On January 22, 2022, Thich Nhat Hanh died at Tu Hieu Temple in Hue, Vietnam, and I wrote in my journal:

Dear Thich Nhat Hanh passed from this Earth today. I grew up a little more. One day I will also give up this Earthly body, and what will be my continuation? Can my awakening strengthen so that my pivot can be immediate?

Like many, I struggled upon hearing the news of the Zen master’s passing. I felt embarrassed by and alone in my grief. I had regrets about finding the path only after Thay (the honorific used by his students) had his stroke in 2014 and never getting the opportunity to meet him in person. I also had doubts arise about the practice path I was on along with overwhelming gratitude at my good fortune that I had found the gift of the dharma at all. A jumble of emotions vied for internal space in those first few days, and I did my best to practice with them, honoring each feeling and listening to what it had to tell me while I awaited its readiness for transformation.

In the following weeks and months, I realized that my grief and gratitude—two sides of the same coin, as grief shows us what we truly care about—were in good company. Not only were so many monastics, lay practitioners, and lay friends feeling similarly, but we were all enacting our practice to take care of ourselves and each other. We get insight into this extraordinary grieving process in the opening essay from the Thich Nhat Hanh Foundation’s Communication Director, Stephen Pradarelli, and four Plum Village monastics, who reflect openly about Thay’s passing.

Just as lotus flowers blossom from muddy water, the idea for this special issue of The Arrow Journal bloomed, in part, out of my internal mud(dle) of those first few weeks of grief and gratitude. Given that Thay’s teachings are reflective of The Arrow’s mission to explore the applica-


2 In Episode #4 (“Zen and the Art of Saving the Planet”) of the podcast The Way Out Is In, Sister True Dedication says, “If the awakening is strong enough, the pivot can be immediate,” meaning that with a strong practice, we have an opportunity to make the personal and collective shifts needed to realize a healthy and inclusive planet. I have held this statement close as a personal practice question ever since. The full conversation can be found here: https://plumvillage.org/podcast/zen-and-the-art-of-saving-the-planet/.
tion of contemplative practice to social activism, my editorial colleagues supported the idea and subsequent call for papers. In fact, *The Arrow*’s recognition of the inseparability of contemplative practice with social engagement is the very foundation of Engaged Buddhism, a topic explored by Kaira Jewel Lingo’s essay, “In the Symphony in the Storm.” “Exploring the development of Thay’s relationship to Engaged Buddhism,” she writes, “is an invitation to all of us to innovate and engage responsively to the particularities of our times.” In this way, our aspiration to practice is an evolutionary and iterative process. Each time we engage, we have the opportunity to make the shifts, or pivots, necessary to attend to and address the ills of our time, including systemic racism and violence, the climate emergency, and the global rise of authoritarianism.

For authors Jesse Curran, Ann Fisher-Wirth, and Natascha Bruckner, this iterative process shows up, in part, in how their practice “off the cushion” has included incorporating Thay’s teachings of Engaged Buddhism in the university classroom, taking high school students on a field trip to Magnolia Grove Monastery, and exploring the benefits and limitations of using mindfulness and meditation practices in prisons. Curran writes in her essay, “The Poetics of Care”:

> Studying Thich Nhat Hanh’s writing over the years has revealed to me a wellspring of energizing perspectives for the development of my own identity as an activist, an educator, and a creative human being… [His] writings have helped me live—and teach—both ethics and poetry.

Our self-development and healing is not disconnected from our engagement with the world. Sr. Dang Nghiem, in our conversation on cultivating fearlessness, shared that “when we are able to look at our own suffering, we are also able to look at the suffering of the world.” The capacity to witness the totality of suffering without discrimination becomes the basis for working skillfully with others.

Engaged practice may not always take us outside our homes. Elena Brower highlights her meditation practice during the COVID-19 pandemic and how Upaya Zen Center’s transition to online offerings allowed her unexpectedly to turn her attention inward as well as to her interactions with her partner and son. In addition to Upaya, Plum Village monasteries worldwide were able to adapt quickly and seamlessly during the global pandemic and “bring the monasteries home” to make the Dharma significantly more accessible.

Thay often said that one Buddha was not enough. And neither was one Thay. In the spirit of this teaching, Sister Peace shares with us an intimate portrait of Sister Chan Khong, the first fully-ordained monastic disciple of Thich Nhat Hanh and the director of his humanitarian projects since the 1960s. According to Sister Peace, Sister Chan Khong is “Thay’s greatest continuation,” and in Thay’s own words, Sister Chan Khong’s “whole life is a Dharma talk.” We honor her in this issue to recognize that without Sr. Chan Khong, the work of Thich Nhat Hanh and the development of Plum Village as a beloved community devoted to “creating a healthy, nourishing environment where people can learn the art of living in harmony with one another and with the Earth” would not have been possible.³

When I first saw the commissioned artwork from artist Rae Minji Lee for this issue, I was instantly reminded of an anecdote I love about Thay. When a contemporary of his visited Plum Village and saw him out in the garden one afternoon, she exclaimed, “You should be inside writing poetry!” He turned, smiled, and replied, “This is how I write my poetry.” Rae’s illustrations so beautifully emphasize Thay’s gentle, joyful, and

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⁴ Plum Village, About, https://plumvillage.org/about/plum-village/.
poetic nature. The collage by Karen Hilsberg and poetry by Jason Zevenbergen, Robert Spencer, and Dolores Walsh also continue the spirit of creativity and beauty that are fundamental in the Plum Village tradition.

Finally, in the closing conversation between Brother Phap Huu and Jo Confino, adapted from the Plum Village Podcast Series *The Way Out Is In* episode “Honoring the Wisdom and Guidance of Thich Nhat Hanh,” we get a deeper understanding from Thay’s personal attendant about his and the community’s experiences of grieving and adapting in the year since Thay’s death. For the one-year memorial of Thay’s passing, Brother Phap Huu wrote,

> Breathing in, we light up the awareness that you are still present for us in each mindful breath. Breathing out, we breathe peacefully with you, dear Thay, most respected and beloved teacher.

Thay himself had said in anticipation of his eventual passing that if he is to be found anywhere, he “may be found in [our] way of breathing and walking.” First and foremost, this is how we continue Thay. Each step and breath taken in full awareness is the ground for the realization of all our self- and world-healing aspirations. Please feel encouraged to take a mindful breath (maybe three!) as you explore the contents of this issue, authored by monastics, lay dharma teachers, and friends, reflective of the diverse and deeply practiced Plum Village community.

With deep bows of love and gratitude to all my teachers and dharma siblings and to each of you dear readers,

Ashley Wilson
Associate Editor
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Vision
At The Arrow Journal, we envision an awake society in which humans create political, economic, and cultural practices and institutions that support all people in discovering their innate worth, wisdom, and compassion; in living meaningful and fulfilling lives; in celebrating and respecting human diversity; and in promoting the health, resilience, and flourishing of the more-than-human world.

Mission
The Arrow Journal fosters thoughtful, nuanced, and scholarly investigation of the applications of contemplative wisdom traditions to addressing global challenges. We aim to be a tool of compassionate disruption of habitual cultural, political, and economic norms that wreak havoc on people and planet. In this way, we encourage contemplative practitioners to sharpen their understanding of how dharma calls on them to show up for suffering and injustice in the world. Simultaneously, we invite policymakers, scholars, and activists to consider alternative ways of knowing that fall outside the western mainstream as necessary and useful perspectives for meaningfully confronting the challenges we face as a global community.

What’s in a name?
In many cultures, the arrow is a traditional image of bravery and precision. Within the speed and chaos of our present world, the arrow symbolizes the courage to define a clear direction for how we might benefit others and society.