

## **Streamlining the Muse: Creative Agency and the Reconfiguration of Charismatic Education as Professional Training in Israeli Poetry Writing Workshops**

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**Abstract** In this article I seek to theorize recent institutional transformations of creative agency that involve the increasing embeddedness of art socialization in the professional and bureaucratic infrastructure of various sorts of educational organizations in the contemporary West. I argue that institutional art education involves the reconfiguration of charismatic education as professional training, and I suggest that this provides an opportunity to theorize the features shared between charismatic education and professional training against the backdrop of a research tradition that has viewed them as antithetical to one another. In doing so, I draw on ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in two Israeli poetry writing workshops, which draw their pedagogy from the rapidly growing field of creative writing programs in the United States. [creative agency, charismatic education, absorption, professional training, poetry writing]

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Anthropologists have recently shown renewed interest in theorizing institutionalized modes of learning to be charismatic, spiritual, or pious. They have taken up this research from multiple perspectives that focus on affect (Gade 2004), embodied practice (Csordas 2007; Mahmood 2005), the materiality of semiotic forms (Bielo 2009), genred interactional events (Capps and Ochs 2002), and psychological proclivity to specific spiritual experiences (Luhmann et al. 2010), to name just a few. Although not always explicitly acknowledged, the intellectual roots of much of this renewed interest go back to Max Weber's notion of "routinization of charisma," i.e., "the desire to transform charisma and charismatic blessing from a unique, transitory gift of grace of extraordinary times and persons into a permanent possession of everyday life" (Weber 1978:1121), and especially to one of the modes of routinization of charisma Weber highlighted, namely "charismatic education" (Weber 1978:1143–1145).

While this tradition of research has been successful in elucidating the multimodal aspects of different forms of charismatic education, it has tended to limit itself to the sphere of religion. Consequently, charismatic education in ethnographic sites in which charisma is not directly associated with religion has remained undertheorized. Such has been the case of art socialization. On the surface, charismatic education may seem to have very little in common with art socialization. However, as Charles Taylor argued in his critical-historical analysis

of expressivist notions of art that emerged in the West toward the end of the 18th century and have been ubiquitous in art circles ever since:

In our civilization, moulded by expressivist conceptions, it [i.e., art] has come to take a central place in our spiritual life, in some respects replacing religion. The awe we feel before artistic originality and creativity places art on the border of the numinous, and reflects the crucial place that creation/expression has in our understanding of human life. [Taylor 1989:376]

Taylor adds that the artist, “as a mediator of spiritual reality to humans . . . can be likened to a priest” or a “seer” in this frame of reference, whose intellectual roots Taylor unpacks in great detail (Taylor 1989:378).<sup>1</sup> In light of these observations, art socialization is well-positioned to provide anthropologists with a window into different forms of charismatic education among modern secular individuals, and thus an opportunity to shift the analytical lens trained in the sphere of religion to other spheres of theoretical interest.

More specifically, a focus on art socialization can contribute to theorizing the institutional transformations of creative or charismatic agency and intentionality in the present historical moment in the West. For millennia, the social role of the artist has epitomized and given shape to key notions of agency in Western cultural history more easily associated with religious charisma. These notions have ranged from an external divine agency that acts through the artist, e.g., the muse (Murray 1989), to organic growth that autonomously expresses the artist’s “true” nature from within (Abrams 1971). However, since the early 20th century, art socialization has been undergoing significant changes in the United States, which have radically reconfigured artistic charisma. These changes pertain to the increasing embeddedness of art socialization in the professional and bureaucratic infrastructure of higher education. No longer limited to classical music, the plastic arts, and dance, socialization in a growing number of art forms—from poetry writing (McGurl 2011; Myers 1993) to jazz music (Prouty 2011; Wilf 2010) and even turntable techniques (Muther 2004)—now takes place within higher education institutions that rely on codified curricula and standardized pedagogical aids and methods. Today, for most neophyte and aspiring artists in the United States, becoming an artist means enrolling in one of the hundreds of specialized art programs that confer various degrees (from B.A. to Ph.D.) and professional certificates (Elkins 2009; Singerman 1999).

Inasmuch as these institutional transformations concern the impact of shifting discourses, cultural norms, and institutional arrangements upon notions of agency, intentionality, motivation, and emotion, they tap into a topic that has been the focus of much research at the intersection of psychology and anthropology, namely, the cultural patterning of the self (see Markus and Kitayama 1991 for a review). These transformations provide an opportunity to conduct ethnographic analyses of attempts to reconcile one model of agency, motivation, and intentionality—the Romantic one, with another—the professional one, within a single ethnographic site and cultural context, and thus answer a number of questions: How do these transformations impact and reconfigure notions of creative agency and intentionality? How

do neophyte artists learn to be charismatic—as “mediator[s] of spiritual reality to humans,” to reiterate Charles Taylor again—amidst such shifts in institutional arrangements? Indeed, Weber himself already alluded to this difficulty. Although he conceded that “the transition between charismatic and rational specialized training is . . . fluid,” he eventually determined that “genuine charismatic education is the radical opposite of specialized professional training as it is espoused by bureaucracy” in that the latter retains hardly any of “the original irrational means of charismatic education” (Weber 1978:1143–1144).

An ethnographic analysis of these institutional transformations can have broad theoretical implications. Weber’s formulation has anticipated and structured a long-held dichotomy between spiritual charisma and the professional ethos in the anthropological literature. In another form, it has found expression in the antinomy of charismatic creativity and society’s secular, mundane, and routine spheres. For example, Franz Boas, writing on the Native American art of the north Pacific Coast, argued that the emergence of pattern books signifies the decadence of folk art (Boas 1955:157). Inasmuch as pattern books denote a form of rational codification, Boas’s argument advances a dichotomy between charismatic creativity and one dimension of the professional ethos. Similarly, in encompassing charismatic and cultural creativity under the notions of “*communitas*” and “liminality,” Victor Turner (1967) located charismatic creativity outside of society’s routine and mundane centers as a state of “betwixt and between” routinized social norms and practices (cf. Mahmood 2005:126–131 for a similar critique of Turner). Furthermore, Turner maintained this distinction in his analysis of complex societies by locating states of liminality and *communitas* in leisure and other types of activities that are set apart from routine work (Turner 1979). The association of charismatic creativity with unpredictability, and its concomitant dissociation from codification, rationalization, and rule-governed social behavior—all dimensions that have structured the professional ethos—also recur in more recent anthropological studies of charismatic creativity as a cultural phenomenon (Lavie et al. 1993:5).<sup>2</sup>

In this article I argue that contrary to Weber’s suggestion and this anthropological tradition, there is much more in common between charismatic education and professional training than meets the eye, and that psychological anthropology can provide key theoretical tools to clarify this common ground. In doing so, I draw on ethnographic fieldwork in two poetry writing workshops organized in Israel by a nonprofit organization for the advancement of poetry, which I call “Orpheus.” As I have argued elsewhere (Wilf 2011), these workshops can be best understood as an attempt to professionalize poetry writing and especially poetic inspiration against the backdrop of Romantic notions of inspiration that emphasize spontaneity and unpredictability. Here I explore in detail a number of techniques of professionalizing poetic inspiration that were inculcated during the workshops.

More specifically, I suggest that the literature within psychological anthropology that has explored the cultural patterning of a specific kind of an altered state of consciousness, namely absorption, can be brought to bear on these poetic techniques. Absorption has been defined as “the profound narrowing or concentration of attention and focused deployment of cognitive resources,” in the course of which “the absorbed individual becomes unaware of the

external environment, self-awareness and critical thought are suspended and time perception may become distorted” (Seligman and Kirmayer 2008:34). If research within psychological anthropology has been consistent in emphasizing that absorption, states of possession, and other altered states of consciousness, as seen in such practices as shamanism or glossolalia are to a large extent skills that individuals are able to cultivate via culturally specific practices such as prayers or mental-imagery training exercises (Crocker 1985; Lambek 1981; Luhrmann et al. 2010; Noll 1985), then psychological anthropology can provide the conceptual machinery necessary to blur the distinction between charismatic agency and routine professional work through an ethnographic focus on professional practices the purpose of which is to induce such altered states of consciousness and shape the perception of professionals for specific purposes. Inasmuch as this research has tended to focus on religion and spheres such as leisure situated away from society’s routine and mundane realms (Schüll 2006; Snodgrass et al. 2011; Stromberg 2009), my shift in focus can broaden psychological anthropology’s sphere of relevance, as well as elucidate a significant contemporary phenomenon that begs for clarification.

To better take advantage of this conceptual machinery, I bring the literature on absorption into conversation with an anthropological literature that has focused on professional training. More specifically, I theorize the poetic techniques in the context of what the linguistic anthropologist Charles Goodwin has called “professional vision,” i.e., the “discursive practices . . . used by members of a profession to shape events in the domains subject to their professional scrutiny” and to create “the objects of knowledge that become the insignia of a profession’s craft: the theories, artifacts, and bodies of expertise that distinguish it from other professions” (1994:606). I argue that the poetic practices inculcated at the workshops constitute a form of professional vision whose purpose is to reconfigure participants’ perception and thus induce dissociative phenomena and states of absorption that result in the production of poetic nuclei that can then be developed into complete poems. These techniques constitute well-formulated and gradual processes that can be subjected to the scrutiny of a community of professionals. As a result of these structured—indeed professional—processes, poetry writing is transformed from an unpredictable and mercurial process under the Romantic framework, to a predictable and structured process under the professional framework.

The phrase “professional vision” thus becomes especially felicitous in the context of my argument because beyond its restricted meaning as formulated by Goodwin—i.e., that of visual perception shaped by a profession through discursive practices—it combines the notions of a profession and Vision, the latter notion now indexing various spiritual and charismatic meanings—remember again Charles Taylor’s argument that the modern artist is widely perceived as a “seer” (1989:378).<sup>3</sup> Professional Vision thus denotes the conflation of spiritual charisma and the professional ethos and allows me to rethink and problematize the long-held dichotomy between spiritual charisma and the professional ethos in the anthropological literature. In the Conclusion, I argue that the professional cultivation of creativity is fast becoming a key managerial concern and object of commodification in postindustrial modernity in the context of the shift to the information and knowledge economy. More than

a complete treatment of each of these disciplines, subdisciplines, and phenomena, then, this article aims to suggest conceptual linkages between them that promise to yield productive theoretical insights.

## The Ethnographic Context and Fieldwork

This article is based on fieldwork I conducted between November 2001 and June 2003 in two poetry workshops organized by Orpheus (a pseudonym), a nonprofit organization for the advancement of poetry in Israel. The workshops were intended to provide training for neophyte poets. Each workshop consisted of 12 participants. Most of the participants were in their twenties, though a few were older, the oldest being in her mid—forties. The workshops were conducted once a month over an entire weekend and were held in a countryside hotel mid-distance between the cities Tel-Aviv and Haifa. Participation, including food and board, was fully funded by Orpheus.

Orpheus was established in 1990 and is considered to be one of the major bodies that operate in the field of Israeli poetry. This field is characterized by a very low degree of institutionalization. For example, the number of poetry journals is small.<sup>4</sup> As a result, poetry criticism is almost entirely absent. Almost without exception, journals do not remunerate poets for the poems they publish; rather, poets are expected to submit their poems free of charge and be satisfied with the fact that their poems are published at all. Although poetry is taught in the academy, poetry writing is almost completely absent from the curriculum.<sup>5</sup> Finally, the number of poetry readers in Israel is very limited, a fact that is reflected in the economic reality of the publishing industry.<sup>6</sup> Newspaper articles that discuss the lack of public financial support for Israeli poetry, as well as demonstrations organized by poets in an attempt to better the state of Israeli poetry, are ubiquitous.<sup>7</sup>

Against the backdrop of this small field of practice, Orpheus stands out as one of the most visible and active organizations devoted to the advancement of poetry in Israel. Significantly, in a number of publications, as well as in interviews I conducted with them, its founders explained that they had founded Orpheus as a response to the low degree of institutionalization of Israeli poetry. They have managed to secure relatively strong financial support from various public and private bodies, a fact that is often enviously mentioned by representatives of other bodies in this resource-depleted field. More than a general contextual fact, Orpheus's success in securing external financial support is inherently tied to its adoption of the professional ethos, which, as I explain below, is based on the use of codified means for the reliable and predictable production of ends and thus the transformation of the Romantic ethos of creativity, which entails unpredictability, into structured work. In interviews, Orpheus's founders explained to me that their ability to build a rational and structured curriculum for teaching poetry writing was key to their success in securing external financial support because, as one of them told me, they could show that "we are not about poetry writing as mysterious voodoo but as orderly work according to well-defined techniques"—a dichotomy that will recur below.

At the time of my fieldwork, Orpheus's poetry workshops were the central training structure for neophyte poets in Israel. In interviews I conducted with them, almost all of its participants fully acknowledged this centrality. Even though some of them had previously participated in workshops organized by other small organizations, they considered the participation in Orpheus's workshops as a highly desired goal not only because the application process was competitive and Orpheus fully funded their participation, but also because Orpheus's institutional importance promised further exposure and important contacts for the poets participating in its workshops.<sup>8</sup>

Two of the people who headed Orpheus had apprenticed in the prestigious creative writing program at the University of Iowa. One instructor had apprenticed in the New School's creative writing program. Thus, Orpheus's professional ethos has a long history that transcends the Israeli context. While creative writing was initially developed at the University of Iowa as part of an attempt to further the critical understanding of literature 'from the inside' rather than to disseminate practical tools for aspiring writers, the discipline soon began to function as a mechanism for the production of professional writers beginning from the 1940s largely for economic reasons, e.g., in order to provide economic security for writers as instructors (Myers 1993). The methods of poetry writing that were mobilized at the workshops are thus indicative of the global dissemination of expert knowledge within this rapidly growing professional domain, which today spans hundreds of academic programs in the United States alone (McGurl 2011).

My intention in conducting the fieldwork was to explore the tension experienced by individuals between modern normative ideals of rationalization, on the one hand, and creativity, on the other hand, in a site that seems to epitomize this tension, i.e., the academic art program, and then to theorize how this tension plays out in different spheres of postindustrial modernity, a point I develop in the Conclusion. I entered the two workshops as a full participant. My status as a researcher was disclosed to all of the participants. The fact that I am versed in Israeli poetry and have ample experience in poetry writing eased my participation. A number of poems that I composed during the workshops were published in the anthologies that summarized the two workshops, and further poems were published in a number of issues of the poetry journal published by Orpheus. Other than participant observation, I conducted semi-structured interviews with all of the participants and instructors. I also conducted content analysis of the various publications issued by Orpheus. The workshops were conducted in Hebrew—my native language. All quotations from Orpheus's publications and workshops, as well as from interviews with participants and instructors are my own translations from the Hebrew, and all names are pseudonyms.

### **The Charismatic Self of the Romantic Poet**

Before discussing the means Orpheus's organizers devised to reconcile the two very different culturally patterned models of the self with one another (Markus and Kitayama 1991)—i.e., the charismatic-Romantic self and the professional self, it is first necessary to highlight the

ideologies that structure the former. The notion of “training” provides a good entry point into this background discussion.

In the beginning of their analysis of proclivity to absorption in the context of the ability to experience God, to which I will return below, Tanya Lhurmann and her colleagues contrast the arts and religion with respect to popular assumptions about the role of talent and training in these spheres. They argue that “many people comfortably assume that training and talent are important in many areas of life: ballet, violin playing, and tennis—*any of the arts* or sports. It seems more awkward to talk about talent and training when it comes to experiencing God” (Luhmann et al. 2010:66; emphasis added). Although these scholars are correct to suggest that people believe training and talent are irrelevant to specific practices, it is important to note that the role of training in creativity and artistic excellence has been far from obvious in the context of key ideologies of creativity in Western intellectual history. At times these ideologies defined creativity and artistic excellence as qualities that have nothing to do with training, much like the ability to experience God in Judaism and Christianity. Indeed, “divine inspiration” and “natural ability” are two key explanations for poetic creativity first formulated by the ancient Greeks, “which have existed in one form or another ever since . . . even in periods when the emphasis of critical theory has been on rules and technique, and the dominant image, that of the poet as craftsman” (Murray 1989:9).

To begin with, one recurring trope in many ideologies of creativity in the West has stipulated the autonomy of creative social action. For example, ancient Greek theories of poetic inspiration attributed it to the divine intervention of entities such as the muses (Abrams 1971:189–190). The centrality of the notion of divine inspiration implied that training played a minor role in the understanding of artistic creativity. Noteworthy is “the absence of any references in early Greek literature to the possibility of one poet teaching another” (Murray 1989:11; McDermott 2004).

These ideas had a tremendous impact during the following centuries, even in the context of the European academies of art that followed the Renaissance tradition, and which were oriented toward codified knowledge. During the Renaissance, various institutionalized forms of socialization into art existed, such as the workshop and the master’s studio. The first academies of art were established in the mid-16th century by artists in an attempt to distance themselves from the guilds of the workshop tradition and their emphasis on craft. They were framed as centers of humanist learning and intellectual research and espoused a division of labor within which teaching would be limited mainly to craft and left to the workshops. Significantly, in discussions about art socialization in this period, “writers acknowledge . . . the elusiveness of art and of the natural talent that an artist either has or does not have, and of the potential harmfulness of intervention in the activity of artists of the first kind and the futility of study for the second” (Goldstein 1996:25). The notion of inspiration as a divine gift recurred in these discussions about the nature of the academy. Thus Vasari argued that “an artist in [a state of God’s grace] has no need of instruction; not so favored, he will benefit little from it” (Goldstein 1996:25). This early period of academization, then, was characterized by hostility to all but the most elementary teaching. Significantly, the separation of the

artist from the craftsman and the reframing of art as an intellectual and spiritual endeavor led to increasing public interest in the artist's personality, mood, and eccentricity (Wittkower and Wittkower 2007).

From the mid-17th century, academies' educational programs shifted toward more rigorous codification of knowledge and their influence was paramount. Academies became the main educational institutions for neophyte artists, and in France, academies were founded in almost every large city. However, even this period of rigorous codification was informed by the Neoplatonic philosophy that places "art in the ephemeral embrace of God" and renders it "contingent to a God-given grace that is gifted rather than acquired" (Goldstein 1996:46). As the academization of art expanded across Europe and beyond it—the Pennsylvania Academy, for example, was founded in 1805 and was the first academy of art in North America—the idea that greatness in art ultimately depends on a noncodifiable element persisted.

The theory of divine inspiration, although slightly out of favor in the context of increased rationalism in early modern Europe, returned with full force at the end of the 18th century with the rise of Romanticism with one significant change: inspiration was interiorized in the person via organic metaphors of independent inner gestation and growth. According to Romantic ideologies of poetic inspiration, "an inspired poem or painting is sudden, effortless, and complete, not because it is a gift from without, but because it grows *of itself*, within a region of the mind which is *inaccessible either to awareness or control*" (Abrams 1971:192; emphasis added). Here came to fruition organic metaphors of natural genius, spontaneous creation, and the idea that each person has his or her "nature" with which they must be in touch (Taylor 1989). Romantic notions of creativity have impacted art socialization ever since in placing "artistic freedom" above codified rules within a hierarchy of normative ideals, even in the context of the institutionalized art education of the European academies (Efland 1990:52). Though codified rules and techniques have always maintained their place in the curriculum in one form or another, noncodified elements such as artistic vision, talent, and radical originality received higher status following Romanticism both within and outside of the sphere of art.

As critics have noted, such notions of creativity and inspiration as inalienable possessions were inherently tied to the rise of possessive individualism as a key normative ideal in the context of post-Enlightenment, a connection that found a typical expression in an essay that had a tremendous impact on Romanticism, entitled "Conjectures on Original Composition," in which its author, Edward Young, expressed his disdain for learning by arguing that "learning is borrowed knowledge; genius is knowledge innate, and quite our own" (Young 1759:36). The notion of the inalienability of charismatic creativity and hence its dissociation from learning structured ideas about copyright (Rose 1993; Woodmansee 1996). Notions of genius became increasingly entangled with philosophies of free market and were subject to commodification (McDermott 2004)—a point that I develop in the Conclusion.

These views eventually came to fruition in the modernist avant-garde, as in the Bauhaus manifesto that stated that "art cannot be taught" and that called for the academies to be united

again with the workshops and focus on teaching craft. According to Gropius, the author of the manifesto, only “in rare moments of inspiration, transcending the consciousness of his will, the grace of heaven may cause [the artist’s] work to blossom into art” (quoted in Goldstein 1996:261). The point is not that modernism rejected institutionalized teaching. Schools for modernist art such as the Bauhaus and the Black Mountain College did exist. Rather, the ambivalence toward codified rules structured whatever teaching was promoted because “in the region of modernist ideology eminence is inseparable from originality, and originality understood as such is unteachable” (Goldstein 1996:288).

Today, Romantic tropes are abundantly disseminated in scripted narratives and cultural artifacts about art, artists, and artistic creation, much like other scripted forms of motivation such as addiction (Carr 2010).<sup>9</sup> At stake is a very specific, culturally patterned self: the idea that each of us has an autonomous nature that should be allowed to be expressed unhindered by external strictures; this idea “has become one of the cornerstones of modern culture. So much so that we barely notice it” (Taylor 1989:376). As I clarify in the next section, Orpheus’s organizers recognized this heritage and formulated their project as the reconfiguration of key Romantic tropes. Their intention was to shape a very different kind of poetic inspiration and self. They were not content with teaching craft alone; rather, they intended to professionalize inspiration. It is their version of inspiration, creative agency, and intentionality, as well as their means of cultivating them, that I now turn to discuss.

### **Professionally Induced Inspiration**

Put simply, the agenda endorsed by the workshops’ organizers focuses on professionalizing poetry writing (Wilf 2011:473–474). In various publications, they highlight the importance of mastering rationalized and standardized techniques of poetry writing that can give the poet control over the different stages of writing. In a vignette that appears in the introductory notes to the anthology of poems that summarized the second annual workshop, held in 1994, the organizers make the following argument:

The Romantic arguments revolve around the belief that it is impossible to teach a person to be a poet: either you have a talent or you don’t. Either the muse is present or it is elsewhere. According to the Romantic conception, the ability to write poetry is a genetic quality like long eyelashes . . . Indeed, not a few of the workshop’s participants first arrived with unfounded systems of expectations about the unique conditions of possibility for poetry writing. One of the aims of the workshop is . . . to give the participants tools that would allow them to work even when they “do not feel like” working. Different instructors suggested different tools and techniques that enable the poet to work when the muse takes a nap or is in a vacation . . . : automatic writing, structured exercises, learning classical forms . . . And to the surprise and amazement of everybody—all these techniques changed the craft of writing from an allegedly spontaneous thing . . . to professional work. Discipline replaced caprice.

The genre of poetic inspiration the organizers purport to replace and reconfigure is here indexed directly by “Romantic,” and indirectly by notions such as “the muse,” “spontaneous,”

“caprice,” and “do not feel like working.” These are precisely the building blocks of the Romantic genre of poetic inspiration, which is associated with unpredictability, lack of control, and shifting emotional moods. How can such charismatic fervor be reconfigured and incorporated into the professional ethos, which emphasizes standardized technique, predictability, and control over one’s craft? How did the organizers attempt to reconcile these two very different culturally patterned selves?

The workshops consisted of a number of classes. There were editing classes, translation classes, classes that revolved around the analysis of the poetics of past masters, and classes devoted to the recitation of poetry. Yet the class that took the center stage was based on exercises whose purpose is to help the poet come up with “the beginning of a new poetic creation,” as its instructor told me in an interview. The organizers conceptualize these exercises as means to enable the poet to write regardless of circumstances of mood and inspiration. They are the conditions of possibility for professional poetry writing. At the end of the workshop, the instructor of this class distributed to the participants a booklet containing nearly 160 of these exercises, many of which the participants had performed during the year. As I have argued elsewhere (Wilf 2011:473–478), the rationale behind these exercises is based on the fact that in contrast to other fields of professional work, a poet does not have at her disposal readily available problems defined within a specific professional domain (such as Fermat’s last theorem before it was solved) on which she can focus her energies at any given time (Csikszentmihalyi 1996:114–115). Rather, she must have an idea she wishes to express in poetic form, or perhaps a tension to unravel, and the existence of these is often unpredictable. Hence, the decision that “now is the time to start writing” has hitherto been the responsibility of the muses, an inspiration, an inner urge, a divine grace, or another kind of an autonomous agency of which the poet has little control. Against this backdrop, the organizers have set themselves the task to professionalize problem finding through specific techniques and thus reconfigure a structure of motivation and intentionality.

Consider the following vignette. It is a sunny day and I and the rest of the workshop’s participants are following Galit, the instructor, who is leading us in into the hotel’s yard. The yard is bounded by an old stone wall and peppered with a number of pine trees. It is a cool January day and the sky is perfect blue. Galit stops walking. She opens the plastic bag that she carried with her and takes out 12 white, rectangular cardboard frames. She then tells us the following in a soft voice:

Alright, please form into pairs. Each pair should go to a different corner. I want one person to take the frame and place it somewhere on the ground, for example, up against a tree trunk or this stone wall, or whatever. I want that person to kneel and look inside the frame and just tell the other person what he or she sees. Just tell what you see. Don’t try to over-think. Just tell what you see. The other person will write precisely what the first person is telling her, o.k.?

We quickly form into groups. I join David, a tall man in his mid-twenties. By this time we are already three months into the workshop, and each participant has his or her regular

partners. David and I have already collaborated on a number of Galit's exercises. We are already beyond the initial awkwardness that accompanied the first exercises we performed together. We walk a short distance away from the other people. We both look around us, searching for a proper spot. After a moment of silence, David, who holds the cardboard frame, says: "Well, Galit said not to over-think. Let's just put it here." He points to the stone wall and we approach it. He carefully places the frame up against the wall. He then kneels on all fours while I open my notebook, pen in hand. I look at him. David comes closer with his head to the frame, his nose almost touching it. There is silence and for a moment I can only hear the wind whistling in the pine trees that surround us. After about five minutes, I hear David's voice and I hurriedly write down what he tells me:

Eh, alright, a nail, I see a nail. [Silence.] It is stuck in the stone wall between the stones. [Silence.] They smoke it, the stones, they smoke it, avidly. They smoke it and, eh, it grows harder with every puff. I can smell the burnt iron turning red, turning rusty red. [Silence.] There is tension between the stones that push on the nail in all directions and, and the nail that pushes outwards at the stones. [Silence.] There is turbulence here, at this spot, at this precise point, a force-field of energy exploding and imploding. I think this will end when the stones throw, no, spit out the nail straight at my face, straight at my face. With disgust! I have interrupted something. There was a moment of concentration here that I disturbed.

I wait for more, but David turns silent. He looks inside the frame for a few more seconds and then slowly stands up. I look around me, and I see some of the other pairs of people still at work, one person kneeling on all fours and staring inside the cardboard frame, the other person diligently transcribing everything the kneeling person is saying. After observing this strange sight for a few seconds, David walks a few steps and places the cardboard frame up against a nearby tree trunk such that the frame frames the point of contact between the tree and the ground. This time it is my turn to kneel down and report to David what I see.

Psychological anthropologists will recognize this poetic technique as a technique of inducing absorption, i.e., a disposition for "having episodes of 'total' attention that fully engage one's representational (i.e., perceptual, enactive, imaginative, and ideational) resources," a state characterized by a "heightened sense of the reality of the attentional object" (Tellegen and Atkinson 1974:268), in which "self-awareness and critical thought are suspended" (Seligman and Kirmayer 2008:34; see also Luhrmann 2005; Luhrmann et al. 2010). The cardboard frame aligned up against the stone wall highlighted for David a chunk of the phenomenal reality, which could now become the exclusive focus of his perception. The frame narrowed his attention to the phenomenal reality inside it and resulted in a cognitive transformation. Suddenly, a nail, which had hitherto been a mere spec in an amorphous perceptual ground, became a figure in a drama, together with the stones that surround it. This drama, in turn, became an object of professional knowledge—i.e., a poetic nucleus—whose validity, as I show below, can be tested against the judgment of other poets. Key here is the fact that these are techniques of inducing nonpathological dissociative states, i.e., they and their impact are controlled. Seligman and Kirmayer argue that "non-pathological or normative dissociative experiences are ubiquitous" and that "a closer examination of the processes

involved in normal dissociative experiences can help illuminate the interactions of mechanism and meaning in the production of socially and culturally significant dissociative experiences” (Seligman and Kirmayer 2008:34).

In follow-up interviews I conducted with 11 of the 12 participants in the workshop, many of them described their experience of performing this and similar exercises in terms that suggest strong evidence for absorption. For example, David told me that “you enter into a meditative state . . . it is some kind of a transformation in which it is easier for you to see things differently . . . It is like a bubble in time—suddenly they [i.e., Galit] extract you from everything so that you become—your senses become sharper because everything is different.” Mattan described the effects he experienced while performing the same exercise, which involved putting a frame up against a tree trunk and looking through it, in these words: “you see a tree in a way that makes you think of words that become that tree; that mix in with the tree; that fuse with it, or what have you. It is a way of looking at the world in a way that another person would not do, would not even think of doing . . . It’s almost like *a disturbance, an obsession, a Dybbuk or an obsession, namely like a nuisance that you can’t shake off of you* [in the moment of performing this exercise].”<sup>10</sup> Rachel repeated the trope of meditation when she described the effects of performing the same exercise: “it’s like meditating and entering into a different mental state.” Although I did not perform rigorous psychological tests to ascertain the existence of absorption when participants performed these exercises, I argue that these descriptions (and descriptions I discuss later) do point to experiences of absorption. Particularly significant are participants’ descriptions of entering alternative states of consciousness (where the trope of the meditation recurs time and again) and experiencing heightened focus and attention to details from which they often find it hard to extract themselves.

To be sure, psychological anthropologists have recently begun to look more closely at the ways in which dissociative states are part of the fabric of everyday life in different cultural and social settings. For example, they have argued that different branches of the entertainment industry such as video-gaming (Snodgrass et al. 2011), gambling (Schüll 2006), and other forms of games and play (Stromberg 2009) rely for their efficacy on inducing absorption. Although this research has been successful in broadening understanding of the ubiquity of absorption in everyday life, I suggest that the emphasis on the role of absorption in the entertainment industry nevertheless reproduces a long-held tendency in anthropology to situate creative social action away from society’s more mundane and routinized spheres, as I discussed in opening this article. Indeed, this emphasis reproduces Victor Turner’s argument that in complex societies the liminal is situated in the sphere of leisure (Turner 1979). Acknowledging that routine professional work might consist of techniques of inducing absorption can help problematize this long-held dichotomy between charismatic education and professional training and point at their meeting points in contemporary work environments (see the Conclusion).<sup>11</sup> I suggest that bringing the literature on absorption into conversation with existing research on professional practice that focuses on the micropractices of professional work, might indicate that there is more in common than meets the eye between charismatic social action and professionalism.

## Professional Vision

One useful strand in the literature on professional work is linguistic anthropologist Charles Goodwin's well-known notion of "professional vision." Goodwin has argued that members of a profession frequently use specific discursive practices to shape events in the domains subject to their professional scrutiny. Key here is Goodwin's notion of "shaping," which is radically distinct from "discovering." The discursive practices used by members of a profession actually create objects of knowledge; they are "socially organized ways of seeing and understanding events that are answerable to the distinctive interests of a particular social group" (Goodwin 1994:606).

One of the discursive practices Goodwin has discussed is "highlighting." According to Goodwin, the purpose of highlighting is to simplify the complicated perceptual field members of a profession typically encounter in their daily work. This simplification consists of "methods used to divide a domain of scrutiny into a figure and a ground, so that events relevant to the activity of the moment stand out" (Goodwin 1994:610). Goodwin has noted that "psychologists have long talked about figure/ground relations as a basic element of human perception" and that "through these practices structures of relevance in the material environment can be made prominent, thus becoming ways of shaping not only one's own perception but also that of others" (Goodwin 1994:610). Drawing on his fieldwork among archeologists, Goodwin has given the example of an archeologist who, during excavation, uses a trowel to outline features in the dirt that are difficult to see:

By doing this the archaeologist establishes a figure in what is quite literally a very amorphous ground. This line in the sand has very powerful persuasive consequences. As a visible annotation of the earth, it becomes a public event that can guide the perception of others while further reifying the object that the archaeologist proposes to be visible in the color patterning in the dirt. The perceptual field provided by the dirt is enhanced in a work-relevant way by human action on it. Through such highlighting and the subsequent digging that it will help to organize, the archaeologist discursively shapes from the materials provided by the earth the phenomenal objects—that is, the archaeological features—that are the concerns of his or her profession. [Goodwin 1994:610–611]

Goodwin's discussion of archeologists' discursive practices as a form of professional vision can be productively brought into a conversation with the anthropological study of absorption and similar phenomena and thus inform the analysis of the poetic technique I described above as a form of professional Vision. Such an analytical strategy can highlight the features shared between charismatic education and professional training against the backdrop of a research tradition that has tended to conceptualize them as antithetical, or at least as unrelated to one another.

At the most basic level, the efficacy of the poetic technique I described above, and of similar techniques like it, is based on the fact that they highlight a complicated perceptual field and reconfigure figure/ground relations in a way that allows the poet to create and shape "objects of knowledge that become the insignia of a profession's craft" (Goodwin

1994:606)—here poetic nuclei that can be further elaborated into complete poems. If, as I discussed above, one of the crucial difficulties that hinders the professionalization of poetry writing is that poets do not have readily available problems that they can address at any given moment, these techniques are controlled mechanisms of generating such problems, whose efficacy is based on their ability to effect changes in the poet's perception and inspiration through reconfiguration of figure/ground relations and thus to induce dissociative states in a controlled manner with surprising and potentially creative results. Other exercises performed during the workshops are based on the same logic. For example, one exercise required each participant to put a hood over his or her head and observe the outside world through two tiny eyeholes.

These techniques are potentially public events that can shift the perception of others, too, and make them co-participants in the shaping of poetic nuclei; I, too, can kneel beside David and look inside the frame and be convinced of, or debate the specific drama he described to me. When collectively discussing the perceptual and conceptual reframing discursively articulated in using this technique of highlighting and when collectively attempting to ascertain this discourse's poetic weight, participants in the workshops often chose to refer back to the framed reality. I was often struck by how participants debated at length whether some entity can be said to look or act in a specific way in the "real" world. When I inquired about this practice, I was told that the power of poetic transformation hinges precisely upon the poet's skill of remaining faithful to accurate representations of what familiar entities look like and what they can do. Participants insisted that such a transformation does not result from completely abandoning these understandings. Hence, they would often refer back to the highlighted phenomena—whether literally (e.g., also looking inside the cardboard frame) or by an act of the imagination (e.g., imagining what a nail stuck in a stone wall looks like)—and judge the poetic stretch of discourse accordingly—two strategies that correspond to absorption involving "engagement with external objects or events," and absorption involving "engagement with internally generated thoughts, images, or imaginative content," respectively (Seligman and Kirmayer 2008:34).

An example for the latter form of absorption took place when, following the exercise that required us to wear a hood with two eyeholes and closely observe flowers in the outside yard, I wrote the following three stanzas, which I later incorporated into a poem that described a party:

The light is dimmed and the joint  
 Passes from mouth to mouth like a bee  
 From flower to flower.

In an editing session, one of the participants had reservations about this image, arguing that "the bee image doesn't really work for the joint." The instructor then asked all of us, in a very soft voice, to "close your eyes and imagine that you are walking in a field full of yellow flowers. It is a summer, sunny day. You are walking among the flowers, you touch them with

your hands, and you stop and you look at a bee that flies, that passes from flower to flower. Stay with this image for a couple of minutes, please.” After a few minutes of utter silence, the instructor asked us to open our eyes. He then said quietly, “There’s something in the hesitation of the bee, the almost casual way in which it passes from flower to flower, which captures very well the casualness of the situation in the party. It also gives the joint a life of its own. The fact that the mouths suck the joint whereas the bee sucks nectar from the flowers is a very nice twist.” A discussion then ensued in which participants commented on this image. Here, then, the instructor asked the participants to assess the poetic value of this image by referring back to the highlighted phenomenon through a mental-imagery training exercise (Crocker 1985; Lambek 1981; Noll 1985). He hoped that by focusing on what a bee looks like when it harvests nectar, the participants could appreciate the full poetic value of these stanzas. Referring to a different mental-imagery exercise that required participants to return to an (albeit private) unresolved moment in their childhood that they wanted to come to terms with, Ohad used the recurring trope of meditation to describe this exercise: “it was like guided meditation—not exactly meditation, more like guided imagination . . . It really affected me. I returned to this moment I had in childhood and it was powerful and it was hard to return to the classroom with all the people beside you. I wanted to stay there. But it worked in terms of producing that initial stimulus . . . It opened something I could write about.” The pinhole observation technique, then, is a poetic technique that leads into a discursive practice that reconfigures inspiration and imagery as features of a professional reality that members of a community of professional practice can share with one another and collectively evaluate.

Note that we need to expand the notion of professional vision/Vision to different sensory modalities other than vision. Thus, during the second month into the workshop, Galit took us into a room, in the middle of which stood a long table. A number of fruit bowls were scattered over the table. The fruit consisted of peeled tangerines, apples, grapes, peeled bananas, and slices of pineapple. Galit instructed us to stand around the table. She then said:

In this exercise I want you to take a fruit, any fruit, and just begin to sense it, learn its texture, its taste, smell. For example, take a slice of a pineapple and touch it with the tip of your tongue for a few minutes. Put it in your mouth and let it be there for a while. Smell it. Rub it against your cheeks or eyelids. But whatever you do, keep your eyes closed. I am not interested now with how the fruit looks. I want you to work with different senses—touch, taste, smell. As always, write down what you feel every few minutes and don’t try to edit. This is just raw material.

This exercise also constitutes a form of highlighting that reconfigures figure/ground relations. Participants narrow their attention in a way not normally done in everyday life, with potentially emergent, creative results. The process allows them to become absorbed in the sensory qualities of the object. However, this focused attention is achieved via senses other than vision. Indeed, in one exercise, participants were asked to form into pairs, hold hands, walk backwards in the streets for an hour, and then write about their experience. Here, then, focused attention revolved around heightened proprioceptive awareness. Dafna, in a

similar way to David's commentary I discussed above, combined the tropes of meditation and the bubble in describing the effects of these techniques: "It's like you participate in meditation workshops . . . It brings you deeper inside things. [To write] you have to enter a bubble. It puts you in a bubble . . . The exercises—like walking backwards—what it does it changes your consciousness. Walking backwards, changing your consciousness, putting you into a different state of consciousness, a different state of—putting you into this bubble." With reference to the exercise that involved sensing fruit, Tal said "It's looking at the tiny details, even [the tiny details of] things we are familiar with and seeing them in a different way—a *delusional*, estranging way, as it were." These descriptions reverberate with the previous ones, especially in their emphasis on entering a different state of consciousness that is characterized by heightened attention to detail and the suspension of critical thought and self-awareness. Especially significant are the recurring tropes of meditation and the bubble, which participants use time and again to describe their experiences of heightened focus that is disconnected from the surrounding environment. I suggest that professional Vision, then, should be understood as a category of professional discursive practices whose productivity is based on the reconfiguration of professionals' various sensorial, embodied, and mental modalities.<sup>12</sup>

### **Conclusion: Professional Vision and the Rise of the Creative Class**

Recent institutional transformations of creative agency and intentionality suggest that scholars need to qualify a long-held belief in the anthropological literature that charismatic education and professional training are antithetical to one another. One step in problematizing this dichotomy would be to shift the analytical lens trained in the study of charismatic education in the sphere of religion to forms of charismatic education in other spheres such as institutionalized art education. Another one would be to inform such a shift by studies of the micro-practices of professional work. Bringing anthropological studies of absorption to bear on studies of "professional vision" and vice versa can be a fruitful way to make explicit the features shared between charismatic education and professional work and to tease out the theoretical implications of institutional forms such as poetry writing workshops that conflate the two in the present historical moment and that attempt to reconcile two different culturally patterned models of the self.

In conversations with participants it became clear that the strategies of streamlining the muse, as I have called it, inculcated during the workshops have had significant impact on many participants' notions of inspiration. Thus, Ariel commented that:

"When you come to write something, you come from nowhere. You don't know where to begin. It's very difficult. How will you suddenly write a poem? Many people report that they are suddenly inspired. If you are suddenly inspired, good for you. But if you want to . . . write seriously, you have to institutionalize it because you can't rely on the fact that once every three years you'll have an inspiration and you'll start writing. You want to produce a certain quantity of poems . . . and so you have to know how to do that, you have to sit in front of the computer and know where to start. If you have one of

those exercises, you have a plan . . . I don't believe anymore in external inspiration that suddenly hits you . . . Once there is a ritualistic repetition [of work] you cannot say 'wow, I don't feel like writing today'."

Ariel's comments suggest that she has internalized the rationale behind the exercises as it is expressed by the workshop's organizers, i.e., in terms of professionalizing the muse, as it were. Debra expressed the added value of routinization in a similar way: "[The exercises] force you to get into it [writing]. You will write 10 bad poems but one will come out fine . . . And we have to remember that throughout history poets wrote on demand. Throughout the Renaissance everyone had a patron, so the exercises are not so far-fetched . . . If you want to begin from somewhere and you're stuck, the exercises are like a starter, a kick, a slap in the face . . . It might be artificial and technical but it works." Dafna expressed the same points using the trope of the bubble that was so prominently featured in her previous commentary: "[The workshop] gave me the tools to put myself in the bubble when I feel like writing . . . The exercises are catalysts. Sometimes you are not inspired and you have to begin artificially and the exercises help you do that . . . But you mustn't take that to extreme because oftentimes a person needs a break from writing—to write you need a break from writing, too, you need days of silence . . . And THERE IS the romanticism. Sometimes you do suddenly become inspired."

Dafna's last words point at the fact that while many participants fully accommodated the idea of streamlining the muse, there were a number of them that resisted this idea.<sup>13</sup> Thus, referring to the poetic exercises that I analyzed above, Alon articulated this rejection in terms of the futility of the very attempt to engineer the muse: "The fact that they deliberately attempt to create in you the mechanization, ritualization, and patterning of creativity is a contradiction in terms because creativity is not patterned, it is not ritualized, and it is not mechanical." At times Romantic notions found emblematic expression, as in Shirley's comments that conceptualize "true" creativity via organic metaphors, in the context of which the poem is like an organ that grows out of the body: "The exercises are something external. It is about forcing you to write about something. It is something very external. I believe in texts that generate from within you, that are something immanent and that is tied—that are part of you, like a member or an organ, and that they [i.e., the texts] help bring outside of you." That the workshops did not result in a complete transformation in which all the participants adhered to the workshop's agenda attests to the powerful impact of the long standing and culturally conditioned opposition between the professional ethos and charismatic creativity. Yet, that most of the participants did reconfigure their notion of inspiration in accordance with the professional ethos suggests that the cultural implications and scope of the entire project cannot be underestimated.

Indeed, as a conclusion, I highlight such implications and scope by discussing another institutional form in which the muse is streamlined at the present historical moment, an institutional form that is probably more significant than academic art education in terms of its future impact and scope: managerial efforts to engineer employees' emotional and cognitive configurations in contemporary work environments. To be sure, managers have long

attempted to shape workers' emotional and cognitive dispositions to increase productivity. As sociologist of emotions Eva Illouz argues, until the 1920s, ideologies of management in the United States focused on the rationalization and standardization of the production process, in which "the individual would be eradicated and general rules and laws would be formalized and applied to the worker and to the work process" (Illouz 2008:67). However, as corporations began to rely on increasing layers of managers in the context of the turn to the service economy, management theories began to be informed by theories of industrial psychologists such as Elton Mayo. These perspectives focus on individuals and their emotions. In particular, they highlight emotional control, anger management, empathy, and strong interpersonal skills as key resources for managers in the new work environment.

I suggest that today, with the turn to the information economy, we are witnessing a new transformation in which professional cultivation and streamlining of creativity become the focus of managerial efforts and management theories. At stake are attempts to reconcile the Romantic self with the professional self, i.e., to streamline the muse and thus make it more reliable by reconfiguring agency, cognition, motivation, and emotion. If, as some scholars have argued, post-industrial modernity is characterized by "the rise of the creative class" (Florida 2003), i.e., a coterie of professionals defined by their creative production and manipulation of knowledge and information, then there is little surprise in the rapid proliferation of institutional forms that conflate the professional ethos and charismatic creativity.

Consider a recent news feature appearing in a number of newspapers and websites concerning Google's new headquarters in Victoria, London, and, in particular, a revamped engineering floor called L4. Enhanced with a number of colorful photos of this newly designed space, the feature reported that at stake is the design of "a highly creative" environment:

Ideas are obviously a key part of working for Google, and there's never a shortage of space to write them down—some of the walls in the corridors are made up of huge white boards . . . Playing is never a distraction either, because it's all free. There's also a gym, sound-proofed music room with drums and guitars and a games room with a pool table, video consoles and a giant Samsung TV . . . [Google's Vice President of Engineering adds]: "Contrary to accepted wisdom, fun offices don't hurt. Our experience is that a comfortable, open and fun environment encourages creativity and openness. Open spaces make chance interactions more likely, and chance interactions often lead to the greatest ideas." [Thornhill 2011]

I suggest that this vignette succinctly portrays various dimensions of managerial efforts to reconcile the two different culturally patterned models of the self with one another in contemporary work environments. First, note the attempt to harness creativity through the cultivation and channeling of immediation. The placement of white walls made up of huge boards on which employees can write ideas taps into the notion of inspiration that is unpredictable, mercurial, and fleeting, and which must be given expression at the moment it arises. This is one of the key features of Romantic inspiration, as I have discussed above. Second, the working space has been designed to be conducive to play: workers have numerous games at their disposal. Indeed, one photo shows a working desk cluttered with

different colorful toys and its caption states that “Programmers are encouraged to play” with them. The association of creativity with play and of the artist with the naïve child has been a cornerstone of Romantic thought, too, most famously given expression in Schiller’s “On the Aesthetic Education of Man” (Schiller 1982). Lastly, note the trope of contingency, i.e., the notion that creativity emerges from chance events over which the individual has little control—another staple of Romanticism. While we need not accept at face value the suggestion made by one photo caption that “L4 is a paradise for creative thinkers,” much of the value of Google’s brand has been based on its ability to convince investors, consumers, and employees that it is capable of orchestrating the powerful alchemy that joins professional work and creative agency together. At the basis of such alchemy is managers’ ability to streamline the muse, i.e., to professionalize chance, immediation, and creative naivety through the discursive practices that I suggest calling “professional Vision.”

At stake, then, is an increasing number of institutional sites at the present historical moment in which one model of agency, motivation, and intentionality—the Romantic one, is reconciled with another—the professional one. This reconciliation, though never seamless, suggests that we need to reconsider the long-held dichotomy between spiritual charisma and the professional ethos in the anthropological literature. I argue that the combination of anthropology, psychology, and the ethnography of professional work can yield significant and much needed insights into these transformations.

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## Notes

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1. For those who wonder whether Taylor’s diagnosis is still relevant despite the fact that it was written more than 20 years ago, consider the commentary written in the *Guardian* in 2006 apropos of an exhibition entitled, *Rebels and Martyrs: The Image of the Artist in the Nineteenth Century*, shown at the National Gallery in London. Commenting on James Esnor’s poster for an exhibition of his symbolic images in Paris in 1898, the author of this article writes: “The condition of the artist [. . .] it portrays is that of a hysterical prophet, free from all social restraint and keeping company with religious phantoms. If you told me it was a contemporary work not only would I believe you, I’d be excited to see an image that’s so true to our time” (Jones 2006).

2. This anthropological literature has also been productive of the dichotomy between creativity and imitative, rule-governed social behavior, which is parallel to the dichotomy between spiritual charisma and the professional ethos (Wilf 2012).

3. Throughout the article, I have capitalized “Vision” to designate this spiritual meaning.
4. At the time of my fieldwork, there were about 20 journals devoted to poetry written in Hebrew. This is an approximation because some of the journals are published irregularly or are the result of initiatives that do not last beyond a single issue. Around six or seven of the journals are circulated only in Tel-Aviv and its suburbs.
5. In 1993, the first creative writing program granting an M.A. degree opened at Ben-Gurion University. In 2003, a similar program at the undergraduate level opened at The Hebrew University. To do justice to this small number, there were only seven research universities in Israel at that time, two of which focused purely on the exact sciences. Nevertheless, the fact that these two programs were established so recently is indicative of the low degree of institutionalization of poetry in Israel.
6. A poet whose book was about to be published in one of the major publishing houses in Israel informed me that a poetry book would be considered a success if it sold 300 copies. Rarely are second editions issued. This does not pertain to a very limited number of well-established poets whose books are more successful.
7. See, for example, Sela (2011) that describes a recent demonstration organized in Tel-Aviv. As a result of growing protest, a number of Israeli parliament members have begun to formulate a law that would regulate public support for Israeli poetry.
8. Thus, one participant told me the following:

Look, Orpheus—I didn’t expect them to teach me how to write poetry. I expected that by virtue of [participating in its workshops] I would be able to publish. And this is what eventually happened. Really, when you think about it—most of today’s young poetry came out of Orpheus . . . They kind of control the field and it is impossible to publish—I sent poems time and again . . . before I participated in Orpheus’s workshop and no one took notice of me. After Orpheus people did take notice of me. So yes, it makes a big difference.

9. The movies *Pollock* (Harris 2000) and *Amadeus* (Forman 1984) are just two examples of cultural artifacts that are organized around the dichotomy between learned and innate knowledge and that situate true genius in the latter pole.
10. Mattan uses English for the first token of “obsession” and Hebrew for the second token of the same word.
11. A step in this direction is Thomas Malaby’s (2009) suggestion that forms of play and games are fast becoming an institutional logic in specific work settings.
12. See Rice (2010) for doctors’ professional practices of listening and Moeran (2007) for scent manufacturers’ professional practices of smelling.
13. In interviews I conducted with them months after the end of the workshops, all of the participants acknowledged that they continue to perform two of the exercises they learned at the workshop: automatic writing and the writing of dreams. This can be explained by the fact that these two exercises align better than the other exercises with the Romantic ethos in that they are means for the presumably unmediated expression of one’s inner self. More importantly, participants explained that they lacked the encouraging institutional framework of the workshop, a point that suggests that a crucial factor in the systematic streamlining of the muse is perhaps one of the key features of professional work: an actual routinized working environment that involves a community of practitioners who work side by side.

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