

YEARNING

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Yearning is inside me, everywhere inside me, in the dendrites, axons, soma of my nerve cells, and in the hypothalamus storing the memories of past yearnings. It is in the capillaries throughout my blood stream. It beats inside my heart, and muscles its way into my bones, ligaments, soft tissue, and protein filaments of actin and myosin producing the contractions of my body movements. It is in my organs from brain to bladder. It effects every aspect of my life. I am in the constant grip of yearning. It is everywhere. I yearn to be creative like the actin and myosin in me.

When I watch my youngest granddaughter play the cello, I yearn for her success and continued pleasure making music. I yearn, with her, to play first chair, rather than second chair, or third chair, in the orchestra. I watch the chair move toward her, it too wants her bottom sitting in its wooden structure, its golden form bending to the rhythm of her sway, its ladderback shape holding her firmly while the cello sits between her knees. As the bow yearns to be pulled across the wanting four strings, its slender neck aches to be caressed, wanting her musical voice to sing

tenderly, clearly, decisively, with precision. The chair's four sturdy legs stand firmly holding each note to their full capacity. The notes on the written page of Mozart's Variation, with its innocence and sophistication, call her to stand out; urging, play me; softly, boldly, tenderly, as I am written. Play me with passion, play me with power, play me with precision, play me with refinement. Each note yearns for full expression. Perhaps, I too can become an artist like my granddaughter.

I walk outside. The leaves on the maple trees each have been yearning throughout the entire summer to change colors; as if saying, change me to orange, change me to yellow, change me to golden, or change me to red. Each leaf wants to grow into autumn;

to be pulled into its natural destiny. Longing to paint the landscape with its indigenous pigments. The Douglas Firs stand proud and tall, longing to reach higher in the sky for more sun light while its roots dig deeper in the soil, stretching its toes hungry for solid footing wishing to be recognized into ten centuries of tomorrows. Urging warblers, squirrels, nuthatches, grouse, and chipmunks to nest and feed in its abundance. I yearn to write a paragraph as beautiful as a tree. Even the rainfall craves to land where it will be used in full capacity to quench the thirst of the ferns, each blade of grass, potato vines, fescues, huckleberries and all the indigenous plants within its reach.

Lovers walking hand in hand at the market, desiring lips and arms to merge into the body of the other. Oblivious to the outside world, their aching appetites only to be satiated by the other. Their hunger, their thirst, their cravings, their desires are expressed in their gazing eyes, through their attentive faces, shoulders leaning into, necks crane intimately toward the other. Ageless

longings, comfortable, serene, familiar, protective, hoping for a century together. They joke, if we eat our spinach, it could happen. Yes, our salmon too. The other adds. They yearn for conversations that confirm the rhapsody of their unbridled passion, and wish for endless time merged with, lost in, the eyes, the lungs, the throat, the body of the other. They perceive through the other's eyes, breathe through their lungs, inhale their scents, taste the sweet mint flavor of the others chewing gum, they see only perfection of the other. Longing for a world that loves as deeply, as profoundly, as wisely, and as innocently as they do. When others see them, they too long for what the lovers have.

Lovers shop for produce, and every vegetable conveys the same longing. The cucumber, the carrot, the asparagus, and the zucchini's lengths confirm special penetrating powers of passion. She smells and playfully caresses the cucumber and looks at him mischievously. He nods, enamored by the private meaning of her gesture, deepening their communal enchantment. Each plant grows firm, like him, because of its yearning, longing, desiring; from its roots to its budding maturity. Plants too have their cravings, passions to be consumed, used, and eaten; to merge with a life force that is greater than just themselves. The squash, the pumpkin, the chayote, the watermelon, the cantaloupe, the gourd, now ripe; yearn to be part of the festive meal, to sacrifice themselves in their longing to nourish before returning to earth from where they began. All are longing, yearning, craving to be the full realization of their evolved purpose.

Nature herself yearns for the full cycle of the seasons to express all her beauty for the passion of all of living things. To flaunt her voluptuous mountains, her fertile oceans, her productive valleys, her undulating hills, her sybaritic rivers and streams, her sensual gorges, her lavish plateaus, and her climatic sunrises and sunsets, she yearns to satisfy, with the totality of her majesty. Everywhere she looks, is longing, is desire, is craving, is wanting, is wishing, is

hungering, of every animal, plant, insect, reptile, fish, human, every living species yearning from life to death. Even the streams yearn to merge with rivers, rivers wish to merge with bigger rivers, and bigger rivers long to merge with the oceans. They flow endlessly from the highest mountains, through the hills, past the plateaus, beyond the valleys, longing, until finally they merge with the ocean.

If that is not enough, the sun aches to pull up the vaporious molecules into the sky to start the passion and cravings of the streams and rivers anew. I yearn to pull words from the sky to create meaning that will enlighten like the sun. The sun passionately hungers to warm the earth and provide light, so all can see longing play out, day after day, into eternity. There is no emotion more powerful than yearning.

When I walk into any art museum, the first things that strikes my senses is the building's structure. Whether it is made of glass with hard edges, huge with cavernous open spaces, or white walls covered with objects of art cramped in small rooms, I can not help from hearing the deep yearnings whispering from inside the walls. Be it a museum of great history and acclaim like the Louvre in Paris, or an unknown museum on a small corner street in Omaha, their art whispers, murmurs, sighs, longs through their corridors; look at me, see me, hear me, smell me, feel me, yearn with me--- but, don't touch me. Every artist on display longs to be seen, heard, understood, felt, imagined, fantasized, dreamed of, talked about, experienced profoundly, deeply, fully for an eternity. Artists' truths are inescapable; their creative energy flows from unquenchable yearnings. From Michelangelo to Matisse, Rembrandt to Rodin, Chagall to Chihuly, Pissarro to Picasso, Vaccaro to Van Gogh, artist yearn.

The same is true of artists that write. If you read close enough, seriously enough, deep enough, slow enough, you feel the bumps and bruises of their yearnings, as they muscle language into poetry of smells, sounds, textures, colors, tastes, emotions, and stories. They make you, too, yearn to see their vision, feel their sadness, swing to their rhythm and blues, grapple their metaphors, crawl

inside their loneliness, climb their mountains, taste their apples, and smell their cotton in the morning before picking. From Dante to Dillard, Poe to Purpura, Bronte to Baldwin,

Gay to Gerard, Chaucer to Coombs, Trotsky to Twain, at a broader level, a larger scope, they each intimately write, implicit in their stories, a silent narrative that you can smell on each page, a story which parallels their centric tales; the memoir of yearning. Their intentions are to provoke images, ideas, connections, inspirations, drag you into, allure you, snag you, and insinuate you, to become infatuated with them. The common pervasive theme hiding within each piece of art, concealed within, contained in words, sentences, paragraph and pages between book covers, under the architecture, is their closeted secret, rooted in the same intimated emotion; yearning. The yearning is so deep in writers, some almost scream it in their essays, poetry, stories, plays, while others whisper it, sing it, dance it, somersault it, cajole it, hint it, pirouette it, bounce it, roll it, humor it, or twizzle it into their motif. Their yearning is inescapable, you taste it in the sentence, in its sweetness and bitterness when rolling the words over the back of your tongue, savoring them ever so mindfully, before sliding them down your throat, digesting each word, each sentence, each paragraph of each page. You want more. You hunger for their muscled distinct language, strong with local flavor and provincial intensity. You experience yourself differently after a reading. You feel bolder, cleverer, more mischievous, because now, you are inflicted with their yearning intentions; even though, perhaps, there was not a single tacit mention of the word yearning. After a rigorous reading, you have internalized the writer's longings, desires, hunger, lust, cravings. You want to be an artist like them.

Their words, from early Greek to Post -modern, are deeply rooted in the ubiquitous emotion of yearning. They're words are the music of yearning. Music, once you've heard it, can't get the tune out of your head. Later, you find yourself muttering the deeper meanings of their messages as you shower and croon their melodies over and over in your mind. Soon your shower soothes with the warmth and the wisdom of their lyrics splashing down droplets of inspiration. You even smell them in the clean crisp fragrance of the body soap. You smell, the wordsmithing of Faulkner or Twain, Cote or Coombs, Gay or Baldwin, or the essays from Aristotle to Zadok, for that matter, and you learn their poetic scents are deeply rooted in the redolent emotions of yearning. The strong evocative fragrance of yearning is inside the creations of all persons of letters.

Yearning is also found inside philosophers, biologists, and psychiatrists. However, many of them, and other well-meaning scholars have been short sighted, constricted, or neglectful when researching or writing about yearning. Some, simply, did not give it, it's just due. Descartes, for example, is well known for his reasoned declaration, "I think, therefore I am." For this, he based the whole of his philosophy. What he meant to say, and which is more accurate, when examined in the whole of his life, is: "I yearn, therefore I am." He yearned his entire life to be a philosopher. He wrote, he walked, he drank, he ate, he loved, he talked, he imagined, and he dreamed, yearning. Perhaps if he wouldn't have slept till noon daily, and gotten out of bed earlier, like Franklin, his thinking would not have been so lazy. Perhaps a few more hours awake in the early morning would have 'unfuzzied' his thinking. He would have clearly seen that the core of his life was not thinking, but rather yearning. Imagine how influential he would have been, had he listened to his heart, rather than his head.

Darwin in writing *Origin of Species* demonstrated yearning throughout, however, sadly, attributed no underlying emotion to evolution. However, even with a casual glance, if you merely walk on the Galapagos Islands, you can see the lumbering iguana as he tries to attract a mate, the hundred year old tortoise consorting with a 25 day old baby, the red throated frigate bird swelling up to be seen by a suitable partner, the flightless cormorant stretching its wings to impress, make growling sounds, nesting and nurturing its offspring. All of these confirms almost poetically, the biological aspects of yearning. The yearning of each species is on vivid display, as each strives to be better, if for no other reason than for survival. Yearning is deeply mingled inside the DNA of each organism.

Two of the most well-known psychiatrists of the twentieth century, Freud and Jung each wrote analytically on yearning. Both discussed it as striving, passion, longing affect, desire, and eagerness. Freud stated it was purely sexual (of course), instinctive, for the preservation of the species. He also called it libido. Jung stated it was creative, qualitative, transformational, interactive, meaningful, progressive and healing- a drive to activity. From another similar perspective comes Sanskrit's thinking, which suggest yearning is a violent longing, an exciting longing, and an eager longing. Each of these thinker's describe yearning, in a common accepted way, which suggest an expansive, deep, and sustaining human experience that emboldens the whole of the human spirit.

Since the Upper Paleolithic (around 43,000 BC), and proba-

bly before, music has also uplifted the human spirit. Music does not explain in words. Music like yearning is an idea. It is not about perfection, beauty, or truth; music is perfection beauty and truth, while yearning seeks it, and beyond. Mankind understands music and yearning as transcendent. From the Geissenklöterle cave in southern Germany, over 46,000 years ago, bone flutes and whistles were found. Inside the Trois-Frères cave in Arège region of France, images of a man playing a flute, were discovered. Both caves provide the early beginnings of graphic representation of music and yearning. Humanity, music, and yearning are inseparable. The music represents an innate urge, a yearning, for transcendence above the ordinary. From the caves in France and Germany, to the Gregorian chants of Catholicism, to the Sonatas of Beethoven to backstage at a U2 concert, music has articulated human yearnings. The Beatles song, *I Want to Hold Your Hand* expresses the young pervasive yearnings of adolescence. While Mozart wrote, as an adolescent, portions of *The Requiem* for a wealthy landowner whose young wife had died. Both songs, many generations apart, memorialize the impact of yearning on youth.

Perhaps no American music depicts yearning more powerfully than the Blues which came from; African spirituals, African chants, work songs, field hollers, rural life, drum music, revivalist hymns, and country dance music. The Blues grew out of the Mississippi Delta, not far from New Orleans, the birth place of Jazz. Just listen to the 12-bar blues, melodies, guitar, piano, harmonica, bass, blues harp, slide guitar, saxophone, or trumpet of the Blues to hear yearning in its full measure. There is no other musical genre like the blues. The deep lyrical emotion and sultry melodies of B.B. King, Charlie Parker, Eric Clapton, Chuck Berry, Billie Holiday, Bessie Smith, Etta James, Janis Joplin, Dinah Washington, Amy Winehouse, Lester Gordon, and Muddy Waters give merely a hint of the unquenchable yearnings found in the blues.

The same can be said of Jazz. Sonny Rollins, Thelonious Monk, Chet Baker, Ray Charles, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennet, Duke Ellington, Nat King Cole, and so many other express imaginatively, creatively, the deeply felt yearnings of all ages, young and old, across subcultures, across continents, and across languages.

From the lyrics of Ira Gershwin, to the lips of Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra, and Natalie Cole the song, *Our Love is Here to Stay* implies the geologic influence of yearning: In time the Rockies may Tumble, Gibraltar may crumble. They're only made of clay. But our

love is here to stay. This clearly has earth science ramifications. Gibraltar and the Rockies yearn to be flat. Adding to the geologic perspective of yearning, are volcanic eruptions of, especially, Hawaii's Kilauea. It lies dormant, minding its own affairs. The magma beneath the earth collecting and playfully bubbling in chambers. When enough force is gathered, it erupts, naturally, and often dramatically. The magna has been yearning to express itself. To show its power, its influence, its magnitude- to bask in its own glory, to get out and take a stroll towards the ocean. Its yearning is as natural as a hiccup, a burp, a sigh, or a moan.

The same can be said of the movement of eight large tectonic plates and seven smaller plates of the Earth's lithosphere which began movement between 3 and 3.5 billion years ago. Of course, earthquakes epicenters outline these plates. After remaining still, for a few million years, they yearn to stretch their bones, muscle themselves into a more comfortable position, like most of us, after we have been sleeping or sitting too long, nudge our pillow or arch our back for comfort. The plates movement causes the reforming oceans to quake and rumble, disturbing the peace of prehistoric aquatic life of yearning trilobites, and sea dinosaurs, and later modern sea fish and mammals, revealing the deep cavernous valleys, forested hills, caves, volcanoes, and mountains, hidden beneath the oceans fertile surface. From Gershwin to tectonic plates, to the mysterious ocean, to sea dinosaurs, the earth yearns. Most people know that Gershwin wrote poetically about love. What most people don't consider, he also wrote poetically about geology. Likewise, most don't consider yearning is in the earth's bones, its mountains, its valleys, its plateaus, and its hills.

While yearning is everywhere: in my granddaughter's cello, leaves of trees, rivers running to the ocean, droplets of rain, musical notes of blues and jazz, and the earth's bones, there is deeper meaning implied in all yearnings; listen to your heart, not your head. So much of our misunderstandings, confusion, tribalism, and strife come from not listening to the earth, the music, the artist's reflection, not 'seeing,' not attending to the 'sadness', and not honoring our emotions. Trees, rivers, raindrops, volcanoes, the earth don't second guess themselves. Our emotional intelligence will often take us out of the briar patch of tangled up rationality, jumbled reasoning, tortuous overthinking, and deliver us closer to our selves, closer to others, closer to our humanity...if we just listen.

I am forever hoping, the poetics of Purpura, the descriptions of Dillard, the beats of Baldwin, the gumptions of Gerard, and the

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aspirations of countless other artists, will osmotically rub off on me. If I stroll with them, meander with them, wander with them, long enough, and far enough, they will teach me their coveted secrets. They will educate me, inform me, guide me, instruct me, tutor me, deeply and profoundly about yearning; how to play with it, stretch it, massage it, squeeze it, remove from its restraints, tickle it, burp it, caress it, tease it, and perhaps take it for a walk into a neighborhood we've never been before. They will teach me beyond the biological, psychological, geological, and musical. They will take me inside their words, sentences, and paragraphs, deep into their dendrites and synapses, deep into the belly, into the eye of the hunger, between white spaces, and the unexpressed thoughts.... to the magic, to the poetic.