

Trans-Disciplinary Migrations

Trans-Disciplinary Migrations:

*Science, the Sacred
and the Arts*

Edited by

Yvonne Owens

**Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing**



Trans-Disciplinary Migrations: Science, the Sacred and the Arts

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This book first published 2024

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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ISBN (10): 1-0364-0510-9

ISBN (13): 978-1-0364-0510-6

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements of Previously Published Works	vii
List of Illustrations	viii
Acknowledgements	xiii
Introduction	xiv
Chapter 1	1
Borders Unbound: Microbial life and the Sublime	
<i>Nicole Clouston</i>	
Chapter 2	16
Matrixial Eco Gnosis: Restoring Reciprocal Relations Through Art, Ritual and Trance-Based Inquiry	
<i>Barbara Bickel</i>	
Chapter 3	35
An Artist's Quest for <i>Genfukei</i> : Yumie Kono Synthesizes the Atomic Bomb	
<i>Yvonne Owens</i>	
Chapter 4	47
Re-Searching: The Ancestral Calling to the Soul and Transcultural Matrix	
<i>Akasa Tseng</i>	
Chapter 5	76
Art Audience as Shamanic Community: How Art Meets Psychological, Social, and Spiritual Needs	
<i>Denita Benyshek</i>	
Chapter 6	121
Sacred Interventions in the Work of Contemporary North American Indigenous Artists Dylan Thomas and Rick Rivet	
<i>Yvonne Owens</i>	

Chapter 7	144
Letters from the Trees: Mysteries and Devotions of the Irish Tree Alphabet <i>Miles Lowry</i>	
Chapter 8	161
Green Romanticism? Exhibiting the Ecocritical Approach in Binoy Majumdar's Poems <i>Nusrat Jahan</i>	
Chapter 9	176
Medieval Science, Poetic Verse, Sacred and Profane Love in Al-Andalus <i>Yvonne Owens</i>	
Chapter 10	216
Mystical, Linguistic and Literary Theory in the Aesthetics of Rowland Abiodun <i>Oluwatoyin Vincent Adepoju</i>	
Chapter 11	231
Science, Mathematics and Soul in the Land Art of Agnes Denes <i>John K. Grande</i>	
Chapter 12	239
The Question of Art, Spirituality and the Science of Wisdom <i>Lezlie A. Kinyon</i>	
Chapter 13	254
Archetypal Visions: A Discussion with Rachel Feinstein about her show <i>Mirror</i> (Gagosian Gallery, London, January-March, 2022) <i>Miriam Stein</i>	
The Contributors.....	265

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS OF PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED WORKS

An early version of Chapter 7, “Letters from the Trees: Mysteries and Devotions of the Irish Tree Alphabet,” by Miles Lowry was published in the journal of the Alcuin Society for Excellence in Book Design, *Amphora* (Vancouver: BC, 2021).

The essay in Chapter 8, “Green Romanticism? Exhibiting the Ecocritical Approach in Binoy Majumdar’s Poems” by Nusrat Jahan, was previously published in *The Çankaya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 17, no. 2 (Ankara: Turkey, 2023).

An earlier version of Chapter 11, “Science, Mathematics and Soul in the Land Art of Agnes Denes” by John K. Grande, appeared as “Minimizing Monetization Earth: Agnes Denes” Art,” in *Empty Mirror Literary Magazine* (Bellingham: WA, April 17, 2020).

The discourse in Chapter 13, “Archetypal Visions: A Discussion with Rachel Feinstein about her show *Mirror*,” by Miriam Stein was originally published as “Archetypal Visions” in *Rachel Feinstein: Mirror*, the artist’s monograph (New York: Gagosian, 2023).

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Chapter 1

- Fig. 1.1. Nicole Clouston, Detail image of microbial growth in *Mud (Lake Ontario)*, 2017-present. Photo and artwork by the author..... 2
- Fig. 1.2. Nicole Clouston, Detail image of microbial growth in *Mud (Lake Ontario)*, 2017-present. Photo and artwork by the author..... 2

Chapter 2

- Fig. 2.1. Nose Hill, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Photograph
by Barbara Bickel 17
- Fig. 2.2. Nose Hill ravine, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Photograph
by Barbara Bickel 20
- Fig. 2.3. *Eco Gnosis*, video still by Barbara Bickel. Image courtesy
of Barbara Bickel 26
- Fig. 2.4. Nose Hill grasses, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Photograph
by Barbara Bickel. 28
- Fig. 2.5. Nose Hill landing, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Photograph
by Barbara Bickel. 32

Chapter 3

- Fig. 3.1. Yumie Kono, *Blue Mountain*, 2005, oil on paper, 72” x 30”. Image
courtesy of Yumie Kono. 36
- Fig. 3.2. Yumie Kono, *Bronze Buttons in Water Box*, 2011, cast bronze.
Image courtesy of Yumie Kono..... 39

- Fig. 3.3. Yumie Kono, *Apple*, 2009, pencil, sumi ink, paper. Image courtesy of Yumie Kono 40
- Fig. 3.4. Yumie Kono, *Invitation from Wood, Water and Quintessence*, 2013, tempera on linen, 30" x 72". Image courtesy of Yumie Kono... 41
- Fig. 3.5. Yumie Kono, *The Murmur in a Wood*, 2013, tempera on linen, 27" x 82". Image courtesy of Yumie Kono 45

Chapter 5

- Fig. 5.1. Denita Benyshek, *The Mother: We are Born of the Earth*, watercolour and mixed media, 2024. Photograph by Denita Benyshek. 80
- Fig. 5.2. Denita Benyshek, *From Earth to Sky*, watercolour and mixed media, 2024. Photograph by Denita Benyshek 99
- Fig. 5.3. Denita Benyshek, *That Which Is Emergent*, watercolour and mixed media, 2024. Photograph by Denita Benyshek..... 108

Chapter 6

- Fig. 6.1. Rick Rivet, *Beast Within Cosmic Space 3*, Acrylic on Canvas, 2023. Image courtesy of Rick Rivet..... 125
- Fig.6.2. Rick Rivet, *Walrus*, acrylic on canvas, 2023. Image courtesy of Rick Rivet 125
- Fig. 6.3. Rick Rivet, *Journey #19*, acrylic on canvas, 1994. Image courtesy of Rick Rivet..... 126
- Fig. 6.4. Rick Rivet, *Beothuk Mound 21*, acrylic on canvas, 2004. Image courtesy of Rick Rivet 127
- Fig. 6.5. Rick Rivet, *Beothuk Mound #6*, acrylic on canvas, 1996. Image courtesy of Rick Rivet 128
- Fig. 6.6. Rick Rivet, *The Stars In Their Courses*, acrylic on canvas, 2023. Image courtesy of Rick Rivet..... 130

Fig. 6.7. Dylan Thomas, <i>Purity</i> , painted, sandblasted wood panel, 2017. Image courtesy of Dylan Thomas.	134
Fig. 6.8. M.C. Escher (1898-1972), <i>Circle Limit III</i> , Woodcut, 1959. Image Public Domain	135
Fig. 6.9. Dylan Thomas, <i>Bodhi Tree</i> , acrylic on canvas, 2016. Image courtesy of Dylan Thomas.	138
Fig. 6:10. Dylan Thomas, <i>Vortex</i> , acrylic on canvas, 2016. Image courtesy of Dylan Thomas.....	139

Chapter 7

Fig. 7.1. Ogham stone at the National Museum of Ireland. Photo courtesy of Miles Lowry	145
Fig. 7.2. Detailed view of notches carved into stone. Photo courtesy of Miles Lowry	145
Fig. 7.3. Miles Lowry, <i>Ogham Alphabet</i> . Photo courtesy of Miles Lowry	147
Fig. 7.4. Miles Lowry, <i>Conal cuan / Pack of Wolves</i> (Detail). Photo courtesy of Miles Lowry	147
Fig. 7.5. Miles Lowry, <i>Heartwood</i> . Photo Courtesy of Miles Lowry	148
Fig. 7.6. Miles Lowry, <i>Bieth / Birch</i> . Photo courtesy of Miles Lowry....	150
Fig. 7.7. Miles Lowry, <i>Glasiuni cnis, most silvery of skin, Bieth / Birch</i> . Photo courtesy of Miles Lowry.....	151
Fig. 7.8. Miles Lowry, <i>Duir / Oak, Ardam dossuibh, highest of bushes</i> . Photo courtesy of Miles Lowry.....	151
Fig. 7.9. Miles Lowry, <i>Ómra</i> . Photo courtesy of Miles Lowry	152
Fig. 7.10. Miles Lowry, <i>Ó laistigh / From Within</i> . Photo courtesy of Miles Lowry.....	153

Fig. 7.11. Miles Lowry, <i>Nine Waves</i> . Photo courtesy of Miles Lowry ...	154
Fig. 7.12. Miles Lowry, <i>Nine Waves</i> (Detail). Photo courtesy of Miles Lowry	155
Fig. 7.13. Miles Lowry, <i>School of Ogham</i> . Photo courtesy of Miles Lowry	156
Fig. 7.14. Miles Lowry, <i>Garrán Ogham</i> (“Ogham Grove”), Photo courtesy of Miles Lowry	157
Fig. 7.15. <i>The Book of Ballymote</i> at The Royal Library. Photo courtesy of Miles Lowry	158
Fig. 7.16. <i>Book of Ballymote</i> Fragment. Photo courtesy of Miles Lowry	158

Chapter 9

Fig. 9.1. Anonymous, “Miniature of the poet Rudolf von Neuenburg,” in <i>The Manesse Codex</i> , Große Heidelberger Liederhandschrift (University Library Heidelberg, c. 1300–40; f. 20r). Public Domain.	185
Fig. 9.2. Anonymous, “Christian And Moor Playing Chess,” <i>Libros de juegos d’Alphonse X le sage</i> fol. 64r.. Public Domain.	186
Fig. 9.3. Title page from a Latin edition of <i>Colliget</i> , Averroes's main work in medicine, Avenzoar, “Colliget Averroys...,” 1530. Wellcome Collection gallery.	194
Fig. 9.4. Left: Illustration from CSM (Alfonso X, “The Wise,” <i>Cantigas de Santa Maria</i>), No. 120: a Moorish player and a Christian player of the “Chitarra Moresca” and the “Chitarra Latina,” respectively; Right: Illustration from CSM No. 70: Two Jewish musicians playing psalteries. <i>Cantigas de Santa María</i> , Codex of the musicians, B-I-2 162R, 13 th century, Royal Library of the Monastery of El Escorial (RBME). National Heritage. Public Domain.	196
Fig. 9.5. Anonymous, “Miniature of the poet Rudolf von Neuenburg,” in <i>The Manesse Codex</i> , Große Heidelberger Liederhandschrift (University Library Heidelberg, c. 1300–40; f. 20r). Public Domain.	198

- Fig. 9.6. “Majun Brought to *Layla's* Tent by the Old Woman,” Miniatures, Gouache, 23.7x13.7 cm. Origin: Iran, 143, Timurid Dynasty, illustrations for *The Khamsa* by Nizami. Hermitage Museum. Public Domain 201
- Fig. 9.7. “The Lover and Dame Oyseuse outside a walled garden,” *Roman de la Rose* (c.1490-1500), f.12v-BL Harley MS 4425. Public Domain. 209

Chapter 11

- Fig. 11.1. Agnes Denes, *Wheatfield – A Confrontation: Battery Park Landfill*, Land Art, Downtown Manhattan, 1982. Image courtesy of John K. Grande..... 232
- Fig. 11.2. Agnes Denes, *Tree Mountain – A Living Time Capsule – 11,000 Trees, 11,000 People, 400 Years* (Triptych), Land Art, Ylöjärvi, Finland, 1992-1996, Type-C print, 36 x 36 inches, image courtesy Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York, 1992/2013..... 235
- Fig. 11.3. Agnes Denes, *Tree Mountain – A Living Time Capsule—11,000 Trees, 11,000 People, 400 Years*, (420 x 270x28 meters), Land Art, Ylöjärvi, Finland, 1992-96, Winter view (2001). Image courtesy Leslie Tonkonow Artworks + Projects, New York 236

Chapter 13

- Fig. 13.1. Rachel Feinstein, *Metal Storm*, 2021, Stained wood (236 x 176 x 106.2 cm). Image courtesy of the artist and Gagosian Gallery. Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates Ltd 264

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all I must thank Cambridge Scholars Publishers for their near-endless patience, which was constant and unstinting through a pandemic, two broken wrists, and the requisite amount of time for the vision for this project to fully emerge. Many thanks are due the prior publishers of early versions of some of the chapters in this volume, who graciously granted permissions for these essays to be included in the anthology: Cankaya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (Nusrat Jahan); Empty Mirror (John K. Grande); Amphora Journal (Miles Lowry) and Gagosian Gallery (Miriam Stein with Rachel Feinstein). Art galleries, photographers, artists and publications who granted permissions for their images and documentation of individual pieces, environmental land art, and performance sites have my gratitude. Finally I must express great appreciation for the contributing authors and their thoughtful, deeply felt chapter essays, their sporting consent to requests for more, and yet more, and to the visual artists among them who contributed their inspiring works.

INTRODUCTION

THE KNOWER AND THE KNOWN ARE ONE: A RUMINATION

*The knower and the known are one in knowledge. Some people think that they shall know God as standing there and they here. Not so. God and I, we are one in pure knowledge.*¹

Ideas as Entities

The pronouncement quoted above, made by the 13th-century German mystic and theologian Meister Eckhart (1260—1328), is still being parsed to this day by theologians seeking its exact meaning, and by those who express consternation about its seemingly Dionysian, ecstatic, all-inclusive “immanence” implications.² Many have observed that ideas seem to have their own consciousness, that they sometimes seem to develop a will of their own, “behave” like a contagious entity, or seem to actively “grow legs” and seek to transmit themselves. If an idea has “fitness,” or is a particularly good or innovative one, this promiscuous tendency to spread itself about might seem to be exacerbated. Ideas can act like living forms, or like probiotics—active agents that work their way through your system, reforming and renewing your constituent parts. Some are wholesome—nutritious—and others are unhelpful, even toxic, inimical to the whole. They need to be tasted, chewed on, found palatable or not, swallowed whole, or in part, or rejected. This is what scholastic monks in Eckhart’s day referred to as “ruminating”—going over and over an idea, mentally parsing it for nutritive value or possible toxicity like a cow or other ruminant, subjecting their well-

¹ Carl Franklin Kelley, *Meister Eckhart on divine knowledge* (Frog Books, 2008), p. 26.

² Michael Kurak, “The epistemology of illumination in Meister Eckhart,” in *Philosophy and Theology* 13, no. 2 (2001): pp. 275-286.

masticated grazing to the thorough, granular deconstruction and digestion through the processing of their complex stomachs.³

Let us consider the largely discredited theory popularly known as “The Hundredth Monkey Effect.” The hundredth monkey phenomenon refers to a sudden, spontaneous and mysterious leap of consciousness achieved when a point of evolutionary change, or change in awareness, is reached by a critical mass of members of the same genus. The idea was hypothesized by Dr. Lyall Watson (1938-2008) in his book *Lifetide* in 1979.⁴ He postulated that a new behaviour or idea is transmitted and spread rapidly in the constitutional, structural formation and consciousness of one group to all related groups once a critical number of members of one group exhibit the new behaviour or acknowledge the new idea, pattern, model and/or form. Crystal beds being grown to controlled specifications for use in space communications, as well as yeasts, primates, and many other genii have exhibited the phenomenon.

Among humans, it might be postulated as the reason why the patents office and copyright agencies in any given week are routinely swamped by applications to register versions of the same or similar invention, creative work, inspiration or idea.⁵ The one who gets their version into the office inbox first gets the patent or copyright. Creatives might find themselves actively attempting to keep their innovation “in the vault,” even in terms of the ways they think about their own creation, wanting to keep their idea under wraps in lieu of actually letting the proverbial cat out of the bag by talking about their invention out loud. This otherwise inexplicable state of affairs offers eloquent support for the idea that everything in the phenomenological universe is consciousness,⁶ constantly vibrating at some communicable frequency, and intrinsically connected at some, even if infinitesimal, highly interactive degree. Then there is The Global Consciousness Project, created originally in the Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research Lab at Princeton University in 1998, and directed by Roger Nelson as an extrapolation of two decades of experiments through

³ Shawn Normandin, “Ruminating on and in the Monk’s Tale.” *Chaucerian Ecopoetics: Deconstructing Anthropocentrism in the Canterbury Tales* (2018): pp. 181-215.

⁴ Lyall Watson, *Lifetide: The biology of the unconscious* (N.Y.:Simon & Schuster, 1979).

⁵ Sadao Nagaoka, Kazuyuki Motohashi, and Akira Goto, “Patent statistics as an innovation indicator,” in *Handbook of the Economics of Innovation*, vol. 2 (North-Holland, 2010): pp. 1083-1127.

⁶ Gopal C. Bhar, “Understanding Mysticism through Quantum Physics,” in *Prabuddha Bharata or Awakened India* 123, no. 3 (2018): pp. 347-365.

The Institute of Noetic Sciences at Princeton.⁷ The project's manifesto states: "Coherent consciousness creates order in the world. Subtle interactions link us with each other and the Earth."⁸ This long-term study maintains that patterns in human consciousness evidenced by behaviour exist and manifest even in advance of major events or natural catastrophes, much as animals seek high ground in advance of a tsunami.⁹ The lively fascination with consciousness continues to evolve, with studies and articles being published at an increasing rate. Two leading voices in evolutionary consciousness science, Eva Jablonka and Simona Ginsburg, recently published an article in the *MIT Press Reader* on how consciousness may have evolved, complete with diagrams and illustrations.¹⁰ A popular science article titled, "The idea that everything from spoons to stones are conscious is gaining academic credibility" was published in early 2018 in the *Quartz Daily Brief*. Penned by Olivia Goldhill, the article starts out:

"Consciousness permeates reality. Rather than being just a unique feature of human subjective experience, it's the foundation of the universe, present in every particle and all physical matter. This sounds like easily-dismissible bunkum, but as traditional attempts to explain consciousness continue to fail, the "panpsychist" view is increasingly being taken seriously by credible

⁷ Roger Nelson, "The Global Consciousness Project: Meaningful Correlations in Random Data," *Institute For Noetic Sciences* (Princeton University, 1999-2020). URL: <https://noosphere.princeton.edu/>

⁸ Although skeptics abound who maintain that the data anomalies reported by the project are the result of "pattern matching" or selection bias, which ultimately fail to support a belief in psi or global consciousness. There is a more considered critique that mainly focuses on methodological approach here: Jeffrey D. Scargle, "Was There Evidence of Global Consciousness on September 11, 2001," in *Journal of Scientific Exploration*, Vol. 16, No. 4: pp. 571–577, 2002; Cf. J. D. Reed, "So just what makes the Earth move?," in *The New York Times* (9 March 2003). URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/09/nyregion/so-just-what-makes-the-earth-move.html> ; See also the critique by famed skeptic, atheist and positivist, Robert Todd Carrol: "Global Consciousness," in *The Skeptic's Dictionary* (2003). URL: <https://skepdic.com/globalconsciousness.html> .

⁹ Maryann Mott, "Did animals sense tsunami was coming? Before the tsunami in Sri Lanka, coastal animals seemed to sense something was coming and fled to safety," in *National Geographic News* 4 (2005).

¹⁰ Eva Jablonka and Simona Ginsburg, "How Did Consciousness Evolve? An Illustrated Guide," in *The MIT Press Reader* (Feb. 3, 2023). URL: https://getpocket.com/explore/item/how-did-consciousness-evolve-an-illustrated-guide?utm_source=pocket-newtab-en-us .

philosophers, neuroscientists, and physicists, including figures such as neuroscientist Christof Koch and physicist Roger Penrose.”¹¹

This is marvellous, except that it's not just “panpsychism” being described. It's also “isness,” and “panentheism,” and “immanence.” It's also “pantheism,” to a degree, and the venerable philosophy and practice of animism, and, by whatever name, sign or symbol, it's likely been around since the dawn of human consciousness. No doubt, if one is of a purely practical scientific mindset, nothing really equates to being “ensouled,”¹² and you likely don't hold with the wilder ramifications of this notion of immanence. But if you're like the physicist, Michael Talbot, who wrote about parallels between ancient mysticism and quantum mechanics,¹³ and espoused a theoretical model of reality that suggests the physical universe is akin to a hologram in works like *Mysticism And The New Physics, Beyond The Quantum*, and *The Holographic Universe*, such ideas are probably not that much of a stretch. Frifjof Capra, the physicist who wrote *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* in 1975, pioneered trans-disciplinary discourses that quested after the delicate line between science and sacrality, treating the mystical implications of subatomic physics and the connections between quantum theory and sacred ideas intrinsic to Buddhism, Hinduism, and Taoism.¹⁴ Science enthusiast, Gary Zukav, wrote *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* in 1979, a book exploring modern physics and quantum phenomena, and was awarded the U.S. National Book Award in the category of Science the following year. An empowering paragraph in the first chapter illustrates why the work remains popular as a pedagogic text:

“This is a book about physics. Therefore, all it contains is a description. It cannot contain the experience itself. This does not mean that you will not have the experience of physics by reading it; it only means that if you do, the experience is coming from you, and not from the book. Quantum mechanics, for example, shows us that we are not as separate from the rest of the world as we once thought. Particle physics shows us that the ‘rest of

¹¹ Olivia Goldhill, “The idea that everything from spoons to stones are conscious is gaining academic credibility,” in *Quartz Daily Brief* (January 27, 2018).

¹² Albert Einstein was exceptional in this and made statements supporting the idea of an “ensouled” and conscious universe, if not “sentient” in all of its component parts and members. See: Albert Einstein and George Bernard Shaw, *Einstein on cosmic religion and other opinions and aphorisms* (Courier Corporation, 2012).

¹³ Michael Talbot, *Mysticism and the new physics* (New York: Bantam Books, 1980).

¹⁴ Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of physics: An exploration of the parallels between modern physics and eastern mysticism* (Boston: Shambhala publications, 1975).

the world' does not sit idly 'out there.' It is a sparkling realm of continual creation, transformation, and annihilation. The ideas of the new physics, when wholly grasped, can produce extraordinary experiences. The study of relativity theory, for example, can produce the remarkable experience that space and time are only mental constructions! Each of these different experiences is capable of changing us in such ways that we never again are able to view the world as we did before."¹⁵

"Wu Li" is the phonetic Chinese word for "physics," and means "Patterns of Organic Energy." It also means "Nonsense," "My Way," "I Clutch My Ideas," and "Enlightenment." These ideas are not mutually exclusive in Zukav's epistemological universe, and form the framework through which he weaves his exploration of quantum mechanics and relativity theory for beginners.¹⁶ Scientists of the more mystical turn of mind seem often to hover around this kind of pantheist idea of absolute connectivity, so you get books like *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* and *The Tao of Physics* coming out in the 1970s and 80s. These scientists and science enthusiasts found themselves immersed in the mystics' Ultimate Reality through their research, began to embrace a dawning understanding of the witch's concept of immanence, and succumbed to the Christian mystic's apprehension of "isness." Along with Gaia Theory in environmental science, and treatises on what will later be recognized and formulated as a "theory of connectivity," we approach a "unified field physics" that might be compared to the "Oneness" theology we saw from medieval mystics like Meister Eckhart or Rumi.¹⁷

Take the first part of Meister Eckhart's maxim, "The knower and the known are one," and consider that advanced physics has now acknowledged the inter-permeability of consciousness to the effect that, not only are the "knower" and the "known" one, but that one observably affects, influences and substantively changes the other. The observer of a controlled experiment affects the outcome in accordance with their expectations. Add this to the basic premise of "The Holographic Universe Theory," which postulates that what we experience phenomenologically as 3-D reality is

¹⁵ Gary Zukov. *The Dancing WuLi Masters. An Overview of the New Physics* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1979). p. 16.

¹⁶ Harper Academic website still lists the book as a top-selling text for university students. URL: <https://www.harperacademic.com/book/9780061926389/the-dancing-wu-li-masters/>

¹⁷ Saeed Zarrabi-Zadeh, *Practical mysticism in Islam and Christianity: a comparative study of Jalal al-Din Rumi and Meister Eckhart* (N.Y.: Routledge, 2016).

actually a projection of personal and collective (or consensual) expectations of reality, and is therefore essentially an illusion. Take the Meister's quote above and substitute the word "consciousness" for "knowledge." Now take the state-of-the-art notion of post-Einstein physics, to the effect that everything in the universe (and the universe itself) is Energy, in constant motion and always vibrating at some frequency or other, and that matter occurs at the conjunctions and intersections of energy wave forms, as if it sort of "clabbers" there, like curds from whey, if whey were a 3-dimensional spider web or densely informed field of radiating energy waves, viewed in 2-D as serpentine waving lines, and from on-end in 2-D as spiral forms. Then take the related relativistic thought, to the effect that Energy is never created or destroyed, it only changes form. Now substitute the word "Consciousness" for "Energy." Now, substitute the word "God" with "Energy." Or "Soul"? "Inspiritus"? "Awareness"? Use any word for the ineffable—for the saturated and saturating "being-ness" that is our apparent substance, energetic underwriting, and objective reality, what Meister Eckhart might have thought of as "isness."¹⁸

I like the term "panentheism," used by the (often-times censured, ultimately defrocked) ex-Catholic Priest, Matthew Fox (b. 1940) to denote the divine in his cosmic creation spirituality, his liberation and ecological theology, and his scientific cosmology.¹⁹ I also like what witch, environmental activist and scholar, Starhawk²⁰ calls it also, this being "immanence."²¹ These are all terms for the concept of a living, ensouled universe, used to express the idea of sacred consciousness infusing the universe, down to the last particle.

Theoretical physicists at the University of Southampton believe they have uncovered evidence the universe is in fact a giant holographic illusion — and one of the researchers on the project has told Sputnik the findings will alter the way scientists think about the universe forevermore. In essence, the holographic universe theory means that while humans perceive reality as three dimensional, it is in fact a mere projection on a two dimensional

¹⁸ Kelley, *Meister Eckhart*. Kelly discusses Eckhart's theory of divine "isness" throughout the book.

¹⁹ John W. Cooper, *Panentheism--the other god of the philosophers: From Plato to the present* (Baker Academic, 2006).

²⁰ Miriam Simos (b. 1951), Matthew Fox's old friend and former colleague at San Francisco University.

²¹ Kelly Therese Pollock, "Working her Magic: How Starhawk's Language of Spirituality Empowers Women and Revalues Nature," in *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review* 2, no. 1 (2011): pp. 20-38; Cassandra Witteman, "The witch: a pedagogy of immanence," PhD diss., 2021.

surface—effectively an illusion. If that’s a tad mind boggling, Professor Kostas Skenderis, one of the researchers on the project, generously simplified the concept. “A good analogy might be watching a 3D movie at the cinema—onscreen images may have height, width and depth, but they’re just projections on a flat 2D screen. In our 3D universe, however, we can touch and feel objects—the ‘projection’ is ‘real’ from our perspective,” Professor Skenderis told Sputnik.²² Skenderis seems to be telling us that all this is just an idea we’re projecting, both individually and collectively, a consensual ideational construct.

Other spiritualized socio-cultural/scientific movements of note that emerged in the mid-1970s include Second Wave Feminism,²³ the modern Green Movement,²⁴ and the Gaia Hypothesis.²⁵ There was also *This amazing, amazing, amazing but knowable universe* by Vladimir Spiridonovich Gott, translated from the original Russian and presented to the world in English by Moscow’s Progress Publishers in 1974.²⁶ Gott expressed his faith that the inexhaustible supply of questions provided by scientific inquiry will continue to be answerable, or “knowable.”

Gott is fundamentally a philosopher, and began his tome with an autoethnographic introductory chapter that establishes his particular, socially and culturally constructed point-of-view, and his relative disciplinary orthodoxy. He owns up to his essentially Marxist bias in decrying Machist Idealism and neo-Thomism, and follows with chapters on the role and characteristics of scientific concepts. The laws and principles of conservation and symmetry that permeate scientific formalism as well as the importance of recent discoveries in subatomic physics and cosmology are addressed, all imbued with a sense of wonder and reverence. This essential sense of awe is its own special cognition.²⁷ Never mind that Gott addresses the vanguards of science from well within the logical frameworks and cognitive culture of evolutionary philosophy, inductive and deductive

²² Kostas Skenderis, “The Holy Grail for Physicists: First Evidence Universe is a Hologram Uncovered,” *Sputnik International* (February 2, 2016).

²³ Charlene Spretnak (ed.), *The politics of women's spirituality: Essays on the rise of spiritual power within the feminist movement* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor books, 1982).

²⁴ Fritjof Capra and Charlene Spretnak, “Green politics: A New Paradigm,” in *National Forum*, vol. 64, no. 3 (Summer 1984): p. 21.

²⁵ James E. Lovelock and Lynn Margulis. “Atmospheric homeostasis by and for the biosphere: the Gaia hypothesis.” In *Tellus* 26, no. 1-2 (1974): pp. 2-10.

²⁶ Vladimir Spiridonovich Gott, *This amazing, amazing, amazing but knowable universe*, translated from the Russian edition (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974).

²⁷ Dacher Keltner and Jonathan Haidt, “Approaching awe, a moral, spiritual, and aesthetic emotion,” in *Cognition and emotion* 17, no. 2 (2003): pp. 297-314.

logics. His spiritually enlightened approach takes his scientific exposition into the realm of the sublime, transporting his rational discourse into the realm of sacred narrative—a “wonder tale” befitting a shaman, ecstatic, mystic or poet. This lucid state of heightened awareness exists in its own realm of hyper-cognition—revelatory, psychologically transforming, essentially religious.²⁸

Science, the sacred and the arts all came together in the birth of the modern Green Movement in the 1970s. The formative “Ten Key Values of the Green Movement” began to be formulated in the early 1980s,²⁹ and were discussed in detail by Daniel Coleman in his *Ecopolitics: building a green society*, published by the Rutgers University Press in 1994.³⁰ Inspired to a great degree by the Earth-revering Neo-Paganism movement in the Bay Area/San Francisco, the Ten Key Values Statement was informed by the works of activists, artists, writers, scholars, scientists, witches and philosophers like Starhawk, Mary Beth Edelson, Charlene Spretnak, and Marija Gimbutas, among other prominent theorists of sustainable social models. Fundamentally, with these guiding principles in place, the Green Movement synthesizes a new, philosophical movement of inter-connectivity. The core values of the movement came into play for the actual crafting of the movement’s original manifesto. The credo’s emergence was, itself, the result of a collective, non- hierarchical consensus process. Journalist Mark Satin was a prominent voice in the early Green Movement. His Green-oriented monthly newsletter, *New Options*, would become a must read in the late 1980s. He was invited to cover the Green Party founding meeting where the Key Values Statement was created, and later described the pluralistic, gender-inclusive, non-hierarchical/egalitarian ethics of the movement expressed in its mandate.

“The Ten Key Values were birthed at the St. Paul founding meeting, during a late Saturday night marathon session facilitated by then Los Angeles-based and later Eugene, OR activist Jeff Land (who would later co-host Green Gathering ’89), with primary contributions by Spretnak and by many close to Murray Bookchin of the New England Institute for Social Ecology [...] A ‘collective brain’ seemed to take hold, and we began working together as one. No single individual came up with the idea of a values statement; it just welled up from out of our intense discussion. Seamlessly, we began discussing what our own values or pillars might be. Someone began

²⁸ Kirk J. Schneider, *Awakening to awe: Personal stories of profound transformation* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2009).

²⁹ Capra and Spretnak, “Green politics,” p. 21.

³⁰ Daniel A. Coleman, *Ecopolitics: building a green society* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

recording our suggestions on a large flip chart. Ten, fifteen, twenty suggestions went up on the chart with seemingly no end in sight.”³¹

Emotions Give Colour to Existence

Erin Sullivan quotes Friedrich Nietzsche in her 2013 paper on the history of the emotions: “So far, all that has given colour to existence still lacks a history.”³² In his 1882 *Die Fröhlichen Wissenschaft*, most often known in English as *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche issued a call for “a more vivid, probing, and emotional form of history-making, one that takes the “conditions of [human] existence” as a crucial philosophical starting point rather than assuming such conditions are fixed and never-changing.”³³ The philosopher’s challenge has only really begun to be taken up in recent decades, despite that it would seem a vital component of any adequate accounting of historical movements and their impetus. “Historians should begin by looking at the emotionology of a period and then consider, to the extent that it is possible, how contemporary expressions of emotion compare to the dominant emotionological framework of that period.”³⁴

William Reddy has discussed how emotions are simultaneously personal and political; they create meaning for individuals but also contribute to “an overarching emotional culture,” shaped by reigning systems of power.³⁵ These cultures, subcultures and countercultures are termed “emotional communities,” and determine a reigning similarity of perception and required responses among particular groups that share a basic set of beliefs and values. An example would be the U.S. MAGA Movement and its internal culture of “alternate facts,” dubious information sources, and cultic perceptions of reality. Though these run counter to the overall national culture and the dominant ideology of democratic principles, MAGA adherents form an influential emotional community and, just as importantly for contemporary balances of domestic and international power, a vigorously engaged voting bloc. An even more vital emotional community formed, on a global scale, after the elevation of Donald J. Trump to the

³¹ The Green Party U.S. website: URL: http://www.gp.org/history_unabridged

³² Erin Sullivan, “The history of the emotions: Past, present, future.” In *Cultural History* 2, no. 1 (2013): pp. 93-102, p. 93.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Peter Burke, “Is There a Cultural History of the Emotions?,” in Gouk, Penelope and Helen Hills (eds) *Representing Emotions: New Connections in the Histories of Art, Music and Medicine* (Aldershot- Ashgate, 2005): pp. 35–47, 37–39.

³⁵ William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 124.

Office of the President in the United States in 2016. It was a peaceful protest against the idea of a demonstrably unapologetic misogynist having gained the highest office in the most economically, ideologically and militarily powerful nation on earth. Concerned that there should be a peaceful transfer of power, by common consensus the organizers of The Women's March waited until the day after Trump's inauguration (January 21, 2017) to stage their protest.³⁶ "An estimated 3,300,000 – 4,600,000 people participated in the United States and up to 5 million did worldwide. Packed cars, buses, airplanes, and trains commuted protesters to the march."³⁷ Within the passionately united worldwide emotional community, that formed over the course of a mere two months in the wake of the election of Trump, were other political and artistic sub-communities like Planned Parenthood and the Pink Pussyhat Project.³⁸

Other spontaneously forming emotional communities of predictably vast proportions are the #MeToo and #TimesUp movements. These, too, are law abiding, peaceful communities which are nevertheless vigorous in their resistance to ongoing abuses, and insistent on progressive change. Anti-vaccination dissenters constitute an emotional community. The Woodstock music festival participants on Max Yasgur's farm represent an emotional community,³⁹ as did the Northern Renaissance classical humanists who supplied the German Witch Hunt with constructed medical theories of "polluted" feminine physiology given to "evil," as justification to burn women designated as "witches" at the stake.⁴⁰ The immensely intellectually, spiritually and culturally fertile axis of time we look back on as the mid-1970s and early 80s, that birthed Second Wave Feminism, Neo-Paganism, Eco-Feminism, the Green Movement, the unearthing of women's history, feminist art history and the rebirth of matrifocal values in society represented a sprawling, globally diffuse emotional community. The significant flash points of historic transformation and change can't really be

³⁶ Originally conceived as The Women's March on Washington, it was ultimately held in sites around the world in a vast, choreographed orchestration.

³⁷ '2017 Women's March,' *Wikipedia*. URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2017_Women%27s_March

³⁸ *Ibid*.

³⁹ "After Yasgur's death, the farm was purchased by Alan Gerry and Bethel Woods Center for the Arts was created. A Woodstock memorial was also created at the site to honor the farmer and his role in music history." *The Real Woodstock Story*. URL: <http://www.woodstockstory.com/maxyasgur.html>

⁴⁰ Yvonne Owens, *Abject eroticism in northern Renaissance art: the witches and femmes fatales of Hans Baldung Grien* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), pp. 1-2, 8-9, 55-62.

accessed, or even properly apprehended, without taking into consideration the emotional histories, the bonded communities, and their feeling dynamics.

Until relatively recently, the empirical approach of physicists of the Newtonian universe propounded the belief that the world exists with or without human consciousness to observe it. But there is no such thing as that kind of separation, we come to find, and nothing so isolated that it represents an “island,” impermeable to outside influences, even to those as seemingly fragile and ephemeral as thought or expectation. Quantum physics puts forth theories that suggest what we think of as “reality” is a co-created illusion or construct. Physicists state that reality is a combination of the laws of the physical world, quantifiable and unequivocal, AND the subjective viewpoint of the observer—their expectations, fears, doubts, or biases. The radical change of perspective sweeping the Western world, the paradigm shift of our times, begins to privilege a more “omnijective view” of the cosmos and challenges our most deeply held beliefs about reality, whether scientific, religious, aesthetic, ethical or other. As our constructs are amended to accommodate this shift in consciousness, we can anticipate monumental changes in our collectively held beliefs about our world, our communities, and ourselves.

The Authors

This collection includes a wide range of ideas and creative expressions, curated from contributors who hail from the spectrum of disciplines, fields, perspectives and approaches, and their short biographies are presented at the close of this book. Because the essays for such a subject as the confluence among science, the sacred and the arts will necessarily be at least partly subjective, an elastic, accommodating, accessible and personalized methodological approach seemed necessary. Such an approach would serve to unify the anthology's various voices, and facilitate flow and connectivity throughout the book. I suggested the autoethnographic methodology as an analytical framework as it privileges personal experience, subjective analyses, memoir, storytelling and anecdote as research and “evidence.” It assumes a directly personal voice, presents in the first-person, and is the natural methodology of the personal essay, which utilizes an accessible yet authoritative discursive style, by which to approach both scholarly and general interest audiences.⁴¹ The methodology is particularly suitable as an approach to qualitative social research.

⁴¹ Julie Choi, *Creating a multivocal self: Autoethnography as method* (Routledge, 2016).

Significantly, autoethnography is a form of qualitative research in which an author uses self- reflection and writing to explore anecdotal and personal experience and connect this autobiographical story to wider cultural, political, and social meanings and understandings.⁴² The methodological approach challenges canonical ways of doing research, transforms traditional ways of representing others, “and treats research as a political, socially-just and socially-conscious act.”⁴³ The researcher, uses tenets of both autobiography and ethnography to perform autoethnography.⁴⁴ “Thus, as a method, autoethnography is both process and product.”⁴⁵ Of pertinence to the contributions included in this anthology, autoethnography “attempts to disrupt the binary of science and art.”⁴⁶ Appropriately for the range of topics treated in this collection: “Autoethnographers believe research can be rigorous, theoretical, and analytical and emotional, therapeutic, and inclusive of personal and social phenomena.”⁴⁷ The methodology is marvelously suited to the sacred art and science of story-telling—of co-creating more fit narratives and evolving stories that serve the planet and humanity in more holistic patterns of collective relevance.⁴⁸ Another appropriate framework, of obvious value in facilitating such a diffuse, all-inclusive, multidisciplinary approach, is the history of emotions methodology.⁴⁹

The request for chapters built around the methodologies of autoethnographic narrative, composed with a regard for emotional histories, bore fruit. The observations, perceptions and understandings available via the practices of emotional research analytical frameworks⁵⁰ are also key to achieving the kinds of comprehensive multi-perspectival analyses included here, and came naturally to the artists, writers, social scientists, environmentalists, culture critics, feminists, psychologists and philosophers (among other disciplinary persuasions) who have contributed to this

⁴² A comprehensive treatment of the method and methodology can be found here: URL: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1589/3095>

⁴³ Carolyn Ellis, Tony E. Adams & Arthur P. Bochner, ‘Autoethnografie,’ in Günter Mey & Katja Mruck (eds.), *Handbuch Qualitative Forschung in der Psychologie* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag/Springer, 2010): pp. 345-357, 357.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 356.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Arthur Bochner and Carolyn Ellis, *Evocative autoethnography: Writing lives and telling stories* (Routledge, 2016).

⁴⁹ Burke, ‘Cultural History of the Emotions.’

⁵⁰ Michael Larkin, Rachel Shaw & Paul Flowers, ‘Multiperspectival designs and processes in interpretative phenomenological analysis research,’ in *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 16:2 (2019): pp. 182-198.

collection. I was rewarded with a truly prismatic array of chapter essays—ones that presented fascinating and accessible scholarly discourses—rich in experience, focussed on experiential process, granular, specific while addressing universal concerns, and personable. They’ve been created by doctors of science, medicine, religion and the humanities, poets, creatives and educators.

The authors collected here hail from the spectrum of spiritual, cultural and disciplinary backgrounds, but all have journeyed with a sense of the quantum sublime, experienced awe in apprehending the web of connectivity, and speak about that with passion and eloquence. I wish you a truly enjoyable experience with their works.

Yvonne Owens, Victoria, 2024

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