

Discussion

Amanda Ravetz (AR): So lots of things there but I noticed you both talking about the preliminaries, the structures around these states and for you [RG], science as partly enabling but also something that you have to counteract with the literature; and [EP] the political situation and the thing of what you say and what you show and how you navigate those situations; then you both had this thing about lift-off, which was serendipity, I think.

Who has a comment or question?

Michele Feder-Nadoff (MFN): This is kind of specific to Eleanor's, just that it would be maybe worth making it a comparative study but in the area [inaudible 00:45:44] research, it's similar where there's like a reconstruction of the new year and it's the fire, like lighting the fire of the new year and there's a lot of parallels between how you were presenting this and ideas of what's authenticity and then also including like the younger generation, just over the 20 years I've been in the area, there were like no interest, people didn't want to speak indigenous language and now people who are either in communities that are considered more assimilated, I'm hearing that they want to learn the indigenous language, so I could tell you more about it but I think it would definitely be worth the comparison and it's really interesting that it's the fire and the sun.

Paul Stenner (PS): Another I suppose question and comment about, I was thinking personally in relation to Rachel's and then suddenly thought a connection to yours, when you asked, you said when you go into orbit, you jettison your own fuel and you're held in this space, this [inaudible 00:46:58] but that you feel connected to other energies and I wondered what those other energies might be and if they are things like with the sun, the ancestors, the spirit world, whether you personally feel that or whether you feel that there could be something like that or some more interpretations of or what personally you feel connected to, or the dead writers or ...

Rachel Genn (RG): I'll just say that I was debating whether to talk about the extension of the metaphor where out of my head grows an antennae, or is it a windmill? I don't know which it is. I don't know what I'm collecting and from where but I do know that there is something that I can ... become attuned to, that is not already in me. That's as far as I can go really, without swaying things too far one way or the other.

PS: But it could equally be in another situation, it is then given a form, a spirit form or something, that that condition?

RG: Yes, absolutely. But another thing I'd quickly say is that I also think of the lift-off and the being in orbit as being truly like inter-subjective with the work, and in a microcosm, me and the work are in that universe and when I get to that level, that's where the reciprocity happens in an equal way almost, and so I believe that words are live matter, I think when I turn around, they talk to each other.

In fact there's a quote in here from a friend of mine's poem called *Where Kimonos Go To Die*, and he talks about his words talking behind his back and about paranoia being almost like a central pre-requisite for poetry. So yes, there's lots of different levels or magnifications that you can look at that metaphor from.

Eleanor Peers (EP): I suppose I want to say to Michelle first that yes, thank you very much for mentioning that, it is really astonishing, the way that all of these revitalisation movements are so similar and part of the explanation is actually really quite practical and easy to understand, is that they're all in conversation with each other and very often they're using the same esoteric literature.

Michael Harner, who's the anthropologist who became a shaman, is very often invoked in Sakha (Yakutia) so I mean for me, the sort of revitalisation of all of these practices is a very sort of widespread, contemporary phenomenon and I suppose I'm very interested to sort of try and use it, I mean in the Sakha case particularly, partly because the Sakha case is beautifully representative, is to just try and work out what is it about the way that we exist now that creates these various motivations and these various enquiries, and sort of really ... these various forms of knowledge production, knowledge and technology production, that create the sort of, well the creative forms that I've just very briefly shown you, and I suppose I'm particularly interested in looking at them next to examples or practices like Anatoli's that are, even though it's not, again now that I'm hitting a block, I'm hitting a sort of habit of speaking in linear terms which actually isn't particularly useful because there are all sorts of different things and times going on at the same time here, but it's easier to see how Anatoli's practice in some way breaks out of many contemporary conventions, in a way that it's more difficult for things like the greeting of the sun or practitioners like Ivan to do.

And I suppose part of what is interesting about this is the way that we seem to be, we are talking about very different examples but there are these sort of parallels between them, as you say, my ears pricked up immediately when you talked about influences coming in from the outside because that's something that comes up again and again in different forms all over the place and in Sakha (Yakutia) it's not problematic, it's kind of quite obvious that other spirits, other beings are coming in and acting through you and even when you say that words are live matter, that has a parallel in Sakha (Yakutia) as well and in fact in a lot of northern cultures because words have their own agency, they're like birds, that's the metaphor, they're birds and they fly, accomplish an action.

RG: Like Gertrude Stein says she likes words to do what they want to do. They have their own volition.

EP: And I'm wondering whether we can maybe isolate a difference in the way that, I mean this is such a difficult thing because I am reproducing a distinction that I want to avoid, which is the distinction between material and spiritual, which I do very much want to avoid but somehow, there's a different physicality about what people in Sakha (Yakutia) are talking about, maybe it's much more clear for them, that the words, these words and energies are so closely integrated into sort of what we see and hear and touch and feel, that a word, a negative word, a curse can produce a physical reaction in the same way that a good word, a healing word sort of cures you, it can get rid of your cold, it can get rid of your headache, all sorts of things like that.

RG: Yes, it's very interesting.

PS: I found both presentations fascinating and I was struck by what you just said about the wanting to avoid sort of collapsing back into the materiality/spirituality thing and I just wonder what you think about alternative formulations of that, for example, the idea of going to the top of Mount Sinai or going into orbit or we might be going down into a cave but the difference between sort of, if you like, the surface level of mundane reality to some sort of level where you encounter a form of importance that you can then bring back to the matter of fact of the mundane level, so that it seems to me that one possible vocabulary [inaudible 00:54:37] that doesn't reduce it to the old binaries, is a dialogue between matter of fact and importance, which then sort of, the question would be, specifically directed to Rachel, is it possible to be addicted to the sense of importance you get from reverie? Can you get addicted to that in other words, if you're insufficiently connected to matter of fact or bring it back to matter of fact?

RG: Yes, I think probably, yes and in that the same way that you could, regret could draw you very strongly to become a major motivator in your creative work, yes I do think you could be addicted to reverie in the sense that you describe there. I'm really interested in the idea of distance or going somewhere else and coming back, in terms of your practice but also the cognitive structures and the way that you think about

things and the structures of concepts and how they can take you away and bring you back within one metaphor, there's certainly space to write about distance and importance with regards to reverie, yes.

P: I wanted to make two comments, [1] you've read like the Austin, in performance studies and performance theory, there's like an idea that there's, have you read that?

EP: John Austin?

P: Yes.

S4: Yes.

P: So it's a performative, so when you say something, it's something that's like an action but it also relates to the parallel to the going up on the mountain, I think like the idea about those are forms of prophecy and so the way that words work in a world of prophecy and things coming through you, so that actually when they went up in the clouds, there was also a relationship between language because the tablets that Moses would get, the words were the metaphors for that language, where they were words that were like flames that could be read from both sides, and so there's all those metaphors of what language was and prophecy and the relationship between performance, there's a lot of stuff to explore so I think that language itself, if you do want to make the analogies, like going looking at the [inaudible 00:57:38] references, like language is very, very animated, it's connected to making something be present in a certain way, even if it's right in front of you, by naming and so there's a whole bunch of stuff that you could explore, animate performativity of words.

P: I enjoyed both presentations, thank you, Rachel, yours particularly with the poetry of the science is obviously [inaudible 00:58:12] familiar but anyway, my question is really minor and they're about two things, [1] the autonomy that you mentioned in the reference that you used because I think given the constraints of academia, that's [inaudible 00:58:24] I'd like to think more about that, but the other one is just in terms of at the end of the last session, we were starting to talk about the potential for inter-subjective or inter-subjectivity or the awareness of creating the conditions of possibility and when you were talking about being in a reverie and then being awoken from it, I wondered about, because I feel guilty all the time for that accusation of you're not really present but of course you are, you're just in a different sort of place to other people, and I think about that and whether guilt as well is this other thing that drags you in different places and that in relation to that inter-subjectivity of reverie, which then moves towards Eleanor's kind of presentation about how that's created and generated actively, make the conscious effort to be part of it, so I think between those two spaces, there's something that's quite interesting.

RG: Yes, and you bringing that up has made me think about the asymmetry of the entering and exiting states of reverie, I mean I know there are multiple ways, we've talked this morning about multiple ways of getting there and different versions of there, so you can't really say across the board but I certainly feel that there's a violence to leaving reverie, which I don't feel on my way into it. What did you say first of all?

P: There was also the thing about autonomy I suppose, you had that photograph of the page with the quotations around ...

S3: Yes, it was feeling, autonomy is described in that particular paper as feeling volitional so when you actively feel, but it never mentions, so I think like autonomy and competence, in that respect are masking any kind of enjoyment or hedonic evaluation of the experience, so it feels to me that I'm making a bit of an assumption that that therefore is a more progressed phase from flow being here and allowed to have feeling, up to getting rid of feeling as a necessary propulsient or whatever the word is.

Yes, autonomy, it feels to me like a bridge from one to the other.

P: Thank you.

EP: I want to clarify something and also maybe slightly in response to what you were

saying about the mundane and common sense-ical, I actually wanted to ask about this at the end of your presentation, really what this concept is and what it means and what it does, because I suppose I'm not really aware of it.

Coming from where I come from, which is an anthropologist looking at a sort of colonised, a context where there is an awful lot of effects of colonialization and also a sort of representative of a colonising sort of country myself, so I sort of very much, I'm influenced by the anthropological habit of seeing the mundane itself as political, as something that emerges out of a sort of hierarchy, a situation where some people are more able to exert their will than others, yes, so basically the mundane itself is political and I suppose again the Sakha case is a good example of this because I don't know whether like for example, Anatoli and those sorts of people, to some degree they are travelling into Turuk but the Turuk itself isn't sort of distance from reality so much as making reality apparent, because in this Sakha (Yakutia) I think several people themselves in the early 20th century have talked about basically these whole parallel clans of beings, that people were sort of really quite familiar with and talked about it, there's gossip and personalities and all brothers and sisters and stepbrothers and all that kind of stuff is going on, and they were always there, always there, somehow in parallel but somehow people were used to the sense that beings could very much be present but you're not necessarily that aware of them the whole time, and so you're sort of oscillating in your awareness rather than in your distance and the point is that you've got some practitioners who are chosen by these beings as being mediators, so this is, and again this is the moment where the relationship between what we see and what we don't see and those relationships really comes forward, even just in the act of choosing somebody as the mediator.

AR: ... you had a question?

P: Yes, could you explain the notion of autonomy because I can't make it fit with inter-subjectivity that [inaudible 01:04:23]?

RG: Autonomy as was used in the slide?

S: You were talking about it as a bridge?

RG: Yes, it's about having agency and being able to effortlessly guide what you are going towards, what's your problem with the inter-subjectivity thing? Do you want to just explain that a bit more?

P: Because autonomy suggests to me being alone, not very influenced, being an agent that's not aware of or responding to immediate circumstances or those early developmental circumstances, the relationships with other people, it's autonomy versus relating to [inaudible 01:05:25].

RG: Well, autonomy gets me anyway in my, when I enter reverie, it gets me to that stage where inter-subjectivity becomes possible so it's not that the two are, they're not acting at the same time in my experience.

[Transcriber's Note: Very poor quality recording, in mono; overlap recording until 32.05; quality too poor to be transcribed]