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AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AS SELF PORTRAIT:
AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF TRAUMA-SENSEMAKING
THROUGH ART AND NARRATIVE

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Communication

by
Kally Christina Werning
May 2023

Accepted by:
Dr. Travers Scott, Committee Chair
Dr. Kristin Okamoto
Dr. Brian Miller

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DISCLAIMER

This thesis project delves into complex trauma and psychological themes, and the contents of this work should not be taken lightly. The research conducted for this thesis was done with the utmost care and consideration, but it is important to note that this project is not intended to serve as a guide or recommendation for others to conduct similar research without proper consultation with a qualified professional. Curious readers are urged to exercise caution and seek professional guidance before attempting to replicate this research. The author of this thesis cannot be held responsible for any adverse effects resulting from the use of the information presented herein.

ABSTRACT

This project thesis is centered around coping with early onset childhood trauma through an autoethnography of narrative and art creation. The goal of this project is to understand more deeply how the art making process synthesizes or disrupts trauma sense-making through the introspective lens of the artist as scholar. The project consists of an interactive art exhibit and this written scholarly analysis of the creation and display of this exhibit. This includes an introduction to my life as a trauma survivor and Greek-American woman, informed by communication scholarship and other relevant fields regarding narrative theory, Greek history, religious and trauma studies. Within the socially constructed “life-world,” the epistemological assumptions of subjective-narrative research focus on the interpretations of lived experience, not to produce generalizable knowledge (Kvale, 1996). Because trauma-sensemaking is both analytical and symbolic, inspired by previous autoethnographic scholarship, this project is written in both a creative and academic voice (Fink, 2022). In addition, the project thesis discusses relevant extant literature surrounding autoethnographic methods and artistic practice and outlines the plans and outcomes of my art exhibit and the design of the autoethnography, including a description of the art-making plan and a discussion of the various art media involved in the project, such as creative writing and painting.

Keywords: trauma, Greek, sexual trauma, childhood abuse, art, religious trauma

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In the dark narrow hallway, light shot out from the crack of my sister's locked door. I dug my hands under the crack and placed my head level to the cream-colored linoleum carpet. My eyes squinted to see if I could make out a foot or a sign of her body in motion. I pressed my tiny lips in the crevice and spoke, "Stephy, can we draw paper dolls together?"

Artistic expression has been an essential part of my life like steady breathing. I first began exploring art through music and performance. Primarily as a vocalist and pianist, I have had the opportunity to sing in front of thousands of people throughout the years. Because my older sister Stephanie was always the "artist" of the family, it wasn't until I was in middle school that I began exploring visual arts. Boxes of notebooks and workbooks sit in my parent's basement collecting dust mites. I used to flip through my sister's old calculus or history notes and vigilantly copy her doodles in the margins. As an artist and academic, I feel reminded of high school, doodling within the confines of the margins of my calculus homework. I have embarked on an artistic exploration in this thesis; however, I am still met with structural limitations as a means to validate the art-making process.

My vocal chords rattle with minor lullabies and the memories of traumas and joys I have experienced through life. The canvas of my life has been painted both for me, and by me to hide besides the skeletons, dirty clothes, and shadows in my closet.

Communication scholar Goodall states, “the public world is unlikely to be measured by a sample size, or an argument about methods, or the tedious language of our in-group speech, but by the *value of our stories in the lives of people who read and use them*” (Goodall, 2004, p. 193). Standard academic scholarship has been criticized for replacing flesh and bone with numbers and variables (Felski, 2011). Like an apple rigidly manufactured to be ripe and polished in appearance, academic projects are sometimes undertaken to increase prestige and grant funding through publication-generation, rather than for their capacity to extend knowledge of human experience. Like the apple in the Garden of Eden, its beauty and promise, while tempting, strip us naked and leave us ill nourished.

Specifically, as an academic, I am interested in how trauma sense-making within art and writing affects the research process. Artist and autoethnographic scholar Elridge states, “arts-based research broadens traditional research paradigms, allows for wide-ranging and participatory conversations, and that art is a way of knowing and can be considered a kind of research” (Elridge, 2012, p. 72). Within the Communication discipline, scholars have called for increased use of performative autoethnography, especially when discussing traumas of the body and diseases (Tillman, 2009).

Holistically, the project examines the ways in which one processes how traumas affect the human body and mind. It is like dancing the tango; as the academic, I hold the artist and propel her forward, listen and understand the rhythm of her hips. I carry her gently and let her be free as I propel her into a spin. As the artist, I am held and guided by my research questions and the literature that has laid the foundation for this project.

RQ1: How can the creation of performative narrative and art inform the autoethnographic processing of traumatic lived experience?

Artist and autoethnographic scholar Cohen-Miller states, “drawings as a visual arts method used within a transcendental phenomenological study provide a way to enable, encourage and support participant voice, in particular when researching sensitive topics” (Cohen-Miller, 2017, p.18). I recall holding my mother among lighting bugs as we slowly danced without music on a dim summer’s night. She leaned her tiny body against mine—I felt cradled by her—like I was born the day before. Attempting to justify this project would be like explaining why I danced with my mother. There was not why, it was only beautiful. Through the lens of narrative theory in exploration of my own self-propelled dance, or academic pursuit through autoethnography, I hope to reclaim what has been taken from me. A victim without voice, now recovering it in retribution through song, art, and scholarship.

Background

Dew and pollen cast gentle shadows along the hospital window as my mother expelled me out of her severed gut. My mother spoke about days past, “You were my tiniest baby, my smallest birth.” She continued, “People would get angry because I never let anyone else hold you because you were my little princess.” Ν βασιλοπούλα, (the princess), was born into a middle-class, big, fat, Greek-American and Catholic family. Life is simple until it is not.

As my academic career approaches crescendo, I reflect on the ways in which meaning has formed itself in my own life. Story-making has been a deflective armory and

a source of comfort. Memories resemble clouds in my mind, and the lines between reality, doctored-truth and fantasy are hazy. I remember being six or seven years old and kissing her soft lips as she laid asleep, like Sleeping Beauty atop a rose bed. This blends together with the memory of his hands clenching my buttock as we shared spit on a sweaty-vodka covered dance floor. The puzzle pieces of my mind are connected in a constellation of symbols and sensations. The meanings and exposition, I have yet to make secure.

Being diagnosed with forms of dissociative identity and auto-immune disease, as well as early onset childhood trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder, I often am at war with my body, soul, demons of the past, and my own self-concept. Contemplating my past is like distantly observing a series of movie trailers, feeling neither a stranger nor the owner of these experiences.

Both the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are littered with parables to understand φιλοξενία, “philoxen-ee-a,” which refers to the ancient Greek concept of hospitality and welcoming to the ‘stranger.’ Mythological tradition informs us that gods come to visit in the form of strangers. Similar notions of φιλοξενία, “philoxen-ee-a,” can be found in the New and Old Testament of the Bible, such as the “Good Samaritan” parable in the Gospel of Luke (Luke 10, 30-38). Modern Greek colloquia often involves Greek people using the words ξενία, “xsenia,” or ξένος, “xsenos,” as exclusionary language to describe non-Greek people, which can be loosely translated as ‘stranger,’ ‘foreigner,’ and / or ‘enemy.’ As I reflect on my own disparate memories and fragmented self-concept, I reconcile with

being a ξενί, “xseni” (stranger), and ελληνίδα, “ellynidtha,” (Greek woman), simultaneously.

Embarking on a journey of self-actualization through auto-ethnography and art is an authorship of narrative and production of a metaphorical mosaic of the fragmented self. For this project I created art in conversation with autoethnographic study. I developed and created an exhibit of related works in painting, drawing, poetry, and song. Included in the exhibit were five paintings, over 100 drawings, and 11 poems. I composed 15-20 minutes of original instrumental piano melody. The completed music played on speakers during the exhibit.

The paintings were created under the creative direction and advisement of Instructor Todd McDonald within the Department of Art at Clemson University. The drawings were created under the advisement of Clemson University Instructor Kathleen Thum. In addition, preliminary charcoal and graphite sketches were kept for reference within my sketchbook. Along with the visual arts, I produced a compilation of written works in song, prose and creative nonfiction under the counsel of Dr. Keith Morris within the Clemson English Department. Written rough drafts were maintained to include as reference material to articulate the art-making process. In addition to finished works, unfinished pieces were presented at the exhibit. Audience members were given access to look through my sketchbook.

Written, auditory and visual works were displayed at a locally held art exhibit in Clemson, South Carolina. The Clemson University Art Department allowed me to use their student-gallery space called the Acorn Gallery, within Lee Hall. The exhibit was a

mixed-media, in-person experience made accessible to the public through invitation. Prior to the event, I had to consider a variety of concerns, such as whether I would be given access to local resources around or on campus, the cost, and how well the space could accommodate the size of the exhibit. The Acorn Gallery accommodated the sound and the placement of art pieces. The gallery space was located on the ground floor of Lee Hall Architecture Building. While creating the exhibit, I considered the sensory qualities of the visual and auditory setup, developed such that it would not be overwhelming to audience members with sensory sensitivities.

Once I procured a time and space for the exhibit, I designed a flier and invitation to display both through social media and in the gallery. I also bought and prepared complimentary traditional Greek hors d'oeuvres, and decorations to accompany the exhibit and attract patrons. Pieces were professionally displayed and prepared in frame or format. Invitations did not market the sale of created works, however, I designed and printed high-quality art prints and postcards to sell, as well as created a list of prices for original art if I needed to reference it throughout the evening. The exhibit was held on March 1st, 2023, from 4:30pm-8:00pm and attracted over 70 Clemson affiliated and non-affiliated patrons. I remained within the gallery space for three-and-a-half hours to stay present during the open house.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

To contextualize and inform my autoethnography of the creation of this exhibit, I reviewed scholarship spanning multiple disciplines but with overarching themes and areas of overlap. For this section, I first will describe my use of narrative theory as the framework of this project and lens for understanding the autoethnographic experience through the art and research component. Next, I will review relevant research on modern Greek culture, religion, and trauma to engage the various scholarly conversations that contextualize and historicize this project. Lastly, scholarship regarding performative art, artist experiences, and autoethnography are reviewed to establish precedents for similar projects.

Narrative Theory

Utilizing narrative theory allows me to examine the themes and symbols of my experiences. Because it exists in and outside the scope of reason and rationality, it enables me to discuss trauma in ways that are illogical or confusing. In addition, the very act of autoethnography will be in narrative form. Not only does the theoretical lens create connections between my identities, art and personhood, it also provides an opportunity to explore conducting research in an accessible format. Writing and artmaking in narrative style will potentially be more salient to audience members. Inadvertently, through the use of narrative, I hope to lessen the gap between academic research and the general public. Writing and artmaking in narrative style will potentially be more salient to audience members.

Cream-colored limestone buildings formed the bustling city Στάγειρα (Stageira), located within modern day Κεντρική Μακεδονία (Central Macedonia). Thousands of years later, archeologist Kostas Sismanidis excavated the ruins of the ancient location of public discourse—the ἀγορά (agora). This relatively small ancient city was the birthplace of the “godfather of narrative theory,” Αριστοτέλης, “Aristotelis” (Aristotle) (Mulvany, 1926; Ricoeur, 1987). Within Aristotle’s philosophical work regarding aesthetics, the Ποητικής, “poitakis,” (*Poetics*), is considered to be one of the earliest existing texts regarding literary philosophy and narrative theory.

Thousands of years later, inspired by the teachings of both Aristotle and Plato, rhetorician Fisher’s narrative paradigm asserted that humans observe the world through narrative, but also communicate and make sense of the world through it (Fisher, 1984). This involves “narrative rationality”—assessing the coherence and effects of storytelling, audience confusion, and message incoherence (Fisher, 1984). The narrative paradigm has been criticized for its oversimplification of audience rationality, the overarching context surrounding the narrative, as well as the cultural logic informing what is perceived as rational and coherent (Warnick, 1987). Nevertheless, the narrative paradigm is useful for this project because I have always seen life through narrative means.

Expanding from traditional Platonic and Aristotelian understandings, Ricoeur narratives transcend the limitations of pen and paper—existing within time, space, and the body (Ricoeur, 1980). Ricoeur addresses a metaphysical component of narrative-time, examining the way narrative is portrayed and changes throughout its existence. Not only does Ricoeur pose a framework for understanding narrative, but he also addresses

the barriers of human experience and the confinement of narrative through temporal misrepresentation. Narrative does not exist similar to time, yet the effects of the constructs do exist.

Narrative scholars have continued to develop methods for understanding the intergenerational transference and articulation of trauma. Narratives can be passed down through generations both epigenetically and through oral or written tradition (Conquergood, 2009). Both as components of cultural dialect such as religious practice, racial or ethnic tradition, narratives can shape generations of expectations and lived experience (Bruner, 1990). Incoherent and unempathetic displays of trauma-based narrative communication between family members results in intergenerational divides, negative emotions, and confusion (Lin and Suyemoto, 2015).

Narrative exists in limitless forms, through various communication means, such as art and performance. Narrative theory has been used to understand collective trauma, assess the ethical accessibility of academic writing, and process lived experiences through qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, or ethnography. Collective memory is formed through narrative communication and text (Bruner, 1990). Bruner argues that narratives are the primary ways in which humans articulate meaning (Bruner, 2002). In particular, narrative has been used by victims to establish collective memory of human atrocities, such as the Holocaust, but also by generations to follow through dramatized storytelling, documentary and art (Alexander, 2002).

Conquergood argues that narrative in art and performance maintains other aspects of human experience through expressions of the body (Conquergood, 2002). In addition

to its classist implications, he suggests that textualization undermines the visceral experience or performative remembering of narrative, stripping the narrative of cultural and dialectic nuance (Conquergood, 2002). Art and performance as expressive forms of narrative allow disabled individuals to exist and make sense of traumatic experiences when normative communication methods are traumatizing or physically and psychologically inaccessible (Charon, 2009). Therapeutic methods inspired by Bruner, utilizing performative narrative, have shown positive psychological outcomes for patients with debilitating trauma (Kestenbaum, 2003).

Narrative theory also provides a guiding lens for autoethnographic work, positioning the scholar to analyze narrative in memory and time, and also explore identity through narrative formation (Somers, 1994). While writing an autoethnography concerning my disabled and traumatized body, I am taking a constructionist, yet realistic, stance on narrative-identity formation. This allows me to exist within the lucid phenomenological space of reliving experiences, while also being guided by how narrative has shaped my perceptions of the body and life (Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, 1999). Performance based autoethnographic narrative work challenges the presumptions of strict academic formatting because it emboldens the researcher to explore non-traditional research methods through prose, art, and music (Bahadur Qutoshi, 2015). Greek and Christian parables, songs, and food are only a few examples of the ways in which these cultural performative narratives have led to my identity formation. Within Greek and Christian culture, as well as in artmaking, how I have compartmentalized my own trauma is through the common thread of narrative.

Modern Greek Cultural Studies

Being a Greek American and bilingual speaker has shaped much of my experiences as a child and adult. In addition, coming from a family of immigrants, there are specific cultural practices salient to my intergenerational understandings of diaspora, trauma and displacement. By examining Greek Cultural Studies, it provides me with some cultural context when examining my own life as a Greek woman.

Within the brush of arid wind and stemming succulent bush, upon the highest mountain top, an eagle gave Zeus the power of thunder. At just over 3000 feet, at the tip of Naxos Island, Μονοπάτι τον Ζα, “Monopati ton Za,” (Mount Zas), is the highest mountain peak on Νάξος (Naxos) within the Cyclades. Early myths suggest that the Greek god Zeus was given his power of thunder at the tip of the island. Greek civilization can be anthropologically traced back four millennia to the Cycladic Period, pertaining to the settlements of people in the Cyclades, during the neolithic period. One most notable occupation of the island of Νάξος (Naxos), the island where my family is from, by the Γρόττα-Πηλός, “Grotta-Pylos,” (Grotto-Pelos) culture around 3300 BC (Cline, 2010).

Transcendent by the work of mathematicians such as Pathagoreos or philosophers Socrates and Plato, all academic scholarship continues to be influenced by Greek culture, language, Πολιτικά, “politika” (politics), and culture. Greek culture is foundational to modern academic scholarship, whether through the linguistic influence of the ancient Greek language or scholars. The sheer magnitude of historical and cultural depth of Greece has led many ethnographic scholars to prioritize the maintenance of cultural continuity within scholarship (Herzfeld, 1987). This infidelious cultural representation,

various appropriations, as well as the growing ignorance of Greek culture, contribute to fractured understandings of Greek history (Anagnostou, 2013).

Throughout recent decades, current generations of Greek-Americans have shown continued decline in cultural practice and native language speaking (Constantinou, 2011). As the influence and reverence of Greek culture continues to face a dry spell, emergent journals have begun to expand the scope of ethnographic research within Greek Studies (Anagnostou, 2009). Greek immigrants have dispersed across the globe, leaving traces of cultural influence through narrative, song and performance (Bucuvalas, 2018). For Greek-Americans, dialectic and symbolic performance has largely been practiced within homogenous-cultural spaces, in particular, through song and narrative within Orthodox spaces (Diacou, 2013). When used, the gendered and mythologically symbolic language, modern Greek, preserves its ancient roots, however, in America, has evolved away from the antiquity of the mother tongue (Hantzopoulos, 2005). “Grenghish,” vernacularly defined as Greek-American slang used by bilingual Greeks, combines words, grammatical patterns, and idioms between English and Greek (Economou, 2001). The use of Grenghish has been widely adopted across the United States and has led to the dissemination of the Greek language, but a preservation of Greek culture (Economou, 2001).

The Usage of narrative within Greek-American literature and communication continues to be ripe with contradictions and embodied diaspora (Anagnostou, 2010). Narrative is heavily used in Greek-American vernacular, in addition to the epigenetic transference of trauma and culture through generations, The assimilation of language has

been influenced and accompanied by intercultural marriage, in particular within inter-Christian practice of Orthodox Christianity and other denominations such as Catholicism (Joanides, et al., 2002). Human Development and Family Studies Scholar Joanides found that current generational trends in Greek-American families show increasing rates of Christian inter-marriage between Greek Orthodox and Eastern Catholic spouses (Joanides et al., 2002). Intercultural marriage further exacerbated the rate of assimilatory Christian practices within homes and churches. This dispersion has become the bearing ground for possible understandings of modern-Greek influence in culture through enacted artistic expression and performance.

As Greek narratives have transcended beyond their classical roots, there is concern of the embodied familial expectation of excellence in societal contribution both intrapersonally and intergenerationally (Diacou, 2013). Especially in intergenerational MG (Modern Greek) conversations, storytelling and narrative tend to be the paramount ways of articulating ideas (Archakis, 2002).

Storytelling, informed also by the historical and mythological context of the Greek language, similar to western uses of storytelling, MG communication continues to be a mechanism for child socialization and moral teaching within the community and household (Tannen, 1989). Older generations of Greek people tend to have a higher frequency of narrative usage in conversation, while storytelling by younger generations is prioritized less in conversation with elders (Lampropoulos, 2007). Linguist and Sociologist Archakis found, within discourse analysis, that narratives have shown to be the primary form of communication within Greek cultural contexts that leads to in-group

identity building as well as socialization, within generationally homogeneous groups (Archakis & Tzanne, 2009). In other words, MG trends articulate a generational divide of narrative usage. Older and younger generations of Greeks utilize narratives amongst their ingroups freely, however, intergenerational narratives tend to prioritize the sanctity and reverence of traditional and “passed down” narratives (Georgakopoulou, 2005). Many of these passed down narratives are foundationally Christian, within the realms of Greek mysticism, or a combination of the two.

Christian Cultural Studies

The studies of Christianity are vast. However, I will briefly address concepts relevant to my project. Growing up within the Catholic church was a predominant part of my identity and still is today. I went to Catholic private schools for Kindergarten through Senior year of high school. In addition to Christianity being an essential aspect of my upbringing, it also was the lens I used to examine my psychological and physical trauma. My Christian upbringing influenced my understanding of sexuality, sex, family, and trauma. These themes and concepts are foundational to my autoethnographic study.

Within fifth century AD, Παρθενώνας, “Parthenonas,” (The Parthenon) the ancient Greek temple built atop the ἀκρόπολις “akropolees,” (Akropolis) originally used to honor Ἁγία Σοφία “Hagia Sophia,” or the goddess Athena, became a place of religious practice for Christians to worship Παναγία η Αθηνιώτισσα, “Panaghia y Athinotissa,” (Our Lady of Athens) (Pollini, 2007). Because many Christians in Greece converted from paganism, both Christian prophets and community members used familiar buildings and symbols within Christian practice (Kostof, 1995). Sociologist Durkheim states, “Thus

there is something eternal in religion which is destined to survive all the particular symbols in which religious thought has successively enveloped itself.” (Durkheim, 1964, p. 427). Durkheim, in line with Berger and Luckmann’s discussion of the socially constructed reality, Durkheim believed religion to be a function for the construction of society, social norms, and strengthening solidarity within the religious body (Durkheim, 1964; Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Religious and cultural practices, once foreign to Christianity, were often used by prophets like Paul and in the biblical text, by Jesus himself, to relate to the common person (Carus, 1911). Greek historical scholar Pollini argues that this assimilation of cultural practices caused unintentional or intentional erasure of previous narratives, through the rewriting of history, or the override of meanings forwarded by the catechesis (Pollini, 2007). Early gods and goddesses within the mythological practice, remained revered as Christian “saints” subservient to God the Father (Le Roux, 2007). A famous shibboleth, the *ἰχθύς*, “eekthys,” the fish symbol is an acronym for Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Σωτήρ, “Iesous, Xristos, Theou Huios, Soter,” (Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior). It was used in secrecy by early Christians to denote safe locations of worship (Carus, 1911). The *ἰχθύς*, “eekthys,” was an adjusted version of a Pagan symbol for fertility and sexual promiscuity, therefore, attracted lessened suspicions (Carus, 1911).

Extended from Judaic understandings of Yahweh in the Torah, cultural practice and dogma within Christianity were founded largely on the oral and written tradition of Old and New Testament narratives. However, Christians have continued to incorporate

and use diverse cultural practices and symbols to express and conceptualize spirituality throughout two millennia (Mullins, 2006).

Seventy-five percent of Greeks around the globe identify as having a Christian identity and ninety percent or more of Greeks in Greece identify as Christian. Greek Americans primarily practice Greek Orthodoxy or Eastern Catholicism (Pew Research Center, 2017). According to modern Greek scholars, Greek Orthodox religious practice within the United States became a primary form of cultural and community fellowship established for and by immigrants (Saloutos, 1973). Much of Greek cultural practice, family events, and celebrations are held at religious institutions or incorporating religious practice (Stavrianidis, 2012). Talismans or symbols, like the κομπολόγια (Komboulougia—evil eye worry beads), used to ward off the βασκανία, “Vaskania,” (evil eye / evil tongue) originating from the Μέγαν Ιερόν Συνέκδημον, “Megan Hieron Synekdemon, are accompanied by prayers such as: “*Holy Virgin, Our Lady, if [insert name of the victim] is suffering of the evil eye, release him / her of it.*”. What began as a pagan understanding of evil demon powers, was adjusted to understand the demonic within a Christian lens.

Jesus Christ is revered as a central religious figure within Orthodox Christian and Eastern Catholic dogma. Predicated by God the Father and his various covenants made with the Jews, Jesus fulfilled this covenant. Venerated for his sacrifice, which humans could never be worthy of, Jesus hung bludgeoned and bleeding above his mother’s head. Religion has been utilized to justify violence toward “the other,” through means of war, oppression, and slavery (Durkheim, 1964).

Adults and children perceive God's intellect in anthropomorphic ways (Heiphetz et al., 2016). Even so, adults tend to describe God as more anthropomorphic, theologically based representations, as opposed to young children who reference their innate knowledge alluding to ego-centrism in youth representations of God's omniscience (Lane et al., 2010).

Trauma Studies

"Suffer for Paris, protect Paris, for eternity ... until he makes you his wedded wife—that or his slave," Aphrodite commands Helen. Helen, believing herself to be a slave to Aphrodite's command, refuses. Aphrodite screams at Helen, "Don't provoke me—wretched headstrong girl! Or in my immortal rage I may just toss you over," (The Iliad, Book 3, lines 470-474 and 480-482). Trauma has been and continues to be studied by scholars ranging from psychology and biology to cultural and communication studies. Being a victim of various types of abuse at a young age, I developed a maladapted developmental dissociative identity-type disorder and suicidal ideation by six or seven years old. Due to a child's neurological and developmental incapacity to process certain stimuli, often, the brain dissociates from the body to cope (Hall & Powell, 2000). This, then, becomes cemented as she develops a fragmented sense of self, leaving traumatized fragments at the stunted age she was left behind (Van der Kolk & Fisler, 1995).

Trauma experienced in childhood can alter the developmental capacity for memory and narrative fidelity (Hirakata, 2009). Children who suffer from abuse are forced to reconcile with the insecurity and betrayal resulting from a lack of protection (Thomas, 2003). Child abuse or maltreatment is generally defined as conditions or

actions negatively affecting a child's developmental, psychological, and physical well-being (Sanders & Giolas, 1991). Abuse occurs both through the proactive existence of harmful stimuli, or the omission of appropriate and necessary care (Thomas, 2003).

Trends show that most child maltreatment victims develop unsuccessful psychological functioning as adults (Sanders & Giolas, 1991). Stunted psychological development, attachment, and identity regulation lead to higher risks of repeated victimization, addiction, and psychological disturbances later in life and in adulthood (Hall & Powell, 2000). Increased severity and frequency of comorbid psychological conditions have been traced to victims of early onset childhood trauma (Bernet & Stein, 1999). Psychology scholars suggest that abused children develop internalized narratives of the self and world through attachment mechanisms (Gallager & Cole, 2011). For example, a child not only perceives herself internally as a victim, but also the abuser and savior (Thomas, 2003). Child abuse is often perpetrated by caregivers; therefore, children tend to mimic the caregivers' abusive behaviors. Abuse disrupts the child's relationship with the self and caregivers because she must now reconcile with insecurity and how to protect herself from the world when no one was there to protect her. However, her frame of reference of protection is distorted, therefore mal adapts to destructive mechanisms to self-preservation, such as self-hate talk and low self-regard (Thomas, 2003).

Dissociative psychopathology is generally defined as a coping mechanism that results in fragmentation of the self, disruption of experiences, and removing the self from reality (Sanders & Giolas, 1991). Scholars recognize dissociation to be the primary accompaniment to conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Kolk &

Fisler, 1995). Memories, emotions, identity, and other psychological processes become disintegrated resulting in meaning distortion, lapses in memory, and a fragmented sense of self (Thomas, 2003). Psychiatrist and researcher Van der Kolk states that difficulties present themselves in adulthood as the child victim works to reintegrate themselves and self-actualize (Van der Kolk & Fisler, 1995). The lapse in memory and fragmented sense of self, previously used to cope with the insecurities and pain experienced in childhood, then become developmental barriers for adults to defragment their identity and form coherent narratives of the self (Gallager & Cole, 2011). Physician and literary scholar Rita Charon argues that the confinements of disability and traumatic misremembering, as narrative rupture, can result in a lapse in identity formation due to ill-fed concrete perceptions of the self (Charon, 2009).

Dissociation as a coping mechanism has been tied to higher frequency in intergenerational abuse, as well as the transmission of enacted dissociative behaviors, “Compartmentalizing experiences and not associating thoughts, feelings, and actions may make it more likely that a parent could abuse his / her child without having empathy and feeling the pain” (Egeland & Susman-Stillman, 1996, p.1130).

Arthur Frank discusses these traumas as places of narrative rupture (Frank, 2013). Frank believes that the identity and meaning making happens through narrative construction (Frank, 2013). The disruption of experiences and psychological processing through dissociation results in a chronic and sustained narrative rupture (Frank, 2013). Narrative distance, informed by Aristotle's discussions in *Poetics*, discussed the various levels in which the self can be removed from the narrative (Solmsen, 1935). Heightened

narrative distance, the distance of the narrative from the author, whether through time or disruption in memory, results in incoherence and the developmental inability to cope with past or current realities (Gallager, 2011). Psychologist Kestenbaum argues, “Narrative, especially autobiography and self-narrative, helps us sort our myriad fantasies, events, and images, weaving them into a cohesive whole that eventually promotes self-awareness,” (Kestenbaum, 2011). Utilizing narrativity and autobiographical writing within psychotherapeutic settings has shown to have positive effects on coping with traumatic life experiences (Kestenbaum, 2003).

Current definitional understandings of self-fragmentation vary across accounts of childhood sexual abuse victims (Hall & Powell, 2000). The diversity and complexity of individual dissociative experiences has led practitioners to uncover additional treatment options in opposition to dominant psychotherapeutic norms (Hirakata, 2008). Reconciling with, through art-making and narrative tactics, dissociation as a part of the lived experience of victims, assists in the effectiveness of reintegration of the self in therapeutic contexts (Laird, 2021). The art making process engages the brain’s limbic system, resulting in the reintegration of coherent narrative when verbal or written communication is inaccessible (Laird & Mulvihill, 2021). Child victims who, without the developmental reasoning to understand their trauma, experience and understand their trauma in predominantly physical ways. Barad states, “Performativity, properly construed, is not an invitation to turn everything (including material bodies) into words; on the contrary, performativity is precisely a contestation of the excessive power granted to language to determine what is real” (Barad, 2003). The ill-body and soul, or the soul

that is ‘ruptured’, is confused and weary about the future due to inconsistencies within coping mechanisms, self-concept, and internal coherence (Frank, 2013).

Most notably to other sections of the literature review, trauma and understanding my own trauma is the crux of this project. The reviewed scholarship establishes the psychological and socio-cultural foundations for this autoethnography. Not only does it overview cross-disciplinary extant literature surrounding the topic of trauma, but also provides the groundwork for me to work through my trauma rationally, artistically and with caution.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Over the course of the academic year 2022-2023, I regimentally created art, responded to prompts, journaled, tracked my mood, as well as prepared and completed an art exhibit. Visual art was created within advanced-level painting and drawing classes. The poetry and journal entries were completed at moments of inspiration throughout my week. Drawing inspiration from previous performance and art autoethnography, I wrote personal journal entries throughout the course of my thesis writing and art making process.

The structure of my autoethnographic research design was refined through public presentations and feedback. Before beginning my research, I wrote a speech and presented my project thesis at the University 3-Minute Thesis competition. Founded by the University of Queensland in 2008, the 3-Minute Thesis is a research-communication competition. Hosted by the Clemson University Graduate Student Government and The Clemson University Research Foundation, I competed against doctoral and master's students within the University. First, during the preliminary round, I competed against students in my college, the College of Behavioral, Social, and Health Sciences (CBSHS). Then, a week later, on October 16th, 2022, I attended a day-long preparatory workshop to refine and improve on my speech for the final competition. On November 9th, 2022, I presented my finalized speech in front of faculty within the Department of Graduate Studies, for last-minute feedback. Finally, I competed in the University-wide competition on November 11th, 2022.

Just as I began the art-making process in October 2022, I competed in the 3-Minute Thesis Competition. I won second place within my college and a \$50 prize. Finally, I competed in the university-wide competition on November 11th, 2022. I did not win any prize or award for the final competition. This competition and its expectations set the tone for my research, as it challenged me to conceptualize such an abstract exploration, in a predominantly objective-hard-sciences environment. There were three judges, two of whom were highly complementary about the project, citing its “uniqueness” and “passion,” while the third judge was critical of the project stating that it lacked “clarity” and “deliverables”. This feedback was helpful, as it assisted me in restructuring the project to be more straightforward, however, it was also discouraging. Competing against doctoral students researching subjects grounded by the scientific method, it became difficult to speak about something as abstract as art, trauma, and culture, within a strict 3-minute format. This feedback, predominantly positive, however, fueled my desire to emphasize the rigor of my work in hopes of legitimizing and validating it. This resulted in me spending hundreds of additional thesis hours perfecting and creating. This obsession became a primary reason for the dissolution of my original weekly timeline (Fig. 3.1), which began with the intention of being regimented, with boundaries built for myself to avoid overworking, became evidence of all the opportunities I had to do more than necessary. Adding layer after layer of oil paint, spending hours breathing in toxic fumes, to achieve insurmountable differences noted by the naked eye. The entire painting process became a dissociative experience, mirroring the very coping mechanisms I developed as a child (Hall & Powell, 2000).

Theoretically, I approached this project through a reflective interpretation of the “life-world,” or as Barad suggests, materiality, defined as being the value-laden, discursively constructed, and communicated reality (Delia & Grossberg 1977). I aim to understand and describe my own individualistic and nuanced experiences, under my presumptive bias as researcher and subject (Wilson, 1994). Informed by principles found within theoretical physics, most notably within their work in quantum physics, Karen Barad developed the theory of agential realism in the critical challenge of metaphysics and ontological praxis (Barad, 1998; 1999; 2007). Agential realism as a theoretical paradigm presumes intra-action, or the interacting materiality, as the basis for knowledge and existence. Furthermore, it criticizes the existential limitations of individualism in metaphysics, while also acknowledging how intimately researchers exist within the apparatus of their research and the socio-political environment. Barad argues that a critical-feminist approach is inherent to agential realism. They suggest that axiological concerns are addressed appropriately if one approaches research under the pretense that their existence is not individualistic, but rather, material negotiating existence and energy, with both connections and severances. Barad argues, therefore, that the paradigm is onto-ethico-epistemological, a holistic theoretical foundation for research.

Research Design and Methods

Formal notions of ethnography originated hundreds of years ago within the realm of anthropological studies. It is regarded as research that seeks to understand human culture and investigate cultural practices and processes through observation and documentation (Lindoff & Taylor, 2011). Through its existence and development,

ethnography has been utilized by behavioral or social science scholars in fields, such as Sociology and Communication. Communication scholar and ethnographer Philipsen developed speech codes theory to examine the patterns and trends within in-group communication settings (Philipsen & Hart, 2015). Clifford Geertz suggests that the study of ethnography should be phenomenological, in that it presupposes the world as socially constructed and understood (Geertz, 1975). Since its positivist inception, ethnographic research has endured criticism for ignoring researcher bias and limitations (Brewer, 1994). Synonymous with the emergence of post-colonial ideology, anthropologists and sociologists challenged the ethical and epistemological validity of positivist approaches to ethnography (Foster, 1982). Various ethnographers argue that the examination of outgroup culture is hegemonically classist and dehumanizes group members as “the Orient,” as well as places group members as subjects, without agency, in the co-creation of meaning through the author’s biased and exclusionary authorship (Ntarangwi, 2021).

Autoethnography emerged as another branch of ethnographic research (Ellis, 2007). The word ‘autoethnography’ is derived from the Greek words *αὐτο*, “afto” (Self), *ἔθνος*, “ethnos” (culture / ethnicity) and *γράφω* (I write). Its scholarly origins date back to the 1970s, when autoethnography was used to categorize cultural research focused on the self, or the introspection of the self within culture (Ellis, 2004). It seeks to understand culture through the explication of self (Ellis et al., 2011). Communication scholars argue that the distinction between ethnographic work and autoethnographic work is the perceived directionality of the author’s claims (Ellingson & Ellis, 2008). Suggestions that the primary distinction between both auto- and non-auto-ethnography is the clearer “self-

awareness about and reporting of one's own experiences and introspections as a primary data source" (Patton, 2002, p.86).

Communication scholar Poulos states, "I cannot write the disembodied academic voice, not now, not this far in" (Poulos, 2017, p. 38). Auto-ethnographers observe and exist within a socially constructed world, one that is not separated from the bias and personal experience of the researcher (Anderson, 2006).

Scholars continue to distinguish autoethnographic research from other types of research. "It is a method that seeks to describe and systematically analyze the personal experience of a researcher in order to understand a particular context, cultural belief, or practice" (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). Autoethnographic narrative inquiry emboldens researchers to explore authentic human experience, foster community within academia, but also to create accessible research for the public through storytelling, art, and performance-based research (Poulos, 2017).

In addition to its introspective nature, it allows researchers to explore how research is conducted, its effects on the researcher, and the holistic understanding of the academic process (Qutoshi, 2015). Scholars who explore topics especially salient to their own lives have to reconcile with the vague distinction between their philosophical and psychological questions (Allen-Collinson, 2013). Because self-directed research is often highly personal, scholars are forced to reason with the visceral emotional realities of their individualized human experience (Richards, 2008).

Inspired by the formatting composed by seminal autoethnographic scholars, I composed the autoethnography in various styles (Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Daly, 2021).

The poetry, art, music, journaling, and mood analytics are the data of the research. Musician and scholar Daly underwent an autoethnographic study of performing and practicing music as a violinist (Daly, 2021). “I have rehearsed with and without my violin, with and through movement and creatively, documented reflexivity throughout. I am no longer a violinist, but a musician and artist who plays the violin” (p. 2473). In addition to documenting her experience learning various classical pieces through Dalcroze Eurhythmics, a type of developmental practice of learning and teaching music, she included poetry excerpts and personal reflections. Similarly, my project thesis investigates the intertwining narratives in art-making and artist perception. My research question aims to understand how the autoethnographic processing of traumatic lived experience as it is affected by the simultaneous creation of performative narrative and art. By examining the interaction between writing autoethnography as well as creating art, it further adds to what we understand about the limitations of various forms of autoethnography as well as engages the creative and analytic processes of the research. In addition, because the body and art are so intertwined with human sense-making, by engaging the physical body in the cocreation of trauma narratives in art and autoethnography, this research aims to discover more about the human condition than what is bound by methodical analysis.

Generating Art and Writing

Prior to beginning the writing process, I created a timeline (Fig. 3.1) for the upcoming months, noting any notable dates, holidays or events to reflect on in the form of prompts. I included both a weekly schedule broken up into three categories:

preparation, art-making and reflection. The preparation stage, scheduled for Mondays, was for sketching, writing lyrics or brainstorming for the art creation process. Then, Wednesdays, I created a day to refine any notable ideas that came about during the preparation stage or continue any outstanding work. Lastly, I listed Fridays as the reflection day, where I would examine my life, circumstances or art at whatever stage of the study I was at. In addition to the weekly schedule, I also created a schedule for prompts to list any notable days or events to reflect on in my journal entries.

Figure 3.1.

Art Creation Timeline

1. Weekday Schedule:

a. Monday-preparation:

- i. One to two hours of brainstorming and the art creation process:
- ii. Sketches-these can be both colored or uncolored, on my phone or in a sketchbook.
- iii. Writing one to two poems, recording music that comes to mind, including lyrics.

b. Wednesday-art making

- i. One to two hours of refining and creating art through music, visual arts, or writing.
- ii. Painting for three-hours, beginning of second semester this will be replaced by fiction or poetry workshop taking up to two hours.

- iii. If not within the confinements of class, the art making process lasts for one to two hours.

c. **Friday-reflection**

- i. This will be a one-two page self-reflection from the week.
- ii. Depending on the week and potential circumstances, this may be extended to large reflections and recollections of memories and short stories.

2. **Weekly Schedule with Prompts:**

- a. November 14th-20th
 - i. Timely Prompt: Defense-What does it mean to defend autoethnography of trauma academically? Perhaps reflect on 3-Minute Thesis competition.
- b. November 21st-27th
 - i. Timely Prompt: Thanksgiving, family, traveling, giving, immigration, colonialism, thankfulness, filial piety.
- c. November 28th-December 4th
- d. December 5th-12th
 - i. Timely Prompt: End of the semester and going home. Seeing boyfriend.
- e. December 13th-18th
- f. December 19th-26th

- i. Timely Prompt: Christmas, Time with immediate family, gift-giving, wish-lists, decorating, Jesus' and my mother's birthday.
- g. December 27th-January 2nd, 2023
 - i. Timely Prompt: New Year festivities, new year-new me, future, post-graduation plans, who am I? Going off of parent's insurance this year.
- h. January 2nd-8th
- i. January 9th-15th
 - i. Timely Prompt: The beginning of the end of graduate school.
- j. January 16th-22nd
- k. January 23rd-29th
 - i. Timely prompt: My father, now retired, 57 years old.
- l. January 30th-February 6th
- m. February 7th-12th

After speaking with my advisor about the schedule, I began writing and sketching. I utilized a variety of mediums for art and writing. I bought a Strathmore 400 series, 11 x 14, sketch-paper sketchbook, in addition to a Strathmore 300 series, 18 x 24, drawing paper sketchbook for larger sketches. For journaling, I primarily used the Apple iPhone X *Notes* App, as well as GoogleDoc files on my laptop. To record music, as time and scheduling permitted, I either went to the Clemson University Brooks Center for Performing Arts to use their practice pianos and facilities or used the 'Voice Memos', by Apple, audio recording application on my iPhone. Lastly, from December 2022 to

February 2023, I tracked my mood using the mobile application *DailyBean* by BlueSignum Corp.

After compiling all of the poems, lyrics and journal entries, I examined the poems by looking for keywords, concepts and symbols. I input the text-strings into a text-analyzing software called ChatGPT. The application allowed me to ask questions to the artificial intelligence such as, “What are the most commonly used words in the following texts,” or “What are various themes that arise across the following poems?” Specifically, I asked ChatGPT to count how many times I mentioned specific individuals or words. ChatGPT, then, would output a response depending on the string that I input. This allowed me to quickly identify key words, frequently mentioned individuals or concepts. After receiving the data from ChatGPT, I went back to the original text and either manually counted words or names to ensure its accuracy or coding-errors, such as misspelled words, as well as wrote down the commonly mentioned themes that ChatGPT identified. To remain holistic in its interpretation of the data, I did not exclude any poems or journal entries in the data input. However, I added titles and headers so that the program would distinguish the poems or journal entries independently from each other.

Lastly, to obtain feedback about my art and project thesis, concurrently to creating it, I also organized and held an art exhibit, including, but not limited to, making marketing materials, speaking with departmental faculty about space reservations, as well as planning how to organize the gallery space. To create marketing materials, I downloaded Adobe Illustrator on my laptop and used the local Staples to buy supplies and to print high resolution prints. I spoke with faculty and staff within the Clemson Art

Department, the Communication Department as well as with Clemson's Reservation Services Department. To track how many people came to the event, by using a QR-Code generator and Google Forms, I created a sign-in survey and a scannable code to place at the entrance of the gallery. I played slow instrumental music from my laptop and displayed the art prints and postcards on the table next to the space for the refreshments. To document the event, I took some photographs of the exhibit before anyone arrived.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter presents an overview of the outcomes of my project. It then proceeds to an analysis of all the free-writing, mood-tracking data, and visual and auditory arts. Lastly, I discuss the meta-cognitive processing of both academic and creative exploration guided by the concepts forwarded in my literature review.

Visual Art

From August 2022-March 2023, I created six paintings, over 100 sketches, and 10 finished drawings. The drawings and paintings were completed over the course of six months, in around 400 hours of total work, not including the conceptual planning and shopping for supplies. All of my paintings were completed during an Advanced Painting course within the Lee Hall painting studio, room 1-168. The room itself was a large two-sided workspace with metal easels, stackable plastic chairs, and rollable work-desks. My workspace was on the far-left side of the room, next to the mineral spirits cabinet. All of the floors were hard concrete, and the back wall of the studio was built with large, almost ceiling-high windows observing a Lee Hall garden space. Instructor Todd McDonald offered insight and suggestions; however, he offered me very few parameters. Therefore, the work time was largely independent, and I could freely paint the concepts and subject matter of my choosing. I spent a minimum of six hours within the studio on a weekly basis. Most regularly, on any given studio day, I painted for one-two hours additionally, amassing a total of 10 hours a week. Over the course of the semester, this totalled over

120 hours of painting alone. This does not include any time I spent preparing for painting, such as buying supplies, sketching and transporting materials.

Although I had recreationally and academically painted before enrolling in this course, I had never used oil paints and any additional painting supplies were at my parents' home in Nebraska. Therefore, before beginning painting, I had to purchase about \$300 in supplies, (Fig. 4.1). Some of these supplies were exhausted by the end of the painting process, therefore are not photographed.

Figure 4.1

Painting supplies



Note. From left to right: Plastic wrap, *Mona Lisa Odorless Thinner*, palette knife, palette scraper, 3-inch flat oil brush, detailed round oil brush, bright brush, bright brush, fan brush, *Gamblin Galkyd Enamel*, *Winsor & Newton Linseed Oil*, *Winsor & Newton* and *Gamblin 1980 37-millimeter oil paints*.

Over less than six months, I created six finished paintings and one experimental painting with sculptural elements. The only painting I did not include in the final art exhibit was

an unfinished sculpture (Fig. 4.11). The first painting I created is called “Dinner for one.” The painting had various iterations, including multiple pencil drawings, a pastel drawing, and the oil painting. I created this painting inspired by a variety of concepts and reference materials. This painting was also created during the process of refining various elements of my literature review, such as discussions of religious and cultural studies.

The 15th century Italian Renaissance painting, *The Lamentation of Christ*, otherwise known as *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, or the *Foreshortened Christ*, by Andrea Mantegna, was a primary influence for the composition of this piece (Fig. 4.2). Mantegna places the deceased Christ’s feet at the foreground of the composition. The viewer sees the feet at the forefront and the rest of his body atop a marble slab as it recedes into the background. Art historian Colin Eisler states, “Mantegna’s Christ ‘foreshortened’ to create what may be the ultimate imago pietatis, granting the viewer a uniquely dramatic, simultaneous viewing of his wounds.” He continues by speaking about various interpretations of the perspective: “That event’s primary importance is indicated by the veiled penis’ placement situated at the exact intersection point of the diagonals of any and all perspectival construction” (Eisler, 2006). Colin further refers to this painting as especially transformative as it alludes to, what seemingly was one of the first notable iterations of a “crotch-shot.” He later elaborates, stating that the painting recalls as ‘avant la lettre’, of pornographic camera work (Eisler, 2006).

Figure 4.2

The Lamentation of the Dead Christ



Note. The Lamentation of the Dead Christ, by Andrea Mantegna, c.1490, tempera on canvas, 68 in x 81 in, Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan. Copyright Alberta De Nicolo Salmazo, Mantegna, Electa, Milano 1997.

While creating my first sketch (Fig. 4.3), and my second sketch (Fig. 4.4), I looked at photographed images of Mantegna's painting on my laptop.

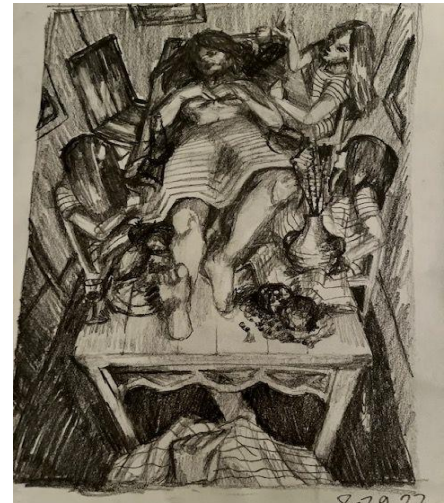
Figure 4.3

'Dinner for One' Sketch 1



Figure 4.4

'Dinner for One' Sketch 2



Note. Both drawings use graphite pencils on sketchbook paper.

While creating this piece, I chose specific elements to include on the table and the style of the table itself. For example, I included pomegranates and an amphora to include as symbolic objects relevant to my Greek culture and its mythology, as well as a table similar to the early-American style dinner table in my early-childhood home. While creating my second sketch (Fig. 4.4), I added more detail, changed various placements of items and removed the fourth seated figure in the back left corner of the composition. In addition, I refined the compositional perspective to have the veiled figure recede more dramatically in the frame.

Figure 4.6

'Dinner for One' sketch 3

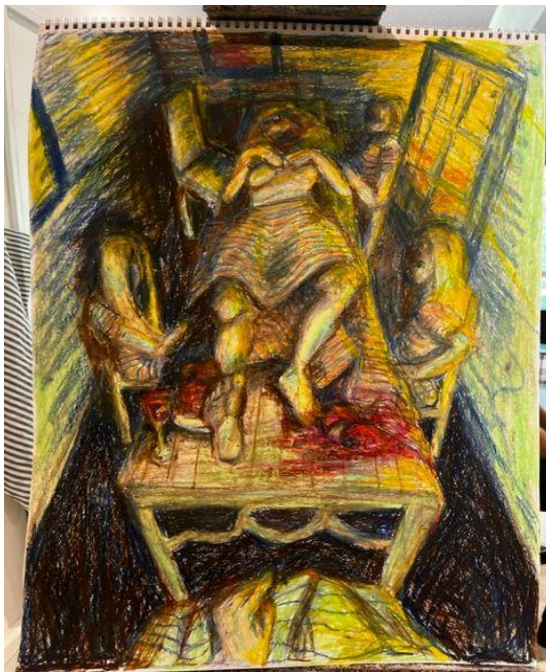


Figure 4.7

Sketch 3 close up



Knowing that I would be converting the sketches into a larger oil painting on thick canvas (20 in x 24 in x 1.5 in), I chose to do a material sketch using large drawing paper and oil pastels (Fig. 4.6).

For this final sketch, I wanted to explore how I would layer colors, finalize details, and place interacting light sources on objects. Prior to approaching the painting process, I did research to identify additional source material to inform physical, and compositional decisions. About 100 feet from the painting studio room is the Lee Hall Architecture Library, where I checked out various books. The book I used was *Jane Morris: the Pre-Raphaelite model of beauty* by Debra Mancoff. Most of the source images in the text were paintings depicting still-portraits of Jane Morris, artist and embroiderer, completed 19th-century romanticism, pre-Raphaelite painter and author Dante Gabriel Rossetti. The romantic, pre-Raphaelite era of painting was an uncharted era of work unbeknownst to me; therefore, I chose to explore something new by attempting this style.

Now, informed by the sketch iterations, as well as various source material images, I began the drawing process. Out of all my paintings, ‘Dinner for One’ (Fig. 4.7), took the longest, probably amassing about 40 hours of work. I began by doing a warm-toned underpainting to sketch out the composition and value shifts (Fig. 4.8). After I was satisfied with the underpainting, I began adding the dark tones, followed by the midtones (Fig. 4.9). Lastly, I added the light values. Throughout the process of the painting, I made various adjustments to the figures in the drawing, such as hand shapes, value shifts and color choices. For example, I began the painting with one warm-toned yellow light source coming from the implied overhead dining light fixture.

Figure 4.7

'Dinner for One'



Note. Oil on canvas, 20-inch x 24-inch x 1.5 inch.

About midway through the painting process, I decided to add a secondary cool-toned neon-blue light source coming from the window on the right side of the composition.

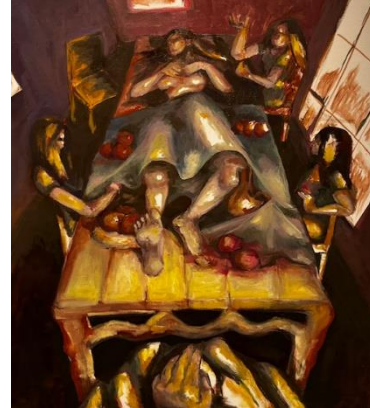
Figure 4.8

'Dinner for One' underpainting



Figure 4.9

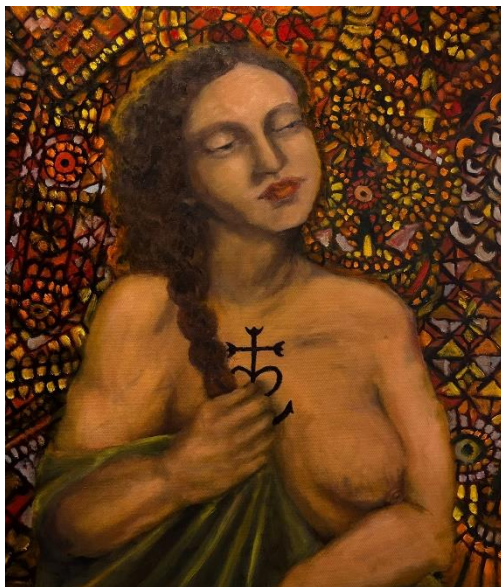
'Dinner for One' with midtones



After this painting, I completed another oil painting, *'Pre-Madonna'*, the same size in a similar style (Fig. 4.10).

Figure 4.10

'Pre-Madonna' oil painting and close up



Note. Oil on canvas, 20-inch x 24-inch x 1.5 inch.

The painting, 'Thanksgiving Feast' (Fig. 4.11), was created in conjunction with the November 2022 Thanksgiving holiday. The base of the painting was created with oil paints on canvas, and then I hand-sculpted a pie crust out of air-dried clay (Fig. 4.12).

Figure 4.11

'Thanksgiving Feast'



Figure 4.12

'Thanksgiving Feast' undried clay



Note. Oil paint on canvas, air dried clay

I began the painting 'Sticky' (Figure 4.13), during the same time period. My boyfriend sent me roses that week and I happened to take a photograph of my cat Sticky sniffing the flowers.

Figure 4.13

'Sticky'



Figure 4.14

'Sticky' reference photograph



The final painting I completed is called, 'Blind Faith' (Fig.4.15). After spending Thanksgiving in Rockville, Maryland visiting family, I came back to Clemson and began the painting. While in D.C., I went to Catholic University's Basilica of the Immaculate Conception. This painting was directly inspired by that experience.

Figure 4.15

'Blind Faith'



Note. Oil on Canvas

The following semester, Spring 2023, I enrolled in an Advanced Drawing course within the Lee Hall drawing studio, room 1-169. I purchased about \$180 in materials for the drawings, including but not limited to a set of graphite pencils, black and white charcoal chalk, a set of oil pastels, colored pencils, an X-Acto knife, kneading erasers, a sketchbook and pencil sharpeners. Over the course of the semester, I spent six hours in the studio weekly and completed over 10 drawings and well over a hundred sketches.

Similar to the painting ‘Dinner for one’ (Fig. 4.7), large scale drawings went through various iterations, use of mediums, use of thumbnail sketches and material sketches. For example, the painting ‘Cymbalta in space’ (Fig.4.17), drawn using layered colored pencil, was completed by referencing ten thumbnail sketches and three material sketches. For scale, the actual pill at the top-right of the composition, is roughly the size of my medication, Duloxetine 60mg.

Figure 4.16

‘Cymbalta in space’ close up photographs

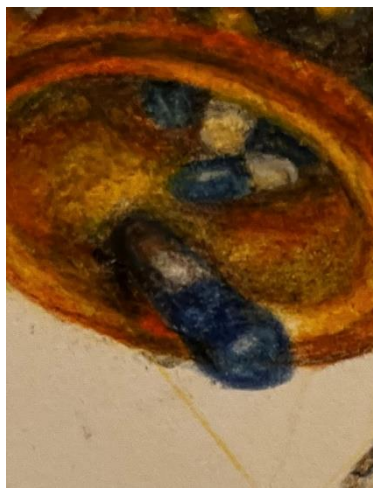


Figure 4.17

‘Cymbalta in space’



Note. Colored pencil on paper

The drawing, “Bleeding birdhouse” (Fig. 4.18), was drawn after completing over 100 3x5 inch note card sketches as seen below (Fig. 4.19).

Figure 4.18

‘Bleeding birdhouse’



Note. Watercolor and oil pastel on paper

Figure 4.19

100 thumbnail sketches



Note. Oil pastel on notecards

Over the course of the year, I did well over 100 sketches, probably about 200. Most of the sketches that I did over the course of both Fall 2022 and Spring 2023 semesters varied in subject matter and medium.

Some sketches (Fig. 4.20) were strictly observational, such as sketches of objects I saw throughout my day, while others were of memories and people in my life. For example, my life partner was frequently a subject matter in my sketches. Sketches were frequently done at the end of my work or school day while speaking with him on

facetime. Others were drawn during my seminar classes while taking notes, often related to the discussion material.

Figure 4.20

Collage of a few sketchbook pages



Note. Graphite pencil or black pen on sketchbook paper

The visual arts studies varied greatly across mediums, time spent on the individual artwork and time of the year. Paintings took far longer than drawings, resulting in higher frequency of drawing and sketching as a method of artmaking. Although there were more

drawings in totality, as opposed to the music or paintings, I spent most of my time painting, especially accounting for drying time.

Most of the drawings, paintings, as well as the music, in their final form, had tremendous variety, including, however, not limited to, diversity of colors, moods, quality and depth. The visual works were primarily warm-toned colors such as reds, browns and oranges. The paintings were often representational, focused on the body. And as the semesters progressed and I began drawing more frequently, the subject of the art became less representational and focused on object, color and the abstract. Paintings often represented the feminine form. Many of the visual representations of women were colorful and alluded to themes of empowerment and hopefulness. I made selective choices to emphasize the sexualized female body, by leaving breasts uncovered, or to organize the objects in the space, such that it guided the viewer's eye to focus on the vagina. In addition, many sketches were of my cat Loki and my long-distance life partner. Various symbolic themes presented themselves in all of the visual / auditory works, including, however not limited to life and death, the body, deterioration, and light and darkness. More specifically, Christian iconography, Greek-mythology and sexuality were frequently implied in the compositional and subject-matter choices.

Music

Outside of studio time, during both Fall of 2022 and Spring of 2023, using the Brooks Center for Performing Arts practice rooms, I composed three piano pieces along with original lyrics. Over the course of these two semesters, I spent about 15-20 hours writing and practicing music within the practice rooms and at my apartment. I used my

journal and computer to write down lyrics as well as used my phone to record myself singing if a melody came to mind throughout the day. Similarly, to how I recorded myself singing if inspiration would arise, I also used my phone to photograph moments and images that I found inspiring as well as jot down thoughts and feelings I had throughout the day. The piano melodies were often slow in tempo, and depending on the day and my mood, would have a faster tempo within a major key. Most frequently however, the piano pieces were composed in minor keys. I transitioned between various minor keys, however, I frequently used A-minor, (Am), B-minor (Bm) and E-minor (Em) or would experiment by playing the same chords within different keys. After listening to the music over again, I noticed that I would include F-sharp minor (F#m) chords during moments of emphasis or transition.

Poetry

Over the course of this project, I authored eleven poems. Each poem varied in length from a few lines to extended prose. Primarily, I used my phone to write poems, generally at night before bed or at random moments throughout the day if inspiration presented itself. In addition, I often wrote in times of emotional distress, which is later made evident by the contents of the poems. In addition, particularly, notable days elicited poems, such as Christmas or my father's birthday.

First, I did a semi-formal content analysis of the poems by identifying keywords, concepts, and symbols. Following this, I input the text-strings into a text-analyzing software called ChatGPT. After using the software to identify frequently used words or concepts, I combined this newfound understanding of the poems with the data

surmounting the content analysis. Lastly, I read through the poems again to ensure that there were not any errors in the data. According to the analysis, the most commonly referenced subject matters were the following: sexually charged violence, parenthood, fear, and loneliness. Some of the subject matter was implied through metaphors such as seasonal changes, religious imagery, the environment, or extended mythological-type narrative.

Themes of parenthood, neglect, physical violence, and self-hate were repeated in poetry excerpts. One trend present within all written excerpts was the emotional state in which they were written. Poetry tended to focus on physical qualities of traumas and the way things feel to the body. These physical qualities were written through descriptive similes and metaphors. The artificial intelligence identified these overarching themes across all of the poems: identity, relationships, inner turmoil, time passage, and nature. Dichotomy was a frequently used device present in a variety of contexts, in particular, within the discussion of trauma and transformation. For example, I discuss the dichotomous relationship between lightness and darkness, death and life, as well as beauty and decomposition. In the poem from December 15th, 2022, I discuss death and rebirth through the metaphor of seasonal changes. An excerpt from this poem is:

I contemplate my destination as I get lost in rubble and potholes filled with muddy, melted ice. At some point between changing seasons my cold heart has melted too. Perhaps it finds itself like the mush getting whisked away by rubber tires and boot soles.

Grey, cold, and wet mush. A gentle reminder of the anticipated blooming season, or an omen announcing death of the preceding.

Where in the world is it only summer? May I take a fast train and narrow view binoculars.

Like how this excerpt discusses the ‘cold heart’, the ‘body’ was frequently referenced in all the poems. It was a conceptual theme, the receiver of physical sensation as well as a subject matter. Therefore, poetry tended to focus on physical qualities of traumas and the intricacies of sensation. It appeared in five poems explicitly and was implied in all of them. For example, in a poem from February 5th, 2023, I stated, “Don’t stop me, my body is a slave to the canyon / Because once upon a time I was a devil in the canyon.” Again, in a poem from January 15th, 2023, “Because then you can at least rest easy knowing that you’ll always be dirty / No matter how hard you try to exfoliate the dirt of your skin and the grime under your fingernails.” As I discuss exfoliating the skin, I am writing about the dirtiness of the body juxtaposed with the idea being clean’. These opposing relationships appear within the metaphors used in all of the poems.

In addition to the body, the poems reference similar opposing, religious forces, such as Light and Dark. In the poem from February 3rd, 2023, I wrote, “Carving walls in the sky starlight lit nights, we still feast in showered damsels in wire corsets / Because dark darkness and soft white lace legs cannot be sensed in the canyon.” The oppositions of darkness and lightness as a place appears both in the “blackness of a bellowed canyon” below the “starlight in the night sky,” as well as being a metaphor for angels and devils. This is later discussed again in another poem from February 15, 2023, “Love you, he

preaches over your altered back he / Says you are the most angelic devil he'd ever / Fuck". In addition to angels being referenced as symbolically 'pure' and 'light', in this excerpt, it is also mentioned that 'he' loves her, but simultaneously belittles 'her' by referring to her as his sexual object.

Similar notions of darkness and lightness through religious and violent imagery are found within the poem from December 25, 2022, "Merry Christmas to all, cheers and laughter / He cried, 'bring me her head, on a silver platter'". The violence mentioned in the poems were almost entirely perpetrated by a male figure victimizing a female figure during or in reference to a sexual act. 'Dirtiness' and 'purity', were mentioned as direct or implicit consequences of the sexual act or being female. Again, from the poem on Christmas it states, "The night before Christmas she laid on her bed / prayed for an angel to come kiss her head. / not a child anymore, and was never on the nice list, but for certain, that her body is priceless". This references a child with a priceless body, awaiting a kiss of an angel. She is depicted as not 'on the nice list', implying that there is something impure about her or her body. Assuming the position of an omniscient perspective suggesting a notion of 'price', implies a form of codification of the child's body.

Feelings of being lost associated with disappointment and continued hopelessness presented itself often. Similarly, I frequently wrote poems about self-hatred and unmet expectations. At the time of writing these poems, it was often associated with some event that happened that day. For example, my friend and I had a long conflict, and I felt unappreciated at the time. Although I did choose to write about the person specifically, I

said, “Like a conditioned animal or like a rat in a trap. The universe leads us with golden promises and hope, only to be caught in the trap. Which, in fact, makes me hate myself even more the same.” Poems about disappointment and unmet expectations often had self-deprecating themes. For example, I say, “makes me hate myself even more the same”, even though, at the time, I was hurt, not by my own actions, but the feeling of shame associated with being a receiver of abuse in a relationship. Another excerpt from this poem states, “First, I’m surprised, “I should have known,” then I laugh because I knew all along. Then I laugh one more time because I know I will do the same thing again next week”. The self-hatred comes as a result of me feeling gullible and foolish for building up hope, ultimately leading to disappointment.

In another poem, I use weather as a metaphor to describe the same cycle of disappointment, “I contemplate my destination as I get lost in rubble and potholes filled with muddy, melted ice. At some point between changing seasons my cold heart has melted too”. This poem explains my feelings at the time. I felt lost but I recognized that the seasons were changing. However, I realized that I, too, had changed. This poem ambiguously describes feeling a loss in identity and anticipation for the future. It suggests that, although I recognize the seasons and I am changing, I still do not know where I am going.

More specifically, I speak about disappointment in the form of my relationship with my father. On my father’s birthday in January 2023, I wrote a poem about a gift I gave him in the past. Years ago, I had given him a children’s book about a daddy and baby bear and I wrote a long letter in the front on the inside binding.

Next to shoes I saw a bag stuffed with giveaways and mistook /
The book I gave to my daddy, and I couldn't help but to stare /
At the stars they looked, I shook / /
My hands, fingers were hooked /
Still life, did he read it or care? /
For my dad's 45th birthday I gave him a book
/ At the stars they looked, I shook, I shook.

This poem describes the moment my world stopped when I saw the book I gave him in the giveaway box next to the trash. The poem embodied my feelings of sadness and disappointment over the years. The poem was not a reflection on the book, however, that the book represented feeling neglected and uncared for by my father. I was not in Nebraska for his most recent birthday, therefore not around him to celebrate, however, felt compelled to write this poem, nonetheless. This indicates, similar to other poems, that I was consistently seeking out poetry during times of emotional distress and depression. The event of my father's birthday elicited painful feelings and poetry was the first medium I chose to articulate them.

Social commentary and financial instability presented itself in a few poems or short reflections. For example, I wrote extended metaphorical prose called, Bananas for Hats. The poem begins by the narrator discussing a memory of a young man and woman who met and had their first kiss, "On the day the world ends / you and your wife take the bullet train past Mcgeyver street / over the rusted green and pink playground set you had

your first / kissed your wife goodbye at her stop”. The poem continues by discussing the man on his way to work,

“Whatever fuck off!” beeping taxis and trams rushing past / crosswalks by
cardboard walls and sweat stained brick. / You fall, drop shit, and lean / down to
grab it all / like ice fishing for your wallet that / fell feet away by / cardboard
piss.

The man finds a banana peel and places it around his neck, “On the day the world ends you put the banana peel around your neck / like a tie / but then you realize that it itches so / you put it on your head.” The poem is an extended metaphor for depression and a complete loss in motivation. The man is tired of the life that he is living and questioning the social pressures and superficiality of his life. It also discusses themes of relational dissatisfaction and the act of going through the motions. While working at Clemson, financial and work-life stressors have been a negative influence on my mental and physical wellbeing. This poem was written at the beginning of the Spring 2023 semester, when I was grappling with my responsibilities as an instructor and student, all while struggling to get by financially. The sheer exhaustion led to feelings of emotional desensitization. I also spoke about this in a short excerpt from January 2023, “I am worried about how financially unstable I am. I feel like I have absolutely nothing to my name, nothing to present as a representation of my hard work.” Both of these poems emerged at the turn of my last semester as a graduate student. Now with the finish-line approaching rapidly, so do the financial pressures to secure a job post-graduation. This was also at the moment that I remembered that I would be without health insurance

before graduation of my 26th birthday on May 5th. As someone with many disabilities, this became a source of stress that appeared often in my journal and poetry excerpts.

Journals

“Living is not living when it is living in a broken body. I am in constant war with myself. This battle, years in the making, have left me confused, hostile and unsure of sovereignty between parts.” this is an excerpt of a journal entry I wrote from October 2022. To gain additional qualitative insight of my psychological state throughout this project, I authored 15 journal entries about once a week. I wrote in reflection of both my mental state, in addition to my responses to the art making process. My emotional state varied while writing the journals, although I often wrote during times of exponential stress of frustration. Most commonly, the journal entries focused on a few people in my life, as well as recurring stressors and their impacts on my body, mind and art. My parents were brought up explicitly or implicitly in 10 / 15 of the journal entries, in addition to my Yiayia 4 / 15 times. A few other people were mentioned in the entries, however, no more than once per person.

One trend present within all written excerpts was also form and format. Journal entries were written similarly to how a rant would be, or as a form of venting. Almost every journal entry began with me stating the general way I was feeling at the time. December 18, 2022, I said, “I feel so alone”. On January 2, I said, “Today I felt a little bit off”. Again, in a journal entry from February, I begin by saying, “I’ve had a really hard couple days”. Most every journal entry focused on a central emotion, and I started each entry by stating which emotion I was feeling most saliently. Although I do not recall

exactly how I was feeling at the time of writing each entry, I often would begin by just writing regardless of whether it was the central concern I wanted to write about. Many of the difficult topics I discussed did not emerge in each journal entry until about two-thirds into the passage.

Poems frequently embodied feelings of pain, sadness, and victimization, while most of my journal entries focused on anger. I chose to use journal writing in times when I wanted to let out pent up feelings of frustration towards people or situations in my life. Overarching concepts of parenthood, neglect, physical violence, and self-hate presented themselves. More specifically, various themes included, however, were not limited to failure, brokenness, stress, depression, fear, disability, trauma and anger. Financial distress, physical illness, relational conflict, my cat being ill, and academic responsibilities were frequently mentioned as sources of stress.

Each journal entry discussed anger either directed internally or externally. Internal anger often presented itself when I discussed disability. “I just want to be free from all of this. I’m not good enough, not smart enough, too lazy, too mentally ill. What am I good enough for? My body hates me. And I’m afraid of what my body is capable of.” In this excerpt, I am discussing the frustration and exhaustion that comes with having, what I perceive to be a broken body. Later, I state the following, “such low self-esteem and depression that a 15-minute drive or 5-minute activity outside of school seems to be too difficult. I’m trying so hard yet I can’t seem to get out of bed to get things done. What do I do? How do I fix this?” Contrarily, I on another day, I speak about being disabled, however, my anger is directed externally,

y'all wouldn't last a day in my body while also getting the amount of shit done that I get done, while dealing with the fucking bullshit I deal with every day. But graciousness and patience are uncommon, why be tacky when you could be classy.

These contrasting messages appear, sometimes days apart. Some days, I blamed myself for feeling like my life was falling apart, other times, I felt that it wasn't my fault at all.

Financial stressors were frequently discussed in my journals as well, "I am worried about how financially unstable I am. I feel like I have absolutely nothing to my name, nothing to present as a representation of my hard work". Graduate school responsibilities, as well as the fear for asking for help emerged along with financial anxieties, "I can't continue to rely on other people to take care of me. Maybe I want to be alone. I don't know. All of this is just so overwhelming". This journal entry was during the time that my cat Sticky was ill, and I needed to pay over \$500 in medical bills for his care. This, given our stipend pay at \$635 a paycheck, was a huge financial setback. My central anxiety at the time was about asking for help, feeling like a failure because I had to, and being afraid of being shamed due to being poor.

Anxiety regarding social criticism and negative treatment were commonly addressed in the journals.

The people that I am around often put me down or make snide comments that are not relevant to my life, because I know that they are not thinking critically, but sort of add to the whole "why?" Like don't try to diagnose me or act like you understand why I am the way that I am, y'all have no idea!

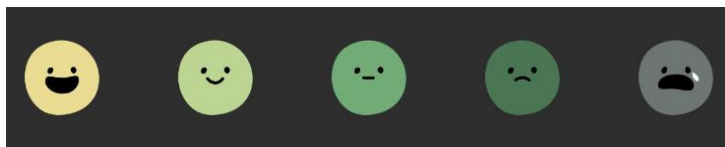
The entries had a similar dynamic throughout. Something occurred in my day-to-day life, whether it be a physical stressor or negatively perceived mistreatment from those in my life. These relational conflicts became the central motivation for journaling. I allude to the stressors of graduate school and graduation deadlines, “I woke up feeling depressed, which those feelings usually don’t manifest until about noon or so in my day. I knew I wanted to get things done but was so drug down and overwhelmed”. Although ripe with content and internal dialogue, I rarely felt resolution after writing my journals.

Mood Tracking

From December 2022 to February 2023, I tracked my mood using the mobile application DailyBean by BlueSignum Corp. The app categorizes the moods with a Likert-type visual scale from 1-5, (one being very happy to five being in high emotional distress) (Fig. #). The highest positive form of mood [value 5] is denoted with a yellow open-mouth smiling face. Value 4 is a lime green closed-mouth smiling face. The midpoint [value 3] emoticon is a bright-green expressionless face. Value 2, the second to lowest mood ranking is a dark green frowning face. Lastly, the lowest mood level [value 1] is denoted by a gray crying face.

Figure 4.21

Screenshot from Daily Bean



Note. Screenshot taken on Iphone X. Copyright, DailyBean by BlueSignum Corp.

My daily mood and mental health were recorded using a color-coded emoticon that most articulated my feelings at the time I was inputting the data. In addition, although I rarely used this feature, the application allowed me to include written excerpts, descriptions of weather, diet (such as caffeine or medication consumption), and interactions within each day to build a timeline. In addition, the application provided basic analytics regarding my mood as I input data within the system.

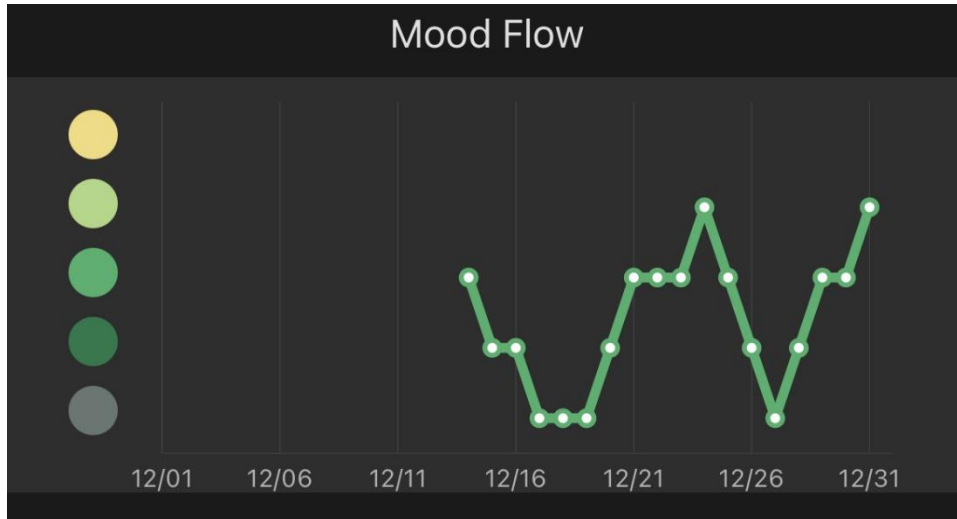
I tracked my mood using DailyBean for 66 consecutive days. Each day accounted for a single mood measurement; therefore, my mood was tracked 66 times total. I began tracking my mood mid-December 14th, 2022, and ended February 18th, 2023, therefore the mood measurements spanned two months, however, existing within three months: December 2022, January 2023, and February 2023. Over the two months, my mood was reported at the lowest [value 1], 17% of the time, and second lowest [value 2], 30% of the time. The highest mood rating was the midpoint value, [value 3], 23 out of 66 days, or 35% of the two months. Lastly, the value 4, slightly above average mood occurred 11 out of 66 days, at 17%. On January 28th, 2023, I reported the one and only highest mood rating [value 5], equating to 1.5%. Over the two-month period, my average mood was 2.56, meaning, slightly below the midpoint value [3], denoted by the expressionless emoticon.

The “Mood Flow” run-charts show an oscillation pattern, in that, the median value was consistently 3 or 2, indicating that I had reported a neutral or slightly negative mood over 50% of the month. The standard deviation was ± 0.86 on any given day.

This indicates that every single day, my mood fluctuated almost one whole-integer, either negatively or positively.

Figure 4.22

December 2022 'Mood Flow' Screenshot

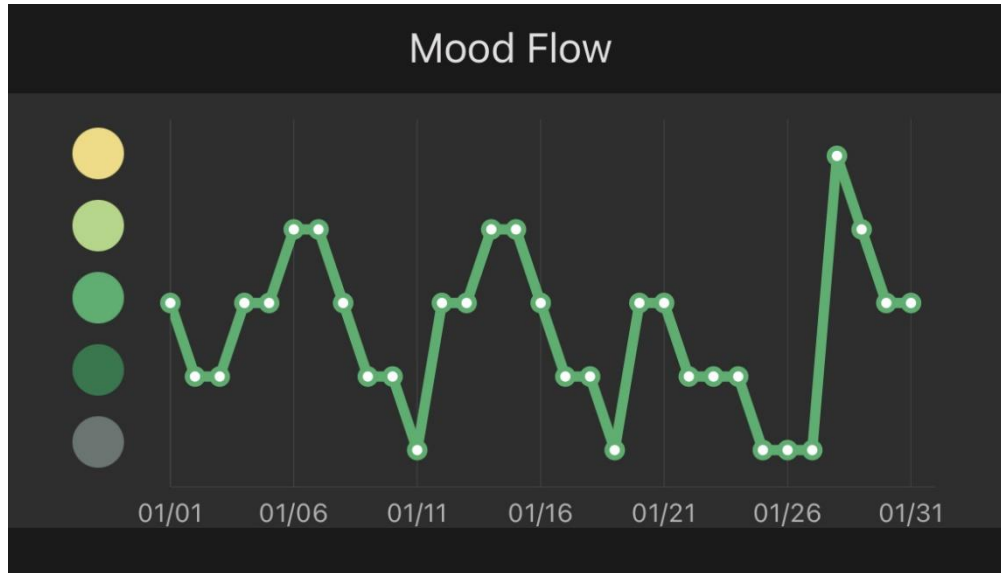


Note. Screenshot taken on Iphone X. Copyright, DailyBean by BlueSignum Corp

On a weekly basis, my mood was reported at its highest approaching Friday and into the weekend. In addition, about every week, there appears to be a trend in a spike in positive mood, and then, a few days later, a drastic drop in mood. However, most regularly, my mood oscillated around the neutral and slightly negative rating. There appeared to be a slight increase in mood at the start of the weekend and a decrease in mood at the start of the work week Monday and Tuesdays.

Figure 4.23

January 2023 ‘Mood Flow’ Screenshot



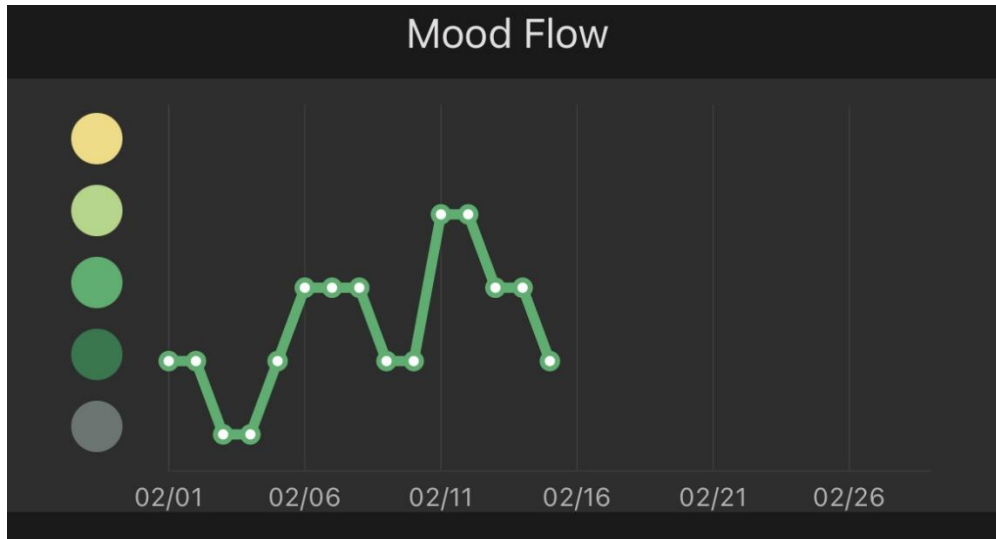
Note. Screenshot taken on iPhoneX. Copyright, DailyBean by BlueSignum Corp

During the half-month in December, I reported 38% midpoint [value 3], 27% slightly upset [value 2], 22% very upset [value 1], 11% slightly pleased [value 4], and 0% very happy [value 5]. Notable drops in mood in December were December 16th, 2022, which was the day I arrived in Nebraska for Winter break and again on December 27th, 2022. My two spikes in positive mood during December were Christmas Day, December 25th, and New Year’s Eve, December 31st (Fig. 4.22).

January 2023, I reported 35% midpoint [value 3], 29% [value 4], 16% [value 1], 16% [value 4] and 3% [value 5]. As articulated by the 3% [value 5], there was a slight peak in usage of the [value 5], positive mood at the end of January on January 28th, 2023. This was directly following an entire three-day reporting of very upset [value 1] January 25th, 26th and 27th. Other notable drops in mood during the month were January 11th and January 19th. Both January 2023 and February 2023, the results were similar (Fig. 23).

Figure 4.24

February 2023 ‘Mood Flow’ Screenshot



Note. Screenshot taken on iPhone X. Copyright, DailyBean by BlueSignum Corp

According to February’s data, at 38%, the most chosen mood was the median [value 3], denoted by a face with no expression. Secondly, at 27%, [value 2], being slightly upset, 22%, [value 1], chosen extremely upset. Lastly, I chose 11%, value 4, slightly happy and 0%, [value 5], denoting the highest level of positive mood. In addition, in February, there was a slight increase in the number of times I chose [value 2], at 40% for the first half of the month (Fig. 4.24).

Exhibition

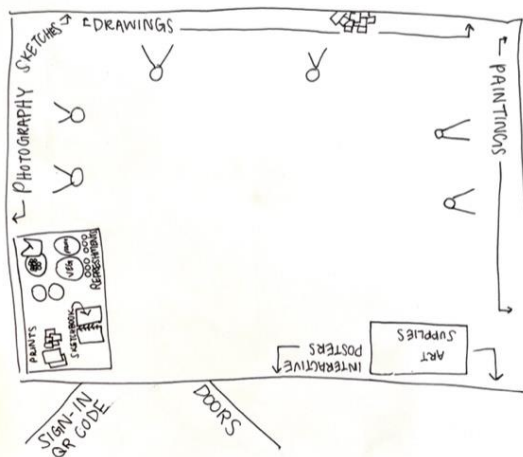
Prior to my art exhibition, I made various arrangements. The Clemson University Art Department allowed me to reserve the Acorn Gallery in the Lee Hall architecture building. To prepare for the exhibit I went to Staples, the office supply store, and printed sellable art prints and postcards, an invitation, and bought supplies. Designing the

original invitation took me about six hours using both Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator. Utilizing photos and drawn elements, the invitation included information regarding the event as well as an edited photo of a seaport in Naxos, Greece located by the “Portara,” a large 600th-century BC lintel, known as a temple entrance. In addition, at the center of the invitation, I included a black and white photograph of me within an image of a golden gallery frame.

The supplies needed for the exhibit included: pins, tacks, tape, pencils, pens, poster boards, foam board, and utensils for refreshments. Before the exhibit, I also wrote artwork descriptions, including title, location, and medium, and attached them to foam board to display below the exhibit works. The night before the exhibit, I went to the gallery to see the space and decide on object placement. To decide on the exhibit layout, I drew an overhead map of the space (Fig. 4.25) including information about lighting, walls and where I would like to place my objects.

Figure 4.25

Hand-drawn map of gallery space



Note. Pencil on sketchbook paper

On March 2nd, 2023, at or about 1:00 pm, I began readying the gallery space for the evening exhibition. I placed the vegetables, fruit, and hummus in the ceramics' studio mini fridge and retrieved a wheelbase cart to transport my artwork and supplies. The gallery space was located on the ground floor of Lee Hall. Using the nearby elevator, I was able to move the supplies into the art space. Upon entering the space, I began painting the canvas edges.

While the canvas edges dried, I carried what felt like a 200-pound table into the gallery space. Every few inches I had to put the table down and pick it up again repeatedly until it was in the gallery. Inch by inch, I managed to get the table in the corner of the gallery and covered with a black, plastic table cover. After this, I began hanging the drawings and photographs on the walls using a wall level, thumbtacks, and t-pins. I secured the artwork plaques left-justified and three inches below the artwork. By the time I hung up all the drawings and photographs, the acrylic paint on the canvases was dry and the paintings were ready to be hung on the wall. After all of the artwork was hung and level, I began preparing the interactive portion of the exhibit. I hung two 22x28 inch poster boards on the wall and displayed instructions for the attendees, "Leave your Mark," "Respond to each other" and "Rip! Draw, Write". I covered the wheel-able cart with a black table cover and put all the art supplies on the top shelf. In addition, I wrote "Supplies" on a piece of paper and placed this directly above the tools.

About 10 minutes before the event, I took the refreshments out of the fridge and placed them on the table. Lastly, I took some photographs (Fig. 4.26) of the exhibit

before anyone arrived. Using my laptop, I played the instrumental piano music I created throughout the year. Lastly, I displayed the art prints and postcards on the table next to the space for the refreshments.

Just before 4:30 pm, about 15 people came into the gallery. Most of the people were art students. Within five minutes, the first audience members began flipping through my sketchbook, asking me questions about the inspiration behind my art as well as beginning to make marks on the interactive poster boards.

Over the course of the evening over 73 people attended the exhibit. The Google Forms survey result indicated 73 people in attendance, however, a few individuals left before signing in or were unable to connect to the website.

Figure 4.26

Collage of photographs of exhibition



There were no less than three people within the gallery at any given time for the first two hours. The academic status of the attendees varied. About 55 were undergraduate students, about 15 were graduate students and the rest were non-Clemson affiliated or Clemson faculty.

At one point in the evening, over 10 people were in the gallery space. Time spent in the gallery also varied. Only one individual left in under 5 minutes. However, most attendees stayed at the exhibit for over ten minutes discussing the art with other attendees, drawing on the board, or eating snacks. A few undergraduate students drew and collaged on the poster board for over 35 minutes (Fig. 4.27).

Figure 4.27

Photograph of attendees interacting with posterboard



From a physical standpoint, by hour two, I was entirely exhausted. I incurred inch blisters on each of my ankles from standing and moving on the hard floor for so long. I remember

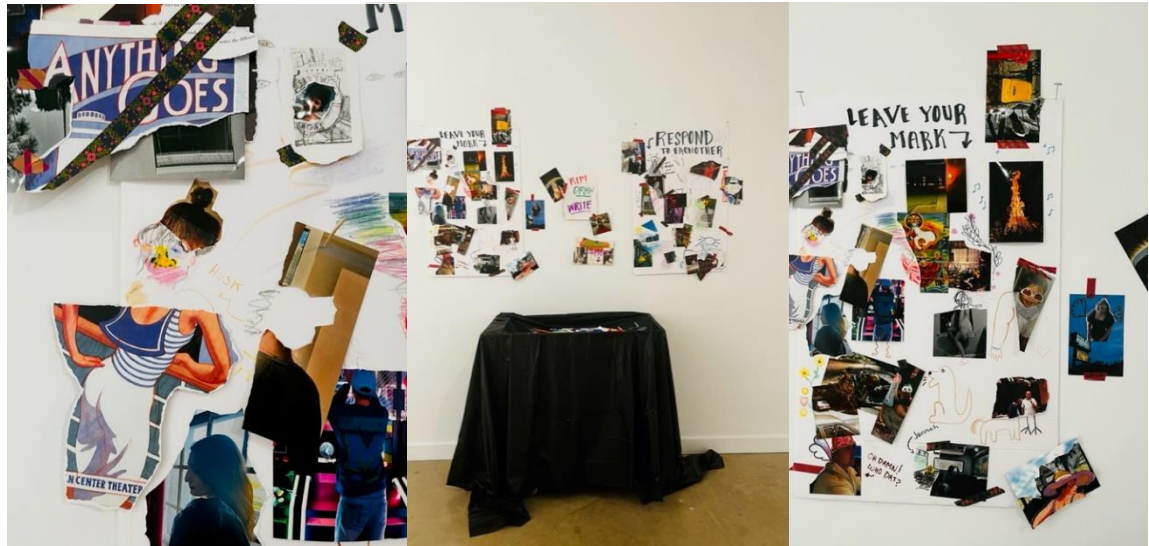
immediately feeling vulnerable as the first people began walking in the space. As someone who has performed in-front of hundreds of people at a time, I did not anticipate feeling caught off guard being at the center of attention. However, seeing other people walk around and talk to each-other about my work, take pictures or ask me questions resulted in me experiencing high levels of anxiety. I had a graduate student ask me, one by one, the inspiration for each piece of artwork. Perhaps, while being so busy with preparing for this project, I did not expect nor prepare myself to answer the questions. Frequently asked questions were “how long did all of this take you?”, “which one is your favorite?”, “how did you come up with this idea?” And “what does this (artwork) mean?” I remember feeling taken aback when attendees would ask me these, seemingly, simple questions. “I don’t know”, I thought at that moment. However, I felt at that moment that I certainly couldn’t tell the attendees that I did not have answers or even understood the meaning of my own work.

In addition to the number of attendees and the physical toll the art show took on my body, the interactive poster boards were completely filled out by the end of the night (Fig. 4.28). Many individuals chose to collage using magazine clippings and photographs provided for them. In addition to using the clippings, attendees frequently added to or reconstructed the images by drawing new parts of the objects. For example, on the far left of the collage (Fig. #), an attendee ripped the paper with a woman on a ship and placed a section of a ripped photograph above it to look like the woman’s hair. After doing this, they drew a multicolored face under the photograph clipping. Other individuals wrote messages on the poster board. A notable message was, “your BODY is a Temple”, with a

sun drawing above the handwritten text. In addition, another individual wrote, “here comes the sun!” with a drawing of an ocean wave over top of a yellow sun drawing.

Figure 4.28

Collage of photographs of interactive posterboard



Throughout the evening, I overheard many conversations among attendees. One notable moment was when I heard someone say, “this is so relaxing”. Photographs of the exhibit poster boards were taken and stored along with the artworks. Some recurring themes that arose during discussion were attendees saying that the exhibit was cool, interesting or impressive. Most discussion instigated by attendees was oriented around the amount of time and effort it took me to complete the items, rather than the symbolism or content of the art itself. Most of these conversations were celebratory, in the sense that they were congratulating me on my work. The second most frequent question I was asked, or topic of discussion was about my interpretation of the artwork. Individuals frequently asked

me, “What does this mean?”, or “What is your inspiration?” Very rarely did attendees interject their personal opinions or interpretations of the art, although, there were many side conversations throughout the night that I was not privy to, where I noticed attendees interacting with each other and pointing to different parts of my artwork. Although I cannot say for certain, it appeared that they were discussing the artwork from their individual perspectives.

There were a few notable exchanges. For example, an undergraduate student attended the event and began speaking with two other students whom they did not know prior to the event. They began talking about ceramics and the one student ended up getting their contact information to join the ceramics club on campus. This student later talked to me about how much they enjoyed art, however, never had been to Lee Hall. They inquired about taking art classes on campus and thanked me for the information.

In addition to this, a student came up to me and showed me a photograph that I had taken last year that was in the pile of collage materials for attendees to use. This was a photograph that I had taken on a bus a year prior. At the time, the lighting in the bus was extremely beautiful, so I asked a few strangers if they would pose for a photo for me. At the exhibit, this student told me that it was actually a photograph of their roommate, and that they were both on the bus when I took the photograph. The student was laughing and smiling while recollecting the story.

Lastly, there were many notable phrases and moments throughout the exhibit that were not necessarily conversations, more so, statements made by attendees as they interacted with the exhibit. For example, someone said, “I honestly have no idea how I

feel, good, but I don't know why." This sentiment was mentioned by various people throughout the evening, saying things like, "I don't know what to say".

After the art show, it took me about 45 minutes to take everything off of the walls, organize my supplies and store any supplies such as food or tacks. I had a stack of plates and additional art supplies that I donated to the Art Department for future use by other student artists. After taking the art and supplies back to my residence, I coordinated with the Art Department staff member in charge of the gallery space and thanked them for their time and resources. Finally, I ended the night by getting drinks with a few friends in downtown Clemson.

CHAPTER FIVE

ANALYSIS

In the dark narrow hallway, light shot out from the crack of my sister's locked door. I dug my hands under the crack and placed my head level to the cream-colored linoleum carpet. My eyes squinted to see if I could make out a foot or a sign of her body in motion. I pressed my tiny lips in the crevice and spoke, "Stephy, can we draw paper dolls together?"

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come." (*English Standard Version Bible*, 2001, Corinthians. 5:17). Montegna's *Foreshortened Christ* (Fig. 4.2) fascinated me. Montegna's choice to place the viewer at Christ's blue-feet, not only forces the viewer to be a participant in the grieving, but it also creates an undeniable power-dynamic. The Christ figure is placed in an ambiguous position not beneath or above the viewer. This position could reference the act of washing Christ's feet, for example. As I recall from my Catholic schooling, in the Bible, Mary of Magdalene, a prostitute, being shamed by the public, falls to Jesus' feet and washes his feet begging for forgiveness. Jesus then reprimands the public for shaming Mary, who is seeking good, while they are the same men who visit her in secret. This is a story of shame and secrecy.

When trauma happens, it happens to our whole being, our fingertips, feet, hair and soul. In 'Dinner for One' (Fig. 4.7), by placing the covered figure on the dinner table, it recalls ideas of consumption and the body as a consumed object. This position, like the

Foreshortened Christ, is like an operating table and burial table. The intention of this piece was to discuss the neurological processing of traumas of the body. In addition to the veiled figure placed on the dinner table, the individuals at the dinner table are interacting with the laying body. As mentioned by Van der Kolk & Fisler, notable moments of early onset childhood trauma can result in fragmented identity and sense of self (Van der Kolk & Fisler, 1995). These individuals represent the post-hoc psychological discourse that happens while experiencing trauma. This is essential to note, as the experience of trauma is not confined to the singular traumatic experience. It is a continued experience, as articulated by me, a master's student, grappling with sexual trauma that occurred as a child.

Therefore, although not consciously aware at the time, the first artwork was an attempt at visualizing a fragmented identity due to childhood trauma. Viewers can see, on the right side of the painting, (Fig. 4.7), there is a window exposing two observable hands. This was an additional choice I made to suggest that the dinner scene was internal-psychological dialogue. This became an internalized narrative of the self (Gallager & Cole, 1999). These compositional decisions were often happening in the moment, with little, if not zero conscious awareness. This phenomenon, I suggest, is due to traumatic breakages in memory and narrative (Hirataka, 2009). Clearly, somewhere, in the recesses of my subconscious, I recalled Mantegna, conceptualized a neurological space, and created visual representations of identity through artistic practice. Thomas discussed the various roles a victim takes as they perceive themselves: the victim, the abuser and the savior (Thomas, 2003). Biblically, Jesus Christ is in the position of both victim and

savior, arguably the abuser depending on how his divinity is interpreted. Although, as depicted by Mantegna, is portrayed dead, prior to the resurrection. The dissonance and tension created post-trauma, is like the experience of victims who have to grapple with life-long consequences of another's action or inaction. As Jesus fell victim to false accusation and a cruel death by his own people, childhood abuse victims are often abused by trusted people in their lives, such as caregivers (Thomas, 2003).

Frank suggests that these traumatic experiences are often moments of narrative rupture (Frank, 2013). Therefore, by the rupture in narrative and perceptions of the self, this dissonant tension is at the locus of transformation. This transformation is the reconstruction of the narrative and perception of self. As visualized in the painting 'Dinner for one', this is a physical form of narrative reconstruction. This further implicates the effectiveness of art and narrative exploration in trauma-sensemaking and psychopathy (Laird, 2021). The compositional choices and formation of the subject matter, places the artist in a position of power and control to dictate the construction of this narrative. Recalling Barad's perspective on performativity, in this case, the act of performing art, contests the power of language, by disrupting what is known to be real (Barad, 2003). By creating physical objects or sensations, such as art, beyond the limitations of written word, disrupts the psychological permanency of post-traumatic mal-adapted narrative, and creates newfound realities to attach to.

Creating visual and auditory art presented various unique challenges, as opposed to writing. In my journal entries, and even in my poetry, I experienced a level of freedom, free from the anxiety of failure, perhaps, because the stream of consciousness provided a

sense of thoughtless comfort. The visual and musical arts, although a greater insight into my emotional state, I was consumed by the fear of creating “bad art”. As a Greek and as a Greek woman, I have been constantly surrounded by legendary art forms in sculpture, writing and painting. These religious and cultural narratives, imbued in Greek art, sat on dinner tables, hung on walls and echoed through the vestibule at church. In addition to the fear of not matching up to my predecessors, I grappled with the anxiety of paying homage to them. Various times throughout my journaling I spoke about the pressures of filial piety and the desire to please my elders. Generational trauma could have created pressure of Greek-American exceptionalism, and the desire to embody generational success through parenting and narrative transmittance (Diacou, 2013). The acts of cultural practices keep alive remembering and sometimes, misremembering of generational trauma (Conquergood, 2009). The lines between traumatic remembrance and intentionality were thin, throughout the art making process. For example, in the painting, ‘Pre-Madonna’, the mosaics behind the female figure were originally human-sized skulls. It was my intention to pay tribute to, not only the erotic female form in early Greek amphora portraiture, but also, a catacomb-type setting behind the figure representing my ancestors. I also painted the skulls in such a way that it felt like it was falling on the figure, placing all their weight on her back. This was to represent the pressures I have felt, as a woman, growing up in a highly misogynistic, Greek American household.

I sat with this painting for hours and felt uncomfortable. Under the guise that the glowing skulls were too contrived, and reckoning ill-fit cultural appropriations, I decided

to cover them, while still retaining original features of the cranial shape. This act of coverage and re-appropriation became a theme throughout all my visual works. However, after reflecting on the true motivation of my decision, I believe that I felt uncomfortable with making such an explicit statement out of fear of judgement. Georgakopoulou speaks about the power-dynamics within intergenerational narrative transmittance (Georgakopoulou, 2005). Perhaps, by creating art regarding generational narrative and trauma, this elicited fears of me becoming a disappointment by disrupting the expectation that elders should have the right to the narrative. Although unaware at the time during my Catholic upbringing, most of the familial and cultural practices were historically Greek-pagan practices, appropriated by the Catholic and Greek-Orthodox church. This presented a challenge for me as an artist, as I attempted to recreate and discuss religious and cultural appropriation. The act of painting over original sketches and paintings, mirrored the experience of cultural erasure. The act of appropriation and narrative erasure has led to a misunderstanding and misrepresentation of Greek culture in The United States (Anagnostou, 2013).

This was apparent in the painting 'Blind Faith' (Fig. 4.15), as it depicts Greek mythological imagery accompanied by religious cues created by the Catholic church. The confusion and misrepresentation of historical fact through art and cultural practice was a form of narrative rupture in my life (Frank, 2009). My mother, a devout Catholic, told me that this painting was her favorite. I created the artwork as a commentary on the uneducated presumptive nature of many Christian churchgoers. The clergy member at the base with wings was in direct reference to a mosaic that I saw at the Catholic Basilica.

The human clergy, in reference to the papacy, all adorned with jewels and wings next to the Christ figure. Many historians and theologians have criticized the Catholic papacy for its hierarchical placement of human beings as political and social leaders of the church. Her statement, alone, was the ultimate form of irony. She believed it to be a form of Catholic worship, due to art being used so frequently as a divisive form of narrative transmittance. Not only has the Catholic church used cultural and religious practice of colonized lands, but the use of art has transformed narrative unbeknownst to its followers (Carus, 1911). Painting became the primary outlet for the discussion of religious corruption, divisive narrative, and cultural appropriation.

My poetry was violent, often devoid of any hopefulness. It was devastating to read and write about. Each line became a moment for me to discuss the traumas of my body. I pitied the author who wrote them. Often, while receiving medical care, I refer to being disabled, experiencing flashbacks, and waking up at night with night terrors in a purely analytic and medicalized way. The use of descriptions, similes and metaphors allowed me to discuss these traumas in a physical and more tangible way. Riceour speaks about the limitless nature of narrative and how it is both tangible and intangible (Riceour, 1980) This also presented itself in my music and lyrical creation. I wanted to be heard but not necessarily cope with the consequential reality of my life and moving on from the traumatic moment. I wanted to hold on to it and play a melody that would capture the pain that I felt. Perhaps, so I could feel it again or make someone else feel it. The farther I traverse in life, the distance grows between me and the traumatic event. But I am not ready to move on. I haven't accepted the reality in the first place. Ellis speaks about

narrative distance, as the phenomenon where, as time and place distance us from the original event, the narrative distance increases, causing a lack of fidelity to the original event (Ellis, 2007). I experienced this over and over throughout my writing and continued to while journaling. No matter how closely I attempted to remember to forget, I could never capture the moment, the fear and the anxiety. These forms of therapeutic release left me feeling more anxious, confused and discouraged. I would try and get something off of my chest, but the words never led to a feeling of relief.

It wasn't surprising seeing my mood ranging low. I have had depression my entire life. However, every day that I went to put in my mood, I felt irritated. "Why did I have to do this?" I would think to myself. Although I attempted to accurately quantify my mood, it reminded me of the hundreds of diagnostic questions I have answered over the years. It left me feeling inconvenienced, and rarely led to any additional information regarding my psychological response to the art making process. Yes, I am depressed. No, a Likert-scale did nothing but confirm the artistic testimony. Goodall speaks to this by discussing the limited nature of quantitative research (Goodall, 2005). Although fearing pressures of validating my own research, I chose to conduct the experiment alongside the art making.

The art exhibition culminated in relative success. I was surprised that over 70 people came to see my artwork. Unlike my thesis, who very few people will read, the art display was an extremely vulnerable experience. It was like having my feelings hung up on the wall for people to look at. I grappled with the fear of being judged and people not coming. Interestingly, however, the exhibition elicited various conversations and

newfound relationships. It appeared that, by creating a vulnerable space to discuss art and music, people were much more willing to divulge their own experiences and thoughts.

The interactive posterboard is the physical evidence of this conversation. Just as Conquergood and Barad speak about performativity, the posterboard created intersecting narrative speaking to a collective experience of what it meant being a student (Conquergood, 2002; Barad, 2003). The exhibition became a place of cultural and emotional discourse.

I found that, although the theoretical basis of the study was reflected in the results, there were few mentions of the practical limitations of art-making within an academic setting.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION

In the dark narrow hallway, light shot out from the crack of my sister's locked door. I dug my hands under the crack and placed my head level to the cream-colored linoleum carpet. My eyes squinted to see if I could make out a foot or a sign of her body in motion. I pressed my tiny lips in the crevice and spoke, "Stephy, can we draw paper dolls together?"

Preparing for my thesis, simultaneous to my exhibit, has been a grueling and exhausting experience. There were days I painted without interruption for eight hours. There were various ramifying effects to my bodily condition throughout the process. Breathing in the chemicals from the oil paints, while painting, gave me headaches and swollen lymph nodes any time I was in the studio. In addition, as someone with a connective tissue disease, using small motor skills, such as drawing, painting, playing the piano or typing for a full-time basis, weekly, caused inflammation and pain in my wrists, arms and shoulders. This, among the stress of my full-time course load and teaching 75 students, presented difficulties in anxiety management. Often, I would feel so overwhelmed during or before writing my thesis or doing an art project, that I would have a panic attack or depressive episode where I would sleep for periods of 15 or more hours. This, among relational stressors, such as both of my grandmothers impending death, resulted in emotional exhaustion and turmoil.

Choosing to conduct highly physical and emotionally grueling research while also planning an art exhibit made being a graduate teaching student and University writing

fellow more taxing. I found myself constantly obsessing over creating perfect artistic works or crying in the dimly lit piano practice rooms at Brooks Performing Arts Center. In addition, I frequently started an artwork, felt so invigorated with passion and excitement, and then found myself disappointed with the outcome after.

These ramifying effects on my body and mental state, considerably influenced my feelings and motivations to the art making process. Therefore, I consider that this physical reality may have influenced the creation and interpretations of my art. For example, within the drawing, “Cymbalta in space,” I began the process with high aspirations and an expectation for the result. By using color pencil, rendering the objects became increasingly time consuming and difficult. Therefore, driven by the desire for perfection, by the time I completed the piece, although accurately matching up with my first aspirations, I felt disappointed and drained.

It was not until stepping away from my work and my final manuscript that I felt a sense of resolve. “I created this,” I thought to myself. The pain that was trapped so deeply in the recesses of my mind, began to spill out in forms of teardrops and sweat. The creation of art as a part of autoethnography has been a transformative experience. Although, it presents a vast list of problems.

Conducting research requiring high levels of energy and time commitments, is unsustainable within an underfunded master’s program. Teaching undergraduate students has been a focal part of my learning outcomes at the University, however, while conducting research, I found myself stretched thin. Doing laborious and personally rigorous forms of research, within this academic institution, exposed various barriers for

me as a student. Not only is the graduate work-schedule difficult to maintain, but the very academic structures also presented physical pain for me while conducting research. Being unable to sit comfortably, walk comfortably and breathe quality air in mold-infested classroom halls, led me to tears almost daily. Therefore, yes, conducting autoethnographic studies incorporating art lends itself to new discovery, however, are nearly impossible to sustain in an ableist academic institution. The act of physically incurring pain and suffering for the sake of completing a thesis, to prove the validity of non-normative forms of research, is evidence of the hegemonic, racist and ableist structures that continue to suppress disenfranchised students and faculty in the margins. Therefore, these inaccessible structures support those who offer research in support of the structures that do not require or desire alternative modes of research. The act of creation dies, and regurgitation begins to be the epitome of academic rigor.

By geometrically analyzing Mantegna's painting it always, no matter what, places his penis as the focal point of the composition. Perhaps it could be attributed to the idea that Jesus bled for the first time at circumcision, and last time at the crucifix. Genitalia, at the focal point of both *The Foreshortened Christ* and my painting *Dinner for One*, a commentary on the divinity of reproduction, creation and the sexual.

In both perspectives, the viewer is placed at the base of the table, forced in a participatory role in the grieving, both for Christ's death as well as in the mourning of sexual violence in my painting. This voyeuristic role complicates the power structure, as like Mary Magdalene washing Jesus' feet in submission, a prostitute, attempting to hail

him, however, in opposition, the viewer is inherently powerful by overlooking someone's vulnerable body.

It complicates the viewer role with the subject, implying that the subject is accountable for the death, or death to virginity, or they are in the position of having to feign sympathies.

Mantegna's painting is at the very moment of painful dissonance and tension, the Christ figure dead, however, before his is resurrected. This tension also appears in my painting, as the subjects all discuss this unconscious body. It is the neuropathic moment of deciding whether the subject is dead or alive, whether to bury the subject in the ground, or whether they will rise again.

My project is a metaphor for this moment of dissonance before transformation. Creating art is death and rebirth. If my trauma is a seed, and I have spent my life clutching it in my palm, fearing life without the protection that it has offered me, it suffocates and doesn't grow. Just like the women sit at the table and mourn this trauma, Jesus' disciples sit at his feet, mourning not the loss of Jesus, however, the fear and anxiety that he may never rise again, and that they have wasted their lives for a lie.

However, for him to be reborn he must die. And for me to be reborn, I must accept that my younger self is dead. I have spent my life clutching at this seed and grappling with "letting it die". But it has always been dead. I will never get my childhood back. I will never be eight years old again. It is dead. It is gone. So, I need to bury it. I need to pay homage to it and all the traumas of my ancestors before me by holding a ceremony. Because by burying it, the seed is reborn again. Just as my womb has carried

generations of traumas, it is the very vessel of artistic creation of a reborn future. This is the importance of art. It creates an object, able to be sensed. The permanency that humans desire—Unlike words that require translation and interpretation, art transcends the confinements of our psychological consciousness and allows us to bury the dead.

By painting a painting, I am memorializing the me before, not severing myself from it, however, paying homage to the past, such that I can be rid of the shackles that confine me to the dead, and go along with the living. Just as I watched my best friend's body lower into the ground, this funeral practice is performative art, for her parents and family, that we pray over her body such that we can move on. Art is the symbolic performance of creating to remember and be reborn anew. At the point of traumatic rupture, art allows us to make real, the amorphous intangible burdens in our psyche. From dust we came and to dust we shall return, with every creation, comes death. And art memorializes the moment before death or after death, such that life can come from it.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Visual Art

Figure A-1: Painting Supplies



Figure A-2: The Lamentation of the Dead Christ



Figure A-3: 'Dinner for One' Sketch 1



Figure A-4: 'Dinner for One' Sketch 2

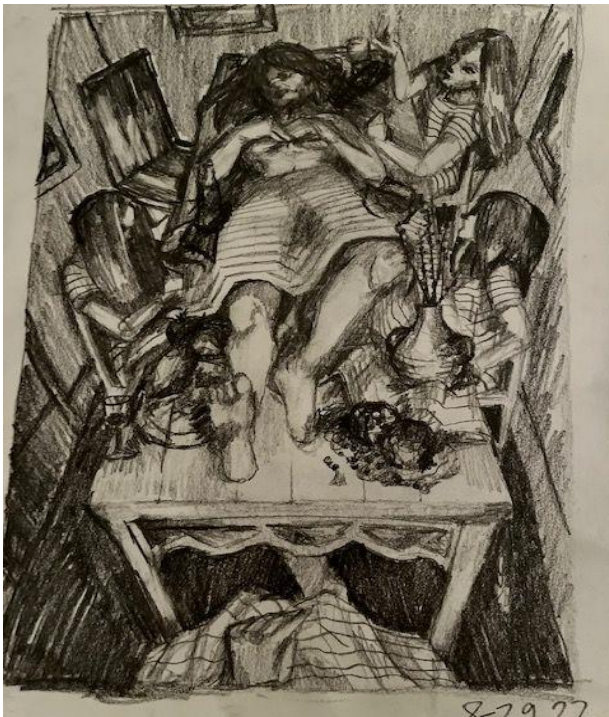


Figure A-5: : 'Dinner for One' Sketch 3

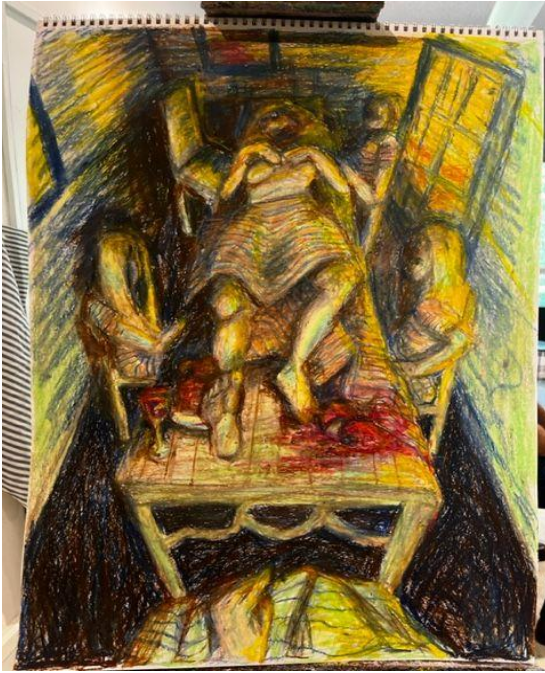


Figure A-6: : 'Dinner for One' Sketch 3 close up



Figure A-7: 'Dinner for One'



Figure A-8: 'Dinner for One' underpainting



Figure A-9: 'Dinner for One' added midtones



Figure A-10: 'Pre-Madonna' and close up

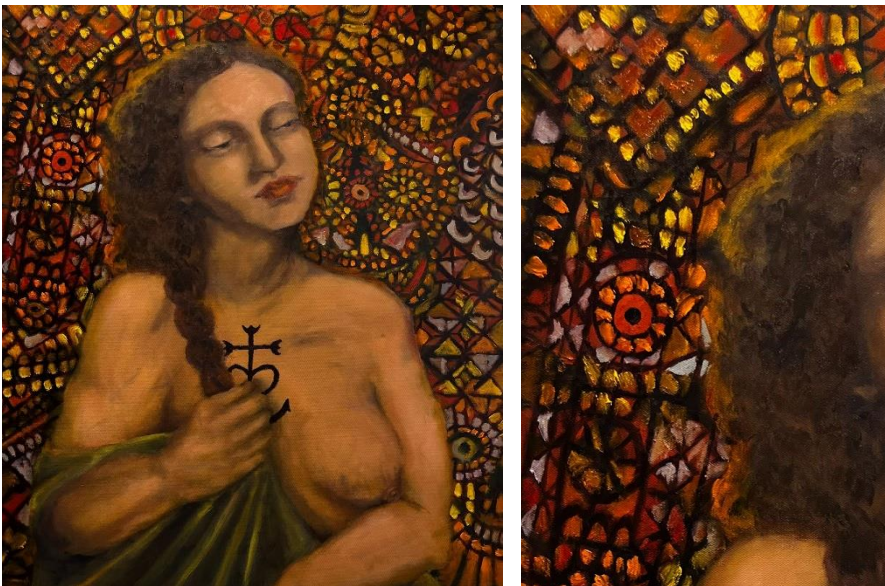


Figure A-11: 'Thanksgiving Feast'



Figure A-12: 'Thanksgiving Feast' undried clay



Figure A-13: 'Sticky'



Figure A-14: Photograph of Sticky and roses



Figure A-15: 'Blind Faith'



Figure A-16: 'Cymbalta in space close up photographs



Figure A-17: 'Cymbalta in space'



Figure A-18: 'Bleeding birdhouse'



Figure A-19: 100 thumbnail sketches



Figure A-20: Collage of a few sketchbook pages



Appendix B

Art Exhibition

Figure B-1: Hand drawn map of gallery space

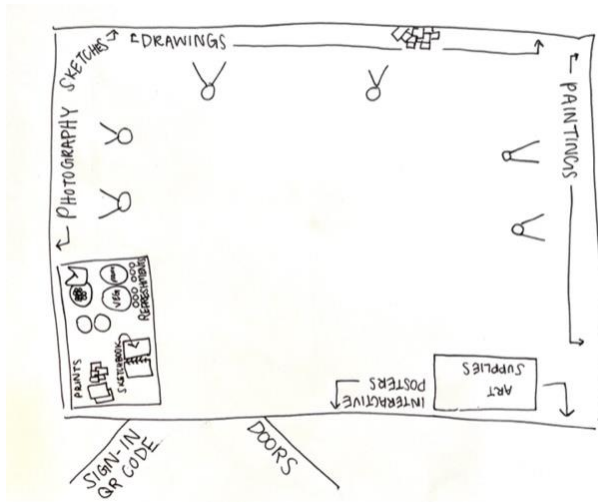


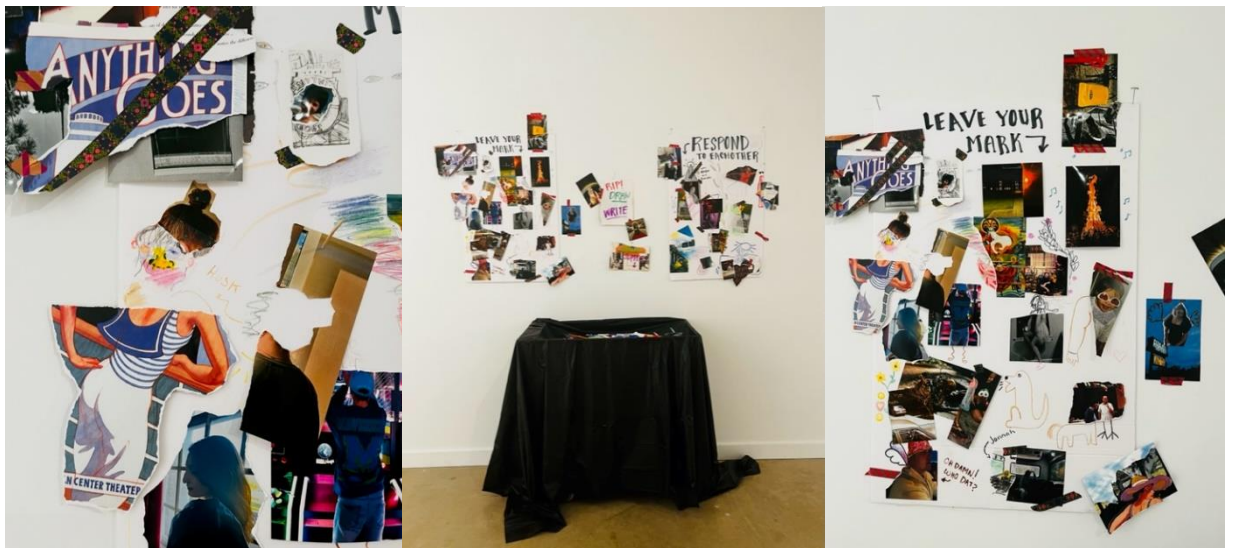
Figure B-2: Collage of photographs of exhibition



Figure B-3: Photograph of attendees interacting with poster boards.



Figure B-4: Collage of photographs of interactive posterboard



Appendix C

Tables and Lists

Figure C-1: Art Creation Timeline

Weekday Schedule:

a. Monday-preparation:

- i. One to two hours of brainstorming and the art creation process:
- ii. Sketches-these can be both colored or uncolored, on my phone or in a sketchbook.
- iii. Writing one to two poems, recording music that comes to mind, including lyrics.

b. Wednesday-art making

- iv. One to two hours of refining and creating art through music, visual arts, or writing.
- v. Painting for three-hours, beginning of second semester this will be replaced by fiction or poetry workshop taking up to two hours.
- vi. If not within the confinements of class, the art making process lasts for one to two hours.

c. Friday-reflection

- vii. This will be a one-two page self-reflection from the week.

- viii. Depending on the week and potential circumstances, this may be extended to large reflections and recollections of memories and short stories.

3. Weekly Schedule with Prompts:

- a. November 14th-20th
 - i. Timely Prompt: Defense-What does it mean to defend autoethnography of trauma academically? Perhaps reflect on 3-Minute Thesis competition.
- b. November 21st-27th
 - i. Timely Prompt: Thanksgiving, family, traveling, giving, immigration, colonialism, thankfulness, filial piety.
- c. November 28th-December 4th
- d. December 5th-12th
 - i. Timely Prompt: End of the semester and going home. Seeing boyfriend.
- e. December 13th-18th
- f. December 19th-26th
 - i. Timely Prompt: Christmas, Time with immediate family, gift-giving, wish-lists, decorating, Jesus' and my mother's birthday.
- g. December 27th-January 2nd, 2023

- i. Timely Prompt: New Year festivities, new year-new me, future, post-graduation plans, who am I? Going off of parent's insurance this year.
- h. January 2nd-8th
- i. January 9th-15th
 - i. Timely Prompt: The beginning of the end of graduate school.
- j. January 16th-22nd
- k. January 23rd-29th
 - i. Timely prompt: My father, now retired, 57 years old.
- l. January 30th-February 6th
- m. February 7th-12th

Figure C-2: Screenshot from Daily Bean

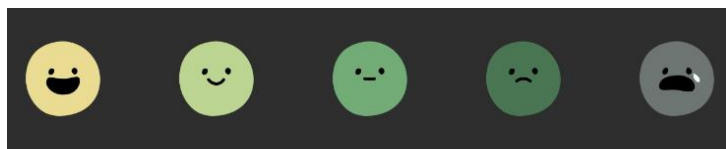


Figure C-3 : December 2022 ‘Mood Flow’ Screenshot

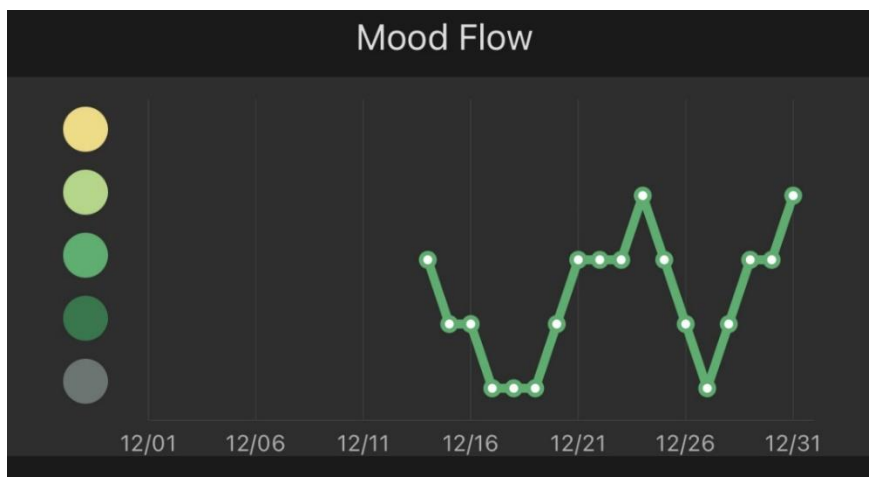


Figure C-4 :January 2023 ‘Mood Flow’ Screenshot

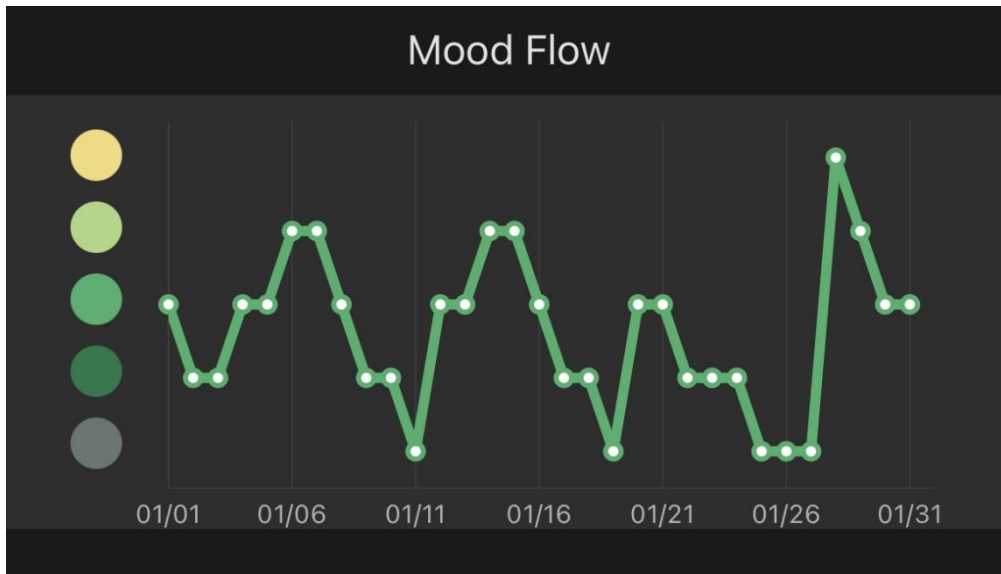
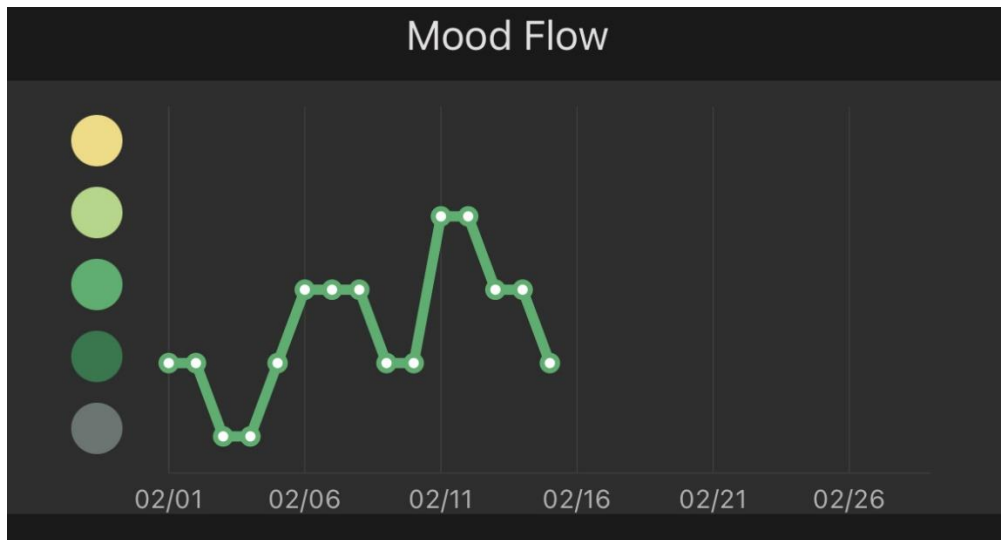


Figure C-5 :February 2023 ‘Mood Flow’ Screenshot



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