

**The City of Orators:
Listening is the most dangerous thing of all.**

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Judith E. Vida¹

A city attains/retains its name when each inhabitant without exception is considered its poet-orator.
Maria Nordman, *City of The Orators*, 1993

Listening is the most dangerous thing of all, listening means knowing, finding out about something and knowing what's going on, our ears don't have lids that can instinctively close against the words uttered, they can't hide from what they sense they're about to hear, it's always too late.
Javier Marías, *A Heart So White*, 1992

Hello.

I pause for a moment to alight on that word, to breathe, and allow it to register that you are in this room with me, that I am in this room with you and with myself, and to take out my poetic license. A year ago (a few weeks more than a year ago), we weren't in this room together. ("You" is obviously some of you and not others. And "this room" would have been in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, not here in Pasadena, safe enough meteorological ground right now though not always.) A year ago on the day that I am writing this (also a few weeks more than a year ago), I was writing the Presidential Address that I didn't give in Fort Lauderdale. I wrote this sentence: "Only later did it hit me with hurricane force how utterly interconnected everything was, and is..." This is not so uncanny as it seems. In September of 2005, Katrina had already destroyed New Orleans (did we know then how utter that would be?), though Wilma had yet to loom. Wilma wasn't even conceived of when those words were written. But Wilma² is why those of us who would have been, weren't in

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² Gersh Molad (see p.8) cannot resist playing with this as both metaphor and counter-metaphor:
"Ma/my/may-wil/l."

the room together on October 21, 2005. Wilma is why I didn't get to speak to you about the interconnectedness of many things: including about how an experience of analytic teaching in Mexico City brought me to the revelation and relief of my insignificance, and to account for myself as existing in conversation, in the context of IFPE and of my life, all of which carries over into tonight.

And Wilma pushed us to Mexico in February of this year. An unwillingness to accept the demolition of a year's hopes and strivings³ was the engine that powered us to seek refuge in the "international," to see what could be reconstituted in the exotic atmosphere of Querétaro, Mexico. This, under the admirable guise of extending IFPE's grasp of what the International in its name could mean and be. About 40 of us went, to listen to and to make 17 presentations, nearly a third of what was lost in Fort Lauderdale. So I said my Presidential piece there, taking advantage of Mexican time to include the parts of my address that time constraints would have persuaded me to leave out in Fort Lauderdale. Time *is* different in Mexico, and we Northerners are often at a loss to absorb it, allow for it, or appreciate it. It gladdens me that some of you here tonight were also there.

But the engine of unwillingness does not operate under poetic license. There will be consequences, and there were. We were asking a great deal of our Mexican colleagues, which their personal as well as culturally prescribed graciousness did not allow them to protest or negotiate, with consequences for them as well. The(ir) collegial organization, upon which we presumed, was more fragile than we knew, leading to collision as well as contact, from which some walked away intact and others did not.

Listening is the most dangerous thing of all.

³ An unwillingness to accept the demolition of a year's hopes and strivings in my personal life leads to a keenly felt desire for transformation: to make co-existing with the other a reality through the bridge of conversation. I use this bridge not to get to any other side but as my chosen place to dwell and abide.

Sándor Ferenczi long ago showed us that there are stages in the development of development. It will always take more time than there is at hand to see what is wrought from either “change” or “the unexpected.” As we wrote in the Call for Participation for this conference, it is difficult to know as it is happening what is a good and what is a bad *anything*.

As I write, I am unable to know if any of this matters. So far it is holding my interest, though I am uncertain of holding yours. What follows will continue as meandering and allusive. If you can, wade into the stream with me and let yourself float. This is how I write and how I think. Later I will notice themes circling around more than once and in more than one way, and this is how I find out what is really on my mind. Victor Segalen, a poet, novelist, archaeologist, and cultural analyst, wrote in 1916, three years before his death from an accident while hiking at the age of forty-one: “the inhuman. What is other than a man. ... Do not confuse it with the Absolute. The Inhuman: its real name is the Other. It thus becomes not a god but an action that is inherent in thought ... To imagine as a function of the adverse.” (p. 60)

To imagine as a function of the adverse. In a sense, IFPE was conceived, more than sixteen years ago, in imagining a function of the adverse,⁴ and it is experiencing now the inevitable difficulty of inhabiting its birthright. There is to be no elected President for 2007, which is a real opportunity for the Board to pause, to examine, and to re-consider IFPE’s basic premises. “Otherness” has been the avowed premise of IFPE, to recognize, to make room for, to find valid. But as an intellectually fashionable term, “otherness” is bandied about freely often without sufficient appreciation of what it is to encounter and to abide with

⁴ Let me think about that word “adverse.” It means “to turn to the other side.” If I turn to the other, I recognize myself in the other’s face. I can recognize parts of myself and of the other that is my existential responsibility to allow, as well as other parts that it may be my essential responsibility to decline. Gersh Molad sees this as the deep meaning of being with the adverse: that we not only support ourselves but that we turn against ourselves as well as against the other, and in the company of others. This is how is established an autobiographical dialogue (see p.13) that not only expresses our lives but simultaneously re-writes them. So, “to imagine” really means “in the presence of.”

it. Victor Segalen in 1916 called Otherness “exoticism,” though he insisted this had nothing to do with camels and tropics and colonies. “[By exoticism] it should be understood that I mean only one thing... something immense ...the feeling which Diversity stirs in us (p. 46).” He had begun this line of thinking in 1908 with his notion of “the rapture of the subject conceiving its object, recognizing its own difference from itself, sensing Diversity (p. 17).” Eight years later, he wrote, “Exoticism is [not] a unique aesthetic force but ...a fundamental Law of the Intensity of Sensation, of the exaltation of Feeling; and therefore of living. It is through Difference and Diversity that existence is made glorious (p. 61).” In conjuring up the sense of a “universal exoticism,” he went on, “Only those who have a strong individuality can sense DifferenceOnly those with a strong individuality can fully appreciate the wonderful sensation of feeling both what they are and what they are not (p. 20).” He called this “the ability to conceive otherwise.” What Victor Segalen bypassed, however, in this exaltation of exoticism is the profound uneasiness that otherness generates.⁵

And this then characterizes the territory that IFPE inhabits for me: simultaneously the exaltation and the uneasiness of Otherness.

And listening is the most dangerous thing of all.

What I didn’t get to say to you in Fort Lauderdale, and what I did say to some of you in Querétaro, was this:

I attended my first IFPE conference in November of 1999, in San Francisco, and I presented “Life Lessons: What One Psychoanalyst Learned From Contemporary Art,” which had recently been rejected by the Program Committee of the American Psychoanalytic Association as being “of no interest to psychoanalysts.” At that time, two and a half decades of my concerted efforts

⁵ The “exo” of exoticism denotes that which is external to me, outside, turned out, kept out. So, the uneasiness that otherness generates can be thought of as the projection of internal uneasiness that is generated by the otherness within me.

both inside the pale and beyond had finally persuaded me that utopian aspirations were pointless, as institutional psychoanalysis could not but repeat its own reprehensible history. Imagine my astonishment, then, from the first session I attended at IFPE, to find myself inside an alive conversation that didn't stop when the session was over but swirled and redounded, implicitly audible in all the other sessions, and grew as it went. Eventually, my presentation was received with warm and thoughtful engagement, but it was the conversation that captivated me, conversation with depth and breadth, an openness and humanity that in decades of psychoanalytic conferences I had seldom before encountered. I went to many presentations some of which, like mine, would never have made the cut in traditional circles. Willa Cather, frustrated as a young girl by the cultural limitations of prairie life, is reported to have said of the local and touring artistic productions passing through Nebraska in the early 1890s, "I didn't care if a performance was good or bad as long as it fired the imagination." Well, IFPE fired my imagination. IFPE still fires my imagination. And I've never looked back. I say to people, "I think it's because there are no continuing education credits and no institutional edifice to protect that there's a different kind of conversation at IFPE. The only reason to be here is love."

Well. That's what I wrote a year ago. As the experience of intervening time bears out, love inhabits more than one form. And sometimes the love that we yearn for is more a product of the engine of unwillingness than of the actual and possible. The actual and the possible is what is we access in this room, together, now, and what we carry away with us. It is as big as the universe, and as inconsequential as the fleeting moment. It is important to remember that.

Over the summer, when I first began to wonder what I could say to you now, this year, after the year that was and has been, a section of that first presentation of mine to IFPE came to mind, about The City of Orators: [show original work]

A city attains/retains its name when each inhabitant without exception is considered its poet-orator.
Maria Nordman, *City of The Orators*, 1993

This is what I said about it in that 1999 presentation:

“... I want to [show] you a piece that is only a tiny fragment of this artist’s work

Maria Nordman works with un-finite materials (ambient light, time) and constructed environments (windows, modular wooden platforms, and shelters) that simplify the surround to allow participants to be more intensely aware, through time, of their acts of perception. This has the effect of enhancing receptivity in a remarkable way: you can feel yourself becoming more alive. The subliminal communication must be that every unit of experience is valuable and is worth receiving and noticing.

Maria Nordman has a utopian vision of human possibility for community and engagement which she develops in an un-utopian way; that is, she is exquisitely careful not to employ her vision in an intrusive or coercive fashion; instead she offers her work, to be made use of by persons, if possible, and to be disseminated as an experience that though ephemeral persists. “City of The Orators” references a larger body of work, but it is perhaps enough to say that I think “the city” can be any institution, which is only as alive, as human, as its participants are valued, as each has a voice that is necessary to be heard. The outcome that is wished for is not Perfection, but To Make Room.”

[... from Life Lessons by Judith E. Vida first written 1995-7, presented at IFPE in November 1999]

For weeks, I held on to “The City of Orators” without any sense of where it would lead me. In the early morning of the day in which I started to write this, I e-mailed David

Tresan, a Jungian analyst in San Francisco (our correspondence, quite frequent for some years, waited seven months after Querétaro to resume):

I just awoke with a possible “way in” to my presidential address ... I realized that “The City of Orators” (“A city attains/retains its name when each inhabitant without exception is considered its poet-orator” [Maria Nordman]) is not only IFPE struggling to be whatever kind of city it can be and daring or not to see what kind of city it actually is; it is also me, trying to listen to all the voices inside me and make room for them. The difficulty of this last year is the sense of losing hold of, hence access to, too many of my voices. Can a voice suggest multiple simultaneous lines the way the violin does when sometimes it sounds like more than one instrument? I'm going to think about that. Perhaps music is the metaphor I want: cacophony and harmony; chromatics; major to minor and back again (what's the term for that? I used to know it at the knee of my wizened 80 year old piano teacher when I was 12), choral; symphonic; a pure solo line; counterpoint. That's it, counterpoint: multiple simultaneous fugal threads that start off sounding related but revealing along the way that they really are not related at all.

If I listen to myself, I have to notice that what I wrote to David Tresan holds itself in apposition to what I felt last year in anticipation of Fort Lauderdale that I characterized as “a vast interconnectedness of things.” This year what I am uneasily in the presence of is what those words refer to: “really not related at all.”

I began to write this on October 8. A week would pass before I could return to it (and you). A day or two in which to write, then a week away: this is the rhythm that established itself until I was done. For a while I was held by the melancholy of “really not related at all,” soothing and wrenching at the same time, as the press of clinical hours and conference details clamored to loft me away from the space and possibly even the voice in

which I had begun. The word I was missing showed up a few days later: it is “modulation.” The word eluding me for movement within a piece of music between major and minor keys is “modulation.”

Perhaps you noticed that I just said “a week would pass before I could return to my writing (and you).” You see, you are very much with me as I write. “I exist in conversation” is what I would have said to you in Fort Lauderdale, and the whole of that address, which is currently posted on the IFPE website, demonstrates and takes place inside a conversation with you. Events of the intervening year make it clear to me that such a conversation is attractive to some, confounding to others and, sometimes, even repellent --- which is what it means when I say “really not related at all.” And the same is true of the conversations offered to me: attractive, confounding, repellent. In “The City of Orators” all are to be made room for. How am I to do that, both conceptually and actually? (I am quite deliberately saying “how am *I* to do that?” rather than “how are *we* to do that?” I know that it matters to me, but I cannot speak for you.) How are the modulations accessed and what will they sound like? How does it “live” when we evoke both complementary and antagonistic echoes in one another? Can this be what it means “to imagine as a function of the adverse”? During the first in-between week, my correspondences began to take their place in what I was writing, and for a brief instant there seemed to be a new internal community under construction ... and then it all fell away again.

I was close to trembling with the dangerousness of listening to the many voices of myself, compounding the difficulty of knowing how to address you this year. “Just one or two main ideas,” offers Gersh Molad, on the telephone, to be helpful. Gersh is my writing partner of many years, a colleague and dear friend who lives in Tel Aviv. “And say them at the beginning and say how you will develop them.” “But I don’t know what they are,” I

protest silently to myself. “And you know that’s not how I write. I won’t and can’t know until afterwards, until after the blank stares and the polite applause.”

And then an e-mail pops up on one of my alternative addresses, an announcement for a conference to be held locally on October 20th and 21st: “Impunities: a two day experiment in writing and community.”⁶ The e-mail continues: “*What role does writing and narrative play in the invention of alternative communities, identities and politics? Can imaginary communities or fictitious authors solve real problems? What are the methodologies of the oppressed, the voices of the silenced and the technologies of otherness? Such work might include collaborative projects, self-organizing or anarchic groups, poetic terrorists, writer-pirates, and textual gleaners, revolutionaries or exiles. Impunities gathers disparate cultural vagabonds who set into motion our collective fantasies of escape, oblivion, arrival, and transformation.*”

I think, “Here are some people who start by knowing that listening is the most dangerous thing of all and are coming together to share their strategies not merely for survival but for living. Are there any possible models for IFPE? Does IFPE have a role to play in the invention of alternative psychoanalytic practice, theory, and application? Does IFPE ‘gather disparate [*psychoanalytic*] vagabonds who set into motion [possibilities for] escape, oblivion, arrival and transformation?’”

This, then, becomes the frame of reference through which I hear Emily Roysdon whose art practice has a “focus on marginal moments” speak of the moment of loss at the instant of naming anything, to which she adds, “Can we speak out of context as a way to evade the coercion of the dyad?” An issue of her collaborative journal LTTR is titled *Practice More Failure*. A major work incorporating simultaneously “ecstatic resistance and structural

⁶ Organized by Christine Wertheim and Matias Viegner, and sponsored by the Writing Program at CalArts and a grant from the Annenberg Foundation. October 20th and 21st, 2006 at REDCAT, the Roy and Edna Disney CalArts Theater, Los Angeles, CA.

collapse” constructs a human pyramid, of people standing on one another’s shoulders three tiers high, each with a self-activating camera “to recognize your moment of competence and then the impending collapse,” for of course the pyramid cannot be sustained: “It actually really did hurt,” she tells us, and quotes Gertrude Stein: “Act as if there is no use in the center.” Lewis MacAdam describes “contingency communities” that tend to dissolve when their necessity for being has been assuaged or accomplished. Prickly Ishmael Reed refers to Alice Walker as an example to say that when one writer of a marginalized group is celebrated, it is because what is written serves the dominant culture. To which Sarah Schulman, speaking from the audience, protests to say that any writer will write what he or she must; at such a point it is not the writer but the reception of the work that needs to be critiqued.

Listening is the most dangerous thing of all.

Is this the moment at which, two weeks into writing, I realize that I have made a crucial elision? Maria Nordman’s piece is called “City of The Orators.” I see that I refer to it throughout as “The City of Orators.” Just as there is a huge distinction between “A” and “The” in a title, the impact of where this “The” is placed is significant. Maria Nordman’s title privileges the Orators themselves: City of *The* Orators, whereas my reference to *The* City of Orators makes it about IFPE. This is the IFPE that I experience as a city in which the orators who make listening dangerous are accorded space, and respect, and consideration for who they are and how they come to be that way.

This thought brings me around again to Gersh Molad to whom I sometimes refer as my partner in crime. “Crime” addresses the difficulty that attends our efforts (his and mine) to introduce a change in the concept of psychoanalytic conference space consonant with The City of Orators. As we describe it in a paper delivered to a Ferenczi conference in

Baden-Baden in August, our collaborative work arose from “the transformation of our previous personal experiences of conference space, a transformation engendered by our encounter with one another.” We had met in 1999 in Tel Aviv at a Ferenczi conference. Just before his presentation, Gersh discovered he had left his conference paper at home; though he recovered it in time (he called his son to bring it by taxi), he decided to demonstrate that the forgetting was an important part of what he was talking about and emblematic of a deeper layer than an unperturbed delivery of his paper could have allowed. His was one of four papers I was to discuss, so I was both witness and participant. It was astonishing to me on that occasion that the difficulty was first spoken and then recognized as relevant to what was in the room: here I could see difficulty itself emerging from its customary cloak of shame and ridicule to be revealed as a vital partner. Before, for me, conference space had been mostly about surviving its competitive and combative essence. In that moment conference space became suddenly human, habitable, and generative for me, though I have to say that it was disquieting for some others. And in that moment a collaboration between the two of us came into being to pick up a process of mutuality that had languished in disrepute since Ferenczi’s death because of the anxiety and fear generated in conference space by its very nature. Throughout the paper, the words in my own voice echo my exhaustion and despair in more than one circumstance at pursuing engagement that ultimately was confounding and repellent. Nevertheless, we affirm again that our collaboration has been built around the idea that, following the Ferenczian concept of mutuality in clinical space, psychoanalytic meaning in conference space is accessed in a different way when there is an autobiographical dialogue with Ferenczian mutual participation and responsibility that goes as far as possible. And then we say, “here is where difficulty appears.”

Difficulty appears because listening is the most dangerous thing of all.

Gersh reads the first six or seven pages of *this* and responds:

Dear Judy, Well, this is where we are: to find the words for what you try to say: asking for support for an existential transformation of psychoanalytic ideas and life, where life, creative thinking, political, personal, and organizational acts, and developmental responsibility, come together to evolve “psychoanalytic education” as an interminable mutual process. A plea for transformation of that kind deals, in the best tradition of an autobiographical dialogue, not only with the content/theory but with the manner of exposition/presentation as the very essence of psychoanalysis: a mutual creating and reading (orating as asking and listening as giving), not only within current city limits, but also in the nomadic journey of past and future, in asking for love, and in meeting with its intermediate end, death – the love and death that were and that will be. Love, Gersh.

The key notion here in Gersh’s words is about the coming together of “life, creative thinking, political, personal, and organizational acts, and developmental responsibilities.” A coming together without compartmentalizing. A recognition that as much as we might protest, we are congruent even when we feel least whole. If I am a different person inside my consulting room than outside, I am in neither setting reliably who I appear to be. The impact of the missing, of what is left out, will be registered, however invisibly.

The missing.

I spot a review in the *Los Angeles Times* of Alain de Botton’s new book *The Architecture of Happiness* that I have yet to read. “It’s all a bit nicey-nice,” complains the reviewer, “but that’s the De Botton way. He wants to make it personal: What we search for in a work of architecture is not in the end so far from what we search for in a friend.” “The world is full of unattractive buildings and bad planning,” continues the review. “[Regarding the new plan for New York’s ground zero, there is] the ridiculous centerpiece, Freedom Tower. But who knows? When the World Trade Center went up in the 70s,

critics decried it as a soulless monstrosity, yet its destruction prompted a torrent of nostalgic reminiscence. The looming towers met a human need after all.” (Review of *The Architecture of Happiness* by Alain de Botton, in *Los Angeles Times Book Review*, October 8, 2006.)

This review, perhaps unwittingly, exposes the complementarity of the personal and the missing. As all of De Botton’s explorations engage a search for the missing personal, the reviewer can find personal only in what’s missing. This uneasy relation of the personal and the missing is what makes listening so dangerous: it’s always too late.

And this returns me to Gersh Molad’s reference to the autobiographical dialogue. Nothing we say, do or choose can be separated from our own story. This is the basis of what the two of us call the autobiographical dialogue. You cannot understand what I have said, done, or written if you do not know something of me. Conversely, what you have said, done, and written will make no sense to me unless I can know something of you. Without that “knowing” we miss each other and we are missing from each other. The “best tradition” concerns the *how* as well as the *what*. Gersh and I take this concept further to assert that when we claim openly, with one another, something of our own story as the basis for what we say, do, and choose, there is a different and alive possibility for an ongoing conversation that can lead towards the transformation of previous thwarting into development. By “autobiographical” and “story” we do not mean a recounting of “the *factual*”, nor is this “self-disclosure.” It is rather about the way *how* and *who* I am makes itself visible in a given experience with you, and whether or how I take responsibility for this, for myself, with you.

For Gersh Molad and myself, conference space, in parallel with clinical space, *is* an analytic space but one that is only as alive, as constructive, as it can be dwelled in with mutuality and responsibility, i.e. ethically. From my earliest days with IFPE, I have been engaging from within these ideas and within the context of an autobiographical dialogue.

The theme of IFPE's 2003 conference in Pasadena, "The Transformational Conversation" drew on some of these ideas. Recently, a colleague within IFPE, troubled by some of the implications, asked "Does the practice of conference space as an analytic space commit us to a therapeutic stance with one another?" Though delivered as a pointed critique, this is nevertheless a serious question that deserves a serious answer. Here is mine, and I will answer not for *us* but for me, because I cannot answer for you:

Yes. My answer is yes. As an analyst, as a therapist, as a human being, I am committed to a therapeutic stance in its broadest though still focused sense. Not only with those who come to work with me, but in conference space as well. I am committed to a therapeutic stance period. And what is that therapeutic stance? What does it mean to have a therapeutic stance? It cannot mean "to do therapy" with everyone. Of course not. (And I cannot construe therapy as something "done to" anyone.) My therapeutic stance is indistinguishable from my stance as a human being. Sarah Schulman refers to the deplorable cultural practice of "let[ting] things go and move on because accountability is uncomfortable, troublesome and difficult." What I mean by both my therapeutic stance and my human stance is to be mindful of and accountable for the impact that I have upon others, for good and ill, and to take responsibility for that impact. I have to be willing to look. What I hope for is that others who are important to me will take that stance as well, but it becomes difficult when they do not, and sometimes the relationship cannot be sustained.

I see that I have stumbled upon the essence of difficulty as it appears in an autobiographical dialogue. So let me repeat this with a slight re-phrasing: What I hope for is that others who are important to me will not take "that stance," not *my* stance, but *their* stance as the only stance they have. What makes it "therapeutic" is a dialogue of mutually carried responsibility, whether in clinical space or in conference space, mutually carried by

those of us participating in the dialogue. But it becomes difficult when that does not occur. Sometimes we are successful enough in our conference space-therapeutic for a difficulty to turn into development and the dialogue can continue; but there are failures, and sometimes then the relationship cannot be sustained.

I sent the Baden Baden paper, the one in which I had written of the exhaustion and despair of pursuing engagement when that engagement itself becomes confounding and repellent, to my friend Jack Wiener in New York. Jack was a dancer before he was a psychoanalyst, and he speaks with a language of the body that has largely gone missing from the lexicon of psychoanalysis, if it was ever really there. He still conducts classes in movement that are open to analysts and that one day I hope to attend. Jack wrote:

[Your problem is with the flow-out of the relational model in which what you write is embedded. It makes me think of someone] trying out a class [of mine who] could not imagine moving with the music [in focus solely] with the interplay of muscles in her own body. She could only cite the reflexive patterned capitulation to the stimulus of the beat as “natural.” And another ... taut as a violin string, intent on “physical mastery” --- more focused on others than with what she is sensing -- - began to feel weaker which was intolerable. My experience with movement is that when the person can totally focus on the motion, moving from muscles to muscles, and sustains that process, wholeness does organically issue forth like water from the rock that does not have to be struck in anger ... The perceptual ability to sense the elasticity (kinesthetic awareness) has to be re-awakened, and become consciously dominant over [a] relational survival model [that is] always focused on the other. The creation or re-creation in conference space is always a potential as the defenses of mastery and/or submission waft away in the simplicity of attention to the ever present movement “in” the musculature. ... Validation is always nice. Affirmation is even quicker. But I’ve come to like Attention as the non-possessive process without beginning or end.

As I listen to Jack, I am aware that the musculo-skeletal strain that has beset me during the last two years is the muffled voice of my own kinesthetic awareness rather urgently trying to awaken. His notion of “attention as the non-possessive process without beginning or end” strikes me as just right. Even without full kinesthetic awareness, that kind of attention is what Gersh Molad and I experience within the autobiographical (or any) dialogue when there is both mutuality and reciprocity. Engagement is different when one can begin from Jack’s state of wholeness. That “relational model that only flows out,” that exhausts as it drains, and drains as it exhausts, is indeed the consequence of the failure of mutuality and reciprocity, and failure of respect for the separate necessity, of privileging the other at the expense of oneself. But where inside all this is that insidious experience of physical weakness as intolerable? Is that part of the engine of unwillingness? The reluctance to admit one’s own vulnerability plays out everywhere, in many guises.

Sarah Schulman is a lesbian writer who lives in New York to whom I’ve referred already more than once. At *Impunities* she makes use of the question posed to her panel “What devices and allegories of transformation work best to effect real change?” to address something of current importance to her, namely *“what I have had to go through personally over a lifetime to face and accept the reality of Israel today, and why for an American Jew it is so essential and so difficult to do so.”* From her weaving together of the autobiographical, the historical, and the philosophical (what strikes me as “the autobiographical dialogue” at its best), she concludes, *“And yet, with all these revelations, this lifetime of constant rethinking and acceptance of what is morally just, I still know that all of my positions make me and other Jews more overtly at the mercy of people who do not care about us and whom we should not trust. But the biggest revelation of all is that to change my mind about Israel, I had to see myself as equal to other people in the world. I have had to sever the special identification with people because we are related or share a culture or history, and instead learn to identify*

with people I do not know and have not met. And through that alchemy, I have had to realize that my own danger is not more important than theirs.”

I can read this revelation of Sarah Schulman’s as a stunning example of movement away from what Jack Wiener called the “reflexive patterned capitulation to the stimulus of the beat.” Sarah Schulman writes this from her identification culturally, historically, and genetically as a Jew and personally as a lesbian, and she doesn’t leave any of the pieces out. I want to transpose this to the situation of the psychoanalyst, and of myself as a psychoanalyst. I wrote quite a lot about myself in last year’s address, and I can’t tell you much of the *what* partly because I don’t want to repeat it but also because I’m not there anymore. I’m *here* now, and I’m hoping you can hear some of the *how*. What does carry across for me from last year, and I’ve referred to it already, is that in Mexico in 2005, the year before Querétaro, I found that I was one among many, a discovery of my insignificance, which was a relief. This year, after the year that was and has been, I am able to acknowledge that my own danger is not more important than yours. At the same time, I want to remind you that yours is not more important than mine.

So, where have we come to, you and I? I’m not sure, and I don’t think that I can be, but I do want to come to rest soon and see what follows. On the way to concluding, I will read you this passage from “Dentist” a short story by Roberto Bolaño in *Last Evenings on Earth* (2006, translated from the Spanish by Chris Andrews, New York: New Directions, p. 191-2):

But that’s where art comes from, he said: life stories. Art history comes along only much later. That what art is, he said, the story of a life in all its particularity. It’s the only thing/ that really is particular and personal. It’s the expression of and, at the same time, the fabric of the particular. And what do you mean by the fabric of the particular? I asked, supposing he would

answer: Art. I was also thinking, indulgently, that we were pretty drunk already and that it was time to go home. But my friend said: What I mean is the secret story.

With a gleam in his eye he stared at me for a moment. The death of the Indian woman from gum cancer had obviously affected him more than I had realized at first.

So now you're wondering what I mean by the secret story? asked my friend. Well, the secret story is the one we'll never know, although we're living it from day to day, thinking we're alive, thinking we've got it all under control and the stuff we overlook doesn't matter. But every single damn thing matters! Only we don't realize. We just tell ourselves that art runs on one track and life, our lives, on another and we don't realize that's a lie.

Now I will reread it, substituting the word "psychoanalysis" in the place of art:

But that's where psychoanalysis comes from, he said: life stories. Psychoanalytic theory comes along only much later. That what psychoanalysis is, he said, the story of a life in all its particularity. It's the only thing/ that really is particular and personal. It's the expression of and, at the same time, the fabric of the particular. And what do you mean by the fabric of the particular? I asked, supposing he would answer: Psychoanalysis. I was also thinking, indulgently, that we were pretty drunk already and that it was time to go home. But my friend said: What I mean is the secret story.

With a gleam in his eye he stared at me for a moment. The death of the Indian woman from gum cancer had obviously affected him more than I had realized at first.

So now you're wondering what I mean by the secret story? asked my friend. Well, the secret story is the one we'll never know, although we're living it from day to day, thinking we're alive, thinking we've got it all under control and the stuff we overlook doesn't matter. But every single

damn thing matters! Only we don't realize. We just tell ourselves that psychoanalysis runs on one track and life, our lives, on another and we don't realize that's a lie.

If we can embrace the notion that every single damn thing matters, and I do, how then am I to comport myself with you, and for what do I hope from you in return? How will it play, how does it live, this therapeutic and human stance that I mean to embody, that I will inevitably fail, and that you will also, and that then we must account for and come to terms with? What is the ethics of it, ethics, that Mady Schutzman at *Impunities* referred to as “notions of relational decency.” In 1992 some terrible circumstances brought my friend David Tresan to his own revelation parallel to Sarah Schulman's, and he wrote:

“What seems needed is the pursuit of a moral aesthetic in which direct experience of love and beauty demands deep consideration and respect, not only by the one who has the experience, but by informed others who know what it feels like when gods speak, even when it is to others. If I know that you love something or someone or that you are truly taken by a certain beauty, it is important that I respect and even, if possible, protect you, your world, your love, and your beauty. It is an abomination to presume to tell you that what you love is wrong or that what you experience deeply and directly as beautiful has no real value. Certainly it is the worst kind of violation to destroy others' loved objects willfully. Those who do this to others are without the capacity to know love or beauty themselves.”

So, at the end, amidst the exaltation and uneasiness of Otherness, I finally do know what I wanted to say to you. It is this:

A city attains/retains its name when each inhabitant without exception is considered its poet-orator.

And this:

Listening is the most dangerous thing of all, listening means knowing, finding out about something and knowing what's going on, our ears don't have lids that can instinctively close against the words uttered, they can't hide from what they sense they're about to hear, it's always too late.

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And, thank *you*, for listening.

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Judith E. Vida MD © 2006
301 S. Fair Oaks Avenue, Suite 406A
Pasadena, CA 91105
626.796.7572
jvida@spence.net