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**The Exile of Poetic Imagination: Challenges to the use of Expressive Arts with Children in Adversity**

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**Introduction**

Why is it so hard to bring poetic imagination, including dance, into mental and physical rehabilitation programs, hospitals and schools? Does art teach? Does nature teach? Is art medicine? If so, why are they so marginalized or superficially included in conventional pedagogies and medicine? And, on the other hand, where we occasionally do find these arts flourishing, what can we learn from successful practitioners?

Adversity confronts children in many guises, from armed conflict to natural disasters, out of the frying pan nightmares of forced migration into the smoldering fires of urban gray zones of the West where refugees are so often forced to settle. More than 100,000 immigrant and refugee children come into Canada every year (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2004), and the number of kids coming from war-torn countries to North America is increasing (Jaycox, cited in Rousseau et. al. In press, A). In Canada's largest city, Toronto, where 38% of children under the age of 10 live in poverty, a large proportion of newcomers are among these urban poor (City of Toronto, 2001). In some urban Canadian schools, as many as 90% of the children are learning English as their Second Language (ESL). Here in the roughest parts of our cities, immigrant and refugee children join the local kids in another kind of adversity. In addition to the acute stresses of migration and in many cases, memories of armed conflict, many urban youth face gang violence on the street and domestic conflict at home.

Expressive arts activities are well known to be helpful for children and youth living in violent and insecure contexts. These activities are used to help children construct meaning, to structure identity and to work through their losses and reestablish social ties (Rousseau et. al. 2003). Expressive arts includes dance, movement and drama as well as

painting, masks, puppetry, music, song and story making, and other forms of poetic and imaginative expression.

This paper examines a number of Canadian initiatives for war-affected and refugee children, in school and out-of-school, both in Canada and in regions of recent armed conflict. It does not attempt to describe all of the expressive arts initiatives serving these children in adversity in Canada or internationally. Some exemplary projects are mentioned in the article to indicate where to look for good practices in this field. In Canada projects for children in adversity may define their clients as newcomers, war-affected children, immigrants and refugees, inner city youth, or children who have experienced multiple transitions in their lives (e.g. divorce, family violence, homelessness).

I argue in this article that while these projects are valuable, many of them do not optimize the rehabilitation potential of expressive arts therapies for children in acute psychosocial distress. The paper will make reference to the More Than Bandages (MTB) program of Médecins Sans Frontières—Canada (MSF-C), an “art garden” project model for war-affected children. The discussion will benefit from a review of psychosocial programs and projects for children in the international child-serving sector conducted as part of the research for More Than Bandages (Lowry et. al., 2001). The article will review the art garden approach and the theories that lie behind it, explaining how the art garden effectively synthesizes a range of creative, poetic and nature-based approaches to help children in adversity in a way that is adaptable to different sociocultural or institutional contexts. The second half of paper will draw on the work of anthropologist Victor Turner and performance theorist Richard Schechner exploring ritual and theatre to shed light on the challenges to the use of play, nature and art in education and therapies with children.

### **Canadian Examples of Good Practice**

Arts education is a component of standard curricula in Canadian schools, so refugees and other children living in stressful circumstances inevitably benefit from this to some

degree. In Canada, there are a number of government initiatives and cultural institutions that have supported artists, including dancers, to work with children and youth, particularly through public schools. In general, arts councils such as the federal Canada Council, provincial arts councils such as the Ontario Arts Council, and city arts councils such as the Toronto Arts Council look favorably on the educational activities of artists as a factor when awarding grants. This offers incentive for artists to engage with young people in their communities, by seeking out opportunities to teach, and to perform for, children. In Ontario, the most significant governmental support for dance and other expressive arts to reach immigrant and refugee children is the Artists in Education program, also known as “artists in schools”. This ongoing program funds professional artists from all artistic expressions and cultures, to be a catalyst in providing in-depth, creative experience for learners. This program has become a lifeline for arts-starved schools in the last decade as the arts have been particularly hard-hit by school funding cuts and changes in the curriculum.

At North Albion Collegiate, a high school in the harsh Toronto suburb of Rexdale, the school population has come from all over the world. Some of the refugee youth are in Canada alone, without families. They are fortunate to have a physical education director who is also a professional dancer. Kathleen Pyper says that for ESL kids who have come from countries at war such as Afghanistan, dance is a less intimidating medium of self-expression than writing or speaking. A member of the Ballet Creole dance company, Pyper uses dance to build bridges across cultures, so the Asian kids learn African dance moves, the Latino kids learn Asian moves, and vice versa, moving to the rhythm of live drumming or music provided by fellow students. “It gives them a feeling of empathy,” says Pyper. The kids love it, and they feel that it reinforces a tolerant school culture. “It’s very interesting. Our school is an oasis without violence in a community that is quite problematic.” After a youth from the school was murdered, the student dance group created a performance about violence and racism called STOPP, Students Triumph Over Peer Pressure, which they present in schools across Ontario. It is a compelling piece, bursting with the multicultural energies African drumming, moves that defy gravity, forceful rap lyrics and choreography that is both muscular and playful. They have taken

the show as far as the Arctic, where their curiosity about Inuit drum dances and throat singing inspired the local kids to take another look at their own heritage. When they left after a one-week visit, eighty local kids skipped out of school and came to the airport. “It was the most moving experience I have ever had as a teacher,” recalls Pyper. “Many of the kids were crying. After only a week in the far north, my kids were singing the ABC in Inuktitut.”

The story of Toronto-based choreographer and educator Allen Kaeja is instructive of how an artist can persevere and navigate through the minefield of convention that often keeps creative activity out of educational institutions. Building on a background in wrestling and undergraduate studies in child psychology, Allen started out working with the Children’s Aid Society and other organizations as a mentor in crisis intervention with youth. When he became a professional dancer, his early grounding in empathy for the most disadvantaged young people combined with his entrepreneurial spirit made it possible for him to gain access to the public school system and to do dance workshops with thousands of children in schools. Kaeja d’Dance, run by Allen Kaeja and his wife and collaborator Karen Kaeja, has worked all across Ontario, paying particular attention to visiting schools in the north. They work with war-affected kids to the extent that such children are dispersed within the school system. Allen remarks that many kids, including both refugees and inner city veterans, “put up walls. Breaking the initial barrier is the hardest, the most exhausting. But you always find a way, and when you do, when you listen to them, and draw from where they are, their physicality, there is a breakthrough... like an explosion of light.” This has been the Kaeja’s consistent experience over years of teaching dance to over 15,000 students. Currently they focus more on training grade 3 to 12 teachers to be dance and drama educators, with government support through the Trillium Foundation, using their *Express Dance* approach and manual. Their practical, accessible methods are consistently effective in engaging even the most inhibited children. Here is an example of how they work. They suggest a warm-up that catches students off-guard and prevents hesitation. The group begins in a circle, and the teacher initiates a simple series of movements and sounds, for example:

- a) the right arm is stretched up to the sky, with a drawn out *ssaaah* sound.

- b) Move quickly to a semi-squat position, bringing the arm down parallel to the floor. Use a *ha!* sound.
- c) The left arm swings around with a drawn-out *chooooo* sound and the hands clap.
- d) The entire body stretches, with no strain, with a drawn out *cheeee* sound.

This is repeated by the students, with subsequent variations to explore tempo, rhythm, adding feelings, heavy versus light movements, and mime. If a student is unresponsive, they provide guidelines for interpreting the simplest body language, such as a shrug, so that anxiety is not a barrier to participation. The book is written in the form of a ‘cook book’ with ingredients, levels of progress framed as courses in a meal, options for dessert, how to add spice, becoming a gourmet, when the soufflé is falling, etc. (Oriold et. al. 1999).

The Royal Conservatory of Music has developed a way of teaching the core public school curriculum through the arts, called Learning Through the Arts (LTTA). Like Kaeja d’Dance, this program reaches refugee and inner city kids as part of the general school population. They are currently active in 300 schools across Canada and in the process of expanding to 500 schools nationwide. LTTA combines the arts with academic subjects, helping students learn the interconnectedness of all things. LTTA is unique in that the curriculum inspires the art, not the other way around. The program emphasizes ongoing professional development for both artists and teachers. They teach history through drama, geometry through visual arts, language through song, and science through dance. For example, a Grade Two science lesson on liquids and solids involves several dances bringing Willy Water Molecule to various forms of life ([www.ltta.ca](http://www.ltta.ca), 2004).

There are also several programs that offer expressive arts to immigrant, refugee and inner city children with a more or less explicit therapeutic intent in cities across Canada. In Ottawa, for example, Peace Play Under the Mango Tree is a program for immigrant children who come from areas of conflict or who have experienced multiple transitions in their lives (e.g. divorce, family violence, homelessness). Their goal is to work with children to give them the tools to create and enhance peace around them through art, celebration and play. Their first project, funded by the municipal government, was in a shelter for the homeless. They also work in schools with high populations of children

from countries with recent histories of conflict, using drama, dance, video production, drawing, clay and story telling to help these youth address some of the confusing and often scary issues in their lives.

Children of all ages enjoy dancing to music with ribbons or scarves of brightly coloured cloth waving in their hands. In 2002 they produced a seven-foot mural of photos taken by children from about thirty different countries. Funding sources include the federal Department of Justice, which sees their focus on non-violence as an innovative crime prevention initiative.

The Acorn Garden, a project at a rural site near Winnipeg (sister of the proposed Afghan ACORN project), has recently been established with a shuttle bus to transport kids from the city. The pilot project brings ‘newcomer’ children to the garden and woodland to participate in expressive arts along with English classes. As the program evolves, it will offer the rehabilitative activities of creative and expressive play, art, drama, dance, music and nature-based horticultural and animal therapies. Dance activities may draw on the cultural traditions of newcomer families from places like Afghanistan, as well as simply working with music that appeals to children, similar to the way dance is an activity in Peace Play Under the Mango Tree. The program is designed specifically to address the psychosocial needs of immigrant children who have been affected by family loss, displacement, war and trauma.

At ISIS—Canada, a school for expressive arts therapists, students are supervised in providing expressive arts activities for individual kids and groups in Toronto elementary schools. School staff select children who may benefit from this kind of intervention, but without formal assessment. Kids are attracted by the opportunity to participate in music, movement, drama and games offered by the ISIS animators. Body work is always included. Sessions typically include warm up by putting on a CD; the animator gets the kids to start dancing around, looks for the energy and group dynamic that emerges, and works with that. Improvisation of dramatic scenes is a favorite activity with teenagers, and movement is an effective way for untrained youth to invent and define characters. “The kids are always moving,” laughs ISIS co-founder Ellen Levine. “Even for painting,

we warm up the body—we go around the room waving brushes, then hit them together as percussion sticks, to make rhythm.”

For a number of years, the Transcultural Psychiatry Team led by Dr. Cécile Rousseau at the Montreal Children’s Hospital has been focusing on providing support for immigrant and refugee children from war torn countries. Unlike most projects involving expressive arts therapies, they have conducted an evaluation study of their program which provides important evidence that “creative workshops in the classroom can have a beneficial effect on the self-esteem and symptomology of immigrant and refugee children from various cultures and backgrounds” (Rousseau et. al. In press B, 1). They have found that it is necessary to provide a safe environment outside of regular school activities, as “most teachers hesitate to raise emotionally charged subjects and may need external counseling or support to do so” (Rousseau et al. In press A, 5). They use a variety of creative expression workshops with therapeutic intent, combining both verbal and non-verbal expression, with an emphasis on sand play for kindergarten aged children, drawing and storytelling for school aged children, and drama for high school aged students. “The workshops aid in promoting children’s emotional well-being while simultaneously strengthening the link of the child to the group. They also transform teachers’ perceptions of newcomers by placing an emphasis on their strengths and their resilience, while not negating their vulnerabilities” (Rousseau et. al, In press A, 2). The capacity to articulate these positive benefits is crucial for program survival, but it is not all that is needed for expressive arts initiatives to proliferate at a scale appropriate to serve the growing numbers of children in adversity.

### **The Art Garden Concept and Practice**

I use the term “art garden” to refer to a project framework developed for the More Than Bandages Program (MTB), and also to the family of art garden projects that have developed in association with one another. These include the Spiral Garden and the Cosmic Birdfeeder, summer day programs serving children with physical disabilities children at the Bloorview MacMillan Rehabilitation Centre in Toronto, Canada since

1984, and the Butterfly Garden, a project for war-affected children in Sri Lanka's eastern province, which was established in 1995 by one of the founders of the Spiral Garden (Chase, R., 2000). It is interesting to note that other projects inspired by these examples are currently in development in a number of places, in Canada in Winnipeg (described above) and Hamilton ("Under the Willows"), as well as in Afghanistan. In association with War Child Canada, an art garden project is being planned for children in Herat, Western Afghanistan. ACORN stands for Afghan Children Organizing to Rehabilitate Nature. The project will use horticulture (a garden and tree nursery) as the entry point to start working creatively with children of both genders in a context where expressive arts could be rejected by local educational authorities. With the recent publication of *The Spiral Garden Resource Book* (Petryk, B, Crossman, S., MacKie, J. & Donovan, M., 2002), perhaps there will be more art garden projects in the future.

From 1998 to 2001 I conducted research with colleagues at MSF, which provided the basis for the development of a framework for mental health projects with children (MTB). The purpose of an MTB project is to improve resilience and reduce trauma symptoms of war-affected children through establishing an art garden project. For a number of reasons, having to do with both operational constraints and institutional habits, MSF did not start an MTB project in the field. In 2003 the program was handed over to the International Centre for Child Rights and Development (ICCRD), so that the investment in more than three years of MTB research and development may benefit children in the future.

The art garden project concept takes inspiration from a variety of locally-run, site-based long-term programs offering creative learning and play for children grounded in the local physical and social ecology, including the local flora, fauna, culture, stories, art, aesthetics, and spiritual traditions (particularly the Butterfly Garden and Spiral Garden mentioned above). "Poetic imagination" as practiced in the art garden is free play in image-making and perception. Poetic imagination is active when a person engages both mind and feeling with an image, whether it is a picture in the mind's eye, a story, a performance, an object, a place or a dream. In the art garden poetic imagination is

cultivated with the children by creative mentors or animators who are visual and performing artists, storytellers, musicians, clowns, gardeners and other gifted creative people. Through the practices of art-making, playfulness, story-creation, performance, gardening and other earthy, elemental activities, kindness and openness with the children, they accompany the children to reconnect to the earth, each other and themselves.

Although they don't know one another, the founders of such programs draw inspiration from common sources including the socially engaged ceremonial theatre traditions of Welfare State International and Bread and Puppet Theatre (Coult, T and Kershaw, B, 1989), as well as the writings of innovators such as ecologist Edith Cobb (1977), eco-theologian Thomas Berry (1988), pioneering art therapist Shaun McNiff (1992), and the iconoclastic trauma specialist Judith Herman (1992). Cobb's eccentric lifework, *The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood*, is a wellspring of inspiration for those who share an intuitive sense that the full potential of the human psyche requires pre-verbal imaginative engagement with nature in childhood.

The art garden concept proposes that an effective way to assist children in acute psychosocial distress is to create a safe place for them and provide the context of care, playfulness and imaginative possibility that allows them to recover and flourish. The aim is for caregivers to work openly and spontaneously with the earth, with images and with each other. Armed conflict or other acute adversity destroys the social 'space' where we feel safe to be together with others. We know that in places affected by armed conflict, it is essential to help people carve out new spaces where they can regenerate kindness and beauty for both the children and their war-torn communities (Summerfield, 1994).

One of the main challenges of the MTB program has been to find appropriate post-conflict contexts to set up a nature/play/art-based psychosocial project for children within the very concrete, patient-treatment orientation of MSF field missions. What MSF knows best is the 'medical act', the life-saving gesture, the timely application of technical skill and resources. Yet in today's wars we know that many of the wounds are in the mind and the spirit, that they arise from the systematic destruction of culture and security of the

home place. Among the refugees that MSF assisted on the Macedonian border of Kosovo in 1999, as many as 9 out of 10 of the clinical cases confronting medical relief workers are psychosomatic illnesses (emotional stress manifesting as physical symptoms) (Dr. James Orbinski, Médecins Sans Frontières, personal communication, 2000). In Chiapas, Chechnya and East Timor, the state now understands that to destroy a people, you must suffocate their culture. The inclusion of culture and nature in medical relief may not be a luxury; perhaps it is a responsibility that we are now just beginning to recognize.

### **Art as Medicine**

A growing body of evidence indicates that contact with the arts and nature are appropriate and important ways to engage the imagination and the body in self-healing. The arts, practiced as a mental health intervention, provide an indirect way of addressing serious psychological issues. In *Art as Medicine*, Shaun McNiff explains that the practice of art stimulates a self-healing cycle “through which imagination treats itself and recycles its vitality back to daily living... Art as medicine returns the treatment of pathologies to ritual activities within the context of a sympathetic community” (McNiff, 1992, 26).

There is now a widespread recognition of the importance of restoring playfulness and resilience through activities including drama, storytelling, puppetry, and local arts and crafts (Trapman, 1995; Vandistendael, 1995; Grothberg 1995; Tolfree, 1996; Apfel and Simon, 1996; Akhundov, 1999; Chase et. al., 1999; Dawes, Donald & Loww, 1999; Green and Honwana, 1999; Le Grand, et. al., 1999). The importance of cultural and non-formal activities such as songs, storytelling, traditional dance, community theatre and memorial festivals to heal the psychological wounds of war have also been explicitly highlighted (Save The Children, 1996). The art garden idea builds on this consensus, taking its primary design reference from program examples that use creative approaches to regenerate the child’s relationship not only with the self and other people but also with nature.

In turning to the arts for healing, we are re-discovering an ancient tradition. In early societies and in indigenous cultures, all healing takes place through ceremonial means. Music, dance, song, story-telling, mask-making, the creation of visual imagery and the ritual re-enactment of myths are all components of a communal process in which suffering is given form (Levine, 1992, 10).

These principles resonate deeply with dance educators. “In the individual’s experience of dance,” as in all the expressive arts, “it is the process, the continuous flow of play, that provides the opportunity for a person to reconnect to the self” (Jessica Kronis, children’s dance instructor, personal communication, 2003). In the language of rehabilitation, dance is a nonverbal means to express and release somatized stress in the body, and thus it is a potential path to come home to one’s self (from the Latin *rehabilitare*).

### **Ritual, theatre, and “liminal” experience**

Victor Turner developed his ideas about *liminal* experience based on the anthropologist Arnold van Gennep’s use of the term in his classic 1908 work, *Rites de Passage*, to explain how ritual works. For Turner, liminality is characteristic of the central phase of ritual in which everyday reality is turned upside down. As he writes, “the liminal period is that time and space betwixt and between one context of meaning and action and another. ...Characteristic of the liminal period is the appearance of marked ambiguity and inconsistency of meaning” (Turner, 1969, 95). Richard Schechner made use of the idea to develop his fertile notion of how creativity flourishes in the liminal creases of culture and especially within the realm of experimental theatre. “Creases are not marginal, on the edge, but liminal, in between. They run through the actual and conceptual centers of society, like faults in the Earth’s crust. Creases are places to hide, but more importantly they signal areas of instability, disturbance, and potentially radical changes in the social topography” (Schechner, 1988, 164). In performance theory the notion of liminality encompasses a range of ideas and practices such as make-believe, parody, clowning and gender bending that all have their roots in the ritual practices of ancient cultures.

## The Primacy of Play

Turner suggests that in Western societies, child's play is seen as inconsequential and unworthy of scrutiny. He observes that liminality is not so prone to be contained or controlled by a society's gatekeepers of conformity when it is child's play. "Only certain types of *children's* games are allowed some degree of freedom because they are defined as structurally 'irrelevant,' not 'mattering'" (Turner, 1982, 29). Despite the extensive evidence of the importance of play for learning and growth, documented and argued eloquently by prominent voices across disciplines from child psychology to social anthropology and performance theory, it would seem that Turner is right. I would suggest that dismissive attitudes to play constitute a barrier to appropriate pedagogy and therapies with children, which is deeply entrenched in Western and in other cultures.

In his subtitle, *The Human Seriousness of Play*, Turner touches on the importance of play and playfulness for humanity. Play is the way that humans explore and learn about the world, and is instinctual for children even in adversity (Winnicott 1981). From studies of street children, Ricardo Lucchini has suggested that we are *homo ludens*, playful by nature. He emphasizes the attraction of the street as a *ludic* space in which children under severe psychosocial distress can fulfill their innately human drive to make meaning and identity, to recreate themselves (recreation) (Lucchini, 1996). George Eisen's study of play in the Holocaust, *Among the Shadows*, concluded that "play should be considered neither an innocent and trivial matter nor an accidental occurrence. In the Holocaust, it became an instinctual form for understanding the absurd and for accommodating the irrational. Play, with its unique conflict-resolving qualities, also provided the children with a mental mechanism that facilitated their ability to cope" (Eisen, 1988, 122). Unfortunately, this is left to chance in most cultures, particularly industrial and post-industrial contexts, where children are left to "get away with" free play outside the context of organized sport. "Organized sport ('pedagogic' play) better fits the Puritan tradition than unorganized children's play ('pediarchic' play) or mere dalliance, which is time wasted" (Turner, 1982, 39).

Play is at the heart of expressive arts with children. But in an art garden we are not talking about a simple day-care centre with toys and games, nor is the art garden a traditional “play therapy” program with its emphasis on diagnosis and treatment. Out of play with materials, words or movement, the children in the project make images that are not analyzed or judged. Out of the images planted in the soil of the garden, stories emerge and grow. The idea is that, with the help of the garden staff, the children can turn these stories into theatre, perhaps with music, dance, costumes or masks.

In this process, even children who have known great cruelty can begin to reconnect with the beauty in themselves, the kindness in others, and the healing power of nature. It generates self-healing in children through processes that require the consistent, skillful presence and improvisation of trained caregivers. The practice of spontaneity, presence and improvisation requires deep experience and maturity. “To ‘become as a child’ [John Keats] is a far more subtle idea than is generally assumed” (Cobb, 1977, 107). In other words, to be able to sit with a child, to play with children, to make art with children with the conscious intent to assist in their psychosocial growth, are skills that practitioners learn through humble practice and self-discovery.

Turner discusses liminality as manifested in initiation rites, but also through a range of activities that directly correspond to the modes of expressive arts and play practiced in the art garden—myth/story, song, secret language, and non-verbal symbolic activities such as dancing, painting, clay modeling, wood carving, masking, etc. (Turner, 1982, 27). For example, a way to generate risk-taking, surprising and delightful experiences for the kids is the “true stewie”, a story game in which “each child tells a short story, and a bit of it is put into the story pot to be stewed with everyone else’s story.” They make something that “sounds like a poem or a dream, and everything in the story is true” (Crossman, Donovan, MacKie and Petryk, 2002, 22). Turner’s description of liminal ritual seems to be an accurate explanation of the true stewie and much else that happens in an art garden project. In liminality people ‘play’ with the elements of the familiar and defamiliarize them. Novelty emerges from unprecedented combinations of familiar elements. The notion that “we have something to learn from being disorderly” (Turner, 1982, 28) points to the pedagogical value of free play. In the delightful vernacular of

Miss Frizzle, the teacher on the Magic School Bus, “Get messy! Take chances!” (*The Magic School Bus* is a series of books from Scholastic, and an animated series on public television).

Turner’s characterization of the multiple facets of ritual in many non-Western small-scale societies sheds further light on the nature of the day-to-day practice in the art garden:

Ritual in such societies... is an orchestration of symbolic actions and objects in all sensory codes—visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory, gustatory—full of music and dancing and with interludes of play and entertainment. It may involve painting, including body painting, sculpture, wood carving, instrumental and choral music, systematic medical treatment,...dramatic plotting,...festal cuisine,... dance drama and choreography... and many more aesthetic and cognitive modes that later come to be specialized out as para-ritual, quasi-secular, then fully secularized professions in more complex societies (Turner, 1982, 35).

Hence the recent co-evolution of the professions of art therapy, play therapy and expressive arts therapy.

Interestingly, art garden theorists insist that they are none of the above, and do not engage in these multiple modes with children as therapy or as secularized professionals. This protects artists from the accusation of pretending to be trained therapists. On the other hand, the art garden does enable a therapeutic process to take place, with or without therapists. This is another way that the art garden’s ambiguous dedication to the poetic and liminal leaves itself open to be marginalized or dismissed in a Western world ruled by hierarchy, accreditation, and professional validation of all human endeavor.

### **Ritual Needs a Clever Disguise**

Turner suggests that liminal situations are “seedbeds of cultural creativity,” that feed back into the society, the political and legal arenas (Turner, 1982, 28). This offers some theoretical support for the therapeutic and pedagogical processes that generate transformative poetic experience in children and youth, and suggests why the art garden approach can make a significant contribution both to functional societies and to cultural

regeneration in a severely disrupted post-war setting. On the other hand this cultural, and thus political, fertility also makes them appear subversive in authoritarian settings, including so-called democratic contexts, where social change from below is discouraged. It can be argued that liminal potentialities are deliberately enabled in the art garden, and to the extent that this is recognized within the institutions that are asked to support it or to coexist with it, it can be perceived as inappropriate, hard to manage, to be strategically marginalized, undermined or contained like an invasive exotic species. This makes it difficult to implement in terms of institutional support, for pilot projects, let alone for integration at a systemic level (organizational, regional, national) either in healthcare and education in relief and development sectors, or in health and education in the developed world, in Canada or other Western countries.

In reading about liminality and culture in the work of Turner and Schechner, I was intrigued by a number of congruencies with my understanding of how the art garden works, and why it is difficult to implement this kind of project. Is it because we can't stand liminal activity, liminal experience? Is it too challenging? This would explain why we do not encourage it, and why we certainly do not institutionalize it. The art garden is a *temenos* (sanctuary, sacred space) where creative experience is deliberately encouraged and enabled among children and their artist-mentors (animators), and as such it may be perceived as troublesome, calling into question the effectiveness, if not the very legitimacy, of the everyday approaches that surround it. This notion of the art garden, a safe place to stimulate poetic imagination among children—as *temenos*—finds validation in Schechner's suggestion that, by definition, a theatre or ritual place is a transformational space created by poetic means (Schechner, 1988, 166).

Turner's distinction between ceremony and ritual is important for an understanding of how art garden practices may run into resistance from local priests or mullahs.

“Ceremony *indicates*, ritual *transforms*...” (Turner, 1982, 80). Ceremony never leaves the real world of ‘actual fact’.. In ritual, “actuality takes the sacrificial plunge into possibility and emerges as a different kind of actuality” (Turner, 1982, 84). If the authorities think that children are engaged in rituals that may be improvised or derived

from foreign traditions, the alarm bells go off. While the art garden concept allows for the possibility of ritual, the word 'ritual' is carefully avoided. 'Ceremony' and 'celebration' are safe words that are useful to throw adults of various orthodoxies (parents, mullahs) off the scent of heresy.

### **Torture it for its secrets: Describe, Evaluate, Standardize**

It is also important to recognize how the practitioners of these poetic activities with children may contribute to undermine their own credibility. They may develop excessively elaborate, abstract, and psychologized explanations of what is going on. In their efforts to explain what they are doing, they may engender confusion and even alienation from stakeholders and gatekeepers, including parents, administrators, and other health or education professionals whose support is needed. Practitioners of these skills are notoriously incapable of explaining what they do. They also express a deep fear, which has some legitimacy, that the institutions will accept the ideas in a superficial way in order not to appear Philistine, but with the intent to contain and manage these artists, to be able to exploit their creativity with the children for marketing, to be able to suggest to the world that they make space for poetic imagination while making certain that it never goes 'to scale'.

A key impediment for non-government organizations (NGO's) or school systems to do this type of work is that its full, subtle practice is dependent on the gifted art garden mentor/ animator. The art garden concept proposes subtle, even initiatory training for mentors (though artists may bring this poetic imagination to the project from their life experience, without art garden training). This type of training is antithetical to standardized training in large systems with all the variables to quality control of personnel. Furthermore, the narcissistic, quixotic elements common to the gifted artistic temperament are not very compatible with institutions; they have trouble fitting in, though diplomacy is also a function of maturity. Practitioners of the art garden approach seem to suggest the impossible, that it would be replicable if every school or therapy team could be creatively managed like a theatre troupe. This is one reason it has been so

difficult to replicate or expand across a healthcare or school system (go to scale). Moreover, training is complex, involving personal growth over time. A typical play program for children provides a number of playful and creative activities, with some supervision from caregivers. The art garden is also grounded in child-friendly, playful approaches, but it is not a simple play program. Play is only one dimension of its work. It generates self-healing in children through processes that require the consistent, skillful presence and improvisation of caregivers trained as mentors. The leadership of trainers and facilitators who can model these practices is essential, as the practice of spontaneity, presence and improvisation requires deep experience and maturity. Finally, the results of this kind of work are difficult to quantify and measure. Evaluation data tends to be anecdotal and qualitative, which is easily dismissed. To evaluate the psychodynamic aspects of the art garden is like pinning the proverbial butterfly, and it can be argued that it would only expose its “dangers” and provide fodder for further suppression. Nevertheless the practitioner’s aversion to the dryness of the researcher’s vocation, and the evaluator’s scrutiny, must be overcome. Evaluation that respects the nuances of the art garden process is needed to promote this kind of work. It is possible for an evaluation study to pass over the liminal mysteries in silence, focusing instead on the evidence of improved well-being.

### **Living Theatre, Dangerous Stories**

Use of theatre process in the art garden serves the function of what Clifford Geertz calls metacommentary, “a story that a group tells itself about itself” (cited in Turner, 1982, 104). In the case of the art garden, even when a group performance emerges to be presented before a community gathering of parents and friends, after some weeks or months, it is primarily a story told by the children and animators about themselves, to themselves, although it is also a performance for the audience of visitors, who are not members of the general public but are committed in various ways to supporting the story-makers.

In the art garden the artist animators try to generate and sustain a living theatre/never-ending story as a psychodynamic process from day to day, working with the emotions and/or physical problems of participating children. This finds theoretical support in Schechner, drawing on Lévi-Strauss: “At its deepest level this is what theatre is about, the ability to frame and control, to transform the raw into the cooked, to deal with the most problematic (violent, dangerous, sexual taboo) human interactions.” He adds that “these changes are usually temporary but sometimes they can be permanent” (Schechner, 1988, 170). It is significant that indigenous people who are living their traditions say that white people, or post-industrial types, are only cooked on the outside, so they are not fully human. We assume that we are born human, but that isn’t true. To be cooked on the inside, they say, you have to swallow hot stones, you have to suffer, and experience grief. There is no easy way to do that, but you have to do it to become a human being. Grief, it has been said, is a good teacher (Bereavement counsellor Steven Jenkinson, video interview by C. Lowry for Médecins Sans Frontières, April 2001).

Turner’s discussion of the Puritan attack on theatre and celebration, set against the Puritanical obsession with self-discipline, hard work, dedication to profit, earnings, thrift, the hallmarks of nascent capitalism, suggests another reason why the arts approaches face cyclical convulsions of strong opposition and allergic reactions in institutions such as schools and hospitals. The Founding Fathers of America also thought play was suspect, dalliance, time wasted, a view apparently shared by many politicians and others who control the resources for education and healthcare in Western capitalist societies. Art and poetics in learning or therapeutic settings bring the potential for enchantment back into the equation, and this may not be altogether welcome to administrators who are infected with what Jurgen Habermas refers to as the endemic disenchantment of our times (Habermas, 1990).

It is also important to acknowledge the dark side of liminality – the breakthrough of chaos into cosmos – despair, death, suicide, anomie, alienation, angst, the hostile dead, the vengeful spirits of strangers—which can occur if it is not contained with skill in order

to achieve compensatory replacement of normative, well-defined social ties and bonds (Turner, 1982, 46). This problem is addressed in the art garden concept. It is recommended that a great deal of care and attention should be paid to cooling down the children from their liminal activities, for example, by gathering in a circle, reflecting on the events of the day, and sharing music, so that they can re-enter their lives outside of the garden each time they visit. However, the recognition that these kinds of activities can be potentially disturbing is another justification that can be invoked to question the legitimacy of intensive expressive arts activities with children and youth.

The use of theatre in the art garden is intended to serve as a playful way for children to experiment with changing their world. By its very nature, performance created by children will distill and contain aspects of conflict that are manifest in the surrounding culture. This is why, in a war or postwar setting, theatrical processes may be (correctly) perceived as subversive and threatening to those who want to control public articulation and perception of the protagonists and the meaning of the conflict. Critical thinking that might question the atrocities permitted by the war system and the dirty politics of war, albeit manifested metaphorically in various poetic forms, is not encouraged by the protagonists of armed struggle.

Fortunately for social health, liminality enters into normal settings, such as typical classrooms or more conventional therapeutic situations, despite the gatekeepers. This is encouraging for educators sympathetic to the art garden, who may be looking for applicability outside the rare art garden context.

A field in which there is great potential for transformative experience without drawing explicit attention to it is in wilderness and outdoor education. A number of organizations in the Americas specialize in working with inner city youth, and some with young offenders who are obligated to participate in programs by the youth justice system as a form of rehabilitation. In Canada, for example, these programs take many forms including the famous Outward Bound Schools. The Guiding Spirit program in the Pacific Northwest and the Ghost River Rediscovery program in the Rockies resemble rites of

passage. Their purpose is to enhance resilience and personal integrity of youth participants. They share in common an emphasis on nurturing a deep connection with the land and with wild creatures, combining practical bush skills, interpersonal cooperation and interdependence, with poetic and meditative activities, including music and stories, drawing from native spiritual traditions and cosmologies.

## **Conclusion**

These projects, as well as the examples of good practice described earlier in this article, are not worlds apart from art gardens. They are on a continuum, sharing many things in common. Indeed, art garden animators usually come from, and often return to, jobs in schools, youth services, and health care agencies. The innovative programs that exist, and the conventional contexts where creative work with children is allowed, are very valuable. Artists, clowns, or gardeners who are paid to work with children belong to an elite few among their kind. This article has argued that they need not be an elite, and that they should be common among the educators, therapists and health workers that serve children in adversity.

How can practitioners and managers committed to poetic imagination meet the challenges that we have discussed? Perhaps the key is not to emphasize the transformational aspects of what is going on, but simply to do the work quietly, and to describe the nature of the work or project more conventionally. This can get the project up and running “under the radar” of those who, in their wisdom, wish to contain or marginalize this kind of work. Perhaps in this case, as someone once said, the secret of subversion is to go unnoticed by the powerful. At the same time, practitioners and champions of expressive arts or art garden approaches for young people need to make ongoing efforts to demonstrate the value and results of these approaches in conventional terms, and to share the beauty of it with stakeholders who are open to visit. Longitudinal evaluation studies are needed in different contexts, following children, practitioners and projects over a period of years (Chase 2000). Such studies, designed to capture nuances of influence at various levels of the child’s social ecology (web of relationships) are very

valuable in promoting creative psychosocial approaches. The kind of institutional change needed to enable expressive arts to flourish in art gardens and schools is gradual, incremental, and dependent on positive persuasive influence over time.

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Motosu Urano, a book-loving college student who just got her Librarian certification and was supposed to enter the job of her dreams after graduation, was killed during a massive earthquake, crushing her underneath a pile of her own massive collection of books. Wishing for reincarnation in order to read even more, she gets reincarnated into a world with a low literacy level and very few books, limited only to the nobility of the world. As she reincarnated as 5-year-old named Maine, daughter of a lowly soldier, no matter how much she wants to read, there is no way there are any books around. You make them yourself of course. What her goal is, to become a librarian no matter what, and to live a life surrounded by books. For starters, she begins with making them herself. Figure 2.2 DS-416 Breaker with Front Cover Removed. Arc Chutes. Auxiliary Switch. Refer to Instruction Book 33-790-1, Section 8, Table 4 for application of sensors. 20 eaton corporation www.eaton.com. Eaton DS and DSL Low Voltage Power Circuit Breaker Renewal Parts. The sole source governing the rights and remedies of any purchaser of this equipment is the contract between the purchaser and Eaton. No warranties, expressed or implied, including warranties of fitness for a particular purpose or merchantability, or warranties arising from course of dealing or usage of trade, are made regarding the information, recommendations, and descriptions contained herein. 2-2 Chapter 2. There is in fact nothing magic about having a resonant antenna, provided of course that you can devise some efficient means to feed the antenna. Many amateurs use non-resonant (even random-length) antennas fed with open-wire transmission lines and antenna tuners. 2-4 Chapter 2. Fig 3 "Feed-point impedance versus frequency for a theoretical 100-foot long dipole, fed in the center in free space, made of thin 0.1-inch (#10) diameter wire. Note that the range of change in reactance is less than that shown in Fig 2, ranging from  $-2700 \Omega$  to  $+2300 \Omega$ . At about  $5000 \Omega$ , the maximum resistance is also less than that in Fig 2 for the thinner wire, where it is about  $10,000 \Omega$ . The antenna is perpendicular to its axis (that is, at right angle to the wire) and parallel to the earth. Thus, since.