



Staying Alive: A Survival Manual for the Liberal Arts

L.O. Aranye Fradenburg

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Staying Alive: A Survival Manual for the Liberal Arts fiercely defends the liberal arts in and from an age of neoliberal capital and techno-corporatization run amok, arguing that the public university's purpose is not vocational training, but rather the cultivation of what Fradenburg calls "artfulness," including the art of making knowledge. In addition to sustained critical and creative thinking, the humanities develop the mind's capacities for real-time improvisational communication and interpretation, without which we can neither thrive nor survive. Humanist pedagogy and research use play, experimentation and intersubjective exchange to foster forms of artfulness critical to the future of our species. From perception to reality-testing to concept-formation and logic, the arts and humanities teach us to see, hear and respond more keenly, and to imagine, or "model," new futures and possibilities. Innovation of all kinds, technological or artistic, depends on the enhancement of the skills proper to staying alive. Bringing together psychoanalysis, neuroscience, animal behavioral research, biology & evolutionary theory, and premodern literature (from Virgil to Chaucer to Shakespeare), Fradenburg offers a bracing polemic against the technocrats of higher education and a vibrant new vision for the humanities as both living art and new life science. Contrary to recent polemics that simply urge the humanities to become more scientific or technology-focused, to demonstrate their utility or even trophy their uselessness, Staying Alive does something remarkably different: it argues for the humanism of a new scientific paradigm based on complexity theory and holistic and ecological approaches to knowledge-making. It urges us to take the further step of realizing not only that we can promote and enhance neuroplastic connectivity and social-emotional cognition, but also that the humanities have always already been doing so. "Nature always exceeds itself in its expressivity" — which is to say that living is itself an art, and artfulness is necessary for living: for adaptation and innovation, for forging rich and varied relationships with other minds, bodies and things, and thus, for thriving — whether in the boardroom or the art gallery, the biology lab or the recording studio, the alley or the playground, the book or the dream. Staying Alive contains companion essays by Donna Beth Ellard (Rice University), Ruth Evans (Saint Louis University), Eileen A. Joy (BABEL Working Group), Julie Orlemanski (University of Chicago), Daniel C. Remein (New York University), and Michael D. Snediker (University of Houston). TABLE OF CONTENTS Eileen A. Joy: Prelude: Hands Off Our Jouissance: The Collaborative Risk of a Shared Disorganization // Chapter 1: Driving Education: A Crash Course // Fugue 1: Julie Orlemanski: An Army of Lovers // Chapter 2: Living the Liberal Arts: An Argument for Embodied Learning Communities // Fugue 2: Daniel C. Remein: Human-Tongued Basilisks // Chapter 3: Breathing with Lacan's Seminar X: Expression and Emergence // Fugue 3: Ruth Evans: The Object Breath // Chapter 4: Life's Reach: Territory, Display, Ekphrasis // Fugue 4: Donna Beth Ellard: Ekphrastic Beowulf: Defying Death and Staying Alive in the Academy // Coda: Michael D. Snediker: Fuzzy Thinking

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Shelly Gomes:

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