

Bound Together: Understanding the Wellbeing Potential of Shared Reading

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Abstract: Poetry offers an especially valuable resource at this moment of tremendous need for language that not only informs but also connects, enacts, and creates. With precision and wonder, poetry can shake us from slumber, from fear, from loneliness and can beckon us across a bridge to a mended world of possibility. For many, the reading aloud and facilitated discussion of poetry and other literature in a community group setting is an amplified site of comfort and connection.

Founders of the shared reading model established reading groups with the conviction that collective engagement with poetry and literature can support personal, collective, and relational wellbeing. With this article, I present selected findings from the poetic inquiry phase of my dissertation examining what can happen within shared reading groups. I present three sets of poems: found poems from the transcripts of conversations I had with shared reading group participants, found poems from the work of theorists whose scholarship extends our understanding of processes integral to shared reading, and threshold poems that weave together the voices of participants, theorists, and myself as the poet-researcher. Through these poems I reveal how the cultivated liminal space of shared

reading engenders a practice of listening otherwise which makes possible resonant relations of wellbeing.

Keywords: poetic inquiry, liminality, listening otherwise, resonance

Introduction

On a drizzly and dark February afternoon, a small group of people gathers around a table, copies of Elizabeth Jennings' poem *Comfort* in hand. The group's facilitator, Claire, reads the poem aloud, slowly:

Hand closed upon another, warm.
The other, cold, turned round and met
And found a weather made of calm.
So sadness goes, and so regret.
A touch, a magic in the hand.
Not that the fortune-teller sees
Or thinks that she can understand.
This warm hand binds but also frees.

A brief, comfortable silence falls before Claire asks if anyone would like to re-read the poem aloud. Max volunteers and reads the poem. Not all, but most of the group members then take a turn sharing where and how the poem resonates, what it prompts them to remember or to reconsider, drawing from their personal experiences and building on one another's perspectives and stories. Elaine repeats the phrase 'a weather made of calm' and remarks how rare that occurrence seems to be now. I talk about how my children used to hold my hand every day and the bittersweetness I feel now that they are older and holding other people's hands. Freya recalls a time when they were comforted – not with words, but with the gentle

touch and presence of another – the dignity offered in just sitting side by side, much like it often is within this group.

This vignette offers a small glimpse of how, for many, the reading aloud and facilitated discussion of poetry and other literary texts in a community group setting is a site of comfort and connection (Longden et al. 2015, 117). Poetry provides precise and wondrous language that informs but also connects, enacts, and creates (Prendergast et al. 2009, 743). Founders of the shared reading model established reading groups with the conviction that collective engagement with poetry and literature can support personal, collective, and relational wellbeing (The Reader n.d.). With this paper, I reveal a selection of findings from the poetic inquiry phase of my doctoral research study examining what happens when people are brought together to read aloud and discuss literature and what is made possible in and from that experience. After providing a brief overview of the terms relational wellbeing, shared reading, and poetic inquiry, I offer more details of the methods I employed in my study. I then present my findings in the form of poetic clusters. Through the poems, I reveal how the cultivated liminal space (Turner 1969) of shared reading engenders a practice of listening otherwise (Lipari 2009) which makes possible resonant relations of wellbeing (Rosa 2019).

A Note on Terminology

At the heart of this work lie three key concepts: relational wellbeing, shared reading, and poetic inquiry. The definitions I offer here are imperfect, partial, and proposed as the most relevant within the context of my work.

Relational Wellbeing

My conceptualization of wellbeing draws from the work of Atkinson (2013), Smith and Reid (2018), White and Jha (2020) and others who characterize wellbeing as relational, collective, and situational. Rather than a set and immutable outcome to be achieved, I understand wellbeing to be a dynamic process, a set of interrelated practices in relation to self, others, place, and material/ immaterial objects: *accessing* and *sharing* valued resources; *experiencing* self-worth and confidence; *exercising* participation; *building* social connections; *enhancing* physical and mental wellness; *finding* meaning and purpose (Ryan et al. 2008; White 2015; Smith and Reid 2018; White and Jha 2020). A relational ontology of wellbeing rejects the primacy of the individual and considers relatedness not only as a support or constraint to individual wellbeing, but as “fundamentally constitutive” of how people experience wellbeing (White 2017, 129; Atkinson et al. 2020). Our sense of who we are and how we are is always in the process of being produced by relations with others.

Shared Reading Groups

Shared reading groups are distinct from more traditional book clubs. The material is not read in advance; poems, short stories, and novels are read aloud with groups of people in a range of settings (e.g., libraries, community centres, homeless shelters, prisons, health care clinics). Led by a trained facilitator in a supportive environment, the reading is interrupted regularly for participants to share their responses and reflections. Group members are free to choose how they participate; they may listen, read portions of the text aloud, and/or contribute to the discussions (Longden et al. 2015; Billington et al. 2016). My research examines what happens in shared reading groups modeled after those developed and delivered by the United

Kingdom charity, *The Reader*, and since adapted by groups throughout Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States.

Poetic Inquiry

Originating with feminist scholars in the 1970s as a way to make space for different forms of knowing, doing, and being, Prendergast first proposed the term 'poetic inquiry' in 2009 to comprise the myriad ways in which researchers incorporate poetry through the process of their work. Leggo (2006) argues that "human science research needs to be challenged, even unsettled, by the perspectives of poets and novelists and artists" (87). This unsettling is not destructive but generative, opening up space for richer and complex interpretation with emotional depth. Those conducting poetic inquiries view the divide between arts and science as artificial, resist objectivity, and do not seek certainty. Poetic inquirers fully acknowledge how their experiences and identities inform their engagement with research participants and data, and take an epistemological stance committed to situated authority and a relational process of knowledge generation (Freeman 2017; Faulkner 2019; Cooms and Saunders 2024).

I chose poetic inquiry as a means of conveying my findings in a way that more authentically communicates the substance and tone of research participants' voices (McCulliss 2013). Poet-researchers blend the scientific with the contemplative, reflexive, and emotive; they honour that "humans naturally take pleasure in rhythm and rhyme" (Lahman et al. 2019, 9). In using poetry as a method of thinking, analyzing, and presenting data, I acknowledge the complexity of experience, create space for the expression of felt experiences, and

seek to engage the readers' senses so they might feel moved by and connected to the world, whatever their interpretation – an echo of what happens in shared reading.

Data Gathering and Analysis

I gathered data from nine shared reading group members from several sites across Canada, United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, by interviewing each of them twice. Through those conversations, I elicited stories about their motivation and participation in shared reading, what wellbeing means to them, what they value (and possibly don't value) about the shared reading experience and why, what they perceive as being important components of shared reading, and whether or how they perceive participation in shared reading to influence their wellbeing.

Within my poetic inquiry, I performed a thinking with theory, weaving data from research participant interviews with selected theoretical concepts. In their seminal 2012 book, Jackson and Mazzei (2012) describe 'thinking with theory' as "putting philosophical concepts to work via disrupting the theory/practice binary by decentering each and instead showing how they constitute or make one another" (5). Thinking with theory is not linear; it involves moving back and forth between theory and data, allowing each to inform and evolve the other. This emergent process encourages creativity and the generation of new insights that might not have been possible through a more traditional application of theory (Jackson and Mazzei 2012). I selected theorists whose concepts can extend our understanding of what shared reading does and what it makes possible (two of which are presented here in this paper): Turner (1969), liminality and Lipari (2009, 2015), listening otherwise.

Immersed in the data, I took note of phrasing and imagery that might give rise to a “poetic occasion”. Syntax, rhythm, pauses and tone are all important consideration when translating the voice of an individual into a poem. To stay close to the essence of the text, to facilitate my reading the text while thinking with theory, and to present the findings, I enacted Prendergasts’ notion of ‘vox’ (voice, in Latin). Vox Theoria are poems written from, or in response to, academic literature. I extracted phrases from relevant theorists and reshaped them into poetic representations. Vox Participare refers to research participant-voiced poems. For these, I took the transcripts from my interviews with research participants and extracted phrases verbatim (though I sometimes rearranged or repeated them). Finally, to connect and juxtapose the voices of my research participants with those of the scholars and that of my own, I wrote what I call Vox Nexum poems. Here, I present a selection of the poems in clusters, accompanied by brief narratives, to allow for the exploration of central themes.

Findings

Liminality

Poems in this *liminality* cluster help us unfold the spatial aspects of the orientation, processes, and practices through which shared reading can be experienced as relational wellbeing. Liminality, derived from the Latin term *limen* meaning “threshold”, was first used by ethnologist Van Gennep (1960) to describe the middle, transitory stage of a rite of passage. It was later developed by Turner (1987) to include all temporary, in-between phases through which an individual or community passes from one state or space to another. A liminal

experience is characterized by a withdrawal from everyday habits, routines, rules, social order, and structures (Turner 1987).

Vox Theoria

I crafted the Vox Theoria poems below from various pieces of Taylor's seminal writing.

Betwixt and between
Positions arrayed by law
Neither here nor there
Momentarily free
Free from the norms

the values

the roles

the status

the responsibilities

brought by gender, social class, other
structural niches

Momentarily free (Turner 1982, 48)

Within a liminal space, new relations have room to flourish while hierarchies of difference are constrained.

Presented with a moment
In and out of time
Reveals however fleetingly
Some recognition of a social bond
That has ceased to be
And has simultaneously yet to be (Turner 1969, 360)

Most of us
See only
What we expect to see

What we expect to see
Is what we are conditioned to see
When we have learned the definitions of our culture

Liminal personae are
At once
No longer classified
Not yet classified
This condition, these persons
Elude the network (Turner 1969, 95-96, 359)

In a liminal space, typical rules and relations are dissolved, creating a disorienting process that engenders the possibility of transformation or something new.

the doffing of masks
the stripping of statuses
the renunciation of roles
the demolishing of structures (Turner 1986, 107)

making possible
the deconstruction of the
“uninteresting”
constructions of common sense
generating openness (Turner 1977, 68)

Vox Participare

The poems below, created from research participants' interview transcripts, suggest that inherent to shared reading are the characteristic elements of liminality: removal from everyday norms, roles, and routines, creative engagement in a facilitated activity, and building community within the group.

Participants spoke almost wistfully about how engagement within the shared reading space involved a suspension of the social rules and roles that governed their everyday lives. In these two poems, Janice and Sue evoke a sense of relief in escape from normal obligations and the resultant possibilities.

We sit for an hour and half with tea
Not having to think
The shops, the milk, the eggs
Oh yes, the eggs
I've got to do this
I've got to do that
We shut the door on the life that's outside (Janice)

It's not just a cup of tea or jar of lollies on the table.
It takes you out of a space that is mundane, ordinary
 And sometimes incredibly lonely
It opens up opportunities to being heard
Which is very interesting
Not only is the author or poet being heard
But the people themselves,
Us ourselves
In company where we are respected
Where we connect
Huh
Where we belong (Sue)

To Juliane, shared reading offered respite and an opportunity to be part of the group, but at a certain remove.

Layers that slowly come off
Slowly peeled away
Slowly edit your understanding of who a person is
You're not friends

And yet again
I'm an outsider in the group
And yet again

We are not paying enough attention
To the importance of feeling connected
Without being friends

It's a kind of being
In moving water
But at eye level with the others
A feeling of safety for me
With others without losing control entirely
Being able to step away from it
It's a practise
Slower to judge
More curious
A companion practise
In opening up
In watching, attending

The lack of pressure for prescriptive participation and the genuine invitation to share with no 'right answer' was welcomed, as Kimberley's and Jennine's poems below show.

whether it's you know
little miseries or big miseries
it's that one hour break
where they can turn that off
just enjoy being with other people
and reading and benefiting in that way

for that brief time
talk or not,
share or not,

smile or not

low stakes

no agenda

no need to come prepared

invited to share, no judgement

valued (Kimberley)

There's no time requirement.

There's no reading requirement.

There's no understanding requirement.

You come with what you have and as you are.

To shine a light on your corners of knowledge. (Jennine)

Jennine and Juliane seem to characterize the literary text itself as a liminal object and/or an object that facilitates experiences of liminality.

Comfort through the lens of the text

Support through the filter of literature

Encourage through the lens of the text

Share through the filter of literature (Jennine)

Text has this kind of Winnicott play object quality

It can be retrieved and discarded

Retrieved and discarded

You can project onto it

It's always the mediator (Juliane)

Vox Nexum

Stretched out on a rock ledge next to the lake, I wrote this Vox Nexum poem to braid together my own evolving understandings,

questions, and insights with those of Turner and those of my research participants.

I am in a liminal space here, where I write
A blue cabin, accessible only by the lake which today
Is painfully, plainly just as you might imagine
Lapping, loon-licked
Away from our kids, home, campus
Is being here why this idea of liminality resonates?

No matter. The poets, the participants, have uttered it themselves.
Not uttered liminal, not directly,
But in-between world words like
Loose, porous, blooming, slowing down, no agenda, curious, peeled away,
creative, fluid, immediacy, democratizing, equals, difference, present,
attending, attention, attend
What these words *do* generates openness – to self, to text, to other, to world

Around the table, text in hand
Refracting and reflecting experiences
Through the eyes of Chekov's head gardener
Through the eyes of glamorous Dorothea who turned 90 last month and
thinks
That story is a load of rubbish

One experience of liminality cocooned within another
Stepping into the pages, having stepped into the reading circle
What happens when we play here awhile, play with who we are and could be?
What happens when we pay attention to what else could be?
And what happens when we get up from the table?
Have we limbered up for a different way to be?
Can new recognition leak out
Once we step back from the pages, step back from the circle?
Or maybe it is enough to just return to the table, to the in-between

The liminality afforded by participation in shared reading renders it a creative and supportive space of openness, of possibility. Group members temporarily leave their everyday lives and enter the space to engage with unknown (at least initially) others. The group's facilitator purposefully and actively cultivates and sustains a supportive, nonjudgmental atmosphere of quiet boldness, emphasizing that all responses are valid and valued. Compared to other spaces, participants experience a relatively flattened hierarchy, enabling a sense of *communitas*, an atmosphere of trust, mutual vulnerability, and compassion.

Shared reading demonstrates that literature, too, can be viewed in liminal terms. Always, the poem or literary text is at the centre; entering the world of the poem or story crosses a second threshold where participants are given access to new landscapes and to the interior thoughts, feelings, and experiences of characters. Group members can identify and discuss feelings or perspectives of a character and not have to disclose them as their own, thus allowing a depth of exploration that might not otherwise have been comfortable or possible. Moreover, shared reading group members described feeling disoriented or uncertain as they wade through the liminal spaces of the text, individually and collectively attempting to cross the threshold to new understanding (of text, themselves, one another).

Listening Otherwise

Poems in this *listening otherwise* cluster prompt us to consider how space is created for listening as a critical, creative practice in shared reading, and what is made possible when we turn toward another (and an other), rather than away. Communication scholar and philosopher Lisbeth Lipari argues that "listening brings humans into being" (Lipari 2014, 2). Grounded in an ethic of compassion,

attention, and holding difference, listening otherwise is an invitational approach that emphasizes deeper engagement. It is an effort to suspend self-interest and foreknowledge, to attune to sounds of difference, and to receive the vulnerability of others in all their complexity (Lipari 2009).

Vox Theoria

Lipari's scholarship on listening otherwise was used to create the Vox Theoria found poems below. I open with two monostich poems to convey Lipari's insistence that our usual way of understanding dialogue is inadequate.

hearing	listening
perception, receiving from others	attention, giving to others (Lipari 2014, 187)

Through listening otherwise, we connect with others in an openness to their perspectives, insights, and experiences regardless of how we understand them or whether they reflect our own. In this process, we submit to discomfort and unpredictability. Listening, therefore, can be a site for the emergence of a new way of relating to ourselves, one another, and our environments.

I come to the conversation empty
not empty of my experience or history
but empty of the belief that my experience or history
defines the limits of possible meaning and experience (Lipari 2014, 35)

I don't have to "feel" what you feel
I don't have to "know" what it feels like to be you
I do need to stand in proximity to your pain.
I do need to stand with you, right next to you,
I do need to belong to you

I do need to let go of my ideas about who you are, who I am, what “should” be
(Lipari 2009, 350–351)

listening otherwise
arises from welcoming the other
as a guest
as a not-me

doesn't insist on understanding or familiarity, or shared feelings
does insist on listening with a kind of awareness that makes space
space for the unthinkable
space for the unimaginable (Lipari 2014, 186)

Lipari (2014) implores us to become, at least temporarily, unmoored, to dwell in the “groundlessness” that emerges when we can stretch beyond what we ‘know’ to be true and genuinely try to understand what others know to be true (184). Though this new understanding may not lead to a change in opinion or behaviour, listening otherwise does necessitate an openness to that possibility.

Listen otherwise
Listen unflinchingly
Despite discomfort
Engage on their terms
Receive insights of others
Despite discomfort
Intentionally engage with what is strange
Not already understood
Receive (Lipari 2009, 56)

Vox Participare

These Vox Participare poems, composed from the interview transcripts of research participants', suggest that shared reading can

be “a kind of dwelling place from where we offer our hospitality to others and the world” (Lipari 2009, 102). From this dwelling place, the listener does not have to fully understand (much less agree with) what the speaker (a character in a book, another reading group member) is describing; it is enough to sit alongside, in openness to receiving.

Catherine is grateful that shared reading begins with and nurtures listening.

One-on-one conversations?

Tricky, a bit intense

My personality type and anxiety?

Means I always feel like I’m “on”, that I need to have an answer to any question

Do I listen to the question?

No, my brain is leaping ahead

But as a shared reading participant?

I can listen, sit back, enjoy being read to, no pressure to respond.

Then when I do respond?

Not panicked, more genuine.

In the following poem, Melinda further laments that, for the most part, we have lost the art of respectful conversation. She feels shared reading might help to hone the requisite listening skills and the willingness to consider and accept the views of others.

In shared reading we’re given permission

To hold difference and to listen

To listen and to hold difference, gaze at it, attend to it

To try to understand when someone says something

Something very different to our own perspective on life

Multiperspectivity - what a mouthful of a word!

But you know what I mean

That is gold

Kimberley and I spent some time talking about the too-often occurrence of speaking with someone and knowing that the other person, instead of actively engaging with what you are conveying, is instead preparing what they want to say next. Kimberley feels that something different happens in shared reading.

At first you could tell the men were like, ugh
I do not wanna be here this is stupid
You know when you're listening to someone
You're You're getting your rebuttal ready

But then as we started talking the walls
The walls came down even they were surprised
How connected it was and how engaging

To talk about a poem and about
What the poem led to talking about

They connected they listened differently

Though we never spoke directly about the concept of listening otherwise, Om nonetheless captures the idea and its effects beautifully.

A continuous practice of listening with acceptance
A continuous practice to not be "Oh, that's not the way *I* think."
Like even when you have an internal dialogue with yourself
Like, "Ohhh, I think that's not quite right."
To be able to get to the place like "Ohhh, this is how *they* see it."
To be able to accept that very special (Om)

Vox Nexum

I wrote the Vox Nexum poem below with the intention of bringing my voice into conversation with Lipari's voice as well as those of my research participants so that together we could create something new.

Sitting on the log with Owen, listening
Slap of a beaver tail
Tremolo of a loon
Chatter of two squirrels up the birch tree
Shaking down the impossibly yellow leaves

Around the dinner table with Owen later that evening
Sure, there is a bit of whinging about kale
Mostly, though, he is listening, wide-open
Turning around the ideas he is hearing
Presenting them back to us, unvarnished

"That's how the bath water gets hot?"
"This song makes you sad? I think it's zippy."
"I want to feel strong arms swimming to the island, too."

Owen is four
He is a magnificent listener
Perhaps, being four, he has fewer objections, fewer assumptions, fewer convictions
But those who know four-year-olds know this isn't likely true
His roots are still tendrils, just below the surface
Not as frayed with complicated cuts and bruises
Not as knotted and bound up with long-held loves and loyalties

Glancing around I see what happens when we are not magnificent listeners
What happens when we fail to listen to the other, for the other
Families smiling (painfully), but unknown to one another
Communities shouting past one another
Fires set, walls set up, instruments set down

Owen comes to the conversation on the log, at the table empty
Not empty of his (still limited) experience or (still short) history
But empty of the certainty that what he knows, what he has experienced
Outlines the limits of what can be known, what can be experienced
We can do that, too

I see it happen around the not-empty table in shared reading
Comprehension and consensus not prerequisites for compassion
Softened boundaries
Listening matters, being listened to matters

Framing shared reading as a space for cultivating listening otherwise extends our understanding of listening as an ethical, relational practice (not just a cognitive function) with an emphasis on openness, vulnerability, and responsibility. If the ethical call is not to necessarily understand one another, but to *try to* understand one another, shared reading is a space in which group members can practice heeding that call. Shared reading, when viewed through the lens of Lipari's concept of listening otherwise, becomes not just a reading group, but a relationally attuned and ethically charged space. It invites participants to listen with care and mutual regard, not only to literature but to each other's stories, silences, and selves. This framing suggests that listening is the very medium through which shared reading works. It is not an adjunct to reading, but its relational core.

I propose that four components of shared reading practice facilitate listening otherwise: text as mediator, slow reading aloud, emphasis on affect, and lack of prescribed goal. Each of the facilitators emphasized the important responsibility of text selection. Key criteria were poems or stories that introduce multiple possible meanings and perspectives. These texts help to foster conversation

that does not fall into debate, argument, or even quick agreement. This mediating function creates a buffer that enables deeper, less defensive listening. Group members' everyday worlds are invariably more cacophonous and hurried. Hearing a story or poem voiced aloud, slowly, group members are better able to feel and acknowledge their relations and be open to self, other, and their environment.

Listening is not unidirectional (speaker to listener), but circular, involving text, listener, speaker, silence, and space. The facilitator draws out people's personal and affective responses to the poems and stories – how their experiences and lives are reflected or refracted. Finally, shared reading has no prescribed outcome; group members are not required to listen with a certain agenda or to prepare the right response. Listening otherwise, as enacted through shared reading, enables plural, layered interpretations to exist simultaneously, without need of resolution. This can enable a more generous listening orientation and a greater comfort with discomfort or not-knowing and disrupt complacent thinking and relating.

Concluding Discussion

My conversations with research participants, engagement with theorists, and the resultant clusters of poems reveal liminality and listening otherwise are not isolated, independent elements of shared reading. Each element contributes to the conditions necessary for the others to emerge, and together, they create a living ecology in which relational wellbeing is not only possible but co-produced through the interplay of affective forces. Relational wellbeing is an emergent quality of the shared reading experience, ground in mutual recognition and reflective co-presence. The facilitator, group, and text enter a threshold space of liminality where ordinary roles and

routines are suspended. This liminality supports listening otherwise by suspending conventional dynamics and patterns of interaction. It disorients in a productive way to enable openness to new kinds of experience, insight, and connection. Group members enter an ethical, responsive mode of listening not to evaluate or fix, but to be present to the words (and silences) of the text and one another. Listening otherwise allows for the emergence of complex truth and shared vulnerability; it sustains the ecology by deepening the quality of relations. Creative, collective literary engagement can generate trust, an eagerness to listen deeply, a willingness to risk depth of sharing, and opportunity to both attend and be attended to.

German sociologist and critical theorist Hartmut Rosa's theory of resonance, well documented in his monograph *Resonance: A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World* (published in German in 2016 and translated into English in 2019), offers a powerful lens for understanding the relational wellbeing potential of shared reading. For Rosa, resonance is a mode of engagement with the world that is characterized by a sense of being in tune or attuned with the environment, other people, and oneself. Resonance is not merely an individual experience but a *relational* quality that emerges from the interaction between an individual and their surroundings. It is a harmonious, dynamic, meaningful connection that shifts and evolves as a person moves through different contexts and experiences (2019).

Shared reading's key components (the presence of a rich literary text, a skilled and supportive facilitator, a group of open and non-judgmental participants, and an atmosphere of care) create conditions in which participants may be addressed and may respond; they can be (re)interpreted as the infrastructure of resonance. Its processes of intersubjective engagement, (in)articulation as a catalyst

for new insight, expansion of the boundaries of self, and collective wondering embody the lived enactments of resonance. Furthermore, the poetic inquiry revealed how listening otherwise (Lipari 2009, 2015) emerges within the liminal space of shared reading (Turner 1969, 1987), offering additional specification of how resonance unfolds in practice. When considered through Rosa's framework, shared reading can be understood as a resonant assemblage in which wellbeing is not delivered as an outcome but emerges as a dynamic relational process.

According to Rosa (2019), resonance always involves a relation of appropriation, in which both self and world are changed through the encounter. This dual movement begins with receptive affection - being touched, addressed, or moved by something outside the self, and culminates in responsive emotion and self-efficacy - answering back, responding, or allowing oneself to be transformed. It is the openness to be affected, and the capacity to respond that distinguishes resonance from mere stimulation or instrumental relation.

In shared reading, such processes are evident at multiple levels. On the individual side, participants often reported that a line of literature "spoke to them" in unexpected ways. A phrase could call forth a memory, unsettle an assumption, or articulate something long felt but unexpressed. In responding by sharing their thoughts aloud and by listening otherwise to one another, they did not simply consume the text but allowed themselves to be reshaped by it. This exemplifies the appropriative movement: the text becomes woven into their sense of self, while their interpretive engagement reanimates the text with new significance. The group setting amplifies this dynamic. When participants felt genuinely listened to,

or when their interpretation resonated with others, they not only saw themselves differently but also altered the collective understanding of the text. The literary text itself does not remain static. Each reading, each emphasis, each response extends its life, bringing forth meanings that would otherwise remain latent. The “world” of the text is therefore also transformed and made present in new ways.

Thus, in shared reading, Rosa’s claim that resonance transforms both self and world is borne out. Group members appropriate literature and one another not as inert resources but as responsive presences; in turn, their own subjectivities are altered by this reciprocity. Relational wellbeing can be experienced here not as comfort or affirmation but as the unfolding of a mutual transformation that expands what both the self and the world can become.

Through this work, I have responded to Sarah Atkinson’s (2013) call: “A shift is demanded away from how to enhance the resources for wellbeing centred on individual acquisition and towards attending to the social, material and spatially situated relationships through which individual and collective wellbeing are effected” (142). Importantly, the findings of this study carry suggestions for how (and why) arts-health practitioners and policymakers may likewise respond. By valuing the role of art, literature, and collective practice in generating resonant relations, communities can be supported to create the kinds of relational assemblages that enable individuals not only to survive, but to live well together.

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