations for new breath, re-structuring the systems of thoughts, and unthought, impelled upon the anatomy. Self-referential as it may always seem, as Searle (1983) once argued, the “newly acquired” intention of such psychological and physiological performance may not set out to fulfill only the intention itself, it may be extending to the realm beyond self-understanding, discerning motivating desires and beliefs, through reflective reasoning that allow self-fulfillment, in spite of the “ghosts” forever-watching...*

It is a play of “ghosts” reconstruct,  
making interdisciplinary enquiry into memory,  
be they phenomenological or casual,  
semantic or episodic,  
habitual or procedural,  
accumulated or unsung,  
long or short,  
and take them all into plays through the arts...

*“Ghosts” talk; we respond.*

### **3. DreamWorks**

While many would see dreams as only flying fancies with substances of size no good to daily living, this chapter is to re-investigate through my personal journey, looking into the effect of the synthesized self with dreams setting out to mount a living canvas often found not negotiable. Through re-identification of familiar objects buried with social, cultural and family ghosts, in which seeded our *first-tiered experiences* since birth, we are to go through an in-depth journey of seeking new perspectives to interpret old thoughts and new routes for alternative performances of the self. In the course of untying the map of dreams and its effect and possible sizes, the daily dreamscape could possibly provide us the source of new actions if only if we allow our observations to trace through triviality and the missing object experiences that kept our fancies checked, with hidden actions to be fulfilled and dreamt on. While I have learnt to resettle the disturbances in me and have them transformed into DreamWorks, it is important to study the “intervention” of dreams, not those imposed by outsiders but the enlightening acts of self-empowerment inspired by dreams. Before and after dreaming, are not there always some discoveries or confession to make, as if seeking actions upon the unconscious and allow the self to remount new confidence on the arena of multiplicity transpired through the lived/living body-mind?

*“Did my work make thorough examination over the body?”*

*“Were your body there when you work?”*

*“Where could I see the very image of the body through these objects of work?”*

*“Were you clothed at work? Or naked?”*

*“As were the objects...”*

*“...”*

*“I x-rayed my body through the hand of my consciousness!”*

*“Objects never do!”*

*“Or were they simply being bypassed, or ignored, through cultural installations?”*

*“Give me speakers!”*

*“Where to find them?”*

*“In your laughs, your cries, your sighs, your giggling, your mumbling...”*

*“What if I were tongue-tied?”*

*“So were the objects then.”*

*“Make up words, couldn’t we?”*

*“We did that all along, without noticing them.”*

*“Have you looked into the interior of the words spoken?”*

*“You mean the signs?”*

*“...”*

*“Who did the thinking: the body or the mind?”*

*“The objects!”*

*“...”*

*“I recalled a special experience of swimming: It was winter. Snowing outside. A big pool. Toronto. Nobody around. All alone. Me and the pool. Sun shining through the glass wall. The water glowed. My body weak and unprepared. Only memory of swimming through stretches of arms and legs. A drowning memory surged in. 50 metres across. The depth of the pool. I see the water in volume. And my body in molecules. I weighed both. I weighed the space, the light and the stillness of the water. I weighed my mind. I jumped into the water...”*

*“You were in tears, after two hours of non-stop stretches of an order newly found...”*

*“Was it the objects, or the objectifiable body, that impelled to speak?”*

*“It was a swim back into the streams of consciousness.”*

*“That very structures stretched through space and time...”*

*“Re-reaching the dead lands of objects!”*

*“Re-invent new signs!”*

Thereupon such “discoveries,” I set up a platform of diversion through the arts. It is an attempt to open up self-actions, re-tracing the writing imprinted by objects that had once overtaken us into a domain of sign outside the body largely dominated, or encompassed, all the perpetually interacting aspects of social reality. All propagated ‘necessities’ in the make-up of our object world have become obstacles built within the body, dangerously establishing their habitat in the veins of our mind. These noises collected under roof(s) deserve alternative analogies. We have to discover new routes to go beyond them...

*Having driven  
from one identity to the other,  
having been discharged  
from one signifier to the other,  
the bodily drive,  
with desire decomposed,  
forever searching  
through havoc,  
until  
a new face appear  
to remap territories, systems, files,  
and historicity  
once  
manifold  
to  
the pyramids  
of  
past events...*

*only in the end  
to find  
that  
“I’ll have to wander all alone”<sup>87</sup>  
through  
whatever events to come...*

To Plato, a chair is a chair and no more than its utilitarian nature. In play, a chair<sup>88</sup> may not be just a chair for sitting. Its existing nature depends a great deal on the actions thereupon drawn or driven, which could be, and indeed was the ‘danger’ as Plato once stated, totally contrary to his student Aristotle’s belief on the art of imitation. The ‘noises’ collected from such a chair-in-action, not as a physical entity, would bear not only properties influenced by the existence of the object, but also bear relations to the chain of actions set forth upon other objects as well. Then when there is no one sitting on a chair, would it still be a chair, or a transformation of reality in disguise, through play? Re-discover through voluntary play and allowing the body-mind temporarily suspended from normal social life, we may be able to re-build a self-action theory upon the simple play — Let a chair be anything! It would produce a space, its own space, through a new organization of performance. Opening opportunities for interaction between objects and the body would allow active creation of one’s surroundings, and subsequently the state of body-mind. In so deducing a new situation that isolated one from normal life, I expand a series of experiment of self-actions, freely reconstructing alternative dynamics in conception of life. In so believed the formation of play, I revisit the rooms, the houses, the ‘homes’ and temporary dwellings. I swim through noises...

*In objects infiltrating all living space around our houses,  
Which carry many notions personal, social, political,  
or ethical  
to the makeup of a single being...  
There are ways to re-locate these noises heard  
And dislocate all the unnecessary means  
through diversion...  
This is not a play soundproofed!  
This is a play with noises, made from the "otherness"...*

*Through studying the textuality of such 'otherness,'  
the exercise of self-actions would be made possible.  
Through the arts,  
we re-climb the social stairs;  
turn new keys;  
uplift signs signified by other;  
re-discover the original behind copies;  
touch base with the reality  
and  
the essentials...*

#### **4. Drumming Voice**

It is a chapter examining the journey in un-discovering *the innovated self*, where seated the third-tiered experiences. Through theatrical frameworks and the course of unfolding family marriages to incubate ideas, how are we to reconstruct stories from experiences remained locked in specific positioning, with thread and bandages still clinging onto daily living situations? Allowing the body-mind to look into the nature of things, circumstances, and relationship among objects, subject and participating bodies, we are to explore the alternatives to ignite ideas of reconstructing the possible

shapes of self-to-be. It is often through the special visit to human hesitation, waiting, fear, anxiety, lack of trust, and wearies that help one learn regenerate such sentiments and small stories into innovative perspectives, with ever-ready observation to re-narrate the ever-evolving living circumstances unfolded by play as devised. Six theatrical frameworks are designed to unfold stories of family marriages, they serve as creative synthesis to open alternative channels for better reflection of the self. *It is to examine the possible process of unpeeling ideas prescribed by other and learning to recognize/eliminate irrelevant materials in the course of theatre/art/play expedition.*

“Unhappiness, I thought, would have given me a contaminated view of reality.” Simone de Beauvoir once said (Rorty, 2003). I had been very unhappy, both as an individual and a social being; my mind and body were once severely contaminated....

*My grandfather had four wives. The last was my grandmother; in seek of a boy to inherit the “family flame.” My father had married four times (one never verified). The first with a wife died of childbirth, i.e. me; the second and third divorced; the fourth, still “surviving,” yet with acute bitterness.*

*Four brothers. Two of them stepbrothers. All married. “Safe” and “sound,” with license!*

*Four sisters. Three of them stepsisters. Two divorced once. One twice. One remained single. Later, one of them remarried, and then divorced again. Now remained single. The only hopeful one recently gets separated.*

*I married once, a teenage wedding, where all relatives retreated from attending the signing of the social contract. Only two people were reluctantly there to serve as “eyewitnesses.” The “bride,” already 5-month pregnant, and the*

*“bridegroom,” barely finished secondary school. We were in causal clothes. We “celebrated” in a desert shop, eating red bean soup. The marriage didn’t last, of course. Yet it took us 13 years to pull out, not together, but separately, from the trauma of divorce, all because each trapped by our own false perceptions on the nature of marriage and how it should have been, on top of all, forever fighting against the curse cast upon us by the society for “being too young.” Never have the courage to marry again, or believe in such “socially sanctioned bond” for a sexual relationship. While the marriage was never meant to be “holy” or seen as something worth celebrating by adults, our son was raised under the shadow of “not being wanted,” (a great paradox that had once been haunting me since my own birth) with both parents suffering from the aftereffect of being labeled for “abnormal matrimony.” We were never “domestic partners”; still learning to digest the adverse effects of “marriage,” an institution only to legitimize the child, conferring “rights” and “obligations” of things no longer intimate or loved.*

*Were we “married” only to a forced value, or a system of control, making it a prerequisite for legalized sexual intercourse? Or simply to refrain from being charged criminally for teenage pregnancy? Not a person mentioned the word of love, as if love is impossible among teens, especially when “unlawful sexual behavior” was never concurred by the society at large. The whirlwind of social condemnation and economic issues in childbearing had long over-shadowed the romance short-lived. While we were too young and too poor to hold any kind of worthy “community property,” we had literally become the property to serve the good end of an institution well thought for the “necessity” of “pragmatics,” not for love. Being supposedly classified as the “unmarriageable,” and breaking the moral code of “wait-till-you-are-no-longer-in-the-minor-league,” the “marriage” had suffered from a “premature-ejaculation-curse”! These memories had much a deep effect on my urge to develop my own sense of reasoning in later years to come...*

For three generations, the least I know, the failure stands. An old Chinese saying stresses that every three generation a full ‘eco-cultural’ cycle. How could we learn from our “cycle of failure” then? Or were we not simply engaged without knowing the



tricks of the wedlock, institutionalized for the sake of manageable economy and sexual intercourse? Or were it not an attempt to rationalize romance that could easily go astray without the needed sanctification of the society?

*I was never married again. I wasn't a good father, nor "experienced" enough to raise a child, trapped with the downer of being "unintentionally conceived." I had learned a lot from my own failure, also the "unintentionality" implanted in my own Mother's womb. In spite of the "suffering" implanted through my mother's womb and those I cast upon my own son, I have acquired all the experience to yet become a "father" to many young people in need then. Am I "compensating" the missing acts of being a "recognized" father, paying forward my "paternal service" to others; reconstructing alternative route to a world never quite lived up to what 'supposedly' promised? Or acts of cutting short the fatalistic continuum of pain among fellow humans?*

I have no interest in lingering on too much the "origins" of such conduct-in-the-building. I see the opportunity to realize some alternative theories in reflective self-actions, putting forth alternative values in social work and education, most of all, redeeming the lost community once innately aligned in our body-mind.

*I married to my creative work,  
re-assessing the once inflamed mind  
and the mourning  
among all  
who,  
for some 'unknown,' or not-yet-rectified, reasons,  
put their faith in marriage  
and yet failed in the system.*

*From one play to another,  
I sought for true liberation  
from the oppression of “social bondage,”  
from one generation to another...*

**I am now married to the world!**

**(hadn't I been so since a foetus in Mother's womb,  
seeking its contingency of survival?)**

**I am married to “the sense of my own contingency” (Sartre, 1977)!**

I seek the so-said “irreversible curses”  
by allowing the self to reconstruct  
a different set of value off experience  
lived and to live.  
And it is theatre that  
sets me up  
to retrace my former footprints,  
searching for the authorship of my “owned” life,  
where  
a body-mind is yet to be re-sketched, and yet re-sketched again, in order to reach its  
“fullness,” at times, in play  
...

*Re-plotting a new tapestry of marriage-plays has allowed me making new  
dialogues with parents, children, young couples, friends, relatives, teachers  
and the society as a whole, opening up routes for reflective actions:*

*plays  
to re-invent  
the marriage of objects,  
a community performance of  
signs, values, morals, ethics,  
and most of all,  
people;  
marriage that uniting “couples”*

*for aesthetic beauty,  
and honoring the hearts  
for  
understanding,  
and  
self-respect....*

### ***5. Remapping the Mapped***

This is a chapter re-visiting the depth of the previous four, re-examining the bearings of teachers/social workers in the process of remapping exercises to the fundamental root of observation inspired by the Beckettian trail. It is an in-depth reflection from the experiences and learning through those 9 years of creative workshops and seeks the best way to identify the phenomenology of experiential learning through the arts. From incidental living images to ad hoc events as depicted in daily life, how could one locate the very source of creativity and innovative power in view of seemingly trivial things in life? It sets out to re-examine the detailed criteria of multiple arts in search of the polymathic self often left unfocused in schooling. As teachers and social workers, how possibly could they re-energize the self and truly acknowledge the strengths perspectives behind art-in-actions and the alternatives for asset approach in remapping the landscape of the body-mind. There are sketches of floating thoughts on rigging an art platform seeded in the theatrical frameworks of re-telling my personal stories. Through remapping the story of my self, I see the importance of acknowledging the 3-tiered experiences within the internal community of the self before teachers and social workers are to explore the possible innovation of the other self. The writing is the

search of relocating and further developing those experiences into a possible literary map of practice approaches.

“One makes detours, goes by side roads; one sees the straight highway before one, *but of course...cannot use it, because it is permanently closed.*”<sup>89</sup> So anthropologist Clifford Geertz proclaimed.

Closed because it ISN'T ALLOWED!

Permanently because so said contradicting the interest of many?

As I keep quoting one scholar after another,

drifting from one situation to another,

letting my mind be drawn to attractions

of the “terrain”

and the “encounters”

                  touched upon,

                  like the situationalists,

entrapping myself

onto a series of illusive references

on a temporal and preferential basis,

not only to tread along

                  the scenario of academic research,

                  but also

                  the realm of personal thoughts

                  that are often obsessively constellated

                  on chaos,

not disorder,

but rather the primal emptiness,

that allow all kinds of new possibilities,

                  as the ancient Greek set out to pervade.

Such manner of

                  indeterminate selection

of references  
yields to the state of being  
as if editing images on video and film...

I  
was,  
and still am,  
vividly feeling transient  
in  
such a passage  
of  
varied ambiances...

Life is full of such ambiances!

I survive through self-actions, by inventing (and accepting) plays of ambiances! Far reachable from the prevailing risk society! Detournement! Simply to transform everyday life by the use of all possible accessible arts...

It is not the quotes that matter anymore but rather the images deduced from such words that speed me up in the highway of illusion, a path I was so used to and brought up, entailing playful-constructs where thoughts are woven through montage of images. With a different sequence of 'shots,' i.e. segments of linked words depicted in this paper, new ideas (mostly images) may be deduced, or 'simulated' (in Baudrillard's line of thought), from the creation of seemingly impossible spatial matches...

"Montage is conflict," so exclaimed Sergei Eisenstein (1942).

This frame of mind could be  
the result of watching over 500 films a year back then!

With the dramatic variations of knowledge,  
both calculated and uncalculated,  
with jump cuts,  
or frequentative editing,  
letting go,  
with the eminent existence of contradiction,  
become the core play,  
revealing a degree of honesty  
and psychogeographical observations,  
a  
collision  
of  
thoughts  
to  
create  
“the meaning of *writing!*”

In a world when “illusion only is sacred, truth profane,”<sup>90</sup> “the whole life of those societies,” as Debord opened his chapter 1 on *Society of the Spectacle* (1995), “in which modern conditions of production prevail presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. All that once was directly lived has become mere representation,” re-treading a line at the danger of complete subordination to habitual influence would mean carrying on to clarify and substantiate wandering thoughts randomly displaced, where *an alternative landscape may have been neglected in the lack of self-critique and bold hypotheses.*

A conditioned specter would always be haunting any potential creativity! With only the conformists left to ask: What do you mean? We do not understand. We need a guidebook!<sup>91</sup>

At a certain point, just when art seems to cease existing, and left deciphered only in the vein of market consumption, its potential to help aestheticize everything would mean a re-opening of boundaries where it could be used to build bridges for self-actions. Through such alternative play of art, we may be able to relieve our existence from the narrow and sterile production of consumable gimmicks, or those rules and guidance habitually elucidated by handbooks prescribed to avoid risks and illusion of any kind.

Speeding...

in view of the hyperreal society,

*where many-a-body-mind lost in shadows of simulacra...*

*the search for alternative landscape for the body and the spirit*

*in a land piled with synthetic knowledge and values*

*would mean*

*inventing play*

*in order*

*to*

*transform illusions into hope!*

*It is a play of rebuilding dreams of each own accord,*

*through reconstructs...*

*not on aesthetic form,*

*but the potential re-building of content,*

*and important truth,*

*derived*

*from*

*“wherever we take the trouble to look!”<sup>92</sup>*

in view of chaos, i.e. disorder and unpredictability,

*where only products of the same name were left*

*to tackle any ad hoc computer clustering,*

*but never on the clustering of the body-mind,*

*on the Highway of Illusions,*

*weren't there also seven perspectives<sup>93</sup> (more or less),*

*alternative and yet interconnected,*

*subjective and objective (or synthesis of both),*

*building a deepening reservoir of ideas,*

*from primal to cerebral idealistic,*

*till*

*in the end,*

*free from the human-made laws of perspectives,*

*unprejudiced by compositional logic,*

*reconstruct through*

*an adventure*

*of*

*perception....*

*The act of seeing the world,*

*not the world itself,*

*matters!*

*So once believed by Stan Brakhage<sup>94</sup>,*

*a visionary on the nature of the relationship*

*between the moving image and the world...*

Self-action begins with the ability of seeing!

Being human begins with the inner lights lit...



***Re-painting the Community Backdrop: “An old lady sings...”***

An old farm lady just went past my window. I overheard her commenting on a neighbor’s behavior with an aphorism depicted from the Confucius. I recognize her voice, an active member off the chat circle near the village parking lot. She is not ‘well-educated’ at all by any academic terms. She is in her seventies. She had not studied in any day school, before or after the Second World War. How that quotation from ancient scholar comes by the tip of her mouth can be an inviting question. How she understands and interprets the saying would yet be another meaningful cultural studies on the life of this old lady, who has been living in this once-remote village all her life. She had been a farmer and a housewife. Now retired. Her warm greeting to me is always plain and direct. Seeing her talking with other old ladies of the village circle is always a beautiful and inspiring, and yet haunting, scenario to me.

This circle seems to have been there long ago. It seats near a squatter house which is compiled of junks selected from old automobiles and wasted furniture dumped by urban drifters who happened to pass by living in the village for a year or two. These ladies sit among an old leather sofa, a small rotten and tilted bamboo stool, a funny looking homemade armchair and some plastic ‘convenient’ chairs, which altogether compose a nice enchanting picture of the ‘deserted’ kind, an intermix of old and new commodities besieged by convenience. This little circle sits precisely at the edge of the village, a community originally run by 5 big families, the Pang’s, the Kan’s, the Cheung’s, the Cheng’s and the Chan’s. I gather these ladies have been sitting there, witnessing the drastic changes of the map of the village. Around them, construction trucks keep storming in and out daily. With new young urban families come and go,

polluted wind blowing through the alleys has long taken away the ancestral tranquility once belayed upon the high village walls. New constructions added over broken roofs, greasy walls and torn balconies have become a trendy thing to do in spite of their illegitimacy. Acre by acre of land reclaimed from wasteland has turned to the favor of developers, adding names of vanity on new houses, totally tasteless and commercialized. From afar, skyscrapers have not only enclosed the former spectacular country skyline, they seem to look down at every corners of the village, like re-making the latest version of an old American movie called *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*,<sup>95</sup> stretching its invisibly-visible “snatchers” onto the body of the village, vegetating the people through capitalistic regimentation. At a distance stands the city of Shenzhen, which used to be another invisible town across the border 20 years ago. It has already climbed up so high and cast a strong shadow over this side of town. And these ladies look like having been here forever, as if chatting through these dramatic acts of urbanization at such ease. The old lady I am particularly fond of always smiles and looks inviting for conversations. With her usual farming outfit, along with a pair of brand new Nike sport shoes, she enjoys her tea off the trendy disposable plastic bottle while reminiscing the good old days when urban folk did not bother to lay eyes on the village. These voices. These outfits. These commodities. All look odd and evasive. And ironically speaking, I could be pretty much part of the make-up of such evasiveness, forever turning the village over to the hand of urban living. For good or bad, it pushes me to an alert of critical social transformation where many people have taken them for granted.

How these changes affected the livelihood of the young remains to be an important social concern. With the village school finally closed down 6 months ago, stories of these old ladies would eventually vanish into nothingness. In the name of economic development, which is mounting up annually to meet the satisfaction of stockholders, we are building a society stripping its coat of anthropological importance and taking on the Emperor's new clothes to make his worldly gesture of big money supremacy. Where would we be heading then if we were training our young ones only to the benefit of a socio-economic system that favors greed and power? In the past nine years, in the creative workshops, namely *Drumming Voices Youth Creative Workshop*<sup>96</sup>, I held for young people, I have witnessed such a common picture at opening interviews:

Faces,  
mounted on statistics,  
mechanically waiting  
for their turn to be scanned  
    by the other....  
Bodies,  
each squeezing  
    into an autistic space,  
losing will to make solid contact  
with the surroundings...  
Eyes,  
cybernetically tuned,  
kept shifting downward or sideway,  
evading all possible living details,  
looking blankly  
    into nothingness...  
Limbs,

conditioned to authoritarian taste,  
move only upon order  
    with neurotic uncertainty...

Ears,  
missing their needed sensitivity,  
maintaining no faith in reality,  
yet  
hearing without listening....

Mouths,  
stuffed with words fed by other,  
incapable of voicing the transcendental...

Mind,  
failing to substantiate anything epistemic,  
trapped in a cul-de-sac  
where  
    curiosity kills...

I see a tapestry woven in rationalistic disorders,  
having no desire  
for problem-solving,  
only  
wishes  
to fill in the blanks provided,  
and a mark  
to certify the list of tasks completed...

With yet a lot of unidentifying remains  
clotted along blood veins,  
streaming nowhere!

When the body, as a community, has been depersonalized and de-realized in face of opinion, the truth is the self being reduced to only epiphenomenon that confines the scope of brain activities, cross verifying customized morals and de-valued tastes. So

scared to be tied down to any potential feeling, yet longing so much to *be felt*! So *easy* on meaningless thing since trusting no effect anyway for whatever done! So worried about making mistakes, where the biggest *mistake* is not to allow oneself to make any tiny mistakes in the first place! So caught up with reward, yet the only reward longing for is care and attention! Indecisiveness has become a common disease; accompanying his buddy withdrawal, all refused to be involved! So traumatically stuck, not knowing what to do with the ever-growing chaotic environment!

When school becomes an impossible place for self-actualization, when knowledge becomes an authorized path for money and power, when disinterest becomes the dominating attitude in life, what kind of shelters should be built to further breed such pathological climate?

I grew up in such a place. I left. And I am back to this land filled with colonized beings. When self-empowerment begins to sound therapeutic, I set off to reconstruct through the arts. I have learnt to adopt self-actions through play, till the drumming voices in me heard and make out its own elaboration. I search. I see. I act. I write...

I remember those old ladies circled in front of the dirt....

These ladies don't represent any organization.

They are just there.

Open and honest!

They don't segregate. They mix and talk about things.

Where is the young hiding?

I don't see any circle that works the same in youth centers.

I see in these inspiring and relaxing bodies,

an in-group as it may be,

an image of an open circle

out in the parks, square, streets...

With body,

transfixed

through historicity in consumption,

where to build

an open community then?

I distantly hear the old lady sings,

“Once upon a time in a place far and away

...”

And so sketched the color foundation of the vinculum depicted in me, I here forth begin five *new* chapters of alternative Acts through a new set (or subset) of WordPLAY, namely “In Search of Community Performance in the Arts” through the landscape of a body herein me drawn and subject to be re-mapped...

## NOTES for INTRODUCTION:

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- <sup>1</sup> Deleuze and Guattari depicted *rhizome* as the title of the first chapter of their book *A Thousand Plateau: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. They saw “root” as the fundamental spirit-form of a book. They specially pointed out the unity sprung from root yet they, paradoxically, adore abortionists of unity who “affirm a properly angelic and superior unity, with writing in a sense of “multiplicity roots” that echoes Joyce. (1987:6)
- <sup>2</sup> Lyotard described the postmodern condition as “incredulity toward meta-narratives,” (1984:xxiv) The counteract has to be something based on specific and localized contexts.
- <sup>3</sup> It is Deleuze’s conception of art. (Colebrook, 2006:94)
- <sup>4</sup> Daniel Chandler has also written a book with the same words as title, an inspiring book on writing that helps shape my approach to this particular paper.
- <sup>5</sup> A phase excerpted from Walter Benjamin’s article “On Language as Such.” (Bullock & Jennings, ed., 1996:69).
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>7</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> I am borrowing Deleuze’s term of *monument* here. He saw artworks as monument. “Art is monumental in the sense of standing alone, producing sensations that no longer rely on a perceiving subject or a constituted world.” (Colebrook, 2006:95)
- <sup>9</sup> Excerpted from the book jacket writing of Philippe Sollers’ book *Numbers* (translated into English by Barbara Johnson in her introduction for Jacques Derrida’s *Dissemination*, 2004:xxxii).
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid. (in paraphrase)
- <sup>11</sup> These two paragraphs were the original beginning of the introduction. In the course of writing, the past, the present and the projected future are often brought together and re-mix into the tapestry of researching. I literally allow these temporal fragments as were/are and integrate them into this paper. It is not all together “rewriting” but rather a continuous dialogue with “monuments” set up in different time and stage of being.
- <sup>12</sup> In his book *The Selfish Genes*, Richard Dawkins stresses, “Living bodies are machines programmed by genes that have survived.”
- <sup>13</sup> This was the first song of Carole King’s 1971 album *Tapestry*; it was also the first song I listened to off the first music album my brother bought back then.
- <sup>14</sup> Black Elk (1863-1950) was the Lakota visionary and healer. The dialogue he made with John G. Neidhardt (1881-1973) was an important oral history made possible to make known the life of the Lakotas and their extinguishing way of living. Song excerpted from “Black Elk Speaks,” a book written by John G. Neidhart. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press. p.3
- <sup>15</sup> Excerpts from the poem “*Oblivion*,” by Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, *The Captain’s Verses*. (Donald D. Walsh, translator.) A New Direction Book, 1952. p.82
- <sup>16</sup> This is yet another fragment of writing I began with in the beginning, juggling through time, approximately two years, and found its place herewith in the process of reviewing the introduction I once tempered with before knowing how I were to begin...

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- <sup>17</sup> per. (n.d.). *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. x. Retrieved September 07, 2008, from Dictionary.com website: [<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/per->].
- <sup>18</sup> form. (n.d.). *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Retrieved September 07, 2008, from Dictionary.com website: [<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/form>]
- <sup>19</sup> perform. (n.d.). *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Retrieved September 07, 2008, from Dictionary.com website: [<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/perform>]
- <sup>20</sup> German poet, playwright and theatre director (1898-1956).
- <sup>21</sup> Karl Marx (1818-1883)'s *Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts* was published in 1844 (first published in 1932).
- <sup>22</sup> The name of the opera I wrote, directed and designed for Theatre Fanatico in 2000, presented by Leisure & Cultural Services Department of Hong Kong Government for the Millennium Arts Festival.
- <sup>23</sup> Milan Kundera's *Immortality* was first published in English Translation by Grove Press in 1991.
- <sup>24</sup> Tang Ti-sheng (1917-1959) was a renowned Cantonese opera playwright. His last piece of work *The Reincarnation of Lady Plum Blossom* was written in 1959.
- <sup>25</sup> In Wikipedia, Marquis de Sade (1740-1814) was described as "a French aristocrat, revolutionary, and writer of philosophic, violent pornography espousing extreme freedom (licentiousness), who was morally, religiously, and legally untrammled in pursuing personal pleasure as the highest principle." URL site: [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marquis\\_de\\_Sade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marquis_de_Sade)] Retrieved on January 2, 2006.
- <sup>26</sup> Pierre Klossowski (1905-2001) was a French writer, translator and artist.
- <sup>27</sup> Michel Foucault (1926-1984) was a French philosopher, historian, critic and sociologist.
- <sup>28</sup> Samuel Beckett (1906-1989) was an Irish playwright, poet, and novelist.
- <sup>29</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was a French philosopher, playwright, novelist and literary critic.
- <sup>30</sup> Peter Handke (1942- ) is an Austrian novelist and playwright.
- <sup>31</sup> Karl Popper (1902-1994) was an Austrian philosopher.
- <sup>32</sup> Georg Wilhem Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was a German philosopher.
- <sup>33</sup> Gautama Buddha (563 B.C. – 483 B.C.) was a spiritual teacher of ancient India and the founder of Buddhism.
- <sup>34</sup> Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) was a Spanish painter and sculptor.
- <sup>35</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) was a French philosopher associated mainly with phenomenology.
- <sup>36</sup> Rene Magritte (1898-1967) was a Belgian surrealist artist. *Human Condition* was one of his paintings finished in 1935.
- <sup>37</sup> Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) was a French playwright, poet, actor and director.



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- <sup>38</sup> Aristotle (384 B.C. – 322 B.C.) was a Greek philosopher.
- <sup>39</sup> Laozi (老子) was a philosopher of ancient China around 6<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.
- <sup>40</sup> Mao Zedong (1893-1976) was the first Chairman of the People's Republic of China (PRC) established in 1949.
- <sup>41</sup> Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (around 1724-1763) is the author of *Dream of the Red Chamber* (紅樓夢).
- <sup>42</sup> John Cage (1912-1992) was an American composer and a leading figure of the post-war avant-garde.
- <sup>43</sup> Peter Brook (1925- ) is a British theatre and film director.
- <sup>44</sup> Méi Lánfāng (梅蘭芳/1894-1961) was a renowned Beijing Opera artists specialized in *qingyi* (青衣) roles, a type of *dan* (旦) role.
- <sup>45</sup> Andy Warhol (1928-1987) was an American artist best known for his pop art.
- <sup>46</sup> The list of people includes scientists, philosophers, dramatists, playwrights, film directors, novelists, painters and literary writers I have been enjoying reading throughout my post-secondary years. They represent part of the intellectual journey I have experienced, with some possibly significant influence on me on and off at different period of my life to the extent I would never be able to clearly articulate all at once.
- <sup>47</sup> Gustave Flaubert, June 1857, letter to Mlle de Chantepie, in M. Nadeau (ed.), *Les Oeuvres* (trans., 1964).
- <sup>48</sup> Excerpted from URL site: [<http://www.johnminihan.com/bacon.html>].
- <sup>49</sup> Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen's works had some strong influence on me in my first year studying theatre. His stress on the need to adopt a critical eye and free inquiry into moral issues of human conditions had somewhat planted some important seeds into my body-mind, which had subsequently on and off.
- <sup>50</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre's early 1938 novel *La Nausea* had quite an effect on me back then before I even had the chance to read his philosophical works. The whole sense of 'nothingness' and 'otherness' in one's search for meaning had often put me in a strong sense of annihilation during my college years. That 'sweet sickness' of nausea later related me to works of Kafka, Beckett and Pinter, whom did indirectly influence quite a large chunk of my theatrical works back in the 1990's.
- <sup>51</sup> "Hidden youth" has been a popular term used in the media and social institutes of Hong Kong to describe young people, mostly male, who spend most of the time in their rooms without any "normal social activities." Some would relate them to *otaku*, someone who are obsessed with video games, and skeptically summarize the "cause" of their behavior.
- <sup>52</sup> As suggested in Cheng's work, she is referring to Russell Ferguson's comment in his introduction article "Invisible Center" for *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Culture* (1990).
- <sup>53</sup> Following the line of thinking as inspired by Gary Zukav's *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* (1980, Bantam Books).
- <sup>54</sup> This may be an intention of exploring the potential parallel in the space for thought and the space in writing, where the former often takes charge so quickly and leave the latter forever tracing

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from behind. Any so called idealized form of structural writing may be “clearer” to reader on one hand, yet the process of idealization does take away a big chunk of reality as lived on the other. Thus, it is indeed a matter of choice in presenting “ideas” through the media of words. Such choice-making process is very much part of the dialectical process I have to take on in the course evaluating the hypothetical questions to generate alternative directions for thought and actions.

- <sup>55</sup> A phrase very much inspired by Ecclesiastira’s saying on ‘simulacrum,’ which he once wrote, “The simulacrum is never that which conceals the truth – it is the truth which conceals that there is none. The simulacrum is true.” Henceforth, it has transformed into the capitalized caption in bold, also part of the titled contents, specially encoded by Jean Baudrillard in his book, *Simulations*, published by Semiotext(e), Inc. in 1983. p.26.
- <sup>56</sup> Krishnamurti and David Bohm (1986) had spoken of the opening of the third eye. It was like locating higher energy of gnosis or intelligence to alter the cells of the brain, seeking transformation for the wholeness of being.
- <sup>57</sup> The time of Proust, a time of aristocracy, so unlike the present, has already undergone severe ‘trials’ by critics, novelists, and philosophers. His time-specificity, and yet timelessness, have been counter-playing some important transformation into the study of human behavior, literature and time.
- <sup>58</sup> From German playwright Georg Buchner’s *Woyzeck*, French philosopher Sartre’s *Nausea*, Irish novelist-dramatist Beckett’s *Waiting for Godot* to Austrian novelist-dramatist Handke’s *The Afternoon of a Writer*, I seem to be following a line of intellectual descendants, all creating free agents to search through echoing trails that devoid meanings.
- <sup>59</sup> Luigi Pirandello, the Italian Nobel Prize winning novelist and dramatist, created the stage play *Six Characters in Search of an Author* back in 1921. He exclaimed that the characters were creatures of his spirit, each of the six characters as created were already living a life which was his/her own that no longer the one as originally conceived by the author any more, a life which it was not in his power any more to deny them.
- <sup>60</sup> Cited from URL site: [<http://www.etymonline.com/>]. Retrieved on September 8, 2008.
- <sup>61</sup> theater. (n.d.). *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. From *Dictionary.com* website: [<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/theater>]. Retrieved on September 08, 2008.
- <sup>62</sup> Framework. (n.d.). *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. From *Dictionary.com* website: [<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/Framework>]. Retrieved on September 08, 2008.
- <sup>63</sup> It is a notion expressed in Roland Barthes’ article “From Work to Text” in URL site: [<http://evans-experientialism.freewebspace.com/barthes05.htm>] Retrieved on September 1, 2008.
- <sup>64</sup> There are 29 versions of translation on Laozi’s *Tao De Ching*, all made available in URL site: [<http://wayist.org/index.html>]. Retrieved on June 1, 2006.
- <sup>65</sup> By the time this paper comes to its tentative conclusion, I am turning 52.
- <sup>66</sup> Canada’s Fraser Institute and US’ Cato Institute have rated Hong Kong as a city with the freest economy of the world in “Economic Freedom of the World: 2005 Annual Report,” which seems to have been serving as the annual ‘achievement report’ for the Hong Kong government.

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- <sup>67</sup> While Hong Kong had once been a British colony for 138 years (1860-1997) before it turned into the Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China on July 1, 1997, its past characteristics of colonization had not exactly faded since the Handover, the 'SARilization' has somewhat fallen into the line of transformation through 'colonization-of-another-kind,' with many behavior, be it political, social or cultural, are molded mainly to specific homage to Beijing 'Central' Administration of totalitarian nature.
- <sup>68</sup> Alain Badiou agrees with Hegel's conclusion that "Philosophy is always trying to catch up with non-philosophical novelties." In other words, "Philosophy is the bird of wisdom, and the bird of wisdom is the owl. But the owl flies off only when the day is over. Philosophy is the discipline which comes after the day of knowledge." Excerpted from Alain Badiou's article "Philosophy as Creative Repetition" in URL site: [<http://www.lacan.com/badrepeat.html>]. Retrieved on September 11, 2008.
- <sup>69</sup> Perception as conveyed in Badiou's dialectical analysis of *being* and *events*. (Ibid.)
- <sup>70</sup> Carol Becker has also cited this quote in the introduction of *The Subversive Imagination: Artists, Society, and Social Responsibility*, a book she edited in 1994. (New York & London: Routledge, p.xi)
- <sup>71</sup> Such term brought up by Cage makes one think of what German scientist Werner Heisenberg had discovered in 1927, the *principle of indeterminacy* to explain physical subatomic phenomena. It states that one cannot assign with full precision values for certain pairs of observable variables, including the position and momentum, of a single particle at the same time even in theory. While the assertion of quantum indeterminacy may sound irrelevant to the subject of performance made by a human being, yet if we elaborate on such a principle of uncertainty and start thinking: would it be possible that even with specific values-in-collection, for all possible measurable properties acquired through the learning of natural phenomena, the state of being-in-performance, as a system, always remain indeterminate? All things learnt and established would turn afresh and evolve into a new state of measures through the ever-uncertain-variables-in-state-of-being as shifted in the ever-changing effect of specific spacetime.
- <sup>72</sup> community. (n.d.). *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Retrieved September 11, 2008, from Dictionary.com website: [<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/community>]
- <sup>73</sup> Excerpted from *en.wikipedia.org* on community. URL site: [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Community>]. Retrieved on September 11, 2008.
- <sup>74</sup> By the time I finish this paper, I have already turned 51.
- <sup>75</sup> "Frederick Matthias Alexander (1869-1955) was an actor who developed the educational process that is today called the Alexander Technique – a method of helping people learn to free habitual reactions of moving, learning by improving one's kinesthetic judgment." Quoted from URL site: [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick\\_Mathias\\_Alexander](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Mathias_Alexander)] Retrieved on February 22, 2007.
- <sup>76</sup> Stephen Priest expresses that to Sartre, "consciousness has no 'outside' because of its interiority, because there is something it consists in to be a consciousness. [Thus,] consciousness may only be observed by the consciousness it is, and any interiority may only be apprehended by itself." (2000:131)
- <sup>77</sup> In the introduction to F.M. Alexander's *Constructive Conscious Control of the Individual*, Dewey described Alexander's discovery as "a new scientific principle with respect to the control of human behavior as important as any that has been discovered in the domain of external nature." (1923:xxix).

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- <sup>78</sup> As a Shakespearean orator, F.M. Alexander had lost his voice and found no cure from physicians.
- <sup>79</sup> On July 1992, The Chief Editor of *The Teaching Profession's Bulletin* had published an editorial view entitled "The Conspiracy of the Education Authorities – Restoring Elitism," saying that "the 'education authorities,' including ED officials and policy-makers from the Education and Manpower Branch of the Government Secretariat and the Education Commission, were very ready, with little effort at concealment, to take the road back to elitism by introducing the TTRA (Target and Target-Related Assessment) in a modified form and by medium of instruction grouping, which indirectly encouraged schools to 'press' students academically, while disregarding their moral, physical, social, and aesthetic development." (Sweeting, 2004:462)
- <sup>80</sup> In the 2<sup>nd</sup> draft of *Proposed New Senior Secondary Curriculum and Assessment Framework for Visual Arts* jointly prepared by the Curriculum Development Council and the Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority in May 2005, one of their major rationale as stated was: "Hong Kong is a high tech information society in which communication technologies, web-based, digitized and published visual information abound. Young people in Hong Kong need to have a good understanding of how to construct and interpret the meanings of these phenomena. Visual arts study, therefore, meets the specific artistic, creative, and intellectual needs and interest of the community and the students who, through the study of the subject, will be in good position *to fill the demand for creative manpower.*"
- <sup>81</sup> This is section excerpted from Letter One of Rainer Maria Rilke's *Letters To A Young Poet*, translated by Stephen Mitchell. URL site: [<http://www.sfgoth.com/~immanis/rilke/letter1.html>]. Retrieved on March 11, 2007.
- <sup>82</sup> "The Seventh Drawer" was a play I wrote in Spain at the turn of the Century, exploring the search of a grandchild for her missing grandfather through seven drawers, where laid the entire history untold of the family. I dedicated the work specially to my family. It was produced by Toy Factory Ensemble of Singapore in April 2001, and later revived as a music theatre by Theatre Fanatico for the New Vision Festival 2004, sponsored by the Leisure and Culture Services Department of Hong Kong.
- <sup>83</sup> Francis Fukuyama has extensively examined the potential consequences of genetic engineering in his book *Our Posthuman Future* (Picador: 2002).
- <sup>84</sup> Bulgarian-born psychoanalyst, linguist, and theorist Julia Kristeva stresses that the maternal body operates between nature and culture. She counter-acts stereotypes that reduce maternity to nature. Her argument maintains that even if the mother is not the subject or agent of her pregnancy and birth, she never ceases to be primarily a speaking subject. Like the maternal body, each one of us is what she calls a subject-in-process, through which we are always negotiating the other within, that is to say, the return of the repressed.
- <sup>85</sup> Gadamer specially cited this particular segment of Henri Bergson's speech on *le bon sens*, i.e. common sense, given at the award ceremony in 1895 at the Sorbonne when writing '*Transcending the Aesthetic Dimension*' in his book *Truth and Method* (Continuum, p.23).
- <sup>86</sup> Avant-garde independent filmmaker Stan Brakhage's 1959 feature, *Window Water Baby Moving* (12 min, 13 sec. in 16mm), was an innovative and creative 'documentary,' recording and re-imagining the experience of witnessing the home birth of his first child. The work caused major influence over the attitude toward the father's presence during childbirth. Since then, the film has been used by maternity centers and natural childbirth groups over the years. Seeing the film did arouse deep emotions in me, as if, for the first time, re-hooking me back to the 'missing'

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umbilical cord of life, seeing the paradox once linked me to life, death and social enigma on my son's 'unwelcome' birth. To me, Brakhage's work on this film was an act of enlightenment.

- <sup>87</sup> A line depicted by David Kammerman on his translation of Jacques Derrida's speech made in view of the suicide of Gilles Deleuze. URL site:[<http://www.usc.edu/dept/comp-lit/tympanum/1/derrida.html>]. Retrieved on March 14, 2007.
- <sup>88</sup> In Chinese opera, a chair can be expanded into all kind of perceptive reality through interplaying with another chair and a table. I have also written a poetic essay on chair, namely *The 32 faces of A Chair*, inspired by the chair play with young people. It was later published in *Hong Kong Drama Review*, Vol. 3, p.87-110, in 2002.
- <sup>89</sup> This is a double quote I freely depicted from Clifford Geertz's *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretative Anthropology*. Basic Books, Inc. 1983, p.6. The italics were the part Geertz quoting Wittgenstein to finish his statement.
- <sup>90</sup> Excerpted from Guy Debord's citing of Feuerbach's preface to the second edition of *The Essence of Christianity* in his *Society of the Spectacle*, (first published in 1967 by Editions Buchet-Chastel, Paris) translated and published by Black & Red in 1970, revised in 1977.
- <sup>91</sup> I gather Chapter 5 is an attempt to strike the kind of balance and expectation through different planes, and at the same time accommodating the existing mental turmoil for clean-cut presentation.
- <sup>92</sup> Quoted from Jorn K. Bramann's citing of John Cage in his argument written for an oral presentation during the Philosophical Forum debate on October 28, 1998. The title of his paper was *Understanding the End of Art*. [<http://faculty.frostburg.edu/phil/forum/forum4.htm>] Retrieved on January 22, 2007.
- <sup>93</sup> Professor C. George Boeree of the Psychology Department at Shippensburg University once developed *Seven Perspectives* on the idea of epistemological levels. They are: the autistic perspective, the authoritarian perspective, the rationalistic perspective, the mechanistic perspective, the cybernetic perspective, the epistemic perspective and the transcendental perspective.  
URL site: [<http://www.ship.edu/%Ecgboeree/sevenpersp.html>] Retrieved on July 2, 2006.
- <sup>94</sup> Stan Brakhage (1933-2003), a renowned American avant-garde filmmaker. Brian Frye, a US culture critic, once wrote about Brakhage's work, "Where his predecessors used metaphor as a means of relating images to one another, Brakhage's films were themselves expressions of a single, great metaphor: visual perception." Retrieved on May 22, 2007.  
URL site: [<http://www.senseofcinema.com/contents/directors/02/Brakhage.html>]
- <sup>95</sup> *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is a 1956 science fiction film (Republic Pictures), based on the novel *The Body Snatchers* by Jack Finney (originally serialized in *Colliers Magazine* in 1954), directed by Don Siegel, who has suggested the film's central theme is the loss of individuality in modern life. The film has been remade twice: one by Philip Kaufman (1978) and the other by Abel Ferrara (1993) with the title *Body Snatchers*.
- <sup>96</sup> Designed and founded by Ho Ying-fung as a subsidiary art-in-education program of Theatre Fanatico in 1999. Since then, it has been supported by various government programs, social and education sectors through the past 7 years, including the *Education Bureau of Hong Kong SAR Government*, *Leisure and Culture Services Department*, the *International Arts Carnival*, the *Boys' and Girls' Clubs Association of Hong Kong*, the *Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Lei Tung* and *Tai Kok Tsui Integrated Service for Young People*, and *The Society for the Rehabilitation of Offenders, Hong Kong*.

*One*

**Beyond The Sky of Birth**

*(or The Contemplation of Re-birth out of Infinite Multiplicity)*

Estragon: (giving up again) Nothing to be done.

Vladimir: (advancing with short, stiff strides, legs wide apart)

I'm beginning to come round to that opinion. All my life I've tried to put it from me, saying, Vladimir, be reasonable, you haven't yet tried everything. And I resumed the struggle.

(He broods, musing on the struggle...)

— *Waiting for Godot*, Samuel Beckett

"I'm gonna show you and everybody else that Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have - to come out number-one man. He fought it out here, and this is where I'm gonna win it for him."

— *Death of A Salesman*, Arthur Miller

Albert Einstein probably would not want to pay too much attention to Estragon's sentiment heavily fumed with delusion underneath, as he believed that delusion is "a kind of prison to us all." As a scientist, he probably would not have the time and space to figure out what Willie Loman, a common man portrayed in theatrical fashion, would mean in view of the vast spectrum of physics in the Universe. To him, the task of being human should probably "free ourselves from this prison by widening the circle

of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty,” a quote I picked up from Ken Wilber’s *A Theory of Everything* (2000). Unlike thinkers of such caliber, attaining an integral life, “a life that finds room for body, mind, soul, and spirit as they all unfold in self, culture, and nature,” (Ibid.) so beautifully conceived, for ordinary people it would be like grinding a needle off a giant marble stone by free hands, and nothing more, metaphysically speaking. (Do not tell me that we are so technologically sophisticated now that it is simply stupid to try a task of this sort.) Such high sounding idealized form of being may yet be quite far away from the characters of Samuel Beckett or Arthur Miller, who simply saw the severe *alienation* of ordinary people hardly capable to grasp or to embrace the world around, or with the kind of power they could possibly understand in normal lifespan.

Karl Marx had probably extensively pointed out the nature of such alienation problems in his works, though which I am no expert of, and yet how far could all such concepts, theories and inspiration like his kind could actually reach the hands of common folks without being transformed into political tools for power play? It is all nice and inspiring to get into these “heaths” of knowledge not entirely touchable, or truly friendly, to ordinary people. Indeed, so alienated, not mentioning the shout for “verification” often made impossible when one is simply trying to make a living out of the *production* lines, with operations designed from “undemocratic nature of the global economic institutions!” (Stiglitz, 2003) How far could these highly philosophical theories be realized without the art of application? Many would say, “Education and social work would provide the answers!” But what IS the reality? To my experience,

many teachers and social workers have simply turned their noble work into some highly administered task-feeding exercises rather than touching ground with the persons as co-learning individuals. The aspiration behind all kinds of profession and ideology could all be noble but we have yet to come down to the bottom line where each ordinary individual is treading a life with struggles reminiscing the characters what Beckett and Miller so heartily portrayed in many of their works, which deeply and profoundly reveal the fundamental trauma of existence. I do not have any answer either. But precisely due to the lack of answer am I here to research on, hoping to re-discover some alternative routes for teachers, social workers and parents to look into resources that long seated within the ecological self. Thus, I hereby begin my work through the act of writing and the building of a set of theatrical frames through the stream of consciousness to look into the very particular cultivated soul (up till this moment) and the experiencing-body I have been carrying around for half a century, re-examining the relative actions I once made and interacted therewith under particular ecological contexts, which would serve as the key references to guide me into a series of reflective exercises into the core of *re-birth* through the discovery of self-innovation. Yet in order to realize the potentials and routes of attaining an integral state of being so described by Wilbur, Lao Tse and many other great thinkers, hoping to re-examine the most likely alternatives we could possibly apply to our *ordinary* life, and to paths a little closer to what all these philosophers so sublimely proclaimed to be the true beauty of living would not be easy. In fact, it would sound quite unrealistic to ordinary individuals to match such ideologies with their daily drifting perceptions of experience that are often filled with trivia and ad hoc incidents. Besides, Erich Fromm did forewarn us that such endeavor would be life long struggles between humanistic



ethics and those authoritarian ones in his book, *Man for Himself* (2003). And so I first learn to pray, and then I go, from this very next sentence onward, starting my exploration with the ordinary “oneness” in me, looking into the mystery beyond the day I was born...

### ***Revisiting Birth...***

Born on September 29, 1957, 50 years 3 months and 22 days apart from *NOW*, this very moment marks my yet another attempt to reconnect the particular event of my own birth taken place in Kwong Wah Hospital situated in the heart of Kowloon Peninsula in Hong Kong, a former British crowned colony. According to what my grandma believed, my existence should be counted from the day I was consummated in my mother’s womb, that would push my “birthday” some eight to nine months earlier, which means a great part of events taken place in 1957 had somewhat been casting long shadows, afar or near, conceivably and inconceivably speaking, upon the process of my biological formation before taking on the *real* path to be a socially “*recognizable* human being.”

Before then, where was *I*? Some chemical-filled cells waiting for their turn to be manufactured? Or molecules “separately” flowing in my parents’ bodies, awaiting their opportunity to get into the right cellular machine for the next round living cell cargo to be hauled? For all the possible highways of proton or photon transportation, a path was open and made ready for channeling the happened-to-pass-by molecular

partners, creating the route of eventual formation of *my* physical body, a physical entity filled with cell biographies made up through possibly zillion microscopic chemical interactions. William James, one of the earliest thinkers addressing such biological factor behind human psychology, argued that it is important to have strong groundings in understanding how biology relates to bodily experiences:

Bodily experiences, therefore, and more particularly brain-experiences, must take a place amongst those conditions of the mental life of which Psychology need take account. The spiritualist and the associationist must both be ‘cerebralists,’ to the extent at least of admitting that certain peculiarities in the way of working of their own favorite principles are explicable only by the fact that the brain laws are a codeterminant of their result.

Our first conclusion, then, is that a certain amount of brain-physiology must be presupposed or included in Psychology. (James, 1950:4-5)

As I am rough-shaping the *imaginary* “scientific” picture of the “physical path” of *my birth*, while I would never know exactly how the biological variables and inherited gene combinations in me “prescribed” my eventual socio-biological constructs, the bio-sociological phenomenon at birth looks to be something re-formulated out of semantic notions or observations long stored in me. This biopsychological sentiment seems to be calling the shots through the special operation of thoughts-at-work-this-very-moment. In the course of re-shuffling, or willing, or pursuing, the toiling of particular areas in my conscious domain, flickering through speculating “*objects*,” “*images*,” “*texts*,” “*spacetime*,” and “*stories*”<sup>1</sup> generated through the interactive pneumatics of bodily fluids and cells long pre-stored in my system simply re-ensures me the phenomenon of inescapable socio-biological processes taking place from the

very beginning of my physical existence, a phenomenon many social scientists would likely exclude, since it is supposedly the problem of *other* departments. This *otherness*, not yet touching the future realm of socio-biological impact through genetic manipulations, somewhat seems to provide an *immune* system for social workers, or teachers, to avoid issues of such canyons of organismic level, as if something always in session, running its own pipe charts or analytical data upon the life-forming of experience so deeply in a universe inhabited with its own “social devices,” which may mean something quite *ordinary* to the daily making of living organisms.

Indeed the above “scientific zone” would be the kind of area quite beyond reach for an ordinary man like me. I would not be able to get the details of biopsychological aspects of perception, sensation, behavior, and emotions “reconnected” all at once. Yet, a 1974 pop song *Unborn Child* suddenly flashes back and discloses the *extraordinary* description of the anxiety in a specific spacetime zone I once experienced, speculatively speaking:

Oh unborn child, if you only knew just what your mamma was plannin' to do.  
You're still a-clingin' to the tree of life, but soon you'll be cut off before you get  
ripe.  
Oh unborn child, beginning to grow inside your mamma, but you'll never know.  
Oh tiny bud, that grows in the womb, only to be crushed before you can bloom.<sup>2</sup>

What I could remember or recall may only be the turmoil of consequence, i.e. my birth, either bestowed by family members or experience transpired through shades heavily tuned by dull colors of morality often made invisible at times. With the “ill fortune” of

cursing spell cast from my mother's death right after the day I was born, probably along side with sentiment multi-expounded by my grandparents' superstition, I was a quiet child subconsciously pushing myself not to get too close to anyone in specific, always step aside to observe things around me. These could be images offset from a series of family stories conducted through "traditions," or "habits" to be a little bit more precise, never quite consciously deciphered or disputed by family friends and relatives. It was so believed: No direct participation of any home events necessary, especially for "a no-good kid be-deviled with ideas of cursed nature." In fact, nobody ever told me the precise reason of the death of my mother and it remains to be my own imagination or relative's gossip of speculative nature. Or it is only the "soreness" in me as Adam Smith described,

"The horror which they conceive at the misery of those wretches affects that particular part in themselves more than any other; because that horror arises from conceiving what they themselves would suffer, if they really were the wretches whom they are looking upon, and if that particular part in themselves was actually affected in the same miserable manner. The very force of this conception is sufficient, in their feeble frames, to produce that itching or uneasy sensation complained of. Men of the most robust make, observe that in looking upon sore eyes they often feel a very sensible soreness in their own, which proceeds from the same reason; that organ being in the strongest man more delicate, than any other part of the body is in the weakest." (Smith, 1759)

For that, I would not particularly generalize my "sore" disposition without going beyond the specific phenomena surrounding my upbringing. I cannot even discard such sentiment merely for the "Chineseness" in my folks and me that undermined the cultural cause of "soreness." Quite the contrary, under such *super ordinary*

circumstances generated in the common mind of my folks back then, the *ordinary* me had somewhat, for some reasons, begun to seek for the potential birth of alternative ideas, stretching the important faculty of the mind simply for the sake of surviving difficult daily ordeals influenced by a caravan of emotions and morals looming monstrously through elaborating thoughts and doings of *the other*. Guess one can hardly imagine how the trillion cells in me had taken the emotional toll in the process, chemically speaking. Yet it seems like as if one should let alone those far distanced events, including these ultra-surreal-kind-of-chemical-talk, outside the family operation, something way beyond recognition of the social formality of daily business. No wonder Smith continued, though speculatively in a sense, to describe:

What are the pangs of a mother, when she hears the moanings of her infant that during the agony of disease cannot express what it feels? In her idea of what it suffers, she joins, to its real helplessness, her own consciousness of that helplessness, and her own terrors for the unknown consequences of its disorder; and out of all these, forms, for her own sorrow, the most complete image of misery and distress. The infant, however, feels only the uneasiness of the present instant, which can never be great. With regard to the future, it is perfectly secure, and in its thoughtlessness and want of foresight, possesses an antidote against fear and anxiety, the great tormentors of the human breast, from which reason and philosophy will, in vain, attempt to defend it, when it grows up to a man. (Ibid. Chapter 1)

If one's life solely tunes on rhetoric, as in William Shakespeare's ghostly sigh through *Macbeth*<sup>3</sup>, with "tales told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing," how could one, often *a poor player* indeed, possibly sustain the living light waiting to burn itself out in the course of a life time? Or, as Shakespeare continued to suggest, what happened to my mother and I were only common phenomenon in life, *signifying nothing* other than only two living beings crossing over in the interim of life and death,

each according to his/her timeline, performing with the measly manner of “strutting and fretting upon the stage and then is heard no more”? And so forth, such sentiment continued with Beckettian characters, trying desperately to make some sense in the course of their “Waiting for Godot”!

In spite of the disillusionment implied in Bard’s “signifying-nothing-speech,” what remains worthy for deciphering is how this “poor player” comes into being, alone, through the dark passage of life beginning in the womb of another human being, like my mother. And so it seems: other than the lived experience in me, anything else would seem to be totally out of hand; strictly scrutinized by someone’s theories and method talks that shaped people to “write culture,” (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) or to write “against” it (Abu-Lughod, 1991), which subsequently creating prevalent images that help meddling the eventual living experience generated in the years that followed. It brings me back to how Beckett examined the *me* subject in many of his novels, cutting deep into the emotionality and consciousness of the *unnamable* lines and shades beyond self-caricature: “*Perhaps it is time I paid a little attention to myself, for a change. I shall be reduced to it sooner or later. At first sight it seems impossible. Me, utter me, in the same foul breath as my creatures? Say of me that I see this, feel that, fear, hope, know and do not know? Yes, I will say it, and of me alone.*” (Beckett, 1979:275) **The inexhaustible attempt to search and research through the extensive self-activating inner monologues in Beckett has lightened up my heart the imagination of re-visiting the scattering breaths once forsaken the living moments drawn in and out of me, which began with the experiential realities encountered**

**through the “tunnel vision,” the special passage through my mother’s uterus into realizing the being-in-me-to-be. It has always been this *lonely* “ME,” the sole subject possibly closest to my imagination, not indulgence, constituting practices through reality as conceived at times, constantly making “textual explication” (Atkinson, 1990) through my plays, designs, drawings, videography, writings and diaries, undulating the possible wavelength of a *method* subconsciously seeded in me, subsequently playing a big part in the process of researching this being-in-me since birth.**

In so doing, I thus allow my mind to drift into far country, looking into territories seemingly quite beyond any *direct* call to the everyday life since birth, where named, or unnamed, far away incidents somehow coincide with happenings that had once taken places to shape my thoughts and beliefs then. For instances: If I take on the globalized worldview, wouldn’t the 1957 nuclear accident<sup>4</sup> of Soviet Union Mayak plant taking place on the same date of my birth make any “*ultra-physical*” impact on me? If I see it as affects from “viruses of the mind,”<sup>5</sup> would the pessimism of Samuel Beckett’s writing of *Endgame* in the same year have infiltrated my state of being through invisible wavelengths of sound and light, and eventually put me to activate the *relic of the past* with bodily chemical once oscillated from influence beyond simple comprehension? (I do not know if it was a coincidence or not, *Endgame* also signified my official career directorial debut in Hong Kong back in 1983.)<sup>6</sup> If I simply stay on the path examining the potential influence of pop culture in me, wouldn’t the newly formed partnership of John Lennon-Paul McCartney and Paul Simon-Art Garfunkel<sup>7</sup>

in the same year preset the aperture of my eventual adolescent “world view?” Yet how could I ever discard the historical significances of what happened in China in that particular year when Mao Zedong instigated the Anti-Rightist Movement and subsequently 300,000 people were labeled rightists, paving the way to the eventual devastating Cultural Revolution (Quan, 2007)? I must say, growing up with *indirect hit* from the historical event, the impact would never be like those experiences as absorbingly described by Quan Li Qun (錢理群) in his book *Ju Jue Yi Wang : “1957 Nian Xue” Yan Jiu Bi Ji* (拒絕遺忘—1957年學研究筆記/“Refusing to forget: Research notes on the year of 1957” [my translation]) commemorating specifically the difficult experiences in the year of 1957 in the Mainland of China. I am not trying to fabricate the magic of 1957 through sporadically selected coincidences so as to amplify the eventual sense of being-to-be. I cannot truly discard these cultural roots and phenomena that later did play a part in the making of social and cultural tissues of my consciousness, especially when each of all those 1957 events, along side with their inherited preconditions anthropologically speaking, had played out its respective significances and generated bountiful currents, known or unknown, in the making of subsequent encountering culture and events thereafter. And I, an ordinary human being, socially cultivated in a British colony from infancy to adolescence, could *not* really disempower myself from the ever-flashing multiple sensations, thoughts, and streams of desires and consciousness in me that had inter-grooved with the mirage deduced from such happenings dated in, before or after, 1957.



### *A Sky of Birth Re-invented...*

“...It truly beats me...the way one had to pump up one’s energy at birth...the Call yearning inside...and the pull through that final barrier between the wall of a woman’s vagina...and...just for that grand entrance to a world unknown...God knows what I was diving into then [or was it only mom’s wishes?] ...”

- *grandpa* in *The Seventh Drawer*

The first time I seriously put my imagination into *re-inventing* a possible picture of my birth was a short story I wrote at around the age of 13. It was written in the form of a film script, depicting my *mind* the moment before entering the world through the cervix of my mother’s uterus. It was almost like a *cinematic* journey of *recreating* my mother’s final journey in life. Thirty-two years later, I recalled this creative incidence in my production diary written during the making of *The Seventh Drawer*, a dramatized epic poem of a common man living through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century China. It was not only my first attempt to revisit stories of my own father under the dramatic disguise of a character, through whom I re-trailed a sea of ancestral images that were possibly the prelude of my life-to-be, it was also the sequel of a series of enigmatic devotion to re-examine the birth-lines of 3 generations, i.e. the birth of my father, me and my son, where all three experienced, celebrated, cursed, and unfortunately, respectively speaking, destinated at birth, had not only played significant part in the life to come, each also took peculiar turns according to the social conditions evolved. The play was written in the year of 2003. The view of birth for a 13-year-old and a 47-year-old were indeed quite different and yet both sprung from the same event once taken place, something I could never truly get any kind of first-hand opinion or documentations on, only that I was expanding my birth imagination into the birth trail

of family descendants. Having lost the hand written story once built on loose sheets, objects once kept in personal files with the intention to keep out of anyone's reaches, I could only work on images still *fresh* to my mind, recalling the tempo and color of the story under the nuances of the "cinematization" of society, (Denzin, 1991), where the past, the present, and the new present to arrive all fogged in to recreate images struggling to recollect events deduced from virtuality, an attempt to crystallize a time lost, like the Bergsonian vision of "paramnesia," i.e. all in the illusion of a déjà vu (Deleuze, 2003), through which as if to recover the negated "absent" in order to affirm the "present":

"...My mum was on her way to the hospital in an ambulance. I could see myself swaying side by side in the womb of belly water, feeling the vibration of frenzily running wheels rushing through busy streets. There wasn't anyone close beside my mum. She was alone. No, she was with me, carrying a tummy embedded a mind long started rumbling inside, dying to make an entrance to the world...the moment I fought myself way out of my mother's final holding, a tunnel so long, dark, deep and wet, as if trying to behold me the last possible second from reaching out its opening, I saw a dark blurry figure standing afar, at a door, coldly witnessing my birth, never intended to make his entrance. That figure never spoke a word. The room was like a wide-angled space, forever stretching out to expand its territory to keep people from close contact. I believed that man, never come near, was my father..."<sup>8</sup>

The story portrayed in such nature was in fact germinated in the year when my father suddenly "disappeared," without a word, and left my brothers, sister and I behind along with grandma. In such a fictitious scenario, the "mechanical challenge" of journeying through the birth canal had suddenly become "melodramatic materials" to amplify the imaginary "biological engagement once arrested the evaporating energy of

a dying mother.” It was almost like an act of psychological indictment over family trauma and events I had no control of, with heavily under-flowing sentiment of self-pity in the process. Looking back from now, it could be the very first sign of transgression taken place in me through art. Such realization did not come solid until a few years back, it was the day when I saw avant-garde filmmaker Stan Brakhage’s 1958 monumental work *Window Water Baby Moving*<sup>9</sup>, a creative documentary on witnessing his wife delivering the first child at home. I was profoundly moved not only by Brakhage’s cinematic *journey* on that particular moment of childbirth but also the sudden close range associated imaginary, my very first I must say, of the reality of the thin line between a new born and a soon-be-dead-body that had separated me and my mother the moment I was born. This particular piece of cinematic experience, which had eventually influenced the Americans to change their attitudes in allowing fathers to witness their wives giving birth in hospitals, has become one of the important artworks I often select for workshops. Not only because of the powerful images that help cultivate in me a sense of re-vitalizing memory and emotions long lost or somewhat de-sensitized, it was also the power of art-in-action that helped transform the reality of the once closed community on specific social subjects.

As a matter of fact, I cannot possibly put the argument of James-Lange theory (James, 1884)<sup>10</sup> and Canon-Bard theory (Canon, 1927)<sup>11</sup> over the precise timing or physical state of how these particular emotions of birth were acquired over the years, especially on the juxtaposition of cognitive responses and physiological state of being. If we apply the former theory to the infant when engaging in the progress of labor through

the birth canal, the making of internal rotation of the fetal head to position the face toward the mother's rectum or restituting the angle of head in relation to the shoulder moments before birth may mean the subsequent "emotional charges" induced from such intensive physical thrust while making entrance to a world unknown, not mentioning the significance of total physical commitment in "corkscrewing" (my imagination of course) my way out of my mother's uterus. Yet would such naturally and innately driven physical states induce some kind of "emotional affect" on the infant? The "emotions" I portrayed in my stories 13 years later after my birth was indeed something totally imaginative and had affected the physical state of being in return, an attempt simply cognitively driven to attend the psychological imbalance emerged at difficult times. While some psychologists may classify my actions as "strategic expression of emotion," (Li & Roloff, 2006) I do find it a bit unrealistic to generalize natural phenomenon into "over-simplified" theories, making attempt to decode "truth" off the ever-complications of natural and social behavior of particular kind. Such "over-simplification" could be made through "clarification of vision depicted from specific pinhole" and excluding other possible relevant parts above, below or beyond the "pinhole." I do not mean to denounce the value of theorizing; I am simply not content for seeing the danger of sheer theorizing without getting into the heart of particular subjects. In this case, it IS all about seeing to the *ordinary* me to be re-deciphered! And along side the course of re-examinations, family members, friends, teachers, artists, colleagues, participants and students I encounter(ed) in the crossing of life events would also be embraced in viewing the extraordinary *ordinariness* in the living in me!

### ***The Oneness in the ordinary Me...***

“I am the One!” So often taken as special pride for many among common folks. It is believed in all walks of life that “being the one” means “the chosen one”, be *the other* neglected or not, a sentiment often promoted, either consciously or subconsciously, by advertisements, schools, organizations and working firms, out of sheer competitiveness strongly advocated by contemporary consumption and hierarchal power driven society. If we look further, when biotechnology revolution has been pinning its way to further infiltration into our physical territory, i.e. our body, like it or not, it would be affecting all human beings in their pursuit of alternative individual pathway to the future, before the body-mind of “being one” has time to figure out argument beyond “nature” versus “nurture,” this “being” could already long be transformed into frames of threats and control that are filled with speculations, likely in the form of propaganda or beliefs shaped in the form of pseudo terror to induce fear, fear of falling into subject of lethal machines and apparatus of technology under any likely form of totalitarian power structure. What prophesized in George Orwell’s *1984* have already proven to become reality, i.e. information technology’s *all out* affect on human living and becoming the “totalitarian dream tool” of human control progressively in massive scale. Where should we see the “oneness” in each of us in a *Brave New World*<sup>12</sup>, as Aldous Huxley long predicted way back in 1930’s, overtaking a possible future in the ambiance of biotechnological imagination, shaped by money politics?

A common ordinary folk, simply seeking to make ends meet day in and day out, may hardly find such phenomena exactly relevant to his/her daily living. When adopting a critical mind could mean threats to the people in power, keeping the common *entertained* through media-generated-programs would keep people away from thinking of the liberty of “oneness” they all should deserve, even though the “oneness” imagined might be far beyond reach from the world what philosophers, scientists and intellectual *elites* set out to narrate. So reflected in the lyrics of US pop singer John Legend’s 2005 Hit single, *Ordinary People*:

We are just ordinary people  
We don’t know which way to go  
Coz we’re ordinary people  
Maybe we should take it slow  
This time we’ll take it slow

Maybe we’ll live and learn  
Maybe we’ll crash and burn  
Maybe you’ll stay, maybe you’ll leave  
Maybe you’ll return  
Maybe you’ll never find  
Maybe we won’t survive  
But maybe we’ll grow  
You never know...<sup>13</sup>

Yet amidst all those “maybes,” in those repetitive wishful thinking on dashing, or desperately striving, for glimpses of hope for alternatives, seem yielding for special attention: TAKE IT SLOW! Can we though? Do we have a choice?

Being ordinary is never a crime; yet such ordinary taking seems bound to be stormed by the ever-speeding-up-technological-exploitation and all-out-consumption plans designed to squeeze the juice out of every possible ordinary being for better profit. (Kindly excuse the tone I here depict, which, apparently, would not at all fit to the “requirement” of an “objective” researcher.) One class. One system. One society. One nation. One world. One globe. One universe. Or *one dimensionality*<sup>14</sup> - the Herbert Marcuse indictment of modern society! Indeed all seems to be quite far from the *one taste*<sup>15</sup> according to Wilbur, which could be nicely treated as an alternative “new age” *sortie* for integral thinking! All these great sentiments of oneness sound like to be pulling us around without truly allowing anyone the room to understand or learn to articulate the fundamentals behind organization of such “oneness” so madly promoted in our society. Between “fragmentation and wholeness,” how are we then to understand “the implicate order”<sup>16</sup> as scientists and thinkers like Bohm once heartily investigated, something at far distance echoing the ancient teaching of *I Ching* and *Tao De Ching*. When ordinary people become the subject of studies, they become easily viewed as “the critical mass,” treated like a subservient subject specially catered for intellectual analysis, formulating through some kind of “traffic jams” in mind<sup>17</sup> where individuals become inevitably vulnerable, not only as data for statistics, but another possible *extraordinary* ideas for mass control. Yet, regardless the grandeur these social

studies may mean, each of us, being individual, may, more or less, long for an exit to small moments of liberty, space not being controlled by “average thinking”, or “speculative thinking.” As being “too *extra-ordinary*” may mean potential outcast, in the dilemma of wanting to be “the one” and not wanting to be “too extraordinary,” what kind of “oneness” should one conceive in view of all possible assignable reasons?

While we cannot deny the importance of care and respect for every single human being, which should be the most challenging (and yet often “under-reconstruction”) work of teachers and social workers, the multi-layered presentation of the self since infant to adulthood, be it socially constructed or culturally conceptualized, has been underlining some serious implications for us to understand the development, or acquisition, of “oneness” perceived or strived for at times or in due course. What if the things each one of us could possibly grasp and relate to in daily life become only “practices” elucidated to scientific institutions serving the System? Or such “work endeavor” teachers and social workers set out to do would all be rounded up to fulfill only the “power stations” of economic expansionists and social institutions ever intended to acknowledge selectively? Should this *Everyman*<sup>18</sup>, with the deliberate absence of any specific name, be always the *nobody*, scrutinized by the “chosen” ones, the elitists who enjoy meddling the floundering crowd with their expertised schematic talks and speeches? If a proper account of life is to be prepared and make imminently necessary in order to get out of the possible distresses either self induced or handed down by others, without losing one’s identity, one may be able to re-articulate the



process of self realization and re-organization of spirits in this oneness once stolen for the sake of other's "normativity." **Retaining the true liberty of being an individual, should I not re-claim the sole rights to narrate my story, not narrativity or subject alienated or objectified by the other? Be it only a small tiny fragment of the world spirit out of the immeasurable resources of the universal spirit realized at time, as long as it is something I can make myself be: It is either being *or* nothing at all.** As Bohm proclaimed, "So what we have to do with regard to the great wisdom from the whole of the past, both in the East and in the West, is to assimilate it and to go on to new and original perception relevant to our present condition of life." (Bohm, 1980:31) **Being ordinary may, or actually *can*, be an extraordinary experience, if only if we can re-examine how the process of formation of this *ordinary* oneness cultivated in us and around us, before, now and in the coming future, and learn to re-constitute the ever-changing alternative ones, flowing to the stream of process evolved both in reality and knowledge.**

### **ONE *magnified...***

So we all so often hear: *One*, a sign that can be denoted as the ultimate reality, an inclination of the Neoplatonic view, the central source of being where emanates the existence of everything. Or the *One* God hailed by Islamic belief that it signifies the Creator of the Universe! Or as Christianity promotes, "God is ONE!"<sup>19</sup> These ONE GOD, ONE SYSTEM AND ONE ORDER! All seems present to the likes of related imaginary longing, especially those mapped by the Authority of all possible inter-related power sectors! Be the longing for control or harmony, war or peace, hate or

love, somehow somewhere and sometimes things have to be, not in the look of the other or counting on the Authority in shaping a *total* truth, constantly reviewed and reexamined in the light of truth. The magnitude and amplification of such “absolute” implication may only bring us to imagine ourselves as only the tiny elements of the dimensions of infinite rows or columns of a humongous identity matrix, namely, the ORDER, all fully embraced by this omnipresent “bracket-like God.” And what if such “absoluteness,” like everything else, would be one day decomposed, added, subtracted, divided or multiplied by other, the “data” or “keys” to resolve the “encryption” of this ONE world around us would likely be changing simultaneously as well. So the “one” may mean being encrypted in a “womb,” where something already formed or reproduced, like a membrane of tiny threads, or small grains, to produce the rightful energy for oneself in a world of eternal multiplicity would mean the strength to overcome being forever contested among perpetual conflicts. The Question of how to attain such ONE nature would indeed often run into an elongating series of past, present and projected future scientific, metaphysical or theological speculations, something long lingering, arising and tumbling about ever since human tried to figure out the meaning of the ever-present multiplicities encompassing the living body, which would be quite beyond the “reality” where ordinary people may touch upon through everyday practices in life.

Yet in our society, just when everyone loves to be “number one” (for instance, the Olympic Games, along side with all other sports events and the gambling industry that often go together with, have surely been casting ever-growing-magnitude to such

desire), and this “oneness” pursued by common folks may have sprung from a chain of seemingly known, and yet ambiguous, recurring speculations on the *one and only one* “achiever-to-be,” the sheer desire being singled out as the ONLY *one* on top of *something*, seems to be mostly a connotation blown up totally out of proportion through capitalist propaganda, areas mostly simulated from selective perception skeptically correlated to Darwinist World View made fit to capital-expanding purposes. Such striving for “excellence,” “particularity,” or the *preferred* singular sense of “existence,” often denounces the true multiple nature of ONE in the eyes of mathematicians, scientists and philosophers, whom see the sign as something of multiplicative nature, be it “divided,” “set” or “exponentiated,” into numerical, factorial, biological or metaphysical substances or operations. If we look into the Wikipedia multiple explanations on “One”<sup>20</sup>: it could be viewed as the smallest positive odd integer or a harmonic divisor number; it may on one hand imply to be one of the two primitive datatype (also known as the Boolean datatype)<sup>21</sup> for computer science (the other is 0) as the logic indicator; on the other hand, it could also be only a number repetitively reflecting its own factorial existence, i.e.  $1 \times 1 \times 1 \times 1 \dots \times 1 = 1$ , and so on and so forth. These mathematical aspects of ONE do not only throw us alternative conception of the frame of things; they also draw us into a state of puzzle and perplexity, reminiscing the potential missing scopes of rational comprehension. Yet, despite the enormous possibility in the viewing on ONE from various sectors of knowledge, how should social scientists look into the “oneness” each individual so heartily searching, self-identifying, juxtaposing in order to make claims being the *ONE* indivisible kind of being, or *thing*? How can we possibly locate this ONE with mathematical precision?

In the light of Set Theory, as elementary the standard as I do know, if I were an element  $x$  and  $1=\{x\}$ , where the curly brackets,  $\{\}$ , is the specific “set” situation, would the equation imply my life possibly an intensive dwelling upon a series of overlapping self-contained curly brackets, like  $\{\{\{\{\{\{\{\{\{x\}\}\}\}\}\}\}\}$  and could be infinitely expanded (not mentioning the ever possible intersecting  $\{x\}$ s off other sets, subsets and elements), where I, being a member of the “singletons,” am very much enwrapped by infinite expounding sets possibly stretching or intersecting into infinite sets and sub-sets of related, or loosely-related, situations that are equal to “1”? Not only would it mean the “ultimate reality” of those sets existing around me ALL at the same time yearning for acknowledgment in the infinite physical spectrum of the cosmos, it could come down to a scene of such views: On one hand, I could be engaging in a simple physical situation like working in front of my computer looking for the emergence of the next possible word or idea; on the other, I could simply be along side being the tiny celluloid “dust,” hardly visible if viewed from far out in space, gingerly dangling toward the next possible relationship with another speck of “dust.” **Identifying such sets, or brackets, in between the two form of existence would mean acquiring the will to re-juxtapose the ONES within me and also the ONES around me, regardless what background, assumptions or historical contexts, or whatever course of inquiry I would prefer to engage my reasoning activity on.** Or one may eventually have to resolve with the self as the sheer product of *chance*, “from which any truth is woven, [as it] is the matter of the subject.” (Badiou, 2005b:394) It is almost distantly reminiscing German Philosopher Edmund Husserl’s

strategy of phenomenological reduction, or commonly known as “bracketing,” or *epoché*. (Beyer, 2007) Identifying the brackets would mean addressing how and why the position of our perception of the world around us come by and, hopefully, we could understand how the social world mostly been “typified” without getting into the depth of quality beyond or above the social groups who produce them. It is not entirely sciences that *matter* when they could easily have divorced from the fabric of human experience at times if not dealt with carefully. As a matter of fact, learning such *oneness*, or the utter articulation of “integral unity” in me seems to be an activity far from being ordinary. It would be essential to retrieve all, or at least as much as possible, natural impulses obstructed in me in order to be able to re-distinguish all these “parts” simply to comprehend the whole. If “I am ONE” could mean, “I am WHOLE”, what is WHOLE then? Working out such blurry outlines of one’s *ordinary* existence, which is filled with vague identifications and characteristics drawn by the media or pseudo science, would mean the amplification the power of our conscious and subconscious world, which is fused with desires, expectations, memories, histories, beliefs, and values that make up one’s world. Yet the bottom line seems to be: wouldn’t this ordinary me, in spite of the multiplicative onenesses I already possessed, simply see ONE as the loneliest number I could ever associate with, something absolutely fathomless and far reaching for common understanding...

I once put in my creative diary such an mathematic fantasia, entitling: “Red+Green=?”<sup>22</sup> Imagining all the namable and unnamable matters and non-matters placed under specific formulas selected from mathematical principles; maybe it could

be the ONLY way to delineate the bountiful field of reality. From the shape and size of a single neuron to the millions of jobs of mixing signs and interactive chemicals in our brain, everything would look like a mosaic-in-motion, each finding ways to synchronize with the world of parts around. As Diane Ackerman described in *An Alchemy of Mind*, “I believe consciousness is brazenly physical, a raucous mirage the brain creates to help us survive.” (2004:27)

No matter how these questions are to be continued, in the midst of all the existing *oneness* where each yielding for specific concern mostly driven by what could possibly be perceived at times in situation(s) kept evolving through events, I should be seeing at least a glimpse, or parts, of me through the *ONEness-in-the-making*, supposedly individually self-embodied, regardless the other existing dimension that constantly keeping my temptation at bait. Yet, how should I exactly articulate these tiny bits of temporal BEING ever fluctuating, and re-join them all together, or one bit at a time, to make the ONE sense out of me? In Sartre’s terms: “to produce in me the image consciousness of [me] is to make an intentional synthesis that gathers in itself a host of past moments, which assert the identity of [me] across these diverse appearances and which give this same object under a certain aspect (in profile, in three-quarters, full size, head and shoulders, etc.)” <sup>23</sup> (Sartre, 2004[1940]) **The particularity of planes used for *imaging* the self could be critical indeed, which would subsequently re-sculpture not only me, but also the shape of the events and happening taken place and their affect on me and the co-relating other as a person.** The fundamental issue seems to be that I did not yield for my own existence

as the ONE single particular biological entity of cells, consummated by chance. All these indefinite seeking for my own uniqueness, i.e. *oneness*, in view of space-time, something far away uttered by philosophers, with ideas perceived quite out of reach to human figures drawn by common experience day in and day out, is always something delicate, not mentioning how to testify the way this biological entity *germinating* a life through the human social domain. Ironically, looking into the sequencing of human genome, merely the first human chromosome already consists of 3,148 genes, 247,200,000 total bases and 224,999,719 sequenced bases (according to the human genome information in the VEGA database<sup>24</sup> distributed by the Sanger Institute in July, 2007), it almost looks like a mission impossible as far as the degree of precision there could be in view of *being* within such socio-biological dimension. Gather if these micro-molecules in me were in fact kept reshaping their patterns of existence from moment to moment, be they influenced by the multitude of situations or a single situation where seeded the motor of actions, I would have to understand those collective influence, which would in fact be an impossible task, upon me through the ever-present transforming *massive social structures*, not mentioning the details of those external *natural*, and *unnatural*, things and beings revolving around my living being on the beat of whatever seconds count they turn out to be, and subsequently *ACT* upon corresponding “particular” situation(s), visibly or invisibly, with deeds and details that probably mean, at times, *only* to me, and *ME* alone, desperately trying to sort out the lived paths and possible paths-to-be in search of the oneness in being drifting in and out of a place like Hong Kong.

*Sorting out the path(s) of ONENESS in me...*

Was *I* not the “first” to experience life of this particular “I-being” the moment consummated in the womb of my mother? What was/is the “seed” of my life then/now? Was it something related to moment(s) and physical condition(s) long before the sperm of my father swimming into the ovary of my mother? What is the essence of *my* life then? The repeating questions of the song sung by Anna Prucnal in Dušan Makavejev’s 1974 film *Sweet Movie*<sup>25</sup> immediately strikes my mind:

Is there life on the Earth?

Is there life after Birth?<sup>26</sup>

Makevejev’s socio-political satire had reassured me the importance to re-visit the living foundation in us all once built and left unspoken. Before sorting out if I were the host to this existing body and the *sole* direct builder of my own life, **to remap the landscape of my body and locate the quality and quantity of “water,” be it distilled, natural, or polluted, once poured, dripped, or showered onto the “seed” planted in me would mean a long series of soul searching into social antecedents, family members, friends, colleagues, and individuals crisscrossed, under conditions once filled with hopes, joys, miseries, struggles, tastes, fights, disillusionment, achievements and losses.** Russian dramatist Constantin Stanislavski did once quote from Leo Tolstoy’s *Resurrection* in his notes on *Types of Actors*:

One of the most usual and widespread superstitions is that every person possesses only his own clear-cut qualities, that a man is good, evil, intelligent, stupid, energetic, apathetic, etc. People are not like that. We can say of a man that he is more good than bad, more often intelligent than stupid, more often energetic than apathetic, or vice versa: but it will be untrue if we say of one man that he is good or clever, and of another that he is bad or stupid. Yet we are always dividing



people. And that is not right. *People are like rivers: they all contain the same water everywhere, yet each river at times will be narrow, swift, broad, smooth-flowing, clear, cold, muddy, warm. So it is with people.* Each man carries within himself the germs of all human qualities, and sometimes he manifests the one or the other and is often quite unlike himself, while still remaining the same person. In some people these changes are especially abrupt...they occur because of some physical or spiritual reason.” (Hapgood, 1968:15 / my italics)

Yet, in the path of re-thinking the people once encountered and history one bestowed, Alun Munslow’s preface on Keith Jenkins’s *Re-thinking History* (1991) forewarns me that “we cannot empathize with people in the past because not only is it plainly impossible to ‘get inside someone else’s head’ but to translate another’s intentions from their actions is an epistemological step too far...the logic of history is not one of discovery but of construction — building on referentiality but deploying figurative thinking, argument, theory, concept and ethics.” (xiii) In other words, constructs are often based on “prefix” of the past; discovery is an innovative matter dealing with the future-to-be through actions.

Beyond the skin of the body, this *one* single being, the journey of re-entering the experience once and ever occupied my living moments, not those dwelled upon in the wells of epistemology often “invisible” to everyday life, would mean recounting murmuring, cries, laughs, jeering, smiles, shouts and all those connected, or disconnected, moments that made up the character in me. Only by looking into these experiences that impregnated living energy and colors once permeated in the physical bodily tissues, once contracted and expanded through the stream of consciousness,

could I possibly relocate a glimpse of the key of know-how and articulate their form of existence probably long written, or buried, in everyday practices. Re-trailing the traits of physical existence in continuity through trials, errors, repetitions, renewal and revitalization, I have yet to learn how contemplation was made possible through close operativity of art, making special connection to people and things around and discovering the way to exercise learning of reflection and intuition at play, or *performances* rather, a word German Dramatist Bertolt Brecht would probably prefer. Such “performances” could be viewed as an outcry for something, be it meaningful or not at times. In *The Messingkauf Dialogues*, Brecht speaks through his character, the *philosopher*: “Crying doesn’t express sorrow so much as relief. But lamenting by means of sounds, or better still words, is a vast liberation, because it means the sufferer is beginning to produce something. He’s already mixing his sorrow with an account of the blows he has received; he’s already making something out of the utterly devastating. Observation has set in.” (1965:47) Indeed, it has been through my performances, *acts of crying*, in theatre, in fact the creative profession that have literally structured my way of observation and thinking, that I learnt more about the art of sharing and alternatives for “the community-building-in-me.” The world may be out of joint as many common helpless folks would say and we cannot possibly pull it back on our own. Indeed, in spite of the commitment to liberty each individual would have to re-establish on daily basis, with whatever limited capacity, who could tell whether/what new dimension in life would be gathered or reconciled? My professional body of work has literally become both part of my participatory action research and my frame of references, be it through theatre and plays created, or workshops through arts that helped initiate changes in individuals, with alternative aspects to rekindle

perception of daily living; I have found myself often being the idea carrier trained to explore alternative routes in viewing the behavior of constituent members of social groups and communities, where information, languages, skills, beliefs, ideas, social and moral practices interplaying out their significances. In the life long process of trying to make every possible *invisible* thing encountered *visible*, I often wonder if I could be “naturally” capable, as Michael Polanyi suggests in his writing on tacit knowledge (1983), to incorporate all these fragments of experience in search of the “oneness-in-the-making” without truly excluding the existence of the *other*.

Allow me to expand a bit here on *participatory action research*. As many would not treat my theatre practice as something relevant to “field work,” especially when the “environmental constraints” are often exclusively narrowed down to “artistic intention” rather than “identifying problems,” I would say these are often confined viewpoints never quite re-examined in the nature of theater practice in search of alternative thinking in life and beyond. Not mentioning the ever biased attitude still adopted by the Hong Kong Education Department regarding the role of art implemented in the secondary school art curriculum, in a recent letter I received from the Home Affairs Bureau, dated January 6, 2008, inviting me to attend a meeting on the announcement of the “new senior secondary school curriculum” regarding the invitation of theatre artists to participate in future collaborations with schools, it simply presented arts through quantification, i.e. every senior high school student would receive *not less than 135 teaching hours (approximately 5% of total learning hours) on arts within 3 years.*<sup>27</sup> When the appreciation of art is simply confined to the

generalized concept of areas loosely relating to creativity, aesthetics and art criticism, it is indeed far away from what sociologist Erving Goffman envisioned back then, i.e. revelation of theatre performance to *the presentation of the self* (1990) and *interaction ritual* (1967) in everyday life. It did not even go beyond the thought of how art could be implemented for a better education; it is treated only as an administrative procedure to file up human thought and creativity as something quantifiable to the purpose of management. Bohm once said, “[...] at the core of thoughts’ fragmentation is an unconscious separation between thought’s *content* and its *function*. This separation is rooted in our prevailing belief that thoughts are vaporous and ephemeral, without any real substance of their own.” (Bohm, 1996a) Would art not be often treated as “vaporous” thought, *dysfunctional* by nature, that could not apply directly to everyday practice then? To my experience, art and theatre practice is in fact down-to-the-wire kind of actions to reassess the possibility of making changes through art-in-action, a path learning to self-implementing alternative methods in views of obstacles, be they mental, social or physical. Training actors and artists is in fact an action research on individual state of mind and body, reformulating potential actions and changes in the self as a being. The *performance* dwelled upon thereafter could be the first step to envision the possibility of implementing new plans of action - not target oriented, but nurturing stimulus through actions; not to institutionalize, but to deepen and diffuse any potential changes likely re-discovered through creativity.

In search of this “oneness-in-me” not necessarily means I am to review my life and ask to be remembered, quite the contrary, they are to be erased from memories and

resumed only to be a vehicle to understand the root of being an individual who tries to make sense out of a life begotten under particular social conditions. And, most of all, through which hopefully I could come up with a series of idea that could provide a variety of alternative insight into the art of contemplation in encounters with human beings, all in the light of looking into another *specific* individual, self-making and eventually owning his/her freedom of being. I do believe that **the experience deduced from course of applying ideas into practices could, or should, one day become seeding platform to provide alternative options of services in the field of social work and education, a platform not in essence totally detouring from the generic principles of both. Not only “the awareness of the dynamic interplay of personal, biological, and psychological elements with the socio-economic forces of the environment in which human being lives” (Friedlander, 1976[1958]:7) would be re-diagnosed through events, stories, characters, role-plays unraveled in me and individuals associated to my work and play, “the strengths of the individual and of the group, as well as the constructive forces of the environment” (Ibid.) would also be sought through *performances* of specific contexts and issues which once dwelled upon, subsequently in hoping to expand a better mind to serve “the betterment of all classes of the entire community.” (Ibid.) It is also hoping through such *performances* of recollecting and reflecting memories of being and events that individuals would get better insight into reality and particular conditions each eventually facing, without “subduing anyone to conformity.” (Ibid.) I would say we have to be careful to treat individual as an object having “observable empirical social facts,” (Popkewitz & Fendler, 1999:20) through which only to obtain reflexive data from “the objectification of the *self*.” (Ibid.) While academics may seek for their**

social epistemological reasoning, or obsession, to relocate *“The Order of Things”* to the likes of administrators for classification and filing, Foucault had warned us the “great hidden forces” that have “an origin, causality, and history.” (Foucault, 1973:250)

**To see the “order of things” in me would mean to understand how such “order” came by and how “things” were being placed in the bodily system.**

The distant voice of Belgian thinker Raoul Vaneigem seems to conjure me to stay away from such sentiment. His writing seems to remind me that “the path toward simplicity is the most complex of all, and here in particular it seemed best not to tear away from the commonplace the tangle of roots which enable us to transplant it into another region, where we can cultivate it to our own profit.” (Vaneigem, 1963-65) He had his points when explaining “our ideas are in themselves commonplace, they can only be of value to people who are not.” (Ibid.) He particularly raised the issue of subjectivity, which I could never escape from, as if to forewarn me to take special caution when seeing that “the objective conditions of the contemporary world are furthering the cause of subjectivity day by day.” Am I, or have I been, as Vaneigem suggested, living all these years as “a self-united man” or “a man of total refusal”? I do find that it has often been the discovery of the latter that set me toward the search for self-unity. It could be the “revolution” in me taken place in everyday life, through the oppression, or “supersession” in Vaneigem’s word, and constantly risking the possibility of being programmed to the rationale and machinery of the hierarchical power. To remain sane, sensitive and sensible, not the agitating current that once consumed Vaneigem, to all these mass of interferences and disentangled from all

circles of oppressive tactics of unforewarned control, changes could only take place from within, like taking a course of walking on the tightrope through experiential learning, with all my senses open and yet no escape to the bombardment of daily triviality. Disillusioned? Yes, I did, and often repetitively so. And no promises made indeed. Yet, to deduce any possible truths in the twenty-four-human-made-quantifiable-hour cycle of daily living might mean constant pain through delirium and self-contempt (which I gather I also had/have a great deal). It was through the minute details of sufferings expounded in my mind and body where I re-discovered, often inspired by the old saying of Lao Tse in *Tao De Ching*, the innately rooted harmony dismissed by many in contemporary society, something distantly echoing American philosopher John Dewey's advocated mind-body philosophy over 2,300 years later (an area I have constantly co-related to throughout the process of all my works):

“So it is that existence and non-existence give birth the one to  
(the idea of) the other;  
that difficulty and ease produce the one (the  
idea of) the other;  
that length and shortness fashion out the one the  
figure of the other;  
that (the ideas of) height and lowness arise from  
the contrast of the one with the other;  
that the musical notes and  
tones become harmonious through the relation of one with another;  
and  
that being before and behind give the idea of one following another.”  
(Chap. 2.2, tr. Legge)<sup>28</sup>

I would not say it was the sentiment of any potential deep religion that called upon me in the light of meditation through Lao's philosophy. While many may find Lao's book too laconic and frequently ambiguous, totally apart from the western tradition in philosophical writing, it is often the space between his words that opens me up to alternative space in viewing the events and happenings taken place, be it in the past or/and those still striving me around day in and out. It was, and still is, that very space inspired me to practice *qi*, a Chinese meditative technique of breathing, where I could retain the energy lost or shattered by the exhausted motors burnt up in me. The eventual detailed readings of my body-mind become a big part of the "techniques" (or "intuition" and "awakening" rather) that has been guiding me through not only my creative and education work, most of all, the foundation for the progressive changes in my health, mentally and physically. Indeed, Vaneigem's deep pessimism, something I once deeply inherited, again cried out to me saying, "Today there is not an action or a thought that is not trapped in the net of received ideas" (1963-65) Guess only through unveiling the "mystery" of this very "net of received ideas" could I possibly, if the will to live strong enough, free my spirit from these frames of references and conceptual schemes historically or strategically implanted or conditioned in contemporary culture. The *Tao* in us all provides the needed space to retrieve the liberation long built from within, which begins with the *now* being, contemplating through the art of living. Marshall McLuhan, long prophetically pointed directly to the endangering identity of living in *global village*, had urged us to focus back on recovering lost old image at any cost. He specially cited from Okakura-Kakuzo's *The Book of Tea* in his collaborative book with Quentin Fiore, *War and Peace in the Global Village*, regarding how "art has



been considered the primary mode of adjustment to the environment” in the Oriental world,

Even in that grotesque apology for Taoism which we find in China at the present day, we can revel in a wealth of imagery impossible to find in any other cult. But the chief contribution of Taoism to Asiatic life has been in the realm of aesthetics. Chinese historians have always spoken of Taoism as the “art of being in the world,” for it deals with the present – ourselves. It is in us that God meets with Nature, and yesterday parts from tomorrow. **The Present is the moving infinity, the legitimate sphere of the Relative. Relativity seeks Adjustment; Adjustment is Art. The art of life lies in a constant readjustment to our surroundings.** (McLuhan/Fiore, 1968:20) [Bold fonts are added.]

To Confucius, cultivating the Tao means “education.” Yet Confucius once said: “I know why the Tao is not practiced. The intelligent go beyond it and the dull do not reach it. I know why the Tao is not manifested. The ‘good’ go beyond it and the unworthy do not reach it. There is no one who does not eat or drink, but there are few who really have ‘taste.’”<sup>29</sup> If “the dull” and “the unworthy” were referring to “the ordinary,” a strong sense of differentiation had long been uttered by these ancient scholars and cast peculiar judgment not only on common folks, but also the very nature of “Tao,” if we take the language as written. When scholars are so “articulate” in the field of “taste” in words, how would the ordinary have the chance to refute without the acquired prerequisite to master the power of language? And consequently, the common becomes only the “subject” of wise scholars’ studies without truly attaining the “Tao” as “promoted.”

In a world still mainly dominated by the power of language, what “remained to be said” does not necessarily exclude the *mute* forms of art, a descriptive intention Merleau-Ponty did once hold onto regarding the *semi-silence* of art. In the preface of the book *Signs* he wrote, “While literature, art, the exercise of life, which are conducted with things themselves, with the sensory world even, even with beings, can, except at their extreme limits, have and give the illusion of remaining within the realm of the habitual and constituted, philosophy, which paints without colors, in black and white like engravings, does not permit us to ignore the strangeness of the world, which men confront as well as if not better than it, but as in a semi-silence.” (1964:31) As the limits of deciphering signs only through the linguistic conventions are obvious, especially when multi-media operation in art has been carrying tremendous weight in postmodern art scene, these *mute* forms are in fact parts of being, seated at corners of body-mind and beyond, ready to confront the world with adjustments, if only if we listen to the breath of *Tao-at-work* through actions unfolded from within this very moment of being. The missing link could be the fact that we are short of such *multi-mediated-learning* in our education. Besides, here writing in English instead of Chinese also poses another layer of cultural paradox in the kind of “education” I have been undertaking, as if pulling flags from two separate hemispheres of learning in my brain and trying to make sense out of something not entirely genuine to the beat of my heart. There are yet some hidden mute forms of power play long seeded in my upbringing, stretching my body-mind over the tug-o-war of Chineseness and English-oriented scope of culture, always struggling in the existing half-Chinese/half-English kind of thinking mode, probably something ultimately *Hongkongish!*

John Dewey maintained that in view of education as a Necessity of life, “Mere physical growing up, mere mastery of the bare necessities of subsistence will not suffice to reproduce the life of the group. Deliberate effort and the taking of thoughtful pains are required.”<sup>30</sup> In a talk he delivered to the New York Academy of Medicine in 1928, Dewey emphasized,

“The evils which we suffer in education, in religion, in the materialism of business and the aloofness of ‘intellectuals’ from life, in the whole separation of knowledge and practice--all testify to the necessity of seeing mind-body as an integral whole. The division in question is so deep-seated that it has affected even our language. We have no word by which to name mind-body in a unified wholeness of operation. For if we said ‘human life’ few would recognize that it is precisely the unity of mind and body in action to which we were referring.”<sup>31</sup>

To me, it has been a map of perseverance through trials, errors and successive balancing acts that keeps rejuvenating the body-mind; it has been through body gestures and substances, energy displayed, plays and stories unveiled by family members, friends, actors, collaborators, students, workshop participants and “enemies” that have been inspiring, and also sustaining me, in the act of “dancing on a tightrope.”

French social scientist Michel de Certeau put it very nicely in his work *The Practice of Everyday Life*:

“Dancing on a tightrope requires that one maintain *an equilibrium* from one moment to the next by recreating it at every step by means of new adjustments; it requires one to maintain a balance that is never permanently acquired; constant readjustment renews the balance while giving the impression of ‘keeping’ it. The art of operation is thus admirably defined, all the more so because in fact the

practitioner himself is part of the equilibrium that he modifies without compromising it. In this ability to create a new set on the basis of a preexisting harmony and to maintain a formal relationship in spite of the variation of the elements, it very closely resembles artistic production. It could be considered the ceaseless creativity of a kind of taste in practical experience.” (de Certeau, 1988:73)

Stories and images carried through these body-minds both in others and me out of everyday practices and those transformed in the arts have set forth a series of possibilities not only in creative work, but also in life as a whole. De Certeau did warn that these experiences engaged could be passing “from the unconsciousness of its practitioners to the reflection of non-practitioners without involving any individual subject.” (Ibid, 71) Since I have been often playing a double role, i.e. being both the conscious practitioner and observer, re-establishing knowledge that does reflect the subject, i.e. me, and the eventual participants in my creative work and education workshops, would mean to listen carefully to tales, stories, events and happenings as conducted in the process of reviewing these oneness in everyday operation. It has been precisely the course of practices that keep expanding my belief in depicting the frame of referential knowledge mainly through everyday practices, where seeded the experiences, following their twists and turns, even detour at times, an art of thinking and actions, and the eventual performance(s), would simultaneously emerge beyond the pulling from the deep of the reservoir of habits, entering potential alternative movements in everyday life. It would be the experience of these practices that I would eventually be retrieving all the possible elements in the contexts of research through reflection, be they unrecognized, or unspoken, at times. Treating the body and mind as one would mean to retain the “wholeness of operations” and “unity in action,” in

Dewey's term, in order to rejoin the preoccupied disconnections often detected in common practices of our social behavior.

The question is: wasn't each of us originally "whole" in operation in our mother's womb, a time when no social consciousness should be operating upon the unborn? Biologists, biochemists, physicists and psychiatrists would likely point out how the physiological state of the mother, (AND the father as well, physically indirect as it may seem) may have already affected the growth environment of the unborn child without knowing it. While that would be another specific area to be researched on by other, out of the common logic deduced and suggested by modern science, I would gather the "unity in actions" between the mother and the embryo, then fetus, before birth would have preformatted some innate elements to the specific characteristics of "oneness" the moment anyone is born. For this part, I do not know how deep and how far the death of my mother on *the second day* after I was born (yet another piece of information I could never truly confirm)<sup>32</sup> had affected the later development of my well being as an infant, an adolescent and an adult. Yet the experience I have been withholding from such "incompleteness," far from being "whole," meta-emotionally speaking, to start with, have actually been the major source of power in reflection. It did open me up somewhat to a series of human relationship, events and happenings all directly or indirectly related to the social attitude and engineering of my human psyche derived of such specific human conditions at birth.

French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty once wrote, "...One can say that the whole of man is already there in his infancy. The child understands well beyond what he knows how to say, responds well beyond what he could define, and this after all is as true of the adult." (Merleau-Ponty, 1964) I do not know how much truth is beheld in the saying and the exact context and scope of "the whole" his thought would like to incorporate; I do think it is indeed beyond what an infant could have understood, a period when the route of *being* is often like an "object given to us." Such innately seeded sentiment, or "high altitude thinking," may seem to "make sense" only after infinite series of compossible life events drawn upon operations beyond ordinary observation in order to recognize the existence of such phenomena. How *invisible* forces generating *visible* actions remains to be a subject "under surveillance" of many psychologists or thinkers. What I did learn later as a theatre director, **the major work of the art is to explore alternative paths for visualizing the unsung voices, and the most important process is to develop assessable platform to make the invisible visible,**<sup>33</sup> through which a series of actions would be invented to construct bridges for the viewing of obscurities once beyond reach in reality. It is precisely this particular dramatic skill I was trained in theatre that had enlightened me to look into the "interiors" of the external world, be it starting with the "womb" beyond my infancy or the "death" of my mother. Although Merleau-Ponty thought that "the naïve certitude of the world, the anticipation of an intelligible world, is as weak when it wishes to convert itself into theses as it is strong in practice," (Ibid, 13) it is precisely my intention to examine if the practices of art could help us re-enter the "islet" each human inherits ever since we were impregnated in our mother's womb. It is critical to observe beyond those instituted opinions and allow our work to go back to the

phenomena observed in everyday life. While we may still only, and always, be the parts and moments of the ONE so grandly perceived by philosophers, easily excluding predicates of the experience lived by the ordinary, the existence of everyday experience could be re-studied without the imaginary translation so often transferred into invisible stratum that can be deciphered only by the scientists. We have to seek alternative route(s) to re-furnish the argument and allow each individual to retain the oneness, or the whole, “already in us all” since infancy.

**If I were to dissolve these questions before theorizing upon the ONE biological community innately structured in the body, with performance(s) eventually enacted, or reenacted, to articulate the presentation of this specific *being* withholding for half a century, I would have no better choice other than re-trailing the footsteps I once laid, re-examining ideas and actions that had been, and still are, flowing in and out of my body-mind. Those footsteps would have been the prime utterances I made in responding to happenings and events crisscrossing around the confrontations I encountered. The logic, the revolt, the thoughts, the risks, the compromises and the contemplation I had endured and experienced would all come forth to the research platform, subject to be re-deciphered, erased or consigned to alternative form of oblivion or memory, where new images and remarks may be realized or found derivable.**

*Looking for a friendly SKY out of the ordinary...*

We have the same birthday, grandpa!

Train of blood they say...

Deaf or blind.

There are always something between your teeth...

Sand of years they say. Beats me. I never know what  
they mean ...

I wonder whether your mom and dad were the same to you as mine.

How did they bring you up

anyway? Bet they are never different.

— From Fanny of *The Seventh Drawer*

How should I be starting the portraiture of the *ONE(s)* in me? And the “ones” I have been carrying around, or reflecting upon, where no (or indeed *never any*) unified totality ever seems to be at hand, guiding *a* being into a *being*? (Some would say these are probably special zones for religious studies only.) Yet the philosophical zoning of this *ME* territory often intersects, mixes, and networks with physics, biology, chemistry, mathematics, metaphysics, psychology, ecology, art, history, politics and all possibly related social and natural sciences. Be they applicable to regulate or devoid any meaning to the life I happen to be leading through such specific space-time, the communities, languages, activities and kinds of knowledge by chance, or at will, interwoven within the realm of this physical being in ME, seem to be infinitely searching or deducing some kind of “meaning,” or “substances,” in the very next moment of their co-existence. The universality of such “multiplicity-in-actions” seem to be, by far, the *only* SKY I could possibly perceive above or beyond, sustaining desire of multiple forms, seeking alternative survival routes, or sites, no matter how fragmentary they are revealed at one time or another. To establish these webs of



WORLDS, infiltrated with the plurality of meanings, conglomerated in me, I am bound to retrace the root(s) of *all* possibly recovered or detected denominating logic formulated in the past 50 years<sup>34</sup> of space-time and beyond, intermingling saturated images of illusions, reality and perceived *truths*, forever proliferating subsequent forms of discourse, actions, or *new* meanings into every possible social sector encountered. Would my body, bearing a system of organs, jointed limbs with mounting nerves and muscles, be ultimately *only* the carcass of an automaton, trapped by “human nature,” predestinated to surf around these human *side products* that named “knowledge,” filtered from affect and experience through the crossing of time tunnel? This particular body-mind, with all the work done, in a soil long colonized by other, and community mostly neglected due to the reign of technocrats, how could I possibly become *one* ordinary human being, striving for actions out of the multitude? When all these *ideas* generated would very likely soon be digitally circulated and disguised in form of merchandize, taking on “new” aspect of *truths*, consumptively speaking, infinitely regressed into “terms” or “concepts” solely designed for future purchase, it would be no easy task for the *one(s)* in me in a world gearing into directions expertizing in cultivating pseudo-objects for market places.

As a theatre maker, a teacher, or a social worker, one would find it necessary and fundamental, almost urgently in a sense, to revitalize the *oneness* lost or disintegrated in a world dwelling upon these existential whirlpools, obstructed by massive merchandise, digitized form of communication, technocrat-driven power structures, all under the grant obsession of control in the name of security. Yet as an *ordinary*

person, dealing with everyday chaos long been mounted to a multitude, or plentitude, absolutely out of any ordinary comprehension seem to be a mission impossible. When the physiognomy of the world has been totally consumed by these mass endeavors over-produced and marketed, treating someone *being ordinary*, with a body-mind confiscated to fulfill the “Disneyfication” (Baudrillard, 2005:53) of the world and wide open *for consumption* only, would mean a delicate edge-cutting into areas of “no man’s land,” intentionally conditioned and segregated from common reaches. It has become quite a cross wiring act to root out the *nature* in us in a world operating under such media network. Being *ordinary* enough to pursue simple things in life seems to be an alternative way of living, like the purchase of organic food, looking for different circuit of the “faulty connections” made under global economy. In other words, retrieving the beauty of such ordinary *oneness* would very likely be the next most insightful deed to do in view of the emergence of globalized *Machiavellian* business, reversing the seeking of political and economic expediency above moral ethics. When the craft and deceit to maintain power become widely acceptable, when all in the interest-driven façade of everyone-could-be-a-stockholder has made the notion of *being ordinary* ambivalent, we may have to re-draft new routes to upturn those social contracts openly signed in Faustian terms, either in the name of the authority or to the sole purpose of achieving better gross profit. Before which, we simply have to allow ourselves, along with all the good, the bad, the ill, the obligation, the feelings, the ideas, and all the multiplied, behold the narrative perspectives that solely belong to ours. When everyday operation becomes the schematization of procedures and tactics, overwhelmingly distorting the natural rhythm of being ordinary, I, as a common man, can only deduce a “philosophy” of my own, and keep from being fumed by the

obscenity behind sabotaged media and power driven narrativity. Devising alternative paths to the art of *being ordinary* is the priority before reaching the ultimate goal of any form of community performances. And such paths should help activate the engineering of “self-unity,” a quality in life self-redefined and owned.

***A methodology in wonder and fancy...***

When discussing what criterion the philosophy of evolution had offered us, William James wrote, “Here is a criterion which is objective and fixed: *That is to be called good which is destined to prevail or survive*. But we immediately see that this standard can only remain objective by leaving my self and conduct out. If what prevails and survives does so by my help, and cannot do so without that help; if something else will prevail in case I alter my conduct – how can I possibly now, conscious of alternative courses of action open before me, either of which I may suppose capable of altering the path of events, decide which course to take by asking what path events will follow? If they follow my direction, evidently my direction cannot wait on them...” (James, 1948:28) Whatever *set* standard or methods the society would like to accept in forecasting manner adopted by researchers, they are often *obsequious*, as James observed, if ill-treated as absolute stagnated opinion, “objective only to the herd of nullities whose votes count for zero in the march of events.” (Ibid, 29) Jenkins also stressed in his *Re-thinking History* that “talk of method as the road to truth is misleading. There is a wide range of methods without any agreed criteria for choosing.” (Jenkins, 1991:18) Russian Dramatist Constantin Stanislavski once told an actor, “One cannot go very far with just the method.”<sup>35</sup> (Gorchakov, 1985) Indeed,

how could I possibly leave my self and conduct out of the context? And likewise, how about the others? As the courses of action determined at times at various particular circumstances in life, the subsequent path of events would alter accordingly, whether to our preferences or not. While each moment is taking shape of the previous ones, the nature of “well-being” so advocated by social workers counts only when the true liberation and empowerment of the body-mind can be attained. The danger of utilizing someone’s theories and systems, *foreign* by nature, to intervene the ever-interactive body-mind could be problematic; one needs to take extreme caution at application. In identifying the “problems” or promoting needed “changes” preconceived would likely dismiss alternative directions possibly created outside the “methods” as conducted, not mentioning the variations in thoughts, behavior and subsequent actions taken in effect behind the multiple, complex transactions going on between people and their environments.

All thoughts should indeed begin with “philosophy.” Yet I do believe it has to be a philosophy of *now* actions, not sheer ideas intellectually operated in some remote region of the mind. William James’s view on philosophy does remind me a great deal of the essence of theatre play I conducted for actors and students at workshops and rehearsals: “Philosophy, beginning in *wonder* [my italic], as Plato and Aristotle said, is able to *fancy* [my italic] everything different from what it is. It sees the familiar as if it were strange, and the strange as if it were familiar. It can take things up and lay them down again. Its mind is full of air that plays round every subject. It rouses us from our native dogmatic slumber and breaks up our caked prejudices.” James also stressed,

“...man thinks always by the same methods. He observes, discriminates, generalizes, classifies, looks for causes, traces analogies, and make hypotheses.” He followed the above with such a statement, “Philosophy, taken as something distinct from science or from practical affairs, follows *no method* peculiar to itself.” (Rorty, 2003:382) Indeed, I DO NOT HAVE A METHOD, but only **the *methodology* of alternating choice in making alternative entrances into an empty space, or a black box, awaiting the entrances of experience unveiled at specific temporality in life. Creating an empty space is one thing; entering an *empty space*, or a *black box*, is another. It would mean open to disclose an invisible picture once beheld from reflection, a theatrical principle I have adopted from British theatre director Peter Brook, where everything is to be seen as something specific and unique the moment making its entrance into an empty space, the realm of igniting new experience: the position each person/object holds; the rhythm and energy each embodied; the color and tonality each tinted; the sound and music each propounding; the story (or stories) and the body-mind each carried along with, etc.** In *The Open Door*, Brook had stressed,

“In order for something of quality to take place, an empty place needs to be created. An empty space makes it possible for a new phenomenon to come to life, for anything that touches on content, meaning, expression, language and music can exist only if the experience is fresh and new. However, no fresh and new experience is possible if there isn't a pure, virgin space ready to receive it.”  
(Brook, 1995)

To Brook, in continuing to work on each particular experience, the conclusion(s) thereof would only make it inconclusive again. Just like when one read a book, it is already something out of date. All beliefs recorded in books would be out of date the

moment they are read. Words are only a display of exercise frozen on the page and no more. The frame of any methodology may be implying the scope of confining experience within the perimeter safe-guarded by the advocate. **The platform of an empty space allows the mind to reopen when encountering every tiny phenomenon within reach the moment it enters the colorless spectrum of the space, until a voice distinctively heard or a shadow defined by a specific shaft of light. Therein, a fresh moment of experience begins.** This is how the chapters of thoughts would proceed, interrelating experience along the punching keys, where each word would be refreshing the body-mind and experience therebefore shaped and opening moments for alternative transformation. It is an *action* research of the immediate acting site, including the act of computing thoughts, and actions through experience, where there is not a single handbook or formula to abide by, only a stream of cognitive and physiological motions through consciousness in action.

In my creative diary, dated April. 4, 2005, based on an observation of storytelling and writing exercise by students, I had elaborated my thoughts on the *actions* behind writing and reading:

What appeared to be a few lines of words casually written or gingerly designed to draw one's attention, doesn't its often-ambiguous intention simply an attempt to cancel out or delude the mind to the true color of events, endlessly excavating or interfering every possible position for internal reevaluation? In the course of writing, a series of *actions* could have structurally imprinted in gaps between words and lines and taken shapes with the *only* purpose: to disturb the viewer by strategically gearing his/her attention to what originally intended, or *unintended*, consciously or subconsciously. Or in the course of writing, for fear that someone

may misinterpret the projected self, consequently juggling in semantics become the sole focus in order to avoid any potential viewpoints and details of stories being altered. In so doing, what truly been excluded is the diverse nature of viewers, each holding onto different background and frames of references. Guess many would wish to correct other's view accordingly, only later found the act a disillusioned one...(Ho, 2005:143 / my translation)

Such *actions* recalled through prints do not quite recollect the whole picture taken place back then, a few hours after a writing workshop. Yet, the “wholeness” being considered therein the previous sentence may have already been transformed into unknown territories since the time and circumstances revisiting that particular events have already locked into different context and taken on alternative interpretation that no longer exact to the spacetime where things were taking shape. **The “transformation” at time of the event and the yet another “transformation” redrawn in the process of writing had some time lapse in between. Thus, the research thereof could be an act of *aftereffect*, trailing residue of selected memory. Since what the ON STAGE moments presented have all undergone transactions through changing spacetime, where matter and body-mind alike began mingling with other matters and life-form bumped into each other the next moment onward. Therefore, the only methodology adopted in the course of the “research” exercise to follow in prints hereafter would be the moment this particular body-mind *performing on stage*, i.e. this very moment when ideas of the mind being transferred through command of my fingers onto the keyboard. How each piece of citations and thoughts mingle with the subject to be deciphered at times would likely take on shapes coinciding with thoughts unfolding from time to time. Any attempts to re-structure the paragraphs and chapters in between would**

**likely leave their marks thereafter. And I can only live in such a manner, carrying me along a reservoir of *past residue* to act upon each segment of “empty space” emerged ahead the next point onward.** How can I take everything for granted? The search would only take shape by allowing my mind, my body, my thought and all the flowing bodily chemical at work with flying colors of the surrounding, where books, magazine, film clips, newspaper, light, sound and all living and non-living commodities in and out of the space I am here working. I am ON STAGE because I acknowledge the shape and limitation of this particular stage and will to claim my rights treading on spotlights particularly selected for this moment. The acknowledgment of such an empty space would be essential when each moment moves forward, and backward along side with time retrieved materialized through dancing fonts undulating in front of me on the computer monitor. Each keypunching would signify the *birth*, or *re-birth*, of ideas, be they formulated sporadically or evolved through series of upholding thoughts and actions, contemplating through infinite multiplicity. It is like a soliloquy-in-the-making, waiting for the continual emergence of new content, as if listening to choral voices already disguised in books and memory, making *dialogues* with these streams of meaning flowing in and out of the body-mind. In such a *dialogue*, where “*dia* means through – it does not mean ‘*two*’,” as I freely depict Bohm’s saying, it is “something more of a common participation,” not “playing games against each other, but *with each other*.” (Bohm, 1996b:7) If applying to the particular *case* at work this *writing* moment, the *other* includes the present of all the happenings and events people once engaged in and the voices heard in and out of my spirit. Such actions are “marks,” as James believed, that reflect “the transition from a state of puzzle and perplexity to rational



comprehension...full of lively relief and pleasure.” (Rorty, 2003:370) They are *actions* to be *realized* in order to “exist” in the consciousness, not just physical facts to be labeled or quantified in statistics. It is an act of story telling, with emotional texture of experience.

Anna Banks shared with us in an interview conducted by Kaja Alilunas on the subjects of “The Struggle over Facts and Fictions”:

“The emotional texture of experience often is what interests me – the consequences of the facts in the lives of the actual persons. When I want to evoke the emotional texture of a human experience for an audience I find the cannons of social science writing aren’t very productive. In other words, I’ve been trained to make my academic research oriented in the factual, but my telling the story of that research often is disturbingly vacuous, because it lacks the traditional quality of good storytelling...the point of such storytelling is to reach audiences at a personal level with an experiential sort of learning.” (Banks, A & Banks, S, 1998)

Just when traditional scholars would argue that “marks” deduced of such ethnographic or fictionalized nature through play simply get readers into “the so-called crises of representation and legitimation, experimenting and theorizing about authorial voice, the nature and the role of the Other, narrative form and authority,” (Ibid, 14) would objectivity then literally mean the absence of any personal emotions, situation- and condition-specificity? In an empty space, we are to recreate such specificity according to the individual participating in the play-at-work. While all actions may seem to spring from imagination, the “fictionalized” actions are fundamentally another aspect of human life-form trying to re-paint a tapestry of unsung emotion-experience. It is

through such act of plays, by nature a lie indeed, that one could realize truth and beyond. Pablo Picasso once so proclaimed.<sup>36</sup>

### ***The Birth of Play at Work***

In *The Seven Drawer*, the play begins like this:

[A giant closet door opens. Sound of flying pigeons storming out.]

[A gunshot is heard.]

[Fanny is found hiding in a corner. Gasping.]

[A Dog jumps out of staggering junks on top, pulling out loads of old clothing and antiques. He puts them back right away nervously as if he has committed a crime.]

[A TV monitor is revealed, sitting quietly on top of Drawer#1.]

D#1: What day is it?

[No response]

D#1: Long enough for the Old Man's shit hole another brush, eh...?

[Three drawers suddenly opens.]

[Pause]

D#2: Anything good this year?

[Pause]

D#1: What made you so aroused?

[The Dog barks vigorously.]

D#3: What do you really care?

[Pause]

D#2: Don't give me that shit again! I have had enough of that...

D#1: Oh, listen to that...they are still out there...another annual Spiting Service for the Old Man...any surprises?

D#3: What could be new after all these years?

Fanny: Shut up you all! Can't we ever have any peace and quiet here? It is noisy enough out there...you are ALL THE SAME! Always farting with bowls of complaints! <sup>37</sup>

The giant closet. The flying pigeons. The gunshot. The dog. The barking. The seven drawers. The old clothing. The crime. And a young girl named Fanny. These were the compilation of emotions physicalized through dramatized metaphor. It was a play written at a time when I had the strongest urge to untie the family knots – a series of interwoven knots strangled together since birth – that never been dealt with, emotionally speaking. Fanny, very much the narrator of the story, took flight through the family closet to unveil stories long buried inside the drawers. In fact, it was my personal surrealistic *flight* for emotional emancipation. The theatrical journey was my own action research into the mystery and complexity of human psyche in me left undeciphered. It was not exactly a way to re-present myself to other, but rather an evocative exercise to examine significant issues and questions through theatre narrative. To me, it is vital to allow myself to meditate through *play-at-work*, as if it was some kind of *re-birth* of ideas and physical energy that proven valuable in the *being* to be.

Adopting the analogy through theatre practice does not necessarily mean that it is entirely the ON STAGE analogy deduced by Erving Goffman in attempting to use

theatre to study the presentation of human self. **It is *NOT ONLY* the aspects of theatrical performance that inspires me on the present subject. It is the ACTIONS upon which the players come across in the process of using their body-mind to research on specific human subjects that had put forth my attempt to transfer those inspiration into education and social work.** The theatre Goffman perceived was not exactly based on his direct practice of theatre, but rather fairly *generalized* speculations on theatre activity. Being a “non-mainstream” theatre artist, I have been allowing myself to work in a totally experimental manner throughout the past 20 years and working quite closely with the human subject through the comparatively long rehearsal processes. Therefore, I could only partially correlate to Goffman’s theory and seek alternative perspectives into the study of retrieving the oneness of the self out of the ordinary. It is only through each of the specific actions unveiled in the “empty space” of creativity that I would see to the potential strategies to follow in this paper. It is precisely in the process of adopting this *open-method* once guided me through a lot of theatrical work and drama-in-education workshops, and subsequently inspiration in life.

Of course, I did not start without any methods; I did once embrace those freshly learnt from teachers at college when I first started my career. But as time went by and experience began to take charge, I recognized the importance of “wonder” and “fancy” in the process of learning, something driven out of the system since my infancy. It is an area strongly related to the writing of ancient Chinese philosopher Lao Tze and the teaching of Chinese Opera Master, Pui Yim Ling, which often reminiscing at the

back of my mind. The opening of Lao Tze's *Tao Teh Ching* (or *The Tao and its Characteristics*, as translated by James Legge) exclaimed, "The Tao that can be trodden is not the enduring and unchanging Tao. The name that can be named is not the enduring and unchanging name." (Lao-tze, 600B.C.:1.1) Lao's teaching did not only unveil a lot of knots and excruciating experiences once encountered and got caught up, it had inspired me to open routes in unknotting painful tendons filled in my body. What he shared did not mean worthless to "walk on" any potential "*tao*," i.e. the Chinese saying of "method," or "ways," we have to be cautious on the danger behind focusing too much on any chosen "particulars." Treading on any "specificity" would likely mean the exclusion of others, which is very much the cause of segregating parts out of the whole, the root of disasters in each of us. As for Master Pui, she once reminded me at one of her theatre lectures back then, "Once you have learnt a method, you ought to have the courage to throw it away when the time comes. Any specific method could eventually turn dull and still, too familiar to be strange." I can still remember how I had once caught up in "method-acting," especially those schools of thoughts so strongly advocated by my acting teachers back at University of Houston in the late 1970's. My directing experience in theatre the past 25 years have taught me well to throw away all such "methods" when working with actors, students or any potential participants engaged in related creative courses. Without a fixed method at the back of my mind, my observation grew stronger. My thought could easily flow from generality to particulars and vice versa. The flexibility to locate causes and traces of actions helped me build fluidity in the course of making analogies and hypotheses, not under closed systems, but forever metamorphosing spirit that guide us all to creative possibilities in life. It is rather an art of building, retrieving, or reconstructing

alternative methods of spontaneity on spot according to the specificity of time, space, people and matter involved.

John Dewey, when writing an account of intellectual development, asserted that James, as a man to think of life in terms of life in action, his “philosophic view, pluralism, novelty, freedom and individuality, are all connected with his feeling for the qualities and traits of that which lives.” (Rorty, 2003:392) Being inspired by both James and Dewey, not entirely on their “methods” or “account of thoughts,” I would rather see them as two of the available life “gangways” to walk on, as if a tightrope under my feet crossing to review experience once conjoined my intellect and will through my latest work development in arts-in-education. While many would search for specific techniques, or *the* menu so popularly looked for by many under the devastating influence of managerialism, as for me in theatre, in education, or in life, there was not, and still is not, any particular single discipline to rely on, be it through work or relationship-building, or even on intellectual development since I have yet to come across an individual who thinks, behaves and acts the same. James reminded me the importance of throwing away rules, “Rules are made for man, not man for rules.” He reinstated, “A true philosopher must see that there is nothing final in any actually given equilibrium of human ideals, but that, as our present laws and customs have fought and conquered other past ones, so they will in their turn be overthrown by any newly discovered order which will hush up the complaints that they will give rise to, without producing other louder still.” (Ibid, 380)

Dewey, following the objective biological approach of the Jamesian psychology, realized that “one has to take a broad survey in detachment from immediate prepossessions to realize the extent to which the characteristic traits of the science of today are connected with the development of social subjects – anthropology, history, politics, economics, language and literature, social and abnormal psychology, and so on.” (Ibid, 393) He even projected ahead of his time and stated that “the next synthetic movement in philosophy will emerge when the significance of the social sciences and arts has become an object of reflective attention in the same way that mathematical and physical sciences have been made the objects of thoughts in the past, and when their full impact is grasped.” (Ibid, 393) While I am not sure if the world, especially under the massive influence exerted by globalization-advocates on productivity, has turned its eyes on “the significance of social sciences and arts,” as an art and education practitioner, I do strongly find that these are the fields to restore the missing links in providing alternative insight in view of the material-driven human community, especially in viewing that “the technical structure and efficacy of the productive and destructive apparatus has been a major instrumentality for subjecting the population to the established social division of labor.” (Marcuse, 1964:11) Such *community* could start with the courage of self-reflection through performances ignited through creative works, i.e. art-in-action. This very sense of “community” could begin from within, the very membrane of the body-mind, all interconnected like a web, a micro-universe physically super-imposed. In Dewey’s word, the important thing is to “help get rid of the useless lumber that blocks our highways of thought, and strive to make straight and open paths that lead to the future.” (Rorty, 2003:393) Or in Marcuse’s term, it is the “inner freedom” that has its reality: “it designates the *private space* [my italic] in

which man may become and remain ‘himself’.” (Marcuse, 1964:12) **In retaining the likelihood of a better *community*, it is important to first retain the freedom of the private space. The empty space in theatre allows one to unload all unnecessary junks jammed inside this private space and reopen alternative adjustment, not *mimesis*, to the ever-renewable identity of the self. It is giving birth to new ideas through play-at-work, opening up cinematographic plausibility through imagination, without the presence of rigid forms that could block the body-mind at work.**

Of course, there are some fundamental communicative activities to be considered every time when the research of such play-at-work is exercised: (a) provide specific, yet always keep simple, setting information for players, including particularity in situation and basic rule of game, according to appropriate personalized individual design; (b) detect transferable information, from generalization to specifications generated through acts of play, with observations that cover both personal, emotional and cultural aspects of participants; (c) apply direct and indirect form of interferences or negotiation strategically exercised in and out of play- or action-in-progress through spontaneity; (d) the use of alternative props, tools, music, video, film clips and actions whatever that may come in mind and find appropriate ways in tackling critical moments arising thereof; (e) sustain the playful atmosphere through repetition, dramatization and appropriate interaction and socialization; (f) repeating the play by alternating viewpoints and situations; (g) update all possible interpretations and alter the act of play according to re-designed circumstances; (h) constantly reflecting



through *performances* successively built or maintained and *roles* depicted from newly acquired activity; and (i) the multiplication of the above *a* thru *h*, which is most likely re-enacted, or discovered, in the course of “doing”; (j) throw away all the above and start anew, i.e. re-emptying the space to allow new set of rules and participatory actions to be created. [To be honest, listing of such definitely is not my cup of tea. If I say it is, like a lot of academic writing, for the sake of clarity, the danger behind would be like filing things with labels, solely made convenient to knowledge-shoppers by excluding all the possible missing and reverberating *steps* often *ghostly* hidden in between, especially when seeing the world getting one dimensional all *for the sake of convenience* – the major winning motto for capitalism.] Henceforth, the *one(s)* at play would be eventually able to self-reference through meticulous application of creativity into the “fieldwork,” decoding and recoding ideas “invented” through innovative actions, all subject to be eventually analyzed and reflected upon the “fruits” of performance deduced by “play-at-work.”

### ***Contemplating through the co-existing another***

Where *one thing* does lead to *another*, sorting out the ONE(S) and THING(S) I am, and have been, withholding would mean the necessity of intensive study of the co-existing *another* through time, which is indeed all part of the *oneness* in me. This *anotherness* of me is in fact long existed way before my birth according to the Bergsonian time zone, i.e. “in reality, life is a movement, materiality is the inverse movement, and each of the two movements is simple–matter, which forms a world, being an undivided flux; life, which cuts matter up into living creatures, also being

undivided.” (Bergson, 1913:249). With the suggested metamorphosis and differentiation often taking place in human life, the ONENESS in such “undivided” continuum does also cast a strong temporal shadow upon the *one(s)* and *another* accounted in me, that the *birth* of such “oneness” *idea* at time could be perceived as “a temporal contraction of trillions of nearly identical oscillations into a single moment” (Bogue, 2003a:17). While reviewing the ideas and modes of physical being germinated in me may mean a series of microscopic search into these “trillionized” single contracting moments, which I am afraid it would take *another* paper to settle the investigation of conjugating all these related ideas, the specific space-time zone I am about to revisit does not only unveil the subtle shadings of living color and hue developed or pervaded in me through experience, but also a spectrum of living continuum once helped igniting creativity in me, constructing a reflective life performance through the arts. ***It is these intersecting moments among experience, actions, art and performance integrated in me that help unveil the desire of searching for an alternate route to community building through studies of individual encounters with the arts.***

I do not have the “right” remedy. Yet I have learnt through my ACTIONS, with a great percentage through the inspiration of art, the alternative route to repaint the landscape of my body, allowing the *being* in me the fundamental options of selecting the direction of every single, likely, or unlikely, *performance*, from simple respiration to live performance *ON STAGE*. I had learnt from my own flaws and the historicity narrated, or fantasized, both by other and me, together, or sporadically in separate

channels. I, the *actor* of my own life, ACTED, *am* still acting, upon events and happenings socially or morally driven from moment to moment, seeking through active dialogues with the SELF-FOREVER-IN-THE-MAKING. It is this very ME I hereby re-deciphered, as the prime study for alternative landscaping of the ordinariness in us all, where community performance is often deeply rooted in between the simple art of breathing in and out, an ancient wisdom may well be long buried in the black boxes of our genes. It is through these revisits to my body and mind to expand our imagination of being through the arts, media long invaded and conjured by consumption at large. By re-inventing the fundamental secrets and ambiguity that are important in brewing creative ideas, and subsequently, imagination for alternative being, we may be able to revitalize our sense of being that no longer prescribed in the same line of marketing realm of culture. In fact, **the remedy to alternative route(s) of being could be within us all, if only if we allow ourselves to re-open our creative traits, platforms where we could re-evaluate the past, the present and the future-in-the-making.**

This is a paper to examine the grounding and potentials of what I set out above to proclaim, hoping to re-formulate alternative routes that have undermined unsung performances in us all, where the *oneness* in each of us could be re-kindled through the magic of the arts. **Be our own “spectators, collectors, describers, *and* analysts”** (de Certeau, 1984); acknowledge our experience through everyday practices out of the *ordinary*. We may be able to disclose new insight in re-applying the so-called “proper” knowledge socially isolated for “education” in our daily use.

*The Three-tiered Sky of Experiences in Me...*

In life, we are often told that there are “the elites,” “the popular ones,” “the commercial lot,” “the common ‘low grade’ vulgar ones” and those who advocates “high culture,” etc. Putting any categories among the life we are exposed to would mean underscoring our experience only to particular ends or interests. In life, all energies keep converging into numerous form of appearance and each would take transformation accordingly. Working on a study in examining alternative routes for community performance, it is indeed fundamental not to exclude one another, yet not necessarily jamming everything altogether at one time. All routes are fundamentally essential for any starting points to re-evaluate life as is at specific temporality. Taking any particular theory into account to frame up the research would easily be drawing more *particulars* into the already particulars. Knowing that there is not a single particular not connected to the whole, it is precisely the intrinsic multiplicity behind any particular idea and thoughts that often reminds me the danger of drawing frameworks from any selective few without going beyond the often fragmentary and yet interlocking tissues often existed in life. It is often more than just the theory, but also the life, place and time of specific nature that have also been playing an integral part of any thoughts or ideas, and most of all, specific life tapestry in the making. Yet, **how could I possible understand anyone’s life without living it? It would only be ended up as sheer speculations or bracketing of someone’s system that function continuously in responses to spiritual, political, economic, social, institutional and environmental aspects of human society. While all acts of study simply cannot**

**escape from cross referencing, yet sometimes such an act could often take away the fundamental importance of common sense away from the intuitive system. Consequently, in the course of often-excessive verifications, we have lost touch with the immediate subject of concern, especially when we are working with ordinary human life.** In the course of juggling on specific “modality” for encoding information or verifying the “sign-type” that signifies specific status of reality, the immediate actions of concern and care in the middle of any experiential learning would be diverted to meaningless spectrum, or simply left to become concerns “dominantly narrated” by institutionalized beliefs. And the “power of texts” would overwhelm the “ordinariness” into unattainable resolution to issues or problems.

Just when experts are still clarifying on how things are being marked by “structuralists,” “post-structuralists,” “fundamentalists,” “foundationalists,” “essentialists,” “anthropologists,” “psychologists,” “sociologists” or “phenomenologists,” etc., the “wonder” and “fancy” such specialists play may never get the chance made applicable to the “wonder and fancy” of the common folks. Or when social workers trying to secure their “services” within the premise *only* “to maintain social norms and values, most concerned in two institutions, family and community,”<sup>38</sup> i.e. the sole purpose of maintenance of social institutions, if the ordinary me decides not to comply with the “norms” or “values” as put forth, would I not be putting into sanitarium or prison for the “outcast”? Then what would be the nature of “individualization” the social services advocating? How should one understand the so-called “individualizing circumstances” against “set criteria” under

the backdrop of procedures operated and designed by institutions? Even university, as part of the major modern institutions, creates and polices disciplinary boundaries.

Weber once remarks in his book *Institutions and Interpretations*:

The University, itself divided into more or less isolated, self-contained departments, was the embodiment of that kind of limited universality that characterized the cognitive model of professionalism. It instituted areas of training and research which, once established, could increasingly ignore the founding limits and limitations of individual disciplines. Indeed the very notion of academic ‘seriousness’ came increasingly to exclude reflection upon the relation of one ‘field’ to another and concomitantly, reflection upon the historical process by which individual disciplines established their boundaries. (1987:32)

When an individual is being seen only as “client” for service taking, with specific preconception operating *only* under selected use of knowledge, i.e. “psychological and social knowledge,” or “social policy and organizational theories” to generate the nature of argument and evidence, how would one be free from the judgment aside from these core of thinking, something never quite reflected the total context of living? By the time we identify with one’s “social origin” of behavior and problems, or the “social environment” that one lives in, the “social legacy” that once acquired may have already taken new shapes and form outside the “standardized orientation” to problems. These frameworks that strive to orient “behavior” and “problems” look like pulling something from “a storehouse of pooled learning,”<sup>39</sup> denominating social mechanism out of normative regulations. All these codes of practice have been conferring to the “effectiveness” of social work, so carefully planned and structured into working procedures and forms filled in the present social services centre. A youth worker who works for a local integrated service centre has shared with me over eighty plus encoded forms designed to codify the nature of practices to be carried out day in and

out. Where should one begin then in view of such over-stretched managerial phenomenon, obsessed with organization power and risk-free security put forth in “services”? Where is the heart of such services so grossly organization-oriented, formulating “demand and responses” all under the scope of “business network” impounded? Living in an “Unbrave New World,” in Clive Kessler’s words, it is “the often diligently patrolled boundaries of what were seen as ‘disciplinary territories’...[that had gone steps further where] the claims of knowledgeable, effective interdisciplinarity replaced and ‘trumped’ by a shallower, more callow cousin, ‘post-disciplinarity – the call not for a mastery and strategic combination of disciplines but for their suppression and discarding.” (Kessler, 2006) Under *such* disciplinary and professional climate, how willing teachers and social workers are in allowing any cross-disciplinary practice theory remain to be an “unchallenged area” that needs special attention if we are to explore any alternative possibilities other than the already stagnated practices.

When the data seeking *eyes* only selectively hook up with the reason establishment-bounded *vision*, all prescribed through encoded form for specific information-in-need for specific *services*, strategies that privileges the “eye” as the primary sense in the production of reason and social progress (Jay, 1993) would operate only to the expectation of spectators, i.e. the funding body, whereby the system of “vision” is powered by structures and ideas amalgamated on basis of technologies and institutions. What if the eye has long been socially disciplined to look into things as ordered or constructed by establishments, the “making” of the self may never be able to escape

from the scrutiny of these “seeing” agents, with the body always under influence of, as Derrida suggested, the hegemony of vision. What is the chance left for the final *private place* to be for any individuals when the *seeing* eyes are constantly watching right around the corner, be they there in the name of social critique or social theorizing purposes all tied to “coherence, systematic order, calculability, control and systematic planning” (Wellmer, 1985)? Even “[Max Weber] did see that social theory and social action under this empirico-scientific paradigm might not lead to liberation but, rather, to a form of indifference, as instrumental concerns, either in the context of bureaucratic or market relationships came to dominate both enquiry and practice, turning the Enlightenment ideal of the autonomous individual into at best an anachronism and at worst a meaningless category.” (Marshall, 1999)

When the need of a person is defined according to conditions prescribed by “theories” and “organized motives,” how many would be labeled as “the undeserving ones” under the “assessment scheme” and “service criteria,” or *entitled* to receive the help and understanding most needed as an ordinary human being? How would the ordinary me ever truly be keen or eager to identify with these *established* codes defined by experts or professionals? **When common needs and aspiration are altogether codified simply for the sake of maintaining social structures with specific institutional and ideological demands, applying “social sciences” into the core of ordinary living may be implying ordinary being subject to the scrutiny of competing social theories, with emphasis either on voluntary, therapeutic or reform aspects.** Is there not any open platform anymore simply designed to endorse simple wishes and



imagination? Could social reform not be creative enough to incorporate the spirit of art, like getting into a theatre to find life?

Of course there are differences between life outside theatre and the one inside. As Peter Brook expands his thought, “But if we accept that life in the theatre is more visible, more vivid than on the outside, then we can see that it is simultaneously the same thing and somewhat different,” (Brook, 1995:11) **it is precisely this very “edge” of being “somewhat different” that have me re-ignited the thought of using the imagination of a theatre to provide alternative community work that could trigger *performance*.** Allow me to declare my position here: I am not an advocate of Peter Brook’s way of theorizing, which was very much an effort to attain the sole goal of inspiring ones to be “a highly professional artist” for the field of theatre only, or asking the social institution to be transformed into theatre. **I simply use the resourceful imaging of theatre,** so well “chiseled, polished, modified, with great skill and artistry” by Mr. Brook, **in the realm of progressive social works and education training. It is the living experience, not organized theories, that truly matters when it comes to the beeswax of *ordinary* human kind.** As theatre is the kind of “place” where “the act of reducing space and compressing time” (Ibid, 11) are often depicted to create a concentrate form of life image, it is precisely these very skills of compression and transformation that could help us remove things that are not strictly necessary in life and intensify what is there to preserve the beauty of being ordinary in us all. Therefore, I would be freely relating to all relevant teaching on theatre and, to the best of my understanding and experience, transform them into potential social and

education practices. With my experience in theatre and education, and the crossover to holding workshops for social work students and practitioners the recent years, there are indeed a lot of potential in the possibility of transplanting theatre skills into both education and social work sectors. It is the “small spark of life,” as Brook keeps repeating in his speech to students, that must happen in a good performer help inspire my way to what Brook suggests, “phenomenon with clarity,” the ground for approaching ordinary mind to recruit alternative form of fresh energy out of the blurry lines and muddles of beliefs generated around the sense of individual being. It would be through the ignition of self-clarification that one could truly retain the self-power to make changes according to one’s own need.

Brook once claimed, “theatre begins when two people meet. If one person stands up and another watches him, this is already a start. For there to be a development, a third person is needed for an encounter to take place. Then life takes over and it is possible to go very far – but the three elements are essential.” (Ibid, 16) Of course, Brook was indeed focusing on theatre. But I would translate it quite differently and revise it as the foundation of building community performance through the arts. **It is these three elements coexisting in me, the 3-tiered sky, that have propounded my imagination into transforming such criteria in theatre on social work or educational practices: (I) I began without theatre. The day when I walked into the profession, I saw the mirror in me; (II) Having worked in the profession for such a span of time and altering the angles of reflection at work, I saw myself taking on a play with my own acts projected through actors, objects, space and events that echoed my past;**

**(III) One day I began to fall back and look at the coalition of these two previous elements of being, i.e. the first element self prior to the profession and the second participating element that followed, I became my own spectator and subsequently began “a third person development process,” i.e. to allow “life to take over” again and make it as my daily encounters with people I work with, live with and play with.**

It is through the light of these “3-tiered sky” that I have come down to draw on the potential setup of a paradigm for motivating the ordinary self into the search for unity-in-actions, a process of the search of self-empowerment through performance progressively designed off the *self* individually structured. Abraham H. Maslow’s suggested paradigm for motivational states pointed out,

“Most drives are not isolable, nor can they be localized somatically, nor can they be considered as if they were the only things happening in the organism at the time...An important activity can easily be shown to have dynamic relationships with almost everything else of importance in the person. Why then take an activity that is not at all average in this sense, an activity that is selected out for special attention only because it is easier to deal with by our customary (but not necessarily correct) experimental technique of isolation, reduction, or of independence from other activities? If we are faced with the choice of dealing with either (1) experimentally simple problems that are however trivial or invalid or (2) experimental problems that are fearfully difficult but important, we should certainly not hesitate to choose the latter.” (Maslow, 1987)

In *Motivation and Personality*, Maslow’s propositions on examining motivation<sup>40</sup> are not altogether alien to theatre maker. Both theatre and education focus on human life.

It is only the different field of perception that often keeps us from looking into one another's concern and the ways to apply our practices. Yet I do have some reservations on listing human persona in generalized terms, in fact a dangerous zone for theatre makers. I am not here to expand the notion of "universalism versus particularism" or getting into the argument of whether to first prioritizing non-liberal community practices, then shifting selectively to the particular needs of individuals. I simply look for the possibility of a cross-field dialogue that could incorporate each other's "moral stands," on the basis that each of our beliefs may consist of professional biases and could be mistaken at times. When each of our ordinary life is often defined or constituted by social groups or norms so close to us, securing alternative room for individual to exercise their autonomy would take more than simple imagination. **Art is one of the better tools there to open up safe and yet experimental space, with specific temporality extracted out of the social context, to allow, "extricating oneself" from the society. And of course, such action would eventually be redeemed into "an awakened presence" sprung from participating some microscopic journey of reflection through "mirror images" deduced from theatre games or art play.**

I could only draw such frameworks out of my own experience. Not disrespecting the grandeur of theories devised in the intellectual world, which could only serve as an alternative mirror for me to reflect on, I would rather seek an open stage, without categorizing the fields of study, or terminologized thoughts and ideas into jargon alien to ordinary folks. It is about the possibility of developing alternative social practices

through the arts, a practice that happen to derive from the experiences I once encountered, both as a theatre artist and an education practitioner.

***A conclusion will to be inconclusively painted...***

In his book *The Object Stares Back*, James Elkins's ten different ways [another listing event again] of looking at a figurative painting in a gallery (Elkins 1996, 38-9) seems to be providing some initial insight into the nature of seeing/observing, where the "gallery" of "human domains" could be juxtaposed according to how and where the "painting" of "actions" is to be carried out. I hereby counteract in italics of what Elkins's list of actions in *concluding*, or *opening* rather, the chapter (or the *yet-another-chapter-to-come*) herewith:

1. You, looking at the painting [*I, reflecting through the painting-in-me that began since birth*];
2. figures in the painting who look out at you [*the tiny bodily cells sending me signals for contemplating a potential dialogue*];
3. figures in the painting who look at one another [*the bodily cells are wave-surfing through the self-referencing socio-biological network, drafting a self portraiture of art-science-at-work, and eventually a community portraiture unbound*];
4. figures in the painting who look at objects or stare off into space or have their eyes closed [*play can always be taking place elsewhere other than the "authorized" playground*];
5. the museum guard, who may be looking at the back of your head [*precisely the time when the book of "Pedagogy of the Oppressed"*<sup>41</sup> *should be rehearsing in view of the smiling insurance broker*];
6. the other people in the gallery, who may be looking at you or at the painting. There are imaginary observers, too [*another story of the eye that hooked on*

*to the wiring of authorized territories, or the imaginary fleeting in the temporal continuum, seeking alternative oscillations into a single moment or a given action];*

7. the artist, who was once looking at this painting [*the movement of matter could be often inversely driven to seek metamorphosis by extracting the temporary self into rhythms vibrating somewhere];*
8. the models for the figures in the painting, who may once have seen themselves there [*yet no one can guarantee the same effect when repeating an action, or simply inserting one another without any logical limits];*
9. all the other people who have seen the painting - the buyers, the museum officials, and so forth [*where consumption would fully fathom the possibility and intention originated];*
10. people who have never seen the painting: they may know it only from reproductions... or from descriptions [*where one should take extreme caution to prevent from being scrutinized by power that likely stealing the to-be-discovered free floating details of humanity].*

If my body is the only direct contact media with the Universe, do allow me to view this small physical entity surrounded by a world of multitude in a fashion self-refined through constantly seeking, consciously, unconsciously or subconsciously. Do allow me to view the origin of the self through all possible circuits of images, be they dream-images or world-images, depicted from life events flashing, bouncing, recollecting from one “end” to another through time. May the images of ME be only reflections or doubles corresponding to the reflected objects multi-mirrored, constantly absorbing and then re-creating its own identity under a sky filled with the ever-happening-birth of ideas! May a new balance be attained, from the microbes to its possible habitats, and the bodily host to its alternating neighbors! With all these *maybe* and wishes, I hereby move on to explore **the possibility of alternative new order through art-in-the-making, continually and unceasingly rejuvenating through observations**

**anew, beyond pre-configured form or conflicting fragments, with critical analysis through theatrical framework to be derived from specific experiential discoveries. Any “evidence-based knowledge” intended for use on any specific individual should be re-examined carefully, with local and indigenous knowledge often ambiguously generalized and applied contrary to individual need and context. In re-building an empty space to allow truth re-deciphered through art and play, with the inner core nurturing of aesthetic impulse to learn, it is possible to regain a paradise lost through the rediscovery of inner freedom, a private community that attached self-sustaining dynamic of “oneness,” i.e. the wholeness that constitute the body-mind at work.**

The body-mind is a pictogram in itself, or in fact a pictophonetic compound, like Chinese characters, highly charged with ideographic indicators to make meanings of the world around. We all learn, but also beg, steal, or borrow, imagery to make ourselves associative with logical and emotional matters, through which hoping to attain transformation, with a little help from orthographic or semantic drift, if we are lucky enough to get the needed education to learn all that. For an ordinary individual, when the cognitive and psychomotor are never nurtured as affective component to help interact with such a world of infinite multiplicity, sheer willingness may not be enough to overcome those could-be-self-discriminating attitudes acquired from the mass media, an area massively consumed by re-juggling these pictogramic- and phonetic-moving-parts to aim at control of the human mind. In such a human-made

environment, so highly conditioned and structure in time and technological gadgets, like *the Wasteland* as foreseen by T.S. Eliot (1962:39):

Unreal City,  
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,  
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
I had not thought death had undone so many.  
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,  
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.  
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,  
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours  
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine. (line 60-68)<sup>42</sup>

Where is the tree of thought? Would there not be an open platform empty enough to reshuffle the troubling attitudes and emotions? Do I still have my own private space to nurture a mind looking for alternative emancipation? **Let's dive back into the pool we created, a world of differentiation concepts, upheld by experts, and unveil such a world that never make true claims to ordinary people in ordinary words. It has to be individual acts beyond institutionalization, able to take risks beyond the tug-of-war of integration and disintegration. Before turning into a member of the community of society, one has to retain the community within the self in the first place, not waiting for the knowledge-supply down the management line where only commodity thinking proliferates.**

I hereby *conclude* with a segment of an email I sent to a friend over in London:



Fri, 18 Jan 2008 10:37:44 +0800

... The bottom-line is: Where is our heart? How do we look into the rationale? That's why I often use the Chinese character of thought these days: *Sih* (思) and *Siang* (想)! The former suggests how our heart (心) should contemplate with the infinite mapping on human and natural field (田) of reality; the latter on the art of looking (目) into a tree (木), the metaphor for nature of living working in cycle, with support from around, above and under, all due to the quality of supply and the environment there is. So often we are all pulled to one side and then dismiss the other because we don't want to look over the other side at all when our mind is blocked by these strange potions brewing somewhere at the back of our brain. It is what we call false perception, or a perception can never truly complete from within. Guess you have to take your mind off these distraction and focus on what you should contemplate at this moment, this very specific time and place being in London and what you set out to do in the first place...

## NOTES for CHAPTER ONE:

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- <sup>1</sup> These are the five fundamental areas to build my theatrical education frameworks for innovative workshops.
- <sup>2</sup> *Unborn Child*. Lyrics by Lana Bogan; music by James Seals, 1974. From the album UNBORN CHILD (1974).
- <sup>3</sup> In Act V, Scene V of *Macbeth*, Shakespeare had given his title character such final words over a life seemingly fatally predestinated, as if with actions long implanted in the words of soothsayers. And so Macbeth exclaimed, "... *life is but a walking shadow. A poor player strutting and fretting upon the stage and then is heard no more...it is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.*"
- <sup>4</sup> According to the 1957 accident of the Mayak nuclear plant stated in the Wikipedia, on September 29, 1957, due to "the failure of the cooling system for a tank storing tens of thousands of tons of dissolved nuclear waste resulted in a non-nuclear explosion having a force estimated at about 75 tons of TNT (310 gigajoules), which released some 20 MCi (740 petabecquerels) of radiation. Subsequently, at least 200 people died of radiation sickness, 10,000 people were evacuated from their homes, and 470,000 people were exposed to radiation."
- <sup>5</sup> Richard Dawkins had written an article called *Viruses of the Mind* in 1991, an effort to demystify speculations on the nature of scientific research. To him, "Scientific ideas, like all memes, are subject to a kind of natural selection, and this might look superficially virus-like. But the selective forces that scrutinize scientific ideas are not arbitrary and capricious. They are exacting, well-honed rules, and they do not favor pointless self-serving behavior." \*Text taken from *Dennett and His Critics: Demystifying Mind*, ed. Bo Dalhomb (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1993).
- <sup>6</sup> I self-financed the production and was presented in McCauly Theatre of the Hong Kong Arts Centre. It was an important experience directing Beckett's work at a time when I was struggling with unresolved family crisis due to an early premature marriage. Looking back, it is also quite a paradox to begin a career with a play called *Endgame*. The play is an existential look into the tragic existence of having "no exit" for humankind. It was an emotional journey for me back then working through Beckett's texts.
- <sup>7</sup> According to the Wikipedia, it was 1957 when "Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel began their recording career under the name of *Tom and Jerry*." It was also the same year when "John Lennon first met Paul McCartney at St. Peter's Church garden fete in Liverpool, England." Their songs had played a great part of my adolescent life and transmitted some important emotional sentiments in me on the world around, which would be examined at later chapters. As a matter of fact, my first record bought was *The greatest hits of Simon and Garfunkel*, produced by Sony, Inc. back in 1973.
- <sup>8</sup> Translated from the original Chinese version I wrote back in 1970 when I was 13.
- <sup>9</sup> *Window Water Baby Moving* (1959. 12 min. 13 sec. 16mm) was one of the best-known works of Stan Brakhage. In the late 1950's, American men were not permitted to witness childbirth in hospitals. Brakhage's film had eventually been used by maternity centers and natural childbirth groups and has helped change attitudes toward the father's presence during childbirth.
- <sup>10</sup> It is a theory independently developed by William James and Carl Lange. "The theory states that within human beings, as a response to experiences in the world, the autonomic nervous system creates physiological events such as muscular tension, a rise in heart rate, perspiration, and dryness of the mouth. Emotions, then, are feelings which come about as a *result* of these physiological changes, rather than being their cause. James and Lange arrived at the theory

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independently. Lange specifically stated that vasomotor changes *are* emotions.” (Cited from Wikipedia)

<sup>11</sup> It is a psychological theory on emotions developed by Walter Cannon and Philip Bard. It suggested, “emotion is the result of one’s perception of their reaction, or ‘bodily change’.” (Cited from Wikipedia)

<sup>12</sup> From a distance, it was William Shakespeare, through Miranda of *The Tempest*, whom once spoke, “O Wonder! How many goodly creatures are there here! How beauteous mankind is! O, brave new world that hath such people in’t!” (Act V, Sc. 1) What envisioned then seems to have already taken peculiar shapes and turns. How has the *World* fallen from grace once “beauteously” conceived?

<sup>13</sup> Excerpts of “Ordinary People”, music and lyrics by John Legend, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Herbert Marcuse’s *One Dimensional Man* (Routledge Classic) published in 1964 had drawn quite a lot of attention for modern thoughts on the prevalent one-dimensional society where people, its subject, was seen “swallowed up by its alienated existence. The achievements of progress defy ideological indictment as well as justification; before their tribunal, the ‘false consciousness’ of their rationality becomes the true consciousness.” P.13

<sup>15</sup> Ken Wilbur, often seen as a “New Age” thinker, spent a whole chapter, namely “One Taste” (from *A Theory of Everything*, Shambhala, Boston, 2001, chapter 7) to explore the route for integral transformative practice, a subject I would be evolving around throughout my reflection of this paper. In fact, He did literally write a book with the same title *One Taste* (Shambhala, Boston, 2000).

<sup>16</sup> David Bohm had written a book called *Wholeness and the Implicate Order* (Routledge, 1980), in which he re-examined the potential integration of Western and Eastern form of insights, also a book I would follow closely in the course of writing this paper.

<sup>17</sup> Popular science writer Philip Ball had repetitively been using samples of “traffic jam”, in his book “Critical Mass: How One Thing Lead to Another,” as reference for his analysis on “critical mass.”

<sup>18</sup> *Everyman* is also the name of a 16<sup>th</sup> Century English morality play based on a late 15<sup>th</sup> Century Dutch morality play “Elckerjic.”

<sup>19</sup> In a recent documentary film released in 2007, namely *Zeitgeist*, i.e. the Spirit of an Age, it suggests that such Christianity-based religious connotation dominated in western culture is somewhat a misleading one, without truly tracing the root of its origin back in the Pagan World of the Egyptians.

<sup>20</sup> Based on URL site: [<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/One>]. Retrieved on February 10, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Source from URL site: [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boolean\\_datatype](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boolean_datatype)]. Retrieved the same day as above.

<sup>22</sup> It was part of my creative journey in my 2005 production of *Springtime at Wuhu Street* (performed at On and On Theatre at Cattle Depot, H.K.). The material was later published by International Association of Theatre Critics (Hong Kong) in a book called, *Here & Now: A Smokeless Journey into “Springtime at Wuhu Street* (2005). The mathematical fantasia could be translated as such (p.184):

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**The 17<sup>th</sup> Prosody: Red + Green =?**

What is the *color* of 160014009641295466?

A : [(Real Number ÷ Abstract Number) + (Elemental Substance ÷ Imaginary Body = (Origin + chance) x Time];

B : [Shuttling through and beyond any material signifier x True Disposition ≠ The Constitution of a Thing];

C : [(√ Meaning – Natural Phenomenon) ÷ (√ Established Rules + Fabricating Ingredients) = Nonsense + Absurdity]

If A = B + C and

If B x Time = C – (Origin + Chance) or

If Origin = 0 and

If Chance = 160014009641295466 x 0,

Then Nonsense = Reverse “66” Sixty-six times to an Open Square N

And Absurdity = The Prime Numbers consisted in 16001400 decompose themselves three hundred and sixty times every second...

What if:

√ Meaning = √ 0

√ Established Rules = (195460166 x √ n) x √ The Sum of Territorial Sand Particles x

√ Moral Sentiment

Natural Phenomenon ≠ True Disposition

Fabricating Ingredients =?

#Hint 1: Disposition ≠ Meaning; Power ≠ Absolute Body; Condition ≠ Natural Phenomenon

What is “Red and Green” then?

The Nature of a Thing plus The Construction of a Thing minus The Soul equals to what kind of Value?

If Red is Soul,

Would Green be the Heart?

#Hint 2: The Soul ≥ The Sum Total Action of 60 trillion cells plus!

P.S. *The Author is an absolute Mathematic Illiterate!*

<sup>23</sup> The bracket [me] is my substitution of the original *Pierre* in Sartre’s words. The citing is excerpts from Jean Paul Sartre’s 1940 publication of *The Imaginary* (Routledge 2004, p.13).

<sup>24</sup> From URL site: [[http://vega.sanger.ac.uk/Homo\\_sapiens/index.html](http://vega.sanger.ac.uk/Homo_sapiens/index.html)]. Retrieved on February 2, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> *Sweet Movie* (1974) is a film by Yugoslav filmmaker Dušan Makavejev, a psychologist turned film director. It was a hilarious political comedy that had once provoked many conservative minds and been seen as “uncouth, uncivilized, and offensive.” Quite the contrary, the film set out to break all the conventional cinematic rules and artistic boundaries in filmmaking, a political satire that, according to film critic David Sterritt, “jolt viewers out of lazy, hazy mindsets that stifle freedom, creativity, and bliss.” It is an intellectual film filled with social and political references. Due to its controversial and anarchic nature, the film is still banned by various countries to this day.

<sup>26</sup> The complete lyrics of the song go like this:

Is there life on the Earth?  
Is there life after Birth?  
It’s a joy to be alive.  
It’s good to be glad.  
    Good to survive.  
It’s great to be mad.  
It’s fun to have nothing.  
    Do things in the nude.  
It is sweet to be hungry.

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It is finger lickin' good.  
Is there life on the Earth?  
Is there life after Birth?  
It is good to be sad.  
It is good to be lucky.  
    Good to practice deadly sin.  
To die for a cause.  
To be alive and to win.  
Is there life on the Earth?  
Is there life after Birth?

In the film "Sweet Movie," the song was sung by a disillusioned prostitute, played by Anna Prucnal, standing on top of a boat, with a giant papier-mâché head of Karl Marx on the prow, called *Survival*, when it was sailing along a river in Amsterdam. A hitchhiking sailor named "Potemkin" was peeing into the river and waving to the prostitute while she was singing.

- <sup>27</sup> I was once a consulting member of the special art curriculum committee formed by the Hong Kong Education Department back in 2003. It was meant to provide ideas on how art should be taught in secondary school. Having been invited to attend 2 meetings within a year, I had only learnt that the meeting agenda was basically set up to seek endorsement from "professionals" and "experts" to implement some preconceived policy, not truly intended to explore any in-depth discussion. The policy remains to be something of administrative convenient nature, but never quite touches base with the content and function behind art education.
- <sup>28</sup> Lao Tse, *The Tao Teh King, or The Tao and its Characteristics*, trans. James Legge. Project Gutenberg Etext. 2.2
- <sup>29</sup> Excerpted from Charles Muller's translation of Confucius's *The Doctrine of the Mean* (section 2). URL site: [<http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/contao/docofmean.htm>] Retrieved on January 30, 2007.
- <sup>30</sup> John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, Section 1 of Chapter One, The Project Gutenberg Etext.
- <sup>31</sup> John Dewey, Preoccupation with the Disconnected, a talk to the New York Academy of Medicine, 1928. [URL site: <http://alexandertechnique.com/articles/dewey/deweydisconnected.rtf>]. Retrieved on February 4, 2007.
- <sup>32</sup> At time of publication, the author had finally learnt from his uncle that his mother died of over-bleeding the next hour after his birth.
- <sup>33</sup> "To make the invisible visible" was one of the first things I learnt in theatre, a line depicted from the renowned theatre director Peter Brook and examined in his book *The Empty Space*.
- <sup>34</sup> Ever since the beginning of the paper, time moves on. Thus, the time "lived" would seem constantly shifting from forty-something to the fifty marks. And I intentionally leave them as were/are.
- <sup>35</sup> Stanislavski also added, "Besides the method, actors must have all the qualities that constitute a real artist: inspiration, intelligence, taste, the ability to communicate, charm, temperament, fine speech and movement, quick excitability and an expressive appearance." (Gorchakov, 1985:52)
- <sup>36</sup> "Picasso Speaks." 1923. *The Arts* (May):5.
- <sup>37</sup> The English text here excerpted (Scene 1) is based on the production script of Hoyingfung's *The Seventh Drawer* performed by Toy Factory Theatre of Singapore in 2002. The text was later translated into Chinese and soon adapted, also by Hoyingfung, into the music theatre production

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of the same name, part of the *Legend of China Arts Festival*, organized by Leisure and Culture Department of Hong Kong, 2003. This section later adapted can be read from p. 78-79 of *Words of Play: Looking Beyond The Seventh Drawer*, published in 2003 by International Associations of Theatre Critics (Hong Kong).

- <sup>38</sup> It is one of the 7 “common features” in the social context of social work proclaimed by Malcolm Payne in his book *Modern Social Work Theory* (Macmillan Education Ltd., London, 1991).
- <sup>39</sup> It is part of Clifford Geertz’s citation of Clyde Kluckhohn’s *Mirror for Man* on the way to define culture in his book *The Interpretation of Culture*. (Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1973, pp.4-5)
- <sup>40</sup> The 17 propositions titles made in Abraham H. Maslow’s *Motivation and Personality* (HarperCollins publishers. 1987, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition) are: 1. Holistic approach; 2. A paradigm for motivational states; 3. Means and ends; 4. Unconscious Motivation; 5. Commonality of human desires; 6. Multiple motivations; 7. Motivating states; 8. Satisfactions generate new motivations; 9. Impossibility of listing drives; 10. Classifying motivation according to fundamental goals; 11. Inadequacy of animal data; 12. Environment; 13. Integrated action; 14. Unmotivated behavior; 15. Possibility of attainment; 16. Reality and the Unconscious; 17. Motivation of highest human capacities.
- <sup>41</sup> *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2004) is a book written by Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire, an advocate on bringing the needed social justice and education in developing world. Ironically speaking, for the so-called developed world, when mass productivity has simply claimed the individual in entirety, the true inner dimension of education has very much been threatened leaving the mind swallowed up by alienated existence.
- <sup>42</sup> Excerpted from T.S. Eliot’s 1922 poem, *Wasteland*. (*The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962.)

*Two*

## **Ghost Plays**

*(or Apparitional Synthesis of Body-Mind in 14 parts)*

**HAMLET.** That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once. How the knave jowls it to the ground, as if 'twere Cain's jawbone, that did the first murder! This might be the pate of a Politician, which this ass now o'erreaches; one that would circumvent God, might it not?

*Act V Scene 1, The Tragedy of Hamlet, William Shakespeare*

**OSWALD.** When a son has nothing to thank his father for? Has never known him? Do you really cling to that old superstition? ... You who are so enlightened in other ways?

**MRS. ALVING.** Can it be only a superstition?

**OSWALD.** Yes; surely you can see that, mother. It's one of those notions that are current in the world, and so...

**MRS. ALVING.** [Deeply moved.] Ghosts!

**OSWALD.** [Crossing the room.] Yes; you may call them ghosts.

*Act III, Ghosts, Henrik Ibsen.*

### ***1: Death as an Experience Denied***

I recently visited the small village, *Lung A Pai*, at *Lam Chuen* of the New Territories in Hong Kong. It used to be the *Wan's* village, i.e. all residents belonging to the *Wan* family. Now it is basically a deserted village, where only one or two self-proclaimed

environmentalists live there, seeking alternative shelters away from the madding crowd. I was told that the *Wan*'s descendants have all moved either overseas or to the outskirts of the village packed with modernized houses, leaving behind ruins and deserted rice fields. Based on the wall paintings and artifacts left behind among the ruins, the village should be very well off over 100 years ago. Located in the heart of Lam Chuen valley plains where crops used to be abundant, with forested hills as its backdrop and rivers flowing from ranges of hills, one could easily imagine the richness of the land and the beauty of the agricultural design and settlement left behind from old folks. Off the far corner near the foothill of the village, there is a quiet "mausoleum" where coffins of the village deceased were placed. It is intimately so close to the "residential area" for the living; apparently the dead were never meant to be far and beyond. Many city dwellers would likely comment on the eeriness of potential apparition or association with haunting off the ever-watchful ancestral eyes. As "traditions" become a sign of "burden" to prosperity to many contemporary *economic* advocates in Hong Kong, what used to be ancestrally important has often turned into relics catered solely for tourist attractions, without any more imagination or curiosity to how the dead and the living could stay together at such close range.

Standing in the "middle" ground between the dead and the imaginary living-used-to-be, I began wondering why people used to say: Chinese are "known for their inability to articulate their feelings and for commonly resorting to somatization in times of stress and emotional difficulties," (Chan, 2000b) or "grief and bereavement is even harder to articulate than are feelings, as death is seen as a curse in the Chinese Culture." (Chan & Chan, 2006) If it were truly a strong sense of "death denial" among



our culture, why do the *Wan*'s, and many other villages as well, buried their dead near the living? Or is it simply due to the speculation of possible "retribution" that many would believe that the dead and the living are still somewhat tied together in a special bond, a relationship that would likely continue with the belief that "the ghost of the dead in the netherworld would influence, or even intervene in, the fate and fortune of the living" (Lai, 2006)? Or has it been the ghostly cast over thousands of generation, ever since Confucius's *The Book of Rites* (Liji) so "explicitly explained the origin of *gui* [the Chinese character for 'ghost']" as Lai suggested? All these beliefs seem to be too easy without getting close enough to the heart of the deceased, a sentiment unlike Heidegger since "death is the outer limit of one's experience and not itself a death of experience," (Heidegger, 1962:303) and those ones closely related, someone "at most 'just there alongside.'" (Scarre, 2007:35) We would so easily morally confine ourselves to such "traditions-seeming-to-be" without the needed touches and smells of body and soul once taken shape in the course of lifetime experienced.

## ***2: Storytelling of Death so close...***

Two weeks ago, on February 2, 2006 I held a workshop for master degree students on *Adaptations, Theatre and Culture*<sup>1</sup>; students brought over some important objects from home and shared the journey once connected with. A student named *Fion*<sup>2</sup> brought to class a case of ear swabs. Just when many wondered what was the big deal about these ear swabs that many would use daily. These ear swabs became the bridge to a heart-pounding experience of death eye-witnessed by Fion. She shared with us her experience of using ear swabs to clean the infected abdomen cancer wound of her dying mother. She was alone trying to help wash her mother's body. It was the first

time being so close to her mom's naked body, a physical entity that once gave birth to her and her sisters. Her mom was constantly in pain. And blood was dripping through the infected unhealable wound. The ear swabs suddenly were transformed into something more than just objects. They beheld experience of a dimension never quite imagined by the rest of us. They weren't "ghosts." They were daily *relics* of living experience and living ritual beyond palliative care once performed. After class, another student took the experience forward, reminisced her recent funeral experience in the class log and shared with us her own *sentiment-unbecoming* on the dead:

**Kan. Posted on February 8, 2008.**

*The third Lesson.*

*Another story from "never satisfied" [the nickname of Fion].*

*I believe there are a lot of stories in everyone. But probably not many ones would be like her, brave enough to share such stories with other.*

*Truly grateful for her honesty.*

*After class, she and I talked about death.*

*I suddenly realized I haven't been to the funeral home quite a while. Well, guess I shouldn't miss the place too much. Cause there are a lot more opportunities to visit that kind of place in the future.*

*1994.*

*It was your funeral. You jumped off a fourteen-storey public estate building near school after swallowed several dozens sleeping pills. You took the leap of falling.*

*I was quiet sitting at your funeral. The day after when I saw your coffin being pushed inside, I suddenly thought, "You would be burnt to ashes. Not a piece of bone would be left." I screamed. I couldn't help crying.*

*2001.*

*It was your funeral. You had intestinal cancer and your cheeks were so thin that one could hardly recognize you. It was fortunate that you passed away soon enough to leave all the pain behind.*

*The dispute over the fortune you left behind took no time to explode right after your death. If you had known, you probably would be very sad. That's why I sat there beside you, also probably to make up all the missing visit to you in the hospital. I kept burning a lot of "imitated money" to you to make sure you could buy some clothes and jewels down there. Cause I know pau pau [grandma] used to love being tidy and enjoy other's respect.*

*I couldn't help being superstitious. You died with eyes remained open. You were probably very angry. I couldn't understand what they're fighting for; they fought even over the money of condolence given by other.*

*I suddenly realized: it wouldn't be so bad to be poor when one dies.*

*2002.*

*The mom of a respected teacher died. I just flew back from Nanjing and went straight to her funeral. It was my first time selecting a floral tribute for a funeral. Without my mother beside me, I found the atmosphere in the funeral home a bit eerie for the first time.*

*My teacher never lifted her head once. It was the first time seeing his teardrops.*

*2003.*

*It was my first year teaching. All "bottom 10" students. One of them was BB. He often ran around during class. He called me once to pick him up at the police station. And I was "honored" to become his "most favorite one." That year, I simply couldn't do anything for him. He was put to Boy's Home and lost his contact ever since.*

*One morning, just when he was walking through the school door, crying, "My mom died last night."*

*I attended his mom's funeral. He didn't run around at all. Just sit there quietly, with head lowered. When I left, he asked me, "When would I take you hiking?"*

*That was the last time visiting a funeral home, the year 2003.*

Death does not have to be a difficult subject. While academicians might like to analyze the “shock,” “anticipatory grief,” “bargaining,” “fears,” “fear of abandonment,” “tears” and “acceptance” kind of psychological reaction aspects on people involved with the subject, which often belayed a series of hypotheses on the nature of behavior and justifications on circumstances totally outside the first-person experience as taken through by the ones involved, I still find it quite difficult to go “beyond” and “rectify” an *outside* experience but take the stories as told the way they were and nothing more.

**If only if we would allow all the ones involved unfolding alternate stories as their experiences move on, and possibly one day, through alternate actions, transcend those experiences into new source in life, such transcendence could be possible when such stories were to be taken further unfolding through the realm of art-in-action, allowing the variables in particular human emotional tissues to stretch out into spectrum of different dimension, thereof, triggering acute molecular movement in the psyche for alternative outlet.**

The “storytelling” of Fion was the beginning of a series of “art-in-action-dwelling-in-her.” It was not simply a recall of the experience but it was the first time, with the ear swabs serving as a “bridge,” to re-narrate a specific experience once encountered to a group of “new audience,” i.e. the classmates. Her body, as an organism, at the same time, experienced a reformation of past experience and learned to articulate the latent

emotions that were never as “clear.” The time and aesthetic distance provided her an opportunity to re-visit death in living terms. Furthermore, her “storytelling” had activated living responses from a group of active listeners. The log posted by Kan was very much triggered from her experience of listening to Fion’s story and subsequently re-activating a series of “death encountering experience” buried at the back of somewhere in one of the mind corners. **Through her action of writing, i.e. the act of re-articulating previous experience in alternate terms, she was undergoing “changes” in her regarding the nature of those particular experiences lived. She was drawing references from her own stories, something already “in her” and by allowing herself to re-open the lid of memory, she had given herself the opportunity to reflect, and create the space for subsequent actions to come.** The nature of art-in-actions secretly took places in these two women. Two weeks later, Fion had further transformed her experience into a piece of artwork, not a representation of her story, but rather moving forward to invite new participation through her work. It was a drawer, in which “buried” with 7 tiny unlit light bulbs, each hooked onto a corresponding tiny battery, a cassette tape (with seven interviews on particular thought on “life”) sitting quietly at a corner as if waiting to be discovered, and seven hand-painted slides by these seven participants involved in the project. When classmates opened up the drawer, a series of investigation immediately took place. How would they be touching the objects? How would the installed objects transmit new actions to come? How would they listen to the new stories originally sprung from Fion’s transcendental experience of retelling her mother’s story? The chain of actions enlivened becomes a great platform of learning, both for Fion and the participants. As for Kan, she moved on to another step closer to storytelling of her

own; such courage was never “present” in her back then. **The act of storytelling and the making of the artwork has become acts of apparitional synthesis, transforming “ghosts” into resourceful materials for further living experience.**

Dewey in *Art as Experience* shared with us some important insight regarding how we may have undermined the importance of the stream of consciousness in our life, something that marked the course of changing experience (Dewey, 2005[1934]:261-262). He further pointed out that it was often “the *control* of formation and development of an experience” that constantly leaves the self with “predetermined direction,” it would be up to us how to reevaluate the human picture and the ability to treat it as “the integral outcome of their interaction with what the mind through the organism contributes.” (Ibid, 261) “The change of physical position does not cause a new psychical element to be injected, but it does signify that a somewhat different organism is acting, and difference in the cause is bound to make a difference in the effect.” (Ibid, 260) In other words, alternate actions would mean giving the self a different kind of experience where one could reflect upon. “Death” could have long incorporated the possibility of yet another “new experience” if only if we allow our “physical position” an alternate view; subsequently, the bodily molecules would correspond accordingly with experience afreshed and possibly revitalized thereof. “Ghosts” do play but in interesting terms – not for “definitions” or “classification,” but served as living resources for transformation in experience. They move. They breathe. They walk. They speak. They transmute and materialize *dreams* through actions brought forth by “the haunted” – all playing in the *oneness* as perceived in being.

### ***3: Knots in Family closet***

With a soul and body-mind once drifted from the colonized Hong Kong to the “Wild West of America,” a sentiment once fantasized through fictionalized stories made out of early Hollywood movies, and then back to the existing HKSAR, it is like another déjà vu for me visiting that village of ruins, as if the most unlikely reminiscence echoing my recent journey to the ancient cities and temples of Angkor in Cambodia, or a special journey to the Minoan Akrotiri, an archaeological site discovered by Spyridon Marinatos in 1967, at Santorini of the Aegean Sea ten years ago<sup>3</sup>, pulling me back into the whirlpool of human history, family events and ghost plays once consumed my upbringing and the eventual creative journey in search of the nature of being-in-the-making. I see the “ghosts” in me, as if migrating from far country to another distant land, connecting the roots of the human tree from one hometown to another. My father never spoke of his “hometown” back in the “Lion Cave” (*shih zih dou*)<sup>4</sup> in Nanhoi of Guangdong, a place I never ever set foot on. Subsequently, it was to me like a “village-ruined” totally fabricated in dreams and tales. With the missing ancestral linkages, like many forever drifting homegrown locals, the chain of the past was something never as deeply carved as those witnessed in the ruins. I seemed to have no alternatives but only to stretch my imagination through creative endeavors to pour in drops into the emotional void. The site of ruins was echoing a set design I once created for my directing project of *The Naked Eyes*<sup>5</sup>, a family saga, also the prelude to *The Seventh Drawer*, in search of unsung emotional turbulence, where a house was torn into two divided spaces, only a tree with trunk separated, one part over-hanging in the air and the base ever-strangling the earth, like *the devil tree*<sup>6</sup> off Jerzy Kosinski’s novel, with roots clinging to a well of the unknown at the core center of the stage. The

family story beyond my father was like this unknown core, generated some unsettling turbulence in me ever since birth. Working on those productions was a time when I was still obsessed with the search for the core of emotions beyond invisible family knots:

“As I become more and more aware of myself, I see myself being divided. My most private, real self is violently antisocial – like a lunatic chained in a basement, grunting and pounding the floor while the rest of his family, the respectable ones, sit upstairs, ignoring the tumult. I don’t know what to do about the family lunatic: destroy him, keep him locked in the cellar or set him free?” (Kosinski, 1973:11)

**These *untouchable* family knots did eventually become the fruits of creativity; they are the source of my continuous acts of emotional and cognitive transgression through art.** The ever-growing and expanding self-awareness in me have aroused my special attention to the “private self” that were once violent and excruciatingly painful due to circumstances impounding the body-mind without the needed advice, guidance and reflection at times. I began searching and recording the activities along way of discoveries over missing objects and display of emotions once buried in the family drawers, the “caves” once resided family stories and life entangled under specific circumstantial era. I trace back the creative journal I wrote in those days of soul-searching, as if re-visiting *ruins* once left behind. Among those *ruins* long beguiled by time, I track down the trails of words once help emancipating the body-mind from the haunting ghosts buried in form of family objects:

Family: a playground that filled with voyeuristic stories! Looking through the chest of drawers, big and small, therein are hidden things and relics that signify the map of family activities. The positioning of each found object often reflects emotions once connected, or spilled without knowing it. Pulling and crushing



through wardrobe, there lies peculiar shapes and leaning of lost love and hidden desire, reflecting memories shuffled in dark corners...

An old photo of faded color that had been forgotten...

The handkerchief deserted at the bottom of a cabinet...

The acute sentiment of the purposeful tidily stacked clothing in drawers...

The diary buried at hidden corners of a drawer...

The *yellow* magazines deserted in a carton box up in my brother's attic...

A love letter re-discovered from a dusty book...

The tranquilizer intentionally hidden in the medical chest...

The pocket money under grandma's pillow...

The key to an ex-lover's house found in a pencil case...

Private matters inserted between old newspapers and magazines...

The pill bottle among mother's lingerie...

Dad's syringe dumped in the garbage bin after a dose of Testosterone...

The encrypted private document files in a computer...

The family photo hiding behind yet *another* family photo...

The girly magazines that cross-stacked with music albums...

The photo of ex-lovers still well kept in wallet...

An old phone number still remained in husband's notebook...

An old stuffed doll that your wife wouldn't get rid of...

The half-burnt cigarette bud secretly distinguished under the drawing table...

Unknown marks left on an old school photo...

Secret home video footage got mixed up with other CD Rom discs...

The old condom found in the company handbag...

A hair still clung to the inside collar of a shirt...

The snack tin box too dear to be thrown away...

An old birthday card...

A scrapbook...

A...

(Ho, 2003:33-34)

I have shared with students, youngsters, theatre people and audiences the magic of re-discovering family stories from *ruins* in many workshop sessions with stimulating feedbacks and possibilities of new actions to come. These ruins could be transformed into, borrowing Dewey's term, "varied substance of the arts." As to Dewey, he made some revelation on how the nature of "architectural structure" could affect our perception and the likely actions to take place thereafter. "A total qualitative impression emanates from it as soon as it interacts with the organism through the visual apparatus...through repeated visits let the structure gradually yield itself to him in various lights and in connection with changing moods," (Dewey, 2005[1934]:229)

The "architectural structure" of ruins and those superimposed through physical objects could open our perception on human landscape, with experience, "a by-product, of continuous and cumulative interaction of an organic self with the world." (Ibid.) By the same token, some eventually learned to make friends with ghosts; some did not but often began to take on alternative perspectives into found objects, upon where many *connections* were once built. **It was not just the *ruins*. It was not just *ghosts*. It was the opportunity reopened to re-visit events narrow-mindedly interpreted, with shadows cast upon by the culture of silence. It was *apparitional synthesis* unrecognized that left cluttered and unsung among living tissues and prints. Through each of the objects re-identified and unfolded, specific individual encounters would be revealed, as if for the first time. New perspectives to stories could often be opening up thoughts for alternative performances to come in the future. It is in the end the fundamental of knowing the self in the making that "synthesize our understandings," as Howard Gardner believed. These objects mirroring the potential multiple intelligences possibly seeded in each of us would**

**take on different effect and actions thereupon corresponding, with “strengths and constraints” of the actor’s mind “far from unencumbered at birth.” (1993:xxiii) It is not the theorizing of how these objects affect our mind, but rather the experience of interacting with this object world and the multiple learning therein.** As Gardner advocated, “...an important part of [that] understanding is knowing who we are and what we can do... Ultimately, we must synthesize our understandings for ourselves. The performance of understanding that try matters are the ones we carry out as human beings in an imperfect world which we can affect for good or for ill.” (1999: 180-181)

#### ***4: Recreating the Ancestral Trail***

Ever since I first engaged in theatre, my creative energy has been focusing a great deal on developing bridges to revisit unsung family ties and turmoil; it has been a series of effort in making truce with emotions left undeciphered by family folks and relatives, dead or still living, and subsequently, a society that often never functioned well enough in matters of care and humanitarian ethics on family issues. The act of writing here put forward in 14 parts is to tackle these once unsettled issues in my childhood, adolescence and, eventually, my emancipation through “ghost plays,” mine as well as others, through adulthood. From a distance, the “skull” Hamlet was holding in the graveyard in Act V Scene I of Shakespeare’s great tragedy suddenly symbolizes the fundamental quest into the sense of being in me and the dead, something echoing what Heidegger examined through *Being and Time*: The dead signifies a sense of loss that “we have no access to the loss-of-Being as such which the dying man ‘suffers.’” (1962:282) Yet the paradox is, like Scarre unfolding Simone de Beauvoir’s view on

death, “that we cannot fully grasp what death means for us by taking the ‘insider’s’ point of view alone. We must also bring to bear what we learn from the ‘outsider’s’ perspective – the stance we assume towards others’ deaths – and apply this to our own case in order that our subjective reflection should be supplied with all relevant data.” (2007:35) While such “relevant data” may seem to be in itself “subjectively selected” in a sense, the experience being very much an “outsider” most of the time had also pushed me back to the “insider’s” mind, as in theatre directing, cultivating a deep sense of longing to touch base with the inner being, constantly making revelation with the past and the present. Kosinski’s words further put me into thoughts once so closely knitted in my body-mind: “Since I left home I have been a vagrant, an outcast; that has been my justification in the present and refusing to examine my psyche or my past. But if I am to know myself, I will have to confront my contradictions and admit the impact of my childhood.” (1973:12) **While Kosinski re-visited his experience through his novels, another form of art-in-action, I re-visited mine through theatre making. We, simultaneously speaking, created alternative paths through art to unveil the apparition effect of “ghosts” on our body, mind and soul along our way to adulthood.** To me, the impact of childhood did not begin with my motherless infanthood, but also with family folks, all ordinary people, who were beguiled by superstitions, moral codes and social conventions left undeciphered. The experience did not start with me but trailing all the way back to my grandfather’s and my father’s journey of “roots and branches” of “the devil tree” grown in 20<sup>th</sup> Century turbulent war zone of China. I had made such a sketch of my father through my dramatic work, *The Seventh Drawer*, as if impersonating him through the uproaring

journey of coming to a world historically so fouled up back in China before his eventual settlement in Hong Kong:

Papa used to say: “Don’t ever chicken out like uncle no.3. Making a quick exit at the time of his 20’s!”... I only learnt much later that uncle no.3 was leaving... for a deal made with a ‘gold miner’... selling himself all out for a trip on a steam ship... was I fortunate to pass my very first test as a human being – successfully breaking into this transitory world... in a BIG TOWN in the *northern* part of China<sup>7</sup>...without having to make any particular deal with anyone... except my Dad... mom said he kept running back and forth on that day... I didn’t understand then... I thought he must be more interested in the waves and riddles created by the crowds holding out with sticks and banners than my vulgarity in sliding out of mom’s womb, an untouchable region of no great significance at the time of national and social uprisings...

... all Dad cared in those days was how to pick up a dance step here and there... finding the right spot hopping in and out of the roaring mobs... I guess learning those ‘steps’ was quite an ‘achievement’ in those days if you really wanted to make yourself known around people with such big noises... I mean to keep a fine balance in a chaotic world pulling apart ain’t easy indeed... Oh, I simply love that loud horn pumping into the sky ...

It must be Uncle No. 3’s steamship... carrying me to this world... for a dream rectified... and there I was, naked and wet and mushy... waiting for the first spanking...

... hey, guys, was it too much trying to make my voice audible... Dad wouldn’t have agreed with me... he would think it’s a crime to alert a world already trying so hard to reaffirm its standings and sensitivities...

... uncle no.3’s son, i.e. my no. 14 cousin, was also born on the very same day... only that he never ever had the chance to see his dad... except a stone monument with his Dad’s name on... and many many others ... erected in Downtown Toronto... for railroad digging so they say... “BIG CONTRIBUTION TO THE

COUNTRY OF CANADA!” says the Canadian prime minister on the Paper...

...it was some 60 years later when uncle no. 3 was found dead lying on a railroad track heading towards the Great Lake of Superior...don't know if the other uncles in Singapore, America and Argentina got so lucky to have a monument of their own... they said many left home that very same morning... which probably was the reason why my first entrance to the *Wong* family<sup>8</sup> was totally insignificant... because the World was turning into a place of clattering fancy, all scrambling for pieces of significance to live by...

...mom never understood or never intended to understand dad's reasons for his constant frowned eyebrows... probably for the significance in him yet to find... oh yes he liked frowning... especially when he appeared hours after my birth... she never paid much attention to that anyway... she only remembered her promise to Buddha that she would never eat beef if she got a son... SHE NEVER ATE BEEF TILL THE DAY SHE DIED<sup>9</sup>... all my fault for charging into the Wong Family with a 'little Willie' between my legs<sup>10</sup>... or else mom may have lived a much SHORTER life for curses cast upon by the dying cows... during that time I bet mouth and foot disease didn't even exist... LESS PAIN... LESS COMPLAINTS... it was so believed my mom...

... EVER SINCE uncle no.3's steam ship left for the West<sup>11</sup>... EVER SINCE the white banners and sticks hurls my dad's soul with wings of flies... searching for void of any possible sacrifice... or pleasure extinct in time of revolutions and wars... THE WONG FAMILY GOT DEPRESSED EVER SINCE THE DAY OF MY BIRTH... AND THEY NEVER PUT ANY FAITH ON MY PREDOMINANTLY DARK GENDER, a sign of bad luck to all descendants to come<sup>12</sup>... Dad later was sorry for having learnt all those dancing steps... they brought forth a lot of door knocks from strangers... some in blue and some in yellow... later even green and red... all looked for the same things... GUNS OR MONEY WITHIN GRASP<sup>13</sup>... GOD KNOWS...

ALSO FOR POTS OF BREWERY IDEOLOGICALLY FOULED!... Mom never made any attempts to understand a single word of propaganda boiling in the heat

of the streets... as for dad... he seemed to be obsessed with the size and shape of the signs and banners flying around on sticks... he used to say, "No harm picking up a word or two here and there as you grow. God knows when they can be in use!"...

... later cousin SUPERIOR learned exactly the same words, charging his dad and mine the crime of KEEPING BAD VIRTUE... it is all because of my birth... a day signifying the uprisings of the hunchbacks, exorcising ghosts beyond human creation eight years later... May Fourth!<sup>14</sup>... a dangerous liaison between the angel painted on uncle no.3's steam ship and the clay Buddha who made my mom making the GREAT BIG BEEF promises...

... AND MOM SPREAD HER LEGS SO WIDE THAT DAY FOR WORRYING I MAY CHANGE MY MIND AND DECIDED TO KEEP HIDING IN HER WOMB OF SECRET GARDENING...<sup>15</sup>

...the devil knows many disguises indeed... MAO, OUR GREAT CHAIRMAN, AND MOM WAS FOUND TO BE A DISTANT COUSIN IN LATER YEARS AND SHE WAS MADE TO RUN FOR HER LIFE FOR HER SILLY SELF-SEGREGATION...<sup>16</sup>

...dad never said a word... for mom had always been only a maid next door, arranged by the fortune-teller to bring forth a son to the globe of the great Wong Family... and here I am, the Ninety-something-great-great-great-great-great-grandson of Wong the thirtieth of the Tang Dynasty... staying in line signing up at the Gate of Eternity ...<sup>17</sup>

... they say: in the pocket of Uncle no.3 found a book of chants... recording all the rhymes and couplets describing the shape and movement of the Dragon<sup>18</sup>... on its back... Uncle no. 3 rode on... to the Great Plain of Alienation... The talk about his Great Dream and Courage ceased when the white banners eventually wrapped up the Wong ancestral altar years later on another fourth day of May... the day when Dad never said another word of the white banners learnt between his dancing steps...

... years gone by, I was then brought into another steam engine, making my way to a COLONIZED PARADISE... LEARNING TO BLINDFOLD MY EYES FROM THE MANIFOLD OF LIVES SACRIFICED...<sup>19</sup>

AND THEN MY DAD'S... MOM'S... UNCLES'... BROTHERS' & SISTERS'... EVEN DOGS'...  
(*The Seventh Drawer*: Scene 2)<sup>20</sup>

While stories I above created were only adaptations from selected *fragments* of images depicted from the conceptualization of the root of our family tree, a vague and illusive image that did once draw my imagination, the precise content of the supporting and transporting tissues of “xylem” and “phloem,” i.e. the blood and cells in us, should be the focal points that should truly be the matters that needed further examination, which represented **the texture and effect of climate on the “growth ring” forever stained in the tree of family history**. In search of the missing roots that had once helped develop the needed anchorage for the “biomass” of the living branches and twigs, i.e. the sons and daughters, grown thereof, it was to me an act of exorcism on the once apparition-driven self that helped transform the ghosts into alternate landscape, a plane I could free from further drowning into the apparitional pull of the family tree, especially those of my father's. *The Seventh Drawer* was to me the same reason as Francois Truffaut<sup>21</sup>, the 1960's New Wave French film director I had once been following closely in my adolescent and college years, to his film *The 400 Blows*: to free myself!<sup>22</sup> Through young Fanny, a character inspired by the return of my young niece from USA when she was only 10, I cast my own spell to send the ghosts away from the part of history-in-me, torn and missing:



“Burn! Burn! Burn!  
Stretch your skin to match your kin!  
They are waiting...  
Waiting...  
For your surrender!  
Pretend! Pretend! Pretend!<sup>23</sup>  
Though you’d never fool your mom in the end...  
Where is your other skin?  
Wrap it around your new love  
And never tell your sisters and brothers  
That your flesh, blood and memory were made  
By Liars and Traitors...  
You can trace it through the body landscape  
of plaster,  
With flag flapping along the pole of vulgar...  
CAUSE MY GRANDPA IS AN IDIOT  
BORN ON THE FOURTH DAY OF MAY<sup>24</sup>,  
The day when things started burning...<sup>25</sup>  
Burning...  
Burning...  
And so the World started turning  
Turning to what?  
To What?  
What did it matter?  
Be it fish, maid, or wire!  
..... ! ”<sup>26</sup>

The “burning” was like an infected disease that would pass on for generations, without anyone courageous enough to openly address its scope of impact. Or was it only my consciousness focusing on a subject with scope I could never totally comprehend?

**What presented in the family stories as told, overheard, or marked in objects, did**

not simply trigger in me a flow of dialectical movement not entirely out of deductive reasoning, but rather the state of being I had once “wrapped” myself in, without fully connecting with the experience once exposed. Standing along side with the apparitional subject, as if they are real objects, in the form of *ghosts*, subsequently upon which reflected the mind I have been enacting my infected consciousness. The 19<sup>th</sup> Century Norwegian dramatist Henrik Ibsen had forewarned us well with his metaphor of *venereal disease* in his 1881 play *Ghosts*: there were not any “protection” for anyone in spite of following the society’s ideals of morality, which were only the “ghosts” of the past constantly generating “moral chaos” among common folks, best represented by his invented character Mrs. Alving, possibly one of the earliest forms of feminist character. These ghosts, taken advantage of the “silence” often self-cloning among social fabrics, would set out haunting the present. They were like revenants, forever-returning in the form of a spirit, bounded by “narrow conventionalism.” While Nisbett would like to think “if people really do differ profoundly in their systems of thought – their worldviews and cognitive processes – then differences in people’s attitudes and beliefs, and even of different inputs and teachings, but rather an inevitable consequence of using different tools to understand the world,” (Nisbett, 2005:xvii) and the “tools” of such are mostly confiscated to the like of the ruling class, including the ruling grandparents, fathers, mothers, or brothers and sisters, in families, the phenomena of “narrow conventionalism” is imminent and inescapable. These “ghosts” could be “reasoning” that “is separate from what is reasoned about,” (Ibid, xiv) especially when the “given thing” and the “number of *different* procedures,” as heartily suggested by Nisbett, become the very subject of power maneuvering in expansionists’ “geography of thought.”

### ***5: Painting Silence/Apparition-at-play***

Looking back into the history of 20<sup>th</sup> Century China, in spite of the violent taking of civil wars, World War II, and the devastating political movements that had literally transformed many family histories into events that went out of any *ordinary* control, the rhetoric of argumentation and reflection over our “inherited culture” is still largely absent in the Chinese family blood (Or when such argumentation did occur, it would turn to chaotic violence, burning many “family trees” to ashes as happened during the Cultural Revolution). Such “inherited silence,” or acts of “*painting silence*”<sup>27</sup> rather, had planted the seed of the “ghost plays” both germinated in my mind and later the creative reality both in and out of theatre. Such “silence” could be, metaphorically speaking, the apparition of idealized thoughts, or “shadows of society” in Foucault’s term, generated to rule or to impound control or “psychiatric threat”<sup>28</sup> over ordinary people. Who would know how the dimension of *truth* to be holding when it comes to the “silencing” of gene expression,<sup>29</sup> especially when we are literally heading into a “posthuman future”<sup>30</sup> as Francis Fukuyama proclaimed? Are we not all holding the skull of the “living dead,” or hanging onto “the one living skull presently beholding,” reminiscing each of our own versions of “death” beyond public tales, and the future-skull-to-be in view of the planting of alternate “cell culture” in meddling the DNA descended from our ancestors? Like looking into the *Hamlet* in us all, understanding the *history* of how people once portrayed the character would possibly mean encountering diversified interpretations, many were “modeled after renowned scholars’ criticism,” with beliefs each trapped in specific time of being, be they in psychoanalytic or semantic approaches. In getting to know what it is like to *be Hamlet*, one can only get *on stage* to live and experience the character as discovered in the

course of playing. As Nobel Prize Laureate, Luigi Pirandello, playfully suggested the alternate “outbreak” of a character in his influential existential drama *Six Characters in search of an Author*: once a character is given the specific details to live on by the author, the character would be free to elaborate on the logic of such given materials and free to take on different challenges among interpreters and the ever-changing circumstances at play; the author would have no more control over his/her subject given birth of (1998). Regardless the multiple possibilities in analogy of family portraiture, the roles undertaken in everyday life often overlap one another like a cover, from historical to contemporary boundaries taking over the surveillance-driven internet *e-bay* that likely is suffocating our senses and, eventually, blind-folding us from awakening.

The *Hamlet* in me lives quite differently from those of Shakespeare’s. So would be the *Mrs. Alving* in us all – the ever-haunting *ghosts* that keep seeking for alternate outbreak from *given* life! If only if we were to sort out the shape and size of each of our *Hamlet* and *Mrs. Alving*, and the possible *ghosts*, likely infected by *venereal disease* of specific kind, we would not be able to see the becoming of our body-mind. It is the genuine act of climbing of this tree of life that truly matters, where “apparitional synthesis,” almost like “photosynthesis-of-the-human-kind,” could be taking place day in and out, affecting the physical and chemical processes in the living organisms we are concurrently hosting. It is more than sheer human bonding, but the bonding interactively synthesized among *the three worlds* in us as Karl Popper once proposed, i.e. the physical bodies and physiological states [*World 1*] we encountered, the mental states and processes [*World 2*] we took on, and finally, the products of a

mind [*World 3*] we subsequently lived upon (Popper, 1993). These three worlds unfold, like Mexican poet Octavio Paz's *Blanco*, as a succession of signs once began from one white blank page, like a void, to another, and then another, with pages unfolded, space opening up like flowing, engendering and dissolving through time, through which I see how ghosts take shape:

*I am the dust of that silt.  
River of blood,  
                                river of histories  
of blood,  
                                dry river:  
mouth of the source  
                                gagged  
by an anonymous conspiracy  
of bone  
by the grim rock of centuries  
and minutes:  
                                language  
is atonement,  
                                an appeasement  
of him who does not speak,  
                                entombed,  
assassinated  
                                every day,  
the countless dead ones.  
                                To speak  
while others work  
is to polish bones,  
                                to sharpen  
silences  
                                to transparency,*

*to undulation...*

(Paz, 1984:84-85)

In Paz's imagination, listening to "the rivers of my body" is like reaching out to the torrent of "microorganisms," where laid the geography of "pulse-beats," like "watching I watch myself," "as if to enter through my eyes," seeing "the creation of what I watch." (1984:85-86) These are the pages of "what I once watched" and "what I am still watching," **undulating the rising and falling of living movements in me and of the others, with actions superimposing to one another through everyday living history in the making. It is no longer the Hamlet's "To be or not to be;" it is the exorcism of ghosts and to transcend the *transparency* into living motions, climbing and descending and then climbing again to watch the apparitional synthesis at play.**

Re-thinking history is like apparition-at-play, as if calling upon ghosts made up of *axiomatic fictions* (Jenkins, 1991:49), predominantly narrated by historians authorized by the ones in power, seeking alternative, not "presuppositionless," (Ibid, 49) interpretation of the past. In doing so, we have to seek the existing "apparition" built up in our inner life. Brook often emphasized the links between an actor and his inner life. "One part of his creative life, at the moments he performs, must be turned inward." (Brook, 1995:38) Sanford Meisner, the renowned acting coach in USA, also declared the importance of building a foundation before any acting should be taking place. To him, "The foundation of acting is the reality of doing." (Meisner & Longwell, 1987:16) To me, **an ACTor is someone who *acts* upon specific issues or**

**particular subjects with selective actions, through which to realize the inner substances or truth hidden beyond. An actor is in fact an action-researcher. The inner being is like spirit apparitionally driven by the daily appearances and contact of phenomena, successively developed through a series of consciousness building on one another through the body-mind at play. Acknowledging the apparitional synthesis in us means to re-visit the historical “mutes” once pre-programmed in our body-mind, unveiling their effect cast upon our spirit so as to allow re-interpretation, or translation, of the often “contemporized history” (Steiner, 1975:134-6) philosophically vulnerable by nature.** Family stories are often filled with acts of translation on the subject of ghosts, apparition of unknown construction. Acting upon these stories could be an act of re-building one’s life foundation through active reflection. Paz’s idea of *Blanco*, “white, an unmarked space” (Paz, 1984: 82) provides the perfect “void,” like the “empty space” as proposed by Brook, for remapping the “rivers of the body” and “geography of the mind.”

### ***6: Scaffolding the Rite of Passage***

I often hold creative workshops beginning with a single white piece of paper, upon which each participant would unveil a world of his/her own through the actions put forth thereof. The paper can be viewed as a piece of theatre prop used for storytelling, set out as a bridge to walk on, eventually leaving behind trails of footsteps imprinted through participating actions. It could also be viewed as the scaffolding (Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976) for thoughts. “Scaffolding is actually a bridge used to build upon what students already know to arrive at something they do not know. If scaffolding is properly administered, it will act as an enabler, not as a disabler” (Benson, 1997). Very

often we would have to go beyond the common conception of the function of a piece of paper and touch base with all possible transformation of existence, with body and mind to transpire actions, or rituals, through drawing, folding, tearing, playing, recording, positioning, eating, chanting, feeling, touching, caring, demolishing, destroying, constructing, deconstructing and contemplating, etc., like scaffolding the rite of passage for self-reconciliation. If the piece of paper is taken as the symbol of life the participants withholding at times, their treatment of the paper would unveil clues to worlds of their living soul, often touching feelings beyond words. **In Hegel's term, the paper is instantly "the new 'object' for consciousness," a state of mind developed from "consciousness' inadequate knowledge of the previous 'object,'" i.e. the life perceived before the moment of actions upon the paper as being *apparition* objectified. Thus, the actions derived are to "modify its 'object' to conform to its new-founded knowledge thereof."** (Hegel, 1807) Most of all, such consciousness would be successively built upon not through my instructions, but rather the *excitable speeches* (Butler, 1997:129-33) articulated through *actions*, not words, executed by each participant. It is as if a "speech act" (Searle, 1969) put forth through bodywork. Every action taken as a sentence-in-the-making is significant; every act should not be dismissed, be they "statement-making" or not. The advantage of the body is that it reveals everything and cannot lie. Imagination, ideas, intentions, thought and reflection would be actively engaged during the event of "paper chasing." It is NOT A TASK as so often viewed by education theorists or practitioners; it is a platform to allow the synthesis of the body-mind through phenomenological studies of actions (or actions of *non-action* by choice) taking place through an object imaginarily re-possessed, i.e. the specific life form or being through which projected. It is an



investigation of the body-mind through “the body electric” (Whitman, 1900) sung through play. The actions are series of display of *the body electric*: strong, weak, timid, powerful, connecting, foul, ablaze, hurling, shattering, beating, suspended, standing still, quivering, enlightening, undulating a map of human emotional wavelengths I had once observed<sup>31</sup>:

**Setup:** All participants seated in circle. An open space created at centre. A stack of white papers placed in the middle of the circle.

**Object:** A single white sheet of A4 size paper.

**Action:** Contemplating the life withholding through particular play with the object silently waited at centre of an empty space.

- He stood there looking at the paper from a distance, as if something sacred, and yet unholy at the same time. His eyes, filled with floating emotions, staring at the void in whiteness, as if witnessing a life desperately seeking reconciliation. His pair of spectacles laid heavily upon his nostrils, like weights dying to be lifted. He walked slowly to the paper and then picked it up, holding it upon his belly with both hands. His grip was so strong that the paper was instantly transformed into a map of crescendo, with loudness forcedly hidden between his overlapping palms, melting into the belly, as if the holy site of passion. He stood quietly with thoughts centering at the heart of the paper. Suddenly, he turned away and left the room. The room was silenced. Just when many thought his act was over, minutes later, he came back. Standing at the door. The paper. Wetted. Stained with dirt. He waited when seeing another participants had already taken over the space. While not many paid attention to his silence, with focus drawn to the “person-in-action,” his presence among the crowd was as if someone forgotten. Finally, his turn again. He held up the paper gingerly, looking at it intensely. He repeated his actions, placing the now transformed paper, no longer white, close to his belly. He took his time. Simply stood there. Not at all relieved. But with contemplating thoughts. Minutes later. It looked like he had his mind “settled.” He went back to where he belonged.

- She carefully lifted the paper. Tore out a single strip. Began folding a miniaturized flying Seahawk, about 2 cm in length. She really took her time while the “world” was watching, as if all heavens could wait. She finally finished and then took a long look at her creation. She went around the circle, making contact with each person by tiptoeing the heavenly creature upon the heart of these watching bodies. Each contact aroused different response. With body-mind suddenly petrified, or awed, embarrassed, or stiffened, each seemed to be precipitating foam drops of emotions through the uninviting contact. It was not just her actions. It was an act dispersing the invisible syllables of body-mind made visible.
- He rushed to the paper, without truly acknowledging its whiteness of existence. He apparently wanted to finish a task he was *told* to enact, driving his body into a series of ambiguous and empty motion. The mind. Like someone lost among nomads. Not exactly knowing where to begin or end. Only drifting moments of hurdling finger exercise never concise. Where were the sites of stories? Precisely seated in the empty space unveiled among his actions, desperately looking for a place to land the empty soul. That was how he “unveiled” his life at that particular moment, without truly knowing it...
- She enjoyed cleaning things up before an action. She cleaned up all the “mess” left behind by preceding participants. The actions upon those torn up pieces left behind by other suddenly looked as if they had become the centre of her whole existence. She had left her own piece of paper aside. Untackled, as if waiting in an eternal moment. Deliberately temporarily deserted. The whiteness suddenly looked like a bank of the improbable, deeply not knowing where to begin. Got to go back to clean up the surrounding before laying hands onto the void reverberating off the white paper, still seated at sidelines, waiting to be touched. Finally, the moment arrived. Finally, the place was clean. Finally, all tidied. Everything seemed to be in control. She tempted the paper lightly with her fingertips, disguising it under the crack between two planks of wood under the desk. She went back to her seat, with the paper, insignificantly hiding, as if waiting for the next assignment to come.

- She walked on, after an emotional uproar. She placed her cross ornamented necklace upon the squashed up paper, as if weighing the tons thereupon condensed. Was not the cross *too heavy* that it dropped? Or an act of deliberate intention? She did not pick it up. She then tore up the paper into pieces and threw it out to the people around staring. With contempt. Her body was still stiffened from previous emotional protest for the likeness of being misinterpreted by others. Her shoulder muscles bound and intrusively thrusting inward. With jawbones tightened, as if prepared to draw blood. The pieces of paper fell to the floor. Silently. With stories scattering color of complaints. Freshly chiseled or hammered. In between the body-mind and the paper, there were clearings of unsettling silence, with blue and green unawakened in the head...
- He casually picked up a piece of white paper from the stack and folded an airplane. He looked as if nothing truly mattered. Yet his fingers were fumbling here and there upon the folds created. Finally the airplane was at hand ready to take flight. He started piloting it in circle, up above everyone's head. People around were not too thrilled at first until he suddenly dropped the airplane, deliberately, and crushed it onto an empty chair. The airplane was instantly crooked. Yet he resumed the flight with the crooked airplane. His face suddenly tinted with different color. His piloting was not as floating as used to be. The plane crashed again. And another. And another. Each time afterward he resumed his flying route. The people around were awed, with expressions suddenly tightening up, witnessing a "flying body" repetitively missing, bumping, crushing, disheartening upon the path-encountered en route. A sense of newly found determination was displayed in three-quartered round of flight. He finally landed his airplane upon a clearing, not sure if he should pick it up again...

These were only "bodies witnessed" of a few selected "scenes." Whitman's voices constantly stormed in through these moving "bodily-embedded papers": "Was it doubted that those who corrupt their own bodies conceal themselves; and if those who

defile the living are as bad as they who defile the dead? And what if the body does not do as much as the Soul? And if the body were not the Soul, what is the Soul?”<sup>32</sup> **It was not performances reflected only through the participating body that volunteered to make contact with life as perceived at that particular space and time. It was a community of participants learning to engage to “listen” to body waves and sounds unfolding through emotions precipitating through sculptured papers. The focuses made on the “papered” life were like reservoirs of emotions, tinted with anger, frustration, distress, bitterness, sour, hope, helplessness, powerlessness, defeat, rejection, embarrassment, stigma, suffering, uncertainty, shame, desire, belittlement, humiliation, alienation, shyness, inadequacy, joy and empathy driven from apparition entangled by historical and everyday interpersonal conflicts, metamorphosed through actions laid claims by participants.** The inner voices disclosed should not be critically judged but rather materialized for further reflection cross-evaluated of what happened and the nature of actions taken. The *ACTors* would be their own researchers, self-identifying those excruciating feeling often disguised. **They are the foundations of building blocks to the eventual components of self-awakening. Allowing the *blanco* to emerge whenever needed and unleashing the turbulences silenced in the void would mean re-synthesizing the body-mind through play, re-visiting the mis-reading phenomenon engraved along the marrow of family bones, with the theatre magic: AS IF, i.e. particularization of emotional fragments, or “personal examples chosen from your experience or your imagination which would emotionally clarifies the cold material of the text” (Meisner & Longwell, 1987:138) in life. They were like alternative “speech acts” transformed through body play, with “forces of**

**utterance” totally diversified from one another, each seeking “to communicate a certain attitude with the type of [speech] act being performed corresponds to the type of attitude being expressed.”**<sup>33</sup> The performance was like *traces* of an event, as Petra Kuppers suggested, something that embodied exegesis of a section of Hegel’s Phenomenology of Spirit, with “a consciousness always aiming to have its desire, which is its will to live, recognized by another.”<sup>34</sup>

**Art-in-action can take us outside ourselves from the tight grip of emotions undermined in history out of our control. We could begin with art and then enter the geography of the minds unveiling through an atmosphere and context of actions created thereof. It is the flowing back and forth of “dialogues-in-the-making” between moving bodies and voices through object amplified. As everyone watched in silence, inner monologues would be built up in each body-mind. The stories “witnessed” would be providing differing possibilities in life based on a common and yet open platform, i.e. the paper. It drew up “the magic of dialogue,” in sociologist Daniel Yankelovich’s term, through the contemplation of life-redefined-thru-paper among participants without truly making any verbal conversation, which allowed, “suspended judgment in order to foster understanding and break down obstacles.” (Yankelovich, 1999) The setup was meant to create equality among participants and opening up certain conditions to allow various levels of interpretation and approaches in the narration of life stories and experiences perceived at times. All participants could suddenly become poets without the use of words, uttering snapshots of emotions and fragments from experiences through imagination, charting the rivers flowing in**

**their body-mind where their psyche were projected through the imagery depicted through performance. Meanings emerged from the moving bodies and the transforming papers. They were not remembered events. They were interactive consciousness at work among the papers, the self and the silent spectators. The silently moving bodies, shattering any potential prefabricated syntax in spoken language, were challenging any habitual thoughts relying on the notions of narrative, re-visiting the apparition synthesized in previous perception. The intended working-in-silence was aiming at removing any ambient noise and to focus at the moment by giving it a force of reality, as if *through the looking glass*, i.e. the paper, to identify the ideas in our heads and to get to know the state of beings still under the spell of apparitional-driven family events.** In Petra Kuppers's words, it was meant to open up pathways "into a more involved and sense-led encounter" with the participants' own living voices, wrestling beyond "the gap between the unsayable and the said" that often operated like a "straight-jacket" of apparitional origin. It could even be viewed as "an embodied exegesis points to the shifting at the heart of the utterance in relation to the meaning in de Saussure's structuralist system of language,"<sup>35</sup> only that the "language" used is no longer confined to spoken words or theory paper, they are actions that imbue with elements of contemporary cultural context where each individual is specifically situated in his or her actions with personal meaning. It IS the participant's *living voice*.

### ***7: Challenging Family Events***

Ever since my first infant "experience of the dead," i.e. my mother's, visiting my mother at Wo Hop Shek cemetery at younger days was like an "annual family picnic"

for all, not a word ever spoken regarding the stories of the deceased. After gobbling up the food and drinks prepared for superstitious rituals, “all about mom” would remain to be taboo of the family. I would then be squeezed into the foot-hole of my father’s *fiat*,<sup>36</sup> distantly witnessing my father driving us back home in silence, with my mind left bewildered under my stepmother’s foothold. While attending funerals had been familiar occasions for me ever since mother died, all those family gatherings, i.e. the longevity banquet (*jie wei jiu*), were often operated in discreet manner to ensure washing away all the “unclean” and a quick way back to “normalcy,” a state that had long been troubling my youthful body-mind back then, a body-mind that took no experience in maternal bonding and little of paternal nature. After all, what was it like growing up in the family I was *predestinated* to settle with? In a city I never picked in the first place? A recent email from my *eldest* brother simply helped me re-thread the family stories that often left untold to the younger generations of the family.

It was an email dated “Sun, 3 Feb 2008 10:49:55-0500,” from my eldest brother to my younger stepsister delivered through the family e-network. It was a correspondence in responding to my stepsister’s seeking advice for her recent problem with her husband.

Below is the letter as printed:

Dear *B.H.*,

Throughout my life, it has always been a continuous struggle between heart and mind, emotion and logic. Moderation is the principle that keeps the balance; a philosophical approach advocated by Benjamin Franklin.

The heart is like a compass. It sets the direction in life and the mind works out the

execution of details and key decisions at the fork of the path. The rest is luck and blessings from the Divine.

So far, I have what I dreamed although the global events get in the way in various ways. Between satisfaction and disappointment, I feel that it turns out for the better path.

Besides of having a meaningful life, to be a good parent has always been an important part of my dream; you can see that it comes from the pain of our childhood. *M.S. [my brother's wife]* is the maid of my dream. Although not everything is perfect, it worked out fine. My children are following the path of their visions, not mine. That's what I feel it should be and I wish them well. Now, I only want to cherish my pre-retirement phase of my life and pursue the last dreams of my life wishing that I would not be a burden on them.

I hope this will help you sort things out. Both heart and mind are equally important.

*I.H.*

The letter had undermined connotations of a series of family story that had left us all, brothers, sister, stepbrothers and stepsisters, once disillusioned in the long trail of “continuous struggles” through challenging family events. *I.H.* has surely come a long way to gain the ground he is standing: a true family man and a successful chemical engineer that he has been so proud of. Words of such like those in the email would not come easy without the trailing of raveling footsteps once treaded over the half century long coming-and-going between USA, the Mainland and Hong Kong, with dreams once so much fantasized since his birth and now settled in the heart of Colorado. Based on the “leftover” candid shots from an old candy tin box, he, being the first born of my parents, was probably the only one who got some joyful photographs with my



parents. It was that temporal joy he once had, being the eldest son, which made him *someone* with a hatful of dreams, something, I believe, that had given him the ultimate strength to *succeed* both in family and career. It was also that joy, turned immediately foul when the family was hitting hard with more children to come (those days when contraception was still unpopular), he had such high expectation of our father, which had later turned sour and filled with frustration when he was repetitively, and unjustly, sent away by our father, for the likely reasons of “minimizing the family expenditure” at difficult times. It was that love-hate relationship with our father that had shaken up *I.H.*’s early rebellion, also the opportunity to learn to be independent while away from home living with the daughter of our father’s stepsister, a refuge on and off for quite a few times whenever he was being “expelled” from home. Through the peculiar hardship in his adolescence, he had turned into a tough man with a strong sense of perseverance. Not only learnt well from “the pain of childhood,” he managed to flourish with a beautiful family of his own and a career he has been proud of. And now he still enjoys so much being the *Big* brother of the family. A recent family reunion party in 2005,<sup>37</sup> the second in 30 years, had provided him the joy and the opportunity to reinstate his *Big-brother-role* among us all, a position of *respect*, the family pride so devastatingly missing because of our father back then when we were young...

Before the *grand* reunion, when the “ground nutrients” essential to the family tree was not at all as one would ideally anticipate, or when the “photosynthesis” thereupon was not exactly prepared to welcome the sunlight that was often blocked by unwanted shades, how should one prepare the body-mind in optimizing its “exposure” of uneven nutrients from the “soil?” Without remapping the ever-changing shape and size of the

family tree, I probably would not be able to re-gain the insight of “reality” that was once perceived foul and foe, not mentioning the world *out there*, wide open to swallow any “suckers” unprepared. I remember what the once disillusioned meal-seeking New York Actor-playwright Wallace Shawn remarked in a conversation with the highly experimental theatre actor-director Andre Gregory in *My Dinner with Andre*<sup>38</sup>:

“Let’s face it, there’s a whole enormous world out there that I don’t even think about, and I certainly don’t take responsibility for how I’ve lived in that world. I mean, if I were actually to confront the fact that I’m sort of sharing this stage with the starving person in Africa somewhere, well then I wouldn’t feel so great about myself. So naturally I blot those people out of my perception. So of course I’m ignoring a whole section of the real world. You know, Hannah Adrendt was always writing about the fact that the more involved you are in corruption or evil, and the more areas of your own existence there are that you therefore don’t want to think about, or that you can’t face, or that you have to lie about, the more distorted your perception of reality will be in general. (Pause.) In other words, we all have every reason to hide from reality, and it’s a terrible problem.” (Shawn & Gregory, 1981:83)

When “reality” turned catastrophic and subsequently became stressors, it would not be within reach of anything “normative” as social scientists would like to “theorize.” While all prescriptions for stressors are often aimed to provide for “professionals” to identify the nature of “abnormal” behavior and happenings, what is more important than allowing the individual to self-empower the vision and ability to “manage” crisis before being hit on without prior notices? These “normative calculations,” as those suggested by Figley on characteristics of catastrophic stressors in family, may at once seem to be too remote for people who has been taking on catastrophic events without

“the amount of time, or previous experience to prepare for them,” (Figley & McCubbin, 1983:14) not mentioning the “quantity and quality of the emotional impact of the stressor” ideally re-formulated through the eyes of social scientists. The learning process, the ability, the view taken, the solution-oriented approach, the tolerance, the commitment, the communication, the considerations, the possible shifting of role, the utilization of resources may all seem to be “matters-of-fact” kind of “resolutions,” as suggested by Figley (Ibid, 18), in coping with catastrophe. Yet before “adequate care” turns up, before things become “manageable” or “predictable,” how should “victims of family catastrophe” get out of their “family of catastrophes”? Should they all be waiting helplessly in line at the welfare department after catastrophic happenings? Fostering well-being and experience through visualization exercises, another form of art-in-action, to unveil, restore, or (re-) construct, the beauty, dignity and sensitivity to the presence of “otherness,” and its likely organic changes, through aesthetic experiments may enrich our capacity in translating the notoriously fleeting emotions triggered by catastrophes. The emotions could never be generalized or categorized as the bodywork since birth is never anything the same for anyone, with body affect often “privatized” without truly falling into the form of any “normative” terms.

### ***8: The Living Pigments of Shame***

I do not know if it was the soil of *shame* that had mainly prevented someone to expose openly to the world *out there*. I had my share of *shameful* feelings, often impounded through reality fabricated by others (figure my father suffered a great deal of that as well). I do not know if *I.H.* has his parts of *shame* to share. As for me, it was the painful *shame* occupying many corners of the body-mind, leaving the being entangled

with distorted perception, all structured upon corresponding social settings of particular space-time, often disguised in different forms, with specific sentiment of anger, fear, sadness, happiness, disgust, surprise, wonder, acceptance, affection, aggression, ambivalence, apathy, anxiety, boredom, compassion, confusion, contempt, depression, doubt, jealousy, ecstasy, embarrassment, euphoria, forgiveness, frustration, grief, guilt, hatred, hope, hunger, hysteria, homesickness, hostility, horror, loneliness, love, paranoia, pride, pleasure, rage, regret, remorse, suffering, sympathy, and along side with all the possible expression semantically possible made out of the human capacity of imagination in *naming* things. **It is through theatre I recovered alternative horizon to the texture of shameful feelings and its toxicity upon my being;** they are “the work of metamorphosis, reframing, refiguration, transfiguration, affective and symbolic loading and deformation” (Sedgwick, 2003:63) of these planes of shame: the shame of the death of my mother; the shame of being not-good-enough-to-play-with-elder-brothers; the *shame* of running away from school; the *shame* of getting low marks in school; the *shame* of being in love; the *shame* of being too naïve and ignorant; the *shame* of having a son at 18; the *shame* of divorce; the *shame* of betrayal-unbecoming; the *shame* of leaving; the *shame* of abandonment; the *shame* of being too honest; the *shame* of being too serious; the *shame* of pursuing dreams “I did not deserve in the first place;” the *shame* of always wanting more; the *shame* of not caring enough (or caring too much); the *shame* of not understanding; the *shame* of oh-so-many-things-in-life, etc. Why the shame? One of the most familiar situation, as Silvan Tomkins put it, “one is suddenly looked at by one who is strange or...one wishes to look at or commune with another person but suddenly cannot because one is strange, or one is expected to be familiar but suddenly appears unfamiliar, or one

started to smile but found one was smiling at a stranger,” (1995:135) It is quite amazing somehow when the indifferent nature of looking takes place from one to another, in some strange territories, *shameful* eyes begin to articulate some unimaginable and yet so floatingly alive color pigments of *shameful* mind or vice versa. With some priori, or expectations, sedimented through time and generations, these looking have taken shape through habits or culture granulated in the mind without knowing it. This strangeness does accumulate and turn into something like molten rock waiting for extrusion, or lamination, in order to retrieve the space beyond these either historically, or culturally, texturized perceptual systems. We need something to burn out the fear of shame. Indeed, what if:

“Shame – living, as it does, on and in the muscles and capillaries of the face – seems to be uniquely contagious from one person to another. And the contagiousness of shame is only fascinated by its anamorphic, protean susceptibility to new expressive grammars.” (Sedgwick, 2003:64)

When shame, like ghosts, is being connoted as something anomalous, with the ever self-assembling of surrounding superheating moralization going on, how would the body-mind respond when it reaches a critical point where all surface tension would suddenly diffuse into abnormal temperature? In physics, all materials change with temperature. What about human mind and body? If the social “temperature” was escalated, a change of properties would subsequently take place, would the analytical application of these “superheated properties,” especially when ideas are twisted and manipulated through media generation, become subject of studies solely dedicated to social scientists? When any devised or deduced theories are applied thereafter, would

they become conditioning *forces* used only to “clean up” or “break down” the human psyche, like another attempt of selective use of strategic “high-temperature devices”? Where would the *shame* be then? Being an entity of physio-bio-chemical properties, how much “shame” could the bodily molecules heat up and still preserve its balance of naturally ingrained “positive and negative charges”? The living organic compounds in us all are indeed all “soluble” materials, all subject to surrounding “heat,” “temperature,” “chemicals,” or “enzymes” generated or “catalyzed” therewith. Such “superheat” could be highly corrosive when it reaches “the boiling point”; a quick count of resistant substances, or “reagents,” available at times would be the remaining survival option, as if looking for immediate “supramolecular chemistry” (Lehn, 1993) to transform the weaker and reversible “noncovalent interactions” among the shame-bearing molecules.

**Alternate *synthesis* of these “critical” substances of our body-mind would be essential to allow us to touch base with feelings that affect “performativity,” keeping us away from the bombardment of moralistic tautology yielding from all sides that could not possibly be grasped by ordinary mind, something so “repetitively complicated” that gets us nowhere. Art, creativity through the touching of “apparitional moments,” is like putting together exceptional *light* from things, people and matters around to react, or correspond, accordingly to independent findings, superimposing them into the respective body-mind at work or at play. It is a process to learn to convert these “light energy” into the living organisms and allow “greening effect” to take place. It is to learn the different “living pigments” of “light” reflected or refracted, or reacted from all**

**interconnecting subjects and objects accessible at times and to act upon selective spectrum one or two at a time. These “pigments” could be obtained or “converted” through narrative transformation, not necessarily through the play of words, but also objects and any possibly likely actions one could imagine in order to “relocate” or “isolate” these “shameful elements” into a “synthetic” process, a self-activated *phenomenology of spirit* through engagement of art-in-action.**

Just as the “white paper” exercise described in previous pages, **the “phenomenology of spirit” was often reflected through “the artist’s work,” i.e. the work projected through the workshop participant’s self-investigative art-in-action.** “Shameful” and “reluctant” feelings could often be detected through the roots of emotions seeded in artworks. It is often an act of “relocating” or “isolating” such “roots” that allows “artist” to contemplate through the course of actions. Walter Benjamin’s *Thirteen Theses against Snobs* spoke well on the nature of such art-in-action and its possible scope for observation in comparing with reflection made through documentation:

- i. The artist makes a work. *The primitive man expresses himself in documents.*
- ii. The artwork is only incidentally a document. *No document is, as such, a work of art.*
- iii. The artwork is a masterpiece. *The document serves to instruct.*
- iv. With artworks, artists learn their craft. *With documents, a public is educated.*
- v. Artworks are remote from one another in their perfection. *All documents communicate through their subject matter.*
- vi. In the artwork, content and form are one: meaning. *In documents the subject matter is wholly dominant.*

- vii. Meaning is the outcome of experience. *Subject matter is the outcome of dreams.*
- viii. In the artwork, subject matter is ballast jettisoned by contemplation. *The more one loses oneself in a document, the denser the subject matter grows.*
- ix. In the artwork, the formal law is central. *Forms are merely dispersed in documents.*
- x. The artwork is synthetic: an energy-center. *The fertility of the document demands: analysis.*
- xi. The artwork intensifies itself under repeated gaze. *A document overpowers only through surprise.*
- xii. The masculinity of works lies in assault. *The document's innocence gives it cover.*
- xiii. The artist sets out to conquer meanings. *The primitive man barricades himself behind subject matter.*

(Bullock & Jennings, eds. 1996)

As for the participants, they might not see themselves as “artists.” They might not see their “artwork” as “masterpieces.” Yet they all care a lot on how their works were being created. While they may not have the “craft” in the first trial, through accumulated experience as revealed from fellow participants, ideas of craft and related thoughts would begin to germinate. And meanings did emerge out of the experiencing discovered thereof. The living energy, centering on the “white paper,” was synthesized through interplay and observations, i.e. the “repeated gaze.” Never a single “white paper” event was repeated the same way as one another. Each signified a specific journey spiced up by specific sentiments in life. And, most of all, these experiences multiplied and helped formulate alternative routes for life reading. I often imagine if the “documentation” of thoughts herewith in these pages could be synthesized into an alternative form of “artwork,” which fertilizes bridges between the comparative thoughts suggested by Benjamin, it could have been my “artwork,” mostly like my



theatre works, that helped me touch feelings apparitionally cultivated by surrounding culture and people connected through life. **It could also be such “artwork-in-the-making” which provokes my body-mind to constantly researching and re-energizing the sense of being-in-the-making, “greening” the “shameful feelings” into constructive source of living materials.** The writing of such experience is more than documenting what had happened or materializing the “research” in words but rather a continuous journey of “art event,” researching, contemplating and experimenting through wordplay. Theatre is a platform juggling between the two, along side implementing one another, i.e. the artwork and the “document,” i.e. through scripts and criticism, as well as the works of “artists” involved thereof, including those of the spectator’s and the actions derived of viewing. As Meisner stressed to actors, “The text is your greatest enemy.” (Meisner & Longwell, 1987:136) Intellectually knowing something does not necessarily imply the ability to touch base with emotional inner content. Most of all, it does not mean to have the ability *To ACT* and *To LIVE* truthfully. The “white paper” was merely the “stage” to reexamine the honesty of actions and affects from ghosts therebefore seated during direct encounters with the subject matter as projected, and most of all, the findings through experience-and-imagination at work together. The “white paper transformed” would be the “artwork,” or the “document *resculptured*,” for contemplation or potential revelation thereafter.

### ***9: Touching Feeling***

Sedgwick’s suggestion of *touching feeling* (2003) through her book of the same title somewhat coincides with a lot of theatre exercise adopted in my workshops or

rehearsal process. It is often through a series of applicable and creative hypothetical action of *touching feeling*, through which experience is extracted and reflected on. It is all transitive from one action to another, from the smallest measurable or immeasurable contact to some untouched sensory-based, emotion-based, or memory-based zone of stories retold, unveiled, reviewed or deconstructed, with the first-person, the third person or even the imaginary *n*-person hidden somewhere with unknown kind of perspectives standing along side with one another, or at distinctly allocated distance, to allow the floating center of consciousness at work, all in focus and with a strong sense of conviction. From telepathic effects of narrativity carefully studied to sense- and emotion-oriented exercises that touch the human psyche, not the generalized neural firing effect, where the simple use of a piece of simple ear swab, or a piece of simple daily use property, could ignite innumerable possibility in reconnecting disjointed regions broken apart because of shame, fear, prejudice and pride; as long as we, the participants at play, could all lend our ears, noses, eyes and all possible sensory and cognitive organs to the deregulated elementary lattice of isolated points and retrace the potential sequencing of missing parts, body and linkages of the originally highly-sophisticated structured human entity. Like the pages hereby unfolding, they are the imaginable act of “theorizing,” or “de-theorizing,” through active deciphering of living spaces, moments, as well as remembered and reflected experiences, setting out to re-connect, or deconstruct, the very unfathomable act and meaning of the temporal living moments; it is a series of continual living action of art-in-research through *play*, undulating waves of cognitive ventilation, emotional memory and bodily energy in *prints* as exposed through the objects maneuvered. Detecting the minute details of these wavelengths of alternating neural movement would take more than just

words, especially when the body-mind is constantly, likely constipated at times, fully, or partially, or sometimes fragmentarily, engaged in the energizing, or often de-energizing, act of narrativity beyond words. How could we possibly take the matter only as “facts,” or “evidence,” of activity recorded? Walter Benjamin once condemned, “The construction of life is at present in the power far more of facts than of convictions, and of such facts as have scarcely ever become the basis of convictions... significant literary effectiveness can come into being only in a strict alternation between action and writing...” (Bullock & Jennings, eds. 1996:444) In between and beyond words, syllables, and space above or under, the already hidden invisible elements only the active participant alone would have experienced and comprehended therein, are setting alternative keys for deciphering of the self and the humanity embedded. Where is the *shame* of living? Shame: only memory! Yet, as in Derrida’s words, “memory *is* or rather *must, should be* an ethical obligation: infinite and at every instant.”<sup>39</sup> I trust it as residue in the body-mind, precipitating with interactivity instantaneously and simultaneously re-constructing through *apparitional synthesis*. The act of theorizing is an act of distillation-in-the-making, never intended, and in fact impossible, to make perfect. It is the impulse to construct everyday experience that helps redefine a consciousness once repressed or left undeciphered. It is the touching of feelings deep from within, through the tingling movement beyond words and voices unbound thereof, not the “wind and confusion” as Vaneigem once warned us, or “the groaning” and “labouring...all bring forth nothing.” (1965: Introduction) The importance of “truly living” but not “only in appearance” was the foundation of such art-in-actions. Otherwise, the self being would be like what

Vaneigem proclaimed, walking “but as so many Ghosts or Shadows in it,” nothing “but the Umbrage of the Unity.” (Ibid.)

Guess we could best reflect from Oliver Sacks’s paradoxical tale on *The Case of the Colorblind Painter*:

Color perception had been an essential part not only of Mr. I.’s visual sense, but his aesthetic sense, his sensibility, his creative identity, an essential part of the way he constructed the world – and now color was gone, not only in perception, but in imagination and memory as well. The resonances of this were very deep. At first he was intensely, furiously conscious of what he had lost (though “conscious,” so to speak, in the manner of an amnesiac). He would glare at an orange in a state of rage, trying to force it to resume its true color. He would sit for hours before his (to him) dark grey lawn, trying to see it, to imagine it, to remember it, as green. He found himself now not only in an impoverished world, but in an alien, incoherent, and almost nightmarish one. He expressed this soon after his injury, better than he could in words, in some of his early, desperate paintings.

But then, with the “apocalyptic” sunrise, and his painting of this, came the first hint of a change, an impulse to construct the world anew, to construct his own sensibility and identity anew. Some of this was conscious and deliberate: retraining his eyes (and hands) to operate, as he had in his first days as an artist. But much occurred below this level, at a level of neural processing not directly accessible to consciousness or control. In this sense, he started to be redefined by what had happened to him – redefined physiologically, psychologically, aesthetically – and with this there came a transformation of values, so that the total otherness, the alienness of his Vi world, which at first had such a quality of horror and nightmare, came to take on, for him, a strange fascination and beauty. (Sacks, 1995:34-35)

As physically diagnosed colorblindness may, factually speaking, be quite different from *colorblindness* out of mentally inclination due to bad memory or disturbing experiences, the enlightening experience of Mr. I. was pretty much self determined through reconstructing values anew. **“The impulse to construct” is the critical point of transformation; it is the outlet to ease the *heat* or *shame* unwantingly accumulated through the years. Re-igniting such impulse would be fundamental when mounting any workshops for opening alternative routes for transformation of this nature.** The empty space in theatrical creativity could be the ideal place to seek profoundness in loss and unpleasantness once encountered. As in Mr. I.’s case, like Sacks’s discovery, he “does not deny his loss, and at some level still mourns it, he has come to feel that his vision has become ‘highly refined,’ ‘privileged,’ that he sees a world of pure form, uncluttered by color. Subtle textures and patterns, normally obscured for the rest of us because of their embedding in color, now stands out for him.” (Ibid, 38) **It is vital to allow the body-mind the space beyond the perceived reality as w and move on to *truth* redefined by afresh-neurological experience.**

### ***10: Reflection made in Family Emails***

To my brother *I.H.*, I gather it has been this immeasurable impulse to construct leading him through the ups and downs. The “painting” to him has been that of “the vision of a chemist.” That particular email he wrote to *B.H.* was like the evidence of transformation, displaying routes of unusual paths once taken by a man, walking through paths like those of “molecular self-assembly,” “without guidance or management from an outside source,”<sup>40</sup> unfolding a series of “noncovalent interactions,” metaphorically speaking of course. As a chemical engineer by

profession, the “chemical bond” generated in *I.H.* had gained much momentum from learning to be independent of paternal bonding, not involving much “sharing” or “pairing” in his younger days, with “covalent bonding,” i.e. “the sharing of pairs,” taken place only at a later age when he had established his own family and achieved considerable financial success and stability. As a matter of fact, we often joked about how *I.H.* looked into everything like chemical equations, like novelist Primo Levi, with *the periodic table*<sup>41</sup> as his inspiration. Every time when it comes to cooking or the food on the dining table, *I.H.*’s chemical analogy would often echo Levi’s way in describing one of chemistry’s most significant processes: “Distilling is beautiful;” it was as if the food was all heated up by a Bunsen burner. Daily utensils, objects and food could suddenly be transformed into the pictorial memory pegs of Periodic Table designed by John P. Pratt, filled with living color, smell and shapes.<sup>42</sup> Who said only artists could be creative? Is everyone not by nature an artist of life-in-the-making? The paradox is: distillation is often an act to attain “purity” and life is never “pure.” The human desire to *purify* something could be either positive or negative, or those ever-struggling grayness in between, depending on the processes and applications taken to achieve the level of “purity-in-mind” at times. Like *B.H.* once wrote, in corresponding to *I.H.*’s email sharing on life on February 13, 2008, that she would prefer “life as should be” rather than “as is.” She believes that “we will never grow and be stagnant.”<sup>43</sup> To me, it has proven an act that could either turn into violent obsession or subconscious calling for delicate tendering and repeating care. I made my correspondence on the subject a day later to *B.H.*:

Very often, the world at war begins with “*it should be!*”  
The human enigma given rise to turmoil and beauty also begins with “*it should be!*”  
I have no place for words with my poor track record and experience regarding family.  
Now I see them as “natural resources” for the next living moment.  
Wise words often catch the attention of our mind but rarely the heart.  
Recognize the true nature in us all: we are all “cell culture bound” under the scrutiny of acute chemical bonding off specific only-god-knows-what-circumstances, each constructing a story of his/her own with respective architectural details in molecular terms, dramatically or not.  
Taking Shakespeare’s words, we are but “a poor player strutting and fretting upon the stage and is heard no more... Signifying Nothing!”<sup>44</sup>  
I learn to make truce with the rumbling cells in me and listen to voices from reverberation in things, objects, matters, people, light, shadow, trees, cats, dogs, and all living and non-living beings around me. I see them all part of me: As Is! As Was! As *being* always there!  
We are all artists-of-the-life-in-the-making! Often with strokes and touches that surprise us here and there at times, in retrospective, like sand castle all would be dissolved one day.  
We are all physio-bio-chemists-at-work by nature. Not mentioning the engineering to do in the living process.  
Such family correspondence should be recorded and passed down to the younger generation, whom I literally learnt the most from, not mentioning the potential blessing or disaster we have all been creating for them.  
Witnessing my stray kittens from 3 weeks old to 11 months old now, two of them in heat, with baby cries and body straining painfully for mating, one got harassed by a friend ending up with an eye fatally injured, eating and defecating disorder, and, most of all, suffering from diabetes and low self-esteem, I see the biological being in us all revised in miniature form.  
Human beings often dismiss our utter *animal* side and covering up with civilized talk!  
I learn to accept the *animal* in me!  
With philosophizing as only the side dishes!

What truly matters seem to be the *transformations* through impurity to be taking place, not “the woeful naiveté,” as Brook suggested, of some “pious search for purity.” (Brook, 1995:56) In an interview with Philip Roth, Italian-Jewish chemist-novelist Primo Levi shared the sense of “impurity” in life, “I see no contradiction between ‘rootedness’ and being (or feeling) ‘a grain of mustard.’ To feel oneself a catalyst, a spur to one’s cultural environment, a something or a somebody that confers taste and sense to life, you don’t need racial laws or anti-Semitism or racism in general; however, it is an advantage to belong to a (not necessarily racial) minority. In other words, it can prove useful not to be pure.” (Levi, 1975:xvi) Of course, the life we brothers and sisters experienced was in no way to compare with those of Levi’s, especially those darkest ghostly moments in Auschwitz during WWII (possibly with the exception of experiences encountered by relatives during the Cultural Revolution). Yet Levi’s haunting reflections through his novel have revealed us another important act of transcendental experience through the arts, something *I.H.* had seeded in me when he first *indirectly* showed me how to paint and shared with me books that enlightened my mind as a human being.

### ***11: Beyond the Bodily System***

We may all be “colorblind painters” at times without knowing it, be us work in group or as individual. Remapping the apparitional movements induced by the shadow cast from the chain of our family tree would seem to be one of the most likely steps to retrace the footsteps of *ghosts*, upon which we might be able to locate the cause of the *colorblindness* in us. In search of the shape of the family tree, it is like cutting open the anatomy of ghosts, sorting out the histology, structure and organization of living



beings *morphologically* patterned along the family tree stem, branches, and roots; it could also be an anthropological look into the anatomical articles where seated the structure of family organ and system accounted all the years. What if we discovered severe damages along *the integumentary system* where our *skin*, the site of pride exposed, is so thin that we could not possibly swallow any criticisms among family members? What if there had long been blood clots in *the cardiovascular system* due to the leftover of rotten memories never got cleaned up in the first place? What if *the endocrine system* were with family hormones lopsidedly patriarchal-inclined without making the needed balance in spite of the sociological changes and the femineity in us all? What if *the immune system* had long been malfunctioned due to the disability, or hypersensitivity, in identifying the nature of disease-carrying agents long infiltrated the family through generations of unfiltered stream of consciousness made invisible? What about a *lymphatic system* with too weak the vessels to make any good transfer of the needed lymph between the family bodily tissues to the family bloodstream of survival when social taboo had clotted up the shattering will? Upon too long a period of under-nutrition, would the discovery of the ever-weakening *muscular system* make one realize why we haven't been truly moving much in the last 100 years, with a *nervous system* not at all functioning to process information among family members and all those exposed to us in the world? Would it not be likely that, with many traditional moral codes left undeciphered over the years, the reproductive system had not been at all consistent, leaving many members of the family offspring often psychologically disturbed, or genetically unimproved? What if the *colorblindness* long began when the *respiratory system* had not been naturally all the years under the scrutiny of abrupt political and social changes, leaving the family lungs saturated with

specks and dusts multiplied at the expense of an economy-driven mindset? With the constant harassment from surrounding problems, how could the *skeletal system* normally function, without leaving various bones either fractured or deteriorated without knowing? With the inherited broken pride out of a missing heritage, would *shameful feelings* not be hard to subside due to the major damages to the family *urinary system*, failing to produce constructive culturally urinating enzymes or excrete culturally dismissed urine, leaving fouled up substances that stank the family altar without any sanitary actions? I had been trying to retrace these family stories through careful studies of the bodily signs depicted from my body, where roots of unsettling family business may have left traces off tissues easily dismissed in everyday life. In the old days, my grandmother had told us stories that by custom or superstition she had kept her maidenhair all along in the old trunk under her bed. It was not verified of course though remembering a glimpse of the hair vaguely flashed in memory. But with the inherited beliefs of the importance of hair, which signifying the personal pride of the person, I had once created a family portrait through the description of the pubic hair among family members, with a touch of taboo indeed so boosted up at times when I was still being the cynic of the family a few years back. It was indeed a satire of the ever-missing family portrait entirely *painted* with impressionistic strokes, yet often with propounding underneath emotions and conflicting judgmental paradox in between the mesmerized vision of the family pubic hair<sup>45</sup>, with the forever missing links from those of my mother's family and the details of *events* transforming these ever-daily-growing substances so heartily connected to the family body. How could one ever be totally objective when it comes to the painting of family portrait? Why should I be looking for, or longing for rather, the potential making of such a family portrait? Was I

not subconsciously ingrained to believe that it is *essential* and *natural* to keep a family whole, just as how I was taught to believe so? Be it expected to be a model to be organized and structured after political, social or moral philosophy pre-fabricated by ancestors and the ruling class, how many members of the family could appeal and make attempts to re-structure the existing patriarchal existence? As the family long being viewed both by Aristotle (*Politics*) (1992[1962]/[340BC]) and Confucius (*The Great Learning [Da Xue Ta Hsio]*) (1963[500BC]) as the small communities that built the foundation to the society and the State, how could one possibly make claims and argue that its formation is aligned with the so-called “natural progression of human beings?” With years passed and in no time, all family members, like those long passed away in the ancestral altar, would be in line with the *necrology* perceived by filmmaker Standish Lawder in his 1969/70 experimental underground classic, everyone joined in the “roll call of the dead,” all once belonged to the anonymous commuters each trapped in their daily routine. How should the pubic hair of these ghosts look like then, especially on their way “ascending and disappearing”<sup>46</sup> to the unknowing darkness? Or were they only mirroring the ghost-members of family institutions and organizations, forever seeking identification of their personal and domestic relationships to the different forms of government in households not totally out of their making. Jonas Mekas of *Village Voice* simply exclaimed, “It’s hard to believe that these faces belong to people today.” The critic saw it as the “grimmiest comments upon the contemporary society that cinema has produced.”<sup>47</sup> As eventually all of us would, with no escape, end up similar to the bogus *ending* credits of the 12-minute-film, parading along with carnival marching music in loud trumpets, a far cry echoing the Shakespearean notation of “the poor player” (*Macbeth*, V.v.) who would

be heard no more. I see the ghosts in this Lawder list of ordinary people [*with bold as original and italics added in by me*]:

**Taxi cab driver** – *who has been suffering from severe urinary disorder...*

**Deaf Mute Woman** – *who has often been treated as UFO when signing...*

**German Business man, retired**

*(living in Brazil) – whose skin has lost the ability to house touches.*

**IBM Salesman** – *who still have mortgages to pay for another 30 years...*

**Man with ulcer** – *who is never respected for a name nobody knows how to pronounce...*

**Trumpet Player** – *who is a spirit booster for the missing trumpet in you and me...*

**Assassin** (with two assistants) – *who keeps saying, “I need a job that pay well too!”*

**Assassin assistant No. 1** – *who keeps repeating, “I am not the killer! I just follow Order!”*

**Assassin assistant No. 2** – *who knows blood clotting is part of the Survival Scheme!”*

**Former Disc Jockey** – *whose dream is to visit the Graceland before his death.*

**Secretary, Bilingual** – *whose vocal chord is too thick to sing...*

**Man whose wife doesn’t understand him** – *who is into group therapy every evening...*

**Local politician** – *who is too busy to attend her mother’s funeral tomorrow.*

**Corvette Owner** – *who could hardly pay the rent this month...*

**Dietician** – *whose favorite place is the MacDonald’s right around the corner...*

**Errand boy** – *whose dream is never big: Simply to make his mom happy tonight!*

**Cleaning woman, retired** – *who once made the headline of the news in 1965...*

**Software Market Research Analyst** – *who has just worked overnight and is tired as hell.*

**Worried mother** – *who doesn’t care what the Guinness Record has to say.*

**Stock Broker just out of Harvard** – *who is still trying to figure out what Stiglitz means.*

**Former Model** – *who recently joined the weight-gaining program run by Bloomberg.*

**Asian Diplomat** – *who doesn't know if the security test runs in British or Vietnamese System.*

**Actor, unemployed** – *who has severe inflammation and infection of the left middle ear.*

**Man returning from dentist** – *who is rushing for the heart surgeon's appointment.*

**Manufacturer of Plastic novelties** – *whose blood is as toxic as his products.*

**Short Order Cook** – *whose nightly course after dinner spells e.x.p.e.c.t.o.r.a.n.t.s.*

**Secretary, black** – *who doesn't know anyone called Obama and his windpipe is block.*

**Greek businessman** – *whose son-in-law is a Turkish Muslim.*

**Woman in meditation** – *whose mental alertness is at alarm watch these days.*

**Peanut Salesman, Coney Island** – *who works to pay the treatment for his dad's disease.*

**FBI agent** – *who doesn't wear a trench coat or any wireless mic behind his ears.*

**Fat teenager with straw pocket book** – *whose neurons are at present actively engaged.*

**Fugitive, interstate** – *who is rushing to visit his mom of dementia.*

**Union Bassoon player** – *whose gastrointestinal tract is breaking down from food poisoning.*

**Suffolk County chess champion** – *who has just been suffering from rheumatic disorder.*

**Ghost Writer** – *whose special taste in life is on "infections and infestations!"*

.....<sup>48</sup>

As ordinary people, would many of us not end up in such a list of everyday life folks barely treated as “expertised subject” for specialists? Or those that were written down would be only distant *Talk*<sup>49</sup> remained reverberating in the long corridor of time, like Swedish filmmaker Lukas Moodysson’s 1997 short film (originally titled *Bara Prata Lite*), where one, when “retired” from work, would forever be left alone searching for the missing human contact in life at the end of the living tunnel. In the family portrait I

had been deliberately playful through capturing the “creative images” of their pubic hair back then, it looked like a Roy Andersson<sup>50</sup> cinema in long takes, with all the faces stiffly caricatured along a post-colonial backdrop, grotesquely waiting in the line for the final curtain call. Genealogically speaking, tracing the family pedigree back into time would seem to be a historical painting that covers the span of three centuries, with a family tree “flourished” and intertwined with descendants scattering in various places overseas, encompassing the modern history of China to the globalized world of the 21st Century, holding values and beliefs often pulling from conservative Chinese heritage to the post-modernistic worldview, forever unsettled and still, like any ordinary folks, craving for the “better life” to come. It was a vignette of constant migration from one place to another, each seeking the land of prosperity rather than one that rooted with family heritage, something that had long been deserted in a town not even my father had ever set foot on anymore since he was very young. All these undermined in the temporality and migrations in the Ho family history of the past century: a family long lost the touch of a communitarian society, with a history probably not many in the family would be interested to pass down to the younger generation. Without investigating the significances behind any “technical details” as listed in Appendix 1 would mean the “tree” was often painted with severe exclusion: the aftereffect of the Cultural Revolution on the relatives who remained in the Mainland during the 1960’s; the impact of civil war taken place in China on the fate of my grandfather and father; the livelihood of those “missing ones” long emigrated some places else before 1949; the meaning of professional achievement for the baby boomers, i.e. my generation, and their “pompous” attitude in children education; the changing role of women in the family from my mother’s generation to those one

generation younger than we are, etc. There are a lot remained unspoken possibly by subconscious choice without knowing it. Family details may easily become just another series of data to fill in for political or social debates, where often “omissions may be said to ‘speak volumes’” (Morgan, 1985:83) – any affiliation to family of “problematic background” would mean “trouble,” possibly a sentiment that had been influenced by the political climate generated by the Rectification Campaign in the 1940’s when the Chinese Communist Party led by 150 members were trying to “clean up” their enemies among the 800,000 members.<sup>51</sup> In the eyes of normalization where “a constant strain towards a consensus,” (Ibid, 85) the stories behind each “character” as enlisted in the family story may only signify something not totally of specific interest to any body of expert. They were/are only important to the respective individuals, ordinary and yet all fighting hard, or tolerating, all the violence and assault impounded on their life through political and social events out of their reaches. The “stories” were probably never “objective” enough to fit for “speech, manifesto or report” under institutionalized models, where emphases are often on “administrative or technical solutions to the problems.” (Ibid, 85), never the minute developmental details one has to go through in everyday life. Whether marriages among family folks suffered from “medicalization,” in Morgan’s word, or not would remain to be subject for “counselors” or “therapists” only; the ones who did involve in this social institutionalized act, be they enjoyed or suffered from the experience, would have their own personal tales for the younger ones, with effect not necessarily based on the “marital problems” as underlined as “symptomatic connotations” adopted by therapists or professionals. By the time such “body of specialized knowledge or theory” is drawn, the particular persons connected would have already moved on to another

plateau of being, subsequently forever carrying with them the effect of “after treatment.” They are only ordinary tales, happenings, and events of ordinary folks, each amplifying one’s vision out of the “Healthy or Well-functioning Marriage or Family” (Gurman & Kniskern, 1981:xv-xvi) in the best way they know how. Any “prevention” of “pathological or dysfunctional” (Ibid) symptoms would seem to be talks of little meanings to the ones who had been treading a life plane solely particular to circumstances they each apprehended at times, not the *Family Process* (Ackerman, 1970) that pre-treated as norms “prescribed” by specialists, making presumption with straightforward matter-of-fact kind of argument or models. Carl R. Rogers once admitted, “I could go on and on with many different and unique problems which people bring to us. They run the gamut of life’s experiences. Yet there is no satisfaction in giving this type of catalog, for, as counselor, I know that the problem as stated and the first interview will not be the problem as seen in the second or third hour, and by the tenth interview it will be a still different problem or series of problems.” (1961:108)

### ***12: Apparitional Synthesis***

When looking into the inner space of human mind, Diane Ackerman reminded me the possible “drama” induced by “pills no larger than a hummingbird’s eye.” (2004:42) She further stressed, “what happens at the synapses is mainly chemical, not electrical, tiny molecules such as antidepressants and sedatives can insinuate their way in and reshape events.” (Ibid.) What about those drifting daily events gliding by or in and out of our mind, especially those “transmitted” through family currents, would they form “the shoals of life,” as Ackerman suggested, which “connect a self with the mainland



and society” and “plot their trail”? When the bedrock of emotional memory constantly keep us company and feed us with “noises” over the course of actions (or the lack of actions), consciously and subconsciously speaking, re-identifying the shape of these emotions, which make up a major part of the self, seated at the back of our memory would seem to be an important process if we are to exorcise the “ghosts,” or apparitional effect, that have been affecting our actions.

In theatre play, drawing on actors’ emotional memory is an important process in creating credible characters. When talking about emotion, theatre director and acting teacher Robert Lewis pinpointed to us that “people seem to think that emotion only implies some huge, general spill of feeling, like crying or terrible anger, whereas actual emotion is something that is always present in one form or another and is sometimes so subtle that it is unidentifiable. You have *some* sort of feeling at all times or you’d be stone dead. There are not just the big ones.” (1980:120) In other words, is the mind not following an emotional text all the time, through which coloring our behavior, something we all cannot hide? “You simply can’t hide it.” So believed Sanford Meisner, who once put it very lyrically regarding the things related to emotion, “The text is like a canoe and the river on which it sits is the emotion. The text floats on the river. If the water of the river is turbulent, the words will come out like a canoe on a rough river. It all depends on the flow of the river, which is your emotion. The text takes on the character of your emotion.” (Meisner & Longwell, 1987:115) Recognizing the “text” flowing along our emotional plane of memory would be like what Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s ultimate action of *living to tell the tale*,<sup>52</sup> a form of apparitional synthesis through creative actions.

In rehearsal room, drawing one's emotional memory would lead one to a series of exercises, through which participants would be engaging to particular moments of events and re-visiting the emotional space that filled with sound and imagery where seated the living energy stained with specific patterns and inner structure. It is often through these exercises that we would re-discover the motive and emotion of characters to be portrayed. The thought and feeling behind these emotional memory exercises would be unique journey to the emotional landscape of "vowels," "resonant," "consonants," and "syllables," each with emotional length and texture distinctively unveiled. To me, such art-in-actions could be transferred into education and social work and help opening up alternative horizons for better emotional development of the mind. I have personally benefited a great deal both from executing these exercises with actors and the observation of body once engaged in these captivating journey of the mind. They opened up charts of bodily references that often echoed or expanded the unsung details of emotional journey not only of my own, but also those of the participants', through which propelled yet another series of artistic endeavor to come.

The "dramatized" monologues below sketched through impersonating members of the family would be one of the apparitional synthesized actions to re-amplify the voices in me as deeply emotionally attached to memories under specific emotional experience, tie and climate. It is also an exercise I often use in working with students, actors, creative workshop participants, social workers and teachers. It is not a technical chart of the family tree or the technical details to cater for "fact-craving" statisticians. It is a platform to remount our emotional journey into new plains where one could re-narrate

living tales that could help nourish the betterment of the mind, transforming the “ghosts” into materials of positive substance. It may, not necessarily linear, expose some of the historical, social and political phenomena within specific timeline long haunted the passers-by of a city like ours, each directly or indirectly haunted by *ghosts*, externally, or internally, driven by circumstances or *apparition* formatted by the ever-changing and shifting *shape, size and direction* of the family due to particular relationship out of one’s control thereof at times. The dramatized “monologues” are meant to be a springboard for renovating the mental fabric before the next possible unknown rapture of emotions to come that may “attack” without any preparation for them. The “storytelling,” in between lines with “drama,” “paintings,” “music,” and tremendous amount of “invisible” space to be visualized in the course of drama-in-action, could be served as an alternative revision of the way of life used to be and, most of all, the future living to come. They are something that could touch bases with “unspoken themes on inequality and conflicts,” or “the construction of the life of an ordinary person growing up at particular time and space,” where such a caricature of family-history-becoming, or family-under-constant-investigative-revitalization, are seeded to create *ordinary* dialogues on *becoming a person* (not “client” for psychotherapists). They are materials for individual creative actions for self-investigation and envisioning the life to be through creative re-narrativity and doings thereupon the findings through the act of experiencing, not for the sake of building therapeutic relationship or materials for charting after any family crisis models like those of Hill’s AB-CX family crisis model<sup>53</sup> (1949) or Burr’s (1973) synthesis of family stress research (McCubbin, Joy, Cauble, Comeau, Patterson, & Needle, 1980),

where “stress” or “crisis” are “conceptualized,” “denoted,” and “charted” into model variables for theorizing only.

Yet, the boundaries of family life are ever evolving around ambiguous goals and patterns of unknown, or multi-dimensional, family values, roles and interactions based on events of changes over series of disruptiveness in individual family members who were often not totally aware of the nature of the stressors at times. The social system, i.e. the family unit, were constantly undergoing hardship dictated not by any perceivable circumstances at times but the imbalance and uncontrollable crisis that could never be easily summarized, experience and memory are piled up without the needed digestion. Things would gradually take over the bodily system that no blueprints or guidelines would be available or well prescribed enough to tackle specific situations. The monologues could be an act of alternative narrativity to help redefine the meaning and values of such family “resources,” be they negative or striking at times. It is to create an *aesthetic distance* that could allow the body-mind to adapt through hypothesized reciprocal relationships among family members, whom had all been suffering from imbalance functioning of the family as temporally perceived, consciously or subconsciously, at times. Vocalizing these imbalance and aftereffect could mean alternatively seeking for the lost sense of coherence in *family* as institutionalized, idealized or philosophized, with or without the support from “legitimate authority” or “controlling factors” as suggested by McCubbin and Patterson who saw them as critical factors that “persons, institutions, a higher power – will act with their best interests.” (1983:19)

### ***13: A Family Portrait under Synthesized Narrativity***

Here are the Voices of the family dust buried in me, all vocalized through the imaginary first person narrative, impersonated through perspectives emotionally, consciously and subconsciously, identified with selected family members, addressing directly, or indirectly, back to me, like mirroring in ghosts play:

**Grandpa** (in his grey Chinese suit, sitting at the lower deck of a bunker):

*It's windy up there. When was it you moved me to Cheong Kwan O? Putting your grandma next to me was nice. But honestly, I'd prefer the solitude back in Cheung Sha Wan. You know how little your grandma talked to me back then. Indeed, I was too old for her. If it weren't for the good of the Ho family, we wouldn't be stuck with each other then. What kind of a place Cheung Sha Wan cemetery was? I couldn't tell the differences after being baptized. Do you really think I am in Heaven now? It was like voodoo to me, more or less. Imagine, how would a dying man care? Well, if it were for the convenience of you all to visit me, how come my bones were left there for so long without being attended? You know well when you came to see me. Even my name on the tombstone was gone. Luckily you found me, good lad! I won't blame you all. As your grandma used to say, "The young gotta work! There ain't time to tender an old man like me." By the way, I did come back once. On the seventh day after my death. You were there crying so loudly that evening, all cranked up in your bunker, facing the dark window. I was out there watching over you. Did you know that? Were you six? Only god knew what kind of ceremony over my dead body they had for me. Must have scared you. Figure that was the first time you learnt anything about death. You were too young to know about your mom back then. Well, if it wasn't the war, I wouldn't be broke. I would have given you more than five cents for snacks for sure. Well, it wasn't bad for a young boy like you to have five cents a week in those days. I really wanted to go back home. I mean the birthplace back in Nan Hoi. I couldn't find it anymore. All changed. Wonder why they don't keep things nowadays. Wouldn't it be nice to go back with my brother and sister? Remember that qi gung (granduncle No.7) of yours? The stuttering one. He was a good man. It was unfortunate of him to have*

*married a noisy woman though. That really kept us away from one another. As for sam goo pau (grandaunt no.3), she may not be able to catch up with us, especially with the lotus feet she was carrying. You know it was sort of luxurious for a lady to have that kind of “beauty treatment.” I wasn’t in for that. Wonder why she wanted her feet crooked like that, eh? It was nice of her visiting us every Lunar New Year though. How’s your dad? Is he doing okay? Well, he’s a good son. If it weren’t the war, he should be a lot better off. I would have taken care of him more. You must listen to him. He’s the head of the family ever since moving to Hong Kong...What? You wanted to touch my face? Come here. Give me your hands. Here. First my baldhead. And my goatee. Hm. Then these sunken lines on my forehead! And those right above the eyebrows. Hmmm. It surely feels good...where was I...*

**Grandma No. 1** (in long cheongsam, sitting at the ancestral family altar):

*You must be the youngest one. Dai Mah (i.e. grandma no.1) wouldn’t have the luck to bear a son like your grandma. Do you know that she was my maid of dowry? Didn’t anyone tell you that? She was lucky. If it weren’t the fortuneteller, she would still be my maid. I know your qi ga (i.e. “the seventh sister,” how we used to call step mom back then) though. Her family was close to ours back in Guangzhou. She knew your dad way before he married your mom. She should have told you that. How’s she now? I mean qi ga. Well, you are a dramatist, right? You should write a story for me, “The Tragedy of a Woman who bore no Son.” A nobody! That’s me...good to see you, boy...*

**Grandma No. 2** (in red cheongsam, alone in the dusty courtyard):

*Who are you? Are you Ah Cheung’s (my father’s name) kid? Gosh, a big boy now. How would it be for me if I could have a son, or a daughter, of my own? I was truly the “nobody” of the family. Probably not many of you even know I did exist. I weren’t subject of those ghostly tales you heard of in the 1960’s. I heard it was a rough time. Did I live long enough to see that though? Can’t remember anymore. Was it your step mom again telling you how I died? How would she know anything? She weren’t there. She weren’t even there to see her parents off? You know how tragic to die without anyone around to see you off. Her mom and dad was wrapped in straw and burnt to hell. You heard of those stories in radio, didn’t*

*you? No, you were too young to know anything back then. Doesn't matter any more. All passed away. No? Who's still lucky enough to be around? I wish them well. It was terrible back then. I know well what did happen and what didn't. Could you ask someone to fix this cheongsam for me? I think it doesn't fit me anymore...I hate anything RED...*

**Grandma No. 3** (still in her undergarment, in hospital):

*Go home if you are busy. Don't mind me. Work is more important...did you just call me mom? No. Figure not...I could truly be your mom you know...only with the missing 9-month pregnancy... As long as you all are alright, I'd be content...all you care is your mom...what good was she to you...I simply don't understand...what good was she to you...if it weren't me, you would have been long gone...in someone's home...it was me to insist raising you up...it was tough and wasn't easy for your pa...I could really be your mom...you all left...never a word with me once...I never complained, didn't I? And...you all left without a word...I know you all would blame me for spoiling my son...if it weren't him, it would be a different story for me...he IS my son...and always will...he gotta take care of himself...MAN of the house...with the women around...they are no good to him...he didn't have any choice...if it weren't that woman, he wouldn't have left me at the elderly home...never...I am sure...why didn't you do anything about it? You could have lived with me...and you...didn't...I know it wasn't easy...with all the work to do...always work...hard to make a living indeed... finish the orange... good for you... come on... have one... just one... you need to eat something... no, I don't need it... you missed my cooking? Too old for that now... I don't deserve this from the family... how I prayed for you all... couldn't you remember: right in front of the window I pray, with all the food and incense burning specially for the well being of you all... nam mo al nay tor (praying)... nam mo al nay tor... you know it was taboo to give you red egg on your birthday... I wouldn't talk about it if I were you... it was a curse... not good to the family... don't listen to qi ga, a stepmother is never any good for you... they don't have a heart... you and your sister were dear to me... she did a lot for me... she wasn't happy when I refused to leave with her to some foreign country... how could I leave your pa... he needed me... he... me... I know... don't mention it... he didn't mean it... I know he didn't mean it... by Buddha, how I took care of you... good that you have a son... how*

*old is he now? Take the orange to him. He needs to eat more if he is to grow up... it's windy here... why all the fuss to bring your grandpa here... I don't want to take care of anyone anymore... hadn't I worked enough for that old man... I am tired... go to... work... (long silence)... go... leave... me... alone...*

**Pa** (alone at home, Chinese Lunar New Year):

*This wine again...same thing over as last few years... (long silence)... it is no good for me... the one you bought still up there in the kitchen... (long silence)... Leave me alone, would you? I wouldn't enjoy having you talked around about my business. What got into your head? You never learnt, didn't you? Why keep digging the past? (Long pause) Can't you leave people alone? How would you know how I felt back then? I don't want to talk about it. Not to you, or anyone else... you can trust no one these days... no one... I mean no one... not even my wife out there... all they think of is the money I have... I don't have much... only good enough for the rest of my life... me alone... it costs to live nowadays you know... the injection I give myself costs double these days... (long pause) how does the email work? Better learn something to keep up with the world... exercise? Yeah, once or twice a week... weight lifting is good for me... (long silence) don't you ever talk to your little sister about me any more...or ah yi... (i.e. stepmother no.3) she has her problems... mind your own lot... (putting on his glasses and shining his shoes, on and off with Cantonese Opera humming at the tip of his mouth; he does everything with precision)... it was tough to take care of the nine of you, you know... it was just me and me alone...who would have understood what it's like out there... I fed you all, didn't I... if I didn't take care of myself, who could... your brothers were like rebels... gotta let them take care of themselves... find their own jobs and get themselves an early start... that's good for them... haven't they turned out well now... you were too weak... too timid... I didn't know what to do with you... (long silence) gotta find someone to take care of me... you know... at least that's what I thought... yet all ended up not trustworthy though... not a single soul... (long silence) I would love to take care of your grandma... if I were only ten or twenty years younger... six floors up here... how would you expect me to carry her... and I still got a car to take care of... the only living tool got left... and the money to maintain it... I wouldn't need any of your support... not anyone... I would be okay on my own... I don't need any*



*sympathy... can't you simply stop licking the old wound? I don't care if it's something you learnt at college or not...enough is enough... (silence) your younger brother came to help me fix the TV... I wouldn't have left if his mom didn't interfere my affair... I don't want to talk about your mom either... or her parents... it was long time ago... didn't I have enough of that... a time when I had to take food home for you all suckers... I gambled for fun... it's absolutely boring in this house... no one talked to each other... I NEED SOME RESPECT AROUND HERE... were I that terrible that you all never talked to me about things... this is MY home and always will... (long silence) even your brothers never said a word about my absence, what good are you... didn't I save the family face at your wedding? It cost me a fortune for that dinner... and the pregnant gown for your little wife... you'd better show some gratitude... and learn to have some respect for your old man... leave the morals on yourself... you had the nerve to get a fine girl only 16 pregnant... how old were you? 18? You weren't any better than me... I don't need any of those... (long silence) you know what he did... don't blame me for expelling your eldest brother... whom did he think he was? As if I were nobody... being the man of the house, I could do whatever I want... I come and leave as I please... do you have a problem with that... (finished his shoeshine, began dying his hair)... if you all brothers and sisters didn't take care of one another like I told you, life would have already sucked you all up... at least I did something good to keep reminding you all that... just that... I never had that luck...to have brothers and... (long silence) I wouldn't need any one of you... I wouldn't bother any of you when I decide to leave... and don't ever buy that wine for me any more... I don't need it... leave me in peace and I would sincerely appreciate it... truly...*

**Mom** (looked like the 5" x 7" photograph in my living room):

*How do I look? Do I still look like the picture you have? Where did you find that picture of me? Must be taken before marrying your dad... I looked much older when delivering you... don't look at me like this...yes, it's me... really good seeing you...must have been hard on you without me... I wouldn't have imagined how you are now... How old are you? What? Fifty already? Where is everybody? What happened? Why did you all separate from one another? So far away... it was hard for your dad to cope back in those days... guess my parents never liked him*

*much...always the money thing I gather... and the time was rough... suddenly with all these people to look after... your grannies and all that... to be honest, I didn't expect you in the beginning... and yet accident did happen you know... family stress never took place on singular term... they piled up without letting you prepare for them...yes, it was always nice in the beginning...your pa was good with words... yet never with true actions... don't mean to criticize him after all these years... how would I have known what a man he was... oh, I knew men alright... like my dad... all runaways whenever things happen... what? How did you get to know my first marriage? You met them... I mean your stepsister and stepbrother... I wouldn't have recognized them at all even when you brought them around to see me... how could my deserted soul recognize faces of my children long gone? How are they now? They must hate me for abandoning them to stay with their uncle... if it weren't my dad running away with another woman, I wouldn't have married at such an early age... it was mom's wishes... tough on her to take care three of us after dad left... you know what it was like... marrying off a daughter would mean financially more stable so to speak...you met my first husband? Still remember all the details? I wouldn't have imagined a man like that after all the events taken place... He should be over 80 by now...when did he pass away? Poor man... never re-married? Not like your pa indeed... would have guessed the marriages he had... must have been difficult for you all... how did you all cope with the changes... no wonder you are all everywhere for now... good to see that you all turned out well... truly proud of you all... I mean it... wish I could be here... let me take a good look at you before leaving... glad you look like me... with that eyes... no tears please... you gotta learn to move on without me... I mean without all the soul searching for me anymore... I would always be around you... yes... close your eyes and simply feel your heart beat... I am still ticking... inside you...*

**Stepmother No. 1** (cleaning her tin box of barber tools):

*Ha ha, bet you still remember these "toys." They were the lifelines for my girl, my boy and me. I did your haircut when you were young. Your pa's too. And also your brothers'. Your sister never let me though. Interesting. I could never talk to her all these years. If it weren't your grandma, it wouldn't be so tough to be your stepmother. Somehow we women never quite support each other in the family. It*

*was really strange. If she didn't spoil her son that much, your pa and I would have made it through. You know how your pa never took care of anything when it came to family business. He just worked and deposited his monthly due, never showed much concern over you guys. It was I who took care of all the schooling stuff for you and your eldest brother. Your dad never put his hands onto a damned thing. I was always the errand girl, running around for your family and was never appreciated. Just because I was someone's "stepmother." Oh, I left without much regret, honestly. Yes, it was very difficult taking your brother and sister to move onto living in such a dingy room in Temple Street. You know how rough the neighborhood was. Well, I kept them intact all right. I was strict. For good reasons. Otherwise, they wouldn't be where they are now. You know how your pa looked down on my son. He had very low self-esteem back then. But, he has always been a good son. I wouldn't have thought he would go back to University in his 30's after all those years. He was never any good with books. Only mechanic stuff. He gotta have some basic skill to survive you know. I was right pushing him to get into vocational training. Otherwise, he would not be able to move on. I would have loved to catch up with you after leaving. But it was tough enough for me. You could have imagined what it was like for a woman with two kids, barely 4 and 2. Right after you turned into secondary school. Must be rough for everyone. Was it '69? Lost count these days. Good to see that you brothers and sisters picked up the family tie after all these years. I always told my kids that regardless what happened between your pa and me, they gotta keep the communication open with you all. Even those with your pa. I could not be that selfish to keep them away from the old man. They have the rights to have a father, whether they like him or not. How are you now? Well, hard times are over. And you shouldn't be unhappy anymore. The past is passed...I gotta take care of my granddaughter today. Talk to you some other time. Her parents are all out at work. I have to help her finish her homework. Just like the old times I took care of yours. The Philipino maid would take care of her English. We share the workload. But, I can hardly catch up with the present standard. It doesn't make much sense to me. I mean the way they go with Primary one...well, gotta go now. Talk to you next time round. Do stop by whenever you are free...*

**Stepmother No. 2** (sitting in the dark, no light on her face):

*Do I know you? Why brought me here? I have no business with anyone of you. Not even your daddy. Who said we were married? I didn't ask him to leave you guys. Don't put the blame on me. It's all his idea. You know how you man could be when lust crowded your head. Go talk to your old man and leave me out of your family. Period. No speculation. No tie. No rumor. Let me be and I would be grateful... Even if it was love, what did it get to do with you? No, I wouldn't be interested in your old man at all. We're long done with each other. Don't ever ask me what happened again. I should have got a different driving instructor and it wouldn't be ended up like this...no matter what, it's none of your god damned business. Okay? I need to have a life of my own. Not the Ho's! Never!*

**Stepmother No. 3** (dishwashing in the kitchen):

*Haven't seen you for ages. How are you? And your son? A TV producer. Good for him. Your pa would be back soon... I don't know where he is. He never says anything every time he leaves home... I wouldn't know... just like I never knew there're so many of you back then, right? Ha, ha... it was a bit hard for my girl to swallow all these big brothers and sisters all of a sudden to be honest... but well, I would tell her to call you up anytime if she has any problems... good to have brothers for her... all alone these years... if you took her place, you would know it hadn't been easy... No. He never paid much attention to her neither. It was just she and I. I wouldn't know what your pa was up to... you help yourself... sorry to be so messy around here... I wouldn't dare touch anything of your pa's... I gotta go back to my parents' ... they need me there... do stop by more often... it's kind of quiet here... your sis would love to talk to you... strange things get into her head sometimes and I couldn't figure out how to help her... your pa keeps mumbling with nonsense; nothing truly helpful... you talk to him then... it's him coming back... the footsteps... leave you two alone now, I gotta get going... see you...*

**Stepsister K. C.** (as if playing mahjong):

*Do you want to play a round? Not much luck today. I simply don't have much luck my whole life. If only if mom had known, she wouldn't have me around this long. Sure you don't want to play... I was only two when they dumped me up in the Mainland. I was too young to remember anything. How long has it been since I've known you? Back in the 80's, wasn't it? When I swam to Hong Kong down the Lo*

*Wu River, I kept thinking if she's still around. I even thought it was her blessing to keep us away from being caught by the border guards. Lucky to get hold of you, otherwise, wouldn't know mom up in Wo Hop Shek cemetery. Oh, god, another lousy handful of tiles here. Where was I? Oh, yes, your brother K.L. would never agree with me though. He's always in his own world. I wouldn't sober like him all the time. Life's too short for that. What's the point to keep sulking about what one didn't have, right? I am easy. After all the bad luck I had, I would think no more of the old days. Who would be worse than I was? If I were a day arriving Hong Kong earlier, it would be a different life to me. My husband wouldn't be gone without me. It was impossible to hook up with him in those days. You heard of the mess up there during the 60's and 70's. We were merely unlucky. Lucky enough to make it here though. Gosh, another one? I don't need this. Stay away from me. Try another round. Where was I? Yes, the Cultural Revolution. We were too poor to go to school. In fact who would dare go to school back then? My son was lucky to get out with his wife a few years back. They are happy in New York now. They had always been okay without me. No. Don't expect me to go there taking care of my grandson. I have a life here. It's good to travel around now. I'd go to my daughter at Sydney for a couple of months if I like. But, you know me. I am not the type who can stick around for too long. By the way, do you have any money? Could you lend me a couple of thousand to sort things out? I'd pay you back... where was I? Oh, I never had much luck with men. Lucky I have a good sister at the Clubhouse. We went to Macau last few months with her boy friend. It was fun. My father? I buried him last year. This is his place. Finally I get something from him in return. Who would have guessed? The old man leaves me a flat here. I know it's public housing but gather they wouldn't know. I am his daughter. They would not mind me taking over for him. They wouldn't kick me out, would they? Sorry, whose turn? Second round East, right? Okay, where are my dices...*

**Stepbrother K.L. (preparing a pot of tea):**

*Have you met Kau Fu (i.e. uncle, mom's younger brother) lately? How's he? Heard he had a heart surgery. Did it go well? No. It doesn't seem right for me to call him. It is not nice to disturb someone's privacy if he's not ready for anyone. You know he doesn't talk much. How's Ah Yi (i.e. mom's younger sister)? No? Me neither. No, just curious how she has been. Haven't seen her a while. How was the*

*old flat of grannies? Was it sold? Nobody has touched the place since they died, eh? Still empty and quiet at Shum Shui Po. I visited them once back then. They didn't like it in the beginning. If it weren't Kau Fu, guess we wouldn't be able to meet each other... so many years now... drink... tea is good for you... wonder what they are going to do with it? Have you been to Wo Hop Shek... Me neither! Should be time cleaning up mom's place. I have only Thursday night off. Can't take any leave. Otherwise I'd lose my job. Well, I am a simple man. I wouldn't butt into other's business. Don't know if I am too dumb to know. I am always the last one to know anything. Even back home in the Mainland, my uncle used to say, "K.L., you're too honest!" I never went to school much. Too poor back then. Otherwise, sis and I wouldn't have swum our way here. Couldn't count on the old man. I wouldn't talk to him at all. What's the point? I don't see any points in doing that. Besides, he's gone now. Finally, as if settling something at the back of my mind... I don't know about my wife. She does what she has to do. It's her family business. I don't want to get involved. It would be nice to have a son though... my girl? She just graduated from an Australian University. I don't know. She's always with her mom. They two got along fine without me... come and have dinner whenever you have time. Give me a ring. Love talking to you. Would your brothers and sister be back visiting Hong Kong this year? It was good seeing them last time. The banquet was really something. Wasn't it like the old days at grandpa's? Figure. I am fine. You know me. I am not the kind who enjoys socializing. I simply enjoy being there. With the family... funny... you know what, only until recently I realized the reasons for my insomnia all these years... drinking too much tea... everyone drinks tea all day long back home... nobody told me that tea could give me these trouble... glad to be able to sleep now... ha ha...*

**Brother No. 1** (checking the latest stock market news on the internet):

*You gotta learn how to invest these days. If you don't plan for your retirement, who would take care of you? Ah Yeh (pa's dad) didn't learn well how to handle money in the old days. Ah gung (mom's dad) did. I learnt from that old man. He's a fine businessman. If you don't start now, you'd be sorry. Take my advice before things do get out of hand. By the way, quit bragging on pa. Leave him be. It wouldn't be fair for him to get stuck with his own past... yes, I do remember all*

*the unhappy stuff and that's what made me in a way... turn out to be good stuff for reflection after all! We all in the Ho family enjoy being alone and independent from one another. It is sort of unique in a way. The broken family we had gave my dream the root for the good family I happen to enjoy right now. Without that, I may not value as much as I do this moment. My wife was the maid to my dream. Though she's by nature an introvert... yet she took good care of my kids... without her, we wouldn't have made it... it was tough on you, I know. That's what made you too. You are an artist and you are bound to be sensitive over things and people around. I could understand why you are what you are. And we all should respect the choice. If it weren't the particular circumstances of the family, we all would be someone different. Like I said, one shouldn't generalize any brotherly relationship. Between you and me, it is a special sort of tie indeed. Not like any other. And I have been learning to accept our special relationship – be it up close and personal, or miles apart. Thanks for taking me as your adolescent inspiration. Guess I took over the paternal role without even knowing it when the old man wasn't around. Good that you picked up the books I gave you and you moved on with even more. What was the first book? Yes, Jonathan Livingston Seagull. Looks like it really did have an effect on you. To be honest, it was more than I anticipated. Well, good for you! Figure I was a bit odd in my personality. Bet you guys worried a lot about me back then, didn't you? With all the running around and moving back then. Selling Bible in South Carolina was quite an experience... ha ha... if it wasn't my wife, god knows where I would have ended up being. Funny how we all learnt from our own stories and how we see the ones spontaneously evolving around us still... I never thought of being a chemical engineer. I guess I had to be practical considering the circumstances back then... one has to learn from history and yet has to move on as well... you see how the stock market fluctuate these days, one could never know how things would turn out tomorrow... I learn to go with the flow and play safe... don't spend more than you can afford... that's my advice... spread out your resource and invest on different terms... don't focus on a single item... allocate your money to different kind of investment plans, then you wouldn't fall short because of depreciation... my son and daughter are on their own now, they know well what I think... would you be interested in skiing tomorrow? It's wonderful up here in the Rockies...*

**Sister No. 2** (tasting a glass of Cabinet Sauvignon):

*Would you like a glass? I'd prefer it dry, with body... just got back from Tanzania, absolutely beautiful out there... like the movie we saw together back then, "Out of Africa." Do you remember that movie? Of course you do... the way you have been watching all those films throughout the years... spent all the money now... gotta go back to work before I could make another trip... gotta go back... simply beautiful... in no time they may be ruined a few years later... truly OUT of Africa by then... I love movies... but I would never figure it out like the way you do... don't thank me... I didn't do anything... I was only curious following other to watch those New Wave stuff from the Europeans... I didn't really understand that much. I just went anyway... who would have thought you followed the path and found your way there? I had no choice but to take you with me wherever I went back then... you were what... only 12 or 13, right? Good that you came out okay, eh? Didn't expect to have that much influence on you... but it's surely nice to see you do what you love... Are you sure you don't want one? Sorry for the mess. Just got back and no time to clean up... you know how I hate mess... when things get out of sync I get agitated very easily... I don't think of relationship much these days...go easy... after all that happened... don't know if it was me out of luck or what... we coming out of the same family would have known the importance of independence... I enjoy going around...good food and all that... life is too short... especially after the operation I had back then... I didn't even mind flying to Tokyo to meet a friend for lunch or something if it is a good time... wonder how you guys still have the mind to remember all the old stuff... to me, out of sight, out of mind... once I decided to leave Hong Kong that day, there was no turning back... I don't think about them anymore... once grandma's gone, I had no more burden... nothing to worry anymore... she really loved you though... the best way she knew how... it wouldn't be fair to take her compare with a missing mother, would it? As for pa, don't count on me. I had enough paying my due back then... I tried but had enough... no more. Period. Hmmm. The wine is really good. Must be 1992. Good year for grapes they said... have you seen my son lately? How's he? Hope he's happy. How old is he now? Well, not much luck for his dad and me. Is he still working at the same firm? About time to change his job. Good for him. How long are you going to stay over? You can sleep in my study room... sorry to leave you behind when things happened back then... I was too young to take the*



*responsibility too... mind you, how people thought of me back then? They kept saying I didn't take care of you out there... gotta work... besides, you were old enough to take care of yourself... how old is your son now? Well, do you mind if I have another glass? When's your next production... still writing books and all that? Hmm... (a long sip of wine)... didn't my son call you?*

**Brother No. 3** (he is putting a golf ball on the green...):

*Great weather today. Every Sunday. Don't want to skip my putting exercise. It's my only day off. Eighteen holes. I could spend a day here... golfing is the best way to do business with those corporate guys, you know? Have you seen the new museum? It's my work. I should take you there and have a look. Very good. Another hole down. Good that you stop by. How's life with you? Any new shows? Like those Vegas stuff? Good money? No. Still stick around with your experimental work, eh? Hmm. Good... as long as you enjoy what you do. You know what... it would be our 29<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary this year... she and I would probably travel to Mexico... have you been to Acapulco? She would love it... remember those years we all lived in one single apartment down in Houston? Four people jammed in one single room... ha ha... those were the days indeed... glad we moved out here in California... life surely changed a lot since then... in a couple years, we may sell the house and get a new one... see how the investment goes... I've got all the girls covered... even have my will set by my lawyer just in case... I still work late everyday... well, all tied up with works still... the girls wouldn't like it... but that's life! Right? They would understand in no time... I am working my way to pass all the jobs for the younger professionals... get the firm and executive staff all set and I'd be retiring in a couple of years... once settled, I'd be gone by then... oh, yes, I still drink... mostly wine now... no more hard stuff... too old for that... what, did I get drunk in front of you? What did I say? No, that was all bull shit... too young then and got things in the head sometimes...she and I are fine now...still see her psychiatrist once in a while, but she has been stable... don't worry... we were all too young-headed back then... did she talk to you? I mean my little girl... sometimes don't really know what to do with her... like all teenagers, always trouble... don't know... if she really wants to talk, I am ready... I always do, don't I? I am usually off Sunday... I'd be home after golf... we always have dinner together Sunday evening... or lunch together sometimes...*

*I don't mind the way she dyed the hair or the boy friend... as long as she knows where the bottom line is... basic respect is important... do I sound like pa? I learned my business mostly from Ah Gung (mom's dad)... you know I pretty much grew up there... hey do you remember how we played after the Bruce Li movie... and the chess game... you always lost and yet you kept pushing me for rematches... good training for learning to be a loser, eh? Ha ha... I don't mean... don't we all have to learn and practice how to deal with losing at times in our lives... whether we like it or not... I LOVE winning though... shit, what a miss! You want to try one hole... not that difficult... all covered and already paid for... don't worry... anyway... just enjoy the game...*

**Ex-wife** (a long 15-minute silence. Not a word spoken. Just staring at me, as if looking into a void somewhere).....

**Son** (on the phone while playing an online video game):

*Don't mind her, dad. She wouldn't change... I understand... she's been like that all the years... yes, it was her new family... I dare not tell you back then... afraid you'd get hurt... don't mention it... the job is fine... a job is a job, I guess... I am on my own now... I usually see them once a week as long as I can get out of work... Ah Pau and Ah Gung (his mom's parents) would be moving to a new place... everybody left... they don't need such a big place... they are fine and healthy... hmmm... yes... yes, figure... my girlfriend works at mom's company... she gets pretty upset lately... I don't think she would change... talked to her but she wouldn't listen... you should know how she was... good that you are happy now... still living with your girl friend... good... got your books... thanks... I'd write you or SMS to let you know... if you are interested... good... appreciate it... gotta go now, time to work... see you next time...*

(**Stepsister B.H.**, **Stepbrother R.H.**, and **Stepsister A.H.**, like haunted, are *watching* all the time, as if being cast *in shadow*, looking for every possible opportunity to voice out their needs, waiting for their turn to get into the spotlight...)

#### ***14: A Temporal Conclusion***

The words, fragmented and floating, as they seemed to be, were more than “functional meaning” (Berry, 1987:30); they were something to free the mind into the subtle depth of the thought and emotions beyond, interwoven with historicity, though often false at times, that has been part of the living in me. They were journeys revisiting the particular contact with events and people, allowing the words, and the breath and pauses there along with, to work into the inner self, making an active dialogue with the mind and the body, where the substance of the sounds and energy unveiling meanings of specific contexts may create profound effect on the weight of revised perception. As Berry suggested, the breath *is* the thought. “If we waste the breath, we disperse and generalize the thought; and, conversely, if we hold on to the breath in the same way, we reduce the thought by holding it back and locking it into ourselves. But more important than this, we perceive that how we breathe is how we think; or rather, in acting terms, how the character breathes is how the character thinks. The breath must encompass the thought, no more or less is needed: that is the precise energy of the thought.” (Ibid, 26) It is not the *acting*; it is the breath in captivating the monologues that help crystallizing the thought and emotions under the influence of apparition. It is through the active voice where *synthesis* would take place. Such voice does not have to be through speeches only; it could be transmitted into a piece of object, like the white paper, and the drive, motive and actions unveiled would likewise incorporate specific breath and rhythm of the person involved. It is about the specifics of a single individual, not generalized theorizing through charts of behavior or figures of behavior patterns. The attention on such particularity is necessary if we are to draw out the inner reality often overshadowed by “ghosts” without play.

Such “inner reality,” if carefully observed, has a structure of its own that could review “subject” as intended studied. They could be broken up into related epistemological fragments and analyzed accordingly. But they would remain to be “subjects,” like those indexed in a book, far too distanced from the daily life of ordinary folks:

The “**Synopsis**” could be left unspoken because it is the core of life in the making.

The “**Sources**” are multilayered and texturized through time and space that means only to scientists and philosophers...

The “**Date**” of events, inner or outer, only signifies the particularity in leading off a series of hidden emotions left undeciphered.

The “**Texts**” are musical notes, or signs, that are breathed in and out of the mind and body that constantly struggle in between, as *one* or *two*, or *two* in *one*...

The “**Analysis and Criticism**” is the continuous self-reflections at work, contemplating the possible cognitive and emotional outlet for the next events to come...

The “**Critical history**” is often already in place in the fissure and lobes of our brain and bodily tissues...

The “**Dramatic structure**” is like games in mathematics with images and problems to tackle from daily events of one sphere to another...

The “**Language**” reviewed through narrativity is the breath of emotional pulsation driven by apparition unknown...

The “**Context and Interpretation**” is the expressions in faces activated by spreading activation...

The “**Religious,**” “**Philosophical,**” “**Political,**” “**Psychoanalytic,**” or the “**Feminist**” side effect from “**specialists**” are only distanced “**concepts**” and “**words**” constantly inheriting public influences and historic memories...

The “**Influence**” is the light and sound constantly breaking in and out of the living shelf, fluttering for every possible doorway to the next possible synthesis to come...

The “**Performance History**” is constantly revising with a chain of effects interlined and intertwined, introducing a temporal self in the making...

The “**References**” are the chemical reactions taking place along human civilization, with alchemy beyond words and filings...

When Elizabeth Swados, an American dramatist-composer-writer, recalling the experience of working on the youth musical *Runaways*<sup>54</sup> in 1978, she said, “There was an energy, a courage, an honesty in the kids that would constantly challenge my more clichéd artistic notions. Their way of speaking, their rhythms, the look in their eyes; they influenced me. I could not have done it without them. A lot of what I wanted to write was in my head, but much of it came from workshops. I would ask them questions and they would tell me stories. I would sit for hours thinking what would be exactly the right questions that would help me write. They could lie, or they could tell the truth. I would watch them, feel the pressures on them, become concerned about them. Then I would go off, and suddenly there would be a song — just from having been with them. I would combine my own artistic sensibilities with the truth of their emotions.”<sup>55</sup> To Swados, the arts had played a very important part of her life, especially with the “horrible childhood” she encountered. She saw theatre arts’ “healing force,” “not by making everything all right,” but “make them feel alive again. And just by doing that - taking the dullness, the sullenness out of everyday life – you’re making a point that life is worth it, and that’s very important.” (Swados, 2005)

Like the ways she did in *Runaways* (1978) with “To The Dead of Family Wars,” it was an example of apparition-synthesis at work, casting away the “ghosts” of the “world of runaways” as conceived through stereotypes. Through working with adolescents,

listening to their stories and playing with them through improvisations, she came up with such a lyrical poem that best summed up the work of “ghosts play”:

To boys and girls whose mothers' and fathers'  
Minds took long walks down late night hall,  
To boys and girls who in baby dreams,  
Saw mothers and fathers scraping the strength off selves,  
Like bark off trees.  
To boys and girls whose mothers and fathers put them to sleep,  
Not with good night eyes,  
But goodbye.  
To boys and girls who saw their mothers' and fathers' lives spread out,  
Like caged bird wings.  
To boys and girls whose mothers and fathers would,  
One minute give a chance,  
And the next close it up like  
Fat cardboard books.  
To boys and girls who grew slim and adolescent  
While mothers and fathers swelled with  
Middle aged wool.  
When mothers and fathers stared blankly,  
When mothers and fathers started screaming lines from old movies.  
To boys and girls whose mothers and fathers drunkenly wished  
For an incredible lie  
Worth-keeping.  
To boys and girls who now weep,  
Because you wished you'd met  
Your mother's or father's shadow  
On a dark talk porch,  
In dream rockers.  
I say,  
Make laws against regret,  
Otherwise you'd have to start with Adam and Eve.

The line is long and waiting.  
They were unsavable by you.  
They were unseen by their own parents themselves.  
It is so long this song and so yearning...  
To boys and girls too young to know,  
When eyes are cold and scared.  
To boys and girls who in baby memories  
Remember a squeeze to stop crying  
So violent that it could not  
Have meant  
Anything but violence.  
To boys and girls who in their adolescent sneak  
Downstairs disturbingly found  
A mother and father coiled in a chair,  
Locked in consequence.  
I say,  
There is so much mother pull,  
There is so much father pull,  
And so little human decency.  
To boys and girls who read half done mother and father war letters,  
And watch the gardens overgrow  
With weeds.  
To boys and girls half secret with womanhood and manhood,  
Who have to pry open too soon,  
Because mothers and fathers die or kill themselves  
According to the law of angry random  
Grown up Gods.  
To boys and girls sweeping, now half man, half woman.

Because you wished you'd got your parents signature,  
On a definite night on a talk porch,  
In dream chairs holding family hands,  
Talking love words.  
I say,

Make laws against regret.  
Otherwise, you'd have to start with Adam and Eve,  
And the line waits endlessly,  
And the song is so long and so yearning.  
(Swados, 1978:67-69)

Maybe we are each our own *secret artist* of apparitional nature, like Freud as suggested by Lesley Chamberlain in her book, making efforts to interpret our own dreams and historicity we could not help revealing at times. Chamberlain specially cited Freud, "... the actual pleasure of a work of art consists in a release of tensions which take place in our soul. Perhaps no small contribution to this success is that the writer puts us in a position henceforth to enjoy our own *phantasies* without the least reproach or shame." (Chamberlain, 2000:34) The voices I re-installed in the impersonating exercises could be *unconscious* memory of my own invention; they could be viewed as "past perceptions get stored as part of the mental equipment for the future." (Ibid, 238) According to Chamberlain's interpretation of Freud, the artist in me could be "neurotic" so to speak but it could often be the *artist* in me that, as "a fortunate psychological constitution," I managed to *unpack* my soul, with a ready imagination for the eventually psychic health (Ibid, 35). The very act of transforming repressed memory into a series of art-in-action, is something not only confined to the realm of linguistic, be it implying usage or taboo, or of semantic ambivalence and pathology as suggested by George Steiner (1973:115). The multiple representations behind such art-in-actions do consist of multiplicity of meanings, with specific individual context non-substitutable, that link up with consciousness ever-broiling in



everyday living, forever ready to be re-shaped in size, color and content, under the influence of specific apparitional synthesis.

While the act of story-telling, or more precise, art-in-action, is often being viewed as a form of “therapeutic action” or “treatment” on “clients,” “patients” or “students” who seek “alternative help” in adjusting their body-mind under apparitional influence, I see it as **a platform for self-empowerment through re-narrativity, not only through speech acts, but also through interpretive actions corresponding to specific tools in the arts each selected to perform their story-telling. The performance is not intervention but a process of self-contemplation on specific problems or daily life situation. It is not “self-hypnosis” but rather a constructive framework to build up alternatives for self-referencing.** It is NOT therapeutic but **something to facilitate better communication with the self and the community over living resources and materials undigested.** It is not any kind of “inpatient treatment” or “outpatient psychiatric treatment” but rather **a self-initiated “detoxification” on the accumulated and clotted up mental energy, seeking alternative outlet for the mind and body to develop perspectives often dismissed by stereotypical or habitual thinking.** In the process of active engagement in *speech act through the arts*, say the monologues I created for myself through impersonating family members, critical self evaluation is important and **it is often through a series of creativity which allows the self to look into the space, the breath, the color, the texture, the form, the style, the tonality, the patterns, the structure, etc. to take shape, allowing any emergence of alternative insight or act of intuition to create visible links for those easily dismissed and once made invisible. It is to break open the**

**myth of creativity and to allow ordinary folks to enjoy re-making, re-constructing, re-fixing, re-mounting, re-processing, re-taking, and re-energizing any potential apparitional jargons under influence. It isn't creativity out of nothing. It is to allow the body-mind reopen for living and natural synthesis to take place through play.** It would take more, or less, than 14 parts to touch base with the hidden consciousness of combined ideas and circumstances, especially those apparitional driven. It would take something beyond Poincare's four phases of creativity (Boden, 2004:29), i.e. *preparation, incubation, illumination, and verification*, to reach the *subliminal* self where often seats the ability to discern, to choose, to divine, to create alternatives for the conscious self under influence, envisioning "the tongue" in the skull that did sing once. Like a vaudeville hero, one never gives up in spite of losing his cane; one will always create "a new cane, a new rendezvous, and a new beauty to captivate his heart." (Gorchakov, 1985:221)

## Appendix 1

**The Ho Family Temporal Archive as sketched on February 20-22, 2008 with a lot of to-be-verified holes for imagination, and with italics of *personal selective memory profile* in square bracket:**

**Grandpa** (*ah yeh*): Born in China (very likely in Guangdong Province) at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> Century; died in Hong Kong in his 80's; probably the eldest son to his father with unknown number of brothers and sisters (I only knew two of them); a Chinese Olive shop owner who had lost his business due to social and political upheavals and war; moved from Guangzhou to Hong Kong to live with his son in 1950's when the situation was getting really bad; baptized a few days before he died, an effort my stepmother No.1 was so proud of for getting him buried in a Catholic cemetery in Cheung Sha Wan District in Kowloon of Hong Kong...

**Grandma No. 1** (*dai mah*): Name, unknown; deceased in 1963 in Guangzhou; broke and without anyone attended her funeral; had six daughters but no son; two of the daughters later emigrated, one to Malaysia and one to London...

**Grandma No. 2** (*ye mah*): Name, unknown; deceased (I was told she was burnt to death due to a fire caused by the spilling of an oil lamp)

**Grandma No. 3** (*ah mah*): Born in Shun Duc of Guangdong, China; once the maiden of dowry to the first wife of my grandpa and later married as a concubine upon my grandpa's sought advice from a fortune teller, a housewife who brought the Ho family a son, i.e. my father; moved to Hong Kong in 1960's; had been living with my father all the years, except the few years of disappearance in 1970's and ever since she broke her hip from falling; lived in the elderly home the last few years of her life; deceased in her 80's

**Dad** (*ba ba*): Born in China (possibly in Nan Hoi of Guangdong Province) in 1923; the only son to my grandfather; had to drop school because of war; with an education reached secondary school level 1 or 2; arrived Hong Kong around 1949; a driving instructor who had failed to change his profession several times back in 1960's; married 4 times (one unverified) and had 7 known children out of 3 different

marriages (could be the third marriage that was never verified, neither the bearing of children from that relationship); he was once responsible for a household of nine members; now he is living with “stepmother No. 4” and their daughter; he just had an operation on his stomach and been recovering very well; now in his late 80’s...

**Mom** (*ma mi*): Probably born in Hong Kong in 1928 (with the date only verified two years after this paper was finished); the first daughter of a fabric factory owner living in Shum Shui Po; before marrying to my father, she was once arranged to marry a neighbor living upstairs at the order of her mother for economic reasons when her father left home with his lover, a factory worker at her father’s whom later became grandma No. 5; she had a daughter and a son in her first marriage, both left tendering by the first husband’s brother in Guangdong; had a sister and a brother, all from the same mother, i.e. grandma No. 2 (his father had four marriages, including three concubines); had no stepbrothers or stepsisters; her family was upper middle class and fairly well off by the standard back in 1950’s; Deceased in her late 20’s (later verified as 29 at time of death), in Kwong Wah Hospital of Hong Kong in 1957 due to severe fatigue (that was the rumor but later verified that the cause of death was due to over-bleeding) after childbirth...

**Stepmother No. 1** (*qi ga*): Born in Guangzhou; the fifth daughter of a well off electrician whom got killed in the Cultural Revolution with his wife; a hometown girl brought up in Guangzhou; her father was a good friend of my grandfather; she arrived Hong Kong in 1950; a barber before marrying my father, a profession that had also helped her raise two children after divorce; became a Catholic, probably for the “goodies” available to be religious in those days, when many parts of the poor relied a great deal on charity from the Catholic Church; bore her first born, a daughter, at the age of 27 and the second one, a son, 22 months later; the children were only 6 and 4 at the time of her divorce; now in her early 70’s enjoying her retirement with her granddaughter, the girl from her daughter’s second marriage

**Stepmother No. 2**: unknown and unverified; she was the reason that my father left the family for four years during our adolescent period

**Stepmother No. 3** (*ah ye*): Place of birth unknown; in her late 50's; a housewife; come from a troubled family; possibly another "victim" of marriage out of economic convenience.

**Stepsister K.C.:** Born in Hong Kong in 1945; Daughter of my mom at her first marriage; her father was an active "businessman" between Guangzhou and Hong Kong; was abandoned in the Mainland at the grandparent's at approximately two of age and nobody knew the reasons behind; her name was given by her grandfather; finished primary school and worked in the field thereafter; illegally smuggled to Hong Kong in mid-1970's; found her way to meet my mother's younger brother, and eventually me, in mid-1980's; married a man who visited the village back in the Mainland and later divorced for having lost communication; with a son now in USA and a daughter in Australia; she's at present in her early 60's.

**Son:** Born and grew up in the Mainland; married in Guangzhou and later immigrated to New York; he should be in his late 30's now; he has a son.

**Daughter:** Born in the Mainland and later married to a Vietnamese in Sydney, Australia; she has two children, a son and a daughter, all born in Australia; should be in her late 30's now (later divorced in 2009).

**Stepbrother K.L.:** Son of my mom at her first marriage; born in 1946 in Hong Kong; was abandoned in the Mainland at the grandparent's at age one; barely finished primary education and could not go on due to poverty; illegally smuggled to Hong Kong through Lo Wu in the mid-1970's; get married through a matchmaker in Hong Kong and they have a daughter; a laundryman in his early 60's

**Wife:** Born in the Mainland and got married in Hong Kong; a housewife.

**Daughter:** Recently graduated in an Australian University and is working as an accountant; she is in her mid-20's.

**Brother No. 1** (*dai guo*): Born in 1950 in Hong Kong; moved around a lot during childhood and adolescent period; stayed mostly at relative's, either at grandparent's (mom's side) or at a distant cousin's when being expelled from home; Had been working as a salesman (electric appliances), private tutor and a teacher before studying

abroad in USA; Worked in restaurants and sold bibles in South Carolina during college years; finished his professional studies in USA and decided to stay in the country after marrying a young Japanese-American girl in late 1970's; they have a son and a daughter; after married, once a part-time handyman for the apartment complex owned by his father-in-law; a chemical engineer by profession; always a well-planned family man; he has his own house and knows how to prepare things for his children, wife and their retirement; he was the only one who did actually visit the "family place used to be" back in Guangzhou; had worked in China for 3 years as an expatriate between end of 1990's and early 2000's; he now works in Denver

**Wife:** a housewife and a language teacher in her 40's, Japanese American; she was 19 when marrying my brother.

**Daughter:** married to an American; at present an English language teacher in Japan in her late 20's.

**Son:** a US naval officer in his 20's.

**Sister No. 2** (*ye ga tse*): Born in 1951; a computer programmer; finished her professional diploma in Hong Kong; first married in late 1970's with a secondary school buddy and had a son; divorced in 1981 and then emigrated to Canada with her second husband; she moved to USA after her second divorce; she now works in Seattle

**Son:** Born in late 1970's; graduated in a Hong Kong based University; he is now a land surveyor.

**Brother No. 3** (*sam guo*): Born in 1954; grown up in grandparent's (my mother's side); a civil engineer graduated in the USA; Left Hong Kong in 1975; married his secondary school lover in 1979 and had two daughters; decided to permanently stay in USA after college; he is now the vice-president of a civil engineering firm in Los Angeles.

**Wife:** a Macau born Chinese; the ninth daughter of a big family; finished her Art degree in USA and has been a businesswoman since then.

**Daughters:** one in College and one still in junior high, both born in USA.

**Me** (No. 4): Born in 1957 with mother died the following hour after giving birth; Left home at age of 15; married a 16 year old girl for her pregnancy at the age of 18 in

1976; they had a son; graduated in drama in an university in Texas, USA, where he re-visited for a second degree; divorced in mid-1980's; worked in Canada for a year and a half; a free-lance teacher and theater practitioner the past 20 years; founder of two theatre companies, one with partnership in 1993 (run only for 3 years) and another one in 1996; the latter still operating till now (later closed down in 2010).

**Son:** Born in 1976; finished his University degree in USA; now a television producer for a TV company; he's in his early 30's.

**Stepsister No. 5:** Born in 1963. Daughter of Stepmother No. 1; Grew up in rough neighborhood at age of 6 with stepmother No. 1 and a brother; Later studied in the USA and earned her B.Arch. and M.Arch. Degrees over there; now works professionally as an architect; once worked in USA and had her first marriage with an American college buddy in late 1980's; came back to work in Hong Kong after her divorce; later married an architecture professor at end of 1990's; moved to Singapore for several years and moved back to Hong Kong 2 years ago; she had a daughter; recently founded her own architecture firm in Hong Kong. (They were divorced in 2009).

**(Ex-)Husband:** Born in China and graduated in a prestigious Chinese University in Beijing; left China in 1970's and studied in London; Earned his Doctorate degree in Architecture; Now a professor in one of the Hong Kong Universities.

**Daughter:** Born in Hong Kong and grew up in Singapore; moved back to Hong Kong at age of 5; now she is 7.

**Stepbrother No. 6:** Born in 1965; son of stepmother no. 1; a self-educated computer engineer; never finished secondary school; finished his vocational training in automobile; founded his own computer company in his 20's; finished his Bachelor degree in his 30's and later a second degree in Physics and computer sciences; married and have no children. (They were divorced in 2009).

**Wife:** a professional in social health industry; in her late 30's to early 40's

**Stepsister No. 7:** daughter of stepmother no. 3; a structural engineer; graduated in one of the Hong Kong Universities; still single and she is in her late 20's.

## NOTES for CHAPTER TWO:

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- <sup>1</sup> *Adaptations, Theatre and Culture* is a course I have been teaching for the past 4 years for the Department of Cultural Studies and Cultural Management at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. I have been adopting the lecture + workshop mode of creative teaching for the course in which blogging, play, artwork, videography, scene work, discussion are all integral parts of the class. All works explored by class participants would be formulated as the core of learning where open dialogues among all would be stressed through their corresponding works.
- <sup>2</sup> In respect to the privacy of all people who once contributed to my research through daily encounters, classes, workshops and colleagues involved, all names depicted would be pseudonymous by nature unless upon specific request from those who prefer sticking to their real names.
- <sup>3</sup> I remembered standing in the middle of the archaeological site as if spellbound, totally consumed by my own imagination of the sudden connections with people once lived 3000 to 2000 BC. Tears helplessly flew off my eyelids at the thought of the volcanic eruption, estimated “one of the largest the planet has ever seen” according to the Wikipedia record, once taken place. I saw the “ghosts” in me.
- <sup>4</sup> It was a place so-named by my stepmother. Sounded like some place fictional. It was never verified, neither in the map or precisely located by anyone.
- <sup>5</sup> *The Naked Eyes* (尋人的眼睛) was a creative collaboration between Poon Wai-sum and Hoyingfung, the former responsible for the playwriting and the latter directing and designing for the production. It was produced by Hong Kong Repertory Theatre in 2000, part of the 2000 Hong Kong Arts Festival program. The performance opened on March 19, 2000 at City Hall Theatre. *The Seventh Drawer* was yet another journey into the heart of family right after this production. It could be seen as the “sequel,” or another perspective, to *The Naked Eyes*.
- <sup>6</sup> *The Devil Tree* was a novel written by Polish novelist, Jerzy Kosinski; Bantam Book published it in 1973. The novel began with a short native folk tale on what means by “the devil tree”: “The native calls the baobab “the devil tree” because he claims that the devil, getting tangled in its branches, punished the tree by reversing it. To the native, the roots are branches now, and the branches are roots. To ensure that there would be no more baobabs, the devil destroyed all the young ones. That is why, the native says, there are only full-grown baobab trees left.” During my college years in Houston, Kosinski was one of my favorite writers back then. It probably had a lot to do with his soul searching back into the history of human made ruins.
- <sup>7</sup> To a boy growing up in Hong Kong, especially back in the 1960’s and early 1970’s, anywhere north of Lo Wu border would be viewed as “northern part.” That was the pathetic “nation view” back then.
- <sup>8</sup> For some reasons, I had deliberately disguised the family name for any potential unwanted-disapproval from family members still living.
- <sup>9</sup> This vow was true and had been significant to the later journey of my grandmother.
- <sup>10</sup> Being the only biological son to my grandfather and was born upon the matchmaking of a soothsayer, it had dramatically affected my father’s upbringing. To my grandfather, having a son at old age meant a lot to him back then. As for my grandmother, her fate had also literally changed from being the maid of my grandfather’s first wife to the prestigious woman of the family for giving the Ho family a son.



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- <sup>11</sup> When I was young, I heard of stories from these relatives who left home to work overseas. “The West” ended up not altogether true. Other than one managed to arrive London. Some actually landed in Singapore and Vietnam. All ended up being manual labor for landlords or restaurants.
- <sup>12</sup> It is a dramatic double play: using my own imagination of my *tragic* birth to replace the importance of my father’s birth to my grannies.
- <sup>13</sup> My grandfather had basically lost everything due to the never-ending wars going on in the Mainland, from civil war of Kuomintang and the Communist Party to the Japanese invasion, from the terrible inflation to the Cultural Revolution. They all ended up living in a small tiny flat in the back of a dye shop in Shumshuipo of Kowloon, Hong Kong before moving to public housing in 1963.
- <sup>14</sup> To me, depicting this special day of the historical May Fourth Movement as the birthday of my father was simply due to the fact that he grew up under the influence of that particular era. He had not only witnessed the eventual social changes taken place thereafter; his life did take on major blows from these political and social upheavals as a common man.
- <sup>15</sup> This had once been my own secret wish, speculating that if it were not me, my brothers and sister would not have lost a mother once so dear to them.
- <sup>16</sup> My grandmother was all alone since married to my grandfather, except one distant relative, a nephew whom she used to love and visit, ended up lost and completely cut off from any form of communication due to her husband’s political background, i.e. being a “leftist,” the big follower of Chairman Mao back in the 1960’s. Since then, my grandmother rarely said a word about her relatives other than her sister working over in Singapore and a brother paid her visit only once a year.
- <sup>17</sup> My eldest brother’s American father-in-law is obsessed with his searching through the family tree, tracing back all the way to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century Scotland. It made me imagine the ancestral line of my own family. While many would keep talking about their family line down the road, it was rarely possible for any of us to do the same in Hong Kong, a land that is totally detached from the root of the Mainland. As someone would say: we are only half Chinese, half British, a fifty-fifty kind of people that lacks originality.
- <sup>18</sup> I was told that my grandfather used to be a man of honor and fairly well off. My stepmother yet told me a different story. So nothing can be truly verified regarding my grandfather’s past. I used to overhear my father telling my big brother about some notes recording some family remedy for particular disease, which did make my grandfather a respectable man for using it to help other people back then.
- <sup>19</sup> Interestingly enough, five of us, brothers and sisters, ended up studying abroad. Three decided to settle in USA. Two came back; leaving behind a bag of old family business stagnated and turned rotten, including those of my grandmother’s and my father’s. While the former died of loneliness, the latter gets trapped into another marriage totally alien to the rest.
- <sup>20</sup> The section cited was directly transcribed from the performance text of *The Seventh Drawer* used for Toy Factory Theatre Company’s premiere performance of the play in Singapore, 2002. It was a dramatic piece I wrote in Spain back in 2001.
- <sup>21</sup> I literally grew up with the cinema of Francois Truffaut. His works had great influence on my later work, not in term of style, but on the semi-autobiographical nature and the belief in authorship. He was one of the few directors whose works I never missed.

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- <sup>22</sup> With the exception that it was to me a rather delayed drive of reflection: I did that in my 40's and Truffaut did that in his 20's! Yet the cinema had great affect on me throughout my life. I looked at the world through the camera vision and editing room logic ever since I began hiding in the cinema as young as twelve and thirteen, the age when I began running away from school and home, like the character Antoine in *The 400 blows*. Between the ages of 15 to 25, I averagely saw one film a day. I could see three movies a day at times and spend all my pocket money and lunch expenses on film. I worked in theatre with a set of cinematic vision, with a mind quite different from conventional theatre practices.
- <sup>23</sup> When I was young, nobody would pay too much attention to how I felt. It could be based on the fact that I had been the invisible for too long, both in school and in the family. And I enjoyed being invisible so as to have freedom to do whatever I could imagine. It was the way to survive: the secrete *code* of silence (something quite different from the "culture of silence" I detested at later years.)
- <sup>24</sup> I guess the handover of Hong Kong back to China had triggered a deeper sense of reflection in me by drawing a family story along side with the social and political changes taken place throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, something that also parallel the rise of the present ruling party in China. To many historians, May 4<sup>th</sup> still signifies the beginning of "modern" China.
- <sup>25</sup> My stepmother's parents were burnt to death in the Cultural Revolution. They had literally lost everything. My stepmother used to say, "My dad and mom didn't have anything left back then. Not one of us got a chance to see them off. Only wrapped naked in a piece of broken rattan and burnt to ashes for charges of being landlords of bourgeois bearings."
- <sup>26</sup> This is excerpted from the ending of the prologue for *The Seventh Drawer*. The Chinese music theatre version was different. The poem was transformed into a song called "*Burning!*"
- <sup>27</sup> In 2007, I had written a play called *The Crossing/Painting Silence*. In witnessing the massive self censorship among all governing sectors, including teachers, social workers, and journalists, since the handover of Hong Kong from July 1997 onward, I saw it as a picture of "painting silence," accomplished not by several individuals, but rather some collective subconsciousness, self-initiating the silencing sentiment among the public, all in the name of a better economic environment. The play was inspired by the imprisonment of dissident journalist Ching Cheung for committing "treason" by writing an article that shouldn't be published. The production was produced by *Theatre Fanatico* and opened on December 6, 2007 at the CA Halls of Shatin Town Hall.
- <sup>28</sup> Clare O'Farrell had cited from one of Foucault's interview in her book *Michel Foucault* (Sage Publications 2005) in explaining how he felt an outsider after the awakening of his sexuality, "Very quickly, it was transformed into a kind of psychiatric threat: if you are not like everyone else, then you are abnormal, you are sick." P.20
- <sup>29</sup> Marjori A. Matzke and Antonius J.M. Matzke's article *Planting the Seeds of a New Paradigm* (2004) explained, "By identifying small RNAs as agents of gene silencing that act at multiple levels throughout the cell, molecular biologists have created a new paradigm for eukaryotic gene regulation. Plant scientists have figured prominently in RNA-mediated silencing research. Instrumental to their success was the early ability to produce large numbers of transgenic plants, which displayed a rich variety of gene silencing phenomena that were amenable to analysis."
- <sup>30</sup> Francis Fukuyama wrote a book called *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* in 2002 (Picador) arguing that "as a result of biomedical advances, we are facing the possibility of a future in which our humanity itself will be altered beyond recognition.

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- <sup>31</sup> They are randomly selected samples of white paper exercise executed by students in seminars I held for Dr. Ho Kwok Leung's class on *Contemporary Social Issues*, held at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University between 2004 and 2008.
- <sup>32</sup> The lines are excerpts from Walt Whitman's *I Sing the Body Electric*, line 5 to 10. Selected from poem collection *Leaves of Grass*. 1900.
- <sup>33</sup> It is excerpted from *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* entry on "Speech Acts," written by Kent Bach. I put in the square brackets to emphasize the nature of actions changed in my workshop.
- <sup>34</sup> It was excerpted from American performing arts theorist and practitioner Petra Kupperts's hypertext poem *Traces of a Performance*, one of the theory articles for sound/text. URL site: [<http://www.heelstone.com/meridian/theory2.html>]. Retrieved on February 12, 2007.
- <sup>35</sup> Same as above. URL site: [<http://www.heelstone.com/meridian/petra/page3.html>]
- <sup>36</sup> *Fiat* was a small French made car owned by my father. He was a driving instructor. The third-hand car represented the family food line. It was quite a journey to stuff 6 people in a small car. Being the youngest at times, I was often placed under the passenger seat compartment to avoid the police when the car was overcrowded.
- <sup>37</sup> The first reunion was held in Los Angeles. It was the wedding of my younger stepbrother. We are altogether nine brothers and sisters, including the stepbrothers and stepsisters both from my father's side and my mother's, where the latter were re-connected in 1976. For us all to meet together was (and still is) difficult since we all have very much been living separately ever since childhood. The first reunion managed to gather six of us, without the presence of our father or stepmothers. The second one was the first time literally everyone of the family got together on separate occasions as arranged by my eldest brother.
- <sup>38</sup> I once produced a stage reading of the screenplay, *My Dinner with Andre*, of Wallace Shawn and Andre Gregory for *Theatre Resolu* (1993-1995), the theatre company I co-founded back then with Tang Shu Wing, at the McCauley Theatre of the Hong Kong Arts Centre. It was a film produced by French director Louis Malle in 1981. As the book proclaimed, it was a conversation that revealed "a sensitive portrait of a friendship that survives and transcends contrasting assumptions about love, death, art, and man's continuing quest for self-fulfillment." Evergreen Book published the screenplay in 1981.
- <sup>39</sup> Derrida, Jacques. "La Parjure," Perhaps: Storytelling and Lying ("abrupt breaches of syntax"). In: Chapter 13. *Acts of Narrative*. Carol Jacobs and Henry Sussman. Eds. Stanford University Press. 2003.
- <sup>40</sup> As my brother is a chemical engineer, learning a little how chemists see things would be quite inspiring and provide me an alternative perspectives in the logic my brother has accumulated in mind. Most of the sourcing regarding the meaning of these chemical actions is from Wikipedia: [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molecular\\_self\\_assembly](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Molecular_self_assembly)]. Retrieved on February 16, 2007. With the easy access to information, it is also an attempt to suggest how different the "postmodern" mind works in comparing to the preceding eras.
- <sup>41</sup> Primo Levi (1919-1987), a Jewish-Italian chemist and writer, once published a collection of short stories about his life, including two written before his time in Auschwitz, entitled *The Periodic Table* (Penguin Classics, 1975), all related in some way to chemical elements as listed in the table.
- <sup>42</sup> John P. Pratt designed Periodic Table Memory Pegs in 1997. He depicts simple colorful icon from daily living to associate with the chemical element's name, atomic number and abbreviation.

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URL source: [<http://www.johnpratt.com/atomic/periodic.html>] Retrieved on February 25, 2007.

<sup>43</sup> It was based on the email reply of B.H. made on the same day, with time specified: Wed, 13 Feb 2008 23:45:28 +0800.

<sup>44</sup> Excerpted from William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Act V, scene v.

<sup>45</sup> It was based on materials translated from a paper I wrote back in 2004 namely "I am writing about my body; and my body is writing about me (translation)," with original Chinese title: 身體在寫我在寫身體. It was to fulfill the course requirement of *Graduate Seminar on Research Methodology* conducted by Dr. Ben Ku of the department of Applied Social Sciences in the Hong Kong Polytechnics University. Pp.19-20. Here below is a translated version from the original Chinese article:

*Wouldn't the pubic hair of grandpa (my father's dad) always grey in color?*

*It's a pity that grandma's pubic hair never got the needed attention (as for the other grandmas, how would I possibly know since I hadn't seen them at all).*

*Wouldn't the pubic hair of grandpa (my mother's father) fill with pride?*

*The pubic hair of another grandma (my mother's mom) might not exist anymore due to the infection of intestinal cancer!*

*Don't know if my dad combed his pubic hair everyday the way he combed his hair.*

*Would my mom's pubic hair still remain intact under the earth at Wo Hop Shek?*

*My stepmother's pubic hair must be stiff and strong like the way she lives her life.*

*(I wouldn't know much about the nature of other "stepmothers" since it had been such a mess regarding their relationship with my dad.)*

*My eldest brother's pubic hair could be part of the chemical substances to be tested in his laboratory.*

*(His wife's pubic hair, though Japanese-American by nature, would only remain the subject for her husband only.)*

*(The pubic hair of my nieces, i.e. their son and daughter, should be all-American in flavor; all subject for future cultural excursion of a different kind.)*

*Wouldn't my eldest sister's pubic hair be as clean as the dustless floor of her house, all sanitized?*

*(The pubic hair of her ex-husbands would leave no traces ever since their disappearance after divorce.)*

*(I dare not talk about her son's pubic hair since it might affect his search in the bountiful future to come.)*

*My second brother's pubic hair should be left deserted over a building site around Los Angeles.*

*(His wife's pubic hair should be a non-trespassing territory, depending on the emotional wavelength of the day.)*

*(One shouldn't talk about their daughter's pubic hair since they were still too young to temper with.)*

*Shouldn't my younger stepsister's pubic hair be very inspired by now in seeking further promotion on the ladder of social climbing?*

*Her husband's pubic hair should be very scholarly and shouldn't weigh lightly with words (though not sure of her ex-husband's).*

*Wouldn't my younger stepbrother's pubic hair be already taken for computerized genetic analysis to prepare for future reproduction?*

*Couldn't his wife's pubic hair be used as monitoring antennas for mental patients?)*

*The pubic hair of my youngest stepsister should be unimaginable since we're still pretty much strangers to one another.*

*It has been fortunate that my pubic hair is still around but god knows how long it would last.*

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*(I would talk no more of my ex-wife's pubic hair since we have already been separated for over 20 years.)  
I simply wish my son's pubic hair wouldn't like mine and airy enough to breathe some fresh air.  
And those of my eldest stepsister's and stepbrother's, which I knew of barely since their return from the Mainland 30 years ago, should find life pre-deterministic that filled with bruises and tumors.*

<sup>46</sup> The film was made into a single shot of ascending image, capturing people from all walks of life descending from an escalator, all disappearing into “a shadowy abyss.”

<sup>47</sup> Excerpted from URL site: [<http://www.canyoncinema.com/L/Lawder.html>]. Retrieved on June 1, 2007.

<sup>48</sup> These are only the beginning pseudo characters with faked name along the lengthy list of credits. I believe it was part of the artistic intention of Standish Lawder to arouse our attention to the morbid urban life as studied at Grand Central Station of New York and most of all, the fate that leaves us all back to the abyss *unnamable*, as suggested in Samuel Beckett's novel *The Unnamable*.

<sup>49</sup> It is the English translated title of Swedish filmmaker Lukas Moodysson's 1997 short feature originally titled *Bara Prata Lite*. It was a story exploring the loneliness of a retired automobile factory worker who simply tries to make some contact with another human being. (14 min., language: Swedish, Color, Dolby, Film i Väst production.)

<sup>50</sup> Roy Andersson is a Swedish film director. His highly stylish film *Songs from the Second Floor* (2000) had left a strong impression on me, especially its powerfully portrayal of how people lost in a spiritually bankrupt world that is materially exhausted.

<sup>51</sup> Excerpted from URL site: [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yan%27an\\_Rectification\\_Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yan%27an_Rectification_Movement)]. Retrieved on June 5, 2007.

<sup>52</sup> It is the name of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's 2003 novel. *Living to tell tales* was a poetic autobiographical novel of the author's early life. It is a “fiction of non-fiction,” setting out to reexamine the living experience through creative actions.

<sup>53</sup> Hill's ABCX family crisis model was one of the earliest conceptual foundations of research on family crisis. The model stated that: A (the stressor event) – interacting with B (the family's crisis meeting resources) – interacting with C (the definition the family makes of the event) – produce X (the crisis).

<sup>54</sup> I had performed in the *Runaways* produced by the Drama department of University of Houston back in 1979. I played Chino. The experience had very deep influence in my later works with teenagers.

<sup>55</sup> Excerpted from “*The Gathering of Runaways*” by Elizabeth Swados at URL site: [[http://www.nodanw.com/shows\\_r/runaways\\_swados.htm](http://www.nodanw.com/shows_r/runaways_swados.htm)] Retrieved on June 20, 2007.

## DreamWorks

(or *Beyond the Crest of Daily Dreamscape and its Timely Effect*)

Buzz. Buzz.

But I, entelechy, form of forms, am I by memory because under  
everchanging forms.

I that sinned and prayed and fasted.

A child Conmee saved from pandies.

I, I and I. I.

A. E. I. O. U.

— *Ulysses*, James Joyce

**Trigorin:** I shall think of you. I shall think of you as you were on that  
lovely day — you remember? A week ago, you were wearing a light  
dress... we talked... and on the bench there lay a white sea gull.

**Nina:** (Thoughtfully.) Yes, a sea gull...

— *The Sea Gull*, Anton Chekhov

### *Dream & Size 1: A room with a View*

“A cow. I looked through the cow’s eyes. Things look dichromatic. I BECAME the  
cow! Standing alone in a ‘waiting’ room. There’s a bathtub. Filled with water. In front  
of ME, an observation window. Someone was watching. Behind that SOMEONE  
stood a huge billboard: ‘Cows are Sacred! No slaughtering!’ The Man. In sun glasses.  
Drinking milk. Do not know if it was from ME. A trough of grain is placed in front of  
ME. I am standing on a weight scale. A hose of multiple faucets is hooked up to my  
BODY, milking, AS IF FOR THE LAST TIME. The meter on the hose was flicking.  
Always flicking. If not, another trough of grain would be placed in front of ME. The

person watching is looking at his watch. SECONDS TICKING AWAY. He then looked at the meters of the hose and the scale. An alarm bell rang. Some people in white walked in and took EVERYTHING away. Only ME left standing. ALONE! Suddenly out of the blue, I was electrocuted... then another ME and another ME waiting in line outside for turn to get inside... ”

This was the “dream” I had while reading Václav Havel’s No.118 letter to his wife Olga<sup>1</sup>, dated March 6, 1982 when Havel, the former Czechoslovakia dissident playwright turned president, was still in prison. He wrote (he was allowed writing to his wife once a week throughout his sentence), “Not long ago, while watching a report on cows on the television news, I realized that the cow is no longer an animal: it is a machine that has an ‘input’ (grain feeds) and an ‘output’ (milk). It has its own production plans and its own operator whose job is the same as the job of the entire economy today: to increase output while decreasing input. The cow serves us quite efficiently, really, but at the cost of no longer being a cow... ” (Havel, 1988:293)

Was it I, or Havel, or the cow, trying to grasp the sense of being in a world gone foul? I am writing in a room with no view (since all windows are shut to keep my cats IN), attempting to make connection with the world OUTside. Havel was in a prison cell, also a “room with *no* view,” writing to create *room* for the need of self-manifestation. The cow, as dreamt, an image transferred from those Havel witnessed on TV news, gets stuck with this human devices as imagined (or particularly designed). My dream could be an intellectual, or even “spiritual,” attempt to deepen the sensitivity conveyed by Havel’s writing. Yet the cow, the “dream product,” could be meaningless (if only if

I may declare here that I am indeed *not*, cold-bloodedly as it may seem, writing on behalf of the suffering of the cow). The rearrangement of matter was simply an act of intention to expand the meaning of reading through “intervention.” What have I truly gained in the process? Surely it will not be the cow (unless the dream becomes, miraculously speaking, a sermon, a ritual, or an act to illicit cow slaughtering in the future). Surely no longer Havel’s (since he had already made his own revelation through the act of writing and eventually the action to participate in his country’s politics)! Would it not be only ME possibly to benefit from the “dream,” if the “benefactor” means only to gain the autonomy as a creative being (since I cannot possibly imagine that a “dream” of such nature would trigger any changes in the slaughtering nature of human being)?

Looking into the dream, the “size” and “distance” of the view in (and outside) me would be difficult to scale. It would not be anything like the experience of looking at a Barnett Newman painting, say *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*<sup>2</sup>, and **scale** oneself, as suggested by Peter de Bolla, through the act of witnessing the work (2001:51). Yet **a dream is never like a canvas with a proposed space to convey the picture-viewing mechanism. There are no “negotiation” of “space,” “size,” or “distance” involved. The only “negotiation” is with the dream self at work. The only “space” is those as self-identifiable among the flying fancies. The only “size” is configured through either the “microstructure” or “macrostructure” as imposed on the object/subject as dreamed/created.**



While the images evolved in a dream could be of sublimated nature, they took place nowhere but only at the time of the dreaming. Once we wake up, the residue of the dream as recalled could be “something else” already. We could never recreate the exact “environment” in order to revisit the dream “properly.” The “viewing room” of a dream, i.e. within somewhere under specific influence of the state of brain-at-work, can be varied as the subject of dream and the perception therein adopt shifts, without prior warning, from one end to another. The resonance refracted from the interweaving cognitive and affective experience in dream could be some psychosomatic sense of presence that one constantly tries to retrieve, which could only be the metaphysical sensation of being when one might *feel* like to be knowing something. Yet the form of dreams rarely repeats. Maybe it is precisely the ungraspable vision in dream that has attracted us all, especially the particular constitution of internal emotions therein, triggering immense impulses to find the right expression of compressed transformation taken place in these idea-and-feeling-generating-phenomena.

**When there is an idea and the idea is expanded into possibilities, a new form of *dream* takes shape. Intelligence would sip in to build special scaffolding to materialize the dream into a form of possible reality. Such transcended form of “dream” often springs from a sense of longing and such longing urges actions that take shapes through dialogues, seeking to locate its right form of communicable expression. It becomes a conscious effort to build something of a reality beyond the presence. Dream suddenly begins to transform into *works*, not only through the fleeting clouds of imagination, but also traveling through the denseness of reality; it allows the pursued and the pursuer to intermingle in the wide-open**

**field of possibilities. Our pride, our doubts, our love, our anger, our passion, our envy, our hatred, our shame, our courage, our roots, our history, our faith, our intelligence and our sense of being would open up in a gate of new realm, cultivating an alternative garden of hope.**

In *The Secret Artist*, Lesley Chamberlain specially made notes on Freud's writing on dream making, i.e. *Verdichtung*, which literally means condensation or thickening (*dicht* = thick). But because of its relation to the word *Dichtung*, "poetry" or "poetic truth," *Verdichtung* also means to turn into art (Chamberlain, 2000:308). To her, "it is as if Freud were trying to create a new music. He creates meaning by supplementing grammar and logic with the wisdom of the dream. The dream unites opposites and beautifies the absurd. It twists original experience into new shapes and forges new links, according to its boundless capacity to generate and animate metaphor." (Ibid, 188) To James Joyce, *Ulysses* could be his "new music," i.e. his "DreamWorks," an effort to wake himself up from the nightmare of History. To Anton Chekhov, realizing one's dream would not be easy. Dreaming, as in his work *The Sea Gull* (1975), could be germinated out of boredom; people and seagull would be killed in the process (Ibid, 46). To me, **the history of dreaming had me transformed into series of action through the arts, a tapestry woven between the pulling of "lived imaginings" to the "what really happened."** But before a large chunk of dreams was re-invented into something creative, they had often been locked in unconscious tracks without finding their true expression: only cluttering energies tangled with moving signs, unknown and "thickening" in the body-mind, forever leveling with ghosts. It would be like Mozart's imagination of Don Giovanni, "the silhouette of a giant black

figure, in cloak and tricorne hat. It extends its arms menacingly and engulfingly, toward its begetter.” (Shaffer, 1984: 110) The irony is: if Peter Shaffer, the playwright, conceived “the black figure” as Mozart’s nightmarish dream of his father, considering the amount of letters Mozart did write to his father in Salzburg, the accumulated thoughts and piled-up father-son emotions therein the course of writing would seem inevitably that the “nightmare” was *real*.<sup>3</sup> In other words, **it was as if for me to dream would be like leading a “secret life” with the neurons’ daily *experiences* in encountering the on-going and piling up *human* events, be they motionless at times, often suggesting the possibility of fantasy with striking mobility. It has often been this secret mobility that allows constant daydreaming, simply to make contact with the world around and to open its *secret life* never revealed to me by other. Dreaming had become a sense of survival, a sense of longing for alternatives under constellation of social orders. DreamWorks become the brand of my secret creativity, freeing the grotesqueness of the body beyond its physical limitation, i.e. re-adjusting the aperture of daily imagination into alternative edges through the act of becoming, as if re-scattering and redistributing bodily parts through secret rituals.** But before all that actually happened, the body-mind would have to go through stages in transforming the “ghosts play” into the subsequent acts of “apparitional synthesis.”

In my *dreamscape*, everything seems to move with flying color and sound, as if working on a Dali painting.<sup>4</sup> From haunting ghostly figures to surrealistic moving objects, from fantasies to heartfelt but illogical events, from day to night through constant shifts in space-time, I would often be moved, haunted, exhausted, petrified,

perplexed, excited, or touched by cinematic images swiftly flying in and out of dreams. The power in dream could be devastating. According to some ancient tales, kings even killed people when they were threatened in dreams.<sup>5</sup> I would not have known that when I was young, a time when I never had the chance to listen to those exotic stories<sup>6</sup>. The elderly would simply say that dreaming was not anything virtuosic, only déjà vu that mysteriously traveling in and out of the mind that people would get drowned for dreaming too much. I would see it as “the tease of memory,”<sup>7</sup> leaving me in euphoria with fleeting melancholy. **It was precisely that state of melancholy had me multiplying imaginary ideas denoted from experience. Subsequently, dream quietly carried the weight for actions-to-be. It had become a powerful form or structure of meditative and transformational work to allow the mind free flowing in search of cubistic landscape of argument, hair-raising chases, or disturbing phenomena, including those of embryonic dimension.**

### *Dream & Size 2: Dream to ACT*

When Martin Luther King Jr. made his *I have a dream* speech in 1963, his *dream* was shaped in an epic dimension, incorporating ideas seeded deep in human turmoil, aiming to guarantee “the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”<sup>8</sup> It was the dream through which many ordinary folks of the oppressed propelled into the action that amplified in the speech, with wishes once unsung or never truly articulated in public. Yet the grandeur of such *dream* could be irrelevant when reduced to individual self-contemplation. **The inspiration made by great men and women and the sharing of their great dreams could become shackles of personal dream when an ordinary mind would only seek alternative actions**

**simply to retain, or preserve, the basic dignity of “profound indifference,” in Camus’s words, deep within the self.** Living in a different world and time, Albert Camus saw “liberty,” through Sartre’s *Nausea*, in a different manner: something coated with *dream* seeking its impossible lucidity. “Man is alone, locked up in this liberty. It is a liberty which exists only in time, for death inflicts on it a swift and breathtaking denial. His condition is absurd. He will go no farther, and the miracle of those mornings where life begins again has lost all meaning for him. How can one remain lucid when faced with such truths?” (Camus, 1979:171-172) Of course, King was preaching on political freedom and Camus making a philosophical enquiry. In spite of his grim view on human existence, Camus never failed to look for alternatives, he continued, “I was looking for something, I wanted to rediscover the world which I had glimpsed and which seemed to me to be my own. Between books and daydreams I was gradually discovering, alone or thanks to friendship, new dimensions to life (Ibid, 174).” In spite of how Camus once warned us through the reading of André Gide the “despair to be intelligent” and the irony of man when “time wanted to move away from what he represented (Ibid, 175),” Dewey recognized the important act of expression at times “when,” he cited William James, “the new centre of energy has been subconsciously incubated so long as to be just ready to burst into flower, ‘hands off’ is the only word for us; it must burst forth unaided.” (Dewey, 2005[1934]:75) In another word, King’s dream speech was not only an “outburst” of consciousness accumulated from objective situations, it was, or indeed had been, an act of dream to activate the minds of many. As James wrote about religious experience, so pointed out by Dewey, “A man’s conscious wit and will are aiming at something only dimly and inaccurately imagined. Yet all the while the forces of mere organic ripening within him

are going on to their own prefigured result, and his conscious strainings are letting loose subconscious allies behind the scenes which in their way work toward rearrangement, and the rearrangement toward which all these deeper forces tend are pretty surely definite, and definitely different from what he consciously conceives and determines. It may consequently be actually interfered with (jammed as it were) by his voluntary efforts slanting toward the true direction.” (Ibid.) When dream works in such dimension, it is not the nightly evaporating dream. It signifies an act of spontaneity sprung from some accumulative force through long periods of activity. **DreamWorks are in fact works of art transformed from dreams and experiences assimilated, seeking invocation to unveil the deep-lying power, formulating their own form of expression.** As in the “daydream” in *Dream & Size I*, the cow did not *move*; I moved, as I kept on writing through co-related or elaborating images, seeking transcendence from the human form of “herd life”! Through dreams, like visiting *Invisible Cities*, it is like being in the garden dialogues between Kublai and Polo as portrayed by Italo Calvino:

Kublai: *I do not know when you have had time to visit all the countries you describe to me. It seems to me you have never moved from this garden...*

Polo: *Perhaps this garden exists only in the shadow of our eyelids, and we have never stopped: you, from raising dust on the fields of battle; and I, from bargaining for sacks of pepper in distant bazaars. But each time we half-close our eyes, in the midst of the din and the throng, we are allowed to withdraw here, dressed in silk kimonos, to ponder what we are seeing and living, to draw conclusions, to contemplate from the distance...It is our eyelids that separate them, but we cannot know which is inside and which outside.*

(Calvino, 1997:103-4)

It is precisely in this *dream* garden, one gains the space to contemplate with past history and experience encountered through space-time. In a society with rules of norms often laid down for behavior and thinking modes, such garden would easily be dismissed as something “unrealistic.” Worst of all, *DreamWorks* would be viewing as gardening in a wasteland where no one would be bothered to pay regular visits. To me, without the fantasies and insight gained in real life, Calvino would not be able to produce *Invisible Cities*, a vivid poem to describe the ability of humankind to develop something beautiful out of chaos. I had also learnt my lessons from a fairly *ordinary and yet chaotic* life; I have learnt to make peace with the tension once stretched my body-mind into some dark voyages of memory, with seemingly fixed words by other, I intended to *erase*, or re-shuffle rather, in order to move on...

Before any bigger dreams, I would have to revisit the smaller ones I had encountered back then. They were dreams that reflected my own condition, with a series of actions, before and after, that had either deepened or lightened up the condition I was once connected. Some dreams, like magnetic field, did once drag me into unknown emotional abyss; some pulled me away from deeper assault of humiliation through the learning of becoming through the arts. With an identity, forever sinking and floating, complex and with claims often defined by “moral” norms, it has been a living journey through one crisis after another, seeking to make terms with my will, my power, my dream, my passion and my pride (possibly including the “Chineseness” of my “face”) that often found being manipulated for the lack of transitive sensitivity in time and history particularly grown out of colonial soil. With view seemed utterly blocked by

surrounding high-rise housing developments<sup>9</sup>, the stomach could hardly digest bigger dreams beyond the horizon of history. When these *big* dreams did storm in with values held only by those in power, they would suddenly behave like a closed system that elicited only designated responses, allowing little room for reconciliation. There were times when I began to query my brain size, as if a quantifiable object tagged with a “BIG-HEADED” label. Not until I truly came to terms with my own “limitations” and “unbecoming” had I come to realize the alternatives were in fact right around the corners: not anything big; only living and non-living forms of common substance simply there indefinitely waiting for unbounded exploration.

Dewey once wrote, “we are too accustomed to think of physical objects as having bounded edges...we unconsciously carry over this belief in the bounded character of all objects of experience...into our conception of experience itself,” (Dewey, 2005[1934]:201) it is so often that we would easily exclude “the community of forms” that carry “a community of substances” without knowing it. As Thorpe pointed out the nature of “community work” could be referring to “a wide range of quite disparate approaches, reflecting diverse, and often opposing, political ideologies,” (Thorpe, 1985) **the body community inside one’s body-mind could consist of coherent characteristics that would keep pulling and testing one’s ability of liberation and control over one’s actions behind dreams under social influences. The substances in dreams are fragments of the totality as timely perceived; they operate in our body-mind and intercourse with the world through particular tentacles, developing one’s own “case work” or “group work” through the self-organized community from within. Such “community organization” within each of our body**



**and mind consciousness would help the self to identify the needs, both socially and individually, looking for more effective ways to locate our inner resources under the apparent confinement of personal history and social boundaries. Small dreams become seeding for alternative actions to build up this bodily community in life. And eventually, they would charge in, interacting with the past and whatever social or inter-personal resources as encountered. It should be viewed as an important self-education process. The “intervention” of dream is not something to be imposed upon by outsiders, i.e. “specialists,” but rather the empowerment of the self through enlightening value of the self-act of changes. I have learnt to contemplate with these *communities* within me through DreamWorks.**

Dream: a premonition to *ACT!* I heard from King. I surely HEARD from all those great men and women I was told to pay respect and learn from in my schooling years. Yet they all became only sets of enclosed channels so disturbing that I could no longer correlate to if I were to retain my own autonomy in life. The size of my dream used to matter only to me. Utterly different from the norms as they might, the *dreams* remained to be my alternate path to touch base with an alternate reality I could comprehend. And my day could only move on from there, if I were not to get drowned again from “moribund product,” (Havel, 1988:296) in Havel’s term, kept self-reproduced, or carbon-copied, from mindless simulation. Yet, am I *dreaming* still as I keep moving on through these words, re-channeling the next possible *act* upon the size of the perceivable space to be, key-punching my way to the very next possible moments of existence?

### ***Dream & Memory: Before and After***

I had once experienced a long period of “dreamless nights.” I suspected that it was a time when the conscious ego had taken charge and kept my mind from being confronted by any potential uncontrollable daily matters, especially anything connected with emotions. The obsession of not taking part in any actions, or choice-making process had consumed the heart and soul, leaving the unconscious barricaded, as if not allowing any kind of split actions between the inner and outer reality. It was a time the mind and body got locked up together from sudden loss of faith in everything. It was a time of hell!

I also had experienced a repetitive dream once: black and white. I was driving. Late night. Not a soul around on the road. I believed I was driving along Shanghai Street in Yaumatei area. The neon lights were bright and sharp. Everywhere was dead silent. I could not hear anything, not even my own voice. My hands were not on the steering wheel anymore. The vehicle seemed to be running in automatic gear. I saw my own image reflected from the car window. As if, not a living soul outside. The car suddenly stopped and over-hanged at the edge of a huge road crack, like an image transposed from Fellini’s *Spirit of the Dead*<sup>10</sup>, with the world suddenly missing beyond. I was screaming, only to see an inverted negative image of me reflected on the car windows. I tried to open the window and door. Failed. Screaming. But no voice heard. I woke up with sweat all over my body...

The phenomena above reflected two different periods of my life: the former took place not long after June 4 Tiananmen Massacre of 1989 and the latter after my divorce.

They were times as if life suddenly stopped buzzing; only left the state of disillusionment overwhelmingly consuming the shape, or nullity, of my dream. The former took place right after the latter with the body-mind intervened daily by anti-depressant drug. Until one day, I told myself to stop all at once and start anew. Do not know if it could be viewed as phenomena of “dream rebound,” i.e. “the return of suppressed thoughts in dream.” (Wegner, Wenzlaff & Kozaki, 2004) I could not tell if they were the “day residue” as experience (e.g., Cohen, 1972; Hartman, 1968) or simply the latent thoughts suppressed for a long period of time. While some people around saw me as someone seriously “screwed up” (I had literally released myself totally from regular works and any possible human contacts), I was *seriously* trying to re-settle myself the meaning of life after the traumatic experiences. Where was *I*? Who was *I*? What was *I*? It was like a prolonged sleeping disorder that had made my dream chromed with colorless overtone, or probably, as suggested by Wegner, Wenzlaff, and Kozaki, that it was “the influence of changes in brain activation during REM sleep on mental control processes.” I had once been trying to make sense out of the nightmares through compulsive writings. I wrote thousands of words, hoping to find any possible acceptable reasoning to live through the morbid moments day in and day out through those particular years of turmoil. The heat of birth, i.e. the *unwanted* childhood memory, did come around with added fuel to the already depressing time. On my birthday of 1989, I wrote such a poem reflecting, or emotionally self-juxtaposing rather, on the state of being after shocked:

Life!     Didn't begin with my birth  
When the machinery of my brain began its operation

The world could be already walking into its mid-life  
(If there is a beginning, middle and an end in the making of the World)  
My story like the bone of my deceased mother would melt  
My word like the stardust of the Universe would disappear  
Words spoken yet never truly belonged to me  
Eyes wide-opened looking for things that are truly crystal-clear  
Story heartily plotted nothing but  
another copy of history already written  
Words staggering up nothing but the epitaph of ancestors  
Long locked up in the cage of Time  
Not seeing...  
Any direction...  
  
Who would know when to begin?  
Who would know when to end?  
Dialogues reflecting the broken fragments of Time  
Words self-drumming on wailing beats as if  
Tomb stones half hanging in mid air clashing upon one another  
Sporadically making some temporal notes  
Maybe  
Once in a while with epitaph grinded smooth and shiny and then  
Broken down into tiny fragments of repetitive signs  
Gliding through the Time Corridor without any meaning  
Not seeing...  
Any Direction...  
  
Life as if sinking and floating  
through the pounding and beating of words  
Until reaching the bottom of a specific space-time at pause  
disappearing <sup>11</sup>

These were only fragments of words I did scribble on loose sheets of paper, notebooks,  
and scrapes torn out of magazine at those particular years. I began to run questions

over and over again and back and forth to lift myself up from *hell*, a time when dream did not exactly work on all levels (with the exception of self-indulging *sex* only to redeem the remaining sense of existence). The body-mind was like paralyzed, leaving no room for curiosity. Before I were to make out any transformation through those depressing years, when *dreams* were scarce and *work* became meaningless, I had to go back and trace along footsteps once treaded, with footprints made out of a body weighed with entangled emotions. Or it was all part of the *dukkha*<sup>12</sup>, i.e. human suffering according to Buddhist teaching, that I was put to tests of endurance in life. Before doing so, I stripped myself naked once again, as my eventual self-regulated ritual, to look into this body long operated by a mind gone up and down the eightfold path<sup>13</sup>, I let go and allow my body-mind drifting back into buzz buzz buzz...

Looking back, it was those times of dreamless nights made me re-evaluate the precious dreams I *did* have and I *could* have made in the years to come. Without the realization of those particular mental and emotional states of *nullity*, or seemingly so, I would not have learnt the importance of letting go and re-acquiring new disciplines in life. The process of re-building a new community in me became freely adaptable from works, from love, from friends, from theatre and most of all, from the wide-ranging circumstances in life often left unpredictably gliding by and around. Like the act of theorizing, I could no longer stick to those so-called “standard” disciplines since my experiences had told me that life never functioned in such ways. It would be like a process of borrowing whatever available at times and be able to particularize the body-mind in attempting to solve any particular cases of phenomena, of course, not dismissing those that people intended to differentiate from one another. While I

learned how to swim in the reservoir of people's ideas, through which learnt to re-construct mine, I have also learnt that it is the ability of emptying oneself, yes idea very much inspired by Laozi, rather than transcending the ego that truly made a difference in allowing dreams to transform into works.

In the "streets," "rivers," and "mountains" of my own memory mapping, no one could possibly comprehend my scores and routes of creative imagination as something that secretly touch notes on reflections through doors, steps, corners, corridors, tunnels, and particular passages under specific lights. Even in dreamless nights, the specific quality of "dreamlessness" became the shape and size of living not to be expunged. Or those over-hanging moment on edges, it was the spirit of the self, no longer the dead, that learnt to re-measure the relationship between the memory space and the reflected events of its past, re-tracking the map of the body-mind, soaking, like a sponge, the smell and the ever running fluid of desire.

Mind us all that memories could be so vulnerable that they could easily be kidnapped by the Mass Media that often "purvey shared national memories that can usurp a personal past," (Ackerman, 2004:76) if we do not cherish all the possible individual effort to identify specifics of events and happening encountered in life. As Ackerman pointed out, "memory isn't like a camcorder, computer, or storage bin. It's more restless, more creative, and it's not one of anything. Each memory is a plural event, an ensemble of synchronized neurons, some side by side, others relatively far apart." (Ibid, 76) **The dreams we had could be far more memorable than those marked as "official social data"; they could never be anything "accurate" or "sacred" but**

**rather rhetorical, seeking to re-energize the mind and body for alternative values and rejuvenate the passions, or adding extra flavor or layers to the crust of memory with new feelings.** Dream and memory, be they before *or* after, are all parts of our “reflections” picked up “in a gazing ball” (Ibid, 79-83), some timely resource for us to revise the self in the making. Of course, regarding the temporality of before and after, Sartre’s warning was worthy of one’s careful attention, “There remains the possibility that this relation before-after can exist only for a witness who establishes it. The difficulty is that if this witness can be simultaneously in A [a supposedly temporal content] and in B [another supposedly temporal content], it is because he is himself temporal, and the problem will be raised anew for him. Or rather, on the contrary, he can transcend time by a gift of temporal ubiquity which is equivalent to non-temporality... ” (Sartre, 2003[1943]:155) **Beyond the synthetic relation of before and after, our life is indeed lingering onto “multiplicity of instants,” including those dreamt or lived, the concern here raised is not entirely a philosophical one like those Sartre set out to examine, but rather, as inspired by Sartre’s insight, the possibility of treating, or reconnecting, living events (with the *being* “I”) as alternative resource, be they temporal or a-temporal, to reconstruct alternate living imagination.**

***Dream & Soil: Bypassing the colonial historicity***

I cannot remember the nature of my dream before puberty (I gather the physical phenomenon of puberty was so powerful that one could hardly forget its presence). I often wonder if it was the particular soil I walked on had my childhood body-mind clotted up with social residue too *thick* to be deciphered. To my imagination, before

such, in the process of drifting and selecting, the sperm of my father could have made *dreams* in the river of evolutionary hunting (very likely a notion inspired by Arno Karlen's *Biography of a Germ*)<sup>14</sup>, which subsequently fore-bear specific space for the gene development to be. I so often wonder the kind of dreams my father would be carrying at the time when social and political climate was so unstable under the Communist influence across the Hong Kong border back then. Though being apolitical, the social pressure in face of the large influx of refugees that caused severe competition in the job market in 1950's would have created tremendous headache for my father. Already with three children, a wife and parents to take care of and being the only working member of the family, my birth would only add extra burden on his shoulder. Would the tension not create subconscious effect on the body-mind of my parents, and subsequently, affect their physio-biological disposition at the time of consummation that created my eventual birth (or, speculatively speaking, the moment of consummation were only an emotional outburst through sexual intercourse, an attempt to relieve the accumulated tension constantly dwelling from within)? Likewise, would my mother's traumatic experience before death not affect the *dream* making of the fetus' prenatal development for which the "origin" of my physical building would have been accounted? It may seem like I am making sheer hypothesis on my parents' emotional and sexual relationship at difficult times. I would say it is rather a revelation I am making from the traumatic experience I encountered with my ex-wife at a time when we were only 18 and 16 respectively. I later re-affirmed myself on that belief by looking back into the negative experiences evolving the birth of my own son at times when my ex-wife and I were too young and too occupied with the unfavorable social judgment generated among family members and those "monitoring



eyes” passing by. With the knowing of his mother’s “unintentional pregnancy” beyond the age of consent, my son had suffered, as early from his infancy, from becoming the uninspiring data of adolescent conduct-unbecoming, which subsequently affected his psychological health (something that could have been totally changed if only if he was born in a different time and era, say hundred years earlier in China). Drawing from the parallel of pregnancy at difficult times both for my mother and my ex-wife, I would say the *dreams*, or the lack of one, of my mother, and my ex-wife, could have severely influenced the motor pattern of the fetus. What would possibly be the shape of their dreams then when the world around them were not too keen at all regarding the lack of social support and understanding dwelling around their pregnancy? Would the soil my mother walked on back and forth between the political and economic rumbling Guangzhou and Hong Kong have cast peculiar effect on her since marrying my father? Would the soil filled with conservative and judgmental eyes favorable to the relationship between my ex-wife and I, a teenaged couple who had barely known the heat and the chill of humankind under adverse moral bombardment? By the same token, if the colonized social climate of Hong Kong cast strange effect on the genetic pattern of my parents and, subsequently, the making of the *dream* in me, how should I then remap the color and texture of the make-up of my being as a child and a teenager back then? Likewise, how to look into those of my own son’s dreams before and after birth?

At time of catastrophes, how possibly would ordinary people have the access, time and knowledge to look for socially recognized models studied by scientists, not mentioning the absence of social support? Who would have the rationale to think according to the

scholarly analogy of distancing nature? The “situational parameters,” as suggested by Figley in his article on *Catastrophe: An Overview of Family Reactions* (Figley & McCubbin, 1983:3-20), to measure the degree and intensity of traumatic stress would seem a bit remote to direct sufferers, or “victims,” as so empathically labeled. While social studies could provide indicators for social service providers and the often-generalized listing of service suggestion or warnings that seem “profoundly” laid out for awareness and precaution to be taken by the needed, the characteristics, be they based on catastrophic or normative, pin-pointed out in these studies could easily remain to be sheer words to practitioners, without truly touching base with the reality and the heart of each individual situation. **The complexity of subsequent upheavals in stressors may go beyond the sub-bodily level without the apprehension of either cultural or community support available. The grieving during and after crisis could be deep beyond one’s normal reaching, with dreams incapable of grasping anymore, or soil, i.e. the social and cultural sentiment, too polluted to sort out its affect on the building of the soul. The “coping” of catastrophe or crisis does not mean the stress would simply go away. The stressors rather stay with the “victims” deep inside the bone and affect the subsequent haunting dream in the life making.**

In the case of my mother, my ex-wife, my son and me, I hereby make a quick corresponding to the suggested characteristic of *dysfunctional coping* according to Figley (Ibid, 18): “the ability to identify the stressor” did not mean the absence of pain; “viewing the situation as a family problem” did not often lighten up the weight of the problem; “adopting a solution-oriented approach” did not necessarily mean the blame

would disappear; “showing tolerance” was not something agreeable, or even accessible, to the people inter-connected at times; “clear expression of commitment to and affection for other” could only be idealized sentiment that weighed no ground under circumstances out of one’s control; “open and clear communication” could be only wishful thinking without empowering the imagination of the ones who did suffer from the crisis; “evidence of high family cohesion” would not be something that could be gathered at haste; “evidence of considerable role flexibility” would only be relevant to isolated cases; “appropriate utilization of resources” could appear to be high sounding suggestion that were alien to people directly, and emotionally, hit by catastrophes. **In order to bypass this could-be-catastrophic historicity that has colonized the body-mind, one seems to have to re-think alternatives that could be attained from within and so as to re-empower the self through such adverse period of acute sufferings. Dreaming could be the pain reliever. Unrealistic as it may sound, re-building new scaffold for dream could be made accessible by re-mounting direct contact with the soil treading on, including all the possibly found objects disserted at arm’s reaches.**

Dream and soil, as if cross-cremating one another, are like two delicate organismic forms, each keeps seeking opportunity to over-power, or to dissolve, the other, either to nurture new roots that could sustain life of the strange sort or destroy each other through the process. Born in the late 1950’s and growing up in the 1960’s and 1970’s, the specific social climate of Hong Kong should have played special effect on the upbringing of my body-mind. What built in the dream was not necessarily coherent to elements that affect the well being of the body-mind. The political and social residue

of the Hong Kong soil did leave its print along the track of my memory and the making of me as a person, surely the same for my father and my own son. I believe everyone would have his or her own special “dictionary” of the hometown, or special places once resided, like Han Shaogong recorded in *A Dictionary of Maqiao*<sup>15</sup>, through which sharing with people specific memories of local color and living stories. Paradoxically speaking, as Edward W. Said shared with us in his book *Culture and Imperialism*, we could find a lot of allusive references to reinforce specific social and moral values through “consolidated vision,” i.e. without knowing it, novels and writing of specific time and era often helped define the writing of history, like the imperialistic connotations filled up the novels of nineteenth- and twentieth-century (Said, 1994:62-190), be they of unconscious or subconscious intentions. Each story, or piece of history, would put together a different set of collections, like playing cards or mahjong, mirroring the life once treaded in specific socio-political circumstances under particular time frame. The dreams and stories once put in specific soil would be, at the same time, mirroring the culture of the land people used to live in. The “soil” to him may mean something quite different to the “land” to her, not mentioning the differences in “dreams.”

My mind had only small dreams before the family fell apart (mind us all that “family fallen apart” was only a phenomenon, not necessarily a “criteria” or “prerequisite” to the unbecoming of a “well-being”); my body had refused to grow as if to keep the privilege of forever-being-the-youngest-and-not-knowing, at least through the age of six until my step-mother gave birth to her first child (one of my nicknames back then was “3-inch-nail” and it had stayed with me till the age of 13 or 14). My body-mind,

heavily soaked with the moisture of the colonized soil and mixed deep with complex emotional drawback from the grandparents' feudal heritage because of the death of my mother, had discovered little escape other than dreaming. The early emotional abnormality did run deep into the bone, which, later added up its flavor in face of the more emotional uprising events, could have been the "cause" of my later chronic back pain.<sup>16</sup> Dream became the only painkiller, countering off the pinching effect from the ever-depressing humidity of the soil. My back pain had become the thermometer of my emotional state of being ever since the heat of pain began to take shape in early twenties (of course, the back injury caused by overwork and depression in that period also added weight to the severity of the pain). Yet such "abnormality" often springs from "particularity" of performances directed strictly from norms as put forth by "the many," something unknowingly, or unintentionally, prescribed in the "social mind" of ordinary folks, and, subsequently, drilling peculiar holes on personality building. Paradoxically speaking, some may argue that by so doing, no wonder we each would easily become "monologuer" in Beckettian form, endlessly seeking contemplation with the self; once having strip-naked our identity, we would only be left as something "*unnamable*,"<sup>17</sup> struggling through the shaping of I from I or the I of I and I on I, and so forth. In such a process of existentialistic enquiry, J. M. Coetzee suggested, through his exploration on Samuel Beckett, that it would be like "in the process of being absorbed into a kind of verbal music, highly reminiscing those of James Joyce, and the fierce comic anguish that accompanied it is in the process of being aestheticised too." (Coetzee, 2008:170) **The "abnormality" in me had indeed drawn a series of transformation into "particular aesthetic performances," leaving room to locate alternative "makeshift solution"** (Ibid.) in case of coming to "the question of what to

do next.” (Ibid.) Or, I should say the “abnormality” of the “dream” and “soil” evolving around my life *IS* the becoming of me as a person.

Carl R. Rogers once emphasized the important process of becoming a person, i.e. “getting behind the mask,” “the experiencing of feeling” and “the discovery of the self through experience,” “openness to experience,” “trust in one’s organism,” “identifying the internal locus of evaluation,” and “the willingness to be a process,” (1961:108-123) which, in a way, echoes a great deal in the way I work with my actors. The issues, or the “differences rather,” remained to be the particular routes and attitude when entering these realms of being without generalizing the particularity as some “itemized” or “pre-identified” phenomena. Beyond dream and soil, should we not locate the “masks of dream” the public has been using in social and political sectors and the “dissatisfaction” in us wearing them along with, worst of all, not knowing such “mass dream” could be manipulated by false hope? When the experiencing were affected by the particular smell of the soil that could have severely altered the feeling and perception in the process, is it not important to learn that when the “discovery” of the “self” therein misled could be pushed away in form of “client talk,” setting out only to duplicate another body-mind to fit the expectation of the norms? Under such specific “dream” and “soil” forms, would the organism not already be “re-organized” according to someone’s need rather than freeing its senses to the inner voice of the being? It does not only take one’s willingness to be a process; it takes tremendous patience and enormous capacity to absorb the potential suffering therein, especially when the realization of how one has determined the value of a specific living

experience, human or non-human, comes to terms with the self could be, in Rogers' term, "invigorating and frightening." (Ibid.)

Dream could allow life's choice to reopen through hypothesis and imagination if we allow the self, along side with the otherness misplaced within us, to re-examine the horizon of dreams to further its territories into live actions. It may not always sound, especially when the "soil" not always, or entirely, be favorable to the make-up of the body-mind conceived at times. Instead of bypassing the "colonized self" cultivated under specific "colonized soil," it would be a lot more realistic to first recognize the effect left behind the "colonized" body-mind and the nature of "dream" once exposed to the process of experiences. **Life is basically a continuum of dreaming and experiencing, seeking adaptive skill in the "life stages," not exactly those as laid out by social scientists, which could easily become mal-treated as a set of generalized terminologies dismissing the detail context of continual living process each individual is encountering.** When the world begins to operate under marketable "menus" of experience processing system that simplifies dream in term of "manageable" mass demand, the specific dream in each of us would fall into the abyss of mass simulation, leaving little room for the recognition of the *person* in the making. Laura Ambrosiano once talked about the importance of free association through dreaming: "when you start to lose your own train of thoughts because the birth of other thoughts breaks up the continuity of conscious thoughts, and then the coherence of the speech breaks down and reveals new and diverging lines of thoughts that describe something known unconsciously but not thought." (Lawrence, 2003:99) **Through interpretation of dreams, which could be "temporary, changeable, and malleable**

enough to comment on the experience and communicate with the others, but they can also be transformed into strong signals of belonging, in totems, in protocols that rule the search for knowledge,” (Ibid, 100) it allows the individual mind to reformulate thoughts generating in the mental space. In reading the historicity of the self, other than how we did learn to play the game the way we were taught, the ability and imagination to bypass such historicity would mean to revisit and analyze the “craft” and “practice” already done to our body-mind, through which, hopefully, we could locate a fair ground to *empty* the self in order to allow any alternative new landscaping on our body and, ultimately, the mind.

***Dream & Effect 1: Traces through Triviality***

*In objects infiltrating all living space around our houses,  
Which carry many notions personal, social, political,  
or ethical  
to the makeup of a single being....  
There are ways to re-locate these noises heard  
And dislocate all the unnecessary means  
through diversion....  
This is not a play soundproofed!  
This is a play with noises, made from the “otherness”...*

*Through studying the textuality of such “otherness,”  
the exercise of self-actions would be made possible.  
Through the arts,  
we re-climb the social stairs;  
turn new keys;  
uplift signs signified by other;  
re-discover the original behind copies;  
touch base with the reality*



*and*  
*the essentials...*

In his account on childhood memories and screen memories, Freud reminded us that “the neutral memories of childhood owe their existence to a process of displacement; as reproduced, they are substitutes for other, genuinely significant impressions, the memory of which can be elicited by psychic analysis although resistance prevents their direct reproduction.” (Freud, 2002:45) He further explained, “Since they owe their retention in the mind not to their own content but to its associative connection with another, repressed subject, they have a good claim to be described...as ‘screen memories’.” (Ibid.) While it would be too far reaching for ordinary people to try to understand “the biological basis of individuality” (Kandel, 2006: 218) as suggested by biologist Eric R. Kandel, it would seem more unlikely, or impossible, for any ordinary being to *investigate* how “the cellular mechanisms of electrophysiological conditioning” affect the “neural population” in the daily activity of “participating cells.” (Ibid, 162) **Everyday life does not normally operate in empiricist or sociological terms, nor would it take on any “rehearsals” like those in theatre. Ordinary acts simply take place through spontaneity along ordinary and yet often ad-hoc circumstances. Yet the observations of infra-ordinariness could bring us to re-account the seemingly “ungovernable” daily matters and behavior, allowing us to look into their effect on our *dream* actions and the inescapable “parapraxis,” i.e. the slips and errors.** (Freud, 2002:ix)

Here are traces of bits and pieces of ordinarily *colonized* behavior taken place during the younger days, often being seen as trivial, I manage, or fail, to re-collect, or possibly imagine, in the process of re-sourcing through the well of phenomenal “daydreams,” “experiences,” and “aftereffects,” once trailed in the path of *expected normality* before reaching adulthood [Warning: there are times some elements could be treated “a-historically, or quite literally anachronistically,” in Jenkins’ term (Jenkins, 1991:55), if we were to gain any understanding about the nature and historicity of the dream and events that were shaped by particular circumstances and beliefs of people involved under the cultural soil as treaded on. But the temporality of memory and actions as “screened” *in* or *out* of the system could deserve some minute reflection in the course of understanding their effect on phenomenal dreamWORKs thereafter.]:

- **SLEEPING POSITION:** There were days when my infant mouth kept sucking. For what? Definitely not my mother’s nipples. To replace the nullity of breasts feeding, I curled up, in spite of the crowded bed<sup>18</sup>, as if to sink back into the womb of my mother, a sleeping position to make dreams throughout the first twenty to thirty years of my life. Or wasn’t it how I felt about my childhood had be-deviled the shape of my sleeping body? I was over 30 when first attaining the pleasure of lying on my back straight and enjoying the hard earned “confidence” of opening up my physical self. It affected the quality of the dream as well...

*I SLIPPED INTO MY FATHER’S BED ONLY ONCE. IT WAS AFTERNOON. HE NORMALLY HELD HIS AFTERNOON DRIVING LESSONS BETWEEN 1430 TILL 1730. I WAS TOLD IT WASN’T ALLOWED TO SLEEP IN HIS BED. I DIDN’T EXACTLY UNDERSTAND BUT I NEVER QUERIED THE REASONS. CAN’T REMEMBER EXACTLY HOW I MANAGED TO SLEEP THERE THAT AFTERNOON. IT WAS THE ONLY SPRING BED IN THE HOUSE. IT HAD A STRANGE TENDER FEELING TO THE TENDER-SEEKING BODY. WHEN I*

*WOKE UP, MY FATHER WAS RIGHT BESIDE ME. I WAS SO SCARED THAT HE WOULD SCOLD ME. HE DIDN'T. NOT A GRIN. I QUIETLY WOKE UP, AS IF NOTHING HAPPENED (I DIDN'T KNOW EXACTLY IF I CURLED UP MY BODY DURING THAT AFTERNOON LAP)...AT LEAST I REMEMBER MY FATHER DIDN'T SLEEP THAT WAY! YET I KEPT MY DREAMING POSITIONING "CURLED UP" ...*

- **PILLOW:** I enjoyed sitting on my grandmother's lap clinging close to her body. My grandmother was blamed to have me spoiled. I was told to stand on my own. I hugged my pillow instead. It became my closest companion in bed. At the age of puberty, it had become the best partner, the best "physical attachment" (OR "sex partner") I could dream of.<sup>19</sup>

*I DON'T KNOW IF THE PILLOW HAD GOT ME TOO TIMID TO STAND UP AMONG MY PEERS. I ENJOYED LISTENING TO CHATS BUT I NEVER GOT HOOKED UP WITH ANY PARTICULAR GROUPS. I DIDN'T ENJOY BEING AGREEABLE OR GETTING TOO CLOSE WITH ANYONE, EXCEPT MY PILLOW OF COURSE. I HAD PROBLEMS SLEEPING WITH WOMEN SINCE I ENJOYED HUGGING THEM LIKE PILLOW IN BED. I LOVED LAYING MY HEAD UPON THEIR BREASTS. IT'S OKAY TO SOME ONCE IN A WHILE. THEY MOSTLY HATED IT. USED TO GUESS: PROBABLY NOT MAN ENOUGH! IN MOVIES, ONE COULD HARDLY SEE ANY MEN SLEEPING WITH PILLOW IN THEIR ARMS. SINCE THEN, I DROPPED MY PILLOWS. I NEVER SLEPT WELL AFTERWARDS. I BEGAN IMAGINING: MY PILLOW WOULD ALWAYS BE THERE, RIGHT THERE, WITHIN MY ARMS...AND I'D SINK DEEP INTO BED AND FALL ASLEEP...*

- **DARK ROOM:** Can't recall anything before three years of age. Didn't things all happen in the dark room at the back of a dyeing factory back then?<sup>20</sup> No wonder! It could be the reasons why I got allergic to fabrics every time I walked into a fabric store. I wouldn't have realized it if I hadn't been working as a costume designer. On one hand, there's magic in those stores packed with million colors and the smell was something close and unique; but on the other hand, in the middle of all those displayed fabrics, it seemed to have installed some eeriness

that cut into the deep of my soul. I had chosen to walk away. At least temporarily from the dream of ghosts in the body!<sup>21</sup>

*I WAS ONCE LEFT ALONE IN MY MOM'S PARENTS', SLEEPING ALL BY MYSELF FOR THE FIRST TIME. I WAS ABOUT FOUR. THEIR HOUSE WAS "A MILLION TIMES BIGGER THAN WHERE I LIVED." THE CEILING WAS VERY HIGH. I WAS SCARED. I COULDN'T CRY. GRANDMA WOULDN'T LIKE IT. THERE WAS SOMETHING UP IN THE CEILING, MOVING. I COULDN'T FIGURE OUT IF IT WAS ONLY MY IMAGINATION OR NOT. IT WAS A BUG. AN INSECT. STARING AT ME. WHAT'S IT GOING TO DO TO ME? IT WAS LUNAR NEW YEAR. THEY WERE ALL PLAYING OVER AT MY GRANDPA'S LIVING ROOM NEXTDOOR. IT WAS ABOUT NINE IN THE EVENING. THE MAID KEPT WALKING BACK AND FORTH ALONG THE CORRIDOR. I SAW HER SHADOW PASSING THROUGH THOSE GLASS PANELS. I WANTED SOMEONE THERE BUT I DARE NOT ASK. THEY WOULDN'T LIKE IT. THE GRANNY'S HOUSE HAD ALWAYS BEEN A "DARK ROOM" TO ME UNTIL I WENT VISITING THEM AFTER COLLEGE.<sup>22</sup> IT TURNED BRIGHT LATER ON WHEN CONVERSATION WAS MADE POSSIBLE. AND, THAT WAS SOMETHING TAKEN PLACE SOME 30 YEARS LATER. IT TOOK ME QUITE A WHILE TO RE-VISIT THAT "DARK ROOM" ...*

- **GRIP:** My stepmother was the one who taught me how to write. She always said I wrote *beautifully*. To be exact, she had probably meant I copied the characters beautifully – under the grip of her hands. When I grew up, I never followed the blanks or lines of my copy books. I hated copying. I fell in love with inventing stories and lines silently in my head. When I worked with kids who got caught in the word copying exercises, I invented with them a story for each blank they fill in. The word wouldn't look the same throughout. And it was quite a beautiful painting. Unfortunately, these kids received warnings from their teachers: the characters should look clean and tidy! My nightmares often had something to do with those grips on my hands, which I gathered much later, probably around College years, that it was the ghosts brought forth from my grandmother's tales of "the-often-no-good-stepmother"...

*MY PRIMARY SCHOOL CHINESE TEACHER MR. K.C.WONG ALWAYS LOOKED LIKE "HAVING A GRIP ON HIS FACE." HE ALWAYS WORRIED SO*

MUCH THAT WE ALL LAUGHED AT HIM WHENEVER HE LET HIS FACE LOOSE, WHICH RARELY HAPPENED. TEACHERS NEVER TALKED ABOUT THEIR FAMILY. MR. WONG ALWAYS WORE BLACK OR GREY SUIT. EVERY TIME WHEN HE TOLD US A NEW STORY OR TAUGHT US A NEW PHRASE, WHAT UTTERED THROUGH HIS IMMOBILE LIPS WOULD BECOME SOMETHING LIKE AN UNTOLD FAMILY STORY HIDDEN BEYOND THOSE WORDS. THERE WERE HAND-MADE BOMBS OUT IN THE STREETS IN 1967. MY NEIGHBOURS OFTEN MADE A BIG THING PACKING OLD CLOTHES AND DAILY NECESSITIES UP FOR RELATIVES IN CHINA. MR. WONG TALKED ABOUT THINGS HAPPENED IN ANCIENT CHINA, BUT NOT A WORD ABOUT WHAT REALLY WENT ON AT THE TIME. A FEW YEARS LATER, I HEARD HE PASSED AWAY. HE WAS ABOUT 40 THE MOST, TO MY YOUNG IMAGINATION. I GOT VERY SENSITIVE ABOUT GRIPS ON THE FACE SINCE THEN...AS IF I HAD INHERITED THE “GRIP” FROM MR. WONG, BEARING THE LOOK SIMILAR TO THAT OF A WILLIE-LOMAN-KIND-OF-TRAGIC-HERO<sup>23</sup> BACK THEN...

- **NOISE OFF:** I wasn't supposed to make any noise at home. I was told to eat quietly. I wasn't allowed to make any noise out of the food, water, chopsticks, plates, bowls, doors or toys (They said I was supposed to be good mannered and well behaved). They said it was impolite and inconsiderate making such unnecessary noise. Subsequently, as if every object around me had become my silent “enemies,” forever tempting me to make noise and got me scolded or treated with looks of hostility. My body was always easily tense-up to ensure the fingers, and feet would gingerly tiptoe around the house, especially at my grandparents' (i.e. my mother's parents). Noises crept into my body instead. I made dreams filled with noises and faces of condemnation until alternatives emerged to replace the “noises” with “stories,” “images,” and “music”...

WE WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO TALK ANYTHING ABOUT CHINA AFTER 1945, EXCEPT ONE OF MY SECONDARY SCHOOL HISTORY TEACHERS. HE LOOKED STRANGE. A RARE SPECIES INDEED IN A GOVERNMENT SCHOOL, AT LEAST THAT WAS HOW WE THOUGHT OF HIM BACK THEN. HE ALWAYS DRESSED UP LIKE A RED GUARD, A “LEFTIST” WHO WASN'T AFRAID OF BEING LABELLED. (HE WAS “RANKED” A CIVIL SERVANT

*TEACHING FOR A GOVERNMENT SCHOOL.) HE WAS ALWAYS VERY ENTHUSIASTIC EVERY TIME TALKING ABOUT THE LATEST DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA. WE COULD NEVER UNDERSTAND. BECAUSE NOBODY TALKED ABOUT IT. WE ALL SIMPLY LAUGHED AND TOOK HIM AS A “JOKER” – SOMEONE BEING TOO SERIOUS ABOUT WHAT THE STORY AND PEOPLE HE ADMIRER (AND HATED). IN MID-1980’S, I WENT BACK TO WORK AS A SUPPLY TEACHER FOR THE SAME SECONDARY SCHOOL. HE WAS STILL AROUND. ALREADY A VICE PRINCIPAL. BUT HE DRESSED UP LIKE A BUSINESSMAN WORKING IN CENTRAL DISTRICT THEN. OF COURSE HE COULDN’T REMEMBER ME. “NOISES OFF,” AS I ALWAYS HAD BEEN, LIKE SLEEPING THROUGHOUT HIS STORIES (HE OFTEN SAT AT MY DESK)! DURING RECESS, HE TALKED ABOUT THE STOCK MARKET INSTEAD. HE WAS SO NOISY, AS ALWAYS, ONLY WITH DIFFERENT TUNES. I SLIPPED INTO MY EARPHONE LISTENING TO DON McLEAN<sup>24</sup> INSTEAD...*

- **SILENCE:** My neighbor used to say I was a good boy when I was in Primary One. I didn’t know why. Probably had something to do with my being reticent most of the time in front of adults. I rarely talked about things cause I knew I had no place to talk at home. I was the *youngest* (before my stepsister was born) and I wasn’t supposed to talk about anything. Not at the dining table (except listening attentively the lecturing from adults). Not while I was studying. Not when the adults were talking. I talked a lot at school instead, since Primary Two. I remained quiet at home though; I only talked with myself in daydreams in class; I also talked to my notebook. Gather it was part of my early “training” to be creative with the self, especially when being “confined” to “silent limitations”...

*GUESS I LOVE SAMUEL BECKETT FOR SOME GOOD REASONS. THE MONOLOGUES IN BECKETT WAS LONG HIDDEN IN THE DAILY LIVING IN ME SINCE I WAS YOUNG. ALMOST AS IF A BORN OBSERVER, MAKING SECRET DIALOGUES TO MYSELF IN SILENCE. I WAS ALWAYS INFERIOR TO PEOPLE WHO WANTED TO BE IN CHARGE OF SOMETHING. I COULD NEVER LISTEN WELL WHEN PEOPLE WERE IN THAT PARTICULAR MODE. MY BODY AND MY MIND WOULD GET RIGOROUS INSIDE, DRIFTING FROM BLOWN-UP FACES TO MICROSCOPIC MOVEMENTS OF FINGERS*

OR FACE MUSCLES. PEOPLE SAID I GOT TOO SENSITIVE ABOUT THINGS. "NO GOOD FOR ME," SO OFTEN THEY SAID. YET SUCH SENSITIVITY HAD GAINED ME THE SPACE TO WORK IN THEATRE SOMEHOW. I DEVELOPED MY WORK MOSTLY THROUGH SILENCE. I HEARD, STILL HEAR, VOICES BEYOND THOSE SILENCES UNFOLDING IN FRONT OF ME. WHEN I WAS IN FORM THREE, MY MATHEMATICS TEACHER SHARED WITH US PAUL SIMON'S "SOUND OF SILENCE" ONE DAY AND TOLD US HOW HE LOVED THE LYRICS: "PEOPLE TALKING WITHOUT SPEAKING. PEOPLE HEARING WITHOUT LISTENING."<sup>25</sup> I DIDN'T KNOW WHY I CRIED RIGHT AWAY IN MY HEART. AND, I COULD STILL REMEMBER THAT TEACHER'S FACE AT THAT PARTICULAR MOMENT WHEN HE SHARED WITH US THOSE LINES, AS IF HE WAS SHARING WITH US THE MISSING HOPE ONCE LONGING FOR...

- **FIRST RED GUARD:** My first "girl friend" was a distant cousin from my grandmother's family. We went to school together at Primary One. We were five years old. She was the monitor and I was the vice monitor for a month. We got to stand in front to the class "to keep the class discipline." I never paid much attention to the discipline. I secretly enjoyed standing along side with her. A year later, she disappeared and no longer lining up with me. I didn't know what happened. And nobody told me the reasons why. Not until a few years later, I saw her passing by in different school uniform. All blue. Like those worn by the Red Guard during the Cultural Revolution. One day, my grandmother took me to visit her mother, the niece of my grandmother. When I walked in, I thought I could see her. But she wasn't there. I was amazed to see the massive Mao collection put around by her father. Yet, it was all supposed to be a "secret."<sup>26</sup> Nobody should talk about it back then. At least I was told not to. I never got to see my first "dream" girl ever since.

IT WAS SOMETHING QUITE ROMANTIC FOR ME SLIPPING INTO THOSE "LEFTIST" CINEMA HOUSES<sup>27</sup> IN THE EARLY 1970's. IT WASN'T POPULAR PLACE TO GO TO AT ALL DURING THAT PERIOD. I WENT ANYWAY. DIDN'T KNOW IF IT WAS CURIOSITY OR BLUNT DETERMINATION TO LOOK FOR ALTERNATIVE CINEMA OTHER THAN THOSE ADVOCATED BY THE MASS<sup>28</sup>. I WAS CURIOUS WITH ANYTHING RED BACK THEN. NOT

CRAZY ABOUT IT. SIMPLY WANTED TO KNOW MORE, AS IF THE SENTIMENTS OF GODARD'S *LA CHINOISE*<sup>29</sup>, HYPOTHESIZING A ROMANTIC, OR INTELLECTUALIZED, COMMUNIST CHINA, AS IF A PLACE I WOULD NEVER KNOW OF SINCE WE WERE NOT SUPPOSED TO TALK ABOUT IT. AT SCHOOL, THEY HANGED UP THE PORTRAIT OF QUEEN ELIZABETH II, SURELY NOT MAO ZEDONG. I ADMIRERD THE RED BOOK WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT REALLY HAPPENED DURING THE PERIOD OF CULTURAL REVOLUTION, NOT UNTIL 1975 WHEN I FIRST PASSED BY A SMALL TOWN CALLED SHEK KEI EN ROUTE TO CHUNGSHAN AND WITNESSED AN OPEN COURT HELD AT PUBLIC SQUARE, WITH OVER TEN TIED-UP "CRIMINALS" KNEELING UNDER SEAS OF POLITICAL BANNERS – THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I WITNESSED THINGS ABOUT THE RED GUARD...

- **PEEPEE:** Actually I had *another* "girl friend" to be honest. She was my neighbour. She always cried though. We played doctor and nurse once when we were about four. As a doctor, I asked her to take off her skirt and underpants. She did and she showed me her "peepee" down there. We almost got caught when her uncle came back. Her uncle was supposed to be my Godfather when I was baptized to be a catholic. This uncle of hers liked Elvis Presley and the Beatles. It was the first time I listened to American pop. It was supposed to be really cool doing that. I dreamt to be Elvis and I wore long hair like the Beatles when I got to secondary school. I never forgot the "peepee" scene every time when I listened to Elvis. At school, no one would show me any nude photos or paintings. Consequently, the secretive "peepee" became the subject of wet dreams at the age of puberty. Not of this "*another* girl friend" anymore since we moved to other place after quarrels among the adults. I dreamt of other "peepee" then. Yet never quite clear what a real "peepee" would look like until I met my ex-wife at the age of 17.<sup>30</sup> Gather all the years, "peepee" had subconsciously become as holy as the sign of *L'Origine du monde*, i.e. *The Origin of Life*, as so painted by Gustave Courbet in 1866, a painting that had become partly the subject of studies in my production notes on the making of *Exposed/Still Burning*<sup>31</sup>...

I LOVED NUDE PHOTOGRAPHY AND PAINTINGS, ESPECIALLY WOMEN'S. THE IRONY WAS: THE FIRST ADULT MAGAZINE I BOUGHT WAS A



*SECOND-HAND GAY MAGAZINE WITHOUT KNOWING IT (THE COVER WAS PROBABLY TORN AWAY BY THE NEWSTAND GUY ON PURPOSE TO AVOID UNWELCOME GAZE), WHICH WAS MY FIRST “SEX EDUCATION” ON THE MALE BODY. IT BEGAN THE FIRST AWARENESS OF THE MALE BODY I WAS CARRYING. I WAS 15. I HAD ALWAYS BEEN SHY ABOUT MY BODY EVER SINCE I WAS A CHILD. PROBABLY HAD TO DO WITH MY SIZE. I BEGAN EXPLORING MY OWN NUDE BODY IN FRONT OF MIRROR WHEN I WAS ALONE. MASTURBATION WAS ONE OF THE MOST DIRECT ROUTES TO GET IN TOUCH WITH THE SENSE OF PHYSICAL EXISTENCE. I ENJOYED WATCHING MY EX-WIFE’S NUDE BODY, ALSO THOSE OF MY LOVERS. YET THEY WERE NEVER COMFORTABLE TO REVEAL THEMSELVES TOTALLY NAKED. I OFTEN WONDERED IF IT WAS ENTIRELY MY PROBLEM. I FOUND NUDITY NOT ONLY SEXUAL, BUT ALSO BEAUTIFUL, DESIRABLE, PROVOCATIVE, REFLECTIVE, MOST HONEST AND SACRED. THE SUBJECT OF THE NUDE BODY WAS LIKE UNVEILING A LIFETIME BATTLEGROUND<sup>32</sup> THEREWITH. I GOT INTERESTED IN STUDYING NUDE PHOTOGRAPHERS AND THE AESTHETIC, CULTURAL, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EXPERIENCES THERE ALONGSIDE WITH, INCLUDING ROBERT MAPLETHORPE, ANDRES SERRANO, SPENCER TUNICK,<sup>33</sup> ETC. I COULD BE MESMERIZED BY THE BODY PAINTINGS OF FRANCIS BACON<sup>34</sup>, FRIDA KAHLO<sup>35</sup> AND EDVARD MUNCH<sup>36</sup> ...THEY HAD EACH OPENED ME UP INTO SOME PREVIOUSLY UNTOUCHED HONESTY AND FORM OF EXPRESSION IN HUMAN BODILY FORM AND PSYCHE, WHICH SUBSEQUENTLY ECHOED IN MY WORK<sup>37</sup> ...*

- **NEW CLOTHES:** I didn't have the luck to wear new clothes very often before 13 (I had my first earnings through tutoring primary students from 13 onward), with the exception about once a year the most, which was to “freshen up” to meet my mother’s rich parents. I used to wear used clothes of my brothers. I never minded much until I saw the new clothes my brothers put on out of the money given by grannies and relatives. I made myself up in newspaper and blankets at play instead. I broke my teeth once for a sudden slip onto the floor with direct hit on the chin while dancing with my new invented Hawaiian skirt. I gave up on the dream of better clothing since then. I shifted into drawing instead. Drawing was

the best daydreams I had...I hate the acute sense of self-consciousness when wearing new clothes...

*I SEE CLOTHES AS EXTRA BODILY STRUCTURE PEOPLE BUILD IN TO REINSTATE THEIR IDENTITY. I ENJOYED WORKING WITH ACTORS' BODIES IN THE FITTING ROOM, ESPECIALLY THE LOOK ON THEIR FACES AS SOMETHING NEW WAS BEING PUT ON THEIR BODIES PIECE BY PIECE, ESPECIALLY THOSE TRANSGURATIVE DESIGN THAT DISTORTED THEIR BODY FORM<sup>38</sup>. NOT MANY WOULD LOOK INTO THE MIRROR IN THE EYE OF THE CHARACTERS TO BE PORTRAYED. THEY'RE OFTEN LOOKING AT THEMSELVES AND THEN MAKING DREAMS WITH THE NEW BODILY TOPPINGS, LIKE A PINUP GIRL SELF-DISSECTING HER BODILY PARTS ACCORDING TO CONSUMER VALUES<sup>39</sup>. DRESSING UP AND UNDESSING BECOMES A VERY IMPORTANT PART OF MY CHARACTER IMAGES ON STAGE. IT ISN'T ABOUT CLOTHES. IT IS ABOUT THE BODY AND THE MIND, AND THE FORM OF EXPRESSIONS IN LINK WITH...*

- **FOOD:** I never enjoyed food as much as a child should when I was young. I rarely dreamt of food though I often watched my grandma cooked. She would give me a bit of this and that while cooking, mostly in “sneaky” manner. She would say, “If your stepmother sees it, you would be in trouble.” I never truly did. But I was intimidated for sure. At the dining table, I could not freely pick the food I wanted to eat. I could not touch the plate supposedly prepared only for my working father. As man of the house, he needed more than we did. At least that was what I was told. There were rules how to pick up food: I could only pick those in front of me, never anything across, i.e. on the other side of the plate; I could not leave the bowl unfinished, not even a tiny bit of rice drops; I had to put in at least two mouthful of rice before picking up a small bite from the dishes. (The irony was: I had later transferred, unconsciously, and unwittingly, such “rules” over my own son’s manner at the dinner table when he [*and I*] was still young.) We were not rich and there were nine of us. And there were no more than three plates of food on the table to share among all. Not that no desire whatsoever. I am sure food had once been the definite object of desire until it had become a sign of moral burden. (My stepmother had once poured a bowl of fish broth on my eldest brother’s head for

his refusal to eat the broth.) There was a lot of family politics going on at the dining table. After a while, I would finish my bowl of rice quickly and leave the table. When I was in secondary school, I saved the money for movies, not for food. As years gone by, foul physical symptoms emerged<sup>40</sup>...

*WHILE FOOD HAS ALWAYS BEEN A HOT SUBJECT FOR MANY AND THE REASONS FOR WORKING SO HARD FOR AND ALL THAT, UNHEALTHY THOUGHTS DID GROW IN MY HEAD. THE MORE PEOPLE TALKED ABOUT FOOD, THE MORE I SKIDDED AWAY FROM THE SUBJECT. IT BECAME REPULSIVE IN THE SYSTEM. I WOULD OFTEN GUTTER THE FOOD SOLELY OUT OF NECESSITY RATHER THAN ENJOYMENT. THERE WAS AN EXTENSIVE PERIOD OF TIME WHEN I THOUGHT I'D PREFER PILLS TO FOOD IF I HAD A CHOICE. NEVER A PASSIONATE EATER! ANOTHER PART OF IT HAD TO DO WITH MONEY. BEING THE YOUNGEST, I DIDN'T REALLY HAVE TO PAY AT ALL SINCE THE ELDERLY WOULD FIND THAT TO BE "THEIR RESPONSIBILITY." AFTER A WHILE, GETTING TO PAY FOR WHAT I EAT BECAME AN OBSESSION, PROBABLY THE NEED TO TELL THE WORLD: I AM MY OWN BOSS! YET I WAS ALWAYS TOO TIMID TO TELL ANYONE. MY BROTHERS AND SISTER STILL DO THE SAME NOWADAYS TO LINGER ON THE PAST HABITS AND I NEVER ENJOY THE "ADVANTAGE" OR THE "FIGHT" TO PAY FOR MY SHARE. THE BURDEN OF FOOD HAD LONG BECOME A SOCIAL THING AND PUT ME OFF FROM DREAMING, WORST OF ALL, THE FOOD SENSORS OF THE MOUTH. UNTIL ONE DAY, I LEARNT TO OVERHAUL ALL THOSE FOUL SENTIMENTS, NOT ONLY ON FOOD THAT HAD UNCONSCIOUSLY BOUNDED MY EATING MODE, BUT ALSO THE GENERAL WELL-BEING OF THE BODY-MIND...*

- **SIZE:** I was physically tiny. Always the first one in the lineup at school. I never enjoyed being the "first one" ever since. I was so small that everyone would push me around, including those in the family. I was pushed to squeeze inside a car under my stepmother's feet. I was secretly hidden to get inside a cinema before age of 10 so as to save from buying an extra ticket. I never had my own seat, always on someone's lap, or at tiny corner of a seat left aside for me. Size became so conscious at the back of my mind until I eventually resolved the anxiety with my dream. I dreamt BIG instead. The "bigness" could expand to things that were

no longer physical, something totally out of the imagination simply to reach far enough to surpass the inferiority of “being small and tiny” (the ever-striving human existential enigma later realized)...

*“BIG” IS AN OBSESSION IN THE BUSINESS WORLD. MANY HAVE THE IMPRESSION THAT THE STAGE SETS I DESIGNED WERE OFTEN “BIG AND HEAVY.” TO THE CONTRARY, THE SET I DEPICTED FOR MY OWN STORIES ON STAGE WERE OFTEN MINIMAL. IT IS THE CONTENT THAT COMPLETES THE LIFE WITHIN FORM. OTHER DIRECTORS WOULD LOOK FOR BIG SET TO DRESS UP THE STAGE TO CATER THE PROJECTED NEED AND TASTE OF SPECTATORS. THE EXPERIENCE OFTEN TURNED DISASTROUS.<sup>41</sup> THEY’RE THERE SIMPLY TO DECORATE AND PUNCH UP THE “SIZE” OF THE PRODUCTION, RATHER THAN TOUCHING BASE WITH THE FUNDAMENTALS. I LEARNT TO USE “SIZE” IN A DIFFERENT WAY – EITHER TWISTED FORMS THROUGH DISTORTION OR FILLING THEM WITH MINUTE DETAILS, INCORPORATING SPACE TO “DEVOUR” OR “PROVOKE” THE MOVING BODIES. IT’S LIKE PLAYING ANOTHER GAME OF IDEAS: BEING “BIG” IN THE DARK!*

- **PENIS:** I first saw the naked body of my father when I was about six. We went swimming and we showered together. My first shower experience back then.<sup>42</sup> I didn’t dare watching my dad. My focus was, of course, at his penis, all black and “dirty.” I was scared one day I would look the same. When I first saw pubic hair grown on me, I was worried. Yet how could I talk to anyone about it? I learnt about it through my father’s *yellow* newspaper later on. I learnt about my circumcised skin in the toilet one day and discovered all the dirt under the foreskin. I was too scared to peel it off. I even thought how grotesque the penis looked. When I finally saw it, i.e. the accumulated peel of urine dirt, come off the penis, I thought, “Wasn’t that all supposed to be part of my penis?” I had no one to talk to about my penis. I learnt to cover it up from everyone. Yet I began enjoying the play with my penis ever since I had learnt to manipulate my foreskin. My dreams were often related with an erected penis throughout my secondary school days. I didn’t know why. I secretly enjoyed the experience and I began my hunting for the secret joy in dreams...

THE OBSESSION OF “BIG” PENIS IN THE PORNOGRAPHIC WORLD DIDN'T ONLY DRAW SOME DEVASTATING PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECT ON MY “DINGY” PENIS; IT HAD FOULED UP MY BODY-MIND STRUGGLING IN AND OUT OF THE PRESUMPTIVE MASCULINE BOUNDARIES. THE MEDIA JOKES MANIPULATING BIAS ON PENIS SIZE REINFORCE THE DAMAGES FURTHERMORE. IT WAS LIKE A VIOLENT WAR BETWEEN “PRIVATE LUSTS AND PUBLIC EMERGENCIES,<sup>43</sup> ”LOOKING FOR ALTERNATIVE ROUTES BEFORE TOTALLY CONSUMED BY THE WORLD OF MERCHANDISED SEXUALITY. THE AWARENESS OF MASCULINITY AND MACHISMO WERE MINDFULLY ABSENT, POSSIBLY OUT OF DELIBERATE WITHDRAWAL, IN MY UP-BRINGING. WITH THE VIOLENCE REVEALED IN MY FATHER'S PERSONAL WAR WITH THE NEIGHBOUR OVER THE ISSUE OF HIS “CONDEMNED ADULTERY”<sup>44</sup> AND HIS “BARBARIC” WAYS TO DRAW COMMAND TO RE-GAIN ATTENTION AFTER HIS RETURNING HOME, ALL SUBSEQUENTLY HAD PUSHED US ALL AWAY FROM HOME<sup>45</sup>. I REPLACED THE FEELINGS BY ENJOYING THE FEMINITY IN ME. I EVEN HAD DREAMS OF MAKING LOVE WITH MY “VAGINA” RATHER THAN MY PENIS, AS IF SELF CASTRATED<sup>46</sup>, BUT THE FIRE IN THE BELLY KEEPS TELLING ME: BE A MAN! AT THE DOORSTEP OF PATRIARCHIAL TRADITIONS, I HAVE BEEN SEEKING ALTERNATIVE EXITS THAT COULD LEAVE THE PHALLUS, I.E. EITHER THE PENIS OR THE IMAGINARY “VAGINA” IN ME, FREE FROM EXISTENTIAL TRAUMAS, WHICH COULD HAVE BEEN THE EFFECT OF WITHDRAWAL DURING THE YEARS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPOTENCE BACK IN 1990'S, A PERIOD SIMPLY GIVEN UP TO “PERFORM” THE SEXUAL RITUAL WHEN THE TRUE FEELING OF INTIMACY WAS ABSENT...I USED TO MASTURBATE WITH TEARS...AS IF SIMPLY TO LET GO THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ME, OR, AS LACAN PUT IT, THE DESIRE OF THE MOTHER<sup>47</sup> RATHER...I ENJOY BEING WITH WOMEN MOSTLY BECAUSE I ENJOY BEING CLOSE TO FEMINITY, OR THE PHALLUS OF “BEING,” I COULD IDENTIFY WITH...

- **RESPECT:** I never got much attention in the family since the adults were always occupied with something. My brothers and sister didn't play with me much since they had their lot of problems to deal with under the watchful eyes of my father

and my stepmother. I finally earned some “respect” and “attention” one year for washing dishes after dinner. My father took me to a movie as reward, only to find that it was a treat subsequently detested by my brothers and sister. I hated “reward” since then. I never attended any kind of award ceremonies since my Primary graduation. I never dreamt of getting awards. I didn’t go to get them even when I was awarded several times much later on<sup>48</sup>. I LOVE being respected. But I *detested* AWARD. I rewarded myself with dreamWORKs instead...

*I LEARNT TO AWARD MYSELF WITH MY OWN WORKS, WHICH HAVE EVENTUALLY BECOME THE GENUINE BRIDGE FOR CROSSING OVER TO THE OTHER POSSIBLY TOUCHABLE WORLD AND BEYOND. THE QUALITY CONTACT WITH ONE’S BODY-MIND REMAINS TO BE THE TIME AND SPACE ONE ALLOWS THE SELF TO PARTICIPATE THROUGH THE REALIZATION OF MAKING CONNECTIONS WITH OBJECTS AND PEOPLE THROUGH WORK. I CAN ONLY RESPECT THESE WORKING MOMENTS, WITH PATHS OPENING UP FOR THE BODY AND THE MIND TO LIBERATE...*

- **BRUCE LEE:** I had to thank my father for having left home most of the years when I was in Secondary school. Those were the time my brothers and sister began to pay some attention to me. They had no choice since no one took care of me. My stepmother left much earlier after her divorce with my dad. My grandma was too sad seeing her only son left without a word. So my brother taught me “Bruce Lee fighting” and all that. He even made me a “double-rods fighting stick” with the wooden rod hacked off from kitchen mop. He also took me to watch him playing with his friends. My sister took me to the cinema, mostly Taiwanese love flicks. Until she got a boyfriend who loved art cinema, I got the chance to join a small cinema club, the Phoenix Cine Club, which held regular screening in a kindergarten at Yau Ma Tei. I got to watch a lot of films I never understood. I never minded much. I enjoyed watching the projector reel rolling and the way they changed reels of film. I sat quietly among these big “brothers” and “sisters,” trying to figure out the passion behind them all, something quite missing in my sister though. When I was in Form three, she got me playing detective, following her friend’s boyfriend to see if he had an affair with someone else. I was playing that detective the day when Bruce Lee died. I was shocked and forgot about the role I

was supposed to play. I had my Bruce Lee dreams those days, just like other teenagers of the time. My body would get imaginative of high kicks and moves I rarely had back then when I was little. The death of Bruce Lee, my teen idol, was the first time feeling like a part of *me* gone...

*I LATER REALIZED IT WASN'T BRUCE LEE, BUT RATHER THE EFFECT OF REPRESSIVE COLONIZED PSYCHOSIS, AS IF TAKING ITS IMAGINATIVE FLIGHT OF EGO-BOOSTING THROUGH BRUCE LEE'S KICKS AND GRINS IN THE YEARS WHEN HONG KONG GREW SENSITIVE IN THE PROCESS OF BUILDING ITS OWN IDENTITY THROUGH POP CULTURE<sup>49</sup>. AND BRUCE LEE HAPPENED TO BE THE MOST MARKETABLE PHENOMENON ONE COULD GRASP AT TIMES, THE VERY FIRST SELF-PROCLAIMED "INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION" – BUILDING YET ANOTHER SET OF STEREOTYPES TO THE FOREVER-SELF-ANTAGONIZED IMAGE OF CHINAMEN. THE "CHINESENESS" HAD BECOME A VERY COMPLICATED WAR WITHIN ME EVER SINCE THE AWARENESS BROUGHT ABOUT THROUGH THE DEATH OF BRUCE LEE AND THE EVENTUAL DEATH TOLL OF THE 1989 TIANANMEN SQUARE MASSACRE, AS IF THE PATH OF PERSONAL AWAKENING FROM POP CULTURE TO NATIONAL AFFAIRS. THE HANDOVER OF HONG KONG SOVEREIGNTY BACK TO CHINA HAD TRIGGERED THE FIRE OF THE SEARCH FOR THE ULTIMATE ABSURDITY IN THE "CHINESENESS" OF A HONGKONGER. I HAD MADE REPETITIVE EFFORT IN SUCH EXPLORATION THROUGH MY WORKS BEFORE AND AFTER 1997<sup>50</sup>...*

- **AMERICA:** I learnt about the “world” from my father’s newspaper, the only “outside world” I could make contact with, since they said I was too young to go anywhere. I learnt to read through words I couldn’t comprehend. I read girly stories, horseracing, football news and most of all, those beautiful fighting jets often found in the Headlines.<sup>51</sup> My brothers used to make models of those wonderful jet planes (which was made possible from the money given by mom’s parents) and hanged them high above, somewhere I could never reach. It was years later when I learnt that those jets were American bombers that had killed many in Vietnam War. I didn’t understand then. My brother and I thought: America should be a great country; otherwise they wouldn’t keep posting her

news in the headlines! Maybe that's why we all went studying in that country. When I got jailed in Pasadena of Texas for running the red traffic lights, causing damages to a crossing pickup truck right on the spot, I got stripped naked in front of the watchful eyes of two white policemen<sup>52</sup>, I knew I was in the wrong place. I decided: America wasn't the place for me for sure! Ever since then, every time when I think of America, my body would gather some strange resilience, as if to further reinforce my determination to focus my work mainly on my hometown, i.e. Hong Kong<sup>53</sup>...

*I WASN'T SUPPOSED TO GO TO AMERICA, ESPECIALLY WHEN I HAD JUST TURNED INTO A TEENAGE FATHER AT THE AGE OF 18. WAS I RUNNING AWAY FROM THE FAMILY? (O HOW WE LOVE TO DRAW CONCLUSION IN HASTE THROUGH ISOLATED CIRCUMSTANCES, REGARDLESS ONE'S AGE AND SOCIAL UP-BRINGING...) THE FIVE MONTHS BEFORE BOARDING THE FLIGHT TO HOUSTON WERE THE MOST INTIMATE HOURS BETWEEN MY SON AND I (I WAS TOTALLY ISOLATED IN THE MONTHS OF MY WIFE'S PREGNANCY, STRUGGLING TO BECOME "A THOUGHTFUL ADULT," YET WITHOUT THE NEEDED RESOURCE AND SUPPORT WHATSOEVER, AND THE IMAGINATION TO SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVE ROUTES TO SELF-EQUIP MYSELF TO BE A FATHER. IT WAS A NO-WIN SITUATION UNTIL I WAS "APPROVED" BY MY EX-WIFE'S PARENTS TO STUDY ABROAD. IT HAD BECOME A "MISSION" FOR ME, AS IF THE BEST WAY TO ATTAIN ANY EVENTUAL TRUST FROM FOLKS, AS IF SAYING: WITH THE BACK-UP OF A BETTER EDUCATION, I WOULD BE A RESPONSIBLE AND, MOST OF ALL, CAPABLE FATHER! IRONICALLY, AMERICA HAD BECOME THE ULTIMATE OBSTACLE BETWEEN MY EX-WIFE AND ME, AND SUBSEQUENTLY, PUSHED US TO THE FINAL DIVORCE DUE TO THE LONG YEARS OF SEPARATION. TO ME, IT WASN'T AT ALL "AN AMERICAN DREAM." IT WAS AN AMERICAN NIGHTMARE! THE FLIGHT TO USA HAD SUBSEQUENTLY DIVERTED MY INTERNAL FLIGHT TO EMOTIONAL ABYSS, LEAVING MY SON IN VAIN OF A FATHER FAILING TO COMMUNICATE WITH. THE "PERSONAL GAIN" DIDN'T HELP TO LIFT ME UP TO EXPECTATION OF THE FAMILY CALL. AMERICA SUDDENLY TRANSFORMED INTO "A DROWNING POOL," ON ONE HAND OPENING ME UP TO ALTERNATIVE IMAGINATIONS IN HUMAN SUFFERINGS, ON*



*THE OTHER HAND CASTING ME AS THE ULTIMATE SINISTER OF "FAMILIAL CRIME," MORALLY SPEAKING! FAMILY WARS HAD SUBSEQUENTLY BECOME ONE OF THE KEY SUBJECTS IN MY THEATREWORKS. **THE SEVENTH DRAWER** WAS ONE OF THE ESSENTIAL JOURNEYS TO SEARCH THE ME THROUGH THE ROOTS OF MY FAMILY, WHERE "AMERICA" WAS SEEMINGLY LONG DESTINATED EVER SINCE THE DREAM OF GOLD MOUNTAINS AMONG RELATIVES BACK IN THE EARLY YEARS OF 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY (Ho, 2003:92-104)...*

- **ALTAR:** I didn't know why I was a Catholic other than the means to get admitted to a Catholic primary school<sup>54</sup>. That was ultimately my stepmother's proud decision. I went to church every Sunday since I was little. I was mesmerized by the ritual play up above the altar, with priest and choirboys all dressed up to put on those repeating spectacles. I had dreamt to be one of those choirboys. Of course, I didn't. Since I was told I sinned everyday and I had to pray for forgiveness. I worried about sins and was told to report to the priest every Sunday. Where came all the power from the one standing in the Altar? (I do wonder if the Church had left me the strong built-in sense of "guilt" over "wrongdoings," which had become such a big part of the consciousness in the first 40 years of my life.)<sup>55</sup> I eventually learnt to put on my own "altar" instead, with ritual solely created by me. I sanctified the self-spirit through these altars created in theatre later on. I dreamt through these altars and became my own "priest" instead. My body-mind would often get energized and focused in the process of enacting imaginary rituals at these "theatrical altars"...

*EVERY TIME AFTER CONFESSION, I WAS TOLD TO "RECITE" SEVERAL PRAYERS AND TO ASK FOR FORGIVENESS. I DIDN'T EVEN UNDERSTAND WHAT THE PRAYERS MEANT. YET I FOLLOWED THE ORDER, MIRACLOUSLY SO, AND REPETITIVELY SAYING PRAYERS EVERY WEEK TILL THE AGE OF 13. THE STORY OF CHRIST PROVIDED ME SCHOOL HOLIDAYS, THAT'S THE BEST EFFECT OF ALL AS FAR AS A YOUNG CHILD WAS CONCERNED. IT WAS A STRANGE FEELING TO LISTEN TO THE OMNI-PRESENT POWER OF THESE GOD OF BETHLEHEM THAT HAD LITTLE IN COMMON WITH THE FOLK TALES OF CHINA. WE DIDN'T ASK ANY QUESTIONS. WE "BELIEVED" FOR THE SAKE OF CHARITY*

*DESPERATELY NEEDED AT TIME OF POVERTY. WE “BELIEVED” IN ANYTHING THAT COULD HELP US PASS THE BAD TIME. YET HOW COME THESE GOD OF BETHLEHEM MINDED SO MUCH WHETHER I WENT TO PRAY FOR HIM ON SUNDAY OR NOT? I BEGAN ASKING QUESTIONS NO ONE WAS INTERESTED IN ANSWERING, BOTH AT HOME AND SCHOOL. IF I WERE ALREADY PART OF GOD, WOULDN’T THE BEST WAY TO SERVE GOD BE TO LIVE AND AMPLIFY THE MAGNIFICENT BEING ALREADY IN ME? THE THEATRE BECAME MY “CHURCH” MAKING THE QUEST OF LIFE; IT HAS BEEN THE HOME OF OPERATION ON THINGS UNKNOWN OR DISGUISED.*

- **CINEMA & BIBLE:** Every Friday, they transformed the Church altar into cinema and I loved Friday night watching movies with neighbors and, along side a lot of “brothers and sisters.” The year when I decided to leave the Church, I began to read the Bible to find out the reasons for all those Sunday church routines, and the nature of “sins” and “guilt” I had to pay my due for in prayers I didn’t mean to say in the first place. I went to cinema instead, the “church” replacement for cultivating my soul! I loved sitting in the dark. The cinema was the only escape route for me to stay away from the reality I couldn’t comprehend. I ran away from school and hid myself most of the time in cinema. I was drawn to another worlds of “heightened reality” that pushed me to think, to imagine, to dream, to innovate, to re-edit, to analyze, to hypothesize, to play, to be bad, to be creative...to be ME! I learnt to dream there, almost excessively by any normal acceptable standard of the time.<sup>56</sup> I never had any regrets for doing so. And I learnt my lessons well there, much more than what I learnt in school for sure. At least it was so in my secondary school days. The cinema became my “church” and the movie-related reviews scrapbook my bible. The energy in me almost seemed inexhaustible at times of assembling all those human story fragments collected at movies...

I learnt to stroll along streets with cinematic perception. My eyes were my camera. My legs the dolly to move the camera. My neck moved to allow the panning shots, etc. I learnt to dream with my body moving. I moved and the dream began reeling. I learnt to talk with myself through the “camera” movement. And I saw the “reflection” of me everywhere. That’s how I learnt to understand Samuel Beckett,

to rehearse again and again within the confined physical space with ghosts whispering in my ears...I learnt about *Endgame*<sup>57</sup> through the long street-walking days when I constantly skipped school in my adolescence and the long period of social exclusion experienced after the pregnancy of my 16-year-old girl friend (whom became my only “lawful” wife before our eventual divorce). I learnt to value each step I made in the years to come. I learnt to transform all my body cells into camera, the only way to meditate through and through the long *falling* years...

*I FOLLOWED THE QUESTS MADE BY FILM DIRECTORS: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL JOURNEY OF FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT, THE MORALITY WAR UNVEILED BY INGMAR BERGMAN, THE VIOLENCE GRAPHICALLY DISPLACED BY SAM PECKINPAH IN HIS QUESTION OVER THE INABILITY OF PEACE AMONG HUMANS, THE GRIM WORLD OF ENTRAPMENT WOVEN BY EARLY ROMAN POLANSKI, THE ROMANTICISED REVOLUTION PAINTED BY SERGEI EISENSTEIN, THE DIALECTIC ANALOG OF JEAN-LUC GODARD, ETC. I LEARNT TO THINK IN FILM LANGUAGE. IT IS THE “CUT,” THE “PAN,” THE “DISSOLVE,” THE “LONG TAKE,” THE “CLOSE-UPS,” THE “SUPERIMPOSING,” AND THE “TRACKING” THAT HAD PULLED MY BODY-MIND OPEN TO FURTHER INVESTIGATION OF THE HUMAN LANDSCAPE. I LIVED IN CINEMA AND SUBSEQUENTLY I TURNED AWAY FROM CINEMA; I PULLED INTO SUPER-REALITY EXAMINED IN THEATRE, WITH LIVING BEINGS WORKING, WITHOUT THE LENSES OF CAMERA OR THE MANIPULATION THROUGH THE EDITING ROOM. IT IS THE LIVE EDITING OF LIVING ACTIONS AT WORK. I REALISE THE HUMAN STORY THROUGH THE LIVING IN ME ALL IN ALL...*

*CINEMA COULD NEVER BE EQUIVALENT TO IMAGES AS DEPICTED BY THE HUMAN MIND; IT SIMPLY EXTRACTS IMAGES AND FORMULATES SPECIFIC MOTORING AUDIO-VISUAL PHOTOGRAPHIC ELEMENTS UNDER SPECIFIC FRAME CAPTURED IN PARTICULAR SPACE-TIME. MY MIND COULD NEVER STAY FOCUSED ON ONE SINGLE SUBJECT FOR LONG. IT OFTEN FLUCTUATES FROM ONE THING TO ANOTHER AND*

CONSTANTLY SHIFTS BACK AND FORTH ALONGSIDE WITH DAYDREAMING, FREE ASSOCIATIONS AND TURNING THOUGHTS. CINEMA BECOMES THE TOOL OF EXAMINING FLOWING THOUGHTS AND CONSCIOUSNESS AS DREAMT AND FABRICATED IN THE BODY-MIND, WITH THE SENSE OF TIME THAT SHEER WORDS COULD NEVER REPLACE ON EQUAL TERMS. CONSIDERING THE TIME TO COMPLETE A PARTICULAR PASSAGE AND THE REELING TIME OF PARTICULAR SCENE IN CINEMA, HOW DIFFERENT WOULD THE EXPERIENCE BE (I'M NOT IMPLYING THE LATTER IS ALTOGETHER NECESSARILY BETTER THAN THE FORMER BY EXPERIENCE)<sup>58</sup> ? **LIFE IS BASICALLY AUDIO-, MOTORING- AND PICTORIAL-BASED. WORDS ARE ATTEMPTS TO CONSOLIDATE THOSE EXPERIENCES AND CONFINED VISIONS WITH PARTICULARS. CINEMA WORKS THROUGH DIALOGUES WITH THE ABSTRACT AND THE REAL, LIKE THE BODY-MIND, ALWAYS BUILDING A SERIES OF SELF-DIALOGUE OVER EVENTS TAKEN PLACE IN THE INNER AND OUTER REALM OF EVERYDAY LIFE. CINEMA BECOMES A POWERFUL THINKING AND PERCEPTION-BASED TOOL HELPING ME ZOOM IN SPECIFIC SPECTRUM OF LIVING, DISSOLVING IT INTO ULTRA ZONES WHERE ONE COULD BE DISTANCED AND FREE ENOUGH TO REFLECT THE EXPERIENCES AS UNVEILED. MY SPIRIT OFTEN TRAVELS WITH THE IMAGES AND MAKES DREAM AS REFLECTED IN THE MIRROR PROVIDED THEREOF. TO REALIZE AND AUGMENT MY CINEMATIC IMAGINATION IN THEATRE NOT ONLY HAD ME REQUESTIONED THE NATURE AND TRADITIONAL FORM OF STORYTELLING ON STAGE, IT ALSO HELPED ME CRYSTALIZE THOUGHTS, BOTH OF THE PAST AND THE PRESENCE.**<sup>59</sup>

- **RITUALS:** I first learnt thing related to “rituals” from my grandma whenever she put all the chicken, pork and fruits up at the *altar* specially setting for major festivals when I was still young. When she no longer put on the “shows,” or when the ritual got simpler and simpler as years gone by, I realized her time was passing away (later I realized that it was the loss of faith in us all not taking her prayers and rituals seriously). I put on my own rituals in theatre. They became the bridge

to visit those unknown “gods” my grandmother used to pray for. To me, they were the unsung voices of the oppressed. My body and soul seemed transfixed every time in search of these “gods,” or “Buddha” rather...

*THERE ARE A LOT OF RITUAL PLACES AT HOME. SECRET PLACES, WHERE THINGS WERE PUT TOGETHER IN SPECIAL MANNER. HIDING PLACES. I PERFORM MY OWN RITUALS TO MY BODY, MY MIND AND MY SPIRIT. THERE'RE ALWAYS PARTICULAR PLACES FOR PARTICULAR THINGS, AS IF THEY'RE THERE FOR PARTICULAR PURPOSES. SURROUNDED BY OBJECTS FROM EVERYWHERE. ALWAYS TEMPTED. AND BECAME THEIR SLAVES. RITUAL BECAME MY OWN ACT OF EXCORCISM, CONTEMPLATING THE FRAILING SPIRIT...*

- **FIRECRACKERS & UNIFORM:** I enjoyed watching people playing firecrackers when I was young. I was too timid to play one though. I later learnt that they put bombs near our building and policemen came to put them away.<sup>60</sup> Everyone was tense and worried. I didn't know why. I dreamt of being a policeman back then. Cause a man looked good in uniform. I loved wearing uniform until the day when my secondary school principal denied my story of being robbed outside school. I was told to report to the police station on my own. I did. The policemen laughed at me. I was twelve. I never liked policemen since then. I missed the firecrackers. I never missed my uniform though. Since then, I never led a “uniformed” life but rather dazzling around through dreams to create glaring living moments like the way lit firecrackers do...

*THESE HAVE BECOME FAMILIAR SCENES IN HONG KONG: IT'S 2230. A SECURITY GUARD KNOCKED ON THE DOOR TO ASK EVERYONE TO LEAVE IN 10 MINUTES. THE CLASS WAS SCHEDULED TO FINISH AT 2300. ANY OVERTIME LESSON WOULD BE CONSIDERED “INEFFICIENT” AND “LACK OF MANAGEMENT” ...TWENTY-FOUR YOUNG TEENAGERS PLAYED AT THE PARK. A SECURITY GUARD STOPPED US AND ASKED FOR PLAYING PERMIT SINCE WE EXCEEDED THE LAWFUL REQUIREMENT OF GROUP GATHERING – THREE THE MOST...WE WERE TRYING TO RELAX AND SIT ON THE FLOOR. A SECURITY GUARD APPROACHED WITH A FINGER GESTURE: NO SITTING ON FLOOR! IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A PUBLIC PLACE...A GROUP OF YOUNGSTERS DRESSED UP IN COSTUME*

*WITH MAKE-UP AND DRUMS AND ALL THAT, APPARENTLY ENJOYING THEIR STREET CARNIVAL. A POLICEMAN STOPPED THEM AND ASKED FOR IDENTIFICATION. WE APPARENTLY HADN'T, ONCE AGAIN, APPLIED FOR PERMIT TO PLAY...FIRECRACKERS HAD BEEN BANNED FOR OVER 40 YEARS. THE CITY IS ALWAYS ON GUARD, WITH UNIFORMED STAFF TO ENSURE ITS "UNIFORM DISPLAY OF LIBERTY" ...*

- **TOP, MIDDLE & FALLING:** I never enjoyed books at school. I used to love drawings only in my secondary school days. All my biology, physics, chemistry and geography diagrams were drawn well, except that I never understood the details behind. The teachers were mostly babbling on without asking if I understood or not. I was supposed to be studying in a top government school.<sup>61</sup> They said being in a “top school” meant we were smart and we weren’t supposed to ask too many questions. I used to pick seat where the teachers wouldn’t see me around. I didn’t enjoy being on top of anything. When I drove to the top of Grand Canyon after my college graduation, I understood what it meant: I was standing there on the top of something, alone, cold and the world was vast...I suddenly remember how I began reading when my brother handed me Richard Bach’s *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* (1970). I was about fourteen. I enjoyed the sense of “falling” and then found my way back, like Jonathon in the book. I read a lot since then, but never the textbooks for examination. And I did *fall* many many times since then. It was hard finding my way up. I began to understand the meaning of “being in the middle,” something distantly echoing the Confucius teaching.<sup>62</sup> I am the “middle” person among my family members. I learnt a lot being in the middle...

*GETTING AHEAD OR WANTING TO BE ON TOP OF OTHER SEEMS TO BE SOMETHING GENETICALLY PLOTTED. ALL NATURALLY ASSEMBLED AND SELECTED THROUGH THE SURVIVAL MACHINE, I.E. THE HUMAN BODY.<sup>63</sup> WE COULD NOT LIVE FOR GENERATIONS. OUR GENES CAN (Dawkins, 1976:29). MAYBE "TRYING TO GET ON TOP" IS THE SIMPLEST TERM OF HOW OUR GENETIC INSTINCT CREATES BETTER SURVIVAL FOR THE NEXT GENERATION TO BE. YET SUCH "BEING ON TOP" IS ALL SUBJECTED TO FURTHER INTERPRETATION SINCE SURVIVAL COULD, AND INDEED HAS, BECOME CRITICAL UNDER DIFFERENT*

CIRCUMSTANCES. UNFORTUNATELY, THE NATURE OF “TOP” IS OFTEN TARGETTED SINGLE-MINDEDLY IN THE BUSINESS WORLD, I.E. WINNING (OR MAKING THE MARKED PROFIT) AT WHATEVER COST. THE ONE-DIMENSIONALIZED BEING IN VIEW OF BEING ON TOP COULD POSSIBLY CREATE THE ULTIMATE DOWNFALL OF MANY FOR THE LACK OF DIVERSITY AND ALTERNATIVES IN VIEW OF DANGER. CONSEQUENTLY, NO RISKS COULD BE ACCEPTABLE! I NEVER ENVY PEOPLE BEING ON TOP EARNING “FORTUNES.” “FORTUNES” HAVE THEIR OWN PRICE TAGGED RIGHT AGAINST THE THROAT OF THE PEOPLE CHOSEN TO HANG ONTO, LEAVING ONE FULL-TIME ENGAGED TO FOREVER CHECKING ON THE LIKELY SETBACK OF THE NEXT MINUTE TO COME. NO WONDER SO MANY BODIES GET TENSED UP, WITHOUT TRULY UNDERSTANDING THE LEEWAY BEING IN THE MIDDLE. WHEN “FALLING” IS BEING SEEN AS SHAMEFUL, ALL EYES LOOK INTO THE SAME UPWARD DIRECTION, WITH STIFF NECKS AND WEIGHT-BEARING SPINE BARELY MAKING THE NEEDED SUPPORT...THE POSSIBLE “PLEASURE OF FALLING” SOUNDS A BIT “OBSCENE” AT THE AGE OF ECONOMY-DRIVEN SOCIETY...

- **NATIONAL ANTHEM / dreamWORKs:** I used to enjoy watching the school janitors raising the colony flag when I was in secondary school. Didn't know why. The British national anthem with Queen Elizabeth II as backdrop played at end of TV program each day didn't mean anything to me though. The first time I heard people singing national anthem was in the American football field. I was already 18. I was overwhelmed when seeing everyone singing together standing up. Didn't exactly know the reasons right away. Probably made me realize the impact of songs sung by the Nazi parade seen in movies<sup>64</sup>. I didn't even know a Chinese national anthem actually *existed* at that time to my experience. Thought it was *The East is Red*.<sup>65</sup> Since the handover, I have been listening to the Chinese national anthem over and over again. And it has never touched my heart, only bitter memories<sup>66</sup>. I guess I have learnt the lesson and the danger of being a nationalist: people get killed. I detested violence, and still do. Last year, I wrote a poem on the possible nature of love for a country. I was in tears when it was recited in one of

my productions.<sup>67</sup> I made dreams in my play throughout. I learnt the importance of DreamWorks. The only living anthem in me...

*“ARISE! ALL WHO REFUSE TO BE SLAVES!”<sup>68</sup> HOW SHOULD WE DEFINE SLAVE NOWADAYS? WOULD WORKING 9 TO 10 HOURS IN FRONT OF A COMPUTER BE COUNTING AS A SORT OF SLAVES? WALLS LONG BUILT WITHIN THE FLESH AND BLOOD, MAKING SMALL ATTEMPT FOR THE BASIC HUMAN LIBERTY. “THE GREATEST PERIL” COULD BE FOREVER AROUND, DEPENDING ON THE POSITIONING OF THE HEART AND MIND. “ARISE!” WHERE TO? MILLION OF HEARTS STILL YEARNING, FOR THE LIBERTY STILL BURIED BEYOND IMAGINATION. WHERE IS THE ENEMY? THE ENEMY COULD BE WITHIN YOU AND ME...*

- **ENGLISH Vs. CHINESE:** I enjoyed singing a lot since my primary school days. The first hit song in English was like Petula Clark’s *Kiss me goodbye* and Julie Andrew’s *Do Re Me* from *The Sound of Music*. My brothers and sister used to complain a lot over my singing. They said I simply ruined the beauty of the songs they loved. I learnt to sing alone since then. I sang when I was sad, holding a guitar I never learnt how to play with. The songs I sang were mostly in English. Didn’t know why. The pop charts were always lined up with American and British pop songs. I loved the English language simply because I found it more direct to express my feelings in general (somehow never the details of my thoughts though). I was poor in Chinese writing, which didn’t necessarily mean I was fluent in English. I tried to imitate American accent and pretended to be an American when I first landed in Houston and got my first job as a busboy in a restaurant. I was probably afraid that I would be discovered as an illegal worker (since I wasn’t supposed to work as a “foreign student”) if my English weren’t impressive enough. I was, in fact, always frustrated both in English and Chinese. Always half and half without any full apprehension or the true pulse of the language. It was Ezra Pound’s poetry (1957) inspired me to pick up Chinese again. Yes, from a Hispanic writer! It was the first time seeing the missing sense of heritage and culture in me growing up in a colony. I eventually learnt to accept the incompleteness in me regarding the semi-fluency in either language. My tongue and my mind were colonized. It took me so many years to make peace with the colonized being in me. And I haven’t been truly successful so far. I have already



turned 50...the only good thing has been: I have finally learnt to find my freedom in dreaming through wordplay instead...

*WOULD FINDINGS MEAN ANYTHING IF NOT FULLY UNDERSTOOD OR ESTABLISHED BY ONESELF? WHAT WOULD BE THE QUALITY OF FINDING WHEN BEING TAKEN AWAY FROM THE FUNDAMENTAL PATH OF LANGUAGE, AS IF IT WERE THE TOOL TO OPEN ONE'S EYES?<sup>69</sup> WHEN THE LANGUAGE PATH WAS BLOCKED AND SUBSEQUENTLY MADE THE QUESTIONING HANDICAPPED, HOW SHOULD ONE PROCEED TO BETTER LEARNING IN LIFE? THE CHINESE I WROTE WASN'T AT ALL TOTALLY COHERENT TO THE CANTONESE I SPOKE. THE ENGLISH I LEARNT WAS RARELY USED IN DAILY LIVING. WHEN "STANDARD" AS SET THROUGH GOVERNING EXAMINATION SYSTEM DEVELOPED ACCORDING TO THE FAVOR OF COLONIAL POWER PLAY, THE LANGUAGE AS SET WOULD TURN OUT TO FULFILL ONLY THE EXPECTATION OF UNIFORMED PERFORMANCE (IRONICALLY, I WASN'T ALLOWED TO USE MY OWN LANGUAGE, I.E. CHINESE, TO WRITE MY DISSERTATION ALL BECAUSE OF THE "STANDARD" AS SET, AND SUCH "STANDARD" IS OFTEN ALTERNATE AND FOUND APPLICABLE ACCORDING TO THE CHANGE OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TIME AND MIND FRAME "LEGITIMATIZED" BY THE AUTHORITY). I HATE UNIFORM, ESPECIALLY WHEN STANDARD IS PRESCRIBED AND ALLOWING NO FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF LEARNING THROUGH TRIALS AND ERRORS. I BEGAN MY LEARNING OF LANGUAGE ALL OVER DURING MY COLLEGE YEARS. I LEARNED TO EXPERIMENT WITH WORDS AND USE THEM AS PLATFORMS TO DRAW NEW IDEAS. THEY ARE NOT THE LANGUAGE I WAS TAUGHT BUT RATHER ATTEMPTS AND EXPERIENCES TO TRANSFORM THE SENSE OF BEING. I WAS IN TEARS THE DAY I DISCOVERED WRITING AS ALTERNATE ROUTE OF FINDING THE SELF AND THE BEING IN ME. I ENJOY WRITING LIKE I NEVER HAD. I HAVE TO LEARN TO COME TO TERMS WITH THE LIMITATION STILL BOUNDING THE MIND AND ITS POWER TO MIX WITH WORDS; YET I DO KNOW ONCE I ACKNOWLEDGE THE PRESENCE OF SUCH BOUNDARIES, I WOULD BE ABLE TO MOVE ONTO NEW PLAINS...AND SO AS I WRITE, I DREAM, I MOVE ON<sup>70</sup>...*

- **ON THE ROAD AGAIN:** I was never allowed to go out playing in my childhood. Every time I got a chance to play “outside,” it was an adventure for me. Until my secondary school years, I spent a lot of time in the streets since nobody was around anymore to keep me at home. Every time when I ran away from school or family, I would spend most of my time “on the road.” In the beginning, I never got to study the road map. I had to walk with my memory, relocating the spine of the city: I kept in mind that every time I got lost, I would direct myself back into the main road. Heading “Central” seemed to be the destination in those days. At 17, I was working as a messenger for a factory. I traveled a lot daily to send out messages from Kwun Tong to Central. I did not only learn more about the “interior” of the City, I learnt more about myself walking through the streets.<sup>71</sup> When I went studying in the USA, I enjoyed driving freely across states. Traveling around had become a way of life for over forty years before I decided to sort of “settling down” for the first time 7 years ago. My dreams have a lot to do with the road. Like American country singer Willie Nelson’s song goes, “On the Road Again...” Not until I traveled back to China had I realized the colonial soil I had been walking on and the affects it had cast upon my soil and my dream. The freeways in America had opened my mind to the meaning of networking in human civilization and the resulted segregation thereof and I did dream if China could be the same with as strong a highway system...

*IN 2006, I TRAVELLED TO LONGSHENG OF GUANGXI PROVINCE VISITING THE YAO PEOPLE AND THE ROAD WAS BARELY OPENED. THE YAO PEOPLE LIVE IN STEEP MOUNTAINS COVERED WITH RICE TERRACES. I WAS TOLD THAT THEY USED TO BE LIVING IN NORTHERN PART OF CHINA SOME 2000 YEARS AGO. THEY MIGRATED TO GUANGXI AND HID THEMSELVES DEEP IN THE MOUNTAIN FOR POLITICAL REASONS. THE NATURAL MOUNTAINOUS BARRIER WAS IDEAL TO THEIR SAFETY. TO THEM, ANY “ROAD” ACCESS TO THE REGION WOULD MEAN POSSIBLE THREAT TO THEIR SURVIVAL. THAT WAS THE OTHER SIDE OF “ROAD” I NEVER THOUGHT OF WHILE I WAS ENJOYING THE FREEWAYS IN USA. THE YAO PEOPLE MADE ME THINK OF THE RED INDIAN RESERVATION AREAS AS WELL, ALSO SEGREGATED, YET FOR A DIFFERENT REASON – THE INTENTIONAL ETHNIC ISOLATION UNDER SUBJUGATION BY THE US GOVERNMENT<sup>72</sup>. **I HAVE DONE THE SAME TO MY OWN BODY-MIND,***

*AS IF A SUBCONSCIOUS OR UNCONSCIOUS EFFORT, OR DESIRE RATHER, TO BLOCK MYSELF FROM CERTAIN MEMORIES OR THE DOOR TO ALTERNATE EXPERIENCES. FROM INDIVIDUAL TO NATION, THE "ROAD" NETWORK AND ITS CONDITION SAY SOMETHING ABOUT HISTORY AND ROUTE OF COLONIZATION, I.E. THE ATTEMPT TO CONTROL OR DOMINATE SPECIFIC REGION THAT WAS "CLASSIFIED" AS POTENTIAL THREAT TO THE "ONENESS" AS DREAMED OF. THE VIEW OF THESE "ROADS" IS ALWAYS SUBJECT TO THE "FUNCTION AND FIELD OF SPEECH AND LANGUAGE"<sup>73</sup> USED IN INTERPRETATION BY THE "AUTHORIZED," INCLUDING THOSE STAMPED ON BEHALF OF "SELF-AUTHORIZATION." WHEN I TRAVEL AGAIN THESE DAYS, THE PATHS, THE ALLEYS, THE STREETS AND THE ROADS AS DISCLOSED AND UNVEILED IN FRONT OF ME DON'T LOOK THE SAME AS USED TO BE, THROUGH WHICH I SEE THE "DESIRE" AS LAID INSIDE ME, BEYOND ME AND PASSING ME IN "TERRITORIES" I, AS AN ORDINARY MAN, COULD NEVER ENTIRELY COMPREHEND ALL AT ONCE...*

*THUS, I DREAM ON AS ENTERING-INTO-THE-I AND ENTERING-INTO-THE-OTHER-SUBJECT-OR-OBJECT-AS-ENVISIONED-AT-TIMES...*

Having moved 25 times from one place to another, not counting the numerous hostels, motels, hotels and temporary dwellings made on the road, in the past 50 years of my life, HOME has long given up its place to "other spaces," as Foucault put it, "spaces of crisis, deviance, exclusion, and illusion."<sup>74</sup> **In reviewing the interior space as once lived, the displacement of objects, including bodies, traced back from one place to another, they seemed to have carried some significances of effect on the interior of my body. This whole *other world* living inside the body has had somewhat woven a series of vinculum-made-curtains to be unveiled for diagnosis, with speakers, perceived as if they were special larynxes, disguised in drawers,**

**corners, beds, boxes, clothes and daily commodities as accessed in and out of these rooms once lived. Unpeeling these physical layers in multitude, I hear voices, or mostly noises rather, once encountered or collected, consciously, unconsciously or subconsciously, mapping a body-mind with signs and spectacles undeciphered.** Were they only objects of illusive nature that had once stolen away my sense of reality, profanely mastering the body-mind into a fragmented and chaotic pseudoworld, deceiving me with images that were, and probably still are, manipulated by others? Or did they, and still do, always consist of “objectives” that are ultimately reactionary, as Guy Debord suggested, that in reality, regardless to their “modern” cultural connotations, these objects’ existence depended so much “on ideological formulations of a past society that has long turned its death agony to the present?”<sup>75</sup> Do these objects contain bodies that truly matter then? Popper’s 3 worlds re-emerged to surface, exposing me routes of unraveling the mess entangled...

When the **silent** presence of such objects, be they trivial or infiltrated with historicity, has always had some sort of performative effect that addresses itself solemnly, or absurdly in form of ridicule-in-disguise, to me and the people around, calling for special attention, often without knowing it, it seems any “forclusion,” in Lacan’s word, of the meaning of their existence would mean an attempt to make censorship on my past, producing only voices, or noises, of sheer oppositional nature, which may have long dictated, or undermined, the very substance of my living performance. Like the violence displayed in one of my works on creative writing, *Still Burning*,<sup>76</sup> written back in 1992 might simply be a poetic discourse that revealed an illusion of “performativity-in-reflection,” stretching to identify the language, gesture and manner

once sought from series of encounter of specific objects and signs that were continually social driven and left me propounded with emotions. **The nature of each of such objects, of substances attributing different affections, does draw me back to identify the zones of habitability and uninhabitability that constituted my life from one space-time to another. Be there already a script written for each of these objects' existence, how I survived, as an ACTor who did, or did not, make use of their significance (and insignificance) actualized or de-actualized, produced or reproduced, remains to be an important subject of discourse over the study of how daily commodities, including those ones that provoked personal acts, which could in fact, as Judith Butler perceived, be “continually scripted by hegemonic social conventions and ideologies,”<sup>77</sup> have affected the construct of my being, past, present and the likely to be.** I begin to wonder if we create a diversion, i.e. a form of communication containing its own critique, among these objects once encountered then. It suddenly dawns on me that rebelliousness in all of us could be both artistic and political, erasing all false ideas at times and reconstructing thoughts through whatever means available in due course. Maybe, with clarified, corrected, and reformulated thoughts we could set ourselves back to touch base with values that were lost, or deformed, where we may reconnect with “the semiotic and symbolic of the body,” as Julia Kristeva advocated. I should even begin to trust my intuition more or my intellect at various points of living when daily events do not necessarily wait for any intellectual deciphering. These lines of object reality, lived and to live, seemingly following me at every instant, have always been there, “pressing against the portals of consciousness,” be they thought, willed, or felt, often have a life of their own, as Henri

Bergson theorized, “with a past preserved by itself automatically.” (Bergson, 1907:5) I begin to see a series of dialogues made between the vast community of objects and me:

*“Did my work make thorough examination over the body?”*

*“Were your body there when you work?”*

*“Where could I see the very image of the body through these objects of work?”*

*“Were you clothed at work? Or naked?”*

*“As were the objects....”*

*“...”*

*“I x-rayed my body through the hand of my consciousness!”*

*“Objects never do!”*

*“Or were they simply being bypassed, or ignored, through cultural installations?”*

*“Give me speakers!”*

*“Where to find them?”*

*“In your laughs, your cries, your sighs, your giggling, your mumbling....”*

*“What if I were tongue-tied?”*

*“So were the objects then.”*

*“Make up words, couldn’t we?”*

*“We did that all along, without noticing them.”*

*“Have you looked into the interior of the words spoken?”*

*“You mean the signs?”*

*“...”*

*“Who did the thinking: the body or the mind?”*

*“The objects!”*

*“...”*

*“I recalled a special experience of swimming: It was winter. Snowing outside. A big pool. Toronto. Nobody around. All alone. Me and the pool. Sun shining through the glass wall. The water glowed. My body weak and unprepared. Only memory of swimming through stretches of arms and legs. A drowning memory surged in. 50 metres across. The depth of the pool. I see the water in volume. And my body in molecules. I weighed both. I weighed the space, the light and the stillness of the water. I weighed my mind. I jumped into the water... ”*

*“You were in tears, after two hours of non-stop stretching of an order newly found....”*

*“Was it the objects, or the objectifiable body, that impelled to speak?”*

*“It was a swim back into the natural streams of bodily consciousness.”*

*“That very structures stretched through space and time....”*

*“Re-reaching the dead lands of objects!”*

*“Re-invent new signs!”*

It was thereupon such “discoveries” that made me set up the platform to explore self-innovation through the arts. It has been those attempts in opening up self-actions, re-tracing the writing imprinted by objects that had once overtaken us into a domain of sign outside the body largely dominated, or encompassed, all the perpetually interacting aspects of social reality. All propagated “necessities” in the make-up of our object world have become obstacles built within the body, dangerously establishing their habitat in the veins of our mind. These object noises collected under roof(s) deserve alternative analogies. We have to discover new routes to go beyond them...

*Having driven  
from one identity to the other,  
having been discharged  
from one signifier to the other,  
the bodily drive,  
with desire decomposed,  
forever searching*

*through havoc,  
until  
a new face appear  
to remap territories, systems, files,  
and historicity  
once  
manifold  
to  
the pyramids  
of  
past events....*

*only in the end  
to find  
that  
“I’ll have to wander all alone”<sup>78</sup>  
through  
whatever events to come....*

To Plato, a chair is a chair and no more than its utilitarian nature. In play, a chair<sup>79</sup> may not be just a chair for sitting. Its existing nature depends a great deal on the actions thereupon drawn or driven, which could be, and indeed was the “danger” as Plato once stated, totally contrary to his student Aristotle’s belief on the art of imitation. The “noises” collected from such a chair-in-action, not as a physical entity, would bear not only properties influenced by the existence of the object, but also bear relations to the chain of actions set forth upon other objects as well. Then when there is no one sitting on a chair, would it still be a chair, or a transformation of reality in disguise, through play? **Re-discover through voluntary play and allowing the body-mind temporarily suspended from normal social life, we may be able to re-build a**



**self-action theory upon the simple play — Let a chair be anything! It would produce a space, its own space, through a new organization of performance. Opening opportunities for interaction between objects and the body would allow active creation of one’s surroundings, and subsequently the state of body-mind.** In so deducing a new situation that isolated one from normal life, I expand a series of experiment of self-actions, freely reconstructing alternative dynamics in conception of life. In so believed the formation of play, I revisit the rooms, the houses, the “homes” and temporary dwellings. I have learnt to swim and remap the mapped through noises....

***Dream & Effect 2: Beyond Object Experiences...***

Without all these objects, would I still be “I”? As if only THEM, never ME? Were I the *I* dreamt to be making, or unveiled through these object experiences? Am I not very much a body of *objects* by nature, in form of cells and organs? I dreamt, and I still do, as I walk(ed) upon the colonial soil *then*, and the seemingly identical post-colonial soil *now*, treading with footsteps of performance traces through specific “regions” (Goffman, 1990[1959]:109) beneath the sole of my shoes. The “small” dreams and stories did not only reflect certain drives, or hidden blocks, bearing in me, they represented some “extraordinary” events I encountered out of ordinary taking that had been responsible for shaping my character to be. As experiences, like Dewey reminded us that even “the old notion of experience was itself a product of experience,” (Dewey, 1957:79) lived and transmitted “circuit changes” (Kandel, 2006:213) along side with “anatomical changes,” (Ibid.) regardless how scientists would like to “measure” or “study” the potential connotations or implications likely

unveiled above, they had transformed my individuality through particular interactive “sensitization,” “habituation,” and “memory consolidation” (Ibid.) from the course of events and being. And the dreamWORKs thereafter did not only linger on the childhood dreams I once had, they also built on top of those experiences and moved on to alternative planes, dreaming to bypass the colonial historicity expressed through the most unlikable triviality as experienced in daily living. The extensive *objectified* list made above may seem trivial as they represented only fragments of everyday events or small “ordinary” happenings that had somewhat interacted with my neural development and became no longer simply “ordinary” but specific interactive phenomena between me and the particular “world” evolving around at specific time. Subsequently, **particular neural patterning, out of conscious or unconscious making, began to take shapes and to activate alternate neurochemistry with chemical level of neural processing with probabilities and outcome more complicated than an ordinary man or woman would have anticipated without knowing it.** Maltz and Walker’s article on dream intelligence had re-aligned my imagination on the possible intellectual dream affects from those daily living fragments, “This chemical level of neural processing is [...] a tremendous amount of data, possibly knowledge, that is never utilized in our conscious states and that remains non-attended. The link between the conscious and the non-attended is the dream. And the dream is a function of our consciousness and contains information and knowledge that is eclipsed by our awakening, sometimes captured in fragments, and clearly an integral part of how we think, work, and gain intelligence.”<sup>80</sup>

The incidences as “listed,” “spotted” or “selected” were random images that first came to my mind, which may not altogether be “fixed” to fulfill particular purposes. They were rather parading mystifying forces of “past images” recollected and re-deciphered, briefly, to reformulate the potential further understanding of an “ordinary” history personally lived and the creativity energized to help out-live the ghosts and “enslavement” of circumstances out of reach or control at specific age and time. Those incidences could indeed be further studied in details, with no escape from potential exclusion of other co-existing phenomenal incidences, and taking on whatever transformation that may find fit to fulfill, as Derrida warned us in “The Violence of the Letter,” (Derrida, 1976:101-140) any “sociological” or “intellectual” necessity. Imagine if scenario were re-**organized** into different groups and levels of comprehension, the “experiences” as approached or studied would be falling into different perspectives and allow different interpretations. **What once experienced could not be altered but all subject to be digested upon different level of reading and modification, which is, by essence, the power of innovative living. Besides, changing each “categorized” notation would have us all breathing in different fabrics of consciousness. And thereafter, new dreams would be liberated, or inhibited, and fostering, or destroying, alternate routes of reflection:**

If “**sleeping position**” were switched to “standing position” and “calculated” on physiological terms...

If “**pillow**” were replaced by “human body” and “studied” through “pre-established foundation” of bio-chemistry...

If “**dark room**” was IN FACT “white room” and “re-diagnosed” in neurological terms...

If the “**grip**” began with a “grin” and “analyzed” through the lenses of a psychoanalyst...

If “**noise off**” exited to make entrance for “*fuck off*” and “caught in the act” by the disciplinary master of my secondary school...

If “**silence**” were totally idealized to escape from “voices” heard when “working” among a group of people with hearing impaired...

If the “**first red guard**” were long planted in my blood and “re-examined” by a Confucius follower...

If “**peepee**” were re-patterned to “pipi” upon the request of a moralist...

If “**new clothes**” were referring to the new knowledge accessed for exploitation under the scrutiny of power craving politician...

If “**food**” were all “dissolved” into *chemical* units and “re-itemized” in a *biological* laboratory...

If “**size**” were only amplified in the lenses of Freudian terms...

If “**penis**” were re-examined in feminist Andrea Dworkin’s polemic pen<sup>81</sup>...

If “**respect**” were stigmatized under the scrutiny of “proper behavior”...

If “**Bruce Lee**” were never considered serious in his studies of philosophy and his invention of Jeet Kun Do...

If “**America**” were reexamined by first strip-naked all-possible-political implications...

If “**altar**” were already long set within the blood and bone of our ancestors...

If “**cinema & bible**” were being found unfit to be linked together and reduced to gesture of blasphemous nature...

If “**rituals**” were condemned and forbidden to perform...

If “**firecrackers & uniform**” were by essence the loving couple...

If “**top, middle & falling**” became the *name* of a national bestseller...

If “**national anthems & dreamWORKS**” became the evidence of high treason...

If “**English Vs. Chinese**” were changed to “Potunghua Vs. Cantonese” under the new debate over Language based on anti-Chomskian viewpoints...

If “**on the road again**” were re-focused in the stream of genetic studies as another psychotic episodes for treating mental patients...

If *all the above*, step away from itself and flow into the passage of time, get mixed up and then interwoven into alternate forms and shapes hardly recognizable before being merged into one single tapestry under the “proper name” of “academically acceptable” and “sociologically defined” category kind of “heading,” denounce the possibility of “pure presence” or make claims on the illusive nature of their “origins”...

What was I *writing* then? Or were it only the continuing of daydreaming through the plane of words, where each word was taken in different form according to analytical taste, preferences or convenience at time of connection? With all those *ifs* and “...” I could have begun another new phase of experiences, not just through *writing*, through the *act* of a “sign-juggler,” making new dreams that could work for the “fancy” or “needs” as discovered at particular space-time, on the basis not to exclude the exteriority of that particularity or the traces of events, which often do not exist on their own (Derrida, 1976:167). As a theatre practitioner, I do not normally *write* only with my pen, I prefer to *sculpture* ideas through space, objects, time, signs, and human bodies interactively with series of exploratory movements, music, lights, emotions, thought, and play emerging at times often unprepared or strictly determined by the principle of individuation. *Writing* simply becomes fragmented representation of my dreams and my thought as approximated through the movement of each alphabet, marking some potential meanings of the differences as observed at times in order to identify, or to discover, the possible properties, or the origin, of extra-ordinariness buried in the mind and body of an ordinary person. The writing is my act of the present at this very moment. The imaginary behind the writing is the flow of consciousness bouncing back and forth through “mirages,” according to Sartre (Sartre, 2004:87), as constructed under reflective search of the absence. Those *ifs* were only my imaging

consciousness at work, seeking to provide counter images to re-ensure the awareness of the likely presence, or absence, of absurdity in *the mode of appearance* in things (Ibid, 85-93), especially those as dreamt.

As Freud so reflected through Leonardo da Vinci, “When we find that in the picture of a person’s character one drive has become excessively strong, like the thirst for knowledge in Leonardo’s case, we seek to explain it as due to a particular disposition, of whose determinants – probably organic – we usually lack any precise knowledge. However, our psychoanalytic studies of those suffering from nervous disorders incline us to entertain two further expectations, which would be pleasing to find confirmed in every case. We think it is likely that this excessively strong drive was already at work in the subject’s earliest childhood and that its dominance was established by impressions received in infancy. We further assume that it gained strength by harnessing forces that originally belonged to the sex drive, so that a later date it could replace part of the subject’s sexual life.” (Freud, 2003:55-56) **While I could not say the “nervous disorder” in me was solely the product of my time or simply the particular experience I took on that had ignited specific drive in the bodily mechanism in me, the dreams, and the eventual dreamWORKs to be, were truly closely inter-related not only with the infantile experience but also throughout the being therein experienced in the process of growing up in particular soil, with particularity always as part of the ever-changing-fragmentized-totality of existence. The actions thereupon were not choices made with clear sense of reasoning, or probably within reasoning best attained at the time; they were energy in the form of dreams unfolding through successive events taken place at**

**different times and space that subsequently conveyed profound affect on *me* as a person, and the creative work, to be.**

Regarding the fine line between dream and memory, the fragmentary pictures as above-briefly painted (which could indeed each independently developed into full length studies) could be crossing over one another, where memory may only be “phantasy” formed and then re-transposed to my own writing of historicity. Freud did raise the same question with Da Vinci’s childhood memory of the vulture, “... this early history should have been an expression of present beliefs and wishes rather than a true picture of the past; for many things had been dropped [...] while others were distorted, and some remains of the past were given a wrong interpretation in order to fit in with contemporary ideas.” He continued, “A man’s conscious memory of the events of his maturity is in every way comparable to the first kind of historical writing [which was a chronicle of current events]; while the memories that he has of his childhood correspond, as far as their origins and reliability are concerned [...], which was compiled later and for tendentious reasons.” (Freud, 2001:32) Of course, I am not at all making comparison of my existence with Da Vinci’s. As Freud suggested that one’s “psychopathology of everyday life” (2002) could be often dealing with “childhood memories” and “screen-memories,” which, to me, could mean that the “path” I once treaded upon my family surviving under the influence of the colonial soil here in Hong Kong were indeed only fragments of “distant perceived memories” sporadically hanging there in the frame of my mind piling up with dream images, helping me to bypass the “phantasy vulture,” metaphorically speaking, before being devoured by the colonial sentiment. **A city’s historicity and interpretations could**

**easily be watering down individual specificity, and left behind further misunderstandings and distortions.** The “imaging consciousness,” in Sartre’s term, was simply possibly my attempt to make the experience “complete” through dreams (Sartre, 2004:48-49). Why not? If such dreams were to carry out a series of actions that help restore unfulfilled thoughts and deeds, they would mean alternative routes to remap the landscape of our body-mind so as to re-visit missing areas that meant so much to *complete* one’s life picture.

### ***Dream & Dialogue: Unfolding Thoughts***

- We all dream. But sometimes probably dreaming too hard...
- The brain would utilize whatever images dreamt of ...
- All derived from our “sensory modalities – visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and somatosensory” (Damasio, 1999:318)...
- Animal dreams too.
- Yet theirs don’t seem to carry on into *DreamWorks* like we do...
- How do you know?
- Hmmm...
- My cat makes sound when she sleeps. Her mouth moves as well...
- “The live animal is fully present, all there, in all of its actions: in its wary glances, its sharp sniffing, its abrupt cocking of ears. All senses are equally on the *qui vive*.” (Dewey, 2005[1934]:18)
- We, “so fractionize when work is labor, and thought withdraws us from the world” (Ibid)...
- My body would get tightened up and sweated all over when haunted by nightmares...
- O all those illogical thoughts and movie-like images!
- Aren’t they like a computer self-tuning at rest, trying to steal time to consolidate all the data for later back up purposes?



- You mean like strengthening the brain in linking and sorting out semantic memories...<sup>82</sup>
- **Like alchemy of the mind at work: it mixes, it dissolves, it filters, it composes and decomposes, it transforms, it accelerates, it heightens, it moves, it eases, it attracts, it repels, it hallucinates, it decodes, it remembers, it forgets, it repeats...**
- Or rather the unconscious war between the left and the right side of brain?
- There are indeed actions put forth springing from ideas in dream...
- The price could be high before any dreams were to be realized...
- **With fear, anxiety, shame, guilt and sense of insecurity that often look for opportunity to slip in and get a strong grip onto the senses of the dreaming self...**
- **When social orders strike, the ever-struggling neurons would seem to look for extra elbowing room, left and right, middle, back or front, to cultivate dreams counter-balancing the equilibrium of the body-mind...**

To *DREAM* means to activate “the secret artist” in *ME*!

How could I, an ordinary man, possibly answer these questions? **I could only *dream* to adapt to the ever-changing world around me, as if the interior and the exterior constantly are playing games with the unconscious, seeking actions on the arena of doubling, splitting, or tripling and then multiplying encountering living materials.** I may *owe* my life to my father and my mother according to Confucius saying as advocated by my primary school teachers, whom, I suspected, did not even question over their “violent employment” of someone’s “methodological tools,” with “logical value” never truly deciphered (Derrida, 1976:104). Yet the weight of such existential *debt* had put me into circus-like dreams, fighting to defend a life with spare parts dissembled by the ghosts once living in them both, with wings clipped and spirit haunted through class and caste systems. It took me quite a lot of years before dream-

making turn rewarding, not mentioning the maternal, placental and fetal factors that might have me pre-determined to a system I long embedded with. An imaginary umbilical cord seems to have forever linked my dreams up between the personhood of my mother, my father, my brother and sister, and finally, my own.

- What's stored in the memory could never be erased like computer images!
- Experience and memory mix and become dreams...
- Wouldn't it mean the abstract reasoning in dreams would affect the level of abstract reasoning performance during the subsequent waking state (Lawrence, 2003:192)?
- Many of my theatrical works adopted the dream structure!<sup>83</sup>
- Like "the heavenly feather-robe moves in accord with the wind"<sup>84</sup>...
- Was it dreams, dreaming or the dreamWORKs that inducted the tension between the conscious (finite) and the unconscious (infinite)? (Ibid, 2)
- Or was it simply the "occupational reputation" and "aristocratic habits" that had played their roles mobilizing the expression of your dreamWORKs (Goffman, 1990[1959]: 43)?
- We are simply the connectors of the "matrix" of dreams, as Lawrence put it, where ideas are derived in "womb," seeding to be bred, grown and developed (Lawrence, 2003:2-3)...
- Does that make us all a born dreamer then?
- Aren't you only revealing the "front" of your dream without going beyond the details of "setting," "appearance," and "manner" in your assemblage of "performance" (Goffman, 1990[1959]:32-40)?
- Your question could be as "selective" as the way I selected my dreams...
- "It is the dreamer-who-dreams-the-dream who takes on the function of understanding in the sense of making meaning." (Lawrence, 2003:4-5)
- Or the sociologist of specific interest who dreams the subject to take on specific understanding under his "dreamt region"...
- The social dreaming matrix is a socio-democratic endeavor (Ibid, 5)...

- Yet the daily trivialities built up could cause severe negation of emotions often trapped by “unhealthy” sentiment of politeness rather than honesty (Havel, 1988:175)...
- Like Havel who often found himself **trapped under the ever-present sense of “control,” “proportion,” and “patience”** (Ibid.)...
- Which makes us **often insecure in the openness for “free association, interpretation, and exploration”** (Lawrence, 2003:13)...
- As in dreams...
- **If only if we are “to tolerate the unknown, to be in doubts, mysteries, and uncertainties”** (Ibid, 14)...

Do not know if it is altogether true that the younger we are, the wilder the dreams, especially the actions thereupon related – like the wet dreams once so longing for at teenage, while it may not necessarily stand for people in general, yet dreams surely stood tall for me in my younger days. Ever since my first wet dream, the physical arousal through dreams had somewhat left behind me a cinematic experience – dreamily woke up with the trousers wet and unsure of whether to change or not, embarrassed for being instantly spotted by my jeering brother, who, sitting under a light bulb, was studying late for his exams. In spite of the *guilt* feelings wetting the bed several nights in a row (somehow managed to cover up from my grandmother) and the missing education on the nature of the peculiar physical phenomenon, I fell into the abyss of diving for repetitive wet dreams day in and day out. It was as if driving myself into some conscious lucid dreaming, pulling over characters, i.e. all possible inspiring girls, to fulfill the nightly fantastic wet-ride. All imaginable objects, including erotic images depicted from *yellow* stories in newspapers and magazines and bodily figures possibly either from daily encounter or to my invention, suddenly became active agents in the new-found-mechanism in human neurology. For a

teenager who suddenly lost his family grip (due to the sudden disappearance of my father), the sexual awakening became the only access to the most direct form of human contact of the self – a quiet and yet bizarre journey that filled with obsession and guilt, yet the most concrete sense of self being in existence at the time. Dreaming became the primary resource for daily actions. Cinema became the ultimate dream world to make my daily fantasy ride “complete.” Ironically, it was cinema that had me trained to reflect from all those flying dreamy objects that once left me disturbed and undeciphered. It ignited the beginning of a series of DreamWorks-to-come, i.e. passionately collecting everything related to my dreams, from newspaper and magazine cutting to specific articles and picture collections. I put out all my pocket money on reinforcing the beauty of dreams...

- You mean collecting dirty pictures?
- I wished but I dared not back then.
- Then what’s the big deal?
- I collected *memories* and *samples* of human stories through storytelling in films.
- Didn’t that all begin with boredom?
- “Boredom is the dream bird that hatches the egg of experience.” (Benjamin, 1968:91)
- Sort of self-counseling?
- As if distantly looking at oneself in a battlefield rather...
- Once filled with cynicism...
- Not unlike Leo Tolstoy’s *The Kreutzer Sonata*<sup>85</sup> where the turmoil of patriarchy infiltrating the soul of the male being in me...
- Thus, many of your dreamWORKs were bound to reexamining the loss of “manhood”...
- With things, unknowingly habitable in the body-mind...

- Or things made believable through “spatial,” or logical, “appropriations,” secretly structured through “memorable” and “primitive” experiences (de Certeau, 1984:105)
- Don’t exploit my experience with your primarily scholarly logic! As a teenager, I was *too* young, by any means, to “properly” *name* the feelings and nature of events taken place...
- No teen idols?
- Guess it was rare to have Francois Truffaut, Jean Renoir, Jean-Luc Godard, Alfred Hitchcock, Stanley Kubrick, Charlie Chaplin, Sam Peckinpah, John Ford, Akira Kurosawa<sup>86</sup> (and many more), etc. listed as major parts of my “teen idols.”<sup>87</sup> (All these figures emerged after the death of Bruce Lee in 1973...)
- Don’t tell me you understood them all...
- I didn’t. Yet they left important images of aesthetic residue and provided alternate visions in my emotional psyche, all miraculously operating in the name of “unknown”...
- What about those trashy stuffs?
- I watched them all as part of the natural make-up of societies...
- Or trying to make their foothold in a world where “experience has fallen in value” (Ibid, 84)...
- As if only experience remained communicable to the ordinary self...
- “For to perceive, a beholder must *create* his own experience” (Dewey, 2005[1934]:56)...
- What a melting pot our body-mind could be...
- Where no formula would be available to calculate the exact chemical reactions taking place from within or traces to be traced for their origin...
- Often drawing invisible *violence* under the scrutiny of “sociological” and “intellectual” exploitations (Derrida, 1976:130)...
- With degree of experiences re-assessed through “hierarchization” or “empirical perception” (Ibid, 122, 126)...
- All resorting to the subject of sheer *writing*...
- Before which, with metalanguage “hypertexted” among bodily tissues, where each word, syllable, or phonetics represent an “extraordinary incident” of human interactions with nature...
- Dream works...

- Or only “subversive imagination” of the *colonized* (Becker, 1994:xi-xix), which is meant to set out to re-define the self from the bombardment of simulacra...
- Poaching possibilities...

**Growing up in a complicated family did not stop me from dreaming, quite the contrary, it pushed me to the realm of living edges where dreams often took shape in peculiar terms. It was as if taking on a special skateboard and flying to places where only my artistic sentiment could find places to match its ever-drifting vitality. At first it was like a hideaway from reality when seeking alternate space in cinema; it later pushed me back to a reality much bigger than I anticipated in the first place, i.e. the human quest for meaning of life.** Dreams became my guide and eventually transformed into beliefs or ideas that carried a series of life actions to follow until they turned cold. That was the time when I “suffered from losses,” “fell from grace” and “departed the age of innocence,” the suggestive sentiment that once echoed American playwright Edward Albee’s early work, *The American Dream* (Albee, 1959). Years later, I then rediscovered the importance of experience and memory that had stored the reasoning, the feeling, the coherence and eventually the actions where mostly reflected the context of *dreams* I once had. Henceforth, I learned to reclaim the joy of dreaming again, and, most of all, the actions that rectify the dreaming spirit.

I am not an American, though I did spend 7 years of my life in USA as a College student. The “American experience,” not the “American dream,” did leave some significant prints on the cortex of my brain – from the realization of grotesqueness in

the history of Witch-hunt in Salem and its eventual route to the Red Hunt of the McCarthy era, from the ideological movement of the pioneering spirit to the deadly spirit of *the crucible* (as described by Arthur Miller in his 1953 play of the same name)<sup>88</sup>, i.e. the melting pot, from the professionalization of sports to the *Dream* industry of film and theatre, etc. America has become the source of cultural energy indirectly motivated the splitting up of my family. We have now distant relatives rooted from Japan, Scotland and Africa in America, as if a transforming family echoing the world development under globalization. Recently, a member of the family joined the US Navy as well. My nieces, all born in America, do not know how to write a word of Chinese. America has become, whether I like it or not, part of my family dreams...

Being baptized by an American catholic priest in Hong Kong when I was four<sup>89</sup> and a head filled with American pops in the adolescence<sup>90</sup>, the forms of dreams in me did eventually unfold with some unexpected turns that once heavily seeded with American flavor, at times unaware of its dominating presence in the media. The sentiment cultivated in the peculiar colonial soil of Hong Kong was like some trendy craving for anything “foreign,” something that had long planted in the daily social tissues without knowing it. The idolization of Bruce Lee was, as pointed out by Kwai-Cheung Lo, in fact peculiar as well since he was in fact an American citizen that his mother an Eurasian and he was born in San Francisco (Lo, 2005:87). [Yet, his keen articulation on the philosophy of martial arts did leave a very strong impression on me, especially the remarkable writing on his invention of *Jeet Kune Do*, contemplating martial arts with Zen, Taoism and Buddhism (Lee, 1975).] Besides, My upbringing under the

double repressive moral guidance of Confucius inclined and Catholic Church orthodox codes of behavior had somewhat shaped the early repressive state of being and the later rebellious nature in me, and, subsequently, the directions of my dreams-to-be – all connected with the body and mind therein developed through the “scriptural” social systems fashioning to the West (de Certeau, 1984:131) on one hand and sorting out the “Chineseness” on the other.

My life has very much been like dreams-on-the-run, ever bouncing from one place to another, modulating and re-shaping a body-mind once debouched from narrow social confinement to the wider scope of artistic ventures. Over the 25 major residential moves in the past 50 years, which means an average of one in every two years, the shapes of my dreams have indeed been constantly dealing with new places and new emotional landscape due to drastic changes, where many journeys were premature, unprepared and circumstantially driven, especially between the age of 11 to 33 when most major moves were taking place (kindly spare me here from *theories* on family stress, especially when the stress had long taken shape and transformed into living effects). Buzz. Buzz. Moved again, all for reasons that could be rational here, irrational there, and even radical inside out at times, carrying dreams developed in “stolen idleness” – being idle could often mean “laziness” or “useless” by “common” standard, a far cry from the praise of “idleness” advocated by Bertrand Russell<sup>91</sup>. Buzz. Buzz. The body-mind took on different blows and drew on maps that often found conflicting to the social landscape of norms. Buzz. Buzz. The ever-turning emotional continent had consumed the logic of the self and created alternative system of concepts derived of experiences taken on personal horizon, filling the body-mind



with “spatial stories” (Ibid.). Of course I “sinned.” And I did “pray.” Most of all, I did “fast” only to quicken my tempo to dive into yet another dream zone, where “A” did not have to be “A” and “E” not necessarily “E” and so on and so forth. It had been a tug-o-war with the body-mind, with only sex left to be the only genuine touches that left me disentangled with the chaos pounding in my brain, constantly haunting my nervous system at times. Ironically, the sex unveiled in me had already long fouled up through these frenzy dreamscapes, de-wakening the senses from needed vitality and colors that one would long for. The frenzy was like the journey in Albee’s *The Zoo Story*, where one found the self left driven to look for alternative contact through ANIMALS!

“... it’s just that if you can’t deal with people, you have to make a start somewhere. WITH ANIMALS! (Much faster now, like a conspirator) Don’t you see? A person has to have some way of dealing with SOMETHING. If not with people... if not with people... SOMETHING. With a bed, with a cockroach, with a mirror...no, that’s hard, that’s one of the last steps. With a cockroach, with a... with a... with a carpet, a roll of toilet paper... no, not that either... that’s a mirror, too; always check bleeding. You see how hard it is to find things? With a street corner, and too many lights, all colors reflecting on the oil-wet streets... with a wisp of smoke, a wisp... of smoke with... with pornographic playing cards, with a strongbox... WITHOUT A LOCK... with love, with vomiting, with crying, with fury because the pretty little ladies aren’t pretty little ladies, with making money with your body which is an act of love and I could prove it, with howling because you’re alive; with God. How about that? WITH GOD WHO IS A COLORED-QUEEN WHO WEARS A KIMONO AND PLUCKS HIS EYEBROWS, WHO IS A WOMAN WHO CRIES WITH DETERMINATION BEHIND HER CLOSED DOOR... with God who, I’m told, turned his back on the whole thing some time ago... with... some day, with people. People. With an idea; a concept. And where jail, where better to communicate one single, simple-minded idea than

in an entrance hall? Where? It would be A START! Where better to make a beginning... to understand and just possibly be understood... a beginning of an understanding, than with... ” (Albee, 1959:35)

O how I could identify the meanings and emotions beyond every single word, object, and image as exposed through *Jerry*, the character who actually delivered this speech! I played the character back in college, carrying the lines through gut feelings, without truly, or thoroughly, knowing the meaning beyond the words then. Now looking back through this particular piece of text, I saw the alienation once filled the anger and frustration in me, with feelings chilled deep into the bones. Was it not another aspect of searching for the humanity in me as an *urbanized* Homo sapiens? It was at this very edge of frenzies that I had left myself meddling with consciousness that remained confused and undeciphered, forever looking for places to land. I hear distant cry once so-reflected in my 1991 dramatic monologue, *Still Burning*<sup>92</sup>:

"Ugrrrrrh!"

A disgusting burp jamming out of my system

- it stank!

Gosh, was I worried?

Or should I, for THE MONEY I WOULD BE MAKING?

Rotten memories storming their way back,

Upsetting my stomach with acute pain.

"Ugrrrrrrrrrrrrh!"

Could be from previous indigestion.

Warning: DON'T CATCH THE INFLUENZA!

(I was once reared in the same farm.)

Eyes. Getting blurred.

Ears. Started ringing.  
My head. Wantonly stirred.  
Quickly slipping aside to a to-be-contaminated corner.  
Took a deep breath.  
Atmosphere: Stagnant, suspended!  
"Where is the flow of LIFE'S ENERGY?"  
Mouth. Opened. Awed.  
And the dream world.....  
                            getting cold!

"DON'T EVER GET YOUR MIND BROKEN-WINDED!"

At the pit of my stomach,  
Voices wheeling in.  
I nailed the pain onto the bottom of Pandora's box.  
I discovered naked, uncombed spirit,  
    raising its eyebrows  
    to  
    that  
        Youth of Being,  
    opening its heart  
    to  
    the Window of Strength .....

I started counting.  
One. Two. Three.  
One. Two. Three.  
One ..... Two ..... Three .....

Eventually, I learnt from ANIMALS! I saw the manhood in me totally “fucked-up” in  
and off bed! I looked into the mirror of human enigma and the subsequent sufferings  
through theatre making. I contemplated with cockroach found in a subway train<sup>93</sup> (like

Ionesco contemplating with *Rhinoceros*<sup>94</sup>)! I learnt to tender with the *locks* of love in spite of the failure after my first marriage. I read the Bible, the Koran and the writings of Buddha, Tao and more, and remained unmoved, as if, in de Certeau's words, "there is no longer a divine Speaker who founds every particular enunciation." (de Certeau, 1988[1984]:156) I traveled to seek alternative cultural references for thoughts. I played with *concepts* through the arts. I, repetitively and daily, learn to tender with the *I*, where seeded the faltering oneness in me...

Looking back, it was as if this urge of searching for a "home" for these unsettling bodily experiences had paradoxically driven me to places where "dream" could never take "normal" shape in the first place. It was not until 8 years ago, right after the turn of the new century (what a temporal coincidence), had I "determined" to "slow down" – only god knows if it was for good or not. What follows would be an account of "dreams" taken in the territory of a body-mind chemically acute-driven by circumstances quite out of the experiences, control or wisdom available at times. Theatre and cinema had become the contemplating ground of those dreams-unbecoming and pushed me back to a series of reality that never thoroughly dealt with, philosophically speaking. Art-in-actions have become my focal paths to seek the ultimate dialogue among *dream, death and the self* (Valberg, 2007), coinciding J.J. Valberg's book of the same title dedicated to examine the human existence before each of us ceases with death, the "extraphilosophical" puzzle, in Valberg's term, that troubles the daily consciousness. **It was through art-in-actions that helped me rekindle a life once lost in other's world of references.** With experience forever dwelled upon the "self-knowledge," "self-reference," "embodiment," and "personal

identity” that, to Valberg, should demand equal attention to understanding “the horizontal sense of self” (Ibid, 366-369), i.e. the experience, the consciousness and the life of self, I hereby revisited the “dreams” once taken flight in me through my work...

- I used to imitate Bruce Lee fighting with my brother when I was a teenager. I later learnt about his philosophy and began looking at my body in the mirror. I learnt to *talk* with my body since then...
- You never had the physical form of Bruce though...
- I was getting inspiration from bodywork and yet never put my will on the body, only on the realization of dreamWORKs instead...
- Making excuses...
- Bruce Lee did once say, “... emphasis should fall not on the cultivation of the particular department which merges into the totality, but rather on the totality that enters and unites that particular department.” (Lee, 1975:7)
- So you talked about totality in theatre...
- It was the void, i.e. the nothingness, re-discovered in *the empty space* (Brook, 1968), as in TAO...
- “A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him...” (Ibid, 9)
- That we may have to count so much on the other to watch, as if through the other we manage to watch ourselves behave and form conjectures about the unknown adaptive unconscious (Irvin, 2006:101)...
- Then, it is all about moving across the void...
- Just as Bruce Lee also said, “If nothing within you stays rigid, outward things will disclose themselves.” (Lee, 1975:7)
- Hmmmmm...
- “The point is the doing of them rather than the accomplishments. There is no actor but the action; there is no experiencer but the experience.” (Ibid, 8)
- All seems to be coherent to the inner imaginary voices heard from the womb of my mother...
- The intuitive mind that echoes in the body...
- The *Still Burning* was part of the experienced that set free the body-mind to come...

- The “ugrrrrrrrh” was never a premonition; it was one of the *camel bells in the windy desert*,<sup>95</sup> the chilling experience and sadness once consumed the body and soul...
- How would you *name* the experience?
- No *naming*, only the experience that truly matters...
- Or simply the primeval urge “incentivized” in the biological system (Irvine, 2006:145-171)...
- (silence)
- With all our joy, pride, happiness, tranquility pretty much enveloped in the “reward” card buried within the system, waiting for us to collect (Ibid, 150)...
- Or shame, regret, loneliness, embarrassment, anxiety, frustration and fear as the “punishment” (Ibid)?
- I’d prefer to re-start with the void...
- Even “void” is prescribed according to specific human conditions...
- It’s the stamp in us all...
- Once again trying to find the escape route through generalizing...
- Probably seeking to make truce with “the ungovernable yet self-governing oddity” (Freud, 2002:x) of the self...
- With thoughts forever unfolding through ordinary actions!
- Making attempts to focus on “infra-ordinary” (Ibid, ix) things and the minute experiences taken their timely effect on the body-mind...
- Dreams and works do collide; they interact!

### ***Dreams and Works: Observation, Actions, and Reflection***

With the lack of story telling when I was a child, observation became the major resource of “stories” making up in my head as the self-suspending bridge for daydreaming. I considered everything happened in the house did not truly concern me. Those “adult world,” including those around my elder brothers and sister, looked simply like *world of aliens* to me back then. Yet I made dreams over their expressions, their look, their behavior and the particular positions they were holding at times. Yes, **it was “I” who dreamt, as if making my own first-person reference, i.e. a**

particular being whose “idea of action” were triggered through the specific “me” as the subject, which could possibly, or in long shot likely, be of reference use to the “generalized” *others*, under circumstances comprehended through the *being in me*. How did those observation-in-me take place? Gather it was the time when “everyone” was too occupied with works and never got extra space to listen to others, especially “me” being *too* young and ignorant, so to speak. Was it because they were *all* “drunk” with “mysterious potion” dropped in their eyes? (Memory somehow often operates in seemingly trivial horizon.) Definitely not the “love potion” as described in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. (My “observation,” just like many other, was often “texturized” with referential flavor.) Or simply *someone*, possibly one of the by-passers, or emerging things, on the roads, dropped the “potion” in *my* eyes without acknowledging me? (Getting absolutely pathetic in the course of looking for that *someone* to make my memory stand for the sake of fabricating a poor argument...) Or simply (another lingering “*simply*”) through *someone* (which could be *anyone* at convenience) who kept switching into one *another*’s frame of *being*, i.e., say, a character, or *any* character would do, to be portraying in a play, would “I” then not manage to expand *my* “normal” and “ordinary” vision of being? Would “I” still be, as the only person, observing the world by “myself” then? Where was that “child” of “I”? How did the *stories* possibly take shapes in “me” unless the specific dreams of “I” were taken seriously along side with the “I” as experienced? If I did not pay that much attention to the “I” as observed or dreamt, where would *I* be by now? As Valberg put it: “The uninterrupted existence through time of an entity of a given kind entails the identity other. So there is such a fact as the fact of my identity through time. This fact, the fact of my identity through time, is, it would seem, simply the fact of the identity

through time of the entity – of whatever kind entity it is – that I am.” (2007:370) Thus, I *am* what I observe I am what I am. I act and reflect according to what I observe this “I am what I am” at times...

*I observed.*

How did it begin? What was there to observe? When the living world around me did not exactly wait for *me* to get ready to observe the “works” as were, or as had been, has been, how the *many* around me has long been operating on the pre-established network repetitively generalized in the making of daily living...Has it not been that I always observe the world as *IS*? **It is the “as is” thinking of the presence, making attempt to look back at the “as was” without truly, or indeed ever, able to identify the *past* reference or the *future* to be, not mentioning the different kind of “looking” in comparing with the *present*.** For the ordinary self, how often would the “I” take on such *presupposed* philosophical reasoning “whereas in everyday life the reasoning never occurs to us? (Ibid, 414) **I simply observed, with possible “resistance” presupposed by the other, as I went about everyday business (Ibid.), allowing natural events to cast images onto the “memory card” of the body-mind, provided that those events and memories would never happen on singular terms.**

*I acted.*

How did I act? How to ACT, under specific circumstances, with or without conscious choice? The *first* action would become the reference for the *second* action to be (if we



stay *only* on the path of linear thinking)...but how and when the *first* action in “me” took place? Or am I simply telling myself to recall the *action* as remembered to be the *first*, or the *second*, according to the available memories, plus affection and knowledge, depicted at times? On what ground could I *trace* this very first “accountable” action to be? As an ordinary man, I never caught myself into such philosophical argument. I simply ACT according to *necessity*, or rationale, or emotions as arisen at times, and I move on from one thing, or several things at the same time, to another, or another set of matters simultaneously and spontaneously. Act, as alarmed, needed, possessed, or directed, through complexity can be deciphered only *upon* ordinary taking or analysis, not, or hardly, beyond the projected, or presupposed, immanence as, possibly illusively, constructed by the *knowledge* as specified by particular scholars or philosophers. **It is the “experience” of “being” encountered in particular “form” of the whole (Dewey, 2005[1934]:58) present in *me* that I found fulfilling, affective, and *necessary* at times. I ACT upon “the rhythm of intakings and outgivings” of experiencing, through “succession” as “punctuated” according to the existence of possibly related, or unrelated, intervals, periods (Ibid.). My dreamWORKs are, therefore, the marks of my actions as recorded, and enacted, according to experiences and reflections as consolidated at times, which each piece of works would only represent the complexity of thoughts and emotions as interwoven and depicted, never ever truly “self-sufficient” intellectually or emotionally speaking, at specific space-time, or something *seemingly* specific which depends on the state of consciousness as perceived.**

*I reflected.*

Did the *knowledge* as projected through images from reflections long pre-structured, or already made, as Bergson described, only re-appear through “an expectation of images,” with an “intellectual attitude intended sometimes to prepare the advent of one definite image, as in case of memory, sometimes to organize a more or less prolonged play among the images capable of inserting themselves in it, as in the case of creative imagination”? (Bergson, 1920:186) Were the reflections not depicted as the inner reference drawn from experiences and the *becoming* thereof derived? Or such reflections were products of the only graspable “I” as sustaining through the “graspable” ordinary living? Yet, whatever they may seem to be at times, **such reflections, as made in the process of my own *becoming*, or *unbecoming*, have been playing important parts in the making of my dreamWORKs, through which, as imaginary as they may seem to be appearing, with, or without, coherency to identity as discovered at specific space-time. Theatre has been the place to examine such reflections where “contaminated images” (Sartre, 2004:91) would go through subsequent abstraction in order to rediscover its “irreducible reality of the image consciousness.” (Ibid, 92)**

Were the reflections, after all, only another form of *dreaming*, or play, borrowing Sartre’s word, of *analogon* (Ibid, 57-93) observed at times? In *Picnic on top of Central Plaza* (1998)<sup>96</sup>, I had made such dream/reflection through the monologue of a young girl:

I sat there. In that room. I heard someone talking. The time was 3 p.m. There was a glass of water in front of me. I listened for a while. Then I stretched out my right hand to pick up the glass of water. I held the glass; I suddenly stopped in the middle of my action. I asked myself, “Why would I need to drink water at this very moment? I am not thirsty. My body isn’t dehydrated. Is it something I overheard that has made me suddenly so uneasy that I have to...” No. I didn’t think so. I was totally relaxed. Was it something in my mouth? No. Nothing specific in my taste bud. When I tried to focus again, I realized I might be a bit thirsty after all. Why didn’t I feel that a while ago though? I wanted to drink because I was thirsty. Why was I thirsty? I didn’t exactly know why. My saliva secretion was normal. I tried to use my will power focusing on the flow of saliva in my mouth. No problem. I could totally control myself at will. My mouth was wet. I didn’t need to drink that glass of water...I put down the glass. I saw two people picking up two glasses of water and drinking. I looked at the glass of water. I looked at my own reflection off the water glass. I was feeling how those two people drank their water. I was feeling what they were feeling at time of drinking. I was feeling how I was feeling the feeling and its relation to the feeling as felt by those two people. I was feeling the feeling off that particular moment. The feeling of this particular moment. The feeling of the previous moment. The feeling of that particular previous moment. The feeling of feeling through the feeling of that particular moment previously engaged. Then... Now...Those two people just finished drinking. My glass of water still sat there. I sat there still...(my translation from original performance)

The audience complained that they did not know what the young girl was talking about. The speech, i.e. the *reflection*, was written in past tense. The actor was playing the past, as written, in the presence, i.e. the moment *on stage*. I *am* writing about a past action recollecting another past action as conceived through analogon, or observed and instantaneously deciphered image, or best possible accessible knowledge, of specific object or subject at times. I *was* playing with my own images, schematized through theatrical symbols and dramatized actions. I had no control how the audience would

perceive through the “symbols,” or “actions,” as come to their mind at times. As observers, the audience tried to connect, resemble, assemble, or compare the images (including the audio-visual and text-based speech) picked up at particular moment sitting in the dark. They were suddenly turned into observers, and act, through imaging, to consolidate their logic and affection as apprehended, and reflect the best way they could base on the initial knowledge and affection as spontaneously responded. The young girl on stage was, as if jumping out of the *self*, watching her own body-mind speaking about her daydream. It was a series of reflection as dreamed and transformed into *reality* at play. The play was not set out to educate, or to promote, specific intentions as affectively or intellectually so luxuriously perceived at times. **It was part of the dreamWORKs that helped expanding my conscious orientation, hopefully someone out there to develop dreamWORKs of their own through the act of interplay developed in the dark of the theatre.**

It is philosophizing through play actions live on stage, not poking into sheer word plays of intellectuals, with priori often unknown to ordinary folks. **To ordinary people, learning to appreciate the extraordinariness of being ordinary is in fact not an ordinary act. The affection and perception as depicted at ordinary time should not be undermined as un-intellectual or determined as something not worthwhile to philosophical discussion.** Worst of all, when such ordinary subjects were resumed to the *violence* of words, as over and over again warned by Derrida, likely scrutinizing ordinary living in the name of the *profound* “logic,” “truth,” “beauty,” “art,” and “origins” as schematically drawn by experts to the liking of priori set entirely known only to people of their own, the writing, playing, and imaging

through ordinary dreams would then become too *plain* to savor according to the extravagant taste of the intellects. Where should one observe, act, and reflect then in the eyes of the honorable philosophers? I began to understand why the Chinese ancestors wrote in simple words. The intention was very likely to invite all walks of life to enjoy the space of thoughts in between the stories, characters, and situations as unfolded, where one could either smell, hear, see, taste according to each particular imagination available at times and enhance one's *ability to exchange experiences*, the belief Walter Benjamin had stressed in his reflections on storytelling through the works of Russian novelist Nikolai Leskov (Benjamin, 1968:83). It seems to be a tradition long forgotten, especially when the Western tradition of "empirical violence," in Derrida's term, like "war in the colloquial sense," (Derrida, 1997[1974]:112) has been overwhelmingly dominating the *procedure* of thoughts as once laid out ideally by great scientists and philosophers. When routes of interpretation were repeatedly re-defined, they robbed the common mind of their freedom to interplay with images as depicted at particular circumstances, observation got too "difficult," or too "intellectual," and acting suddenly requires "qualification" as agreeable to the liking of the selected few scholars or people in power, how would then one think of the reflection made thereof under the shadow play of the highly skilful display of perception generalized by the ideal play of expert thinkers?

In "*Theories on all things being equal*," Chapter Two of *Zhuangzi* (莊子), there is such a segment: "One who dreams of a drunken banquet wakes up in the morning weeping and sobbing. One who dreams of weeping and sobbing wakes up in the morning and

goes hunting. While they are dreaming, they do not know they are dreaming. In the middle of a dream they might think they are actually a part of the dream, but when they wake up they realize it was just a dream. After one has completely woken up they realize it was all just a big dream. A fool believes himself to be awake, inwardly and privately actually believing he knows who he really is.”<sup>97</sup> The word “theories” as translated into English, in this case by Nina Correa, may not be totally appropriated. It was *added* according to the frame of western logic. *Zhuangzi*’s story is simple and yet thought provoking. It opens room for discussion and interpretation according to the degree and flavor of “drunkenness,” “waking up,” “weeping and sobbing,” “dreaming,” “thinking,” “believing,” “foolness,” “inwardness,” and “privateness” as the nature of “he,” “she,” or the “one” sets out to be. Interpretations made by *prestigious* scholars and *well-known* philosophers could serve only as additional references for those who are interested *only* in the “passion play” of seeking “absolute representation.” Yet such referencing would often be left empty in view of the bountiful complexity of probability in *chemical* interaction among things of nature. All traces of selective views through such referencing process would only push one into yet far corners of incomprehensible value established by seemingly specific logic as deciphered at times according to specific space-time, if such space-time is truly a “unit” accountable, as philosophers like to advocate. I would read and understand the text in the presence with the state of being “as is,” without speculating or searching “the absence made present” through hypothesis or endless referencing. The “beauty” of the text lies in its availability to us all and its natural openness to welcome free association according to one’s available consciousness and imagination as detected during the interplay with the images of *Zhuangzi*. While million of words had been

written regarding the “beautiful thoughts” *supposedly* preambled in the *original* text, the traces of such “supposedness” and “origins” had indeed become yet more traces of obsessive acts in *re-defining* the objects of absence, i.e. the imaginary. It could have been a fun-filled journey if only if one is prepared to enjoy the ride in these intellectual hunting of the supposedly presence of “truth.” Sartre had once written, “What is present is, in some way, its absence.” (Sartre, 2004:87) When we keep looking *elsewhere* to define the being in the presence, what is there to observe, to act or to reflect, not mentioning the experiencing therein?

While the subject of dreams was once seen by Freud as “new method of psychological investigation,” especially in service seeking “solution of phobias, obsessions and delusions,” (Freud, 1952:8) the “dream-state-of-being” as unveiled in Zhuangzi’s tale may distantly echo Freud’s exploration of “dream displacement” and, his borrowing Nietzsche’s phrase, “transvaluation of psychical values,” (Ibid, 34) only that the former was never intended to “make analysis” but rather to leave the “dream” open to story-reader’s own “transvaluation,” the latter was in fact working with distinct *intentionality*, hoping to *cure* through analysis. Nowadays, it is so popular for people to seek “professional advice” from psychiatrists or psychotherapists, including the judicial sectors. A few family members of mine have also been seeking such professional advices on regular basis. To a certain extent, “psychical values” has become the subject of “psychical health consumption” rather than the power within the self for reflections that could put forth new actions. When the interpretation of dreams is solely turned into matters of power play expertised by “professionals,” dreams would suddenly become only “available” to “be interpreted” by the “designated few”

through specified *empirical* dimension, ordinary dreaming that provokes ordinary mind and thoughts has suddenly become the “unlikely” centre of subject that deserves equal attention. **It would be quite absurd if we all turn into “patients” first before our dreams call for the needed attention in the making of ordinary living. While we could keep investigating the “differences” of “style” or “form” in Freud’s or Jung’s or Lacan’s dreams, one should not let ordinary dreamers all fall under the special “dreamscape” only to Freudian, Jungian, or Lacanian terms, leaving little room for *ordinary dream thoughts* that could trigger ordinary, yet important, on personal basis, dreamWORKs, not mentioning “the central role dream experience and dream interpretation and their interactions, play in the maintenance and even creation of cultural forms in primitive societies” (Hunt, 1989:214).**

Every morning, it is like a ritual that my partner and I would share our dreams freshly baked before waking up. She is often particularly precise in describing the details as “remembered.” In reality according to Valberg (2007:74-75), she is already “outside” her dream. In recalling the dreamscape, would it not be possible that she has been asserting the “internal” reality of her dreams as perceived in a position already “external” to the dream reality that taken place back in a different time zone of the body-mind? In the process of reliving those dreamt moments, would there not be some significant bits and pieces excluded without consciously knowing so? Or would it be the aftereffect of lucid dream that were consciously driven, be it dream-initiated or wake-initiated ones? If so, how do we re-evaluate that “false awakening” consciousness, as the phenomenon read by Celia Green in her book *Lucid Dream*



(Green, 1968)? By the same token, what would it be when re-capturing the so-called “reality” of daily living then? What would be the perception of “reality” having shifted from one location to another, i.e. from actuality to the perceivable at the back of the memory? Guess this could be a classical case of “dream skepticism vs. memory skepticism” (Valberg, 2007:78): we could often take our dreams or memory for granted as if they are there “intact” as once experienced. Philosophers and scientists would probably like to pose a series of question over the “grip of reality” and the justification behind it. As for my partner and I, **these dream exchanges have not only become our daily loving rituals that simply enhance our ability to share with one another over things and thoughts beyond daily mundane affairs, they could transform into alternative thoughts over perceptions in people and things we know, subsequently, enhancing the process of *transvaluation* through alternate actions.** To me, like many artists do (yet never take on the same path), I transform these dreaming energy into my works, with narrative structures often cut beyond normative storytelling, “neither to entertain nor to defend theses,” as that once proclaimed by active theatre anthropologist and dramatist Eugenio Barba, “it only asks questions to which each one of us must find his/her own answer.” Engaged in such storytelling, like dreamWORKs, “does not provide the right answers, it is content to ask the right questions.” (D’urso & Barba, 1994[1990]:12) In his work *My Father’s House* (Min Fars Hus, 1972-1974), Barba shared with his audience such an act of *dream*:

I dreamed that I had dressed myself very elegantly, and that I had dressed my children very elegantly. And I had gone home to my native village. It had been a

long time since I had returned there, and it was the first time I had taken my children. I had even cut their long hair.

I went out into the streets. I met many people that I could recognize in spite of the time which had passed. But they did not seem to recognize me. They passed me by, one after another. I stopped one of them who I was certain had recognized me, even if he hadn't greeted me. I asked him: "Why don't you greet me? Why don't you greet my children?"

"They are not your children," he replied.

"What do you mean? Of course they are my children."

"No," he replied. "We have seen pictures of your children. They are very different from these children. They have long hair."

He went away. And I saw that I was crying. The man came back towards me and asked me: "Why are you crying?" I showed him my children and I said to him:

"Not even I know if these are my children."

(Ibid, 24)

In the conclusion for his book *Multiplicity of Dream*, Harry T. Hunt recognized what Ricoeur and Burke developed regarding dreams as narratives and the form of dreaming through better articulations of setting, character, agency, and act and the preemptory introduction and dramatic resolution of discordance. (Hunt, 1989:215) In other words, **it is the "re-organization of lived experience" through dreamWORKs that allows one to *transvalue* personal or collective tales through specific "framing of experience as metaphor," where meditative contemplation of dreaming could be made possible** (Ibid, 215-217). It is precisely on these beliefs that Barba has been working with his ensemble, i.e. Odin Teatret, through the streets, towns and villages of Salento, Barbagia, Peru, Amazonia, and Chile (D'Urso & Barba, 1990:9), re-exploring the darkness in living dreams. To him, it was like a "fight against the 'other' [*the emotional and ethical attitude towards others*] hidden in us" (Ibid, 12). I do not know

if it was exactly the great “berserk” of Barba in me that had motivated the development of most of my theatre works evolving around dreams. The dream structures, which allow heightened experiences to weave in and out of specific dramatic framework, had indeed been used in questioning rules and beliefs grounded from our “*father’s house*” to the unstable-yet-transforming identity before and after the handover of Hong Kong. It has been through those dreamWORKs, in the lights of “Odin,” the god of war (Ibid) that **I learnt to realize the fight with the darkness, not only in me, but also the “ambush” of “ghosts” and “watchful eyes.” In reviewing the chronology of my dreamWORKs, I have realized that they have been bringing about the building, and re-building, of my living consciousness and learning to realize the freedom to re-activate the “fallen value” of experiences** as exclaimed by Walter Benjamin (Benjamin, 1968:83-84), sentiments that Austrian film director Michael Haneke had controversially exposed in *The Seventh Continent*, where he vigorously attacked the phenomenal problem of our age: alienation from oneself (*Entfremdung*), emotional glaciations (*emotionale Vergletscherung*) and reality losing its sense of realness (*Entwirklichung*).<sup>98</sup> Such characteristics also echo in my theatre pieces: the amount of monologues instead of dialogues I depicted for my characters; the inability of characters to converse or share their thoughts and emotions; the longing for rituals to re-establish the lost sense of reality, etc. **The experience creating the line of dreamWORKs throughout the past 30 years in theatre does provide some insight into my own transformation as a person, and, subsequently, the outreach social and education programs structured after the explorative nature of the arts.** Here is a brief chronological recap of the *dreams* “re-activated,” voluntarily or/and involuntarily, through the *memory* of my works. They represented a series of self-

initiated dreamWORKs that echoing the consciousness of self-being, contemplating the “wherefore” behind the mask of the body-mind of living substance. The following is not at all an account of the creative works I once engaged. They are in fact chronological traces of experiences reopened for analysis of the interactiveness of my creativity, my dreams and the consciousness of particular living and historicity as encountered in the body-mind at specific frame of space-time:

**December 1979. “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?”<sup>99</sup> Houston, USA.**

At the age of 22, directing the final act, *The Exorcism*, of Edward Albee’s phenomenal work for my final directing project, also my first major directing endeavor, seemed totally “inappropriate” according to my professor. He thought I was simply too young to understand the agony and pain of the middle-aged couple. I couldn’t exactly locate the reason why I selected the piece. It simply liked a calling from inside. Yet *I seemed to know them, i.e. the characters, well, through my father, stepmother and the marriages and divorces as witnessed in my family, most of all, the ever-present absurdity of my own situation: making belief that I was doing something genuinely good for the marriage that many people were cursing in the first place. To me, it was a journey to investigate the absurdity of “living with false illusions,”<sup>100</sup> an enigma that I had long found disturbing and yet so humanly understandable at times. It was like through an act of *exorcism*, excavating violent emotions through recital of Requiem verses, as if exercising pagan rituals setting out to cast out any remaining illusions. It was literally like the killing of dreams...While George and Martha, the two main characters of the play, were making exit to their *dream* child who never truly existed, *I was probably subconsciously exorcising the curses other had put on the child of my own, or most of all, my own unwanted existence as experienced since the death of my mother...**

**May 1983. *Endgame*. McCauly Theatre, Hong Kong.**

I was 26. Having waited for three years since my return to Hong Kong, this was my directorial debut in Hong Kong. It was quite ironic and paradoxical for me to

choose Samuel Beckett's 1957 work *Endgame*. Why did I *begin* my "career" with an *endgame*, as if signifying something that was written in the year of my own birth? Ending and beginning; beginning with an ending! All seemed so appropriate to the time frame as corresponding to the grim view of life at that particular time when I was trapped and disillusioned by the failing marriage and the hopeless family bonding experienced at time. There wasn't any *fun* working on the piece. It was like the sheer voyage dwelling, not knowing if it had to do with the deep sense of romanticism or annihilation, upon the abyss of *unhappiness*, finding myself reminiscing through the characters, "blind," "disabled," and "buried with rotten memories," yet mutually dependent on each other the *unbecoming* sense of being. *It was a dream working on ritualistic dimension, as if conjuring with my own rotten experiences, desperately seeking the way out. Ironically, all characters, as if the sum total existence of me at time, were trapped and there weren't any exits in the place they lived. I was desperately looking for an exit to the living condition when I was not leading the kind of life I anticipated or relationship I longed for.* Being "classified" as the "unprivileged" young father living under the roof of the in-laws, I couldn't make any sound decisions for daily living, including where to live or go, what to eat or buy, when to relax, and how to teach my child, etc. When my wife came to see me rehearse, the one and only one time, she later commented on the shock of seeing the *different* me "operating" with such confidence in theatre (which to her shouldn't be the kind of place I should be making a living) in comparing to the always-submissive husband I had been. I made my "temporary exit" two years later to seek my alternative options...

**June 1985. *The Maids*. Studio Theatre. University of Houston. USA.**

I was turning 28. If I said I loved rituals, it had probably so much to do with my love of making dreams through the specific dramatic construct to attain spiritual freedom. It could also be the subconscious drive to understand the reasons behind my failing love life and the violence underlying my deep sense of delusion. Jean Genet's 1947 one act play *The Maids*<sup>101</sup> was perfect for me *to further my previously incomplete and unfinished exorcism, making attempts to "kill" the warring emotions through play.* Through the fantasized ceremonies depicted by two maids, the ultimate choice to exercise unequal power over someone high above, i.e. their *Madame*, would mean the ultimate attempt to re-construct the *self*

in dream acts. The production I did wasn't a success by any means due to the participating actors and designer's failure to share or identify with the agonizing struggles of the outcasts and their imaginary war with the oppressor. It was a classical case of people living in different social order setting out to make plays only to entertain the self. I wasn't sure of myself either, especially the possible self-annihilation through "dreamWORKs," hoping to regain something incapable of in reality back then. Like the maids who "dream within a dream," as Sartre analyzed in his preface for Genet's play, I might have become one of the "dream dwellers, pure reflections of a sleeping consciousness, use the little reality which this consciousness has given them to imagine that they are becoming the Master who imagines them." (Genet, 1954:18) *At that time, theatre was simply, at times, the "convenient" tool of self-empowerment, through which I was setting out to re-examine the possible danger of being swallowed up by my own false dreams, with a body double, like the reflective pairing of the maids, hauntingly watching over my own shoulder to keep checking the potential downfall of the other half before getting too unconscious of getting pre-occupied with the missing self, i.e. the ability to re-identify, or re-entering, the I as falsely projected by others.* It was the first time I placed my awareness over the transformative aspect of theatre as a theatre and theatre-in-education practitioner. Most of all, *it was like an act to regain the confidence to be my own master over daily events that I once lost grip with. I returned home with high hope to regain the losing ground back in my own family...*

**October 1987. Happy Days. Chung Ying Theatre Company, McCauly Theatre. Hong Kong.**

I was 30, supposedly to be enjoying the "fruit" of beginning recognition. A career seemed to be emerging. Yet, I saw myself wandering in between the abyss of personal destruction due to emotional failure in love and family on one hand, and the bliss of my "up and rising" professional path on the other; it was like waging wars between the irrational and the rational mind zone where reasons and feelings never seemed to settle for any consolation. And there were indeed no formula available for me to settle the struggling feelings, as Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno put it: "...but life, which cannot be formulated, life which lives and seeks to live for ever, does not submit to formulas. Its sole formula is: all for

nothing. Feeling does not compound its differences with middle terms.” (de Unamuno, 1954:107) In fact, I could be enjoying the sense of deep *falling* in order to activate the creative antennae, something Bernard Goss, the former artistic director of Chung Ying Theatre Company, had once warned me: “Don’t count too much on your own *pain* for creative stimulants.”

My re-visiting Samuel Beckett seemed to be a desperate ride into alternate dreamscape different from *Endgame*. *Happy Days* had not only proposed another existential backdrop of time standing still, it further exposed me to human condition of “strangeness” through Winnie, the woman of the play whose existence was physically embedded to a mound of earth from waist down, and, eventually, neck down in the second act. In the course of forcing myself to face head on with a world combined of “the strange and the practical, the mysterious and the factual,” (Burkman, 1987:54) as Beckett put it, *I found myself pulling in “the crux of both the comedy and the tragedy” (Ibid.) possibly out of my own making, an absurd position where I was bound to re-define the “predestinated” life that had been out of my control*. Ironically, I was suddenly welcome by the theatre circle after my return from Houston the second time, something I never enjoyed the first time round when still fighting with my over-shadowing family burdens; I was also falling into emotional abyss of my divorce and, as if determined, unconsciously so, to “revenge” or to make up all the lost time through “promiscuity,” the course of “convenient” *love* events that had literally drowned me into deeper depression. In real life, it was like foul plays on me that I suddenly realized “everything has its place. Everything is wearing out or running out.” (Ibid, 53) “Happy days” fell short on me. The dream act was like stretching a canvas I wasn’t yet ready to mount, subsequently failing to attain the “pernicious and incurable optimism” (Beckett, 1967:28) as possessed by the Beckettian protagonist. It was a dream destined to re-make itself, as if a tragic-comedic human condition I have yet to comprehend and revisit in the time to come, especially in view of the befalling of *happy days* images, i.e. the Beckettian paradox of existence, all over me the following 20 years...

**November 1988. *The Duck Variations & Rupert’s Birthday*.<sup>102</sup> Shouson Theatre, Hong Kong.**

I staged these two “animal” plays in a *bare* proscenium stage: bare not only in the physical sense but also in the emotional sense, with the actors (2 on David Mamet’s *The Duck Variations* and 1 for Ken Jenkins’ *Rupert’s Birthday*) performing without any suggestive scenery, only words, memories and emotions floating in specific time-space. The bareness had, as if, rocked my soul to the bottom of my own animal calling. It was strange that I produced these two short plays at such a time, with the former taken place in a park bench where two elderly men making a series of dialogue on ducks while watching them (Mamet, 1978) and the latter taken place at a vineyard where a woman recalling her memory of the coincidence of the birth of a calf on the day she first menstruated at 13 and her mother gave birth to her brother, and a year later how she sent the calf to its death in the slaughter house (Jenkins, K., 1985). I was on medication for my severe depression while working on this production. My energy could only sustain for about 3 to 4 hours the most daily. I was desperately looking for contemplation, or a way out to uplift the fast fading spirit in life. When human contact suddenly seemed too far-reaching and not trustworthy, I dreamt to “befriend” with “animals.” The simplicity of these two pieces of dramatic writing seemed perfect for the state of body-mind I was engaged at that time. The irony was that I was financially stable for the first time in my life (I financed this production out of my own money) and yet I had also lost everything emotionally speaking, even giving up the ever-lingering moral battle over the custody of my son. Resuming to “animal plays” seemed to be the only positive notes for the destructive self, as if to provide the ultimate journey looking into the *animal* being of the self. Through these plays, *I was like re-visiting the myth of birth and death and the ever-mysterious struggles in between. It was yet another dream act to further explore the absurdity of social premonition over my birth in relation to the death of my mother, and also the “unintended birth” of my 12-year-old son, reality that both my son and I could not revert...*

**February 1991. *Shades: Journey into Macbeth*.<sup>103</sup> Physikal Theatre. Toronto Theatre Centre, Canada.**

It was 20 months since June 4, 1989, the date when the Tiananmen massacre took place. I still hadn’t recovered entirely from the “dreamless nights” and the “forced exile” from the chaos as closely encountered back home, which subsequently



brought forth my disconnection with the community, including my works, my son, and my contact with everything seemingly valuable and beyond. It was an “exile” pushing me to come to terms not only with the self but also the realization of the absurd world around me. As if the 1989 incidences, possibly magnified by those happened in Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, USSR and South Africa, interwoven everything into one gigantic web of “humanity” that had grown too big and too fast for me to comprehend. My body-mind was as if taking on the first big blow from the “real” world when everyone suddenly hooked on to each of his or her piece of opportunity to tell one another how the world *should be*. I was simply too naïve and too “inexperienced” to resolve other people’s power play that were totally out of my “grip” or “understanding.” I was doomed. Literally falling! I was totally aware of the sense of falling back into “nothingness”: a state of being which I probably had chosen to preserve the “integrity” of the “soul,” heavily *shaded*, as consciously re-building at times.

Writing was the only route of soul searching I did in those idling long months in Mississauga, a suburban district near Toronto and the miles and miles of traveling over North America and Europe. *Shades: Journey into Macbeth* was my first original play. It was a dramatic monologue exploring the loneliness of Macbeth the moment heading into his final battle, knowing that he was “destinated” to lose upon the curses of the witches. Deep down, it was very much an act of self-examination through the “ghost” of Shakespearean character, Macbeth, seeing *myself* being pushed to dead end by “witches,” like those I once witnessed and encountered in the summer of 1989:

Walking.

Along lines.

Straight lines...

Curved lines...

Crooked lines...

Walking.

Lines.

Making circles. Contact. Stop. Contact. Stop.

Coming back.

Centering.  
Sun. Moon. Earth. Me.  
I  
Walked my body  
along  
lines.  
A step. A word. Another step. Another word.  
Making up steps.  
Making up words.  
...Not mine!  
...  
A dot. A line. A word.  
Lines. Words.  
Walking.  
**Like shadows, so depart.**  
**I AM LOST!**  
(*scene ii*)

It sounded as if an internal *outcry* from the inflicted turmoil of disillusionment from the political trauma and chaos storming all over on top of the personal failure over family and love that all boiled up to high heat at the same time. The play, along the lines of my floating emotions, moved on with the character kept looking and exploring lines on face, arms, body in mirror:

Mornings. Evenings. Days. Nights.  
Imprisoned. Possessed. Intoxicated.  
Only to dream of falling back into nothingness.  
Hands. Failing to write another word.  
Mouth. Unwilling to utter another syllable.  
Mind. Numbed by the horrors of human stupidity.  
I. Hallucinating.  
In someone came.  
With body Inviting.  
With arms open

to embrace .....

More hallucinations!

Decided to abandon my soul.

(scene iii)

*The experience was like self-mocking through play, seeking alternative transformation through unmasking the monstrosity both in me and those imposed on me, most of all, the overshadowing farce of the world around.*

- This is life still!

Swallowed a great dosage of prescribed drugs.

Expected to re-enact the thousand years of sweet follies

With arms, Twisted.

With body, Deformed.

Monstrously breathing .....

I am dying of suffocation!

Why birth when death was long buried in my belly?

O Where is that magic beginning

When God called on us

to walk

on the angelic plain .....

Welcome slaves!

Welcome madness!

Let's dance and lead off the last possible farce.

Show me death.

Blast me all over a thousand times.

Maybe on the top of one gigantic mushroom cloud

I'll find happiness.

- that could be my only hope

To restore a new form of life!

No pain!

No abandoned souls!

No God pitying .....

**To madness I commend my spirit!**

(scene ix)

*This play did not only signify a new theatrical journey both in form, style and content, it also set the foundation of aesthetics and beliefs in re-exploring social conscientiousness in my work for all the years to come.* From then on, I rarely touched base with other people's script (even the few adaptation work as exceptions were depicted out of the same reason). I began my own journey of developing "original" works that reflected the cultural, social, political and philosophical issues and concerns unveiled through particular places and era as I experienced being a *time* traveler. It also marked the first note of dreamWORKs that represented my attitude of theatrical journey into depicting human *madness* as the subject of all my works-to-come. (I later founded my own theatre company *Theatre Fanatico*, with the Chinese name "瘋祭舞台," literally translated as "*Theatre of the Maddened and the Rituals*," a platform that I have been building all of my dreamWORKs since 1995.) In the middle of working on this production, I suddenly decided to leave and move back to Hong Kong in January 1991. And the play opened without my presence. I couldn't tell exactly what kind of pull it was that made my sudden return. It was all so quiet and remote all of a sudden, as if to retrieve something unsettled here, including the missing links with my son...

**August 1993. *Butterfly Suite*. Theatre du Pif. Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Scotland.**

I was 36. Two years silently re-working my way back into the professional scene in Hong Kong was an unusual journey, totally free from all past relation-boundaries, as if re-born like butterfly, through metamorphosis. *The unusual silence and distant observation in everything around me suddenly prepared me for alternative routes in life and theatre*, an aspect I never would have thought of before, i.e. developing my own line of work independently. This production marked the prelude to the long road of theatrical expeditions in the following ten years.

In this adaptation work of Edgar Allan Poe's 1839 short story *The Fall of the House of Usher*, one of the three endeavors of adaptations in the span of 15 years to come, I had made my journey deeper into the exploration of inner struggles experienced through the years within the family. *The character of Roderick and his twin sister Madeline were simply re-invented, literally transferred from Poe, to reflect upon one another, as if talking to the imaginary partner, seeking to transform the oppressive and secluded living environment into the search of reasons behind the acute anxiety and hypersensitivity of an "outcast" (another self-image) and the grotesqueness of madness driven by foreshadows of social disillusionment (as if re-building a new aspect of self-defensive mechanism).*

*Roderick:*

Simply sitting.

Waiting in the lamplight.

Listening

unconsciously

to all the eternal laws

which

preside about the house,

interpreting,

realizing

ALL THAT CONTAINED IN THE SILENCE

of the doors,

of the windows,

of the bricks,

of the stones,

of the fungi,

of

the passages

where the small voice of the lamplight

reverberating,

enduring

the presence of our soul

and

their destiny .....  
Bowling our heads a little,  
never suspecting  
that  
the power of all these  
would watch  
and  
WAIT,  
WAIT  
IN THE ROOM  
like attentive servants .....  
Not a star in the sky,  
not a part of the soul would remain indifferent  
to the lowering of an eyelid  
or  
the waking of a thought .....

(Excerpt from Hoyingfung's *Butterfly Suite*)

In the wake of thoughts that followed, I began to realize the meaning of totality, both in life and in theatre, reminiscing through the “inside” and the “outside” of Roderick’s self-confined “ancient mansion.” It was like an impossible expedition to re-discover the fossil of a butterfly from the Minoan eruption of Thera<sup>104</sup> in Greece (I visited the archaeological site a few years later) or wall paintings vividly preserved in “the underground room” barely excavated, which signifying ancient life form self-revised through fathomless cycles, seeking its own perpetuation through the line of spirits “reactivated” by human endeavor – probably, as de Unamuno put it, an intellectual act to preserve the “good” in the consciousness of the human self. (1954:29) I wasn’t too sure if it was the “good” I was “preserving.” I do know I was touching base with “the underground room” within my own body-mind, seeking alternatives to merge into the invisible. The core of pain was the vivid “moving pictures” still tangling in that “room,” where filled up dreams of “resistance” fighting between two efforts (reminiscing the two characters as portrayed in the play), like the playing of *In Nomine* (the ancient form of mysterious music in plainsong and polyphony during the 17<sup>th</sup> Century)

according to the revelation made by historian David Rattray, i.e. the effort to hear and the effort to make sense. (1992:276) It was as if, at the body's core, being possessed by the obsession of "purifying" the senses, worrying the losing of true meaning in being *ME*. Deep down, in that "room of Roderick," I heard "the music of abyss," like those of Artaud. (Ibid.) Between *what I see* and *ME* was such a great distance...

**October 1993. *Two Civil Servants in a Skyscraper*.<sup>105</sup> Theatre Résolu.<sup>106</sup>  
Tashkent International Theatre Festival, Uzbekistan.**

The arrival of Chris Patten as the last British governor of Hong Kong did heat up a lot of social awareness on the forthcoming 1997 handover of sovereignty from the United Kingdom to the People's Republic of China (PRC). This production marked my first response to the social and political phenomena as witnessed. When the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed and the path of "reunification of Hong Kong and its Motherland" was facilitated, voices from common folks seemed to be relatively small and unimportant, mostly overshadowed by political drama dominating the media. It was an exploration of the absurd silence among people who had been quietly contributing their parts in the social make-up of the former crowned colony. Distantly inspired by Austrian playwright, poet and novelist, Peter Handke's 1992 one act play *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other*, there were indeed so many things we "knew nothing of" apart from the bolded headlines on the political high talks among politicians and social opportunists. Focusing on the "tiny little actions" of 450 characters as once observed by Handke at "a little square in Muggia near Trieste"<sup>107</sup> would be impossible for me in the course of rigging the first production for a newly co-founded theatre company with my partner Tang Shu-wing. Being a play without words, we later "named" it as "mimodrama." As we were fascinated by the play with no words and its metaphorical implication on the particular political circumstances we were experiencing, we focused on two civil servants who were responsible only for mundane and repetitive clerical works, two "nobody," i.e. the "invisible" *living* under the gigantic political backdrop. The Chinese title of the production was literally meant to speak for itself the way as written: "*What's the Big Deal rising up 375 metres from Ground Level?*" (離地三百七十五米又如何) 375 metres was the height of Central Plaza, the tallest building of Hong Kong at

that particular year. Putting the two “insignificant” characters in an “invisible” office high up in the skyscraper seemed totally absurd dramatically speaking. Opening the work in a “strange” and “alienated” city like Tashkent out of Central Asia did add on some unusual flavor to the experience. It was a production of absurd office warfare between these two *totally insignificant* civil servants, each seeking his way for “promotion,” or “self recognition” rather, only to discover the paradoxical existence of two body-minds colonized, having little left to talk about except the long deserted *naked* self. To me, it was genuinely the first true effort of identity searching for me as a Hongkonger, especially after the ordeal experience in 1989. *It was, as if, only through every possible little thing or tiniest insignificant daily “beeswax” could I possibly relocate the contour of my body-mind lost in the hustling and bustling of the fast-paced city, hoping to re-captivate some tiniest moments that could retrieve some significances in life, no matter how ordinary they would be.* The *dream work* ended with two characters stripped naked after *dumping* every possible object to the floor and contemplate with their *last* (or first) *breakfast* in front of a pot of tiny fern, waiting for the “handover”...

**From 1994 onward**, the dreamWORKs expanded, as if in De Unamuno’s words, into “the depths of the abyss” (Ibid, 106-131) awaiting for further expeditions into the *dream making* of the self, moving along crest of consciousness, at most likely sheer vanity in vain, with philosophizing self nourished, composed, decomposed or re-structured through tales with no ending. Yet it was these dreamWORKs I dreamed on that allowed me to transform memories into new dreams-in-actions, with *plots* (or non-plots rather) and *pots* (symbolic props I often use in my work) to restore them into alternate shifts and changes to be. The reflection therein derived of often opened up new craving for more dreams; pain and disillusionment could be the best resources for making better dreams to disquiet the ever-roaring shadowy past, commencing the spirit to cease making peace where actions would have no place and avail no one to move on...



My art has been like tracing alternative routes for *dreaming up new dreams* before heading to ultimate *nothingness*! It was almost like a *disease*, as de Unamuno *angrily* questioning: “A disease? Perhaps it may be, like life itself to which it is thrall, and perhaps the only health possible may be death; but this disease is the fount of all vigorous health. From the depth of this anguish, from the abyss of the feeling of our immortality, we emerge into the light of another heaven, as from the depth of Hell Dante emerged to behold the stars once again...” (Ibid, 41-42)

For the “vigorous health” of personal well being, I dreamt on...

In *The Miss Julie Trilogy* (1995-1997) and *Mother* (1999)...

I dreamed of, or simply *imagined* to build my dreams on rather, the missing experience of having a “Mother” in Hong Kong’s returning to the “Motherland” through alternate viewpoints, running back and forth from ancient history to the contemporary alienated society as witnessed in Hong Kong. It was like an attempt to reconstruct a justifiable mirage of returning to the mother’s womb, dreaming, with reflective consciousness, to re-locate the heart of reality totally scraped or distorted by the other...

In *The Naked Eyes* (2000), *The Seventh Drawer* (2003) and *Springtime at Wuhu Street* (2005)...

I dreamed of, or kept imagining still, likely for the urge of seeking alternate routes for emotional and intellectual outlet, my family that was fatally disintegrated in view of unknown curses cast from the monstrous web of distant family history, and a father who recently wept so hard for the lonely turmoil accumulated through the past century that not one of us brothers or sisters, in spite of the lousy and rotten memories once held, could possibly comprehend...

In *Picnic on top of Central Plaza* (1998), *In Search of a Floating Stone* (1999) and *The Price* (2001) ...

I dreamed of my son, possibly subconscious attempt in *unmaking* the deep sense of guilt and conduct unbecoming so fumed up by the imaginary *many* on my role as a father, along with younger ones beyond his generation, in the post-Beckettian scenario of post-colonial Hong Kong in the 50 years to come. Through surrealistic circumscribed events, I saw my own body-mind, and those equally socially simulated through *copy shop*<sup>108</sup>, re-examined the repetitiveness of human nature through the eyes of Francis Bacon's captivating violent self portraits, Rene Magritte's green apples, Bertolt Brecht's crudely didactic *Mother Courage*, Samuel Beckett's pessimistic *Endgame*, and the ultimate *absent* toilet as once absurdly portrayed by the first generation post-war Japanese playwright Minoru Betsuyaku, looking back at a world of time and space gone foul, desperately waiting for detour...

In *Heading West* (2003)...

I dreamed of the meaning, or *meaninglessness*, of "economic progress" blindly fostered in Western China by *Homo economicus*, or "economic man" (a name playfully introduced by Tim Harford in his book *The Logic of Life*), who "doesn't understand human emotions like love, friendship, or charity, or even envy, hate or anger – only selfishness and greed." (Harford, 2008:9) I took my flight through characters depicted from the Chinese fantasy classic, *Journey into the West*, and have them transformed into contemporary figures who were trapped in the middle of the desert in Western China, seeking their way *out* in the midst of running away from social chaos back in their hometowns...

In *Dreaming Plum Blossom Away* (2004)...

I dreamed of the ever-unattainable love by making my characters traveling through space-time of two different eras, i.e. the classical and the contemporary, as if seeking alternate explanations for the emotional failure of my own. Through such dreaming, I tried to survive through traumatic neurosis experienced from anxiety of sex and love ever since the *cursed* marriage I experienced. Seeking historical justification, voluntarily or involuntarily speaking, seemed to be the effort of protecting myself from further moral damages from poor memories and

impressions as destructively projected onto the body-mind throughout, conjuring the *painful* past in the name of exploring intellectual value on love...

In *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* (1997) and *The Crossing/Painting Silence* (2007)...

I dreamed of the alienation and soul searching among dissidents imprisoned in the Mainland, as if to re-ensure the re-possession of further annihilation of my own, the ever fostering anger to prolong the deep grieving from within, the very source of creative energy without ceasing to be, as if rejuvenating the rotting “flesh and bone” and the failing of “becoming other than I am” (De Unamuno, 1954:11). It was some painful experience cutting beyond the once hallucinating sense of existence during the turmoil years begotten by the 1989 incidence...

In *Miss Margarita's Way* (1994) and *Exposed/Still Burning* (2006)...

I dreamed of the fatal effect of failure in education, or the “*Miseducation*” rather, with “inherent hypocrisy of contemporary democracies,” where, according to Noam Chomsky, the term democracy refers to “a system of government in which elite elements based in the business community control the state by virtue of their dominance of the private society, while the population observes quietly.” (2000:1) As for Hongkongers, it was a matter of colonization of the body-mind, as if, echoed by Singaporean playwright Kuo Pao Kun’s work, “so comfortably castrated,”<sup>109</sup> through “*miseducation*” painted in the beautiful façade of the ever-supplying-material comfort. Besides, through these particular dreaming, the misbehaving old dreams of my own old school days, and the root of teacher suicide in recent years, re-emerged to seek refutable evidence to back up the search of an alternative pedagogic vision...

In *Fanatico Theatre Impromptu Series 1-9* with Ho Kwok Leung (2002-2004)...

I dreamed of alternative reasoning on social and political issues other than those magnified by the media and the people in power. I even dreamt of casting myself away from the *established* theatrical environment, seeking alternatives voices for the role of theatre in *community* building, treating the theatre as a special place for communal meeting on specific issues over- or under-exposed by the Media and the parties in related to those issues...

In *Drumming Voices Creative Workshop Series* (1999-2006) and *Remapping Hong Kong Series* (2004 & 2007)...

I dreamed of the alternative purposes of the arts in furthering education for young people, parents, social workers and teachers. It was a wholly separated series of extensive dreamWORKs that had drawn me to write this particular paper, an effort to decipher how one could make use of creative energy to expand the sense of community performance of one's own vision as dreamt and experienced at times. The experiences illuminate thoughts and actions that originated from my artistic journey and the self-exploration through the works that subsequently followed (see Chapter 4 & 5)...

Were the above enlisted all dreams? Or were they, as de Unamuno vividly disclosed, all matters of “exertion of the intellect by exercise” that “prolonged to a perpetual exertion,” contemplating “living substance” mixed in me (de Unamuno, 1954:33)? I *named* my actions through plays; yet could I have proven anything? With all the experiences, *nameless*, what once *moved* me to *act* through this particular body-mind were neither “spirit” nor “art”; they were only *conversations* with the “I” evolving in the post-modern world often consciously disproven of any notion of *immortality*. **These *performances* had become my own *discourse of method* to decipher experiences picked up along side with daily living, which mostly remained *not knowing* enough of. They could be “the primary reality” not of what I *thought*, but that I *lived* (Ibid, 35), which would never be “pure,” or “without consciousness of self,” or “without personality,” or “feelings,” through “the act of knowing and willing” (Ibid, 36). I could not possibly only live with the rhetoric as invented in the mind or merely imitating reality as witnessed; I could not be only making specific journey through imagination to re-configure the possible alternate**

**connections with the objects, the people, and the “ideologies” surfing through around me. There was a huge amount of *disguised*, or unrepresented, events that closely linked to daily living. Yes, daily *living*!** To Erving Goffman, it would be the *team* itself that had probably involved in the process of the staging of a particular performance without truly presenting themselves “in the flesh to witness the show” (Goffman, 1990[1959]:87). Yet this team would be representing a reality where “the situation projected by a particular participant is an integral part of a projection that is fostered and sustained by the intimate cooperation of more than one participant.” (Ibid, 83) This team, including their opinion, their working characteristics, their service, their product, their manner and spirit at work, is significant “living substance” that integrates with the making of all the dreamWORKS, incorporating different standards and ideas that are necessary to make the performances possible. **There are in fact more than just a *team*; there is a whole human networking system involved that many people indirectly associated with the making of particular properties or related product with specific logic and negotiations going on in order to allow each of his/her “individual performance” affect or ensure the output of each fragment of performance components to take shape.** In fact, aside from the *team* as deciphered by Goffman, there are a lot of bypassing people and objects that could have played some significance in the make-up of the events often without being truly addressed. **It all comes back to ordinary living and ordinary people that not only the idea carriers and service providers constitute the making of the whole; things and matters drifting in and out of our livelihood could have cast some indirect or direct effect on the psychical expression. They were all making specific “conversation” with the “I,” never “pure” nor “ideal.”** If it were the dreams that

motivated the actions, it would have often been the interweaving *ordinary* that made up the *extraordinary* and the *infra-ordinary thing*. It is a living tapestry that cannot possibly be woven by abstracting only the isolated work of the intellect. It is so easy to extract from the whole only the “spirit-should-be” and to easily exclude, or omit, the “spirit-there-is.” Rattray so described through Artaud’s words: The artist becomes “an actively sentient force of nature whose thought-process is patterned by its activity.” Yet the scope and nature of the “pattern” would strictly depend on the sensitivity and specific condition of the artist at and out of work. When Rattray further expressed, “And the civilization in which the artist is a participant becomes ‘an image of the cosmos, the revelation of a system of interacting forces,’” (1992:145) the “revelation,” the “system,” and the “forces” as perceived and adopted at times would vary according to circumstances that might not mean as much to the artist as ideally anticipated. While it was the *dreams* that had pulled me back to the living and allowed the body-mind reopen to re-organize new *performances*, it was also an *engagement* of community in performance, setting off for *dreams* each likely encounter through the process of human networking, with “party-lines,” “teammates,” “unions,” “associates,” “committees,” “departments,” “sections,” “districts,” “organizations,” “companies,” etc. where each representing different “team-and-individual-performances.” Thus, **the above chronology of dreamWORKs was in fact the course of human events that had stream-lined to particular performances as *first* initiated by the dreaming taken place in and out of my body-mind and yet it was in fact specific observations or thoughts on some distinct phenomenal human behavior in the community that did *first* trigger such dreaming to be and *perpetuate* the *exerted* actions there of.** Yet who *first* started all the actions that eventually evolved? How

could I be the *first* if the human networks have long been rolling like a machine, self-propelling events that could no longer be perceivable for any single individual? **The “team” I did work with would only be another theorizing *loopholes* for the sake of idealizing an argument. What I intended to reflect could be merely “reading of experiences” aiming at “re-translating” or “consolidating experiences” into specific form of expressions. Behind the hundred or more footnotes when establishing relating thoughts, I am probably making personal attempts to re-navigate the form, size and shape of human picture as specifically experienced in different times. Thus, I was probably *theatering* my way to be and nothing more. The living tapestry is whatever one perceives and encounters at times.** To the late German playwright Heiner Müller, he saw the picture as a “family album” through the eyes of “Hamlet”:

I was Hamlet. I stood at the waterfront and talked to the surf BLAH BLAH BLAH, behind me the ruins of Europe. The bells tolled for the state funeral, murderer and widow a couple, the alderman howling in badly paid grief, marching in goose-step behind the coffin of the high cadaver. WHOSE IS THE CORPSE IN THE HEARSE/FOR WHOM THERE’S SUCH A SCREAMS AND CURSE/IT’S THE CORPSE OF A GREAT SOUL/A GIVER OF ALMS TO ALL, the People as the guard of honor, creation of his statesmanship HE WAS A MAN TOOK ALL FROM ALL. I stopped the funeral, forced the coffin open with my sword, that’s when the blade snapped, I managed with the blunt remains and distributed the dead father FLESH AND FLESH KEEP GOOD COMPANY among the wretched creatures hovering around me. Mourning turned to rejoicing, rejoicing into munching, on top of the empty coffin the murderer mounted the widow LET ME GIVE YOU A LEG UP UNCLE SPREAD YOU LEGS MOTHER. I lay down on the ground and heard the world doing its rounds in step with decay... (Müller, 1995:87)

It was not truly “HAMLET” he was seeing, but only a “HAMLETMACHINE” operating to reactivate the dream of corpse, which could be of Shakespeare’s, where we keep remaking its spirit in the NAME of GOOD THEATRE FOR A WORLD CRAVING FOR “CULTURAL CONSUMPTION.” What kind of theatre have I been producing then? Have I not become the *THEATREMACHINE*, with the body and consciousness remained struggling to live, with or without a purpose (or purposes) in the making?

“In reality we are always between two times: that of the body and that of consciousness. Hence the distinction made in all other cultures between body and soul. The soul is first, and above all, the locus of another time.” (Berger, 1991:10) What John Berger above described could possibly be the “*irreality*” (Sartre, 2004: 188-194) that Sartre perceived in work of art, which could only be the “intentional act of an imaging consciousness.” (Ibid, 189) What I was painting in *my* theatre events could indeed be viewed as the “aftereffect” of reality, that by essence the experiences working with many collaborators and materials under specific social circumstances and living conditions would be the core of the events and being therein taken places. **It was indeed the painting of the effect, and causes, of a series of dreamscape, manifesting through actions, with strokes that illuminated by real actions put to the aesthetic building, i.e. theatre as the *aesthetic* object. The *missing* reality, which would be the core of my further studies in the next chapter on “marrying ideas through/into actions,” is often *masked*, allowing little room for spectators to witness, or even understand somehow, as if I, with the collaborating teams, were**



**standing inside the mirror, witnessing the “go-between” of being and the reflected, with million ordinary things bouncing in and out of the “never idealized settings,” pulling the body and mind to and fro from one another through objects, people, and space-time with wide open living choices skipping around the crisscrossing life lines:**

*The producer’s idea of the script’s “traditional dwelling” may not be the “home” as ancestrally configured according to the pre-established cliché suggested by his missing father; the taxi driver he or she talked to could suddenly arouse another battle of taste rather than insights on the way actors should or should not pull up their costumes in front of the spectators; the jokes of someone’s dying mother in hospital could transfix the mood of players at rehearsals; the tempo of a scene could be interrupted by the sudden muscular tension mounting up in the stage manager’s digestive system; the designer’s pride could be devastating when the circuit among all was disconnected over an argument over the shape of a vase; the genetic thrust of the janitor passing by could for some reasons accelerate affects over the sensitivity of sexual equilibrium among people working over 8 hours inside a dark and suffocating space; the diversity and honesty in sense of longing, falling, hating, loving and touching among the playing children spotted in a playground may uproot all preconceived calculation over human emotions based on the first reading of a script; the trail of ants along the wall had once altered the conceptual measure of human relationship, pushing one another the natural strength to clean up the room together before the next incontrollable emotional rupture among collaborators; the body is aging every minute and the mind is coping every second closely connecting to not only the distribution of the cardiac output but also any potential physical actions that would likely affect the blood flow of an aging actor or dancer, which could mean the necessity to remap the activeness of muscle to be maximized in the following minutes of play...*

*And so on and so forth through the indeterminacy of the next possible living moments...*

**Through dreams, I act. And through act, I dream on. I observe. I act. I reflect. And I am still battling with memories rotten, slaughtered, exposed, or still hidden, and the longing to take on refreshing ideas through alternative living forms, fusing experiences and hoping that some understanding of the *living* would come by, perhaps, later...**

***Living* remains to be the only “object of inquiry,” with dreamWORKs marked with living semantics ever transformed through correlating space-time...**

***Dream & Effect 3: Concluding with Chekhov and Cats...***

Like Nina, the character who dreamt of being a successful actress in Anton Chekhov’s self-revealing work *The Sea Gull*, her perception of the flying sea gull would be totally different from Act I and the one being shot down in Act IV, with the metaphoric image of a dream once flying and eventually destroyed through the lapse of time and experience. In the eye of the “playwright” Trigorin, another Chekhovian self-reflective character of the same play, the flying “object” signified something lost in him: the memory of sudden “lightness” once captured in the young Nina became his inspiration that had long been missing in a career that was seemingly successful but way gone stagnated. (Kindly bear in mind these were my “interpretation” from the play, not necessarily Chekhov’s original intention, which, since he is dead, would no longer mean anything to me, or him, anymore than the findings as is.) Designing the costume of *The Sea Gull* was one of my very first theatrical experiences here in Hong Kong. And I wrote an essay reflecting the experience 20 years later, only to remind me

the *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* I once took on from the hand of my brother and its aftereffect on me ever since. And in the year of 2000, I accepted the design to have the sea gull killed on stage in my production *The Naked Eyes*<sup>110</sup>. Yet, up till now, I could still hear the voices of the *animal* cry from Nina's first performance in the play (another series of elaborated *actions* as propounded from the building of creative thoughts, over the self-built bridge of logic according to the *limited* findings as done at times, which owed much gratitude to the original creative effort physicalized by Chekhov):

“People, lions, eagles, and partridges, antlered stags, geese, spiders, silent fishes dwelling in the water, starfish and creatures invisible to the eye – in short: all life, all life, all life having performed the sad cycle is burned out... For thousands of centuries the earth has not carried upon itself a single living being and this poor moon lights up her lamp in vain. No more do the cranes wake shrieking in the meadow; nor are Maybeetles heard in the lime grove. Cold, cold, cold. Empty, empty, empty. Terror, terror, terror. (Pause) The bodies of living beings have vanished into dust. Eternal matter has turned them into stones. Into water, into clouds, but their souls have fused into one soul. That cosmic soul am I... I... I am the soul of Alexander the Great and Caesar and Shakespeare and of Napoleon and of the last leech. In me the consciousness of people has fused with the instincts of animals, and I remember all, all, all, and each life within me – I myself relive anew. I am alone. Once in a hundred years I open my lips to speak and my voice in this void sounds weary and no one hears...” (Act I, *The Seagull* /1975:30)

And Chekhov, a playwright and a medical practitioner by profession, made such claims through Nina's first performance, a speech, “with no living people,” she did not understand at an age too young. It was “life perceived in vision” according to Treplev, a young playwright character within the play so proclaimed. And animals, not

excluding human, were the cores of imagination to seek alternative outbreak from the bondage of human history. I have yet to unveil the animal side of me and revisit the core where “matter and soul will flow together in radiant harmony” (Chekhov, 1975:31) and await the rise of “the Kingdom of Universal Will.” (Ibid.)

Yet in the daily horizon of ordinary people, we do “know” what we are and we do get “confused” and remain “serious” about things. Things, images, sounds are often buzzing here and there and ever-evolving around us in different forms and shapes. Even though the “reality” as perceived at times could be “selective” and not “whole,” we do not ask questions like philosophers. Their questions simply come and go and often left unanswered.<sup>111</sup> Being always the *first*-person engaged in specific living moments at times, how often do we pull ourselves out of the living *shell* and perceive the situation from the *second*- or *third*-person viewpoint? Not until we meditate with what happened would we finally stop and reflect from selective “reality” perceived at times, something that is often fragmentary and almost “dream-like.” What would be the residue of these “fragmentary reflection” on our body-mind? Would it be something so close to James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, with only bits and pieces of life re-captured through stream of consciousness where only fragments were to be “recovered” drifting in and out of our body-mind, i.e. the *I*s, seeking contemplation with the moment of intended to behold at times? Yet, when we were young, and the power of reflection worked on different planes, where often stretched under the social order as communicated by parents, teachers and adults, with living moments often like “dream on the run,” embracing peculiar perception of time and vision casting shadows upon our body landscape, it was time when the body-mind was often consumed by

fear, anxiety and not knowing enough. **What appeared above was like attempts to re-capture those fragmentary moments of being from childhood, adolescence to adulthood, be it rationally or irrationally, not only to trace the identity once bounded, with sexuality “de-wakened” at specific events of time and space, but also re-configure the ever-changing human body living in me, through me, and with me through living dreams, or memories, as “ruined,” “fractured,” “disillusioned,” “imagined,” “re-discovered,” or “re-created” between the interactive play of “having” and “being in.” It would be traces of identity once formed, deformed, and re-formed through fire of reflective modulations and reverberations on living transparencies, i.e. dream-like memory re-sculptured in alternative form of life play. And those eventually *lived*, through the arts...**

Milan Kundera's *Identity* had shared with us such thoughts: “Remembering the past, carrying it with us always, may be the necessary requirement for maintaining, as they say, the wholeness of the self. To ensure that the self does not shrink, to see that it holds on to its volume, memories have to be watered like potted flowers, and the watering calls for regular contact with the witnesses of the past, that is to say, with friends. They are our mirror; our memory; we ask nothing of them but that they polish the mirror from time to time so we can look at ourselves in it.” (Kundera, 1997:46) As I was citing the passage, I realized the upper left corner of the book was bitten off by one of the kittens, named *Mi Gow*, which has been living with us the past twelve months. The bitten area left marks of her favorite passed time while lying on top of books watching me working on my desk. She became a “witness” of this particular paper in the making. Thus, I hereby begin, yes, and hurrah, another moment begins,

with *Mi Gow* and the stories of her “sisters and brother,” four living animals with specific physical development I happen to witness, with amazing changes in them that have pulled me back to the reality of my own body, a physical entity that has once undergone dreams, ignorance, rebellions, curses, abuses, with reminiscing physical moments not totally irrelevant to those possessed, or *culturally* dispossessed, by these kittens. Through the uninhibited physical form and expression of the kittens (with the exceptional encounter of one who got abused and permanently brain damaged by human vulgarity – the sudden outburst of violence from an educated man who teaches parenting in University), through their sleeping positions, their stretching limbs, their kneading paws, their sprawling and rolling about, their pressing cheeks, their blinking eyes, their positioning of ears, their scent rubbing, their meowing and purring, their whining and chirruping, their righting reflex and their escape instinct, I re-discovered the ignorance of my own body that had left unsung in childhood and eventually gone adrift and foul tuned under the double jeopardy of natural causes and severe social scrutiny...

**It is in theatre I re-open my body-mind to reunite “the doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy, that makes an experience to be an experience,”** (Dewey, 2005:50) **and allow its timely effect awaken a sense of longing, or alternate a different state of being by creating dreamWORKs.** But is it truly possible? In such an age? Müller thought of Freud’s words once, “Text spoken in dreams is either remembered or quoted text, never new: there are no original texts in dreams. And we are living in a dream-phase like that. It’s as though dialect has come to a halt. A frozen time. Everything that was before is congested. It’s all available, but

nothing new is possible.” He, therefore, exclaimed, “Art needs diffusion.” (Müller, 1995:xx)

My dreamWORKs  
were probably not setting out to diffuse...  
*only*  
to make room to re-create,  
or to re-energize,  
once again,  
the ever-fading dreams,  
allowing the body-mind  
making *new* dreams  
for the living to be...  
Buzz...  
Buzz...  
Beyond the crust of  
daily dreamscape,  
I  
see  
its  
timely effect  
tightly woven  
in  
traces  
of events  
unfolding consciousness  
and tacit knowledge  
of  
the body-mind...

## NOTES for CHAPTER THREE:

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- <sup>1</sup> During his imprisonment, Václav Havel was allowed to write one letter each week to his wife Olga. The letters were later put into a collection and become *Letters to Olga*, first published in 1983 and later re-published in USA, Canada and Britain.
- <sup>2</sup> Barnett Newman, *Vir Heroicus Sublimis*, oil on canvas, 7'11<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" x 17'9<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub>", 1950-1951. Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Ben Heller.
- <sup>3</sup> In one of his many letters to his father, dated February 28, 1778, Mozart wrote: I beg of you, do not let the thought come into your head that I shall ever forget you – I cannot bear it. My main goal was, is, and will always be to strive for a speedy and happy reunion – but it means to be patient; you know better than I how things sometimes go awry – but they also straighten out again. Just be patient. Let's put our trust in god, I am sure he will not forsake us; I certainly will do my part; how can you possibly have any doubts about me? – Is it not to my own advantage that I would work with all my strength so I can, the sooner, the better, have the good fortune and pleasure to embrace my best and most beloved father with all my heart?" Excerpted from *Mozart's Letters Mozart's Life*, selected letters edited and newly translated by Robert Spaethling (2000, faber and faber, p.135)
- <sup>4</sup> In 1944, Spanish painter Salvador Dali had depicted the auditory phenomenon of dreaming in *Dream Caused by the Flight of a Bee around a Pomegranate a Second Before Awakening*.
- <sup>5</sup> During the Western Jin Dynasty (265-316) of China, it was so recorded in *The Graves of Three Kings of Sou Shen Ji* (Stories of Immortals): "The king had a dream one night, in which he saw a boy, whose eyebrows were one foot apart from each other, swearing to take vengeance for his father's death. The king offered a reward of one-thousand taels of gold for the capture of the young lad..." (100 Chinese Myths and Fantasies, tr. Ding Wangdao, Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 1988, p. 111)
- <sup>6</sup> I often believe the reason why I fell in love with films mainly got to do with the missing storytelling when I was still a child. The absence of stories, not even cartoon, had me pulled myself into my own story making through observation, or daydreaming. I was 16 when I first saw a Disney cartoon feature film and I never had much joy watching it.
- <sup>7</sup> David Glenn wrote an article entitled *The Tease of Memory*, examining the phenomenon of déjà vu. (The Chronicle of Higher Education, Research & Publishing, July 23, 2004)  
URL site: [<http://chronicle.com/free/v50/i46/46a01201.htm>] Retrieved on March 24, 2008.
- <sup>8</sup> Excerpted from Martin Luther King Jr.'s *I have a dream* speech, delivered on August 28, 1963 at the steps of Lincoln Memorial in Washington.
- <sup>9</sup> It is a phenomenon, on one hand, bounded by limited land and too big a population; on the other, the ecological condition also provides real estate agents a grant excuse to build more high-rises to guarantee better profit return with lower investment basis. Consequently, the city piles up with taller and taller blocks, suffocating the city with unwanted "windshields."
- <sup>10</sup> It was a short film (40 minutes) directed by Federica Fellini in 1968 for *Tales of Mysteries*, a French-Italian collaboration, distributed by American International Pictures.
- <sup>11</sup> Translated from my own poem collection. This was one of the series reflecting on the aftershock experience of June 4, 1989. Poems of this nature had been lingering for years.
- <sup>12</sup> According to the Buddha teaching as shared in *Access to Insight* website: [<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html>], "Birth is dukkha, aging



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is dukkha, death is dukkha; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, & despair are dukkha; association with the unbeloved is dukkha; separation from the loved is dukkha; not getting what is wanted is dukkha. In short, the five clinging-aggregates are dukkha."

- <sup>13</sup> The Eightfold Path was also the teaching of Buddha; it includes "right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is the path; this is the practice for the full comprehension of these forms of stressfulness." URL site: [<http://www.accesstoinight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn38/sn38.014.than.html>] Retrieved on April 1, 2008.
- <sup>14</sup> Arno Karlen's *Biography of a Germ* (2001, Anchor Books) denotes the life story of *Borrelia burgdorferi* (Bb for short), the bacterium that causes Lyme disease, AIDS, and West Nile encephalitis. The amazing aspect of the "biography" was Karlen's unveiling the remarkable resilience and adaptive skill that Bb possessed in its way to survive, always managed to thrive into alternative transition, from animal hosts to human hosts. In another word, the adaptive nature of the germ, in revelation to the cells living in human, could signify something insight to how we should look into the natural environment and its correlating behavior.
- <sup>15</sup> In Han Shaogong's *A Dictionary of Maqiao* (2003/1996), he had written 116 articles elaborating on specific words, expressions and signs used by people living in Maqiao. The articles were like paintings of Maqiao village life depicted from the perspective of a young student who was once sent to Maqiao during the "Down to the countryside Movement" taken place in China around 1950's and 1960's.
- <sup>16</sup> John E. Sarno, MD, Professor of Clinical Rehabilitation Medicine at New York University School of Medicine, had shared his view in an interview for *Medscape Orthopaedics & Sports Medicine* (8[1], 2004) that "large numbers of people in whom the pain was being attributed to some structural abnormality actually had a totally different disorder. It was a disorder in which the pain was very real, but it was initiated by emotional factors." I have been carrying back pain for over years and have never been "cured" by any doctors. The only way to ease the pain is through meditation. URL site: [<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/478840?src=mp>] Retrieved on June 15, 2007.
- <sup>17</sup> Samuel Beckett finished his final part of his "trilogy" in 1952, entitled *The Unnamable*. To J.M. Coetzee, "if 'the Unnamable' is the verbal sign for whatever is left once every mark of identity has been stripped from the series of antecedent monologuer (Molloy, Malone, Mahood, Worm and the rest of them), who/what comes when the Unnamable is stripped too, and who after that successor, and so forth; and – more important – does the fiction itself not degenerate into a record of an increasingly mechanical stripping process?" (Coetzee, 2008:170)
- <sup>18</sup> As there were nine people in the family at times and we lived in a flat less than 200 sq. ft., we had to cramp together in the bunk bed at night. I used to sleep with my grandmother and my sister on the lower level of the bunker and my brothers on the upper levels.
- <sup>19</sup> The lack of touching in the family culture did severely affect the development of my self-esteem. Psychotherapist Beverly Engel talked about "touch as sex education" – "The importance of touching in human life can hardly be over-emphasized. Touching is essential for healthy development – in fact, the tactile sense is the first to develop. Babies who have not received sufficient tactile stimulation – hugging, cuddling, kissing – do not develop normally and many do not grow at all. In the months following birth, touching can literally mean the difference between life and death; the mortality rate for babies deprived of touching is extremely high." (Engel, 1995::25)
- <sup>20</sup> I was too young to recall the first place I lived in. My brother told me much later regarding where we used to live before moving to the low cost housing estate newly developed in Kwun Tong,

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which, to my memory, was the “first” place I lived. I would expand on the effect of living space at later chapter.

- <sup>21</sup> Rudolf Steiner, the education philosopher who was responsible for the Waldorf school movement, so shared his thoughts with a group of factory workers in one of his lectures given in Dornach on April 16, 1923, “...during early period of childhood the human being is inwardly predisposed, right down to the blood circulation, by what comes from the environment. These influences become instrumental for the orientation of a person’s thought life.” (Steiner, 1996:32)
- <sup>22</sup> When I got back to Hong Kong after college, I was the only grandchild in my family still left around in Hong Kong at that time since all my brothers and sister were overseas, either studying or emigrated. It was a whole different relationship in comparing with those I experienced when I was a child, when everybody was still around.
- <sup>23</sup> Willie Loman was the main character of Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman* who found himself socially trapped and no longer capable to fulfill the dreams he had told his sons.
- <sup>24</sup> Don McLean was my favorite songwriter and singer since teenage. I had literally bought all his albums and had all his lyrics copied to my notebook. I had twice used his songs in performances, one in a secondary school singing contest and one in an audition for a musical during my college year. His song *American Pie* had my mind prepared quite differently during those years studying in Houston. In fact, many American pop and folk songs I sang back then became the cultural mirrors for thoughts.
- <sup>25</sup> Paul Simon’s *Sound of Silence* was the theme song of the movie *The Graduate* (Embassy Picture, 1967), directed by Mike Nichols, produced by Joseph E. Levine and Lawrence Turman. I did not get to see the film until college years.
- <sup>26</sup> It was a political sensitive time during the late 1960’s when the Cultural Revolution was heated up across the border. Many “leftists,” the *nationalists* of “Communist China,” i.e. People’s Republic of China (PRC) at that time, were being viewed as “extremists,” “terrorists,” or “trouble-makers,” for their challenge to the local colonial government, especially when the police arrested their leaders and stormed their meeting places. They were held responsible for the 1967 riots in Hong Kong for planting fake and real bombs in the city. I had personally witnessed these fake bombs planted near our residential area and how the policemen were geared up with tear masks and rattan shields at work. It was like my first experience of “war.”
- <sup>27</sup> Those cinema houses were all clearly identical in their setting and mood, all run by Mainland-related franchises. There were quite a few over the colony. In those cinema houses, they showed only films imported from “Red China.”
- <sup>28</sup> I believed it was mainly influenced by the experience of following my sister’s boy friend to Phoenix Cine Club, one of the earliest private art cinema club run by a group of young moviegoers, watching those art films at kindergartens in Wu Chung Street of Yau Ma Tei beginning in the early 1970’s.
- <sup>29</sup> *La Chinoise* was a French film made by Jean-Luc Godard in 1967. It was viewed by critic that “it is as much a film about filmmaking as it is a political film: combining pop-art montage with a non-linear narrative, Godard created a multifaceted polemic which covered both his political views and his cinematic conscience.” (From Directors Suite: Jean-luc Godard, URL site: [<http://www.madmancinema.com.au/>]. Retrieved on June 12, 2008.
- <sup>30</sup> There was not any kind of sex education back in the 1970’s. At least not ever experienced in the school I was in. The ignorance in sex and the body had indeed severely affected the “decision” and “experience” I had when we made love, subsequently the unexpected pregnancy. The only

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“sex education” I did receive was those read in the “dirty” magazine and erotic stories in newspaper.

- <sup>31</sup> I have the habits of elaborating my creative thought through writing, ever since 2002 on the production of *Heading West*, a Theatre Fanatico production exploring the nature of economic development in Western China. Subsequently, I have them all published in the form of books, sharing my production notes of corresponding theatrical works. Those writings had become part of my research effort in the search of the self-at-work through the arts.
- <sup>32</sup> One of American photographer Barbara Kruger’s 1989 Untitled photograph printed a strong statement, “YOUR BODY IS A BATTLEGROUND” (Ewing, 1994: 337) on top of a woman’s positive vs. negative exposed face, a very influential work that had provoked tremendous thought on feminism.
- <sup>33</sup> These three photographers had posed some thought-provoking nudes and body landscape for contemplation. Each arouses different aspects of the human bodily form and expressions: from Maplethorpe’s uncompromising visit to body parts to Serrano’s physicalized absurdity of human emotions and desire, and Tunnick’s urban bodyscape, an outcry to the self-censoring body unnaturally inhibited.
- <sup>34</sup> In an interview with Hugh Davies, March 6 and August 7, 1973, London, Francis Bacon expressed, “I rely on chance as much as possible and push the paint around until something happens, I think of myself as an instinctual painter, being as close as possible to the nervous system and the unconscious... One does not know what one’s instinct is, why one retains one hazardous mark rather than another. You hope that you change altogether through time. People don’t ever stand still, they’re in movement from birth to death, the whole psyche is changing all the time. No one ever knows what their psyche ever is.” (Davies & Yard, 1986:110) I have always been deeply moved by Bacon’s exploration on masculinity and the unbashful quality of self-investigation through his works on the psyche of male figure. In his works, I see traces of my own male root; forever entangled in illusive moral, social, cultural and historical “frames.”
- <sup>35</sup> The long series of self-portrait by Frida Kahlo (1907-1954) had pushed me to the awareness of the history of cultural sufferings on the body and spirit of the female. The conscientiousness of femininity did not exactly open me up but rather constantly tested me inside out through the inner war of pull from masculinity and patriarchal heritage.
- <sup>36</sup> Norwegian artist Edvard Munch’s paintings and etchings had moved me deeply since early days. His obsessive investigation of repressive childhood experience had some parallel that echoes the repressed psyche of my own. His painting series on women, like “Madonna” (1895), “Vampire” (1895), “The Kiss” (1895; 1897), “The Voice” (1896), “Attraction” and “Attraction II” (1896), were especially haunting and honest that had triggered deep emotions in me while reflecting the love and sexual relationship I had experienced.
- <sup>37</sup> Nudity was an important aspect of my works. In *Two Civil Servants in a Skyscraper* (Theatre Resolu, 1993), the final scene revealed two nude civil servants having a picnic on their working desks. In *Miss Julie Trilogy* (Theatre Resolu-Theatre Fanatico, 1994-1997), three aspects of nudity were examined through a man searching for his own death in the nude, a prisoner freed himself from the bondage of imprisonment and a mother undressed to reveal her bodily wound infringed during the Cultural Revolution. In *Picnic on Top of Central Plaza* (Theatre Fanatico, 1998), two nude males were wrestling in a cage, one depicting the male figure from British painter Francis Bacon and the other a self-bondaged gentleman twisted from the image of Rene Magritte. In *Exposed/Still Burning* (Theatre Fanatico, 2006), a nude male dancer sat in the middle of the audience making live comments on the show they are watching and a female teacher undressed to fulfill her own fantasy while reading an erotic story, *Story of the Eye* by Georges Bataille.

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- <sup>38</sup> Working on period costume design gave me the chance to study the changing form of body aesthetics and the absurdity behind fashion. The corset, the bustle, the knots, the ties that all bundled up bodily figures had worked my mind through and out. I once dressed up Caliban, the “half man half animal” character in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, in a piece of costume that weighed over 100 pounds, tying up with huge knots and bundles from used clothes, simply designed to transform the actor’s movement.
- <sup>39</sup> Annie Sprinkle had once produced a creative photograph in 1991, titled *Anatomy of a pinup photo* (Ewing, 1994:336), which was placed along side with Kruger’s “Your Body is a Battleground” in Ewing’s photo studies of the human form in *The Body*. The female body in full-scaled lingerie, including garter-belts, silk stockings and high heel shoes, was labeled with notes objectified with specification on each body parts and put-on pieces.
- <sup>40</sup> In Jennifer Ackerman’s *Sex Sleep Eat Drink Dream*, she wrote, “Nausea – hunger’s antithesis – is a potent protective tool. Just what causes the sick head and roiling stomach remains an enigma.” (J. Ackerman, 2007:48) I had developed a series of physical symptoms, including stomachache, nausea, respiratory contraction, diarrhea, etc. in the face of food in the first 30 years of my life. It could all be psychosomatic. For example, every time I drank warm water, I would feel sick. It had been bothering me throughout the years before one day I suddenly stopped and asked why. My grandmother’s saying popped up in my head, “Don’t drink anything warm. No good for you. Get something hotter.” It got into my mind so deeply that my body had been tuned to repulse anything not to the temperature as conceptualized. After I got the reasoning behind sorted out, I never had much problems drinking warm water then.
- <sup>41</sup> In early 1990’s when Hong Kong was preparing its road for the Handover ceremony, I had once been responsible to design the set for a musical play called TALES OF THE WALLED CITY (written by Raymond To and directed by Daniel Yang), a mega-sized-blockbuster kind of production co-produced by the three prominent government supported professional performing arts groups, including the Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, the Hong Kong Dance Company and the Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra. It was the first “major” co-production and all anticipated GLORY AND SUCCESS to fulfill the political expectation of the former Urban Council (now Leisure and Cultural Services Department). Yet the Hong Kong theatrical scene was not at all prepared for such a big production. The process was agonizing and disastrous when the set was built by an unprofessional company, with set pieces unfixed all over the stage two days before opening. I had once shared the experience in *Forum on Hong Kong Theatre Aesthetics* held at Sir Run Run Shaw Hall of the Hong Kong Chinese University in 2001. (No. 3, Hong Kong Drama Review, 2002, p.77) Looking back from now, it had also something to do with the immaturity and unseasoned experience on my part as a designer at the time, unrealistically trying to entertain the unfathomable desire of human vanity.
- <sup>42</sup> Shower was considered to be luxurious to our standard. We bathed only with a plastic basin of water. In the years when water supply was limited to only 4 hours in 4 days, we could only bathe once every four days. Some said it was due to severe drought back in 1963 and 1967. It was later believed that due to the political constraints and the political upheavals in the Mainland, the government imposed water rationing was due to the water supply from China’s East River was periodically turned off, and consequently, water shortages.
- <sup>43</sup> Wendell Berry’s *Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community* has made such notes: “Seeking to ‘free’ sexual love from its old communal restraints, we have ‘freed’ it also from its meaning, its responsibility, and its exaltation. And we have made it more dangerous. ‘Sexual liberation’ is as much a fraud and as great a failure as the ‘peaceful atom.’ We are now living in a sexual atmosphere so polluted and embittered that women must look on virtually any man as a potential assailant, and a man must look on virtually any woman as a potential accuser. The idea that this situation can be corrected by the courts and the police only compounds the

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disorder and the danger. And in the midst of this acid rainfall of predation and recrimination, we presume to teach our young people that sex can be made 'safe' – by the use, inevitably, of purchased drugs and devices. What a lie! Sex was never safe, and it is less safe now than it has ever been." (Berry, 1992:142)

- <sup>44</sup> The event had "profound" influence over my sufferings over the fallen through marriage I experienced. It also had me transgressed into propounding struggles over the issue of love, sex and fidelity throughout the period when I was being considered as being "promiscuous" over the number of "part-time lovers" within the six-year period after divorce.
- <sup>45</sup> My father did not have the luxury of having brothers and sisters to grow up with, which possibly resulted his lack of imagination in communicating with one another in the family. Being the only son of my grandfather, he had always been the focus of the household and expected everyone's attention thereof. We, my brothers, sister and I, had left the family when I was 15 due to the violence as exposed between the fight of my father and my eldest brother over the hi-fi sound volume, a burning point long repressed since my father's return after his sudden four-year disappearance from the family. At the age of 87, he has still been exercising his command over his 30 year-old-daughter, i.e. my youngest stepsister, and set curfew in the house forbidding her to use the computer after midnight, which resulted in the injury of the old man from a physical attack by the enraged daughter. The incidence had been the latest drama evolved around his "household" which ended up settled in court between the two as he filed a police report charging my stepsister with physically abusing him. The event was luckily settled from the daughter's apology.
- <sup>46</sup> Such "unconscious castration" was a knot as examined by Jacques Lacan to be "the installation in the subject of an unconscious position without which he would be unable to identify himself with the ideal type of his sex, or to respond without grave risk to the needs of his partner in the sexual relation, or even to accept in a satisfactory way the needs of the child who may be produced by this relation." (Lacan, 1977:312) As my first sexual intercourse experience had produced an "unexpected pregnancy," as naïve as it may sound for an eighteen-year-old, the subsequent birth of my child had become the haunted image of anxiety for all my later sexual relationship.
- <sup>47</sup> In his lecture on "The Significance of the Phallus," Jacques Lacan mentioned, "The demand for love can only suffer from a desire whose signifier [phallus] is alien to it. If the desire of the mother *is* the phallus, the child wishes to be the phallus in order to satisfy that desire. Thus the division immanent in desire is already opposed to the fact that the subject is content to present to the Other what in reality he may *have* that corresponds to this phallus, for what he has is worth no more than what he does not have, as far as his demand for love is concerned because that demand requires that he be the phallus." (Lacan, 1977:320)
- <sup>48</sup> I was awarded quite a few times for achievements in theatre practice. I never got the "courage" to pick up any of them on stage. I believed it had become a gesture of disrespect to the organizations that awarded me. There had always been strange feelings on my part. I believe in collaboration but I never believed in "*quanzi*," i.e. relationship intentionally established, especially those organized ones. Ever since primary and secondary schools, I never joined any particular groups. I enjoyed talking with people and sharing things. I never enjoyed belonging to any particular groupings though. I was very much a cruiser, enjoying traveling alone. I value all kinds of individual effort but rarely organized ones. Paradoxically speaking, theatre is very much an *organized* activity. Guess I was not truly into organizing things but rather the creation of potential collaboration among individuals. To me, that is quite different from getting people "organized."
- <sup>49</sup> According to Kwai-cheung Lo's *Chinese Face/Off: The Transnational popular culture of Hong Kong*, Bruce Lee only represented the "chopsocky" martial arts genres that attracted primarily black

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and young audience in America. (Lo, 2005:130) He also quoted Chinese writer Wang Shuo's article "My views on Mass Culture, Hong Kong and Taiwan cultures, and others" (2000) and regarded the "hyperbolic body" of Bruce Lee belonging only to the trashy popular culture realm that had nothing to do with the really serious national affairs. (Ibid, 81)

- <sup>50</sup> It began with *Two Civil Servants in a Skyscraper* in 1993, exploring the lack of genuine participation over the political dialogues of the handover among common folks. I moved on to examine the psyche of this dissented child, i.e. Hong Kong's separation from her Motherland, through alternative journey re-visiting ancient history in *The Miss Julie Trilogy* (1995-1997) and *Mother* (1999). I also examined the meaning of growing up in the economy-driven society of Hong Kong and the alienation therein through the heated process of avoidance in political reflection in *Picnic on Top of Central Plaza* (1998). I further examined the lack of critical reflection in Hong Kong due to the slow death in sensitivity brought about through colonial governance in *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral* (1997). I extended my doubt, through *In Search of a Floating Stone* (1999), over the all out economy as the sole direction of survival, and, worst of all, the missing reflection over the sentiment of "dance and horse-racing remains for 50 years." I made my own speculation through a hypothesized catastrophic Hong Kong in 2046.
- <sup>51</sup> American priests ran the Church I went to. When I was five, I went to a Bible class taught by an American nun. It was 1963. The day when the news of President John F. Kennedy being assassinated reached the year of Madame Deng, that was how we used to address her, she was in tears. Did not know why that particular scene impressed me. Things that were American had filled up the senses in many of us in the neighborhood. Our ears got so catchy on American stories. The war fought by the American became stories like those watched in cowboy movies. In those days, Hong Kong was the only available free port for American Naval ships to refuel around the South East Asia area.
- <sup>52</sup> I was on my way to a driving test in Pasadena. I was told that it would be easier to get a license there. I was driving a 1969 Pontiac and dreaming of my wife. Did not know the road condition well enough and ran past a red light without knowing it. I was immediately hit by a pick-up truck, brand new and custom made. Pasadena was a "red-neck" town where resided Klu Klux Klan club in the town. When the police arrived, they did not say a word and handcuffed me to the town jail. I was told to strip and walk naked to the cell. I was not allowed to use the phone until three hours later. My brother bailed me out six hours later.
- <sup>53</sup> Of course, it was a much more complicated story other than the jailed experience. Being an illegal restaurant worker throughout my studying in the country, a lot of fundamental cultural thinking came to mind and those reflections were critical enough to pull myself back to where I was born, hoping to relocate the sense of belonging and the sense of place (or misplaced) from where I was brought up. Throughout most of my work infiltrated a strong sentiment of that particular search for a deeper sense of cultural identity, be they through the family re-visited or the colonial historicity living in me.
- <sup>54</sup> The primary school I went to was called St. John the Baptist Primary School, one of the first Catholic schools in Kwun Tung ever since the Government first developed massive low cost housing estate and resettlement housing there. American Catholic priests and nuns ran the school. It was a time when a great part of social welfare was contributed through charity made by religious sectors. It also signified the common path of colonization through religious means, like those taken place in South America, the Philippines and many more.
- <sup>55</sup> If the Church had been building the "dynamics and statics," as what suggested by Rudolf Steiner (April 16, 1923 lecture at Dornach), of my childhood, it had also become the "soul elements" of my upbringing. By uprooting that moral pull, resetting an alternative altar would seem to be the best possible way I could think of at times to take hold of my own spirit.

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- <sup>56</sup> Ever since my father's divorce with my stepmother and the eventual disappearance of my father, I ran away from school a lot. I attended morning shows in cinema. Later on, even 3 shows a day, with the money saved from smaller lunches and tutorial income from teaching primary students. In peak years, I watched over 500 films a year. 300 was an average for quite a few years.
- <sup>57</sup> It was my first stage production, and also my first of Samuel Beckett, in Hong Kong back in 1982. I was only 25, an age supposedly too young to understand the morbid world of the Irish playwright. In the five months rehearsing the play, it was like a journey into the purgatory of meaningless existence. The play also signified the coming end of my relationship with my ex-wife. She came to see me rehearse for the first time and learnt that I was not at all the one she knew at home, someone with energy totally transformed in theatre in compared with the "passive being" I was reluctant to be under undesirable family setting.
- <sup>58</sup> Take Derek Jarman as an example: reading his passage on "The Perils of Yellow" in *Chroma* (1994, Vintage) would be a different experience from watching the quality of yellow depicted in his film *Caravaggio* (1986). Likewise, it would be another totally different experience in his perception of yellow used in his painting. Regarding the differences between painting and moving photographic images, French cinema critic Andre Bazin has shared with us a very vivid ontological analysis over the change and need of human psyche in pursuit of the aesthetics and psychological satisfaction through image plays. (Bazin, 1967: 9-16)
- <sup>59</sup> Gilles Deleuze once wrote, "What the crystal reveals or makes visible is the hidden ground of time, that is, its differentiation into two flows, that of presents which pass and that of pasts which are preserved. Time simultaneously makes the present pass and preserves the past in itself. There are, therefore, already, two possible time-images, one grounded in the past, the other in the present. Each is complex and is valid for time as a whole." (Deleuze, 2003:98) The image, the thought and the media of expression depicted are all integrated in the process of "crystallization," which signifying a series of successive moments joined together to allow the free association taking place in the presence.
- <sup>60</sup> It was during the period of 1967 riot when pro-communist "leftists" challenged the British ruling of Hong Kong. The event was related to the Cultural Revolution launched in the Mainland. The streets of Hong Kong were flooded with home made bombs.
- <sup>61</sup> I sat for the Hong Kong Secondary School Entrance Examination and was allocated to *King's College*, supposedly a top government school in Sai Ying Poon (the Westside of Hong Kong Island), somewhere far away from where I lived, i.e. Kwun Tong (the Eastside of Kowloon Peninsula). It was the top school lined up selected by my brother. No one would expect me to get in such a high-ranking school. I often joked I was at the bottom of these top-rankers. I never managed or made the effort to get on top throughout the secondary school years. I had made myself being the invisible all the years since Form Two. It was a school I never had any good memory with.
- <sup>62</sup> According to Confucius in *The Doctrine of Mean*, "When joy, anger, sorrow and pleasure have not yet arisen, it is called *chung* (equilibrium, centrality, mean). When they arise to their appropriate levels, it is called "harmony." *Chung* is the great root of all-under-heaven. "Harmony" is the penetration of the Tao through all-under-heaven. When the mean and harmony are actualized, Heaven and Earth are in their proper positions, and the myriad things are nourished." (part 1)
- <sup>63</sup> Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene* so recorded, "A body is the genes' way of preserving the genes unaltered. The evolutionary importance of the fact that genes control embryonic development is this: it means that genes are at least partly responsible for their own survival in the future,

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because their survival depends on the efficiency of the bodies in which they live and which they helped to build.” (Dawkins, 1976:23-24)

- <sup>64</sup> The scene of “Tomorrow Belongs to me” in Bob Fosse’s 1972 film *Cabaret* (ABC picture) had left some deep impact in me on the sense of foul nationalism.
- <sup>65</sup> *The East is Red* was the unofficial Chinese national anthem during the Cultural Revolution. A time when the original national anthem *March of the Volunteers* was banned during the period as the writer of the song, Tien Han, was imprisoned. In Hong Kong, nobody talked about the Chinese national anthem before the handover and they were never played often, except in particular schools of specific political background. Growing up in a Catholic school and a government school, nationalism was not exactly something people would talk about in the first place.
- <sup>66</sup> The lyrics of the present Chinese National Anthem is absolutely “outdated” as far as the implied context, especially the first few lines of the verses that directly depicted from Tien Han’s 1934 Shanghai play, eventually the theme song of an old movie, *Sons and Daughters in a Time of Storm*, a film made in 1935 China was at war with the Japanese invasion. During the June 4<sup>th</sup> Events of 1989, the Anthem suddenly incorporated different meanings to me. It was a time when the meaning of *slaves, flesh and blood* became something quite vivid and disturbing.
- <sup>67</sup> It was a production elaborated on the imprisonment of dissident journalist Ching Cheong. The name of the production was *The Crossing/Painting Silence*, produced by Theatre Fanatico and performed at C.A. hall of Shatin Town Hall in December 2007. I was the director, writer and designer.
- <sup>68</sup> The first line of the Chinese national anthems translated from Tian Han’s song lyrics written for a shanghai play, which later became the theme song of the 1935 patriotic film *Sons and Daughters in a Time of Storm*. (Wikipedia source)
- <sup>69</sup> In the course of his elaboration on M. Duclos’ influence on Rousseau in “*Genesis and Structure of the Essay on The Origin of Languages*,” Jacques Derrida had made such comments: The degradation of the language is the symptom of a social and political degradation (a theme that will become most frequent in the second half of the eighteenth century); it has its origin in the aristocracy and in the capital city. Duclos announces the Rousseauist themes most precisely when he holds forth this: “What we call society, and what our ancestors would merely have called a *coterie*, decides the nature of language and manners [*moeurs*] today. When a word has been for a time in use *in these social circles*, its pronunciation softens.” (Derrida, 1976:169) How Hong Kong, as a former British colony, cast her effect on my language seems to be more than merely a subject of language as “tool” for opening the “eyes.”
- <sup>70</sup> In the interview with Michel Foucault conducted by D. Trombadori at end of 1978 (Faubion 1994: 237), Foucault said, “What I think is never quite the same, because for me my books are experiences, in a sense, that I would like to be as full as possible. An experience is something that one comes out of transformed. If I had to write a book to communicate what I’m already thinking before I begin to write, I would never have the courage to begin. I write a book because I still do not exactly know what to think about this thing I want so much to think about, so that the book transforms me and transforms what I think.”
- <sup>71</sup> It was as if the act of walking in those days would link me to Michel de Certeau’s “Pedestrian Speech Act” and his revelation to J. Searle’s search on “speech act”: It was like through walking I learnt to “actualize possibilities” in thought; the *here* and *there* helped me establishing “a conjunctive and disjunctive articulation of places”; the *idle* steps projected the chorus of values hidden in the urban system. (de Certeau, 1984:97)



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- <sup>72</sup> John G. Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks* had extensively recorded the story of the Lakota visionary and healer Nicholas Black Elk (1863-1950) and the history of sufferings experienced by the Native nation.
- <sup>73</sup> In "The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis," (Lacan, 1989:9-32), Jacques Lacan concluded, "The psychoanalytic experience has rediscovered in man the imperative of the Word as the law that has formed him in its image. It manipulates the poetic function of language to give to his desire its symbolic mediation."
- <sup>74</sup> Excerpted from Michel Foucault's essay *Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias*, republished in *Architecture Culture*, 1943-1968, 419-426.
- <sup>75</sup> Excerpted from Guy-Ernest Debord's article *Method of Detournement*, *Les Levres Nues*, No. 8, May 1956.
- <sup>76</sup> *Still Burning* is a dramatic monologue based on my personal experience as a supply teacher working in a Hong Kong secondary school written back in 1992. It was never performed. The piece is later transcribed into a new dramatic work, namely *Exposed/Still Burning*, commissioned by the Festival Office of the Leisure & Culture Services Department of Hong Kong. It was presented in the 2006 New Vision Festival.
- <sup>77</sup> Judith Butler had made an extensive analysis on the issue in her book *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (1997).
- <sup>78</sup> A line depicted by David Kammerman on his translation of Jacques Derrida's speech made in view of the suicide of Gilles Deleuze. URL site: [<http://www.usc.edu/dept/comp-lit/tympanum/1/derrida.html>]. Retrieved on May 30, 2007.
- <sup>79</sup> In Chinese opera, a chair can be expanded into all kind of perceptive reality through interplaying with another chair and a table. I have also written a poetic essay on chair, namely *The 32 faces of A Chair*, inspired by the chair play with young people. It was later published in *Hong Kong Drama Review*, Vol. 3, p.87-110, in 2002.
- <sup>80</sup> Maltz, Marc & Walker, E. Martin, 2003. "Dream Intelligence: Tapping Conscious and non-attended Sources of Intelligence in Organization" in W. Gordon Lawrence's (ed.) *Experiences in Social Dreaming*. London and New York: Karnac, pp. 189-201.
- <sup>81</sup> Andrea Dworkin's *Intercourse* (1988, Arrow Books) had painted a very vivid picture re-examining the *penis* of man and its oppressive nature.
- <sup>82</sup> R. Stickgold, J. A. Hobson, R. Fosse, M. Fosse (October 2001). "Sleep, Learning, and Dreams: Offline Memory Reprocessing". *Science* 294 (5544): 1052 - 1057.
- <sup>83</sup> From *The Miss Julie Trilogy* (1995 -1997) to *Picnic on top of Central Plaza* (1998), *Mother* (1999), *The Seventh Drawer* (2003) and *The Crossing/Painting Silence* (2007), all these productions I created evolved around dreams.
- <sup>84</sup> Excerpted from *Hagoromo*, an early Noh play that related to God dance. (Pound & Fenollosa, 1959:102)
- <sup>85</sup> American Feminist writer Andrea Dworkin had extensively re-examined the "man-made" world according to Leo Tolstoy's *The Kruetzer Sonata* and its explicit connotation of "misogyny and insight" on intercourse. (Dworkin, 1987:3-23)
- <sup>86</sup> I wrote my first film review on Akira Kurosawa's *Dodes'kadan* (1970) at the age of 16.

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- <sup>87</sup> I had donated 5 scrapbooks of film review clippings to Hong Kong Film Archive. They were collections I did between the ages of 13 to 16. They included all major and minor local film reviews from newspapers and magazines. I literally spent all my earnings from being a primary student tutor on watching movies and purchase of movie related printed articles. I had a notebook with all the watched movies listed, with favorite directors and actors specially marked with personal ratings.
- <sup>88</sup> American Playwright Arthur Miller wrote *The Crucible* in 1953 during the era of McCarthyism. Miller was one of the members “invited” for questioning in front of the House of Representatives’ Committee on Un-American Activities in 1956 (Wikipedia Source).
- <sup>89</sup> It was Father “Lai” (they all adopted a Chinese name), an American who learnt to speak Cantonese, of St. John the Baptist Church at Yee On Street of Kwun Tong. I was sent to get baptized simply for the reason of getting “a free ticket” to enter the primary school run by the same Church, i.e. St. John the Baptist Primary School. My stepmother was behind all these arrangement. As a matter of fact, she had herself baptized together to ensure my application sound and “religious” enough to match the “requirement.”
- <sup>90</sup> Since my father left home when I was about 11, listening to American pops was the best time for us all, i.e. my brothers and me. We could turn on the hi-fi or radio loudly without any complaints. I literally learnt my English from the lyrics. I copied them all on a special notebook and kept digging from one disc to another, searching for voices that could tame the heart. Songs by Peter, Paul and Mary, Joan Biaz and Simon and Garfunkel were on top of the lists at early days. Later on added Carol King, Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, and many more...
- <sup>91</sup> Bertrand Russell’s *In Praise of Idleness* has been inspiring in his beliefs in the importance of lightheartedness and play in the education of the young. While I was not, and still is not, exactly economically well off, the pursuit of “useless knowledge” had often been fascinating and inspiring to my creativity. Small things around ordinary life could be resourceful in their own special way if only if we have reflective understanding over a wider spectrum of life.
- <sup>92</sup> *Still Burning* was a piece of dramatized monologue I wrote about the experience of being a supply teacher in a Hong Kong secondary school. The work took me back to some deep reflection over the nature of learning under a colonized education system and its effect on the body-mind as I did once experience and those witness during the teaching period in 1991. I later expanded the reflection to yet another dramatic poem in exploring the same issue, i.e. *Exposed/Still Burning*, in the New Vision Arts Festival of 2006.
- <sup>93</sup> It was February 5, 1988 while I was taking the subway train in Hong Kong. I saw a cockroach trying to run for its life among the in-flooding crowd inside a compartment. That evening, I wrote a poem for this poor cockroach, as if reminiscing the difficulties in me trying to find my way out of the emotional and professional rollercoaster ride after my divorce. It was another route of “day-dreaming” exercises I had through my writing, looking for alternative emotional outlet through creativity.
- <sup>94</sup> *Rhinoceros* was an “absurd” play written by Romanian-French playwright Eugène Ionesco in 1959. It was in three acts which described the inhabitants of a small provincial French town all turned into rhinoceros over the course of actions with an epidemic overtone, with the exception of only one central character, Bérenger, “a flustered everyman” who is semi-alcoholic and apathetic, managed to escape from the metamorphosis. The central theme revolves around the subject of conformity. As Ionesco focused on the upsurge of communism and fascism, the play was later adapted into a musical called *Born Again*, with the setting shifted to an American shopping mall, which very much signifying the attention shift to consumerism and materialism.

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- <sup>95</sup> An expression borrowed from Hong Kong writer Andrew Tu's autobiographical tale, *Camel Bells in the Windy Desert: Memories of Inner Mongolia* (Longman Group Far East Limited, 1987), recalling his childhood back in Inner Mongolia and the eventual flight across China before moving to Hong Kong.
- <sup>96</sup> I produced, wrote and directed *Picnic on top of Central Plaza* in 1998, a Theatre Fanatico production presented at the Studio Theatre of the Hong Kong Culture Centre. It was an absurd music theatre about a young local runaway girl being examined, like picnicking, by a group of "councilors" sitting around a gigantic conference table.
- <sup>97</sup> From Nina Correa's translation of Chapter Two, "Theories on all things equal," of *The Zhuangzi* at URL site: [<http://daoisopen.com/ZZ2.html>]. Retrieved on August 23, 2007.
- <sup>98</sup> In Andrew J. Horton's article "De-icing the Emotions: Michael Haneke's Retrospective in London," it touches upon Haneke's views of his films that he wonders if discussing his work in English is at all possible. URL site: [<http://www.ce-review.org/kinoeye/kinoeye5old.html>]. Retrieved on January 28, 2007.
- <sup>99</sup> *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is a play written by American Edward Albee in 1962.
- <sup>100</sup> In an interview Edward Albee made back in 1966 with William Flanagan ("The Art of Theatre No. 4: Edward Albee," *The Paris Review*. Issue 39. Fall, 1966), he expressed that "I was in there having a beer one night, and I saw 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?' scrawled in soap, I suppose, on this mirror. When I started to write the play it cropped up in my mind again. And of course, who's afraid of Virginia Woolf means who's afraid of the big *bad* wolf...who's afraid of living life without false illusions. And it did strike me as being a rather typical, university intellectual joke."
- <sup>101</sup> *The Maids* was originally published in French as *Les Bonnes* in *L'Arbalète*, No. 12 (Lyons: 1947) and first performed at the Théâtre Athénée in Paris on April 17, 1947.
- <sup>102</sup> *The Duck Variations* was a play written by American playwright David Mamet in 1972. Ken Jenkins' *Rupert's Birthday* was first produced in 1981-82 by Actors Theatre of Louisville at Humana Festival, Kentucky.
- <sup>103</sup> The play was first presented by The Physikal Theatre at Toronto Theatre Centre on February 13, 1991, with Philip Shepherd as the Actor and Andy Stochansky as the Percussionist. The play was re-mounted for the 1992 Hong Kong Fringe Festival at the main theatre of the Hong Kong Fringe Club, with the additional collaboration of The Hong Kong Theatre of the Deaf.
- <sup>104</sup> Some scientists believe the massive eruption 3,600 years ago was responsible for the disappearance of the Minoan culture on nearby Crete. Others link the eruption to the disappearance of the legendary island of Atlantis. Information cited from the article "Santorini eruption much larger than originally believed" in URL site: [<http://www.uri.edu/news/releases/?id=3654>]. Retrieved on November 24, 2007.
- <sup>105</sup> The production was later traveling back in Hong Kong and opened in January 1994 at Shouson Theatre of the Hong Kong Arts Centre.
- <sup>106</sup> It was a company co-founded by Tang Shu Wing and me in 1993 and it operated till 1995 when we decided to split up. We each formed our own separate company instead, i.e. *No Man's Land* and *Theatre Fanatico* respectively.
- <sup>107</sup> The description was made by Peter Handke in an interview with Sigrid Löffler for *Profil* in May 1992.

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<sup>108</sup> In 2001, Austrian film director Virgil Wildrich had made a short film called *Copy Shop* (12 min., Wildrichfilm). It was about a man who works in a copy shop and annihilated through copying himself till he was surrounded by a world filled with his own images.

<sup>109</sup> It was the metaphor of Kuo Pao Kun's play *Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral*, a play I directed for Theatre Fanatico in 1998 at Shouson Theatre of the Hong Kong Arts Centre. The "less painful method" of castration was described in Scene 12 of the play. (Kuo, 2003:57-58)

<sup>110</sup> Hong Kong playwright Poon Wai-sum wrote the play. I directed and designed the work for Hong Kong Repertory Theatre at the 2000 Hong Kong Arts Festival.

<sup>111</sup> J. Valberg, in his book *Dream, Death and the Self*, reminded us, "In real-life way, however, the question has disappeared. Were that not the case, he would not be able to continue his philosophizing." (Valberg. 2007: 81) He, on discussing dream hypothesis (DH), had particularly pointed out that "what underlies, or may underlie, our philosophical uncertainty is equally the source of our momentary disorientation outside philosophy. The confusion that comes over us in everyday life, which momentarily takes possession of us and then departs, is the same confusion that (I believe) is present in the usual line of philosophical reflection on the DH: the confusion of standpoint." (Ibid, 82)

## Drumming Voices

(or *Marrying Ideas in Transformative Landscape of the Body-mind*)

Satisfy the necessities of life like the butterfly that sips the flower, without destroying its fragrance or its texture.

— Buddha

Sensitivity requires a high degree of softness and fragility – eyeballs, eardrums, taste buds and nerve ends culminating in the highly delicate organism of the brain. These are not only soft and fragile, but also perishable...

— Alan W. Watts

***Voice#1: The Sounds of Silence***<sup>1</sup>

Bats *speak*, only that we cannot hear. Voices echo in their mind; images emerge through sonar reading, with “vision” mapped by “echolocation.” (Dawkins, 1996:21-37) Though human ear, out of different *design*, cannot possibly detect sound the way bats can, the images we do *perceive* through our ears, and our heart, could be *drumming* voices way beyond the music of Beethoven and Mozart, possibly, metaphorically speaking, like madrigal with multi-layers of individual fragmentary voices, broken and yet never incoherent. How human brain decodes sound waves and transforms the sensation into vision have always been interesting subject to artists, scientists and philosophers. To Aldous Huxley, he enjoyed madrigals for its “certain degree of disintegration,” with a sense of “danger” that would not “lull one into a sense of false security by some merely human, merely fabricated order.” (Huxley,

2004:50-51) Yet it has been so often that we simply take *sound* waves for granted and subsequently carry along with us misperception that communication *has* to be through speech *only*. American neurologist Oliver Sacks, in his journey into the world of the deaf in *Seeing Voices*, extended his concern for the misconception on the *mute* that such prejudice “went back to biblical days: the subhuman status of mutes was part of the Mosaic code, and it was reinforced by the biblical exaltation of the voice and ear as the one and true way in which man and God could speak (‘In the beginning was the Word.’)” (Sacks, 1989:15) *God spoke. We listened*, for a long time without asking the needed questions. With the invention of naming and the eventual development of “the machinery of representation,” (de Certeau, 1984:147-150) our ears, component parts of the body, seem to have stayed tuned only to inscription of words contextualized under codes and signs made up by the law, the discourses, the advertisements, the stories passed down by establishments, with “practitioners” specially trained to ensure our hearing attuned to the socioeconomic and cultural contracts designed for such conformity. What exactly do we hear? Voices of “the real”? When our body is being instrumented by meanings laid down by Others, what does the body truly bear other than the operation presupposed by the ideological and normative control under state formation (Burkitt, 1999:53-58)? What we hear day in and day out could be *just noises*, bouqueted with clustering meanings transferred through muddling words that no longer serve or support the lifeline there is. In the time when Beethoven has turned into a name brand for music gadget and Mozart possibly the name of the latest hearing aid model, where could one locate *names* and the echo of the self, however fragmented their meanings and existence have turned to be?

Richard Dawkins specially cited Mark Twain's saying: "History is usually a random, messy affair," simply to contrast his point that "evolution rhymes, patterns recur" when he opened his page on *The Ancestor's Tale* (Dawkins, 2005:1). While biologists have long been seeing all "living organization" as "product of cumulative selection," (Dawkins, 1996:45) they are talking about a phenomenal process taking place through thousands and millions of generations. Unfortunately the development of a single human body-mind in a limited lifetime, especially those belong to *ordinary* beings, is often rarely mapped beyond "programming" offered by the ruling class or "expressions," and "thoughts" as *defined, studied, or theorized* by the intellectual elites in contemporary society. The *sounds* of ordinary being, be they produced by the deaf, blind, mute, handicapped, or physically impaired, are, therefore, often being viewed, or *classified*, as the *desire* of the Other (or the "multiplicity of others" in Artaud's term<sup>2</sup>), "subjectivized," in Lacan's word, to fit into the *selective vision* of the "Master-Signifier," (Zizek, 2006:345) leaving individuals only with compromised *silence*. Silence. Could be. But never mute. Do bear in mind: the "position" each theorist is taking often implies his or her specific "grounding" or "condition" in the course of *building* perception. Yet, as de Certeau repetitively exclaimed in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1988), how often do those "groundings" and "conditions" favor the body-mind already "displaced," "corrected," "added," or "removed," "deteriorated," "substituted," or "sewn together" by things and ideas instrumented under the normative discourse operated by specialists?

French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas once said, "The painter would notice that he is descending from the picture he is painting." (Harasym, 1998:22) Yet if the frame was

long initiated by others and the pattern of strokes and brushes were laid out according to plot historicized, what would be the nature of *painting* led by the descendant? Would that not simply be another *descendant of the Eunuch Admiral* (Kuo, 2003), with body and mind both castrated to the liking of the ruling *Emperor*? While the “master-signifier” may like to idealize how the system of communication *should* be, anything apart from the System as perceived would be seen as “symptoms” that are “distorted,” “improper,” or “incompetent” to connect accordingly. **If true “ethical experience” can only be achieved in a *face-to-face* position in account of his or her humanity, a sentiment strongly believed by Lévinas (Harasym, 1998:23), the sounds of a particular *face*, or the *other* face, as encountered at particular *position*, should be carefully *juxtaposed* and *echolocated*, regardless whether or how far things, among common folks, would reach the “level of transcendence” pre-supposed by philosophers.** Otherwise, all these sounds of silence would remain only, and always, be the *other*, “*man-handled*” in *singular* sense over the *multitude*, forever “subjectivized” to fulfill the needs of researchers, or “institutionalized” under specific “categories,” with labels violently scraping any true color of individuality. The “silence” thereof, sunken deep in the wells of infinite intellectual deciphering, lingers on, with sounds, yearning, beyond pull of families, schools, friends, and daily circumstances, with subjectivity that is probably too *common* or too *simple* for any “honorable” recognition.

Alas, what’s the use of talking about Lacan, Lévinas, Freud and all these *big* names to ordinary folks who are simply trying to finish their daily workout, or trying to make truce with the warring self in a world that set out to alienate one’s existence? While



philosophical argument could go on forever to “redefine” things and people around according to the changing perspectives philosophers are holding, everyday life encounters, other than being the *prey* for thoughts (which are only proliferating tricks to many), are in fact things beyond *principles* or *rules* only transferable for novelists’, psychologists’ or philosophers’ special taste for “metaphorizations.” (de Certeau, 1988:54) There are often *simple* things that are fundamental for one another to make sense out of daily living. Yet their voices are often *tuned*, or *mistuned* rather, to the liking of particular politics strategized to the taste of the intellectual few, seeking for the use of analogy for theoretical creation (Ibid, 55). What good could that be if these brilliant ideas cannot be transferred into real actions and help make *common* changes for common folks, especially those who are severely deprived of the rights and opportunity, or trapped by circumstances out of their control (like the millions who recently suffered from Cyclone Nargis in Burma since May 2, 2008 or the earthquake taken place at Szechuan of China on May 12, 2008, the days while I was working on this paper)? I am not opposing the acquisition of knowledge. Is it not the basic rights everyone should have according to each of his or her specific grounding? NOT to the ideologies as set by the “respected” few? **As teachers, social workers or facilitators, should these human service providers not reconfigure their scope of work beyond philosophizing, administering (or task-orienting), and get down to the fundamental contexts of social and personal constructs as unveiled or construed by each individual interpreter-at-work when it comes down to “face-to-face” situation?** Should we not go beyond the regulated behavior, as Foucault remarked, supplanted by the judicial law and power that have produced these docile bodies that disciplined and prepared only for labor force (Foucault, 1979)? Should the ethical self-

regulation not as studied by these “interpreters” (Viney, 1987) who go beyond the precepts recorded in philosophical texts, like what Foucault did with *The History of Sexuality*, (Gardiner, 1996) and touch base with the relation of individuals to one another? **Should these human service *officers* not trail the *ghost play* in each individual’s body-mind and help re-activate alternative dreamWORKs to cultivate the fundamental equilibrium of individual self, which could be the very foundation of a healthy community?**

Seeing how the Hong Kong government recently has been actively promoting the newly adopted “Seven level Qualifications Frameworks,”<sup>3</sup> it looks to be another example of the “ultimate” effort of the ruling class trying to differentiate and divide its citizen according to human labor as hierarchically measured to the likes of the institutions, business corporations and industries, as if human voices are instantly mapped according to the *controlled* measure of “knowledge and intellectual skills,” “processes,” “application, autonomy and accountability” and “communications, IT and numeracy”<sup>4</sup> *pre-programmed* in form of social policy to scrutinize further any *natural* tracks of human development. When social scientists, “the intelligent minorities” according to Chomsky (2000:137), team up with the ruling class to utilize any potential occasion to develop *new* theories under the “chosen” *logic* of *natural selection*, i.e. the government’s new move simply represents another set of human endeavor in “strengthening management,” all in the name of *engineering* the community for “better survival” (as if borrowing Darwin’s “natural selection” viewpoint for granted, or at convenience, and further applying “pre-determined hierarchical theories” to serve specific political purposes, or interests with selected

economic rationale), these contemporary theorists, working under institutions mostly funded by the business sectors, could easily draw their interests through *power* play focusing *only* on specific “business-related” subjects or materials and “*mastermind*” their ways into “expertised territories,” dividing *nature* to the tunes of the latest development of their *perceivable* “human industry” without providing any integrated pictures of the whole. These “mastermind” players are often experts in language, knowing how to maneuver semantics to their liking, creating alternative tactics through “rewriting” or “transformational,” or even “morpho-phonological” rules (Chomsky, 2007:136) that common folks would never be able to tackle. As a result, what publicized or promoted in the scientific, political or economic news bulletin would be something farther and farther away from the *drumming voices* naturally floating and comprehensible in ordinary beings, would it not?

I am not posing these elongated sets of questions and social phenomena to deny any potentially noble aspects of theorizing based on specific scientific aspiration. Neither am I here denying the innovations and findings developed in the *honorable* scientific domain. I simply see the potential danger if the over-dominating “expert voices,” *the ruling minorities*, powerfully maneuvered the ever *renewable* information, in the good name of working for the *majority*, the effect could easily subside or translate ordinary voices under “special management” and have “the data” collected transformed into theories either of “generic nature” or “contextualized inscriptions,” which subsequently, undermine the specific details and differences that could be significant and important to individual beings. By and large, the mass may easily be interpreted as “bats,” blind and noisy, flooding their ways through “darkness,” being forced to “move

their shadow”<sup>5</sup> around *banality*. Yet the complexity of skills behind “flying in such darkness” could easily be ignored or generalized as just an *other* sociological phenomenon that could be *fixed* by corresponding *tactics* run by policy designed for the purpose. What would happen to such a society if people were *banned* as individuals, like the many experienced during the South African apartheid? (Lelyveld, 1986:311) With the increasing reliance of the state on normative controls, the bodies of individuals would be over-tinted with institutional sentiments (as those modeled in prison, hospital, schools, etc.), regulating “everyday interactions between people...like the watchers and the watched, surveying others as well as their own selves.” (Burkitt, 1999:66) In so doing, what ground should one be holding when voices from within are no longer *specifics*, with “wavelength” and “echolocation” that are generalized or classified by “generic vision?” Do all particular individuals not deserve to be heard as much as those high sounds *drumming* by the “experts”? Such attention should be drawn before these inner voices being marked “perishable”...

In theatre, we would keep seeking the voices of characters, hoping to pay justice to the “individuals” as perceived by playwrights. Ironically, many would argue that we are still very much working on materials, or “individuals,” as fictionalized under the grand *design* of the writers. Many actors, designers and directors would get trapped in the argument over the logic of the writer’s character disposition, with particular circumstances, objectives, dramatic situation, or “tactics,” that bound the precision of the role-play. Goffman took the performing matter on in his theory on *the presentation of the self in everyday life* and so forth elaborated: “When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before

them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be.” (1990[1959]:28) The “possession” and “attributes” as taken on by actors remain to be argumentative on whether such “possession” is purely a state of the mind, i.e. mental things, possibly through unreliable *automatic believing* (Gilbert, Tafarodi and Malone, 1993), or the “attributes” as disclosed could be subjectively based on the actor’s particular observation of the characters only, which does not necessarily reflect the “reality” as perceived by each individual audience. In other words, what seems to take “possession” of could be only an illusive and presumptive generalization since there is often a lot more to the “reality,” which does vary according to the actor and the character’s conditional viewpoints. As Goffman pointed out, “When the individual has no belief in his own act and no ultimate concern with the beliefs of his audience, we may call him cynical, reserving the term ‘sincere’ for individuals who believe in the impression fostered by their own performance.” (Goffman, 1990[1959]:29) While we cannot assume the situation and prescription offered by the playwright are altogether convincing and sound to the performers, not mentioning yet the audience, they, in fact both, i.e. the performers and the audience, could re-formulate their conception of behavior and “reality” based on alternative attributes, be they taking the covariation model (Kelley, 1967) or not, i.e. looking across for a range of similarities through consensus, distinctiveness, or consistency (Ibid.), or the correspondence inference theory (Jones and Davis, 1965) by comparing the character actions with alternative actions in real life and re-evaluating the choices as provided by the writer. Indeed we could juggle around all kinds of attribution theories and re-examine the fundamentals,

the differences or errors as disclosed, we still would end up summarizing individual acts through the theorists' eyes without truly touching base with the individuals who are actually involved in the act. To my experience working in theatre, what truly matters is not singularly what the playwright has been giving us or what the actors' impression are; **what matters is the dialogues made thereof among a group of individuals who come from different backgrounds and the aftereffect to the transformation of actions put forth by the *inspired* body-mind.** Dialogues do not come easy. As Bohm suggested to us that we may not need "rules" to open good dialogues, but certain principles are fundamental; he has his own "vision of dialogue" (1996b:34-54). A good dialogue between actors, playwright, director, designer and the eventual audience is in fact a *multilogue* that requires all to re-evaluate matters beyond the "level of contact," "impulses," "blocks," "attitude," "new ideas," and "assumptions" there could be and to allow one another to suspend any conclusive opinions in order to allow listening and sharing to take charge (Ibid.). Theatre is an open platform for such a dialogue/multilogue. It is not anything about scrutinizing the playwright's or the director's vision but rather about taking it on as an alternative pathway for extending the scope of experiences. It is not about the kind of theories or school of beliefs we each should be holding onto. It is the will of spending time to digest the details and roots of circumstances. It is through creativity that opens up playgrounds to rejuvenate old beliefs and values, allowing individuals to cultivate alternative viewpoints through understanding someone's offering, in such case, the playwright's text as stepping stones to alternative horizon. The silence in each character could be a well that contains sounds beyond normal comprehension, especially when dramatic writing is a

**compressed form of art that often focuses on human conditions under specific lenses. We have to devise specific grid (which I would further explore at later paragraphs) to understand the voices underneath.**

Throughout the past ten years or so, especially the time when I managed to transfer my professional mode as a theatre practitioner to alternate human practices, I hear things more than I used to. My ears pick up not just *noises*, but also distinctive voices, and the specific differences behind ambiances of multi-layered and multi-directional wavelengths. I have encountered specific stories of individuals, each *crying* out loud for attention. Their stories did not just break out. The *characters* were not the sick or the possessed; they were, and still are, the “troubled” souls, howling and seeking, hoping to find better logic in life through and out of the political machinery of moral and social order presupposedly drawn to cultivate the makeup of their body-mind. Their body could often be “grotesque,” “closed,” (Burkitt, 1999:66) or “tortured” according to the normative eyes of *professionals*; yet their mind never stop rolling, with drumming voices looking for alternative meanings and sounds in the deep of imposed *silence*...

**J.K.** A 13-year-old young teen just got in a secondary school. The year was 2001. His skin was poorly infected due to severe malnutrition. He didn't have the money to see a doctor. He only got 20 dollars for a day, inclusive for both meals and transportation. Sometimes, he had to starve because his mother didn't come home often. He was the kid of a single mother who had been trying her luck with boyfriends, hoping that one day she would find a man, subsequently a new home for her boy. J.K. never complained much. He spoke highly of his mother in spite of her constant absence. He often scratched his itchy arms without knowing it.

Though classmates were often laughing at his body smell, he kept his silence, with dignity. He didn't talk much but yet so many words left unspoken. His "social worker" said a *case* file already opened for him. He got to see his "field worker" once a month no more than 40 minutes. And he would have to wait for another "appointment" the next month. Didn't exactly know what for though. He never managed to say much. He was only 13. He still only got 20 dollars a day and he never asked anyone out to buy him a meal. He said he was happy with his instant noodles. He ate quietly and attentively every time we went out for a meal together. He was exceptionally polite and thoughtful. He never wasted anything on the table. His eyes spoke a lot behind the dropping glasses hanging at the tip of his small nose. He made conversation with the world around him with his articulative senses and keen curiosity. He talked about his dream: simply hoping mom would find her man one day. Tears tipping off quietly and rolling down to moisturize his dry skin...

**P.H.** A 9-year-old boy. He was in primary two when I met him in the year of 2005. He crossed his eyes the first time we met. I later realized that it used to be his way to deal with "strangers." He didn't say much, only repeating the same question, "When can I go home?" We didn't manage to make any "conversation" other than the scratch marks left on my forearm – he *spoke*. Not exactly the way many would accept. His mother said he had a high fever the first 9 months after birth. It affected his growth and health development ever since. He had been seeing a speech therapist. About 40 minutes per session by appointment. His speech didn't improve much. Every week, he had to meet many specialists. He got to be very particular about his position, i.e. where he would be heading. He was being put into "special" class at school. He was never comfortable every time when he had to see somebody *special*. His father - a senior police officer who is particular about discipline! His mother said the father was never comfortable with his boy ever since he left the hospital. P.H. did speak, only not in the fashion we would *normally* anticipate. Once he was being turned to experts, he spoke *less*. When he joined us in the summer workshop, he would sit quietly on a side bench, for a minute or two, then he would rumble up and down and ask: "What time could I go home?" We invited him to play, he would decline and go back to



observe quietly. We respected his choice. But his curiosity grew when seeing there weren't anyone *special* pushing him to perform...

**Big W.** A 15-year-old young man. Well built. He was being *referred* to my workshop by a social worker in 1999. He was being labeled: "*Semi-retarded!*" He was big for his age. I was *warned* that he could be physically aggressive. Yet every time he walked into my workshop, he would stay away from the crowd and never spoke a word. He never showed much interest or curiosity to the games we played. Some members found him "weird!" I suggested to let him be. After a week or so, he kept coming back. He still picked his particular space and time to stroll around the room. His eyes began watching, not "attentively" on the surface. One day, he strolled by me and slipped out a statement, "You are doing something silly!" I didn't know exactly what he meant the first time round. He kept coming back more often with acute one-liner commenting the activities I had been holding with the workshop participants, mostly young people. His words got sharper and more specific. He had always been with us all the first day onward. He observed quietly. His mind even got beyond the logic of the games we were playing. He participated, only with several keen observations of steps further beyond the initial actions. He was even caring in his very special way. Not with words, but with special vision on how things could be. I listened. And I responded not with words but reactions to his suggestions brought forth every time he strolled behind me with that slip of advice. His voice changed. He got a bit closer to the group. His body was talking to us...

**A.K.** A Form Five graduating secondary school girl. It was 1999 when we first met. She was exceptionally energetic. Almost *too* eager and keen on everything. She wanted to perform. Many around her didn't feel easy for her *over*-anticipating behavior. She got emotional easily and then rushed with explanation in muddy words. She had a brother. Labeled by specialist as "intellectually disabled." He had problems with words. She loved him and often worried about him. "Yet my brother is a very caring person. Always positive. He never speaks much. Smiles a lot. He loves machine and enjoys playing with parts," she enjoyed sharing with other things about her brother. She even made video with him. She wrote the script and made her brother the cameraman. One day, she fell apart. People around

thought she was *crazy*. I got to know much later that a relative living close to her house sexually abused her. Her mother urged her not to report the case. Worried about the *curse* from home folks. Her dad left early when she was still young. “A gambler,” she said. Her tears could flow like river every time she talked. She had been carrying very dark “bags” under her eyes. She was afraid of falling asleep at night. She was scared she would be attacked again. She dared not ask for extra help from her mom since she said mom suffered enough raising her and her brother. At the end of our workshop, she made herself a *cage*, with bamboo and net found in garbage. She transformed a chair into a refuge where she could be safe. Her performance with her artwork was stories many wouldn’t have imagined. She spoke with her performing body...

These are only a few live *sketches* out of the hundreds “sounds of silence” I happened to encounter in the past 9 years in the *drumming voices* workshops<sup>6</sup> I designed and hosted for young people, teachers, social workers, and parents. With latent insight, particular perception and structure if observed carefully, each of their voices lives within them the structure of particular emotions and stories, initiating actions, simple as they may appear, that are important to the meaning and sense of being at times. **They are living voices: slowly and silently metamorphosing! Their wavelengths are always specific, with echolocation attuned to specific experiences and structures of being. They are all in themselves *personal constructs*, generating meaning structures that could help them sort out how to get along in an *other* world filled with *other* meaning structures** – areas where George A. Kelly would like to postulate in his psychological investigation in *The Psychology of Personal Constructs* (Kelly, 1955). While I was not exactly deducing a list of self-evident corollaries<sup>7</sup> (Ibid, 32-73) and *Repertory Grid*<sup>8</sup> (Ibid, 189-202) like those adopted by Kelly and his followers for interviews and accounts of my workshop participants’

process of constructs (specific alternatives to be discussed in Chapter 5), since I am not interested in *therapeutic* measure on individual matters, I simply find it important, not at all contrary to what Kelly advocated, to **allow people’s worldview to develop through events they each anticipates, with due respect for who they are and what they are at times of building and allow each individual to refine their living models through the experiencing of events whenever possible.** Any workshops or classes through the arts are set out simply to *facilitate* individuals to re-examine and to re-construe their own constructs. Any “progress” would solely be determined by each participating individual in respect to his/her findings and alternative constructs made thereof. In other words, **the *constructs* daily created are in fact important subjects, or by essence the *core* subject, in building the wisdom of a person’s survival. There are no peripheral matters whatsoever since every tiny fragment moment of experience or happening could be *decisive* to the next moment of event to be, with *organizational* concept part-taking only to the self conscious hierarchical preferences present in the particular body-mind at times.** The voices of these hundreds, and many more, passing by day in and day out, are often sipping out through cracks and holes in between their breathing or tilting of eyelids, with sensory affect “modulated” to experiences derived from living thereof. These voices may not be as “sublime,” in fact mostly trivial, to the social order as perceived or constructed by the Other as anticipated by specialists; they, as sensory affect, may not be seriously recognized by psychoanalysts as “experience of the epiphany of the face” or anything transcendental (Harasym, 1998:24). Yet they could be **something significant if truly being validated and valued. Beyond the sensory affect often lays a system of personal constructs that look like a matrix of experiences drawn throughout one’s**

**life, waiting for each individual to decipher whereupon on his or her own. In the course of living events-in-construction, unstable as things may seem at times, the constructs as used and construed could gain new or alternative grounding through cumulative experiences. These voices, not often verbal, could fill not only with anxiety, confusion, fear, frustration, but also pleasure, desire, imagination, and dreams to begin with; they are voices that provide elements for new constructs to be and eventually accommodate alternative ideas before heading into something a lot more specific, if only if we are there listening to the sounds in the wells of silent events between moves and breathings.** To Kelly, one should not be interpreting a person's psyche or imposing one's own constructs on other. We should each facilitate one another the space and time to observe personal constructs in details (1955:32-33). Before Kelly died, he once wrote in his article "Confusion and Clock," which truly rekindled the potential misunderstanding of his studies on cognitive theory. The human feeling seems to sip back in (do not know if it was because of his construing death in the final piece of writing):

It has often occurred to me, as I am sure it has to you too, that it would be amusing to have a peek through the curtain of night at what tomorrow has in store. Suppose I could observe what I would be doing at this time tomorrow night. It might be interesting to watch the goings on from this present vantage point of the evening before, yet not to participate in them, nor to be concerned with whether I was doing what I was supposed to be doing, nor even to be in any danger of being recognized as an intruder. Such a thing would have to be done surreptitiously, however, for I am sure if I were to be caught at my eavesdropping, my tomorrow's I (How do you say that?) would become self-conscious about the arrangement and start acting in an unnatural manner. He might not even do things the way he was destined to do, and the whole affair might fall apart in a shambles of irreality.

But if I could manage to keep out of sight, so that all the performers in tomorrow evening's episode would act the way the sum-total of their previous experiences supposedly required them to act, that is, would act naturally, the affair might come off pretty well. Now that I think of it, the other people, other than myself-tomorrow and myself-today, ought to be easy enough to fool, even if they did get a glimpse of me eavesdropping. They would probably be no more than mistaking me for myself-tomorrow, and think it was quite natural that I should be there - unless, of course, I was wearing a different colored shirt, or hadn't shined my shoes, as I haven't tonight. So that part of the arrangement has a reasonable chance of being worked out, in spite of what some of my more skeptical readers - not you; I didn't mean you! - are likely to think.

Where I would get into trouble, if I weren't extremely careful, is with myself. Perhaps if I arrived in some kind of disguise, it would keep me from finding myself out...<sup>9</sup>

What was driven in Kelly's *metatheory*<sup>10</sup> and **notion of "individual-as-scientist"** (Davidson & Reser, 1996:107) had placed great emphasis that **psychologists should not "start their work with theories, but with involvement in the life situation of the people whom they wish to study; to go where the action is in order to be able to draw on one's own experience, which is richer than the constructs provided by available theories."** (Jahoda, 1988:5) In the grand scheme of hierarchical organization of nature, each level of component, or sub-, or sub-sub-component parts, to the complex entity is vital to the makeup of the whole. **Each voice conducts specific interactions that could be vital to the equilibrium of specifics in daily individual living**, not mentioning the particularity of "temperature, acidity, water content or electrical potential" (Dawkins, 1996:10) physically vital to the living body. **When the sounds of *silence* echo in the well of living being, they could be waves detected in**

**the heath of nature, pitching for specific foothold to stand, or, carrying along trillions of cell motions, seeking their survival through zillions of electrical gates to make specific connections.** Yet, because these voices sound so “improbable,” “vast” and “unrealistic” under the control-craving logic of the ruling class, they could easily be “transferred” into specific compartments, specially labeled: “COMPLAINTS!” It is so easy to dismiss any of such “insignificant component parts” from the layers of the “orderly hierarchy” and exclude their significance as “variable parts” of nature or the societal, schematic whole – something that could be far from being “manageable” by any generic *human* skills or techniques. Considering the tremendous amount of sonar output for a bat to identify a tiny object *in the dark*, the “small” responding mental image “echoed” in the mind of the bat could be decisive to survival. What Dawkins draws in his book *The Blind Watchmaker* is not the “blindness” or “mindless” nature of life form but rather the miraculous details and configurations behind “being alive,” in spite of knowing the fact that “it is certain that there are vastly more ways of being dead, or rather not alive.” (Ibid, 9) If the living, knowing the limitations in one’s lifetime and the tragic sense in human conditions, does not get out of the fear and stop the terror of reality not entirely to one’s making, one can never create alternative version of meaning structure to confront directly with the essential conditions of human existence.<sup>11</sup>

### ***Voice#2: The Map of the Body***

Take Norwegian painter Edvard Munch: he was an artist who had been “silenced” by “the angels” of “disease, insanity and death” which attended his cradle, and by the haunting memory struck him at the deathbed of his mother and his sister (Hodin,

1972:11), it had taken him years before the *sounds of silence* took shapes and forms into specific expressions through his paintings. For Munch, it had been an extensive dialogue with the self through self-portraits and related self-reflective paintings that had remounted his passion and reflection.<sup>12</sup> Or to Helen Keller, the first American deafblind college graduate turned social activist, her “silence,” as if once preconceived by other as “naturally struck” by early infant illness, was filled with “sounds” that were made possible through her special relationship with her childhood friend Martha Washington, lifelong friend Polly Thompson and her teacher Anne Sullivan. Her self-discoveries had later transformed into specific voices for the women’s suffrage, workers’ rights and social causes related to disability.<sup>13</sup> Keller was *blind*, but *seeing* with vision beyond normal comprehensions; *deaf*, but *hearing* specific voices attuned to specific needs and circumstances. If their “sounds,” *and* “silence,” were never attended with specific tendering care, either by the self or particular human encounters, they could have easily drown into the well of “diseased,” socially disregarded as sheer pathological causes, like another “bats” vaguely seen flying “in the dark” along with others. To some, they may still be considered as the *work* of “miracle workers,”<sup>14</sup> fancies often beheld by teachers and social workers as if without whom their voices would never be heard. Yet how could we possibly delineate their voices from generalization made *glossy* and *iconic* by skeptical perception and exclude their lifelong effort in making their inner voices heard in spite of the gigantic societal well echoed with hair-raising sounds of social fury? In echoing Dawkins’ ethological journey, the “living organization” is in fact already long “prescribed” in the living system in you and me, with innate power of “cumulative selection” sieving opportunities through changing moments and circumstances. Identifying those layers

of specific moments and happenings through living process would be vital to allow specific voices unfold, short term as they may seem to be in real life time in comparing to evolutionary perception. **These voices through selecting, picking, dialing, elaborating, branching, developing, mounting, singing, or crying out loud at particular space-time could be valuable access to understand not only the “cumulative self,” but also to create alternatives for the next possible influencing living moment. The “sounds” could be *problematic* and too *complicated* to help one locate one’s position; they are yet the very guides, or grids, shaped by echoes, with specific footsteps envisioning the following possible living moment to be in the well of *silence*, not entirely relying on the chance passing by but rather the enlivening sensitivity built-in around one’s body-mind to establish the next possible “vision-to-be.”** So to speak, there are alternative visions unveiled beyond the lyrics of Paul Simon’s *The Sound of Silence*:

Hello, darkness my old friend  
I’ve come to talk with you again  
Because a vision softly creeping  
Left its seeds while I was sleeping  
And the vision that was planted in my brain  
Still remains within the sound of silence...<sup>15</sup>

Through “restless dream” and “naked light,” it would no longer be the “people talking without speaking” or “people hearing without listening” (somewhat echoing physicist and theorist David Bohm’s comment on “the difficulties of dialogue”<sup>16</sup>) that keep haunting you or me from reconnecting the self. It would be the “songs” and “voices” in the form of biological trillions I thereby disclose through self-reflection, with



“arms” and “words” rebuilt to reach out, touching the “fools” once projected in me and beyond. Allow us to bear in mind, as Bamberg suggests (2004a / my italics), “‘being *silent*’ is very different from ‘pausing’ or ‘not immediately following with one’s turn,’ because it requires some form of intentional stance. It represents an act of the form: ‘I could have said something here, but I decided to keep it to myself.’” How we are going to interpret such “sound of silence” would definitely need special circumnavigation ...

Beyond the ghost plays and dreamWORKs I had previously construed, there are always voices, like Xenophanes’s “woven web of guesses” (Popper, 1960:66), forever disturbed by other’s principles, notions and, most of all, concerns about things that craving for “instructions” or “guidelines” so much anticipated by contemporary consumer culture. Struggling through the battles with other’s “*non-sense*” and “foreign *ideas*” out of the external world perceived at times has been difficult enough; forever tempering the changing and perishable physicality of the body-mind from moment to moment is a life-long entanglement<sup>17</sup> that have been driving me into reality kept decomposing, or deforming, itself through time, ever trying to catch up the next minute of unknown bio-chemical mimicry at play deep in the well of physical *de*-constructs out of my comprehension. “See a doctor,” friends would say. Yet even doctors operate on a time-scale of 8-minute-maximum span of consultation time (the average consultation time for out-patients has been 5.6 minutes)<sup>18</sup> and monitor only general physical symptoms without truly getting to know whatsoever the exact reality going on in my body-mind, how could I possibly leave my fate to strangers, “experts” and “professionals” as they are so “certified” or “registered” (unless I have *the money* to

buy more consultation time and get the “idealized” diagnosis). I construed. I acted. I re-constructed. And yet my body never physically constructs with the same terms; it simply stops playing “tricks” on me, as if various organisms within the *self* were progressively failing to recognize its own constituent parts. It has long been a daily battle to learn either to accept the natural phenomena of a failing body or fight against the acute physical pain induced by internal disorder of the bodily system (which could have long begun at the sub-molecular levels). Other than contemplating with the cells, like a cell biologist does (except without the relative “tools”), sending “microelectrodes,” in the form of *qi* (in fact what it means to me is like *the minutely floating of focused energy or the detailed mapping of the self-body*), to the troubled areas through the inner projected detailed map of bodily circuitry, I almost feel helpless to re-construct anything but follow the innate cellular mechanism and entrust them to do the *natural* work. When biologists keep saying that emotions and memory are all biological, I have long been wondering how serious the frailness of my physical condition has been affecting my mind or vice versa all along the past 50 plus years of living...

Standing in front of a mirror, totally naked... I cannot exactly *see* the phenomenal biological chain effects long over-taking me... I can only contemplate with the *wounds* as picked up along the way... as if kissing them, not out of self-pitying but simply **allowing the reflected self to look back at the body parts, inside out, and make truce with the ailing and deforming physique, hoping that I could make some sense out of their “befriending” existence...** I am particularly sensitive in body reading, internally and externally, as I have a very keen sense of the physical presence of the self... “The body never lies,” I so often tell my actors... I also believe (definitely *not* automatic believing<sup>19</sup>): deception is drawn

by acute bio-chemical reactions under particular circumstances or intervention from induced drugs... I *talk* to my *friendly* cells through “sounds of silence,” as if sending specific messages to particular neurons, hoping to slow down the ever-present pain by mental process with subconscious energy penetration like diverting the flow of breath “one cell at a time,” as if simulating the way Kandel did in his studies of memory (2006:134), except no help of any sophisticated instruments, hoping that my will power would activate “the strength of synapses between neurons” and subsequently create alternatives for the cell behavior (Ibid, 208)... I begin imagine myself as a tree: with out-reaching living veins – xylem and phloem, running through trunks, branches, twigs, leaves and roots, transporting collected nutrition and inner energy to specific regions that need contemplation... I allow the “aura” around me, i.e. the natural flow of energy to re-charge my senses of being... the more I work, the clearer I see the rigorous images of inescapable wound long befriended me all these years:

- The shock wave from chronic vestibular neuronitis that constantly gives me vertigo attack;
- The acute sensitivity along the respiratory track due to chronic bronchitis in childhood has very much kept me away from anything cold – abnormal temperature from air-conditioning and the constant temptation of cold drinks;
- The musculoskeletal disorder and osteophytes, i.e. bone spur,<sup>20</sup> along the spinal cord due to back injury from work<sup>21</sup> and bad posture have not only put me to chronic sleeping disorder, especially the years between early 1980’s and early 1990’s, a period when I had constantly to roll over from side to side to avoid severe back pain (The back still hurts now yet I have been learning how to ease the pain by conscious respirational exercise before, during, and after sleep). The symptoms have also been severely affecting my walking and sitting habits that I couldn’t possibly walk or sit for an extensive period of time without *extra* support;
- The helplessness of weak abdominals and hamstrings due to urbanized lifestyles have basically provided little help to my back condition;
- The depressing effect of humidity on my chronic rheumatoid arthritis (knees, right shoulder, right elbow and right wrist<sup>22</sup>) due to the lack of medical care after sport injury<sup>23</sup> have held me off from any serious physical sports other than simulating Tai Chi sort of slow dancing;

- The walking frustration from minor dislocation of hip joint on the right (my right leg slightly shorter than the left leg) had left me unnoticing its cause until I got it checked out from a chiropractor<sup>24</sup>. The symptom has kept me away from taking long expedition on foot;
- The acute aftereffect of in-taking food that follows with chronic heartburn had me traced back to the long stress and depression from adolescent to adulthood when I had constantly preferred pills to solid diet;
- The pseudodiarrhea of liquid bowel movements was the weirdest physical symptom I had picked up, probably from false belief of my grandmother's advice when I was still a child<sup>25</sup>;
- The morning sickness of dry eyes due to decreased tear production (the consequence of the extensive use of spray paint without putting on eye-goggles) has basically changed my way of working on drawings and modeling on design ever since;
- The hateful postural hypotension from unstable low blood pressure that causes me periodical fainting spell whenever I abruptly change my body position;
- The pain of urination difficulties due to benign prostatic hyperplasia caused by the larger than normal prostate gland;
- The ever-growing disturbing periodical sexual dysfunction that could have traced back to the anxiety of the unexpected pregnancy of my ex-wife and the warring psyche over the *performance* of feminine and masculine sexuality;
- The irritating hemorrhoid that has been hanging around swelling the anus veins on and off for over 25 years does transform my bowel habit entirely and make me super conscious with the diet and sitting position;
- The hereditary high triglycerides level has changed my diet completely ever since it had once reached an unacceptable warning mark;
- The frequent drowsiness caused by the overpressure on the cervical nerves from the poor positioning of my "oversized" head, in proportion to the body of course, have been a constant frustration while working on my computer, not mentioning the time I have here been key-punching for months (looks like still a lot more to go)...

These are the *ghosts* literally living in my body. I have learnt to make friends with them rather than making any more complaints over their *intrusion*. It has been like

a self-induced psychotherapy through auto-brain-imaging to send off psychodynamic messages (my pseudo action response to Kandel's scientific discovery) (Ibid, 363-375) to the problematic zones...

The truth is: I don't see anything in the mirror but only the bodyscape that shaped by receding hairlines, protruding belly, baggy eyes, dry skin, imbalance shoulders, crooked alignment of the back, feet asymmetrically pointing to different angles, head forward clinging, sagging muscles, drooping buttocks and the shrinking uncircumcised penis that merged into the black bushy pubic hair...unless I begin contemplating with the subconscious and the unconscious territories, leaving the self open again to the wounds and learn to befriend with the aging physique, allowing, not fighting, the body to (de)construct through natural courses...<sup>26</sup>

I gather experts of different fields, especially those in medical and psychoanalytical services (not excluding those self-claimed "expertised-products" over advertisements and *special consumer service* counters), would jump onto my wagon and draw their respective critical analysis or offers over my un-phenomenal physiological exposition. I do not deny that the symptoms could all be "cured" if taken the necessary medical treatment or care theoretically speaking under idealized circumstances. I do not deny that the potential professional input could have provided me remedy or temporarily relief as long as I could truly financially afford to do so in reality, especially in periods of significant financial and emotional stress. To be honest, I am not making an explicit account of my medical record to exhibit, or expose, my presumably *private* body to you readers. I am simply trying to take into account of every possible relevant area or angle on *me* that could have affected the journey of my personal constructs or vice versa. **Looking beyond the seemingly obvious "self-negligence" and "ignorance" in medical knowledge and treatment, I am re-visiting the part of me that could**

**not possibly be erased, excluded, or “idealized,” in the course of re-examining the *real* me along side the cognitive investigation through experiences.** I am not making attempts to metaphorize illness or body parts, or de-metaphorize in the grand scale as Sontag did in her critical essays on illness<sup>27</sup> (though she did inspire me for the necessary honesty in regarding illness as is and the missing compassion looking into human condition during sickness or time of physical incompetence), especially when one cannot possibly isolate illness without relating it to the economic phenomenon and social structure of contemporary society. **As “everyday social life is not just simply a game, nor a drama, nor a ceremonial ritual, but a whole mosaic of interlocking activities with the function of mutually supporting and reciprocally defining one another, each known in terms of the part it plays in relation to all the rest”** (Shotter, 1985), **how my body interlocks with the social ecology and re-define its state of existence in “the bustle of life”<sup>28</sup>** (Wittgenstein, 1980) **and how I talk to account for its physical phenomena would simply reflect my experience and understanding of myself as part of the reality lived and the possible living to be.**

As in my case, my on-going financial burden, particular family history, troubling love relationship, stages of maturity and unsettling living conditions at specific place and age did not only play significant roles in the course of my deciding how to tackle the proliferating physical symptoms, they cast special effects on my temperament and attitude towards particular physical signs of internal system gone foul, not mentioning the social impact of how people look at *disease* under the often publicized rhetoric on illness. Sontag pointed out that “psychologizing seems to provide control over which people have in fact little or no control. Psychological understanding undermines the

‘reality’ of a disease.” (Sontag, 1989:55) Before putting *too many* meanings to tyrannize the *cruel* reality, **I do see how the ordinary me, often shameful, ignorant, defeated, struggling, deceptive and yet trying to make the best effort of know-how at times to justify the nature of ailing physique. I even see myself physically and mentally living out the ordeal of Beckettian characters, trapped in one’s own delusion of existence and the helplessness of disability and isolation of the body and yet pushing the limit to expand the days and hours over the possible meaning left in the sense of being. Writing about my body would often seem an effort as if to put my body under a microscope and witness its *silent* and often helpless metamorphosis.** The experience is somewhat like Pierre Chabert’s description of the form of the body in Beckett’s theatre, “It is *worked*, violated even, much like the raw materials of the painter or sculptor, in the service of a systematic exploration of all possible relationships between the body and movement, the body and space, the body and light and the body and words.”<sup>29</sup> Recollecting the physical symptoms of illness or malfunctions is like revisiting a specific bodily site, where “movement” and “stillness” and “manifestation” are all making dialectic among themselves, seeking the possible justification or balance of the body and mind at work. Through the irreducible bodily journey, the body acts as “an agent of disclosure,”<sup>30</sup> in spite of the indeterminacy over its physical organs, forever making attempts “to restore its primal function.”<sup>31</sup> I gather it is also because of such acute personal nature of psycho-physiological being that had put F.M. Alexander to investigate in his own physical problems at times when no doctors were truly able to go beyond the causation of symptoms existed. As a former Shakespearean orator who had lost his voice, he set off to cure himself through acute observation of his physical self through mirror and discovered the problems with the

way *he used himself*. (Alexander, 1985[1932]) His discovery had later influenced John Dewey in a vital way, according to Eric D. McCormack (1958), that Dewey had applied Alexander's doctrine into his philosophical writing. McCormack specially cited from Dewey's *Experience and Nature* (1929) and made his point that the voice was in fact based on F.M. Alexander's teaching:

“Till we understand operations of the self as the tool of tools, the means in all use of means, specifying its differential activities in their distinctive consequences in varying qualities of what is experienced, science is incomplete and the use made of it is at the mercy of an unknown factor, so that the ultimate and important consequence is in so far a matter of accident. Intentions and effort bring forth the opposite of what was intended and striven for, and the result is confusion and catastrophe. Thus we are brought to a consideration of the psycho-physical mechanism and functioning of the individual centres of action.” (Citation of Dewey in [McCormack, 1958])

Seeing how biological toll has been affecting me as a person through and through and yet without, or in fact never, paying enough attention to its effect on everyday life, other than its unimaginable impact on my work, particular dreamWORKs, life never in fact takes its course the way as perceived, or can be altered by any narratological thought to possibly change the biological structure of the being in me. **These bodily fluids, veins, muscles, tendons, bones and organs of mine are indeed silently working, transforming the mind structure accordingly, and making dialogues with daily encounters possibly without truly knowing it. The bodily sounds were produced at particular time, within specific biological space against the cultural backdrop I have been treading, making unconscious judgment on the building of the self and bringing about severe affliction and distress to the mind. The**



**calamities do often reflect through the judgmental eyes of the community, of which, ironically, values are often rebuked and left its residue along side within the community of my bodily cells.** As McCormack repeatedly picked up Dewey to further stress the important findings of Alexander on *the use of self*:

“Organic and psycho-physical activities with their qualities are conditions which have to come into existence before mind, the presence and operation of meanings, ideas, is possible. They supply mind with its footing and connection in nature; they provide meanings with their existential stuff. But meanings, ideas, are also, when they occur, characters of a new interaction of events; they are characters which in their incorporation with sentiency transform organic action, furnishing it with new properties. Every thought and meaning has its substratum in some organic act of absorption and elimination, of seeking or turning away from, of destroying or caring for, of signaling or responding. It roots in some definite act of biological behavior; our physical names for mental acts like seeing, grasping, searching, affirming, acquiescing, spurning, comprehending, affection, emotion, are not just ‘metaphors.’” (Cited by McCormack from Chapter VII of John Dewey’s *Experience and Nature* [1958])

I could know. I do know. I simply – know, if only if I allow myself to revisit “the well of silence” and relocate the “silent raindrops” enlightening the body and the spirit, as long as I could go beyond the blindness eagerly induced by the ever growing “neon god” for stock of trade, the abundant “signs” for revelations and the acute productions of “warning signal” out of anxiety and insecurity flashing upon me. What truly missing is the re-acknowledgement of the very foundation to recognize the *autopoietic* (Smith & Jenks, 2000:139) nature in us all, a system like a machine “organized (defined as a unity) as a network of processes of production (transformation and destruction) of components which: (i) through their interactions and transformations continuously regenerate and realize the network of processes (relations) that produced

them; and (ii) constitute (the machine) as a concrete unity in space in which they (the components) exist by specifying the topological domain of its realization as such a network.” (Maturana & Varela, 1980:78) **As, by nature, a walking “inter- and multi-disciplinary system” living day in and day out of everyday life, the confinement of theories and systems established by scholars, scientists and philosophers would easily scrape away the core experiences each individual has taken within the daily living and being of one’s body-mind, leaving little room for the ordinary to speak about the specific experiences as lived, with “complexity” that may not entirely be irrelevant to “the chosen words” as purposely or ideally depicted by the “specialists,” or “connections” and “adaptations” not necessarily less critical to the preferable “terminologies” and “perspectives” studied by theorists. In the multi-dimensional space one is living in, everyone is in each of his or her own way sorting out the best way he or she knows how at times, re-configuring tentatively the cumulative experiences through living tracks, learning to marry ideas that come across from objects, space, people and events generated thereof, making the best effort to make balance with the web of inter-related systems and living elements constantly get re-patterned, not necessarily out of deliberate intention, to generate desirable behaviors and properties as distantly willed by the ruling class.** Unfortunately and without knowing it, it is so often that the living bodily shock from chronic physical and mental short-circuit out of biological, cultural, social and political causes, does get original insight, intuition and sensitivity worked up to cater the interests as set forth by the power-manuevered mass. By and by, these living individuals become only the *subjects* or *objectified materials* of studies for sciences and philosophy, delineating *methodology* or *applications* attributing to the

special eyes of “researchers.” Anyone deviates from the pathway as set by the “norms” defined by the “observation” of these specialists or ruling bodies would mean *trouble*. What kind of “sounds” would that be then if such “expertised resources” is not used to serve common folks, people who are subordinated or bounded by rules and regulations imposed upon them day in and day out of everyday living? Or are they simply “synthesizing force” produced, consumed, and then remade again with meanings emptying out itself in the process of “custom-blending” or “mass-customization” generated by the consumption of the mass, (Beeston, 2001) as if the “silence” generated through *abuses of power* would become consequential to the *ethics* as *persuaded* by the “System”? If the “models,” the “principles,” the “laws” propounded would subsequently transform the state of being into living *components* relevant only to the grand machine of *establishment* that no longer acknowledged the autopoietic nature of beings, would the *sounds* of the other not get nosier than ever? Is the *silence* orchestrated in the mask of running “stills,” with deceptive motions not generated by the social machines? Where could people like J.K., P.H., Big W., and A.K. move on to if they are to re-gain the space for personal constructs? Beyond their voices, there often hides **a map of the body silently operating to navigate the sense of distancing to events taking place in and out of the day. Re-mapping the ever-balancing inner privacy and the public self would be like studying individual constructs, that an analysis of *yous* would mean moving through an analysis of *mes*, to the self and on to *Is*** (Shotter, 1985-184). As no one of us can incorporate the being of two people, as if one on the inside and the other on the outside, like split personality, the privacy of an individual would simply be present along side wherever

he/she may be publicly, including the potential “ugly face” unveiled at times of “public appearance.”

### ***Voice#3: Gliding through scenes of Personal Constructs***

Before making waves over the *drumming voices* as encountered in the creative workshop I designed for re-inventing the self from threshold of the past, something that could find its root in Kelly’s lifetime endeavor, i.e. *personal constructs* (1991), I hereby further on re-construct a living sketch namely, “Unfolding Many-a-cursed-marriage,”<sup>32</sup> another leaf of personal encounters, that meant to provide **alternative perspectives into the cubismic life** picture of mine, through which a further investigation into the understanding of the self as painted through dialectical narratives designed on the basis of “theatrical hypothesis,” a framework not to call for historical facts but rather **revisiting historical circumstances**, i.e. marriages, **from the magical “as if,”** an *open door*<sup>33</sup> often depicted by playwrights, directors and actors in their search for truth of reality. Narration of such dimension implies *voices* deduced are of both homo- and heterodiegetic nature (Genette, 1988) where **I, as an active agent, did take part in and out of experiences as encountered/created. It also implies distinct limitation, like adopting specific “dramatic focus,” according to particulars of circumstances once engaged and the situation or perspectives as reflected or focalized, sometimes like a *foreigner*, or a storyteller/narrator, walking back into the historization of the self with images barely intelligible from logics and senses often germinated through actions triggered either by me, the other or both simultaneously or fragmentarily at times.** Yet in spite of the *alienation* not altogether self-imposed, re-visiting the *marriages* as *fabricated* under the shadow of

social inscriptions formally or informally belayed on individual self-being means looking into experiences beyond ideal-types as fostered by the often unquestioned traditional values, institutionalized cultural and social codes, with expectancies, or validators, drawn from accumulated events and actions thereof deduced. The framework, unlike what Beckett contextualized through his existential stream-of-consciousness-kind-of writing (though I must admit I was severely inspired by his works and ultimate monolithic style of soul searching), would have to fall back onto the narrator's voice, i.e. ultimately mine in the course of processing and interacting with founded materials and references, seeking to contemplate the potential of alternative studies, and subsequently culture work, of individuals through biographical paths, not rigidly holding onto any particular idealized sociological frame of references that social scientists would like to draw on.<sup>34</sup> Instead I remain focusing on narrative discourse (Genette, 1980 & Chatman, 1978). **It was I who spoke throughout, making attempts to integrate multiple *voices* and *sounds* as projected on and through my body-mind at work. Being my own "voice marker" (Jahn, 2005:N1.4), the *content matter* would most likely be personal responses to cultural voices as detected through events with significant *subjective expressions* consciously or subconsciously oriented and accounted for communication.**

The word *marriage* does not only imply the "wedlock" between men and women I personally witnessed in the family or the fatally premature relationship of my ex-wife and me that served to satisfy the institutionalized social sentiment under acute circumstances; it also means the "blending and matching of different elements or components"<sup>35</sup> or "any close or intimate association or union"<sup>36</sup> encountered in the

course of living time. Other than the social contracts as declared and made formal a relationship between parties, including those of men and women, **everyday life events often help one associate existential references from people, things, events and ideas conditionally or unconditionally crisscrossing or gliding by, with multiple possibility of mating activities. Ever since birth, these seemingly separate elements of living and non-living entities are often accompanying/associating with one another and *marrying* (or *rejecting*) ideas along the ways of *nested* social and cultural consciousness beyond individual reaches. The marriages, or bonding of things, that have been taking place in and out of daily encounters are often poaching (and at the same time potentially defeating) numerous possibilities in thoughts and action procedures, as if innovating/destroying countless differences in the course of everyday operation.** Yet, because of the ever-present filtering/screening social machinery, the cultural turns of many-a-marriages often suffer from the absence of endorsement needed or sought at times and subsequently deeply affect the quality of self-transformation experienced in the process. With accumulative ambiguity and chaos left undeciphered, many seemingly married ideas find little room to be further developed and often go sour and bitter under the scrutiny of anticipating social autonomy and functional differentiation (Fischer-Rosenthal, 2000) pressed, engineered, or reproduced by political and socio-cultural institutions, with unwanting integration and disintegration constituting ambivalent inclusion/exclusion patterns on individual behavior. Marriages under such circumstances often undermine “nested hierarchy... [with] an amalgam of monological wholeness claims” (Wilber, 2000a:30) where spirituality is often hidden within “conventional forms of everything” which are easily “marginalized...[in view of]

pluralistic values and subjectivistic warrants,” (Ibid, 31) behind which many experts would make claims for their actions by “[seizing] egalitarian axioms... [of] political orientations.” (Badiou, 2005a:52-59) Subsequently, many-a-marriages were found or left *cursed*, without an *integral culture* or *vision* (Wilber, 2000a:31) to allow transformative, not translative, performances to take place.

*Cursed* means embodying an attitude as once personally constructed due to the overwhelming negative charges over my emotions as built from “unhappy” experiences conceived thereof. Such *cursed* energy did consume much of my physiological state of being before it was transformed into eventual positive resource for creativity, work, and inspiration later when *unhappiness* becomes the cradle for searching alternatives. *Unfolding* is an action, or an attempt, to reinterpret the experiences and to allow later diagnostic constructs-to-be in the course of extensive studies of the self through art-in-actions. If all the previous narratives from birth through ghost plays and dreamWORKs were indeed affects of apparitional synthesis of the body-mind that has kept seeking alternative outlet of living meanings through personal constructs, the following foliage of events, living signs and actions once come across would be another continuing datum, or experimentations through *play*, into forming constructs and the making of the eventual drumming voices workshop. It is a journey of the transforming self as personally *witnessed* and *experienced* from “marriages” of the other to the short-lived marriage once encountered on my own. The constructs, as possibly validated through changing perspectives from time to time, could never be formulated as anything *impermeable* or *preemptive*, it consists of a lot of loosely structured, or *permeable* and *constellatory* (Kelly, 1991[1955]a:109), with

elements of coping mechanisms or ever-fluctuating principles and ways of handling comfort/discomfort that have eventually gone under review through art-in-actions to allow alternative propositions for better reflections and transformative actions.

If unhappiness were something contagious, not only among one another but also as if carrying residue traveling from cell to cell, would it not subsequently contaminate our view of reality? I had been very *unhappy* and I do not exactly know if it was my nature or I simply do not have the “talent” to be happy, both as an individual and a social being. I gather my “unhappiness” did have my mind and body once severely contaminated (at least that was how I projected myself when I was young and locked in consequences not all together self-constructed). I had long come to the realization that such “unhappiness” had cast special effects on the makeup of my physiological self until I got totally fed up with the over-consumption of such when it turned me upside down into conditions desperately calling for special attention: Was it not the stress-illness cycle (Pilisuk & Parks, 1983) that had reinforced my health breakdown or possible disorders of genetic origin? Or was it not the “buffering effect provided by marriage, church or organizational affiliation, community cohesiveness, or the presence of a confidant” (Ibid.)? Was it not due to “the deficiencies in support from kin” (Ibid.) due to breakdown of family units at times when moral, social and cultural values were under phenomenal changes? Finally, was it not due to “failure to maintain conditions favorable to the formation of new constructs [and subsequently] delay their formation” (Kelly, 1991[1955]a:116-119) when mostly needed at times of trauma or chaos? Such questions would seem too convenient if we are to study individual outside generalized or idealized terms. Jung had once remarked regarding the application of



principles based on general experience, "... principles of this kind do not adequately express the facts and fail to meet the nature of the case. The deeper his understanding penetrates, the more the general principles lose their meaning." (Jung, 2002:36) Jung had also urged us **the importance of taking risk and not to avoid impunity if we are serious about understanding the self, especially the individual's understanding of himself/herself, a path gearing away from academic psychology.** (Ibid.) I eventually came to realize, through Beckett, that such *unhappiness* sprung from some deep emotions of seeing possibilities (or the lack of possibility on existentialistic terms), unrealistically or too idealistically as many would say, beyond conventional forms of being, and the desperate drive to look for alternative paths for conversion of *unwanted* circumstances, only subsequently found the spirit hooked onto metaphysical plains that not many people around would find easy to correlate to. Such *unhappiness* had in fact been transformed into major source of my art-in-actions and creativity-to-be. It still is, with subconsciousness likely operating on philosophical planes.

If I were to re-trail some *fundamental postulate* (Ibid, 33-34) and see how the way the *person* as once lived, channeled, anticipated, or processed in me psychologically, physiologically, or even unconsciously without knowing it, throughout the experiences of encountering marriage-events, I might have to, at least loosely, follow Kelly's list of proposed corollaries (Ibid, 35-73) in the form of theatrical hypothesis and to re-examine how cursed the marriages had actually been projecting their effects on the system operating in me, not hoping to counter-check the accountability of personal constructs in the making but rather to allow a grid of structural framework to cast upon the mapping to be for once, something that would later correlate the drumming voices

program as designed according to the reflections of ideas and actions *married* and eventually *transformed* by *dreamWORKS* and *apparitional synthesis* as discussed in previous chapters. To me, making up all these chapters of words is like making a self dialogue, *as if* in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, like those of Vladimir and Estragon sublimating, inescapably acting out, or aim inhibiting, avoiding, attacking, displacing, denying, idealizing, rationalizing, reacting, projecting, intellectualizing, identifying, dissociating, fantasizing, repressing at times so humanly possible, in order to retrieve or make claims of the sovereignty (or "the measly manner of existence"<sup>37</sup>) of the transformative self-being:

Vladimir: When you seek you hear.

Estragon: You do.

Vladimir: That prevents you from finding.

Estragon: It does.

Vladimir: That prevents you from thinking.

Estragon: You think all the same.

Vladimir: No, no, impossible.

Estragon: That's the idea, let's contradict each other.

Vladimir: Impossible.

Estragon: You think so?

Vladimir: We're in no danger of ever thinking any more.

Estragon: Then what are we complaining about?

Vladimir: Thinking is not the worst.

Estragon: Perhaps not. But at least there's that.

Vladimir: That What?

Estragon: That's the idea, let's ask each other questions.

Vladimir: What do you mean, at least there's that?

Estragon: That much less misery.

Vladimir: True.

Estragon: Well? If we gave thanks for our mercies?

Vladimir: What is terrible is to *have* thought.

Estragon: But did that ever happen to us?

Vladimir: Where are all these corpses from?

Estragon: These skeletons.

Vladimir: Tell me that.

Estragon: True.

Vladimir: We must have thought a little.

Estragon: At the very beginning.

.....

(Beckett, 1956:64)

**Theatrical hypothesis means making approximation of specific identity, events and details of actions for re-examination through *play*.** As Eugenio Barba believed, “Things on which we can really make our mark are always much smaller than those we can discuss.” (D’urso & Barba, 1990:220) **It is a journey to look into small things unnoticed, something which builds blocks in life.** It is an investigation tool theatre directors and actors often use to build characters and scenes in search of truth perceived in reality as well as irreality. What more important is: **theatre by nature allows one “to confront with something which secretly leaves a trace in that part of them which lives in exile.”** (Ibid, 92) While the past is indeed passed, as if in exile, the historicity of events and people as revisited hereby could no longer be *facts* any longer other than subjects/objects as retrieved and reconstructed from memory. It is precisely through *play* I allow myself to cut beyond phenomena once perceived by other and me and, subsequently, to re-stitch all possible retrievable fragments on basis of personal constructs, construing the individuals, the organization, the choice, the experiences, the scope of events, the variants, the fragmentation, the commonality and the sociality (Kelly, 1991[1955]a:35-73), through which, beyond the period of

usefulness (Ibid, 71) and not meant to arrive deliberately at any psychotherapeutic insight or theories, **hopefully some alternative narratological routes could be derived and navigated to relocate some possibly neglected *drumming voices* where potential art-in-actions-to-be could ignite to help build an alternate grid for culture workers, i.e. teachers and social workers, and lifetime learners.** We do have to bear in mind that “our only access to ‘the tale itself’ is through the act of its being told (or retold); by that act, the story is inevitably rearranged, deformed, and made into a new version that possesses its own singularity [or plurality] – and which may then be retold again.” (McDonald, 1994) There are indeed elements of uncertainty, according to Heisenberg’s principle, that either, ironically, “in fact generated by certainty” (Ibid, 7-8) or due to the “limitation... of ourselves – or our ‘nature.’” (Ibid, 8-9). According to Bohr (1934), there are some fundamental conflicts in the ways we picture matter that we would possibly apply contradicting measures in spite of the inadequacy of logical coherency. Theatre simply constructs, with a lot of parallels to the narrative act, without interfering with any “fixed [or] reliable meaning” (McDonald, 1994:9-10) to the story or its parts. **It is the process of *constructing* or *making* the story that truly allows me to suspend performances possibly through a wide variety of contexts, allowing the storyteller to perform the activity of *constituting* the subject (Ibid, 11-12) in the process, through which, hoping that, some transformative experiences, or *passageways*,<sup>38</sup> in Tadashi Suzuki’s word, would be evolved to allow alternative personal constructs to take place.**

Retrieving the images of *marriages* of my past would mean *inventing bridges* to revisit the secrets, or unsung, layers and lining of living stories without assigning any

absolute interpretive references, or a priori basis, to the parties involved in the course of re-examining the affects of meaning deduced thereof. These bridges could be built not only through words, but also more often through *deeds* designed and improvised according to specific circumstances and nature of people and things as conceived at times. Just as Wittgenstein (1972) believed: that what words mean is less important than what they do. “The term ‘language game’ is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life” (sec. 23) and “Words are also deeds” (sec. 546). In theatre, “words” could be hidden as “subtexts” or “inner monologues” that propel actions. It is very often that actions could be realized through studying integration of images unveiled from various levels, i.e. through audio or visual representations, and, most of all, the physical performances in relation to surroundings as conceived and depicted at times. The following would be “six scenes from marriages”<sup>39</sup> that I would hereby reconstruct, with family members as the *protagonists*, like the silent actor in Beckett’s *Catastrophe* (1982)<sup>40</sup>, and me as the *antagonist*, i.e. the *self*-director who attempts to *command* the actions throughout the constructs and construing. In the course of *play*, roles and position of viewing would keep switching from one another to allow alternative perspectives to be developed, among which a lot of potential reconstructs could happen if enough attention is drawn from *the inviting space* for observation and actions-to-be. The following scenes are *designed* in form of theatre with reflection to the prospect of *play* I often adopt for the *drumming voices* workshop, only that I herewith put myself back into the participants’ *positions*<sup>41</sup> through which to examine the potential affects of the use of arts for personal *re*-constructs (the footnotes of the following scenes are important for extra thoughts on the building of structure and potential reflection behind *play*):

**Scene 1: The pretty picture (or *this was how marriage came to my mind...*)**

*At rehearsal. Final touches of the last scene. Bare stage.*<sup>42</sup>

*All family members are sitting at both side stages in silhouette,<sup>43</sup> as if being part of the observing body. They would be going centre stage only at the command of the director (Dir).*

**Dir** (through the microphone): The Grannies. First position.<sup>44</sup>

*Dim lights fade in on Grandfather. He sits in a black lacquer armchair. Wearing grey Chinese changshan. His hair already grey. A soft thin goatee hanging from his chin. Face, solemn and yet kind. His first wife, in dark grey qípáo, i.e. a mandarin gown, sitting next to him. Her feet bound. Face white. And blurred. Apparently don't know where she should be looking. Three "concubines" standing behind. Two of them in black. Each with dark red flower pinned to their hair. Their bodylines barely visible. Face, as if charcoaled. Feature hardly recognizable. The fourth wife stands right behind, slightly to the left of grandfather. A soft spotlight is on her face. She's the only one in red. She looks the youngest. Her eyes point afar. With a tip of smile on her face. She is holding onto a young boy standing right by her side. Content. The boy. Her son. Leaning against her body. With dreams coloring up his forehead.*<sup>45</sup>

*A phone rings. The Director picks up the phone. Nods a little. Then hangs up. He presses a buzzer. A stagehand comes on stage waiting for his direction.*<sup>46</sup>

**Dir:** Make up. Second position.

*The stagehand signals to dim the lights. He moves the grannies around to a different position. They follow. He removes the armchairs and brings on a wheelchair instead. Once they are in position, according to the notes made on his clipboard, he puts extra make-up on them. Change their outlook by taking off parts of their costumes. He also gives them each a hollow picture frame<sup>47</sup> to hold*

*onto, except the youngest grandmother. Before he leaves, he signals an okay sign to the director.*

**Dir:** Lights up.

*The “young” grandmother is seen in her homemade under-garments. She looks old now. As if in her eighties. She is the only one sitting. On a wheelchair. The grandfather is standing far back at upstage centre. In white. He is holding the picture frame right in front of his face. A little ornate cross can be seen on top of the frame. The rest of the grandmothers are standing next to him. A step behind. Also each holding a picture frame in front of face. No cross though. Just plain black frame. Four of them look blank and emotionless. Only the one on wheelchair looks lonely and depressed. Her hands are trying to pull the length of her underpants to cover her knees.<sup>48</sup> The boy isn’t there anymore. The spot is still on her. With floating faces hanging behind her.*

*The Director looks satisfied. Then he gives a hand signal.*

*The stagehand is seen walking across unfolding a banner: “Who can guarantee culture progress? Or social harmony?”<sup>49</sup>*

*An announcement follows: Bo Yang<sup>50</sup> died on April 29, 2008. I am sure your grandfather never heard of him back then...*

*The director takes a photograph<sup>51</sup> of the grannies on stage. Lights up on the surrounding family members. All looking at the director. The director puts away his camera. Lights dim on the director, with the granny on wheelchair looking beyond the dark...*

*Notes:* It may look like a familiar scene once portrayed in Ghost Plays. In fact, it is NOT; it is A NEW ACT! As **all the details are deliberately skipped in order to allow open reconstructs for participants to fill in with**

**undiscovered materials.** All props, sound, lights, space, blocking (positioning) and speech (non-verbal) depicted are meant to be **specific and yet ambiguous enough to allow interactions both for the actors and the observers.** “Specific” in the sense of choice depicted at times for particular expressions! “Ambiguous” in the sense of alternative space for reconstructing one’s viewpoint and make necessary shifts whenever appropriate! The entire design is to allow inner/outer voices to emerge (or be re-discovered) through *play*. Each participant would carry his/her own speech act (or narratives) not through spoken language but body language incorporating the *self* with the subject focused. The *actions* thereof would trigger reflective language based on the choices made respectively by participants in the course of *play*. It is precisely through the observation and the play inter-cutting the course of events that create the needed chemistry to unveil alternate “*marking and loosening of the limits of systems*” (Derrida, 1981:17) presupposed or preconditioned signs laid out by the self or others over past events. It is a play with “unity [to be] self-generated, rather than imposed through [something] preconceived,” as the opening words of Harold Rosenberg’s *Act and the Actor* (1983), a renowned art critic who see **the act of creation** is the only remaining option to be when the world has basically run out of alternatives in the tide of human being *exteriorized* and “the human act is veined under the currents of inertia and lacks shape and measure.” (Ibid, 9) The *design* of the scene looks *rigid* only to serve as a *grid*, unlike Kelly’s repertory grid built on mathematical data (Kelly, 1955:152-238), for actions to be processed therein, where *voices* would be drumming in the course of *play*. To Rosenberg, “the composition of a work of



art does contain a point of beginning and an interval of choice – that is to say, it contains the outline of a free act.” (Ibid, 13) Like Action painting, the pressing issue is: instead of waiting, ACTING to the end! (Ibid, 9) It is nothing religious about the nature of such ACT. (To Jung, being religious could mean to “rope the individual into a social organization and reduce him [or her] to a condition of diminished responsibility.”) (Jung, 2002:40) It is not to imitate or to perform one’s part as assigned. It is rather like walking onto the specific grid to revisit the substance of diminishing/diminished acts, especially those gone stale in memory, and to allow revising acts of individual creation where voices would be sung and drumming afresh to open up routes for the next minute of living to be.

It is in fact all about framing. The stage itself is a frame, “the theatrical frame” as Goffman put it (1986:124-155). The mindset is yet another frame that constantly interact with other frames, like daily rituals, seeking to constantly reorganize oneself from one frame to another. What is a “right” frame that can be “pretty” enough to fulfill the displaying of the self to others? While speech is often embedded as the foundation of daily interactions, non-speech act is in fact as important, something beyond conversation and silently germinating through ever-changing situations. Framing is the positioning of the self that keeps trying to locate one’s footing as daily events unfold. Goffman pointed out that “since all these interactional frames are a series of embeddings upon the primal reality of living creatures in the physical world, we could argue that the underlying ‘self’ is simply the awareness residing in one’s physical body,

as one tries to deal with the other physical bodies around one.” (Ibid.) In other words, it seems to be unrealistic for one to seek any enduring form to describe what underlies the motivation of the self, as living human beings constantly juggle with day-to-day nuisances, it is most natural that the “pretty picture” there is would always be subject to negotiations or transformation through different footing of performances. (Collins, 1988) Through the framed images, either formulated by the self or the other, one is capable to retrieve the root of how one’s perceptions come by, especially when the faces as perceived are likely only responses of others, which subsequently, formulate the face of the mirrored self in return. (Goffman, 1967:33) Yet, the players, i.e. the participants as projected through the play of family members, have eventually become “signs and symbols” that are formulated in the course of my own personal history trail, with, countering what Goffman discusses (Ibid, 31-33), specific form of (non-)interactive orders, (negative-)mechanisms or, likely, (off-)balances [*I add in the brackets*] affecting the self-in-the-making.

The stage allows one to strengthen the self from fragility and limits by rebuilding through renewable aesthetic/existential concepts, or, in Goffman’s words, “the re-organization of experience – something that an individual actor can take into his mind.” (1990[1959]:13) As for the former, Kundera helps us acknowledge: “people simple or refined, intelligent or stupid, are regularly faced in life with the beautiful, the ugly, the sublime, the comical, the tragic, the lyrical, the dramatic, with actions, peripeteia, catharsis, or, to speak of less philosophical concepts, with agelasty or kitsch or vulgarity; all these concepts

are tracks leading to various aspects of existence that are inaccessible by any other means.” (2005:104) In other words, it is not to idealize what an aesthetic/existential concept should be but rather to develop such concept according to the level of consciousness available therein to particular situation as encountered by particular individual at times. As for the latter, it requires “frame analysis” beyond natural frameworks and social fabrications, since “human interest stories are a caricature of evidence in the very degree of their interest, providing a unity, coherence, pointedness, self-completeness, and drama only crudely sustained, if at all, by everyday living.” (Goffman, 1986:14) Yet beyond acknowledging the specific “frame of reference” one is taking on at a specific time, it is the eventual development of frame-in-actions and nature of involvement within and beyond the frame that would help reorganize and embrace alternate spectrum of activities. Like in theatrical creativity, we would divide actions into “beats,” i.e. identifying the frames by breaking them up into small frames of attention, wherein specific moment-by-moment psychological, physiological, and cognitive process would be carefully identified in addition to the inescapable spatial and temporal dimensions. It does not mean to manipulate the living moments but rather to allow one to re-equip oneself the insight of enlightening living moments-to-be. The “pretty picture” does not come at once, which is often prescribed, or morally obliged, and long settling in before the actualizing experiences. In a sense, so it seems that within the human frame-in-motions, each simply holds onto to specific frames that he or she finds interesting (or obliged) to *marry* at times, and no more. How those “marrying ideas,” something that often have deluded us

through predisposed attitude-behavior consistency (Kallgren & Wood, 1986), came to one's mind would deserve "a break in its governance," (Goffman, 1986:347) allowing the body-mind to disrupt its established ideas and rejuvenate through new activities that could help unbuttoning old and rotten values bring about "troubles," i.e. as Goffman advocated, the realization of the important act of *breaking frame* (Ibid, 345-377) whenever necessary!

## **Scene 2: Like father, Like son. (or *simply an act of self-evasion...*)**

*Setting same as above.*

*The Director sits silently in the dark.*

**Dir:** The Parents. First Position.

*The stagehand brings on the Father, the Mother and the Stepmothers.<sup>52</sup> Except not all at once. They each appear one after another in respective order. Each add-on would hold 30 seconds<sup>53</sup> before bringing on an extra. When together, they end up repeating the approximate positions as the Grannies, only that they each appear quite differently. The spot light<sup>54</sup> is always on The Father. Each of the women would only have only 30 seconds with soft spot on her face...*

*The Father sits on a 1960's style single sofa. He is reading the newspaper on horseracing. Next to him a common wooden chair. The mother sits silently, dreaming. She wears the early 1950's hairstyle and a small flowery cheongsam. Looks like a film celebrity. The first stepmother stands close to the left of the Father. The second stepmother looks blurry. Hardly recognizable behind the couple sitting in front. The third stepmother looks the youngest. She looks trapped. With a reluctant smile on her face.*

*A Tall Man is added.<sup>55</sup> Standing from a distance staring at the Mother.*

*A horseracing radio soundtrack<sup>56</sup> is playing at a distance.*

**Dir:** First couple.

*Lights on the Tall Man and the Mother. A boy and a girl walk on across the stage between them. Staring at them for a few seconds and then moving on.*

**Dir:** Second couple.

*Lights on the Father and the Mother. Three Sons and a Daughter walk on and stop at a distance. They each select their focus<sup>57</sup>: The Eldest Son on the Father: the Daughter with blank stare; the Third Son looks ahead and beyond; the Fourth Son on the Mother. After 15 seconds and they all look back at the Director, as if waiting for new command.*

**Dir:** Aren't you all supposed to leave?

*The Sons and Daughter leave and move to the Director. They sit next to him and look back on the Father, the Mother and the Stepmothers at centre stage.<sup>58</sup> The Stagehand runs in and urges the Sons and Daughter to leave immediately. They don't move. He signals the Mother to leave and replaces her with an 12 x 14 black and white photo of her on chair.*

*The phone rings again.*

*The Director doesn't answer.*

*It rings for 15 seconds. Silence.*

*The Stepsister and Stepbrother walk on stage. They take their mother's arm and give her a chair to sit on at another end of the stage.*

*The phone rings again. Nobody answers. Silence.*

*The Second stepmother leaves on her own. No one responds on stage.*

*After 10 seconds of silence. The phone rings again.*

*The youngest Stepsister walks on. She stands next to her mother. The radio track is on stock market news instead. The Father is still focusing on his newspaper.*

**Dir:** Clear the stage.

*The Stagehand signals everyone at centre stage off. Only the sofa, the chair, the photo, the newspaper and the sound tracks remains. And the Father's pair of sandals left in front of the sofa.<sup>59</sup>*

*The Sons and Daughter stay on with the Director. The Stepbrother and Stepsisters join in. All looking at the properties on stage.*

*A text image, in bold fonts, is projected on the upstage wall: "A person chooses for himself/herself with only finite alternatives...how far could he/she possibly manage to re-define the self-system?"<sup>60</sup>*

**Dir** (STANDING UP): Wrong projection. No words, PLEASE!

*EVERYONE looks at the Director. A buzz went off. Loudly.*

*Projection in bold: **ESPECIALLY WHEN OUR LIFE TOGETHER HAS BECOME FULL OF EVASIONS AND RESTRICTIONS AND REFUSALS.**<sup>61</sup>*

**Dir:** Remove the sandals.

*The Stagehand does as told.*

**Dir:** The Sofa.

*The Stagehand follows.*

**Dir:** Everything. Remove everything.<sup>62</sup>

*The Stagehand does the job quietly. The Sons and Daughters and Stepbrothers and Stepsisters all left when there is nothing more on stage. Only the director is left behind.*

*The phone rings again.*

*Nobody answers.*

*Notes:* I am not an advocate of using drama or art for therapeutic end. I hereby **use drama and its related art as potential measure for expanding one's imagination for personal constructs.** The facilitators of such kind of workshop do not have the "magic wand" for healing. They are simply there **to lay open a creative grid to walk on together and learn more about the possible alternative route of strengthening the vision of the self along side through resonating images and reflective space. Through interacting with one another (not just people, but also objects, space, time and relationship among all actively/inactively engaged within the exercise), each, including the "facilitator," may be able to open up alternative landscape of the body-mind for reconstructing the self and creating alternative choice of narratives to one's living,** especially when *talking* (or the counseling social workers and teachers often prefer) becomes a big burden and leaves little room for self-development. Being *therapeutic*, or the act of classifying it as *therapeutic*, could be dangerous. It would imply the pre-supposition of the experts and inferiorize the participants as "patients" or "victim," subsequently

severely undermining the potential difficulties of their psychological balancing act in the long run. It is important to make special notes that the workshop is not set out to look for “perfect dramatic situations,” which, in fact, none of such kind exists. In work of building blocks on fictional basis, it is important to accept the ambiguities inherent in behavior, which is often picked up from blurring genres in mass media. Most important of all, as Anna Banks suggested, “Some people would say I tell lies!” (Banks & Banks, 1998:167-175) She ended her article of the same title saying: there will be stories which must remain untold and realities which will remain buried. (Ibid, 175) It is so easy for us to personify specific work in the name of social or cultural production and forget the importance of how such collective de-personification process would take away the individual voices, which are not anything black and white or ambiguously stretched as multi-colored. It is the route to rediscover how the constructs of “black and white” and “color” that has been affecting the mind of individuals before self-evading to being a *nobody*.

From bare stage to actions unveiled throughout the creative process engineered through play, each participant would retrieve the importance of *marrying ideas* (old, new, half-bred or half-ruined, etc.) into multi-intelligence building (Gardner, 2000[1999] & 1993[1983]) and emotional range, choice and experiences thereof deduced. It is also a matter of opening up channels to re-organize daily events and systems taken place inside and outside the body-mind to allow alternative construing re-validated. As Gardner stresses, “Stripped down, analogies are simple examples drawn from another realm of



experience.” (Ibid, 199) It is precisely the rejuvenation from living moments and experiences drawn thereof allowing the *drumming voices* workshop to find its footing among participants of lifetime learning. The living experiences would be the core study of interactive events that take place in and out of the life laboratory operated in the form of theatre inspired workshop. It is an ACT to *create*, not “waiting” like Beckett pessimistically implied in his plays, *Endgame* or *Waiting for Godot*. **Creativity, not decision, is a “happening” that allows “chance and play as a medium of *willed* change.”** (Rosenberg, 1983:6) The family portrait depicted here in the scene is an example of potential play for self- reflection, through which I was not trying to drive at any specific “technique” for psychoanalysis or exert any therapeutic maneuvering over the self as a subject. It was simply **an ACT to re-decipher the renewable force of past memories into alternate narratives, subsequently relocating/transforming the self-in-motion in view of encounters-to-come instead of self-evading to being the reluctantly-invisible. It is a journey of creative synthesis, i.e. to “create new genres or reconfigure old ones.”** (Gardner, 2000[1999]:149-152) But, do bear in mind, as Gardner suggests, “the work of art are quintessentially individual – each is different from every other. One cannot hope to enter into a work, let alone understand it, unless one engages its particular materials.” (Ibid.) It is precisely the fundamental nature of the individuality of art-in-actions that allows each individual the best opportunity to re-evaluate through one’s focused participation on specific materials that one is able to re-install alternative thoughts over daily phenomena and *indigested* value systems, especially not being entrapped by

socially desirable norms only driving at normative conduct through trans-situational influence (Reno, Cialdini & Kallgren, 1993) without truly acknowledging individuals the space to uncover the frame of situations and impact of influences.

The imaging of objects (a subject I would expand further in the next chapter) as *witnessed* by family members of the scene are denoted as particular experiences that associate with particular memories, events and sense of being once collected. They become the focus of reflection: the very tissues, color, texture, frame and positioning of these particular objects could be strained with emotions and thoughts that once consumed the daily imagination of being, where the qualities of consciousness could have been shaped. The “matter” behind these objects, i.e. properties in theatrical terms, could be carefully studied since it may imply the shapes and veins of personal psychology and the reality as once entrapped and trailed. Deconstructing such matter would mean alternative route to personal constructs along the line of experience corollary (Kelly, 1955:50-54), where such “matter,” embodying particular experiences, did not simply come by as anticipated, in order not to be repetitively trapped in the same experiences, reconstructing through re-narration of stories beyond these objects would imply possible changes to our future expectations to be. One could even further travel to alternative planes and re-perceive the range of situations associated with the objects as selected and displayed. The situations as envisioned at times in the past may re-surface to new planes where alternative *dramatic* situation may help to unveil the limitation of those

situations narrowed down by circumstances. It is to re-gain new confidence to gain new experiences through inspiration from play, hopefully some subsequent actions would take place and elevate us to alternative zone of constructs.

### **Scene 3: Scenes from a marriage (*a self-reflection-in-performance...*)**

*The Director is on stage alone.*<sup>63</sup>

*The whole family is watching from the auditorium.*<sup>64</sup>

*The Stagehand reads from his prompt book and gives “directions”<sup>65</sup> to the Director...*

**Stagehand** (in monotonous voice): Listen carefully before you are to carry out the tasks. You have 15 minutes<sup>66</sup> only to *voice* out what you want to say about your failed marriage but you cannot speak or use any written words. You can pick up anything we fly in from above and show us your reflection in five sets of installation. Before you begin, watch the warnings projected. When the projector runs out of words, you may start.

*From above the main stage, a lot of heavy-duty black garbage bags<sup>67</sup> are flown in, creating a heavy sky. The Stagehand brings in a ladder for the director and hands him a sack of tools. The projections begin:*

1. You are not supposed to lust after anyone;
2. You have to be agreeable to everything you are told;
3. Don't ever ask such a question: “What do *I* want *me* to want? *I* don't deserve anything!”
4. Accept to trade off your personality with security;
5. Do remember being religious means to believe in loneliness;
6. Admit to yourself that you are an emotional illiterate;

7. Don't ever question if you are real or not;
8. No sulking over your wretched cowardice and shame and irresponsibility or talking to anyone even when your future is at stake;
9. Accept the fact that nobody speaks the same language so invent a third language if necessary;
10. Save some money to buy a rug big enough to sweep everything under.<sup>68</sup>

*The Director climbs up the ladder and reaches out to grab a single chair from above. He brings it down to centre. Looking at it intensely. It is a common wooden chair, nothing spectacular. Moments later, he goes up again, in another place, and retrieve another chair. He brings it near the first chair. The second one is different in style, more feminine by appearance. He walks around the chairs as if seeing a special relationship between them. He then walks closely to the second chair and touches it gently, as if it was so fragile that he may break it anytime. He then picks it up and begins dancing with the chair. The first chair seems to be reflecting, alone, at a distance...*<sup>69</sup>

*As the Director is getting so involved with the second chair, as if making love together, the gigantic black bags above suddenly lowers the level and creates a "stuffy and heavy skyscape." The Director seems not truly aware of the "reality." He keeps dancing so hard until he is exhausted. He lies down and is hugging the second chair. Suddenly, as if something happens, he wakes up looking sharply at above, the wooden chair and the one he has been hugging. He quickly puts the feminine chair back next to the wooden chair. Then pulling himself away. Looking at "the chair couple" intensely still...*

**Stagehand (V.O.):** Ten minutes left.

*A bag suddenly drops from above and produces a loud noise. Like a wakeup call to the Director.*

*The Director takes out a roll of gaffer tape and marks a 4 by 4 meter square at centre.<sup>70</sup> The "couple" remains at centre. The Director starts strolling at the outside of the square at steady pace. He suddenly jumps into the square and*

*attempts to measure the space around with his body. He uses his fingers, his arms, legs, feet, elbows, torso and eventually full length of the body to sort out the exact dimension around the couple.*

*The “sky” drops another meter lower.*

*The Director takes out his tape again and sub-divides the square into four equal spaces. Like the Chinese word, “田”, i.e. paddy field or arable land. He moves the couple around and sees where to put them in the “field.” The first chair ends up at the sub-square of downstage right and the other at the one of upstage left. The Director squats on the first chair looking at the second chair. And then reverse his point of view. He tries to position the couple as close as possible by pulling them both closer to the centre in spite of the “physical separation” from one another, i.e. still remained “divided” by two territories. Afterward, the Director looks at “the couple” again at a far corner of the upstage right sub-square. Not a word. Only staring. Filled with thoughts. Then he jumped right back in and get close to the second chair. Instead of dancing romantically, he is tangoing with it violently. He seems to be looking for “re-settlement.” He ends up falling and falling again, with the chair remains at far corner, a place further away from the original position...<sup>71</sup>*

*Another two bags fall from above.<sup>72</sup> The noise is getting louder.*

**Stagehand (V.O.):** Eight minutes left.

*The Director moves faster than ever. He further sub-divides the 3 extra “fields” among the four sub-squares, which transforms the original square into 13 sub-divisions. The first chair is seen trapped in one of the small sub-divisions. The second one remains in the bigger one upstage left. The Director jumps from one “sub-divided-sub-square” into another.<sup>73</sup> He carries the first chair around as if to re-locate its rightful place. He cannot find one. He ends up making short accommodation in each of the smaller squares with the first chair and finds himself entangled with it in different positions, making different relationships,*

*hoping to re-gain some kind of formulation of the self-in-the-middle-of-an-unfinished-relationship.*

*The second chair remains strong and alone at the original position.*

*Five bags drops from above, as if bombs surrounding the “field.”*

**Stagehand (V.O.):** Five minutes left.

*The Director takes out rolls of bandages and approaches the second chair.<sup>74</sup> He begins to wrap the bandages around the legs and arms and back of the chair and pin down the bandage to the floor of the “field.” When he finishes, he jumps right out of the big square and begins his strolling again. The pace is unstable. Quick and slow. As if he was sorting out the right tempo for his next move...He then goes back to the first chair, closely examines its structure by touching it with his face and his body. He never uses his hands.<sup>75</sup> It looks like a masculine wrestling with oneself, trying to resolve the knots entangled from within. He ends up exhausted, with the chair “looking” severely battered.*

*A huge bag drops near the Director. He does not respond. Still lying on the floor.*

**Stagehand (V.O.):** Two minutes left.

*The projected wall is whitened with strong floodlights.<sup>76</sup>*

*The Director finally gets up and pulls out a red tape and divides the original square in half. The red tape extends all the way from left to right beyond reach of the square. He then begins to put the red tapes on himself. All over his body!<sup>77</sup> Looks like a wild wolf dancing with himself in the dark. Howling. He has lost his sense of territory. His dance trespasses all areas except the holy square of the second chair. His feet are stumping hard on the stage floor, moving on rhombic form, as if breaking up the squares through steps.*

*All bags from above fall at once.<sup>78</sup> Almost the entire stage is covered up by bags, except where the Director stands and the sub-square where the second chair is still bandaged on.*

*The stage is suddenly silent.*

*The Director opens one of the bags. He crawls into it, as if looking for something. He ends up hiding inside for a while. He reappears later, with dust and sand covering his whole body.<sup>79</sup>*

*He begins removing these bags out of the square until it is all clear. He then continues marking the floor with more tapes. Not within the square. But rather diverting the original lines into territories beyond the square. The “field” grows bigger and bigger, as if disappearing into a gigantic web...<sup>80</sup>*

**Stagehand** (V.O.): Time’s up.<sup>81</sup>

*The Director continues without paying any attention to the voice.*

*He pushes the bags around like Sisyphus.<sup>82</sup> Pulling them all together to form one gigantic black mass. He almost gets drowned in that mass.*

*The Stagehand appears and covers the second chair and the sub-square in a huge black cloth. He then hides himself underneath.*

*The Director picks up the battered pieces of the first chair and reassembles them together in tapes. The chair is then placed silently in a selected corner, a small section of the web. He sits there. Quietly cleaning himself up...*

**Stagehand** (V.O.): Fifteen minutes. Counting.

*The Director does not seem to pay any attention to the voice. He is now completely naked.<sup>83</sup> Dancing on the chair. As if contemplating with the world around him...*

*The second chair and the black cloth suddenly get sucked into the stage floor and disappear. Only a vacuum left. The sub-square remains. Hollow. Empty.*

*The face of the Director looks perplexed.*

*Most of the family members fall asleep in the auditorium. Some snoozing. Some remains watching, with blank stare...<sup>84</sup>*

*A young boy is seen walking across the stage playing his Nintendo, as if nothing has happened. Before he disappears, he stops. He puts the Nintendo in his pocket and replaces it with a mobile phone. He is punching a message...*

*The message is projected on stage: **"I am not home. Please leave a message!"***

*He leaves without looking back...*

*The Director remains standing on the chair in one leg, trying to sustain his body in balance...*

*P.S. I married once, a teenage wedding, where all relatives retreated from attending the signing of the social contract. Only two people were reluctantly there to serve as "eyewitnesses" required by the law. The "bride," already 5-month pregnant, and the "bridegroom," barely finished secondary school. We were in causal clothes. We "celebrated" in a dessert shop, eating red bean soup. The marriage did not last, of course. Yet it took us 13 years to pull out, not together, but separately, from the trauma of getting "legally" divorced, all because each were trapped by false perceptions on the nature of marriage and how it should have been, on top of all, forever fighting against the curse cast upon us by the society for "being too young." Never have the courage to marry again, or believe in such "socially sanctioned bond" to justify any sexual relationship. While*



*the marriage was never meant to be “holy” or seen as something worth celebrating by adults, our son was raised under the shadow of “not being wanted,” (the great paradox that had once been haunting me since my own birth) with both parents suffering from the aftereffect of being labeled for “abnormal matrimony.” We were never “domestic partners”; still learning to digest the adverse effects of “marriage,” an institution only to legitimize the child, conferring “rights” and “obligations” of things no longer intimate or loved.*

*Were we “married” only to a forced value, or a system of control, making it a prerequisite for home-making and legalized sexual intercourse? Or simply to refrain from being charged criminally for teenage pregnancy? Not a person mentioned the word of love, as if love is impossible among teens, especially when “unlawful sexual behavior” was never concurred by the society at large. The whirlwind of social condemnation and economic issues in childbearing had long over-shadowed the romance short-lived. While we were too young and too poor to hold any kind of worthy “community property,” we had literally become the property to serve the good end of an institution well thought for the “necessity” of “pragmatics,” not for love. Being supposedly classified as the “unmarriageable,” and breaking the moral code of “wait-till-you-are-no-longer-in-the-minor-league,” the “marriage” had suffered from a “premature-curse!” These memories had much too deep an effect on my urge to develop my own sense of reasoning in later years to come....*

French choreographer Xavier Le Roy once said, “Science plays a role in my way to question the body in my choreographic works but it is very difficult to make a clear distinction when science does it more specifically because it is already part of a context, how I experience science.” (Hoffman & Jonas, 2005:74) While social scientists may see the above “scene” as *non-scientific*

that it is only another dramatic endeavor to amplify my personal journey in marriage, it is precisely my intention to stay away from putting on “data” as administrators and quantitative researchers would prefer to look into. What those experienced in the past twenty years both in theatre and art-in-education have in fact summoned me to look into the possible combination of human knowledge, act and spirit already at work day in and day out, metamorphosing through the bodily tissues and leaving traces of to-be-further-on-reflected and revitalized voices. It would be totally out of the point if things were being instantly transcribed into pure analogies with a seemingly matter-of-fact-kind of structure breaking down into a list of potential techniques or phenomenal registration. I *hide* related thoughts in the footnotes simply to make room for better dialogues among readers/audience. It is NOT A SCENE to justify my case; it is MORE THAN JUST A SCENE, or a CASE study, so to speak as long as we are WILLING to read between words and allow the body-mind to explore the fluidity of emotions and shifting nature of possible developing persona-in-motions. Through the creation of such a dramatic *scene*, it is the exploration of particular contexts of the ever-changing relationship between my ex-wife and me and the identification of the self-transformation that allow the *performer* in me to grow conscientiously and reflectively through *play*. What seems to be “unreal” in play is in fact touching base with the “real” often preconceived or regarded as “sovereignty,” not “substance” of thoughts. (Goffman, 1986:560-561) It is also through the making of such a scene that puts me back to the reflection of art-in-actions and its possible use in educational program for the study of a creative self, or personal constructs, not

in the sense of art training but rather utilizing art/theatre as the tool to move an extra step or two closer to re-examine the daily experiences left undigested, or as a BRIDGE for internalizing better views, where insightful events could be taking place out of unusual circumstances of the self-in-the-making. It is *beyond* confession. Rousseau's opening words in *Confession* (1954[1781]) distantly echoes in my mind:

Simply myself. I know my own heart and understand my fellow man. But I am made unlike anyone I have ever met; I will even venture to say that I am like no one in the whole world. I may be no better, but at least I am different.

It is not only the dramaturgic perspective that constructs the being in reflection. It is the being reconstructing the self through dramaturgical tool, seeing that "the objective [social] standards and the experienced [personal events] episodes are [in fact] intimately linked and not in opposition [to one another]." (Silver & Sabini, 1985) Distantly echoing the work of Jackson Pollock, the scene is like an *action* painting that "radically questioned the medium...and directed it into an assemblage of installation, performance and interactive environment." (Hoffman & Jonas, 2005:132) It is also like the way John Cage once inspired Allan Kaprow as a live performer, who was "inspired to abandon the medium...and instead integrating various simultaneous events and media such as light, sound and painted environments into his works." (Ibid.) I am not making a scene to rectify the artistic intention of my work like those of the artists above mentioned. I AM making a scene to explore the possibility of transferring the actions into an event, or a happening, that could allow

art/theatre as a medium “to express oneself imaginatively, authentically, and spontaneously, an experience that, over time, can lead to personal fulfillment, emotional reparation, and transformation.” (Malchiodi, 2006) **It is the creative process as synthesis that opens alternative channels for better reflections of the self, through which unpeeling set of ideas prescribed by others and learning to recognize/eliminate irrelevant materials in the process of specific art/theatre/play expedition.** There is not any ultimate “model language” as Gardner has been anticipating (2000[1999]:202-208) to offer or something of the sort that could fit all. There are only the experiences discovered in the course of play making, which could in return open passageway to unveil beliefs and ideas upon substratum layers that often lie beneath, shaping the subconsciousness and the unspoken before re-emerging to the surface.

#### **Scene 4: Marriage Fragments (or *The Art of Fragility at play...*)**

*A roll of toilet tissue is set at centre stage.*<sup>85</sup>

*All (step-)brothers and (step-)sisters are lined up sitting at the back along the cyclorama, with their (ex-)wives and (ex-)husbands all sitting at the edge of the downstage floor with their back facing the audience. These (ex-)couples are, as if, facing each other for the first time...*

*These (ex-)couples are to take turn to meet at centre stage, facing each other at a distance as appropriated by their feelings regarding the experiences of relationship after years of marriage/divorce. They would each take on the roll of toilet tissues as the primary source of reflection on their relationship...*

*The Director is back at his directing chair in the auditorium, watching, as if playing the “judge”<sup>86</sup> ...*

*The followings are the seven living images<sup>87</sup> as displayed by these (ex-)couples, who are my (step-)brothers and (step-)sisters; they are like a tapestry of married/divorced/separating visions that has been (under-)developing, something apparently conceived/witnessed in the family, as if constellating with those of the parents and grandparents...*

**i. [The Fate Dwellers...]** K.C. walks to centre and tears out a piece of toilet tissue. Her ex-husband stands up and circles around her from a distance. K.C. simply lies on the floor and separate the tissue into three pieces, one on top of her chest and two on her belly. She spreads open her arms as if waiting. Her ex-husband keeps walking in circle, looking attentively. After ten rounds of circling, with each getting a step closer to K.C., he finally kneels and puts his nose close to the separated tissues, then sucking them up all at once with his nostril. He puts in the best effort to hold on to the tissues and take them out of the circle he has once been walking along – all within one breath! He apparently cannot breathe. The tissues eventually fall, scattering over different places. K.C. slowly sits up, looking at the tissues, not doing anything, except watching her ex-husband walking away, making his exit beyond the reach of her eyes...

**ii. [The Silent Partners...]** K.L. and his wife walk together to centre. They never look at each other. They stand still at a distance. Don't exactly know what to do with the toilet tissues. K.L. finally picks up the tissue roll, clumsily tears out a section. He still doesn't know what to do with the tissue. He makes some attempts to fold the tissue, like a restaurant napkin, only to find the tissue torn and crumbled into pieces. He is still holding onto the handful of torn pieces. Not knowing what to do with them. Finally, he squashes them all together into a ball and uses his foot to pass the “ball” to his wife. His wife watches the “ball” passing in front of her. She hesitates if she should pick it up. Eventually she does. Looking at the “ball” as if not knowing exactly how she should be responding. She finally puts it into her mouth, bit-by-bit, piece-by-piece, chewing them with a long face, as if it is her duty to do so...

**iii. [Almost thirty years down the road...]** I.H. walks to centre, waiting for his wife. His wife stands up and walks to his side. They both face the audience, as if re-experiencing the holy matrimony once taken place by the bayou. They take a deep bow together and then unroll the toilet tissue into a long roll, say 9 meters long. It spreads across the entire stage. Then they each stand on either side of the long and extended *lane* of tissue, looking at each other to get ready for the long walk. They take off their shoes and socks and begin their journey together. They gingerly take their steps, one by one, to ensure that the tissue stays intact. They each choose specific steps within particular distance and then make changes to accommodate the approaching “unknown” distance. Their footsteps vary, not always synchronized with one another. Sometimes they use their toes only, sometimes the outer edge of their feet, sometimes only the heels. Things do happen. There are tears and fragmented pieces here and there. I.H. always picks up his share of broken pieces and transforms them into rigid and yet practical formation through his footwork. His wife looks impatient at times and yet always manages to recuperate and moves on. I.H. is the one who always stops and keeps checking to see if his wife is doing all right. He slips and falls at times and yet manages to get up and move on. His footsteps gets better and better in place as he gets closer to his wife. They finally stop when only a meter left to tread on. I.H. reaches out for his wife’s hand. She responds in her special way, without any smile. I.H. begins to lead her off to dance and play with the fragmented tissues on floor. The footing and steps get loosened up and become rhythmical. The tissues are flying all over, as if becoming part of their soul and body. Their steps do eventually slow down and transform into waltzing form. There are smiles on their faces...

**iv. [The Heart of The Lonely Dreamer...]** T.H. walks to centre slowly and reluctantly. Two of her ex-husbands take their positions on both sides of the stage. Quite far from centre. T.H. picks up the tissue roll, not looking at the ex-husbands. She tears out one single section and leaves it on the side of her first husband and then throws the entire tissue roll to her second husband. She first tenders with the single piece, as if totally alienated, only with mild touches on the back of her wrist every now and then. She moves it around a bit, not getting far, and then she

separates it into pieces. She blows it off with one deep breath and sees them off without turning back. She quickly turns to her second ex-husband. She wraps herself up with the tissue roll, nice and neat, and, most of all, as if presentable enough to please him. She is never easy with her movement. As a matter of fact, she is often too self-conscious at every single step closer to him. Her first husband picks up the torn up pieces and attempts to put them all back together. He sits on the floor, watching her leave while re-threading the blown-off fragments into one single piece. T.H. has finally wrapped herself up almost entirely with tissues, which makes her movement odd and stiff. It requires her absolute caution in order to keep the tissues stay intact. As she gets closer to her second husband, he suddenly takes her in and tries to pick her up in one piece. The tissues break up instantly and scatter all over the trail she was once treading on. She releases herself, looking at the torn up pieces and decides to pick them up. In the middle of doing so, she stops and decides to leave them be. She leaves silently without looking back at either one of the ex-husbands...

v. **[Beyond the Roller-coaster Riders...]** L.H. and his wife get up together. They open the roll of tissues together and lay out four strips of tissues, each parallel with one another, as if four stages of their marriage. *The first strip:* L.H.'s wife stands on one end, waiting for L.H. to send her a gift; L.H. folds up a flower with a portion of the toilet roll and puts it at the tip of his mouth. He walks across with ease and charm, yet not without problems. The strip of tissues does get messed up over and over again and angers his wife from time to time. It is as if taking a lot of arguing, teasing and pampering to finally get close enough to send her the flower. When she picks it up, the flower is wet and disfigured. *The second strip:* The wife looks indifferent, with her back against the strip of tissues almost all the time. L.H.'s previous charm is gone and yet still patient enough to move on. He tears out a section of tissue and makes another flower. A simpler one and yet as glamorous as the previous one. He puts it between his toes and back crawls on three "legs" instead of four. He is not rushing or anything. Always keeps checking on the possible response of his wife. By the time he reaches her, he is deadly exhausted and yet still manages to pass her the flower. She doesn't pick it up or look at it at all. Just leave it on her lap. L.H. is left isolated at the back, reading the crushed strip of tissues along the trail. *The third strip:* They both stand

at each end of the strip. She picks up one end and begins counting the sections left by tearing out one section at a time. For each section she picks up, she would repeat “deflowering” it into bits and pieces, as if emotionlessly... L.H. still tries to make a third flower, only that he is in no hurry to send it over. After he finishes, he ties it carefully onto a thread and places it at a distance, like bait waiting for someone to hook up on. Then he makes another. And another one... By the time his wife gets close enough to him, she sees the flowers all threaded in front of him, waiting... she steps on them and covers them with the bits and pieces she has been producing along the trail... L.H. stops her actions and kisses her on the cheek... *The fourth strip:* They both stand together. In silence. Not touching the tissues at all. Simply holding hands...she then kicks the toilet roll lightly... he joins in... they both play together...

**vi. [The Ruling of the Mind...]** B.H. confidently walks to centre and unroll the tissues. She makes herself a laurel to put on... her first husband remains sitting and never makes any move... maintaining his distance... not at all watching... her separating husband is standing up, hesitantly... he unrolls another toilet tissues and lays out a geometrically symmetrical grid on the floor... B.H. doesn't pay much attention to the grid and yet begins to make one on her own, something grander and asymmetrical... when she finishes, she walks on her own grid without taking on anything from the one laid out by the man she is leaving behind...

**vii. [The Self-involved Familial Profile]** R.H. brings in two chairs and invites his wife to sit next to him. They look close; but not that close after all... She is sitting there enjoying her sun-dried melon seeds, with eyes semi-focusing onto something, as if watching a television program or listening to a list of clinically-sound alternative living options... He picks up a seed or two from her and tries to watch together, yet he can never sustain his attention span... his hands begin playing with the toilet roll... but doesn't know what to make out of the long strip of unrolling tissues. She remains light and easy with her seeds, and he keeps unrolling one after another coil of toilet tissues. R.H. tries to impress her with different tricks by formulating innovative ways of playing...he runs up and down and under and round the chair yet without disturbing her or touching her one bit whatsoever... he never stops until he only gets one single section left in his



palm... She just smiles lightly and remains the same profile as before... R.H. begins to tear off the last piece of tissue and stick the pieces to his nostril, his eyes, his mouth and his ears... while his body is still entangled with numerous strips of toilet rolls left behind...they both remains sitting, together, with minds focusing on different planes...

*Notes:* Witnessing the coming and going of three generations, the *failure* stands as far as marriages are concerned among members of my generation in the family. An old Chinese saying stresses that every three generation a full ‘eco-cultural’ cycle. How could we learn from our ‘cycle of failure’ then? Or were we not simply engaged without knowing the tricks of the wedlock, institutionalized for the sake of manageable economy and sexual intercourse? Or was it not an attempt to rationalize romance that could easily go astray without the needed sanctification of the society? I am not hereby painting these seven vignettes for moralizing or building cases for sociological measures. While all the relationships as *re-staged* above could be investigated in details and become “issues of marital studies,” where each marriage would signify or imply an aspect of socio-phenomenal relationship between men and women (or marriage of the same sex), it is not my intention to display these familial sketches for such purposes. **They are serving as powerful human stories that could be narrated for inspiration and generating alternative poetry for the marrying ideas to be. They are performances based on deep emotional reflections and acts for everyday living researchers, unveiling the architecture of emotional memory on marital relationship. They represent alternative processes to re-organize past experiences and to allow one**

**another to transform through play.** They are NOT composites or profiles for conducting “hypothesis,” “methods,” “results,” “practices,” and “conclusions” for fulfilling the scientific requirements of casework focusing on marital subjects. Classifying each (ex-)couples according to the expectations of clinicians, educators, researchers and attorneys would easily mean de-individualizing the people involved simply to force the experiences into data collections or selected-theory-based-diagnosis without truly acknowledging the ever-adjusting body-mind over individual needs, values and desire. They would become materials for the formation of “patterns” and “dynamics” in professional practices. The “processes” and “components” of emotions would easily fall into the abyss of therapeutic judgment or sociological approaches coming down even to “demographic data,” where specificity of individual events and senses of being would be “scaled” into “tables of data references.” In McCall and Green’s article “*Symmetricality and Complementarity and Their Relationship to Marital Stability*,” (1991) a 19-point relationship scale questionnaire was drawn up to itemize the “typical interaction with [...] spouse, ” which included (1) Give spouse advice; (2) Compare self negatively to spouse; (3) Gives in to spouse; (4) Starts arguments with spouse; (5) Tells spouse what to do; (6)...and so on and so forth (Everett, 1991:32). Consequently, how easy it would be for each individual couple to turn into numerical data or alphabetical grades, where their marital acts of possible immense complications (or simplicity) would get “concluded” within 6 pages of “researched findings.” For example, in Everett’s *Marital Instability and Divorce Outcomes* (1991), for the 11 “issues” raised, studied or *singled* out,

they would conclude specific marital phenomenon within a mean average of 15 pages of studies, ranging from 6 pages to 25 pages maximum. How should the couples involved respond to the “results”? I am not trying to put down the values of these researches. I am simply seeing how these researches are often based on the aftereffect of “outcomes,” but rarely on the potential creative synthesis in relationship building. When the “subject,” i.e. studied individuals/couples, become marginalized on specific “categorized social groupings,” would ordinary folks be able to get out of such “labeling effects” and remain confident enough to maintain his/her individuality and sense of integrity for the choice made in life at specific stages of life? Would it not often be an idealized assumption, like what Friedlander suggested (1976:22), to have a “skilled and informed caseworker” who is “at the heart of casework practice,” someone who “must be able to use psychological, social, and biological conceptual tools skillfully for understanding human behavior in situations of stress and social deviation”? When an individual is under the professional scrutiny of someone’s “assessment,” “goal-setting,” and “intervention modalities,” would that *individual* still be “individual” anymore when he or she is being viewed as the subject merely for “the restoration of satisfying and effective personal-social balances,” with “goal” already set, by these *professionals*, as the fundamental criteria for “the control of the person” (Ibid.)?

Franz Kafka once meditated on *Resolutions*, not as a “professional” but rather putting the focus back on the *self* as an individual:

“ To raise oneself out of the depths of misery must be easy, even with a studied display of energy. I will wrench myself out of my chair, trot round the table, loosen up my head and neck, inject a gleam into my eyes, tauten the muscles surrounding them. Defy all my natural feelings, give. A. an enthusiastic welcome if he comes, tolerate B. amicably in my room, swallow down everything that is said at C.’s place in long draughts, despite the labor and pain it costs me.

Yet even if I can manage all that, each false step – and they’re bound to occur – will make the whole enterprise, easy or difficult, falter; and I shall have to turn back to the point where I began.

So in the end it remains advisable to accept whatever comes, to behave like an inert mass even if one feels oneself being swept away, not to be lured into a single unnecessary step, to regard others with the gaze of an animal, to feel no remorse, in short to crush with one’s own hand any ghost of life that subsists, that is, to intensify the final quiet of the grave still further and let nothing beyond that endure.

A characteristic gesture in such a condition is to run one’s little finger along one’s eyebrows.” (Kafka, 1992:18)

While some may still be referring the above as “fictional,” not “scientific” enough for tackling sociological issues, it would seem that **perspectives on inquiry are often made limited only to those *thinking/practice format* prescribed or pre-structured by specialists. The dimension of storytelling, not necessarily only by verbal terms, can in fact “activate subjectivity and compel emotional response. [Stories] long to be used rather than analyzed, to be told and retold rather than theorized and settled.”** (Bochner, 1994:40)

The above painted scenarios on members of my family are not fixed data. As a matter of facts, they are abstracted emotions based on living pictures that are still undergoing constant constructs. **A performance-based study would**

**mean the utter respect to individuals and allow each of them to constantly reflect, develop, construct and reconstruct on site of action-based-self-research subject to the perspectives each individual would prefer or find appropriate to adopt at times. Each individual *performance* is meant to be sustaining through personal constructs at play, depicting actions through improvisations, i.e. developing series of findings on spot of actions.** Looking at how the renowned photographer/performer Cindy Sherman focused her works through self-portrait<sup>88</sup> and the way she has been “wearing someone else’s clothes, getting dressed up and inventing a different personality for each of her images that is the motor behind most of her pieces,” (Hoffman & Jonas, 2005:82) it is like the writing of Peter Handke in *The Afternoon of a Writer* (1991), where the writer at work is engaged in art-in-actions and allowing the character to develop through the process of discoveries in the “afternoon [...] walking into town, out of town, has a drink or two, walks home and goes to bed, alone.”<sup>89</sup> I am not trying to convey that everyone can be Cindy Sherman or Peter Handke. **But it is possible for all individual common folk to reconstruct their living through *creative synthesis, i.e. allowing their body-mind to interact with materials, images, people, space, time on a much friendlier dimension and re-capture alternatives and imagination to the seemingly “predestinated” daily mode of living as if “pre-structured” by other.*** Seeing how my (step-)brothers and (step-)sisters simply threading their own life one moment at a time, the reflection on their experiences simply remind me how individuals are trying to develop whenever and wherever possible meanings for further constructing the daily living to be. Be they

“unstable” or “divorced” or “self-involved” (Everett, 1991) or not, they are each doing the best ways they know how at times to (re-)establish/(re-)construct (or sometimes even deconstruct as a way to reconstruct) a relationship, or a world, no matter how “small” it may be, they are capable of coping at particular time and place. Through the toilet tissues, one of the most familiar daily household products, the individuals as *painted* are simply engaged in the live art re-exploring the hidden forces of fragility, learning to handle one another with care and sensitivity that call for at times when insecurity, fear, anxiety, love, ambiguity, complications, dilemmas, bonds, obsession, needs, desire, honesty are all compounded to threaten/mesmerize/transform the relationships, “with the whole of questions – questions about ourselves, our lives, other people, and other lives” (Kiesinger, 1998) are at stake or on hold under a spotlight. **It is more than just toilet tissues; it is human condition under particular reflection. Through play, it is magnified to dimensions beyond normal takings, ever metamorphosed by human acts. It is fragile. Precisely it is this *fragile* nature, like the paper tissues, that propels delicate adjustment in the process of handling.** As the particular material implies: FRAGILE, easy to break! What truly matters is the interpretive context and observation made through “the anchoring of activity,” as Goffman once built a chapter on the subject, which was highly correlating activities and techniques used in theatre (1986:247-299), and allowed such to blossom into enlightening thoughts and reflections among participating players, be they standing inside or outside of the “operating *play* arena.”

**Scene 5: The Missing Calligraphists<sup>90</sup> (or *The Grit of a Word beyond sex...*)**

*A big piece of white canvas<sup>91</sup> is laid out at centre stage. Next to it, a bowl of Chinese ink, a bucket of water and different sizes of brushes,<sup>92</sup> including mop-like long handled jumble brushes, are prepared, lining up solemnly at the upstage edge of the canvas.*

*All family members sit around the square, leaving a comfortable aisle<sup>93</sup> in between.*

*A big drum<sup>94</sup>, preferably Daiko (大鼓), is placed at up centre stage, prominently sitting there as if the grand master of ceremony<sup>95</sup>.*

*A drummer, half naked, is rolling the drum.*

*It looks like a ceremonial event where each member is open to take a stand to share with all a selected word that reflects his or her innermost feelings on sexual experiences. All he or she can use is the power of play over one specific Chinese character<sup>96</sup> freely painted on the canvas.*

*The whiteness of the Canvas is suddenly like the naked spirit inside, open and ready for any form of expressions from any disturbed or lost or celebrating souls.*

*The stage is set but nobody seems “ready” to take the stage...*

*Silence and stark whiteness dominate the space.*

*It sustains for 30 minutes. Nobody sets foot on stage...*

*The drum begins rolling. Solemnly.*

*The Director finally walks on. He stands still looking at the family around and the whiteness in front. He doesn't move for a minute. Then he signals the drummer to*

*begin. He then walks slowly around the square, as if questioning the presence of the people sitting. Round and round. Thrice. He stops. Taking off his clothes. Almost stark naked<sup>97</sup>. He picks up the “mop” and dips it into the water, not the ink. Then walks on to downcentre and begins his word. His form is cursive. One can barely see what he has written. The strokes flood the canvas with violence and contempt. His body moves like a beast. He howls as he paints. When the word is finished, he is exhausted and kneeling upcentre with his back against the auditorium...*

*Everyone is quiet. No sign of response.*

*The “word” remains a mystery, only watery reflection here and there...*

*A shaft of sand<sup>98</sup> suddenly pours down on the Director’s naked body. It runs on the motionless body with sand bouncing off onto the white canvas. It hits the floor and creates sound waves of sand. It continues. Doesn’t look like it’d be stopping.*

*The Director is half buried in the sand<sup>99</sup>. He still doesn’t move...*

*The people around remain motionless.*

*Notes:* While the above looks like a personal unpublished anecdote that does not narrate REGULAR stories to any *normal* mindset, the scene somewhat speaks for itself through its silent affair, especially the great silence induced upon by the subject of sex. It is as if: Everybody does it; nobody talks about it. Denying the subject is like denying the utmost sense of biological being. It is like *a dream play*<sup>100</sup> to me. It is as if: Never *negotiable* but only to resume self-actions as the remained option to be! The Director’s final action is like drumming voices left unsung for decades, or even centuries, yet making the last attempt to climb on *the crippled tree*, like the title image once witnessed by



Han Suyin in her autobiographical novel: **“I have pushed with passion beyond the precincts of a family, trying to grasp the motivation, the social and economic background of a whole era: to understand, through one family, the long feudal millenniums of China; through her yesterday made explicit to grasp her wholeness in her new day.”** (Han, 1982:30) What is it to a family laying open in such a stark white court? In reality, it would not happen indeed. Even when it does, it may be another tragic scenario like those once happened during the Cultural Revolution when “open court” meant “open fire” to accuse one another in public, where family members, elders, authors, artists, and religious figures were thereupon purged and killed. (Tang, 1986 & Harding, 1987) The “court” I above painted is not for that purpose. But it does mean to be *open*, in the true sense of unveiling “certain truths situated in the very deeps of the spirit,” like the sense what Théâtre Jarry<sup>101</sup> reintroduced to the theatre, seeing that “there exists between real life and dream life a certain ‘play’ of mental combinations, affinity of gestures, and events translatable into acts precisely constituting this *theatrical* [my italics] reality.” (Chwat, 1974) To me, theatre is like a play of rituals where one can reexamine the missing strength and living bonds in contemporary society. Therefore, the setting and rituals behind the above scene is one of the major passageways for many drumming voices participants. **It is through these plays of ceremonial live calligraphy exercise under the spirit of drumming that one is inaugurating one’s own *rite of passage* (Gennep, 1960), entering the sense of atonement of the self from past experiences. It is a special path of self re-education. It is beyond any social fixing of shared values; it is simply the expression of**

**the naked self, seeking for self-transformation, with eyewitnesses, i.e. the participating members as audience, to “certify” the acts-to-be.** I have personally witnessed many words painted in all sorts of manner and directions, unveiling deep sense of turmoil, frustration, reconciliation, love, pain, care, concern, uneasiness, hypocrisy, adrenalin, ambiguity, courage, reluctance, sufferings, dreams, unfulfilled destiny and much more, where relentless logic of everyday life is trailing along strokes and brushes.<sup>102</sup> It does take special effort to take one back onto the *missing* rite of passage, which is almost totally left unspoken or unexplored in the contemporary urban society, especially the important menarche and other phenomenal *liminal passage* (Turner, 1967) within puberty when psychological and physiological recognition of the sense of being for adolescence are mostly ignored. Another aspect of the scene is like the ultimate *judgment* of the self in front of the family that ends with actions of philosophical *contempt*. And my *confession* remains hidden:

*I never get married again. I wasn't a good father, nor “experienced” enough to raise a child who was trapped with the downer of being “unintentionally conceived.” I learned much from my own failure, also the “unintentionality” implanted in my own Mother's womb. In spite of the “suffering” implanted through my mother's womb and those I cast upon my own son, I have acquired all the experience to yet become a “father” to many young people in need then. Am I “compensating” the missing acts of being a “recognized” father, paying forward my “paternal service” to others; reconstructing alternative routes to a world never quite lived up to what “supposedly” promised? Or acts of cutting short the fatalistic continuum of pain among fellow humans?*

I have no interest in lingering too much on the “origins” of such conduct-in-building. I see the opportunity to realize some alternative routes in reflective self-actions, putting forth alternative values in social work and education, most of all, redeeming the *lost* community within the self being that long innately aligned in our body-mind. The act would be the ultimate statement of the self to further my beliefs:

*I married to my creative work,  
re-assessing the once inflamed mind  
and the mourning  
among all  
who,  
for some “unknown,” or not-yet-rectified, reasons,  
put their faith in marriage  
and yet failed in the system.  
From one play to another,  
I sought for true liberation  
from the oppression of “social bondage,”  
from one generation to another....*

**I am now married to the world!**

**(hadn't I been so since a foetus in Mother's womb,  
seeking its contingency of survival?)**

**I am married to “the sense of my own contingency”! (Sartre, 1977[1948])**

I seek the so-said “irreversible curses”  
by allowing the self to reconstruct  
a different set of value of experience  
lived and to live.  
And it is theatre that  
set me up  
to retrace my former footprints,

re-endorsing the authorship of my “owned” life,  
where  
a body-mind is to be re-sketches *and* yet re-sketches again, in order to reach  
its  
potential  
“fullness,” at times,  
in play  
....

The ritual of death was the first I encountered. In the course of coming of age, when the rite of passage was only “formalized,” “qualified,” or “certified” by institutions through *approved* mass ceremonies, the luminality of wound and pain from past memory that allows one to make necessary transition to alternative perspectives in thought and self-understanding is basically absent. One may best re-learn the power of rituals through daily interaction rituals (Goffman, 1967) and interaction ritual chains (Collins, 2004), where one can “derive almost everything that we want to know about individuals, as a moving precipitate across situations.” (Ibid, 4) Elaborating from Goffman and Collins that interaction rituals (IRs) and interaction ritual chains as theories of situations, the momentary encounters of participants at play does provide a chain of bodily actions and emotions, not just as social actors but as particular individuals, that open up “keyholes” for the self to peer into the-perceived-universe-at-work at selected moments. **Theatre is a form of art focusing on human conditions bounded by particular situations. Setting up the theatrical environment for play is like re-vitalizing the nurturing ground of ritual to cultivate actions that can strengthen one’s belief, from the**

**fundamental self-esteem to the possible social solidarity to hold a society together as a whole.** Yet it is so often the latter belief that would easily uphold the importance of the former and consequently all actions thereof made idealized to the “sociological light.” Without the firm grounding of building a healthy individual, the basic unit that forms the *chain* of actions in a community, and the recognition of particular act of agency charged up in specific body-mind, where the energy unveiled with emotions that precipitated the focus and intensity of individual consciousness at particular time and place, we would only be treading on some sociological morass that is fueled by conventional frames generated by people engaged in corrosive power play. As Collins argues, “without face-to-face rituals, writings and ideas would never be charged up with emotional energy; they would be *Durkheimian* [my italics] emblems of a dead religion, whose worshippers never came to ceremonies.” (Collins, 1998:27) Following Collins’ vision of social bonds (Ibid.), art-in-actions could possibly become powerful alternative routes for individual to reflect over the “cultural capital” each is carrying (or *miscarried*) in the name of the other and to transform emotional outburst into long-term “emotional energy” that can bring about true confidence and good feelings of the self, hoping that, subsequently, one can develop specific “stratified networks” according to particular needs and dreams.

*Re-plotting a new tapestry of marriage-plays has allowed me to make new dialogues with parents, children, young couples, friends, relatives, teachers and the society as a whole, opening up routes for reflective actions:*

*plays*  
*to re-invent*  
*the marriage of objects,*  
*a community performance of*  
*signs, values, morals, ethics,*  
*and most of all,*  
*people;*  
*marriage that unites “couples”*  
*for aesthetic beauty,*  
*and to honor the hearts*  
*for*  
*understanding,*  
*and*  
*self-respect....*

**Scene 6: Knots Landing<sup>103</sup> (or *Unrestraining the veins of imagination...*)**

*A gigantic Chinese herbalist cabinet is placed at up centre stage<sup>104</sup>. It consists of hundred of drawers, on which with neither labels nor tags.*

*The Director is seen being tied up on a chair at centre stage. His body is wrapped up in bandages, on which a lot of tags, labels, and small daily commodity and gadgets are tied, making the wrapped figure looked hinged and stuffed with loads of signs and logos.<sup>105</sup> The bandages are torn, stained or filled with graffiti. The human body is basically totally covered and disguised by these “foreign objects,” leaving very little space to breathe.<sup>106</sup>*

*At far distance, over twenty female figures standing in silhouette, they each go up to the Director and link him up with a piece of elastic threads, tying it onto different part of the Director’s body.<sup>107</sup> Afterward, they would each stretch the threads and tie it up onto a selected drawer of the cabinet.*

*When finished, the Director looks like Sisyphus again, as if pulling the entire cabinet with these twenty-something pieces of “elastic” threads, except that he can’t move anywhere.*

*The women appear through their selected drawers, looking at the Director through the direction of the tying thread. They would then transmit extra objects through the thread, as if to communicate with the Director at the centre. These extra objects are stories written in papers fold in special shapes, bearing the experiences they once had with this disfigured man.*

*The stories sliding down onto the Director seem adding weights and tension to the body already tightly bandaged. As each papered story is being tied onto a piece of thread, a special sound track would begin playing. In the beginning, the stories and voices were still distinct and clear. As things add up, the voices get blurred and muddy. They become “noise” filled up the space. The shape and fragmented voices of the stories flow like this:<sup>108</sup>*

- It was three in the morning. We were still hanging out in the street. Your wife and your son waiting. It was your first total journey in theatre. Clouds in your head. You were tormenting yourself. And I... enjoyed seeing that pain in you...
- You could have me. You knew well enough. I envied her. If I couldn't have all of you, what good would you be to me? Endlessly. Pointlessly walking. In the dark. I didn't know why I hooked up with a lost soul...
- It was as if a one-night-stand... no more... I was a proud person... guess I still am! Don't be too sure. Not because of you. I learnt... with what I saw in your bathtub... I couldn't bear seeing love being divided...
- I was raped. Literally raped. By a fucking Russian circus moron. You heard my story. And you sat there. Not a word. You could have done something. No. You couldn't. You are only full of yourself. No more...
- I bet I took the longest route to get to you. My first time flying across the Pacific... And it was that kind of reception. I still couldn't figure out what was in your mind... you never bother to look at me in the eyes... as if I were so obscene...

- I kept knocking and knocking... I couldn't help it... The security guard thought I was crazy. I didn't see you... it didn't matter if it were you or not... it just happened that you passed by...
- I'd prefer words to sex. I could free my mind in words. No. I couldn't. I still can't now. It was like my stepfather still watching me... Sorry... I never liked my body... most of all, I simply felt dirty all over...
- I was too young. You couldn't blame me for cheating on you. I really couldn't believe you took my words seriously... I was only teasing you... wow that was fun...
- I knew you're disturbed and lonely and all that and I didn't want to hurt you 'cause I knew you could be serious with all those men I had I couldn't do that to you no I couldn't and I still believe I was doing the right thing not to...
- No. Had to disconnect the line. (Long Pause.) No. You knew how I felt. (Long Pause.) I have never been any good talking about things... (Long Pause.) Guess we were both too sensitive. And got hurt too easily. (Long Pause.) No. It didn't have to...
- I needed the security. I needed the apartment. I needed settlement. And you couldn't have given anything to me. So that's that. I was already thirty-something. I couldn't possibly wait any longer...
- I never liked you. I truly didn't like you. How could I love a man like you? I didn't. Don't put me on your map. It had nothing to do with me. You came to me remember. It wasn't my fault...
- I still couldn't believe how you treated me. It was disrespectful. You knew how a woman hated a man like that. You shouldn't have me heating up in the first place. I would have felt much better. Wasn't I good enough for you? Disgusting...
- I followed you. You knew. And you hated me for that. I couldn't help it. I didn't know if it was love. I just couldn't help it. Couldn't. And you. Did you have to be so cruel though?
- I thought we were really good friends. We shared so much. We talked and talked and talked. Nights and days. I got confused. Was I just happened to be there when you needed someone... to talk to... O God, it could be anybody...
- Hey, we are still pals, aren't we? We still are. Aren't you glad? That's what truly matters, right? I respected you and I still do. Don't know why. But



simply can't cross the line... deep down, I know I shouldn't... and thank you for respecting my choice...

- I have married for over 15 years now. Two kids. Boys. They are well. I am happy too. How are you? What? Don't be serious. You didn't mean it, did you? I am sorry. Was it I? I hope not...
- I couldn't believe how gutless you were. Picked up the line and it would be a different story...weren't you scared? Of what? So much worrying...
- What do you care? You never did anyway. That was long time ago and we were still young. Too young. I could have done more...you bet I would...I simply wish we didn't meet at all...
- Who are you? Do I really know you? I can't remember. Are you sure you get the right person? I am not too sure if...
- I loved you. I still do. Don't you ever believe me? I wish I could be that woman... Be honest: she has gone long time ago...

*The Director doesn't move a bit. The noisier it gets, the quieter he looks.*

*The women's threads were filled with sliding knots. All landing onto the Director's body parts. The stage is flooded with white lights. The women long disappeared. Only their threads remain...*

*The Stagehand walks in. Sees the Director. He doesn't do anything. Only looking around. As if looking for something. After a minute or two, he leaves. Without saying or doing anything.*

*The Director lights up a cigarette. Smoking. Without doing anything to the bandages. Or the threads. He just lets them be...*

*Suddenly lights dim. And...*

*A floating sky is projected on the Cabinet. The Director melts into the sky...as if floating, in bandages...*

*Suddenly the Director turns into a flame and disappears... including the cabinet...*<sup>109</sup>

*When lights up, only the threads and the knots remains...with each end tied to an object: an urn, a kite, a digital camera case, an umbrella, a pile of books, a g-string underwear, an ivory Greek goddess of love, a bottle of pills, a school dress, a cassette player, a candle, a stack of old letters, a vehicle license plate, a Japanese kitsch painting, a microphone...*<sup>110</sup>

*Notes:* In *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, John Dewey had made an extensive examination on “the ideal and the real,” (1957:103-131) in which he had paid unusual attention to the importance of *imagination* and the lack of such among establishment. He said, “The things most emphasized in imagination as it reshapes experience are things which are absent in reality. In the degree in which life is placid and easy, imagination is sluggish and bovine. In the degree in which life is uneasy and troubled, fancy is stirred to frame pictures of a contrary state of things. By reading the characteristic features of any man’s castle in the air you can make a shrewd guess as to his underlying desires which are frustrated.” (Ibid, 104) He continued, “What is difficulty and disappointment in real life becomes conspicuous achievement and triumph in revery; what is negative in fact will be positive in the image drawn by fancy; what is vexation in conduct will be compensated for in high relief in idealizing imagination.” (Ibid, 104-105) The above scene is designed with Dewey’s philosophical undertone, where it is not to seek any idealized form of expressions but rather to include “objects of ordinary experiences.” They are

not there to help *idealize* the imagination of the scene but rather to re-examine the unresolved experiences hidden or remained unthreaded beyond the pull of social expectations. As Dewey warned us that “it is worth pointing out that these great systematic philosophies defined perfect Ideality in conceptions that express the opposite of those things which make life unsatisfactory and troublesome.” (Ibid, 106) The “System” looks like the gigantic cabinet with so many unknown drawers of “wisdom” perfectly locked in place; yet never meant to be open without ultimate degree of knowledge, with “certifications” so to speak, to reconnect the running tracks for opening the drawers. The idea of love is often “idealized” and “moralized” according to “established norms.” The marrying of ideas of love is like being attributed to a scale of being that has long been laid out by some supreme being, only not knowing the exact shape and size of the Hands beholding the constraints. When an idea is being idealized and “mark[ed] off the Ultimate Reality from the imperfect realities of practical life,” (Ibid, 108) it leaves little room for imagination. Any potential diversity would become “nightmares” and “foul plays” incomprehensible to the Order of Ultimate reality. What is Ultimate Reality then? I have seen a lot of human sufferings practically coming out of the bondage of these *Ultimate* imaginations and their clashes with contradicting values in common reality. Like the idea of Love. Ideal love. It has somewhat been embodying the Ultimate sign and form that no one could possibly derail from normal tracks, with constant failure in seeking alternative approaches to the formation of love and being. Subsequently, many are left to marrying ideas that could be filled with flaws and biases.

**The monstrosity of this “Ideal” fool does need special imagination to unthread its fixities.** To my experience, making puppetry and giant installation often took *drumming voices* participants onto alternative “physicalized” plane of unusual experiences. **In working on the “real” plane of envisioned obstruction and detected trouble in living experiences, illustrating the “troubled” mind would need special practices, i.e. to invent new sites of expressions apart from normal channels. Such response is not exactly taking “refuge in fantasy,”** (Ibid, 120) as Dewey put it; **it takes special “instrument” to channel the heat, i.e. the courage to untie the knots that are mostly locked up in the fancy of the Belly.** Shakespeare put it well in his famous speech on the function of the Belly in *Coriolanus*:

*There was a time when all the body's members  
Rebelled against the Belly; thus accused it:  
That only like a gulf it did remain  
I' th' midst o' th' body, idle and unactive,  
Still cupboarding the viand, never bearing  
Like labor with the rest; where th' other instrument  
Did see and hear, devise, instruct, walk, feel,  
And, mutually participate, did minister  
Unto the appetite and affection common  
Of the whole body. The Belly answered –  
(Act I, Scene I, line 97-106)*

I am taking the liberty of depicting the body-state metaphor used in Bard's tragedy and transfer it into the context parallel to Dewey's *complaint*: the

idealized “State,” like “purified mind” or “ideas,” could easily ignore the voice of individual body, all in the name of striving for the making of a *perfect* State. What is a body to the State then? What is “loving” to me *and* to these women I once encountered? What was the nature of experiences projected in the name of “love”? I even once believed if I did not read Erich Fromm’s *The Art of Loving* (2006) when I was still a teenager, I might have taken on a different journey. Not that I am putting the blame on Fromm’s *beautiful* writing, I guess I might have simply fallen into the idealized analytical trap without truly understanding who I was and how my personality originated, subsequently constantly struggling between *the Ideal and the Real*. The one passage on “the objects of love” still stays with my mind:

If a person loves only one other person and is indifferent to the rest of his fellow men, his love is not love but a symbiotic attachment, or an enlarged egotism. Yet most people believe that love is constituted by the object, not by the faculty. In fact, they even believe that it is proof of the intensity of their love when they do not love anybody except the “loved” person. This is the same fallacy which I have already mentioned above. Because one does not see that love is an activity, a power of the soul, one believes that all that is necessary to find is the right object - and that everything goes by itself afterward. This attitude can be compared to that of the man who wants to paint but who, instead of learning the art, claims that he just has to wait for the right object - and that he will paint beautifully when he finds it. If I truly love one person I love all persons, I love the world, I love life. If I can say to somebody else, “I love you,” I must be able to say, “I love in you everybody, I love through you the world, I love in you also myself.” (Ibid, 43)

So much “love talk” and yet dismissing all the sexual phenomena! In the sociological map of what Fromm put on in his book regarding love, there

seems no place to talk about sexual desire and the crooked soul with such sense of shame, embarrassment, disgust and lust among the tissues of the male body in me. My body never managed to get out of itself as an object of desire. The beautiful spirit seems to look out to castrate the human organ and leaves the body-mind forever battling with one another over the corrosive presence of desire or any passionate thought. The women were as if all connected to complete the whole image of what *a woman* should be. They were as if mothers, sisters, intimate friends, sexual partners, prostitutes, virgins, saints, conquerors, scapegoats, baby girls, and predators all in one, embodying all the fear, desire, shame and guilt, and the *missing* love within the living body in me. Honestly, I never managed to touch base with the reality of Fromm's "art" of loving. Ever since the dead mother and the cursed pregnant teen wife, I have been struggling with a variety of shame: moral shame and sexual shame, like Scruton's description (2006:147): In each of these there is the same fundamental thought that structures embarrassment: the thought that I come before the other, and am judged, as an individual, am present in the individuality of my body, and in a strange way answerable for it." Or as Scruton further expanded his beliefs through Max Scheler that "shame in all forms as a 'protective feeling [Schutzgefühl] of the individual and of his individual worth, against the whole public sphere." (Ibid.) Ironically, I also seem to be "enjoying" the catastrophic notion of repetitive failure, as if the way for me to re-generate constantly the needed passion (or anxiety rather) to feel existing with the mere idea of *looking for love*: be it forbidden, subordinating, neurotic, seductive, or even possibly perverse at times. The mind is constantly

making survey of the self under the shadowy paroxysm of potential abandonment or the tug-o-war with the watchful eyes of social predicament. Most of all, the animal system never a minute diminishes in me!

The Director's body, superimposing the *self* image, bandaged up could be a metaphor of the *self* I see myself being wrapped up in an era of "market character," the neurotic postwar capitalistic consumer, just like what Neil Clark expresses in his article *How we forgot the art of loving* (2005) with emphasis on Fromm's viewpoints: To an extent, a "market character" is someone who "adapts to the market economy by becoming detached from authentic emotions, truth and conviction [...] that everything is transformed into a commodity, not only things, but the person himself, his physical energy, his skills, his knowledge, his opinions, his feelings, even his smiles." (Ibid.) When the whole body is up for open market, where could one possibly see the human expression? No wonder Romanian-French dramatist Ionesco would exclaim, "The real must be in a way dislocated, before it can be reintegrated." (1958) To him, it is necessary to avoid the psychology and expand it to a metaphysical dimension that "drama lies in extreme exaggeration of the feelings, an exaggeration that dislocates flat everyday reality." (Ibid, 771) According to Ionesco, he considered "imaginative truth to be more profound, more loaded with significance, than everyday reality," (Ibid, 767) especially when such "reality" is consumed by the threatening reduction of human beings to commodities.

While the “play scale” of such imagination is not exactly what Sandra W. Russ anticipates in her book on *Affect & Creativity* (1993), where she envisions play mostly on scoring data, it is meant to go beyond “mood-induction” (Ibid, 71-78) or “motivation systems” (Ibid.) that participants are solely on their own to decide what to (or *not to*) connect in the course of play. **It is not creativity for creativity’s sake but rather re-discovering the nature of *knots* and its nature of *landing* onto our body-mind through play.** It is beyond the “stages of creativity” like those written in form of “consumer handbook” (Armbruster, 1989) that the activities are set up as *pre-modeled* and *step-by-step* kind of module menu; it is highly improvised according to specific circumstances and elaborated on to tackle specific logic, memory and mental process abstracted by particular individuals in the process of play. It is not the *idealized* creative play envisioned by scientists that one needs to *prepare* one’s information or to *master* the knowledge base first before taking part in the play. **It is based on theatrical hypothesis that one would devise one’s character according to particular situation set up. The thread, the cabinet, the positioning, the bandages, etc. are all parts of the creative grid that invite actions, “incubating” ideas through the acts of play, i.e. reconstructing stories from experiences either through free association or reflective actions discovered thereof, not for the sake of drawing any solution, but rather to ignite alternative ideas to the ones begun with. It is through imagination that actions are “illuminated”, which become, not something to be “verified,” subject of studies down the road constructing the possible shapes of the self-to-be.**



Six scenes. Six frames. Six corresponding thoughts. They are not only expanding my biographical journey into another important aspect of the self, i.e. the experience of *marrying ideas* from the perspective of marriage through play images; they are *echolocating* the distant *drumming voices* which I have been encountering throughout the past 9 years, with the scenes intentionally depicting experiences from the workshop and transforming into the acts in search of *self* through the imaginary. It is *imaginary* not in the sense of being unreal or ideal; it is, in Sartre's term, "the intentional act of an imaging consciousness," (2004:189) through which aesthetic contemplation is taken to the face of real objects and events, hoping that alternative perceptions could be derived thereof. The extensive footnotes were meant to cut loose the academic menu-like layout or routine expectation to avoid viewing the dramatic constructs as specific "step-by-step" *techniques* or *methods*. I see them, by nature pluralistic and spontaneous, as potential *routes* of using the imaginary for creative synthesis, something that can be learnt and devised through particular frameworks based on corresponding circumstances and necessity. The "information" as unfolded from one note to another could indeed be skipped if readers are prepared to get into the metaphysical contemplation behind the dramatic scenes, a form of dramatically scripted research (Miller, 1998) **I particularly adopted to draw upon alternative narrations on the multi-layered account of my 3-tiered experiences integrated among the living stories, the creativity and the cultural services. The foundation of the hypothesis made in the scenes is based on the most popular *as-if* approach often used in theatrical works, especially when working with actors to find out**

***particulars* about a character. The “character” as studied was “I” as the subject, reflected through reconstructs of images and hypothetical situations, allowing the ghosts, family (ex-)members, friends and (ex-)lovers to stand in to activate the imaginary visual-audio dialogues/reflection at play.** In order to allow such play to begin, it is best to adopt the Zen no-mind-ness and allow the intellect to temporary set free from discriminating subject from object (Suzuki, 1962:293). McWilliams would put it as “the Mating of East and West.” (1996) Let the dramatic situation draws in and allows the participant to make free choice of actions. **It is through looking into the nature of things, circumstances and relationship among objects, subject and participating bodies that one would find engaged in an *unknown* journey, yet is totally safe within the theatrical frame, to unfold the ridicule, tension and pain once tied in knots, letting the mind and body free to associate. It is a matter of learning how to observe thoughts-in-action or -non-action through the seemingly dramatized scenes/setup, where transformation through personal constructs, which could include meditations, that help suspending or loosening one’s consciousness in the creative processes.**

Over a century ago, Russian Dramatist Constantin Stanislavski suggested the “magic *if*” (1936) for actors in their truthful pursuit of the essence of a character. Through asking a series of hypothetical questions, an actor may be able to better locate the dramatic circumstances and psychology of the particular character he or she sets out to portray. It is about *particularization*, a series of action to clarify situations and feelings through asking “as if.” Sanford Meisner dedicated a whole chapter in his book *On Acting* focusing on the magic *As If*, through which to help actors seek “personal

example chosen from [his/her] experience or [his/her] imagination which emotionally clarifies the cold material of the text.” (Meisner & Longwell, 1987:138) As for social actors, to Kelly the application of such an approach, “along with the acceptance of the notion that we need not disprove one proposition in order to entertain another, suggests a culture of possibility as a framework for supporting and encouraging human inquiry.” (McWilliams, 1996) In expanding the thought, Vaihinger’s *Philosophy of “As If”* (1952) could, as McWilliams proposed, further lead us to the hypothetical approach to understanding, a consciously fictional approach in cultural work: “The value of ideas lies in their ability to expedite anticipation of events. By building inquiry around a deliberately fictional approach, we may avoid prematurely objectifying our beliefs. We might find it useful to actively apply known fictions in the process of inquiry, because we then consciously conceive our ideas as artificial and false, with no claim to ultimate accuracy. We can thus more easily abandon them over time, as new ideas come into play, and we can use them consciously as means toward furthering inquiry, rather than as truths.” It is also through the “as if” Kelly located his position towards knowledge, encouraging people to construct events and see how the out-come would be when seeking help from the magic words. (1969) In fact, what Kelly advocated was apparently influenced by Vaihinger’s thought, someone who defined *thought* as “a purposive organic function” that helps you and me adapt to different living situations and the *psyche* as “an organic formative force” that can swiftly make changes by assimilating alternative information in order to appropriate the mind to construct freely. (Vaihinger, 1952:2) Theatre has inspired me the freedom in the use of “images” beyond words. As Robert Lewis put it, “The use of ‘image’ in acting is the stage equivalent of ‘imagism’ in poetry, in which you

create/achieve/convey emotion not through concepts of things but through things themselves, which in art can only be realized through the image,” (1980:33) it cannot be passive fantasy; it should be **active fantasy in order to allow “the conscious and the unconscious personality of the subject flow together into a common product in which both are unified. Such a fantasy can be the highest expression of a person’s individuality, and it may even create that individuality by giving perfect expression to its unity.”** (Jung, 1921:6:428) Of course, the scenes are not meant to train artists; they simply consist of art elements to work on the imagination of participants/readers, through which to explore the psyche and historicity of the self once engaged in particular human conditions, only herewith I have made my focus on the subject of marriages among (ex-)family members and the potential of seeing how marrying ideas at work both in ordinary living and in creative play. **The journey(s) could be delicate and require special care and sensitivity in the course of play. The “findings” would not be anything that needs to be “verified” but rather an alternate platform for transformation of the body-mind through taking different flight of the imagination. It is not meant to arrive at any specific results but rather to ignite alternative thinking and observations in the make-up of thoughts and emotions and the particular affects from previously lived experiences and the possible experiences-to-be.**

*Voices#4: All from a recovered old diary*

I was never on good terms with my father. And so likewise, my son to me. It looks like a continuous cycle of life-in-making; each traps in one’s own morals (mostly others though), without recovering from old wounds. Why so? Has it to be so? Ironically, re-

leveling our conduct-unbecoming has yet become my source of creativity and gradual personal growth, like putting up a raft in the sky and showing myself the monstrosity of being. In the course of re-constructing my stories, I have found new freedom where to allow a sip of tranquility. Forgiving has become the ultimate joy ride, freeing from all possibly perceived moral bondage, and ultimately, the *satori*<sup>111</sup> in life. I made a long speculative list of little things that could have happened to my father in the last scene of *The Seventh Drawer*, probably an attempt to resurrect myself from *ghosts play*. I took such play on and transform it to re-examine the constituents of one's reality. There are yet many old diaries remained to be recovered, through which to seek possibilities in externalizing the ghosts at play, making exceptions for problems besetting many-a-troubled-soul, wondering....

*Through the inventory of many-a-life-or-mind researched,  
Should there be a balance of the old and the new  
in our superstitions in economic expansion?  
With the impressionistic studies once drawn  
Through play and studies,  
Could we possibly devise an alternative route  
in building our body-mind  
in face of the invasion of hyperrealism?*

*In a commodity driven value system,  
distribution of visual pleasure often comes  
without  
intellectual engagement,  
not mentioning  
self-examination!*

*When intellectual consumption deals  
entirely on the account of property-oriented materialism,  
self-examination could easily become  
just another consultative topic  
that required the service of expertise....*

*When birth, sex, emotions, pains, love, illusions and intellects  
have all become objects for 'academic consumption,'  
where  
could  
the subject of such  
go  
next?*

*When transcendental being remains to be the ultimate subject of many philosophers, what each philosopher bases his/her theories on is often the fruit of others. Once the self has transcended, what's next then? After the act of transcendence, would transcendent-in-itself go on seeking its alternative existence? While the journey of epistemological exploration can be infinite, the finitude of life would keep "polluting" the Transcendental Field. Be consciousness and the body continuously arguing over their existing level of duality, the body-mind of a single individual could never escape the final foothold of existence. Intellectual use of concepts is often presumed on the fabrication of intentionality, especially when each particular conception is drawn from a specific period at specific spacetime where the body-mind is undergoing particular development, cognitively, physically, psychologically, emotionally, and psychogeographically speaking and so on and so forth. Any method deduced possesses specific phenomenological elements, echoing specific systems of methodology (In my case, non-method can be viewed as The Method). In a world where consensus plays*

*intricate roles in modern politics, including academic institutions, the act of “pure” reflection is running scarce, especially for common folks. Yet in order to lift oneself from the bombardment of public obscurity manipulated by the mass media, the defense of one’s memory, be it reflective or non-reflective, and the courage to transpose new perspectives into new actions do require the “individualization” of reflection over our body-mind. Before such, body-mind may one day be overexposed in the world of cellular automation, seeking only to simulate resembling real-life processes....*

*Is it nature or nurtured?*

*Cultural animals so we believe we are:*

*with behavior learnt, modified, or genetically aggregated,*

*yet variance constantly play tricks on philosophers*

*favoring the pursue of purity,*

*leaving polemics forever raging battles*

*over plastic and meaningless concepts on human nature....*

*On one side,*

*the Game of life*

*is electronically driven;*

*on the other,*

*biotechnologically simulated.*

*Where can the individual find his/her way out?*

*In*

*view*

*of*

*such*

*indifferences*

*called for*

*itself*

*as*

*a power  
(so watched Nietzsche over our shoulders  
from the near distant past),  
where at the self-action belay  
in order to  
recover the freedom  
of  
being  
significant?*

*The color of human,  
before the invasion of posthuman revolution<sup>112</sup>,  
once vividly texturized in many-old-diaries,  
where  
nature carries punctuation marks  
among words, among bodies, among breaths....  
Should we forget  
those once gave us perspectives  
to judge  
whether we are dealing  
with  
ghosts, or souls....*

*With our hands stretched,  
head stood,  
and the mind making love to the body,  
allowing 16,000 billion little "cell-friends"  
of the "other" world  
re-lifting new panes of thought,  
superimposing them  
in the eyes of the gods,*



*looking for  
reconstructs  
of  
the self!*

*Reconstruct means “an adventure of perception,”<sup>113</sup>  
against any possible claims from the mass,  
or any political or social assault  
upon the sovereignty of the Self...  
If and only if  
the imaginative consciousness  
can be magnified  
as the ultimate self-action  
for  
freedom  
in the finitude of existence!*

***Voice#5: The Echolocation of a Particular Voice (or the view from “other”  
frame...)***

The “personal constructs” above through **theatrical frames** were not to make claims of their “effectiveness” on the self-in-the-making but rather to provide a series of hypothetical framework for studying the application of creative synthesis to help make changes, something that has once “revolutionalized” the physiological and behavioral development in me. It is a process to learn to marry unfamiliar ideas, i.e. allowing a plurality of possibilities at play to widen the opportunity of altering one’s points of view. It is an invitation to construct through play instead of simply coping with habitual preferences in approaching personal and social problems. When everyday life does not always provide the necessary resources or skills to empower the self with

better strategies in dealing with personal, family, interpersonal and social issues, instead of holding onto generalized attitudes, with conception of the self and interpersonal relationship stagnated by common norms, fixed beliefs or so-called socially acceptable interpersonal skills that could be too typical and taken-for-granted, **rejuvenating the body-mind to take on the invitational self-construing through play could be an alternative path to expand the transformational landscape of personal constructs. Theatrical frames, echoing Goffman's thoughts, mean an alternative way to re-organize seemingly familiar meanings at play, through which to re-organize one's involvement by taking on a series of actions triggered by "as-ifs", seeking options to learn more about the activities within and outside the frames one has been living day in and day out.** As Goffman suggested, "keyings and fabrications" could be two basic kinds of transformation, or retransformations, in order to get one to have a grip onto the multiple laminations of experience. (1986:182) In a way, to me, **keying at play is about the focusing of selected laminating layers of experience, about opening doors to perception, about activating the ideas in mind, about re-modeling the environment a few steps closer to one's attainable power, about re-generating alternative ideas to old frameworks, about re-locating one's inner energy to better organization, about re-organizing one's engaged behavior in view of dilemma,** etc. In reality, the society is filled with interactive and inter-juxtaposed frameworks that are plurally inter-bracketed, or conflicting, one another, through which transmitting multiple sound and voices that would take a lot of "echolocating acts" if one is to respond and locate the positioning of the self as swiftly as a "naturally blind" bat. In spite of "the vulnerabilities of experience" (Ibid, 439-495), **the issue of transformation remains lying on the individual's ability to break**

**frames whenever necessary before re-establishing new adaptive frameworks that are sound to one's living.** Theatrical hypothesis, “as if”, does allow one to engage in one's history with the hat of a **different** character, making acute observation that is often unavailable in everyday life without the unnecessary scrutiny of immediate social leveling. **It is through fabricating new frameworks, new rules, and new premises to anchoring new activities that allow one to re-assess one's lived and living experiences, hoping to draw up alternative form of expressions that could go beyond normal coping or general adaptive tasks prescribed by social engines. It is the use of theatrical frame that helps carry the self into uncommonly “dramatized” circumstances, where one can, in spite of potential ambiguity, errors or disputes over the setup of frames, (Ibid, 343) learn to overcome “ordinary troubles” by re-constructing alternative logic and viewpoints, and subsequently, possible new actions thereafter.**

If we are to recall J.K., P.H., Big W. and A.K.'s earlier voices, they had each made their specific journey in *drumming voices* workshop. The nature of the above scenes should be familiar to them, as they each had created their own scenes back then. Their stories, like many others, deserve independent studies and cannot possibly be “categorized” or “classified” into “types,” “tags,” “patterns,” or “norms.” J.K.'s pride could be positive access to his future path of personal constructs. P.H.'s “sudden improvement” in speech during the two months of open play workshop would lead us rethink the nature of “services” provided for “special kids.” Big W's acute power of observation has taken him to be a cook in a restaurant over in the United States of America and he still keeps coming back visiting the workshop and leaves his “special

comments” about play, which does mean something for me to think about the “effect” specially taken on him back then. A.K.’s emotional trauma has been transforming into significant resources for her creativity and she has been actively producing her own works through play. Their journeys, among the many bits and pieces of drumming voices yet-to-be-threaded experiences, had inspired me to further investigate the happenings and events taken place in the 9-year long workshop, seeking not to confirm, but to remap the possible course of navigation of personal constructs on different individual through the arts. In order to further expand the drumming voices as once experienced and the nature of related works thereof, I hereby would make an attempt to remap the echolocation of C.H., one of the ex-drumming voices participants who happened to have connected with the workshops for several years in a row, playing different roles according to his needs and evolving conditions. Through the short history of how C.H. learnt to reconstruct his stories, we may be able to see some lights of J.K., P.H., Big W, A.K. and many other drumming voices participants’ potential encounters, not altogether the same as C.H. but some parallels drawn in terms of how each once took on his/her own creative synthesis and altered the particular trails of personal constructs. It is not to make claims but rather to provide a grid, i.e. a framework, to further examine the potential of transformational effect of the arts on individuals through the events and stories once taken place. If “distancing” is one of the most widely adopted beliefs in sociological practices (Morgan, 1985:192-193), I would say it is the invitational “coming and going,” the “in and out,” the “being there,” the “ever flexible degree of involvement,” the “power not to maintain a distance but rather to assess the nature and possible aftereffect of such distance” that has been keeping me afloat with the ever-drifting emotions of C.H.’s on and off self-actions as

well as non-action. I, the active observer that maybe, was to engage in anchoring a series of activity to correspond with C.H. and the fellow participating body-minds, not as the “observed” but rather the integral “players” of events. The echolocating of C.H., as an ex-drumming-voices-participant and friend would be like another aspect of echolocating the development of the self in me witnessing the creative synthesis that has once inspired me from the apparitional synthesis and the ever-present ghosts play of the past. Thus, it *is* about C.H. as I once “encountered”; it *is* about the phenomenal events once taken place that has been dealing with “tendencies rather than the absolute” (Morgan, 1985:202) of being undertaking his own transformational journey in life. It *is* the story of “C.H. Reconstructs,” a particular drumming voice that once specifically encountered:

“All blank...  
Seeing hardly any shadows among the crowd!  
Where am I?”<sup>114</sup>

So written C.H. in one of his songs, recalling his feelings back then, a time when everything went wrong...

When I first met C.H., he was sixteen. He could easily be labeled as a “hidden” youth, with his hair falling stylishly in the front to hide his eyes from any possible direct human contact. Physically small built. Often drifting around hidden corners to avoid any possible attention among the crowd. It was a time when he mostly chose to hide at home, fiddling only with endless computer games. Slept out most of the day and refused to talk to any persons. It was a time when he would brush his teeth for at least

30 minutes twice daily. As he recalled, “That would be the only time rolling up my eyelids, staring blankly into the mirror, seeing a face so thin and disillusioned.” *Cleaning up* had somewhat become an obsessive act for C.H. ever since he found himself trapped and labeled as a “no-good” by his dad, then his school, and eventually the “*entire* society” as he perceived...

With the bodily image C.H. projected at our early encounter, it was disturbing and calling for some human concern. Did he not love himself? I would say a definitely yes. He surely still cared deep down; otherwise he would not have always tried to “dress up” in an articulate fashion, like how his shirt untagged at precise position and hair combed to distinct direction. He was *speaking* to the world in his own manner, silently re-exploring an alternative capacity of “selected vision” in order to make sense out of a world gone foul to his experience. What was the basic reality of C.H. then? Did his bodily disposition reflect, pervert or mask a basic reality, which deeply interacted in inextricably complex ways, both with his own body-mind, and with the external world? Or were they only images to diffuse our attention? Or to draw some serious attention for the absence of a reality that he would long for?

It was the summer of 2000. C.H. just got out of Pik Uk Correctional Institute for “having committed sexual acts with a girl under sixteen,” a “criminal charge” filed by his ex-lover’s parents. The girl was fourteen, and found pregnant. So alarmed the parents and then the police. C.H. did not mind going to “prison” at first as he later recalled and exclaimed. He still thought he could take care of the girl *and* the “baby” once he “got out.” Having spent a month in the correctional institute (where C.H.

claimed as “Hell”), he did not expect to surrender his love but illusively determined to pursue his own “family.” He only found himself “betrayed” as he saw the girl going out with another boy after an abortion, an act “without his manly approval.” The “lovesick” boy was furious and disillusioned. It all seemed to be just another case of failing young love affair. At least many adults around him took it that way at that time. To C.H., he felt being robbed of the only possible human trust left in him. The following year, he was found seriously depressed and was referred to psychiatrist by the Social Welfare Department. He was on anti-depressant for the next couple of years until he one day decided to quit and start all over again...

C.H. would easily fit into the category of being “just another youth-at-risks” according to his probation officer, yet with loads of problem left unattended. Other than his “love-sickness,” which looked like only a deadening “fireball” triggered after a series of long repressive emotions accumulated through years, he had his list of “problems” long laid down both by his parents’ misfortune and the *new* world he tried so hard to adapt to ever since he moved from the Mainland to Hong Kong at age 11. Problems that remained unidentified, or easily evaded by stereotyped social attitude, easily put C.H. onto another popular chart of statistics on youth problems in a society so obsessed with social data rather than humanistic respect for individuality. Yet how did all those begin? Was C.H. just another “youth-at-risks” that could be typically characterized and labeled as a “dropout,” “immature,” and “lack of self-control” (Lee, 2005)? Were those problems solely out of C.H.’s own making? It almost sounded as if those problems did not have to take place at all if C.H. were a GOOD boy. How GOOD could he be under the social and family circumstances he had totally no control

of during his childhood and adolescent development? Or was it only our society that had presumptuously *allocated* his “conduct unbecoming” according to norms and projected social theories made up by researchers who formulated their opinions on selective social phenomenon, where the essence of their observations most inherently consisted of interpretations that were set out to serve different purposes? Besides, should those observations and opinions not vary from individuals of diversified background? How were C.H.’s problems rooted remained to be issues often ignored, generalized or intricately transfused by his social workers, teachers, parents and schoolmates and had them turned into a web of false representations made up by social and moral codes often distorted and simulated by the mass media? While many expertise on adolescence may come up with a list of explanation on C.H. and chart out his emotionality through some decoding techniques devised from studies, I was uneasy at putting C.H. under such “scholarly observations,” leaving him to be just another object of studies to decipher his mode of socialization and morality-in-transition. As an individual human being, embodying specific body-mind experience, there should be more to it other than C.H.’s decision to leave everything behind and to bury himself to hypnotic electronic games off the computer, a commodity that bears only the hyperreal (Baudrillard, 1983), with the origin or reality no longer possessed models of a real. C.H.’s mind seemed at once content with these simulated images detached totally from reality, through which he kept surfing in the sky of mental desert with simulated models no longer coherent to the life around. Therefore, our summer encounter started with a force of inertia overwhelmingly surrounded C.H., with his mind constantly looped by deployment of a reality, following only serial codes of deterrence foully depicted in his past experience in the correctional institute. The objective of our



relationship, therefore, was never to fulfill a study deprived of. But rather, to discover alternative route for C.H. to reconstruct a life he had so disturbingly fostered in the first place.

“I was a sharp student once and I attended a bend one school<sup>115</sup> then.” C.H. often proudly recalled. Yet if we go down the list of events taken place in his family, we can somewhat track down some hints on the “historicity” of his “problems,” a hidden mine that had driven C.H. to the road of “self-destruction.” In order to understand C.H.’s past with a wider perspective, it is vital to get to know him personally and build up a comparatively omnibearing bridge together to review all the actions he put forth in the 16 years of his life. Building such a bridge required specificity that could temporarily detour conventional perception so as to allow parties involved to abort any habitual mindset. It should look inviting and “unsafe” enough to allow prevailing customs to go adrift, opening up space for C.H. to revisit corners of his body-mind that had once left unattended. As Karl Popper’s theorem (1994)  $P_1 \rightarrow TT \rightarrow EE \rightarrow P_2$  suggests, making problem-solving as a series of adventurous event that filled with tentative tests and error elimination processes in life learning would be the key to alter our presumptuous burden and habitual false attitude in treating “*problems*,” a phenomenon commonly disturbed many and often burned out life energy therein such for negative causes. In relocating the three Worlds of Popper on C.H.’s body-mind, i.e. the physical and physiological states of being (World 1) he is embodied, the mental states and interactive processes thereof engaged (World 2), and finally, the products/aftereffect of a mind (World 3) he subsequently lived upon (Popper 1984), the use of art as an interactive tool had provided me a set of alternating discipline in working with C.H. to

get to the heart of his problems. Through the summer workshop, *Drumming Voices Creative Workshop*, in the year of 2000, it had been an illuminating experience to set off some alternative perspectives both in looking into C.H.'s problems and the attempts in helping C.H. to reconstruct his life through the arts.

If, according to Popper,  $P_1$  means the problem from which we start,  $TT$  is a tentative theory which we offer in order to solve that problem,  $EE$  means a process of error elimination, by way of critical tests, or of critical discussions, and  $P_2$  means the problems with which we end – the problems that emerge from the discussions and tests, the schema  $P_1 \rightarrow TT \rightarrow EE \rightarrow P_2$  does invite a wide range of application likely applicable to both practical problems and theoretical problems. If the logic behind the theorem were adopted and applied to C.H. in helping him reconstruct his “problems,” it may also likely reveal some insight into the ways we commonly ignore when viewing youth problems, ways of events implemented upon C.H. that had consequently and intricately tied him down to social circumstances conventionally unwarranted. With the specific *physical bodies and physiological states* of C.H. and matters encountered, how did they affect his *mental states and processes* thereof driven? How would we see C.H.'s body-mind problem? Would C.H.'s problems be very much the “*products*” of a mind out of his own making, or properties of how the society received C.H. then? All these would be the core of C.H.'s journey of developing a life reconstruction, which very likely would lead to new problems, i.e.  $P_2$ , or  $P_n$ , as suggested by Popper's theory (of course, I am here literally taking the liberty of transferring Popper's supposedly grand theory loosely onto the subject of a single individual). With such foundational questions at the back of the mind, it helped

me re-evaluate the applications of art in the summer workshop and allow the participants' vision, dreams, nightmares, stories, opinions and morality to freely permeate through actions-in-the-art-making. Such a process also further illuminates our alternative route of exploration in addressing youth problems, treating them as human life dynamics rather than social issues. C.H.'s journey did not only provide him and me, also the fellow co-participants, some unusual and inspiring experience in re-assessing the ever-changing shape and size of the "bucket of their mind," through which to attain alternative enthusiasm in treating all potential "problems," i.e. *P<sub>n</sub>*, in the life to come.

Before I get into the heart of the journey C.H. and I went through that summer and the summers that followed, I would freely depict Karl Popper's theoretical proposition in his tetradic schema as a guide to glide through the sky of our experience. First of all, let's start with *P<sub>1</sub>*. If it suggests "the problem from which we start," how would we then perceive C.H.'s problems? Should we, or should we not, first attempt to identify the physical root of those problems, which could likely have undermined in the environment and choice provided by his parents? Or from the general perceived moral codes of our society at large, without first locating some physical evidence of C.H. family history? What seemed to be most reasonable was to look into those events as experienced by C.H. and the chain of processes taken place, be they out of objective or subjective circumstances, only through which we could have a better grip onto the eventual mental states and actions C.H. had adopted thereupon or after. Of course, we have also to be careful in reading the physical evidence once disclaimed and then further reviewed by C.H. at different time frames and not missing how they had

evolved in the ever-changing state of being. How those evidence came by also deserved our special attention, only that those pieces of “information” should never serve as analytical materials on part of C.H. but rather as *transformable* colorful living palette that allowed him to enrich his life canvas, which we would get back to talk about at a later stage.

Here are the basic facts (up to 2000) as told by C.H.:

- *He was born in a small provincial town Hoi Ping, his mom’s hometown, of Guangdong in 1983.*
- *He is the only son of his father, a Hong Kong citizen, who married his mom, a Hoi Ping native, from an arranged marriage.*
- *His dad is twenty-two years older than his mom in age and they don’t talk to each other often.*
- *His father, with an education of 3-year elementary schooling, was a shipman and normally visited him and his mom once a month. He later changed his profession as a security guard when C.H. was 10.*
- *His mom at Hoi Ping brought him up before he moved to Hong Kong in 1994.*
- *He had been living with his dad alone for a year and a half in Hong Kong before his mom reunited with the family in 1996. Since then, they all have been living in a small flat of a public housing estate in western Kowloon, a place his dad long resided.*
- *He was 11 when first arrived Hong Kong and was drawn back to study Primary 4, two-level lower than originally anticipated.*
- *He was often violently beaten by his dad. At 12 a severe beaten up for stealing money had sent him to his first surgery in a hospital for an eardrum torn, without the presence of his mom.*
- *He was admitted to a Bend One secondary school at 14.*
- *Ever since she arrived at Hong Kong, his mom had worked as a dishwasher, an office assistant and then a school janitor. She was better educated in*

*comparing to his dad (C.H. stressed). She had finished her third year in secondary school. Due to the Cultural Revolution, she had to drop out.*

- *C.H. was alone at home most of the time with parents at work during most part of the day.*
- *He had been trying to stay away from home since his parents were often engaged in fights and quarrels over family finance and C.H.'s personal development ever since his mom had moved to Hong Kong.*
- *He was attracted to a girl classmate two years younger in Form 2 and eventually fell in love for the first time in 1998.*
- *He was relocated to a Bend Five school after Pik Uk. He hated that school.*
- *He ran away from school very often and eventually dropped out of school entirely.*
- *He didn't finish his secondary school education (at least that was the fact up to the point we first met).*

The above may easily be accounted only as fragments of C.H.'s young life, providing some basic scope of materials that lead us to start thinking how C.H.'s body-mind problems were driven by relationship between his *World 1* and *World 2*. It is so often that we would take such prevailing "hard facts" as basis for tracing C.H.'s behavior and serving as the social origin of his problems. Yet how such social environment of C.H.'s life came by ( $P_1$ ), and the way it eventually play on his body-mind, which subsequently drove him into actions and circumstances ( $P_2$ ) as happened, remains to be re-examined and reconstructed by further understanding how *World 3* established in C.H. While all the details and interactions (*TT* and *EE*) between C.H. and his social workers, teachers and probation officer remains to be unknown (C.H. rarely talked about those experience), it would not be good for me to speculate the constructs of observations made by such *professionals*. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of counseling and arrangement made by these professionals under their organizational working codes

had not proved to be sound, especially when their sense data was operated mainly upon written evidence stated in forms and regulations, not through detailed study of C.H.'s mental complications. (According to C.H., he was arranged to see those professionals on a once-every-three-month basis, with the duration of no more than 45 minutes for each session.) What were the tentative tests *TT* put into the problem *P<sub>1</sub>* and *P<sub>2</sub>* as perceived by these professional workers seemed to be minimal and ineffective. C.H.'s behavior had often been charted and assessed according to some prefabricated analytical forms, with eventual placement of actions filed accordingly to appropriate boxes of check lists that meant very little to C.H. It was something C.H. would see as infuriating for being compressed to some *boxed* social indicators that were worked out from sheer theoretical observations and managerial procedure. The process of error eliminations *EE* put forth could often be conveniently dictated according to the "normal" social indicators as found appropriate for particular professional attitude adopted and the amount of time resource so stressed available. The view of "new findings" (*P<sub>2</sub>*) could easily be dismissed when insufficient "give and take" between both parties was created within those so-called "professional encounters."

When a relationship was never closely connected and a process never elaborated, which means both *TT* and *EE* were never taken seriously, C.H. was found being put through only a series of discrete events that were either impractical or falsely implemented upon him. In other words, an undesirable *P<sub>2</sub>* was attained and eventually pushed forward as a new set of problems arisen to C.H. He was left odd, speechless and totally victimized by sheer professional manipulations. At a time when he mostly needed care and understanding, the quality of social service was yet operated

according to professional procedure and bureaucratic jargons that were so said backed up by social, psychoanalytic and therapeutic theories. The sort of behavior modification was often exercised according to generalized cultural assumptions and conventional expectations, without reaching out to go beyond the heart of problems belayed upon C.H. When a true relationship was never established, we can hardly talk about any maintenance of relationship that could originally mean something to C.H. When C.H. was treated only as “just another client” but not as an individual, he found himself “framed” into yet another social institution that never was there to provide genuine help, only as so theoretically established. It deepened the moral burden of C.H.

All these “analysis” did not come by all of a sudden. It took me years to unravel the knots so tightly tied up in C.H. Without building a bridge to cross over and reveal the possible view beyond, it would be impossible to have any access to details of hooks and ties inside C.H.’s body-mind. It was through a series of games and collaboration-in-the-making through the arts that we managed to gain trust upon each other. In view of all those workshops we both got involved in, dissolving the *rock* so determinedly set inside C.H.’s mindset did take us a lot of patience and wars to dissemble the entangling elements from within. Before C.H. came about to tell us his story verbally, all we, yes it was us all, i.e. including all the participating bodies of the workshop, went through was indeed an energy-driven tug of war through games depicted from theatre, video-making, dance, installations, songs, and puppetry, which were media that served as alternative channel for projecting inner sentiment and re-building the self of C.H. so lowly deteriorated. Burkitt stated in his *Body of Thoughts* (1999) that

the construction of experience through the active body would provide us a useful basis on which to develop notions of resistance, in which it can formulate, with others and develop viewpoints on the form of power group that seek to shape it, especially when “the body as a social and natural construction, as a malleable organism which is open to re-formation through its location within networks of historically variable social relations.” (Ibid, 7) What I saw in the course of our “art events” was such a body of C.H. in the beginning:

- *A body derailed where his torso often laid limp and limbs unmotivated;*
- *Eyes that were often blocked by mysterious shadows kept unfocused and shifting to airy corners;*
- *Fingers fiddling on objects never meant to make any sense (even his beloved guitar) or attempted to adopt any directions in the course of actions;*
- *Smile so reluctantly hooked on a bony face carried only habitual signs of withdrawal;*
- *Speech so fragmented with occasional stutters only put one to wonder whether he truly wanted to communicate;*
- *Constant bodily pretreatment at far corners often gave us his warning signal, “Leave me alone!” (Yet he never skipped a single workshop.)*

With all the “tentative tests” of known knowledge made through play and art making, C.H. had appeared to be struggling severely between his distrust of others (and mostly himself) and the hidden wishes to make a break off the seemingly irredeemable life at times. His disturbed mental states had very much engaged in a process that denied himself the sense of sound, taste, touch, smell, sight as well as all the other known powers of his mind. Psychoanalyst and psychiatrist R.D. Laing (1976:20) once “speculated”:



*“I see it in the mirror  
I take the mirror image, turning it round, and  
Place it in the space where it is now suspended,  
Between “me,” and the paper I am writing upon.*

*I take off this visual mask, an inverted reversed  
image of a reflection.*

*What is my face now?”*

The play and the people involved in the workshop were *as if* to C.H. a mirror he could barely face (in spite of his mirroring experience when brushing his teeth), the artwork a paper he could not write anything upon, the play a process he so afraid of unmasking, a face so tightly gripped together for fear of further moral judgment. Yet when seeing and hearing other young participants' life stories bit by bit unfolded through their works, a drifting current up-tided secretly within the heart and mind of C.H. His withdrawal had eventually revealed some unequal signs of self-drifting from one side to another and then another and so forth. Rage once fully stuffed over his chest had minutely dissolved into some random actions of physical comments of his look. His reluctant smile had faded out almost entirely in his silent observations over the trial and tests displayed by other participants. Without a single thread of his “secret” story untied, C.H. gingerly and tentatively made his move through secret attempts of groundbreaking actions to fulfill an ego by nature regal and high. When seeing the sense of achievement no longer those competitive marks pursued in school and wars so expectedly to be won for parents and teachers, C.H. began to enjoy those little moments of happening and tiny senses of acute joy of being in art, where he did

not have to prove anything to anyone anymore, he had eventually laid down his shield and defensive armor and learnt to participate in the wonder of human contact through games, not competitive but inviting to one's imagination and view-findings. In the course of 8 intensive workshopping weeks<sup>116</sup>, his story began to unfold through his songs, his artwork and eventual sharing of family stories in “newspaper sculpturing” and “blackened word play”<sup>117</sup> on black boxes...

C.H.'s outcry can be heard in one of his songs,

*“Have I thought of which station I'd be heading next?*

*Lost and dumbfounded.*

*I really want to break away from these barriers.*

*Loosening from ties and hooks...*

*and not being alone again.” (my translation)<sup>118</sup>*

As Gadamer said in his introduction to *Truth and Method* (2004), “...understanding and interpretation are not constructions based on principles, but the furthering of an event that goes far back.” If professionals were to take on concepts unquestioningly, what comes down to it would be a series of miscomprehended events that both defied true meanings and operated on false methods. To C.H., if his needs were never justified and fairly assessed, any theorized connotations over his needs made by experts were only some cold chicken left frozen in an institutionalized fridge, unable to express his feelings and conditions. If needs mean something within us that drive us to achieve some purpose (Payne, 1991), its social definition would apparently be transmuted into silent judgmental call and place C.H. as someone evaluated as “deserving” or “undeserving” of assistance by welfare workers and social

organizations though their theorized system of a “book-keeping” society. At least it was so perceived by C.H. according to his minimal experience in obtaining such social services. The diagnosis of his needs would somehow come down to be defined by professionals as either justifiably “normative,” “felt,” “expressed,” or “comparative,” (Bradshaw, 1972), with indicators alien to a young man in his teens. The question remained was whether the professional observations and analysis were altogether sound and meaningful to the problem of C.H. when those actions were defined by theories derived one or a few generations ago. When the social phenomena behind C.H.’s upbringing was something very specific at that particular social and political time frame of China and Hong Kong, with situations under specific laws, social norms and public climate that directly or indirectly affected his physical and mental disposition, how C.H. was going to reconstruct his own history and to re-narrate his stories in alternative angles would be vital to his future development. Instead of putting him inside a bucket of institutionalized theories and suffocating him with coldly rationalized actions that put him further off balance, it was best to provide alternative routes for him to release from past burden. And the living resource was, and still is, very much within him, including his innate knowledge that remained hidden in his genetic black boxes and left untracked. If, like the DNA in our genes suggested by Richard Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene*, “the chance coming together, through crossing-over, of previously existing sub-units is the usual way for a new genetic unit to be formed,” (1976:31) C.H. had yet to open up the hidden secret of life buried in the billions of black gene boxes. The proposed “art making” exercises were never designed or meant to be trainings for C.H. to be an artist. **Each workshop served as a platform for C.H. to formulate his own tentative trials and tests over**

**potential problems. The process of error elimination would thereupon become an important thinking and emotional process for C.H. in view of fragments of his stories exposed through his collections of found objects, songbooks, puppets, and dance. Those objects were his diving board for experimenting in the wild pool of “questions and answers,” making expeditions to testify moments of exploration in life, subsequently allowing his genes to evolve or revive through “point mutation” of the senses, the mind and the body, unleashing strength and voices long left unsung.** Not only did he begin to experience perceptual development, C.H. was eventually picking up some generic skills and meta-cognition (Cole & Chan, 1994) through our autonomous and open-ended processes of inquiry in the sharing of games and artwork.

In viewing Popper’s “bucket theory of the mind,” Fitz-Claridge (1995) elaborated the aspects of *unschooling*: “...instruction from without is highly unlikely to address the real interests and concerns (or “problem situation,” as Popper calls it) of the individual learner. How could one person's (or one school's, or one government's) vision of What Children Need To Be Taught possibly bear any relation to an individual child's burning questions, problems, and interests? Is it likely that a lesson planned for several children (or millions of children, in the case of a national curriculum) will answer any questions the child happens to have at that time?” It reminds me how C.H. did learn to re-open new routes to re-direct alternative contact to his inner self, all on his own. **Getting him to dive into his own “bucket,” to re-explore senses through the eyes, the ears, the nose, and the tongue and to reveal their potential depth was the goal of the workshops.** Instead of directly pinpointing the location of C.H.’s problems, be

they objective or subjective, I had directed the workshop to re-open the basis of problems by laying out some alternative problem solving devices, i.e. play, through which participants could refrain themselves from any initial undesirable personal exposition. **Play means a journey to unveil through experimenting rules, try-outs, decision-making, and judgment call, error elimination, risks taking, actions implemented and also likely boredom and frustration. Different kind of art media would require a different set of logic and approaches, whereas video shooting would tackle our viewpoints and context of images displayed, dance would challenge the ego and self-image projected through constant re-aligning the body to create new forms and shapes that make sense to particular space, time and music, etc. Through such variations of use in art form and media, new sets of  $P_1$  that appear to be impersonal art material, instrument or fictionalized condition would be displayed through the introduction of a variety of game development on-going designed, devised and re-defined according to the capacity of creativity and workshop situations.** C.H. was to tackle his own set of problems (fiddling through  $P_1$ ,  $P_2$  and the eventual  $P_n$ ) accordingly through play. He had to adopt a variety of strategies, i.e. *TT* and *EE*, in the process. His actions and newly developed  $P_2$  (and the eventual series of  $P_n$ ) would eventually provide us, especially himself, the clues to review his body-mind actions. Through a prolonged period of art adventures (an 8-week intensive exercise, 7 hours a day and four days a week), C.H. bit by bit released his personal stories through his songs, play and artwork. He also managed to address his emotional problems through acute involvement over story sharing and exploration through play.

Knowing that C.H. loves playing guitar, he was encouraged to write his own songs. It served as one of his major breakthrough in successfully articulating his tormented psyche and re-focusing his dreams onto something he found himself manageable and, above all, rewarding. Through an in-depth self-exploration journey that filled with arguments and critical thinking among young participants from all walks of life, C.H. was re-exposed to some fundamental thoughts over the events that happened in his past. While it was considered to be a safe place to re-examine such personal issues, the “public” domain, i.e. **the workshop, was re-defined constantly on a day-to-day basis to take on alternative interpretations of experience and stories over different artwork**, which did not only possess potential informative functions, they also displayed detailed descriptions of events that were normally disguised and left unspoken in school and family. Evaluation of the groups’ specific descriptions of images and events helped C.H. review, and eventually regenerate, his own conscious and unconscious assumptions and viewpoints over people and events happened. The process was slow and yet re-validating C.H.’s sense of existence in a society he once found alien and insensitive to his needs. He had even regained his humor and it was reflected in one of his co-written songs created with a group of new friends:

*“I am a magician.*

*Don’t treat me like an idiot.*

*Bet you wouldn’t even know the power within me.”<sup>119</sup>*

It was until then under such relaxed creative environment that C.H. managed to rebuild trust among friends, and eventually his mom, also understanding and forgiveness to himself and his dad. He may still not yet comprehend literally the complexity of

social phenomena behind the specific period and place he grew up with. Yet he had learnt to reflect through newly discovered problems and create new room for the people he never got along with back then. Chatting with him recently had refreshed both his and my mind over his lately adopted attitude in life. He is now 23. Recently decided to finish his secondary education and he did. Furthermore, he is now pursuing his studies in sound design and music composition. He has formed his rock band and has been quite productive both in school and the music field. His face is lightened, with an easy flair that warms the heart. It took us two more summers of family visits and additional workshops then before he finally opened his heart and shared with me these thoughts without any reservations:

*“I miss Hoi Ping. Funny why people gave up such spacious living place and moved to these tiny flat like ours.”*

*“Father must be very lonely all those years. It was amazing how my parents got together. We had some fairly good time together back then. Short but memorable.”*

*“Being the only son ain’t easy. My parents don’t talk to each other that much now, and in fact never truly did. I, somehow, have turned to be the key figure, like a go-between, to maintain some harmony at home.”*

*“Sometimes it makes me wonder why my dad had gradually turned to be so violent and unpredictable. He used to talk to me over things back then. His adventure at sea and so forth. He must be worrying over his financial situation. Now he is retired. Do hope we can sit down and chitchat over things one of these days.”*

*“Mom can still be annoying and pushy. Yet she really loves me. That I know. Guess I am her only hope of achievement in life. Her Hong Kong experience hadn’t been easy. She worked very hard. Lucky she recovered from her recent*

*injury at work. She never gave up (only once briefly after my release from Pik Uk). She was disappointed but your chat with her did help to ease her anxiety.”*

*“No more fights at home now. I even enjoy having dinner at home. Not easy going back to school but I have to. I want to get to do what I should be good at. Silly how I missed being a ‘Bend one’ student back then. It gets to my nerve every now and then. Yet almost all of my friends now were pals from that ‘Bend five’ school though.”*

That was C.H.’s latest version of his stories reconstructed. Yet was it really C.H. or art that did the “magic,” allowing the criticism of life to take place? C.H. always thinks very highly of himself on one hand and yet totally lacks the needed confidence on the other. Yet, with art, it could worsen C.H.’s “status anxiety,” in De Bottom’s word (2005), if not being taken well care of, especially the nature of criticism and observation called for at times.

Designing art activities for young people like C.H. in *Drumming Voices Creative Workshop* has proven to be challenging experiences all these years. The key is NOT only to build up a new bank of sensitive artists for our society who are willing to provide alternative routes for youth education through the arts, especially filling up missing or neglected areas, like moral education, where formal school education never made enough effort to provide the needed inspiration. As the method of playing through *trials and errors* in various art forms would depend much upon the nature and background of participants involved, the elimination of error does presuppose a vast supply of new ideas made by young people in the process. With the development of incentives among them, and above all, inventiveness, as Popper stressed, “imagination



vastly increases this supply so that the trial-and-error method may lead to many new kinds of behavioral responses.” (1993:89) The *drumming voices workshop* is NOT operating like an institution. It is a playground for battles that can be lost and regained, without having to suffer prematurely over jargons imposed by conventional social disciplines. It rather sets off to encourage young people, also parents, social workers and teachers, to re-evaluate these conventions and disciplines that so forth put them into policies and programmes with framework they know so little of. Through revealing the essence of problems that once disturbed them, re-telling or re-interpreting their stories becomes an important step to look deeper into the inherent or hidden potentialities of things both from within and at a distance. **We all have to learn to be a true actor, not moralizing through deeds, but rather acting upon new possibilities and re-discovering logic of thoughts adopted by different parties.** It is to my belief that true social dynamics spring from re-assessing the community within the individual body and allowing each to perform and foster quality relationship. While the role of art is not solely to strengthen our expressive and communicative function in narration, it also is not simply there to fulfill sheer aesthetic sentiment, art can operate on a level parallel to scientific experiments, making hypothesis and research through tentative tests and error eliminations in order to arrive at some new or revised theory and viewpoints through selected physical representations, only that such “experimentation” would be tried out through *play*, with objective and subjective knowledge both interactively engaged, re-interpreted, mix-matched and decoded. An object of art (be it a performance or objectified representation) reveals the artist’s particular stage of findings of a specific topic at specific time-space, waiting for its journey of yet another cycle of deconstruction, resembling, and reconstruction. It is

NOT as an aged old theory saying that art is ONLY for self-expression. Yet, as Popper reminded us, **the artist may learn from his/her work constantly while he/she is creating, a part that has seemingly long forgotten by many.** Besides, **aesthetic questions put forth through the arts could be a form of enquiry which provides valuable insights not only into the nature of the arts but also into the importance of broader considerations relating to our physical, cultural and spiritual environment** (Fowler, 1996).

C.H.'s songs were very much a conscious act of reconstructing a life once gone afoul, a creative process that took him re-visiting things, people and events at the back of his memory, plus the realm of imagination that he never had realized. I would say his encounter with the arts had invited him to a more imaginative and diverse perspectives and interpretations, allowing him to make better judgments in ambiguous situations and exercise self-monitoring and self-awareness (Eisner, 2002). A stronger sense of self-empowerment had been taking place in the course of C.H.'s song writing. He was once so involved in the quality of his work that he went visiting a security guard, a profession his father held before his retirement, and learned to understand the nature of his work, and most of all, the loneliness of the profession. When he shared with me that particular exercise, his eyes were clear and shining, making contact with a world he never placed any interest in before.

The C.H. I know now has learned to adopt a different mental experience (World 2) and allow it to meddle and intervene what has passed and to eventually welcome new problems arisen. Consequently, his newly acquired mindset (World 3) has also

rewarded him with a new set of value that is more connected to his needs and development as a human being. His vision of the physical world (World 1) has significantly gained some alternative insight, especially from his self-initiative and growing-positive identity with the recently turned adulthood, that his “home” in Hoi Ping and the landscape of Hong Kong have been transformed through his consciousness and developed into some enriching resource and images of his creation.

C.H. is now 23. A few summer back then, he finished a song that he started off in the summer of 2000. It was a song dedicated to all the Drumming Voices participants to extend his wishes never quite realized back then. The work had then taken some changes and transformation through the years, which signified the fundamental changes of attitude within him. He told me that he was truly glad to see that happen. And here I am to end this section, again *inconclusively*, with this lovely song, *Watching the Stars* by C.H.:

*Don't keep telling us you don't have the time.  
Isn't it time to listen to our dreams?  
If You don't want to give up even a single minute,  
what's the point of carrying on our conversation then?  
All you do everyday is work, work, and work!  
Leaving me behind unattended.*

*I really really really want to receive your care and support.  
Not your mean and boring preaching.  
I really really really want to be with you watching the stars together...  
Who could be there to pull our hearts closer together?  
(Part I, written in 2000)*

*I want a home with no disgusting dialogues.*

*Did it have to be like that?*

*Without you, would I be better off then?*

*You have given up so much. I keep asking for more.*

*I am so afraid of being lonely.*

*Glad to have you with me now.*

*I really really really truly want to live with you...*

*I really really really truly want to stay with you...*

*I really really really want to receive your care and support.*

*Let me pull our hearts together closer and closer.*

*I really really really want to be with you watching the stars together...*

*Let me pull our hearts together closer and closer.<sup>120</sup>*

*(my translation, Part II, written in 2005)*

### ***Voice#6: A Conclusion beyond the Unsung Multiplicity that drums...***

If a human body is by nature a system on its own, the stories of C.H. do not provide all the “variables” of his becoming, before, during or now. The drumming voices program was not set out to collect data, i.e. variables, to derive a “grounded action”<sup>121</sup> (Simmons & Gregory, 2003) to solve C.H.’s problems. The potential transformative learning therein with “ability to rise and go beyond” (Pearce, 2002) the previous problems C.H. had known of would be important. In seeing C.H.’s life, it embodies multiple properties no less than anyone of us, with dimensions forever being processed in the course of living. All seemingly latent patterns of behavior underlying in C.H., which I also possessed a great deal of in view of the socio-biological being in me taking on the challenges posed by nature under the special watchful eyes of social

psychology and social structures, is in fact seeking their opportunities to cultivate any possible *transformative learning* (Mezirow, 1990) in response to issues and problems encountering at specific time and place. In generating any explanatory “theories” out of an individual, any “explanation” *detected* or sought after with an intention to provide further insights in actions-to-be would likely fall short at the presence of preconception of what a “healthy” individual should be. We can only discover possibilities in the course of getting to know how situations, ideas and concepts came to the body-mind of the individual and then make hypotheses to devise new actions based on the discoveries thereof. It is not an “investment” prescribed according to the good will of the other. **It is the will of the individual who decides to take on any actions-to-be and learn to define his/her own questions on what kind of actions he/she would like to anticipate in the course of participating in the art-in-actions proposed. The initial hesitation, waiting, fear, anxiety, lack of trust, and wearies are all part of the resources to generate better (or could be worse) situation for the next round of actions to be. In each individual system where specific level of understandings, beliefs, perspectives, experiences, background and interpretations to the context of “framework” theatricalized according to the ever-evolving circumstances of play devised at times, there exists some on-going unpredictability during the exploration through art-in-actions, sometimes could be non-art and non-action basis if that is what it takes. Even addressing the wrong problem at times could be transformed into potential resource for future references or immediate re-adjustment of play, as long as the core sense of participating body-mind is allowed to suspend his/her actions whenever necessary.** Any conventional management over the participating individual body

would easily fall into the traps of putting blame on one another without opening up the needed insight to re-focus on the happenings in events that constantly call for modification and comparison to generate better prospects for future actions-to-be. **The facilitator(s)/participating tutor(s) or social worker(s) of such workshops do not collect “samples”; instead what truly matters is the quality of observation on participants’ actions taken where often seated the “concerning models” in the process of selecting at times, through which reflect the choice of actions in related (or contrast) to the context of play either coherently or incoherently cultivated among participating individuals. What seems to be the core action at times would likely shift to alternative actions-to-be, especially when the multiplicity of unsung inner voices slowly emerge in the course of plays. The “core” of actions that seems truthful would be the living and transformative moments as unveiled by participating individual on and off plays, with “issues” and “problems” as often identified by teachers/social workers<sup>122</sup> to be re-generated mainly through the participants’ involving *play* perspective. The doing and non-doing called upon by individuals at times of play in particular framework(s) often reveal the nature of operation-at-will systemically generated by particular individuals, where each holds onto her/his own self-explanatory integrating or non-integrating moments that often consist of multiple diversity that may or may not be sustainable to the next round of play, all depending on the extent of honesty, devotion, trust, and energy (or even of sentiment opposite *or* watered down by nature) put in accordingly. The multiple variations of choice put in the play would allow more diversified references for the self-under-reflection. It is often through revisiting one’s personal stories that helps clarify the ever-disturbing single dimensionality**

of the body-mind locked in at times. It is literally the play-in-progress that helps generate alternative perspectives in the ever-present components of being alongside playing within the bodily and mental system that often keep unveiling a lot of unforeseen indicators of the self *used to be* and the self *willed* to be thereof. Through the constant appearance of either new options inspired by the play or immobility due to the lack of choice during the course of actions engaged, whatever outcomes that become valuable resources for the next action/play to be, are likely to bring about alternatives in choice, viewpoints and potential changes. All “safely guarded” in the façade of theatrical framework, where particularity in time, relationship, skills and resource available would help confine or expand the vision in the next *play* operation. It is through the design of a series of seemingly related, or unrelated, plays that allows the individuals to try implementing new actions according to new discoveries or measures studied through trials and errors, from which some potential transformative learning may be taking place.

In *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, Lefebvre writes: “Everyday life is made of recurrences: gestures of labor and leisure, mechanical movements both human and properly mechanic, hours, days, weeks, months, years, linear and cyclical repetitions, natural and rational time.” (1984:18). **Through the cyclical repetitions lies the hidden diversity of tempo that interweaves all aspects of interrelationship among the living and the non-living being. Cultivating play in drumming voices often begins with the drumming of the most natural voices and then proceeds to the profoundly hidden voices, where encompassing a wide spectrum of differences and diversities of human activities, including the unsung multiplicity that waits for**

drumming. C.H., J.K., P.H., Big W, A.K. and many more (including I) are all individual systems operating within the grand system of nature and those self-propounded by human society, constantly seeking within our “lived body,” echolocating our “sense of identity” through relationships “achieved and created,” though “tenuous and vulnerable” still, always looking for the “fluid and dynamic” of “continually re-created and re-constituted” experiences (Calvello, 1983:151).

I would like to hereby cite a part of Peter Handke’s last speech from *Kaspar* (1986), the character depicted from a historical 16-year-old boy appearing from nowhere in 1828 who had to be taught to speak from scratch, to conclude my reflection over the voices as raised above for individuals as an individual:

In my story I only wanted to make a noise with my first sentence, whereas with my second sentence I wanted to call attention to myself, and I wanted to *speak* with the next sentence, and I wanted to *hear* myself *speak* with the next sentence, and with my next sentence I wanted *others* to hear my speaking, and with the next sentence I wanted others to hear *what* I said, and with the next sentence I wanted others who *also* uttered a sentence not to be heard, and used only the next to last sentence to *ask questions*, and began only with the last sentence of the story to ask what the *others* had said, the other who were ignored while I said my sentence.

(p.91-92)

**If you give up understanding the “voices” between the sentences as unfolded, even with the help of a drum would not get the needed attention. As for *drumming*, it requires the sensitivity of the hand, the heart, the mind and the sense of the ever-changing surroundings...**



## NOTES for CHAPTER FOUR:

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- <sup>1</sup> Borrowing the title of the folk rock song of the same name written by American singer-songwriter Paul Simon in 1964. According to Paul Simon, the song, written right after the assassination of John F. Kennedy, was about "A societal view of the lack of communication." The "sounds," in plural, was the original name, which later was changed into singular "sound." Yet the singular and plural forms were used in the lyrics. (Wikipedia Source, retrieved on May 7, 2008.)
- <sup>2</sup> Chiesa, Lorenzo. "Lacan with Artaud: j'ouïs-sens, jouis-sens, jouis-sans" in *Lacan: The Silent Partners*, edited by Slavoj Zizek, London, New York: Verso (2006), p.345.
- <sup>3</sup> URL site: [[http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/HKQF\\_GLD.asp](http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/HKQF_GLD.asp)]. Retrieved on April 25, 2008.
- <sup>4</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>5</sup> Joseph Lelyveld once wrote a book called *Move Your Shadow: South Africa, Black and White* on the horror of apartheid of South Africa in the mid-1960s and then again fourteen years later (Penguin Book, 1985). The book was written based on the author's personalized experience. The phrase "move your shadow" was based on an expression of a white golfer talking to a black caddy boy in South Africa, "Move your shadow. Don't rattle the bag." (J.D. Bold, Fanagalo Phrase Book, Grammar and Dictionary, the Lingua Franca of Southern Africa, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition, 1977.)
- <sup>6</sup> The workshop has been running under Theatre Fanatico's operation since 1999, an annual program to use performing arts and alternative art forms to work with people, mostly young folks, to re-explore the missing life force and energy in Hong Kong. Prior to 1999, I had long been experimenting the same idea in and out of schools and social sectors. *Drumming Voices* represents a focused effort in mobilizing individual and community sensitivity through the arts.
- <sup>7</sup> Kelley's list of corollary is not only informative but also helps expand the general understanding of the dimension of personal constructs. Yet I do have reservations in pursuing the list without distinguishing its scope of generalization and the specificity of individual differences in course of daily events taken place (though which has also been "envisioned" as part of the *corollarized* consideration). The adverse effect would be to take them for granted as "itemized" phenomena and dismiss any likely numbers of diversification or complication composed, or decomposed, in the course of construing individual experiences within systems ever evolving and self-referencing.
- <sup>8</sup> I do have a lot of reservation on depicting Kelly's Repertory Grid in my workshop. It seems to be contradictory to Kelly's concern over human feelings when the Grid was set out to resort experiences through preset perspectives and then allocate "answers" into cells, columns, and rows. Interpreting the positions and elements of the given answers accordingly would easily fall into easy analytical flaw, with speculations that could have been pre-constructed by analyst(s). It is ironic to see how the Grid has been adopted in marketing research on construing consumer products and services.
- <sup>9</sup> Excerpts from URL site: [<http://www.oikos.org/kellyconfusion.htm>] Retrieved on May 7, 2006.
- <sup>10</sup> Jahoda (1988) had mentioned in his article that Kelly rejected the term theory but preferred the term metatheory, which, according to Kelly, was a theory about a theory. (Walker, Costigan, Viney and Warren, 1996:107)
- <sup>11</sup> Rowe, Dorothy. 1996. "The Importance of Personal Construct Psychology." In: Beverly M. Walker, Jacqui Costigan, Linda L. Viney and Bill Warren (eds.) *Personal Construct Theory: A Psychology for the Future*. (p.17) The Australian Psychological Society Limited.

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- <sup>12</sup> Peter Watkins' 1974 film on Edvard Munch had extensively explored how the impact of Munch's sickly childhood and adolescence intermingle with his adult life and creative works.
- <sup>13</sup> Source from *The Story of My Life* by Helen Keller (1880-1968), Project Gutenberg. URL site: [<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/2397>]. Retrieved on December 22, 2007.
- <sup>14</sup> Helen Keller's story was portrayed into a stage play called *The Miracle Worker* (First Pocket Books, 2002), written by William Gibson. First realized as a 1957 Playhouse 90 broadcast radio play. Later adapted into a 1959 Broadway production. (Wikipedia source)
- <sup>15</sup> URL site: [<http://www3u.homeip.net/lyrics/show.php?fname=the01>]. Retrieved on May 7, 2008.
- <sup>16</sup> Bohm, 1996:34-36
- <sup>17</sup> According to my grandma and stepmother, I had been suffered from chronic bronchitis before 10. Severe nose bleeding was common when I was in primary school.
- <sup>18</sup> According to the article by Ella Lee on "We Cannot Give Proper Care, Says Doctor" (December 14, 2007, South China Morning Post), "Representatives of 300 doctors working at outpatient clinics...wrote to Hospital Authority chief executive Shane Solomon and chairman Anthony Wu Ting-yuk...the doctors said they have only 5.6 minutes per consultation. They are demanding at least an average of eight minutes for each patient, a recommended consultation time for new cases by the College of Family Physicians."
- <sup>19</sup> Gilbert, Tafarodi and Malone (1993) had once researched on how people could easily be affected by false statement or distracted by other's opinion in the process of making initial judgment.
- <sup>20</sup> According to X-ray report of my spinal cord back on December 1, 2000, "along the fourth, fifth, and sixth cervical disks, there are bony projections that form along joints. Signs of calcification at the back of cervical ligament. The fifth vertebra of the thoracic region shows minor displacement. The upper left side of the second and third vertebrae of the Lumbar region also shows signs of calcification and bony projections. There are early signs of spondylosis in these areas." (Translated from X-ray report by Sun Kwong X-Ray & Medical Laboratory)
- <sup>21</sup> During my college years, I had been working as a waiter and busboy in restaurants to make a living and to pay for the tuition. Carrying big tray of drinks, foods, and dirty plates high over my shoulder had severely burnt the loading of my spine. Being a relatively short person working among Caucasians was a challenge, especially having to run around crowds. Also, while I was working in a scenic work as a set designer in 1984 on a Chung Ying Theatre touring production called "Heaven, what a Sound!", I was injured by a falling 4-metre-flat when trying to hold it off from any potential damage. There was acute pain along the lumbar curve. I was too poor to consult a specialist back then.
- <sup>22</sup> Heavy computing has in fact worsened the situation since I am right-handed and the long duration in using the mouse pad has indeed extended the problem to three finger knuckles. I am learning, and trying very hard, to pick things up with my left hand instead.
- <sup>23</sup> The knee injury happened when I was 12, attending the school team basketball game. In those days, there were not any sport shoes cheap enough to provide the needed protection. The shoulder injury happened when I was trying too hard to throw long with the baseball and American football during my college years. Again, no medical treatment was made due to expensive medical bills.

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- <sup>24</sup> Between 1993 and 2000, I had been visiting a lot of physicians, chiropractors and acupuncturists on the bodily pain, especially the neck, the chest and the hip joint. I had literally spent a big chunk of my income on doctors and medications, hoping to make up the loss I had in those years of severe financial burdens. From 2000 onward, I decided to give them all up and have been focusing on self-meditation instead.
- <sup>25</sup> When I was young, say before 25, I often had diarrhea right after drinking “warm” water. I never had any problems with hot water or cold one. I did not know why until one day I suddenly recalled my grandmother’s advice, “When a glass of water cools off, do not drink it. No good for you!” I took the advice to the heart without any queries. I rarely drank anything warm then. In fact I had been keeping myself away from anything “warm.” When I learnt about this psychological symptom, my diarrhea had stopped suddenly. Right now, I still have frequent liquid bowels, mostly right after breakfast. I have somewhat learnt to accept such physical abnormality for years without truly getting to the heart of the problem. I had spent most of my earnings after 30 on medical bills. I got fed up the recent 7 years and decided to work things out my own way instead.
- <sup>26</sup> I have been writing extensive articles on my body. This is a translated and expanded segment based on an article I wrote between July and August in the year of 2004. The original title of the work was “身體在寫我在寫身體 — 一次追溯身體記憶時空的不完全旅程” (My body writes on me and I write on my body: an unfinished journey in search of the spacetime of bodily memory). It would be published in my own upcoming publication namely *Exposed/Still Burning*, to be printed and distributed by International Associations of Theatre Critics (Hong Kong).
- <sup>27</sup> Susan Sontag (1933-2004) had written two essays, *Illness as Metaphor* and *Aids and its Metaphor* (later published together in one book with the titles joined together by Anchor Books in 1990), exploring cultural stigma on illness and how to resist metaphoric thinking on disease.
- <sup>28</sup> Shotter had specifically cited Wittgenstein in his article on “Social accountability and Self Specification”: We judge an action according to its background within human life...The background is the bustle of life. And our concept points to something within this bustle...And it is the very concept “bustle” that brings about this indefiniteness. For a bustle comes about only through constant repetition. And there is no definite starting point for “constant repetition.” (Wittgenstein, vol. II, secs. 624-626)
- <sup>29</sup> Pierre Chabert on “The Body in Beckett’s Theatre” at URL site: [<http://www.english.fsu.edu/jobs/num08/Num8Chabert.htm>]. Retrieved on September 28, 2006.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>32</sup> I literally borrow this “title” from Scene 4 of my own play *The Seventh Drawer*.
- <sup>33</sup> A term borrowed from the title of Peter Brook’s book *The Open Door*.
- <sup>34</sup> Michael Rustin’s article “*Reflections on the biographical turn in social science*” had emphasized the importance of drawing “sociological frame of reference” in order “to demonstrate that original knowledge of social structure and process can be derived from the study of individual life stories.” (In: *The Turn to Biographical Methods in Social Science: Comparative Issues and Examples*, edited by Prue Chamberlayne, Joanna Bornat and Tom Wengaf. New York and London: Routledge. 2000. P.45)

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- <sup>35</sup> Marriage. Dictionary.com. *Dictionary.com Unabridged (v 1.1)*. Random House, Inc. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/marriage> (accessed: May 1, 2008).
- <sup>36</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>37</sup> An expression I strongly felt from Arthur Miller's play, *Death of a Salesman*.
- <sup>38</sup> Japanese dramatist Tadashi Suzuki's theatre journey is inspired by the Toga stage, where "an actor enters, he can exit freely in any direction he chooses. There is thus no restricted 'main stage' or 'rear stage' as in the noh; our playing space is designed for a continuous flow of movement. It is this kind of flowing space that [he] has dubbed a 'passageway'." (Suzuki, 1986:23-24)
- <sup>39</sup> I would be formulating the reflection in six scenes, echoing Swedish film and theatre director Ingmar Bergman's 1973 film *Scenes from a Marriage* (Cinematograph AB production), only that the contexts would be totally different and mostly non-verbal.
- <sup>40</sup> As all the family members are basically "reconstructed" based on my *narrative act*, putting words in their mouth does not seem right (though I did make my attempt impersonating them in previous chapter). The setting of Beckett's 1982 short play *Catastrophe* seems providing me the dramatic setup for studying the subject(s) with the actor, i.e. like the silent protagonist Beckett portrayed, and the director (only distantly echoing the autocratic antagonist character depicted in the play). Beckett originally dedicated the piece to the imprisoned Czech reformer and playwright Václav Havel. It was seen as an allegory on the power of totalitarianism and the struggle to oppose it, where the protagonist representing people ruled by *dictators*, i.e. the director and his aide. (Zeifman, 1988:133) As I am literally "dictating" the direction of the scenes-to-be, I would play the role of this "dictator," yet on a totally different metaphor, i.e. a thorough self-reflection of the *commander-of-personal-constructs-in-action*.
- <sup>41</sup> *Position* relates to the book of interviews under the same title by Jacques Derrida (1981). The word undermines movement of *différance*, in Derrida's word, which could be active and passive and consists of specific actions produced with specific time, language, concepts of elements possibly deferred by alternative means or differentiated from common root. (1981:7-8) The eventual "position" to be taken by participating members of events would likely reflect a series of possibilities subject to transformation through art-in-action.
- <sup>42</sup> This is exactly the first stage direction how *Catastrophe* (Beckett, 1984: 294-301) begins. But in theatre, "bare stage" means wide-open space that allows flow of actions to take place and good for transformation. "Rehearsal" means in the course of trying things out, an important process of action-research on formation particular subjects/issues. "Final touches" means the stage of drawing conclusive decisions.
- <sup>43</sup> The use of lighting is a very effective tool for illuminating imagination and flow of thoughts. Lit or unlit, which indicates a spectrum of possibilities in concealing or unveiling the subject of studies out of specific intentions. It is not only a source of energy that reflects intensity of being; it also helps provoke the mind to go beyond the superficial representation and cut beyond the inner energy of reality to be deciphered.
- <sup>44</sup> While language used in theatre is often idealized for developing dramatic situation and characters, it is often depicted from "everyday language" and further expands its metaphysical nature. In his book *Positions*, Derrida expressed his view on everyday language: "'everyday language' is not innocent or neutral. It is the language of Western [/Eastern] (my addition) metaphysics, and it carries with it not only a considerable number of presuppositions of all types, but also presuppositions inseparable from metaphysics, which, although little attended to, are tied into a knot." (p. 19)

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- <sup>45</sup> Making a scene is like painting a picture. To each participant, the details of a picture in mind could vary. It is always important to allow their mind to go beyond naturalism and seek accents on their descriptions of the family characters to be examined, either through their facial expressions, the clothes they wear, the body gestures as remembered or re-formulated according to memory. The choice made on the such body relationship and physical descriptions would be strong building blocks for generating thoughts to come regarding one's "impressionistic/expressionistic painting" of family members.
- <sup>46</sup> The operation of the mind on decision-making often deserves re-examination. Where one gets IDEAS from and how one carries out the ACTIONS are often critical. The use of property, i.e. the phone as depicted in the scene, is an important part of workshop design to function as a bridge to the world beyond reach. Actualize and identify the existence of "unknown voices" would help relocate one's action-taking position or source for observation building.
- <sup>47</sup> *Framing* is an important part of art making. Painting, film, theatre, music and photography are also about framing. It helps one focus and play with ideas of what to *include* and what to *exclude*, how they interconnect with one another, and, most of all, sorting out the reasons behind. There are far too many things that can draw one's attention, framing can be an effective tool to isolate the point of interest and build one's frame of references in thought. It also expands one's thought regarding the *inside* and the *outside* of frames. Erving Goffman had extensively explored the constitution of a "frame" as "a socially defined reality (which itself is a transformation of some prior or more basic reality)." (Goffman, 1974) He further expanded his analogy on "frame," "frame space," and "frame breaks." (Ibid.) I'd honestly prefer not to get too stuck with terminologies but get people to discover "frame vision" of their own.
- <sup>48</sup> It was a very strong image from my memory. I once witnessed how my grandmother did the same thing when she was wheeled to the hospital from an ambulance. She was in her homemade "underwear," though which looked very much like normal clothing to us. She was so embarrassed that she kept pulling the leg of her pants to cover her knees. It was very careless and inconsiderate on my parts. To make amend, I asked for a blanket to cover her body.
- <sup>49</sup> Echoing Kelly's Sociality Corollary: to the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, he may play a role in a social process involving the other person. (Kelly, 1955: 66)
- <sup>50</sup> Bo Yang (1920-2008), a Chinese writer who had been living in Taiwan since 1949, had left a very strong impression in my young mind when I was fifteen. His two books, *The Alien Realm* 異域 (1961) and *The Ugly Chinamen and the Crisis of Chinese Culture* 醜陋的中國人 (1985) had probably played some significant parts in my cultural awakening as a Chinese.
- <sup>51</sup> Photography is an enlightening route to re-explore the realm of seeing, framing and projecting. Susan Sontag had extensively examined the art of photography in her book *On Photography* (1990 [1973]). She cited American photographer Minor White, "the state of mind of the photographer while creating is a blank...when looking for pictures...The photographer projects himself into everything he sees, identifying himself with everything in order to know it and to feel it better." (p.116) From which she elaborated, "Photograph is advanced as a form of knowing without knowing: a way of outwitting the world, instead of making a frontal attack on it." (Ibid.) When drumming voices participants pick up a camera, what they are photographing would provide important self-referencing materials on studying through the act of *particular seeing*, likely an intuitive drive of wanting to know or make specific contact with things and people they would like to know.
- <sup>52</sup> When applying to different group of participants, the order and details of family members would be entirely open and subjected to the special "selections" as proposed or willed at times. It is often through the introductions of close family members that tales of inner emotions caused by

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family would emerge and eventually be reflected on. Such members' positioning and sequence/approach of appearance would be totally subject to the final decision of particular participant. These members could be played either by real members, which would be quite rare and dangerous, or invited participants to explore the possibility after instructions or sharing made thereof.

<sup>53</sup> The order and timing of bringing on any specific subject/character would affect the tempo of observation. The length of time in between introducing each particular subject/object/character could vary according to the nature of events and objectives loosely based on. The decision could be entirely subjective to the judgment made thereof, which would also eventually become part of the reflective materials to be.

<sup>54</sup> "The spot light" could literally mean the choice of focus depicted at times. It is vital to trigger respective stimulants on participants to help them focus onto *something*/someone to begin with so as to allow one's body-mind to engage in the actions thereafter. The choice could be critical at times. It would rely a great deal on the workshop facilitator's sensitivity regarding the specific persona of the involved participants.

<sup>55</sup> Bringing on extras is always optional. It would arouse alternative perspectives if one finds the scene getting stagnant and not going anywhere. Such extras would provide refreshing combination/composition to the habitual observation gone flat.

<sup>56</sup> It had been the most dominating soundscape of all the weekends when I was still living with my father.

<sup>57</sup> While it looks like a "pre-designed" scene, what suggests here is the importance of observing *how* participants pick their focuses. It often helps lead one another to materialize the potential frame of logic depicting in the course of play. It is solely the participants' decision on where to focus. But at times, it is no harm to begin with an *assigned* spot first if one does not know what to do in the first place, only that such "assignment" should be sensitively sound and of good potentials to build blocks on.

<sup>58</sup> Other than being the performers, it is a very important move to pull the participants out of their performing mode and looking back at the scene they once helped build. Such alternative angles would be fundamental to allow them to self-build reflective space, a unique place outside performances.

<sup>59</sup> Other than playing the characters, it is also critical to look into the objects, in which many stories could have been hidden from within. Looking into these personal objects could expand the dimension of experiences once displaced among household things. It is so easy for us now to omit or de-validate the emotional space within objects.

<sup>60</sup> I do wonder how far we can take on Kelly's Dichotomy Corollary, through which he did emphasize: "The person's choice of an aspect determines both what shall be considered similar and what shall be considered contrasting. The same aspect, or the same abstraction, determines both." (Kelly, 1955:41-45) If things are ended up to mathematical assumptive structure, waiting for data feeding, how far can we possible go on the true understanding of an individual? The corollaries seem to be designed as techniques for observation, very much aiming for psychology practitioners, but one has to be careful not falling into the premises, i.e. the frames of references as put forth by Kelly, as latently forewarned by the systems as preset by the "author" himself.

<sup>61</sup> Excerpted from Scene Two of *Scenes from a Marriage*. (Bergman, 1974:72) The use of words in theatre very much is sprung from Brecht's epic theatre. To Brecht, it is important to constantly remind the spectators that it is a play that one is watching. Such banners with slogans, idioms,

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quotes or citation used would help participants knock themselves out of personal modes and reflect from alternative spectrum. It would help expand the dimensions of perspectives on reality.

- <sup>62</sup> Removing everything could mean emptying one's shelf and allow the mind to reconstruct new stuff thereafter. The process of emptying oneself is an important process to revitalize one's space to incorporate new things in life. It is also an act to push on another mental button on parts of the observers when they get very easily hooked up onto what they see and forget about the alternatives outside the premises as *staged* or *fabricated* therebefore.
- <sup>63</sup> Reversing the role-play is another powerful reflective exercise. Seeing and doing are basically different experiences. Diversify one's experiences at play would mean expanding the scope of thoughts among players.
- <sup>64</sup> I had been inviting family members of *drumming voices* participants to watch their sharing presentation and there were significant interactions that later took effects on relationship building and alternative understanding unveiled through performances and observation.
- <sup>65</sup> It is so often that clear guidelines are anticipated for all "task-oriented" social and education program. Re-shuffling the concept of "direction" would mean to provoke participants to re-think over established values and their affects over actions thereafter. The "game" through art is designed to play against the obvious and invite active participation through interplay with contradicting ideas.
- <sup>66</sup> The time factor is often used not in the true count but rather an open end. It means 15 units of time that could be prolonged or stretched accordingly. Depending on the progress of participants. I had once played with the idea of conceptual time in my production *Exposed/Still Burning*, where the duration of the show was announced to the audience the moment they walked in. Thereafter, they would be reminded constantly the amount of time left. While the audience was getting used to the announcement and taking on the time frame as stated, by the time when the show was supposed to finish, the announcement started anew. It was up to the audience to decide whether the show was over or not, especially when things still kept moving on stage.
- <sup>67</sup> I had once used the same design idea in *Two Civil Servants in a Skyscraper* (a Theatre Resolu production) back in 1994 when the production was presented at the Shouson Theatre of the Hong Kong Arts Centre. Black implies the potential unknown to be discovered. Like the black bag in Beckett's *Winnie* in *Happy Days*, it is for the participants to unveil the memory or things once collected and to take them out to reconnect stories buried from within.
- <sup>68</sup> All nine commands are re-designed, re-toned and adapted from *complaints* made by either Johan or Marianne of *Scenes from a Marriage* in separate scenes. (Bergman, 1974) They are "voiced" to serve as *alternative non-model* to counter off the administrative "procedures" and "guidelines" normally listed for teachers and social workers as culture workers and to allow them to diversify thoughts over "preparation" for one's work in cultural and educational services. It is another effort to question the anticipating convenience in carrying events under organizational mode of thinking and the so-called, as Kelly put it, the ordinal relationships between constructs. (Kelly, 1955:39-41) It is intentionally posed as something "negative" to trigger alternative options other than familiar circumstances already known. It is called: playing the opposite! In acting, it is often through the re-examination of negative thoughts, or challenging questions that push one to better articulate the inner emotions and unraveling thoughts.
- <sup>69</sup> The choice/design of actions would provide insightful readings to the participating body-mind, and, subsequently, their actions would also give specific meanings to the object-at-play. One has to be careful not to draw meanings too quickly and drive at conclusive interpretation of "symbols." What's signified would always be subject to changes according to tests/interference

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at play. The frame of logical reference depicted by participants would be useful only as stepping-stones to build better form of expressions in the act to come. They should never be viewed as “diagnosis” or “moral judgment” on participants.

<sup>70</sup> I work with square a lot both in theatre design and during rehearsals. Square implies specific territory. Like the Chinese word of paddy field, “田,” which looks like four divided squares. The inside and the outside of each defined space allow one to reflect from each other. The entering and exiting of a particular space also allows one either to get involved or temporarily detached from relating territory, be it physical or mental by nature. What to put in and out of the “territory” would be the choice to reflect from in the course of particular *play* designated to study specific subject as framed by given logic based on accumulative signs, experiences and actions displayed.

<sup>71</sup> I use chairs a lot in my workshop. While it looks like the most convenient object to be used on one hand, transforming the normal function into stories untold would often be astounding experiences among participants on the other. I basically ask the participants to project their stories through the chair, as if it was a living being transformed into specific circumstances. The images therein unveiled have often been powerful and inspiring for thoughts, touching base with emotions rarely spoken of among friends, colleagues and family members of participants. I once wrote a poem namely, *The Triacotakaitrignon of a Chair* (椅子三十二面體), on September 2001, exploring the multiplicity of ways in seeing how one can relate to a chair. (Published in Hong Kong Drama Review, Vol. III, 2002. pp.87-110)

<sup>72</sup> It could be viewed as the potential “intervention” of play, which may either change or add extra dimension to the context of play at times. The *dramatic* choice, i.e. *motif* of play, is open according to the flow and context of actions taking place. The choice of object and usage would also be open enough to allow the participants to make specific dialogues with the transforming space, through which some alternative perspectives for specific issue may emerge accordingly. It is an *act* to propel alternatives for reflections beyond common approaches, which could be decisive in terms of the timing and choice of actions taken at times.

<sup>73</sup> The physical dimension of play could provide strong stimulation to thought. It is a process of concretizing actions through physical representation. While it may be *abstract* to an extent, the logic and route of abstraction would mean opening a grid of logic, not mathematical data, that helps reconstruct emotions left undeciphered. As one grid would lead to another, it would unveil a series of possibilities that reflects the mind-mapping of participants. Expand the mind-map by breaking through habitual actions would help open up alternatives for the reading of events and actions of the *self* that has once been bouncing upon thereof. In *The Crossing/Painting Silence*, I had asked two of my actors to examine the potential of such play logic to expand a scene on their possible “scope of vision” within “limited confinement,” which was like examining space beyond potential self-imprisonment.

<sup>74</sup> The installation of an object is another aspect of self-narratives. I had encountered some very insightful stories from participants through their installation work. In the summer workshop of 2004, a 14-year old girl wrapped her chair in total black. It was shocking to see how “depressing” and “heavy” the chair was. I began talking to her and see if she would like to share about her artistic choice. I lied down on the floor while talking to her. I suddenly realize it was all colorful underneath. She then shared with me her “secret” upon my curiosity and amazement on her work. She told me that her loving grandmother was dying. The chair was made for her and also about her special feelings toward her granny, who had been so close to her all the years.

<sup>75</sup> By giving limitation to one’s option in movement, it forces one to break the ordinary mode of thinking and to touch base with extraordinary. It is often that such “limitation” would draw one into unusual space of exploration that could, in return, inspire further actions-to-be. It is also a



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very special bridge to go beyond normal reaches, allowing the self to use the imagination to expand habitual relationship with object and people thereupon making contact with.

- <sup>76</sup> It is so easy for participants to get too sucked into their act without pulling themselves out for reflection. The use of environmental intervention/commenting often provides acute dialogues with the participants-in-actions. The choice of their response to the changing environment would help diversify the block-building/reading in the process. There is no guarantee on the affects it would draw thereof. It is always a process of trial and error and eventually learning to eliminate unnecessary attention and pull one back into the focusing issue.
- <sup>77</sup> In theatre, costuming is an important area to provide additional path for interpreting the character. In the course of “dressing oneself up,” specific transformation would take place in the character psyche, likewise, the spectator’s vision of the character as well. For a live performer, putting on an act through performative turn/transformation would ultimately cast alternative findings in the process. Instead of sticking to a prescribed script, the improvisation thereof would operate like an action-researcher, utilizing the body to seek alternative connections with ideas, events, objects, people and happenings encountered thereof.
- <sup>78</sup> Beyond the dramatic aspect of the scene building here, the external use of “intervening” elements could be critical, especially when participants get too carried away with their acts. Such extra attention-shifting choice would help, not adding drama to the scene, put a halt to the “overdose events” and deliberately comment on the directions getting out of control. The decision could be critical and yet safe within the context of *play* without truly hurting the feelings of participants, rather it would propound the imagination to seek alternatives at such adverse circumstances.
- <sup>79</sup> In theatre, surprise actions are often adopted at particular dramatic situation to allow the mind and emotions to pull out and look into the possible absurdity behind actions. Re-making up the participants’ appearance often help expand their vision of the self-empowerment through alternative play. Mask and makeup could serve as important tools to reach beyond the normal faces of participants and insert unusual energy and imagination into the body.
- <sup>80</sup> Further elaboration on established rules and grid of beliefs would mean taking on extra effort in examining the possible undiscovered dimensions-to-be.
- <sup>81</sup> As said above, the “command” is simply set out to test the response of both the participants and the spectators. How one is to judge accordingly would often provide interesting insight to how one takes on the “rule of game” and sees the possibility of “further develop” new play thereafter. The “passage” of time can be abstract in dramatic aspect. Therefore, by applying the loose alterable concept into play, the time factor could provide another spectrum of living dimension to participants.
- <sup>82</sup> As Camus made a philosophical essay examining the absurdity of existence through *The myth of Sisyphus* (1942), he concluded that in perceiving the meaningless task of repeating oneself pushing a rock up a mountain like Sisyphus, the Greek mythological figure, did, one should at least imagine Sisyphus happy. *“I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one’s burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man’s heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy.”* (Chapter 4) As Camus learnt to accept the existence of such absurdity in life, he believes “revolt, freedom and passion” are the fundamental consequences if one is to embrace life. (Chapter 1)

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<sup>83</sup> I have repetitively used naked body in my works: not only to explore the ultimate beauty and simplicity of human nature but also to examine the widely neglected study of the body in contemporary society. The examination of the body has been critically focused in the course of my theatre works. The body, as a subject, has fundamentally been seriously neglected in the school systems of Hong Kong. There are enormous areas related to physical phenomena left undeciphered. Artworks on body would be used very often to explore the heart of taboo and hypocrisy in our culture. Participants would also share among each other stories of their body in return. The sharing has been an important process looking into the self and revalidates the missing pieces of bodily existence.

<sup>84</sup> It is so often that during the course of play, the spectators would be neglected and treated as “outsiders.” It is most important to re-explore their possible roles and potential participation. Most often, they would care only about stories of their own and forget about the potential of parallel or mirroring experiences exposed thereof at play. While “waiting” for their turns, it would be wonderful if all could be incorporated through different perspectives and cross-checking values and beliefs they are likely holding in stories of their own, which would alternatively provide multi-dimension to the view of particular human conditions.

<sup>85</sup> I often begin the exercise with only a single rule: once a piece/section of toilet tissue is taken and transformed into an image that represents the relationship as perceived/projected at that particular moment, he or she is to communicate by sending out the “gift” to his/her partner, without the use of hands, from one end to the other. The “gift” has to be sent out in person and the “idea” behind the “artwork” should be conveyed through the journey of giving and receiving/rejecting. Of course, “breaking the rule” is always part of the in-take of the exercise. The act behind the handling of the fragile paper tissue does call for special observation and care from participants. One can never rush or temper the materials without transcending the thoughts and emotions onto the projected image depicted. Yet the body is always naked and honest, unable to lie at times of *performance*.

<sup>86</sup> When working as a facilitator witnessing the performance-based workshopping presentations, it is not a time to make any particular “judgment” but rather seek the *appropriate* passageway to enter the specific world unveiled by individuals. One is not looking for dramatic effect but is rather fascinated by the secret emotions and choice of actions taken, which are often inter-changeable, permutable and transformative, allowing one to take various routes to read the deep of the imaginary and hidden living forces from within.

<sup>87</sup> The power of learning does not rely on any single experience shared by one particular individual. The multiplying forces behind a series of living images displayed would allow cross-reflections from one another, not comparing which the better scene but rather the potential inspiration through re-assessing the reality as projected by each individual and the frames of references depicted. It often generates unusual consciousness over the phenomena behind the variations of play created by participants. The images I elaborated did echo the impersonating monologues I developed in previous chapters. They are all alternative creative narratives to help looking into one’s history, family, memory and living conditions that have been affecting the making of persona and worldview.

<sup>88</sup> In the interview of Cindy Sherman by Therese Lichtenstein, Cindy had shared how she worked on projects without preconceived settings and her exploration of fantasy, play and the world of gender and sexual stereotypes through her self-portraits. *Journal of Contemporary Art*, URL site: [<http://www.jca-online.com/sherman.html>]. Retrieved on March 20, 2007.

<sup>89</sup> It was how John Updike described the “actions” therein Peter Handke’s 1991 novel *The Afternoon of a Writer* in his review for *The New Yorker*. (December 25, 1989, p. 104)

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- <sup>90</sup> I have extensively exploring the art of Chinese calligraphy and its inspiration on the energy of the body. In the rehearsal of *Miss Julie Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, I had literally adopted it as the fundamental exercise for the realization of the self and inter-related energy flowing in and out of the body. The body becomes the brush that absorbs ink and water; the performance is the way to use the ink and water to write on the canvas. The contact of the brush upon the canvas requires control and sensitivity; it is the genuine “dialogues” between the self and the world upon particular living moments. (Ng, 2006:239)
- <sup>91</sup> It is like another *stage* upon the stage, reinforcing the ceremonial context of the actions-to-be. White simply works on various levels, from metaphysical contemplation to the artistic input thereafter. White space also implies an invitation of actions that call for special witnesses. Once things are further established, the idea of “canvas” can find applicable to any physical planes to be discovered by participants, which can stretch from the body as a canvas to a T-shirt or the underside of a chair, etc.
- <sup>92</sup> The selection of brushes would become part of the rituals, which often reveal particular sentiment on part of the player. Different brush would call for different dynamic of actions. When picking the “wrong brush,” the flow of “unbalancing” energy and actions thereafter would cultivate adverse effects that would trigger different kind of action-narratives. There are times I would have the participants creating their own brushes with corn leaves, various sizes of strings, mop, etc, something inspired by local painter, Yeung Sau-cheuk. The journey would be totally a new experience.
- <sup>93</sup> The configuration of space is an important design of activity, which allows players to take specific routes before entering the heart of space for actions. In theatre, this aisle, reminiscing the *hashigakari*, i.e. the bridge, of Noh Theatre, would work as a transitory area, providing a passageway for transformation of character-to-be. It is also a special area to allow participants to “prepare” their body-mind for true actions. It is often in this passageway that participants would embrace for self-adjustment, contemplating what to project on the white space and what to be accomplished in the space when leaving. It is the special path for making particular entrances and exits, as if the breathing room before and after the phrasing of an action.
- <sup>94</sup> Drum represents the beating of spirit. I was inspired by the performance of Japanese Taiko back in the 1980's and U Theatre's *The Sound of Ocean* (presented by LCSD on November 5, 2004 at the Grand Theatre of the Hong Kong Cultural Centre), seeing how the performers and audience merged together through drumbeats that took them onto planes of unusual rhythmic and transcended spirit. What is truly missing nowadays is precisely this fundamental drumming beats to carry the daily rhythm of beings. I literally use drums to retrieve the missing spirit and motivation among young folks. Through performed rhythm, the participants would have to engage in the fundamental components of “rhythmic structure, tempo and timing,” (Honing, 2001/2002) which would subsequently transform participants into unusual cognitive and physical mode of being and activate the consciousness and sensitivity rarely focused on in everyday life. Ironically speaking, these rhythmic qualities are in fact part of daily behavior if carefully observed.
- <sup>95</sup> In contemporary society, ceremony is often being carried out with heavy commercial or political connotations, often under *authorization* of establishment. It rarely has anything to do with the rite journey for growing up as a human being. Taking ceremony as a creative motif in *drumming voices* workshop is simply an important addition to create our own rite of passage in life, celebrating the missing tribute to life discoveries and significant journey.
- <sup>96</sup> The multiple layers of meaning behind a single word can be highly interpretive and personal. Therefore, it is not only the word as a symbol, but rather the actions that carry the painting of the word would be viewed as a *complete* and *whole* action to be. The formation of Chinese characters incorporate multiple possibilities in what each character may carry beyond word, i.e.

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behind the “pictogram, pictophonetic compounds, ideograph, logical aggregates, associate transformation or loan characters” (Wikipedia Source), it consists from within some particular roots of experiences generated in everyday life and important events. The strokes and brushes of specific word performed by participants would often touch base with some fundamental root of emotions rarely voiced by individuals. These trails of actions, i.e. the preparation, the walk to the centre stage, the selection of brushes, the rituals before, during and after the performance to be would all be significant building blocks of a rite journey that physicalized the spirit of the self, through which the living energy, rhythm, emotions, actions and form of expressions would all become important part of self-empowerment.

<sup>97</sup> While our society is always very conservative about the use of the body, it is often precisely the body that has the deepest affects on participants most of the time. One of the most concerned topics in the workshop is to examine the taboo of the human body in our society. Many participants feel reluctant to talk about their body and the related stories. In the American trial of obscenity on the film *I am Curious, Yellow* back in 1968, The Reverend Howard Moody, Senior Minister of the Judson Memorial Church in New York City, had made such a comment when testifying on the moral value of the film: “Perhaps the dirtiest picture in the world was not the picture of a man and a woman making love but the picture of the piled-up corpses at Buchenwald and Dachau; this was far more obscene and did more, far more, violence to the human situation, human action, than all slick-paper graphic essays on sex, the human body and so forth. There is nothing obscene or dirty about the human body, but there is about men’s violent treatment of that body, and this I felt was the real obscenity...” (Sjöman, 1968:205)

<sup>98</sup> The motion of sand implies the sense of time. It is an image I once depicted in my production, *Heading West*, where the archeologist sees a naked man in mask contemplating the sense of being under a shaft of sand.

<sup>99</sup> It is an image echoing the half-buried Winnie in the first act of Beckett’s *Happy Days*.

<sup>100</sup> I here take on a double play on words, since it also stands for August Strindberg’s turn of the century play, *A Dream Play* (1901-02), which the playwright once characterized as “the child of [his] greatest pain.” It touches both the interior and exterior of a human mind that is complex, and trembling...

<sup>101</sup> Théâtre Alfred Jarry was founded by theorist Antonin Artaud with Roger Vitrac and Robert Aron in 1926. It was disbanded in 1929 after four programs. (Source from Encyclopedia Britannica)

<sup>102</sup> I have been adopting this exercise not only as one of the core activities in *Drumming Voices* workshop, but also classes I conducted at the Department of Applied Social Sciences of Polytechnic University, the cultural studies class at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, as well as workshops with teachers and parents.

<sup>103</sup> R.D. Laing’s 1970 book *Knots* has been an inspiring little book to me when I was in College. The way he presented his stories has left a very strong impression on my mind. I did not only see the knots. I saw how they were tied and how they could be untied if taken the needed patience and time. I am revealing the love knots I once tied up with in the past and how they have shaped me up all the years, whether I like it or not.

<sup>104</sup> It was the set design I depicted for *The Seventh Drawer* where the huge cabinet represented the hidden stories behind an individual. The drawers were voices buried in the deep of memory. Opening them would be important rituals to listen to voices unresolved. The use of specific installation setting is one of the possible ways to set up passageway for cognitive and emotional mapping, upon which actions would have the interior and exterior re-threaded to unravel alternative rational and emotional outlets...

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- <sup>105</sup> The “costume” or the way a character dresses up would become a major transitory passageway for alternative expressions. It would be something beyond words and yet powerful enough for individuals to unleash deep emotions through externalized form of physical representations. Such form can either be puppets, masks, costumes, sculptures, paintings, set installations or whatever participants may find appropriate at times within the facilitating resources available.
- <sup>106</sup> Temporarily putting away the face would be one of the effective ways of getting to the heart of matters prevailed. It would help those who are not courageous enough to deal with things at times and yet wanting the space for expression so desperately deep down. Playing with objects would help project the emotions and thoughts through different planes.
- <sup>107</sup> It is quite amazing how people get to relate to someone who cannot talk or move. I have encountered some amazing journey from participants. The way they shared their stories through re-threading the trail of history was often deep and honest, all buried in little knots tied up to the threads. With the knots adding up, they represented how the troubling mind had been taking its walk along the living lanes. Each thread represents a particular individual journey, with particular knots landing onto specific places at specific time, waiting for attention. The body parts each chooses to tie onto are each significant to the nature of concern over their stories to be telling.
- <sup>108</sup> If the voices were the “noises” I once heard from people I ran into, people whom did try to make out with one another in the name of love, these were the “voices” I had probably dismissed consciously or subconsciously. It was probably the “voice of love,” some unknown ideology that had consumed the mind and body without first asking what it was all about. In *The Crossing/Painting Silence*, I finally made the quest and juggled with the meaning of “I love you.” I still do not have the answer. But the journey was real...
- <sup>109</sup> The use of magic is always fascinating. When things works with the imagination, things get miraculously cleared up and takes flight to our surprises. Just as Dewey said, “As imagination becomes freer and less controlled by concrete actualities, the idealizing tendency takes further flights unrestrained by the rein of the prosaic world.” (1957/1920:104)
- <sup>110</sup> There are always stories behind objects of belongings. They are good vehicles for sharing things. Everybody often cares so much what they bring in and how people interpret those things that were dear. It is often through the lining and imaging of objects that many stories come to light and take flight through unusual highways. (This would be further explored in the next chapter.)
- <sup>111</sup> Satori, a Japanese Buddhist word for awakening.
- <sup>112</sup> Social philosopher Francis Fukuyama’s *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* (New York: Picador, 2002) set out to examine the potential effects of genetic exploration and how it would affect human beings in the future to come. He argues that the ability to manipulate the DNA of all of one person’s descendants will cast profound, and potentially terrible, consequences for the world order.
- <sup>113</sup> Stan Brakhage’s opening paragraph of his first piece of writing, *Metaphor on Vision (Film Culture, Vol.30:1963)*, asks his reader to “imagine a world” where “an adventure of perception” can be made possible. In *The International Dictionary of Films and Filmmakers* (Chicago: St. James Press, 1984, p.61), Brakhage’s works was identified as “the representation of a lyrical self.”
- <sup>114</sup> “All Blank” (空白一片), music and lyrics by C.H., originated from “Tears No More”, a youth musical produced by Theatre Fanatico for LCSD’s 2002 International Arts Carnival.
- <sup>115</sup> Hong Kong Education Bureau has classified secondary schools into 3 bends according to overall

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school performance assessment based on 4 domains of 32 performance indicators as set forth. Bend 1 is the prestige class and Bend 3 the lowest.

- <sup>116</sup> We met four days a week and seven hours a day. During the final week of sharing performance, we met from 1000 till 2300. Sometimes, some of them would even stay much longer beyond the “workshop hours.” The extended and intensive time factor has proven to be an important element that allows participants to go through a series of activity without breaking up into parts by periodical schedules so often favored by administrators and consumer-parents. It is because such focused time slot allows participants to accumulate experiences thereof, without getting deteriorated by outside intervention for a successive period of quality work and time.
- <sup>117</sup> Participants were to use a black felt pen to write their stories and feelings on a black wooden box. The double play of blackness had simulated some magical moments that many felt free to write anything without the “danger” of being “watched” at times of writing. The writing was meant to be self-reflective that served mainly for self-logging.
- <sup>118</sup> “Next Station” (下一站), music and lyrics by C.H., originated from “Tears No More”, a youth musical produced by Theatre Fanatico for LCSD’s 2002 International Arts Carnival.
- <sup>119</sup> “The Magician” (魔法師), music by C.H., lyrics by C.H., Esther, Ky, and Tai Yip, originated from “Tears No More”, a youth musical produced by Theatre Fanatico for LCSD’s 2002 International Arts Carnival.
- <sup>120</sup> “Watching Stars” (看星星), music and lyrics by C.H. URL site: [[http://www.theatrefanatico.org/drumming\\_voices/](http://www.theatrefanatico.org/drumming_voices/)]. Retrieved on July 2, 2006.
- <sup>121</sup> In unveiling actions through play, the continual effect or each particular action as unfolded would lead to subsequent actions that follow. It is a process not only distantly echoing Grounded Action Theory, in terms of the effectiveness of actions and the responses of participants, (Simmons & Gregory, 2003) but also the transformative learning as advocated by Mezirow (1990) and Pearce (2002).
- <sup>122</sup> Participating social workers/teachers are often, as Simmons and Gregory (2003) discussed the common phenomenon among practitioners, “focusing on what they think ‘ought to be’ instead of discovering and explaining ‘what is’” in the process of play actions.

## Remapping the mapped

(or *Rediscovering the community within the polymathic self...*)

A room is still a room, even when there's nothin' there but gloom

But a room is not a house and a house is not a home...<sup>1</sup>

— Burt Bacharach and Hal David

In the *Everyman* play, Five Wits was disparaged as a useless unreliable creature, while Knowledge was commended by the priests as Everyman's true friend. And now Five Wits is getting disparaged again, for Science mistrusts these unregulated powers.

— Drusilla Scott

### ***Some Reflections on the Remapping bearings***

If I say the previous four chapters were like an action research through ecological self-play, from unraveling the self-regulating system to installing a series of theatre/art frameworks so as to pave my way to sustain or orient my body-mind in contemplating the sky of birth and remapping my own past into creative synthesis for the present, I would also say it is the making of an ecological tapestry woven in fragments and stories of a specific body-mind encompassed and at work in particular socio-, physio-, and psycho-biological contexts, drifting in and out of particular space-time, in search of alternative landscapes for the yet-to-be-fully-discovered body-mind. Such an act reminisces filmmaker Michael Haneke's *71 Fragments of a Chronology of Chance*<sup>2</sup>, interlocking multiple loosely chronological fragments from my life stories based on the *3-tiered* experiences, with fragmented incidents taken place in and out of urban

living. It is also through possible daily ad hoc events overtaken by chance that help weave a specific chain of thoughts and multi-logues with the self-in-search-of-possible-innovative-theories. It is not intended to deliver an ideal painting of the whole. It would always be, as presented, in fragments being unveiled through the interplay of chance, most of all, through the act of writing, that allows possible dialogues between the interiority and exteriority of the incarnated bodily system once lost, prejudiced, prefabricated, commodificated, subverted, reflected, loved, embraced and revitalized through intersecting cultural, political and social systems, trying to make sense and to perform in a world mostly presumed by meaning structures *known* or *mapped*. I am not into the technical problem-solving kind of thinking. I am into exploratory ways to retrieve one's often-neglected potential of self-innovation through alternatives unfolded in daily stories and events. In another words, I was/am to remap the potential condition of *personal knowledge* – *if we were/are indeed keen to open up alternative routes for better community performance other than the traditional paths safely and gingerly implemented by social institutions*. The writing is in fact itself reflecting the “methods” of self-innovative exercises I have been exploring, like a theatre director's self-reflective act in trying to save the *actors* from any potential lifeless rehearsal, hoping to elucidate alternative forms of landscape for the self (like participating players contemplating in the field of the inner self) to reflect and learn from the tacit power mostly undermined in the course of one's upbringing. Questions are being posed to elongate not only the chain of thoughts and dialogues through acute observations and hypothesis often depicted in rehearsals, and subsequently parallel-adopted for all my *drumming voices* workshops, germinating revitalized actions through play like those taken place in a rehearsal room. Questions and thoughts that



are constantly adopted by American acting coach like Viola Spolin flashes dialogically at the back of my mind:

- Am I focusing with the right kind of energy?  
*Something that could instantly change one's living form and direction...*
- Am I spending too much time on mechanics?  
*Cause there're times when one is never sure whether the mechanics are naturally functioning anymore...*
- Who would need more individual attention?  
*When the body of every individual seems to be saying: everyone deserves equal attention...*
- Do they need to extend the experimental workshops?  
*When the apparent enemy is: the habitual dwellings that lock up daily sensitivity...*
- Are rehearsals [/workshop exercises] getting too dry and unimaginative?  
*When things are being too task-oriented without acknowledging the minute-to-minute changing phenomenon in the process...*
- Am I nagging the players [/participants]?  
*When it is so easy to hold too tightly on one's established mind without truly taking a good look at the self-being of each player-at-and-off-work...*
- Am I attacking them?  
*When asking too much may turn into something abusive at times without knowing it, that could hurt someone's feeling and jeopardize the likely daily progress...*
- Are the actors [/participants] working at odds with me?  
*When there is too much unnecessary imagination in the head without focusing on the happening of the bodily systems, the odds would often be "looking without seeing," "hearing without listening" and "talking without speaking"...*
- Is the problem physical or psychological?  
*When all problems could never be "typical" or "simple as are," it is important to go beyond the phenomena not by asking verbally but transforming the performing body through real action...*
- Am I just being a traffic manager?  
*Instead of taking the easy route to get someone going from one place to another, the fundamental bearing is to allow the one-in-action truly understand the particular needs, motivation and condition of doing so...*

- Is it necessary to stimulate more spontaneity?  
*When the participants are getting too passive without touching base with their intuition and comprehension from parts to whole...*
  - Am I using the actors as puppets?  
*When one is no longer working WITH someone, one's body-mind would lose the needed sensitivity to make better dialogues...*
  - Am I over-anxious?  
*When the mind is prescribed with set answers, the body would no longer feel at ease with unfolding events, big and small, in front of "an anticipating or taken for granted audience"...*
  - Am I asking them for more than they can give me at this time?  
*When the body-mind is no longer receptive but driven at results, one can no longer see the minute contribution unleashed from time to time...*
  - Am I reaching the intuitive?  
*When the body-mind is jammed with pre-structured or pre-meditated elements, the intuition would be shut out. So would the participants...*
- (The questions are Spolin's [1985:12]; the *Italics* and [bracketed] words are mine.)

In the course of writing, indeed I am the "director," the "producer" and the "actor" of all my actions. The rest, which could be identified as the "co-players," is as if all imaginary, be they based from experience or culminating thoughts, to counteract with the mind at work. It is like making a short history of my emotional, intellectual and creative journey into life, seeking to make some sense out of the deeds I set out to explore. From contemplating on the birth of the body to the birth of idea, from ghosts play to the discovery of apparitional synthesis, from dream to dreamWORKs, from theatrical discoveries to creative synthesis, from arts to the remapping of the community within the self, it is like a five-act play, each act unfolding the possibility of the next act to come, and yet all, fragmented as they may appear to be, integrating to make a whole.

These four previous chapters were a community of fragmentary emotions, thoughts, wars, negotiations, contradictions, juxtapositions, and actions re-constituting the possible inner coherence and incoherence to the historicity and values seeking to surpass the underpinned pre-disciplined social and cultural frames. The chapters are set out **to cross the disciplinary boundaries, hoping to reconceptualize the materiality and creativity of thoughts over the possible innovative dialogues between the living self and the lived body.** “It is in articulation itself, whether that be through words, texts, objects or images, that subjects negotiate a meaningful place in the world.” (Davies & Meskimmon, 2003:1) **It is in itself a processual mode of reconstructing the self, through art and play to allow exchanges and dialogues between borders established and those to-be-discovered. It is about the use of knowledge that is no longer limited by the prestiged or the authorized parties. It is about the possible good use of spontaneity amount a common person can possibly get hold of at times if we are to free the body-mind from any pre-packed or preassembled constructs provided by others. The most immediate resources one can possibly get hold of are the experiences, the ever-floating consciousness as well as tacit knowledge embodied in the culminating self.** I am not intending to over boost the ego we all could have already possessed as individuals, but rather to learn to appreciate the complexity, i.e. the community, long integrated from within. By unraveling or disentangling the unacceptable and yet ever-existing prioritization preset by others, **it is best through self-innovation to recover one’s autonomous coherence if we are to establish any hope for a better community in the course of working with others.** The thinking practice may have to seek logical operations

outside conventional systems, something aside from the formal subjects and schooling where one may lose all the natural and practical powers (Scott, 1995[1985]:48-49).

To some, I may read the world *wrong*; but that is exactly part of the fundamental processes in learning, i.e. to allow one to go *wrong* under the umbrella of education, before getting totally deceived by what we are told. Thus, what I have written in the previous chapters may look like a sketchy autobiographical expedition in theatre-arts frameworks; they are in fact a series of alternative cross-disciplinary angles I have been adopting to mix and match crossover beliefs and parallel ideologies into specific circumstances in education workshop I have been devising, for co-learners/participants to depict particular viewing on selected segments of events and stories evolved in life.

**It is often *the act of viewing through specific lenses that allows one to reflect more fruitfully on living scenes unraveled or never envisaged. Just as one could clearly see the “blind spots in me” likely unveiled in the particular position(s) and choice(s) depicted in the process of dramatization, it is yet such “concrete action(s)” through creativity that allows me to first underpin the potential implications behind my preestablished persona and values before building any education grid for investigating possibilities of innovative purposes. It is precisely the enactment of re-narrating one’s stories through different perspectives or medium that often helps open up one’s tacit power and hidden values that left unreflected or discriminated at times.*** Instead of writing straight *recipes* laying out formulas on how and why, which is also the inherent intellectual blindness in the present age of marketing and commercialism, I find it essential to allow each individual to trace and retrieve the particular path of his/her thinking practice and

bodily operating system over areas outside the influence of technocratic expertised opinions. The act of *writing* itself could be the “recipe.” I remember well how Paulo Freire once wrote in the very beginning of his book *Teachers as Cultural Workers* (1998):

The truth is that writing is not a mere mechanical act preceded by a greater, much more important act: process through which the thinking subject begins to understand more profoundly the object of his or her thinking, a process that will inevitably lead him or her to learn about the *raison d’être* of the object of his or her thinking. This process leads the author to know the object more intimately. From this point on, then, the author, purely mechanically, writes about what he or she knows concerning the object of his or her prior thinking. ***No!*** (my italic and bold font) This is not exactly how these things take place. At words, about the relationship between thinking, doing, writing, reading, thoughts, language, and reality – I experience the solidarity among these diverse moments that makes it impossible to separate and dichotomize them. (p.1)

**The *recipe* is within the community of the polymathic self in every human being, where innately sown the seeds of wisdom and yearning for beauty, care, love, attention, awareness and responsibility that are sentiments rarely found in the laboratory of pure scientific causes. The *recipes* seat in the courage of experimentation and the passionate imagination to put forth actions to meddle with the muddy human emotional swamps.** If it is all *clear* and *articulate*, the *discovery* thereafter following the “recipe” as enlisted would possibly mean wasting labour in conforming to the undigested “rules” and “regulations” imposed by others without even acknowledging the true knowledge of their existence. Imagine when one is frying an egg, what is truly needed is not the “recipes” but the heart to feel the heat

and the affected substances, including the egg white, the yolk, the pan, the oil, the temperature, the timing, and most of all, the mind in connecting to the happenings, i.e. the choice of the egg cooked and the coherent mindset when frying it. It is to allow the action of searching to put forth more than one's "five wits"<sup>3</sup> to tests, not only to re-examine the inherited "unregulated" powers remained inarticulate living day in and day out but also the condition of the heart and mind when doing it. I would have guessed my readers would also see my chapters as "unregulated" and "unformatted" to the "required" discipline of conventional scientific research. I hereby make an attempt to "pinpoint" the potential questions on my irregularities as below:

1. How could I allow my thoughts to flow in streams of consciousness without putting testable *evidence* and *necessary* framework to establish my *argument* (or there, in fact, are not any clear evidence of true argument at all)?
2. How could daily ad hoc events and trivia be included in such a paper of supposedly nobly well-structured and academically oriented piece of writing?
3. How could such a wide spectrum of disciplines and possibly incoherent thoughts be *mixed* and *jammed* in such a "dramatic" way that leaves one so difficult, or possibly simply *unmanageable*, to weave them all together to form a whole?
4. How could I pose so many questions without answering them or not clearly stating my findings both in theatrical experience and their affects on the community arts projects?
5. What are the points of listening to my stories without any substantial sociological analogies or revelations, as readers would anticipate for an ethnographical work to reflect on particular culture and society based on autobiography?

The above questions may not include *all* the potential queries, I am afraid, but at least cover some basic concerns to readers who do not see the logic of an *alternative form of action research writing* in my work. While being "scientific" or not remains to be widely argumentative, I would rather focus my *arguments* on the potential alternative

route(s) of self-discovery and self-empowerment through innovation deduced in the process of theatre/art making. In fact, such “viewpoints” (or theatricalized “data” as collected through successive/interval series of actions<sup>4</sup>) are developed and undertaken through a long process of working with young people, parents, actors, social workers and teachers in previous years, with precious experiences and findings that are meant to be “fragmented” and “ever-floating” in forms and energy like the course of living, with particular phenomenal learning from each individual encounter. Do allow me to clarify my thoughts here below, not exactly as *answers* to the above *questions* but simply further reflections on the “precondition” as implied for a paper so presented herewith:

1. In working with ordinary folks, any preconceived *frameworks* or projected *evidence* would mean excluding any potential illuminating happenings and imaginative acts in the process. The participating bodies are not there either to be “verified” or “proofed” for the sake of completing one’s argument. They are there to work together in search of paths for self-innovation and routes of discoveries, which have often been taken away under the scrutiny of managerialism<sup>5</sup> or hierarchiology. The “frameworks” are in fact hidden and transformative, within reach to one’s perceivable distance in making direct or indirect contact with co-participating bodies. By allowing individuals to re-establish the needed aesthetic distance so as to reestablish alternative viewpoints thereof would often mean treating the “evidence” as substances of metaphorical nature. The investigative exercises as disclosed through streams of consciousness is part of the theorizing attempts to deconstruct any preconditioned procedures of thinking practice and to provide alternative routes other than the traditional way of linear thinking. In Walter Benjamin’s term, **the “method” is like a literary montage of “exhibits,” “trivia,” “trash” that may be drifting in and out of everyday life that are often put together in use** (1989: N1a, 8). It is like what Benjamin’s unfinished *Arcade Project* (1999) reminds us that the “bodies, images, signs, stimulants,

movement...experience as a perpetual assault on both traditions and the human sensorium alike” are all “paradoxically [displaying] a paucity of communicable experience.” (Highmore, 2002:61) **The everyday consciousness does flow around in and out of living and non-living debris accumulating and registering incessantly through the body-mind. To work with any particular person, which begun with “I” in this case, means the necessity to acquire such space of observation to read into the floating and fluctuating web of daily experiences. The particularity and historicity of personal experiences need to be recognized and apprehended as the ways they are presented or perceived at times if they are to be made available for criticism or re-narrativity.** In a way, a teacher or social worker may have to work like a ragpicker as the methodology suggested by Benjamin, i.e. “if we want to visualize [the person] just for himself [/herself], in the solitude of his [/her] craft and his [/her] endeavour, we see: a ragpicker at daybreak, lancing with his stick scraps of language and tatters of speech in order to throw them in his [/her] cart, grumbling, stubbornly, somewhat the worse for drink” (1998:114). It is possible to isolate incidents and events and reshuffle them into a special cart to deliver an idealized argument. But it is precisely the danger one may adopt such practices when applying learning for self-innovation of common folks, whose daily experiences could be an eclectic array of examples and perspectives without knowing them. Thus, **the “streams of consciousness” I have depicted in the course of writing the previous four chapters are in fact distantly echoing the architecture of the daily working body-mind, embodying open and unsystematic circulation of references and information. They are not *argument* or *analysis*; they are self-revelating layers of the ever-re-orientating thoughts and experiences of the incarnating living body-mind.**

As a matter of fact, **all the *evidence* as *collected* through observations and workshop experiences are transcribed into the act of discourse. Instead of *indexicalized* the observed evidence, they have become the major initiatives in the (re-)shaping of my stories and those of others under specially alternatively structured theatrical frameworks, not only to reflect from the *findings* that once observed but also to re-generate the materials into epistemological**



**investigation through art-in-actions for expanding the traditional foundation of self-learning among ordinary people.**

2. In real life, things do pop up and down, in and out, often without plans as anticipated. The ability to incorporate any ad hoc happenings and phenomenal “problematic” acts or gestures would be very important in carrying out innovative education workshops of such where performing and visual arts are used as vehicles for experimentation and communication. Distantly echoing suggestions made by Glaser in *grounded theory*, “the research problem is *necessarily* emergent, not preconceived” (Simmons & Gregory, 2003:4.1.3); it emerges and questions “out of open coding, collection by theoretical sampling, and analyzing by constant comparison emerge [an alternative focus] for the research.” (Glaser, 1992:25) He further argues that it is important for researchers to deal with these emerging problems strongly valid for participants, not “what is supposed to exist or what a professional says is important.” (Glaser, 1998:116; also cited by Simmons & Gregory, 2003:4.1.3.28) It is very often we tend to idealize the circumstances in the process of theorizing by simply excluding daily events that do not, ideologically speaking, integrate with the research, but also failing to free up one’s imagination out of any *rigid* thoughts and premeditative politically *correct* thinking. **In working with individuals, whom embodying a variety of particularities and historicity, with differentiation of logic and senses that are ever-ready to pose new questions and phenomenon arisen over ad hoc events, it is important to be able to weave in any spontaneous pop-up signs, breaths, sighs, silence and any seemingly incoherent incidents journeying through our daily experiences. Daily perception and thinking work like twins and the process of abstraction from the over-abundant signs, symbols, events and happenings drifting in and out of daily living would mean the necessity of ever-readiness in educators to pick up threads from moments and individual perspectives unexpectedly arising.** By excluding those ad hoc or non-premeditated moments is only yet another one of the likely possibilities, which may only review the inflexibility and rigidity in the course of evaluating experiences and perceptions. In spite of the nuances of everyday life colonized by commodity forms that Lefebvre once argued (1984:29), by skipping any potentialities perceived in daily living would mean giving up one’s possible poetic

situation to prescriptive values conveyed by organized politics and social conditions (de Certeau 1997: 29-31). It is often such ad hoc events and images propounding some surrealistic thinking that cut deep into the heart of innovation. The ethnographical journey into any particular person does need such surrealistic events as emerged in the process of juxtaposing one's theory and practice (Clifford, 1988:147). Theatrical frameworks allow the subconsciousness, i.e. the possible surrealistic subject latent in the self, to be physicalized through play. These ad hoc events are in fact the fabrics of everyday life, with possible space that touches the internal struggles from the haunted past, flashing on and off as multiple ghosts to cast their influences on the uncanny present. It is to allow the material and trivial geography that mapped the psychology of everyday life, be it "pathologically" or not as Freud once concerned (2002), to re-surface for recognition instead of impounding the iron cages of beliefs, rules and regulations on how one should think and behave in daily living. Working with individuals in education under any particular social setting requires such particular sensitivity to potential non-conscious realm of chance encounters, especially in a world overwhelmingly dominated by cyclical repetitions and mechanical moments, which subsequently drown thoughts into the abyss of habits and recurrences. If we do consider the interrelationship of all aspects of everyday life profoundly important to the studies on empowering self-innovation for common people, it is often through ad hoc magical moments attained at leisure, a time that Lefebvre would consider constituting "a diversity of activities that don't contain a particular common orientation, apart from their differentiation from the world of work," (1991) when one could retain the quality of *play* into the innovative workshops.

3. Indeed, in the contemporary so-called "knowledge-society," all intellectual constructs are either institutionally prescribed or entrepreneurially managed. Even the paths of common sense are "technocratically expertised" or "specially theorized" under managerial culture.<sup>6</sup> Any eclectic use of knowledge would mean troubles. Yet, **under globalization and the technological advancement, the younger generations are all living under a different eco-system where proliferating and unmediated information are available quite handily. The ability to integrate through "common factors, technical eclecticism, theoretical integration and assimilative integration"** (Norcross, 2005) becomes

**necessary when there are new models and alternative routes kept re-establishing under the root of computer-generated object-base thinking process.** While it seems unrealistic for biologically framed human beings, with the existing evolutionary pace having gathered momentum through billions of years, to keep up with the sudden monstrous speed of technological advancement in the past 50 years, **it is vital to keep apace not only the fundamental changes in traditional mode of learning but also the monumental affect of cinema and the associated visual and audio thinking behind the interactive web-base generated life-world.** Honestly, if we would get into the play of hypertext for any selected piece of letters, journals, theories, novels or philosophical writings, the sociology of words/texts would likely become a separate mini-size encyclopedia of a special kind, which means each word would encompass a matrix of sociological journey before reaching the moment of particular usages (The work of Randall Collins' *The Sociology of Philosophies* [1998] could be an inspiring look into such spectrum.) Such wordplay is in fact long blown up to a much more vigorous dimension of pseudo-meanings and commodification in the media world. It would be getting more and more difficult for any ordinary folks to trace back to the origin and exclude the validity of existing phenomena. **Isolating any particular philosopher or school of thoughts would only be quite irrelevant to the multiplicity of daily events and floating thoughts; it would also exclude any potential alternatives for individuals being "crippled" by designated frameworks without opening alternative routes to re-interpret the world around according to the particularity of the lived body.** In fact, singling out any one particular thinker would by essence mean to incorporate the web of interactive thoughts and domains that helped crystallize the particular theory or ideology, with logic and interactive ritual chain way beyond daily common comprehension. I am not putting up such argument to denounce the importance of particularity in specific thoughts and theories; on the contrary, it is precisely the inescapable coalitions of human mind throughout history which often provides us a dynamic vision of creative energy in further generating new thoughts and discoveries. **Working with ordinary folks does not necessarily mean the equivalence to work with disciplines pursued by philosophers; it simply requires the power of common sense,** especially in a time when "government acts like some extraterrestrial power, not an institution that exists to serve us [,

with] its actions [...] an arbitrary quality [that] almost never deals with real-life problems in a way that reflects an understanding of the situation.” (Howard, 1994)

**Incorporating different existential phenomena at work, be it coherent or incoherent at times, would mean retrieving the creative impulse from situations as lived. Different thoughts and arguments would likely emerge, which could sometimes be conflicting, simply to provoke the sensitivity of the body-mind and arouse its needed energy in re-endorsing the tacit knowledge long buried within the lived/living body. It could only be *manageable* in the sense of dramatic play when such cross-disciplines are exposed to trigger the imagination to journey back into the lived body-mind, sorting out the residue and debris of ideas once deposited without knowing why and how. It is like a *cocktail* prescription designed as potential remedy for particular taste and roots – a diversified *multi-stimuli-approach* hoping to ignite different responses from co-participants in educational settings.** It is like the parts already installed in the interactive ritual chain, as proposed by Collins (1988; 2004) and Goffman (1967), by allowing one’s perception floating up and down through emotional energy interactively floating through one’s immediate, recent or past experiences. It is the particular choice and type of contact in particular [dramatic] situation offered by co-participants that would later reward in further interactive happenings. According to my experiences and findings from workshops, I have discovered that a lot of teachers and social workers are often stuck with particular rules and forms in carrying out their “tasks of education” without truly opening up options for alternative thoughts, especially options beyond verbal communication. **The process of *mixing* and *jamming* is like actions of a bartender making different cocktails, inter-mixing and inter-jamming different ingredients to create alternative possibilities for experiences, thoughts and actions. It is not an act of actual theorizing. It is an act to make things happen in order to propel alternative imagination in the process of educating self-innovation. It is often not only language based; it could be visual, audio and *doer* based.** They are not anything to be “verified,” “validated” or “falsified,” as Popper proclaimed important, for scientific purposes; they are there as real things, incorporating the mind and matter, like what Robert Pirsig beautifully presented in his *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*

(1974), **for personal process of *original* discovery where alternative observations, beauty and emotions are involved in creativity.**

4. **Questions, in dramaturgical terms, are not set to seek for answers. They are there to provoke the mind to alternative angles of observations before taking on any experimentation through true actions.** They could be treated as hypothetical thoughts to pave ways for further investigation and discovery through play. The “findings,” i.e. the theatrical frameworks as put forth in community arts projects, are in fact already implied, not literally, metaphorically within fabrics of my storytelling. Instead of “findings” (I would prefer to use the word “discoveries”), I would rather see them as potential options in expanding the theatrical routes into self-innovation and community building (which I would further clarify in this chapter later on regarding the foundations of *remapping the mapped* by using theatre-arts frameworks based on strategies inspired by Beckett’s work). The intention of disguising them within fragments simply signifies some latent emphasis on the necessity of all teachers or workshop facilitators to be sensitive to the fluidity of the body-mind in observing things and events evolving around living beings and their interactions with non-living beings, it is so often that “discoveries” could be just around the corners of a particular movement of a specific co-participant or the shifting of a prop engaged by the passionate hands of another bodily system. Such discoveries are in fact floating around, waiting to be re-organized to allow alternative landscaping of the body-mind possible. It is an on-going process of happenings, i.e. an interactive ritual chain, that leads one to focus from one point to another, alongside come the opening of routes of possibilities. All these make me rethink what echoing Polanyi’s argument on the problem of prevailing conception of science based on the disjunction of subjectivity and objectivity (1964:15), Scott expresses that “rigid rules only at the cost of losing contact with reality” (Scott, 1995[1985]:41). Giorgi (1990) endorses it being improbable for social scientists to allow the separation of the experience agent from the object of experience, i.e. the lay person. To him, **it is absolutely vital to gain the needed access to a person’s lived experience if we were to understand the person. The questions are meant to seek free imaginative variations that are necessary to understand the psychological essences of phenomena as observed. As common sense is never “disciplined thought” as**

scientists pursue, it is never truly “critically specialized” but rather operating through intuition with common association on what to believe, judge, act and make propositions thereof. Thus, in the course of preparing oneself in face of “questions” over particular living situation under theatre-arts frameworks, it is vital to adopt metaphor as the bridge to reveal the unfamiliar, the cliché, the hidden, and the unaddressed issues left untouched at the back of the psyche among ordinary folks who may not want to be understood in the first place. The “findings” are not data collection but rather being alternative routes for attaining personal insight. It is about the invention of alternative vocabulary, especially the non-verbal ones, to re-think the human condition and seek alternative implementation of variables, methods or auxiliary concepts to re-compose the possible thinking left missing to begin with. The “answers” are often lying within the culminating experiences in the composite of the actions taken thereof. The “questions” are there to foster the angles and the nature of the theatrical frames to be and the *actions* that follow. As in this paper, *I have buried all the actions within fragments, choice and perspectives depicted for “dramatization” of the self, which means the reflections made on seeing the self as an object being, seeking to decompose and then re-model the possible roots of self-discoveries, i.e. through language, through the music in me, through the everyday logic, through space-time, through personal knowledge available and redefined at times, through the troubled bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, and the “socialization” and “participatory quality” of actions made thereof throughout personal changes.*

5. Instead of viewing my stories as “autobiographical,” I would rather say they are mostly treated as *dramaturgical* materials, with each fragment intentionally angled in particular dramatic strategy in order to allow both the readers and me to re-enter scenes of lived experience and phenomena with an aesthetic distance, i.e. *Verfremdungseffekt*, the distancing effect in German (some would say “alienation effect”), from which, a theatrical device to allow the viewers, including myself, to remain a critical observer. It is also an artistic attempt to defamiliarize the seemingly familiar materials through dramatization, forcing the viewers/observer/participants to re-think common things often taken for granted or automatically perceived without critical awareness and needed

**attention.** *Thus, my stories have been constantly undergoing the potential scrutiny of being cut, re-edited, re-structured, re-told, re-narrated, collaged, montaged, or re-played through hypothetical dramatized viewpoints. They are not meant to be ethnographical but rather dramaturgical as vehicles to transform one's seemingly natural language into poetic ones. Being poetic does not mean to force anyone to become poets. It is rather to use art as a device (Crawford, 1984:209) for the prevention of "over-automatization" in viewing ordinary phenomena, which are intricately like a matrix of differences in change, motion, values, emotions, and energy that set out to deter one's normal perception of living situations. My stories, therefore, are used not to propel the ego in me, but rather the determination to re-examine the lived experience in the seemingly familiar language-form and to re-divert them into unfamiliar dramatic situations, allowing the living fragments to re-acquire particular space-time, through which alternative perception and sensation of matter and being would be ignited through aesthetic end for better reflection. As parents, facilitators, teachers, or social workers, the knowing of both the premeditative self and the lived body could be critical in terms of the potential emotional and mental energy likely applied to facilitate learning before reaching out to touch base with emotional and mental energy of others. As ordinary people, who could easily be engaged in the realm of categorization under mass-observation (Highmore, 2002:75-112), rarely consciously talk about their living experience through sociological or philosophical terms, their conversation and contexts of revelation are often fragmentary, with bits and pieces of memory and matter observed constantly drifting from one thing to another in the course of building up such resources into daily individual repertoire of living forms and languages. I deliberately cut away any potential specialized ethnographical sentiments and unveil, or defamiliarize, my stories through familiarized fragments. I have been adopting such "technique of dramatization" in many of my innovative workshops as well as my dreamWORKs and have discovered some fruitful discoveries in the art of self-innovation. In adopting such "techniques" in retelling my own stories have in fact put me another steps further into reflecting the experiences once put forth on others as a workshop facilitator. Maybe it is not totally appropriate to treat them as "techniques"; they should be viewed as alternative landscapes to preserve "what's left over" (Lefebvre, 1991:97) within the individual other than the*

“specialized” analysis offered by selected “social space,” i.e. the particularity of culture and society, as authorized by the Government or the hierarchical elites. In everyday life, stories are often unfolded not in expertised sociological terms; they are recognized as “moments” and “instances” of everyday experience, all undermined in particular living conditions left unsaid or existential phenomenology unobserved. They could be phenomena of emotions and viewpoints which remained self-conflicting, just like the conflicting referencing likely adopted in life without truly socially or culturally grounded. In the course of facilitating workshop for *remapping the mapped*, the most immediate access to the self of the participants is the bridge(s) as provided through stories, which are not necessarily told through verbal communication. **Diversification in forms of story-telling is often important according to the different persona as encountered at particular time and space, with emotional and cognitive energy often left “internalized” or “colonized” from past events that look for alternative landing zones. The “inner cities” of individual emotional and intellectual zones are historically or geographically particular. In order to apprehend the particular site(s), one may have to reach out and to first touch base with the unfamiliarity of familiar groundings before establishing any substantial progress in self-empowerment. The viewing of my stories in such diversified positions is in fact a combination of potential bridges built for special “site-seeing,” with fragmentation through time, space and personal knowledge perceived and made available at times.**

***Re-discovering the Self by crossing the Beckettian trail...***

Every person has his/her own world map no matter how “unscientific” or “unworldly” some scholars and philosophers may suspect and make queries over the credibility of generalization in the mapping of “a commoner’s world-view.” When things fall into the hands of a management-craving society<sup>7</sup>, everything seems necessarily falling into *branding* under “experts’ special labels” or “directions by agenda” to ensure that the routes and paths where people trodden on can easily be identified. It is not uncommon



nowadays to see so many children, teenagers and even adults easily get so worried about losing the grip of the “correct manner” or “words” in articulating daily events and, eventually, beginning to give up talking about their thoughts and feelings, since many literally think what they say would not be recognized or taken seriously in “the map of the world” anyway. This “Map of the World” suddenly shimmers like a plaque of *ghosts*, engraving with commandment-like illustrations of how one should follow the daily trails and commend one’s daily performance accordingly, as if history has long mapped out specific paths and all one expected to do is to follow the authorized signs for the direction of the next possible move, including the way we eat, we sleep, we walk, we act, we buy, we sell, we talk and the way we think. Czech animators Jan Švankmajer’s 1992 short film *Food* (Jidlo) has vividly satirized the kind of life-lines that the crowd, including the “distinguished” and “privileged” individuals, could have been leading, before and after the phenomenological event of revolution<sup>8</sup>. As the short film suggested, life seems to be a handed-down menu, in and out of principles all pre-formatted by the “people-in-charge-of-knowledge,” closely echoing so many people I see gingerly hanging onto walking bodily systems mechanically trailing the designated routes without asking any questions (not necessarily meant they do not have any opinion of their own). When teachers and social workers, part of the designated *educated* crew, are expected to effectively carry out their *tasks* within a presumed period of time according to pre-administered plans, what many are expected is to diligently work toward the goals as set forth to ensure all the materials as prepared and charted to be performed as required by the corresponding *ruling* institutes. As long as the recipients get *fed and stuffed* as pre-targeted, the job is finished. Subsequently, the education of our young people and social service for needed recipients would all be

pre-formatted as “consumer services,” designed to be well articulated according to the game plans with *anticipated progress* to ensure the society its annual feeding of labour through annual *certified graduates* coming out of the designated study or “*files fulfilled*” within the anticipating service period. Such idealized social and educational structure has so carried out in kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, vocational institutes, universities and participating social organizations to reinforce the administering of the established System. As a result, students under the highly advertised special kinship offered by the social order, mostly in the name of “universal experience,” are expected to fill in awaiting jobs to fit into the anticipating future to come, as if each would have a *place* in the Map of the Ideal Society, or, in Erich Fromm’s word, *the Sane Society* (1956), expecting all individuals to conform to the System politically, sociologically, and economically as pre-fabricated, manufacturing “a synthetic consensus by the systemic mass production of ‘surplus meanings’ by the media, the commercialization of intellectual and cultural values and the social institutions of knowledge.” (Davies M., 2003) Or as Castoriadis put it, “the institution of higher education...intentionally sponsor meaninglessness: generating ideas and forms in excess of what can practically be assimilated, i.e. made meaningful, where it counts, socially.” (Ibid.) (One can imagine why educator John Holt would advocate *Growing without Schooling*)<sup>9</sup>.

Indeed, the above phenomena could easily be extracted specifically, or to one’s convenience, to cater for specific scholarly writing to fulfill the “field of interest” or the sole purpose of theorizing. It is indeed an act of exclusion to trail along the agreed routes as established and to re-affirm that the Knowledge is *preserved* with the

*necessary* form of integrity. So to speak: the act of “remapping” could easily fall into the *Grand Scheme* to re-ensure that the *Mapped* is to be followed, or simply to convert one’s paradigm to fulfill the taste and requirement of specific interest group. What is the Mapped then? Should we say what “mapped” Samuel Beckett was the particular awareness and attention to his time and age as perceived in minute details out of lenses re-invented on his own? Indeed, if we do value the tremendous individual effort to remap his/her course of living, what Beckett unveiled to us should be far more than the generalized map as put forth by institutionalized departmental acknowledgement. By trailing Beckett’s “influence” as detected by writers, critics and philosophers, from James Joyce back to Henri Bergson, Søren Kierkegaard and many more, many would suspect: should there not be an academically recognizable route of established beliefs and background if we were to re-establish anything Beckettian? The Map of Beckett is indeed far grander, or to be more precise, deeper and specific, beyond what skeptically described above. In fact, *the idiosyncratic map of any single individual, including his/her trails of thoughts and deeds, is a very complicated one.* Depicting Beckett to relate things and ideas of individual learning may seem inappropriate to many sociologists, especially when Beckett can easily be recognized or attributed to disciplines only in “special fields” of literary or dramatic basis. I am not truly interested in Beckett the man as “recognized” or “attributed”; I am interested only in Beckett’s work and the inspiration he has put forth in the process of examining the existential phenomena of human condition, especially in the aspect of making exceptionally close contact with the existential *self* trapped in disillusionment, which could indeed trail deep in the Beckettian root of genuine concern over the possible complicity of the inner world of an individual being. Scanlon (1992) has reminded us

the importance and meaning of developing a phenomenological attitude towards the “lifeworld” (*Lebenswelt*) so as to break from the natural attitude commonly treaded on day in and day out. In furthering Husserl’s multiple thoughts over the work of phenomenologists, Scanlon urges to rethink carefully the phenomenological assumption of how one could be “critically, reflectively, achieving a stance that makes it possible to remember the indispensable involvement of experiences and practices of the lifeworld in the technological enterprise of modern science, an involvement that is easily forgotten under the spell of the impressive rational results of that science.” (Ibid, 229-39) The literary world of Samuel Beckett seems cutting beyond the phenomenological orientation and recognizes the variables of expression among individuals beyond the study of human psyche and behavior of selective subject, especially the individual’s engaged and contesting sentiment under the influence of situational phenomenological duality of interiority and exteriority existing in the living body-mind. Like contemporary Austrian writer Elfriede Jelinek<sup>10</sup>, Beckett has vividly painted individual voices, through distinctive language, highly sensitive to everyday phenomena and allowed his characters **to acknowledge the potential “disorders,” “anxiety,” or “social phobia” that affect the normal functioning, with psychological attitude never “ready-made.”** The living experience is like a trail of **endless and often paradoxical and fragmentary inner-monologues, interactively engaged upon the daily ever-changing situational structures, weaving through perception on loosely, but moving, interpretive constructs constantly seeking their meanings at the expense of the intricate relationship of the self and the other, which consists of individual experiences never completed till death.** I truly feel even Kelly would not have expected his personal constructs theory to go that far and

beyond, where constructs could easily be self-trapped within his theorizing parameter and stopped at the heat of Jelinek-Beckettian field of all out exploration.

What makes Beckett a unique torchlight to me in thinking of ordinary folks is his genuine focus on the interior of a living person, in view of the often uncontrollable exteriority, that is rarely taken on as seriously by anyone else in the same manner, not being analytical as psychologists or “problematic” as anticipated by social workers, but rather investigative through “self-generating speech act,” which is in essence the genuine Beckettian act of writing and dramaturgy. It is NOT paying any premeditated social lip service to the disillusioned. It is about the humanity of deep concern over the internal struggle of the human body-mind. In spite of his extensive existential examination of a person’s “vision” of life, the journey he did make, whole-heartedly, without any predicament of structure or preformatted route, in and out of a person’s mind throughout his novels, has in fact opened up a lot of insight in re-evaluating the missing humanity of any single human being. It is in those long and endless trails of inner monologues in Beckett’s characters and the eventual contrasting highly minimalistic short plays he once established that have me re-thought the multiple anchoring points in making contact with individuals in learning. Instead of masking the whole precept about how one should be learning or thinking in face of particular disciplines, it is best **to re-trail the map of each particular person and recover the tacit power possibly ignored or re-routed due to any potential general socialization or expectations ruthlessly imposed on one’s learning and growth development path, undermining the ever-shifting and ever-present focal awareness and attention, in Michael Polanyi’s terms<sup>11</sup>, of the *self* constantly under**

**construction in daily life. It is the unpredictability in Beckettian characters that lead me ask the nature of “remapping” in view of the seemingly untouchable “mapped world” laid down by the Authority, historians and sociologists. It is also in the theatre events as poetically reinvented by Beckett that allows me to make use of the economy of dramatic language and action to open up alternative routes for viewing the self-innovated metaphorical being that helps us re-embodiment the power of self expressions and responsibility of self actions.** Subsequently, the Beckettian trail has not only freed me up to re-chart the process of thinking, which is never linear in reality, in the course of treating my writing as the ultimate act of inner-monologues against outer experiences in search of the subjects as disclosed through the series of *irregular* thoughts in previous chapters; it has also opened up thoughts for freely adopting the **theatrical frameworks** as inspired by my own professional experiences in the field, beyond the Goffman dimension, into the profound interplay and discoveries of the power of self-innovation, especially with learning individuals in face of the *risk society* that often keeps them away from taking, or, in Giddens’ term, *manufacturing* to be precise, risks in life. Even the late Russian novelist and dramatist Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in view of the loss of will power among contemporaries in the West, once so reminded us, “Even biology knows that habitual extreme safety and well-being are not advantageous for a living organism.” (1978) Seemingly casual as so stated, the former Nobel Prize laureate had forewarned us the phenomenon of moral poverty in contemporary world. The Beckettian trail is not to de-spiritualize humanity through the emphasis of blind individual freedom. It sets out to further explore the effect of endless materialism upon human soul and to retrieve the likely spirituality beyond the unrestrained discipline of everyday life. *The “discipline” to re-acquire*

*may spring from the awareness of the self-in-action in the course of experience of moral growth.*

The considerably safe environment of theatrical and art settings would provide alternative routes to put on unusual perspectives through dramatized incidents and rituals unveiled in play<sup>12</sup>, believing that, subsequently, **the particular experiences through arts could re-empower the self-transformation of the body-mind and its possible imagination in view of potential real life risks.** It is about the potential discipline in the application of such Beckettian theatrical frames as repetitively researched on through my workshops and professional practices **to help individuals re-define their utter sense of self-being if they are to equip themselves in face of potential chronic problems arisen in the ever-transforming human conditions, or to enhance the better quality of life-to-be in a society losing its grip of channeling the individual impact onto community building.** It is, as Robert Landy (1982:63) puts it, “a dialectic between the actual, everyday reality and the imaginative” through play, with genuine reading of latter and intimate contact with the psycho-biological self, hoping to regain the missing insight of one’s physiological community within the body-mind long neglected or disintegrated in one’s upbringing<sup>13</sup>. It is also about the ability to retrieve the art of looking at simple people, objects or happening of daily events and the potential discipline to re-settle the self in the course of action research on renewable awareness and attention of the lived body through play. Simple, in the sense of ordinariness and voices possibly embodied within the perceivable physical being, means plain and inartificial, not ornate and free of deceit or imposed sophistication.

### ***From the phenomenology of an ad hoc event to experiential learning***

Take the seemingly casual incident of potential risks that took place in my life last night i.e. July 30, 2008, (or possibly any incident drifting in and out of our life daily) as an alternative entrance for thoughts. The incident, literally speaking, or to a certain degree, could have changed the whole aspect of living in me this very moment, subsequently the “turn” of thoughts in particular page of this paper, if the outcome, or the handling of the moment, totally got out of *self control* in the happening of the event:

It was about 11:00 p.m. I was taking my usual route walking back to my village home from the train station. I was carrying an exhausted body and yet very much absolved in my thinking mode: heads down, strolling along the bicycle trail without putting too much attention to things around. I apparently took it for granted that the home trail had always been safe. It was dark and quiet as usual. I passed the pedestrian subway, and then the pedestrian traffic lights and headed toward the final 300-meter bayou pavement. At one-third way into the dark trail, suddenly someone was tiptoeing closely behind me, within walking distance less than half a meter. I had no idea where and when that person suddenly popped up, with unusual footsteps trailing too close for any stranger. I was instantly alert and up charged for the abnormal pacing behind. I looked back. It was a young woman, about 20. Medium height. Long hair. She tried to look away when I turned around. Her left hand was carrying a pack of carton paper and the right hand two to three super-market plastic bags. They looked unusually heavy, carrying some rock-like substances. I asked the young woman if she was okay. She appeared odd and stepped aside a little bit. Not answering me. Then I discovered two more figures in the dark trailing behind, about 20 metres away, a couple of middle-aged man and woman, carrying the same things, i.e. pack of carton papers on the left and plastic bags on the right. I felt a bit fishy. They are apparently not locals. The young woman kept checking the two walking behind her, as if trying to get some signals or something. I was wide-awake and by instinct I asked her one more time if



everything was okay. She didn't answer and kept her close walking distance with me. I sensed something unusual and pulled out my cell phone faking a call. I spoke very loudly as to get the signal across that someone nearby would be joining me. There was tremendous tension between the four of us. I kept changing my pace and the young woman still maintained her distance until I suddenly stopped, looking back at all of them while talking to my "friend" on the phone regarding the particular location I was standing. The young woman wasn't sure anymore and she stopped abruptly. The two at the back also stopped and silently talked to one another. The young woman looked like waiting for some signal. I suddenly dashed off while keeping the "conversation" vividly *alive* at the same time. The young woman hesitated and didn't know what to do. By the time she was wondering whether to move ahead or not, I managed to turn into a corner trail and head back into the village. And fortunately they didn't follow...

This may very likely seem to be another totally "irrelevant" incident to the subject I have been writing. Nothing did happen so it seemed in spite of the potential unpredictable "risk" there was, if any *slightly different* or *re-angled* "actions" were to be taken on evolving parties to alter the outcome of events. Indeed, what if something did happen? How could we possibly account for what did and did not happen, in thought or in reality? Not mentioning the likely missing intention of the strangers, **an incident like that could consist of phenomenological implications often made one detour from original trail of thoughts and reinvent alternative options from intuitive power to cope with the sudden event.** In everyday life, how often would such ad hoc events, be it of dangerous notion or not, keep drifting in and out of one's daily normal pacing and disrupt the mental and physical state of beings? It is never "safe." It is in fact a wide-open adventure for us all without knowing it. And, most of all, such inconceivable event do play a significant part in daily living though such events are often neglected in *idealized* research settings. **In a risk society, when**

everyone tries to ensure the security of all the potential living moments, how much room is left for taking the daily little challenges, especially the likely risks-to-be based on the nature of actions and whatever decisions of those actions are based on? A particular scene like that above could be extracted into a Beckettian trail and become pages and pages of self study over the perception of one's particularly engaged situation, as if examining one's phenomenological attitude on the nature of normal living and the unusual time that would call for particular self judgment on the possible human actions to be. Or it could be turned literally the other way around and had the observation and narratives made over acute angles of perception that one would not normally proceed, so as to allow all figures, in the particular eye of the self-in-action, proliferate into existential fragments, with their moves, breaths, gestures, utterances, and any possibly related human enigma therein the event all suddenly jammed and mixedly reflected in the special searching mind, re-examining the absurdity of human conditions being trapped (among all four people) in that few long minutes of living moments abruptly activated by the sudden uplifting survival instinct. What were the "risks" to be exact? Probably no one could tell except the judgment call based on that few minutes of interacting moments. Yet, it is often through these particular and yet seemingly nonsensical living moments that often have our psyche fully exposed to the vulnerable and irrational self, touching base with the thread of human frenzy over potential fear and danger. Through the Beckettian trial, the incident could either be theatricalized into absurd fragments or re-structured in particular form to unveil the core of human actions through an intensive searching of words or a series of investigative speechless actions, which often

**touch upon the core of the human psyche beyond normal comprehension.** I am sure trails of past incidents related to “being followed” would eventually re-emerge at the back of my mind and become the hidden spine of my actions (which could be dated back from my childhood and teenage detective act to cover stories for my sister’s love affair to the schizoid-state of being when cruising in discriminating foreign streets and cities, which could be stretched to the years of emotional and social turbulence when experiencing some disturbing daily “trailing” exercised by total unknown strangers). As for the above-mentioned particular case happened in the approaching midnight hour, it was treated simply as if it was another ad hoc event unexpectedly taking place. Yet in the course of searching body-mind deeper and beyond, it pulled out a long trail of psychopathological hysteria which had once haunted my past and, possibly, the acute alertness and hypersensitivity to unusual human actions. It is indeed through the study of this particular self, as what I did extensively put forth in previous chapters, to allow me, both as the studied subject and the art-in-actions unraveled thereof, to touch base with the core of my investigation on experiential learning.

As a matter of fact, the interactive ritual in daily events in the past few weeks could have already played some significant parts in me in the course of working on this “concluding” chapter: the sudden discovery of thyroid cancer in my sister, the flu and the subsequent drowsiness I have been fighting the past two weeks, the sudden appearance of some missing friends, the abrupt separation of my stepsister and her husband (with a 8-year-old daughter added to the social data list of new member to the “single-parent family club”), a sudden call from an ex-student to ask for a loan, etc. Apparently, on the surface, or generally speaking, a particular piece of thesis writing

like the one I am hereby developing should never put such “ad hoc” events into normal writing stock. Yet, it is so often that the daily thinking mode is never what appears to be in an “academic” paper, which could often be trapped by preconceived format, structure and content by nature highly *distilled* or *academically stereotyped*. The danger of treading along such “academic” path could suddenly become the likely excuse of not including any “unacceptable” or “irrelevant” *non-institutionalized* ingredients. Yet, **in working with common folks, how could one possibly deny the existential phenomena of daily encounters and their effects on human body-mind? Any form of community performance should never be the ones as idealized or pre-configured by agreed presumption of what a community should be. The “greater community” could be inspired and derived of the perception of the potential harmony among interacting agents mostly within the self-operating “bio-physiological-community,”** not those skeptically conceived to cater for the “need” of the “mass,” which could mean simple grouping of individuals by ignoring their potential differentiations and needs. If we were to get beyond the detail of alternative thoughts and emotions in the midst of all these daily happenings, would the aspect of Beckettian monologues not re-emerge, disclosing a long train of either muddled, interlocking or even at times incoherent inner murmuring? In encountering all the daily ever-changing living phenomena, one can rarely be solely philosophical or just being there to try the best out of one’s knowledge to address or ignore or pretend to acknowledge the happenings and events as drifted by. **It is so often that such invisible and inaudible inner-monologues in our body-mind has been internally guiding our way in and out of daily existence. It is not altogether right to summon such events to yet another *special corner* of categorization or**

**compartmentalization of knowledge by empirical reduction, discarding them as *institutionally unacceptable* materials in the sociological field of “non-literary” basis.**

Polanyi (1970) did share with us the danger of “these increasingly levels of experience continue[d] to be reductively undercut by a positivistic empiricism,” as if “the self-destructive commitment to ultimate lucidity.” As he stressed that we often “rely not only on the several aspects of an object as [we] attend from these to a coherent view of the whole; [we] also rely on body with its multiple and complex levels of functioning as [we] perceive things away from body in the external world.” (Ibid, 88-94) Introducing the above ad hoc incident is by no means to undercut the human experience into “bits and pieces scattered about in random meaninglessness” (Ibid.) or to focus only on “particulars” without comprehending the joint meaning of the living whole. As Bohm did suspect, “the ground of intelligence must be in the undetermined and unknown flux, that is also the ground of all definable forms of matter...[where] mind and matter are abstractions from the universal flux and that both are to be regarded as different and relatively autonomous orders within the one whole movement.” (1980:67-8) Likewise, **I am seeing such *particulars* as the inescapable part of the whole, like a particular fragmentary plane of vision in a cubismic painting where the vision of the artist is making acute examination by depicting a particular subject from a multitude of viewpoints, hoping to achieve better representation of the subject in a context of interpenetrating planes**, which, at a distance, echo Polanyi’s analysis on the human activity of subsidiary and focal awareness:

I look at my hand, another face, or a machine. I recognize its area by its enclosed contours, by the relation between the object itself and its background within my field of vision. While I attend to the object itself I am relying on multiple clues -shapes, colors, extensions, perhaps in changing relations to each other. But I do not focus directly on each aspect of the object in its field. I have awareness of many of these aspects of the whole. (Polanyi, 1980)

The Beckettian trail is like a continuous journey unveiling such subsidiary actions and ever-shifting focal awareness on the self and the interactiveness with objects and events passing by. In entering a classroom or a workshop, it seems so natural that we would often unrealistically anticipate “equal attention” from the participating co-learners. Yet, that is often too ideal and never happens in real life. Who would have thought among the group each would have the same identical frame of mind, carrying the same expectation and energy in the process of learning? Of course, many teachers and social workers I collaborated with would feel that it is the participants’ responsibility to be “attentive,” as if engaged in a totalitarian environment where the “speaker” should be “respected” by ground rule. Yet, as for interactive learning, the living situation is never as “safe” or “well-conditioned.” It is precisely the likely differences carrying in each frame of the bodily systems consist of ad hoc events that could be as disturbing or of potential danger as the incident that took place in me as shared above. My thoughts before the incident was disturbed and never followed through with where I stopped afterward. The alertness had speeded up the bodily adrenalin and upheld the presumed normalcy of being. Likewise, no one can possibly tell straight away what has happened to the student-participants the moment they walk into a workshop. It is so often we would exclude such possibility of “abnormality” and

proceed to the planned agenda of that particular session. It is as if: that is how we normally take life the way as *granted!* So is the exercise of writing where all structures and formats could be taken for granted as pre-requisite to understanding. Yet in real life, things never take shape as planned or charted. So is thinking! In other words, **in the course of “remapping,” it is vital to stay alert for the ever-changing directions of emotions and shapes of thoughts among individuals and allow them to affect us in the course of making adjustments to the changing course of learning. Looking into the *mapped* does require special sensitivity to listen and watch attentively to details never quite “normal” or “sound” as regularly anticipated. The human dimension is never static nor geometrically accurately represented. It is often dynamic and interactive, or boring and non-active at times, moving or dwelling in multi-dimensional spacetime, with objects, regions, and themes totally consisting of elements utterly individualized.** Any attempt in “regulating” such individual exercises would easily fall back into being the pre-contextualized realm of meditating *acceptable* behavior, with mapping cartographically charted to the taste of establishment only.

**Taking the Beckettian trial means allowing one to investigate deeply into individual rationale that is both unpredictable and wide open, with orientations kept swaying to and fro from different directions, based on particular experiences as charted along the progress of daily events floating from one moment into another. The “depth” could begin with a sigh or a nod of the head. It could also intercept the likely normal conversation and suddenly fall beyond one’s apprehension at times, with emotions and wonderings that cut deep into the holes**

**of semantics and exclamations cast out of intuitive forces. The wavelength in thoughts could be traveling in a speed not measurable by common scale or expressed in a multiple mapping scheme in a ratio unit not corresponding to regular search engine. It is always operating in the actor-adjustable scale, scrolling down maps never physically materialized. Thus, it is a process to keep searching, for the right kind of word space, to denote the rhythm and tempo appropriately to the particular cartogram of one's breath, just like what Beckett expressed in his attitude in writing:**

All this business of a labour to accomplish before I can end the words to say; "a truth to recover in order to say it before I can handle an imposed task, once known, long neglected, finally forgotten; to perform, before I can be done, done with speaking, done with listening, I invented it all in a hope that it will console me, help me to go on, allow me to think of myself as someone on the road moving between a beginning and an end, gaining ground, losing ground, getting lost, but somehow in the long run making headway, all lies, I've nothing to do, say nothing in particular, I have to speak whatever that means." <sup>14</sup>

To me, it echoes the innermost utterance of many ordinary folks, only that their voices are rarely recognized or well represented, or, as Amedeo Giorgi (1990) put it, often appropriated without the "disciplined thought." Beckett had literally laid them all down on paper and superimposed them into his meticulously detailed monologues, a series of self-searching on the consciousness and attention of being in the road of the living. It is in this spirit I have hereby moved onto this final chapter and paragraphs, seeking to look into the "remapping" I put forth on the self and the synthesized actions mapped and derived thereof. It is not just the philosophical grounding I have been



taking on from Beckett; **it is the fundamental approach and application for creative individual works, i.e. the ability to validate the potential depth and communication implication between/behind individual utterances and seemingly non-actions, be they verbal or non-verbal. Most important of all, it is vital to acknowledge the hidden voices in between pauses and silences in the course of putting forth an action, i.e. echolocating specific action** (as previously examined in Chapter 4), **and explore alternatives to transform them into positive emotional energy that could help re-activate the innovative self through daily living events.** It is all based on deep intention to better understand, and subsequently better connection to, the human condition conveyed through these acute Beckettian observations, not the pessimistic nor the potentially annihilatic artistic root projected within Beckett's work but his insightful multiple intersecting layers in the course of examining the enigmatic voices within an individual, through which allow the social workers, teachers, and co-participants (including the non-participants at times) the needed expandable and imaginative space to recover from the potential living vacuum in the self grown habitually stagnant due to the prefabricated social forestructure. I would hereby rounded up the potential transformation of Beckettian trail into the following summary of theatrical routes in arts for building community performance. They are some important alternatives for experiential learning of an individual body-mind, with echoing findings based on the overall observations and experiences learnt from creative and self-innovative workshops held in the span of 10 years working with young people, social workers, teachers and parents. In the experiences of working with these workshop participants, **the design of my workshops with multiple use of different art forms are: first, to cultivate separate distinguished experiences for**

**the body-mind based on differences among individuals; second, to make good use of the eventually mixed-art forms accordingly to modulate potential holistic training of the body-mind, which would echo the ultimate perception of community performance.** It is not the superficial technical aspects of the individual art form that calls for special attention; it is the special characteristics of each particular art form that allow participants to open up different aspects of the performing body-mind, which, subsequently, help build up some progressive experiences after a continuity of interactive play between past experiences and devising activities in art and theatrical frameworks, with focuses inter-shifting from *here and now* situation to the changing circumstances that individuals would be *in-taking* and *outputting* co-relating stories, emotions, energy, sharing, and viewpoints likely developed in the course of art-in-action. As Dewey emphasized in his book *Experience and Education* (1997[1938]) that the subjective quality of learners' experiences and the necessity of understanding such experiences is vital to the design of educational activities if it were to liberate such experiences to better performances in the community. The following are the essential aspects of holding *remapping exercises* for the betterment of the innovative self and community building through discovery of individual works and their possible distinctive ensemble nature, which are insight sprung from experiences I have accumulated through 10-year continuous innovative workshop encounters and deep reflection of theatre practice.

***Beyond the dilemma of (re-)mapping along cross disciplinary paths...***

If the design of computing technology is very much springing from the inspiration of the operation of the body-mind, when one day the given *data* and the list of

*preinstalled instructions* between a computer and a human body-mind are compatible with one another, the act of mapping the body-mind would be entering a whole new realm of reality, seemingly not totally beyond our reaches, with object thinking (even human genes are objectified for experimentation) in pace and logic of development surpassing even the *advancement* of the computing ideas itself. Until then, the act of (re-)mapping of a common body-mind would become simply the job of a common technician, likely a programmed robot, all charted in a post-human factory<sup>15</sup>. Though it is not the work I can possibly incorporate in this paper, it has already become, and in fact already *IS*, a part of the reality that has exerted tremendous impact on human body-mind. **(Re-)Mapping the individual body-mind would mean some fundamental understanding of the complications we are facing day in and day out when the operation of daily commodities is very much under-going the “autonomy” of on-going influence of ever-transforming philosophies where the sociology, culture, or *production*, of intellectual life is woven, like a matrix of beliefs and integrating, or conflicting, theories and paradox.** Not mentioning the complexities of begetting ideas, if I were to touch base with the phenomena observed from ordinary folks and daily events, there are pounding signs and behavior that has been alerting us all, only with the often falling behind mindset or neglecting mentality in education that fail to keep pace with the ever-conflicting or repudiating social constructions, deconstructions and overlapping of ideas and technological developments. It is inescapably skeptic in reflexivity among ordinary folks the sets of boundaries re-categorizing radically in daily discourse, with systems, from micro- to macro-encounters, no longer capable to contain or embrace the paradox of the ever-expanding (inwardly and outwardly speaking) human ideas and scope of activities

(which, often in exploitative nature, are under the crux of capitalistic expansionism). In recent years of working with students and participants as co-learners in classrooms and workshops, I have been witnessing such physical phenomena that deserves special attention in view of the “map” of the active body-mind living in such particular age and time.

***Mapping* is by nature like working as a cartographer, investigating not only the surface but also the multi-dimensional space of the body-mind, which would mean combining multiple disciplines from science, aesthetics, moral ethics, history, philosophy, culture, sociology, psychology and also technical ability to recreate a balanced and contemplable medium to open up alternative paths for new actions that are communicable to others.** *Maps* communicate seemingly invisible spatial information by transforming specific readings and measurement into something visible. In contemporary digital world, *interactiveness* is the key that allows others to participate in the fields, actions and pictures thereof with particular “references,” “themes” and “location systems” geographically illustrated. The landscape of the body-mind requires special cartography, with the needed “critical consciousness”<sup>16</sup> as Freire (2005) repetitively emphasized. **The act of (re-)mapping does not only involve studying the “magnetic devices” in one’s bio-chemical bodily systems; it also requires a special *compass* for multiple readings of the bodily behavior and psyche operated along side the interwoven *longitude* and *latitude* of daily images that are often rooted all the way back in time and history, especially the landmarks of being oppressed and leaving the learners dumbfounded with loads of obstacles.** Thus, a special *quadrant* to help navigate the altitude of learning is

important in articulating the particular angles a learner has been adopting in viewing the world around; at time even a *vernier-scale*-like fine observation and measurement would be called for on any “objects” that may require (re-)alignment on particularity left unattended among the needed, especially when personal humility and confidence are at stake resulted from acts of oppressors. Such mapping instruments should be made available to all learners, where to each of his/her mapping, it may call for a distinct “quadrant” or “vernier scale” that could fit to the particularity of an individual and the world he or she lives in. Therefore, the previous four chapters were in a way one of the *re-mapping* processes I have taken on in re-orienting myself as I did set forth onto specific art-based community programs designed for ordinary folks who are seeking alternatives beyond ordinary thinking/working habits. They are **theatricalized frameworks to unveil the paths that learners have once re-inspired me to walk back onto my own particular contours of terrain, relief, or elevation of my own making**. Being each of his/her own mapmaker of life, seeing how others once mapped one’s life would be essential to re-develop any alternative keys to any potentially prescribed hierarchy of knowledge, beliefs, moral codes and patterns of thought formation generated by social figures on the ground of “centrality,” “closed forms” and “differentiation” rarely articulated by the Authority. The act of (re-)mapping, not tracing, is aiming at restoring individual strength and resources, not “focusing on perceptions of clients’ problems and deficits” like the professional human service workers often do (Saleebey, 1997). To Deleuze and Guattari, “what distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map [...] constructs the unconscious [that] it fosters connections between the field, the removal of blockages on bodies without organs, the maximum

opening of bodies onto a plane of consistency.” (1987: 12) **The “elements” of each map should therefore be calling for particular orders that correspond to the desired patterns or textures to be incorporated into the specific echolocation of one’s lived experience, i.e. every learning experience should incorporate “a spirit of mutual learning and genuine partnership” (Ibid.). It would be a life-long on-going process of contouring along the lines of formation throughout one’s physio-biological *gradients* of daily living, with particular “temperature,” “pressure” and “distances” ascending or descending into one’s vision of community wholeness within the self.**

Here below is **“a brief summary report on remapping exercises”** based on the creative workshops I held for the past ten years, **there are five key areas in employing theatre/arts as vehicle for experiential learning, with contexts inspired by Beckettian trail and phenomenal discoveries thereof, operating with the basic practice principles that echoes Karen Healy’s, i.e. “adopt an optimistic attitude; focus on primarily on [individual] assets; [treat all learners as collaborators]; work towards the long-term empowerment of [participants] and create [the needed sense of] community.” (2005: 158-165)** The work does echo an ideology of *asset approach* (Ibid, 165) that corresponds to the valued community of Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) that is based on the capacity and renewable and revitalizable strengths of “local residents,” i.e. participants and learners of my workshops:

1. **Creative exploration on multiple amplification of individual voices (including silent voices):** Through the employment of multiple art forms in innovative workshop, including *dance, drumming, theatre and puppetry, videography and photography, visual arts (installation, calligraphy and painting), poetry and songwriting workshops*, the designated team of teachers/workshop facilitators are to work together through close collaboration<sup>17</sup> to examine the alternative affect from different processes of thinking and experiences in the process of art making, which would, subsequently, provide an important learning environment for developing innate multiple intelligence and insight from unsung stories and tacit knowledge buried within the body-mind. Contrary to the Hong Kong government's promotion of "one art for life," it is an alternative route of multiple arts penetration of the body-mind that allows individual to slip in and out of one's habitual mode of thinking and form of actions in order to re-discover alternative journey in the building of community performance thereafter. **It is not about art training or training artists. It is about the alternative use of art in building self-innovation among individuals so as to open up multiple routes for expressions and amplification of the unsung voices buried deep in the body-mind, and subsequently, with great hope, to acquire some fundamental critical consciousness of how the reality has been casting its effect on the self.** As Freire put it, these multiple arts based approach workshops are projects designed "to move from naïveté to a critical attitude." (2005[1974]: 38-9)

***Multiple Arts Approach:*** As the different art forms specially depicted do play important roles in sculpturing the shape, texture and dimension of the participants'

experience of the interactive self, distantly echoing the *multiple intelligence theory* advocated by Howard Gardner<sup>18</sup>. It is not art in education as “pedagogised” or formulated by traditional school curriculum. **It is to treat art-in-action as a critical journey of re-discovering the innovative self, allowing participants to “make memory,” “address issues of personal, social, cultural and political concern,” using multiple art approach to “foster a creative thinking environment”** (Addison & Burgess, 2005:127-137) **in which participants can respond to specific experiences of the living body. It should be valued as “a dialectical relationship in which practical and critical mutually inform the other, where critical ideas are given visual form and where visual form provides impetus for more refined critical practice, and so on.”** (Atkinson & Dash, 2005:xii) The following phenomena of experiences have been observed among participants (including workshop tutors and participating social workers) in the course of running the series of workshop events throughout the years from 1999 to 2008, which are in fact the basis of materials I had alternatively used and reflected through transferring and re-juxtaposing the experiences through theatrical play of my own stories in previous chapters:

### ***Dance***

It is not about teaching one how to attain the required shape of the body or the gracefulness of bodily movement or particular technique training called for professionals of respective dance genres. It is about learning the fundamentals of the natural (internal and external) body-in-motion/body-in-non-motion through dance and play, from contact of the skin<sup>19</sup> to the deep of the body and soul<sup>20</sup>. **Its goal is to retrieve the innate sense of bodily rhythm, motions and the ability of centering and raying, through which an individual recovers from the missing physical and kinetic intelligence chipped away in years of urban living.** As the body never lies



(best amplified and projected in the *performing body* of athletes), through the sense and form of movement revealed by *dancing* participants, the body often tells us a lot of stories about the self-image, traces of mental and physical blocks, and the will to overcome such obstacles in the course of timely play.<sup>21</sup> **Through specific physicalization of internal emotions and feelings refined by the use of props, music and particular space formation, the participating body is often amplifying a corpus of complicated psyche intimately connected with perceptions never deciphered.** In the course of extensive dance play, there are some important phenomena emerging through the learning and investigating body through an extensive period of workout<sup>22</sup>:

- *There are some significant improvements on verbal expression, especially the ones who used to be shy and timid;*
- *There are signs of growing awareness of the self image and progressive building of will and energy (internally and externally speaking) in experiencing better feelings about the self in the course of physical engagement in dance exercises;*
- *There are substantial buildup on the wishes of nurturing alternative experiences of the self and growing determination in expanding personal boundary through the moving body;*
- *A majority of participants are positive and keen on the discovery of alternative routes to tell one's stories, especially members who prefer to touch deep onto one's past emotions without using a single word;*
- *There are encouraging signs of growing sensitivity in non-verbal expressions/observations and building up of confidence in the discovery of tacit power linked with one's physical self;*
- *There are increasing curiosity on the development of particular interest on creating individual identity through the transformative body;*
- *There are igniting phenomena in better reflection of the interactive self when the body is re-activated through interactive movements among participants;*
- *It has repetitively been showing some significances in the process of unleashing the internal bodily tension and uncomfortable feelings accumulated not only from the in and out daily encounters but also past premeditated emotions and stress in*

*family and social sectors in the course of dancing, i.e. alternative story telling through articulate movement of the body;*

- *Some strong non-verbal communications among participants have been established, which play an important part in strengthening the ability to give and take between one another and the will to stretch on the needed space for subjectivity.*

**Setback:** It has always been a major obstacle for dance teacher *and* participants, whom often focus solely on techniques, to go beyond the formation of the human psyche picked up through premeditated experiences. When the ruling class of contemporary society has mostly compartmentalized knowledge into specific fields of studies<sup>23</sup> (even within “the dance department,” there are so many different schools advocating on specific style and form of dance), it is not easy for dance teacher to retrain his/her body-mind in coping with specific nature of the workshop, i.e. **to work closely with the physical phenomenon unveiled through each individual body and invent alternative games or methods to allow each participant to develop his/her own “goal” through the bodily exercises.** The irony is: even vocational dance training has lost the fundamental touches on the way to unfold the human emotions and desire to dance. Techniques prescribed by “great masters” have become the *set* menu, which, subsequently, draw up a lot of taboos on re-patterning movements, cutting short its natural deepening contact with the human spirit. Under the grand umbrella of training professionals, a lot of the so-called “dance” training has mainly been shifting its focus on “techniques” rather than the understanding of an alternative form of human expressions. Thus, it is not surprising to see so many social workers and facilitators treating dance to be a very “technical” area that relies on the *expertised training* hosted by “professional dancer.” All of a sudden, the whole body matter becomes something quite alienated to the social work profession, leaving little room for imagination and

true collaboration. Subsequently, they would choose to sideline themselves without truly validate the most needed observations on the subtle expressions, energy projection and quality of articulation through the moving bodies and souls, which are in fact very important value-building blocks for retrieving participants' self esteem and with potentials empowering the self with alternative imagination through physical discoveries of the *dancing* body.

### ***Drumming***

Again, it is not about music training. **It is about the recovery of natural rhythmic spirit in living being**, inspired by the Chinese *Daiko* and the Japanese *Taiko* where it was being used for ritualistic play at festivals or/and to motivate troops in marching pace back in the old days. **When modern technology has been playing a significant role in daily living, the human body, especially the younger generation, has often become passive, with diminishing motoring skill and failing bodily awareness of natural impulses, as if physically tied up to the tune of technological advancement rather than exercising the true nature of beats and rhythms long installed in the bodily systems, including breathing, pacing, heartbeat, and pulsation.** Barbara Crowe of Arizona State University states a list of principles to explain the benefit of group drumming: (1) it is innate for human responding to rhythm. Drumming activities could function to motivate people of all ages; (2) the lack of ethnic and cultural boundaries makes drumming truly fun and positive for a wide variety of people; (3) it activates the motor skills of participants as well as sustaining physical activity and relaxation; (4) it helps create a strong sense of group identity and a feeling of belonging through sustained period of repetitive beats; (5) it doesn't require previous experience and is accessible to all. (Crowe, Reuer, & Bernstein, 1999) There are also significant scientific findings that "neuroendocrine and immunologic

alterations were found in drumming subjects.” (Bittman, Berk, Felten, Westengard, Simonton, Pappas & Ninehouser, 2001) Other says drumming does not only help “boost the immune system,” it also “helps control chronic pain, reduces tension, anxiety, and stress”; it also “produces deeper self-awareness by inducing synchronous brain activity” (Drake, 2006) Instead of saying drumming consists of therapeutic nature, I would prefer to use it as **a strategy of adopting the ancient human rituals to revitalize the ailing human spirit among contemporaries and cultivate a deeper sense of collective consciousness.** The workshop was named *Drumming Voices*, partially due to the emphasis of the missing drumming spirit in contemporary living. It is to make good use of drumming and its dynamic beats to activate the frailty physique, seeking to re-establish the missing strength of the self, rejuvenating the spirit being buried by *melancholy*<sup>24</sup> (Burton, 1621) or habitual dwellings, or, in Bourdieu’s term, *habitus*<sup>25</sup> (Bourdieu, 1977; Maton, 2008), that have long been overshadowing the social makeup of individual participants, including the participating social workers, teachers and parents. Drumming would mean re-setting the living pace of the body-mind. The participants have to make their own drumsticks and to improvise drums made out of empty water tank, oil tank, plastic water buckets and found objects, an idea inspired by the city percussionists and physical theatre group STOMP<sup>26</sup>. They have also to re-tune their ears to specific pitch and quality of sound produced by “ordinary objects,” creating their own orchestration of mixed media percussions. Before such, running and performing in the streets have been a great part of the warm-up and training exercises<sup>27</sup>. The experiential learning had been quite phenomenal among young participants:

- *In the course of playing, there are significant signs seeing participants bit by bit retrieving the missing will power and relative inner strength behind running and drumming*<sup>28</sup>;

- *It is quite apparent that the participating body has been developing stronger sense of community through spiritual play of drumming after prolonged and persisting disciplinary rolling,<sup>29</sup> especially when the exercises are being carried out in open streets<sup>30</sup>;*
- *It has turned out to be a unique process to progressively re-sensitize the listening of the ear and germinate new discovery of the inner tranquility of the body-mind in the process of arriving at a holistic performance;*
- *The self-inventing sound of drumming on ordinary objects and particular spacing of instruments helps develop imaginary spirit<sup>31</sup>;*
- *As the physical dimension of music in drumming never lies, i.e. it simply displays the spirit as played, it has proven to be an effective vehicle in discovering the limitation of individual play in contrast to the significant sense of energy and will power behind effective ensemble works;*
- *The self-disciplined orchestration helps strengthen the self awareness of internal struggles in the course of confronting the weakening body and the warring mind;*
- *It shows that participants are likely strengthening the power of reflections in the process of identifying tiny details of variation in rhythm and sound orchestrated by co-participants;*
- *There are significant signs to see community performance at work when the playing is totally built from self-discipline<sup>32</sup> and cross-imposed interactive group cohesion, especially when everyone has his/her chance to play the lead, regardless of embedded strength or weaknesses, through composition developed based on democratic settings<sup>33</sup>.*

**Setback:** There are tremendous struggles among participants to learn to accept the existence of differences, especially on matter of variation in individual excellence. Many workshop tutors and social workers would easily turn into impatient participating bodies, quickly trying to “resolve problems” by allowing the team to give up certain group rationale or imaginary goal. The paradox is that many are being too task oriented on one hand and not accepting the imperfect world on the other. The self-generating discipline is in fact very critical if we are to develop the body-mind the

needed critical and self-reflective perspectives in the course of drumming. It is so often that the supposedly “teacher” would fall into playing the leader and take charge of the orchestration solely to drive at an anticipating result, which takes away some important learning experiences in the group when trying to drill themselves out of unforeseen chaos or habitual resignation at play. It is very often some workshop tutors would overlook the significance of chaos and the importance of process in seeking alternatives to handling them among individuals. The biggest enemy is always the prevailing management perception of TIME, if only if everyone is courageous enough to learn to accept failure, imperfection, boredom and the lack of communal responsibility as part of the reality play. The challenge to resolve such human enigma would take time and patience. When transcendental learning is becoming scarce these days, a majority of participants, including social workers and tutors, would get impatient too easily under the influence of economic driven society. Social workers tend to neglect the potential significances behind play since they are often masked with their “professional mode of counseling based practice” and pay little attention to “irrelevant art play.” (I would stress that it is important not to label participants as “clients” or “service users.” It is often under such labeling that participants would no longer see themselves as equal learners or players among the group.) Some social workers would simply borrow direct strategies from problem-solving approaches into the playing and fail to deal with “entrenched and complex issues” among participants or “leave little room for individual doubt or complaints.” (Kanter, 1983) Consequently, the particular “human condition” at drumming would be disregarded as something “outside the scope of professional work,” leaving the responsibility to the “music teacher.” Likewise, the “music teacher” would often focus only on the “music” played, but rarely the “music from within.” Some major re-training would be necessary if such cross-disciplinary workshops are to be engaged.<sup>34</sup>

### *Theatre/puppetry*

It is not about putting on theatrical performances for shows. It is about **the use of theatre/puppetry as vehicle to set up educational frameworks for the training of the body-mind in developing viewpoints and narrativity of the self. The focus would be on both the making and breaking of narrative frameworks to rebuild the sense of selfhood and its ultimate relation to the community.** It is not solely about the “purity,” “re-arrangement” and “transformation” of individual performance as Goffman (1986:124-7) once questioned; **it is through the “reorganization” of established frameworks that one re-examines the “keyings and fabrications”** (Ibid, 156-165) **once embedded in daily events and individual habits, through which one seeks alternative routes for self-innovation and re-interpretation of the self stories.** In the extensive use of theatrical frameworks, including the special experiences in making of individual puppet for narratives, in the workshops, there are significant (though argumentative at times) phenomena arisen and some unusual “out-of-frame activity” (Ibid, 201-246) signifying the acute adjustment of the participants in their perception of the self in the course of various routes and forms of story telling. Throughout the workshops, the facilitators and artists must bear in mind that they should NOT impose their own professional views of aesthetics but rather treat the events as part of aesthetic education. Most of all, the cliché-ridden examples copied from the mass media as often depicted by participants should be specially noted so as to bring up the awareness of the necessary creative expressions and the importance of experimentation<sup>35</sup>:

- *Through alternative role plays and cross impersonating self-made puppets, many participants have discovered some degree of insight on alternative interpretations of personal encounters;*

- *In the course of directing “scene work,” some participants begin to unveil multiple routes in entering one’s stories either from alternative narratives or diversified viewpoints from the perception of alter ego mirrored by other performers;*
- *There are also some growing awareness among some participants in the freedom not to hang onto premeditated beliefs and explore alternative viewpoints on things and matter once pre-structured by others;*
- *There are at times significant signs of temporary relief from past burdens and the change within the body-mind at times in the course of discovering new experiences through play;*
- *There are interesting phenomena among participants in the concretization of the self-image through puppet making and its operation;*
- *It proves to be an important process to create a particular stage for performance, especially when seeing the joy of self-empowerment illuminated in the course of self presentation and group works;*
- *The freely adoption of theatre play has played significant role in the participants’ effort in making better and more effective contact and sharing among friends, parents, relatives and teachers;*
- *There are improvements in discovering alternative space, other than the habitual living space, through re-anchoring one’s perception, either by building specific route(s) with the use of props and supporting casts or shifting focus by utilizing the different sense of space in and out of the body-mind;*
- *There are signs of improvements on the ability to incorporate ordinary things and ad hoc events in the course of transforming one’s adventure into the imaging of the self and other under particular situations as depicted accordingly;*
- *There are progressive improvements on the identifying paths of acquiring positive experiences to counter off the negative experiences dominating the premeditated self;*
- *There are constant discoveries of “the vulnerabilities of experience” (Ibid, 439-495) when the self is being provoked by differences in conflicting viewpoints that often reveal the fragility of the unbecoming self;*
- *There are growing curiosity and significant innate passion in looking for physical and spiritual reinforcement of the inner self to recover the power of “centering the head” for “clarity of vision” (Ginnis, 1998);*



- *The diversification of formats from verbal to non-verbal presentation of the self does allow participants to expand their cognitive activities and capacity of observation with a range expanding from the real to the abstract.*

**Setback:** Same as dance tutors: many “dramatists,” “acting coaches” or “professional puppeteers” would focus solely on the “drama” and “techniques” instead of the human body and psyche unfolding through actions displayed by participants. The comments and observations would easily fall into professional traps without truly making the needed adjustment to foster alternative narrativity for educating the innovative self-at-work. Again, it has so much to do with the professional boundaries preset by these “professionals.” Ironically, many participating social workers would respond on the other side of “professions” – focusing mainly on the social boundaries set by “social work manifesto” without observing the body-mind-in-motion triggered by theatrical frameworks. The “assessment” and “diagnosis” would often fall into superficial professional ethics of protection in the name of “confidentiality,” an area that many social workers constantly find its challenge in dramatized personal stories. The “management” of intervention on “client’s personal issues” and professional jargons apprehended without the needed flexibility has often become the major disturbances on the performing floor, especially when such “practices” are based on discourse<sup>36</sup> rather than practical findings. The reasons behind such are the lack of focus and concern over participants’ lives. Most of all, as Healy identified, “some social workers, very much alien to *postmodern practice approach*, fail to separate the person from the “problem” and leave little room for any self re-constructs possible.” (2005:206-209) As a result, due to the over-protection and the severe undermining of the participants’ reconnecting/disclosing the self at play, their failure in understanding the exploration of the self through *dramatic* action would often jeopardize the process

of utilizing such theatrical frameworks as educational platform. **Without the needed cross-disciplinary understanding from both fields, it would be impossible to allow individuals to freely make good use of the theatricalized educational frameworks in search of better performance of the self in the community.** Apparently, these are the typical phenomenon for social workers in view of difficult situation of multiple and competing truth claims (Taylor and White, 2000) often possible in theatrical frameworks.

### ***Videography/Photography***

They are also areas that remain to be focused mostly on vocational training<sup>37</sup>, especially videography. It is a heavily missing area in general education, especially when image making has long become part of daily living ever since TV and Internet was introduced to general households. Ever since the invention of photography and the moving pictures being popularized by the film industry, the specific visual thinking and associative logic generated by visual impact of photographic images and editing of moving images have long infiltrated the mindset of many ordinary folks. With the open access of Internet channels for photo upload and video display, echoing the mass' availability of digital video camera and phone camera in recent years, it is an emerging social phenomenon of the over-whelming domination of image-based computer-generated information, with frame of logic often neglected by ordinary consumers, with body-mind, paradoxically, being bombarded by the monstrosity of mass delivery of commercial oriented images. The educational studies and use of videography and photography are something that deserves immediate attention. As *Educause Connect*<sup>38</sup> suggests, inspired by the extensive use of Internet in the recent US presidential election campaign, the use of video (and possibly videogames) for education can be fully explored in many aspects.<sup>39</sup> While many scientific researches

also indicate that using video in the classroom improves learning<sup>40</sup>, the use of video often remains to be the “tool for teachers” rather than creative and exploratory tools for learners. As for videogames, as suggested by James Newman (2004:3-7), they are essentially a forgotten medium and often ignored by academics for seeing it only as “children’s medium” and “mere trifles – low art – carrying none of the weight, gravitas or credibility of more traditional media,” in spite of, ironically, the growing size of the industry and the proven popularity of human-computer interaction.<sup>41</sup> **When many participants have long been open to image logic through comics and video games, the daily manufacturing of images could be re-examined and transferred to further investigate the role of visual thinking in daily events. Thus, the use of videography and photography in workshops has been focusing on the following parameters: (1) discovery of differences in individual viewpoints; (2) articulation of specific observations in daily events; (3) alternative substitute for text-based education tool; (4) diagnosis of the manufacturing of daily images in the media; (5) subjective investigation of specific objects/space/characters; (6) the abstract play of time and space in perception and storytelling; (7) alternative tool for the quiet observers.** Some unusual phenomena have been displayed from participants and tutors:

- *It has repetitively proven to be an effective tool for unfolding unsung stories from quiet or passive participants<sup>42</sup>;*
- *The works of participants have also unveiled aspects of multiple focuses and thinking logic on particular events and stories;*
- *It also suggests that image making is prevailing to get closer to the mindset of participants who does not enjoy writing;*
- *There are significant signs to see videography and photography as alternative access to support development of argument by particular display of aesthetics and visual juxtaposition on human perception of personal stories that are often dismissed by academicians and the text-based logic building Authority;*

- *It has indeed been effectively serving as a powerful bridge to develop the art of seeing;*
- *It helps develop alternative viewing to recognize the growing impact of social influence generated by images displayed in the media;*
- *It also opens better routes for articulation or comprehension of a situation often jeopardized by the preconditioned syllabus-oriented academic frameworks;*
- *The operation of such quiet tools has been allowing sudden upsurge of life energy, including curiosity and passion, often misplaced or hidden in daily events when the language behind image making seems a lot more intimate, immediate and relevant to daily path of visual thinking, something very familiar to the innate ability of associative thinking long germinated in childhood;*
- *Through special editing of images that reminisces the editing of thinking process, it helps participants multiply their ability to generate alternative viewpoints from different characters involved in specific situation(s).*

**Setback:** Due to the lack of training in image analogy in daily education, a lot of comments made by participants on moving images and logic of montage often tends to be elementary, or something heavily influenced by the images generated by mass media or those prescribed by the Authority. Many teachers and social workers, mostly dominated by text-based education, tend to easily treat moving images as “sheer entertainment” or “irrelevant materials” for preparing the mind to understand the fundamental operation of the social system, which is still prevailed by adopting the text-based examination oriented educational frameworks.<sup>43</sup> Thus, it is so often not putting enough attention to the logic behind the making and interpretation of images. Specialized video artists and photographers would also fall into their own professional traps of advice mostly technically driven without opening up the political, social and cultural roots in image making. When “the study of cinema” is being seen as something that has nothing to do with a “good education” and not “practical” enough to offer professional insight in the well being of the self, discussions over still and

moving imaging would often end up to be some superficial commentaries on the “success/failure” of “performances,” or some “celebrity-bounded” ideas never truly relevant to daily living. Again, in applying the use of videography, many social workers have again been rigidly mentally blocked by the beliefs of “confidentiality” play with bluntly responsibility-bound and theory-based management scheme of form filling to break participants away from implementing the effective use of videography in storytelling<sup>44</sup>. There are signs of severe paradox in the conflicts of field works and theories built on generalized information. Subsequently, both young workers and “experienced” *bureaucratized* supervisors are easily trapped by “management practice” quite opposed to the professional code of practice, i.e. to avoid generalization when treating individual situations that are supposedly unique and idiosyncratic. Most of all, when the nature of social work is often being sub-divided into specialized settings or practicing fields, many would easily neglect the needed observations of emotional and physical details unveiled by the bodily systems in art play and fail to read them as something that could be valued as potential sociological path in designing better social services instead of excluded as *irrelevant* field studies.

### ***Installation/Calligraphy/Painting***

These are multiple art applications on rebuilding the world of self-discovery and self-innovation through the use of hands and its deeply embedded connections to the heart and senses. When everyone has to limit his/her story telling and emotional expressions through text-based media or technological-based digital gadgets, installation becomes an important alternative **in physicalized expressions by reformulating the socialization of self-invented symbols and metaphors through ordinarily found objects, with specific contexts that help re-narrate stories of the lived body.** Just when many would prefer to think that art requires “special skills,” the art of play

innately sown in human nature is often being neglected. It is, as Polanyi put it, a process most alive when applying to renew the self through creativity (Scheffler, 1997:125). Yet the dynamic of the bodily system could best be read through the act of painting and Chinese calligraphy. They would be used as vehicles to re-mobilize the bodily system for alternative experiences through creating “personal monuments” (stealing the term of “monumentality”<sup>45</sup> from Deleuze and Guattari) (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994: 155, 164) with specific flow of energy materialized through brushes, ink, water, paper and paint. Whether their works should be viewed as “artworks” is secondary, it is a ritual of art-play possibly filled with “symptomatic and fortuitous actions” (Freud, 2002: 183-207) to allow unspecified floating emotions and sense of being to be materialized through “monumental” moments of sensation and symbolized existence, another alternative paths to actualize and conserve moments of aestheticized self-existence and to allow them the potential room to transform into transcendental experiences. As Ōmori Sōgen put it on the Zen of Calligraphy, insight can only be obtained through contemplation (Sōgen, Katsujō & Stevens, 1983). While it may seem too far out for participants to attain the art of Zen, it is through the very act of witnessing the natural flow of ink and water phenomenon on rice paper, with specific reflective energy unfolded, that one may realize the importance of being able to “function creatively, moving freely between limited and unlimited being, absolute and relative behavior.” (Ibid, 4-5) Thus, one should not defeat the participants for the lack of sense for artistic excellence (especially when it is not meant to be the focus of the workshop); one should treat the matter **as a special rite of passage to touch base with one’s feelings, thoughts, and lived experiences through direct hand contact, with body-mind re-activated to find its living composition on planes specially set up for the art-in-actions, with findings and moments often**, as Freud put it (2002: 183), “unthinkable” or encountered “purely by chance,” something that simply

**happenw with the particular touches of the participant's hands.** These areas have played significant parts in the workshop throughout the years, unveiling many important temporal “monuments” that once constituted important parts of the psyche and physical being of participants. What they have unfolded deserves special attention to re-evaluate the phenomena behind their act of courage, love, pain and thoughts over personal issues and stories left untackled in real life:

- *The process of finding “the right materials” from ordinary living objects for individual installation is an intriguing journey to discover the route to “physicalize” personal expressions;*
- *The selection and composition of particular objects and materials often unveil latent thoughts, feelings and emotions of particular story untold or remaining suppressed or never yet articulated;*
- *The making of a particular installation becomes a specific route of self discovery of psychological intentions and worldly impressions morally, socially or culturally bounded within the body-mind of a participant;*
- *Moments that slip out of the mind or the hands could be significant as budding insight into the process of making special inquiry of the lived body-mind and its related living phenomena;*
- *Allowing participants to remain reticent on the “meaning” of their works and to keep subtly the intentions all to themselves often help suspend the inner and outer experiences of the “new-artists-at-work”;*
- *Participants tend to ask for specific methods and rules before discovering or valuing the importance of deterritorialization of systems and boundaries in creativity;*
- *Not a single participant would literally copy ideas from another participant's work. The “self signature” constructed by each participant proves to be something much treasured with “added values”;*
- *All installation, no matter how rough they may appear to be, constitutes a part of the participants' “face value” that often left unspoken or undeciphered in daily living;*
- *The word(s) selected for calligraphical presentation often consists of emotional energy rarely articulated as precise or distilled in everyday living;*

- *The physical exercises prior to the making of calligraphy have proven to be an important process to free the territorialization of one's emotions and experiences before unveiling some honest physical expressions through the use of brushes and ink;*
- *The making of personal brushes<sup>46</sup> other than the generic ones would send the participants' mind away from generalized actions;*
- *The selection of space in calligraphy helps unveil a specific sense of unnoticeable sensation of the self being captured in action at times;*
- *The often untrained hands proved to be sensitive when freed and opened, allowing the self to render one's emotions and thoughts through specific touches in the process of art maneuvering;*
- *It has been the process, not the result, that matters so much more in arriving at any true connection with the inner self;*
- *It has been a long and tough process to activate the hand to "see by touching" instead of the primary use of eyes;*
- *It takes tremendous energy to overcome psychological obstacles accumulated through upbringing in the process of painting one's personal story on specific non-traditional planes;*
- *The concept of balance, rhythm, color, texture and style is in fact something innate if the prefabricated values could be re-evaluated to allow the body-mind to refrain from listening to the music of the bodily systems under influences;*
- *Many participants are eventually able to free up their personal ideas and open to alternative concepts or methodologies generated by others after some prolonged struggles of the validity of self values;*
- *Some participants would gradually begin to see one another beyond physical appearances and learn to "listen" and "watch" more respectfully to other stories being installed in particular space and combined objects;*
- *Each participant would embody his/her own "regimes of signs" picked up from mass media without truly understanding the essence behind the symbols, which takes tremendous patience to allow the self to reach inside the body-mind to make the needed enquiry of the values held by self-being;*
- *The sensation of touches on objects and specific bodies of participants often expand one's vocabulary of feelings and imagination.*



**Setback:** Many participants, including tutors and social workers, are often too task-oriented and lack the needed patience to observe minute changes taking place in the process of art-in-action. While the exercise is conceived in the form of art and the criteria of art may not be totally applicable to the making of the “products,” many social workers would complain about their non-art background and claim that they do not know “what to look at.” It is as if suddenly the bodies of participants who got engaged in the “art industry” had nothing to do with social sciences. Common sense is often being severely neglected by these tutors and social workers when their mindsets are secluded within particular “professional boundaries.” The organic flow of happenings in the art making becomes something like the stereotypical “art routines,” which easily deny the floating of bodily energy desperately seeking for alternative expressions. When “art” is being treated as a specialized yet “academically unimportant” branch of studies, the igniting human compassions, physiological motions and culture-carrying signs and symbols in action could fall into the abyss of professional ignorance, without utilizing the particular phenomena to help further articulate specific personal painting of the lived world and body.<sup>47</sup> It makes me think of Freire’s *Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*<sup>48</sup>, where he once emphasized that “we must dare, in the full sense of the word, to speak of love without the fear of being called ridiculous, mawkish, or unscientific, if not antiscientific, we must dare in order to say scientifically, and not as mere blah-blah-blah, that we study, we learn, we teach, we know with our entire body. **We do all these things with feeling, with emotion, with wishes, with fear, with doubts, with passion, and also with critical reasoning.**” (1998:3) **Most important of all, he continued that “we must dare so as never to dichotomize cognition and emotion...dare to learn how to dare in order to say no to the bureaucratization of the mind to which we are exposed every day.”** (Ibid.) The above was exactly what many tutors and social workers did not dare

to do as cultural workers, i.e. **to re-examine the inclusion and exclusion between the “pedagogised self” and the “pedagogised other,”** leaving learning solely as “pedagogised subject” pre-determined by established discourses (Atkinson D., 2002:121-124). As a result, many participants would be left idle when seeing facilitators caught up only with one’s own “professional preferences.”

### ***Poetry/Song Writing***

When writing has often been treated as a preformatted skill with specific institutionalized standard to be fulfilled in schooling systems, many students have either lost their confidence or the genuine interest in writing. As Swados said, many schools had unfortunately turned into places where “surprise is not loved [and] rebellion is not cared about.” (Onofri, 2005) Indeed, many young people do have a lot to say deep inside. This is an area to ignite the creativity among youngsters to regain the needed self-esteem and self-innovative space for expressions. **Songwriting begins with daily speech and the urge to make connections with unspoken emotions and thoughts. It is about the gathering of courage, honesty and energy to learn not to undermine one another’s experiences. It is about rebuilding the emotional grid through poetry constructed from visual and audio experiences left undeciphered. By treating words as visual and audio images, special relationship between words, lines, frames, and pauses would represent the daily breath, texture and rhythm of living never truly articulated. It is about the innate ability to read the music living in us all day in and day out.** Camilleri so shared with us on the potentials behind songwriting, “Composing songs allows [participants] to express and give voice to concerns and hopes. By creating original lyrics, they are able to control and manipulate their experiences, often gaining mastery over difficult emotions and circumstances. As they internalize new approaches, behaviors and reactions can be

modified, making improved outcomes possible for the future. Through this process, they are heard, and validated.” (2007:90) Dvorkin (1991) also describes songs used as **transitional objects to absorb and communicate dangerous feelings. It is like a bridge to gain better insight and perspectives on troubling issues and to help organize chaotic experiences and confusing issues.** Writing poetry, the essential spirit behind songwriting in a sense, means the will **to retrieve unspoken spirit that has once twisted or broken by outside forces. It becomes the shape of one’s inner voices, seeking special form and touches to personalize the once stereotyped expressions pre-conditioned by others. It is based on “self-actualization,”** something strongly explored by Jung (Jung, 2002; O’Byrne & Angers, 1972) and Maslow (1987; 1993), that “the fullest, most complete differentiation and harmonious blending of all aspects of man’s total personality,” which means in essence **the utter freedom for anyone to fulfill one’s potentials.** (Lorenz, 1998:77) The act of writing and the eventual song sung by the lived body would become an important journey to overcome “emotional flu” in life<sup>49</sup>, re-identifying one’s stories through metaphors, imagery, rhythm and poetic devices. The hardest part is to help revitalize one’s courage and confidence to dig deep into daily tissues to smell, touch, and feel the missing layers unidentified. It is about the composition of signs and experiences traveling through the sensation of the body-mind. In the course of these workshops, each particular participant has spoken his/her mind through specific bodily phenomena, carrying some significant experiences for all to reflect on:

- *Many participants would regard daily trivial matters have nothing to do with learning to begin with. Until they begin to talk seriously about what they have actually observed and experienced, such matters and daily ordinary events would then become sound resources for creativity;*

- *When a participant's body-mind is severely pre-conditioned by institutionalized norms, breaking away is on one hand like an unlit candle waiting for a match and on the other a haunting image that could steal away potentially costly burden;*
- *Many participants get trapped by standards told by others and lose the needed intuition to make better contact with the people and things around. Thus, the first line of a new song is often the toughest journey to many participants who have once suffered from bad experiences in the past, say, school penalty, bad remarks on school report or distrust from parents;*
- *It takes both the tutors/social workers and participants a while to realize the obstacles to creativity often lying in the illusion of false security, poor childhood memories, the loss of ability to dream, to breathe, to celebrate, to love and to care. Subsequently, the obstacles grow bigger and suck the spirit up by paying too much attention to negative energy of daily existence;*
- *The seemingly privileged participants who had taken specific instrumental lessons often show the least sensitivity to the living music in life because they were mostly trained to read papered music as instructed by tutors;*
- *Improvisation is being seen as something risky and meaningless;*
- *Many believes a song must embody a "message" and a "form" as supposedly expected by the audience long before they jot down the first note, which subsequently, becomes psychological burdens when they cannot locate the positioning of such "form" and "message." Many simply do not believe they are already buried in the natural vibes of their lived body;*
- *Indeed, going through a process of re-tuning and re-training is often far more difficult than those who did not have any experiences to begin with. Yet, it is phenomenal to read the tension between different groups of participants and how different they value the meaning of "learned" and "not being taught" – the responsibility of learning is often falling onto the shoulder of somebody else, rarely the self;*
- *Many find poetry irrelevant to their living and yet they could "see" poetry in the installations and dance performance of co-participants;*
- *Many could easily identify the emotions of one another through choral singing, especially from songs composed by themselves;*
- *Through their performances, they would become more critical to the self-in-performance by reflecting on the performance of others. Subsequently, they would*

*be accumulating all the differences and come up with some unexpected alternatives that would inspire the performing community as a whole;*

- *Once the participants learn to contextualize their singing and composition, their power of performance would be far more honest and real by touching base with the inner reality of the self-being.*

**Setback:** When pop culture in Hong Kong is in fact something of homogeneous nature, very much bounded by conservative values generated both in the business sectors and the often discouraging and non-innovative schooling climate, to break through such conservatism withheld in the learning mind has always been one of the greatest challenge among the participants and tutors/social workers. When writing songs or singing is not being treated as something academically sound or of good prospect to locate work in the future job market, many participants often struggle with the love of singing and the war of wondering if to give up the fun or not. The thrive for self-expression is often self-censored due to the equally conservative sentiments among many parents, whom would see such activities “extracurricular,” which means irrelevant subjects for improving one’s “marks” or “grades” in public examination. The body and the mind are found heavily imbalance between academic affairs and those emotional matters of the bodily systems. The heavily unpoetic side of urban living often has little room for poetry, likewise in the result-conscious urbanized mindset of many tutors/social workers. Worst of all, the content of the songs written by youngsters also constantly face potential “censorship,”<sup>50</sup> with gestures often discouraging enough to suspend their growing interest in the activity either from institutional bodies. As for facilitators or participating social workers, it is often very easy to focus on the participants’ “productivity” rather than the quality and content of works produced. Yet it is also easy for participants getting too carried away by the music without truly touching the core of expressions, i.e. the stories hidden in between

musical notes and lyrics. To each participant, each song may lead him/her to the context of particular living experiences, where many participating workers would easily generalize the participants' overall expression without paying keen observations to the differences of emotions among the singing faces. Most of all, many would confine the "creativity" within the so-called "band room" and forget to open up alternative inspiration by taking the creativity out to experiences discovered in the streets. The space to diversify the participant's observation is often overlooked in spite of the beliefs in doing so. "Knowing what should be done" and "getting things done as believed" seem to keep certain distance from one another, mainly because the lack of professional awareness or confidence to take on young participants' potential uproaring challenge and to replace them with "menu book" kind of "safety measure," kept innovation impossible and afar, not mentioning the hidden feelings woven in between lines of lyrics or poetry, verbalizing stories never before unfolded. It would all seem improbable unless facilitators and social workers are to cross the disciplinary boundary, not necessarily irrelevant, to get to know the "disorder" of literary figures like John Stuart Mill and W.H. Auden, whom, as Morrison (1987) re-introduced to us in his writing on poetry therapy, had recovered from "the sick soul" through poetry writing.

If art, as Dewey believed, underlies important processes that "energize perception and give form and function to inanimate matter...operative in scientific inquiry, and in any realm in which judgment is required of human understanding" (Dalton, 2002:14) the phenomenal experiences through the living stamina of art-in-action, or taking art as an alternative route to experience, seems to unveil some significant pathways of interpenetration into the body-mind of participants, providing some

alternative routes to review the meanings of past stories and values of beliefs once held onto in the course of upbringing. **The multiple use of art forms allow the body-mind encountering some multi-angled “art attack” or “art contemplation,” not for the sake of art making but rather the potentialities to unfold inner feelings, memories and experiences never courageous enough to face before, especially the actualization of intrinsic growth of the self.** Quite different from Dewey’s advocacy on the qualitative elements of aesthetic creation, which I think yet another far reaching matter that requires “extra” training for participants, it is far more important, in the context of education and social work, **to relocate the multiplicity of voices remained unsung among participants onto alternative planes of reconstruction, with particular embodiments and sensitivity straightly uprooted from the lived bodies and space often indeterminate in character during the process of unobserved habitual consciousness.** The aesthetic context of “color,” “line,” “form,” “depth,” and “symmetry” does not have to be “in line” with Dewey’s aesthetic order, i.e. of the often-addressed aesthetic “order” and “value” for an “artwork.” Yet **the flying color of emotions, the ever-floating “ghostly” lines of play actions, the multiple form of synthesis in expressions, the inner depth of dreams and thoughts, and the asymmetrical tendency within the seemingly symmetrical composition of self structures are all part of the transformative experiences to be observed in the course of learning through art-in-action.** Thus, the introduction of multiple arts becomes potential options to reshape one’s perception of personal history, especially feelings and experiences. **It is the phenomenology of experiences through the landscape of theatre-art frameworks that allows**

**inspiration possible on participants, theatre and art tutors/teachers and social workers the freedom and trust to keep re-modifying the routes of learning through the perceived changing elements. The “rhythmic order and variations” of the living body-mind keeps brushing one’s freshness to get ready for any potential transformation of the self. By releasing a wide range of energy and experiences possibilities, one’s heart and mind are extended to alternative one’s route of inquiry into realm of value systems that has often been undermined within the self-being unwittingly regulated by social norms.**

Instead of separating one’s intelligence into specific regions of the cognitive development or categories according to Gardner’s multiple intelligence, the “frames of mind” (1993) is in fact always “as a piece,” or “a set of essentials” with elements interacting with one another. The diversified arts-in-actions are *not* designed to constrain any particular “immobilized regions”; they are there to compensate one another’s potential discrepancies and re-energize individuals in full contact with the innovative self rather than partial and selective distortion of the fragmentary body-mind. The multiple arts approach I have adopted is in fact focusing far more on Sternberg’s “componential, experiential and contextual facets of intelligence” (1985a; 1996) that derives strongly from participants’ intuitions and reasoning unfolded through process particular stories and materials as encountered, not on empirical grounding. Art means creativity, which, as **Rudolf Steiner proclaims, is “the principal foundation for man’s inner and outward independence...it can only be initiated and individually developed in a process that is itself creative. That is why education, the initiation and implementation of learning processes, must be practiced as an art, and why the whole**



**spectrum of artistic means – painting/modeling, speaking/dramatics and music – is so indispensable for appropriate learning processes.”** (Rist & Schneider, 1979:150) The theatrical frameworks are, therefore, designed on such beliefs of multiplicity in application of arts and theatre as the means to arouse full contact with individuals’ self being.

2. *The diversification of learning patterns that help nest the communication network of the body-mind:* Through the acute Beckettian observation on drifting patterns of human behavior, emotions, psychology and expressions through chaos/stability, affirmation/negation, thesis/antithesis, rise/fall, part/whole, open/close, give/take, come/go, verbal/non-verbal, in/out, living/lifeless, cliché/particularity, speechlessness/being mute, entrance/exit, motion/pause, light/shadow, rule/exception, rational/irrational, joy/sorrow, sanity/alienation, lies/truth, continuity/disunity, etc., it is vital to allow the body-mind adrift through variations of speech/narrative act, verbal or non-verbal, triggered by a selected variety of art medium made possible. It is like freely adopting appropriate theatrical frameworks, coherent or seemingly incoherent at times, in helping one understand the inner divisions of any individual struggle, which could subsequently be transformed into personal resource of envisaging the ultimate sense of community. It is the exploration of specific individual frameworks to help re-build a bank of innovative vocabulary within the self. **It is not solely the interplay of duality but rather what sustains the co-existence of such duality, i.e. the divider or scale of “/” could become one of the important focal subjects of studies, not only due to its balancing or dividing role but also the actual**

**substances in holding on the counterweight system and the diversity of design behind such “systems” of “sustainable living energy.”** Like Beckett’s drama as analyzed by James Eliopoulos (1975), behind the surface of “contradictions,” it may simply function “as an anti-clarity device”; behind “meta-narrative features,” wherein...characters/authors are themselves in the process of composition...commenting on and qualifying their stories.” (Gontarski, 1979) In other words, in trailing such routes and allowing the necessary transformation thereof in the process of art-in-actions, all diversified patterns as adopted are simply alternative attempts en route to better communication with the intrapersonal being and, hopefully, the eventual enlightening of the self.

**On Designing Individual-based/Group-based Activities:** As each individual does embody a specific grid of personal knowledge and stories the moment when entering a particular art-in-action, it is important to observe carefully how each *presents* the self in the course of actions, both in individual work and group work. The workshop facilitator/social worker has to be sharp enough to contextualize each participant’s choice of actions, not judging but rather utilizing the unfolding moments as the basis for alternative design in future activities and individual work to come. It is very dangerous to have any preconceptual or advocating “social reform” value when working with individual participants, which would easily fall into argument of “social righteousness” instead of gaining insight to the value system each individual being is holding. As the learning patterns of each individual are in fact different, designing group activity does not mean to push for “synchronization” or “ensemble” effect and to disregard the variations in intelligence, emotions, and expressions. Interpenetrating the value of self-love is unavoidable before reaching any potential goal of integral

living among a community of participants. It does not help anyone if the facilitator is propounding any sense of guilt among participants in the course of group activity. Instead, one has to learn to locate the source of guilt in each participant's personal experiences, be they sprung from family or cultural institutions. It is the inner vitality that should not be denied, an important strength as strongly suggested in Freire's monumental work, *Pedagogy of Hope* (Freire P. & M.A. Freire, 2004). Diversifying individual patterns within each group activity is indeed an important aspect, allowing one's imagination to float into the consciousness through specific patterns, without jeopardizing the community whole. As Dewey once stressed, one has to accept "the indeterminacy of feelings and attitude that underlie moral conduct and [social/political] conflict" among individuals, all subject to "variables and...contingencies of experiences (Dalton, 2002:196-7). Thus, in the course of aligning any group activities, one should not assert any single principle of conduct or effect upon the experimenting participants. Instead, it is the art of utilizing the differences and merging them into a potential variety whole by encouraging the frequency of give and take among participants. It is through the discovery of such needs among the participants that they could eventually produce anything integral to the collective consciousness as developed in the process. It is an important process of learning about one another and accepting the differences as existed. Only through such genuine understanding of differentiation among one another could the group possibly develop any specific chemistry to activate the communication network within the community.

***Alarming phenomenon and setback:*** It is so often that social workers are issues and target based when observing participants' work-in-progress. Participants are often being categorized into "problematic groups" based on "social problems" pre-identified

by established norms or ground rules and regulations laid down by institutions. Consequently, participants are not being observed on individual basis with the rightful capacity to make changes. **It is important for facilitators/social workers to be flexible enough to adopt new attitudes and to transform discoveries into alternative approaches in order to allow human expressions and feelings being channeled into pathways open to be re-contextualized. Any potential social reforms or changes should best begin with innovation re-discovered among the self-being of each individual. It is through the self-empowerment rediscovered through art-play that helps uproot any pre-conceived attitudes.** The usual route of counseling and intervention are not advisable in the process of observing individuals making exploration through art-in-actions. May the actions ambiguous or specific at times, allowing individuals to digest the experiences and to develop balanced personal judgment upon their own performances accordingly are often not being encouraged. Many social workers tend to project conventional judgment on personal behavior and conduct and to subsequently lead to behavior disasters among participants by, though unconsciously, deepening their worries of potential moral judgment imposed on their works and self-image, which in return put a halt to their learning through performances. While many tutors/social workers would be so insecure on the uncertainties of situations generated by theatrical frameworks, where interaction of the mind and body could ignite unfamiliar energy and behavior among participants, with resourcefulness newly discovered through play. There is a lack of trust on participants' new findings and the potential impact on their psyche, especially when the phenomenal experiences exceed the "pre-established expectations" or "patterns of behavior" *socially acceptable* according to norms. When self-empowerment is only conceived in aligning to such premeditated value, it would turn out to be deceitful art-play without truly making contact with the inner reality of participating body-mind.

The result could be disastrous and unconstructive. *Art as experience*, as if suddenly disconnected from Dewey's distant voices, is subsequently being treated not as something beyond common routes that should allow participants a bit more adventurous in search of alternative value systems to express the worldviews and human feelings. It is so often that many social workers/teachers are left unprepared to acknowledge such phenomenal happenings in the course of art-in-actions.

The Beckettian trail is simply an alternative route of possibilities in allowing the body-mind to engage into various integrating or isolating perspectives of observations into daily human activities. **Through trails of personalized patterns and voices, one is able to first re-identify the pathways re-energized and then reconstruct specific coordination with the moving subjects and objects drifting in and out of one's personal path of being. Social workers/teachers/facilitators have to be brave enough to look into simple functioning processes of walking, talking, moving, focusing, touching, communicating and expressing of emotions, ideas, feelings and thoughts through simple objects at play, where a variety of potential learning patterns could be devised. Take the happenings one step at a time and re-mount any potential ties, be they skeletal, muscular, neural, social, psychological or personal, within the performing body-mind, where particular intuition would be floating to reflect specific flow of reality as perceived. Any re-patterning activities designed in response to participants' performance would mean an additional incorporation of newly adopted intellectual elements to allow better reflected experiences to transcend into alternative perception of reality**

**charged at specific space and time. It is important to allow the self being engaged in play the notion of continual growth initiated by the process of renewing one's use of the self,**<sup>51</sup> echoing the physiological discipline once advocated by F. M. Alexander and endorsed by John Dewey. In Freire's words, it is not acceptable for teachers/educators to hold their sentiment simply "from talking to learners to talking to them and with them," (1998:63-68) with such immense notion of permissive undertone would never bring about true learning of the innovative self. It is about the respect of indifferences and tolerance of one another (Ibid, 67) if we were to develop any diversified learning patterns according to voices buried deep inside each individuals.

3. ***The art of play at waiting***<sup>52</sup> **(or the art of non-action):** The paradox of *waiting* in Beckett's plays, like *Waiting for Godot*, *Happy Days* and *Endgame*, is the amount of inventive actions/non-actions through the course of waiting. In spite of the pessimistic existential outlook, piles of human actions are deduced out of the seemingly nonsense of waiting. What seems inescapable is that, instead of driving toward a specific goal/end, life is often marked by the core of waiting with personal actions, non-actions or the velleities of action, which are often filled with creative and continuous inner dialogue of the individual self, making chains of imaginative associations in and out of the inner and outer world. It is often these very resources of "being engulfed by 'phantoms' or 'voices'" (Fahrenbach & Fletcher, 1976) that provide the triggering rendition of *apparitional synthesis*. **Teachers and social workers should be willing to work beyond the tasks as set forth and learn to re-articulate the alternative nature of actions/non-actions as**

**displayed by participants in the process of learning. Waiting does not mean nothing happened; things do happen in the long process of waiting, an important time of brewing something, making ways to remake alternative routes for the next possible existing moment to come.** We are, in Freire's perception, "makers of [our] way," (Freire, 2004: 83) only that we may be committing ourselves to the "way" through transformative moments of waiting, carrying dreams and hope that are temporarily "stepping back" because of "distortion of the call" (Ibid, 84). The art of play at waiting is important time to clarify such "distortion" and retrieve the on-going curiosity in search of a better living community both from within and outside the self.

***Phenomena observed at workshops:***

- *As many participants, including tutors/social workers, often joined the workshops with habitual and programmed learning/teaching patterns and attitude carried over from schools and organizations of generalized and undigested cultural influences, it is very common to see that many begin either with routine formality or a lack of enthusiasm, as if going through habitual motion of waiting, like "rituals-taken-for-granted" moving on to another pre-arranged events or social gathering. While the learning side is either waiting to be fed or not knowing why and what to expect from the self, the teaching side is simply carrying out a preset agenda and paying little notice both on the problematic undeciphered collective consciousness and non-actions among individuals;*
- *It is very common to see both the workshop facilitators and participants too eager to provide "participations" a collective goal and abruptly dismiss the individual differences and diversified presence of the silent and passive members;*
- *When "participationism" reigns, a strong sense of blaming and guilt feelings would be displayed to quickly overrule the ones choose temporary non-actions as the initial options;*

- *Many facilitators/social workers often look for collective actions in group works as the ultimate standard of participation, without opening alternatives to include the “outcasts” by diverting their role plays through other perspectives;*
- *The preoccupied time-management value<sup>53</sup> often pushes both the participants and facilitators/social workers to drive hard on the premeditated tempo of progress and discard any allowances of not-knowing or still searching sentiments;*
- *The ability of transforming non-actions as potential resources for creating alternatives for the choice of actions is generally weak, mostly due to serious impatience, insecurity, and the failure of activating good observations or imagination among participants and facilitators/social workers;*
- *The lack of skills and strategies to rebuild individual bonds among participants, which often springs from a lack of acute observation and creativity on individual behavior and psychology, do jeopardize the visualization of any potential community performance to come;*
- *When art is being treated as a specialized field of knowledge, many social workers would choose to leave “observations” and “actions” to the “professional tutors” and have themselves left “waiting in the sidelines” or irresponsibly “cruising in and out of actions”;*
- *When “professional tutors” do not want to exceed his/her own field of interest and leave all the “counseling” to the hand of social workers, the happenings taken place in the course of actions would often end up standing still in between waiting for resolution from “collaborators” and dying for support from “true professionals,” which subsequently would leave the participants waiting without truly undertaking true responsibility in their own hands;*
- *When the quiet ones are being addressed through alternative role plays, they could often transform their non-existence into resources that could be inspiring to the group as a community whole;*
- *The courage to break up actions into small fragments and to rebuild the whole from bits and pieces turn out to be a significant process to generate true kinship among participants;*
- *When “ghosts play” among individuals are well-addressed and re-channeled into alternative narrative acts through the selective use of art constructs, apparitional synthesis does take place silently through the bodily systems, something that requires handling with care and patience.*



When the society is highly driven by economic beliefs, like what Highmore raised as phenomenon of something like a “totalitarian” desire specially designed in the form of “grand narratives” (2002:25), many people are subsequently turned simply into beings with too grand a target oriented in mind, leaving aside the much needed time and patience in working with individuals in re-building their self esteem and imagination in the use of the self. When focuses are being placed on the superficial phenomenon of actions instead of the inner actions often waiting to be fostered, the bodily systems are likely left untouched or unobserved in the course of re-assembling their form of expressions. It is so often that people and things are being tackled only on technical or presentational ends<sup>54</sup> without paying attention to the potential variations very much silently proliferating in daily living. As a result, the “meanings” and “goals” of life are resumed only to general assumptions *without* incorporating individual differences arising out of naturally random processes, and, most of all, the possible moral nature of commitment, conscience and responsibility strongly re-emphasized by Polanyi (Scott, 1985:74). The overdrive toward technological and economic ends would precisely fall into the Beckettian paradox of “endgame,” as if leaving little space left for human reflection; yet the *reality* is quite the contrary – as Beckett suggested, there are all the time in the world for *reflection*. **The effective use of theatrical frameworks would allow silent participants to engage in specially designed dramatized space that enables innovation to silently penetrate the psyche-in-waiting. Facilitators and social workers should strengthen their sensitivity in the natural process of dissembling and re-assembling of emotional, aesthetic or intellectual bits and**

**pieces virtually or sensually articulated by the participating bodily systems through their interplay of acute, or sometimes ambiguous space, time, objects and related images fostered in the course of waiting.** Time is often deluded by the fear of hypocrisy for either being a “do-gooder” or a “wrongdoer” often skeptically portrayed by stereotypes.

4. *Contemplating through Act without words*<sup>55</sup>: The imaginative use of space, time and object(s) shifting round and about an individual would be an important part of drawing substantial experiential learning through devised situations created in theatrical frameworks. It is about the art of object thinking, including the innate sense of visual, audio and sensory thinking often neglected in general school education. The ultimate focus would be put back to the cultivation of perception on the genuine making of one’s body-mind and its conscious relation(s) to one another. The Beckettian play of “act without words” often consists of metaphors developed by subtle evolution of object-relation and images derived thereof. The sensitivity to read these images deduced by participants through play is vital to carry the art-in-actions into substantial experiential learning. It is where real life experiences are being transformed into play images, within which, like Dewey’s poetry, “weighing the possibilities and consequences of different emotions.” (Dalton, 2002:116) It is also about the genuine sensitivity to the lived body, and the bodily parts that carry “traditions,” “habits,” “cultural heritage,” “pain,” “personal feelings,” “muddling thoughts” and “family burdens” that seek particular form of expressions through the interplay of selected props and particular disposition of body-mind. As the body is the emblem of humanity, the actions

thereof carrying would have traces through ancestral heritage to contemporary pulsation intermingling along arms, feet, legs, eyes, foreheads, mouth, groins, muscles and even tips of fingers. Before allowing the “body” to be objectified and re-conceptualized by future neurophysiology that could view the body as sheer “electro-chemical-mechanical system” no longer owned by the self (Danto, 2001[1999]:201), it is important to open the human tool boxes of ordinary living, beyond sciences, arts, philosophies and languages, and to further develop one’s possible system(s) of representations where feelings, thoughts, emotions, beliefs, attitudes, and expressions could be personalized and structured as Beckettian monologues, silently activating one’s imaginations like Joyce’s “soliloquy, dense with memories, resentments, eruptions and subsidings of feelings of love, longing and disdain.” (Ibid, 204)

***Phenomenology of the Body studied at workshops:***

- *It is so common to see participants’ bodies being heavily colonized by beliefs and conduct pre-meditated in family, schools and social institutions;*
- *When prevailing homogeneous culture consuming the body-mind, breaking open alternative pathways for the body becomes the most challenging work for workshop facilitators/tutors;*
- *While many participants tend to keep themselves away from talking about the bodily experiences or memories related to the bodily systems, “acts without words” have often become inviting routes to contemplate with the lived body;*
- *When the observation of the bodily systems among participants and social workers mostly orients from stereotypical values or prescribed categories approved by the Authority, the physical phenomenon of silent play often helps unveil distinctive personal values once left unsung or articulated;*

- *While the body never lies, yet the observing mind seems to be incapable to keep pace with the transforming state of being engaged in play, easily wasting tremendous energy displayed by participants;*
- *When the bodily systems are at work physically with particular rhythmic sensation, the energy and raying projected by the moving bodies would help participants ignite vision rarely experienced in verbal-based or text-based exercises;*
- *It is quite disastrous to misfire on participants' seemingly "conduct unbecoming" unfolded in the course of play when presumed value systems are prevailing in the mind of the observers, i.e. the participants and the workshop facilitators/social workers, denoting only "relevant materials" based on general social work or common schooling practices;*
- *A lot of bodily phenomena remains undeciphered by participants, workshop facilitators and social workers, especially when all bodily signs are being viewed as "intentions" with distinct message(s) or projected target(s), taking away all the potential transformation of personal experiences;*
- *It is so often that a great part of bodily movements is being isolated in the process of observation by excluding the integrating circumstantial elements;*
- *The skin of the body, especially the face, is often profoundly glowing, gleaming, glittering, graying, toning, sensing along participants' routes of bodily explorations, as if "mediating between [the] inner and outer [zone of] perception... necessary for the development of a sense of continuity of self" (Hartley, 1995:134);*
- *When it is culturally believed that everything has to have a purpose before committing one's action, at early stage, **it is very common to see participants, being preoccupied with a preset "purpose," touching without feeling, moving without experiencing, making contact with objects without entering the tactile surface that linked up the body and the world around;***
- *In the course of making physical connection with the world around, many participants are fundamentally unequipped, not at all their fault though, to define the particular situation(s) as engaged in art-play or their relationship to the performing self. It takes acute turns on the part of the workshop facilitator/tutor/social worker to activate special art-in-transformation to help the body-mind register the minute details of happening behind actions;*

- *The seemingly invisible boundary of the body-mind is in fact often made visible through the engaged actions of participants, through which created the needed space re-examining the possibilities of separating or uniting experiences in the particular environments shifting between the inner self and the outer world;*
- *In the course of containing or integrating one's experience in particular designed theatrical frameworks, the degree of awareness of the bodily systems would depend a great deal on how much preconception the hosting body would be willing to discard and how much the openness to one another's changing phenomena-at-play.*

The professionalized perception of social workers have often “theorized” individual art-in-actions as the extension of social problems that have to be specially tackled with scientific method recognized by the profession. Subsequently, most part of expressions delivered by the investigating body-mind of participants would be rounded up in respect of their validity to social services backed up by corresponding social institutes or social work agencies. It has been problematic that many social workers tend to identify participants’ actions not with any curiosity on aesthetic sentiments or individual knowledge and development, only piling up opinions either of counseling nature or resultant problems based on pre-identified social contexts. There are also serious areas of misfiring when social workers only size up participants’ physical gestures or expressions based on the social background and causes, seeking only “relevant solution” or “impacts” to fulfill the “pursuit” of data for case filings. When verbalization has been the *only* channel and form used for discussion, any other non-verbal form of sharing, experimentation or investigation of the self would instantly seem alien to many social workers. When emotions, feelings and expressions are being identified

under particular roof of institutionalized theories, like anger becoming “a form of social role” (Averill, 1982) or doubt as “motives of social implications” under the concept of motivation (Mills, 1940) etc., it would be very difficult to come out of the theorizing closets and to allow individuals simply to reconstruct the self according to what they discover and see from daily accomplishments, including those bits and pieces of learning made possible through play without words. All such problematics of psychological explanations would fuel the body-mind with only “researched data” that would not mean much to common folks who simply, as Danto pointed to Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, “see [themselves] portrayed as [they] portray [themselves]” (2001[1999]:200). Each, in his or her own voice and action, is in fact not subject of “thesis” to be “falsified”; they are only forms of expressions in different dimension and contexts of interpretation based on time, place, psychology and physical circumstances as assessed by each individual accordingly. What each individual delivers at times is in fact potential route(s) for self-innovation, *not* any form of social myth (Coulter, 1979). It is understandable why social workers are feeling uncomfortable, especially when everything has to conform to the sphere of social discourse, it would suddenly seem like removing all the bodily parts of participants and re-shuffling them into categorized compartments, discarding the natural bodily phenomena of these natural beings in the name of analytic interest or professional jargons. **While the “art-in-actions” could be “minority action” or deeds of “unpopular principles,” they are in fact more than just professional matters of information processing. They are not there to challenge traditional knowledge claims; they are simply there as**

**alternative access to personal betterment by re-acquiring the needed self esteem and innovative power through art-in-play.**

5. *Treating parts as necessity to the integral whole*: From birth till death, the body and mind work through coherent and incoherent parts, not just as thinker of forces generated from past, present and the likely projecting future, but also as craftsman and innovator working through sets of tools pre-meditated, (to-be-)invented and (to-be-)experimented either from past existence, learned principles or ad hoc realization/discovery. The community within the self often threads along potential lines of awakening in the self, like an on-going and integrating psycho-physiological framework seeking its possible meaning of co-existence within the cosmos, with lines of motifs trailing along the Beckettian self-generating art zone, drawing, “discarding, abandoning, retrieving, sorting out” (Taylor, 1980) and trying out one’s transformational space and metaphors in and out of daily objects connected to particular environment and memory. Working with individuals often means constantly shifting in and out of the self, the way like Beckett treated his characters, under the ever changing whole as envisaged from time to time under transformative parts of specific situations. Such parts, be they natural or artificial under corresponding classification or categorization by theorists, are all part of the *self constructs* deeply connected to the perception of the whole. It would be an inverted play beginning with generalizations and back to specific and primary elements that serve as fundamental blocks for building insight of the living self. **It is through the poetic of *living space*<sup>56</sup> (Bachelard, 1994) and the special phenomena of connected objects that allow art-in-actions to take place,**

**something assessable to participants to observe the interactiveness in the transformation and development of the 3-tiered experiences of the self, i.e. the *apparitional self*, the *synthesized self* and the *innovative self* through journeying into living objects and space.** In the process, a lot of investigative look into personal belongings, household objects and living space would become very effective and powerful platforms for touching base with the missing pieces left untackled in the lived body. It is often through theatrical frameworks to unveil intimate stories behind objects that “furnishes dispersed images and a body of images,” (Ibid, 3) lifting us to imagination and phenomena of learning in the process of liquidating the past and confronting the emerging new possibilities.

***Phenomenology of space and objects as observed in workshops:***

- *The transformation of space does affect the psychology of participants both in individual works and group works;*
- *When facilitator/social worker and participants fails to pay attention to the potential affect of a particular stagnated space, behavior tends to get verbal instead of physical, with equally stagnant body getting stuck with habitual projection of non-action basis;*
- *Many participants tend to stay on the superficial representations of objects if workshop facilitators/social workers fail to inspire any further actions in transforming selected objects into theatrical play;*
- *In theatrical frameworks, the imagination of objects become important routes for alternative thinking: it does not only open up new platforms to re-examine the disposition of the self as reflected, it also implies special psychological and intellectual space to re-visit values and stories buried from within, including the cultural conceptualization of objects and personally experienced events that affect the interpretation of the objects;*
- *Through play, the dramatic use of objects often lead participants to open new doors for hypothesis, allowing the body-mind to leave aside the moral order*



*temporarily and to re-examine the alternative emotional or intellectual construction of the self through metaphors envisioned in the course of art-in-actions;*

- *In view of how the cyber culture consumes many participants' body-mind like an extension of the "technological component" (Dery, 2000:563), working with objects through theatrical frameworks allow the body-mind to re-temper the natural tacit power, unhooking innate interplaying ability with concrete, not virtualized, substance at play;*
- *In fictionalized space, the participants' body seem to be far more open and prepared to take risks, comparatively freer to augment self actions through wonders and play;*
- *The transformational (or dramatic) use of objects in play provides an important sense of distancing to allow participants to project their inner feelings and conflicts without directly hitting the emotional buttons, leaving the needed space for reflection and to play out the alternative parts never before conceived in real life;*
- *There are often unexplored traits of complex voice projected on objects through play self-generated by participants, with motifs often disguised due to the mistrust of transformational perception among observers;*
- *There are times one could see multiple narratives emerging through space, articulated through specific distancing or proximity of space, like Beckettian characters, appearing and vanishing, i.e. freely taking entrances and exits, at will through play;*
- *Many participants often find sudden freedom of expressions through object play which help unfold inner emotions through particular "scrutiny of physical objects" (Taylor, 1980);*
- *Through a lot of "goalless" travel in space, specific modes of body-mind often disclose particular aspect of participants' psychology, be it in group or individual works;*
- *Past unarticulated sense of direction in space is encountering alternative form of expression under theatrical hypothesis, allowing participants to enter new sense of innovative directions in re-interpreting space through play;*
- *The form and pattern of physical expression are subtly transcribed through space and objects with individual variations, taking ritualistic passages into personal*

*references and zoning often embedded with perplexing and transient elements seldom attracting any previous attention;*

- *The often obscure symbolism depicted through object play could take sharp turns and develop alternative images that reflect the psychological self unfolded through the perceiving eye of the participating actor(s)...*

There are times when participants fail to channel their emotions and thoughts into a sense of mastery over the self being, the unconscious play made out of the imaginary would be left outside of the consciousness and experiences remained undigested. When facilitator/social workers fail to channel their actions according to the established situations and the flow of human psyche unveiled at times, which is in fact critical for self-understanding, such actions would remain only as nothing more than just play, with little impact on self-empowerment or re-building dialogical value between participants and objects interplaying at particular space-time. The situation could be worse when participating social workers are not clear with their role play, especially when most are obliged to see themselves solely as counselor or caseworker, without furthering their sensitivity in keying alternative values and routes for observation, subsequently, many participants could never get out of the presumed social frameworks bounded by “assessment of ‘risks’ and ‘needs’” not necessarily relevant to the experiences of alternative synthesis through art. Still heavily bearing with the “client-worker” kind of relationship, the role of being a potential co-learning partner seems diminishing in view of the special “professional attitude” from a “care manager,” classifying participants’ actions on “manageable basis,” or repetitively asserting “social control” over behavior-at-play without acknowledging participants’ own choice and responsibility of actions working under non-offensive theatrical

bearings. **When social workers have turned themselves into risk assessors, controlling or surveillance agents** (Jordan and Jordan, 2000), **their own body-mind would subsequently be disengaged from tacit knowledge of nature, making observation a prescriptive act through the monitoring eye of a sudden “social critic” rather than co-building learning routes with participants.** With the postmodern rhetoric of the forever-illusory participationism<sup>57</sup> (Benhabib, 1992) and accountability of actions (Reeves, 2004), participants’ actions could not possibly escape from the scrutiny of predatory analysis based on irrelevant trails. When art is supposedly used as an alternative vehicle to re-examine the value of human actions through play, individual actions could sometimes absurdly be transferred into “managerially-controlled” play procedures, utilizing forced “consensus” to measure the complexity of art-in-actions. With such organizational based hegemonic power play over learning individuals, turning participating actions into the realm of management-craving workers seeking for answerability, art would suddenly become only “gimmicks” of “event-building” without the humanitarian heart of bettering self-innovation among individuals. As David M. Boje (2006[2005]) put it, all storytelling under the umbrella of qualitative research would only be an act to fulfill the “high demand of managerial and naïve schools of postmodern,” willful to “capture the Holy Grail: move worker’s tacit knowledge...into the management information systems [where] to make worker’s knowledge the property of the system and its reengineers.” What would be the quality of observations cast upon the participants under such managerial demand? Ironically, many artists have also placed themselves under similar roof, treating art play as an alternative to fulfill the pre-administered “event building” justifiable to consumer culture<sup>58</sup>. In the process, severe distortion would take

place in the course of observing participants' performances, with "measures" tailor-made to project presentation necessary for gaining continual organization support. Under such circumstances, both the execution of play and observations of actions would be diminished to sheer power play without truly touching base with the phenomenal body desperately seeking alternative routes for self-empowerment.

Rubin Rabinovitz (1977) said, "Samuel Beckett sees the world as a mysterious place where appearances are deceptive and ultimately reality is rarely perceived. In his fiction Beckett attempts to represent the world as accurately as he can, or, as he might put it, to lie about it as little as possible." To social workers, the above would remain as a literary subject totally irrelevant to "social issue based profession," or an impractical act "looking through the wrong end of the telescope" (Ibid.). **The workshop is not set out to verify Beckett's work; it is simply inspired by the "mysterious" artistic endeavor in search of reality as observed at particular space-time with constantly adjusting perception. How "accurately" each individual describes his/her world would be quite a journey, through which often seated the mind of the observer and "the world being a projection of the individual's consciousness."** (Beckett, 1957:8) In Beckettian trail, physical objects are the bridges for building metaphors of mental existence. The extensiveness of using objects in response to the particular space-time as lived and perceived could in fact be part of the important metaphysical process of theatrical frameworks, allowing participants to enter metaphorical settings to *see* the inner space we often neglect in daily living. If such space is being treated only as potential context registering only for "professional, organizational, social and political issues," the phenomenology of space

and objects at play with the body-mind would make impossible flights among individuals looking for alternative journey into the inner community self play. **If such space could be valued as “valid knowledge,” and possibly “practical self skill” to transform the *apparitional self* into *creative synthesis*, allowing innovations to contest prescribed concept of the lived body, “the acquisition of appropriate skills and knowledge”<sup>59</sup> in view of individual education would take on a more holistic approach, valuing both the tacit knowledge and the object-related inspiration long buried within the natural body. It is possibly only through looking into these “parts” could we reach the revelation of the internal whole, and subsequently, the community whole under substantial qualitative reflection put forth by the enduring play of art-in-actions.**

It is under the above specific beliefs and experiences, I have been constantly put myself into (re-)designing and (re-)searching the context and fluidity of education workshop held the past 10 years. Fundamentally speaking, **it is all about experiential learning through specially designed theatre and art frameworks that allow metamorphosing actions through the diversified affect and particularity of individual voices, without jeopardizing the sense of community whole inside and outside of individual person. It is also the learning from those workshops among young people and adults that have been re-generating my body-mind to further consolidate the experiences received thereof and examine the potential of alternative theorizing on related synthesis of the creative/innovative potential of the body-mind and the re-discovery of alternative routes in holding education workshops for such purposes. It was precisely through the influence of such**

**workshop experiences had I come up with the “dramatized” form of re-exploring the stories of the self in me, allowing the act of writing as the prime tool of (re-)thinking, (re-)studying, (re-)learning and (re-)stitching part fragmentary events and experiences thereof derived. It is almost literally the very dialogical act with *words, thinking and memories* I put forth the (re-)enactment of remapping the self through the previous chapters before (re-)framing them up in these concluding chapter.**

***Reflections over the experiences as workshop facilitator***

To Beckett, and many artists alike, they know well that one cannot change the System but one can change the interpretation of living space and expand the *personal* worldview through art-in-action. I did not set out to explore the techniques of how to train artist. I believe there is an “artist” living within each one of us, with special tacit knowledge about beauty, harmony, symmetry, balance, tempo and natural spirit. It is the institutionalization of knowledge that causes things to be compartmentalized, leaving the natural senses chaotically disorganized and foully tuned only to the economic, education, social and legal institutional sentiment. The natural deep intrinsic meanings of human experience has been severely sabotaged by “commodified knowledge system,” compromising the natural being and natural thinking into manipulative and control craving activity that has been preoccupying the intellectual eco-system in recent decades. It has been like a severe separation of the body from the mind, leaving the soul totally idle, waiting desperately to rejoin the natural whole. To Bohm (1980:21), in view of the world struggling between such degree of

fragmentation and wholeness, “it is not an accident that our fragmentary form of thought is leading to such a widespread range of crises, social, political, economic, ecological, psychological, etc., in the individual and in society as a whole. Such a mode of thought unending development of chaotic and meaningless conflict, in which the energies of all tend to be lost by movements that are antagonistic or else at cross-purposes.” When philosophers and ordinary folks are both constructing different schemes of different scales and perspectives in the process of interpreting experiences, which are seemingly distanced and drifting toward different ends, ironically, **they do need one another to fulfill the “incompleteness” of thoughts**, be their relationship intricate or uneasy with one another. **The art-in-actions are there to allow both ends to re-examine each other’s relative role in building knowledge through personal experiences re-defined, not to provoke any further reciprocal tension or to eliminate the presence of one another.** Just as I walk into a theatre directing class, I often share with students the often-undermined multiple roles of a “director.”<sup>60</sup> When the world tries to simplify his “tasks” solely on the generic name necessary for social ranking in professional hierarchy, there is little consideration over the multiple experiences involved behind the job of a storyteller, a position highly reminiscing those of philosophers, except that the expressions are never formulated through words but experiences of human interactions derived of among space, objects, time, texts, values, and history. For ordinary folks, their specific experiences and meanings should be theirs and directed by themselves alone. Their emotional and cognitive output should not be taken over by “disciplined thought” of scholars making assumptions for specialized context. (Giorgi, 1990:64-5) In fact, their inner worlds should not be generalized. They should be re-examined through the Beckettian trail, i.e. cutting into

the deep of human thoughts in minute details and have them recorded as they are. **Treating art as experience does allow individuals to retrieve the innate ability to articulate the natural bodily flow of emotions and thoughts that come up at play. The fragments and the wholeness of being are in fact operating constantly together as a community if only if we allow the body-mind to make special contact with the dialogues in between their interactions through art based experimentation and exercises.**

In these past ten years of working with over thousands of participants based on the idea of experiential learning through arts, I have learnt a lot from their stories, actions, and performances once lost and found through art interplay. It has been like putting forth the 30 years of experience in theatre making and transforming the findings into cross-play with ordinary folks on re-establishing the sense of being through the best possible use of art as vehicle for innovative experiences. **What in fact alerts me is to re-think the phenomenal experiences as disclosed by the participating body-mind and the changing frames of orientating the *self* unleashed through the multiple application of art-in-action. It has been like a multiple journey into re-discovering the self not only as the *director* of one's own being, but also the narrator adopting multiple roles in search of the physiological and sociological network-at-work within the body-mind, something never quite truly acknowledged in daily events.** Such phenomenal transformation reminds me of what Dewey once talked of the distinctive work of the mind and the consciousness: "Mind is contextual and persistent; consciousness is focal and transitive. Mind is, so to speak, structural, substantial; a constant background and foreground; perceptive consciousness is



process; a series of heres and nows. Mind is constantly luminosity; consciousness intermittent, a series of flashes of varying intensities.” (Dalton, 2002:142) I am not here to validate if Dewey’s argument was true or false. What he vividly described is in fact some fundamental phenomena I have been observing in the participants, as if a transient vignette of body-mind picture being energized by “particular field of forces or interactive events” (Dewey, 1958:201), which later much echoed in the works of Goffman and Collins, something not totally irrelevant to my learning and discoveries both in theatre and educational workshops deduced thereof. Of course, it could be dangerous if we follow strictly Goffman’s analogy of social constructivism and dramaturgy without valuing the emotional bearings of individuals (Messinger, Sampson, & Towne, 1962). When individual performances are being literately generated into data solely for social analysis and the feelings that are vital part of the construction of the self are neglected, the experiences and sincerity of experimentation thereof taking place would likely be misread or misplaced, leaving little room for individual synthesis. Bear in mind: sincerity is an important route of expressions on one’s implicit and explicit “feelings and constructions in making a self,” something “of conscious contents, of impulses and tugs” (Silver & Sabrini, 1985) that deserves special attention. It is something strongly related to individual intuition quite beyond Goffman’s and Collins’ social behavioral observation. It would easily take us back to Freire who strongly reminded us, “Critical intellectuals should live passionately their own ideas, building spaces of deliberation and tolerance in their quest for knowledge and empowerment. They love what they do, and those with whom they do interact,” (Torres, 1999) which are the fundamental “good sense” of an educator in the course of working with individuals.

As a theatre art maker, through constant reflection of the existential self-being and the related feelings and worldview derived thereof, I have come to realize *the inescapable examination of the 3-tiered experiences in me if I were to translate the specific art-in-action experiences into potential alternative path of learning for community building to others. Only through the extensive self-understanding could one help each other put forth any form of positive synthesis to take place in the body-mind, not forcing the value systems on others but rather being able to operate on a much more conscious and conscientious level based on the needs and particularity of (non-)participants. In researching on the nature of community performance building through the arts, working with one another on aspects of self-empowerment would necessarily mean including all the participating selves. As facilitator/teacher/social worker for innovative workshops designed to help re-build the landscape of the body-mind, it is not about method, especially not the dividing-the-world-into-them-and-us kind of authoritarian power play, but the co-learning with participating individuals and the help of addressing the distinct differences in needs among these body-mind searching for alternatives of self-innovation. I, as the observer, the researcher, the listener, the writer, the analyst, the architect of building “beliefs,” should first become the “subject” for analysis. Thus, the first tier of self experiences to be studied would be the apparitional self, through which diffuses the premonition of danger in taking any potential authoritative stand without truly understand the nature of self when working in service for others. It is not the writing about me or writing against me that should become the sole subject of studies; it should always be an integral part of the studies that provide the circumstances of “analyses,”*

**“teachings,” or “theories” therein established. The *DreamWorks* as deduced from *the synthesized self* would be an important process of self-reflection that helps germinate echolocating actions. Without clarification of the previous two selves, *the innovative self* of the other may not be truly respected or valued as important assets in the course of implementing the theatre-arts play for community building.** As someone growing up in this postmodern era, the free-floating consciousness of a world of changing crisis and representations constantly affect the make up of *what* and *how* in view of the self. It does not mean there are necessary conflicts between developing grand value and remapping individual idea of human life, as long as the former does not constrain individual beliefs and behavior to any single account of life but rather the synthetic notion of combining ideas for individuals. Art is used as a form of bridges to help rebuild actions for re-conceptualizing ideas seeded in us and reviewing the morality integral to the make up of the world around us. It is through art-in-actions that individuals are allowed to re-visit the set of commitments in their ways of being, re-examining “the body of knowledge that reflexively supports those commitments” (McKenna & Kessler, 1985) since no analysis or conceptualization of the world is ever neutral or complete. They serve as critical experiences under experimentation to allow creative synthesis to provide alternative landscape to one’s body-mind.

### ***In Concluding through the mapping of an Incidental Image***

In view of all the cases and experimentations taken and studied throughout the years of working both in theatre and theatre-in-education, including the *drumming voices*

workshops, I cannot possibly list them all as they were or as references to readers since they were all specifics not meant to be generalized or re-narrated to purposeful contexts of this paper. Instead, **I have transferred the experiences into the course of self-reflection and re-investigated all the findings and thoughts through *theatrical frameworks* purposefully re-modeled to the narrativity of the stories and particulars of my own lived body.** The 3-tiered experiences as (re-)exposed, (re-)shaped and (re-)mapped in this paper could in fact be summed up to one single belief of art-in-action-to-be: **Never under estimate the phenomenon of any single incidental image we run into day in and day out and always allow any potentially special synthesis of image-thought and bodily experience to take place over the particular body-mind thereof available if we are indeed keen to revitalize any possible personal knowledge among individuals.** Thus, I hereby take the final liberty to make a *personalized* overview, possibly a disguised alternative form of conclusion for the paper, of a specific action based on yet another ad hoc incident outside my own body-mind, with specific insight of inviting “actions-to-be” through the phenomenological engagement of specific being, with acts and observations often easily ignored by teaching professionals or social workers. I do hope with sincere gratitude that the following “case work” as explicitly described and analyzed would serve as the final reflection of the root of my writing in this dissertation:

On June 13, 2008, my friend *silly H.* sent me a photo she posed on her Facebook<sup>61</sup> special group “Photo A Day”<sup>62</sup> with a Tagore quote sitting at down left side of the image, “*We read the world wrong and say it deceives us.*”<sup>63</sup> At a glance the words looked like an advertising slogan depicted in a contemporary high culture graphic arts

market, with meaning fading into an illusive world of mysterious shadows. It seems quite absurd, and in fact quite ironic, to read Tagore on Facebook, one of the most popular social networking websites nowadays. It may be too soon for me to say it is a “wrong” world, surely a possibly *deceptive* world that functions like a mega shopping mall filled with 24,000 virtual applications (with 140 new applications adding per day<sup>64</sup>, which was so highlighted in the Facebook statistics) for consumption. How much time, mathematically measurable speaking, would the website founders expect the users put in their time daily to sort out all the applications? Or are they there simply to draw up all the attention so make one feel totally “engaged” and “occupied” with gadget-led behavior totally manipulated by software designers? I gather Tagore would never have thought his poem of meditative nature would be “trimmed” and “fit” into the specific photo corner for virtual consumption. How do we actually *read* the world around us? I wonder how much Gustave Flaubert’s famous quote “Read in order to live”<sup>65</sup> (1974[1857]) would mean to a world of systems now mostly run by computer programs, where reading is apparently taken in shifting contexts: from traditional texts on paper to those presented through IT images where words could either be viewed by computer specialists as “objects” fitting into the “ones and zeros” within the ever-expanding software of a computing machine. Words are, to a certain extent, departing the lyrical world of Tagore and Flaubert and made available to wait in line serving the potential databank for slogan-usage of particular branding, like sheer signs and logos used by salesman/advertisers to *confuse* costumers/consumers for material consumptions. When words are *adopted* and *re-programmed* for implementing “message,” “function call,” and “syntax” inside a machine (West, 2004:119), something quite outside the context of the traditional *reading* world as reminisced by Alberto Manguel in *A History of Reading* (1996). What we ARE truly *reading* when the spectrum of “readable things” has been expanding to contexts

beyond common day-to-day comprehensions deserves educators to review their strategies in remapping the world around us since remapping the body-mind that is likely long pre-conditioned and mapped to the rhyme and rhythm of popular culture, or simply within bound the “readable” parameters set by the Authority are no longer the only parameters. There ARE alternatives!

Indeed it was just a photograph, an extra item out of the 80 million active Facebook users<sup>66</sup>, just another digital image out of the 14 million plus images<sup>67</sup> uploaded to the website daily. While we may wonder who would truly *read* the image carefully to sort out the *exact* or possible reality behind this particular human activity, which could be something quite beyond normal comprehension when the body-mind is mostly consumed by the clicking of buttons for instant “feedback,” especially when the time and effort likely drawn to evaluate the meanings and potential significances behind this daily seemingly insignificant “artistic” endeavor would be minimal, yet for the creator of this single photograph as mentioned above, the urge to post it up for public exhibition may imply the urge to share with others the significance of a particular moment in life, a moment that may help evoke some significant insight in the possible interaction with the world around, i.e. the particularity of situations thereby individual bodies charging their living spirit. It *is* important to re-open one’s channel to make the *necessary* reading behind particular living moment(s) as such when the daily events are jammed by innumerable *facts* and *figures* staggering up to distortional dimensions that are often turned stereotyped. That particular image indeed belonged to *silly H.*, the image-maker, only. The line was no longer Tagore’s but *silly H’s*, at least true to the moment when those particular words that captured her imagination and the subsequent action. Bergson once wrote: All seems to take place as if, in this aggregate of images which I call the universe, nothing really new could happen except through the medium

of certain particular images, the type of which is furnished me by my body (1991[1986 & 1896]:18). Behind the selection of one particular image, we may have to get closer, not exactly, to the reality as projected or integrated on one's action no matter how far reach we could possibly go beyond the "captured" image and its meaning to our body-mind. As Bergson continued to remind us that "if it is an image, that image can give but what has been put into it, and since it is, by hypothesis, the image of my body only, it would be absurd to expect to get from it that of the whole universe." (Ibid, 20) In other words, it is the body, which means the photographer's body, which is very much in itself an object. It must be *the* centre of action, i.e. the particular physiological soundings that provoked the clicking of the camera to record that particular image at time. It is not the birth of another representation. It is the body under influence, as if automatically, according to the natural interactive nature, which causes the *necessary* action exercised at times. The important thing is, as Bergson realized, **"the objects which surround [the] body reflect its possible action upon them."** (Ibid, 21; emphasis added) The ability to *read* these objects surrounding us would mean the willingness to go beyond the *ghost plays* and likely *apparitional synthesis* and *dreamWORKs* there exist in the context of the actions which made that particular image possible. What revolved around *silly H.*'s image is in fact embodied the fundamental keys of all my creative workshops when working with participating bodies through images, be they deduced or created from the basis of an isolating image or not:

#### **Aspect#1: In Reading the Initial Situation of Action**

According to *silly H.*'s saying,<sup>68</sup> she took the photograph at around 11:00 p.m. on June 12, 2008 when she was reading Matthieu Ricard's photo essays *Motionless Journey: From A Hermitage in the Himalayas* in her bed. It was raining heavily outside. When

she flipped to the page with Tagore's citation, she realized the light from the bed lantern cast upon the naked page the shadow of the floral mosquito net. The moment suddenly gave her the impulse to record the image with her digital camera when the image, along with the single line of printed words, seemed connecting closely to some unsung feelings at the back of her heart. Thus, she took the *necessary* action: CLICK the button!

*What seems ordinary at times could in fact incorporate a series of hidden social constructs and personal constructs behind the scene of action. In theatre, we often ask actors about the particulars in situation each character is engaged, which would mean a series of investigation into the logic and circumstances those objects, space and time, as envisioned or pre-conditioned by the "creator(s)," namely the playwright, **and** the actor who would be playing the character, which, as in this case, could be silly H. **and** me (since it is based on her description and then re-written in my words). In comprehending such a "dramatic" situation, all visible and invisible objects would become the subject of studies. What above described is only the "initial" description of the immediate condition, wherein a range of facts, emotions, psychology, cultural and social connotations of objects and their eventual disposition should also be parts of the "measurable reality" as constructed or perceptualized by the person(s) and the society, directly or indirectly, involved. Keying each object specifically means to understand the potential personal or social fabrics therein woven. Identifying these fabrics would help one see "what is going on is what is being fabricated" (Goffman, 1986:84) in the **situation** possibly out of the interactive, not necessarily integrating, personal and social construction. Such immediate reading and comprehension of the physical aspect of the scene of action would be the starting grid of any further investigation.*



**Aspect#2: In Reading the interiority of silly H.**

*Silly H.* is a middle aged divorced woman who has just decided to step aside from her business with the intention to spend more time with her son in their new home in a deserted village called Lung A Pai of Lam Chuen. Several things suddenly jammed into her mind the last couple of years: (1) the desperate need for reconciliation to her uproaring and rebellious past, especially the relationship with her authoritative mother, a physician by profession, someone who once emigrated to Indonesia from the mainland and then moved to Hong Kong 40 years ago; (2) the disillusionment of love, with a man of different racial and cultural origin, and the lingering turmoil from a divorce and the decision to be a single parent; (3) the struggles in helping her “hyperactive” Eurasian 11-year-old son<sup>69</sup>, whose character strongly reminds her the past she had once been, through alternative home learning (since she gets fed up with the existing schooling that only puts her son under “labeling” as “special kid,” which has subsequently been causing him severe psychological damages); (4) the ultimate deception in her leather trading business, something conflicting to her growing beliefs in environmental ethics; (5) the desire to re-define the sense of self-being; (6) the physiological state of being after the particular emotional history as sketched above, including all the possible socio-cultural and historical influences remained hidden and untouched in the emotional tissues of the interior as a person born and raised in colonial Hong Kong, along side with a higher education never quite finished back in the United Kingdom. How much these accumulating experiences set forth the changes in *silly H.* the past years remains to be further examined<sup>70</sup>, *especially the particular physio-biological mechanism internally transformed through those events*; yet the culminating affects from such experiences have in fact driven her to take a series of actions hoping to re-cultivate a life she finds too dry from past encounters. Taking

picture becomes one of the *alternative actions*<sup>71</sup> she has specifically taken on this year or two. Joining the Facebook *Photo A Day* group is an extension of that action to fulfill the inner thrives for an identification of the self as a being anew.

*In theatre the study of a character requires all actors<sup>72</sup> involved in a play to understand the “intentions,” “the circumstances,” “the immediate and distant situations,” and most of all, the makeup of “the body” that is responsible for the corresponding role(s)-in-actions thereof. In the process, the first thing involved in a “normal” creative process is the cold reading of the script. “Cold” means distancing and being impartial, subjectively speaking, the best way one knows of at times. Yet it does not mean passive. What goes on in the reader’s mind and how the particular body-mind begins to sort out the sense out of the reading, as “action(s),” would be critically important. Through traces of the “evidence,” i.e. the texts in the case when one begins one’s work with a given script, actors are expected to breathe in and out through the fabrics of situation(s) unfolded and the particular condition(s) characters as scripted. Beside the “given” evidence, the next thing is to investigate the thing unsaid, i.e. those things beyond texts – the interiority of the characters. In doing so, the actors have to first learn about their own particular bodily systems and the logic and framework(s) they would be adopting in the course of “interpretation.” It is the “double interiority” at play, i.e. those of the characters (the person-in-action as observed) and those buried within the players (the observer-in-action). Within each, “listening, hearing and speaking”<sup>73</sup> are all interactively at work inside and outside spontaneously at the same time, with the inescapable interruption of doubts, pride, prejudice, preconception, over-anticipation, sentimental notion of empathy and unknown experiences. Knowing the interiority of a particular bodily system is fundamental to touch upon the very fabrics of a person’s “grid of operation” in*

*responding to the exteriority of the moment. Of course, we cannot treat silly H. as a “character in a script.” I am simply trying to place a possible parallel in leading to the importance of understanding the person if we are to understand the significance of the image produced by particular person, most of all, to use that particular image as a possible bridge to further and better any plausible future communication. In Polanyi’s term, what we have to pay attention to is silly H.’s **personal knowledge** (1964) that **operates as the foundation of her actions (also the base of understanding her actions)**. Again, it is another exercise of “as if” – to allow silent thoughts and unsettling sentiments to take shapes for self-reassessment. The willingness to read beyond the subjectivity of that particular image could be vital for extending any form of interactive chain of activities thereafter. According to John F. Crosby, the recollected subjectivity would not only unveil the structure of personal selfhood (1996:98-106), the significance behind presentation of the self is often enacted and manifested through the recollection and reflection of the imaging created by the self. “In recollecting myself I come to myself.” (Ibid, 102) It is not only the human being, but also the human person that should call for our attention.*

### **Aspect#3: In Reading the Exteriority of the Moment**

The multiple physical and metaphysical aspects of the image that seem to do with experiences outside *silly H.* is in fact, not exactly by chance, all come into the continual moments of perception that the acting body is carrying, through a series of interactions based on the stock of social resource accumulated from within, and the reality as consciously, past, present and possible, of all inter-related conscious beings, perceived from the influence of other images that help prepare new actions (Bergson, 1991[1988&1896]:228-233): (1) **The disposition of objects**: It includes the time and physical journey of the objects surrounding *silly H.* at times, which the lantern, the

energy and the color of the lights in relation to the position of the book, the particular page as unveiled at that particular moment, the particularity of words that was in print on that particular page, i.e. line LXXV of *Stray Birds* from Tagore (*silly H.* didn't know who he was at times), the mosquito net (which happened to be the particular necessary commodity called for in her "new" house she recently moved in), the particular bedtime after putting her son to sleep, and also, the rain, the low humidity, the temperature, the sound, the historicity of the house and the objects put in from recent renovation of the place, are all becoming part of the "mysterious" moment that may have affected the cerebral vibration of *silly H.*; (2) **The play of time:** It happened that *silly H.* picked up Ricard's book, not any other book, at a time when she was particularly interested in photography and meditation; the particular moment of Ricard's photograph and the line of Tagore's poem selected by Ricard to contemplate with his experiences up in the Himalayas under "the different subtleties of light"<sup>74</sup>; the particular moment when Tagore wrote that particular line in *Strays Birds* one day in the year of 1916 when the world was at the edge of war; the publication of the book and the moment of purchase made by *silly H.* at particular time and place; all the related *objects thinking* taken place among the three persons in separate time and places; and, most of all, the coincidence of the above coming together at a single moment through different planes of objectified images; (3) **The interaction ritual chain**<sup>75</sup> **as performed:** How *silly H.* and others, without truly conferring one another the mobility of choice and living consciousness, come to, unknowingly, draw the respective inter-related actions and come around to one particular action is a fascinating series of living aspects not to be dismissed. From the discovery of *silly H.* the needs to make changes to the moment of putting up the image in Facebook, there is a long detailed series of self-motivating journey within her body-mind and the subsequent choices and events she delivered to make the actions a reality. From the

moment of creating the particular group by someone named Jessie Clockwork (a pseudo name) to his acquaintance of *silly H.* and the eventual invitation to the events, it has been another series of interactive chain of ritual going on, not only in *silly H.*, but also her son, her Philipino maid, friends, working colleagues and the 431 members<sup>76</sup> *indirectly* involved in the photo contributing and sharing activities. (4) **The continual effect of change as daily factors**, which include the daily events taken place in *silly H.* and the ever-changing reality of the matters that directly or indirectly connecting to all the physical bodies crisscrossed upon one another, not excluding the running of Facebook, and all matter of floating consciousness inter-relating to her daily activities, where arisen continuous excitations to the body and simultaneously corresponding to the unceasingly perception of things that prepare for the actions.

*When an actor enters a scene, I would often ask, "Where do you come from?" Although the audience would never be able to "see" the place off-stage, it is precisely where, i.e. beyond the visible part of the stage, the actor-character would be carrying his or her consciousness of reality onto the particular scene-of-actions. In other words, the "exteriority" of the particular reality "visible" is actually co-existing, or connected, to another spectrum of reality "invisible" through "duration of time,"<sup>77</sup> which means that "reality" is a continuous perceptive and moving matter, both for the state of objects and beings. It is through the accumulating and continuous perceived images the actor-character-body is carried from "outside" to "inside" that keeps propelling the actions upon particular moment and space. Such "exteriority" is in fact part of the "interiority" of the person who acts. It is part of the person's makeup in memory, interacting with the intuition of a particular body, in Bergson's words, "the pure unadulterated inner continuity (duration), continuity which was neither unity nor multiplicity" (1999[1946]:14), it is through the interactions between intuition and the*

*intellect that unify the divergence in our perceptions of reality. Indeed, we are basically trying to “break up” perceivable reality, through movements, into “moments” and to make specification on “each of the positions,” which Bergson had already forewarned us as “snapshots” rather than the true continuity of daily logics and it would be impossible to grasp or juxtapose one’s views for practical purposes. I am here to make it “as if” calculatable simply to allow us, i.e. both the actor and the observer, to equip ourselves with all possible reachable resources and viewpoints in order to set free the moment of action and to allow alternative transitions to take place. Such “exteriority” could become an “extra” dimension to “recompose” the perception once narrowly confined, which would eventually touch base, insubstantially, as it may be, with the continuity of transition. Ironically speaking, “the apparent duration of things expresses only the infirmity of a mind that cannot know everything at once.” (Bergson, 1911:39)*

#### **Aspect#4: In reading the Observer’s Action**

I, as an *observer*, seem to be *acting* upon the image taken by *silly H.* and *transferring* it into contexts she may not have considered at times. There are particular circumstances already built into the separate bodily system of hers and mine. On top of that, there are preceding situations directly and indirectly that had somehow put us together into a map inter-connecting, at least temporally speaking, the contour of two moving bodily agents: (1) If *silly H.* and her son did not join the *Remapping Hong Kong II*<sup>78</sup> community arts project I hosted in 2006, I would not have the chance to know them and witness the development she and her son have been undertaking; (2) If we did not keep up with each other an on-going relationship, I might not be able to pick up *silly H.*’s email and take a look at her photo when I happened to be writing a chapter on re-evaluating the potential of remapping the body-mind through studying

the nature of interaction between matter and body, subsequently, her image and action thereof involved would not become the subject of my writing<sup>79</sup>, which serves well, at least to my present knowledge, as a temporal *personalized* conclusion that echoes the *remapping* acts as above re-examined in previous sections and paragraphs; (3) My living partner happens to be an active member of *Photo A Day*. In fact, she has been hosting her own blog in *Everydayaphotograph*<sup>80</sup> since October 2006 and putting on daily photographs as a form of her living diary, something I strongly encouraged her to do as an alternative platform to build up her inner strength through photography, especially when seeing her innate talent in observing still objects (the activity has in fact been expanding her mindset both on photography as well as her options in *reading* things about matter and body); (4) Photography has always been a significant part of the creative workshops I have been conducting, through which both the participants and I are able to share perceptions of things and people of daily living experiences, and, most of all, examine the use of arts as tools and affects on making enquiries over the ever-transformative human body-mind (It further expands the experiences into videography, i.e. moving pictures, with movements of fixed frames, some associative logics long built in the bodily systems ever since the media was dominated by television, Internet and film); (5) It is also the ever-transformative bodily images very much living in me as a human body, like those of *silly H.* and all others, that allow such particular image to transfer into another spectrum of living experiences; (6) And, many unknown and yet possibly to be discovered inter-related circumstances and events, either from memory or matters beyond measurable time that we may have missed or dismissed at times; And (7) finally, most important of all, **without acknowledging the 3-tiered experiences through apparitional synthesis from *ghosts play*, *dreamWORKs* and the *echolocation of silly H.'s drumming voices*, I may not be able to soundly remap the image of such as an observer-in-action.** All

the above mentioned are in fact knowledge interactively engaging the action and mind of the *observer* and the *observed*, whom are basically operating on either self- or inter-reversible roles and contexts according to corresponding time and space conceptualized and arranged through events acted or perceived thereof.

*Maxine Greene once said, "I have to be aware of where I come from, of my new situation, not only about being a woman and being middle class and so on and so forth, have to be aware of the limits of my vision."*<sup>81</sup>*As a facilitator, teacher, culture worker, social critics, or co-learner, **how one's lenses are shaped would be vital to how one places oneself in the course and context of particular situation related to those of participants and co-workers.** We all tell different stories and, based on our living experiences, contextualize our thoughts and conversation under particular circumstances thereof engaged in order to enact what we set out to achieve or communicate. Deep down we all seem to have a set of "Coordinated Management of Meaning," each with his/her own constitutive or regulative rules of action based on communication perspective (Pearce and Cronen, 1980; Pearce, 2004), that we often put in meanings and analogies of other people's images and conversation with twists, turns, brackets, and punctuation that could alter or shift significantly the meaning as observed (Wasserman, 2004:2), without knowing it. In a way, we should not overlook the selfhood that **I** achieve when "**I make myself the object of my act**" (Crosby, 1996:159) (emphasis added). It is often because of the ways of objectivizing that constantly put us back in the paradox of observing the object rather than the person who is capable of reflexivity. Carl Rogers once shared with Michael Polanyi in a television dialogue that "behavioral sciences are tending to depersonalize the individual and...often tending to cause people to feel that they are themselves robots, rather than individuals with spontaneity and the possibility of responsible actions, and*



*so on.”<sup>82</sup> Knowing my own limitation and the special lenses I have been putting on in observing others (which is the very reason of writing this paper through the 3-tiered experiences) and the images thereof produced would require special awareness if we are to surpass the situation and to allow any form of transcendence in the persons, i.e. the actors, including the observed and the observer, and the imaging objects and actions to take place beyond the moments of perceived reality.*

The intention of drawing such a multi-layered look into the various aspects of circumstances around *silly H.*'s photo is not only to allow the readers to begin their thoughts with a casual daily incident by examining the potential of learning through such daily assessable images as variable resource, it is also a roundup of the *necessary* picture and grounded beliefs for co-learners, including tutors and social workers, in all the classes and workshops related to education or social calling. It is important to develop sound and coherent observation and actions in developing any possible frameworks in adopting arts as the tool for (re-)building/rejuvenating better self-actions. They are indeed *not* comprehensive map of the *full* aspects of *silly H.*'s action/image; they are only *fractional* images as grasped by my limited associative-subjective imagination, roughly based on the experiences of my own personal living journey in the past, and those inspired by collaborators in theatrework, *Drumming Voices* program and *Remapping Hong Kong* projects. Yet **the potential resources depicted from such an incidental image could serve as a powerful springboard to insightful dialogues or collaborative learning between participants and facilitators.** Such experiences, as already re-examined above regarding phenomena observed in workshops, would definitely help further understand the possibility of

building better community performances through the work of individuals, especially the art experience they engaged in and the works thereof put forth that should be more than just *techniques* or “empathic sentiments” in mounting interactive frameworks for the purpose. In fact it does require some fundamental philosophical frameworks, including the basic aspects as examined above, and understanding, especially for those who are in position to hold such educational or cultural workshops for the community.

The *remapping* of *silly H.*'s action/image is in fact a **process fundamental and critical in working with individuals through the use of daily ordinary objects and images.** The use of art simply provides the co-learners, i.e. the facilitators and the participants, the grid to take a look at such daily incidents by building a more in-depth vision into the reality, both interior and exterior, of the bodily systems, situations, actions, and images detected and works thereof executed by individuals, including the self-claimed *observer* and those *actors* as intentionally *observed* (I would prefer the term “co-learners”). Through such art-based *performances*, it would unveil special viewpoints looking from the *self-built*, or *co-built*, virtual *bridge(s)* to review the work and the particular human conditions evolved in daily living. Of course, the reality of *silly H.* as described would never be altogether what Bergson, or other philosophers, would likely feel the picture being “total” or “complete.” To Bergson, **reality is ultimately like an endless flow of change of the whole that “it hurtles in its course against such formidable difficulties, it sees its logic end in such strange contradictions, that it very speedily renounces its first ambition. ‘It is no longer reality itself,’ it says, ‘that it will reconstruct, but only an imitation of the real, or rather a symbolical image; the**

**essence of things escapes us, and will escape us always; we move among relations; the absolute is not in our province; we are brought to a stand before the Unknowable.”** (1911) *It is probably this very sense of “unknowable” that puts us forth in the enigmatic quest of looking under and beyond, as if, operating like a naturalist, by observing inert matter and the life, space, and time thereupon inter-playing and co-existing, hoping that one could at least learn how to grasp the essential flow of nature in the form of reality that has been shaping one’s own life (never the ultimate whole), according to the level of perception (which is in fact also something transformative) one established the best way of known-how at times.* Do bear in mind that it is unrealistic to ask ordinary people to level with those envisioned by intellects like scholars, philosophers and scientists. What I am doing here is to focus mainly on the creation of a series of possibly workable, and daily accessible paths, for ordinary human being to further cultivate each of his/her vision attained at times, so as to allow the self an ability to re-generate self-experiences into alternative new actions that could better one’s dialogues with the world around. And art has been one of the most effective and comparatively safe and thought-provoking tool there is to allow common folks to enjoy the self-discoveries thereof.

***Final words I (Westbound): Remapping Beyond Philosophical Frameworks***

Indeed, Kierkegaard’s argument on subjective truth (2000:VII) and Bergson’s philosophy on reality, time, image, object, movement and intuition, plus Dewey, Goffman, Polanyi and Collin’s philosophy on *experiences, personal knowledge* and *interaction rituals*, would likely be providing some strong foundation in the course of my reflecting the experiences, actions and events once observed and taken place in

*remapping the mapped* body-mind. Not that these philosophers' works (which I did *selectively* pick for their particular inspiration on me at times) as presupposed theories are ready for being inducted as instruments to measure the works, not mentioning the particular space-time each philosopher was/is engaged at times of making their theories, or operations of the works thereof related, for which Popper has forewarned us that "all laws and theories are conjectures, or tentative *hypotheses*...that we may reject a law or theory on the basis of new evidence, without necessarily discarding the old evidence which originally led us to accept it." (2002:72) Ironically, it is precisely, as Polanyi suggested, beyond these "objectiveness" and "evidence-collecting" that Popper advocated should we proceed to retrieve the fundamental passion for beauty in *everyman*. It is not about "falsification." It is about the passionate, personal, human appraisals (Polanyi, 1964:15).

My focus, as a facilitator for *remappers*, would have to bear in mind the insight once drawn from theories derived from these philosophers if I were to explore the potentialities of applying interactive theatre arts frameworks in teaching and inter-related cultural works. Such necessary philosophical bearings would allow me constantly conscious not only of the potential refutations and conjectures thereof arisen but also the necessary sensitivity to "the solitary intimation of...bits and pieces here and there which seem to offer clues to something hidden." (Polanyi, 1983:75) From the generalized view of "intuition" and "impression" deduced from memory to the depth of intuition necessity integrated with intellectual knowledge, if we were to arrive at a unified knowledge of reality, so proclaimed by Bergson (1999[1946]), which is a powerful reminder for all to keep double checking with the quality of observation and

action made and the logics of meaning these things are based on. Most of all, Bergson's vision on time and reality, movement and continuity, helps us review how contemporary body-mind is strongly affected by time and movement images, especially under the influence of motion pictures, television and the Internet. As for the effect of cinema, Deleuze (2001[1983] & 2003[1985]) later helped expand such vision into articulate insight on how we should re-examine the cinema as philosophical source for thoughts, an important area for teachers and cultural workers in dealing with the contemporary society filled with media images (It is unfortunate that the impact of cinema on contemporary thinking and shifts in common logic, especially the impact of *visual thinking* upon the younger generation, has often been neglected in philosophy and sociology, and most of all, education). As for Dewey, other than his strong vocation on learning from experiences that constantly reminds us to take a deeper look into the shaping of a person's lived experiences, he also stressed the importance of the consideration of the abstract concepts of mechanism and personality. As he warned us that in teaching, or similar position of facilitating role, "too much preoccupation with [students/participants] in a general fashion...without translation into relevant imagery of actual conditions is likely to give rise to unreal difficulties." (1900:113) For us all, with our personality forever *forming and reforming*, providing psychical stimuli leading to the equipment of personality with active habits and interests would be vital, which does involve necessarily a knowledge of [the self] (which is in fact a prerequisite) [and] the participants' reciprocal reactions – of what goes by the name of causal mechanism (Ibid, 113-4). Goffman's closely knitted use of theatrical framework (1986) does strongly echo experiences in the field I have been engaged in for over twenty years. His stress on face-to-face interaction does re-ensure us the importance of

live workshop, like those in theatre work, allowing the media-driven generation to go back to the fundamental enquiry of the self by touching base with the body-mind through physical live interactions among participants (including the creative part of the observers' bodily systems). As Collins followed Goffman's path and pointed out that "there is no privileged reality standing outside of situations, but only a chain of situations and preparation for (and aftermath of) situations," (Collins, 2004:19) it is precisely the art of setting up a chain of *dramatized* situations to allow alternative paths of remapping one's mapped body-mind. "Dramatized" means working on one's "imagination," which is linked closely with our memories that are stocked with images of remembered events, by re-manipulating or re-conjuring them in sequences and combinations anew. (Winter, Buck & Sobiechowska, 1999:195) Swanwick (1994:29-30) , echoing Bergson, said that "intuitive knowledge is essentially the exercise of *imagination*, the creative forming of images...that mediates between the chaos of sensory experience and intellectual comprehension." "Without imaginative construction," he further exclaimed, "the play of light on the retina of the eye is a meaningless muddle, as indeed for some time after birth before we have developed ways of organizing visual experience." (Ibid, 30)

What Michael Polanyi often reminds us is the fact that each human being does know more than he or she can tell. He was talking about tacit knowledge (1983) of course, an area that consists of particularities in habits and culture of being that we may not be able to recognize in ourselves at times. They are not yet "explicit knowledge." The use of art is simply a bridge to help one another articulate such *hidden* knowledge in the process of transforming tacit knowledge through particular personal experiences. **It is**

**all about exploration into the depth of self-innovation.** Many people often do not know how to talk about the *know-why* and *know-what* kind of facts and yet they simply *know how* to do it without knowing the existing *codes* behind their actions. The process of art making is not about the work of art, at least it has been so in my workshops; **it is about the discoveries through experiencing, i.e. seeing the emerging *uncodified* actions and their effects and phenomenon of particulars, with *consequences unforeseen or unintended* (Merton, 1936), coming out of the experimenting body-mind. It is all about *participatory observation* on particular person(s) who is/are embedded with particularities in history and scope of education and socialization with perspectives *totally personal*.** Allowing such differences and even making use of such particular differences in the process of remapping, i.e. re-organizing one's mapped paths, would mean to acknowledge the constellation Polanyi named as the *polycentric order* (Tsoukas, 2003).

Remapping the body-mind can never operate in separate forms, i.e. missing the line and shape of the melodies humming from within. We have **to learn to re-identify places within the individual under the chain of interactive rituals by re-working the imagination through play.** "Without imagination, we could never apply concepts to sense experience. Whereas wholly sensory life would be without any regularity or organization, a purely intellectual life would be without any real content." (Warnock, 1976:30) Since, as suggested by Warnock, imagination allows us to classify experiences...as well as to explore alternative ways of classifying them. (Ibid, 28) Through identifying the interactions taken place day in and day out, it would take some special disciplines to enlighten our body-mind through the process of reading

daily situations in alternative ways, hopefully one could find new images to re-interpret events, situations and experiences once lived. In Gareth Morgan's word, it is "imaginization"(1993) – literally speaking, it could mean the organization of imagination.<sup>83</sup> Of course, I am not here to advocate the "managerial skill" that a CEO would envision in his/her investments. But there are times; some insight could be retrieved out of the "creative organizational management models,"<sup>84</sup> say the innovative hybrid-like-form-of-matrix organization with working groups in order to allow better interactions and less hierarchical inferiority among a group of individuals co-learning together in given alterable condition(s). Within those "hybrids," a lot of unsung intelligence and solidarity remain to be unfolded, especially among individuals who have been "divided," "excluded," and "classified" as "non-conformists." They could be the individuals haunted by the status rituals and power rituals (Collins, 2004:112-8) and failed to identify themselves in the sociometric rankings.

As an *individual*, a word originated with the meaning of *not (in-) divisible*<sup>85</sup>, or *dividable*, one could rarely get truly "divided" or "singled" out (with the exception of those forced to be by power play) from the map of any human studies without touching the multitude of existence surfing in and out of daily events, beings, objects, time and space. The course of examining the self of an individual does mean the necessity to study the map that is filled with images one has been encountering since birth, or even beyond birth if taken further into the heredity perspectives. The perception one puts in on any encountering objects deserve careful studies in order to know how one centers one's body and the thoughts emanated thereof; it would also be part of the important observations called for from all participating bodies in viewing the possible personal



constructs in the course of using art as tools for social or cultural education works. To re-think the possible relationship with human and objects and the possible images/actions taken in between through arts means developing alternative ways of re-thinking and re-imaging how and why the self interactively engages in daily events (being inactive is also part of the interactiveness as depicted by choice under specific circumstances). Instead of searching for the “correct theory,” we would be learning to remap any possible links, associations, and interpretations to the best of one’s imagination forming at times, raising new questions through creative metaphors from storytelling, or any possible creative actions that could make the differences, i.e. treating the particulars as perceived to be reflectively meaningful and inspiring, as Michael Watts so described Kierkegaard’s assertion on the necessity of becoming a “single individual”:

As a “single individual,” my true self, I create and choose my own values and way of life irrespective of whether or not it harmonizes with the society in which I live. Total commitment to the fundamental path that I have freely chosen in life is the key feature of this state of consciousness. This lends a sense of cohesiveness and integrity to my existence, for now my actions are a genuine expression of what I really want to be doing with my existence. (Watts, 2003:96)

How *silly H.*, as a single individual, perceives her situations in life would be determined entirely upon the influences she has been exposed to and the values she intends to tune her life in at times, all according to the specific understanding at the moments of action(s) taken. **The intention of disclosing myself herein this paper as the subject of studies through multiple approaches is indeed meant to unveil the**

**complexity of being “a single individual,” and to decipher through potential affect of the observer-in-action. All theorists should not just idealize one’s theorizing circumstances by excluding the phenomenal effect of the self in the process of making theories. As Kierkegaard believed, each is his/her own author of his/her life stories. (Ibid, 86) Yet in the course of treading one’s life, *finite* as it is, to allow one’s transformative and *infinite* potentiality blossom means to empower one’s ability to acknowledge matters in life as subjectively experienced. Art could be the powerful transmitter to help us retrieve the necessary insight in mastering the needed *double reflection* (Ibid, 88), i.e. to understand life intellectually and the ability to relate it to one’s particular situation experienced at times, and so with those particularly experienced by others.**

I would here like to draw the final attention of teachers and social workers: Incidentally as it may be, **seemingly unworthy image-action like those of *silly H.* could be critically waiting for our attention, behind which a particular individual is making his/her utmost minimal gesture, sounding off through an object, or an image, a tiny fragment of an action that links up to a whole chain of living experiences and stories. It is not just the knowledge. It is the heart and the creativity to restore the space hidden in the body-mind, alienated from situation to situation, or obsessed with works, objects, solitary confinement or intellectual hook-ups.** When words fail, it is time to seek alternative outlet for the neurotic emotional energy not knowing where to draw its home, or any no-label-zone for the hyper-reflexive-active-and-sensitive people who are seen as “introverts,” “rebels” or “outcast” totally consumed by the powering mass manipulated by the media engines.

Even among the “regularly normal,” the tremendous anxiety to be left out by the many and its status quo does need another “escape route” to reclaim the individuality badly needed at times. There are times when one simply is not competitive enough. Or one cannot afford to pay their “premium” on innovativeness, or the periodic changes to sustain the freshness by marketing standard. If one does not want to pursue or acquire the personality the media-market has been *typically* calling for, we can explore alternatives to stop the market-conscious activities for once and retrieve the essence of art in creating hope and insight to the living. Creative, but not for the sake of branding! Imaginative, but not to meet the persona the market sought for! Beyond reality play, there are bound to be some safe places where one could get “out of control” temporarily in order to test the hidden potentials. In the ever-expanding human world market of greed, there are bound to be alternatives beyond the means already set by the ruling class, with knowledge, information, transactions and all the priori in the name of a better economy. In a world entrapped in *a technology of discourse* (Ewen & Ewen, 2000:3), one has simply to look for alternatives to retain the simple knowledge of the self attained through daily experiences. *Remapping the mapped* may literally mean the willingness to break open the frames of the previously mapped if we are to renew the contour of the body-mind. If we were to tackle the questions as raised above, we may have to first pay the needed attention to each individual and allow him or her to self-acquire the necessary perception before taking on such questions that could have exerted powerful influences on the self being before one is prepared to contemplate with questions of such social dwellings.

After all, the approach I have been taking on is somewhat echoing with the postmodern practice approach of Michael White and David Epston's Dulwich Centre in Adelaide (Australia) focusing on the use of narrative therapy (White and Epston, 1990), with the fundamental principles of (1) focusing on the Narratives that shape service users' lives; (2) separate the person from the problem; (3) reconstruct the dominant story of the self as one of survival, courage, responsibility and active resistance (Healy, 2005). The fundamental difference remains on my beliefs is *not* to treat the activities on "therapeutic terms" and the use of multiple arts as alternative options for narrativity. I truly believe, according to the 9-year long endeavor and witnessing of related workshops, that the actions I have taken could definitely serve as alternative approaches in social practice, especially on learning and self-empowerment, further taking the Strengths perspective<sup>86</sup> (Saleebey, 1996 & 1997; Weick *et al.*, 1989) into the context of theatrical frameworks rather than staying onto the narrow realm of "listening as the method" (Van Wormer, 2001:32) as the only orientation approach to problem-solving. In the process of adopting a liberal perspective with aspirations for change among individuals, before placing all the "responsibility" on the shoulder of individuals, it is vital to activate their imagination and positive assets left undiscovered before the genuine growing awareness of matters in community level. Thus, the work is in fact beyond respect and potentials; it is about the ability to remap, or to re-narrate, one's historicity and to unveil tacit knowledge beyond any particular issue being singled out on a task-fulfilling basis. It is through sound self-understanding, with the belief that "knowledge is action," (Baert, 2005:154) that one can possibly open up alternative scenarios so as to "reconceptualize our selves, our culture and our surroundings" (Ibid, 156) in re-defined social settings.

Theatrical frameworks, in expanding Goffman's vision, are, therefore, borrowed and adopted to provide alternative routes for betterment of the self. Within such frameworks, the diversity in methodologies and the potential gained in multiplicity should be addressed. One should no longer stay as a spectator; one should involve deep into the co-learning process that often take more than sheer conversation or listening – the quality of observation and interactive play, i.e. with active practical consciousness, taken in the course of actions would be the key to any effective running of performance building among individuals, and the possible community performance incorporated thereof or after. As Kögler (1996) pointed out, echoing Rorty's proposal for an "edifying" philosophy (1979: 370), it is important to promote the pragmatic perspectives of "self-referential" forms of knowledge acquisition in which individuals learn to see themselves, their own culture and their own presuppositions from a different perspective, and to contrast this reinterpretation with alternative forms of life." (Kögler, 159-214; summed up by Baert, 2005:156)

Therefore, the approaches in viewing the image of *silly H.* was essentially something fundamental, something like a no-nonsense kind of take-off by building its particularity from every possible conceivable plane every time when I have to engage in particular interaction with workshop participants, including parents, children, teenagers, students, teachers, social workers, and all possible *co-participants*, i.e. co-workers and facilitators. It is the grounding of beliefs that I have been learning and gaining through my upbringing, my theatre works, i.e. my dreamWORKs, and thereafter all the art/theatre-in-education for community performance building. The self-reflection through theatre-art-frameworks on the self in the act of creative thesis

writing as unfolded in previous chapters could be in fact the pre-requisite, at least for me as an individual being, a theatre director and a workshop teacher-facilitator, to any substantial and insightful observation and actions-to-be to take place if one is sincere about working with others on such collaborative co-learning basis. The multi-layered reflection, i.e. something equivalent to the 3-tiered reflection I have been re-examining in this thesis, from the chain of experiences taken since one's birth, ghost plays to apparitional-creative synthesis thereof put forth would be some necessary understanding and grounding exercises for all who intend to break into the parameter of adopting art as bridge-building for better self-understanding and better community performance, eventually speaking, which all begins with the living matrix-like-community within one's body-mind. It is all about the disciplines one has to adopt in the process of remapping the mapped self before acting upon any further interactions with co-learning bodies. Yet in view of the complexities of the ever-ready information and ideas available, how one possibly resumes to the "basics" and go beyond the overwhelming influences of the world wide web and fast growing multiple effects of computer technology on everyday life would look like a war of conflicting values triggered by the ever-spreading information dissemination and the inescapable internal physiological adaptation of individuals.

***Final words II (East-Westbound): Remapping the body as a subjective object***

Reading Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* is always an enlightening experience. Not only do I relate to his use of pseudonym in writing that re-affirms my reasoning in writing as a *lunatic*<sup>87</sup>, which seems to be the best way by far "to stop [my] thoughts being mutated into yet another 'system' for human existence" (Watts, 2003:65), I have

come to realize the importance of faith re-built through *infinite resignation* (Kierkegaard, 2003:74-75), where “the secret of life is that everyone must sew it for himself” (Ibid, 74). Resignation does not mean to withdraw oneself from learning. Quite the opposite, it frees up my senses to learn more than I used to be. “For what I win in *resignation* is my eternal consciousness.” (Ibid, 77 / my italics) (It echoes the distant thoughts of Laozi at the back of my mind.) Being raised as a catholic and educated under the colonial repressive schooling and religious systems, the “fear” and “trembling” behind “mimicry” (Bhabha, 2006[1994]:121-131) of colonial discourse had literally *electrocuted* my senses and internal power from any insightful learning when I was young. Being the descendant of refugee-parents, someone who ran away from homeland for sheer economic betterment, the lack of heritage and cultural sensitivity that embedded by stereotypical Confucian moral connotations had critically alienated my everyday scenes with severe ambivalence in cultural identity and personal constructs. Re-identifying those colonial forms and traces means to learn to liberate the already fouled-up language system within me, i.e. half-English, half-Cantonese and half-Mandarin (or *chinglish* as I was once labeled back in USA), which subsequently made up a *phantasmatic-language-subversive monster*, as if someone who were forced only to learn the “structure” of [*foreign*] language as *prescribed* and cut off its natural “communicative” sensitivity<sup>88</sup>. It is an *act* to retrieve, in Chomsky’s term, “the innate organization of the mind” (2007[1975]) and allow alternative mindset for a “normalized” education and “self-disciplinary powers” I was/am supposed to be rightfully entitled as an individual. Remapping my body-mind means allowing the self to re-surface from a prescribed close and fixed culture to identify the “mummification of individual thinking” (Fanon, 1970:44) once imposed by socio-political and

epistemological systems reinforced by colonial perceptions. Such colonial scrutiny that seems to transform through the so-called post-colonial Hong Kong, where traces of colonial fixation are seeking their mirroring mutation into the Special Administrative Region that is still mostly governed by a group of ex-colonial bureaucrats and technocrats who were/are constructed under the *imaginary* of colonial subject, is apparently still seeking its articulation in many ordinary folks who are basically disavowed or negated in sounding off their rights as subjective beings. While these are very much the precepts and background of my stories of *ghosts plays* and *apparitional synthesis*, through which a series of ideas on *creative synthesis* are subsequently established as alternative strategies to escape from (or counter-play) any further threats of being colonized by stereotypes, “the apparatus...inscribed in [the] play of power” (Foucault, 1980:196).

One of the most powerful actions is to *resign* oneself back to the subjective *presence*. Be the body-mind “prejudiced,” which Gadamer argued as “the condition of consciousness,” something long “located in the interpretative traditions, the network of beliefs, presuppositions, values and above all language which pre-constitute the world for consciousness to know” (Usher & Edwards, 2003:57-58), “existence,” as Kierkegaard suggested, “is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, and the existing individual is both finite and infinite,” (1960:350) that allows our imagination (infinity) as a creative being to go beyond perceived components of our reality (finite). Being subjective is utterly the learning through the *process of becoming* on the basis of the living moments that unfold in view of our body-mind. It is all about *our way of being*. And *presence* is “where the subject ‘sees’ clearly and systematically...an autonomous



being who simply ‘sees’ with both an internal and externally directed gaze untouched by the social form” (Usher & Edwards, 2003:57). It is to re-hold the control of such self-consciousness that helps us regain the subjectivity of being and remount the self in the openness to knowledge that is *present* and *transparent*. How possibly can one grasp the whole reality, especially for ordinary folks who are often deprived of the space to out-live the fixity as seemingly prepared and readily generated in the mass media? There are always something bound to be unknown anyway, or no matter what, that we, the subjective beings, are constantly changing with the world around or presented to us. For the last resort, we can always resign back to the body as the fundamental *object* of the self. It is a matter of retrieved courage to go beyond the teacher’s old saying in classroom: “You **have** to **complete** the things you set out to do!” We can be more “complete” as we go by on the gain of a day-to-day basis. There is always “a *necessary* incompleteness” (Ibid, 58) since we are, as Bergson suggested, always shifting in the middle of such an incomplete movement. (Deleuze, 2001[1983]) Therefore, I am not going to get too much into such philosophical argument (which would be another separate specialized subject for discourse); I would focus on the possible physical actions to exercise the body-mind back to its *presence* by going beyond our habitual self, infiltrating the bodily system with alternative self-willed journey...

In “Zen and the Art of Tea,” Daisetz Suzuki wrote:

“The elimination of the unnecessary is achieved by Zen in its intuitive grasp of final reality...the art of tea is the aestheticism of primitive simplicity...Zen...aims at stripping off all the artificially wrappings humanity has devised, supposedly for its own solemnization. Zen first of all combats the intellect; for, in spite of its

practical usefulness, the intellect goes against our effort to delve into the depths of being. Philosophy may propose all kinds of questions for intellectual solution, but it never claims to give us the spiritual satisfaction which must be accessible to every one of us, however intellectually undeveloped he may be. *Philosophy is accessible only to those who are intellectually equipped, and thus it cannot be a discipline of universal appreciation.* Zen...is to cast off all one thinks he possesses, even life, and to get back to the ultimate state of being, the 'Original Abode,' one's own father or mother. This can be done by everyone of us, for we are what we are because of it or him or her, and without it or him or her we are nothing..." (*italics added*) (1998:55-6)

Ironically speaking, to an extent, even "Zen" could fall into its own "intellectual trap" for being just another "school of thoughts" or "specialized discipline" if one is taking it on literally as another "branch of philosophy" still very much *inaccessible* to ordinary people. I am not citing Suzuki's passage simply to advocate the greatness of Zen or urging anyone to be a Zen master. I simply find it quite inspiring to re-think the possibility of touching base with the body without any pre-requisite of knowing specific field of philosophy to begin with, which is indeed something fairly inaccessible to ordinary people. Yet as education or socio-cultural service provider and facilitator, one does have to equip oneself the way to build particular pathways or bridges for ordinary folks to re-enter their bodies left deserted or unattended out of unintentional negligence or being mummified by social claims. The "Zen" in us all, distantly echoing Polanyi's thought, may be saying these final words, echoing the song of Burt Bacharach and Hal David, "a house is not a home" until there is room for the Zen of love:

There is a room within the bodyscape seated the energy center of the Self!

There are multiple-rooms within the Self where seated the Five Wits oh so  
beautiful...

There are intricate rooms where one shall see the shape of tales hidden beyond the  
map of the body....

There are the Lived/Living rooms of an individual echolocating matter and memory  
lost and found...

There is the ultimate room to empty the Self as “the Way”!

Looking back. The path as laid in this thesis may have long been routed since the dawn  
I began writing:

From dawn, the world was already set up for humankind.

From dawn, I didn't set up the world. It is the world that set me up.

I toed the line and stepped onto the world stage.

I gingerly learnt to perform according to the grid of stage  
already laid down by ancestors.

Eventually, I learnt to set up my own stage,

Re-examining the world stage I was put on.

I performed. I created performance. I observe others and myself performing.

We are all *ACT*ors. Learning through performance.

This is an investigation of *actors* and *performance*.

This is an attempt to remount a new stage to study  
through the community built within the body.

*It was* about the performance of the body.

And still *IS*.

I see reflection of my past performance.

I make attempts to reconstruct a body tamed, abused and out of joint.

I don't see just a body, but a community constant reconstructing itself....

I don't just see things in performance. I share experience.

From dawn till....

I see myself, and others, perform quite differently,  
each with a community of his or her own,

yet inter-connecting,  
seeking materialization of a bigger community....

These have been an effort  
to investigate the *differences* that we may be able to make,  
in order to come to  
an understanding of living,  
very much a philosophical inquiry  
into the nature of *personal constructs*....

## NOTES for CHAPTER FIVE:

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- <sup>1</sup> Excerpted from the 1964 song *A House is not A Home*, first sung by Dionne Warwick.
- <sup>2</sup> It was a 1994 WEGA FILM production written and directed by Michael Haneke and produced by Veit Heiduschka (Austria/Germany, Color, 95 min., 1.85:1).
- <sup>3</sup> In late 15<sup>th</sup> Century, there was a morality English play called *Everyman* written by an anonymous writer. In the play, there is a character named Five Wits, a useless and unreliable creature because of his/her “unregulated powers.” (Scott, 1985:45)
- <sup>4</sup> The data as collected from play actions projected by participants are by nature qualitative, mainly through observations progressively generated by participants along side with participating workshop tutors/social workers. The reflection and analysis evolving the actions as grounded for specific studies of issues or problems raised by participants would generate further inquiry through re-designed play, with rule(s) and regulation(s) specifically re-initiated according to the newly discovered perspectives. As Simmons and Gregory’s grounded actions theory suggested, all such “data” as observed and collected through actions would be under “constant comparison – not as a problem but as an opportunity.” (2003:4.1.2)
- <sup>5</sup> In the past two decades, the ideology of managerialism or new public management (NPM), the ideas of neo-liberalism and the rhetoric of economic rationalism have become very popular, creating a very strong force that has significantly affected the running of the public sector. The growing tide of “managerialism” has affected not only the public sector management discourse but also education development. Amidst the pressure for management efficiency in the face of widened access and reduced resources, the use of market or economic principles is seen as a disciplinary mechanism to make the education sector and its people work harder, more efficiently and effectively. (Mok & Tan, 2004:15)
- <sup>6</sup> The situation is getting quite hefty when such culture is under severe monitoring by the Authority and parties of economic and political self-interests. Loader and Mulcahy once wrote, “...policing culture appears today to be structured around a conflict between the ‘modernizing’ zeal of consumerism and managerialism and a nostalgic yearning for the solidarity of community. Yet for all that they differ in outlook and emotional tone, these ‘dominant’ and ‘residual’ forms contribute to a broadly similar outcome: namely, a cultural complex of impatient, other-disregarding and seemingly insatiable demands. This situation can be interpreted, or so we have argued, as a consequence of processes of individualization and detraditionalization. But it is also the product of a failure of democratization...public sentiments marked by anger, frustration, and disenchantment arise, in other words, from a polity that lacks institutional spaces through which competing demands can engage in mutual dialogue, and by these means be subject to democratic governance.” (2003:320)
- <sup>7</sup> John Clark (1996) has made such comments in his article *Public Nightmare and Communitarian Dreams*, “Ideologically, managerialism is the representative of those “good business practices” that the public sector needed to learn from the private sector: how to be dynamic, competitive, efficient and customer centred. Managerialism promises to overcome the problems and limitations of the ‘old regime’ of bureau-professionalism. In practice, it has provided the means of installing new disciplines in state welfare agencies. It has carried the demands of new pseudo-competitive environments, the shift to purchaser-provider or other contracting relationships, and a greater ‘budgetary consciousness’. Managerialism has been used as the ‘ideological cement’ which holds together the new dispersed form of state welfare, both as a generalized ideological formation and as a set of specific discourses in the practice of intra- and inter-organizational coordination.” (p.74)

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- <sup>8</sup> Jan Švankmajer had witnessed the social changes since the velvet revolution of Czechoslovakia in 1989 and how the country had transformed from communist setting to capitalistic one.
- <sup>9</sup> Words borrowed from *A Conversation with John Holt* (1980) with interviewer Marlene Bumgarner for The Natural Child Project. In: [[http://www.naturalchild.org/guest/marlene\\_bumgarner.html](http://www.naturalchild.org/guest/marlene_bumgarner.html)]. Retrieved on November 11, 2006.
- <sup>10</sup> Nobel Prize recipient in Literature, 2004.
- <sup>11</sup> To Polanyi, there are two kinds of knowing: (1) knowing a thing by *attending to it*, in the way we attend to an entity as a whole and (2) knowing a thing *by relying on our awareness of it for the purpose of attending to an entity to which it contributes*. (1962:601)
- <sup>12</sup> I have to emphasize here that it is not the “psychodrama” as advocated by drama therapists. The source of art-in-actions does not only involve theatre and drama elements. It incorporates a wide range of art forms to open up alternative routes of self-discovery. As in experimentation of role play, it is not only through dramatic play or scene work, or the “five sequential phases” advocated by Emunah’s drama therapy (1994), it is through the multiple echolocation of the self through different art form to allow drawing participants’ distinctive awareness and special attention to behavior and choice of actions as continually devised in the process of using art to build alternative experiences. Their acts could often be inspired by rituals self-implemented through play to unleash the unconscious constraints often left neglected in daily living without knowing it.
- <sup>13</sup> Drama educator Richard Courtney (1989: 92) sees theatrical play as “a central position for individual process of learning and thinking.” Through acting-out the unconscious, it is possible to transcend the intellect of body-mind to potential experiences of sublimation.
- <sup>14</sup> Excerpted from Eva Navratilova’s *The Absurdity of Beckett*, In (Chapter Two): [[http://mural.uv.es/anlsvii/2\\_biography.htm](http://mural.uv.es/anlsvii/2_biography.htm)]. Retrieved on January 12, 2008.
- <sup>15</sup> Francis Fukuyama (2002) has warned us the forthcoming of posthuman era and the likely impact cast upon us all in view of the expanding biotechnological development in the recent decade.
- <sup>16</sup> The “critical consciousness” Freire has been advocating is precisely what local teachers and social workers have mostly not acquired or carried along in education. Freire’s emphasis on the learner’s life situation has in fact mostly been excluded to accommodate the administrative oriented target approach education, failing to raise the needed consciousness among learners and facilitators and subsequently, never truly tackle the obstacles of learning for the oppressed.
- <sup>17</sup> A team of two or more co-teachers is a basic criterion for setting up workshops of such nature. While one is focusing on the overall guidance of formulating grid for potential directions, the other would be focusing on individual performance – not to perfect their bodywork but rather to help identify the mental and physical blocks therein and help locate the source of such phenomena.
- <sup>18</sup> Gardner (1983/1993) has formulated a list of eight intelligences: logical-mathematical intelligence; linguistic intelligence; spatial intelligence; musical intelligence; bodily-kinesthetic intelligence; interpersonal intelligence; intrapersonal intelligence and naturalistic intelligence.
- <sup>19</sup> In her book *Wisdom of the Body Moving* exploring the importance of body-mind centering, Linda Hartley has once written about the human skin, “When we touch another person’s body our first contact is with the skin, the primary boundary that differentiates the physical body within from other physical bodies outside. Through awareness of this boundary, gained through the experiences of contact with the world outside, the infant first begins to identify itself as a

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unique and relatively separate individual. In this experience are the first intimations of selfhood.” (1995: 132)

- <sup>20</sup> It is an in-depth process of studies on the bodily systems, allowing the participants to retrieve the awareness of the self through specific physical journeys into the “minds” of the various bodily systems, as occupational therapist Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen suggested (Hartley, 1995), “from skeletal and muscular systems to the quite different inner lives of digestive, lymphatic, urinary, respiratory, vocal, circulatory, endocrine, and reproductive organs.” It is through special exercises of the bodily systems to retain the awareness of the body-mind and its power of centering the self in relation to the world of images, feelings, sensations and intuition often undermined in the urban upbringing.
- <sup>21</sup> Pirkko Markula (2006) has once derived her observation of the dancing body from Gilles Deleuze’s theory of “Body without Organs” and sees the potential of researching on the subject of femininity through the body in dancing performance. In the end, it is not the performance that matters; it is the contexts the dancing body engaged in and the emotions and subconsciousness unraveled through movement.
- <sup>22</sup> The time factor can be critical, especially when we are living in an age and place not many would be willing to “spare” enough time for enduring exploration. Very often, the time frame as set for many workshops can easily be scrutinized by “managerial conveniences” and “marketing beliefs,” severely jeopardizing the necessary time factor in germinating the potential development among individuals.
- <sup>23</sup> Richard Palmer (2001), Emeritus professor of philosophy and Religion in MacMurray College, so summarized Gadamer’s critique on *compartmentalization of knowledge* in a postmodern conference: “The era of specialization necessary in science leads in its imitators in other disciplines to the compartmentalization of knowledge, and also to compartmentalized activity that contradicts the good of the whole. Gadamer’s philosophical life has been one of crossing disciplinary barriers. The journal he edited with Helmut Kuhn for twenty years, the *Philosophische Rundschau*, reached out to a wide spectrum of philosophical positions and to the contributions of other disciplines that would bear on philosophy. His own writings involve art, poetry, politics, language theory, foreign publications, music, theory of history, deconstruction, Habermas’ social theory, and other areas. His movement of the interpretive horizon back to its existential roots and its rootedness in tradition runs counter to the kind of compartmentalization of knowledge more and more typical of the twentieth century. He reached out to analytic philosophy, deconstruction, and other currents, and when the book on his philosophy in the “Library of Living Philosophers” was being put together, he looked for people who disagreed with him rather than those who supported him.” URL site: [<http://www.mac.edu/faculty/richardpalmer/POSTMODERN/openings.htm#compartmentalization>] Retrieved on August 3, 2008.
- <sup>24</sup> Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* has its prophetic vision drawing observations and analysis on the human body on aspects way ahead of its time. It sees *Melancholy* as a habit, something like a serious ailment, a prelude to Bourdieu’s studies of *habitus*.
- <sup>25</sup> While in Bourdieu’s world of *habitus*, he sees social structure as something objective and the individual members as subjective agents, interpreting mental experiences into specific cognitive and somatic dispositions, yet the acquired patterns of thoughts, beliefs, behavior and taste of common folks are often pre-fabricated or preconditioned by norms proliferated by the media and the Authority. The internalization process of such premeditated values has often scrutinized individual beings into non-transitory mode of living, often heavily discontent with the *self* off-balanced and consumed by fabricating values.

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- <sup>26</sup> STOMP is a non-traditional dance troupe (originating in Brighton, UK) that uses the body and ordinary objects to create a physical theatre performance, where the body is incorporated with objects as a means of producing percussion and movement that has echoes of tribal dance. (Wikipedia source: [[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stomp\\_%28dance\\_troupe%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stomp_%28dance_troupe%29)]. Retrieved on June 24, 2008.)
- <sup>27</sup> It is an idea borrowed from Chin Kwok Wai, the vice-principal percussionist of the Chinese Orchestra of Hong Kong, in the way he has been training young percussionists. It is also the fundamental training for *Daiko* and *Taiko* artists.
- <sup>28</sup> The pilgrim-like intensive disciplinary and spiritual training advocated by the Taiwan U Theatre is another aspect of inspiration on the use of drums for youth works.
- <sup>29</sup> The “discipline” should be willed by the group as a whole, ***not enforced by “the Authority,”*** which could easily be falsely amplified by the workshop tutors or participating social workers as “the convenient leaders.”
- <sup>30</sup> The open street has been a significant factor in opening up the individual body-mind to better focus on the quality of performance if the participating bodies are running in self-orchestrated discipline formation.
- <sup>31</sup> I have often deliberately invited members of low self-esteem to play the lead or the *Daiko*, which often signifies the core base of drumming within the ensemble. It has always been tough in the beginning. But eventually, the transformation on this insecure body-mind has been quite encouraging. The will to drum has placed a big challenge to the struggling mind. While the world is prevailing with fittest to play the strongest part, I often arrange things the other way round to trigger a process-based training for the body-mind, both for the *seemingly strong* and the *mindfully weak*.
- <sup>32</sup> It is important to let the participants to develop their own sense of discipline based on self-discovering necessities in the course of performing, not something imposed by the “Authority.” It is the fundamental root of building sound awareness of the body-mind in relating the self to the community whole.
- <sup>33</sup> The participating group is to resolve all individual and group problems together without any true intervention of the facilitator or tutor. Even in the middle of chaos, they have to learn to accept that particular state of being and “unbecoming” performance as generated.
- <sup>34</sup> Since it has been trendy to put on art performance as alternative services for youth, some social service organizations would mistake the whole concept and transfer the art performance as the annual organized events mainly for the sake of putting on shows rather than treating them as innovative exercises for the well being of participants. As a result, I have heard a lot of complaints from participants on being used as puppets for showcases. One of the international NGO (H.K.) organizations had once invited me to design an interactive education centre for the education branch. Unfortunately, they have only taken the superficial outset of the design, with running concept never taken further into true execution of using arts as educational vehicle.
- <sup>35</sup> These are also the points brought up among educators and artists on using puppetry for education in the meeting of UNIMA Education Commission at the Sibenik Festival held in June 2006. URL site: [<http://pagesperso-orange.fr/unima/uniE148.htm>]. Retrieved on February 17, 2008.
- <sup>36</sup> The irony is as Cree once exclaimed, “Sociologists ask questions; social workers must act as though they have answers.” (2000:6)



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- <sup>37</sup> Up till now, there still is not a single course on the social and cognitive impact of moving pictures being held for students in the social sciences and education departments of Hong Kong universities.
- <sup>38</sup> It is the name of an education website focusing on “transforming education through information technologies.” URL site: [<http://connect.educause.edu/>]. Retrieved on April 23, 2008.
- <sup>39</sup> Jeff VanDrimmelen (2007) suggested five ways of using video in education: record class presentations; video projects; instructional video; video blog; use online video already available. URL site: [<http://connect.educause.edu/blog/jeffvand/fivewaysyoucouldusevideoi/16704?time=1220151567>]. Retrieved on August 20, 2008. We do have to bear in mind though: What truly matters is not the “ways” of using video; it is the context of application and images as depicted in the video.
- <sup>40</sup> In the article “No Child Left Behind” published by *libraryvideo.com*, it has extensively shared a list of scientific related findings on the improvements of learning by using video in the classroom. URL site: [<http://www.libraryvideo.com/articles/article18.asp>].
- <sup>41</sup> Henry Jenkins (2000) sees videogames as “an art form for the digital age” and Shuker (1995) sees “video games...a major cultural form, and may well soon replace cinema, cable and broadcast television as the dominant popular medium.”
- <sup>42</sup> At interviews, I often use video camera as an alternative tool to allow quiet interviewees to share with the interviewers their thoughts over the proceeding interviews to come. Through their actions, a great sense of instant achievement often shows and helps “break the ice” immediately.
- <sup>43</sup> James M. Marshall (2002) has once cited a variety of educational theories – the arousal theory, the short-term gratification theory and the interest stimulation theory – in supporting his argument of the benefits of using multimedia in teaching and learning. URL site: [[http://www.medialit.org/reading\\_room/pdf/545\\_CICReportLearningwithTechnology.pdf](http://www.medialit.org/reading_room/pdf/545_CICReportLearningwithTechnology.pdf)] Retrieved on May 2, 2007.
- <sup>44</sup> I had experienced such an incident: a collaborating social worker forbid us to use video camera unless having all the participants to sign an agreement of confidentiality. Other than the habitual act of “standard procedure,” I could understand why such an action was initiated – the paradox of “protection of *clients*’ interest warranted by the ethical code of social work.” I thought it would be so much better if it could be turned into an educational process of understanding and discovering the potential dilemma behind the social worker’s proposition, not simply close off all options by strict signing of agreement with value subject never thoroughly examined by participants.
- <sup>45</sup> In Deleuze and Guattari’s 1994 publication *What is Philosophy?* (New York: University Press), they describe artwork as “monument” (155; 164), emphasizing the block of sensations an artwork does conserve, regardless its physical size. They consider all human gestures, no matter how minimal they may seem at times, and perceived phenomenon as portrayed in an artwork are in fact in themselves “monumental” moments that are physically conserved.
- <sup>46</sup> I had once invited Yeung Sau Cheung, a renowned painter in Hong Kong, to host one of the workshops for *Drumming Voices*. He had introduced the use of corn leaves, bamboo sticks and strings to create brushes for painting.
- <sup>47</sup> Dennis Atkinson argues in his book, *Art in Education: Identity and Practice* (2002), that it is often discourses construct *pedagogised identities* (pp. 121-124) of teachers and learners, with “material practices” of assessment and curriculum policy in art education to construct

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*pedagogised subjects*, which all arises as “a consequence of valuing and legitimizing particular kinds of teaching and learning experiences in art.” (p. 4)

- <sup>48</sup> The subtitle of Paulo Freire’s book *Teachers as Cultural Workers*.
- <sup>49</sup> It was also those years filled with emotional turmoil when I wrote most of my poems back then. The experiences had proved to be critically important to help me through difficult times in sorting out confusing issues and troubling thoughts.
- <sup>50</sup> In 2003, one of the scenes written for Theatre Fanatico’s youth musical *Tears No More*, a special commission by Hong Kong Leisure and Culture Services Department’s International Arts Carnival was indirectly censored for singing about the natural phenomenon of masturbation among boys at puberty. The reason was: “not suitable content for family audience.” The production team was advised to delete the scene.
- <sup>51</sup> John Dewey once wrote the introduction for F.M. Alexander’s book *The Use of the Self* (1932) and advocated Alexander’s technique on the mastery of physical energies that enable individuals to secure the right use of their selves.
- <sup>52</sup> Other than the monumental work *Waiting for Godot* (1952), *Endgame* (1957) and *Happy Days* (1960), Beckett had constantly focused on the human drama of waiting before death throughout his novels and short plays. It is quite amazing on Beckett’s productivity and imagination on this existential human enigma, which could be treated as alternative thoughts on creativity.
- <sup>53</sup> Many social organizations have declined my proposed workshop schedule for being “too long” or “too unrealistic” to parents’ consumer sensitivity and “standard practice.” Likewise, I would refuse to collaborate with organizations that refused to acknowledge the importance of a reasonable time frame for workshopping, i.e. an extensive period of meetings amounted to at least four 6-hour sessions per week and a minimum of 7 to 8 weeks for every workshop cycle. The specific time available has proven to be critical to allow participants the needed space to digest the experiences enlivened thereof.
- <sup>54</sup> The questions I often heard from institutional officers and NGO executives during the workshops are:  
*1. Are there any presentations at end of workshop? 2. When would you rehearse for presentations? 3. What kind of presentation would it be? 4. Could you give me the details so that we could put things up to the Press according to schedules as set forth? 5. Could there be a ceremony held by an honorable member of the Board of Directors before the presentation? 6. Could you give me a list of things that you have been doing in the workshops? 7. How are you going to dress up the performance? 8. Could the whole thing finish with less time?*
- <sup>55</sup> Two mime work *Act without Words I & II* developed by Beckett in 1956 could serve as an elaborating platform for innovative thoughts in educating the body-mind without the use of speech.
- <sup>56</sup> Remapping the living space has been an important part of the workshop built for rediscovering self-innovation. In the course of re-trailing the paths of objects resided in one’s living space, the long lost poetry of living is suddenly reemerged into the body-mind, as if re-vitalizing some forgotten inner emotional zone that has played important roles in one’s upbringing. In such an exercise, I have observed a lot of “miracles” performed by participants, enlivening some lost spirit and unknitting some abusive family ties that shaken up one’s persona.
- <sup>57</sup> It is quite often that participation is being treated as “the grand rule of cooperation,” as if forcing pluralistic actions in the good name of “reform” under the façade of pure technicality advocated by administrative-centered merits. As Benhabib (1982:81) put it, “Participationism is not an answer to the dilemmas of modern identity, estrangement, anomie and homelessness. For on the participationist model, the public sentiment which is encouraged is not

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reconciliation and harmony, but rather political agency and efficacy, namely the sense that we have a say in the economic, political and civic arrangements which define our lives together, and that what one does makes a difference.” In his discussion paper for Council of Europe, Adalbert Evers summed up **participationism** as something that “offers a rich manual for a concept of user involvement that that gives users the promise of gaining a lot of impact but also requires them to give a lot in return. By highlighting people’s role as citizens and members of communities beside their sole roles as workers, consumers and private (family) beings, it runs counter to a society where everyone specializes on his very personal interest and tasks. This may be seen both as the strong and/or the weak element of this strand of thinking.” URL site: [<http://www.coe.int/t/dg3/socialpolicies/socialrights/source/SocServEversRep.doc>] Retrieved on September 26, 2007.

<sup>58</sup> As there is not any established cultural policy in Hong Kong, artists are only offered annual community scheme open for tendering. Not knowing if the proposed project would be accepted or not, marking one’s “marketable skills” and “*bargainable* flexibilities” would prove beneficial to survival. As a result, there is often a lack of long-term commitment or vision to most community art project in the city.

<sup>59</sup> According to “The Role of the Social Worker in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Literature Review” (Asquith, Clark & Waterhouse: 2005), one of the sections so summarized that “a variant approach to social work is found in the continental tradition of social pedagogy. This stresses the educational role of the professional and the potential of individuals to address their family and social situation through the acquisition of appropriate skills and knowledge. It shares with the main tradition of social work the emphasis on human relationships and a holistic approach to social problems.” URL site: [<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/12/1994633/46336>]. Retrieved on July 22, 2008.

<sup>60</sup> The following is the chart I used to share with students on the role of a theatre director, someone that should have the mind of a/an/the...

Painter	Sociologist	Sign reader	Map reader
Psychologist	Philosopher	Designer	Map maker
Novelist	Anthropologist	Editor	Journalist
Architect	World reader	Observer	Photographer
Composer	Social critic	Analyst	Musician
Image-maker	Political critic	Doctor	Dreamer
Player	Culture critic	Researcher	Adventurer
Gambler	Driver	Sculptor	Humanitarian
Speaker	Collaborator	Choreographer	Commander-in-chief
Animal	Lover	Negotiator	Fish
Communist	Collector	Janitor	Business executive
Economist	Capitalist	Poet	Ice-breaker
Humorist	Writer	Priest	Joker
Moralist	Gardener	Blues singer	Ritual maker
Social worker	Salesman	Deaf person	Music director
Autistic person	Blind person	Lunatic	Physical disabled
Ship captain	Patient	Commentator	Protestor
Postmodernist	Engineer	Mountain climber	Modernist
Magician	Politician	Mother	Performer
Father	<i>Conscientious person</i>	Sister	Child
Brother	Palm reader	( <i>im</i> )perfectionist	Good cousin
Communicator	Loner	Astrologist	Articulator
Installation artist	Translator	Historian	Artist
Interpreter	Pessimist	Structuralist	<i>Human</i> being
Optimist	<i>Discipline</i>	Holist	Spectator
Phenomenologist	<i>Master/mistress</i>	Scientist	Witness
Scenographer	Craftsman	Scholar	Mathematician
Traveler	Winner	Worker	Common man
Loser	Corrupted	Cinematographer	Deaf
Innocent	Gambler	Abused	Grotesque
Player	Card-player	Musician	Footballer
Goal-keeper and <i>more...</i>		Wielder	Miner

<sup>61</sup> A social networking website founded by Mark Zuckerberg and Dustin Moskovitz. It was launched on February 4, 2004.

<sup>62</sup> URL site: [<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=6354421988>] Retrieved on May 11, 2008.

<sup>63</sup> From *Stray Birds*, 1916. New York: The Macmillan Company. LXXV

<sup>64</sup> URL site: [<http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>]. Retrieved on June 18, 2008. By the time when this thesis is published, the statistic data has altered drastically. the number of virtual applications would likewise be mounting up to a much bigger figures according to the staggering popularity of this social network.

<sup>65</sup> The full quote is: “Do not read, as children do, to amuse yourself, or like the ambitious, for the purpose of instruction. No, read in order to live.” (1857)

<sup>66</sup> Based on the Facebook statistics up till June 18, 2008, there are 80 million regular users. URL site: [<http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>]. Retrieved on June 18, 2008. According to Quantcast.com 2010-10-27 data info, as Facebook has 135.1 million monthly unique U.S. visitors, not counting those active users outside U.S.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> That was how she addressed herself in her email.

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- <sup>69</sup> Her son once ran away from home when he was only five due to significant family violence. Thereafter, he had experienced tremendous emotional uproars with the divorce of his parents. Being a Eurasian has made it a lot more difficult for him to fit in the “regular” school. As a result, he has been labeled as “hyperactive” and often placed in “special class” at school for his short concentration span. Apparently nobody would bother to find out why he did not pay the “expected” attention in class. Out of the defeating experiences, he had got more and more agitated by the way he was “specially” treated.
- <sup>70</sup> In an email *silly H.* sent me on June 18, 2008, she wrote (I keep all the wordings intact, including grammatical errors, as shown in the mail):  
*“After 20 yrs of non-stop working earning \$\$\$, I thought I can BUY happiness, have house, expensive clothes, eat in top restaurants as told by the adults, by the society since was born, but something is still missing.  
I didn't see the beauty around me, hardly have feeling on others apart showing off. Feel helpless and couldn't do much when son cried for help (apart from paying expensive lesson and go to international school), cannot change the marriage status. The world seems so cold.... So what have I got?  
It's only sound of the rain on the roof, Jamie slept deeply, we have less and less but feel more and more grounded, feel myself is present.  
Everyday on the street people are blaming the weather to the rain, the storm and earthquake, the stock market, oil price, food price, avian flu etc etc. So am asking myself what is the source of all these misfortune?”*
- <sup>71</sup> In fact, silly H. has been taking up a lot of classes, including dance, tai chi, music theory, theatre, art, gardening and related educational workshops. For some, like the Re-mapping Hong Kong community arts project of Theatre Fanatico, which she did take part together with her son.
- <sup>72</sup> Geertz's description of the Balinese concept of the person gives us some different insight: “...anything characteristic of the individual merely because he is who he is physically, psychologically or biographically, is muted in favor of his assigned place in the continuing, and, so it is thought, never-changing pageant that is Balinese life. It is *dramatis personae*, not actors, that endure; indeed it is *dramatis personae*, not actors, that in the proper sense really exist. Physically men come and go – mere incidents in a happenstance history of no genuine importance, even to themselves. But the masks they wear, the stage they occupy, the parts they play, and most important, the spectacle they mount remain and constitute not the façade but the substance of things, not least the self” (1975:50)
- <sup>73</sup> The “listening, hearing and speaking” I described here is quite different from Harlene Anderson's concept of “treatment dialogue” based on therapeutic exercises. Her presentation at the Eighth Annual Open Dialogue Conference on “What is helpful in Treatment Dialogue?” with focus on the aspect of “listening, hearing and speaking” would easily lock oneself in a client-therapist power relationship. The nature of “interaction” could easily be idealized or taken for granted based on aestheticized “expertised” beliefs. URL Source: [<http://www.harleneanderson.org/writings/listenhearandspeak.htm>]. Retrieved on June 25, 2008.
- <sup>74</sup> So described in the synopsis of Matthieu Ricard's *Motionless Journey: From a Hermitage in the Himalayas*. URL site: [<http://www.wisdom-books.com/ProductDetail.asp?PID=17822>]. Retrieved on June 16, 2008.
- <sup>75</sup> This is indeed an elaboration on Collins' microsociological look into living moments and their connection to human daily endeavor in his book of the same name, *Interaction Ritual Chains*. (2004)
- <sup>76</sup> Based on figure displayed on the group site on June 18, 2008. URL site: [<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=6354421988>] Retrieved on June 25, 2008.

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- <sup>77</sup> To Bergson, there are only two forms of time: pure time and mathematical time. The former is real duration and the latter is measurable duration. The “duration of time” we often talk about belongs to the latter where time is being divided into intervals or units. To Bergson, it does not reflect the flow of real time. (1999/1946:12-13)
- <sup>78</sup> It was an extension of *drumming voices* program designed to further its muscles into the bigger community. Parents, social workers, teachers and young people were all invited to join the nine-month project to remap the self in dialogues with the community. *Remapping Hong Kong* was first introduced to the community in 2003. It was a program funded and presented by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department of Hong Kong Government.
- <sup>79</sup> According to Karen Burke LeFevre in *Invention as a Social Act* (1987), writing is “an act initiated by a writer and completed by readers, extending over time through a series of transactions and texts. Gregory Clark, in his *Dialogue, Dialectic, and Conversation* (1990), elaborates on Lefevre’s argument that the individual writer and the community of which she is a part are necessarily “coexisting and mutually defining.” (p.1) Clark’s book has given me some serious thoughts over the act of writing, especially the course of experiences taken place throughout this dissertation.
- <sup>80</sup> URL site: [<http://www.woolingling.blogspot.com/>] Retrieved on June 18, 2008.
- <sup>81</sup> It is based on her presentation speech at the *Interrupting Oppression & Sustaining Justice Conference* held at Teachers College, Columbia University in 2004. (Greene, 2004:1)
- <sup>82</sup> Based on transcription of a dialogue between Michael Polanyi and Carl Rogers recorded at KPBS television, San Diego, California, on March 5, 1966 (Rogers and Coulson, 1968, pp.193-201).
- <sup>83</sup> Of course, to Morgan it is quite the other way round, i.e. the imagination to organize an organization: “Imaginization is organization!” In an interview with Joe Katzman on November 13, 1996, Morgan expressed that “the key to implementing imaginization in practice is to recognize that the aim is to create a new context in which new things can happen...the aim is to find new understandings and insights that will open the way to new actions with high leverage on problems of concern.” URL site: [<http://www.imaginiz.com/provocative/imaginization/interview.html>]. Retrieved on October 13, 2007.
- <sup>84</sup> Morgan suggested the creative mixing of six models of organization in *Imaginization: The art of Creative Management* (1993). URL site: [<http://www.imaginiz.com/provocative/metaphors/models.html#model5>]. Retrieved on October 13, 2007.
- <sup>85</sup> Based on *Online Etymology Dictionary*. URL site: [<http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?search=individual&searchmode=none>] Retrieved on June 20, 2008.
- <sup>86</sup> As Healy (2005:155) suggests in view of the development of the Strengths perspective in social practice, there is profound influence from Erving Goffman’s (1991) unmasking of the degree of “social labeling, stigma and marginalization” contributed by institutional services.
- <sup>87</sup> I have been writing my creative diaries under the pseudonym *fung tze* (瘋子), which literally means “a lunatic.” It echoes the name of my theatre company – *fung zi wu toi* (瘋祭舞台), which literally means “the stage for the mad and the rituals.”
- <sup>88</sup> Noam Chomsky had made an extensive argument over Searle’s “common sense picture of human language,” i.e. “structure and function so obviously interact.” (1975:55) What Chomsky clarified is an important note to the freedom of use of language: “I can be using language in the

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strictest sense with no intention of communicating. Though my utterances have a definite meaning, their normal meaning, nevertheless my intentions with regard to an audience may shed no light on this meaning. (Ibid, 61)

## Postscript

A man's ignorance sometimes is not only useful, but beautiful – while his knowledge, so called, is oftentimes worse than useless, besides being ugly...the highest that we can attain is not Knowledge, but Sympathy with Intelligence.

— *Walking*, Henry David Thoreau

A while ago before putting my mind onto this postscript, I was sitting in my landlord's open courtyard enjoying the sun. Having been suffered from a severe flu for a few days since coming back from an acupunctural treatment in Zhuhai of Guangdong province, my body has been aching all over. The joints are especially sensitive after days of rain. The longing for sunlight from within heeded me to get out of my bungalow.

Sky. Hazy. The Sun. Warming up the damp Lam Chuen valley. I sat on an old rocking chair enjoying the rare moment of tranquility. Butterflies. And moths. Fluttering here and there. Birds. Chirping aloud. Dashing in and out of bushes and trees. The memory of two scary porcupines passing right in front of me last night on my way home was still at the back of my mind, wondering: where would they be now? My landlord's dog Momo stopped by saying hello. Her eyes are always inviting for actions. A water hose kept dripping mountain water onto a medium size fish tank, where lived two gold fishes not moving about much. The mountain afar was barely visible under the hazy glare, which lightening up spiders' webs woven along leaves, branches and ruins. Everything seemed to be just "in place," interlocking the present with one another for causes left unspoken. I was, as if an outsider, or, in fact, very much part of the scenario, trying to ease up the usual thinking and weary modes, learning to take advantage of the seemingly uneventful and nothing-in-particular state of natural affairs, with a body-mind *longing* for nothingness.



Did not know how long I had been sitting in the sun, as if time was suddenly standing still for special reasons: all *useful knowledge* suddenly, as in Thoreau's words (1861), diffused into moments of *useful ignorance*, unveiling the potential conceit of this human mind in me. Could the things I wrote back then were only records of a man in search of particular knowledge that were once "positive ignorance," looking for something green as grass? Could increased *self-knowledge*, as Spinoza (1883) once believed, help avoid what is useless?

Today is November 7, 2010. It has been two years one month and seven days since I submitted the dissertation. In this period, drastic things have been taking place both in me and in the people I wrote about in the Paper:

I had moved twice (my 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> round): First, based on an anticipated plan, moved to a "dream" flat over an outlying island; Second moved out to a secluded cottage in Lam Chuen unwillingly due to unwanted encounters, including the separation from a partner whom I had been staying with for ten years;

The unconventional approach of my dissertation had taken me into a 2-year long process of defending its integrity from any potential unethical institutional scrutiny of administratively driven hegemonic nature;

I entered another period (the previous one was twenty years ago) of deep depression and disillusionment, as if Hamlet, Coriolanus, Othello and Hamm all fighting for a part in me. I had eventually wrapped up everything, including the closing of a theatre company I had been running for 15 years, and begun looking for alternatives other than the routes familiarized and paths longing to be repaved for transformation-to-be (only God knows what that could be);

Three members of my family got divorced with their partners and had their life course totally altered, including the young ones and the elderly connected;

My father, turning into his nineties, has become a fan of Facebook and yet we are still not communicating with one another;

C.H. is writing his first musical for his graduate project, seeking to transform his own story on stage while his father is suffering from loneliness and isolation after retirement. He has become the *man* of the house, constantly tempering the fights between his parents;

Silly H. is running her own tiny farm, looking for alternative *green* life that was never possible when she was running her leather trading company. She said that she had been learning so much more about herself and the rebellious past once trodden in making out daily terms with her son who is still suffering from traumatic childhood experiences;

IH turns 60, planning his retirement in a city in Colorado. He is still so keen in promoting his investment ideas with everyone in the family, young and old;

And my cats are no longer living with me...

When daily living often takes shape in peculiar terms without warnings, the conduct and events unfolded are often never conveyed according to “principles” or “circumstances” theorized by scholars or their intellectual offsprings. They are simply *being there*, with individuals and related (and unrelated) objects juxtaposing all possible alternatives according to physical conditions, ideas and situations made available at times, for better, worse, or forever blue and gray. In view of the tests put forth in me these two years, it brings me back to the Buddhist teaching in *Diamond Sūtra*:

*All conditioned phenomena*

*Are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, or shadows;  
Like drops of dew, or flashes of lightning;  
Thusly should they be contemplated.<sup>1</sup>*

Indeed, re-visiting my dissertation the past weeks seemed to be an emotional journey to me. Fortunately, not like a kind of emasculated antiquity often propagated in universities, the materials have somewhat transformed into something like warning signals, challenging me with ideas once self-examined and alternative remedies for the self upon delicate depressing situations as encountering at the moment. While some psychiatrists or psychotherapists may classify my “ghostly state of mind” as potential *obsessional neurosis* or *melancholia*, to neuroscientists, my present unstable emotional situation could be purely “physical” – with bio-chemical territories over-reactive to abnormal *heat* and *energy* deduced from the interactiveness of the self and the world around. No matter how intellectually one tries to make sense out of a life found and lost and, hopefully, found again, the stream of consciousness never promises one to be as smooth and willing as one wishes to be. It does take swift turns or get stuck at times (like the bold fonts, italics, spacing and parentheses inhabited along words, lines and paragraphs at times), with moments of wandering about, searching for new exits-to-be. It was precisely on the basis of such beliefs that I set out to work on the dissertation with particular approach for each of the chapters back then, aiming at reminding the body-mind at work (including all pedagogic related workers and readers’) not to get too acquainted to materials generated or theorized under a crumb of comfort. Paradoxically, what I have been experiencing in the past two years, no matter how “depressing” they had been to me, are only evidences re-rectifying the necessities of researching as I made in the thesis (forever dangling along side with a hatful of anti-thesis sentiment), pulling me back constantly into the self-queries and alternative adjustments accordingly on subjects and matters I got familiarized or possibly taken for granted. Most of all, I have been consciously trying not to draw up any kind of rules according to my limited capacities and inclinations. It is precisely to such sentiment that I had to first disclose myself as nakedly as I possibly could at times in order to avoid the

likely tyranny capable of in the process of working as a human service provider. The will to cut beyond the self-image and the ever-new adaptation to changing circumstances would be fundamental, no matter how skeptically that could be at times, to all teachers and social workers when taking on any type of calling for pedagogic contemplation or consolation.

A reader is, to me, never passive. He/She is very much like an artist as well, constantly creating alternative images through words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, with space and structures each specifically articulated according to experiences possessed or taking shape at times of reading, regardless how apparent or unapparent the text was set forth. Thus, the text was written as an act of investigative journey for self-in-the-making/reflecting, corresponding dialogues with the community shaped and proliferating from within, calling for performances upon the participating act of reader on subjects as individually unfolded at times of action. It is in the experience and the value of experiences reassessed through the act of being that could possibly help one acquire a better knowledge of the present. As Nietzsche said in *We Philologists* (1874:7), "The philologist must first of all be a man; for then only can he be productive as a philologist." There are no simple solutions or recommendations to how a text should be read without the necessary self-preparation on subjects as focused. For me, the philosophical writer, also the *reader* of livelihood, knowledge and its related antiquity re-assessed, re-reading the experiences recorded through a time when I was, as least I thought so, at the height of "well-being," would apparently get me melancholy, especially when I am in the present at a state of disillusionment due to some haunting and yet seemingly inescapable personal traumas. Thus, the act of reading on a text self produced back then was indeed an independent act, unveiling the incompleteness of a researcher-in-action, seeking some faintly measurable dimension to share with readers the fragments, the queries, the confused, the compromises, the findings and the imagination multiplied therein the produce of an architecture of words, trying to make some sense on the transformative landscape of a body as lived and perceived, with temporal

conclusions that were meant only to trigger a more holistic view of the subjects as explored in the tapestry of wordplay.

Life was/is never empty. The thesis (or *anti-thesis* to some) is like a web of hybridity among living, space and words. A reflection made earlier for *Crossroads 2010*<sup>2</sup>, a world conference on cultural studies (as shown below), was an echolocation of my work on this particular research paper distantly inspired by Peter Brook's monumental theatre writing, *The Empty Space*. I would hereby make them as endnotes for this particular academic endeavor: The "theatre" is simply transferred to the Thesis; the "space" is yet never "empty" to begin with...

I.	
Often imagine –	
Yes. Just imagine:	
walking	
into an empty room.	This room.
No one around. Only me.	With you.
Alone.	Being there, never empty,
With the lived/living self and	Witnessing...
the physical space	a space pre-formatted
standing	for specific purposes...
as is...	
I. Suddenly,	You,
like a living monument,	walking into this space,
temporarily dislocated	carrying
among some ancient stones,	monuments of your own,
lost	seeking
in a womb of absence!	the urge to recreate...
Those <i>have-been</i>	objects, ideas, claims, arguments,
and those that are <i>not-yet</i>	and
all seemingly bounded	whatever left untestified,
by a system	with or without

long conceived and  
implanted  
in  
the *empty* space from within.

I. Listening  
to voices and outcry  
pulling  
from prenatal and postnatal life...

My mother died when I was born.  
And yet ever since then  
her existence seems to have been  
pulling me  
on and off,  
in and out  
of the mythic world of  
*empty* living...

Yet,  
it's in such a state of emptiness

I often find peace  
and enormous energy,  
and, at the same time,  
as if  
forever lost  
in the absence of...

I.  
Perform  
so as to  
experience  
these drifting things,  
knowingly,

passion...

You. Hearing  
mostly to voices from within  
stretching  
the locks and chains,  
in search of  
possibly superficial  
impression  
of  
a case,  
a sign,  
or a *cargo*  
for the next delivery on demand...

Ever feel like screaming...

No. You are not supposed  
to scream!

What if we  
switch places...  
and, at the same time,  
as if,  
you were  
making the speech,  
or  
presenting,  
performing,  
like attending  
occupational therapy,  
or  
group therapy,

and yet mostly unknowingly,  
implanted  
in and out  
of  
the interiority  
and  
the exteriority  
of  
the lived/living body...  
never lack of momentarily  
catatonia,  
or  
hebephrenia,  
trying to stay put  
from any possible paranoid,  
or avoiding  
any potential inflection  
of thinking<sup>3</sup>...

Empty.  
And so it seems.  
Yet never is...  
Forever shifting  
the paradigm  
of a word...

## Notes for Postscript:

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- <sup>1</sup> Excerpts from *Lapis Lazuli Texts*. URL site: [http://lapislazulitexts.com/vajracchedika\_prajnaparamita\_sutra.html]. Retrieved on October 10, 2010.
- <sup>2</sup> *Crossroads 2010* is the 8<sup>th</sup> Crossroads in Cultural Studies conference developed by Association for Cultural Studies and hosted by Lingnan University of Hong Kong in the year of 2010.
- <sup>3</sup> Paraphrasing from R.D. Laing's case studies on "Samples of Psychiatry" in *The Facts of Life* (1976:95).



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