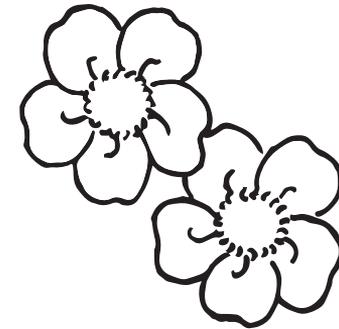


## a permanent mark on a physical body



*Boiling down a conversation that has been ongoing for years to a few pages of text is a complicated thing to do. Boiling down experiences gathered over the span of half a lifetime is even more so. In the beginning of this project, mingling two different people's notions of existence into one body of text seemed to provide nothing but confusion and frustration. But there turned out to be some points of connection, bright lights that started to indicate a path. It was loosely defined, sometimes lost from sight, but nonetheless a common ground. What started to emerge was a shared notion of being. A being among beings. Being aware of the creeping sensation of becoming aware through a bodily experience. Being there-ness, a sensation brought upon the flesh through needles and patterns. It could have been anything, of course. The prick of the needle is just the beginning, the thin sliver of sunlight indicating that a door has been opened. Walking through that door is a different thing altogether...*

*a permanent mark on a physical body*

A permanent mark on a physical body  
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Everything is connected.  
Like dots on a paper.  
The dots that make us see connections.

Dots that create an image  
Making a new map.  
Punctures  
A new picture or an image?

I am becoming.  
Am I becoming?

An image is starting to reveal itself.  
But where do I start?  
How do I begin?  
Where is the first dot?  
What is expected of me?  
What do I expect of myself?

It is a dense forest of possibilities.  
What is it?  
I can't see.  
Branches are stretching out their long arms.  
Blocking my view.  
Sticking to my clothes and tearing my hair.

The branches.  
Extensions of a stem.  
Arms extending from the world we live in,  
Reflections of a state of being.

Reflectiveness.  
It is an octopus.  
With one million arms.

Fragments.  
Description of events.  
I am participating in a process,  
A meeting, a rendez-vous between the skin and the  
needle.  
What use are words in this?  
Are the words just pieces left over from the  
construction work?  
A bamboo scaffold holding the house together.  
Leftovers,  
Memories and letters in an alphabet soup.

Words are the long arms of the octopus  
I fumble for something to hold on to.  
But the process becomes only an image.  
Not a like photograph, good, bad or beautiful.  
But the image as a representation of events.  
I remember.

Constructing a new image.  
New ideas.  
New knowledge.

- Tattoo gun. It is a strange name for the device, the little electric thing that makes the needles move has little to nothing in common with guns. But it is still common slang word for the device, however it is not used by practitioners in the trade that often – it seems to be a phrasing more used by those who stand on the outside looking in. How come? I do not know. May it be because it makes the process sound more aggressive, more painful? It makes me think of similar phrasings in photography – the snap shot, the photo shoot – a language that Susan Sontag in the 1970s pointed out to be violent, that give the act of photographing something of a sinister ring. The photographer shoots pictures, possibly causing harm to those in front of the lens. The tattooist holds the gun. Both practices have something to do with permanence. Maybe there are no other common traits? Maybe there is. I get the feeling there is.

What is to be created is already done.  
I have already moved on.  
I am eating the alphabet soup.  
Just remembering the taste.  
Footprints in wet sand  
when the waves are moving in.

The body becomes a point of departure, a  
framework with an edge.  
An edge against unlimited limitations.

Perhaps it is the "I" that is the framework?  
But if the "I" is created by my desires,  
Then what do I desire?

The skin is just a surface.

- Within Buddhism they talk about consciousness. There are six senses. Eye/vision, ear/hearing, nose/olfaction, tongue/taste, skin/touch and mind/thought. So when the needle penetrates my skin and are within my skin's receptive field, my sense of touch and the sense object in the form of a needle(or sense object) are present, the bodily consciousness arises. The arising of these three elements, skin needle and touch/consciousness – lead to the percept, known as "contact" and in turn causes a pleasant or unpleasant or a neutral feeling to arise. It is from such a feeling that craving arises.

Everything is connected.  
I am trying to connect the dots, the dots on a paper.  
Believing ,  
that I will see a picture in the end.

With old age my body starts to loose its tension.  
(as if I had any tension before)  
My body is inevitable changing.  
I am inevitable changing.  
The images on my body will loose their fine lines.  
I will become something else.  
In the end I will die and decay.  
For better or worse.

- I remember walking up the Via del Corso. I walked towards Piazza del Popolo. It was March 16th and it was colder than normal in Rome. Via del Corso is always a busy street. The street was full of people moving in both directions. One stream of people moves toward Piazza Venezia, the other part moves towards Piazza del Popolo. The street is 1, 5 km long and is like a straight line through the center of Rome. It was cloudy and cold. I wrapped my scarf tighter around my neck. I walked with firm steady steps. I wanted to get away from the busy street. Away from the stream of people. The sidewalk was narrow. One of us always had to step off the sidewalk and walk into the street, out in the traffic. In the corner of my eye I saw a man sitting on the street. It was all over in a few seconds. A flash, a blink of an eye. An Asian man was sitting on the sidewalk, selling small insects made of bamboo, butterflies, beetles and praying mantises. Elegant little creatures cut out of bamboo. He made the small figures with a sharp knife. Small creatures with delicate wings and thin legs. Elegant little creatures made with craftsmanship. They were sold for 10 € each. I walked on. Moving on. The moment stuck in my memory. Why was he there? How do I relate to him? Why do I relate to him? Why do I remember? My thoughts jump from metaphor to metaphor. Via del Coro is a popular route for passeggiata, evening walks, to see and be seen by others. I continue to walk. I identify myself in the eyes of others. But did he see me?

With my footsteps  
I have the opportunity to identify the short break  
before the foot turns up or down  
in the completion of a step.  
A moment of equilibrium on my way to  
or from something.

I am.

The experience and memory forms a starting point.  
A catalyst.

- I realize that a catalysis is the increase in rate of a reaction due to the participation of a substance/object/event called a catalyst. Unlike other substance/object/event in the reaction, a catalyst is not consumed. A catalyst may participate in multiple transformations. The effect of a catalyst may vary due to the presence of other substance/object/event known as inhibitors or poisons (which reduce the catalytic activity) or promoters (which increase the activity). As a catalyst is regenerated in a reaction, often only small amounts are needed to increase the rate of the reaction. In practice, however, catalysts are sometimes consumed in secondary processes.

The movement of the needle on my skin is a  
symbolic gesture.  
Depicting the space in-between.  
In-between as the space between two words on a  
white paper.  
A space that is descriptive of the actual form.

I don't remember the pain.  
My memory is selective.  
Everything is connected.  
But do I understand it?

- In his "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" Nietzsche presents what he calls the three metamorphoses of the spirit. These metamorphoses describes the different steps in the transformation of human consciousness. Just as we pass through the various (physical and mental) development stages on our way to adulthood, Nietzsche suggests that we pass through different stages of consciousness. We are in a perpetual "future". We are not static beings. Indeed, for Nietzsche nothing is static, but everything is in flux. There is no imperishable being, everything becomes. This conversion process is not necessarily linear. It seems to be more cyclical in nature.

The tattoo needle perforates the skin and inserts ink.  
Expectations that pictures carry meaning.  
That the picture creates meaning and the picture  
becomes understandable.  
And life becomes meaningful.  
But the picture doesn't mean anything.  
The picture is a result.  
Completely unimportant.

The microsecond when the needle penetrates a  
millimetre into my body.  
Perforates.  
Penetrates.  
Then, when my skin is changing permanently with  
large black areas.  
What eyes will I meet?  
My nerve ends send signals to my brain.  
Registers pain.

I have never craved the tattoo needle less than I do  
now.  
It tears at my flesh.  
It renders my limbs sore and swollen.  
It makes me feel fragile.  
I do not know how to be fragile in a proper way.

The sand seeps up between my toes.  
I wonder about the meaning of my body?  
Everything is connected.  
Everything becomes

The needle rubs my skin.  
A rubbing on the skin to cover an area the size of a  
postage stamp.  
Small circles round and round and round.  
It is difficult to see the skin surface that has already  
been worked on with the needle.  
Excess ink settles on the skin surface and mixes with  
blood and plasma.  
Blinding my eyes.  
I will destroy the skin if I go over the same area with  
the needle too many times.  
It is an abrasive rubbing, a repetition of the same  
movement over and over again.  
A repetition as everything else is.

Who will I become?

- Vedanā is a Buddhist term traditionally translated as either "feeling" or "sensation." In general, vedanā refers to the pleasant, unpleasant and neutral sensations that occur when our internal sense organs come into contact with external sense objects. Feeling is the mental factor which feels the object. When the needle perforates my skin. It is the effective mode in which the object is experienced. The Pali word vedanā does not signify emotion but the bare affective quality of an experience, which may be either pleasant, painful or neutral.

We are in dialogue with each other.  
Exchanging.  
I'm listening.  
I listen when he talks.  
The words float.  
The words are like smoke.  
Someone mentioned presence.  
Inevitable.  
I'm listening.  
It burns in my skin.  
An intimate conversation.

We create each other.  
Our identities are reinforced.  
Does it hurt when the words come to life?  
I tolerate his views.  
But I do not agree.  
Does it hurt?

The picture is there,  
but there are no words about the content.

- I am merely a listener. I take part in their words long after they grew silent. The lights in the videos hints that the time of year should be in the summer, and the small room the men inhabit is bathed in a strong light. It is a space where one person is very comfortable and the other is just visiting. Their movements indicate the different levels of homeliness: one focused at gathering his work material while the other is fidgeting around, aimlessly.

Is there any humility?  
Is there any tolerance?

There is only a desire for improvement.

A black background highlights the cherry blossoms.  
Exchanging words with each other.  
Building new meanings.  
Inserting.

The event is a perceptual process.

There is no permanence.  
Everything becomes.

Experience is a place and something that I have to  
carry.  
Inevitable, however heavy it will be.

Wear it like a coat.  
Wear it like a crown

Good and evil.  
Ugly and beautiful

Stay – True  
True – Love  
Live – Free  
Gold – Fish  
Stay – Down  
Left - Right  
Cats – Meow  
Love - Hate

- I gaze into the small laptop screen and gaze back in time. I see a video of two men who meet after being separated for a while, and I hear how they hesitantly start their conversation. I watch them meet several times, hour-long meetings or more, and their conversation floats from one subject to another. It could have been just like any kind of meeting between friends but there is something that mingles with their voices, something that at times makes it hard to make out their words. It is the sound of a tattoo machine. A shrill, vibrating tune that informs me that during these conversations it is not only a dialogue unfolding, but that a lifelong mark is slowly taking form on human flesh.

He is waiting for the needle.  
He is waiting to receive.  
To be blessed?

- I realize as the work progresses and the task at hand begins, that the roles become even clearer – one of them working, in full control of the situation, the other receiving, passively. In the beginning there is not really that much of a difference in the conversations that leap from one place to another. Not much is being said about the actual tattoo. They talk about everyday things, about their partners, about IKEA, about career choices. But after a while, there is a clear change of direction and one starts asking questions and other starts answering them. The one with the answers is the man with the needle and he is opinionated, almost agitating at times. Maybe it is easier to be the one with the answers when you are behind the needle rather than under it? Easier to be certain when you are not in a state of submission? Or might it be so that the very act of submitting leaves you humble regarding what you know or may not know?

Whirlwinds are taking form during the conversation. Flower petals torn by the wind, scattered over the skin. For every passing minute I watch, the skin is disappearing under lines and patches of grey and color. There is no trace of the words spoken.

- I remember my own experience, it worms its way into my viewing. I remember the smell of ink and blood mingling together (a sweetish smell, by no means unpleasant), the hardness of the floor under my body and how it was like to be in transformation. To be in a state where I was no longer in charge. The tattoo experience was also an experience of having my mind loudly called back into my body, to be forced into my very own skin. The distinction between mind and matter became increasingly hard to distinguish, and I found peace in that. It gave me peace to listen to the sound of the needles penetrating skin, mixed with the voice that grew familiar. To not control anything, to just be.

You see, I found something in those moments, when I was balancing on the thin line between being and becoming. In the borderlands. In the transmission.

There, and only there  
(in a place that I am unable to name or to define)  
was the answer to the question:  
What are we looking for?  
We are looking for ways to be.  
Just be.

- But, always this but, borderlands cease to exist the moment we strive to define them, to draw lines between the one and the other. In our effort to understand the borderlands we also extinguish them. Like the hand that carefully creates the complex sand paintings also in the end is bound to erase them with an unguarded flick of a finger, turning them into nothing but dust. To be tattooed upon became a door to enter, to be able to contemplate the state of change in all things. Some may ask what this could possibly have to do with the permanent tattoo. How can sand painting and ink in flesh possibly be compared? I am inclined to answer: Because the understanding is born in the body. The meticulous work of pouring thin lines of colored sand in complex patterns not only reminds the practitioner of the frailty of the material she is working with but also of the limits of the body. An unstable hand might ruin hours of hard work. One careless movement creates traces that cannot be undone. There is no turning back. After my first tattoo session I found myself in a liminal state. I was no longer what I had been but had still to become what I would be. I borrow the term from the discipline of anthropology, where they use a concept called “liminality” to describes the state of a person that just subdued himself or herself in a ritual act. Liminality has been described by the anthropologist Victor Turner as the borderlands, the place of becoming, and the undefined. He chooses to divide ritual practice into three segments where the initial stage is separating the person or persons that shall undergo a ritual from the group they belong to. The second stage is the contradictory and fleeting stage when a person neither belongs in their former life nor have access to their new life. The third and last stage is the re-connection with the group they used to be a part of, but now with a different status. The middle stage is the liminal stage. The thought of that place entices me. Becoming.

Becoming is harder this time around.  
When I re-enter the relationship  
with the needle after a few years of being  
I find it to be much harder to accept.  
The scabs do not heal as fast as I remembered them  
to do. They keep me up at night  
Frenzied itching that cannot be calmed.  
I find myself being worried, fret over small things.  
Healing is slow.

- Is tattooing a form of ritual, hidden in a consumer  
culture? I do not know, but I feel inclined to think  
so.

- I remember eavesdropping on two women that sat in  
the waiting room at the tattooist when I was waiting  
to get my first tattoo. It sounded to me like they were  
mother and daughter, loudly chatting and picking and  
choosing from the flash art that covered the walls. They  
both decided to go for a little tribal with a flower in the  
center with the motivation "it will be easy to remove".  
"You should not destroy yourself like that", said my  
mom, when I showed her a picture of what would  
be my first tattoo. "You'll only end up regretting it."

No regrets.

- Marking the body as a form of penalty grew common during the European Middle Ages. Border control (or the lack thereof) in combination with an increasingly vagrant population made it harder to uphold law and order. Impostors, con artists, thieves, and vagabonds could fairly easily leave a town, province, or country behind, thus escaping punishment. It was possible to simply disappear and reappear under a new name, as someone else. The historian Miriam Eliay-Feldon has written about the subject and describes how the law enforcers started to introduce penal markings as a way to keep the population in check and to make it easier to recognize wrongdoers. Markings and mutilations become the way to do this. Limbs were severed from bodies, hot iron pressed against the skin; skin was marked by colors and symbols. It made it harder to change your identity when former sins were imprinted on your very flesh. The very body functioned as a telltale sign, something that could identify your sins for people that knew little or nothing about you besides the fact of the mark. The stigma. The long-gone act would be carried visibly for anyone to see. To once have been, and always to be forced to be. There should be no escape from your own history.

What happens with a body that is marked?  
What consequences do the markings bear?

- Five centuries later and body modification, such as tattoos, branding, and piercing, has become something we do by choice, all in the name of individual expression. My choices should be reflected in my appearance, in my home, in my consumer habits, and on my skin. I, the individual, the efforts put into being unique – these thoughts scare me at times. There are so few things that urge us to connect with others, to be a part of something bigger. Where is that sense of community? Margaret Thatcher said in the 1980's that "there are no such thing as 'society' there is only men, women and families".<sup>1</sup> A place only consisting of individuals with no obligations to one another, no connectedness – that is the nightmare state to me. To not have a connection with other people.

I can describe smells and the feeling of my body.  
How my body occupies a space.  
How I feel the surface connect to my body.  
How the chair forms itself around my physical form.

- I find a beauty and some comfort in the fact that my tattoos are by no means unique. That they belong to a tradition that existed prior to me and that they will, most likely, survive me. It makes me a part of a long line of people that adorned their bodies with the same pictures but for very different reasons. It makes me a part of a group of people that I never met or are even likely to meet. But they are there and I am among them, in a sense.

- But the choice to cover your skin with ink is also the choice to be given a role. At very first sight, I might be perceived either as a tattooed brethren or a threatening “other”. Sometimes I get the impression that some people think that I am to be understood as the cover of a book, that they need not talk to me to “figure me out”. Some seem to think to know what I am and where I am from. Some like to touch the tattoos without paying any attention to the fact that it is not a picture, it is my body. Some seem to think that the images are there for them, that I adorned myself for the gaze of the other. Little do they know.

But there is a difference between theory and practice. The body is my physical practice.

Pain is a physical experience.  
A physical practice.  
With physical limitations.

The air is dry.  
Filled with a smell of ink and blood.

A light perfume is moving through the aircraft cabin.  
The people around me smell of perfume and sweat.  
We are so close to each other.  
I hear their sounds as a low noise.  
Voices and movements.  
There is no exchange of pleasantries.  
We don't exchange anything else other than our presence.

Our presence as humans.  
If you look at all this from above.  
We all look like ants.  
Moving around seemingly chaotic.

But do ants question their presence?

The sweat starts to dry on my face and my body.  
My breath starts to calm down.  
Breathing deep.

Deep breathing makes the pain disappear.  
The floor in the aircraft cabin is blue.  
Are cabin floors always blue?  
Blue might be a soothing color.

- The French philosopher Roland Barthes mentions the concept of punctum in his famous book Camera Lucida (1980). He describes punctum as a feeling, like the prick of a needle, as Barthes describes it, that causes the viewer of a photograph to react.<sup>2</sup> The concept has been heatedly discussed within academic circles but I still venture to include it here. It has something to do with using the needle as a metaphor for something that centers attention, that gives me something to relate to perhaps. It may be that simple. That the piercing of the mind/flesh should offer some kind of insight. Barthes himself is (intentionally? Some argue so) not clear with what he means with the word but I choose to interpret it nonetheless. Into the meaning of pain. That the prick of a needle releases a flood of thoughts and memories, that the unexpected pain in experiencing something unexpected opens up for reflections that may have very little to do with the actual needle. But still, it is connected.

Fear of death.

I lie down and allow myself to be tattooed.

Explanations in retrospect, rationalization.

Time heals all wounds.

There is a promise of change.

The needle is sharp, the ink black and the flesh is weak.

- Isn't the flesh really the strongest thing there is? With its ability to be stretched, bent, broken, and heal? And in so many ways it is also our only true connection to the world. We sense, therefore we are. Without our bodies, what would there be left?

Patterns of grey clouds.  
The sun is shining today.  
Who was I before?

- I must admit that my decision to get a large portion of my skin covered in ink met with little appreciation from my partner at the time. The first few months of the becoming of the tattoo, there were arguments and periods of what can only be described as mourning. It was a too visible change, and too much of a reminder that things and bodies inevitably change, was the answer I got at the time, when I wondered how my personal journey could be so upsetting. I remember I overheard my tattooist talking to another client some time later. The client was a young man, about to enter the army and go to a war zone and who chose to have his skin altered before he left, whose partner strongly disapproved. The client was lamenting about his girlfriend's reaction and the tattooist said that it was not uncommon that spouses disapproved of large scale tattoos. His theory at the time was that the ink was a manifestation of the fact that the body was indeed only the property of the owner and nothing that the partner could claim any right to, and that the act of independence could be troublesome for some. It made sense to me. I would believe that my partner's reaction to no small extent was a question of the nature of the act of tattooing. Of course, it could be seen as an act of independence. When I think about it, I guess it had to do with independence more than aesthetics. At least initially. Then, when the reality of the needle became tangible to me, it changed focus. I can no longer say that it was an independence act. Sometimes, I get the feeling that it had more to do with submitting. Being tattooed is indeed a carnal experience, in some aspects not unlike the things we share with partners and lovers. One could argue that the similarities ends there. That close emotional or physical relationships requires closeness, right? But, I would like to ask, who is closer to me than the person I allow to repeatedly inflict me pain? Who I, despite this, choose to meet again and again, month after month, year after year. To literally pierce my flesh? To

leave a literal map of those meetings engraved in my skin? But maybe this is just confusing. The hurt my partner felt was, no matter the origin, no less real. But it was also confusing. Might be, I am just confused.

Afterwards.

Laminated with thin plastic foil

I have a noise in my ears.  
Going home with light steps.

Headache.  
A short moment.  
A rush of chemical reactions.

In 1968 Ronald Melzack and Kenneth Casey described pain in terms of its three dimensions: "sensory-discriminative" (sense of the intensity, location, quality and duration of the pain), "affective-motivational" (unpleasantness and urge to escape the unpleasantness), and "cognitive-evaluative" (cognitions such as appraisal, cultural values, distraction and hypnotic suggestion).<sup>3</sup> They theorized that pain intensity (the sensory discriminative dimension) and unpleasantness (the affective-motivational dimension) are not simply determined by the magnitude of the painful stimulus, but by "higher" cognitive activities that can influence perceived intensity and unpleasantness. Cognitive activities "may affect both sensory and affective experience or they may modify primarily the affective-motivational dimension. Thus, excitement in games or war appears to block both dimensions of pain, while suggestion and placebos may modulate the affective-motivational dimension and leave the sensory-discriminative dimension relatively undisturbed." "Pain can be treated not only by trying to cut down the sensory input by anesthetic block, surgical intervention and the like, but also by influencing the motivational-affective and cognitive factors as well."

I see the Turning Torso through the clouds.  
The waves move fast with white foam peaks over  
Öresund.

I close my eyes.

- Pain is whatever the experiencing person says it is, existing whenever he says it does". To assess intensity, the patient may be asked to locate their pain on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being no pain at all, and 10 the worst pain they have ever felt. Quality can be established by having the patient complete the McGill Pain Questionnaire indicating which words best describe their pain.<sup>4</sup>

What is worse?

To drown in cold February water  
or to disappear  
in a shower of burning airplane fuel?  
Most accidents with aircraft happen  
within 90 seconds of start or landing.  
The body is only a vessel

The stewardess sits down.  
She looks calm.  
Should I also be calm?  
The airplane shakes.  
I hear the increase in speed in the flight engines,  
engines fighting with invisible air.  
I try putting theory into practice.  
I try to put practice into theory.

Sound creates space.  
The tattoo needle sounds like an angry wasp.  
And in that moment my body exists.  
The sound puts my body within this space.  
It is a lens in focus.  
It formulates my being.  
The sound resounds and reverbs against my physical  
form.  
It is a moment of in-between.  
On one side I am dead and the other I am alive.  
Existing in two places at the same time.  
Outside of the windows.  
It is completely silent.

Only movement.  
But who is moving?  
The world outside or me on the inside?

I remember making a drawing of a tattoo.  
A snake that slithered around a dagger.

- I had signed on in Haraholmen outside Piteå in Sweden. My dad drove me there in his old Volvo. I was 15 years old and he chain-smoked in the car on the way to the ship. The ashtray in the car was already full when we started driving. Later, I sat down in the mess hall and watched the people around me. One of the sailors had his ATM card code tattooed on his arm. I do not remember any names, there are only vague faces in my memory. It was the first night on the ship. The mess hall was brown and smoky. I did not say much in those days. So I sat silent and drew on a napkin with a ballpoint. A blue snake coiled around a dagger. Old School.

The body creates and resurrects memories.  
Lost, but now engraved permanently,  
as a proof that something happened.  
As if we needed proof of our own existence.  
The world moves around me, but in which direction?

Everything is connected.

- I understand that memories, all boil down to these fragile little things. We depend so heavily upon them and still we distrust them so (rightfully). We keep mementos to remember how things were but they change nonetheless. A lock of hair, a tattoo, a rock collected from a sunny beach one day long, long ago – the items may not change much but our memories related to them inevitably do.

Day by day, we forget a little.  
Day by day, we re-invent our past.  
Eventually the memory will be a construction, a theatrical thing.

- The sun is shining on the runway. 20 m/s. I know nothing of it. I don't feel the wind. I am in my bubble. A bubble of my own thoughts mixed with voices and echoes. It is a protective shell. It is a noise in my ears and I can only hear my own footsteps. I'm watching people moving through the airport. I'm am nowhere. I am on the inside looking out. I am invisible. I am absent. I am nowhere. No one sees me coming or going. No one speaks to me. I only exist in someone else's eyes. If they are looking at me.

H&M have the same clothes here as everywhere else.  
Starbucks coffee is still coffee.  
I feel safe.

But not surprised.

Is there anything that tastes good on an airport?  
I ask myself and taste plastic and even more tasteless  
plastic.  
I am in the in-between.  
The place where you are coming from,  
and the space which you are leaving.  
A "never there".

It is all about being present.  
And the need for surprise

The beer is cold and refreshing.  
The windows are dirty  
I see airplanes in faded colors.  
There are dirty tables.  
Nobody wipes the tables.  
Everything is connected by blue dots.

- I hear it so often in everyday conversations. The distinction between mind and body, the way to perceive the flesh we inhabit as something distinct from ourselves. People talk about it like it is something separate from them. "My body needs this", not "I need this" or "my body is tired" not "I am tired". The body seem in these cases to be more an object (or maybe even a project) than what we are, our very physical existence. It's just around, and it can be talked about as something that does belong to us but it does not define us. Some discipline it, through training and diets, some adorn it in various ways, others spend their lives despising it for various reasons. We are not our bodies, even if we have them. I am not sure if this is positive or negative, but it confuses me to think of an non-bodily existence. My entire life is being experienced through the flesh that is me. What could I possibly know or be without it? What "inner world" could I ever imagine without a lived bodily experience to relate it too?

The body is never as present as when it is  
dysfunctional.  
When it does not take heed of my wishes.  
When it bleeds, scabs and itches.  
Frustration wells up in me.

- When I travel to a new place, I always find myself trying to find a specific brand of coffee shop (one of the big international ones, names are not important). If I find one, I always enter. I do not always purchase something, sometimes I just want to stand there in the familiar atmosphere (or lack thereof). They are nearly the same wherever you go. I like to play with the thought that when I leave this specific shop, I will not exit into the same city from where I entered, that I will find myself in a totally different place when I step outside. It could be like that, you know. They all look the same. Even the customers are familiar. Hong Kong, New York, London, Berlin – it does not change much. The brand concept has created a space that is impenetrable to the outside world – it is a world within itself. The scent of roasted coffee beans, the selection of beverages and pastries, the staff uniforms - they even play the same music. It is a nearly-convincing illusion of something constant. It is a tremendously sad place for the very same reason. But I still go there. And I sit down and I listen to the same music wherever I am. It is like a place in between places.

Knowledge is like a long journey.  
It is the enjoyment of drifting.  
Drifting without knowing were to start or end.

- It is often accepted as an a priori principle that one has inherent knowledge of one's own consciousness simply by virtue of dwelling within an "inner world" of the mind. This drastic distinction between inner world and outer world was most popularized by René Descartes when he solidified his principle of Cartesian dualism. From the centrality of one's own consciousness springs a fundamental problem of other minds, the discussion of which has often centered around pain.

Unknowing to be able to explore again.  
Finding things you didn't know existed.  
In every action there is a human wish for  
improvement.  
Improvements in the quality of life.

To make a difference.  
To be somebody.  
To become someone.

I often get the question if it hurts.  
It hurts, yes it does.  
Everything hurts.  
Everything is pain

I try to communicate.  
Exchange.  
Dialogues.

But what is left?  
We don't share the same world anymore.  
We need to build bridges.  
Every action has a reaction.

Human beings do not want to be alone.  
She seeks out and acts around others.  
Desperately looking for attention.  
Confirmation is in the eyes of others.  
Fear as a motivator.

Fame or fortune.  
Hunted, chasing, running  
You closest to your self.

It is a paradox that on the one hand wanting to be  
individualistic  
and the other the need for a hug from a community.  
affirmation  
acknowledgement  
seal  
confirmation

But what does your desire create?

- Jungians have often seen the individuation process of self-realisation as taking place within a liminal space. 'Individuation begins with a withdrawal from normal modes of socialisation, epitomized by the breakdown of the persona...liminality'. Thus 'what Turner's concept of social liminality does for status in society, Jung...does for the movement of the person through the life process of individuation'. Individuation can be seen as a 'movement through liminal space and time, from disorientation to integration....What takes place in the dark phase of liminality is a process of breaking down...in the interest of "making whole" one's meaning, purpose and sense of relatedness once more'. As an archetypal figure, 'the trickster is a symbol of the liminal state itself, and of its permanent accessibility as a source of recreative power'. But other depth psychologies speak of a similar process. Carl Rogers describes 'the "out-of-this-world" quality that many therapists have remarked upon, a sort of trance-like feeling in the relationship that client and therapist emerge from at the end of the hour, as if from a deep well or tunnel. The French talk of how the analytic setting 'opens/forges the "intermediate space," "excluded middle," or "between" that figures so importantly in Irigaray's writing'. Marion Milner claims that 'a temporal spatial frame also marks off the special kind of reality of a psycho-analytic session...the different kind of reality that is within it'. Jungians however have perhaps been most explicit about the 'need to accord space, time and place for liminal feeling' - as well about the associated dangers, 'two mistakes: we provide no ritual space at all in our lives...or we stay in it too long'. Indeed, Jung's psychology has itself been described as 'a form of "permanent liminality" in which there is no need to return to social structure'.

Our society has so many normative rules.  
Dualism to create a community.  
A community where not everything and everyone fits in.

We are all the same surfaces reflecting sameness.  
Values to be consolidated.

Values to be defended but never defined,  
other than to the negative, to what something isn't.

- Forced unity is always about someone/something else to be removed.  
That's why the Taliban blasts ancient Buddha statues to edit their own history.  
And that is why the Nazis burned books. It's all about relief, to avoid the concern the diversity of democracy creates.

Democracy creates diversity.  
People who are watching and listening  
create diversity.

It is a desire to find company.

Only what is measurable is understandable.  
I measure the time it takes to cover a small area with  
ink on my body.

- Rūpa is the Buddhist concept of material form, including both the body and external matter. Rūpa is not matter as in the metaphysical substance of materialism. Instead it means both materiality and sensibility — signifying, for example, a tactile object both insofar as that object is made of matter and that the object can be tactically sensed. In fact rūpa is more essentially defined by its amenability to being sensed than its being matter: just like everything else it is defined in terms of its function; what it does, not what it is.

- I'm still considering the effect it has had on me. Really, there should be none. Really, there inevitably is. A little tug in the web, a sense of things being affected.

Movements and sounds create a space,  
the body forms to it,  
forms around it.  
Impressions.  
As a print,  
An impression.

Like the lines on a copperplate.

- Sometimes, I fear that there is no chance in gaining any real perspective, that we are all trapped in our small worlds, co-existing but not communicating. That we are all stuck in small, dark places where all we can hope for is to see a fragment of light seeping down from the above. we are all trapped in our small worlds, co-existing but There is only so much that can be seen.

Are you to judge me then?

A sentence to exclusion.

How so?

To put me in the community of outsiders?

- So far we've been maintaining communications more frequently than before, but his way of communicating is totally foreign to me. Before, we had normal communications, albeit at times a lot of time would pass between them. Not abnormal. I'm trying to figure out how to continue our communication, while we are in the same room. I'm just lying here on my back, smelling the disinfectant, stinging my nose. But as everyone else I have to believe that communication will lead to a result. But what about that communication we can't see? The communication that is invisible. The communication we can't see? We need to build bridges. If I can't have power over events in the world I can at least have power over my own body. Abridging the distance. Controlling the body. Communicating with my body. We have to continue this relationship. I am not trying to work this out myself. From this point on I will not be the same as before. We will eventually meet. Everyone I meet will judge me. Judge me on presumptive evidence. Does it have to do with gender? Of course it does, as everything else. There is no black or white, only a grey shade. This conversion process is not necessarily linear, but seems to be more cyclical in nature. A changing result that is amorphous in its nature.

Short, sharp movements.

I watch the needle dig a little ditch in my skin.

I am there,

I listen to her voice

I can see the dark fall outside

As I try to make the pain into something good

- Whip shading is a technic were the tattoo needle is “whipped” in order to create a fading scale from dark to a light colour. Grey wash is another way to create a grey scale with ink on a human skin.

Everyone is striving for a good life,

(Who does not?)

But what is a good life?

But on who’s conditions?

And how far could I go?

How far is to pass over an invisible border?

- Ilse Koch was the wife of commandant Karl-Otto Koch at the Buchenwald and Majdanek concentration camps. Koch became known as the “Bitch of Buchenwald” and was accused of selecting concentration camp inmates for their tattoos, before having them executed and their skins preserved.

Man’s ability to preserve and collect.

Collect in heaps, on attics and in forgotten corners

The men who wore those skins are not left behind.

The skin is just a product.

A shell.

A faded result, the confirmation in the eyes of others.

And how far can people go in his need for acceptance and approval?

Everything is connected.

At The Medical Pathology Museum of Tokyo University in Tokyo they have saved skins, human skins, tattooed.

Saved for posterity.

Power expresses itself in so many different ways.

Always a quest for confirmation.

If not to punish yourself.

The same

A need for control.

I see repetition around me.

The same repetition over and over again, rubbing it in.

A repetition of the same movement.

- I remember a newly built part of Hanoi's airport. They made a second floor that would be filled with tax-free shops and happy shoppers. The second floor echoed an empty sound. An open landscape with no landscape, only an empty horizon. No one knew what it was that the second floor would contain. Expectations maybe? Some years later they started to fill the void. But it was so mediocre, so it was nothing. A chimera in the mind. I remember that smoked my last cigarette there in the empty space of the second floor of Hanoi's airport. I just realized that I have only one life. There is no second chance. Still waiting. I hate the sandwich I have to eat. The beer is cold and tastes like lemon. I am looking with my eyes but it is hard to see because of all people. No one is standing out. We all look the same. But still you think you recognize someone. Sometimes a face pops up in the sea of colours. A faces stand out in the crowd. Memories. Images of thoughts. I better go to my gate.

- It should be pointed that phenomenological philosophy does not claim that pure knowledge of the "thing in itself" can be reached, since all knowledge is mediated through the experience of it, that is the "thing for us."

Finding a method.  
Man's quest.  
Looking beyond the surface.  
Appreciating the content.

I hear the longing.  
Free?  
I do not think so.

Not as long as we all compare.  
Disregarding.  
Closing your Eyes.  
So what?  
The only thing we know is that history repeats it self..

Large dark areas.  
I can't see the forest because of all the trees.  
Different perspectives.

What can be violated is violated.  
Un-violated.

Everyone gets offended.

Smallness. A repetition as everything else.  
Every man and women for him/her self.

Fear.

- I have lived many lives. I am not who I used to be. This is the sum of living. I gained some perspectives from the bottom of the well. I can see that I started to learn important things, and that it took me quite a while to realize what really was important to me; that a lot of my battles have been rather pointless, and did not get me anywhere. That the path I am walking now seems a lot more promising, and at the same time a lot harder. That I have at times been childish, selfish and less than a decent person. I think I used to see life as a mountain that needed to be climbed in order to get somewhere else, to reach new things. I sped onwards, always struggling, always out of breath. But somewhere along the road, I fell. I fell to the ground and when I managed to get on my feet again I started to enjoy climbing. I cannot say when that happened. It just did. I found that even if I kept repeating the same patterns new things happened, and in every familiar curve and line there was an endless amount of newness and promises. And now, I've started to hope that this mountain has no top. I have grown older, arguably more patient. I am unwilling to say that I have grown wiser – it is not up to me to judge. But I do know that I am different, that not only my appearances but also that my inner core has changed over the years. When I was young, I had it all figured out. Several years later I find myself knowing very little. But I like to think that I am willing to learn and unlearn.

- It took time to reach this place. It took decades. I would like to say that I no longer fear the grey areas but that would be a lie (I would not want to lie to you, not now). Rather, I would say that I now carry fear perched on my shoulder, whispering in my ear. Every once in a while it rustles its feathers. I know that it is there but it does not control me the way it used to. However, I listen more than I choose to speak.

I'm catching glimpses of the dots  
from the corner of my eye.

Dots are starting to express themselves  
with black lines of ink.

- Process - Creation - Becoming - Result. Learning to think again. Trying to learn to think. Because the opposite of trying would be to terrifying. It takes 600 years for a change to take place. When I was little I used to turn my binoculars the wrong way around. I looked at the reality from the other way. I didn't come closer. The world just became further away. What I saw was vague unfocused abstract forms. Everything was small and far, far away. Perhaps more orderly. I am watching people moving like a stream around me now also. Vague unfocused abstract forms. Receding. I let the bodies fold like waves around me. Listening to voices. Pinning them on maps. Placing them in the world. Listening to my own thoughts. Finding words and phrases that disappears as quickly as they appeared. But it does not matter. My body is moving. The body becomes an extension and a reaffirmation of my own existence. What becomes of this? What is the result? My own future? My own metamorphosis. For the things I do not know? Exploring. Proving the possibility of change. Becoming. Learning to walk. Finding new phrases that are descriptive of the actual creation. I put my feet down in front of me and feel the ground under my feet moving so slowly. I feel the soil affect my body.

- Boots are walking up and down. Stories repeat. I see the bullet holes on the walls of Die Altes Museum. Thinking of Nefertiti. Standing there waiting. Everything repeats itself. When I was little I had a friend who lived above me. He built model airplanes. Painted them meticulously. The airplanes hung from the roof in his boy's room on thin fishing line. He also had the battleship Bismarck on his book shelf. He had many models from the German war machine. He also had small plastic soldiers. He had all the things I did not have. I never had the patience to build models. I don't remember if I was jealous.

Beck's Bier and Apfelkorn in Lübeck.

Small German plastic soldiers.

A Junkers Ju 87 or Stuka hanging in from a fishing line.

And knowing that German prepositions require the dative:

aus, außer, bei, mit, nach, seit, von, zu.

I remember my language.

I still remember.

But do I know anything?

- Saṅkhāra or saṃskāra is a term figuring prominently in the teaching of the Buddha. The word means 'that which has been put together' and "that which puts together". In the first (passive) sense, saṅkhāra refers to conditioned phenomena generally, but specifically to all mental "dispositions".<sup>5</sup> These are called 'volitional formations' both because they are formed as a result of volition and because they are causes for the arising of future volitional actions.<sup>6</sup> In the second (active) sense of the word, saṅkhāra refers to that faculty of the mind/brain apparatus (saṅkhara-khandha) that puts together those formations.<sup>7</sup> English translations for saṅkhāra in the first sense of the word include 'conditioned things',<sup>8</sup> 'determinations',<sup>9</sup> 'fabrications'<sup>10</sup> and 'formations' (or, particularly when referring to mental processes, 'volitional formations').<sup>11</sup> In the first (passive) sense saṅkhāra can refer to any compound form in the universe whether a tree, a cloud, a human being, a thought or a molecule. All these are saṅkhāras. The Buddha taught that all such things are impermanent, arising and passing away, subject to change, and that understanding the significance of this reality is wisdom. Saṅkhāra is often used in this first sense to describe the psychological conditioning (particularly the habit patterns of the unconscious mind) that give any individual human being his or her unique character and make-up at any given time

A smell of blood mixed with ink.

Body fluids.

Surfaces.

- I wrap my scarf around my head. I look like a woman in my hijab. The wind is cold and wet rain falls on my body. Berliner Fernsehturm is leaning over me. Enlightened and a reminder of a time that was. Lost in shadows of old memory and nostalgia. The Eye of Sauron watching over us. Some would probably see it as a powerful phallus. I see it more like a threatening bat ready to fall on my head.

I suppose I will have to let go.  
Chained and the chains are hard to get off.  
I create my own chains.

- Metzinger says that for there to be a first person perspective we need three 'target properties'  
1. mineness - a sense of ownership, particularly over the body.  
2. selfhood - the sense that "I am someone", and continuity through time.  
3. centredness - the sense that "I am the centre of my own subjective self".<sup>12</sup>

Happiness based on hope.

Make-Beliefs.

So many things remind me of what I am not.  
In this way the body becomes a tool for understanding.

- After listening to the men on the video, I begin to wander back through memory to find myself on the floor in the tattoo studio. The tattooist bent over me, talking about Buddhism with his calm but strangely insistent voice. He almost preaches to me (I despise preaching) but strangely enough I do not mind.

I am not the listener.  
I am, at that point,  
nothing but flesh under the needle.

His many words mingle with the sound  
of my skin penetrated by the needles,  
a soft whispering sound.

I feel it.  
I smile.  
It hurts.  
It is pain.

And afterwards, it strikes me.  
That the words indeed came to me even if I did not  
pay attention.

I do remember many of those conversations  
as if they were etched into my mind,  
as the ink was worked into my skin.

And again, I smile.  
We listen in magnificent ways.  
The body is just as active as the mind in taking in  
our surroundings.

- Tattoo needles come in different numbers and forms. Configuration 2R, 5R and so on indicate how the needles are grouped together. The configuration determines the shape or pattern of how the ink will go into the skin. So in the example of 1207RL, where 12 is the diameter, 7 is the count, RL, indicates the configuration. RL stands for round liner, a round liner is a formation of needles in a tight circular formation, which is used for lining. The other configurations are RS = round shader, F = flats, M1 = weaved magnum, M2 = stacked magnum and RM = round magnum. RL or round liner needles are used for lining. RS or round shader are used for shading. Flats are used for areas with geometric shapes and shading. Weaved magnums are used for shading, blending and coloring large areas. Stacked magnums are used for shading, blending and colouring tighter large areas. Both can be used for lining if you turn the needle to the side. This does take a bit of skill to do, so only do it if you have practiced the technique enough or else you may end up damaging the skin. Round curve magnums are used for shading, blending and colouring large areas with less impact to the skin. The needles are made in an arch formation to better deflect the skin when it goes in and out. With a regular magnum, there is potential for the edges of the mag to dig into the skin, with a round magnum, the arch of the needle will allow you to move more freely on the skin without the risk of the edges digging in.

It is dark.

I have hard streets beneath my feet again.

I walk and feel my feet hurt.

I walk alone.

I clear my mind.

My feet hurt.

- After his island becomes occupied by Prospero and his cohort, Caliban is forced into servitude. While he is referred to as a calvaluna or mooncalf, a freckled monster, he is the only human inhabitant of the island that is otherwise "not honour'd with a human shape" (Prospero, I.2.283). In some traditions he is depicted as: a wild man, or a deformed man, or a beast man, or sometimes a mix of fish and man, stemming from the confusion of two of the characters about what he is, found lying on a deserted island.

I take the elevator up to my room.  
I can look into the apartments on the other side in  
the houses across the street.  
The windows are like small TV screens.  
Ongoing life.  
Old people and young people who flicker on and off.  
Far out of reach.

Antimacassar.  
Like old worn clothes.  
Hanging like dead fish over the furniture.  
The lights from the windows sweeps in front of my  
eyes.

Now they are gone.

- Saṃjñā is a Buddhist term that is typically translated as "perception" or "cognition." It can be defined as grasping at the distinguishing features or characteristics. Alexander Berzin gives the following informal explanation: "Then there is distinguishing, for instance between light and dark. I mean, we're seeing a huge amount of information, and in order to deal with it we need to distinguish one little piece from everything else. That's distinguishing."

- I hear that George Clooney is staying in an apartment further up the street. He is shorter than everyone thinks. The Vietnamese took photos of him and with him in the restaurant. They were the same length. David Bowie has also returned. The wind blows cold between the houses and on Karl Marx Alle. A hard cold wind. And again I remember. Alexanderplatz 1987.

Will I ever know?  
I like to sleep.  
I don't think  
I have a death wish.  
I like the mornings.  
There is a promise of change  
with the start of a new day.

The sun rises at 07:45.

- Mimesis, or the imitative aspect of human behavior, is an important aspect of liminality. Individuals who are trapped in a liminal situation are not able to act rationally for two reasons: "first, because the structure on which 'objective' rationality was based has disappeared; and second, because the stressful, emotive character of a liminal crisis prevents clear thinking". This can lead to "mimetic" behavior on the part of the trapped individuals: "a central characteristic of liminal situations is that, by eliminating the stable boundary lines, they contribute to the proliferation of imitative processes and thus to the continuous reproduction of dominant messages about what to copy". Without stable institutions (which are effectively broken down in a liminal period), "people will look at concrete individuals for guidance".

The memory is like a sieve.  
It all comes back to me.  
Sifting fragments of a past.

I will never remember names but I remember  
Käthe Kollwitz.

Writing a dialogue.  
A one-sided exchange or a one-sided transaction?  
It is about a promise.  
There is a promise of something.  
A promise of a participation?  
A sense of belonging.

“Don’t worry be happy” played at the jukebox.  
The clientele in the bar changed around 6 am in the  
morning. The early morning dog walkers took their  
turn for a drink. They suggested autofahrer bier for  
me. Pilsator played Helter Skelter later that year.  
And they played loud.

Bullet holes in the buildings.  
Small coins made of tin.  
I did not go to bed.

Some people are interested in meeting others.  
They search and research what and who to ask.  
Running dialogues with everyone and everything.  
Exchanging pleasantries and experiences.

I don't.

I remember I walked up the Via del Corso. I walked towards Piazza del Popolo. It was March 16th and it was colder than normal in Rome I was heading for Santa Maria Del Poppolo. The church contains two paintings by Caravaggio, The Conversion on the Way to Damascus and Crucifixion of Saint Peter. It is a dark space where the paintings are hanging. I put € 1 in a money box and the lights turn on so you can see the paintings. But the lights will only last for one minute. "And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man". Everything changes. Everything happens on the road to Damascus. "You will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." It was two weeks before Easter. The mass started at 1pm. It was in Italian. I do not understand Italian. Do I need to understand?

Experiences create new starting points.  
Untold knowledge.

A movement from one metaphor to another.  
A spider web of possibilities.  
In meetings and in between situations  
and in the things that happen we find opportunity.  
But simply communicating need does not necessarily  
lead to a new result.  
We create each other if we listen.

How does the words taste in your mouth?  
How does the words taste in my mouth?

Resonance  
Reverb

- Human existence, in the Buddha's view, is nothing more than a composite of the five aggregates. Matter or Form: the physical form responded to the five organs of senses, i.e., eye, ear, nose, tongue and body; Sensation or Feeling: the feeling in reception of physical things by the senses through the mind; Perception and/or cognition: the functioning of mind in distinguishing appearances; Volition or Mental Formation: habitual action, i.e., a conditioned response to the object of experience, whether it is good or evil, you like or dislike; Consciousness: the mental faculty in regard to perception, cognition and experience;

Just wondering.  
Just wandering.  
Monkey mind.

This we can call not knowing.  
Which for me is the very basis for understanding.



## Footnotes

1

Great Britians Prime minister Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990) talking to Women's Own magazine, October 31 1987: "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families."

2

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6

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12

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source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mthDxnFXs9k>

*a permanent mark on a physical body*

A permanent mark on a physical body  
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notes by emma ewadotter and micalael norberg

Everything is connected.  
Like dots on a paper.  
The dots that make us see connections.

Dots that create an image  
Making a new map.  
Punctures  
A new picture or an image?

I am becoming.  
Am I becoming?

An image is starting to reveal itself.  
But where do I start?  
How do I begin?  
Where is the first dot?  
What is expected of me?  
What do I expect of myself?

It is a dense forest of possibilities.  
What is it?  
I can't see.  
Branches are stretching out their long arms.  
Blocking my view.  
Sticking to my clothes and tearing my hair.

The branches.  
Extensions of a stem.  
Arms extending from the world we live in,  
Reflections of a state of being.

Reflectiveness.  
It is an octopus.  
With one million arms.

Fragments.  
Description of events.  
I am participating in a process,  
A meeting, a rendez-vous between the skin and the  
needle.  
What use are words in this?  
Are the words just pieces left over from the  
construction work?  
A bamboo scaffold holding the house together.  
Leftovers,  
Memories and letters in an alphabet soup.

Words are the long arms of the octopus  
I fumble for something to hold on to.  
But the process becomes only an image.  
Not a like photograph, good, bad or beautiful.  
But the image as a representation of events.  
I remember.

Constructing a new image.  
New ideas.  
New knowledge.

- Tattoo gun. It is a strange name for the device, the little electric thing that makes the needles move has little to nothing in common with guns. But it is still common slang word for the device, however it is not used by practitioners in the trade that often – it seems to be a phrasing more used by those who stand on the outside looking in. How come? I do not know. May it be because it makes the process sound more aggressive, more painful? It makes me think of similar phrasings in photography – the snap shot, the photo shoot – a language that Susan Sontag in the 1970s pointed out to be violent, that give the act of photographing something of a sinister ring. The photographer shoots pictures, possibly causing harm to those in front of the lens. The tattooist holds the gun. Both practices have something to do with permanence. Maybe there are no other common traits? Maybe there is. I get the feeling there is.

What is to be created is already done.  
I have already moved on.  
I am eating the alphabet soup.  
Just remembering the taste.  
Footprints in wet sand  
when the waves are moving in.

The body becomes a point of departure, a  
framework with an edge.  
An edge against unlimited limitations.

Perhaps it is the "I" that is the framework?  
But if the "I" is created by my desires,  
Then what do I desire?

The skin is just a surface.

- Within Buddhism they talk about consciousness. There are six senses. Eye/vision, ear/hearing, nose/olfaction, tongue/taste, skin/touch and mind/thought. So when the needle penetrates my skin and are within my skin's receptive field, my sense of touch and the sense object in the form of a needle(or sense object) are present, the bodily consciousness arises. The arising of these three elements, skin needle and touch/consciousness – lead to the percept, known as "contact" and in turn causes a pleasant or unpleasant or a neutral feeling to arise. It is from such a feeling that craving arises.

Everything is connected.  
I am trying to connect the dots, the dots on a paper.  
Believing ,  
that I will see a picture in the end.

With old age my body starts to loose its tension.  
(as if I had any tension before)  
My body is inevitable changing.  
I am inevitable changing.  
The images on my body will loose their fine lines.  
I will become something else.  
In the end I will die and decay.  
For better or worse.

- I remember walking up the Via del Corso. I walked towards Piazza del Popolo. It was March 16th and it was colder than normal in Rome. Via del Corso is always a busy street. The street was full of people moving in both directions. One stream of people moves toward Piazza Venezia, the other part moves towards Piazza del Popolo. The street is 1, 5 km long and is like a straight line through the center of Rome. It was cloudy and cold. I wrapped my scarf tighter around my neck. I walked with firm steady steps. I wanted to get away from the busy street. Away from the stream of people. The sidewalk was narrow. One of us always had to step off the sidewalk and walk into the street, out in the traffic. In the corner of my eye I saw a man sitting on the street. It was all over in a few seconds. A flash, a blink of an eye. An Asian man was sitting on the sidewalk, selling small insects made of bamboo, butterflies, beetles and praying mantises. Elegant little creatures cut out of bamboo. He made the small figures with a sharp knife. Small creatures with delicate wings and thin legs. Elegant little creatures made with craftsmanship. They were sold for 10 € each. I walked on. Moving on. The moment stuck in my memory. Why was he there? How do I relate to him? Why do I relate to him? Why do I remember? My thoughts jump from metaphor to metaphor. Via del Coro is a popular route for passeggiata, evening walks, to see and be seen by others. I continue to walk. I identify myself in the eyes of others. But did he see me?

With my footsteps  
I have the opportunity to identify the short break  
before the foot turns up or down  
in the completion of a step.  
A moment of equilibrium on my way to  
or from something.

I am.

The experience and memory forms a starting point.  
A catalyst.

- I realize that a catalysis is the increase in rate of a reaction due to the participation of a substance/object/event called a catalyst. Unlike other substance/object/event in the reaction, a catalyst is not consumed. A catalyst may participate in multiple transformations. The effect of a catalyst may vary due to the presence of other substance/object/event known as inhibitors or poisons (which reduce the catalytic activity) or promoters (which increase the activity). As a catalyst is regenerated in a reaction, often only small amounts are needed to increase the rate of the reaction. In practice, however, catalysts are sometimes consumed in secondary processes.

The movement of the needle on my skin is a  
symbolic gesture.  
Depicting the space in-between.  
In-between as the space between two words on a  
white paper.  
A space that is descriptive of the actual form.

I don't remember the pain.  
My memory is selective.  
Everything is connected.  
But do I understand it?

- In his "Thus Spoke Zarathustra" Nietzsche presents what he calls the three metamorphoses of the spirit. These metamorphoses describes the different steps in the transformation of human consciousness. Just as we pass through the various (physical and mental) development stages on our way to adulthood, Nietzsche suggests that we pass through different stages of consciousness. We are in a perpetual "future". We are not static beings. Indeed, for Nietzsche nothing is static, but everything is in flux. There is no imperishable being, everything becomes. This conversion process is not necessarily linear. It seems to be more cyclical in nature.

The tattoo needle perforates the skin and inserts ink.  
Expectations that pictures carry meaning.  
That the picture creates meaning and the picture  
becomes understandable.  
And life becomes meaningful.  
But the picture doesn't mean anything.  
The picture is a result.  
Completely unimportant.

The microsecond when the needle penetrates a  
millimetre into my body.  
Perforates.  
Penetrates.  
Then, when my skin is changing permanently with  
large black areas.  
What eyes will I meet?  
My nerve ends send signals to my brain.  
Registers pain.

I have never craved the tattoo needle less than I do  
now.  
It tears at my flesh.  
It renders my limbs sore and swollen.  
It makes me feel fragile.  
I do not know how to be fragile in a proper way.

The sand seeps up between my toes.  
I wonder about the meaning of my body?  
Everything is connected.  
Everything becomes

The needle rubs my skin.  
A rubbing on the skin to cover an area the size of a  
postage stamp,  
Small circles round and round and round.  
It is difficult to see the skin surface that has already  
been worked on with the needle.  
Excess ink settles on the skin surface and mixes with  
blood and plasma.  
Blinding my eyes.  
I will destroy the skin if I go over the same area with  
the needle too many times.  
It is an abrasive rubbing, a repetition of the same  
movement over and over again.  
A repetition as everything else is.

Who will I become?

- Vedanā is a Buddhist term traditionally translated as either "feeling" or "sensation." In general, vedanā refers to the pleasant, unpleasant and neutral sensations that occur when our internal sense organs come into contact with external sense objects. Feeling is the mental factor which feels the object. When the needle perforates my skin. It is the effective mode in which the object is experienced. The Pali word vedanā does not signify emotion but the bare affective quality of an experience, which may be either pleasant, painful or neutral.

We are in dialogue with each other.  
Exchanging.  
I'm listening.  
I listen when he talks.  
The words float.  
The words are like smoke.  
Someone mentioned presence.  
Inevitable.  
I'm listening.  
It burns in my skin.  
An intimate conversation.

We create each other.  
Our identities are reinforced.  
Does it hurt when the words come to life?  
I tolerate his views.  
But I do not agree.  
Does it hurt?

The picture is there,  
but there are no words about the content.

- I am merely a listener. I take part in their words long after they grew silent. The lights in the videos hints that the time of year should be in the summer, and the small room the men inhabit is bathed in a strong light. It is a space where one person is very comfortable and the other is just visiting. Their movements indicate the different levels of homeliness: one focused at gathering his work material while the other is fidgeting around, aimlessly.

Is there any humility?  
Is there any tolerance?

There is only a desire for improvement.

A black background highlights the cherry blossoms.  
Exchanging words with each other.  
Building new meanings.  
Inserting.

The event is a perceptual process.

There is no permanence.  
Everything becomes.

Experience is a place and something that I have to  
carry.  
Inevitable, however heavy it will be.

Wear it like a coat.  
Wear it like a crown

Good and evil.  
Ugly and beautiful

Stay – True  
True – Love  
Live – Free  
Gold – Fish  
Stay – Down  
Left - Right  
Cats – Meow  
Love - Hate

- I gaze into the small laptop screen and gaze back in time. I see a video of two men who meet after being separated for a while, and I hear how they hesitantly start their conversation. I watch them meet several times, hour-long meetings or more, and their conversation floats from one subject to another. It could have been just like any kind of meeting between friends but there is something that mingles with their voices, something that at times makes it hard to make out their words. It is the sound of a tattoo machine. A shrill, vibrating tune that informs me that during these conversations it is not only a dialogue unfolding, but that a lifelong mark is slowly taking form on human flesh.

He is waiting for the needle.  
He is waiting to receive.  
To be blessed?

- I realize as the work progresses and the task at hand begins, that the roles become even clearer – one of them working, in full control of the situation, the other receiving, passively. In the beginning there is not really that much of a difference in the conversations that leap from one place to another. Not much is being said about the actual tattoo. They talk about everyday things, about their partners, about IKEA, about career choices. But after a while, there is a clear change of direction and one starts asking questions and the other starts answering them. The one with the answers is the man with the needle and he is opinionated, almost agitating at times. Maybe it is easier to be the one with the answers when you are behind the needle rather than under it? Easier to be certain when you are not in a state of submission? Or might it be so that the very act of submitting leaves you humble regarding what you know or may not know?

Whirlwinds are taking form during the conversation. Flower petals torn by the wind, scattered over the skin. For every passing minute I watch, the skin is disappearing under lines and patches of grey and color. There is no trace of the words spoken.

- I remember my own experience, it worms its way into my viewing. I remember the smell of ink and blood mingling together (a sweetish smell, by no means unpleasant), the hardness of the floor under my body and how it was like to be in transformation. To be in a state where I was no longer in charge. The tattoo experience was also an experience of having my mind loudly called back into my body, to be forced into my very own skin. The distinction between mind and matter became increasingly hard to distinguish, and I found peace in that. It gave me peace to listen to the sound of the needles penetrating skin, mixed with the voice that grew familiar. To not control anything, to just be.

You see, I found something in those moments, when I was balancing on the thin line between being and becoming. In the borderlands. In the transmission.

There, and only there  
(in a place that I am unable to name or to define)  
was the answer to the question:  
What are we looking for?  
We are looking for ways to be.  
Just be.

- But, always this but, borderlands cease to exist the moment we strive to define them, to draw lines between the one and the other. In our effort to understand the borderlands we also extinguish them. Like the hand that carefully creates the complex sand paintings also in the end is bound to erase them with an unguarded flick of a finger, turning them into nothing but dust. To be tattooed upon became a door to enter, to be able to contemplate the state of change in all things. Some may ask what this could possibly have to do with the permanent tattoo. How can sand painting and ink in flesh possibly be compared? I am inclined to answer: Because the understanding is born in the body. The meticulous work of pouring thin lines of colored sand in complex patterns not only reminds the practitioner of the frailty of the material she is working with but also of the limits of the body. An unstable hand might ruin hours of hard work. One careless movement creates traces that cannot be undone. There is no turning back. After my first tattoo session I found myself in a liminal state. I was no longer what I had been but had still to become what I would be. I borrow the term from the discipline of anthropology, where they use a concept called “liminality” to describes the state of a person that just subdued himself or herself in a ritual act. Liminality has been described by the anthropologist Victor Turner as the borderlands, the place of becoming, and the undefined. He chooses to divide ritual practice into three segments where the initial stage is separating the person or persons that shall undergo a ritual from the group they belong to. The second stage is the contradictory and fleeting stage when a person neither belongs in their former life nor have access to their new life. The third and last stage is the re-connection with the group they used to be a part of, but now with a different status. The middle stage is the liminal stage. The thought of that place entices me. Becoming.

Becoming is harder this time around.  
When I re-enter the relationship  
with the needle after a few years of being  
I find it to be much harder to accept.  
The scabs do not heal as fast as I remembered them  
to do. They keep me up at night  
Frenzied itching that cannot be calmed.  
I find myself being worried, fret over small things.  
Healing is slow.

- Is tattooing a form of ritual, hidden in a consumer  
culture? I do not know, but I feel inclined to think  
so.

- I remember eavesdropping on two women that sat in  
the waiting room at the tattooist when I was waiting  
to get my first tattoo. It sounded to me like they were  
mother and daughter, loudly chatting and picking and  
choosing from the flash art that covered the walls. They  
both decided to go for a little tribal with a flower in the  
center with the motivation "it will be easy to remove".  
"You should not destroy yourself like that", said my  
mom, when I showed her a picture of what would  
be my first tattoo. "You'll only end up regretting it."

No regrets.

- Marking the body as a form of penalty grew common during the European Middle Ages. Border control (or the lack thereof) in combination with an increasingly vagrant population made it harder to uphold law and order. Impostors, con artists, thieves, and vagabonds could fairly easily leave a town, province, or country behind, thus escaping punishment. It was possible to simply disappear and reappear under a new name, as someone else. The historian Miriam Eliay-Feldon has written about the subject and describes how the law enforcers started to introduce penal markings as a way to keep the population in check and to make it easier to recognize wrongdoers. Markings and mutilations become the way to do this. Limbs were severed from bodies, hot iron pressed against the skin; skin was marked by colors and symbols. It made it harder to change your identity when former sins were imprinted on your very flesh. The very body functioned as a telltale sign, something that could identify your sins for people that knew little or nothing about you besides the fact of the mark. The stigma. The long-gone act would be carried visibly for anyone to see. To once have been, and always to be forced to be. There should be no escape from your own history.

What happens with a body that is marked?  
What consequences do the markings bear?

- Five centuries later and body modification, such as tattoos, branding, and piercing, has become something we do by choice, all in the name of individual expression. My choices should be reflected in my appearance, in my home, in my consumer habits, and on my skin. I, the individual, the efforts put into being unique – these thoughts scare me at times. There are so few things that urge us to connect with others, to be a part of something bigger. Where is that sense of community? Margaret Thatcher said in the 1980's that "there are no such thing as 'society' there is only men, women and families".<sup>1</sup> A place only consisting of individuals with no obligations to one another, no connectedness – that is the nightmare state to me. To not have a connection with other people.

I can describe smells and the feeling of my body.  
How my body occupies a space.  
How I feel the surface connect to my body.  
How the chair forms itself around my physical form.

- I find a beauty and some comfort in the fact that my tattoos are by no means unique. That they belong to a tradition that existed prior to me and that they will, most likely, survive me. It makes me a part of a long line of people that adorned their bodies with the same pictures but for very different reasons. It makes me a part of a group of people that I never met or are even likely to meet. But they are there and I am among them, in a sense.

- But the choice to cover your skin with ink is also the choice to be given a role. At very first sight, I might be perceived either as a tattooed brethren or a threatening “other”. Sometimes I get the impression that some people think that I am to be understood as the cover of a book, that they need not talk to me to “figure me out”. Some seem to think to know what I am and where I am from. Some like to touch the tattoos without paying any attention to the fact that it is not a picture, it is my body. Some seem to think that the images are there for them, that I adorned myself for the gaze of the other. Little do they know.

But there is a difference between theory and practice. The body is my physical practice.

Pain is a physical experience.  
A physical practice.  
With physical limitations.

The air is dry.  
Filled with a smell of ink and blood.

A light perfume is moving through the aircraft cabin.  
The people around me smell of perfume and sweat.  
We are so close to each other.  
I hear their sounds as a low noise.  
Voices and movements.  
There is no exchange of pleasantries.  
We don't exchange anything else other than our presence.

Our presence as humans.  
If you look at all this from above.  
We all look like ants.  
Moving around seemingly chaotic.

But do ants question their presence?

The sweat starts to dry on my face and my body.  
My breath starts to calm down.  
Breathing deep.

Deep breathing makes the pain disappear.  
The floor in the aircraft cabin is blue.  
Are cabin floors always blue?  
Blue might be a soothing color.

- The French philosopher Roland Barthes mentions the concept of punctum in his famous book Camera Lucida (1980). He describes punctum as a feeling, like the prick of a needle, as Barthes describes it, that causes the viewer of a photograph to react.<sup>2</sup> The concept has been heatedly discussed within academic circles but I still venture to include it here. It has something to do with using the needle as a metaphor for something that centers attention, that gives me something to relate to perhaps. It may be that simple. That the piercing of the mind/flesh should offer some kind of insight. Barthes himself is (intentionally? Some argue so) not clear with what he means with the word but I choose to interpret it nonetheless. Into the meaning of pain. That the prick of a needle releases a flood of thoughts and memories, that the unexpected pain in experiencing something unexpected opens up for reflections that may have very little to do with the actual needle. But still, it is connected.

Fear of death.

I lie down and allow myself to be tattooed.

Explanations in retrospect, rationalization.

Time heals all wounds.

There is a promise of change.

The needle is sharp, the ink black and the flesh is weak.

- Isn't the flesh really the strongest thing there is? With its ability to be stretched, bent, broken, and heal? And in so many ways it is also our only true connection to the world. We sense, therefore we are. Without our bodies, what would there be left?

Patterns of grey clouds.  
The sun is shining today.  
Who was I before?

- I must admit that my decision to get a large portion of my skin covered in ink met with little appreciation from my partner at the time. The first few months of the becoming of the tattoo, there were arguments and periods of what can only be described as mourning. It was a too visible change, and too much of a reminder that things and bodies inevitably change, was the answer I got at the time, when I wondered how my personal journey could be so upsetting. I remember I overheard my tattooist talking to another client some time later. The client was a young man, about to enter the army and go to a war zone and who chose to have his skin altered before he left, whose partner strongly disapproved. The client was lamenting about his girlfriend's reaction and the tattooist said that it was not uncommon that spouses disapproved of large scale tattoos. His theory at the time was that the ink was a manifestation of the fact that the body was indeed only the property of the owner and nothing that the partner could claim any right to, and that the act of independence could be troublesome for some. It made sense to me. I would believe that my partner's reaction to no small extent was a question of the nature of the act of tattooing. Of course, it could be seen as an act of independence. When I think about it, I guess it had to do with independence more than aesthetics. At least initially. Then, when the reality of the needle became tangible to me, it changed focus. I can no longer say that it was an independence act. Sometimes, I get the feeling that it had more to do with submitting. Being tattooed is indeed a carnal experience, in some aspects not unlike the things we share with partners and lovers. One could argue that the similarities ends there. That close emotional or physical relationships requires closeness, right? But, I would like to ask, who is closer to me than the person I allow to repeatedly inflict me pain? Who I, despite this, choose to meet again and again, month after month, year after year. To literally pierce my flesh? To

leave a literal map of those meetings engraved in my skin? But maybe this is just confusing. The hurt my partner felt was, no matter the origin, no less real. But it was also confusing. Might be, I am just confused.

Afterwards.

Laminated with thin plastic foil

I have a noise in my ears.  
Going home with light steps.

Headache.  
A short moment.  
A rush of chemical reactions.

In 1968 Ronald Melzack and Kenneth Casey described pain in terms of its three dimensions: "sensory-discriminative" (sense of the intensity, location, quality and duration of the pain), "affective-motivational" (unpleasantness and urge to escape the unpleasantness), and "cognitive-evaluative" (cognitions such as appraisal, cultural values, distraction and hypnotic suggestion).<sup>3</sup> They theorized that pain intensity (the sensory discriminative dimension) and unpleasantness (the affective-motivational dimension) are not simply determined by the magnitude of the painful stimulus, but by "higher" cognitive activities that can influence perceived intensity and unpleasantness. Cognitive activities "may affect both sensory and affective experience or they may modify primarily the affective-motivational dimension. Thus, excitement in games or war appears to block both dimensions of pain, while suggestion and placebos may modulate the affective-motivational dimension and leave the sensory-discriminative dimension relatively undisturbed." "Pain can be treated not only by trying to cut down the sensory input by anesthetic block, surgical intervention and the like, but also by influencing the motivational-affective and cognitive factors as well."

I see the Turning Torso through the clouds.  
The waves move fast with white foam peaks over  
Öresund.

I close my eyes.

- Pain is whatever the experiencing person says it is, existing whenever he says it does". To assess intensity, the patient may be asked to locate their pain on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being no pain at all, and 10 the worst pain they have ever felt. Quality can be established by having the patient complete the McGill Pain Questionnaire indicating which words best describe their pain.<sup>4</sup>

What is worse?

To drown in cold February water  
or to disappear  
in a shower of burning airplane fuel?  
Most accidents with aircraft happen  
within 90 seconds of start or landing.  
The body is only a vessel

The stewardess sits down.

She looks calm.

Should I also be calm?

The airplane shakes.

I hear the increase in speed in the flight engines,  
engines fighting with invisible air.

I try putting theory into practice.

I try to put practice into theory.

Sound creates space.

The tattoo needle sounds like an angry wasp.

And in that moment my body exists.

The sound puts my body within this space.

It is a lens in focus.

It formulates my being.

The sound resounds and reverbs against my physical form.

It is a moment of in-between.

On one side I am dead and the other I am alive.

Existing in two places at the same time.

Outside of the windows.

It is completely silent.

Only movement.

But who is moving?

The world outside or me on the inside?

I remember making a drawing of a tattoo.

A snake that slithered around a dagger.

- I had signed on in Haraholmen outside Piteå in Sweden. My dad drove me there in his old Volvo. I was 15 years old and he chain-smoked in the car on the way to the ship. The ashtray in the car was already full when we started driving. Later, I sat down in the mess hall and watched the people around me. One of the sailors had his ATM card code tattooed on his arm. I do not remember any names, there are only vague faces in my memory. It was the first night on the ship. The mess hall was brown and smoky. I did not say much in those days. So I sat silent and drew on a napkin with a ballpoint. A blue snake coiled around a dagger. Old School.

The body creates and resurrects memories.  
Lost, but now engraved permanently,  
as a proof that something happened.  
As if we needed proof of our own existence.  
The world moves around me, but in which direction?

Everything is connected.

- I understand that memories, all boil down to these fragile little things. We depend so heavily upon them and still we distrust them so (rightfully). We keep mementos to remember how things were but they change nonetheless. A lock of hair, a tattoo, a rock collected from a sunny beach one day long, long ago – the items may not change much but our memories related to them inevitably do.

Day by day, we forget a little.  
Day by day, we re-invent our past.  
Eventually the memory will be a construction, a theatrical thing.

- The sun is shining on the runway. 20 m/s. I know nothing of it. I don't feel the wind. I am in my bubble. A bubble of my own thoughts mixed with voices and echoes. It is a protective shell. It is a noise in my ears and I can only hear my own footsteps. I'm watching people moving through the airport. I'm am nowhere. I am on the inside looking out. I am invisible. I am absent. I am nowhere. No one sees me coming or going. No one speaks to me. I only exist in someone else's eyes. If they are looking at me.

H&M have the same clothes here as everywhere else.  
Starbucks coffee is still coffee.  
I feel safe.

But not surprised.

Is there anything that tastes good on an airport?  
I ask myself and taste plastic and even more tasteless  
plastic.  
I am in the in-between.  
The place where you are coming from,  
and the space which you are leaving.  
A "never there".

It is all about being present.  
And the need for surprise

The beer is cold and refreshing.  
The windows are dirty  
I see airplanes in faded colors.  
There are dirty tables.  
Nobody wipes the tables.  
Everything is connected by blue dots.

- I hear it so often in everyday conversations. The distinction between mind and body, the way to perceive the flesh we inhabit as something distinct from ourselves. People talk about it like it is something separate from them. "My body needs this", not "I need this" or "my body is tired" not "I am tired". The body seem in these cases to be more an object (or maybe even a project) than what we are, our very physical existence. It's just around, and it can be talked about as something that does belong to us but it does not define us. Some discipline it, through training and diets, some adorn it in various ways, others spend their lives despising it for various reasons. We are not our bodies, even if we have them. I am not sure if this is positive or negative, but it confuses me to think of an non-bodily existence. My entire life is being experienced through the flesh that is me. What could I possibly know or be without it? What "inner world" could I ever imagine without a lived bodily experience to relate it too?

The body is never as present as when it is  
dysfunctional.  
When it does not take heed of my wishes.  
When it bleeds, scabs and itches.  
Frustration wells up in me.

- When I travel to a new place, I always find myself trying to find a specific brand of coffee shop (one of the big international ones, names are not important). If I find one, I always enter. I do not always purchase something, sometimes I just want to stand there in the familiar atmosphere (or lack thereof). They are nearly the same wherever you go. I like to play with the thought that when I leave this specific shop, I will not exit into the same city from where I entered, that I will find myself in a totally different place when I step outside. It could be like that, you know. They all look the same. Even the customers are familiar. Hong Kong, New York, London, Berlin – it does not change much. The brand concept has created a space that is impenetrable to the outside world – it is a world within itself. The scent of roasted coffee beans, the selection of beverages and pastries, the staff uniforms - they even play the same music. It is a nearly-convincing illusion of something constant. It is a tremendously sad place for the very same reason. But I still go there. And I sit down and I listen to the same music wherever I am. It is like a place in between places.

Knowledge is like a long journey.  
It is the enjoyment of drifting.  
Drifting without knowing were to start or end.

- It is often accepted as an a priori principle that one has inherent knowledge of one's own consciousness simply by virtue of dwelling within an "inner world" of the mind. This drastic distinction between inner world and outer world was most popularized by René Descartes when he solidified his principle of Cartesian dualism. From the centrality of one's own consciousness springs a fundamental problem of other minds, the discussion of which has often centered around pain.

Unknowing to be able to explore again.  
Finding things you didn't know existed.  
In every action there is a human wish for  
improvement.  
Improvements in the quality of life.

To make a difference.  
To be somebody.  
To become someone.

I often get the question if it hurts.  
It hurts, yes it does.  
Everything hurts.  
Everything is pain

I try to communicate.  
Exchange.  
Dialogues.

But what is left?  
We don't share the same world anymore.  
We need to build bridges.  
Every action has a reaction.

Human beings do not want to be alone.  
She seeks out and acts around others.  
Desperately looking for attention.  
Confirmation is in the eyes of others.  
Fear as a motivator.

Fame or fortune.  
Hunted, chasing, running  
You closest to your self.

It is a paradox that on the one hand wanting to be  
individualistic  
and the other the need for a hug from a community.  
affirmation  
acknowledgement  
seal  
confirmation

But what does your desire create?

- Jungians have often seen the individuation process of self-realisation as taking place within a liminal space. 'Individuation begins with a withdrawal from normal modes of socialisation, epitomized by the breakdown of the persona...liminality'. Thus 'what Turner's concept of social liminality does for status in society, Jung...does for the movement of the person through the life process of individuation'. Individuation can be seen as a 'movement through liminal space and time, from disorientation to integration....What takes place in the dark phase of liminality is a process of breaking down...in the interest of "making whole" one's meaning, purpose and sense of relatedness once more'. As an archetypal figure, 'the trickster is a symbol of the liminal state itself, and of its permanent accessibility as a source of recreative power'. But other depth psychologies speak of a similar process. Carl Rogers describes 'the "out-of-this-world" quality that many therapists have remarked upon, a sort of trance-like feeling in the relationship that client and therapist emerge from at the end of the hour, as if from a deep well or tunnel. The French talk of how the analytic setting 'opens/forges the "intermediate space," "excluded middle," or "between" that figures so importantly in Irigaray's writing'. Marion Milner claims that 'a temporal spatial frame also marks off the special kind of reality of a psycho-analytic session...the different kind of reality that is within it'. Jungians however have perhaps been most explicit about the 'need to accord space, time and place for liminal feeling' - as well about the associated dangers, 'two mistakes: we provide no ritual space at all in our lives...or we stay in it too long'. Indeed, Jung's psychology has itself been described as 'a form of "permanent liminality" in which there is no need to return to social structure'.

Our society has so many normative rules.  
Dualism to create a community.  
A community where not everything and everyone fits in.

We are all the same surfaces reflecting sameness.  
Values to be consolidated.

Values to be defended but never defined,  
other than to the negative, to what something isn't.

- Forced unity is always about someone/something else to be removed.  
That's why the Taliban blasts ancient Buddha statues to edit their own history.  
And that is why the Nazis burned books. It's all about relief, to avoid the concern the diversity of democracy creates.

Democracy creates diversity.  
People who are watching and listening  
create diversity.

It is a desire to find company.

Only what is measurable is understandable.  
I measure the time it takes to cover a small area with  
ink on my body.

- Rūpa is the Buddhist concept of material form, including both the body and external matter. Rūpa is not matter as in the metaphysical substance of materialism. Instead it means both materiality and sensibility — signifying, for example, a tactile object both insofar as that object is made of matter and that the object can be tactically sensed. In fact rūpa is more essentially defined by its amenability to being sensed than its being matter: just like everything else it is defined in terms of its function; what it does, not what it is.

- I'm still considering the effect it has had on me. Really, there should be none. Really, there inevitably is. A little tug in the web, a sense of things being affected.

Movements and sounds create a space,  
the body forms to it,  
forms around it.  
Impressions.  
As a print,  
An impression.

Like the lines on a copperplate.

- Sometimes, I fear that there is no chance in gaining any real perspective, that we are all trapped in our small worlds, co-existing but not communicating. That we are all stuck in small, dark places where all we can hope for is to see a fragment of light seeping down from the above. we are all trapped in our small worlds, co-existing but There is only so much that can be seen.

Are you to judge me then?

A sentence to exclusion.

How so?

To put me in the community of outsiders?

- So far we've been maintaining communications more frequently than before, but his way of communicating is totally foreign to me. Before, we had normal communications, albeit at times a lot of time would pass between them. Not abnormal. I'm trying to figure out how to continue our communication, while we are in the same room. I'm just lying here on my back, smelling the disinfectant, stinging my nose. But as everyone else I have to believe that communication will lead to a result. But what about that communication we can't see? The communication that is invisible. The communication we can't see? We need to build bridges. If I can't have power over events in the world I can at least have power over my own body. Abridging the distance. Controlling the body. Communicating with my body. We have to continue this relationship. I am not trying to work this out myself. From this point on I will not be the same as before. We will eventually meet. Everyone I meet will judge me. Judge me on presumptive evidence. Does it have to do with gender? Of course it does, as everything else. There is no black or white, only a grey shade. This conversion process is not necessarily linear, but seems to be more cyclical in nature. A changing result that is amorphous in its nature.

Short, sharp movements.

I watch the needle dig a little ditch in my skin.

I am there,

I listen to her voice

I can see the dark fall outside

As I try to make the pain into something good

- Whip shading is a technic were the tattoo needle is “whipped” in order to create a fading scale from dark to a light colour. Grey wash is another way to create a grey scale with ink on a human skin.

Everyone is striving for a good life,

(Who does not?)

But what is a good life?

But on who’s conditions?

And how far could I go?

How far is to pass over an invisible border?

- Ilse Koch was the wife of commandant Karl-Otto Koch at the Buchenwald and Majdanek concentration camps. Koch became known as the “Bitch of Buchenwald” and was accused of selecting concentration camp inmates for their tattoos, before having them executed and their skins preserved.

Man’s ability to preserve and collect.

Collect in heaps, on attics and in forgotten corners

The men who wore those skins are not left behind.

The skin is just a product.

A shell.

A faded result, the confirmation in the eyes of others.

And how far can people go in his need for acceptance and approval?

Everything is connected.

At The Medical Pathology Museum of Tokyo University in Tokyo they have saved skins, human skins, tattooed.

Saved for posterity.

Power expresses itself in so many different ways.

Always a quest for confirmation.

If not to punish yourself.

The same

A need for control.

I see repetition around me.

The same repetition over and over again, rubbing it in.

A repetition of the same movement.

- I remember a newly built part of Hanoi's airport. They made a second floor that would be filled with tax-free shops and happy shoppers. The second floor echoed an empty sound. An open landscape with no landscape, only an empty horizon. No one knew what it was that the second floor would contain. Expectations maybe? Some years later they started to fill the void. But it was so mediocre, so it was nothing. A chimera in the mind. I remember that smoked my last cigarette there in the empty space of the second floor of Hanoi's airport. I just realized that I have only one life. There is no second chance. Still waiting. I hate the sandwich I have to eat. The beer is cold and tastes like lemon. I am looking with my eyes but it is hard to see because of all people. No one is standing out. We all look the same. But still you think you recognize someone. Sometimes a face pops up in the sea of colours. A faces stand out in the crowd. Memories. Images of thoughts. I better go to my gate.

- It should be pointed that phenomenological philosophy does not claim that pure knowledge of the "thing in itself" can be reached, since all knowledge is mediated through the experience of it, that is the "thing for us."

Finding a method.  
Man's quest.  
Looking beyond the surface.  
Appreciating the content.

I hear the longing.  
Free?  
I do not think so.

Not as long as we all compare.  
Disregarding.  
Closing your Eyes.  
So what?  
The only thing we know is that history repeats it self..

Large dark areas.  
I can't see the forest because of all the trees.  
Different perspectives.

What can be violated is violated.  
Un-violated.

Everyone gets offended.

Smallness. A repetition as everything else.  
Every man and women for him/her self.

Fear.

- I have lived many lives. I am not who I used to be. This is the sum of living. I gained some perspectives from the bottom of the well. I can see that I started to learn important things, and that it took me quite a while to realize what really was important to me; that a lot of my battles have been rather pointless, and did not get me anywhere. That the path I am walking now seems a lot more promising, and at the same time a lot harder. That I have at times been childish, selfish and less than a decent person. I think I used to see life as a mountain that needed to be climbed in order to get somewhere else, to reach new things. I sped onwards, always struggling, always out of breath. But somewhere along the road, I fell. I fell to the ground and when I managed to get on my feet again I started to enjoy climbing. I cannot say when that happened. It just did. I found that even if I kept repeating the same patterns new things happened, and in every familiar curve and line there was an endless amount of newness and promises. And now, I've started to hope that this mountain has no top. I have grown older, arguably more patient. I am unwilling to say that I have grown wiser – it is not up to me to judge. But I do know that I am different, that not only my appearances but also that my inner core has changed over the years. When I was young, I had it all figured out. Several years later I find myself knowing very little. But I like to think that I am willing to learn and unlearn.

- It took time to reach this place. It took decades. I would like to say that I no longer fear the grey areas but that would be a lie (I would not want to lie to you, not now). Rather, I would say that I now carry fear perched on my shoulder, whispering in my ear. Every once in a while it rustles its feathers. I know that it is there but it does not control me the way it used to. However, I listen more than I choose to speak.

I'm catching glimpses of the dots  
from the corner of my eye.

Dots are starting to express themselves  
with black lines of ink.

- Process - Creation - Becoming - Result. Learning to think again. Trying to learn to think. Because the opposite of trying would be to terrifying. It takes 600 years for a change to take place. When I was little I used to turn my binoculars the wrong way around. I looked at the reality from the other way. I didn't come closer. The world just became further away. What I saw was vague unfocused abstract forms. Everything was small and far, far away. Perhaps more orderly. I am watching people moving like a stream around me now also. Vague unfocused abstract forms. Receding. I let the bodies fold like waves around me. Listening to voices. Pinning them on maps. Placing them in the world. Listening to my own thoughts. Finding words and phrases that disappears as quickly as they appeared. But it does not matter. My body is moving. The body becomes an extension and a reaffirmation of my own existence. What becomes of this? What is the result? My own future? My own metamorphosis. For the things I do not know? Exploring. Proving the possibility of change. Becoming. Learning to walk. Finding new phrases that are descriptive of the actual creation. I put my feet down in front of me and feel the ground under my feet moving so slowly. I feel the soil affect my body.

- Boots are walking up and down. Stories repeat. I see the bullet holes on the walls of Die Altes Museum. Thinking of Nefertiti. Standing there waiting. Everything repeats itself. When I was little I had a friend who lived above me. He built model airplanes. Painted them meticulously. The airplanes hung from the roof in his boy's room on thin fishing line. He also had the battleship Bismarck on his book shelf. He had many models from the German war machine. He also had small plastic soldiers. He had all the things I did not have. I never had the patience to build models. I don't remember if I was jealous.

Beck's Bier and Apfelkorn in Lübeck.

Small German plastic soldiers.

A Junkers Ju 87 or Stuka hanging in from a fishing line.

And knowing that German prepositions require the dative:

aus, außer, bei, mit, nach, seit, von, zu.

I remember my language.

I still remember.

But do I know anything?

- Saṅkhāra or saṃskāra is a term figuring prominently in the teaching of the Buddha. The word means 'that which has been put together' and "that which puts together". In the first (passive) sense, saṅkhāra refers to conditioned phenomena generally, but specifically to all mental "dispositions".<sup>5</sup> These are called 'volitional formations' both because they are formed as a result of volition and because they are causes for the arising of future volitional actions.<sup>6</sup> In the second (active) sense of the word, saṅkhāra refers to that faculty of the mind/brain apparatus (saṅkhara-khandha) that puts together those formations.<sup>7</sup> English translations for saṅkhāra in the first sense of the word include 'conditioned things',<sup>8</sup> 'determinations',<sup>9</sup> 'fabrications'<sup>10</sup> and 'formations' (or, particularly when referring to mental processes, 'volitional formations').<sup>11</sup> In the first (passive) sense saṅkhāra can refer to any compound form in the universe whether a tree, a cloud, a human being, a thought or a molecule. All these are saṅkhāras. The Buddha taught that all such things are impermanent, arising and passing away, subject to change, and that understanding the significance of this reality is wisdom. Saṅkhāra is often used in this first sense to describe the psychological conditioning (particularly the habit patterns of the unconscious mind) that give any individual human being his or her unique character and make-up at any given time

A smell of blood mixed with ink.

Body fluids.

Surfaces.

- I wrap my scarf around my head. I look like a woman in my hijab. The wind is cold and wet rain falls on my body. Berliner Fernsehturm is leaning over me. Enlightened and a reminder of a time that was. Lost in shadows of old memory and nostalgia. The Eye of Sauron watching over us. Some would probably see it as a powerful phallus. I see it more like a threatening bat ready to fall on my head.

I suppose I will have to let go.  
Chained and the chains are hard to get off.  
I create my own chains.

- Metzinger says that for there to be a first person perspective we need three 'target properties'  
1. mineness - a sense of ownership, particularly over the body.  
2. selfhood - the sense that "I am someone", and continuity through time.  
3. centredness - the sense that "I am the centre of my own subjective self".<sup>12</sup>

Happiness based on hope.

Make-Beliefs.

So many things remind me of what I am not.  
In this way the body becomes a tool for understanding.

- After listening to the men on the video, I begin to wander back through memory to find myself on the floor in the tattoo studio. The tattooist bent over me, talking about Buddhism with his calm but strangely insistent voice. He almost preaches to me (I despise preaching) but strangely enough I do not mind.

I am not the listener.  
I am, at that point,  
nothing but flesh under the needle.

His many words mingle with the sound  
of my skin penetrated by the needles,  
a soft whispering sound.

I feel it.  
I smile.  
It hurts.  
It is pain.

And afterwards, it strikes me.  
That the words indeed came to me even if I did not  
pay attention.

I do remember many of those conversations  
as if they were etched into my mind,  
as the ink was worked into my skin.

And again, I smile.  
We listen in magnificent ways.  
The body is just as active as the mind in taking in  
our surroundings.

- Tattoo needles come in different numbers and forms. Configuration 2R, 5R and so on indicate how the needles are grouped together. The configuration determines the shape or pattern of how the ink will go into the skin. So in the example of 1207RL, where 12 is the diameter, 7 is the count, RL, indicates the configuration. RL stands for round liner, a round liner is a formation of needles in a tight circular formation, which is used for lining. The other configurations are RS = round shader, F = flats, M1 = weaved magnum, M2 = stacked magnum and RM = round magnum. RL or round liner needles are used for lining. RS or round shader are used for shading. Flats are used for areas with geometric shapes and shading. Weaved magnums are used for shading, blending and coloring large areas. Stacked magnums are used for shading, blending and colouring tighter large areas. Both can be used for lining if you turn the needle to the side. This does take a bit of skill to do, so only do it if you have practiced the technique enough or else you may end up damaging the skin. Round curve magnums are used for shading, blending and colouring large areas with less impact to the skin. The needles are made in an arch formation to better deflect the skin when it goes in and out. With a regular magnum, there is potential for the edges of the mag to dig into the skin, with a round magnum, the arch of the needle will allow you to move more freely on the skin without the risk of the edges digging in.

It is dark.

I have hard streets beneath my feet again.

I walk and feel my feet hurt.

I walk alone.

I clear my mind.

My feet hurt.

- After his island becomes occupied by Prospero and his cohort, Caliban is forced into servitude. While he is referred to as a calvaluna or mooncalf, a freckled monster, he is the only human inhabitant of the island that is otherwise "not honour'd with a human shape" (Prospero, I.2.283). In some traditions he is depicted as: a wild man, or a deformed man, or a beast man, or sometimes a mix of fish and man, stemming from the confusion of two of the characters about what he is, found lying on a deserted island.

I take the elevator up to my room.  
I can look into the apartments on the other side in  
the houses across the street.  
The windows are like small TV screens.  
Ongoing life.  
Old people and young people who flicker on and off.  
Far out of reach.

Antimacassar.  
Like old worn clothes.  
Hanging like dead fish over the furniture.  
The lights from the windows sweeps in front of my  
eyes.

Now they are gone.

- Saṃjñā is a Buddhist term that is typically translated as "perception" or "cognition." It can be defined as grasping at the distinguishing features or characteristics. Alexander Berzin gives the following informal explanation: "Then there is distinguishing, for instance between light and dark. I mean, we're seeing a huge amount of information, and in order to deal with it we need to distinguish one little piece from everything else. That's distinguishing."

- I hear that George Clooney is staying in an apartment further up the street. He is shorter than everyone thinks. The Vietnamese took photos of him and with him in the restaurant. They were the same length. David Bowie has also returned. The wind blows cold between the houses and on Karl Marx Alle. A hard cold wind. And again I remember. Alexanderplatz 1987.

Will I ever know?  
I like to sleep.  
I don't think  
I have a death wish.  
I like the mornings.  
There is a promise of change  
with the start of a new day.

The sun rises at 07:45.

- Mimesis, or the imitative aspect of human behavior, is an important aspect of liminality. Individuals who are trapped in a liminal situation are not able to act rationally for two reasons: “first, because the structure on which ‘objective’ rationality was based has disappeared; and second, because the stressful, emotive character of a liminal crisis prevents clear thinking”. This can lead to “mimetic” behavior on the part of the trapped individuals: “a central characteristic of liminal situations is that, by eliminating the stable boundary lines, they contribute to the proliferation of imitative processes and thus to the continuous reproduction of dominant messages about what to copy”. Without stable institutions (which are effectively broken down in a liminal period), “people will look at concrete individuals for guidance”.

The memory is like a sieve.  
It all comes back to me.  
Sifting fragments of a past.

I will never remember names but I remember  
Käthe Kollwitz.

Writing a dialogue.  
A one-sided exchange or a one-sided transaction?  
It is about a promise.  
There is a promise of something.  
A promise of a participation?  
A sense of belonging.

“Don’t worry be happy” played at the jukebox.  
The clientele in the bar changed around 6 am in the  
morning. The early morning dog walkers took their  
turn for a drink. They suggested autofahrer bier for  
me. Pilsator played Helter Skelter later that year.  
And they played loud.

Bullet holes in the buildings.  
Small coins made of tin.  
I did not go to bed.

Some people are interested in meeting others.  
They search and research what and who to ask.  
Running dialogues with everyone and everything.  
Exchanging pleasantries and experiences.

I don't.

I remember I walked up the Via del Corso. I walked towards Piazza del Popolo. It was March 16th and it was colder than normal in Rome I was heading for Santa Maria Del Poppolo. The church contains two paintings by Caravaggio, The Conversion on the Way to Damascus and Crucifixion of Saint Peter. It is a dark space where the paintings are hanging. I put € 1 in a money box and the lights turn on so you can see the paintings. But the lights will only last for one minute. "And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man". Everything changes. Everything happens on the road to Damascus. "You will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." It was two weeks before Easter. The mass started at 1pm. It was in Italian. I do not understand Italian. Do I need to understand?

Experiences create new starting points.  
Untold knowledge.

A movement from one metaphor to another.  
A spider web of possibilities.  
In meetings and in between situations  
and in the things that happen we find opportunity.  
But simply communicating need does not necessarily  
lead to a new result.  
We create each other if we listen.

How does the words taste in your mouth?  
How does the words taste in my mouth?

Resonance  
Reverb

- Human existence, in the Buddha's view, is nothing more than a composite of the five aggregates. Matter or Form: the physical form responded to the five organs of senses, i.e., eye, ear, nose, tongue and body; Sensation or Feeling: the feeling in reception of physical things by the senses through the mind; Perception and/or cognition: the functioning of mind in distinguishing appearances; Volition or Mental Formation: habitual action, i.e., a conditioned response to the object of experience, whether it is good or evil, you like or dislike; Consciousness: the mental faculty in regard to perception, cognition and experience;

Just wondering.  
Just wandering.  
Monkey mind.

This we can call not knowing.  
Which for me is the very basis for understanding.

## Footnotes

1

Great Britians Prime minister Margaret Thatcher (1979-1990) talking to Women's Own magazine, October 31 1987: "There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women, and there are families."

2

Roland Barthes, *Det ljusa rummet*, (first print 1980, Alfabeta Bokförlag, 2010) page 44.

3

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5

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source: <http://www.seeingthroughthenet.net>.

6

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10

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12

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source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mthDxnFXs9k>