

A Love Song for Evie Rose:  
An investigation of health, education, identity, and social change

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In the Humanities Doctoral Program

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## ABSTRACT

### **A Love Song for Evie Rose: An Investigation of Health, Education, Identity, and Social Change**

Kim Hershorn, Ph.D.  
Concordia University, 2008

This creative investigation revolves around *A Love Song for Evie Rose*, a semi-autobiographic travel narrative of multiple quests that are part of the same journey: finding a route from pain and illness to wellness; the search for social justice and healthy approaches to social activism; the search for identity and a place to belong; the need to find meaning in the past as well as the future; and the tracing of possible paths to healing the world and the environment, as well as the individual. The investigation of the connection between learning and health is central to this inquiry which comprises a profound reflection on pedagogies of love in both formal and informal education. Excerpted from a longer novel, *You Say You Want a Revolution* (whose writing was part of the research methodology), the story spans two generations and moves back and forth between several countries and three continents, capturing the political zeitgeist and history of over three decades from the late sixties to the present. The story of a woman's chronic pain and search for healing is shown against a backdrop of popular culture (especially music) and political unrest that mirrors and often shapes her journey. A series of critical scholarly reflections punctuates, accents, and analyses the series of snapshots and soundbytes that form the narrative, highlighting the intersection and the relationships between personal, social, and political change. The narrative and the accompanying reflections raise and re-

frame current theoretical questions about health, education, individual and social change, and identities.

## DEDICATION

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To my parents, Noreen and Marvin Hershorn for their unrelenting love, support,  
and dedication

To my sister, Marny and my brother, Robert for their friendship and for always  
making me laugh

To my PhD supervisor, Dr. Sandra Weber for giving me both the space and the  
guidance so I could follow my heart

...And to everyone whose hearts have ached and longed for life

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## CHAPTER ONE

### YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION: AN OVERTURE

---

I said I wanted a revolution. But how do you change the world? Revolution implies the turning of something around an axis until it returns to its original position. Although the term has been used to refer to significant political and social changes, many historical revolutions have come round full circle back to the place they started. History notoriously repeats itself. Fifty years after the French Revolution, Alphonse Karr, a writer and editor for the newspaper, *Le Figaro* wrote these famous words in the January 1849 issue of a satirical monthly review he founded, *Les Guêpes*: “plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose” (The more things change, the more they remain the same). Was he right?

In face of current social and environmental crises on a global scale, the need for change is increasingly apparent—from personal projects of self-development and health, to political activism and environmental advocacy, people everywhere are trying to address the ills of the world. But in the light of Karr's epigram, is it possible to break out of the cycles of historical reproduction? How can the past be used to create a healthier future instead of merely being repeated? Is it at all possible to create something new? Or did King Solomon have a point about three thousand years ago when he lamented that there was nothing new under the sun? The question of how to change things for the better is not only central to this thesis, it has been the driving impetus of my life.

## **Autobiographic Fiction as Inquiry**

As the principle method of inquiry, I have been writing a novel called *You Say You Want a Revolution* in which each of the characters yearns to change the world in some way. Through them, the reader engages in their struggles to come to terms with this wish. Their journeys have allowed me to study my own aspirations for social change and think about ways to approach it. The novel investigates social change by looking at how people deal with pain and suffering in ways that are simultaneously both individual and collective. As medical anthropologist, Arthur Kleinman has pointed out: “[F]orms of human suffering can be at the same time collective and individual...modes of experiencing pain and trauma can be both local and global” (ix). The overlapping personal and social struggles of suffering and healing are important in working toward social change. The work of scholars who write or investigate autobiographies of pain and illness demonstrate how these links can be made explicit through the process of writing about one’s life (see, for example, Anzaldua, Frank 1995, Griffin, Kleinman, Lorde, Mattingly and Garro, Pratt, Rose, Stacey 1997, Wilentz). They also show that this kind of methodology can offer insight into what is required for healing.

The story follows the inter-related lives of two generations of middle class Westerners. The first comes of age in the context of the sixties and seventies counter-cultural movements and identity politics. The younger generation faces particular historical challenges—ones that are similar to those I’ve grappled with in my own life. All the characters have to contend with legacies of the past—the effects of World War II, Apartheid in South Africa, the conflict between Israel and

Palestine, revolutionary struggles in Mexico, and more recently, a globalising post-Cold War, post-9/11, and postmodern world.

### **Travel and Music as Metaphors**

Acting as an unorthodox *Travel Guide to a New World*, this thesis raises questions and proposes possible itineraries and tips, offering activist travelogues, landscapes of the heart, and even a repertoire of songs that might shed light on how to change for those who are trying. It can be read as a (potential) conversation with educators, activists, scholars, artists and others who believe that another world is possible.<sup>1</sup>

The thesis presents and reflects on selected “sound bites” and “snapshots” from my novel (the story is imbued with music and word images), focusing mainly on the narrative of Evie Rose, the character from the larger novel who most closely resembles me. The title I have chosen for her story is *A Love Song For Evie Rose*. A soundtrack of significant songs accompanies the narrative. The lyrics not only reflect the times that shape the story, they also evoke and help me think about human experience in both general and very personal ways. Like stories and all forms of creative expression, the songs convey something that is arguably universally human: struggles for freedom, peace, happiness and love. In fact, readers might want to read this thesis with Youtube access, listening to the songs whenever they are mentioned. This might provide a better sense as to how this thesis was written. Song and the

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<sup>1</sup> The term *another world is possible* is a popular slogan for the World Social Forum, the annual meeting of people and organisations involved in the global justice movement.

development of voice is an enduring metaphor throughout. The task of social change is perhaps like putting words to music, playing a melody or singing in harmony: It requires a refinement of the everyday expressions of who we are.

### **Health, Identity, and Social Change**

Through Evie's story, I invite the reader to think about the connections between individual and social change, the nature of personal, social, cultural and environmental well-being, and the inter-relationships between identity, culture, nature and health. Through the travel narratives and sections devoted to critical reflections, I propose a reconceptualisation of social change as a health issue. Indirectly, I also investigate the phenomenological question of what constitutes human *nature* or what it means to be human. This query underlies much of the literature on social change (see for example Denzin and Lincoln, and Kincheloe).

The thesis draws upon my interdisciplinary background in cultural studies theory (including cultural criticism) and builds on the hope for social transformation that runs through critical literature from feminist to post-colonial critiques of modern Western culture. It has been inspired by methodologies for transformative education and radical pedagogy, as well as qualitative forms of inquiry that encourage life-long learning. As an educator, I reflect on how to teach culture through the lens of social change and well-being. Contemporary discourses about current crises that comprise much of my course material also inform my inquiry.

In addition, my research fits into and links the emerging fields of *environmental cultural studies*<sup>2</sup> and *health humanities*<sup>3</sup> (similar to medical anthropology), which encourage creative, arts-based, narrative forms of inquiry to understand the relationship between people, culture, nature and health. Like the Canadian-based international and interdisciplinary journal of the *Creative Arts in Health, Training and Education* (CCAhte), my thesis relies on the use of artistic forms of expression “for raising awareness about social issues and health”.<sup>4</sup>

### **Education and Self-Study (Project Background)**

Since I began my PhD, my supervisor, Dr. Sandra Weber, has been encouraging me to study the work of teachers who investigate their experience of education in order to understand their own practice. This has become a key aspect of my research. I began teaching during my first year of university when I was just eighteen. My first job was as an English teacher to Japanese businessmen and their wives in Montreal. I never stopped teaching after that. I taught English as a second language for many years to people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds in several parts of the world. This often included cultural briefing—training students to be aware of and sensitive to the

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.wsu.edu/~amerstu/ce/ce.html>

<sup>3</sup> The Canadian Institute of Health Research (CIHR) established in 2000 is an example of the increasing attention paid to the importance of the humanities in health research. Their website points out how: “Perspectives in science are expanding to include cultural contexts, social understandings and innovations. Health research now encompasses concepts and approaches of many disciplines, including the social sciences and humanities.” <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/30529.html>. The programme in Humanities in Medicine at Dalhousie University, started in 1992, seeks to strike a balance between the scientific and the human in medicine, which have traditionally been seen as separate (Murray 1). The Arts and Humanities in Health and Medicine Programme at the University of Alberta also aim to strike this balance. Their research methods include: “narrative medicine”, “the arts (literature, music, drama, visual art, creative writing)” <http://www.med.ualberta.ca/education/ahhm.cfm>.

<sup>4</sup> “The CCAhte Journal is your creative arts, health, training and education connection. You'll find information about creative arts approaches in staff health and wellness, arts raising awareness about social issues and health, information and resources that will benefit those involved in gerontology and education, nursing education, social work, medical education & health training.” <http://www.cmclean.com/>

particular customs and understandings related to the language they were learning.

My studies have also focused on culture and cultural interconnections. For my BA at McGill, I studied political science and minored in German and Spanish language and literature. For my Master's degree in international relations at the University of Amsterdam, I immersed myself in cultural studies, international development and political economy with an interest in questions of gender and identity. While in Amsterdam, I worked for *The Netherlands Centre for Indigenous Peoples*, a non-governmental human rights organisation that advocated for indigenous peoples on a project that illustrated the deleterious effects on their communities as a result of environmental exploitation. I also compiled information on the use of traditional knowledge as a sustainable alternative to Western models of development.

During my MA studies, I was introduced to critical theory for the first time. The ideas that upheld our global political economy as well as the practices that made it so destructive to people and nature became more apparent to me. This new perspective on the world upset and disturbed me deeply. It occurred to me that the world came to be the way it was not so much by accident, as by greed.

During the first year of my graduate work, the pain from injuries I sustained during a car crash several years earlier began to get worse. Eventually, I could hardly move my neck and lost a lot of mobility in my back. After searching for answers in every kind of therapy, I was finally diagnosed with fibromyalgia—a term that means what I already knew too intimately through my



body: “chronic soft tissue pain”. The condition is characterised by chronic fatigue and insomnia, intense pain from head to toe, and a host of other symptoms of auto-immune dysfunction. The doctors said that they did not know the cause of it, nor, to their knowledge, was there a cure. I would have to learn to live with it and find ways to manage it. All they could really offer me was to experiment with different medications. But the drugs they prescribed only made me feel worse. The story of my existential challenge to understand and address the suffering of the world took on a new and urgent spin. I pushed myself to live a normal life, looked for answers everywhere, and carried on trying to live, completing my studies. After I left Amsterdam, I was able to cope and work most of the time, but I was always tired and in varying degrees of pain. Like Evie Rose, my quest for social justice since that accident became inextricably linked to the search for healing.

After graduation, I went to Mexico where I studied anthropology and worked with NGOs in Mexico City, as well as in the field in the mountains of Guerrero. I travelled with *Tlachinollan*, a local human rights organisation, observed their workshops in different indigenous villages as well as the way they dealt with human rights abuses. I also accompanied two government lawyers from the *National Centre for Human Rights* (CNDH) as they visited villages to listen to the complaints of local people. In Mexico City, I worked on a project with an NGO called *Equipo Pueblo*, which reviewed the effects of globalisation on social and cultural policy in Mexico. Specifically, we looked at how Structural Adjustment Policies imposed by the *World Bank* affected the environment,

gender, youth and indigenous peoples. The results were brought to the *Bank* in an effort to change policy. My research also entailed interviews with activists and scholars working to improve the plight of the poor, as well as the people who were themselves struggling to live with dignity. I also completed a qualifying year of courses in anthropology from both the *National Autonomous University of Mexico* (UNAM) and the *National School of Anthropology and History* (ENAH)—the goal of which was to develop my professional expertise in anthropological and ethnographic research.

My next job was in South Africa working for a conflict resolution organisation where I helped conduct research for the design of workshops for teachers, students and staff in formerly white schools that were trying to integrate students of colour. This work sparked my interest in investigating the role of education and training in relation to social change. I wanted to work not at the level of policy or theory but practically, with people. At the time, this seemed to me the best way to make a difference.

After returning from South Africa to Montreal, I began my PhD at Concordia University, and soon got a job teaching at a junior college (CEGEP) in the humanities department. Over the last few years I have taught four courses: *Knowledge and Media*, *Democracy and Cultural Diversity*, *Green Living*, and *Education and Social Change*. I have also been teaching an undergraduate course at Concordia University called *Media, Technology and Politics*. These classes have given me the opportunity to work through some of the questions and subject matter that I have explored throughout my professional life, to

reconceptualise my theoretical understanding of social change, and to listen to the views of others on these topics. Much of this thesis is a reflection on that experience.

Other endeavours have also engaged my imagination in relation to education and social change. For example, I worked as a researcher for the *Creative Arts Therapy Centre* at Concordia University for a year where I had the opportunity to observe the way workshops in drama, art, dance, and music therapy assisted clients with developmental delays. I also designed and coordinated an arts-based project for *The Saidye Bronfman Centre Youth Institute*, a local community organisation. This included workshops that assisted elementary school students to explore their identities through writing, visual and performing arts through which they were encouraged to seek commonality in their diversity.

Backpacking in India on two long trips, including a month in Thailand, was another important part of my research journey, and had a direct influence on the format and genre I use here. During my travels, I talked with fellow travellers of different ages—from students fresh out of university to older hippies who had been around since the late sixties and seventies. The efforts of Westerners to negotiate their lives in response to the society we live in, and its influence on the rest of the world, comprised a large part of my questioning. I was interested in the way Westerners deal with their urban lives and how they sought answers in non-Western cultures and natural environments. I observed their searches for meaning, fulfillment and well-being; and also their efforts to escape or find

**TRAVEL AS RESEARCH:**

*Scholars have used the trope of travel to look critically at everyday life and question normative cultural assumptions (Anzaldúa, Behar, Kumar, Majara, Soja, Suleri, McLaughlin). Fine and Deegan point out how qualitative inquiry is in itself akin to travel and comprises what the researcher serendipitously finds along the way. The autobiographical work of feminist, postcolonial and other theorists use travel as a method of inquiry (Bateson, Griffin, McLaughlin, Schaller), while the quest narrative is also a common approach used in autobiographies of illness (Cousen, Frank, Griffin, Kleinman, Mattingly and Garro). Other theorists point to the importance of travel for theory and research methodologies in an age of globalisation where ideas, people and goods are always on the move (Clifford, Cousineau, Holland and Huggan, Williams 1998).*

alternatives to standard Western lives and lifestyles. It became clear to me that learning is life-long and can occur outside formal settings. Travel is often a more effective methodology to learn about one's own and other cultures, identities and histories than books or formal education. In fact, travel is a method of inquiry in itself. Much can be learned as we cross habitual

boundaries and experience new places.

Around the time I began my PhD, I became aware that I had been living two parallel, yet overlapping stories of suffering and healing—one personal and the other global. The search to understand this dual story of pain, illness and recovery has been the impetus for much of my research. My training in various areas of health and healing has enriched my perspective on this: I am now a certified yoga teacher, and having studied ayurvedic medicine and meditation. I am also a student of the Alexander and Eyebody Techniques which re-educate a person to change habitual reactions in movement, thinking, and seeing. Further, my informal study of the connection between what we eat, and the health of the planet, our bodies and minds has deepened my study of the politics of food and nutrition—which I began in my work on the effects of globalisation and which I incorporate into my courses.

The more I learned about healing, and the better I felt, the more I met people who were struggling with similar health challenges. It seemed that chronic pain and illness were pandemic. I found that a lot of my students or their family members had similar problems. I started to get calls from friends, and friends of friends who knew how much my situation had changed. They were trying to find ways to deal with conditions that mainstream medicine couldn't help them with. Over the last few years, I have taught healing techniques including yoga, meditation, breathing and movement. This role has expanded to that akin to a health consultant and even "life coach".

All this research, combined with my embodied experience of overcoming pain and achieving good health, has informed my theoretical understanding and my teaching practice.

### **Cultural Studies & Cultural Reproduction**

Neo, the hero of the 1999 cult film classic, *The Matrix*, is leading a typical life in a Western city. He lives alone and works at a computer in an office. But Neo has the feeling there is more to life. When he meets his mentor, Morpheus, he learns that his hunch is right. The world isn't what it appears to be. In fact, it's a simulated reality, a matrix, created by machines to keep human beings enslaved. In reality, people are trapped in vats where their bodies are used as batteries to power the mechanical monsters who rule the world. Although life appears real, experience is actually a mental projection constructed by an outside force.

**Morpheus:** *You're here because you know something. What you know you can't explain, but you feel it. You've felt it your entire life, that there's something wrong with the world. You don't know what it is, but it's there, like a splinter in your mind, driving you mad. It is this feeling that has brought you to me. Do you know what I'm talking about?*

**Neo:** *The Matrix.*

**Morpheus:** *Do you want to know what it is?*

**Neo:** *Yes.*

**Morpheus:** *The Matrix is everywhere. It is all around us. Even now, in this very room. You can see it when you look out your window or when you turn on your television. You can feel it when you go to work... when you go to church... when you pay your taxes. It is the world that has been pulled over your eyes to blind you from the truth.*

When I was introduced to cultural studies theory as a Master's student, I felt a bit like Neo must have the day he encountered Morpheus. The theory helped me understand what I, like Neo, had been feeling—that there was “something wrong with the world”.<sup>5</sup> It gave me the tools to put it into words and helped me understand the

dynamics of the culture in which I grew up. For the first time, I understood how things got to be the way they are—and that reality is constructed culturally.

This thesis deals with some of the key problems of cultural studies theory that have inspired my work as a student, teacher, and activist. I have been particularly interested in the question of cultural reproduction and the ways that people reproduce or internalise past understandings and practices. Many cultural studies theorists have investigated this as well as the ways people subvert or resist these to bring about social transformation (Agger, Barthes, Bhabha, Bourdieu, Butler, Fiske, Foucault, Hall, Hebdige, Kellner, Parenti, Said, Spence, Weber and Mitchell 1995, and many others). How do we understand the outside forces that shape our lives? How do we decide for ourselves and become agents of our own realities?

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0133093/quotes>

A key concern of critical theory has been around issues of identity politics and how to address a social order based on violence in the forms of elitism, sexism, racism and homophobia, and other kinds of discrimination. In light of these themes, cultural studies theorists have been interested in questions of power. They have exposed the relationship of different groups to power (and to each other) by deconstructing the social order—not as something that is natural or derived from nature, but as something constructed by culture. They have shown that dominant culture is constructed primarily by those who have power, especially through social institutions. One of the great hopes for social change comes from this insight: If reality is constructed, it can be deconstructed, and also reconstructed (Agger, Barthes, Braidotti, Butler, Derrida, Emberley, Escobar, Foucault, Hall, Hebdige, Hooper, Kellner, Merchant, Mohanty, Parpart and Marchand , Mieder, Said, and many others).

Inspired by these basic tenets of critical theory, both Evie Rose and I wonder about social change. As she tries to both rebel against and transform mainstream ideas and practices, Evie considers questions of cultural reproduction. She thinks about how to investigate the way she, as someone engaged in social activism, both reproduces and resists dominant ways of thinking and acting.

As a college teacher, I have used the metaphor of the matrix to inspire my students to question their taken-for-granted assumptions. I have explored how I might share the sensibilities of my theoretical training with students with no background in it. What aspects of it might be most important, most interesting,

and most useful to them? How can I teach it without both oversimplifying it and over-intellectualising it? How can I use everyday language to explain it? One of my key concerns is how theory can be made useful in understanding their lives, and how it might help them grow as human beings.

These questions have challenged me both in class and in the writing of my thesis— precisely because the theory is so diverse and complex. As I try to get clarity about how to do this, I play with theory throughout the narrative. But rather than presenting my findings in a “high” theoretical format, I explore my questions about power, cultural reproduction, and the constructedness of reality, identity and agency through Evie Rose's journey, and through reflective sections that consider how theory might apply to life. In so doing, I think about critical pedagogy and methods of inquiry that encourage the study of personal experience to understand bigger social and cultural questions—as well as how a better grasp of larger social dynamics can help a person understand their own challenges. How do we negotiate our identities in relationship to others and to community? How do we conform and rebel? In what ways do we both belong or are unable to fit in? Evie works through these questions not only as theoretical constructs but in the process of living her life.

Writing autobiographic fiction about Evie gives me room to understand and deconstruct my own experience. As Claudia Mitchell and Sandra Weber remind us (drawing on work by Norquay), writing about one's life in the third person facilitates a critical perspective and enables us to visit places that might be too difficult or too painful to explore in the first person. As a form of self-study,



I travel with Evie as she grapples with her identity and her relationship with her human-made and natural environments, and the ways they overlap and interconnect. I watch as Evie tries to find a balanced way of living in a society that does not respect life. Her questions are similar to those that many critical theorists pose: How do we address a social, political, economic and cultural system that was founded on the exploitation of nature and people for the sake of empowering a small elite; and the historical legacy of practices such as slavery, colonialism, racism and sexism? How do we deal with a world that operates based on the perceived needs of the economy rather than of people or other living beings? How do we avoid reproducing this system, its values and practices, when we learn it everyday through all our social institutions like schools and universities, hospitals and doctor's offices, government, and the media? How do we challenge the cultural constructions of reality and of identity that we often internalise? How shall we live in a world in which the individual is often cut off from others, the natural world and the self?

### **Krisis-A Turning Point in a Disease**

We live in a time of Krisis with a capital "K". Even though *crisis* arguably looks cooler with a "K", that's not why I've chosen to write it that way. The word *crisis* comes from the Greek *krisis* meaning "a turning point in a disease". It also means, to judge, decide, sieve, distinguish, discriminate. It reflects a crucial or

decisive situation<sup>6</sup> and also reflects my understanding of social change as a health issue. In her work on the meaning of revolution, Chela Sandoval says:

[w]hat many called the 'cultural crisis' of the West—the 'breakdown' of traditional institutions, values, beliefs, attitudes, morals, and so on—[is] symptomatic of the overwhelming recognition by many peoples that they [a]re no longer capable of making sense of or giving meaning to the practices that life in 'advanced' industrialized societies require[s] its members to observe (9).

During this “unprecedented period in Western history” crisis affects all aspects of our lives: the environment and public health; identity and community; politics, democracy, and the state; the media and journalism; as well as broader notions of truth, reality and meaning (Bennett 2005, Day 2005, Webster). Perhaps, that's what makes our contemporary situation different from previous ones. We live in a pivotal historical moment. The displacements caused by Western industrial society demand that we make a choice: Either we will heal our collective illness or we will have to face the dire consequences of continued environmental and social devastation. Jean Houston, one of the founders of the human potential movement, argued that “the ecological crisis is doing what no other crisis in history has ever done—challenging us to a realization of a new humanity”. The school of thought of which she was a part was based on the belief that personal development would lead to social change.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=crisis>; <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/crisis>

Sandoval points out that new terms used to describe *first world* societies like *postindustrial*, *consumer*, *high-tech*, *multinational*, *transnational*, *postcolonial*, *postmodern*, and/or *global* indicate “that a new cultural dominant has overtaken the rationality of the old” (9). Critiques of the “rationality of the old” are everywhere—in scholarly work, in the media, and in politics. In this thesis, I try to move beyond cultural criticism, to inquire: What *is* the rationality of the new...or how might one be created?

If social change *is* a health issue, at its heart lies the need to alter our relationship to nature and the way we both understand and live our lives. The state of the environment is an indication of a larger crisis of human health that affects and reflects all aspects of human life. Because of this, more and more people are recognising the need for change, and are also seeking new ways of doing things. People have been turning to nature for answers and are seeking more natural ways of living. This search for nature, however, not only takes place in the world “out there”, the search for one’s own nature and for an understanding of some kind of transcendent, universal natural order is part of this trend.

Cultural theorist Jackie Stacey studied people’s responses “in face of the dizzying and disorientating effects of global change” (2000 109). In an attempt to escape the vagaries of industrial society, many Westerners have been seeking answers in non-Western (often Eastern or Native) or ancient cultures and “natures”. Stacey speculates that these alternatives appeal because of their more natural approaches, reverence for nature and promises of some transcendent spirituality lacking in the West. She also notes a general proliferation of “self-

health” literature, products and practices (2000 117-119) that focus on healing, self-improvement, and awareness—including “alternative” medicine. Stacey argues that these trends are “part of a much broader transformation of Western beliefs about the meaning of life, death and God, and that this is a crucial, and yet little-discussed dimension of globalisation” (2000 122). She points out that contemporary “global health cultures” represent a significant paradigm shift in Western culture from one based on duality and separateness to “a model of unity, of interconnectedness and interdependence” (2000 122-123). This thesis reflects the cultural shift that Stacey describes. It questions the human encounter with nature and culture that is an integral part of it.

This kind of questioning is typical of the current trend in qualitative methods of research. In their *Handbook of Qualitative Inquiry*, Denzin and Lincoln identify it as the *seventh moment*. As a bridge into the future, it

is simultaneously minimal, existential, autoethnographic, vulnerable, performative and critical. This form of inquiry erases traditional distinctions among epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics; nothing is value-free. It seeks to ground the self in a sense of the sacred, to connect the ethical, respectful self dialogically to nature and the worldly environment. It seeks to embed this self in deeply storied histories of sacred spaces and local places, to illuminate the unity of the self and its

relationship to the reconstructed moral, and sacred natural world. This model of inquiry seeks a sacred epistemology that recognizes the essential ethical unity of mind and nature. A sacred existential epistemology places us in a noncompetitive, non-hierarchical relationship to the earth, to nature, and to the larger world. It is political, presuming a feminist, communitarian moral ethic stressing the values of empowerment, shared governance, care, solidarity, love, community, covenant, morally involved observers and civic transformation (1052).

This is precisely what my project seeks to accomplish. It “works outward from those moments of existential crisis in the culture” (Denzin and Lincoln 1052). Rather than high theory, this kind of interpretive scholarship “moves from the researcher’s biography to the biographies of others, to those rare moments when our lives connect” (1053). Denzin and Lincoln argue that contemporary crises could be understood and worked through with narrative forms of inquiry. The personal and the local reveal insight into universal problems. As individuals, we “universalize] in our singularity the crises and experiences of our historical epoch” (1053). Writing is a political act that responds to “the hopes, needs, goals and promises of a free democratic society” (Denzin and Lincoln 3). It provides tools to explore the important ethical, political and social questions of our time.

## Love Stories & the Search for Utopia

*The stories we sit up late to hear are love stories. It seems that we cannot know enough about this riddle of our lives. We go back to the same scenes, the same words, trying to scrape out the meaning. Nothing else could be more familiar than love. Nothing could elude us so completely...My search for you, your search for me, is a search after something that cannot be found.*

*-Jeannette Winterson*

The search for love, for connection or communion, although it takes on different forms, is probably fundamental to every human story. I didn't realise it right away, but eventually it became clear that the novel I am writing is a love story. It's not about a passing fancy or a one night stand, but about true love. Our experience of romantic love, lust and sex; the desires and fears that it evokes in us; the negotiations of power; and the way that we share and express that love with another is important in understanding how we love, our challenges to love in general—the fundamentals of human experience.

When I speak of love, I am not referring to romantic love. Some of the love stories I wrote about just came out that way, I think, because as human beings we need love—not just to be healthy individuals, but for the wellness of the world. The song Burt Bacharach wrote in 1965 still holds true. It's "what the world needs now". "Love sweet love". The search for it is part of a search for a better life. The investigation and reconsideration of our relationships—to self, to others, and to the world is a necessary part of social change.

bell hooks has argued that "all the great movements for social justice in our society have strongly emphasized a love ethic". She explains that love is a "transformative force" (2000 xix). For hooks, cultural revolution comes from self-actualisation based on a commitment to learning to love (1994 243). "The

absence of a sustained focus on love in progressive circles,” she writes, “arises from a collective failure to acknowledge the needs of the spirit and an overdetermined emphasis on material concerns” (1994 243). To change society, we need to address more than aspects of power such as material wealth, ownership, status, and class. To transform what hooks calls the “lovelessness” in our culture, we need to look at the way we *do* love or are still incapable of loving.

In 2003, Anita Roddick came out with an interesting coffee table book called, *A Revolution in Kindness*. The premise was to collect a series of quotes from scholars, politicians, writers, artists, and activists about how the media, politics, music, religion, the environment, business, health, and the justice system would look if they were kind. Roddick says: “In a period of human history in which we are obsessed with change—personal and political—and are unsure whether it is possible at all, kindness could be our salvation” (9). The idea that treating others with compassion and respect is revolutionary should make us really reconsider the way our society operates.

Critical educators like hooks, Parker Palmer, Paulo Freire, Antonia Darder, and Ira Shor have argued for a pedagogy of love and hope that teaches not just to look critically at one’s own experience, but to improve it (also see Louise, Zajonc, Cunningham, Van Heertum). “Teachers need to do more than awaken students to the surrounding world; they need to simultaneously give them the faith and strength to work to transform the world”. This “radical politics of embodied hope” (Van Heertum 47) offers some kind of utopian vision for the future. This approach to learning is premised on love because it seeks to heal the

separations and dislocations of contemporary society by creating connection, building community<sup>7</sup>, nurturing intimacy and participation, and cultivating healthy relationships with others and nature (Zajonc 745). My research seeks “an affirmative politics and pedagogy that move beyond critique to embrace the utopian traces that exist in most cultural artefacts and activities” (van Heertum 45).

Palmer argues that “the goal of a knowledge arising from love is the reunification and reconstruction of broken selves and worlds” (7). He points out that knowledge should not originate in “curiosity or a desire to control” as it has in the past. Instead he stresses a way of knowing based in compassion and love (8). He maintains that the transformational power of love can create a vision of community that comes from the heart and not the mind (xxiii). A knowledge that springs from love will implicate us in the web of life, heal the “pain of disconnection”, and assist us to overcome separateness and alienation and be the basis of the recovery of community. According to Palmer, the failure of pedagogy to create a better world is not one of ethics. It requires that we “allow love to inform the relations that our knowledge creates—within ourselves, with each other, with the whole animate and inanimate world” (9).

Qualitative researchers like Behar, Ellis, Kincheloe, Pelias, Richardson and Bochner make the case for a *methodology with a heart* that works toward social justice and reaches out to others. Pelias, for example, works toward a scholarship that “fosters connections, opens spaces for dialogue, heals” (2). Ellis describes this methodology as a ‘move inward toward social change’ (254). She

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<sup>7</sup> hooks, like Martin Luther King Jr. before her, encourages the fostering of a “beloved community”



and Behar discuss how this kind of work can assist in mending broken hearts. As an expression of the heart, it engages in a learning not based on knowledge for the sake of knowledge, but for the sake of human growth (hooks 1995 7)—one’s own as well as that of others by engaging them, as Pelias puts it, “by striving to connect heart to heart” (12).

### Love-Songlines (Signposts & Life Literacy)

*Why is man the most restless, dissatisfied of animals? Why do wandering people conceive the world as perfect whereas sedentary ones always try to change it? Why have the great teachers—Christ or the Buddha—recommended the Road as the way to salvation? Do we agree with Pascal that all man’s troubles stem from his inability to sit quietly in a room?*  
-Bruce Chatwin  
(From the flyleaf of *The Songlines*)

Australian aboriginals mapped their landscapes in songs. Rather than having any kind of written map, they found their way through the outback by singing. Their songs told the stories of their ancestors in the “dreamtime”—the time before Creation—and how they dreamt the land and all its features

into being. They used these tales to get themselves from one landmark to another. They would start at one place like a mountain or a large rock and sing about how it had been created. The song would tell them how to get to the next location, like a river. Once there, they would navigate their way with another creation song to the following destination, and on and on, until thousands of miles would be crossed (Chatwin). The narrativisation of my life’s journey has been a form of map-making perhaps akin to songlines—or, maybe even—love-songlines.

The first love songs ever written (in Europe, at least) were the *chansons de geste* (the *songs of heroic deeds*)—the epic poems of the troubadors, the wandering minstrels. Italian poet Dante defined the troubadour lyric as poetical fiction and as an exploration into human psychology and the nature of love<sup>8</sup>. The minstrel was not just a traveller, she was a poet who sang her way from one place to the next contemplating both what it meant to love and to be human.

My emerging methodology makes use of a similar process. The story is the journey of lovelorn travellers who find answers in moments of inspiration, celebration and connection, as well as isolation, hardship and struggle. Both moments of joy and pain provide living opportunities for an education in love, and of how to lead more loving lives. These moments are signposts that, if we learn how to read them, will teach us how to be more loving and more humane. They will help us grow and maybe even lead us to a better place.

### The Unlived Past (Time Travel)

*♪ Our heirs, whatever or whoever they may be, will explore space and time to degrees we cannot currently fathom. They will create new melodies in the music of time. There are infinite harmonies to be explored.*

-Clifford Pickover,  
Time: A Traveler's Guide ♪

In the 1986 film, *The Labyrinth*, the heroes are reminded that sometimes the way forward is also the way back. In the same way, the study of human experience celebrated by critical theorists makes use of the past for the sake of learning not only about current practices, but also how to affect the future (Agger, Behar, Benstock, Butler and Scott, Grumet, Kincheloe, Miller, Smith, Spence, Stanley, Swindells, Van Manen, Weber and Mitchell). In

<sup>8</sup> <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/dante/>; <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Troubadour>

their work using personal narrative for the individual and professional growth of teachers, Weber and Mitchell (1999), for example, explain how we can “make the past usable” (3) and find in it possible pedagogies for the future. Memory work can help us understand the legacies of the past, and make visible what has been inherited from previous generations (Haug et al). Other educators argue that we need to study our own pasts in order to see clearly what we pass on to others (Knowles, Pinar 148, Grumet, Schon, Rousmaniere, Weiler).

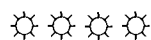
By studying what we have lived, we are also investigating our unlived pasts. Both the paths we take and fail to take are important. I used old diaries, emails, postcards, letters, and photographs to explore them. It has helped me see in retrospect what I might not have noticed along the way. By studying the opportunities missed or still waiting to be realised, we can see that we often have more choices than we are aware of. We can begin to look for these in the present moment and to understand our patterns of thinking and behaving so we can experience something new.

Rishma Dunlop, who wrote one of the first novels to be accepted as a doctoral dissertation in a Faculty of Education in Canada, explained this process well when she said:

I have known these situations, I have experienced them myself, yet none of them has given rise to the person my curriculum vitae and I represent. The characters in my novels are my unrealized possibilities.... Each one has crossed a border that I

myself circumvented. It is that crossed border (the border beyond which my own 'I' ends) which attracts me the most.

Phenomenologist Max Van Manen defends the use of a novel as a method of inquiry: "What is revealed in the experience of fictional literature is not fact or incidence, news or controversy, but the reality of possibility: the reality of imaginable human experience" (177). By writing an auto-fictional text, I have found more freedom to investigate both my past and my theoretical and existential questions in a way that I could not do merely through autobiography. This genre has helped me explore possibilities, imagine other potential worlds and dream of a better future—the utopian impulse in all hopes for change. Through it, I have developed a better understanding of what it means to be human—why we take certain paths and perhaps how to choose a "higher" (or healthier) road.



All paths, however, provide the opportunity for learning. There is no such thing as a waste of time. In fact, in borrowing from lived experience to write fiction, we don't only affect the future. We can change the past. Moments of confusion can be made clear. What was lived that felt wrong or seemed obscure could be made right and relived in the light. Relationships can be healed; love and purpose can be found where we didn't feel them before. We can see what might have been overlooked, take opportunities that weren't taken, or find missed connections. As we travel the old roads, we might notice that there were other

ways we could have gone, and we might explore them. The people that cross our paths also change. Some might appear to have been wolves in sheep's clothing. Or we might not have noticed that the way was full of teachers, or even angels.

This kind of freedom to explore, invent, wander and wonder reinvigorates our relationship to the world. Everyone and everything has a purpose and a special meaning. We begin to notice that the universe has its own wonderful magic, that everything is interconnected and happens for a reason.

One day while writing, I revisited my trip to Paris and wandered again into the Saint-Sulpice church. I re-read a quote by French poet Baudelaire that was inscribed on a plaque: "The marvelous surrounds and sustains us like the atmosphere; but we don't see it." I wrote it in my journal in 1995. Then I forgot. But my research helped me remember.

## Heroes

*♪ I will be king  
And you  
You will be queen  
Though nothing  
Will drive them away  
We can be Heroes  
Just for one day  
We can be us  
Just for one day*  
-David Bowie ♪

In every story ever told, the hero always returns to the place where he started. From ancient myths to novels and Hollywood blockbusters, they all share a fundamental structure, a universal pattern, a similar motif—what Irish writer James Joyce once referred to as

the "monomyth" and what mythologist Joseph Campbell called "The Hero's Journey"<sup>9</sup>. The hero of all tales faces archetypal challenges as she tries to deal with the fundamental questions and problems of life. She is called on some

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<sup>9</sup> The hero's journey has been critiqued as being a masculinist understanding of human life incorporating a modernist representation of identity. Psychoanalyst Margaret Murdock, for example, has proposed a more feminine model of living and encourages the integration of masculine and feminine. I think that depending on how you look at it, it can be both. I am using the term here for heuristic purposes to question the cyclical nature of human experience.

journey that takes her far from home—literally or figuratively. Once on the adventure, she faces many challenges—a *road of trials*. In the end, however, she returns to the ordinary world where she started. She brings with her some great lesson or treasure, elixir or boon that she can use to make the world a better place. If she fails, she will be doomed to repeat what she has already lived. The hero's journey is eerily like revolution—always returning to the place it began. Are all human stories destined to loop back to the starting point?

In his book *Arrow of the Blue Skinned God*, Jonah Blank, goes on a pilgrimage in India to re-trace the *Ramayana*, the most famous of Hindu epics that is said to have been written about eight thousand years ago. He maintains that “[t]he questions that Indians debate as they sip their afternoon chai are often the very same ones that vexed Lord Rama on his tireless quest” (x). He doesn't try to answer them, instead maintains that the goal of his research:

is not to 'explain' India—such a task is far beyond my abilities. I suspect it would be beyond the abilities of *any* observer, and most certainly any observer from across the wide ocean. My intent is merely to let the reader meet some of the fascinating people I have met, see some of the sights I've seen, ponder some of the philosophical mysteries I've pondered (x-xi).

Any attempt to “know” India would be futile. In fact, the joke amongst many Western backpackers was that to travel there, you had to learn how to let go of any desire to control your destiny. India was too vast, wild, and unruly.

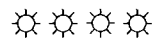
Trains never ran on time, you never got the right directions, or there would always be some amazing distraction to lead you somewhere unexpected. Whatever plans you had, India had other plans for you. It was impossible to predict the exact itinerary of your trip or how long it would take. John Lennon once said that life is what happens to you when you're busy making other plans. India became a metaphor for life, the world, and even the universe, which are all much more unpredictable than we sometimes want to believe or accept.

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the logical scholar, Horatio, was surprised to see Hamlet's ghost who reminded him that knowledge was unlimited: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy." Theories are constantly refuted and adjusted. We used to think the world was flat and people who didn't were heretics. Yesterday's heresy is today's truth. What is the heresy of our day?

Any attempt made to find out, any kind of search or research must inherently treat the unknown very seriously. To try to know is an effort to control what happens in the world and in our lives. Knowing is inherently bound with a fear of the unknown—a place we are not comfortable going. But to accept that one might not know is to allow for limitless possibility. It is to venture into the unknown and beyond one's zones of comfort. It shows us that in order to change we need to see what we have not been able to look at, and go where we hesitated to go. No *Lonely Planet* travel guide exists for this place. Perhaps it's inside us. Maybe we just have to surrender to the idea that the circumstances under which we exist are largely unknown to us and out of our control; and to

accept that it's impossible to know it all. Maybe the road knows better than we do where we need to go.

One of the biggest lessons for a Western traveller in India is to surrender their original agenda and go with the flow—to expect that nothing will go as intended and that it's okay. Trusting that somehow nature, the universe, the world, India knows better because it offers the vast possibility of the unknown and the unexpected. Fine and Deegan have argued that this is necessary for scholarly research. The researcher must be open to what she serendipitously might find along the way.



***We are not what we know but  
what we are willing to learn.***  
-Mary Catherine Bateson

My characters are not really heroes.

Protagonists and heroes are different. The

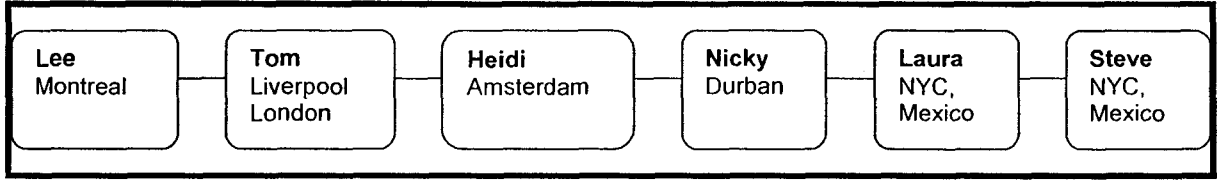
protagonist of a story is the main character around whom the action takes place. A hero, however, is someone who, through his unique quality of strength, courage, wisdom, or personal integrity contributes something to the world. Superheroes, for example, not only save the day but help others who are in harm's way. Historical heroes like Martin Luther King, Jr. or Gandhi were praised as being extraordinary. Gandhi was even called "Mahatma" which means "great soul". The characters in my book are striving for heroism—searching for ways to heal and help themselves and the planet. They illustrate how people deal with the suffering that comprises both their personal lives and the historical experience of every place they've ever seen. Their journeys depict the very old and very human struggle to find peace in a world that seems to be forever at war; where acts of cruelty appear to be greater



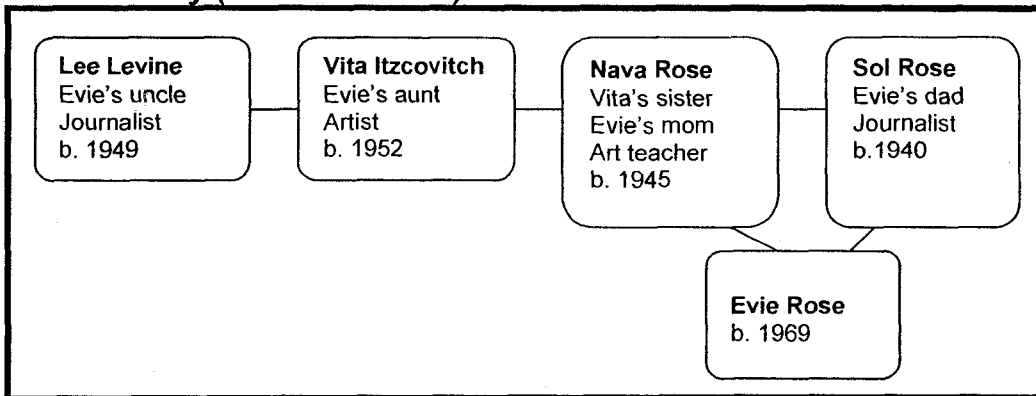
defining factors of human history than random acts of kindness; where more energy and resources seem to be directed at destroying life rather than celebrating it; where hope is more often a prayer for the end of suffering rather than the anticipation for the deepening of the joy of being alive. Through them, the reader can see some of what I have seen, ponder what I have pondered, and ask some of the questions I have asked—the same ones perhaps that have always inspired people both to find out and to let go.

# CHARACTER MAPS

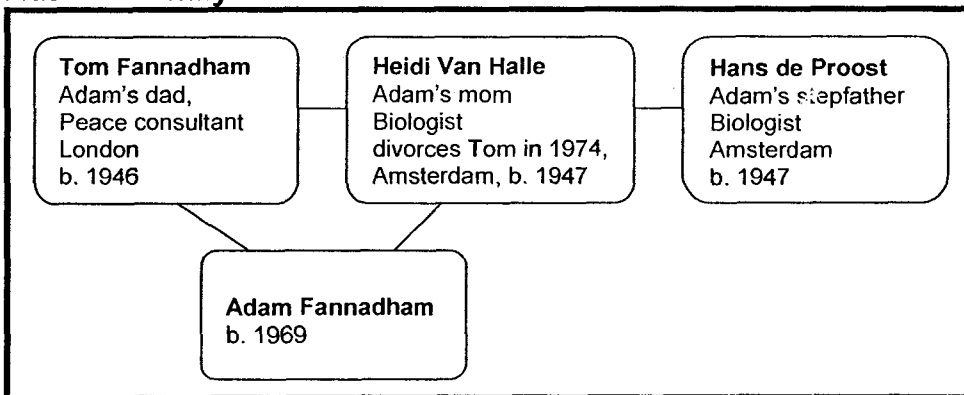
## First Generation, India 1968



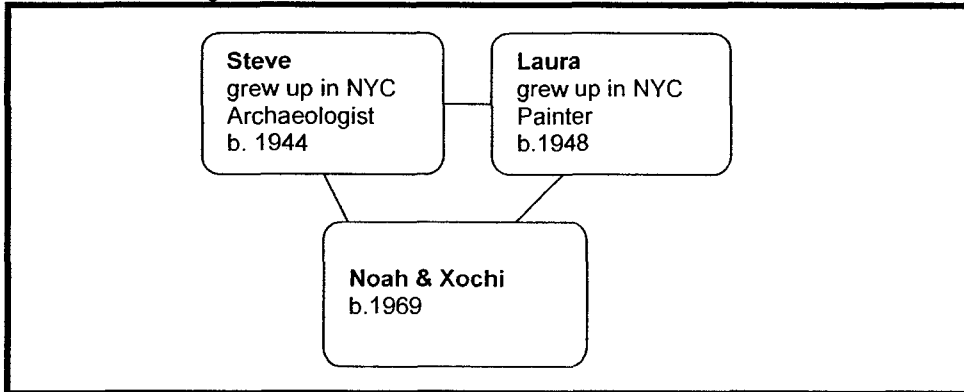
## Evie's Family (From Montreal)



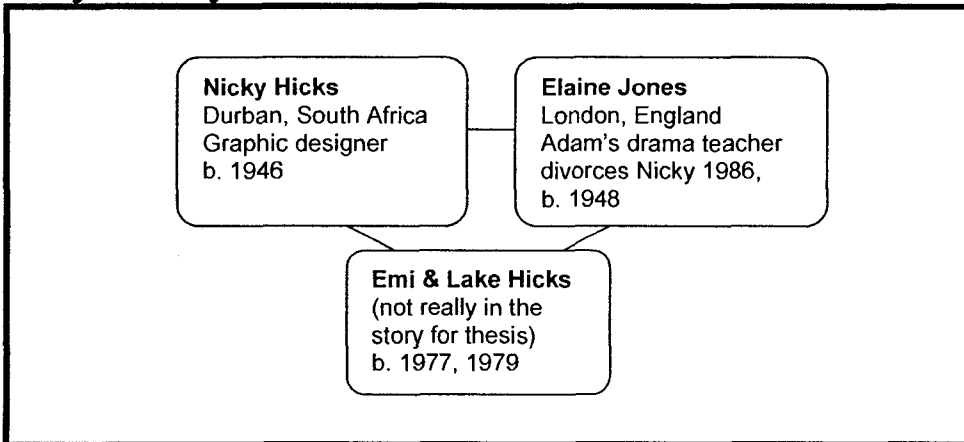
## Adam's Family



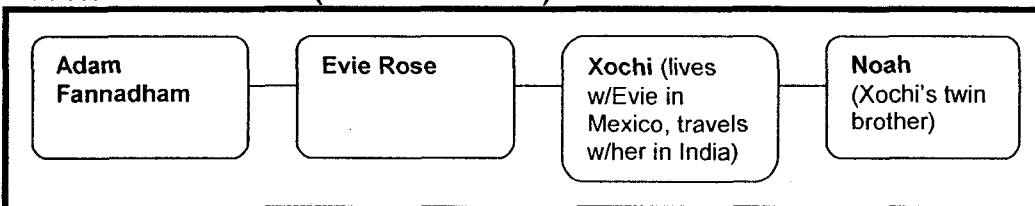
### Xochi's Family



### Nicky's Family



### Second Generation (all born in 1969)



## CHAPTER TWO

### EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL *YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION* BEFORE EVIE ROSE'S BIRTH (INDIA 1968)

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#### Twists of Fate

♪ *You say you want a revolution*  
*Well you know*  
*We all want to change the world*  
*You tell me that it's evolution*  
*Well you know*  
*We all want to change the world*  
*But when you talk about destruction*  
*Don't you know you can count me out*  
*Don't you know it's gonna be alright*  
-The Beatles ♪

"Maybe times really were changing," Lee said.

The serendipitous twist of fate that brought Lee Levine to Rishikesh in February of 1968 would alter the course

of his life forever. In fact, if truth be told, it would change the world. His simple choice to take a trip across the globe would alter a lot of people's lives—including that of his future niece, Evie Rose.

He hadn't planned to visit the holy city where thousands of pilgrims came in search of salvation. Quite by accident, he found himself in the peaceful town at the foot of the Himalayas where the River Ganges flowed out to the plains of northern India.

Years later, Lee would tell a beguiled Evie stories about the time he spent there. On cold winter nights in a sleepy Montreal white-washed with snow, Lee would get Evie ready for the miracles he knew her life would be full of. He tried to convey to her the importance of the fact that she was alive. He would recount the old Buddhist tale about the wooden ring floating on an ocean the size of the universe, and the big, blind turtle that lives in its depths.

“Every hundred years,” he would tell Evie, “The old turtle surfaces. What do you think his chances are of accidentally poking his head through the wooden ring?”

“Not too good.” Evie would giggle.

“They say that the chances of that giant turtle poking his head through the ring are about as great as a human birth. It’s so rare and special to be born human,” he would insist.

Even less likely, the story went, was to also be exposed to the Buddha’s teachings. Rarer still, Lee knew, was to discover your life’s purpose—the reason for your birth. But he would explain all that to Evie when it was time. Meanwhile, he would describe the amazing way he ended up being there the night she was born.

## **Connecting**

Fourteen months before Lee met Evie’s mother’s sister, Vita, he happened to be in a dirty restaurant in the bustling Main Bazaar in Old Delhi. He was almost nineteen, on his first trip to India, and in a state of almost unbearable existential agitation. After his girlfriend left him for a West German über-hippie at an Anjuna beach party, Lee was totally distraught. He left the hippie hangout on the coast of Goa and caught an overcrowded train to Delhi where he spent three days in a sweaty hotel room smoking hash through a stone chillum. He didn’t tell Evie this. Instead he explained that he was confused because his heart had been broken. Too stoned (confused) to make decisions large or small, he picked at his curry

for over an hour and stared hopelessly at his open journal without writing a word. He wondered whether or not he should just go home—then forgot what he had been thinking, reconsidered it, and then once again lost his train of thought. He seemed to be stuck in this mental looping, swimming circles in his head like a forgetful goldfish, when Nicky Hicks' voice broke through the haze. At first, it sounded as if he were speaking under water.

“Hey mate! Mate?” He had been saying for a while until Lee finally looked up sluggishly. “You alright?”

Nicky Hicks, a thin, tanned South African from Durban, was sitting at a rickety table with uneven legs in front of Lee. He had been reading a novel that was banned by the racist government back home, and sipping a mango lassi when he noticed the skinny, red-eyed teenager gazing intently at the soiled yellow wall.

When Lee didn't answer, Heidi van Halle, a five-foot-eleven, freckle-faced Dutch woman with a long strawberry blonde pony-tail commanded him to drink some water from her bottle which she held out with long, sun-spotted fingers. She had been chatting over lunch with her burly boyfriend, Tom Fannadham, who let out deep laughs in what seemed to Lee like regular intervals. Lee, however, had not connected the guttural chortles he kept hearing to the big, grinning man with the red bandana in his long sandy hair who was sitting just to his right. Instead he felt the resounding reverberation like someone polishing his head as if it were a tight-skinned bongo. Tom ordered Lee a mango lassi and

warned him about all the stories he heard about Western kids who lose it in India to drugs, religion, or culture shock—sometimes to all three!—and never go home.

“What’s going on with you?” He asked Lee with a smile lingering on his thick lips and the balls of his rosy cheeks.

Lee’s sudden re-hydration gave him the strength to answer Tom’s question without doing or saying anything too embarrassing.

“Love,” Lee sighed revealing his tendency to wallow in his own perceived misfortunes. Contact with other Westerners broke the Alice-in-Wonderland spell that a foreigner can feel travelling alone in India. Lee was actually thrilled to have someone to talk to who knew where he was coming from. The superficial and often confusing exchanges he had with Indian shopkeepers, hotel managers, rickshaw drivers, and waiters were starting to get to him—especially when they responded to his questions by nodding their head ambiguously Indian-style as if simultaneously indicating both “yes” and “no”. The four backpackers were soon eating milky sweets, sipping soft drinks and sharing stories. As Lee’s blood sugar regulated, he realised that he didn’t really want to go home after all.

During that first meeting, Tom and Heidi had helped Lee realise what he had denied the whole time he and his girlfriend were together—that they were utterly incompatible. Like the beach parties, and the trip to India itself, she had been a form of distraction—but from what, he wasn’t sure. Her rejection of him made him feel insecure about his desirability as a man. But a broken heart and a fragile ego were not the same thing.

“Maybe I never really loved her at all!” Lee told his new friends in a moment of lucidity which sometimes occurred between long bouts of obscurity, “Maybe I don’t even know what love is.”

“How many of us really do?” Heidi said which made Tom slightly nervous.



The four travellers spent the next three days site-seeing in Delhi and staying up late talking in Tom and Heidi’s hotel room. They munched on strangely spiced potato chips and shared with each other things they never realised before because they had never said them out loud. Lee hadn’t been able to talk this way to his girlfriend—or to very many people before.

A few days on the road, however, was equivalent to a lifetime at home in the “real” world, Lee reflected. It was hard to believe, that just a week ago, they were total strangers. He loved this about travelling. You could sit for hours in a restaurant just talking about life with strangers with whom you could develop an intimacy unheard of at home—the kind that people longed for but were either too afraid or too inhibited to allow.

### **Serendipity**

“You grew up with John Lennon?” Lee said when Tom casually mentioned it. Lee’s *Beatles* records were just about the only thing he regretted leaving behind him when he left home.

“You know. He didn’t tell anyone about it the whole way from Israel to Pakistan. Even after he told me,” Heidi said.



Heidi and Tom had met on a kibbutz in Israel the previous summer where they were both working as volunteers. Although Heidi had a boyfriend at home and planned to return to finish her last year of university, Tom had convinced her to travel with him on what would later be known as the hippy trail.

“I wanted her to love me for me.” Tom said.

“What? You think she’d date you just because you know John Lennon,” Nicky said.

“No, but she might’ve come to India with me because she’d like to meet him.”

“How do you mean?”

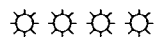
“We’re on our way to see him. He’s staying at the ashram of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in Rishikesh.”

“Are you serious?”

“Very,” Heidi said smiling. “I still can’t believe it!”

“So will you two dharma bums come along?” Tom said.

Nicky and Lee looked at each other and started laughing like a couple of gamblers after hitting the jackpot.



A day later, the four of them were trying to sleep in a compartment on an overnight train to Rishikesh. Lee lay there on the cobalt blue vinyl seat that opened into a hard bunk watching the shadow of the train pass over the land outside. It was a lot less crowded than it had been on the way to Delhi. He couldn’t believe where he was going or how well he connected with Tom, Heidi,

and Nicky. Was he really going to meet the *Beatles*? What would he say to them? What would it be like to meditate? What would they do on the ashram? What would Rishikesh be like? What kind of person was the Maharishi? Despite all his questions, Lee felt this was the beginning of a great adventure—one that would give him something real to write about. His story might even match Kerouac's novel *On the Road*, which Lee carried like a talisman in his backpack. He had been in the right place at the right time, and he knew that somehow the four of them were meant to be on this journey together. These thoughts had been rolling through his brain at high speed—so quickly he couldn't keep them for more than a split second, like the scarcely visible landscape that passed in an obscure blur outside the window. He assumed everyone else was sleeping when Nicky's whisper rose above the rattle of the train:

"You asleep?"

"Yeah right." Lee said and they both laughed. Nicky was as animated as Lee was. The train meandered through a dark landscape beneath a starry moonless sky unpolluted by city lights.

"You know," Nicky said. "There's a word for this."

"What?"

"Serendipity," he said, "when you set out looking for one thing and by chance find something else—something good and unexpected."

"We're the three princes of Serendip," Lee agreed.

"Who?"

“The three princes—and, well, one princess, I guess. I read once that the word *serendipity* comes from a Persian fairy tale *The Three Princes of Serendip*,” Lee explained. “These three princes from Serendip—which is the old name for Sri Lanka—set out on a journey in search of glory and treasure, but keep on discovering things they’re not looking for but somehow need.”

“What are we in search of?” Nicky said.

“Peace of mind, I guess.” Lee said.

They paused to listen to the steady rhythm of the train rolling over the tracks wondering what else they might happen to find.

#### **Peace of Mind** (*Ashram of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi-Rishikesh, India*)

Lee had never worked on concentrating his thoughts on anything in particular before. So when he was meditating, he was surprised to find how unruly his mind was—how it was all over the place, off on a million different tangents like every train in India getting derailed all at once and then again and again. Sometimes this made Lee so tired he would literally fall asleep in the meditation hall. All through the day and night his every word, thought and deed centred around his own likes and dislikes, his desires and aversions. He realised that human beings were ruled by what they wanted for their own comfort: I me mine. I me mine. I me mine. I’m hungry. I’m thirsty. I’m lonely. I’m cold. I’m hot. I want this. I want that. He could not detach from all the conditions he had for his own contentment. Either that or he found himself lamenting the past or planning

what he would do when the retreat was over. Could he ever just be in the present moment without desiring or judging? Could he just be here now and at peace?

Lee had assumed he had put his difficult past behind him. When he got on the plane, he imagined he was flying away from everything that came before. But as he sat quietly with himself, there it all was—all the hardships and pain, all the anger; every moment of his life as fresh as if he had lived it yesterday. Every time he closed his eyes he heard his father speaking. He never realised before the degree to which the voices in his head were not his own. Lee had been trying to recycle an identity from whatever that man had left lying around.

His father had lived through devastating pogroms in a small Ukrainian shtetl near Kiev. As a young child, he had seen his own father beheaded and his aunt raped by Cossacks. He had come to Canada via Liverpool, where many Europeans crossed over on their way to a new life, with his single mom and five bewildered brothers and sisters. Years later, he was still afraid of gentiles. The *goyim*, he would always find opportunities to remind his children, hated Jews. He had the Holocaust and every example of anti-Semitism he ever came across in his life to prove it. Lee would sometimes think people who experienced the kind of severe trauma that his parents had, might see therapists for years. The Jewish community was full of survivors of the most hideous forms of abuse who just got on with life as if nothing had ever happened. This thought made him cry one day in the meditation hall. Lee knew his father could never come to terms with what he had lived. When Lee had tried to talk to him about it, he always changed the subject in a most abrupt way by mentioning the previous night's hockey game or

how heavy the last snowfall had been. Lee wondered if his father could ever find peace of mind. But he knew he would first have to look for it. Consequently, when Lee was little, he had a deep sense that the world was a very unsafe and hostile place. Like a constant ache in the belly, he also had a secret wish to make it all better. This wish continued into adulthood. After India, Lee planned on going home to study English and journalism so he could write about the injustices of the world.

### **Salvation**

The four new friends, The Beatles and some other meditators were just finishing lunch at the long wooden table on the cliff overlooking Rishikesh and the Ganges below. John Lennon was sitting next to Tom listening to his travel stories while Lee, Nicky, and Heidi were having another cup of chai talking about meditation. Everyone else had already left the table to go for an afternoon walk or to nap in their pod-like stone huts. A stout middle-aged Indian woman dressed in an orange sari with a large red bindi on her forehead came over followed by a smiling young Western-looking man and woman. The older woman, exuding a matriarchal confidence, lifted her brow and smiled as she spoke.

“Are these seats taken?”

“Go ahead,” Lee said.

They settled into their chairs and the older woman took a sip of her tea and looked around at the others. She knew that her young companions were excited about meeting *The Beatles*, but until she noticed John Lennon’s reflection

in the young woman's shiny black eyes, she hadn't realised that he was sitting across from her. When she did, she looked at John and said:

"Ahh. You must be a Beatle."

"He's John Lennon," Tom said.

"John Lennon. Of course. I didn't recognise you. You look so big and tall on TV. But you're not that big or tall. You look just like a regular person," She and everyone else laughed including John suspecting for a moment that she was purposely trying to challenge his ego for the sake of his spiritual growth.

"It's all an optical illusion!" John said raising and dropping his eyebrows several times, almost flirtatiously.

"Maybe. Or maybe it's just me. Perhaps I have kaleidoscope eyes!" She laughed at her own joke, and since she looked like an unlikely *Beatles* fan, everyone else joined in her amusement.

"You must be Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds!" Heidi said.

"No, I'm just Shivani on the Chair with Chai...unfortunately." Everyone laughed again. "I'm an archaeologist from the University of Delhi and this is my research assistant Steve from New York and his girlfriend, Laura. They study in Mexico and just arrived from Mexico City." The couple both said "hi" and flashed a slight wave like an Indian "how" in an old Western.

Heidi, Tom and Nicky introduced themselves.

"So what brings you to the ashram?" John asked warmly.

"We heard you'd be here," she beamed looking at John. "We want an autograph!" Then she burst into laughter again which made everyone else follow

suit. "No, no, it's not true. I come here a lot. I'm a friend of Guru-ji," she said respectfully about the Maharishi. "I always stay here when I'm doing research in the caves." She pointed at the mountains beyond the Ganges.

"The ones up in the foothills where all the babas hang out and meditate?" Tom asked referring to the bearded holy men who could be seen all over town.

"Yes. Those. And other ones that are less known."

"What are you looking for there?" John asked her.

"What we're all looking for, John: How to save the world. Isn't it?" She said laughing again looking around the table at what had just become her captive audience.

"From what?" Lee wondered.

"From destruction," Shivani said still laughing. "We are trying to find the answer to the great mysteries of human civilization!"

"What was the question?" John quipped.

"We study end-time prophecy, John." Shivani said.

"Really? Sounds morbid."

"It's actually quite fascinating. Almost all cultures on the planet predict one thing without fail."

"What's that?" John said.

"A coming end around the beginning of the twenty-first century. This has been foreseen across the Americas, Africa, and Australia; in Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, and Christianity; The Sikhs and the Jains believe it. In ancient Egypt and Greece, philosophers and mystics all referred to the end of an age, the end

of time or of creation. In all these traditions they spoke of an apocalyptic era, a judgement day, a great purification and an ensuing golden age.”

“You have to ask yourself why that is.” Steve said.

“It’s pretty much only Western culture that ignores this sort of thing,” Laura said.

“Figures.” Nicky sighed.

“So what do you think? Can we save the world?” Lee said almost ready to throw in the towel.

“The Maya calculated that the Earth was approaching the end of a galactic cycle of twenty-five thousand years culminating on the winter solstice of 2012,” Steve said. “When the sun aligns with the light at the galactic centre, it’s gonna heat up. That’ll cause solar flares and a shift in the sun’s magnetic field which will result in a polar shift on Earth. So basically, we’re talking earthquakes, floods and the heating up of the planet and weird weather.”

“So are we doomed?” Nicky said.

“The Aztecs sacrificed twenty thousand people a year hoping that the gods would protect them and prevent the fall of their civilisation. They once killed something like eighty-thousand people in a four-day ritual dedicated to a temple pyramid.” Steve cringed every time he visited the Zócalo, Mexico City’s central square, where piles of human skulls once lay.

“That wasn’t very effective, then.” Tom said unable to restrain a chuckle.

“That’s the thing! None of these civilisations could save themselves from what they saw was written in the stars. Nothing they did worked.”



“So we are doomed!” Nicky said.

***[C]harged particles emitted by the Sun in the way of solar flares, CME's and coronal holes are the cause of extreme earth changes such as earthquakes, volcanoes, hurricanes, and tornadoes...the very same magnetic flux which affects the Earth, will also affect humans...the magnetic field which surrounds the Earth is similar to the magnetic field which surrounds every living thing...the magnetic influence produced by the Sun...will usher in what is described by our ancient ancestors as 'the transition' bringing us to a new state-of-being.***

-Mitch Battros,  
Earthchanges Media

“Not necessarily,” said Shivani. “You

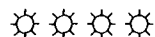
see, each galactic cycle is also said to represent a new stage of human evolution. The increased galactic and solar energy is supposed to be like a cleansing process that will help people evolve into what most traditions refer to as some kind of golden era. As the Earth goes through its shifts, it's supposed to be a time of awakening. We

don't really know what will be destroyed and what will be saved in the transition.”

“2012, man, I'll be...sixty-two. That's too young to die!” Lee spoke dramatically with his arms—only half-joking.

“So, let's say this does actually happen—more earthquakes, volcanoes exploding, the temperature on Earth rising, the weather going crazy. We have all the signs, we know it's coming, what then? What do we do?” Heidi asked.

“That's what we're trying to find out.” Shivani said.



The serendipitous meeting of Lee, Nicky, Tom and Heidi, and Laura and Steve in India that year was not only the beginning of a life-long friendship, but also the birth of a conversation about how to save the world that would last for decades and also shape the destinies of the next generation. In fact, if Lee had not gone to India that winter, his niece Evie's life would have been utterly and

completely different. Lee's friends would eventually become a kind of human map that would take her from one place to the next—Mexico, Israel, England, Holland, India, South Africa. Evie Rose's journey became inexorably interwoven with theirs. The stories of each generation are always interwoven.

Perhaps it was a sign of the times that Lee and his new friends had spent their stay in India thinking and talking about human emancipation. Shortly after they left the ashram, the world seemed to be demanding it. Student demonstrations took place in Germany, Italy, Argentina, and Belgium—and escalated into general strikes. In the United States, protestors demanded an end to the Vietnam War. In Paris, heated battles with police erupted in the Latin Quarter. In Mexico, the army massacred hundreds of people at a peaceful demonstration and hauled the bodies away in garbage trucks. Poles and Yugoslavs cried out for freedom of speech; and in Prague, they rallied for democratic reforms. Citizens everywhere moved and marched for human liberation because that was the way they thought they might be freed. But the Prague Spring became a long and bitter winter. The Soviet army occupied Czechoslovakia safeguarding their sphere of influence and their brand of Communist totalitarianism. Across the ocean, American civil rights hero Martin Luther King Jr. was gunned down on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis after reassuring the crowd that they would all eventually get to the Promised Land. Two months later progressive peace-promoting Senator Robert Kennedy, who was expected to be the next President, was also assassinated.

Many revolutionaries wondered whether oppression could ever be defeated through peaceful means. When John Lennon saw what was happening in Paris, he wrote the song *Revolution* which criticised the use of violence as a means to bring about social change. The momentum of every uprising in the world would slow down but never come to rest—like a historical pendulum set in motion back and forth forever in a rhythmic action and reaction that everyone was too animated to stop. Sometimes it helped to recall that every “advanced” civilisation that ever existed—from Ancient Egypt to the Maya and the Holy Roman Empire—had fallen. Why would the current one be any different?

**Love at First Sight** (*Lee meets Vita, Montreal 1969*)

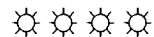
*♪ Now the years are rolling by me,  
they are rockin even me  
I am older than I once was,  
and younger than I'll be,  
that's not unusual  
No it isn't strange,  
after changes upon changes,  
we are more or less the same*

-Simon & Garfunkel *The Boxer* 🎵

On the night Evie was born, her seventeen year old aunt, Vita, her mother's sister, was at the *Queen Elizabeth Hotel* in Montreal where John Lennon and Yoko Ono were having a bed-in for world peace. She was trying to convince a security guard to let her and a friend in to the famous couple's suite. Lee, who had been invited by Tom and Heidi to hang out there at John's request, was just leaving when he noticed her trying to sweet talk the burly bouncer who refused to be swayed.

“It was love at first sight,” he would later tell Evie when she still believed in such things. “There was something about her. She was wearing a camera around her neck and daisies in her hair. It was irresistible!”

Quite impulsively, Lee had invited Vita to meet him the next day promising to try to get her in. But the following evening, she showed up late in a panic. On her way out to meet him, they had received a call from her brother-in-law, Sol. Her sister, Nava, was in labour and they were going to the hospital. Vita, having no other way to reach Lee, had decided to go to the hotel and then meet everyone at the hospital later on. So, Lee and Vita hung out with John Lennon, Yoko Ono and their entourage on the very night they recorded *Give Peace a Chance*. When it was over, Lee splurged for a cab and took Vita to the Jewish General Hospital just in time for Evie's birth. Her arrival signalled a new beginning for both of them—the start of their life together. Vita was seventeen and Lee was twenty and that was their first date.



About five days after Evie was born, she was shaking hands with John Lennon—or rather, she was clutching his pointer finger with her little fist. Tom invited Nava and Sol to the hotel to meet John and Yoko. That night Evie also met Adam, Tom and Heidi's four-month-old son. Nava and Heidi sat side-by-side breastfeeding their babies while John played *Give Peace a Chance* just for them as a gesture to the world he hoped would come. Although Evie would not see Adam again for eleven years, that meeting would set a life-long precedent. Adam would always be in her life. And so would John Lennon's wish for peace.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **CONTEXT: OUR LONELY PLANET (2003-2008)**

#### **REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING (&LEARNING) SOCIAL CHANGE & WELL-BEING**

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*In this section, I set the context of my research within the current dynamics of contemporary crises and social change by reflecting on some of my teaching experience and course material.*

#### **End Of Days, Act Now**

In mainstream news, there has been talk about end times. If you check *Google News*, you can find about one hundred and twenty hits. A *Youtube* search draws over eleven hundred.<sup>10</sup> In July 2006, for example, CNN star, Paula Zahn interviewed authors Joel Rosenberg and Jerry Jenkins about the end of days. Zahn announced: "From books to blogs to back pews, the buzz is all about the end times!" Jenkins tells her that people are becoming more interested in the subject because "they are scared to death about the future".<sup>11</sup> The authors also appear on *Fox News* and *ABC*. Captions at the bottom of the screen read: "Current events spurring big interest in so-called end times" or "Is it the end?" or "Some people believe Mideast conflict signals the end of the world" and "Apocalypse Now: Is the End Near?"<sup>12</sup> The signs of the end times were reviewed: the world falling into chaos, natural disasters like earthquakes, volcanoes, and floods; conflict, and pestilence. The internet is rife with doomsayer discourse that cover the gamut of political and cultural representation from American Christian conservatives, to prophecy scholars, Eastern mystical

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<sup>10</sup> This varies, of course. These searches were done on March 15, 2008. I check *Google News* regularly and find a similar amount on a daily basis for the last few months.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-nFWkQTOEA>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-nFWkQTOEA>;  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dj9J1YsFR8A&mode=related&search=>

teachings, to the Koran's predictions.<sup>13</sup> Anti-war activists and other "liberals" have expressed concern about an imminent attack on Iran. Environmentalists warn that we must act soon before it's too late. *The New York Times* recently published an article about how survivalism—preparing for disaster due to war, terrorism, an economic crash, environmental emergencies, oil and food shortages—is a growing movement amongst people from all across the political spectrum (Williams 2008).

Recent dystopian films and television series like *Children of Men*, *Doomsday*, *Resident Evil: Extinction*, *I am Legend*, the BBC docudrama, *End Day* and *The History Channel's* documentary, *Decoding the Past-Doomsday 2012* from *Unexplained Mysteries* illustrate that end time discourses are a sign of the times (as well as an unrelenting preoccupation in industrial societies).<sup>14</sup> The TV show's write-up says:

There are prophecies and oracles from around the world that all seem to point to December 21, 2012 as doomsday. The ancient Mayan Calendar, the medieval predictions of Merlin, the Book of Revelation and the Chinese oracle of the I Ching all point to this specific date as the end of civilization. A new technology called "The Web-Bot Project" makes massive scans of the internet as a means of forecasting the future...and has turned up the same

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<sup>13</sup> [www.harunyahya.com](http://www.harunyahya.com); <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSMt3aKGgmw>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.history.com/shows.do?episodeld=273664&action=detail>

dreaded date: 2012. Skeptics point to a long history of "Failed Doomsdays", but many oracles of doom throughout history have a disturbingly accurate track record. As the year 2012 ticks ever closer we'll speculate if there are any reasons to believe these doomsayers.

In an interview on the programme, author Richard Smoley asks: "Is the world going to end or will there be or will there remain a major shift in the cycles of history? That remains an open question."<sup>15</sup>

Even some of my junior college students are wondering.

"You heard about 2012, Miss?"<sup>16</sup> An eighteen-year-old in my *Green Living* class asked when we were talking about Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth*. "Is it true? Do you think it's the end of the world?"

Although crises and end-of-day warnings have been prevalent in other historical periods, what makes this one different? Never before has the planet been threatened by the prospect of global war at a time when more states have nuclear and biological weapons than ever before. Nor has human history ever seen the destruction of ecosystems and biodiversity to this degree. The planet has faced cataclysmic changes and shifts to new ages before (take the dinosaurs, for example), but not during the last few thousand years.

When it comes to the state of the natural world, some have gone so far as to call this period "the eleventh hour". The 2007 environmental documentary of

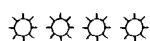
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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1ci1n\\_doomsday-2012-preview](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/x1ci1n_doomsday-2012-preview)

<sup>16</sup> Whatever my objections, they always call me "Miss", as if I were a teenaged waitress at a roadside diner!

the same name, narrated by actor Leonardo DiCaprio of *Titanic* fame, warned that our collective ship is sinking and we're all going down for the ride. The film features a number of the world's most prominent thinkers and activists who discuss the challenge currently faced by all life systems upon the planet. The future of humanity is in danger, it claims, and time is running out. If we don't act soon, it might be too late to save ourselves and the planet from destruction with global warming, the depletion of ocean habitats, mass species extinction and deforestation.

Al Gore's academy award-winning documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth*, transformed this fear into common public discourse and sentiment. 2007 was a pivotal moment in terms of shifting perceptions of life on Planet Earth. Today, the environment is a hot topic for popular discussion and debate and no longer marginalised by the mainstream. In fact, being green is hipper than ever. It's even been called "the new black" (Blanchard): Everyone is going green from oil companies to fashionistas (Connolly and Prothero). Environmental organisations and governments alike have followed Gore's lead by encouraging individual actions to affect climate change. Due to the failure of the state and society's institutions to deal with current crises (Klein 2007), personal responsibility is increasingly seen as the best way to change the world. You better get your act together and stop using incandescent light bulbs, insulate your water heater, buy organic food, fly less, make sure your car's tuned up...or else we're doomed.<sup>17</sup>



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<sup>17</sup> <http://www.climatecrisis.net/takeaction/whatyoucando/index.html>



***The focus on global warming distracts from the main issue, which is a lack of respect for the planet's life systems.***

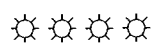
—Ted Robert Bahr

But *An Inconvenient Truth* has been criticised for not looking at the root cause of the environmental crisis (Bahr, Marshall). Gore didn't critique the economic system or the culture behind it. Although everyone is talking green, the focus has been on global warming, CO<sup>2</sup> emissions, and how to prevent climate change. Little attention has been paid in the media to other problems like deforestation, ocean dead zones, desertification, loss of biodiversity etc. and how these might also be contributing—or what these mean for the health of life on the planet.

Some critics warn that the change in climate to watch out for is the one of fear that all the media-hype has evoked. Like the post-9/11 apprehension about terrorism, some argue that it gives a pretext for politicians to infringe on individual freedoms as they demand greater control and surveillance. Prime Minister Gordon Brown, for example, has publicly called for a "new world order" to combat the threat of climate change and global warming. The UN recommended a global tax to deter people from driving. Governments all over the world are talking about taxing drivers to encourage them to conserve fuel. Like world trade agreements, this kind of global law would override national or local decision-making. Proposals for surveillance to make sure people are going green are also abound—from tracking people's garbage cans, to requiring that all vehicles have satellite systems, to checking people's homes to make sure they've made certain green renovations (Bahr, Kincaid, Marshall, Watson).

The climate change discussion has also been presented in a polarised way in mainstream discourse<sup>18</sup>: Between those who deny that global warming is man-made and those who are sure it is. But critics have shown that the actual situation is not so black and white. Some claim that the sun is actually heating up and is warming all the planets in the solar system (Ravilious, Than, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute). Others point out that we are moving into an ice age. Many scientists argue that we need to look at more than carbon. The decimation of the world's forests and the proliferation of volcanic activity (see Redfern), for example, have major effects on the quality of the air we breathe. They point out that we fail to consider all the consequences of oxygen depletion and "the ratio of trees versus algae in bearing the load of carbon dioxide conversion into oxygen. Were there enough trees in the equation, climate change would not be occurring other than that which would be normal for the earth's and oceans' cycles during this Era" (Ten Billion Acres).

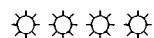
To assuage fears about climate change, some proposals have been made regarding geo-engineering which is a growing industry, funded by government. It seeks to manipulate nature on a massive scale through interventions like dumping loads of iron in the oceans to produce plankton to absorb the CO<sup>2</sup>; sending out fleets of giant balloons and giant orbiting mirrors to form a planetary sunscreen; shooting sulphate into the sky with giant guns (Bahr, Romm). Didn't messing with nature get us in trouble in the first place?



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<sup>18</sup> For example, see CBC newsreport at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xf4NKMJvKUM>; and Newsweek's article "Global Warming is A Hoax" from Aug. 13, 2007

After September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, *The Guerrilla News Network* made a video called *S-11 Redux: (Channel) Surfing the Apocalypse* “culled from over 20 hours of television footage recorded over a one month period and across 13 networks”. The sound bites from just after the incident demonstrate the way the media has constructed a cultural climate suitable for the war agenda of the US government. Through polarised representations of “us” and “them”, they depict Americans as “good” in their fight for freedom and democracy in opposition to their “evil” Islamic fundamentalist enemies. Included in this footage, however, were interesting discourses about what the crisis had to teach people, particularly Americans, about their own behaviour and their perception of others. Interestingly, it turned to the need for love as the key to global salvation. For example, Steve Allen, in a clip from a post-911 speech says: “Almost all religions preach that love is the supreme virtue; and a few spiritual teachers perceiving that we are all gifted at loving what pleases us, teach that the highest, most edifying forms, which might ultimately save the world, involve our regard for those it is difficult to love, some of whom are our enemies.” Not long afterward, however, this kind of introspection was nowhere to be seen in the mainstream. Instead, news reports continued to play on the fear of terrorists.



Crises—whether terrorist attacks or environmental devastation—provide opportunities to question ourselves and the way we do things. But the mainstream discourses demonstrate the way crises are often used as tools of manipulation. Journalist Naomi Klein, for example, in her latest book *The Shock*

*Doctrine*, shows how governments have used crises to push forth policies that support corporate rather than public interests. She quotes economist Milton Friedman, whose market capitalism has shaped global economic policy since the late 1970s: “Only a crisis actual or perceived produces real change”. Klein gives current examples of what she calls “disaster capitalism”:

At the most chaotic juncture in Iraq’s civil war, a new law is unveiled that would allow Shell and BP to claim the country’s vast oil reserves.... Immediately following September 11, the Bush Administration quietly out-sources the running of the “War on Terror” to Halliburton and Blackwater.... After a tsunami wipes out the coasts of Southeast Asia, the pristine beaches are auctioned off to tourist resorts.... New Orleans’s residents, scattered from Hurricane Katrina, discover that their public housing, hospitals and schools will never be reopened.... These events are examples of “the shock doctrine”: using the public’s disorientation following massive collective shocks—wars, terrorist attacks, or natural disasters—to achieve control by imposing economic shock therapy.<sup>19</sup>

It appears that crisis can go either way. If we want it to be an opening to something new, we need to pay attention. But, what exactly might we look out

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.naomiklein.org/shock-doctrine/the-book>

for? Some contemporary crises might offer some suggestions about how to deal with the shocks, traumas, pains and dislocations of life in general. Everyday people and new social movements are questioning the culture that contributed to these major crises of social and global conflict and ecological destruction.

### **Be the Change-New Forms of Politics**

New forms of political activism encourage social change both through individual action and self-development. Lance Bennett has pointed out that:

The contemporary experiences of risk and dislocation [have been] negotiated by individuals largely through independent identity management strategies...

[C]itizens participate by other means through 'self actualizing' or 'self reflexive' involvement in personally meaningful causes guided by their own lifestyles and shifting social networks (3).

Since the nineties, with the decline of the state and the rise of the corporation as the locus of political and economic power, new kinds of political action have emerged. Traditional forms of politics have been delegitimised. Voting, government, and political parties are increasingly seen as ineffective in addressing social and environmental ills. The fall of communism as well as the crises brought on by neo-liberal trade policies have meant that the grand ideologies of Marxism or liberalism around which citizens mobilised in the past are no longer considered viable solutions to society's problems (Bennett, Day,

Holloway, Webster). Instead of influencing state power either through reform or revolution, a set of diverse and disparate struggles have emerged (Day, Holloway).

Activist groups operate increasingly through affinity and contingency. That is, they form around specific issues rather than big ideas. They organise in “non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, non-coercive relationships based on mutual aid and shared ethical commitments” (Day 9). *The World Social Forum*, set up in response to the corporate led *World Economic Forum* in Davos, Switzerland, epitomises this trend. Every year, individuals, groups and organisations gather to work toward a global vision that promotes democracy, economic justice, environmental protection, and human rights. They organise both locally and in world-wide networks. They encourage people to *think globally and act locally* to deal with the harmful effects of global economic policies (Lipschutz 30, Hawken 1-8).

This new political awareness connects the local and personal to the global. In focusing more on individual everyday actions, lifestyle changes are believed to have political consequences. These are not just related to being more environmentally sensitive. Interestingly, they also address personal care of the body, mind and spirit and include activities such as ethical and healthy consumerism, recycling, vegetarianism, eco-travel, spending more time with loved ones, or watching less TV. The detrimental practices of dominant culture are challenged not by taking power, but by investigating bigger questions of health and the search for healthy alternatives to mainstream practices. Strategies

to become healthier also take on what it means to be human and encourage self-development. This broad notion of health encompasses the physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and environmental aspects of life and has become the basis for a new political strategy as well as a new global movement.

Information that was difficult to find before the advent of the internet is readily available posing a significant challenge to conventional health authorities. Activists are confronting the way public health has been controlled by giant multinational pharmaceutical and food companies, the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and the World Health Organisation (WHO) (Pollan, Simon, Trudeau). They are reconceptualising ideas about health and looking for non-conventional ways of eating and using plants as medicine. *The Movement for Health Freedom*, for example, takes on the *International Codex* that seeks to criminalise alternative health practices and remedies. It also makes evident that freedom is a health issue. Health is required for political, personal and social emancipation. Michael Moore's 2007 documentary film *Sicko* also makes this claim. It depicts the challenges that everyday Americans face vis-à-vis a health care system structured for corporate profit. In a poignant interview with Tony Benn, the radical British Labour politician reminds viewers that "[a]n educated, healthy, and confident nation is harder to govern".<sup>20</sup>

In her book *Appetite for Profit: How the Food Industry Undermines our Health and How to Fight Back*, Michele Simon looks at the way growing public health crises of obesity and diet-related illnesses are getting people to work toward taking back their food supply and challenge destructive agricultural

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<sup>20</sup> Tony Benn, excerpt from *Sicko* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3HyK5rB9jY>

practices. Sustainable.org, for example, is part of a larger political movement that encourages people to take responsibility for their health as a form of activism. Sustainable agriculture and food politics activist, Anna Lappé, points out how food is an important political issue: "Every time you buy food, you're voting for the world you want. When you choose corporate, processed foods, you're paying for a food system gone awry, including the massive environmental cleanup of runoff from industrial farms".<sup>21</sup> Other theorists like Doel and Segrott, Tulloch and Lupton point to the importance of nutrition as a political issue.

Projects like *The Better World Handbook*, *We are What We Do*, *Worldchanging*, Gaia.com, and *The Cultural Creatives* suggest that universal human liberation can arise from individual actions. Mahatma Gandhi's famous teaching: *You must be the change you wish to see in the world* represents a political strategy that is either expressed explicitly (the quotation is abundant on many of their websites and publications) or tacitly implied.

In their book, *The Cultural Creatives: How 50 Million People Are Changing the World*, Paul Ray and Sherry Anderson argue that a new demographic exists that represents about a quarter of the population of Western countries. This group "care[s] deeply about ecology and saving the planet, about relationships, peace, social justice, and about self actualization, spirituality and self-expression."

Environmentalist Paul Hawken researched organisations world-wide dedicated to restoring the environment and fostering social justice.

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<sup>21</sup> [http://www.spiritualityhealth.com/newsh/items/blank/item\\_10285.html](http://www.spiritualityhealth.com/newsh/items/blank/item_10285.html)



From billion-dollar nonprofits to single-person dot causes, these groups collectively comprise the largest movement on earth, a movement that has no name, leader, or location, and that has gone largely ignored by politicians and the media. Like nature itself, it is organizing from the bottom up, in every city, town, and culture and is emerging to be an extraordinary and creative expression of people's needs worldwide.<sup>22</sup>

*Cultural Creatives* aim to foster a culture that “would encourage each person to find meaning and fulfillment by pursuing their true passions, fostering loving relationships, and living authentic, reflective lives rather than by seeking status and material possessions”.

*The Better World Handbook* suggests that one of the seven foundations for building a better world is “a culture of simplicity” that “would encourage each person to find meaning and fulfillment by pursuing their true passions, fostering loving relationships, and living authentic, reflective lives rather than by seeking status and material possessions” (see Jones et al).

In their list of “simple, everyday actions you can do to help change the world (and have fun while you're doing it)”, the UK-based movement (that has spread to Canada and the US) *We Are What We Do* states: “It could be doing something for the community like shopping locally, something for the

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.blessedunrest.com/>

environment like avoiding plastic bags, or something for you, like learning to paint, sing or speak Spanish...”

The social networking site, Gaia.com comprises a group of companies - Gaiam, Inc., Zaadz, Inc., Revolution, LLC, LIME Media and Conscious Enlightenment, Inc. that merged in the fall of 2007 to launch a new *Lifestyles of Health and Sustainability* (LOHAS) network (Cashmore). They focus on themes like green living, spirituality, positive change, and healthy foods and currently boast over one hundred and seventy-five thousand members. They act as a clearing house of information including books, blogs, podcasts, newsletters, and events for people who want to change the world. Their mandate says:

We're a little different than most social networks.

We're here for a purpose—to inspire and empower you to be the change you want to see in the world.

We're a community of individuals committed to supporting each other in being our highest selves. We aspire to live at our greatest potential, seeing the best in others and encouraging them to do the same.

We're here to discover our purpose and to contribute our gifts to the planet. We're here to live authentically.

In short, we're here to change the world.

Quests for community and connection, for fulfillment and meaning draw on new communication strategies and also reflect a broader paradigm shift seen in many sub- and countercultural expressions (Goffman and Joy, Heath and Potter,

Kahn and Kellner). Gaia theory—the idea that all living things are connected—permeates this discourse. Globaljusticemovement.org, for example, reflects this change of perspective. It aims to bring about “a society where spiritual values and respect for all creation transcend material values”. They use the acronym GRACE to map their project for social change: Global Justice, Respect The Earth, Abundance Is Possible, Creative Work For All, Economic Democracy. Hawken’s work shows how this trend reflects a resuscitation of the utopian project of politics and its dream that another—healthier, kinder, more ethical and “humane” world—is possible. It does so without any overarching theories or ideologies but with a commitment to searching for diverse ways to bring about a society that is inclusive and respectful not only of all people, but of all life. This new understanding of utopia is no longer “a social project with claims to transforming the world”, but more of “a new intensity of life experience and a broader horizon for the individual” which “endows the individual with a more significant and wider horizon” (Epstein 1). But, unlike the extreme individualism encouraged by mainstream political and economic trends which shifts responsibility from the state to the individual for addressing social ills, it does so by situating the individual within a larger community, and an overarching network of nature.

### **The Pathological Pursuit of Power**

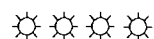
In his book, *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power* (which was made into the most successful documentary film in Canadian

history), Joel Bakan illustrates how corporate domination has led to unhealthy practices. As the most powerful institution of our time, the corporation is considered a person by law with the same rights and protections of any individual in society. Even though they dominate public life, they are not held accountable in the same way that governments are for violations of human rights and social justice. They are not bound to any constitution to protect the rights of citizens. Their main interest is for the short term profit of their stockholders rather than the benefit of society.

If the corporation is a legal person, Bakan asks: What kind of person is it? He uses a standard psychiatric diagnostic tool to point out that it has a psychopathic personality. It has become powerful through behaviour that is anti-social, self-interested, inherently amoral, callous and deceitful. It breaches social and legal standards to get its way. It does not suffer from guilt, yet it can mimic the human qualities of empathy, caring and altruism. He points out that case studies of corporate activity clearly demonstrate psychopathic behaviour: harm to workers, human health, animals and the biosphere.

Because of its power and influence over everyday life, the corporation is also the biggest disseminator of culture. All the major cultural industries including television, film, music, radio, publishing, and newspapers, are controlled by a small handful of giant multinational companies (McChesney 1-4; Lee, Leis, Kline, and Jhally). We are immersed in media messages—in the streets, on billboards, on t-shirts, on TV, in songs. It shapes the way we understand reality and identity—our selves and others (Kellner, Parenti). The ideas and values

generated tend to support the status quo—since corporations benefit from the current structure of the overarching economic, social and political system. Rarely, if ever, are we exposed to radical ideas or the diversity of voices that comprise everyday social life. The effects of the media on the audience have been an ongoing discussion and debate in cultural studies literature. Many theorists agree that the way the audience understands media messages is negotiated and never straightforward (Fiske, Gauntlett, Hall, Hebdige). Nevertheless, critics point to the way that larger social pathologies are passed down through all of society's institutions and social relations. Despite the fact that people are always constructing culture, they tend to adopt certain dominant social narratives (Bateson, Weber and Mitchell 1995 9-10). Do everyday people in such as society also seek to empower themselves in pathological ways?



Before going on a shooting spree at *Dawson College* in Montreal, a young man uploaded photos of himself brandishing a semi-automatic Beretta rifle (CBC News) on the Goth website, [vampirefreaks.com](http://vampirefreaks.com). A heated debate broke out in the media and on the site as to what would make someone do what he did. Everyone was looking for something to blame: Many blamed Goth culture and the influence of cult websites. The kids on the site for the most part resented the fact that people were pointing their fingers at their subculture. Some said that they turned to it to deal with the pain of living in such a messed up society. One of the postings during that time said this:

There's a term for this kind of reaction to tragedy, moral panic. It's truly sad that people out there seek to exploit a tragedy such as this by pointing their fingers at a minority and whether that minority is Goths, or Mods, or witches, or communists, or gays, or people who play roleplaying games, all of these groups (among many others) have served as a convenient scapegoat for those who would rather point fingers during a time of tragedy than seek to truly understand its root causes.

Finding the causes of social ills—or even of our personal ones—is complex. We live in a culture that often focuses on treating the symptoms by providing quick fixes, magic pills, temporary distractions and comforts. Conventional medical models, for example, offer pharmaceutical remedies to treat symptoms or body parts. Rather than taking a holistic view that respects the complexity of both the individual and her interaction with the world, doctors often prescribe remedies that mask discomforts and pain without getting to their myriad causes. They often overlook the need to address the bigger picture of pathology and a person's relationship to his social and natural environment. The whole person and the connection between the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of life are rarely considered (Deol and Segrott, Greenslit, Trudeau).

In 1999, two Columbine, Ohio high school kids also shot their classmates and themselves. After the incident, the Goth music they listened to was also

identified as having instigated their actions. In Michael Moore's film, *Bowling for Columbine*, the director asks Goth superstar Marilyn Manson if he thought that his songs might have been a motivation. He replied:

nobody said 'well maybe the President had an influence on this violent behavior' [he bombed Kosovo the same day as the shooting] Because that's not the way the media wants to take it and spin it, and turn it into fear, because then you're watching television, you're watching the news, you're being pumped full of fear, there's floods, there's AIDS, there's murder, cut to commercial, buy the Acura, buy the Colgate, if you have bad breath they're not going to talk to you, if you have pimples, the girl's not going to fuck you, and it's just this campaign of fear, and consumption, and that's what I think it's all based on, the whole idea of keep everyone afraid, and they'll consume.

How do people negotiate their identities in a culture where pathology is encouraged? What can we do to deal with the fears and desires it generates? In face of insecurity, we often seek empowerment. But, as in the case of the dominant institution of the day, the pursuit of power can often be pathological. Wielding a gun at your peers and yourself is an extreme example of how someone might deal with their sense of powerlessness, the causes of which I do not mean to oversimplify. I *do* want to point to the need to question the ways we

seek power and deal with our need for empowerment. What do we perceive as being empowering and why? In what ways do we desire what we think will make us powerful? And how do we fear not getting what we want? Are we aware of our own pursuits of power—which, very often, are pathological? How do we as individuals and as agents of transformation seek to empower ourselves, claim power or become powerful? How can we discern between an empowerment based on human growth and one that is rooted in violence, domination, oppression or exploitation?

### The Lonely Planet

*It is usually assumed that the traveller who prefers lonely places, the desert traveller so to say, is one who wishes to escape from his world and his fellows.*

-Freya Stark

The title of one of the world's most popular travel guides, *The Lonely Planet*, sometimes seems anachronistic. In an article called *Lonely No More*, Moshe Gilad reports that Tony and Maureen Wheeler, the Australian hippies who wrote the first guidebook in the 1970s, have decided to sell. Although they changed travel culture by encouraging people to go to exotic locations and seek unbeaten paths, the planet isn't what it used to be.

"It's not just that we're aging," Tony Wheeler said, "The field is changing and my feeling is that many aspects of the vagabond spirit have vanished"... "During my last visit to China, I stood in the center of one of the major cities and wondered if I was in Eastern Asia or Western Europe. That's also what I thought in Istanbul. The world has become less exotic and the distances between world centers and the periphery have nearly been erased."



Maybe there's no space left to be lonely. Even the most remote locale has been explored. Land and space everywhere have been exploited for profit. You can find McDonald's and Levi's shops all over India, which had been closed off to foreign imports and companies until the early nineties. You could have a coffee at Starbucks on a small island in the Thai Sea. Is there no space untouched by Western development? To borrow the words of songwriter, Joni Mitchell: Will every paradise eventually be paved to put up a parking lot? How many places are left where we can find the natural world untouched by human corruption? Klein wonders where we might go to escape the corporate takeover of public life:

[Y]ou could ask to go soaring off the side of a mountain on a snowboard, feeling as if, for one moment, you are riding the clouds instead of the snow. You could scour Southeast Asia, like the world-weary twenty-somethings in Alex Garland's novel *The Beach*, looking for the one corner of the globe uncharted by *The Lonely Planet* to start your own private utopia. You could, for that matter, join a New Age cult and dream of alien abduction. From the occult to raves to riots to extreme sports, it seems that the eternal urge for escape has never enjoyed such niche marketing... [But] as privatization slithers into every crevice of public life, even these intervals of freedom and back alleys of unsponsored space are

slipping away... What haunts me is not exactly the absence of literal space so much as a deep craving for metaphorical space: release, escape, some kind of open-ended freedom (2000 64).

Klein is also concerned about the loss of space that happens inside a person—the colonisation of their mental space (2000 66). If this is the case, then, is there a place within the individual that existed before this usurpation—some kind of “nature” within? What have we been trying to escape from or to both within and outside ourselves?

On one of the most tourist-beaten streets in Bangkok, and, arguably, in South East Asia, Garland’s character, Keaty says to the protagonist: “You know Richard, one of these days I’m going to find one of those *Lonely Planet* writers and I’m going to ask him, what’s so fucking lonely about the Khao San Road” (194)? Once a new destination gets into *The Lonely Planet*, they complain that “the hordes are bound to follow”...and...“once that happens it’s countdown to doomsday” (139). Garland’s characters try in vain to keep secret what might be Thailand’s last Eden—an isolated, unexploited paradisiacal beach. But their attempt to salvage it ultimately fails. The utopian dreams they have for the small community they establish there deteriorate into some kind of *Lord-of-the-Flies* dystopian nightmare that erupts in violence and mayhem. Even when they find their earthly paradise, they cannot escape themselves. Wherever they go, there they are.

At the end of the day, you can travel the world over but never find happiness or even yourself—even when it's staring at you in the mirror everyday. If Keaty and Richard and their friends from Garland's *Beach* had known this, they might have agreed with one-hit wonder Charlene when she sang: "I've been to paradise, but I've never been to me." How the hell do you get there, anyway?

### **False Edens & Magic Pills**

*Adbuster's* magazine founder Kalle Lasn puts a new spin on the environmental movement and the problem of pollution. Like Klein, he worries about the colonisation of the mind. He urges people to reclaim their mental environment from corporate control. In their internet article on toxic culture, he and psychology professor Richard Grandpre list reports that "track[ed] the rise of addictions, anxieties and mood disorders as they have grown into what some public health officials now describe as an 'epidemic' of despair (1)." They also look at the way anti-depressant drugs have been widely prescribed to deal with society's collective mental illness (1). On the shelves in the *Cultural Studies* section of bookstores, for example, cultural critics refer to all manner of health problems like the rise of environmental illnesses (Griffin, Ryley), a detrimental food culture, poor eating practices (Schlosser, Spurdock, Simon), rampant chronic physical pain (Morris 1997), mass addictive behaviour (Kilbourne), a moral crisis of dishonesty and lack of personal integrity in order to "succeed" in a competitive market system (Callahan).

Critics not only point to emerging personal illnesses in face of social and

cultural ones, they also question how they are treated (Doel and Segrott, Greenslit). Moynihan and Cassels, The Media Education Foundation, health freedom activist Mike Adams, and DeGrandpre, for example, take to task the propaganda machine of the pharmaceutical industry and their efforts to market disease and push drugs. They show how illness has been used, manipulated, and created, for capital gain. Moynihan and Cassels in their book, *Selling Sickness: how the world's biggest pharmaceutical companies are turning us all into patients*, demonstrate that making people believe that they are sick is big business. They show how mild problems have suddenly become diseases or disorders.

Advertising glamorises and normalises the use of prescription medication. It also encourages quick fixes for health problems rather than prevention. In his book, *Ritalin Nation: Rapid-Fire Culture and the Transformation of Human Consciousness*, DeGrandpre argues that using drugs to heal social and psychological problems is dangerous. These critics show how we have been conditioned to understand and relate to disease and healing. They illustrate the need to reclaim and reconceptualise our ideas and approaches to health and well-being; and to question the effects of relying on a for-profit industry to determine our health practices. They get us to look to the root causes of toxicity in our culture and to ask ourselves how we might detoxify.

## Have You Been to You Yet?

*♪ Hey, you know what  
paradise is? It's a lie, a fantasy  
we create about people and  
places as we'd like them to be.*

—Charlene ♪

In the eighties, the Britpop band *Wham!* made the *Choose Life* t-shirt famous. They were part of a range of protest t-shirts by designer

Katherine Hamnett, that included slogans like *Worldwide Nuclear Ban Now*, *Preserve The Rainforests*, *Save The World*, *Save The Whales*, and *Education not Missiles*.<sup>23</sup> Today, the political fashion statement has been downgraded to *Shoes Life*.<sup>24</sup> It's a *Sex and the City* "cultural hangover".<sup>25</sup> The TV show that depicts the lives of single women in their thirties living in New York seems to promote shopping as a prerequisite for female emancipation. Buying a pair of designer shoes (and presumably having sex and partying like Hugh Hefner) is represented as the new women's lib (Arthurs). When Charlene sang about her jet set lifestyle and regretted that she'd been to paradise, but never to herself, maybe it was a sign of the times? Maybe sometimes what appears to be paradise is just a distraction? It's easy to be seduced by appearances (and really great shoes).

Corporations spend billions of dollars on public relations and advertising to manipulate political debate, public opinion and behaviour (Century of the Self, Chomsky in Achbar, Jensen, Klein, Kilbourne). The management of the public mind affects all matters related to personal and public health. Simon and Pollan, for example, describe the tactics used to undermine nutrition policy. "Instead of making their products healthier, food giants make them 'seem' that way—with

<sup>23</sup> <http://80sactual.blogspot.com/2005/05/choose-life.html>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.queenofsuburbia.com/>

<sup>25</sup> Richmond points out how today's liberated women are too busy buying shoes and having sex to cook.

deceptive claims, self-congratulatory banners and junk science” (Simon 1 2007). Public relations campaigns “nutriwash” unhealthy foods to make them seem healthy. *Krispy Kream* make their donuts *appear* nutritious by making them whole wheat. *McDonald’s Go Active* campaign helps you design a fitness plan for a healthier more active lifestyle (presumably after you’ve scoffed down a *Big Mac* and fries).

At the same time, some of the world’s greatest polluters are selling themselves as green. “Greenwashing” has become a preferred advertising strategy of oil and car companies. British Petroleum, for example, is now *Beyond Petroleum*. Corporately controlled grassroots front groups pretend to advocate for the environment. And public relations companies try to promote the ecological benefits of toxic sludge for use in agriculture and present skewed scientific studies on the effects of industrial pollution (Beder, Stauber and Rampton).

These activities might seem harmless—as some of my students have commented, even after I (and numerous other scholars in articles, books and media education videos) have explained why they’re not. They say things like: “Why do you guys have to trash McDonald’s? They’re just trying to be healthier.” Or: “It’s only a donut.”

“Yes,” I tell them, in an attempt to teach them how to analyse the donut as a text and to look for its connotative meaning beyond the obvious one (Barthes), “but what’s *behind* the donut? How can we understand it as a metaphor for the culture we live in?”

We’re getting a whole lot of sugar coating with little nutritional value.

The pervasive images that young people emulate (in part because they are the only images available) are those where beauty is only skin deep and *cool* is the pinnacle of human evolution. And *cool* is not defined by kindness, generosity or wisdom. Even brands in themselves can act as role models. For example, Paris Hilton, who is famous because she is rich, is a huge business empire encompassing nightclubs, clothing, an energy drink, perfume, shoes, jewellery, make-up, cologne, a chain of hotels, and an autobiography. On top of that she charges two-hundred thousand dollars for a twenty minute appearance at parties (Harris). Many of today's heroes from TV to music videos are just really good consumers. Beyond the shiny surfaces and hollow promises of consumer culture, there is little substance.

***Marcuse and his Frankfurt School compatriots were among the first to recognize the power of capitalism to create a desiring system that manipulated people into capitulating their most basic desires to those dictated by the culture industry and the underlying capitalist structure.***  
-Van Heertum

Through sophisticated psychological strategies, advertising campaigns play with human fears and desires. They repeatedly tell us that a meaningful life—salvation, emancipation, enlightenment, good relationships, happiness, satisfaction and fulfillment, political freedom, and the way to a better world—can be obtained through the purchase and consumption of material objects (Kilbourne 75). Ad campaigns strive to fulfill our emotional needs by co-opting the human desire for connection, but, Kilbourne says, they can never live up to the task. Products can never deliver what most people really want: good friendships and family relations, a meaningful social and work life.

We are relentlessly trained through the message of popular culture to enact a limited conception of what it means to be human. Individuals “are reduced to clusters of spending patterns” or “pathways to products” and the self is annihilated “in the steady, dead-eyed gaze of the demographer or corporate-financed cool hunter” (Kingwell 162). Kilbourne asserts that this kind of society feeds addiction because we can never be satisfied. The dreamlike promise of advertising always leaves us hungry for more. As the title of her book, *Can't Buy My Love*, indicates, the products we love cannot love us back. The result is a society based on cynicism, dissatisfaction, and craving as people look for meaning, fulfillment, emancipation and love in all the wrong places. This kind of culture fosters isolation, dislocation, and internal angst. With no real substance behind the convictions and claims for a better life, words lose their meaning. “Without a reliance on words and a faith in truth, we lack the mortar for social cohesion. Without trustworthy communication, there is no communion, no community, only an aggregation of increasingly isolated individuals, alone in the mass” (Pollay 24). As long as real salvation, connection and community are unobtainable, substitutes are available to ease the sense of dislocation: alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, shopping, food, TV, sex, travel; and all forms of distraction, entertainment, and escape. Maybe we *would* “choose life” if we knew where to find it?

### **Ham Sandwiches & Pig Farms**

One day in class at the college where I teach, I showed my students a film



♪ *Do you know how animals die?*  
-The Smiths from their 1986 album  
and title track Meat is Murder ♪

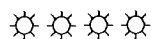
that described the harsh treatment of child workers in El Salvador's free trade zone.

Even though they learned the details of the children's suffering as slaves in a textile factory, one student said he would have no qualms about running such a business himself. Thinking the other students would put him in his place, I asked the class to debate and vote on whether they agreed with him. To my astonishment, more than three quarters of the class said they did. They would do the same if they could make a lot of money. I repeated the same experiment in class after class with younger and older students and repeatedly got the same results.

"So, slavery is not an ethical problem for you?"

"Someone's going to do it, anyway, Miss."

This if-you-can't-beat-'em-join-'em attitude came up in different class discussions. Materialism often won out over things like not selling the land where your ancestors were buried so you could save it from being mined for uranium (Murdoch).



After they had seen the film, *Fast Food Nation* based on the book by Eric Schlosser that looked at the practices behind the industry, I asked whether they would change their eating habits. They had just seen cowshit in the meat, workers up to their knees in blood, illegal immigrants getting sexually abused and maimed by machinery, and acres of land laid to waste. A few were going to make changes, but most students agreed they would continue eating hamburgers as

usual. Two days later, one guy admitted that all that talk about burgers made him so hungry he had to go to Burger King after class.

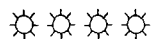
“I know it was wrong, Miss, but I couldn’t help it. I was craving a Whopper so bad.”

Later that semester, while a student was showing a *Youtube* video of pigs being slaughtered and talking to the class about animal rights, another one pulled out a sandwich and had lunch. I couldn’t understand how she could eat while watching a terrified animal sliced up on a conveyer belt. Finding her action both comic and tragic, I said:

“Bon appétit”.

Later, I asked the student what was between the bread.

“Ham,” she said.



In a discussion about global warming, I asked my students what they thought they could do to make a difference. An eighteen-year-old called Glen said:

“Nothing.”

“What do you mean nothing?” I asked him.

“I mean it’s too late, Miss. We should have acted a long time ago. The politicians aren’t gonna do anything. It’ll only get worse.”

When I asked the students in two classes if they agreed, I found that about a third did. I was surprised by this fatalistic attitude and wondered how many people—especially youth—had lost hope. I imagined them trying to live

their lives and make sense of the world despite the foreboding feeling that it was falling apart. I wasn't sure what to make of it. Were they numb, cynical, lost, confused, conditioned or just simply uncaring?

*♪ Come writers and critics  
Who prophesize with your pen  
And keep your eyes wide  
The chance won't come again  
And don't speak too soon  
For the wheel's still in spin  
And there's no tellin' who  
That it's namin'.  
For the loser now  
Will be later to win  
For the times they are a-changin'.*

-Bob Dylan ♪

Folk music legend, Bob Dylan warned

that those who claimed to know how the world should or would end up might be wrong. Things might turn out differently than they expected.<sup>26</sup> Who would have thought that about thirty years later, Dylan would give the *Bank of Montreal* permission to use his

famous sixties protest song in an ad campaign? Instead of turning on, tuning in and dropping out, had Dylan given in, given up and sold out? He himself had prophesied with his pen that the times were changing. Did he wonder now if he had spoken too soon? Maybe like my students, he had become a jaded realist who decided to use the system to his advantage.

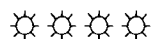
Renowned for his knowledge and writing, King Solomon not only thought there was nothing new under the sun. He also said: "...with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief." Perhaps this was meant as a cautionary message: Nothing new can be found through knowing. No one ever built a utopia from ideas—although people had many and they tried. Ideas about how we should live are not the same as living.

Taking stock of how students reacted to my teaching and material that

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<sup>26</sup> Nobody knows just how it will end; Can theory walk the roads that need pavin'? For it don't matter now if we can't comprehend, for the times they are a-changin'... (my adaptation)

term, I realised that information wasn't necessarily going to help them in life or change them. Nor was my effort to try to appeal to their emotions. I could not always win their hearts and minds.<sup>27</sup> (Besides, I wasn't a propaganda machine and they weren't part of any conquest.) Some of what I related to them was important to some of them. I had spent the semester sharing knowledge with my students about environmental problems, but that day I realised that what a lot of them needed wasn't information, but inspiration: a purpose, a reason to care about life. I lost my motivation to discuss the details of the world's crises. When I cleaned my office that spring, I found myself getting rid of everything that I felt I could no longer teach. The recycling bin was overflowing and I didn't even worry too much about the trees. In a climate of cynicism, I wanted to teach to inspire, not encourage fear or despair. But how?



I tried to show my students how and why dominant culture was changing; and the many attempts to address serious social and environmental problems. Rather than focusing on crisis, we investigated the process of finding solutions. We looked at the ways people were soul searching and trying to make a difference. I asked the students to think critically about their lives and to explore how individuals and groups were contributing to the world while at the same time enriching themselves. I hoped to illustrate that by respecting and taking care of other living beings, they were not only accepting to value life in general, but to cherish their own lives. I realised they had not received these kinds of messages

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<sup>27</sup> The US government talked about winning the "hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese and the Iraqis during those wars.

very often; they had grown up with a sense that there was nothing that could be done to stop the imminent destruction of the world. I hoped to remind them that life was full of opportunities for growth and healing. They were not powerless to bring joy and well-being to their own lives and to others.

In my *Green Living* course on the environment and health, when I asked one of my students why she missed so many classes, she replied:

“I’m so tired all the time.” She told me she had terrible aches and pains and that she had been taking anti-depressants but that they made her feel worse.

After visiting the SPCA to see what could be done to help animals, she came into my office.

“I cried all weekend after that visit,” she said. “I couldn’t get out of bed. Everything hurt.”

She was not the first student who complained of either physical or emotional pain when discussing their feelings about the world. Nor was she the first to be medicated. In response to their existential struggles, I tried to give my students a sense that no matter what they were told or taught or felt, they couldn’t depend on anyone to find solutions for them. They had to be advocates for their own health and well-being. About a month after the semester ended, I received an email from the same girl that said:

“I just wanted to tell you that I found an organic grocery. I’m so happy, I just found it today, and my car is full of bags!!! So now I will always go there!! Hee hee! I just wanted to tell you that, I will feel better because all I will just have at home is organic food!”

When thanking me for my media classes, one of my university students said: "It wasn't just about the media. It was about life."

Another student told me that she had learned so much not only about the course subject, but also about herself. In a Christmas card she said:

"I sometimes felt alone in the world. I felt as though I was the only one who believed there was a chance to make a difference. But hearing your stories and just listening to others in the class, my hopes for the world have really gone up."

Another student wrote: "I can truly say that my world views have changed, I see things differently now. I'm taking what I have learned in our class as a phase of my maturity that is growing day by day, this class has inspired me to view this world in a much better way, it isn't so cold as people say it is. Actually this class has motivated me to put some money aside and put it towards a fund of some sort, I don't quite know yet, all I know is I wanna help someone in need, anyone, this class has made me aware of the environment but also the value of human life! I want to make a difference!"

This, of course, didn't happen with all students. These were some of the happy class endings that taught me something very important. People, including myself, needed to feel that they were part of the world, that they had a purpose and that life had meaning; and that to understand the world and how to live in it, they needed to have a better sense of themselves and their place in it.

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*The next chapter returns us to Evie's story, a narrative that on one level mirrors and further explores the problems and concerns that my students or I raised in this section.*

## CHAPTER FOUR

### EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL *YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION* MONTREAL (1980-88)

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Wishes (*Mexico, Christmas Holidays 1980*)

*I love you.  
More than the tears the world will cry  
More than the stars in all of the sky  
More than the pain I feel in my heart  
More than the distance that tears us apart*  
-Evie, poem for Adam, never sent 1981

John Lennon was killed the day after Lee, Vita and their eleven year old niece Evie arrived in Mexico City.

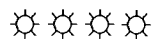
The old friends from India days had all decided to meet in Mexico at Laura and Steve's that Christmas. Tom, whose wife Heidi had left him in 1974, had come with his son, eleven-year-old, Adam. Nicky showed up with his wife, Elaine, and their three-year-old daughter, Emi.

Lee was working on his portable electric typewriter in the beautiful, little garden in the courtyard of Laura and Steve's pink house in Coyoacán—a quiet, colonial neighbourhood of artists and intellectuals in the south of Mexico City. He was watching a tiny humming bird flutter around the *jacaranda* like a little fairy, marvelling at its quick, sharp movements. Its long needle-like beak would disappear and reappear amongst the tree's violet flowers. Lee considered for a moment that everything was perfect just as it was—that it all fit together as if touched by some overseeing grace. But like other such revelations, it quickly dissipated like a twilight fog when Laura came out to give him the news. Everyone was silent, and, strangely, Tom said exactly what Yoko Ono did when she was told that her husband was dead:

“Tell me it's not true.”

With the peace icon of their generation dead, it felt like all the hopes they had since adolescence were dashed in an instant—as if all the opportunities to give peace a chance had been used up; and every attempt to imagine a better world was just another pipe dream.

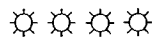
Xochi and Noah, Laura and Steve's twins, also eleven, had been packing their bags when they heard the adults' voices turn mournful. Their conversation drifted in from the garden like a slow and sorrowful love song punctuated by intermittent weeping. They were going to drive up to the mountains of Guerrero that afternoon. They had planned to stay in Tlapa—the central town in the region known as *la Montaña* in the mountains of Guerrero. Steve had been doing field work there for years. They had all been looking forward to the trip but on the seven-hour drive there, they were all in sombre moods.



Evie felt the dry tropical forest air on her skin. The flat landscape along the highway was arid with tufts of thick resilient bushes, the occasional oak or white pine, and enormous *chiotilla* cactuses. Evie could not believe how big they were. She and Adam sat together in the back of the VW Beetle that Tom had rented making stupid jokes, trying to stifle their giggles, and going through Adam's tape collection. They drove past small workshops for shoe or mechanical repairs; bakeries, stationery stores, and *perfumerías*. The one or two story concrete buildings on the side of the road were covered with political graffiti or concert announcements. In the valley heading up into the highlands they saw yellowing corn fields, and hay stacks. Men in straw hats waited at bus stops, while boys



threw stones at the asphalt, and women hung colourful laundry out on the line. Mangy dogs barked at oncoming traffic, and garbage burned at the edge of towns. Under the shade of red, yellow, blue or white canopies, the stands set up at local markets, the *tianguis*, displayed neat pyramids of fruit: sweet, brown mamey, plump oranges and juicy papaya; or red and green-leaved poinsettias for the Christmas season. Often at intersections they would pass makeshift wooden crosses marking the places where people had died in an accident. Later, when Laura told her what they were for, Evie imagined that all roads must be full of ghosts. In the distance, they could see snow capped mountains spotted with firs. Except for Lee's periodic insistence that Lennon's death was a conspiracy, Tom and Lee, who were sitting in the front, were unusually quiet for most of the drive.



Whenever they visited Tlapa, Steve and Laura and their kids would stay at the *Posada del Sol*. The kids loved it because it had a swimming pool in the courtyard with a yellow, concrete bridge arched over the middle that Noah would jump off. It was the only swimming pool in the entire region. Typical of buildings in most Mexican towns, the hotel was made of concrete and had large metal doors. In the evening, after dinner, Evie and Adam would sneak up the stairs to the roof where the cleaning boys hung white sheets and towels. They would often watch the sun set behind the mountains that surrounded the town. Then they would talk as the moon rose and the stars came out. Evie would read Adam poetry from the journal her father had given her especially for the trip. Adam would play music from the little tape recorder he had brought with him introducing

her to some of the English bands that would be the soundtrack of her teenage life. They talked about their hopes and dreams and their sorrows and fears.

*My special friend and I...  
watch the sun set into the earth's horizon,  
an orange fire from a curious fruit tree  
The lavender sky is the bed that it lies in  
Its spirit's the soul we all wish to be*  
-Evie

"My mother left us." Adam told her. "She went back to Amsterdam where she's from."

"Do you visit her?"

"Yeah, usually on holidays, but my dad wanted me to come to Mexico this year. I saw my mom in the summer. And sometimes she comes for long weekends or I go there for bank holidays. They talk funny there."

"Where?"

"In Holland."

"Do you speak it, too?"

"I understand my mom and my stepfather and my grandparents, but I don't like to make those sounds." Adam pretended to be clearing his throat and horking up phlegm.

"They don't really talk like that!"

"Sort of."

"Are you sad because your parents aren't together?"

"I don't know."

"Do you like your stepdad?"

"He's alright." Adam never talked about his feelings about his mother leaving them. But he remembered the day when he was five when he met Hans who would become her second husband. Adam recalled the sense of foreboding

he felt when he saw in Hans's eyes that this man who wasn't his father was in love with his mother. He knew then, even as a young child, that things would never be the same. While trying to skate on the canals near the market at the Waterlooplein, he got a bloody lip when he fell on his face. His mother had been distracted by Hans who was taking pictures of her in a red hooded duffle coat. The hot chocolate they gave him in a nearby café to compensate for the injury was Adam's first memory of despair. It gave him a lifelong aversion toward both skating and cocoa.

When his mother left them to live with Hans, Adam had felt it not only as a rejection of his father but of the apple that didn't fall far from his tree. She returned to Amsterdam to finish her degree in biology and to marry her first love—both of which she had abandoned to travel with Tom. She had got pregnant with Adam in India and had gone to live with Tom in London without having thought it all through.

Adam experienced his father's heartbreak through osmosis as if it was something tangible that leaked through his skin. The break up of his parents ensued with little overt drama but it was difficult to repair the wound in a little boy's heart from the fear of hearing his father sob. Adam's keen sense of empathy would later be put to better use in the theatre. About a year before going to Mexico, Adam started going to a drama class given by Nicky's wife, Elaine.

"I want to be a famous actor." He told Evie. He had never told anyone that before. "And maybe a playwright. I write skits."

“About what?”

“I try to make them funny.”

“I think you’re funny.”

“You do?”

“Yeah. You always make me laugh.” Evie said shyly not wanting to let on that she liked him as much as she did.

“Yeah, I guess I do.” Adam chuckled, pleased with himself. “What’s *your* dream Evie Rose?” Adam would call Evie by her full name for years to come.

“I don’t know why I want to do it,” she said, “But I sort of want to write a book—a novel and poems.”

“One day you will, Evie Rose,” he said.

They passed a notebook back and forth composing tall tales of silly mishaps, or outrageous adventures that they sometimes acted out with Xochi and Noah. Adam was the first person with whom Evie would share her love of words. And he would be one of the only ones to understand how important they were in coping with life.

“How do you know?”

“Well, you just gotta trust, Evie Rose.” Adam said repeating what Elaine had told him about standing in front of an audience. They stared at the stars for a while without saying anything.

“When I was little, my mother would tell me to count nine stars for nine nights and then we would make a wish,” Adam said. “It started on holiday, but when I returned to London, I was gutted to find that it was sometimes impossible

to find any stars at all. But I thought, just because you can't see them, doesn't mean they're not there. So I always count them and make a wish—even if I have to imagine them.”

“People need wishes.” Evie said staring at the sky dreamily.

“The stars are really good at helping you remember them.”

“I hope I don't forget mine.”

“I will remind you.”

“But you live in England.”

“So? We'll write letters.”

“Really?”

“Of course.”

Evie could hear Adam breathing. He took her hand and Evie's heart was beating so hard, she was sure he could hear it. They were quiet for what seemed like a very long time. Evie's mind was racing so fast that she was almost in a panic.

“Did you ever kiss a boy, Evie?”

“No.” Evie continued to gaze at the sky. She was too terrified to look at him. But Adam leaned over and kissed her softly on the lips. It only lasted a few seconds, but Evie would draw out the memory for years to come. She knew she would remember the moment forever. And for a long time, even into adulthood, nothing would compare to it.

“You're not like other girls.” Adam said, which, if he were a little older than eleven might have sounded like a come on.

Thanks, was all Evie could think of saying although she wasn't sure if it was the right thing. Besides her cousin or her brother, Evie had never spent that much time with a boy before. She had crushes on them, but she hadn't really known any. Adam was different. He wasn't just cute. He was her friend.

"Evie?"

"Yeah?"

"You're cool."

And Evie smiled so wide, she hoped it was too dark for Adam to notice.

"So are you," she managed to whisper.

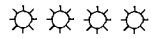
#### Others (*Evie's Story-Montreal 1982-88*)

*♪Babe, I'm leaving,  
I must be on my way  
The time is drawing near  
My train is going,  
I see it in your eyes  
the love, the need, your tears  
But I'll be lonely without you  
And I'll need your love  
to see me through  
Please believe me,  
my heart is in your hands  
And I'll be missing you.*

-Styx 

For a long time, Evie would reconstruct the conversations she had with Adam in Mexico—especially the nights on the roof. She would listen to *Babe* by Styx incessantly and write Adam love letters she mostly never sent. Although they were still too young to be able to tell the difference between really connecting with someone, resonating with a common wound, and distracting oneself with pleasant company, life was hard when your first relationship—the one you had two months after you first started menstruating—would be the healthiest for years to come. When Evie got back to Montreal, she reminded her parents that she wanted to be a writer. In response, her father came home that week with a pile of new journals. Evie loved the smell

and feel of their crisp blank pages. She began writing more than before and with great enthusiasm—mostly poetry.



When Evie started high school and found her first real boyfriend, she began to write a lot about love. Jody was a handsome guy with dark blonde hair who was six feet tall at fourteen. Evie would see him in the halls and thought he was cute. A friend of hers intervened and presented her with a note from her crush:

“Dear Evie, I know that you like me and I like you, too. Do you want to go out? Circle: Yes or No.” Evie was thrilled. She circled “yes”. Jody sent her a note back that said: “Call me” with his phone number. Evie got her best friend to make the call and pretend it was her because she was too shy to speak to him herself. Jody would tell her his fantasies about them being together—like how he wanted to kiss her while she was tied to a tree. Evie ignored this bit of information. But years later, she would wonder about it. Anyway, he never tried.

*Your heart's as hard as stone  
While mine's as brittle as a leaf  
A heart's been stolen  
It's my own  
and I think you're the thief  
And I write poems of love  
Sometimes they're for you  
It's you I'm thinking of  
When I've nothing else to do*  
-Evie

She and Jody would listen to the tapes that Adam gave her and together got into punk and alternative music. Eventually, she made her own phone calls and she and Jody would stay up late, not really talking about anything

while listening to new bands on *Brave New Waves* on *CBC Radio 2*. A couple of years later, when he was sixteen, Jody would take his new identity a step further. He would shave his Mohawk and become a skinhead—but not the racist kind, a

friend reassured Evie. She knew because he was wearing the right colour shoelaces. At thirteen, Jody made sense to Evie. Although they really didn't have much to talk about, she liked him because he was a rebel—and he wasn't Jewish. They would French kiss in the park near his house while skipping school. That was also where they smoked their first cigarettes. This new life felt daring and exciting to Evie. Jewish kids didn't skip. School was too important to them—or at least to their parents. A person needed an education to make something of themselves—and they better be successful after everything that would be sacrificed for them to make it. Evie wanted to know people who didn't share her background. She became friends with some Anglo and Greek kids who she found refreshing. Being with them was like travelling. She loved being immersed in different cultures. They made her realise that she wouldn't die if she didn't go to class. And nobody had to know. You just had to write your own note. She was also fascinated about how they didn't worry—either about cutting class or many other aspects of life. Maybe things weren't as serious as she had been led to believe? This was good news.

Evie started to lighten up. She was intoxicated by the otherness of her Greek friends—especially how they talked with greaser accents sort of like bad boy Danny Zucco's friends in the film *Grease*. They had framed portraits of Jesus on the walls of their dining rooms which their tiny black-clad grandmothers had generously decorated with doilies. Since Jews were generally put off by lascivious symbols of Christianity, having these icons in her midst felt like a protest—like she was going to decide for herself who she was going to be



regardless of her incidental heritage.

### **Dishrag (About Evie's Aunt Vita)**

Vita was the first one to notice that her niece Evie could feel things that other people couldn't. If she hadn't explained to Evie what it meant to be sensitive, Evie never would have known why she felt upset or uneasy in certain situations. Vita recognised Evie's empathic abilities because Vita had them too. The first time Vita felt someone else's pain, it was her mother's. Sometimes Vita would fall into states of lethargy and depression for weeks—seemingly, for no apparent reason. No one told her that the mess that was her mother's pain could seep through a daughter's skin as if she were a dishrag.

Vita's parents had come to Canada from Poland in the 1920s. Throughout their lives, they worked in a garment factory where her father was a designer and her mother would sew the linings into women's coats. Even at a time when it was uncommon for women to be employed outside the home, Vita and Nava's mother worked long hours. Although Vita longed for her mother's attention, she would busily prepare dinner with her usual air of being both defeated and depleted from exhaustion. This made her feel like she was on her own and was compounded by their father's habitual absence. He opted to spend Saturdays talking politics and reading Yiddish newspapers at his brother's butcher shop. This ritual became ever more frequent after the news came in 1945, just after his first child Nava was born, that his wife's parents and siblings had been murdered at Auschwitz. She had been speaking to the survivors that she knew at the factory

and getting friends to ask around for stories from Europe. Vita's mother would never recover from the devastation of her loss and floated through life as if she weren't really there. She refused to have any more children until eight years later when, accidentally, Vita was conceived.

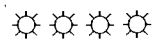
Vita had been an emotionally volatile child who constantly complained of aches and pains. She would often lie in bed sobbing, her head throbbing and back aching, overcome with feelings of impending doom as if the world were about to end. But she herself could not say why she was feeling the way she was.

At eleven, she spent three days crying and waking up with nightmares just before her best friend was struck by a milk truck on her way to the corner store to get milk. Vita woke up choking as if she were being strangled. She grabbed at her throat in some vain effort to release the pressure she felt there. When they went to see her friend in the hospital, Vita and her mother discovered that she had broken her neck. This episode incited her mother's epiphany that there was a pattern in Vita's emotional outbursts and physical pain. If something bad was going to happen, like an accident, a death or an illness, Vita would spend days in bed with flu-like symptoms. At night, she would often lie awake holding herself not knowing what to do or where to go to find relief.

Sometimes it was hard for Vita to be with people at all. If they were anxious, sad, nervous or angry, she might burst into tears or feel sick. She could feel the discomfort of other people's suffering in her bones. Her overpowering urge to escape the pain of the world often compelled her to hide in her bedroom

closet. She would curl up in a foetal-like embrace and cry for hours in the darkness hoping to disappear. She'd wish that her mother would come find her, but she never did. So Vita started drawing and painting both to distract her from and help her work through her feelings. Her ability to feel the intensity of other people's emotions made her a great artist.

"Don't let things get to you so much," her elder sister Nava would tell her. But Vita never understood what she expected her to do. It wasn't as if pain, whether emotional or physical, came with an on/off button.



*♪ I sit behind the wire  
and watch the birds in flight  
In view, a sphere of fire,  
The source we live by day and night.  
I try to look much higher  
but get blinded by the light.*

*But if the sun should burn my eyes  
I'll just wear shades to see the skies*  
- Evie ♪

Sol and Nava, Evie's parents worked a lot. Sol would stay late at the newspaper where, once he finished the articles for the next day's edition, he wrote extra ones to sell freelance. Nava, like

Vita, was an art teacher at a local Jewish community centre. But unlike her sister, she had little time to work on her own stuff. Although she had a space in the basement for her easel, canvases, paints, and art books, Evie had almost never seen her using it. Nava also tried to supplement the family income by doing part-time administrative work at a nearby library. Overwhelmed by the double burden of having to earn a living outside the home and taking care of the kids and the house, she would often have to lock herself in her room and cry. Evie sensed her mother's anguish and sought refuge in her bedroom where she spent a lot of time listening to music. Writing helped her work through the loneliness that came

from feeling everything around her so intensely. She wrote philosophy, stories, poems, quotes from books she found in her father's library. She relished the lyrics to songs that she carefully inscribed there, and long lists of new vocabulary. Without these words, Evie later wondered how she would ever have survived adolescence.

Vita loved the way Lee, lacking his own children, opened his home and his heart to her niece. Evie would often escape there to paint with Vita or play with Lee's typewriter. Vita herself adored Evie but often saw their babysitting more as an art experiment than an opportunity to care for a child. She loved the idea of painting with kids whom she believed were all born artists and had not yet forgotten that they were. But she was always relieved that she could send Evie back home.

### **Another Brick in the Wall** (*Back to Evie's Story*)

♪ *I've got a strong urge to fly  
But I've got nowhere to fly to*  
-Pink Floyd, *Nobody Home*,  
from: *The Wall* ♪

By grade eight, Evie was cutting her hair short and spiky and dyeing it red. In grade ten, she was platinum blonde like *Eurhythmics* singer, Annie Lennox. By the time she was eighteen, her hair had also been jet black, tangerine, and burgundy rose. Evie preferred being a redhead and kept it that way well into her twenties. By that time, she had gone to every concert of almost every alternative band that came to Montreal—most of whom were British. Evie and Adam wrote letters on and off for a few years and would send each other mixed tapes of cool new bands. But eventually they lost touch.

***Wherever you are,  
you must be a friend  
So answer my plea  
before it all ends  
Why the turmoil, the torture,  
the hurt and the pain  
Oh, there must be a reason  
for the sun and rain!  
Give us a world  
full of honour and love  
We need you below  
as you watch from above  
I'm sorry if this seems  
like a blasphemous prayer  
Just give me some hope  
to prove that you're there  
-Evie***

Although Evie loved books and had a longing to learn, she hated school. She felt bored, unchallenged, and imprisoned in circumstances she felt she could not escape. It seemed to her that she was wasting her time. For most of her high school years, she was obsessed with English band *Pink Floyd's* haunting rock opera, *The Wall*. She would walk the halls of her public high school

listening to their number one hit, *Another Brick in the Wall* upset because she was forced to live like one. She understood just how the protagonist, Pink, the broken-hearted rock star, felt. Throughout the film, his story would demonstrate just how much life sucked and how society was destroying everyone's soul. Just like him, she knew what it was like to build a wall to protect oneself from all the senseless horrors of the world. Roger Waters' voice blared through the headphones of her walkman: "We don't need no education. We don't need no thought control".

"Yeah!" she would think, picturing the scene in the movie where hundreds of kids wearing identical masks and school uniforms fell into a meat-grinder until they ripped off their disguises and trashed their school. "Feelin' 7-Up" was inscribed on the wall behind them, but they ignored the giant soft drink bottle that surveyed the riot like a disapproving god.

Evie lamented her own lack of freedom and dreamed about travelling—something she had wanted for as long as she could remember. This was what

she would do as soon as she finished school when she would finally be free. Something inside whispered: “keep on moving.” It was something that she could not describe in words. Later she found out that this is what the Buddha would say to spiritual seekers, the wandering *Sannyasin*.

“Charaveiti, Charaveiti,” he said. *Keep on moving*.

Evie clutched her cigarette and talked about going to England because that was where the music was. She would spend many sleepless nights exploring an old globe or leafing through the worn out pages of her father’s Atlas.

## Against

*♪ How many ways to get what you want  
I use the best I use the rest  
I use the enemy I use anarchy cos I  
I wanna be anarchy !  
The only way to be !*

-The Sex Pistols, *Anarchy in the UK* ♪

The lunch bell had just gone and Evie was waiting for a friend in the parking lot in front of school blowing rings of cigarette smoke in the afternoon

sun. She was supposed to be rushing off to history but, after all, it was Friday and she hadn’t skipped all week and, moreover, she had made herself a promise. Her policy, decreed late in grade ten, was that she wasn’t allowed ever to complete a full week of school without skipping. Once she realised she could get away with it by forging her own notes, there was no stopping her from being anywhere but in school as much as possible.

This was Evie’s way of protesting a system that she felt was a colossal waste of her life and of life in general; that, and, a meagre attempt to start a group called “S.A.E.” (with an anarchist “A”)—“Students Against the

Establishment". At the time, she thought that *fighting against* was a good idea and so she proceeded with this strategy with great zeal for many years. Much later in her life, after meeting Nicky Hicks in South Africa, this would begin to change. Inspired by adolescent anger and an as-of-yet undeveloped sense of politics, one night, she drew up a manifesto with some plans of action and told some friends about it the next day. This first engagement with activism resulted in one attempted royal flush (a few of them tried to flush all the toilets in school at the same time hoping to cause a plumbing fiasco that would disrupt classes. Unfortunately, there were less of them than there were toilets) and a pulled fire alarm that got the whole school out the emergency exits and forced her and one of her best friends, Lizajay into a state of uncontainable yet unsustainable glee through the illusion of their own empowerment. Nevertheless, this did not change the system, and she still had to return to school everyday—well, almost everyday—uninspired, unchallenged, and unwilling.

## Habit

*The rainbow's colours are so bright  
The stars that glisten in the night  
They make me feel like it's alright  
And when I see a bird in flight  
or any other pretty sight  
Or when you hold me really tight  
I want to laugh, I think I might*  
-Evie

"You do what you have to do," Evie's paternal grandmother always used to say.

But she came from a shtetl in rural Romania where as a small child she witnessed fires, rapes, and murders by

Cossacks, which led to a lifestyle where getting by and going through the motions took precedence over living. Things were different for Evie, of course.

Not having to worry about survival, her generation could become “self-actualised”. But everyone had to contend with their grandparents’ genes—and they never fit quite right. The legacy of the past lingered in people’s bodies every moment of their lives; even if their ideas, circumstances, or physical forms were very different from those of their ancestors.

At times, Evie wondered if she had really chosen her life or if it had somehow been chosen for her. Was she living some kind of inherited state of fight or flight where she was both fighting and fleeing a past that she had never actually experienced? Was she projecting a world full of invisible Cossacks or Nazis—or Babylonians even—who had taken the ancient Jews out of Israel into slavery almost six hundred years before the birth of Christ? Did everyone experience this kind of inter-generational déjà-vu? Evie sometimes had a sneaking suspicion, like an ethereal suggestion, that everything that was lived was simply a repeat of something that already happened. The past, she realised, lurked like a ghost in the individual and collective psyche—often undetectable, sometimes menacing—an unrelenting, but ineffable whispering about what came before; a subliminal time capsule. Her early and later efforts both to conform and to rebel did nothing to change this.

Evie sometimes thought she heard the residual whispers of her parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, great-great grandparents and on and on, perhaps back to the beginning of time; if there was a beginning. Did everyone in the world feel their ancestors transmitting their experience from bones and skin and muscles and nerves? Was each cell of every body on Earth alive with



disseminating vestiges of every lifetime ever lived?

What happened to all the pain passed down through history—all the battle scars and holocausts, the broken hearts and tragedies; all the destruction and violence, greed, hatred, oppression and ill will? Did they linger with us in traces forever?

*The Russians have their missiles  
The Americans have their bombs  
But my only weapon is my hope  
I cannot remain calm!*

-Evie

Evie was constantly preoccupied by the threat of global nuclear war and environmental havoc. But she couldn't see

why the promises of tomorrow should be different from those of yesterday. The future and past seemed so irrevocably intertwined, locked in an endless power struggle. Like a war over territory where the land is continually carved up, and certain pieces claimed—white meat, dark meat, leg, breast—like a Thanksgiving turkey on a table in a house where no one is really grateful but just going through the motions.

## Belonging

*Who am I  
if not like you?  
Born of this land  
although a Jew  
Another tongue,  
an Anglophone  
Don't leave me out  
This is my home!  
Oh, who am I  
if not like you  
Just don't forget  
I live here, too*

-Evie

Around the time that Evie was born people all over the world were demanding change. Quebec was no different—it had been going through what was known as *The Quiet Revolution*. The *Front de la Libération du Québec* (FLQ) had been blowing up mailboxes since the early sixties and demanding the separation of the province

from Canada. They aimed to empower the Francophone majority and address

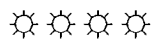
oppression in the province by creating a state run by French-speaking workers (who had historically been employed by Anglophone-owned businesses). The ensuing climate for minorities in Quebec was tense. The nationalist *Partie Québécois* came to power in 1976, declared French the official language, called a referendum for Quebec's independence (which they lost in 1980), and refused to ratify the Canadian constitution resulting in language debates that dominated the political climate throughout Evie's adolescence and persist to this day.

This didn't compare to the kinds of conflict Evie would learn about later through books or the news, and then through study, work and travel. But she often experienced discrimination—like when a friend of a friend told her she was not a *real* Quebecker because she was not *pure laine* (the term meaning “pure wool” that Francophone nationalists used to refer to descendants of the original French settlers); or when a bunch of kids yelled at her on the street on Saint Jean Baptiste Day (the French nationalist holiday) because she was speaking English, or being reprimanded by “language police” in the downtown store where she worked for speaking English even though she was talking to an Anglo colleague, or when her Francophone friends all went to work at another boutique and told her she shouldn't even bother applying because they only hired *pure laine*.

Although she did not grow up with overt violence, she did begin to ask herself important questions from an early age. She wondered how the longing for a home or a place to belong became confused with the search for power. Did empowering the self always mean disempowering an other? For someone to

belong, did others have to be excluded? How could people deal with their historical pain or powerlessness and heal the wounds of injustice without causing more of the same?

During those post-punk teenage days in Montreal nightclubs in the eighties, Evie fashioned an identity from an oppositional stance to those in power. She filled the void with music and derived a sense of self from the lyrics and styles of her favourite alternative bands. She wore black as a signifier of her displeasure with mainstream society. But as Evie got older that was no longer sufficient. She continued to question where—if anywhere, she really belonged.



Evie had always rejected her Jewish background. The religion—as taught to her in elementary school or on a few trips to the synagogue—never gave her any sense of meaning, spirituality, or inspiration. She didn't buy what they were being taught in grade school. She thought it was bullshit—the notion that if she wasn't following the holidays she was in some way bad. Instinctively, she felt that abiding by a set of rules was not necessarily the road to a moral high ground. Goodness had to come from inside. Her parents weren't observant. Her mother's father would wave his hand as if to give religion the brush-off and insist it was more important just to be a good person. In fact, he had flirted with communism in the factory where he worked. Consequently, for several years, he wasn't allowed to cross the border to visit New York where he would go in search of new fashion designs. Evie thought it was cool that her zaida had been blacklisted.

Opposing Judaism was Evie's first rebellion. In grade five, she found herself in the corridors of her school having been assigned the task of copying *Exodus* into a notebook in Hebrew. Later, she thought that it was ironic that she had been asked to transcribe the story of finding freedom from bondage when she had felt like a prisoner. When it came time for high school, Evie insisted on going to the neighbourhood public school where there would be kids from different backgrounds. Evie always looked for other places to belong.

For most of her life she handled this predicament like director Woody Allen in his

*The Ku Klux Klan, who saw Zelig as a Jew, that could turn himself into a Negro and an Indian, saw him as a triple threat.*

-The Narrator in Woody Allen's film *Zelig*

film, *Zelig*, where the protagonist has a bizarre disease:

He is (literally) a human chameleon. Wherever he goes, whoever he's with, he blends in to hide his difference.

But he doesn't really belong anywhere.

### Meeting John Lennon in a Lucid Dream

When Evie was sixteen she bought a book on lucid dreaming. Since she couldn't travel to new geographical locations as she so longed, this seemed like a good alternative. She treated it as a sort of inter-dimensional ethnography as she tried to find out what was really going on in the universe. She prepared a list of questions to formally interview anyone she met in the dream world willing to tell her about the mysteries of life: "What is God?" "Is there such thing as reincarnation?" "Are there other universes?" For weeks she would follow all the directions in the book about how to do it. She said her affirmations before going to sleep:

“I will be aware in my dream. I will wake up in my dream.” She would look at the palms of her hands and remember that she was dreaming.

One night while sleeping she met a grey-haired woman with whom she tried to start a conversation.

“What happens when you die?”

“That’s anathema,” the woman said and disappeared.

Evie didn’t know what *anathema* meant and had never heard the word before. When she woke up she scribbled it in her dream journal. She looked it up and was surprised when she actually found it. The definition was something like “a ban or a curse that could lead to excommunication from the church”—something a kid from Côte-Saint-Luc, one of Montreal’s largest Jewish neighbourhoods, wouldn’t commonly hear too much about. After this, she was sure she hadn’t made it up and that the woman in her dream was real. This confirmed her suspicion that there was much more to life than she was being taught in school. She couldn’t help but feel that somehow she was being cheated of the truth.

In another dream, Evie gazed upwards and saw the tallest snow-capped mountains she had ever seen. She was sitting on a cane lounge chair wearing white when she noticed Uncle Lee sitting beside her.

*♪ When I was younger,  
so much younger than today  
I never needed anybody's help in any way  
But now these days are gone,  
I'm not so self assured  
Now I find, I've changed my mind,  
I've opened up the doors*

-The Beatles, Help! ♪

“Uncle Lee,” she said.

Lee smiled but did not answer.

Then Evie heard music. Looking around for its source, she saw the

Beatles. She couldn't tell what song they were playing, but then she realised it was a slow version of their hit song, *Help*. She watched for a while, and when the song was over, John Lennon looked directly at her.

"Get help, Evie Rose. Open up the door," he said and repeated the lyrics of the song. Then he winked. When she asked him what he meant, he didn't answer.

"Is this for real?" She asked him.

"What's real?" said John.

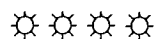
"How do I know I'm not making you and all this up?"

Evie told John about the anathema story and how she had never heard of it before.

"I was sure the word didn't come from me," she explained. In an effort to prove to herself that what she was dreaming was indeed real, Evie asked John if he could tell her some obscure word that she could look up later, when she awoke. This, she felt, would give her substantiation that would be indisputable.

"Tell me a word that very few people understand," she requested.

And with no hesitation, John Lennon smiled and said, "Peace."



Evie couldn't get that dream out of her mind.

*Who was it that needed help?* She wondered. *John, The Beatles, her uncle, his friends—or me?*

The next day in Lizajay's lavender bedroom, Evie and her friend listened to a tape of *Help!*. They sang along at the top of their lungs trying to solve the

mystery of Evie's dream. Through the silver horizontal blinds, the late afternoon sun cast dark lines on Evie's *Echo and the Bunnymen* t-shirt. Lizajay's smile revealed a mouthful of silver braces. Her jet-black shoulder-length hair, sprayed high into a fountain-like wall fell to one side of her face. Her finger hovered over the pause button of her guettoblaster as the two girls analysed the song's lyrics, writing down their thoughts in the pink Hilroy notebook that Lizajay used for Miss Quinn's English class.

Was the ex ex-Beatle trying to tell Evie something? Had she somehow travelled back in time to 1968 to talk to John Lennon? Or was she recreating the story that Lee had told her about the ashram and the Beatles? What door was she supposed to open? Did *she* know what peace meant? Did anybody? Maybe it was a warning. Maybe somehow John Lennon knew that in the next few years Evie's insomnia would turn to chronic exhaustion. Somewhere on the astral plane, he might have found out that she would be in unbearable pain for fifteen years. She would always wonder about this dream. Where might she have gone for help during those days? If she had done things differently, might she have found healing sooner? Maybe if Vita hadn't left town *she* could have helped Evie? Vita had tried. She was the only one who understood what Evie felt. Oh, why did she have to go? Maybe John Lennon was trying to give her some kind of ethereal heads-up: "You're on the wrong path."

## CHAPTER FIVE

### EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL *YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION* ISRAEL (1967/1989)

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#### **Knights (About Adam's Dad, Tom)**

In 1967, Adam's father Tom went to Jerusalem in search of peace. But he found himself in the middle of a war. He had just graduated in political science and history from the *London School of Economics*, fulfilling his father's life-long dream for him. But Tom wasn't sure about his own. He just wanted to travel. He needed all the space in the world to figure stuff out. History, he thought, could be better learned visiting the locations where events took place than from any book.

When Tom was eight, his father gave him a book about Liverpool. He learned that Woolton, the neighbourhood where they lived, had been held by the Knights Hospitallers for over three hundred and fifty years until it was taken by Queen Elizabeth I in the mid-sixteenth century. The knights of the Saint John of Jerusalem Order had protected the routes for Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land. Tom imagined these brave warriors from Woolton safeguarding the way for those in search of salvation. And he fancied himself one of them. Some children devoted their time to building model airplanes or cars. Some got into football or rugby. Others collected stamps or went to the cinema on Saturday mornings. But Tom preferred to wander off on his own and read books about the Crusades or the legends of King Arthur and prepare himself for knighthood. He would often practice signing his name *Sir Thomas Fannadham* in a school notebook, but abandoned that pastime when it became too stressful to hide it from his leering brother, Michael, who would relentlessly make fun of him. He would fashion



armor from tinfoil, box tops and pie plates and pretend he was one of them protecting the lives of imaginary pilgrims and princesses and securing all the roads to Jerusalem.

Tom's father wasn't very keen on having a knight in shining armour for a son but figured Tom would outgrow his obsession with being a crusader. He didn't approve of his son glorifying war.

"A real knight doesn't make war, son." He would tell him. "He helps make peace."

Tom's dad had served in the *Second World War* which had reinforced his conviction that war should be avoided at all costs. He wouldn't tell his sons what happened to him when he was a soldier. His silence instilled in them the idea that it had been an unspeakable horror. When the war was over, Tom's father returned to Liverpool with a scar on his left shoulder. Tom assumed that someone had tried to shoot him in the heart and had missed. He married their mother who had spent the previous two years doing her obligatory national service in a munitions factory. He entered an intensive one-year course to become a teacher—an emergency training scheme the government had issued to address the postwar shortage. A year later, he got a job teaching history at Quarry Bank High School where he would work for the rest of his life and where Tom, Michael and his friend, John Lennon would study. Eventually, they moved into a nearby three-bedroom semi-detached house on Vale Road in the suburban neighbourhood of Woolton.

Despite their father's disapproval of war games, Michael would run off to Woolton Wood a few blocks away and incite Tom into battle. He and John Lennon would smoke cigarettes and shout obscenities at Tom who would ride by on his bike wielding a tinsel sword trying to kill them both.

Knighthood was not the only thing that intrigued Tom. He also developed a fascination for Jerusalem. He saw it as a magic place with olive trees, where princesses waited in golden towers, pilgrims found the sacred, and valiant men in shiny coats of mail were hailed heroes wherever they went any time of day or night. Jerusalem was a place where prayers were answered and wishes came true. Tom longed to go there more than anywhere else on the entire planet.

When Tom took a course on Middle Eastern politics at university, his youthful fascination for Jerusalem was rekindled as well as his earlier impulse to become a knight. When Michael's friend told him that he knew someone who did a volunteer placement on a kibbutz, a cooperative Israeli farming community, as a gap year he knew that was where he would start his trip. He didn't know it in 1967, but his life would be shaped by the Six Day War. After travelling in India during the winter of 1968—and meeting Lee and Nicky—Tom returned to London where he got a job as a peace consultant for an international conflict resolution organisation. As if he had left behind unfinished business, Tom would continue to return to Israel and to the kibbutz for the rest of his life. Eventually, he would work as a mediator to help negotiate a peace settlement over the territory that had been in dispute since the 1967 war.

**Evie Rose by Any Other Name**  
*(Evie and Adam meet again, Israel 1989)*

When Evie and Adam met as adults on the kibbutz where Tom stayed, it was eight years since they had last seen each other. Evie had chosen to volunteer on this kibbutz because of Tom's recommendation. Tom had graciously picked her up from the airport and told her that Adam would come by to show her around later in the day. She was jetlagged and nervous. She never forgot Adam and was excited to see him again. She wondered if he remembered her the way she did him, if she would still feel the same sense of ease with him, if they would laugh and talk like they did when they were kids.

Evie was comforted as soon as she saw Tom grinning, his large full-lipped smile, his ruddy reddish skin stretching over wide cheekbones and greying beard.

"Hello Love. Remember your old Uncle Tom?" He said enveloping her in a crushing embrace. Evie remembered. Adam was a lot like Tom—big, friendly, lovely and warm.

After Tom showed her the room where she would be living for five months, Evie showered and fell into a deep sleep. She woke a few hours later, unpacked, put on a pair of jeans, a white Joy Division t-shirt with a thin green cardigan and went outside.

The volunteer camp was a cosy arrangement—several wooden one-story buildings with a balcony out front that housed several rooms. They were placed in a rectangular formation around a courtyard with a large area of grass, picnic tables, and a large oak with a tree house in the middle. The toilets and shower

***What's in a name? that which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet;  
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,  
Retain that dear perfection which he owes  
Without that title. Romeo, doff thy name,  
And for that name which is no part of thee  
Take all myself.***

-Juliet in Shakespeare's play,  
Romeo & Juliet

houses were at the entrance off the road. Adam was sitting on a picnic table playing guitar and singing, *Heroes*. Evie knew it was him instantly. She sat down next to him

and, although shy, she pushed herself to sing along. Since it was just before midday, everyone was still working and the camp was empty.

"Do you know this one?" He asked her as soon as they were through *Heroes*. "It's a god awful small affair..."

"...to the girl with the mousy hair..." Evie continued. They ended up sitting there for about an hour singing a substantial repertoire of classic Bowie. Until Adam put the guitar down and said, *Evie Rose*, they hadn't talked or acknowledged that they recognised each other.

"Adam Fannadham, how did you know it was me?"

"Evie Rose by any other name would smell as sweet," he said with the dramatic flair she remembered which made her think he must have planned the line.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, it doesn't matter that you don't look the same and you didn't tell me your name. I remember who you are. Inside you're still the same." And just as abruptly as his father, he reached out with his big arms to give her a tight squeeze. Just for a moment, Evie let go—of what she did not know, but it felt better than anything she had experienced in a long time.

## Palindromes<sup>28</sup>

***People always end up the way they started out. No one ever changes.***

—Mark Wiener, director of the indyfilm, *Palindromes*.

***'Palindromes' is effectively engaged in an examination of stasis in its essence: as an ineffable, often unseen and self-perpetuated prison.***

—Matthew Plouffe, indiwire film reviewer

“I don't know if it's such a good thing,”

Evie told Adam one night in the tree house.

“What?”

“To be named after your ancestors. I was named after my great-grandmother.”

“I was just named *Adam* because my mum liked the name and my dad convinced

her that it would bring joy to all who met me to hear that my name was Adam Fannadham.”

“He was right. It's a great name.”

“Best part of it is—what my mum explained to me later—Fannadham is a Belgian name—my grandfather came to Liverpool from there—and, well, my name translates to Adam of Adam. Once my dad convinced my mum, they thought it was great—like it would help me decide for myself who I was going to be without any outside influence like nationality or geographical location.”

“I want to be Eva Fanneva!”

“So you shall.”

“But we were named after Adam and Eve of the Bible's Fall of Man...and woman. Don't you find that problematic?”

“How do you mean?”

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<sup>28</sup> [http://www.indiewire.com/movies/movies\\_050412palin.html](http://www.indiewire.com/movies/movies_050412palin.html)

"I mean. It's like an invocation. If you're named after someone, it's like you've inherited something from them. Every time someone uses your name, it's like they're calling forth this inheritance."

"Hmmm. It's true. It must really have some force over us, don't you think? Like our lives are a challenge to undo whatever was done in our name."

"I don't know. So what's our challenge? Eve ate the forbidden fruit because she wanted knowledge. I guess she didn't realise that ignorance was bliss."

"Well, Adam ate it, too."

"It was her fault. Sorry. My mother overlooked the fact that Eve was responsible for all human misery when she named me... for the expulsion from paradise."

"It ain't so bad!" Adam said.

"What are you talking about? The world is a mess and it's all Eve's fault!" Evie paused to take the cigarette from Adam and took a drag. "But...there are two redeeming things about my name..."

"What?"

"First, it also means *life*, and second it's a palindrome."

"A what?"

"You know the same back to front and front to back."

"Cool."

*♪ I lie alone with all these thoughts  
Who is this man I love?  
He is the hand that has been caught  
within my only glove*

*He is the words to all my songs  
my winter nights' last prayer  
He's the one who climbs the tower  
but trips on every stair  
while out of every window  
I hang my long blonde hair*

-Evie 

“My father was obsessed with that. When he taught me to write it, he would point out incessantly how it was spelled the same way both frontward and back.”

“I love that. Not sure why. But it’s great. I almost wish my name was Madam.”

“So shall it be,” Evie laughed. “I looked *palindrome* up when I was twelve. It’s from Greek. It means something like ‘to run again’. Like some kind of endless loop. I don’t know if that’s in any way significant to my life. Maybe it is. Maybe I’m always running in circles. I don’t know.”

“Maybe we all are, Evie Rose. Anyway, we’ll see,” Adam said. Evie was happy he said that. She analysed it later wondering if it was like some kind of reassurance that he felt the same as she did about their friendship and that he hoped that it would last.

“Anna. Hannah. Bob.” Adam said.

“What are you talking about?”

“They’re palindromes.”

“Abba.”

“Aha!”

“Eye.”

“I?”

“Yeah, eye. E-Y-E.”

“Ewe.”

“You?”

“Ewe. E-W-E.” They paused for a couple of drags.

“Boob!”

“Tit!” This put them into hysterics. They decided it was time for bed, and remembered to count nine stars. They climbed out of the tree house and went to their rooms laughing and thinking about their wishes.

## **Nazis**

“Guess what?” Adam said one night in the tree house.

“What?”

“I got Nazi blood in me.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’m Nazi progeny, Evie Rose. Up until last year I thought I was just some English bloke with a Dutch mother. But when my grandfather died last year, she sprang it on me.”

“What?”

“Her real father was a German officer during the war. He was a Nazi. It’s driving me mad, Evie—especially here. I don’t know how that bit of information can change everything, but I can’t get my head around it.”

“So your Dutch grandfather isn’t your real grandfather?”

“He’s just some poor old sod who was desperate for a young bride, I guess. My grandmother was a collaborator, Ev. She was shagging a Nazi officer during the war for favours! She got pregnant just before the British and Canadians liberated Holland. So to save her life from disrepute, she married my

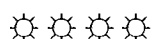


grandfather who was about twenty-five years older. My grandmother has never been the most loving woman, but you know, as a kid you just chalked it up to her being aged and crotchety. Now I can't even look at her without thinking that she was a Nazi whore. If I had been my grandmother I would have joined the bloody resistance."

"Whoa, that's crazy."

"And, now I'm a quarter German, the bastard grandchild of a Nazi—not just some lowly kid who was drafted, but a Nazi officer who gave orders—not one who took them."

"Adam. That's not what you are. You're Adam of Adam. Nothing less. It doesn't matter where you came from, what's important is who you accept to be now."



After she said it, Evie felt very clever. She often had trouble finding the right words for things when she was speaking. That's why writing everything down was sometimes very useful. You could come to wise discoveries that could be applied later. Evie had come to this revelation when reading a biography about Hitler. She read it as she always read—with a pen in hand and a notebook at her side. She had wanted to figure Hitler out as if he were some kind of puzzle—the answer to the existential mystery of why there was evil on Earth. She looked for his humanity in the same way she would travel the world—searching for the light amidst the darkness, trying to understand why it was the way it was. She discovered that Hitler loved art, architecture and the opera. He

had lived in Vienna as a struggling artist and had completed thousands of paintings and drawings during this time. What was it inside him, she wondered, that inspired him to be so creative, and still be so utterly destructive? She pondered what lay behind his piercing blue eyes—the colour that could never be detected from the old black and white photos or film footage. What pushed a person over the edge to make him choose to be evil?

### Golden

*Today I felt like gold  
Priceless, radiant ore  
And in this life I know  
That there is something more  
Gold shone from the shadows  
And it blossomed from the ground  
And I wallow in the riches  
That I have newly found*

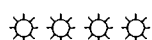
-Evie

Evie was in her kibbutz work clothes picking weeds in one of the orchards. She stopped to look around at the landscape—the orange and grapefruit trees, the sunshine and the sky. She felt lucky to be where she was

rather than enduring the long drawn out Montreal winter, smoking cigarettes in the student lounge of her college with a bunch of confused youth, day in and day out, day after day. She was thinking about how absurd it was that they had to live that way—that these were supposed to be the best years of their lives. But there seemed to be no other options.

Evie's mother, Nava, had written her a letter about coming home, settling down and going to university. Evie wrote back telling her that even though she would come home, she would never be happy unless she was exploring the world. She was consumed by a profound restlessness—what some called “itchy feet” or what her parents referred to as “the travel bug”. Whenever Evie started

travelling and appeared unable to stop, her parents considered it somewhat of an ailment that they hoped she would “get out of her system”, as if it were some sort of virus. During her travels, Evie was looking for something more—some kind of answer, but she didn’t even know what the question was.



One Saturday, Evie and Adam took the kibbutz horses out through the fields up through the hills in the forest. Spring had arrived and everything was green and filled with a rainbow of wildflowers in bloom. They were so plentiful, so bright and beautiful, they hardly looked real. Evie had never seen anything quite like it. She felt the wind in her hair as the horses raced through the trees. The forest seemed to know everything that was in her heart—the trees growing up to the sky, the colours of the flowers, the saffron light of the sun. Everything seemed to glow with a golden energy she could only describe as divine. Evie dreaded to think that a few months later her friend Adam, his smile, the horses and the brilliant scene would seem like a dream. On a hill overlooking valleys of green and gold and auburn and chocolate, they stopped for a picnic. They talked about how it felt to be in a land that was no longer as strange as it had first seemed. And they continued their ongoing political debate about the meaning of *utopia*.

“Utopia is a perfect moment,” Adam said intending to end their argument once and for all. “Like now.” They both paused to relish it.

“Or,” Adam continued, “like sitting down after work with a pint and the landlady saying, *Drink up and get yourself another one*, and the landlord hitting

the floor after falling asleep in his chair. Utopia, Evie Rose, is when there's nowhere else you'd rather be than right here, right now. If you could find that every once in a while, then life's not so bad."

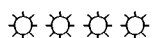
## Love & War<sup>29</sup>

♪ *There's so many different worlds  
So many different suns  
And we have just one world  
But we live in different ones*  
-Dire Straights, *Brothers in Arms* ♪

Evie had fantasised about her meeting with Adam before she left for Israel. She had secretly hoped that he would be her great love. But only a few days after arriving on the kibbutz, not only did she find out that he had been sleeping with Claudette, a French volunteer, but that he had quite a reputation as a kibbutz Casanova. She knew, however, that the connection they had was nonetheless special. They were always together, talked about everything and spent a lot of time writing and playing songs. Everyone knew that she and Adam were close. Even Claudette once came to ask Evie for advice when she was upset about the way Adam was treating her. Evie tried to make herself feel better about Adam's apparent lack of romantic interest in her by reminding herself of all the things about him that would make him an undesirable partner. Nevertheless, it was hard. She understood him and no matter how she tried couldn't muster enough excuses to convince herself that he was not one of the most amazing people she had ever known. Until Evie met Arik, her feelings for Adam left her in a constant state of turmoil.

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<sup>29</sup> Evie heard Israelis talk about the song *Brothers In Arms* more than once as a reflection of the painful experience of being involved in a protracted conflict. Interestingly, after having just searched for it on Youtube, I found that it was used for a rather nationalist video by the Israeli Defense Forces dedicated to soldiers. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wahd2pilir4Q>



Evie first saw Arik in a hotel nightclub on a trip to Eilat, a small resort town on the Red Sea. Arik was wearing black running shoes, Levi's, and a black Bauhaus concert t-shirt—and he was cute. He had dark, almost black straight hair, soft blue eyes, and full lips. Evie was surprised to see someone in Israel dressed as if he were part of the alternative music scene back home.

“Of course, we like that kind of music here,” he said with a strong Hebrew accent. They talked for hours after that and shared a passionate kiss good-bye.

Arik was in his second year in the army but whenever he had time off, Evie would go see him. She would sleep over at the apartment he shared with his mother in Jerusalem. Evie loved Arik because he was smart, sensitive, and quiet. He was so different from Adam who always had to be the centre of attention. Arik touched her heart with his softness. When she was with Adam, Evie felt crazy. They fed off each other's restlessness and wildness. But with Arik she felt a calmness that she had never felt before. Arik was like the bass guitar he played—the underlying beat of a song that holds the whole thing together but that no one gives much attention. Arik was like that, like a heartbeat.

## The Hope

*She sat by the window  
and then went outside  
Warmed by the morning  
Sun-light in the skies  
The white clouds were forming  
like ghosts in her eyes  
A memory's a warning  
with no shape and no size*

-Evie

Evie often thought about revolution because she couldn't deal with suffering; or how people could both inflict or endure all manner of unspeakable horror. As a student in a Hebrew

day school, her first history lessons had been about the Holocaust, pogroms and the Exodus. The persecution and genocide of Jews loomed in her consciousness like an ever-present shadow over her relatively comfortable middle class suburban life. Whatever had taken place in the past had wounded Jewish great-grandparents and grandparents. It affected the way they raised their families and was a legacy inherited by the generations that followed.

Israel was a perfect example of how the cycle of trauma was hard to break. When they were on the kibbutz, it was the time of the first Intifada—the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation. Both Jews and Palestinians had forged an identity derived from trauma including both the impulse to survive, the dream of a better life, and the hope for peace. As the Intifada intensified, Arik was called to the West Bank to do his military duty. He came back with stories he could not bear to tell and that Evie could not stand to hear.

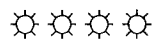
“I cannot stand the hatred in their eyes,” he said. Arik was not a soldier, she knew, but an artist who loved animals and music. He didn’t belong in a war.

In Israel, Evie was forced to face a part of her identity she had rejected growing up. She didn’t feel she fit in with most other Jewish kids. She had also not grown up with the materialistic nouveau riche mentality of many people in her neighbourhood. She didn’t know how to deal with being Jewish. More than anything, she felt it was a source of shame—something she associated with pain and trauma that was devoid of substance and meaning. Israel complicated things. She couldn’t decide what was right or wrong or how to deal with the

conflict and hatred. Arik once told her that she should know her own roots before someone else's.

“It's like you're so interested in learning about everything and everyone in the whole world, but you're running away from your own background,” he once commented.

Evie didn't know what to make of that. But every time she heard the Israeli national anthem, a strange thing would happen. She would have to hold back tears. Evie was moved by the music which she later realised was written in the mournful tone of a minor key. But when she was much older, she realised that wasn't why she wanted to cry. The song was called *The Hope, HaTikva*, and was about the yearning to return to the place you belonged, the longing to be free, in your own land, and finally, after ages of wandering, to be home. Wasn't this everybody's wish? Of Jews, Palestinians, anyone who had been dispossessed or lost or searching? Wasn't it her wish? Why was it so complicated? *HaTikva* made Evie want to weep not just for Jews or for Israel, but for all of humanity. The pain of this longing, of not belonging, of seeking, was overwhelming.



One night Arik knocked on her door at one o'clock in the morning—which was especially late since she had to get up at four to pick oranges in the orchards. He was wearing his uniform and had an Uzi around his shoulder. All soldiers on duty had to carry their guns—which was one of the things about Israel Evie could never get used to. Evie woke with a start to find him sitting at the edge of her bed trying to wake her up.

“What is it?” she said when she saw the sombre look on his face. “What’s wrong?”

“I can’t be a soldier, anymore,” he said, his eyes glazing over.

“What time is it?”

“It’s late.” Arik paused as Evie sat up. “Evie, I shot someone.”

“What!? Arik, can you take the gun off?” Arik put it on the floor under Evie’s bed.

“I didn’t kill him, Evie. I just shot him in the leg. There was nothing else to do. They could have killed us!” Evie touched his face, kissed his lips and wrapped her arms around him.

“What happened?” she asked.

“We were patrolling in a jeep when they started throwing rocks at us from the rooftops. We couldn’t go any further so we stopped and took shelter under the jeep. I looked up and I saw this guy about to throw a Molotov cocktail at us. I knew if it would have hit the jeep we’d all be dead. So I shot him. But I aimed for his leg. Once the shooting started, they stopped and we managed to get back in the jeep and drive away.”

“When did this happen?”

“A few hours ago.”

“How did you get here?”

“I took my officer’s car. He gave it to me. He saw I can’t take it anymore. He gave me the keys and told me to be back tomorrow night.”

That night Evie and Arik drove to the ocean in Tel Aviv. They walked and



talked on the beach all night. Arik wanted to leave the war but not his home. Evie counted nine stars and wished for peace. And then they watched the sun rise.

### Fortresses & Wandering Minstrels<sup>30</sup>

*Words are all we have  
to take away the pain  
Life without expression  
like a storm without the rain  
Hold on to your feelings  
only they can make you cry  
Grow your imagination  
so bright it makes you smile  
There's one thing to remember  
in this life that passes by  
A minstrel's life is like a hill  
So low and yet so high  
To Evie: a veritable minstrel  
-good-bye note from Adam*

Masada, meaning *fortress*, was Israel's age-old symbol of resistance. Israel was often described as having a "Masada complex"—a fortress mentality, always on the defensive and fearing attack. Arik took Evie to the Judean desert in the south to see Masada during Passover. The Zealots, who had taken refuge there in the first century, were a Jewish sect that refused to be subservient to Rome. But eventually the flat-topped mountain was surrounded by the greatest Roman legion of all time. When they were about to be invaded, the Zealots committed mass suicide. They preferred to die than to be conquered and forced into slavery. Evie wondered about the fine line between fear and bravery, the re-enactment of trauma and the strength of resistance.

Evie and Arik watched as the sun rose through the mist across the sky—a perfectly round bright orange ball. The Dead Sea lay unmoving in the distance with patches of salt so thick they looked like ice drifts. She could see the purple peaks of Jordan on the other side. The clouds glowed golden and the sky glistened over the brown yellow mountains. Even in a desert where nothing grew,

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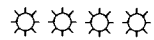
<sup>30</sup> The minstrel poem was actually a good-bye note written to me by my Welch friend, Jock Jenkins.

she felt a sense of radiant life, burning hot, beautiful and vast.

Evie could feel a presence there—as if something watched over them—something sad and lost that she could identify with as if it were her own. She tried to imagine the despair that came from wanting to live but believing you had no choice but to die. It was as if she knew that one day she would feel this concretely in her own life and that the decisive blow was just around the corner. Just a year later, Evie would start to have pain that would become so intense it would keep her awake at night. Sometimes it would make her feel that she didn't know how she would carry on—although inside she would never stop burning and yearning to be alive. Maybe this conundrum of death and life was something inherited, or maybe it was just a human challenge. Her eyes saw the same view as her ancestors two thousand years earlier. She could even hear the rocks—as if they were softly singing some ancient form of the Blues. She was the future, listening to the past watching the sun cross the horizon just as it had a million times before and just as it would until the end of time.

They sat on some ancient wall, Arik's arm around her shoulder, happy to be in this moment, here and now. She thought about what it must have been like to not be able to escape this place, and remembered that she had read somewhere once that the walls built to keep out, also kept in. The world was like this, Evie thought, life and death dancing together, like the animated sky over a place where nothing could grow. Or like being so high you could see for miles over the lowest place on Earth. The peacefulness of the scene brought out the restlessness inside her. The limitlessness of the heavens made her regret the

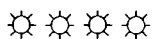
borders she could see in the distance. The past and the future, freedom and bondage, highs and lows, inside and outside her, intermingled.



Arik wanted Evie to stay in Israel. He had two years left in the army and couldn't go anywhere until he finished them. But she had dreamed about travelling for so long, and was determined to go before starting university.

"So come back when you're done and study in Jerusalem," he had said. But she never really responded directly.

The last time Evie saw Arik it was a week before she left for Greece. They sipped cappuccinos at an outdoor café on Ben Yehudah Street in the centre of Jerusalem. When he got up to leave, they hugged and kissed good-bye as if they both knew they would never see each other again. Evie watched Arik walk away in his khaki uniform, his Uzi around his shoulder, past the restaurants, jewellery vendors, and street artists until he turned the corner onto King George Street. Evie felt both empty and nothing at the same time.



*You know that a life  
can never be lent  
But then when it's gone  
you don't know where it went  
And you're paying for him  
but he's only for rent  
When he spoke once of love  
you don't know what he meant  
-Evie*

The night before Evie left the kibbutz for Athens, she and Adam and their friends had a party in the volunteer camp. They built a bonfire, drank Maccabee beer, blasted eighties disco from someone's sound system, and danced like

mad.

"Let's say good-bye to the horses!" Adam said once the party started to

die down.

About twenty minutes later, they were galloping on the well-lit road between theirs and another kibbutz. Evie's heart was racing. She loved riding and would miss the horses. Riding was the closest to freedom she might ever get, she was thinking, when suddenly Adam shouted:

"Watch the fence!" Evie's horse hadn't seen the low wire fence at the edge of the road either. He tripped over it, launching Evie from the saddle and onto the muddy ground.

"Evie!" Adam yelled, got off his horse and ran over to her.

Evie was lying in the mud but when she saw Adam's worried face, she started laughing. Her adrenaline was pumping and brought her to her feet.

"I thought you were dead," Adam cried. "Are you okay?"

"I think so," she said and rose to her feet. They walked the horses back to the stable and went to Adam's room.

"I think I'm okay," she said. "My head hurts a bit and I've got some scratches on my legs, but I think I'll survive." Adam moved her hair aside and tried to inspect her scalp.

"It looks like you're bleeding a bit, but nothing major. Usually head wounds bleed a lot. This looks more like a scrape."

Evie and Adam spent the next couple of hours drinking beer to deal with their nerves and talking about their five months together on the kibbutz. The drunker they got, the more they laughed.

"I have something for you," Adam told her, almost slurring, and handed

*♪ So why do you fill my sorrow  
With the words you've borrowed  
From the only place you've known  
And why do you sing Hallelujah  
If it means nothing to you  
Why do you sing with me at all?*

-Damien Rice *Delicate* ♪

her an envelope. "I was going to slip it into your bag." Evie was full of emotion as she read his poem about her words and songs. Although he rarely said anything, Adam had

heard and seen her.

"You're not like other girls, Evie Rose." He said just like he once had on the roof of the Posada del Sol in Mexico. Then he leaned over and they kissed like they'd been saving it up for years.

"If I'm so special," Evie said softly, "then how come you're such a slut?"

"I can't help it, Evie. I just like women. I'm obsessed! I'm like a Neanderthal without capacity to reason! It drives me crazy, as a matter of fact! Life would be a lot easier if I could just be a head!"

"You have a problem, Adam Fannadham. But I love you, anyway."

They fell asleep in their clothes in each other's arms.

## CHAPTER SIX

### **EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL *YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION* HIGHER EDUCATION-GOING TO UNIVERSITY (1989-92)**

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Flags (*Ios, Greece 1989*)

Evie was sitting at The Far-Out Café at a topless beach on a Greek island in the Ionian Sea with blinding sun and white washed buildings when she heard about the massacre in Tiananmen Square. She read how the Chinese army had massacred hundreds or maybe thousands of protestors in the *International Herald*—where she would often scan the classifieds for ideas about what to do with her life in between drinks and dunks in the sea. That was the time before the fear of the sun being disastrously carcinogenic and she had a great tan without ever burning and never wore UV protection. She was leaning over a blue painted concrete table on a bamboo covered terrace eating a toastie full of tzatziki and reading the paper while *Funky Cold Medina* blared from the restaurant's speakers.

"Democracy," she thought looking at some drunk Swede passed out on the sand not far from her tanned feet. Evie was waitressing in a white-washed bar in the square which had free drinks as one of its perks. She had just turned twenty and was in search of something she couldn't define. Since arriving in Greece, she had been confused, even a bit down. About a week had passed since she left Israel. Her head was in a spin about Arik and Adam. She wasn't sure what she was doing with her life and she had two months left of summer

before starting university in Montreal. She also began to get awful headaches that didn't seem to be getting better.

When Canada Day came in July, Evie found an excuse to celebrate with her compatriots and anyone else who needed a pretext to party—just like they had at Swedish Midsummer. Any excuse to drink was good enough for most people on Ios. On July Fourth, a bunch of European guys put straws in their hair for feathers and coloured zinc on their faces for war paint. They ran around drunk doing a painfully stereotypical interpretation of Native American rain dances yelling “Go away, USA!” They were protesting America, they said. Evie, who had never been comfortable with the global domination of the United States, thought it was dumb. A lot of the American backpackers were really upset. That day, Evie took the Canadian flag off her backpack. If people thought she was American and didn't like her because of it, it would be their problem. She was going to be Eva Fanneva. Never again would she ever wave another flag.

Evie became friends with an English girl who was part of a travelling band of mostly Brits and Swedes who lived their early twenties globetrotting and meeting every year in Ios. They were as lost as she was, but she wanted to join them when they invited her to go to Yugoslavia. If Evie had known that the war was just around the corner, and that its beautiful cities would be irrevocably destroyed, she would have gone. But even though she longed to continue travelling, she went home just as Communism began to fall in Eastern Europe. The news made her kick herself that she had left Europe just when all the action started. She was certain that she was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

**Isn't This Where We Came In? (Montreal 1989)**

♪ *A woman on the radio  
talked about revolution  
When it's already passed her by  
Bob Dylan didn't have this to sing about  
You know it feels good to be alive*  
-Jesus Jones ♪

Instead of being where important things were happening, Evie was back in Montreal. She sat in overcrowded classrooms listening to conservative

professors talk about Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union from textbooks that had just become ridiculously outdated. None of them suspected what would happen that “hot” autumn. In her daydreams she would be clutching the wooden handle of an iron pick made in the USSR and pounding the Berlin Wall until it crumbled.

The British band *Jesus Jones* released *Right Here, Right Now* and celebrated “watching the world wake up from history”. The Velvet Revolutions, as they were called, were heralded by conservatives in the West as the triumph of capitalism. Theorists like Francis Fukuyama declared “the end of history” as if the apex of human evolution was at hand.

When the Berlin Wall began to fall, there was a general air of excitement—as if, effortlessly, the world would come together and forget about its deep historical divisions. Roger Waters of the supergroup *Pink Floyd* organised *The Wall* concert to commemorate this historical event, using the songs from his 1982 album and the film of the same name. The protagonist of *The Wall* movie, a rock star called Pink, was born while his father was killed at war. His whole life was shadowed by the trauma and the effect it had on him and



his mother. At school he was physically and verbally assaulted by his teachers. The lives of the students, like those of soldiers were not valued by authority. They were forced to be faceless, nameless automatons whose individuality was quashed by society like bricks in a wall. Pink's relationship with his wife also fell apart and he couldn't deal with the hollowness of show business. As he lost his sanity, he took on all the characteristics of that which inflicted the trauma in the first place. He transposed Hitler's personality onto his own.

Waters' work showed that power was dangerous and damaging whether between teachers and students, parents and children, governments and citizens, celebrities and groupies. The album was circular illustrating the way trauma was reproduced if it was not healed, and that it manifested in the form of power and relations of power—where those with authority dominated and oppressed those without it. It started with the same melody with which it ended, beginning with the words "...we came in?" and ending with "Isn't this where..."

Waters stood on the border between East and West Berlin in front of about four hundred thousand people singing about the sick society that made people and countries into fortresses—about how a person cut himself off from others because of the unhealed trauma that he had lived. Evie would later wonder whether that day in Berlin was a celebration of the fall of the wall or a warning about what the past can teach us about our possible futures. Her grandmother would have taken it as a warning.

## Necessary Holocausts<sup>31</sup>

Evie sat at the kitchen table at her parents' home reading the November 1989 issue of *Time Magazine* which was full of photographs of people joyfully chipping away at the Berlin Wall.

"Look Bubby," she said excited by the possibility that the world was changing. But her grandmother's expression turned cold.

"The Germans are reuniting and you think this is a good thing?" she said. And she left the room.

♪ *Enola Gay,*  
*it shouldn't ever have to end this way*  
*Aha Enola Gay,*  
*it shouldn't fade in our dreams away*  
*It's 8:15,*  
*and that's the time that its always been*  
*We got your message on the radio,*  
*conditions normal and you're coming home*  
*Enola gay,*  
*is mother proud of little boy today*  
*Aha this kiss you give,*  
*it's never ever gonna fade away*

-OMD, *Enola Gay* ♪

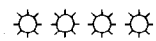
Startled, Evie was reminded how far removed she had been from understanding her grandmother's pain. Although she felt it in her heart and even in her body, she had difficulty grasping the human horror of a holocaust. Her grandmother's

whole family had been killed in concentration camps. She had come to Canada when she was fifteen and never saw them again. Evie wondered how her grandmother must have felt when she saw that Evie wasn't even thinking about that horrible history and, even worse, that she was happy about German reunification. Maybe her grandmother had become like Pink. Unable to deal with the traumas of history, she had also put up a wall. But unlike Pink, she had no groupies or drugs to deal with it; and her wall was never going to be torn down.

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<sup>31</sup> Enola Gay was the name of the plane that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima at 8:15am on Aug. 6, 1945.

When her grandmother died a year later, it was ironic that Evie understood what the rabbi was saying in Yiddish only because she was studying German; the two languages were close enough. Her grandparents had lost their language, their place of birth, and their history. Evie wondered if she had also lost hers, but how could you lose something you never had? No records remained as to where they came from or who had come before them. She could never trace her family history.



Meanwhile Evie found herself in international relations seminars where people were talking about things like deterrence and balance of power and debating whether or not Hiroshima was necessary to end World War II. Evie never said anything during these kinds of discussions. She could not speak. Instead she sat there wondering what was wrong with her. She didn't get it—how on earth could anyone argue that a nuclear holocaust that murdered and maimed thousands of people by fire was in any way, for any reason “necessary”? This wasn't about geo-political strategy, it was about people's lives.

### **Feminist (*Spain, summer 1990*)**

Evie was studying political science, language and literature. She loved the languages and literature part, but she hated her major. Once when she took an elective in drawing in the education department, she felt like she was in the right place. But she wouldn't be able to get a job if she studied art, would she? Every chance Evie had, she left town. Evie's father once told her about a girl who

♪ *My mind wreaks havoc  
On the order of my pen  
I feel like packing up  
And moving on again  
But when I write it down  
It doesn't look the same  
As the way I see it  
On the canvas in my brain*  
-Evie ♪

hitchhiked with a sign that said "anywhere but here."

He said that she reminded him of her.

Evie lived with her parents and saved up her money for a flight. After her first year, she bought a ticket to Spain and landed in Madrid with two

hundred dollars in her pocket. Her plan was to find work as an English teacher or in a bar on the Costa del Sol. And that's exactly what she did. That was the summer Evie decided to be a feminist. She had never been more overtly harassed by men in her life. She couldn't bear the way she was objectified. No one seemed to be interested in who she was, they only responded to her physical form. Although she had not yet developed serious ideas about what feminism really was, she began to seriously contemplate what it meant to be a woman, how women differed from men, and the challenges of living in a world dominated by men. She knew that her travel experiences would be different if she were male.

### **Accidents (Holland, summer 1991)**

When Evie was in Spain she met a Spanish guy who had grown up in Holland. They had a long distance relationship for a year. The summer after her second year of university, she visited him in Amsterdam. One night while they were driving on a winding road, he lost control of his red Sirocco. He was taking the curves too quickly, Evie felt, and it made her nervous. But right when she told him to slow down, he lost his grip on the steering wheel and the car flew off the

road at high speed. It bolted through a steel and glass bus shelter and into the forest. Evie was thinking about her parents.

“I can’t die,” she thought, “If I do they’ll be devastated.” But as it was happening, she realised that she couldn’t do anything about it. In that instant, she accepted the possibility of her own death, and also the fact that she had no control of her own destiny—and Evie let go. She had never done it before, but she surrendered to some higher power to decide her fate.

“If I die, I die,” something inside her said. “You decide.”

The next thing she knew she felt herself spinning in circles that got bigger and bigger and seemed to carry her upward. She was surrounded by darkness and then there were stars all around her. Everything became illuminated with a bright light. She felt an overwhelming peace—as if there had never been anything to worry about in the world. Although she couldn’t see anyone with her, she had a sense that she was not alone. She felt loved and supported, and, for the first time, she trusted that everything was perfect as it was. She saw every moment of her life replay before her as if on a movie screen—the time she had hurt people without knowing, the things she had said that were unkind, the way her parents felt when she did not think of their feelings, the ways she disrespected herself...or how she had tried to be there for others, or showed love and care to people and animals. One by one, she watched how her actions affected those around her. And then her grandmother appeared. She was wearing white. Evie had never seen her that young, or not looking tired, but she knew it was her.

"I'm sorry," Evie said. "I didn't know you were going to die." But all Evie felt was love—like everything she had ever done and said was okay. She wondered if she had in fact died. Was she in heaven?

"You must wake up," it wasn't a voice that spoke, but more of a feeling.

"I like it here," Evie said because she felt no pain of any kind.

"You must go back." But Evie wanted to stay where she was.

"Every life has a purpose. You have not fulfilled yours. You have more work to do and many things to accomplish."

"A purpose? What's my purpose?"

Hundreds of glowing figures stood illuminated all around her. She could not see their faces, but Evie felt she was not alone. They were there to support her. They loved her. They had always been there and would never leave her. She wondered if they were angels.

## **Angels**

"You must have a guardian angel," a man in a white coat with a kind face had his hand on Evie's and was standing over her. She was lying in a hospital bed.

The car had been completely wrecked and the ambulance technicians were amazed that they had survived.

"It's a miracle," the nurse said as she picked shards of glass from Evie's hands and face. "What are the chances of driving like that into a forest and not hitting a tree?"

Evie had a concussion and stayed in the hospital for a couple of days. Her boyfriend had walked out of the wreck without a scratch.

"I thought you were dead," he said. "You weren't breathing after we crashed. I tried to get you out of the seat, but I had to run to the road to stop someone so we could call an ambulance. I'm so sorry, Evie."

"It's okay," she said, but after returning home to Montreal that summer, she didn't see him again until she moved to Amsterdam to do her Master's three years later.

Adam, who was visiting his mother in Holland for a few weeks that summer, came to see Evie everyday—both in the hospital and, later, when she was recovered enough, at her boyfriend's house.

"Ad," she asked him. "Do you believe in angels?"

### **Remembering Lost Love** (*Montreal, winter 1992*)

One night when Evie was supposed to be finishing a paper, she found herself looking through a box of old letters and came across a photograph of her Israeli boyfriend, Arik. He was wearing a black *Sisters of Mercy* t-shirt posing with his German shepherd. On the back of the photo, Arik had written in Hebrew, a language Evie could no longer really speak: "I miss your belly button." He had sent the snapshot to her on the kibbutz. Nothing was ever the same after she left Israel, she thought—as if she had lost hope or something inside her had broken. She had been so close to something that she felt must have been love. But

maybe love was ever elusive, always slipping through your fingers like grains of sand.

A year had passed since Evie and Arik had stopped writing. She was just too stressed out with school to answer his letters. Looking at the photograph, she remembered when they had been together on the little mattress on the floor in the alcove of his mother's living room that he used as a bedroom—how they would lie and talk for hours amidst stacks of tapes of alternative music. As if no time had passed, she recalled how his body felt against hers, and his heart beating. She wondered what would have happened if she had stayed. But when you're so young, you don't always notice the miraculous nature of chance encounters—how unlikely it is for two people who have everything in common to meet. You don't realise that these kinds of meetings don't happen as often as you think they will. With the photograph in hand, Evie suddenly understood: She had never wanted to leave Arik; she needed to get away from war. Evie was afraid that maybe war would always win out over love.

**What Now?** (*McGill University, Montreal 1992*)

After her last exam, Evie sat at the university pub drinking beer with some people from her class. The year was 1992, the middle of a world-wide recession. The economy in Montreal had gone downhill since Quebec had threatened to separate from Canada. Apartments were dirt cheap and in abundant supply. Shops in the busiest part of the city were boarded up, and unemployment was sky high. They drank and reflected on how they had spent their entire lives doing



what they thought they had to do, to get where they thought they had to go. But now that it was over and they were free none of the students were really sure where that was.

***A visit to the museum in Peace Park is a harrowing experience. The photographs and artefacts on display together summon up an eschatological vision of ruin—paralysed clocks, human forms burnt into the pavement, hideous wounds and tumours. Crowds of tourists and Japanese schoolchildren flood through the hall every day, most of them struck silent by the carefully catalogued assemblage of horror. ‘No more Hiroshimas’, ‘never again’, ‘the evil must never be repeated’—these are slogans with which few people are likely to disagree.***

—Tasker (275)

Evie had lived in fight or flight. She had no apparent injuries after the accident, but the occasional headaches she had before got worse and she developed severe back pain. She never told her parents about the accident because she didn't want to upset them. They thought that her discomfort came from studying so much. Physiotherapy didn't help very much, so she tried to ignore it and pushed herself to complete the last year of her BA. She became very good at surviving. Evie worked like crazy to meet deadlines, make some extra cash, all the while trying to deal with the pain, insomnia, and exhaustion. It never occurred to her to stop or to try to find someone other than the doctors and therapists she had already seen who could help her. She hadn't had a moment to look inside—let alone find her purpose.

That day at the pub, she experienced the biggest anti-climax of her life. She didn't know almost anything about what she wanted except that she longed to travel. Like many other Westerners in search of work at the time, she went to Japan to teach English. After she visited the museum in Hiroshima, she had to sit down in the nearby Peace Park and cry. She watched as hundreds of children on

school trips hung multi-coloured paper cranes on all the trees. As symbols of peace and prosperity, the birds reflected hundreds of thousands of wishes for a world without war. In that world, people would probably have a better idea of what they were actually doing and why.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL *YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION* MEXICO (1968-1969/1997-1998)

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#### Protest – Mexico 1968 (About Uncle Lee’s friends Steve and Laura)

*This is no new war. This war has a five-hundred year history. This is the same war of resistance that the indigenous peoples of the Americas have never ceased to fight. We are all part of the old stories. Whether we know the stories or not, the stories know about us.*

-Marmon Silko in Katzenberger (205)  
on the Zapatista Revolution 1994

When Laura and Steve returned to their apartment in Mexico City after their trip to India in 1968 (where they had met Evie’s Uncle Lee and Adam’s parents Tom and

Heidi), the country was in a state of unrest. Revolutionary fervor buzzed in the streets like an electric power station pumped to full capacity. Everyone they knew was wired. The government responded to ongoing protests by occupying the biggest university in the city. The army went around arresting and beating students randomly with no provocation.

One evening in October, Laura and Steve joined their friends and about fifteen thousand other students to march against the occupation. They were trying to attract international attention to government oppression just before the Mexican capital was supposed to host the Olympics. They met at Tlatelolco Square chanting: *We don't want the Olympics, we want revolution!*

Steve had never experienced anything like it. He felt the power of thousands of angry people crying out against injustice. The force was like the crashing of Pacific waves that could take anything down. But when the army started firing at the crowd he couldn’t believe what was happening. Everyone

began to run for their lives. He would recall later how fast it all took place while at the same time it felt as if everything were in slow motion. People fell to the ground, ran by bleeding, screaming, and wailing in terror. Steve clutched Laura's hand and hurried away from the tanks that surrounded the plaza. But about three hundred people never made it. Later they heard that when the bodies began to pile up, the army took them away in garbage trucks. Laura and Steve would never be able to forget this clear illustration of how little this government valued human life.

From then on, they knew they needed a new strategy for changing the world. The intended peaceful demonstration had led to unspeakable violence. Some people they knew became more militant in face of continued government oppression. Many of their enraged friends and acquaintances began to organise to protect human rights. In the countryside, many groups formed guerrilla armies to fight what became known as the government's *Dirty War* against its own citizens. But Laura and Steve didn't know what to do. Something in them had broken. The trauma had taken from them their will to fight. That autumn night they fell into a period of silence because they instinctively knew it was golden. They abandoned their idealism for a realism that teetered for a long time on the edge of hope and despair. Their daughter Xochi, however, would be a fighter.

### **Flowers and Songs** (*Mexico 1969*)

Laura relished the contrast between her New York life and the aliveness of Mexico—the place where her mother was born and raised. She felt she was

connecting not only with her roots, but with something more fundamental. One day at the *National Museum of Anthropology and History* at Chapultepec Park in Mexico City, she found words to describe her feelings. On an enormous marble plaque at the entrance to the building it said: *Must I go just like this? Like the flowers that perish? Will nothing remain of my name? Nothing of my fame here on earth? At least flowers, at least songs!* It had been written by an Aztec scholar. Life in American cities, she felt, was devoid of flowers and songs. But in Mexico she could slow down. She found time to stop and smell the flowers, or pause and listen to the songs. Something had been missing that she had found on the other side, *el otro lado*—a term often used by Mexicans to refer to the United States that made sense to her. Crossing the border felt somewhat like moving from Kansas to Oz: Suddenly things appeared to be in Technicolor and magic was a normal part of everyday life. Or it was like traversing the line from life to death and finding out what really mattered after all when everything else fell away.

Steve told her that flowers and songs were euphemisms for the soul or the essence of life. The Aztecs believed it was all that would remain after death. In their culture, the artist was the intermediary between the gods and the people. Their job was to bring flowers and songs to the world through their art. Since prophecy taught that their civilisation would fall and that the world would come to an end, the artist was the only hope. Only he could protect the people from destruction by bringing to them something that would live forever. The entire planet might perish, but flowers and songs would remain.

Laura got home that day with renewed inspiration for her painting. She was working on a still life of flowers she had bought in the Coyoacan market. She was imagining what songs would look like if they were colours, when the doctor called. The pregnancy test was positive. Laura decided that if the baby was a girl, they would call her Xochi, a common Mexican name, the Nahuatl word for *flower*. Xochi would be the most beautiful thing she could leave behind when she was gone. As flowers do, Xochi arrived in the springtime, followed three minutes later by her brother Noah.

### **Survival Strategies** (*Evie arrives in Mexico 1997*)

***...if I did not recover soon, how would I be able to pay my bills? In this sense of the word, how would I survive?***

-Griffin (17)

Evie got a Foreign Government Award to study in Mexico. Her motivation was partly an attempt to cope with chronic pain, a survival strategy. She had received the diagnosis of fibromyalgia only a few months earlier. Her doctor had prescribed various medications for her to try, but they didn't seem to help. Even after several visits to the Pain Clinic at the Royal Victoria Hospital and consultations with rheumatologists, Evie still had no answers about how to feel better.

"What do I do?" Evie asked her GP. "It's hard for me to function sometimes."

"Go on welfare," he said sympathetically shrugging his shoulders. Evie shuddered at the implications of this. He couldn't offer her any other solution. Did

he expect her to live with her parents forever, to give up on having any sort of career, and to survive on a few hundred dollars a month for the rest of her life?

Evie went home and wept for hours. Her parents felt helpless and didn't know what she should do either. So mostly she didn't talk to them about her predicament. She didn't want to be a burden. But she was determined to live. She wiped her tears and recovered her composure and resolved to find a way to continue working to make the world a better place. After meeting with a few professors and human rights activists, Evie applied for a scholarship. If she did academic research, she reasoned, she could still work part-time to earn money, but her schedule would be more flexible. A few months later, she arrived in Mexico hoping for a new life.

Laura and Steve, who her Uncle Lee had remained close with since they met in India, insisted that Evie stay with them in Coyoacan until she found her own place. But within a couple of weeks, their daughter Xochi kicked her boyfriend out of the apartment they shared near the university and asked Evie if she wanted to move in. Evie was happy to accept the invitation.

Xochi threw a housewarming party so that Evie could meet her friends. One of the first things Evie noticed that evening was that the socially accepted radius of personal space granted others was much smaller in Mexico than she was used to in Canada or Europe. She found herself leaning back every time she had a conversation with someone. She wasn't comfortable with the closeness. A general rule for her was that if you are close enough to smell the other person's

breath and you are not romantically involved or aiding them in a medical emergency—it was too close. Luckily, no one she spoke to had terrible breath.

Most Mexicans Evie knew danced and drank a lot at the parties that someone always seemed to be having. Noah, Xochi's twin brother, showed her how to salsa—which Evie translated as pelvic thrusting your partner to a Latin beat. Merengue was faster and salsa was slower. She didn't want just anyone's pelvis that close to hers, but Noah was cool. She would have to get used to the space thing. But it didn't matter that much after you had a few shots of tequila.

Evie woke early in the morning dreaming she was chugging down bottles of cool, fresh water. Her thirst was so intense, she couldn't sleep. She went to the kitchen but there was no water. In Mexico, you couldn't drink from the tap and there was nothing in the fridge but milk and beer. Finally, Evie found a couple of oranges, which she squeezed with her bare hands directly into her mouth. It helped her feel like she might survive a few more minutes. She couldn't fathom going out into the street to look for a shop. Instead she went back in bed and lay there for a few hours in terrible pain. Whenever Evie got a hangover, what Xochi called “la palida”, she would feel it in her whole body. She lay there for a long time feeling sorry for the street dogs who were barking outside. She listened to the sounds emanating from the room where Xochi was sleeping with some guy—the continuous coughing and throat-clearing, typical of Chilangos. Mexico City dwellers had all kinds of respiratory problems from the pollution. Evie hoped she wouldn't develop any, but given what she'd heard so far, that seemed unlikely.



“Qué te pasa, amiguita?” Xochi wanted to know what was wrong with her when she saw Evie later that morning. “You look like shit... La palida!”

## Warriors

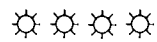
***‘To civilize’ is a key expression. In Mexico, civilizing has always meant de-Indianizing, imposing the ways of the West.***

- Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (105)

In Mexico, Evie was a visible minority. Whenever she went for a walk, she was aware that she looked different than the average Mexican and that everyone noticed. Even though Mexico was supposed to be a hybrid, mestizo nation—a mix between indigenous and European—most people didn’t look white at all. Evie got honks or loud kissing noises from men in cars. She found out quickly that a person got special treatment for being white. She would discover this in other places in the world, too: looking European was considered attractive. Even if your own mother couldn’t stand your face at home, you’d probably still be gorgeous in many non-Western countries. On billboards and on TV, the “beautiful people” were never brown, small, with the thick indigenous features of most Mexicans. Evie and her white expat friends joked that they were much better looking in Mexico than at home—at least they got way more attention.

“Pendejos! Goddamn idiots!” Xochi screamed after the cars that honked at them. “Yeah, they like white skin. They’ll call you Güerra—which means white-skinned woman—as a term of affection. But it’s not just that. It’s just that Mexicans love to fall in and out of love. They love to suffer for love. They sing and cry about love. But for the most part, these pinche cabrones, these bastards,

have no idea what love is.” She paused to brush her straight black hair off her face. “That’s the same as anywhere, I guess.”



The night before leaving for the mountains where Evie was going to do some of her research, she dreamed that she gave birth to a baby boy. She watched him grow into a man. She witnessed all the phases of his life and was filled with love.

Evie was excited about the trip—and especially the fact that she would be the first person to write about women in la Montaña of Guerrero. Xochi loved that. She was the bass player in an all-girls punk band whose music was staunchly political, feminist, and anti-establishment. She had spent much of her life in the region and besides being involved with an anarchist youth collective that prepared food, swapped clothes, books and did guerrilla art and gardening around the city, she was very active with a human rights organisation in Tlapa—the same town where Evie and Adam first connected on the roof of the Posada del Sol.

“I’m glad you want to do this, Evie,” Xochi said as they drove through the thick smog on the huge four lane streets of the city in Noah’s noisy white VW Beetle.

Few people knew anything about the mountains of Guerrero. Most Mexicans had never even heard of Tlapa, its main town. Guerrero, like its name which meant “warrior”, had a history of and reputation for violence. Steve, Xochi’s father, loved it. He found archaeological treasures there that no-one knew about

except for the locals who still used them in their rituals. La Montaña was also so marginalised economically and geographically that it kept people away. Being so far up in the mountains with few roads, some villages could only be accessed through footpaths. There were no natural resources to be fought over except for the trees that were being cut down at an alarming rate. The people of the region spent half the year working elsewhere and the other half growing and harvesting corn.

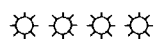
“People that go to the city to sell things are the lucky ones,” Xochi said. “Most of the men here work as peones—labourers in construction or as farmhands.”

On the way, they passed dry mountains with few trees and a lot of cactus. The two-lane highway was the only paved road the whole way. All those leading off it were not. They were lined mostly with one story rectangular houses made of concrete brick and tin roofs.

“These are the rich towns,” Xochi said.

What amazed Evie was that all the houses had satellite dishes. When she asked Xochi about it, she said:

“Whole families live in these shacks and sleep on hammocks and dirt floors, but they all have TVs. Only half have fridges. But once they see how the gringos live, it’s very hard for them to be satisfied.”



When they arrived at the human rights centre in Tlapa seven hours later, Abel, the anthropologist who ran it, came to the hotel to greet them. They had

dinner there with a few of the lawyers who worked for the Centre. Abel was a big dark man with a round face with big pock-marked cheeks, a black mustache and a deep rolling belly laugh. Evie's vegetarianism and whether or not she liked chile was a celebrated topic of conversation. They talked about food for quite a while and when she added salsa to her tostadas, everyone let out a little cheer. They seemed to think that gringos never ate spicy food. Evie was amazed how everyone fell silent when they ate so that all you could hear was cutlery clinking, slurping, and chewing. They didn't take breaks to chat, but focused intently on devouring their meal. After dinner, Evie and Xochi went to sleep in their yellow room with the blue metal door.

At about three o'clock in the morning, Evie woke to someone snoring like a Mac truck and every few minutes she had to flick an ant off her body. She tossed and turned trying to find a comfortable position while Xochi seemed to be sleeping soundly. Evie woke to church bells possibly only minutes after she had finally fallen asleep again. Although she heard nine bells, her alarm clock said it was five to six. At 6:45 they chimed again. This made no sense to her and seemed in no way to be related to the actual time. She wondered if this was Mexican time. Unable to fall back asleep, she got up at about 7:30 and went downstairs for breakfast. She ordered an orange juice and a sweet roll but felt too tired to really eat.

After breakfast, she and Xochi walked over to the Human Rights Centre which was in the other hotel in town. Like the Posada del Sol, it was made of concrete, had metal doors and was built around a courtyard. Abel gave her a pile

of articles and books about the region. The office was a stuffy but bearable room with a few desks, bookshelves, a computer and a fax machine. Xochi told Evie how many men from the area migrate to the States—Los Angeles, Chicago or New York—and go through a harrowing journey to get there. They sometimes managed to scrape together enough money to send back to their families. Others migrated to Mexico City or Chilpancingo, the capital or Guerrero, where they might make up to forty pesos a day. If they went to the nearby town of Tlapa, they might make just twenty, about four Canadian dollars. Usually men wouldn't even allow their wives to work because it meant he couldn't provide for his family.

"It's an insult to their manhood," Xochi said. "I know a woman who was offered a full-time stable job with the City Hall and her husband wouldn't let her take it. A woman better be home when her husband gets in otherwise she might get a beating. That's a big problem here."

### **Teachers' Meeting** (*Axoxuca, indigenous village near Tlapa*)

***I'd rather die fighting on my feet, than live on my knees.***  
- Emiliano Zapata

The army and police were ordered by the government to crack down on any kind of political uprising that took place in Guerrero—especially the mountains which were completely militarised. Teachers were especially suspect because they had the power to influence people. The authorities believed that many had connections with the EPR, the popular revolutionary army. The guerrilla army was fighting against government oppression and surveillance. It formed in June 1996 in response to the massacre of sixteen peasants by the police. The

government had been engaged in a low-intensity “Dirty War” against the people in Guerrero since the sixties. They put everyone under observation, searched houses, interrogated whomever they wanted, and blacklisted suspects.

“The EPR doesn’t have a clear definition of what they’re doing although they use Marxist-Leninist language,” Xochi told her.

“Even after the fall of communism in Europe?”

“What’s Europe, Evie? What do they have to do with us?” Evie could think of a few things, but she knew what Xochi meant.

Abel had taken them in his pick-up truck over horrendous roads to a village where two teachers had been murdered by the army. They met in a one-room rectangular building used by school staff. The room was made of large grey concrete bricks that matched the dusty cement floor and was lit by a bare dim bulb that hung from a string. They sat on chairs made of wood and straw that looked to Evie like those she had seen in Van Gogh paintings. About thirty or so men showed up for the meeting and only about four women. Evie, who was five foot nine, was at least a head taller than most of the men and towered over the tiny women who looked dwarfish to her. The three men who were leading the meeting sat at a table with a blackboard behind it. Dogs were howling madly in the background. The father and brother of one of the murdered teachers sat next to Evie. They looked like father and son, like younger and older versions of the same person. They both held their straw sombreros on their knees and seemed bewildered. Evie figured they were still in shock. Everyone shared stories about different examples about the army and police violations.

“Those teachers were murdered for purely political reasons,” someone said. “And who’s going to help us? No one. This happened in El Salvador and Guatemala and it’s just going to get worse.”

The meeting ended several hours later with everyone giving a little donation to the family so they could stay in Tlapa and give their testimony at the human rights centre.

## Faith

*Reality—that is, the world that surrounds us—exists by itself here, has a life of its own, and was not invented by man as it was in the United States.*

—Octavio Paz

Who was she to say that the Virgin Mary was not hovering in the sky above the church? She could have been. After all, it was the Day of the Virgin. Hundreds of people gathered in the Tlapa churchyard which was fenced in by tall white walls and shaded by enormous palms and oak trees. Dressed in traditional clothing, the locals were commemorating the moment in 1531 when the Virgin of Guadalupe—Mexico’s brown-skinned Madonna—was first seen by Juan Diego, an Indian peasant. The men and boys wore white cotton pants and shirts, with leather *huaraches* (sandals) on their feet. Little boys donned straw hats and painted-on moustaches just like Diego himself. Many of the women had on white dresses with colourful embroidery and shawls—not a far stretch from what a lot of the indigenous women still wore. Evie was taking photographs trying not to feel like some kind of conquistador, when a hush, then a din of oohing and aahing came over the

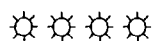
crowd and everyone began pointing upward. When she looked, she saw a vague apparition of a rainbow in the sunny sky.

And then someone said: “*Mira!* Look! It’s la Virgen!”

It had never occurred to Evie that such a thing could happen. Naturally, she was sceptical. But the rumours quickly spread throughout the town that the Virgin had appeared to the crowd that afternoon. When Evie went to the store to buy some bottled water, the vendor asked if she had been at the church. At the hotel restaurant, the cook was telling the story when they were having dinner.

She later discovered that there were over three hundred sightings of Mexico’s *Virgen de Guadalupe* a year. On the day that Evie would leave Mexico, the ethereal matriarch would be seen in the form of a water stain inside *Hidalgo* subway station. The sight would draw so many people that it would have to be removed from the interior and set in a shrine outside.

If it appeared to so many people, maybe it was real? Evie thought. Every day in Mexico someone would see the Madonna on a piece of toast or in a tortilla. Did she appear only because they believed in her? Like lying in the grass looking up at the clouds, Evie would regularly investigate her lunch for signs of some sort of miracle. In a random sandwich or a pancake brunch she would try to find something to believe in.



Urbano, a priest in one of the villages, told Evie about the plight of the indigenous people of the mountains. He exuded a sweetness that she noticed right away. His was the face of a gentle man. They walked down the dirt road



from the community hall, past the basketball courts to the local white-washed baroque church that the Spanish had built in the sixteenth century. Urbano pointed out the *figuras sagradas*—the sacred statues of saints that stood protected in glass cabinets alongside the church walls. Evie was surprised at the anguished face of the most bloody Jesus she had ever seen. The priest told her that the icons needed to reflect the reality of the people.

“They need to believe that *el Cristo* suffered more than they do. That’s why he’s so bloody. Usually these figures are made indigenous,” the priest told her. He pointed to the statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe. “Her skin is dark and her face is distorted by suffering. You see the way her hands are thick and strong like the *indios*?”

Urbano paused and then asked Evie, “What is the name of the Virgin Mary in your country?”

Evie didn’t feel that qualified to answer any questions about the virgin mother of Jesus Christ, but as far as she knew, Quebec didn’t have any special name for Mother Mary. Nor had she any clue why she needed more than one name. Steve had advised her to tell everyone that she was Catholic.

“The people here might not trust you if they know you’re Jewish,” he had said. “They have no idea what that means.” Although she understood, this made Evie feel like she always had—that people might not like her if they knew the truth about who she was.

“She’s just the Virgin Mary,” Evie told Urbano. “We don’t have any nationalised version of her like you do in Mexico.” The priest looked like he didn’t

get it, but nodded anyway leaving Evie wondering whether she'd said something wrong.

As they walked back down the dirt path, a couple of little girls stood by giggling stupidly and yelling *Gringa!* which, unless it was used as a joke by a teasing friend, was meant as an insult. Although this kind of outburst didn't happen very often, Evie still felt as if she'd been slighted.

**A Beaten Path - Christmas Trip to the Land of the Maya**  
(*South of Mexico-Chiapas, Guatemala*)

♪ *The people with power hate you  
And there are more people  
who want to kick in their heads  
If you give more power to power  
The more they will screw you over  
They treat us badly because  
we're a world-wide force and we're poor*  
-translation of *Dame todo el poder*  
by Molotov ♪

The land of the Maya was miles away, but Evie took something back with her—not like a virus or a memory, but more like a haunting. Although a beaten path, the *Ruta Maya*, left her

with the ineffable sensation of having been on hallowed ground. She had experienced some kind of intimacy with both death and life. In travel, you feel just how big and little you are. When you walk amidst the ruins of cities that had been mapped in the stars or float on a volcanic lake with no known bottom like the one in Guatemala, you have a sense of the insignificance of your own corporeality, but also the possibility of your own divinity. In the snowy peaks of volcanoes and in the limestone surfaces of stepped pyramids, Evie saw glimmers of her own hopes and fears.

In Guatemala, they were digging up mass graves of civilians murdered by the military, finally commemorating the attempted genocide of its indigenous

population. She was in the Gringo haven of Antigua, feasting on Thai coconut curry for the first time after months in Mexico, with some strange sense that she had been deprived. Just over the border in Chiapas, a paramilitary group controlled by the government, massacred forty-five men, women and children in Acteal.

A week later, in a bar in San Cristóbal, it struck Evie what it meant to live in a police state. She was drinking Caronas with a government human rights lawyer she knew from her work in the mountains who she happened to run into in the zócalo (the central square). She had laughed with him, could attest to his humanity. He must have known that his work for the government was a sham. Or maybe he was lying to himself? She told him about the drive from Tikal in Guatemala back to Chiapas in Mexico through an area that was originally rainforest. The bus had struggled over a bumpy unpaved road with nothing on either side but acres of tree stumps. Evie felt as if they were crossing through a vast cemetery like those war memorials with simple white identical crosses lined up—row after row of young lives wasted. She wondered if he really cared.

After the meeting, Evie had to excavate herself from all the ruins—the buildings, the land, the bodies both dead and alive of hopeful strangers. An hour later, she impulsively got on a bus and headed back to Mexico City. She felt like she had to get out of Chiapas. Besides, it was a friend's birthday and there would be a party. The trip took a hellish eighteen hours as soldiers got on and off at six military checkpoints requesting the i.d.'s of young, Mexican men who, because of

their age, might be involved in subversive activity. Evie found herself wondering things like how the bus would be if instead of seats there were hammocks.

The next day, despite her exhaustion, Evie accompanied Xochi to the march where a quarter of a million people demanded peace for Chiapas. They protested the massacre, military occupation in indigenous villages, globalisation and the neo-liberal policies that benefitted the rich, leaving the rest of the population impoverished. They demanded a democratic government that would be responsive to the people. This kind of demonstration would have been impossible up until a few months earlier when the opposition PRD party (The Democratic Reform Party) took power in the capital. Women, men, and children of all ages and backgrounds—students, workers, artists, professionals, activists—shouted together: “The government, murderers!”, “Zapata lives, the struggle continues!”, “Fuck your mother, Presidente!” For the first time in generations, they were allowed to publicly express their rage at the corrupt government.

Behind all this, Evie sensed the lingering gravity of death—the accusations of murder, the images of grim reapers and the fake coffins, the black balaclavas covering faces that revealed eyes gleaming with what she read as a desire not just to survive but to live—and the possibility that they would do anything to realise this impulse. In them, she saw her own eyes, her own anger. She could not shake the unbearable thought that her own government had paid for the training and the equipment of the Mexican army. In the crowd, Evie sensed her own brutality, the unrelenting fury for all the injustices of the world—

but she also found her humanity. The fight for justice, dignity and liberty demanded by the Zapatistas, she realised, was part of a greater human struggle that transgresses all boundaries—an urge to live a life free of pain. She identified with this plight. Her fight for social justice was compounded by her own rage at the unresponsiveness of her own government’s health care system. She had tried everything to get help, but could not get the kind of support she needed to heal her pain. The Canadian government could not help heal their own citizens, but they could supply the means to kill those of other countries.

When they finally reached the zócalo, the crowd cried out as busloads of indigenous people from the south joined them. Over and over they chanted in a touching display of solidarity: “You are not alone! You are not alone!” Evie struggled to hold back her tears as if the words had been addressed to her.

### **The Chicken Man**

*Me or my body  
Like chicken and egg  
What did come first  
the pain or the dead?  
I can't find the words  
I can't tell anyone  
but each day I wonder  
how I'll carry on  
I don't have a home  
Not even in me  
of this achy body  
I long to be free  
of this angry country  
I'm feeling in me  
-Evie*

At dawn one Saturday morning, Evie woke to a pounding that was so loud she thought someone might be hitting the building with a wrecking ball. She looked out the window, but saw nothing unusual. She tried to go back to sleep, but couldn't. Instead she lay in bed listening to the banging reverberate through brick and concrete. It had no rhythm but rather an unnatural

irregularity that left her anticipating the next beat. The noise continued all morning and then the next day. On a normal night, it took Evie hours to fall

asleep—even when she was totally exhausted. Sometimes she wouldn't nod off until dawn. Even when she was asleep, her rest was so precarious that she would wake up throughout the night. She needed at least a few mornings to catch up to be able to function. She lost many days like this, doing nothing but eating, watching TV or lying in bed tossing and turning. On the third day, having not slept in two, she knocked on the door of Xochi's room which was slightly open.

“Are you awake?” But it didn't look like she was. Xochi groaned but did not stir. “How could you sleep through this?”

“I can't.”

They weren't sure where the sound was coming from and thought it was just construction and that it would pass. But when it recurred the next day, Xochi went downstairs to investigate. When she came back up, she said:

“It's the pinche Chicken Man.”

“The Chicken Man?”

“Yeah, he's moved in next door. He's tenderising his chickens.”

Evie waited one more day to see what would happen. When it continued, she went downstairs to talk to the Chicken Man herself. For Xochi, it meant waking up about an hour and a half early for work. She lay in bed cursing both chickens and men until she had to get up. Xochi just got to sleep earlier. Evie, on the other hand, was a complete mess. The more she couldn't sleep, the more she was running on adrenaline, which made it difficult to fall asleep. She tried to get by on coffee, but her nerves were shot. So she smoked too many cigarettes

and, too tired to cook her own food, ate tortas at the sandwich shop down the road. Her exhaustion became so deep and unbearable, her bones ached and she had trouble thinking and speaking. The pain became more severe and she spent much of the day lying in bed crying, trying to take a nap.

“What the hell is wrong with me?” Evie asked herself out loud one afternoon. She had not been to the university or to the centre where she was volunteering for over a week. She wondered if she should move, but she didn’t even have the strength to think about that. And, besides, where would she go? By the end of the second week, both Evie and Xochi had spoken to the Chicken Man, his landlady, and their own to see if something could be done—like maybe he could skip weekends or start later or...something. But, the response they got was something like: *This was Mexico. Things didn’t work like they did in Gringolandia*. Nobody was interested or they didn’t understand the fact that the whole situation was causing Evie’s physical and emotional deterioration.

“It doesn’t matter that it’s a residential area,” Xochi said. “We’re in Mexico—the law’s not important. You’re a woman and you’re a Gringa and besides that, they think you’re rich. Who’s going to take your side over a working man just trying to earn his living? They will always see you as different—even if you spent most of your life here, speak the language perfectly, and come from a Mexican mother. They’ll still call you *Gringa*! Damn that Chicken Man!”

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL *YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION* SOUTH AFRICA (1967/1998-1999)

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The Struggle, Durban 1967  
(About Uncle Lee's friend Nicky)

*♪ I knew a man who lived in fear  
It was huge, it was angry,  
it was drawing near  
Behind his house, a secret place  
Was the shadow of the demon  
he could never face  
He built a wall of steel and flame  
And men with guns, to keep it tame  
Then standing back, he made it plain  
That the nightmare would  
never ever rise again  
But the fear and the fire  
and the guns remain*

*It doesn't matter now  
It's over anyhow  
He tells the world that it's sleeping  
But as the night came round  
I heard its lonely sound  
It wasn't roaring, it was weeping*

-Vusi Mahlasela, *Weeping* ♪

Nicky Hicks was on the run.

"That's what it felt like," he told

Lee, Heidi and Tom in India in 1968, but he couldn't decide if it was on purpose or quite by accident.

"I don't know if I did the right thing.

I just had to get away from home." He

was bemoaning South Africa's Apartheid policy of racial segregation, and the

brutality of the way "Whites" were treating

non-whites or anyone who dared to oppose the authoritarian regime.

"When you live with madness all around you all the time, and your parents are mad, and your teachers beat you in school, and the government kills people because of the colour of their skin, their sexual orientation or their political views, you feel not so right in the head yourself. Know what I mean?"

The others said they understood. The world was run by a corrupt, insane power-hungry elite, they agreed. But Nicky was sure they didn't really know what



he meant. They had never lived in South Africa. They didn't understand the struggle.

On the surface, things were relatively quiet in the late sixties. The white supremacist government had worked tirelessly to put down resistance. Protestors had been massacred and opposition leaders like Nelson Mandela had been jailed for life. The political activity of the entire population was meticulously policed and controlled. The oppression writhed in Nicky's belly like a seething cauldron of anger and despair he knew would one day explode. He couldn't tell if it was his own or if it belonged to the country as a whole.

Nicky came from an English family that had lived in Durban for well over a century. In his heart and blood and bones, he felt as African as if he had been a seed planted there that had grown up out of the land itself. He loved his city and often felt grateful that he had been born in a tropical paradise teeming with life—thick vegetation, rolling green hills, birds calling in a myriad of voices all day long. He loved to feel the moisture of the rich, red earth on his feet in his best friend, Jimmy's backyard garden. And more than anything, Nicky loved the ocean. He would watch the waves crash and foam onto the shore and the sun glistening off the surface of the aqua blue water. He'd look out past the docks and the shark nets to the horizon. The life force of the water in its power and calm always saved him. He would grab his board and head down to North Beach whenever he needed to get away from it all. Riding the mighty waves made him feel that things were not as out of control as they sometimes seemed. Like a rising sun or moon, he often felt as if he were the only thing between the water and the sky.

For many years, Nicky would sit at North Beach on benches labelled “Europeans” with Jimmy, clutching his surfboard like a security blanket. They would make fun of the hordes of sun burnt Afrikaner tourists who had travelled south to bask in the Durban sun. Fat Praetorians smeared tanning oil on their wives who gloated on the part of the sand reserved for whites only. As Nicky got older, it became harder to see past the beach to the horizon. He would try to comfort himself with a vanilla ice cream cone that he always bought from the same friendly Indian vendor who would graciously pile on extra chocolate bits without being asked. He never stopped being moved by these small gestures of kindness.

Like many of their friends, Nicky and Jimmy’s mandatory military service had been deferred when they finished high school so they could go to university. But the prospect that they would have to go to the army when they graduated loomed like a pair of hard-hearted bullies waiting for their victims at the school gate. Nicky and Jimmy decided that either they would have to leave the country when the time came or they would have to change it. They began to attend political meetings to discuss the virtues of democracy and their hopes to end Apartheid. They got involved with a radical group of students, some of whom were part of a meditation group that would meet once a week.

“If we can’t free South Africa, at least we could free our minds!” Jimmy had joked.

Nicky and Jimmy met as often as possible to meditate. They read books on Hinduism and Buddhism which they discussed at length while smoking joints

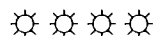
in Jimmy's backyard late at night. But soon that wasn't good enough. Nicky and Jimmy wanted to experience the real thing. They wanted to learn about spirituality in India. Although Durban had the largest Indian population outside the subcontinent itself, and had even been home to Gandhi, they knew that if they ever wanted to immerse themselves in Indian culture, they would have to leave South Africa where strict segregation laws made this difficult. A boat crossed the Indian Ocean from Durban to Bombay and they devised a plan about how they would eventually be on it.

A few weeks later, Nicky arrived at Jimmy's flat with a map of India tucked under his arm but found no sign of his friend. When about ten days passed with no news from him, Nicky panicked.

When Nicky's mother made him tell her what was wrong, she forbade him from being politically active.

"You'll ruin your life!" she told him one night. "You'll get yourself killed if you get involved with those radicals!"

But Nicky could not shake the sense that something somewhere was going to break any moment. And if it wasn't going to be South Africa, it would have to be him.



"I know where Jimmy is," Nicky's mother told him a few days later. As a nurse in the psychiatric ward at Addington Hospital on South Beach, Nicky's mother had witnessed the fate of many political activists. Nicky managed to convince her to let him come for a quick visit.

“But you must promise not to tell anyone! You must not make a fuss!” she said.

Nicky found Jimmy asleep tied to a bed. He reached over to wake him but when his eyes opened he just stared blankly. Nicky shook him but could not find a glimmer of recognition in Jimmy’s eyes.

“What did they do to him?!” Nicky demanded glaring at his mother who stood in front of the closed door.

“He’s just had therapy, Nicky. He’ll come around.”

“What did they do to him!!?” Nicky yelled.

“Shh! Keep your voice down!”

“You *tell* me what they did to him, Mother, or I swear to God, I’ll ransack this whole bloody ward!”

“Sit down! I’ll tell you. I’ll tell you what happened. Just sit down!”

Nicky sat on the chair at his friend’s bedside while his mother explained that Jimmy had been in a rage when he came in.

“He needed to be sedated. He was having a terrible fight with his father about some political pamphlets and it came to blows. A neighbour overheard and called the police. They found the pamphlets.”

“Oh God...” Nicky held his forehead with his left hand. He wasn’t going to tell his mother that he had designed them. Then it occurred to him: “What do *you* do here exactly?”

“I assist the doctors with the treatments and I care for the patients...”

“What kind of treatments?”

*♪ How long, just how long  
are we going to cry? It's  
been such a long time. Calm  
down, my people—we've  
been killing each other for  
too long now.*

-Busi Mholongo  
*Afrikan Nation, Calm!* ♪

"We use electric shock and new drug  
therapies so they won't be so agitated..."

"But there's nothing wrong with him!"

"It served him right, Nicky! He knew that  
what he was doing would get him in trouble! And

the same will happen to you if you're not careful!" Her face and ears turned beet  
red, and the veins in her neck strained.

Nicky stormed out of the room leaving his mother standing there stifling  
her urge to yell at him for fear that someone would hear. He ran all the way from  
South to North Beach in a heavy summer rain. He let it beat down on his face so  
that he couldn't tell the difference between the downpour and his tears. He  
sensed the vastness and depth of the ocean beside him and stopped at the  
shoreline to yell at the sky. He let out a scream that burst out from inside him like  
the thunder through the dark clouds. Just like the anger, frustration, and despair  
that he had carried with him for so long, there was no one there to see it, nor  
could it be heard above the sound of the ocean and the falling rain. What if they  
came for him next? He felt powerless to help anyone—himself, his friend, the  
entire country.

Nicky found his bench overlooking an empty, dark horizon and admired  
the capillaries of lightning that lit up the sky like a giant x-ray of someone's  
eyeball. He sat there listening to the thunder for what felt like ages until he knew  
what he had to do. Nobody could give you your freedom, he decided. You had to  
take it for yourself. He ran home up the hill, packed a small rucksack, took the

money he had saved and supplemented it with what his mother hid in a sock in a mothball-filled drawer. He also grabbed a few pieces of jewellery—the gold extracted from the land by the toiling hands of black miners. He went to the port to find a cheap hotel. On December 1st 1967, Nicky climbed aboard the SS Karanja. As the ship pulled away from the harbour, he inhaled deeply, tasting the sweet salty humid air in his throat and the elemental offering of rejuvenation. He looked out where the water met the sky to the place he knew Bombay was waiting, and he thanked the ocean for carrying him there.

**Singing** (*Evie connects with Nicky, Durban 1998*)

♪ *There's no one judging  
what we do  
No good or bad  
just black and blue*  
-Evie ♪

“So what happened to Jimmy?” Evie asked Nicky at the table in his apartment where they sat drinking roiboos tea. Evie had just woken up after a

long well-needed rest. She had spent two days in transit from Montreal to Durban. Nicky picked her up at the airport. Evie hadn't seen him since the time she first met Adam in Mexico when she was eleven. Although she expected him to look much older, he was almost the same as she remembered—slim and tanned with thick, dark brown hair, smiling mysteriously as he stood at the gate waiting to see if she'd recognise him.

They drove on the English side of the highway from the airport to his apartment in Berea—a middle-class white neighbourhood where blacks weren't allowed to enter freely just a few years earlier.

“Jimmy. He turned out to be okay. He lost some of his memory, though. He emigrated to Israel not long after. A lot of South African Jews went there instead of being drafted in the army here.”

“I know. I met a lot when I was there... Hey, does he have curly reddish hair and glasses?”

“Yeah, he does!”

“I met him! He came to visit Tom on the kibbutz.”

Nicky had been telling Evie the story about how he had first met her Uncle Lee.

“Tell me about the Beatles,” Evie said. “I just feel like I should know, you know? Like John Lennon is some sort of godfather to Adam and me or like a harbinger of our life missions.”

“Which are?”

“I don’t know. Adam and I tried to figure it out—like, working for world peace and writing songs.”

“Are you a songwriter?”

“Well, I love words. I don’t always put them to music, but when I write, it feels like a melody or it has a rhythm. Adam and I wrote a lot of songs together. But I’m trying to write more on my own. I need to practice guitar a bit more.”

Evie didn’t feel like telling him that she had trouble progressing because it hurt so much to sit down and hold the same position for an extended period of time. She preferred to pass as normal for a while. She didn’t want people to know about her day-to-day struggles. She didn’t want her illness to be her identity.

“Let me hear something,” Nicky said gesturing to her guitar which was leaning on the wall by the front door in a padded black travel case.

“Maybe when I get to know you better,” Evie smiled. “So, the Beatles?”

“As you know, we spent a lot of time with John because of Tom. I remember he was glad about how much music they were writing at the ashram. I think he felt they could be truer there.”

“They wrote most of the songs from *The White Album* there, eh?”

“Yeah, they were playing a lot. I remember this one time when John played a slow version of *Help!* It was great. He’d written it originally that way...”

“Really?”

“Yeah—as a ballad about his emotional state and all the questions he was asking about life, but then they upped the tempo and made it more poppy.”

“That would give it a whole different feel.” Evie said remembering the dream she had as a teenager.

“It was pretty special. I never heard it played like that anywhere before or since. It really did change the whole vibe of the song. You could tell the man was in a bit of turmoil about his life the way he sang it that day. But from the version of song that was officially released, no one would ever know what was really going on inside him.”

## **Dodging**

Nicky had immigrated to London in the seventies—one of thousands of South African exiles who would not or could not go home until a new, democratic



government would be established in 1994. When he received his call-up papers to fight in the Border War, Elaine, an English actress with whom he had a four month romance in India offered him a room in the Brixton house she had inherited from her father. Since draft dodging meant six years in prison, prospective soldiers would either fight or go abroad. Until the end of the war in 1989, over ten thousand white South African defectors left. With Elaine's help, Nicky was one of them. Nicky married Elaine, worked as a graphic designer, became a father to two children, and spent his life fighting Apartheid. But after they divorced in the eighties, Nicky's urge to go home became overwhelming.

"I always felt painfully homesick," he told Evie. For eighteen years, he dreamed of the day when he would return to South Africa. When the new democratic government was elected in 1994 he finally did. But something inside him had given up and he couldn't decide where he belonged.

"I didn't live what you lived," Evie said. "But I understand how you feel."

"I know you do," Nicky said.

## **Adrenaline**

Tom had hired Evie to join him on a six-month contract. His organisation was working on a government project to assess the situation in Durban area formerly all-white high schools that were integrating students of colour and to consult on the implementation of workshops for students and teachers to assist the process. In the mornings, Evie drove down the hill to the centre of town to the office of a local conflict resolution NGO out of which they worked. In the

afternoons, she visited high schools all around Durban. The fresh, white office was in a skyscraper just near the City Hall and had huge windows that looked out onto the busiest port in Africa. Evie liked to watch the boats come in and out. But if you'd asked her if she did, she wouldn't have remembered. Her dreamy gaze at the ocean was mostly unconscious.

*♪ You hold the mirror  
as I speak through a memory  
And I try to remember  
now there's somebody listening  
And the walls that you talk through  
become like veils to a bridegroom  
And you see through the theatre  
past the stage to the playground  
where I once put on lipstick  
to impress all the boys*

- Evie ♪

Nicky had a telescope that he kept near the door of the balcony which overlooked the hillside neighbourhood that descended to the town centre and out to the Indian Ocean. From it, she could see a spectacular view of all of Durban and miles of water stretching out as far as the eye could see. Evie would often sit there during weekends reading South African novels. She'd listen to jungle noises, like wild birds with exotic calls. They had built a nest on the ledge of the balcony and Evie was waiting for the eggs to hatch. She loved that in some parts of Durban when you closed your eyes, it was hard to tell if you were in the middle of a city or a rainforest. She would sometimes use the telescope to watch the place where the ocean met the sky.

At first Evie planned to stay with Nicky until she found a place of her own. But it was hard to find one in Durban. She was surprised at how well she and Nicky got along. He wasn't just some guy old enough to be her father; Nicky became one of the best friends she ever had. He understood everything she felt—about the injustices of the world, and the deep loneliness that came from

suffering in silence. Once she told him about it, he helped her in a way that nobody ever had.

She and Nicky also shared a love of the sea. One day when they went to the beach, the water triggered an emotional reaction of despair in Evie. Maybe it had something to do with its life force. Compared to it, she felt impotent. She started to tell Nicky what she endured on a day-to-day basis. When she saw that he was listening and caring, something burst in her and she started to cry. She sobbed for ages at Nicky's side while he held her hand and caressed her shoulder. It suddenly struck her what she'd been doing—what she always did. She both feared and was ashamed of her pain.

That night she had a dream that her house was on fire. She was trying to cover it up by putting rugs over the flames in the floor boards. She placed cinderling furniture in the cupboards and pretended that everything was under control. But when she realised the fire was spreading, she went into a complete panic. She called the fire department, but they wouldn't send a truck so she started yelling at them in a complete frenzy: "My house is on fire! My house is on fire!" When she went outside she was even more distraught to find the smoke billowing up high into the sky so that she could no longer hide it from her family, friends or neighbours.

"You need to stop," Nicky said. "Stop pushing. Talk about your feelings, you don't have to do everything by yourself." One of her friends once told her that everyone thought she was such a strong person, that she'd done so much. But Evie wondered now if the way she lived was born of strength or adrenaline.

## Music

*♪ Nothing ever happens,  
nothing happens at all  
The needle returns  
to the start of the song  
And we all sing along  
like before  
And we'll all be lonely  
tonight and lonely tomorrow  
-Del Amitri  
Nothing Ever Happens ♪*

The first song Evie ever learned to play was *Nothing Ever Happens*. A guy called Rob from Perth with a sunburn and a guitar taught it to her on a beach on an island in the Thai Sea. She loved the song at the time. It talked about the way

people often live on autopilot. They go to work and return home. They find small pleasures in meaningless distractions like the pub or TV or shopping. But without any real connection or commitment to life or to others, they are just going through the motions. Nothing new would happen and history would only repeat itself unless they lived more consciously. For Evie, this meant making music, although she wasn't very good at it. One day, she hoped, she would leave everything else behind and focus just on that. When she got better, she planned to sit and play guitar for hours.

Nicky saw how much Evie loved music, and believed that it would help heal her. He took her to all the bars and cultural centres in town where they played live music. The traditionally white bars and live music clubs usually played folk or rock. Evie was fascinated by the way music was an indicator of cultural background in South Africa—as if each racial designation had adopted its own particular rhythm and way of moving in the world. Evie fell in love with African Jazz and went to every show she could. She loved it because it was joyful. You couldn't just listen to it. You had to get up and dance. Evie would sometimes go to venues where people of all ages were going wild moving to the music. She

watched little kids as they grooved with huge smiles on their faces. And it occurred to her for the first time that she had never danced as a child.

## Legacies

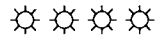
*I'd like to be  
The real me  
But I can't escape  
the legacy  
Should I fight  
Or should I flee?  
Should I escape  
by land or sea?  
Oh tell me where  
I can be free!*

-Evie

Evie often wondered how it would be possible to transform the hateful legacy of Apartheid in people's hearts. Even for the ones who didn't remember it. Some of the teenagers she worked with didn't even know what Apartheid was. They only experienced its aftermath. A peculiar silence fell over the past which made it hard for her and her colleagues to do their work. They were not allowed to ask any explicit questions about race.

Although schools had desegregated and South Africa had adopted the most progressive constitution on Earth, black students in many impoverished areas still lived in perpetual fear of crime and violence. Their lives were still shadowed by dire poverty and their future prospects were not as bright as those of children who could afford to study in formerly white establishments like the high school in the white, middle-class neighbourhood of Hillcrest. Black gardeners still trimmed the bushes and watered the thick, green lawns of the pleasant brick houses where many white people lived. Hillcrest High stood amidst rolling hills and valleys, quite spotless with no signs of vandalism or violence. The entrances and staff lavatories had frilly, pastel sofas and gussy fabrics—typical of traditional white South African décor. The reception was

stocked with equipment and supplies—computers and telephones. The students who attended schools like it were lucky. The contrast between the old white schools to the black ones was startling.



Although Vuyiswa Mtololo High School in the township of Kwa Mashu generally lacked equipment, at least it was made of brick. Some of the other schools in black areas that Evie had visited were nothing more than large tin containers with plastic windows. But bricks didn't make the structure secure. School for many students and teachers was a terror. Equipment like furniture and typewriters was always stolen so that it didn't make sense to get anything new. Vandals often cut the electricity and phones. Boys from the community broke through the back gate and pushed drugs.

"We are so, so afraid," a fifteen year-old girl told Evie. "They come with guns and sometimes they force us to go with them." The girls were terrified of gangs both in and outside school.

Some of the teachers themselves had been held at gunpoint.

"Many of them come to school stoned or drunk or spaced out from who knows what," a teacher complained. "Everyone is frightened." A lot of her colleagues stopped going to class.

## Values<sup>32</sup>

On a muggy day in Durban, in a bright office with flowery curtains and matching upholstered chairs, an enthusiastic principal told Evie about an amazingly successful programme she had implemented in her formerly white high school to integrate new students of colour. It was based on value-sharing workshops, something she had come across at a principals' conference in Australia. It taught the kids that despite their differences, they had values in common. They learned about democracy in a country with no history or culture of it. Evie was deeply moved by the way the principal described this time in South Africa's history—the first democratic elections, the first day when children of colour came to her all-white school.

When a parent reflecting on the cultural mixing in her child's school said: "We've lost our values," it dawned on the principal that the problem in culturally mixed schools was a difference in values. Her new students didn't share the British colonial mindset of their new environment. Accordingly, she soon arranged to have her teachers trained to give workshops to their students that would help them create a new school culture. Students and staff shared stories of their different cultural and racial experiences, explored their histories, and expressed their aspirations for their lives, their families, their country, their communities and their school. Their distinct historical experiences became apparent but so did common human goals such as health, happiness, prosperity, security, love, peace and harmony. In order to achieve these, they realised that

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<sup>32</sup> See the following article for more details on this: Hershorn, Kim. "High School Students Learn New Values in the New South Africa." *Nonviolence Today*. March/April/May 1999, [www.uq.net.au/~zzdkeena/NvT/NvT62.pdf](http://www.uq.net.au/~zzdkeena/NvT/NvT62.pdf)

they had to work together as a learning community and to respect, learn from, and benefit from each other's differences. Through this exercise, they became aware that by creating conflict with others, they were jeopardising all the things they wanted for themselves

Evie's visit to that school changed her life. Maybe transformation could only happen when people at the local level and in their personal lives took responsibility for it. Maybe they had to stop expecting the powerful institutions of society to do it. People had to find ways to do it from within themselves, with their loved-ones, in their schools, places of work, and communities.

#### **What Lies Within** (*Cape Town 1999*)

The sun was rising when Evie and Wade arrived in Namaqualand, a semi-arid region in the Northern Cape Province on the border of Namibia. They had driven eight hours north from Cape Town to write an assessment report on a government project. Evie had found a job with a Cape Town NGO that worked on community development where Wade was one of the coordinators.

Wade grew up in the Cape Flats—the township near Cape Town where coloured people lived. The term “coloured” was used by the Apartheid regime to refer to people of mixed race—black African and usually Afrikaner (except the brown-skinned Malays who were either brought as slaves or exiled as political dissidents from Indonesia by the Dutch East India Company in the seventeenth century). They spoke Afrikaans, and, as a rule, had it a little better in terms of living conditions and public services than black South Africans.



Wade's older brother was in the army, so when he was quite young Wade was encouraged to have a military career.

"I wanted to make something of my life and to travel," he told her. But somehow he ended up becoming some kind of mercenary. Evie was not clear about how all this happened; she just let Wade talk about his life because she could see that he needed someone to listen.

"I didn't know what I was getting into," he said, "But once I was in, it was too late." Wade had travelled the world over fighting someone else's battles, enduring brutal physical and psychological training.

The closer they got, the more Evie and Wade told each other the truth about their pain. Evie admitted that she didn't know how she would cope if she had to live with that amount of pain for the rest of her life.

"Don't believe what they tell you," he told her.

"What do you mean?"

"Just because the doctors don't know how to heal your pain, doesn't mean that you can't. I want you to believe that, Evie. You can heal it." Wade sometimes spoke like that—with an authority that came from someone who himself had beaten all the odds and survived.

The first time he kissed her Evie wasn't sure she wanted it to go that way. They were great as friends. She didn't want to mess it up. And she wasn't sure she felt like that about him. But he was wise, gentle, patient, and giving. He made her feel safe and cared for. When someone had recommended Evie to a healer, Wade drove her out to the suburbs and then picked her up twice a week.



Somewhere in Africa, Wade had gotten his leg blown up. He had to be sent by air back to Cape Town to be treated. After that it took him months to recover. But there were blessings in everything. His physical rehabilitation was the beginning of his emotional, psychological and spiritual healing as well. The injury was also his ticket out of the military. When he was well enough, he got a degree in conflict resolution and community development. He wanted to devote his life to being of service to others.

“I was trained to kill, Evie, and I was put into situations where I had to,” He said one night while they were drinking wine at the kitchen table in what he and the two guys he lived with jokingly called the House for Battered Men. They had all been through some hard times.

Wade was having trouble forgiving himself. Evie sensed that he must have hoped that if she could still love him after this confession, he might find a way to love himself. Like most people who did bad things, when he did whatever he did, he didn't know what he was doing. If she had known about his past before they got involved, she didn't think it would have mattered. She knew more about his present. Whatever he had lived was not who he was. Everyone needed to be forgiven. And if no one else could, even if *he* couldn't, Evie would.

Once when Evie was telling him all the things she regretted in her life; what she would have done differently if she only had the energy, he said:

“What lies behind us and what lies ahead of us is nothing compared to what lies within us.” He had obviously given it some thought.

*♪ All the pain that you have known  
All the violence in your soul  
All the 'wrong' things you have done  
I will take from you when I come  
All mistakes made in distress  
All your unhappiness  
I will take away with my kiss, yes  
I will give you tenderness*

-Sinead O'Connor  
*This is to Mother You* 🎵

Wade spoke to her eloquently and calmly about life—about her life—and reminded her that she needed to let go of the past. He helped her trust life again and to remember that at

heart, she was much greater than the limited conception of herself that she had always had. One night after one of their long talks, she fell asleep in his arms and dreamt that she was living in some apartment on the highest floor of a building. All her old friends and boyfriends were there. Suddenly, one of her old journals flew out the window and started falling to the ground. Evie ran down the winding stairwell in panic. She was determined to catch it before it landed.

## Road Kill

Wade liked to listen to Evie sing and often made special requests—especially when they were driving. She was covering Al Green's *Let's Stay Together* and dancing around in the front seat when she saw two silver eyes in the beams of the headlights. Suddenly, there was a thud as the body of an animal she could not identify hit the front of the car. She gasped and her heart sank.

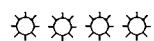
"Wade! Pull over. Maybe it's still alive!"

"It's only a rabbit," he said unfazed.

Evie was mortified. She could not get those glowing terror-filled eyes out of her mind. She had witnessed their last glimpse of life, a creature's last breath, its fear of death, the clinging to life, the deep impulse that willed survival. And she could not shake the way he had said, "It's only a rabbit."

She hadn't really understood that he had seen this before. And it hadn't been road kill either. He had looked it in the eyes and turned himself off long ago. Although she tried to brush it aside, it had been a moment of clarity—one of those instances in a relationship where you are given clues about how it will end. In the way that pain was the only thing on earth besides love that was not relative, each had developed their own particular intimacy with life and death. And neither could bear to see the depth and breadth of the trauma of the other, because they hadn't yet healed their own. Instead, Evie smoked and talked into the night. She didn't care if he wasn't listening or didn't understand or couldn't see or didn't want to know. The universe was there by the roadside.

They spent the rest of the night on the road passing the dark contours of mountains, the colours of which she never knew. They stopped on the empty highway for a break. No other cars, houses, or people could be seen anywhere—just miles of a dark desert landscape, a big bright crescent moon, and a sky full of stars. Evie was amazed by the silence. It seemed that the crickets were the only other creatures that were awake. They lay on a blanket on the grainy earth, talked about the difference between wisdom and intelligence, and watched stardust fall from the sky.



The landscape turned blue and orange as they made their way north through the sunrise. By the time they got to Springbok, an old copper mining town, it was five in the morning and they were deliriously road weary. They slept in the car in the driveway of one of Wade's friends' homes. The white concrete houses were built in neat rows. The buzz of a nearby reservoir intruded on the strange silence of the desert night. Then the endless din of what seemed like thousands of roosters crowing took over. Evie had never heard so many at once. In the haze of her exhaustion, she imagined them in some sort of mirrored room—roosters upon roosters upon roosters. She fell asleep contemplating why they actually crowed at dawn. What was the biological purpose? And she thought that she knew so little about animals and even less about the reason why any creature was alive.

### **Namaqualand**

The dry heat was already oppressive as they made their way down a coppery, camel-coloured dirt road to the town of Henkries. In the midst of a deserted, rocky landscape, they approached the small community of concrete houses with tin roofs. During Apartheid, coloureds were forced to live in these kinds of isolated areas with few economic resources. They were going to an assembly to commemorate *National Water Week* at the Henkries Community Hall. The first thing Evie noticed about the people when they got there was that although most of them were black, many of them had very blue eyes. They were discussing the *Work for Water Campaign* implemented by the government's

Reconstruction and Development Plan. It paid locals to poison and uproot alien trees and plants—a goal that would take fifteen years to achieve. Evie thought it was amazing how when growing in the wrong places, something as seemingly benign as a bush could destroy not only indigenous species, but all life in the region by absorbing so much of the water. In any case, it created jobs for those who needed them—mostly women and youth who were not looking for work in the cities like a lot of the men were.

“Most young people don’t go to school,” one of the workers told her later when they were all standing around for the tree planting ceremony. “They usually stop when they get to grades six to eight.”

Wherever there was poverty, there was less time to invest in self-development. Communities like this one were rife with violence, alcoholism, child abuse, battered women, and crime. When people were desperate and suffering, they somehow always managed to make more of it. Evie wondered what else they could do, how this kind of cycle could ever be broken. But the question was overwhelming.

The director of the Reconstruction and Development Plan told her that over a third of their budget went to training. The communities were given courses on things like project management, conflict resolution, small entrepreneurship, how to manage personal finances, HIV/AIDS, TB, and child abuse. At schools and community meetings they were trying to teach people about water conservation and that it was necessary to pay their water and electricity bills—

which they had refused to do as part of the struggle against the Apartheid government.

“Consciousness-raising is the only hope for the future,” the director said.

## Fix You

♪ *Tears stream down  
on your face  
I promise you  
I will learn from my mistakes  
Tears stream down  
your face and I...*

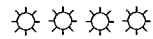
*Lights will guide you home  
And ignite your bones  
And I will try to fix you*  
-Coldplay *Fix You* ♪

Evie could not walk down the street by herself at night. Crime was higher in South Africa than almost anywhere else on the planet. The country had notoriously become the rape capital of the world. People jokingly began to call Cape Town “Rape Town”. And, like Mexico, all the houses in middle class neighbourhoods had bars on the windows. Did she really want to stay in South Africa?

Rather than making her feel better, the more Evie visited the healer and opened up to Wade, the more she realised that she didn’t know where she wanted to be. She had begun to face her pain, and recognised the extent of the depth and breadth of it. Being together became heavy and intense when what they both really needed was a little levity.

When Wade decided he would accept a two-month contract to work on a project in Kenya, Evie thought she would go home to Montreal for a while. It hadn’t been the first time a man had not been able to handle the monumental task of loving a woman who was in chronic pain. But Wade had a low tolerance for what he couldn’t fix both in her and within himself. She left South Africa for

Montreal with a return ticket, and stored a large duffle bag in a friend's basement. But Evie never went back.



Afterward, when she thought of Wade, Evie wondered: Was it love or the hope for love? Maybe it was just the tenderness that came from compassion for the pain of the other. Or the unconscious impulse to fix in someone else what really needed healing in yourself. No, it wasn't really love, she decided. But she couldn't find the words for what it was, which made her realise that the essence of pain was to have feelings and thoughts and longings that went forever unnamed. Whatever it was it had left her heartbroken. But at least they had helped each other put into language what had been hidden in silence. Evie's stories and songs were this—this forever desire, this eternal wish to bring into existence something that did not exist before. Or, they were rooted in an impulse to be seen and heard as if what had been obscured from view or silenced was one's own seemingly elusive self. This urge to create was as natural as giving birth. Like painting an image from what seemed like nothingness, Evie wondered what gave shape to her life's longing for itself—like the glass that held the water or the valley that held the sea. Words took you out of darkness like the voice that spoke "Light" when there was no such thing. Together she and Wade had found the language to put the past out into the light. But that probably wasn't love.



## CHAPTER NINE

### EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL *YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION* THAILAND (2001)

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#### Khao San Road (Bangkok 2001)

*James had launched into some enormous long-winded theory about imperialist cultural assumptions and putting yourself into a situation where you're challenged to think about things that are taken for granted in the West, but I could tell that what he actually meant was 'The dope really is cheap'. Besides, anyone who talks about challenging their cultural assumptions and then goes to Thailand is clearly talking out of their arse.*

-Sutcliffe (33)

Khao San Road had changed.

In 1993, the first time Evie went to Thailand, there were no Japanese Family Marts, American Seven Elevens or British Boots Pharmacies. Ronald McDonald and the Buddha

were not yet neighbours and Colonel Sanders' face did not peer out from behind golden pagodas. Little boys didn't pump gas at Shell stations alongside temples. The battle between Pepsi and Coke to brand every last billboard, awning, and table cloth was not as ubiquitous.

Khao San road was a place where the consumer dreams of Western holiday makers came true. Techno, dance or trip hop music blared from sound systems at tables of cheap bootlegged CDs. You could get a pedicure, a manicure, a facial, a wax or Thai massages for just a few bucks at one of the many beauty parlors. Tourists hung out in restaurants that screened American blockbusters, or sat in rows at computer terminals to email friends. Food carts sold pancakes, spring rolls, Pad Thai, mangoes and pineapple—and even edible insects. Small shops poured out onto the sidewalk selling fake Nikes, Diesel tops, Oakley sunglasses, and t-shirts with ironic slogans like *McShit* or *Penis*

instead of Pepsi. You could get anything you wanted: funky jewellery, hammocks, bags, flip flops, CD players, used books, Thai fisherman pants in every colour of the rainbow—all for a fraction of what you would pay at home.

Travellers walked up and down the busy street like kids in candy stores; or they sat in restaurants drinking, eating and people-watching. They booked exotic trips like hiking in the north, scuba diving in the south, historical tours to the Bridge on the River Kwai, or flights to anywhere you wanted to go. Thailand was the easiest place in the world to travel and Bangkok sometimes felt like the centre of the universe.

Evie was both intrigued and disturbed by the hyper-consumerism. She had a field day with five dollar CDs and indulged in daily Thai massages which were a dream come true for her aches and pains. She appreciated eating three healthy, delicious and affordable meals a day. At home she was always too tired to shop and cook. Instead, when she was really hungry, she would drag herself down to the corner store for popcorn. The comforting heat, fresh air, the sun and sea, the forests of palms, rest and meditation made Thailand the perfect place for healing. Everyone came there for something—a break, an escape, or a party. They found comfort and pleasure in love or sex, in nature, and sometimes in the Buddha. Evie wondered what people were looking for in the East (or the South) that they couldn't find at home.

## Synchronicity

*♪ In search of healing,  
some kind of meaning  
we always seem  
to look outside  
But when you're freed  
there is no need  
to travel far  
or travel wide*

-Evie ♪

Evie was sipping a coconut shake in the lounge of the Sawasdee guest house. She kicked back on one of the comfortable wicker chairs amidst hard wood tables, ottoman-style chaise-longues, laughing Buddha statues and elephant figures. Even with the ceiling fans whirling on the high ceilings, the smells of the road wafted in through the open front of the building. They intermingled like the positive and negative forces of the universe: sandalwood and sewer, sweat and coconut oil, fried garlic and rot steaming in the sun. She had just checked in and was thrilled just to chill out and listen to the DJ play some ambient trance. The day was warm and windy; not too hot—just enough to get her blood moving again and help her release the chill of the Montreal winter from her bones. The air was moist, not too humid, and soft enough to make your skin feel that way too. Evie hated the itchy, flakey dryness of winter at home. She was relieved to be able to wear sandals instead of salt-stained leather boots. She was admiring the sweet freedom of her toes when a large cockroach hopped by on the beige marble tiles on the floor.

Evie closed her eyes and leaned her head on the wicker chair. She was thinking that there were cute guys everywhere. When she opened them, a tall guy, not so cute, with shoulder length brown hair and sunglasses was walking over to where she was sitting near the bar.

“Good Morning,” he said and ordered a coffee. Evie thought he looked dazed.

"Good morning."

"How are you?"

"Great. You?"

"Not bad."

"Where are you from?"

"Montreal. You?"

"Amsterdam."

"Oh yeah? I used to live there. Actually, one of my good friends from there is supposed to meet me later on this trip."

"Yeah, who?" he said paying for his coffee.

"Why, you think you might know him?"

"You never know."

"Adam Fannadham."

"Big, tall guy. Light brown hair. Musician? Has a hot mother called Heidi who lived on Spuistraat?"

"Yes!"

"He smoked his first joint with me in that apartment when we were thirteen," he said almost proudly.

"You're kidding?"

"If you had any manners you'd invite me to sit down."

"Go ahead," Evie said.

Evie and Fritz smoked cigarettes and talked for hours that afternoon. Evie sipped fruit shakes while Fritz drank coffee. Fritz had just left his girlfriend with

whom he had been for three years. He found out that she was having an affair for the last year of their relationship. He was a mess. On impulse, he went to the airport and flew to Bangkok without saying good-bye to anyone. He didn't even pack a bag. Fritz had spent the last two weeks in a hotel room on Khao San Road smoking as much pot as he could possibly inhale.

"I just can't do anything right now. I just can't," he said. "...I also have this problem. I know she did love me—once, at least—but maybe she couldn't deal with it. I don't think I can anymore either."

"What?" Evie asked.

"Pain. All the time, everyday, everywhere, from head to toe, very intense."

Evie didn't know what to say.

"What from, Fritz?"

"I don't know. Nobody knows. I'm just very sensitive to things. I have always been, and the older I got, the more painful it became."

"What do you mean sensitive?"

"I don't really know. I feel things. It's hard to explain. I feel other people. I feel the weather. I feel the energy of places..."

Over the next few days, she and Fritz talked about being exhausted and achy, about their lives and their feelings, and about Adam. Fritz told her things that she herself had been feeling but had never heard anybody say. They had each spent the last ten years both travelling and in a lot of pain. They had been to many of the same places sometimes at the same time, or often only shortly after.

"We've been living parallel lives," she told him. "It's a wonder we haven't met before."

Once when Evie was at a friend's flat in Brighton, she was inspecting a collage of travel photographs that his girlfriend had assembled and hung on the wall. In one of the pictures, Evie noticed a good friend of hers from Montreal. Her friend's partner had met him in India at the same time Evie was hanging out with her boyfriend in Mexico. What were the chances? Although she still wondered if the universe was random, it became clearer and clearer that it couldn't possibly be.

### Strangeness

*I've often thought  
and now I think  
about the thought  
in which I sink  
and now that I'm  
close to the brink  
of thinking thoughts  
I cannot think*

-Evie

The first few days in Bangkok, Evie woke up early.

"Damn jetlag," she thought. She was exhausted.

Bangkok was so far away from Montreal. But

she'd been to distant places many times. She had to remember to see them. Before she left, her PhD supervisor asked her to write about her trip phenomenologically.

"Describe your sensory experience," she had said. "How does everything look, sound, smell, and feel?"

But Evie wasn't sure she could recount things as they were. Not only because it was hard to see reality as it was, but because she couldn't stop analysing and making meaning—not even for a second. Perhaps it came from

years of both not wanting to be in her body and also of travel. Somewhere along the way, she had become numb. Nothing seemed strange anymore. Instead she felt disoriented, as if moving around so much had taken from her all her reference points. When someone said “tree” she no longer imagined the ubiquitous maples that lined the Montreal streets where she grew up. A tree could be any tree—any number of trees that she had seen in any number of the countries where she had been. She still often looked the wrong way when crossing the street. When it appeared normal for the driver of a vehicle to be on either side of the car, there was no wrong side of the road.

When Evie first began travelling, the strangeness of the new and different was seductive. Everything was intriguing—from the local vegetation to subtleties of hand gestures and building fixtures. When Evie was eleven, she, her parents and her brother and sister drove down to Florida in the family station wagon. Although she was moving further away from home than she ever had, the expansion she experienced was much more than geographical. Before reaching South Carolina, it had never occurred to her that the earth could be anything other than black or dark brown. She gawked at the red dirt along the highway through the car window in complete and utter awe. But when the strange becomes normal, sometimes we forget to look. Evie now wished she could notice everything, as if she had never left home before.

## Men are from Venus

***Researchers from Brigham Young University and Stanford wanted to investigate whether men really are from Mars and women really are from Venus, and they found, at least among depressed individuals, that the answer is a resounding no—both genders are from Earth.***

***...worries about being unloved or being a failure are standard human concerns, not gender concerns.***  
-Brigham Young University

Fritz and Evie had dinner with Sam, a Canadian just arrived from Ottawa. He had just left his girlfriend and a job at a big telecommunications company, to go travelling.

“I was making good money,” he said.

“But it wasn’t enough. I felt trapped.”

They talked for a while about all the expectations society imposed on people and how at some point you just had to find an alternative because that formula didn’t work.

“Insurance. What *is* that?” Sam said. “Our society is so screwed up.”

When Sam revealed that his girlfriend had also cheated on him, they spent a couple more hours talking about relationships and gender. It felt uncomfortable to Evie like they had been reading *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*—except that maybe they were the ones from Venus. She couldn’t decide. The more Evie shared intimately with men, the more she realised that in many ways they were a lot like women, and just as messed up by a patriarchal society. They also wanted love, longed to connect, and to be seen and heard and appreciated. And women weren’t the only gender to be objectified. Women were also constantly checking guys out and having sex with them without being the least bit interested in who they were as people. They often did this impulsively to empower themselves—like they might boast about



being useless in the kitchen. In a vain effort to soothe their broken hearts, Evie suggested that Fritz and Sam might work on forgiveness and move on.

“Forgiveness?” Fritz said. “I hope she gets smashed by a train.”

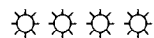
“Cheers!” Sam said and clinked his beer bottle against Fritz’s.

## Transfer

*You know that your life  
Can't be stolen or borrowed  
And there's no time to waste  
'Cause today is tomorrow  
And it's him that I taste  
In this wine glass of sorrow  
And we sit down to drink  
Just to fill up the hollow*  
-Evie

The three of them went swimming on the roof of the *D and D Inn* where Fritz was staying. The pool was on a raised area enclosed by a railing. An amazing view of the Bangkok landscape—a complex and random arrangement

of ornate golden stupas and graying concrete structures—sprawled outward toward the horizon. Evie floated for what seemed like a really long time. She surrendered her weight and wished she could always feel that light. She thought about her connection to Amsterdam and how it was possible that she just met a guy who knew Adam when he was a kid.



Evie tried to get Fritz to come with her to the meditation retreat she was going to in the north. She had been meditating seriously for just over a year, and found that it was helping her deal with her chronic pain.

“Maybe it can help you, too, Fritz,” she suggested.

“I’d like to Evie, but I don’t know.”

Fritz vacillated for two days on whether or not he wanted to go to the retreat with her. Evie didn't want to be like him. She wanted to be free of anger. She hoped to be able to love fully without the lurking shadows of past disappointments. She doubted that she had forgiven everything, but she tried. Fritz had a lot of wisdom, and she appreciated it, but it was all intellectual. He was too messed up to act on it. You could be wise, but if your heart was still broken, what good would it do you?

"Kidnap me," he said. "Force me to go."

"I can't, Fritz. You have to decide for yourself and get up out of this hotel room."

Evie went to buy her ticket to the north. When she came back and went to see, Fritz, he was stoned as usual, his white sheets full of ashes, chocolate bar wrappers, and empty water bottles.

"Fritz," she said gently. "Come with me to the retreat. You have to get yourself out of this. You can't go on like this."

"I don't know if I can," he said.

Evie told him what happened after she meditated all night asking for healing. Something inside her wondered if she was ready for it. Was she ready to look at her fears and her darkness; to let go of everything she had been holding on to; to let down her guard; take off her masks, and open her heart? Yes, she had thought, maybe not all at once, but she was ready to start.

"Healing is not about feeling good. It's not going to make it all not matter like your pot. It's a long and painful process. So if you're not ready, it's okay. You

deal with your pain however you need to. I understand,” Evie told him. She hugged him and rubbed his shoulder. She suddenly started to feel his ache extend from her fingers up through hers and throughout her body.

“I feel it, Fritz,” she said. “It’s bad. I’m sorry.” She felt like crying—for him, for herself, and because pain hurt in general.

Fritz didn’t want to go out for dinner, so she ate alone feeling sick and drained. She was thinking of how tired she was of always struggling so hard for balance, but never seeming to achieve it. In the background Manu Chao was singing “Cuando Llegaré? When will I arrive?” repeating the words over and over again, as if to taunt her. She hoped that Fritz would try to help himself; that maybe her suggestion had planted some kind of seed in him that he might water later. Maybe the gifts received from chance meetings were not ready to be opened right away.

Fritz did not go on the retreat. Two weeks later, on her way to the islands in the south, she stopped by his hotel. He was still smoking in his air conditioned room. After that, she never saw or heard from him again. He didn’t answer her emails.

## Other Worlds

*The soul that is ever sublime  
Keeps drinking the wine that you pour  
And it never keeps track of the time  
It just holds out its glass for some more*  
-Evie

The dogs were going mad; some war over territory. They always passed by her on the beach busily preoccupied

with something.

“We know there are other worlds out there,” Evie wrote in her journal. “But we do not take them seriously. They are not our worlds. They are the worlds of other creatures.”

She was sitting on the pillows on the platform of a beachfront restaurant eating red coconut curry. She had just experienced another world. That morning, Evie went scuba diving for the first time. It made the planet seem much bigger and smaller at the same time. There was much more to reality than she had ever imagined.

For much of her life, Evie had been both afraid and in awe of natural bodies of water. Like another dimension, it was full of life that could not be seen. Because of this, she loved to visit aquariums to catch a glimpse of a normally inaccessible world. This kind of nautical voyeurism intrigued her like really good sci-fi. But the idea of plunging to the seafloor was terrifying—like visiting some other planet with alien life-forms. When Evie finally plucked up the courage to go, it was an awakening. Two-thirds of the Earth’s surface was water and she had never experienced what was down there. For the first time, she could look up and see schools of fish swimming overhead. It felt like climbing inside a mirror and looking out. What had seemed dangerous, mysterious and frightening filled her with inexpressible wonder. She knew what it was like on the other side and had conquered her fear of what she could not before see or hear and did not know.

Evie was happy in Koh Tao, the island in the Thai Sea where she spent a month. She had her feet in the sand. She was writing and sharing with others in the way you do when you’re outside your usual Western city life. She had time to

stop and breathe and remember life. That's what she loved about travel. It gave her the opportunity to feel the sun on her skin. She climbed mountains, floated on the sea, bathed beneath waterfalls, danced in the rain, rode horses and elephants, collected sea shells, ate fresh tropical fruits, sipped coconut shakes. She swam like a bird in flight beneath the sea and saw fish that looked like they'd been painstakingly designed by an artist. She slept beneath the stars, and watched the sky turn pink and the moon wax full. She met new people, heard new stories, and lived in new worlds.

## CHAPTER TEN

### EXCERPT FROM THE NOVEL *YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION* INDIA (2004)

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#### Bollywood (*Rajasthan 2004*)

*I am going away with him to  
an unknown country where I  
shall have no past and no  
name, and where I shall be  
born again with a new face  
and an untried heart.*

-Colette

Malagar Singh, the modern Sikh driver from Amritsar they had hired to travel through Rajasthan, drove his white Ambassador through dry plains of yellow grass. They followed big orange trucks with "HORN PLEASE" painted in bright colours on their backsides. They passed men with coloured turbans on bicycles or old slow-moving tractors. Sometimes jeeps packed with men would overtake them. Piles of dung patties baked in the sun on the side of the road. Straw huts and mud brick shacks stood in the heat. Women in bright cotton saris draped over their heads worked in fields of rice, wheat or mustard. Shepherds in long white kurta pajamas tried to keep their sheep from wandering onto the asphalt. Mud bricks baked in open chimney stack ovens. Some of the time the road would be lined with trees—Eucalyptus from Australia, large Banyans like the one the Buddha sat under, and bitter Nim. But the further they got into the Rajasthan Desert, the hillier and drier the landscape became with almost no vegetation. Ladies in Punjabis with clanging bangles collected water from a well. Buffalo roamed, sacred cows ate plastic water bottles and garbage, and donkeys hee-hawed. A procession of men and women walked along with camels. Pepsi and Coke ads were painted on most of

the shops in the towns they passed, their metal garage-like doors announcing repeatedly: *Enjoy! This was India. Enjoy!*

They arrived in Jaipur at about four o'clock in the afternoon. Like the other cities of Rajasthan, Jaipur had its own colour. The old Moghul style houses and the newer concrete buildings were all painted pink.

"Imagine they decided to paint every building in Mexico the same colour," Xochi said.

"What colour would it be?" Evie asked.

"*Quien sabe? Who knows?*" Xochi responded in a way that was typically Mexican.

That night, after pigging out on Indian sweets, Evie, Xochi and Singh, as he liked to be called, went to the famous Imperial Cinema. Evie and Xochi waited in the women's queue (which was separate from the men's to spare women from being too close to the opposite gender). About a dozen or so men tried to slip them rupees from across the railings asking to buy them tickets. They conceded to a few but when it started getting out of hand, they had to turn their backs on the eager crowd.

Evie sat between Xochi and Singh. The theatre was a pale pink, peculiarly Indian version of art-deco lit dimly by ornate chandeliers. They sipped mango juice in the balcony where the tickets were a little more expensive than on the floor. They tried to follow the Hindi dialogue over the din of crying babies and rambunctious young men chattering and laughing down below. *Chorry, Chorry, Chupka, Chupka* was one of the most popular Bollywood films of the time.

*♪ You have pervaded  
the core of my being...  
as though you've stolen  
me from myself  
You've stolen my heart away  
secretly and silently...  
-Chori Chori Chupke Chupke  
(translation of title track of film) ♪*

Evie found herself attracted to the leading man, Raj, who reminded her of Nicholas Cage—but really cute. Like an absurd Hollywood hero, Raj's character was so exaggerated it seemed to be a caricature. They would never lay it on this thick in the West. But in India, it was less important to make a story believable, as it was to make it colourful. She loved the way all the characters and subplots intertwined like a Salman Rushdie novel and culminated in the end in a fairytale resolution. The same formula—the Hindu epic—was used for all Bollywood films. The heroes and heroines were crafted from stereotypical scripts of Indian masculinity and femininity, and the vamps and villains delineated the rules of gender by showing what happened when you broke them (see Majara).

Although Evie wanted to resist the temptation of being seduced by its happy ending, she couldn't. She lapped it up, eager to watch another one. Just like Hollywood romantic comedies, she wanted the lovelorn couple to get together in the end and live happily ever after. She felt like a sucker most of the time when it came to the woman she was made, not born to be. Not only was she always concerned about her body image, but she couldn't help but hope for some prince to come to make her life complete. Pretty much every woman she knew felt the same. At thirty, she and her friends would spend their time talking about boys, relationships and how fat they were just as they had at thirteen. She and Xochi had spent a lot of time devising and revising their "man of my dreams" lists of desirable traits. They started it when they were living together in Mexico,



but as they got older, it seemed to get longer and longer. No, they insisted, they didn't need a man, but they sure devoted lots of energy pondering the subject.

No matter how sappy, Evie had been bedazzled by Bollywood glitz—the singing, the dancing, the outfits, and the love stories.

“We're going to Bollywood.” Evie said to Xochi, like a young American starlet ready to try her luck in Tinsel Town.

“We're so going to Bollywood,” Xochi agreed. “California here we come...I mean, Maharashtra!”

**Enjoy!**

Pushkar was the white city built around a holy lake. Evie and Xochi wandered through its winding streets circling the miracle of water in the desert. They decided to go shopping for their Bollywood costumes and make their trip into a sort of theatre. They would experience everything that happened like they were in a movie. You could do that in India where fantastical things always seemed to be happening. They bought bright coloured dresses, long flowing skirts and silky scarves and always wore bright coloured bindis on their third eyes.

Just before sunset, they met Singh at the main steps of the filthy lake. Watching the sun go down there had been a ritual for travellers since the sixties. Before it got busy, an Indian guy in a white *Thums-up* t-shirt invited Evie to take India's version of the Pepsi Challenge. Actually, it was the Thums-Up Challenge, a cola from the Coca-Cola Company. At one of the holiest places in India, a

group of young Indians wearing matching t-shirts and baseball caps set up a table for the occasion. Evie, who was intrigued, had accepted to do the test. She was standing near the table when the Thums-Up guys announced through a microphone that someone was taking the Challenge. A large crowd gathered to watch the event. One of the guys handed Evie two glasses of cola.

“Which one tastes stronger?” He yelled into a microphone.

“What do you mean ‘stronger’?”

They didn’t explain, but being in India, she was used to not getting clear answers.

“You know, Madam, *stronger*. Which one is stronger?”

She tasted the beverages. In the background some of the Thums-Up guys urged her to choose the second one.

“Well,” she said completely unsure, “The first one is sweeter.”

“Yeah! The second one is stronger!” one of the guys yelled and the crowd cheered.

“We have a special prize for you, Madam!” He gave Evie a Thums-Up T-shirt and a poster. Evie looked at the poster and was surprised to see a picture of Raj holding a soft drink bottle and giving the thumbs up sign. In the midst of the excitement, they held the t-shirt in front of her and tried to photograph her holding a bottle of Thums-Up in one hand and giving the thumbs-up sign with the other—just like Raj. Evie was dazed by the absurdity of the whole thing and nearly let them do it, but she came to her senses just in time to tell them she refused to support Coca-Cola.

“No photographs. Only autographs.” She joked.

Suddenly a grey-haired man stormed up to her from the crowd yelling:

“That’s my poster!” He grabbed it from Evie. Another one of the Thumbs-Up guys had a few words with him and, without explanation, the man returned the poster.

When she sat down with Xochi and Singh who were watching the scene from a nearby café, she caught the tail end of a conversation Singh was having with an older Dutch couple.

“We don’t watch the news when we travel,” said the man.

“No, we don’t want to see the real world when we are on holiday,” said the woman.

Was India not real? Evie found this funny because she knew that to a lot of Westerners it seemed that way. And knowing the difference between the real and the made-up could be confusing in India—which made you realise that it was that way everywhere.

As sunset approached, more people arrived—a disproportionate amount of young Israelis mostly fresh out of the army. Evie danced to the drummers who travelled with bongos and tablas. Xochi took pictures of the jugglers and girls spinning Poi balls on rope in amazing configurations. Everyone sat around on the steps drinking chai, talking and smoking in their hippiewear.

“You good dancer, Evie!” Singh laughed.

*♪ All I need is a little time,  
To get behind this sun and cast my weight,  
All I need is a peace of this mind,  
Then I can celebrate.*

-Air All I Need ♪

When it was over and  
darkness fell, Xochi and Evie were  
chatting on the steps when an Indian

guy called Deepa came over and told them he was enlightened. They  
immediately started laughing since, as Xochi put it later:

“Those who know don’t say and those who say don’t know.” He was  
Brahmin, he told them, part of the priestly caste.

“Come. We do puja at the lake,” he said offering to guide them through a  
holy ritual ceremony. “One hundred rupees.”

“Don’t do it!” A nearby Israeli woman yelled. “He’ll rip you off!”

“No!” he said smiling. “You come to India to enjoy Indian culture. I show  
you! You enjoy!”

Evie was fascinated how Indian men used spirituality either to try to  
seduce Western women, or to swindle travellers out of a few rupees. You could  
sell, seek and find both salvation and Coke at India’s most sacred sites. All over  
the world, they were hot commodities sold with the promise of a special pleasure.

## **Reality**

The next day on the six hour drive to Jodhpur (it was always a six hour  
drive to everywhere for some odd reason that Singh couldn’t really qualify), Xochi  
slept on the back seat. Evie was sitting in the front listening to Zap Mama.

“You not just good dancer, Evie, you also good singer!”

“That’s why I am going to Bollywood, Singh!”

“You crazy.” Singh laughed.

Evie looked at Xochi.

“She’s really sick, Singh. She was up all night.”

“It’s just loose motion, she’ll be fine.”

Jodhpur was a small town in the middle of a dry, almost barren desert landscape. When they got to the hotel, Xochi went straight to bed. Evie went for a walk through the dusty blue city.

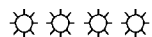
*There’s this saying; in an all-blue world, colour doesn’t exist. It makes a lot of sense to me. If something seems strange, you question it; but if the outside world is too distant to use as a comparison then nothing seems strange.*

-Garland (115)

A tall white guy with short dark hair, an open vest with no shirt, and matching beige adventure travel pants, tapped her on the shoulder. He had a tattoo of a dragon on his left arm.

“Excuse me, you know internet café?” He struggled in broken English with a French accent.

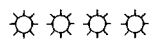
“Tu parles français?” Evie asked and the man, looking relieved that she spoke his language, invited her to have a glass of chai with him.



They sat on an old wooden bench in front of a rickety chai stand drinking mint tea from dirty glasses and talked about their travels. Jean-Michel came to India a lot. He imported furniture to France. He always took time to spend at the beach—usually in Goa, he said.

“I love to float on the waves at night and watch the stars listening to the music from the parties.”

Since it was nearly sunset, they decided to walk up to the old fort on the hill that overlooked the city. The streets were winding and dusty, packed with people and lined with royal blue buildings. Everybody said hello. They were the only Westerners around. Children grabbed them by the hand. One man came out and asked them where they were from. When they told them, he insisted they wait and ran into his house. When he came out again he showed them his collection of money notes from all over the world set carefully in a large scrapbook. Evie was surprised to see that he had an old Canadian dollar bill.



Evie thought it was amazing how two strangers could meet by chance in a place very far from home, sit on the wall of an ancient fort built by a Rajasthani king, and watch a sun set in a desert over a town that was painted blue. They listened to the din from the streets.

“There is always noise in India,” Jean-Michel said.

“It’s never quiet.”

After dusk, they dined at some relatively clean fast-food place. The waiter brought Evie a masala dosa, an Indian millet pancake rolled over spicy potatoes, which was so enormous it could have put Fred Flintstone’s brontosaurus burger to shame. They didn’t come like that in Montreal or Marseilles. Evie told Jean-Michel about her obsession with Bollywood, so after dinner they went on a quest for a cinema. When they found the only one in town, they watched what appeared to Evie to be some kind of Bollywood western. The theatre was pretty empty except for a few young Indian men who chuckled and gabbed the whole

time. In India, everyone had to put in their two cents worth, even at the movies. Jean-Michel got impatient with watching a mediocre film in a language he could not understand and was curious about what an Indian projection room might look like. When they knocked on the door, an old, thin hunchback with a limp, soft brown eyes and a kind smile showed them how he changed the reels on the ancient equipment.

“I can’t believe it,” Jean-Michel laughed when they left the room. “He was like a character in a movie!”

In the lobby, they stopped to investigate a few enormous wood carvings on the wall. The first one depicted feet walking, the next, a person swimming, and in the final one, an old man with a cane.

“It’s the path of experience to wisdom,” Jean-Michel said. “Evolution... It’s beautiful, no?”

Around the images there were whirlpools with stars and ringed planets around overlapping circles like the solar system and the sun hovering in a concentric cosmos.

“The journey of life like the cycles of the universe,” Evie said.

“I like that.” Jean-Michel said.

“It’s the hero’s journey, isn’t it? Bollywood, Hollywood or real life—every story is the same. Some hero or aspiring hero trying to grow up and out of his predicament.”

"It's not just human," Jean-Michel said pointing at the cosmic images. "All life is trying to grow up to the heavens. There's a universal order." They looked at each other, laughed, and went back out to the street.

After the film, Evie and Jean-Michel walked and talked for another hour or so until Evie decided she should check on Xochi. Jean-Michel invited them to come for breakfast at the palace with his business associates.

In the morning, Xochi was still sick and insisted that Evie go without her. Evie put on her costume—a long red cotton evening-style dress with a red chiffon scarf, and a glittering bindi.

"Oh Madam, you really look like Miss World." One of the hotel staff said when she passed the front desk. Beauty pageants were big in India. Evie laughed, and, playing up the role of a Bollywood starlet, she lifted her sunglasses, peered at the men, and, in her best vampy voice, said, "Thank you."

### Life as Theatre

*♪ Sooner or later  
I'll come to see you  
and feel your power  
in the yellow sun  
to all your days  
I wish you blindness  
from all the evils in the world  
-My Morning Jacket Sooner ♪*

Their glass table was raised on a marble terrace above a beautiful garden complete with peacocks on a hill that overlooked the entire blue city. The prices on the menu were extravagant. Mr. Gujati insisted immediately

that they were paying for the meal.

"Order what you like, you are our guests," he said.



They all ate fruit salad and croissants with butter and jam and sipped coffee, tea and juice.

“Jean-Michel is my best friend,” Mr. Bali said.

“Really?”

“Yes. Very good man.”

“Yes,” Evie said.

“You, why you come to India?” Mr. Gujati asked.

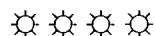
“My friend and I are actresses back in Canada,” she told them because she was in that kind of mood. “We’re very good at dancing and singing and we’re going to Bollywood.”

“Maybe you ‘ave some connection, yes?” Jean-Michel said, amused by Evie’s movie star act.

“As a matter of fact, very famous Bollywood actor bought furniture from us a couple of months ago.” Mr. Bali took a little leather-bound address book out of his briefcase, looked through it and wrote down a name and number on a piece of paper.

“You call him before you go to Mumbai. He’s very fine man.”

When Evie and Xochi got there, after their quest for two gurus—one who was “no more” and the other who told them that the human being is utter illusion—the actor with the handlebar mustache who played Raj’s father in the film picked them up in his limosine to take them to dinner. He also invited them to the Bollywood set where he was shooting his latest film.



In the early nineties, American actor Kevin Bacon said in an interview that through his work he was connected with everyone in Hollywood. The idea that everyone was linked and that it's a small world after all became the inspiration for the trivia game *Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon*. As quickly as possible, players had to show the link between any actor and Bacon through their roles. Was Raj India's Kevin Bacon? Or was the whole thing just pop culture reminding them that everything was connected to everything else and that maybe the universe wasn't so random after all? Maybe it was just art imitating life?

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

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### PEDAGOGIES OF LOVE

*The excerpts from Evie's story end here, but the questions she raises reverberate into this chapter. I reflect on the implications of the narrative for theory and practice on health, identity, education and social change.*

Evie's experience illustrates the way that larger social crises and pathologies both incur and reflect the dislocations within the individual. They attest to a person's disconnection from both self and world, including other people and living beings, as well as the natural environment. In an almost instinctive effort to heal, Evie and the other characters seek to "re-connect". As Evie's search for healing evolves and becomes more conscious, it seems that what she is looking for is some kind of "nature"—something beyond the pathological constructions of identity and reality that she has been taught and has lived through dominant culture. In her search, Evie seeks to understand and grow closer to this "nature" which she imagines as her "true" self, the nurturing aliveness of the natural world, as well as some kind of universal order or natural balance of life.

In this chapter, I explore some of the theoretical questions behind this search for healing, and the way that it involves the kind of personal and collective learning that is interwoven with social change. Specifically, I consider life experience as a pedagogy of love that has the potential to provide healing if we heed its lessons. Through living we learn how to heal the pain, pathologies, and traumas of the past as we develop a greater understanding of their dynamics; and as we accept to make peace with and live in greater harmony with the world. I reflect on the role of this kind of personal growth for broader questions of radical

pedagogy in formal education that has social change as its goal. The search for well-being is perhaps akin to some kind of “embodiment” of the heart. Perhaps it can be understood as the anchoring of love or an integration with some sort of “nature” that can imbue our physical experience of the material world.

### Healing Trauma Culture

Arthur Frank, a scholar of illness narratives, asserts that in a “historical moment when consciousness is overwhelmed with ‘unjustifiable’ sufferings, the sense of self splits” (1995 177). Anzaldua asserts that in a (patriarchal) culture where violence is normalised, a disconnect not only takes place *between* selves (Anglo/Chicano, Man/Woman, Queer/Straight) but *within* them (65). Kleinman further explores this sense of being cut off when he refers to “the incommunicability of pain” and how “much of routinized misery is invisible” (Kleinman xii). When a person is in pain, it is difficult to convey this experience to others and also hard for others to understand it (Frank 1995, Morris 1991). Moreover, David Morris, who has studied the connection between culture and pain, maintains that “chronic pain constitutes an immense, invisible crisis at the center of contemporary life” (1997 4).

***I gain truth when I expand  
my constricted eye, an eye  
that has only let in what I  
have been taught to see.***

-Pratt (17)

Gina Ross (1-8), a trauma expert, has argued that in the last century about eighty per cent of the world’s population has been exposed to trauma. About twenty per cent have serious post-traumatic stress disorder. She maintains that traumatic stress can be cumulative and can even happen

second hand through constant exposure to violence through the mass media. If left unhealed, she maintains, trauma is re-enacted. Those who are traumatised find it difficult to escape the “urge to repeat” it (4). How can mass trauma of this kind be addressed—especially when “[t]he suffering of groups or entire populations is an experience that most people, writers included, find extremely difficult to grasp” (Morris 1997, 38)?

The connection between individual and social pain, illness and suffering is made clear through the work of these writers. Like Evie’s story, they illustrate the way that contemporary crises further sever a person’s connections to self, others and to the world. They point to the need to “reconnect”. Activist Hentie van der Merwe, in contemplating Africa’s AIDS epidemic, for example, has considered the way that the illness demands a new way of “relat[ing] to each other as human beings” (in Martin 128). Healing perhaps is premised on the act of communion—a process that occurs both within society and the individual.

## Embodiment

***When our lived experience of theorizing is fundamentally linked to processes of self-discovery, of collective liberation, no gap exists between theory and practice. Indeed, what such experience makes more evident is the bond between the two—that ultimately reciprocal process wherein one enables the other.***

- bell hooks (1994 61)

As Evie learns more about chronic ailments, like fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome,<sup>33</sup> and environmental illness, and meets with people who have them, she notices that

these ailments seem to be triggered by some kind of unresolved trauma—a car accident, the death of someone close, shocks to the body even through sport

<sup>33</sup> called ME or Myalgic Encephalomyelitis in Britain and some other parts of the world.

(she knew a rugby player who had all the symptoms), involvement in a war or conflict, a divorce, physical or emotional abuse. The body is somehow telling them that they have had enough, that things need to change, and that they have to live in a different way. The trigger event is like a loose thread that if pulled can unravel other aspects of life that have not yet been healed. When unresolved issues of trauma, pain, disappointment or despair have not been fully dealt with, the result is a breakdown of the person's immunity. They are no longer able to shield themselves from everything around them so that they are not adversely affected by it. Their integrity is challenged on a physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual level. If we look back at Evie's experience, we can reflect on the diverse factors that might lead to pain and illness. Thinking back to Evie inescapably means considering her relationship with her body. As Mitchell and Weber, among many others, remind us, all experience, including learning, is embodied. The body can teach us how to heal pain, pathology and trauma both within ourselves and in the world. Scholars like Shusterman, for example, attest to the crucial role the body can play in improving our practices. Hoogland argues that the body is a "conduit for reflection" on our experience (117).

Fibromyalgia (along with many other ailments that mainstream medicine can't explain) is considered by many to be a result of the body's inability to fight off the growing toxicity of the environment (see Ryley, Strubbe-Wittenberg). At a conference on environmental illness, Evie observes people's rage about what is happening to the natural world. She can't help but wonder if their emotional pain might be connected to the aches they feel in their bodies. Are they especially

sensitive to the plight of the planet? Are the ailing planet and the sick body connected? Which came first? Did they get sick because of industrial pollution or out of an emotional and psychological response to it, or both? Or have their systems broken down due to other unresolved aspects of their lives which make it more difficult for their bodies to protect themselves against pollution? The answers, Evie discovers, are not simple. Her story reflects the complexity of how we become both unwell and heal individually and socially. The negotiation of our relationships to self, others, and the world in our quests for wellness is a long and often arduous journey.

### **Knowledge, Power & Disconnection**

*Americans have never left our destiny to the whims of nature, and we will not start now.*

-George W. Bush on Hurricane Katrina recovery, Sept. 15, 2005

The challenge of how to address the problem of disconnection required for healing both self and the world is central to my novel. It can be seen in the way the characters struggle with questions of power and how it is negotiated in all kinds of relationships. Evie's story shows how this occurs in personal relationships, as well as with social institutions like schools, governments or the larger economic structure. We see it in her dealings with "others" as she questions her own identity vis-à-vis places, cultures and people that are different from those she is familiar with. This grappling with power takes place in all the characters' stories—especially as they live and work in a position of relative class privilege in poorer areas of the world.

In discussions about the construction of culture, power is always connected to knowledge (see, for example, Foucault or Giroux). The desire to control the world—be it through economic, political, social or legal systems of knowledge—has taken on a particular form in modern Western culture which has had world-wide influence through colonialism and globalisation. The duality or separateness constructed within the framework of this purview has been critiqued extensively in postmodern critical theories. Derrida, and other cultural theorists, have argued, for example, that Western thought has been based largely on binary opposites: Mind has been seen both in opposition to and as superior to the body, culture to nature, man to woman (masculine to feminine), modern to traditional (Parpart and Marchand 3 or Grosz).

Rather than seeing themselves as participants in the world, scientists remove themselves from it, imagining themselves as separate from the object of research. This scientific view of reality has contributed to a fundamental disconnect in modern Western culture. People are seen as separate from the world and from each other. Identity is viewed as static and autonomous, rather than relational, interdependent and changing over time. This failure to acknowledge the interconnectedness of things can be seen in the Western tendency to see the world in parts rather than holistically. The academy is divided into disciplines, and medicine into specialisations that treat body parts rather than the whole person. The question about how to address these divisions echoes implicitly through the thesis. It also reflects an ongoing theme in critical theories,



especially as they have turned to concerns “involving what it means to be human, [and] what it might mean to live in a good and just society” (Kincheloe 247).

*It is painful to keep understanding this separation within myself and in the world.*

-Pratt (19)

As she witnesses first hand how differently power is shared in different countries, Evie comes to the conclusion that

we need to examine power relations both within society as well as within ourselves. The way we deal with insecurity, fear, or dis-ease, individually and collectively, might reveal the degree to which our relationships with others are based on power. In what ways do we seek to empower ourselves? If not at the expense of others, we always do so *in relation to* them. Through our relationships, we often seek a sense of self and self-worth. Our relationship to others is often premised to some degree on whether they can make us feel “empowered” in different ways—good, secure, loveable, desirable, creative, fulfilled, free, smart, strong, intelligent, beautiful... As she more consciously engages in healing herself, Evie wonders, (as we shall see in her epilogue that ends this thesis), if there is a way to become independently empowered. Do we need to rely on others for this sense of self? When we are faced with pain, dis-ease or insecurity—both individually and socially—it is especially important to ask this question.

In his book, *Change the World Without Taking Power*, Holloway explains why social change cannot arise through an approach based on power. Power, he says, “can do no more than reproduce power” (18):

The induction into the conquest of power inevitably

becomes an induction into power itself. The initiates learn the language, logic and calculations of power; they learn to wield the categories of a social science which has been entirely shaped by its obsession with power. Differences within the organization become struggles for power. Manipulation and manoeuvring for power become a way of life (15-16)...What is at issue in the revolutionary transformation of the world is not who has power, but the very existence of power. How can we create a world based on the mutual recognition of human dignity. Can we have social relations which are not power relations (18)?

Can we engage in relationships based on mutual growth and support? How can we heal the separation between the self and others and nature, and within the self?

### **Loving Others (Re-connecting I)**

The question of how to heal the separation between self and others has been taken up extensively in cultural studies theories (Hesford and Kozol). Many scholars have tried to counter dualistic notions of identity. Alison Weir, for example, seeks "a theory of existential or ethical self-identity, understood as the capacity to experience oneself and one's relationships with others" (13). She

seeks “a basis for some kind of universal social identity” that also respects difference (2).

In order to account for people who have been marginalised or “othered” in mainstream culture, other theorists have challenged conventional notions of the individual as a separate, self-contained entity. Instead, they have viewed identity as relational or dialectical. The notion of a “third space” has been used to reconceptualise identity as a “borderland”—a site where intercultural negotiation, translation, cross-pollination, conversation, metissage and hybridisation take place within and between people (Anzaldua,<sup>34</sup> Bhabha, Friedman, Gazetas, Kingwell, Lionnet, and Soja). Bakhtin, Britzman and Grosz have posited a dialectic understanding of identity where the social and personal interact and shape each other. They point to the way identities shift and change.

Although it is seldom taken up by many scholars, the question Luce Irigaray asks in *The Way Of Love*—“How can we love each other?” (1)—seems fundamental to this line of inquiry. I shall elaborate further later on in this chapter.

### **The Search for Nature (Re-connecting II)**

The problem of the alienation of the self and nature/world has been illustrated extensively by feminist and postcolonial critiques of science. In the tradition of modern Western science, for example, nature is constructed as something lacking intrinsic worth. People, animals, trees, plants and minerals are viewed and treated as objects whose value is based only on how they can be

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<sup>34</sup> Although she never uses the term, Anzaldua’s work—her images and metaphors—point to a third space, what she calls a new (Mestiza) consciousness.

used. This utilitarian, instrumentalist perspective has been a driving force in the way modern societies function. The power to alter nature through technical machinery was deemed proof of human superiority over other living beings (Braidotti 154-161, Escobar 378-79, Emberley, Fox-Keller, Haraway, Hooper 4, Johnston, Merchant in Shiva, Mieder 2, Mohanty, Murphy and Tooze, Postman, Shiva). Technologies that arise from such a culture become tools of domination (Haraway).

The emerging field of “green” cultural studies expands on this tradition (Castree and Braun; Moore, Kosek and Pandian). The problem of how to account for a natural world beyond culture remains. For example, Haraway has argued that “[n]ature cannot pre-exist its construction” (1992 67). This position has been rejected by most environmentalists who insist that, although culture may indeed change the lens through which we interpret and construct our ideas of nature, the natural world and its destruction are very “real” (Muecke 1).

The need to both account for and connect with some kind of broader notion of “nature” seems fundamental to both individual and social quests for healing. This idea overlaps with the field of Eco-psychology<sup>35</sup> and its discussion of the human-nature relationship. Eco-psychology theorists critique modern culture’s treatment of the environment (Adams, Gomes, Gorrell, Roszak, Totton). They expose the effects of industrial technologies on the environment and the ways human beings have sought power through the technological domination of nature (Adams 1). One of the key premises of eco-psychology is that the

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<sup>35</sup> They also have much in common with Deep Ecology which insists upon the need to respect the inherent worth of all living beings (Humphrey, Griffiths, Kowalewski, Zimmerman).

destruction of the natural world attests to the pathology of modern culture. Scholars such as the movement's founder, Theodor Roszak, argue that the environmental crises we are witnessing and experiencing both affect and are a product of our psyches. Gorrell, Roszak, and Totton, for example, describe how human psychology shapes the outer world and how the emotional health of the individual and environment are interconnected (Gomes 1). They argue that the alienation from nature that arises from ecological destruction is harmful to people, something that Evie's story exemplifies to a certain extent (this is explored to a greater degree in the full novel). They are interested in healing culture as well as the individuals who live within it by reconnecting them to nature and to others. This integration is the basis of establishing meaningful and healthy relationships (Adams, Gomes, Gorrell, Roszak, Totton).

Evie's journey can be understood in this way—as a search for nature within and outside herself premised on a renegotiation of her experience of culture and her own identity. It questions what happens when we live in a culture that fails to value nature “out there”. What effect does that have on our ability to accept and respect nature “in here”—our own nature? It points to the possibility that perhaps we *need* nature to be healthy. Maybe our understanding of what it means to be healthy requires that we reconceptualise nature—not as something that we could necessarily know, but as something that we need to look for in order to heal. Maybe we need to look for this within us as we make sense of our own experience and learn how to love more.

## Pedagogy of Love

***“Love is the voice under all silences, the hope which has no opposite in fear; the strength so strong mere force is feebleness: the truth more first than sun, more last than star...”***

—poet EE Cummings

As she travels the world, Evie continually encounters situations where people are oppressed or treated badly by those who seek power over them. Although it often seems like there is little hope to transform the human impulse to have power “over”, she finds encouraging stories in those who try to make a difference in the lives of others (like the school principal in South Africa who found ways to heal power relationships between students with different racial backgrounds). At first she is distraught by the violent forms of oppression and domination that she often both witnesses and experiences. But as she engages in healing, Evie becomes more hopeful. Even where they fail, people’s attempts to help others with compassion and tenderness can be continually refined through experience. Lived experience is a pedagogy of love which continually provides the opportunity to learn how to be more loving—to have relationships based less on power and more on mutual growth.

This thesis could be characterised as a reflection on life as a pedagogy of love both in and out of the classroom. It questions how our journeys in life and in formal education overlap. As Zajonc points out: “The curricula offered by our institutions of higher education have largely neglected this central, if profoundly difficult, task of learning to love, which is also the task of learning to live in true peace and harmony with others and with nature” (1743).

Critical pedagogues like hooks, Freire, Kincheloe, and Giroux have all discussed the importance of personal action, engagement, and commitment in education. Educators like Mayes, Nemiroff, and Uhrmacher diverge from scholars such as Giroux by integrating the exploration of the psyche into their critical stance; they point out that a critical pedagogical theory that encourages social change also requires a critical *psychology*. Nemiroff asserts that education needs to encourage personal growth by getting students to explore the psychological grip that social structures have in our everyday life. She suggests “a learning model in which learners focus on their individual lives and relationships” and are brought “in touch with their own and others’ feelings and values” (81). Situating themselves socially, economically, and politically is essential, but it is not enough. Students need to engage in a dialectical exploration of their own lives and the psychic aspects of their personal and social experience. David Tacey argues in his critique of social constructivism that we need to look at more than how culture and identity are “merely construct[s] of society, that can be exploded merely if we stop believing in [them]” (10). He contends that we need psychoanalysis to understand the psychic aspects of power.

Autobiographer Carolyn Steedman, who writes about her relationship with her mother and working class culture in England, builds on the post-Marxist and psychoanalytic traditions of critical theory. To her, although they are useful, they are not adequate in helping to understand all the overlapping social, personal and inter-textual intricacies of her life story. Perhaps an exploration of critical

psychology is necessary to better understand the relationship of the individual to social change and health. Theory must take seriously the layers of complexity of lived experience. The stories of the characters in my novel offer us the opportunity to explore the psychology of individual experience and see how it intersects with larger social issues. We are invited to think about how the characters respond to a world where love is so often absent from social relations. In what ways do they reproduce what they see all around them? How do they find inspiration despite social suffering? Can they learn to love anyway?

### Human Nature and Utopia

♪ *I wouldn't ever try to hurt you  
I just needed someone to hold me  
To fill the void while you were gone  
To fill this space of emptiness  
I'm only human  
Of flesh and blood I'm made  
Human, Born to make mistakes*  
-The Human League, *Human* ♪

Three hit songs might give us clues about how human nature is seen in pop culture. Michael Jackson, Madonna, and The Human League all wrote songs about human nature, depicting it as repressed

sexual desire. Rebellion against social taboos and the uninhibited expression of lust and desire have been seen as liberating (and transgressive)—from *Sex and the City* to “naughty” reality shows like *Kink* and *Sin City*, being sexual has become synonymous with being yourself. But all this “revolutionary” talk about sex, lust and desire, seldom includes any serious mention of love. What if we were to expand our notion of human nature to one that includes love?

In the task of building community and reaching out to others, it becomes important to seek some common ground, to feel some sort of kinship or similarity



of experience. In an age where emphasising cultural, gender, sexual, racial, religious, or national differences and distinctiveness is all the rage, this can be difficult. Yet, all people on this planet do have at least one thing in common: We are alive.

What is this life? Do we have some kind of intrinsic, universal “nature” in the experience of being alive? Scholars investigating autobiography have wondered whether there is a transcendent self beyond the one constructed in language (Olney, Eakin). And if there is, what is this ungraspable something that cannot be represented in words? French cultural theorist, Roland Barthes, called it *l'introuvable dont je suis fait*—the unaddressable thing of which I’m made (Smith 102). According to James Olney, this is an angst-filled question, “an anxiety about the dimness and vulnerability of that entity that no one has ever seen or touched or tasted” (23).

Although this intangible “nature” cannot be represented, maybe it can be lived—even seen, touched and tasted. All our experiences seem to allude to its presence. Moments of clarity, connectedness, and inspiration remind us of our nature. Times of pain, illness, fragmentation and confusion can lead us back to it.

In all her travels, Evie never finds the utopia she is seeking or the perfect place to live. Every place has its lightness and its dark underbelly. Maybe the utopia she is seeking could only ever be personal and momentary. Something exists in those instances of connecting with others, taking time to listen and know the self, and of being in nature that she knew was important and valuable. Even if we can never really see things as they are—even if it is hard to see past our

mental projections, cultural lenses and matrices—don't we get fleeting moments of truth in love, in beauty, in clarity when we commune with others, with nature, with ourselves? How might we have more of these moments?

Maybe utopia is learning how to respond to the moment with clarity, with a sense of harmony with that which connects us to others and to everything else? Maybe the problem of communion requires nature as a part of self that we share with others. Are the repressed sexual desires celebrated in the popular songs I mentioned earlier characteristic of our "nature;" is that all that we share? Is Freud correct in asserting that sex is the basis of our connection? If so, then, like a one-night stand, this relationship is likely not going to last. We need to ask what else do human beings have in common besides desire? How do we move toward addressing the more "authentic series of desires" (Van Heertum 48) that most people seek—for community, love, connection, happiness, fulfillment and freedom?

### **Layers of False Identity (More than a Woman)**

Through her writing, Minnie Bruce Pratt tries to "strip away the layers of deceit that I have been taught" (39). She works "at stripping away layer after layer of [her] false identity, notions of skin, blood, heart based in racism and anti-Semitism..." (43). She struggles "to change the habits of a lifetime, and the beliefs of centuries" (51). Pratt tries to understand the way history has shaped her as a person and tries to heal it by addressing that within herself that she

inherited from the past that is not really hers or “of” her—that which leads to separation, violence and hatred.

*♪ Here in your arms  
I found my paradise  
My only chance for happiness  
And if I lose you now  
I think I would die.*

*Oh say you'll always be my baby  
We can make it shine,  
we can take forever  
Just a minute at a time.*

*More than a woman, more than a  
woman to me  
More than a woman, more than a  
woman to me*

*There are stories old and true  
Of people so in love like you and me  
And I can see myself  
Let history repeat itself. ♪*

-The Bee Gees

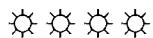
The investigation of personal experience can help us work through our social suffering precisely because it can help us “re-connect”. Susan Griffin, an autobiographer with chronic fatigue syndrome, contends that writing is a way to connect with others: “the desire to perceive and know your own experience founders on the desire for communion” (27). As they write about their pain either through illness

or social dislocation, writers like Anzaldua, Griffin, Lorde, Pratt, Stacey (1997), and Rose politicise their lives by rendering visible what was not seen before, and saying what has not been spoken. They find and refine their voices and connect to others. The attempt to understand how and what we have lived is grounded in the very human search for healing, love and connection. That is essentially the search that we saw Evie undertake. In the course of her quest, she learns what she needs to change if she is to find what she is looking for. Healing the splits within the self seems to be a prerequisite for healing those within society (Anzaldua, Frank 1995, Griffin, Kleinman, Lorde, Pratt, Stacey 1997, Wilentz).

Suffering has a social use and historical memories of suffering can be useful to change the present (Kleinman xi). Like travel; crisis, pain or illness can

be forms of culture shock. They can jolt you out of your habitual complacency and get you to question what you might have taken for granted. The experience can open up thresholds to new places.<sup>36</sup>

In her writing about cancer, Stacey says that she began to notice how “all kinds of narratives had quietly structured my imagination previously, almost without my knowledge” (1997 6). She argues that “[w]hen something unexpected occurs, such as illness, the scripts need rewriting, but normally the shock of the experience can be partly absorbed by the telling of a new story (1997 9). Stacey wonders whether broad crises of health in our society might lead to social change—perhaps offering a “chance for a new start” (1997 12). She comes to see her illness as “a blessing in disguise” (1997 12). Likewise, Cousen suggests that pain and illness may “stimulate reassessment of a whole life” (7). Crisis, then, offers the opportunity of finding a more “true” self, speaking in new ways—and perhaps, for refining the voice.



The search for something beyond the false, constructed identities that have constituted our sense of self can be understood as a quest for our humanness—for the part of our being that is greater than gender, or class, or the colour of our skin, or ethnicity, nationality or the state of the physical body. Evie feels she needs to find this to get well. When she accepts to heal her rage at sexism, anti-Semitism, racism, nationalism...she decides:

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<sup>36</sup> These thresholds are sometimes referred to as “liminal” spaces. “Liminality, from *limen* (Latin: literally threshold) is a term most notably linked to Victor Turner who writes of a no-man's-land betwixt-and-between, a site of a 'fructile chaos ... a storehouse of possibilities, not by any means a random assemblage but a striving after new forms' (Turner, 1990: 11-12)” (Broadhurst 243).

I am more than a woman to me. I am more than my body, or my cultural background, or my level of education. Whatever anyone says I am, whatever labels I am given, I will always be Eva Fanneva. The more I can be myself, the more I can heal all the aspects of my socially constructed self that have separated me from others, and disconnected me from my own nature.

### Speaking & Vocal Training

*♪ We always have a choice  
Or at least I think we do  
We can always use our voice  
I thought this to be true  
We can live in fear  
Extend our selves to love  
We can fall below  
Or lift our selves above  
Fear can stop you loving  
Love can stop your fear  
Fear can stop you loving  
But it's not always that clear  
-Morcheeba Love & Fear♪*

The search for nature and the attempt to “re-connect” seem inherently tied up with the act of refining one’s voice. This is important because the voices with which we speak aren’t necessarily our own. We often reproduce the discourses and language of dominant culture and its notion of who we should be as women,

as men, as people of certain cultural or ethnic backgrounds, and even as human beings. Solving the problem of speaking, however, is not just a matter of allowing for a greater diversity of voices or more social equality between different groups. It depends on how we heal the traumas that have contributed to social pathology in the first place.

Radical pedagogue, Augusto Boal, for example, uses theatre to help people explore the voices of authority in their heads that police their thoughts and actions. By helping people become more aware of aspects of the identities they have internalised from their cultural conditioning, critical approaches can enable us to find our own voice (see the work of feminist autobiographers like Pratt, Anzaldua, Griffin, Lorde, Pratt, Stacey 1997, for example). They can help heal the dislocations within the self, and between self and other.

Proctor reminds us that the separation of nature and culture in Western thought “can be traced back at least to Aristotle, for whom nature (*physis*) is that which is not made by humans, in contrast to *techné*, that which is of human origin” (637). The word “technology” comes from the Greek *technologia*—“*techne*” meaning “craft”, and “*logia*” which is “saying”<sup>37</sup>—“the art of saying”. That which has been made by humans, however, has often been used for domination. In fact, a lot of the technologies that have shaped our civilisation were developed for the purpose of war like jet planes, atomic bombs, and even the internet.

The use of technology for destruction has inspired our dystopian imagination since the advent of the industrial revolution. Films and books like *Metropolis*, *Blade Runner*, *A Clockwork Orange*, 1984, and *Brave New World* reflect our “science fiction fevered dreams [that] stem from our deepest concerns about science, technology, and society” (Kunzru 1). Genetically modified foods, cloned sheep, florescent green pigs, mice that grow human ears on their backs, terminator seeds that don’t reproduce so farmers will have to buy more, hybrid human-monkeys for cheap labour. These are just some of the “monsters” created

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<sup>37</sup> Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, 1980

by human beings in their attempts to shape nature according to their whims. These Franken-foods and Franken-beings are projections of a human psyche strategising for its own survival. But in the same way that Frankenstein destroys his creator, perhaps the tree of knowledge chops itself down in the end.

*♪ I realized by using the high notes of the chords as a melodic line, and by the right harmonic progression, I could play what I heard inside me. That's when I was born.*

-Charlie Parker ♪

Perhaps changing the world requires that we strive to make all our constructions creative rather than destructive. If first there is the word and then the creation, then how we speak

matters. Creating or making something can be seen as the “art of saying”. Vocal training might be required in both personal and social healing. If, as Liberman argues “it is nature not technology that heals” (4), perhaps this implies that the task of refining the voice is the same as that of finding one’s nature.

bell hooks said that making a difference in the world depends on discovering what it is you really have to say and to contribute to it (hooks 2002 xviii). Maybe that is the key to political and social emancipation. As we seek out better ways of being in the world, it’s great to be a traveller, but it’s richer to be a minstrel who enlivens the journey with songs of love.

## **Learning, Growth & Creativity**

Phenomenologists like Merleau-Ponty have claimed that the act of writing can point to the “essence” of life experience (see also Van Manen). It may be impossible to fully theorise this state of being (and becoming), but this ineffable

“essence” at the heart of our experience cannot be dismissed. After all, we’d have no experience without it.

One way to “see” human nature might be to engage in creative forms of expression, such as writing a novel or an autobiography. Many theorists have argued that the universal aspects of human experience can be accessed through art (Barone, Cole, Connelly and Clandinin, Denzin and Lincoln, Ellis, Eisner, Eisner in Saks, Knowles and Cole, Faux, Merleau-Ponty, Van Manen, and others). The genre of creative writing “impl[ies], through language, qualities of life that are often ineffable, what cannot be said, particularly in conventional perceptions of...life” (Dunlop 3).

Maybe we can never fully define or understand nature or even our own nature, but as Evie’s story so tellingly argues, that doesn’t mean we should stop striving to find that within us which is the same in others despite our differences. In his study of photographer Jo Spence’s autobiography, Guimond points out how Spence represents herself as “struggling to discover and communicate the truth about herself.” And that “she acknowledges the difficulty of this task...” (578). Although identity is complex, she tries to reveal an “essential truth”, “the deep structure of reality”, through art, a person can “penetrate the surface features of their existences” to reveal something deeper—a self “not imposed upon her by others” (579). Like Spence, we can constantly strive to discover and communicate our “true” selves (584) all the while accepting that our lessons are endless, and our creativity, infinite.



## EPILOGUE by Evie Rose

### CODA: AN ARIA ON LIFE, LEARNING & HEALING

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*♪ The operatic equivalent of the soliloquy is the aria, the solo song that does not really further the plot, but gives insight into a character, allowing the audience to better understand his motivations, his foibles, his secret inner emotions.*

-Classical Music Journal 🎵

*A coda is the finale of a musical work. This one, as my last chapter, can be read as Evie's final "aria". In it, Evie reflects on the implications of what she has lived in her process of healing. We come back to where we started, asking about how we might avoid reproducing the cycles of history by continuing to consider personal transformation as an integral part of social change.*

My pain was like an alarm sounding: Something had to change. And it wasn't the world, it was me. Pop psychologist Dr. Phil always challenges his guests to question their life strategy: *How's that working for you?* He asks, knowing full well that it's not. If he would have asked me, I would have had to admit that it wasn't. I could no longer go on the way I was. It had become so unbearable I felt that if I didn't heal it, I would die. I had sought help for a very long time, but nothing really seemed to work. Once I started to meditate and practice yoga, however, I realised that no one could ever really heal me. I had to do it myself. I resolved, with the greatest conviction I could muster, that I would do it both fully and on my own.

But I didn't realise right away how much work it was. Wade was right. What lies both behind us and ahead of us is nothing compared to what lies within. Healing wasn't about doing a few yoga postures or disciplining yourself to sit unmoving in meditation for an hour a day. It required serious introspection—and not just that. When I looked more closely at my life, it became clear that I had to come to terms not only with my own pain, but with that of the world.

Making peace with everything was an indispensable part of healing. Sorrow, fear, anger and disgust are not conducive to nurturing well-being.

Even so, in all my work as an activist or a teacher, I never encountered any kind of de-briefing activity to help people deal with their feelings about living in a violent world that lacks respect for life.<sup>38</sup> None of the organisations or schools I worked with ever provided this. Instead, I watched as people were both directly and indirectly traumatised by what was happening in the world. I saw women's rights advocates hurt by sexism; environmentalists unable to reconcile within themselves the devastation of the natural world; indigenous people murdered by armies and/or dispossessed of their lands; human rights activists arrested or tortured, their offices ransacked; teachers and parents trying to protect children from rape and abuse; students depressed and distraught by current events and prospects for the future; or just everyday people lost, searching or suffering. Although I met many caring individuals who were trying to make a difference, many of them were deeply troubled. If peace in the world requires peace within, then most people I knew who longed for social transformation (including myself) weren't off to a very good start.

### **Survival in the Wilderness & Life in the Garden**

In the myth of the Garden of Eden, Eve and Adam, eked on by a serpent, ate the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. What they came to know

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<sup>38</sup> I have recently come across two examples of this in Montreal and hope that it is part of a growing trend that I feel my work can contribute to. The first was a workshop on activist pain at the 2006 Anarchist Bookfair, and the second, workshops given at the Padua Centre in Montreal by Rebekah Hart based on the work of Marianne Williamson.

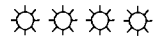
would lead to humanity's fall from grace. I always considered my namesake, Eve, either as a sort of mother of the world who had left me with some monumental baggage, or as some kind of incarnation of myself in another time and place. I had somehow inherited her challenge because we had been given the same name. But I don't think it was knowledge that was the cause of Eve's expulsion from paradise. I think it was the separateness that comes through judgement—the human impulse to label things as either good or bad, right or wrong. The tree of knowledge is, after all, based on knowing the difference between good and evil.

*♪ Standing in the garden you are laughing  
Arranging a bright and new bouquet  
The halo overhead looks like a rainbow  
That comes out even when it hasn't rained  
Could this be lo-ove? La la la Lo-ve.  
-Evie ♪*

As I worked on healing myself, I learned a lot about judgement. If you were busy condemning everything that was going on in the world, it was not a

sign of peace within. And the worst part of it all was that if you were judging the world, you were also disapproving of yourself. I judged everything that was lived in pain and confusion as if it were all worthless. Not just my own experience, but that of others as well. I couldn't bear to see suffering. But to judge something is to separate yourself from it. You divide the world (and yourself) into what is good and evil, desired and unwanted. To see the world this way derives not from an acceptance to love unconditionally, but from fear and desire—the sense of trepidation about what you don't want; and the hope for what you do. It is a survival strategy rather than really living. It implies the condemnation of many facets of life experience—especially the painful, conflictual, disharmonious ones. By judging the painful experiences of others I was not respecting fully their lives

or the value of what they were living. By judging the past, I was mistrusting my path, lacking reverence for my own life. When you don't acknowledge the necessity of where you have been and what you have lived, you have no faith in where you are going. You aren't accepting that everything in life has a purpose—even pain, illness and trauma. And that everything in life is valuable.



**♪ We are stardust, we are golden,  
We are caught in the Devil's bargain,  
And we got to get ourselves  
back to the garden.**

- Joni Mitchell, *Woodstock* ♪

The wilderness is a common motif in the hero's journey. From being lost in the desert in the biblical Exodus to

mythical stories from all times and places, the fear of the unknown world “out there”, be it the watery depths of the ocean, the woods, the underworld, the concrete jungle, the desert, or outer space, is a common human fear. The wildernesses of our postmodern imagination reflect our apocalyptic, dystopian, survivalist fears of not being able to cope if we're left to nature without the easy-to-purchase comforts of our urban infrastructures. It illustrates, perhaps, a distrust of life by feeling that we can't survive without being able to be in control of nature. Current reality TV shows like *Survivor* and *Man vs. Wild* appeal to this sensibility. The problem of whether or not we can survive in some wild, mysterious, uncivilised place seems to be ingrained in the human psyche.

If the world is viewed as a wilderness then there are enemies, monsters, witches, dragons or ogres lurking behind every tree. The world becomes full of victims and perpetrators, and also needs rescuers to set things right. Our fear of the unknown becomes a fear of the other, a “necessary” xenophobia premised

on the priority of survival. We are ready to fight or flee at the first signs of danger, are never at rest, and always on guard as we try to keep things under control or to protect ourselves and others from harm.

If the traveller is world-weary, she most likely perceives the universe as a random, chaotic and dangerous wilderness. But in healing, I learned to trust my path. In fact, I think that to be healthy requires this. It opened my eyes to the probability that maybe, just maybe, everything was perfect as it was—that all creation had a place and a purpose; and that maybe I did, too.

### **The Light Always Gets In (Nature, Purpose & Sunshine)**

Although it was first written in Ecclesiastes (3:1-8), I know the words from the sixties rock band, *The Byrds*, who sang that there was a season for everything, and a time for every purpose under heaven. Once on a flight, I saw a show about centenarians. They didn't do anything like exercise or diet for their longevity. But they all had a purpose—something to keep them going. When I saw it, it struck me because I didn't know what mine was.

On the first meditation retreat I ever did at a monastery in the middle of a tropical forest on an island in the Thai Sea, I sat in silence and observed my surroundings. As I watched the insects interact with plants, and the flowers and leaves and trees; as I listened to the birds sing, it occurred to me that each living being contributed in its own unique way to the whole. Each had its own special role to play in the sustenance of other life forms. Everything fit together to

***Life, in its essence, is perfection. We take this perfection and degrade it to our own purposes. We create disease for many different reasons, perhaps to learn some lessons that need to be learned, perhaps to come to an awakening, or to spur us to embark on a personal transformation. Disease may have certain benefits for us in our spiritual education, but disease is man-made, not nature-made.***

-rawfoodist Rhio (11)

support everything else. Life sustained life in a naturally balanced and harmonious way.

This idea, of course, is not new, but I grasped, maybe for the first time, the way that Nature unfolds in orderly

patterns, perfect sequences and meaningful cycles. The design of a snowflake seemed to attest to the possibility of order in the universe; or the way that seasons unfolded precisely in the appropriate sequence to give everything enough time to be planted, nourished, to blossom, grow, and to be harvested.

On closer inspection, Nature seemed to know what it was doing. Like seeds, flowers, plants and trees, maybe it is our natural inclination to seek illumination and grow (upward). The sun's radiance sustains all life no matter what we make of it. It shines down on everyone despite their actions or beliefs. In the same way, maybe it is a natural impetus to seek peace and harmony, and to commune with our neighbours—rather than fight or compete with them, or seek to destroy them.

Perhaps life's lessons are meant to show us how to choose light over darkness, clarity over confusion, communion over disconnection? Despite our frequent disconnectedness, maybe light is the underlying (and overarching) reality of our existence. I think that's what Leonard Cohen meant when he sang: "There's a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in." Through our broken worlds, hearts, minds, bodies, our social dislocations, and severed relationships,

glimmers the promise of greater clarity. Weeds spring up from the breaks in the sidewalk because they grow where the soil needs nutrients. Nourished by the sun's rays, they persevere in even the most unwelcoming situations—and they do so with purpose: So they can heal life.

I suspect that healing depends on listening to whatever Nature is trying to tell us as it restores harmony. When we spray poison on plants, the insects only get stronger and more resistant. Nature gives us a choice: Either we continually apply stronger pesticides, which in turn strengthens the bugs and eventually disrupts the entire ecosystem, or we find another approach to gardening. If we resist what it is trying to tell us by insisting to do things our way, then we risk throwing everything out of balance.

***There is an orderliness in the universe, there is an unalterable law governing everything and every being that exists or lives. It is no blind law; for no blind law can govern the conduct of human beings.***

-Mahatma Gandhi

I have started to listen more. I have tried to attune to the ebbs and flows, to the natural rhythms and cycles of life—not by hanging out on an exotic mountain top, forest or sea side retreat (although this helps, too), but by observing myself.

And as I have done so, I have healed my pain.

We often imagine Nature to be something “out there” surrounding us—as implied by the term “environment”. Or we envision it as something belonging to plants, animals, the earth or ecosystems. We often forget to look for it “in here.” Not only are our bodies made of the same stuff as all life forms—oxygen, hydrogen, carbon and nitrogen; whatever gives them their aliveness is also part of who we are.

As I have experienced the restoration of my health, I have felt part of something infinite, and, like the universe, ever-expanding and even miraculous. Miracles, I have considered, seem to be examples of Nature just being itself as it brings things into balance. Maybe I just didn't notice before because I wasn't paying attention.

### **Sensing the World (Cellular Memory)**

**If you are lucky enough to recover, illness will bring you to cherish life. Surviving serious illness, all your senses will seem newly awake, every experience vibrant.**

-Griffin (11)

My search to understand the multiple causes of pain and illness has led me to some realisations about both

the complexity of our experience, and how much of it we are unaware of. For example, many people can feel shifts in the environment based on geological movement, weather, solar flares, or other natural phenomena. When I started observing my pain, I found that some of my physical reactions would be triggered by major earthquakes in other parts of the world; or by a severe storm, like a hurricane or tornado. Animals react before bouts of extreme weather or temblors—dogs bark, cats stick to the drapes, and elephants run for the hills. It makes sense to think that humans might also be affected by these and a multitude of other natural phenomena (Chang, Park)—many of which are not merely material.

The Global Consciousness Project at Princeton University has provided evidence that a collective unconscious might exist. Researchers placed random event generators around the world to see if human consciousness would interact



with them. They learned that collective emotions like trauma or fear could be measured. The generators showed irregular patterns just before major events like the funeral of Princess Diana, the Winter Olympics in Japan, or the destruction of the Twin Towers in New York.<sup>39</sup> Was the body able to somehow tap into the collective emotion around these kinds of occurrences?

A Japanese scientist, Masaru Emoto, discovered that the crystalline structures of water react to environmental conditions, pollution and music as well as thoughts and words. For example, water that was pristine or that had been treated with words of love had beautifully formed geometric designs. Water that was polluted or had been exposed to heavy metal music or hateful language would have distorted and random crystalline structures. Emoto's work illustrated the way our bodies, which are made up of water, are affected by our experience. The body feels and remembers the dissonance in our environment at a deep cellular level.

"[T]he idea that the cells in our bodies contain information about our personalities, tastes, and histories", although controversial in mainstream medicine, is beginning to be accepted by some doctors (Carroll in Linton 1). Evidence that this phenomenon exists has been found repeatedly in patients who had received organ transplants—especially hearts (Linton, McClaskey, Pearsall, Pert, Sylvia, Takeuchi). Recipients often suddenly adopted the "attitudes, tastes and habits" of their donors (Linton 1).

After her operation, Claire Sylvia, a forty-nine year old dancer who had been given the heart of a nineteen-year-old boy, suddenly developed strange

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<sup>39</sup> <http://noosphere.princeton.edu/>

cravings. She longed for the first time in her life, to have a beer and Kentucky Fried Chicken. Although recipients were never allowed to know whose heart they had, Sylvia found out who her donor was in a dream in which she was told his name. When she met his family, they confirmed that the new feelings she had were typical of the person who died.

Thomas McClaskey of the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress contends that:

Virtually every behavioral pattern exhibited during routine activities of daily living results from learned data which is stored, or encoded, as cellular memory. Most of those behavioral patterns are benign, in that they do not contribute significantly to cellular destruction (i.e., disease). Some of those patterns, however, are expressed as significant reflections of traumatically encoded cellular information. In a condition such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, it must be kept in mind that the "problem" is an expression of traumatically encoded information at the cellular level. In order for therapy to have lasting effect, it is imperative that a primary focus of intervention involves isolation and decoding of the causative traumatic cellular memory pattern.

The underlying factors that contribute to disease and pain both personal

and social are deep, complex and overlapping. They require that we address them on multiple levels. I could work toward understanding, pacify the mind, learn about spirituality, but I wasn't going to get better if I didn't heal my cellular memory.

### Renewal (Healing Myself)

*Until the transplant, I had spent most of my adult life either in a relationship with a man or hoping to be in one. But after the operation, while I still felt attracted to men, I didn't feel that same need to have a boyfriend. I was freer and more independent than before - as if I had taken on a more masculine outlook.*

-Claire Sylvia

My understanding of Nature as that which heals and as part of a greater quest for growth and even illumination was something that I felt through my body in the process of healing. I have breathed light through every cell of my physical form; and have tried to

radiate it from my heart through my body to situations or people I have felt might need it or that I might be judging in some way. But I haven't only tried to do this at home in meditation, yoga or movement. I've committed to doing it all the time, in every situation. I have learned that healing requires responding differently to the world than I did before. Instead of reacting to old triggers, I have worked on detaching from them. When I find myself responding with anything other than love, I breathe. I focus on illuminating my body through the heart, and I try to put love to it. This is not a mental understanding. It isn't enough just to understand. I have had to commit to healing all that was lived in pain, in judgement, in confusion, in darkness and in disrespect. This hasn't been easy, and it hasn't been quick either. It has taken some living, and a lot of movement.

Through this process, I have become aware of how I respond to others, to my environment and experiences, not just with thoughts and emotions, but on a physical level, through the body. I no longer react the same way to things as I did in the past. Rather than turning inward or condemning that which I once considered harmful or threatening, my heart has begun to open. It has become easier to reach out to others. As my body has integrated new ways of living, it has begun to resonate with love rather than resistance. As I respond differently to each new experience, the body no longer resonates to the old triggers, wounds, fears, desires, or traumas. The residue of the past in the cells heals. The old patternings of cellular memory no longer influence my thoughts and emotions in the same way. Over time, as the cells reproduce, the old ones are released, and the new ones resonate in new ways to the world. As I accept to live with love, the cells re-constitutionalise. They no longer “remember” in the same way. I have begun to live something new. I have become aware through my experience that it is love that offers the possibility of renewal—not just through the mind, but through the body.

This is why I think that both understanding and making peace with the past is essential to healing. If you are presented the same experience again, it can be lived differently—with love rather than fear, trust, and an openness of heart. Old patterns can be broken as lessons are learned. This is very different from revolution. Instead of hoping or pushing for change, it is premised on learning and accepting to love, forgive and trust all that was lived. In doing so,

the past loses its grip, and each moment can be lived in a new way. History no longer casts a shadow on present experience.

## Support Systems

*I can feel the rising sun  
I can feel a new day dawn  
I can feel the sky open  
I can feel my soul*  
-Evie ♪

Rather than judging or condemning the ills of the world and the way I, others, social institutions, even corporations, sometimes behave in pathological ways, I have asked myself how I can be a source of support, assistance, and healing for collective growth? Mother Teresa once said that she would not go to an anti-war demonstration, but would be happy to attend a peace rally. The world, she must have felt, cannot be changed through struggle, just as peace cannot be achieved through fighting. She must have recognised the creative potential of acting in support of, over the destructiveness of fighting against. Like a garden, this kind of pedagogy is “restorative”. It nourishes and sustains life.

A way to understand this might be to consider the way restorative approaches to justice respond to social pathologies like crime and violence in a way that nurtures all those affected by it—even the perpetrators. In contrast to conventional forms of punitive justice, restorative justice seeks to heal the perpetrators, victims, and their communities. Restorative justice sees

conflict as an opportunity for a community to learn and grow. It operates on the premise that conflict, even criminal conflict, inflicts harm, and therefore individuals must accept responsibility for repairing that

harm. Communities are empowered to choose their response to conflict. Victims, offenders and communities actively participate in devising mutually beneficial solutions, and implementing those solutions. Conflicts are resolved in a way that restores harmony in the community members, relationships, and allows people to continue to live together in a safer, healthy environment.<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps social justice is not a fight to be won, after all. In any case, I grew tired of fighting. I became much more interested in healing and giving.

### Princes on White Horses (Autonomy)

♪ *She got to be herself  
So she can free herself  
Singing power to the people*  
-John Lennon ♪

When I realised that my prince was never going to come, I was really upset. It just struck me one day what I'd been doing. He never existed at all. He was a myth, a folk tale made up by me or culture, but he wasn't real. No one was ever going to come around who would complete me. I had to forget about him. Healing has been a solitary endeavor, anyway.

The prince on a white horse is a metaphor for simple solutions to life's problems. He's the magic pill or the quick fix. So many women, although we might fight it or deny it—still hope he'll come. Many men do, too—both literally for some, and figuratively for others. Maybe we all secretly long to be rescued from the pain and hardship of life. The idea that someone else could sweep you up

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.sfu.ca/crj/about.html#what>

and take you to a better place is appealing. But when I committed to healing myself, I saw that this wish to be saved or fixed or healed by someone else makes them responsible for your well-being and happiness. After travelling the world searching for this in different places, people, and cultures, I found out that nothing outside myself can really help me. No doctor or healer or teacher or book or pill or guru could ever save me or anyone else. Everyone had to be responsible for their own salvation. But, I also learned that it's okay if you aren't ready. Sometimes you have to experience what is unnecessary to learn that you don't need it. As John Lennon once sang: "Whatever gets you through the night. It's alright."

*♪ Sing and dance together and be joyous,  
but let each one of you be alone,  
Even as the strings of a lute are alone  
though they quiver with the same music.*

*-Khalil Gibran, On Marriage ♪*

I've tried to be as autonomous as possible. And as I have, I haven't felt as compelled to fight to change the

world anymore. *It* had never really been the problem. *I* was the one that had to change. In any case, I was the only thing I *could* change. The more I worked on myself, it became clear that peace did not require peace in the world. Peace in the world was not a prerequisite for peace within. A person didn't need to be around joyful people to be joyful. Joy in the world wasn't needed to be joyful. People didn't need to live in a loving environment to feel love. Love in the world was not a prerequisite for love within. When I stopped worrying about everyone else and stopped focusing on all that was wrong in the world, I found something inside me that was naturally peaceful, joyful and full of love. As I nourished it, I

saw that I was able to touch others with this peace, joy and love. Maybe this was the only way to make a difference?

Perhaps revolution can never really happen. Maybe rebellion is impossible. Like conformity, maybe it's just the flip side of the same coin. It means constructing your identity in relation to someone else—something outside yourself—which is clearly not freedom. I think healing is like getting out of a co-dependent relationship and accepting to take responsibility for your own joy, love, peace, kindness, and healing.

Maybe the irony of true love, of real communion, is that you need to be autonomous to really connect with others. If you are, the actions, thoughts or words of another don't affect you emotionally, negatively or positively. You are no longer a prisoner to the will of others or they to yours.

## Transformation

*♪ flicka flicka flicka here you are  
cata cata cata caterpillar girl  
flowing in and filling up  
my hopeless heart  
oh never never go  
dust my lemon lies  
with powder pink and sweet  
the day I stop is the day you change  
and fly away from me*

-The Cure, *Caterpillar Girl* ♪

If pain, as poet Khalil Gibran once said, is the break of the shell that encloses our understanding, then that's what healing it has been to me. Like a gestation period, it has changed me, nourished me and helped me grow in fundamental ways. I imagine myself emerging from my cocoon with wings—no longer a caterpillar girl trying to fill up the hopeless hearts of others... with powder pink and sweet.



Pain seems to be a signifier pointing to something beyond itself even more elusive—something about myself that I had not fully experienced before. I think it has to do with who I really am—with some kind of intrinsic “nature”. And I am sure this is quite the same thing as love or whatever it is that keeps me alive. So I can’t really name it or describe it or theorise it, but I know that whatever “it” is, it offers the possibility of transformation and renewal—like turning from a caterpillar to a butterfly. To learn from pain is to transcend it. After I heeded its lessons, I didn’t need it anymore. I no longer needed to crawl around and eat leaves on the same tree day in and day out until winter. I could even grow colourful wings and fly thousands of miles to some far away place where the sun would still be shining—while still being at home with myself.

### The Art of Listening<sup>41</sup>

*Music is a cooperative art. A composer or performer creates or recreates a tapestry of sounds and silences and a listener finds the beauty and meaning in the complex pattern or the joy in the simple melody.♪*

In life we are constantly being asked whether or not we are paying attention. Are we listening and watching? Are we seeing all the possibilities and opportunities? What meaning do we give to the events of our lives that contribute to our growth? Do we recognise the synchronicity in “chance” meetings and paths crossed? Can we see the wonder in everything that is lived? In observing my patterns, I noticed that there is a gift in the fact that history

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<sup>41</sup> The above quote is from a review of Jean Ferris’ book, *The Art of Listening* retrieved from: <http://highered.mcgraw-hill.com/sites/0072491353/> on May 8, 2008

repeats itself. If we didn't notice an opportunity before, it's never too late. We always get another chance to live our unlived pasts.

I think the key to healthy relationships—whether teacher-student, parent-child, friendships or romance, or between the activist and the powers-that-be—depends on the degree to which you are able to abandon your own agenda and really listen. Healing is not just the art of saying (as in the definition of *technologia* discussed in the previous chapter), it is also an art of listening. To connect, it seems necessary to really respect where others are at without projecting on them what you want them to be or desiring to control what they think, feel or do in any way.

This is easier said than done. It's hard not to interfere—especially when you think others might be on a destructive path. Canadian eco-celebrity, David Suzuki, speaking about the state of the environment said: "We're in a giant car heading towards a brick wall and everyone's arguing over where they're going to sit." How could you not want to point out what lies ahead? Should you let them hit the wall?

Maybe sometimes people have to crash into walls. Lord knows, I've hit a few. I can't control the outcome of everybody's actions—not students, friends, family, boyfriends, corporations, governments, or even my own. Like many disgruntled girlfriends have learned after vigorously perusing the self-help aisles of local bookstores: You just can't change someone. They have to be keen to transform themselves. Maybe you are looking for love in guys who are just not

that into you.<sup>42</sup> Whatever the case, worrying about them would not help you. It is better to leave them be and get on to doing your own thing. So I started doing mine.

I've tried to accept that pain is part of the learning process. Sometimes people get hurt, sick, lost and confused. Life is like that. But it also has its way of letting people know both when and how they need to change. You can try to give them help to support their growth, but you can't make anybody be other than they accept to be. People can learn what is healthy or not just by living. The school of life is the ultimate education. We all learn from the natural consequences of our actions. Life itself is a natural pedagogy of love, a song that resonates differently for everyone—but you have to listen.

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<sup>42</sup> This is a reference to the book made famous by TV's *Sex and the City: He's Just Not That Into You: The No-Excuses Truth to Understanding Guys* by Greg Behrendt and Liz Tuccillo

## YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION - THE SOUNDTRACK

*This list is meant to help you listen to the thesis.*

### disc one

1. Revolution-Sean Ono Lennon (an imaginary acoustic cover)
2. What the World Needs Now-Jackie Deshannon
3. The Boxer-Simon and Garfunkel
4. Give Peace a Chance-John Lennon
5. Big Yellow Taxi-Joni Mitchell
6. I've Never been to Me-Charlene
7. Meat is Murder-The Smiths
8. The Times They are A-Changin'-Bob Dylan
9. Babe-Styx
10. Nobody Home-Pink Floyd
11. Another Brick in the Wall-Pink Floyd
12. Anarchy in the UK-The Sex Pistols
13. Help! Sean Ono Lennon (the ballad, imaginary acoustic cover)
14. Brothers in Arms-Dire Straights
15. Delicate-Damien Rice
16. Right here, Right Now-Jesus Jones (remixed by Robbie Rivera)

### disc two

1. Enola Gay-OMD
2. Dame todo el poder-Molotov
3. Weeping-Vusi Mahlasela
4. African Nation, Calm!-Busi Mholongo
5. Nothing Ever Happens-Del Amitri
6. This is to Mother You-Sinead O'Connor
7. Chori Chori Chupke Chupke-Alka Yagnik & Babul Supriyo
8. All I Need-Air
9. Sooner-This Morning Jacket
10. Love and Fear-Morcheeba
11. More Than a Woman-The Bee Gees
12. Human-The Human League
13. Woodstock-Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young
14. Anthem-Leonard Cohen
15. Power to the People-John Lennon
16. Whatever Gets You Through the Night-John Lennon
17. Caterpillar Girl-The Cure

### disc three

All Evie Rose's songs (and poems) were written by me and some might appear on my upcoming CD.

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