

somatics : an undichotomizing poetic : a provocative invitation

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i am a poet. a performer. eARThist. a writer. i ~~never~~ [rarely] suffer from writer's block. until now.

somatics toolkit?

the words fail me. i return again, and again to [try to] write. to respond.

nothing

[but failed attempts].

i move. i stretch. i step away. i wash the dishes. i clean the lint from the dryer. i water the plants. i organize my drawers [this is getting serious]. i return, only to befriend the delete key...*again*.

i am lexiconically choked, vernacularly void.

panic begins to set in [as the weeks pass, as the deadline looms and attempts-turned-to-outright-diversion begin to pattern my relationship to the request to contribute to this project, my relationship to the subject...*to the word*].

why?

simple.

because...

'I have never quite understood what 'somatics' means.

What 'it' encompasses.

What it does not.

It takes me to the dictionary.

Every time

I see it.

Read it.

~~Write it.~~

I rarely use it.

[though many classify my work in this 'category']

It gets underlined in **red**

by my computer. This actually helps

me understand **it** a little

more.

[shift position]

As if

a notion – perhaps too old/
perhaps too new – for cultural
assimilation.

Maybe it has

side-stepped the mainstream. (*full stop? footnote?*)

Maybe it's renegade in its plurality...¹

OR...

...is [the use of the term] somatic[s] potentially reinscribing a dichotomy?

somatic |sə'madik| *

adjective

relating to the body, especially as distinct from
the mind.

**a dictionaried plural form does not exist*

toolkit |'tu:ɫ,kit|

noun

a set of tools, especially one kept in a bag or box
and used for a particular purpose.

• a personal set of resources, abilities, or skills²

mind|body

–

body|mind

my toolkit is the plural possibility of [a] verb[ing]
the in – between
[*nounly adjectified*]

i am

nationally registered as a

*Person with a Permanent
Disability*

*my whole
body is*

¹ Preece (2019), unpublished, and accepted, abstract submitted to the Canadian Association of Theatre Research's 'Somatic Engagement: pedagogy / practice / performance as research' seminar for Congress 2019, Vancouver, BC.

² Dictionary definition excerpts from New Oxford American English Dictionary [Version 2.2.1 (194) on Mac Computer]

*my mind.
my mind is
my whole
body :*

i engage
with-and-
as world
through
disjuncture :

*somaticizing like
none other*

this my whole

and my experience of holism
(a composite of splicings, tangents, and fragments :
in thinkingbodybeing | beingbodythinking :
writingmoving | movingwriting)

though specific, unique, idiosyncratic, even: ‘individualized’ –
is shared and [only] made possible
through the experience
of our inextricable trans-corporeality³...

**we share the air, we are reciprocally composed of salined sea equations,
we share a common ancestor⁴:**

In order for:

trans-corporeality to be an ethical mode of being, the material self must not
be a finished, self-contained product of evolutionary genealogies but a site
where the knowledges and practices of embodiment are undertaken as part of
the world’s becoming (Alaimo, 2016a, p.127).

My lack of resonating with – or apprehensive use of – the term ‘somatics’ relates to my sense
that by using *somatics*, one may be/is essentially reinforcing a different/new/old type of
[Cartesian] binary between mind and body⁵...which ‘somatics’ practitioners seem to be

³ See: Alaimo (2016a, 2016b, 2010a, 2010b)

⁴ David Suzuki remarks, by ‘studying DNA, molecular biologists have verified that all living organisms are genetically related’
(1997, p.131; see also Sahtouris, 2000).

⁵ So too, have I had some of the same resistances to some of the (former) uses of ‘embodiment’ (but not in the above case with
Alaimo’s quote).

generally – if not, ironically – trying to eschew. Somatics, as such – as I understand it – has limits : ‘where body functions as compartmentalized within autonomous zones and properly assigned functions’ (Banes and Lepecki, 2007 p.5). *Boundaries. Borders.* Which means exclusion...

do i belong here?

**i feel that the conventional use of the term somatics in fact betrays the work
i do/aim for
(as well as that of other practitioners) :
an integrated, interconnected, immersive experiencing
of self in animate consort with other selves :
a world alive with[in]
the ‘world’s becoming’...**

***indivisible from and dependent upon
each other’s diversity
and heterogeneity...***

‘I have the rare genetic condition, Wilson’s Disease; the acute manifestations of which began to appear a decade ago. Wilson’s Disease simultaneously displays neurological, hepatological, gastroenterological and psychiatric manifestations, due to an inability to flush copper. Beginning at birth, the body retains all copper (sourced from water and food), accumulating to the point where the possessor of the mutated ATP7B gene displays an array of symptoms stemming from heavy metal poisoning’ (Preece, 2019 p.12).

My somatics toolkit lies in the ‘evolutionary genealogies’ of inclusion ...

Sensing

Observing Omissions

Mutable, Marginalized Movements

Animate Awarenesses

Trans-corporal

Idiosyncratic, Interdependent-while-Individual

Caring, Compassionate...Containing Cautions

Specific, Singularly-plural⁶: Shared

Transparent

Oikos

Overlapping

Layered

Knowledges

Inviting Immersion and Intersectionality

Truthful Testimonials

⁶ See: Nancy (2000).

provoking questions

body|mind – mind|body

i am, yes, rejecting, on the basis of semantics, the usage of somatics.

i am ~~not~~ a [somatics] practitioner.

I am, however, not negating the significant, sensitive, evocative and prescient work that many (labelled and unlabeled/self- or identified) 'somatics'-practitioners (in a variety of fields) are doing...

ones/practices who/which are engaging with many of the same ethical underpinnings that i feel are so imperative to co-creating expansive, exploratory and enriching terrains...*all different, sharing resonant ethos.*

Though somatics, as [a] field[s] of inquiry, is relatively new, i feel [many of] its own practices [may] have already revealed and yielded a demand for re-wording, for re-verbing. *Perhaps neologistic reinventions.* And maybe *this* is the greatest, and timeliest generative catalyst that has emerged from within the 'frame of somatics' – making apparent the need for further responsive plurality aiming to dissolve binaries, dichotomies and dissonance across 'disciplines'...

That which we call somatics / By any other name may...

[insert continued process of unfurlings here...]

may be an invitation....

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Bio: Bronwyn is an improvisational, site-specific performance eARThist, published poet and author, community-engaged Applied Theatre practitioner, butoh dancer and multi-disciplinary artist...who is honoured to be living as a guest on the Traditional Indigenous Territory of the Salish Peoples. Her performance and writing work actively incorporates a sensitivity to place. She recently completed her SSHRC-funded PhD in Performance (*Performing Embodiment: Improvisational Investigations into the Intersections of Ecology and Disability*), and holds a SSHRC-funded MA and a BFA-with-Distinction in Applied Theatre. Bronwyn became Canada's first certified teacher of Action Theater™ improvisation. She facilitates workshops and performs internationally...often calling her work earthBODYment.