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## Guest Editorial

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## Shadowcast: Reflections from Quarantine

*Baby's Blue. See Through.*

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*A Poem for a Space of Forty Days*

I'm not sure if I don't expect  
 That this just might be how things appear as life  
 Ebbs. As consciousness starts giving up  
 Its sometimes terrible sway.  
 And things have a chance to become themselves again.  
 Back to normal. Ungripped.  
 Like timid birds finally able to peek out safe and sound.  
 To peek out safe, and sound the air around.

A sort of over exposed burn out in  
 Psychedelic Expectation.  
 An olden boy a sucker for  
 Translucent Beauty. Just like always.  
 Just like for years.  
 Ravens just out that window.  
 I'll just bet I missed their wing shadows by  
 Lost Seconds.  
 Just like 70 Years Gone, just like that  
 Just Like That.  
 Upper Cases  
 Proper Names  
 Yes.  
 Windowsuns.  
 Baby Pinks.  
 Baby Blues.

Baby's blue and it's sweet as can be.  
 A Yellow Ring.  
 I feel like Yarrow.  
 See through.

Things speak; they show the shape they are in. They announce themselves, bear witness to their presence: "Look, here we are." They regard us beyond how we may regard them, our perspectives, what we intend with them, and how we dispose of them. (Hillman 2006, p. 33)

[It] would not deserve the interest we take in it if it did not have something to teach us that we could not know by ourselves. (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. xxxv).

*Quaranta giorni*. Literally "a space of forty days" (OED). An old Italian term naming the forty days that ships from plagued countries had to lay in harbour.

Quarantine. Forty days and forty nights. Forty days in the desert. Strange thing to find when you've got a bit too much time on your hands. *Schola*. Leisure. "A holding back. A keeping clear" (OED). But don't forget, when doing interpretive work: "Even when etymologies are right, they are not proofs but achievements preparatory to conceptual analysis, and only in such analysis to they obtain a firm foundation" (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 103). And this noted right after Hans-Georg has analytically detailed and lamented the "subjectivization of aesthetic experience" (pp. 42-81) and proposed *Truth and Method* as set squarely on "retrieving the question of artistic truth" (pp. 81-100).

Time to pick up new habits, or, perhaps, to think through old habits anew. That last phrase is as good a definition of interpretive work as I can currently manage.

A relatively new habit, this picture taking stuff. "Don't wait" is the only thing I know that I know. It has become, lately, a way to demonstrate to myself something of the immediacies of attention and what they can yield in the lingers of dying ever so slowly so far. Some sort of fecundity of the individual case. Something of the irreplaceability of the case. Something of remembering not to skitter away, but rather, stay, sit and see what happens.

Momentariness. Temporality. Sunarcs shifts across a worn old oak table.

Such goes ephemera. But, as per cases well attended to, their very particularity betrays, to equivocate, a sort of universality of irreplaceability, irreducibility.

But this universality does not *govern* them. Nor is it ever complete. It always stands in abeyance of the arrival of the next case, or the arrival of the fresh experience of the very same case returned to and differently the same because of that. Looking again at that photo. Falling in love as its gravitational pull "increases in being" (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 40) and purrs from the attention.

And must be experienced as such to be experience for what it is, freed-moving, but never free from the archangel eye of subjectivity that beholds it. Abeyance. Suspension. Something of Edmund Husserl's (1931/1970a, 1936/1970b) phenomenological aspirations. And also, expectant waitfulness or hopefulness (OED). Like whiling. Agape. Daresay both pronunciations of this last work: open-mouthed, amazed, and also some deep, sensuous attraction to what seems to be the truth of what is experienced. Drawing closer, waiting. Writing.

There is breath here, too, both gasped and held:

The word for perception or sensation in Greek was *aesthesis*, which means at root a breathing in or taking in of the world, the gasp, "aha," the "uh" of the breath in wonder, shock, amazement, and aesthetic response. (Hillman, 2006, p. 36)

An *aesthesis* unsubjectivized, that bears witness to an experience that "something [just might be] is going on, (*im Spiele ist*), something [seems to be] is happening (*sich abspielt*)" (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 104). I add these square brackets, because aesthetic response, like etymologies, is not proof, but is, rather, an ambiguous clue that needs love and attention. And it just might turn

out to be little more than a fleeting affair that goes nowhere, that does not deepen or last or return. We all know this sort of experience full well, I expect.

Just look at that picture (I say to myself as well). I write this secretly because I want to know: it's not just me, right? *It's* quite stunning and strange and provocative. Provoking voicing, showing, sharing, writing. *Its* voicing, *its* showing. It:

is an *Ereignis* – an event that ‘appropriates us’ into itself. It jolts us, it knocks us over, and sets up a world of its own, into which we are drawn, as it were. (Gadamer, 2001, p. 71)

A little recessed space whose recess --withdrawnness, hidden enclivity, increases with the right attention. It becomes beautifully less capturable and beautifully more drawing in the same working gesture of interpretation.

There is a great old word for photographs: snaps. I deleted far more photos than the one I'm offering here. And that decision has a suddenness and immediacy that I cannot unfold further, except to say that it is like what happens when a story is told and you know immediately that *that* is worth noting, remembering, saving, caring for, not forgetting. This happens, too, when I read, too, and a strike will occur and the text will beckon a pen underlining, making it a locale to which I just might return, and the work, then, is to properly attend to it so it doesn't end up simply being reduced to the fact that I got struck.

Here's the tough thing. Not every story, not every case, not every event, lasts. Not everything “makes memory last” (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 111). And becoming proficient in interpretive work is, in part, getting good at the practice of recognition, the practice of seeking the last of things and the weird risk of making something public. No matter how diligent, being practiced is no sort of guarantee. Things fall apart. No centers hold even when they once did for a while.

So here's the trick. I'm erasing things. I'm sorting. I'm emptying the trash. Me. And my own limitedness will be an intimate part of how this operates, where and when these parses occurs. And I am and remain profoundly susceptible to tragic, awful errors in this regard -- of ignoring, of following old habits, of losing precious light and shadow through distraction, exhaustion or mere happenstance, of numbly repeating deeply buried presumptions, prejudices, unnoticed bile and guile, picking away mindlessly at the same scab.

And *no matter what I do*, no matter how good hearted the effort, I cannot outrun this prospect. That is why I write and publish these things, because my own light and shadowcast inevitably proves itself to be inadequate to the case itself. I cannot live up to that photo's sweet demand.

Inevitably. Other voices aren't just politically correct to seek out and favour, any more than subjectively isolating one's own “story” into interior ownership. It must be told out loud, listened to, spoken to, cast through the. Other voices are vital because the thing itself (the story, the photo, the essay, the interview, the text, the dance, the Raven) *is* inexhaustibly rich, inevitably shadowed and sunlit, inevitably temporal, multifarious:

It is not at all a question of a mere subjective variety of conceptions, but of the work's own possibilities of being that emerge as the work explicates itself, as it were, in the variety of its aspects. (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 118)

“Oh, please spare me that completely misleading concept of intersubjectivity, of a subjectivism doubled!” (Gadamer 2001, p. 59). Now *there* is a conundrum for those interested in methodologically based work to contemplate: in hermeneutic work, the work explicates itself.

There is no outrunning this. There is no “eidetic phenomenology” (Gadamer, 1960/1989, p. 254) that can “fix it once and for all in a way equally accessible to all.” (Husserl, 1936/1970b, p. 178), no longer in need of new and renewed attention and devotion.

Edmund Husserl tried hedging his bets by saying that such eidetic clarification was an “infinite task.”

But it took the twists of his students to note that pursuing eidetic clarification was not the phenomenological task at all, that it ruined, in advance and under the desire for permanence and fixity, the hard work of paying attention to living itself and learning to speak well and with propriety of its ways.

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