

On Transience and other hatreds

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Abstract

This article originates in a free associative extended reflection on what the author sees as the many faces of our relationship to transience in Western culture. It begins with the image of plastic flowers in graveyards, wild flowers pushed to verges and marginal spaces, women, migrant and transient communities. Our relation to life, death and their relation to movement and limitation are key aspects being reflected on and taken up for further analysis. The result of the free associative experiment is to invite reflections on the Freudian concepts of Eros and Thanatos and revisit the highly controversial question of whether these should be viewed in terms of a dualist or a monistic understanding. What is being presented here is a way of working with free associations outside the consulting room and group processes, using free associations as a reflexive research tool within a psychosocial hermeneutic approach.

Key words: free associations, transience, movement, environment, marginalisation

Introduction

The article opens with a series of reflections based on free associations, foundational to psychoanalysis (Lothane, 2018) and more recently key to psychoanalytically informed psychosocial group processes and research methods, such as social dreaming and visual matrix (Manley, 2018; Froggett et al, 2015). Here the free associative approach is used as a heuristic device to get at what I believe to be ontological issues underlying our attitudes to manifestations of transience (and stasis). Following the free associative sections the article proceeds to explore fluidity in terms of language, interpretation and hermeneutics and its association in mythology to Hermes, the Mercurial god of thieves as well as leader of the Muses, whose staff has been adopted as a symbol for healing. The relevance of this could be self-evident given the interpretive, hermeneutic nature of this piece, but Hermes has even more relevance given his association to mercurial fluidity and the subject matter at hand. The ambivalence in Hermes also links to the article's reflections on a long standing controversy and ambivalence of fundamental concepts in Freudian theory, also reworked by Marcuse (1955; 1964; 1970) and more recently Kli (2018), namely the much debated dualistic division of Eros and Thanatos in Freud's work. My own free associative thinking experiment led me to a monistic view and a different understanding of Thanatos as material limitation, closer to the reality principle. This allows for a different understanding of the kind of displacement of fear and hatred towards transience within the social and environmental sphere. The process of writing this article starting with free associations has been one of intense engagement hard to reproduce in the writing itself. Questioning the language to avoid getting too drawn into one thing or another, resisting the attempt to take sides, avoiding the possibility of misrepresentation,

becoming judgmental, rather than discerning, has mirrored the cultural tendencies to categorise in ways that may not do justice to the material. As soon as one position is taken, objections come to mind and words betray the intended meaning. The whole piece is about movement and fluidity and this is always hard to write about, but I offer the first free associative sections as a way of being transparent about the starting point for what ended up as an ontological excursion that started from personal experience. The writing performs a parallel process to the subject matter.

Free Associative Reflection 1: Emblems of modernity: plastic flowers

Maybe because I knew my father was terminally ill I found myself thinking about the squalor of graveyards festooned with faded plastic flowers. They made me think of the indignity of the pretense of care that they display.

Flowers are one of the most beautiful, yet most ephemeral expressions of life, they unfold slowly and then in a matter of days if not hours they wilt and die. Plastic on the other hand is made to last, to defeat death. Death and decay is denied by making permanent one of the loveliest and most transient of life's manifestations. And yet that which we prize about plastic flowers and all plastic things, their durability and their immortality, is beginning to cause the very thing we fear most by choking our environment on a global scale.

It is part of human nature to want to capture moments of beauty and all cultures create art aimed to do just that or to turn it the other way round: moments of beauty inspire humans to create art. There is a difference in these movements or gestures: the first is possessive, the second expressive. The possessive modus operandi tries to capture the moment. It is like a child crushing a butterfly by holding it too tight or catching it to pin it to a board. As a child I was told a wise tale: butterflies have a magic flying powder on their wings and if you touch it the magic won't work anymore. That magic tale does have a scientific core: the magic dust is actually delicate scales, equivalent to feathers and if enough are lost or damaged the butterfly's power of flight is endangered. The expressive gesture has a very different character: it aims to internalize the feeling, the forces mobilized by the object, till we can bring forth an expression of them in some form of re-presentation. I love the work of British artists Andy Goldsworthy, Richard Long and David Nash, who do not aim for permanence in working with nature, who allow and celebrate the transience of their work with or in nature.

Plastic is malleable, it fades and fractures, but it doesn't die and transform, as living things do when they die and decay creating nourishment for more life. Plastic is a perfect trick of the devil: a good servant that doesn't really serve life, but we love it. The plastic flower is an emblem of mastery over nature. A man-made creation, it does not resist its maker by putting up resistance, like wood or stone. It does not need a mutual relationship to be built. Dependent on its industrial creator, plastic's inertness and passivity has agency nonetheless. It is now undoing us through environmental damage.

Our own incapacity to appreciate our own transience, to accept our mortality, seems to me a form of melancholia at a social level. Our acquisitiveness, our difficulty in letting go is our downfall.

Free association 2: Flowers of the verge

The uncultivated in-betweens, between road and field, road and garden are the refuge of wild flowers and weeds. Roundabouts, a feature of the British road system become little oasis in the sea of traffic, somewhere where the dandelions can escape persecution. Toughing it out against car fumes and lack of nourishment, clinging to poor soil, they battle on.

I think of prostitutes, homeless and displaced people, 'misfits' and the poor as flowers of the verge. Poverty of means, but also poverty of love puts them at the margins of society, living in the cracks, finding ways to survive. So many migrant women in Italy walk the verges, short skirts, deep necklines and long boots serving the desires of men with money.

Migrants are flowers of the verges, transient people, toughing it out against the prejudice that would much prefer not to let them into places where the settled live. Marilynne Robinson's novel *Housekeeping* (Robinson, 1980) novel speaks of characters that drifted across the US, who did not settle well and loved nature. The more insecure the settler identity, the more scorn and contempt appear to be heaped upon the drifters. Yet it seems drifting is not just a superseded nomadic practice, but also a modern way of life, moving with a job, being upwardly mobile often requires repeated relocation and even dislocation and displacement. Identity once linked to family ties and belonging was displaced by work identities in high modernity, now with increasingly precarious employment practices, it is more about gender or tribal affiliations on the Internet. Identity politics thrive in a precarity of belonging and a proliferation of identifications.

In the UK right wing politicians have harvested the fear of migrants, the hatred of transience that has always made gypsies, travelers and Jews prime targets. In a feast of displacement through projection, some of the elite have made migrants the target of all the frustrations, insecurities and lack of status of the least powerful layers of the population: the poor and the old. Stop free movement, movement is bad. In the US the wall Trump wants on the border with Mexico is the most powerful and literal symbol of stopping the flow, the movement that is feared to engulf us as if it were the great flood, while the real possibility of climate change causing another great flood is denied and the ark now would have fewer animals to take on board given the current rate of extinction. The worse things get, the more denial and projection have good ground to establish themselves. It is a grim landscape we inhabit right now.

Free Association 3: *La donna e' mobile qual piuma al vento*

Women are tarred with the brush of transience too. They make good victims and good culprits. Their positioning in doer/done to dynamics (Benjamin, 2018)

shifts wonderfully easily between the two. The stereotype tends to be one of inconstancy and unpredictability; it portrays women as fluid and transient in their dispositions. The famous aria that starts with the above line is from Giuseppe Verdi's (1851) opera *Rigoletto*, and is normally translated as 'woman is fickle', but the fuller and more literal translation is: 'woman is as mobile as a feather in the wind'. The opera's central character, Rigoletto, is a court jester, a mercurial figure par excellence; the other key protagonists are the profligate Duke of Mantua and Rigoletto's own daughter Gilda, alongside a hired killer. The aria is sung by the Duke, who has won the affections of Gilda, but following various twists in the plot it is Gilda who is mistakenly stabbed to death by Rigoletto's hired killer, rather than the seductive Duke, who was the intended victim.

The aria came unbidden to mind and it was afterwards that its relevance became clearer and linked to my other thoughts at the time, which were that I certainly have met many more men, whose affections are labile and whose commitment is transient. Maybe it is the poor company I have kept, but it appears to me that many of the men who distrust women are themselves far guiltier of what they accuse women to be. Is this yet another case of displacement via projection? Or am I just generalizing unfairly? I may be of course, and mercifully I have been keeping better company for a while.

The trouble is there does seem to be some truth to the inconstancy of humans, rather than necessarily the inconstancy of one gender or the other. Playing hard to get, being demanding, changing one's mind has its rewards, as some contemporary politicians seem to be appreciating and deploying. Inconstancies, refusing to be pinned down, slipperiness can be embraced in cunning guises to serve one's desires.

Projections, envy and the lure of that which we deny in ourselves and to ourselves, or is denied to us, are common companions of the settled, but available to us all. Our desires are both friends and enemies, 'frenemies', friends when they are fulfilled and enemies when they are thwarted, but both options lurk within us at all times. Envy and projections are able to sneak up on us all, given the right conditions, but they are not the only way to be with others. Acceptance of limitations, acceptance and appreciation of the ever-changing nature of life are an option we can attempt to embrace, while all the time knowing that even this is bound to be a transient state of mind.

Hermes and Language-Hermeneutics and Ambivalence

In the above sections I have given myself license to think out loud free associatively. One of the things that stood out to me was the slipperiness of language and thoughts. The way the writing drifts between topics and words such as transience, inconstancy, dislocation and displacement may seem lax, imprecise. Nonetheless it seems to me to be in keeping with the theme of transience to defy the academic insistence on precision and definition of terms. Indeed the need and insistence on definitions is precisely because language is slippery and imprecise and not only subject to interpretation, but needful of it.

However every definition excludes and limits connections to other possible meanings and understandings and closes the door to the emerging of links and to the unconscious.

As Claude Barbre (2015, pp. xi-xii) reminds us Hermes was the Greek god of language and interpretation. The term hermeneutic has its origin in Hermes' name. Hermes was named as Mercury by the Romans and associated with the only liquid metal, highly sensitive to temperature and highly toxic. Hermes was, paradoxically, patron of the Arts and leader of the Muses, and patron to thieves and merchants. Even more interesting is the association of his staff, featuring two snakes coiling around it and topped by wings, originally to wisdom and more recently to medicine. This association is relatively recent, but the rod of Asclepius, the original Greek patron of medicine and healing also featured a snake coiled round a staff. In other words wisdom and healing were associated to snakes coiled round an upright structure.

The associations I make to these symbols have to do with structure and fluidity, both necessary aspects of existence, yet in Western cultures since Christianity the snake, in its slippery fluidity and association to sexuality and desire has been demonized and associated with woman's role in the fall from Eden. What could also be seen as a more static phallic symbol, i.e. the staff, has not been tarred with the same brush. Indeed snakes, Mercury and fluidity have their dangers and toxicities. Poisons are powerful, yet they do not only kill: in the right amount they can also cure.

Mercury is the metal that allows us to determine temperature, and life can only be sustained within certain temperature ranges. Whether we focus on danger or healing potential depends on our interpretation. We need binocular vision to keep track of both aspects. Our world is steeped in ambivalence, ambiguity and uncertainty and we don't like that. The only certain thing is death and we like that even less.

Life and death

Many words have been written on life and death. For present purposes I wish to follow my own associations and provisional understanding: death as the cessation of organized movement within a body. However, that cessation is relatively brief, because soon other movements begin to take over in processes of decomposition. Life is never still; nature is in constant flow, within the limits of space and time, and the materials that give it form. Nature and life are creative; no matter is lost, only transformed. It is the form that is transient. We fear death; we supposedly love life, but we also fear life, by fearing its changes. We want permanence, settled existences and men wish to control supposedly inconstant women and nature. At the same time that which endures, like man-made plastic, contradicts life, as it does not break down and resists transformation. The origin of our existence may be rooted in our ambivalence towards that which sustains us and/or reminds us of our impermanence. By wishing to deny our impermanence, we may bite the hand that feeds us, as in the case of women. By refusing death, we also end up rejecting and 'othering' life

and its many moving and moveable manifestations including our own destructive tendencies. Rather than working with one ambivalent, multifaceted, ever-changing reality, we try to fix it (and fixing itself has several meanings) and tie ourselves in knots of contradictions, binaries and further destruction. Life and death, Eros and Thanatos may not be separate tendencies, but manifestations of the same vital impulse, working across time within the limitations of space and resources.

Eros and Thanatos-Integrative and disintegrative-discriminative and non-discriminative attachments

When dealing with life and death, hatred and love, it is natural to be drawn to Freud's work on the matter. To link back to Hermes and language, however, there is a difficulty with this: Freud did not leave us steady definitions or ways of thinking about the relationship with regard to Eros and Thanatos. Laplanche and Pontalis (1988, p.153) attest to this in their entry for Eros as utilised by Freud 'in his final instinct theory to connote the whole of the life instincts as opposed to the death instincts.' They then restrict the entry specifically to the use of the term Eros, which Freud used as a synonym for life instincts from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud 1920) onwards. Laplanche and Pontalis also point to Freud's use of the term as a way of inserting

his new theory of the instincts into a philosophical and mythical tradition of universal scope [...] Thus Eros is conceived of as what 'by bringing about a more and more far reaching combination of particles into which living substance is dispersed, aims at complicating life and at the same time, of course, preserving it' (1988, p.153).

This quote suits the focus of the argument I am about to develop in relation to the free associative sections above, particularly as the term Thanatos, also appearing from *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud 1920) onwards, was deployed to be in a direct oppositional duality in a 'quasi-mythical sense' (Laplanche and Pontalis, 1988: 447). Freud saw Thanatos as a fundamental aspect of dissolution, an entropic force, opposed to the tendencies of life to organize and preserve itself in ever more complex forms. He also linked it to destructive and aggressive tendencies (ibid). This is where I join company with others (see also controversial discussions, Klein and Lacan as well as Marcuse and Kli in later sections) in questioning aspects that might lead to a dualistic view of that aspect of his work, , both in terms of my earlier free associative reflections and my previous work on aggression (Crociani-Windland, 2005). Hatred and aggression do not dissolve bonds, they are not about being less connected in hate than we are in love. Both are aspects of life in its creative and destructive potential.

A vitalist and monistic perspective also underlies Deleuze and Guattari's concept of affect (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988), their critiques of psychoanalysis (Deleuze and Guattari, 2003) and developments of a philosophical framework able to encompass internal and external, individual and social milieus. Though I do not refer to their work here directly to maintain focus, in my previous work

(Crociani-Windland, 2003) informed by their theories, I made a distinction between integrative and disintegrative dynamics that sees aggression in terms of integration and attachment, while disintegrative dynamics have to do with detachment and indifference. Both integrative and disintegrative dynamics have both useful and destructive potential, neither is good nor bad or to put it the other way, they can be good and bad; it depends on levels and context. The duality as I see it concerns life in terms of movement and death as the stopping of movement, rather than movement in an entropic direction. In that sense death is an extremely brief instance of stasis, before the movement of dissolution begins, as new chemical reactions begin to take place in a new movement towards different forms of life. Plastic is dead, because it is so refractory to dissolution and therefore also transformation; it breaks up without breaking down; it is a relatively static and passive form of matter. Dissolution is necessary to life's continuous movement of change; it is part of a cycle. The stopping of movement, the limit, the boundary, the detachment and distancing seem to me to be more of a death force, itself able to be useful or not, depending on levels and context. This is both extremely abstract as a notion and very real, because totally dependent on the nature of the material conditions of our existence. It is the materials themselves that have a 'sell-by' date. Stasis, death, limits and boundaries are part of the material conditions of and for life.

It is possible that Freud's adherence to a dualistic view opposing Eros and Thanatos may have been driven both by the dualist tendency reoccurring in his work overall and by his opposition to Jung and his more positive view of spirituality. His regressive interpretation of the human tendency towards spirituality is evident for instance in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (Freud 1930), which starts with a critique of religious feelings. In keeping with the prevailing views of modernity, his work took an evolutionary view of religion, as based on a narcissistic regression towards a state of unity. In places he spoke of the 'Nirvana principle' (borrowed from Barbara Low and Hindu religion) as expressing the trend of the death principle, by its tendency 'to reduce, keep constant or to remove internal tension due to stimuli' (Freud, 1920 p.55 – 56). I wonder if his evolutionary secular perspective made it hard to resolve some of the problems arising from such a view of Nirvana, which appears to overlook the non-orgiastic intensity and pleasure aspect of such a state. The basic principle of Nirvana, if it can be put in a nutshell, is about forgoing single object attachments, in other words forgoing partial attachment in favour of a more unifying and deeper sense of union with a creative force. This pattern is acknowledged in *Civilisation and its Discontents* (Freud, 1930 p. 39) describing sublimation as a displacement of 'being loved onto loving', subjects protecting themselves 'from the loss of the object by directing their love, not to single objects but to all men alike'. What is interesting is that, giving the example of St. Francis of Assisi, he remarks that the Saint perhaps 'went furthest in thus exploiting love for the benefit of an inner feeling of happiness'. What I find remarkable is that the idea of sublimation in Freud is seen as an inhibiting of the sexual impulse and he objects to its value in bringing happiness for two main reasons: 'A love that does not discriminate seems to me to forfeit a part of its own value, by doing injustice to its object; and secondly, not all men are worthy of love' (Freud, 1930, p. 97). I object to his objections: the use of the word 'discriminate' (may be an effect of

translation) is problematic and the idea that not all men are worthy of love is also difficult. Who we consider worthy of love is certainly not a given and so much discord and suffering can come from judgment and discrimination. As a Jew living in times of eugenics Freud may have thought of Hitler as unworthy of love, but Hitler was discriminating against him, being a Jew, alongside gypsies, people with disabilities and with mental illness. The other objection I have is to the idea that one can dismiss the value of different kinds of happiness, where they do no harm and may be socially beneficial, different, not better or worse when not idealized, distorted or again made to count more than others.

If we think of the pleasure principle, with less emphasis on sexuality, and primarily as a movement towards union or bonding (Freud, 1949), which has as a result the coming together of more and more particles in organized forms aimed at self-preservation and pleasure seeking, there is no need to dismiss the value of more fluid, but no less intense attachments or mystical union. The problems shift elsewhere. The search for union in most life situations and social settings is limited. It may be the narcissistic state of union with a caregiver, the sexual union with a partner or the intense feeling of belonging to a group, a belief or a place. The problems are not life or death, to be or not to be, but more practically how to be, how to deal with the material conditions of life on earth, marked by time and space, which mark limits till we can be something else, in Pablo Neruda's words (2018 [1994]: 57): 'maybe a few yellow flowers' that will also decay and be transformed.

Is it possible to accept these limitations and work within them? Is repression necessary and unavoidable? Delayed gratification is one strategy to cope with limitations, but it is not acceptance. Sublimation seems a more creative transformation of that energy. It is not the staying of the impulse, but its transformation into different creative deployment than procreation or pleasure for the sake of it. Within the social field my research into festivals (Crociani-Windland, 2011) suggested that acceptance of the limits of group membership, mostly given in terms of a face-to-face group of about 150 members (Dunbar and Hill, 2003), the intensity generated by that membership and the inevitable dynamics of in-group and out-group can be worked at in ways that allow inter-group aggression and narcissisms of minor differences to be managed without repression. Ritual studies since Freud have given us a less jaundiced view of the role of ritual than that offered by Freud. Rituals, conceived as not only in terms of religion, but also in secular terms such as sport or theatre, offer a time and a space for intensity to be given expression, for love and hate, rivalries, envy and passions to be enjoyed, while given containment. Pleasure is clearly not only sexual, Freud acknowledged this, though his focus tended towards the side of pleasure procurement by sexual union. If there were no pleasure in destruction our history would not be so full of conflict, wars and persecutions. The pleasure principle as separate from the Death drive would go against it.

Women as others

My mother's attitude to death may aid my next point. Towards the end of her life she was able to have a humorous take on her failing body: 'Great design the

human body, shame about the poor quality of materials'. She put in a nutshell what I have taken time and ink to get to. What is interesting though is how she managed to both acknowledge a profound reality and make a jest of it at the same time. Humour has of course a mercurial aspect. Her attitude towards the reality she jokingly named was one of acceptance: as her health deteriorated she started to let go of things and people (see also Crociani-Windland, 2013), while my father, by contrast, found it hard to let go. As I pondered and read to prepare for this article, I began to think about acceptance of limitation as one of the aspects that socially and culturally women have been good at, though it has not been good for them. Feminism is a pretty recent cultural phenomenon and as De Beauvoir (1989, p. 46) pointed out, women have been the 'Other' par excellence. Women seem to be the 'other' across most cultures and historical periods, though some exceptions have existed historically and precious few matriarchal societies can still be found. The question I wrestled with was whether I could find a possible answer as to why, on the basis on my free associations and in the light of what I have outlined so far.

My free associations went from death and plastic flowers to flowers of the verges, transient populations, flighty women, those whose attachments are particularly labile, mostly out of necessity, though not always. This can be made sense of in terms of our ambivalent relation to our own transience. No one can flourish without change and contrast, life requires it, but we fear, justifiably, too much of it and we don't like to think about our unavoidable end. My point is that it is impossible to separate our fear of death and our fear of life. The fear of transience relates to both. It is our unacknowledged fear of life (which includes death) that causes the fear of transience to get displaced onto others, who for one reason or another find themselves on the move, at the margins, whether in terms of place or in terms of sexual and emotional attachments. In the case of women it is not so much the actual inconstancy, but the potential inconstancy that is feared. Women as essential to procreation, life-givers and nurturers, but also potentially withholders of such, are the object of ambivalent responses, they are 'frenemies', though this term may not be strong enough in this case. Women are feared, because they are so indispensable, for pleasure and for life to renew itself, they are the antidote to individual and species demise. The trouble is limitation, which plagues existences on both sides of the gender divide. Death is the 'no' of this particular form of life, no more, no further, it is a quantitative device of material existence keeping us within the zone of optimal functioning, but every time we say 'no', it is a little death that we perform on whatever we limit, in the service of life, which includes destruction.

Mixtures confuse us, but in reality things are always mixtures, only tendencies are simple and pure (Deleuze, 1999: 45). Particularly in the West, we rail against limitation as much as against transience, against movement as much as stasis, but by separating them and taking sides, rather than questioning when, what, how and how much of which is in the service of life, we rail against life. The two cannot be separated, save in our minds. Limitation is a forming and ordering principle; it is what makes materials and humans able to do certain things and not others. It is also what intellectual pursuit demands, it is the drawing of boundaries in the creation of categories, it is the partial stopping of connectivity

between heterogeneous entities. Categories usually have to do with sameness, they order chaos along particular lines. Linking without pre-established boundaries is what the idea and practice of free associations is about. It allows to shift where the stoppages, the no more and no further, might have to occur, as an outcome of time and space. This article is no exception to that reality, it cannot cover a scholarly review of all the debates and reworking of Eros and Thanatos, though before I finish I will go to a recent article on a non-dualistic interpretation of Eros and Thanatos.

Nature and culture-individual and social milieus in a non-dualist view of Eros and Thanatos

A recent article by Maria Kli (2018) offers an outline of a non-dualistic interpretation of Eros and Thanatos from Freud to Marcuse. This outline traces a trajectory in Freud's thinking that makes the view of Eros and Thanatos as distinct drives appear less certain in Freud's own work over time, in spite of his seeming adherence to its dualism. Kli offers an outline of Marcuse's own interpretation of Freud's work that is fundamentally psychosocial. In this view the social and nature are not divided, which is also implied in my thoughts so far. To return to and elaborate briefly my earlier themes in the light of Marcuse, the social itself brings about limitations that demand repression of life instincts and produce a transformation of libidinal energy into productive labour (Marcuse 1955). The idea of optimal conditions earlier mentioned, comes in Marcuse in terms of what he terms the 'excessive repression' of capitalism and, at the same time, the removal of limitation of sexual pleasure, in what he terms 'repressive desublimation', which nonetheless decouples it from a fuller experience of union that includes emotional aspects, meaning the sexual act may hold desire at bay, but does not afford fulfillment. What Marcuse also offers is a critique of Freud's negative interpretation of regressive sources of pleasure. Narcissism, according to later Freud (1920, 1923) can be brought to resist the Death drive. As Kli (2018: 76) summarises: 'According to Marcuse (see Freud 1920, and Marcuse, 1995), given this recognition of the [potential of] narcissistic libido, the dualistic perception of two autonomous principles-namely Eros/love and death/destruction-cannot be sustained.'

This outline gives a sense of how acknowledging and playing with ambivalence, boundaries, connectivity and interpretation offers different possibilities for analysis. To reconnect to earlier points, the hierarchical notions that come with judgment, have downplayed the value of pleasure that can be derived from play, from non-hierarchical forms of connections, from forms of asexual reproduction to use a Deleuzian concept that relates to both creative and aggressive dynamics of bonding (Crociani-Windland, 2011). Deleuze and Winnicott (1975) make more sense of these forms of intensity and connectivity. The hatred of those seen as transient or inconstant is a form of intensity connected to fear of life itself. The whole thing belongs in a circular dynamic of exclusion, where social agreements and interpretations of right and wrong mix with the two basic emotions of fear and anger. Yet in my lived experience, which includes my research, anger is about the fact we cannot be totally indifferent to the 'other'. Anger is a process of heat and movement. We can be moved towards so hard, that we are moved against.

But there is nothing pure in the world: fear has its place, the 'other' challenges the accepted order, the perceived integrity of the social arrangements. Fear separates, makes us go cold, makes us stop caring for the others' welfare or suffering, which allows anger generated elsewhere to be projected at them. The limits and boundaries of our real or imagined communities (Anderson 1983) are what is at stake. It does not have to do with resources in most Western countries. There is enough on this earth, if the perception and the distribution of resources were not what they are, based on a logic of scarcity (Marcuse, 1955: 134) and increasingly unequal. If both Eros and Thanatos in their widest and ambivalent potentials were embraced, rather than feared or judged maybe we could think about all forms of life and its transience in more positive ways. If instead of judgment and discrimination, we thought in terms of discernment: what aids life, rather than what aids me and mine, could it be different?

Could it be that women's extended role in and closeness to life has made them more tolerant of limitations and ambivalence? Generalising here, but this supposition would make sense of women's historical submissiveness to male domination and their traditional role as guardians of the realm of care and nurture. What is needed, however, is not to make women less tolerant of limitation, but all humanity more tolerant of the limitations our planet entails and above all more caring. Caring is a part of love/Eros, a nurturing of life that does not linger in the denying, fearing or railing against necessity, and might lead to more equality.

Conclusion

Free associative thinking is another kind of flow and transience, a way of not trying to pin things down, of allowing the movement itself and following its direction, without pinning it to some display board like a very dead butterfly. I am very grateful to one of my peer reviewers for alerting me to a very short literary piece titled *On Transience* written by Freud in a very similar vein in 1915 and published in 1916, based on his conversations from 'a summer walk through a smiling countryside in the company of a taciturn friend and of a young but already famous poet' (p.305), which led him to reflect on nature, beauty and war in relation to transience. Although life and death are both in that piece in different guises Freud took a different turn in his elaboration, which prefigures the publication of his seminal work on mourning and melancholia in 1917.

Western culture and maybe even mankind has managed to transcend limitations to ever increasing and astonishing degrees, yet happiness is not increasing. It appears that development and progress have not actually solved the problem of civilisation's discontents. What has come from my experiment is a way of asking and partially answering several questions: can Freudian views on Eros and Thanatos as distinct and opposed drives help us to answer the hatred of transience in different social expressions? Is Western culture's fear of death linked to an increased fear of transience? Is it necessary to conceptualise a Death drive as separate to Eros or life instincts? Is the idea of the Death drive as limitation, inherent in the actual conditions necessary to life, sufficient?

Limitation, in this view, is not the same as scarcity or lack, but a property of the actual materials that life is made of: it is the marker of what they can and can't do; how long they can last, before they need to decompose and go on to their next manifestation of life. This is something we can work with, as the blacksmith uses heat, hammer and cold water to forge metal or as the woodworker chooses which wood to use for what and does not fight the grain. This view also means the death drive is not separate from Eros, both are implicated in creation and destruction. Integrative and disintegrative tendencies can both be used in the service of life, but limits to any individual part of life are inherent in the materials life affords us, until we find something, like plastic, that defies its own destruction and by that property defies life itself.

The 'Goldilocks principle' (Hawking and Mlodinow, 2010) is implied in the necessary limits of not too much nor too little of anything, and temperature is definitely key in this aspect, as we are finding by altering the planet's temperature. Our human tendency to become 'prosthetic gods' (Freud 1930 p. 39.), not just in terms of plastic, but also in terms of many other technological devices, is producing climate change, increased climatic turbulence and extreme weather events. Unfortunately as Greek myths already told us, our hubris may be our demise. Transience in particular will be a growing problem in light of climate change. Some people care, some people don't, most do not care enough; some deny, some fear, some try to care and act from love, for life.

In keeping with my argument so far, I have also come to the limit of time, space and contents that this article can contain and be contained within. This has meant much more that could have been explored, such as the construction of gender in relation to objectivity and subjectivity, soft versus hard science (Fox Keller 1985) and other feminist psychoanalytic work could not find a space, without giving gender an unfair centrality over other aspects of transience, thereby reproducing aspects of hierarchy by offering more attention to one or other. Yet I hope to have paid homage to a different way of knowing, namely free associative thinking, that could be deemed by some as feminine and 'unscientific', while having had its origins in the work of Freud, a man who broke new ground and who, in spite of being nominated for a total of thirteen times for a Nobel prize, never attained it. This could be seen to indicate it is fluidity of thought we fear, more than women or men.

There is one aspect of my free associative sections I have not yet touched on and that I will return to briefly to conclude. This relates to the examples of so called 'land art' in British sculpture that give an illustration of a different way of working with limitations in nature. None of these artists goes against the transience of nature. They celebrate it. Andy Goldsworthy (<http://www.galerieelong.com/artists/andy-goldsworthy>) works with the ephemeral beauty of temporary colours and materials, the leaf arrangements will scatter, curl, fade and decompose. Richard Long's practice of walking the landscape as one off events speaks for itself of movement and transience (<https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/name/richard-long-ra>). David Nash's Wooden Boulder project tracks the movement of a block of wood along a

river and no final form is imposed on his wooden, the wood can move as it will within the given form (<https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/name/david-nash-ra>). We need to learn how to do that as individuals and as social beings.

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