

Metaphorical Awakening: Curricular Reconceptualizations of Aesthetic Experience

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If we can honor the visual, poetic, and gestural possibilities in the arts, we then can begin to understand the openings made accessible by *living in the questions*.

- Maxine Greene, *Releasing the Imagination*, 2013

In...indwelling in the Zone of Between we see the teacher's dwelling place at a sanctified clearing where the teacher and students gather – somewhat like the place before the hearth at home – an extraordinary unique and precious place, a trustful place, a careful place – essentially a human place dedicated to ventures devoted to a leading out, an authentic 'e(out)/ducere(lead),' from the 'is' to new possibilities yet unknown.

- Ted Aoki, "Teaching as Indwelling Between Two Curriculum Worlds," 1986/2005

LIKE MANY OTHERS, I have been inspired by the work and words of Maxine Greene. When I first came to *Releasing the Imagination* a number of years ago, I was in the midst of a Masters program in a suffocatingly masculinist philosophy department; the text entered my life like a waft of fresh air at a time when I was gasping for breath. As I read through her text, rife as it was with literary, poetic, artistic and rhythmic references, I frenetically turned each page, voraciously inhaling line after line. I laughed, cried, nodded in agreement, shouted, and conversed with Maxine, circling words and jotting notes in the margins. When my eyes traced the final lines, the somatic buzz slowly faded into a hum, and then, stillness. Having read the text

in one fell swoop, I sat revelling in the seeming somatic contradictions; I was exhausted and invigorated, emotionally drained and revived. The experience reminded me of the enveloping comfort that results from lengthy and loving conversation with a close friend, but also loss—the synchronous bite of finality and longing, the un/settling reverberations that wash over you at the end of a novel, a trip, a relationship, in each instance, desiring at once its continuation and cessation. Inspired, I too wished to “look at things as if they could be otherwise” and “break with the supposedly fixed and finished” (Greene, 1995, p. 19), but was not quite sure how. I wanted to—needed to—learn how to release my own imagination.

Years later, after diving into a PhD program in education, I fortuitously found myself in Maxine’s classroom. I had come to New York to conduct my dissertation research, and was granted permission to audit her class on education and the aesthetic experience, sadly, one of the last she would teach. This paper offers my struggles to work with aesthetic experience over the course of the semester, alongside a close re-reading of Maxine’s (1995) *Releasing the Imagination*. I begin with a description of stories and the social imagination, highlighting their connectedness to Maxine’s conceptions of the imagination, aesthetic experience, and wide-awakeness. This exposition is coupled with narrative text about my own attempts to become wide-awake by engaging with art, ending with a short poetic interlude. In the next section, I outline some of the difficulties of this engagement by sketching the visual metaphors that appear throughout Maxine’s work, ultimately arguing that the presentational immediacy of visual metaphors grounds the ways in which wide-awakeness can be experienced. I conclude, in the spirit of Maxine, with questions about what it might mean to dwell in the spaces in between, by gesturing toward the words of Ted Aoki (1996/2005) where the *in between* serves as a tensioned space of possibility—the slash or its visual marker. I use it here as a way to talk through what it might mean to re/lease the imag/in/ation and engage with the spaces in between awakeness and sleep, beyond the visual modality of metaphor.

Storying Lives: Imagining Possibilities

She entered the story knowing she would emerge from it feeling she had been immersed in the lives of others, in plots that stretched back twenty years, her body full of sentences and moments, as if awaking from sleep with a heaviness caused by unremembered dreams.

- Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient*

As the passage from Ondaatje’s (1992) novel *The English Patient* suggests, stories have a powerful capacity to connect individuals who may, through storied accounts, enter imaginatively into the lives of others, becoming rooted in a collective history, and, at the same time transporting to places not otherwise seen. This power and potential of stories to connect plays an important social role insofar as it contributes to the construction of communal narratives. Jean Clandinin and Jerry Rosiek (2007) explain:

Human beings have lived out and told stories about that living for as long as we could talk. And then we have talked about the stories we tell for almost as long. These lives and told

stories and the talk about the stories is one of the ways that we fill our world with meaning and enlist one another's assistance in building lives and communities. (p. 35)

In a communal narrative, stories emerge from within and are filtered through the social imaginary (otherwise called the epistemic or social imagination), defined as collective or common understandings that people hold as well as their expectations of others. These understandings and expectations function in such a way that they make it possible for “us to carry out the collective practices that make up our social life” (Taylor, 2004, pp. 106-107). While the notion of a social imaginary is admittedly vague (and has been criticized for its purported homogeneity (see Hebert, 2014; Strauss, 2006)), it remains a useful concept for the purposes of our discussion as it highlights the ways in which the imagination, in particular, functions at both an individual and collective level. According to Taylor's conceptualization, the social imaginary is a co-constituted set of images, created through a dialogic exchange as what is imagined is conveyed to others by way of storied accounts. As Taylor (2004) notes, people “imagine their social surroundings” and subsequently express these imaginings to others by way of “images, stories and legends” (pp. 106-107). Says Maxine Greene (2004), “imagination [is] a means through which we can create a coherent world” (p. 3).

While imagining itself may be an individual activity, given that we exclusively use and have access to our own imaginations, the social imaginary roots our imaginings within a collective narrative at the stage of thought itself. The social imaginary becomes a sort of epistemic container or mould, limiting the scope of our epistemic resources. What we can conceive is primarily extracted from or shaped by this set of available common understandings, constituted by stories that are told within the social imaginary. In other words, what I can imagine and how that imagining is subsequently described will be constrained by what is possible within the social imaginary, and the types of stories that are made available. What kinds of stories do we, as a society, share about love? How do we conceptualize violence – what constitutes a violent act? What does it mean to be responsible? Responsive? Accountable to others? Filtered through the social imaginary, we assess the fidelity of stories by looking to the aforementioned common understandings and expectations, the ways in which they buttress, butt up against, or lie between narrative accounts. Tales are compared to others, fit in place on prefabricated hegemonic mats or discarded, piled with others deemed ‘extra’ or ‘not quite right.’ And our very ability to hear certain stories in the first place depends upon our expectations about what types of stories can be told. As Babbitt explains, “we cannot even hear certain stories unless we first recognize what these stories might explain” (p. 2), what they could be about.

While I am inevitably drawn to one story over another, I remain wary of my desire to choose, to proclaim the prominence or veracity of one story, “lens” or “vantage point” (Greene, 1995, p.11). I am reminded of Chimamanda Adiche's (2009) warning about the single story, that assuming singularity “make[s] one story become the only story” (p. 5). I also recall Greene's claim that “reality – if it means anything – means interpreted experiences,” “multiple realities” rooted in situated experiences (Greene, 1984, p. 123). In selecting, I narrow and close, demarcating the boundaries of the social imaginary. Limiting narratives forecloses multiple truths, marking what is possible, what can count as a story and what that story must be about. It denounces “multiple realities” in favour of capital-T Truth (Greene, 1984, p. 124). Through this process, the social imaginary is reduced to a site for answers and actualities, for what *is* and *must*

be, rather than what could or might be.

Rejecting the univocal narrative arc, Greene (1995) conceptualizes what she terms the “social imagination” as a space for potentialities and openings. For Greene, when individuals come together, they “reach out” to one another, listen to each others’ stories, bear witness to “multiple ways of seeing and multiple dialogues,” ultimately paying attention to, contemplating and considering “alternative possibilities” (p. 17). And it is through the imagination, Greene argues, that they can make this empathic leap to “see through strangers’ eyes and hear through their ears,” to “enter” imaginatively into the “realities,” of others, “to discover how it looks and feels from the vantage point of the person whose world it is” (pp. 3-5). Greene explains:

Imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible. It is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called ‘other’ over the years...It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinction and definitions. (p. 3)

And so, as we reach out, we begin to disrupt the conventional limits of our own experiences, in collaboration and conversation. Talking, probing, querying, we start to create openings in the social imaginary for “visions of what should be and what might be” (Greene, 1995, p. 5), what is “not yet” (Pinar, 1998, p. 1). Openings do not appear in the form of answers, but rather, questions, as we inch aside “things as they are,” to make room for “things as they could be otherwise” (Greene, 2005, p. 19).

Questions may appear suddenly, like the initial droplets in an incipient summer storm that seem to materialize out of thin air. Or they may emerge slowly, in portending pregnant clouds, heavy with possibility, that warn us of their appearance. But the difficult task we face, of course, is how to respond to the rain, in all of its uncertainty. Drops may be icier than anticipated, stinging steaming skin, shocking us into awareness; one follows another, as the storm takes off, a torrent of shocks that eventually cede to satiation as the rain cools. We may take cover, or choose to supplicate, lying supine in the grass, ceding to its unpredictability. As the storm abates, leaving the world renewed, we can walk the streets, inspect the flowers, listen to the birds; it all appears anew, twinkling in a different light. Conversely, we may fear the storm, annoyed by the droplets, brushing the moisture away. Wishing to ward off the soaked sensation, fearing what may pour down from the sky, we swiftly raise umbrellas, protecting ourselves from the onslaught and the eventual muddy residue that will remain.

Fear is not to be derided. We can empathize with those who cling to what they deem safe and expected, worrying that jabbing at crevices of query may open hermeneutic black holes into which all perceived certainty will fall; that answering questions with more questions might lead to an infinite regress of uncertainty. Here, we may choose to converse with instead of chide, call forth rather than suppress. Perhaps more importantly, we can look to spark individual imaginations, which can rouse and vivify, stimulating others to “see beyond what the imager has called normal or ‘common-sensible’ and to carve out new orders in experience” (Greene, 1995, pp. 17-19). But remembering that the social imagination is co-created in conversations with others, we can first strive to “release” our own imaginations so that we too, when confronted with “contesting voices” and “clashing interpretations,” do not perceive this

cacophony as a “slippage, a shaking of foundations” (Greene, 1995, p. 187) but rather, an opening. To do so, we must learn to face the rain, the “unpredictabilities” and “the unexpected” (Greene, 1995, p. 124); to look and listen. To pay attention.

For Greene (1995), the arts serve as the catalyst for this imaginative thought, given the power that literature, art, music, and dance hold to “enable us to *see* more in our experience, to *hear* more on normally unheard frequencies, to *become conscious* of what daily routines have obscured, what habit and convention have suppressed” (1995, p. 123). The arts have the potential to evoke emotional responses, as well as connect us to the storied lives of others, in particular, those that we might not otherwise have access to. Claire Messud’s (2013) *The Woman Upstairs*, for instance, invites me into the life of an artist and schoolteacher, struggling to conceptualize her life as one still in the making as she grapples with what it means to love and live. I soak in her narrative whilst lounging on the couch in my Brooklyn apartment, feet tracing the tears and cracks in the worn synthetic sofa, hands reaching absently for the soft fur that culminates atop the cat’s head. Messud’s story stays with me as I walk home from the library on a sunny fall afternoon, my eye drawn to the streetcorner where a Junoesque woman in black corrals a group of children into the fenced borders of the austere concrete schoolyard. Who is this teacher? How does she laugh? Live? Love? What is her relationship with this new city of mine? Does she feel, as Messud’s protagonist did, that “all of the clichés of a new city are new and hence not clichés” just like love is each time newly experienced, “each time... familiar and new at once, an overturning” (Messud, 2013, p. 242)? Something in her face – her rounded jawline, the slight part of her lips and her look as I catch her eye – triggers a vision of Klimt’s (1907) *Adele Bloch-Bauer 1*, its resting place a short subway ride away. Has she visited the painting of the Vinnese hostess? Seen her own face reflected back to her in the woman who stands enveloped in flecks of gold? As I carry on down the street, a tree gives me pause. I stand up against it, examining its skin, tracing the patchwork patterns of the Sycamore, all the while reminded of a line from a play, *Red*. In the opening scene, Mark Rothko instructs a budding artist interviewing to be his apprentice: “Stand closer. You’ve got to get close. Let it pulsate.... Let it wrap its arms around you; let it embrace you, filling even your peripheral vision so nothing else exists or has ever existed or will ever exist” (Logan, 2009). As I turn, warm from the embrace, the light catches my eye as it cascades through narrow cracks between residences, slate concrete pressed up against blue “brown-stones” and red facades, glass entrances decorated with iron rods that bar. The tree’s stump extends beyond the tiny square allocated for its existent space, demarcated by large concrete slabs that it has since uprooted – cracking the tablets, displacing the sidewalk, disrupting solidity. Has the tree outgrown the neighbourhood? The neighbourhood, the tree? Reminded that there are no simple answers, I think of that tree often, of what it means to break barriers, live in the spaces between urban and organic, as I walk through neighbourhoods with crowns and prospects at their heights, points that green and parks that slope.

But Greene cautions that engagement with a work of art does not occur automatically upon our arrival to the scene, as we peruse a novel, attend a play, or stand in front of a painting. “Simply being in the presence of art forms,” Greene notes, “is not sufficient to occasion an aesthetic experience or change a life” (1995, p. 125). Rather, stimulating the imagination through aesthetic experience is a process within which we bring awareness to our own perception of art, drawing attention to the connection between the piece and ourselves (Greene, 2007). In a simple aesthetic encounter, one lacking the type of engagement for which Greene advocates, the

purported aesthete enters the gallery and glides through the space uncritically. Taking in the paintings, she may acknowledge the artists and the subject matter, glimmer in recognition when passing by a particular piece of art before moving quickly onto the next canvas. But “without spending reflective time,” Greene warns, “people merely seek the right labels, seek out the works by the artists they have heard they should see” (1995, p. 125). The pathos that infuses much of this particular experience is consumerism. To consume as much as possible, we must rush through the galleries, the space reduced to a conduit for our artistic ingestion. A visit to the Museum of Modern Art on a Saturday afternoon will reveal this expedition, as patrons flock to have their photos taken beside the Warhol’s (1962) soup cans, Matisse’s (1963) dancers, and Dali’s (1931) melting clocks; photographs are not taken to insure against an impersistent memory, as in our digital age, these images are readily available online. In fact, many patrons appear uninterested in *seeing* the art, but rather, want to *be seen with* the art. A quick glance suffices for an aesthetic encounter before they scurry off to the next piece, the interaction once again to be captured on film and shared later with social media.

This way of engaging with art is both anaesthetized and anaesthetizing. Borrowing the term from Dewey (1934), Greene (2001) defines *anaesthesia* as “a numbness, an emotional incapacity” that “can immobilize, prevent people from questioning, from meeting the challenges of being in and naming and (perhaps) transforming the world” (p. x). Induced to see the world as it is, the anaesthetized remain in a state of slumber, accepting reality as it is presented. They often persist in their apathy and indifference, wrapped in a haze of the “taken-for-granted”, “everydayness of things” (Greene, 1995, p. 47). Otherwise described, the anaesthetized are not “fully present” in a given moment; they rebuke or are blind to opportunities to unsettle what is presented or given, and fail to look at things again, differently (Greene, 1984). This desensitization makes us strangers to ourselves, disconnecting us from our own experiences as well as the experiences of others. Anaesthetized experience, consequently, will not lead to an expansion of the social imaginary.

The alternative, for Greene (1984) is an aesthetic stance she calls *wide-awakeness*. To be wide-awake is to be “vividly present” (Greene, 2001, p. 15), viscerally aware. Kindling the imagination, the arts “provide new perspectives on the lived world” (Greene, 1995, p. 3); “the ability to make poetic use of our imagination,” is determined by “the extent to which we grasp another’s world,” and are able to “bring into being the ‘as if’ worlds created by writers, painters, sculptors, filmmakers, choreographers, and composers” (Greene, 1995, p. 4). Picasso’s renderings of faces during his cubist period may incite me to reconceptualize a smile, as Suzanne Lacey’s (2013) *Between the Door and the Street* challenges me to think differently about the notion of a public exhibit, witnessing and community. To be awake is to pay attention, to enliven the world as it is perceived. We may “awaken” by “defamiliarizing the ordinary” (Greene, 1995, p. 4), seeing things in a different way or, a new light, “acting” rather than “responding” “to outside stimuli and cues” (Greene, 1984, p. 124). To do so, we must make our own meanings. Looking again, (re)searching for the otherwise overlooked, we can work to “disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected” (Greene, 1995, p. 28).

Returning to our gallery visitor, the scene remains the same but aesthetic engagement alters the interaction itself. Peering at her from around the corner, we watch as she pauses in front of a painting. Looking carefully, pointing to sections of the canvas, circling sections with broad

strokes, she draws others in. Time seems to escape her as she lingers here – scanning, squinting, seeking new angles. Her hand is placed pensively on her chin, before it cradles her neck, which tilts ever so slightly as she attempts to see things from a different angle. As she “stand[s] in the presence, say, of a still life or a portrait and move[s] (perceptually and imaginatively) inside the pictorial frame” she continues to work to “bracket out conventional seeing and expectation for a while” (Greene, 1984, p. 124). We watch as she turns to her companion, an elderly woman in a thick-rimmed sun hat, and asks her what she sees. They speak of other pieces, postulate meanings, ask questions. The older woman nods, careens, shuffles closer to the painting and away again, and then shakes her head in disagreement. Her own life story coalesces with the work to create disparate significance. They chat a while longer before moving on, another piece catching their eye. What doesn’t garner their attention is the placard, lying idly in the corner. For the imaginative, the placard represents an end, rather than a beginning. Beginnings are “generated by questioning, curiosity, wonder, restiveness” (Greene, 1984a, p. 124), not by digesting pre-formulated answers. Answers suggest finality; and yet, aesthetic experience never achieves finality. Greene (1984) explains, of the infinitude of an aesthetic experience:

It would never be fixed or entirely finished because the next time the individual came to the same painting (whether because he/she had lived a little longer, learned more, was in a different mood, or was enabled to look from another angle) the painting would show itself somehow differently, perhaps more fully or more abstractly. (Greene, 1984b, pp. 124–125)

Revisiting moments and pieces of art, reaching out to others to bear witness to them, we recreate our own stories, which are themselves, always already in the making. And this reaching out, a process of thoughtful engagement with others through art, takes time.

Poetic Interlude: Grasping for Wide-Awakeness while Grappling with Time, Experience and Art

Time. How do I navigate my way through my time here during my brief sojourn in New York - this urban jungle where moments are so precisely measured and punctuated with temporality. My own clock, wound tightly in anticipation, released once the wheels touched the tarmac. Hours, regulated, limited, contained by neat calendar boxes – eight months; 5,808 hours; 20,908,800 seconds – ticking away, slipping away... *Experience.* How will I make the *most* of this experience, this determiner, gesturing at quantifiability is not what I’m striving for, as I strive, enmeshed in the lingual lure of rhetorical progress. Pause. Re-wind, re-word. How will I have *an* experience? I turn to Dewey, a chapter titled “Having an Experience.” For Dewey, we have an experience “when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment,” when it is “integrated in and demarcated in the general stream of experience from other experiences” (Dewey, 1934, p. 35). Here the experience is a totalizing end, one that hints at perfection, fulfillment. But how do I aim for consummation in a city of insatiability, a possible impossibility? As the clock counts down, that omnipresent signifier of moments past, passing - how do I discern between “experiences that are worthwhile” and those that are simply not (Dewey, 1933, p. 33)? *Art.* To museum mile, an un/orthodox classroom on Fifth Avenue; to Maxine Greene, who sings of aesthetic awakenings, opening up to parts of experience that we never even knew existed. Wide-awakeness. Always already coming to, after the hibernation, seeing the world anew, once more, again. How can I initiate this process of opening, a readiness to be impressed upon,

becoming consciously aware amongst the whispers of eminent ghosts, creators of aesthetic marvel that beckon me to make their acquaintance as I stand, gawking, in the shadows of their magnanimous wonders? As a classmate queries, what might it mean to strive for wide-awakeness in the city that never sleeps? And so I go, looking, attending to – museums, theatres, statues in the park; street festivals, graffiti, performance art. And I read, devouring books in transit, aiming always for arrival. I focus, consumed, consuming Camus and Arendt and Freire for class, Morrison, Roth, and Franzen for me, for *me*, but then blurring, obfuscating, student and self, academic and bibliophile. I trouble time, getting lost in a book or canvas, persisting in my presence longer than my wandering eye desires, looking again, challenging what I see and what I think I know. I make connections, lingering, re-interpreting memories. And yet, through this process of engagement, this reaching out of myself into the world, I feel - *feel* disconnected, placated by this antibiotics. Where is the wind, the raw elemental sensation that rips over the East River into the Brooklyn streets, that chills me to the bone, penetrates deep into my corporeal being? The wind that provokes strangers to stop, interrupting their journey as they proclaim, pronounce “Man. Cold, in’ it?” What am I overlooking? What can’t I see?

Visual Metaphors: Imagine Seeing Through the Eyes of Others and Becoming Wide-Awake

As I try to spark myself into wide-awakeness, I become cognizant of the extent to which what I can conceive is shaped not only by a conceptual schema – understandings and expectations rooted in the social imaginary – but also by language, specifically, metaphors. Taking seriously the idea that “language is an act of the imagination, a means by which we construct in our minds images (or, to use a related word, imitations) of each other’s thoughts and experiences” (Pugh, Hicks, & Davis, 1997, p. 3), I wonder, how do metaphors shape what I imagine, what I can come to know? More importantly, perhaps, how might language impede one’s ability to imagine or think differently about certain phenomena? And collectively, how might language impinge on the expansion of the social imaginary?

Metaphors, often defined, perhaps too simply, as “the use of language to refer to something other than what it was originally applied to, or what it literally means, in order to suggest some resemblance” (Knowles & Moon, 2006, p. 3) can be used as a tool with which to connect to an idea or concept. Here, metaphors serve as a sort of bridge between an object or thought and our imagination (Pugh, Hicks, & Davis, 1997). Saturated with imagery, metaphors, can “move us, perhaps more than non-imagaic language, because of the richness of the associations they evoke” (La Caze, 2002, p. 8). Describing children’s minds as empty containers to be filled, for instance, vessels within which knowledge is to be deposited, has visceral impact, as does depicting minds as blank slates upon which the chalk of impressions might write. Hence, metaphorical language often serves a “unique communicative power,” (Stamovsky, 1988, p. 3) that carries with it a sort of “suggestive magic” (Baudelaire in Frye, 1963, p. 11). Evoked by rich metaphorical language, we might say that metaphor serves an opening function (to use a spatial metaphor) in that it creates space for new connections.

Beyond their function as linguistic tools for imaginative connectivity, metaphors operate at a deeper level as well; meta-conceptually, metaphors circumscribe our very ability think about or imagine certain phenomena. Highlighting the prevalence of metaphors in “our ordinary

conceptual system,” Lakoff and Johnson (1980) note that we “conceive of” and subsequently “experience” something within an imaginative frame that is laden with metaphor. For instance, as the concept “argument” is tied to war, we think and speak about arguments within this metaphorical frame (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Similar to a Spartan phalanx, my premises must be solid and strong, cutting and concise, so as not to miss the mark. In this respect, metaphor serves a closing function insofar as what we can conceive is already contained within or limited to a pre-formulated set of literary images. Thinking back to our discussion of the social imaginary, metaphors serve as part of a set of common understandings, a component of the imaginary, that make it difficult for us to think about and talk about certain phenomena differently. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) remind us:

Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think, what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor. (p. 3)

While literary texts are often ripe with metaphors, so too are philosophical works (de Man, 1978). Le Doeuff (1989) introduces the “philosophical imaginary” to capture this “stock of images philosophers use,” often integral to “the expression of philosophical thought” itself, “to the way debates are structured, and assumptions are shared” (La Caze, 2002, p. 1). We might think of the philosophical imaginary as a discourse specific set of images within a broader social imaginary. Metaphors, specifically visual ones – metaphors that orient us using sight, such as *image*, *imagination* (forming mental *images*), *attention*, *see*, *view*, *viewpoint*, *point of view*, *vantage point*, *perspective*, *look*, *watch*, *reflect*, and *lay eyes on*, and spatial ones – metaphors, that refer to a contained space, including particular locations, such as a *stage*, *theatre*, or *room*, or more broad spatial orientations such as *somewhere*, *nowhere* and *everywhere*, abound in philosophical texts, especially those that tackle questions about knowing and being. As Marguerite La Caze (2002) points out “visual metaphors are generally paired with spatial ones,” especially in epistemology, where “sight” is often conceptualized as “a distinctively spatial sense” (pp. 120-121). La Caze reminds us of Plato’s famous allegorical world wherein prisoners live in the darkness of a cave (spatial metaphor) filled with shadows and reflections (visual metaphors) in a realm intended to represent what he labels the ‘visible world.’ Once the prisoner escapes, he is blinded by the light of the intelligible world, governed by the sun, intended of course to represent the Forms (La Caze, 2002).

It is also important to note that metaphors operate on a precognitive level to the extent that they frequently escape our awareness, and are immediate. Very basically, we pay no mind to our conceptual system (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), taking for granted its ability to assist us in our daily tasks. But beyond this lack of awareness, Phillip Stambovsky (1988) points out that this quality of immediacy maintains a particularly potent function with respect to literary images. As “objects of the imagination,” literary images “possess all the irrefragable presence of sense impressions” (p. 45). Stambovsky notes that “literary experience” is “a prediscursive, aesthetically immediate mode of consciousness,” a “prereflective, presentational vehicle of communication” that taps into the emotive, affective realm in a way that is “active and transformative as perception itself” (Stambovsky, 1988, pp. 62–75). This is to say that metaphor,

a component of literary experience and one type of literary image, affects us with the same force of effectual immediacy as any other perception: the sharp cacophony of horns that accost my eardrums as I walk down Park Avenue; the piercing pinch of the sunlight as I emerge from Film Forum on a sunny day; the stench of garbage that, despite my efforts, floods nostrils on a humid summer morning. Returning to a literary text, awash with metaphors, a text affectively washes over me as I experience metaphor. When I stumble upon William Wordsworth's (1812) advice to "Fill your paper with breathings of your heart" (p. 107) or Picasso's famous claim that "Art washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life," I affectively respond as the metaphorical connection is made. But as metaphors often remain undetected, I am unaware of the extent to which metaphor stimulates affect. Similar to sense experience, presentational immediacy does not include an additional step, a moment of reflection within which I can ponder the extent to which a conceptual scheme is metaphorical, or critically analyze the usage of one term over the other. For once reflection begins, the experience undergoes a "conscious remove," as direct experience is filtered through an analytic lens (Stambovsky, 1988). Stambovsky explains:

As soon as we begin to reflect upon experience – applying analytic concepts, theories, or strategies in order to construe meaning – and attempt to *make* sense rather than merely to *take* the phenomenological sense of it, we are no longer directly engaged, con-forming – no longer *in formation*, as it were – with the original facts and phenomena of experience. (p. 47)

Shifting back to Greene's work here, we may take note of the fact that visual metaphors are plentiful in *Releasing the Imagination*. As Greene puzzles over the notion of "wide-awakeness," she coaxes the reader, by way of modeling, through a process of "reconceiving and revisualizing," of "looking" for "new perspectives and images;" she encourages us to try to "see the world" from "different vantage points" while we *invent visions*; paying *attention*, we aim to become "aware" of "moments of awareness and intensified consciousness," "memories and *visions* from childhood" that may "release *imagination*." Time and time again, we come back to objects and texts and look again – "look at things as if they could be otherwise" (Greene, 1995, pp. 1-19). Carol Jeffers (1998) picks up on the visuality in Greene's text, noting that "seeing – the capacity to see both the particularities and possibilities – becomes a powerful theme in understanding imagination, and a means of understanding Greene's perceptive encounters with the arts" (p. 77). Considering the power of images "to persuade and to provide support for a particular view and to exclude alternatives and methods" (La Caze, 2002, p. 1), I wonder how these visual metaphors might serve a restrictive function, inciting closures rather than openings? As La Caze (2002) reminds us again, "images can work to close off certain questions. Subscribing to the image can make... certain questions unaskable or invisible" (p. 16). What can get lost with our entanglement in the visual?

I am concerned, specifically, with connotations of visuality given the aforementioned immediacy of metaphorical perception. If, as Stambovsky (1988) suggests, literary experience is an "aesthetically immediate mode of consciousness" (p. 75), what do visual metaphors evoke? In its most primitive form, wide-awakeness is antonymous with a sort of deep sleep. A person who is wide-awake has moved beyond the hazy awareness that follows from slumber; stimulated, eyes open, s/he is aware, paying attention, looking closely. S/he scans the room, takes in the surroundings, notices. Hence, wide-awakeness suggests consciousness, attention to something

rather than passive receipt. Similarly, as I endeavour to become wide-awake, my experience is constrained by these metaphors of sight, its rootedness in visuality. And so, despite my understanding of Greene's wide-awakeness as a form of "intentional" conscious attendance that "throws itself outward toward the world" (Greene, 1979, p. 162), one that requires reflection and connection with others in the "translation of ideas" (Greene, 2010, p. 945), nevertheless, at first I look – watch, detect, bear witness to – in galleries and parks, on streets and subway trains, at parties and the theatre. I look because the visual metaphor incites me to, as sight is the sense incited to engage.

William Gaudelli (2011) describes seeing as "the selfish sense," "presumably totalizing while limiting, equating all of the body's other senses with itself but rather arrogantly presuming to capture the world in its view" (p. 1239). When one returns from a trip, Gaudelli notes, "friends are unlikely to ask, 'So, how did it taste? What did you hear there? Tell us about the smells?' But surely they will ask, 'What did you see?'" (p. 1239). What becomes "unaskable or invisible" here is the non-visible, or not ocular. Ted Aoki's (1990/2005) writing resonates. Citing Wittgenstein, he reminds us how "in the West the world of language has come to over emphasize and overly rely upon visuality, thereby diminishing the place of other ways of being in the world" (p. 372). Soaking in Aoki's words, alongside Berendt's claim that "we understand only half of the world if we...comprehend it only by seeing" (Berendt in Aoki, 1990/2005, p. 372), I wonder not what else I might know, but how else might I *be*, if not tuned in solely to what I *see*.

Connected to my sense of being, I am curious at how metaphor's very rootedness in the visual might elicit epistemology's traditional bifurcation between rational and emotional, with emphasis placed on the former. As "wide-awake" is also synonymous with consciousness, the connection connotes the rational/cognitive domain, signalling this interpretation to some. So while journeying toward wide-awakeness, I may prereflectively privilege rationality over emotion, focusing once again on what I *know*, rather than what I *feel*, despite Greene's arguments for wide-awakeness's power to the contrary. In the words of Marshall McLuhan, the medium becomes the message.

Concordantly, wide-awakeness in its popular usage, also calls forth the previously cited epistemic connections. During the final class of Maxine's seminar, a group of students performed a musical piece, a suitably titled hit pop song "Wide Awake" by Katy Perry, adapting some of the lyrics to reflect Maxine's ideas. A cursory glance of the words of the song, laden with visual metaphors, quickly reveals the term's association with learning and knowledge. Suggesting ignorance before "wide-awakeness," our pop star claims she was "in the dark" and "dreaming for so long," in the past, singing "I wish I knew then, what I know now" (Perry, Gottwald, Martin, Walter & McKee, 2012). However, transcending this ignorance as she awakens, Perry proclaims that the issue is "clear" to her, as she emerges "born again, out of the lion's den" (Perry, Gottwald, Martin, Walter & McKee, 2012). When she enters the light, sees clearly, or awakens, the suggestion is clearly that knowledge has been attained. And like Perry, wide-awakeness rouses me to arrive at knowledge, even despite my familiarity with Greene's argument to the contrary. So while Greene speaks of openings and possibilities, "leaving spaces" and "reaching beyond," the "questions" (Greene, 1995, pp. 1-30) and the "not yet" (Pinar, 1998, p. 1), at the prereflective level, the visual image leads me to make this association with epistemology, excluding and foreclosing rather than opening. As La Caze says, "the visual

metaphor lends itself to an ideal of completion (La Caze, 2002, p. 2). Despite my efforts to the contrary, the metaphor incites me to know. Here, the visual metaphor operates contrary to the intended meaning of the term, as the image of wide-awakeness “work[s] to close off certain questions,” “reconceptions excluded by the images that have been used” (La Caze, 2002, p. 16).

Finally, as wide-awakeness is stimulated by way of the imagination, we may also consider what the term evokes. In its most basic interpretation, an individual who imagines performs the cognitive act in a self-contained manner; a child with what might be termed an “active imagination” creates narratives, fabricating scenes and characters, extrapolating from sensory data whilst also creating anew. And so while the imagination might be an effective tool for transcending the boundaries between self and other, insofar as it can permit someone to “glimpse what might be,” “to see beyond what the imaginer has called normal” and “carve out new order in experience” (Greene, 1995, p. 19), metaphorically, the term need not incite me to connect with others in the process. While the imagination may “open new perspectives” and “offer new lenses through which to look out” (Greene, 1995, p. 18), the lenses may be sufficiently muddied with our own experiential framing that they let in little of the light (visual metaphor intended) of others’ actual experiences. La Caze (2002) cautions against the visual metaphor of imagination in the case of marginalized groups, when imagining might lead to “romanticizing” “rather than actually learning or accepting what marginalized groups know” (p. 137). Hence, imagination’s rootedness in our own situated and partial perspectives is important to pay heed to, as is our inability to ever really imagine our way into the mind of another.

Un/Final Gestures: Indwelling Between the Questions and re/leasing imag/in/ation

I struggle to tell my story, nip in the bud my own solipsist musings in favour of wandering in the fecund grounds of other people’s narrative accounts. How do I enter these gardens respectfully? Appreciate the sweet scents while laying aside my desire to inhale, my urge to pick the flowers to add to my own garden? How can I see, smell and taste there what I have not yet seen, cannot see? Know and not know what I do not yet know, what I cannot yet imagine possible? How can I learn to listen, soak in, be with other people’s stories, troubling all the while my own? How do I learn to cultivate this fertile space, in collaboration with others, honouring that which has come before and that which has yet to be? And how do I release the imagination in Greene’s sense of the word without remaining contained within the prediscursive affect the metaphor evokes?

In one sense, I cannot escape the social imaginary, nor can I write and think without metaphor; this text, focusing as it does on the prevalence of metaphor in literary and philosophical work, is littered with metaphors. But I can learn to be aware of the extent to which conceptual and linguistic frames mould and shape my thought. I can nudge, butt up against, and wiggle the hinges of these containers, visualize them overflowing with the fullness of a multiplicity of words, images, expectations and understandings; of other people’s stories that have come before, and those that have yet to be conceived. I might smash them instead, piece them back together again in fragmented bits, in glue not quite strong enough to hold anything in place.

I can also trouble inclinations to bifurcate, pushing back against the binary’s prominence, tidy delineations that entice with their sparkling veneer of certitude, aiming to ground us in the grooves and arcs of the univocal narrative thread:

me/you	present/past	presence/absence	inside/outside
here/there	awake/asleep	reason/emotion	image/text
life/death	listen/speak	question/answer	knowledge/ignorance

Sidestepping, evading its pull, I make note of, feel the slash—marking, cutting, dividing, shuddering at the violence of it all. Thinking of Aoki, I reconceptualize the slash, the space in between, as a “generative space” between not only words but “actions and encounters juxtaposed,” (Fels, 2013, p. 40) where the slash serves as a “crack where the lights comes in,” (Aoki, 2000/2005, p. 332) an area of “possibilities as we quest for a change from the is to the not yet” (Aoki, 1986/2005, p. 165). Rita Irwin (2003) describes the site as a “mode of being” that requires “living in tensionality,” as “tensions between...polarities are held within a dialectical balance, a balance that invigorates novelty, surprise and humour” (p. 64). Irwin also calls attention to the aesthetic element of this tension in its ability to offer new “ways of knowing” or “in/sights” (p. 63). She explains:

In/sights open up or unfold implicit aesthetic sensibilities within seeing. The / (slash) embellishes the typically unperceived inner space between *in* and *sights*. *In*, meaning held by, surrounded by, amidst, within the boundary of, or within the confines of a category, is held in dialectical tension with *sight*, meaning the act of seeing, things worth seeing, viewing and the range of vision....In/sight, at once looking within while seeing beyond: a delicate balance between seeing possibilities and recognizing limitations. (pp. 64 – 65).

Again, I make note of these metaphors here—*space in between*—spatial metaphor, *the light comes in*—visual metaphor, *in/sights*—spatial and visual metaphor, aware that they might constrain my ability to conceptualize and experience the slash as a possible space for aesthetic experience.

At the same time, the space in between, generative, lush, abundant with possibility, need not be a thing conceived as space, but rather, as both space and not space, de/generative, in/abundant with im/possibility. Aoki’s (1996/2005) account of trying to conceptualize “the space between East and West” resonates here. He notes:

In order to loosen my attachment to East or West as ‘thing,’ I call upon a Chinese character, (wu). It reads ‘nothing’ or ‘no-thing.’ But I note that in ‘no-thing’ there is already inscribed the word ‘thing,’ as if to say ‘nothing’ cannot be without ‘thing,’ and ‘thing’ cannot be without ‘no-thing.’ For me, such a reading is already away from the modernist binary discourse of ‘this or that,’ or the imaginary grounded in an essence called ‘thing.’ And now I am drawn into the fold of a discursive imaginary that can entertain ‘both this and that,’ ‘neither this nor that’ – a space of paradox, ambiguity and ambivalence. (p. 317)

Considering this space in between as an “active space for knowledge creation, and particularly, an active space for unfolding aesthetic sensibilities” (Irwin, 20013, p. 64), I can, like Aoki, ruminate on the both and neither, as I loosen what this area in between might mean – an in/active non/space for un/knowing creation, re-creation, lack of creation and everything in between, amidst and beyond the binaries. New meanings are un/made as I resist binary thinking, moving toward “a multilectical view that encourages thirdness, an in-between space that exists between and among categories...a point of convergence...where differences and similarities are woven together” (Irwin, 2004, p. 29).

Releasing the imagination takes on new meaning as I work within its third space. Releasing—*Re* suggests repetition, *leasing* both taking and granting. *Re/leasing*, the space between the process of taking and granting ad infinitum, linearity and progress disrupted. An in/active stillness, peaceful im/mobility. Imagination – *image*, gesturing toward visuality; *in*, within, inside, contained; *ation*, an action or process, a thing being done. *Imag/in/ation*—expanding sensory input, transcending physical borders, in/action. Here, un/common mis/understandings are not to be taken for granted; I/you never know what we do not yet know as we reach out to each other, unsure of where I/you end and begin, neither consuming nor subsuming but looming in between the spaces between us, gazing at our dim reflections in each others’ eyes. In a state of un/conscious, my rememberings ebb and flow here like a soft breeze, visions cast with the hazy consistency of a dream. In this space, I am neither wide-awake nor in a deep slumber. I am, in this sense, both in and outside of the world, while at once both, neither. Dreams are not spaces for reflecting, labeling, naming, categorizing, as these processes have no place here. I am simply present in the moment, in/existence marked by sensations of calmness, warmth, gratitude, restlessness, terror and anxiety; with feelings, about what can and cannot be.

Like Pinar, Greene’s pronouncement, “I am who I am not yet” and Pinar’s iteration “I am...not yet” “hangs in the air around me” (p. 1). The ellipsis, its present absence, is particularly poignant now. I long to reach out, across lines and borders, through in/finitudes of time. No longer in New York, a piece of myself remains there, though which one, I could not say. I had hoped, planned even, to return to New York in the late spring, to schedule a meeting with Maxine to discuss her class, this paper. I lined a notebook with my questions, her, their intended audience. But as I skimmed Facebook one afternoon, a post signalled ever-so subtly that I was too late. “There are no final words,” it read, “but only questions” (personal communication, May 29, 2014). Questions remain unanswered, but also, unasked. Amidst the memories and silences, the present moments and the din of daily life, I am left wondering. What might it mean to strive to be, not yet, in the space *in between the questions*?

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