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Una cuestión de des/corporización no/relacionada en prácticas de arte
terapia

Una qüestió de des/corporització no/relacionada en les pràctiques d'art
teràpia

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Abstract

Embodied practices in arts therapies are frequently constructed upon the premise of developmental psychotherapies. This paper problematises some of the key concepts commonly used in arts therapies and explores a new intra-active framework for becoming. Relationality, boundaries and the context of change processes are revisited to investigate modelling an approach that decentres human subjectivity and considers the relevance of embodiment and the environment in relation to therapeutic change. Intersections between art, developmental psychotherapies, arts therapies and aesthetics form the basis of retheorising the dynamic relations of art-therapist-patient.

Keywords

Arts therapies; new materialism; embodiment; relationality; mirroring; intra-action

Resumen

Las prácticas encarnadas en la terapia artística se construyen sobre la premisa de las psicoterapias del desarrollo. Este artículo problematiza algunos de los conceptos clave comúnmente utilizados en la terapia artística para teorizar un nuevo marco intraactivo del devenir. La relacionalidad, los límites y el contexto de los procesos de cambio se revisan para investigar el modelado de un enfoque que descentra la subjetividad humana y considera la relevancia de la encarnación y el entorno en relación con el cambio terapéutico. Las intersecciones entre el arte, las psicoterapias del desarrollo, la terapia artística y la estética forman la base de la deconstrucción de una triangulación de arte-terapeuta-paciente.

Palabras clave

Arteterapia; nuevo materialismo; encarnación; Relacionalidad; Espejado

Resum

Les pràctiques encarnades en art teràpia es construeixen sobre la premissa de les psicoteràpies del desenvolupament. Aquest treball problematitza alguns dels conceptes clau comunament utilitzats en artteràpia per teoritzar un nou marc intraactiu de l'esdevenir. La relacionalitat, els límits i el context dels processos de canvi es revisen per investigar la modelització d'un enfocament que descentra la subjectivitat humana i considera la rellevància de l'encarnació i l'entorn en relació amb el canvi terapèutic. Les interseccions entre l'art, les psicoteràpies del desenvolupament, l'artteràpia i l'estètica formen la base de la deconstrucció d'una triangulació art-terapeuta-pacient.

Paraules clau

Art teràpia; nou materialisme; Encarnació; relacionalitat; Reflectint

Background

In their seminal work, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*, Karen Barad (2007) builds an interdisciplinary framework for new materialism (NM), redefining the relationship between knower and known that forms part of a movement theorised by Rosi Braidotti (2019) as a post-human neo-materialism. This movement, driven by the ontological turn, was also developed by Gamble et al. (2019) as a philosophy of matter being indeterminate, that is with potentiality of form, constituted from agential intra-actions.

Building on Barad's work, Gamble et al. (ibid.) argue that this development of an in-part-random and spontaneous character intrinsic to matter itself emerged from a tradition of vitalist new materialism as exemplified by Bennett's (2010) philosophy of matter as inherently vibrant, vital and embodied, allowing for continuous indeterminacy and improvisation in material becoming. They go on to state that the knower-known binary constitutes situated knowledge on a historical continuum, and instead propose a (future) ontoepistemological relation between matter and practice as dynamic, co-constructed, entangled and eternally iterated in movement and performance (Gamble et al., 2019).

This view of evolving entanglements of what matters has significant implications for Arts therapies. Specifically, the constant reconstitution of material engagements, integral to both art making and therapy, is itself a part of the discovery of an improvisatory embodied process in arts therapies. This paper argues that the issue of bodily boundaries and, therefore, embodiment, needs to be reconsidered within a framework that posits the materiality of change as integral to psychological affects. Barad (2007) suggests that the static bodily boundary is a misconception about matter derived from Cartesian theory, where inert matter is separate from consciousness. Whilst

the last century has been dominated by (male, elitist and Eurocentric) ideologies of passive matter, Barad builds their argument on the conceptual fundamentals first described in the more socially liberated philosophies of Epicurean materialism in the 1st Century BCE which gave ethical priority to the 'cry of the flesh' over and beyond human mind and practice, as discussed by Wilson (2017) and its interventions in ancient atomism, in particular the notion of the swerve, which granted matter an inherent creativity and aliveness (Gamble et al, 2019).

In recent developments, we have seen a more active political charge to matter in NM citing Deleuze and Guattari's (1972,1980) project, *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. The project introduced a revolutionary general semiosis, schizoanalysis, as an interference between three major forms of 19th-century materialisms (Marxian, Nietzschean and Freudian) and disrupting linear production, including the work of art (Holland, 1987) or the embodied image, as addressed in this paper. In a similar sense, Deleuze's (1968/1994) 'iron collars of representation' problematised the image as representation, and instead focused on the constitutional assemblage of the environment, materiality, maker and social context, meaning that making art became more than mere resemblance.

Over the past decade, NM has been instrumental in addressing social and ecological challenges through the integration of interdisciplinary knowledge, significantly impacting the field of arts therapies—a discipline inherently rooted in an interdisciplinary approach to psychological and social healing (Koch, 2006). Early adoption of NM methods in art therapy research (Pink et al., 2011; Toll, 2018) and practice (Fenner, 2017; Linnell, 2014; Lupton & Leahy, 2021; Paton & Linnell, 2018; Thomson, 2020) has facilitated a convergence between the objectives of promoting wellbeing and mental health and addressing broader community, social, and global issues.

In light of these recent developments, this paper addresses a pivotal question at the intersections of the body-mind question in arts therapies, which is "How is the embodied image constituted within the therapeutic context of arts therapies?" This paper employs a genealogical approach to theoretical development, re-examining traditional arts therapies practices that prioritise linguistic or representational approaches. In doing so, it explores a reinterpretation of the mind-body question, viewing it through the perspective of embodied states within the discourse of NM.

Whilst the theories are relevant to many arts-based therapeutic practices, our theorisation is structured according to three principal conceptual areas within art therapy, viewed through the NM lens: relationality (Potash & Ho, 2011), boundaries of the body (Toll & Winkel, 2019) and contextualising change processes (Ball, 2002).

The first section of this paper problematises mirroring and reflectiveness as conditions for embodiment, as seeking similarity as overlooking a nuanced intra-active discourse. The second section provides a brief exploration of an NM reframing of the traditional art therapy triadic dynamic of image art-therapist-patient, proposing a repositioned triangulation that fosters a co-creative discourse, thereby recontextualising embodiment. The third section explores the boundaries of embodiment, moving from an essentialist theory of human expression to one which is defined according to the co-constituted boundaries of being in and of the world. Following this, the paper introduces a non-binary conception of embodiment that views mind-body unity. The paper then considers embodiment as a form of social action, inherently linked to the socio-material milieu, thereby underscoring the political dimensions of embodied practice.

The conclusion outlines three non-embodied states encountered in a therapeutic process

towards embodied practices—diagrammed, unstructured, and disembodied—highlighting the potential of arts therapies to embrace diversity, alterity, and the capacity for co-creating social transformation. This approach aims to expand the practice of art therapy, making it more inclusive and attuned to the complexities of human experience and societal change.

At the Edges of the Mirror

Conceptualising the boundaries of embodiment is vital to fully appreciating the experience of therapeutic change and expression in arts therapies. Art therapists, with their unique position at the intersection of health and societal issues such as gender, sexuality, race, and disabilities, engage deeply with the context of knowledge creation. However, as a relational therapy there can be an inevitable over reliance on binary values of self and other that reduces contextual factors to a human-centric (or person-centred) hegemony, which excludes or devalues contextual material vitalities.

To illustrate this point, the researchers Gerber et al. (2018) provide an in-depth view on the state of arts therapies today, through a lab style investigation involving a reflexive '...systematic study of psychological, emotional, relational, and arts-based phenomena...' (ibid., p. 12). Their findings describe specific attributes of arts therapies practices. Gerber et al. (ibid.) define a change process where the subject transcends material confines, achieving a state of enablement. This process responds to participant experiences of arts therapies revealing that the participant aims to achieve a '...desired level of consciousness once fully engaged in the arts process... [transcendent] beyond confines of physical world while allowing peripheral awareness of it...' (ibid.). This approach promotes meditation, introspection, reflection, and empathy,

suggesting that mirroring illuminates and liberates the self from material rigidity.

According to Gerber et al. (ibid.) arts therapies involve a dimension of 'imaginational flow/transcendence' that is a reflective, empathic aptitude distanced from mental and physical pains. The importance in relation to a therapeutic change process conveys the movement through nonverbal expression and engagement to a less restricted experience of conscious exploration while also being attuned 'to sensory embodied ways of knowing' (ibid., p. 12). In their study, participants of the arts therapies research project describe a phase of mind-body binaries where they relate to the body from a reflective stance. Whilst this is not sufficiently contextualised to make sense of how or when this state precedes embodied knowledge, this phase informs a therapeutic aim to 'transcend the physical boundaries of interpersonal separateness and enter the sensory, emotional, and imaginal world of 'the other' enhancing attunement, understanding, and empathy' (ibid.). As a result, this ultimate outcome aligns with new materialist perspectives, which perceive the self-other-matter and concepts as a situated assemblage, highlighting a dynamic change process involving a phase of binary reflection.

Barad (2007) critiques the concept of reflection, widely used in psychotherapy, for perpetuating dominant discourses that remove the observer's subjectivity from the material context. However, with the absence of an alternative concept or language for facilitating change in art therapy, practice is unlikely to find a different path than using reflective processes which is so socially imbued in Western discourse.

However, looking at the genealogy of the concept of reflection takes us to the sciences, more specifically mechanisms widely used in Newtonian physics to represent the 'standard model'. Barad (ibid.) problematises a further binary of quantum and atomic physics and introduces an ontology based on diffractive

discourse that challenges the traditional dualism of observer and observed. In other words, drawing on Niels Bohr's phenomenological realism, Barad provides that basis for a new ontology derived from quantum physics experimentation, where the observer co-creates the observed mechanisms through concepts, observations, apparatuses and personal intra-actions with/of matter. In this sense, they argue that knowledge of things is revealed through the demarcations that occur when these factors are articulated, thus forming a repeatable co-dependent assemblage, not the only possible reality, but the one that presents itself because of these situated assemblages.

The conditions through which these factors can be conceptualised is referred to by Barad as a 'diffractive' process, rather than reflective, or representational. This is because unlike a mirror, which, from this point of view robs the event of its co-created qualities, diffraction suggests that the dynamic boundaries can be assembled only to provide a version of reality according to how the factors intra-act and are arranged. This is more than simply taking a different perspective, for example standing in a different position in relation to the mirror, it is being in/of/with the event and being given the opportunity to co-construct potential realities that are conceptual variations, offering nuances that can be easily overlooked if we assume the naming of experience is bound to an absolute representation. The concept of diffraction therefore provides a different quality of relationality where what we name is permeated with creative potential. In other words, the dynamic boundary, for example how we conceptualise the art image in art therapy is generated through therapeutic intra-actions between the art therapist, image, patient and the socio-political context. Intra-active participation emphasises the dynamic and constitutive nature of relations to produce change—rather than through

reflective observation involving degrees of passivity, activity and perspective.

To resolve the dualism of knower and known, Barad offers an ontology that results from and within a diffractive discourse. The concepts central to NM, including diffraction and intra-action, are thus understood as dynamic, transformative, and affective, moving beyond mere descriptive, representational, or reductive interpretations.

As Ingold (2013) reminds us, participant observation, for example 'is a way of knowing *from the inside*' (ibid., p. 5), and that the co-production of knowledge is 'carried forward in a process of life and affects transformations within that process' rather than 'a study of and learning about' (ibid., p. 3).

In this sense, bodies matter, not only in the intransitive sense of their socio-political import, but also in their inherent transitive affective and productive agency and are not there to be liberated or separated from as an act of privileged consciousness, becoming divorced from the materials within and of which consciousness exists. Therefore, how we conceptually enact the position of our bodies, minds and the other situates the embodied or disembodied mind. For example, as discussed by Towns (2018), the movement Black Lives Matter, re-embodied the Black person, not as a Black non-living entity, a foreign body whose mind was at best elusive, but resituated the vitality of bodily matters intrinsic to and inseparable from the minds of marginalised populations within a socio-political field. This intersubjective-objective movement of being in and of the subject-object matter is intrinsic to the embodied act of learning.

All together, these features suggest how crucial it is to look well beyond mirroring when looking into natural pedagogical processes. Human beings live in complex and multi-faced systems such as families,

groups etc., displaying emergent properties that trigger a radical redefinition of interpersonal processes and promote increasing complexity and integration with respect to the surrounding context. (Lacone & Meini, 2021, p. 33).

Lacone and Meini offer an insight into looking into the mirror as a reductive device that compromises the total situation of 'the surrounding context'. Art therapy is often informed by a developmental relational premise that the therapeutic situation utilises mirroring processes, initiated early on in infancy to provide the basis for human development that include mechanisms of empathy (McGarry & Russo, 2011), projective identification (Ogden, 1979), mentalization (Fonagy, 2018) and social cognition (Westen, 1991). However, Bateman, Ryle and Fonagy acknowledge the profound limitations of the concept of mirroring stating that mirroring is often conceptualised as a '...one-sided and reductive account of the maternal-infant interaction' (2007, p. 55), suggesting that 'Intersubjective intuitions, signs and other phenomena' (ibid.) require further investigation to elaborate on the nature of human development. Fonagy and Allison (2014) also further elaborate on this by discussing 'contingently marked' mirroring. This concept refers to a nuanced form of interaction where the responses of one person to another are not just imitative but are marked with signs that indicate they are intentional, reflective responses rather than simply replication. This concept is further conceptualised in psychotherapies as intersubjectivities (Stern, 2000) co-creating a clarity of edging (Bogue, 2003). Harrison and Tronick also state that the body-mind intra and inter-actions between people produce a non-linear narrative resulting in the emergence of intersubjective moments:

This interplay could be elaborated to consider the interplay or potential messiness of the meanings between

individuals, the polysemic discord of meanings within the individual, and the potential dynamic conflicts engendered in the within and between or the inter- and intra-subjective meanings (2022, p. 8).

This nuanced dialogue emphasises the crucial role of meaning within the realms of human development and interpersonal connections. It posits that individuals, from their earliest moments, are immersed in a process of material and relational becoming characterised by vibrant vitality and complex, 'messy' encounters. Winnicott, a pioneer in integrating the arts into psychoanalysis with techniques such as the squiggle game, disrupts traditional perspectives through his provocative claim, 'there is no such thing as a baby' (Winnicott, 2011, p. 81). Initially, this assertion appears to diverge from an NM perspective. Winnicott's observation far from denying the importance of material agency, draws our attention to the intricate, socially and psychologically constructed environments that shape our understanding of early development and interconnectedness.

Winnicott's theory brings to light the integral role of the environment in the emotional development of a person, proposing that one's development cannot be fully understood in isolation from their surroundings. He posits, 'the behaviour of the environment is part of the individual's own personal development and must therefore be included' (Winnicott, 2005, p. 72).

Furthermore, Winnicott's theory contends that

a description of the emotional development of the individual cannot be made entirely in terms of the individual, [...], the behaviour of the environment is part of the individual's own personal development and must therefore be included (ibid.).

From a NM perspective the materiality of being, also has its own inherent positionality, co-determined in a relational context from the

moments of pre/conception. In Barad's words, 'we know because we are of the world... in its differential becoming' (2007, p. 185). The physicality of the baby is not separable from the baby's mind and intelligibility. Not only the mental functions, but the record of the bodily substance as the inherent psychological and social intra-actions.

The psychoanalyst Hollway addresses the psychodynamics of becoming as intra-active agencies akin to Barad's theorisation when she quotes Money-Kyrle:

there is a continual unconscious wandering of other personalities into ourselves... Every person, then, is many persons; a multitude made into one (2006, p. 474).

Like our becoming into (and of) the world, as art therapists, practice, culture and society engages with some of our most complex questions about being in the world with others. NM decentres the human perspective to a position of equal relations with materiality. Francis Halsall asserts, from an Actor-Network Theory (ANT) perspective, 'the human subject is... distributed and dispersed over those systems' (2019, p. 200). This suggests a reconceptualisation of agency as distributed across an interconnected web of relations, challenging us to rethink our place and role within the broader ecological and social



Figure 1. Image taken from 'Imagine Sheppey' Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/imaginesheppey/>

fabric.

NM challenges the traditional dichotomies of mind versus body and the individual versus the social, critiquing the established power structures and normative societal boundaries that developmental psychology, among other dominant discourses, places on the practice of art therapy—which lends itself to reconsidering models of early development. Clark (2012) explores how art can be repurposed from a tool that institutions use to gauge developmental milestones to a medium that subverts these normative expectations. In her research in two early childhood centres, she replaces traditional paper with Plexiglas within a collective intensional assemblage of child-material-environment-educator bodies to challenge the neoliberal drive for (individual) representational endpoints. She holds the camera in the research, aiming to co-create rather than access reality, capturing moments where her body ‘became enchanted’ and resisting a more totalising mirror-lens of camera use in developmental psychology. The participants engaged in activities that disrupted conventional modes of representation. This approach not only highlights the limitations of traditional developmental deficit paradigms but also emphasises the transformative potential of arts-based practices to reconceptualise understanding and engagement with the developmental processes of children.

In their captivating performance pieces, Carabelli and Lyon (2016) employ the ‘Imagine Sheppey’ project to transform flexible and distorted mirrored card into tools for experimental research (Fig. 1).

This project explores the future aspirations of young people living in the Isle of Sheppey in Kent, UK—a region characterised by economic hardship and societal stigma, diverging from the futures envisioned by more privileged, middle-class narratives. Through innovative methods such as leaping into mirror holes on the pavement to metaphorically ‘reach the future,’ or wrestling with the resistance of wind against fabric and

manoeuvring through mirrored cones to reshape imagined possibilities, the participants engaged in activities that disrupted conventional modes of representation.

This diffractive reimagining of arts therapies practices and involves embracing a more inclusive perspective of human experience and development, characterised by a heightened sensitivity to difference, an appreciation for the other, and a deeper engagement with the broader socio-material-subjective world.

Reassembling the Art Therapy Triangle as a Site of Intra-active Embodiment

Havsteen-Franklin's (2008) critique of the art therapy triangle, comprising the image, patient, and therapist (Fig. 2), reflects on how postmodernism has facilitated a cultural pastiche, thereby redefining the roles of author and participant within a collective narrative where authorship is diffused (Alter-Muri & Klein, 2007).

Traditional Model of Arts Therapies

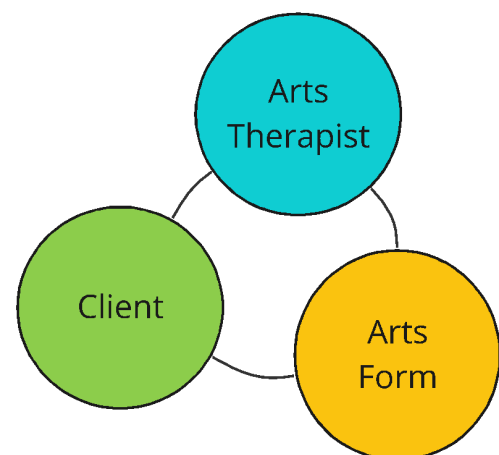


Figure 2. Traditional model of Arts Therapies

This perspective underscores the significance of perceived boundaries and the texture of therapeutic dialogue as elements central to the type of embodiment that emerges from

the effects of jointly established demarcations (Gough, 1997). This concept was exemplified by the 'death of the author', which signifies a profound shift in the locus of voice across the confines of textual exchange, emphasising the shared construction of meaning and the fluidity of authorial identity. From an NM perspective, the premise of art therapy as a social-bodies-minds-politics-cultures discourse, challenges assumed boundaries of therapeutic work, in terms of how we define relational ailments and healing, and we believe that this can be answered within the domains of ontological inquiry. How do we know we exist and what is our relation to knowledge? In other words, ontology underpins the constructs that have been explored in arts therapies that relate to what the art object means within the relational context. In traditional art therapy models, the patient, therapist and image, hold a dynamic relation to one another (Schaverien 2000). This is based on the ontological proposition that all things co-exist in linear time separated by spatial (representational) demarcations and in this Cartesian version of space and time, the sequences of events unfold to propose a reality of differences and similarities (Crowell, 2001). This mirrors Western hegemonic discourses, where Cartesian science presents a mechanistic perspective on interactive objects within space (Roux, 2004), which on an individual, human level has been largely superseded by non-cartesian philosophies (Gabbard, 2001; Harre, 1996). Unlike the post-Cartesian view of psychotherapy, for Barad (2007), human relationships, boundaries and meanings are constantly evolving as a dynamic discourse, rather than revealing an essentialist reality. In this sense, Barad (ibid.) invites us to reconceptualise the triangular interactive arrangement as an intra-active assemblage moving from a mechanistic Cartesian view of interrelated parts to one which is enfolded and dynamic where the elements co-create the therapeutic site. Thereby an NM arts therapies model can be described as enabling therapeutic change

through providing places for arts-humans-nonhumans reconceptualisation where the boundaries allow for creative and dynamic restructuring according not only to interpersonal affects, but environmental and social contextual factors (See Fig. 3).

A New Materialist Model of Intra-Active Arts Therapies

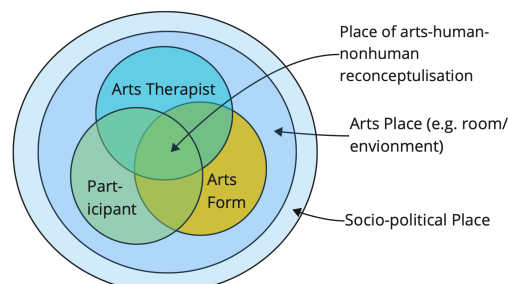


Figure 3. An NM model for creating places of reconceptualisation in arts therapies as a dynamic site of enacted conceptual demarcation.

The Boundaries of Embodiment

In the preceding discussion, the focus was on clinical contextual factors within the discourse of NM, particularly focusing on the co-construction of embodiment boundaries. Through this lens, boundaries of embodiment are not seen as static or predefined but as emergent properties of ongoing interactions, highlighting the fluid nature of identity and experience within therapeutic contexts. Havsteen-Franklin (2008) stated that there is no discrete embodied image that exists independently from the social, cultural and philosophical position/ing of the maker and therapist. Here, we have used an '/' as a structural demarcation on the basis that being human results from a nature-culture discourse where determined and predetermined qualities, including the self, are entangled in a condition of enfolding social and material realities. The embodied image occurs within a meaningful and authentic engagement, with the material phenomena which is conceptually articulated through our bodily-minded intra-actions. The otherness of materiality is that which is seen in the diffracted moment, where the edges, form, resonance are

renegotiated based on the tangible articulations within and of the world.

This premise also accounts for the innate aesthetic value or agency within materiality as co-constitutive of the material – subject relationality. Ingold conveys this sentiment eloquently when referring to one’s engagement with materials in the act of arts making,

The conduct of thought goes along with, and continually answers to, fluxes and flows of the materials with which we work. These materials think in us, as we think through them. (Ingold, 2013, p. 6).

Thereby, the image making process includes a relation to difference, rather than prioritising sameness in the act of mirroring. We meet the Other in the creative intra-action and a belief in independent embodied agency as a discrete actor may be betrayed by the unexpected dynamism of the materiality that meets us (Havsteen-Franklin 2008). The material is the stuff of which our agential actions are articulated of and through and yet; we are faced with the strangeness, the Other of which we barely grasp despite our condition of inseparability. To simplify this, in enacted embodiment, where our conceptualisations, our bodies, emotionality and sensed intra-actions leave an impression, a mark, we find an embodied diffraction that encompasses our intentions as far as our social, political, cultural sensibilities will lead us, and simultaneously we have the position/ing of being in and with a world that echoes our call with flesh, substance and a material dynamic. Therefore, to understand the nature of the embodied image is also to understand the action of the author as intrinsically shaped by and shaping the environment and the material Other which is being engaged with. The philosopher Butler states,

That the body is a set of possibilities signifies (a) that its appearance in the

world, for perception, is not predetermined by some manner of interior essence, and (b) that its concrete expression in the world must be understood as the taking up and rendering specific of a set of historical possibilities. Hence, there is an agency which is understood as the process of rendering such possibilities determinate. (Butler, 2004, p. 902)

This boundary is determined with and through the rendering of those possibilities. It is not fixed, and where we might consider the embodied outline to exist as the skin, this has been dramatically revised in NM to include the repetitive gestural intra-action as the basis for boundary setting of the body. This is in contrast to early psychoanalytic studies privileging the skin as the ego boundary to the world (Anzieu, 1990; Bick, 1968), itself a rendered possibility within the scope of our sensibilities. Anzieu (ibid.) describes the development of the skin as a psychic envelope, differentiating the self from the other. However, more recently, developmental studies demonstrate intra-active processes that enable micro entanglements of becoming, whereby indeterminacy as potentiality is constantly negotiated. Murriss and Osgood vividly describe

figurations of (the) posthuman child that are conceptualised and performed as more than a bounded body – (a) porous self, always connected, embedded and embodied, dynamic and active (2022, p. 210).

In this sense the bodily boundary relates to identity, sensation, action, environmental and social contact and the politics of apparatuses. For example, Merleau-Ponty uses the blind man’s stick as an example of an extended boundary of the body,

The blind man’s stick has ceased to be an object for him and is no longer perceived for itself; its point has become an area of sensitivity,

extending the scope and active radius of touch and providing a parallel to sight. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 143)

This is vividly portrayed in Ivinson and Renold's (2016) research of young people's experiences of growing up in a post-industrial ex-mining town in South Wales. Together with teenage girls living in the area they co-produced a short film using a diffractive methodology, paying attention to patterns of small differences; the human and more-than-human elements of camera (as posthuman player), location, anatomy of the female body and the history of place. They conclude that the production of the short film 'Still Running' produced a fluid dynamic narrative of the girls' personal trajectories and their becoming embodied (as mobile, energetic), disrupting dominant narratives in their post-industrial growing-up-place.

The nature of boundaried materiality is the potentiality of becoming rather than a reductive notion of the skin that privileges an individualised human-centric mind, over the collective and material despite increasing evidence suggesting that we exist in a social field (Pomeroy et al., 2021; Poudel, 2020).

Therefore, from a NM perspective, embodiment encapsulates a restructuring of boundaries that enfolds the individual within a social materialism, whereby the relation to the environment holds its own agentic apparatuses. This is not a new concept to non-Western indigenous populations. For example, the thoughts of the land, or 'Place-Thought' is a concept well known to the Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabe tribes, where the land is made up of '...the female, animals, the spirit world, and the mineral and plant world' (Watts, 2013, p. 21). Similarly in Arts Therapies, reconsidering the situatedness of arts therapies practices within the place of happening helps to prevent reduction of the event to psychophysical symptoms. To conclude, Barad's ontological turn enables a far more dynamic and co-created demarcation of the boundaries of embodiment in arts

therapies which allows the arts therapies project to become a 'Place-Thought' (See Fig. 3), that is, a site enacted through conceptual demarcation enabling possibilities for inclusivity and difference.

Embodiment as Monist

Embodiment is the discovery of the boundaries of minded-bodily languages. Responding to NM, Thomson and Linnell (2020) reflect on these actions as a dynamic entity and a non-representational action, that they describe as 'thinking-through-artmaking'.

Koch and Fuchs (2011) conceptualise embodiment to delineate then what is not embodied,

The embodied self is defined by our corporeality or mind-body unity. It is empirically investigated by the analysis of the relations between what is conceptualized as body (B) and mind (M). The embodied self unifies phenomena of embodied cognition, perception, emotion, and action. The enactive self is conceptualized as a living system following the principles of autonomy, self-reproduction, plasticity, sense-making, and a coupling with the environment. If applied to person systems, it also denominates phenomena such as the self-extended to a dyad or a group that constitutes a new entity beyond that of the individual embodied selves. (p. 277)

Koch and Fuchs (ibid.) define embodiment according to the person's conceptualised boundaries of mind and body as an enacted self-matrix, that 'can extend to a dyad or group' (ibid.). Their conceptualisation inevitably faces some dilemmas of describing mind-body unity where, culturally, and socially, language, binaries about minds and bodies is pre-determined by boundaried systems. This is problematic for the

investigation of a monist model of embodiment. For example, Koch and Fuchs delineate the interaction between body and mind, positing a relational framework that conceptually segregates the two. Contrarily, Barad (2007) critiques this dichotomy, arguing that the very act of examining the body-mind relationship through conventional conceptual tools inherently reinforces the notion of their separation. This stands in stark contrast to Koch and Fuchs's assertion of a 'mind-body unity,' which suggests an integrated state of becoming. Barad's critique illuminates the presupposed division within traditional conceptual frameworks, challenging the perception of body and mind as distinct entities.

Koch and Fuchs (2011) further contribute to this discourse by conceptualising the boundary of the mind-body as not merely a demarcation of individual identity but as 'self-extended,' implicating embodiment in a broader context that encompasses social, cultural, political, and material dimensions of becoming. This perspective underscores the participatory action as a crucial element in the formation of these boundaries, suggesting that the individual's engagement with the world around them is a constitutive factor in the delineation of their embodied identity. Thus, the mind-body boundary is not only a personal frontier but also a point of interaction with, and extension into, the surrounding environment, reflecting a more nuanced understanding of embodiment that transcends traditional dualisms.

Therefore, through the embodied image, we are treating the materials as articulations of qualities that bring us closer to what it means to be with others and otherness. As Barad stated, 'Embodiment is a matter not of being specifically situated in the world, but rather of being of the world in its dynamic specificity' (ibid., p. 377). In other words, the realisation that boundaries of self, other, even physical laws can be renegotiated, where the world

that we co-exist within plays a mutually important role in our existence.

The multiplicity of construed boundaries, edges and envelopes that structure our sense of being in and of the world provide the contextual factors to test, play with and, if necessary, rework. In this sense, we are acting in this world in the 'thickness of time' (Geertz, 1973; Gunther, 2006, Merleau-Ponty, 1962) where time, site and substance form the embodied moment.

Embodiment, within the framework of a socio-ecological ecosystem, is conceptualised as both a supra-individual phenomenon and an agentially anchored discourse. This understanding implicates arts therapies within a realm of constant dynamic intra-actions, suggesting that the practice itself is shaped by these ongoing intersections. As a result, the act of embodiment in arts therapies emerges as an authentic expression that redefines the boundaries of its objectives, such as wellbeing or improved health, within the context of relational moments.

This perspective highlights the fluid nature of arts therapies' goals, which are not static endpoints but are continuously reshaped through the therapeutic process. The engagement in arts therapies, thus, becomes a means through which individuals can renegotiate their sense of self and their interaction with the world, informed by the interplay between individual agency and the broader socio-ecological context. In this way, embodiment in arts therapies serves as a critical lens through which the impacts of therapeutic practices on wellbeing and health are understood and articulated, emphasizing the importance of the relational and contextual dimensions of therapeutic engagement.

The design of the arts therapies project as encompassing the potentialities, boundaries and limitations of embodiment, whether it is co-created as a group experience or as a research project requires sensitivity to those

boundaries, knowing that they are a nuanced co-construction from meaningful matter being realised through action and discourse. NM does not mean that there are no physical boundaries to embodiment, filters, or constructions, otherwise there would be no parameters for the project to be established of and within. As Butler (2004) has stated, all social projects begin with the preconceptions, assumptions, the familiar and repetitions as a gestural discourse.

To summarise, the fundamental features of NM underpinning embodiment are that a) we are intrinsically in and of the world, b) the boundaries of our relation to the world are changing according to how we continue to conceptualise this relation, c) the potentiality and limitations of possibilities that can occur in this intra-action are co-determined across culture and nature as a unified phenomenon, d) that there is a shift of consciousness from individual healing to developing the potentiality for co-creating a healing human and non-human discourse.

The Social Actions of Embodiment

Otherness is an inevitability of conceptual demarcation. We create the familiar and the unfamiliar, the similar and different and that which sits outside of our own socio-political-bodily conceptual demarcation exists as other. As arts therapists our therapeutic projects are commonly about healing and transforming personal and social boundaries, often where the boundaries that were constructed to support people, families, lives, societies and cultures have been othered, devalued, reappropriated and personal and cultural identities have been obscured through disempowering relations. In the previous section, notions of materiality provided the basis of extending and demarcating embodiment through action. However, even the site itself is in discourse with the wider world. Talwar writes, 'Social, cultural, and historical frameworks must

become central to our arts therapies practices when we explore with our clients the embodiment, language, feelings, and memory of trauma.' (2015, p. 101) Talwar is referring to the global power dynamics that have left many cultures within restricted and conflicted conditions, where cultural values have been upturned and dominated by a mechanistic, global commodification of human and material resources. Talwar also offers a perspective that brings the socio-political into the context of health, stating, 'This means that we have to think beyond the narrowly defined, medicalized models of art therapy to envision ways to empower our clients, rather than pathologize the realities they cannot escape' (ibid.). This marks a point of demarcation regarding the unification of mind-body whereby we see the arts therapies project, not as focusing primarily on relieving symptoms as existing independently from the socio-political contexts, but of reshaping knowledge to transform systemic, material, and social relations. Working with the notion of embodiment means reformulating conceptualisations of being within new, changing social-culture-nature-political environments that draw on all senses. The sensed phenomena are a co-created act between things, people, and environments. The art therapist and researcher, Kapitan (2015) theorises that this forms the premise of engaging with the unfamiliar, to be with, take in, reassess, and ultimately reconceptualise the boundaries of being in relation to the other. Kapitan states,

Had I not been able to identify these physical, visual-perceptual, and emotional sensations, I would not have been able to interrupt my ethnocentric lens and imagine alternatives to the "right form of things" that I reactively took to be universal and true. Similarly, to help art therapists locate themselves in an unfamiliar culture, I draw their

attention to their embodied feelings and sensations. (ibid., p. 109)

Kapitan describes an intra-active embodied process, not as a passive experience, but as the action of engaging through our senses, playing with materiality, bringing our actions, body and mind into a unity of experience to realise the situatedness of cultural knowledges. From this perspective, aesthetic appreciation, that of sensed intimacy and articulation as an embodied act is itself a conceptualising process and performative gesture. Arts therapists are positioned to engage with the dilemmas that humans face about self, identity, bodily, social parameters through action, gesture and the marks that result as evidence of a discourse revealing the results of the experimental project. As such, arts therapies are an experimental project where we cultivate embodied articulation to address some of the most fundamental questions arising from traumatic events. For example, in their work with domestic violence and abuse, the arts therapists Pink et al. again position the therapeutic journey as a sensory, embodied approach to sense-making,

Yet, by identifying the artmaking and art-interpreting processes, and the intersubjectivities they imply, as multi-sensory and embodied, it demands further attention to empathetic and experienced-based ways of knowing and understanding. (2011, p. 17)

This feature of the therapeutic process as a demand for a quality of attention that is altered through the performative action (Butler, 2004) is also a process of the therapist's professional journey. Likewise, the art therapist Bird describes a therapeutic event, where they realise the importance of the narrative of everyday life as political action, contextualised by given and assumed parameters of our belonging in the world:

A feature to emerge late on in my understanding of transitional stories

was the recognition that one way of thinking about *the embodied qualities of everyday life* is to make use of the idea of belonging, here taken to mean a sociological concept that brings together attention to political structures, cultural practices, physical space, corporeal experience and personal relationships [Italics added]. (2018, p. 22)

In an art therapy context, image making can facilitate the embodied relationality in and of the environment, renegotiating the boundaries of belonging. The material properties as inseparable from agentive values, political and subjective properties emerge and are discovered simultaneously.

To conclude, the embodied aesthetic is the product of the intra-action, and the result of the project, resembling the language of the author's mind-body as a contextually based enactment and demarcations expressed of and through the maker's movement. The dynamics of these entangled qualia are articulated embodied states, forming the source of a process of change and social transformation.

Non-Embodied States

In this section we will look further into the aesthetic entanglements of image making in art therapy and conditions that occur whereby mind-body experience is displaced, dislocated or decontextualised within a socio-political binary. It is inevitable that these conditions of non-embodiment will occur in the intra-exchanges within art therapy. As we have explored, the arts therapies project can be one of a process of becoming, of reformulating languages and boundaries, affects and thoughts, with and through the materiality of the arts form and the existing socio-political context that is dominated by mind-body binary hegemonies.

In medicalised settings, there is a risk that the delineation of mind-body boundaries will be articulated through a binary framework, emphasising a dualism that segregates bodily and mental phenomena. This perspective tends to marginalize the complex, embodied intra-actions, relegating them to a secondary status within a dualistic schema that views issues of distress primarily through a privileged physiological lens. Such a reductionist approach not only simplifies the multifaceted nature of distress but also undermines a more holistic view of patient experience.

The challenges posed by displacement, the re-emergence of trauma, and the experiences of relational neglect and/or abuse critically impede the integration of intra-active dialogues, particularly at moments when the boundaries of identity and experience undergo reconceptualisation potentially retriggering earlier traumas of boundary violations. These dynamics highlight the value of sensitively working with a binarised experience of mind and body, which simplifies physical and psychological states. Through embodied enactment, arts therapies aim to facilitate a transformative process that alters cognitive and emotional patterns. However, the arts therapies employ diverse situated strategies and methodologies to co-create individuals' perceptions, interpretations, and emotional responses to their environments. The approaches highlight dynamic interactions through unifying thought and feeling, underlining the capacity for change. Through this reconfiguration process, arts therapies empower individuals to forge new viewpoints, enhance resilience, and nurture a more co-constructive approach to overcoming relational challenges. This emphasises the need for a combination of strategies, including a more nuanced understanding and approach within arts therapies, one that exceeds reductive dualisms to address the full spectrum of human experience.

Engaging with non-embodied states constitutes a pivotal component of the therapeutic journey. Havsteen-Franklin (2008) articulates that through sensitive demarcating enactments through artmaking, art therapy can utilise arts-based strategies not only to navigate but also to mitigate or entirely redefine the boundaries of experience. This can prevent the rigid demarcation between states or, conversely, establish preliminary possibilities for exploration. Such processes manifest variably across the stages of the arts therapies process, culminating in an aesthetic matrix that incorporates the participant's sense of becoming, the place and otherness within the final imagery. In instances where this process involves significant disruption to agency and intention, divisions emerge, such as the dichotomies between self and other or body and mind, resulting in an image that resonates with a misinterpreted sense of otherness. This often obscures the participant's agency, highlighting the complex interplay between embodiment, identity, and artistic expression in the art therapeutic context. In this situation, the arts therapist provides strategies for acceptance of otherness as other, both internal and external, rather than searching for similarities and sameness. Havsteen-Franklin states, 'In my view, art psychotherapy offers a way of understanding the experience of disembodiment without the attempt to transform it through meaningful abstraction and undue anthropomorphisation' (2008, p. 56).

Havsteen-Franklin's perspective attempts to flatten the hierarchy between the abstractions wrought through cognitive interpretation and the act of creating. Further to this, he is making reference to allowing the non-human to co-exist with agency (See Fig. 4).

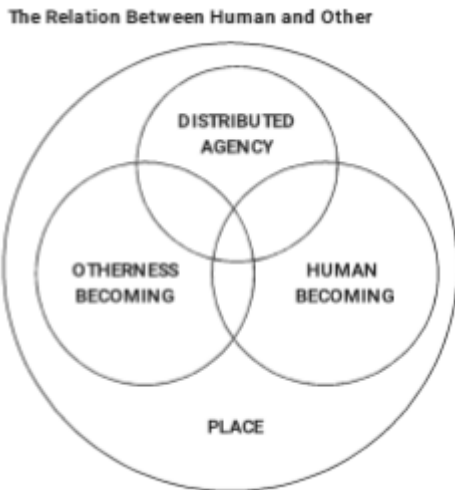


Figure 4. The relations between otherness as an agently bound process in the context of human becoming allows for a range of configurations between self, environment, cultures, and peoples to occur, where other is intrinsic to human becoming and can have differential agenty qualities.

In the experience of a dislocated otherness a disembodied gaze (Thomson & Linnell, 2020) of the other looks back at the maker, now othered and dismembered, to preserve a fragile sense of self at the centre of the narrative. The other in all its materialism is alive with the experiences of ruptures to the boundary, vividly stated by Havsteen-Franklin in the case study of Miss E.

She felt that the notion of a symbolic discourse had at that time become identified with the removal of an internal space: her womb. Her capacity to think and hold ideas was felt to be like premature babies (2008, p. 58).

The case study extract describes the otherness of materiality of body, of being a woman raped and being detained in a psychiatric hospital, the primacy of materialism, of an alterity, the harsh otherness enveloping the construct of self.

In this space, emergent linear forms may also be evident, what Deleuze and Guattari (1980) referred to as edging, a map with potential

vitality, finding the spaces that can be inhabited. It is not objectified as diagrammatic, but is in the act of doing, of beginning an intra-active discourse. '...my experience has been that the diagrammed image holds significant potentiality notable by the way that the image is composed and key features that are frequently alluded to or explicitly developed in later images' (Havsteen-Franklin, 2008, p. 61). Therefore, the diagrammed image is a conceptual approach to mapping experience, narrative, setting up detached realities. However, in the absence of form, the linear structures provide indeterminate spaces demarcated by outlines where events may have happened or could happen. In Barad's terms (2007) the space is a condition of potentiality, as a surface of indeterminacy rather than vacuous. In this sense, it is common that the diagrammed image in art therapy that searches for the conceptual edges of our world also describes the potentiality of becoming and is akin to developmentally early versions of pretend play. In child development, pretend play is an 'as if' narrative to map out relations between people, things and the world.

Essentially this in its more rudimentary and sophisticated forms is an approach to finding the edge of concepts, mapping experience through outlines of phenomena. This is a conventional humanist method of collating 'brute data' (Springgay & Zaliwska, 2015, p. 139).

By 'brute data' Springgay and Zaliwska are referring to the rudimentary formation, where edging is not explored as an approximation of becoming but is seen as an absolute, with preconceived values.

In contrast, in art therapy we can also see images where edges collapse or disintegrate, as an aesthetic phenomenon referred to by Havsteen-Franklin (2008) as the 'unstructured image'. This notion extends to the transformation of line into irregular forms and gestures, where the mind-body encounters no

discernible boundary aside from the creative action itself, for example a physical gesture, rhythm, or scribble.

I have witnessed this a number of times and the 'unstructured image' allows for chaotic, pre-verbal, unformulated content to exist in a way uncompromised by the supposition of an embodiment or diagram. (Ibid., p. 55).

Havsteen-Franklin's mention of preverbal content invites cautious consideration. Within this context, autobiographic content may be highly condensed amidst moments of tangible enactment, and the resulting aesthetic defies direct classification as a developmental phase. Instead, it represents a mode of interaction with materiality and the world at large, characterised by a repetitive language akin to the persistent, solitary beat of a drum on resonating skin. Thus, the unstructured image stands in contrast to the diagrammed image, challenging conventional interpretations and engaging with the world in a fundamentally unique way. Whilst the diagrammed image holds an edging process, has an edge and demarcates spaces, the unstructured image is the continuous diffraction of edges, whereby the form is lost. The form is consumed by the porosity of surface, the collapse of rhythm into itself, so that the eye meanders without a focal point.

From the ambiguity of surface and the boundary between self and other comes a novel way of experiencing the world. There is no discernible boundary between self or other. The world is diffracted in upon itself as a repetitive act, a thick layer of boundary where self and other are entangled. Through the unstructured image, we see diffractive searching where self and other have collapsed into one another as a deconceptualised interference.

In conclusion, employing a NM framework to conceptualise non-embodied states suggests that the body, or segments thereof, may be

experienced as a form of psychic dualism, becoming disconnected from a sense of self. According to Havsteen-Franklin (ibid.), embodied, disembodied, diagrammed, and unstructured experiences can coalesce into a unified assemblage. Within this assemblage, the act of diagramming serves to delineate conceptual boundaries, effectively mapping the intricate conceptualisations of body-mind-place. This approach highlights the dynamic and interconnected nature of existence, proposing that these various states of being—whether physically manifested or not—operate in relation to one another to shape the individual's engagement with the world around them.

Conclusion

To summarise, adopting a NM framework for conceptualising non-embodied states suggests a departure from binary dynamics of mind and body interactions as an aim. According to Havsteen-Franklin (ibid.), experiences that are embodied, disembodied, diagrammed, and unstructured can collectively form an integrated assemblages within the processes of arts therapies practices. Within this assemblage, the act of diagramming serves to delineate conceptual boundaries, effectively mapping the intricate interplay between body, mind, and world.

In the broader context of arts therapies, engaging with a non-dualistic way of being with/ in/ of physical and mental phenomena through intra-actions with the therapeutic environment has profound implications. Recent advancements in arts therapies within health and social spheres highlight the necessity of expanding our understanding beyond dualistic, human-centric views that perceive individuals as isolated entities with fixed boundaries. Rather, humans are reimagined within a dynamic, intra-active material-subjective framework, thereby challenging and potentially reshaping the ontological hierarchy. This reconceptualisation

implies that the formation of time and spatial boundaries is a collaborative process deeply intertwined with the environment, recognising environmental boundaries as dynamic, conceptualised realities.

Future research in this area should prioritise ethnographic and quantitative methodologies that embrace the integration of human and non-human forms of data, as well as developing methodologies for data collection and analysis, highlighting the significance of understanding the agency of matter. An exemplary qualitative study by Hickey-Moody (2018) utilises new materialist methods within a multi-sited trans-national ethnography to explore socially engaged arts practices, thereby demonstrating the value of integrating traditional and innovative research techniques in examining the transformative potential of arts therapies.

In the UK arts therapies practices are increasingly attentive to the gestural act of image making that can be described as manifesting within and through a spectrum of styles that relate to the self-other-environment becoming. The four states of visual aesthetic: embodied; disembodied; diagrammed and unstructured are within a process of diffraction whereby intra-action forms the basis of being in the world. When there is an environmental failure at social, political, and personal levels, being and becoming are expressed through, within, and with the medium of expression in varying degrees of boundary diffraction and binary rigidity, which as seen through NM, serves the purpose of actualising becoming in a wider context of co-existing and producing social change.

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Daniel is a UK-based dramatherapist and medical anthropologist and has a background in English Literature. He teaches the Anthropology and Aesthetics module on the Art Psychotherapy MA at Brunel University. He has a specialist interest in the therapeutic uses of puppetry, and how our understanding and experience of suffering and healing are informed by and reproduce social and cultural value. He is active in education, training, research, and publishing in these fields, and has presented his work extensively in the UK, Europe, and the US.

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Liliana Montoya De La Cruz is the Programme Lead for the MA in Art Psychotherapy at Brunel University. She is an art psychotherapist, visual artist and art educator born in Colombia, and has lived most of her life in Europe between the UK, France and Spain. She has an MA in Art Therapy

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