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DISRUPTION

An Essay of Longing and Love

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An Essay of Longing and Love

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This series of reflections explores historical experiences of disruption and migration through the self-elegy of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish and the memoir of German philosopher Walter Benjamin. Darwish and Benjamin both lived diasporic lives and adhered to a notion of truth as an aural phenomenon. This work takes the performed poem and the told story as sites to explore the suspension and reemergence of memories, termed imagistic precipitates of experience, as expressed through the sentiments of longing and love. According to Benjamin, images hold smells, visions, gestures, and sound-forms. This essay asks if images can indeed be heard. Additionally, it asks if images are a language and, if so, what are its expressive characters? This essay seeks to address what images as a language might enable or permit by invoking anthropologist Lisa Stevenson's claim that images can shape forms of life.

KEY WORDS forced migration, Germany, longing, love, Palestine, storytelling

There is no trace of al-Birweh on the right side of the road from Nazareth, except for its place in your imagination that is now pierced by the horns of bulls, chewing and mulling over your memory fodder. You said: I will pass by at sunset to let the darkness feed my imagination and help the stranger in me sculpt images from stone.

—Mahmoud Darwish (2011, 140)

-Graphy

The suffix -graphy has long formed the names of artistic and scientific practices from calligraphy and photography to sonography and ethnography: pens inscribe paper pulp, light etches film negatives, soundwaves depict bodily organs, and anthropologists document sociocultural life. Derived from the Greek -graphia, the suffix means “to represent by lines drawn”, “to scrape or scratch”, “to draw”, or “to record or express by written characters” (etymonline). Sinan Antoon adds one more -graphy to the long list in his introduction to *In the Presence of Absence: poetography* (Darwish 2011, 5-6). Theorists of literary form have debated the distinguishing characteristics of poetics since the time of the ancients,

but Aristotle (384-322 BCE) is thought of as having initiated this tradition. The principal element of poeotography is “where opposites bleed and blend into each other: life and death, home and exile, but also, and most important, poetry and prose” (Darwish 2011, 8). Poeotography engraves, it scratches and scrapes; it sculpts images of the absent in the realm of the present: images of home amid exile. Longing for their birthplaces from a distance, Mahmoud Darwish and Walter Benjamin both lived diasporic lives of disruption and migration.

The following series of reflections takes the performed poem and the told story as sites to explore the suspension and reemergence of memories, termed imagistic precipitates of experience, as expressed through the sentiments of longing and love. The aim is to address whether images can shape the ways we live. However, reflection as method requires that one know not entirely what the end result will be. As Benjamin will later detail using the idea of information, contemporary society has placed a primacy on forms of communication that are immediately intelligible if not patterned and predictable: a market-based exchange logic of sorts, perhaps all in the name of efficiency or expediency. Reflection, for many, has lost its place because it is a waste of time (Lyotard 1988, xv). The results are simply less punctual, the process less productive. This essay is too a meditation on time, how we have configured it or how it might be reconfigured once more. Formally, this essay is an attempt to convey the mood of a moment when time will cease to matter, where straightforward transactional logics become mere afterthoughts. A simultaneous aim is that in gesturing toward the obscurity of time’s passing, a certain connection may become apparent, one that intimates belonging beyond a single place or person; or in our current global moment of upheaval, where one need hardly move to be displaced, one can feel a certain intimacy even in isolation. Ultimately, this essay asserts that a certain strength is held within the contradictory opacity of images and that poeotography is characteristic of such an antinomic melding.

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Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008) was only seven in 1948 when armed forces of the nascent Israeli state razed and depopulated his birthplace, the village of al-Birweh (Jadaliyya 2011). Shortly thereafter, Jewish settlers occupied what little remained. The village’s former residents became refugees, many of whom left the Galilee to live in Lebanon. Darwish’s family followed suit but only one year later returned secretly (American Academy of Poets). Israel would designate Darwish and many others like him a present-absentee—one who had ‘left’ and yet lingered like a specter. He first published a collection of poetry at twenty-two. In less than twenty-five years, Darwish would sell over a million books in Arab majority societies alone.

Under the constant gaze of the state, Darwish frequently faced harassment and imprisonment for the public recitation of his work. His poems were designed to be performed, drawing on the depth of the Arabic prosodic tradition, constantly crafting new incantations from older forms (Said 1994, 114). One such example is *In the Presence of Absence*, Darwish’s penultimate work published in 2006, which develops the pre-Islamic genre of self-elegy. ‘Pre-Islam’ is a temporal divide of indeterminate duration, marked more by its end date (622 AD) than beginning. The literary forms of the era are largely derived

from celebrations surrounding polytheistic pilgrimage sites like the Kaaba of Mecca and the mercantile exchanges of Arabian Peninsular communities (Allen 2000, 17). Classical Arabic poetics were undoubtedly affected by the pilgrims and merchants who came, listened, retold, and went. Darwish was a journeyman too from his early adolescence onward. He left Israel in 1970, only to briefly return twenty-six years later. Darwish would migrate as far east as Moscow and west as Houston, where he lived his last moments in 2008. “Since Darwish left Beirut in 1982,” said Edward Said, “one of the main topoi in his verse is not just the place and time of ending (for which the various Palestinian exoduses are an all too persistent reference) but what happens *after* the ending, what it is like to live past one’s time and place” (Said 1994, 115). Formally and thematically, *In the Presence of Absence* stretches back and peers forward. Its performative arrangement lingers in reflection and yet moves us beyond one’s final moments.

Like Darwish, Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) found that life only becomes communicable at the moment of death (Benjamin 2019, 38). The time of dying is the time of storytelling. Yet, the storyteller began as a listener who listens to the repetitions of lives past. “From the beginning,” writes Hannah Arendt on Benjamin, “the problem of truth presented itself to him as a ‘revelation... which must be heard, that is, which lies in the metaphysically acoustic sphere’” (Benjamin 2019, lxi). It is the orality of Benjamin’s story and the public iterability of Darwish’s poem that reveal bit by bit, telling after telling, that *truth is above all acoustical*. But one has to be aware and receptive to be attuned to the telling. This process of deeply listening, absorbing, and integrating others’ experiences—experiences that derive authority only in dying—is what this essay refers to as attunement, a form of social organization called “the community of listeners,” that Benjamin thought to be disappearing (Benjamin 2019, 35).¹ Of course, truth as oral (or aural) exists only in relation; it inherently implies a connection beyond oneself. The self-elegy of Darwish and memoir of Benjamin express a kind of attachment that is based in a place but not forever delimited to it, a nearness or intimacy despite the irreversibility of exile common to their life experiences. As if the space of attunement (“the community of listeners”) had a material hold over the reiterations of tales originally told by voices passed, like a relative holding an image of a deceased loved one and feeling their human grasp. Furthermore, attunement demands intention. It requires an engagement close to submission where revelation commands an ear. The prophetic traditions of Islam and Judaism are, of course, progenitors to Darwish and Benjamin’s oral truth. It is this shared conception of truth as well as the place of dying in writing and reciting that positions these two authors so closely.

Benjamin was born to a well-to-do Jewish family in Berlin at dusk of the nineteenth century. Precocious, he studied in progressive boarding schools and elite universities in Southern Germany and Northern Switzerland. Yet, Benjamin authored an unconventional doctoral dissertation and was forced to withdraw his final submission, making his future as an academic all but quashed. He then worked as an art and literary critic, contributing to magazines and newspapers as well as a radio broadcaster and translator. He also wrote many essays, short stories, and poems. Unlike Darwish, Benjamin never attained fame during his life. *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, a virtually unknown memoir, only appeared as an entire text ten years after his death. As Benjamin’s relationship to Nazi Germany became increasingly tenuous, he would move between coasts of the Mediterranean and North Seas. He left Germany for the final time in 1933, only to be imprisoned in Vichy France

while the Second World War dawned. Fleeing across the southern border, Benjamin was turned back by authorities. Facing a precarious death, he ended his life atop the Spanish Pyrenees in the autumn of 1940.

1

The Arab poet pre-Islam was characterized as an artisan who gave defined form to raw matter and whose compositions were deemed akin to embroidery or chiseling (Kilito 2014, 2). Between the sculpted stones, within the atmosphere of craftsmanship, existed a particular form of communication among artisans. Storytelling, according to Walter Benjamin, thrived in the milieu of work—the maritime, the rural (Benjamin 2019, 36). Stonework, like flawless pearls or matured wines, was a precious product crafted through patience and diligence, imitative of organic time like the ageing of the oyster or the ripening of the grape. Like the process of fermentation, the concentration of essences and alcohols and their preservation by tannins, glass, or—in the case of a shell—calcium, the story conserves and condenses its potency, “capable of releasing it even after a long time” (Benjamin 2019, 34). The story, as a shell in the sea, sinks into the life of the storyteller only to be brought out again and to be given a new form: to be shucked and shined.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth (Bible Gateway)

Like the slow layering of an oyster shell’s prismatic columns of calcite, narratives are revealed by retelling, resurfacing, and reemerging as water precipitates and evaporates. With repetition, humans leave telltale imprints. “Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to a clay vessel” (Benjamin 2019, 36). These residues and remnants adhere according to organic long-chain time, which accumulates to a temporal limit, cyclically as nutrients do in soils, season after season, where fecundity no longer ebbs and flows but peaks and plateaus. Such a time cannot be abridged (Benjamin 2019, 37).² One would work and wait as long as it takes, patient at the threshold of time where time will soon cease to matter. The story and the stoneworker belong to this time.

2

An epitaph chiseled in a headstone, *In the Presence of Absence* is a self-elegy: a bidding farewell to the self. Storytelling too belongs to the moments of dying and death. For Benjamin, life becomes transmissible only as one dies. “Just as a sequence of images is set in motion inside a man as his life comes to an end,” one’s knowledge or wisdom—the stuff of stories—emerges and imparts to the living an imprint, a touch, a sense of being graced by a hand (Benjamin 2019, 38). The trace of a connection or the sense that one is being held represents the authority that the dying and the dead possess for the living around them.

This is the authority at the source of a story. “Death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell. He has borrowed his authority from death” (Benjamin 2019, 39). This authority stems from uncertainty about whether the dead are truly dead, whether they are truly absent or present (Stevenson 2014, 40).³

Like the lingering impression of a light on the back of the eyelid at night, death, like poetography, is a bleeding of opposites. As sequences of images set in motion—the montage of ‘life flashing before your eyes’—they reemerge as blended precipitates of experiences. Benjamin, like Darwish, was also expelled from his beloved birthplace by the impending threat of violent erasure. Benjamin knew he would never see the city of Berlin again. Prior to bidding farewell, the images of his childhood resurfaced and in early 1932 Benjamin began to compose *Berlin Childhood around 1900*:

When, having mastered my senses with great effort, I arrived to quell the uproar after prolonged fumbling through the gloomy corridor, I tore off the two receivers, which were heavy as dumbbells, thrust my head between them, and was inexorably delivered over to the voice that now sounded. There was nothing to allay the violence with which it pierced me. Powerless, I suffered, seeing that it obliterated my consciousness of time, my firm resolve, my sense of duty. And just as the medium obeys the voice that takes possession of him from beyond the grave, I submitted to the first proposal that came my way through the telephone (Benjamin 2006, 49–50).

Benjamin was delivered. Pierced, he was powerless in reminiscing his earliest experiences using the telephone. Time was obliterated—as in the temporality of the story or the stoneworker; it did not matter. The voice on the other end was a voice ‘from beyond the grave’: a voice of the dead. His resolve and his duty were annihilated by the authority that the dying hold over the living or the spirit possesses over the medium. Benjamin knew he would forever be homesick, that there could be no final detachment from Berlin—no final moment—where his absence from the city would mean its absence from his life (Stevenson 2014, 41).⁴

3

Benjamin would forever long for the place where he belonged. For longing is a line drawn in one’s interior, a scrape or scratch as one’s roots to their land are cut away. Longing is the topographical friction ridges of the fingers imprinted by the exiled who exiles another. Darwish too longed for his home: a land he would leave, and return to, and leave once more, time and again. Here, he reflects further on how it feels to live ‘past one’s time’ (Said 1994, 115):

Longing is a scar inside the heart and a country’s fingerprint on the body. But no one longs for his wound, no one longs for pain or nightmare, but for what was before. For a time when there was no pain except of primary pleasures that melt time, like a sugar cube in a cup of tea, and for a time of heavenly images. Longing is the call of ney to ney to restore the direction broken by the horses’

hooves in a military campaign. It is an intermittent ailment, neither contagious nor lethal, even when it takes the form of an epidemic. It is an invitation to stay up late with the lonesome and an excuse not to be on equal footing with train passengers who know their own addresses well. It is the transparent fabric of that beautiful nothingness, gathered to roast the coffee of wakefulness for the dreams of strangers (Darwish 2011, 111).

Longing is a trace, an impression of a connection, the print of a potter clinging to clay, or the residual echo of a voice clinging to life as it bids farewell to itself. Longing is a time of both agitation and stillness, where the water peaks and crests or merely rests. It is a time where sea shells or sugar cubes float freely, suspended. A time where desire drifts, where primary pleasures are as undivided and unbounded as the oceans, as unified as the child at a mother's breast (Freud 1962, 11–13).⁵ Longing is an oceanic time where time dissolves, where it knows no limit, where it no longer matters. Longing is intermittent, and it is uncertain. But it is certain in that wherever one is absent longing could always be present, and it is certain in that 'to know an address well' one need not listen to the letters of lost loved ones, need not reciprocate the requests of the return addressee. Longing is transparent, yet, it is an "utterance less transparent for meaning than the word itself" (Stevenson 2014, 12).⁶ It is the unformulated fabric of craftsmanship, the artisanal embroidery, the enmeshing of the story's "slow piling one on top of the other of thin, transparent layers" (Benjamin 2019, 37). It is the iridescent, porcelaneous prisms of nacre-colored narratives. Longing is the slow stimulant to sleep, the 'wakefulness for the dreams' where dreams think themselves in images. Longing is where, even in the waking world, "thinking in pictures stands nearer to unconscious processes than does thinking in words" (Stevenson 2014, 44).⁷ Longing is where waking and sleeping blend—where they melt and mingle—opposites though they may be. Where what was thought to vanish at daybreak, emerges at sunrise. Where what was thought to design only dreams styles reality. "It [then] becomes crucial for us," implores Lisa Stevenson, "to dissolve the difference between dreaming and what it is to be held captive by an image" (Stevenson 2014, 45). Such 'captivity' is bound by the unformulated, murky qualities of sentiments like longing. One is held by the unresolved paradoxical nature of an image, a dream, a story, or even a mode of thinking. This affective embrace incites new political arrangements that revolve around the properties and possibilities of time (Rancière 2004, 13). The obscurity of time's passing—dissolvable, undivided oceanic time—expands the limitations of who can speak or who can be heard, democratizing our sense of belonging.

4

Images that continue to resonate with us and that animate us over the course of our lives are what Benjamin called "precipitates of experience" (Stevenson 2014, 11, 42). As in chemistry and storytelling, precipitates are condensed and concentrated forms that are stronger and more potent than the originals. For Benjamin, a few fragmentary images⁸ encapsulate "the whole distorted world of childhood" (Benjamin 2006, 98).⁹ Precipitates float freely like solids in solutions or shells in the sea; only through agitation (in Benjamin's case, disjuncture and forced separation) do precipitates emerge as suspensions. Images and stories do not expend themselves at the moments in which they are new. They conserve or

preserve their strength, and are capable of releasing said strength even after a long time. Although images solidify and strengthen, precipitates cannot be understood as piths. They are montages or collages, conglomerates that do not inherently contain clarity.

Similar to images, stories do not aim to convey the pure essence of a thing (Benjamin 2019, 36). Images are not necessarily straight-forward biographical depictions, and thus their representations by lines drawn—the -graphy of biography—need not be linear. As precipitates resurface or reemerge their expressions can present as distortions, their compositions unclear or even untrue (Stevenson 2014, 11). “The image is a language which expresses without formulating, an utterance less transparent for meaning than the word itself” (Stevenson 2014, 12).¹⁰ Benjamin contrasts storytelling with a newer form of communication that emerges from the middle classes and the printing presses: information. “Information lays claim to prompt verifiability. The prime requirement is that it appears ‘understandable in itself’” (Benjamin 2019, 33). Stories, like images, need not be immediately intelligible nor ostensibly true.

5

If images are a language, what are its expressive characters? What are the markers of its nonlinear and unformulated utterances, or its—if I may be permitted—imagography? Furthermore, what do images as language enable or permit? What do images allow for creatively? What do they hold within them—that which is agitated, brought out again, and given new form? That which precipitates experience and evaporates absence? Lisa Stevenson, in her recent ethnography, *Life Beside Itself*, partially addresses these inquiries. *Life Beside Itself* juxtaposes Canadian humanitarian interventions in the lives of Inuit communities throughout the tuberculosis epidemic of the 1940s to 1960s alongside the suicide crisis starting in the 1980s in order to conceive of alternate forms of attending to and caring for others who matter. Stevenson’s methodology is one of images, which she refers to as ‘image as method’. Using Benjamin’s works, including his memoir, she sees images not as mere representations but as forms potentiating care. Images are a means of thinking and knowing that, like stories, need not appear immediately understandable in and of themselves. Instead, the ambiguity or contradiction of memory is held within a sensorial array. As expressions without formulation, images articulate new possibilities of relating ethically and politically to others.

One particular anecdote that Stevenson draws on is from E.M. Forster’s novel *Howards End* (1910).¹¹ A handwritten note arrives in the morning mail, the return addressee the matron of Mrs. Wilcox’s nursing home. The note instructs Mr. Wilcox and his son, Charles, that she, Mrs. Wilcox, would prefer her friend and not her family to inherit her house at Howards End. Mrs. Wilcox had recently died at the nursing home, which her husband and son knew beforehand. The mourning men assessed the request, deliberated, and decided it was written in illness. Mr. Wilcox and Charles ripped the note and burned it. Forster writes, “To them Howards End was a house: they could not know that to her it had been a spirit, for which she sought a spiritual heir” (Stevenson 2014, 35–36).

Mr. Wilcox and his son did not allow themselves to trace the inscriptions in the paper pulp—to sense the graceful handprint of the dead. They did not permit themselves to be held by the dying and be told one last story by a beloved wife and mother. They rejected the story’s uncertainty, certain themselves that she was truly dead, truly absent. “To allow Mrs. Wilcox

to remain a presence would be to allow her handwritten note *the status of an image*, an image being that which has a hold on us even after its informational and symbolic meaning has been decoded” (Stevenson 2014, 36, emphasis added). The dead woman’s note, the recording of a voice from ‘beyond the grave,’ could have attained the status of an image (Stevenson 2014, 36). The strength—the potency of a precipitate—was on the verge of reemergence, on the crest of resurfacing. Yet, one must answer the phone. One must tear off the two receivers and thrust their head between them. If the ringtone falls on deaf ears, if paper pulp becomes mere tinder, “The gift for listening is lost and the community of listeners disappears. For storytelling is always the art of repeating stories, and this art is lost when stories are no longer retained” (Benjamin 2019, 35).” One must be attuned to the story; one must listen to the image in order to hear the voice on the other end: the voice beyond the grave.

Imago-

Images and feelings are strictly interdependent. If an image can be felt, if it can be heard, what are the expressive characters of an image language? According to Benjamin, images hold smells, visions, gestures, and sound-forms within their concentrations (Benjamin 2006, 39).¹² Curiously, the sensorial array captured within precipitates of experience is not static or stagnant. Smells waft, visions morph, gestures jerk, and sounds snap.¹³ As when stories reemerge and their narratives are retold in new forms, images pass from one state to another. The condensation of the precipitate, the preservation of potency, is not pithy precisely due to this reason. Stories do not convey essences because of the shifts in their nature. Sinking and surfacing, the strength of the story does not appear as a still image. Rather, experiences and stories are locomotive; they possess motility or motivity. They themselves move as they are concurrently capable of shaking and displacing us. The movements of images and stories contain uncertainty and contradiction, the uncertainty as to whether the dead are actually dead and the contradiction as to whether the dead are absent, present, or both (Stevenson 2014, 10).¹⁴

A particular strength is held within such an antinomic melding. To sit with, to receive, to absorb the reemergent movements of memories, to attune oneself to a different time, is to integrate relations with those who have passed that may transform connections in the present. “The ‘images’ Benjamin provides in *Berlin Childhood around 1900*,” according to Lisa Stevenson, “are not merely tokens of a dissolving past, but they actually shape and condition a form of thought, and perhaps even a form of life” (Stevenson 2014, 42). However, what dissolves is not sought after to be reconstituted. Beyond the disruptions and displacements in the lives of both Benjamin and Darwish, longing is not a simple desire for the restoration of a time prior to the end. Hannah Arendt, in introducing Benjamin’s works, expresses that “Although the living is subject to the ruin of time, the process of decay is at the same time a process of crystallization” (Benjamin 2019, lxiii). Similarly, *In the Presence of Absence* looks forward as much as it reflects back. Longing, too, is a simultaneous expression of dissipation and concentration, of accumulative, cyclical time. Longing oscillates between the already and the not yet in the now. Within the ambiguity and antinomy is a contemporaneous plurality, an openness to always being made. The moments of metamorphosis are saturated with the images and stories of love:

In the beginning of love, beginnings swarm down on you, deep blue. At the height of love you live it, you forget it, it forgets you and makes you forget the beginnings. At the end of love you look long at the clock. In absence, beginnings find the residual aches of the room: not having a second glass of wine, a missing blue shawl. The poem is filled with missing elements, and when you complete it with an incompleteness that opens into another poem, you are cured of memories and regrets. The gold in you does not rust. As if writing were, like love, the offspring of a cloud. When you touch it, it melts. As if the utterance were only incited in an effort to make up for a loss. The image of love reveals itself there; in a profoundly present absence (Darwish 2011, 116).

Looking long at the clock. To linger, to long for love. To long for what was forgotten, what was obliterated: absent time. As a lover departs, their belongings arrive: cordials and clothing. As at the airport terminal where baggage is checked the floor above where it is claimed. One loves, leaves, and comes in layers, like the palatine manteaux draped over and against itself or the childhood that greets you as you say goodbye to your birthplace. The tick-tock of the clock snaps and the image sequence is set in motion. Flashing before your eyes, the residues and remnants resonate; they ache as you recount, rewind the dial: the hour, the minute hand. But the eyes grasp at what the hands cannot reach, like the boat that slips out of sight: the absence that we still desire, long for to be present (Stevenson 2014, 37).¹⁵ The space of presence, up in the clouds, when you reach for it, when you seek to traverse it, the distance dissolves. The space is erased. The cloud condenses, precipitates, evaporates. Its shapes shift as clouds do. You lie back, gaze above, and their sequences set in motion. They waft, they morph, they pass from one state to another, one place to another. But you forget it. Love moves. Then it forgets you. Love moves you. It displaces you, shakes you, like the larvae left behind by the butterfly: the imago. That when you look back at the cavity of the chrysalis, when you bid farewell to yourself, you might sense that even amid your absence, even amid your death, life and love may be present.

Notes

1. Interestingly, Benjamin thought such a process and community to be disappearing given the general lack of societal boredom. Integrating a story into one's own experience "requires a state of relaxation which is becoming rarer and rarer. If sleep is the apogee of physical relaxation, boredom is the apogee of mental relaxation." There is also a spatial element where the "nesting places" of "boredom [a]s the dream bird" are disappearing too; the spaces in the city and country that foster relaxation and integration are vanishing. See Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 35.
2. "All these products of sustained, sacrificing effort are vanishing, and the time is past in which time did not matter. Modern man no longer works at what cannot be abbreviated."
3. Stevenson is describing the lingering effects of viewing a photograph of the once living; "this makes me think more about the relationship of photographs to the images we hold in our mind's eye... and the hold they both have over us. Both share a kind of afterlife..."
4. Stevenson is commenting directly on Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood*.
5. Freud's oceanic state: "It is a feeling, then, of being indissolubly bound up with and belonging to the whole of the world outside oneself."

6. Lisa Stevenson is quoting Michel Foucault commenting on Sigmund Freud. See also Foucault, Michel. "Dream, Imagination and Existence: An Introduction to Ludwig Binswanger's 'Dream and Existence.'" In *Dream and Existence*, edited by K. Hoeller, 29-78. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1993.
7. Lisa Stevenson is quoting Sigmund Freud.
8. Chapter titles in Benjamin's Berlin include, among others: "Butterfly Hunt," "The Sock," "Two Brass Bands," "Colors," and "Tardy Arrival."
9. See also Stevenson, *Life Beside Itself*, 41.
10. The quote is Michel Foucault commenting on Sigmund Freud.
11. This recapitulation is derived from Stevenson, *Life Beside Itself*, 35-36.
12. See also Stevenson, *Life Beside Itself*, 42.
13. Snap, as in, to pass from one form, state, or level to another.
14. "Images—in the broad sense that I use the term—are useful precisely because they can capture uncertainty and contradiction without having to resolve it."
15. Stevenson is making reference to anthropologist Michael Taussig, who is drawing on the work of film scholar Gertrud Koch.

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This series of reflections explores historical experiences of disruption and migration through the self-elegy of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish and the memoir of German philosopher Walter Benjamin. Darwish and Benjamin both lived diasporic lives and adhered to a notion of truth as an aural phenomenon. This work takes the performed poem and the told story as sites to explore the suspension and reemergence of memories, termed imagistic precipitates of experience, as expressed through the sentiments of longing and love. According to Benjamin, images hold smells, visions, gestures, and sound-forms. This essay asks if images can indeed be heard. Additionally, it asks if images are a language and, if so, what are its expressive characters? This essay seeks to address what images as a language might enable or permit by invoking anthropologist Lisa Stevenson's claim that images can shape forms of life.

KEY WORDS forced migration, Germany, longing, love, Palestine, storytelling

There is no trace of al-Birweh on the right side of the road from Nazareth, except for its place in your imagination that is now pierced by the horns of bulls, chewing and mulling over your memory fodder. You said: I will pass by at sunset to let the darkness feed my imagination and help the stranger in me sculpt images from stone.

—Mahmoud Darwish (2011, 140)

-Graphy

The suffix -graphy has long formed the names of artistic and scientific practices from calligraphy and photography to sonography and ethnography: pens inscribe paper pulp, light etches film negatives, soundwaves depict bodily organs, and anthropologists document sociocultural life. Derived from the Greek -graphia, the suffix means “to represent by lines drawn”, “to scrape or scratch”, “to draw”, or “to record or express by written characters” (etymonline). Sinan Antoon adds one more -graphy to the long list in his introduction to *In the Presence of Absence: poetography* (Darwish 2011, 5-6). Theorists of literary form have debated the distinguishing characteristics of poetics since the time of the ancients,

but Aristotle (384-322 BCE) is thought of as having initiated this tradition. The principal element of poeotography is “where opposites bleed and blend into each other: life and death, home and exile, but also, and most important, poetry and prose” (Darwish 2011, 8). Poeotography engraves, it scratches and scrapes; it sculpts images of the absent in the realm of the present: images of home amid exile. Longing for their birthplaces from a distance, Mahmoud Darwish and Walter Benjamin both lived diasporic lives of disruption and migration.

The following series of reflections takes the performed poem and the told story as sites to explore the suspension and reemergence of memories, termed imagistic precipitates of experience, as expressed through the sentiments of longing and love. The aim is to address whether images can shape the ways we live. However, reflection as method requires that one know not entirely what the end result will be. As Benjamin will later detail using the idea of information, contemporary society has placed a primacy on forms of communication that are immediately intelligible if not patterned and predictable: a market-based exchange logic of sorts, perhaps all in the name of efficiency or expediency. Reflection, for many, has lost its place because it is a waste of time (Lyotard 1988, xv). The results are simply less punctual, the process less productive. This essay is too a meditation on time, how we have configured it or how it might be reconfigured once more. Formally, this essay is an attempt to convey the mood of a moment when time will cease to matter, where straightforward transactional logics become mere afterthoughts. A simultaneous aim is that in gesturing toward the obscurity of time’s passing, a certain connection may become apparent, one that intimates belonging beyond a single place or person; or in our current global moment of upheaval, where one need hardly move to be displaced, one can feel a certain intimacy even in isolation. Ultimately, this essay asserts that a certain strength is held within the contradictory opacity of images and that poeotography is characteristic of such an antinomic melding.

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Mahmoud Darwish (1941-2008) was only seven in 1948 when armed forces of the nascent Israeli state razed and depopulated his birthplace, the village of al-Birweh (Jadaliyya 2011). Shortly thereafter, Jewish settlers occupied what little remained. The village’s former residents became refugees, many of whom left the Galilee to live in Lebanon. Darwish’s family followed suit but only one year later returned secretly (American Academy of Poets). Israel would designate Darwish and many others like him a present-absentee—one who had ‘left’ and yet lingered like a specter. He first published a collection of poetry at twenty-two. In less than twenty-five years, Darwish would sell over a million books in Arab majority societies alone.

Under the constant gaze of the state, Darwish frequently faced harassment and imprisonment for the public recitation of his work. His poems were designed to be performed, drawing on the depth of the Arabic prosodic tradition, constantly crafting new incantations from older forms (Said 1994, 114). One such example is *In the Presence of Absence*, Darwish’s penultimate work published in 2006, which develops the pre-Islamic genre of self-elegy. ‘Pre-Islam’ is a temporal divide of indeterminate duration, marked more by its end date (622 AD) than beginning. The literary forms of the era are largely derived

from celebrations surrounding polytheistic pilgrimage sites like the Kaaba of Mecca and the mercantile exchanges of Arabian Peninsular communities (Allen 2000, 17). Classical Arabic poetics were undoubtedly affected by the pilgrims and merchants who came, listened, retold, and went. Darwish was a journeyman too from his early adolescence onward. He left Israel in 1970, only to briefly return twenty-six years later. Darwish would migrate as far east as Moscow and west as Houston, where he lived his last moments in 2008. “Since Darwish left Beirut in 1982,” said Edward Said, “one of the main topoi in his verse is not just the place and time of ending (for which the various Palestinian exoduses are an all too persistent reference) but what happens *after* the ending, what it is like to live past one’s time and place” (Said 1994, 115). Formally and thematically, *In the Presence of Absence* stretches back and peers forward. Its performative arrangement lingers in reflection and yet moves us beyond one’s final moments.

Like Darwish, Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) found that life only becomes communicable at the moment of death (Benjamin 2019, 38). The time of dying is the time of storytelling. Yet, the storyteller began as a listener who listens to the repetitions of lives past. “From the beginning,” writes Hannah Arendt on Benjamin, “the problem of truth presented itself to him as a ‘revelation... which must be heard, that is, which lies in the metaphysically acoustic sphere’” (Benjamin 2019, lxi). It is the orality of Benjamin’s story and the public iterability of Darwish’s poem that reveal bit by bit, telling after telling, that *truth is above all acoustical*. But one has to be aware and receptive to be attuned to the telling. This process of deeply listening, absorbing, and integrating others’ experiences—experiences that derive authority only in dying—is what this essay refers to as attunement, a form of social organization called “the community of listeners,” that Benjamin thought to be disappearing (Benjamin 2019, 35).¹ Of course, truth as oral (or aural) exists only in relation; it inherently implies a connection beyond oneself. The self-elegy of Darwish and memoir of Benjamin express a kind of attachment that is based in a place but not forever delimited to it, a nearness or intimacy despite the irreversibility of exile common to their life experiences. As if the space of attunement (“the community of listeners”) had a material hold over the reiterations of tales originally told by voices passed, like a relative holding an image of a deceased loved one and feeling their human grasp. Furthermore, attunement demands intention. It requires an engagement close to submission where revelation commands an ear. The prophetic traditions of Islam and Judaism are, of course, progenitors to Darwish and Benjamin’s oral truth. It is this shared conception of truth as well as the place of dying in writing and reciting that positions these two authors so closely.

Benjamin was born to a well-to-do Jewish family in Berlin at dusk of the nineteenth century. Precocious, he studied in progressive boarding schools and elite universities in Southern Germany and Northern Switzerland. Yet, Benjamin authored an unconventional doctoral dissertation and was forced to withdraw his final submission, making his future as an academic all but quashed. He then worked as an art and literary critic, contributing to magazines and newspapers as well as a radio broadcaster and translator. He also wrote many essays, short stories, and poems. Unlike Darwish, Benjamin never attained fame during his life. *Berlin Childhood around 1900*, a virtually unknown memoir, only appeared as an entire text ten years after his death. As Benjamin’s relationship to Nazi Germany became increasingly tenuous, he would move between coasts of the Mediterranean and North Seas. He left Germany for the final time in 1933, only to be imprisoned in Vichy France

while the Second World War dawned. Fleeing across the southern border, Benjamin was turned back by authorities. Facing a precarious death, he ended his life atop the Spanish Pyrenees in the autumn of 1940.

1

The Arab poet pre-Islam was characterized as an artisan who gave defined form to raw matter and whose compositions were deemed akin to embroidery or chiseling (Kilito 2014, 2). Between the sculpted stones, within the atmosphere of craftsmanship, existed a particular form of communication among artisans. Storytelling, according to Walter Benjamin, thrived in the milieu of work—the maritime, the rural (Benjamin 2019, 36). Stonework, like flawless pearls or matured wines, was a precious product crafted through patience and diligence, imitative of organic time like the ageing of the oyster or the ripening of the grape. Like the process of fermentation, the concentration of essences and alcohols and their preservation by tannins, glass, or—in the case of a shell—calcium, the story conserves and condenses its potency, “capable of releasing it even after a long time” (Benjamin 2019, 34). The story, as a shell in the sea, sinks into the life of the storyteller only to be brought out again and to be given a new form: to be shucked and shined.

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth (Bible Gateway)

Like the slow layering of an oyster shell’s prismatic columns of calcite, narratives are revealed by retelling, resurfacing, and reemerging as water precipitates and evaporates. With repetition, humans leave telltale imprints. “Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to a clay vessel” (Benjamin 2019, 36). These residues and remnants adhere according to organic long-chain time, which accumulates to a temporal limit, cyclically as nutrients do in soils, season after season, where fecundity no longer ebbs and flows but peaks and plateaus. Such a time cannot be abridged (Benjamin 2019, 37).² One would work and wait as long as it takes, patient at the threshold of time where time will soon cease to matter. The story and the stoneworker belong to this time.

2

An epitaph chiseled in a headstone, *In the Presence of Absence* is a self-elegy: a bidding farewell to the self. Storytelling too belongs to the moments of dying and death. For Benjamin, life becomes transmissible only as one dies. “Just as a sequence of images is set in motion inside a man as his life comes to an end,” one’s knowledge or wisdom—the stuff of stories—emerges and imparts to the living an imprint, a touch, a sense of being graced by a hand (Benjamin 2019, 38). The trace of a connection or the sense that one is being held represents the authority that the dying and the dead possess for the living around them.

This is the authority at the source of a story. “Death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell. He has borrowed his authority from death” (Benjamin 2019, 39). This authority stems from uncertainty about whether the dead are truly dead, whether they are truly absent or present (Stevenson 2014, 40).³

Like the lingering impression of a light on the back of the eyelid at night, death, like poetography, is a bleeding of opposites. As sequences of images set in motion—the montage of ‘life flashing before your eyes’—they reemerge as blended precipitates of experiences. Benjamin, like Darwish, was also expelled from his beloved birthplace by the impending threat of violent erasure. Benjamin knew he would never see the city of Berlin again. Prior to bidding farewell, the images of his childhood resurfaced and in early 1932 Benjamin began to compose *Berlin Childhood around 1900*:

When, having mastered my senses with great effort, I arrived to quell the uproar after prolonged fumbling through the gloomy corridor, I tore off the two receivers, which were heavy as dumbbells, thrust my head between them, and was inexorably delivered over to the voice that now sounded. There was nothing to allay the violence with which it pierced me. Powerless, I suffered, seeing that it obliterated my consciousness of time, my firm resolve, my sense of duty. And just as the medium obeys the voice that takes possession of him from beyond the grave, I submitted to the first proposal that came my way through the telephone (Benjamin 2006, 49–50).

Benjamin was delivered. Pierced, he was powerless in reminiscing his earliest experiences using the telephone. Time was obliterated—as in the temporality of the story or the stoneworker; it did not matter. The voice on the other end was a voice ‘from beyond the grave’: a voice of the dead. His resolve and his duty were annihilated by the authority that the dying hold over the living or the spirit possesses over the medium. Benjamin knew he would forever be homesick, that there could be no final detachment from Berlin—no final moment—where his absence from the city would mean its absence from his life (Stevenson 2014, 41).⁴

3

Benjamin would forever long for the place where he belonged. For longing is a line drawn in one’s interior, a scrape or scratch as one’s roots to their land are cut away. Longing is the topographical friction ridges of the fingers imprinted by the exiled who exiles another. Darwish too longed for his home: a land he would leave, and return to, and leave once more, time and again. Here, he reflects further on how it feels to live ‘past one’s time’ (Said 1994, 115):

Longing is a scar inside the heart and a country’s fingerprint on the body. But no one longs for his wound, no one longs for pain or nightmare, but for what was before. For a time when there was no pain except of primary pleasures that melt time, like a sugar cube in a cup of tea, and for a time of heavenly images. Longing is the call of ney to ney to restore the direction broken by the horses’

hooves in a military campaign. It is an intermittent ailment, neither contagious nor lethal, even when it takes the form of an epidemic. It is an invitation to stay up late with the lonesome and an excuse not to be on equal footing with train passengers who know their own addresses well. It is the transparent fabric of that beautiful nothingness, gathered to roast the coffee of wakefulness for the dreams of strangers (Darwish 2011, 111).

Longing is a trace, an impression of a connection, the print of a potter clinging to clay, or the residual echo of a voice clinging to life as it bids farewell to itself. Longing is a time of both agitation and stillness, where the water peaks and crests or merely rests. It is a time where sea shells or sugar cubes float freely, suspended. A time where desire drifts, where primary pleasures are as undivided and unbounded as the oceans, as unified as the child at a mother's breast (Freud 1962, 11–13).⁵ Longing is an oceanic time where time dissolves, where it knows no limit, where it no longer matters. Longing is intermittent, and it is uncertain. But it is certain in that wherever one is absent longing could always be present, and it is certain in that 'to know an address well' one need not listen to the letters of lost loved ones, need not reciprocate the requests of the return addressee. Longing is transparent, yet, it is an "utterance less transparent for meaning than the word itself" (Stevenson 2014, 12).⁶ It is the unformulated fabric of craftsmanship, the artisanal embroidery, the enmeshing of the story's "slow piling one on top of the other of thin, transparent layers" (Benjamin 2019, 37). It is the iridescent, porcelaneous prisms of nacre-colored narratives. Longing is the slow stimulant to sleep, the 'wakefulness for the dreams' where dreams think themselves in images. Longing is where, even in the waking world, "thinking in pictures stands nearer to unconscious processes than does thinking in words" (Stevenson 2014, 44).⁷ Longing is where waking and sleeping blend—where they melt and mingle—opposites though they may be. Where what was thought to vanish at daybreak, emerges at sunrise. Where what was thought to design only dreams styles reality. "It [then] becomes crucial for us," implores Lisa Stevenson, "to dissolve the difference between dreaming and what it is to be held captive by an image" (Stevenson 2014, 45). Such 'captive' is bound by the unformulated, murky qualities of sentiments like longing. One is held by the unresolved paradoxical nature of an image, a dream, a story, or even a mode of thinking. This affective embrace incites new political arrangements that revolve around the properties and possibilities of time (Rancière 2004, 13). The obscurity of time's passing—dissolvable, undivided oceanic time—expands the limitations of who can speak or who can be heard, democratizing our sense of belonging.

4

Images that continue to resonate with us and that animate us over the course of our lives are what Benjamin called "precipitates of experience" (Stevenson 2014, 11, 42). As in chemistry and storytelling, precipitates are condensed and concentrated forms that are stronger and more potent than the originals. For Benjamin, a few fragmentary images⁸ encapsulate "the whole distorted world of childhood" (Benjamin 2006, 98).⁹ Precipitates float freely like solids in solutions or shells in the sea; only through agitation (in Benjamin's case, disjuncture and forced separation) do precipitates emerge as suspensions. Images and stories do not expend themselves at the moments in which they are new. They conserve or

preserve their strength, and are capable of releasing said strength even after a long time. Although images solidify and strengthen, precipitates cannot be understood as piths. They are montages or collages, conglomerates that do not inherently contain clarity.

Similar to images, stories do not aim to convey the pure essence of a thing (Benjamin 2019, 36). Images are not necessarily straight-forward biographical depictions, and thus their representations by lines drawn—the -graphy of biography—need not be linear. As precipitates resurface or reemerge their expressions can present as distortions, their compositions unclear or even untrue (Stevenson 2014, 11). “The image is a language which expresses without formulating, an utterance less transparent for meaning than the word itself” (Stevenson 2014, 12).¹⁰ Benjamin contrasts storytelling with a newer form of communication that emerges from the middle classes and the printing presses: information. “Information lays claim to prompt verifiability. The prime requirement is that it appears ‘understandable in itself’” (Benjamin 2019, 33). Stories, like images, need not be immediately intelligible nor ostensibly true.

5

If images are a language, what are its expressive characters? What are the markers of its nonlinear and unformulated utterances, or its—if I may be permitted—imagography? Furthermore, what do images as language enable or permit? What do images allow for creatively? What do they hold within them—that which is agitated, brought out again, and given new form? That which precipitates experience and evaporates absence? Lisa Stevenson, in her recent ethnography, *Life Beside Itself*, partially addresses these inquiries. *Life Beside Itself* juxtaposes Canadian humanitarian interventions in the lives of Inuit communities throughout the tuberculosis epidemic of the 1940s to 1960s alongside the suicide crisis starting in the 1980s in order to conceive of alternate forms of attending to and caring for others who matter. Stevenson’s methodology is one of images, which she refers to as ‘image as method’. Using Benjamin’s works, including his memoir, she sees images not as mere representations but as forms potentiating care. Images are a means of thinking and knowing that, like stories, need not appear immediately understandable in and of themselves. Instead, the ambiguity or contradiction of memory is held within a sensorial array. As expressions without formulation, images articulate new possibilities of relating ethically and politically to others.

One particular anecdote that Stevenson draws on is from E.M. Forster’s novel *Howards End* (1910).¹¹ A handwritten note arrives in the morning mail, the return addressee the matron of Mrs. Wilcox’s nursing home. The note instructs Mr. Wilcox and his son, Charles, that she, Mrs. Wilcox, would prefer her friend and not her family to inherit her house at Howards End. Mrs. Wilcox had recently died at the nursing home, which her husband and son knew beforehand. The mourning men assessed the request, deliberated, and decided it was written in illness. Mr. Wilcox and Charles ripped the note and burned it. Forster writes, “To them Howards End was a house: they could not know that to her it had been a spirit, for which she sought a spiritual heir” (Stevenson 2014, 35–36).

Mr. Wilcox and his son did not allow themselves to trace the inscriptions in the paper pulp—to sense the graceful handprint of the dead. They did not permit themselves to be held by the dying and be told one last story by a beloved wife and mother. They rejected the story’s uncertainty, certain themselves that she was truly dead, truly absent. “To allow Mrs. Wilcox

to remain a presence would be to allow her handwritten note *the status of an image*, an image being that which has a hold on us even after its informational and symbolic meaning has been decoded” (Stevenson 2014, 36, emphasis added). The dead woman’s note, the recording of a voice from ‘beyond the grave,’ could have attained the status of an image (Stevenson 2014, 36). The strength—the potency of a precipitate—was on the verge of reemergence, on the crest of resurfacing. Yet, one must answer the phone. One must tear off the two receivers and thrust their head between them. If the ringtone falls on deaf ears, if paper pulp becomes mere tinder, “The gift for listening is lost and the community of listeners disappears. For storytelling is always the art of repeating stories, and this art is lost when stories are no longer retained” (Benjamin 2019, 35).” One must be attuned to the story; one must listen to the image in order to hear the voice on the other end: the voice beyond the grave.

Imago-

Images and feelings are strictly interdependent. If an image can be felt, if it can be heard, what are the expressive characters of an image language? According to Benjamin, images hold smells, visions, gestures, and sound-forms within their concentrations (Benjamin 2006, 39).¹² Curiously, the sensorial array captured within precipitates of experience is not static or stagnant. Smells waft, visions morph, gestures jerk, and sounds snap.¹³ As when stories reemerge and their narratives are retold in new forms, images pass from one state to another. The condensation of the precipitate, the preservation of potency, is not pithy precisely due to this reason. Stories do not convey essences because of the shifts in their nature. Sinking and surfacing, the strength of the story does not appear as a still image. Rather, experiences and stories are locomotive; they possess motility or motivity. They themselves move as they are concurrently capable of shaking and displacing us. The movements of images and stories contain uncertainty and contradiction, the uncertainty as to whether the dead are actually dead and the contradiction as to whether the dead are absent, present, or both (Stevenson 2014, 10).¹⁴

A particular strength is held within such an antinomic melding. To sit with, to receive, to absorb the reemergent movements of memories, to attune oneself to a different time, is to integrate relations with those who have passed that may transform connections in the present. “The ‘images’ Benjamin provides in *Berlin Childhood around 1900*,” according to Lisa Stevenson, “are not merely tokens of a dissolving past, but they actually shape and condition a form of thought, and perhaps even a form of life” (Stevenson 2014, 42). However, what dissolves is not sought after to be reconstituted. Beyond the disruptions and displacements in the lives of both Benjamin and Darwish, longing is not a simple desire for the restoration of a time prior to the end. Hannah Arendt, in introducing Benjamin’s works, expresses that “Although the living is subject to the ruin of time, the process of decay is at the same time a process of crystallization” (Benjamin 2019, lxiii). Similarly, *In the Presence of Absence* looks forward as much as it reflects back. Longing, too, is a simultaneous expression of dissipation and concentration, of accumulative, cyclical time. Longing oscillates between the already and the not yet in the now. Within the ambiguity and antinomy is a contemporaneous plurality, an openness to always being made. The moments of metamorphosis are saturated with the images and stories of love:

In the beginning of love, beginnings swarm down on you, deep blue. At the height of love you live it, you forget it, it forgets you and makes you forget the beginnings. At the end of love you look long at the clock. In absence, beginnings find the residual aches of the room: not having a second glass of wine, a missing blue shawl. The poem is filled with missing elements, and when you complete it with an incompleteness that opens into another poem, you are cured of memories and regrets. The gold in you does not rust. As if writing were, like love, the offspring of a cloud. When you touch it, it melts. As if the utterance were only incited in an effort to make up for a loss. The image of love reveals itself there; in a profoundly present absence (Darwish 2011, 116).

Looking long at the clock. To linger, to long for love. To long for what was forgotten, what was obliterated: absent time. As a lover departs, their belongings arrive: cordials and clothing. As at the airport terminal where baggage is checked the floor above where it is claimed. One loves, leaves, and comes in layers, like the palatine manteaux draped over and against itself or the childhood that greets you as you say goodbye to your birthplace. The tick-tock of the clock snaps and the image sequence is set in motion. Flashing before your eyes, the residues and remnants resonate; they ache as you recount, rewind the dial: the hour, the minute hand. But the eyes grasp at what the hands cannot reach, like the boat that slips out of sight: the absence that we still desire, long for to be present (Stevenson 2014, 37).¹⁵ The space of presence, up in the clouds, when you reach for it, when you seek to traverse it, the distance dissolves. The space is erased. The cloud condenses, precipitates, evaporates. Its shapes shift as clouds do. You lie back, gaze above, and their sequences set in motion. They waft, they morph, they pass from one state to another, one place to another. But you forget it. Love moves. Then it forgets you. Love moves you. It displaces you, shakes you, like the larvae left behind by the butterfly: the imago. That when you look back at the cavity of the chrysalis, when you bid farewell to yourself, you might sense that even amid your absence, even amid your death, life and love may be present.

Notes

1. Interestingly, Benjamin thought such a process and community to be disappearing given the general lack of societal boredom. Integrating a story into one's own experience "requires a state of relaxation which is becoming rarer and rarer. If sleep is the apogee of physical relaxation, boredom is the apogee of mental relaxation." There is also a spatial element where the "nesting places" of "boredom [a]s the dream bird" are disappearing too; the spaces in the city and country that foster relaxation and integration are vanishing. See Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 35.
2. "All these products of sustained, sacrificing effort are vanishing, and the time is past in which time did not matter. Modern man no longer works at what cannot be abbreviated."
3. Stevenson is describing the lingering effects of viewing a photograph of the once living; "this makes me think more about the relationship of photographs to the images we hold in our mind's eye... and the hold they both have over us. Both share a kind of afterlife..."
4. Stevenson is commenting directly on Benjamin's *Berlin Childhood*.
5. Freud's oceanic state: "It is a feeling, then, of being indissolubly bound up with and belonging to the whole of the world outside oneself."

6. Lisa Stevenson is quoting Michel Foucault commenting on Sigmund Freud. See also Foucault, Michel. "Dream, Imagination and Existence: An Introduction to Ludwig Binswanger's 'Dream and Existence.'" In *Dream and Existence*, edited by K. Hoeller, 29-78. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1993.
7. Lisa Stevenson is quoting Sigmund Freud.
8. Chapter titles in Benjamin's Berlin include, among others: "Butterfly Hunt," "The Sock," "Two Brass Bands," "Colors," and "Tardy Arrival."
9. See also Stevenson, *Life Beside Itself*, 41.
10. The quote is Michel Foucault commenting on Sigmund Freud.
11. This recapitulation is derived from Stevenson, *Life Beside Itself*, 35-36.
12. See also Stevenson, *Life Beside Itself*, 42.
13. Snap, as in, to pass from one form, state, or level to another.
14. "Images—in the broad sense that I use the term—are useful precisely because they can capture uncertainty and contradiction without having to resolve it."
15. Stevenson is making reference to anthropologist Michael Taussig, who is drawing on the work of film scholar Gertrud Koch.

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