

POIESIS: A Journal of the Arts & Communication
Volume 19, 2022 • Encountering the Other



POIESIS

A Journal of the Arts & Communication

Volume 19, 2022

Editor: Stephen K. Levine

Art Director, Layout & Design: Kristin Briggs

EGS Press Manager: Sarah Farr



www.egspress.com

ISBN # 978-1-7776817-1-5

The POIESIS journal is supported by the European Graduate School (EGS), Switzerland.

EGS offers low-residency masters and doctoral programs in the Division of Arts, Health and Society (www.expressivearts.egs.edu), and in the Division of Philosophy, Art and Critical Thought (www.egs.edu).

All Rights Reserved ©2022 EGS Press, except where otherwise indicated.

COVER ART: *Uneasy Stillness #1*, by Ellen G. Levine, 2005,
acrylic, oil stick, sandpaper, pencil on paper.

Three Paintings	Ellen G. Levine	4
Editorial Introduction	Stephen K. Levine	8
Poets Know Things: Encountering (An)Other in Writing and Retreat	Judith Greer Essex with Elizabeth Gordon McKim	14
Gifts	Elizabeth Gordon McKim	32
Cries	Elizabeth Gordon McKim	33
One Thing	Elizabeth Gordon McKim	34
And you, what is encounter for you, in this time? An approach from a European view of generations	Hjørdis Mair	36
Encountering the Other in Expressive Arts-Based Research	Daphna Saker-Massey	42
Escapando del muro (Escaping from the wall)	Judith Alalú	61
The Bond in Expressive Arts Therapy: Tinkuy, the Coloniality of Power and the Imaginary	José Miguel Calderon	62
The Art of Slowness: Healing through Symbolic Process	Alexandra Fidyk	70
The encounter with...	Odette A. Vélez V., Martín Zavala G.	78
El encuentro con...	Odette A. Vélez V., Martín Zavala G.	84
Performing Home: An Interview with Carrie MacLeod	Stephen K. Levine	90
The Road	Kristin Briggs	101
MEETING POINT: Expressive Arts as Encounter. Cross-cultural Expressive Arts-based Research	Varvara V. Sidorova	102
The Other of the Same	Gopika Dahanukar	128
Remembrance	Stephen K. Levine	130
Untitled	Margo Fuchs Knill	131
Rejuvenation—the Other Force	Margo Fuchs Knill	132

Liminal Beings: A Sketch **Barbara Hielscher-Witte** 144

parálisis (paralysis) **Judith Alalú** 149

The Ecological Literacies of St. Hildegard of Bingen **Michael Marder** 150

Little by Little **Michael Marder** 165

Lauren Schaffer's Dirty Sweep: A Conversation with Richard Moszka and Kelly Lycan
Lauren Schaffer 166

Suddenly... **Zelda Gamson** 184

Becoming Indigenous to Place: Eco-poiesis and Aesthetic Responsibility
Jenna Montgomery 186

Communion: Encountering the Other through Photography **Carolina Herbert** 198

In Search of Ways to Facilitate Eco-identity Formation: The Central Role of the Arts and the Arts Therapies
Alexander Kopytin 220

Wake **Andrew Sofer** 238

Mourning for the Un-Sea-n: To Our Beloved Marmara Sea. When did the Mother become the Other?
Aylin Vartanyan, Fulya Kurter Musnitsky and Beliz Demircioğlu 240

Untitled **Zelda Gamson** 253

Joële Walinga on Bram Gielen's Gubb Falls and Hachanlieder Valley **Joële Walinga** 254

moderato cantabile **Jeremy Fernando** 258

Story **Elizabeth Gordon McKim** (art by Elizabeth Gordon McKim and David E. Gowdy) 265

En el bosque (In the woods) **Judith Alalú** 266

Trail **Andrew Sofer** 267

Poems for Ukraine **Stephen K. Levine** 268

war poem **Dorota Solarska** 273

End Game **Stephen K. Levine** 274

Three Paintings

Ellen G. Levine

The three paintings in the POIESIS Journal are experiments in “mixed media.” When I think about the theme of the Journal—encountering the other—I wonder how the materials encounter each other. Mixed media provides an encounter between disparate materials. It is not simply the use of the different materials separately. There is a relationship that is formed between them that creates a third thing that informs the whole piece. In each of these paintings, there is also an encounter between different layers of the landscape. What happens when sky meets earth? When the sea meets the shore?

Cover painting: “Uneasy Stillness #1” (2005)

Acrylic, oil stick, sandpaper, pencil on paper.

This painting evokes a sense of mystery or even dread. What is this unknown object lying in the sea close to the shore? Is it a rock? Is it a fragment of a weapon or a bomb? Does it lie on the surface of the water or is it down below? I like to play with different textures and materials in the construction of a painting. In this case, I am using black sandpaper which becomes a mysterious object. I usually tear it and work with whatever comes from the tearing. It might be uneven and show parts of the paper to which the sandpaper material adheres.



Painting #2 (previous page):

Acrylic, oil stick, sandpaper, pencil on cardboard.

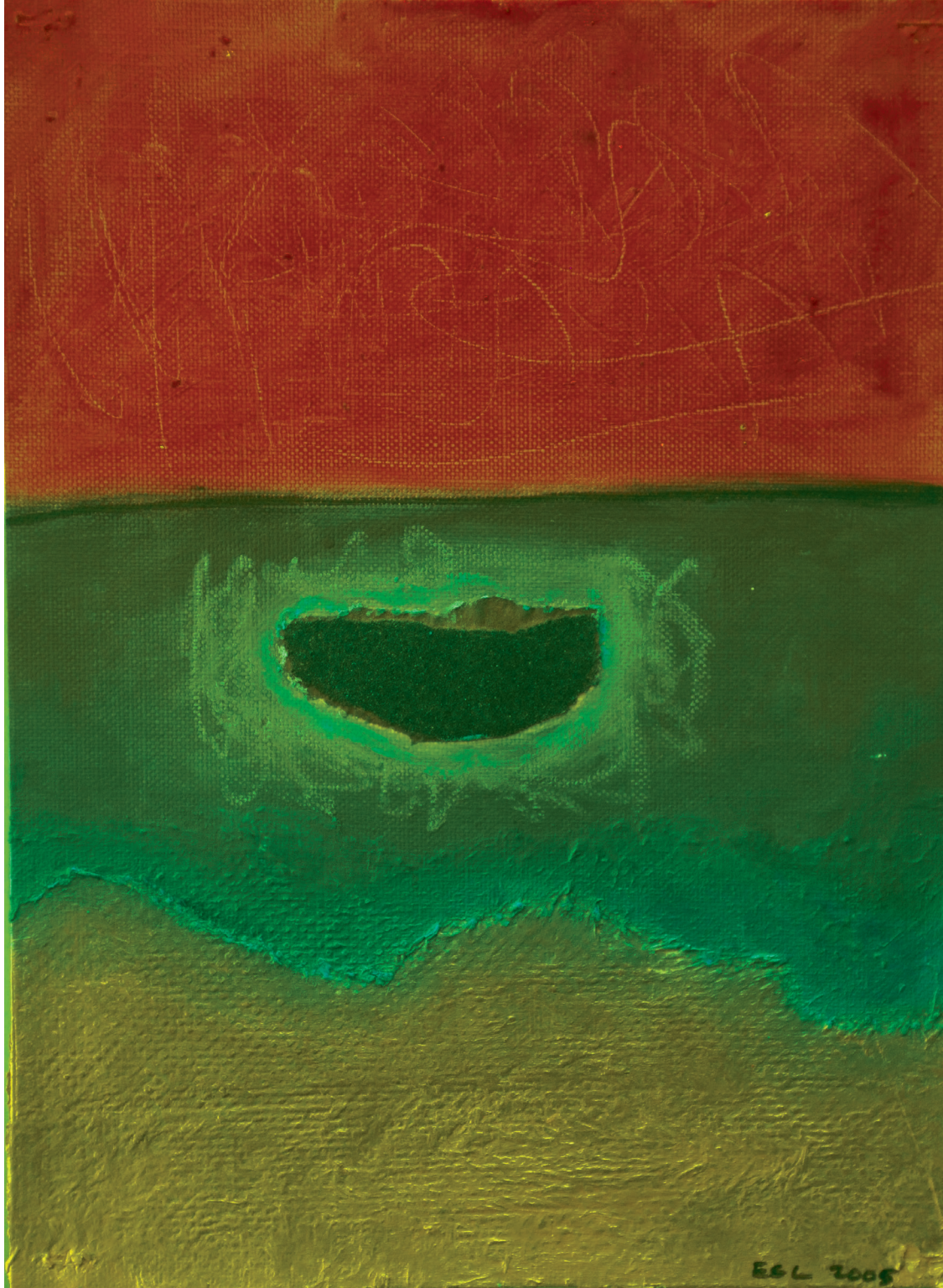
This one is part of a series entitled: "Great Rock Bight," a cove on Martha's Vineyard with a distinctive large rock off-shore. People like to swim out to the rock. When someone I knew died, her family swam out and scattered her ashes near the rock. You have to hike about 20 minutes through the forest to get down to the beach in order to see the cove and the rock. It is an incredibly peaceful place.

Painting #3 (right): "Uneasy Stillness #2" (2005)

Acrylic, oil stick, sandpaper, paper towel, pencil on paper.

Like the cover painting, this one repeats the theme of the object of mystery or dread lying either on the surface or deep under the water. I use textured papers and sandpaper in this piece.

Ellen G. Levine is a Professor and Core Faculty member of the European Graduate School and a co-founder and faculty member of the CREATE Institute in Toronto, a three-year training program in expressive arts therapy. She is the author, co-author and editor of many books in the field of expressive arts therapy. She has shown her paintings in Canada, the United States and in Switzerland at the European Graduate School.



Editorial Introduction

Stephen K. Levine

As I am writing, the war in Ukraine rages on. We don't know what will happen next, whether there will be some sort of cease-fire (I won't say "peace") or an escalation with even more horrendous results. Whatever happens, I am still left with the question that the theme of this journal poses: What does it mean to encounter the other? In Ukraine, it means murder, violence without limit. Nor of course is this an isolated incident. Human history is marked by war and genocide. It sometimes seems as if our primary mode of encountering others is to kill them.

Of course, I'm not referring to us. We are the peaceful ones. We wouldn't hurt a fly. Are we in fact implicated? Are we part of a violent murderous species? Are we somehow responsible? I know that I have had murderous impulses towards others, as well as loving ones. What a paradoxical creature the human being is! At once generous and self-sacrificing, and at the



Je est un autre. Painting by Dorota Solarska

same time violent and murderous. Usually we divide them up: we love our own and hate the others. And yet we also are violent towards our own people, towards our neighbors, our families, towards ourselves even. And our love can extend beyond ourselves to those who are most different from ourselves.

I cannot solve the riddle of humanity. What I can do is ask, what is the nature of our work together? Is therapy non-violent? Is art? And what about the fundamental concept of expressive arts, *poiesis*? Does our work in all its dimensions (therapeutic, social change-oriented, ecological) base itself on non-violence? And if so, how can we find our way when we acknowledge our own murderous impulses and those of our species?

Let's look at the other in all its different dimensions. First of all, what does it mean to encounter the self? What is the self? Is there a self? Rimbaud wrote in a letter in 1871, "*Je est un autre*." The equivalent phrase in English might be "I is an other." He used the third person singular rather than the more usual first person, "*Je suis un autre*" to indicate that I am another to myself. I am not identical with myself. Perhaps this is a particularly appropriate comment in his own case, since he made the transition from being a poet to running guns in North Africa (unless of course you would equate poetry with gun-running, which some might be tempted to do). But perhaps it is also appropriate for us in our own time, in which identity becomes a foundational concept, one which excludes the other by definition.

What does it mean to be another to myself? First of all, it indicates that the "I" is not a univocal concept. There are many parts to me and not all of them are known to me. Freud made this the basis for his practice of psychoanalysis, but we can see it in everyday life as well.

I am one person by myself (although even there I have many different moods), but another person with my partner or my grandchild or my clients in therapy or the bus driver. Jung thought that there was a central part of me that he called the "Self" which integrates all the

other parts, but even that is questionable. In fact, James Hillman, the most brilliant post-Jungian writer, denies the idea of a central identity, seeing it as an inheritance of the monotheistic framework of western religion. Instead, Hillman conceives of the person as “polytheistic,” without a central core but also, unlike Freud, without a hierarchical identity in which one part would be above the others. Within a contemporary framework, we might say that Hillman has decolonized the self.

What about encountering the other person? Do I exist only in relationship to the other, and which other am I referring to? Heidegger said that *Dasein* (his word for the existence of the human being, one who “is there”) is essentially “with” others (*Mitsein*), and yet at the same time he saw the danger of the other becoming an identical mass into which I would be absorbed. In his view, I become myself only by separating from others in facing my own death. To my mind, there is a certain heroic flavour to his thinking here, one which easily could lead to that of the Fascist revolutionaries in Spain, whose battle cry was, “*Viva la muerte!*” (“Long live death!”)

Hannah Arendt, who had been Heidegger’s student, took her thinking in another direction and saw not death but birth as essential to human existence, emphasizing natality rather than mortality. We become ourselves by transcending who we are in bringing something new into the world, whether it be a child, a work of art or a new political form. It seems to me that Arendt’s thinking here is close to what we mean by *poiesis*.

What, then, does it mean to encounter the other person? For Descartes, I have no direct access to the other. I can only hypothesize that behind their behaviour there exists another consciousness. This is very different from the thinking of, for example, Jean-Luc Nancy, who uses the phrase, “being singular plural,” to indicate that our existence is essentially *with* others, while at the same time that we are *not* the other. I am not radically separate from others, but neither am I identical with them. To encounter them would be to acknowledge both our sameness and our difference. Encountering the other, in this sense, has the same paradoxical

quality as encountering the self.

And the earth? What does it mean to encounter the earth? Our extreme alienation from the earth, encapsulated in the term, "Anthropocene," is often contrasted with an identification with the earth. This leads us to try to become merged with the earth by immersing ourselves in nature. In fact, the arts therapies often recommend finding a natural place where we can lose ourselves. But our relationship to the earth is no less paradoxical than our relationship to ourselves or to other people. We are *of* the earth, but we are *not* the earth. Yet we are always in relationship to it. Therefore, we can destroy it or nurture it. This is our choice.

There is a sense in which our relationship with ourselves, with others and with the earth can take the same violent turn. I see rape as the most violent act. Environmental degradation can be understood as a raping of the earth. In a case, we see the other only as the object of our will, not in its essential alterity. How can we turn to being-with the other, not to identifying with them, but to recognising their otherness? How, we might ask, can we become tender with the other?

This is where I would like to look at the concept of *poiesis* to try to understand whether it shows us another way of being with the other. *Poiesis* is an active responding to whatever challenges us. It searches for something new that can cast a different light upon our existence and that of the other. In face, *poiesis* is an act of imagination that is not limited to the arts but can be understood as central to every creative process. It is a letting-be which allows the other to find their proper form. In this sense, we can say that we can give birth to ourselves, to others and to the earth, transforming each so that it exists in a way proper to itself. In a therapeutic relationship, for example, the therapist does not impose their conception of what the person should be upon the client but rather tries to help them find their own way. Similarly, in the arts, the artist must allow whatever is happening to arrive without pre-determining it by a conception of what should come. This kind of relationship to the other is only possible if I can

step aside and not impose my will upon them. I see such a process as the opposite to violent imposition.

However, stepping aside or letting-be does not mean that I vanish from the scene or cease to exist. Rather, I must perform the same act of letting-be upon myself in order to encounter the other as they are. To put it another way, I must myself be present in order to help the other find their own way of being present as well. For example, in a relationship with another person, I have to take account of their needs, but I cannot ignore my own either. Rather, I have to see them as like me but different. This is much more difficult than it sounds, since our tendency is to see the other as ourselves. To fully recognize them as other requires that I see myself in all my fullness.

The same thing would be true in terms of my relationship to the earth. I cannot overcome the domination of the earth by identifying with it. Rather, I have to find a way not only to recognize the otherness of the earth and its own tendencies but also to take into account my own needs and desires as a human being.

At this point, I think it is necessary to probe into the underlying conception of what it means to exist in order to understand the possibility of *poiesis*. What kind of being is capable of such a foundational act? Ultimately, perhaps, we are undefinable. Mediaeval philosopher Duns Scotus introduced the term “haecceity” to indicate the “thisness” of a thing, not its essence but its being-there. Its there-ness is irreducible. Heidegger’s *Dasein* is close to this, but he goes on to ascribe to *Dasein* the existential characteristics of being-with-others and being-in-a-world. Putting these aside these, what can we say about the thisness of anything? In the mystical visions of St. Hildegard, written about by Michael Marder in his essay in this issue of the *POIESIS* journal, this haecceity is revealed to be *viriditas*, “the ever fresh power of finite creation capable of renewing or re-creating itself.” *Poiesis*, then, is possible because we are always capable of renewing or re-creating ourselves. As I have written elsewhere, *poiesis* is al-

ways possible. This is due not to our superior power but to the fact that we are creative in our very existence.

The question then arises, why do we not always respond creatively? And how can we change our behavior to become more non-violent? The opposite of *poiesis* is the imposition of our will on another. Why do we do that? Is it because we fear for our own existence if we let the other be? Is it the fear of death that makes us hold on to our will to exist at the expense of the other? And if so, how can we let go of this fear? Is it not “natural”? Spinoza says every finite being has a will to be. What can make us let go of this will to be? Do we also have a will to create? If our very existence is creative, then would not our will to be also be a will to create?

These questions are unanswerable. Perhaps we are bi-polar in our very existence. This would account for the paradoxical quality of our relation to ourselves and to others. It does seem that the creative way requires a struggle against violence. We come into the world with the will to be, and only by a contrary effort can we activate our will to create. We have to *turn* away from our basic inclination to exist and give it up, if only temporarily, to access our will to create. This requires confronting the possibility of our non-existence, our fear of not-being, of death. But what can motivate us to do this? Can the suffering we bring upon ourselves by self-assertion lead us to turn in a different direction? Creativity requires a letting-go. Paradoxically, it is only by letting-go of ourselves that we can find ourselves at last. When we do, perhaps we can finally learn how to encounter the other—and perhaps by this means to find our joy as well.

★

As I review the contributions to the journal, I see that each of them can be considered to be an encounter with the other. I hope you find your own pleasure in encountering them.

Poets Know Things: Encountering (An)Other in Writing and Retreat

Judith Greer Essex
with Elizabeth Gordon McKim

From the Pacific to the Atlantic I fly for a private seminar with my wo-mentor Elizabeth Gordon McKim. Our friendship began at the European Graduate School in 1997. At that time, I was a doctoral student writing my dissertation, and my heart ached over the recent death of my youngest brother. Now I've separated from my partner. Heart-break has returned, and my writer self needs a re-boot.

We travel to Tenants Harbor, Maine, on the St. George Peninsula, to the family place Elizabeth's parents built in the '60's. After many hours of driving, we meander into the small interstitial coves and fingers of the unforgiving Maine coast. At the end of a dirt road stands the wooden structure, called the Carousel by the family because of its octagonal shape and

peaked roofline. It is a fit location for retreating. I want to escape sadness and loss or try to transform it. My horses are wounded. I withdraw, to break free from peril. It might also be a place to heal, whatever that means, to refresh and rejuvenate. Will a week of writing by the sea do that? Will being facilitated by a writer and teacher I admire do that? Can I encounter my other self, (an)other self? Eliz is a good teacher for me, with a multitude of resources at her fingertips about poetry and writing. She is scholarly and literate. But she is also funny and irreverent; bawdy and particular. My kinda gal. She says learning is an essential part of my story, that I am an eager student. So we adopt this metaphor for our work/time together.

We pack the necessities for our week: food, computers, journals, colors, music. She takes the room with the claw-footed bathtub. I take the one with the stuffed mermaid hanging on the wall. Is this deep diver looking for pearls?

We establish a pattern: Wake up. Whoever is up first makes coffee, and we nod to each other as we take our places. She at the high desk, me at the kitchen table. We both have views of the sky and sea from wrap-around win-



dows, floor to ceiling. We watch the sun rise over the harbor. Warm-up. We play with words, draw, chant or hum, but with no interaction between us, alone together. Eliz might go out for a ceremonial smoke. I might stretch on the deck.

After some time, perhaps two hours, we make breakfast. We reflect on what came in the warm-up time: images, feelings, words. She playfully suggests an assignment for the student. I am eager to play and take it. I stand up very straight, and after she gives the assignment, I take a little bow. For several hours we are busy: serious play with words.

At 2:00 pm we go out and about the little New England villages with their autumn glory: leaves of gold, red, pink and orange. There is lunch or shopping for dinner. She knows where to get the best lobster, fish sandwich, clam chowder. We feast on the bounty of the Atlantic waters. When we return to the Carousel, we make dinner and then I share my work of that day. As an expert on the oral tradition, she has me read everything aloud. We share associations that arise for us, how our literary history informs us. Many questions arise: Will anything crystallize for me? What can hold this anguish? Is there any succor here? Here is a recounting from my journal, and assignments Eliz suggested to me:

October 16, Saturday Journal

Eliz suggests a first assignment—a free write. “Write what comes,” she says. “Write your head off and your heart out.” The front of the house is all glass; the scene surrounds me. I am held by the skyline and sea. Reminded of my mother, Helen Stuart (1923-2017), who loved to look at clouds and weather, I write:

Sky Scape

The deep red, the bright red, the burning red

Seeps into the steely blue and crowds out the clouds.

*The face of the sun peeps over the horizon.
First, comes the show—the pink and tangerine, lavender and lemon yellow.
The day is beautiful as it begins.
Later, the squash-faced orange moon hovers like a basketball—
How can such a heavy object rise up and float?
It paves a path of shattered light.
The night is beautiful as it begins.*

When I read this, Eliz is reminded of Zen poet Issa (1763-1828) and his haiku:

*Broken and broken
again on the sea, the moon
so easily mends*

The rising moonlight floods the living room. How many moons have I seen? From what perspective? Seeing her in any of her phases, fingernail or full, is a reminder to breathe and consider my tiny place in the solar system. This thought always brings relief: I am small but part of something bigger; reassured of, *"My place in the family of things"* as Mary Oliver says. By virtue of this remote and idyllic setting I begin to unwind—breathe the salt air, consider the pines, stretch on the deck, walk in the woods. Alone in a kind of communal solitude. A good beginning.

October 17, Sunday Journal

A Turn I Took

As we go along in life, the path turns, surprises us. The turn comes unbidden, we are forced to make a change. Sometimes we make a choice. We decide something, "we take a turn." Coming to Maine, after loss, during a pandemic, was my choice. I turned.

*On the edge of the Atlantic
We wake to watch the sunrise:
fiery or calm*

*We write, shape, shake, read
and cook.
Sudden squalls clear the air
Violent winds and driving rain.
The sea—unrelenting and harsh.
It never stops, like a breathing thing.
And sings me to sleep.*

An assignment seems to abate the distress of my roiling mind, boiling heart, sour belly, at least while I am in its thrall. It's a captivating puzzle. I write and wriggle away from anguish. Will words and images, enjambment and alliteration, be salve and succor to me? Can I make poems without considering my problem or painful situation? Will that help? Let's see. This is the *theme-far* work that Paolo Knill describes: leaving the dire straits behind for more open play space (*Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy*, 2005, p.165). Will that help? Let's see.

The house itself is so strange an architecture—like a circus tent. Its shape is singular—an octagon, eight sides, two stories. I am fascinated with it. The word "octagon" pulls on my memory and brings up the poem, *Should Lanterns Shine* by Welsh poet Dylan Thomas, (1914-1953).

*Should lanterns shine, the holy face,
Caught in an octagon of unaccustomed light,
Would wither up, an any boy of love
Look twice before he fell from grace.*

Our "octagon of unaccustomed light," the late afternoon sunbeams, stream into the living



rooms, golden, giving everything a painter's wash, a shimmering patina. What is my relationship to the holy face? Am I the boy of love? Pay attention to the images, signs, and symbols that emerge in this reverie; everything is part of it.

Oct 18, 2021. Monday Journal Free Write

*After the crashing foaming sea
the glowering skies of yesterday,*

*Today is all gentle ripples—
The horizon like a ruler's edge.*

*Red sunrise now hidden behind a thin skim of cloud.
Quarriers lived here with their families.
They were the tenants of Tenants Harbor.
Pines right to the water's edge.
No boomers collide with the stony shoreline.
Peaceful lap-lapping at the worn-smooth granite.
Little eddies ripple into a pattern like watermarked silk.
A solitary sailboat glides by—as if on a track—
Pulled by a string to the shore.
The sun tucks into cozy cloud comfort.
The lobsterman—having hauled his traps, darts out of sight.*

This evening the shadow of a huge spider appears on the lampshade. The way the light hits the assembly makes the image. Surprise! Grandmother Spider has arrived. We share some stories that are woven around this image. Weaving is an image I have long associated with our work: blending, braiding, transferring, intertwining, translating. Peo-





ple, art disciples and traditions, languages, ideas, and methods. Elizabeth refers to this life-weaving as "following the red thread." There are many origin stories about this image. The one most pertinent to my situation is the Greek story of King Theseus using a red thread to find his way out of the labyrinth of the Minotaur: a red thread to find one's way away from certain death. Shaun McNiff speaks about times when sacredness and imagination is absent. This loss of the animating force he calls, "soul loss." (*Art Heals*, p. 204) Is the emptiness I feel a loss of soul? Is the river of my imagination drying up? Elizabeth quotes Ikkyu, the 15th Century Zen mystic: *Passion's red thread is infinite, like the earth, always under me. Where is my passion, my red thread, my path?*

Oct 19, 2021. Tuesday Journal Free Write

*Dawn. Pinking shears cut the edge of the clouds.
Chittering squirrels disregard gravity
Fling themselves from tree to tree.
Someone's been painting on the ocean,
Leaving a bright mark, a brush stroke.
Sun spangles on the surface of the sea,
Cloud smudge
Smeared across the sky.*

Poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, a Catholic priest (1844-1889), pops into my mind when I write "smudge and smeared." Reminds me of his poem, *Pied Beauty*:

...

Glory be to God for dappled things...

Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough...

Hopkins—the ultimate phenomenologist—uses a poetic device of his own making: *enscape*, his way of describing each example of a thing as singular, unique. Considering the importance of variation and contrast in poetry, writing and the arts, my wo-mentor and I both are intrigued by words, their origins, variety, and usage. I tug on this tiny frayed end of a strand. Can words or lines of poetry be my red thread?

Later we talk about loss of love, hers and mine. She conjures up W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) and how he speaks of pain and love residing side-by-side in the poem, *Crazy Jane Talks to the Bishop*:

*"Fair and foul are near of kin,
And fair needs foul," I cried.*

...

*"But Love has pitched his mansion in
The place of excrement;
For Nothing can be sole or whole
That has not been rent."*

Loving brings not either/or, but both/and—adventure and anguish; pleasure and pain, side-by-side. According to Yeats, things must be broken to be whole. I am broken, but am I whole? Can poetry and writing be the golden repair, the kintsugi, for me? Singer-songwriter Leonard Cohen (1934-2016) says *"There is a crack in everything, That's how the light gets in."* If loss is the crack, can poetry be the light? The gold? The poets think so, and poets know things.

The taboo of the sensual longings and appetites of mature women comes wafting into our conversation; sexuality in the midst of separation or death. The lovely poem, *The Sorrow of*

Departure, by Li Qingzhao (1084-1151) from the Song Dynasty drifts into the room:

*Red lotus incense fades on
The jeweled curtain. Autumn
Comes again. Gently I open
My silk dress and float alone
On the orchid boat.*

“Float alone on the orchid boat” is a Chinese metaphor for sensuous self-pleasuring of women. From this delicate image we launch into a bawdy/body wide-ranging discussion of memory and masturbation across time and space. We laugh. Poetry reveals and conceals.

Oct 22, 2021. Friday Journal Free Write

*The Squall
First, clear dawn.
Then drumbeat on the skylight.
A low mass of dark clouds overcome the sky,
Rumble in from nowhere like a motorcycle gang.
Was that thunder? Was that lightning?
Could this be a Nor'easter I've only heard about? No.
The broom of wind sweeps the dark away, and then
little buoys are shining in the slanted sun.
Sea-bangles in the burnished afternoon.*

Second Assignment: A Sestina

A Sestina, a highly structured formal European poetic form, is suggested as my second assignment. “After great pain, a formal feeling comes” Emily Dickinson (1830-1886). Seems right.

Constructed around six chosen words that are woven in a set but changing pattern, the original sestinas were written in iambic, but I break these rules. There are six stanzas, followed by the envoi (or conclusion) of three lines. We read the famous sestina by Elizabeth Bishop, *A Miracle for Breakfast*. Eliz says it is an ultimate structured poem, like a ghazal—a 7th century Arabic poetic form, also with very strict specifications concerning the pain of loss or separation and the beauty of love in spite of pain. Sounds right. Eliz asks me to find my words—perhaps from my earlier writing. I choose *Skies/ Sea/ Carousel/ Shore/ Granite/ Harbor*.

Sestina—

- 1 *Wake early to witness red watercolor Skies
Dawn waves dance to the Shore
The wake of the lobster boat glitters like sequins on the Sea.
Pushing the moire pattern to the barrier of Granite
This is a working Harbor
At the foot of the Carousel*
- 2 *The octagon of the wooden Carousel
Pushes its center peak into the Skies,
Sits squat at the edge of the Harbor
Its footings inches from the rocky Shore
Where boulders of ancient rock form boundaries of Granite
Cooled and hardened eons ago by the Atlantic Sea*
- 3 *High tide and here comes salty Sea
Crawling to the edge of the Carousel
This merry-go-round would slip-slide into the drink if not for Granite.
Mercurial winds whip the clouds and colors of the Skies
Which follow close the shape of the zig-zag Shore
Folding into and out of the rick-rack Harbor*

- 4 *Cormorants find shelter and supper in the Harbor
They fly from island to island fishing in this Sea
Laugh when they head straight for our Shore
Watery arrows pointing at the Carousel
They leap into low Skies
Float like bobbing buoys near the barrier of Granite*
- 5 *Magma from the continental crust gifted us this Granite.
Quarriers ply it with their bodies, the tenants of the Harbor.
Sweat and labor under these same Skies
They play in and eat from this same Sea.
We now rest, write, read in comfort in the Carousel.
My life's edge, like a Shore*
- 6 *A marker on my timeline, this Shore.
I wish for the strength of the Granite.
Writing around the dangerous Carousel
Is this safe and sheltering Harbor?
These are tumultuous friendly Seas
The changing moon shares our same Skies*
- 7 *Nothing can predict the Skies or straighten out the rocky Shore.
Nothing can calm the roiling Sea, or soften ancient Granite.
This tiny Harbor shelters me, reaching for gold on the Carousel.*

Are there resources here for me? The ride on the merry-go-round is dizzying, and precarious at the edge of sea, at the edge of my life, still, I can reach for the gold ring, try to get the prize. Stories of forces more ancient and enduring than my individual life are calling. Comfort-

ing. The theme of my suffering is put into perspective by my relationship with larger, older elements. I look around me: all the life forms in this scene—the birds, the squirrels, the fish, the lobsters, the lobstermen, even the pines—are shaped and molded by the forces they encounter. Even the granite, as powerful as molten granite is, is shaped by the still greater power of the ocean, which is pulled by the still greater power of the moon, which is illuminated by the still greater sun. One thing flows out of another. I, too, am shaped by forces both benevolent, malevolent: forces that cannot acknowledge my existence. Might present pain add dimension to the beauty of my life? *"I have heard many years of telling, And many years should see some change."* (Dylan Thomas)

We collect questions. We cherish the questions as Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926) suggests in *Letters to a Young Poet*: *"...have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves..."* Our questions are: Do you believe in me? Where are we now? Can poetry and writing bring repair? What were you saying? Who said that? What am I sitting on? Is there any succor here? What time is it? Will there be a harvest? When do we eat? These queries had responses reverent/ irreverent, "scared and sacred." Hilarity ensues and then came haikus.

Third Assignment: Haiku. Eliz calls haiku the "little muscle of poetry;" a form of reduction and condensation. The strict format is three lines with the number of syllables in each line being: five, seven, five.

Haiku

*Jack-o-lantern Moon
Pops over the horizon
Is this Halloween?*

*October moon hunts
Wounded heart and teary face
A surprising shine*

*Lifesaver full moon
Round red cheese in the window
Makes my wet face glow.*

As we end, I write about Eliz:

Portrait of The Poet

*She brought her words to Saas Fee.
I brought a broken heart.
We walk up the Alpine trail,
She tells me the green goes over and over.
My dead brother is under the green ground.
A sermon of the heart,
Direct trans/mission*

*Poets know things,
The way a voice enters a body.*

*Her silver head glides from room to room
Silhouette in fabrics from Bali and Spain,
The desert and the cold places.
Her rooms are colorful, textured,
Toys, and treasures from the sea wrack,
Picture books and sacred texts.
Fine paintings and children's hieroglyphics
Kitchen—a medley of cookware & glassware,
Stoneware and fine bone china.
On a curry-colored couch
Wrapped in a teal quilt
E: Speak out. Push away the heavy object.
G: Pregnant with a manuscript.
E: Bear it wear it—it moves through you.
G: And beyond.*

Here is her report card for my efforts:

REPORT RE:PORT

*You did it you met the Atlantic
Blossoming forth in a wild out/size wave
Meant for both teacher and student
Where AND is the undercover operative:
The score. You take it from here
You give me a home run
Over the top of the green monster*

*Scared and sacred in the hoop of the world
Give me a dance, I toss you a song
Give me a poem, I give you
A report, re:port
A mark. Congratulations!
You passed
High honors*

—EGMcK

We're surrounded by a gathering of poets and questions. I am feeling better, more hopeful, less stuck. What were the ingredients to my change? Being surrounded by a different ocean and having a good guide helped. Trusting my process of observation and response in poetic forms helped. Allowing all the visitors to come in: words, images, poets, visitations by weather and animals. The luxury of time also was an important ingredient. However, my narrative of distress and perspective changed without ever encountering it as a central theme directly. It hung in the surrounding atmosphere. I wept, but I never wrote a single line about it, in poetry or in my journal. What seemed most helpful was paying attention to the poetic dimension of nearly everything, and writing seriously with full attention to what emerged. I lived inside a poem, a real and true decentering. Everything has a poetic dimension. This is how we do it. Poets know things.

References

Knill, P. J., Levine, E. G., & Levine, S. K. (2005). *Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy: Toward a Therapeutic Aesthetics*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London.

McKim, Elizabeth Gordon (2003). *The Red Thread*. Leapfrog Press, MA.

McNiff, Shaun (2004). *Art Heals*. Shambala, London.

Rilke, Rainer Maria (2004). *Letters to a Young Poet*. Norton, NY

Judith Greer Essex PhD, LMFT, REAT, ADTR is the founder and director of the Expressive Arts Institute, San Diego. Having taught at EGS for twenty years, she is now a Professor in the CAGS program, where she also leads the community art sessions. Her contributions to *POIESIS* have included articles and poetry.

Elizabeth Gordon McKim is a poet/teacher/spirit/singer...

She knows a few things. The things that she knows
Shall never be hers/ they shall only move through her
And move beyond.

Also: She is the poet laureate of the European Graduate School
and the Jazz Poet of Lynn, Massachusetts. Her latest book,
published by Leapfrog Press, is *LOVERS in the FREE FALL*.

Gifts

Elizabeth Gordon McKim

Such gifts arise from
Other voices older wounds
Curses and blessings

Such gifts arrive from
Older voices other rooms
Faraway rhythms

The narrative cries
Shifts with/in out/side bodies
Beyond any land

River. Sea. The threads
Flow indifferently onward
No one owns the drift

Cries

Elizabeth Gordon McKim

Cry so much
Wet myself
So ashamed

I hang my britches on the line to dry

Immutable juiced resistant proud constrained courageous

Throw me a rainbow
I toss you a rubber tire
Twirl me an umbrella
I fling you a banana

You heard me
Banana

If you say something
See something

One Thing

Elizabeth Gordon McKim

The freedom
Of my happen
Stance
Happens
Every day
Freely

I said
Revolution
You said
Revelation
I said
Evolution
You said
Eventual

An author from Ukraine stopped by
Said we can only do
2 things

We need to stay alive
We need to act
As one

We free peoples be

I thought I knew
A thing or two
But I was wrong
I only know
One thing...

And you, what is encounter for you, in this time?

An approach from a European view of generations

Hjørdis Mair

There may be more beautiful times, but this one is ours.

Jean-Paul Sartre

My granddaughter was born in May 2020, in this special time when a small virus has torn people of all countries out of their individual identities and connects them across borders and oceans through its threat. She is lucky, her parents have been able to spend a lot of time with her. Her father, a professional dancer, due to the circumstances, is not dancing on the big stages of the world, but in the living room with his little daughter on his arm. In her world, faces in the public disappear behind masks. Soon she learns what eyes tell, whether they are laughing or sad, whether the person behind the mask is present or far away. The mask becomes for her a hat, a handkerchief, or a funny everyday utensil. She sees people disinfecting their hands and is proud that she can now do the same. There's nothing wrong with it, it's just normal, it's what you do. It's what their time is like. Children are born into their time free of

the need to judge and evaluate, they look at the world on the surface and experience it as normality: no doubting thought slows down their desire to discover and their will to understand.

Her great-grandmother turned 90 in this second year of the pandemic. We celebrated on a beautiful autumn day, vaccinated and tested, full of hope that now the worst might be over. In her long life, she experienced poverty during the second world war and the joy of a piece of chocolate as a gift in times of rationing. She experienced the era of economic growth, seemingly inexhaustible abundance, and light-heartedness of the last century in one of the richest countries, Switzerland. My mother is pragmatic and an optimist: she wears the mask with equanimity and dignity, seeking her own way between sensible withdrawal and joyful living. She rejoices in visits from her grandchildren and carefully weighs quality of life against longevity. And yet they are there: her sadness at life pausing, the loneliness during the lockdowns, the questions about her arc of life in this world, where nature is acutely endangered, and which could now end so disturbingly and challenge the future of her great-grandchild.

Generation Z and the millennials, who are in the process of finding their vocations and starting families, are thwarted in their drive to shape their lives. Shaped by the ideas of another time in which self-determination and existence seemed secure and health was a question of self-responsibility. For many, the planned lifeline runs in the fog of uncertainty and existential threat. The danger of climate change makes personal goals meaningless and perspectives waver. Contact restrictions increase loneliness and social withdrawal into the digital world. In my private and professional environment, fears, mental insecurity, and discouragement grow. Professional paths break off. I experience how certainties break open, cracks become visible in personal self-perception, leaving crusts behind, and revealing fresh, vulnerable skin below. I admire the courage of many young people to venture out again and to understand the present time as an invitation to take unknown paths and explore new territory.

As a lecturer with students of different ages, I experience the different poles and positions in our training as a mirror image of society: fronts of the most diverse opinions are formed,

from the right to personal freedom, self-determination and self-responsibility to the desire for clear guidelines and security. I experience strong resistance across the spectrum of attitudes and opinions, both to rules and restrictions and to not following those rules. And I also often experience fear and deep despair at a time when we face loss of control and must admit to not knowing how the pandemic will develop. There is deepest despair about the current situation, about restrictions and about the feeling of powerlessness and the danger of being excluded.

I see how it is so easy to get impatient with one another, how suddenly seeing people with a different point of view in another light, judging them, how there is the tendency toward distancing oneself inwardly. And then, behind the facade of aggression, I recognize the longing to be accepted and seen in this otherness.

I myself stand at the upper end of the two edges of life. I feel privileged, have lived a full life in a safe country. My personal grief grows out of the helplessness and guilt that my generation carries, for having put our world in jeopardy. We may learn to live with a virus like Covid19; however, we can only stop the destruction of our habitat if we join forces together.

The encounter with my little grandchild, who lets me discover the world anew, gives me hope. Her non-judgmental, phenomenological view of her little world teaches me to look, smell, listen and experience anew the power of beauty and aesthetics. It asks me to impart joy and confidence, to block out the horror and complex factors, perhaps to allow myself to be naïve in order to trust again through the beauty of being. Her innocent look at her time gives me the grace of joy and confidence. It obliges me to face this discrepancy of discord, fear, anger and despair in myself and in my surroundings. The reduction to the phenomena of life, to the beauty of the unveiling existence, guides me again and again back to the attitude that makes surprise possible and opens the door to wonder.

The question that arises for me is, which frame do we choose for our life story? Which causes influence the perception of our realities? Am I courageous enough to question my

world-view, which has become a matter of course and an inner certainty? How can I distinguish between belief, facts and knowledge, and to whom do I refer? What does it mean for my life when a vaccine becomes a personal threat, and what if it is a blessing and stands for the hope to be able to help ending this pandemic? How do we come to define freedom and knowledge and who we trust? What construct becomes the truth of my life? Will we ever create cohesion in society that lets us find global and equitable solutions? We need the courage to be deeply honest, despite hardened fronts that have built around us. Only when we turn back to the stories in open dialogue, do our hands touch again in the field beyond right and wrong—and opponents can again become people who respectfully meet each other.

It is our task to create places where encounters become a chance, and the collective trauma can heal. Experiences that we learn in our expressive arts work reminds us of our diverse realities and the possibility of adopting different perspectives and opening ourselves to the new and unfamiliar. Creative activity in art and in nature allows us to connect with the surroundings and ourselves, and to heal and become whole again. And even if the fronts flare up again outside the protected space, a mycelium of memory is planted in the aesthetic



Photo: Mycelium / Quelle:

<https://gardenculturemagazine.com/how-mushrooms-and-the-mycelium-network-are-healing-the-world/>

experience, which networks and spreads over a large area and always sends a fruit through the damp earth to the light. I want to believe that we have tools available in our environment to create these spaces. I want to believe that the butterfly's wing sets the air waves in motion to the farthest corners of parlors and presidents' suites. I want to believe that we will not tire of opening ourselves to the wounds and wonders, that we will be brave enough to pull the sting of devaluation and reluctance from our own hearts. I want to believe that the challenge of our time shows us a way of living that turns the focus from restriction and renunciation to respect and sustainability, as the mode of life which we love and see as a benefit—for the preservation of our existence and our planet. I want to believe the examples of resilience I experienced might be a key to support people in desperation and need: the clarity of little children, the wisdom and ability of acceptance of the older generation and the will of younger people to create their lives in this time.

I close my thoughts with a statement from a friend of mine in his thirties: "2021 was the worst year—and at the same time the best, because it brought me to places I couldn't imagine. May we encounter each other again, doing art and sharing it. And then we will come out of this time stronger!" I wish us all this ability to accept the polar qualities of our time, to discover their beauty, and—in spite of everything—to shape our own time powerfully.

Hjørdis Mair is co-founder, director and teacher at the inArtes Institut Zurich. She holds a Masters in EXA /EGS. Her focus as a teacher is on poetry, trauma, resilience and biographical work. Hjørdis is an experienced therapist, especially with children, and co-founder of the prevention project Kinderprojekt BARCA, that supports children with mentally ill parents. The power of art and creativity accompanies them through their childhood and youth and opens a new perspective on life through the arts. She is a poet and lives with her family in Zurich, Switzerland.

Watching news
in the TV
I freeze
when the faces
distorted with rage
stare at me
triumphant smiles
clapping on the asphalt
in front of the parliament
a closed society
of others

my hands caress
your hate
don't water
the roots of separation
your anxiety
is mine and
my tears are dripping
from your eyes.

you borrowed your longing
for acceptance
from the unknown
neighbor
your devastating anger
will destroy
your health
and mine

we are the same
you and me
beyond layers of anxiety
let your hatred
smelt to pearls
and let us find
the dance
of joy and
diversity

– Hjørdis Mair

Encountering the Other in Expressive Arts-Based Research

Daphna Saker-Massey

After I had prepared the room, and before the first research session began, I sat down to write. I started by reading the paragraph which Stephen K. Levine wrote as an invitation for contributors to this journal as a starting point for my research:

“Now more than ever we need to go beyond our own circle and meet others who are different from us. Genuine encounter means being open to the other, whether it be the world around us, other persons or even ourselves.”

I asked where this paragraph meets me in my own experience; it was the words “the world around us, other persons or even ourselves” which made me pause. I believe that the world in which we exist in is interconnected; in my view we are all part of one reality. I thought of how the sessions can sometimes show that our inner reality can merge with outer forms, that the arts

can become a bridge through which synchronicities arrive. Yet even though I have experienced this interconnectedness, I feel my separateness and I still identify with my body and personality; therefore, I asked myself, what is then the border between myself and the world? I finished phrasing these thoughts and prepared for the arrival of the first participant.

I had invited three women to participate and co-research the theme of encountering the other, to go into the arts and see what information we might collect. I am an expressive arts-based researcher, and I work with a method that I call the “Real Dream.” I started photography at age thirteen, making black and white portraits of friends and family. When I was in my twenties, I developed further my art practice. The act of making another person’s portrait, though, felt unsatisfying, and I wanted to be in a creative profession where I could meet others in genuine and helping encounters. In expressive arts therapy, I found a way to make an encounter with another person meaningful. Yet as a facilitator of someone else’s experience, I was missing the valuable resources which my studio practice had given me. Letting go of those resources did not feel right. I found a gap, an in-between space which had the potential of becoming a whole new playground. The “Real Dream” method combines the two fields and stands in that gap.

The first part of this essay will show the core ideas which led to the development of this method, and to my position as an expressive arts-based researcher. In the second part, I will share the research conducted with the three women, centered around the theme of encoun-

tering the other, ending with our conclusions.

The development of my art practice

Portraits have intrigued me since childhood. I became fascinated with artists, painters and photographers who use a dark background, not yet realising that this dark space was the connection between them. When I was twenty-three, I met my husband Ang, and a year later I moved to live with him in Tuscany. One evening Ang wanted to try out my new digital camera. As an artist who enjoys calligraphy, he wanted to make some photographs in the dark, experimenting in writing with a flashlight. The first artist to develop this method intentionally and to write with handheld lights was Man Ray in 1935. He started as a painter and bought a camera to take pictures of his work, but soon became completely immersed in photography, creating innovative images, and elaborating new techniques from his Dadaist and surrealist point of view. For Ray, drawing in the air with the handheld light created an image which represented the uncontrolled mind. (Eder, 1945)

Ang and I started photographing together. I was behind the camera. He was drawing with the flashlight, and by chance his face became lit very softly and beautifully, in a way which made me immediately want to try it as well, just out of pure playful curiosity. He went behind the camera, and I took the handheld light and sat in front of the camera. I lit my face, and the photo immediately worked, and looked more like I had painted a picture. For the next three years we made self-portraits, experimenting with different techniques, and learning about portraiture. The way we worked in the dark had made taking a picture resemble being on a stage, like a short performance. We had to be still in the darkness while lighting ourselves. We were the artist and the model at the same time, treating each image like a blank canvas. The outcomes were interesting, as they would bring out unexpected results and many personalities emerged of our own. It made me question, what is constant when the image is so fluid?

Living in the countryside, taking our own pictures was easy and accessible, yet we had

reached a moment where something needed to evolve. The next step would be inviting people into our studio.

Photographing others

A few people who saw our pictures were curious about the space in the image and offered to participate. Yet, when we tried to invite others, the images were not interesting, and the experience of the people who participated became boring for them. The playfulness and curiosity which were a big part of our own process did not translate into the new situation. As I read more about portrait history and its ties to the changing power structures in society, I became more aware of having made other people into objects in my work. I searched for a relationship with others which would be more collaborative.

I looked for solutions in the arts and thought maybe I would find an answer in participatory art, a movement within the arts which aspires to make the viewers themselves become active participants. Claire Bishop, an art historian who has written extensively about Participatory Art (also called "Social Practice"), looks at the history and at the evolution of this art form. In the 1920's André Breton, the Dada artist, coined a new term "Artificial Hells," to describe art which was out in the streets and called for the public's participation. In 1934 Walter Benjamin wrote about the importance of making the viewer active, changing their involvement in the work of art from a consumer of art to a producer (Bishop, 2006). The first drive behind this work was a desire to help people become more aware of their own power, of their political and social responsibilities, and hopefully create a society which is more active in its formation rather than passive, striving for a more

positive, non-hierarchical social model. Yet, I could not find many art works which looked at the personal experience of the participant. The work seemed more of a symbolic action in an art form that wanted to say something political, and less about the direct experience of the participant. By this time Ang was more involved in his own art, and I carried on my own—yet there was no clear artistic motivation or financial benefit that would motivate me to continue.

Expressive Arts Therapy

I went to study art therapy first but then found EGS and expressive arts therapy.

I enjoyed the emotional process that art therapy could take people into, and the playfulness and experimentation in which I started allowing myself to venture. Yet I felt uncomfortable with the position of a therapist working within the psychotherapeutic framework. The arts were in service of the emotional world of the client. I was not sure where art came from, but I knew it didn't always come from me and my emotions. The phenomenological framework, on the other hand, gave me a new perspective, looking at art as something that we invite in, rather than something that derives from us alone. Paolo Knill, who developed this perspective, was led by a phenomenological approach before he knew what to call it. He recounts making plays with his brother and sister and enjoying the stage. In one Christmas play in particular, while acting, he felt that the storyline should be changed, and he went with that impulse. His father became angry, though Paolo could not understand why, as he felt that he was going along with what came through playing and wondered why he should be punished for that (*POIESIS*, 2012). He felt that it was not he who was changing the story, it was the story itself taking on its own shape. The phenomenological perspective is about expressing the thing that wants to be expressed; he was not changing the play, just allowing the play to change.

When I first began my art therapy training, playing with the art materials was very rewarding, yet the outcomes did not show much about the experiences. I didn't enjoy the results, I

wished for an outcome which would represent the process.

The EXA therapist is first of all an artist who facilitates an experience, through their own artistic expertise they are able to guide their clients into the imagination, where the things that want to be expressed can come about by themselves. The client is the expert of their own experience. In practice, EXA invites the art into the room while trying to make its presence as precise as possible. We strive towards an aesthetic experience and outcome, searching for beauty.

This therapeutic practice allowed me to see the possibility of a new form of encounter.

Bringing my art and the principles of EXA together

The practice of making portraits in a dark space had many artistic elements, it was like a performance and resembled painting with light, so it already had an intermodal aspect, one of the principles of EXA. I wanted to see if this personal studio practice could become a tool in an expressive arts therapy session.

That first research in 2012 was for my M.A thesis, I invited five participants for two or three sessions each. The research showed me only the potential; nothing really worked, but I could see that something could. About a year after the thesis research, I came to a profound conclusion. The psychological framework which I was always interested in and which was a basic knowledge needed to learn art therapy had not played a part in my work. It became clear to me that phenomenology is enough and that what I was doing was being an

artist who walks with clients into their imagination. In a lesson I had with Paolo Knill he talked about a movie as being a seamless intermodal work of art—when a movie is well made, we do not feel the separateness of sound, the movement of the camera or the acting. This example kept coming back to my mind. I started shaping the session with the intention of creating a cohesive experience. Since the portraits always remained a part of the process and are taken in a dark room, I developed further the play of light in the room, creating through different lights the different parts of the session and the change of atmosphere.

A few participants had remarked that during the session they had felt like they were in a dream. Ang had created a typographic font and was making text-based art works with it. One of his works was called, “Real Dream,” pointing to the human experience as a real dream. With his permission, this became the name of my method. I continued giving workshops and working with people one on one. I decided that it was much more suitable for me to work separately with one person at a time. I enjoyed the intimacy and honesty which the encounter enabled me to achieve. I also found that I preferred giving only one session per participant. Whereas at first facilitating and making art during the session was a step I took cautiously, I soon understood that by making my art while the participant made their own art, I was giving them space to go into their own mind. I was involved in the process with real artistic curiosity, I didn’t need to hold back my creativity, and that made the encounter more authentic. Designing the process which participants come into, and the portrait made during the session, were my creative endeavors.

From therapist to researcher

The way I researched through the years was by using my own art practice of taking self-portraits as a way of developing new tools and staying connected to the world into which I was bringing participants. I was in fact engaging in Arts-Based Research (ABR), in which researchers themselves create art to gain insights into the subject at hand. ABR offers a unique possibility for the artist-self and researcher-self to co-exist (Leavy, 2009). ABR expands the notion of research and opens up the fields of inquiry, using someone’s personal experiences as a valid

way of researching. This was the same paradigm that I identified with in EXA. I now understood that what I do with clients was developing a space where we were both artists and researchers; in fact I was facilitating an Expressive Arts Based Research. José Miguel Calderon presents Expressive Arts-based Research (EABR) as a new methodology, offering nine windows from which one can explore their research question. These have been collected through years of working with expressive arts students. He invites researchers to find their own way of practicing EABR (Calderon, 2019).

Whereas Calderon puts the emphasis on research methodology, I am proposing EABR as a method for facilitators to co-research with others.

Encountering the other in a creative and inquisitive space is the core of my work. It enables me to develop the work further, to learn and to be with people in a new territory. They leave their ordinary state and enter an alternative world experience, bringing back information from a different space of mind.

Co-researching

Until now the research on the part of participants was centered around their personal questions alone. In this research, I chose to introduce a theme which did not come from them. Therefore, besides looking at the development of the Real Dream method, there were two new questions. The first was, will we be able to leave the personal space, and bring back information which is accessible to an outside reader? Secondly, how will the theme evolve during the sessions, what information will we be able to contribute? And will the art contribute to bringing that

knowledge back from the other world experience?

The sessions took place on three consecutive days and were between two and a half to four hours each. I sent the women invitations to participate in the research along with Levine's paragraph about encountering the other, asking that they keep it in mind and see where it meets them. I started every session with a cup of tea and an explanation of the session's intentions. I explained how the work developed and what we will be doing, step by step. I added to that by saying that we are collecting information and what comes might continue to develop further after the session ends. It might bring a clear message, or it might just be a surreal and creative experience. I asked that they try to let the information in and move through the process with as little judgment as they possibly can, while reassuring them that we all find ourselves doubting in different moments, but that there is no way of getting anything wrong in this space. I explained that everything that is said will be completely private except what they chose to share, and that I like the process to remain discreet as well. Once they understood the process, we began.

For the first part of the session, the intake, I went back to the paragraph and read it out loud, curious to see what this had brought up in each of them. We started by discussing where this meets them in their personal lives, looking to phrase a clear question. This part of phrasing and rephrasing the question is important, as the participants let new ideas come and the space of inquiry starts to expand.

All the women chose to look at their interactions with other people who are close to them, their immediate families and close friends, asking how they may reach a more authentic expression within these relationships. The word "freedom" came up repeatedly in all three sessions, and repeated through the different questions they posed: How to open the connections between the speech of the heart, the mind and the words spoken? How to be authentic and faithful to one's own calling while respecting those relationships? How to free a creative expres-

sion? How much am I able to be myself within the expectations and obligations which my relationships bring?

For the second part we moved to the decentering, the creative space. I changed the lighting, which immediately changed the atmosphere, and we stepped into the arts. They received notebooks where they wrote at different stages of the process. I showed them postcards, portraits which I have collected through the years while visiting museums. I guided them into choosing a portrait, and the person in that postcard accompanied them throughout the decentering process.

We wrote and painted, and as I took their portrait, lighting them with hand-held lights, they were guided into an audio-visual experience. The photographic portrait is an accumulation of the process; the women are seen inside the paintings they have made. I am aware that how I make these portraits, as well as the progress of the session itself, may not be totally clear to the reader. This is a choice I make to keep some of the mystery and element of surprise open for future participants and for my own personal design process.

The end of the decentering connects to the third part of the aesthetic analysis—we looked at their portraits and chose one. We discussed the creative process, and they gave the work a title in relation to their experience. Here are the texts they wrote, accompanied by the portraits I made and their titles.

Reborn from the flames

Hagar Talmor



Hello dear friend

I've been to the end of the world and back.

I've seen the power of tenderness of nature and allowed myself to just be part of it.

I wish to permit myself PRESENCE.

Meeting the other is nature's way of meeting yourself.

Here and now

Hagar

The flight within
Mandy Pang

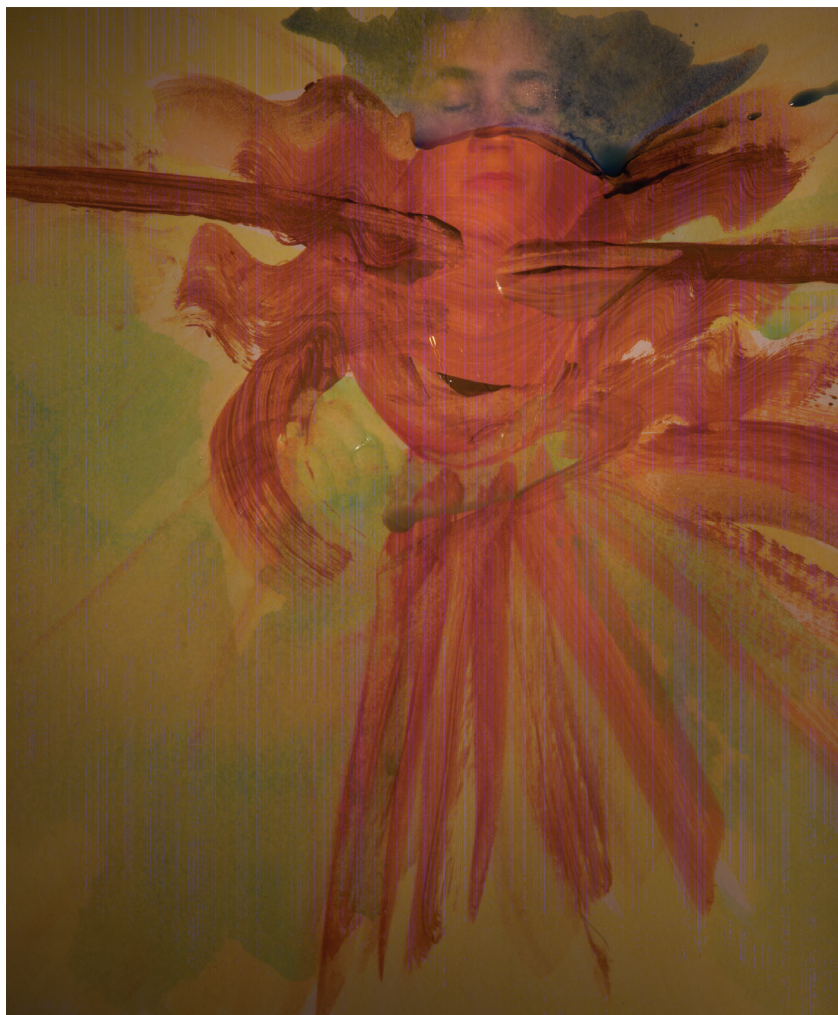


Encountering the other inside myself
Is a wider expansion of the mind, body and consciousness
Entering an internal vortex
You don't know what you will face,
How deep you will go
And when, who or what may come

Some encounters come and go,
some linger or return,
others become within.

Liberté masquée

Nadine Richter



I encountered others and the world within myself because the other is a reflection of me.
I am free within myself. Freedom is momentary. It is boundless and yet limited to the horizons I set.
In her depth of thought a melancholy
Struck her strength
And she rested in the freedom of her femininity.

As the session can take participants into unexpected places, I asked the women to take time and let the process evolve in their mind. Ten days later I sent them questionnaires. I wanted to know their impressions of the theme of encountering the other, their personal questions and the method itself.

Looking at the Real Dream method

Two of the women remarked especially on how they were at ease, and at the same time felt intense emotions. They were all surprised by the unfolding of the session and by the different creative elements.

One of the women had mentioned that she would have liked more clarity regarding the process before we began. It was a good reminder of the importance of the beginning part of the session, and the sense of reassurance which knowing the structure can give.

Mandy wrote about feeling that the process between her and me had reflected symbolically the way in which she interacts with others, something which she felt she needed to look at further. She saw the method as a way to reach undiscovered aspects of oneself, which can serve a deep meaning—the image was allowing her to see herself in a different way than she had seen before.

For Hagar it felt like a journey from the outside in; the image was showing her the way she would like to live: “a calm center inside a life full of fire and sparks.” She added that she enjoyed the fact that we were both in the creative process, she didn’t feel observed, it was for her a meeting of two people who came to share.

Nadine wrote “I feel like I was guided on a journey to my subconscious.”

Regarding their personal questions Hagar and Mandy both felt that deep changes were taking place in their lives since the session. All three remarked that the process is still unfolding. Nadine wrote: "I have been reflecting on the freedom that comes from true belonging. Not the freedom that comes from 'fitting in.' Having the courage to be who I am is what leads to freedom. When I try to fit in, my freedom ends."

Nadine and Mandy both experienced synchronicities. During the decentering, Mandy had seen a butterfly, and when we looked at the portrait, she saw it there as well. A week after the session as she was walking in the city streets, a butterfly sat on her and stayed for half an hour in the palm of her hand.

Regarding the evolution of the theme of encountering the other they were all still engaging with what they had experienced and wrote in the session.

Hagar felt the importance of having her mind, speech and soul aligned for the right communication with others. Mandy added another paragraph to accompany her portrait. And Nadine wrote: "My conclusion is that the deeper my connection to myself is, the deeper my connection to others can be. I can only meet others to the depth at which I meet myself."

Research conclusions

I could sense during the sessions what the women had written

about the method. They had gone into different levels of awareness and brought back information that was important to them. When the sessions are deep, that information needs time to evolve. The art we made, for me, showed our experience in the most direct way. Synchronicities, such as Mandy's butterfly, open a space where surprises leave the time and place of the session, and break out into the world, like signposts which show both the participant and me that we are looking in the right direction.

In the answers the three women had given in their questionnaire, I saw that the personal process had become intertwined with the theme of the research. Yet, during the sessions, in their writings and in our conversations, I heard a voice which was speaking from a more universal and deep perspective. I was surprised by the clarity in which I had found the answers to my own personal question regarding encountering the other. That question was, while experiencing reality as interconnected, I still feel my separateness, what is then the border between myself and the world?

I chose three sentences, one from each of the three texts written during the sessions, which together pointed towards the answer and added to my exploration of the human experience of encounter:

Meeting the other is nature's way of meeting yourself.

Encountering the other inside myself

Is a wider expansion of the mind, body and consciousness.

I encountered others and the world within myself because the other is a reflection of me.

The results of introducing a theme from outside the session had left me curious about further developing the possibilities which this method holds.

Many artists who come to study art therapy or EXA, become detached from their own art practice. To me, an art practice is a resource which should not be wasted. It is the knowledge of a path that has been uncovered and should not be then left aside or rarely visited. I suggest that bringing yourself as a researcher, as a facilitator and as an active artist can bring new, individual and unique ways of working that can serve both participants and facilitators.

One of the things that made me feel like I had found a home at EGS was the request of the teachers that each student adds something new to the field. This is a testament to the open heart and spirit of the founders and of the work itself. Each practitioner makes their own path; in mine, I have found my way of encountering the other.

References

Bishop, C., ed. (2006) *Participation*. Boston: MIT Press

Bishop, C. (2012). *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. Verso Books.

Calderon, J. M. (2020). Expressive Arts Based Research. *POIESIS: A Journal of the Arts & Communication* Volume 17, 2020, 17, 36.

Eder, J. M. (1945). *History of Photography*. Columbia University Press: New York.

Knill, P. J., Levine, E. G., & Levine, S. K. (2005). *Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy: Toward a Therapeutic Aesthetics*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London.

Leavy, P. (2020). *Method Meets Art: Arts-based Research Practice*. Guilford Publications.

Levine, S. K. (1992). *Poiesis: The Language of Psychology and the Speech of the Soul*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Levine, S. K. (2012). Longing for Beauty and the Work: An Interview with Paolo Knill. *POIESIS: A Journal of the Arts & Communication*, Volume 14, 2012, 10, 26.

Levine, S. K. (2019). *Philosophy of Expressive Arts Therapy: Poiesis and the Therapeutic Imagination*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Daphna Saker Massey is a visual artist, an expressive arts therapist and an expressive arts based researcher. Since graduating with an M.A. from EGS in 2012, she has been developing her “Real Dream” method, which combines her artistic practice and expressive arts experience. This became the subject of her doctoral dissertation after graduating from the CAGS program in 2014. She participated in the MusraraMix festival in Jerusalem (2016) and has worked in Israel, Italy, the USA, Germany, and Spain.



Escapando del muro (Escaping from the wall). Digital painting–Judith Alalú



I am another you. Painting by Judith Alalú

The Bond in Expressive Arts Therapy

Tinkuy, the Coloniality of Power and the Imaginary

José Miguel Calderon

In Expressive Arts Therapy we often say that the arts are at the center of the experience. That is to say, we trust in the transformative power of the arts if we let them manifest to their full potential, without prematurely interfering with interpretations or psychological understandings. Although this is a fundamental characteristic of our discipline, we must not forget that the arts occur in a secure bond with the facilitator or change agent.

In this essay, I would like to name three aspects to take into account in the bonds that expressive arts facilitators establish with clients, groups, organizations, communities or students:

Tinkuy

In Calderon (2019), I have already extensively described the relationship between tinkuy and expressive arts therapy. Tinkuy or “encounter” in Quechua, has multiple meanings that continue to be discovered in different ethnolinguistic investigations (Valiente, 2016). The image that best describes it for me is that of two rivers that converge and in that encounter eddies, frictions, chaos, confusion arise until finally a new river emerges. Allen (2002) tells us that “Tinkuys are powerful, dangerous places full of liberated and uncontrollable forces (...) a mixture of different elements that brings something new into existence, and this new being (...) is endowed with vitalizing force.” (p.205)

The tinkuy thus alludes both to the possibilities of vital transformation that occur in the encounter as well as the difficulties and frictions that may arise. The tinkuy is an essential idea in the Andean worldview that seeks balance and the possibility of continuing with the regeneration of the world. In the tinkuy differences are honored and the multiplicity is celebrated in a vital coexistence.

In our expressive arts work, the image of the tinkuy can inspire our encounters with the people, groups and communities with whom we work. The tinkuy can guide our ethics of encounter. It also invites us to integrate the complex and difficult moments that occur in any therapeutic or change encounter: when there are resistances and conflicts in the sessions, when people cannot enter to do art or blockages arise that prevent access to the imaginal space. The tinkuy encourages us to see these moments as part of a process towards transformation where something new can emerge.

The tinkuy seeks to promote encounters with people’s resources. On many occasions the people or groups that seek help are disconnected from their strengths, and their symptoms or problems are more present. Clients or communities identify with a negative or pathologi-

cal way of being in the world. The tinkuy reminds us of the importance of integrating the perspective of health into people's lives and preventing them from focusing only on what is not working.

When there is no tinkuy, conflict, stagnation and disease arise. In our expressive arts sessions, we should revive the fluidity of the tinkuy and its promise to bring something new to the world by honoring multiplicity.

Coloniality of power

The term coloniality of power has been elaborated by Anibal Quijano (2007), a Peruvian sociologist who asserts that the consequences brought about by the conquest in Latin America are still valid in our contemporary society. A group in power continues to exercise control over a large majority, imposing a way of being in the world above other visions. This impact occurs on many levels: cultural, educational, economic, social, even existential. As Maldonado-Torres (2007) says, coloniality: "...remains alive in school textbooks, in the criteria for good academic work, in culture, in common sense, in the peoples' self-image, in individual aspirations, and in many other aspects of our modern experience. In a sense, we breathe coloniality on a daily basis in our modernity." (p.131)

In every therapeutic encounter with the arts, beyond living in a specific territory, we have to keep in mind how the dynamics of power and coloniality are updated. As expressive arts facilitators we have to ask ourselves how we have internalized the coloniality of power throughout our history, what aspects of us are colonized. Does my mind have greater preponderance over my emotions? Does my body express its vitality freely? Do I impose my ideas about art, change and transformation onto the people I work with?

Likewise, we have to ask ourselves what type of bond the people with whom we work have in relation to the coloniality of power, how they have internalized these inequalities. Where do

clients place us facilitators in relation to power? Do they give us power and control over their lives? How do we respond to that? What role do they want us to play? What aspects, emotional, cognitive or bodily, of the clients are subjected to the colonality of power?

In turn, all this leads us to value the role that expressive arts facilitators have in the decolonization process. Here the phenomenological approach of our field and the emphasis given to listening to the images that arise can help us in this process to avoid falling into the imbalance of colonization. In other words, the space of decentering and imaginal reality is a place of equality and freedom above any type of domination. The arts understood in this way would be helping to strengthen bonds free of the colonality of power.

The Imaginary

Just as we are aware that we work with the internal creative resources of the person (particularly their imagination), we must also take into account the imaginary of the place where we find ourselves. I have elsewhere (Calderon 2015) defined the imaginary as: nature, geography, and/or spaces of the place.

- Vision of the world that the inhabitants of that place have or had
- Myths
- Traditional and modern forms of creation (arts and handicrafts)

The imaginary is also related to the *pacha*, one of the most important divinities of the Andean world. The *pacha* is the space, time, world of a specific place. We must ask ourselves as facilitators what is the connection we have with our *pacha*, that is, with nature, artistic traditions, world-view, myths of the place where we are going to work. Likewise, we must investigate how our clients or groups have internalized their bond with their imaginary.

The imaginary is also a great resource to create and nurture our expressive arts practice. Just as we have art materials or musical instruments, we also have everything that the pacha of the place where we work can offer us. Nature and the space where we work also imagines and expresses itself and can participate in the encounter between expressive arts facilitators and their clients and communities.

However, in Latin America, Quijano (2007) warns us: "In a very broad part of the worldwide population, the imaginary itself was colonized" (p. 123). In other words, the resources present in our pacha are being made invisible and restricted. How then to make the tinkuy with our imagery, as I am proposing, if it is subdued? In turn, in the Andes, individual or collective illnesses are understood as a "dislocation" from the pacha. "Distanced from their Pacha, people—and culture—run the risk of becoming distorted, falling ill" (Kreimer, 1993).

Due to all this, it becomes more important to integrate the imaginary of the place where we work as a way of reestablishing the lost health as a consequence of the coloniality of power and reconnecting with an invaluable source of resources.

After reviewing these three ideas it is important to remember that in our expressive arts work the arts are at the center in a vital and transformative tinkuy between the client, group and community with the facilitator. The tinkuy inspires the way of approaching this therapeutic bond like two rivers that come together and bring a new vital force. This tinkuy takes place in a space that has a particular imaginary with which we can enrich our sessions. Recover the dialogue with the pacha and everything it can offer us. All within a perspective that seeks to transform the coloniality of power into more egalitarian and liberating bonds between us and our multiplicity.

I am another you

I am the sovereign Atahualpa and his pain, rage, and impotence.
I am the grandeur of his empire and the resignation of its destruction. His supposed
fratricide and his humiliated generals.

I am the Marques Governor Francisco Pizarro and his urge to eat everything up, his
blindness and insanity. His poverty, his deceit, and his unbreakable determination.

I am José María Arguedas, his anguish and depression, his beehive. I am the beauty of his
song, his Don Diego in perpetual dialogue with sly foxes everywhere in Peru.

I am the Lord of Sipán, his majesty and his fears. I am all the Mochica governors, those
who clung to power and those who made their culture flourish.

I am the Pacha that heals you and that sickens you. The one that waits calmly for you to
look at her, hear her, and feel her in order to give you all she has to give.

I am the lord of intermediate spaces; I live in the kingdom of "in-between."
I am in one place and the other, at the same time. I am your rage and joy, your fear and
fortitude, a torrent that stirs everything up and renders it transparent.

I am the maker of chaos and humor, a Baal Shem Tov who flashes in his frantic dance,
leaves his body and confuses himself with God.

I am the encounter between the sea and the sun at dusk, the sand, the salt, the waves,
the wind, and those infinite lighted shades of color that die and are reborn.

Infinite lighted shades of color.

You, too, are another me.

References

Allen, J. Catherine. (2002) *The Hold Life Has: Coca and Cultural Identity in an Andean Community*. 2nd ed. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

Calderón, JM. (2015). *Tinkuy: The Encounter Between the Peruvian Imaginary and the Expressive Arts*. Doctoral dissertation for the European Graduate School.

Calderon, JM. and Velez, O. (Ed.) (2019), *Dolor y Belleza: Imágenes de las Artes Expresivas en el Peru*. Lima: TAE Perú

Kreimer, Elizabeth. (1993) Un proyecto de salud.... pero, para quién, pp. 89-108. En: Pinzón, C., Suárez, R., Garay, G. (editores). *Cultura y Salud en la Construcción de las Américas. Reflexiones sobre el Sujeto Social*. Coedición del Instituto Colombiano de Cultura y Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo del Popoli.

Maldonado-Torres, Nelson. (2007) Colonialidad del ser: contribuciones al desarrollo de un concepto, pp. 127-168. En: Castro-Gómez, Santiago y Gros-Foguel, Ramón (ed.). *El Giro Decolonial: Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*. Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores. Universidad Central, Instituto de Estudios Contemporáneos y Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Instituto Pensar.

Quijano, Aníbal. (2007) Colonialidad del poder y clasificación social, pp. 93-126. En: Castro-Gómez, Santiago y Grosfoguel, Ramón (ed.). *El Giro Decolonial: Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global*. Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores. Universidad Central, Instituto de Estudios Contemporáneos y Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Instituto Pensar

Valiente, T. (2016). Tinkuy. Encuentro de contrarios o diferentes. Una mirada en las fuentes. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.18441/ind.v33i1.199-220>

José Miguel Calderon Co-founder of TAE Peru/Barcelona institute. Director of the expressive arts doctoral program at EGS, Ph.D in expressive arts therapy from EGS. He received a master's degree in Theoretical Psychoanalytic Studies at University College, London. Graduated in clinical psychology from the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. Expressive arts therapist and supervisor. He has led various community projects. His interest is in arts-based research, and the exploration of movement and creative writing.

The Art of Slowness: Healing through Symbolic Process

Alexandra Fidyk

As I prepared for a fairy tale seminar on the Russian folk tale, *Vessalisa the Beautiful*, I was met by a profound bodily re-membling of the mystery and vitality revealed when moving slowing with an image from a fairy tale, dream, or waking-life. Something happens when we read a passage slowly, again, then again, rounding more slowly each time, repeating any gesture that accompanies it, again, then again, more slowly each time. Through the reiterative turning of the amplification process, something crystallizes that was not previously known. It was in this way that I came to experience and so stand-under amplification as a method of slowness—a method of encountering the other.

Amplification, a method central to Jungian interpretation used commonly with fairy tales and dreams, might be understood best as the *art of slowness* and not simply an act of enlargement. In slowing down and inviting the clustering attraction of a symbol to loosen, a field constellates with bejeweled layers of emotional, sensorial, and somatic effects. Each turn invites; images, impulses, memories, symbols, affect, and stories appear, enveloping dreamer or storyteller and listener in the very thing itself. We become cast in a somaesthetic experience of its life world—the bony, crooked fingers of Baba Yaga, the haunting cold of light burning in the eye sockets of a skull, and the sweetbitter scent of horse dander as the night's watchman rides

by. A cocoon wraps us close, providing safe, magical withdrawal from life's tasks. This temporary shroud makes possible the actual transformation not only of the persons, but also of the field and the space between. This envelopment is the active ingredient (von Franz, 1970), the necessary agent to be mixed with the containing medium of the what, the how, and the meanings of the collection of parallels (mythology, fairy tales, etymology, meaningful associations culturally, familiarly, historically, geographically, personally, and so on) gathered in rounding the image.

This feeling-toned discovery reflects what I understand to be Heidegger's phenomenological notion of "thingness," where phenomenology is invested in the strangeness and otherness of the thingness of the thing. Heidegger (2001), in the turn toward the lived world as a way of being rather than a way of knowing, asked, "What in the thing is thingly?" (p. 165). This turn shifts us from epistemology to ontology; and in today's worldviews, from a predictable paradigm to an animated one in continuous flux and dynamic change. Here things dwell in relations; their revealment ensues via these relations, whereby the thingness is never of the thing alone but of the thing in its thingly relations. Phenomenology requires of us, its practitioners, a "heedful attunement to the modes of being of the ways that things are in the world" (van Manen, 2014, p. 105). In wondering, noticing, slowing with this call, phenomenologists warn not to interpret, for we risk losing contact with the always already situatedness of the thing. Interpretation typically privileges the separateness of ideas, abstractions, and intellectualism—devoid of felt relations. To inadequately dwell with a phenomenon, in this case, the image, flattens or reduces what is meant to be a fattening or reviving process. To adequately dwell with the image, in its fecund particularities, respects its living world. When such indwelling occurs, we fall into a kind of entrainment with the otherness of the thing and its rich place-time-relations. Such an encounter, even fleeting, is at some level part of and significant to the becoming of the dreamer and listener—and is carried forth as a re-membering. Because it was only forgotten, this otherness is never fully other. It lies in waiting for a chance encounter to be known.

Slow receptive exploration, as in collecting parallels for the image of Baba Yaga, for example, aids in drawing forth such an encounter. Baba Yaga, across time and culture, has been seen as “a many-faceted figure... [recognized] as a Cloud, Moon, Death, Winter, Snake, Bird, Pelican or Earth Goddess, totemic matriarchal ancestress, female initiator, phallic mother, or archetypal image” (Johns, 2004, p. 9). As the thing—old woman—appears, our felt-sense brings her into embodied awareness, and with every turn, she comes more fully into consciousness, inhabiting the body, until a spell takes hold—a spell with the power to transform us. Like any spell, we are overcome with awe—when something familiar becomes profoundly unfamiliar—staring at the old one who stares back at us. This casting and the reciprocal being caught beckons something to break open.

Through this elongated archetypal spinning, we are better able to notice the story—its details, movements, and nuances. “Nōtitia” means “a knowing,” “a being known.” In today’s terms, it means “noticing,” “perceiving,” “attending,” “heeding.” That is, listeners of a tale observe with more than the eyes, hear with more than the ears, feel with more than touch. We can sense what it is that moves the characters or grips us, the listeners. “An archetypal image,” for von Franz (1970), “is not only a thought pattern; it is also an emotional experience—the emotional experience of an individual. [And] *only if* it has an emotional and feeling value for the individual is it alive and meaningful” (p. 10, emphasis added). It is also an “elementary poetical image and fantasy, and an elementary emotion,... even an elementary impulse toward some typical action” (p. 8). “Feelings [here] are necessary and belong,” especially “if you want to get at the phenomenon in the right way” (p. 11). Notice. Attend what arises. Linger with the image so your whole being can be moved by and respond to it.

To illustrate, Baba Yaga has a long lineage through Slavic folklore, shape-shifting with the east and the west; nevertheless, the intercultural weaving of witches and wise women proves a fascinating aspect of folk tales. She appears in traditional Russian folklore as a monstrous and hungry cannibal. As “ambiguous mother and witch” (Johns, 2004), she most often lives alone

in a hut in the forest which stands and rotates on chicken legs. This attribute bears reference to the frequent epithet, "bony legs." To some protagonists, she is helpful; to others, she is harmful. Johns (2004) identifies her as "one of the most memorable and distinctive figures in Slavic European folklore" (pp. 1-3). He adds, she is "enigmatic: and often exhibits "striking ambiguity" (pp. 1-3).

Zipes (2013) describes her as "the wild witch," "inscrutable and so powerful that she does not owe allegiance to the Devil or God or even to her storytellers. In fact, she opposes all Judeo-Christian and Muslim deities and beliefs" (viii). Zipes explains: "She transcends definition because she is an amalgamation of deities mixed with a dose of sorcery" (p. vii). He adds that she was created "by many voices and many hands from the pre-Christian era in Russia times up through the eighteenth century until she finally became 'fleshed out' in the abundant Russian and other Slavic tales collected in the nineteenth century" (p. vii). The tales formed an "indelible and unfathomable image" of what a Baba Yaga is, as in many tales there are three Baba Yagas, often sisters (p. vii)—as we recall the opening scene of Macbeth. Thus, despite getting rid of one, another appears. As "her own woman," she is "a parthogenetic mother," who decides case-by-case whether she will aid or kill the people who come to her home. She can be an ally or friend, like a grandmother.

Baba Yaga's major prey consists of children and young women, and the odd man—traits shared with Kali and Lilith. Specifically, she thrives on Russian blood. She "kidnaps in the form of a Whirlwind" (Zipes, 2013, viii), and she murders at will. This reference to Russian blood highlights her nose, which some describe as "stuck (sic) into the ceiling," and it is known to sniff out her interlopers. Some narrators emphasize the repulsiveness of her nose or other body parts—breasts, fingers, and face (p. 21). Scholars agree that Baba Yaga lives deep in the woods; it is her domain. It is said that she is particularly connected to the birch tree. Birch is reportedly the same wood used for her broom, known to whisk away negativity and bring light and healing—known by the Cree and Blackfoot to reduce inflammation and aid digestion.

Animals venerate her, and she protects the forest as a mother-earth figure—kindred here to Artemis. Dogs, geese, swans and the black cat are said by some to be her animals. They protect her and help with her work. The only times she leaves the forest, “she travels in a mortar (a bowl for grinding food), wielding a pestle as a club or rudder, and a broom to sweep away the tracks behind her” (Zipes, 2013, p. viii). Baba Yaga holds the “secret to the water of life and may even be Mother Earth herself” (viii). Some call her a Crone Goddess who is honoured at harvest; she resides over the last sheaf of grain when she ensures that the grain will grow again—a connection to the wheat, flax, and poppy spinning within the fairy tale—an association that opens another thread to amplify. And so, the weaving continues.

The research required for this kind of enlargement may take months to elicit the spell of the things themselves. It requires wonder, willingness, and a capacity to dwell in the unpredictable forces of the unconscious. While both Baba Yaga and the unconscious are unpredictable, we must eventually trust in something greater than ourselves in order to venture forth into the new. Such discovery is not unlike the light that Vessalisa retrieved from the old woman. After enduring and successfully completing all her tasks, Baba Yaga sent her on her way with a skull carrying fire. Paradoxically, Baba Yaga and the unconscious are both the devourer and the giver of light. In venturing toward both, we must embrace something beyond-the-personal rather than only the personal. Nevertheless, both are potentially destructive and can overwhelm as well as potentially create and heal. Just as an encounter with the unconscious can be numinous, Baba Yaga constantly tends burning coals in her hearth. When she decides, she gifts fire—the spark that becomes a new creative life. Just as we see the transformation of Vessalisa through the encounter with Baba Yaga, we too can be inspired, restored, through a turn to creative, symbolic processes. The charm of the presence of the living symbol is the aim; its tangibility becomes an embodied experience. The interactive field and container become more enlivened, a quicksilver sparking, and a palpable quickening felt by those present. Here, the archetypal revealing works upon all elements within the container, imbuing them with wonder, charging them with an awe-filled orientation, and spelling them with numinosity. This enlarged,

embodied experience is primary. It alone makes transformation possible.

Developing the attitude, patience, and attunement to engage in the acts of noticing, perceiving, attending, and heeding requires capacity and care by both teller and listener. To slow, to weave and to amplify is to phenomenologically trace and breathe in the aspects of the thing revealing itself in other things—the bird, the wind, the winged creature—and to somatically perceive the thing as it reveals itself from its relations. In this way, the wonder of the phenomenon addresses us and is addressed by us. As von Franz (1970) writes of the power of traditional story, “a fairy tale takes you far away into the childhood dream world of the collective unconscious” (p. 41). “Once upon a time” transports us from the particularities of place-time-relations and releases us immediately into the archetypal realm, where the magic common to childhood dwells. It is here that the “unwilled willingness to meet what is utterly strange in what is most familiar awaits us at the approaching path toward knowledge and understanding” (van Manen & Adams, 2010, np). In this wonder and willingness, we come into alignment with the mandate of the Self, and so the tale, literally, enchants our lives. What begins as an initial experience of otherness, shifts through slowing, wondering, noticing, and attuning, where through the immediacy of experience, the thing is lived through—grasped.

In this call to encounter the Other, the Self, and the Earth, we may well feel the existentially hopeless aspect of life in consciousness—witnessed in the moment as Russia is invading Ukraine and global warming is devastating glaciers, ice fields, and inter-species’ habitats. There remains concealed in the unconscious irrational potentialities. Remarkable unfoldings in waiting. Unconcealedness that reveals a whole range of manifestations and defies the unilateral pull of interpretations. This presence does not mean that we do not act in consciously mediated ethical and meaningful ways. It does mean that amidst the symptoms of our political, geographical, and relational terror, when the condition of a continual respectful relationship between consciousness and the unconscious has been established, a healing cure is possible. Archetypally and phenomenologically, as with our brief circumambulation of Baba Yaga, show-

ing forth her witch and wise woman ways, we are asked to host practices that permit a thing to show itself, particularly its unseen, even undesirable, other sides. We too are asked how can we invite something that is concealed, something that lies hidden, but that fundamentally belongs to what shows itself and constitutes its very meaning and ground, to show itself to us in our individual lives and collective endeavours? Something necessary yet able to be disclosed requires a particular kind of ethic if it is to be revealed—an ethic that respects the art of slowness, restores the still-living function of the symbolic life, and honours the intentional modes of wondering, noticing, and attending.

References

Johns, A. (2004). *Baba Yaga: The Ambiguous Mother and Witch of Russian Folktale*. Peter Lang.

Johns, A. (1998). "Baba Yaga and the Russian Mother." *The Slavic and East European Journal*. American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages. 42(1).

Forrester, S. (2013). *Baba Yaga: The Wild Witch of the East in Russian Fairy Tales*. University Press of Mississippi.

Heidegger, M. (2001). "The thing." In *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans A. Hofstadter, (pp. 161-184). Perennial Classics.

Von Franz, M.-L. (1970). *The Interpretation of Fairy Tales*. Revised Edition. Shambhala.

Van Manen, M. (2014). *Phenomenology of Practice: Meaning-giving Methods in Phenomenological Research and Writing*. Left Coast Press.

Van Manen, M., & Adams, C. (2010). Phenomenology. The method of reduction. *International*

Encyclopedia of Education, 3rd Edition, (np). Retrieved from: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/phenomenological-method>

Zipes, J. (2013). Foreword. Unfathomable Baba Yagas. In *Baba Yaga: The Wild Witch of the East in Russian Fairy Tales*, S. Forrester, (pp. vii-xii). University Press of Mississippi.

Alexandra Fidyk, philosopher, poet, psychotherapist and professor, serves the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta. Her transdisciplinary research engages with youth and teachers on issues of wellbeing, mental health, body-centred and creative processes, and trauma-sensitive pedagogy. She embraces hermeneutics, poetic inquiry, and life writing in an aesthetic range of genres to explore questions central to living well, loving, and suffering.

The encounter with...

Odette A. Vélez V.

Martín Zavala G.

But only someone who is ready for everything,
who excludes nothing, not even the most enigmatical,
will live the relation to another as something alive and
will himself draw exhaustively from his own existence.

(Rainer Maria Rilke)

something alive
present here and now

something alive
part of a landscape
within something bigger and enigmatical

something alive that will die

this evanescence: all my kingdom¹
a kingdom that will not last longer than the light of the fireflies, will be mine²

1 Verse by the Peruvian poet Juan Gonzalo Rose: *esta fugacidad: todo mi reino*.

2 Fragment of a story by the Peruvian writer Edgardo Rivera Martínez.

something alive that will remain after our existence

*why this mercy of death that allows us to return to life, even if only for a few hours,
to dance this dance?*³

a stone
the dog that wags the tail
the singing of a voice
the beautiful flower and its aroma
a bird in full flight
a wave in the sea

your cry
my pains
our lying face
our contempt
the rotten words

that is who I am that is what you are
that is what we are

that is

am I ready for everything?
is it possible not to exclude anything?

3 Fragment of a story by the Peruvian writer Edgardo Rivera Martínez.

I don't know what is to come
or maybe it is me who arrives

I go in and out
day and night

something alive
comes and goes

appearances are deceiving

my appearances are deceiving

sometimes I close the door
other times it stays ajar

*a door is a door
that I knock on day and night⁴*

sometimes I wait outside for something alive to arrive
sometimes I'm inside and I wait for something to come in

sometimes someone answers

and sometimes I answer

s o m e t i m e s y e s . s o m e t i m e s n o

4 Verse by the Peruvian poet Jorge Eduardo Eielson.

something alive

I am alive

I live in something

do not close the door

do not leave something out

ready for everything

I close and open the door

i
n
h
a
l
e

e
x
h
a
l
e

the most enigmatical is yet to come
or dwells in us always

I exclude the landscape and remain alone
I exclude your voice and I become silent
I exclude your touch and my caresses disappear

the perfume of the flower is not only there for me

*the flower, not the idea, is the goddess there*⁵
what breathes with me and what ceases to breathe?
how do I leave something aside if I am part of the whole living landscape?

I exclude
and nothing disappears

I belong always

*And more than anything else, what sounds the most are the footsteps of the animals
that one has been before being human,
the footsteps of stones and vegetables and the things that every human has been.
And also, what one has heard before; all that sounds in the night of the jungle.*

*Because everything that one is going to listen, all of that sounds, anticipated,
in the midst of the night in the jungle, in the jungle that sounds in the midst of the night.
Imagine. Only imagine. Who is going to be able to hear it all, at once, and believe it...?*⁶

5 Verse by the Peruvian poet J. C. de la Puente.

6 Fragment of the novel by Peruvian writer César Calvo.

References

- Calvo, C. (2015). *Las tres mitades de Ino Moxo*. Lima: Peisa.
- De la Fuente, J.C. (2008) *Las barcas que se despiden del sol*. Lima: Tranvías editores.
- Eielson, J.E. (1976). Poema *He aquí el amor*. En: Poesía Escrita. Lima: INC
- Rilke, R. (1996). *Cartas a un joven poeta*. Barcelona: Obelisco.
- Rivera Martínez, E. (2006). *Danzantes de la noche y de la muerte y otros relatos*. Lima: Alfaguara.
- Rose, J.G. (1974). Poema *Escribano en la balanza*. En: Obra Poética. Lima: INC

Translation review by Pilar Sousa and Natalia Parodi.

Odette Amaranta Vélez Valcárcel, Professor at TAE Peru institute and the European Graduate School, PhD candidate in expressive arts therapy at EGS. Poet, psychologist and writer, Odette accompanies learning, creation and healing processes through the expressive arts and Bach flowers. She has taught at several universities in Peru. Author of poetry books, co-author and editor of books on education.

Martin Zavala Gianella, Co-founder and teacher at TAE Peru institute. Studies in expressive arts and social change at the European Graduate School, in psychology at the University of Barcelona and at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. He has participated in various programs to promote community health, and has published several papers. He loves the sea and has participated in two painting exhibitions.

El encuentro con...

Odette A. Vélez V.

Martín Zavala G.

Solo quien está dispuesto a todo,
quien no cierra la puerta a nada, ni siquiera a lo más enigmático,
vivirá la relación con el otro como algo vivo
y ahondará en sí mismo.
(Rainer María Rilke)

algo vivo
presente aquí y ahora

algo vivo
parte de un paisaje
dentro de algo más grande y enigmático

algo vivo que morirá

esta fugacidad: todo mi reino¹
será mío un reinado que no durará más allá de cuanto alumbren las luciérnagas²

1 Verso del poeta peruano Juan Gonzalo Rose.

2 Fragmento de un cuento del escritor peruano Edgardo Rivera Martínez.

algo vivo que permanecerá luego de nuestra existencia

¿a qué se debe esa merced de la muerte que nos permite retornar a la vida,
aunque solo sea por unas horas, para bailar esta danza?³

una piedra
el perro que mueve la cola
el canto de una voz
la bella flor y su aroma
un ave en pleno vuelo
una ola en el mar

tu llanto
mis dolores
nuestra cara que miente
nuestro desprecio
las palabras podridas

eso soy eso eres
eso somos

eso es

¿estoy dispuesta a todo?
¿es posible no excluir nada?

3 Fragmento de un cuento del escritor peruano Edgardo Rivera Martínez.

no sé qué está por venir
o tal vez soy yo quien llego

entro y salgo
día y noche

algo vivo
en vaivén

las apariencias engañan

mis apariencias engañan

a veces cierro la puerta
otras veces queda entreabierta

una puerta es una puerta
a la que golpeo día y noche⁴

a veces espero afuera a que algo vivo llegue
a veces estoy dentro y espero que algo entre

a veces alguien responde

y a veces contesto

a v e c e s s í . a v e c e s n o

4 Verso del poeta peruano Jorge Eduardo Eielson.

algo vivo

estoy vivo

vivo en algo

no cerrar la puerta
no dejar algo al margen

dispuesta
cierro y abro la puerta

i
n
h
a
l
o

e
x
h
a
l
o

lo más enigmático está por venir
o nos habita siempre

excluyo el paisaje y me quedo solo
excluyo tu voz y me silencio
excluyo tu tacto y desaparecen mis caricias

el perfume de la flor no solo está ahí para mí

*la flor, no la idea, es la diosa de ahí*⁵
¿qué respira conmigo y qué deja de respirar?
¿cómo dejo algo de lado si formo parte de todo el paisaje vivo?

excluyo
y nada desaparece

soy parte siempre

*Y más que nada suenan los pasos de los animales que uno ha sido antes de humano,
los pasos de las piedras y los vegetales y las cosas que cada humano ha sido.
Y también lo que uno ha escuchado antes, todo eso suena en la noche de la selva.*

*Porque todo lo que uno va a escuchar, todo eso suena, anticipado,
en medio de la noche de la selva, en la selva que suena en medio de la noche.
Imagínate. Nada más imagínate. ¿Quién va a poder oírlo todo, de una vez, y creerlo...?*⁶

5 Verso del poeta peruano J.C. de la Puente.

6 Fragmento de la novela del escritor peruano César Calvo.

Bibliografía

Calvo, C. (2015). Las tres mitades de Ino Moxo. Lima: Peisa.

De la Fuente, J.C. (2008) Las barcas que se despiden del sol. Lima: Tranvías editores.

Eielson, J.E. (1976) Poema He aquí el amor. En: Poesía Escrita. Lima: INC.

Rilke, R. (1996). Cartas a un joven poeta. Barcelona: Obelisco.

Rivera Martínez, E. (2006). Danzantes de la noche y de la muerte y otros relatos. Lima: Alfaguara.

Rose, J.G. (1974) Poema Escribano en la balanza. En: Obra Poética. Lima: INC.

Performing Home: An Interview with Carrie MacLeod

Stephen K. Levine

SKL: The theme of this year's journal is "encountering the other." I know that a lot of the work you've done in expressive arts has been with people from other cultures, and often in other geographic locations. Can you tell our readers something about the work that you've done in this area and what has drawn you to this?

CM: As a point of orientation for this timely theme of the journal, I'll start by situating my positionality as a white, educated, able-bodied and cis-gendered woman of Anglo-European descent who lives on the traditional, ancestral and unceded lands of the Squamish (Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw), Tsleil-Waututh (səlilwətaʔt) and Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm) Nations. I've been drawn to Expressive Arts projects that call for a critical reflection of power and privilege in relation to my social location and the social constructions of otherness. In this era of mass displacement and dispossession, I am keenly aware that my freedom of movement and subsequent capacity to "encounter the other" comes with a responsibility to confront unjust systems. As I recognize the limitations and resources of my worldviews, I gravitate towards community-engaged performance projects that explore intersecting identities and complex power dynamics. Asking uncomfortable questions with others has led me to arts-based conflict

transformation, refugee resettlement, and truth and reconciliation projects in both international and domestic intercultural contexts. Through activating the senses and the imagination, I have found that an expressive arts praxis illuminates symbolic systems of meaning at individual, communal and policy levels.

SKL: Can you give us some concrete examples of the work that you've done with people from other cultures and the ways in which that has affected you?

CM: I was particularly moved by performance artists in Kabala, Sierra Leone, who were determined to create unmediated spaces of communal joy. When I returned to Sierra Leone several years after the Lomé Peace Accord was signed, the performative categories of "war wounded," "child soldiers," and "amputees" created a stigmatized "other" that surfaced in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and NGO programs. People had been narrowly type-cast as victims or perpetrators based on wartime identities. Corresponding reconciliation initiatives that were developed by "expert" outsiders had yielded limited participation from locals. It was clearly time to listen to the communities on *their* terms.

For a couple of months, I worked with a group of high school youth to produce a multi-ethnic performance peacebuilding festival in Kabala. Stigmas were slowly dismantled when sensational war stories were re-placed with a culturally fluent performance of "social forgetting." Make no mistake, I learned that this mode of forgetting is not bypassing or negating past atrocities. Rather, the community worked to unmake the past by remaking identities in the present. We created giant puppets and invited griot storytellers to infuse doses of Krio humour into the lifeblood of the community. This live assembly of symbols and rituals was aligned with a decentering approach in the Expressive Arts. A culturally situated script became a third "other" where conflictual projections and positions were shape-shifted through performance-making processes. Instead of adhering to old patterns of blame and shame, the emergent performance score housed identities-in-the-making. Long-time enmities were redressed through

the aesthetic logic of performance, and the multi-modal script demanded our undivided attention. There was a renewed capacity to be with one another in ways that made life more livable. Rather than “victims” working through tensions with “perpetrators,” musicians offered another kind of accompaniment with dancers through movement phrases. War-time atrocities were not merely scripted as chronological testimonies, but instead manifested as polyrhythmic memories that surfaced *in their own space and time*.

When we convened a harvesting session after the festival, I posed the question: *Where do we go from here?* One notable response came from a dancer who had lost several limbs in the war. “We do this. We make a move. Just like this. Please tell your family in Canada what we are doing here in ‘Sweet Salone’.” The message was clear: they didn’t want Sierra Leone to be known solely as a conflict zone, but as a vibrant hub of movers and makers. Making a difference. One stage at a time.

Similar “a-ha” moments surfaced for me as I engaged with newcomer youth who were navigating refugee determination systems in Canada. The youths I encountered often saw themselves as adaptable home-makers rather than displaced persons. They were well versed in un(re)solved home-making endeavors and refuted labels that countered this reality. The Expressive Arts projects that I co-facilitated catalyzed ingenious acts of place-making through site-specific performances. I quickly learned that the path of involuntary migration necessitates multiple arrivals rather than one destination. Some of these arrivals manifested as a series of interlocking performances on the streets and in public courtyards rather than specialized programs. Without a consistent studio space to rehearse, the youth taught me to listen for multi-syllabic soundscapes in the neighborhood that were primed for rapping and riffing. Rocks and rakes morphed into instruments in found orchestras. A multi-level staircase in the back of an apartment building gave us an acoustic scaffolding for call and response harmonies between each floor. Through a sensory orientation, it was possible to inhabit the interval spaces between arrivals and departures. Home-making became a quest to find a source of aliveness in

between discomfort and discovery. *How* we witnessed each other in unlikely places became its own form of world-making.

SKL: I see that your encounter with others from different cultures also becomes a way of helping them find a home, either in their own locality or in the new territory of the immigrant. Can you tell us how your focus on building or finding a home relates to your own quest for a place where you can belong? What does home mean to you, as a person who is conscious of your own position as a settler-colonial? Where is your home?

CM: My quest to find home and belonging leads me to into contexts where an expanded range of perception and reception can be possible. I'm no longer seeking a singular place or a group of people that will "inspire" me, but instead find myself gravitating toward spaces and communities that unsettle ethnocentric ways of knowing. I am always listening for new ways of relating—to myself, to others and to the earth—beyond the status quo and prevailing norms.

I often experience this unsettling exchange through the symbiotic energy that flows back and forth between performers and spectators. An irreplaceable gift arises from the immediacy of this mutual response in live performance. Unpredictable and destabilizing encounters are bound to happen here. The play and fluidity of performance moves between spatial, temporal, corporeal and relational dimensions. I love how this dynamic lexicon offers a range of lenses from which to explore the lived and imaginal qualities of home. Performance practices can shed light on the paradoxes, precarities and possibilities of home.

Home is sensed in the musculature in the body, heard in the cracks of glacial songs, negotiated as currencies of meaning between borderlands, or translated through intergenerational tones. There are an infinite number of iterations and inscriptions of home that can be crystallized in a performance. These may take the form of celebrations, divisive contestations and/or surprising revelations. I am often overwhelmed by the structural injustices that I see and am implicated in. The time-bound nature of performance invites a heightened sensitivity to a

particular set of relations and reveals what *really* wants to emerge. With *this* audience. In *this* place. And for *this* moment in time. Performance offers a ritual frame for the pervasive and evasive qualities of home that otherwise escape me. It carries visceral translations that live close to the bone.

Performances are platforms where new systems of meaning can be visibly negotiated and where hierarchies are inverted. Motivations are scrutinized and gestures are improvised. As a settler, I have a responsibility to find spaces that destabilize my positioning and interrogate the source of my motivations in every sense. Performance practices can challenge “official narratives” by introducing alternative scripts and diverse ways of knowing. This emphasis on plural perspectives, relationship building, responsibility and connectivity contribute to a decolonizing praxis of home-making.

SKL: How did you get to this perspective on performance? Can you give some examples of the kinds of experience that you’ve had that lead you to this point of view? I think our readers would like to know how you came to these conclusions, how your experience made you see performance as home-making. Another way to ask this is, where did you start and what happened to you that you ended up decolonizing yourself?

CM: I spent the first sixteen years of my life in a small prairie town on the traditional lands of the Siksikaitsitapi (Blackfoot Confederacy) within the Treaty 7 region of Southern Alberta, Canada. I was surrounded by a relatively homogenous population of mostly white settlers, and a racist and anti-Indigenous undercurrent moved through the language and relations in ways that devalued Indigenous experience. After I witnessed instances of fierce bullying, I wrote and performed a monologue in high school that overtly addressed these issues in front of a full auditorium. I crossed the fourth wall of the proscenium stage and moved through the crowd repeating, “*Wake up! Who do you think you are?*” after each stanza. This was the one place where I could voice my rage, and it was the *one* place in town where I truly felt at home.

When I think back to the shocked faces in the audience, I now realize that agenda-driven messages tend to be less effective than co-creating agency around social justice issues. However, the performance generated much debate and lively discussion in the schools and local newspapers.

This performance catalyzed my desire to pursue undergraduate studies in theatre, and a graduate degree in Theatre and Media as Development at the University of Winchester. For the field internship, I worked with a colleague in a Gender and Development project with an NGO in Rajasthan for several months. The Executive Director was from Rajasthan, but he had spent considerable time working in Europe. He wanted us to devise community workshops and performances for “women’s liberation,” but these visions were incongruent with the caste and gender dynamics in the village. The themes we were exploring through participatory theatre were not welcomed by everyone, and I sensed that our presence was doing more harm than good overall. I suspected that the work would place some women in danger if we carried on. After months of mistranslations and misunderstandings, I thought, *What on earth am I doing here?* I was disillusioned and felt compelled to understand the injustices of settler colonial regimes closer to home.

When I returned to Canada, I collaborated with playwright and theatre practitioner Darrell Wildcat for a couple of years on the Ermineskin Cree Nation in Maskwacîs. We co-facilitated arts projects at the Ehpewapahk Alternate School and the Elders Centre based on the Cree-Métis philosophy of *wahkohtowin*—which translates as kin-

ship or relationships in Nêhiyawênin (Plains Cree language) and Michif (Métis Language). Wahkohtowin is built on the understanding that everything in the world is interconnected and animate. This became the foundation for creating community performances on settler colonial modes of governance, language revitalization, and countering Indigenous representations in the surrounding communities with settler youths. I became keenly aware that I belonged to a lineage that was implicated in a history of dispossession. I knew that decolonizing my worldviews and relations would be a life-long process of learning and unlearning, and this commitment continues to call for my full sensory engagement.

This experience fuelled my desire to collaborate with others who were engaged with arts-based reconciliation processes in local and global contexts. The opportunities to design Expressive Arts programs with conflict resolution practitioners, mediators, scholars, artists and community leaders at grassroots and policy levels have shaped the way I move through the world. For several years, Michelle LeBaron invited me to collaborate on intercultural conflict transformation projects funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Council, Public Safety Canada, and the University of British Columbia Faculty of Law. It has been a joy to bring lessons from these experiences into the Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding Program at EGS.

I've also had the privilege and opportunity to work with Sierra Leone communities for over a decade. I first collaborated with a group of Sierra Leone youth in Canada at the International Conference on Children Affected by war. Youth from conflict zones were being called from around the world to speak directly about their war-torn experiences in a lectern podium format. I worked with an NGO to arrange for several youth from Sierra Leone to develop a more culturally fluent way of communicating their stories through a multi-modal performance score. *They* determined how to stage their stories and silences. This rhythmic script did not offer a verbatim account of "what happened," but viscerally depicted the cycles of collapse and coherence in the aftermath of civil war. The long pauses, jolted movement

phrases and tableau images provoked calls to action in audiences. We then staged this show in a *Peace Through Theatre* tour across the country, in tandem with arts-based workshops on how the illegal trade and consumption of blood diamonds fuels conflicts overseas. This was followed by theatre and film productions in Canada and Sierra Leone with the Freetong Players performance troupe and other grassroots performance artists who were advancing the work of reconciliation. The founder of the Freetong Players, Charlie Haffner, gifted me with the insight that reconciliation is not about achieving harmonious relations. Rather, it involves performing conflicting stories and dissonant views in life-giving forms.

I brought this kernel of wisdom to my work and home life in the Kinbrace Community. As I shared a communal home with people navigating the refugee determination system in Canada, our daily life was braided with urgent health appointments, judicial proceedings, and unplanned visits from border officers. The threat of deportation moved as a relentless undercurrent in our home. This ongoing precarity meant that it was difficult to plan consistent arts-based initiatives. However, I often stumbled upon incidental performances that spontaneously happened in the kitchen or living room. Improvised dances layered with poetic songs of freedom created a hub of connection across linguistic barriers and cultural divides. The smallest acts in transit were reframing host and guest relations in our shared home. These performances became a pivotal point of (re)orientation when a known destination was nowhere to be found.

It was difficult to process the dire consequences of exile that

shaped our everyday home life. Once again, the medium of live performance became an exoskeleton that could hold my internalized responses once I moved out of the home. The negative impacts of systemic injustice on the well-being of asylum seekers catalyzed the creation of two public performances: *Geographies of Belonging*—a mainstage production co-written and performed with Michelle LeBaron and former Kinbrace residents, and *To Be Determined*—a site-specific production written and performed with an ensemble. Outdoor performances staged in neighbourhoods have also generated high levels of community engagement for Syrian resettlement initiatives. When displaced realities were transposed to living inquiries on stage, these indeterminate home spaces were no longer hidden behind closed doors.

Do any of these examples resonate with your experiences of performance as a home-making practice or space to encounter the “other”?

SKL: Thank you for sharing these important steps in your development. I now see clearly how your thinking is grounded in your life experience. We all come from some specific home, though the homes we make may end up being quite different from the ones from which we came. This, to me, is the meaning of *poiesis*: the situation we find ourselves in is always an occasion for us to respond to. We are never determined by the past.

In my case, I was born into a middle-class Jewish family in Brooklyn, New York in 1938. It was still the time of economic Depression and also a time in which the spectre of Fascism threatened Jews everywhere. My parents responded by striving for financial security and by trying to be as assimilated into American society as much as possible. Ethnicity was not at all valued or celebrated, as it came to be much later. Personally, I felt quite alienated by the values that were embodied in my family’s lifestyle. From a certain point of view, I would now say that my family were colonized people who had adopted the values of the colonizer in order to survive. To me, my home was the “other” which I encountered.

My feeling of alienation was intensified by my experience at university, in which the conformism of post-war America was embodied in the dominance of fraternities and football. I began to write poetry as an attempt to find a response to this suffocating atmosphere. I remember writing a long poem, "America: A Prophecy Fulfilled" (the title refers to William Blake's, "America: A Prophecy") in which the concluding line was, "Oh to build a fortress on a phantasmal fart!" It seems that was my final verdict on American culture at that time.

It wasn't until later that performance became central for me, although one could say that all art is performance. It is always *for* someone *by* someone. Even poetry, which I was taught was to be read silently, was originally oral performance, as Elizabeth McKim has demonstrated so clearly in her revival of the oral tradition. At the time, though, performance for me was theatre. I began to act in the 1970s in improvisation and physical theatre, and went on to commedia dell'arte, using this form of popular theatre as political critique. I ended by developing a clown character, Max, who worked with his partner, Sadie (played by my partner Ellen Levine). At EGS in Saas Fee, we did clown shows at the end of each summer school session, often commenting sardonically on events in the world or in the school. We must have done thirty or more shows over the years, involving students as well as faculty.

In all my theatre work, I had the sense that I was helping to create communities in which I could find my place. This was for me the essence of home-making. I remember in Saas Fee, there was a trail that we would walk on in which the words of the emigré writer, Carl Zuck-

meyer, were etched into steel pillars. One of them said, in my translation, "Home is not where you were born, but where you wish to die." I would amend that to say, "Home is not where you were born, but the place that you create with others through performance."

I recently went to dinner with some friends in Martha's Vineyard. After the meal we somehow got onto the topic of home, each one of us taking a turn to say what home meant to us. The following poem emerged from that evening:

When we shared what we meant by home,
First I said "beach,"
and the rabbi echoed, "water."
Not Johannesburg not Israel not the Vineyard,
but water and only water
could soothe the pain of loss.
Then I corrected myself to say "stage."
The only place I was truly home
was by being somewhere else.

Carrie MacLeod is a scholar-practitioner, educator and performance artist who designs and facilitates arts-based peace-building, conflict transformation and refugee resettlement initiatives worldwide. Carrie is on the faculty at the European Graduate School and has published several chapters and training materials in academic, community and artistic contexts.

The Road

Kristin Briggs

Feet up on the dash, no shoes,
the road gave the lie,
hissing like a river, but no water in sight.

Coax a song from this highway, tease it out.

"Let's carve something into this endless drive,"
pulling into a cinderblock motel,
"c'mon..."

"Yeah, let's."

Poetry flows from highways bleeding out from Tennessee
and something flows from nothing if it's meant to truly be.
Freeway wine—green bottle—last light.
Every sip slipped a weight on the ankle of the night.

Monolith of desire
Every room for hire
The parking lot's on fire

Nowhere to turn but toward you
Such exquisite otherness
The choice is clear

From here we can sing on home.

Kristin Briggs is the Co-director of Kitchen Music Studios, a music school in Toronto, Canada, with her partner Steve Briggs. She is a 1998 graduate of CREATE (Toronto). She is also a graphic designer and has been art director for all volumes of the *POIESIS* journal since its inception.

MEETING POINT:

Expressive Arts as Encounter

Cross-cultural Expressive Arts-based Research

Varvara V. Sidorova



I photographed this image (left) in the Moscow Underground. During the pandemic we could hardly meet in the Moscow Metro, but we could find other opportunities for meeting, in the territory of the arts, the space of our hearts.

In the process of writing my second PhD thesis, dedicated to the elaboration of theoretical and methodological bases for culture-oriented

expressive arts therapy, I initiated cross-cultural expressive arts-based research. My colleagues from other countries conducting expressive arts therapy programs supported me. The Moscow expressive arts therapy program in the Department of Counseling and Clinical Psychology at Moscow State University and Education has existed since 2005. Now it is part of the International Network of Expressive Arts Therapy Institutes of the European Graduate School. This research in the field of expressive arts has involved partner institutions, encouraging independent cross-cultural arts-based studies. All the teaching programs included in the International Network share a common philosophy and approach to expressive arts. We speak and understand the same language of expressive arts, even though our native languages differ, as well as the cultural and social situations in our countries. Each institution adapts the standards of teaching expressive arts according to its local situation, but the essence of expressive arts stays the same.

The global situation caused by the pandemic provoked major changes at many levels of consciousness, but in spite of the limitations, the pandemic aided our unity and connected us to each other. The online format of teaching and studying expressive arts has become the unexpected “Third,” expanding our range of play. In 2020, we began inviting teachers from abroad for online meetings. In 2021, the experiment of engaging students from different countries and programs studying expressive arts became possible.

One of the first achievements of this study has been the meeting of students from different countries in the territory of expressive arts. It has become the Meeting Point, the Bridge, the Mirror, making it possible for every student to see and to hear each other, without predispositions and cultural stereotypes, staying in the clean space of phenomenological meeting. This has resulted in strong emotional responses from participants, experiencing how their cultural “bubble” of ordinary reactions broke, producing the experience of “expanding the range of play” (Knill, 1995) at many levels.

As a result of each session, a multilateral dialogue emerged as a conversation with oneself,

with others, with alien and own cultures in the language of expressive arts.

Methodology of the study

There are many different research approaches at the junction of psychology and cultures, among them psychological anthropology, cross-cultural psychology, ethnopsychology, cultural psychology, et al. All of them deal with different aspects of the massive body of culture and psychology. Cross-cultural psychology, for one, puts the main emphasis on comparative analyses of different cultures. Cultural psychology takes culture and cultural influence back into psychological frameworks. Ethnopsychology concentrates on the psychological particularities of people representing different ethnic groups. and calls for poly-cultural comparisons. Psychological anthropology has also been widely studied.

In my first PhD dissertation, dedicated to the cultural determination of the image of consciousness, I researched the junction of cross-cultural and cultural psychologies. My test subjects were Russians and Japanese, as well as Russian and Japanese immigrants to the USA, and a control group of people who had been American citizens for a few generations. I discovered that immigrants import their way of building up their own image of consciousness which is unique for each culture. (Sidorova, 2005) The way people build up their image of consciousness is determined by culture; Japanese form their image of consciousness based on objective reality, while for the Russians the fabric of meaning played the main role. In the Russian way of building up the image of consciousness, more abstract images were present, living rather in the world of ideas than of objects. This study also helped me personally to understand the culture-specific work of Russian consciousness.

In the present study, I did not aim to extract and describe specific differences, by comparing different categories, as was done in the first research using the method of a quantitative survey. My goal was rather to create and describe the phenomenon of meeting people repre-

senting different cultures with the help of the arts, using expressive arts.

I proposed using the expressive arts in this study as an encounter, as the place and means for meeting people representing different cultures. I engaged in cross-cultural arts-based research, an important part of which is not only the result and the accumulated data, such as the analysis and description of visual objects, or the Third, derived from the study, but the very process of investigation representing the multilateral meeting with oneself through the Other or through another culture. Self-understanding is impossible without the Other. Consciousness is initially intersubjective, Husserl said, but at the same time the experience of the Other is not given to us directly—behind the movements and wider manifestations of the Other there is another life of consciousness. This is an almost impossible task—the task of allowing the Other into your experience so that this Other is not spoken of as me, but remains another. A meeting always takes place in the experience of my consciousness, but at the same time this consciousness is impossible without the experience of the Other.

On the one hand, we leaned on the method of art-based research (P. Leavy, Shaun McNiff), firstly, on the understanding of the fact that the scholar himself turns into an artist or a creator plunging into the territory of art experience. We also tried as much as possible to avoid analyzing the data, but instead to stay inside the process of research. The methodology of arts-based research is enhanced by the method of Expressive Arts-Based Research (J. M. Calderon), according to which insights and discoveries made as the result of the art-work—or the “Third”—are the study’s data.

Another philosophical basis of the study is phenomenology. First of all, the scrutiny of cultural layers of experience allows us to exclude one of the layers of cultural identity in order to come up to the higher layer of universal human experience. So, in the course of the process, the participants could feel themselves at different layers of their identity: 1) personal and individual, 2) cultural, conditioned by affiliation to one or another culture, 3) universal human level.

Nevertheless, this reduction did not result in erasure or loss of one's own unique culture, rather, on the contrary, it only became possible through the recognition and acknowledgement of one's own uniqueness and the uniqueness of another.

To summarize, I relied in my research on the following statements:

1. Culture and nature are indivisible.
2. Every traditional culture engenders or creates specific art forms – such as music, dances, songs, musical instruments and so on – which are essentially a response to its natural geographic environment; we can view them as ecopoiesis which manifests or expresses the soul of the folk and the soul of its land.
3. Traditional art forms are the culture-specific means of tuning consciousness.
4. We can use traditional art forms in the area of expressive arts as specific frames channeling our consciousness and psychic energy; in doing this, we express maximum respect for the traditions of native peoples, but on the other hand we frame the expression letting the meeting occur in one's own interpretation.
5. We propose not only the position of meeting with an art form from an alien culture but also creating a multi-dialogue with oneself and others through expressivity and intermodal passages leading to meeting on the territory of art, to touching a new way of attuning one's consciousness and expanding the repertoire of play.
6. In this research we used fragments of traditional music of the participants in the investigation of cultures and proposed to the participants to assume an active role through aesthetic response with the help of movement, drawing or poetry, which created the phenomenon of meeting and made the meeting actually lived through at the experiential, not the

speculative, level. The result was one's own, lived-through experience which created a collective response, expanding the repertoire of play, and allowing us to know ourselves better, to get to know ourselves in a different culture or to transcend to a supra-cultural human layer of meeting.

I also relied on the direction of the culture-oriented expressive arts therapy I am developing, using consciously the following parameters in practicing expressive arts:

1. General culture and contact with universal cultural layer similar with many peoples;
2. Traditional native culture which the person belongs to but seldom knows in depth—which is true practically for all modern cultures eroded by globalization;
3. A different culture and its art-forms allowing expanding the range of play and acquiring new experience investigating the world.

Traditional art-forms as a culture-specific means of tuning consciousness

Vygotsky speaks of art as a social means of sensing. I propose to look at the culture-specificity of this way of sensing, or, more widely, at the work of consciousness as a whole in which the senses are just one of the components. We can speak about art from this perspective as a *culture-specific means of tuning the work of consciousness*.

Let's take, for instance, the ceremonial Japanese music form Gagaku, existing since the IXth century, or the Japanese Noh theatre, and compare them to European classic music. Gagaku music forms a special state of consciousness making one experience totally different emotions than in European music. We can even speak not about experience but of different acts of consciousness in comparison to European classic music. We will not delve into the cause of this, leaving the matter to culture specialists and art researchers. There are a lot of reasons for

it—geographic, historical, confessional—which leave their imprints on the work of consciousness in different cultures.

From a wider point of view every art-form, type or genre of art was engendered in one culture or another. It conveys meanings—the invisible paths—which the art-form invites us to tread, becoming an intermediary in bringing in signals and ways of consciousness proposed by that specific culture. Furthermore, traditional art-forms are aesthetic responses to the land they live in, the unique natural landscape which, mirrored in the people, becomes the nature-spiritual landscape. Traditional art-forms like dance, music, visual arts—thus become ecopoiesis.

Globalization has brought a worldwide way of imaging on rectangular sheets of paper, with the help of materials such as pastels, aquarelle, gouache, oil. But a rectangular sheet of paper is not the only way to make a picture. One can draw on trees, use scrolls, make round images, paint on bodies and so on. And each of these ways of imaging bears an imprint of a certain culture. We can take for instance Warli—a traditional Indian art of picturing with the help of cow dung and rice flour on house walls. The very means of making images guides us to experience certain states of consciousness engendered by the specifically Indian natural and cultural environment, with its specifically Hindu relation to the cow, on the one hand, and to the warm climate, on the other hand, which lets dung dry quickly, etc. This art form could not arise in Muslim countries where excrements are considered impure or in Russia where the cold climate cannot allow the material to dry.

Our study focused on arts-based research with the means of traditional musical art-forms of the different cultures. In modern culture blurred by globalization, meeting one's own traditional culture may reveal many insights linked to implicit self-identity and some hidden knowledge, more commonly unseen and not perceived by everyday consciousness. This is especially felt in more nationally homogeneous societies and cultures. For instance, in Russia, the Russians comprise more than 70 percent of population, and, as we say, the fish in water don't feel

water. Likewise, the culturally specific ways of communication, the language, self-identity of a homogeneous culture, are so strong and natural that one can understand one's own particularity only after experiencing the culture shock of getting out of the realm of the given culture and meeting a different culture, like when travelling abroad or meeting foreigners. The very fact of recognition when meeting the other produces many revelations about one's own identity. We need to see ourselves reflected in the Other to understand who we are. On the other hand, even in homogeneous societies which lose their links with their traditional cultures because of globalization, meeting one's native art form on the territory of art but not known to the participant may become an important supporting point, allowing one to build up one's own cultural identity and links to one's roots.

The first presupposition made in this research is that a traditional art-form–music in this case–bears, like a molecule, some properties or culture codes of the culture it was born in. Here we also meet a number of obstacles, particularly because the choice of the musical fragment also reflects the personal preferences of the researcher. No matter what musical fragment is chosen, we cannot accept it as a perfectly pure art-form of a given culture, since in history genres of different cultures penetrate and interact influencing one another, especially if we speak of geographically neighboring cultures. Another difficulty was that even within one culture there are many musical genres and compositions created for various occasions, bearing different emotional coloring. Therefore, we decided to presuppose that the very choice made by the researcher is a part of the reality of the cultural consciousness under study, perceived from within.

The second presupposition is that we can perceive an art-form, in this case, music, as a certain meta-text bearing an emotional and semantic load conveying, or forcing the hearers to receive, the information packed in sound. With this, we suppose that representatives of different cultures may hear something particular to them in each musical fragment. That is, the way to see and to hear formed in a certain culture may make an imprint on the perception of a

musical fragment. It is also of interest to us if one can perceive hearing a musical fragment as a manifestation of cultural consciousness, with a phenomenological attitude free of stereotypes and clichés, a certain peculiarity of the culture as felt and heard by everybody, as well as how it may be conveyed, if the answer is positive.

On the other hand, we attempted to leave some free space for our study, allowing as much room as possible for multi-dialogue with ourselves, with the others, and with the world through the expressive arts—essentially a self-study, because whatever we study, we always study ourselves.

Art-autobiographic methodology. Archeology and chronology of a life

I started to analyze the events of my life while working at my thesis on culture-oriented therapy with expressive arts, and it became clear to me that all my life is a journey through cultures in which I meet with myself. I grew up in the Soviet Union and was a “young pioneer,” sharing the Soviet cultural ideology which cut the people off from the roots of their mother culture. After the Perestroika of 1991, it became possible to travel, I started travelling and studying the arts and traditions of other cultures. There was a Japanese period in my life when I played the Shamisen lute—taking part in concerts, and studied Japanese ceramics. There was a Sufi period with the experience of Sufi-spinning and chanting zikrs, a Tibetan period, an Indian period and others. I have been to India over ten times, and each time it opened itself up to me in a new way. Ironically, I danced Russian round dances for the first time in India, among a Russian community spending the winter there. Thus, I came to Russian culture after encountering the wisdom of alien cultures. I then started to paint a series of canvases as a part of a reassessment of my experience of meeting other cultures. I think that conducting cross-cultural art-based research and developing culture-oriented expressive arts continue the experience of meeting myself through a different culture, which has become the experience of my life.



Description of the research work

At present 3 meetings have been conducted:

Indian-Russian meeting (twice) (Institute Swahansa directed by Gopika Dahanukar).

Russian-Hong Kong meeting (Institute Kunst Exa directed by Ka Kit Lai).

The third, a Russian-USA meeting in cooperation with the Expressive Arts Institute of San Diego (Director Judith Greer Essex) is in preparation, as well as the Russian-Japanese meeting with the group studying expressive arts under the direction of Mariko Kitao Hoshizumi and Markus Scott Alexander, and a Russian-Peruvian meeting with a Peruvian institute.

Each time while preparing the meeting, a representative of the EXA Institute and I chose a musical fragment together. This action called for aesthetic responsibility on our part as teachers and therapists, on the one hand, and as representatives of our native culture, on the other. Each time we would choose a piece of traditional music using traditional instruments or traditional vocal performance. As the Russian musical tradition was best preserved in vocal form, I chose Russian folk songs in various performances both times. During the meeting with the Indian group, we used a fragment of traditional Indian raga played by sitar, tabla and flute. During the meeting with the Hong Kong group, a fragment of Chinese flute was chosen.

Our deliberate choice to explore

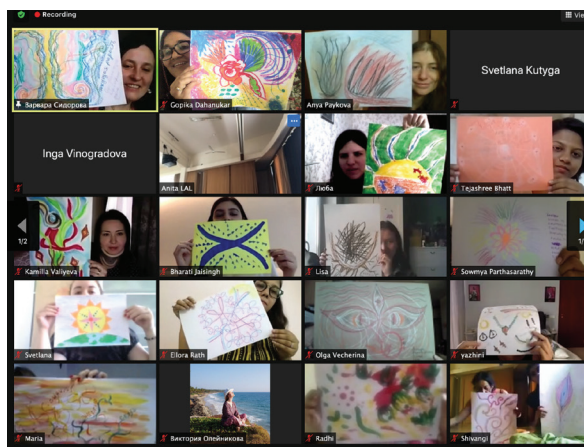


Photo from the Russian-Indian meeting. The participants show their drawings as a response to a fragment of Indian music.

traditional music cultures was also part of the decolonization movement. We know that European colonization distinctly manifests itself in the field of music and music education worldwide by implanting European musical traditions. As we observed in Russia, indigenous music was rooted out (or died out by itself) when Peter I eradicated Russian traditional music, and the European music style took its place. Decolonization is a way of recognizing the value, depth and wisdom of non-European musical traditions carrying the wisdom of traditional cultures, with a totally different system of musical coordinates, a different musical language, such as pentatonic or traditional Indian ragas, etc.

Process of our art-based research

1. Groups meet online and participants present themselves with a ritual of tuning through name gestures.
2. The group listens to the 1st musical fragment.
3. The group listens to the 1st musical fragment for a second time, with the invitation to respond to the fragment with a dance.
4. Creating a drawing after hearing and dancing: images, impressions, lines and forms.
5. Writing 5 words to go with the drawing and answer in writing what surprised them, what the Third was.
6. A break.
7. Listening to the 2nd musical fragment.
8. Hearing of the 2nd musical fragment for a second time, with the invitation to respond to the fragment with a dance.

9. Making a drawing after hearing and dancing, making images, impressions, lines and forms.
10. Writing 5 words.
11. Meeting in session rooms in pairs or mini-groups, with representatives of each culture present in every group or pair. They were asked to talk about their drawings, to share their experience in movement or dance, and to exchange their aesthetic responses.
12. Returning to the general group and writing a poem combining the first and the second 5 words, including aesthetic responses. Then they were asked to write a poem combining or uniting the experiences from both musical fragments.
13. Sharing in the general group, poetic sharing included. What surprised me? What did I discover as the result of this research?
14. Final ritual.
15. Filling out the research form.

In advance of the meeting, all its participants received an invitation to take part in the research, containing a consent form for the documentation of the meeting, zoom-video recording and sharing the research data. After the meeting, all its participants filled out the Google-form for feedback and sent their drawings and poems for data collection. (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdZeX1iBTkJq5TCXer-MZ68NgONGPbJiiDwTWO_ZtlzOxpbBA/viewform)

Phenomenology of the meeting

As we know, the results of an art-based research, and even more so of an expressive-arts based research, are the collected data of a session, but also those unexpected things which were disclosed as the result of the session and what we could call the "Third." We realize that

we cannot describe and translate this phenomenon of meeting in full, to pass on the feelings and experience gained during the meeting. We propose to use language—the basic human way of communication—in order to describe and feel the lived experience. When we use not only verbal means of communication but also the language of the arts—image, dance, poetry—we get help in transmitting the full volume of the experience.

In this article we shall touch on only the description of the Russian-Hong Kong session; but during the two Russian-Indian sessions, participants also remarked the feelings of contact, closeness and unity.

All the participants of the process described their feelings as spiritual uplift, the joy of meeting a different culture, and expanding their range of play.

The following is how the participants described their emotions from the whole research process:

- Surprise, interest, enrichment, fullness, peace (Rus.);
- Cooperation, interest, co-creation, looking outside seeing inside (Chin.);
- Jointness, play, rise of energy, unity, force of expressive arts (Rus.);
- Surprise, interest, unity, universal language of arts (Rus);
- Interest, tenderness, sounds, carefulness (Rus.);
- Sweet, unreal, fairytale, rhythm, we are together (Rus.);
- Fun to meet people in different culture, to share feeling and thoughts (Chin.);
- Fun, a unit, wave, energy, embracing (Chin.);
- Joyful, friendly, ensemble, experimental, unlimited (Chin);
- Space expanding, inspiration, positive, combining many dimensions: reunion from one spot (Rus.);
- Expanding, integration, new experience, closeness of cultures, unity, meeting oneself mir-

rored in other's eyes (Rus.);

-Soulfulness, interest, difference and equality, a different vision (Rus.).

The participants of the Russian-Hong Kong session respond to the fragment of the Russian song "Where have you been?" (performed by the Pokrovsky Ensemble of Russian traditional song):

-A drawling, turbulent river through the window, inside is joy, easy surfacing (Rus.);

-Two streams, extension and grounding, fabric of life, entwinings (Rus.);

-Loneliness, silence, whirl of wind, regret, life is slipping away (Chin.);

-Wings, connection, center, flight, created by nature (Rus.);

-Snowstorm, whirling, diversity, power, fairytale, creeping (Rus.);

-Sorrowful, power of polyphony, captivity, droopy wings (Rus.);

-Smoothness, roundness, mixing, anxiety, clearances (Rus.);

-Fluidity, support, flow, together—more voluminous, more than two (Rus.);

-Sacred, continuous, smooth, chasing, joined (Chin.);

-Unit, goal, wave, celebration, accompany (Chin.);

-Flowing, know, heart, unite, comfort (Chin.);

-Freedom, roots, rootedness, expanse. Sadness, grief, longing, calmness. Accepting one's home place with the possibility to be everywhere. You are rooted and free simultaneously. (Rus);

-Birds of heaven, salvation, purification, love, humanity (Rus.);

-Sun rays, energy, water, pair, swan (Rus.);

-Bird singing under rain, power, expanse, fertility, a gray day, gray wings (Rus.);

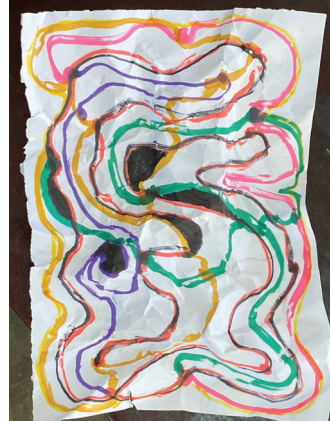
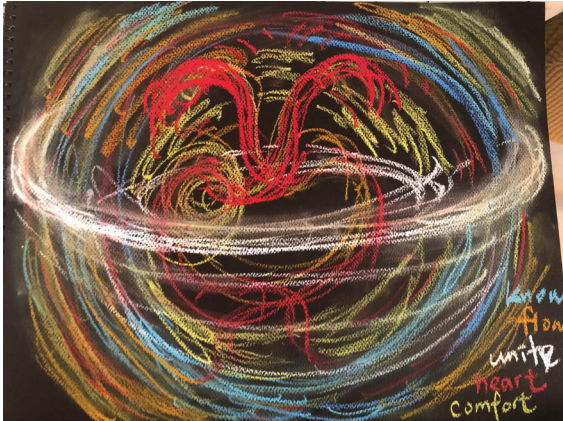
-Grounding, roots, soles of one's feet, spiritual affinity (Rus.);

-Space, field, summer, peasant men, generosity and wideness (Rus.).

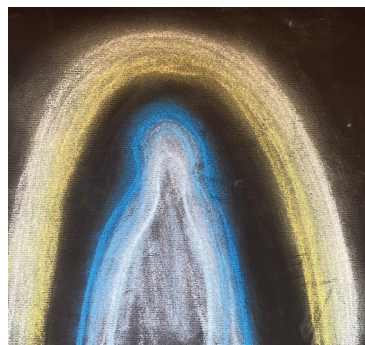
It was interesting to note that if the Russian participants heard in the music rootedness, expanse and linking, the Hong Kong participants of the research heard notes of loneliness and sorrow. While dancing they hid their faces in their hands and bowed their heads. But the Rus-

sian students, on the contrary, moved like in Russian dances, throwing out their arms, stepping rhythmically.

Drawings of the Chinese participant on the Russian music fragment.



Drawings of the Russian participants on the Russian music fragment.



Responses of Russian and Chinese participants to a fragment of Chinese music (Chinese flute)

- Combination, tree of life, sap of the earth, flexibility, in multiple dimensions
- Easiness, joy, spring, chirping, transition to a beginning (Rus.);
- Dots and lines, sounds and rhythm, space of creation (Rus.);
- Dance of life, transition, dissolve, balance of contrast, regeneration, rebirth, revival (Chin.);
- Matching, tree of life, juice of Earth, flexibility, in few dimensions (Rus.);
- Flowers are blossoming, birds are singing, trill, spring, freshness (Rus.);
- Waterfall, bird roulades, non-judgmental watching, acceptance (Rus.);
- Easiness, exquisiteness, flight, tenderness, joy (Rus.);
- Dance, bird, butterfly, easiness, thrill (Rus.);
- Light, rhythmic, colorful, singing birds, spring. (Chin.);
- Fun, nature, tradition, cultural difference, dancing (Chin.);
- Spin, balance, ripples, primitive, harmony with nature (Chin.);
- Rice, smooth stones, overflowing water, path, sound, curiosity, unity with nature (Rus.);
- Easiness, feather, girl, tenderness, love, longing, caress (Rus.);
- Sphere, lush forest, sunny ring, bird, a bowl of goodness (Rus.);
- Constant upgrowth, huge ocean of air, mountains and chill, a small bird, high and lots of air (Rus.);
- Flight, easiness, fantasies, separation from reality (Rus.);
- Depth, flight, stork, butterfly, bird, peacefulness, water (Rus.).

There also occurred a curious misunderstanding concerning the black color which many Chinese participants used in their drawings in response to Chinese music. For the Russians, black signified sadness and oppression, while for the Chinese participants it was the color of power connected to Chinese calligraphy.

Drawings of the Chinese participants on the Chinese music fragment:



Drawings of the Russian participants on the Chinese music fragment:



What appeared unexpected in the process of research, what surprised you, how did the voice of the "Third" manifest itself?

-Connection of the two pieces that seemed to be parts of different realities but managed to meet and bring an important message (Chin.);

-Feeling of integration of the body, of uprising, the state of "being in a few dimensions," transition from winter to spring (Rus.);

-The Chinese musical fragment had some specifics, but could exist in Russian music too, like the horn and shepherd's pipe playing. Similarly, the drawing of a girl from Hong Kong expressed sorrow in her drawing, though she could not guess what the Russian words meant (Rus.);

-Totally different response to the first Russian music between Russian and Chinese (Chin.);

-When we don't know the meaning of the Russian song, Hong Kong participants are dancing, something like a celebration. However, when I know the meaning of the Russian music, I know why Russian participants are crying (Chin.);

-When we were asked to write a poem combining the first and second experiences of music and drawing, I couldn't imagine how it would be ... (Chin.);

-The "Third" was the appearance of that simultaneous feeling of being somewhere else and at home at the same time. That which I call the feeling of roots and being at home with the possibility to be everywhere. Also, the commonness of people. We all are ordinary people, even if we grow and come to maturity in different cultures. And further, that there are two realities—politics and the world of people (Rus.);

-Body responds to Chinese music as to my own (Rus.);

-Everything is connected to everything. Traditions differ but are the same at core, turning to nature—the heart of human existence and binding with the world (Rus.);

-I succeeded in discovering a new musical modality! It was unexpected like a fresh wind in the face. I am listening all the time now, exploring the music of other cultures. I am grateful for this discovery!

-The soul can feel any culture!

Poems written by the participants according to the proposal to combine their responses to both musical fragments

This proposal itself moved the participants to find their unique combination of the absorbed experience and in one's own manner to wind together or knit the new inner experience into one's actual reality, to verbalize it and to turn it into poetic form, crystallizing all the past experience and bearing one's personal meaning.

My life is slipping out of my hands,
I'm turning away from the light,
Going deeper into solitude and sadness.
This is just a transition—
Dissolvment, tranquil rebirth,
Anew the night is changing with the day,
And the dance of Life is going on (Chin.)

I feel my wings and binds with the very core,
When I am in flight.
I am a part of Nature's creation,
I'm standing on the ground and I feel
Connection with the Tree of Life, plasticity.
I feel myself multidimensional (Rus.)

About birds both here and there.
sorrowful polyphony
and bird's chirping
deep inside
we are closer
than we think (Rus.)

Balance and easiness together are more.
Tenderness and fragility in float give birth to power.
Life is a circle, from high to low, cold and warm,
from Russia to Hong Kong, we hear birds sing and so on (Chin.)

We are a unit. We have different backgrounds,
but we dance together. We connect together.
Energy is flowing. Energy is rolling.
Children spinning in circles,
just like the water with ripples,
one heart unites all people,
it's a heavenly ensemble (Chin.)

Rolling of grass, a path, a sound.
Sorrow and grief, long silence around.
Rivers are flowing from place to place
Getting together somewhere in space.
Taking root I feel I am free.
Spreading out my hands I sense Nature in me.
I feel the power to take my place.
I know that each one will get own face (Rus.)

Rooted and free at the same time.
With that inner feeling
The space is three-dimensional (Rus.)

I feel sorrow deep inside
Where the voice of my ancestors lives.
It is looking for hope,
It's calling heavenly birds.
Where shall we find lightness,
The power for salvation?
Answered the birds:
"Lightness is in creation,
In love and compassion,
And in humanity.
There is the sea of tenderness,
The ocean of immortality" (Rus.)

Wide.
Far.
High.
Spreading out in all directions
We are growing deeper.
Dancing the dance of roots and wings
we meet in our human hearts (Rus.)

The single tree-trunk of culture is forked with different branches.
I support and I am supported, I flow in joy and I stand in modesty,
I link with the rhythm of flowing life, with the rhythm of the earth,
the rhythm of movement and stillness.
This is our language of living, dancing Earth (Rus.)

What reveals itself–What emerged

Our research is unique because its participants were students studying expressive arts in different countries: they basically speak the same language of expressive arts, which we comprehend in this research as a phenomenological research of consciousness through art. It is quite curious in this meeting that we studied cultural consciousness coded within a musical fragment on one the one hand, and in parallel, studied individual consciousnesses of representatives of different cultures interacting with art-forms of both native and foreign cultures, and translating musical impression into the languages of dance and poetry with the help of aesthetic responses.

Thanks to this way of conducting dialogue on the territory of expressive arts, we succeeded in feeling unity and, in a way, transcending the cultural differences that divide us, rising to the

human similarities which unite us. We succeeded as well to preserve the uniqueness of the “otherness” of each culture. A surge of curiosity, acceptance, a feeling of amplification of one’s self and touching another way of seeing rose up every time after a session. There were many unexpected discoveries.

It is interesting that such an experiment became possible particularly during the pandemic, which had divided us on one hand, but on the other hand, it united the world, leading to an uplift of consciousness and an even greater awareness of the unity of humankind. This cross-cultural research has a social value of its own; as an opportunity to see otherness as it is, without stereotypes, prejudices and fake expectations warped by politicians. This is a step to a human image of life and interaction, and an example of building communication through the arts.

References

Atkins, S., Snyder, M. (2018) *Nature-based Expressive Arts Therapy*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London.

Paolo J. Knill, Helen Nienhaus Barba, Margo N. Fuchs (1995) *Minstrels of Soul: Intermodal Expressive Therapy*, Palmerston Press: Toronto.

Knill, Paolo, Levine, Ellen G., Levine Stephen K. (2005) *Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London.

Levine, Stephen K. (2012) *Nature as a Work of Art: Toward a Poetic Ecology*, *POIESIS A Journal of the Arts and Communication*, EGS Press: Toronto.

McNiff, Shaun (1981) *The Arts and Psychotherapy*, Thomas: 1981

Rogers, N. (2011) *The Creative Connection*, Science and Behavior Books, California

Sidorova V.V., Vasilyuk F.E. (2009) Cross-cultural study of strategies of the work of consciousness (on the materials of Russian and Japanese cultures). Issue 2: *Psychotherapy. Consciousness. Culture* / Ed. by. F.E. Vasilyuk. - M.: MGPPU, PI RAO, 2009.

Sidorova, V.V. (2005) Cultural determination of the image of consciousness (on the example of Russian and Japanese cultures). Synopsis of a thesis for the degree of candidate of psychological sciences. - (in Russian)

Sidorova, V.V. (2012, 2017) *The image culture: cultural determination of the image of consciousness*. - Kharkov: Humanitarian Center.

Sidorova, V.V. (2020) *Dance of drawing, voice of line, poetry of life: intermodal expressive arts therapy*. - M: Genesis.

Vasilyuk, F.E. (1993) The structure of the image // *Questions of Psychology*. - 1993. - No5 - P.5-19.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1998) *Psychology of Art*. M: Labyrinth Publ., - 325 p. (in Russian)

Vygotsky, L. S. (2005) *Psychology of Human Development*, Moscow: Eksmo, Smysl. Publ. (in Russian).

Varvara V. Sidorova PhD, REAT, associate professor at the Department of Clinical and Counseling Psychology at Moscow State University of Psychology and Education, head of the postgraduate program of Expressive Arts Therapy at MSUPE, director of Arts Therapy Center "ArtDOM", founder and first president of Expressive Arts Therapy Association (Russia). www.artstherapy.ru

The Other of the Same

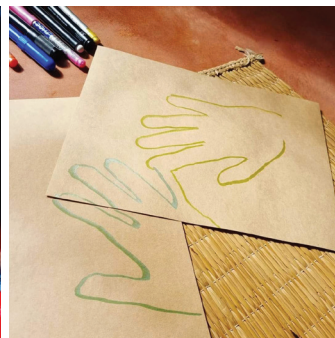
Gopika Dahanukar

It is not far, your world from my own
Of the same human stuff, we have grown
Our bones and blood in different forms hold
The miracle of being in the stories we are told

What is it then that of us remains?
Am I, of the other, or are you, of the same?

In nature's arms, we are the human race
In her sky mirror, we have the same face
A species with possibilities, spent in vain
A tribe that rebels, in her enduring pain

What is it then that of us remains?
Am I, of the other, or are you, of the same?



You must be the other so I can with you play
To find out we are journeying, through the same way
We are seen and unseen in this drama of strife
While we encounter the whole in a tiny cell of life

What is it then that of us remains?
Am I, of the other, or are you, of the same?

In the light of your shadow, I can hope to hold you close
In the night of my day, it is the love we can see grows
Together we can, in a world we must meet
Each other and the same rooted on our feet
And moments we should live like never before
Driving them home to the question at our core

What is it that of us remains?
Am I, of the other, or are you, of the same?



Gopika Dahanukar is an artist and vocalist, Founder and Director of Swahansa Expressive Arts India, in cooperation with the European Graduate School. Gopika has a MFA in Applied Craft and Design from PNCA, Portland, USA, a Certificate in Entrepreneurship, Social Innovation and Change from UPEACE, a Diploma in Expressive Arts Therapy, Vancouver School of Healing Arts, and a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (CAGS) from EGS. Her research interest is directed toward sustainability, peace-building, and socially-engaged interactive art. She is also a trustee of the Prafulla Dahanukar Art Foundation, a non-profit organisation that is leading the way in supporting emerging artists and progressive social action through the arts in India.

Remembrance

Stephen K. Levine

My friend is gone.
Images remain,
flicker,
then fade.

I feel him now,
the weight of him.

All the dead we bear
so gracefully,
offering prayers of praise.

Untitled

Margo Fuchs Knill

Sometimes, like in the middle of the day
your lasting absence hits me.
Look at us, you would say
when a window mirrored us arm in arm
we stood still, as curiosity took over-
two blushing faces merging to one:
a wondrous appearance
wearing our names.
Quiet looks, a felt sense
ahead of words.
We were held in our own embrace
vast space around us
fully awake in other-land
two foolish mates
of luminous and willful play
we know of since Adam and Eve
or whoever we may blame
for our paradise lost.

Rejuvenation—the Other Force

Margo Fuchs Knill

We all owe death a life.

Salman Rushdie

Salman Rushdie (2021), a storyteller of the highest order, delves in his latest book, *Languages of Truth*, into the nature of storytelling as a human need. He proposes to write about what we do not know, what is other than our own story. We can do that by either traveling and visiting other places, or by remembering that fiction is truly fictional, and dream on paper. I am interested in the other that emerges through art making, specifically poetry and its rejuvenating impact.

Since my husband Paolo Knill, founding Rector of the European Graduate School EGS passed away in September 2020, I somehow excluded the term “rejuvenation” from my vocabulary. Then Katrina Plato, conference co-chair of IEATA International Expressive Arts Therapy Association, invited me to give a keynote for the online conference 2022 on Rejuvenation. Even though in deep grief, I accepted the challenge. What follows are slightly revised excerpts in prose and poetry.

Two years of pandemic, one year of grief

What matters—finally, and what matters
now?

I look people into their eyes: see,
we still can smile.

And alas, the September sun
is warming my face.

I know it—nothing lasts.
I know it since childhood
since my cat passed away
since holidays came to an end:
good bye playmates
good bye lake and beach.

Grief—this love upside down
love—freed from gravity.
A motion of another kind
light and holes, and holy songs.

The poet's way

During the process of grieving I would prescribe for myself to write and read poetry, mainly by Mary Oliver (2020). She lost her partner after having lived together for more than forty years. I was secretly hoping to find direct answers on how to deal with grief. Yet, to my surprise, she would not literally write about grief and loss. Her poetry praises the rejuvenating beauty of nature. She describes how nature is miraculously sustaining, and proclaims how precious our fragile lives are. In Paolo Knill's (2010) terminology, we would say that she truly "decentered" from the issue, which is there anyway. Decentering allows us some distance to gain a new perspective, and to rejuvenate our way of living with the challenge. When we approach rejuvenation through the lense of salutogenesis, we can point out that analogous to Antonovsky's (1997) health- illness continuum, our lives swing on a remembrance-rejuvenation continuum. In the following poem Rose Ausländer (1994) masterfully announces the rejuvenating force with one term: still. We are-still-here.

You're here, still
throw your fear
into the air

Soon
your time is over
soon
heaven grows
under the grass
your dreams fall
into nowhere

Still
the carnation smells sweetly
the thrush sings
still you may love
give words away
you are here, still

Be what you are
give what you have

Translated by Julia Stein

An etymological departure on rejuvenation

What does rejuvenation mean? Rejuvenation happens. In nature, with us. Some synonyms are:

renaissance, renewal, transformation, innovation, reconstruction, renovation, rebuilding, revolution, rebirth, revival, restoration, revitalization, regeneration, restitution.

I died as mineral and became a plant,
I died as plant and rose to animal,
I died as animal and I was human,
Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?
Yet once more I shall die human,
To soar with angels blessed above.
And when I sacrifice my angel soul
I shall become what no mind ever conceived.
As a human, I will die once more,
Reborn, I will with the angels soar.
And when I let my angel body go,
I shall be more than mortal mind can know.

Rumi Jalal ad'Din

This poem speaks vividly about one specific approach to rejuvenation: nothing on this earth, on this planet, in this universe gets lost. Everything transforms, changes into something else. As long as we humans are bound to this earth, we are bound to the concept of being in it. We cannot escape—there is a system, and within that system is another system and another.

Love as a rejuvenating resource

During this time of grief, I felt and feel in many ways even more alive. More sad, more grateful, more lonely, more amazed, more scared, more willed to make it—as joyous, or less, as immersed in work, even more, and endlessly missing—I do miss Paolo-home, Paolo-love, Paolo-smile, Paolo-touch, Paolo-song to my ears, Paolo-talk, Paolo-Paolo.

And—how did I survive it, how am I living with-out Paolo?

Isn't it love that helps us humans to reconcile with the in-completeness of our existence bound to our beating hearts, bound to co-existence in the sense of I co-exist, therefore I exist? Isn't it the force of love that makes us do the work, fight peacefully for the wellbeing of our clients, students, colleagues? Yet love is not static, love is in itself changing, or rejuvenating. As already James Hillman said many years ago at Lesley University: if you make love at forty the way you did at 20, something must be wrong with you. Now I can say, that this specific love for Paolo died, yet not my ability to love—love rejuvenates.

Above us the knowing sky
wide and light
our bodies held
beyond time and fear
we call each other
with new names,
without contours, the night -
you my star and I, your tail.

Dedicated to late Paolo

The rejuvenating force of poetry

What are we professionals doing when we are challenged ourselves? I prescribed myself what I would prescribe my clients: Write. Give yourself balsam for the soul. Do your exercises, move, go for walks, socialize, eat, sleep. And to my amazement—I could experience the power of the word. The poetic guiding force, the soothing quality, its naked truth, its being ahead of my own comprehension. Rejuvenation has something to do with recognizing the changing and daring to name it: “We call each other with new names.” We can conclude that phenomenologically speaking, there is no either-or, grief or joy, loss or gain, sadness or happiness. Grief can be imbued with an inner joyfulness. It is our organizing minds that categorize and separate.

Here begins the therapeutic work: the professional can support the process by giving the client the permission to trust his or her own experience with all its facets.

Poetry is ahead of us. Rejuvenation is already in the poem. The mysterious beyond, the passing away, the thereafter, and the vision of a new encounter. The rejuvenating power of the arts, in this case poetry with its ability to name creates a new existence, first in our imagination, on paper, in spirit. Poetry in its inclusive language helps us to see that it is not either—or; however, *it is this and that*.

With each shaping, it might be of a poem, a painting, a dance, a song—we bring us (client and/or professional alike) into a place of starting, of renewing, of giving us another chance.

I began a series on “resilience poetry” when the pandemic began and continued when Paolo passed away. When you write resilience poetry, you have both in mind: the falling, and the getting up, the worrisome past, and the vision of a different future. You write yourself into rejuvenation. This is different from “I am grieving”—it is the attitude of “I am grieving and—what else?”

Something has happened
to us humans, mostly unavailable
and to our nature, sometimes strewn.

We have been thrown off.
What now?
Our minds too weary
to let hope in
to ignite the simple
the first crocus
a ray of sunshine
on my homeless face.

I want to see the change
here and there
in the still dormant trees
on our afflicted planet
who lost her abundance.

I want us
just walking
in the beauty of
humbled humankind

and clearly
have faith that
we are
in each other's hands.

This is fair enough—isn't it?

After two years of pandemic, what matters—finally, and what matters now?

Paolo Knill always said that the field of intermodal expressive arts which he developed in theory and practice at Lesley University should not be attached to his name, but to the field itself. We wouldn't talk about the "Knill school" or the "Knillsche method." His hope was that the field will survive him, and it does. Yet the question remains—how can expressive arts stay young and crispy?

Let's remember Paolo's good-bye rituals at the end of a conference, workshop, or EGS summer school. We would stand in a circle and hold hands, enlarge the circle by stepping backwards until the chain of holding hands broke. Paolo would say: let's break this circle so we give space to the new and never calcify or become a cult. A strong image—breaking willfully, joyfully the built intimacy as we say good bye and realize that it never will be the same circle again. This good-bye ritual illustrates that it may take the breaking open to let the new in.

Such an approach is a courageous leap. Yet the not knowing is not nothing, it is a leap into an opening that emerges. We might not yet have words, we may not know its meaning, its what-for and how-come. Yet we can recognize it on a raw level: we are in awe, bewildered, astounded. Such amazement keeps us young in spirit. We can observe it in children who encounter in awe a world full of surprises. In amazement we are not blindly obedient, we are open to let something uncensored in from a place before judgment.

The task

My task is to practice kindness.

Over here signs of spring, over there patches of snow.

Overall, beauty and hurt.

Why am I staring into the mirror?

To find an aging face? Nevertheless,

practice. Place your hand on what matters.

Be reachable. Focus on the view,

the trees in bloom, the chirping birds.

Learn to trust what is. Take it from there.

You are, you are your life's practitioner. Now.



Artwork by Yuan Wen, EGS Ph.D. cand.

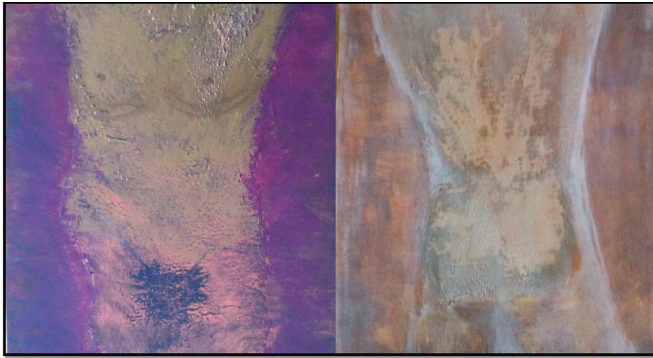
References

- A. Antonovsky (1997). *Salutogenese*. Dgvt-Verlag
- R. Ausländer (1994). *Regenwörter*. Reclam
- H. Eberhart und P. Knill (2010). *Lösungskunst*. Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht
- M. Oliver (2020). *Devotions. The Selected Poems of Mary Oliver*. Penguin Random House
- S. Rushdie (2021) *Languages of Truth. Essays 2003 – 2020*. Penguin Random House
- Julia Stein: https://www.babelmatrix.org/works/de/Ausländer%2C_Rose-1901/Noch_bist_du_da/en/49682-You're_here%2C_still?tr_id=7902 1.17.2022
- Rumi Jalal ad'Din: <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/823646-i-died-as-mineral-and-became-a-plant-i-died> 1.17.2022

Margo Fuchs Knill is a professor, psychotherapist, expressive arts professional and poet. She is the Dean of the Division Arts, Health and Society at EGS, and a member of the founding Core Faculty of the European Graduate School (EGS). She was an Assistant Professor at Lesley University, Cambridge, MA. Margo Fuchs Knill works in private practice and teaches expressive arts internationally at training institutes in Europe, Russia, Asia, Latin America and the US. She is the author of numerous poetry books, such as *Von nun an*, and she has contributed numerous book chapters on poetry, poetics and expressive arts. She is co-author of *Minstrels of Soul: Intermodal Expressive Therapy*, as well as a contributor to *Foundations of Expressive Arts Therapy*. Her latest book, together with Sally Atkins, is titled *Poetry in Expressive Arts. Supporting Resilience through Poetic Writing*.

Liminal Beings: A Sketch

Barbara Hielscher-Witte



Other –painting by Barbara Hielscher-Witte

"Nothing human is altogether incorporeal."

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

From where do we speak about and access the *other*? "In some traditions, the problem of inter-subjectivity has been identified with the problem of other minds. The only mind I have direct access to is my own"(Zahavi 2005, 148). Furthermore, the thinking mind places us in perspectivity across to the other and the context around. From this position, the other seems to be foreign territory. Attempts to get closer to the being of the other often have the effect of incorporation, in which the being different is deconstructed as alien and thus domesticated

and put in opposition to us. The mind as such is invisible and needs expression to concretize. From here then it often sounds as if the experiencing of the other could be easily liquefied in words and thus directly converted into meaning. But what a shared human situation has to say is genuinely open, complex, inter-subjectively and culturally co-created and only approachable as an approximation of translation into language, from one way of experience to another, and in that not without residue and incompleteness.

The leap from the lived experience to language is mediated by concepts, which are “fingers pointing to the moon, but not the moon.”¹ One of the helping concepts to access the encounter of the other from a different position than that of him being across from us is the phenomenal lived body in the life-world. This shift in thinking is subtle yet radical. From the basis of the embeddedness of the lived body in the life-world, every shared situation brings forth a new process of differentiation, a process of shaping of me and not-me, rather than an opposition of me and the other, which the mind tends to produce.

The “life-world” (Lebenswelt) is the world of our immediately lived experience as we live it, prior to all our thoughts about it. It is what is present to us in our everyday tasks and enjoyments—reality as it engages us, before being analyzed by our theories and our science...Easily overlooked, this primordial world is always already there when we begin to reflect or philosophize. It is not a private, but a collective, dimension—the common field of our lives and the other lives with which ours are intertwined—and yet it is profoundly ambiguous and indeterminate, since our experience of this field is always relative to our situation within it (Abraham 1996, 40).

Through the lived body, our corporeality appears as a prototype of the in-between. Thus existing bodily, we are neither mere extensions nor mere consciousness, neither only internal

1 Chinese saying

nor only external, neither only past nor only future, neither only individual nor only collective, neither only natural nor only historical, neither only objective-thingly nor only subjectively. From here, the situation in which we talk, work, play, argue with and encounter each other is not a reflective category, but an existential one: we are always already situated by our lived body before we turn to our situation in explicit thematization. Intersubjectivity then is more than what is planned by the individual, because what happens between people is itself structure-forming and unpredictable. In working, playing, speaking, living together, intersubjectivity thus functions as continuously newly articulated dimension of relation and community.

From the perspective of the lived body, we are simultaneously seeing and seen, perceiving and perceived. In this primordial sphere the other is equiprimordial. On this level of being-in-the-world, a sensual formation of relation is established, which connects and precedes the encounter of the other as another distinguished from me. In sensing, the experience of *me* contains as well dimensions of otherness. In its development, this dimension of bodily relatedness is at the beginning, from which the consciousness of one's own body and one's own self gradually forms and arises. The body is experienced as body-in-connection-with-others, the experience of self a precipitation of interactive experiences. Through my body, above all reflection, I've always been socialized; bodily I am related to others. Before I express my conscious intentions, I have already adjusted myself physically to the others.

It is never our objective body that we move, but always our phenomenal body, and this in a way that is by no means mysterious since it was our body as an asset ... that carried itself towards the tangible objects and perceived them (Merleau-Ponty 1966, 40).

From the phenomenological perspective we are already embedded in the world through the lived body. What the heart is within the human body, is—metaphorically speaking—the lived body for the human being in the world: a poly-sensual, both intercorporeal and world-relation

constituting living means. Intersubjectivity emerges from the lived body as intercorporeality and returns back to it in reciprocal coupling, thus creating the liminal space of in-between. In the corporeality of the lived body, which is as such unavailable and hidden to the conscious and intentional mind, we are not transparent to ourselves, yet in existential vulnerability exposed to the other and at his mercy. In the fragility of this intercorporeal inter-subjectivity, the experiences of one's ownness and otherness of the other are co-present. Herein, neither being bodily nor being different are freely available. They both emerge inter-dependently in the moments of expression.

If there is a constant reference to one's own lived body throughout the lived experience, albeit implicitly, then this reference forms a structural part of the phenomenal field of perception that is likely to affect all other processes of perception, including the encounter of the other. Expressive gestures then reveal aspects of this being-in-the-world immediately in bodily gestures and mediated and materialized in other modalities of expression.

In expressive artifacts and in creative acts, aspects of these human-world relationships materialize and thus first become available to conscious perception and reflection. The process of expression mediates in such a way, that it simultaneously separates, reveals, shapes and connects; expression becomes simultaneously impression as it offers and concretizes in a tangible way the "other" to us, which originates from our hidden lived body, from the relational space between us and from the context around us. From this perspective, the own, the foreignness of the other and the common we are both in are given at the same time and constitute the multiple dimensions of a situation, which invites us to differentiate them further. What materializes in expressive events becomes thus new knowledge about me, not-me, us and our being-in-the-world as embedded in it.

References

Abram, David (1996): *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World*. New York

Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1962): *Phenomenology of Perception*. London

Zahavi, Dan (2005): *Subjectivity and Selfhood. Investigating the First-Person Perspective*, Boston

Barbara Hielscher-Witte, CAGS, Ph.D. Cand. Assistant Dean of the Arts, Health & Society Division of the European Graduate School EGS, Faculty Member of the EGS and Director of the Expressive Arts Institute Berlin, Germany.



parálisis (paralysis). Digital painting—Judith Alalú

Judith Alalú Langnas Co-founder of TAE Barcelona and TAE Peru institutes. Faculty member and Phd candidate EGS. Graduated in clinical psychology from the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. Therapist and supervisor of expressive arts, and member of the Peruvian Association of Expressive Arts (APDARE). Art is essential in her life, especially painting. Exhibiting artist. Co-author of the painting and poetry book, *Vital Exodus*, and co-author of the book *Dolor y belleza. Imágenes desde las artes expresivas en el Perú*.

The Ecological Literacies of St. Hildegard of Bingen

Michael Marder

Reprinted by permission from the journal, *Stasis*, vol.9, no. 1, 2020

Taking Literacy Literally

Listing the principles of ecological literacy, David Orr notes that “all education is environmental education... by what is included or excluded, we teach the young that they are part of or apart from the natural world.”¹ The totalizing assertion regarding “all” education—the kind of assertion that is prevalent nowadays, curiously, with respect to ecological issues—² risks, nevertheless, contradicting both the spirit and the letter of ecology. The letter, because it situates on the same plane environmental and anti-environmental education (the latter incorporated into the former, which is its very opposite). The spirit, because ecology does not comprise a totality but foregrounds singular connections among seemingly disparate beings, events, and processes.

That said, Orr has put his finger on something crucial, namely the vitality of contexts and their articulation with the texts of education. The matters of inclusion and exclusion that he focuses on participate in a dynamic interplay between contexts and texts, whose relation is not

fixed once and for all; the ongoing shifts this relation undergoes belong to and, indeed, form the meshwork of ecology. Despite the clear contrast between environmental and anti-environmental attitudes I have referred to, the soft, permeable, and ever-mutating edges between texts and contexts are the sites of ecological action, beautifully expressed by Orr in the nearly homophonous terms of "they are part of or apart from."

Another thing worries me in Orr's approach, which is consistent with many others in the field: the move from literacy to education is too precipitous. We should take the time to consider literacy literally, on the terms dictated by this word and the phenomenon it designates. Before making any further observations on the subject, note that the call "to consider literacy literally" redoubles the root word *liter* in the noun and the adverb, inviting us to take our cues from it. The advocates of ecological literacy decline this invitation almost by default, for isn't the sort of literacy they promote supposed to be, precisely, not literal but metaphorical, dealing not with the actual letters and readings of texts but with the multifaceted attunements to environmental processes? I take issue with this unarticulated or underarticulated premise and suggest that ecological literacy, like Jewish and Christian mysticisms, on which I will draw to make my argument, is actually *hyperliteral*, preceding the literal/metaphorical distinction. (I realize, of course, that a person whose understanding is hyperliteral might be considered dumb or, to put it less crudely, culturally illiterate. But this is the sort of dumbness that we need, an afterglow of Socratic not-knowing that lets us see the world and ourselves otherwise.)

Literacy is, literally, a question not of education but of the letter. More than that, it is a question of the letter in the two senses the word has in English: as a symbol of the alphabet and a piece of correspondence. My hypothesis is that ecological literacies may learn a great deal from the literalization, or even the hyper-literalization, of the letter and that they may do so by turning to the corpus of twelfth-century Benedictine abbess, polymath, and mystic St. Hildegard of Bingen.³ After all, Hildegard, who was exquisitely attuned to the vegetal world, which was at the core of her theological and scientific endeavors, corresponded through let-

tters with the leading personalities of her times and also invented a language, called *lingua ignota* (the unknown language) replete with *ignotas litteras* (the unknown letters).⁴ Who better than her can spell out the various senses of ecological literacy?

Literacy to the Letter (1): Environmental Correspondences

The first, and perhaps the most conspicuous, point about Hildegard's approach is the mutually exclusive relation between conventional literacy and theologico-ecological literacy that she insists upon, especially in her letters. Writing to Eberhard, Bishop of Bamberg, Hildegard argues that her words are not really hers: "I am but a poor woman, looking out into true light, in which I have seen and heard the true vision of what I am expounding before you. And this exposition does not consist of my words, but of true light, which has no defects and which I hereby transmit [*ita expositum non verbis meis, sed veri luminis, cui numquam ullus defectus est, in hunc modum transmitto*]" (Epist. XXXI, 9-11; CCCM 91, p. 83).⁵ In a more detailed fashion, Hildegard explains in a letter to Guibert of Gembloux, dating from 1175: "what I do not see, I do not know, for I am not educated [*indocta sum*], but I have simply been taught how to read. And what I write is what I see and hear in the vision. I compose no other words than those I hear, and I set them forth in unpolished Latin just as I hear them in the vision [*latinesque verbis non limatis ea profero quemadmodum illa in visione audio*], for I am not taught in this vision to write as philosophers do. And the words in this vision are not like words uttered by the mouth of man, but like a shimmering flame, or a cloud floating in pure air [*nubes in aere puro mota*]" (Epist. CIII, 89-95; CCCM 91A, p. 262).⁶

If Hildegard's writing is a function of hearing, which is itself relayed in visions (hence, in a synesthetic experience that combines light and sound), then the letters and the words they form are the afterglows of divine light, of a flame or clouds floating in the sky. Her letters and words are elemental—not as the elements of a spoken or written human language but as the ramifications of the elements (fire, air, water, earth) that speak through her. They could not be

any different from the writings of philosophers ("*sicut philosophi scribunt*") that, having lost touch with elemental languages, formalize the world in symbolic systems. The ecological literacies of her visions are, therefore, quite distant from that literacy which is implied by a polished Latin, by the Scholastics, and by the artificially constructed cultural frameworks for comprehending reality.

There is no doubt that, in part, the self-presentation of a polymath as ingenious as Hildegard in terms of a "poor woman," "uneducated" and barely literate, was a strategic stance to adopt in a male-dominated culture, dismissive of women's voices. Barbara Newman contends that "the problem of feminine authority was no less troubling for Hildegard herself than for her auditors, since she fully shared her culture's notions of female inferiority. No matter how strong the sense of the grace that animated her, she suffered from an almost equal sense of her own implausibility as a vessel."⁷

But this is only half the story. It does not seem, for one, that Hildegard "fully shared her culture's notions of female inferiority," since on multiple occasions she subverted these notions from within, placing women (and virgins, starting with the Virgin Mary) in the position of strength and power (*vir*) compared to their male counterparts.⁸ For another, the role of a medium, an intermediary, a messenger bridging different realms (in short, the angelic and hermeneutical role *par excellence*) is not only a strategic adaptation but also an ontological necessity assigning to the visionary the same structural place as that occupied by vegetation. Just as plants span the sky and the earth, the luminous and the dark, warmth and moisture, so the female mystic receives "true light" and "transmits" it to the rest of the world. Opening themselves up to solar energy, plants (or, more precisely, their chloroplasts) invent the first writing of light, a photography before photography; receiving the shimmering and fiery discharges of divine wisdom, cast in environmental terms, Hildegard channels theologically inflected ecological literacies.

The roughness of the “unpolished” conventional words and letters she operates with—what she denominates her *verbis non limatis*: this was, probably, the colloquial sense of *illiteratus* in Hildegard’s time, since it “could indicate someone who had not been tutored formally, but who nevertheless could understand or even read something in Latin”⁹—thus directly corresponds to the rawness of the experience of revelations and, above all, to *other letters and words* bound by elemental grammars, in which this experience is wrapped. Insofar as they are not merely strategic, Hildegard’s professions of formal illiteracy are the underside of a plenitude that does not fit the usual forms of written and spoken expression and that carries with it light and warmth, moisture and airy expanses, divine and ecological. (This inadequacy, this lack of fit, might have been one of the reasons behind Hildegard’s attempt to invent a new language that, aside from being “unknown” would no longer be a language of either representation or knowing, of a subject who grasps the world through the faculty of understanding. Rather than Nicholas of Cusa’s *docta ignorantia*, Hildegard spearheads an *indocta sapientia*. More on this later. In this sense, I cannot help but detect a certain ambiguity inherent in her admission, by Pope Benedict XVI, to the ranks of the Doctors of the Church in 2012.¹⁰) The aspects of her illiteracy, then, are distributed along two dimensions: the negative and the positive.

On the negative side of things, though not so much in line with apophantic theology, the non-polished words Hildegard writes down are the inheritors of her inspired understanding of the Bible that disallows a division of scriptural text into syllables or autonomous semantic units. In the preface to *Scivias*, she intimates: “When I was forty-two years and seven months old, a blazing fiery light [*coruscationis igneum lumen*] came from the open heaven and poured over my whole head and heart and breast like a flame. [...] Immediately I knew how to explain [*Et repente intellectum expositionis*] the books of the Psalter, gospel, and other catholic volumes of the Old and New Testament. However, I did not know how to interpret the words of their text, nor the division of syllables, nor the knowledge of cases and tenses [*non autem interpretationem verborum textus eorum nec divisionem syllabarum nec cognitionem casuum aut temporum habebam*]” (*Scivias* Prot.; CCCM 43, pp. 3-4).¹¹ While, thanks to the flame that suffuses

her entire being, she knows how to explain the holy books, she professes not to know how to interpret the words of the text with reference to everything formal literacy presupposes. I could say, in the spirit of Hildegard herself: formal *ill literacy* in need of a cure, as opposed to another sort of illiteracy, which may well be the cure when it is the obverse of ecological literacy.

The negativity of the understanding Hildegard attains through fiery suffusion is concentrated in how it repels both formalism and analysis or division, including the literal division of a text into syllables and letters. The mystical experience she invokes with reference to this divine-elemental force is one of absolute synthesis, which doesn't mean that everything just fuses into an undifferentiated whole, but, rather, that something other than analysis is required to do justice to singularity. What exactly? Nothing other than justice blended with love that, minutely adjusted to each, is incarnated in Christ as "the sun of justice," *sol iustitiae*, "with the brilliance of burning love [*fulgorem ardentis caritatis*], of such great glory that every creature is illuminated by the brightness of his light" (Scivias I.3.3; CCCM 43, p. 43). That is why, also, the light and the heat of revelation cannot suffuse Hildegard's head alone; they pour over her entire body, including the breast and the heart, "like a flame." Ecological literacies involve corporeality as a whole and the symphonies of living, ensouled bodies that Hildegard hears and relays in her poetic and mystical writings.

To be sure, we ought to overview Hildegard's illumination in an alleged state of near illiteracy in the context of the tradition of medieval women, who found themselves in a similar predicament. "Whereas," Christine Cooper-Rompato writes, "the gifts of sapientia are often given to men to assist their *scientia*, [...] more often than not, in women's lives, sapientia is said to come to the wholly illiterate, who are blank slates waiting to be written on by God. For example, the Cistercian Ida of Louvain (d. 1300), who entered a convent later in life [...] was described as formally illiterate. Although 'she had never been taught letters in her entire life,' she is imagined to have an interior bookshelf that she could read inwardly, suggesting that sapientia provides an alternative to traditional literacy."¹² This alternative, however, is not sim-

ply a fast-tracked and generally inexplicable acquisition of the same knowledges and skills as those formally literate people come to possess after years of learning and arduous practice. The negative aspects of Hildegard's illiteracy, tied to "non-polished words," have to do with the non-analytic nature of her wisdom and the fact that it is not focused on the head alone. The purely synthetic, synesthetic, whole-body experience of knowing sets her apart from learned men and, at the same time, roots her in divine, elemental, and vegetal realms. It is there that the positive sense of illiteracy, as another kind of literacy, resides.

In a 1148 letter to Pope Eugenius, Hildegard makes the following request: "Prepare this writing for the hearing of those who receive me and make it *viridem* with the juice of sweet flavor [*et fac illam viridem in suco suavis gustus*]; make it a root of the branches and a leaf flying into the face of the devil [*et radicem ramorum et volans folium contra diabolum*], and you will have eternal life" (Epist. II, 24-26; CCCM 91, p. 8). Non-polished words blossom into plant-writing or plant-speaking ("prepare this writing for the hearing of those who receive me"), branching out toward its audience without straying from the source. They ooze with *viriditas*, the ever-fresh power of finite creation capable of renewing or recreating itself. Having been suffused with divine fire, Hildegard lets it grow in her, mature, ripen, be distilled in "the juice of sweet flavor" that combines warmth and moisture in a cocktail of *viriditas*. (The caveat here is that the ripeness of *viriditas* is the realization of its essential unripeness, greenness, indomitable youthfulness: the advent of the fresh, the refreshed and the renewed.) Uncontainable, this liquid fire inundates Hildegard's interiority, spilling into ramified vegetal formations that are sent further out into the world.

The scheme of ecological literacies I have just somewhat hastily sketched, relates to Hildegard's letter-writing or exchange of correspondences as much as to her overall message (which, she would claim, is not really hers, but is only sent through her), the good news of *viriditas*. At the literal level of literacy, Hildegard sees her letters as harbingers of a divine ecology, as she reiterates in an epistle to Arnold, the Archbishop of Cologne, to whom she sends a book

of her “true visions.” “I remind you,” she writes, “that it [the book] contains nothing originating from human wisdom nor from my own will, but rather it contains those truths which the unfailing light wished to reveal through his own words. Indeed, this very letter which I am now writing to you [*hoc ipsum quod tibi nunc scribo*] came in a similar manner, not from my intellect nor through any human mediation, but through divine revelation” (Epist. XIVr, 1-7; CCCM 91, p. 32). The here-and-now, *hoc et nunc*, of letter-writing is, itself, a trace of the immemorial, unrepresentable past and a sign of the equally overwhelming, uncontrollable future. It spotlights that which speaks through the differently literate subject: the unfailing light, divine wisdom, plants and the elements.

Literacy to the Letter (2): Environmental Alphabets

The other literal sense of literacy is the letter as a character in a system of writing. In Christian traditions, the contrast between the letter and the spirit of a text is often framed in terms of the divergences between Judaism and Christianity, where the letter falls on the side of the Judaic law and spirit designates the supplanting of law by Christian love. Some of Hildegard’s visions confirm the traditional take on Judeo-Christianity, and yet the question of the letter as a unit of inscription is far from secondary for the Benedictine abbess.

In a missive sent to Pope Anastasius in 1153, Hildegard states: “But He who is great and without flaw has now touched a humble dwelling [*parvum habitaculum tetigit*], so that it might see a miracle and form unknown letters and utter an unknown tongue [*ignotas litteras formaret, ac ignotam linguam sonaret*]. And this was said to that little habitation: You have written these things in a language given to you from above, rather than in ordinary human speech, since it was not revealed to you in that form, but let him who has the pumice stone [*ille qui limam habet*] not fail to polish it and make it intelligible to mankind” (Epist. VIII, 79-85; CCCM 91, p. 21).

Non-polished words make their return, now with the injunction that they *must* be polished in order to become intelligible. Rather than simply raw, however, these words are spelled with “unknown letters” and resound in an “unknown tongue”—the letters and language of divine revelation. Their ecological dimension, in turn, is twofold. First, unknown letters and words materialize when a “humble dwelling” is “touched” by the infinite, meaning (within Hildegard’s semantic pluriverse) the ecological formation of humanity itself as much as her own disquietude, the equivalent of an electric charge her body and soul receive from God. After all, in Hildegard’s writings, “touching, kissing, and embracing are humanity itself and the only dwelling worthy of human being.”¹³ Second, the term *habitation* resonates, whether consciously or not, with the ancient Greek *oikos* that is at the foundations of ecology (as well as of economy). A dwelling not serving as a place of refuge from the other but as exposure to and constitution in its exposure by alterity. The other portion of ecology is the Greek *logos*, speech or discourse, which, as Hildegard has it, remains faithful to constitutive alterity, to the other who has touched one. Its faithfulness hinges on retaining a mystery, the unknown, even in letters and words, that, nonetheless, call for a mediator who would polish and ready them for human understanding.

Still, Hildegard warns, in the same letter to Pope Anastasius, whom she admonishes somewhat harshly for coming to terms with the secular authority of the emperor,¹⁴ that the time to translate her unknown letters and words into intelligible signs has not yet arrived: “...healing will come forth from the heart when the dawn appears like the splendor of the first sunrise. Those things which will follow in the new desire and the new zeal, however, must not be spoken now [*Que vero sequuntur in novo disederio et in novo studio, dicenda non sunt*]” (Epist. VIII, 77-78; CCCM 91, p. 21). Ecological literacies obey the law of seasonality, vegetal rather than mineral. According to this law, healing, reborn desire, and zeal must ripen before coming to understanding. It makes no sense within the mineral paradigm that the building blocks of an unknown language cannot be polished as soon as they are written or the moment they resound. But healing and renewal need time, the period it takes for the sweet juices of *viriditas* to be refined and distilled. This period will coincide with the delay between, on the one hand,

the initial formation and utterance of unknown letters and words, and, on the other, their polishing and translation, their ripening and distillation, their being cast into the light of universal intelligibility.

As for the materiality of the letters in Hildegard's unknown language, Jonathan Green contends that her familiarity with the Greek alphabet is one of the sources to pay attention to.¹⁵ For her part, Sarah Higley suggests that Hildegard "may have seen Hebrew letters; just as striking is the resemblance of her alphabet to Old Hebrew or Aramaic characters, but without a corresponding equivalency."¹⁶ And, Higley immediately adds, "it is unlikely that Hildegard was copying directly from any of these alphabets; her letters are most likely her own invention, showing merely an acquaintance with and an imitation of other alphabets, rather like one who has seen a foreign alphabet and loosely bases her own inventions on its remembered letters."¹⁷

Why is an impressionistic connection to Hebrew in particular significant? For several reasons. Given the conjectured role of Hebrew inscription in *lingua ignota*, it is no longer possible to dismiss Judaism as the rigid letter of the law incompatible with the spirit of love in Christianity: just as the Judaic scriptural source continues to inspire and nourish Christian theology, so Hebrew letters tacitly underly and motivate ("without," as Higley aptly puts it, "a corresponding equivalency") the Christian visionary's unknown language. Furthermore, in the kabbalistic tradition, the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are not only units in a conventional writing system but the media of and the mediators for creation. In light of the fascinating—both tense and symbiotic—relation of Jewish and Christian mysticisms, chances are that Hildegard was abreast of this doctrine and that, by implication, she viewed her "unknown letters" in their full cosmic and ecological scope.

There are numerous indirect clues to her acquaintance with the kabbalistic tradition. Worth citing among these clues are the parallels between Hildegard's Mary and the feminine aspects of divinity with regard to *šēkīnah*;¹⁸ the symbolic links between God and fire as in *kavod* (glory)

and in the Christian mystic's experience of revelation;¹⁹ or the implicit association of the virtues in *Ordo Virtutum* with *sefirot*, the ten emanations of the divine, for instance, "in the *Book of Light*, a twelfth-century kabbalistic work that originated in Provence but was compiled in part by German pietists."²⁰ The image of the crown of God in *Scivias* II.9.25 is an identical twin of *keter* (crown), one of the highest *sefirot* according to the Kabbalah.²¹ In what Barbara Newman calls "the sapiential theology of the high Middle Ages,"²² Sapientia and Caritas in Hildegard correspond to the *sefirot* of *ḥokmah* and *ḥesed*, respectively. The list goes on, but the main purpose of this small hermeneutical exercise has been already accomplished: it supports the hypothesis that the script of twenty-three letters pertaining to *lingua ignota* likely shared the mystical nature of kabbalistic writing.

In the oldest known book of the kabbalistic corpus, *Sēfer Yəšīrā* dating from the third or fourth century BCE, the world is created from, among other things, the "ten *sefirot* of nothingness" and "twenty-two foundation letters [*ʿesrim vʹštayim ʿotiot yesod*]" (1:2).²³ The letters are drawn, "engraved and carved," from breath (*ruah*), formlessness and emptiness (*tohu va'bohu*), water (*mayim*), clay (*tit*), fire (*ʿesh*) (1:11-12)—that is to say, from the elements and elemental void. They are, literally, ecological literacies, not interpreting but bringing forth, not reading but writing the world. Hildegard's twenty-three letters add an extra one to the twenty-two of the Hebrew alphabet. This *plus-one* designates an excess—the excess of *viriditas* over the singular occurrence and hierarchy of creation, over the world of static identities, over itself. While borrowing the fecundity of kabbalistic letters, Hildegard destines them to the healing of the world, its regeneration at the time of a new dawn. For now, though, as she confides in Pope Anastasius, these things "must not be spoken," or they must be spoken and written in a yet unknown language, which lets them appear even as it respects the prohibition.

As we return to this epistle, the words "has now touched a humble dwelling, so that it might see a miracle and form unknown letters and utter an unknown tongue" shimmer with another light. *Lingua ignota* and *ignotas litteras* are imparted to Hildegard by God in a similar

manner that *viriditas*, a self-refreshing power of finite existence, is passed on from the Creator to creation. It is a gift that cannot be contained, that cannot be absorbed in its being received, or that, in the course of being received, surpasses the narrow confines of the dwelling that welcomes it.²⁴ This is true with respect to *viriditas* as much as Hildegard's divine inspirations, including *lingua ignota*: they flow from the same source and overflow every vessel that contains them. Except that, while emerging as a variation on the theme of *viriditas*, *lingua ignota* is also meant to facilitate the flow of this self-refreshing capacity at the right time (hence, it keeps the valve of the secret, of the unknown, closed *for now*).

In Hildegard's *Vita*, a rhetorical question is raised: "Who truly does not marvel that she brought forth with miraculous harmony a song, sweetest of melodies, and published characters never before seen with a language unheard of before now? [*quis vero non miretur, quod cantum dulcissime melodie mirabili protulit symphonia et litteras non prius visas cum lingua edidit antea inaudita?*]" (CCCM 125, p. 20).²⁵ Along with *viriditas*, the symphonality of being in Hildegard is one of the keys to an ecological theology, where the body resonates with its soul and ensouled bodies with each other and with the rest of creation.²⁶ Not by mere accident the previously unpublished alphabet and unheard-of language are mentioned on a par with *symphonia*: they are the texts and the contexts of mystical ecology, weaving in and out of one another under the aegis of *viriditas*. Any consideration of ecological literacies in Hildegard's corpus must take its bearings from their interrelation.

Michael Marder is IKERBASQUE Research Professor in the Department of Philosophy at the University of the Basque Country (UPV-EHU), Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain. His writings span the fields of ecological theory, phenomenology, and political thought. He is the author of numerous scientific articles and eighteen monographs, including, most recently, *Dump Philosophy* (2020); and *Green Mass* (2021). For more information, please consult his website michaelmarder.org.

Endnotes

1 David Orr, "Foreword." In *Ecological Literacy: Educating Our Children for a Sustainable World*, edited by Michel Stone & Zenobia Barlow (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2005), p. xi.

2 See, for example, Timothy Morton, *All Art Is Ecological* (London & New York: Penguin, 2021).

3 Refer to Michael Marder, *Green Mass: The Ecological Theology of St Hildegard of Bingen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2021).

4 Sarah Higley, *Hildegard of Bingen's Unknown Language: An Edition, Translation, and Discussion* (New York & Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 60.

5 *Hildegardis Bingensis Epistolarium*. First Part, I-XC, ed. L. Van Acker. Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, Vol. 91 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1991). Cited as "CCCM 91"

6 *Hildegardis Bingensis Epistolarium*. Second Part, XCI-CCLr, ed. L. Van Acker. Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, Vol. 91A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993). Cited as "CCCM 91A"

7 Barbara Newman, *Sister of Wisdom: St. Hildegard's Theology of the Feminine* (Berkeley & LA: University of California Press, 1997), p. 35.

8 Refer to Marder, *Green Mass*, particularly Chapter 1, "Verges."

9 Christine F. Cooper-Rompato, *The Gift of Tongues: Women's Xenoglossia in the Later Middle Ages* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), p. 67.

10 Pope Benedict XVI, "Apostolic Letter, Proclaiming Saint Hildegard of Bingen, Professed Nun of the Order of Saint Benedict, a Doctor of the Universal Church" (Vatican, October 7, 2012) https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_letters/documents/hf_ben-xvi_apl_20121007_ildegarda-bingen.html Last accessed on October 14, 2021.

11 *Hildegardis Scivias*, ed. A. Führkötter. Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, Vol. 43 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978). Cited as "CCCM 43"

12 Cooper-Rompato, *The Gift of Tongues*, p. 66.

13 Marder, Green Mass, p. 137.

14 Joseph L. Baird & Radd K. Ehrman, *The Letters of St. Hildegard of Bingen*, Vols. I, II & II, trans. Joseph L. Baird & Radd K. Ehrman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994-2004), p. 41.

15 Jonathan P. Green, "A New Gloss on Hildegard of Bingen's *Lingua Ignota*." *Viator* 36, 2005, p. 234.

16 Higley, *Hildegard of Bingen's Unknown Language*, p. 60.

17 Higley, *Hildegard of Bingen's Unknown Language*, p. 61.

18 Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Gender in Jewish Mysticism." In Frederick E. Greenspahn, *Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah: Insights & Scholarship* (New York: NYU Press, 2011), p. 196.

19 Debra L. Stoudt, "Parallels between Jewish and Christian Mystical Experiences in Medieval Germany." In *German Literature between Faiths: Jew and Christian at Odds and in Harmony*, edited by Peter Meister (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 45-46.

20 Stoudt, "Parallels," p. 46.

21 Marder, *Green Mass*, p. 119.

22 Barbara Newman, *God and the Goddesses: Vision, Poetry, and Belief in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), p. 205.

23 Aryeh Kaplan, Sefer Yetzirah: *The Book of Creation* (San Francisco & Newburyport: Weiser Books, 1997), p. 22.

24 On the subject of the dwelling or habitation see, for instance, the following statement by Hildegard: "A human is the edifice of God, in which he dwells because he sent the fiery soul into it, the soul that flies with rationality in expansion, just as a wall encompasses the breadth of a house [*Homo enim edificium Dei est, in quo ipse mansionem habet, quoniam igneam animam in illum misit, que cum rationalitate in dilatatione volat, quemadmodum murus latitudinem domus comprehendit*]" (Epist. XLV, 10-13; CCCM 91, p. 114).

25 *Vita Sanctae Hildegardis*, ed. Monika Klaes. Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis, Vol. 126 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1993). Cited as "CCCM 126"

26 See Marder, *Green Mass*, passim.

Little by little
Michael Marder

Imperceptibly, at first.
Then, looking back—
A vague discernment.
Still impossible to tell
What has changed.
The same keeps being the same:
Whence its safe-keeping?
Elongated or contracted,
More or less the same.
Adrift from itself
And from the image
You have formed.
Little by little.
Letter by letter.
Breath by breath.

Lauren Schaffer's *Dirty Sweep*

A Conversation with
Richard Moszka and Kelly Lycan

166



© 2022 EGS Press. Printed in Canada. All rights reserved.

Lauren Schaffer (LS): "Dirty Sweep" came about through my process-driven practice, which generally tends to work through the logic of the mould. I like the idea that Marcel Duchamp talked about regarding the mould's "mysterious and pleasurable constraint."¹

The pieces in the show derived from closely observed matter, location and sound, alluding to multiple scales of geography and time. They consist of small sculptural works as well as field recordings that end up in video and audio form.

The wall-mounted suites refer partly to those horizon-less photographic backdrops: "sweeps" or "cyc" (from cyclorama) is another term for them. They consist of the white plastic sheets curving away from the wall, sloping just off level on wooden shelves.



These shelves that were in the show were inspired by Konstantin Melnikov, who was a Russian architect during the 1920s and who, in '29, put in a proposal for this *Green City* (a "disurbanism" design competition organized by the Soviet government). It was never realized or accepted. This "sleeping laboratory" and communal, technologized, "sleeping cure"



Melnikov's Sleeping Laboratory, model (1929).

were designed to support a restless collective. The cots for the overworked proletariat were built at a 15-degree slope, eliminating the need for head-rests. That gesture reflects both the rationalistic construction and irrational yearning of social utopianism. He also piped in sounds of nature and wanted to let loose wild animals onto the city

1 *Part Object Part Sculpture*, Edited by Helen Molesworth, 2005, Penn State University Press & Wexler Center for the Arts.



streets. This kind of tension—or idea—of building an infrastructure for a restless collective had been a particular interest to me, though these sources are more distantly interpreted in my work.²

Most of the objects on the sweeps explore the mould-making and casting as a form of sculptural production and reproduction. The structural ingredient that you find again and again is concrete, almost outsized for the scale of the objects. I'd been really interested in this idea of having a material that seemed too large for the small and sometimes detailed forms that were being constructed.

There is also organic material. In this case, it's the remains of a moth larvae from a failed amateur entomological experiment of mine (image bottom left). The moth larvae crawled in and never came out, and I built these sorts of sarcophagi. These (and other organic objects) are subjected to several sculptural—and otherwise—procedures and integrated with manufactured material.



2 Julian Bienart (Lecture 14: 20th Century Realizations: Russia and Great Britain) for the course, Theory of City Form, from MIT (2013) <https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/architecture/4-241j-theory-of-city-form-spring-2013/>



mimicking I'm curious about, using the window like that.

LS: Yeah, it was a bit like turning your back on the world, you know what I mean? Because the sweeps—in this case they're a white plastic—were intended to be a bit of mimicry of the white walls of the gallery so that it points to that space. There's that promise, but against the window. I thought it was curious to put the viewers coming upon it from behind. I generally tend to like the idea of somehow trying to encircle everything. I have access to all parts, of course, then you have this picture window—obviously that's a real break from (the sweep). In this case it's a thinner sweep, so that the illusion of the horizonless space is really barely there.

You know, this is actually a kind of miniature of that first jar form—the kind of reiteration of it, with a bit of parody and definitely as an anti-monument sentiment.

I'll show you: here (image left) the styro-foam originals were just scanned and printed and then illuminated or molded and cast. So that's this first sweep—I don't know if you guys wanted to weigh in with any observations.

Kelly Lycan (KL): I'm curious about the choice—which I liked a lot—of having it against the window. It gives us a sense that there's a window there. It's interesting that you're creating this live image behind your photograph, and then the photograph and the objects are sort of mimicking this object in the photograph. It's this kind of perpetual



In fact, it just becomes more of an extension of the window—presented like a kind of entry into the space. The other sweeps are sort of hugging the wall and presenting more like something coming off the wall.

Richard Moszka (RM): But it works here: it's like an empty window display. And also you're lucky it snowed so much because the sweep seems to be mimicked outside with the snow.

KL: Yeah, I find that it sort of brings in the other room with the monitors—ties it together as well. It's also like a moving image: potentially there's movement outside, or somebody walking. I just really appreciate your use of that window. I think it's unusual and really successful.





LS: I wanted to just mention this idea that the scale of the work is table-top, which kind of supplants the need for a base and, again, is another way of refusing monumentality. The shelves hold these updated or sometimes rotated selections of recombinant sculptures which are designed without singular orientation or wholeness...a lot of these objects don't sit comfortably in one position and so I've used the inclined plane to temporarily secure them. The materials are concrete, brass, bronze, vacuum-forming of plastic—here is a bread piece...yeah, with the different materials, you end up with a different kind of timeframe. Bread has more contingency than brass.

RM: Not archival.

LS: I was also going to make a point about the idea of the sweeps

overlaying, which can create a kind of horizon: this space countering gravity through optical illusion, functioning as a form of sensory deprivation...there is so much about (the idea of) balance in the work.

Maybe I'll just quickly say something about the forms. This sequence—called *Rue Interieure*—comes from a collection of inspirations: mould-gating systems taken from students' off-cuts at the OCADU (Ontario College of Art and Design) foundry, the *rue interieure* or "galleries" from Charles Fourier, le Corbusier, and the "dispersed uniform settlements," in which Lenin referred to space where there are interior streets or exterior public corridors. The gating systems are the channels that link all the parts of the sculptural form, and they also shift with every material in iteration.³

The sweeps are "dirty," as a way to think about breaking illusion to bring it back down to earth. Also, to "sweep dirt" or to have a "dirty sweep," refers to clearing away matter, and I was thinking about the finiteness of matter and just sweeping it around. A friend had mentioned a South Asian expression about cleaning with a dirty mop, and I think this reiterates the options of keeping these objects around and shifting them.

KL: I'd like to clarify the "dirty" again...are you thinking the "dirty" also relates to the idea of saving off-cuts or of the disposed.

LS: Yeah, a lot of the source material is detritus—I'm working with the remains of my entomology study or I quite like the off-cuts from students, etc. A lot of the work I've done are responses to teaching. I'm kind of immersed in mould-making and I'm trying to show student ideas, and so there's this exchange—which also means taking a little bit from someone else—and so those gates are already abstracted extractions from someone else's form. The dirtiness is considering all sorts of substances around you that get reformed or reshaped.

3 Julian Bienart (Lecture 14: 20th Century Realizations: Russia and Great Britain) for the course, Theory of City Form, from MIT (2013) <https://ocw.mit.edu/courses/architecture/4-241j-theory-of-city-form-spring-2013/>



KL: I'm curious about these elastic bands (image above, center) and how they're often used as this thing that holds... I always think of this word "capture" in relation to what you're doing but they sometimes stabilize...are they, for you, in a state of regression? It's sort of like a process that could be about removal: they have their function but you're kind of filling in the negative space and changing their form.

RM: Well, it seems to me that what, at one point, you might be making us (or me) feel, is that stuff is constantly just falling apart and that you are constantly having to jerry-rig it back together right, imperfectly. That they (and we, like the buildings) are essentially flawed; no matter what the utopian architectural references are, there are always flaws that are overlooked. Most of us around the world actually live in more vernacular architecture, or more precarious circumstances than what the modernists saw, so it seems to me that you're revealing that kind of process.

LS: I do like this kind of diachronic way of working, where you're heading in one direction with something, and you have an experience with it and you, you take a left turn. So there are—you know—a lot of left turns.

KL: I like the way the elastics want you to wonder if they're losing their function or gaining their function,

you know? I guess it really speaks to the process because they're the most familiar things to us—those are the things that are most familiar to our hands. So I like that you've just made the subtle shift to encapsulate what your intention is with this grouping.

RM: I like the fact you used “Frankenstein-ing” as a verb when we talked yesterday, reanimating dead things imperfectly to a degree, or you know, giving them an illusion of movement like the squeaky toy that holds under that piece of concrete, that you can accidentally push and it emits a sound (image left). You're also using stuff that is raw and has a process of its own: incorporating the rotting grapes, or whatever is happening inside that silicone (image right).

It seems like the insects are inhabiting (whether you see them or not, all our buildings are full of things like cockroaches and ants and bed bugs) the same way that we ourselves may be riddling, invading or overrunning perfect architecture from modernism. There's a metaphor there between the critters that crawled into your pieces and the way we inhabit offices—sorry housing...social housing...hahaha...

LS: Imperfect social housing...

This (image opposite page) is the same bridge building that I photographed in the first room, it's a drone shot bumping into the bridge



control building. The video is looped three times as a continuous minute and a half. The audio is from peregrine nests...I was following this organization that tries to steward urban peregrines and they had a nest on the 43rd floor of the Sheraton Hotel. There was a boiler room next to the ledge and then the city below. I'm continuing to do work with it, but I've sort of put these two together: this overbuilt 1968 infrastructure bridge building that oversees the most polluted stretch of water in the city [the Keating Channel].

RM: No wonder it is our favorite building in Toronto.

LS: The building is not movable, the bridge is movable...it is the bridge control building, so it just sits cantilevered on its stairs and has all the original controls from 1968. Nothing's changed; it's a very mechanical lift.

RM: Because it's on the cantilevered stairs, it looks like a crane, it looks like it might be able to kind of swivel around, so I like the drone in the video (I mean I didn't know it was a drone) I thought it was the building moving towards me, actually, along with the bridge (because I know the bridge moves) and so, and then the screaming on the soundtrack...also I don't know if it's the building screaming and the hinges are rusty and the whole thing is about to fall apart again (you



City of Toronto Archives, Series 1403, File 124, Item 12



know you need a lot of WD40) and then you do hear a lot of birds...If you hadn't told me they were peregrine falcons I'm not sure if I would have understood that they were birds. Maybe eventually.

LS: Yeah, there is a bit of that confusion...intentionally. I did end up with hours and hours of tape of boiler rooms because—all the high rises and hospitals in the few places I went to—that is where the high up ledges are (which end up being like cliff sides). That's where we also put that infrastructure. The latch-door (where the microphone was installed) was straddling the boiler rooms and these ledges with the nests...

KL: I'm fascinated how a lot of your works have captured bodies in them. And I'm really

fascinated by how you're using video and sculpture and that sometimes the sculpture feels like the still images for the videos. In a way they're the solid captures of what's happening in the videos with these captured bodies...I would love for you to speak a little bit about that, is that a desire?

LS: Yeah I think it's funny, because nowadays, I feel like I use photography as a way of enhancing my failing vision. So with this kind of observation of closely watched spaces, it's hard to make that into an object; it's hard to represent that, and it's a difficult proximity I would have to have as well. In looking at the world at that scale you infer larger. The filming made sense for that scale as my work was getting smaller and smaller.

There is the same frustration with how much you can see, or how much attention you can give to the actual object, and I think it's the same with these creatures, which you know are all around us and very accessible, especially in the city. They're in our bodies, and so obviously to some extent, we are inextricably linked. The models of how we observe them in the world and in relation to us, I wanted to manifest materially. So, I do end up using the bugs themselves, but sometimes just the way things come together...more abstract reflections of those relations, if that makes sense.

KL: I'm also curious how the "peregrine tower" or whatever you're calling that piece...





LS: "peregrine place", like a soap opera...

KL: ...is almost like a little horror film, so it contextualizes the objects differently than some of the other videos.

LS: Yeah, that's newer and a bit of a departure from the studio series ...but there is always this sort of scale discrepancy that I'm interested in. I have the audio of the peregrines, and with those critter cams you're in close proximity to the nest...and you're also hearing the city and the boiler room on the 43rd floor, there is this three-tiered space that is present.

RM: That's it! That's why I thought it was the bridge or the building moving and not the peregrine screeching, because there's also that rumbling sound, so you think it's like a rumbling mechanism. Well, it's still disturbing no matter how you look at it, whether it's the building, that screeching of the falcons or, you know, human babies.

LS: Yeah, yeah, it's not a comfortable sound. Sometimes they're cute sounding but they are predatory creatures.

RM: Aren't we all...

KL: Again it's like some of those words that you said at the beginning, with Duchamp talking about "constraints" and how also everything's a little unstable...the sculptures are doing

that and that video does that.

RM: In the containment strategies as well, right?

KL: Yeah oh yeah.

RM:... the process is... even in the baking (of the bread), where you're melting, burning, cutting stuff out, kind of everyday processes, but also all kind of violent.

KL: We were discussing this the other day, but I actually think that "social" or "relationships" are maybe words to consider with your work. Because you use words like "embrace" and "touch" and "leaning"...

LS: Yeah, well I do think that they're part-bodies, but there is also just this gesture of connection, I guess physical, which of course is a perfectly wonderful metaphor for how we interact socially. I like the different contingencies, the different stabilities of objects and where they join...that's like me, hovering in the realm of metaphor. There are relationships between humans and humans, and between humans and non-humans. And I do think that in there is a certain kind of empathy. It's not all lovely gestures—like you said it can become violent.

KL: I have one of your smaller sculptures, and I'm fascinated by the experience of the sculpture because it has three parts. It has a place where it rests and it's stable, but it's hard to get those three parts in that place and so there's some anxiety in the experience.



RM: And there's a vulnerability there, I think also in the materials. And I was talking about violence, but just as much it talks about nesting or this sort of like, not mothering, fathering but "taking-care-of." It's all very precarious and so you have to be very careful with it.

KL: Right

LS: Yeah. Yeah, relationship...

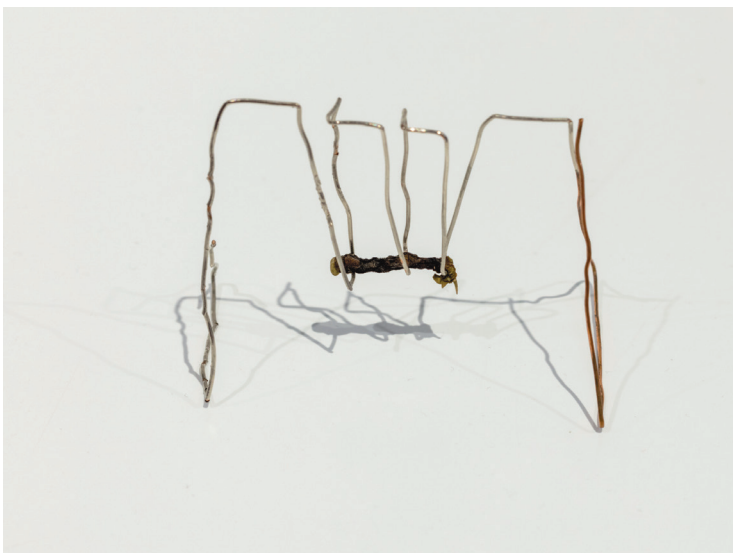
RM: ...all kinds of different relationships.

LS: And I thought it might be worth it if anyone out there in the TV land had any questions or comments to throw into the chat or to say it out loud...Yeah, Caroline.

Caroline Chan (CC): Thanks so much for this talk. I just had a couple of observations. I've been really excited about these works and seeing it the other day. We had a great chat, but since then some things have been sinking in, especially after this talk with Kelly, you and Richard. I just love the expansiveness of the work.

Even though we are talking about disruption and the instability of the objects...Kelly, what you were just saying about how they are so precarious, in a way. But there is also an expansiveness because you're really sort of undoing this language of sculpture, the language of space, and that all the boundaries are loosened which is really amazing. There's limitlessness...I'm appreciating that.





And then it makes me think about how this work has been in process for many years, especially back to your insect studies, where I feel some of this is started.

LS: I appreciate that you call them “studies” (hahaha).

CC: It’s been iterative and that’s also part of his expansiveness...it’s just an iteration upon iteration. You don’t know when it’s ending or beginning and I love that. But remember, we talked about the concept of the *Umwelt* (the world around us), when you were doing these insects studies, so I think about

that, with the lady bugs (or fake ladybugs, I don’t know what that is). You know this concept of the *Umwelt* is from semiotics, but I think it was from a biologist who applied it to the study of organisms and how each one of us, even though we may be in the same environment, have a different concept of our environment based on our sensory perception. Whatever is in our immediate environment impacts on the way we develop our concept of the world.

My next point was that I’m seeing the insect as the subject and then I also think you are...

LS: Yeah, I think I’m all over it, I mean I’m the one who gets to, for better or worse, make those things and touch those things and try to put them together, and, like Kelly, I’m equally frustrated and excited trying to assemble them (and re-assemble them) and make sure they hold. So there’s this kind of performance of the whole environment. The exhibition sets up the maker, sets me up a bit, quietly performing back there. And we know we can’t differentiate our-

selves when we're observing from what we are looking at. We're part of it.

I do think a lot about a connectedness between species, and then this kind of obtuseness about it, too...I have looked at ethology and researching animal behavior. And with that, I try to fight the impulse for anthropomorphism. It's really, really hard, but I think it's an interesting battle. And it's sometimes a formal battle, I think it (anthropomorphism) is something I shouldn't do, or we shouldn't do...so I guess I am trying to represent that and play against what I might research about this physiognomy or the ecology around us.

RM: Depending on your point of view—whether you're soiling a structure by inhabiting it, or maintaining it, or whether you're invading it or trying to make it more aseptic—all of the possibilities always exist.

LS: There's life in the dirt.

Lauren Schaffer is an interdisciplinary artist who resides in Toronto/Tkaronto. Through disruption of materiality, her work explores the connections between human and non-human. Closely observed location and sound circulate within the work, alluding to multiple scales of geography and time. She was the recipient of the Grow Op Seed Award 2018, the Best Experimental Film winner in the Toronto Urban Film Festival 2015 and has received grants from the Conseil des Arts et des Lettres (Quebec), the Ontario Arts Council and the Canada Council for the Arts. Her work has been featured in Canadian Art, C Magazine and Espace Magazine and is held in various private, public and corporate collections. www.laurenschaffer.com

Kelly Lycan is a photo-based installation artist who resides in Vancouver, BC, Canada on the traditional and unceded territories of the Squamish (Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw), Tsleil-Waututh (səlilwətaʔt) and Musqueam (xʷməθkʷəy̓əm) Nations. Lycan's work investigates the way objects and images are placed and displayed in the world and the cycle of value they experience. She employs photography and sculpture in order to engage them beyond medium specificity. Her work has been exhibited across Canada, the US, Europe, and the Middle East. Lycan also collaborated from 2005-2015 with the artist collective Instant Coffee, a service-oriented artist collective that have exhibited widely. www.kellylycan.com

Richard Moszka is a visual artist based in Mexico City. He has earned a living doing translation, demolition, art criticism, workshops and curatorial and commercial design. Only recently has he figured out how to more effectively merge his interests in activism involving harm reduction strategies with an unintentionally convoluted, disorderly approach to visual representation. He has received grants from Mexico's *Sistema Nacional de Creadores* and the Canada Council. His work is in the *Colección Jumex* and the Arkheia Documentation Center at the MUAC (UNAM).

Caroline Chan is an artist, cultural worker and friend, based in Tkaronto.

Suddenly...

Zelda Gamson

I find myself in the place I want to be, not far from the place I don't want to be. I look out my window and see the scolding crows, the song sparrows, the oaks, the maples. I have been here for a week and have gone to two parties and an art opening. Masked people come up to me and want to hug. One tells me her life since I left. I know her face but not her name. Another gossips about the people who bought my house.

I am driving again and every curve reveals a new scene and every scene brings back another. I check out the passing farm stands. They are still where I left them, but did they change while I was gone? I am glad to see they still have their boxes of dollar bills and coins for buyers to make change. I bag a few pears and a container of feta cheese.

The cliffs at the beaches have turned into hillocks due to erosion and heavy winds but the beaches are intact and the ocean as unpredictable as ever. On wild, windy days I know where to go to see the surfers, some young and female and some older and male. On milder days, I

can walk up the beach to a part filled with stones of many colors, shaped and polished by the sea. I take two back to my new home.

I keep running into people I knew before we disappeared behind masks: The manager of the Brazilian grocery store who opened the first health store 30 years ago. The dentist who is the president of the Jewish congregation. The clerk at the hospital who used to work for the city of Boston. And the barber, Phil, who used to cut Bill's hair.

I miss seeing my friend, June, a member of the Wampanoags, a glowing woman who drove us to Boston in the 90s when Bill got sick. She made her way around the boards of the non-profits on the island and worked the register at the Thrift Shop. I was planning to run into her and catch up. Now she is gone. I go to her memorial and talk to her family and friends, and it is sweet.

Every day I get up early and throw a coat over my nightgown, hat and gloves flying after me. I sit on a folding chair looking at the clouds scudding across the sun. The daylight ends quickly and I find myself absorbed in something at my desk and miss the sunset. I must remember to go out again to check out the sky before it goes dark. If it gets to be dark when I look up, the stars will draw me outside.

I thought I had lost this home of mine. And suddenly, I realize it's been waiting for me.

Zelda Gamson is a sociologist who has been on the faculty of the University of Michigan and the University of Massachusetts Boston. She has published in such publications as *Left* magazine and *Jewish Currents*. She is working on an autobiography with the working title *Midcentury Modern Woman: Teetering on the Edge of Change*.

Becoming Indigenous to Place: Ecopoiesis and Aesthetic Responsibility

Jenna Montgomery

As a child, I equated nature to the outdoors. It was a place where I could interact and learn about other creatures and landforms. I did not separate built environments from those that were more wild. It was all nature to me. As I grew older and became more interested in environmental management and civil engineering, my thinking began to conform to the scientific method and Cartesian dualism, including the separation of humans from nature. I started to place greater value on pristine wilderness and dreamed of a world in which human development practically came to a halt. To me, this is how we would save Earth from human destruction.

However, human survival has always depended upon our ability to create and shape what the earth has to offer us. For example, clearing forests has enabled us to improve food security.

The construction of dams has improved water access and availability. Mining for minerals and metals has improved the quality and durability of materials and enabled us to create powerful computer processors. Without human development, the human species would not have been able to thrive as we have.

Living in downtown Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, my neighbourhood includes streets and avenues of intensely humancentric development but also a river valley home to a variety of non-human species. While physically isolated from friends and family during the coronavirus pandemic, I turned to a reliable form of connection for me, nature. I took the opportunity to deepen my knowledge of the local environment, refining my plant identification skills and learning the local river valley trails. Each day I took note of changes in the growth and development of the various trees, shrubs and grasses in the area. I quickly became fond of witnessing the sun rise. I tracked daily and seasonal variances in the colours of the sky and the location of the sun along the horizon. I also became more attentive to the moon's orbit around Earth and its relationship to the sun.

As time passed, my experiences in the outdoors became more like creative explorations, similar to how I experience working in the art studio. With greater familiarity of my environment, I could allow my aesthetic sensibilities to guide me through the streets, parks, and river valley. When something caught my attention, I allowed myself to relax into the moment and become more sensitive to the experience. With my senses fully engaged, my awareness and imagination became attuned to chance meetings and moments of vulnerability just as they would if I were painting. I embraced opportunities to move, smell, look, taste and feel my neighbourhood in ways I had not previously been open to. Exploring my environment became a creative and playful approach to connection. I rediscovered the joy and curiosity that comes from sitting, lying, crawling, and climbing over the earth, sometimes taking photos not as art but as a reminder to myself of an experience. Some examples are here on the following pages.



Figure 1



Figure 2

Montgomery, J. (2020). A reminder of the pressed leaves from the weight of my body and the dull colours that invoked a mild sadness inside of me. [Digital photograph]



Figure 3

As I reflect on my experiences in nature over the past two years, my conceptualization of it has shifted. The demarcation between humans and nature is being eroded and my perception of reality is shifting. I have a deep sense of the built environment as something that is not separate and apart from nature. Human shaping is a part of nature. However, I am more aware of the anthropocentric activities that we engage in and the destruction that results. Rather than desiring these activities to end, I now want to imagine a different approach to human development that does not conform to Cartesian dualism but embraces our creative capacity for building connection to place. What makes me hopeful is that there are others imagining this as well.

Robin Wall Kimmerer is a botanist and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation who explores the intersections between science and traditional knowledge. After an experience in which her post-secondary class could not identify a single example of a beneficial relationship between humans and nature, Kimmerer asks, "How can we move towards ecological and cultural sustainability if we cannot even imagine what that path feels like (2013, p.6)?" To begin to answer this question, she turns to Indigenous mythology and the origin stories of Skywoman and Nanabozho. These stories use imagination to describe a vision for the relationship between humans and nature, in particular a beneficial relationship. The story of Skywoman explains that the mother of humans fell to Earth from space; with acts of reciprocity, she was able to co-create Turtle Island, also known as North America, as a place suitable for not only her life but lives for generations to come. Kimmerer continues by describing Skywoman as an immigrant who became indigenous to place and suggests that we too, as a nation of immigrants, could learn to become indigenous: "...living as if [our] children's future mattered, to take care of the land as if our lives, both material and spiritual, depended on it (2013, p.9)." This indigeneity is not related to specific cultures nor to overwriting history, but to a basic fundamental relationship to place. To be *indigenous to place* is not to claim belonging to societies that pre-date colonialism, but to deeply understand and accept our interconnectedness with the places we call home. The story of Skywoman sets forth what Kimmerer explains are the "Original Instructions," which have served not as directions for living but as the Anishinaabe people's

compass for how each person chooses to live (2013, p.7).

Kimmerer uses the timeless Anishinaabe story of Nanabozho to describe what it might look like for us as a settler society to use that compass to become indigenous to place (2013, p. 202). In the story, Nanabozho arrives on Turtle Island unknowing of where he came from but aware that he has arrived in an ancient place already home to diverse species. Nanabozho first sees the sun rise and is reminded of the origin of Turtle Island and the Original Instructions (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 202). Following in the footsteps of Skywoman, he knows that everything he needs to survive is here. All the knowledge he needs is carried by those already inhabiting Turtle Island and so he answers the Creator's call to learn the names of all the other beings:

He watched them carefully to see how they lived and spoke with them to learn what gifts they carried to discern their true names. Right away he began to feel more at home and was not lonely anymore when he could call the others by name and they called out to him when he passed... (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 202)

Nanabozho not only knows of those around him, but also develops personal connection and understanding. This deep level of knowing contributes to his sense of place and belonging.

Without a map to follow, Nanabozho relies upon the cardinal directions to navigate and attach meaning to place. In the East, he finds knowledge, sacred tobacco and connection to Creator (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 202). In the South, he finds the cedar and his responsibility to protect life on Earth (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 203). In the North, he finds sweetgrass, along with compassion, kindness and healing (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 206). Finally in the West, Nanabozho meets sage and fire. Here he learns about duality by meeting with his arrogant twin, who like fire, holds the power to create and destroy (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 206). Nanabozho recognizes that the human power to create, if left unchecked, can overwhelm and lead to destruction.

The more he experiences the world, the more he comes to understand each being's re-

sponsibility and the importance of reciprocity for survival. "Every being with a gift, every being with a responsibility (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 205)." It becomes his responsibility to walk with humility to ensure that human creation does not lead to destruction (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 206). His reliance and responsibility to others allows for the co-creation of a sustainable world for future generations. With this realization, Nanabozho becomes indigenous to place.

Nanabozho's journey leaves us with a map for the shaping the world that is based on reciprocity and a connection to place. Another map that we could follow is through a phenomenological approach that philosopher Stephen K. Levine describes as a "poietic ecology" (2020). A poietic ecology recognizes humans "...as finite historical beings, [who] are 'thrown' into a world we have not ourselves made; yet it is within our power to choose those possibilities which exist within this world in order to develop it in a 'suitable' way..." (Levine, 2020). Both Kimmerer and Levine describe a world in which humans do not hold dominion over Earth but must shape it to meet our needs for survival. In the same way that Nanabozho learns from nature to build technology and improve the world for future humans (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 204), Levine suggests that our aesthetic responsibility, or our ability to respond to what emerges during the creative process, can be used to shape the earth in a way that respects our reliance and connection to it (2020). "We are not creator gods; rather, we take what is given and respond to it" (Levine, 2020)." Responding to Earth with aesthetic responsibility recognizes that shaping is a continual process; we can never hold dominion over Earth.

Aesthetic responsibility is a key element of poiesis; poietic ecology suggests that poiesis can be applied to understanding our relationship to the planet. In the tradition of Western philosophy, poiesis is related to the human act of making, specifically the making of art. It is related to a knowing that is rooted in the senses and aesthetic sensibilities. Cartesian dualism assumes that poietic knowledge is inferior to more objective ways of knowing that require the separation between nature and consciousness (Knill et.al, 2010, p. 19). This is the dominant paradigm that currently dictates how we shape and manage our environment. To apply poiesis

to ecology, we must challenge the dominant paradigm and recognize the limitations of Cartesian dualism, adopting a phenomenological approach to knowing.

Phenomenology recognizes that our perceptions and experiences affect our values, how we approach reality and our relationship to the world. In shifting to phenomenology, we shift from a dualist *knowing about* to an experiential *knowing* or *knowing from*. Similarly, we see evidence of this sort of shift in Nanabozho, when learning the names of others becomes not just an intellectual exercise, but an intimate and relational experience that leads to belonging. As we transition from the *knowing about* a space in terms that are objective and measurable, to knowing a space through experiences that are intimate and personal, we apply meaning, value and attachment and our relationship to the space changes.

Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan describes space as a “a condition for biological survival” and a resource. (p. 57) We need space in order to meet our basic needs. Space is a tangible thing that can be measured and demarcated with boundaries and barriers. There is a permanence and reliability inherent to space. Cartesian systems of knowing and being help us to understand space. However, as Tuan describes, “Life is lived, not a pageant from which we stand aside and observe. The real is the familiar daily round, unobtrusive like breathing. The real involves our whole being, all of our senses” (Tuan, p. 146). Experience shapes our reality.

Both Kimmerer and Levine attribute experience as the source of connection to the spaces we inhabit. Tuan describes these experiences as “intimate experiences” (1977, p. 137). As we relax into a space and allow ourselves to be vulnerable, we begin to experience that space. Any dualist separation between nature and consciousness becomes eroded as we enter a liminal space where the senses and imagination are awakened. Intimate experiences are ephemeral yet visceral and embodied, and cannot be accurately described or captured through objective intellectual means (Tuan, 1977, p. 147).

Art and ritual become the most effective methods of sharing intimate experiences, since these experiences rely upon the senses and imagination in not only the act of making but also in the response to what has been made. Creative expressions have the ability to turn the personal into the universal by providing an opportunity to embody and reflect upon intimate experiences (Tuan, 1977, p. 148). Through reflection we can “gain a measure of permanence” upon which we can shape our reality of space into place (Tuan, p. 148).

With poietic ecology, Levine suggests that nature could be viewed as a work of art itself (2020). In this context, the work of art is not something that humans have created in a godly fashion since Earth cannot be mastered, but rather as something that draws our attention to the impacts and consequences of our actions. When we accept nature as art, we can be open to what is lovely, ugly, painful, suffering and respond to it with an aesthetic responsibility (Knill et al 2010, p. 140). Shaping the earth with aesthetic responsibility is *ecopoiesis* (Levine, 2020).

Practical applications of *ecopoiesis* require us to “...accept our responsibility for shaping the environment in a way that respects its otherness as well as our own capacity for affecting it (Levine, 2020).” Encounters with place awaken our aesthetic responsibility and turn us towards a phenomenological approach to shaping that frees us from Cartesian dualism. From here, new possibilities for beneficial relationships between humans and others can be imagined and realized.

My personal experiences show me that deep connection and belonging to place can open our imagination to consider modes of shaping that honour reciprocity over progress and consumption. My response to the ideas shared by Robin Wall Kimmerer and Stephen K. Levine in the time of climate change is one of cautious hope. They both consider the role that connection and belonging to place have on our perception of survival and the shaping of our environment. What if we as a settler society took a moment to take note of our aesthetic responsibility and focused on becoming indigenous to place? Would we rethink our political and societal

systems and structures in a meaningful and honest way? As climate change puts humanity into desperate situations for survival, is it too late to become indigenous to place or is this exactly what we need to survive?

References

Kimmerer, R. W. (2013). *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. (2nd edition). Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions.

Knill, P. J., Levine, E. G., and Levine, S. K. (2010). *Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy: Toward a Therapeutic Aesthetic*. London, UK: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Levine, S. K. (2020). Ecopoiesis: Towards a poietic ecology. *Ecopoiesis: Eco-Human Theory and Practice*, 1(1). [open access internet journal]. URL: <http://ecopoiesis.ru> (31/12/2021)

Tuan, Y. (1977). *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Jenna Montgomery (she/her) lives on the land currently known as the province of Alberta in Canada. Her ancestors were indigenous to Europe but settled on Treaty 7 lands that are the traditional territory of the Blackfoot people, which is also where she has spent most of her life. With a background in the visual arts, human geography, and civil engineering, she is continuously working to strengthen her connection to and understanding of place at the intersection of art and science.



Communion:

Encountering the Other through Photography

Carolina Herbert

On being a photographer

Photography for me is like a meditation. It's a tool that draws me into a deep communion with nature. Communion is derived from *com*, meaning "with or together" and *unus*, meaning "oneness or union," its Latin root is *communio*, meaning "fellowship, mutual participation, and a sharing."¹ The mysterious sharing and participation with nature that we are all part of is the communion I experience as a photographer.

Photography helps me to look, notice, become curious and to deeply focus. In this way of

¹ <https://www.etymonline.com/word/communion>

seeing, the camera becomes almost invisible, I no longer experience it as an object or a technical barrier, instead it becomes a channel of communication and relational communion. The barriers of separation start to disappear and I feel a flow of energy between myself and the landscape, plant or animal I am focusing on.

I feel fully present to this sacred relationship. There is no longer separation with nature, we are of one spirit, one breath—such is this mystical participation, this union, this communion.

Focusing on an image draws my inner eye into the landscape of the very being of beauty. There is a breath, a pulse, my heart beating with the rhythm of wonder. Beauty captivates me and fills me with awe as I capture each moment, I want to preserve and share her essence.

To show you the soft hues of dawn or a sunset's final firefly blaze, the ocean alight with the sun's flames, a wave that curls over the golden path as if drawing the thread of light into its inky indigo depths. To introduce you to the wild animal's eyes so you can know the wild within you. To show you the tender luminous green iris shoots growing up through the icy cold winter ground beneath the magnificent bare beech tree. These





lilac lights igniting the pathway to spring. To show you those magical moments of rainbow arch and northern lights, distant stars amidst the fullness of the moon as it rises over the tops of snow-capped mountains. To show you another perspective, to reset where and who you are in the universe of things. To remind you that all this lives in you too, this universe of beauty.

On being in nature

200

As a child I roamed free in the wilds of nature with my brothers. We were often out until sunset building dens in nearby fields or surfing in the wild sea. I had the joy of galloping on



my horse across wide stretches of sandy beaches. The natural world and especially the ocean was my home, my play space and my constant encounter with beauty and the wild. I was always talking with these natural elements, they were my friends. These powerful ancient beings helped raise me and continue to inspire me to be well and to have hope.

In his book *Last Child in the Woods*, the journalist Richard Louv (2005) warned of the impact of children's loss of freedom to roam in their neighbourhoods and discover nearby nature. This happened within little more than a generation as children's lives became more confined indoors.

"At the very moment that the bond is breaking between the young and the natural world," he observed, "a growing body of research links our mental, physical and spiritual health to our association with nature" (p. 3). In considering how to move social and ecological systems toward sustainability, Ives et al. (2018) propose that emotional connections with nature have the potential to leverage deep societal change toward respect and care for nature; and they recognise childhood as a time to begin building connection.

Chan et al. (2016) make a similar argument that people often protect and restore the natural world for the sake of "relational values": because feelings like connection with nature, attachment to a special place in nature or satisfaction found in caring for nature enhance the quality of people's lives.

In their book *Nature-Based Expressive Arts Therapy*, Sally Atkins and Melia Snyder describe how we have lost what eco-philosopher Thomas Berry (1988) calls "the great conversation" with the moon, with trees, rivers, mountains and animals, with our more than human world (Atkins & Snyder 2018 p. 87-88). They propose we need to return to an epistemology of the sacred, of the senses and of intimacy with nature. An intimacy that can cultivate the deepest respect in relationship with nature.

As Thich Nhat Hanh so eloquently says: "When we walk like [we are rushing], we print anxiety and sorrow on the earth. We have to walk in a way that we only print peace and serenity on the earth... Be aware of the contact between your feet and the earth. Walk as if you are kissing the earth with your feet."² Such relationship and communion then has the potential to cultivate constructive hope and action. Li and Monroe (2019) found that when young people feel concern about environmental problems and believe that they and others can address problems effectively, they are more likely to feel hope. Both hope and concern motivate action, whereas despair and feelings of helplessness are negatively related to action in the research (Ojala,

2 <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/255935-when-we-walk-like-we-are-rushing-we-print-anxiety>

2012, 2013; Stevenson, Peterson, & Bondell, 2019; Stevenson & Peterson, 2016).

On Being with the I-Thou

In his iconic book *I and Thou*, Martin Buber (1923) explains that there are two modes of engaging with the world, which he describes through the use of two word pairs, I-It and I-Thou. Buber calls these primary words, which do not signify things but intimate relations. It is not possible to be an “I” outside of these relations. Buber calls the I-It mode of engaging with the world, the mode of “experience” (which covers both inner emotions and sensory experience), where the I is an objective observer, cataloguing, calculating, analyzing, and describing, rather than being in active relation. Buber tells us that I-It does not make for a “whole” human being. For this we also need I-Thou (Buber 1923).

For Martin Buber “...he who lives with It alone is not a man” (p.24). Human beings need “I-Thou” relationships, where we communicate with our being rather than with words. I-Thou is about mutuality, seeing someone in his or her depth, speaking to the Other with your entire being, saying Thou with all that you are, standing in present relation, in the here and now—not completely separate, but not completely fused, maintaining just enough balance between close and distant to retain a sense of who you are.

Buber primarily talks about human relationships, however he also considers relationships with Nature. Buber sums up the difference between I-It and I-Thou relationships by considering a tree:

I can look on it as a picture: stiff column in a shock of light, or splash of green shot with the delicate blue and silver of the background. I can perceive it as movement: flowing veins on clinging, pressing pith, suck of the roots, breathing of the leaves, ceaseless commerce with earth and air—and the obscure growth itself. I can classify it in a species and study it as a type in its structure



and mode of life. I can subdue its actual presence and form so sternly that I recognize it only as an expression of law...I can dissipate it and perpetuate it in number, in pure numerical relation. In all this the tree remains my object, occupies space and time, and has its nature and constitution. It can, however, also come about, if I have both will and grace, that in considering the tree I become bound up in relation to it. The tree is no longer It. I have been seized by the power of exclusiveness." (Martin Buber 1923, p.6).

In taking this photograph of the copper beech tree (opposite), I entered into what felt like an I-Thou relationship. As I reflected on my experience it moved me to tears. Tears that fell to the ground with such a deep honor and respect for the presence of this tree that it became like a sacred teacher to me in a moment of communion.

Sentient beings
Reaching up to the skies
Magnificent fire canopy
Caressed in sunset's golden light
Effortless in your presence
You hold your still ground
You place no demands on me
As you release each leaf
I watch them fly away like dying flames on the cool breeze of autumn
Falling
With grace to ground
We breathe together
Giving and receiving
Life and death

(Carrie Herbert November 2020)

I have learnt that I-Thou experiences cannot be willed. They are given to us by grace, but I have to be open to them, choose to enter these moments and learn to give and receive through this relationship. Buber talks about knowledge, art and teaching as all needing more I-Thou relationships. Is the I-Thou the central focus of all creativity, all spirituality and all human becoming? All I know is when I surrender into the creative process in relationship with the other, something new emerges. It is what Paolo Knill describes as the Third (Knill et al., 2005). This refers to the myriad of “aha” moments. The term “flash” was introduced by Balint (1980) for all the surprising and non-reproducible healing effects of a relationship. Grob (1989) talks about it as a “gift in the space of encounter.” Using photography as a therapeutic tool, I experience such moments and gifts in the encounter with nature every time.

Billy Childish states “my quest through my work is for God” (Kessler 2002, p.14). It is perhaps a willingness of the artist to enter the “participation mystique” (Jung 1967, p.105) that art impacts upon the life of the both the artist and the collective. The creative process has been perceived as meaning-making and as a mystical and mysterious process that cannot be fully fathomed or comprehensible by reason. The artist is a mediator who strives to bring together the temporal with the eternal, bringing two worlds together. Jung proposes “that the artist is not a person endowed with free will who seeks his own ends, but one who allows art to realize its purposes through him. As an artist he is man in the higher sense—he is collective man, a vehicle and moulder of the unconscious psychic life of mankind” (Jung 1967, p.101).

Photography enables the art of seeing and focusing on the now, on the present moment. Being fully present is a powerful state of being. As such, photography used in this way creates a shift in perspective, a literal shift in our wellbeing, boosts positive hormones, enhances our mood and draws us into connection with beauty. As a person with depression stated: “*I was able to start seeing beauty all around me: in darkness and in light. The ordinary became fascinating and the mundane started to shine.*” (The One Project 2018, p.21). When you have a camera in your hand, you begin searching for beauty in the world even more. It’s not always in

the obvious places. The mundane can start to take on new meaning and light for you as your eye becomes more trained to find the next photo. This is often connected to gratitude, which is another powerful tool for healing and shifting your thought patterns and way of being (The One Project 2018, p.22). Photography can connect us with deep and rich experiences and life stories as we encounter the other, as I discovered on meeting Sambo, an incredible elephant in the wilds of Cambodia.

The Asian elephant—an encounter with resilience and freedom

Asian elephants have been integral to Khmer culture in Cambodia for millennia. Elephants feature prominently in the extraordinary temples of Angkor in Cambodia's northern province of Siem Reap. Historians estimate that over 6,000 elephants were used in the construction of the Angkor Wat complex. The 12th century Terrace of the Elephants depicts scores of nearly full-size elephants at Angkor Thom³. The Asian elephant now is endangered with only 30-50,000 left and only around 400 remaining in Cambodia. Elephants have disappeared entirely from western Asia, Iran, and most of China⁴.

Sambo was one of 6 elephants taken during the Khmer Rouge from their owner. Only Sambo survived. After the war was over his owner found him chained and in a near-death starvation state and brought him back to Phnom Penh as its people too began to return. Over time Sambo, like the Khmer people became strong again. One day the school bus broke down and Sambo became the transport for the children. He became an iconic part of the landscape of Phnom Penh's streets as they rode his back to school. However, a city is no place really for an elephant. An elephant sanctuary in the rolling hills of Mondulkiri opened in recent years and took him in for retirement.

I had often seen Sambo on the streets of the city and now I had gone to meet him back

3 <https://wildearthallies.org/cultural-significance-asian-elephants-cambodia/>

4 <https://elephantconservation.org/elephants/asian-elephants/>



in the wilds of the jungle. I am not sure what happened between us as I gazed into his eye set deep into his golden-brown leather skin. I felt moved to tears to witness this resilient giant who had been through so much suffering finally returned to the freedom of the wild. Amidst my tears, I laughed out loud as the ranger told me Sambo keeps escaping the sanctuary boundaries with his new elephant friend Ruby. They are often found eating their way through a nearby banana plantation, or they have to go and get him from outside the local school where Sambo waits for the children to come outside at the end of the day. It made me wonder if he misses the familiar presence of those barefooted children bundled up on the arch of his back as he rocked them home through the streets of Phnom Penh.

Sambo, I see you at a distance,
your earthen form merged with the wild vibrant green jungle
as if you had always belonged here.
You let me come close.
It's the closest I have ever been to an elephant.
Breathtaking.

I am in awe of your sentinel being.
My breathing slows as I feel your breath on my skin.
I gaze into your eye and wonder how you survived
watching your family die,
while you too were chained,
worked to the bone to your dying day.
Then you lived, lived in the big hard concrete city away from the green.
I wonder how it felt to let those barefooted children
clamber on your back to ride to school.
How you allow any human to come close
after being so injured by us.
There is a secret silent strength in you
and a fierce fight for freedom still,
as you escape the elephant sanctuary with reckless abandon
and rip those golden curved delights in the succulent banana plantain.
before going to stand still waiting by the gates of the village school
until the patter of children's feet come running to your side.

Birds in the wild

The improvisational robin song stops me in my tracks, I pause and listen to your chit chit chatter music and you and I stay so close for a while. I and you, you and I, eye to eye as if time stands still. Your iconic red breast spills its song into my heart and ignites a fiery passion, a longing to protect you from moving to the red list of endangered birds in the UK. How many more species do we need to lose from our skies I wonder? It was heartening to visit the re-wilded white tailed sea eagles on the Isle of Skye on the West Coast of Scotland. They were nearly extinct in the area. Now there are over 150 pairs of eagles successfully reintroduced to the wild moving this magnificent bird of prey from the red to the amber list. It is possible, when we focus only on one species being endangered, to lose sight of the ripple effect of any species becoming rare or extinct in the delicate balance of our ecosystems.

Co-extinction happens because of co-existence. Spending time with these exquisite endangered hummingbirds is breathtaking. I learned that if hummingbirds went extinct, the mites could go extinct too because they would have no way of getting from flower to flower. Then the flowers, because they depend on the hummingbirds and mites to spread pollen, also go extinct⁵.

⁵ <https://indianapublicmedia.org/amomentofscience/coextinction.php>



"An animal's eyes have the power to speak a great language." Martin Buber ⁶



I encourage you to be with these images and words and notice what you see, feel and encounter through them. Take a moment to meditate on the meaning of your encounter with animals and nature. Your relationship with the I-Thou, the Other. What is there for you to receive, to learn to see, to imagine, to create?

The Seal

Once you know I am safe
Your eyes soften and close into blissful rest.
There is no waiting.
There is no time
As the tide sweeps away
From your ochre sea rug.

(From an encounter with the seals when I was recently exploring
my Scottish roots and spending time with wildlife that is pro-
tected and respected.)



Dolphin

It was my childhood dream to see you just once in the wild
And then you came back again and again and again
Playfully darting alongside the boat
Until ours eyes met
Joy welled up in my whole being
I was lost in an ocean of salt-water tears



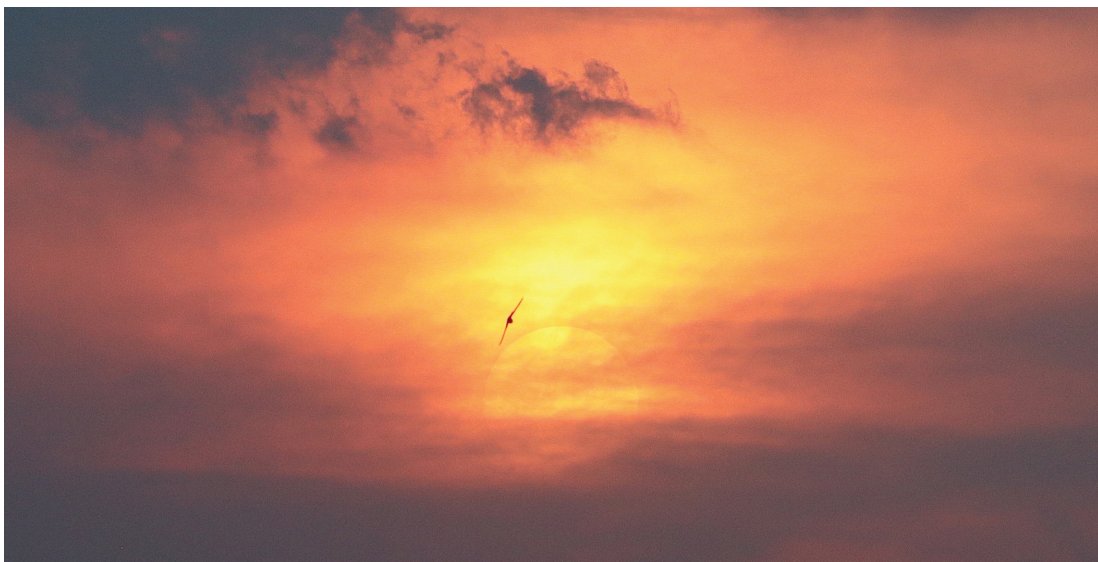
The Stag

Ah, that wild rugged Isle. We were headed back home after a wee dram as Nick shared his dream to see a stag deer.

"Why not ask the universe" I suggested, "for your wish."

You appeared like a majestic guardian. Watching over us as we departed before turning into the setting sun.

The dignity of your presence lingered. For a moment I forgot to take a breath as I turned to see Nick's burley frame sobbing with gratitude.



As the sun leaves the day
You fly as if your wing brushes
The golden orb
Into its slumber
I am flooded with gratitude
My Icarus fears suspended with my breath
As you soar up and beyond
Into the darkening skies lit with traces of golden hope

Concluding thoughts

What are you left feeling now, what poetic response might you write from these images, these words. Can you spend some time in nature encountering the other, the I-thou in the trees, the birds, the landscape around you. How will it affect you, move you, change you?

Endnote

In religious communion there is a sacrament, in its original meaning a sacrament is a solemn oath. I make a commitment to honour the sacred, the mystery and the beauty of mother earth, nature in all living things, nature in you, nature in me.

Carolina Herbert, PHD, is an arts psychotherapist, supervisor, educator and celebrant with over 20 years experience working with people, organisations and communities in post-conflict and conflict environments. As a singer/songwriter and photographer, Carolina has a passion for how the expressive arts can support us to respond to the complex challenges we face in our world today. Contact Carolina at: carrie@alkimiasoul.com. www.alkimiasoul.com

References

Atkins, S. & Snyder, M. (2018). *Nature-based Expressive Arts Therapy: Integrating the Expressive Arts and Ecotherapy*. Jessica Kingsley, London.

Balint, M. (1980) *Der Arzt, sein Patient und die Krankheit*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta. Cited in Knill, P.J. , Levine E.G. and Levine S.K. (2005) *Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy*. Jessica Kingsley, London.

Berry, T (1988). *The Dream of the Earth* cited in Atkins, S. & Snyder, M. (2018). *Nature-based Ex-*

pressive Arts Therapy: Integrating the Expressive Arts and Ecotherapy. Jessica Kingsley, London.

Buber, M. (1923) *Ich Und Du*. Translated by Ronald Gregor Smith and published as *I and Thou* by Bloomsbury Revelations Edition (2013)

Chan, K. M. A., Balvanera, P., Benessaiah, K., Chapman, M., Diaz, S., Cited in Chawla L. (2020) Childhood nature connection and constructive hope: A review of research on connecting with nature and coping with environmental loss. *People Nat*. 2020;2:619–642.

Chawla L. (2020) Childhood nature connection and constructive hope: A review of research on connecting with nature and coping with environmental loss. *People Nat*. 2020;2:619–642.

Gomez-Baggethun, E., Klain, S. (2016). Why protect nature? Rethinking values and the environment. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 113, 1462–1465.

Grob, P. (1989). *Beziehungseffekte in der medizin*. Manuskript. Bramberstr, 18, Luzern, Switzerland. Cited in Knill, P.J. , Levine E.G. and Levine S.K. (2005) *Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy*. Jessica Kingsley, London.

Ives, C. D., Abson, D. J., von Wehrden, H., Dorninger, C., Klaniecki, K., & Fischer, J. (2018). Reconnecting with nature for sustainability. *Sustainability Science*, 13, 1389–1397. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-018-0542-9>

Jung, C.G. (1967). *The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature*. Ark, London.

Kessler, T. (2002). Billy Childish. *Observer Magazine*, 24 March p.10-14.

Knill, P.J. , Levine E.G. and Levine S.K. (2005). *Principles and Practice of Expressive Arts Therapy*.

Jessica Kingsley, London.

Li, C. J., & Monroe, M. C. (2019). Exploring the essential psychological factors in fostering hope concerning climate change. *Environmental Education Research*, 25(6), 936–954. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2017.1367916>

Louv, R. (2005). *Last child in the woods*. Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books Cited in Chawla L. (2020) Childhood nature connection and constructive hope: A review of research on connecting with nature and coping with environmental loss. *People Nat.* 2020;2:619–642.

Ojala, M. (2012). How do children cope with global climate change? Coping strategies, engagement, and well-being. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 32(3), 225–233. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envp.2012.02.004>

Ojala, M. (2013). Coping with climate change among adolescents: Implications for subjective well-being and environmental engagement. *Sustainability Science*, 5, 2191–2209. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su.5052191>

Stevenson, K. T., Peterson, M. N., & Bondell, H. D. (2019). The influence of personal beliefs, friends, and family in building climate change concern among adolescents. *Environmental Education Research*, 25(6), 832–845. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2016.1177712>

Stevenson, K., & Peterson, N. (2016). Motivating action through fostering climate change hope and concern and avoiding despair among adolescents. *Sustainability Science*, 8(6). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su8010006>

The One Project (2018). https://theoneproject.co/wp-content/uploads/woocommerce_uploads/2018/08/DiscoverHealingPowerofPhotography-EBook-TheOneProject-August172016.compressed.pdf

In Search of Ways to Facilitate Eco-identity Formation:

The Central Role of the Arts and the Arts Therapies

Alexander Kopytin

Challenges: the crisis of ecology and the humanities

The global environmental crisis has become a reality. The transition of the global environmental crisis into an ecological catastrophe is a matter of time, during which humankind can either take certain steps to prevent it, or remain on the same track of uncontrolled exploitation of the earth's natural resources. Attempts are being made to solve the global environmental crisis in various ways, in particular, by implementing a sustainable development model, which, among other things, assumes the need for technological reorganization, as well as introducing environmental education to support the development of environmental awareness.

The environmental crisis is taking place against the backdrop of many complex societal issues, demonstrating the fragility of the existing order in which, due to globalization, everything is dependent upon everything else. From the perspective of ecological theory, this is a relatively stable system but a system without resilience. The crisis in the humanities appears to be at the core of the current global situation. In what way?

As Arran Gare asserts (Kopytin, 2020b), the most promising avenue for defending the humanities and their values is “to claim intrinsic value for all life, not as a subjective preference but as objectively defensible. The crisis in the humanities coming at a time of accelerating ecological destruction, threatening not only most terrestrial species but the future of humanity, spurred the development of philosophical biology, antireductionist theoretical biology and then biosemiotics, each supporting radical ideas in ecology. These held out the last hope for upholding the humanities and humanistic human sciences, avoiding the political consequences of denying value to living beings except as instruments.”

Today many people are more estranged from nature, degrading both ecological and psychological health. The estrangement from nature arrests human psychological growth and identity formation. This situation leaves a psychological void that many people try to fill through compulsive consumption.

Back-to-nature movements, inspired in part by ecopsychological ideas, promote initiatives to address the estrangement between humanity and nature. While these initiatives are diverse, the motivation undergirding each of them seems to be similar: reconnecting humans with nature on cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and behavioral levels. It is believed that this, in turn, will boost ecological and psychological health.

Arne Naess (Naess, 1989) coined the term, “the ecological self,” and developed the idea of eco-identity as a necessary prerequisite for self-realization, better mental health and quality

of life. He believed that humans experience new dimensions of life satisfaction as their identities widen through experiencing and integrating an ecological conception of self-hood.

The problem of developing eco-identity is often linked to the issue of ecological/environmental consciousness as necessary for healthy life-styles. Environmental consciousness and eco-identity are seen as inclusive of cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and behavioral aspects, thus implying a human willingness to responsibly treat the environment that determines the corresponding behavior of a person in environmentally problematic situations (Windhorst, 2019).

At present, attempts are being made to support eco-identity formation and the development of ecological/environmental consciousness in various ways, including back-to-nature initiatives (e.g., Animas Valley Institute, 2019; Children & Nature Network, 2019; David Suzuki Foundation, 2019; The Wildlife Trusts, 2019) and the eco-sexual movement (Sprinkle & Stephens, 2021), eco-therapies, environmental education, etc. However, the efforts undertaken appear to be insufficient to ensure qualitative changes in the human environmental stance toward the world. The psychosocial mechanisms of eco-identity formation determining the development of ecological/environmental consciousness need to be further studied.

The issue of eco-identity and the ecological self

According to environmentally- or ecologically-grounded personality theory, one's relationship with nature occupies a special role and is a vital factor in healthy personality formation. Thus, establishing an Earth-based sense of Self, an eco-identity based on human identification with the world of nature, has the same significance as one's relations with people. Our emotional bond with nature and the attachment of human beings to nature, together with our bonds with other people, are integral to the psychological growth of a person, beginning with the early developmental phase and ending with the final stage of the human lifespan.

Healthy personality development takes place within a wider matrix of being, “the web of life,” and involves relationships that enable the formation of eco-identity. The notion of eco-identity should be foremost in the field of ecopsychology. This notion challenges most “conventional” personality theories. Eco-identity can be defined as the interiorized dynamic structure of our relationship with nature that embraces both the human and more-than-human worlds and serves as one of the significant foundations for self-perception and self-conception. This is the kind of self-understanding that is linked to one’s mutually sustaining relationship with the living environment and implies one’s responsibility and care for nature. Ethical and aesthetic perception of the world of nature and practical action aimed at its preservation and cultivation serve as important factors in one’s own health and well-being.

Deep ecology formulated ideas about the eco-identity of the individual as a new, radical basis for the environmental movement. According to Næss (1989, 2003, 2008), the main cause of the ecological crisis is the psychological organization of a personality formed on the wave of industrialization and scientism. This psychological organization of “the schizoid man” is what Metzner refers to in his book *Green Psychology* (1999) as “the collective psychopathology of the relationship between human beings and nature” or, in other words, “dissociation.” Psychology should therefore be on the front lines of the endeavor to examine our worldview, and ourselves; but mainstream psychology is currently dominated by technophiles. These technophiles, or perhaps more poignantly “necrophiles,” actively encourage technology’s consumptive behavior and instrumental use of nature (the systematic transformation of nature into its use by humans) (Metzner, 1999, pp. 94-97).

Accordingly, in order to overcome the environmental crisis, it is necessary to form a different psychological organization of the personality, based on the concept of environmental identity–eco-identity. The concept of eco-identity was adopted by ecopsychologists (T. Roszak, R. Metzner and others), especially those who adhere to the positions of archetypal psychology, as well as transpersonal and constructionist approaches to understanding personality. This

allows Bragg (1996) to recognize that such theories (a) exemplify a more ecological, or systems, view of the person, (b) offer an understanding of how an expanded self-concept might affect the functioning of an individual and his or her living environment, and (c) suggest how self-constructs might be changed (p. 98-102).

The concept of the ecological self, together with the concept of eco-identity is often used to explain the reciprocity between planet and psyche (e.g., Kahn Jr. & Hasbach, 2012; Merritt, 2012; Roszak et al., 1995; Winter, 1996). The ecological self is defined as “a wide, expansive, or field-like sense of self, which ultimately includes all life-forms, ecosystems and the Earth itself” (Bragg, 1996, p. 95). Eric Windhorst (2019) modified Bragg’s conception by adding that the ecological self ultimately extends beyond the Earth to include the cosmos or universe. It is believed that by affiliating with nature an individual’s sense of self can expand to include nature (Macy & Brown, 2014; Roszak et al., 1995). This supports self-realization, providing both ecological and psychological health.

There are four primary components to ecological self-experience: cognitions, emotions, spiritual experiences and behavior. The cognitive aspect of ecological self-experience includes perceptions of being “similar, related to, or identical with other life-forms” (Bragg, 1996, p. 95). The emotional facet of ecological self-experience includes feelings of emotional resonance with other life-forms (Naess, 1989). The spiritual aspect of ecological self-experience involves cognitions and emotions that are broader, more universal, or cosmic in scope (Fox, 1990). Finally, the physical behavior characteristic of ecological self-experience includes “physical reactions of defending or nurturing other beings as if they were one’s own self” (Bragg, 1996, p. 96).

Ecopsychologists argue that eco-identity requires a variety of experiential elements. For example, Drengson (2008) stressed the significance of nature-based “meditations, ceremonies, celebrations, rituals, and other practices” (p. 40); S. Harper (1995) highlighted the importance of wilderness experiences; Devall (1988) drew attention to the value of bioregional familiarity

and environmental activist engagement; Abram (1996, 2010) noted the importance of regular, intimate nature encounters; and, finally, many have emphasized the crucial role of positive childhood nature experiences to support eco-identity formation (e.g., Chawla, 2015; Kahn Jr. & Kellert, 2002; Sobel, 2008).

The subjectivity of nature

As far as eco-identity formation is concerned, the issue of determining the subjectivity of nature in its relation to the human mind is crucial. Trying to solve the problem of determining the relationship between human subjectivity and the environment, the mental and the physical realms, C.G. Jung introduced the concept of a “psychoid” (or “psychoid factor”). As Murray Stein explains, “psychoid” is a concept, “... referring to the boundaries of the psyche, one side of which interacts with the body and the physical world, and the other with the kingdom of the “spirit” (1998, p. 234). Thus, in order to solve the problem of determining the relationship between human subjectivity and the environment, the “psychoid” foundation of mind as partly material, partly psychic, a merging of psyche and matter is proposed.

Based on some key Jungian ideas, archetypal psychology appears to be more consistent in developing ideas about the relationship of the human psyche with the environment. It is significant that James Hillman’s later publications indicate an increasingly clear connection of his thought to ecopsychology. In the preface to the book *Ecopsychology* (1995) he writes: “Psychology would track the fields of naturalists, botanists, oceanographers, geologists, urbanists, designers for the concealed intentions, the latent subjectivity of regions the old paradigm considered only objective, beyond consciousness and interiority... Psychology, so dedicated to awakening human consciousness, needs to wake itself up to one of the most ancient human truths: we cannot be studied or cured apart from the planet.” (p. xxii).

In the same preface, Hillman raises questions about the nature of human beings and human subjectivity: what is the human self, where does it begin and where does it end? Considering the historical development of psychological concepts, he demonstrates the transition that is taking place in psychology from the idea that the psyche is a phenomenon associated exclusively with the human brain, to ideas that consider mental activity as being carried out between individuals and their environments, including the natural world:

This statement reflects the idea, which is fundamentally important for ecopsychology, that the “ecological self” and “the environment” establish a union and generate their subjectivity together. At the same time, this idea admits the ambiguity of our conception of the human being, which can be determined by the complex nature of the human mind. While our roots of ourselves, our “ecological unconscious” (according to Theodore Roszak) may be planted in territories far away from anything we call ours, due to our conscious mind, we can differently determine our relations with the environment, i.e., the world of nature. In relation to that, our responses to the environment can be either life-affirming or destructive. (Hillman)

The subjectification of the environment and the development of eco-identity

According to the ideas of archetypal psychology, “soul creation” becomes an act of creating “environmental soul,” and moves an individual psyche from a more limited sense of oneself to the wider environmental self, included in the realms of the cultural, natural, and cosmic environments. Ecopsychology justifies the specific subjective mode of perception of the world around us, often defined as the subjectification of the world of nature and natural objects (i.e., the perception of the environment and objects as having their own subjectivity). Subjectification plays a crucial role in the process of developing human relationship with natural environments and objects, as well as in eco-identity formation, and enables an ethical

perception of nature.

At the same time, the endowment of natural objects with subjectivity can be viewed from different perspectives. One of the positions, thoroughly described and investigated by Sergey Deryabo (2002), is associated with the recognition of natural objects as a means of reflecting human subjectivity; the Self-image of the individual. "The basis of the subjectification of natural objects is the human desire for 'subjective expansion' of one's subjectivity onto other beings. It is the manifestation of a person's profound need to 'appropriate the world.'" (p.4)

According to Deryabo, the process of human subjectification of natural objects has the following basic functions: a) to provide persons with an experience of their own personal dynamics, b) to act as an intermediary in a person's relationship with the world, and c) to act as a subject of joint activity and communication.

Ecopsychology (Panov, 2014, p.13) also proposes a different type of interaction between humans and their environments associated with the concept of subject-generating interaction. Subject-generating interaction is considered to be a process whereby the psyche takes on actual existence, passing from "being in possibility" to "being in reality" through the human interaction with the environment. In this case, the psyche embraces both human and environmental parts in order to produce a new aggregated quality:

...the psyche appears as the emerging quality (property) embracing the whole "human-environmental" system, which (since it is systemic) is not reduced to the actual properties of either "human" or "environmental" as components of the specified system, but is determined by both of them. This means that the formation of psychic reality as a quality of this specified system occurs in the functional range, the limits of which are set by the relevant properties of its components, that is, an individual and the environment. (Panov, p.14).

In consequence, this type of interaction between humans and their environments establishes a new subjectivity that is not reducible to the subjectivity of the individual and the qualities of the environment that were present before the start of the process.

The role of the arts and arts therapies in eco-identity formation and developing environmental consciousness

In common with the main ideas of ecopsychology, as well as with the neo-shamanic and psychedelic movements, Shaun McNiff (2021) asserts:

My artistic practice suggests that an accurate conceptualization of the creative act requires this context of complete interdependence. We are always creating with “others,” even when alone—materials, environments, feelings, memories, influences, inspirations, gestures, colors, forms, etc. Thus, what I call communities of creation might involve working together with other people, but they are also eco-systems of creation involving so many other subtle forces and elements which may both expand and enrich our ideas about nature, our relationships to it, and our imagination of it all. While respecting different artistic disciplines, “art” in my view is ultimately inclusive of all forms of expression, with each medium involving a necessary interdependence of the senses that always work together. This whole art process generates life-enhancing energy and the transformation of afflictions and problems into affirmations of life—all of which corresponds to the metamorphic processes of nature.

The visual and performing arts as well as other forms of organized and meaningful human-environmental interaction have existed in human history since long before “civilized” minds came to an understanding of creative acts as primarily the result of individual activity. The wider environmental perception of the arts can be found in many world traditions, especially in those characterized, “...by ideas about the interconnectedness of all things, perpetual movement,

impermanence, and how small and humble acts generate larger changes in the world” (McNiff, 2015, p.12). Such perception of the arts is also implied in the contemporary environmental movement. This demonstrates the perennial need of human beings to maintain their intrinsic connection with nature around and in themselves.

Considerable similarity can be found between the understanding of the arts in modern environmental, ecopsychological theory and many world traditions that involve environmental practices that support mind-body-spirit integration. Both contemporary ecotherapy and indigenous cultural traditions perceive the arts as playing a vital role in supporting healthy human relationships to nature, the web of life, and in giving a voice and meaning to earthly life. According to these conceptions, natural environments and diverse life forms are important to humans not only for pragmatic reasons, but also for their aesthetic, emotional, and spiritual significance (Kopytin, 2021).

It is understandable, therefore, that ecological or nature-assisted creative/expressive arts therapies have recently appeared and represent an emerging therapeutic cluster, based on the new understanding of the role of the arts in providing public and environmental health and in establishing more harmonious and mutually-supporting relations of humans with nature. Ecological arts therapies are characterized by a new perspective on health issues and the role of the arts in providing public and planetary health and well-being. They are supported by scientific approaches such as ecopsychology and eco-philosophy and demonstrate a new perspective on our understanding of the therapeutic role of human connections with nature (Kopytin, 2021).

Ecological arts therapies strive to form a new and even revolutionary platform for empirical forms of therapeutic and health-promoting work, supported by a constellation of distinct theoretical ideas and values, the first and foremost of which is the idea of the “poietic” or creative nature of human beings. According to Stephen K. Levine (1992, 2020), *poiesis* indicates our

basic capacity to shape the world. "The human being is distinct from other creatures in that it is not pre-adapted to a particular environment. Instead, it has the ability to build radically different worlds suitable (or not) to life in a wide diversity of surroundings. In building its world, the human shapes the environment, and as it does so, it shapes itself. World-building is self-building" (Levine, 1992, p. 23-24).

Based on the idea of *poiesis*, the concept of *ecopoiesis* (from the Greek words *Οἶκος*—home, housing, and *ποίησις*—making, creating) is proposed, supporting the idea of humans as "environmental subjects" (Kopytin, 2020; Levine, 2020). This concept is designed to provide the foundation necessary to consider humans in their relations with the living environment as willing and able to take care of their "earthly home." It recognizes the need for humans and their habitat to form a niche in the life web and their human need to live non-destructively with other species.

Ecopoiesis designates a quality and mechanism of the co-evolution of humans and nature, a conscious and responsible co-creation of humankind with nature, based on our physical, emotional and spiritual connection with it. Through ecopoiesis, human beings, together with nature and as part of it, continue and support themselves, but also various forms of earthly life and the eco-sphere. Creative acts, perceived from the ecopoietic perspective, are rooted not so much in the need of individual creative "self-expression" in the traditional sense of this word, but in the motivation to support and serve nature and life and to achieve non-duality, a balance between the natural and cultural milieu. Ecopoiesis cannot be achieved without love for the Earth and for the beings that inhabit it, including ourselves.

Nature-assisted arts therapies can involve experiences of becoming embedded in the ecosystem and of empathic attuning to the living environment and different forms of life. This process has the potential to allow us to actualize and bring to the conscious mind certain aspects of the human experience, in particular, those related to our biological history and our "ecological unconscious," according to Theodore Roszak (2001).

The results of this include improved health and well-being and support eco-identity. Nature-assisted arts therapies can bring changes to humans' perception of themselves and their interconnectedness with the life web. By doing so, these therapies provide modest but compelling acts of regeneration, an adaptive response to healing not only of human beings, but of the multitude of places on the planet that experience distress and "illness." They strive to achieve multiple therapeutic goals, embracing both the micro- and macro-levels, since they not only deal with individual needs and health issues, but with environmental issues as well.

One of the main characteristics of nature-assisted or ecological arts therapies can be summarized as including either outdoor or indoor activities that involve direct interaction with the natural world or natural materials and often lead to the perception of the environment and its inhabitants as other forms of life, which are then engaged with ethically.

The spectrum of ways to engage with nature through the arts is wide and involves the participant engaging in different roles from objective observer to active intervenor. The study of the cultural history of humankind helps us to recognize that making art brings new meaning to human relations with nature; increases our consciousness of our place in the natural world and our interdependence; encourages people to transcend their own personal problems and develop a sense of being part of a bigger whole, thus allowing the spiritual awareness of a relationship with the natural world; and develops the self-directed need to be caring and to preserve and respect the natural world and to develop lifestyles that will aid this process.

One of the significant effects of making art with and in nature is that the arts give natural environments and objects some kind of "distinctive meaning, relevance and status" (Sontag, 1990, p. 28). Making art as a form of environmental activity can help people to recognize the meaningfulness and beauty of nature, even if they initially don't perceive such qualities. If a person is focused even on the most depressed, sad and colorless environment and starts looking beneath the superficial exterior of things or places using the arts, she/he will often see some spark of life, or some unique, individual aspects that characterize those objects or places.

Our perception of the constructive human interaction with nature through the arts can be enriched by subjectification of the world of nature. Subjectification implies both empathy and identification with natural objects and environments and plays a crucial role in the process of developing the human relationship to the more-than-human world; it also enables an ethical perception of nature to be established.

Engaging in environmental art also supports mindfulness and a sense of physical presence in the environment, connecting the symbolic forms of the arts and language to the immediate physical experience of the natural world (the life process). Embodiment effects can be easily facilitated through various creative environmental activities or mindful journeys that help us to feel more embedded in the web of life. Often, the projective nature of the arts enables a person's identification with natural objects and environments on a physical level.

Conclusion

This article examines the concept of eco-identity formation and its connection to the ecological self from the perspective of ecopsychology. The problem of developing eco-identity is linked to the issue of ecological/environmental consciousness as a prerequisite of healthy and environmentally-friendly life-styles. A variety of experiential elements required in order to provide eco-identity formation are embraced in particular ecotherapies and eco-arts therapies.

Though community and social action therapies, including the creative/expressive arts therapies, have been developing and exploring new possibilities for therapeutic work with the environment in the last few decades, ecological or nature-assisted creative and expressive arts therapies tend to constitute an increasingly significant part of the spectrum of contemporary ecotherapeutic methods able to support eco-identity formation and develop environmental consciousness.

Ecological arts therapies are supported by approaches such as ecopsychology and ecophilosophy, and they demonstrate a new perspective for our understanding of the therapeutic role of human relationships and interaction with nature. This is a perennial idea that has gained new currency and a sense of urgency in the modern environmental movement.

The proximity of various ways to facilitate eco-identity formation, including ecotherapy, environmental arts and eco-arts therapies, is seen as dependent on their mutual understanding of human subjectivity as being shaped not only in the societal and cultural domains, but also in a wider living environment, in the process of the creative interaction between humans and the world of nature. The ecosphere, as a living environment, is waiting for humans to meet it as a subject, or a community of subjects, in order to re-establish and recognize their connection with the “world psyche,” or ecological self.

This brings us close to *ecopoiesis*, denoting a quality and mechanism of the co-evolution of the human being and nature, a conscious and responsible co-creation of humans with their living environment, the Earth / the eco-sphere and the cosmos. We can recognize that ecopsychology (the logos of Earth’s psyche) means: reason, speech or intelligible description of the Earth’s soul. It is the task of ecopsychology to find the logos for Earth’s soul, in order to provide it with an adequate understanding of itself and human beings. Ecopsychology needs the arts to play an important role in this task.

References

Abram, D. (1996). *The Spell of the Senuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-human World*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Abram, D. (2010). *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Animas Valley Institute. (2019). *What We Do* | Animas Valley Institute. Retrieved from <http://www.animas.org/about-us/our-organization/what-we-do/>

Bragg, E.A. (1996). Towards ecological Self: deep ecology meets constructivist self-theory. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 1996, 16, 93-108.

Chawla, L. (2015). Benefits of nature contact for children. *Journal of Planning Literature*, 30(4), 433–452. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0885412215595441>

Children & Nature Network. (2019). ABOUT Mission & Vision | Children & Nature Network. Retrieved from <http://www.childrenandnature.org/about/>

David Suzuki Foundation. (2019). getbackoutside.ca | Get Outside and Save the World. Retrieved from <http://getbackoutside.ca/>

Deryabo, S.D. (2002). *The Phenomenon of Subjectification of Natural Objects*. Abstract dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Psychology. Moscow: MGPPU.

Hillman, J. (1995). Preface. The Soul as big as the Earth. In T. Roszak, M.E. Gomes, and A.D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*, pp. viii-xxii. San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.

Kahn Jr., P. H., & Hasbach, P. H. (2012b). Introduction to ecopsychology: Science, totems, and the technological species. In P. H. Kahn Jr. & P. H. Hasbach (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Science, Totems, and the Technological Species* (pp. 1–21). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Kahn Jr., P. H., & Kellert, S. R. (Eds.). (2002). *Children and Nature: Psychological, Sociocultural, and Evolutionary Investigations*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Kopytin, A.I. (2020a). The eco-humanities as a way of coordinating the natural and human being. *Ecopoiesis: Eco-Human Theory and Practice*, 1(1). [open access internet journal]. URL: <http://en.ecopoiesis.ru>

Kopytin, A.I. (2020b). Toward an ecological civilization—an interview with Arran Gare. *Ecopoiesis: Eco-Human Theory and Practice*, 1(2). [open access internet journal]. – URL: <http://en.ecopoiesis.ru>

Kopytin, A. (2021). Ecological/nature-assisted arts therapies. *Ecopoiesis: Eco-Human Theory and Practice*, 2(2). [open access internet journal]. URL: [http://en.ecopoiesis.ru \(d/m/y\)](http://en.ecopoiesis.ru (d/m/y))

Levine, S.K. (1992). *Poiesis: The Language of Psychology and the Speech of the Soul*. Toronto: Palmerston Press/Jessica Kingsley.

Levine, S.K. (2020). Ecopoiesis: Towards a poietic ecology. *Ecopoiesis: Eco-Human Theory and Practice*, 1(1). [open access internet journal]. URL: <http://en.ecopoiesis.ru>

Macy, J., & Brown, M. (2014). *Coming Back to Life*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers.

McNiff, S. (2015). *Imagination in Action. Secrets for Unleashing Creative Expression*. Boston and London: Shambhala Publications.

McNiff, S. (2021). Revisioning art and nature: Toward a depth psychology of creation. *Ecopoiesis: Eco-Human Theory and Practice*, 2(1). [open access internet journal]. URL: [http://en.ecopoiesis.ru \(d/m/y\)](http://en.ecopoiesis.ru (d/m/y))

Merritt, D. L. (2012). *Jung and Ecopsychology: The Dairy Farmer's Guide to the Universe*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fsigen.2007.12.001>

Metzner, R. (1999). *Green Psychology: Transforming our Relationship to the Earth*. Rochester, NY: Park Street Press.

Næss, A. (1989). *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Næss, A. (2003). The deep ecology movement: some philosophical aspects. in: H. Rolston (Ed.), *Environmental Ethics*, pp.112-127. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.

Naess, A. (2008). Self-realization: An ecological approach to being in the world. In A. Drengson & B. Devall (Eds.), *The Ecology of Wisdom: Writings by Arne Naess* (pp. 81–96). Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint.

Panov, V. I. (2014). *Ecopsychology: A Paradigmatic Search*. Moscow: Psychological Institute of the Russian Academy of Education.

Roszak, T., Gomes, M. E., & Kanner, A. D. (Eds.). (1995). *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind*. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books.

Sobel, D. (2008). *Childhood and Nature: Design Principles for Educators*. Portland, ME: Stenhouse Publishers.

Sontag, S. (1990). *On Photography*. New York: Straus and Giroux.

Sprinkle, A., and Stephens, B. (2021). Ecosexuality: The story of our love with the Earth. *Ecopoiesis: Eco-Human Theory and Practice*, 2(1). [open access internet journal].

Stein, M. *Jung's Map of the Soul: An Introduction*. Peru, IL: Open Court, 1998.

The Wildlife Trusts. (2019). 30 Days Wild–July | The Wildlife Trusts. Retrieved from <https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/30DaysWild>

Windhorst, E. (2019). *Exploring the Ecological Self: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis with Gifted Adults*. A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy, Brock University, Catharines, Ontario.

Winter, D.D.N. (1996). *Ecological Psychology: Healing the Split Between Planet and Self*. New York: HarperCollins.

Alexander Kopytin, Professor, Department of Psychology, St. Petersburg Academy of Post-graduate Pedagogical Education, author of numerous publications in the field of art therapy, including *Green Studio: Nature and the Arts in Therapy*, *Clinical Art Psychotherapy with War Veterans*, *Environmental Expressive Therapies: Nature-Assisted Theory and Practice*.

Wake
Andrew Sofer

The rowboat's full of garter snakes.
Mother swims the dark lagoon.
I tip the boat to spill the snakes.
This summerhouse will empty soon.

At night we hear a ghostly loon,
shiver at the cry it makes.
She hoists her gimlet, toasts that loon.
I take a stick, sweep out the snakes,

and wonder if the skin the snake's
sloughed off this hot, suspended June
is like an itch that swells and breaks
while mother swims. O dark lagoon,

why do I dream a drowning moon?
I skim stones before Mother wakes.
My closet hides a moth cocoon.
I drag the boat behind the snakes

and watch each stroke my mother makes,
her cap a bobbing black balloon.
*Please swim back, for both our sakes,
and summerhouse, be empty soon.*

Two snakes lie sunning like a rune.
A wake will take the time it takes.
The buoy sings its rusty tune—
*Go back, boy, to your ducks and drakes.
The rowboat's full.*

Andrew Sofer is a poet and theater historian. His books include *The Stage Life of Props*, *Dark Matter: Invisibility in Drama, Theater and Performance*, and *Wave*, a poetry collection. He teaches at Boston College and since 2012 has taught at the Mellon School for Theater and Performance Research at Harvard. He holds an MFA in Directing and has directed many new and classic plays.

Mourning for the Un-Sea-n:

To Our Beloved Marmara Sea
When did the Mother become the Other?

Aylin Vartanyan, Fulya Kurter Musnitsky
and Beliz Demircioğlu



Bronze coin of Byzantium: Dolphin flanked by two tunny fish, 146-176 CE.
(Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York). Photo by Roan, P. (2013).

Wailing tunes embraced my soul
I am in a dream filled constantly with songs
Along with flying birds, seagulls
A green sweet spring
Thrilled lovers laughing
There was passion and pleasure
And a sea that had waves full of love¹

These lyrics are from a very popular 1960s Turkish song, most probably inspired by a walk near the Marmara sea. It points to the evocative quality of living near the sea and the poetry and love that the sea gently carries to the everyday lives of city dwellers. Being near the Marmara sea, an inland sea connecting Europe and Asia by the city of Istanbul, has always functioned as a getaway that allowed Istanbulites to breathe, to be in touch with the flowing streams of the sea that open a door for contemplation as a way of de-centering from everyday life. The sea is an ideal mother archetype for Istanbulites. It is a source of abundance, where fishing by the Bosphorus or on the Galata Bridge is an everyday practice for many people to feed their family or sell the fish to make a living. The marine life is embedded prominently in Istanbul's culture, art, and mythology from earliest times. The capital city of Byzantium, circa 600 BCE, used a Marmara tuna fish (*Euthynnus alletteratus*) as its civic emblem and also on its coinage.

1 Müren, Z. [Avrupa Müzik]. (2022, January, 10). Zeki Müren–İnleyen Nağmeler Ruhumu Sardı (Official Audio) YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rUpDwnQJ5yg>. Zeynettin Maraş; the composer and writer of this song, was born in 1927 by the Marmara Sea in Istanbul's Suadiye neighbourhood. According to some sources, the song was created in his dream. The song was made popular by the unique revolutionary artist Zeki Müren. The lyrics are translated from Turkish to English by Aylin Vartanyan.

Since then, the sea has hosted diverse types of fish and shelled sea creatures and has continued to be an attentive witness to the melancholic dwellers of Istanbul. She also eases the transportation challenges of the city by allowing the movement of hundreds of ferries carrying thousands of people every day.

This summer we were shaken by the terror that our “ideal mother,” who has been unconditionally there for us forever, was dying. The surface of the sea was covered by a layer of foamy white unfamiliar material. The sea was “throwing up,” and this was unstoppable. We were faced with a phenomenon called mucilage. Marmara, connecting the Black Sea to the Aegean and Mediterranean Seas, was crying out and revolting from the burden and abuse she had to carry all these years.

Marmara is famous for its marine ecosystem. It always served, and still does, as a bridge, a connector, and a universe that holds diversity². It feeds life in the upper zone of the Black Sea and the lower zone of the Mediterranean. Moreover, its death is not recent. According to hydrobiologist Levent Artüz, the Marmara Sea actually died in 1989. He describes the latest emergence of the intense mucilage as “the decaying of the corpse” (Olcan & Idemen, 2021). The mucilage is actually the result of the overgrowth of microscopic algae called phytoplankton caused by intense pollution, waste and global climate change (Deutsche Welle, 2021). Phytoplankton overgrowth (HABs) produces extremely toxic compounds that harm fish, shellfish, mammals, birds and people. The environmental policies that neglected science, the growing number of poorly planned housing projects, the industries that treated the sea as their dumping site and consumerism of city life, have poisoned our mother. A once abundant and life-giving sea has now become sick and virulent.

2 By the late 1970s, the 127 fish species Deveciyan an Armenian expert of Marmara listed in 1915 had shrunk to sixty. The number would keep falling dramatically to twenty species by 2010, according to the Turkish Biology Foundation.

Nothing happens in a day
In a day
Right here
Right there

Here is another funeral without a ceremony
With no coral red flowers
nor a calming blue breeze
only the "dead zones"³
Hear
the drought of the sea goddesses
Does anything remain to quench their thirst
Other than our mourning hearts
And a forgotten childhood dream

Nothing happens in a day
In a day
Right here
Right there

We dare to see

—Fulya Kurter Musnitsky, December 2021

3 "Dead zone" is a common term for hypoxia, which refers to a reduced level of oxygen in the water.

Eco-grief through Nature-Based Expressive Arts Experience

"How can we encounter our beloved sea that inspires, cultivates and nourishes our shaping capacity?"

"How can we respond to the call coming from the decomposing sea life?"

"How can we contain our sense of despair?"

"How can we relate the phenomena of decay to the context of gender differentiation?"

All these questions were reflecting our state of grief for the loss of a life-giving source for our *oikos*, the sea. We followed the call to create a containing space to hold and give shape to our grief. This was also after the ongoing wildfires that left us with massive destruction, helplessness and in deep pain.

As the members of Expressive Arts Institute Istanbul, we were looking forward to a nature-based expressive arts experience through an art-analogue approach for our community last September, after the summer break. We were all aware that mucilage doesn't only belong to the sea. The oxygen level was not only low under the sea. (Bio)diversity was not only challenged under the sea due to low oxygen levels. Women and the LGBTQ+ people have been specifically challenged by exclusionary politics and violations of their rights. Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention⁴ also coincided with an environmental challenge Istanbul was going through.

The destination for our nature-based Expressive Arts workshop was one of the most beautiful of the Princes' Islands near Istanbul: Burgaz. This was our first face-to-face meeting after months of zoom due to the pandemic. The Princes' Islands, once a destination for exile and

4 The repercussions about the withdrawal of Turkey from the Istanbul Convention can be found here: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/turkey-s-announced-withdrawal-from-the-istanbul-convention-endangers-women-s-rights>

imprisonment during Byzantine times, are today an ideal getaway from the city. No cars are allowed on the islands except electric carts (as in Saas-Fee, Switzerland). There are beautiful public beaches surrounding the islands, though the water is no longer clean enough for swimming. The original name of the island during Byzantine times was "Antigone." A reference to Sophocles' Antigone is evoked, a strong female figure who called for a just ritual mourning process for her brother, killed in a war orchestrated by their uncle, Creon. This name resonated with the work we intended to carry out on the island. Antigone was a revolutionary female figure, as well as a reminder of the chthonic ritual of holding a mourning ceremony for our losses.

We felt that one of the well-known sites of the island, Martha's Beach, would be the perfect place for our nature-based expressive arts work. Martha, the woman who gave the name to this beach, was an Armenian woman from Egypt who married an Armenian man and started living on Burgaz island.

The islands are known for hosting the minority populations of Istanbul: the Rums (the Greeks of Istanbul), Jews, and Armenians. For those communities, living on the island meant living in a safe and secluded space. Martha was a woman who deeply loved the sea, the water, the seashells, and felt connected to all the beauty that nature offers. She dressed in her own way, loved putting ribbons in her hair and enjoyed creating accessories from seashells for the women and girls living on the island. At some point in her life, she started living in a fisherman's hut near the beach to be closer to the sea, which was quite unusual for the time. According to her friends, she would also collect rain water to use for long showers, claiming that she was "washing her body with God's water." Her life-force and her confident connection with her body and soul were reflections of her free spirit. Unfortunately, these qualities were not welcomed by some of the inhabitants of the island. In time, the harsh rumors and gossip behind her back affected her gravely and, tragically, she took her life by poisoning herself, leaving a note behind saying, "Now you can relax!"



Photo: *Martha*

On this beach
Pebbles lying in harmony with the roots of the trees
The orangy autumn light touching our skin gently
The sound of waves calmly entering
our little circle

Yes, we are talking about you Martha
We are looking at your black and white photo
And are mesmerized by your beauty and calm smile
You look right into our eyes
As if you are ready to tell your story
Your love for water
Your passion for blending with the fish and waves
Your longing for one-ness with the beauty that surrounds you

When did the Mother become the Other?

No, you are too much for the island residents
Your abundance turns into bitterness
Your patience does not last
You had to go...
Too early too soon
Your legacy is with us
Us, women who love to play with water
And pebbles
And trees
And who carry on with the songs you started singing
On this beach...

–Aylin Vartanyan, December 2021



Burgaz Ada, September 2021 (Photo by Sevinç Çalhanoğlu)

In our small EXA community circle we were immersed in Martha's story. We were gathered by the decaying sea, revisiting Martha's story, who also left this world as a result of an ethical and human decay she could no longer bear. While the mucilage brought the truth of the Marmara Sea to the surface, the island helped us dive into the story of an Armenian woman who was pushed to the margins of the island community. As EXA practitioners who, on that day, happen to all be women, we encountered and mourned two losses; the loss of a life-giving sea and the loss of a life-giving woman who was in love with the sea.

We walked silently to the water, stood in line and let the waves touch our feet before the sunset. Then we created a collective statue made of pieces from the surrounding nature. We saluted Martha and each other with a dance by the sea near the area where she used to

live. We listened to what the collective artwork had to say. Its message was clear; "*Ahenkle Canım!*", which means, "In Harmony my dear!" We were sure Martha would call each of us "my dear" without hesitation.

There was lightness in the air.

We were left with this image of harmony versus a decaying sea and values regarding a woman who was marginalized to the point of self-destruction. The following words have been with us:

Our experience of pain for the world is not an individual pathology. When we deny or repress our pain we also diminish our power of healing our world. Our pain and our power to act spring from our inter-connectedness with all beings. (Atkins & Snyder, 2018, p.93)

Epilogue

Civilized Man says: I am Self, I am Master, all the rest is other—outside, below, underneath, subservient. I own, I use, I explore, I exploit, I control. What I do is what matters. What I want is what matter is for. I am that I am, and the rest is women & wilderness, to be used as I see fit.

—Ursula Le Guin

Le Guin (1989), points out the binary construct we are living in; nature and woman are two "others" that are externalized, invaded, used and abused as the sovereign wishes. Our experience on Burgaz island was an aesthetic response to Le Guin's statement; the haunting image of the mucilage merged with Martha's tragic story. Patriarchy, turbo-capitalism, pandemics, burdens from the "un-sea-n" collective memories left us breathless above and under the sea. In



"Akanla Kal" by Fulya Kurter Musnitsky, watercolor on paper.

our EXA-based mourning work on the island, we snapped out of breathlessness and embraced flow and poetics rather than paralysis. Turkish literature as well as Turkish classical music have been carriers of "*hüzün*," best translated as melancholy, such as coming from living in Istanbul, a city that is prone to constant change, transformation and plunder with no time and desire for grieving. Expressive arts, nature and, more importantly, the community spirit offered us the opportunity to find our responses.

Once more we felt determined to stay with what flowed, in other words “*akanla kal!*”⁵, which strongly resonates with Stephen K. Levine’s call, “Poiesis is always possible.”

We want to thank all the participants of EXA trainees of the Expressive Arts Institute Istanbul for their dedication and love.

References

Atkins, S. and Snyder, M. (2018). *Nature Based Expressive Arts Therapy: Integrating Expressive Arts and Ecotherapy*. Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Deutsche Welle (June 16, 2021). “Sea snot” in Turkey is part of a growing environmental threat. Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5-NQbl7WAzY>

Le Guin, Ursula K. (1989). “Women/Wilderness”, in Judith Plant, ed., *Healing the Wounds*. New Society: Philadelphia, p45.

Olcan, A. and Idemen, S. (2021, May 21). *Marmara Denizini Kaplayan Deniz*

Salyası: Cesedin Çürümesidir Bu. <https://birartibir.org/cesedin-curumesidir-bu/>.

Roan, P. (2013). Bronze coin of Byzantium: <https://www.worldhistory.org/image/1064/bronze-coin-of-byzantium/>

5 Here the authors make reference to the visual art work (opposite page) by Fulya Kurter Musnitsky; the song emerged from it in collaboration with Aylin Vartanyan during the EXA based voice and music workshop with Carolina Herbert in Istanbul in November, 2021. The lyrics became a mantra; “Akanla Kal.” “Akan” means what flows and “kan” means blood. Associations arrived from there were womanhood, pain, mother earth and life force. Later, all the group members with drums and dancing joined this call of “Akanla kal!”

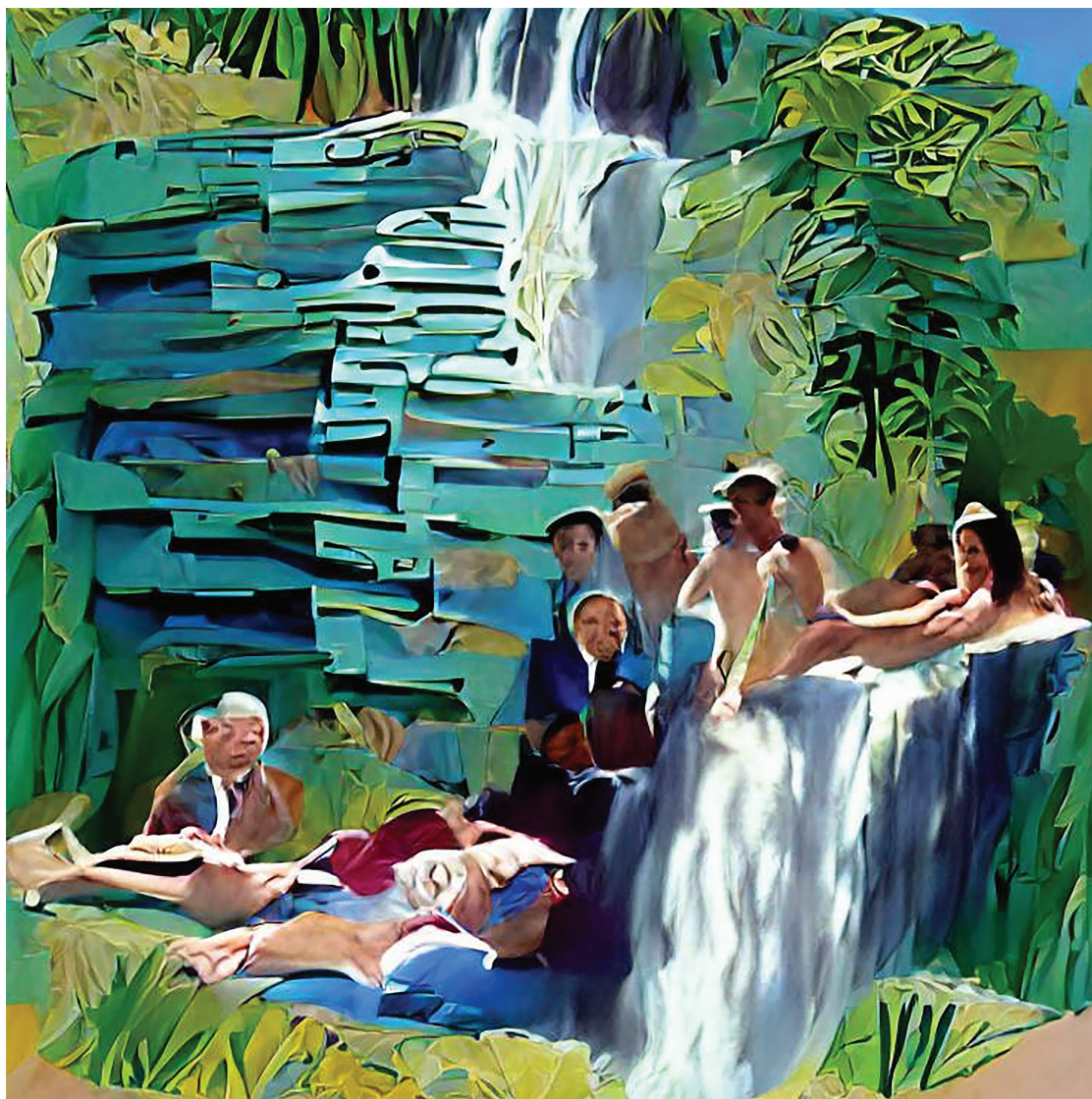
Fulya Kurter Musnitsky is the founder of Expressive Arts Institute Istanbul. She is a psycho-therapist and facilitator specializing in Expressive Arts Therapy and Psychodrama. She has her own private practice and is currently a Ph.D. Candidate in Expressive Arts at EGS.

Beliz Demircioğlu, PhD, teaches at the Expressive Arts Institute Istanbul, Istanbul Bilgi University and Limpid Works Prague. She is an expressive arts practitioner, registered somatic movement therapist and a dancer. Her book *Improvisation in the Expressive and Performing Arts* has been published by Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Aylin Vartanyan, (CAGS, PhD candidate) is an instructor at Bogazici University and a member of the Peace Education Center at the same university. She is a facilitator at the Expressive Arts Institute Istanbul and Expressive Arts program at EGS, concentrating in conflict transformation.



Untitled –Zelda Gamson



Gubb Falls (for Bram Gielen's *Eight Places*), 2021, A.I. Digital Painting by Joële Walinga

Joële Walinga on Bram Gielen's Gubb Falls and Hachanlieder Valley

These two digital art pieces (left, and the following page) were the result of a collaborative art project between music composer Bram Gielen, visual artist/filmmaker Joële Walinga and A.I. (artificial intelligence) software. Joële lets us in on her side of the process that led to the finished digital paintings.

Bram and I were planning to move forward together on his upcoming suite of compositions, *"Eight Places,"* a series of eight fantastic and dreamy songs which he was writing and naming after fictional places that he'd imagined. I was to create the album artwork—as I have in the past for Bram—but it actually took me quite a while, maybe around a year, to come up with an idea that felt satisfying and worthy of the music. It finally occurred to me that creating works through a "third collaborator" in the form of an A.I. would be a playful extension from the idea of Bram's artificial places: in this case, the fictional Gubb Falls and Hachanlieder Valley.

The A.I. (artificial intelligence) technology I used is hosted on a number of sites online—there are several A.I. art creation websites currently available, some free and some for a fee.



Hachanlieder Valley (for Bram Gielen's *Eight Places*), 2021, A.I. Digital Painting by Joële Walinga

The software offers a number of options for inducing the A.I. to create various forms of artwork. For this project, I opted to engage the A.I. with text: I asked it to “interpret” my words as digital paintings.

First, I wrote freely while listening to each musical composition and considering the fictional places they represent; describing how I imagined the tone, the colours, what might happen at this place (are people happy there? Is there wind? What does it smell like?). Then I fed each piece of text to the A.I. The A.I. would take my text prompts—my text-based interpretation of Bram’s music—and make its own further interpretation, drawing on all of the knowledge it has access to, trying to understand the sensations of scent, emotion, the feeling of wind, and expressing that in a painting.

Often, the A.I. and I were not on the same page, and I would have to rephrase my meaning. That’s collaboration! I wish I kept my text prompts documented to share with you here, yet it also feels appropriate that it remains a private dialogue between me and the A.I. artist. This way you can have your own interpretation, too.

You can listen to **Bram Gielen**’s compositions from *For Double Bass*, featuring the pieces “*Gubb Falls*” and “*Hachanlieder Valley*,” as well as the full suite, “*Eight Places*,” on Apple Music, YouTube Music, Spotify and more. www.bramgielen.com

Joële Walinga is a Canadian artist and filmmaker. Her work has been shown at the Art Gallery of Ontario, International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Jihlava International Documentary Film Festival, and the SXSW Film Festival among others. She is an alumna of the 2021 Berlin International Film Festival’s talent development programme, Berlinale Talents, and her latest feature documentary SELF-PORTRAIT had its world premiere at the 2022 SXSW Film Festival. www.joelewalinga.com

moderato cantabile

Jeremy Fernando

Garlic

She woke up that morning with lashings in her head.

A word that had long clung to her, like picnics and the Famous Five. Back then, she imagined it were their exploits which drew her in, but as time rolled on she knew without ever quite realising it that it be the spreads that were calling her name.

I miss George.

She longed to tell her, if I hurt you, I'll make wine from your tears. But Michael Hutchence had already sung it. Sometimes others say your words for you. I suppose I was never one for verse. She never thought she had anything to say, that she had to say anything. I really thought she would stay.

If only she'd call.

Reaching over to the still-made side of her bed, she remembers G loving it spread over toast, the grin on her face as the crunch was accompanied by an explosion of rich verdant freshness, teeth sinking in velvet oiliness, a little garlicky kiss afterwards. Maybe if I make it, she would dream a little dream of me. Not that she even realised G's love for it until finding it in a letter, one not even addressed to her.

And makes—
makes this very
trace.

*Writing, like mourning and history,
designates the place of an irreplaceable,
marks the trace of a disappearance.*

~Chantal Thomas

Hope is a dangerous thing for one to have.
It be pretty dreaming behind a rainy windowpane.

Pine Nuts, untoasted

First time we met, we were by a river,
standing.

Both having scampered from a work gathering, one of those things we were obliged to be at, at least that's what I told her, having needed to find a way to have her for an evening beside me. Perhaps that was the problem, me plunging headfirst. At that moment, everything seemed fine: we were both standing there, standing by peaceful waters.

Hands might have touched.

They certainly did later, tearing into a magherita. Laughing with joint memories, ones that we couldn't possibly have had, or yet known. Mozzarella stretching linking stringing us along. And the way she twirled her finger around the thread between, until softly my lips she brushed.

Things, they attract each other.

She invited me for a midnight dip in a river that for an evening was ours. I just wanna dance with you—she might have just been repeating Lana del Rey or every other pop song ever written I didn't really care. Perhaps that was the problem, me plunging headfirst.

*Baby don't lie to me
you know I'll believe you*

~Matt Berninger

By the time everything crumbled, we realised we
were more alike than we'd liked.

Basil

All she had to do was combine.

Surely all her years of bringing people together, she thought to herself as she placed her shopping on the kitchen counter not just putting them in the same space but also handling them guiding them even at times leading them by their noses, should have made her an old hand at this. How difficult could this be.

Moreover, she had a pestle on her side—

usually she could only dream of having a mallet to go along with the smile she had to endure wearing.

The only thing being things, unlike people, things keep their secrets.

*If the colour yellow runs out
with what will we make bread?*

~Pablo Neruda

Parmigiano

She felt so relaxed she decided to put on a record.

Nel nome del Padre e del Figlio e dello Spirito Santo... the words tumbled out of her with the first grind of the pestle, turning slowly along the sides of the mortar; always start with offering gratitude *cara*. She instinctively went to a phrase following her since she was a child, one she repeated almost instinctively somewhat meditatively whenever she was asking for something, for a kind of nourishment any forgiveness some moment of kindness. It never failed to remind her of father, and sons she never had.

She liked the fact that hidden within it lay echoes of *nom nom nom*, another sound from her youth, a sound from another childhood almost, a preferred sound if she were being honest.

*I've been tearing around in my fucking nightgown
24/7 Sylvia Plath
Writing in blood on the walls
'Cause the ink in my pen don't work in my notepad
Don't ask if I'm happy, you know that I'm not
But, at best, I can say I'm not sad
'Cause hope is a dangerous thing for a woman like me to have
Hope is a dangerous thing for a woman like me to have*

~Lana del Rey

She put on a record to get herself to relax.

Pecorino

Place the garlic in the mortar. Take the pestle in your hand, hold snugly in your palm, start to mash in slow swirling motions. Gently. You're not trying to pound them into submission, she hears Nonna's voice every time, you're trying to coax their essence into emerging. Add a dash of salt to help. To build, you always need a grain of earth.

Once the yellow of the sun reveals itself, set aside.

Enter pine nuts, stage left. Give them space, *mia cara*, let them play, and for you they'll put on the glow of *il terreno*.

Lift the earth from the bowl. Start laying *basilico*, in small batches so you have time to know them. As the mortar becomes lush with forest green, gradually introduce them to the yellow and the brown.

Piano piano.

Give them room *cara* to engender themselves, *passare da maschio a femmina*, transform into a basilica. *Piccola*, don't try to make it the way you think it should be. Love it, and let it be.

Amo, volo ut sis.

And when you hear the whispers of angels singing, remember *cara*, sometimes

they appear to take the form of gargoyles, but don't be fooled, *i demoni sono solo cherubini affamati*, shower them with yellows of fire and the tuscan sun, and always swirling, bathe *la miscela* in drizzles of green around which this world builds itself.

Taste *cara*, keep tasting, listen with your tongue.

Add salt to taste.

Moderato cantabile.

It be pretty building layers behind a rainy windowpane.

Olive Oil

Someone once told me marriage is a life-long feat of diplomacy; the most important things must not be discussed.

Probably why we never did so.

I suppose the only reasonable thing to do was trade her for ghosts, it seemed the moderate thing to do. Time has a wonderful way of sifting, drowning noise, leaving us with memories of times our voices were in accord, surrounding a plate, bowl, dish, nary a word between us, singingly almost—in silence.

Something about breaking eggs to make omelettes. I'm not sure I ever believed it despite it being true, maybe even because it were.

I walked out on G, thought it were easier that way, the most important things must not be discussed. I may have well been right, told myself abandonment is a form of freedom.

*It's incredible how easy it is
to believe your own stories
even when you know
how arbitrary they are*

~Sophie Calle

Thankfully ghosts never quite go away, they sing me each time to my bowl.
Maybe if I make it she will dream a little dream of me.

Hope is a dangerous thing for one to have.

It be pretty dreaming behind a rainy windowpane.

moderato cantabile is dedicated to, and in loving memory of, Jean-Luc Nancy.

Jeremy Fernando reads, and writes. He works in the intersections of literature, philosophy, and the arts; and is the general editor of Delere Press and the thematic magazine, *One Imperative*. He is also the Jean Baudrillard Fellow at The European Graduate School.

Story

Elizabeth Gordon McKim

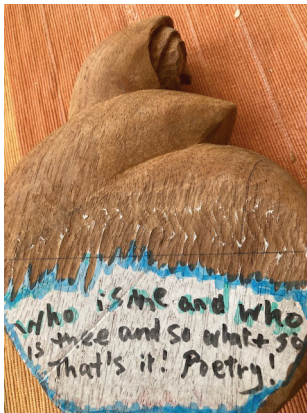
It comes with a story
A history a little red wagon
A rooster a bali/wood

A rapture a crime a wraparound
Tribunal a bi a trans a pass
A rupture a break
A break/fast

The heart of the matter
Rests on the roof of the sky

We only go by
We only go by

Who is me and who
Is thee and so what and so
That's it...Poetry!



Haiku on wood carving by Elizabeth Gordon McKim and David E Gowdy



En el bosque (In the woods). Digital painting—Judith Alalú

The Trail

Andrew Sofer

The seven-year-old who fell
broke free from fuselage
and walked past what remained

Of mother, father, sister,
barefoot through thorn and briar
to farmhouse lantern-light.

She clutched a shred of flame
like a sleepwalker in a tale.
Gamely, the journalist

now tracks her forest path
but cannot pierce the thicket.
Nor can his camera crew.

Behind the fish-eye lens,
a harrowing urge descends
to possess that wingless girl

and enter miracle—
as if her path were ours
and where it led was home.

Poems for Ukraine

Stephen K. Levine

I.

In Ukraine
the grass will not be green this year.
Or if it is,
we will not live to see it.

Mortar shells line the road.
They may be coming in,
even as you read.

"Suddenly I had to sing...
But evenings I cried bitterly."¹

Song and pain—
are they commensurate?

Dakha Brakha sings out
but the music turns to tears.

Who will show us the way home?

1 Else Lasker-Schuler, *In the Evening*. Translated by Audri Durchslag-Litt and Jeanette Litman-Demeestère.

II.

There are no men in this country,
all murdered by the troops of the Overlord,
the one who commands us all to kill.

There are no women in this country.
They have left with their children,
though some will stay to fight.

NO!

These words are false.

The men live in underground bunkers
When they come out,
they refuse to die.

And the women will return
Bearing strong and tender children
who grow differently this time.
They will be lovers not killers.

The one who has left is Putin.
He simply cannot prevail.
Even if he kills them all,
he will not prevail.

He has already lost.

III.

This is not the ritual
of marching around the stupa.
The gods will not intervene.
They live on a different plane.

No, it is preparation
for the slaughter,
when those who didn't want to fight
will kill in rage and blood.

No one escapes the horror.
Those who hide
die equally.

I watch from afar
wondering what to do
how to respond to violence
while the nuclear reactor prepares to burst

Om mani padme hum
Om mani pradi hum

The priests walk and chant
their song of dharma,
of a life we know is there
but cannot see

WAKE UP!

Now choose
your fate

IV.

Another day another disaster.
Do they still pronounce it Kiev
even when the spelling's changed?

Reluctant troops enter the city
looking to kill their brothers.
They used to hunt Nazis,
now they look for the President.
By the time you read this,
he may be captured
or dead.

The Jew always the target,
with the yellow star on his back,
one drop rule
modelled after black death,
and the puppet master
waits for the applause
at the end of the show.

The earth burns
and we all go merrily
on our way.

war poem

Dorota Solarska

You think you can rape us
We've been raped so many times
You cannot rape us more

You think you can kill us
We died so many times
You cannot kill us more

You think you can tear us apart
We've learned loneliness before you were born
Silence of solitude

Instead, we will let you be
With your eyes wide open
Witness of your own deeds
Hope-free

Dorota K.Solarska, a writer and a painter. Her third book was published in Poland earlier this year, she also writes a blog, articles and theatre plays (the next production, spring 2022 in Switzerland) and contributes to *POIESIS*, *Kuckucksnest* and *Silne* magazines. Her artworks are exhibited in Switzerland and Poland. You can access them also via Instagram, @doraoutsiderart.

End Game

Stephen K. Levine

All right everybody,
time to line up!
To the right! To the left!

The magic finger writes
and having writ,
moves on.

Who knows? Who cares?
And does it matter now?
Is it already too late?

We crawled on our bellies,
out of the swamps,
to behold the stars.

Now billionaires aim
to travel there.

We can't escape
what we have made,
our own machines crushing us
until we bleed.

You shall be as gods,
and like all gods,
leave only dust
behind.

We travel to the stars,
but the earth
will bloom again.

And we shall be redeemed.

poiesis is always possible



The European Graduate School

