Endurance and Evanescence:
On the Practice and Performance of Silence and Meditation

by

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MASTER OF ARTS
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We accept the thesis as conforming to the required standard
Abstract
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Through the use of autoethnography (Bochner & Ellis, 2000) and ethnodramatic performance (Saladana, 2003) this thesis presents an articulation of how the practice of meditation and silence influences identity and communication. Through self-reflection, interviews and conscious performance, I hope to contribute to literature describing health geographies and wellness communication. The data for this paper was collected during ethnographic fieldwork conducted at Bodhi Zendo, a Zen Meditation Centre located in the hills of Kodaiknal, in the province of Tamil Nadu on the southeastern coast of India. During a four-week period between December 1st 2012 and January 2nd 2013, I participated as a practitioner and researcher where I conducted interviews with other retreat participants, documented my own experiences, and recorded my own and other participants’ reflections through photography, video, and self-reflective field notes. During my time at the Zen Centre I meditated for ten hours daily and I completed both a silent mini-sesshin and a silent sesshin. This paper includes thoughts and experiences prior to the fieldwork in India as well as thoughts and reflections experienced during the five months upon returning home to Canada. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the experience of self through a meditative lens and describe the liminal and transformative states between silence and sound.

*Keywords*: Wellness, meditation, silence, place, autoethnography, ethnodrama
Setting the Stage

A Preface to a Preface

As indicated in the abstract of this thesis, the intent in the following pages is to present an autoethnographic (Bochner & Ellis, 2000) and ethnodramatic (Saldana, 2003) account of my experiences practicing meditation and silence while simultaneously reflecting on place and wellness, known within academic literature as “geographies of health” or “therapeutic landscapes” (Curtis, 2010) - to which I will refer to as “wellness geographies.” Within academic research, autoethnography and ethnodrama are often presented in non-traditional formats and this paper reflects that tendency. It is my intent in “setting the stage” to provide the reader with a brief introduction of the non-traditional organization of this thesis. “Setting the stage” is equivalent to an introduction but without the performance infused style that follows within the remainder of this paper. In what follows I will introduce each scene and setting before the performance begins. One might even consider the “setting of the stage” a performance of performing academia itself. After all, isn’t everything a performance?

Setting the Scenes: Style and Organization

The performance of this thesis has been divided into four opposing yet intermingled voices. Each scene presents a new voice and performs a new self. This has been done in order to demonstrate how a self is not a single entity but rather a self is performed through many selves that may emerge as a singular form or as a plurality of the many in its composition (Goffman, 1959). Narrating and performing many voices and many selves serves to show that understanding wellness involves recognizing and acknowledging the many selves we live throughout a given hour, day, week, month, and year.
Each scene displays a pseudonym which integrates a persona of my many selves that I have encountered throughout this research process. I would like to acknowledge that these selves have also emerged in other instances and will make many appearances throughout my academic career and life. The conscious choice to defer identity through the creation of four distinct voices is an example of severaling (Manning, 2009) which is then explored through a layered account (Rambo-Ronai, 1995) for the purposes of; demonstrating the felt experience of meditation, telling an honest story, creating verisimilitude, crediting alternate times and spaces, incorporating shifting states of awareness, and offering varying points of view and multiple tones so that the reader may share in the presence of the page (Creswell, 2007, p.195). The use of four voices also creates definite transitions within the paper, allowing an opportunity for silence to be experienced during the readers’ engagement. This choice was made consciously in order to reflect meditation as a practice that “is supposed to lead to a certain shift in one’s self-understanding and thereby one’s relation to the world” (Fasching, 2008, p.464) and because it has been said that, “Silence is the element in which great things fashion themselves together” (Carlyle, 1906, p.187). There are also a purposeful blank spaces between scenes one and two and scenes two and three as an intentional reminder to the reader that, “What we cannot speak about we must consign to silence” (Wittgenstein, 1961). It is my hope that when this paper is read in spaces and places I cannot know, that those spaces on the page will facilitate moments of felt awareness: This is the text, this is the reading... this is the magic. Understanding meditation and silence as wellness communication, and routes to wellness geographies, this paper represents an externalized experience of sitting in zazen.ii

The four voices have also been used to demonstrate the therapeutic communication of mindfulness. Becoming mindful allows one to better manage a schismatic self (Manning, 2009),...
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to control and understand chameleonic tendencies, and to effectively engage within multiple media channels in order to design appropriate selves that function in a world of rapidly unfolding communication avenues (Robinson, 2012). The creation of selves therefore, is a skill born out of the need to tame chaos, which aids in the development of our wellbeing - as Deleuze and Guattari (1994) write in *What is Philosophy?:*

> Conceptual personae are the philosopher’s “heteronyms,” and the philosopher’s name is the simple pseudonym of his personae. I am no longer myself but thought’s aptitude for finding itself and spreading across a plane that passes through me at several places. The philosopher is the indiosyncrasy of his conceptual personae. (p. 64)

Scenes Two, Three and Four have been named following the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1994) who discuss and define three different planes of thought: the plane of immanence, the plane of consistency, and the plane of reference. Deleuze and Guattari describe these planes as an articulation of the relationship between philosophy, art, and science (p.202) and as a classification system to escape from the “congenital tongue-tie” (p.176) that one experiences when language is called into question. Since meditation and silence can bring about revelations and states that are difficult to describe, I have found an understanding of these three planes to be beneficial in facilitating a dialogue (or triologue) - we plunge into meditation as we plunge into the brain (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p.208).

In each scene, I have used the allegorical literary devices from Deleuze and Guattari (1987) of deterritorialization, lines of flight (subdivided into movement and connection), and reterritorialization to demonstrate experienced affect, emplacement, and refrain. In each scene you will find various modes of writing; academic to poetic composition, videos, notes and
photographs. Each mode of writing brings forth a new thought which is made possible through
the compositional style itself. After spending time studying Indian healing systems and the
concept of wellness, I have also chosen to craft the voices based on the ancient art and science of
Ayurveda, which defines life “as the conjunction of body, mind and spirit found in Cosmic
Consciousness and embracing all of Creation” (Lad, 2003, p.1).

The first scene of this thesis provides a general overview of academic literature on the
topic of wellness geographies, meditation, and silence as well as an explanation of the reasons
for this research. In this scene I describe wellness communication as a response to the mental
health crisis in Canada and emphasize the importance of inter-disciplinary scholarship and
collaboration. In performing the proposal I highlight the necessity for mindfully engaged and
emergent research in order to find communicative therapies for mental health. I have followed
the protocol of using an academic voice that utilizes the proper conventions of the academy in
order to demonstrate my authority and knowledge of the subject matter. I have carefully
followed the proper protocols and procedures to ensure that my disciplined knowledge is
adequately demonstrated in the thesis that follows. I have meticulously followed the guidelines
set by the American Psychological Association (APA). Following APA has ensured that the
formatting of my newly acquired knowledge conveys an authoritative understanding of the
literature surrounding the subject matter of this thesis.

The second scene in this thesis is written from the plane of immanence. I have utilized
the persona “Katie” to describe an experience of affect in meditation and silence. I have
purposefully chosen a font and poetic compositional style in order to convey a transitory space
from which the writing emerges. Since hers is an exploration of the plane of immanence, the
focus is on sensation (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p.166) and the writing is done in the form of
diaries recorded at the Zen Centre and back in Canada. I have also included artistic videos that explore perspective, time, language and silence in order to reflect the liminal feeling of a plane of immanence.

The third scene is written from the plane of consistency or composition. Moving the focus away from sensation in the previous scene, the persona “Kate” writes about the transition from endosensation to exosensation, or from philosophy to art (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p.185). I have written this scene in a journalistic style to reflect the methods, theories and frameworks that I had previously established before arriving at the Zen Centre. This scene demonstrates the lines of flight that connect deterritorialization and reterritorialization and focuses on the physicality of the movements and connections experienced through meditation and silence. I have chosen to incorporate photos of the landscape, interview notes, and audiovisual media in order to demonstrate a sense of emplacement (Pink, 2009) and allow the reader to see and hear what this author is feeling. The language in this scene is about the body - about interactions, communication, frustrations and liberations experienced during day-to-day life at the zendo.

The fourth and final scene of this thesis is written from the plane of reference. As we have transitioned from philosophy to art in the previous planes, we now turn to science. The persona “Kathryn” writes in a reflective literary style using an authoritative and vulnerable voice. This scene represents the reterritorialization experienced after silence and meditation and offers insight into the importance of discipline, the need for frameworks and the skill involved in emerging from the chaotic. I have written this scene to demonstrate a refrain (Stewart, 2010) which leads to a change in perspective and approach. As the final voice in this paper, I have included written reflections on the topics of space and place and concluded with an assemblage
artwork and a video that represent the emergence experienced since the video in scene one and offers a significant revelation for the author when she writes, “Helene Cixous’ (1976) desire to write the body has become for me instead, a desire to embody the written as it constantly writes itself” (Goodwin, K., p.37).

Scene One: Rehearsing the Literature and Performing the Proposal

This paper is a contribution to studies on mental health and communication and seeks to describe how the organic and the technological interact. The aim of this paper is to provide a description of how meditation affects communication and provide an example of mindful identity creation. We must create new selves, allow new selves to be born and to be discovered, we must develop the ability to design a therapeutic self, a place for our spirit to draw towards when a former self can no longer articulate, when that self comes too close to the center, when they nearly touch that which escapes, for them to return they must know the home towards which they are drawn.

On May 12th 2012 the Canadian government released its first-ever national mental health strategy acknowledging the statistic that one in five Canadians will directly experience a mental illness in their lifetime (Mental Health Commission, 2012). The strategy – entitled, Changing Directions, Changing Lives states that “an indigenous, holistic understanding of wellness – rooted in culture, the land, family, community and self-determination – can help to transform the mental health system” and acknowledges that communication and media are “playing an increasingly constructive role” in improving mental health (Mental Health Commission, 2012, sec. 1). Following this release at the 65th annual World Health Assembly in Geneva Switzerland, David Goldbloom, Chair of the Canadian Mental Health Commission, framed mental health and
mental illness as a “global issue” and stressed the importance of changing attitudes and behaviors in order to change the quality of life for all citizens (Canada News Centre, 2012). Current research across academic disciplines also suggests that well-being is created both medically and socially (Curtis, 2010; Sternberg 2009) and that a geographical perspective “enables the linking of culture and environment ...into both ecosystems and health” (Curtis, 2010, p.175).

This research draws from literature on human geography and therapeutic landscapes (Casey, 2001; Curtis, 2010; Ingold, 2000; Morton, 2005; Sternberg 2009), embodiment and movement (Ingold, 2011; Manning, 2009), communication theory (Bochner & Ellis, 2000; Crang& Cook, 2007; Creswell, 2007; Pink, 2009; Rambo-Ronai, 1995; Saldana, 2003; Stoller, 1997; Thrift, 2008), philosophy (Cixous, 1976; Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Deleuze & Guattari, 1995), affect and refrain (Stewart, 2010; Thein, 2005) and literature on meditation, yoga, well-being and silence (Fasching, 2008; Ganguly, 1968; Lad, 2002; Robinson, 2012; Samy, 2010) in order to explore how the practice of meditation and silence elicits changes in the practitioners’ experience of space, place, identity and wellbeing. I will be using the perspective of non-representational theory as the framework for this research as this theory concerns itself with movement, fluidity, embodiment and present action (Thrift, 2008) and previous research (Thorpe & Reinhart, 2010) has found it beneficial to the study of physicality and culture creation.

Creating a culture of Wellness has become a priority for many individuals, businesses and communities since the economic crash in 2008 (Canadian Wellness Index, 2013). Understanding that resources are limited and the economy is in transition, there is a general increase in levels of awareness about responsibility, sustainability, and collaboration. Even entire school boards are looking for tools to help bridge the worlds of media, health and education (HWCDSB, 2012) as we discover new tools and theories that help in forming our collective
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social development. In aiming to create a general definition for the concept of wellness, the Presidents Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Research Digest suggests that, “Wellness is a multi-dimensional state of being describing the existence of positive health in an individual as exemplified by quality of life and a sense of well-being (2001, p.3). Understanding that our social relationships exist both online and off and that this affects our wellness, current research in health communication (Atkinson, Weng Chou & Hesse, 2009) is beginning to explore the socio-demographic and health factors associated with internet use in a rapidly evolving communication landscape. The evidence is there – we are multi-dimensional – this thesis responds to that sensation.

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In closing this rehearsal of literature I would like to write a few words on the experience of connecting the organic and the digital. When I began this research I had no idea of the magnitude of my topic and was completely unaware of the rabbit-hole into which I was throwing myself. I longed for a non-conceptual world and in silence and meditation I found what I was looking for ... nothing. When I returned home from India I was very scared that I would not be able to write anything. In finding nothing I saw connections to everything, and I struggled to find a meaningful way to present the research as constantly emergent and evasive - as present the day I write it as when it is read. I found social media to be a place of both therapy and unease as I struggled with my transition back home. I felt anxiety about identity, about frequency of sharing and appropriateness of content. I realized that the internet is such a sensitive place and is in its own awkward phase of development, and I understood that I had to treat it as mindfully as I treated myself. I feel there is a great need to explore wellness communication online and look forward to contributing to healthy online geographies and developing realms where together we
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can explore our many masks and characters. Wellness itself has many masks, there is no standard
definition, the beauty of wellness is in its all pervasive nature and adaptability. We are never just
one, we are multiple and in therapeutic communication both online and off, we come to birth, to
encourage, to know and to abandon our multiple selves. Our enlightenment perhaps is a
collective awakening to the urgency of becoming creative and mindful managers of our many
selves.

Scene Two: Plane of Immanence
In Ayurvedic medicine, Katie is the element of Vata. She has a fluid nature and is associated with intuition and emotion. Katie writes diaries in *MV Boli font* often in poetic verse from the shaky seats of buses and trains. She writes her sensations with curious immediacy and creates language and pictures that are unbounded by time. Scribbling memos and notes while in transit, she longs to describe the subtle shifts in consciousness through which life reveals itself as not divided between sleeping and waking, animate or inanimate, dead or alive. She experiences silence through sense transference, desires a therapeutic daily routine and finds great pleasure in meditation followed by sweet cookies and tea. Her favorite food is hasafaiv. She understands wellness as aligning with ones infinite curiosity and creativity. She is affect.
Why stay so long where your words are scattered
And doing no good? I’ve sent a letter a day
For a hundred days. Either you don’t read the mail
Or you’ve forgotten how to leave.

Let the letter read you. Come back.
No one understands who you are in that prison
For the stonefaced. You’ve escaped,
But still you sit there like a falcon
On the window ledge. You are both water and
Stream, but you think you need something
To drink like a lion or a deer.

How far is it? How far is the light of the moon
From the moon? How far is the taste of candy
From the lip? Every second you give away light.
We accept. We like this market.

Your love is a sweet poison we eat from your hand
To dissolve and drain away the ego-life
Now spraying this fountain from us.
- Rumi (Stoller, 1997)

Deterritorialization

Monsoon Season, July 2012 - An incompleteness so thorough that it suffocates
and makes me want to run, with urgency I plan to escape the definitions and
find a true voice, an identity, the mixture of confidence and vulnerability. I feel
a dissolving, I sense I have forgotten an important secret and I am anxious, this
pulsing deep within my ears … maybe I am remembering:
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Autumn Season, October 2012 – Concern with writing in an authentic voice, one of which I fear I will never obtain in a world that has set me up to be defined, stripped of sensitivity and in suffocating debt to a future not secure enough to believe in. There is so much noise. At every encounter I feel the judgement, the impossibility of it all, where did we learn to be so impatient with the frail? I deconstruct, scrub away, throw things away, shed layer after layer and explore the process through experimental video by deconstructing time and self.

Writing the body: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WUU9IAVn-CQ

Winter Season, November 2012 – I have left everything, escaped from a world with no keys to come back to. I cry, alone in the airport. Synchronicity starts to increase as I climb up the mountain to the zendo, I ask the driver to stop and on my right I see those large pink bricks – a reoccurring dream from childhood – and the folding starts to increase. The synchronicity picks up and I am prepared for it and aware of its presence since my letting go. Patterns start to reveal themselves to me and I realize I am witnessing a journey home.
Lines of Flight

Winter Season, December 2012 - I have taken away the mirror. I have not seen my face in a week, I have not spoken for days. I am everywhere, I am everything. Completely emplaced, bodies as thoughts, the sun and flowers speak through me in a constant conversation. I record the landscape to show what I cannot express and create a library of conversation with the environment.

Bodhi Zendo Talking Water: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rySZ8PGCD7I

Bodhi Zendo Talking Pages: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXV_Y5UEGRs

Bodhi Zendo Talking Garden: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xfrWtxSdVnM

Bodhi Zendo Talking Sun: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l2TMBndPQvM

Bodhi Zendo Talking Walk: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8fEmOpAKFg

Bodhi Zendo Talking Window: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QyGawI-jiRc

Bodhi Zendo Talking Faucet: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n8R1U8cdM
Winter Season, December 2012 - Meditation

The room blazes, the beauty radiates

I hear soundwaves, feel them humming at my ears.

Her light is gone and this skin, these lungs, this room, all settle

The mountain remains, that whose attunement escapes me and soothes me

A trust that I love because I am - and my pancreas expands, expels...

I become a seamstress, weaving in and out of times

The room breathes me. I am here.

Can I focus on focusing? I imagine the mountain painted on the backs of my

eyelids. I try to look at it evenly. I notice my eyes moving, wanting to move

constantly. It's the most interesting feeling. I can feel weight to them. The left

eye is stronger, it's heavier, it wins by choosing thoughts. So I concentrate on

the weight in the right eye. More attention behind the right eye. When the

eyes are evenly weighted then I can focus evenly on the mountain and focus

without interruption from thoughts. What an extraordinary power! For so long I
have felt a tear, a schism, a divide between right brain and left brain, like two different people, like I had to choose, but if I chose I would be incomplete. The feeling overwhelmed me for most of the last year. Now, finally—some relief: I could clearly see this;
I begin to concentrate on the scale, on strengthening the bar that held each weight. When we finish I feel so strong, so bright, so aware. At dinner I could clearly see the beauty and humanity in everyone – it shone from their eyes.

Winter Season, December 2012 – What have I learned about love?vi There’s a part of me who doesn’t think this question is useful, doesn’t think it deserves a place in my research but in hours of meditation I have found myself only to have three thoughts; who to love, what to do, and how to understand self – karma, bhakti and jnana yoga. I have found that internal and external love are mirrors, are reflective and I fear I will always be either the pirate or the raped
girlvii until I can understand myself not as the person who stands or the person who reflects, but as the mirror itself.

Do we need to be enlightened to properly love?

Then these words whispered in my ear:

“Learn to accept”
Reterritorialization

Cold Season, March 2013 - Write. Write. Write. Write confusion. Write anger, disappointment, abandonment, resentment, frustration, unknown, unwilling, unloved, loved. Write. Write purity, recognition, negotiation, influence, torture, spilling, page turning, unwrapping, unnoticed. Write. Write reflection, cognition, games said and unsaid, day and night. Future and wasps, and grain, and monks on pathways walking through Bodh Gaya. Write. Write that day in the airport with tears falling on thighs, the garden in the hills and the same splash. Write the encounter with three lovers. Write the ultimate love, the one you know and don’t know at the same time. Write the one you say good-bye to. Write the story, unfold the story. Unfolding and writing. Careful unfolding, tearing through the package sometimes, write the pulse of never writing, never touching the elusive. Write the description - the pain of never touching anything. Write it, plant it, cook it, drink it, cut it, write it down - biologically, textually, casually, mindfully and cautiously planting bombs. Write words for the future, in the happenstance. Write wrong. Write right. Write through fingers and tongues and
dreams and breezes and flows and refrains. Write conceptually artistically and unconventionally. Write the pain, the yearning, the pressure points. Write ... don’t write.

Just stop.
Scene Three: Plane of Composition

Kate is the element of fire—the pitta force in Ayurveda. She is energetic, assertive and uncontained. At once a warming, life giving force, she is also unpredictable and dangerous. She is passionate and forceful, igniting change, and then coming close to a burn. Kate writes her reports in typewriter font often early in the morning from coffee-shops or late at night over glasses of wine. She believes her face is uneven and thus her entire being off balance, so she searches for ways both physical and spiritual to create equilibrium. She has an insatiable appetite and throws herself into the unknown determined to describe that which escapes us. She is the physicality of meditation and silence – she is emplacement.

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Deterritorialization

12/12 - All is in the collection. I desire and determine to be the researcher, to collect the interpretations of my soul, document the ambivalence of the stars before bed, somehow capture the mountain breathing me.

After arrival I at once begin my observations. I see the nothingness I longed for – the utter simplicity. I take pictures of my room, I take note of the dining hall. I familiarize myself with the zendo and the gardens and choose places I can record from. I am here to answer a question: How does meditation affect communication? I will find the answer through interviews and through my own sensual observations. I think of tactics, take note of the participants, focus on expanding my vocabulary and try to navigate the space between releasing and recording.
There are approximately twenty people staying here right now, I can’t be certain because there is a constant flow in and out. The people here are atypical, which I would’ve expected at a hideaway such as this. There are a lot of Germans (I have learned that Father Ama Samy has a large presence in Germany – he is all but unknown in Canada). I am the youngest person save for an eighteen-year old from Connecticut. I feel comfortable saying that forty would be the average age.

Lines of Flight

movement.

12/12 Eating in Silence: This is not noble silence, but movement without words. We sit to eat and Shabir hands me a bean across the table and motions to his mouth – I should eat it. Thank you, I nod and crunch half the bean between my teeth. Where is the jam? I look around. I approach the other table, tap the jam, point to my heart and then to my table, can I take this? Heads nod as they eat their breakfast. Someone pushes the honey towards me – an Italian man, I don’t know his name. We are friends now though and I thank him for the honey with a Namaste. I am done now. From behind me Shabir snatches the other half of the bean back. I smile, quietly laugh with the Italian and then get up to do my dishes. I wash the plate with warm soapy water and enter the dining room. The Italian motions me toward him, he
points to his sleeve and I see he has stolen my banana. We laugh, I take it back, breakfast is over.

**12/12 Moving in Silence:** We walk on the roof of the zendo for a five minute meditation. My body up and down. I wish I could see out the back of my head - why a view always forward? or maybe this is backwards? I think of the significance of a face, or a perspective, of a view of life. I wonder about gaze and direction and the power in influencing our own. I observe bodies articulating thoughts ... we are as we move.
I record videos of movement and interaction to show how we travel within this space, to record consciousness traveling through skin and bone.

Bodhi Zendo Talking Walk:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E8fEmOpAKFq

Bodhi Zendo Talking Samu:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8484t1WL0i4

Bodhi Zendo Talking Kinhin:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjBr_HArFnE

donnection.

12/22/12 -Talking of silence: I ask, can language make you sick?
I spend an afternoon by the frog pond with Engel. “Yes” he said, “Of course language makes you sick. Language provides affectual tones and vibrations in the mind. Language forms pictures in your thinking”. I ask him if we need less language to relieve us from suffering and pain. “Maybe we need more” he says and looks right at me, eyes meeting mine. “Maybe we need more words – you cannot see something until you have a word for it. Once we have a word we can begin to work with it.” He pointed out that there is the seen and the unseen. There is the world of body, thought and of
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soul. Meditation can bring us into the worlds of the mind and the soul, creating awareness of body.
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Working in silence: My samu\textsuperscript{xi} has been changed again. I am in the dining hall. There is a misunderstanding on shared effort and all this work I fear has been for nothing\textsuperscript{xii}. It frightens me that even in a therapeutic space the differing worldviews of those who occupy it can instantly create opposition. I can see how manipulative tone and gesture can be, how powerful conscious communication is and I understand the significance of protecting my perspective.
12/7/12 - Days sitting and in silence. I am in pain. I am frustrated. There are no answers and I long for the comforts of home. I feel so alone. In needing to speak and confide I break silence in my room and record a video diary:

Bodhi Zendo Talking: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kjn7vn5COT4

I stop the recording and head back to the zendo. I sit upright on the bolster to ease the pains in my legs. Then, as soon as the lights dimmed and the bell rang to begin. I just imagined a lover holding me, clearly this is what I wanted ... to be in love. I imagined him no longer torturing me with fantasies I could not have. Instead he held me, and told me that what I was doing was wonderful and brave. He supported me and let me breathe for a few moments, he let me enjoy, surrender into just a few moments of safety, home and reassurance. Then, an amazing thing happened – I realized it wasn’t really this lover that was doing this. It was that self – and at once I recognized her as Kathryn, as me, grown-up, the name on my birth certificate - who I was in essence. She had surfaced and I knew who she was. Not anatman, no self, not nothingness, not oneness, not Buddha, not the holy spirit, not a divine spark, but Kathryn - me. At once I could trust and feel safe, she had things under control. She let me breathe safely for the rest of the session.
Scene Four: Plane of Reference

Kathryn is the element of earth. She is the embodiment of confidence and vulnerability. She is a sensual and strategic communicator. Kathryn’s practicality and simplicity make her productive in various structures and her adaptability is often regarded as her most admired trait. Kathryn writes in Constantia font, and is committed to representing the corpus callosum and the collaboration of immanence and art. She enjoys the flesh, is not afraid of money and believes in taking care of oneself. She grounds her work in those who have gone before her. She is refrain.

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Deterritorialization

February, 2013: To return home. It is a park. It is the spaces of a playground – the tunnels, the slides, the rolling hills and the monkey bars. The silence was an affect and a refrain: An affect in its power and its opening, in the energy it stirred and the space it illuminated. The silence was a refrain from the affect of language at home. We are always both I guess. Always affectual and receding. I am a physical affect at home because I am a physical refrain from India now. But my affect internally is heightened with India and I cannot sink into a rhythm here. Life in solitude, in contemplation, in soulful connection and honesty is not life here. The television goes on, the food gets ordered in, the money is visible, the life is internalized - the space allocated, and the firm lines set. Aesthetically, more like the zen centre than the rest of India - a mixture of chaos and defined lines. But here, no chaos acknowledged – chaos only diagnosed. A transition Home. Always occurring, reoccurring and boring – soaring. Stop. Standstill. Move. Move quickly.

Objects of opposition. Shadow. Shadow-self-selfing. I become rebellious. I have words for my feelings now and pictures I can describe. I can say how it feels to fold and face, to risk and reveal. So people start to drop away. Old casings and routines dissolve. I lose relationships. I type a thawing.

The conversations hurt me. Questions and probing and evaluation. The words hurt me. I can feel the language inside of my brain. I can feel it puncture, piercing and linear. I get lost – a vicious space to lose a self. I’m folding. I can’t handle the thoughts so I turn to the body. I eat too much, I tear into destructible surfaces, I try to escape, I am sensual and
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cold and encapsulated in skin. The mirrors are all back and I have been placed from plural to singular. I cry in the darkness of the month, in the horrible volatile space between winter and spring.

I have travelled to the innermost space of my thoughts and have witnessed that place as completely magical. I realize that my anxiety comes from a lack of transitional language in English. Our words indicate a “foundness” a state of being that is static. We have few words and few conversational devices that allow us to travel non-linearly. Words as “chutes”, words to release us, cut us free. Words like “ka” - the ultimate zen parachute.

In the search for greater mental health, what we need is worldview that allows us to slip through different states. My language had the potential to make me sick because I felt multi-dimensionally but was only able to articulate linearly. Silence can help. Silence and science. Contraction and expansion. The silence liberates our language. With silence our words are more precise, speaking becomes an art, speech becomes organic – like lungs, like prana, alive. We experience and articulate this crash, this journey to the center of the brain. To touch creative force. To be an exploding star. When we realize our potential, the key is movement. If I stood in the center of a room and walked to the left fifty-feet, I now have the ability to walk to the right fifty-feet - I have been granted that permission universally. If I walk fifty-one feet to the right and do not travel back to the left one more foot I will be in a volatile space. We can vacillate between left and right until we eclipse, until we create vortexes and partake in monumental environmental changes. But if we are not cautious we could find ourselves struggling with any series of pains to our well-being. The mono-myth. Here. Always deterritorialize carefully.
I need a structure in order to survive. I write the process on the walls to mirror the process in my mind – I need to see it outside of me. Finally, it comes and I can understand my place, where I fit, how the chaos is moving. In this volatile space of April I give birth to a reference and end the pulsing, at least if I know there are stages of descent and ascent, spaces of transition, then I can make it through this vortex.
ENDURANCE AND EVANESCENCE

connection.

May 2013: Cottage University

A community. A refrain. We gather up north for a sensory experience. I am learning to eat again, learning to speak, learning how to ascent from the pulse. Together we end silence with a laugh. Together we support, inspire and bridge the space of chaos. We make machines, we make sushi, we make fire. We eat Saskatoon berry sauce on pizza and allow each other to untangle as we tangle into a knot. We see ourselves as process and are not alone. I understand the significance of a mindful community and see we share a mind.

Reterritorialization

June 2013:

Dear April,

As the finish line for this thesis draws nearer and nearer to me I am starting to feel the relief that comes with completing something so significant, hand in hand with a bit of nostalgia as I reflect on where we have been together. We agreed I would send this to you today, so I am sending what I have, you will notice something missing from it, however – I think we are here.

I have again taken all of your suggestions and made a number of changes, cleared some things up, organized the writing and generally made it appear more legitimate... I hope I capitalized all the proper words in the reference section and have demonstrated to
the academic panel that I am sufficiently capable of articulation and contribution within intellectual realms, and thus deserving of my Masters degree. In resubmitting this to you, for what I am afraid will be the last time, I have purposely not written the last part - the Kathryn part about reterritorialization - and I think that's because there is a part of me that isn't ready to let go. There's also a part of me that fears that this is not really an academic contribution and is slightly embarrassed of my own selfishness (this part of me can't imagine where this would get published and fears those who read it will judge me for being a self-involved little girl). But there is another part of me that is aware of the significance of this work, and is proud to share it.

I chose to study meditation, silence and communication because I longed to live in a world where I could be, rather than do and I felt I wanted to help “legitimize” yoga in the West. My desire came from a personal experience: at sixteen I had such difficulty having “normal” conversations and I was pained that I thought about things I felt no one else did and that I wanted to experience life in a way I felt no one else did. In response to my pain my doctor gave me anti-depressants and anti-anxiety medication so that I could focus, go to work and participate in social life like a girl my age should. But they didn’t work - they made me feel sick, disconnected, robotic, like I was cheating life somehow. I made the choice to stop taking them and I turned to yoga and meditation, but the question remains, Why were they so quick to diagnose me?

As I grew up I continued to long for quiet, for solitude, and spaces where I could just be, but this was not easy outside the yoga studio and the constant noise began to
pain me again. I decided to study silence in the belief that our world needs therapeutic, liberating and mindful communication to soothe our sensitive psyches and I am grateful to have had the opportunity to do so. Now as I conclude this study, I am simultaneously inspired and afraid - I fear the inherent risk in exposing oneself and yet am liberated by the process. I fear that once this is done, once I send this to you that then it is over. You see, in the confines of academia this exploration has been allowed to be called “research” once it is finished I wonder how it flows. I have this haunting fear that somehow the beauty will be taken from me and I will be captured, contained and brought under a militant order of linear time again. I feel as though I understand the process of death and the significance of letting go – something must always escape, just as the spirit escapes the body one day - and I am thankful for that. I never would’ve thought I could eclipse the pain of my own worldview and now I am responsible to nurture this precious new perspective. I also never thought that a process of disentanglement would result in love, and yet that is where I stand - though I am still apprehensive of my deserving - I can at least move within this space with a certain degree of grace.

Since my descent into the unknown I have had many homes. I stand today in a new one, in a bloom-space (Stewart, 2010), the etching of a refrain within a refrain, a worlding of a new immanence and yet also an articulation. I have learned that these planes occur rapidly, in congruence with each other and reflect the nature of our many selves. It interests me that my body had to stretch for my mind to stretch, that it had to physically cross distances and land on the other side of the world. It had to be
uncomfortable and unattached, it needed to be high up in the mountains, reaching outwards to soak up sensation...

...and then it came back to earth to seek saturation instead of escape. I find myself no longer in the space upstairs writing, but in the basement fleshing out thought. Helene Cixous’ (1976) desire to write the body has become for me instead, a desire to embody the written as it constantly writes itself. To facilitate this reciprocal and eternal flow, I turn to the languages of sense and art. Where I once needed to reach out and collect, I now must reach in and give, so I am painting my thesis in a new found interest in assemblage art\textsuperscript{xiv}. I am of service to everyday machines - from caterpillars to felt-tip pens - including metal, cotton, meat, jewellery, and cookies. I connect with consciousness as I guide the pen, drag the glue, taste the food and share this miraculous feeling of being alive.
I will end by saying thank you. Thank you for believing in what I once thought was an illness, for connecting me to a home. I started this journey wanting to capture something that meditation and silence *did* — intending to return with a tangible item to exclaim, “here! I have found it, meditation does this ...” and present a holy grail, a stone, a talisman or magic potion – something the world could use. Instead I found the real gift was me, given back to me - it was what I longed for ... the space to *be*. This project is not about the data I collected or observed, but about the significance of discovery through an experimental learning process that was emergent, ever-changing and liberating. The data I left the zen centre with (interview notes, videos and pictures) doesn’t much matter when compared to the strength and peace I feel in my ability to articulate a personal experience. Through this type of learning I was encouraged to reach personal levels of
intensity and then was guided through them. This process allowed me to develop a navigation system for my own inner wellness geographies and to connect with theories as my experience deemed necessary - it was about gaining knowledge through trust in abandonment. I feel I am speaking of a new kind of learning, a much needed pedagogy – one where the teacher asks the student to begin with a passion and then mindfully assists them through their journey, ever-present, always saying “yes” or “keep going” or providing guidance on how to safely explore the edge. April, you did all of this. In the last year that we have worked together you have been a supportive, creative and impassioned mentor. My feeling is of complete gratitude for the process you allowed me to experience. All of the answers I sought were within - I only needed a guide who understood that the study of creativity was linked to well-being. I hesitate to write these words now, I write them slowly as though with each letter I type I am touching a memory; the first days at Royal Roads on the lawn behind the castle, the unexpected comfort of an education that finally served me well, the encouragement to explore, the intensity of the flow, the energetics that carried me, the levels of awareness and the tearing open of space. As we collectively experience this shift in structure and navigate these new geographies, I anticipate a love of silence, a shaking off of the bonds of anxiety and ...the permission to have fun. There is nothing left to write now and everything to share.

Embody the Written:  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlyxpO2EvDA

Uh huh, Uh huh, Uh huh ... yep, yep, yep, yep, yep ....

Sincerely.
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References


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1. A period of intense meditation and silence that lasts from one to seven days.
2. Seated meditation, the basic practice in zen. It involves bodily posture, breathing, mental attitude and vision, see Samy (2010) chapter two for more information on.
3. Realm is a comic book character who has the power of changing landscapes through meditation. Realm works with everyone she meets to develop their own Super-Here-O’s as a means of bridging the online and offline worlds and liberating people from stress and anxiety.
4. Hasafa is a made up word by Katie and Amy Goodwin that denotes a perfect, magical food which doesn’t exist in the plane of composition but on the plane of immanence it is indescribable in that it simultaneously tastes like everything you desire at any particular moment.
5. Videos taken between December 1, 2012 and January 2, 2013 from Bodhi Zendo I called them “voems” as video poetry and visual expressions of the presence of meditation.
6. A conversation on Christmas Day at 3:00p.m. in the zen garden, we speak about giving and receiving and whether enlightenment must come before love, or love comes before enlightenment. On June 17th 2013 I wonder if maybe they are the same thing.
7. Father Samy gave a lecture during our sesshin about coming to understand ourselves as both givers and takers in relationships and that we must see the strength and vulnerability that exists simultaneously within ourselves.
8. Noble silence is silence of body, speech and mind, there is no gesturing in noble silence.
9. Videos recorded between December 1, 2012 and January 2, 2013 to document the body and the sense of emplacement.
10. Interview on December 22nd, 2:30p.m. in the zen center by the frog pond I ask about the trappings of language.
11. Samu is selfless service that is done by all participants in the form of gardening, sweeping, room cleaning, cutting vegetables and maintaining the grounds while they stay at the center.
12. After approaching a participant about avoiding samu, I was left this letter at my door. The note made me feel ashamed for having even asked about it, but I also felt like leaving it unsaid was creating tension. This was a big lesson for me in confidence and vulnerability.
13. Cottage University was hosted between May 11th 2013 and May 16th 2013 by the Department of Biological Flow, an ongoing experimental dialogue of research between Sean Smith and Barb Fornssler.
14. An artistic process of putting two or three dimensional compositions together with found objects.