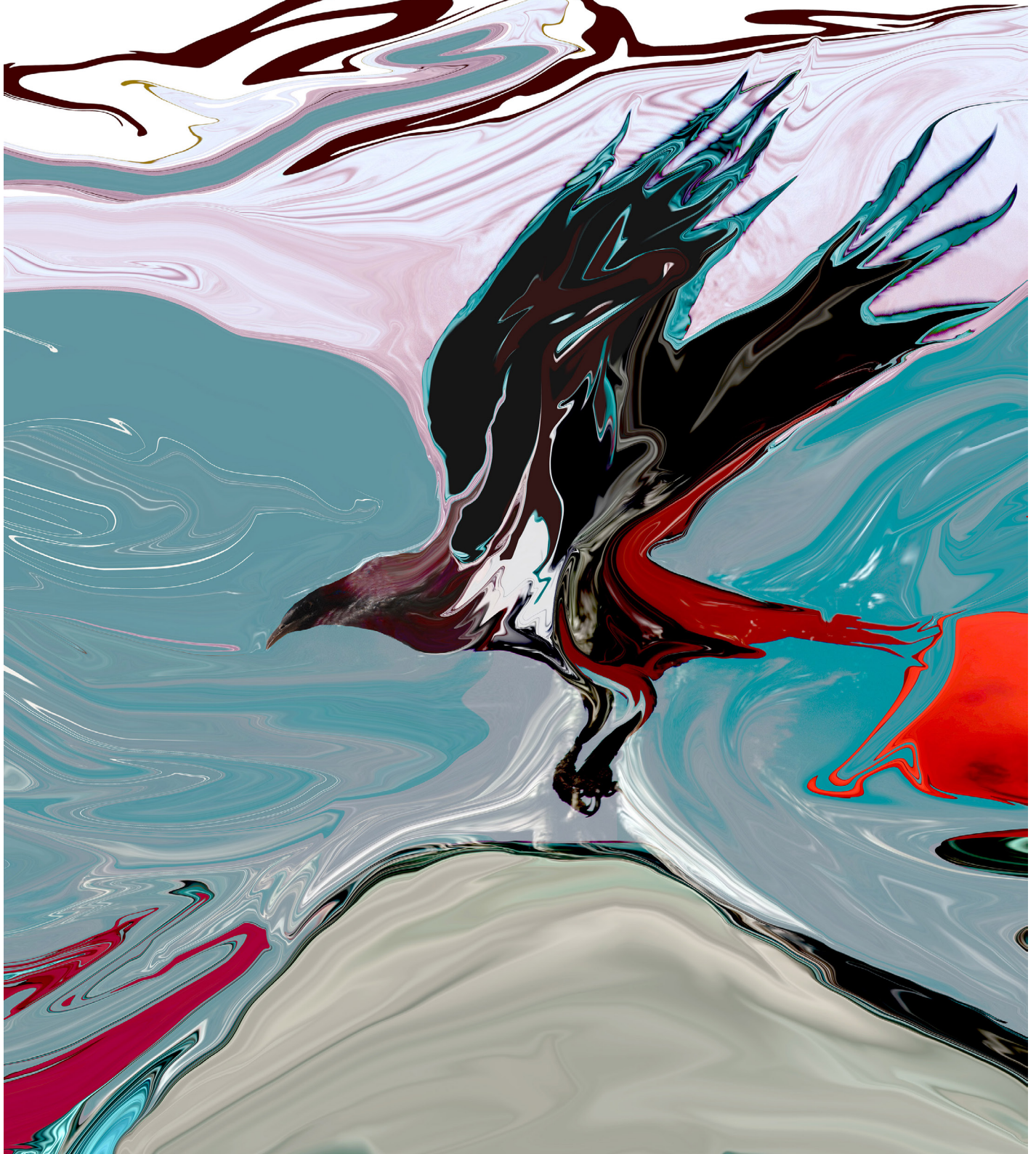


ARTIZZEIN

Arts & Teaching Journal





Artizein: Arts and Teaching Journal is an international open access, blind, peer-reviewed publication produced by the Art Education Program in the School of Art & Design at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. The Journal seeks to enlarge and shift the current professional domains of visual art, teaching, inquiry and learning with a renewed examination of what is possible through an expansive interdisciplinary lens that includes not only visual art, but all of the creative arts.

art (n.) early 13c., “skill as a result of learning or practice,” from Old French *art* (10c.), from Latin *artem* (nominative *ars*) “work of art; practical skill; a business, craft,” from PIE **ar-ti-* (cognates: Sanskrit *rtih* “manner, mode;” Greek *arti* “just,” *artios* “complete, suitable,” *artizein* “to prepare;” Latin *artus* “joint;” Armenian *arnam* “make;” German *art* “manner, mode”), from root **ar-* “fit together, join”



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SUBMISSIONS

ARTIZEIN welcomes submissions addressing the significance of understanding the roles of teaching, learning and inquiring through the arts, relative to the arts themselves. We publish articles, artworks, poems, visual essays, book reviews, digital media and other materials:

- To deepen perceptions about the creative capacities of all people, and how this ability, that is innate to all, unfolds and develops in a wide array of ways, tempos, and settings,
- To inform and engage readers in expansive thinking about what the arts are and can be, and how to teach, transmit, and facilitate their emergence, where it might take place, and how to recognize its impact on those that make and those that experience the arts and their effects,
- To expand possibilities for how the arts as inquiry can contribute to the learning and unlearning of ways of being and knowing for just and sustainable societies (communities),
- To direct attention to instructional approaches (some new and innovative, others neglected or forgotten) that are currently restricted by an emphasis on normalized arts instruction in public schooling and higher education

Please visit our website for specific information related to upcoming volumes:

https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/atj/call_for_papers.html

To see the themed call for the 2021 Issue go to page 218.





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INTRODUCTION: CURATING AS COMPASSION

Barbara Bickel @ Darlene St. Georges

It is time for us to go deeper into our own knowledge systems, deeper into our story worlds. We must now go beyond what has been “discovered”; we must go beyond the colonizing constraints of Western theories and paradigms.

—Archibald, Lee-Morgan & De Santolo, 2019, p.11



Spontaneous creation making play with bird-headed goddess (clay), June, 2020. © Barbara Bickel

We draw strength from creative practices and stories of lived experience that speak from and to a deep philosophy about humans' relationships with each other and more-than-human entities.

Acknowledging and “attending to this ethic of relationality honours systems of knowledge and knowing [that] are intricate, intellectual, living, and part of a larger framework of relationships that shape multiple realities” (Garcia, Tenakhongva, & Honyouti, 2019, p. 110).

An ethics of relationality engages holistically and creatively in meaning-making; to “involve the heart (emotions), mind (intellect), body (physical actions), and spirit (spirituality), as well as recognize the relationships of these realms to oneself, family, community, land/environment, and wider society” (Archibald, et al., 2019, p. 4). It provokes alternative understandings that can guide us to be better humans.

Indigenous scholars tell us that, traditionally, Elders sought knowledge about the outer world through their subjective inward journeys. They understood that making connections between the inner and outer realms of experience is how to expand knowledge, relationally (Ermine, 1996, 2011; Kelly, 2015; Manulani Aluli-Meyer, 2013).

Kimmerer (2013) tells us that creation cosmologies are a source of identity and our orientation to the world, teaching us about the responsibility that flows between humans, Other-than-human and the Earth. This is a relational ontology that is embodied with/in a creation research process (St. Georges, 2020);¹ a type of living inquiry that is accountable for knowledge that is connected holistically, with intellect, emotion, spirit, and the physical aspects of being (Absolon, 2011).

Critical creative practices and pedagogy can intensify our ability to gain deeper awareness when we engage ourselves; “attuning us to the fissures present in our current ways of being and thinking, and provoking in us critical reflexion about the ways in which we relate with the world; it changes our visual system, our hearing system, and our speaking system” (Trungpa, 2008, pp. 22–23), allowing us “to expand knowledge outward, in depth and toward the light” (Maori leader Mirini Maka Mead as cited in Aluli-Meyer, 2013b, p.1).

This is an approach to research and teaching that is not static, but generative and rooted in compassion. To practice “art as compassion,” as artist, psychoanalyst, activist and philosopher Bracha Ettinger teaches, is to understand that “[t]here will be no compassion without creativity” (Fox, 1979, p. 104). In a time when security and trust are rapidly eroding, we still can make, teach, inquire and learn through creativity and the arts. In doing so we can move closer to living with compassion “by fine attunements that evade the political systems” (Ettinger, n.d., n.p.). We launch this open access issue of *Artizein: Arts & Teaching Journal* in the midst of an unprecedented time of change, where the impact of failing political systems are fully visible and thus primed for radical attunements that we believe are best guided by fine attunements that emerge from ethical relationality and art as compassion.

This issue's open call brought forth a diversity of submissions that reflect the culture of uncertainty and possibilities for the arts and inquiry, teaching and learning in the Twenty-first Century. We offer this issue as a gift during a time of pandemic, ecological crisis, and racial and gender divides, with a desire to contribute to unmaking and making meaning through the arts; “it is how we develop our agency and exercise our voice. Art as something that is active and alive has an inherent link to our humanity, consciousness, and process of evolution; ... it is generative, fluid, and permeable. It moves and it is restless... It cannot be bound or replicated, which is the challenge that it

brings to research” (St. Georges, 2020, p. 90).

As our culture strives to develop ways of understanding and living life that holds compassion for humans and more-than-humans at its’ core, teachers of art can supply needed practices to assist living well through the changes. Carl Leggo (2019) calls educators to consider “what it means to be human in the creation, what it means to live in relationship with all of creation, what it means to resonate with voice and voices” (p.103);

If I can believe in an invisible net of worldwide
interconnections in cyberspace, surely I can
believe in the ecology of words and lines of care
borne lightly in the heart, even the unbearable.

I will hold my friends through the blustery
winds of winter into the promises of spring
as I know they will hold me, in blood-beating
heart and imagination and memory beyond
all counting of tense time, in tenderness only.

(Carl Leggo, *Ecology*, [two stanzas] as cited in Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008, p. 96.)

Editors, similar to curators have a significant role to play in what is published and how author-artists are held as the blustering winds of the publication/exhibiting process unfolds. In the last two issues of Artizein, guest editor Susan Walsh and Barbara Bickel described their editing process as a feminist “relational co-evolving model of generative peer dialogue” (Bickel & Walsh, 2018, p. 10). This issue builds upon the feminist relational model and swerves it toward curating with care and compassion for restoration and transformation. The definition of the word curator includes ‘one who cares for.’ Care for the collection of art and writings in this issue in an aesthetical and ethical relational paradigm includes care for both the creation and the creator. In conversations with the authors during the editing process an author shared that this way of curating a journal is a needed alternative to the traditional gate-keeper role of the editor in academia. We believe that the reader/viewer/listener of the offerings in this issue will also be impacted by the field of care that was established in the full editing process.

Editor’s Curatorial Process

Submissions went through the traditional blind peer review, but once accepted the authors worked closely and in dialogue with the editors, to at times restore, and at other times transform their pieces. Sotomayor, a contributor to this issue, “uses the term curator to describe the actions of an educator who is creating, implementing, and sharing a pedagogical approach that centers on co-creating knowledge with care and stewardship (Sotomayor, 2020).” We echo her description and share below the steward process that we engaged as editors of this issue, in a manner that contemporary feminist curators describe as “taking care to power” (Horne et al, 2016, p. 124).

Tenets include:

- a gift economy as a foundation for building a creative scholarly circle of care, criticality and connectivity,
- inclusion of emerging, mid and mature scholarly and creative contributions,
- a relational ontology,
- not being in denial of the time of atrocity we are living in,
- addressing aesthetics first, with ethics emerging from the aesthetic, and lastly politics with a return to aesthetics

at the end of the process.

Process included:

- blind peer review,
- editors not as gate keepers but as nurturers of the individual and their story (parts and whole),
- curatorial mentoring
 - development of the capacity of author-artists / artist-authors
 - to bring forward the aesthetic and academic strength of each article, poem, essay, visual essay,
- keeping the issue current and context relevant for artist teachers working in today's world.

Overview of Contributions

Two significant themes presented themselves, despite being an open call for submissions. They reflect the cascading crisis times we are living into and the desire to take pedagogic action through inquiry, writing and artmaking. The image cover created by Darlene St. Georges and found in this issue on p. 88, brings the natural world's intelligence and beauty to the fore of this issue. A reminder that birds and particularly Corvids such as the crow can be guiding teachers of change for humans in these times of entering the mysteries of the dark. Poignantly, the authors-artists turn us to question and rethink our practices of ecological and human relations, in and through the significant teaching and learning struggles and the complexity involved.

Section one dwells in gifts; of art, relationships, nature and spirit. Drawing a relational thread to prior *Artizein* issues the journal opens with a found poem co-created by the contributors of the past 2 issues, as the *Contemplative Arts Collective*. This opening poem proffers a strong thread to the creative contributions of the teachings and learnings that precede us. *Gerofsky, Barney and Gerard's article* follows by literally taking on the notion of paying it forward that Dr. Leggo's teachings inspired in the previous two-part special issue of *Artizein*. They situate their collaboration in the gift economy that is flourishing in this time of coronavirus, cultivating the relational gift as they build a caring community through their shared experience. A visual essay of relational evocations in the forest then unfolds leading us into the gift of a walking a/r/tographic inquiry by *Chung*. Following the forest walk with *Chung*, emergent strands of a contemplative and artful *méttisage* co-created by *Mitchell, Phillips, Trill, Walsh, Bickel, Bartley, & McConachy* braids together still and moving images, sound audio, story and poetry. In this *méttisage* the reader/listener/viewer is guided into the sacred worldview that holds the inquiry, learning and teachings of these 7 co-inquirers. *Nicole Rallis* then guides readers into Pacific Spirit Park on an ecopedagogical poetic wandering, which is followed by Earthen lessons for rematriation with Nature that are then re-ordered through the tellings of bird or woman; as *Fidyk* and *St. Georges* invoke the Goddess with her call to live well with the dark side of life at the troubled edge we now live looking down into. *Pente* walks us into an Alberta farm field and engages land-based performance art with the virtual aid of GPS technology in a visual poetry essay, as she expands traditional understandings of landscape art. *Hauk* and *Kippen* carry on the environmental theme and teach a relational game they call the "Verge" as a research method that introduces environmental and arts-based educational scholars to an innovative approach to research data interpretation, with the ability to re-center non-dominant insights and ways of knowing.

Section two enters a critical and compassionate inquiry into identities and the navigation of complex relations in learning, unlearning and remembering. The lived experience of teaching those with marginalized black identities in a dominantly white American university is vulnerably expressed in a co-taught university course by *Sotomayor & Porterfield*. This critical self-reflective teaching article navigates the *nepantla* space of the classroom, showing us the

difficulties encountered in the crossing of worlds in a racially divided culture. *Snowber & Odabashian*, next invite the reader/viewer into a celebration of reclamation as they carry the threads of inexpressible familial hauntings of the Armenian genocide through the creation of beauty sourced from the heart in their poetic and visual art dialogue. A love imbued conversation between poetry and prose carries the thread further in *Downey* and *Sagy's* article of emergent songs to the Earth and each other as respectively, diasporic and Indigenous colleagues engaging with relational entanglement(s) of reconciliation in the curriculum of life. *Adams* follows by entering a learning and unlearning journey through her art and poetry, as she grapples with the complexities of respectful reconciliation practices with the land, as a settler living and creating on Treaty land. *Morrison's* article then explores her identity and offers insight into being a teaching artist in the public school system, as she passionately articulates the priority of bringing the arts back into the school system to assist youth recover and regenerate themselves through the arts in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic. Drawing the many threads of heart, mind, body and spirit found in this issue to a reflective pause, *London's* story connects the spiritual passage from death to life with the arts, as his powerful art images join the Heavens with the Earth. We are pleased to include Artizein's first book review, written by *Nicole Rallis* that introduces readers to *Adrian Schoone's* 2020 book entitled "Constellations of Alternative Education Tutors: A Poetic Inquiry." We hope her overview of this book inspires you to look further into Schoone's scholarship on poetic inquiry.

At the heart of this collection are ethical relational entanglements. These relationships are not simple, rather they are interconnected, complex, dynamic, and filled with responsibility for community, language, ontologies, environments, the cosmos, and diverse ideologies (Garcia, Tenakhongva, & Honyouti, 2019). The contributions of this Journal issue are a telling of stories; of a self-in-relation, that invite us to consider an embodied and inspired way of being and becoming in the world (Aoki, 2005). We invite you to wander through this issue and find sacred spaces for moments of pause, questioning and reflection within your own life as artist-teacher and learner.

Barbara Bickel & Darlene St. Georges

ENDNOTE

1. We draw upon creation-research as theorized by St. Georges (2020), wherein inquiry is an inspired relational inward and outward journey; a storying praxis that resists fixedness and is rooted in spirit and creation. It is critically fluid and is in motion, tangling through complexity and multiplicity in our relational realms of experience. Creation is intentionally positioned first, flipping research-creation to creation-research because (CR) is rooted in insight from Indigenous scholars who tell us that making connections between the inner and outer realms of experience is a way to expand knowledge, relationally (Cajete, 1993; Deloria, 2012; Ermine, 1996; Kelly, 2015; Kimmerer, 2013; Meyer, 2013).

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SECTION ONE



Humming I [photograph] D. St. Georges 2020.

BEGIN WITH LETTING GO: A FOUND POEM IN HONOUR OF CARL LEGGO

Contemplative Arts Collective

ABSTRACT

As a group of nineteen, we are pleased to offer a found poem that we co-created with lines from our contributions to a two-part special issue of *Artizein: Arts and Teaching Journal* (2018, 2019). We wove our words together with those of our dear friend, colleague, and mentor, Carl Leggo, who was integral to the emergence and energy of the special issue and to the work of this group. Further, we performed the found poem at an event in honour of Carl's life and work (*Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies Preconference Event—The Many Faces of Love: Celebrating the Lifework of Carl Leggo*. University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, June 1, 2019). We offer this found poem with boundless love, compassion, respect, and heart.¹

a time you learned something almost
always begins with letting go²

in the rising smoke, our daily prayers are
carried and offered humbly to Creator, Gitchie Manitou,
sacred being that we honour within Creation
in service of "All Our Relations"

everything is a plea
etched in absence,
not desire
going where my heart wants to go
being in the moment
*in search of the miraculous*³

relax into whatever arises
with gentleness, care towards
ourselves and one another
silence solitude space
walk labyrinth, sit, pray, write, eat,
walk outside, make art

I have been a pebble picking itself up a thousand times
so I can throw myself back into the stream I have feasted
on nature's immeasurable worth all along the trail

the essence: behind the bend, beyond
the visible, in iridescent light
making me wish I was
blind once more for a glimpse into another world

the smallest perceptual moments of sight, sound, feeling,
or smell can reveal the ceaseless energy of the moment

time has another form here; in the territory of fertility,
where timelessness and time are
Lovers teach us to bloom again
towards our own beginnings

a wonderful open-minded community
welcomed with open arms hearts
listening giving receiving

a time you learned something almost
always begins with letting go

you were sitting on the edge of a star,
contemplating everything that would come,
accepting this strange film, without losing your smile

through the seasons, I visited this place
made time to witness changes in the world around me
I watched the river dwindle and slow,
freeze and babble, re-emerge and rise once more

from first encounter to taking flight—we invoke, evoke artistic practices
experience, embodiment co-exist make visible what matters

we thrive to inspire
grab hold of souls
try to make sense of it all
through creative process

under the sky where possibilities defy calculus
I am a radical rooted in earth, heart, and wind

a living being ever present: music—
become part of it, flow with it—
a meditative state of mind

true creativity grows out of meditateness,
music: just one of its expressions

Indigenous Poiesis, or “making”
contemplative arts-based practices
are like the offering of Tobacco into the fire of Creation
they create the possibility of a medicine way

a time you learned something almost
always begins with letting go

there is always a shadow beside my eyes where
I see the greys, the color of wisdom in my liminal mind
memories connecting souls to care
my love letter to the academy...

when does a relationship end?
what is that space between the model and the canvas?

our visual field is constantly flowing
with the movement of celestial bodies the ever-changing
angle of the sun keeps everything fresh

relationships matter...
and we surface...
the loneliness of an academic's burden and
desire for co-creation and belonging

through a matrixial gaze we touch primary compassion
potentially a fragilizing process opening to the consciousness
of the Cosmos—co-becoming
an invitation for others to cross the thresholds

a time you learned something almost
always begins with letting go

three rivers and a song of universal purpose
no singular ownership
Water—given by Creator
for universal purpose
used by everyone, in everyone
everyone brought into this world by water

together, we call for the co-creation of contemplative spaces for
silence gentleness wonder uneasiness
creating a circle of care

a time you learned something almost
always begins with letting go

* * *

ENDNOTES

1. See the two-part special issue of *Artizein, An Arts-Based and Contemplative Pause: Part One* (2018) at <https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/atj/vol3/iss1/> and *Part Two* (2019) at <https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/atj/vol4/iss1/> . In alphabetical order, the contributors to the two-part special issue—and authors of this found poem—are: G. Belliveau, B. Bickel, D. Conrad, A. Cuculiza-Brunke, A. Downey, L. Fels, M. Gardner, A. Garcia-Fialdini, Y. Gillard, V. Kelly, M. Khan, A. Kumar, J. Markides, R. Nellis, M. Searle, C. Snowber, R. Traill, J. Valdez, & S. Walsh.
2. Refrain from: Leggo, C. (2018). Perplexing pedagogy: Pensées, in “Holding fast to H: Ruminations on the ARTS preconference.” *Artizein: Arts and Teaching Journal*, 3(1), 16.
3. Ouspensky, P. D. (1949). *In search of the miraculous: Fragments of an unknown teaching*. Harcourt Brace.



PAYING IT FORWARD: A GIFT ECONOMY OF POETRY AND VISUAL ART IMAGES

Susan Gerofsky, Daniel T. Barney & Mira Gerard

ABSTRACT

As our world has changed rapidly and ineluctably with the COVID-19 pandemic, many are advocating an ethos of generosity and a gift economy, based on generative, creative offerings, as an alternative or balance to the excesses of a mainstream neoliberal exchange economy. What is the gift economy, and how does it entangle us in a fabric of mutual responsibility, obligation, creative practices and love, within the human and greater-than-human world? A Pay-It-Forward New Year's gift game amongst a group of artist/ educators, ongoing since 2014, gives rise to this meditation on the gift economy, based on Mauss, Hyde, Kimmerer, Vaughan and Jordan's work and contemplation of intergenerational, inter-being webs of mutuality. Visual artwork (photography and painting), and poetry and song that inspired and arose from the Pay-It-Forward engagement are part of this piece.

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Bios

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Mira Gerard received her BFA from Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana and her MFA from the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia. Her work has been exhibited at a range of venues including Knoxville Museum of Art, Torrance Art Museum, Huntsville Museum of Art, Wichita Center for Contemporary Art, Marianne Boesky Gallery, and more. Her work was selected for New American Paintings #118 (Southeast Edition, 2015)

and has been published in Poets & Artists, The Cortland Review, and Manifest Painting International. She has presented papers and performances on the intersection of art and psychoanalysis at the International Zizek Studies Conference, LACK, Psychology and the Other, and the Southeastern College Art Conference. Mira often produces her painting at artist residencies, which have included Ox-Bow School of Art, Cill Rialaig Project, The Hambidge Center, The Vermont Studio Center, and the Virginia Center for Creative Arts. She is Chair and Professor in the Department of Art & Design at East Tennessee State University in Johnson City, Tennessee where she has lived and worked since 2001. Contact: GERARD@mail.etsu.edu

INTRODUCTION: A NEW YEAR'S GIFT

On New Year's Day six years ago, my friend Mira Gerard, a professor of painting at East Tennessee State University, posted a lovely offer on Facebook:

Pay It Forward art-making project for 2014:

I promise to make a small work of art for the first five people who comment on this post and say "YES, I want in". You must in turn post this as your status update and make something for the first five who comment on your status.

* The rules are simple: it has to be your work, made by you, and the recipient must receive it before 2014 ends.

* It can be anything art-based: a drawing or a conceptual work of art and anything in between.

Yes, you can be on each other's pay it forward lists.

I love Mira's paintings, so I didn't hesitate to respond immediately -- and I was one of the lucky five who made it onto Mira's Pay It Forward 2014 gift list.

The term 'Pay-It-Forward' encapsulates an important concept that will be discussed further in this piece. As a working definition, we can say that 'paying it forward' into the future is a way of thinking about gift-giving as something that extends kindness, generosity, even life-giving support to those who will, in future, extend similar generosity to others. It is opposite to the idea of 'payback' (Atwood, 2008) -- the idea of debt and owing, and extending to revenge or retribution, where the person who gave a gift or benefit, or an insult or harm must be 'paid back' equally in kind. Where paying back belongs to the exchange economy, paying forward is more closely related to the maternal economy (Vaughan, 2019), where mothers and other caregivers give the gifts of birth and life, milk, food, teaching and protection to babies and the young, without any possibility of 'payback' -- giving for the sake of love, sustenance and the carrying forward of future generations. Presumably, many of those babies will grow up to be adults who give the same gift, paying it forward, to future generations of children. The generosity of Paying It Forward demands no return gift to sender, but an extension of the generosity to those who will receive ongoing gifts in future. When the gifts are artistic creations, both the giver and receiver may benefit from the process of connecting and making, holding one another in mind and building relationship and community in the process.

I reciprocated in response to Mira's invitation by copying the post to my own Facebook timeline, and immediately had responses from five friends: (1) Mira (putting herself on my list in a reflexive move), (2) Dan Barney (professor of Art Education at Brigham Young University), (3) Myriam (environmentalist and baker in Kingston, Ontario), (4) Tamsin (professor of Mathematics Education at Western Norway University of Applied Sciences),

and (5) Rosie (designer and commercial artist, and a friend since high school). (Note that the gift responses for (1), (2), (3) and (4) will be shared at the end of this article; (5) is still to be completed.) Our economy and community based on gifts had begun to form.

In the weeks and months following, no matter how busy things were with work and family, my mind was working on fulfilling the happy obligation I had set for myself through this gift economy. I had accepted a commission (or given myself a mission) to write five poems, customized to the interests and character of my five friends. I wrote the poems as I rode my bike to work, when I ate lunch or took a bus, and when I was falling asleep each night. I jotted lines down on scraps of paper and on my calendar.

By the end of July, I had written the four poems below, and sent them to Mira, Dan, Myriam and Tamsin, who received them with grace and messages of appreciation:

I'm thrilled to have inspired and to have been inspired by you.

How wonderful! Please, spread these lovely words of yours as wild seeds would. I enjoyed your play on the word rise... so many meanings and such power and hopefulness in such a small word.

But the poem is wonderful. It resonates in its cadences and in its sentiments and I am so pleased to have received it. It also gives me hope that as academics there are places for creativity both of a formal and informal nature.

I had plans to write a multi-voice choral piece about herbal teas for Rosie -- since she and I share an interest in herbal remedies and gardens -- but have not yet managed to complete that piece nor send it to my friend.

The feelings of guilt and non-completion in this gift-giving stay with me, and in some ways tie me closer to Rosie because of a gift that needs to be given, an exchange that ought to happen and has not yet. Similarly, Mira has not yet sent me that small handmade thing that she planned to make for me either. Without any bad feelings, I still await that small gift that was promised, and which may someday arrive, a gift that ties us together through anticipation and a story. Whether an actual painting arrives in the mail someday or not, we are drawn together in community around these gift-obligations, these narratives of giving and friendship.

Theories of the gift economy: Mauss on potlatch cultures, Hyde on the artist's gifts

The narrative and social texture/ textile/ web of the gift is reminiscent of Marcel Mauss' (1925/2011) classic of anthropological writing, *The Gift*, a study that inspired Levi-Strauss, Bourdieu, Bataille, and Hyde, among others. In this small book, Mauss compares gift-giving practices and cultures in Polynesia, Melanesia and the Pacific Northwest of North America (including Haida, Tlingit, Tsimshian, Kwakwaka'wakw traditions), with additional references to many other classical and contemporary cultures worldwide. Much of Mauss' study focuses on cultures where potlatch is central to relationships among individuals and clans, and where the reciprocation of gift-giving is deeply important to people's sense of self and relationships to the human and greater-than-human world. Mauss writes that:

To give something is to give a part of oneself... one gives away what is in reality a part of one's nature and substance, while to receive something is to receive a part of someone's spiritual essence... The

thing given is not inert. It is alive and often personified... It retains a magical and religious hold over the recipient. (Mauss, 1925/2011, p. 10)

There is an obligation to give and to receive, and to repay gifts received plus something extra. These social and spiritual entanglements of gift-giving continue to 'pay it forward' indefinitely into the future, and connect people with the gods and ancestors, and with the spirits of the land, plants and animals that sustain the people. Gifts or sacrifices to the spirit world are part of the holistic gift economy, bringing the people into relationships of honour and respect with unseen worlds of great power.

Gifts are both things and more-than-things, beautiful and useful in themselves, and also imbued with spirit and reciprocal responsibilities. A gift is symbolic of the systems of mutual obligation and reliance that bind together beings in the human and greater-than-human world over time. To be given a gift and not be expected (or able) to reciprocate may put a person in a position of dishonour and shame, according to Mauss' study -- and this is one of the great social and moral problems of charity given from the rich to the poor, without expectation of reciprocation.

Lewis Hyde's work (Hyde, 1982/2007) takes Mauss' anthropological study of the gift into the deep meanings of folktale, and the worlds of artists and writers. He considers the idea of inborn artistic talents as gifts and the gifts we benefit from in the natural world, alongside the gifts people give one another.

Hyde differentiates between a two-party exchange, where goods and services are 'paid back' and bartered, and where commodities may be hoarded for profit, and gifts that get energy through movement among people. Gifts that are not bartered commodities involve a sense of mystery through an expanded span of time and community. Where a gift 'goes around a corner' into a mysterious, unknown place over time, there is an almost magical sense of paying it forward to those one does not know -- those that might need exactly that gift at the time it arrives. (In fact, this is a generative and fruitful way to consider the gifts we are still awaiting or that are still not completed. It may be that the time is not yet ripe for these gifts, or that they have 'gone around the corner' to someone that needed them more, and may reappear in mysterious ways later on...) The gift's energy is refreshed as it moves towards those who are most in need of it. Hyde writes:

When I give to someone from whom I do not receive (and yet I do receive elsewhere), it is as if the gift goes around a corner before it comes back. I have to give blindly. And I feel a sort of blind gratitude as well. (Hyde, 1982/2007, p. 20)

If the commodity moves to turn a profit, where does the gift move? The gift moves toward the empty place. As it turns in its circle it turns toward him who has been empty-handed the longest, and if someone appears elsewhere whose need is greater it leaves the old channel and moves toward him. Our generosity may leave us empty but our emptiness then pulls gently at the whole until the thing in motion returns to replenish us. (Hyde, 1982/2007, p. 29)

Hyde's sense of the gift having its own trajectory, energy and agency might seem ethereal or an example of magical thinking, but in these times of COVID-19, this sense of the gift that 'goes around the corner' into mystery and somehow returns (in changed form) has become a shared, solidly material experience for many people, even making it into daily news reports. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), Canada's public broadcaster, reported this story recently:

Bradley Harder has baked more than 200 pies for members of his community... As someone who's almost 60 living with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), among other health issues, Harder says he began to worry about the growing threat of the pandemic. He decided he wouldn't leave his house, but to pass the time, he started creating YouTube videos called Cooking without pants — tutorials for homemade meals like lasagna. In one of the videos, Harder mentioned running out of some ingredients. So, some friends watching decided they'd order groceries to his door.

"I was so moved by this that I thought, 'Well, what can I do? I mean, I'm stuck at home, I'm vulnerable ... I've got COPD, I don't want to catch the disease,'" he said. "So I thought about it and said, 'Well, I can bake.'"

He started by baking pies for the people who'd sent him food, then for some friends, then for some neighbours, and 200 pies later, Harder's still getting requests... Whereas Harder had started the project buying the ingredients himself, he's now finding flour, butter and fresh fruit at his door, along with some financial contributions...

"Do what you do, give it away for free. It'll come back to you, I swear," he says. "It's a bad business model on paper, but it works. People are good." (Simmons, May 13, 2020)

These COVID times are full of similar stories of those who offer a gift -- of music, of food, of companionship or health support -- even when they feel they might have little to offer, and where, through the circulation of the gift, without a clear explanation, gifts are returned in some way to the giver. Much of what is created as a side effect of the movement of the gift is a sense of caring and community that is the ground and infrastructure allowing for the satisfaction of giving and receiving, motion and energy amongst people:

Unlike the sale of a commodity, the giving of a gift tends to establish a relationship between the parties involved. Furthermore, when gifts circulate within a group, their commerce leaves a series of interconnected relationships in its wake, and a kind of decentralized cohesiveness emerges. (Hyde, 1982/2007, p. xx)

Speaking to artists, Hyde notes that at the best of times, there is a feeling that the artist's gifts, muses or talents flow through the person -- that the gift is in motion, and is both part and not part of the self. When artists create and share new works, these gifts are activated, not depleted:

To have painted a painting does not empty the vessel out of which the paintings come. On the contrary, it is the talent which is not in use that is lost or atrophies, and to bestow one of our creations is the surest way to invoke the next. (Hyde, 1982/2007, p. 189)

So to be invited to make a new work of art is also an invitation to invoke those gifts that flow through us as artists; the giver is gifted with inspiration and motivation in creating something of their own self that pays inspiration forward to another. Hyde quotes the poet Gary Snyder writing about the gratitude he feels in the appearance of a poem that it seems is of himself, and at the same time, a gift that is not made through his conscious control:

You get a good poem and you don't know where it came from. "Did I say that?" And so all you feel is: you feel humility and you feel gratitude. (Snyder, 1980, p. 79)

There is a sense that the gift gives energy, surprise and satisfaction to the artist in both the making and the giving, so that the gift energizes the whole community in unpredictable and unexpected ways, quite beyond its exchange value as a commodity.

Theories of the gift economy: Kimmerer on the gifts of the greater-than-human world

Mauss' and Hyde's voices come from masculinist, European/ American colonial traditions of anthropology and literary theory from the 20th century; Kimmerer, Vaughan and Jordan write the theory of the gift economy from contemporary feminist, ecological, counter-colonial scholarship.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, professor of plant ecology at SUNY Syracuse and Indigenous scholar from the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, writes about experiencing the gift economy in our times, where market economy commodification has destroyed and threatened so much.

Kimmerer writes about being 'raised by strawberries' -- about the wild strawberries of her childhood as a gift of the earth:

Strawberries first shaped my view of a world full of gifts simply scattered at your feet. A gift comes to you through no action of your own, free, having moved toward you without your beckoning. It is not a reward; you cannot earn it, or call it to you, or even deserve it. And yet it appears. Your only role is to be open-eyed and present. Gifts exist in a realm of humility and mystery— as with random acts of kindness, we do not know their source. (Kimmerer, 2013, pp. 23-24)

Kimmerer writes about learning from the strawberries how to give back to the strawberries: by clearing space for their runners to take root and the plants to spread and propagate. This learning from the strawberries could only take place because there was an ongoing relationship with the strawberry plants; the berries were accepted as a gift, and through that gift, reciprocal responsibilities could and must be taken up.

The sweetgrass of Kimmerer's book title (*Hierochloë hirta*, *H. alpina* and other related species of long, satiny, fragrant grasses) is native to Canada, most of the US and many northern nations. It is "a widely used and revered sacred plant... and continues to play an important role in Indigenous cultures" (Turner, 2018). Sweetgrass may be burned as a purifying 'smudge' or incense, plaited or woven into baskets and hats, and used for ceremonial and medicinal purposes.

In a form of human gift-giving akin to the gift of the strawberries, traditional sweetgrass pickers would never buy and sell sweetgrass for money, nor would they take more sweetgrass than they needed. People who collect sweetgrass with proper respect offer back a gift to the earth, or burn a braid of sweetgrass in the fire to give thanks:

The braids are given as gifts, to honor, to say thank you, to heal and to strengthen. The sweetgrass is kept in motion. When Wally gives sweetgrass to the fire, it is a gift that has passed from hand to

hand, growing richer as it is honored in every exchange... That is the fundamental nature of gifts: they move, and their value increases with their passage. The fields made a gift of berries to us and we made a gift of them to our father. The more something is shared, the greater its value becomes. (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 26)

This sense of movement and mutuality, gratitude and reciprocation is the essence of the gift culture and its life-giving lessons of generosity and non-attachment. Kimmerer writes about the unhealthy stasis of private ownership and greed, compared to the flow and movement of a gift culture:

Wealth among traditional people is measured by having enough to give away. Hoarding the gift, we become constipated with wealth, bloated with possessions, too heavy to join the dance... In a culture of gratitude, everyone knows that gifts will follow the circle of reciprocity and flow back to you again. This time you give and next time you receive. Both the honor of giving and the humility of receiving are necessary halves of the equation. (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 382)

In traditional and contemporary ceremonies, the circulation of the gift “marries the mundane to the sacred” (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 37), bringing people into a mutual relationship with the ancestors, spirits, other humans and the earth. Through ritual, gratitude, trust and generosity, we care for one another and keep the gifts moving -- creating the world we want to live in and making it a place where all can thrive.

Kimmerer has commented on the importance of awareness that we survive and thrive within a gift economy in these times of COVID-19 mutual interdependence and isolation, in a recent interview in the Guardian (Yeh, May 23, 2020):

People can't understand the world as a gift unless someone shows them how it's a gift... What's being revealed to me from readers is a really deep longing for connection with nature... It's as if people remember in some kind of early, ancestral place within them. They're remembering what it might be like to live somewhere you felt companionship with the living world, not estrangement. (Kimmerer, quoted in Yeh, May 23, 2020)

Through this crisis, we are becoming more aware of the gifts of the natural world, freely given, and of ourselves as earthly beings. Are we capable of reciprocating in meaningful ways by 'paying it forward' to future generations, of humans and of the greater-than-human world we live in and with?

[The coronavirus has reminded us that] we're biological beings, subject to the laws of nature. That alone can be a shaking. But I wonder, can we at some point turn our attention away to say the vulnerability we are experiencing right now is the vulnerability that songbirds feel every single day of their lives? Could this extend our sense of ecological compassion, to the rest of our more-than-human relatives? (Kimmerer, quoted in Yeh, May 23, 2020)

Theories of the gift economy: Vaughan and Jordan on the maternal gift economy

In many ways, the gift economy structure is no more than a formalization of the processes of intergenerational care and learning that always take place with humans and other living things. As new babies are born, adults

must nurture them, and welcome them into the culture through material and more-than-material gifts of kindness and care, teaching and mentorship -- paying forward the gifts that they themselves received from earlier generations. Those mentoring also receive gifts of energy and new engagement with the culture, delight and a fresh point of view from the novices they mentor. The act of giving regenerates both givers and receivers, and the mutual bonds of responsibility of the paying-it-forward gift economy brings creative work into being that might not have been undertaken without the sweet obligation to return the gift.

Genevieve Vaughan and Nané Jordan make the strong connection between the maternal gift economy and the vital role of mothers 'paying gifts forward' with no expectation or possibility of recompense. Mothers give the gift of life in birthing, nurturing and teaching babies and children. It is every person's first experience of generosity and the gift, as we all start life as infants dependent upon our mothers (and others who fulfil mothering, caring roles). This is the work that gifts each human with our very existence, our life and ability to thrive and grow -- unacknowledged, unpaid work that is deliberately ignored by the mainstream economy.

Vaughan sees the patriarchal 'payback' exchange economy as parasitic on the more fundamental 'paying it forward' matriarchal gift economy, claiming and selling its gifts as commodities:

Our society today is based on two economies, not just one economy with 'externalities.' The domestic economy is a gift economy with mothering practices as its core. The market economy is superimposed upon the domestic economy and takes its sustenance from it while distributing scarce goods to it through monetized exchange. (Vaughan, 2019, p. 25)

She addresses Mauss' schema of gift exchange in the context of the maternal gift economy:

Marcel Mauss' three-step process of giving-receiving-giving back necessarily begins with the two-step process of giving-receiving in the life of every human, because infants cannot perform the third step of giving back. (Vaughan, 2019, p. 25)

The effects of this paying-it-forward maternal gift economy are essential to the development of each person's relationships of love and trust in the world:

Direct giving and receiving mediate the child's world; they create relations of mutuality and trust, and form the basis of attachment. (Vaughan, 2019, p. 27)

Jordan extends Vaughan's approach to a consideration of Earth as mother that gives generously and without a demand for reciprocation to all living beings. This is a way of being that resonates with Kimmerer's sense of wild strawberries as the first gift, and of a consideration of the greater-than-human world as our kin:

This early maternal gift economy does not approximate the exchange economy, where something is only given in exchange for something else. A child requires the mother's immediate and constant giving, or the child will perish. The gift is also present in the Earth's resources as a continual free stream of goods that humans need. Yet much of human life is being commodified through exchange and market economies. Work, services and the "free" goods of the Earth itself have costs in their exchange value. (Jordan, 2017, p. 148)

Revisiting our experiences as artists paying-it-forward

To return from this holistic and all-embracing view of gift culture to our small exchange of pay-it-forward art works, our offerings to one another may seem insignificant. And yet, the story continues, and the narrative is never completed -- and we may never know where even this modest paying-forward and movement of gifts may go. There has already been a collaboration with three performer/ musician/ clown friends (Melissa Aston, Veronica Maynard and M. Pyress Flame) in a performative session for the 2015 Provoking Curriculum Conference at the University of British Columbia ("Playing it forward: Gift poems on curriculum sung with accordion, musical saw and clowning", filmed by Joe Norris, Brock University for his Playbuilding <http://www.joenorrisplaybuilding.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Provoking-Program.pdf>). Dan Barney has created a new series of artistic images, different from the original ones, in response to the gift poem written for him here -- and the reverberations from these sharings carry forward.

We will finish with the gift poems and images, and a meditation from each of the co-authors on the experience of being involved in this six-year ongoing relationship of art-making and mutual gift-giving and the way it has affected our relationships with one another, our processes of creative making and our deep emotions about the world as we experience change, creativity, joy, loss, caring and friendship together over time.

(1) Susan Gerofsky's poem for Mira Gerard, based on Mira's paintings: Another World Within This One

How could they not pay
attention to the fairy tales?
How could they not learn?
How could they set the ocean
afire?
How could they grow up
without going into the
woods?
Into their deep dark
How could they not
How could they find no
pleasure in colour?
How could they find no
pleasure?



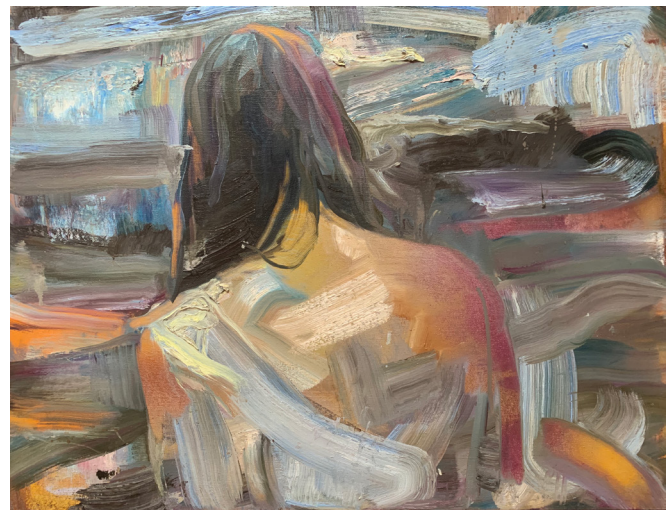
How could they give up on their hands
Their ears
How could they not be entranced by that music?
How could they be entranced
In growing up, how could they not be delicious?
Delighted in that light
How could they hand over their mouths?
How could they not be overcome with the melting
beauty of it?
How could they not taste the irony of blood?



How could we still swim in those waters?
Strong and vulnerable in a slip of a dress, slip of a girl
How could we not desire those depths?
Sinking down, joyfully rehearsing oblivion
How could we not sing our full hearts forth?
Under the bursting moon
How could we not be seduced by that light?
Not be light
Falling up into it
The waters above the sky?



How could the shadow not race?
How could the moment of impact...
How could we wait for that?
How could we picnic on the moon?
Waiting for that nightmare to unfold
How could we take that moment to our hearts?
How could we live better till it arrives?



How could we roam that other world
each night?
How could it be so deep, so superficial?
Symbols and rebuses
How could the structure of the story
come from this?
How picaresque the plot
How could we not know this place we
walk so intimate?
How could we not visit one another in
our dreamwalks?



How was it when one first was born?
How was it before it could be spoken?
How were the hand and eye coupled?
How will they tickle one another apart?
How are we amongst the other animals?
The cats winding us to their ways
Crows, bees, fish dreaming us into being?
How is it that one must be many?
Seduced by our other selves, sylvan elves
The forest full of vampire loves.



Mira writes a letter to Susan:

When I first received your poems, I only glanced at what you wrote. I think that's because I wasn't ready to fulfill my side of the bargain. I put it off, and have done that more than once in this process. I felt bad about it, but apparently not bad enough to do anything. It's not the first time I've dropped the ball. This aspect of myself is not something I'm proud of, but somehow my friendships and relationships have remained intact, probably because my loved ones understand that I am not always punctual.

I think it was meant to be, ultimately, that I took a long time before deeply contemplating the poems. In the time between when this project was initiated and now being brought full circle, my mother was diagnosed with stage 4 pancreatic neuroendocrine cancer, and suffered terribly for 10 months until her death in 2019. Much more recently, Susan lost her mother. We are bonded in this unimaginable grief. In the aftermath of the year of taking care of mom and the deep, unbelievably visceral pain of losing her that is long from subsiding, I have thought about my paintings, and how dark, fragmented, and shrouded they have so often been- my paintings, which are in many ways a cinematic ode to longing and pain, and which Susan rightfully points to in her poem-as-series-of-questions. I love how the poem visually lines up to each painting, exploring the turning away, the hopelessness, the giving up, that's embedded into all of them- all while somehow reflecting that the paintings are in and of themselves an illustration of fullness and hope and life, with their lush colors and marks and the unknown narratives of the faceless figures. I have always imagined the figures in my paintings as trapped in a space between one state of being and another. Liminality, dreams, the unconscious, and transformation are all things I have thought about.

It is only now, at this stage in my life when many of the anticipated apocalypses of loss that we all must face in various forms have indelibly struck my personal life (death, divorce, depression, menopause, and more), that I have begun to learn just how much joy and richness I have had and still do have, and have been able to face and process whatever my regrets have been, enough to see more clearly that I have been a lot more present for the good than I thought. My paintings are in a state of transition, as is everything. I imagine soil that has been hard-packed for some time, loosening enough so that there are many free-floating parts, and somehow when they come together again, some parts will wash away. Much like our world now in the pandemic that we are all bound together and apart by, it is impossible to know what will be left and what will be broken away.

While I am sorry that I didn't respond to Susan sooner, I now feel that it was meant exactly like this. I also now know what to send her, to complete my side of the "pay it forward" bargain. I look forward to doing that, very much.

On a final note, last night I had a dream about my mother. In the dream, we were hugging for a very, very long time, and I knew she was dying, so I kept telling her that I love her so much. Whispering it in her ear. Someone was saying "she's dead" and I hoped she couldn't hear them anticipating what we knew was coming. Nothing really mattered other than that hug, which I woke up directly from, still feeling the warmth of her from the dream. The last line of a stanza of Susan's poem: "How could we not visit one another in our dreamwalks?" is one of many tiny moments in the months since Mom's passing that I have wondered at the magic of patterns seen and unseen, and whether meaning is grafted onto chaos, or something more. I will take it as it came to me, because it is all I have, and it is very, very beautiful. I am grateful.

Thank you Susan for being such an incredibly kind, giving, thoughtful friend. It is fitting that we met in a virtual world online and not yet in person, yet have such a deep connection. One day I hope we can meet in real space. Until then, please send me your address again, so I can give you something special that I made!

(2) Susan Gerofsky's poem for Dan Barney, written in response to Dan's earlier work, and Dan's new images, created in response to the poem:

What to wear? Song for Dan Barney

I will not wear your scared regulations
Bored blandness, sad hatreds
Don't mix your patterns, no pink with red
No white after Labour Day
Don't show your underwear
Don't show your roots.
Act your age, act your rage.

But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve
Hair wildly wound
Colours singing
Patterns at play

I will not wear your sad sad beige
I will not wear your good girl shame
But I will wear
The brilliant colours of my joyful age.
But I will wear my own true name

I will not wear your fear of scorn
But I will wear
'Glad to be born'

I will not wear
Their hatred of my grandma's grandma
Her nose, her hips, her hair
But I will gladly wear
The history of love come down the families
To me, and she, and thee.



I will not wear
The sposed-to-do and must-nots and beware
The how-to-hides and flaws and cover-girls
I will not wear the hate-my-voice and stupid-me and hide.

If I will wear invisibility
It will be as an awesome superpower
Ghosting observant as a theatre gal
Picking the times to notice and be seen.

I will not wear your shame, your tame,
Your money and fame
Ambition, success and blame
Your sin and your redemption and then sin again
Your salvation
Your temptation
These are none of mine.

I will not wear your smug, your sure, your being right
The thought that what is known is known
And that the one is right, the other wrong
And must be taught, by force if it comes to that.

But I will wear adventure clothes
Children's wonder and surprise
A travelling hat and cape, bundle on a stick
With the gossamer sweater my fairy godma knit
Stout boots, and a chunk of bread and cheese.
I will wear the poems I know by heart
And smidges of another language world.

I'll go forth in a humble track
Amazed at sunsets, shivering at the wolves,
Friend to birds and ants and sheep, and poor folk on the
way.
Ready to laugh and sing and build a boat and make a hut
of reeds
And make friends along the ways
And in my small way save my small bit of world.



Dan Barney writes:

Process: How did it feel to receive the gift and how did it feel to give? Was this a familiar medium/process or was it an exploration in a new medium/process?

When Susan first offered her poem to me, she stated that she was responding to a 20-year old photographic series I started while I was a photography teacher at the secondary level. At that time, I was not using much digital photography but rather silver and non-silver darkroom processes. The series, titled “Appearing”, included black and white portraits and self-portraits that utilized cut outs from magazines to shift and change likenesses. The magazine images were adhered to an actual face with regular tape without any attempt to mask its artifice. The series was used to demonstrate various dodging and burning techniques for my students. The new series I created here for Susan retains the magazine cut outs as a type of temporary masking, but they are all self-portraits and are in color rather than in black and white.

Tensions: Any unfolding or unresolved tensions between the authors?

To be honest, I felt quite a bit of guilt and disappointment in myself for having received such a personal and powerful gift of poetry from Susan but delaying my reply to her. For me, thinking of how to respond with something of value took time to process. It took me almost 6 years to fulfill my obligation to Susan and I still have plans to offer more since the feeling of owing someone something, in this case, was generative as a type of potential doing for me. I felt disappointed and also constantly inspired. On the one hand, I enjoyed having a creative project that was continually present, alongside me, but on the other hand, I felt uneasy not knowing how to respond with a corresponding, perfectly appropriate reply. This gift exchange process was uneasy, unsettling, and humbling. For example, was I up to the challenge of returning such a thoughtful gift, and to even give “a little extra?” I thought about the time Susan put in to think about me personally through poetry, a poetic thinking and doing, in relation to work that I had originally created for my students and me. I was overwhelmed that my friend had reflected so personally to my creations that were generated from my own doings and pedagogical offerings in the past within a completely different context. Feelings of “how can I ever fulfill such a gift obligation,” especially in terms of a gift culture of returning the offer of “a little extra” was so deeply touching, and it paralyzed me at times. The responsibility to my friend was a continual connection to my friend, but with a tinge of guilt that I was not able to quickly offer her as much as she had given.

Relationship between the authors:

Susan was hired at the university where I was working on my PhD. I really did not understand interdisciplinarity until I had met Susan. I do not remember ever meeting a scholar who was interested in and skilled in so many areas that were previously siloed to me. Susan was a scholar in language and literature, ecology, gesture, mathematics, and music. She wrote haikus and offered them as performances, but she also wrote traditional academic papers. Susan inspired me as a student to consider all my interests and curiosities as scholarship.

Susan Gerofsky writes:

Mira and Dan are two very dear friends to me, both artist-scholars, who have never met one another—though

I hope we will all meet in real life before too long. Mira and I met through the online world of Second Life more than a decade ago, and have continued our friendship through other social media, but have never actually met in person. Dan and I know each other in many face-to-face contexts as university colleagues, and see one another virtually on Facebook and in person most years at education conferences.

We have a deep rapport through conversation and art, Mira and I, and Dan and I, and have shared many deep experiences over the past fifteen years. Mira and I are both entranced by the imagery of fairytales and dreams, wildness, love, grief... Dan and I find uncanny ironies in images of self as filtered through national norms and popular culture, fashion and gender, family roles and a wry sense of humour.

I returned to more intensive art-making through poetry, playwriting, music, filmmaking and fibre arts over the past fifteen years, integrated with my work as a university professor, as our own children grew up and I left the hurly-burly life of secondary school teaching. It helps me to have a social relationship and a promise to another person to make art; perhaps in identifying strongly as a mother, I care about satisfying the need of the other, or at least in telling myself that there is someone else who is waiting for this new thing to be made.

There is guilt, but not an overwhelming or paralyzing guilt... just an itchy, stimulating feeling that someone I care about might be anticipating something, and it is up to me to make it. That provocation gets me working even when I don't know I'm working, while I'm sleeping or walking or swimming. In the same way, I like to do puzzles that make me very slightly irritated or provoked, so that my half-asleep mind is working through all the possible anagrams of a set of letters for one game, or the logic of a mathematical puzzle for another. Perhaps that's why I love math, and poetry, and language, and music... they all have an element of subconscious, multisensory patterning that helps me bring my focus to something compelling and a bit tricky.

When I finally got around to writing down the poems, about seven months after promising them, the words flowed easily. I had been drafting and redrafting internally for quite a while, feeling my friends' presence, considering who we are for each other, listening to their voices through social media and looking deeply into their visual artwork. I didn't know how they would receive these gifts, and whether the poems might truly speak to them or not. But the poems arrived to me almost fully-formed, and that was how they had to be, ready or not.

I told myself that these gifts were for others, but they have been gifts for myself too. Especially in the poems for Dan and Mira, I revisited places and feelings from my childhood that I hadn't revealed to many people. It felt risky to put them forward in the poems, but in (o)uttering these stories, these feelings and images, I am able to bring them consciously into my life now. I learn something of the unchanging themes of my life as I reread these poems and am moved by my friends' art. With the pain of my mother's passing during this COVID isolation, without having the traditions of mourning to support us; with our family's emotional turmoil in these months of intensity and isolation -- now is a good time to be able to give and receive these gifts of honesty and love.

This piece concludes with the gift poems I wrote for Myriam and Tamsin. I've set Myriam's poem to music, so that it has become the lyrics of a song which may be taken up by a choir I belong to in Vancouver. Tamsin's poem also might lend itself to music, and in this way feels still unfinished. The song I have promised as a gift to Rosie is still bubbling, effervescing and percolating within me, and will no doubt emerge before too long. Each gift, as every gift, is incomplete: moving, gone off around the corner to places of mystery, hibernating, estivating, waking, returning and promising to offer something surprising. We shall see!

(3) Susan Gerofsky's poem/ song for Myriam Beaulne, baker and environmentalist: What makes you rise?

What Makes You Rise?

Susan Gerofsky

Susan Gerofsky

$\text{♩} = 80$
Am

Yeast in the air ev erywhere Baking soda explodes with vin e gar

3 Eggs, eggs stiff beat en egg whites What makes it rise?

5 The magic of a sour sour dough Fomentation of fer men ta tion

7 The fizz of car bon a tion - What makes it rise? Rise, rise as an - gel cake light

10 Rise rise empty as a bubble Rise, leaven that un leav ened bread

12 Am D Light, rise, air, le - vi-ty Rise, like a fla - ky past - ry Rise, like the cheese sou ff - le

15 E Am Am Rise, fall, rise up, fall back What makes it rise? Rise, rise

18 E Am Am E Am What makes it rise? Rise, rise What makes it rise?

2014

(a) Yeast, yeast in the air everywhere
Baking soda explodes with vinegar
Eggs, eggs, stiff beaten egg whites
What makes it rise?

The magic of a sour sourdough
Fomentation of fermentation
The fizz of carbonization
What makes it rise?

Rise, rise light as an angel cake
Rise, rise, empty as a bubble
Rise, leaven that unleavened bread
Light, rise, air, levity
Rise, like a flaky pastry
Rise, like the cheese soufflé
Rise, fall, rise up, fall back
What makes it rise?

(b) You may rise to the occasion
You might rise to the bait
Rise, rise up in anger
What makes you rise?

Rise in the heat of the moment
Rise, ah, to meet your lover
Breath, heart, blood steaming
What makes you rise?

Who can get a rise out of you?
What is it raises your spirits?
Flying high, sail on, sail on
Sail for a sky-egg sun.

You got a rocket in your pocket?
You found the lightness of being?
Laughter, holy liftin'
What makes you rise?

(c) We rise to stand together
Rise to assert what's right
Voices rise up singing
What makes us rise?

Rising to oppose injustice
Rising to create our art
Rise, like the sun or a hurricane
How should we rise?

Rise to defend our Mother
Rise cause we just can't stand it
Rise in hope and pleasure
Rise up, rise up.

Stand on your own two feet now
Levitating shoulder to shoulder
Lifted by love and music
What makes us rise?

S. Gerofsky, [photograph]. Homemade Bread for Gift Economy. 2020

(4) Susan Gerofsky's poem for Tamsin Meaney, mathematics education researcher.

In time and over time:

(1) Listen my young one
I have big ideas for you
A plan for your future life
In a future time.

I might not make it there
You'll go on without me
But I have things to teach you
That will help on your way.

I'm quite sure, though I worry
That you may not be listening
It will help, if you hear it
What I need to pass on.

I'll tell you a story
I'll sing you a ditty
I'll give you advice
That will help you, I'm sure.

Quite sure, quite sure
That I know what I'm saying
That I know what I know
And it's all for the best.

Experience taught me
That and my schooling
I know what I give
And what you must take.

Pay attention now kiddo
Listen hard
Write it all down
Learn it by heart

It's all important
It's all I can offer
It's all that you'll need
And it's all of it true.

(2) Listen now learners
We have big plans for you
Society's plan
Where you'll each know your place.

It involves economics
Predictions of job markets
Riches and poverty
Which will be yours?

We have a curriculum
Unit plans, lesson plans
Testing and grading
To sort you for sure.

To sort you for certain
The smart and the stupid
The bullies and bullied
The hands and the heads.

Quite certain, quite certain
We know what we're doing
We know what the future
Will hold for you all.

It's based on a survey
Of major employers
It's quite scientific
The numbers don't lie.

Do your homework now kiddos
These examinations
Determine your future
No matter how flawed.

It's all being counted
It's stored in your records
It'll stay there forever
And it's all of it true.

(3) Listen dear elders
I have my own questions
Regarding the future
Which may not be yours.

Don't know if I'll make it
Or what I'll make of it
Or who'll be there with me
Or if the world's doomed.

I do love your stories
I'm listening carefully
Some I will take to heart
Some I reject.

I have a new project
I have my own standards
I often don't meet them
I'm never quite sure.

Never sure, never sure
But watching and listening
Anxious and playful
At all the same time.

I don't know what's the future
Or what's my place in it
I do know your old world
Is going, has gone.

Pay attention, my teachers
We learn in our choosing
Forgetting, remembering
All of your tales.

Our learning is different
Both in time and over time
I'd be happy to share with you
Something that's true

ARTWORK CREDITS

Mira Gerard paintings, in order of appearance: *Graph of Desire*; *River of Forgetting*; *Epistasis*; *Listen Carefully to the Sound of Your Loneliness*; *Conversion*; *In Rainbows*. Oil on canvas.

Dan Barney: *I Woke Up Like This -- Flawless*. Four images from new photo series.

Susan Gerofsky poems and song: *What to wear? Song for Dan Barney*; *What makes you rise? Song for Myriam Beaulne (music and lyrics)*; *In time and over time: Poem for Tamsin Meany*; *For Mira Gerard: Another world within this one*.

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WALKING AND DWELLING: CREATING AN ATELIER IN NATURE

Kwang Dae (Mitsy) Chung

ABSTRACT

This paper comprises a description of an exploration of how the author's daily walking reflected the emergence of an a/r/tographical living inquiry that engendered a profound sense of dwelling and lingering, and a deeper understanding of the nature of artistic invitation through a pedagogical aesthetic provocation.

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BIO

Kwang Dae (Mitsy) Chung is a Master of Arts student in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy, Art Education at the University of British Columbia (UBC). She was awarded her Bachelor of Early Childhood Care and Education degree by Capilano University in Canada in 2013. She has been an early childhood educator for 15 years, with a primary focus on young children's drawings and art. Her areas of particular interest are visual art as a living inquiry, a/r/tography, arts-based methods and research, phenomenology, curriculum and pedagogy, common world pedagogy, new materialism, and drawings in both the early childhood education, and community art settings. Contact: mitsy0406@gmail.com

More so...

I went for my habitual morning walk along a trail. There was a small bridge with a handrail, on which I spotted five small rocks.

They were lined up perfectly. The row of rocks was barely noticeable and yet it caught my attention. I wondered who had left these small rocks there and why. The five small rocks invited me to experience being in the moment and dwelling with the materials (LeBlanc & Irwin, 2018). The provocation, in the form of these small rocks inspired me to explore, dwelling with materials as a living inquiry in the atelier of the forest.

"Dwelling" means being immersed in the moment (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, & Kocher, 2017). It is not just making something for others. Dwelling (Pacini-Ketchabaw, Kind, and Kocher, 2017) means we are becoming a part of "the emergent processes of bringing something into being" (p. 9). I was curious to discover how others would respond to my process of creating with materials contained in the forest: of dwelling and experiencing being in the moment.

With these thoughts in mind, I began to incorporate my own living inquiry as an entry into a/r/tography



Figure 1 Five rocks

(Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2005). My walks, as an emergent project in a/r/tographical practice, were active and ongoing; they therefore required attentiveness to what was yet unknown (Springgay et al., 2005).

A/r/tography is about “lingering in the unknown, the unexpected, and the liminal events” (LeBlanc & Irwin, 2018, p. 1). As I am practicing to become an artist, a writer and a teacher, I am committed to being in a process of artmaking, inquiring, teaching, learning, emerging, and becoming. This visual essay explores a specific practice over the course of many moments in my larger quest to become an a/r/tographer.



Figure 2 Forest



Figure 3 Golden leaves

The following question was inspired by my walking project of creating and recreating daily artistry in a particular place: Is it possible to provoke others to attentively stop and wonder at my invitations? Thus, this essay is an invitation to share my daily walking and artmaking through excerpts from the daily journal entries and photographs that are presented below. The daily journal notes on my walk are rendered in italics. In addition, the focus is on the artist/writer moving into the inquirer aspect of the a/r/tographer.

Provocation 1: Being alongside sticks of wood

Walking is not only a repetitive motion of moving my legs, nor is it just multidimensional body movements. I am recognizing it as also being an aesthetic experience that facilitates a new type of art practice (Triggs, Irwin, & Leggo, 2014).

*I collected sticks and placed them on a tree stump.
As the tree stump was round, I made a circle with the sticks.
The following day, there was no trace of the circle.
Maybe wind?
Maybe dogs?
Maybe children who were jumping around the clearing?*

*I did not react to the situation immediately.
I waited a few days before responding to the reaction and then reissued a fresh invitation on the same wood stump.
What would happen to them next?*



Figure 4 Sticks on a tree stump



Figure 5 Sticks are gone

Provocation 2: Dwelling in the midst of leaves

Any acts of engagement will occur in-between open spaces, whereas knowing is situated within the middle and on the edges (Springgay et al., 2005). Should I therefore regard these open spaces that occur within the provocative actions as invitations? As the in-between space that “leave(s) room for encounters between artist/researcher/teacher and reader/viewers’ entangling experience(s)” (Springgay et al., 2005, p. 906)?

My attitude to artworks in nature has been largely influenced by Andy Goldsworthy, a British artist (Nakhnikian, 2018). In one of his interviews Goldsworthy asserted that being openminded meant always relying on our own curiosity, intuition, and intention, and then investigating what interests us the most (Nakhnikian, 2018). My intention with each artistic provocation was not to copy or mimic Goldsworthy’s artwork visually, rather, it was to have an encounter with the natural materials, and to emulate Goldsworthy’s ways of being and making artistry in a public open space.

Provocation 3: Patterning acorn leaves

*I returned to the tree stump.
The recent invitation was mostly still there.
I passed by and kept walking.*

*I came upon an acorn tree.
The ground was covered with brown leaves.
I paid close attention to each leaf.
I started noticing multiple autumn colors.
I collected some.
I retraced my steps.
I came back to my tree stump.
I decided to issue a fresh invitation.
What could make?*



Figure 6 Foggy day



Figure 7 Acorn leaves forming



Figure 8 Acorn leaves falling

Provocation 4: Returning to play with sticks

*...The leaves were gone again.
Not one of my leaves remained on the stump.
How did it happen?
Did somebody break my creation?
Did the wind blow the leaves?
Or did squirrels play with them?*

*Repetition of creating and recreating, actions and reactions.
It makes me wonder whether something, or someone, is looking for more creations from me?*



Figure 9 Repetition

These modes of ongoing questioning, questing, being and dwelling allow me to continuously move to the next level of being an artist, researcher, teacher and learner, rather than maintaining the same perspective and position (Springgay et al., 2005). My aesthetic perspective includes my desire to create with a sense of color, rhythm and repetition. Barrett and Bolt (2013) supports my ways of connecting with materials and my walking. They argue that making representational art and craving beautiful representation are not bad tendencies. However, in this modern world, our problem is how representational art has dominated our ways of understanding art. While I was making these daily creations, it was not easy to maintain my focus on the process, rather than on the daily end product, but it was satisfying to have a final presentational creation every day. Based on wanting others to have an encounter of dwelling and play, my ongoing question became: how can I make my neighbors think more about process rather than the end representations?



Figure 10 Outdoor atelier

Provocation 5: Becoming “a nature artist”

*Walking in the rain
Looking for life and cheer*

*Picking autumn leaves.
The multitude of colors
inspired me
to paint the top of my
wood stump.*

*My hand became
a paintbrush,
the leaves my paints, and
the tree stump my canvas.*

*A lady walked by, looked at my painting and exclaimed,
“From now on, I am going to call you, ‘a nature artist!’”*

Am I now becoming an artist in residence?



Figure 11 “Artist is here!”



Figure 12 Red carpet



Figure 13 Marching leaves

Shifting the knowing of myself to being an artist in residence moved me closer to what a/r/tographers practice in their need to share a sense of being with others, their learning processes, strategies, and sense of wonder (Irwin, 2008). Through this ongoing walking inquiry, I have shared my sense of being, which involves acting and reacting with others through my artistic creations. To my surprise, I have noticed both a verbal and invisible dialogue between the viewers and myself (Cutcher, Rousell, & Cutter-Mackenzie, 2015).



Figures 14 - 17 Rainbows

Provocation 6: Unfolding myself

We look at the same creation in a communal space.

Each person's encounter with each provocation is unique.

... art

design ...

... trace ...

... entertain

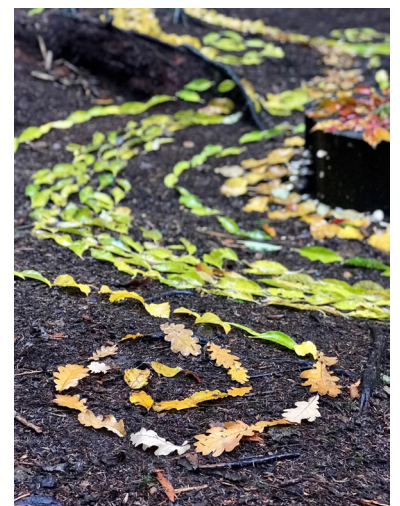
... decoration

Through lingering with my neighbors' unique ways of encountering my creations, I have been coding and decoding my original intention for this project, which is provoking others as well as expanding my own definition of art.

I have become more focused on recording my ways of being a storyteller, artist and educator, and understanding my intentions toward my own artistic creations by folding and unfolding in and through practice and time (LeBlanc & Irwin, 2018).



Figure 18 Floating



Figures 19 - 21 Layers of yellows

The Story so far...

As a result of conversations and encounters with others, and my living inquiry, my understanding of daily provocation has been changing to evocation. My artistic provocations have now assumed the form of artistic invitations as communicable languages or walking propositions. My living inquiry of making daily artistic creations every day helps others to re-think the beauty of artmaking processes and how we artistically live and walk with nature.

Besides making artistic provocations/evocations with natural materials in nature, I keep photographing each creation. Each photographic image is not intended to represent art as a product or specific categories of artistic activity (Pink, 2007). I record each creation in a photographic image because I wonder how these photographs might be reinterpreted by the readers when they engage with the words that I write and the photos that I take (Pink, 2007).

Through this living inquiry, I have learned how an act of commitment and contiguity helps me to understand the importance of “the relationship between art and graphy” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xxviii) through the encounter between the artistic practices and written forms within and through phenomena. Making art and writing about it in this visual essay has helped me to relocate myself “in the space of the in-between to create self-sustaining interrelating identities that inform, enhance, evoke and/or provoke one another” (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. xxv).

Last but not least, this living inquiry began with a response to the small rocks placed in my path in the forest, which called me to make art. The rocks marked the beginning of an a/r/tographic inquiry through my shifting into poetic provocations and explorations of a/r/tographic ideas. In sharing this visual essay as a material-based teaching of a/r/tographic experiences and ideas for myself, I hope it invites viewers and readers into their own discovery of a/r/tographic inquiry.



Figure 22 Sending love letter



Figure 23 - 25 Winter and Spring

NOTE:

Figure 7, Figure 22, Figure 24 and Figure 25 will be published in the Mapping A/r/tography InSEA 2019 Exhibition catalogue

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A CONTEMPLATIVE AND ARTFUL MÉTISSAGE OF INQUIRY AND RESPONSE

Jackie Mitchell, Nicholas Phillips, Robyn Traill, Susan Walsh,
Barbara Bickel, Wendalyn Bartley & Medwyn McConachy

ABSTRACT

In this mixed media métissage, we offer an exploration of artful and contemplative inquiry and response. We are a group of seven artist-researchers who engage with contemplative practices associated with various spiritual traditions, including spiritual feminist, Wiccan, Mi'kmaq, and Tibetan Buddhist, integral to all of which are beliefs about human interconnectedness with the energies of all sentient beings, the Earth, and beings in the spirit worlds. As artist-researchers, we engage with a range of arts disciplines including poetry, creative non-fiction, storytelling, sounding, visual art, filmmaking, and photography. Together, we invite the reader/listener/viewer—as co-creator—into the potentialities of our métissage: the narratives, poems, photographs, visual art, film, and sounding (audio) files—as well as into the spaces between and beyond.

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BIO

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INTRODUCTION

We are interested in the ways that collaborative inquiry across contemplative traditions and arts disciplines can open spaces for compassionate and heartfelt transformation in communal, personal, spiritual, and political realms. As a group, we locate our métissage alongside a body of work currently being cultivated by artist-researchers who intentionally invoke other-than-conceptual ways of being and knowing through forms of artful contemplative practice (see, for example, Bhattacharya, 2018; Bhattacharya & Payne, 2016; Bickel, Jordan, Rose, McConachy, & Griffith, 2018; Bickel & Walsh, 2019¹; Franklin, 1999, 2012, 2017; Gradle, 2012; Jordan, 2013; Kelly, 2010; Mitchell, 2017; Neilsen, 2004; Phillips, 2017; Richardson & Walsh, 2018; Traill, 2018, 2019; Walsh, 2018; Walsh & Bai, 2015, 2017; Walsh & Bickel, 2018²; Walsh, Bickel, & Leggo, 2015a³, 2015b). Other-than-conceptual ways of being and knowing are not based on the logic of rationality, nor are they irrational; rather, they are arational. Arationality is emergent and can be found in the realms of the intuitive, sensorial, and spiritual. Philosopher, linguist, and poet Jan Gebser (1984) describes the arational as aperspectival, and atemporal, outside the duality of western rationality and irrationality. We invite readers/viewers/listeners to bring open heartedness and curiosity to whatever arises as they engage with our offerings of image, word, and sound. In working with métissage as a form or container for our piece, we draw on the work of researchers who braid together life writing as groups of researchers (see, for example, Chambers, Hasebe-Ludt, Donald, Hurren, Leggo, & Oberg, 2008; Hasebe-Ludt, Chambers, & Leggo, 2009; Hasebe-Ludt & Jordan, 2010; Jordan, Richardson, Fisher, Bickel, & Walsh, 2016; Miller 2010).⁴ In braiding strands of experience—and, in our case, different art

forms—*métissage* serves to juxtapose. Open spaces. Generate imaginative possibilities. Highlight differences and points of connection. In relation to a 2010 special issue about life writing and *métissage*,⁵ Miller (2010) says that

the theory and practices of *métissage*, as conceptualized and intricately entwined with/in [the] researchers' word-and image-braidings . . . highlight paradoxes, contradictions, muddles, surprises and messy complexities of life writing as a form of educational research and practice. Indeed, one of the major contributions that [such] authors make to research, writ large, is their insistence on the necessity of a form of connect-ness that demonstrates life writing as educational inquiry that is at once social and productive of possible new and unanticipated constructions of selves and histories. Such work, I believe, serves as one way of working toward the forging of ethical and just educational relationships across difference as well as through varying research, pedagogical and wisdom traditions and practices. (p. 102)

In our work with and through *métissage*, we are interested in the potential to “forg[e] ethical and just educational relationships across difference as well as through varying research, pedagogical and wisdom traditions and practices.” In relation to “varying research, pedagogical, and wisdom traditions,” we work to foreground ways of being and knowing that are marginalized in mainstream North American schooling at all levels and also marginalized in academic research, including most forms of qualitative research. As artist-researchers and teachers, we seek to foreground ways of being and knowing that embrace and embody that which is other-than-conceptual, nondual, unseparate-able: for example, intuition, sense perception, and interconnectedness. Through our collaborative, contemplative, artful, multi-media *métissage*, we create spaces for what has yet-been-unsaid (and unthought, unfelt) to arise. To attend to what is nebulous, vague. Unworded. Beyond.

The *métissage* that we present here has unfolded in organic ways. It began as a performative session at a conference of the Arts Researchers and Teachers Society (ARTS), a special interest group of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) (Walsh, Mitchell, Traill, Phillips, Bickel, McConachy, & Bartley, 2017). Susan invited graduate students Jackie, Nik, and Robyn to create a multi-media *métissage* emerging from the contemplative and artful research that each of them was undertaking at the time; the result was a performative text including narrative, poetry, Miksang photography, film, and visual art. Barbara, as respondent for the ARTS performance session, felt called by the authenticity of the work to respond through the practice of sounding. She invited her long-time collaborators, Medwyn and Wendalyn to participate with her in creating an improvised vocal response (sounding) based on impressions from Jackie, Nik, Robyn, and Susan's multi-media text. In their response, the three women invited the presenters and audience alike to enter the post performative experience as a practice of deep listening and attending to what still lingered in the room from the performance session, with the intention that such lingerings would be amplified through the spontaneous sounding process. As a group of seven performer-respondents, we then agreed to experiment further to see what would arise if we worked together more intentionally and collaboratively. This *métissage* is the result.

We precede our multi-media offering with brief introductory comments about each of the seven of us in the service of inviting space for the reverberations, echoes, and resonances that abound between and among the variegated strands of our collective—a way of holding space for all such strands to breathe more deeply together.

Of inhaling, exhaling with infinite space through the text that follows.

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Jackie Mitchell's vision of education and curriculum is inspired by her background in dance, politics and meditation. In 1994, Jackie and a group of young parents brought their vision into being and founded the Shambhala Elementary School in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where she taught for 20 years. Story, Indigenous and traditional ecological knowledge, environmental learning, and an appreciation of culture are central to her approach, informed by an ecological perspective and underpinned by contemplative practice. As a longtime educator and Buddhist practitioner, Jackie explored these elements in depth for her Master's thesis and came to formulate the idea of sacred worldview in the curriculum. This perspective is inspired by her lifetime's work as an educator as well as her recent work in Bhutan where she designed a curriculum for young monks, integrating traditional knowledge with a secular course of study. Sacred worldview offers educators and their students an alternative perspective to the materialism that underpins curricula in the mainstream, incorporating a profound exploration of the interdependence of life forms and systems on the planet. In this métissage, elements of Jackie's Scottish roots are spun with stories of her time in Bhutan as she sought to understand and integrate her experience of living in that culture (see Mitchell, 2017; Mitchell & Gyaltsen, 2018).

Nik Phillips is extremely passionate about early childhood development, and ways of addressing intergenerational trauma within First Nation communities. In pursuing his commitment to good mental health for children and youth, Nik completed his Masters in Child and Youth Study and has found himself extremely interested in extending work with his thesis, titled *Ke'kutnuk* (2017). *Ke'kutnuk* is a storying of Nik's life that builds on the idea of reclaiming his Indigeneity as a praxis in building strong Indigenous children, while addressing the predisposition to trauma, as he learnt and shared within his research. With determination and drive, Nik is currently employed as the Director of Early Education for his Mi'kmaw Community of Millbrook where he oversees all programs directly linked to children 18 months through to Grade 3. Nik is also the full-time faculty member for the Nova Scotia Community College's newly developed Mi'kmaw version of Early Education Program—Poqji-kiná'masulti'kw tel-kiná'mujik mijusa'ji'jk. Aside from his work, Nik spends a wealth of time learning and sharing traditional knowledge and ceremony. He enjoys physical outdoor activities, beading and craft, and of course his family of two beautiful children and his husband (see Phillips, 2014, 2017; Phillips & Davis, 2014).

Robyn Traill is creating an arts-based meditation called "contemplative film practice," a practice intended to develop sensitivity to genuine experience, fresh and unfiltered. The seed idea for this creative film-making meditation is "dharma art" as taught by Chogyam Trungpa, Rinpoche (Trungpa, 2008). Since his twenties, Robyn has practiced insight meditations and art-as-inquiry. This view of insight or awareness is a "knowing" beyond relative concepts, mental fabrications, and dualities. The idea is that the closer we come to the truth of who we are, the more we relax the struggle to be something we are not. Robyn is interested in how we might glimpse this non-conceptual, non-local awareness in both the flow and discontinuity of perceptions, and observing how our consciousness expands, contracts, and sometimes loses track of itself (see Traill, 2018, 2019). In the opening poem of the métissage text below; please see a link indicated by a peach coloured text, to a sample of Robyn's moving images and original music. The film clip is created from the raw footage used in his Master's thesis films (see Traill, 2018).

Susan Walsh is learning what it means to be a grandmother from a radiant, joyful new teacher. She has long been interested in the ways that language liberates and constricts human being&knowing, particularly in relation to the feminine. For more than thirty years in the academic context, Susan has experimented with languaging as a way of opening into non ordinary ways of being&knowing, a portal for the other-than-conceptual; writing has been with her since she was a small child. Susan also holds many years of disciplined forms of dance in her body memory. More recently, she has become a student of Miksang/contemplative photography as a way of attuning to, communing with the spirits of the land where she now lives. Susan is devoted to innovative research practices that integrate spirituality, art, and healing. In May 2019, she was awarded the title of

Professor Emerita, Mount Saint Vincent University. Susan is committed to living well across different realms of existence in good relation to all beings and the cosmos.

Following the spirit of art since childhood has led *Barbara Bickel* into liminal spaces of the numinous, the not-yet-known and the more-than-known. Walking a path of radical relationality, she makes art with life, with sentient, and non-sentient beings. Walking a path of radical trust, she inquires into mystery, into beauty. Walking a path of radical learning, she teaches through exploration, through ritual and trance-based inquiry with the guidance and gifts of ancestors. A student of matrixial theory and gift economies, she walks the de-centering path of fearlessness with her life-partner in borderlands between institutions and grassroots community, between home and studio, between Western Canadian prairies and the Rocky mountains on Treaty Seven lands. She recently has come out of a sequestered writing space with her book *Art, Ritual and Trance Inquiry: Arational Learning in an Irrational World* (2020) where she knit and wrote in tandem with the spirit of art.

Wendalyn Bartley is a composer, shamanic singer, creative vocal coach, and writer living in Toronto, whose artistic practice is dedicated to the awakening of the feminine voice. Her compositions are rooted in the contemporary chamber and electroacoustic music traditions, extended vocal practice, and soundscape studies with influences from ecofeminism, mythic story, and energy healing modalities. She brings her deep listening skills and knowledge of the voice into all her practices, offering voice workshops, group rituals, and individual embodied voice sessions. The music on her CD entitled “Sound Dreaming: Oracle Songs from Ancient Ritual Spaces” (Wendalyn, 2012) was created from vocal improvisations made in Malta and Crete at temple and cave sites that once honoured the wisdom of the feminine. She is currently working on a book that descends into the imaginal worlds, weaving together narratives from her compositions, mythic writings, dreams, cultural history, and her visions for the potential of the human voice. Wendalyn received her MMus in composition from McGill University.

Medwyn McConachy is an artist, poet, adventurer whose peripatetic life has been lived from the UK to Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia, and the North. Medwyn’s art is inspired by her relationship with the natural world. Whether it be the foothills of Snowdonia, Wales, or a tiny stream trickling its way through springtime budding on Vancouver Island, the presence of mystery and wonder flows into and through her textile workings, photography, performative installations, and poetry. She is influenced by Barbara Bickel, India Flint, Robin Wall Kimmerer, and the traditional practices of Celtic and North American First People. She is currently working on a collection of eco-printed and dyed textile pieces and poetry invoking the magic and wisdom of nature’s teachings. Medwyn lives as a settler on the unceded traditional territory of the Lkwungen speaking people on Vancouver Island.

Co-founders Barbara, Medwyn, Wendalyn, and Nané Jordan, along with Cindy Lou Griffith of the Gestare Art Collective—are a feminist collective of artists. Their source of artistic collaborations come from their shared engagement with the Divine Feminine and the Earth, gestated in the labyrinthine container of wombspace. They developed their co-sounding frequencies within the sacred wombspace of this collective whose combined practices include visual, textural, vocal, performative, moving, ephemeral, earth-related, and time/space based mediums (see www.gestareartcollective.com).

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Together, the seven of us invite you—as co-creator—into the potentialities of our métissage: the narratives, poems, photographs, visual art, sounding (audio) files—as well as into the spaces between and beyond. We trust that our offerings will evoke fresh associations, resistances, ideas, feelings, images, journeys. Through an iterative

process of revisioning and rewriting over months and years, the voice of the text whispered, and then spoke more loudly, as our individual voices merged, commingled, shifted, and began to dissolve into something new, changeable. As a reader-co-creator, you are now part of this living process. Your creative participation is integral to the collaborative rendering of the text and to the collective spirit with which we initiated this project. Welcome.

Spirit of the Wind and Air, come to this place. You are in our breath. You cool our skin and make us move.

Spirit of the Sun and Fire, come to this place. You are the heat in our belly. You are our passion.

Spirit of the Ocean and Water, come to this place. You are our blood. You are the flow of nourishment.

Spirit of the Planet and Earth, come to this place. You are our bones and muscles. You allow us to stand, give us a home.

Spirit of Space, come to this place⁶. You are our openness. You accommodate everything.

Spirits of the Elements, we have forgotten that you are what we are made of. So, for the moment, let us talk to you as if you are separate from us.

May this remind us that our care of you is the same as our care of ourselves, our families and everything that we love.

May we always remember that there is no happiness if you are not happy.

May our care of the earth, water, air and energy not be a hassle, but be joyful and delightful.

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Image 1. Phillips, N. (2017). [Acrylic Energy Painting, Ke'kutnuk].

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When I found interest in our ways of life, I was fixated on the physical realm of who we are. I was fixated on the materialistic attributes of our people: the clothing, the crafts, the meals, the hunting, the fishing. I remember I would visit my Elders and ask many questions, and they would kindly answer them, but also add the “did you know”—acknowledging ourselves beyond the physicality of our culture.

Because of my own ignorance, my Elders opened the doors to offer alternative conversations about family, spirituality, and our environment. As I grow older, I now see the true meaning of our conversations, in saying that we were more than just separate beings. As Vicki Kelly (2010) shares, our education and our way of understanding positions us between an environmental ecology and spiritual ecology. And so, the process of reclaiming who I was required me to go back to our Mi'kmaw way of thought and start over—blending the realms. Marie Battiste and James Henderson (2000) share that “stories are enfolding lessons. Not only do they transmit validated experiences; they also renew, awake and honour spiritual forces” around us (p. 77). In other words, the need and readiness to be immersed in the Mi'kmaw education system was the only way I would truly be able to build on this search of knowing.

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My experience of living in Bhutan with the monks and hearing stories about their view of reality makes me realize that what I take for granted, coming as I do from a Western scientific standpoint, is not necessarily how they understand the world to be. They are far closer to another reality which is open to possibilities of strange happenings, magic, and a close relationship with a world of spirits, gods, and the power of natural phenomena in

an embodied form. Everywhere you look, prayer flags are part of the landscape, in order to magnetize the blessings of the local spirits and deities.

One night there was a fire at the monastery, and later I learned that one of the monks, aged about 15 years old, had brushed the electrical wires with a bamboo frond that he was using to beat at the fire, and he had been electrocuted. He was momentarily knocked out but was otherwise unharmed. On waking up, the first thing he did was to run to the nearest house, dip his feet in a pail of water, and walk across the wooden veranda of the house. He was not sure if he was alive or dead, but if he couldn't see his footprints, then he would know that he was no longer in the world of the living.

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Image 2. Phillips, N. (2020). [Beadwork]. Truro, Canada.

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So much has happened since I had the honour of working with Jackie, Nik, and Robyn at Mount Saint Vincent University. I am now of the Canadian prairies again, the place that grew me as a teenager and young adult. I miss the waves of the Atlantic Ocean at the edges of the place called Nova Scotia, feel its absence in the cells of my body. And though I don't feel at home here on the prairies again yet, I am slowly learning to attune more deeply with the land, with the spirits of this place.

Jackie, Nik, and Robyn—each with their own strong groundings in spiritual and artful practices—gifted me with teachings that have ongoing reverberations in my being&knowing—and in my daily practices and interactions in&with the earth and spirit worlds. Nik's commitment to his Indigenous ancestors and their ways, his confidence in artfully storying his own Indigeneity. Jackie's courage and spirit of adventure, her open-hearted narrative wonderings about teaching with heart and art. Robyn's wanderings in the vastness of big mind, his joyful, exploratory play with paint, film, music.

*a black capped chickadee hangs
upside down on the crabapple tree outside
the window tiny claws gripping
a dried berry in the warm
coolness of a February day*

*



Image 3. Mitchell, J. (2017). [Digital photograph, Spinning wheel]. Scoraig, Scotland.

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We three gather prior to the presentation in the student housing space where Medwyn, Barbara (and Susan) are staying. We have each read and spent time with Nik, Jackie, Robyn, and Susan's woven text prior to coming together here in this space. We stand with our feet firmly grounded, facing each other in a triangle formation. We share reflections on words and ideas that have captured our attention from spending time with the presentation texts, images, and videos. Although we have not sounded together as a threesome in a number of years, we easily slip back into attunement breath by breath. With our interior selves still resonating with the words of the co-authors, we take three deep breaths and begin to interweave our voices through emergent vocal sounds. Our voices follow the threads of an unspoken reply that resonates with the vibrational current connecting us to Nik, Robyn, Jackie, and Susan. We record our soundings responses in audio. The resulting three 5-minute sound recordings shared in this *métissage* are deliberately produced with minor editing to reflect the fresh co-emergent quality of our sonic responses.⁷ Each of the three soundings appear in this *métissage*. The recorded strand of our second practice, Sounding 2, is placed at the close of this woven *métissage*. Sounding One contains the cell phone bell alarm at the 5 minute mark as we practiced on that day, staying within our given performance time as respondents.

Sounding 1

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Stay with the heart
tune in
 to the flow of the moment
without agenda
 rest
settle in that space
 be that space
you are the art that is
each moment.
You are space looking at itself
 from nowhere
without center or fringe
spontaneous
brush stroke or thought
. . . arises
dance with the play of phenomena
Glimpse the space too vast
for "self and other" to gain a solid purchase
How can you know before the occurrence of a knower?
Who's observing the knower?
From where are they looking
and at what?

Who just asked that?

Settling into this undefinable space
is the lion's gaze

empty

luminous

awareness

without center (Traill, 2019, pp. 127-128)

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Image 4. Traill, R. (2019.) [Digital photograph]. Crystal Crescent, Canada.

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Absent from light, harmony, patience and reliance.
Watch me as I ignite.
Ignite my flame from within.

I feed it with my yearnings to learn my cultural ways.
My need to understand who I am and where I come from.
Red, the colour of my skin, the passion for fighting for what I believe in.
Turquoise, to bring me healing.
Yellow to shine a light in the darkest places of all.
The flame begins small, like a small spark and progresses to a flame of resilience and love.
Finding foundation, We'jitu ta'n tett weta'peksi.
This is me - Ni'n.

Our respect for the land, and even more so, our ecology, shaped us just as much as we shaped it. Our language, L'nui'suti, is a verb-based language that derives from the land we live on, and the life around us. For example, the Mi'kmaw word for whale, is putup—its pronunciation portrays the sound of bubbles being released from the blow hole of the whale under water. Another example is ptqu'k—this pronunciation alludes to the sound of a wave crashing against the wall of a canoe out in the water. Once we have acknowledged that we are not superior to these beings, then we can begin the process of connection and growth, which opens the door to our foundation and our language. We'jitu ta'n tett weta'peksi.

*



Image 5. Sa'n, S. (2020). [Digital photograph]. Truro, Canada.

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Being immersed in the Bhutanese culture, so foreign to me, has made me reflect upon how learning happens in the young child. In the absence of language, I am thrown back on using other means of communication and ways of learning. Like a child learning a language for the first time, I watch and listen, trying to make sense of what is happening around me. There is a sense of yearning, straining to understand. I listen, almost as if my ears are on stalks, as the words of the Sharchop language flow over me. Occasional words and phrases pop out that are familiar and from those I try and piece together what is going on. I feel sometimes, that if only I could flick a switch, everything would become clear.

*

I watch the part of myself that wants to be distracted from the practice of writing. The sun is shining, so I go outside, pull some wandering vines from the rock garden. The ground is wet, so the vines come out easily. I think about how I will take breaks in my writing by coming out to the garden at intervals. My fingernails have dirt under them, so I go inside and wash my hands. Eat an orange.

I can write quite a bit today, I think as I make a piece of toast, open a jar of marmalade. I recognize this desire for distraction. A kind of fear of doing what needs to be done. I can feel my tears as I sit back down to write. The place I get to sometimes when I bring myself back again, yet again to the breath in meditation. A place of tenderness, rawness. I am keenly aware of the need to touch that place, to know it, relax into it. That's where I need to write from. (excerpts from Walsh, 2018, p. 23)



Image 6. Traill, R. (2019.) [Digital photograph]. Rainbow Haven, Canada.

Breathe. Let go of the tension in my shoulders, my jaw. I can feel my heart beating hard, making me breathless, faint even.

I'm afraid of letting go of the ways I am, the comfort of it. I can hardly see the keyboard right now, and yet the path is clear. I do not know where this will lead. (excerpts from Walsh, 2018, pp. 23-24)

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Beyond word, thought and expression, the toning arises from the morning, the waves, the undefined grey space of the horizon. Vocal ululations tune their bodies to the moment, dance, synchronize with the wind. The banner, held aloft, flickers with the threads of birth and memory. Pieces of a child's blanket? Something that has been washed and used and worn out into wisdom? The birds answer. They thread through the release as if carrying dreams to the dakini realm. Their bodies are swaying with energy now. There is commitment. Their voices coax, quiver, shake. Yes! This sadhana of dream time release to the elements is real! The rags are a conduit from the heart to the heavens. Please be careful now! Cradle this cloth soaked in heart's blood! There is no for-getting. There is no-thing to remember. All is precious, delicate, piercing. At once I am playing with my daughter. We giggle. Fly. I kiss her, and she shines bright. Where did that come from? My eyes are brimming, and dakinis flock through the space like arrows to the vital point. Everything gets slightly crazy, animal tremors daring all fixation and boundary. And then there is rest. Held by the earth. Refreshed by sleep and silence. The formless fibres, the aura, the subtle bodies are combed, caressed. Such knowing hands. I feel myself extend into the surrounding space. I radiate beyond my skin. They wait, assess the space between themselves. Where did we go? What is left? Call the Image mothers. Call to their blood and beauty. Their wrinkles, scars. The dream flag is held aloft. Reach! It is lineage born fresh. This is what gave me birth. I want to wrap my mother in this cloth. I want her to know. What? That the dakinis are calling to her? She will be cared for? Death is not an end. Pain is not a punishment. Vividness is its own reward. But we must dissolve the mandala. Everything returns. Waves to the sea. Clouds to the sky. Without this I might try to hold on. I want to keep my tears, but I am called to a different simplicity. The scroll is gathered like a coil of joy. A completion without which all might be lost. Reverence has nothing to fear, and yet. They carry the cloth toward me. For me. Through me. Nothing left but to dissolve. And be held. What am I to do with this? Can I raise my daughter like this, do my laundry like this, walk to work like this. I am a man. Humbled. I have things to learn. Maybe now I will sit and watch.⁸

*

The young monks are curious about my life and Canadian lifestyle in general. Often the conversation will start with the words, "In your village...?"

"In your village, Madam, are there many houses?"

"Many, many houses. It's a town, a big town."

"Do you have a car?"

"Yes."

"How far do you have to walk from your house to your car?"

I am not sure how to answer this in this Bhutanese context, but I say, "My house is by the road."



Image 7. Mitchell, J. (2017). [Digital photograph, prayer flags]. Dewathang, Bhutan.

This makes sense to them. Here, there is only one road. It goes from east to west across the country, winding around valleys, up mountains and over passes. Houses in this far southeastern part of Bhutan are perched on the sides of the mountains, joined by a network of footpaths and “shortcuts” as they are called.

Everything needed for living is carried to its destination either on the shoulders or on a bamboo pole slung between two people. Furniture, gas canisters, 40 kilogram sacks of rice, children, building materials—all are carried to the houses on the backs of these tough and resilient people.

“Madam,” one boy asks, “Did it take a long time to get here from your village?”

How to answer this? In these days of airplane travel, time does not equal distance covered by foot as it does for these Bhutanese children. I answer, “I came in an airplane. It is a long way from Canada to here.” How will they put those pieces together in their imaginations, I wonder?

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At the centre of my gaze I am guided by my intuition.
The inner knowing that has been seeded in my
D - N - A.

I walk this path, and it feels so right.
I feel connected, as if I were walking it with you, my ancestor.
Let me walk this path you have built for me, allow me to follow in the footprints you’ve created.
Wet-taqane’wasi

Mi’kwite’tm ta’n kisi teliaq
remembering the past
the past of my family

first the Bernards—doodoo—
the dodo or even the tutuis—
then came the Phillips

We are connected by more than just our blood relations. However, with years of colonization we resort back to our ancestral connections to remind us that we are still here, alive, well and free.

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Image 8. Walsh, S. (2020). [Digital photograph]. St. Albert, Canada

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Contemplate a spinning wheel
made completely from bicycle parts.
Falling apart, reimagining and transforming
speed and movement forward
into a different reality.
All the tangled fibres
teased out

transformed
spinning consciousness into awareness.
Sacred outlook.
Ecology as curriculum.
Contemplate
interdependence, compassion.
Everything matters

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Image 9. Walsh, S. (2019). [Digital photograph]. St. Albert, Canada.

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In the classroom where the métissage presentation has just taken place, we rise and stand in an open triangle formation in front of the audience. The audience is invited to close their eyes and enter an inner place of deep listening to receive the sounding response to the presentation. We begin with the source of breath. Breath that connects us to each other, each person in the room, and reaching as far back as the beginning of time. From this acoustic interconnected space we extend across time and place, sounding the stories of spiritwork brought to sight and audability on this day.

ounding performance

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We gather in the morning and set off down the road from the monastery to the main road. The river is a silver thread in the valley far below. At the road, we take a path that goes steeply down to a farmstead. We pass the farmer's garden full of corn, beans, and the ubiquitous chilli, then a large field full of newly sprouting corn plants, and descend into a fragrant orange grove. It hums with insects, butterflies, and birds. Wild orchids grow on dead stumps.

Below the orchard, we enter into the jungle. It is shady under the canopy of tall trees, and vines and creepers trail down from above and snake across the almost invisible trail. It is very steep, and I am preoccupied with keeping myself from pitching headfirst down the mountain. This is hard as there is so much to look at, and my attention is constantly diverted by my young companions:

“Look, here is where a wild boar has been digging to make a sleeping place.”

“There is a porcupine's hole in that tree.”

“We use this plant for medicine.”

“Woodpeckers' holes in that tree, Madam.”

“This is elephant poop, Madam. Very big.” I was glad that it was obviously quite old....

“What do you call this in your language we use this for this is a ”

*

I walk the ravine behind my house notice the snow
crystal diamond in the light of the early afternoon
crusty chunks melting then freezing again in the
dryness of the prairie air footprints in the snow
different sizes of boots on the path dogs' paws
scamper etchings of mice voles barely noticeable
imprints of bird claws maybe magpies
I walk some more let the late winter sun warm
my head my hair my back through my jacket
I breathe light let it radiate within beyond
in the soft stillness a drumming sound calls to me

I walk further into the trees stop listen
take a few more steps till the snow falls
into my boots soaks the tops of my socks
fast flashes of black white red
rhythmic drum beat a pileated woodpecker
the trunk of a dead birch tree
large small chunks of bark fly into white

*



Image 10. Mitchell, J. (2017) [Digital photograph, Stupa]. Dewathang, Bhutan.

*

I search for radiance—to visualize the world into fullness with a musical gesture, a proclamation. Sometimes it is a wordless ache in the breath. Sometimes it is accompanied by a flashing thought burning bright.

“The world is sacred!”

“Tears are blessings.”

“Vividness is its own reward.”

“Fear is not punishment.”

Something juicy appears and comes into being—into pitch, rhythm, timbre, polyphony, text—declaring this moment worthy, that nothing need be rejected.

I am habitually coming into being. Radiating into the world like music improv.

Musicians can be like the trumpeter and flag bearer at the vanguard of a campaign to conquer fear. Music is like a kiss that inspires courage on contact.

*



Image 11. Traill, R. (2019). [Digital photograph]. Lunenburg, Canada.

*

Above the clouds I can see now.
Everything that is below me.
I see the tree that I have grown.
Its roots deep within the ground
The trunk—wide, round, and full
The canvas burning with life.

I look from Ke'kutnuk and realize I have something special.
Do you see what I see?
Do you see my tree?
The tree that I have grown,
The tree that I have shaped and nurtured all this time.

Do you see what I see
Do you see my tree of life?

Jekue' - jekue' stand with me, look from Ke'kutnuk with me.
Now can you see it?
Because I can.

It is by no mistake the Creator put one of the most important organs at the centre of our physical selves—our heart. Our heart is the place that drives us to push further when we can't any more. It is the place that holds love, compassion, empathy, and understanding. It is also by no mistake then, that the heart is only inches from our heads. Together they are meant to work together to align our mind, body, and soul.

Finding heart,
finding your inner passion—Wije'wm ksalsuti.
Msit No'kmaq.

*



Image 12. Traill, R. (2019.) [Digital photograph]. Cape Split, Canada.

*

I attend to Miksang—contemplative photography—as a practice. Take time to form an intent for a Miksang walk: may I synchronize with the world. Attune. Notice what arises. Flashes of perception that stop the eye—invite me to pause, breathe. Form a photo. A relationship with the camera and the phenomenal world. Be with&in. This now.

I feel the subtle (and not-so-subtle) ways in which “my” energy interacts with the energy of that-to-which-eye-attend-with-the-camera.

The intimacy of the moment. (Do leaves actually move in response to attention?)

Co-emergence. Affecting one another on energetic levels. The responsibility inherent in this. Making conscious choices.

What does this mean for research? For living well in the world? (excerpts from Walsh, 2018, p. 135)

*

Soundings 2

*



Image 13. Walsh, S. (2020). [Digital photograph]. St. Albert, Canada.

ENDNOTES

1. In Part Two of this special issue of *Artizein*, please see the work of Bickel (2019), Garcia-Fialdini (2019), Gillard (2019), Kelly (2019), Khan (2019), Kumar and Downey (2019), London (2019), Snowber (2019), and Traill (2019).
2. In Part One of this special issue of *Artizein*, please see the work of Belliveau (2018), Cuculiza-Brunke (2018), Gardner (2018), Kelly (2018), Leggo (2018), Markides (2018), Nellis (2018), Searle and Fels (2018), and Valdez (2018).
3. In this edited collection, please see the work of Fels (2015), Kelly, (2015), Leggo (2015), Mesner (2015), Park and Rabi (2015), Snowber and Bickel (2015), Walsh and Bai (2015), Walsh, Bickel, and Leggo (2015).
4. Individual researchers also create métissage texts by braiding together different aspects of their own experiences (see, for example, Kelly, 2010).
5. See the editorial for the special issue on life writing and métissage (Hasebe-Ludt & Jordan, 2010).
6. Please see the link to a sample of Robyn's contemplative film work as described above.
7. As noted previously, there are three links to sounding /audio files in this metissage. Please click on the link for each one as you encounter it.
8. The preceding text arose as an improvised, exposition-of-consciousness style contemplative artistic practice while witnessing a thirteen minute Gestare Art Collective film—a spontaneous performance ritual of releasing dreams, entitled, the threads of a dream (Bickel & McConachy, 2012 at <https://vimeo.com/44233735>). I (RT) was moved to search out this work after experiencing Bickel, Bartley, and McConachy do a sounding practice at the conference of the Arts Researchers and Teacher Society (ARTS) of the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) (Walsh, Mitchell, Traill, Phillips, Bickel, McConachy, & Bartley, 2017).

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ECO-PEDAGOGICAL WANDERING AND PONDERING IN PACIFIC SPIRIT PARK

Nicole Rallis

ABSTRACT

This poetry emerges from my ongoing Ph.D. research and coursework at the University of British Columbia, where I am engaging in an a/r/tographic-walking inquiry on environmental sustainability and climate change. After moving to the unceded and ancestral lands of the Coast Salish peoples, now known as Vancouver, I began walking the forest trails of Pacific Spirit Park. Inspired by Robin Wall Kimmerer's (2013) pedagogical discussions about the grammar of animacy, two-eyed ways of seeing, and childlike ways of seeing, my poems pay tribute to the plant elders and more-than-human beings guiding my learning journey. My ecopedagogical wandering and pondering align with environmental scientists' calls for developing more holistic understandings and feelings about our relationship with nature (i.e. the aesthetic, spiritual and non-utilitarian standpoints that increase the sense of awe with which we regard the natural world) (Prugh & Assadourian, 2003).

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BIO

Nicole Rallis is a writer, documentary filmmaker and aspiring a/r/tographer. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Curriculum Studies in the Department of Curriculum and Pedagogy at the University of British Columbia.
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off balance

we cannot own
land

we cannot own
waters

we cannot own
sky

we cannot own
each other

we cannot own
our partners

our friends

our children

especially not our children

only in *loving freedom*¹ can we come into wisdom

to learn from and be with

*all our relations*²

in the context of family and community

relationship and ownership

cannot

co-exist

ownership obfuscates our coming into understanding

of ourselves and/with/in the land

we need to restore

balance

a two-eyed ode to pacific spirit park

Polystichum munitum

Kingdom: Plantae
Clade: Tracheophytes
Class: Polypodiopsida
Order: Polypodiales
Family: Dryopteridaceae

dear sword ferns,
you grow so beautifully amongst and
between the tall trees
your bright green fronds
attach to rhizome
i marvel at your sacred geometry
and thank you for your
healing properties
you share when my body aches

Pseudotsuga menziessi var. menziesii

Kingdom: Plantae
Clade: Tracheophytes
Division: Pinophyta
Class: Pinopsida
Order: Pinales
Family: Pinaceae

marvelous and grand douglas firs,
awe every time I visit
look up to the sky, you grow
so tall and magnificent
i wonder of all the beings who have
walked by you through the centuries
oh the stories and wisdom you hold
i place my hands upon you listening
i feel the moss
i hear the songbirds
i see your cones on the forest floor
signs of life,
sustenance,
abundance

Rubus Sectabilis

Kingdom: Plantae
Clade: Tracheophytes.
Clade: Angiosperms
Clade: Eudicots
Clade: Rosids
Order: Rosales
Family: Rosaceae

dear salmon berries,
i remember the first time i came
across you in mid-summer
your colourful fruit caught my eye
i thought you were a raspberry
but you have your own distinct
flavour and way of being
my daughter and i return to your
bushes each summer to pick from
your bounty
we make sure not to take too much
you are a sharing being
and remind us of the gift of
generosity

Acer Macrophyllum

Kingdom: Plantae
Clade: Angiosperms
Clade: Eudicots
Clade: Rosids
Order: Sapindales
Family: Sapindaceae

majestic big leaf maples,
you grow amongst cedars
and firs
your large foliage brings us a
special kind of beauty offering
the gift of life itself
i take a deep breath in, slowly
exhale.
in return,
you breathe me in
and release oxygen
a profound reciprocal exchange
unable to be properly described
with language

Strix Occidentalis

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Strigiformes
Family: Strigidae

magical spotted owl,
i hear you more than I see you
sometimes if I look closely
at the forest floor
i find your lovely feathers
you remind me of my daughter
named after a goddess
accompanied by an owl friend
before she was born, she visited me
in a dream (the most vivid)
as an owl
when I hear you I think of
the dreaming world, spirit worlds
you remind me there is so much
beyond what human eyes can see

Haliaeetus Leucocephalus

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Accipitriformes
Family: Accipitridae

sacred bald eagles,
i see you soaring above the forest
your flying wonderous dance
of graceful spirals
as though you live in
a liminal, magical space
between the earth and the sun
you nest within the tallest of trees
a fierce protector of your young
i am humbled in your presence

Poecile Atricapillus

Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Aves
Order: Passeriformes
Family: Paridae

black-capped chickadee,
lovely and tiny
you sing the most beautiful songs
composed of complex arrangements
you make me feel serene
sometimes I think you are singing
a sweet lullaby to all forest beings
you remind me that
strong and resilient beings can
manifest in the tiniest of forms

Cantharellus

Kingdom: Fungi
Division: Basidiomycota
Class: Agaricomycetes
Order: Cantharellales
Family: Cantharellaceae

wonderous chanterelle mushrooms,
you remind me of the importance
of inter-species relationships
i wonder about the conversations
you and red cedars must have
your kinship inseparable
i would rather sit and look at you
than eat you
so otherworldly
a pop of bright yellow amongst
the bark and the moss

*dear pacific spirit
i can feel you
manifested
in all the sacred forms of being
found beneath and above
the forest canopy
our animal cousins
plant elders
the waters, earth and wind*

haunting

in pacific spirit park because it is just that
ghostly, maintained, contained remains of a stolen place
winds ruffle leaves, carrying whispers
human nature, humans in nature, wildlife
now controlled.
preserved and perverted from the truest of beauty
which can only be found in utter freedom
what is the difference between a park and a camp?
markers on a map
both are imagined lines, mythical boundaries
that come to life and control
how matter moves and how it grows
binding and containing.
let the haunting speak to you
new imaginings can begin
let the movement of your mind and body
be
be free.

ENDNOTES

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LESSONS FROM BIRDS, BONES & THE BODY

Alexandra Fidyk @ Darlene St. Georges

ABSTRACT

Written as a layered pictorial script, three images—Owl, Raven, and Hummingbird—beckoned the authors. Together, they explored neglected epistemologies in many disciplines within education, the arts and humanities to deepen their understanding of what it means to live in caring relation with an animated world. By tracking the Birds' lineages and kinships through active imagination, amplification, and circumambulation, concealed patterns and associations reveal lessons for living more consciously with repressed and expressed feminine/androgynous energies. To be more conscious of both energies aids in the unfolding processes central to becoming, undoing, creativity, and pedagogy. Herein an ethical challenge arises: how might we honour the ancestors and communal life while attending the spirits that call us onward?

• • •

Bios

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In the spirit of the dead, the living, and the unborn,
Empty your ears . . .
That you may hear [our] story.
~Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Wizard of the Crow*, 2006, Invocation

In the archeomythological tradition¹ of Marija Gimbutas, we offer a “pictorial script” of lessons for living well as pedagogic and ethical beings during an unrecognizable time (Gimbutas, 1989). To live well, we must mine the dark side of life—fear, rage, denial—draw it up and make it known. Such living recognizes “there is no love of life without despair of life” (Camus, 2012, p. 13).

To excavate such lessons, this script—layers of mythology, voice, image, and verse shaped by prehistoric markings, space, silence, and longing—asks us to be open to the unfamiliar. “A whole made up of parts that are

wholes” (Cixous, 2001, p. 87). Tender lines engraved like the early medieval Ogham on the bodies of Owl, Raven, and Hummingbird; soft curves of crescents, moons, and horns, as in the lost last letter of the Latin alphabet, ampersand; found fragments;² and stories of sisters and their winged companions as in the earliest decorative motifs of Old European symbols: chevrons, Vs, nets, and Vs repeated as zig-zags, Ms, and tri-lines signaling bird figures and bird-woman hybrids (Gimbutas, 1989, p. 3). Coupled with meanders, streams, snakes, and vines, these records resist the simplistic interpretation of mere “geometric motifs,” demanding the life-giving moisture of the Goddess’s body—breasts, eyes, mouth, and vulva (p. 3). For many these reverential adorations are readily recognizable as fertile earth, universal and immediate. Great Mother—archetypal and ancient.

regeneratrix of life
spiritus

Gimbutas’s lexicon—the pictorial script of the primordial—reminds us of the old ones’ efforts to understand and live in harmony with the beauty and wonder of Life. As Joseph Campbell (1989) describes in *The Language of the Goddess*, her earthen study “adumbrates in archetypal symbolic terms a philosophy of human life that is in every aspect contrary to the manipulated systems in the West that have prevailed in historic times” (p. xiv)—and which continue to conquer and colonize worldwide.

As in some of the earliest mythologies, all things emerged from her—born of soil and star. She is Goddess-Creator. From this matristic order, there arose a principle of “Mother Right”—a kinship system of communal life intricately wed with feather, fur, scale, and stone. A prepatriarchal order that flourished throughout America and Asia. Our script of image and verse similarly emerged as reflection and respect of the ways of Nature personified by a sisterhood of “lesser,” younger goddesses, shavings of the great Bird Goddess—pared down over time by the horse-riding, sky-god worshipping tribes from the east. Be the telling bird or woman, they are one and the same; we are of bone.

“History is amoral: events occurred. But memory is moral; what we consciously remember is what our conscience remembers” (Michaels, 1996, p. 138).

fleeting through boarders
unsurfaced

she winds her horn

Minerva and the Owl: Goddess of wisdom, medicine, the arts, poetry, and handcrafts. Later the Romans inducted her as goddess of war and in time, Minerva became associated with strategy, commerce, and education. Within Greek mythology, Minerva is Athena.

Just as Athena, for the Greeks, took on the attributes of Zeus—dignified, judicious, brave, and commanding—she too is associated with war. She is goddess of culture and the advancement of civilization, that is, the ordering of

Life, as well as the goddess of the household and the household of crafts—pottery, spinning, weaving. Goddess of artist and artisan. Her art is the “art made within and for the human community”—art that arises from inspired work, “from discipline and training”—soul-work (Downing, 1999, p. 121).

By her breath, Athena gave us life. Prometheus mixed earth and rainwater to fashion the male body into the likeness of the gods. Athena, fashioning her breath as butterfly, tucked soul into Pandora, in time becoming our bodies. She is “soul-giver, soul-maker”—our constant (Downing, 1999, p. 105). North Star.

beautiful throat—clear chords

Remembering Athena means to recover our relation to the feminine, to mother, to Metis. Despite the integration of her father’s gifts: strength, wisdom, and self-confidence, they originated at source with her mother, with Metis. We forget this. Even Zeus’s wisdom, his *metis*, as well as the daughter’s rose from Metis. Hers is “‘watery’ wisdom—intuitive, attuned to subtleties and transformations, sensitive to nuances of personal feeling, poetic rather than abstract, receptive rather than commanding” (Downing, 1999, p. 117). By her we find attunement with body, with bird, and so with Life. “[B]ody: bread of light” (Cixous, 2005, p. 7).

eloquently persuasive with silver tongue
changing gravity

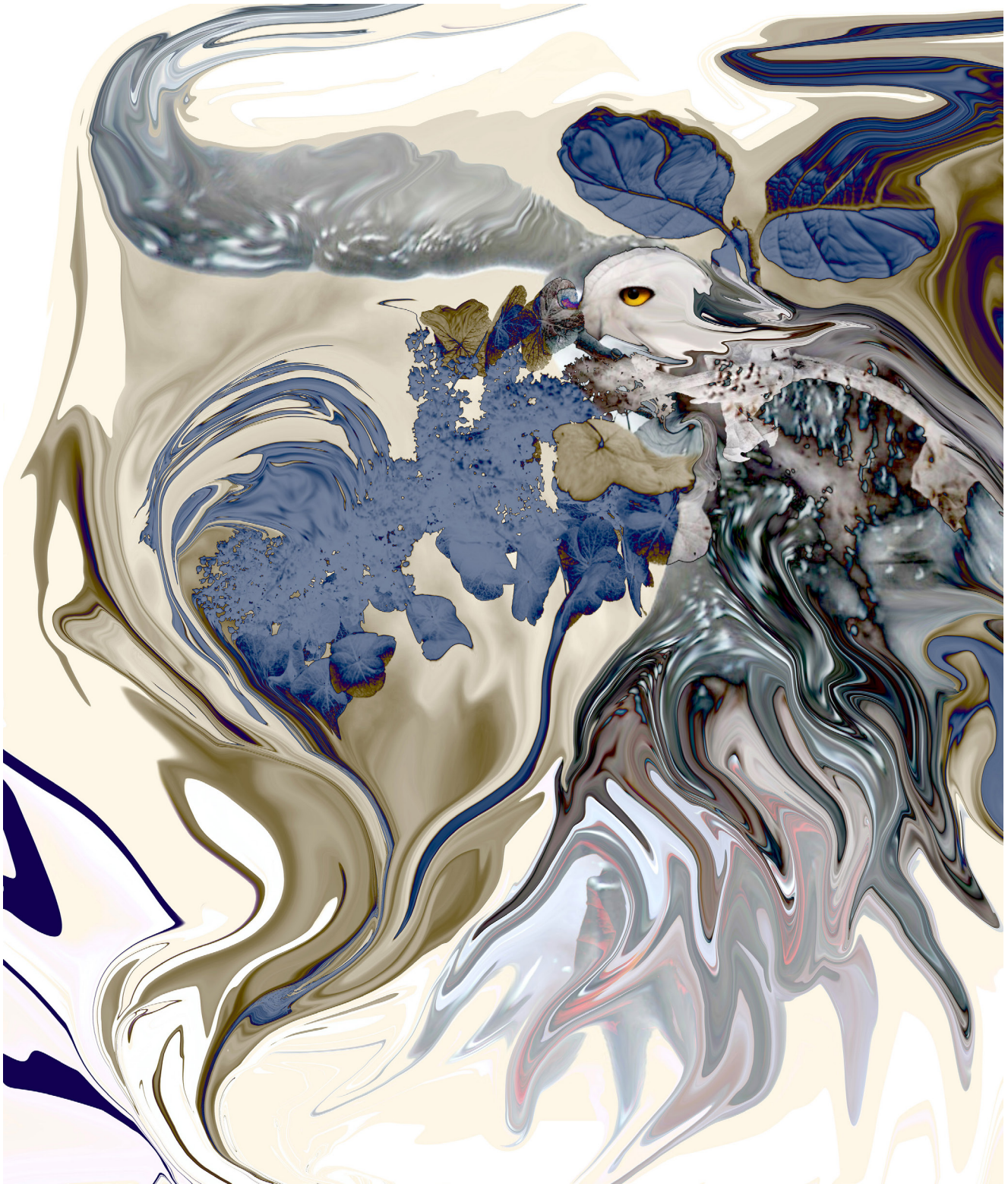
As the Roman telling goes, Epopeus, a king of Lesbos, betrayed his daughter Nyctimene to satisfy his own desire. In need of safety, she fled to the forest and refused to show herself in daylight. Minerva transformed Nyctimene into Owl, wise bird of the night. Prophetic. Owl became a symbol for the goddesses. Dark wisdom—earthen and fluid—closely related to the under side of things: secrets, the unknown, and the hidden.

lingering among shadows in low-lying playgrounds
with fluid keys dangling between points

“Metis,” their mother, a word in Greek that meant *wisdom; skill; craft*. Earlier, in fifth century Greek philosophy, Metis was revered as the mother of wisdom, knowledge and deep thought. Metis too was equated with the trickster powers of Prometheus, leading to the desirable quality of “wise counsel.” A feminine form of knowing subsumed by the 1400 AD resurgence in the arts—embraced by the Renaissance—embraced in painting and architecture. Yet denied in female form during the “Enlightenment”—what became the enactment of dominating patriarchal epistemologies for centuries. So threatening were these embodiments that women with intuitive wisdom were actively pursued and slaughtered.

Witches.

. . . —if one of [the great horned Owls] should touch me, it would touch to the center of my life, and I must fall. They are the pure wild hunters of our world. They are swift and merciless upon the



'Owl' [Photo-digital collage & painting]. Darlene St. Georges, 2020.

backs of rabbits, mice, voles, snakes, even skunks, even cats sitting in dusky yards, thinking peaceful thoughts. I have found the headless bodies of rabbits and blue jays, and known it was the great horned owl that did them in, taking the head only I know this bird. If it could, it would eat the whole world. (Oliver, 2003, p. 15)

Strigidae: family; owls. Solitary and nocturnal.

Raptors—birds of prey—most often embody death in Old European imagery. Carved into bones and stones, the likeness of the Owl, in particular its eyes, couple the raptor to Minerva and Athena. Etched Owl eyes on bare bone often placed in graves (c. 5000 BC), while a symbol of death, reveal regenerative power (Gimbutas, 1989). Owl is companion to the ancestor realm—land of hollow-bone. Life, death, and regeneration. Sitting in the East. Night Eagle. Kin of whole truths.

mingling with wild geraniums on terraces
where streetlights bend out over long dark paths beneath sieves

“The memories we elude catch up to us, overtake us like a shadow. A truth appears suddenly in the middle of a thought, a hair on a lens” (Michaels, 1996, p. 213).

luminous amplitudes
through one breath and then another

The superhuman qualities and near-human appearance of Owl—“its upright perch, mortal stare, fantastic vision, and nightly screams”—for Gimbutas (1999), “especially evoked mystery and awe” (p. 19). This bird of prey, known to behead its victims, strips the body of its flesh leaving only the bones. Understandably, the cultural practice of excarnation—exposing the dead on platforms to the elements of wind, rain, and sun—clarifies the role of the bird of prey in the death process.

lucid primordial intonations
that unravel time

Fascination with Owl stretches long before the Neolithic age because it appears on Upper Paleolithic cave walls in southern France (Gimbutas, 1999, p. 19). History, iconography, and mythology connects Owl with other goddesses—not only Athena and Minerva but also Lilith, the Sumerian-Akkadian goddess. In Jewish mythology, Lilith, first wife of Adam, is associated with night, the south wind, and the screech Owl. As in the Old Testament, the Choctaw (Indigenous peoples of southeastern USA) deity Ishkitini, or horned Owl, was believed to prowl around at night killing men and animals. When Ishkitini screeched, it meant that a child was going to die.

In the night, when the owl is less than exquisitely swift and perfect, the scream of the rabbit is terrible. But the scream of the owl, which is not of pain and hopelessness and the fear of being plucked out of the world, but of the sheer rollicking glory of the death-bringer, is more terrible still. When I hear it resounding through the woods, and the five black pellets of its song dropping like stones into the air, I know I am standing at the edge of the mystery, in which terror is naturally and abundantly part of life, part of even the most becalmed, intelligent, sunny life—as, for example, my own. The world where the owl is endlessly hungry and endlessly on the hunt is the world in which I live too. There is only one world. (Oliver, 2003, p. 15-16)

borne into the screech
stillness rests at the centre,
a little to the left

In the night forest, Crow grows raucous for fear her place as Minerva's sacred bird is being usurped by Nyctimene, the nocturnal Owl.

Corvidae: family; crows and ravens. Known as “Corvids,” ravens belong to the order Passeriformes, perching birds. Members of the Corvid family: crows, ravens, jays, magpies, jackdaws, and nutcrackers are classified as songbirds. Highly intelligent, self-aware, inventive—tool-makers.

Songbird; Trickster; Shaman;
Shapeshifter; Dark Angel; Ministers of Veiled Mysteries;
Healer; Magician;
Secret Keeper.

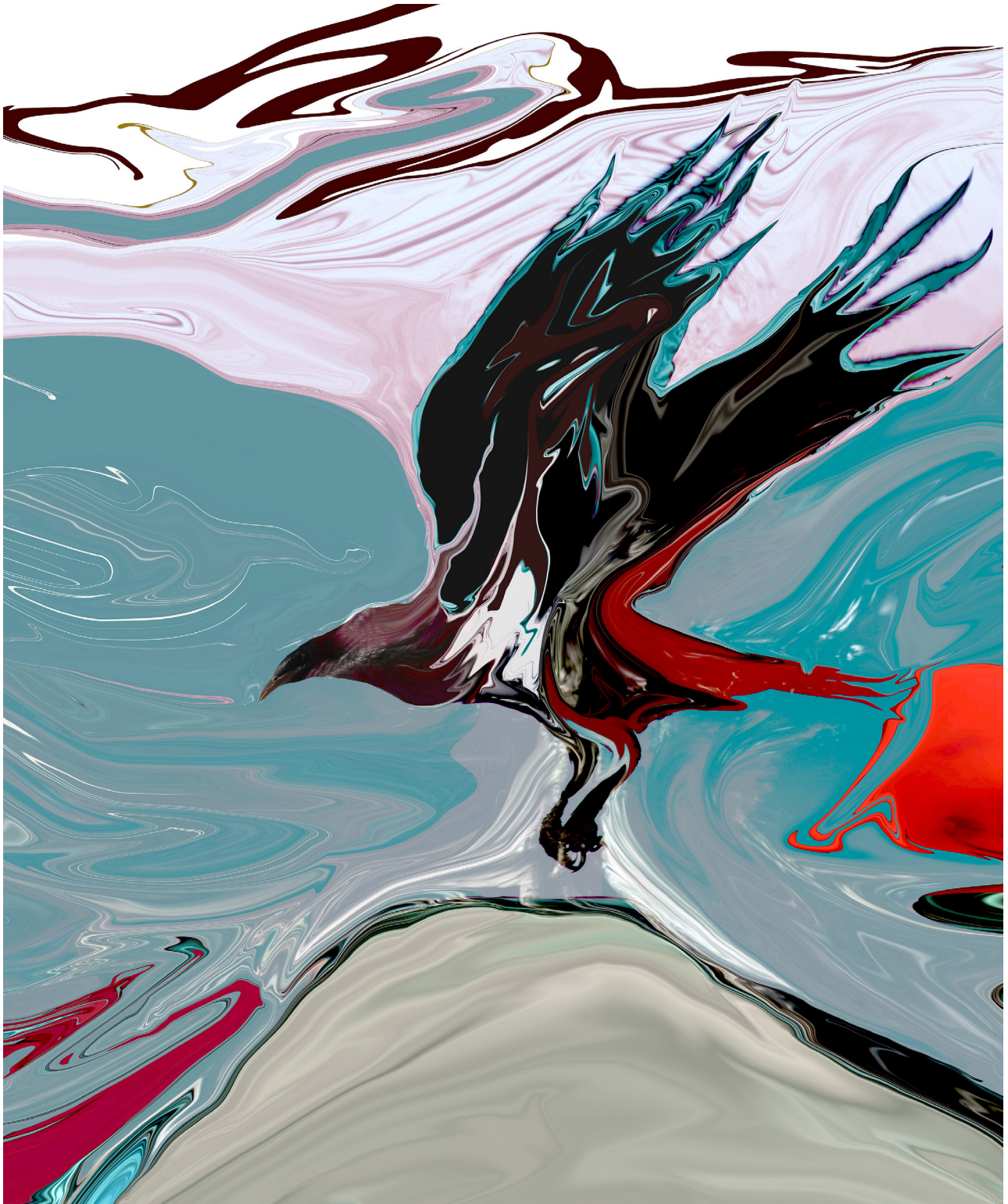
Raven carries the medicine of magic, giving us the courage to enter into the darkness—Great Mystery. The iridescent blue black of Raven's feather symbolizes the energy and changeability of form that can bring awakening. Raven carries the energy of ceremonial healing to its intended destination (Sams & Carson, 1988).

Owl and Raven hold close companionship with Women, especially of northern lands. Central to this realm and the next. Other-world messengers.

Matrilineal, descendants of the Haida Northwest Coast First Nations people belong to one of two clans: Raven or Eagle. The motherline determines clanship. As with many Indigenous peoples of the Americas, Raven plays a central character. Described as transformer and potent creative force, the Haida believe Raven or “*Yáahl*” to be a complex reflection of one's own self” (Haida mythology, “Raven”). They often call upon Raven to clarify truths in visions. The dark eye that sees.

like a needle
entering its field of memory

ne' tata ' suaqan [wisdom]



'Raven' [Photo-digital collage & painting]. Darlene St. Georges, 2020.

Central to many creation myths, Raven's actions led to the formation of Haida Gwaii, releasing the sun from its tiny box and making the stars and moon (Haida mythology, "Raven"). Recognized as the greediest, most lecherous and mischievous creature known to the Haida, Raven often helps humans in our encounters with other supernatural beings (Haida mythology, "Raven"). His methods include stealing, exchanging, tricking, redistributing, and shifting. Raven teaches by example—subversive, because he breaks the rules. Methods not to be forgotten or lost.

etched in trees
perching on smooth edges

Recall Gimbutas' Bird Goddess—Great Mother—through the destructive forces of invading herder peoples, her potency denied, she eventually fell into oblivion. During the diminishment of her power, her gifts were doled out to other goddesses, such as the Romans' Minerva and the Greeks' Athena. Like them, Raven embodies both masculine and feminine qualities. Androgynous—resourceful, intelligent, clever. Border-crosser. Traits readily visible across the creation myths of the Inuit, Siberians, and Indigenous peoples of north-western American tribes: Raven, as a powerful god, married Great Mother, bringing dry land out of the sea and creating life (Walker, 1988, p. 408).

Lilith as screech Owl belongs here too. Minerva, Athena, and Lilith—all names related to the Crone Goddess. The word "crone" comes from "crown," symbolizing the energy that radiates above the head like a halo. "Crown" was born of the identical Greek word *korōnē*: "crow" (raven). In her positive aspect she is known as Grandmother, *Kokum*, wise woman, midwife. Her wise counsel is sought as guide by those journeying hardships and transitions.

she belongs to the forces of innocence
against plaintive doors and incorruptible memory

Many unfortunately know nothing of Lilith. As with the power of the dark feminine, she has been repressed, forgotten. Made evil. Cast off as the stuff of witches. The Talmudic *midrash*, however, tells of the primordial Lilith, first wife of Adam, who resisted domination and subservience (Kamerling, 2003, p. 99). She sought equality.

Memory favours one-sided telling. When we stand at the veil between realms, at the eye to enter this Time, we choose one of two waterways: the river of memory, Mnemosyne, or the river of oblivion, Lethe. Ancestral wisdom on this plane seeks to unite both. One cannot be Crone without embodying Maiden and Mother energies—hence the Triple Goddess. Another name to describe this thread.

In Latin, wise-woman and witch have the same name—Owl: *strix* or *striges* (plural); later *strega*, "witch" (Walker, 1988, p. 404). So the legacy of our mother tongue.

clear moon
turning truth: toward voice

“History and memory share events; that is, they share time and space. Every moment is two moments” (Michaels, 1996, p. 138).

Appearing in the Sumerian culture of 3000 BCE as storm or wind spirit, Lil was revamped as a “she-demon” during the Talmudic period (Kamerling, 2003, p. 98). She emerged in “the Middle Ages, the Kabbalistic era, as a consort *at the side* of God”—bone to bone, flesh to flesh (p. 98, emphasis added).

“She lies on top . . . , the saddle of pelvis, the curve of skull, fibulas and femurs, sacrum and sternum. [He] feel[s] the arches of her ribs, every breath flooding blood between the ossicula of her ears and of her feet” (Michaels, 1996, p. 181).

Hair long, wild and red, Lilith belongs to the night.
Voluptuous and beautiful, she has wings.

In her refusal to obey Adam, the masculine god forbids her grace.
In this transition she becomes associated with the negative aspect, “a violent, masculine aspect of the Earth Mother, a kind of destructive side-effect of the materialistic attitude she embodies” (Birkhäuser-Oeri, 1988, p. 111)—cut off from her two-winged nature.

shifting the night into shadows and ancestral songs—
muted voices in landscapes with bare branches

“[She] offers her ancestors to me. I’m shocked at my hunger for her memories. Love feeds on the protein of detail, sucks fact to the marrow; just as there’s no generality in the body, every particular speaking at once until there’s such a crying out . . .” (Michaels, 1996, p. 196).

As told in the legend, Lilith was unwilling to submit to the authority of her husband, Adam. The demand was humiliating and diminishing. Lilith responded with rage. Instead of obeying Adam, she chose flight and desolation. She threatened revenge and destruction. As the patriarchy strengthened, Eve became the prototype of the submissive female, and Lilith energy was repressed into the unconscious. (Kamerling, 2003, p. 105)

In Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, Cornix, a princess, daughter of Coronaeus, walks by the seashore. When seen by Neptune, Poseidon to the Greeks, in a plot too common, he tries to seduce her. When his attempts fail, he tries rape. Cornix flees, crying to men and gods to help her. None do. Only Athena responds. She transforms Cornix into Crow.

“Lulled by the ocean’s breath and watched over by the insomniac eye of the Pacific, I fall asleep under the stars and dream of a great horned [O]wl with wide-open eyes” (Reis, 2016, p. 179). Bird of death, of winter, and of the north wind (for the Algonquin, see Walker, 1988, p. 404).

cree woman crow
cree woman caw

crow woman dig down
scrape away the layers
of sleeping memory (Dumont, 2015, p. 44)

the inward turn

black feathers descend
healing and creation

Archilochus colubris: Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

“Hum”—the sound made by the rapid vibration of their wings and the beat of their hearts. 1200 beats per minute, more than 20 beats per second. Their hearts, if heard, would also hum. Beauty, grace, desperation. Always hungry, always humming. They must fall into a form of hibernation at night to slow their metabolism, thus enter a deep sleep so not to starve.

pulled tightly
glossed in the acids of cells

red

Reddening symbolizes a time of reengagement in life. Here, life energy has gone inward, upward, downward, then returns to the world, infused with what has transpired on the other planes. This is a moment of the *rotatio*, a turning and turning like the cosmos itself. . . .

primary colour
body, blood, birth, death

Red is the archetypal color, the first color humans mastered, fabricated, reproduced, and broke down into different shades. . . . This has given it primacy over all other colors through the millennia. . . . [Red] remains the strongest, most remarkable color, and the one richest in poetic, oneiric, and symbolic possibilities. (Pastoureau, 2017, p. 7)

“A curious bird to see . . . a [H]ummingbird” (“humming”). Divine bird.

Huitzilōpōchtli, “Hummingbird of the South” or “Left-handed Hummingbird” is the Aztec God of War. He is identified by the bracelet of Hummingbird feathers worn around his left wrist. The left side calls upon the mother-line. The Aztecs believed that when warriors died, they would transform into Hummingbirds so they



'Hummingbird', [photo-digital collage & painting]. Darlene St. Georges, 2020

could fly and join Huitzilōpōchtli. In this relationship, Hummingbird symbolizes royalty, the sacred, and becomes god of rebirth, regeneration (Ursin, “Hummingbird mythology”).

quick tiny hearts
ripe: in full colour
shuttling through breath and promises

For the Ohlone Indigenous people of northern California, Hummingbird is both a trickster and our ancestor (Ohlone mythology). In Ohlone mythology, their spiritual and philosophical belief systems as well as their conception of the world order is foretold in their creation story. It begins with the destruction of a previous world. When it was destroyed, the world was covered entirely in water, apart from a single peak upon which Hummingbird, Coyote, and Eagle stood (Ohlone mythology).

“The event is meaningful only if the coordination of time and place is witnessed” (Michaels, 2003, p 162).

tender mortals
in an unchartered efficacy

For many Indigenous peoples of the Americas, Hummingbird is healer and fire-bringer, Promethean. His songs wake medicinal flowers and incite fertility. Hummingbird hears and plays celestial music, harmonizing with Great Mother through the renewal of magic. His feathers as sacred charms open the heart’s succulent nectars of life (Sams & Carson 1998).

a delicate premise of promises
woven with sweetgrass and hues of lavender and gold

Hummingbird, among some Mexican tribes today, carries messages between worlds, particularly from the underworld, like Owl and Raven, even reincarnating ancestors’ spirits. “[M]emory is encoded in air currents and river sediment. Eskers of ash wait to be scooped up, lives reconstituted” (Michaels, 1996, p. 53).

These winged familiars—Women, Owls, Ravens, and Hummingbirds—share more than the sheen of light on feather. They are of the Moon—Clay Mother; they are of the Earth—Earth Mother; they are of the Wind—Soul. As messengers, they cross the veils—to the North, the South, East and West. Creating portals in all directions. Allowing those marked with tender lines, soft curves, and eyes that see in the dark to fly between the worlds.

exquisite wings
reaching distances on winds

Myths can be understood as collective Big Dreams. They reveal perennial truths about human experience. In their remembering, we call forth stories that reflect the mythopoetic flights of human existence, evolution of the human psyche. Myth has been called the feminine expression of the past, concerned not with dates and facts as in history but subjective meaning and cycles of life (Hunter, 2009, p. 4).

Dreams as gifts reveal “how the channels between waking life, personal [and ancestral] unconscious, and the wider world of symbols have deepened” (Reis, 2016, p. 150). As Virginia Woolf said, “We think back through our mothers, if we are women” (cited in Reis, 2016, p. 65).

As shared, Lilith belongs among the oldest mythology—inspired by the celestial movements of the planet Venus and stories writ upon the stars. Venus radiates a “startling bright presence” in the night sky, “living half her life as Morning Star, the other half as Evening Star” (Hunter, 2009, p. 4). Recognized by many in her relationship with Inanna, the Sumerian goddess, this myth chronicles the development of the Great Goddess, the Bird Goddess, during the Time Before, along with the female cosmogonic principle, and the eventual division of herself, shaved down in the ascendancy of male gods. Aspects of this myth are woven here through the substrata of Minerva and Athena, the young women saved and transformed, and their winged companions. These goddesses offer much to us today—regarding both our expressed and repressed energies.

deep in tenderness,
she places her whole body upon the earth
conjuring smoke of perfect circles

To better understand this last weave of the positive and negative aspects associated with Lilith and Inanna, we recount three elements with which they have been long associated: bird, tree, and serpent. Found in myths worldwide, these aspects reveal much about women’s nature as symbols of the life-giving and -taking yoked with the goddesses. Serpent symbolizes the chthonic wisdom of earth, oracular powers, and “the *kundalini*, the subtle life force that awakes consciousness as it courses up the tree of the spinal cord” (Hunter, 2009, p. 5). Rising energy that also grounds down into the earth. Serpent also symbolizes rebirth through the cyclical shedding of its skin. Tree, also archetypal, has many meanings: physical and spiritual nourishment; transformation and liberation; union and fertility. Its trunk runs vertical, south and north; its roots and branches run horizontal, east and west. Nourishing in all directions. Bird represents the world of spirit as well as death—as we see with the feathered-familiars here: Owl, Raven, and Hummingbird. Through them we are connected to Minerva’s and Athena’s instinctive wisdom and to Lilith’s untamed, unconscious nature.

“I was surprised to discover not everyone sees the shadow around objects, the black outline, the bruise of fermentation on things even as light clings to them. I saw the aura of mortality like a snake that sees its prey in infrared, the pulse-heat” (Michaels, 1996, p. 204).

To live well, we must take heed. Look deeply into the dark side of life, its wildness and chaos—and make it conscious. As shared through the layered fragments of Minerva, Athena, and Lilith, if we can endure the intensity of their encounters on our journeys, we might be stripped down and find our self and soul transformed. But we must agree to this undoing. Like the chevrons, Vs, and tri-lines marked on bird figures and bird-woman hybrids, we are marked by their presence in relation to the fates we carry in our bones. Both curves of joy and lines of

suffering. They accompany us always, these ancestors, during times of loss, liminality, and reddening.

We do not journey alone in day light or night sky. At times in our telling, the goddess of death and regeneration has been conflated with Earth Mother. Rather than differentiating between the Neolithic and Upper Paleolithic periods—while unique, both are about spiritual transformation. Prehistorian James Harrod (1997) writes of the “Venus figurines” that represent the double perspective of the Bird Goddess spiritual transformation: “grievous loss, abandonment and death; and pregnancy, the engendering of a creative and abundantly nourishing life” (p. 491). Embodying this doubling is our legacy. Lilith brings us to this edge.

shifting the night
into shadows and ancestral songs
where bones
sing like small birds
returning to their hidden fountains.

NOTE

The purpose of the paper is to welcome new modes of knowing into scholarly writing. This knowing was determined only in hindsight because the artists/authors/educators simply responded to the call of three birds. The beckoning then unfolded with a conversation and the response of one drawing and the other writing. Their work was shared and both responded to the other's creation with comments, questions, and more writing. Both creations were layered with others' lyrical writing, often in the form of fragment. Active imagination, amplification, and circumambulation were the critical methods used to track the Birds' lineages and kinships. Like tracking Hermes, only when the text was completed could the "purpose" be identified, that is, to promote the conscious relationship with expressed and repressed energies of the Bird Goddess or Earth Mother.

ENDNOTES

1. Archaeomythology is an interdisciplinary approach to scholarship developed by archeologist Marija Gimbutas for the purpose of expanding the boundaries of the study and understanding of the multidimensional fabric of human cultures. Emphasis lies upon the "beliefs, rituals, symbolism, social structure, and systems of communication of prehistoric societies" (Archaeomythology, "About IAM"). This methodology integrates numerous disciplines including, but not limited to, archaeology, anthropology, comparative religion, ecology, ethnology, folklore, genetics, history, linguistics, and mythology. Relevant to our poetic script, "archaeomythology can also be used as a metaphor for a complex inquiry, or 'excavation,' into the mythological, psychological, and spiritual layers of any cultural period, including the present" ("About I AM").

2. Fragments are understood here as "writing and voice" often of women, specifically Anne Michaels and Mary Oliver, whose work stands on their own and at times braids with ours as a collective story of what it means to live well in troubled times. Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément (2001) write, "defining a feminine practice of writing is impossible" for it will never "be able to be theorized, enclosed, coded" (emphasis in original, p. 92). It exists somewhere "other than in the territories subordinated to philosophical-theoretical domination" (p. 92). Thus to express such a practice writers must "break automatic functions" (p. 92). We intentionally do not unpack quotations nor do we weave them tightly within our own text. While we do not change font to distinguish voices, we use the subtlety of indentation and line spacing to indicate some difference regarding voice and citation. As Anne Carson (2002) artfully offers in *If not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho*, only one Sappho poem in its entirety survived, with all others only fragments. In Carson's translation, she uses the simplest language to put down all that can be read of each poem and where possible maintains word order. In response to her decisions regarding the text, Carson quotes J. Derrida (1981): "Breaks are always, and fatally, reinscribed in an old cloth that must continually, interminably be undone" (p. 24, cited in Carson, 2002, x). We too write fragments. We too are intentionally incomplete in our process. We include this endnote as supplementary information so readers are better able to follow our writing, decision-making, and process.

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AN UNLIKELY CORRESPONDENCE: GPS AND BODY IN PLACE

Patti Pente

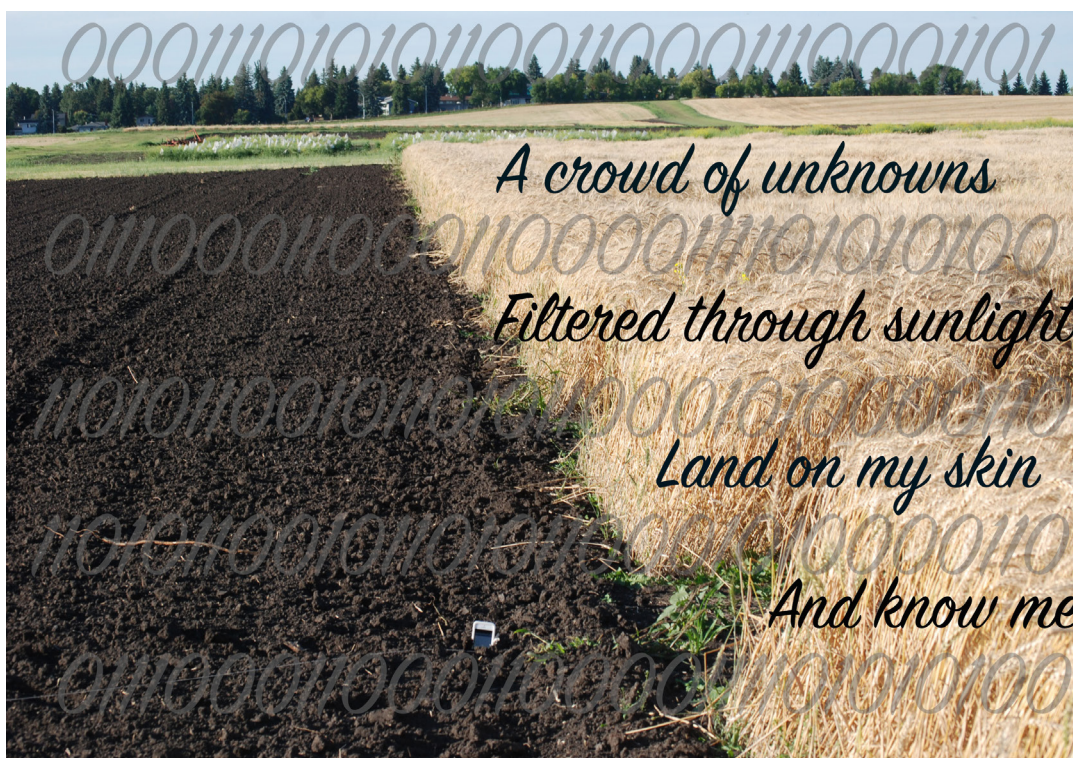
ABSTRACT

This visual essay investigates the significance of GPS technology and the human body in relation to a sense of place. Framed by posthumanism, the poetic images offer an approach to transformative education through a local site. Agency of place is key to this exploration of dynamic relationships with technology, body and the earth. As a creative performance, I executed a series of movements in a place of personal significance, and then further developed the essay through visual poetry. The research is informed by an underlying assumption that creative understanding and artistic analysis can foster deeper environmental care, and although this is only a speculation, it is one that drives my performance.

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BIO

Dr. Patti Pente is an artist and professor of art education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. She obtained her Doctor of Philosophy degree in Curriculum Studies at the University of British Columbia, Canada. Her research includes pedagogical shifts that occur when examining cultural and philosophical texts through art. She is interested in contemporary art, with particular emphasis on educational potential within digital and traditional art processes. She continues to investigate the aesthetic nature of physical and virtual relationships to place. She approaches these interests through painting, poetry, video, and site-specific work. She has exhibited her art nationally and internationally. <https://pattipente.com/>

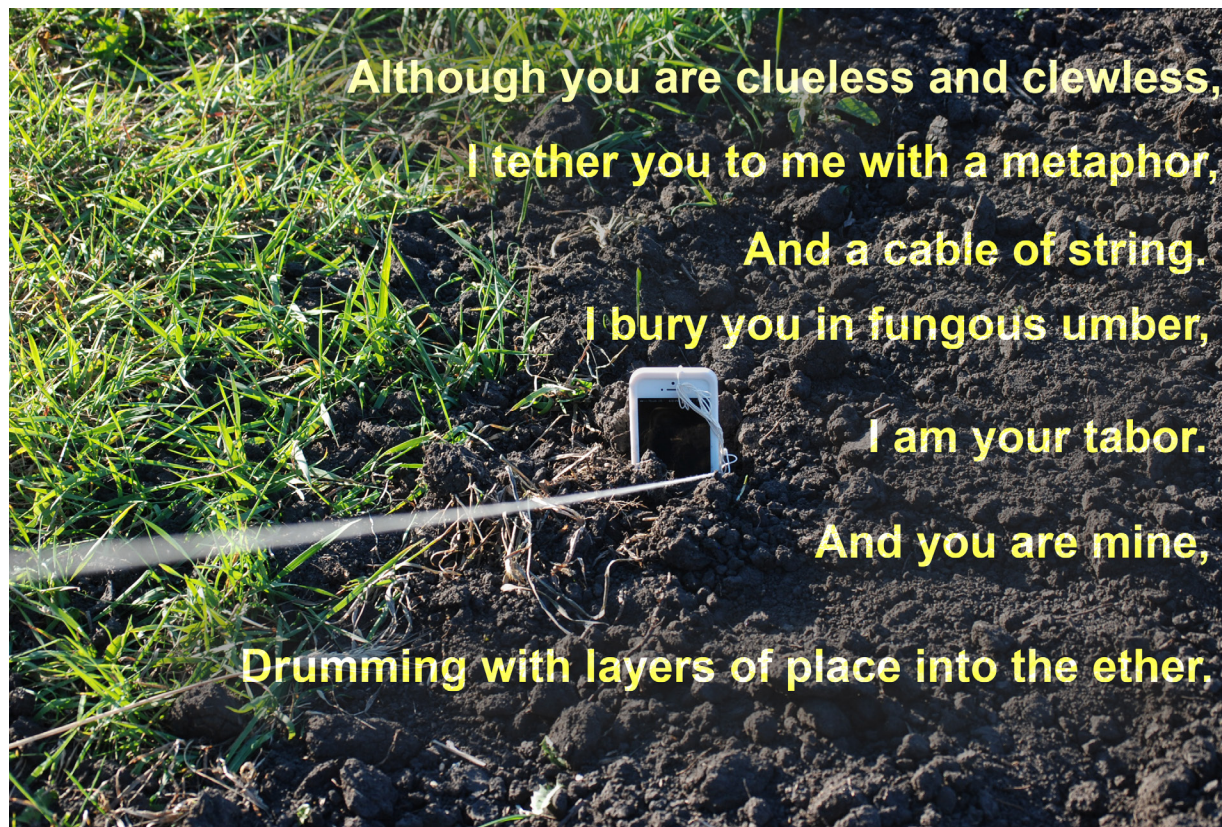


If I stand in a field, in this case, one of sun, wheat, sky and black earth, I can envision the rushing of electrons/ molecules/atoms through these entities, my body, and beyond. By doing so, I anticipate increasing my awareness through creative exploration about this place: my physical movements through space and my virtual movements tracked through GPS technology. This art performance, taking place in the field, considers both the seen and unseen, including the forces of the earth, the geolocate radio signals of GPS, and the history of this place. Although invisible, they catalyze creative thought and action. I offer this visual essay as an expansion of landscape art that reconfigures a “seen scene” to include the non-human, material agency within invisible elements/ communication that exist around and in the body, technology and place. Through this extension, learning about our shared symbiotic relationship with the earth is possible: there is an underlying assumption that this kind of holistic understanding can promote a higher degree of environmental care, and although this is only a speculation, it is one that drives my performance.



In Global Positioning Systems (GPS)¹ movement is recorded through a system of satellites, ground stations and receivers. The system utilizes time, radio waves, and frequency to establish locations through links between a minimum of three or four satellites and a receiver, such as a mobile phone. Ubiquitous GPS technology that captures movement and tracks the user’s activities has become a normative part of many lives. Documented as data, this information typically moves to larger platforms, often beyond the control of the user. As a creative visual essay into the dynamic relationship between the human and the non-human, this research is in the form of communion among place, human, phone and earth. Thinking about forms of agency and communication, I use the English language, while my phone uses its computer language of 0’s and 1’s. The language of the earth in this place is the open space of the unknown. These configurations of communication suggest a very crowded circumstance when I consider all of the invisible (to me) waves of interaction.

On one level, the digital phone is reconfigured within this site-specific art experiment to become an analogue anchor, physically securing me to it. I collect data on the phone through digital photography, while the phone collects data on me through GPS. But what of the earth? It is more than a background site for this strange conversation. This place is an active participant, producing its own myriad forms of data including sunshine, wind, dirt, plant, bird call, wheat rustle and magnetic force; it is all considered data in this visual experiment. Thus, a complexity occurs in this expansion of what is designated as data and what is designated as collector/creator of data. This field is half way from my home to the university where I work. I traverse it multiple times throughout the year, and witness the changes it brings, as it has witnessed my changes as well. We have grown in each other's company.



To begin this performance,² I attached my hand to my mobile phone with a length of string, mimicking the straight line of the radio signal. This rigid, linear arrangement directly contrasted with the movements of my body, which were inspired by the ways that atoms and molecules move in Brownian motion³: jerky, irrational, multi-directional, and dependent upon the environment. The phone was embedded in the soil so that it remained stationary, while I, the human, continually moved, albeit limited by the length of string. This tether is symbolically important. It represents the radio wave that always connects the user to the digital phone through GPS technology. The tether highlights the invisible action of digital communication continually working in the background of life. I also consider the earth's forces/agencies that were involved in this triangular conversation. The phone, embedded as it was in the soil, was connected physically to this place, and so the tether was indirectly connecting me to the earth. This underlines the ways that GPS digitally links the body to places through a form of communication with the phone.

Interestingly, as a straight line, the radio waves' GPS linearity lacked the ability to record my full complement of movement. The kind of sensual data experienced as I performed steps, turned my head, moved my joints, my eyes, my lungs, and so on, is the antithesis of a straight line. These movements were a layer of direct communication between the earth and my body; for example, with the soil I pressed beneath my feet, or the wind blowing across my face. These two pathways of connection; body-tether-phone-satellite-earth, and body-earth, contrast and elevate my considerations of the virtual and the physical. The random movements and agential forces of body-earth are beyond the GPS technology's ability to discern. Similarly, agency at the molecular level is beyond my human ability to discern. I draw attention to my fractional knowing that this implies: I am but one small part of this time and place. The inability of GPS data to fully record my movement is not particularly enlightening in and of itself: what is worth noting, however, is the fact that through the act of performing there existed a pedagogical moment for me as performer. It is the layering of these forms of communion that elevated the experiential immediacy of the place, with all its seen and unseen entities/forces.

Methodological preference for chance and emergence is key in much performance art. In this case, the performance was not scripted, but began with movement that was contingent upon my physical and historical experience of the place. This was the instigation of visual poetry.⁴ There were pauses between my movements where I photographed my phone and site to record a moment. I concur with Silvia Battista's (2018) description of the versatility and power within performance art.

Performance offers a laboratory, a prolific theoretical, experimental and methodological territory of investigation which potentially can give access to micro and macro contexts; to inner emotional landscapes and uncharted visibilities; to performative forms of embodiment and imaginative, intuitive dimensions that are otherwise not accessible. (p. 199)



Some of these “intuitive dimensions” became clearer later in the studio, where I contemplated my performance by adding poetic text upon the recorded images. As I grafted words onto the photographic history of the performance that is the heart of the research, I reconsidered social, historical and political aspects of place and GPS functionality. I thought about the ways that places continually form me through my collaboration with them. Movement attached me to this place and it to me, in what were (for me), rich and transformative moments.

This builds on what Karen Keifer-Boyd and colleagues (2018, p. 24) name “co-figurative agency”, where the artist/student/teacher body and geo-location data become sites for potential educational transformation. Of particular interest here is the tension that is highlighted between physical movement in the world - in other words, moving through a specific place - and this same locative experience as data (Keifer-Boyd et al., 2018). Both aspects of movement can be potential pedagogies of transformation. In considering my performance, I am guided by Elizabeth Lange’s (2012, 2015) advocacy for transformative learning that goes beyond cognition toward a holistic



approach. She comments, “Learning is *learning to live symbiotically* in a participatory universe, often best accessed through meditation, ritual, and contemplation, and often best expressed in music, poetry, art, and story. Teaching these practices in educational spaces repatterns habitual ways of knowing and being” (Lange, 2012, p. 207, Italics in original). Movement can evoke transformative learning based upon intuition, emotion and embodiment. This creative attunement to a place through artistic performance can support this kind of transformative education.

Theoretically, this research is informed by posthumanism with an emphasis on material agency. As a philosoph-

ical stance that contradicts the hegemony of humanism, with its elevation of the human to a unique position of autonomous power, posthumanism positions the human in a symbiotic relationship with entities in the world (living and non-living), including the earth (Gough, 2015; Keeling & Lehman, 2018; Pente, 2018; Snaza & Weaver, 2015). Posthumanism typically emphasizes the material connections between the human/non-human as a way to emphasize the multiplicity of agency. As such, agency is not dictated by the human, but rather, it is shared (Keeling & Lehman, 2018). This shift in the relationship of the human with the world is approached in much posthuman literature through a focus on the ways that molecular properties of the body are similar to those of the other living/non-living entities in/of the world (Barad, 2003, 2007; Bennet, 2010; Braidotti, 2013). Non-human in the context of this research includes the molecular level of the land with its soil, plant and animal; as well as the digital elements such as the phone, frequency of radio waves etc.

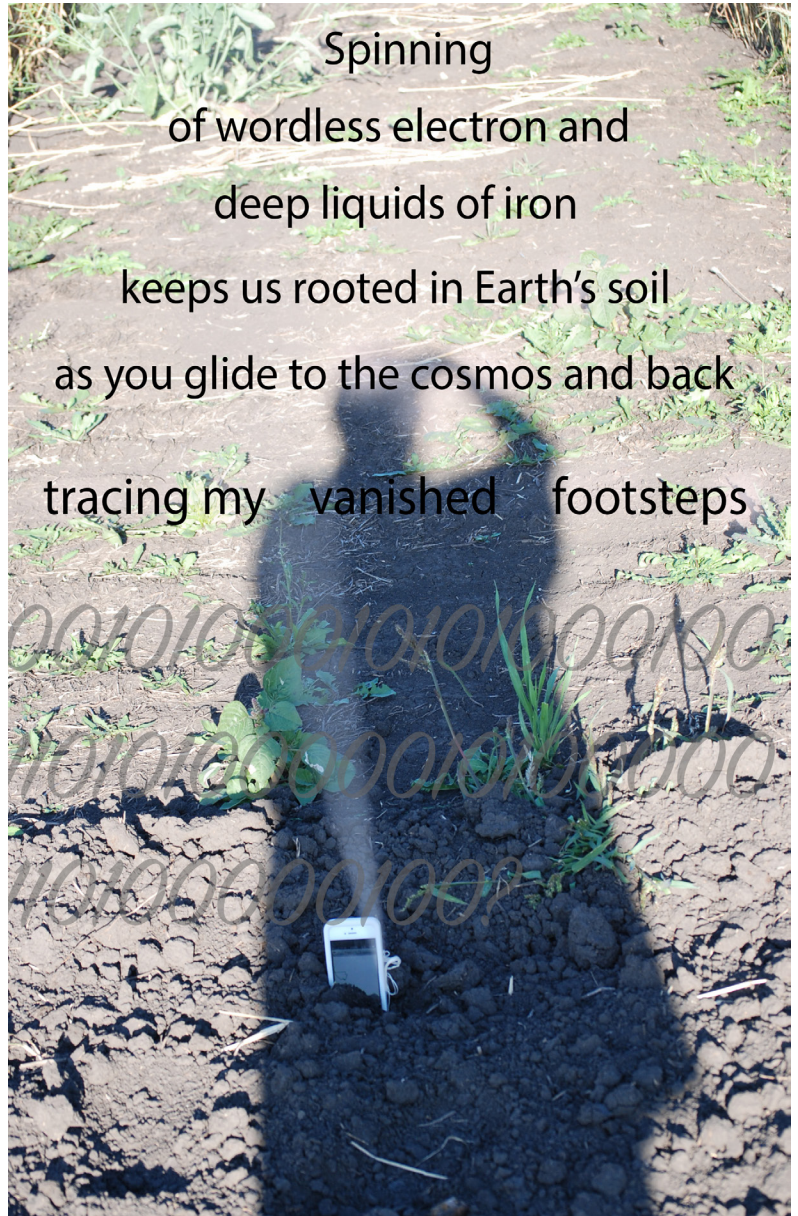
Enriching this Western academic perspective of material agency that has become prominent in much scholarly work, however, are the more established Indigenous ways of knowing in terms of place that have always understood the shared nature of material agency within the land (Marker, 2018). Indigenous perspectives recognized non-human or more-than-human agency long before it became popular in Western academia (Rosiek et al, 2020). This point is made clear through Juanita Sendberg's (2014) account of the hegemony of Eurocentrism that has influenced posthumanism. She notes that within the posthumanist critique is embedded a generalization that the Enlightenment dualisms such as the nature/culture divide were assumed to be universal. In fact, the multiple ways of knowing throughout Indigenous ontologies never embraced such dualisms (Sendberg, 2014). This limited, normalized Eurocentric viewpoint extends to K-12 schools, where a holistic awareness of the agency of place can counter the sense of placelessness that curriculum rooted in European Enlightenment philosophy has perpetuated (Donald, 2019). In terms of human attitudes toward the earth, Indigenous perspectives about relationships of the human with the earth include multiple, generational stories based on close observations of the processes



of nature (Cajete, 2020). By acknowledging the many generations of this knowledge and layering them with ideas of post-humanism, a multiplicity of theories could strengthen awareness and care with/in the environment as we move forward. Specifically, performance art can address the noted flaw within many educational institutions that Rosiek, et al. (2020) identify as a separation of cognition and affect from more holistic ways of knowing. Performing and creating visual poetry offers an alternative format to move the reader beyond mere description toward affective encounters and considerations of multiple agencies of place. Students can creatively explore social and political realities of places through creative activities on site and later in the classroom. In this place of my performance, for example, the settler, colonial history within this wheat field grows over the centuries of Indigenous histories.⁵ Acknowledging the history of the place is part of understanding my shared relationship with it.

Key to the success of performance art is the powerful, holistic response the art can trigger (Beighton, 2015). Art education research that includes site-specific performance expands the potential for transformative learning in the artistic performer and potentially in the viewer. As Lange (2015) notes, “to foster relationally-based transformative learning is to create disturbances, not casual interventions, and to help trigger a process of emergence through which meaningful ideas or practices circulate through feedback loops and communication networks” (pp. 32-33).

As artists and art educators, it is important to “dig deeply” into places to appreciate and understand our shared connections in order to open our creative selves to new possibilities for what it means to be alive in this time and place. For me, the motion and movement of my body, vibrations of the tether, and the continued signals of the phone represent a slice of contemporary life in relation.



Art performances that open possibilities for educators, students, and artists to imagine their place-based embodiment can also extend into the virtual. Thus, dynamic relationships discovered through site-specific performance art can continue to transform definitions of agency, pedagogy and research. It is my hope that holistic understandings that include the agential forces of the earth, as well as those of technology may promote a gentler step on/with places that we share.

ENDNOTES

1. Here is a detailed explanation of the way that GPS functions:

“1. GPS satellites broadcast radio signals providing their locations, status, and precise time (t1) from on-board atomic clocks.

2. The GPS radio signals travel through space at the speed of light (c), more than 299,792 km/second.

3. A GPS device receives the radio signals, noting their exact time of arrival (t2), and uses these to calculate its distance from each satellite in view. To calculate its distance from a satellite, a GPS device applies this formula to the satellite’s signal: distance = rate x time, where rate is (c) and time is how long the signal traveled through space.

The signal’s travel time is the difference between the time broadcast by the satellite (t1) and the time the signal is received (t2).

4. Once a GPS device knows its distance from at least four satellites, it can use geometry to determine its location on Earth in three dimensions.”

<https://web.archive.org/web/20170917094001/http://www.gps.gov/multimedia/poster/poster.txt>

2. Clewless derives from a nautical term, “clew” which refers to the hole in the corner of a sail to attach ropes. Thus, clewless suggests a detachment; further understood here as “without a thread to guide one’s way through a maze”.

<https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/clewless>

3. Brownian motion is characterized by sporadic, unchoreographed movement of atoms and molecules that react to their environment. It was first observed by the botanist, Robert Brown, in 1827 and led to explorations into the existence of atoms and molecules. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brownian_motion

4. Visual poetry is how I describe the process of photographing as part of my performance, and then layering poetry onto the images. I photograph during the performance, without preplanning. My movements with the camera become part of the performance. In post-production, I relive the experience in the field through the many photographs. I select images so that a variety of positions reveal my dynamic embodied relationship with the place (the field) and the phone. I am constantly aware of the GPS tracking me and this is also considered. I create the poetry as a resonance with the experience. I consider the words to be visuals, and the selection of font and colour is done in a similar aesthetic process with which I paint: partially instinctive, layered with many years of personal artistic knowledge.

5. This performance site is part of the University of Alberta farmlands and resonates with the histories of First Nations peoples that live/lived here. We are located on Treaty 6 territory, traditional lands of First Nations and Metis people.

For more information, please see <https://www.folio.ca/how-to-do-a-territorial-acknowledgment/>

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THE VERGE: NETWORKS OF INTERSUBJECTIVE RESPONDING FOR JUST SUSTAINABILITY ARTS EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Marna Hauk & Amanda Rachel Kippen

ABSTRACT

Two sustainability arts scholars describe a method of data interpretation they developed for making sense of complex environmental and sustainability education research data. They “played” images and recorded a conversation in a form of arts-based intersubjective knowing. The card game process was named the Verge because of how the process promises to surface unheard voices and re-center nondominant insights and ways of knowing. It leverages Casey’s glance method with systems networks to complicate sense-making in arts-based educational research. The arts scholars intermixed research data from two just sustainability education research case studies: collages from participants of a climate justice social incubator as well as participant art from place-based ecojustice walking pedagogy research. The article engages in intersubjective responding and generated arts-based responses to the process itself. The Verge catalyzed insight in the researchers’ just sustainability arts educational research. They suggest that the Verge could be a useful research method for arts-based educators, particularly sensitive to the ecological and social justice dimensions of data and learning contexts. The researchers found the method helped them gain insight and perspective, sense bias, make subtle connections, sense patterns, decenter domination discourses, and enhance their capacity to engage creatively and critically with social and ecological intelligence in their research process. They posit that the Verge can nurture the unfinished and ongoing work of educational design for just sustainabilities.

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Bios

Dr. Marna Hauk facilitates social incubators for community climate change visionary-activists and innovates graduate curriculum in creativity, sustainability leadership, regenerative design, climate change, and climate justice education as the director for the Institute for Earth Regenerative Studies and in leadership programs at Prescott College and Champlain College. She has more than ninety peer-reviewed publications and presentations and co-edited *Vibrant Voices: Women, Myth, and the Arts* (2018) and *Community Climate Change Education: A Mosaic of Approaches* (2017). She earned her Ph.D. in Sustainability Education in 2014 and is a facilitator for the “Work that Reconnects Network”. Dr. Hauk has presented internationally and facilitated keynotes and featured presentations regarding climate change education, climate justice visionary activism, and ecopsychologically-informed resilience building and educational approaches. She catalyzes group genius with approaches that are academically vigorous, research-based, experientially immersive, and solutionary. Contact: earthregenerative@gmail.com

Amanda Rachel Kippen is an ocean advocate with a background in science education and environmental program development for nonprofits. She is a current student in the Master of Arts Program in Environmental Studies at Prescott College (Prescott, Arizona). Her research interests are focused on plastic pollution and plastic consumption in industrial agriculture and community education and engagement through social practice arts. Rachel is the Director of Programs at a marine conservation nonprofit in Santa Cruz, California, where she currently resides. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Environmental Studies with an emphasis in Marine Conservation from the University of Redlands and a Certificate in Strategic Leadership and Nonprofit Management from San Francisco State University. Rachel enjoys her free time walking shorelines and collecting materials for repurposed artwork that is embodied in her portfolio, Singleuseplanet <https://amandakippen.wixsite.com/singleuseplanet>



Figure 1. On the Verge of Mirrored Ecologies of Mind, Original Mixed Media, A. Kippen

As attention increases to ecological crises provoked by industrial growth society (Macy & Johnstone, 2012), including climate consequences and eco-disasters, the value of nature connection can get lost in the mix, as can nuanced understandings of the naturecultural experiences of the dispossessed (Fawcett, 2013). In particular, ecological discourses and discourses on ecology can become fraught with the same re-assertions of unconscious dominator culture linearity, hierarchy, and polarities, reinforcing the submersion of nondominant voices. How do we surface unheard voices in ecological and climate change education and educational research, to attend also to environmental and to climate justice? Do arts-based approaches have a special role to play in re-centering the unheard and sidelined experiences of those oppressed by other forms of structural violence? This article explores one possible approach: a type of collaborative arts-based inquiry in environmental and sustainability education and environmental justice education to re-center unheard voices.

Research Context

Researcher 1, Marna Hauk, is positioned as a white, queer sustainability education faculty innovating community climate resilience programs for queer women. She worked with images and collages made by participants in a Gaian resilience and climate justice social incubator with intergenerational mentoring for adult women and queer womxn visionary-activists in Portland, Oregon, on the traditional lands of the Multnomah and Upper Chinook peoples (Hauk, 2017). Researcher 2, Amanda Rachel Kippen, is positioned as a Hawaiian-heritage female environmental educator and established visual artist designing programs serving first- and second-generation children of migrant workers near Monterey Bay, California, on the traditional lands of the Awaswas, Ohlone, Ohlone/Amah Mutsun, and Rumsen peoples. She used images of participant art-making from the redevelopment of a curriculum for a marine experiential immersion program for first and second-generation children of migrant workers (bilingual or Spanish-language only) that was expanded to include community-based, grassroots organizing advocacy skills and environmental justice curriculum. Our relationship began as a nourishing student and mentor relationship and evolved into a rich co-learning and co-researching relationship. In the process of pursuing our own educational research sense-making, we found productive and expansive possibilities by mashing up our arts-based data in a co-invented game. This article describes this collaborative and

gamified way of gaining fresh perspectives on arts-based research data through juxtaposition, interrelationship, kibitzing, reflecting, and further artmaking.

Meaning and Method at the Verge

The novel method used in this form of collaborative arts-based inquiry involves building complex networks of content and process through a form of gamification via images and interpretation.

The method we have developed is called “Verge” and involves “playing” images from research data in an imaginal field to sense complex networks of emergent themes. We chose to call the method “Verge” because it invites threshold experiences.¹ We leveraged a method called intersubjective responding, in which artists respond to others’ art (Rumbold, Allen, Alexander, & van Laar, 2008). We created a game based on intersubjective responding in which we respond to each other’s arts-based data. We borrowed from Casey’s (2007) glance method to examine the edges and peripheries, or the verges, of connections, relationships, and emergent meanings. We developed this approach to move both of our bodies of research forward, generating novel visualizations and complex networks as we “played” data in novel assemblages. Metacognitive reflective journaling helped clarify fresh insights. We offer this method, or meta-method, to support others in their work with subtle dynamics and complex topics, including just sustainability arts educational research.

Resonances at the Verge

The Verge integrates methods and theories of the glance at the ecotones/borderlands to generate intersubjective responding. The particular subject matter of the educational research exemplified in relationship, is from the fields of environmental justice and just sustainabilities. The method promises fruitful generativity in application in other kinds of arts-based research as well.

The glance. This work leverages place scholar and environmental phenomenologist Ed Casey’s arts-based *glance* method (2007). Glancing applies both to taking in original sense phenomenon, kind of like glancing out the window of a moving car, as well as how to take in artworks more holistically. The glance is an alternative to the gaze.

Casey’s glance involves looking swiftly, consciously but non-analytically, and aims at including the peripheral. It is relevant for perceiving, understanding and connecting art-making, earth, and landscapes (Casey, 2005, p. 158). For those from dominant positions, we suggest, glancing can involve fleeting access outside of/underneath the constraints of dominator perception and perspective. We used the glance with our research data and the process of the Verge to avoid only looking-at the data, and instead, perceived-with the images arising, and sometimes from the arising of unheard voices or silenced perspectives, including that of the place or land itself. For those positioned at the margins and already on the decentered periphery, the glance involves inclusion, connection, and possibly re-centering. This is particularly relevant for working in just sustainabilities or other contexts that hold power differentials. In both cases, it is fresh, surprising, and connective (Casey, 2007, p. 216). A more thoroughgoing exploration of the glance is beyond the scope of the current work.

Working at the Verge with our just sustainabilities arts data required looking differently. Glancing also supported our work in intersubjective responding where Verges are blurring, prismatic, edgy. Just sustainabilities involve flipping out of/under the dominant and dominating discourses. For these reasons, glance methods were resonant at the Verge.

The Verge and Edge, Ecotone, Borderland, Rhizovocal Matrix

In the process of the Verge, we invite pulling forward the corners, the borderlands (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009), the spaces between, the side of the road, the ecotone (Krall, 1994), the edge of the perceivable. In particular, guided by Anzaldúa, we enter the nepantlera zone, “the interfaces one crosses when switching between the upper, or external, reality and the underworld, the world of the soul and its images” (2009, p. 103) at the virtual or real crossroads. Such activity “opens up ecofeminist subversions ... at the ecotones of eliding cultural phenomenon, where rhizovocal irruptions (Jackson, 2003) can be amplified. Ecotones are the spaces where ecological communities or biomes meet, what in permaculture is referred to as edge” (Hauk, 2016, p. 141). We “see with cracked lenses” (Canty, 2017). We dig deep and reach across. We diffract and regenerate. In particular, arts-based approaches have been identified as being productive at this verge/edge/threshold of environmental education, to nurture transdisciplinary dialogue and encourage participation (Heimlich & Miss, 2013).

Intersubjective Responding

This Verge method also involves a form of sequenced “playing” of images inspired by a method in *Knowing Differently: Arts-Based and Collaborative Research Methods* (Liamputtong & Rumbold, 2008) called intersubjective responding, characterized as a form of knowing differently together (Rumbold, Allen, Alexander, & van Laar, 2008). Intersubjective knowing is shared understanding and a shared criterion for evidence (Rumbold, et al., 2008). Propositional knowing and practical knowing are dominant ways of knowing in research that substantiates what something is, or how something is done. Intersubjectivity requires connection beyond the individual through sharing ways of knowing, while recognizing that those engaged in sharing may have entirely different interpretive and conceptual ways of making meaning. We as co-researchers participated in intersubjective communication by taking turns sharing our participants’ art and elucidating on each piece as we verbalized what was brought to top of mind. The responding researcher would choose to exhibit an image from their own dataset based on the ideas surfaced through visual and spoken communication. This process allowed us to enter into a visual conversation that opened up intentional displays that represented each individual’s ways of knowing and a corresponding response to the art displayed. This process-oriented research method values the lived experience of research, places the researcher as a participant, and in so doing, can encourage perceptions that are on the edge of the researcher’s frame. It can encourage bias to be brought front and center. Bickel contends that these kinds of reflective and co-emergent processes allow research participants to “have the opportunity to step beyond personal boundaries to re-attune with themselves and others” (2015, p. 82).

Relationship, Ecological Networks, and Systems Ecologies

What does nature connection cultivate in arts-based methods? Ecological ways of knowing emphasize relationship and connectedness as well as kinship (Bigknife Antonio, 2019; Cajete, 2008; Haraway, 2016; Hauk, 2018; Ingold, 2011; McKenzie et al, 2009). Novel interpretations of ecological connections across nature, culture, and naturecultures reveal patterns of complex networks emerging (Goldstein, Hazy, & Lichtenstein, 2009; Hauk, 2014b; Lima, 2015; Peters & Araya, 2009). Playing the Verge extended ecological networks methods using image card games in educational research leveraging ecological, fractal patterns (Hauk, 2013, 2014a, b) and mandalas (Hauk, 2014c). Echoing Wheatley (2006), the Verge approach emphasizes the value of an ecological worldview and systems ecological ways of organizing research using relational networks: shifting from systems of domina-

tion and control (p. 248). The Verge as a game engages with what Goleman, Bennett, and Barlow (2012) described as taking a living systems approach to cultivate emotional, social, and ecological intelligence (pp. 10-11). We found the surfacing of emerging relational networks particularly compatible with our work in just sustainabilities, with its emphasis on troubling structural domination and control. Additionally, the deployment of arts and creativity in education has been demonstrated as particularly effective in undermining dogmatism and entrenched perception systems of domination and control (Ambrose, 2009; Bowers, 2011; Dolby, 2012; Hauk, 2014a, Jardine, 1998). Arts-informed approaches are particularly useful in studying effective social justice and eco-justice pedagogies (Kulnieks & Young, 2014). As with other forms of arts-based environmental educational research, the benefits of just sustainability arts educational research accrue both within the research participants and findings as well as for the researchers themselves (Kushins, 2015).

Note that using complex relational networks as part of our method of the Verge, we aim to reflect this practice in our use of many inline citations, using trans- and interdisciplinary references to draw complex networked connections between the kinds of sources supporting our research.

Developing the Verge

As co-researchers, we played with different methods of intersubjective responding, including multi-stranded personal conversation, thus blogging along multiple lines of inquiry.² Our initial inquiry involved multiple questions: art as a liberatory praxis in just sustainability research; art as a means for learners to increase emotional resilience and to metabolize possibly overwhelming emotional responses to climate justice, environmental justice, and ecofeminism topics; art as a language for global conversations about environmental justice (across spoken languages); and art as a catalyst for relationship and participatory process (Conversation, researchers 1 and 2, Research Data, June 2016)

Eventually, we developed the Verge as a more dynamic and visually engaging form of intersubjective responding. As we conducted the stranded written conversations first, we are not able to pull apart how the Verge might work as a standalone without anticipatory intersubjective written responding, so we leave that to future inquiry. Another dimension for future research would be enabling the original research participants themselves to engage in the Verge for even broader sense-making.

The Verge game we prototyped involved five phases of preparation and multiple rounds of intersubjective responding. These are described in the next section in full:

- Phase 1: Curation of Images & Setting Guidelines for Play
- Phase 2: Playing Images
- Phase 3: Researcher Reflection
- Phase 4: Emergent Network Mapping
- Phase 5: Arts Response

The Verge in Action

As we are sharing a prototype of an arts-based data sense-making gamification method, the co-researchers share details of the main phases of the process, from image curation to multiple rounds of intersubjective responding and arts-based sense-making. The game was played virtually. We were on the phone and both on our computers. Zoom

or a similar platform would help a lot with this process in the future. We had a Basecamp site that was a shared electronic space for preparing and sharing images, sharing notes, reflective writing, artworking, etc. This Verge can be played with more than 2 co-researchers.

Phase 1. Curating Images and Setting Guidelines for Play

Each researcher curates and prepares real or virtual images from their research data. These images can be selections of pages of printouts of arts-based data from participants, or jpg/other electronic images in a stack or electronic folder [see images in Figures 2 through 7]. In Phase 1, guidelines are set regarding the sequence of who takes turns in what order amongst the researcher-players, minimum number of rounds of responding, mode of meeting, and methods of recording impressions and ideas.

Before play started, the co-researchers set up guidelines, including who would start and the kinds of responses to be recorded, where and how. In this instance, the guidelines set before playing were to respond using glance modes that also allow multiple ideas in responding. The idea was to swing wide rather than stay narrow. What is bubbling up from the periphery? What intuitive connections are arising?

Researcher 1's research involved catalyzing climate change and climate justice visionary-activists to take action, supported in a year-long eco-social incubator to design community-based projects. She played the Verge with collaged art that her participants had developed to explore ecological and cultural regeneration.

Researcher 2's research invited naturalist and public school educators to participate in a walking migration of the coast to explore connections between justice and sustainability using place-based and arts-based pedagogies. Researcher 2 played the Verge with pieces of art her participants created from recycled agricultural plastic they had recovered during environmental restoration or had found in situ during research walks. These art pieces were individually and collaboratively created and curated. These pieces represented the weaving and intersecting nature of the research as the original participants, including the researcher, explored environmental and social dimensions of the Monterey Bay.

Phase 2. Sample Play: Six Moves at the Verge

During play, researchers take turns starting to glance at, select, and place images. One researcher notes the sequences of alternating rounds of image selection as images are played. The spoken words of the co-researcher playing their image are captured or recorded in audio and/or as text by the researcher not playing in order to capture potential connections. Then, the next image is played.

Per Phase 1 of the Verge, both researchers self-curated by preparing a quiver of images valuable to their individual research endeavors prior to meeting. In Phase 2, the researchers engaged in playing the Verge. Both researchers utilized Casey's glance methods (2007) to take in the images and the growing network ecology of them. This glance method also invited the two researchers to open to edgeful and nonlinear blendings of subtle perceptions and threshold experiences, including emergent connections with place, land, the collective intelligence of participants and phenomena, the fields of ancestral and future beings, etc. Shall we call this "merge at the Verge"? In describing artists [researchers] glancing at and metabolizing the primary terrain and re-expressing it as embodied, Casey (2005) described the process of the glance:

the viewing subject is invited to leave his or her egocentricity behind so as to rejoin the greater natural world without and to realize an animated alliance between immanence and transcendence, psyche and soma - all this sublimated to the very threshold of human experience. At this threshold and beyond it,

painting and mapping stage one of their most intimate and evocative scenarios of collaboration. (p. 173)

One researcher, in this case researcher 2, typed spoken conversation while the other ensured that all details were captured. This included the careful recording of the name, sequence, and placement of each data-image played as both researchers were looking at their computers and focusing on the image being offered. The conversation was occurring over the telephone and being typed, with a voice recording backup [newer technology will make this process easier in the future]. On their turn, each researcher also suggested a physical placement for their image in relation to the other played images. Proximity signified relatedness. This relational location was also recorded. In this way, the play over time formed a multi-dimensional, relational visual network, later visualized in Phase 4.

Researcher 1 began by playing her first card and sharing her own reflection on her reasoning for sharing. Researcher 2 chose her own follow up card based on connections uncovered through researcher 1's revelations. Researcher 2 then explained her decision-making process and meaning making of the image chosen and expressed reflections. Playing cards back and forth, in the framework of intersubjective responding, continued until both researchers had played three cards each. Following the conversation, researcher 1 and researcher 2 separately reflected on the entire process. The experience flowed smoothly, with both researchers finding new reflections and addressing their familiar art from the research with new perspective. While the co-researchers have spent hundreds of hours communicating about ecofeminist, environmental justice, and sustainability education research and project design over many years, topics of discussion were unearthed for the first time as a result of this creative and intersubjective approach.

Table 1.
Sample Play of the Verge

The following sequence of plays and the free-write transcript highlights meaning-making in the Verge arts-based educational research data synthesis activity (November 2016).



TURN 1
Researcher 1 plays card (Figure 2).

Commentary by researcher 1 while placing this image card:

The participant who created this image spoke about how by looking from different perspectives, a richer wholeness emerges. They were intending this image to both be about love relationships but also about planetary love. It leads to questions: can I have a relationship with the planet, what is that like, what is the nature of that, what is that similar to, what comes alive from that, how does that work? Ocean symbolizes this sense of resurgence. There is this cyclic, resurgent quality to the kind of perception explored. The artist-participant expressed how being able to perceive the planet has a tidal, cyclic regenerative quality to it. This tidal flow of regenerative energies also applies specifically to thinking about climate change, planetary changes, and other of these deeper rhythms. How do we fall in love and have this love relationship with something that is at the planetary scale? Can this love regenerate our capacity to act on behalf of and with the planetary systems?

Figure 2. Regeneration Collage, Participant 07, in Researcher 1's Women Empowering Climate Action Network (WE-CAN) for Gaian Resilience and Climate Justice Program Research, 2016

TURN 2

Researcher 2 plays card (Figure 3).

Hearing that looking at different perspectives created a richer wholeness made me think about the weaving of my agricultural plastic and talking about the weaving of perspectives together to create a larger picture. The perspectives that emerged in the walking and weaving research discussion were first about the naming of places and how that represented the history of that place either accurately or inaccurately. We discussed how potentially and very likely place naming did not include the whole story of that place where we were sitting and doing the weaving practice together. Then the discussion morphed into a talk about our personal names and how those names either represented a story of our own journey, our family journey, and how that might have also not reflected our whole story. Then the conversation morphed into a discussion about gender roles and women taking the last name of their husbands through the institution of marriage.

For the third card played, researcher 1 played a card and inserted it in where researcher 2 was talking about historical erasures and the partial nature of places and the colonial obscuring of the full perspective.



Figure 3. Agricultural Drip Tape Weaving Templates, Researcher 2's Monterey Bay Ecojustice Walking Curriculum Research, 2016.



Figure 4. Regeneration Collage, Participant 02, Researcher 1's Women Empowering Climate Action Network (WE-CAN) for Gaian Resilience. and Climate Justice Program Research, E. Zions, 2016.

TURN 3

Researcher 1 plays card (Figure 4).

Parallel to potential erasure, what comes to mind is how intimately connected place connection is with ancestral connection and cross-lineage knowing. An act of reclamation as important as climate justice includes the kind of place connection from critical place inquiry³ that requires the decolonizing and reinhabiting dimensions.⁴ The thing that comes to mind in the moment about that is how do we make space to invite and support stories that have been repressed both from the land themselves, the places themselves, as well as the people who recolonization has tried to erase?

TURN 4.

Researcher 2 plays card (Figure 5).

This makes me immediately go back to the conversation about naming because after the discussion about the taking of names, the participants wanted to explore how to encourage learners through art and through weaving to tell a more true story about their experience or feel inspired to learn about a more true story about their history. An idea arose to invite the participants to write their own story as they know it on the actual plastic and then weave that with other stories. The participants then would follow up by going home and trying to do research about why they have their name and where it came from, what could have been lost along the way.

That also makes me think of what you are talking about, how to invite more stories from the land itself. In this way, I see the network beginning to emerge. I see how this image card I am playing has multiple relationships. Here at the Verge, I can play against multiple of the cards that have been played rather than playing in a line. That is a key distinction about a complex network as opposed to just creating linear sequences. This draws lines to other cards rather than linear discussion.

I am playing this image card because this art piece really represented my first attempt of identifying with my own story. As I wove this giant piece, it was meant to be lauhala, the Hawaiian form of weaving, representing some of my personal history and connection to my own naming and identity.



Figure 5. Agricultural Plastic Lauhala Weave, Original Art, A. Kippen, 2016.



Figure 6. Regeneration Collage, Participant 05, Researcher 1's Women Empowering Climate Action Network (WE-CAN) for Gaian Resilience and Climate Justice Program Research, Participant Alouette Mayer, 2016.

TURN 5

Researcher 1 plays card (Figure 6).

I am playing this image card and connecting it to the two others I played and the one you just played about the mesh weave. Connect that image card to the one I just played and the one right before it, with the branching out to make a triangle together. What I want to bring in is that the land itself has stories to tell. Some of those stories are very old and very ancient stories. I admit I can't fully remember what the participant said about this image. What I see is this idea that multiple perspectives are reflected in the waterdrops, each of which is reflecting holographically the entire flower inside of which it was taken. Every drop of water, speck of dirt, in a place is also holding the story of that entire place across millennia.⁵ Some of those stories have nothing to do with humans and some of them have a lot to do with humans, and if we are only going through the lens of humans, we might often miss some of the stories. How do we get place-centric and surface the unheard voices as well? And that reminds me of the whole research practice of place consent in the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. How do we seek consent from places as well as people?⁶ Part of why I am also playing this card is because there are patterns in nature from the biocultural matrix that help us think in fundamentally non-patriarchal ways so that we can access the sort of consciousness that is like the planetary. This card then also connects up to the first card. How do we relate to the planetary scale? Something like climate change that is such a planet-scale phenomena, how do we get our consciousness into the immediate and specific, tragic and imminent to get into a deep time perspective and into a deep being and cross-scale happening?⁷

TURN 6.

Researcher 2 plays card (Figure 7).

Alright, so when you were talking about how we can look at land in a way that includes stories that are not just from a human perspective but also from the land and from all parts of the land—from the soil, to micro-organisms to everything that is part of that ecosystem—I thought about how often it is the case that we focus only on human perspective through climate change and climate justice education. This includes how we think about the materials that we used to create this art. Some of the participants tried to celebrate or wanted to reclaim the land when it was not in suffering, at least in their own opinions. For example, some participants wanted to draw pictures of strawberries on the pipe trying to represent a time when the land was “productive.” I was struck by the persistent human-centrism of these participants.

I noticed how the participants, having learned about that farming properly from which the plastic was salvaged, and the state the land was currently in (severely affected by storm and erosion), how they wanted to draw a strawberry on a piece of trash to make it not shameful for agriculture and for agricultural workers in the community. And when you talked about asking the land for permission to do research, when I was on that property it did feel



Figure 7. PVC Pipe Collaborative Hanging, Researcher 2's Monterey Bay Ecojustice Walking Curriculum Research, 2016.

like I was part of a violation of that land by taking photos of it in its degraded form and hearing stories from the Land Manager who kept referring to the current state of the land as “raped.” And in that experience, I noticed the many nonhuman residents that still remained in this place, and whose perspective I was not hearing necessarily or asking permission from. It makes me think about how art could be more reflective and encouraging of participants to consider these social justice issues as they deem human rights issues as also rights issues for the land itself.

Phase 3. Metareflective Journaling: Patterns That Connect

Parallel to the process of collaborative inquiry, each researcher prepares a written or arts-based response to the process of intersubjective responding and the emergent connections after the immediate network-making play, as meta-reflective journaling in the form of a free-write. The arts-based process of intersubjective responding reveals understanding differently, together (Rumbold, et al., 2008), the next part of the Verge. Table 2 highlights some of the journaled reflections from Phase 3.

Table 2.

Researcher reflections in free-writes after rounds of playing the “Verge”

Researcher 1 Meta-reflections	Researcher 2 Meta-reflections
<p>I am savoring the content resonances around resurgence (related to Simpson’s work, 2011, 2017) and resistance, decolonization, reclaiming positionality, biocultural matrix, and re-centering land and land relationships (resonant with Calderon’s 2014 work).</p> <p>I am also savoring the process findings in addition to the content findings. I have really enjoyed this activity. There were certain moments that really come to mind with a fierce clarity. In order to play “the images” I had to really intensely differentially engage with each image, with the art, and it really cultivated a deeper level of perception and metabolizing of the layers of both intention but also interpretation on that image. I felt free to be evocatively connective across the different dimensions of the conversation rather than feeling more constrained in a linear mode, so it had a liberatory and possibility sense to it.</p> <p>Then another thing that happened for me with this process was that I felt like we were in a experience of mutual discovery (I mean discovery in a non-colonizing way)—in a process of mutual making if you will, mutual meaning-</p>	<p>This experience felt fluid and engaging. The conversation was layered as we simultaneously discussed the visuals played as cards at present while being internally reflective on the meaning-making we described attached to each visual card, and then additionally reflected in relation to one another’s reflection. It resulted in a conversation that was rooted in what had actually happened in our own lives through the creation of the visual cards we each shared, yet tied into larger concepts and constructs that perhaps neither artist researcher had considered.</p> <p>I was encouraged to share new relationships, both with my visual cards and with the experiences and perspectives they represented. It further grounded my understanding of critical pedagogies of place and belief that art is supportive of this pedagogy. I was attached to my images as they represented part of my place and my experience and the act of swapping visual cards and participating in these dialogues inspired new critical thought about something so familiar. In the future, I would like to see this visually laid out in a web. Perhaps we could create a drawing or mapping document, or even utilize a visual layout like Prezi.</p>

Researcher 1 Meta-reflections...

making we were both feeling into. I felt like I learned to know more about researcher 2's recent research, which I hadn't heard that much about yet. The rich conversation had with participants surfaced in the echoes through Researcher 2's rendering and interpretation. To note, interpretation does not feel like the right word. Perhaps instead, sense-making? Curation?

Another thing that came alive for me was that I realize that, similar to other things that I've been doing over the past few years, I've been exploring gamification as an alternative form of data synthesis and data analysis and that kind of sense making. I feel very excited about that and like that maybe there's a string of writing from the kinds of gamified research experiments in this space I've been exploring in the past few years. I am so excited about the idea and open to having the same kind of energy I have towards artmaking that's open space, non-academic, ceramics or some of this kind of more collage imagery that I personally work with. I feel excitement about this direction, a sense of an invitation to be more creative as a researcher: I'm going to be creative. There was a lot more open-endedness than when I'm coding qualitative data. Even though I try to follow Johnny Saldaña's (2013) idea that coding is a form of poetry, this was more fun today. So I'm excited to see how this form of collaborative inquiry that's a kind of intersubjective responding can continue to open up. Working with research data at the Verge really opened something up for me.

Then I think the other thing about this approach is that it's a way for researchers who are not themselves image makers or art makers nevertheless to get into imagery and work with images from participants even if they themselves are not studio artists.

Researcher 2 Meta-reflections...

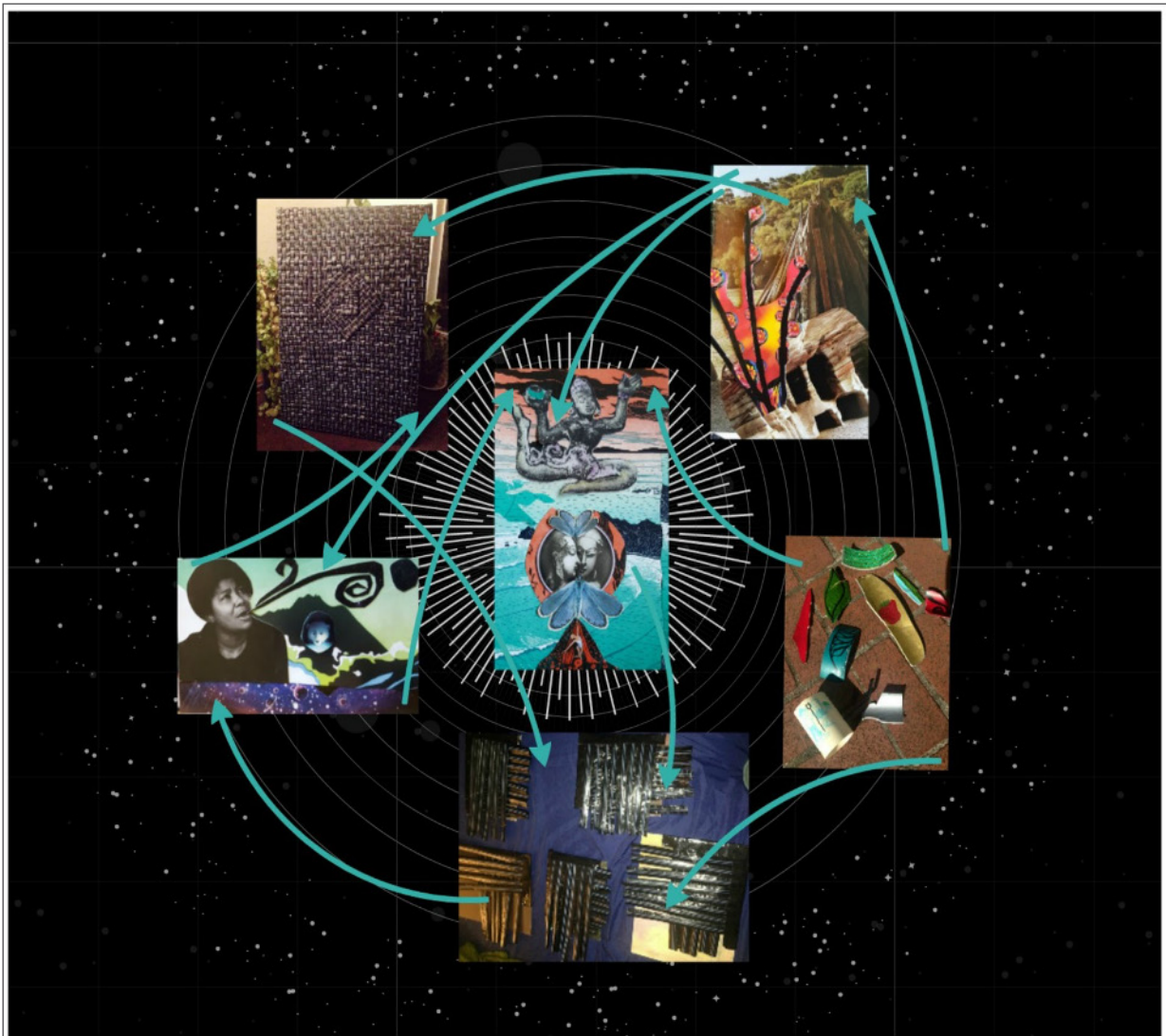
That would allow the artist researchers to see new connections to other images including previously played images in a web format rather than linearly. The dialogue recorded would still reflect the playing of one card off the next but could increase the subjects broached through a larger lens.

Phase 4. Network Synthesis

In this fourth phase of the Verge there is an emergence and documentation of a systems-ecological network of multi-relationships between cards played and emergent themes (see Figure 8). This phase, which can also emerge during synchronous, real-time play, is the development of a visual network of the multi-stranded connections across the images and the insights they catalyzed. Figure 8 reflects a systems network of complex ecologies of relationship stirred during the Verge. In this instance, researcher 2 developed this visualization of the network synthesis emerging into an artwork, and both authors collaborated in noticing and adding connective ties, theme words, etc. The fifth phase of arts-based response to the entire process is described in the following section as well as in the article's conclusion.

Phase 5. Sense Making

Generation of arts-based responses to the process takes place in phase 5. To provide an overview, the rich emerging networks of fresh sense-making through the Verge helped us deepen in connections with our research areas. We found that arts-mediated inter-subjective knowing that brings the edges-of de-centered bias, insight, and intuition-to the center of attention is particularly appropriate for educational research oriented to just sustainabilities. For both of us, the emerging nexus affirmed how environmental justice and just sustainabilities are educational approaches at the verge: they straddle boundaries of disciplines as well as straddle activity, moving theory into practice (Agyeman & Crouch, 2004, p. 114).



richer wholeness . deep planetary love . consciousness . biocultural . cyclical . recolonize .
perspective . woven . encourage . repressed . critical place . identity . human perspective .
phenomena . land identity . violation . nature patterns . ancestral . story . reflecting .
climate justice . erasure . cross-scale . naming . deep time . reclaim . permission

Figure 8. Systems network of complex ecologies of relationship stirred between this 6-image card playing at the Verge, Hauk and Kippen, 2017.

Particularly, arts-based approaches to environmental and place-based — just sustainabilities arts educational research education approaches — have proven fruitful along themes of reclaiming power, borderlands, displacement, reclamation, and belonging, including “the threshold of home” (Graham, 2010, p. 39). Graham further reflects on the fruitfulness:

We started with the idea that art making could be a social enterprise, connected to the communities around us with a significant moral dimension. I wanted to move from the traditional, but limited, notion of art being solely about personal expression toward a vision of teaching that could engage students in a reflective and social process with the larger community. As we did this, we became a mirror and inspiration to people around us. The experience transformed our vision and our awareness. (Graham, 2010, p. 46)

What were the transformed visions and awarenesses?

Both researchers discovered that environmental justice and just sustainabilities can be used as a living lens and conceptual framework for sustainability education (Agyeman & Crouch, 2004, p. 113). For researcher 2, engaging with the Verge clarified fresh emphases at the convergence of topic and process in her research in environmental justice education. Her project in the Monterey Bay concerned developing walking pedagogies centering environmental racism and environmental justice. The environmental justice movements have traditionally surfaced concerns of communities of color bearing a differential and heavy burden of toxins in urban contexts, including through incinerators and pollution (Bullard, 2000). In the Monterey Bay context, the weaving process surfaced the toxic connections between farmworkers exposed to pesticides, agricultural use of plastics (including in organic food production), and health concerns about farm-to-ocean cycles. She was studying how to design educational interventions savvy to this environmental racism, which is a central concern of environmental justice. Traditionally, iterations of these environmental justice efforts have broadened to additionally consider issues of equity and access when considering experiencing nature, environmental education, and conservation activities that are more commonly resourced for those who benefit from oppressive power structures (Taylor, 1996).

In parallel, the climate justice movements have spotlighted the need for structural and distributive justices to avoid those who have contributed the least to planetary ecological crises paying the highest cost in access to dry land, clean water, safety, and public health (Tremmel & Robinson, 2014). What researcher 2 found was that inviting her participants into weaving with plastic waste, and journeying in these environmental justice terrains while catalyzing purposeful conversations during their art-making, did in fact surface insights for her participants around these justice issues of power, submerged stories, and processes of reclaiming voice and power. Importantly, these participant insights were personalized rather than abstracted. And researcher 2 discovered further opportunities to support those from dominant positions to not unconsciously re-erase systemic damages. These discoveries will inspire further research and curricular design.

For researcher 1, the Verge work felt liberatory. She found novel connections between other areas of her research and the particular project’s purpose along with the sensefield of her collage-making participants. Her research related to the field of just sustainabilities, which brings a further future focus to environmental and climate justice. Agyeman, Bullard, and Evans (2003) highlighted the value of just sustainability initiatives, reasoning “sustainable development requires that we give consideration to our own developmental needs, as well as those

of generations still to come, while environmental justice prioritizes accountability to those currently alive” (p. 188). With a future forward focus and while being seen as additive to environmental racism and environmental justice, just sustainability framings are focused on precautionary principles including a revision of the notion that sustainability is limited to environmental concerns. The term just sustainabilities (plural) is often used to voice the need for multiple disciplines and perspectives.

For researcher 1, the senses of expansion identified in Macy’s teachings of “Work That Reconnects” – across deep time, bridging different kinds of power, extending experiences of community, and expanding circles of identity (Macy & Johnstone, 2012) – were coming alive in the participants’ sense of catalyzing legacy, their deepening orientation to intergenerational restorative justice, their burgeoning community with each other, as well as their experience of the planetary within the just sustainabilities ecosocial incubator. As a researcher, she was freed up from the boxing of categorization and thematizing. The data itself was coming alive, a living network, expressive of the life energy of the placefields, justice, and the planetary in and through the participants. She began to sense the pulsing life moving in and through her research participants, those inventors and innovators she was supporting as they incubated community climate change projects. More emergent sense-making through intersubjective responding is explored in the last section of the article.

Discussion and Conclusion



Figure 9. On the Verge of Mirrored Ecologies of Mind, Original Mixed Media, A. Kippen

We conclude by offering a final holistic artworking (image +word),⁸ synthesizing some of the findings from playing the Verge and suggest next directions, by way of exploring the naming and imagery in the “Mirrored Ecologies of Mind” triptych. Researcher 2 took on the task of generating an image for this article describing the Verge. She layered pencil, ink drops, paint, and aerosol spray paint to depict brain scans and then distorted the images with varying exposure. Both researchers named and discussed the meaning. Inspired by researcher 2’s holistic art and the scintillating experience of playing the Verge, researcher 1 incubated some poetry, including the following poem in response to researcher 2’s layered art: radical, cloud-weaving, evanescent, essential net-web-braid.

On the Verge

nexus of the broken, crazed and braised curation:
knots and nodes explode us out of broken boxes.

verging, the insistence to connect - no, really the break
ing through of the underlying nettlings and mats

imbricating vats of vast connecting. the ribbon works of “fractured seeing”^{*}
are ley lines re-announcing possibilities, the subversive truth

that “what we need / is here. And we pray: not / for new earth
or heaven, but to be / quiet in heart, and in eye / clear.”^{**}
tendrilled rupture of our hallucinated isolation
returning us to intricate netting, nesting, nestling.

this living world of whorled amanuensis, fractal wholes:
whether in a circle, under shade of rowan and walking onion,

or in circles on sand, weaving reclaimed plastic, we touch in
to the greater weavings, through weft of flocks and stones,
warp of stories and names, resurrecting bones, across great spans of time,
dedicated to create sanctuary, for the flourishing of future beings.

“We seek not rest but transformation.
We are dancing through each other as doorways.
We are ripples crossing and fusing, journeying and returning.”^{***}

let our walking, shaking, slaying of chains and remains
forge a greater quaking, realign the sublime subterranean snaking

until, amplified, returning to the verge of becoming, to ground and body,
we can forever sense earth tendrils and human hands, connecting us to justice.
just us, quivering, in this queer, deep belly invitation to matter, as we embrace
this umbilical, rooted, radical, cloud-weaving, evanescent, essential net-web-braid.

Intersubjective Responding Poem, written by Marna Hauk

^{*} Jeanine Canty, 2017, from “Seeing Clearly Through Cracked Lenses”

^{**} Wendell Berry, 1985, from “The Wild Geese”

^{***} Marge Piercy, from “Circling,” *Living in the Open*, p. 83

“Ecologies of Mind,” in the name of the triptych, is a reference to Bateson’s (1972) *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* in which he envisioned a relational “pattern that connects” across disciplines, resonant with our networked and relational process which constitute the Verge. Bateson (2002) in *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity* further argued that our binocular eyesight somatically generated our tendency to understand things relationally, including learning, by double description (p. 125). The double brain hemispheres, recast as interlayered nerve threads mirroring knowing within and across mind(s) in Figure 9, hopes to suggest a twined metaphor between our own internal reflective processes and those understandings we intersubjectively co-generated at the surprising, generative threshold of glancing holistically and absorptively (Casey, 2007). Perhaps, in addition to a twinned relationality, the Verge opens up a third space, a further connective tissue. Ingold suggested being inspired by the act of drawing to describe this form of emergent being and relational learning:

Another way is to imagine the social world as a tangle of threads or life-paths, ever ravelling here and unravelling there, within which the task for any being is to improvise a way through, and to keep on going. Lives are bound up *in* the tangle, but are not bound *by* it, since there is no enframing, no external boundary. Thus the self is not fashioned on the rebound but undergoes continual generation. (Ingold, 2011, p. 221, emphasis as in original)

As we offer this final holistic artworking, we also problematize renderings of thinking and “mind” as occurring in the brain. The current neophilic fascination with the cauliflower on top of the neck in the upturned skybowl of bone is a vogue that is already passing, disrupted by body-wide deep sensing networks (as popularized by Pert, 1999 in *Molecules of Emotion* or explored by dancer and educational researcher Olsen, 2002, in *Body and Earth: An Experiential Guide*). We play with the vogue by multicasting the underlying networked nature of such sensing and sense-making, threading through and across the multi-scale and fractalized threaded interweave of living systems, whether recast as Baradian entanglement (2007), Gaian mind (Hauk, 2020) or the healer’s voyages across the in-between (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009).

This invitation to ecologize our perception deepens into a networked, ecological, and systemic view. Macy has likened this to Buddhist mutual causality, echoing von Bertalanffy’s characterization of open systems as flux-balancing (1991, p. 72). In other words, our looking, sensing, and understanding is also re/making the world, co-instantiating sense and possibility. This is why arts-based approaches are so creatively critical in catalyzing perceptions of justice and nurturing justice-seeking perception. Hillman suggested

it must arise in the heart in order to mediate the world truly, since... it is that subtle organ which perceives the correspondences between the subtleties of consciousness and the levels of being. This intelligence takes place by means of images which are a third possibility between mind and world. (1992/2004, p. 7)

The heartfelt tending, multiple glancing, fluxing, and systems-infused perception imbricate tangled threads, growing like a living network of connected knowing and wondering from this Verge. It can be useful to synthesize what ecojustice educational researcher Bowers (2011) elucidated while reflecting on Bateson’s work. Education and educational research can value ecological intelligence when it: encourages perception of relationships that nourish living systems, refreshes meta-perception of languages and patterns of domination and liberation, troubles abstract thinking and reconnects perception with immediate context and systems patterns, while decentering human-centered perception that can be intergenerationally renewed, encouraging nonprint cultural storage and communication, relationally re-relating learners to embedding cultural and natural ecologies, and supporting

reflective consciousness of ecologies of relationships and patterns (#1-7, pp. 138-139). Thus, as Bowers clarified, Bateson's *pattern that connects* can be an embodied practice cultivating these multiple and generative dimensions of ecological intelligence. Verge explorations catalyzed just these kinds of perceptual and meta-perceptual moves. Research at the Verge, as a methodology, holds promise of sense-making in arts-based educational research that nurtures ecological intelligence.

Perhaps the verge is the corpus callosum between our sense-making in these visuals that look as much like astronomical constellations as they do structural mappings. In this way, maybe the Verge opens up the ecotonal space of participatory perception, sense making, relationship, and artworking that promises to regenerate the threshold of experience, where natureculture and naturebodies e/merge in kinly co-creating (Hauk, 2016). Perhaps, fractally, we are cupped in the cauliflower of mountain within bone sky-bowls of terrains of mountain and slope, in co-generative cognition with placefields.

This process of “drawing together” (Ingold, 2011, p. 211) serves as “a revival of our basically animistic participation to the presence of the living world around us, locally, and construction of a participative perception of planet Earth,” toward an aesthetic of sustainability complexity (Kagan, 2011, p. 267). In sum, educational arts-based research at the Verge invites us into the unfinished (and unfinishable) work of making the art of the world/world-making via art/justly — co-generating planetary presence via thinking perception, surprising glance, and improvised relational response. Form and content converge in this kind of research: the process of just sustainabilities and arts-based educational research sense-making are equally processual and ongoing. We pause at this inverting cusp where the edges fold in, encouraged by these collaborative and emergentist networks, to sense the larger meaning-making braiding and unbraiding itself into being. Perhaps through our research into climate justice education and environmental justice-sparked sustainability journeys, and our intersubjective responding at the Verge within this research, we touch into and also help weave the larger pulsing, co-imbricating emergences, of relationship, networks, and justice. In this way, at the verges of the greater intertwining, Earth meshes with us into the tousled warp and weft of the larger living loom.

ENDNOTES

1. In particular, an Arts-Based Educational Research (ABER) pre-conference gathering at CIIS in San Francisco in 2012 on the theme of “Arts-Based Educational Research At the Edge – And Over” involved post nap-in (Bickel, 2015) breakouts at themes related to “the edge.” Author 1 gravitated to the group breakout on Verge, which through conceptual contemplation informed this game and thus merited the name.
2. This method was developed in preparation for a presentation at the Seattle Just Sustainabilities conference in August 2016, to theorize “Just Sustainability Arts” (Hauk & Kippen, 2016).
3. Tuck & McKenzie, 2015
4. Hauk, 2013; Hauk & Bloomfield, 2016
5. Greenwood, 2013; Hauk & Bloomfield, 2016
6. Chalquist & Rankin, 2010; Leetch, 2016; Miller, 2014
7. Holdrege, 2013; Macy & Johnstone, 2012
8. Artworking, a term used by Bracha Ettinger, is sourced from her practice which involves a combination of art and writing in sketchbooks/journals. See Griselda Pollock 2011, p. 240.

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SECTION TWO



Humming II [photograph] D. St. Georges. 2020.

WHO'S CURATING IN THE CLASSROOM?: SITUATING AUTOHISTORIA-TEORÍAS IN THE ARCHIVES

Leslie C. Sotomayor & Julie M. Porterfield

ABSTRACT

During the 2018-2019 academic year, we collaborated to facilitate a workshop for students in an Art Education course, using archival material from the Eberly Family Special Collections Library at Penn State. The course centered on diversity, pedagogy, and visual culture. Using our respective expertise in Art Education and primary source literacy, we chose the design and scope of the two-day workshop and subsequent assignment as a reflection for our passion for feminist theorizing and reimagining the academic White patriarchal canon in a predominantly White institution. As critical, feminist pedagogues, and in an effort to match the course theme, we chose to focus the workshop on critical analysis of primary sources that contain visual depictions and documentation of culturally diverse experiences, many of which were not positive experiences. In lesson planning, we focused on planning student interactions with the library archival materials as a way to critically reflect on historical visual culture and narratives of lived experiences. What we could not have predicted is the way that student reactions would urge us to evaluate and reflect on the emotional impact of our pedagogy on students.

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Bios

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During the 2018-2019 academic year, we collaborated to facilitate a workshop for students in an Art Education course, using archival material from the Eberly Family Special Collections Library at Penn State. The course centered on diversity, pedagogy, and visual culture. Using our respective expertise in Art Education and primary source literacy, we chose the design and scope of the two-day workshop and subsequent assignment as a reflection for our passion for feminist theorizing and reimagining the academic White patriarchal canon in a predominantly White institution. As critical, feminist pedagogues, and in an effort to match the course theme, we chose to focus the workshop on critical analysis of primary sources that contain visual depictions and documentation of culturally diverse experiences, many of which were not positive experiences. In lesson planning, we focused on planning student interactions with the library archival materials as a way to critically reflect on historical visual culture and narratives of lived experiences. What we could not have predicted is the way that student reactions would urge us to evaluate and reflect on the emotional impact of our pedagogy on students. The title of the workshop, “Who’s Curating?,” was meant to be a call to students to consider the sources of the materials that they examined and question who deems those materials worthy of being placed in an archive. Ultimately, we were asking whose experience and education the chosen archive privileged? Our objective was to encourage active listening and culturally responsive teaching through stories that are connected to history and lived experiences in an art education undergraduate classroom. Could participants also become active listeners

and participants in their own histories? Furthermore, we could not have predicted that as we reflected on our experiences from this classroom workshop the turmoil escalating within the United States; one of an increased volatile racial divide. As we reflect and write this article, the significance is even more apparent of the need for transformative and culturally responsive teaching and critical reflection as educators.

As an instructor for the School of Visual Arts, co-author, Dr. Leslie C. Sotomayor, served as the instructor of record for the course for the full semester term. Co-author, Julie M. Porterfield, serves as a faculty member in the University Libraries, meaning that she is responsible for collaborating with multiple instructors and classes throughout the term, rather than serving as an instructor of record. Having previously collaborated to plan and execute one-shot primary source literacy lessons and visits to the Special Collections exhibition gallery, working together to create the Who's Curating workshop was a natural partnership. Within this context of identifying our roles within the bureaucracy of the University, it is also important for the reflective tone of this article that we acknowledge our positionality as educators facilitating a diversity workshop. Leslie and Julie, both identify as white although Leslie also identifies as Latina. Both authors identify as cisgender, heterosexual women. Our personal narratives have many similarities and differences related to navigating through our lived experiences, offering a kaleidoscope of perspectives that interlock and work together. We navigate many parts of our identities within our job description that are extensions of traditional roles for cisgender women. For example, Leslie's teaching experience and scholarship background has been strongly cemented in working with underrepresented peers in her interdisciplinary fields and graduate work. Her experiences coded as a woman have been one of primarily a Woman of Color within a predominantly White institution, often fulfilling a diversity checkbox, and her whiteness being measured by the person next to her. The constant border crossing between identities has become a consistent inhabited space, what Chicana, feminist and queer cultural theorist Anzaldúa (2015) calls *nepantla*, the Nahuatl word for in-between spaces. The *nepantla* space that we created with the class was one of critically self-reflecting on overarching narratives that we may or may not recognize as absorbing due to our individual and collective positionality within society and culture. An example of an in-between space in the classroom was White historical narratives and Black lived experiences, theoretical rhetoric about inclusion and diversity and lived experiences of students with a deep sense of not-belonging. This is an important premise to unpack because in theory there is often specific conversations that differ from lived experiences of marginalized identities and communities.

What follows in this article is an account of our experiences as facilitators within the course and curated assignment as well as our witnessing of learners' experiences and the complexities of navigating culturally responsive environments within a university setting. In this article, we share our reflections about what we witnessed with our students and our own emotional labor throughout the process. One of the strengths we feel we have as gained experience in as educators is the positionality to facilitate conversations around important social issues.

We chose the title for this library archival workshop, Who's Curating? Because we situate curating as an active form of agency within our academic environments as a pedagogical and theoretical approach gleaned from our personal experiences as educators and navigating historical and contemporary spaces of marginalization. We disrupt the hierarchal and historical use of the word and meaning of curating to not reproduce power dynamics that by its nature is excluding knowledge that is not deemed 'expert.' However, we position ourselves as educators akin to curators and invite undergraduate students to also engage with library archives curatorially in conjunction with their expert knowledge by carefully and critically self-reflecting on their own knowledge bases. Sotomayor uses the term curator to describe the actions of an educator who is creating, implementing, and sharing a

pedagogical approach that centers on co-creating knowledge with care and stewardship (Sotomayor, 2020). In the account shared here, curating is a shared experience between Julie and Leslie and a classroom of undergraduate students. Next, we will explain our approach in contextualizing our curating of the archival workshop for undergraduate students as part of their taking a diversity, pedagogy and visual culture class.

Pedagogy & Theoretical Approach

After discussing our personal Feminist pedagogies for inclusion, critical self-reflection and analysis of power dynamics within institutions and the Art Education course objectives; we determined that a culturally relevant/responsive approach to the workshop would be the best fit. Culturally relevant pedagogy was first defined by Gloria Ladson-Billings as an approach to teaching that “empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, & attitudes” (1994, p.18). More recently, Brown University’s, The Education Alliance (2019) outlines seven tenets of culturally responsive teaching. For the purposes of the workshop, we focused on three of these characteristics: culturally mediated instruction, learning within the culture of context and student-centered instruction. We have contextualized Culturally Responsive Teaching within our feminist and art education disciplines engaging with the scholarship of Gloria Anzaldúa (2015), AnaLouise Keating (2015), and Maxine Greene (1995). Anzaldúa, Keating and Greene warn us of the emotional toll and heavy work that conscious raising work requires by connecting and dismantling historical narratives that impact our lived experiences. In this reflection we attempt to unpack the impact to our own experiences and by extension the students. By curating a critically self-reflective space for ourselves and students the experiences become collaborative, a collective of mine, ours, and theirs; a suturing of stories as we co-curate.

In co-curating undergraduate environments, we aimed to facilitate conversations with students while employing Gloria Anzaldúa (2015) and Maxine Greene (1995) theories of curating spaces where vulnerability and exposure of wounds is shared, and learners bear witness to each other’s internalized pain. This is a form of emotional labor. Anzaldúa explains that artists “bear witness to what haunts us, to step back and attempt to see the pattern in these events (personal and societal), and how we can repair *el daño* (the damage) by using the imagination and its vision” (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2015, p. 10). Through sharing of pain and trauma, exposure and a necessary fragmentation is enacted. The transformative acts of sharing our lived experiences, critically self-reflecting and actively listening encourage healing and integration of the self (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2015). Furthermore, the act of sharing our testimonios,^[1] ignites the creation for the theory Anzaldúa coined, *Autohistoria-teoría*, a feminist writing practice of *testimonio* as a way to create self-knowledge, belonging, and to bridge collaborative spaces through self-empowerment. Anzaldúa offers a proto-definition of *autohistoria* as a term to “describe the genre of writing about one’s personal and collective history using fictive elements, a sort of fictionalized autobiography or memoir: and *autohistoria-teoría*, is a personal essay that theorizes” (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2009, p. 578). We bridge Anzaldúa’s call for self-liberation through testimonios to Maxine Greene’s vision for consciousness and empathy work through art education.

The concept of transformative learning toward interconnectedness has also been important to the philosophy of aesthetic education (Greene, 1978, 1995). Aesthetic education philosopher, Maxine Greene (1995) explores concepts of possibilities, imagination, and interconnectedness towards transformation through art education. Her concept of an emancipated pedagogy, which merges art and aesthetics as one education that empowers students and “allows them to read and to name, to write and to rewrite their own lived worlds” seeks to create

inclusion and a making of “some common world” (Greene, 1995, pp. 147, 135). Greene (1978) defines art and aesthetic education as worlds that facilitate reflection and awareness in order to create meaning and new possibilities. She explains the possibilities for educators to “move more and more persons into the imaginative mode of awareness, as we free them to make their own visions real” (Greene, 1978, p. 196). Greene (1995) addresses a larger picture of art education advocating for active teaching in order to inspire active learners. She explains that imagination is an integral part of both the lives of teachers and learners’ experiences to see new paths for learning, consciousness work, and also towards empathy (Greene, 1995). Greene, reaches beyond theorizing and creating environments for awareness, and expands the crossings into active and critical self-reflective work to rewrite one’s own empowered stories and engage in a healing process. Her emancipatory pedagogy towards freedom specifically addresses the inclusion of groups of people and ranges of media and arts which have historically been excluded from the art education canon (Greene, 1995). Furthermore, she posits that engaging with “pluralities of persons” may inspire individuals to find their own images, and visions within an array of arts, experiencing “all sorts of sensuous openings” (Greene, 1995, p. 137). Greene (1995) writes,

Yes, it should be education for a more informed and imaginative awareness, but it should also be education in the kinds of critical transactions that empower students to resist both elitism and objectivism, that allow them to read and to name, to write and to rewrite their own lived worlds. (p. 147)

In this reflective paper we ask, how may we instigate a rewriting of lived and witnessed experiences with students in the classroom space?

In order to meet the critical, feminist outcomes of both the workshop and the course as a whole, the selection of archival materials used for the workshop began with two criteria: items that document the oppression of marginalized groups, and items that demonstrate this oppression through visual representations. One of the archival literacy objectives that we intended for students to meet as a result of the workshop was an understanding of “archival silences,” or the gaps that occur in the archival record, when evidence of certain experiences are not collected (Carter, 2006). We integrated this concept into the lesson through both the assignment and a brief lecture on archives at the beginning of class. The brief lecture included an explanation of archival practice, and a brief discussion of Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook’s (2002) assertion that “Archives have the power to privilege and to marginalize. They can be a tool of hegemony; they can be a tool of resistance. They both reflect and constitute power relations” (p. 13). In the assignment, students were asked to address this theme by considering what was privileged and what was missing from their archival materials. As a result, we also hoped that students would interrogate the authority of those who make collecting and appraisal decisions for the collections that they would interact with in the workshop. Specifically, students were asked to consider whether the materials their group engaged with adequately document an experience, and whose experiences are represented. Thus, in addition to the original two criteria, it was also important to include materials that represented multiple perspectives on an issue when selecting the primary sources for students to analyze.

The first archival selection for the workshop were the student activism papers collected by Eric A. Walker, 1963-1986. The documents found in this collection were the least visual of those selected for the workshop. However, they document student activism and unrest on campus during the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War. The collection includes materials created by both the University’s administration and student groups.



Figure 1. Women's Suffrage Collection, 1912-1920, The Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Penn State University Libraries.

The second collection selected for the workshop was the Labor Graphic Arts and Poster Collection, 1897-1983. This collection consists of oversized graphics and posters created by international labor unions, including the United Mine Workers, the United Steelworkers, and Federación de Trabajadores de la Caña de Azúcar y Sus Derivados de Venezuela. In contrast to the student activism papers, this collection is very visual in its representations of labor unrest. Additionally, it primarily documents the perspective of the unions, rather than employers. The next collection included was the Women's Suffrage Collection, 1912-1920 (Figure 1). It documents both suffrage and anti-suffrage campaigns in Pennsylvania through pamphlets distributed by organizations on each side of the issue. Most of the pamphlets include drawings and other visual depictions of women. The fourth grouping of materials came from the poster series of the larger Ken Lawrence collection, 1940-2010. Similar to the labor poster collection, the Ken Lawrence posters are extremely visual, international in scope, and were created by activist groups. The causes included range from racial inequality to anti-war sentiment. The final selection of materials

was the Charles L. Blockson collection of postcards and related materials, 1919-2000 (Figure 2), which consists of racist postcards and advertising cards collected by Charles L. Blockson, an advocate and historian of African American history and culture. The racist depictions found in the materials are highly visual and jarring. They primarily represent the viewpoint of the oppressive, dominant white culture that created and distributed them.



Figure 2. Charles L. Blockson collection of postcards and related materials, 1919-2000, The Eberly Family Special Collections Library, Penn State University Libraries.

Student Centered Reactions & Reflections

We divide this section up into three reflective perspectives. First, we discuss what we witnessed as student reactions during and after the library workshop. Next, Leslie shares her analysis and lastly, Julie shares her critical reflections.

Student Reactions

Students had various reactions during the workshop, presentation, and afterwards in critically listening and reflecting on their archival research experience and their peer's presentations. The witnessing of the accumulation of trauma came forth in a way that we were not anticipating. One Black student's reaction was to the archive selection in particular, she reacted emotionally to the one set of archives that she had been randomly selected to

engage with her peers. In her attempt to explain why it was so disturbing to her as a Black student to view these violent postcards from the archives, she choked on her words. It was hard for her to articulate fully what she felt being one of three Black students in class with twenty-six White peers. As the class facilitators and educators, we were not quite sure how to proceed. In that moment, our White privilege was glaring.

Leslie addressed the violent atrocities depicted on the postcards that the Black student was referencing and attempted to make the connection that all of the archives in some way had a crude violence to them, however, she acknowledged this particular set was the most visually violent--yet no other student had reacted in quite this way. Concluding class shortly after the students distressed response, Julie and I met one on one with the student. She was embarrassed to have become so emotional in a predominately White class, where she was exposed and became the center of unwanted attention. This, she explained, was on top of carrying the burden in every class on campus of being Black during Black History Month in February, a detail that escaped Julie and I in our white skins. Leslie followed up with her student in person and via email, whom 'til this day she continues to maintain a relationship with. However, Julie and I walked away that day with many emotions as we reflected on our pedagogies and facilitation styles in the classroom space. We met multiple times to discuss what we could have done different and what does this experience do for our teaching going forward.

Leslie's Reflection

I, Leslie, felt enraged that no-one else felt visibly uncomfortable with the archives; including myself. That no one else reacted in a visceral way. I questioned my pedagogical and facilitation approach looking for my flaws and ways to improve. In self-reflecting, I remembered a few weeks prior, during a discussion about Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña's, *The Couple in the Cage* (1993) when another one of the Black students from this same class did become emotional during the discussion. And I remembered how there were multiple incidents before that with thick tensions between Black and White students about race and racial construction and the lived experiences of People of Color in the United States. My mind became flooded by memories from the few classes I had taught previously where I was called out by multiple students for having an 'agenda', a 'clear political view' that was biased in my curriculum curating.

Our White privilege in a predominantly White institution was glaring, and we could not hide. We could not brush it aside. Although I identify as a woman of color, I am also White. And in that moment, I was very White. The premise for this attempted conscious raising in the academic environment meant connecting to parts of ourselves that were hard to look at while trying to dismantle historical narratives.

During the last segment of our class time in the archives, we reconvened as a large group, sharing our initial feelings and reactions to the archives just analyzed. Several students shared how they had never heard of some of the social movements and groups represented in the archives viewed. Others reflected on their surprise at some of the racist content found in many of the archives such as posters for social movements from Western Pennsylvania that only depicted white abled male bodies or the Woman's suffragette movement only showcasing white women. The Black student who shared her visceral, emotional response to the racist, violent images in the archive she was randomly assigned was poignant. The student, as we mentioned earlier could barely speak because of her pain in viewing the images. As we acknowledged the crass nature of the imagery, and the traumatic experience of viewing them, we wrapped up the end of class, making sure to follow up with the student

one on one. The conversations between us as co-facilitators and the student's that followed caused much pause for reflection by us, the facilitators of the workshop. The students overwhelming feeling caused by so much of the race talks that she was burdened by in almost every space on a predominantly white campus during Black History month, when this workshop took place, caused her to feel acutely aware and tokenized by the subject matter. The historicized racism that the United States was born out of, and built upon, haunts us as a nation and a people even to this day. White privilege awareness and the trauma of racism has once again torn open a huge deep wound in our country that continues to bleed out onto our streets--how do we as a society expect students of color to go about education and daily mundane life experiences when they are continuously being killed and their wounds reopen? What are we educating for?

Leslie, in previous weeks before this assignment aimed to the trauma of racism, but her lecture fell short, a more vigorous discussion and context was needed. Leslie also realized that the courses she taught before this one, were smaller and predominantly students of color, providing a much different context for discussions through lived experiences and testimonio work. In a different iteration of this undergraduate course and workshop, perhaps testimonios curated more specificity connected to the identities represented in the classroom would have been beneficial. In this particular class and classes like it, alluded to previously in this article, I, Leslie, am often told at the end of the semester by students that too much emphasis and context was given to the histories of people of color--despite public education in the U.S. being one that is centered in Westernized White patriarchal canons; anything that disrupts the traditional narrative is seen as a threat. We see this now amidst the continued intensified turmoil of our country with the public murders and lynchings of black victims (Haywood Rolling Jr., 2020). White ideologies are often threatened by anything that challenges the historical dominant narrative. Brown and black bodies continue to carry the burden wherever they go.

Often as teachers, we have both felt the amount of emotional labor that is part of our culturally relevant and feminist pedagogy. However, we did not anticipate how our students and how we would feel in facilitating this classroom assignment and the emotional labor it entailed. I have reflected often on that semester and how vulnerability came out in a variety of ways for students and myself. Because of my own experiences as a student of color in classrooms where often I did not 'belong', as for example, my Puerto Rican and Cuban heritage was not represented, nor my Spanish language, my mixed identities, my histories. I became an educator, first as a student learning about herself and second to represent what I failed to see in education for myself. I live in nepantla, curating my own autohistoria, suturing parts of myself. I have aimed to curate my life by taking all the bits that make up parts of me and reframe them for myself, my stories, my education, my art, my experiences, finding empowerment and transformation through this process. I aim to share this as an educator. And felt that I had failed in that semester, in that class. But we, Julie and I, also need to be careful not to fall into the grips of White fragility and White tears, this isn't about us only, it is about the students and their vulnerability as well. However, I have chosen to gather up those experiences and to continue to become a better educator, curating environments anew that empower students towards conversations of inclusion within diversity, respect and listening to each other despite differences of perspectives.

Julie's Reflection

I have spent a large portion of my career researching, writing, and practicing culturally relevant, and other critical/liberatory approaches, to teaching information literacy skills. In particular, I have extolled the virtues of primary sources for consciousness-raising in the classroom. While I have done this work within the context of li-

braries and archives, my primary professional identity is as a teacher, and it is important to me to be a very good one. As I watched our student's eyes well up with emotion, I immediately realized that I had totally, unequivocally failed this student. Worse yet, I had done so by leading the charge with a pedagogical approach that I had previously thought to be a movement in the right equity, diversity, and inclusion direction.

My next realization was just how blatant my White Privilege was at that moment. I was also immediately aware of my relative Whiteness to everyone in the room. I saw myself in the anguished faces of the young White women who lingered after class, wanting to comfort their classmate, but not knowing if it was appropriate. I did not have the heart to tell those young women that I was not entirely sure what level of comfort was appropriate to come from someone with our privilege at the moment either. The difference was that I was one of the co-teachers of the workshop, and I had to address the situation. So, I carried a box of tissues to the table, and pulled up a seat with Leslie and the student. The room had cleared out, and it was now just the three of us. But, my new found realization of relative whiteness was still reeling. I looked at Leslie, who is my dear friend outside of our work together, with fear-stricken eyes that said help me navigate this: you are Latina.

Despite all of my fears, I took responsibility for the situation right away. I let the student know that I was deeply sorry that she was upset. I had selected the materials, and it was my fault. What she said next changed my understanding of pedagogy and classroom dynamics forever. She clarified that she was not sad. She was embarrassed, because the onus to explain and embody the racist experiences of a Black person that were found in the postcards was on her in the White majority classroom. I was stunned. It is always my goal for students to leave my classroom more aware of social injustice, but never embarrassed. Stupidly, I told the student that I understood, and was glad she was there to help the other students understand.

I spent the next week reflecting on my own, before I met up with Leslie to debrief and reflect further. During this time, I started thinking about the responsibility that we had inadvertently put on this student. It was the same responsibility that I had put on Leslie when I looked to her to lead the conversation with the student, because she is Latina. How do we help White students to be aware of racial injustice and their privilege without requiring students of color to be their guides without consent? When I met up with Leslie a week later to debrief and discuss, I was relieved to learn that she had been asking herself the very same question. As we reflected together, the importance of context emerged as a theme. First, there was the overall makeup of the classroom. At a predominately White institution, it is not unusual to have an overwhelmingly White majority class, like this one. I had previously spent a lot of time thinking about how this was racist and unjust, but, inexplicably, I had never considered how this context damages the ability of educators to effectively leverage culturally relevant pedagogy. Second, I did not effectively situate the collections that students viewed within their individual contexts. For example, the postcards that provoked the student's reaction were collected by Charles L. Blockson, a Black scholar of African American history, who began collecting documentation of African americana and African diaspora after being told by a grade school teacher that Black Americans had no history. The group of students who worked with these postcards ultimately found a documentary about Mr. Blockson, and incorporated it into their final presentation. They indicated that having this context helped them to understand why documentation of racism is important.

While a major takeaway of this experience was the importance of context, the most important lesson learned was that I can always be a better teacher. It would be easy to hide behind White fragility, and say that upsetting

the student was not my intent. Blame her for not understanding my pedagogical goals. However, the truth is that I am the one that did not understand. I did not understand how it feels to look at racist imagery when you are Black, and I never truly will. I can, however, endeavor to present these images in a more informed manner the next time.

Lessons Learned

This experience challenged us to critically look at our pedagogy and how we may have facilitated and culturally mediated our instructions differently. Using tenets of culturally responsive teaching in another iteration of this workshop we would reshape the curriculum due to students' insights and critical reflections with the archives. A few things have come up for us in how to do this. For example, situating a more in-depth historical context for the construction of race in our U.S. history would be beneficial to create the language needed to grapple with many of these hard conversations. In our subconscious, as a U.S. nation, we tend to forget that many who have since assimilated into mainstream White culture weren't always in that position (Figueroa, 2011). For example, the Irish, Italians and many other ethnic groups migrating from Europe were racialized and marginalized when immigrating to the U.S. However, with time these groups of immigrants assimilated and anchored their citizenship throughout the U.S. due to being accepted because of their status as White Europeans (Fox, Moroşanu, & Szilassy, 2015). Critically looking at the history of the construction of racial politics that precede U.S. history and the forming of our country would better connect the ideas deeply embedded in what racial construction is and the power dynamics within it (Omi & Winant, 2014; HoSang et al., 2012).

Learning within the Context of Culture ideally takes into account varying cultural backgrounds of students. Despite this, we did not foresee several things from our privileged location as white identified women professors. The first is that this archival workshop took place during Black History month, adding an additional emotional burden on students of color in the class. Second, although before this point there were uncomfortable conversations that took place and were acknowledged by the facilitator; a clear plan was not in place for how to navigate these spaces for the well-being of the students of color. Third, a more in-depth contextualizing of the construction of race as institutionalized and historicized may have better couched the larger conversation of Whiteness and otherness, to not position them as oppositional but rather as different perspectives about the construction of race in the U.S.

As we reflect further on our teaching as facilitators and reshaping the curriculum we consider: How could we make the assignment in future iterations meaningful for all students? How could we consider more preemptively mental well-being and trigger warnings for our students engaging in these difficult and complex issues? Despite the emotional toll and navigating of difficult and complex discussions, students of color felt heard within the classroom space.

Quote from student's email reflection:

"Thank you for always allowing a safe space for me to express my opinions and feelings. As a black female student at a PWI, that does not happen a lot for me and you created a small window of that. For that I am beyond grateful... You've been kind to me, and supportive..."

As we look critically back on our archive workshop experience, we realize that in the initial planning and implementing of the assignment we did not approach it as facilitators, but rather as educators with parameters for a reflective assignment. We used this strategy in a responsive rather than a proactive way. In the future, we will be

more conscious of using resources and materials as ways to initiate conversations, with accompanying supplemental sources that will bolster more in-depth critical reflections to help analyze and unpack larger issues, and allow more time to process complex territories and the emotional responses that may arise. Although we did not read Gloria Anzaldúa's books in the course, Leslie structured the course on the premise of Anzaldúa's auto-historia-teoría, bringing excerpts into the class curriculum and having discussions about the curating of our lives through our lived experiences. For example, one of the assignments in the course was writing an identity poem as a way to create more intimate conversations and discuss the complexities of our identities. In wanting to layer various approaches to unpacking our lived experiences, during the process throughout the semester, it overall felt hard to initiate deep discussions. In an effort to expose systemic racism through the curated curriculum through lived experiences, critical self-reflection writing and discussions around it proved to be a very hard space to navigate.

Leslie felt a lot of resistance and it seemed to be hard for many students to fully grasp systemic racism and oppression because of their own privileged experiences. Moving forward, we would include resources and collaborations with outside support, such as professional guests connected to campus support counselling groups. Inviting them to participate in potentially sensitive discussions relevant to the course materials. Both of our backgrounds in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies led us to take for granted the often-vulnerable exposure of self that is required to address larger issues of oppression through classroom consciousness-raising. As feminist educators, we so often take part in critically reflective activities in the courses we teach shouldering the emotional labor that falls on us, but how do we navigate emotional labor when it falls on a student? We forgot how fragile these spaces can be at times because of our White privilege. In curating our autohistoria following this experience we are finding the need to be honest and confront these 'shadow' sides of oneself. We did not fully realize the risk we were taking in curating the course assignment and attempting to dismantle historical narratives.

Two main points for reflection and caution emerged from this experience for our roles as teachers: First, the emotional labor as teacher/facilitators that often goes unspoken needs to be addressed and supported within educational structures. To be present for our students, as educators, requires a tremendous amount of time, commitment, follow-up, listening, knowledge about resources, and consistency to reimagine curriculum. Second, educator collaborations, co-teaching and mentorship opportunities for educators such as this one helps to create solidarity within educational spaces to support each other in in-between, nepantla spaces. The experiences and critical reflections expressed in this article are an example of inhabiting a nepantla state where we (as a class) were jolted from our complacent realities. To be a true facilitator also means to be proactive in helping to contextualize conversations for students. In this one example we highlight as educators, the time we have taken to process this experience. It has taught us about our own pedagogy and facilitating in our classroom spaces, the things that may be taken for granted. In addition to the time and emotional bandwidth spent to support, encourage and make ourselves available to our students, we took on the emotionally laborious task of both collective and individual reflection to grapple with the complexities of our own histories, representations and identities. While this experience was intense and complex as a collective project, having the support of a co-teacher was invaluable. The emotional pain and trauma as one of the consequences of this workshop becomes an in-between place of nepantla in our autohistoria. The emotional trauma, once revealed becomes a site for healing, repairing the damage (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2015). As educators we are unlearning the repressive narratives within academia that reproduce a knowledge production that is inherently racist. Furthermore, students are also unlearning how racist and systemic oppressive narratives have been embedded into their psyches. As students and educators unlearning the deep infiltration of racist ideologies, pain and trauma we, as a collective, can carve out spaces to create

a new world by re-imagining new spaces and narratives. The emotional labor of investing our time we hold as one of the highest values in our teaching, because emotional connections and vulnerable experiences are often what is remembered most by learners, an exchange between humans that leads towards conscious work growing mutual empathy.

ENDNOTES

1. Testimonio: a public testament of a lived or witnessed experience.
2. Intersectionality was coined by black feminist Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (1989) as a theory to identify how overlapping categories of identities impact individual, collective, and systemic institutions affecting social and cultural norms. Class, race, gender, sexuality, religion, ability, and age are some of the intersections that Crenshaw theorized about as various forms of social stratification. Feminism is defined here as the movement to end sexist, white, patriarchal oppression towards everyone (bell hooks, 1995).
3. Teaching Diverse Learners, The Education Alliance at Brown University. Retrieved on March 4, 2019. https://www.brown.edu/academics/education-alliance/teaching-diverse-learners/search/google?cx=001311030293454891064%3A1-wlrsw9qt3o&cof=FORID%3A11&query=citation&sa.x=0&sa.y=0&form_id=brown_google_cse_searchbox_for

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FRAGMENTS OF ARMENIAN IDENTITY

Celeste Nazeli Snowber & Marsha Nouritza Odabashian

ABSTRACT

We come as two artists, one a poet and dancer, Celeste Nazeli Snowber, and the other a visual artist, Marsha Nouritza Odabashian to excavate, reclaim and celebrate our Armenian identities. This offering is a collaboration of poems and visual images which sing a song deep in our bones and cells. Through colors, words, hues, and textures we hearken back to what has been in us all along. We offer it to you as a place to know that cultural identities live within the skin in all their paradox, glory and mystery.

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Bios

Celeste Nazeli Snowber, PhD is a dancer, writer and award-winning educator who is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University outside Vancouver, B.C., Canada. She has published widely in the area of arts-based research and her books include *Embodied Prayer and Embodied Inquiry: Writing, living and being through the body*, as well as two collections of poetry. Celeste continues to create site-specific performances in the natural world as well as full-length performances. She is presently finishing a collection of poetry connected to her Armenian identity, which will be integrated in her next one-woman show. Celeste's mother was born in Historic Armenia in 1912 and survived the Armenian genocide before immigrating to Boston. Integral to Celeste's own healing process is excavating fragments of ancestral memory, which find their way in poems and dances. They become a path to excavate trauma as well as the beauty imbued in the terroir of Armenian culture. A short site-specific performance piece to the poem, "Dissolving all boundaries," was created as an opening for the article and is linked here: <https://vimeo.com/433807763> Contact: celeste@sfu.ca / www.celestesnowber.com

Boston based artist and with a MFA, *Marsha Nouritza Odabashian's* drawings and paintings uniquely reflect the tension and expansiveness of being raised in dual cultures, Armenian and American. As a young child she watched her mother cultivate the Armenian tradition of dyeing eggs red by boiling them in onionskins. In her work, vignettes of current events, history and social justice emerge from the onionskin dye on paper, stretched canvas or compressed cellulose sponge. Her numerous solo exhibitions in the United States include *Skins* at the Armenian Museum of America in Watertown, *In the Shade of the Peacock*, *EXPUNGE* and *Miasma* at Galatea Fine Art in Boston. Group exhibitions include the Danforth Museum and Gallery Z. She has exhibited in Armenia twice: *New Illuminations (HAYP Pop Up)* and *Road Maps (Honey Pump Gallery)*. Reviews of her work appear in *ArtScope*, *Art New England*, the *Boston Globe*, and the *Mirror Spectator*. Odabashian studies early and medieval Armenian art and architecture at Tufts University with Professor Christina Maranci, with whom she traveled to Aght'amar and Ani in Historic Armenia. Pairing her ancestral past with the present in her art is her means of fulfillment. Contact: mnodabashian@gmail.com



“Sustenance”. Onionskin Dye and Acrylic Paint on Canvas. 16” x 20.”
Marsha Nouritza Odabashian. © 2016

We come as two artists, one a poet and dancer, Celeste Nazeli Snowber, and the other a visual artist, Marsha Nouritza Odabashian, to excavate, reclaim and celebrate our Armenian identities. As both descendants of Armenian genocide survivors, we integrate our art as a place to explore, excavate and celebrate our Armenian identity. To contextualize our journey it is important to know that the Armenian genocide which began in 1915 resulted in the deaths of 1.5 million Armenians who went through horrific brutalities including death marches in the Syrian Desert. Trauma has a way of getting in the tissues of our bodies, and artistic practices are a vessel for recovering pieces of our own stories.

This offering is a collaboration of poems and visual images which articulate a song deep in our bones and cells. All the visual images are done by Marsha and all the poems by Celeste. Even though we have executed our artistic practices apart, there is a thread of connections and shared stories. We are both deeply affected by each other’s work. There is a visceral resonance, as if one is an expression of the other, even though we are working in isolation, in our own solitudes. Our artistic processes have expanded our understanding that as artists, we can companion each other through our creative journeys.

Through colors, words, hues, and textures we hearken back to what has been in us all along. We offer it to you as a place to know that cultural identities live within the skin in all their paradox, glory and mystery.

Batchig and Geragoor

the two words
I remember
are imprinted on the body

batchig: to kiss
geragoor: food or a meal

the two areas my mother
reminded me of every day
as if they were partners

kissing the food
feeding the kiss

she was a foodie
before it was hip
knowing that taste, colour, texture

was at the heart
of loving and living

so here I am left with
what is necessary.

Celeste Nazeli Snowber

*In praise of the kitchen-studio **

she created beauty in strife
aftermath of Armenian genocide
escaped but the heart
does not cease living lament
of the forefathers and foremothers
the old country's legacy

at eleven she made paper roses
sold them on the streets
in Cambridge, Massachusetts
brought reapings to her family

at seventy-three
the year of her death
after my father died
she was still bringing flowers to life
nothing could stop living petals
being shaped into modern art

our kitchen was transformed
into an art studio
practices of cooking with color
or creating color through
sculptural objects and plant life

I have kept the tradition
of my artist-mother
knocked out a wall
in my kitchen/dining area
laid a wooden floor
doubles as a dance
studio, torso ecstatic

kitchens are places of love
creating food, art, dance
exchange of hearts through flesh
and always
there shall be flowers

there is strife too in kitchens --
tears and conflict
but connections usually win out
ripeness of beauty over a life-time

we are made and re-made
in the kitchen-studio
colors of soul brought to brilliance
in ordinary living.

Celeste Nazeli Snowber



"Kitchen Studio". Onionskin Dye and Gouache on Stonehenge Paper.
14" x 11". Marsha Nouritza Odabashian. © 2019

*A version of the poem, "In Praise of the Kitchen Studio," was first published in the journal, Blue Skies Poetry.

Dissolving all boundaries

on the other side
of what cannot be seen
fragility goes wild



“Milky Way Waltz”: Onionskin Dye and Acrylic Paint on Canvas. 24” x 24”.
Marsha Nouritza Odabashian. © 2017

containing constellations

turquoise galaxies gulp
bodies within bodies
bones blast to sand
swirling in all you ever knew

within the borderlines
where skin meets sky
crying out for a third way
dissolving all boundaries



“Migration”. Onionskin Dye and Acrylic on Canvas. 24” x 48”. Marsha Nouritza Odabashian. © 2017

An alphabet of longing

there are not enough letters
in the alphabet to define
the characteristics of longing

sketched into the Armenian soul
varied, complex and complicated
as the cuisine of food

the alphabet of longing
has aromas which sit
long after it's recognized

even words don't express
the inexpressible haunts
where yearning aches

in the dance of migration

Celeste Nazeli Snowber

CONVERSATIONS WITH EACH OTHER: LOVE SONGS TO THE EARTH

Adrian M. Downey & Gonen Sagy

ABSTRACT

Conversation is a complicated, ever-changing, and dynamic space—a space which is foundational to both education and curriculum, broadly conceived. In this article, we continue our ongoing conversation through the notion of writing love songs to the Earth and to each other. Within the conversation, Gonen shares original poetry emergent from his lived experiences, while Adrian attends to Gonen's poetry in prosaic response. In this, the socio-political moment of the Canadian movement toward reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, we view our relationship and our conversations as speaking back to the competitive languages of diasporic space and Indigenous place through an emphasis on our mutual, though diverse, humanity. Far from a conclusive conversation, we offer our mutual and respective engagements with life's curriculum, the world, and with words in the hope that these insights will resonate with other educators.

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Bios

Adrian M. Downey is Mi'kmaq and an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at Mount Saint Vincent University. He has undergraduate degrees from Bishop's University in Music and Education, and a Master of Arts in Education focused in Curriculum Theory. His 2017 master's thesis, "Speaking in Circles: Indigenous Identity and White Privilege," is an arts-informed and Indigenous autobiographical and poetic examination of the intersection between white privilege and Indigenous identity and won both the MSVU Master's Thesis Award and the CACS Cynthia Chambers Master's Thesis Award. His recent scholarly publications have been focused on the role of spiritual thought, Indigenous knowledge, music, and poetry in changing the way we enact and think about curriculum. He currently holds a SSHRC doctoral fellowship for his dissertation which engages critical, posthuman, and Indigenous theory in the curricular context of death education. Adrian.Downey@msvu.ca

Gonen Sagy holds an interdisciplinary PhD on multicultural aspects of environmental education, an MA in environmental studies, and a Bachelor of Education and Philosophy. His doings these days include writing poems about immigration (as one of the outcomes from meeting Adrian), facilitating cross-cultural youth encounters in Ottawa, developing the Caring Hearts program for reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Canada's National Capital Region, and supporting the monitoring of the educational work of the Water Resources Action Project which brings together schools from Israel, Palestine, Jordan and the USA around water conservation. Gonen used to direct a peace education program in Israeli Jewish and Palestinian schools in Jerusalem, Nazareth, Lod and in rural areas of Israel. Born and raised Israeli, in 2015 he immigrated with his nuclear family to Canada.

On Love, Entanglement, Space, Place, and Attending

In his address to the 2018 Empowering Sustainability Gathering,¹ a yearly meeting for globally-engaged professionals, activists, and academics working toward sustainability, Debeet Sarangi stated that perhaps the most damning sign of modern society's failure was the loss of our capacity to write love songs to the Earth. An evocative notion meant to inspire a more poetic and appreciative relationship with our natural world, the idea of writing love songs to the Earth resonated deeply within us. It called on each of us to attend to our daily interactions with the Earth and to bear witness to the myriad natural networks in which we find ourselves entangled. Not the least of our entanglements is our relationship—a space where we have found it safe to share our songs and to grow through each other's words. In this article, we continue our ongoing conversation in the spirit of Mr. Sarangi's words—writing love songs to the Earth and attending to each other/the Other through words.

We initially met in a graduate course on critical thinking, where Gonen was the instructor and Adrian a student. Throughout the duration of the course, we engaged in many conversations about peace, education, social justice, sustainability, and reconciliation. After the course finished, we continued our conversations in both published (Downey & Sagy, 2018) and unpublished writing—as well as in person and over the phone. After initially engaging in written conversation over the course of two years, Adrian asked Gonen to respond not in the prosaic manner to which they had become accustomed, but through poetry. Adrian did not know at the time that Gonen's last poems were written just before he was drafted into Israel's mandatory military service at the age of 18. Challenged, but not deterred, Gonen responded with the poems presented in this article. Adrian then responded to each of Gonen's poems prosaically.

Our use of this method of written exchange is informed by the tradition of curriculum theory, where the notions of conversation and dialogue have been taken up in a variety of capacities (Bartlett & Quinn, 2018; Christou & Wearing, 2015; Clarke & Hutchinson, 2018; Kumar & Downey, 2018, 2019; Nazari & Heng Hartse, 2018). Perhaps most notably, William Pinar's (2012) notion of curriculum as complicated conversation creates a generative space in which our current conversation conceptually fits. Here we are interested in curriculum in the broadest possible sense; we are interested in life's curriculum and all that can be learned through living.

We are also both educators. Adrian currently teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in education. Before immigrating to Canada, Gonen directed The Youth Environmental Education Peace Initiative,² which brought together youth and staff from ten Israeli Jewish and Palestinian high schools around sustainability and environmental studies. He also taught graduate and undergraduate courses on socio-ecology and environmental education, and he currently teaches Hebrew at a middle school in Ottawa. As educators we know that the lessons we learn through lived experience—our engagement with life's curriculum—filter into the curriculum-as-planned (Aoki, 2005) whether we ask/expect/want them to or not. Rather than try to untangle ourselves from the curriculum, we embrace our subjectivity and open ourselves and our teaching up to being changed by what we read, write, see, think, feel, and experience (see also Coleman, 2009). Our deepest hope for this article is that our engagement with life's curriculum will resonate with other people, especially educators.

Outside of curriculum (though not too far away), we are informed by contemplative arts-based inquiry (Searle & Fels, 2018; see also Walsh, Bickel, & Leggo, 2015), particularly the notion of attending as presented by Carl Leggo and Rita Irwin (2018). Here, we are attending to each other, to the Earth, to the students with whom we work, to our descendants and Ancestors, and to you, the reader. We are doing this through considered and sustained

attention to words—attention rich with careful, thoughtful reflection/reflexivity because we know that words are more than words. We are writing love songs to each other, to the Other (with/in), and to our shared Earth, and in so doing we are both demanding and giving a sacred, loving, careful, meditative attention. Vicki Kelly wrote recently that, “Indigenous knowledge practices are ecological encounters of profound ethical relationality that acknowledge the act of co-creating through living embodiments of Indigenous Poiesis” (Kelly, 2019, p. 17). Yes. We are entangled with one another, and we hold sacred that entanglement; our relationality creates and deepens our aesthetic and holds space for dialogic co-creation to begin. In short, our relationship is methodologically rigorous—a notion informed in equal parts by Indigenous relational ontology, relational accountability (Wilson, 2008), and the broader trend of centering subjectivity in research.

Our relationship also speaks loudly in the current socio-political moment. Through our conversation here we ask and answer many questions, but fundamentally we are concerned with reconciliation—the building of sustainable relationships between Indigenous people and Settlers after 500 years of colonial occupation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). We are keenly aware of the contentious language of diasporic space and Indigenous place and the ways that settler colonialism and global capitalism have pitted those two lived realities against one another (Coleman, 2016). We also maintain an intimate awareness of what some call “the materializing force of language” (Young, 2015, p. 67), or the capacity of words to make it seem that particular bio-political realities are/were inevitable or that they have always been (Young, 2015).

Perhaps because of language’s materializing force and the competitive language ascribed by settler-colonial capitalism to diasporic and Indigenous peoples, solidarity between diasporic and Indigenous communities is not as common as it should be (e.g., Chung, 2012; Sivanewaralingam, Bhatti, & Lam, 2017). We, thus, enter into our relationship, our attending, our writing, and our sharing with a, perhaps counter-cultural, ethos of solidarity between diasporic and Indigenous peoples.

In order to disrupt the conventional language of competitive capitalism and the illusion of liberal individualism, we gesture toward what Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) calls constellations of co-resistance. Fundamentally a way of decentering the role of settler allyship in anti-oppressive resistance, the idea of a constellation of co-resistance evokes real, tangible relationships in the world, through which people from divergent marginal backgrounds work together to disrupt settler colonialism. The metaphorical image of a constellation highlights the brilliance of individuals (with)in communities and shows how each individual star is made brighter through its relationship to another. Within a constellation, there is space and place for everyone to be, to be brilliant, and to work together in resisting settler-colonial heteropatriarchal (see Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013), ableist capitalism—what Penobscot author Sherri Mitchell (2018) might summarize as hierarchical thinking. In constellations, the competitive dichotomies/hierarchies of place and space are displaced in favour of beautifully rhizomatic relationships of resistance. Our attending, then, is an act of linguistic resistance embedded in and emergent from our relational entanglement(s).

Though we can only begin to share the infinite complexity of our individual, mutual, and collective entanglements, we would offer a few words regarding who we are and where we come from. This relational contextualization is aimed at creating transparency in the relationship between us, the authors, and you, the reader. To know our words, you need to know something of us (see also Archibald, 2008; Hart, 2002; Kovach, 2009). We consider this transparency an axiological imperative of writing in an academic context (Wilson, 2008).

I (Adrian) am a Mi'kmaq man who is entangled in a PhD program at the University of New Brunswick. I am originally from Halifax, but my family ties are along the West Coast of Newfoundland and in the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation. From 2013 until 2015, I was a teacher in Eeyou Istchee (James Bay), and I have spent time working with Indigenous groups in international contexts. As a musician, a poet, and a writer, I see myself as an artistic researcher, and I am particularly interested in the relationship(s) between theory, curriculum, the arts, and conversation.

I (Gonen) am an Israeli born and raised Jewish man, a father, and a grandson to survivors who lost all their family members in the Holocaust. My nuclear family and I recently left our extended family in order to immigrate to and settle in Canada. I worked as journalist while completing my BEd, MA in Desert Ecology, and PhD on environmental education in Israel. In addition to the work described above, I currently facilitate multicultural meetings for high school students at *Young Voices Can!*³ to nurture acquaintances and socio-ecological awareness among youth in Ottawa. In 2019, I began collaborating with Chief Richard Zohr of The Bonnechere Algonquin First Nation in Ontario on *Caring Hearts*, a reconciliation program aiming to build bridges between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in the National Capital Region and the surrounding area.

Though we come from different backgrounds, we are intimately concerned with the wellbeing of our planet, as well as the humans and more-than-humans that live here. We started our friendship and joint work asking and dwelling within the key question of peace and environmental education: what does it mean to live well in our world (see Orr, 1994)? Since then, our conversations and our lives have taken many twists and turns. Below we present poems emergent from our ongoing conversation and offer attention to each.

Love Songs and Attendings.⁴

I

No words.

Only words, for time beyond words,
listening

II

Miller writes, “the problem with words is that they can never totally convey the meaning of direct experience” (2000, p. 149). When we listen from our hearts, listening is endless. Our ears are gateways to understanding the physical world, but there is so much more alive beyond what we can perceive. Our heart is our gateway to that metaphysical world. When we listen with our heart, completely willing to be changed by what we hear, we give an amazing gift. It is not just the gift of being heard; it is the gift of being accepted in all your complexity, idiosyncrasy, and humanness. You are right nitap⁵, there are no words for the metaphysical. When we speak of matters of the heart, we do not need words—words come from the brain, but the heart speaks directly.

I am seeking, but often blinded by the immediate and what others tell me to want. The media tells us we should buy, the government tells us we should hate, our tradition tells us we should forgive, but what is real in our hearts? For me, the real need I have is for connection. I need others to hear my words and to feel them; I need to hear others and be changed by them.

III

Words are temporal in their sequentiality: they mark the passage of time. How long did it take us to write this (years)? How long to edit (months)? How long to read (hours)? But temporality is internal and subjective. We are all lodged within our own times, and systems inflict violence on us by controlling our temporality (Saul, 2020) and controlling our words (e.g., Coleman, 2016). 5,000 words without references; abstracts no longer than 250 words. Everything has a limit.

We do not need words to know. We need blank pages and days off.

I have taken to teaching through silence. My role as a teacher is not to tell anyone anything. Advice is a violence unless it is asked for, and just because a student sits in a classroom does not mean they've asked. You told me once that if you wait long enough, the questions will come. The only thing I do as a teacher is hold space through whole body listening for others to make movements with(in) themselves. It is the 99-1 rule. I speak 1% of the time, everyone else speaks 99% of the time. When I finally do decide to speak, I try to be the loudest quiet I can be. These are my pedagogies of silence.

IV

Politically Correct⁶

And who by poisoned gathered foods,
 Who by crystal meth,
 Who by homicide?
 Who chose suicide?
Who by overcrowded home,
 Who was kidnapped,
 Who as a sex slave?
 Who by sorrow?

And who shall we say makes profit?

V

All the work presented at the Empowering Sustainability Gathering is aimed at ending suffering in some capacity, but we all have the same starting point: we are trying to understand.

I have begun to consider my own education a curriculum as nocturne (Smits, 2011, 2018). A nocturne, in music, is a loving ode to the darkness of night. As such, it has the ability to show light's presence with(in) darkness. I often force myself to go into the darkness of matters, things that make my heart heavy and move me to tears. I bear witness to the colonization, oppression, and subjugation of my people. I learn all the ways in which global corporations profit from exploitative and extractive economic structures. I see clearly the destructive nature of

the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. I see it all on a macro level—conceptually. I think I understand, but the stories of individual sorrow and trauma continue to shake me.

Daniel Coleman writes, “a book can be sweet *because* it is devastating. And devastation ... can be one of the most important spurs to spiritual growth [emphasis original]” (2009, p. 104). I dwell within the sadness—the darkness—of others and myself, searching for the light within so I might raise it up. Eve Tuck (2009) writes about damage-centered narratives and the idea that the stories we have told through our research are generally about how badly people—particularly Indigenous peoples—have been hurt by colonization, globalization, neoliberalism, and hierarchical thinking (Mitchell, 2018). Tuck proposed that we move beyond these damage-centered narratives toward a storying/re-storying of the resilience and brilliance of Indigenous people. This is, for me, the light in the darkness. We cannot understand resilience without first understanding that which we are resilient toward. My own education, then, has been spent dwelling within the darkness in order to find the light, and to find ways of amplifying the light to disrupt the dark.

VI

You

You understand
when I remember violence and injustice
you can see it too
you know

you too have this dual vision
the regular and the vision of those
who have many dead.

Popular culture says: Talk to me about money. Talk to me about sex. Politic and power!
No time for sadness, no space for pain.
Things that heal if shared.

What if it happens again?
It is happening again right now somewhere on our sweet world.
The regular don't see just.

Popular culture says: Talk to me about money. Talk to me about sex. Politic and power!
No room for sadness, no need to remember pain.
Things heal if shared.

You see the possible futures,
You bring them nearer, you're a brilliant plotter,
out of cells, leaving chains behind,
Liberation!

Popular culture says: Talk to me about money. Talk to me about sex. Politic and power!

No time for sadness, no space for pain.
Things heal if decolonised.

If all that life provided to someone, is the regular, popular vision,
What is the point of that somebody's life?

VII

Life is a journey to understand what it means to walk in the world and how to do that in a good way (Stonechild, 2016). But from time to time, we all get lost.

Krishnamurti (1992), and those who take up his work such as Ashwani Kumar (2013), said that the suffering existent within the modern world is a result of our internal psychological fragmentations. Modern society tells us many things about what we want, need, and should be. It is very loud in what it tells us, and sometimes it is impossible to ignore those voices. But maybe there is something deeper—a true version of ourselves buried under layers of social conditioning. Attempting to silence the conditionings at work within our psychologies and to become more in tune with our self could be the project of education (see Krishnamurti, 1992; Kumar, 2013, 2014; Kumar & Downey, 2018, 2019). Instead, I still remember the quadratic formula.

VIII

I have questions

Is modern Western society, as many have written (e.g., Doka, 2015; Durant, 2018; Kortes-Miller, 2014; Ulin, 1977), a death-denying society? Apart from ritual burials and ceremonies to say goodbye to those who have physically departed, is there any room to acknowledge the transcendental deaths that mark both tragedy and profound growth (Leggo, 2017; see also Nellis, 2018)?

Biesta (2006) writes of the transcendental violence inherent to learning, when learning is viewed not in a linear, banking model, but rather as a subjective “coming to presence” or “showing who you are and where you stand” (p. 62). This transcendental violence is not negative—it is a natural, beautiful part of life, but schools try to protect us from it. More and more, school systems want everything standard(ized), impersonal, and safe, but what of the stunning chaos of self-transformation? What of the need to die transcendently and be reborn? What of the possibilities of change? These seem, to me, like precursors to our talk about healing and reconciliation—both personally and societally.

What we see with the reconciliation movement is how difficult allowing for change can be. On a personal level, we have thousands of psychological structures which resist change; we are mostly creatures of habit and want to know what to expect in our lives, ourselves, and those around us. On a societal level, those structures are codified and enshrined in law, legislature, policy, and institutional memory. These are ‘barriers to change.’ Do these barriers really exist? They are ideas, and until we can allow for the possibility of changing ideas, no matter how deeply enshrined or normalized they may be, how can we ever move forward in healing and reconciliation?

IX

When it's painful

History is written by blood,
I write to you by tears,
visions of smiling futures,
laughter.
Future history will be written by love.

X

A few times in my life, I have heard firsthand the stories of those who survived residential schools. What always strikes me in these moments is the silence. There is simply nothing you can say when someone shares their personal history written in blood and tears.

The biggest learning of my 20s was not to say anything in those silences. When I was younger, I would often try to break the tension with a joke—tastefully, of course—but as I grew older, I began to realize the importance of silence. Silence offers the space to digest what we have heard and internalize the stories so that we never forget.

Silence is the sound of attending. It is the sound of being changed.

I still turn to laughter to guide me out of sorrow, but today I linger in the sadness long enough for my heart to hear and understand what is being shared. Silence is where the heart learns what it means to be human.

Our humanness is hilarious. Do we all remember moments in our lives where we have done embarrassing things and feel that embarrassment anew through our memories? I have come to love those moments because they are reminders of my humanness.

There is darkness and light in all of us and in every moment. To dwell within either too intensely seems fallacious.

XI

I am sorry, your mother is not dead (at the Bureau of Statistics)

Dear Young Madam,
This is to inform you we received your letter.
After looking carefully into your case
we understand that you're in distress,
yet nevertheless,
I am sorry, your mother is not dead.

Because,
We could list dead by toxins, or poisoned foods.

We have piles of bodies from sickness, diseases and/or just too much sexual abuse.
We have dead by homicide, and dead by suicide,
for those who had nothing else to lose,
but dead by sorrow?...
to us it sounds like a poor excuse.

We really would like to help,
it would have been easy if you claimed:
“killed by deadly husband”
or “she died due to being poisoned by lead”,
but as far as our paperwork goes,
I am afraid that for us,
your mother is simply not dead.

Because,
We could list dead by toxins, or poisoned foods.
We have piles of bodies from sickness, diseases and/or just too much sexual abuse.
We have dead by homicide, and dead by suicide,
for those who had nothing else to lose,
but dead by sorrow?...
to us it sounds like a poor excuse.

Dead by sorrow?...
I am sorry for your mother’s absence of death.
Young madam, you are welcome to contact us once more,
with a new letter as soon as tomorrow.

Because?
Because...

Because,
We could list dead by toxins, or poisoned foods.
We have piles of bodies from sickness, diseases and/or just too much sexual abuse.
We have dead by homicide, and dead by suicide,
for those who had nothing else to lose,
but dead by sorrow?...
to us it sounds like a poor excuse.

I am sorry,
I really am.
Your mother is not deceased,
I wish you could just let your mom go in peace.

XII

It is impossible to capture the complexity of someone's internal landscape in paperwork. The structures that we have created and that have been created for us, both internally and externally, control our perception of reality. So does language for that matter (e.g., Coleman, 2016; Young, 2015).

A death by sorrow, to me, feels like a failure to allow healing and growth; it feels like a bureaucratic refusal of change within the self. Change produces energy, and without acknowledgement and direction of that energy, our system can become overloaded. Our internal landscape becomes chaotic and unpredictable. Think of an over-charged battery. The energy needs to go somewhere.

And yet...

Yet, learning, healing, and sorrow are often seen as disconnected (some exceptions apply: e.g., Leggo, 2017; Nellis, 2009, 2018).

Pope Francis has said that "nothing in this world is indifferent to us" (2015). He was, of course, speaking of our relationship to the natural world, but this can easily be understood in a metaphysical sense as well. Nothing is indifferent to anything else. Healing and learning are two ends of the same spectrum, and we daily rove back and forth between the two.

Death by sorrow. Death by failure to learn. Death by lack of growth and adaptation. Death by inability to heal the traumas of the past. Death by willful ignorance. Our deaths, the small ones we experience every day, can often go unseen, so when we reach those big, sorrowful moments, is it any wonder that we can become so overwhelmed? The failure to recognize our metaphysical and transcendental deaths in turn brings about our physical death.

Nothing is indifferent to anything. Our thoughts and the energy they bring about have profoundly intense effects on the world around us, on our bodies, and on the Land. So, let's find a place for our sorrow to be felt. Let us heal together in laughter and in silence.

XIII

What have you done to us!?

Room for love on the sidewalk

(or How do you weigh this at the Bureau of Statistics?)

On the sidewalk
her body collapses and she cries,
to us and to the sky.

The time was 4:30ish pm...
And the time was neoliberal time.
The place was next to the crossing...
Right by the bus-please-stop.

And the place was the entrance to the Rideau shopping centre,
A place in downtown Ottawa.
The people were of all origins, young and old and wise in age,
And the people were trained proficient professionals.

Busy people.
They too, have their place on the list of casualties.

It all happened a moment's walk from federal offices.
Do you know this entrance to the shopping centre?
The one on Mackenzie-King bridge?

Tens of people at the green light,
she placed herself next to their way
to or from the business for the night.
Many are young,
brilliant.
The pounding blood at the heart of Ottawa.

Her face shaped by northern wind.
What made her overwhelmed?
loudly questioning,
demanding
again and again,
with kind sad eyes,
her voice (pain):

- "What have you done to us?!"
Look at me!
What have you done?!".

Most people stole a quick look,
as fast as a blink.

Observing the crowd, I saw people raising eyes,
glancing at her, watching real life entertainment,
then comes the shame
and they quickly look anyway...
(let them not see that I looked).
Most people.

She owned her cries
on the sidewalk.
Sat, then lay on her back to glance at the blue sky,

then sat to talk to them,
to address the crowd,
in an old broken fashion.

Demanding,
shouting:
- “What have you done to us?!”

Look at me!” she asked.

What have they done?
I was looking at us,
I was looking at them,
and they glanced,
and they blinked,
and they were in a terrible hurry,
to avoid conscience.

and me?
What about me?
Wishing to help,
I made steps toward you
while thinking that as a new immigrant
(which is another version of the good old settler)
I am not sure what to do.
What would you like me to introduce into this moment?
this moment which was momentarily controlled by you.

A young lady
and a younger man
were quicker, more decisive.
With caring looks in their eyes asking:
“how can I help?, would you like me to...?”
and she looked back in their eyes,
quietly reflecting the skies:
“I want them to look!”

Was it silence on the sidewalk?
I wished for the buses to stop,

With my children waiting at home,
children wait alone without any worries.
I went into the shopping centre to buy Ottawa monthly bus pass.
Inside: relaxing music, shiny stores,

and sad salespersons
attending the momentarily controlling customers.

Products are made of flesh,
buyers make the knife.
My family is far far away,
myself and my friends are gone,
where are we taking our children too?

It is all manmade, not an act of the heavens.
Look at what we do, or don't.

Thirty minutes later,
rush hour gone,
less people,
less buses around,
where is she now?
Birds on the trees
singing.

XIV

There is a profound violence in unseeing. In some Indigenous languages, “hello” is translated as “I acknowledge you” or “I acknowledge your presence” (Simpson, 2017). Acknowledging presence is a fundamental act of respect, but we are conditioned to unsee people—primarily those “undesirables” which we experience as a part of a phenomenological netherworld.

In *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (2006), Slavoj Žižek discusses the bathroom scene of *The Conversation* (1974). In so doing, he states:

In our most elementary experience, when we flush the toilet, excrements simply disappear out of our reality into another space, which we phenomenologically perceive as a kind of a netherworld—another reality, a chaotic, primordial reality. And the ultimate horror, of course, is if the flushing doesn't work, if objects return, if remainders, excremental remainders, return from that dimension. (Žižek, 2006)

This discussion of our perception of the toilet is, to me, a perfect metaphor for the unseeing of people within Western society. The woman you saw was ignored(unseen). Within the perception of those ignoring her, she was a window into both the internal chaos existent within all of us and the external chaos produced as a bi-product of modern, post-industrial life (see also Bauman, 2007). Western society, and many of the people who comprise it, attempt to keep these chaotic netherworlds hidden, and when they are thrust back into our face, we do not want to look at them. We need to unsee it/them, to make it/them gone as quickly as possible. It has become acceptable to “flush” certain people who do not fit within a particular view of the world out of that view, and when we are confronted with them, we do not know what to say or do. Seeing the chaos resultant from our society

mirrors our own internal chaos. We are reminded, forcibly, of our own humanness, awkwardness, and imperfection. And then we turn away.

But we all want to be seen, acknowledged, heard, and understood. We want our chaos to be accepted by others. We want to be able to show “who we are and where we stand” (Biesta, 2006, p. 62), not just recite the quadratic formula or apply it to solve for X.

Society is messy. Learning is messy. I want to embrace that mess—not just unclog the toilet, but honour the presence of what we have flushed away and bask in its complexity. The separation barriers in Jerusalem and Belfast are another sort of gateway, keeping the Other—the chaos of the netherworld—out of sight and out of mind (Bollens, 2018).

XV

Right from wrong

Is everything all right?
If you wanna know,
ask the weakest,
the one with least control.

What is wrong?
If you wanna know,

ask the weakest,
they always know.

XVI

Scott Bollens (2018), who we both heard speak in at University of California Irvine (UCI) in August 2018, offers the following thoughts about unseeing:

To unsee the other
Is a more active disengagement than passively not pay attention

The lens directed at the angle of the other excludes it from view
Rather than the wider horizon and focusing elsewhere

It is structured neglect rather than considered dismissal
Premeditated rather than contemporaneous

Unseeing removes the unbearable burden of guilt, of humiliation, of history
It simplifies and extracts; it keeps the enemy at bay

The gaze of surveillance does not add sight

But rather a military-security layer through which those excluded become suspect

For the superior, unseeing validates dominance
For the subordinate, it demarcates a space of dignity

With lack of sight, we gain urban anonymity and illusion of privacy
lost is the shared enterprise through which we connect with the other (p. 61).

If you want to know the effects of a policy, ask the unseen.

XVII

Time immemorial

Oh, Majestic people
Abundant land
Singularity
Wisdom
Harmony
Peace
Colonialism
Nation building
Urbanization
Bureaucratization
Technocracy
Capitalism
Globalization
Neoliberalism

Oh, residential schools

Loving
Family
Stories
Time
Together
Nature
Fire
Water
Laughter

XVIII

Oh “Canada”—What a twisted mess of ideology that is (Gulliver, 2018; see also Saul & Burkholder, 2019). At the

last Empowering Sustainability Gathering, I was speaking with another Fellow about how I found it odd that our host university didn't have an Elder-in-residence or anyone from the local Indigenous community to welcome us. They looked shocked and told me that I needed to dial back my "progressive Canadian-ness" and respect the reality of the United States. Do Canada or the United States really exist outside of our minds? Does Canadian-ness? I do not generally consider myself a Canadian, but apparently the way I pronounce "about" and "out" gives me away. There is not really a word for the preposition "about" in Mi'kmaw, but if there was, I wonder if when I said it, it would communicate something to other people. Sometimes the fact of language communicates just as much as the content of the language.

XIX

Where we meet

You and I
We talk a lot
we listen more
we silence

we seat
listen to silences

to silence we listen
particularly well

we take care
care
there is a point
meaning to all

healing take time
for now
healing take actions
we act what else is there to do?
we care
care

XX

How many languages do you speak now, nitap? Now that you have been unable to find work despite your PhD in education, published scholarly work, and many years of experience—now that you have been told to learn French so you can get a job. I have heard you speak English, Arabic, Hebrew, and some Spanish. You are being unseen, and I stand by watching with a clenched jaw and a heavy heart. I do not know if it is solace or rage that I

find in the fact that you are not alone, that people are often discounted because of foreign credentials and a perceived (read as: imagined) inability to communicate.

The monoculture of mind (Hensley, 2011)—the mind-numbing sameness of standardization and melting pot inclusion—can be combatted by a radical appreciation for uniqueness. If we take our time and bear witness to the light in another (see also Downey & Rowett, 2020), not only will our society be richer for the experience, so too will our own internal landscapes become lush with diversity. Dwayne Huebner acknowledged this when he called learning standing in the presence of the stranger (1984). It can be terrifying to step outside of what is “normal” professionally and personally (see also Christou in Christou & Wearing, 2015), but it is precisely that discomfort which gives rise to the most profound learning.

You taught me that it is not enough to be critical of particular populations despite the fact that they may have committed terrible atrocities. There is educative potential in dwelling within our own darkness, as it helps illuminate the phenomena which underpin our capacity to unsee the other, but there is also potential in the light of ‘the Other.’ I think of this as being pro people (a category in which I include the more-than-human and the non-human). For me, this means conversing with people with whom I may not agree. This is how I have started to go about reconciliation; conversations, often heated, but never disrespectful.

XXI

Grandfather Abraham

Abraham was a slave from childhood,
knowing carriers of wickedness,
he was taken away at 14 to be a slave,
by people who left no room for tears.

He missed his mother, always like a child.

Abraham was brought up to be a Rabbi,
the wisdom and memory of his nation
were engraved in his young student’s mind and heart,
before the beginning of the holocaust.

He missed his god, always like a Rabbi.

At the end Abraham was forced to walk with others on death marches,
yet worst things were upon Abraham earlier, and after.
For example, he came back home to find
none of his family of ten siblings survived.

He missed his mother, always like a child.
He missed his god, always like a Rabbi.

Can you imagine the hope he had before finding out?
He never knew how their lives were taken,

How he prayed to God of six slaving years?
He never knew how their lives were taken,
maybe surviving is only the lesser worst

He missed his mother, always like a child.
He missed his god, always like a Rabbi.

To his last day,
Abraham was busy with a “rabbinical puzzle”:
Where was yehova?⁸
Maybe surviving is only the lesser worst.

He missed his mother, always like a child.
He missed his god, always like a Rabbi.

XXII

I am not a number - I am a real person

and the list goes on,
by almost every measurable indicator
Canada’s Indigenous people suffer a harsh fate:
dropout of school are almost three times higher,
unemployment rate is 2.1 times more than the national rate,
and the list goes on,
median income is 60% of the national average,
probability of being incarcerated is ten times higher than for a non-indigenous Canadian,
homicide rate is 6.1 higher than the national rate,
infant mortality is 2.3 times higher,
life expectancy is shorter,
and yet
the list goes on

XXIII

We can often become lost in our own darkness. When we become unseen, it is easier to unsee. When we are slighted, hurt, devastated, or destroyed, it can seem impossible to rise again. All I can offer to those lost in the darkness is my own hope. My hope is radical (Lear, 2006). When everything we have come to know and love has stopped existing, with what are we left? Both our Ancestors faced this reality. Generations of Indigenous people have had to redefine what life had the potential to be because their realities were constantly being robbed from them through colonization. Your (Gonen) Ancestors faced the same reality, but in a single lifetime. Everything they had come to know was robbed from them, and they were forced to redefine what life had the potential to be. I draw my hope from these stories. For my Ancestors, I know it was our culture and our spirituality which gave us the capacity to redefine our lives. Nothing is ever static in Mi’kmaw knowledge, and that gives us the capacity to understand the shifting social reality all around us. Yes, sometimes we lose touch with who we are, where we come from, and where we are going, but at the end of the day, there is a blood memory which guides us toward

something bigger. For me, the future is not dark; it simply is, and we can accept it in whatever form it takes. We can dwell within the dark to understand it but move toward the light in order to transcend. Perhaps in this way Abraham, and the rest of us, can find the light he lost. Perhaps in this way systems can start to change.

XXIV

Knowing is being

Can I learn your heroism?
Can I listen to the stories, let the songs fill my soul?

Is there room for me in your dream?
Will we ever be together in spirit?

XXV

Hadot (2002) supposes that Plato and Socrates would have it that no matter what we do, we will never be able to know. Wisdom is the divine marker of a sage, of God. Yet, we should not be complacent in our ignorance. It is the task of the philosopher to simultaneously be aware of one's ignorance and the impossibility of wisdom and to work toward wisdom anyway. This is, for me, the great struggle. We may never know true freedom, true peace, or true love, but that is all the more reason to try. I read Hadot (2002) as a call to embrace our humanness and the imperfections implicit within that, but also to constantly try to move toward the divine. In this struggle, I find peace and a life in which I can continue to work toward liberation and environmental suitability in ways that value the humanity of everyone with whom I work, not just those with whom I agree. I think that we agree here; but even if we do not, that is okay. I still see your light and would never say or do anything to diminish it. That is the way I am trying to walk in this world.

XXVI

Dear Adrian,

Reading your words, witnessing our friendship as it is, and as it changes; reading this time with joy in tears, this time there is quiet serenity by sharing words at last.

Our parents are speaking to each other through us.

Gonen

XXVII

Dear Gonen,

To me, our conversations form constellations of co-resistance (Simpson, 2017), and the implicit relationality of a constellation amplifies the brilliance of each individual star. Wela'lin nitap, for all the ways you make my heart and mind radiate, reverberate, and resonate. Thank you for the spaces you hold so that our Ancestors can speak through us.

Michelle Sylliboy writes that in the Mi'kmaw language, “there is no word for goodbye, in the same way there is no end to learning. *Numultes* is a by-product of this worldview. It represents an ongoing dialogue between two or more people” (Sylliboy, 2019, p. 8). I think the same about our friendship and our conversations. Even when there are silences that last months or years, conversations recur unexpectedly—haunting us, as some would say (Nellis, 2009). These recursions are openings, invitations to relive and renew our conversations and to form new constellations. So today, I say “app numultes,” “see you again,” with an emphasis on the “again” but without expectations as to when.

Adrian

M'sit No'kmaw

כל יחסינו Col Yechasenu

All our relations

ENDNOTES

1. See the following website for more details: <https://empowering-sustainability.weebly.com>
2. The Youth Environmental Education Peace Initiative was initiated under the auspices of The Arava Institute for Environmental Studies.
3. Young Voices Can! is an Ottawa-based charitable organization working to foster open dialogue, mutual understanding and inclusion among young people of different ethnic, religious, and linguistic backgrounds.
4. Unless otherwise indicated, poetic offerings were written by Gonen and prosaic offerings were written by Adrian. Any “I” statements should be interpreted accordingly.
5. My friend.
6. “Politically Correct” was inspired by Leonard Cohen’s “Who By Fire.” Both poems are rooted in וְנִתְּנָה תְּקוּפָה (U’netaneh Tokef), a Jewish ceremonial poem dated to be about 1050 years old. Its name could be translated as “A validation to be conditionally given.” We (Jewish people) recite this poem as part of a ten-day process of reflection that starts immediately at the beginning of our year (around September). The reflection process ends with 24 hours of fasting on the tenth day. Jewish people dedicate these ten days to contemplate all our relations with(in) the world and the people we have been in touch with during the previous year, asking for forgiveness if needed. The poem lists horrifying deaths if God judges someone’s previous year negatively. This poem is written in our praying books, and is accompanied by a legend about its origins.
7. Simpson articulates this in the context of Nishnaabewin: “Aaniin [hello] then can also mean ‘I see your light,’ or ‘I see your essence,’ or ‘I see who you are’ (Simpson, 2017, p. 181). I (Adrian) have also heard similar teachings on recognition from Elders in different communities (see also Downey & Rowett, 2020).
8. It is forbidden for Jewish people to voice the name Yehova/Jehovah יהוה, it is the implicit word related to our nameless god. It is also a related to the Hebrew word that mean presence.

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EDITING MY OWN DRUM

Adrienne Adams

ABSTRACT

The author examines her art and poetry practice exploring how the “Badlands” of Alberta, Canada, in particular Áísinaípi (Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park), are “the bones of the earth”. She looks at the visual and linguistic poetry within them and examines her wording to decolonize her practice and learning/unlearning from the land and the cultures; Blackfoot and Settler, and peoples that inhabit it. She highlights how her process of editing a specific poem “My Own Drum” prompted and echoes an examination of her practice that leads to the writing of a new poem written during this process, revealing some of her findings. The original, edited and new poems show her process and struggles with fear, knowledge, skill, experience, art, poetry, nature and decolonization as a descendant of white settlers on Treaty 7 land. This is her first attempt to de-colonize her practice and she hopes that sharing her journey will inspire others to do so as well.

BIO

Adrienne Adams is a poet, artist and curator dedicated to creating safer inter-sectional space to honour the feminine. She is published in Antilang, FreeFall, Politics/letters live, Polyglot, Wax Poetry and Art, Rose Quartz, NōD, New Forum, The Last Petal, Mothering Anthology (Inanna Publications), YYC POP: Portraits of People and others. She curates Woolf’s Voices (aka Virginia), joking that it’s an excuse to howl in public. She has performed her work extensively including at South Country Fair, The New Beat, Storytellers, Expressions, FlyWheel, PPF, Ignite, and co-curated for Single Onion, CiSWE, and The Indie YYC. Her artwork has been shown around Alberta and is in the permanent collection at The Alberta Children’s Hospital. Ms. Adams has worked as an artist in residence and art teacher in the community for over 20 years. <https://adrienneadamsartandpoetry.com/>



Image 1. Adams, A. (2020). [Process shots In-situ]. Áísinaípi, Canada.

I began a body of work in 2008 called *Written in the Bones*, drawing the “poetry” I came across when examining how our bones look like other things. Drawing these I contemplate what that could mean for our collective and individual histories.

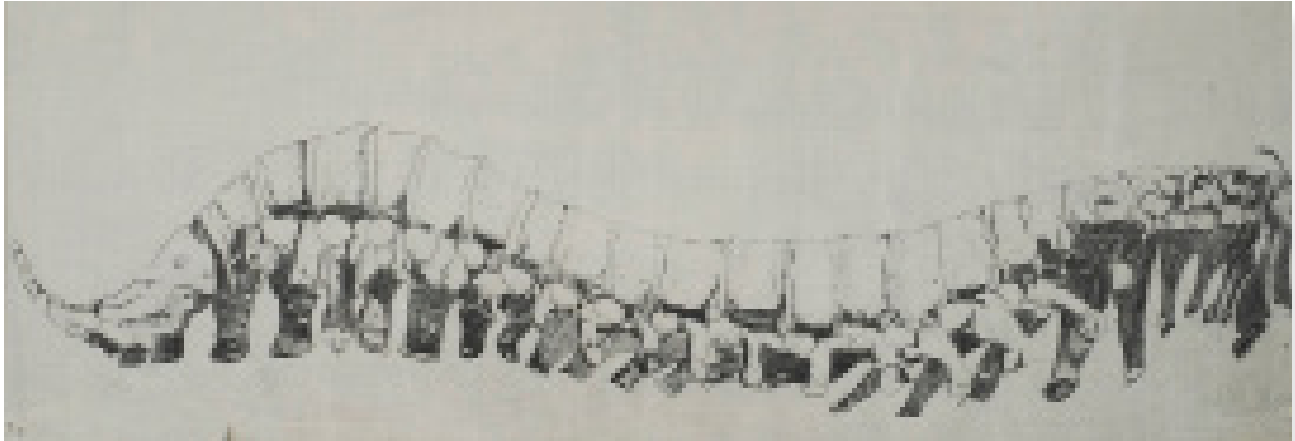


Image 2. Adams, A. (2008). [Pencil on Jade Rice Paper, Caterpillar Spine]. Calgary, AB, Canada.

In my artist statement for that show at The Epcor Center, I state,

Written in the bones, buried in the channel of our bodies. A shoulder blade like a wing wanting to take flight - once played by our ancestors as one of our first instruments. Mammoth skulls were once used as drums...

Animals buried in our spines. I can see a face, a mask, a butterfly all hidden, buried in my vertebrae and the cow bones I possess. A cat face in a cat spine. Our bones, so similar and related to each other and to our fellow vertebrates. My hand becomes a spider that I use to crawl across your back. My forearm is a hammer, my pelvis becomes a butterfly wanting to take flight in your arms (my sacred bone - sacrum), your spine becomes a snake intertwining through time.

What stories are hidden in the bones of human history? What poetry can we deduce from the fact that shoulder blades are like wings, vertebra like shape shifters, the spine like a snake, a guitar, a telephone wire? Are bones really gargoyles in disguise? Examining objects to see what other things they look like I create drawings exploring what the bones - human and those of our cousins the animals - have to tell us about ourselves.... (Adams, 2008)

Following this I began to think about how, if the earth is a geological body, its bedrock or stones could be considered its bones. There are several places on earth where I feel a very special and sacred connection to the land. The “Badlands” of Alberta, particularly Áísínai’pi (Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park), is one such place. I began to think about how the Badlands are the bones of the earth; warehouses of shifting images or spirits passing through, as the rocks change shape, over the centuries. I wanted to explore what this, in turn, might signify for our collective human histories. In 2012 I applied for a permit to go into the restricted areas of the park as an artist and draw the stones.

Working in the park I became overwrought with fear – of my lack of knowledge of rattlesnakes and how to spot them, of my lack of Indigenous heritage; of whether, in doing this work, I was trespassing on sacred ground. I constantly thought I was hearing rattles when really it was the buzzing of the grasshoppers. I was overrun by my

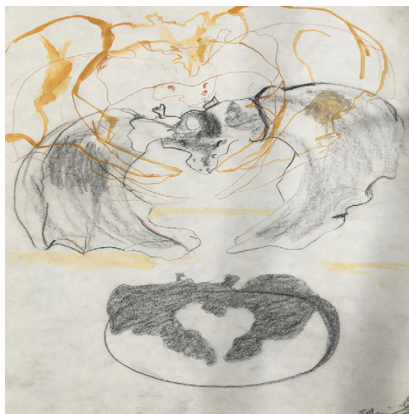


Image 3. Adams, A. (2008). [Pencil and Watercolour on Paper], Bat Pelvis]. Calgary, AB, Canada.

increasing doubts about the project, given my growing knowledge of the history of the place and its sacredness to the Blackfoot people. Though often matching; these beliefs sometimes contradicted my own direct experiences of the place, which were, and are of course, influenced by my own upbringing as a colonial settler in this land. I found it very hard to relax and draw.

I began writing this essay as a journey to edit a poem I wrote there where I struggle to reconcile my desires to have a relationship with Áísínai'pi, connect with the land and create art, with doubts about my right to do so as a colonial settler on this land. This process echoes my journey of overcoming my fear of the poetry editing process itself. Editing is something I used to be deathly afraid of. Over the process of several years of consulting with many fellow poets and seeking suggestions I gradually came to the point where I actually enjoyed it. This felt like a ritual cleansing of my fear through practice and engagement.

I discovered as an artist, poet and teacher of art who has not written an academic essay in 20 years, that I had much to learn about academic writing itself, at the same time as attempting to unlearn its' colonial conventions and decolonize my writing and my practice. I examined my use of language through the lens of many books, articles and feedback and consultations with Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, colleagues and poets. This involved learning and unlearning (Donald, 2020) in a continually evolving feedback loop.

Over the process of editing this poem, and writing this essay, I went through several waves of fear, overwhelm, and discouragement. I realized just how deeply my language and thinking are embedded in colonial culture and how much learning and unlearning I have yet to do. With a determination to try again and face and overcome my fears of not doing or saying the right thing, I came back continually and looked at what I was saying and doing.

Decolonizing one's language and thinking takes time, patience, study and attention; just as any good relationship does. It's important work.

Here, I present the edited and unedited versions of the poem side by side, followed by an in-depth examination of a few of the changes in language that I made and why. Notably, I changed the title from "My Own Drum" to "One Drum, Many Voices" influenced in part, by Richard Wagamese's (2019) posthumous book, "One Drum". It is my hope that this may serve as an example to other poets and writers to look at their own work, while I recognize that I still have a lot to learn myself. The more I learn the more I see things differently. This process has helped me to shed my fear and recognize that this work is a lifelong journey. Colonization took hundreds of years to be passed on and embedded in our thinking. One essay, and one edited poem cannot do all the work of unlearning, but it's a start.



Image 4. Adams, A. (2008). [Pencil on Jade Rice Paper, Detail - Caterpillar Spine]. Calgary, AB, Canada.



Image 5. Adams, A. (2012). [Pencil on Canvas, Untitled]. Writing-on-Stone, Provincial Park, AB, Canada

Áísínai'pi which means "it is pictured" (Alberta Parks, 2017) is a very sacred place to the Blackfoot, and if I am to work there, I need my relations around my work to be respectful and appropriate. As park interpreter Desiree Yellowhorn said in the Vagabrothers video (2015) "The Blackfoot Nation",

The Blackfoot believe that this area is inhabited by many spirits often called Grandfathers and Grandmothers. The Valley here actually belongs to them, it's their home. This area is considered very sacred. So you can equate it to such places as Jerusalem or Mecca. ... [the park contains] thousands of petroglyphs, hundreds of pictographs. Writing on stone here was a way for them to actually communicate with the spirits. So some of the rock art here is believed to be created by the spirits as messages for the people. We haven't really counted them all, mainly because everytime we decide to go exploring we always find something new. It's a way for us to teach our ways of life and share. Around twenty or thirty years ago First Nations were depicted as "the other", but now we're not seen as "the other". We're seen as all together. We're all interconnected. (1:41 - 2:47)

One Drum, Many Voices

(edited and revised in March 2020)

I have been learning,
and unlearning,
lessons about
leading and following,
internally and externally.

What's written in the stones?

These parks are sacred land,
gathering stories,
The humbling rock giants cow me.
Spirit grandstands the rodeo;
overlooks the valley
of little people, common folk
rocks.

A foxy sphinx
springs the vale, alive.
Big enough to move,
small enough to breathe.
I prefer to crawl amongst
rocks I can scale.
Here I find,
my own visions;
interpretations.
I realize the connection I sought
in the big valley
is open with these smaller humble rocks.

My Own Drum

*(Original Poem: Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park,
August 2012)*

I have been learning lessons
about not following
someone's else's drum.

Writing on stone
No Grand need here
I am more comfortable amongst
the little people,
common folk,
mushroom grandfather's with kindly, old
wrinkly faces,
foxy sphinx's
overlooking the valley
with all the fresh, aliveness
of being big enough to move
and small enough to breathe
No humbling giants for me,
I prefer to crawl amongst rocks I can identify
here I find
my own visions
Interpretations
I love the vast beauty of the great rock valley,
true.
Though intimidated
It becomes hard to find my own imaginings
There, I keep seeing

Mushroom Grandfather winks at me
Their kind wrinkly eyes beckon, smiling.
Soon, they will find their way,
onto my canvas.

I love the vast beauty of the great rock valley,
but – intimidated,
it becomes hard to find the way
to my own images.
I keep seeing
Grand Chiefs,
Eagles,
Bears,
All the warriors
that have lived and died and fought here.
Sought visions of their own.
They speak to me in Big Silences; towering.
Even the large stately
Great Grandfather who welcomed me,
renders my pencil; mute.

(in slips Baba Yaga) laughing.
Hissing with snake breath
she challenges me;
rattling grasshoppers in every sound second,
charming my snaking fears,
so that I cannot sit still,
and draw.

She summons me;
a gift to see a woman – finally,
after failing Great Grandfather,
in these cold sand rocks.

She is fierce and old and kind.
Her teeth are falling out.
Her smile's a grimace.
Her hair, a river of Babushka
flowing over stone.
Her mouth a cavernous shadow
of chin, hollow so hollow.
She sucks you in to the body of the snake
sidling by.

Grand Chiefs
All the warriors
that have lived & died & fought here.
They speak to me in Big Silences making me
cower.
Even the large stately Great Grandfather
I found who welcomes me
I realize the opening I sought to reconnect
with is also of small humble folks paling -
at least in comparison to GRAND daddy!
a kindly fellow
he beacons, smiling at me
& will soon find his way onto my canvas.
The Grandmother I finally found is laughing at
me the hiss with the snake breath of Baba Yaga
Challenging me
Snake fears charmer's fears of my own
addictions to men who aren't good for me - if
that can be classified as an addiction,
that is,

But Oh! The rush of hormones
is so greatly profound
& I so love to feel my body
alive, electric
So flowing with juices,
Baba calls to me
a gift after
sustaining my own fear - drawing Great
Grandfather in & finishing him
A gift to see a woman -finally
in these cold sand rocks
after all this time.
She is fierce and old and kind
Her teeth are falling out
A Toothless grimace, her hair
is a river of Babushka
flowing over the stone
her mouth a cavernous shadow of a chin
hollow so hollow
to suck you in
like the body of the snake
would if it could

I imagine being like that,
so close to the earth –
my body hugging the ground
in constant worship.
I admire her movements as she slivers off
the grass.

I strive to see and follow these visions.
But to learn the land,
I need to be connected,
to my own psyche, first.

My head is so peopled with other culture's
thoughts that this is difficult,
if not impossible,
and, perhaps inappropriate.

Akin to walking into Notre Dame
and trying to establish your own relation-
ship
to those manufactured rocks,
without visions of the Catholic Church
nipping at your heels.
Yet one can sense
the multicolored grandness of the window
stains,
the awed hush of the place;
regardless of one's race or creed.

In Áísinaí'pi's naturally hewn stones
I sense the magnificence of these Chiefs.
Great men who wandered the prairies
unafraid
of the snakes who slithered up
to greet them.
Women who shook the rattle
as if it were their own.

But now I am living out my own legend;
which involves being here,
feeling,
and drawing,
establishing a relationship with the land,

So graceful
I admire his movements as he slivers off the
grass.

I imagine being like that
so close to the earth - my body
hugging the ground in constant worship
I would like that
I strive to be
& see my own visions
realize I need to be connected
to my psyche first,
My head is so peopled with other culture's
thoughts
that this is difficult, if not impossible and, per-
haps somewhat inappropriate
like it would be difficult
to walk into Notre Dame and try to establish
your own relationship
without visions of the Catholic Church nipping
at your heels
Yet one can sense the multicolored grandness
of the window stains
& the awed hush of the place
regardless of one's race or creed.
And here in these naturally hewn stones I
sense the magnificence
of these chiefs,
great men who wandered the prairies unafraid
of the snakes who slithered up to greet them
Women who shook the rattle as if it were their
own
& I realize I do not need to be them –
A Grand Chief

just myself.
I can honour them,
Draw what I see
Perhaps come back later and draw
the beaver,
the buffalo,
& the eagle
Great water, earth and sky beings that they are
but for now

struggling with whispers of self and
cultural doubt.
Weighed down by legacies of colonial
racism,
assimilation,
genocide and gentrification
built layer upon layer within me,
all the rows of mud and bricks,
my forefathers,
laid down before me.

I need to learn more,
about breaking and following,
listening and searching.
reading and leading,
asking and seeking,
offering and making.

Stepping above and beyond
and around these colonial weights

I touch the earth; feet barred.
Soul stretched
across this land,
to be,
here,
now.

I realize I don't need to be grand to
connect; just myself.
I can honour them,
Draw what I see.
Come again,
later, when I have learned enough,
and draw
Beaver,
Buffalo, and
Eagle.
Great water,
earth, and Sky beings.

I am the Ukranian, Polish, Scottish, witch,
artist

I am living out my personal legend
which involves being here
feeling and drawing,
establishing my own relationship with the
land struggling with all the whispers of self
and cultural doubt
the legacies of
racism,
assimilation,
& gentrification
built layer upon layer within me
like all the rows of mud and bricks
my forefathers laid down before me.
Stepping above and beyond and Around that
& touching the earth,
my feet barred, my soul reaching across the
land
to live & be this small piece,
here,now.
My personal legend
I am the Ukranian, Polish, Scottish, Witch,
Artist
who lives on the other side of the Bering strait
Yet senses the terra firma as a living being like
her ancients - the mammoth hunters
I am not native
nor need be
but as an inhabitant of this earth
I am as native to this planet as need be.
We all are.
& Natives most likely have as many varied
beliefs as coexist on Sunday morning
in a Unitarian congregation
who welcomes all
faiths,
religions,
creeds
& sexualities
judging no one based on what they believe
but only on how fervent their search for mean-
ing & truth,
At the beginning of the 21st century
in this, our very agnostic
age of earth.

who lives on the other side of the Bering Strait.
Yet senses the terra firma as a living
being like her ancients –
the mammoth hunters.

I am not Indigenous to Áísínai’pi
nor need be.
As an inhabitant of this earth,
I have earthly roots primed to this planet
We all do
Learning to play
my Indigenous, shamanic celtic, slavic,
harmonic lines while listening,
connecting to
the wisdom of the Elders and
stones of Áísínai’pi,
here on Treaty 7 land
roots conversation on respectful ground,
bearing healing fruit
mending shifting rifts
to reform stoned stories.
Áísínai’pi is currently in Blackfoot territory;
Nitawahsin¹
Over the centuries many tribes
have passed through
these stones seeking,
meeting and guidance.
We are mistaken to assume uniformity.
Indigenous beliefs are as varied,
as those coexistent
on Sunday morning
in a Unitarian congregation;
which welcomes all
faiths, religions, creeds and sexualities,
judging no one based on what they believe;
but only on how fervent their search
for meaning and truth.
At the beginning of the 21st century
in this, our very agnostic
age of earth.

I wrote the first version of the poem *My Own Drum* to wrestle with and come to terms with my struggle. At the time I was terrified editing my poetry would give me writer’s block. For years the poem remained unedited. I abandoned my project. Or so I thought.

Thinking back over the years, I realized that wasn’t entirely true. I may have abandoned the drawings and poems, but like anything that is inside you, and anything you feel is important, or perhaps even anything you are afraid

of, it will keep coming back to you until you deal with it; and do the work. “The land knows you, even when you are lost” (Kimmerer, 2015, p. 36).

As Shawn Wilson (2008) states in the introduction to his book *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, “Research is all about unanswered questions, but it also reveals our unquestioned answers” (p. 6). Editing my poem I’ve realized just how many of my answers I didn’t question back then that I do now. This is an example of unlearning and is reflected in the difference between the two. Wilson goes on to quote Terry Tafoya,



Image 6. Adams, A. (2012). [Pencil, Watercolour and Ink on Wood, Grandvision]. Writing-on-Stone, Canada

Stories go in circles. They don’t go in straight lines. It helps if you listen in circles because there are a lot of stories inside and between stories, and finding your way through them is as easy and as hard as finding your way home. Part of finding is getting lost, and when you are lost you start to open up and listen. (Tafoya, 1995, p. 12)

Over the years I kept visiting these places and establishing my relationships with them. I’ve gone on herb walks to learn how to forage with both Métis and non-Indigenous guides. I’ve been learning to identify plants and medicines and studying traditional uses and protocols. I have been very casually teaching myself some Blackfoot and Cree. I have been deepening my relationship with the land and lessening my fear. As Margorie Beaucage (2020) has said, “The Indigenous classroom is the land. It has always been the land (n.p.)”

One summer before returning to Áísínai’pi I spent over an hour listening to the difference between the sound of a rattlesnake rattling its tail; juxtaposing this against listening to the sound of grasshoppers rubbing their legs together. That was the sound I kept mistaking for snakes. I read all the brochures the park had available on rattlesnakes. I then paid attention to these clues on my next trip deepening my relationship with the land while attempting to lessen my fear.

Over the years I have been reading and studying Indigenous literature, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), and engaging in conversations about the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)² with colleagues who are part of this work. I have deepened my relationships and understandings with Indigenous peoples and my own history and implications as a settler within a framework of a colonial culture. Eventually I decided to edit my poem and to take up this work again, addressing it head on. Although I had paused, the work itself cycled and coiled itself back to me through all I was compelled to do over the years. It came back to me in what our current cross-cultural dialogues and conversations are, working on decolonizing my understanding of the land, my own inner leanings, interests and the ways in which I care about and relate to the world. Also, I’m older and have learned the value of just doing things; of buckling down and doing the work rather than worrying about doing it perfectly.

Maybe I will be called out. Surely I will make mistakes along the way. In fact, I think I already have by not realizing I should have done then, what I am doing now. As Jürgen W. Kremer states in the afterword to Betty Bastien’s (2004) *Blackfoot Ways of Knowing*,

People of European descent or people who have entered the Euro Centered process of consciousness have split themselves off from an ongoing interaction with place, ancestry, animals, plants, spirit(s), community, story, ceremony, cycles of life, and cycles of the seasons and ages.... We engage in acts of imperialism - however subtle they may be - as long as we don’t understand our own shamanic and Indigenous roots, our ancestral alliances and nurturing conversations with our relations. We can only be part of an egalitarian knowledge exchange and dialogue if we know who we are as indigenous people. (p. 185)

And that is precisely why the work is worth doing. It’s important to learn, to try, to edit, unlearn, and revise. To do better. To repair or undo mistakes and start again. To do our work, to live our lives and relationships in the best ways we can. I am learning about what being a good ally means and trying to reflect that in my writing. Like art, and like poetry, this involves study and practice. Trial and error and most importantly then; trying again. As Gregory Younging (2018) writes in *Indigenous Styles*, “Find your way through and show how you have found your way through” (p. 50-51).

Over the years I have come to care very deeply about these issues. I’ve struggled with whether or not I have a right to explore my own relationship with this land where I am a settler. What are the right ways to do so given our colonial history? At the same time how do I acknowledge what I feel very deeply as my connection to the land? As Dr. Dwayne Donald (2020) of the University of Alberta has said,

Colonialism is an ideology.... Colonialism is an extended process of denying relationships...predicated on relationship denial.... The work becomes how do you repair those relationships that have been denied. And then once they are repaired how do you renew them on more ethical terms... That is the fundamental thing we have to recover from if we are going to proceed differently and support, I guess, people living according to different ethics.... I use the phrase ‘unlearning’ instead of decolonization because those are two different

things. We have to unlearn colonialism. (n.p.)

To explore these questions and my learning and unlearning, I present these exploratory poems with my visual art.

Further Reflections on Learning and Unlearning through Editing Poetry

I share, “My Own Drum” in two versions at the beginning of this essay. Below, “When She was All Alone” presents my experience of the land in a rainstorm one summer (see the video link for the performance in footnote 11). In “Worship” I wrote about my relationship to Nosehill in Calgary. I end with a poem I wrote while researching background material to support this essay called, “Colonial ReRead”. The art images and photographs I share in conversation with the poems were created from my visits to Áísínai’pi. From a teaching and learning perspective the reader will be able to see not only my evolving editing skills through “My Own Drum”; but also my growing and evolving knowledge and relationship surrounding the issues which form the crux of the poem, or the problem of decolonizing oneself, in itself.

Examining the past through the present while writing this essay I became conscious of where I was, and also of where I’m at now. The present is informing my memories of my experiences. At the same time, I am learning new things, and forgetting some of what was present back then. Editing I realized, became a vehicle for this process to flow through me; for both my thoughts and relationships to my work and the land itself, to shift and reform. This, in turn, echoes the shifting images that pop up, fade, morph and reform in the stones, as the earth herself performs her own kind of editing and revision through wind and rain, storms and time. I can wrestle with my doubts as I wrestle with words to contain and reconfigure my shifting and growing relationship to the land, Indigenous settler relations, and my work.

Attending workshops this spring through The Calgary Distinguished Writers Program at the University of Calgary with Leanne Simpson,³ Lee Maracle and Gwen Bennaway have deepened my perspective and awareness of my responsibility surrounding these issues. Bennaway opened her workshop by stating the greatest gift she has been given by her Elders as a writer is the question, “Who are you responsible too?” This has influenced my thinking a lot. As a settler I am responsible to myself, my community, my ancestors and all those we have interacted with and affected on our journeys. Summoning the courage to articulate my questions during the workshop, Maracle suggested, “Face it, explore it, and write about it.”⁴ Here, I hope, I’ve at least articulated my questions better. This helps guide my journey.

Back in 2012 “My Own Drum” tried to address some of my doubts. In the present day I am galled by my past lack of humility and also my current lack of knowledge. The more you explore, the more you realize you do not know. For instance, I struggled with my use of the term “Native” in this passage knowing now, it is no longer a respectful way to address Indigenous people:

I am not native,
nor need be.

As an inhabitant of this earth,

I am as native to this planet, as need be. We all are.

Generally, we now only speak accurately of plants being native, not people (Younging, 2018). The metaphor itself however, still holds. As using “Indigenous” in the following verse instead of “Native”, is the correct way to speak

generally of Indigenous people in Canada, I changed it. Speaking of a specific person or group it is desired protocol to address both the region and nation that someone is from (Ossie, 2017). For instance; Kainai of the Blackfoot Nation.

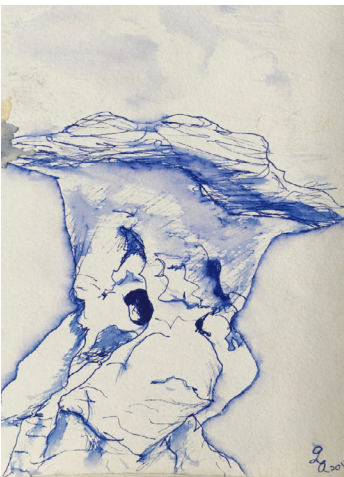
In my present version I changed the “he” of my “Mushroom Grandfather” (see Image 8) to a gender neutral “they” to reflect more possibilities within the gender spectrum as is the Blackfoot understanding of gender as well.⁵ This also opens the poem up, inviting people to make their own associations as is current with present day gender politics, “Mushroom Grandfather winks at me / Their kind wrinkly eyes beckon, smiling. / Soon, they will find their way onto my canvas.”

I also questioned my use of the word “tribes” in the poem, as this is currently contested. Though originally a French word that was used derogatorily, a lot of Indigenous people are reclaiming it. There is no universal consensus within Indigenous communities but an ongoing dialogue and discussion (Younging, 2018). Learning to decolonize my language, and my thinking, I’m realizing, will be a lifelong process. As Dr. Dwayne Donald (2018) says,



Colonization took over 100 years to do its damage so the process of reparations will probably take at least as long. The original intent of the treaties were as peace and friendship treaties. They were signed by both settlers and Indigenous peoples alike. We are all treaty people. Learning to honour and live by their original intentions is a complex and multi-layered endeavour. (n.p.)

It is a good project that we are all engaged in, as Treaty people.



Many Blackfoot names for places reflect their view of the earth as a body. Places such as Nosehill, Head Butte, Heart Creek, Elbow River etc. When I go back to Áísinaí’pi again I want to draw the stones that I now know that the Blackfoot people actually think of as the bones of the earth. For at least 3000 years (Government of Alberta, 2016), the Blackfoot have had a special relationship with this sacred place. Áísinaí’pi has had relationships with people of various “tribes” for over 20,000 years (Johnston, 1987). During the various rock art tours I took at the park, some Elders spoke to this relationship with various people over the ages. I need to find a way to explore my relationship with the bones of the earth through my art and poetry that fits within ethical relationality (Donald, 2020). This involves forming relationships with others who are also connected to this land and respecting their connections, as well as my own.

Image 7 [Stone Slider]
Image 8 [Mushroom Grandfather]. Adams, A. (2012). Writing-on-Stone, Provincial Park, AB, Canada.

I also think it’s about listening to the land; not only in those places where I feel a special connection, or Alberta Parks, or Parks Canada have deemed special; but everywhere. Listening to the land in my backyard, the Bow River in Calgary, the earth under the highway byway strip or the mall parking lot, and the soil in my garden; hearing what it has to say, whether that land is viewed as being in a sacred place or not. That said, I do feel a calling to explore the bones of the earth specifically. The land itself has much more to say; everywhere, and to everyone.

Vicki Kelly (2019) has talked about how her wonder at her lived experiences in nature turned to reverence once

she surrendered to them, “my job was to withstand the intensity of my lived experience” (p. 20). I believe that this is where some of my fear comes from; what happens if I become one with the rattlesnake? Do I know enough about snakes to walk safely and knowledgeable amongst these lands? Can I withstand the intense energies I feel at Áísínai’pi even when I don’t understand them? In the lower valley the energies are gentler and park guides have often talked about these being more open to the general public than the restricted areas which are viewed as more Sacred to the Niitsitapi. I don’t feel as if I am trespassing there but rather that I am welcome. This is where most of my drawings have actually come from. The kindly “Mushroom Grandfather” in my poem (see Image 8 and 12), and recently the “Queen” and “Peaceful Daughter” (see Image 1) both whom I communed with and drew on my most recent visits this summer. To draw the rock Eagle, Bear and Buffalo of the Great rock wall in the restricted area I would need to develop my relationships more and ask if and when that would be appropriate. The most intense challenge I received in the Great rock wall came from the “Baba Yaga” Grandmother I saw on the rock wall who is known a trickster of sorts in my own historical Slavic culture, as well as the rattlesnakes. I have my work cut out for me in figuring out what Baba Yaga and the snakes are challenging me to learn.

This year I kept seeing butterflies of all sorts everywhere which has never happened to me before at the park. I actually saw a rattlesnake sleeping just under a rock ledge below the great rock wall. Curiously, actually seeing her for the first time, I wasn’t afraid. I was a safe distance away and she looked so vulnerable. Rattlesnakes are an endangered species so that vulnerability is real. And also knowing where the snake is helps; a lot. You know then that you are not going to accidentally step on the snake or have one catch you unaware. Right before seeing the snake I had the honour of hearing a meadowlark in the wild for the first time. It was quite special and I think opened me up to seeing the snake with less fear. Not that I carry any delusions about just how powerful she is as a rattlesnake.



Image 9. Adams, A. (2018). [Pen, Sketchbook, Insistence]. Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park. AB, Canada.

Image 10. Adams, A. (2012). [Digital Photography, Kiss]. Writing-on-Stone. Provincial Park. AB, Canada.

Amongst the hoodoos, particularly at Áísínai’pi, I have often felt like the stones were speaking directly to me. Elder Leroy Little Bear says that “the hoodoos are listening to us” (cited in Hill, 2008, p. 41). The Blackfeet believe that Spirits did the writing on the stones. On a personal level I have felt more of a relationship with the actual

formations of the rocks than the petroglyphs and pictographs. Perhaps because I am not Blackfoot or perhaps because my imagination roams more freely around the organic rock formations; though the mystery and the stories the Elders tell around the carvings are certainly food for the soul. Yet that is not where I, myself, feel called to communicate and draw. Rather, the faces and animals I see in the rocks, and encounter in the park, are loud in my imagination and spirit.

As I reflect in my poem, “When She was Alone” (see at end of essay), the wind and rain are always blowing through the park and changing things. “Wind is understood in Blackfoot as *sopo*”, (Little Bear cited in Hill, 2008, p. 41) something that goes through everything. “Think of their age,” Little Bear marvels, the primordial history of the rock and the hoodoos at Writing-on-Stone self-evident. “The stuff they must know!” yet the “teaching rocks” are somewhat careful about sharing their counsel” (cited in Hill, 2008, p. 42).

This reflects my own experiences in seeking counsel. Both in 2012 when I asked one of the Blackfoot interpreters at the park and did not get a direct answer, and when consulting with Dr. Dwayne Donald via email about this essay and project in hopes that he could help me to know how to connect with an Elder. It also reflects the worldview of Indigenous people of teaching through stories to let listeners come to their own conclusions and encourage independent thinking (Indigenous Canada Course, 2020). So instead Dr. Donald asked me,

How do you approach WOS as a living relative? How do you honour the presence there? How do you feed the life that resides there? To me, these are very important questions for you to consider. The thing is, Elders will likely not automatically share this with people they don’t know very well. You need to earn their trust and guidance. They will need to know what you will do with what they share with you.⁶

As Little Bear (2008) says of the stones “Like a stranger, they will not sit down and tell you everything immediately, ... only when the rocks begin to know you will they tell you their story” (cited in Hill, p. 41).

And it makes sense. If what the Elders, and what the stones have to say is sensitive, why would they impart that knowledge until they trusted you? Trust is developed through time and experience; like relationships. That is a key element of ethical relationality. Especially when dealing with traditional sacred sites. In any mystical system, certain knowledge is not imparted (we hope) until the student is ready. Perhaps this is even part of the fear I experienced in picking up on energies I didn’t fully understand. Like listening to the land, if I hope to consult with an Elder, I need to more deeply develop my relationships with the Blackfoot people and their knowledge systems.

In Don Hill’s 2008 Alberta Views article, Little Bear talks about our relationship with the land in terms of renewal. What am I giving to the land in exchange for my experiences there? Taking Dr. Donald’s advice for example, I have been taught by Metis herbalists that when I forage for plants, to first ask permission of the plant to gather it or not, and then leave some strands of my hair (or something else, such as food) as an offering in exchange when I don’t have tobacco. The way I see it, when I offer my hair as a substitute, I am literally offering the earth a piece of my own body and DNA and so reciprocal communion takes place. Recently a friend gifted me some tobacco plants which are now growing in my garden as a way of generating this offering without supporting the commercial cigarette industry. This act of growing, and then offering, becomes a way of renewing my relationship with the land. I want to share my experiences of *Áísínai’pi* through my art and poetry because they are profound and beautiful. What does the land itself want in return? Currently the Milk River has nearly dried up because of the St. Mary’s river canal collapsing (Edwardson, 2020). What is the land trying to say through that?



Image 11, Sphinx; Image 12, Mushroom Grandfather; Image 13 Great Rock Wall. Adams, A. (2018). [Digital Photograph], Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park, AB, Canada.

Little Bear believes there is an unspoken language that makes it possible to bridge every worldview, a language that can be learned through dialogue—the willingness to set aside preconceived ideas and listen not only with your mind but with your heart. And if the way forward begins with a commitment to genuine dialogue, Little Bear teaches that the exchange of conversation must not only occur between human beings but also between all the creatures and plants and spirits that connect us to and with the earth (cited in Hill, 2008).

While researching and editing this essay I wrote “Colonial Re-read”, reflecting on my relationship to land as a settler. Growing up I was obsessed with the Little House books and olden times. They were a big part of me learning how to read. Reading “My Prairie Year” by Brett Harvey right after listening to “The Marrow Thieves” by Cherie Dimaline was a sharp contrast that really brought home the effects of intergenerational trauma from residential schools and racist portrayals of Indigenous folks in pioneer histories. It has made me reflect, less romantically, about my own Ukrainian and Scottish immigrant ancestral pasts as people who struggled through much hardship and racism of their own; to build a life for themselves here on this land. But also, as people who benefited from displacing and attempting to sever Indigenous people from their long-cultivated relationships with this land. All the more reason to do this work as Dr. Dwayne Donald so clearly states.

What it means to be a human being living in a particular place. ... I use that image of the treaty handshake. So what does that mean? ... We have... local Indigenous understandings of what it means to live in a place and what's the wisdom associated with how to live well there. ... I try to promote a way in which this handshake can be honoured and my view is that it doesn't matter who you are or where you come from, if you live in this place where I live, where I gather students, ... then you are part of this treaty agreement and so it's your responsibility as an educator to learn how local Indigenous people understand themselves as human beings and what that has to do with the ecosystem.... The ecosystem is very interconnected to the knowledge system and the stories that come from the knowledge system describe the ecosystem and how to live well there.... The way I imagine this is kind of like this extensive web of relations that I try to bring my students into. And try to help them overcome all their fears about you know, “I'm not Indigenous. I don't have the right to do this”. I try to show them that there's actually kind of an urgency for them to begin to accept that the ecosystem, the place where they live might have something to do with their own identi-

ties. So unlearning comes through this process... where I tell as many stories as I can because one thing I say is that if you want to know the land, if you want to know the people, you've got to know their stories. So... the other thing is that in ethical relationality and unlearning... I try to honour the fact that they don't just learn in an intellectual way. Their bodies can learn. Their spirit needs to be addressed. Their emotions need to be supported. (Donald, 2020, n.p.)

Listening to podcasts by Dr. Dwayne Donald where he stresses the importance of doing this work and reading "Braiding Sweetgrass" by Robin Wall Kimmerer I've realized that the way we view the land influences our relationships with "it" and with each other. This work of reconciliation is not only something we do with the Indigenous peoples of this land, but something we do with the land itself/herself. Honouring the earth as sacred; exploring my relationships with "her" heals a rift forged by colonialism that I, as a descendant of settlers, can also explore. "For the sake of the peoples and the land, the urgent work of the Second Man may be to set aside the ways of the colonist and become Indigenous to place" (Kimmerer, 2013, 207). We all need to do good work here as Dr. Donald reminds us.

It's important to say that... Indigenous people do not have copyright on ecology... there are people all around the world who have their own traditions and own ways of doing it and just because you're not Indigenous doesn't mean you don't have access to this or an understanding of this. There's examples all around the world... this is a human desire that we have to try to connect in these ways and that not to make it about a particular people with a particular propensity... to make sure that they understand that this is a shared human desire. (n.p.)

I realized it's not about whether or not I have a right to do this work; it's about establishing my relationships and working on them. My relationships to the land herself, to my art, poetry and writing, to people and cultures who have lived and worked with the land for thousands of years and generations before me. I do feel like I need to ask permission; not to do my art or poetry, but to work with the land. "To be native to a place we must learn to speak its language" (Kimmerer, 2013, 48). I need to ask the land herself. I do see the earth or land as female, or feminine; more specifically of creative generative force. Kainai Elder Saa'kokoto was our park interpreter on the rock art tours I did this summer and he kept talking about the heartbeat Na'á as Mother Earth and how we do ceremonies such as offering tobacco to the earth as self care.⁷ For me as a feminine identified woman calling the land feminine helps me to connect, resonating deep within. Readers may have different connections. My task is to listen, learn, unlearn and ask questions. Sit with the land, read books, listen to podcasts, talk with and visit and learn from Elders. While writing I googled whether the word Elder should always be capitalized. And yes, it should, when referring to a spiritual leader as a sign of respect, though, not when referring to an Indigenous senior who is not a spiritual leader (Anonymous, n.d.).

My editing was interrupted by the Covid 19 pandemic. While writing I was longing to connect with an Elder somehow but was cut off from my community connections that would allow me to do so. In my research, options I came across include; approaching my local Native friendship center, visiting The Elders Guidance Circle at my local library and consulting with The Alberta First Nations Governance Center.⁸ Finally towards the final editing stages I was able to re-visit Áísinaí'pi and briefly connect with Saa'kokoto, an Elder there, who confirmed that there were some things I needed to do first. Such as offering the homegrown tobacco I had brought directly to the land herself, both from me and from/for him, instead of giving it to him as I had intended. This was a small start towards learning to respect and honour the cultural protocols of a place. In 2012 I didn't realize I also needed to consult with Elders and the Blackfoot people directly. This has been part of my learning. This essay was peer

reviewed by Artizein reviewers and editors as well as some of my Indigenous and settler colleagues.⁹ In a way I'm backtracking and doing now what I realize would have been appropriate to do at the very first. Just as I applied in 2012 to the provincial park itself for a permit to work in the restricted areas which developed a conversation with the park rangers and Indigenous cultural interpreters and guides in the park at the time. The work itself can then become a conversation with itself and with others. As Kimmerer (2013) reminds us "Listening in wild places, we are audience to conversations in a language not our own" (p. 48). I am held responsible to do my best; to do the work in a good way. Making an offering to the land and then sitting and listening to it before working or writing or drawing establishes a bond that allows the work to flow through me rather than me being an outsider reflecting or recording impressions of the land. Instead I acknowledge that I, as a human, am part of the land and all of creation, not separate.

Finally, I realized all of my learning and unlearning is part of decolonizing; owning the fact that I can feel the intense energy of the land when I'm in *Áísínai'pi*, that I feel it speaking to me, and not being embarrassed, or fearing that others will think I'm crazy. Those are colonial dialogues that encourage a disconnection from the land. As Jürgen W. Kremer states in the afterword to Betty Bastien's book "Blackfoot Ways of Knowing",

We need to engage and recover what might be called a nurturing conversation, in other words: seek that deep still place that Indians know about. 'Such quality of inquiry and conversation means that I make myself present to the current moment and to what went before, to present and past; it means to be present to the cycle of the seasons, the celestial movements, the weather, the land, the past of the land, the plants and animals, and to fellow human beings; it means looking at shadow material as well as acknowledging and healing denials and splits (internal and external). It means not just thinking about rights, but also obligations. It means discovering spirits in symbols and using metaphors to create the possibility of spiritual presence. And then there is the creative play of chance, vision, and insight, the movement of tricksters. Visionary narratives of this kind are boundaries by the land lived on, by the seasons, by the movement of animals, now seemingly chance, now predictable. Tradition, when alive, is mirror and inspiration, it challenges and is challenged as old vision rubs against new.... Engaging in inquiry and conversation of the quality just described means recovering connections to my own indigenous roots, the times and places where such nurturing conversations or balancing ways may have occurred.' (pp. 187-188)

Connecting to my own ancient shamanic celtic and slavic indigenous roots alongside reading and studying about other Indigenous cultures such as the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) or Nehiyawak (Cree), which I live amongst and alongside in Treaty 7 land, is important so that we may connect, and understand each other on respectful ground.

For instance, long have I had a relationship with Baba Yaga, who could be characterized as the "trickster" of slavic folklore and mythology. Obsessed with fairytales and my slavic and celtic roots I've also done tons of research on her over the years. This is probably why she showed up for me in the stones, laughing at me, and also why she is key as a figure who challenges me in my poem. My relationship to her is about my connection to my own indigenous slavic roots as much as I've been able to explore thus far. She is an important ancestor figure for me, as is my own late Baba who I have tried to maintain and deepen a relationship with over the years through remembering and connecting with her through gardening, learning how to forage, making pysanky and a myriad of other Ukrainian traditions I have learned to practice throughout my life. The thrill I received when researching my genealogy and tracing my 6th Great Baba back to a particular unassuming grass grown over alleyway

in Ukraine that I saw on google earth is unspeakable. As is the subsequent grief and confusion. I have no direct connection or experience of my ancestral land but that is where my slavic indigenous ancestors are likely from; the ancient Ukrainians. I do however have direct lived experiences of Treaty 7 land, and hence the tension. That is the dissonance of trying to heal my severed relationships with my own indigenous roots and the severing caused in part by my own more recent settler ancestors here.

What is important is owning these roots, which my more recent ancestors lost touch with through the gradual colonization of their own shamanic cultures over the centuries. Then, not being ashamed to claim these more ancient ways of knowing about the world through wisdom embedded in myths, folklore and the land herself. For example, getting over my fear that others will think I'm crazy if I talk honestly about how the stones "speak" to me. This is overcoming my own internalized colonial attitudes and heals a rift permeating our culture which separates us from the natural world preventing us from seeing rocks and trees, animals and the land as equal to us as, "All our relations" (Kelly, 2019, p. 20). Stones, for instance, as our ancient ancestors who have much to teach us if we will listen.

Áísínai'pi resonates deeply within me as geological ancestors, though they are more directly Blackfoot ancestors than mine. I am learning to ask humbly to relate to them. Examining "My Own Drum" poem and engaging this research and writing process I now understand my own writing better than I did when I wrote it years ago. Part of this has been a process of dealing with my own shame of being a settler. This is both the struggle and the gift of editing your own work. Part of my process was going from seeking permission, to giving myself permission, even while being challenged by the editing process, as if my very thoughts themselves were being edited.

Vicki Kelly states, in her 2019 essay on Indigenous Poesis that the process involves offering, asking, making, having, sharing and celebrating. A lot of this essay has been spent in the offering and asking stages so that I may make with good hands and heart in order to learn from Áísínai'pi and share and then celebrate what I have learned. She wrote,

Asking is really a prayer.... True learning requires deep motivation, down to the marrow of one's bones, with one's whole heart, soul and spirit. This initiates the process of making ready, preparing the ground, physically, emotionally, mindfully and spiritually.... it creates the good hands, good heart and good mind of the Indigenous Poiesis process. (p. 22)

Going back to the park this summer and drawing, I saved some of my tobacco to offer to the specific rocks I would draw. I found a queenly mother and her peaceful daughter, made an offering to them and drew (see Image 1). I realized a few things in the process. One of the reasons I feel the need to draw the stones is that I have a profound dialogue with them as I do so. Our conversation is as real to me as the unspoken but shown and verbalized communication that I have with my cat when she asks for food or water or to cuddle or go outside. Words may not be exchanged but conversation happens. The stones at Áísínai'pi are teaching me it's just a conversation that happens in a language not my "own". Happiness came to me then, in the process of communing with the rock Grandmothers I drew (see Image 1, 5 and 10), resting in the knowledge that I had made my offerings and asked and was granted a conversation. While drawing, I felt blessed and at peace with my making and being. I hope to become more fluent communicating with the land through time and experience.

Similarly, gathering support from others while editing, editing has now, years later, lost its edge. My fear of what I don't know evaporates. I become hungry and excited to know and explore all I can. Through sharing this essay

with Indigenous and settler colleagues and Elders I hope to have further discussions and reflections come out of it that will continue to inform my art and poetry practices and relationships.

This then will allow us to explore the stories embedded in the bones of the earth, finding poetry in their shapes and rhythms. Listening and examining hoodoos to see what other things they look like, delving into what they have to tell us about ourselves and our collective histories on this plane.

Endings as Beginnings: Learning as Unlearning

My journey shows a spiraling back to the past, and to the land, to retrieve and re-examine; like a snake coiling back into and out of itself again. I begin this last section with a poem called “Worship” that I wrote years ago about my relationship with Nosehill in Calgary, which reflects my connection to the land and also very obviously references my Catholic upbringing.¹⁰ “When She was Alone”, was a poem written during my 2010 visit at Áísínai’pi (Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park). The last poem “Colonial ReRead” is an invitation for others to join in the practice of rereading all our relations in the aftermath of colonialism.

Worship

& I realize that my way of
praying
is touching the earth.
That there is,

something sacred about the strength,
in my legs
that carries
me up
this mount.
something of a sermon
in the width and sturdiness of my thighs,
that opens up when
I praise pleasure with sky high cries.

Something about this
that makes my heart beat with more than
the exertion and exhilaration
of being up,
on this hill & when
I stop, I see a pasque flower
bright, in my favourite hue.
Reborn again, I am
sitting, feeling the warmth of this earth
mound radiating up my veins,
as the sun sets & the moon rises,
I know,

that worship, is something,
you more feel,
with your heart, than say.

Nosehill, May 2012

When She was Alone¹¹

On a hot summer day
surrounded by her beauty
Bamboozled, entrenched
Deep, deep within
the caves of her cracks
The spirits
Whisper to me
visions of their past
my future
lulled & lured
Presently seduced
by the heat
incarcerating in
the walls of her womb
I swoon...
deeply held,
cradled
& the rock-ing of the warm earth
swaying back & forth
a lullaby swing
my, our bones
Howl
AWE-Struck!
Steamy
DEEP within her cracks
her visions show
often hot
Today she has showed me ALL her weather
– that she can be cold
when the wind blows through
your soul

Like a howling Wolf gale
storming your skies
your mind
oceans of clouds
That open up
& pour
torrents of tears
melting
weathering
sculpting
Tearing
In perfect surrender
I – Trust.

I
Howl
for all that has been lost
to lust
All that has emptied out of
the universe
She shows me
to this
strange, cold
side of her verse
Tears so desolate,
so lonely,

You could
be the only
eagle flying
Inside the cracks of her time

Torrents pouring
down her sides
slides in wet
juicy slickness
not hot
but fluid
flowing
glowing, growing.

This is how her visions are fashioned
How the spirits came to palpitate the soul of the land
This is how her beauty is carved,
Recorded in Stone

To mesmerize us
in the hot
sun, cradle
& dazzle
Sparkle & laugh
appear & disappear
Seducing us with the beauty
of her cracks
she alone knows
How these were formed

When she was cold
When the wind rattled
through ALL her bones
She knows
She knows
This is how her beauty
was carved
when she
was all

Alone.

Áísínai'pi (Writing-on-Stone Provincial Park) Summer 2010

Colonial ReRead

I now read my prairie year through the little house's colonial lens
It's just as hard but not as romantic
The banality of evil seeps into my glasses
And I drink
A toast to my ancestors who endured
And perpetuated before me.

Fresh eyes prairie brown skin wizened
By the same history of the sun
Rerun, reread, rewritten
Burnt
Umber skies hail down
Cry wolf
And sheep
As won
How have we begun?

In one night I juxtapose
#NotYourPrincess against Cassie's Year
Braiding Sweetgrass against Orion
the Journals of Susanna Moodie and My Prairie Year
are
Whispering in the Shadows
of A Rain of Nightbirds
trailing The Marrow Thieves
of ancestral memory
across my sight
blurring the lines
of wrong and right

Am I a daughter, no, *Son of a Trickster?*¹²

My Kleenex falls into my whisky teacup,
and I wipe their covers polishing
Dust and grime and guilt and shame
Until they shine
Golden,
A wavering vast,
Prairie sun.

Calgary, Alberta. June 2020

My efforts seem to have borne fruit. On the day after the last full harvest moon in early September 2020 I was visited by a bright sun and new leaf coloured butterfly that came to rest on my torso while I was drawing, then by a female deer nibbling amongst the berry bushes. Emerging from my drawing conversation with the stones, there was a double rainbow, spawning the valley (Image 14). Nothing has ever felt more like a beautiful blessing from the land to me and my work than this. I am thankful to Na'a and Áísinaí'pi for these gifts.



Image 14. Adams, A. (2020). [Digital Photograph, Double Rainbow Valley]. Writing-On-Stone, Canada.

ENDNOTES

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4. The Calgary Distinguished Writers Program at the University of Calgary Free Exchange Master Class February 29th 2020. <https://uofcfreeexchange.wordpress.com/2020/02/27/you-are-cordially-invited-to-the-2020-free-exchange-conference/>
5. See https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323857899_Blackfoot_Gender
6. Dr. Dwayne Donald, personal email, June 23, 2020.
7. Saa'kokoto (Randy Bottle) on tour at Áísinaí'pi July 27th 2020. See also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvDu6wYmlN0&frags=wn>
8. The Alberta First Nations Information Governance Centre (AFNIGC) is a leader in strengthening First Nations Sovereignty in data and information governance for the well-being of the sovereign Nations, members, and Peoples of Treaty 6, 7, and 8 in recognition and respect of each distinct knowledge system. <http://www.afnigc.ca/main/index.php?id=home&content=home>
9. Special thanks to Tereasa Marie Maillie, rhean murray and Michelle Meier, Artizein reviewers and editors, Drs. Barbara Bickel and Darlene St. Georges and Dr. Dwayne Donald.
10. Originally published in: Adams, Adrienne. (2013). "Worship," *Weekly Poem #2: Wax Poetry and Art*. Kirk Ramdath. <http://waxpoetryart.com/weeklypoem/issues/02.html>
11. To see this poem performed go to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NeKhcywoxNU&list=PLmcK6gGJOzr-tJ9rxX-NgY-LuQX-Fl85Wg>
12. The *italicized* writing in this poem references the following books: *My Prairie Year* by Brett Harvey, *Little House* series by Laura Ingalls Wilder, *#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women* edited by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale, *Cassie's Year* by Brett Harvey, *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Orion Magazine*, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* by Margaret Atwood, *Whispering in the Shadows* by Jeanette Armstrong, *A Rain of Nightbirds* by Deena Metzger, *The Marrow Thieves* by Cherie Dimaline and *Son of a Trickster* by Eden Robinson.

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CO-CREATION WITH YOUTH: TEACHING ARTISTRY AND ART OUTREACH PROGRAMS

Hallie Morrison

ABSTRACT

This article shares my process and reflection as a teaching artist on a specific project with the Chicago Opera Theater (COT). An extension of my personal and professional practices that aims to provide larger painting experiences for students than they are normally provided, this project takes place in Chicago public schools through a model of Arts Partnership in which COT brings in multidisciplinary arts education. Beyond being an educational program, this school-based artistic co-creation resulted in opportunities for professional learning, intracultural bonding, and empowering moments for youth. This article includes images of the art teaching process, arts integration program tools, and closing teaching artist reflections on the project that include a visual and poetic arts-based response.

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Bio

Hallie Morrison is a multidisciplinary teaching artist currently practicing in Chicago, Illinois, USA. She is an Art Director for Art Relief International, an art outreach non-profit effort currently on pause after 10 years of bringing art education to at-risk populations in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Her dedication to facilitating healing social impact has led her to work in various non-profit centers and create murals and social projects in Thailand, Ireland, and the Chicagoland area. To view her art portfolio and arts-based research on-line visit: halliemorrison.myportfolio.com.

After six years as a teaching artist and artistic director for art outreach programs in schools, it finally clicks: large-scale art projects for youth groups are critical for their personal, communal, and educational development. At a glance, these projects have empowered youth by highlighting their existing creative capacities as facets of themselves that can be honed for their future personal and career pathways. I have seen these projects serve as in-classroom arts-based professional learning for educators and school administrators, in addition to creating bonds within classroom culture (between students and between the teachers and their students.) This article is an overview of one teaching artist experience I recently had as an example of how an artist can work within a school setting to support and expand students' and teachers' experiences with art as a transformative part of a curriculum that can augment students' understanding of relationship building and of following a life path based on dedication and passion.

In writing this article, I intend to share how a regular arts practice can significantly prepare one with the mental and emotional skillset to become an active citizen in society by being able to consistently find inspiration in the mundane, light in the dark, and motivation throughout all of life's obstacles. This article exposes insights from my ongoing creative praxis of curiously inquiring into all aspects of my own life, and how that practice has afforded me the adaptability and problem-solving skills to prosper whilst finding meaningful community and career stability.

As schools have been striving during the Coronavirus pandemic to provide sufficient virtual education and safely get their students back to school soon, this article aims to share the benefits of youth art projects, in general, in hopes that these programs will be prioritized when children return to school. I acknowledge that many arts organizations and small businesses have folded during the pandemic, and a wealth of experience and knowledge needs to urgently be generated in education spaces for fear of loss. Recovering programs such as “Opera For All” and instilling more creative resources and practices for youth needs to be revisited and spotlighted—this is the time for reversing the historical lack of support and funding for arts programming in American public schools.

In Chicago, public schools sign up for the “Opera For All” (OFA) program year after year because there are few options for their students within the field of arts education, due to long-standing, political and financial reasons. This program is provided by the Chicago Opera Theater (COT) and aims to meet the needs of public schools without theater, music, dance, and visual arts programming: where arts education is otherwise left to out-of-school programming or additional guardian/teacher responsibility—that may not be realistic nor accessible to supplement a student’s formal education. Through OFA, each classroom learns the “stages of creating, producing, and performing their own musical shows. In addition to script writing, composing, painting, dancing, and performing, students are exposed to an opera performance and a field trip each year” (Opera For All, n.d.). This program is meant to serve students who “normally wouldn’t have access [to the arts] in an everyday classroom situation,” specifically in schools that do not offer arts programming at all, or only provide a few disciplines from the visual arts (Opera For All, YouTube). From an art outreach perspective, programs like this go directly to the students—and operate independently through non-profit alternative education organizations that obtain their own funding. Thus, the project plays an important role within the larger field of art education for its auxiliary approach to arts teaching and learning that is not currently available to certain public schools.

As a Guest Teaching Artist (GTA) of Scenic Backdrops with the Chicago Opera Theater, I collaborated with twenty-four 2nd-7th grade Chicago public school classrooms to create original scenic backdrops for each class’s student-produced and performed opera production. Usually, focusing on the scenic element of the opera productions, I collaborate with youth and their educators to design and facilitate the creation of painted backdrops. These works are usually 6x9 feet in size to allow average class sizes of 25+ students to gather around, learn, and co-create.

Each class’s opera is influenced by the yearly OFA program theme in conjunction with the COT’s main-stage production. This year’s theme was generally framed around “justice” and “freedom,” as the COT performed *Freedom Ride*, its own commission about Sylvie Davenport who is “forced to choose between her academic future and the future of the nation in a story that highlights how far we’ve come and how far we still have left to go” (Shore, 2020, n.p.).

The Teaching Artist Process

Before I entered each classroom, students worked with their year-round opera Teaching Artist. This educator takes each class through an introduction to opera history, music composition, lyric writing, script writing, prop and costume design, and more. The theme of this year’s program, “justice” and “freedom,” was explored with students at the beginning of the school year through brainstorming and questioning facilitated by each Teaching Artist. After these initial brainstorming sessions, each classroom took a scheduled field trip to the Chicago History Museum where they perused exhibits about national, international, and Chicago-based freedom move-

ments. They visited the exhibition, *Facing Freedom in America*, which showed them historic examples of how communities have fought for and gained rights, and how these movements may continue today. While in the exhibit, the TA's asked students about the concept of freedom and if anything from the exhibit influenced their understanding of freedom. After the experience of the field trip, the TA's had each classroom brainstorm together, decide upon, and individually sketch an environment for a central conflict around which their opera plots and characters could develop.

At this point in the opera program, students brainstormed and sketched their visions for their scenic backdrops, given their developing class conversations about their opera's plot, conflict, and freedom fight in their stories. Facilitated by their opera Teaching Artists, students drew out their ideas, including clear symbols, words, and images to visually express their environment. Before meeting the students, I received their sketches and ideas of what they envisioned their backdrop to look like. The drawings that I received were based on each class's creative consensus—given their still-evolving storyline (after understanding basic story structure) and their understanding of the importance of their story's environment. Once all of the student sketches were submitted to me as the GTA, I jumped into each classroom's creative progress by compiling and representing everyone's ideas into one, final background design (per classroom.) I sifted through great creativity from students, and their clever visual cues that they imbued into their sketches, and ultimately, I prepared one unifying design for each classroom by the time of our first session together.

Connecting with the idea of a relatable conflict, one classroom was possibly influenced by the *Facing Freedom in America* exhibit and the historic school boycotts that the exhibition covered. This fourth-grade class of special needs students was inspired to create an opera with a conflict about the student-teacher dynamic. During my first session with this classroom, I introduced myself and asked them about the conflict in their plot, to which I gathered this synopsis:

A central student in the opera is constantly misjudged by their teacher and blamed for things they did not do. This makes the student feel unheard, unseen, desperate, and lost. The student needs to find a way to speak up to communicate this experience with their peers first—to gain a sense of belonging—then, correct their image and reclaim justice by their teacher, with the help of their peers.

Given this conflict focus, the entire class had submitted intriguing sketches for their scenic backdrops—images of never-ending school hallways, clocks, staircases with confusing directions, and repetitive classroom items, like rows of desks and meticulously detailed tiles of the classroom ceilings and floors.

For all of the classrooms, this year's backdrops needed to set the scene for many unique situations that involved speaking up for ourselves and fighting for justice. Given the anti-racism movements taking place in Chicago, and all over the world, I wish that these students could respond again to the theme of justice and freedom in order learn and express from this critical time in current events. Though, students came up with conflicts involving injustice, such as: fruit friends who can no longer live in peace in the same fruit bowl because of fruit-based racism; underwater employees protesting the antics of their boss at "Sea Store" for un-ethical treatment; black cats protesting cultural prejudices that cause their low adoption rates at Los Angeles pet center "All Fur One"; and more.



Fig. 1. Four teaching artist composite sketches for different classroom backdrops. H. Morrison.

After compiling each student's sketch into one class design, I gridded, drew, outlined, and painted a small composite sketch to present to students in their first session with me. This year I added another teaching element, in which I taught students about the design and gridding process that I use to translate small-scale sketches to large-scale surfaces. Last year, I stressed the need for an additional session in which GTA's could show students the design and drawing steps, so as to democratize the preliminary work that an artist would typically do alone, and make the overall project much more accessible for novices. This was to further prevent the paint-by-numbers experience that students historically received, when the GTA produced an already drawn and outlined canvas for each class.

The First Session: Drawing and Grid-Making

In the first one-hour session, I introduced myself as an artist and muralist, and we had a quick conversation about large-scale paintings and where and why we see them: like murals in our neighborhoods. I explained to students that I had been given their individual sketches and created a composite from all of their ideas, so as to represent everyone equally. This is where the opera Teaching Artists, classroom teachers, and I realized that

exposing this process to the students was more valuable than I had initially proposed; in that moment, I was facilitating a Language Arts lesson explaining what “composite” means and asking students for words with similar roots. Across 2nd-7th grade, students anticipated my direction when asking for words like composite, defining for me the words “combine, compile, compose.” Classroom teachers were able to jump in and come up to the white board and instruct and remind students of past lessons and exercises that involved these words and their meanings. From here, I challenged all students to look further into what I had prepared for them. Every time I introduced a class to their design, I led a 5-7 minutes conversation (depending on the grade) about the elements and principles of Art and tied them back to the English Language Arts.

We also encountered Mathematics in Art when I pointed out that my sketch had a grid over it. So, I facilitated a conversation about grids and asked if anyone had played any games that involved coordinates on grids (like Battleship.) I briefly explained and quizzed students on “rows and columns” and how to locate coordinates using alphabet guides for rows and numbers for columns. After the entire class understood the grid system and that the squares of the grid were 1x1 inch, so as to correlate with the 1x1 foot ratio of our 6x9 feet canvas, I instructed students to copy my composite sketch into the blank grid on a worksheet. I created these grid worksheets for each student with their own class’s composite sketch. Students in some classes were encouraged to work in partners, and some students with special needs worked with their aids. Most students, depending on the grade and classroom, completed the worksheet on their own.

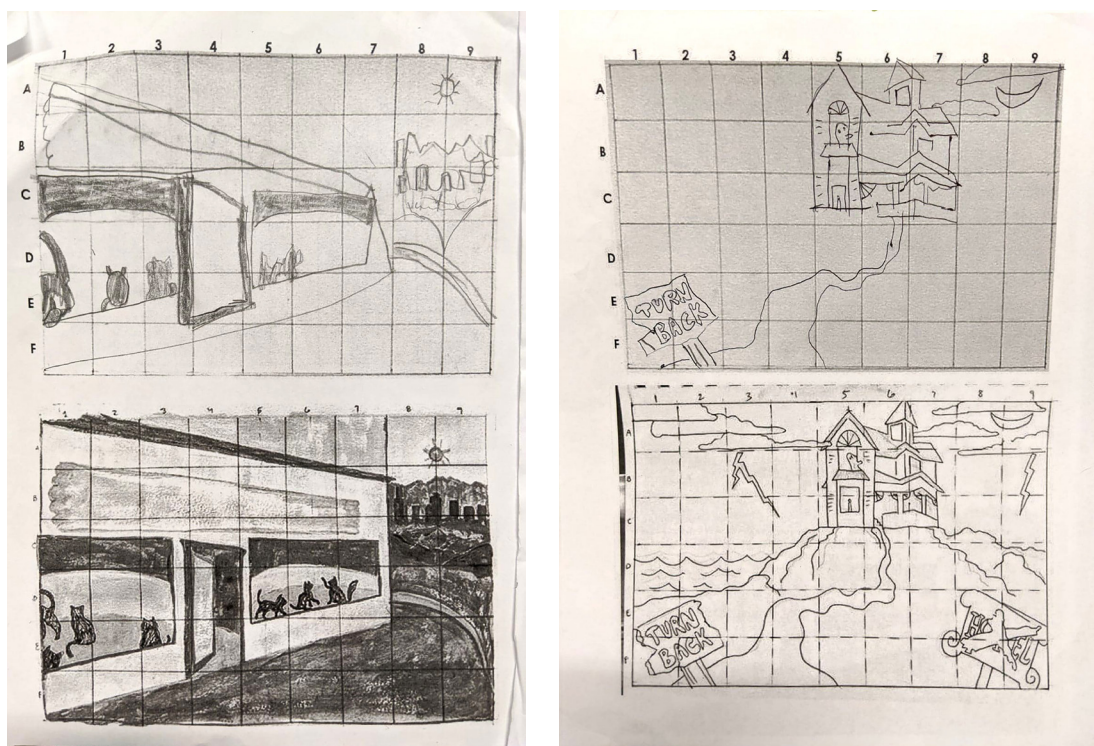


Fig. 2 and 3. Completed worksheets from 4th and 3rd graders, with the original artist sketches on the bottom, February 2020. H. Morrison.

I was fortunate in that students demonstrated innate abilities in observation, basic drawing, and fine motor skills. Throughout the activity, students’ abilities expanded to include comparison and spatial awareness—after first thinking that larger-seeming features in the sketch actually took up larger sections of the grid, for example.

Students also quickly implemented resourceful tips for drawing straighter lines with the use of local materials; using the straight edge of another sheet of paper, pencil, or folder to help them achieve angular features, like buildings, or other geometric parts of the drawing.

While students worked on their sheets, I simultaneously prepared the canvas by laying it down and plotting out the grid according to the 1x1 foot ratio we had discussed. With a tape measurer and pencil, I gridded each canvas in the same time students completed their worksheets. Then, we all gathered around the canvas and I demonstrated how to sketch and follow the gridded composite sketch.

Following the grid from left to right, row by row, I started in “A1” and moved to “A2” and showed students how

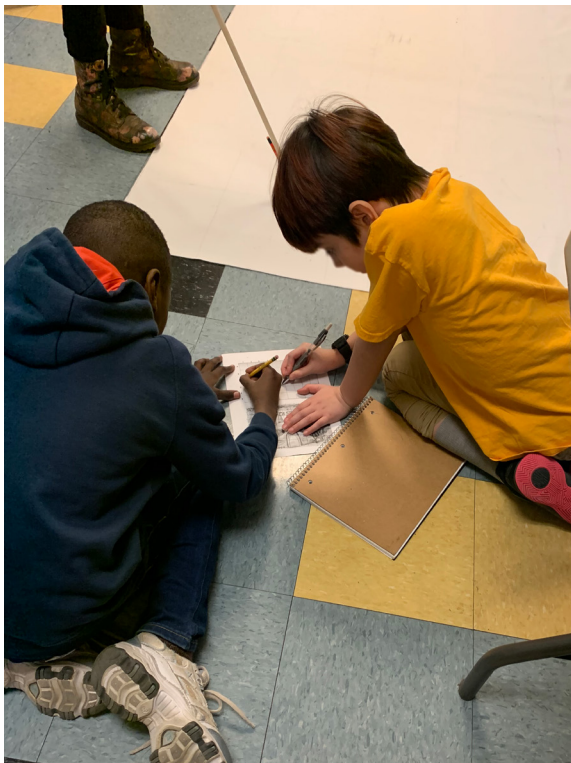


Fig. 4. Students working on gridded worksheets and final backdrop to scale up the composite sketch, February 2020. Photo Credit K. Best.

to directly translate the sketch, minding the increase in scale. Students had a chance to sketch directly onto the canvas with a tool that I occasionally use to help me reach across the large canvas (a wooden dowel with a pencil taped to the end) Students could see the sketched drawing grow on the canvas, and we defined the technique of sketching: light lines that are drawn as guides for the final design. We usually ended the first hour together at this point, and looked forward to outlining the sketch more permanently with markers in the next session.

Scaffolding this technique for students through conversation, the worksheet, and participation on the large scale was something I have honed in my prior years teaching in this program, and it worked well with each student. Students witnessed something “come to life” and felt the excitement and fun that the start of a shared project always promises. Teachers in the classroom enjoyed seeing how Math and other subjects tie into Art, and how this project inherently satisfies their teaching requirements. They could easily see how, looking at the Illinois Learning Standards for Visual Arts, Mathematics, and English Language Arts, teachers could easily see that this painting project would touch upon, if not satisfy, specific standards—and could intentionally be expanded upon to reach even more.¹

The Second and Third Sessions: Painting

Anxious to roll up our sleeves, the second and third sessions revealed open-mindedness and much appreciation for painting in the students. We revisited my composite sketch, reminded ourselves of the team vision, and finished sketching or outlining (with marker) any part of the drawing that had not been finalized. Every class was split up into two groups, in order to fit 10-12 students around the canvas at a time. Whilst waiting their turn, the group in the classroom worked on t-shirt designs for an OFA program-wide design competition.

Before painting, we went through three necessary painting pointers. Firstly, when dipping into containers of professional-grade, permanent, acrylic paint, it is important to wipe off the brush multiple times against the edge

of the container before approaching the canvas. This is to prevent dripping onto the canvas (or yourself) and to preserve paint supply. This pointer became a behavioral management device throughout the work-time, to remind students to slow down, wipe the brush, breathe, and practice consideration for those around them. This project facilitated a considerateness that apparently some students had been waiting for—chiming in and endorsing caution whilst working so closely together. These student responses made this project experience seem necessary for community-building and interpersonal skill building. Physical boundaries and respect were consistent reminders to be instilled in those younger in years.



Fig. 6 & Fig. 7. Morrison instructing and co-creating with 3rd and 4th grade classes, February 2020. Photo Credit K. Best.

Secondly, when working on such a large scale (also considering the size of students), it is important to paint from the middle of the canvas and work outwards, so as not to paint yourself into a corner, prevent yourself or others from reaching a section of the canvas, or waste time waiting for barriers of wet paint to dry. Thirdly, always initiate a new section of the painting by starting right at the marker-lined border of that area, and then work your way outwards.

On one side of the spectrum: second graders could not contain themselves once they approached the canvas. On the other side: seventh graders were calm but curious. Regardless of their grade or developmental level, every class brought wonder and all of their sensibilities to the work. Students with physical limitations were part of the experience, innovating hand tools to grasp the paint brush with the help of their aides. At one school, the entire 3rd grade class hoisted up the canvas so that a student in a wheelchair could kickstart the painting process.

The actual moments of painting were a whirlwind of delegating tasks to pairs and groups of students based on the sections of canvas they could reach and tackle—and by what colors were mixed and available. In moments when students did not have a painting task, they were invited to practice color mixing and received an introductory

lesson on color theory. Some students already knew about complementary colors and could clue their peers as to what colors to mix next. Ultimately, everyone had a hand in the mixing of paint, and some students even preferred it to the painting, because they found the swirling and mixing of the colors to be fascinating or soothing.

Student and Teacher Feedback

As a teaching artist, I was validated by both the students and the teachers and I evolved as an artist myself. The painting days were the students' favorite OFA days out of the year. Some students started out saying that choreography days were their favorite, and ended up changing their minds in favor of the painting days for the novelty of the activity and for the chance to work alongside friends.

While instructing how to mix paint with one 3rd grade male, I advised them to scrape the bottoms and sides of the bowl for unmixed paint and I showed them how to angle the brush into the curves of the bowl. This demonstration gained a: "Wow, you're a *real* artist," and the student mimicked my motions exactly, demonstrating their ability to also become a real artist. Another student (3rd grade, male, with special needs) rushed up to me at the start of each session and told me about the first moments in which they felt like an artist, and the art they made. Another male student (3rd grade), told me that in between our sessions they started to paint more at home and wanted me to know that he has always felt like an artist. From the same classroom, another male student greeted me at the start of a session with a hand-cut paper snowflake and very seriously asked, "Would you like one of my snowflakes?" which I accepted with gratitude, knowing myself how I feel when someone appreciates the art that I make.

Two female students (3rd and 4th grade) told me that they both had painted before with their fathers. One father painted houses for work, and that student was very confident with holding and maneuvering the brush. The other student told me that her father has a space for recreational painting in their garage, and that he lets her work on detailed sections of his paintings. I leveraged this information to entrust her with lettering in the backdrop that needed to be legible at a distance by the audience. This student, usually quiet, spoke up excitedly when she had previous knowledge or experience to share regarding painting and what brush or color might be best for each section. So, I harnessed this energy and asked her to help her neighbors and work with others more, rather than allowing her to continue working as singularly as she usually would. This social nudge could have been especially successful because of my situation as a guest in the existing class culture, in that I did not repeat or perpetuate existing situational/social barriers that class may have already unintentionally cultivated.

As for the teachers, some were particularly supportive, one spoke very highly of artists, and wanted their students to understand that I created the composite artwork based on their original ideas and to make everyone feel included. The same teacher wanted to break the illusion of the artwork itself and explain that it did not just appear magically, but that it is a product of one's imagination, skill, and research; that making art takes dedication, practice, and self-identification as an artist to make artwork come to fruition. I found it to be important for teachers to be present during the introductory session, in which I explained "composite sketch" and the mathematical side of gridding an artwork, so that they could connect to the many potential arts integration ideas embedded in this project and extract from it some tangible project plans for their future lessons. For example, all of the teachers were impressed by the grid technique and wanted to know more about how they could implement it into their math lessons. Overall, the teachers were excited about the process and outcome of the backdrops, proud of their students, and thankful for my involvement as a teaching artist.

Teacher Artist Reflections

As a teaching artist, my role is to provide my honed artistic, conceptual thinking, problem-solving, and mentorship skills to students who are picking up a paintbrush for the first time—perhaps because they live with guardians or attend schools that have never encouraged nor supported art making. For the last five years, I have likened my position as a teaching artist to being a positive guide for youth, as through my own skills and career I am modelling to them the future career and lifestyle pathways available. Personally, in pursuit of authentic individuality and creativity (and their relevant tools), I set off on an educational journey of earning a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree and a Master of Arts degree in Creative Process. A short time later, I found myself transformed from an art-loving, public-school student to an impassioned Art Director—forging international partnerships, offering free arts-based education experiences to marginalized communities around the globe, and fundraising to make it all possible (Art Relief International). I continued to expand myself through the visual, sensorial elements of life that inspire me to regularly practice art making, writing, self-reflecting, and researching. Today, I curiously study life through art making, researching, and teaching, and “living inquiry” is enveloped into my praxis (the holistic study of life, art, research, and teaching). Living inquiry can be explained as “an embodied encounter constituted through visual and textual understandings and experiences rather than mere visual and textual representations” with a rigor that “comes from its continuous reflective and reflexive stance to engagement, analysis and learning” (Springgay, xxix). I interpret these embodied encounters I have resonated with as life realizations via an activity, such as art making, that occurred independently and authentically, without a visual or textual representation present; and, that these “eureka” moments are possible through committed self-reflection, continuously learning, and humbly analyzing one’s self for areas of growth, regularly.

As part of my post-reflection on this teaching artist experience, I engaged my art practice of collage. The large, radial torn paper collage (Fig. 8) created right after the opera project, came from a calling to create something that seemed whole, free from the commercialized rectangular art surface, and felt inclusive for all its parts. Just as I was inviting an inclusive art and learning environment for the students based on the reciprocal wholeness of each person’s ability to contribute to the mural. For me, sourcing the segments of color and texture from magazines felt similar to searching through the visual elements of the students’ sketches, which I enjoyed so much. Adhering the segments together seemed to me symbolic in the pooling together and honoring of many individual elements to create a collective work. The ripping process of tearing each piece of paper was like the physical, fast-paced process I had in each session with the students: unfurling and stretching out (the canvas and myself) the 6x9 feet surface; reaching and using a long dowel to grid and sketch on the canvas; weaving in and out of children and educators to get everyone paints and brushes and tasks in a productive flow, and so on.

There was also a quick nature to the composite sketching process, as I had to make executive decisions for the final backdrop based on students’ ideas—but there could have been many possible outcomes given the rich detail and level of creativity students poured into their sketches. This composite sketching process was very inspiring for me, as I had not drawn representationally in a while, and it reminded me of all of the drawing training I have had, and how those hours of practice have allowed me to confidently create these final backdrops for the opera with such joyous and eager students in a meaningful project.

This torn paper collage process, I realized, is metaphorical for a potential way forward in life. The process allows me to make something from nothing—something from forgotten material: magazine pages. I repurpose the left-

over pages, rife with mediated content of our times, and weave together my own vision. I decide the arrangement, placement, juxtaposition, and conversation that all diverse parts, torn from the magazine, will have—and I build and stitch together thousands of pieces to retell my own narrative of these past, mediated events (news, fashion, ads, editorials, etc). I find this torn paper collage method to be empowering yet reflective, and I can envision sharing it with youth so that they can also feel that control and make sense of their worlds through this medium.



Fig. 8. Torn paper collage reflection (four feet in diameter) made after the opera program, with poem (see p. 144), H. Morrison.

Additionally, after this teaching artist experience, finding myself in social isolation due to COVID-19, I sought a way to quickly release ideas, writing, and drawings without being attached to the outcome. I encouraged myself to sketch and brainstorm and express myself more often, yet I could not get past the mental barriers of doing so, due to institutionalized associations of drawing (pressure to draw well with archival media that will meet certain quality standards upon completion). I thought of drawing regularly on a large sheet of butcher paper attached to my wall, but still felt that was too precious. I realized that I needed a white dry erase board in my room. So, I found a 2.5 x 4 feet white dry erase board at a thrift store

Since acquiring these materials, I have been able to approach this board and spontaneously produce many drawings and writings, on my own and in spontaneous creation making sessions with a virtual creative collective, through Studio M*: A Research Creation Lab (www.studiom.space). Some of these drawings have since been featured in an online exhibition of artists creating messages of inspiration for others, despite quarantine (*Arts Letters & Numbers*). Surprisingly, I have felt proud of these spontaneous outcomes and have been able to draw regularly and more often than I have for many years. Time with the dry erase board has served as meditation and self-soothing therapy, as I have reached out for it for support on stressful days.

Encouraging expression on white boards could be a process to incorporate with students in schools going forward, seeing as most schools already have individual-sized chalk boards or dry erase boards for academic purposes. I think the accessibility of the erasable surface takes away the pressure and fear of creating, and allows new techniques and skills to grow. These materials could be embraced outside (or inside) of the standardized learning curricula and could be harnessed for positive student engagement, or even emotional and behavioral regulation.

Though students recognized and trusted me as the “expert,” as a visiting artist working on a short-term project with them, they were also interested in me as a person and asked about my personal life and upbringing. The foremost conversation between myself and all grade levels was about identity—who they feel they are now, and who they would like to be in the future. The most common questions were “how long have you been an artist?” or “when did you first know that you wanted to be an artist?” I sensed the underlying “but what about my future?” pathway question underneath these simple questions—as that is my own core question when I am talking with arts professionals more experienced than myself. I tried to let students know that I chose this life while I was in high school based on my strong interest in visual arts, which began in my elementary days. I then went to art college; made sure to realize other strengths of mine and to invest in those other skills along the



Fig. 9, 10, & 11. Spontaneous dry erase board drawings made in quarantine, H. Morrison.

way (teaching, administration, leadership); and that I chose to stay strong on this non-linear, non-traditional career path. I let them know that following your passion takes personal strength and a lot of hard work.

The opportunity for students, to be part of this whole project with a teaching artist, I felt demystified the myth of the artist for these students, and for their teachers. A leveling force between all participants in this work was the proximity to the physical ground, and witnessing each other in different bodily postures than what is typical in the institutionalized school setting (e.g. stretching out across a canvas, holding yoga-like poses to reach sections of the painting). Intentionally humanizing myself in simple ways, being on the ground with the students, connecting with them at eye level, and being honest in my conversations with them about my life pathway as



Torn paper collage poem

there's a necessary physical endurance
to being an artist, to being a creative human

painful frustration, ripping away
for a finished look
“this is suffering”
the band aid off
that never ends

but still some things are worth doing slowly
excruciatingly
after all of the time and energy spent on a “project”

it's not worth it to rush the finished product

some sections are easier to pass through
because the front and back, both sides of the
experiential spectrum
space and time
are consistent—though opposite

AND OF COURSE, 75% through an experience
everything feels easier
the hands know the way, the mind shuts up
and the finish line is reached

an artist all facilitated deeper trust and connection between the students and I, and amongst the students. This, I believe further grounded, or debunked, their perception of the genius, unattainable “artist” persona.

The myth of the artist (as I understand it from research and lived experience as an artist in the Western world) is that artists are more inclined than others to be geniuses and to see the world in more enlightened ways. This idea has elevated artists to elitist levels, compounded by the commercialization of art, and its “star-making,” and thus has excluded many members of society from the arts due to believing or even being told that art is not for them, they will never be an artist who can survive economically and/or that they were not endowed with the right skillset to be artistic—or even creative (Ortega, Episode 138).

Being a professional artist or teaching artist is a choice and can often entail a tough lifestyle—with a string of short-term, independently contracted projects for income, a need for strong time management and organization skills, and the ability to be fast-moving, flexible, responsive to and supportive of all of the unique needs of partner or collaborator organizations (schools, galleries and museums, non-profit community groups, etc). For many professional artists and teaching artists, there can be a great struggle between meeting basic personal needs and maintaining the creative spirit necessary to fulfill their work. The complex effort required of an artist emerged in the poem I wrote while contemplating further on the torn paper collage reflection art piece.



Fig. 12 & Fig. 13 detail. Another torn paper piece (life-sized), processing the energetic and physical experience of the program, H. Morrison.

The quotes I gathered from students—from their involuntary and authentic reactions to the project, its process, and the materials—seem to show why students need to be exposed to many creative career paths at an early age. Firstly, the experiential shift (alternative program days of painting, acting, singing, costume designing, and differentiation from their typical school day) provided opportunity for students to open up through novel activities, and access different modes of learning. Secondly, when students witnessed their own ability, and those of others—through teamwork and building relationships—students exhibited feelings of self-empowerment gained through exploration, and an inspirational model influencing the continuation of their own personal outlets outside of school or for future life-work pathways. Furthermore, the student bonding these large-scale projects afford is critical in these times of racial tension, when we know the significance of students with diverse backgrounds understanding and respecting each other.

Overall, this work connects deeply to my personal and professional passions for the inspirational impact art making has on students. My main mission as a teaching artist is to help others tap into their own creativity and (re)commit to their life's potential. Art making has always strengthened my personal sense of intuition and problem-solving, by witnessing myself react, make decisions, and take actions about how to keep moving forward. Throughout 2020, my skills and abilities have shifted and have been channeled into other urgent work opportunities: making COVID-19 diagnostics testing kits for national and international use. My eye for detail, consistency, and contrast have allowed me to catch major quality errors and be promoted twice within my laboratory.

During these times of deepening global change, many artistic careers have needed to transform from the normal public venues of artist success and exposure. My art world efforts have been paused: an artist residency and exhibition I had been awarded have both been postponed, though I have been part of a virtual exhibition. Thanks to my background as an artist, I have been able to remain flexible and adaptable in finding work—while ever-curious and grounded outside of work, through my personal, creative rituals, which have recently flourished within virtual community.

Conclusion

At the moment, I wish I had more solutions to offer, like funding opportunities for families who are trying to innovate home-based, virtual education by shipping to them large canvases and art supplies so that they can safely experience large-scale projects. Yet, I hope that in sharing my teaching artist experience that this article can serve as an accessible beginning for families and educators in the larger, needed conversation of re-envisioning timely and meaningful education for youth. As parents and guardians, educators, and their school systems try to respond to the new, real, and rapidly changing needs of our youth, the arts should be grasped daily as responsive, radical, and healing tools. The many disciplines of movement, music, and visual arts have always been important and are arguably even more significant in youth's daily experiences in order to comprehend and cope with all of the uncertainty and tension we are facing—as society finds ways to reinvent a safer and more just future. It is my hope that this article will be shared widely to spark independent project ideas for youth, and that parents and guardians will be inspired to work more with their local artists—or revive dormant artistic practices themselves.

Ideally, teaching artistry can spread critical and creative thought into one's life outlook, perspective, and attitude. It can impact how we grow in life and take care of ourselves and others. Art making consistently reminds me that things are not always as black and white as they seem. It pays off to remember to breathe along the way, and it certainly pays off to be innovative and honor your individuality within community. When I see these lessons being grasped by youth through large-scale, community-bonding projects, such as OFA, I believe even more in the impact of art and am determined to share this experiential learning with parents, educators, and administrators.

ENDNOTES

1. This project touches upon K-12 standards of Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts in Language, as well as Speaking and Listening. Through regularly facilitated conversation around the elements and principles of art and design, more standards could be satisfied by including writing and reflection activities before, during, or after the visual arts portion of the project. Through the other disciplines of the opera program, the students reach these standards by writing lyrics, learning about language in song composition, script writing, and more.

Given the physical backdrop goal and the necessary steps in measuring, estimating, plotting lines, using rulers, scaling ratio, and problem-solving, this project could serve as the “real-world problem” when teaching for the following strands of the Illinois Common Core State Standards for Mathematics: Measurements and Data, Geometry, and Ratios and Proportional Relationships. The project could also be tied into the Mathematical Practice Standards 1 and 5 across K-12, and could be more impactful in K-6.

While this arts-based project overwhelmingly satisfies the Illinois Standards for Arts Learning, it specifically meets the Anchors in the categories of Creating, Responding, and Connecting (2016.) In the current structure that students experience the project (three one-hour sessions with a guest teaching artist) these standards are probably met for K-7th grade. Yet, through the inherent material experience and instructional conversation necessary for the project, students could meet even more requirements with more time dedicated to the visual arts element of this opera project.

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ART: THE LANGUAGE WE USE WHEN THERE IS NOTHING WE CAN SAY

Peter London

Bio

The patriarch of my family dubs me; “Pete the artist.” I take the name and the work.

—Peter London, Chancellor Professor Emeritus, Art Education, The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth

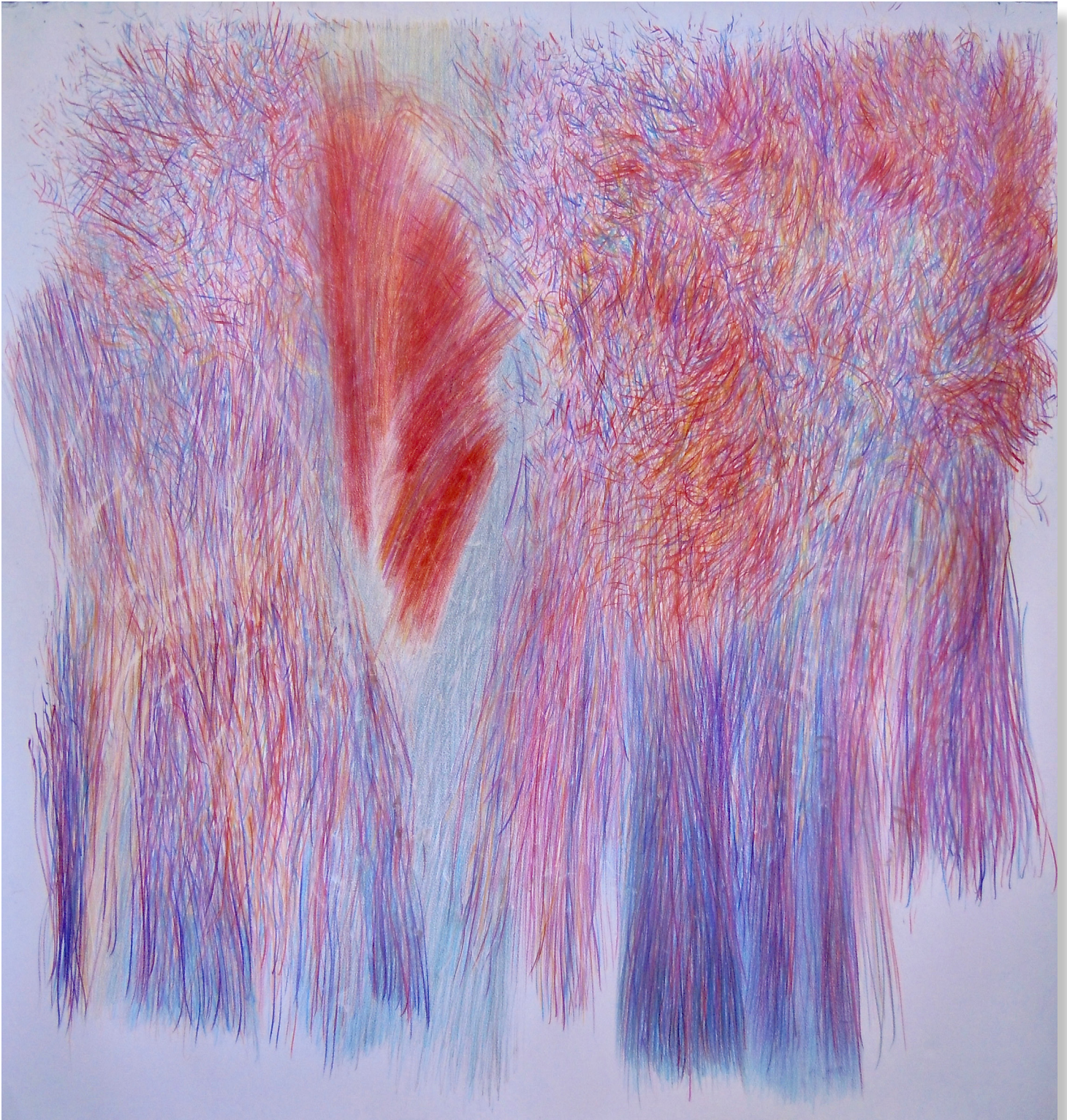
The day after an elderly and proper gentleman neighbor of mine died I visited the home of the bereaved family. While sitting with his widow, after the funeral and burial, she told me about what happened the night he died. She had an advanced stage of Muscular Dystrophy and as a consequence slept downstairs in a hospital bed while he slept upstairs in their bedroom. “That evening,” she said, “sometime after he saw to putting me to bed and retired to his own bedroom, he came downstairs again and said to me, “Beth, may I join you in bed tonight?” I said, “Of course”, and we made room for one another. A short while later he said, “Beth, would you hold me close?” And I did so. Then he said, “Beth, would you sing to me?” And I said, “My dear, I can hardly talk now, no less sing.” But he said, “That’s OK, sing anyway, sing anything.” And I did, I sang something from our youth. When I had finished, he sighed, shook slightly, breathed once more, then he died. Now, Peter’ she said, “What do you make of that?” At the time I could think of nothing to say, and simply took her hands in mine.

Here is what I now make of that. When matters of ultimate concern are upon us, the language with which we ordinarily negotiate life reveals its limitations. At these pivotal moments of life, we spontaneously yield to tears or laughter or song or silence. At these high moments reason no longer feels sufficient, is too slow, too pedantic. In these moments we shift inexorably from walking to dancing, from speaking to singing. We rely upon song to console us, we believe in song to hold us steady, to carry us past or closer. We rely on art, these seemingly flimsy things to save us.

Moments of ultimate concern are sacred moments. And the language with which we express ultimate concerns are the language of the arts. In this fundamental way the arts are sacred languages. No matter how art is misconstrued, made shallow, made to serve merely the manufacture of pretty things, no matter how weakened by the diminishing of its actual powers to devolve to a distraction, an entertainment; religion and sex has suffered much the same, in the great moments of life, when the ordinary shudders under the weight of the sheer wonder and tragedy and mystery of being and non being, when in moments when intimacy blurs all distinctions, we simply cannot help but to burst into the domain of art, to sing dance, gussy up, to create and participate in art.

Art is the natural human response to life’s high moments. Life’s high moments are invariably spiritually evocative ones. The practice of art, giving it everything you have, naturally imparts a spiritual richness to the experience and this dual reward of a practice will be a constant leitmotif of our treatise.

Joining Heaven & Earth



Joining Heaven and Earth. 4" x 4", oil sticks and colored pencils on paper. P. London, 2020



Joining Heaven and Earth. 4" x 4", oil sticks and colored pencils on paper. P. London, 2020



Joining Heaven and Earth. 4" x 4", oil sticks and colored pencils on paper. P. London, 2020

BOOK REVIEW

Nicole Rallis

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION TUTORS: A POETIC INQUIRY

Adrian Schoone

Springer Briefs in Arts-Based Educational Research,
Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2020.

neoliberal educational policies

exacerbating struggles for freedom and wisdom

power

privilege

marginalization

ongoing colonization

uneven relations

classifications

justifications

ranking criterion

all transforming landscapes of learning.

in this era

teacher identities become bound to

qualifications degrees

traditional pedagogies

but

what of the essences of a tutor?

Adrian Schoone is a lecturer at the Auckland University of Technology teaching and researching in the arts, creativity, alternative education and inclusive education. His masterful poetic inquiry on alternative education tutors, *Constellations of Alternative Education Tutors*, is birthed from his experiences working in a managerial position for an alternative education program. Rather than engaging in traditional forms of social-educational research, Schoone embarks on a phenomenological poetic inquiry into the lived experiences of eight alternative education tutors. He presents his findings as constellations of found poetry created from interview transcripts, observation notes, and a performative participant workshop. In doing so, Schoone pushes the boundaries of traditional educational research methods and unearths a generative, reciprocal and ethically responsible way to highlight the complex and often misunderstood identities (essences) of alternative education tutors in New Zealand. Moreover, Schoone's research brilliantly demonstrates poetic inquiry's power to expand and provoke new understandings about what it means to artistically engage in phenomenological research.

Constellations of Alternative Education Tutors is written in three parts. In **Part One**, Schoone explains the historical, social, and political context for his research. He situates the rise of alternative education within the shifting learning landscape of the 1990s, where neoliberal reforms created a decentralized educational system in New Zealand that fostered intense competition between schools for funding and resources. This transformation left little room for students who did not perform well on standardized tests or had difficulties fitting into traditional school settings. During this time, Creative Learning Scheme, the alternative education program Schoone worked at as a manager, was created.

In alternative learning contexts, tutors specialize in working with youth who do not fit well or have antagonistic relationships with traditional school settings. These youth, more often than not, come from marginalized communities. Despite their unique and valuable skill set, Schoone explains that alternative education tutors are often viewed as unqualified and undertrained teaching professionals. They do not require university degrees or certified teaching credentials. Schoone's job at Creative Learning Scheme was to "teach" tutors.

Schoone learns that these tutors offer rich and nuanced pedagogical contributions to teaching marginalized students: "These tutors drew from life experiences, passion to work with youth, vocational skills and cultural knowledge to provide a holistic education (p.2)." The eight tutors Schoone works with as research participants for his inquiry range in age from their early twenties to late fifties, and have diverse educational, genders and cultural backgrounds. Importantly, his engagement working with these tutors reveals a deeper understanding of his positionality as a pakeha (Maori: A New Zealander of European descent) and the tensions and injustices towards BIPOC communities in New Zealand arising from traditional schooling and ongoing processes of colonization.

In **Part One**, Schoone also carefully outlines his reasoning for a phenomenological-poetic inquiry: "In my study, the relationship between poetry and phenomenology is very close as I sought to understand how tutors were dwelling poetically (a phenomenological exercise) through the art of found poetry (a poetic inquiry method) (p.4)." He engages with Heidegger's (1971) notions of becoming and also applies Sartre's (1946) idea of 'essence' to emphasize tutor identities as contextual, embodied, unfixed, and emergent: "These are not external forms but are concepts of being-a-tutor that are discerned and re/discerned democratically and hermeneutically (p.3)." Importantly, Schoone emphasizes the plurality of 'essences' to highlight the multitude of identities that tutors embody. Finally, he introduces constellations as an overarching metaphor for the book to explore a galaxy of tutor essences.

In Part Two, Schoone unpacks his methodology. He first situates found poetry as a playful and artful approach to bring marginalized voices to the forefront, referencing important studies that have used similar poetic methods. For his data collection, Schoone engages in open-ended discussions about tutoring with his research participants. He reveals how this interview approach aligns with the traditional Pasifika methodology of talanoa: a discussion with pure and authentic personal stories (p.14). Incorporating talanoa is important as six out of eight research participants are of Pasifika ancestry, and alternative education settings in New Zealand have high proportions of Pasifika students. Schoone describes the raw and reciprocal nature of the interview process by illuminating tutor stories of struggle, breakthrough and resilience while also helping tutors clarify their own pedagogies and teaching practices. The found poetry was also inspired and informed by Schoone's fieldwork journals, where he recorded classroom observations and everyday tutor practices.

Schoone also sought to uncover intersubjective understandings about the essences of tutors by engaging his research participants in a collaborative and performative tutor-robot making workshop. In the workshop, Schoone uses Boal's (1995) notion of metaxis to help tutors reflect on their own identities and self-worth while constructing a cardboard robot named Maximus (p.28). Asking the tutors to choose words (ex. confidence, hope, restore, caring, ready and ripple) to physically imprint onto Maximus gave space for tutors to reflect on their teaching practices, "lending insight into their pedagogy which values embodied learning experiences, humour, and encouraging language (p.29)."

From these data collection practices, Schoone created over 150 lyrical poems from between two to twenty-four lines. He created some of the poems by cutting up interview transcripts and arranging words into couplets. He also constructed lino and cardboard printing blocks from the interviews to meditate on single words and phrases: "At times, I felt the ease of writing a single word was too effortless for the gravity of meaning it conveyed to me about tutors' experiences (p.18)." He added complexity to the poems by intentionally incorporating his reflections: "I explicitly implicated myself in the practice of meaning-making (p.22)."

In Part Three, Schoone expands on the galaxy metaphor that has guided his inquiry: "Creating poetry constellations was my ultimate research act, bringing together shining fragments from across all the poems that were created in the research thus far (p.30)." He presents his final research findings as twenty-one constellations of tutor essences. Each constellation performed one of the essences of the lived experiences of alternatives education tutors (ex. essences of call, essences of empathy, essences of poesis). A lyrical found poem accompanied each constellation.

The constellations were created in three-dimension, with Schoone fixing each found word to polystyrene balls, hung using nylon string suspended across the protective netting of his backyard trampoline. Each arrangement of stars (constellations) was photographed (p.41). What appears are words floating in white, round stars surrounded by vast darkness. Of the final photographed constellations, Schoone writes:

I argue that by keeping the dark spaces visible the metaphor allowed me to acknowledge the uncertainties and ambiguities in my research findings. The spaces that surround the research poems acknowledged the mauri (Maori: the life source), spirit, and the inexhaustibility of knowledge. Thus, the constellation metaphor enabled space for the spirit that kept the research breathing and therefore 'alive,' eschewing any attempt to turn the poem into an It (p.40).

Schoone concludes his book by arranging all of the constellations and forming a poetic galaxy of essences. He

reminds us that tutor identities are in a constant state of becoming. They are emergent and unfixed. This insight not only lets the reader better understand the landscape of alternative education in New Zealand but also invites the reader to look inward, pause, and reflect on their own teaching practices and identities. To honour Schoone's innovative and unique methodological form and the beautiful sharing of lived experiences of alternative education tutors, I end with a found poem taken from insights from the book.

what are the essences of a tutor?
it's little steps of epiphany all the time
turning and transforming
everyday language into the sacred
a galaxy of tutor pedagogy
attempts at making sense of the stars
the shining comes from within
found by the poems of tutors
I re/found the poetry within



Stories that Mattered: Inspired Stories and the Unfolding Arts Curriculum

Call for Papers — Fall 2021 Issue

Stories are the most ancient, universal and venerable literary forms entrusted to tell emerging generations the experienced wisdom of prior generations. The Torah, the Popul Vuh, the Gospels, the Upanishads, The Story of Siddhartha, the Koran, the thousands of other stories arising from all cultural traditions, make up the basis of the spiritual legacy of billions of adherents and form the basis of laws and accepted behavior that govern all. The stories in epic verse and theater, of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, the musical stories of Puccini, Wagner, Verdi, Rogers and Hart, the Gershwins, and Leonard Bernstein, in the novels of Cervantes, The brothers Grimm, Balzac, Tolstoy, Mann, Robert Lewis Stevenson, E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolfe, Marquez, Neruda, Alice Walker, Margaret Atwood, Iris Murdoch, Jane Austin, J.K. Rawlings, Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Amy Tam, Thomas King, Richard Wagamese, Thomson Highway, Lee Maracle, Pauline Johnston, Rita Joe, Mark Twain, Toni Morison, Ralph Ellison, the cinematic and Broadway stories of Walt Disney, Frank Baum, Steven Spielberg, Ken Burns, Tony Kushner and many more keep telling us what is proper, what to fear, and what, even to hope for. The list is extensive and we are certain to have left out hundreds more who have informed and redirected millions of lives.

Stories, unlike admonitions and even reasoned argument, have particular persuasive powers because they embed their truths in accounts of plausible people, if heroine or hero, in a broth of natural and unnatural, fantastic but just possible adventures with which we can find common, if lofty, purpose. Like all art, stories fuse mind and feeling in adventures that at the outset have no guaranteed outcomes. Certainly, no good or deserving outcomes are guaranteed. Just like life.

So we read and see stories as if we ourselves are tumbling along a journey in which every step must be care full and when the story concludes it's as if we had that adventure and what happened to those in the story, happened to our self. So we not only read or see and hear, we learn. Personal account stories take on further persuasion if the author is deemed credible and the story plausible. Which brings us to the call for story submissions to *Artizein: Arts & Teaching Journal*.

“Stories that Mattered”

An issue of *Artizein* devoted to teachers of the arts, where teachers, as credible sources of learning with their own stories to tell, have the opportunity to contribute personal stories of something unexpected that happened in their classroom while teaching, that caused the author to rethink some basic premises of their teaching about art, about students, about teachers, about themselves, about what art and/or schools are for, about what is life all about anyway.

We are inviting such first-hand stories, and what conceptions and pedagogy came to be re-examined and reformed. And, how (hopefully) things changed for the better.

We are seeking approximately ten such articles through invited and open submissions from arts educators teaching all age levels in all institutional settings. The manuscript should consist of several elements; a narrative (story) of what happened in the classroom, a description of the entering beliefs and practices, reflections on the dissonance between prior belief and practice and the pivotal classroom incident, consequential modifications in beliefs and practices, and the results there of. Illustrative materials are welcome. This is nothing more, but also nothing less to stress the critical components of all investigative procedures; draw up a reasonable hypothesis, design an implementation plan, implement the plan, see how it worked, revise accordingly and do it all again. And again.

Call for submissions due: January 15, 2021

Send Inquiries and submissions to: petermarionlondon@gmail.com

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