

POET AS RADIO: WEEK 1

Listen To Your Gut

Let me begin with a bit of a confession. The subtitle of this class, “writing from intuition”, is an intentional misleading. In the dominant culture “creative writing” is almost entirely discussed as an artisan “craft” of a singular free will expressing a unique idea out of a formless void. Language, in that sense,

is conceived of as a utilitarian tool, that if used properly can become a transparent vehicle for understanding. The creative writer, with the proper expertise, can be like the Christian Father-God creating an objective world apart from “him”-self that is subject to his authority and will. Or at least that’s the Jerry Falwell-style of reading the opening of the book of *Genesis* “literally.” If you spend any time with that text, though, the little Toto in your mind is likely to tug at the odd details of language, revealing some (not so) elaborate con job. For starters, a careful attention to the phrasing of the English translations of the text are pretty peculiar, particularly the repeated incantation of the spell of creativity. I’ll suggest here that if you listen creatively you might hear it in the voice of Paul McCartney, “*Let it be, Let it be...*” And don’t get me started on the etymology of the word “genesis” and what its peers – gene, genius, genie, generic – all have in common (hint: it ain’t phallic). So, when I talk about “writing” or being “creative” the labor involved is not of the Henry Ford variety. Creativity is a beautiful and extremely challenging mystery that involves being with, stretching, holding together, allowing, breathing, and withstanding an almost unbearable amount of pain and pressure.

The other part of that subtitle that is of importance is also something our culture derides as passive and not reliable, and that is the intuition, or we might call it “listening to your gut.” Well, reductionist science is finally starting to catch up on the importance of that much maligned, vital aspect of our being. It’s not just some internal energy plant exploiting resources and expelling large amounts of toxic smelling shit. There’s a whole ecosystem of bacterial organisms (a micro-biome) that live in solidarity with your tissues and blood and nerve endings, and it’s that cooperative living that holds the human being as an organism together.

If you find this idea fascinating, you might check out the work of Lyn Margulis, who pioneered research into the role of symbiosis in evolution and was instrumental in the developing of the Gaia theory, which posits that earth is a self-organizing system (ie. a living thing made up of living things). She was one of the first biologists of the 20th century to push back at the narrative that posits that all life is merely accidental and that competition is what drives evolutionary change. Instead, she found evidence that the emergence of new species was the result of cooperation and solidarity, and that biodiversity is the key to the longevity of self-organizing systems. If you find this interesting, check out [this recording](#) of the last interview she gave before she died. In that interview she stresses a concept she learned from an early philosopher of science [Ludwik Fleck](#), “All Science starts as esoterica.”

This is nothing new to practitioners of the occult and other esoteric arts who have long recognized that existence and consciousness extends beyond the simplistic binaries that give an optical illusion of human division from the rest of the universe. Their credo was “As above, so below. As within, so without.” In other words, the patterns which connect the world outside the self are mirrored in similar patterns within, like a nesting doll. If you want a quick visualization of this fractalizing principle, check out this short 1977 video by Charels and Ray Eames, titled [“Powers of Ten”](#). All this is to say that intuition is the through line, or the interval, on those scales – an extension of you into the atomic and the cosmic. In this class, which here on out, I’ll refer to as a lab, we’ll be playing with and working some ancient technologies like divination (think tarot, or runes, or pendulums, or tea leaves, or rituals, etc) that help us to see and more importantly, feel and hear, across time and space.

Over the next 5 weeks, I’ll drop a new note with possible rabbit holes you can follow as well as some more pared down reading and a brief exercise. Follow what leads you and what you have time for, and we’ll start each week with a check-in, where everyone has a chance to share where the work took you. If that doesn’t take up all of class, I’ll have some fun, generative exercises to get the wheels turning.

For this week:

We’ll start by looking at how simple games can break open the writing process to allow for the unexpected. The Parisian Surrealists in the 1920s were fascinated by parlor games and how arbitrary rules allowed children to collaborate and create surprise and joy outside of conventional logic. They experimented with using variations on these games to pre-occupy the ego and access the imaginative part of the mind repressed by social pressures and education. Take a look at the opening section of [The Book of Surrealist Games](#) (compiled by Alastair Brotchie in 1995) and a short article on one of those games, [The Exquisite Corpse](#), and see what rings some bells for you. Maybe even give one a try if you have time. We’ll discuss what these ideas have opened up for us, even if that happens to be a can of worms, and (time permitting) even try our best to play a round of Exquisite Corpse adapted for cyberspace.