The Mask of Modernity

“All of western medicine is built on getting rid of pain, which is not the same as healing. Healing is actually the capacity to hold pain.” Gabor Maté

Edlanet’e; Lhasso fyafulla.

My name is Suna Galay-Tamang, and I am currently based on Syilx-speaking Okanagan lands, in so-called Greenwood, British Columbia. On my mother’s side I am Tamang clan, from the foothills of the Himalayas in Nepal. On my father’s side I am Dene Métis from Buffalo Narrows, Saskatchewan (Dënesųłinė́, Scottish and French), with Jewish-Ukrainian and German-speaking Dutch bloodlines.

I am a hide tanner, astrologer, clown artist and budding birthworker. This may seem like many things to focus on, but maybe because my blood comes from so many different places, they don’t feel very different to me. They are all threshold traversing practices. They articulate ecosystem and physiological transitions, rhythms and cycles. They teach me how to time travel and how to stay present with transformation, and to have agency within it.

I was invited to read Vanessa Machado de Oliveira’s book *Hospicing Modernity* during my pregnancy with my first child in 2022, and then write an essay in response on the relationship between the death of modernity, and the birth of my child.

First off I need to say that I can’t take credit for the originality of what I write here. A north star of my artistic work is that one of the blueprints for harmonious life on Earth[1] is that nothing belongs to me; everything is a gift, and all gifts come with the responsibility to take care of them.

To me, that means that my body, my ability to think, the time I have in this life, are all gifts from my ancestors, the Earth and the universe itself and it is my responsibility to tend to myself, the Earth, and all of my living and beyond earthly life relations in exchange. Every thought I have comes from the dreams and questions my ancestors had, conversations I’ve had, content I’ve listened to or watched and principles I’ve learned from my teachers.

What I can take credit for is that I do honour my name, Suna, which means to listen; I listen to what is being said, what rests beneath what is not being said, and discern within that to what feels true. I find connections and track the patterns that present themselves.

The past few months have been a poignant time to ponder birth and death, more so than I was expecting, with the death of my late grandfather in October, and the ongoing publicized genocide of the Palestinian Nation.

To start off, what I know about birth and death is that they are thresholds of transformation, and they are equalizing; places where all masks (personas or frames of mind) and preconceived

[1] Inspired from the book “Yamoria: The Lawmaker, Stories of the Dene” by George Blondin

notions fade away and there is nothing but to work with what is apparent. They are liminal spaces, and the traverser “occupies a position at, or on both sides of, a boundary or threshold”. If we see it as a continuum, between death and birth is gestation.

What I have learned about liminal spaces is that your relationship with and faith in the unknown shapes the quality of the transition. Liminal spaces are almost like a pause in time: a death (form dissolving, dis-illusioning, letting go), the pause (gestation, where things reshape themselves), and then a new form and possibility is born. I believe the pause is where agency shapes itself.

While talking about blood quantum with a friend recently, in the context of finding a mate to have babies with, I stated that I think it is a bullshit qualifier on someone’s value because epigenetics is where we come from, but our values and agency shape who we become.

Giving birth and becoming a parent is difficult work, and deeply uncomfortable to varying degrees of painful. It requires trust, faith in the unknown, engagement, agency and letting go. It is death and birth all wrapped into one beautiful bloody mess.

But it is worth it. For us in modern culture, it is probably the most profound initiation that life offers. It has shaped me into a more integrated human.

The birth of my baby tethered me to this life: to my partner, to the Earth that healed me, to my family and community who helped us, and to the future because my son’s whole world is yet to be formed and I want to witness it.

I remember when my partner and I were navigating the early days of transitioning from a platonic friendship into a committed romantic one, the kind that creates a family. So much resistance came up every time we’d take a step closer to one another, and he said through tears “this is the kind of love that creates loops, between you and me and me and the earth.” That was so scary for him because he knew he wouldn’t be able to fly away as easily as he could before.

It is so uncomfortable to associate when you live in a culture of dissociation and separation. All the tethering that I’ve experienced has required effort. Because love and building relationships move at the speed of nature, not the faster than light speed of modernity. Slowing down to nature's rhythm can feel like contracting your whole spirit into a tree, and realizing you have to wait until deep winter for the sap to start flowing, and it is only early spring. It’s just hard.
It requires taking up space in time, which is only possible by being associated with our body, right where we are, and moving at its pace. And that is way slower than any of us would like to believe.

While I was pregnant, I didn’t want to read *Hospicing Modernity.* I wanted to protect myself - my mind, my body and my baby - and I had a feeling the content would be too confronting. I knew that from multiple Indigenous birthing teachings, it is best to not scare the lifegiver because they

are in a very vulnerable time physiologically. Bad news can be like cold air, which in many Indigenous medicine traditions across the globe, including the Ayurvedic tradition my mum comes from, is the most harmful energy to the postpartum body and baby. It can cause physical, mental and emotional unease and illness.

Gestating a baby makes the body more vulnerable to the world around it, and brings a heightened awareness of this vulnerability in the psyche. For the full length of gestation, the lifegiver's body is in a liminal state, connected to everything - the womb becomes a portal to an ancestral place in time, receiving a novel/ancient essence from the universe which fuses with cells rapidly assembling themselves into coherent patterns to spring forth new tissue. Their body and its DNA are forever changed, as they incorporate cells from the baby's other parent into their own bloodstream. The heart grows to one and a half times its size, blood volume doubles, and organs squish into cavities of the body that they have never occupied before. The brain of the lifegiver creates more new synapses in the two years after giving birth than it ever has, since its own birth. The baby and the parent grow together.

The physiology of the lifegiver is as vulnerable as the baby they have just birthed. Both need warmth, rest, and nourishing food to recover and grow.

The nature of my labour was long; 128 hours, and for 3 of those days I couldn't rest for more than 30 minutes before another contraction would rise. When I did fall asleep, I would wake up in confusion and stress in the peak of a contraction. My partner and mother were my tethers through these moments, using Reiki and coaching me to stay calm and track my breath through the waves. Still, the lack of sleep, coupled with traumatic memories surfacing as my cervical tissues expanded, confusing moments of discordant intentions amongst myself and the shifting people who were present to support me, and the emergency transfer to the hospital after our baby's heart rate began dipping on the 5th night, left my partner and I depleted. Thankfully with the help of an epidural I dilated fully, my water broke, and I began pushing my baby out within 45 minutes of arriving at the hospital. Two hours later, our baby was born and immediately tended to by 3 pediatricians standing by, and we remained at the hospital for 2 extra days to do testing on his slow heart rate.

In the first few days after the birth, we slept for no longer than one hour at a time, ate barely enough food because the hospital only provides food for the mother, and walked around barefoot on the cold hospital floors because we hadn't packed an overnight bag for an emergency hospital birth. I felt very calm and grounded, but when I would drift into sleep I often woke up dissociated - I remember seeing my baby and thinking he was my grandmother's baby, and that I wasn't allowed to keep him.

I didn't know it then, but my partner had started to have a mental breakdown. He had slept almost as little as me in the past 5 days, but I had the oxytocin from breastfeeding to keep me grounded. When we look back on it, we laugh that we should have known he was losing his grip on reality when he offered me a plastic cup of liquid and said emphatically "Oh, you gotta try this tea. I think that's the best tea I've ever had," and when I tasted it, it was just warm water.

After two and a half days of uncertainty, our baby's heart rate started to level out and we were finally told we can go home. Our home was exactly as we had left it, with the birth pool and room I had been labouring in still set up. It felt like returning to the site of a car accident.
The next day, my husband began hearing voices, and past traumas resurfaced. Though he instinctively reached out to people that he has strong tethers to - his best friend, his mum, our clown teacher - he could not resist the momentum of his psychological death. He felt certain his spirit was trying to leave his body, and that he would not be able to keep me and our baby safe in his presence, so he left the house. He called me on the phone to tell me I would probably never see him again, and I said "don't you dare leave, we need you, don't go anywhere" and said we could talk after I finish feeding the baby. Half an hour later I found him in the front yard, looking extremely dehydrated, with shadows moving across his face. He looked high but I knew he was sober. I tried to pull him back inside the house but he later told me he saw a traumatic image flash in his mind right then, and he stumbled backwards down our front steps and fell onto his back on the grass. He was not seriously hurt, but he could not move.

I immediately ran to his side. I was barefoot and kneeled on the grass beside him. It was mid-January and an unusually sunny day in Vancouver. He was wearing shorts and a t-shirt, also barefoot. When I kneeled beside him, he arched his back as if his soul was being pulled out of his chest. The moment my knees touched the ground and I touched him, I felt a surge of electric energy travel up my spine and grip the back of my skull so intensely, it ached with a steely sensation I've never felt before.

He went to psych emerg after 4 hours of lying on the grass, immovable but very communicative, in the company of my siblings and a couple incredible neighbours passing by who were moved to stay by his side. My sister accompanied him to the hospital and I called our best friend to meet him there. He left not knowing when he would see me and our baby again, certain he wouldn't be allowed to leave the hospital once they admitted him, in the state he was in.

I stayed home with our baby and my mother, and my mother gave me a warming Ayurvedic massage which helped me to sleep and temporarily alleviate the intense aches in my mid-back that became chronic for the next few weeks. My partner was released from emerg with Ativan and told to get some sleep, that he was just a stressed out father experiencing postpartum anxiety, and recovered for a week at our best friend's house.

I've never seen so much pain and grief in someone's eyes as there were in his the first time I saw him again. He had to walk extremely slow in those days, and focus his energy on loving himself and communing with trees in order to gain strength. If he moved too fast, he wasn't sure which inner mask would take over and whether he could trust their intentions.

The mask he had been operating in on a daily basis fractured the moment he touched our baby. The trauma from his own childhood surfaced in a strong wave and in the days following, he returned to the mind of himself at 5 years old, when he realized he would never get the love he

needed from his parents by being himself, so his need for love created a mask that would be more approved of.

He was so confronted by our little son, who was so strong and so vulnerable and completely dependent on us for survival, that the mask which compromised his core sense of self in the pursuit of receiving love had to die. A parent strong enough to love themselves and our son needed to be born.

My experience of becoming a parent was much more gradual. The mask I had been operating in slowly expanded over the 10 months of gestation as my body changed shape. It expanded so much that it dissolved, and transformed me from the inside out as my hormones rose and fell. I went through the gradual process of stretching into a different frame of mind as the tissues of my body expanded and relaxed, essentially tanning my own hide. I slowly made space for my child inside my body, and therefore didn't expand so fast that I had a crisis of death and rebirth like my partner went through.

Even so, the transition into parenthood is something no one can prepare you for. The paradox for the lifegiver is that their new mask as a parent grows out of a wound - they have literally split open, pushed the fire inside them out, and are left emptied. They need sleep and food from the marathon they've just endured, but the initiation into parenthood is immediate, and time no longer belongs to the self - a new lifeform has entered the world. The responsibility to care for the completely vulnerable infant is constant and all consuming, and is often the sole responsibility of the traumatized and wounded parent(s). Even a smooth birth with no complications or medical violence is a traumatic event, because of the rapid change in the structure of the body.

Perhaps traumatic is not the right word … maybe birth has become a traumatic event, because there is little awareness in modern culture that it is an initiation across a threshold of transformation, for both the birther and baby, and thresholds need tending.

This is when communal time[2] is needed - for everyone to gather round with a shared goal to share the roles of caring for the new life, and hear the story of the initiation. I heard a quote by ethnographer Arnold van Gennep, that the rites of passage happen for their community, that they are meant to be shared and guide the community as well[3]. If the initiate has no one to share their story with, psychosis can bloom. Or if they are not tethered securely to the land, they can also be taken by insanity, because initiations are thresholds where nothing is certain - but something we can always return to, even if all else has abandoned us, is the land. The land remains true in its steadfast materiality and cycles of growth and decay, which is why it's so concerning that the modern agenda is to displace populations from the land they are tethered to, and excavate the land itself. The dream of modernity has already fractured the land and

[2] "Time belongs to community", something my dear friend Sussan Yanez-Kalfumallen said intuitively while we were talking about the shift in relationship to time once a baby is born.
[3] Arnold van Gennep*, "The Rites of Passage".*

essence of time into a million isolated worlds, in which most inhabitants of those worlds are struggling just to take care of themselves. I remember my partner used to say something that I found so soothing - that insanity is believing you are separate from everything else. Well, insanity has certainly taken hold of our collective consciousness.

So, what carried us through the early postpartum days was humour. We were in totally new territories - the mask I was used to engaging with in my partner had dissolved abruptly, but his sense of humour remained and this is how we stayed in the same world. He became the jester of our lives, and we both acknowledged that he may have become even funnier of a clown because of his journey to his inner hell and back[4]. He nimbly jigged his way around his existential grief with profound and ridiculous humour, and carried me along as a willing and captive audience. I am certain that our shared sense of humour just sidestepped us from postpartum depression or worse. Now, I think that the wisest thing to do when looking for a partner to have a baby with, is make sure you can laugh together - because when you can't recognize each other anymore, at least you can always find each other's hearts through the cosmic giggle.

Still, I thought obsessively about my labour every day, and fixated on the moments that I felt abandoned and unsupported in - when the absence of unconditional love and care from my surroundings had made my inner world become chaotic, and the level of pain I was in felt unmanageable. My mind now felt like an open wound to match my swollen and tender pelvic area. For three months, I relived the birth every day and felt completely isolated emotionally. My husband had been my main emotional support but now did not have the capacity to talk about the birth at all. As long as we focused on being good parents and being present for our son, our relationship was functional and peaceful.

I had expected to be surrounded by love, joy and excitement at the new life who had come to us, and congratulations for the hardest work I had ever done in my life. We did have some wonderful visits and help from friends and family, but most of the celebration died down after the first couple weeks, as no one else's sense of time had shifted so profoundly as ours did with the new little life in our arms.

As a birthworker, I knew too much, and that brought its own grief. I knew how it was supposed to be for new mothers in other countries with more intact postpartum traditions. My mother was trained by the elders in her village from the age of 8 to be a birth assistant, taught how to massage the lifegiver during labour and what foods to cook for postpartum healing. I knew I was supposed to be massaged every day to help my circulation during bedrest, and eat only warm soft nourishing foods, and rest lots with family around to hold my baby while I slept. But in reality, I don't live in a community that collectively operates with these traditions and isn't struggling with their own mental health and survival needs, and I don't have the financial means to hire professional support.

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[4] Rogan Taylor, "*The Death and Resurrection Show: From Shaman to Superstar".* https://archive.org/details/deathresurrectio0000tayl

My mum was able to stay for two weeks, honouring the first 11 days of postpartum care as is Tamang tradition, before my grandmother's health became critical and she had to go away for a month. In those 11 days I ate the best food of my life. But our relationship was more tense than it had ever been, due to conflicts and heartbreak that arose during my labour. Both my sister and mother had to tend to their own depletion from the birth and stress that followed it, and could not be as present as I had expected they would be.

But, if I hadn't experienced a lack of the support and attunement I needed from my human kin, I would not have searched for it elsewhere. When I look back on those months, I received medicine from so many different lifeforms: water, plants, steam, fire, nourishing foods, the wisdom conveyed through Vanessa's book, teachings from my animal kin from the deer and buffalo hides I've tanned, and the teachings resident in my heart and body from my clown practice. My community is all of these things and they helped to clear my heart, to see myself in the continuum, and to integrate the birth as an intact initiation.

I learned that the Earth is my community, and what comes from the Earth has the capacity to heal our bodies; to process trauma and integrate it on a cellular level.

After coming across online resources about pelvic steaming being a universal gynecological healing tradition, I found out which herbs I should use in the postpartum time. For three days in a row I kneeled over a pot of freshly made tea for 15 minutes, and after three months of replaying my birth in my head, like picking at a scab, I just stopped. I just stopped feeling traumatized. The gentle medicine of steam from hot water and medicinal herbs pulled the cold air out of me.

It was the first thing that made me feel optimistic about my body and my relationships recovering.

Once I went through labour, and my early postpartum time, I realized it is impossible to protect yourself from harm while living within modernity. Harm is inevitable. Being affected by the world is inevitable. It is how we show up as community for those with open wounds, to tend and care for them, that shapes the way we move forward. And the most painful symptom of modernity is that we no longer have the collective time or knowledge of how to care for one another through transitional times.

This is why when I began reading *Hospicing Modernity* after my baby had come, it did the work of the wise and experienced midwife I didn't have and dearly needed, applying a soothing balm to my broken heart and palpating my organs back into place. It made me understand that I will not be mended to the state I was in before, and that this was a necessary death, because I had been in a state of self-centered self-infantilization that was undermining my own growth.

I was looking for a sense of validation and communion that no human kin could give me. It was when I finally turned to the land, to plants and lifegiving water, that I experienced psychological integration and physical healing from my birth. And only once I chose to reach out and offer support every time I felt unsupported, that I received the connection I was looking for.

Stepping into parenthood with its hormonal rollercoaster brought me a deeper awareness of the impact of my actions, and how they would affect more than just my own relationships with my family and friends, but also my child's relationships. I had numerous experiences of emotional waves like tsunamis waking me up in the middle of the night in agony about the lack of support I felt from loved ones. The type of agony that made me want to turn away and abandon them in return, to dissociate from them. But that was in too much contrast with my allegiance to having loving and present aunties and uncles for my child to be tethered to. And that made me have to grow up, and acknowledge how my actions and non actions had contributed to the lack of safety I felt, and that I possessed agency to do things differently, to invest in creating harmony. I chose to stay in and strengthen my connection to the circles I am tethered to, and be in allegiance to peace and harmony, for my baby. This choice grew new masks in me, the kind that have the courage to be vulnerable, compassionate and understanding when conflict arises.

My grandfather died on October 2nd of this year, and I saw him for the last time one week before that. He had alzheimers and its progression accelerated throughout the pandemic, until he wandered away from home with no shoes on and was taken to the hospital for an assessment to place him in longterm care. He was placed in an acute ward, instead of a longterm rehabilitative one, and did not experience dignity or the care he needed. He declined rapidly in their care, and in the end I think he chose to die because it was too painful to be alive any longer.

The last thing he taught me, in our visit, was about agency. He was looking outside his window at the scaffolding, and seemed fixated on it. He kept saying "what's wrong with that? That's no good, no good". I was used to this because he was always pointing out things that weren't safe. But this time he had another question - "Well, what are you gonna do about it?"

There are two men in my life who have taught me about my own agency to change things - my grandfather, Victor John Galay, and my clown[5] teacher, David MacMurray Smith.

When I first heard about clown school from a friend while in art school, it lodged itself in me with a simple knowing that I had to go because it sounded terrifying and I was curious. Now, ten years after doing my first course, I understand in increasing detail why I keep coming home to my clown practice.

Being the psychic sponge that I am, and descending from multiple lineages of survivors of genocide, oppression and sexual trauma, my survival strategy of choice has been dissociation. Daydreaming and my imagination have been my refuge since childhood, as I perfected the art of escapism without leaving the room.

I remember being in the studio during a performance development class one day, working on identifying what it is that we wanted to say to our audience. I felt stuck emotionally, and took a break to sit on the side, in tears. My teacher sat beside me and asked what was going on for me, and I said that I didn't know what the point was, in 'growing up', because all I saw was depression and struggle and sacrifice around me, and no freedom. He said that "an image presents itself only long enough for you to see it, and decide whether you are going to believe in it. If you don't, what are you going to create instead?"

I see clown as a practice to re-member our dismembered bodies. It is de-institutionalizing, for the body shapes and mind frames we relate to the world through on a daily basis, actually undermining the concept of body and mind being separate at all. The Clown's[6] intention is to release the dreams and images that exist within the tissues of the body, so we can respond to what is there and follow our throughline to embodiment. It requires we place our attention within and in the space around our bodies, that we learn how to simultaneously will and surrender to the release of our diaphragm, and to coax unexpressed impulses to the surface to be released, extended and fulfilled into an image.

Clown involves time travel because the images and memories stored in our bodies span our lifetime, and our ancestors' lifetimes. I have worked with powerful images that came to me during studio work that years later were addressed by Medicine People as painful, perhaps soul loss, experiences I was still grieving from previous lifetimes.

What I have learned from mask-making, a cornerstone of clown work, is that at the center of every mask (or image, mindset, concept, in fact every living thing) is a need, which springs forth a value; something we need becomes something we care about and believe to be true, that we believe is worth protecting and worth keeping alive, maybe even worth fighting for. It shapes our

[5] Clown school is not capitalized because I don't want to say there is a universal understanding of what clown is, means or represents across different worldviews and pedagogies.
[6] Clown is capitalized when I am referring to it as a spirit with an intention. You will find the same with RingMaster as you continue reading.

actions, our thoughts, and our beliefs. It shapes the way we see the world and how we interact with the world. It shapes how we experience time.

In David's clown theory there is a concept called the Imperative Allegiance shearing stress. When the imperatives of a situation (your needs) don't match the allegiance (your values) there is a dissonance, and the more the two are in contrast, the stronger they will resist each other. As they resist, they create a 'shearing stress' that intensifies until there is release from being bound together. A solution to escape the stress is to dissociate, or the allegiance needs to allow itself to be transformed to match the imperative. When they align, they seem to stack onto one another and that feels to me like focus, balance, harmony.

I don't know exactly how a mask is created, but I think it has to do with a need and value matching up. There's a focus and galvanizing that happens when imperatives and allegiances align, that births new masks, ideas, concepts, visions. And when the needs and values start to shift, that must be when they start to expire and die, ready for composting.

I'm thinking of this in relation to the modern human's pursuit of autonomous freedom and agency within time. A primary *imperative* for life on Earth seems to be reciprocity; a balance of mutual caretaking. If there is mutual caretaking - embodied by communal effort towards sharing resources to nourish and protect oneself and others - then the *allegiance* to collective freedom becomes possible.

Freedom is life, it is time. It is taking up space in time[7]. Life, time, freedom and space are all bigger than us; they are the fishbowl we exist within and they must be shared. They cannot belong to anyone because we belong to them, instead. They hold us.

Yet at this point, whole nations striving for liberation are simply fighting for their birthright to exist within time; to share the same access to water, food, oxygen, and shelter on Earth. That must mean the balance is fundamentally off kilter, and the shearing stress is intensifying.

Colonial modernity's imperative is to conquer, gain and maintain control of all forms of resources in order to sustain its allegiance to unrestricted autonomy and comfort for those with enough wealth. This requires having power *over* the resources of land, animals and humans in order to build these 'empires' in towers high above the ground - they have and will inevitably topple over.

[7] Quote from Astrologer Jessica Lanyadoo on "*Ghost of A Podcast".*

It is a precarious existence and requires hoarding because it is not rooted into a living foundation of *shared power* and equality, with its connections to everything else intact. Modernity's allegiance to *power over* separates itself from the natural cycles of life on Earth, which involve the humbling, inescapable processes of death and decay.

A mask's imperative is to be in service to the needs of the human that plays them, and when that need is no longer relevant for the player's life, masks can have a really hard time letting go. In fact, they will hold on tighter than ever trying to convince the player of their worthiness because they sense their imminent death. Right before a mask is 'removed' (from being the driver of the bus) is when it actually becomes more visible than ever; it digs deeper into the player in an ironic, desperate attempt to hide. Masks really just want to be useful, but this is when expired stories can keep the player in a loop of tripped wires, which undermines their evolution and growth. Once the mask's story has expired, rebirth is possible for the spirit of the mask by giving it a new allegiance.

In clown terminology, this is where the RingMaster comes in. Much like a parent, they exist to ensure no one is harmed in the play, including the player. I see them as each player's internalized parent: a constellation of skills that focuses its awareness on maintaining and respecting personal and shared boundaries and intentions. They watch the boundaries of a situation and track the player's capacity so they never go farther than they know how to get back. And sometimes (often), it is the experience of going farther than they know how to get back that grows the skills the player needs to have a strong RingMaster guiding their bus. They are timekeeper and director, managing which masks have the stage and when it is time to transition. They are the governor of agency in relation to the player's intention. They are not the Clown, which I understand to be the spirit in us capable of adapting, learning and becoming anew, whose constant effort is to shake off the institution in order to create new patterns in the brain and sustain connection with others. The RingMaster and Clown work together to keep the player in reciprocal relations with other lifeforms as an engaged and emotionally responsible human who keeps an open invitation for connection. The RingMaster tends to the logistics as the Clown initiates us into self-repair, and integration.

The Clown's natural environment is the 'in between'; the liminal space. In this space is a clarifying of values, a pause in time to create new associations, which will necessarily change the player's frame of mind. There is death, transformation, rebirth, and the natural language of this transitional space is humour. Humour seems to be an internal earthquake that starts in the diaphragm and transmits through the air around us; it is personal, historical, existential, transpersonal and transcends boundaries. It is fire. Within institutions, it is often perceived as danger or condemned as insanity, because it is so powerful and comes from a place beyond modernity's grip.

The shape of the lifegiving body is one that knows the experience of having another entity exist within its own center, which goes on to then exist outside of its body. Entering parenthood is such a powerful initiation because of this physical evolution. It is an event which proposes to undermine modernity's death wish by its very nature: it contradicts modernity's foundation of

“dismemberment and fragmentation in our bodies and our unconscious at individual and collective levels”. It is an antidote to modernity’s disease because parenthood requires overcoming the delusion of separation, disembodiment from values that honour life, and fear to use one’s agency. It calls upon the parents to tether themselves to the world in a deeply intimate way.

The individual self dies in order to become someone whose actions are centered around the value and responsibility of protecting that which is more vulnerable. Because of that, I believe that children are the future for humanity; they are the tender new life that can stir collective consciousness to transform in service to them.

One of the ways we know we are witnessing an intended genocide right now in Palestine is that it is the children who are being targetted, just as the children of Indigenous populations on Turtle Island have been for decades with residential schools and now the child welfare system. Colonizers know that children’s bodies and innocence need to be stolen at a young age in order to maintain their agenda - by forcibly removing children, they rip a jagged wound in the heart of the communities, one which cannot be repaired. And if the children survive the removal, they face varying degrees of violent indoctrination and are brainwashed to believe in separation, and must cooperate in order to survive.

What became clear to me in the past year is that everything is not going to be ‘okay’. Seeing the broadcasted genocide of the Palestinians and knowing that it is not the only one reminds me that things have not been okay for a long time. There are currently 30 countries either at risk for genocide in this year, or currently undergoing mass killings[8]. I used to believe that peace would prevail across humanity, that ‘good’ would always win over ‘evil’. Now it is apparent to me that the balance has been tipped too far.

From my understanding, the blueprint for living on Earth is that we are given access to experience and interact with the whole thing: all the elements, in all the directions - as long as we tend to the whole thing. That mutual agreement has been broken by humankind, and the law of nature is unyieldingly rooted in reciprocity. Limits are just a part of nature. Nature shares its power with us, clearly being the one who is offering. The insanity of control over nature, separation and exclusion of people and land, cannot coexist with this blueprint. The Earth never consented to this.

I can tell we are in the liminal time of modernity’s death because I have the same heightened awareness of time as I did surrounding the birth of my child. Time becomes visible to me in the way it is used. In this case, there is a contrast between those engaging with the heartbreak of watching a genocide happen on public and social media, and those not. What I am witnessing in even my close friends - people who are compassionate, empathic and conscientious people - is the delusion of separation, disembodiment from values that honour life, and fear to use one’s agency. This makes it very clear to me that modern culture is in desperate need for a collective rite of passage. There is a clear distinction between those who believe their time belongs to

[8] https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/blog/countries-at-risk-for-mass-killing-2022-23

themselves, that they have the choice to not engage, and those who believe they are tethered to what is happening to people across the world from them. The latter make effort to reside in communal time, allowing themselves to be moved by what is happening to others, acknowledging their participation in the global system and engaging with what agency they do have to affect the outcome.

The one glimmer of hope I sense of the suffering that modernity causes, is that it is an initiation into self-repair[9], because this creates the possibility that the death of modernity is the birth of collective care. I have come to believe that the most revolutionary act we can do personally and collectively is to shape ourselves from a deep presence with the slow, gentle and pragmatic tending to a wound.

But what happens when the wounds are not tended as they need to be? What if self-repair and integration is not possible within the context one lives in? Ideally this is when community steps in and collective repair becomes possible. But what if that network has been destroyed already, and collective agency continues to be oppressed?

What if there is no one else to help ease the hardening of scar tissue and it forms ridges and brittle spines that travel along the myofascial network within the body, strangling organs as it makes its way to the heart to wrap it in calcification? Is that how the mask of the colonizer and the dream of modernity came into being?

And what is the role of the Clown in times like these? Can we use this spirit that traverses thresholds to initiate collective self-repair and integration? What is the dream of humanity and whose body is the dream trapped inside? Does the Earth hold humanity's dream?

Maybe all of these thoughts are just hopes and fears turned into questions and hypotheses, which may or may not reveal themselves to be true. Regardless, they do lead me to believe that the mask of modernity is dying, which means we must be approaching gestation, perhaps are already in the process of shaping new associations, and preparing to use our agency for the birth of a new collective mask.

The only thing I feel optimistic about is that the Clown and RingMaster will be there, working together to disrupt the heavy hand of the institutional mind and undermine modernity's death wish for life on Earth. As long as They are there, maybe something extraordinarily absurd and sacred will happen. Maybe we will remember we are all part of the same play, and that the show can't go on without a willing audience. Maybe we will realize we can say no to this dream and work together to build a new one.

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[9] Rogan Taylor, clown initiates self-repair, "*The Death and Resurrection Show: From Shaman to Superstar"*