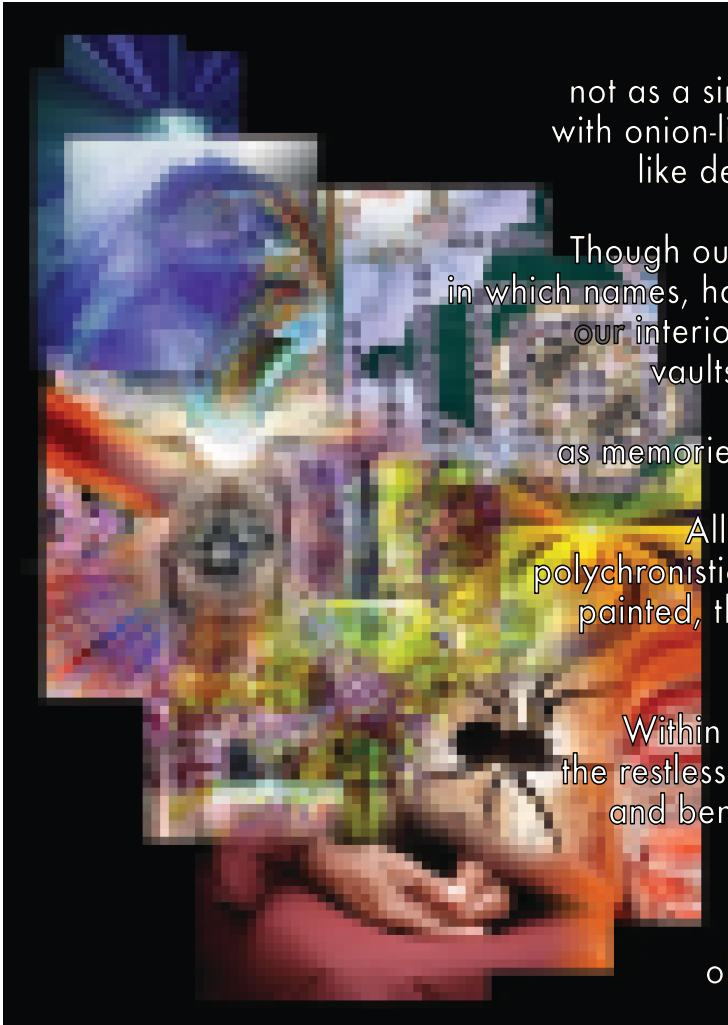


LAYERS OF LIFE:

An Exploration of Samaskaric Sheaths



Many spirits dwell in each soul,
not as a single flame, but a vast symphony,
with onion-like layers, concentric and bright,
like deep tree rings, hidden from sight.

Though our surface displays familiar maps,
in which names, habits, and histories are wrapped,
our interiors contain vast, verdant shores—
vaults of lost whispers, secrets galore,
echoing uncharted designs,
as memories manifest through tangled lines.

All living things are time machines:
polychronistic pieces of art encased in genes
painted, then scraped, then painted anew,
redefining the meaning of "true."

Within the hard shells of adults we find,
the restless spirits of youths are intertwined,
and beneath that stirs more ancient still:
a primordial inheritance,
older than language,
older than memory,
older than the self we claim to be.

Ron: *(making a sudden, abrasive burp after listening to the poem)* This kind of transcendental drivel has been expressed a thousand times already. Why keep raking through the same cold ashes?

Lex: *(lingering over a slow sip of herbal tea)* Some truths are like prayer bells: they do not exist to be heard once, but to be struck repeatedly so their resonance enters our awareness.

Ron: *(with practiced sarcasm)* People have to discover "truth" on their own. What we call "truth" is merely a mental construct. Without the right scaffolding, understanding remains on flimsy ground. That is why most preachers are ineffectual. In time, perhaps truth will reveal itself. Yet is that notion "we have the truth" itself a notion?

Linda: *(shrugging lightly, eyes still on the image)* Who knows? Time strips away all constructs. Maybe that is the only truth? Eventually, everything eventually disappears . . .

Lis: *(with an ironic laugh)* That makes this entire conversation inconsequential.

- T Newfields

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