

part in an organic process of come-and-go. There is no ego, no “me” is designated—all the myriad molecules exist independently on their own but contribute collectively to everything that occurs. *The infinity of the little ones*, perhaps the true extent of unity and the principle of non-duality. Watts continues as N. and I find ourselves melting into the night watch, becoming the darkness, the blindness. The immediate presence of unity with our invisible collaborators—all the people who find themselves in the dark—is not an illusion. *The truest unity is the same thing as the most detailed, highly articulated multiplicity.*

The future is collective agency. Watts, a spiritual teacher, grounded in traditions of Eastern mysticism, seems far removed from where N. and

I find ourselves. But he is speaking to us, to the people, not as a “you” and “me,” but as a diversification of beings. And for him, as for us, time becomes quite important. For the past nights, the variety of experiences has led me to consider language as a script that can be read and understood through a variety of moods and inflections. The visual, not in the sense of what I see, but what my mind imagines, literally *images*, presents itself in language as the poetic. Lately, I have been thinking about the poetic connotations of “revolution,” not out of some romanticizing impulse but more as a register of speech that can help clarify the disparity between the factual experiences played out on the street and my subjective, emotional intuitions. For me, the poetic acts as a threshold to the

political, a foot dangling over a cliff, tickled by a bird's feather, jerking forward and being pulled back. The poetic also measures time differently, quite important when time has seemed to collapse on a historical level as well as a purely chronometric one. The poetic's insistence on breaks and gaps, the pauses for breath, the indirectness of speech and the roundabout, descriptive (or abstract) ways of imagining, reflecting and expressing situations seems highly appropriate. And, maybe most interesting of all, the transience of the physical world is self-understood by the poetic through the constant, brilliant succession of images in the imagination. When music plays, it is there by disappearing. The sound is slipping into the past at breakneck speed. Mountains come and go, oceans

live and die, this temporality of the physical, the always on-the-brink-of-disappearing, is what pushes life to the realm of the imaginary. To not possess the “vision of the future”—that is, the possibility to participate in a poetic perception of reality—is to believe that vision is fixed, that the body is tangible and finite and to insert *thingness* into matter, forcing objects to be as they appear and clinging onto the surface of what one immediately sees and takes for granted. The dissolution of matter is the foundational principle of being for the poetic and the imaginary. To read what was never written is, perhaps, the ongoing task of maintaining a language that seeks to translate the complexity of physical reality as what lays beneath the surface—the trembling organs, the symbolic configurations, the blind landscape of the night.

Johanne Nordby Wernø

Transatlantic Journeys (excerpts)

Author's Note

While interning as a curator's assistant in 2008 at the Henie Onstad Art Center, I got to know the story of Sonja Henie and Niels Onstad. She was the world's best and most glamorous figure skater and a 1930s Hollywood star; he was a shipping magnate and her third husband. The history of the art collecting couple and their institution—inaugurated in the charged year of 1968—became the starting point for half a work of fiction; the other half begins with a selected artwork which was on view as part of a group show at the center, Per-Oskar Leu's *America (If it Wasn't for You, We'd All Speak German)* from 2007. *America* traces the same trajectory as the

one so frequently traveled by the California-based couple: USA-Norway. The artist addressed a first edition of Franz Kafka's novel *Amerika* (1927) to the book's main character and mailed it to him in the USA, only to see it returned to Oslo. A character, a man from Oklahoma, was extracted from the work and cast in this short story.

What might emerge when words get to act with or through, rather than having to “be about,” art? Regarding the present alleged crisis in art criticism—the once influential critic losing out to the curator—as emancipatory rather than threatening, the short story “Transatlantic Journeys” came about

as part of a larger investigation of this crisis: how do unorthodox modes of art criticism, such as fiction, contribute to its discourse? The story (abridged in the version printed here) can be read both as part of this investigation and separately as an independent piece of fiction.