

## Agape: Love and Art in Community

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Abstract:

*In the New Testament the early Christians adopted the notion of absolute, creative and excessive love—agape—as a comprehensive fatherly love that God possesses for mankind, which as a consequence extends to a love of one’s fellow man. This paper is an investigation of agape and its relevance in contemporary art. Like a work of art, agape has an immanent creative component in that it generates value in its object. Agapic art is largely activated in the space of community. I unpack my thesis examining several contemporary artworks beginning with a public installation in 2010 commissioned after the murder of a student at the University of Virginia. I deploy my research through multiple lenses, including the thinking of Arendt, Freud, Heidegger, Lewis and Nancy. Art provides the Heideggerian clearing of light in a world that is witness to the darkness of terroristic threats, domestic violence and ethnic hatred. The list goes on, because now—as in all of history—the human instinct for aggression sees no end in sight. Works of art that express agape are gifts of optimism to the living.*

### Death and Art in a University Community

In May of 2010, lacrosse player Yeardeley Love was by all reports an energetic, gleeful 22-year-old senior lacrosse player at the University of Virginia. With bright blue-gray eyes and an engaging smile, Love was a few weeks from graduation when her roommate found her lifeless and broken body. An investigation revealed Love had been violently beaten and shaken in her apartment in Charlottesville by her ex-boyfriend and next-door neighbor, George Huguely. During the murder trial, scrutiny of the defendant revealed he not only had a record of trouble with police for public drunkenness, he also had a history of verbal threats and violence towards Love throughout their relationship. This element of their relationship had previously been obscured by their campus reputations as standout lacrosse athletes.

The university and local community were devastated by the crime, which garnered the attention of national media. For a few days the campus was paralyzed in shock before the university president formally addressed the students, and a candlelight vigil was held. The annual graduation festivities were distressed by Love’s tragic death; lingering feelings of confusion, sadness and helplessness about how something so unimaginable had happened in an academic community dedicated to the ideals of higher education and outstanding college sports.

Over the following summer, the new president of the University of Virginia Teresa Sullivan planned a “Day of Dialogue” for the fall semester. This was to be a day dedicated to community building and violence prevention at the university. She invited Associate Professor of Art and Architecture Sanda Iliescu to consider designing a public work of art for the campus-wide event. At first reluctant, Iliescu became convinced when the administration answered her question, “Why art?” with the explanation that art tends to be left out or taken for granted. Iliescu was also promised financial backing and complete control of the project.<sup>1</sup>

Iliescu conceived of a work of art that would symbolically counter the act of lethal aggression upon Love by bringing the campus community together. She designed a two-part public site-specific art installation titled *Lines of Darkness and Light* (2010). In the first part of the project, which took place in the early fall semester (September 17

- 27, 2010) Iliescu veiled the ten, white neoclassical columns of the South Porch of the Rotunda in black cloth. The choice of this location is significant: President Thomas Jefferson designed the Rotunda in 1822 as the “architectural and academic heart of his original community of scholars.”<sup>2</sup> The sight of the Rotunda in the middle of the campus is commanding, and recalls the great Pantheon in Rome on which it is modeled.

For Iliescu the veiling of the columns was a symbol of communal lamentation that brought the University populace together in a shared experience of loss. In a statement about the project Iliescu commented,

*We are fortunate at this university to have such a powerful symbol for our collective will: the Rotunda. What better way to put such sad events into focus than by taking the beautiful classical columns facing the lawn and temporarily veiling them? These columns are so bright, so suggestive of optimism, enlightenment, and natural grace. It is fitting that for a brief period we have the courage to transform them by lightly and delicately covering them. They will, for a brief period, turn heavy, melancholy, and introspective. When the veils are taken down, through contrast, the gleaming, luminous columns will move us more. My hope is that they will become brighter, and at the same time deeper. The memory of Aristotle's "melas," or essence of darkness, will transform and enrich the columns, as we continue to reflect and perhaps ask ourselves: "Remember when the bright columns were veiled?"<sup>3</sup>*

The second part of the project was a participatory event that took place on the final day of the column covering. Ten colorfully painted voting-box type structures made of recycled wood were placed on the Rotunda Lawn. They were designed to provide a contrast to the darkness of the veils. Next to each box was a stack of envelopes each containing a pencil and piece of blank paper. All members of the University community were invited to record two thoughts on the paper—either anonymously or signed—then return the paper to the envelope and insert it into a wooden box. One reflection was to be a regret of the previous year and the other a hope for the upcoming one. The latter illustrates the idea of the “collective will” Iliescu mentions. The compilation of these personal remarks is archived and accessible to members of the university as a future source of inspiration for creative works such as poetry, music composition and visual art.

The overall theme of Iliescu’s project was that of loss and regeneration. The temporary veiling of the columns provided the university community with the opportunity to contemplate the loss of members Love and Hugely<sup>4</sup> as well as a rupture of community security. By contrast, the envelope project generated ideas and thoughts that would become a permanent record and part of the ongoing history of the university.

### Community Care

This paper intends to make the relationship of love and contemporary art more cogent by locating *agapic* love in particular works of art and examining these works in terms of philosophical concepts. Love has been the subject of philosophical debate since Plato wrote the *Symposium*.<sup>5</sup> In the New Testament the early Christians adopted the notion of absolute, creative and excessive love—*agape*—as a comprehensive fatherly love that God possesses for mankind, which as a consequence extends to a love of one’s fellow man. Christian theology holds that God the Father offered his Son Jesus Christ to humankind as the consummate sacrificial act of love. Christ’s crucifixion on the cross was intended as the salvation of mankind, which had been in jeopardy since the Original Sin of Adam and Eve.

In Christ's sacrifice *agape* is established as a perfectly *giving* love, as opposed to the egocentric love of *eros*. Contemporary philosopher Soble writes,

*Eros is a love that responds to merit or value of its object, while agape creates value in its object as a result of loving it, and exists independently of, or regardless of any merit or lack of merit in its object.*<sup>6</sup>

Like a work of art, *agape* has an immanent creative component in that it generates value in its object. Art—as a creative endeavor—may offer gestures of overarching care for fellow humanity. For example, Iliescu's *Lines of Darkness and Light* creates a time and space in which the subject may consciously consider a quality of life with others, establishing a potential to improve that life. This has a cogent application in our contemporary world because works of art that open up opportunities for *agape* help individuals maintain a balance of caring and thoughtful communities.

The hallmarks of *agape* are twofold: charity and “unconditionality.”<sup>7</sup> In regards to the former, another denotation of *agape* was a Christian “love feast” or meal, to which the poor were invited as a rite of fellowship, in the manner of Christ's Last Supper. This inclination of charity, or *caritas*, is key to Christian *agape* in terms of modeling the altruistic life of Christ. In terms of the un-conditionality of *agape*, important early Christian doctrine is found in the New Testament that includes the First Epistle to the Corinthians by the apostle Paul,

*If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or clanging symbol. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain not nothing. 4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no records of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease: where there are tongues, they will be stilled: where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when perfection comes the imperfect disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. 12 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see fact to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. 13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*<sup>8</sup>

In the original Greek language Paul uses the term *agape* (ἀγάπη), which he characterizes as the kind of love Christians should have for everyone. While this passage imposes a nearly impossible list of qualities for loving each other, it underscores the essence of a love that stresses the benevolent act of loving, rather than the situation of being loved.<sup>9</sup>

Community is a wide-ranging term; the most encompassing Oxford English Dictionary definition is “A body of people or things viewed collectively,”<sup>10</sup> which could be as sizable as all the citizens of China or all the members of Facebook. Most definitions of community include the constituent of something *in common*, such as place, culture, ideology, identity or interest. Throughout our lives we may be engaged in a number of communities that are transient and overlapping, such as a school, neighborhood, or house of worship, etc. Yet the notion of community is not dependent on a subject's geographical location or obvious social cohesion. Considering community most broadly across time, community is *a posteriori*. Hannah Arendt writes, “Based on kinship, the

human community is thereby a society with and from the dead; in other words, this community is historical.”<sup>11</sup> Arendt asserts the commonality all beings share is to be born, and eventually to die.

The philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy agrees community is historical, but not that it belongs to time.<sup>12</sup> We are beings together *in time*, always becoming, in the “pure present,”<sup>13</sup> the now. Nancy writes, “It is a matter of the space of time...which gives to “us” the possibility of saying “we”—that is, the possibility of being *in common* and of presenting or representing ourselves as a community...”<sup>14</sup> For Nancy, community exists in the eternal present.

Nancy believes there is no way we live *in the absence of* community. He writes, “Community is the community of *others*, which does not mean that several individuals possess some common nature in spite of their differences, but rather that they partake only of their otherness.”<sup>15</sup> Here Nancy tells us that our existence as individual subjects, what he terms our “selfness”, is always already a mark of our otherness established in community. The self resides within otherness. In a reversal of the Cartesian standard, Nancy states, “I am ‘I’ (I exist) only if I can say ‘we’...We are *others* -each one for the other and each for him/herself -through birth and death, which expose our finitude.”<sup>16</sup>

He understands that we are born into a life with other beings for which we need to be present. In this way Nancy decenters subjectivity by placing responsibility in the communal. This responsibility is demonstrated in *Lines of Darkness and Light*, where the lamentation for Ms. Love is a cooperative act.

Nancy’s project is to expand Martin Heidegger’s ontological construction of being: we are not beings *alone*, but beings in relationship to others. This relationship is what Heidegger terms “being-in-the-world” or *Dasein*. This means everything we think and do—our entire existence—is shaped by an *a priori* interconnection to others. For Heidegger *Dasein* is the essential perspective of understanding what it is to be human. He also asserts that an important aspect of being-in-the-world is the fundamental notion of care or *Sorge*, or taking responsibility: for yourself, for others, and for things in the world.<sup>17</sup> Creating art is one way of demonstrating care. Iliescu’s *Lines of Darkness and Light* is a work of art concerned with care for the community. The project provided a transitional interval for the campus in the aftermath of a crisis, which allowed individuals to comprehend their relationship to others in a new way, and to their visual surroundings as well. This is particularly evident in the act of veiling and unveiling the extraordinary Rotunda columns: concealing their brightness with darkness, and then restoring their light. The sight of the columns was taken for granted. Heidegger claims that art is a way to jog us out of our everydayness.

That community takes place in time—that it is historical—is key to Heidegger’s philosophical thought because as beings we are finite and often move through life without a consciousness of Being. To be is to exist, but to Be is to also ask questions about life and to demonstrate care beyond the everydayness of existence. Making art provokes questions and contemplation about existence as a way of Being since it heightens consciousness. Heidegger calls this moment of truth “clearing” because it allows insight on behalf of the subject, in the way an opening in the forest allows the sunlight to shine undiminished by the shade of the trees.

We are born into language; the subject is determined by language because the *other* (the community of others) is where language and speaking arises.<sup>18</sup> Maurice Blanchot argues that this linguistic communication makes up the essence of our existence with others. While Heidegger wrote of the singular subject’s finitude, Blanchot argues that it is someone else’s death that founds community. He writes, “There could not be a community without the

sharing of that first and last event which in everyone ceases to be able to be just that (birth, death).”<sup>19</sup> Blanchot continues,

*If the community is revealed by the death of the other person, it is because death is itself the true community of mortal beings: their impossible communion. The community therefore occupies the following singular space: it takes upon itself the impossibility of its own immanence, the impossibility of a communitarian being as subject. In a way the community takes upon itself and inscribes in itself the impossibility of the community. . . . A community is the presentation to its members of their mortal truth...(one may say as well that there can be no community of immortal beings. . .). It is the presentation of finitude and of excess without possibility.*<sup>20</sup>

What I take Blanchot to mean here is that within our interdependence on others, we realize that at the same time we are in community, it is never secure: someone will die. Even if we die alone, our death is never a solitary event: someone will bury us.

The vulnerability of community can be seen in Iliescu’s *Lines of Darkness and Light* in the ritual of communal lamentation. And these intentions are remarkable in another contemporary artist who also works within public space: Krzysztof Wodiczko. Like Iliescu, he employs architecture as a medium, but he sees structures as metaphors for the body or other objects.<sup>21</sup> His *Hiroshima Projection* (1999) was a public video projection onto the A-Bomb Dome in Hiroshima, Japan.<sup>22</sup> This is the site of the first atomic bomb detonation in 1945 by the United States during World War II. It was the only structure that remained standing after the explosion, which sits on the banks of the Aioi River and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Seventy thousand people were instantly annihilated in the attack and 70,000 more died from burns and other injuries.

Wodiczko interviewed the elderly survivors of the Hiroshima bombing, recording their eyewitness accounts of the explosion. He also videotaped the gestures of their hands while they told their stories of horror, pain and loss. Arendt and Blanchot’s notion of death as testimony to community is evident in *Hiroshima Projection* because he brings together the intergenerational community of Hiroshima’s dead and living. Wodiczko writes,

*I started working on my Hiroshima projection with the assumption that we were going to ‘reactualize’ the A-Bomb Dome monument (one of the few structures that survived the bombing- just underneath the hyper-center of the explosion) and reanimate it with the voices and gestures of present-day Hiroshima inhabitants from various generations...So all those generations somehow connect through this projection, not necessarily in agreement in terms of the way the bombing is important and the way the meaning of that bombing connects with their present experiences. The fallout of the bombing is physical and cultural, psychological.*<sup>23</sup>

Wodiczko’s plan to “reactualize” and “reanimate” took place on a monumental video projection onto the façade of the A-Bomb memorial and the Aioi River. The projection, which includes the audio of his interviews, features the gestures of the hands of the interviewees in their often-tearful narration. The largely unconscious hand gestures of the speakers also enacted a symbolic ceremonial pouring of tea into the river. Wodiczko states,

*A memorial should be a vehicle through which the past and future converge. The river became a graveyard for both people and buildings in Hiroshima. As both a tragic witness but also as a hope, because it is moving there is new water coming.*<sup>24</sup>

Here again is the theme of loss and regeneration. Wodcizko's intervention literally and figuratively broke the terrible fifty-four year old silence of the A-Bomb Dome. Much like Iliescu's Lines of Darkness and Light, Hiroshima Projection creates a Heideggerian clearing of understanding through creative care of community.

### The Impossibility of Loving Thy Neighbor

C. S. Lewis's book *Four Loves* explores the Christian adaptation of the original Greek types of love. In the chapter titled "Charity" he discusses *agape*, what he considers the greatest of the four loves. He writes, "For most of us the true rivalry lies between the self and the human other, not yet between the human Other and God."<sup>25</sup> [Italics mine for emphasis.] This conflict between subjects in community is an important aspect of understanding *agape*, because it is a type of love embracing an idealistic attitude toward everyone, including people that we might think of as unlovable: adversaries, terrorists, drunks, rapists, and the occasional in-law.

In its boundless nature *agape* is paradoxically an unattainable type of love because to love *everyone* is an unachievable task. Freud addresses this demand in his late essay *Civilization and Its Discontents*. In response to the commandment 'Love thy neighbor as thyself,' he writes,

*The element of truth behind all this, which people are so ready to disavow, is that men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result their neighbor is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on them, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and kill him.*<sup>26</sup>

Freud asserts that the love commandment is antithetical to society because the human tendency for aggression will always battle with reason.

Doris Salcedo is a contemporary sculptor whose oeuvre addresses the universal condition of the subject's inhumanity to others. A native of Columbia, she is based in the capital city of Bogotá, and has been a witness to the longstanding violence of the drug wars in her country. Her work tends to be based on the experiences of victims in highly symbolic representations. Salcedo's *Shibboleth* (2007) is a site-specific installation commissioned for the monumental space of the Tate Modern's Turbine Hall in London. In situ for six months between 2007-08, it consisted of a cement floor with fissures that meandered the length of the space.

The conception of the work was inspired by seeing visitors at the Tate walk around in awe of the grandeur they projected onto the immense loftiness of this industrial space, a former power plant.<sup>27</sup> Salcedo asserts that such an industrial space did not deserve this sense of wonder; it could not compare to the architectural achievements of Hagia Sophia or the Egyptian pyramids. She intended to create another perspective with *Shibboleth*, referencing an ancient Hebrew term that acted as a test of pronunciation used to identify foreigners. For the duration of Salcedo's installation the Turbine Hall became an unsafe place to walk around without caution; one needed to look down instead of gazing into the lofty heights of the structure. Salcedo literally placed all visitors to the Tate Modern in physical jeopardy: a similar danger experienced by non-whites and immigrants as they cross borders into white Euro-centric culture. The enormous gaps in the Tate floor forced visitors to confront the boundaries of an abyss, to contemplate the crack in civilization between people that is racial hatred. She states,

*I wanted to inscribe in this modernist, rationalist building an image that was somehow chaotic, that marked a negative space, because I believe there is a bottomless gap that divides humanity from inhumanity, or whites from nonwhites. I wanted to address that gap, which I thought was mainly perceived in the history of modernity.<sup>28</sup>*

Salcedo's Shibboleth speaks to the loathing Freud describes in *Civilization and Its Discontents* as a default human state of being. Although Freud is convinced of humanity's innate aggression, he does admit, "It is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness."<sup>29</sup> For Freud the occasional expression of agape is a trade-off for our need to feel security and happiness.

Freud sees religion as an illusion, yet for many individuals their religious faith is a source of happiness. According to Freud, the seeking of pleasure and joy along with the absence of pain is at the heart of the human endeavor. He believes the pain of our relationships with others is the cause of most of our misery. At the same time he insists it is better to join forces in the human community rather than the option of isolating the self, "Then one is working with all for the good of all."<sup>30</sup> He seems to have art in mind when he notes that the pleasure we experience in an imaginative work frees our mind from anxieties.<sup>31</sup>

Regarding the commandment of "Love thy neighbor," Nancy deconstructs Christianity in terms of the impossibility of this law.<sup>32</sup> He asks, "... Would not precisely the impossibility of this love be the very thing that produces the very concept, content and reality of this love?"<sup>33</sup> Since Christianity asks us to have faith that the impossible is possible, then so go its commandments. Nancy also states, "The fact that it is impossible is *why it is the answer*."<sup>34</sup> Yet Arendt's understanding of loving thy neighbor belies a motive of something that is possible: love for love's sake. She writes, "Love proves its strength precisely in considering even the enemy and even the sinner as mere occasions for love. It is not really the neighbor who is loved in this love of neighbor—it is love itself."<sup>35</sup>

### Creative *Caritas*

Martin Luther King Jr. staked a claim for *agape* in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. In an essay titled "The Power of Non-violence" he argues for the tactic of non-violent resistance in the civil rights movement based on *agape*,

*The Greek language uses three words for love.<sup>36</sup> It talks about eros. Eros is a sort of aesthetic love. It has come to us to be a sort of romantic love and it stands with all of its beauty. But when we speak of loving those who oppose us we're not talking about eros. The Greek language talks about philia and this is a sort of reciprocal love between personal friends. This is a vital, valuable love. But when we talk of loving those who oppose you and those who seek to defeat you we are not talking about eros or philia. The Greek language comes out with another word and it is agape. Agape is understanding, creative, redemptive good will for all men. Biblical theologians would say it is the love of God working in the minds of men. It is an overflowing love which seeks nothing in return. And when you come to love on this level you begin to love men not because they are likeable, not because they do things that attract us, but because God loves them and here we love the person who does the evil deed while hating the deed that person does. It is the type of love that stands at the center of the movement that we are trying to carry on in the Southland—agape.<sup>37</sup>*

King remains grounded in a theological reasoning, asserting the basic Christian belief of God's merciful love that humans should emulate. Perhaps it is impossible to completely secularize the concept of agape with its roots in god-centered beliefs. Yet by doing this, we extend the essence of agape into the global community of diverse beliefs; agape by nature is a wholly inclusive concept.

The idea of non-violence as a creative approach to the struggle for civil rights is compelling. Creativity suggests originality, resourcefulness, inventiveness and imagination. Creativity begins with questions, not answers. It is open-ended and seeks the new. Anders Nygren, a Swedish Lutheran theologian also describes agape as a "creative" type of love.<sup>38</sup> It is spontaneous and unmotivated, rules or laws do not mandate it. Nygren writes, "Agape does not recognize value, but creates it."<sup>39</sup> Can it not be said that works of art do the same? While art may arise from any source of inspiration, there are no rules, and it is not fixed in any established ethical codes.

In the 1990s relational aesthetics emerged as a new field of avant-garde artistic praxis designed to create "hands-on utopias"<sup>40</sup> via the construction of intersubjective opportunities. A renowned example is the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija, who in 1992 created a work called *Untitled (Free)* within a gallery space in New York City.<sup>41</sup> There were no familiar objects of art such as paintings or sculptures to view. Rather he set up the space with an improvised kitchen alongside tables and chairs, cooking and serving rice and curry prepared on the spot to gallery visitors who sat around and talked to each other or at least enjoyed a complimentary meal. Tiravanija brought something innovative to the practice of art in that the "art" consisted of the interaction and participation of individuals in the gallery, the food acting as a catalyst for sensual experience and open dialogue. Bourriaud states, "A work of art has a quality that sets it apart from other things produced by human activities. This quality is its (relative) social transparency."<sup>42</sup>

Tiravanija's subtitle of *Free* is important. Traditionally art is a commodity, yet he provides the food at no cost to the participant, thus upholding the notion of art as pure lived experience. It is possible to think of this art—Tiravanija's micro-utopia—as an act of gift and goodwill, an expression of *agape* within a "concrete space."<sup>43</sup> Tiravanija's project, a version of a soup kitchen, is not intended for the homeless and poor. Visitors to the gallery were members of the art world: gallery-goers, artists, critics, art students, etc. Yet the income or social status of recipients to whom gifts are offered does not diminish the act giving. The bottom line is that a charitable soup kitchen or Tiravanija's aestheticized one both uphold ideas of kindness and connection within community. And while *Untitled (Free)* is not a response to an event like *Lines of Darkness and Light* and *Hiroshima Project*, all of these works of art are an extraordinary gesture to others within ordinary life, which allows for moments of thoughtful community.

For a little more than two years (2007 – 09) the Brooklyn-based Brazilian-born artist Vik Muniz<sup>44</sup> and film director Lucy Walker worked on a two-part project in the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, located in the world's largest garbage dump called Jardim Gramacho.<sup>45</sup> Using video and photographs, they documented men and women of all ages who make their living recovering recyclable materials amongst the landfill's mountainous piles of refuse. The workers there confront unimaginable quantities of suburban and slum household trash, as well as rotting corpses, exposure to leprosy, and all manner of hazardous materials. Literally risking life and limb in every aspect of their daily scavenging, and barely paid for their efforts, these impoverished laborers are called *catadores*. Muniz and Walker recorded the landfill's desperately dangerous working conditions in addition to the living situations of the *catadores* or scavengers. In spite of long hours the *catadores* exist in abject poverty in one of Rio de Janeiro's renowned open-sewer *favelas*, or shantytowns.

Muniz's photographic project *Pictures of Garbage* evolved out of the making of the film *Waste Land* (2010) that focuses on the heartfelt stories of a number of individual *catadores* in Jardim Gramacho. After getting to know the workers through the filming, Muniz invited them into a unique artistic collaboration.<sup>46</sup> In addition to making conventional photographic portraits of subjects posing for the camera, Muniz worked alongside the *catadores* to create monumentally scaled classical self-portraits (up to 72 feet high) concocted out of the very recyclables they collected. The composition of the images are based on portraits from the canon of European art history, such as David's *Death of Marat* and Picasso's *Woman Ironing*. When completed the assemblages were photographed, and printed. The materials used were then recycled.

While the idea of a "garbage portrait" may sound at the least disagreeable, *Waste Land* along with *Pictures of Garbage* is a revelation of dignity, hope and good will. The film captures the subjects participating enthusiastically in the making of their portraits. They demonstrate feelings of honor and pride to be a part of designing a personalized work of art that others outside of their world will see. The creative task of carefully assembling the trash into their own image raises them out of their often-grim realities. Individual reactions to the art-making process captured in the film reflect the sensibility of belonging to something greater than themselves.

*Waste Land* and the *Pictures of Garbage* series celebrate a community of working individuals in a part of the world few people know—or care to know. The projects evoke compassion from the viewer. It seems nearly impossible not to feel empathy and concern for the souls that populate Jardim Gramacho because the cameras capture them in a completely candid state. A catador's wit, intelligence and personality unfold as the camera follows them around for extended periods of time, recording despair alongside dreams. Some workers die and some thrive, yet all are changed by the experience of art.

During the project Muniz raised money by selling one of the portraits from the *Pictures of Garbage* at auction in London for over \$64,000. He turned over all of the profit to the Garbage Pickers Association of Jardim Gramacho.<sup>47</sup> This association, which established the recycling center, provides job contracts, a medical clinic, a day care center and other community resources.<sup>48</sup> When the project concluded Muniz held gallery exhibits internationally in which the sales of over \$300,000 were given to the subjects.

While the abundant monetary reimbursement for *Pictures of Garbage* was an undeniable economic boost to the *catadores* it is also—and perhaps more importantly—the artistic collaboration that stands as an example of *agape* as art and love in community. This collaboration resulted in the subjects celebrating their lives and their community in a number of ways. A *New York Times* review of *Waste Land* contains this quote from a *catador* who attended the Museu de Arte in Rio for the first time in order to see *Pictures of Garbage*: "Sometimes we see ourselves as so small but people out there see us as so big, so beautiful." <sup>49</sup> *Pictures of Garbage* gives faces to the faceless. Like *agape* it creates value out of what seems (or feels) worthless. This value possesses meaning for what it is to Be.

## Conclusion

Agapic art is largely activated in public space, the space of community. The members of the University of Virginia campus who participated in *Lines of Darkness and Light*, the New York visitors to *Untitled (Free)*, the witnesses to *Hiroshima Projection* or the viewers of Muniz/Walker's *Waste Land* remain for the most part anonymous individuals who may (or may not) be altered by viewing or participating in the projects. This does not negate the idea that agapic works of art are acts of care. This care is evident in gifts of opportunity, which contain the potential to uphold ever-present community taken for granted in our everydayness. In this way agapic art

creates value. Arendt asserts that, "...love is derivative—derived from hope."<sup>50</sup> Art provides the Heideggerian clearing of light in a world that is witness to the ongoing darkness of A-bomb threats, domestic violence, and racial hatred, not to mention recent mass killings in movie theaters or elementary schools. The list goes on because now, as in all of history, the human instinct for aggression sees no end in sight. It is for this reason that we need agapic art to provide the glimpses of a community joined in hope, momentarily abating our vulnerability to unhappiness and death.

Agapic art celebrates the light needed to live. Iliescu remarks upon this optimism in her description of the symbolic uncovering of the Rotunda's columns in *Lines of Darkness and Light*.<sup>51</sup> Wodiczko points out the hope contained in the coming of new water of the river at the A-Bomb Dome. A gallery goer is cheered by a complimentary bowl of curry. A *catador* sees the hope of recognition through her portrait. Works of art that express *agape* are gifts of optimism to the living.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Personal Interview with Sanda Iliescu on July 9, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.virginia.edu/rotunda/rotundaHistory.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.virginia.edu/dayofdialogue/dayofdialogue/artproject.html>

<sup>4</sup> The community also suffered the loss of this young man who had been a star athlete and popular student. He not only took Love's life but also managed to destroy his own future as a free individual and contributor to society. Huguey's trial concluded with a conviction of second-degree murder and grand larceny. The jury recommended 26 years in prison; he was sentenced to 23 years, and recently (2013) his lawyers have filed an appeal claiming he did not receive a fair trial.

<sup>5</sup> In the *Symposium* (385 – 380 B.C.E.) Plato addresses notions of love using the voice of his teacher Socrates. The dialogue concerns a drinking party in which interlocutors take turns speaking about love, its genesis, justification and various forms of expression. The *Symposium* explains love as a ladder: the bottom of the rungs as lust or sexual attraction (*eros*) and the top is something that transcends the body to help the lover access divinity.

<sup>6</sup> Alan Soble, "Introduction" in *Eros, Agape and Philia: Readings in the Philosophy of Love* (St Paul: Paragon House, 1989), xxiii.

<sup>7</sup> David L. Norton and Mary F. Kille, *Philosophies of Love* (Totowa, NJ: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1988), 153.

<sup>8</sup> St. Paul, *Holy Bible: New International Version* (Meadow, UK: International Bible Society, 1984), 811.

<sup>9</sup> David L. Norton and Mary F. Kille, *Philosophies of Love* (Totowa, NJ: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1988), 156.

<sup>10</sup> Oxford English Dictionary. <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/37337?redirectedFrom=COMMUNITY#eid> (accessed June 6, 2012)

<sup>11</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 103.

<sup>12</sup> Jean Luc Nancy, *The Birth to Presence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 143.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>15</sup> Jean Luc Nancy, *The Birth to Presence* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993) 155.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>17</sup> Barbara Bolt, *Heidegger Reframed* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2011) 17.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XI* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978) 198.

<sup>19</sup> Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community* (Barrytown, NY: Station Hill Press, 1988) 9.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>21</sup> Phil Freshman, editor, *Public Address: Krzysztof Wodiczko* (Minneapolis, MN: Walker Art Center, 1992), 101.

<sup>22</sup> Wodiczko was the recipient of the Hiroshima Art Prize with the condition of displaying a retrospective. He proposed the *Hiroshima Projection* as a large-scale public art project to take place the day after the anniversary of the bombing.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.art21.org/videos/segment-krzysztof-wodiczko-in-power> (accessed August 4, 2012)

<sup>24</sup> Transcribed from video interview. <http://www.art21.org/videos/segment-krzysztof-wodiczko-in-power> (accessed August 4, 2012)

<sup>25</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Four Loves* (New York: Harcourt, Inc.: 1991), 118.

<sup>26</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Civilization and Its Discontents" in *The Freud Reader* (New York, NY: Norton & Norton Publishing, 1989), 749.

<sup>27</sup> The Tate Modern occupies the site of the former Bankside Power Station, which was in operation between 1947-1981. After its conversion in 2000, it measures almost 325 feet in height.

- <sup>28</sup> This quote is transcribed from a video interview with Salcedo on the *art21* Website. <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/doris-salcedo>
- <sup>29</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Civilization and Its Discontents" in *The Freud Reader* (New York, NY: Norton & Norton Publishing, 1989), 751.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 730.
- <sup>31</sup> Sigmund Freud, "Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of His Childhood" in *The Freud Reader* (New York, NY: Norton & Norton Publishing, 1989), 443.
- <sup>32</sup> European Graduate School Faculty Lecture. Round Table Discussion with Jean-Luc Nancy, Avital Ronell and Wolfgang Schirmacher. European Graduate School. <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jean-luc-nancy/articles/love-and-community/> (accessed June 6- June 9, 2012).
- <sup>33</sup> European Graduate School Faculty Lecture. Round Table Discussion with Jean-Luc Nancy, Avital Ronell and Wolfgang Schirmacher. European Graduate School. <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jean-luc-nancy/articles/love-and-community/> (accessed June 6 - June 9, 2012).
- <sup>34</sup> European Graduate School Faculty Lecture. Round Table Discussion with Jean-Luc Nancy, Avital Ronell and Wolfgang Schirmacher. European Graduate School. <http://www.egs.edu/faculty/jean-luc-nancy/articles/love-and-community/> (accessed June 10, 2012).
- <sup>35</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 97.
- <sup>36</sup> While Dr. King makes a claim for three words in Greek love, there are actually four. He does not mention *storge*, a type of familial love that exists between parents and their children. A further meaning of *storge* is a strong affection and commitment held between friends.
- <sup>37</sup> <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1131>
- <sup>38</sup> David L. Norton and Mary F. Kille, *Philosophies of Love* (Totowa, NJ: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 1988), 159.
- <sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.
- <sup>40</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Les presses du réel: 1998), 9.
- <sup>41</sup> Recently the Museum of Modern Art in New York City recreated Tiravanija's *Untitled (Free)* from November 17, 2011 – February 8, 2012 serving rice and curry from noon to 3 PM daily.
- <sup>42</sup> Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Les presses du réel: 1998), 41.
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.
- <sup>44</sup> Muniz's photographic oeuvre typically includes the creative use of materials such as dust, sugar, and airplane exhaust, sometimes in mimesis of master works from art history.
- <sup>45</sup> Ironically the term *jardim* is Portuguese for garden.
- <sup>46</sup> <http://www.wastelandmovie.com/> (accessed August 7, 2012)
- <sup>47</sup> <http://www.wastelandmovie.com/pdf/waste-land-press-notes.pdf> (accessed August 7, 2012)
- <sup>48</sup> Jardim Gramacho closed in 2012.
- <sup>49</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/24/arts/design/24muniz.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed August 7, 2012)
- <sup>50</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Love and Saint Augustine* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 42.
- <sup>51</sup> <http://www.virginia.edu/dayofdialogue/dayofdialogue/artproject.html> (Accessed August 8, 2012)

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