

CULTURAL MIDWIFERY: A THEORETICAL INQUIRY OF COMPLEXITY,
EPISTEMOLOGY, AND LIMINAL LEADERSHIP
FOR POSTNORMAL TIMES

by

Kimberly Ann Streeter

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty
of the California Institute of Integral Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Transformative Studies

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CULTURAL MIDWIFERY: A THEORETICAL INQUIRY OF COMPLEXITY,
EPISTEMOLOGY, AND LIMINAL LEADERSHIP FOR POSTNORMAL
TIMES

ABSTRACT

Cultural Midwifery is a theoretical inquiry that explores an ontology of *being*, *being with*, and *being within* the *becoming* that may ease the transition of individuals, communities, organizations, and social institutions through the uncertainties of “postnormal times”—the undefined spaces between paradigms that are failing and those that have yet to emerge. With a mind toward a declining Industrial Age in the West, and a possible Ecological Era on the horizon, Cultural Midwifery attempts to cull the knowledge and skill sets of midwives, who have been attending to liminal spaces for millennia, so as to inform and to narrativize the emergent and complex adaptive dynamics of epistemology, leadership, relational care, and culture. Midwifery is presented as an originary, poetic, pragmatic, and embodied *ēthos* of relating, meaning-making, and leading into *being*. To engage this inquiry with a depth of understanding and a breadth of awareness that honors myriad ways of knowing, that calls upon a wholeness of *being*, and that allows for nonlinear emergentism, a new, processual inquiry perspective, entitled the “complex gaze,” is also introduced.

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No creative endeavor or scholarly inquiry is composed within a vacuum, and Cultural Midwifery certainly owes a great debt to myriad intersectional encounters between material, narrative, and experiential resources. This dissertation inquiry represents over 1,000 books, journal articles, and conference papers, curated from dozens of disciplines and sub-disciplines. Its unfolding is further shaped by several hundred hours of informal—yet, constructive—collegial dialogues, an ongoing mindfulness practice, and many years of work within the fields of perinatal health, integrative and functional medicine, and organizational growth and management. My decision to develop and to adopt a “complex gaze” as an inquiry perspective (see Chapter 1) has additionally served to validate an array of emergent events and generative transactions that are often deemed to be irrelevant or beyond one’s scope within conventional academic spheres. While a comprehensive literature review provides a foundation for my research, many of the most significant inquiry *breakthroughs* were born from other heuristic factors—the quiet mornings I spent observing the flight patterns of California least terns; the ambling walks I took while listening to audio recordings of half-written dissertation chapters (as an audience member rather than the narrator); the turns of phrase that I encountered in a poem, a novel, or a podcast; the creative challenges of learning the nonverbal language of a musical instrument or how to encapsulate a moment-in-time via photography; the expressive and embodied interpretations of dance; the monitoring of contentious political debate; the care exchanged while attending to those entering and exiting the world; and countless

other points of tension, synergy, and inspiration. Cultural Midwifery is a living inquiry. It is an enactment of ever-evolving fields of significance and meaning-making, which have been translated into narrative form. While it is impossible to map every point of connection that has led to this work and infeasible to extrapolate each conception to a state of exhaustion, I have endeavored to provide enough anchor points throughout this dissertation for readers to be able to infer meaning, to supplement gaps in their knowledge sets, and to experience a felt-sense of this inquiry. As such, I invite readers to engage with Cultural Midwifery not as a prescriptive model or panacea, but as an initial condition for their own exploration, learning, growth, and participation.

Discursive Acknowledgments

Shelia Kitzinger (1991) asserts that to romanticize midwifery “is to do a disservice to the profession” (p. 12); it fails to recognize the tremendous amounts of work midwives have had to endure and to embrace in order to actualize their roles *with* and *within* the liminal *becoming*. In this dissertation, I attempt to walk a fine line between presenting midwifery as an ontological orientation, which can be applied ubiquitously, and still honoring the scores of individual women, and a few men, who have served as midwives with unparalleled devotion. For the purposes of this inquiry, I take care to specify midwifery as a philosophic, archetypal, and embodied *ēthos* rather than focusing my attention on the individual experiences of midwives or the differences between midwives. I do so not to diminish the phenomenological experiences of midwives, but to emphasize the infusion of birth and midwifery in broader cultural theaters.

Likewise, although my background is steeped in feminist, postcolonial, and critical theories, I intentionally adopt a voice for this dissertation that seeks to invite and to inform rather than actively disrupt. It is my contention that dynamic participation is a formidable mode of disruption in its own right—one that imbues a way *through* disruption without specifically mandating the abandonment of the past or the wholesale adoption of a particular vision for the future. My tone is thus tempered to evoke curiosity in the reader rather than issuing a directive for activism. While I acknowledge the potential inadequacies of this stance and give nod to the hegemonic criticisms that may arise, I also hold that this dissertation is relatable across identity spectrums. Cultural Midwifery does the work of phenomenizing complexity. It establishes multiple points of entry into *copoiësis*. It enacts the wit(h)nessing of liminal emergence, and it identifies ways of *being* in postnormality that have existed—often with neglect or intentional suppression—throughout the course of Western history. In order to cast light upon these marginalized shadows and to help ease the West’s transition through Postnormal Times, I readily lay claim to the risk of romanticization or oversimplification. Ultimately, I anticipate that Cultural Midwifery will be a narrative that many people will be able to connect with and that its contributions will far outweigh its shortcomings.

Personal Acknowledgments

Elizabeth Noble (1983) once wrote that childbirth “calls into question our very existence, requiring an expectant couple to confront not only new life[,] but death, pain, fear[,] and, most of all, change” (p. viii). The same could be said

about the birth of this dissertation. Every facet of my life has been challenged and reshaped during the course of this inquiry, and I have benefited immeasurably from the depth of care and the generous support that has been bestowed upon me along the way. My immense gratitude extends to the members of my committee—Daniel Deslauriers, PhD, Connie Jones, PhD, and Terri O’Fallon, PhD—for their encouragement, feedback, and vision. I also humbly bow to the members of my writing group—Renée Eli, PhD, MaryClare Foecke, PhD, Kerri Laryea, PhD, and Ann Malmuth-Onn, PhD—for their unwavering commitment, love, and insight. Our time together has been the privilege of a lifetime. On a professional level, I have had the good fortune of learning from and working with an array of visionaries, many of whom I now consider to be family. Specifically, I would like to acknowledge Nancy Bardacke, CNM, Kenji Muro, and Larissa Duncan, PhD, of the Mindful Birthing and Parenting Foundation; Lisa Lichtig, MD, Patrick Hanaway, MD, Susan Ehram, MD, Chama Woydak, CD, Emily Sullivan, CD, and Nicole Veilleux from my tenure at Family to Family; Diana Paul and Molly Arthur from Sage Femme and EcoBirth; Jerrygrace Lyons of Final Passages; Julia Getzelman, MD, of GetzWell Pediatrics; Ina May Gaskin, CPM, and Pamela Hunt, CPM, from the Farm Midwifery Center; and Marshall Klaus, MD, and Phyllis Klaus, MFT, co-founders of DONA and pioneering attachment and bonding researchers. Truly, the heart, integrity, and sense of vocation that each brings to their work will be of benefit for generations to come. Also bridging the professional divide to assume a more familial role is my dear friend, Andrea Girman, MD, whose ability to grasp the many layers of Cultural

Midwifery emboldened me to push my inquiry even further. Indeed, it was on a trek with Andrea into the wilds of Iceland that I fully recognized an embodied sense of stillpoints within living, dynamic systems—a turning point in my work and in my life. I would be remiss to speak of Iceland and not take pause to pay respects to the neo-classical composer and musician, Ólafur Arnalds, whose music was a daily companion to my writing and helped to ritualize a conjuring of creative connectivity. Conversely, I am also indebted to my many friends and family members, who made every effort to keep me fed, grounded, and relatively sane during the progression of this labor. I would especially like to thank my parents, David and Françoise Streeter, and my siblings, Suzy, Bob, Michelle, and Karen, for their unconditional love, relentless cheerleading, and steadfast confidence. They are the wind at my back. Lastly, I would like to acknowledge those who have invited me (as a birth and postpartum doula, as a midwife’s assistant, or as a death midwife) to share in the raw, intimate experiences of life coming into the world and life being released. You have honored me with your trust, and I will continuously endeavor to be worthy of it.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to those who brave the outer edges of their horizons, who lean into the unknown with a sense of care and curiosity, and who actively participate in the wit(h)nessing of the becoming.

You are not alone.

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INQUIRY PROLOGUE

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from.
. . . Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
Every poem an epitaph. (Eliot, 1943, p. 58)

In her foreword to *Love*, novelist Toni Morrison (2005) declares: “Love is the weather. Betrayal is the lightning that cleaves and reveals it” (p. x). As September waned to a close in 2006, Morrison’s words became visceral to me when my niece, Kaylie Jade, died in utero, only three weeks from term. A stillbirth is a promise fractured beyond repair and a narrative stripped of all reason. It is a beginning and an end (and an end and a beginning) that is held in paradoxical unity by the love that is woven through the branded hearts of the living and the fields of significance to which they attend. For when a child meets death before breath, it is a betrayal that unravels one’s trust in a perceived and anticipated reality, and it is a revelation—in its absence—of the raw essence of enlivened *being*. In the wake of the still-born, the known is shadowed by the unknown, roles and identities are cast into chaos, and one’s existence is exposed as both arbitrary and fleeting. Yet, even in these splintered and disruptive spaces of death and decline, there are emergent opportunities for connection and creation (*poiësis*) to arise. That which is dramatic need not be traumatic.

As the long days of summer ceded to fall, my youngest sister labored to bring her firstborn into the world. For three days, Pitocin-induced contractions gripped the walls of her uterus to expel the promise within. For three days, a rotating cast of care providers and relatives swept in and out of her hospital room, each mandating an appropriately brave façade. For three days, morphine drips

dulled the physicality of her pain and masked the riotous edges of her grief, but did little to help her integrate an unwanted truth or mitigate her suffering. For all of its merits, the allopathic model of care failed my sister in the same way that all industrial systems fail to sate the existential needs of humanity: it attempted to control, reduce, and compartmentalize a natural phenomenon; it promoted efficiency and the predictability of outcomes over the nurturance of an entire ecology of *being*; it structured and distributed power amongst specialized individuals trained to insulate themselves from overt entanglement; and it repudiated any participatory responsibility toward the narrative meaning-making that often accompanies moments of salience—save its efforts to frame the loss in non-litigious terms. In the moment that I found myself nudging two nervous nurses aside to reswaddle the partially decayed skull of my niece (in effect, plumping her cheeks in order to provide integrity to the face my sister would come to etch into memory), I thought:

*We're really bad at this.
How did we get this way?
Where do we go from here?*

Kaylie's passage was the lightning that cleaved and revealed a connectivity lost to the Western *ēthos*—a connectivity that seems to be an imperative in an interdependent and uncertain world. This inquiry takes a step toward its reclamation and our collective re-membering.

CHAPTER 1: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

To understand theory is to travel into someone else's mind and become able to perceive reality as that person does. To understand theory is to experience a shift in one's mental structure and discover a different way of thinking. To understand theory is to feel some wonder that one never saw before what now seems to have been obvious all along. (Anfara & Mertz, 2006, p. xiv)

Theory as Method

In a critical turn of Plato's (ca. 369 BCE/2013a) *Theaetetus*, Socrates and his students concede that the revelation of the true nature of knowledge is an essential human endeavor. During his exchange with Socrates, Theaetetus expresses an acute anxiety over his ability to locate and to articulate such truths, to which Socrates chastises his pupil for being lost in the pains of his labor and losing sight of what is being birthed. Socrates calls upon the ways of his mother, Phaenarete, a midwife of some renown, to explicate his dialectic process. Assuming the role of midwife, of souls rather than bodies, Socrates traces the philosopher's path through the acts of matchmaking compatible concepts, sowing the seeds of conceptions, drawing upon tools to soothe and to arouse pangs of labor, aborting lines of reasoning that are unviable, cultivating the fruits of process, and then further refining the art of inquiry. It is from these passages of *Theaetetus* that Socrates' maieutic dialectic arises as an indirect extension of midwifery's lineage and as a path toward epistemology. Derived from the Greek word for midwife (*maia*), maieutics seeks to birth truth from the latency of the mind by way of the philosopher's spiritual midwifery (Edmonds, 2000). A skilled examiner questions the philosopher, tests the soundness of hypotheses, and attempts to establish truths through reasoned arguments. During this exchange,

the philosopher grapples with both doubt and dispute, while wholly existing in and querying the unknown (Bykhovskii, 1976). At the base of Western civilization is this dialectic relationship with logos (A. Whitehead, 1929/1978)—a relationship influenced by Socrates’s partial appropriation of the phenomenological work of midwives. Had Socrates actually attended births, or more fully understood the spaces inhabited by midwives, philosophical discourse in the West could have progressed quite differently.

In this chapter, I expand upon the logics, inquiry perspectives, and theoretical underpinnings that are utilized to develop and to nurture the emergence of a theory of Cultural Midwifery. I provide a brief historical overview of the evolution of theoretical standpoints in Western philosophy, introduce paradigm-based theory-building models, and present the complex gaze as a meta-culture of inquiry.

Theory-building Logics: A Philosophic Précis

With the exception of the ecclesiastical interlude of the Middle Ages, philosophic trends in the West have been predominantly influenced by Hellenistic ideals, wherein rationalized arguments are utilized to query and to define the nature of truth (Yazdani, Murad, & Abbas, 2011). Gray (1995) surmises that early Greek logocentrism can be understood as the conception in which “human reason mirrors the structure of the world” (p. 152). This line of reasoning and the conjoining approaches philosophers take toward logos, however, have varied methodologically from the earliest years of Western civilization. In the Socratic/Platonic vein of “objective idealism,” for instance, *theoria*

(contemplation) is refined through deductive methods until it crosses a threshold of universal truthfulness, yielding principles or models for *praxis* (action) (Saunders, Lewis, & Thronhill, 2007; Steiner, 1988). Deductive logics are marked by an assertion of certainty of the conclusions that are drawn, a declaration of cause and effect, an *a priori* relationship to knowledge, and movement from the general to the specific (Babbie, 2012). In contrast, Aristotle (ca. 340 BCE/1987) partitioned *theoria* from *praxis* and *poiësis* (creation), rendering the rational activities of the philosopher seeking universal truths as being distinct from the practical, moral, and aesthetic applications of such truths (Adkins, 1978). Aristotle (ca. 350 BCE/2009a) offered the West a legacy of inductive empiricism (R. Smith, 2015), wherein theoretical logics and observations of reality could be systemized, codified, and evaluated for validity (Shields, 2015). Inductive logics speak to the probabilities of conclusions, an investigation from effect to cause, an *a posteriori* relationship to knowledge, and movement from the specific to the general (Babbie, 2012). The themes and logics of both idealism and empirical realism have not only shaped epistemological and ontological debates throughout Western history, but they also continue to inform the Western *ēthos*.

During the early- to mid-modern era, the conceptualization of truth and the role of theory was developed further by Western philosophers, particularly Descartes (1637/2008), Locke (1690/1995), Berkeley (1710/2003), Hume (1748/1995), and Kant (1781/2011). During this period, the mind could be understood not as a mirror of the material world, but as “the world-as-rendered-

by-the-human-mind” (Tarnas, 1991, p. 417). Culminating in Kant’s notions of “transcendental idealism” and “subjective deduction”—which allowed for the coexistence of an *a priori* realm (comprised of all possible sensory stimuli, time, and intuition [the *noumena*]) and the *a posteriori* conceptualizations derived from the observed experience (the *phenomena*; Scruton, 2001, J. Smith, n.d.)—this era provided the ground for radical shifts in the pursuit of knowledge as well as future narratives of truth (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Fernández-Armesto, 1997; Tarnas, 1991; Yazdani et al., 2011). Post-Kant, theory-building logics were no longer reduced to a singularity of explicit meaning and closed resolution (Sennett, 2012), nor were they necessarily relegated to a path of radical empiricism, such as classic phenomenism (see Mill, 1843/2009). Rather, there was an opening for the study of both the perceptions of phenomena and the essences of phenomena. There were truths that could be known and unknown—a transcendence of pure logic.

Although Hegel (1807/1977; 1820/2003) rejected Kant’s understanding of a constant, noumenal world (postulating instead that throughout history, the truth of material and mental phenomena are revealed or hidden by stages of consciousness; the temporal conditioning of culture [i.e., *zeitgeists*]; and variances in human cognitive capacities; Redding, 2010), the influence of Kant is apparent throughout much of Hegel’s groundbreaking work (Houlgate, 2014). It is with Hegel that the West is introduced to a system of thinking that makes a polarized dichotomy of idealism and materialism seem irrelevant. Everything is contradictory for Hegel (a type of irrationalism; R. Stern, 2013; R. M. Wallace, 2005); yet, the tensions and the dialectical examinations of these contradictions

are also the “way station[s] on the road to truth” (Burbridge, 1992, p. 72). For Hegel, conflicting philosophical viewpoints are not inherently false; rather, they are part of an organic process of growth, culminating in “absolute knowing.” Absolute knowing is Hegel’s highest state of consciousness, yielded from critical introspection and the transcendent assimilation of all phenomena (Trejo, 1993)—from *sein* (pure being) to *nicht* (nothingness) and vice versa (Houlgate, 2005).

Whether in agreement with Hegel’s theorems or diametrically opposed, Hegel’s impact on Western philosophy in the mid- to late-modern era is vast (Merleau-Ponty, 1948/1964; Rockmore, 2003)—from Kierkegaard (1843/1992a), Engels (1841/1975), Marx (1843/1977), and Nietzsche (1882/2001) to Heidegger (1930–1931/1988), Sartre (1960/2006), de Beauvoir (1952/1989), and Dewey (1891/1957), to name but a few. Before Kant and Hegel, one could argue that the functional objective of theory-building was to present knowledge that expressed a set of universals and that a theory’s value could be appraised on the basis of its “truthfulness” (Steiner, 1988). With Kant, however, there is an allowance for potentially paradoxical relationships to truth, and with Hegel, the possibility of degrees of truth within theoretical propositions (Trejo, 1993). The trajectory of theory-building during this period, therefore, shifted away from the polarized axis of pure idealism versus pure empiricism and the exclusive use of either inductive or deductive logics.

Indeed, with Peirce (1903/2004), the father of the pragmatist movement, a complementary note was struck between induction and deduction, and an allowance was made for other forms of logics, including abductive or retroductive

reasoning (Douven, 2011; Menand, 2001). Peirce was an idealist, believing that the universe and its truths were knowable and that human minds were designed to know them, but also an empiricist, asserting that observation—even with the fallible imperfection of sensual perceptions—is the means by which the truth can be known (Menand, 2001; Steiner, 1988). James (1890/2007) and Dewey (1903/2008) edged away from Peirce’s idealism, but they concurred with his *a posteriori* stance on empirical epistemology and went on to emphasize the practical, adaptive, and neuroplastic mechanisms at work during the assimilation of knowledge. For pragmatists, it is the habits of actions, thoughts, and beliefs that become lenses for perception. There is a type of narrative consistency that is sought wherein “truth is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in way of belief” (James 1906/2013, p. 36). Furthermore, as Peirce (1877) contended, inquiry, as a theoretical methodology, is best expressed as “the irritation of doubt [that] causes a struggle to attain a state of belief” (p. 5). Inquiry’s objective is to reach a settlement of opinion. This settlement of opinion, or the belief of fact, is neither a concrete data point nor an *a priori* essentialism. Rather, it is a contribution to a complex, irreducible, pluralist, and processual system of meanings (James, 1890/2007; S. B. Rosenthal & Bourgeois, 1980)—a part of an evolving narrative whole.

Coinciding with the development of pragmatist thought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were other Western theoretical movements seeking to rejoin homological *theoria* (Steiner, 1988) with *praxis*, *poiësis*, and narratives of the lived experience, including existentialism and

phenomenology (Holden, 2001; Lawrence & O'Connor, 1967; S. B. Rosenthal & Bourgeois, 1980). Although the roots of existentialism, particularly its concern for ethical human conduct, can be traced back to Socrates (Flynn, 2006), its influence as a movement first began with Kierkegaard's (1846/1992b) assertion that truth is objectively uncertain and thus requires subjective reflexivity. Existentialism gained momentum with the French existentialists' focus on lived experiences; the idea that existence precedes essence (i.e., one's choices dictate one's lifeworld); and the descriptive nature of meaning (Crowell, 2015; Flynn, 2006). Existentialism is not irrationalism. Rather, existentialists question the primacy and the efficacy of analytic logics and scientific reasoning in accessing the personal convictions and the depths of inwardness that guide one's life.

There is a clear alignment and dialogue between existentialism and phenomenology, and at times, there is a fusion of the two. With Husserl (1913/2012), phenomenology is initially presented as a type of Kantian transcendental idealism (Okrent, 2003). There is concern for intentionality, consciousness, first-person perspectives of *qualia*, temporal awareness (J. Smith, n.d.; D. W. Smith, 2013), and a reductive process of revealing the primacy of "the things themselves" (Husserl, 1901/2001, p. 175). With next-generation phenomenologists like Heidegger (1927/1962) and Merleau-Ponty (1948/1964), however, phenomenology veers from Husserl's emphasis on cognitive-based epistemologies—critiqued by some as a continuance of the Cartesian prejudice (Flynn, 2006; McConnell-Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2009)—and toward a nondual, hermeneutic understanding of embodied *Daseins*, or *beings-in-the-world*

(Dreyfus, 1991). The question of *being* is an ontological priority for existential phenomenologists. It is not enough to pursue the nature of knowledge or some understanding of truth through rational means. For Heidegger (1927/1962), the *Dasein*'s search for knowledge—even self-knowledge—is inextricably bound in complex processes of interpretation and contextual understanding (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998), replete with truths and misinterpretations of truths. What is real and truthful is not necessarily the dialectically or empirically proven existence of external objects or events. What is real and truthful may be concealed within an entire field of significance that the *Dasein* must care for (*sorge*) and carefully interact with (*fürsorge*), as an *authentic being-in-the-world*, a *being-engaged-with-the-world*, and a *being-encountered-within-the-world* (Heidegger, 1927/1962; Inwood, 1997).

Heidegger's (1927/1962) themes of significance, meaning-making, and the existential experiences of *being* (from the primordial [*ursprünglich*] to the superficial [*ursprung*]) come to dominate much of postmodern discourse. From semiotics (see Eco, 1976) and deconstructivism (see Derrida, 1967/2013) to feminist (see Harding, 2004; Hesse-Biber, 2012) and critical theories (see Habermas, 1972; Horkheimer, 1972), the postmodern period marks an explosion of theoretical orientations and notions of truthfulness. In what Harding (1996) calls the “epistemological crisis of the West,” postmodernism is demarcated by myriad diversions and animated debates over what knowledge is, how validity is determined, and whether or not knowledge can be objective when so many power dynamics, sociohistorical influences, and cultural contexts are at play (Bentz &

Shapiro, 1998; Creswell, 2013; Foucault, 1980). In this epoch, the ratiocinative gives way to the relative; the dialectic yields to the dialogic; intersubjective approaches to inquiry coalesce; and nonlinear logics—as well as tacit (see Polanyi, 1966), embodied (see Merleau-Ponty, 1942/1963, 1948/1964; Todres, 2007), and enacted (see Haskell, Linds, & Ippolito, 2002; Masciotra, Roth, & Morel, 2007) epistemologies—find footholds within theory-building methods.

Paradigm-based Theory-building: Perspectival Approaches and Cultures of Inquiry

With the postmodern turn (Best & Kellner, 1997) and the rapid expansion of research epistemologies, the choice between narrowly defined axiomatic truths or immutable conceptions of the phenomenal no longer serves as the quintessential pivot point of theoretical discourse (Geertz, 1973, 1983; Kamps, 1999; Willis, 2007). In lieu of default positivist or post-positivist orientations (see Appendix A), postmodern theorists acknowledge, develop, and adopt perspectival approaches that not only inform their epistemological and methodological choices, but that also bring the potential for biases and blind spots into awareness—precipitating a mandate for continuous self-reflexivity in research (Greenbank, 2003; Griffiths, 1998). These perspectives, what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call “inquiry paradigms” and Bentz and Shapiro (1998) refer to as “cultures of inquiry,” are a culmination of the ideas, experiences, and frameworks that prompt an inquirer’s questions, determine the means of their exploration, and then shade the analysis, interpretation, and rhetoric that follow (Anfara & Mertz, 2006).

Paradigm-based theory-building is not necessarily concerned with a search for a singular, objective, or universal truth (Kuhn, 1962/2012); rather, this approach is more aligned with a search for a comprehensiveness of meaning (Fuller, 1981), patterns of coherence, and narrative intersectionality (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Ricoeur, 1991, 1992). Moreover, many paradigm-based models have axiological goals that go beyond the pursuit of explanatory truths. Participatory paradigms (see Heron, 1996; Reason, 1998), for instance, advocate an aim of human flourishing. Critical (see Harvey, 1990; Held, 1980) and post-colonial (see Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 1989) paradigms explicitly promote emancipation and social justice agendas. Constructivist paradigms (see Gergen, 2009) attempt to achieve a democratic orientation toward co-created knowledge. To meet such goals, paradigm-based theory-building calls upon an inquirer's masterful connoisseurship (Eisner, 1997) of a comprehensive breadth of inquiry, while simultaneously fostering a critical eye, a contemplative mind, and a concise voice (Willis, 2007). Simply put, paradigm-based theory-building can be both a contribution *of theory* and *to theory* (Gioia & Pitre, 1990).

Meta-Cultures of Inquiry

In Bentz and Shapiro's (1998) *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research*, the concept of a meta-culture of inquiry is defined as a paradigm-based approach that not only carries the power to extend or to enfold other inquiry perspectives, but that may also transcend them. Bentz and Shapiro point to the intellectual traditions of phenomenology and hermeneutics as examples of meta-cultures of inquiry, but they fail to elaborate on what qualifies them as such. One could

conjecture that the ability of phenomenology and hermeneutics to supersede disciplinary confines; to provide unique—yet, accessible—methodologies; and to link theories cross-paradigmatically at shared boundaries, or to transcend boundaries meta-paradigmatically, substantiates a meta-culture of inquiry status. However, I would argue that Bentz & Shapiro’s “mindful inquiry”—as an intentionally curated mélange of phenomenology, hermeneutics, critical social science, and Buddhism—is a far better exemplar of a meta-culture of inquiry than phenomenology or hermeneutics alone. The goals and processes of mindful inquiry are multifaceted and dynamic, equally grounded and provocative. Moreover, the role of the mindful inquirer—to include their perspectival influences, presenced lifeworld, and enacted *spielraum* (the space one has to maneuver, or the network of one’s possible actions; Heidegger, 1927/1962; Masciotra et al., 2007)—is integral to every facet of the research, analysis, and reporting process. I lean into Bentz and Shapiro’s (1998) precedent to offer the complex gaze as a mindful-inquiry- and complexity-theory-inspired, paradigm-based, meta-culture of inquiry that employs complex adaptive logics to co-create ontological narratives.

Introducing the Complex Gaze

“That life is complicated may seem a banal expression of the obvious, but it is nonetheless a profound theoretical statement—perhaps the most important theoretical statement of our time.” (Gordon, 1997, p. 3)

Complexity theory can be understood simply as a formal attempt to understand how coherent and purposeful wholes can emerge from the interactions of simple and, at times, non-purposive components (Lissack, 1999). As Phelps and Hase (2002) posit, “At its most humble, [complexity theory] attempts to

explain the ‘big consequences of little things’” (p. 1). When social theorists began to apply complexity theory to non-computational spheres at the close of the 20th century (see Eve, Horsfall, & Lee, 1997; Habermas, 1981/1984, 1981/1987; Sawyer, 2005), the ontological focus of complexity theory shifted from a strict, empirical realism (Bhaskar, 1986) to a broader, philosophic/scientific orientation (Byrne, 1998). This “softer” application has had its critics (see Hunter & Benson, 1997; Medd & Haynes, 1998), but social complexity theorists have endeavored to maintain a posture of robust scientific integrity in order to counter this dissent. While making allowances for the social application of nonlinearity, paradox, and non-reductive indeterminism, for instance, social complexity theorists have also been keen to negotiate a clear distinction between themselves and postmodernists. In particular, they disavow both the postmodern “misappropriation of chaos” (i.e., the use of chaos as a way to subvert order [Hayles, 1990] rather than a source of order [Byrne, 1998]) and the postmodern abandonment of explanation and causation (Walby, 2003). Social complexity theorists claim that there is a realism that is accessible to the scientific method, even as it has been traditionally conceived, but that there is also a richness to phenomenism that is nuanced, metaphoric (Thrift, 1999), and integrally contingent (Gould, 1991). This philosophic/scientific orientation

treats nature and society as if they were [both] ontologically open and historically constituted; hierarchically structured, yet interactively complex; non-reductive and indeterminate, yet amenable to rational explanation; [and] capable of seeing nature as a “self-organising” [*sic*] enterprise without succumbing to anthropomorphism or mystifying animism. (M. Reed & Harvey, 1992, p. 359)

I find resonance with the dynamics of this philosophic/scientific frame, particularly the room it leaves for the coexistence, cooperation, and cross-pollination of distinct paradigms. However, in presenting the complex gaze as a meta-culture of inquiry, I take even further liberties with complexity theory than social theorists do in order to bring forth an intention that is neither an empirical, scientific exercise nor a static lens through which realities are to be critiqued or constructed. I offer the complex gaze as a metaphoric, narrative mechanism—a dynamic way of seeing while presencing—through which a holistic and recursive process of inquiry may be engaged to proffer new insights, novel courses of action, and a deeper ecology of awareness (see Abram, 1996; Capra, 1996; Naess, 1989). I envision this gaze, this meta-culture of inquiry, as being particularly useful when the inquirer is in the company of paradox, incomplete narratives, or shifting ontological tides. In the face of uncertainty, it may become necessary to access myriad knowledge sets, to employ a range of epistemologies, and to broaden the scope of one's *spielraum* in order to derive a comprehensiveness of meaning or, when appropriate, facilitate pragmatic, actionable turns.

In the following section, I introduce some of the paradigmatic components of the complex gaze, adapting the categorical structure of “inquiry perspectives” proposed by Lincoln, Lynham, and Guba (2011; see Appendix A). I also define the concept of complex adaptive logics and situate it as an organic extension of *theoria*'s lineage in the West. To conclude this chapter, I elaborate on the primal origins of the complex gaze and continue to stitch the theoretical ground for Cultural Midwifery.

The Complex Gaze: Ontology

While I draw upon complexity theory, social complexity theory, and complex adaptive systems referentially (to offer some parameters for the complex gaze and to provide a parallel framework for the complex gaze as an enaction of Cultural Midwifery), I view the ontology of the complex gaze as having neither a realist nor a relativist orientation. Instead, I purport an ontological perspective that holds at its core a co-created and co-arising subjective–objective reality that is both participatory and process-oriented. This position supports an organismic (see A. Whitehead, 1925, 1929/1978) and ecological understanding of reality (see G. Bateson, 1979; Charlton, 2008; Morin, 1999, 2008a), wherein “ecology, in the widest sense, turns out to be the study of the interaction and survival of ideas and programs... in circuits” (G. Bateson, 1972, p. 491) *with* and *within* systems. These interactive systems, in turn, can emerge, self-define, and self-organize *with* and *within* particular environments. Together, organismic systems and their environments are part of a nonlinear co-evolution of complex adaptive systems that exist *with* and *within* “changing fitness landscapes, path dependency and saltation, punctuated equilibria and waves” (Walby, 2003, p. 6). I call upon Kaufmann (1993, 1995) to explicate an understanding of complex adaptive systems as those systems which consider all other systems to be their environment. In other words, complex adaptive systems are continuously co-evolving with other systems because they are co-adapting to their ever-changing environs. I also interpret Kaufmann’s (1993) use of “fitness landscapes” as the dynamic planes of *being* that can be altered or deformed by co-evolving systems.

These alterations can vary the opportunities faced by other systems, instigating complex developmental consequences (Walby, 2003). I further liken fitness landscapes to Heidegger's (1927/1962) "fields of significance," which the inquirer—as a *Dasein*—both cares for (*sorge*) and carefully interacts with (*fürsorge*).

Walby (2003) surmises:

Much traditional science, both natural and social, has had a preference for a single level of analysis, a tendency to search for connections that reach back to one fundamental level (Rose, 1997). Much complexity theory by contrast has as a core assumption the importance of ontological depth, of levels that are linked . . . within a system, and that the relationships in one level are not reducible in any simple manner to those in another. . . . It is not so much that the whole is greater than the parts as that it is different from the parts. (p. 10)

In viewing the complex gaze as a meta-culture of inquiry, it is important for the inquirer to curate epistemological and methodological approaches that can adapt to a dynamic ontology of *being* that is neither static nor absurdly relative, neither rife with fixed truths nor void of metaphoric (Kernick, 2006) or modeled meaning (Törnberg, 2011). To revise James' (1906/2013) seminal summary of pragmatism, with the complex gaze, truth is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in way of a *system's* beliefs, as well as its habits, its capacity to learn, and its adaptive actions.

If one regards both life (the existential processes of *being* in the *becoming*) and inquiry as "open systems," as being demarcated by the disequilibrium of change and the interrelationships of systems and their environments (i.e., other systems within fitness landscapes), then reality should also be understood as open. For Morin (2008a), realities are not only the composites that are shaped by

systemic interplay, interference, and emergence, but they are also inherently imbued with a certain degree of autonomy. Realities are “as much in the connection (relationship) as in the distinction between [an] open system and its environment” (Morin, 2008a, p. 11). A system cannot be understood without an inclusion of the environment, but the environment is also simultaneously “intimate and foreign: it is a part of the system while remaining exterior to it” (Morin, 2008a, p. 11). Harkening back to Kant’s understanding of the *noumena* (the things-in-themselves, including a sea of all possible sensory stimuli, time, and intuition) and the *phenomena* (the observational qualities of transcendental objects or events), the paradoxical nature of the intimate and the foreign within transitional or transcendental relationships—in this case, between systems and their environments—comes to the fore. It is only in the relational play, in the interstitial spaces between gestation, creation, rest, and reconstitution, that the indwelling inquirer may translate the acts of presencing (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2004) and active witnessing into meaning (i.e., one’s hegemonic, cultural, spatial, and temporally contingent narratives of reality). These narratives are obsolete at the moment of their inception, as complex adaptive systems continuously co-evolve and saltate, but they are also essential and useful to the condition of being human—as *Daseins* in the world—nonetheless. Even if it is impossible to definitively reveal or predict all that there is to be known, the exploration of knowledge and knowledge-building is still, as Socrates and Theaetetus once conceded, an essential human endeavor.

The Complex Gaze: Epistemology

The pursuit of epistemological ground in the face of co-evolving, pluralistic, and processual ontologies is an imperative of the inquirer (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998; Leavy, 2011; Saren & Pels, 2008). The complex gaze, which calls for a myriad of components acting in concert, could be interpreted as an epistemological mandate for better information processing or algorithmic sophistication. As an applied philosopher, however, I view the complex gaze as an extended, improvisational dance between tangible and esoteric knowledge sets, to include observational, experimental, experiential, propositional, tacit, embodied, enacted, performed, transactional, and presentational ways of knowing. These knowledge sets weave a fabric of fitness landscapes together and enrich vast fields of significance. They are in dialogue and in dispute, in harmony and in discordance. They embrace in creation and grapple in doubt. They co-exist, co-evolve, and co-create *with* and *within* a cacophonous potage of meaning. These varying logics—in themselves and in relational exchange—are their own complex adaptive systems; they are *complex adaptive logics*. It is, in fact, illogical to purport to limit oneself to an exclusive use of induction or deduction when enacting this sort of adaptive, open, and “living” inquiry (Leavy, 2011). Complex adaptive logics are an active engagement of an entire ecology of *being* and knowing, interpretation and narrativization. They are the epistemological mechanism of the complex gaze.

Knowledge accumulation. The complex gaze does not fall into the bicameral, problem/solution dichotomy that anchors so many other

epistemological approaches. With a complex gaze, the role of the knower is enmeshed with the known. Individuals who help shape the systems they relate with are, in turn, affected by those systems, and then exert themselves onto the systems anew (Morin, 2008a). The epistemological aim of complexity should not be regarded as a search for completion, nor should it be thought of as the exposure of impenetrable complications. The complex gaze's epistemological journey is both an embrace of rationality and an acknowledgment of the existential desire to encompass reality into one coherent narrative, but it is also an ever-evolving dialogue with discovery (Bradbury & Lichtenstein, 2000; Morin, 2008a; Van Maanen, 1995), steeped in the potentiality of the spaces-between (Buber, 1923/1970) and wary of the illusions spawned from belief (Gergen, 2009; Montuori, 2012, 2013; Stewart & Bennett, 1991).

The use of transdisciplinarity. Although inquiring with a complex gaze is inherently an invitation to broaden the horizons of one's ontological, epistemological, methodological, and axiological standpoints, the complex gaze does not mandate that the inquirer move between or outside of disciplinary confines. One can take on myriad inquiry perspectives and epistemological orientations without also becoming a multi-, inter-, or trans-disciplinarian. Yet, due to the ever-evolving nature of complex adaptive logics, inquiring with a complex gaze will often blur, transgress, or disregard the lines of disciplinarity altogether in practice. In shaping a theory of Cultural Midwifery, my personal enactment of a complex gaze is deeply respectful of the knowledge culled from decades and centuries of disciplinary focus and attention, but it is also

undoubtedly a transdisciplinary exercise, with one small exception: just as the complex gaze does not mandate that an inquirer move outside of disciplinary confines, it also does not necessitate that an inquirer be embedded firmly within a particular discipline (as Leavy, 2011, and Giri, 2002, imply) before thinking and researching transdisciplinarily. There is an imbued freedom in the complex gaze that allows an inquiry to evolve organically *with* and *within* an array of fitness landscapes. However, this freedom is not void of responsibility. In asking questions that deepen an ecology of *being*, the inquirer must integrally care for the integrity of the inquiry process and the quality of its iteration. Indeed, the scope and depth of information culled from a complex gaze may be inhibitive to the unseasoned researcher, and when coupled with transdisciplinarity, production paralysis can be a constant threat (Öberg, 2011). Nevertheless, transdisciplinarity—with its focus on *a process of inquiry* (how questions are asked and approached); *the meta-paradigmatic dimensions of knowledge* (how assumptions are questioned and reconciled); *the organization of knowledge* (the breadth of contexts and connections that are made); and *the integration of the knower into the known* (the illumination of an embedded, co-constructive nature of knowledge) (Montuori, 2008)—is a robust partner to the complex gaze.

For Leavy (2011), transdisciplinarity is marked by the following principles: (a) issue- or problem-centered questions; (b) holistic, nonlinear, or synergistic approaches to research; (c) a transcendence of disciplines; (d) an emergence of new conceptual or methodological frames; (e) innovation; and (f) flexibility. Leavy views transdisciplinarity pragmatically as a way “to address

important topics and questions, solve real-world problems, and identify and address the needs of an increasingly complex global community” (p. 29).

Although I am not opposed to actionable or teleological ends emerging from transdisciplinary research (I certainly present the theory of Cultural Midwifery as a means to reduce undue suffering in Postnormal Times), I am hesitant to promote an explicit aim of “solving” “problems” or to make assumptions that complex questions can be conclusively “addressed.” Instead, I adopt an approach to transdisciplinarity that is more aligned with Montuori (2013) and Morin (2008a, 2008b) whereby an emphasis is placed on revealing, conjuring, and understanding the depths of interconnected relationships; on enhancing the richness, coherence, and transparency of narratives; and on proffering wisdom from the use of complex thought, reflexive self-awareness, presencing, and deep listening.

Likewise, I adhere to many of the articles outlined in the *Charter of Transdisciplinarity* (see Appendix B), with a particular focus on an understanding of *rigor* and comprehensiveness as a means to prevent distortions in meaning and analysis; *openness* as an acceptance of the unknown, the inexplicable, and the unforeseeable; and *tolerance* as an acknowledgement of the right to ideas and truths that are opposed to one’s own (Nicolescu, 2002).

Inquirer’s posture. The first steps of transdisciplinary research are not the formidable questions that are asked, nor the issues that are identified, nor the paths of inquiry that are embarked upon. To begin, it serves the transdisciplinarian to become steeped in and aware of their own ontology of *being* so that the edifice of knowledge does not begin with “isolated atoms of

information” (Montuori, 2013, p. 45), but rather, with and within the inquirer’s integral connection to a vast web of relationships (Capra, 1996; Peat, 2002). If one views learning as the self-organizing adaptation (Doolittle, 2014) that reinforces the health of a system’s ecology, the learning agent—as the “knower”—is a primary field of significance (Phelps & Hase, 2002). As such, the inquirer must engage a mindful awareness of their own *being* (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998), their own *spielraum* (Masciotra et al., 2007), and their own narrative tendencies (Chase, 1995), including their relationships with the intimate and the foreign. When the processes of self-inquiry and the dynamic practices of recursive reflection are engaged, the reciprocal interplay between what is known and the processes of knowing (i.e., the bridging of epistemologies; S. D. N. Cook & Brown, 1999) yield and reveal the informative and phenomenological data points of a narrative experience. In concert or discordance, these data points (what Peirce, 1877, would call “settlements of opinions”) begin to shape the habits and actions of complex adaptive logics and the ontological narratives they engender. In this way, the knowledge that is culled from the synergistic interplay of meta-paradigmatic approaches (or meta-cultures of inquiry) can transcend the sum of the parts involved (Flinterman, Teclemariam-Mesbah, Broerse, & Bunders, 2001).

Within these ontological, complex adaptive narratives, meaning does not simply reside *de facto*; it is seized (Deslauriers & Cordts, 1995), interpreted, questioned, influenced, and communicated by the inquirer. A poetic ethic of holism is evoked (Kearney, 1999) that awakens an awareness of the complex

multiplicity between the self and the world (Morin, 2008b). By holding both purposive and non-purposive parts in consideration, inquirers attend to the deep and the superficial. They inhabit meditative (Depres, Brais, & Auellan, 2004), liminal (V. Turner, 1969), intermediate (Steinmetz, 2007), and emergent spaces (Leavy, 2011) while also attending to the accessibility, humility, and comprehensiveness of their iterations. The inquirer's posture is not merely a spiral dynamic, nor is it an achievement of states or stages; rather, it is a multi-directional, lived and living, oscillation *with* and *within* the known and the unknown, the intimate and the foreign, the primordial and the superficial.

The Complex Gaze: Goodness

When considering the axiological aspects of the complex gaze, I once again fall in line with Morin's (2008a) position that the enacted knowing of how to lean into the dynamic fabric of complex adaptive systems (what Morin calls "self-eco-re-organizing systems"; Montuori, 2008) is an end in and of itself that is intrinsically valuable. When coupled with the ability to flourish (see Reason, 1998) or to build narrative meaning within complexity or to enhance complex thought, the complex gaze is elevated to yet another level of utility and virtue. Theoretical works are often deemed "good" if they yield hypotheses and models that may be tested for proof (Kamps, 1999; Steiner, 1988). However, to borrow loosely from Gödel's (1931/2000) incompleteness theorems, it is my contention that no system is capable of explaining itself absolutely, nor proving its own fidelity. With the complex gaze, incompleteness and paradox are not intrinsically problematic (Howard, 2010); they may even offer the tensions and disruptions

that preempt the bifurcations and way-stations (as with Hegel) that mark the paths toward meaningful truths. That said, the complex gaze is not an exercise of unbridled relativism. Although there are no absolute truths, there are some useful parameters that may be employed to evaluate the quality of one's inquiry.

Wacker (1998), for instance, calls upon the virtues of uniqueness, conservatism, generalizability, fecundity, simplicity, internal consistency, empirical riskiness, and abstraction to delineate the qualities of "good" theory. By *uniqueness*, Wacker implies that theories must differentiate themselves from pre-existing theories. This requires a broad review of the literature and an excessive diligence on the part of the inquirer. With *conservatism*, there is a mandate that new theory not replace existing theory unless it is "superior in its virtues" (p. 365). In other words, paradigms are not changed for the sake of change. There must be a distinguishable value added to adopting a new theory (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). By *generalizability*, Wacker (1998) suggests that the more areas to which a theory is applicable, the better the theory is. Generalizability is an especially significant theme for inquiries adopting a transdisciplinary approach in conjunction with the complex gaze. *Fecundity* speaks to the propagative properties of a theory, its ability to evoke other hypotheses, models, and theories. *Simplicity* falls into the sphere of Occam's razor, wherein all things being equal, the fewer assumptions that are needed to understand a theory, the better. By *internal consistency*, Wacker seeks compatibility between the concepts, relationships, variables, and logics used within a theory. By *empirical riskiness*, Wacker suggests if a theory predicts

likely events and is irrefutable, it is not a good theory. In turn, if a theory makes unlikely predictions and contains prohibitions, it is considered to be superior. Finally, by *abstraction*, Wacker contends that good theory is applicable independent of time and space and that theory achieves its independence via its ability to be inclusive in its relationships. A theory is good when competing and paradoxical components can still find a home within the theory's bounds (L. Johnson, 2013; Saren & Pels, 2008).

I diverge slightly from Wacker on the point of abstraction. From the standpoint of a complex gaze, theories are living, ontological narratives that describe and inform underlying patterns and dynamics of *being*. They are integrally tied to micro-, meso-, and macro-relationships of time and space—what Koehler (2001) calls “fractal time ecology.” Theories emerge *in* time and space and *across* time and space. In fractal time ecology, “dynamical patterns at one level of interaction are linked to emergent patterns at other levels. . . . These links between levels reflect an ecology of interactions, which is at the heart of a complexity model” (Dooley & Lichtenstein, 2008, p. 271). A theory may be applicable independent of time and space, as Wacker (1998) advocates, but a theory may also be good if it is intended for or embedded within a specific time, space, or culture.

There are also other elements and qualities of “goodness” that are useful to consider, such as narrative consistency, congruence, and comprehensiveness. Bruner (1986) makes a case for a distinction between “logico-scientific” (or paradigmatic) and “narrative” modes of thinking. Bruner’s dichotomy pits

logico-scientific characteristics (like the search for truth or proof, the employment of empirical methods that are guided by reasoned hypotheses, and the value of analyses that are derived from Aristotelian logics) against narrative characteristics (such as verisimilitude as a search for meaning, the aim of universal understandings that are grounded in the personal experience, and the generation of inspirational narrative accounts that are guided by intuition and a sense of aesthetics; Tsoukas & Hatch, 2001). With a complex gaze and the use of complex adaptive logics, however, creating this sort of dichotomy is superfluous. The narrative form has its own paradigmatic structure, and the logico-scientific form invariably engages the narrative skillset. What is of interest to me is the *narrative consistency* of theory, or whether or not a theory endows meaning that becomes richer with compounding complexity; the *narrative congruence* of the theory, or whether or not there is a harmony, consonance, or tensegrity (the ability of a narrative to maintain meaningful structural integrity under tensional or oppositional stresses; adapted from Fuller, 1961; Ingber, 1998) throughout the varying levels of a theory's enaction; and the *narrative comprehensiveness* of the theory, or whether or not the scope of a theory represents a depth that reflects complexity. These are subjective measures, but good theory does not arise in a vacuum. The inquirer's careful consideration; exhaustive research; mindful awareness of tacit inclinations; cultural contexts and challenges; enacted histories; embodied, embedded, and dialogic exchanges; relational influences; curiosity; and their deep-seated integrity of *being* are what help good theory to emerge, to serve, and to evolve.

What's in a Gaze?: Concluding Remarks

Within two to five days of birth, human neonates are capable of distinguishing between direct and averted gazes, demonstrating a distinct preference for a mutual, participatory gaze (Farroni, Csibra, Simon, & Johnson, 2002). Infants—as open, dynamic systems not yet able to engage in symbolic meaning-making—rely upon biopsychosocial processes (such as motor actions, affect, reactivity thresholds, and cortical responses) to weave information that they have gleaned from the world into increasingly complex states of coherence (Tronick & Beeghly, 2011). In short, the earliest human epistemologies *are not logocentric*, but embodied enactments of relational exchange. Indeed, the ability to derive meaning from gaze-related cues (Mason, Tatkov, & Macrae, 2005) and, in turn, to participate in the micro-collaborative, temporal space of “gaze windows” (Bavelas, Coates, & Johnson, 2002), exposes us¹ to our first interpersonal and cultural mores and memes (Hrdy, 2009).

In academia, the traditional treatment of a “gaze” has largely fallen under divisive and critical frames. From psychologist Jacques Lacan’s (1973/1978) anxiety-ridden interpretation of Sartre’s (1943/1984) treatment of *le regard* (wherein the Other as Subject also means that the Self is Subject for the Other) to Foucault’s (1963/2003) analysis of the “medical gaze” and Mulvey’s (1975) critique of the “male gaze” (Storr, 1994), there has been limited allowance in theoretical discourse for the prosocial, generative, and emergent properties of

¹ Collective pronouns and determiners are occasionally utilized during the course of this dissertation as a participatory mechanism.

“mutual gazes.” There are some notable exceptions in the performances of cultural anthropology, phenomenology, humanistic psychology, action research, and Heron and Reason’s (1997) co-operative, participatory paradigm (see Appendix A), which speak to the possibility of a subject–object unity (see Nishida, 1921/1990) and a reciprocity that one would expect to find within gaze windows. However, none of these exceptions do so with an explicit emphasis on complex adaptive systems and the processual, nondual, and, at times, self-organizing nature of the intrapersonal, intersubjective, and extradyadic properties at play.

With the complex gaze, I extend the meaning of a “gaze” to include not only a “seeing” and “being seen,” but also an organically oscillating dynamic of relating *to*, *with*, and *within* an entire ecology of *being* (see G. Bateson, 1972; Morin, 2008a). The complex gaze is a recognition of the mutual regulation (D. Stern, 1985) and the necessary illusion of intersubjective understanding (Heller, 2012). It is the care (*sorge*) for a deep interiority that calls one to presence as an integrated, authentic, and unified whole (Masciotra et al., 2007). In making meaning, I liken the complex gaze to an extended maieutic. In lieu of querying a latent mind to reveal a static truth (like the Socratic method), an inquirer employing a complex gaze brings forth an embodied mindfulness—a mutual gaze—to the process of inquiry. Allowing an awareness to arise by focusing one’s attention “on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally” (Kabat-Zinn, 1994, p. 4), the inquirer is able to bear witness to the open, relaxed, and receptive stillpoints of creative suspension (see Peat, 2008; Senge et al.,

2004). It is *with*, *within*, and *from* these stillpoints (Depraz, Valera, & Vermersch, 2000) that tacit connections begin to self-organize; that embodied and enacted knowledge sets percolate into consciousness (Haskell et al., 2002); that feelings of connection or discordance—however enduring or finite—are identified; that narrative threads start to emerge (Lieblich, 1998; Phillion, 2002); and that pattern integrity is tested (Fuller, 1975). What is birthed from these stillpoints—these gaze windows—is not the perfect ideal or axiom, but more intangible ends, such as an expanded *spielraum*, an emancipation from absolute knowing (see Krishnamurti, 1969), or a more profound relationship to meaning (see Frankl, 1959/1992). These stillpoints are ends that are living beginnings. They are ends that are a poetic resonance. They are ends that are a convergence of *sein* and *nicht*. They are ends that are a dance of lucid liminality and narrative knowing (Deslauriers, 1992). They defy the hypoxia of entrenchment and enable the skillful use of complex adaptive logics. It is from these intangible ends, these stillpoints or gaze windows, that the complex gaze, employing a system of complex adaptive logics, makes its mark on the storied lineage of Western epistemology.

CHAPTER 2: COMPLEXITY, LIMINALITY, AND POSTNORMAL TIMES

A wave pushes him towards the shore,
another pulls him back,
only to push him higher still.
One more,
and he's out of the flood.
He's parted from water,
and come to the land.
He's frightened, terrified.
Let him be.
Just wait.
This child is awakening
for the very first time. (Leboyer, 1974/2002, p. 70)

To query the nature of truths, to push the boundaries of narrative meaning, to think critically about one's enacted worldview, to dialogue about interrelational *being*, or to strive toward an authentic engagement of recursive inquiry necessitates, at minimum, a germinal sense of the intimate and the foreign, the known and the unknown. To be mindful of the shifts in one's physiological, philosophical, and phenomenological orientations is a continuous recalibration of one's ontological narratives; it is an effort to maintain the existential equivalent of a proprioceptive center. At the etymological base of the word "ecology" is the ancient Greek term for a dwelling or home, *oikos* (Hughes, 1975). To think and to relate ecologically is to dwell *with* and *within* a web of extended home environments, to stretch toward the horizons while also cultivating the stabilizing force of normative anchors.

The womb—the first home, the first field of significance, and the first normative reference point of every *Homo sapien*—is often considered to be a closed, sterile environment. The converse is true. While a fetus is enshrouded in the sterile waters of the amniotic sac, there is a great deal of exchange and

alchemy that occurs between the intimate life within the womb and the foreign life outside. From the transactions that provide enriching sustenance to life (such as nourishment, purification, and the roots of language cadence) to those associated with detriment (such as toxins, disease, and habituation to violence), the ecological and epigenetic influences affecting the formative months of a human's life are vast, and they exponentially compound the intricate and adaptive processes of life coming into *being* (see Karr-Morse & Wiley, 2012; May, Byers-Heinlein, Gervain, & Werker, 2011; Meeker, 2012; Radtke et al., 2011; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Steingraber, 2001; Woodruff, Zota, & Schwartz, 2011). In this first home, complexity—not sterility—is the prevailing theme. For millennia, the womb has been the site of normative biological complexity as well as convoluted sociopolitical and cultural constructs. To pursue an understanding of the perinatal period, therefore, is to participate in an elaborate metaphysical dance. What occurs in the womb filters into the experience of the human condition. What occurs in the world is reflected in the womb. Birth stories may be our first stories, but other narratives affect the ways in which we gestate and are birthed—both literally and metaphorically.

In this chapter, I delve deeper into the themes of postnormality, liminal space, and complexity. I borrow from van Gennep's (1909/1960) "rites of passage" to help structure this chapter in accordance with the three phases of transformation he describes: *separation*, *liminality*, and *reincorporation*. In the separation phase, I discuss the disruption of eco-normative ways of *being*—the homelessness or *oikos*-lessness of modernity and the Industrial Age. I also

introduce postnormality and its predecessors, the “postnormal creep” (the period when paradigmatic boundaries blur and systems become “pregnant with the potential to go postnormal”; Sardar & Sweeney, 2016, p. 5) and the “postnormal lag” (resistance to paradigmatic change). In the liminality phase, I move the discussion of the liminal beyond observations of formal rites of passage and into the chaotic dynamism and experientialism of liminal time and space. Finally, in the reincorporation phase, I bring attention to self-organized emergence and the manifestation of new systemic and paradigmatic norms.

Normative Disruption: The Separation Phase

Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2000, 2011) asserts that there are notable distinctions between the “solid modernity” of the 19th and 20th centuries and the “liquid modernity” of the 21st. For Bauman, a liquid-modern world enacts cultural patterns that are post-paradigmatic, self-propelling, and self-intensifying. Liquid modernity is demarcated by a cloud of propositional attractors rather than prohibitive norms. It can be identified in the dismantlement of cultural hierarchies; the co-mingling of postmodern lives adrift; and in the shadows cast by chaos, diasporas, and entanglement. Ziauddin Sardar (2010; Sardar & Sweeney, 2016) adds that these liquid-modern characteristics are not perpetually post-paradigmatic. Liquid-modern traits are merely indicative of both imminent and active “postnormality”—transitional states where old paradigms are failing, but new ones have yet to emerge. To anthropologically rephrase, liquid modernity is ostensibly at the precipice of a liminoid state, at a threshold “betwixt and between” (V. Turner, 1969, p. 359).

Both Bauman (2000, 2011) and Sardar (2010; Sardar & Sweeney, 2016) maintain that the instability faced at the dawn of the 21st century represents the disintegration of 20th-century norms. Such assessments, however, are wanton, and they fail to fully appreciate the enduring influence of non-eco-normative events that precipitated solid modernity—namely the Industrial Revolution, the Great Divergence (the tipping point of the West’s economic, hegemonic, and colonial dominance; Pomeranz, 2000), and the rise of the Industrial Age. Indeed, the metaphysical and organizational features of industrialism have become so integral to the Western identity that it is difficult for many to conceptualize other notions of time (Kahn, 1989), space, and relational exchange (Peat, 2002)—to remember or to imagine other ontological homes. As such, the West’s industrialist legacy has positioned liquid modernity into a creative and paradoxical tension with solid modernity, as subjective fields buttressed against objective landscapes. A separation from solid modernity is thus neither a *breakdown* of industrial norms by way of deindustrialization or post-industrialism (Bettis & Mills, 2006; Zukin, 1991), as Bauman and Sardar imply, nor is it a pseudo-nostalgic return to pre-industrial times. Rather, the disruption that marks a separation from solid modernity is a process of normative suffusion, amalgamation, and chrysalis. It is a complex adaptive *breakthrough* of newly emerging, co-creative, subjective–objective organizing principles.

Solid Modernity in Brief

Many critics of industrialism have converged upon the position that the objectivist nature of solid modernity is both erroneous (Morçöl, 2005) and

misaligned with the amorphous nature of reality (Morin, 1999). Spawned from the minds that shaped the mid-modern era (including Bacon, 1620/2000; Descartes, 1637/2008; Galileo Galilei, 1638/1914; and Newton, 1687/2009), the ideals, values, and mindsets of the Industrial Age have culminated to reflect the atomic, orderly workings of the machine. Invariance, dualism, mechanicism, linear logics, and chronological time have dominated the industrial *ēthos*. Progress has been marked by productivity, predictability, efficiency, and fiscal prosperity (Peat, 2002). Change has been expedient. Technology, transportation, communication, governance, and economic trade practices have all taken radical turns, as have science and allopathic medicine. While of some benefit, these transitions have also instigated a great deal of personal and societal upheaval (Hobsbawn, 1968/1999), including waves of immigration; dense urbanization (Koditschek, 1990; Zunz, 1982); the construct of industrial class structures; the specialization of professions; the mass infusion of women and children into the public workforce (see Cowan, 1976); and the institutionalization of oppressive political, racial, and socioeconomic practices (see Davis, 1998; Feagin, 2000; R. C. Smith, 1995; Streeter, 2004).

Within this solid-modern context, dramatic changes were set into motion on the subtlest of levels as well. Just as Darwin (1859) released *On the Origin of Species*, for instance, industrial practices were already at play that would come to instigate a cascade of transgenerational consequences, including environmental degradation, the nonrandom mutation of genes, and the advent of “unnatural selection” (Enriquez & Gullans, 2015). Indeed, as the Industrial Age matured, the

compass of all homo-normality skewed in the West. In just a few generations' time, the quintessential knowledge of how to sustain the basic biologic functions of being human—birthing young, growing food, healing ill, and burying the dead—shifted from the realm of the collective to the domains of individualized specialists. These marked “embodied, emotional, cognitive, and structural transformation[s] and re-orderings” (Küpers, 2011, p. 52) have come to represent a genuine redirection of the West's ontology and praxis. Solid modernity, in turn, cannot be denied out of hand nor simply discarded. Rather, it must be invited into a relationally productive and disruptive “third space” (Bhabha, 1994)—into a participatory, mutual gaze window—where distinctions can be blurred, polarity eluded, and normative values refashioned (Küpers, 2011; Sturdy, Schwarz, & Spicer, 2006).

Approaching Thresholds: Embodying Disruptive Tensions

Critics of solid modernity have argued that the rejection of nature as *oikos* (Roszak, Gomes, & Kanner, 1995) and the posturing of humans as autonomous controllers have underpinned the narcissism (Kanner & Gomes, 1995) and the perceptual myopia that has separated the West from a broader ecology of *being* (Abram, 1985; Sewall, 1995). Indeed, despite the arrival of decidedly liquid-modern turns, such as relativity, postmodernism, quantum physics (Urry, 2005), aerospace travel, world wars, globalization, the internet, and the so-called Information Age (Morin, 1999), the manufactured norms of the West continue to default toward the solid-modern promise of certainty over paradox, predictability over flux, and control over chaos (Peat, 2002). Sardar and Sweeney (2016) refer

to this tendency as a sort of “postnormal lag”—the refusal to redefine one’s perspectives and paradigms despite compelling evidence to the contrary. From a neurobiologic standpoint, this static, positivist leaning is well-aligned with the risk-adverse, protective habits of the brain’s amygdala and the body’s limbic system. Absent the mindful intervention of the brain’s frontal lobe, the way in which the body perceives change is often unnuanced and any degree of uncertainty can be deemed as threat (Hariri, Bookheimer, & Mazziotta, 2000; Whalen, 2007). As Karr-Morse and Wiley (2012) so adeptly state,

[t]he problem is that fight-flight-freeze, which originally evolved to protect us in the face of an occasional acute physical danger—like an attack from a wild beast—has not adapted to the challenges of life in the twenty-first century. . . . Having evolved as hunter-gatherers in small mobile communities close to the land, we now find ourselves living mostly in densely populated areas in constant proximity to strangers, often with little connection to the natural environment. . . . [T]he realities of modern living—including staggering advances in technology, increasing population density and drastic changes in our roles and relationships with other humans—have outpaced the adaptations of our internal physical systems To top it all off, we are the only species, as far as we know, that worries, projecting concerns into the future and ruminating on our fears. (p. 19)

Such ruminations and reactive stress responses seem to perpetuate the postnormal lag of solid modernity. Despite evidence of interconnectedness and impermanence, from the quantum to cosmological scales, many are unwilling to relinquish the pursuit of control and the alleged security that lies therein.

However, as more fluid, feminine ways of *being* (see M. C. Bateson, 1989; Eisler, 1987, 2002, 2007) emerge as counter-narratives to industrial mindsets (Berry, 1999; Slater, 2009), adaptive, observational, improvisational, cooperative, and ecological qualities begin to gain value (M. C. Bateson, 1994). The feminine stress response of “tend-and-befriend” (see Taylor et al., 2000), for instance, has

only recently emerged as an alternative to the fight-or-flight stress paradigm (see Cannon, 1915). Tending is enacted by way of protective nurturance, projected assurances of safety, and efforts to reduce distress (Azar, 2000). Befriending entails the creation and maintenance of social networks, the reinforcement of attachment and bonding, and the activation of the oxytocin-rich neural pathways (A. Campbell, 2008; Taylor et al., 2000) that are also associated with empathy (Barraza & Zak, 2009), generosity (Zak, Stanton, & Ahmadi, 2007), trust (Kosfeld, Heinrichs, Zak, Fischbacher, & Fehr, 2005), and other prosocial behaviors (Kirsch et al., 2005).

Although it may appear, to paraphrase the poet William Blake, that on a systemic level “we are caught between two worlds, one dying and one ready to be born” (Theobald, 1999, para. 1), there is also a curious continuity and exchange that occurs during the separation phase, which is maintained in the recursive interactions between postnormal lags and postnormal creeps. However, as with other complex adaptive systems, when the imbued tension of paradigmatic disequibration reaches a critical apex—a bifurcation point—a divide is cleaved and a new path is embarked upon (Karpiak, 2006; Walby 2007). Blomme and Bornebroek-Te Lintelo (2012) describe this separation as the moment in which all repetitive cycles cease and emergence is possible. While bifurcations adequately represent the distinct separation of saltated change, the specific evidence of actuated divergence is often lacking on a meta-systemic or sociocultural level. To use an analogy of birth, a labor may be instigated by the sudden rupture of amniotic membranes, but more often than not, the first signs of this separative

process are subtle, irregular, multifaceted, and even prodromal in nature. As such, I call upon Heidegger's (1954/1977a) definition of boundaries as porous horizons to help frame the notion of normative separation within a context of processual coevolution: "A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its essential unfolding* [emphasis in original]" (p. 332).

Complexity and emergence are living processes (Morçöl, 2005; Stanley, 2007); they are phenomenally experienced, known, and shared (Letiche, 2000). The gift of the Industrial Age has been that it has emboldened humans to embody a sense of agency and autonomy, albeit, often to delusional degrees of hubris. Without the expression of this confidence, however, the possibilities of humans assuming fully participatory, co-creative roles within a "chiasmic nexus" (Küpers, 2011) of embodied selves—as *Daseins* entwining with the world—would be lessened. Indeed, it is in this nexus, this threshold, this porous boundary of "Postnormal Times" (Sardar, 2010), that the legacy of solid modernity and the agitation of liquid modernity enfold upon each other and open new channels for more *oikos*-ful paradigms to unfold and take root, for new homes to stretch toward the unknown horizons.

Normative Suspension: The Liminality Phase

"And if thou gaze long into an abyss, the abyss will also gaze into thee."
(Nietzsche, 1886/2007, p. 75)

van Gennep (1909/1960) defines liminality (from the Latin root *līmen*) as the marginal spaces that occur when a separation from fixed points in an individual, social, or cultural state transpires, but before stability through

aggregation is achieved. The *līmen* is a threshold, a margin, or a boundary that is beyond the ratiocinative, beyond perceptual interpretation, and beyond the reach of hegemonic expression. As Küpers (2011) holds, *līmens* are “situated at an edge[,] calling for movement[;] they carry with them a sense of opening up towards and closing away from” (p. 46). *Līmens* reveal themselves as normative anchors give way, as interstices become more porous and receptive, and as conditions of ambiguity invite interrelational play and inquiry. van Gennep (1909/1960) and, later, V. Turner (1969) point to social rites of passage—such as birth, initiation, and death (St. John, 2008)—as being universally enacted *līmens*, which beget new identities and novel ways of being across humanity (Bettis & Mills, 2006). They serve as transformative pockets of time and space that are integrated within the strata of the human experience. van Gennep and V. Turner approach rites of passage as formal endeavors, complete with narrative parameters, symbolism, and ceremonious actions. Beyond these ritualistic boundaries, however, the liminal is considered to be an unstructured, *autopoiëtic*, and *autotelic* happening (V. Turner, 1977)—an experience of flow (see Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) within a postnormal “phase space,” or *spielraum* (Kamlah, 1983). If paradoxes arise during the liminal phase, they are not problematic. Rather, they are the co-evolving pulses that incite the dying and the *becoming*, the enfolding and the unfolding. As V. Turner (1967) observes, there is a “peculiar unity of the liminal: that which is neither this nor that, and yet is both” (p. 99).

Beyond the Threshold: Experiencing Liminality

When a *līmen* is transgressed, either as a formal passage or as an essential unfolding of adaptive complexity, a period of liminality ensues. A brief survey of the literature describes the liminal in myriad ways. Liminality is revealed as indeterminate, transitory, and vulnerable (Küpers, 2011); as destabilizing, figurative, and anxiety-inducing (Shortt, 2014); as undefined, symbolically inverted, and creative (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003); as discontinuous, fragmented (Garsten, 1999), and paradoxical (Bettis & Mills, 2006); as liberating, generative (Madge & O'Connor, 2005), and unsettling (Sturdy et al., 2006); as between-space, between-time (Küpers, 2011; Malpas, 2007), and beyond-knowing (Deslauriers, 1992); as an invitation, a passage, and a tensile flow (Fornäs, 2002); and as liberation, equalization (V. Turner, 1977), and ambiguation (V. Turner, 1969). In short, liminality is a field of raw potentiality that is beyond the scope of consummate control. Liminality can be likened, as V. Turner (1969) posits, to the abstruse, creative experience of “being in the womb” (p. 359).

The liminal womb. While a correlation between liminality and the womb is astute in its own right, V. Turner’s (1969) analogy also begs further inspection. Throughout history, the womb has been misconstrued as the inconsequential tableau against which the drama of life’s emergence is transacted. For many, the womb serves merely as an incubator, or a space-holder, for the miraculous events that transpire within. The womb, however, is not a sterile, non-normative *tabula rasa*, nor is it a negligible field. There are untold rhythms and arrhythmias, cycles and variances, histories and responses, physiologies and pathologies to consider

(Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 1971/2011). The womb is part of a systemic body, and it is party to the pressures of internal and external fitness landscapes. Its praxis is both to expand and to contract—at times, simultaneously (Bardacke, 2012). It is a site of both continuous renewal via menstruation and fractal time ecology through gravity. To this effect, when an ovum, carrying half of the gamete material needed to spark our very existence, was created within our mothers' ovaries, our mothers were fetuses gestating within our grandmothers' wombs—a full generation before (Moore, 2015). To imply, therefore, that liminality is akin to being in the womb is a bold and complex statement.

What transpires within the womb and within liminal space may be opaque or wholly unknown, but its experience is not beyond any filament of knowing. All human beings, by way of gestation and birth, have inhabited the liminal, have been temporally integrated into relational paradox within the motherbaby dyad (whereby an individual exists simultaneously as Subject, as Object, and as an inextricable, co-created Subject–Object), and have had, at minimum, a psychosomatic experience of the discomfort and the expansiveness of emergence. Consequently, when humans enter liminality or postnormal spaces, they do so with nascent habits of action and beliefs of fact. If liminality is understood as imperviousness, it can be tainted with feelings of anxiety and resistance. Conversely, if liminality is greeted as a familiar unfamiliar, as a marriage between the intimate and the foreign, it can be participated in as a dialogic unfolding. Like the womb, liminal space possesses its own phenomenological character, which is

to be experienced, interacted with, and responded to within a deep interiority, a breadth of potentiality, and a perspicacious presence of *being*.

Chaos. When a *limen* is crossed, when a complex system bifurcates, or when paradigmatic postnormality betides, the theme of chaos is inevitably evoked (Peat, 2002). Chaos is traditionally understood as dynamic instability within a system (Karpiak, 2006). Beyond this definition, however, theorists diverge (Walby, 2003). Chaos is considered to be erratic, random (Halmi, 2003), and unknowable by some schools (see Prigogine, 1997; Prigogine & Stengers, 1984), and as a constructive and deterministic element by others (see Byrne, 1998). For Karpiak (2006), chaos is neither the absence of order nor is it a building block for new order. Rather, chaos is an alternate relationship to order, or a suspension of order, that is more akin to the imaginative and improvisational spaces of narrative interpretation and metaphor than the rejection or adoption of “fixed attractors” (the rigid rules, organizational structures, or behaviors that guide closed, dissipative systems and, at times, complex, living systems; see Montuori, 2013; Peat, 2008). When a system is chaotic, when it is far from equilibrium, and when it is subject to “perturbation and flux, the system . . . [becomes] inordinately sensitive to events from within and without” (Karpiak, 2006, p. 93). Even small changes can act as trimtabs (see Fuller, 1972; Gabel & Walker, 2006), steering a system into radical new directions, trajectories, and manifestations (see Luhmann, 2002/2013; von Bertalanffy, 1975). Accordingly, whereas chaos is an antithetical objective for closed systems, chaos can be a wealth of creative potential for open systems. As Rickles, Hawe, and Shiell (2007) denote, chaos is not bound by fixed

rules or norms; rather, it gravitates toward “strange attractors” (the fractal phase spaces, or *spielraums*, that exhibit a keen sensitivity to a system’s initial conditions while diverging exponentially over time; Kamlah, 1983). Complex adaptive systems come to supersede chaos (J. Smith & Jenks, 2005) when their evolving phase spaces spontaneously interact—at the right time and with the right measure—with fixed or strange attractors (Ricklefs et al., 2007). These exchanges provoke new feedback cycles and spur self-organization (Eve et al, 1997; Morrison, 2008). For Montuori (2003), these actions are what enable living systems to make meaning out of randomness and chaos; they are what allow new norms and ontological narratives to coalesce and to begin their essential unfolding.

Kairos. The relationship between postnormal chaos and time is aperiodic and atypical (Ricklefs et al, 2007). As phase spaces encounter various attractors, chaos opens windows for synchronicity to occur (Peat, 2014). Synchronicity is the acausal parallelism of meaningful coincidences (Jung, 1952/2010) that distinguishes and connects events in liminal time—in *kairos* (Peat, 2014). From the Pre-Socratic Era, the Greeks have observed a difference between measured time, *chronos*, and engrossed participation in time, *kairos* (Bolen, 1979; Sullivan, 1992). Whereas *chronos* can be compared to “clock time,” *kairos* defies such regimentation. *Kairos* is a seasonal, horticultural, and ecological (McCourt, 2009) “womb time” (Peat, 2002). It is qualitative time (J. E. Smith, 2002). It is an ontological and epistemological time, marked by right timing and proper measure (deVogel, 1966). *Kairos* is a poetic time that challenges both mundanity

and linear relationships to *logos*. It is experienced as an engaged, tensile dynamic of normative suspension. It is a sort of irrationality (Sullivan, 1992) that enables self-organized emergence (Peat, 2002). To be in *kairos* and to be in liminality, therefore, is to be in what *was*, what *is*, and what *is becoming* simultaneously. It is a *copoiëtic* embeddedness of *being*.

Stillpoints of Creative Suspension

Whether liminality is regarded as a rite of passage (van Gennep, 1909/1960), as the “corporeal chaos” of a pregnant body (Madge & O’Connor, 2005), as an organization in flux (Czarniawska & Mazza, 2003; Sturdy et al., 2006), or as the swelling sea change of cultural paradigms (Dillon, 2000), to be in the in-between is to submit to the “creative suspension” of liminal space. Peat (2008) describes creative suspension as the deterioration of norms within an existing system, the abandonment of old feedback loops and the temporary creation of new ones, and the exploration and testing of behavioral possibilities. In short, components of a system “try on” new ways of *being* and relating within liminal postnormality. They grapple within the unstructured, nonlinear, and equalizing context of chaos. They are engrossed in *kairos*. All possible actions are made available to them, and the components of a system allow themselves “a creative breathing space before self-organizing again” (Peat, 2008, p. 90). These spaces are “in and out of time, and in and out of secular social structure[s]” (V. Turner, 1969, p. 360). They mark the cleaves that divide and the stitches that bind. They are momentary reprieves from stasis, but they are also enduring, dynamic ontologies of *being*. In these spaces, in these pregnant pauses, liminality

can be synchronistic and paradoxical, intimate and foreign. It can be agitated in its motility and lucid in its stillness. These spaces are, as the poet T. S. Eliot (1943) so beautifully scribed,

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance. (pp. 15–16)

Without liminality, without the stillpoints of creative suspension, there can be no emergence. What liminality allows is an expanded horizon of mutual gaze windows—a threshold for fields and attractors to make contact, to offer consideration and care (*sorge*), and to dance improvisationally within an undefined and uncommitted third space. In time, these dances begin to take shape and coordinate, start to develop their own habits and forms, and help to conjure the *becoming*.

Normative Emergence: The Reincorporation Phase

“Fear not the strangeness you feel. The future must enter you long before it happens. Just wait for the birth, for the hour of the new clarity.” (Rilke, 1929/1984, p. 24)

For van Gennep (1909/1960) and V. Turner (1969), when normative re-aggregation begins to take root, the passage through liminality is “consummated” (p. 359). That which has been experiencing postnormality arises from both its unstructured character and its promiscuous relations to integrate into relatively stable states, complete with new behavioral obligations, customary norms, and relational agreements. A complexus (“that which is woven together”; Morin, 2008a, p. 5) *autopoiëtically* emerges, co-evolving feedback cycles quicken and

meld, and new ontological homes are organized. The reincorporation phase represents more than the reordering of a system's historical constituency; it is a marker of genuine transfiguration, expanded fields of potentiality and significance, and new points of origin (initial conditions) for future divergence.

Systemic Parturition: The Reincorporation of a Living Complexus

Most people are familiar with the fact that human beings carry and express the material imprint of their parents' genes, but that a human fetus also transfers cells to its mother while *in utero* (both positively and negatively impacting her health for decades) is less known (Boddy, Fortunato, Sayres, & Aktipis, 2015). There is a multidirectional link—an inscription of legacy—that is integral to understanding the emergence of new systems, even after distinct separations or bifurcations have occurred. It is a whisper of continuity that is more than just a bridge that connects two sides of a postnormal gap. It is a tether to the whole, one of many malleable threads interwoven and infused into the expanding fabric of a complexus. Reincorporation, or the birth of an emergent system, is about the patterns that breakthrough postnormality and express themselves meaningfully *with* and *within* an evolving texture of transient horizons. It is about insight, ritual, and the depths of understanding that come by setting knowledge and “experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, [and] learning by letting them speak to one another” (M. C. Bateson, 1994, p. 14). Reincorporation is about watching, waiting, feeling into, and attending; it is the enaction of a newly arising clarity.

Self-organization. Complexity theorists point to the phenomenon of self-organization (the recursive patterning of “self-generating, self-amplifying[,] and self-maintaining” emergence; Phelps & Hase, 2002, p. 7) as the reincorporative plait that defines and perpetuates a nascent complexus. Morin (2008a) and Montuori (2003) alternately refer to this process as “self-eco-*re*-organization” to draw attention to an entire ecology of action that must interact in concert. Montuori (2008) holds, “A system does not merely organize itself, independently of its environment. . . . [Nor does it] merely self-eco-organize” (p. xxxv). Rather, a system continuously self-eco-*re*-organizes—by way of participation, existence, and co-evolution—even after a distinctive normative aggregation has transpired (Montuori, 2003). The spontaneous and, at times, synchronistic behaviors that are self-borne from nonlinear competition between positive and negative feedback cycles (Blomme & Bornebroek-Te Lintelo, 2012), as well as the primacy of fixed or strange attractors (Eve et al., 1997), are not granted clemency from future change (i.e., *re*-organization; Montuori, 2003). Instead, these habitual norms become the “recursive smears” (J. Smith & Jenks, 2005) that designate the boundaries from which a system continues its essential unfolding.

A complexus adapts until it can adapt no longer, at which point, a *līmen* is crossed, postnormality and chaos ensue, and emerging norms re-agitate and re-expand fields of possibility (*spieltraums*) anew. Like recessive alleles, the potential and actualized habits of the past are given an opportunity within the present to be enfolded and phenotypically expressed in the future. It is an example of original synthesis *with* and *within* lived, fractal time ecology (Stanley,

2007). The consummation, emergence, life, and decline of norms are cycled through, but without linear trajectory, without predictable outcomes, and without reductive cause.

Emergence and meaning. Several modeled and metaphoric frameworks have been developed in an attempt to exemplify the *autopoiëtic* re-aggregation of norms following chaos (Eve et al., 1997; Törnberg, 2011). Discussions of feedback loops as rules of engagement (F. Turner, 1997), swarming or flocking as guidelines for behavior (Fisher, 2009), and the simulation of local variances in order to track shifts in global patterns have all been presented as fodder for discourse (Mihata, 1997). Yet, as G. H. Mead (1938) contends, meaning is not necessarily made explicit in the initial budding of reincorporation:

When things get together, there then arises something that was not there before, and that character is something that cannot be stated in terms of the elements which go to make up the combination. It remains to be seen in what sense we can now characterize that which has so emerged. (p. 641)

Emergentism may yield new directives, identities, forms, and boundaries, but what has emerged cannot be understood by simply examining interacting parts or other basic units of analysis (T. S. Smith, 1997). A complexus regales in its own epistemology as a learning, expressive, and participatory self. Meaning, in turn, is also ensconced within a burgeoning multifaceted oneness, a *unitas multiplex* (Morin, 1999). The emergence of norms, therefore, must be lived, presented, symbolized, and contextualized both for meaning to be derived (Letiche, 2000; Stanley, 2007) and for the reincorporation of a system to reach a degree of stasis. Further, as a system adapts and complexifies, meaning also matures from the

tacit impressions conveyed during initial emergence into the ingrained habits, beliefs, and narratives that mark the normative anchors of relatively steady states.

Le Premier Cri: The Expressive Complexus

With the exceptions of turns-of-phrase (like ecosystems as “organizer-placentas”; Morin, 2008a, p. 103) or the analyses of relatively tangible complex adaptive behaviors (such as infant motor movements; Kamm, Thelen, & Jensen, 1990; Thelen, Kelso, & Fogel, 1987), few direct correlations have been made between the perinatal period and systemic complexity. Within a literary or metaphoric context, however, the iconic imagery of a child being birthed has long been symbolic of creativity and processual emergence (Friedman, 1987). In short, a babe gestates in its aquatic home, is coaxed and compressed through the birth canal, undulates as it crowns and is expelled, and then, as a first breath rushes into the thoracic cavity and a first cry rings out, is self-declared as a newly expressive body. Depictions of this scene date back to the West’s Archaic period (800–600 BCE; Perkins, 2012) and its significance and influence are omnipresent in the many Western myths and models that relate to creation—from the esoteric (see J. Campbell, 1988) to the pragmatic (see Wallas, 1926/2014). Yet, the advanced study of life emerging from life—of something becoming more than what it was and being more than the sum of its parts—is still neoteric.

Despite tremendous advances in perinatal research in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, there is much about gestation, the advent of labor, and the birth of a child that remains unknown. To date, there is still no conclusive evidence about what or even who initiates the onset of labor: mother or child.

The most current line of thinking points to steroidal changes in the fetus (meant to quicken the maturation of its lungs) irritating the myometrial lining of the mother's uterus and instigating a cascade of hormonal and physiological changes (Gao et al., 2015). However, there are untold variations to the path to parturition. Everything from maternal stress, disease, and injury to the quality of maternal periodontal health can instigate labor (Goldenberg, Culhane, Iams, & Romero, 2008). Even environmental factors, such as air pollution (Ritz, Wilhelm, Hoggatt, & Ghosh, 2007) or bacterial exposure (Wang & Hirsch, 2003), can provoke the process. Just as a phase space must meet attractors at the right time and with the proper measure for self-organization to occur, perinatal bifurcation, parturition, and emergence are also not easily defined and each is engaged in innumerable relational complexities. Every aspect of the process of birth, from pre-conceptive conditions to a babe's first declarative cry, is contingent and fractally significant. In itself, the transition of a fetus's fluid-aspirating lungs into a neonate's self-sustaining and fully expressive pulmonary system is a remarkable case study of normative separation, suspension, emergence, and reincorporation (Bland, 2001; Jain & Eaton, 2006).

How living systems are expressed and how they are known is inextricably linked to the initial conditions of their primal origins (see D. Chamberlain, 1988; McCarty, 2004; Grof, 1988). Although the perinatal period is strange, "shaped by mysterious forces, [and] replete with corporeal transformations . . . hidden within" (Finlay, 2013, p. 207), it provides a unique perspective on complexity. The actors in the perinatal period are not only adaptive systems in their own right, but they

are also both the initial conditions for other adaptive systems and the generative, emergent environments with which systems interact. Moreover, as an anthropocentric field, perinatology can be subjected to a bevy of epistemological approaches. The meaning and significance of complex exchanges can be drawn, translated, communicated, debated, and consented upon. Finlay (2013) surmises:

Bodies within bodies create curious conditions and ambiguous affects [*sic*]. The processes of generating life within life are where private and public worlds elide. . . . [They expose] key issues as to how, in the past as well as the present, the generative process is made real, given recognition and meaning[,] . . . [and is] imagined. (p. 207)

In other words, the perinatal period warrants further investigation not only as a primed field of adaptive complexity, but also as a rich cache of expressive bodies, layers of consciousness, epistemological emergence, subjective–objective relations, sociocultural influence and mirroring, as well as other grounds and horizons of ontological significance. It is both the part and the whole, the known and the unknown.

Toward an Ecological Era: Concluding Remarks

Many scholars have asserted that the West is in the midst of a significant shift in paradigms (Appiah, 2006; Capra, 1996, 2005; Kapoor, 2011; Morin, 1999; Peat, 2002, 2008; Sardar & Sweeney, 2016; Scharmer, 2009; Slater, 2009). The fixity of modernity is giving way to a more fluid and dynamic interconnectivity. The Industrial Age is reluctantly heeling to what is being predicted to be a more ecological, Ecozoic Era (a time when humans mutually co-exist and participate with their natural environs and a broader ecology of *being*; Berry, 1999). Yet, between these paradigms lies a period of unrest, uncertainty, anxiety, and

ambiguation that reflects the hallmarks of liminal time and space. It is a span of postnormality that Sardar (2010) calls “Postnormal Times.”

In this epoch, women and feminine ways of *being* and knowing are said to be newly “revealing Western civilization to itself” (Berry, 1999, p. 181). By modeling how to search in ambiguity for a kind of integrity, how to ground in the rhythms of expressive bodies, how to ride the tides of disjunction within a life’s course, and how to “adapt and improvise in a culture in which [one] could only partly be at home” (M. C. Bateson, 1989, p. 13), women have already subsumed the nature of postnormal *being*. They enact the fluidity and peripheral vision (see M. C. Bateson, 1994) of their double consciousness (the awareness that comes from seeing oneself through the eyes of a dominant majority while also existing behind the veil as an “Other”; Du Bois, 1903/1989), which readily enables them to hold on to paradoxical truths without paralysis, to co-evolve as their contingent lives mandate, and to propagate more nuanced ontological orientations to offspring. For women of color and other underrepresented identifications, this poly-consciousness is only compounded (J. A. Cook & Fonow, 1986; D. K. King, 1988), adding layers of complexity to the lived, known, and shared experiences of life.

The archetypal feminine, by contrast, is neither contingent on biologic sex nor restricted to an identified gender consciousness. Rather, the feminine—akin to the Taoist *yin* (see Lao-Tzu, ca. 500 BCE/1961; Ulanov, 1971)—signifies a set of traits that are accessible to all humanity, including sensitivity, nurturance, creativity, communicativeness, emotionality, responsiveness, intuitiveness,

relationality, and cooperativeness, to name but a few (M. C. Bateson, 1989; Hill, 2013). Although feminine ways of *being* and knowing have been grossly undervalued and suppressed during solid modernity (Eisler, 1987), the archetypal feminine is particularly well-suited to understanding postnormal liminality, emergence, reincorporation, and the dynamics of an adaptive Ecological Era.

If Postnormal Times are, in fact, representing a shift from the *oikos*-lessness of the Industrial Age (what Heidegger, 1977b, and G. Thomson, 2011, refer to as the “abandonment of *being*”), nothing short of paradigmatic transformation will suffice. It is my contention that a more balanced relationship to the archetypal feminine and a valuing of women’s narratives will be essential in helping to ease the confusion, discomfort, and suffering that inevitably accompanies radical change. As part of a living complexus, as participatory agents, and as active witnesses, individuals and collectives have the potential to offer palliative care to normative elements in decline and to nurture those being birthed. This is the *praxis* of the liminal leader.

CHAPTER 3: TOWARD LIMINAL LEADERSHIP

Liminal. A threshold. My body between worlds. This word returns me to my original state. “*I am water. I am water.*” I am sea cells evolving to a consciousness that has pulled me upright. . . . [E]ach a witness to a world we cannot see In this vast, undulating ocean, we are cradled. The waves carry us like the rise and fall of the melody of mothers. (Williams, 2012, Chapter 3, para. 1)

In Hesiod’s (ca. 700 BCE/1914) epic poem, *Theogony*, the oldest known recording of Greek cosmology (Sandywell, 1996), a complex narrative of theo- and bio-genesis, archetypal expressions, and the progeny of power is revealed. *Theogony*, the “begetting” or the “birth of gods,” serves not only as an authoritative primer of Greek mythology, but it also acts as a performative enactment of a rhapsodic hymn, an exercise in poetics. Woven *with* and *within* Hesiod’s distinct narrative voice (Bergren, 1983), *Theogony* inspires, evokes, and essentializes thematic multiplicity, interpolarity, and expressive self-inquiry (Stoddard, 2004). It grounds the human condition by situating mortal beings into familial relations with divine, mysterious unknowns. From the portrayal of the spontaneous, *autopoiëtic* emergence of the first primordial beings—Chaos, the “gaping void”; Gaia, the “broad-breasted earth” from which life arises and is seated; Tartarus, the ambiguous “depth” that is anchored far below both earth and underworld; and Eros, the “desire” that fuels all proliferation (Hard, 2004)—to the connections made between poetics, persuasion, and virtuous kingship (Duban, 1980; Pucci, 1977), *Theogony* chronicles early Western ontologic and hegemonic principles and intimates their wielding.

Hominal leadership in *Theogony* is primarily affiliated with kingship, as an “earthly counterpart of a divine dispensation” (Duban, 1980, p. 18). For much

of the Archaic Period (ca. 800 BCE–480 BCE) through Late Antiquity (ca. 200 CE–750 CE), this dispensation is at Zeus’s behest, as the allfather and the chief of gods, but it is made manifest, delivered, and communicated by way of Zeus’s daughters, the Muses (Stoddard, 2003). Upon the birth of a king, the Muses gift him with sweet dew upon his tongue so that words of wisdom will flow graciously from his mouth, judgments will be imparted with steadfast resolve, and understanding will be received and dispatched with reverential authority (Hesiod, ca. 700 BCE/1914, lines 80–92). Given this partnered bestowal, one could intimate that kingship is dependent upon both masculine and feminine forces. However, Hesiod’s treatment of the Muses in *Theogony*, which parallels the Homeric view of female discourse in general, is begrudged by mistrust and fear (Schiegel, 2006). The Muses are described as being cloaked behind darkness and a double-veiled mist (Hesiod, ca. 700 BCE/1914, lines 9–11); their speech is defined as both *truth*, exemplified by teaching and prophecy, and *falsification*, indicated by trickery and illusion (Bergren, 1983). The Muses are both an enaction and an exudation of ambiguity and paradox. Furthermore, while the Muses bestow blessings upon kings, the ability to channel and signify the Muses’ voices is ascribed to the purview of poets and singers—rarely is there a poet–king (Duban, 1980).

Given Hesiod’s wary treatment of the Muses, it is of some significance that he interrupts *Theogony* to induce a lengthy encomium of Hecate (Clay, 1984; Marquardt, 1981), a goddess affiliated with crossroads, transitional thresholds, and liminal spaces (Boedeker, 1983; Edwards, 1986). In the so-called “Hymn to

Hecate,” Hesiod (ca. 700 BCE/1914, lines 411–452) establishes the goddess as second only to Zeus in the scope of her influence (Von Rudloff, 1999). Without rendering any special services to Zeus, Hecate is honored by him and privileged above her male counterparts (Clay, 2003). She mediates between the old gods (the Titans) and the new (the Olympians); she bridges earth, heaven, and sea; and she serves as a liaison between the gods and men (Clay, 1984). Hecate may choose to sit beside kings in judgment (Hesiod, ca. 700 BCE/1914, lines 429–430), but her attentions are not limited to their service in the way that the Muses’ are (Marquardt, 1981). Hecate extends success, glory, and safe passage to whom she wills (Clay, 1984). She is unbound and un beholden. She is an anomaly. The torch she carries casts both light and shadow (Edwards, 1986). She is a guardian, a guide, and a witness, but she can also be a force of disruption. She is described effeminately as tenderhearted, yet can be found attending to men at war (Evelyn-White, 1914). She is lauded as she acts upon her own volitions, but she also seems to be able to wield her agency without hegemonic overtures. Hecate expresses no fealty in her consortiums, nor allusions toward hierarchic exclusivity. Her contacts range from kings to fishermen, from warriors to herdsmen (Marquardt, 1981), and from deities to midwives (Diesel, 2008; Evelyn-White, 1914; Liston & Rotroff, 2013). In her passive acceptance of the *timai* (the honors, powers, and spheres of influence) accorded to her, Hecate is presented as “an antithesis to Zeus’ active pursuit and use of power. Hecate is never directly ‘subsumed’ or ‘consumed’ . . . into the regime of Zeus Instead, she remains outside [both] the struggle for power” (Boedeker, 1983, pp. 92–93)

and the confines of her culture's credo. She is archetypically expressive of those who attend to liminality and *liminal personae* (threshold people; V. Turner, 1969).

In this chapter, I build upon some of the themes that are introduced in *Theogony* to elucidate Western conceptions of leadership. In doing so, I take into consideration Gadamer's (1975) words of caution regarding the imposition of contemporary ideals onto ancient texts, but I also hold that the legacy of *Theogony* is so enmeshed into the grain of Western precepts that it continues to inform their expression. In the first section of this chapter's body, I discuss leadership as kingship and focus on the dominant narrative of an individual leader as a heroic great man. In the second section, I look to the Muses to provide a point of origin for distributive and postheroic approaches to leadership. I also introduce poetics, meaning-making, and an archetypal feminine as elements of an emerging liminal leadership narrative. Finally, I extend Hecate's position to consider the phenomenal conditions of liminal performers, to include *liminal personae* and *liminal obstetrices* (liminal midwives).

Honeyed Tongues and Heroic Statures: Legacies of the Great Man

“[Julius Caesar] only wrote three words unto Anitius at Rome: ‘Veni, vidi, vici’: to wit, ‘I came, I saw, I overcame.’” (Plutarch, ca. 125 CE/1875, p. 87)

During the Archaic Period, a great deal of value was placed in stating things as they were, clearly and unhidden (Bergren, 1983; T. Cole, 1983; Spentzou & Fowler, 2002). Although kings in *Theogony* used persuasion to bend, deflect, and cajole others to move the paths of their minds (Pucci, 1977), monarchs were expected to be explicit and unambiguous in their deliberations

(Duban, 1980). If their decrees were tainted by veiled meaning, which was a threat constantly imposed by the activities of the Muses (Hesiod, ca. 700 BCE/1914, lines 27–28), then their credibility and authority would be at risk. As emissaries of Zeus, kings were to serve his ends and mete his justice with steadfast predictability. They were to overcome adversity and to mitigate uncertainty. They were to enact a hegemonic structure that reinforced a hierarchic pattern of dominance, with Zeus at the apex of the pantheon, the *basileus* (the hereditary king) as his earthly agent, and all others as subordinates (Duban, 1980). In fact, the term hierarchy is derived from this arrangement—the ancient Greek *hierós*, “holy” or “divine,” coupled with *arkhos*, “sovereign” or “ruler” (Grint, 2010).

In practice, however, the distribution of power during the Archaic Period was more convoluted than Hesiod’s ideal. As Greece experienced acute waves of urbanization (which became the origins of the *polis*, the city-state; Fitzsimons, 2014) and embarked upon expansive colonization efforts (Graham, 1982), kings began to delegate authority to wealthy oligarchs. According to Aristotle (ca. 350 BCE/2009c), these aristocrats became overbearing in short order. They acted upon their own personal ambitions, seized power, and enforced their own will through fear, intimidation, and the use of private armies (Drews, 1972). With time, even kings behaved in a similar fashion (Aristotle, ca. 350 BCE/2009c). The Archaic Period, thus, is known alternately as the “Age of Tyranny” or the “Age of Tyrants” (Parker, 2007). It was an epoch that produced ceaseless warfare, promoted the primacy of individual desires (Mitchell, 1997), stratified

the distribution of power amongst classes, and enflamed civil strife (Manicas, 1982). It was an era that precipitated the advent of Athenian democracy (Ober, 1998), but it also set a precedent for the future emergence of extra-legal strongmen—autocratic leaders who demonstrate a decisive clarity of vision that makes them particularly desirable during exceptional, postnormal times (see Giorgini, 2008; Machiavelli, 1531/1998, 1532/2012).

The events of the Archaic Period are of significance because most conventions about leadership throughout Western history have fallen in line with the elite nature of kingship and the belief that power is to be concentrated and harnessed by the individual. Successful leaders have long been affiliated with an elevated, heroic status of men who possess an innate, god-like, or god-given capacity to impart influence on the future (Western, 2008). Such leaders make crucial decisions that directly result in their intended outcomes. They demonstrate consummate control over the social dynamics of their realm (Lichtenstein et al., 2006). They possess the ability to divine or to create “a compelling vision, one that takes people to a new place, and then to translate that vision into reality” (Bennis, 2009, p. 188). They are venerated (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012) and are deemed great men (see Carlyle, 1849/2008). Over the last two millennia, these attribute-based, individualist, and heroic constructs have been reified in their repetition as existential truths (Burns, 1978/2010; Gemmill & Oakley, 1992); they have become the default way of conceptualizing leadership (Ober, 1998).

The Great Man: Evolutionary and Inculcated Perspectives

“Let me not then die ingloriously and without a struggle, but let me first do some great thing that shall be told among men hereafter.” (Homer, ca. 750 BCE/1999, p. 266)

Evolutionary theorists frame the “great man” perspective (see Carlyle, 1849/2008) as a natural response to the sociobiologic pressures and vulnerabilities of being human (Van Vugt, 2006). Simply put, if a leader keeps the members of his group secure in the face of external dangers, internal discord, and threats to resources (Wilson, 1975), he establishes himself as desirable and increases the chances of his own genetic propagation (Van Vugt, Hogan, & Kaiser, 2008). Masculine traits that demonstrate prowess (Western, 2008), therefore, such as physical strength (Murray & Schmitz, 2011), cognitive intelligence (Carlyle, 1849/2008), charisma (Gemmill & Oakley, 1992), extroversion and confidence (A. J. King, Johnson, & Van Vugt, 2009), drive (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991), stamina (Fleenor, 2007), effectiveness in problem-solving (Zaccaro, 2007), command and control (B. Kellerman, 2012), assertiveness, boldness, and risk-taking (Van Vugt et al., 2008) have become synonymous with good leadership. As Galton (1869/2002) frames it, these superlative, individualist, and heroic attributes are the result of “hereditary genius.” In this view, people are born predisposed to lead or to follow, and the elite, concentrated nature of cultural, economic, and political hegemony is but an extension of the natural order—a manifest destiny justly supported through eugenic, colonial, and autocratic means (Bashford & Levine, 2010; Galton, 1909).

In the 20th century, however, the hereditary factor of trait theories came into sharp contrast with the work of behaviorists (see Pavlov, 1927/2015; Skinner,

1962; Watson, 1924/2013), who argued that a taxonomy of behaviors or qualities could be elicited through behavioral modification (DeRue, Nahrgang, Wellman, & Humphrey, 2011). Leadership, within this framework, could be defined by the learned actions performed by individuals to influence others, rather than some sort of *de facto* consequence of a divine dispensation or genetic inheritance. Within the solid-modern context of the Industrial Age, this notion that desired behaviors could be elicited or engineered was particularly well-suited to the mechanical orientation of the industrial mindset (Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2007; Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007). Leadership, as the adept social conditioning or the behavioral modification of others, became yet another milieu in which genius could be expressed (Thyer, 1999). The great man mythos was thus extended from the dominion of sovereigns and cultural elites to the shoulders of so-called “captains of industry” who conquered markets, maximized profit margins, predicted or manufactured growth sectors, mitigated flux, and maintained a productive and subservient workforce (A. F. C. Wallace, 1981). As with the Archaic notion of kingship, the “transactional” (Burns, 1978) or “administrative” (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007) leadership styles of industrialists still supported hierarchic power structures, the foregrounding of masculine attributes, the pursuit of consummate control, and the elimination of all ambiguity from organizational life (Plowman et al., 2007), but the methodology used by transactional leaders relied upon contractual promises of awards (positive reinforcements) and threats of punishments (negative reinforcements) rather than the inherited mandate of metaphysical decrees (Bass, 1985, 1999; Lovaglia,

Lucas, & Baxter, 2012). Nevertheless, the core objective of great man leadership—whether it was bestowed, inherited, or learned—remained the same: to overcome and to vanquish the unknown; to promote a clear, secure, and normative agenda; and to reap the rewards of one’s efforts. As William Marcy (1832) once asserted, “Men of enterprise and talents . . . claim, as a matter of right, the advantages of success. They see nothing wrong in the rule, [*sic*] that to the victor belong the spoils” (column 1325, para. 3–4). In effect, great men were not only entitled to their positions of secular power, but the legacies that they amassed also warranted them a modicum of immortality (Hirschman, 1990)—reaffirming the god-like mythos of the great leader (Grint, 2010).

The Great Man as Messiah

Great man leadership may be regarded as a divined right, an inherited disposition, or a conditioned posture, but it can also be a designated or socially constructed role. Buckley (1989) holds that when the pressures, demands, and unparalleled growth of paradigmatic change seem insurmountable, the role of “leader” may be granted by those who desire to be led. Gemmill and Oakley (1992) observe:

When members of a group are faced with uncertainty and ambiguity regarding direction, they often report experiencing feelings of anxiety, helplessness, discomfort, disappointment, hostility, and fear of failure. Frightened by these emerging emotions and impulses, . . . they collude, largely unconsciously, to dispel them by projecting them onto “leadership” or the “leader” role. . . . [It is] a regressive wish to return to the symbiotic environment of the womb: to be absolved of consciousness, mindfulness, and [the] responsibility for initiating responses to our environment to attain what we need and want. (p. 114, 126)

In an effort to allay the discomforts of change, to include the biophysical and existential anxieties that lie therein, followers are drawn to seemingly omnipotent

or omniscient figures. They lean into the inculcated narrative of the heroic and messianic great man so that they might be delivered from the despair that accompanies their own feelings of overwhelm and helplessness (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). Whether the heroic leader uses transactional means to maintain a promised stability or transformational techniques (such as serving as a role model, inspiring or motivating followers, stimulating intellectual or creative innovation, or mentoring individuals; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Reinhardt, 2004) to shape impending change, the great man establishes clear goals, rules, strategies, values, and ontological parameters around which followers should organize (see Bass, 1985, 1999; Bass & Bass, 2008; Burns, 1978/2010; Reinhardt, 2004). Outcomes, in turn, are causally attributed to the efficacy of individual leadership, regardless of whether power is applied from the top-down or the bottom-up. Followers show faith or derision based upon the leader's ability to control, direct, or influence the future (Gemmill & Oakley, 1992). Hence, there is an inherent sense of striving that infiltrates almost all types of leadership—from the *basileus* to the philosopher king (see Plato, ca. 360 BCE/2013b), the strong-man despot to the diplomat, and the physician to the priest—that both enfold and perpetuates the narrative of the great man, the visionary man, the messianic man, and the conquering hero.

Reclaiming the Muse: Reshaping the Leadership Narrative

Nothing in the world is softer and weaker than water;
But, for attacking the hard and strong, there is nothing like it!
For nothing can take its place.
That the weak overcomes the strong, and soft overcomes the hard,
This is something known by all, but practiced by none. (Lao-tzu, ca. 500
BCE/1961, p. 159)

In Greek mythology, when the souls of the dead drink from the River Lethe, they relinquish the memories of their past lives and return to earth to live again. However, if the souls of the dead choose to drink from the deep, dark pool of goddess Mnemosyne instead, she grants them full access to a complete narrative of life—replete with mistakes and glories—and extends to them the option to return to earth or to rest eternally in the Elysium (Hansell, 2015). Mnemosyne is the goddess of memory, the inventress of language, the originator of story, and the mother of Zeus’ daughters, the Muses (Atsma, 2011c). In *Theogony*, Hesiod (ca. 700 BCE/1914) attempts to differentiate the Muses from the dark depths of their mother. They are originally portrayed as virginal, tender, delicate, sweet, and pure. Upon their birth, they proceed to the house of their father, in service to him, while their mother disappears from the text altogether. In effect, the Muses subsume Mnemosyne’s function, to preserve “the memory that allows past and future to be comprehended in the context of the present” (Arthur, 1983, p. 108). They become the progenitors and the guardians of culture and meaning-making. They endow humans with the affect, passion, skill, and intellectual faculty needed to envision the world (Spentzou & Fowler, 2002). Yet, as evidenced by the consummate presence of their chaperone, Apollo, the Muses still imbue the precarious status of being female. In penetrating the hearts of poets, the voices of singers, and the tongues of kings, they threaten the corporeal integrity and the alleged invulnerability of the masculine (Fowler, 2002). They simultaneously represent the potential for powerlessness and, paradoxically, the means by which almost all human epistemology is made possible. Indeed, the

double-veiled mists in which they are enshrouded are but emblematic extensions of the double consciousness they imbue—an awareness of the whole and the part, the masculine and the feminine, the divine and the profane.

It is with the reclamation of Mnemosyne and the Muses that the potential for an alternate leadership narrative begins in the West. Instead of repackaging the mythos of the great man or the heroic leader generation after generation (Senge et al., 2004; Western, 2008), a choice may be made to dip into Mnemosyne's pool, to allow oneself to be penetrated, to be affected, and to be a conscious part of an evolving, paradoxical, and systemic whole—*to be, to be with, and to be within the becoming*.

Postheroic Leadership: Paths Toward Emergent, Narrative, and Participatory Processes

As was the case with other Western ontological and epistemological orientations during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, leadership and organizational studies also experienced a paroxysm of growth and diversification during this period. Postmodern schools of thought that challenged the entrenchment of dominant power structures and the propaganda of individual exceptionalism—such as critical (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012), feminist (Chin, Lott, Rice, & Sanchez-Hucles, 2007), constructivist (Gergen, 2009), contingent (Fiedler, 1967), multidimensional (Chelladurai & Saleh, 1980), constellation (Denis, Lamothe, & Langley, 2001), integral (Reams, 2006; Wilber, 2000), systems (Katz & Kahn, 1978), and complexity theories (Lichtenstein et al., 2006)—each developed clear alternatives to the heroic leadership narrative.

Indeed, no shortages of opinions have emerged about what it means to lead, including Greenleaf's (1970) introduction of "servant leadership"; Eisler's (2002) call for a more democratic, "partnership" model; Hersey and Blanchard's (1969) appeal to consider the context of one's actionable tasks via "situational leadership"; Stogdill and Coons's (1957) proposal for an interdependent, "relational leading" style (see also Uhl-Bien 2005, 2006); and Eggert's (1998) offering of an introspective and "contemplative" approach, to name but a few. As Stogdill (1974) famously lamented, "There are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are persons who have attempted to define the concept" (p. 7).

Yet, leadership discourse in the 21st century has been trending away from the overglorification of unitary command, allowing for more interpretative, phenomenological, distributive, and liquid-modern dynamics to gain traction (Jones & Corner, 2012; Lichtenstein et al., 2006; Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001; G. H. Mead, 1932/2002, 1934/1962; Nicholls & Webb, 2006; Pearce & Manz, 2005). Ecological (Wielkiewicz & Stelzner, 2005), comprehensivist (Gabel & Walker, 2006), wisdom-based (Küpers & Statler, 2008), and complex adaptive (Lichtenstein et al., 2006) movements, which perceive leadership as a continuous, tacit, embodied (Schuyler, 2010), collective, and interactive learning process (Crevani et al., 2007; Crevani, Lindgren, & Packendorff, 2010), have significantly challenged heroic narratives. Leadership, in such views, is neither top-down nor bottom-up in structure, but rather, it is a "middle-out" event (Seel, 2000)—a series of co-evolving exchanges that emerge from the relational interactions,

tensions, and patterns that arise in the “spaces-between” agents, ideas, environments, and other systemic fields (Boal & Schultz, 2007; Lichtenstein et al., 2006; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Leadership is complex. It is fluid and adaptive. It is a marker of liminal emergence.

A Place for Poets

If leadership is to be understood as the phenomenological events that emerge as adaptive responses to the internal and external pressures of dynamic, organizational bodies (rather than the causal actions performed by individual “leaders”), then leadership can occur anywhere within a system, by any conditional agent, and at any point within a fractal time ecology (Dooley & Lichtenstein, 2008; Lichtenstein et al., 2006). Leadership is a signifier of complex adaptive exchange, exhibiting nonlinear, distributive, contingent, and self-organizing tendencies (Jones & Corner, 2012; Plowman et al., 2007). Within this frame, individuals participate both as “tensile agents” (entities that interact *with*, *within*, and *as* dynamic systems; Lichtenstein et al., 2006) and as “sense-makers” (narrators who craft meaning, situate emergent events, reincorporate ontology, and revise the parameters by which a complexus abides; Neal, Lichtenstein, & Banner, 1999; Plowman et al., 2007). To lead, therefore, is both *to be* and *to become* a contextual component of the *becoming* within the ever-changing present. It is an embedded, embodied, enacted, and living poetic (Cunliffe, 2002).

Poetics and meaning-making. Poetics are often regarded as either expressive, living language or that which evokes great truths (Aristotle, ca. 350

BCE/2009b). Poetics touch upon the intangible and give light to the shadow. They conjure sentiment and induce resonance. They are acts of communion that are continuously born anew (Meyer, 1985). Poetics may precede meaning, but they are also tied, simultaneously, to established semantic spaces. For McNamee (2000),

To talk of the poetic is to give wing to the imaginative. It is to “express oneself” in words that are “thoughtful.” . . . One is urged, in employing the poetic, to suspend the discourse of “fact” or “form” and . . . to engage in improvisation. . . . Here we move rapidly from the interior of the poet[,] or the particular poetic moment[,] to the relational nexus from which all meaning emerges. (p. 146)

Poetics provide a means for *being with* the inexplicable, for narrativizing mass dynamics as they arise, and for disregarding the restrictions of linearity, fixed attractors, and chronological time (Gibbs, 1994). Poetics not only encompass the proto-semantic spaces imbued by the chaotic nature of the “domain of ‘betweens’” (McCaffery, 2001, p. xvi), but they also invoke a semantic sense of the whole. In short, poetics obscure notions of certainty while also edifying evolving unknowns.

As Mnemosyne and the Muses seemed to understand, the human species is one that “thinks in metaphors and learns through stories” (M. C. Bateson, 1994, p. 11). All human cognition is inherently figurative (Widdershoven, 1993). Every mental construct “reflects an adaptation of the mind to the world, [and] the language that expresses these constructs attests to [a] continuous process of poetic thinking” (Gibbs, 1994, p. 1) and poetic composition (Wittgenstein, 1980). Poetic techniques, such as metaphor, metonymy, allegory, personification, archetypes, and other tropes are not meant to obfuscate, as Hesiod feared. Rather, they point

to the emergence of broader epistemic frames and bridges (Küpers, 2011) that come to narrativize the intrasubjective (Ricoeur, 1991, 1992), sociocultural (Lantolf, 2000), neurobiological (Young & Saver, 2001), and ecopsychological (Roszak et al., 1995) understandings of the human condition (Gibbs, 1994). They are tools by which we communicate, influence, and organize that which is known to ourselves and to others.

Poiësis and the feminine. At the etymological base of the term poetics is the ancient Greek verb *poiësis*, “to make.” Heidegger (1971) emphasizes *poiësis* as a “bringing forth,” or an “origination,” and poetics as the creative source for “the humanness of the dwelling life of man” (Hofstadter, 1971, p. xv). In a similar vein, Widhalm (2011) defines *poiësis* as a creative revelation of *being*. D. H. Whitehead (2003) speaks of *poiësis* as that which is “produced into presence” (section 2, para. 4) not by an exercise of will, but as an unveiled emergence that precipitates *gnosis* (knowledge). *Poiësis*, as a generative, middle-out event, is a “*leading into being* [emphasis mine]” (section 2, para. 1). It gives birth to fields of significance. It brings fitness landscapes to life. It adapts and broadens *spielraums*. It informs the collective unconscious (see Jung, 1959). The function of *poiësis* is not about that which is actionable or even purposeful; rather, *poiësis* creates, engages, catalyzes, and reveals conditions of emergence. Akin to Hillman’s (1975/1992) treatise on myth, *poiësis* does not dictate the *how*; it provokes its unfurling. To support and to enable *poiësis* is to attend to *being* as it is improvisationally defined and influenced by the *becoming*. To translate *poiësis* into poetics is to begin to trace figurative forms. To identify the narrative within

the figurative is to embrace the semantic. To coadapt *with* and *within* a semantic exchange, at the proper time and with the proper measure, is to be sapiential. To lead with sapiential authority is to be a full participant in a stream of coevolving unknowns (Peat, 2008); it is to “metramorphically” (from the Latin *metrium*, meaning womb, and *metamorphosis*, or transformation) weave the subjective and the transsubjective into a shareable, *copoiëtic*, and liminal womb-space (Ettinger, 2005, 2006)—to midwife ontology.

Ettinger (2005) offers this dynamic nexus—the *copoiëtic* matrixial—as an incompletable field of potentiality, as an extension of the gestational feminine (Boyne, 2004), and as a “*becoming-threshold*” that marks the passage from the sub-symbolic to the symbolic (Bertelsen, 2004). For Ettinger, like Arendt (1958), “natality, the capacity to begin, is the foundational fact of all thought, all politics[,] and all action” (Tyler, 2009, p. 1). Birth as *poiësis* is central to all life and its meaning. It is the threshold of our biologic and representational existence. As thus, the role of women in the process of birth and the feminine in the process of creation should be neither disregarded nor deemphasized. In contrast to Arendt, Ettinger (2005, 2006) endeavors to foreground women and the feminine in the “wit(h)nessing” of the *becoming*. For Ettinger, women as “m/Others” naturally employ a vacillating gaze, coupled with a double or poly-consciousness, that allows them to link co-emerging selves with other differentiated fields. Women as m/Others see no paradox in the simultaneous (and somewhat interchangeable) coexistence of an “I” and a “non-I.” As such, they recognize power “not so much as domination and an ability to control, but . . . as a capacity”

(Billing & Alvesson, 2000, p. 147) to relate—to comprehend that all things are entangled and twinborn (*copoiëtic*).

When other scholars have attempted to expand upon such hegemonic sentiments to define a feminine leadership style in the past, they have resorted to identifying traits that are relational, flexible, emotional, communicative, and interdependent (Billing & Alvesson, 2000; Grant, 1998; Helgesen, 1990; Marshall, 1993/2012). They have acknowledged a willingness to be vulnerable, receptive, empathetic, intuitive, and cooperative (Fletcher, 2004). They have regarded nuance, pattern-oriented thinking, participatory attendance, mediation, creativity, emotional intelligence, social presence, and distributive or democratic tendencies as belonging to the feminine (Billing & Alvesson, 2000; Byrom & Downe, 2010; Eisler, 2007; Lichtenstein, 2014; Neal et al., 1999). While these trait-based frameworks have provided counterpoints to dominant leadership narratives, they have also been criticized as further encouraging narrow, binary, and stereotypic gender roles that delimit the transformative potential of women as leaders (Billing & Alvesson, 2000). They have been said to contribute to the “invisibility” of women, to misconstrue women’s leadership as a type of “selfless mothering,” and to undervalue and exploit those motivated by so-called “labors of love” (Fletcher, 2004). While such critiques have merit, particularly when presented in the context of dominant leadership paradigms, it is my contention that where trait-based approaches have fallen the shortest is in their flat and passive portrayal of the feminine. The dynamic synergy and generative forces of natality, which are inherently infused in the feminine, have been glaringly absent

in trait-based descriptions, rendering affiliated leadership styles somewhat impotent.

I turn to the tropic use of an archetypal feminine—as a nuance or a character that arises from a cluster of qualities, behaviors, and dynamics that are often found in constellation to one another—to imbue the feminine with the liveliness that Ettinger (2005, 2006) envisions. To begin, it is important to denote that the invocation of an archetypal feminine is neither a replacement for dominant paradigms nor a prescriptive agenda for breaking down patriarchal entrenchment. Rather, the enaction and the embodiment of an archetypal feminine—particularly during the flux and the fluidity of Postnormal Times—serve as tensile points and spaces of inquiry that enable the *copoiëtic breakthrough* (the middle-out emergence) of new habits of action and beliefs of fact. They provoke adaptive exchanges and give rise to “ecologies of innovation” (Goldstein, Hazy, & Lichtenstein, 2010). They facilitate dialogic interactions and expand fields of potentiality. They enable a *leading into being*.

To hearken the feminine, to choose to go beyond the veil, to invite the shadow, to embrace the intangible, and to engage impermanent narratives of truth is not a passive surrender; it is a conscientious dip into Mnemosyne’s pool. *Līmens* are crossed. Elements of a system are partly shared and partly abandoned by the mere happenstance of *being together* (Bertelsen, 2004). Rigidity is deferred. Improvisational spaces of creation are seeded. Processes to wit(h)ness the *becoming*, to participate in the poetic, and to care for (*sorge*) paradigmatic emergence are fostered. To call upon the feminine, to reclaim the Muses, and to

embrace (rather than vanquish) the liminal is a radical reorientation of what it means to lead; it is a continuous promise to be *copoietically* reborn as m/Other, as child, and as a “*becoming-threshold*” for life and its meaning.

Toward Liminal Leadership: Attending to the Spaces-Between

Imagine that you are a midwife: You are assisting at someone else’s birth. Do good without show or fuss. Facilitate what is happening rather than what you think ought to be happening. If you must take the lead, lead so that the mother is helped, yet still free and in charge. When the baby is born, the mother will rightly say: “We did it ourselves!” (Heider, 2015, p. 33)

Even within traditional leadership discourse, the ability to relate to uncertainty, ambiguity, paradox, and complexity has been emerging as a critical leadership competency (Baron & Cayer, 2010; Howard, 2010; Lane & Klenke, 2004). Forward-thinking leaders, who can suspend judgment while also sustaining long periods of delayed gratification, have been cited as being quintessential to organizational success (VandenBos & Bulatao, 2000). Calls to be mindfully disciplined, to cultivate situational awareness (Hinchliffe, 2010), to help moderate the anxieties that inevitably accompany ambiguity (Gudykunst, 1995), and to provide continuous attention to new information while integrating multiple perspectives into broader narratives of truth (i.e., to build meaning conscientiously within complexity, despite the fallibility of such endeavors; Lane & Klenke, 2004; Langer, 1997) have been made with frequency. These capacities, however, have been primarily solicited in the service of evolving definitions of leadership genius in response to the insolvable, “wicked problems” (Rittel & Webber, 1973) of an increasingly globalized world (Eggert, 1998). They are viewed as the extended requirements of what the heroic great man

should *do* to control or influence future outcomes rather than the means by which individuals can engage, embody, and enact complex adaptive emergence (ways of *being, being with, and being within the becoming*).

In the previous section, I propose redefining leadership as a series of co-evolving exchanges that emerge from the relational interactions, tensions, and patterns that arise in the “spaces-between” agents, ideas, environments, and other systemic fields. In this view, leadership not only goes beyond the scope of an individual leader to include the collective, but it also infers that leadership is not always hominal. That which leads does so by its strength as an attractor and its ability to appeal and to relate to other systemic components (Peat, 2008).

Leadership, therefore, is that which emerges from self-organizing, co-evolving, and *copoiëtic* complex adaptive events. Yet, as participant–observers, as wit(h)nesses of the *becoming*, individuals also have rich phenomenological and representational experiences of leadership. The narratives they build to describe and to understand leadership events can shape a system’s normative behavior. As fully suspended and embedded components of liminal spaces, these individuals are entangled; their perceptions of an “I” and a “not-I” are being twinborn within the same poetic moment, the same *becoming*-threshold. As such, I propose that it is in the enaction and the subsumption of the liminal that *liminal personae* (those who occupy interstitial spaces) are best primed to identify the narrative threads that most vividly signify the *becoming*. By employing a vacillating gaze, by cultivating capacities for poly-consciousness, and by nurturing the processes of *poiësis* (a *leading into being*), *liminal personae* invoke both the forces of natality

and the *modi* of an archetypal feminine. They summon the liminal—the chiasmic “domain of between”—in a way that seeks not to resolve ambiguity or paradox, but that attempts to hold them open—in an “orderly disorder” (Somé, 1999)—so that they may be presenced, adapted *with* and *through*, and creatively sourced as generative events unfurl (Küpers, 2011). They provide a germ for the emergence of liminal leadership.

Postnormal Performers: The Actors and the Acted Upon, the Attenders and the Attendees

“The question is not whether the poets are silent, but whether our ear is acute enough to hear.” (Gadamer, 1992, p. 78)

Liminal personae: The quick and the void. In V. Turner’s (1969) anthropological study of ritual subjects, he describes the extraordinary social and cultural phenomenon of individuals crossing *limens* into liminal space. These threshold people, or *liminal personae*, exist in states of limbo. They are “neither here nor there” (V. Turner, 1969, p. 359). They take on “no longer/not yet” (Deflem, 1991, para. 39) personas. Their known lives are cast into chaos. *Liminal personae* are denuded of all structural identity, including rank, gender, and property (V. Turner, 1969; E. Turner, 2012). They are represented by symbols that are “neither living nor dead, and both living and dead” (Deflem, 1991, para. 39). They are deigned equals within a *communitas* (V. Turner, 1969; E. Turner, 2012), an open society (see Bergson 1932/1977; Buber, 1947/1993; Popper, 1994) of neophytes that “transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships” (V. Turner, 1969, p. 372). *Liminal personae* are fields of pure potential and unprecedented potency. They are both

“the ‘quick’ of human interconnectedness” (V. Turner, 1969, p. 372) and the gaping void—the stillpoint—from which relations arise.

Even within the limited context of rituals and rites of passage, V. Turner (1969) observes that *liminal personae* imbue a great deal of influence. They can incite action. They can shape and diversify perceived realities. They can establish the “subjective moods” of symbolic and metaphoric tropes and produce diverse cultural forms that are “capable of moving people at many psychobiological levels simultaneously” (V. Turner, 1969, p. 373). Yet, within these undefined, postnormal spaces, *liminal personae* are also uniquely vulnerable to outside forces. They can lack the critical reflection that might protect them from misuse or abuse. They can attach themselves too quickly to attractors that are familiar or that resemble the vestiges of their storied histories. They can engage in avoidance behaviors. As Küpers (2011) holds, when liminal neophytes are “in transitional states, when the old world has not yet passed away, and the new world is not fully formed[, their] sense of security and identity [can be] destabilized, which makes those involved prone to cling to restabilising [*sic*] ideologies” (p. 52) or to attempt to circumvent the transformative process altogether.

These postnormal lags not only slow or hinder emergent processes, but they can also precipitate or aggravate experiences of suffering for *liminal personae*. As Daly (1999) defines it, suffering is a phenomenological event that is marked by an anguished “pushing–resisting”/“engaging–disengaging” struggle of individuals who are “powering to create new ways of *becoming* [emphasis

mine]” (p. 246) that are reconcilable with their expectations of the future or their established perceptions of self (Kralik, Visentin, & van Loon, 2006). To become attached to a particular outcome, to grasp for the familiar, to attempt to control mass dynamics, to separate oneself from an ecology of *being*, or to eschew one’s place in the *becoming*, therefore, is to invite suffering. Yet, when faced with the fear of pain or a perceived threat to one’s integrity (of personhood; of corporeal body; or of relational, ontologic, or existential realities; Cassell, 1998), *liminal personae* can be swayed to resist or to avoid change, even if it induces, exacerbates, or prolongs their experiences of suffering.

However, if liminality, marginality, and structural inferiority are reframed as spaces of inquiry, with *liminal personae* enacting participatory stances as active wit(h)nesses—as humans, “in their wholeness[,] wholly attending” (V. Turner, 1969, p. 373)—then the creative aspects of the liminal may help to mitigate the nonproductive disruptions that arise from fear, anxiety, or undue suffering. For V. Turner (1969), liminal spaces are the nebulous conditions from which

myths, symbols, rites, philosophical systems, and works of art [are frequently generated]. These cultural forms [not only] provide men with a set of templates or models [that help facilitate] . . . reclassifications of reality and man’s relationship to society, nature, and culture[, but they also] . . . incite men to action as well as thought. (p. 373)

While culture can help instruct (see Chapter 5), *liminal personae* are neither passive participants in the *becoming* nor *tabula rasae* to be scripted upon. Even without structural identity, *liminal personae* maintain agency. Even within the unknown, they can be recursive thinkers. Even in the face of incompletable fields of potentiality, they can be creators. *Liminal personae* may be neophytes, but

they are not without resource or recourse. Even if cultural forms that support an engagement of liminality are lacking, as has often been the case in the West, precedence for participatory, liminal leadership events can still be found at every transitional turn, at every crossroad, and at every *becoming*-threshold. That said, if cultural forms, narratives, and histories legitimize a space for ambiguity and paradox, if they influence *liminal personae* to value the nonlinear, matrixial processes of *poiësis*, it may be possible that liminal events can unfold with less resistance and, thus, with less suffering. The narrative shape of drama, in other words, can forestall experiences of trauma (see Garland, Farb, Goldin, & Fredrickson, 2015).

Introducing *liminal obstetrices*: Meta-wit(h)nesses of the *becoming*. If *liminal personae* are to be m/Others of the *becoming*, if they are fractal components of that which *becomes*, and if they are dynamic fields with which and against which the *becoming* unfurls, how is it that *liminal personae* can also, concurrently, develop the meta-subjectivity that is necessary to both wit(h)ness and signify emergence? How do they learn to modulate the attention and the care (*sorge*) that they extend to shifting attractors and poetic spaces? How do they reconcile improvisation with recursivity and discernment? How is it that they learn to perform in complexity? Much of the academic discourse regarding liminality rests on the allegorical experiences of *liminal personae* and the cultural symbols that demark the phases of their separation, postnormality, and structural reincorporation (Beech, 2011; V. Turner, 1969). Far less is revealed about the tacit, embodied, and enacted capacities that *liminal personae* must engage within

complex adaptive exchanges. To elucidate the more nuanced interactions of liminality, I look beyond the phenomenological experiences of liminal neophytes to include and to query those who are called to attend to liminal spaces and to *liminal personae* in a more acute capacity, as the guardians, the watchers, the synergists, the horticulturalists, and the sacralizers of the spaces-between—the meta-wit(h)nesses of the *becoming* or *liminal obstetrices* (liminal midwives).

In *Theogony*, the goddess Hecate provides the West with one of the first mythological representations of a *liminal obstetrix*. Hecate is afforded the power to rule over any sphere or to influence any population that she desires (Hesiod, ca. 700 BCE/1914); yet, she spurns traditional positions of prestige and authority in favor of attending to threshold spaces. In doing so, Hecate casts her gaze (and ours) onto the understated import of the marginalized shadow. Anthon (1847) holds,

Hecate was the night, and, by an extension of this idea, the primitive night, the primary cause or parent of all things. . . . Her action upon nature, her diversified attributes, her innumerable functions, are a mixture of physical, allegorical, and philosophical traditions respecting the fusion of the elements and the generation of beings. (p. 579)

As a divine figure choosing to inhabit the liminal, Hecate not only positions herself to bear witness to adaptive exchanges and *poiëtic* processes, but she also absorbs liminal events into broader ontological fabrics by actively presencing them. Artists, thus, have often represented Hecate in triplicate form (Edwards, 1986)—as a vessel for all that transpires within interstitial spaces and a receptacle for the multiverses of pasts and futures that buttress against them.

If Mnemosyne is known as the meta-preserver of memory and as the progenitor of culture through the Muses, then Hecate is best regarded as an

illuminator of creation, as a meta-wit(h)ness of the *becoming*. Without attachment to outcome or concern for the reason of men (Anthon, 1847), she both simplifies and complexifies liminal spaces with her light and shadow. Acting as a trim tab (an almost indeterminate, but loosely directional rudder that is embedded within the initial and adaptive conditions of an emergent course; see Fuller, 1972), Hecate draws and modulates her strength from her integral relationship to the whole. Regarded as being more comfortable in the fringes, straddling conventional boundaries and eluding definition, than being observed (Hornblower, Spawforth, & Eidinow, 2012), Hecate is known, etymologically, as she “who operates from afar” or she who “removes or drives off” (Anthon, 1847, p. 579). As such, the force of Hecate’s work—befitting of the liminal spaces she abides—is in its subtlety, its deft improvisation, its spectral vision, and its enacted ecology of *being*.

Given Hecate’s standing in *Theogony*, it is curious that she has been generally regarded as a minor goddess in the Greek pantheon and even denigrated in later years as a figure correlated with ghosts, damned spirits, necromancy, and sorcery (Atsma, 2011a; Hornblower et al., 2012). Yet, when put into the context of what has been traditionally promoted as virtuous in the West (i.e., notions of the heroic, great man), Hecate’s standing warrants logic. Lévi-Strauss (1955) once posited that the substance of a myth lies in the story that it tells, in the wholeness of its composition rather than the examination of its isolated parts. However, an analysis of the mythic whole would also be incomplete without consideration for the tacit and implicit transmissions of *gnosis*, an

acknowledgement of myriad interpretive layers and lenses, and an honoring of the other negative spaces that are implied therein. Indeed, what lies in wait—unseen within the shadow—carries its own intrinsic potency. Myths are not merely a means to share information, explanation, or ways of *being* (Lawson, 1979); as living cultural forms, they also record how figurative minds interpret narratives within the contexts of various existential states. They reflect a culture's ontology of *being* and bank the seeds of its *becoming*.

In the West, myths that promote the hero's journey (whereby a protagonist meets and then conquers challenges that arise within a spectrum of liminality; see Campbell, 2008) have been promoted as exemplars of desirable narrative arcs. Even performances of childbirth have been reframed as hero's tales (commonly patronized by popular goddesses like Artemis and Eileithyia; G. Thomson & Downe, 2013; Waugh 2009). Yet, Hecate, as a mythic *liminal obstetrix*, offers the West an archetypical representation of a narrative that has long lain dormant in its anthology. In her unattached wit(h)nessing of *poiësis*, a *leading into being*, coupled with the holism of her vision, Hecate enacts a depth of attendance so primal that it has even been recorded in non-hominal primates (Pan et al., 2014)—the performance of midwifery.

Hands

These are my hands. Thru these hands I have come to see the world. These hands have measured the growth of life and documented the stalling of time. They guide my ears to places where I hear the watch[-]like beating of tiny hearts. My hands have felt the hard bony framework of passages and the softness of muscles, which will bulge like the petals of a rose.

My hands have opened windows to the energy of the souls of those I have touched. They have held the frigid rigidity of steel instruments, and the softness of a friend. There are stories in these hands, read from the pages of the work of women. With my hands I have felt the power of the strength it takes to grow and release new spirit.

My hands were born with the knowing of touch. The journey has added how and when and the time to ask for help. Teaching hands engulfed mine until they were ready to fly. My hands are joined in a circle which is unbroken through time.

Sometimes my hands do nothing. Their most important work to be still with fingers laced, and witness. “The art of doing nothing well” has been passed from one generation to the next. Mine have been taught by some of the most powerful hands, to watch and wait. This is perhaps the hardest for hands born to touch.

If I have nothing else to give you, let me teach you how to see with your hands. How to open the windows of life, and close the door softly when it is time. In the darkness, it is your hands that will light the way.

These are my hands These are the hands of a midwife.

Note. “Hands,” by J. W. Smith (personal communication, November 20, 2016). Reprinted with permission from author. Also see “Into the Hands of a Midwife,” by J. Rorie, 2003, *Journal of Midwifery*, 48(2), p. 164. Copyright 2003 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc. Reprinted with permission.

CHAPTER 4: PERFORMING MIDWIFERY

There is power that comes to women when they give birth. They don't ask for it, it simply invades them. [It] accumulates like clouds on the horizon and passes through, carrying a child with it. . . . It sounds in our bodies . . . [and makes] a mockery of all the work we have ever done on our own. Birth can silence our ego and, for the moment, we feel ourselves overcome by a larger life pounding through our own. (Armstrong & Feldman, 1990/2007, On the Power section, para. 21)

At the onset of hominin evolution, 4–5 million years ago, the earliest of human ancestors stood upright, using two limbs rather than four to move through the world (Ko, 2015; Rosenberg & Trevathan, 1995, 2002). Bipedalism, as this phenomenon is known, was a critical marker and catalyst for evolutionary change in the hominin line. Paleoanthropologists have correlated it to the diversification of diets; the expansion of self-protective behaviors; the ability to create, carry, and use tools (Ko, 2015); and even the enhancement of body temperature regulation as hominins changed habitats from forested regions to grassy savannahs (Wheeler, 1984). Anatomically, the postural and physiological requirements of bipedalism not only mandated a strengthening and elongation of the hominin spine, but the hominin pelvis also had to be radically reoriented in order to accommodate the centralization of the body's trunk mass over the hip region (Whitcome, Shapiro, & Lieberman, 2007). This pelvic repositioning left little room for error during parturition. Although the brain sizes of hominins did not start their marked expansion until approximately 2.5–2.8 million years ago, with the advent of the *Homo* genus (Rosenberg & Trevathan, 2002; Villmoare et al., 2015), early hominin infants already presented with the broad, rigid shoulder structure that put birthing females and their offspring at risk (Franciscus, 2009). Prolonged labors and birth complications, like shoulder dystocia, heightened the

threat of maternal and infant mortality, morbidity, and predation. In turn, hominin birth behavior began to move away from unattended births (which is still preferred by most mammals, including non-human primates) and toward assisted births (Falk, Zollikofer, Morimoto, & Ponce de León, 2012; Franciscus, 2009; Rosenberg & Trevathan, 1995, 2002; Trevathan, 1996), or “obligate midwifery” (Trevathan, 1987).

According to paleontologists, the reorientation of the hominin pelvis was just one of the pelvic structural changes to materialize as a result of bipedalism. Over time, the distance between the hip joints and the sacrum also decreased in order to enhance the efficiency of bipedal movement (Franciscus, 2009). In fact, as the *Homo* genus evolved, the hominin pelvis became situated perpendicularly so that the pelvic inlet was widest on the sagittal plane (side-to-side) and the pelvic outlet was broadest on the coronal plane (front-to-back, between the pubic symphysis and the coccyx; Buck, 2011; Franciscus, 2009; Trevathan, 1996). This development further complicated the birthing process (Falk et al., 2012) and contributed to an increased likelihood of what is known alternately as cephalopelvic disproportion (Cassidy, 2006), the “obstetrical dilemma” (Washburn, 1960), and the “scar of human evolution” (Krogman, 1951). In short, the *Homo* genus not only exhibited the broad, rigid shoulders of its earlier hominin relations (which required infants to squeeze through a compacted pelvis), but as the *Homo* genus encephalized (more than tripling in brain mass; Zihlman & Bolter, 2015), its neonates also presented with craniums that were both perpendicular in depth to the width of the neonates’ shoulders and fitted almost

identically in circumference to the aperture of the maternal pelvis (Franciscus, 2009; Rosenberg & Trevathan, 1995, 2002). As a result, *Homo* offspring had to rotate twice in order to exit the maternal pelvic cavity: once to free the head and another time to free the shoulders. This rotational birth pattern meant that a majority of *Homo* neonates emerged from the birth canal in an occiput anterior (face-down) position (Buck, 2011). As Rosenberg and Trevathan (2002) explain, this presentation has its challenges:

Because the human fetus emerges from the birth canal facing in the opposite direction from its mother, it is difficult for the mother, whatever her position, to reach down, as non-human primate mothers often do, to clear a breathing passage for the infant or to remove the umbilical cord from around its neck. If a human mother tries to assist in delivery by guiding the infant from the birth canal, she risks pulling it against the body's angle of flexion, possibly damaging the infant's spinal cord, brachial nerves and muscles. The human adaptation to this challenge is to seek assistance during birth. [Thus,] the species-typical pattern of "obligate midwifery" emerged. (pp. 1202–1203)

To midwife means to be "with woman" (Cassidy, 2006). It is a performance that is as ancient as the human lineage itself (Rosenberg & Trevathan, 2002). It predates tool-making, the development of speech and language patterns, the use of fire, the advent of agriculture, and a multitude of other human activities (Harari, 2015)—*by millions of years* (Trevathan, 1996). Moreover, given the physioanatomical complexities of human birth and the altricial prematurity of human infants, it is questionable whether the hominin line could have evolved to its current speciation without the inception and performance of midwifery.

In this chapter, I explore midwifery as an ontology of *being*, a performance of *being with*, and an ethic of care that facilitates *becoming*. I

endeavor to uncorset the maternal body (Kahn, 1989) so as to offer an exemplar—a patterning (Tomkins & Simpson, 2015)—of lived time and space, tacit and embodied understanding, and the poetic emergence of essence, or “mattering,” from existential *being*. I present midwifery as a “genuine caring in caring for the genuine” (Berg, 2005, Abstract, para. 1) and engage the philosophical works of phenomenologists to help elucidate the *ēthos* of midwifery. Throughout this chapter, I hold firmly to the position that midwifery is both primordial and originary. Outside of the mother–baby dyad, midwifery is one of the most foundational relationships that humans have to one another and the world around them. There is much to be learned, therefore, by finding one’s way back to the beginning and coming to know the significance of that place for the very first time (Eliot, 1943).

Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology, Performance, and a Midwife Sense

“By nature, midwives trust birth.” (Bak, 2006, para. 9)

Pregnancy and childbirth affect every system of the maternal body, largely autonomically. Hormones initiate a concert of activity (Soma-Pillay, Nelson-Piercy, Tolppanen, & Mebazaa, 2016), blood volumes increase by half (Hyttén, 1985), skin darkens and stretches (Martin & Leal-Khoury, 1992), joint ligaments relax (Calguneri, Bird, & Wright, 1982), new organs (placentas) are grown from scratch (Evain-Brion & Malassine, 2003), immune functions are remodulated (Mor & Cardenas, 2010), and myriad other events transpire without conscious instruction. The fetal body also advances in line with its own developmental course—subject to the health of its environment and resources, but also endogenous in the direction of its physiological growth (O’Rahilly & Müller,

2010). Indeed, as “bodies within bodies” (Finlay, 2013, p. 207), the perinatal period is a quintessential expression of the somatic experience. It is a wholly “bodied” space and time.

Midwifery—the art, performance, and ethic of *being with*—is intrinsically connected to the fluid temporality, biological rhythms, and relational dynamics of bodied spaces (Walsh, 2009). In fact, “obligate midwifery” most likely arose not as a strategic means to have more successful birth outcomes, but as a deep maternal desire to ease the physical and emotional stresses of birth by way of companionship (Cassidy, 2006; Rosenberg & Trevathan, 2002). It was a bodily impulse. Keller (2011) holds that “the body is basically an open field of presence” (p. 122); it is a pre-conscious, aesthetic dynamic of sense-driven and relational experiences of existence. The body does not merely live *in* space and time; it inhabits them. It *is* space and time (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012). As such, the body is integral to all *being* and knowing, providing the frame from which the world is experienced (Tomkins & Simpson, 2015) while also serving as a fractal component of the metaphysical whole. Polanyi (1966) explains,

In all our waking moments[,] we are *relying* [emphasis in original] on our awareness of contacts of our body with things outside for *attending* [emphasis in original] to these things. Our own body is the only thing in the world which we normally never experience as object, but experience always in terms of the world to which we are attending from our body. (pp. 15–16)

Knowledge that is gleaned from this embodied attendance is experienced as essential. It is *of* “the things themselves” (Husserl, 1901/2001, p. 175) *as* “the things themselves.” It is inscribed as an immediate, non-ratiocinative cognition (Davis-Floyd & Davis, 1996), an intuitive reckoning. Laughlin (1997) describes

this unconscious process of awareness as being “neurognostic”—a deep, genetically preserved neurocognitive process that allows information to be imprinted as knowledge without the formal engagement of linguistic or conceptual cognitive processes (Davis-Floyd & Davis, 1996). For Polanyi (1996), comprehension at this level is experienced as an extension of the embodied self. Its form and structure reflect the habits and the performative experiences of the indwelling body (Blaaka & Eri, 2008; Cheyney, 2011)—beginning with the perinatal period (Ridgway, 2006).

In line with these tenets, midwifery upholds an explicit trust in tacit and embodied fields, even allowing them to serve as primary sources of authoritative knowledge (Bak, 2006; Davis-Floyd & Davis, 1996; Gaskin, 1996; Hunter, 2008; Parratt & Fahy, 2008). Midwives believe that “women’s bodies are designed to give birth and know how to labor better than we understand” (Rooks, 1997, p. 128). As such, zealous attempts to control, to intervene, or to improve upon birth processes are understood to contribute to mounting tides of unintended and even harmful consequences (Odent, 1994; Rooks, 1999; Vincent, 2002). These so-called “cascades of interventions” generally do not improve birth outcomes en masse (National Partnership for Women & Families, 2016; Renfrew, Homer, et al., 2014; Rossignol, Chaillet, Boughrassa, & Moutquin, 2014), but they still persist in technocratic and industrialized medical cultures that value *doing* over the relational and wisdom-based care cultures of *being with* (Byrom & Downe, 2010; Cheyney, 2011; Davis-Floyd, 1987). As an iteration of the latter, midwifery lies skillfully “in knowing when to inform, [when to] act, [when to]

seek help[,] and most importantly, [when to] be still or withdraw” (Blaaka & Eri, 2008, p. 350). It arises from an ontology of *being*; from a relational, embodied, and embedded position of *being with (copoietically wit[h]nessing)*; and from the performative, co-creative processes of the emergent *becoming*, which allow birthing bodies (i.e., liminal bodies) to be reinscribed with personal, familial, and sociocultural meaning (Carter, 2010; C. Chamberlain, Fergie, Sinclair, & Asmar, 2016; Cheyney, 2011; Schäfer, Jaeger-Erben, & Bamberg, 2012).

Midwives purport that it is only in the continuous attendance (Nicholls & Webb, 2006; Sandall, 1995) and the presencing of lived perinatal performances (Blaaka & Eri, 2008)—in the active, moment-by-moment, *kairotic* animations of gestating, laboring, birthing, and bonding—that the nature of the birthing body reveals itself (Rooks, 1997). To have a “midwife sense” (Berg & Dahlberg, 2001), in other words, is to encounter bodied spaces as an engrossment of lived time, “laden with the thick[, phenomenal] experiences of subjective stimulus complexity” (Flaherty, 1991, p. 82). It is to cultivate and to negotiate intimate relationships with both generalized and individualized norms (Bak, 2006; Berg, 2005; Rooks, 1999; Winter & Duff, 2009), to absorb storied histories (Downe, 2005; Gidman, 2013; P. G. Reed, 1999; VandeVusse, 1999; Weston, 2012), to lean into uncertainty (Bak, 2006; Matthias & Babrow, 2007), to vacillate between and to meld epistemologies (Davis-Floyd & Davis, 1996; Hunter, 2008), and to care for the whole *gestalt* of birth (Reid, 1986; Renfrew, Homer, et al., 2014) as it is experienced during a particular unfolding (Muoni, 2012; Noble, 1983) and as it is preserved within a lineaged *theoria* (Davis-Floyd & Davis, 1996; Hunter, 2008;

Rooks, 1997). To have a “midwife sense” is to employ intuition and insight, or “motherwit,” so seamlessly that it acts as the “underlying grammar of midwifery” (Fraser, 1998, p. 26)—shaping the world as it is perceived (the phenomenology) and the ways in which *poiësis* is both activated and enlivened (the performance).

Garner (1994) defines bodied spaces as the fields in which phenomenology and performance collide. They engage, choreograph, ritualize, and enact the poetic function (Bauman & Briggs, 1990), serving as the initial sources of “organizational becoming” (the budding, ontological gradations that precede structure; Guimarães-Costa & Pina e Cunha, 2013). They adaptively *lead into being*. For midwives, respect for bodied spaces is not only a dignity-protective measure for mothers, babies, and the normative processes of birth (Berg, 2005; Fahy, 2012), but it is also a heuristic opportunity to transform ways of relating (Byrom & Downe, 2010), to co-create cultural mores, to shift hegemonic structures, and to redefine social paradigms (Cheyney, 2011). Bodied spaces do not exist in isolation; they constantly encounter, participate, and improvise with other fields, ecologies, and relational tensions of *being*. They demarcate the evolving perceptual thresholds of significance, or “mattering” (Stoian, 2008), as well as the reflexive performances and the ethics of care that arise in response.

Midwifery and the Ethics of Care

The starting point for gaining knowledge is the created life as it is actually lived and experienced. . . . Life is understood as a life in dependency, in the sense that the other’s life, the birthing woman’s life [and the infant’s life, are] placed in the care of the midwife. Ethics are expressed in these meetings, in the way we care for the other’s exposure and vulnerability. (Blaaka & Eri, 2008, p. 346)

Foucault (1997) once argued that when ethics are understood as a way of *being* as well as the outward, behavioral expressions of moral sentiments, they mirror the ancient Greek notion of *ēthos*. The indwelling work of self-care and self-enhancement is intrinsically connected to the relational, *oikos*-ful activities of receptivity and caring for others. These ethics, at times referred to as “feminist ethics” or “the ethics of care” in postmodernity (see Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984), are inherently ontological in nature. They rest upon an integrated vision of “the capacity to care or [to] be concerned about things, persons, a whole life-course, a society, [and] one’s self” (Reich, 1995, Conclusion section, para. 8). They bind and define the complexity of lifeworlds. They not only instruct how to care, but they also intimate what is worth caring about. To this effect, Heidegger (1927/1962) identifies three primary vectors associated with care: a) *besorgen*, the concern that arises from the perception of something “mattering” (Stoian, 2008) amidst that which is available to us (Dreyfus, 1991); b) *fürsorge*, the solicitude that comes from *being with* the *being* of others (Stoian, 2008); and c) *sorge*, the ontological sense of a wholeness of *being* that is not the composite of *being*, but is rather the “primordial interwovenness of existence” (Tomkins & Simpson, 2015, p. 1021) that makes all ontic experiences of care possible (Stack, 1969). So important is the concept of care to Heidegger that he assigns *sorge* the distinction of being the “fundamental ontological structure of [the] *Dasein*” (Stack, 1969, p. 30)—it is the very *being* of a *being-in-the-world* (Heidegger, 1927/1962; Hyland, 1997). To be human, in other words, is to care.

Heidegger (1927/1962) calls upon the Greco-Roman myth of the goddess Cura (Latin for “care” or “concern”), as it was recounted by the Roman scholar Hyginus (trans. 1960) at the turn of the Common Era, to elucidate *sorge*’s primordial role. In short, the goddess Cura was crossing a particular river when she spotted some clay and spontaneously began to mold the first human being. As Cura was pondering her creation, Jupiter approached. Cura requested that Jupiter breathe spirit into the human form (Reich, 1995), and he acquiesced (Hyland, 1997). However, Jupiter then refused Cura the right to bestow her name upon the being. The goddess Terra (or Earth) emerged during this dispute and also struck a claim upon Cura’s creation, since its flesh was of her own body (Froese, 2005). The matter was eventually settled by Saturn (the Roman counterpart of Cronus, the Greek god of time; Atsma, 2011b) who decreed: since Jupiter had inspirited the being, he would receive the spirit upon death; since Terra had offered up her body, she would receive the body upon death; and since Cura had first fashioned the creation, she would assume possession of it in the in-between, during its life course (Hyginus, trans. 1960). The creature was to be called “homo” since it was made of *humus*, or earth (Reich, 1995), but Cura, as care, was recognized as the source, nature, and *praxis* of its *being* (Heidegger, 1927/1962).

Care as Concern (*Besorgen*) and the Tensions of Time

In recalling the myth of Cura, Heidegger (1927/1962) not only brings the integral relationship between care and life to the fore, but he also postulates that care and temporality are co-primordial (Froese, 2005; Hyland, 1997). At the very

genesis of human life is the inherent promise of human death (Jonas, 1992; Leavitt, 1996). It is an existential and corporeal truth that begets the tensegrity of time (Carey, 2000). For Heidegger (1927/1962), temporality—revealed as both “the sense of authentic care” (p. 374) and the fundamental unity of care’s structure (Dreyfus, 1991)—is what precipitates and helps to enframe meaning. As Tomkins and Simpson (2015) elaborate, “Care is about *mattering* [emphasis in original]—being both of-concern and of-matter. It is . . . fundamental to our engagement with, and construction of, the world through the [temporal] medium of our bodies” (pp. 1024–1025). Without time and the promise of our physical mortality, there would be no impetus to pay “attention to one’s own presence in the world” (Ciulla, 2009, p. 3); there would be no need to care. This is not to imply that *besorgen* is concerned exclusively with self-concern or self-preservation, however. Heidegger (1927/1962) maintains that because *Daseins* are embedded or immersed in the world, they are already absorbed (*verfallen*) into the fabric of what *is* (which is denoted by the temporal concept of “the past”). Likewise, because a *Dasein*’s life occurs *with* and *within* existential (ontological) and existentiell (ontic) experiences, *Daseins* are additionally *beings* who are also *alongside* and attuned (*befindlichkeit*) to the world they inhabit (i.e., “the present”). Moreover, since *Daseins* seek to understand (*verstehen*) their *being*, they are furthermore “already-ahead” of the present moment, making associative and predictive connections while also tracing the roots of narrative meaning (“the future”; Tomkins & Simpson, 2015). Care, therefore, inhabits and spans all time

simultaneously as a fractal time ecology, and care for oneself is tautological for care for all *being* (Heidegger, 1927/1962). There is no separation.

For Heidegger (1927/1962), care is an *ēthos* that presents as the “original ethics” of *Daseins*; it is the “basic stance of dwelling in the world” (Carey, 2000, p. 23). Care manifests *with* and *within* all temporal structures—from the ecstatic (*kairotic*) to the horizontal (chronological, linear, or industrial time). Indeed, the engrossed existentiality of a *Dasein*’s ecstatic *being* is inextricably conjoined with the “temporal *horizon* [emphasis in original] of the world of everyday [existentiell] activity” (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 245). Both matter. As Carey (2000) interprets Heidegger, a healthy *ēthos* is

primordial or originary because it is developed in relationship with the ontological emergence of other *beings* [emphasis mine] and their emergence is perceptual [i.e., phenomenal in nature]. Because the emergence of others is perpetually underway, the development of the *ethos* [emphasis in original] that is required to welcome that emergence is also perceptual [*besorgen*]. Hence, there is deep ontological meaning in our attempt to maintain ourselves in the *ethos* that welcomes the ontological emergence of the other [*fürsorge*]. Furthermore, since our ability to respond to the needs of others depends upon our ability to see others in their ontological depth [*sorge*], the need to develop our *capacity* [emphasis in original] to respond is central to the *ethos* of original ethics. (p. 28)

For Merleau-Ponty (1945/2012), this “capacity to respond” begins with the pre-rational, lived body. Because the primordial body exists in dynamic and reciprocal play with the other entities, fields, and tensions that make up its ecology, the meetings that occur in these bodied spaces are what enable perceptions and notions of mattering (*bersorgen*) to arise. As Abram (1996) puts it,

In the act of perception[, one] enter[s] into a sympathetic relation with the perceived, which is possible only because neither [one’s] body nor the

sensible exists outside the flux of time, and so each has its own dynamism, its own pulsation and style. Perception[,] in this sense, is an attunement or synchronization between [one's] own rhythms and the rhythms of the things themselves, their own tones and textures. (p. 54)

These often ambiguous relations between the self and the world are not only symbiotic (Carey, 2000), but they are also tensile in nature. Since the internal and the external are never mutually exclusive (Froese, 2005), these exchanges establish and signify the porous boundaries of *poiësis* and initiate the poetic capacity for creative emergence. As such, the ethics that are derived from these participatory spaces are more concerned with the truth of *being*, or authenticity (Heidegger, 1946/1998), than any sort of decisive or dichotomous morality (Paley, 2000). The ethics of care present as a profound and watchful solicitude for all facets of a lifeworld—both animate and inanimate—akin to what midwives refer to as “genuine caring in caring for the genuine” (Berg, 2005, Abstract section, para. 1).

Care as Solicitude (*Fürsorge*) and Genuine Caring in Caring for the Genuine

“[Midwives] see their expertise in their connective labor, of connecting pregnancy to other areas of daily living, connecting with women emotionally, and connecting birth with meaningfulness.” (Bjorkman, 2004, p. 114)

If *besorgen* is the concern for perceiving and knowing the world as it is—as it matters *with* and *within* a particular space and time—then *fürsorge* can be considered the imaginal or emotive bridge between the self and an ecology of *being* (Carey, 2000). Although some scholars (see Tomkins & Simpson, 2015) have attempted to simplify these two vectors of care by assigning *besorgen* the role of caring for things and *fürsorge* the role of engaging with other people, it is my contention that if one has an “anxious concern for” or a “worry for”

something that is other-than-self or for a self-in-the-world-that-is-other (as Heidegger, 1927/1962, describes *besorgen*), then this concern is itself an example of *being-in*, *being-alongside*, and *being-with* the *being* of others (*fürsorge*), regardless of degrees of animation. Distinctions that are drawn between *besorgen* and *fürsorge*, therefore, have less to do with the objects of one's concern than with the relational breadth, complexity, and authenticity of one's empathy. *Fürsorge* is a concern that meaningfully moors interstitial spaces; it links fields and entities to one another—and to oneself—as intrinsic and incarnate entanglements (Stoian, 2008). *Fürsorge* is the manifestation of a multifaceted capacity to sense beyond the self (to be curious), to adapt with measure (to curate), to imagine oneself in another's stead (to perceive by proxy [from the Latin root *prōcūrātīo*]), and to assert intention or see to something (to procure) as an extension of care (*cura*; Tomkins & Simpson, 2015).

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger (1927/1962) offers two variations of *fürsorge*'s intentional engagement with the *being* of an other: a) *einspringen*, an intervention during which the care-giver “leaps in” to assume control or responsibility for the care-recipient so as to achieve a particular outcome (similar to both heroic leadership and obstetrical models), and b) *vorausspringen*, an adaptive approach wherein the care-giver “leaps ahead” of the care-recipient in order to connect the recipient to a broader *spielraum* of possibilities without an attachment to a specific action or solution (analogous to liminal leadership and midwifery; Healy, 2011; Tomkins & Simpson, 2015). For Reich (1995), the latter is a “kind of solicitude that is authentic care, for it helps the other to know himself

or herself in care . . . and to become free for care” (Heidegger section, para. 7) to reveal a mutually illuminating and multiplicitous truth of *being* (Tomkins & Simpson, 2015). It is a “genuine caring in caring for the genuine” (Berg, 2005, Abstract section, para. 1) that calls for a) the mindful cultivation of dignity-protective relationships, b) the integration of embodied knowledge sets, and c) a balancing of complementary and sometimes paradoxical perspectives.

Dignity-protective relationships. *To be with the being* of others is to recognize and to engage the truth of another’s *being*; it is to care for and to be protective of another’s indelible dignity (Barger, 2005). Midwifery, as the art, performance, and ethic of *being with the being* of others, centralizes these dignity-protective relationships in its formal models of care (see Appendix C; Colvin et al., 2013; Johanson, Newburn, & Macfarlane, 2002; Midwives Alliance of North America, 2016; Renfrew, McFadden, et al., 2014; Rothman, 1979; ten Hoope-Bender et al., 2014). Midwifery models not only maintain that the transformative processes of birth are meaningful, natural, and to be regarded as normal (unless evidence emerges to the contrary; Ament, 2007; Rooks, 1999; Sakala & Corry, 2008; Singtree, 2007), but they also express and value a depth of engagement and a continuous attendance to perinatal women and their families—a meta-wit(h)nessing—that is unparalleled in surgical–obstetrical frameworks (See Appendix C; Byrom & Downe, 2010; Carolan, 2011; Reid, 1989). Midwives seek to meet those they care for authentically, “where they are,” without judgment or derision (Nicholls & Webb, 2006). As the renowned midwife, Ina May Gaskin (1975), once asserted,

A midwife must have a deep love for other women. She knows that all women, including herself, are sometimes as elemental as the weather and the tides, and that they need each other's help and understanding. The true sisterhood of all women is not an abstract idea to her. . . . A midwife is an especially privileged person because she gets to see the original face of each child [and each mother] she helps to birth. (p. 273)

A midwife presences the face of authentic *being* (*sorge*), revealed most explicitly when the veils between life and death are at their most ambiguous. There is a relational exchange of intimacy during this period that is so primordial that it goes well beyond any notions of cultural or diagnostic competency (Barger, 2005; Meddings & Haith-Cooper, 2008); it is an evocation of the esoteric (Parratt & Fahy, 2008), the very essence of essence.

To protect the sanctity of such dynamics, Berg (2005) purports that midwives use five overlapping elements to serve as the foundation of dignity-protective relationships: a) mutuality, b) trust, c) ongoing dialogue, d) shared responsibility, and e) enduring presence. Mutuality, for Berg, is a connective and bridging confirmation of the relational other. It makes plain that the other is seen as mattering, and it acknowledges that the suffering or thriving of another's *being* is linked to one's own. Trust extends from this mutuality. For Berg and Dahlberg (1998), trust is the communication of mutuality—both verbal and nonverbal—that creates a sense of safety, “reliability[,] and security out of chaos” (p. 262). Midwives trust the instincts of birthing women (Thorstensen, 2000) as well as their “accommodating and collaborative bodies” (Carter, 2010, p. 1005), and women, in turn, allow themselves to rest in the watchful and experienced hands of their midwives (Berg, 2005). This trust establishes itself over time by way of ongoing dialogue (Newman, 2005). A participatory and dialogic precedent is set

during initial meetings between care-providers and care-recipients, and it carries forth throughout the birth and into the reincorporative postnatal period. The time allotted for these meetings is intentionally of length so as to allow the disclosure of personal contexts and narratives; to disseminate practical information; and to name and explore the physical, psychological, social, spiritual, emotional, and other relational concerns which may arise. This dialogism is an acknowledgement that midwives and birthing families share the responsibility for the liminal experiences of pregnancy, labor, and birth (Berg, 2005; Colvin et al., 2013; Hunter, 2008). It establishes an opportunity for “midwives and mothers [to] cocreate, appropriate, and reinterpret meaning in childbirth[,] . . . replacing mechanistic views of the body and birth with the language of connection, celebration, power, transformation, and [the recognition] of mothers and babies as inseparable units” (Cheyney, 2011, p. 520). Just as a mother–baby dyad has an implicit understanding of enduring presence, midwives must also communicate a sense of nearness and availability to those they care for (Berg, 2005). As Blaaka and Eri (2008) explain,

Wise midwifery means to find a good balance between closeness and distance and not intervene unnecessarily. The midwife stays near the woman, trying to decrease fear and increase safety by listening to the woman’s inner space without crowding her. . . . Caring for birth . . . is not merely to manage the task in a purely technical sense, but to use the possibility to be present . . . over time. It is based on a belief system that the birthing body is a living and sensing body, which has both order and disorder. . . . Lack of ambiguity is not the primary consideration, but [is rather] the individual possibility for variation with which the body expresses itself [and gives truth to its *being*]. (pp. 350–351)

Enduring presence allows mutuality to take hold. It diminishes the space between a care-giver and a care-recipient, and it attunes somatic and cognitive perceptions

of emergence—in a dignity-protective manner—toward the genuine as life makes itself known.

Embodied knowledge and a balance of perspectives. To *be with* the complexity of birth, to wit(h)ness liminal emergence, is to extract or to curate the essential from the non-essential (Blaaka & Eri, 2008); it is to recognize “pattern integrity” (see Fuller, 1975) without comprising the dignity of the whole. Before a midwife can attend to others, monitoring the rhythms of a labor or the course of a pregnancy with her “head, heart, and hands” (Blaaka & Eri, 2008, p. 349), she must commit to engaging in a rigorous practice of reflexive self-inquiry. Shifting between inductive and deductive reasoning (Davis-Floyd & Davis, 1996); employing a “midwife sense”; assessing information gleaned from empirical, aesthetic, personal, ethical, subjective, procedural, and constructed knowledge sets (Hunter, 2008); recalling wisdom drawn from shared narratives, apprenticeships, or case histories (Gidman, 2013; VandeVusse, 1999); considering sociological, economic, ethnic, cultural, and hegemonic contexts; and continuously monitoring oneself for signs of bias, hubris, or potential blind spots (Lambert, Jomeen, & McSherry, 2010) are all incredibly sophisticated epistemological endeavors in their own right. For a midwife to fuse these ways of knowing into an enacted complex gaze with any degree of efficacy is the work of a lifetime. As Berg (2005) asserts, “There are no short cuts to gaining deep-rooted, embodied knowledge” (Embodied Knowledge section, para. 4), but if a midwife is genuine to herself and open to the genuine in others, she “*is* [emphasis in original] her knowledge” (Embodied Knowledge section, para. 1). She is the

ontological embodiment and the ontic expression of care (*sorge*), caring-for (*fürsorge*), and caring-about (*besorgen*). She has a visceral understanding of women caring for others that spans the breadth of time, and she feels called to care in this way—to midwife—“because [she] remember[s it] in [her] cells [emphasis in original]” (VanGorder, 2000, as cited in Hunter, 2008, p. 411). What may be known and what may be deemed as mattering, in other words, is always available to the inquirer who embraces an ethic of care, who genuinely cares for the genuine (Plested, 2014). Care is not only “the very stuff of humanity” (Tomkins & Eatough, 2013, p. 4), but it is also that which opens up all possible horizons for human engagement *with* and *within* the world. It is both *a priori* and essential, concrete and variable. The very heart of care, to borrow words from the poet T. S. Eliot (1943), is “a condition of complete simplicity / (Costing not less than everything)” (p. 59).

Care as the Primordial Ontology of *Being* (*Sorge*): Coming Home

“With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling
We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where started
And know the place for the first time.” (Eliot, 1943, p. 59)

When attempting to define what constitutes a “good midwife,” researchers (see Byrom & Downe, 2010; Carolan, 2011; Nicholls & Webb, 2006; Renfrew, McFadden, et al., 2014) have pointed to attributes like “compassion, understanding, honesty, competence, commitment, humanity, . . . courage, creativity, a sense of justice, respect, optimism[,] and grace” (Nicholls & Webb, 2006, p. 415). While of virtue, if one is interpreting midwifery care in a Heideggerian sense of the term, as *sorge*, then these trait-based descriptions are

woefully insufficient. They fail to capture the lived experience, the dynamic complexity, the multiplicity, and the existential depth of care (Tomkins & Simpson, 2015). They perpetuate an industrial bias toward “doing” midwifery rather than “*being*” the embodiment of midwifery care (Fahy, 1998; P. K. Turner, 2004). This is not to imply that *being* is a static state or devoid of creative action, however (Bigwood, 2007). In his “Letter on ‘Humanism,’” Heidegger (1946/1998) makes clear that the core of a *Dasein*’s every action is accomplishment (a birth), which is not the effect of “doing” but is an extension of *being*. For Heidegger (1946/1998),

“To accomplish means to unfold something into the fullness of its essence, to lead it forth into [its] fullness—*producere* [emphasis in original]. Therefore[,] only what already is can really be accomplished. But what ‘is’ above all is *being* [emphasis mine].” (p. 239)

Existence, thus, can be said to precede essence, as Sartre (1946/2007) once proposed, because the nature, meaningfulness, and essence of *being* is always relationally contingent upon what existentially *is* and *is becoming*. The activities of a *Dasein*, in turn, are wholly in service to the “shepherding” of *being* into essence, the enabling of “ecstatic existence [to be] experienced as ‘care’” (Heidegger, 1946/1998, p. 252). This “leading-forth,” this shepherding or midwifery of *being*, is how we come to know and to inhabit our dwelling-place in the world, our *oikos*-fulness, our home.

The original face of our *being* (Hwu, 1998) is forged inside the bodies of our mothers, “the first site in the world into which we are thrown” (Mumford, 2013, p. 77). From that place, our sense of home and our care for *being* continue to complexify as we encounter, engage, connect, and adapt to the world

throughout the life course (Schillmeier & Domènech, 2009). “Home,” as Schillmeier and Heinlein (2009) define it,

relates not so much to a fixed and clearly bounded spatial “*being*” [emphasis mine] but can be understood as a “*becoming*” [emphasis mine]: a moving achievement between feeling at home or not. Moving, then, not only denotes a *movement in/through space* [emphasis in original] but also an open, often uncertain and insecure *process of being moved* [emphasis in original] by emerging relations. (p. 218)

Being at home, in sum, is a situatedness that is nearest to us, yet remains the farthest (Heidegger, 1946/1998). It is both known and unknown (Capobianco, 2005). *Daseins* dwell amidst these shifting spaces by attending to them sapientially, *with* and *as* care (Schillmeier & Domènech, 2009), but at times, they fall short.

The human being is primordially at home in nearness to *Being* [emphasis mine], the source of all. . . . Even so, it is also true that the human being is “unsettled” and “unhomely.” . . . Heidegger’s nuanced position [may be summarized in] this way: The human being is primordially at home in *Being* [emphasis mine] but in the beginning is not aware of Home *as* [emphasis in original] Home. (Capobianco, 2010, pp. 62–63)

Humans forget. They obfuscate. They look beyond their *being*. Yet, when they re-member, when they take “the poetic passage away from home to the foreign” (Heidegger, 1981/2010, p. 112) and in doing so find their return, they are able to know their fullness and to be at home in their multifaceted oneness (*unitas multiplex*; Morin, 1999). From this in-dwelling place, as Heidegger (1954/1977a) espouses, humans care for and propagate the fields *with*, *within*, and *against* which all things may come into their own and either flourish or decline. In this way, *sorge*—“dwelling as caring” (Schillmeier & Domènech, 2009, p. 288)—is a force of radical liberation. Pretext and control are suspended so that the entirety

of *being* may be freed and come to know itself and its *oikos*-fulness by way of its own presencing (Heidegger, 1954/1977a).

Birth into *Being*, Midwife into *Mattering*: Concluding Remarks

The etymology of the Anglo-Saxon term “midwife” means to be “with woman” (Cassidy, 2006). It implies a nearness and a supportive presencing of *being-made-manifest* through the processual course of a pregnancy, the stages of labor, a birth, and the postpartum period. Midwives wit(h)ness the original face of *being* as it is emerging and, at times, as it is failing to come into fruition. From the earliest years of the hominin line, this has been the crux of the phenomenal and performative work of midwifery. As the *Homo sapien* species evolved and complexified, however, midwives also came to hold more meaningful roles within their community’s social structure. They were referred to as the “wise women” (i.e., *les sage-femmes* in French and *die weise frauen* in German; C. Chamberlain et al., 2016) because they understood and attended to the “rhythms and the mysteries of birth and death” (Kitzinger, 1991, p. 1). They were the guardians and the navigators of the liminal sphere. Through this work and through their care, midwives thus came to enact and to preserve some of the most elemental pathways for meaning to be made, encoded, and passed along to future generations. They demonstrated “how culture infolds into the body (and, reciprocally, how bodily processes unfold into social space)” (Kleinman & Kleinman, 1994, pp. 710–711). They laid the ground for the midwifery of cultures.

CHAPTER 5: CULTURAL MIDWIFERY

Midwives have always been the mediators between nature and culture. They deal with . . . the human being at its first, raw[,] elemental moment[s] of existence. . . . In childbirth[,] midwives touch the two worlds of the instinctual and the cultural, bringing them into harmony. Such a calling requires not domination and control, but careful observation and sensitive awareness. It needs patience and a willingness to wait for the unfolding of life. (Kitzinger, 1991, p. 18)

When the Book of Genesis was inscribed into text, the first words attributed to a midwife (Varney & Thompson, 2016) were recorded: “Fear not” (Pilant, 1997, Gen. 35:17, JPS Tanakh 1917). The instruction was uttered to Rachel, the wife of Jacob (Israel) and the mother of Joseph, while Rachel was in the throes of a difficult labor with her youngest son (Unger, 2012). “Fear not,” the midwife said, “thou shalt have this son also” (Gen. 35:17, King James Version). Rachel did deliver her son, naming him Ben-Oni (“son of my grief” [D. Stern, 1998, Gen. 35:18, Complete Jewish Bible], “son of my pain” [Gen. 35:18, Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition], “son of my sorrow” [Gen. 35:18, 21st Century King James Version], or “son of my suffering” [Gen. 35:18, Expanded Bible]), and then died soon thereafter. Her husband, Jacob, quickly nullified Rachel’s last decree, replacing the name Ben-Oni with nomenclature that was considered to be more auspicious, virtuous, and strengthful—Benjamin (*Binyāmīn* in Hebrew or *Binyaamem* in Samaritan, meaning “son of my right hand” [Gen. 35:18, 21st Century King James Version], “son of my strength,” “son of my days” [Tsedaka & Sullivan, 2013, pp. 83–84], or “son of the south” [Goldin, 1977, p. 42]). In this short passage, characters who are immensely important to all three Abrahamic religions, and thus to the West itself, personify the dynamic complexities of cultural mores, temporal and corporeal tensions, iterations of

phenomenological experiences, gendered hegemony, and the privileging of value sets. They also provide an early example of a narrative exchange between a *liminal persona* and a *liminal obstetrix*, which provides some useful guidance for Postnormal Times. Even in the face of death or decline, even amongst the uncertainty of radical change, even when the weight of physical, emotional, or existential pain feels unbearable, *fear not*. The unfolding of the *becoming* is best served by one's presence, one's care (*sorge*), and one's participatory wit(h)nessing.

Fair (1925) once wrote that “from the foundation of the world[,] there has been but one way for a man to gain entrance” (p. 745), and at that threshold, keeping watch, stands a midwife. For millennia, midwives have been embedded within the communities that they have served (Varney & Thompson, 2016). They have been steeped in the customs, beliefs, and relational styles of their respective populations (M. Mead & Newton, 1967). They have preserved birth traditions and have overseen rituals (Kitzinger, 2000/2011). They have been educators, healers (Minkowski, 1992), and liminal leaders. Yet, midwives have also borne a keen responsibility to be sensitive to variations that may arise within an ecology of *being*. At times, this awareness has made them the *de facto* protectors of the *becoming*, on both individual levels and broader sociocultural scales, even when disregarding established norms or mandates posed a threat to their person. In the Book of Exodus, for instance, the story of Shiphrah and Puah recounts how Hebrew midwives had to defy the King of Egypt to save the sons of Hebrew women. These midwives summoned their voices as authorities on birth and

manipulated established norms in order to contrive a spurious stereotype of Hebrew women (as being too vigorous to experience prolonged labors thus circumventing a midwife's ability to commit infanticide) so that they could serve a greater good (Pilant, 1997, Exod. 1:15–21, JPS Tanakh 1917). This narrative—of midwives “doing good by stealth” (Kirkham, 1999, p. 736)—is one that has been perpetuated for centuries in midwifery practice and lore, particularly as Judeo-Christian traditions took root in the West and midwives found themselves in increasingly precarious social standings.

In the early second century of the Common Era, Soranus of Ephesus (ca. 98–138 CE) made note of the standards that guided Greek midwives. These directives were centered around learnedness and literacy, an attention to hygiene, an ability to be sympathetic and to provide reassurance, a skillfulness in reasoning and articulating decisions, and a capacity to be “unperturbed” and “unafraid in danger” (Soranus, ca. 118–138 CE/1956, p. 6). For the Greeks, the physical world was perfect and harmonious in and of itself; it did not require humans to perfect it or to bring it into spiritual alignment with a monotheistic Creator. Greek midwives, in effect, did not share the same spiritual burden or hegemonic pressures that their Abrahamic counterparts would come to endure (Giladi, 2014). While the Greeks were both military and cultural imperialists during the Hellenistic expansion of Alexander the Great (ca. 356–323 BCE), the Jewish people were never wholly assimilated into Greek culture (Gruen, 1997). As a result, Judaic traditions and narratives, such as the origin story of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden (D. Stern, 1998, Gen. 3:1–24,

Complete Jewish Bible), were able to persist in the West and, as a second-order effect via the propagation of Christianity, shape Western ontology. This historical turn had a profound impact on Western midwifery. The cultural understanding of childbirth pain, for instance, shifted from being a physical phenomenon to being a spiritually punitive event meant to transcend generations—a punishment for Eve’s consumption of fruit from the Tree of Knowledge (D. Stern, 1998, Gen. 3:16, Complete Jewish Bible). Consequently, midwives, who attempted to alleviate this pain, were accused of being in violation of God’s decree (Ehrenreich & English, 1973b; Minkowski, 1992).

As the Age of Antiquity subsided in the West (ca. 476 CE), midwives became the source of a great deal of consternation for religious elites. During the Middle Ages, the dissemination of truth and knowledge became exclusively privileged, reserved for the vicars and priests who were considered to be the chosen vessels through which God communicated (Minkowski, 1992). Midwives, who possessed their own autonomous standing within their communities, who “relied [upon their] senses rather than on faith or doctrine” alone, who “believed in trial and error, cause and effect,” and who had attitudes that were not merely “religiously passive, but [were] actively inquiring” (Ehrenreich & English, 1973b, p. 14), ran afoul of Church precepts at times. Moreover, the ability of midwives to perform certain religious rites, like baptisms in emergency situations (Forbes, 1971), also blurred midwives’ standing in relationship to male clergy (Melammed, 1999). Although some scholars have asserted that reports of midwives being persecuted and executed as witches during the Inquisition (ca.

1231–1836 CE) have been overstated (see Harley, 1990), religious texts like the *Malleus Maleficarum*, “The Hammer of Witches” (a work that remained second only to the Bible in popularity for 200 years; Fritscher & La Vey, 1969/2004), specifically targeted midwives as grave threats to both individuals and social institutions. The authors, Friars Kramer and Sprenger (1486/1999), constructed elaborate and lurid accounts of the perversions and transgressions of midwives and asserted that “no one does more harm to the Catholic Church than midwives” (Part 1, Question 11, para. 4). This sentiment was reinforced by Pope Innocent VIII’s (1484) papal bull, *Summis desiderantes affectibus*, which gave explicit authority to Kramer, Sprenger, and other Inquisitors to target and to punish witches—a class that included those who terminated pregnancies, those who enabled women to avoid conception, and those who interfered during the course of parturition.

The reputation of midwives as unruly and devious sorts, and women, in general, as the “devil’s gateway” (Tertullian, ca. 225 CE/2003, Book 1, Chapter 1, para. 1), extended far beyond the Middle Ages. Propaganda campaigns and legislative efforts that were spawned by an emerging class of white, male, obstetrical surgeons in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—and persisting well into the twenty-first—also aggressively sought to dissuade women from employing midwives during childbirth (Rooks, 1997). These physician-led campaigns employed tactics of blatant misinformation that were often laden with xenophobic, racist, sexist, and classist overtures (Fraser, 1998; Litoff, 1986; Oparah & Bonaparte, 2015). They exploited the implicit fear and feelings of

vulnerability that are inherent to the perinatal period. They made promises of control and efficacy under a surgeon's care. They touted the supremacy of technology over biology (Arms, 1994; Cassidy, 2006; Johanson et al., 2002), and they marketed the concept of an aseptic, convenient, pain-free, and even memory-free childbirth experience (De Haven Pitcock & Clark, 1992). By the end of the 20th century, traditional midwifery was virtually eradicated (Bjorkman, 2004; Stewart, 1998); up to half of all women failed to meet new obstetrical standards of "normal" (Berglund & Lindmark, 2000); and the number of invasive interventions used during births rose exponentially (Boyle et al., 2013; Gibbons et al., 2010). Yet, with the arrival of the second wave of feminism in the West (ca. 1960–1990 CE) came a push to redefine all ideological representations of the feminine, to include the biologic and sociocultural theaters (Whelehan, 1995). Once again, midwives were sourced as repositories for alternate narratives and knowledge sets, and they helped to catalyze newly emergent norms that were of women and for women (Gaskin, 1975). The home birth and natural birth movements, in particular (Arms, 1994), epitomized the radical feminist tenet that the personal is political (Hanisch, 1970). As with Bourdieu's (1998) socio-philosophical concept of "habitus," both the body and the realm of the intimate were understood as living in a social world, but the social world was also regarded as living within the body (Kleinman & Kleinman, 1994; Reay, 2004). Through the biophysical milieu of their reproductive systems, women attempted to know and to experience their own power, to question and to challenge cultural norms, and to translate their ability to cope with physical pain into a capacity to transmute sociocultural

oppression (Boston Women’s Health Book Collective, 1971/2011; Ehrenreich & English, 1973a; Whelehan, 1995). It was a frame from which women could tell the whole truth about themselves and their births, “the truth that includes the transformation, mastery, satisfaction, personal power[,] and the difference between pain and suffering” (van Hoover, 2004, Quote section).

Like Hecate in *Theogony*, midwives in the West have inhabited—by dire necessity and by circumstance—a shadowy third space that is both steeped in culture and exists outside its bounds. They have navigated the tricky terrain of liminality during births. They have risen in service on behalf of their communities, and they have receded in obfuscation as a means of self-preservation. They have conserved tradition while actively wit(h)nessing the emergent *becoming*. They have persisted. For midwives to continue to recognize themselves in the words of Rachel’s *sage femme* and to recite her advice generation after generation, therefore, is of significance. *Fear not*. The way *through* complexity and postnormality is not by way of an edict or an instruction or a formula for safety; it is a complex adaptive dance with that which comes.

In this chapter, I explore the construct, purpose, and plasticity of culture. I go beyond conventions that describe culture as that which instructs or delimits the individual and reframe culture as an incubative and catalyzing third space that serves as a *spielraum* of the *becoming*. I pay particular attention to the interfaces between the body-self and culture, expounding upon both approach–avoidant motivations for culture and a few of the physio-phenomenal mechanisms that help transmit and transform culture. I conclude by reminding the reader that as with

all adaptive complexuses, as with every processual birth, neither fixed nor promised outcomes are yielded from cultural exchange. As such, our collective responsibility lies in the quality of our care, our participatory attendance, and our liminal leadership—the midwifery that enables us to *be*, to *be with*, and to *be within* the *becoming* most fully.

The Construct of Culture

“Culture is not causeless and disembodied. It is generated in rich and intricate ways by information processing mechanisms situated in human minds.” (Cosmides, Tooby, & Barkow, 1992, p. 3)

In order to pass through the maternal pelvis during parturition, *Homo sapien* neonates are born prematurely. At birth, approximately 70% of a human’s brain mass is still undeveloped (Berk, 2013, p. 186). Within the first two years of life, grey matter volumes (which account for a majority of the central nervous system, including areas responsible for muscle control, sensory perception, affect, memory, language, self-regulation, and decision-making) multiply to reach 80-90% of average adult volumes (Knickmeyer et al., 2008, p. 12176); neural synapses (which allow neurons to intercommunicate) swiftly propagate; and white matter bundles (which contain the axonal pathways that connect the grey areas of the brain to one another) are almost completely myelinated (i.e., they are insulated to increase the speed of their conduction; Tortora & Reynolds Grabowski, 1996). This rapid brain development is a co-evolutionary process propelled *by* and *for* the purposes of social exchange, whereby genetic factors combine with the relational experiences of care; the ecological, embodied phenomenology of *being-in-the-world*; and the cultural transmissions of normative behaviors that are meant to promote the cooperative and adaptive traits that are a species-specific

evolutionary advantage (see Boyd & Richerson, 2009; Gintis, 2011; Richerson & Boyd, 2005; Rowson, 2011; Shonkoff & Philips, 2000; Wexler, 2006). As babies interact with their environments, as parent–child bonds formalize (Kolb, Mychasiuk, Muhammad, & Gibb, 2013), as hundreds of bacterial species pass through a mother’s milk (Cabrera-Rubio et al., 2012; Fernández et al., 2013; Rodríguez et al., 2015) and further seed a baby’s microbiome (growing to tens of trillions of non-human cells that come to impact everything from mood and stress responsivity to inflammation and disease; Cryan & O’Mahony, 2011; Francescone, Hou, & Grivennikov, 2014; Sender, Fuchs, & Milo, 2016), and as children begin to differentiate information into meaning (by trial and error, mirroring, the absorption of stimuli, mentalizing, and other learning modalities; Johnson & Munakata, 2005; Mesoudi, Whiten, & Laland, 2006), a broad swath of sensory data is merged—initially, synesthetically (Maurer & Mondloch, 2005)—into habitual neural patterns. Neurons are then pruned to facilitate these configurations, parcellating stimulus-responses into perceptual and behavioral feedback cycles (Johnson & Munakata, 2005; Recanzone, 2000). Known as Hebb’s (1949) rule, this neural phenomenon is précised by the axiom that neurons that fire together wire together (Löwel & Singer, 1992).

In Greek mythology, Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory and the inventress of language, gives birth to the Muses, the proprietors of culture who carry the cumulative knowledge of the past into present and inspire the future (Arthur, 1983; Hesiod, ca. 700 BCE/1914). As one of the original Titans born to the primordial deities, Gaia (Earth) and Uranus (Sky), Mnemosyne’s functions are

elemental; they underlie and precipitate all culture. It is memory, both cognitive and noncognitive, that allows humans to learn and to retain knowledge (see Gluck, Mercado, & Myers, 2008; McGaugh, 2000), and it is social languaging, in both verbal and nonverbal communicative forms, that enables that which is known to be transmitted to others (see Christie & Martin, 2007; Henrich & McElreath, 2003; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 1999; G. Rosenthal, 2006; Swain & Lapkin, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978). Yet, even before memory and language take root as culture, the perceptive awareness of something mattering in the world (*besorgen*) must be cultivated *with* and *within* the medium of the body (Csordas, 2011; Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2012; Narvaez, 2014).

Culture as a Second Skin: Approach and Avoidance

From an evolutionary perspective, an organism's ability to distinguish between that which should be avoided and that which should be approached is the most basic marker of species adaptation that will separate those who will survive and thrive from those who will struggle or go extinct (Elliot, 2006, 2008). Avoidant behaviors, motivations, and strategies tend to prevent or reduce an organism's experience of stress, pain, or anxiety by moving it away from stimuli that are perceived as threats (S. Roth & Cohen, 1986). Approach behaviors, motivations, and strategies, in contrast, direct an organism toward stimuli that are perceived to be beneficial (Elliot, 2006); that allow for the "ventilation of affect" (S. Roth & Cohen, 1986, p. 813); that encourage novelty-seeking, such as exploration and new learning (Kirmayer, 2008); and that are copacetic with tend-and-befriend interactions (Taylor et al., 2000). The repetitive movements

between the sensations that one approaches and that one avoids entrench the neuroendocrinological responses of the body into systemic behavioral pathways (O’Connell & Hofmann, 2011) and habits of action (James, 1890/2007). It is a process that is the germ of *autopoietic* self-regulation (Di Paolo, 2005; Elliot, 2006; Maturana & Varela, 1972/1980) and learning (Doolittle, 2014). It is how one’s conceptual lenses, structures, and metaphoric narratives begin to materialize and are then reinforced (Kirmayer, 2008). It is also how caregivers increase the chances of their offspring’s survival (Narvaez, 2014).

By sharing information as culture, so that one’s sense of the world (including what should be approached and what should be avoided) is internalized as a second skin (Bourdieu, 1989; Reay, 2004), each generation contributes to and maintains a paradigmatic continuum of interpreted perceptions (Meyerson & Martin, 1987) that have the potential to move the species “from a condition of mere sufficiency[,] which may be described] as survival” (Bussey, 2006, p. 41), toward a capacity to flourish in a multidimensionality that is “thrival.” This shared, matrixial memory “is not a static repository of knowledge and experience[, but is rather] an active arena of reconstruction—remembering, embodying, and extending experience as it unfolds” (Kirmayer, 2008, p. 331). Culture is not only that which limits or instructs, but it is also an incubative, creative field of possibility. It is a liminal womb, the *spielraum* of the *becoming*.

The Parameters of Culture: *Educare* Toward *Educere*

“The Latin author Varro [116–27 BCE] . . . said: *Educit obstetrix, educat nutrix, instituit pedagogus, docet magister*, which . . . means: ‘The midwife brings forth, the nurse brings up, the tutor trains, and the master teaches.’” (Gisbert, 1973, p. 261)

In the West, scholars have focused on defining culture as the ideas, institutions, and interactions that inform an individual how to think, feel, and behave (Markus, 2012; Markus & Conner, 2013). Richerson and Boyd (2005), for instance, refer to culture as the information that is “capable of affecting individuals’ behavior that they acquire from other members of their species through teaching, imitation, and other forms of social transmission” (p. 5). Information, in this case, broadly incorporates any sort of mental state, both conscious and unconscious, that is acquired or modified, such as ideas, beliefs, values, knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Mesoudi et al., 2006). This information often serves to delimit the individual by providing an array of approach–avoidance instruction. Sztompka’s (1993) description of culture as an interrelational fabric or field, however, helps to shift the parameters of culture away from the fixed rigidity of transmissions meant to train, mold, or rear up the individual (encapsulated by the etymological root of the term “education,” *educare*, which refers to the raising of children; Bredvold, 1957; Mackail, 1921) and toward a more fluid and co-creative interdependency between human beings and their cultures (better surmised by the alternate root of “education,” *educere*, linked to a midwifery expression for being present at the birth of, for leading forth, or for drawing out; Gisbert, 1973; Jensen, 2004).

For Sztompka (1993), culture is marked by recursive exchanges between four interconnected systems: a) *cultural ideals*, or a society’s “social awareness” (its shared nexus of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and definitions of reality); b) *cultural norms*, or a society’s “social institutions” (its interlinked rules that place

limits on behavior, provide prescriptive ideals, and privilege value sets); c) the *interactional dimensions of culture*, or a society's "social organization" (its dynamic web of actions and transactions which occur across all macro-, mezzo-, and micro-levels); and d) the *opportunistic dimensions of culture*, or a society's "social hierarchies" (its potential and limitations based upon member access to resources, opportunities, and degrees of nurturance). Jovchelovitch (2007) holds that these systemic interactions are what allow cultural meanings, symbols, and values to persist through time. They ensure that the future is met with a certain degree of stability and that each generation has both existential (ontological) and existentiell (ontic) baselines to draw upon (Dall'Alba, 2009; Goonatilake, 2016). However, these exchanges and their cultural artifacts (M. Cole, 1996)—whether material, conceptual, or phenomenal—are also constantly subject to the creative tensions of perceptual, interpretative, and adaptive forces (Glăveanu, 2010). If one concedes that a culture is indeed a fabric, field, or "*web of significance, an interworked system of construable signs* [emphasis in original]" (Glăveanu, 2010, p. 85) that is not external to power but is its context (Geertz, 1973), then all relationships between the self, others, and ecologies of *being* are invariably open to dialogic mediation, to include all symbolic exchanges (M. Cole, 1996). In the spaces between cultural participants and their mores and memes (see Dawkins, 1989; Mesoudi et al., 2006), dynamic assemblages of shared information and experiences interface with one another to co-create a recursive and interactive medium that

flows back and forth through the social spaces of institutions and the body-self. This . . . medium joins norms to sentiments, social meaning to

cognition, [and] social relationships to psychobiological responses. Because it is processual, [sociocultural] experience is about transition, transformation, [and] change. (Kleinman & Kleinman, 1994, p. 712)

Alterations that are made at any point, at any time, and *with* and *within* any component of a cultural system, therefore, have the potential to induce transformational effects (Eve et al., 1997; Hannerz, 1992; Meyerson & Martin, 1987; Sawyer, 2005). As such, culture is emblematic of a plastic, adaptive, and emergent complexus.

An Evolving Role for Culture: Stasis, Plasticity, and Emergence

As the fire of our creativity burns its way into our interior life as much as it transforms the world at large, we experience what the medieval philosophers called the *alchemical wedding* [emphasis in original], the meeting of the interior world of a single human being with the great soul of the world. This betwixt-and-between [space] is the very touchstone of creativity. . . . A numinous engagement where the soul is seated on the bridge between the world we imagine and envision and the world as we find it. (Whyte, 2002, p. 112)

Evolution, whether biologic or cultural, is defined by Bentley, Hahn, and Shennan (2004) as the “process by which the frequencies of variants in a population change over time” (p. 1443). Typically, evolutionary change is incremental. Subtle adaptations to biologic, environmental, or ontological stressors, attractors, or influences beget the creation of temporary or sustained variations (Jablonka, 2016; Mesoudi et al., 2006; J. Smith & Jenks, 2005), which systems or organisms “try on” (Peat, 2008). During periods of postnormal discontinuity or chaos, however, when no learned or practiced solutions can adequately be applied to a particular stimulus, context, or state of *being* (Glăveanu, 2010; Varela, 1999), rapid deviations and saltations may also occur (Rochon, 1998). These radical variations can induce experiences of dissonance,

particularly when multiple paradigms co-exist paradoxically and meaning can no longer be agreed upon (Blomme & Bornebroek-Te Lintelo, 2012; Howard, 2010; Kuhn, 2007; Scharmer, 2009). Iain Thomson (2001) explains that “our very ‘*being-in-the-world*’ [emphasis mine] is shaped by the knowledge we pursue, uncover, and embody. . . . [W]e cannot help [but practice] what we know, since we are ‘always already’ implicitly shaped by our guiding metaphysical presuppositions” (p. 250). Humans are “always already” influenced and limited by their perceptive and interpretive capacities, by their ontologies and sociocultural contexts, and by their “self-eco-re-organizing” environments (Morin, 2008a). In this way, the meaning that people derive from that which is known (in order to make their decisions, to plan for their futures, and to regulate their behaviors) is also conditional; yet, few recognize it as such. During periods of postnormality, however, the ability of humans to discern (*besorgen*), to connect with (*fürsorge*), or to care for (*sorge*) what matters is often disrupted, allowing dynamic, *copoiëtic*, and emergent transformations to rise to the fore.

Alchemical Weddings: Balancing Discernment and Plasticity

As children, human beings display a great deal of plasticity. They have an expansive ability to accept, integrate, modify, and imaginatively shape-shift ontological realities at will (Vygotsky, 2004). As they grow into young adults, however, this capacity dramatically diminishes. Adult executive functioning (the higher-order cognitive processes of the frontal lobe that enable the inhibition of behavior, that delay gratification, that support temporal organization and planning, and that help to shift or to sustain attention; Bernier, Carlson, &

Whipple, 2010; Lehto, Juujärvi, Kooistra, & Pulkkinen, 2003) relies upon a relatively stable narrative of the world in order to expedite decisions about what to engage with (what to approach) and what to avoid. When institutionalized, these tenets elicit a sense of control in individuals and embolden them to act with agency (Narvaez, 2014). One's truths, however, are not always aligned with the nature of one's ecology of *being* (Peat, 2002). Any executive functioning that is conducted without at least a modicum of presencing, or wit(h)nessing, is thus devoid of essence. For this reason, Heidegger (1977b) argues that it is our truths, our aims, and our orientations that most deserve to be questioned. Yet, engaging in this sort of inquiry is a pilgrimage without destination or return. It is an epistemological and ontological odyssey. Individuals need to be both immersed in and able to imaginatively and empathetically project themselves outside of their bounded sensory, cognitive, and narrative realities. They need to be able to enhance the quality of their attention while simultaneously expanding their tolerance for coexisting variants (i.e., a complexification of the "theory of mind"; see Premack & Woodruff, 1978; V. E. Stone, Baron-Cohen, & Knight, 1998; Wellman, 1990). They need to be able to summon the fullness of their participatory *being* with intention without impeding the emergent *becoming*. They need to be able to stand at the threshold of their own alchemical weddings as midwives—waiting, rising, and ushering the dawn.

In his foreword to a work detailing the contributions of renowned neurologist, psychiatrist, and Holocaust survivor, Viktor Frankl, Covey (2017) recites an unattributed quote which surmises: "Between stimulus and response,

there is a space. In that space lies our freedom and our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our happiness” (p. x). For Shildrick (2000), these stillpoints of ambiguity and vulnerability are the inalienable conditions of the *becoming*. They are the instances that humans are “in every sense . . . entangled, connected, indefinite, impersonal, [and] shifting into different multiplicities and assemblages” (St. Pierre, 2013, p. 653). They are the windows of our plasticity, our attention, our attunement, our care (*sorge*), and our adaptive *poiësis* (Di Paolo, 2005). They are the boundaries, or *līmens*, from which we begin our essential unfolding (Heidegger, 1954/1977a), from which we are co-creatively led into *being*. It is also in these spaces-between, ironically, that the same mechanisms that reinforce our beliefs and worldviews, that expedite our habits of action, and that modulate our relational exchanges can also be transmuted to supplant our various entrenchments (Kirmayer, 2008; Rowson, 2011). The use of mindfulness meditation techniques, for instance, engages the brain’s executive functioning centers in a way that can bring about an enhanced quality of presence, attention, and awareness of the present moment (Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Tang, Yang, Leve, & Harold, 2012; Teper & Inzlicht, 2013). Though a subtle and simple intervention, mindfulness can have substantial implications when practiced, including the improvement of cognitive flexibility (Heeren, Van Broeck, & Philippot, 2009), the reduction of experiences of negative affect and the overuse of negative labeling (Creswell, Way, Eisenberger, & Lieberman, 2007), the evocation of enduring change to amygdaloid responsivity (Desbordes et al., 2012), the expansion of an individual’s tolerance for uncertainty and

distress (Feldman, Dunn, Stemke, Bell, & Greeson, 2013), the alteration of immune responses in the body (Davidson et al., 2003), the mitigation of qualitative experiences of pain (Gard et al., 2012; Zeidan et al., 2015), and the alleviation of one's tendencies to catastrophize or blanketly avoid fearful and anxiety-inducing contexts (McCracken & Keogh, 2009; Schütze, Rees, Preece, & Schütze, 2010). It is a practice that can be learned, that can be culturally transmitted, that can assist in the cultivation of metacognitive awareness (see Teasdale et al., 2002), that can interrupt biologic and behavioral feedback cycles, and that can upend both personal and cultural habitus. It is a practice that affirms that in the spaces-between lies a choice, and when that choice is made with frequency across variants, it can be embodied into an enacted reflex—a deep, ritualized interiority where even the “difficult [can] become habit, the habit easy, and the easy beautiful” (Henning & Reynolds, 1977, p. 127).

Re-membering Rachel: A Meditation on Pain and Its Legacies

Midwives and winding sheets
know birthing is hard
and dying is mean
and living's a trial in between.
Why do we journey, muttering
like rumors among the stars?
Is a dimension lost?
Is it love? (Angelou, 1990, p. 8)

For more than 99% of the history of the *Homo* genus, human beings have evolved to exhibit strong prosocial behaviors (Fry, 2006; Narvaez, 2014). Within the context of Western civilization, however, prosocial predilections have yielded to a subset of dominant and self-centric mores that have bolstered the illusion that humans can control their existential circumstances (see Eisler, 1987, 2002). In a

sense, these orientations have been an attempt to reject, avoid, or postpone the penultimate postnormal condition of life—the biologic and ontological singularity that is death (Szumakowicz, 2000). As such, any stimulus or circumstance that bears a negative association or that poses a challenge to one’s perceived vitality is often regarded with some degree of disdain in the West. To suggest that these factors must be engaged rather than be exterminated, therefore, is a call for courage. It is both an appeal to lean into the vulnerability of one’s *being* and an invitation to suspend what is known in order to participate in the *copoiëtic* processes of cultural emergence.

It is here that I take pause to ponder: had Rachel’s testament of her pain and suffering (Gen. 35:17–18, Douay-Rheims 1899 American Edition) been acknowledged and permitted a public legacy, had she lived in a culture that did not compound the physicality of birth with the alleged metaphysical failings of her sex, had the words of her midwife—“*fear not*”—been adopted as a guiding principle rather than a momentary placation, how might the West have evolved to express a more adaptive nature? How might the West be more favorably suited or situated to navigate these Postnormal Times? How might it provide palliative care to paradigms in decline and expectantly manage the emergent *becoming* with simultaneous ease? How might it *breakthrough* the rigidity of its confines and nurture a more nuanced ecology of *being* (i.e., an expanded cultural *spielraum*)? To provide fodder for such inquiries, I turn to one of the most foundational sources of avoidant leanings, reactionary sentiments, and inclinations toward domination and control: the phenomena of pain and suffering.

Pain hermeneutics. The human experience of pain (from the Latin root, *poena*, meaning “penalty”; Free, 2002) is both physiological and metaphoric in nature (Shilling & Mellor, 2010); it can be both cemented into memory and summoned by it (Kirmayer, 2008). Pain is typically defined as a noxious or unpleasant sensation that alerts the brain to potential injury (Garland, 2012). It is a non-rational mode of communication that allows a stimulus to be brought into awareness and that enables embodied maps of impending danger or hardship to be drawn and recalled (Kirmayer, 2007). Although somewhat reflexive in nature, pain can also be cognitively modulated. Dynamic, adaptive, and neuromatrixial interactions, which occur *with* and *within* the body (see Brown, 2013; Garland, 2012; Melzack, 1990), entreat upon the cognitive capacities of the brain in order to assess the nature, severity, and context of pain. These intermediary and axiological processes of evaluation have the ability to alter an individual’s response to pain relative to what is perceived to be appropriate praxis (Ramírez-Maestre, Esteve, & López, 2008). Pain, in other words, is not only information that is intrapersonally observed, experienced, and interpreted, but it is also a hermeneutic that is culturally shaped, constructed, curtailed, and transmitted (Kleinman & Kleinman, 1994). For Coakley (2007), it is the spaces-between the body-self and one’s culture that make

our particular sensitivity to pain and the anxiety that attends it, . . . not simply a matter of genetics, physiology, and circumstance, . . . but also one of learned “hermeneutics”: the way we *interpret* [emphasis in original] our pain is all important for the mode of our suffering it.
(pp. 1–2)

The ways in which humans perceive, express, and control pain are both learned orientations (Free, 2002) and acts of *copoiēsis*. They are the interconnected

matrices of individual, relational, and cultural fields of significance that coexist both synergistically and in tension with one another, constantly endeavoring to create meaning.

Certainly, within the childbirth arena, both cross-cultural and individual differences in the way that pain may be perceived—and is thus experienced—have been recorded (Christiaens, Verhaeghe, & Bracke, 2010). Laboring women, for instance, who readily interpret pain as a cue for injury, danger, or hardship (as is typical in the West) are more likely to endure surges of stress hormones during parturition (like cortisol and the fight-or-flight catecholamines, epinephrine and norepinephrine) than those who have more nuanced views of pain (Alehagen, Wijma, Lundberg, & Wijma, 2005). These psychosomatic responses not only heighten and intensify the awareness of pain in the body, but they can also prolong the duration one's suffering (Adams, Eberhard-Gran, & Eskild, 2012). Excessive stress, fears, and anxiety have the ability to interrupt the secretion of oxytocin during parturition, which is responsible for the strength, interval, and duration of uterine contractions (Moberg, 2003). This process of slowing labor enables mammals to find safety if they are at risk of predation, but it also occurs within a modern context when laboring women are faced with non-lethal labor disturbances (like the disorientation of transferring from one's home to the hospital; the introduction of machine monitoring; the interactions with strangers that occur at a time of immense intimacy; or the discontinuous support of caregivers throughout the course of a labor; Lothian, 2004; Klaus & Kennell, 1997; Klaus, Kennell, & Klaus, 1993). By contrast, individuals and cultures that

have adopted a more nuanced relationship to pain—that have complexified their hermeneutic capacities toward pain into an expanded pain *spielraum*—report a broader array of both phenomenal experiences of pain and responses to pain sensations (Kabat-Zinn, 1990). For instance, those who identify (or learn to identify) the pains of childbirth as being a normal pain—as being an ally to the birth process and as a constructive, biologic, and transformative sensation—tend to report less physical pain, less fear, and less distress during childbirth than those with avoidant inclinations (Bardacke, 2012; Christiaens et al., 2010; Duncan, et al., 2017; Leventhal, Leventhal, Shacham, & Easterling, 1989; Veringa et al., 2016). They tend to suffer less, for a shorter duration, and at times, they do not suffer at all (see Buckley, 2010).

Is a dimension lost? Beyond its reproductive functions, the neuropeptide oxytocin (from the Greek root *oxús*, meaning “quick” or “swift,” and *tókos*, meaning childbirth) is most commonly known as the “love hormone” (Moberg, 2003). It imprints feelings of calm and connection onto the psyche; it promotes maternal behavior and social bonding (Rodrigues, Saslow, Garcia, John, & Keltner, 2009); and it encourages the development of trust (Kosfeld et al., 2005), generosity (Zak et al., 2007), empathy (Hurlemann et al., 2010), and myriad other prosocial traits (Moberg, 2003). Yet, oxytocin’s role is not merely rhapsodic. It also fortifies deep-seated memories, especially those related to social isolation, betrayal, and loss, which can trigger immense pain, fear, and anxiety in the individual (Bergland, 2015; Guzmán et al., 2013). It yields a functional paradox. The very mechanism that enables an individual to feel loved and connected also

reinforces the fears and anxieties that one has of being unloved and disconnected, which in turn can interrupt an individual's ability to feel loved and connected. In the proper measure, these oxytocin pathways work as both positive and negative feedback cycles that emphatically promote prosociality as a human imperative, but when a person or a culture privileges or excessively nurses the pains that are associated with negative outcomes or loss (Kirmayer, 2008), prosocial inclinations and objectives can be derailed, and suffering may be compounded (Narvaez, 2014). The ways in which we attend to our pain and contextualize our suffering, therefore, have gross implications for our physical, existential, and cultural experiences of *being*. As such, our stories not only matter in a personal capacity, but as our hermeneutic horizons begin to fuse (see Gadamer, 1975), they also help to establish the boundaries from which all future generations will begin their essential unfolding.

Cultural epigenetics. Neuroplasticity, neuroendocrinology, and hermeneutics are but a few of the embodied mechanisms by which culture can be enfolded into the body and, reciprocally, how the body can come to shape culture. One's narratives, beliefs, and habits of action; one's interpersonal relations; and one's environmental encounters may also become inscribed when epigenetic changes occur within cells (both human and non-human; see Hullar & Fu, 2014; Jablonka, 2016; Jablonka & Lamb, 2002; Paschos & Allday, 2010), making the implicit, transgenerational transmission of information to offspring possible (see Fish et al., 2004; Heijmans, Tobi, Lumey, & Slagboom, 2009; Market Velker, Denomme, & Mann, 2012; Oberlander et al., 2008; Weaver et al., 2004; Yehuda

et al., 2016). Originally coined by Waddington (1942/2012) to describe the landscapes through which the expression of genes could be altered by environmental stimuli (bringing phenotypic variants into *being*; Goldberg, Allis, & Bernstein, 2007), the study of epigenetics has begun to evolve conceptually and functionally to encompass both the biologic and the symbolic bridging that can occur between stasis and emergentism. Specifically, epigenetics intimates how a system or an organism can adaptively *breakthrough* its structural habits—even at molecular levels—to redefine, reconstruct, or reconstitute its dynamic expressions of *being* without discarding its history, heredity, or memory (Jablonka, 2016). In a biologic context, epigenetic stimuli, stressors, and experiences (like nutrition and lifestyle choices, exposure to toxins, microbiotic gut health, the quality of maternal care, affect disorders, and episodes of stress, pain, and trauma, to name a few; Fish et al., 2004; Jablonka, 2016; L. S. Stone & Szyf, 2013; Weaver et al., 2004) are capable of altering the methylated coating of a cell’s chromosomes or modifying the histone lengths around which a strand of DNA winds without mutating a cell’s underlying DNA sequencing (Denk & McMahon, 2012). These changes effectively promote or inhibit a gene’s function, essentially turning a gene “on” or “off.” If these epigenetic marks are conserved during DNA replication (see Budhavarapu, Chavez, & Tyler, 2013), they become a sort of heritable, cellular memory—“a constant physical reminder of past events[,] our own and those of our parents, grandparents[,] and beyond” (N. Kellerman, 2013, p. 34). As such, epigenetic variants not only affect a primary system or organism,

but they can also serve as the initial conditions for future systems and organisms, influencing the trajectory, dynamics, and emergent capacities of the *becoming*.

While many scholars have engaged their epigenomic inquiries as an attempt to identify the sources of dysfunction or disease (both biologic and social; Karr-Morse & Wiley, 2012), what is of equal significance is that things like DNA methylation are intrinsically reversible (Rothstein, Cai, & Marchant, 2009). Nothing exists as a preordained fixity. Epigenetic changes can both initiate and disrupt lineages of maladaptation and trauma (N. Kellerman, 2013; Kuzawa & Sweet, 2009). For instance, even if inclinations toward radical individualism, low empathy, high self-protectiveness, aggression, and domination are normative within a personal, familial, or sociocultural system, this does not preclude the future emergence and endurance of more connective or prosocial niches of care (Narvaez, 2014). In fact, we may come to find that periods of stress, upheaval, and rapid development (which typically demark postnormal spaces) may actually become the grounds from which prosocial variations may readily rise (T. L. Roth, 2013).

Fear not: An invitation to grow into being. When connections between the body-self and culture are made, they affirm that conceptualizations of culture as an unbroken line of instructions of how to subsist in the world are insufficient. By reimagining culture as an open field of possibility and variability, which is constantly and dynamically evolving, one captures the enlivened and adaptive spirit of culture. Indeed, the combinatory breadth of cultural components—from a culture's narratives, ideals, and hermeneutics to its members' sensory-

perceptive capacities, relationality, and biologic constitutions—is limitless. What serves, therefore, is not necessarily a frame or a blueprint for building culture. Rather, what is of benefit, particularly during Postnormal Times, is the care and cultivation of an entire ontology of *being* that evocatively seeks to breathe life into culture, as an enacted *spielraum*, honoring the storied rhythms from which it comes while simultaneously wit(h)nessing the *becoming*.

And There Is Only the Dance: Concluding Remarks

“When my work is done and I go from the place of birth
I walk out across the fields of the planets
into the spaces between the furthest stars.” (Krysl, 1989, p. 35)

In a midwifery approach to pregnancy and childbirth, there are no promised outcomes, only a promised presence of care. In a field where 8–20% of all pregnancies spontaneously fail to reach a point of viability annually (Tulandi & Al-Fozan, 2017, Incidence section, para. 1); where an additional 2.6 million pregnancies reach viability globally, but then end in stillbirth (half of which occur during parturition; Horton & Samarasekera, 2016, p. 515); where babies can be born precipitously or over the course of days, prematurely or within a 5-week “full-term” window, free from their amniotic sacs or encased entirely in their caul, as singletons or as multiples or as a twin who absorbed a sibling in utero, it is fair to say that flux, variation, and uncertainty are some of the only constants that midwives will encounter in their work. Yet, there are still normative markers during gestational and parturitional windows that allow midwives to lean into an emergent process, sensing into, assessing, and responding to the nature of its integrity.

The midwifery of culture, as an extension, also represents a deep commitment to care (as *sorge*) and creative *copoiësis* rather than the promise or the manifestation of a specific utopic vision (the poems, to paraphrase Adrienne Rich, 1991, which inevitably ask another to stand within them, unsatisfied). Instead of constructing a new cultural or organizational framework for others to adopt, Cultural Midwifery offers a descriptive ontology of *being*, *being with*, and *being within* the *becoming* that both invites and facilitates complex adaptive *breakthroughs* while also attempting to mitigate undue suffering. During the course of this dissertation, I have pointed to several trintab interventions—such as the acknowledgment of the archetypal feminine; a nurturance of primal prosociality; the de-fetishism of the heroic leader; an evolution of narratives regarding fear, uncertainty, and complexity; the participatory attendance to entire ecologies of *being*; and an expansion of the emergent capacity of cultural *spielraums*—that may help to ease the West’s transition through Postnormal Times. While it remains to be seen whether an Ecozoic or an Ecological Era is in fact emerging from the declining embers of the Industrial Age (still carrying with it many vestiges of that epoch, including the participatory agency of the individual), the dimensions, character, and dynamics of future paradigms have yet to find their reconstructive and normative footholds. Until such traces of meaning begin to form, enfold, and embed themselves into the webs of personal, relational, and cultural significance—in effect, etching the boundaries of the West’s essential unfolding—there will be the dance, and only the dance, of the spaces-between.

INQUIRY EPILOGUE

We rose before dawn. More than a thousand waking bodies, from as many directions, all trickling together, moving carefully across the crackling, chaparral terrain of the Escondido mountains and amassing, silently, in implicit communion. A few days prior, Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh marked his 87th birthday. On this morning, at least four generations gather to join him in walking meditation. Placing our right foot upon the earth, we conjure the phrase: *I am mother*. Transferring our weight to the left: *I am father*. With each step, we summon the truth of our lived lineage. With each step, we acknowledge the storied histories of those who came before. With each step, we consummate—in our collusion or in our disruption—the germ of what will *become*. *I am mother*. *I am father*. These words are entwined in the double helix of our DNA. They are infused into the reflexive habits of our ways of *being*. They are ontologically enmeshed, shaping the bounds of our personal and cultural identities. *Right foot: Mother*. *Left foot: Father*. In slow and steady succession, we ascend the mountain path. Birds begin their morning greetings in a cacophony of sound and flight. Geckos and brush rabbits both scatter and stare. A solitary mule deer has decided to continue its graze, but with watchful anticipation. *Mother*. *Father*. Upon reaching the summit, we settle upon an outcropping of boulders, just moments before the sun blossoms at the horizon's edge. Looking long across the valley plain, the light bends ever so slightly, revealing an almost imperceptible curvature at the corners of our sight. We sit, in stillness, as the land beneath us careens through space and the dawn, arising, paints a portrait of the Earth's

pirouette. *Inhaling: I am mother. Exhaling: I am father.* With each breath, the blood in our bodies courses through 96,500km of vasculature to sate trillions of oxygen-dependent cells (Daniels, 2007, p. 125). With it, atop the elemental iron birthed from the keening of a star's implosion, the lynchpin of our existence rests. To know that our life is owed in part to stardust is to know that we are complexity incarnate, and to assume an *ēthos* of care for this knowledge—for that which matters—is to embrace love as our “metaphysical gravity” (Fuller, 1981). *I am mother. I am father. I am midwife and the child that comes.*

In his summation of *No Name in the Street*, poet and critical theorist James Baldwin (1972) portends:

An old world is dying, and a new one, kicking in the belly of its mother, time, announces that it is ready to be born. This birth will not be easy, and many of us are doomed to discover that we are exceedingly clumsy midwives. No matter, so long as we accept that our responsibility is to the newborn . . . [and that] the acceptance of [this] responsibility contains the key to the necessary evolving skill. (p. 196)

Movement through postnormality is rarely devoid of difficulty, particularly when transitions are occurring between paradigms. We are creatures who like to have the rules of our engagement clearly defined; yet, we live in a world that is rife with flux and uncertainty and that is more interconnected than we can fathom. Moreover, we now live in an age where changes to our planet are occurring more rapidly than we can study them; where ecological pressures and demands on our resources (material and otherwise) are being exponentially compounded; where information streams are more vast than our capacities to extract meaning; where artificial intelligences are developing their own languages and the rudiments of their own complex adaptive cultures; where relations between trade partners and

nation-states are reaching critical thresholds; where citizens are questioning the nature of power and the future of their national identities; and where incomplete narratives are becoming our new normative realities. To say, therefore, that our responsibility is to that which comes, to that which is being led into *being*, or to the newly born is to make a profound commitment. Midwives—however clumsy—recognize that all creative emergence (and the meaning that is assigned to it) occurs *with* and *within* a dynamic ecology of *being* and that care for organismic systems (whether animate or inanimate) is a condition of both complete simplicity—as the very essence of a *being-in-the-world*—and immeasurable complexity—as the means by which all epistemological and relational connections are made, maintained, and transformed.

To care for the newborn, as the *becoming*, is to attend to a wholeness of *being*. It is an acknowledgment of our primordial rootedness in care (as *sorge*), which enables both our ability to discern that which matters (*besorgen*) and our capacity to *be with* the *being* of others (*fürsorge*). It is a depth of care that resides well within our reach, as a primal enaction of an originary *ēthos* of our species. As such, the contention that birth and the development of culture are intrinsically tied is far from hyperbolic. So long as we have birthed life into *being*, we have also midwifed our perceptions, our constructs, and our ideals into mattering. Birth, and its attendance, has invariably served as a mirror of cultural paradigms; as a metaphor for *copoiēsis*, liminality, and emergence; as a tacit, participatory, and embodied mode of *being*; and as a subtle, but enduring mechanism for transgenerational change. The ontology and praxis of midwifery, in the birth

theater and beyond, offers a way *through* postnormality that is indigenous in nature. It reminds us that at the stillpoint of the turning world—betwixt and between every inhalation and exhalation, every contraction and expansion, every stimulus and response, every step and repose, every surge of creation and every hint of decay—liminal spaces will inevitably unfurl. As these interstitial gaps arise, we are invited to wit(h)ness more fully, to lean into complexity, to adapt to variants, to allow for emergence, and to midwife that which comes with all that we are and all that we may be.

Breathing in: I am arriving in awareness.

Breathing out: I am home.

And at the stillpoint between: I am born anew.

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APPENDIX A: INQUIRY PERSPECTIVES

Table A1

Inquiry Perspectives: Ontology

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Ontology	Naïve realism: "real" reality, but apprehendable	Critical realism: "real" reality, but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendable	Historical realism: virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values; crystallized over time	Relativism: local and specific co-constructed realities	Participative reality: subjective-objective reality, co-created by mind and given cosmos	Participative and process-oriented reality: subjective-objective reality, co-created by mind and given cosmos/ecologies and also subject to generative emergence from nonlinear dynamics

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Ontology. Author's table. Adapted from "Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited," by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A2

Inquiry Perspectives: Epistemology

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Epistemology	Dualist/ objectivist; findings true	Modified dualist/ objectivist; critical tradition/ community; findings probably true	Transactional/ subjectivist; value-mediated findings	Transactional/ subjectivist; co- created findings	Critical subjectivity in participatory transaction with cosmos; extended epistemology of experimental, propositional, and practical knowing; co- created findings	Critical subjectivity and intersubjectivity in participatory transaction with cosmos/ ecologies; extended epistemology of experimental, propositional, tacit, embodied, and practical knowing; co- created, co- arising, and emergent findings

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Epistemology. Author’s table. Adapted from “Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited,” by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A3

Inquiry Perspectives: Methodology

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Methodology	Experimental/ manipulative; verification of hypotheses; chiefly quantitative methods	Modified experimental/ manipulative; critical multiplism; falsification of hypotheses; may include qualitative methods	Dialogic/ dialectical	Hermeneutical/ dialectical	Political participation in collaborative action inquiry; primacy of the practical; use of language grounded in shared experiential context	Dialogic; dynamic dialectics; reflexive hermeneutics; aspect modeling and insight modeling (Törnberg, 2011); narrativizing mass-dynamics (Lane, as cited in Törnberg, 2011); framework theories (Porter, 1991); holographic modeling (Morin, 2008a)

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Methodology. Author’s table. Adapted from “Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited,” by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A4

Inquiry Perspectives: Axiology

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Axiology	Researchers should remain distant from the subject so their actions are to not have influence on populations—only the laws their inquiry produces	Researchers should attempt to gain a better understanding of reality and as close as possible to truth through the use of statistics that explains and describes what is known as reality	Researchers seek to change existing education as well as other social institutions' policies and practices. Attempt to conduct research to improve social justice and remove barriers and other negative influences associated with social oppression	Propositional, transactional knowing is instrumentally valuable as a means to social emancipation, which is an end in itself, is intrinsically valuable. Emancipatory, but longer term, more reflective versus critical theory's desire for immediate results	Practical knowing how to flourish with a balance of autonomy, co-operation and hierarchy in a culture is an end in itself, is intrinsically valuable. In terms of human flourishing, social practices and institutions need to enhance human associations by integration of these 3 principles: deciding for others, with others and for oneself	Enacted knowing of how to flourish within a dynamic fabric of complex adaptive systems is an end in itself and is intrinsically valuable. Researchers are interested in an ecology of action, complex thinking, self-regulating and self-organizing emergence of metaparadigmatic/transdisciplinary perspectives. Paradox is not intrinsically problematic (Howard, 2009). Emphasis on process-oriented knowing

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Axiology. Author's table. Adapted from "Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited," by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A5

Inquiry Perspectives: Inquiry Aim

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Inquiry Aim	Explanation: prediction and control; Demonstrate laws that can be applied to natural order	Explanation: prediction and control; Researchers attempt to get as close to the answer as possible. Cannot fully attain reality but can approximate it	Critique and transformation; restitution and emancipation. Aim of inquiry is to find the social power structure in an attempt to discover the truth as it relates to social power struggles	Understanding; reconstruction. To understand and interpret through meaning of phenomena. Such understanding is sought to inform praxis	What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it? What is the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known? How can the inquirer go about knowing? What is intrinsically valuable in human life, in particular what sort of knowledge?	Concern with the "philosophy of organism" (Whitehead, 1925); seeks to illuminate nonlinear relationships between constantly changing entities, describe qualitative characteristics of change, examine how complex behavior evolves or emerges from simple interactions, and acknowledge role of synergy in a system's relationships

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Inquiry aim. Author's table. Adapted from "Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited," by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A6

Inquiry Perspectives: Nature of Knowledge

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Nature of Knowledge	Verified hypotheses established as facts or law	Nonfalsified hypotheses that are probable facts or laws	Structural/historical insights	Individual and collective reconstructions sometimes coalescing around consensus	Extended epistemology; primacy of practical knowing; critical subjectivity; living knowledge	Extended epistemology of experimental, propositional, phenomenal, tacit, embodied, and practical knowing; co-created, co-arising, and emergent findings

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Nature of knowledge. Author’s table. Adapted from “Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited,” by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A7

Inquiry Perspectives: Knowledge Accumulation

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Knowledge Accumulation	Accretion: "building blocks" adding to "edifice of knowledge"; generalizations and cause-effect linkages	Accretion: "building blocks" adding to "edifice of knowledge"; generalizations and cause-effect linkages	Historical revisionism; generalization by similarity	More informed and sophisticated reconstructions; vicarious experience	In communities of inquiry embedded in communities of practice	Meta-paradigmatic/ Trans-disciplinary synthesis of complex, self-eco-re-organizing phenomena (Morin, 2008a). Situated, multifaceted understanding of <i>autopoiësis</i> , <i>allopoiësis</i> , and emergence

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Knowledge accumulation. Author’s table. Adapted from “Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited,” by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A8

Inquiry Perspectives: Goodness, Quality of Criteria

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Goodness, Quality of Criteria	Conventional benchmarks of "rigor"; internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity	Conventional benchmarks of "rigor"; internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity	Historical situatedness; erosion of ignorance and mis-apprehensions; action stimulus	Trustworthiness and authenticity including catalyst for action	Congruence of experiential, presentational, propositional, and practical knowing; leads to action to transform the world in the service of human flourishing	Congruence of experiential, presentational, propositional, phenomenal, tacit, embodied, and practical knowing; leads to co-created action and opportunities for emergence to transform the world in the service of human flourishing; tensegrity; narrative consistency, congruence, and comprehensiveness

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Goodness, quality of criteria. Author's table. Adapted from "Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited," by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A9

Inquiry Perspectives: Values

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Values	Excluded— influence denied	Excluded— influence denied	Included— formative	Included— formative	Included— formative	Included— formative

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Values. Author’s table. Adapted from “Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited,” by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A10

Inquiry Perspectives: Ethics

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Ethics	Extrinsic—tilt toward deception	Extrinsic—tilt toward deception	Intrinsic—moral tilt toward revelation	Intrinsic— process tilt toward revelation	Intrinsic—process tilt toward revelation	Intrinsic—process tilt toward revelation

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Ethics. Author’s table. Adapted from “Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited,” by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A11

Inquiry Perspectives: Voice

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Voice	The data speaks for itself; consistent findings from inquiry leads to the researcher being disinterested in effect	Researchers are to inform populations using the data produced through their inquiry	The data are created with the intent of producing social change and imparting a social justice that leads to equal rights for all	"Passionate participant" as facilitator of multivoice reconstruction	"Passionate participant" as facilitator of multivoice reconstruction	Inquirer integral to inquiry; facilitates the narrativizing of mass-dynamics to promote situated understanding within flux, change, and complexity

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Voice. Author’s table. Adapted from “Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited,” by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A12

Inquiry Perspectives: Training

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Training	Technical and quantitative; substantive theories	Technical; quantitative and qualitative; substantive theories	Resocialization; qualitative and quantitative; history; values of altruism, empowerment, and liberation	Resocialization; qualitative and quantitative; history; values of altruism, empowerment, and liberation	Coresearchers are initiated into the inquiry process by facilitator/ researcher and learn through active engagement in the process; facilitator/ researcher requires emotional competence, democratic personalities and skills	Coresearchers are initiated into the inquiry process by facilitator/ researcher and learn through active engagement in the process; facilitator/ researcher requires emotional competence, democratic personalities, ambiguity tolerance, ability to engage in complex thinking, non-attachment to outcome, and enacted synthesis skills

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Training. Author’s table. Adapted from “Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited,” by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A13

Inquiry Perspectives: Inquirer Posture

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Inquirer Posture	"Disinterested scientist" as informer of decision makers, policy makers, and change agents	"Disinterested scientist" as informer of decision makers, policy makers, and change agents	"Transformative intellectual" as advocate and activist	"Passionate participant" as facilitator of multivoice reconstruction	Primary voice manifest through aware self-reflective action; secondary voices in illuminating theory, narrative, movement, song, dance, and other presentational forms	Primary voice manifest through aware self-reflective action (cultivation of mindfulness); secondary voices in illuminating theory, narrative, movement, the arts, and other forms/ types of representation, embodiment, and enaction

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Inquirer posture. Author’s table. Adapted from “Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited,” by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A14

Inquiry Perspectives: Accommodation

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Accommodation	Commensurable: Research has a common unit for study and analysis	Commensurable: Research has a common unit for study and analysis	Incommensurable: Data produced do not have to be from a common unit of measurement. Approaches research with different styles and methods that can produce multiple forms of data	Incommensurable: Data produced do not have to be from a common unit of measurement. Approaches research with different styles and methods that can produce multiple forms of data	Incommensurable: Data produced do not have to be from a common unit of measurement. Approaches research with different styles and methods that can produce multiple forms of data	Incommensurable: Data produced do not have to be from a common unit of measurement. Approaches research with different styles and methods that can produce multiple forms of data

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Accommodation. Author’s table. Adapted from “Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited,” by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A15

Inquiry Perspectives: Hegemony

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Hegemony	Belief that research should have the influence—not the person conducting the inquiry. Aim is to produce truth, not provide ways for that reality to affect others	Statistical analysis of reality will produce data from which decisions can be made. Ultimately, the researcher is in charge of the inquiry process	Research demonstrates the interactions of privilege and oppression as they relate to race/ethnicity; gender, class, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, and age	Seeks recognition and input; offers challenges to predecessor paradigms, aligned with postcolonial aspirations	Power is a factor in what and how we know	Offers challenges to predecessor paradigms; acknowledges interactions of privilege and oppression; power is a dynamic force/agency, and it factors into what and how we know and how we approach our processes of knowing

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Hegemony. Author’s table. Adapted from “Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited,” by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A16

Inquiry Perspectives: Action

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Action	Researchers are to remain strictly objective, therefore do not concern themselves with the action that is produced as a result of inquiry research	Researchers are to remain strictly objective, therefore do not concern themselves with the action that is produced as a result of inquiry research	The research produced is to impart social change, change how people think, or serve as an examination of human existence	Intertwined with validity; inquiry often incomplete without action on the part of the participants; mandates training in political action if participants do not understand political systems. Must act to be valid or trustworthy. Must understand the social context and the culture in which the data are produced to accurately reflect what the data actually meant to study	Intertwined with validity; inquiry often incomplete without action on the part of the participants; mandates training in political action if participants do not understand political systems	The research is produced to impart understanding of complex phenomena, trintab interventions, generative emergence, and self-organization within ecologies of perception, thought, action, and <i>being</i> . Applications to social change are oriented toward <i>breakingthrough</i> rather than <i>breakingdown</i> previous paradigms (Eisler, 1987)

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Action. Author’s table. Adapted from “Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited,” by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

Table A17

Inquiry Perspectives: Control

	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical Theories	Constructivism	Participatory	Complex Gaze
Control	Control is conducted by the researchers without the input and/or concern of the participants and/or society as a whole	Control is conducted by the researchers without the input and/or concern of the participants and/or society as a whole	Critical race theory and critical raced-gendered epistemologies demonstrate that within the critical paradigm, control can be shared by the researcher and the subject, and ultimately the subject can have a say in how the research is conducted	Shared between inquirer and participants. Without equal or co-equal control, research cannot be carried out	Shared between inquirer and participants. Without equal or co-equal control, research cannot be carried out. Knowledge is an expression of power	Shared between inquirer and participants. Without equal or co-equal control, research cannot be carried out. Knowledge is an expression of power

Note. Inquiry perspectives: Control. Author’s table. Adapted from “Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited,” by Y. S. Lincoln, S. A. Lynham, and E. G. Guba, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (4th ed., pp. 97–128), 2011, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc. Copyright 2011 by Sage Publications, Inc. Adapted with permission.

APPENDIX B: ARTICLES OF TRANSDISCIPLINARITY

Article 1:

Any attempt to reduce the human being by formally defining what a human being is and subjecting the human being to reductive analyses within a framework of formal structures, no matter what they are, is incompatible with the transdisciplinary vision.

Article 2:

The recognition of the existence of different levels of reality governed by different types of logic is inherent in the transdisciplinary attitude. Any attempt to reduce reality to a single level governed by a single form of logic does not lie within the scope of transdisciplinarity.

Article 3:

Transdisciplinarity complements disciplinary approaches. It occasions the emergence of new data and new interactions from out of the encounter between disciplines. It offers us a new vision of nature and reality. Transdisciplinarity does not strive for mastery of several disciplines but aims to open all disciplines to that which they share and to that which lies beyond them.

Article 4:

The keystone of transdisciplinarity is the semantic and practical unification of the meanings that *traverse* and *lie beyond* different disciplines. It presupposes an open-minded rationality by re-examining the concepts of “definition” and “objectivity.” An excess of formalism, rigidity of definitions and a claim to total objectivity, entailing the exclusion of the subject, can only have a life-negating effect.

Article 5:

The transdisciplinary vision is resolutely open insofar as it goes beyond the field of the exact sciences and demands their dialogue and their reconciliation with the humanities and the social sciences, as well as with art, literature, poetry and spiritual experience.

Article 6:

In comparison with interdisciplinarity and multidisciplinary, transdisciplinarity is multireferential and multidimensional. While taking account of the various approaches to time and history, transdisciplinarity does not exclude a transhistorical horizon.

Article 7:

Transdisciplinarity constitutes neither a new religion, nor a new philosophy, nor a new metaphysics, nor a science of sciences.

Article 8:

The dignity of the human being is of both planetary and cosmic dimensions. The appearance of human beings on Earth is one of the stages in the history of the Universe. The recognition of the Earth as our home is one of the imperatives of transdisciplinarity. Every human being is entitled to a nationality, but as an inhabitant of the Earth is also a transnational being. The acknowledgement by international law of this twofold belonging, to a nation and to the Earth, is one of the goals of transdisciplinary research.

Article 9:

Transdisciplinarity leads to an open attitude towards myths and religions, and also towards those who respect them in a transdisciplinary spirit.

Article 10:

No single culture is privileged over any other culture. The transdisciplinary approach is inherently transcultural.

Article 11:

Authentic education cannot value abstraction over other forms of knowledge. It must teach contextual, concrete and global approaches. Transdisciplinary education revalues the role of intuition, imagination, sensibility and the body in the transmission of knowledge.

Article 12:

The development of a transdisciplinary economy is based on the postulate that the economy must serve the human being and not the reverse.

Article 13:

The transdisciplinary ethic rejects any attitude that refuses dialogue and discussion, regardless of whether the origin of this attitude is ideological, scientific [*sic*], religious, economic, political or philosophical. Shared knowledge should lead to a shared understanding based on an absolute *respect* for the collective and individual Otherness united by our common life on one and the same Earth.

Article 14:

Rigor, openness, and tolerance are the fundamental characteristics of the transdisciplinary attitude and vision. *Rigor* in argument, taking into account all existing data, is the best defense against possible distortions. *Openness* involves an acceptance of the unknown, the unexpected and the unpredictable. *Tolerance* implies acknowledging the right to ideas and truths opposed to our own.

Note. From “Appendix I. The charter of transdisciplinarity,” by B. Nicolescu, in *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity* (pp. 148–151), 2002, Albany: State University of New York Press. Copyright 2002 by State University of New York Press. Reprinted with permission.

APPENDIX C: MIDWIFERY AND MEDICAL MODELS OF CARE

Table C1

Midwifery and Medical Models of Care

Midwifery model	Medical model
Pregnancy and birth as ‘normal’	Pregnancy and birth as abnormal / dangerous
Continuous care and support for the mother by one person over a long period of time	Care distributed among several health-care providers, generally short-term and discontinuous
Woman-centered and relationship-based approach to care that prioritises [<i>sic</i>] the experience of the mother	Efficiency- and effectiveness-based approach to care that prioritises [<i>sic</i>] care as part of a broader system of health-care provision
Anticipation and avoidance of unnecessary medical support and intervention	Preparation / preference for medical support and intervention
Value of experiential, embodied, intuitive knowledge	Value of biomedical knowledge
Focus on mother’s birth experience	Focus on anticipating and managing risk and liability
Importance of personal trust between midwife and mother	Importance of clinical confidence of mother in health-care provider
Provider training focused on the ‘normal’	Provider training focused on the ‘abnormal’
Perception of pain during labour [<i>sic</i>] as natural in most cases	Perception of pain during labour [<i>sic</i>] as a medical symptom to be alleviated

Note. From “A systematic review of qualitative evidence on barriers and facilitators to the implementation of task-shifting in midwifery services,” by Colvin, C. J., de Heer, J., Winterton, L., Mellenkamp, M., Glenton, C., Noyes, J., . . . Rashidian, A, 2013, *Midwifery*, 29(10), p. 1217. Copyright 2013 by Elsevier Science and Technology Journals. Reprinted with permission.