

LIVING WITH A LIMINAL MIND

YORIKO GILLARD

ABSTRACT:

Learning to be an educational storyteller entails using every creative skill I learned since my childhood and has allowed me to connect with others especially those in pain. This paper is a reflection of my emotional past. My tears are coming from the ocean and rivers in my liminal space. In this space, I contemplate my hopeful future and seek its contemplative challenges to discover what I still do not know and could learn as an educator. My sincere contemplation to serve society shall be a poetic reflection of who I am becoming each step of my life. Creative writing is the truthful voice of my soul. I, a contemporary artist, avoid making art unless my heart screams its pain and allows these stories to take flight. Memories of pain are seeded throughout my liminal space where water overflows and swallows them occasionally. The beauty of ambiguity is inside grey pavements and reflects the multi layers, which are subtle and bold at the same time. I shall become free with my sense of belonging that is connecting to my soul and history.

BIO:

Yoriko Gillard is an artist, poet, researcher and teacher. After receiving heartfelt

support and care and mentorship from Dr. Carl Leggo, she advanced to PhD Candidate in Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver BC, Canada in June 2018. While teaching Japanese language, Japanese culture and visual arts through a variety of creative practices in various educational communities, she tries to connect with people in the *Kizuna* way, which Gillard defines as a respectful, affectionate, and trustful reciprocal relationship. 絆(きずな: *Kizuna*) is a Japanese word which connotes a strong feeling of belonging to one's communities, people, lands, and nature. The concept is well known in Japan especially since the Great East Japan Earthquake struck the country in March 11, 2011. In 2017 she worked as a student researcher for [Landscapes of Injustices](#) at Nikkei National Museum and Cultural Centre in Burnaby where she uncovered the resilient *Kizuna* stories of Japanese Canadian communities from 1942-1949. Her desire in education comes directly from her mentor, Dr. Leggo's words; "Live creatively and poetically" to reach out people with her liminal storytelling practices.

There is always a shadow beside my eyes where I see the greys¹, the color of wisdom in my liminal mind. My liminal mind is where I allow myself to be free to think of anything truthful with intuitive sense ... in my liminal space. My liminal mind guides my living and thinking processes of a relationship among 'contemplate,' 'contemplative,' and 'contemplation.' It is my way to wander a world full of opportunities that occasionally seem promised, smooth, and secure, yet sometimes disappointing, rough, and bumpy ...



My liminal space, a safer place
allows me to play with
a lingering verb 'to contemplate'
a hopeful adjective 'contemplative'
a wishful noun 'contemplation' ...

The verb 'to contemplate'
an action to gather thoughts from the
past
imagination in the present
the path to our 'contemplative' future
with others to serve society ...

Let me hold my passion ...
let me seek trusting relationships ...
let me feel hearts of care and kindness
...
my way of living with a liminal mind
another story to weave a grey journey
I am mending in my liminal space ...



It hurts² me
still ...
truly tragedy ...
earth shock
oceans awoken
tsunami warned
humans crying
technology ... radiation ...
our broken silence
March 11, 2011,
the day I will never forget ...

I am connecting
with souls ...
tears still screaming
my careful selection takes time
outside the academy I stay
where am I?
where do I belong?
inside the academy?
liminal mind circulates ...

“... you need to stop thinking
am I good enough ...”
Mentor’s words ³
wisdom,
care,
medicine
for many I know
contagious
genuine
his trust
circulating ...

2018, seven years later
my contemplation
messy
people care
humanity
inside and outside the academy
many
feel the pain
many
see the pain
many
hear the pain
tears
fill my heart ...

Life and death
belonging or not belonging
life long contemplation
circulates ...
my liminal space a safer space
since childhood
living with a liminal mind ...

“I might not live long ... dear ...
I teach everything I can now”

Mother’s voice echoes
my heart aches to survive ...

attentive to life
my mother her teaching
heart still beating
danger a teacher she says
smiling at school
hiding my fear of losing her ...

A girl sobbing
alone at night
still ...
my forever friend
my forever teacher ...



My liminal mind
a guide
to feel and hear voices
pain of others ...

Learning journey
memories of liminal space
taking me far
deep reasoning
my actions
dancing together ...
I am alive ...

walking head down
 thinking life
with others ...
 staring cracks
 in the street
 reflect my life
with others ...

Every street has its history ...
snowstorms
frost heaves
the earth lifts our sealed pavement
us relearning
the power of nature
can we command ...
street full of gray patches
telling us stories of
negotiations and contemplations
driving quickly
responsibilities
missing the chance to learn
again and again ...



Several promises to myself

in staying in the academy ...

- 1) Admit I do not know many things
- 2) Be honest with my inner voices
- 3) Follow people I trust only
- 4) Be humble and stay away from envy
- 5) Seek help for reciprocal growth
- 6) Contemplate to serve society

there

are

more

to

come ...

The world seems two-sided
right and wrong
life and death
accepted and declined
gain and loss
success and failure
trust and distrust
binary concept continues endlessly
creating multiple perspectives
rightness reversed into wrongness
"I like – " and "I hate –"
multiplicity ...
binary collections

Vancouver
myth of a multicultural dream city
full of ethnic foods
different languages echo on streets
are we belonging?
are we understanding?
are we feeling?
are we listening?

are we learning?
are we comforting?
are we caring?
are we sharing?
contemplation keep moving ...

Yes or No
Black and White
Up and Down
Right and Left
In and Out
Good and Bad
Correct and Incorrect
endless binaries ...

Nikkei National Museum⁴
a place that holds memories for
many
from 1942 to 1949
Japanese Canadian injustice
still hurting ... haunting
many Canadians
they were called enemy aliens

my elderly friends teach and cry
silently and humbly
living with us
past/present/future
many ignore
many unaware
many disbelieve
many uneducated ...
still ...

My own ignorance
guilt and shame
this my force
a reason to stay in the academy ...
seventy six years
long past already...

My commitment
research the past⁵
to the future
in present ...
fifty letters from 1942 ...

Japanese calling me
to belong
to understand
to feel
to listen
to learn
to comfort
to care
to share
contemplation connecting us ...

Japan to Canada
Canada to Japan
unimaginable pain
travels with my liminal mind
binary problems
existing
still ...

Contemplative processes
break my heart deeply
crying helps

perhaps
crying reminds me pain
emotion our pure sense
who decided who does not belong
in the academy ...
crying many times
with my broken heart
walking around Fukushima ...
translating letters from 1942 ...
who has the right to say I am weak?
who can decide crying is weak?
I am alive
to feel the pain
in my liminal space
with a liminal mind ...

I am a human walking on earth full
of greys
I am a person who cares about pain
of others
Is this enough to stay in the academy?



“... you are an artist ...
why do you care about the academy ...
you should belong to communities ...
you are a social activist ...”

I hear well

I feel well

what is the academy anyways ...
contemplation circulates ...

Education ...

in the heart of our lives

within society including the academy ...

Pavement cracks
 history ...
layers, mendings
 history ...
Fukushima
Japanese Canadians
 history ...
strength gained from survivors
 irony and truth
resilience, dignity, forgiveness ...
 history of hopes
circulate with my liminal mind ...

Meandering
living with a liminal mind
stumbling all over the places
get hurt and carry scars
memories connecting souls to care
pain guiding us forward ...
this is my love letter to the academy ...



[Link to video](#)

Notes

¹ Photos (Still Images) in this chapter are selected from the video created by the author. Gillard, Y. (2016), Living with a Liminal Mind.

² See <https://open.library.ubc.ca/cIRcle/collections/ubctheses/24/items/1.0166942>

³ Heartfelt words of encouragement given by Dr. Carl Leggo, my PhD Supervisor

⁴ See <http://centre.nikkeiplace.org/research/japanese-canadian-history-in-brief/>

⁵ See <http://www.landscapesofinjustice.com/>

