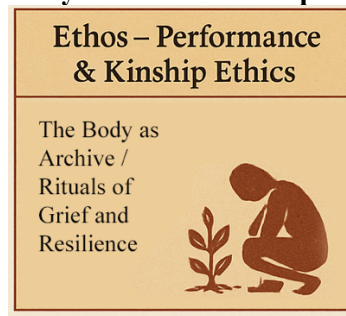


**Ecology of Memory:
Transgenerational Ecopoetics in Multimedia
by Madam Neverstop.**



Week 5: Ethos – Performance & Kinship Ethics

Theme: The Body as Archive / Rituals of Grief and Resilience

Theoretical Focus: Ethos, as framed this week, refers to the ethical presence of the body in ecological relation. Drawing from Augusto Boal’s *Aesthetics of the Oppressed* and Yotam Shibolet’s *Bodyminds in Movement*, we view performance as both resistance and remembrance. This somatic archive carries ecological grief, ancestral gestures, and interspecies care. Through collaborative and solo movement practices, we interrogate how the body becomes a vessel of ecological knowledge.

Practices:

- Collaborative/Improvisational movement improvisation based on generational memories
- Scripted monologues or incantations from sound and text archives
- Creation of embodied poetic gestures tied to environmental ethics / ecological responses.

Exercise:

Perform a ritual (solo or collaborative) that invokes ancestors, ecological grief, or healing. Record and reflect on how the body remembers more-than-human relations. Document the performance through reflection, and dialogue on how the body can “remember” more-than-human relations, informed by Haraway’s multispecies ethics and Boal’s theatrical interventions.

‘E’thos – character

Our inner eye can relate to the past and present; human animals have a mechanism which can turn equally well outward to the senses, to our physical world of existence, and inward to memory and thought, to personal symbolism and pre-symbolic emotions.⁶ Our museums, for example, might exploit this capacity; we could draw from individual visitors’ personal experience and from their private symbolism (memory) while developing a shared public experience (thinking). This might yield new affective geographies: emotional relationships and responses to scientific data within the public space.

– Tom Bristow, *Living Lexicon for the Environmental Humanities*.

The Body Remembers
A reflection by Madam Neverstop

Dear friend,

Sometimes the work begins before we are aware of it. Before the mind can shape a thought into a sentence, the body is already in motion—leaning, reaching, holding its breath. I have been thinking about how the body keeps its own record: not exactly as a tidy logbook of dates and events and scars, but more as a shifting archive of gestures, resistances, and responses.

Yotam Shibolet, in writing about Contact Improvisation, points to the challenge of “diagramming without stilling”—of finding a way to let language move like a body in improvisation. Nancy Stark-Smith’s hieroglyphs, drawn to map the flows of attention and movement, remind me of river deltas seen from above: not fixed borders, but patterns that adapt to the conditions of the moment. In ecological terms, this is also what survival looks like—a capacity for presence in flux, for responding to what is here now. Augusto Boal speaks of the body as both instrument and witness, capable of bypassing the habitual limits of language to awaken other forms of perception. In his Image Theatre, the gesture, the distance between two people, the way an object is placed in a hand—these carry meaning as vividly as any spoken word. He reminds us that art, and especially embodied art, is the search for truths through our sensory equipment.

This week, our work with *ethos* is a practice of ecological ethics in motion. To act ethically in relation to the more-than-human world is not only to hold ideas about care—it is to feel care as a reflex, to let it shape the way we stand, breathe, touch, and respond. The body becomes a site where kinship is rehearsed and remembered: a living, somatic archive of ecological grief and resilience. Please take the time to use all the knowledge from previous lessons, and in circular motions, revisit, return to, recycle ideas you might have discarded or left halfway there.

I interpret environmental ethics not as a distant abstraction but an intimate choreography. It is the way we kneel to plant something we may never see bloom, the way we open our arms to shelter, the way our bodies instinctively soften in the presence of another being—human or otherwise. These movements are greater than us, for they are part of a shared, species-crossing repertoire that ties us into the ongoing story of the planet. Tom Bristow writes that our inner eye can move both outward to the senses and inward to memory, and that this dual capacity can create new “affective geographies.” This is our work now: to cultivate performances that are not merely self-expression, but shared public experiences in which ecological memory and personal symbolism meet.

This week, I invite you to perform as if your movements are both message and offering. Whether alone or in collaboration, let your gestures carry the weight of the ancestors and the presence of the more-than-human. Consider how your body can remember relationships that words too often forget. And when you record your performance, think of it not as documentation but as a continuation of the act—a trace that will ripple forward.

*Madam
Neverstop*

CONTACT IMPROVISATION IN ACADEMIC WRITING by Yotam Shibolet

I want to be able to write from inside the movements of an improvisation [...] But I keep finding myself back here walking the line, on the page, trying to make pens pirouette, words walk and ideas bounce and split open, like dancing can do. [...] I'm curious to see [...] how we can keep the dance moving, through the hieroglyphs and into our mother tongue.

Nancy Stark-Smith, 'Editor Note,' *Contact Quarterly* 10, no. 2

“As the *Contact Quarterly* editor and one of CI's founders and most influential figures, Stark-Smith's remarks on her fascination and frustration with writing about CI are indicative of broader characteristics of the CI community's approach to writing, constituted by the inter-relationship mentioned above between practice and discourse. Firstly, most writing about CI can be considered as an attempt to “diagram without stilling” (Massumi 2002, 134), to echo the constant movement and being-in-process experienced within the moment of improvised dance. The hieroglyphs employed in Stark-Smith's teaching and writing are a prime example of attempts at achieving this. CI movement-gestures are as resistant to meaningful capture by analytic annotation systems as the concept of CI is to capture by definitions. To broach and recognize this challenge, Stark-Smith's hieroglyphs describe somatic flows of movement and attention through symbols of “lived abstraction”: open to interpretation and manifestation within a given moment.”

ON BODY AND RESONANCE:

The body, in work as in play, as well as producing stimuli, responds to those it receives, creating, in itself, a muscular mask as strong as the mask of social behaviour – both of which act directly on the thought and emotions which thus become stratified. Games facilitate and oblige this de-mechanisation, being, as they are, sensory dialogues where, within the necessary discipline, they demand the creativity which is their essence.

The word is the greatest invention of the human being, and yet it brings with it the obliteration of the senses, the atrophy of other forms of perception. Art is the search for truths by means of our sensory equipment. In Image Theatre, we dispense with the use of the word – which, however, we revere! – so that we can develop other forms of perception. We use the body,

physiognomies, objects, distances and colours, which oblige us to enlarge our signalétique vision – where signifiers and signifieds are indissociable, like the smile of joy on our face, or the tears of sadness and lamentation – rather than only using the symbolic language of words dissociated from concrete, sensible realities, to which they refer only by means of sound or mark on paper.

The same analytical process occurs with the Introspective Techniques of the *Rainbow of Desires* which, using words and, especially, images, enables the theatricalisation of introjected oppressions. In these Techniques – which revolve on each of us as individuals, whilst always seeking resonances of the group – even in these Techniques, which are part of the Tree of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO), the objective is to show that these internalised oppressions have their origin in, and retain an intimate relation with, our social life.

Augusto Boal – The Tree of the Theatre of the Oppressed

Practices

- Collaborative/Improvisational movement improvisation based on generational memories
- Scripted monologues or incantations drawn from sound and text archives
- Creation of embodied poetic gestures tied to environmental ethics and ecological responses

Approach your body as both archive and antenna. In movement, listen for the gestures that arrive without being planned, the rhythms that feel older than you are. Let them carry you toward an environmental ethic that is not only intellectual but lived, felt, enacted. Allow your performance to create “affective geographies” where personal and ecological memory meet, and where kinship with the more-than-human becomes visible.

Exercise

Perform a ritual (solo or collaborative) that invokes ancestors, ecological grief, or healing. Use movement, gesture, and spatial relationships as your primary vocabulary—words may be present, but they need not lead.

Remember, a ritual is an act of repetition, not necessarily tied to divination or religious connotations. While you are welcome to connect it to your religious beliefs if you wish, the essence here is the rituals we create for ourselves. These rituals help us connect with our own stories, our planet, and our envisioned futures. They are personal practices that ground us, provide meaning, and foster a sense of continuity and purpose in our lives. Whether it's a daily walk in nature, a moment of reflection, or a creative endeavor, these rituals are powerful tools for nurturing our connection to the world and our aspirations. You may draw from:

- Personal and ancestral memory
- Field recordings and archival sounds
- Found or made objects that carry ecological or symbolic resonance

Record the performance with whatever device is available to you—a phone, webcam, or simple camera. Work in a location that deepens your connection to the theme (outdoors, in a family space, near water, in a place marked by change).

Reflect on how the body remembers more-than-human relations. How does movement carry the weight of environmental grief? How might it also enact resilience and care?

SUBMISSION for Lesson 5

Submit your performance video (2–5 minutes) accompanied by a short reflection (300–500 words) on how your work engages with *ethos*, kinship ethics, and ecological response.