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Pádua Hussner, Marc De; Hills de Zárate, Margaret , dir. Embodied Echoes : An Artistic Inquiry into Somatic Countertransference in Dance Movement Therapy with Healthy Seniors. Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2025. 88 pag. (Màster en Dansa Moviment Teràpia)

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Embodied Echoes: An Artistic Inquiry into Somatic Countertransference in Dance Movement Therapy with Healthy Seniors

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, UAB

Máster en Danza Movimiento Terapia - 19a Promoción (2022/2024)

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January 2025

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Abstract

This paper explores the use of Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) with healthy seniors, with specific focus on the transformation of somatic countertransference into poetry through artistic inquiry. Based on the technique of writing-moving-writing, the emotional embodied responses of the therapist-researcher to the sessions were documented in poetic form as a reflexive and analytical tool. Intertwining neuroscientific evidence, psychodynamic perspectives, philosophical theories, and drawing insight from the creative arts therapies (CAT's), this study investigates how embodied cognition and the artistic process promotes deeper therapeutic attunement for a strengthened therapeutic alliance. It further demonstrates how the creative process mirrors the therapeutic journey, seeking to highlight poetry's potential as an effective medium to facilitate access to preverbal and unconscious emotional content, both in the therapist and the

patient. This thesis seeks to contribute to the advancement of the therapeutic field, beyond the CAT's, by proposing the use of artistic modalities in clinical and personal practice, regardless of therapeutic paradigm. Both the creative and therapeutic journey's are presented as outcomes.

Resumen

Este documento explora el uso de la Danza Movimiento Terapia (DMT) con adultos mayores neurotípicos, con enfoque específico en la transformación de la contratransferencia somática en poesía a través de la indagación artística. Basado en la técnica de escritura-movimiento-escritura, las respuestas corporales y emocionales del terapeuta-investigador a las sesiones, se documentaron en forma poética como una herramienta reflexiva y analítica. Entrelazando evidencia neurocientífica, perspectivas psicodinámicas, teorías filosóficas y extrayendo información de las terapias de artes creativas (CAT), este estudio investiga cómo la cognición corporal y el proceso artístico promueven una sintonía terapéutica más profunda para una alianza terapéutica fortalecida. Además, demuestra cómo el proceso creativo refleja el recorrido terapéutico, buscando resaltar el potencial de la poesía como un medio eficaz para facilitar el acceso al contenido emocional preverbal e inconsciente, tanto en el terapeuta como en el paciente. Esta tesis busca contribuir al avance del campo terapéutico, más allá de las CAT, proponiendo el uso de modalidades artísticas en la práctica clínica y personal, independientemente del paradigma terapéutico. Tanto el recorrido creativo como el terapéutico se presentan como resultados.

Resum

Aquest document explora l'ús de la Danza Movimiento Terapia (DMT) amb adults majors neurotípics, amb enfocament específic en la transformació de la contratransferència somàtica en poesia a través de la indagació artística. Basat en la tècnica d'escriptura-moviment-escriptura, les respostes corporals i emocionals del terapeuta-investigador a les sessions, es documenten en forma poètica com una eina

reflexiva i analítica. Entrelazando evidencia neurocientífica, perspectivas psicodinámicas, teorías filosóficas y extrayendo información de las terapias de artes creativas (CAT), este estudio investiga cómo la cognición corporal y el proceso artístico promueven una sintonía terapéutica más profunda para una alianza terapéutica fortalecida. A més, demostra com el procés creatiu reflecteix el recorridó terapèutic, buscant ressaltar el potencial de la poesia com un mitjà eficaç per facilitar l'accés al contingut emocional preverbal i inconscient, tant en el terapeuta com en el pacient. Aquesta tesi busca contribuir a l'avanç del camp terapèutic, més allá de las CAT, proposant l'ús de modalitats artístiques en la pràctica clínica i personal, independentment del paradigma terapèutic. Tant el recorregut creatiu com el terapèutic es presenta com a resultats.

Keywords

Dance Movement Therapy (DMT), Healthy Seniors, Somatic Countertransference, Artistic Inquiry, Poetic Reflection, Embodied Cognition, Creative Arts Therapies (CAT's).

Acknowledgments

I'd like to acknowledge and express my deepest gratitude towards all the participants of this study, whose engagement, patience and dedication were invaluable to this journey. To Dra. Aida Marques and the Red Cross's staff in Parede, your generosity and collaboration made this work possible. To my supervisor María Elena Al-Cheikh, and my tutor Margaret Hills de Zárate, your guidance, wisdom and encouragement have been nothing short of instrumental in shaping this project, and in facing the challenges it presented along the way. Lastly, to my partner in life and crime, Matilde Ferreira, your unwavering support, patience, and belief in me have been my anchor throughout this odyssey.

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1. Presentation

This master thesis explores the therapist-researcher's physical and emotional responses to the therapeutic relationship with healthy seniors in Dance Movement Therapy (DMT), using the creative lens of poetic reflection both as a method of inquiry and tool for documenting therapeutic insights. Crossing the boundaries of both art and science, and framed by neuroscientific research, psychodynamic and philosophical theories, this paper seeks to engage and reveal the verbal, non-verbal, sensory and creative dimensions of the therapeutic relationship in a novel way. It aims to disclose an emerging therapist's journey with a new DMT group, presenting arguments for the use of poetic language as an innovative tool for a wider understanding of the clinical setting, while simultaneously following the unravelling of the creative process itself.

Grounded in key concepts such as transitional space, embodied cognition, and neuroplasticity, this thesis not only examines countertransference, but also reflects on a personal transformation which occurred in the DMT master programme: the spontaneous creation of poetic writings as a direct response to the intrinsic work as a DMT student, and practitioner in training. This project reveals a personal and creative endeavour, which in many ways mirrors the creative process of therapeutic change. It is the disclosure of an individual's journey into a new artform, and a quest for a broadened understanding of the therapeutic processes traversed by patients, hoping to better create transformative spaces through deepened empathy.

Lastly, the chosen population has profound personal connections, as the Red-Cross center where this study was implemented, assisted the therapist-researcher's maternal grandparents with daily meals in their late and final years. Serving a population often overlooked and underserved, became a tangible way to give back to a community central to a family's well-being.

2. Introduction

My personal journey into DMT began with a lifelong interest in the mind-body connection. I was aware that by enrolling in this master's programme, I would deepen the understanding of an observation I instinctively developed as a professional dancer—how movement easily reveals the hidden stories and emotions embedded deep within our bodies. A growing wish to be able to help my students beyond the scope of dance emerged, thus a search for therapeutic tools began. What I was unaware I would find, however, were the subtle nuances of somatic countertransference—the spontaneous, physical responses that occur as a therapist resonates, consciously or most often unconsciously, with their patients' experience. These moments became the basis for exploring how poetic reflection could transform embodied responses into meaningful insights. Serving as a new creative outlet, poetry also became a means to document my personal journey as an emerging therapist in DMT.

In two classes during this master's, I discovered an unexpected talent through the practice of writing-moving-writing as suggested by Panhofer and Payne (2011). I initially used this method during the first year in a *Preparación a la DMT* class, and then again in my second year in a *Aproximaciones al Embodiment* class. In both instances, after briefly embodying a personal episode and a case study, rhymes and stanzas spontaneously materialized in my notebook. As if somehow channeled, they formed reflections with a depth and complexity that technical language alone couldn't honor or convey. In one of these instances, the words revealed my countertransference presented as the patients' own voice, as my embodied response resonated with her experience of losing a lifelong partner.

“Fuiste la razón de mi vivir,

Aunque vivir por ti,

Fue mi sufrir.

Soy libre porque no estás más.

Pero contigo en la gloria,

No estoy en paz.”

(Excerpts from therapist-researcher's class notes after embodied movement, 2024)

Panhofer et al. (2011) highlight how the practice of movement promotes a greater engagement from the practitioner's entire being, effectively bridging the intellectual and emotional realms. One co-researcher in particular, expressed surprise over how movement had transformed her final writings, from technical to highly emotional (Panhofer et al., 2011). Inspired by this shift, I began incorporating this technique during my second-year internship, where I mediated DMT sessions with a group of male seniors at the *Residencia de Sant Cugat*, near Barcelona. At the end of each session, feeling the need to process the therapeutic relationship beyond simple note-taking, I expressed my countertransference through brief moments of embodied movement, followed by an attempt at writing poetry.

Brown (2008) emphasizes how important it is for creative arts therapists to stay connected to their original artforms in order to maintain their creative spark alive. Although I had stepped away from Argentine tango during the duration of this course, movement was always present as I maintained a practice akin to Authentic Movement (Adler, 2002). In private, I looked for information through my physical senses, listened to my body's impulses and acted them out as expressive movement. Writing has also been a lifelong passion, one which I've used extensively for introspection, particularly in moments of personal hardship, however, never for poetic reflection. In fact, I have never truly understood poetry nor have I sought it out deliberately, much less written any. I did write many journals during the course of this master's, as its journey brought profound personal changes to both my internal and external worlds. Over the past two years, I have kept these passions well alive, and having now merged, they naturally and irrevocably flourished into this artistic inquiry, revealing poetry as both a therapeutic tool for documenting and analyzing therapeutic relationships, and a creative output in its own right.

Therefore, this artistic inquiry is deeply connected to both my personal and professional lives. By bridging past passions and current interests with future aspirations, it unites the infinitely curious inner-child, the professional dancer, the amateur writer, the emerging dance movement therapist and the future creative arts therapist.

Dance Movement Therapy (DMT) and Seniors

DMT is a form of psychotherapy which focuses on movement as the foundational basis for emotional exploration, growth, and change, belonging to the family of Creative Arts Therapies (CAT's) alongside music, drama, poetry and art. The American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA) defines DMT as “the psychotherapeutic use of movement to promote emotional, social, cognitive, and physical integration of the individual, for the purpose of improving health and well-being” (ADTA, n.d.). Promoting self-expression and emotional release through enhanced self-awareness, DMT permits participants to access and process deep-seated emotions by engaging in an embodied enactive approach, which emphasizes body motion and the sensorimotor experience as key to the formation of abstract thinking (Koch & Fischman, 2011). There are several publications demonstrating DMT's ability to improve physical mobility, cognitive functioning, and emotional regulation, particularly in seniors, validating its implementation in addressing common challenges faced by this demographic, such as isolation, depression, and cognitive decline (Hackney et al., 2009; Guzmán-García et al., 2012; Ho et al., 2018; Bräuninger, 2018; Jiménez et al., 2019; Shim et al., 2024).

The cognitive benefits of DMT for seniors have been further demonstrated in structured dance forms like ballroom dancing, with research showing how the stimulation and activation of these neural pathways successfully slows cognitive decline, offering important support for seniors with mild cognitive impairment (Lazarou et al., 2017; Koch et al., 2019; Braco et al., 2023). Furthermore, a systematic review on the effectiveness of DMT in treating adults with depression by Karkou et al. (2019), demonstrated improved emotional well-being with reduced symptoms of depression and anxiety. Bräuninger's (2014) study on the effects of DMT with the elderly, also showed a significant, positive impact on social well-being, with reduced loneliness and isolation being reported by participants. Through kinesthetic empathy and attunement—the capacity to understand and tune into another individual's emotional states and experiences through movement sensing—DMT promotes “individual's spontaneity, playfulness, and creativity, (...)stimulates embodiment and thus the integration of the mind and body” (Jerak et al., 2018,

p. 61). By creating a supportive environment, DMT offers seniors an important sense of community by providing a space where they are able to connect with others, build trust, and experience a shared understanding of their individual stories.

Objectives

The main objective of this artistic inquiry is to leave a lasting contribution to the DMT and CAT's fields, by documenting an emerging therapist's journey into DMT, while following their creative endeavor into a new artform. The concept of somatic countertransference is addressed in an artistic way, using poetry both as a creative output and a tool for self-reflection, in an attempt to better understand relational dynamics for an improved therapeutic alliance. It also presents arguments as to how the creative process of poetic writing, promotes and facilitates the navigation and processing of complex emotional and relational patterns, which often lay beyond the conscious awareness of both therapist and patient.

Through this inquiry, the creation of an artistic body of work is sought—a collection of poems written as echoes of somatic countertransference, rising from the therapeutic relationship with healthy seniors in a daycare center. It investigates the connection between creativity, movement and language, and how the artistic expression can transform verbal and somatic experiences into reflective insight. Contributing to the advancement of CAT's and beyond, it proposes the use of poetry as an alternate form of analysis in clinical practice. Grounded in neuroscientific, philosophical and psychodynamic perspectives, the works of Damasio, Winnicott, Bion, Panhofer, Payne, Fiorini, Tosquelles, and others, are used to explore the intersection between arts and science.

Lastly, a hypothesis is proposed as to why these personal changes occurred, seeking to find the reason or combination of factors, which led to a spontaneous shift from narratives in prose, into poetry.

Significance of the Inquiry

Somatic countertransference still seems to be underexplored and undervalued as a powerful tool for therapeutic understanding and insight, particularly prevalent outside the field of DMT. Even though it is an area beyond the scope of this paper, it is a highly relevant discussion to the therapeutic field.

Through poetic reflection, therapists may potentially gain deeper insights into the therapeutic relationship, by reviewing their own embodied responses, and documenting them in a way that permits better access to emotional material, which may otherwise be lost through rational thought and technical language alone. In using free association through poetic writing, therapists could gain a more direct channel to uncover hidden meanings, which emerge from the interplay between the embodied experience and its creative expression. A better understanding of the therapeutic relationship allows for a more compassionate and attuned practitioner, strengthening the therapeutic alliance, which only benefits both patient and therapist.

This study also offers a perspective of the therapeutic relationship which is often undocumented—the therapist’s embodied responses to the intersubjective field, or somatic countertransference—through poetry, and by following their creative journey. Ultimately this is a personal tribute to a master’s degree, which has profoundly touched and changed me. By examining my own personal transformation—how my embodied experiences shifted my writing narratives into poetry—this thesis offers insight into the creative process itself, mirroring the therapeutic journey traversed in any clinical setting. It is hoped that this process, which is intricately related to therapeutic growth and change, prepares this emerging therapist to better empathize with patients engaging with new forms of communication and information processing, as it is proposed and made available by CAT’s.

3. Theoretical Framework

This chapter is organized into two focus areas, each providing a unique perspective into the transformative potential of DMT. In an attempt to validate the merit of CAT's and DMT in particular, neuroscientific findings are interwoven with philosophical and psychodynamic perspectives, demonstrating how enactive embodied experiences affect and change brain patterns. It also seeks to provide solid arguments for the use of poetic writing, both as a tool for documenting and analyzing countertransference, and as a medium for transformative therapeutic change.

Weaving together key concepts from neuroscientific research such as neuroplasticity, mirror neurons, motor-language interconnection, somatic markers, and self-location, with psychodynamic and philosophical theories of somatic countertransference, projective identification, vitality affects, transitional space, reverie, embodied cognition, body memory, tertiary thought processes, and poetic mirroring, this section seeks to establish a strong foundation to support the thesis' general focus. Through the integration of the research and theory reviewed in this section, the therapist-researcher seeks a justification to the personal change which occurred by directly engaging with the tools proposed and applied by DMT training.

3.1 Neuroscientific Research

Neuroplasticity

The brain's intrinsic ability to restructure and regenerate itself through the continuous formation of new neural pathways, achieved through engaging in sensorimotor activities and embodied experiences, lies at the very heart of therapeutic change. Making direct use of this biological function, DMT and CAT's, facilitate the access to emotional material through implicit processes, using symbolism and metaphor in

helping patients approach and address challenges in a more benevolent and compassionate manner, rather than tackling them in a verbal and direct way (Vaisvaser, 2021).

Research by Bonetto et al. (2021) shows the neuroplastic function of the brain happening beyond the synaptic connections, demonstrating how myelin—an insulating layer of protein and lipids that form around nerve fiber in the central nervous system—improves speed and signal transmission throughout the body. Highlighting how the creative, enactive practices influence both synaptic and myelin adaptations, the authors suggest that activities as proposed by DMT, may effectively reshape neural pathways, contributing to a more robust neurocircuitry.

The brain's inherent predictive ability, generating continuous internal modules to anticipate environmental experiences, further engages its neuroplastic function. When experiencing “prediction errors” in relation to real experiences such as encountering unfamiliar movement, the brain is triggered into neural adaptations, reshaping its previous models to accommodate and assimilate the new information received through the novel experience (Vaisvaser, 2021). This is particularly prominent in DMT settings, where patients are implicitly connected with new experiences, which resonate both cognitively and somatically through embodiment, symbolism and metaphor, helping promote resilience and adaptive reorganization of thought and behavior (De Witte et al., 2021).

Mirror Neurons and Empathy

Using single-cell recordings which detect electrical activity of individual neurons, Rizzolatti et al. (1996) discovered how a macaque's neurons fired both during specific motor actions, like grasping, but also while observing the same action performed by others, effectively transforming our understanding of social cognition. Also called “motor resonance,” this dually activated system located in the ventral premotor cortex, serves as the physical grounds for empathy to flourish, where the mere observation of

action and gesture activates internal motor representations, and enables an implicit understanding of others' intentions and emotions (Kilner & Lemon, 2013).

The therapeutic relationship in DMT is highly dependent on the mirror neuron system. Forming its empathic core, DMT uses perception and action to facilitate the connection between therapist and patient, on a profound nonverbal level of understanding. This is particularly relevant with populations that have either never had, or lost their language capabilities. By mirroring patients' movements, DMT practitioners engage the mirror neuron system, creating a shared resonance that allows patients to feel "seen" and understood in a transformative, nonverbal somatic way, grounding the therapeutic relationship in a deep sense of trust.

Motor-Language Interconnection

The 2010 study by Pulvermüller & Fadiga on active perception, suggests language and movement are interconnected within the brain's prefrontal cortex, specifically in the Broca's area. This area belongs to a network of "action-perception" neural circuits that integrate both sensory and motor information, enabling the brain to interpret sounds, gestures and movements, aiding in phonological, semantic and syntactic processing. The authors demonstrate a significant correlation between the language centers and the brain's motor functions, positively reframing language from a purely symbolic and abstract system, to one deeply rooted in physical, embodied experiences. Proposing that both verbal and nonverbal communication happens within the realm of physical experience, and supporting the mirror neuron system discoveries, these findings establish solid proof of the existence of a social connection that exists well beyond verbal and conceptual comprehension (Pulvermüller & Fadiga, 2010).

This study offers a neurobiological foundation for the perspective of embodied cognition, proposing there is an important interdependence between sensory and motor systems in meaning constructing. It shows

that emotional processing can be achieved through the use of movement as a primary mode of expression, particularly when addressing complex preverbal emotions. In DMT, this connection further highlights the clinical potential of movement as a means to access and reframe emotional experiences that can otherwise be difficult to be verbally articulated. The engagement of the neural circuitry of the action-perception networks, is the framework through which the therapist-researcher hypothesizes the transformation of his own narratives into poetry. This shift, catalyzed by embodied experiences, likely stemmed from the activation and reorganization of the language centers in the brain, creating some sort of a narrative reshuffling that found its renewed expression through poetic form, effectively highlighting the potential of movement based therapies in promoting creative and linguistic transformation.

Somatic Markers and Emotional Processing

In Descartes' Error (1994), Damasio presented one of the most relevant neuroscientific hypotheses of its time—the somatic marker theory. In his book, the author proposes that physical sensations, or “somatic markers,” act as embodied cues which alert and inform the brain of the emotional significance of any given situation, linking emotions to particular experiences. These markers, as posited by Damasio, function as subconscious signals, manifesting themselves in the ventromedial prefrontal cortex, before conscious awareness is fully engaged. In 1999, the author deepened his theory further emphasizing the mind-body interconnectedness, by proposing emotions originate in the body as physiological responses to external stimuli, only to be later read and interpreted by the brain, which in turn then creates a subjective experience of feelings (Damasio, 1999).

Damasio (2010) further expanded his work to suggest somatic markers—the physiological reference points created by past emotional experiences—contribute to a core, sense of self, shaping what is perceived as instinctive perceptions and unconscious responses to one's environment. Naming this concept as the “narrative self,” the author affirms that somatic markers are closely tied to autobiographical memory,

organizing past experiences into a coherent sense of identity, where embodied memories form present behavior and perception, beyond the simple moment-to-moment instinctive and immediate reactions. Apart from informing the brain of immediate emotional experiences, the somatic markers serve as long-term, embodied narratives, influencing an individual's relational dynamics and ever-evolving concept of self (Damasio, 2021).

This theory is highly relevant to the field of DMT, offering a solid validation for the use of movement as a pathway to access preverbal, unconscious material, helping patients and therapists alike access and restructure deeply rooted patterns and behaviors, through an intuitive, embodied process.

Embodiment and Self-Location

Research by Azry et al. (2006) on the neural basis of embodiment, highlights the role of the temporoparietal junction (TPJ) and the extrastriate body area (EBA) in the physical sensation of self. The TPJ, which integrates multisensory bodily information and is involved in self-processing, and the EBA, “which responds selectively to human bodies and body parts” (Azry et al., 2006, p.1) are responsible for the sense of embodiment—the sensation of inhabiting one’s physical body— and its location in space. This neurocircuitry enables physical and spatial processing, which allows individuals to feel grounded and oriented in space, promoting a stable embodied experience of the self, critical in therapeutic contexts (Azry et al., 2006).

This study suggests that DMT’s focus on an embodied presence through movement and body-centered dynamics, engages both the TPJ and EBA, facilitating the experience of the “here and now,” potentially contributing to a more cohesive sense of self. This neuroscientific evidence aligns with DMT practice, demonstrating how movement stimulates neurobiological mechanisms that underlie body awareness and spatial self-location, reinforcing the value of its clinical practices in promoting an embodied presence.

3.2 Psychodynamic and Philosophical Theory

Brief overview of Countertransference

Freud first introduced the term “countertransference” in private correspondence with Jung in 1909, initially defining it as the analyst’s emotional responses to the patient’s projections. Freud characterized it as being potentially obstructive to clinical objectivity, encouraging analysts to maintain absolute neutrality, effectively acting as “blank canvases” for their patients, as he believed any unresolved conflicts within the analyst could interfere with the therapeutic relationship (Stefana, 2015).

The theory on countertransference was later publicly debuted at the Nuremberg Congress of International Psychoanalytic Association (Freud, 1910), where Freud reiterated the risks of the therapists’ unchecked emotional responses, acknowledging, however, these reactions had the potential to reveal significant insights into the therapist’s own vulnerabilities and relational dynamics (Stefana, 2015).

Gabbard (2001) explains how in modern psychoanalytic theory, the concept and scope of countertransference evolved from a potential obstacle to be avoided, into an essential therapeutic tool. It has been increasingly embraced as a relational, intersubjective, bi-directional phenomenon that offers insight into the dynamic relationship between therapist and patient. The author further emphasizes how countertransference allows the therapist to access a patients’ unconscious material, revealing hidden layers of the psyche which may otherwise remain inaccessible. Countertransference is currently deemed as inevitable, and seen as a vital therapeutic tool which dynamically reflects the patients inner world, promoting greater empathic resonance and relational depth in the therapeutic relationship (Gabbard, 2001).

Somatic Countertransference

In contemporary psychoanalytic theory, somatic countertransference is becoming gradually recognized as an important aspect of the therapeutic setting, even though as Gubb (2014) notes, it remains underexplored. Presented as distinct from traditional countertransference, it is characterized as involving the totality of the therapists' embodied responses—the physical sensations and somatic reactions—which act as an attuned reflection of the patients' experience in the therapeutic space, facilitating a deep, nonverbal understanding of their internal states (Dosamantes-Beaudry, 2007).

Kinesthetic empathy, as defined by Fischman (2009), “synthesizes an approach of the dynamics of the therapeutic relationship that includes non-verbal communication, bodily movement, dancing and verbal expression” (p.21), and is described as essential for somatic countertransference. It is a form of knowledge, contact and co-construction, that can manifest itself through direct mirroring and affective attunement of the dance therapist's, or patients' movements, as well as the use of analogy, metaphor, and the telling of a semantically isomorphic story with movement, or the patients' verbalization (Fischman, 2009).

This embodied attunement, closely linked to the concept of projective identification, allows the therapist's body to function as a “tuning fork,” resonating with the patients' unconscious emotional states, often those dissociated or connected to trauma (Stone, 2006; Eekhoff, 2018). Projective identification, a concept developed by Klein (1946), describes an unconscious mechanism through which a person projects unwanted parts of themselves onto another person. Shay (2011) explains it as “an active process of disavowal, dis-identification, and externalization onto the social world” (p.256), with the “projector” unconsciously transferring these disowned aspects onto another, who may then begin to feel or express them. When this projection is engaged with and embodied by the recipient, it becomes what Klein defined as projective identification (Shay, 2011).

Shay further clarifies that in therapeutic contexts, projective identification is often a mutual and reciprocal process, where roles of projector and recipient may shift. This dynamic grants the therapist access to layers of the patients' psyche that may not be easily verbalized and accessed, providing embodied insight into dissociated or preverbal experiences. These projections can evoke traits or emotions within the recipient that may have been dormant, creating a rich interplay of resonant emotional material that may sometimes be difficult to discern who and where these feelings originated from (Shay, 2011).

Dosamantes-Beaudry (2007) highlights the importance of DMT practitioners tracking their somatic countertransference and using their own subjective experience, to better relate to their patients, especially when these have regressed to preverbal states. Finally, a study by Assan et al. (2022) has demonstrated the importance of self-care for therapeutic practitioners, with results suggesting that therapists who engage in self-nurturing practices and seek to resolve inner-conflicts, are better equipped to differentiate and manage emotional personal responses arising from countertransference.

Vitality Affects, Transitional Space and Reverie

Stern's (1985, 2010) theory on vitality affects, bringing a developmental psychology perspective on nonverbal communication to the discussion, is used in this thesis to frame how a therapist is able to use the neuroscientific concepts outlined in the previous sections, to read, interpret and connect to a patient. The author's theory relates to the preverbal relationship between the infant and the adult caregiver. It proposes that individual and unique vitality affects, categorized as intensity, rhythm, tempo and duration, develop in this intersubjective relationship, through a process he named as affective attunement, expanding on the notion that emotions are an entirely subjective experience born in one's body (Køppe et al., 2009). Seeking to explain the "how" of an interaction, and shedding light on the pathway through which a therapist can intuitively access and decipher feelings, states and emotional shifts in their patients,

Stern's theory emphasizes that form is inseparable from content, greatly contributing to, and validating the clinical work proposed by DMT practice.

This paper would be incomplete without the mention of the psychodynamic theory that provides the framework for the conceptual space where these relational dynamics and therapeutic changes occur. Winnicott first published his theory on "transitional objects" in 1953, expanding on it further in his book *Playing and Reality*, in 1971. Also relating to the adult-infant relationship, the transitional object stands for the transition of the infant from a symbiotic relationship with the mother (or primary caregiver), to the understanding she is something external and "other" than self. Winnicott deepens this concept to include the "potential space," as a conceptual area of experience that is neither internal nor external, but a combination of both, the space where the intersubjective relationship unfolds (Winnicott, 1971). It is within this abstract space, recreated in the therapeutic setting through affective attunement, that vitality affects unfold, helping both patients and therapists connect with deep, preverbal relational patterns, and through which therapeutic insight and change is possible.

Finally, Bion's (1962) theory on "*Container and contained*", expanding on the Kleinian concept of projective identification, explains how Winnicott's transitional space is sustained. Riesenberg-Malcolm defines it as "the capacity of one individual (or object) to receive in himself projections from another individual, which he then can sense and use as communications (from him), transform them, and finally give them back (or convey back) to the subject in a modified form" (Riesenberg-Malcolm, 2001, p. 166). Bion suggests that infants have sensations they are unable to cope with, thus projecting them onto the mother that "mentally digests" them and returns them in a more tolerable way for the infant to assimilate. He called this "*Reverie*" (Bion, 1962).

Tertiary Thought Process and The Poetic Mirror

Expanding the concept of primary and secondary thought processes (Freud, 1900), a tertiary thought process is introduced by Fiorini (2007) as a separate mode of cognition that, as the author proposes, acts as a creative bridge between the first two. Identifying it as central to the creative process, and differentiating it from the primary process—driven by unconscious, preverbal expressions—and the secondary process—directed by structured, reality-based reasoning—the author postulates the tertiary thought process promotes a “creative oscillation” between the conscious and unconscious realms. The therapeutic potential is deepened, as this oscillation allows the patient to dynamically interact between creative engagement and rational thought, enabling them to access and resolve internal conflicts through symbolic play and imaginative exploration. Relating it to Winnicott’s “transitional space,” Fiorini describes this process as essential to both artistic creation and therapeutic transformation, as it promotes flexibility and innovation in thought and emotional expression (Fiorini, 2007).

Tosquelles (2014) “poetic mirror” builds upon this concept, suggesting that poetry functions as a medium beyond just a form of expression—it allows access, and has the potential to reorganize unconscious material. Proposing that poetic language creates a symbolic bridge between fragmented, preverbal experiences and a structured self-awareness, effectively reflecting Fiorini’s views, the author affirms that this process permits individuals to see themselves in fresh, unexpected ways, while holding space for ambiguity and multiplicity. Poetry enables a fluid interchange between the subjective and objective aspects of the patients’ experience, fostering a form of “psychological play” to symbolically process repressed, disorganized or dissociated aspects of the psyche (Tosquelles, 2014).

Intersubjective Embodied Cognition and Body Memory

Building on previous sections, which addressed the therapeutic context and the tools used by practitioners to analyze the intersubjective relationship that occurs within it, Gallagher & Payne (2014) propose a

reshaping of traditional clinical models. Framing classical psychotherapy as purely mental and detached from bodily processes, the authors suggest a paradigm shift into a new therapeutic model that incorporates and acknowledges the body as subject (or agent), rather than an object with only mechanical functions. As already postulated in the neuroscientific section, they emphasize the mind exists through the body and its interaction to the environment, and not simply in the brain as purely cognitive processes. This indicates that meaning is a co-created experience, achieved through an enactive, embodied process, where the active engagement with the environment and the relational dynamics, shapes the intersubjective, relational space (Gallagher & Payne, 2014).

Adding to this argument, Panhofer et al. (2011) state that movement precedes the verbal language as means of communication, having the ability to bypass cognitive barriers, thus allowing for direct access to emotional material imprinted physically as body memory—emotional and experiential knowledge embedded in the body. The authors highlight how this type of memory is non-linear and implicit, surfacing through gestures, rhythms and movements that evoke emotional responses, providing further support for the use of nonverbal techniques in clinical contexts. Panhofer et al. contribute further to the embodied cognition discussion, by suggesting thinking and knowing to be deeply rooted in the body (Panhofer et al., 2011).

Panhofer & Payne (2011) add deeper insight, by providing solid arguments that deepen Gallagher & Payne's proposed model, using metaphor and imagery as a means to translate the lived experience into words, as suggested by Panhofer et al. (2011). Panhofer & Payne discuss the limitations of technical language in translating the embodied experience into conventional language, instead proposing that this transmutation be done through the use of metaphor, poetry, and personal, emotive vocabulary to better capture the experience. These perspectives contribute to a more holistic approach to clinical reasoning, in particular, validating DMT's practices where movement is extensively used as a method to engage the

body as subject, facilitating emotional and relational exploration in an implicit, deeply intuitive way, beyond the purely verbal and rational reasoning.

Writing-moving-writing

Panhofer (2011) adds the finalizing touch to the theoretical framework on which this thesis is grounded upon, while simultaneously introducing the next section—methodology. This research article further supports the use of poetic and metaphorical language for the expression of preverbal material, offering even more arguments that support Gallagher & Payne’s proposed model. Panhofer rounds the discussion on how movement and body-centered practices allow for patients and therapists alike, to connect with unconscious material, stating these methods have the potential to reveal insights that may otherwise not emerge through language alone.

This article is of particular relevance to this thesis, as it presents the technique used by the therapist-researcher that led to its inception—writing-moving-writing. Beyond introducing an innovative technique of transmuting movement into language, it was this method that caused the transformation leading to a shift from narratives into poetic writings. Finally, this study provides a solid argument for artistic research, recognizing movement and writing as not only creative and expressive outlets, but also as important sources of knowledge. Panhofer’s views are central to the chosen methodology, presenting strong evidence of the transformative potential of this technique as both a research tool and a reflective practice. This perspective positions the therapist’s own creative engagement as an essential aspect of the therapeutic relationship, helping process countertransference, and somatic countertransference in particular, through mediums more apt to capture its nuanced, embodied elements.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design: Artistic Inquiry

This project employs artistic inquiry as its research method, emphasizing a practice-led approach, where the creative process serves as the central method of knowledge generation. Hervey (2000) defines artistic research as a method that “uses artistic methods of gathering, analyzing, and/or presenting data, (...) engages in and acknowledges a creative process, (...) [and] is motivated and determined by the aesthetic values of the researcher” (Hervey 2000, p. 7). Although qualitative research tools such as interviews and reflective journaling, which produce data through thematic coding, may complement artistic research, they remain, however, secondary to its central focus on creation as inquiry (McNiff, 1998). A recent field in academic research, artistic inquiry treats the creative process itself as the main driver of inquiry, generating embodied, performative, and affective knowledge, validating artistic creation as both process and outcome (Hervey 2000; Haseman, 2006; Bolt, 2007; Hannula et al., 2014; Leavy, 2017).

Artistic research prioritizes non-discursive knowledge and insight that emerges from sensory, embodied, aesthetic engagement, challenging conventional academic and linguistic frameworks of presenting data (Barrett & Bolt, 2010; Borgdorff, 2012). This type of inquiry provides a solid methodology for engaging with embodied, affective dimensions of experience, as it expands beyond the qualitative research paradigms, yet still maintains academic and methodological rigour (Hannula et al., 2014). McNiff (1986) furthers this argument, stating that the greatest strength of research in creative arts therapies lies in its ability to blur and transcend the boundaries between art and science. Insight derived from movement, as in dance, resists traditional verbalization but retains methodological rigour, by treating the performance as both investigation and result (Hervey, 2000; Nelson, 2013; Hannula et al., 2014).

Nelson (2013) expands the discussion on artistic research demonstrating how its adaptive nature allows for questions and hypotheses to evolve organically, by placing emphasis on exploration rather than

explanation. Further challenging traditional research methods, Haseman (2006) notes how an artist's engagement with their medium generates intuitive and sensory insights that conventional methods may overlook. This makes artistic research particularly relevant in therapeutic change, where creative experiences and processes promote transformative experiences, challenging hierarchical knowledge generation (Leavy, 2017; Barrett & Bolt, 2010).

Hervey (2000) introduces further arguments that support artistic inquiry as a transformative methodology, arguing it transcends objectivity and facilitates access to embodied knowledge, by interconnecting art, truth, authenticity, and the aesthetic experience. Authenticity emerges from a genuine engagement with the creative process, while the aesthetic experience is not about creating beauty, but about engaging with the qualities of the created work, its rhythm, flow, texture and emotional resonance. This methodology, Hervey argues, is particularly well suited to uncovering and revealing personal and subjective truths that may otherwise be difficult to convey (Hervey, 2000).

In this thesis, the creation of poetry is thus presented as having a dual purpose—an instrument of reflection in addressing countertransference experiences and a medium through which somatic responses are transformed into a creative output. It is the therapist-researcher's conviction that poetic language honours the nonverbal, sensory and affective dimensions of therapeutic work, enabling a nuanced exploration of the therapeutic setting and relationship. This method effectively parallels the creative reflexive processes as practiced in DMT, offering another pathway to transformation and growth in the therapeutic setting. The collection of poems that were created through this process are presented in its entirety in Appendix G.

4.2 Reflexivity and Positionality

Positionality describes how a researcher enters the process of knowledge generation, taking into account their social identity, personal narratives and philosophical views, and is viewed as essential in order to maintain transparency and strengthen methodological rigor in qualitative research (Kennedy et al., 2024). The authors further state that in research involving direct contact with participants, as is the case of this inquiry, positionality directly shapes the intersubjective space between the researcher, the participants, how they “relate to one another, the nature of the access they are willing to provide us to their thoughts or actions or environments and our possible interpretations” (p. 1).

The choice of these particular demographics and institution has deep personal ties to the researcher-therapist. Even though a “phenomenological attitude” (Finlay, 2008) was pursued, as this study’s output is uniquely centered on the therapist-researcher’s lived experience of countertransference, the need to reduce biases by balancing the researcher’s insights with observations from the participants was deemed as unnecessary. Dwyer & Buckle (2009) identify three “membership roles” of researcher’s engaged in observational methods—*peripheral*, *active* and *complete member researchers*—along with an “*insider-outsider*” conflict. The sessions from which data was gathered were led by the therapist-researcher clearly defining his status and role as a full member of the group. Relating to the insider-outsider perspective, there was a continuous dance between being an insider and outsider researcher (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). At times, cultural identities and local norms gave way to an insider position. However, the simple difference in chronological age sometimes made the outsider position as the only possible role.

Reflexivity, understood as “a continual internal dialogue and critical self-evaluation of researchers’ positionality” (Koopman et al., 2020, p. 1), enables the researcher to reach broader interpretations of both data collected and how the researcher influenced its production. In this study, reflexivity was achieved through several mediums, such as reflexive journaling and video recordings, which tracked emotional

responses and the evolving therapeutic presence of the therapist-researcher. By focusing mainly on the therapist-researcher's lived experience, reflexivity was employed to strengthen the authenticity and depth of personal introspection. In a way, this study is a form of autoethnography (Adams et al., 2015), using poetry, reflexive journaling and visual recordings, to explore the complexities of countertransference and somatic responses in DMT group sessions, ultimately creating a series of poems that emerged from the therapist-researcher's intersubjective experience with, and within the group.

4.3 Triangulation

Patton (1999) states that a consensus within the academic community has been reached regarding the comparison (and validity) between quantitative and qualitative research. The author emphasizes the importance of adjusting research methods to empirical questions and issues, rather than advocating for a single, universal methodological approach to all problems. This statement offers a solid foundation for the methodology chosen by the therapist-researcher to capture the nuances of somatic countertransference.

Patton identified four distinct triangulation methods: "(1) checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods, that is, *methods triangulation*; (2) examining the consistency of different data sources within the same method, that is, *triangulation of sources*; (3) using multiple analysts to review findings, that is, *analyst triangulation*; and (4) using multiple perspectives or theories to interpret the data, that is, *theory/perspective triangulation*" (Patton, 1999, p. 1193). Method and theory/perspective triangulation have been employed in this inquiry, through the use of multiple data collecting procedures and by drawing from diverse theoretical frameworks. Using multiple methods, data sources and theories, triangulation is used to ensure and enhance the quality and credibility of qualitative research, seeking to reduce biases and inconsistencies throughout the data collected and analyzed (Patton, 1999).

4.4 Participants, Setting and Description

Participants

The group was predominantly formed by female neurotypical seniors [65+ as defined by Merriam-Webster (2024)], with 3 males and 16 females attending in total. Participants' ages ranged between 62 to 89, with most living alone for many years, some of them for well over a decade. Only one participant lived at the Red Cross' senior residence facility. Several reported having lived in the same area for over 50 years, even though they originated from diverse parts of Portugal, such as the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, Proença-a-Nova, Porto, and Arcos de Valdevez. Most participants disclosed having longstanding ties to their local communities and, to a certain extent, already formed a cohesive unit as they were all users of the institution's daycare center.

The first session was attended by 14 participants, although attendance varied throughout the series due to personal and health reasons. Some members withdrew, while others joined mid-series with the group's unanimous agreement, resulting in an average of 9 participants per session. This number is only demonstrative, as in reality most sessions had above 10 participants, while only a few towards the end of the process had as few as 6 and 7 participants. The final session was attended by 9, showing some consistency in the group's attendance and an overall commitment to the DMT process.

Institution

The Portuguese Red Cross's delegation in Parede (Cascais) "seeks to develop a set of activities in the areas of Health, Social Action, and Training aimed at contributing to improving the situation of the most vulnerable" (Translation by the author, Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa, n.d.-a). Divided into several wings including: the Senior Academy and Senior Club offering a variety of activities, such as fitness, foreign language classes and arts and crafts workshops; a communal cafeteria, which also offers home delivered

meals (Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa, n.d.-b); the Residential Facilities, with 30 rooms divided into 17 singles and 13 doubles, with healthcare professionals present to face the residents “needs, offering privacy, social interaction, and encouragement for participation in active life” (Translation by the author, Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa, n.d.-c); and a healthcare clinic offering a wide variety of medical services to the community at large (Cruz Vermelha Portuguesa, n.d.-d).

Criteria

No exclusion criteria was set for this research. Participation in the group sessions was open to all seniors at the center who expressed interest or were identified by the staff as likely to benefit, regardless of potential mobility issues, prior experience with expressive movement, therapy, or existing health conditions.

Setting, Description and Structure

The group met bi-weekly, on Tuesdays and Fridays at 11 a.m., with the sessions initially being 45 minutes long. They were, however, soon extended to a full hour, as participants were highly engaged in the proposed activities. The series ran between September 13th and October 18th, 2024, and consisted of eleven sessions in a semi-open group format, offering flexibility for participants to join or leave as needed or desired.

The Friday sessions took place in the center’s Noble Hall, a large, spacious area that comfortably accommodated the group. On Tuesdays, scheduling conflicts meant the sessions were often conducted in smaller spaces, such as the senior academy’s community room and other smaller rooms, which limited movement and the possibility of the activities proposed. Despite these constraints, activities were adjusted

to the possibilities each room offered, and although perhaps not fully comfortable due to the space restrictions, participants seemed to adapt well.

Following Marian Chace's technique (Levy, 1988), each session followed a structure of check-in, warm-up, theme development, and closure. The therapeutic objectives for the series were to develop group cohesion, promote emotional expression through creative processes, and vitalization (Schmais, 1985). The sessions began with a 10 minute check-in, where participants were invited to share current emotional and physical states. In the warm-up phase, grounding dynamics and basic movement exercises, exploring Laban's *efforts* (Bartenieff & Lewis, 1980), were introduced in an effort to facilitate the transition into therapeutic work and to expand movement vocabulary. The Chace circle, an activity where the group mirrors the movement of each participant, one at a time, was used extensively throughout the series to promote connection, belonging and the experience of being "seen." The development stage, which was typically the longest, included nonverbal and creative expression exercises, such as translating poetry and narratives into movement, and vice-versa. Finally, all sessions ended with a check-out phase, following a closing ritual established in the first session of singing *Nel blu, dipinto di blu*, by Domenico Modugno.

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Before the start of the series, participants were requested to sign informed consent forms (Appendix A) after a first meeting, in which they were briefed on the study's general objectives and the nature of the DMT sessions. The potential of incorporating some of the participants' material into the final thesis was acknowledged, assuring their full confidentiality and anonymity, through the use of coded references in documenting any identifiable information. In order to fully safeguard participants' privacy, notes and journals were safely stored. A risk assessment form (Appendix B) was also signed, which informed the participants on the nature of the sessions and their general guidelines. Both these forms, along with the

preliminary questionnaires used *in lieu* of the initial interviews, were translated and adapted from Castellanos-Montenegro (2023) to suit the particular context of this research.

In an attempt to ensure participants' physical safety by reducing the risk of falls, and in order to accommodate all levels of physical mobility, the sessions were conducted primarily from a seated position. The therapist-researcher maintained a flexible attitude, using a semi-structured session plan, allowing for participants to engage with the proposed activities at their own individual paces. This promoted a safe and accessible environment for movement-based dynamics to be carried out comfortably and securely. Finally, to ensure participation was voluntary, they were informed of the right to withdraw at any point during the course of the series, without the need to provide any justification.

4.6 Data Collection

To ensure comprehensive data was collected on the somatic countertransference and the evolution of the therapist-researcher's journey in DMT, data was gathered through a variety of sources and within specific timeframes. Initially, semi-structured individual interviews were planned to be conducted before the beginning of the sessions, however, due to scheduling changes requested by the institution, these were unable to be implemented. Participants were instead requested to complete semi-structured questionnaires (Appendix C), helping the therapist-researcher develop objectives and strategies for the series by obtaining detailed information on their individual backgrounds.

The data collection methods were:

A - Pre-session questionnaires.

B - Session Notes on the logistics, goals, adaptations, resources, themes, reflections, movement analysis and future planning (Appendix E).

C - Researcher's Diary documenting self-observations and reflective notes, recorded in longhand immediately before and after each session.

D - Video Recordings of therapist-researcher's movement exploration based on the somatic countertransference, following each note-taking session (point B and C).

E - Poetry Writing after each movement exploration session (point D).

F - Creative Process Diary documenting the creative process involved in producing the video recordings and writing poetry.

G - Final Focus Group gathering participants' insights and reflections on their experience of the sessions.

In addition to composing the poems after each movement session, the therapist-researcher revisited and reshaped the poetic echoes, by carefully re-reading the reflexive diary, the session notes and by reviewing the video recordings, engaging once again in a similar technique, following, however, a *reading-moving-writing* process instead. Although not the scope of this study, the final focus group provided an external and invaluable perspective to the therapist-researcher's personal journey as a therapist in training, by revealing the voices and experiences of the participants. Finally, as Portuguese was both the participants and the therapist-researcher's native tongue, all notes and poems were initially written in this language, having been translated by the author into English, making them accessible to a wider audience.

5. Findings

The Therapeutic Journey

There was an initial level of nervousness in facing an unknown—the starting of a new process and, more importantly, a new career—illustrating the therapist-researcher’s inexperience, and underlying anxiety. However, despite these obstacles, a conscious effort was made to face challenges with the necessary courage to deal with emotional growth and vulnerability. From an early stage, a deliberate attempt in embracing the concept of simply being present and holding space, was also made, helping both the therapist-researcher and the group navigate initial resistance, scepticism and misconstrued ideas of the DMT process and setting.

“Coragem, portanto,

Com ela vou brincar.

A dor, no entanto,

Ainda não sei processar.”

[Excerpt from *A PRIMEIRA VEZ* (THE FIRST TIME)]

“Courage, therefore,

With it I will play.

The pain, however,

I still don’t know how to process.”

“O espaço é necessário,

Para um silêncio partir.

A sua voz é um rio,

À espera de poder fluir.”

[Excerpt from *CANSADO EM SILÊNCIO* (TIRED IN SILENCE)]

“Space is necessary

For silence to break.

Their voice is a river,

Waiting to flow.”

The initial nervousness and fears evolved into greater confusion, self-doubt and frustration, from being lost, to not belonging, to grappling with the sensation of being more like an entertainer rather than a therapist.

*“Que dor esta confusão,
Envelhecer não é sem senão!
Tudo quero compreender...
Mas sinto não pertencer.”*

[Excerpt from *CONFUSÃO* (CONFUSION)]

*“Sinto ainda ser animador...
Precisam de um catalisador!
Mas não partilho da afirmação,
Vi até muita imaginação!”*

[Excerpt from *O POEMA* (THE POEM)]

*“Presente apenas estou,
Só perdido assim encontrarei,
Mesmo sem saber para onde vou
A pessoa que um dia serei.”*

[Excerpt from *PERDIDO* (LOST)]

“What pain, this confusion,
Growing old is no easy feat!
I want to understand everything...
But I feel I do not belong.”

“I still feel like an entertainer...
They need a catalyst!
But I don’t share that affirmation,
I even saw much imagination!”

“I am only present,
Only by being lost will I find,
Even without knowing where I go,
The person I am yet to become.”

Naturally, resistance was a common thread that surfaced often during the course of the series, what was perhaps less expected, was the countertransference—resisting back.

*“Mas resistência induzi
Em resposta à relutância.
Pus então em evidência
Um padrão que reproduzi.*

“But resistance, I induced
In response to reluctance.
It thus brought to light
A pattern I reproduced.

[Excerpts from *RESISTÊNCIA* (RESISTANCE)]

Another moment was noted through an image and poem that reflected the invaluable resource of having one's work supervised. The gesture of swimming was repeated throughout the series and led to the poem *Nadar (Supervisão)* [Swimming (Supervision)].

“A nadar procuro

Um apoio no meandro

Deste rio que é a vida,

Entre nós aqui compartilhada.

“Swimming, I seek

Support in the meander

Of this river called life,

Shared here among us.

Em cada exalar,

Encontro uma exortação:

Nadar pede respirar,

E fazer supervisão!”

In every exhale,

I find an exhortation:

Swimming requires breathing,

And supervision!”

{Excerpts from *NADAR (SUPERVISÃO)* [SWIMMING (SUPERVISION)]}

This is illustrative of the struggle in containing the group, and most importantly, the challenge in sustaining difficult emotions without seeking to alter patients' experience.

“Do silêncio que sustive

O calor em suor surtiu.

O diálogo então surgiu,

No espaço que contive.

“From the silence I held,

The warmth turned to sweat.

The dialogue then emerged

In the space I contained.

[Excerpts from *A SESSÃO* (THE SESSION)]

“Difícil é a experiência

De manter a respiração,

Não alterar a vivência,

E suster a sensação.”

[Excerpt from *PERDIDO* (LOST)]

“It is difficult, this experience,

To keep breathing steady,

To not alter the living moment,

And to hold the sensation.”

The mental confusion of not being able to process the emotional weight from such a large group, also had its expression.

Cerrada esta névoa

De um poço sem fundo.

Uma palavra que atordoa

E uma quadra que confundo.

[Excerpt from *TRISTE NÉVOA* (SAD MIST)]

Dense is this mist

Of a bottomless pit.

A word that stuns

And a verse that I confuse.

Towards the final sessions, a subtle but significant change started taking place. As we entered the flu season, the attendance slightly dwindled, bringing the numbers down to form a more manageable group to hold and contain, which in turn led to greater disclosure by the participants.

“Do número pequeno

Emerge a cumplicidade

Para o seu mundo interno

Revelar com autenticidade.

[Excerpts from *ENCONTRO* (ENCOUNTER)]

“From the smaller number

Emerges complicity,

To reveal their inner world

With authenticity.”

Before the closing session there was still room for another unexpected turn of events, leading to a strong somatic countertransference, when a dynamic proposed was expected to have one outcome, when in reality, it had the exact opposite result.

“Sensação incômoda

Não a consigo afastar.

Ficou como uma nódoa

Que não consigo limpar.

“An uncomfortable feeling

I cannot push it away.

It stayed like a stain

That I cannot clean.

Carrego uma tristeza

Do induzir algo bom.

Pensava que trazia leveza,

Terminamos noutro tom.”

I carry a sadness

From inducing something good.

I thought I brought lightness,

But we ended on another note.”

[Excerpt from *TRISTE NÉVOA* (SAD MIST)]

The final session revealed a personal ambivalence towards closures—a satisfaction of having reached the end, intertwined with a paradoxical feeling of not wanting to see the closure of this group.

“Do fecho e da mudança,

Reconheço querer distância

Mas em plena confiança

Lembrei-me da sua importância.”

“Of closure and change,

I recognize a desire for distance

But in full confidence

I remembered its importance.”

“Alívio enfim

Em sentimento oposto:

“Relief at last

In an opposing feeling:

Querer chegar ao fim

Wanting to reach the end

E preservar o posto.”

Yet preserve the post.”

[Excerpts from *FINAL* (ENDING)]

The Creative Journey

The notes on the creative process which unfolded behind the creation of these poems, reveal another layer of this personal journey. They follow the struggles, shifts, and limitations that occurred while a new artform was engaged. It is a written testament to the trial and error process that unfolded as this work was coming to life, a document that shows the different angles and approaches that were sought in order to create a valid piece of art.

At the beginning of this process, there was a clear tendency towards perfectionism, which led to high levels of procrastination, ending in a creative block. The need to be “perfect”, even in the way the letters were written on paper, completely hampered the creative flow. “There was something about wanting to be perfect, to not smudge a piece of paper in vain, something about being scared about not being perfect, that I forgot that is precisely what the artistic process is all about” (Excerpt from the creative diary, September 16th, 2024), an experiential journey.

However, time constraints pushed the work further and forced the technique of writing-moving-writing to be applied regardless of outcome. The work needed to be produced, gradually creating an internal shift, realizing that in order to create, whether good or bad, all that is necessary is to simply engage in the creative process itself.

“I didn’t necessarily find the theme I wanted to address, but a combination of words came up, words that I used as a starting point: tired and silence. I let it flow, some verses came

out, prose, some loose words I wished I had found, but I am still discovering the artistic process itself” (Excerpt from the creative diary, September 17th, 2024).

Still in the initial phases of this process, namely after session #4, the direction of the poetry took shape, from capturing an overall sense of the sessions, to specifically addressing and mirroring the therapist-researcher’s own experience with the group. Feelings of self-doubt returned, questioning the validity and legitimacy of the creative work..

“It was a challenge to guide the poetry more towards my own experience, trying to channel the countertransference. I felt blocked and clumsy, yet I ended up writing more than ever. Once again, I doubted the quality and, more importantly, the value of my work and process” (Excerpt from the creative diary, September 27th, 2024).

After session #6 a shift started happening. During the movement exploration the voice appeared for the first time, a symbolic moment, representative of the transformation that started taking place within the creative process itself. Also, in an effort to focus the creation, keywords summarizing the countertransference started being used as a starting point for the poems.

“I’m starting to feel value in what I’m doing. I enjoy the process of creation, of bringing something new into the world. I enjoy playing with words, with their rhythm, with the meaning they take on. I’m also losing the fear of the non-beautiful, the grotesque, and the nonsensical” (Excerpt from the creative diary, October 1st, 2024).

And finally, the creative process started mirroring therapeutic growth and change.

“Where does the creative process end? It never does. It can always renew, restructure, and reinvent itself. I feel increasingly confident in my work. I may not always get it right, I may even succeed only a few times, but I question, review, and seek out my mistakes and how to improve in the future” (Excerpt from the creative diary, October 8th, 2024).

“It seems it was important to immerse myself in the process, simply to keep writing until what was within me, ready to be revealed, started to emerge” (Excerpt from the creative diary, October 11th, 2024).

Which of course had its turn of events, both in the session and in the creative process following it.

“I finish today with a very restless feeling, as if I don’t know how to position my body or where or how to do it. The mental fog is still present. I think I need to move more. The countertransference from this day was very strong! To the point that I felt the need to keep trying to write some verses after this note...” (Excerpt from the creative diary, October 15th, 2024).

By the end of the series, this process created a tangible change. The fear of imperfection was not as prevalent, allowing for mistakes to take place, for the process to be experimental and embracing discovery in a non-judgemental way.

“I see greater fluidity and, more importantly, less rigidity. I’m not worried about striking out words on the paper, not worried with rhymes, and see something deeper, more beautiful emerging. I feel more confident in this work, and I can see how this process has helped and changed me. (...) I increasingly believe in the power of creativity, not to bring something concrete or tangible into the world, beautiful or grotesque, but as a way to

expand and open the horizons of my inner world. Isn't that what this is all about? To connect with the life force is to connect with the spontaneity and creativity we all possess. It's about awakening them" (Excerpt from the creative diary, October 18th, 2024).

6. Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

It is not within the scope of this project to present any particular findings or analysis of results in regard to any therapeutic or somatic countertransference insights. Furthermore, eleven sessions of therapeutic group work are insufficient to produce such data, especially when performed by a therapist still in training and in a group of such large numbers. Instead, the engagement in the creative process itself, and the outcome of a collection of poems as a result, were the main drivers of this inquiry. Using somatic countertransference as its basis for information collecting, this thesis simply sought to document an emerging therapist's journey into a new DMT group, revealing it through poetry.

Notwithstanding, working with seniors brought insight into their life condition. Above all, a sense of purpose, of being needed, was highly valued as it may have been lost in other areas of their lives. Österholm et al. (2022) highlight the importance in “doing” and “being”, for feelings of “becoming” and “belonging” to arise. DMT encourages a reflexive “doing”, by offering a space that invites patients to achieve a sense of self-realization, through an implicit creative process. It also offers a space for belonging, where self-acceptance is fostered by engaging in shared “doings”, effectively helping promote the well-being and healthy aging of seniors (Österholm et al., 2022). DMT greatly contributes to humanized care (Roque et al., 2021) by maintaining affective attunement and kinesthetic empathy at its core, recognizing an individual as a complete subject with physical, emotional and psychological needs, promoting autonomy and dignified aging.

Starting an endeavour into a new artform brought many challenges. Perfectionism, procrastination, frustration, and self-doubt, all surfaced with *gusto*. The perceived need to create something meaningful and with artistic beauty, created a pressure that brought feelings of invalidation and illegitimacy. A

resistance to starting the process also appeared, as it was difficult to reconnect to the body and its subsequent somatic countertransference, after deliberately spending several months away from DMT.

The need to balance the use of raw material immediately after a session, with post-reflection of the emotional content, raised a question that was never truly answered. Right after the session was perhaps more apt to capture the somatic countertransference in its rawest form, however, in using poetry as an analytical tool, it seemed necessary for the material to mature first, before materializing it into a written form. A search to allow free associative flow to emerge was also undertaken, the irony is, while trying to permit for a free structure to come forth, the verses invariably wanted to become rhyming quatrains. This created a continuous tension between structure and spontaneity that was never resolved.

The perceived lack of safe, private spaces in the institution, in order to conduct this work uninterrupted, also added an additional layer to the challenges, highlighting the need for a dedicated space to engage in these self-reflective practices. Notwithstanding, through engagement in the creative process itself, some of these obstacles were overcome. Even though the poetry seemed to evolve in depth and quality, developing a growing sense of confidence in the value of the work produced, the true purpose of creation became clearer—embracing imperfection and mistake, connecting with spontaneity and creativity, expanding inner horizons.

Engaging in a new artform was done as a challenge to broaden the perspectives of therapeutic work within the CAT's. Seeking to connect with the journey any new patient embarks on when joining an arts-therapy based process, as proposed by DMT, it was hoped this process would help develop greater empathic attunement towards their experience. This approach is particularly relevant, when a patient has no previous perceived experience in the creative arts, whether it be movement, art, music or poetry. Personal and emotional change, as thoroughly demonstrated in the theoretical framework section, whether implicitly through DMT or in more traditional therapeutic settings, is a non-linear, experiential process,

highly creative in its nature, which is effectively mirrored by the process of artistic creation itself. The participation in an artistic process fosters new pathways in meaning making, helping patients and therapists alike reach insight through unexpected forms.

This subjective experience has informed my work as a therapist in two ways—case analysis and the activities proposed in session. In case analysis, the writing-moving-writing technique concluded in poetic form, allows for an unconfined flow of free association, which may be unburdened by semantics and syntax rules. Together with the brain's restructuring that movement promotes, it greatly fosters the surfacing of preconscious, or unconscious material, more easily materialized into poetic form. As shown by Panhofer & Payne (2011), it also brings forth an emotional charge that seems to be absent in technical writings. Expanding on these authors' proposal of using this technique for clinical supervision, this thesis seeks to inspire practitioners, whether dance movement therapists or others, to use this method of analysis.

In preparing activities for sessions, the discovery of a new personal artform has catalyzed different ways of engaging with patients' emotional realms. Koch & Fuchs (2011) propose an intermodal approach to therapeutic practices, effectively creating an interchange between cognitive sciences and arts therapies. The process of freely interchanging and translating between different communication mediums—movement to poetry, to drawing, to movement, to narratives, and so on—using these experiences to promote self-awareness and a self-discovery journey based on neuroscientific research, has provided a powerful and insightful tool to seamlessly address, translate, and transform meaning from one communication form into another. It lights a creative spark, bringing imagination and creativity back to life, helping patients navigate complex emotional landscapes in unexpected ways. This is one of the most significant strengths of CAT's—seeing any communication form as valid, whatever shape it may take, and using this intermodal exchange as a pathway to achieve personal change. The capacity to access and

articulate communication well beyond the verbal, is particularly important with demographics that do not possess, or have lost this ability.

Personal insight and change achieved through this inquiry is manifold. Embracing mistake making and experimentation, effectively loosening perfectionism's grip, has led to a growth in a non-judgmental mental flexibility, here represented through a significant shift in writing styles as shown in Appendix F. The messy, non-linear process which creativity promotes, has been extrapolated into creating a more compassionate and empathic human being, and most importantly, future therapist. The practice of writing-moving-writing as a way to unblock narratives and thought processes, has also been fully incorporated into daily life. When feelings of being stuck surface, this technique has proven to be an important new resource to face these challenges. Lastly, and perhaps the most significant, poetry is now the medium I reach for as a means to materialize and unpack emotional content. It may not necessarily mean a search to analyze or deepen the understanding of a particular case, but simply a form used to channel any emotions, personal or clinical, lying below the level of conscious awareness, materializing them into a concrete expression.

Limitations

As this study only presents the therapist-researcher's perspective on somatic countertransference reflected into poetry, providing no direct input from the participants' views, it is highly subjective and of difficult replication. Limiting poetry to rhyming quatrains, a fact that occurred despite seeking freedom from it, may also have thwarted the depth of personal insights, as a particular result was sought. The use of written language also limits the demographics this specific approach can address. Finally, the short duration of the study associated with an overly large number of participants is also seen as a limitation, making the emergence of insight and the processing of group content difficult to achieve.

Conclusion

It is hoped that this master thesis encourages therapists, within CAT's and beyond, to engage in introspective and artistic mediums, to promote their continuous personal and professional development. Poetry, as presented in this study, is highly subjective to the author's personal experience, notwithstanding, this artistic inquiry is a call for therapists and practitioners to embrace new challenges in creative endeavours of their own preference, proposing that engaging in new artistic forms catalyzes creativity, and offers a renewed sense of self-discovery as a means to better empathize and relate to their patients' experience. Although not the scope of this project, it also hopes to contribute to the discussion of somatic countertransference as an essential therapeutic tool, in any therapeutic setting, verbal or nonverbal.

Further studies on this method's usefulness are required, however, having been experienced as a meaningful, albeit subjective tool for exploring the therapeutic relationship, this thesis proposes the method of writing-moving-writing for future applications. It is presented as an alternate avenue to clinical analysis, beyond the clinical supervision as proposed by Panhofer & Payne (2011), wishing to see it expanded to any therapeutic paradigm, DMT, CAT's or beyond.

This project was conceived as an homage to the transformative process the DMT programme of the *Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona* (UAB) bestows. Additionally to this master's degree, connecting with an artform beyond dance and movement, was regarded as a significant step towards connecting further with CAT's, as it is the author's wish to pursue a PhD in the field.

7. References

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8. Appendices

– Appendix A: Consent Form

Form for informed consent and confidentiality agreements.

– Appendix B: Risk Assessment

Form disclosing risk assessment and the studies general guidelines.

– Appendix C: Preliminary Questionnaire and Response Summary

Questionnaire informing the therapist-researcher on participants backgrounds and personal details, followed by their summarized responses.

– Appendix D: Focus Group Questions and Findings

Questions and prompts used to trigger reflections over the emotional and psychosocial outcomes of the sessions, followed by a synthesis of participants' responses.

– Appendix E: Session Notes

Example of the technical notes taken after each session.

– Appendix F: Changes in Writing Styles

Examples of the writing styles, a “before and after” poetry was engaged and incorporated as a reflexive method.

– Appendix G: Collection of Poems with literal Translation into English

Collection of poems written in Portuguese after each session, as the final product of this artistic inquiry.

Appendix A: Consent Form

Consentimento Informado e Proteção de Dados

Eu, _____ declaro que:

1. Fui informado/a e convidado/a a participar nas sessões de Dança e Movimento Terapia que serão realizadas de 13 de Setembro a 22 de Outubro de 2024, no âmbito do convénio de cooperação educativa para a realização de um projeto académico entre a Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona e a Cruz Vermelha Parede.

2. Estou ciente de que serão realizadas duas sessões por semana, com duração de 50 minutos, terças e sextas-feiras às 11h00. As sessões serão realizadas na Cruz Vermelha Parede, R. Vasco da Gama 243, 2775-297 Parede. Além disso, reconheço Marc de Pádua Hussner como o terapeuta/investigador responsável pelo processo.

3. Entendo que a Dança Movimento Terapia é um tipo de psicoterapia criativa que tem como objetivo contribuir para o meu bem-estar físico, mental, emocional e social. É, portanto, um espaço de respeito, no qual posso expressar-me livremente e manifestar as minhas opiniões, emoções, sensações e percepções.

4. Tenho pleno conhecimento de que o terapeuta de Dança e Movimento em formação que conduzirá as sessões, tem o interesse investigativo de explorar a Dança Movimento Terapia (DMT) como uma estratégia de intervenção psicossocial que pode contribuir para um processo de reconciliação social. Por isso, propõe realizar uma recolha de dados que inclui:

- Preenchimento de um questionário antes do início do processo
- Entrevista em grupo após o término do processo
- Registo da experiência, tanto escrito como potencialmente audiovisual

5. Aceito partilhar o material criado por mim durante as sessões. O investigador poderá registar por meio de vídeo, fotografia e/ou escaneamento o material gerado durante as sessões, que poderá servir como apoio à pesquisa.

6. Foi-me assegurado que a confidencialidade dos meus dados será mantida e que o meu nome será associado a um número de série, o que significa que as respostas não poderão ser conhecidas nem identificadas individualmente na fase de publicação dos resultados.

7. Os dados e materiais recolhidos serão armazenados eletronicamente por um período de cinco (5) anos a partir da data de publicação, de forma a garantir a integridade e a segurança, evitando também modificações não autorizadas.

8. Estou ciente de que não haverá compensação financeira pela participação neste estudo, mas poderei acessar e divulgar o produto final, uma vez que seja aceite e publicado pela Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

9. Diante de qualquer dúvida que possa surgir durante o processo, posso entrar em contato com o terapeuta/investigador pelo seu e-mail marc.p.hussner@gmail.com. Caso queira comunicar com outra pessoa, pode contatar diretamente a Dra. Aida Marques, coordenadora de voluntários da Cruz Vermelha Parede.

10. Se em algum momento sentir que necessito de algum tipo de acompanhamento psicológico e/ou emocional fora do processo de DMT, posso recorrer à Cruz Vermelha para receber o acompanhamento necessário.

11. Sei que posso recusar a minha participação ou retirar-me em qualquer etapa da pesquisa, sem justificação nem consequências negativas.

12. Recebi uma cópia deste Consentimento Informado, datado e assinado pelo terapeuta/investigador. Foram-me explicadas as características e o objetivo do processo.

13. Foi-me disponibilizado tempo e oportunidade para fazer perguntas e levantar as dúvidas necessárias. Todas as perguntas foram respondidas de forma satisfatória.

14. O terapeuta/investigador compromete-se a não transferir os meus dados para outros projetos ou pesquisadores sem a minha autorização e sem prévia revisão do comité de ética da Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

15. Fui apoiado/a por uma pessoa de confiança na compreensão dos 14 pontos acima mencionados, antes de assinar este documento.

Com base no exposto, aceito voluntariamente participar neste processo de criação e pesquisa.

Assinatura do/a participante

Data:

Cidade:



Assinatura do terapeuta/investigador

Data: 01/09/2024

Cidade: Lisboa

Assinatura da testemunha

Data:

Cidade:

Appendix B: Risk Assessment

Avaliação de Riscos

Dado que a presente pesquisa foi proposta com uma metodologia de investigação artística, parte-se do princípio de que o produto final será resultado de um processo coletivo de criação. Por isso, é necessário identificar e avaliar os possíveis riscos que possam surgir durante o processo, para estabelecer acordos mútuos e um plano de trabalho que priorize a segurança e tranquilidade das participantes.

Após a avaliação dos possíveis riscos, propõem-se os seguintes acordos:

1. Caso sejam realizados vídeos e/ou fotografias, os rostos das participantes não serão exibidos, a menos que expressem o contrário.
2. Cada sessão será realizada com roupa confortável, sapatos/meias antiderrapantes e hidratação.
3. Em caso de não poder comparecer, o/a participante informará previamente tanto ao terapeuta como ao grupo.
4. Haverá confidencialidade no grupo e o que for compartilhado na sessão de DMT não será divulgado fora dela.
5. As sessões iniciarão e terminarão pontualmente na hora acordada.
6. Falar-se-á em primeira pessoa e não se fará referência a outro/a participante do grupo em terceira pessoa.
7. Se algum integrante do grupo se sentir sensibilizado/a, exposto/a e/ou desconfortável, o espaço estará disponível por alguns minutos após o término da sessão, caso queira permanecer no local. Além disso, poderão entrar em contato com alguém de confiança a qualquer momento.

Caso considere necessários outros acordos para prevenir algum tipo de risco, durante a primeira sessão eles serão estabelecidos em comum acordo:

Assinatura do/a participante

Data:

Cidade:



Assinatura do terapeuta/investigador

Data: 01/09/2024

Cidade: Lisboa

Assinatura da testemunha

Data:

Cidade:

Appendix C: Preliminary Questionnaire and Responses

Questionário

Dados Gerais

Primeiro nome: _____

Sexo: _____

Idade: _____

Local de nascimento: _____

Ano (e motivo) de saída: _____

Há quantos anos reside na Parede: _____

Pessoas com quem vive: _____

Se só, há quantos anos: _____

Como é a sua relação com os vizinhos e a comunidade onde vive: _____

Quando tem algum problema ou dificuldade, em quem procura ajuda: _____

O que faz para resolver os seus problemas e dificuldades: _____

Que dificuldades sente enfrentar que o/a impeça de viver tranquilamente: _____

Quando alguém está a passar por um momento difícil, como reage, que faz: _____

Relativamente ao processo de Dança e Movimento Terapia (DMT):

Que espera destes encontros?

Que gostaria de vivenciar, aprender ou desenvolver durante este processo de DMT?

Que gostaria de encontrar durante as sessões?

Que o/a assusta ou poderá eventualmente não lhe agradar?

Que normas ou acordos considera essenciais para iniciar e desenvolver este processo em segurança e comodidade?

Preliminary Questionnaire Response Summary

Regarding the expectations of the DMT sessions, they were about physical, emotional, and social benefits, more specifically, activities that would provide opportunities for personal growth, social interaction, and creative exploration. Generally, the stated intentions included learning new skills, connecting closer with others, and seeking fun and mental stimulation through movement, music, and poetry.

Concerns about the sessions included their perceived physical limitations along with environmental disruptions. Some participants indicated a concern about keeping up with others, while several referred that a respectful, calm, and supportive environment was important for comfort and safety in the sessions. Many also mentioned that mutual respect, trust, and understanding were necessary to engagement and vulnerability, and that a well-structured and thoughtful atmosphere would be the key to the positive outcomes anticipated.

Unfortunately not all participants completed the questionnaires, leading to data gaps.

Appendix D: Focus Group Questions and Findings

FOCUS GROUP - Oct/22/2024 - 10 users present

Open Discussion (40 minutes)

- General Experience: “How did you feel during these sessions? Was there a particular moment that stood out to you? Any movement, sequences of movement? Anything written or drawn?”
- Themes of Loneliness and Connection: “We have talked a lot about loneliness. Has participating in this group influenced how you feel about it?”
- Impact and Expression: “Have you noticed any changes in how you express emotions or how you feel connected to the group or to yourselves?”
- Creative Expression: “In what way has movement helped you express yourself during these sessions?”
- Final Reflection: “If you could describe your experience in one word or phrase, what would it be?”

Focus Group Findings Summary

The final focus group revealed that the overall reception of the sessions had been very positive, with the vast majority of participants showing a strong desire in their continuation. Many referred that during these sessions, they experienced moments of depth which exceeded their initial expectations. Participants enjoyed their time and became cognitively and emotionally engaged with the activities, pointing to how these sessions created stimulating opportunities for personal growth and socializing.

Although some participants had an initial uneasiness and resistance towards expressive movement, over time, they grew in ease and began to appreciate the value of movement as a medium of expression and connection with others. Movement and poetry were mentioned as powerful tools that encouraged self-expression and creativity in new ways, reportedly having expanded their self-awareness and communication of emotions that might otherwise have remained unspoken.

The discussion also highlighted that through having a space for safe interaction, the relief from loneliness was felt in the sessions, which in turn allowed for a renewed sense of community. Participants reflected on how the improvement of their social interactions contrasted with the isolation they normally felt in their everyday lives.

The therapist-researcher's presence and guidance also emerged as another important factor in the participants' positive experiences, demonstrating the importance of a supportive environment where reflection and personal growth can take place. Altogether, findings indicate that the DMT sessions not only promoted individual well-being but helped develop a deeper sense of companionship among the participants.

Appendix E: Example of Session Notes

Session #6

October 1st, 2024

11 USERS Present (1 new)

CVPP GROUP	2024/10/01	Session #6	Duration 55'
SESSION	SCHEDULED	MODIFICATIONS	OBSERVATIONS
Objectives	Build Cohesion. Stimulate creativity.	-	-
Check-in (10min)	Verbal check-in.	-	-
Warm-up (10min)	Laban's 8 basic actions - warmup	-	Some funny looks.
Development (15min)	Writing communal poetry.	-	Played random music from the playlist while they wrote.
Check-out (15min)	Discuss today's experience of being in session.	-	Negative, difficult feelings surfaced.
Music Used	Check-in	-	
	Warm-up	-	
	Development	-	
	Check-out	https://open.spotify.com/track/71hlekopkrYCGgggsBOpVG?si=3d457eda6b354f9d	
	Playlist	https://open.spotify.com/playlist/7Dtlfkvwh8rV8v4ahljxMa?si=d4a1fb0d6cc347e7	
Themes	Beginning	Blind optimism.	
	Throughout	Feelings of despair, fear of the unknown.	

In between sessions	Had to switch to a smaller room which definitely couldn't accommodate all the users present for this group.
Reflections	<p>There's a user that has blocked herself, because she was reminded by me that we should speak in the singular and not plural. She is somehow throwing a temper tantrum, in a passive-aggressive way.</p> <p>Remarkable how they move from being optimistic and jolly to finishing the session in such a despairing mood. "Are traditions the only thing that survives?"</p> <p>Do I need to keep the energy up? The users request it, but is it really my position to do so? What if I just let the energy die out...?</p>
Images/Symbols	War.
Transference	<p>Feeling that sharing such intimate things should be reserved for friends.</p> <p>Mild passive-aggressive behavior because this user was confronted.</p> <p>Feelings of uncomfortableness.</p> <p>Requesting/needing my guidance.</p>
Countertransference	<p>Impotence in regards to their hopelessness.</p> <p>Feeling like I have to energize/convince them to engage.</p> <p>Heavy body, feeling tired and needing to leave the space immediately after notetaking. Challenge to keep the energy up.</p>
Body	Sitting back. Relaxed/skeptical.
Space	Mostly sagittal dimension - forward, downwards tendency.
Dynamics	Slow, bound, indirect, light gestures.
Relationships	Newer members speak to me. Veterans speak more amongst themselves.
Actions	Gliding, floating, flicking, punching.
What worked	<p>Playing music while writing (idling users danced and sang).</p> <p>Writing communal text (all were engaged).</p> <p>CLOSING SONG (Resetting the mood).</p>
What didn't	<p>Room (too small/hot).</p> <p>Some challenges in following the <i>basic actions</i> (some thought they were silly/didn't move).</p>
Thoughts for future sessions	Mirroring in pairs.

Appendix F: Changes in Writing Styles – “Before and After”

Não poderia li-me desta sem escrever primeiro. Sinto
que há quase algo de pavoroso nisto. Como algo
que não posso largar. O fetiche da caneta, de entrar
a sua ponta deslizar sobre o papel. Sei não sei bem
como ela quer estar contra o papel. Há um per
de movimentos de a enroscarem no papel. O Páucio
está no sentir a caneta escrever no papel. E
regras e bunitas. Também escrever a preto. Bolos
não sei como me reconstruam. É isso que preciso?
Mas tenho que gesticular de mim nas aulas.
No entanto não quero revelar demasiado de mim.
Sou carnalizo e quero continuar a sê-lo. Gosto
de mim assim. Desta forma posso esconder-me
Mas sou um carnalizo. Não sei como cair a ser
a minha avaliação aqui neste curso. Sei novamente
que quero ver as milhares notas possíveis
para poder continuar a estudar se quiser. Bolos
isto. E ainda existes tu. Ainda tenho que lidar
contigo. Tu gomas, és familiar. És aquilo tio que
tem que se conhece, finge sim.. Também não
sei o que fizesse contigo. Está a escrever muito.
Algo se passa contigo. É assim que processo.

Talvez use o facto de escrever para fugir?! Será um escape? Estarei assim a fugir a algo? Será mesmo um escape. Não sei como fazer... não sei ao que estou a fugir. Estarei a fugir? Ao que estou a fugir? Não sei muito bem o que é. Simplemente adoro escrever mas gosto estar mesmo a fugir... não sei bem. Simplemente não sei... Estou mesmo um pouco perdido da vida. Bolás, mas não sei muito bem o que fazer com isto. Apetece-me fugir. Apetece-me fugir-me na realidade. Mas não sei muito bem. Apenas não quero que seja bom. Apetece-me sim fazer umas coisas. Quero sim fugir... Quero escapar. Estarei a escapar também à História?! Espero que não. Quero continuar uma vida com ela. Não a quero perder. E das coisas mais bonitas que já me aconteceram. Será mesmo ser a melhor coisa de sempre. Tanto custa? Apenas quero estar bem. E isso. Só quero estar bem. Apenas isso. Boa. Vamos. Progas. Quero soltar tudo, mas depois vem o amanhã. É a vida. Mas não quero mesmo. Vamos pôr-se apenas hoje? Quero mesmo muito fugir-me... Mas apenas quero saber como posso

Poneaquia
aqui, com
as pelames
de origo
assim
unha com linha
pneumado de
a fila.

Zebo
praga gostu
delele monedo
em ji nao no breco
Pocunas, com
Zaluna
sem um gosto
especial
quando de num
E algo natiford.

Natural cereais
ou cereais de
cereais com
de ao meu
Natural cereais
Pelo cereais
ou patricio

leijate com alguma
mãe no dia
pela noite com
noite ^{deixando} ~~deixando~~

Beto
Zona comoda
a 10 km do rio
para o rio
a 10 km do rio

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 xer pool
 Thiste
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 os cultu
 ate can

a trake
 Perno
 e' aque
 que com
 me tr
 ator eu
 Deep
 Benit
 mocha
 Capric
 Capric

Case
Cruz
Lag
com

~~Esco para todos~~
~~todos o seu tempo~~

monde
- 45 ans après
vers
somme

[illegible]

1080 no
Deeg & 1
as 1740
Conh 8

a / 20 giano
 uto 800 capet
 uno no l'ave
 o altri
 ieni d
 ver
 on sa.

dessejam
e amam
o que não se tem
para poder
melhor viverem
Cadaque já
se tem.

Quando tardo
 onde os furos de hoje
~~Quando~~ Quando aborde
 que tardo terminou
 a tardo de hoje
 e tudo o que acabou

nesta dia
apenas estive
na casa sombria
onde vive
o condenado

Pseudo ~~poder~~
Pseudo poder de
sem prior
o reino
de haurer
o governo
do poeta

Conoce pela vida
parece uma gente de
quando chega á terra
é gente mentiro.

O suture
Dentro de new corpo
A superficie
vejo por dentro
com o intuzie
de um uirve
a sentire

quise até falar
mas eu não
marguei
a minha

NA neue 20
assimilieren
a wende
NA ne
A von
assimilieren

de Poeta
é se home
mulher e a
de uma só
e
e
mulher
é
usa

Se beta,
e criança
sem homem,
nen e criança.
lavar na d'ou
na esperança

$$x_i$$

desde
de
de nuevo

ang
atanga
pesta,
e honon,
e chitanga.
n na alina
e esderencia

Appendix G: Collection of Poems with literal Translation into English

Session #1

September 13th, 2024

14 Users present

A PRIMEIRA VEZ

Nervos, Ansiedade,

Medo ao desconhecido.

Receio de não encontrar,

O que foi perdido.

Procuro as ferramentas,

Da vida, da emoção,

Da força da minha mão,

Para enfrentar estas tormentas.

Coragem, portanto,

Com ela vou brincar.

A dor, no entanto,

Ainda não sei processar.

A primeira vez, vamos,

É sempre a primeira.

Mesmo quando já passámos

Tudo além da cimeira.

THE FIRST TIME

Nerves, Anxiety,

Fear of the unknown.

Fear of not finding

What has been lost.

I search for the tools

Of life, of emotion,

Of the strength of my hand,

To face these storms.

Courage, therefore,

With it I will play.

The pain, however,

I still don't know how to process.

The first time, in fact,

Is always a first.

Even when we've already passed

Everything beyond the summit.

*A primeira vez nunca volta,
Disso tenho a certeza.
Na segunda pode haver revolta
Se na primeira houve beleza.*

*Na terceira, a coisa vai mais solta
Na quarta já quase nem conta.
Agora deixem-me aqui, pronto.
Pois a morte assim espanto.*

*Então vamos lá primeira vez,
Contigo vou brincar.
Quero saber agora de vez
Até onde posso chegar.*

The first time never returns,
Of that, I'm certain.
The second may see a comeback
If the first held beauty.

By the third, things loosen up,
By the fourth, it almost doesn't count.
Now leave me here, please.
For this way, I ward off death.

So let's go, first time,
With you I will play.
I want to know, now for sure,
How far I can go.

Session #2

September 17th, 2024

12 Users present (2 new)

CANSADO EM SILÊNCIO

Tenho um espaço,

Ainda não o conheço.

Não sei o que processo,

Sei sim que o agradeço.

Ponho o corpo a mover

Para noutros o meu ver,

E assim sem querer,

Sinto o seu sofrer.

Têm voz e desejam partilhar

Um sentir, que ninguém quer validar.

Sós, sem alguém para escutar,

Vêm comigo, este momento passar.

No silêncio encontram um espaço

Onde um amigo lhes dá o braço.

O céu interno assim desvelam

Do seu novelo, que a mim revelam.

TIRED IN SILENCE

I have a space,

I do not yet know.

I know not what I process,

I do know I am grateful.

I set my body in motion

To see myself in others,

And without meaning to,

I feel their suffering.

They have voices and wish to share

A feeling no one wants to validate.

Alone, with no one to listen,

This moment they come spend with me.

In silence, they find a space

Where a friend offers a hand.

Their internal sky unfolds,

Revealing their tangled threads to me.

Entre vontade e desejo

A não querer e recusar.

Um mundo inteiro, revejo,

Num silêncio a desvendar.

Between will and desire,

Not wanting and refusing.

An entire world, I see again,

In a silence unraveling.

O espaço é necessário,

Para um silêncio partir.

A sua voz é um rio,

À espera de poder fluir.

Space is necessary

For silence to break.

Their voice is a river,

Waiting to flow.

A Democracia do silêncio

Cansada tem o povo.

Pouco traz o seu pronuncio,

Já nada diz de novo.

The democracy of silence

Has people jaded.

Its pronouncement brings little,

It says nothing new.

Session #3

September 20th, 2024

13 users present (1 new)

CONFUSÃO

*Que massada não saber;
Nem algo comum escrever!
Algo tão simples, ainda assim,
Preciso explicar, enfim...*

*Não gosto do confuso
Fica tudo nebuloso!
Torna-se em ira sofrida
Das borras da minha vida.*

*Chateia-me não poder
Uma simples tarefa fazer!
Dá-me a mão para eu ver,
O meu caminho a percorrer.*

*Que dor esta confusão,
Envelhecer não é sem senão!
Tudo quero compreender...
Mas sinto não pertencer.*

CONFUSION

What a bother, not knowing,
To write even something ordinary!
Something so simple, and still,
I need to explain it, after all...

I don't like confusion,
Everything becomes cloudy!
It turns into a suffering rage
From the dregs of my life.

It annoys me not to be able
To do a simple task!
Give me your hand so I can see
The path I need to follow.

What pain, this confusion,
Growing old is no easy feat!
I want to understand everything...
But I feel I do not belong.

Falta de criatividade...

Uí, com esta idade?!

Não sei da espontaneidade...

Por favor, tenha piedade!

Mas de mim não pode abdicar,

Ajude-me a reencontrar o perdido!

Recorda? Tenho muito para dar,

Ainda em mim há um latido.

Quero ainda muito dar

Mesmo quase sem acreditar...

Amor, paz e alegria vou partilhar

Para eu também alguma levar.

A lack of creativity...

Oh, at this age?!

I can't find spontaneity...

Please, have pity!

But don't give up on me,

Help me recover what's lost!

Remember? I have so much to give,

There's still a bark left in me.

I still want to give so much,

Even with little belief...

Love, peace, and joy I will share,

So I might take some too.

Session #4

September 24th, 2024

12 users present

O POEMA

Improvisação e criatividade

Dizem já não ter nesta idade.

Entrelinhas de um poema

Deslindámos esse dilema.

Sinto ainda ser animador...

Precisam de um catalisador.

Mas não partilho da afirmação,

Vi até muita imaginação!

Verso a verso, comento,

Um poema vi em movimento!

Da morte nasceu vida

Com a criatividade devida.

Da pouca espontaneidade

Emergiu uma verdade.

Da essência do seu ser

Um poema vi nascer.

THE POEM

Improvisation and creativity

They say they no longer have at this age.

Between the lines of a poem

We unraveled this dilemma.

I still feel like an entertainer...

They need a catalyst.

But I don't share that affirmation,

I even saw much imagination!

Verse by verse, I comment,

I saw a poem in motion!

From death, life was born

With the creativity it deserved.

From little spontaneity

Emerged a truth.

From the essence of their being

I saw a poem take shape.

A noite enfrentámos

E o dia recebemos.

Cómodo com a morte,

Tenho essa sorte...

We faced the night

And welcomed the day.

Comfortable with death,

I am lucky that way...

Bom e mau o suficiente

Como aprendiz emergente,

Estando alerta e presente,

Algo sou de competente.

Good and bad enough

To emerge as an apprentice,

Alert and present,

I became somewhat competent.

O eco da sua voz

Foi para mim uma foz.

Inundou-me um calor

Ultrapassada a sua dor.

The echo of their voice

Became an estuary for me.

A warmth flooded me,

Their pain now surpassed.

Session #5

September 27th, 2024

9 Users present

A SESSÃO

*No interior, trazia um calor;
Uma memória cheia de dulçor.
Este labor é um louvor,
A um passado cheio de amor.*

*Do silêncio que sustive
O calor em suor surtiu.
O diálogo então surgiu,
No espaço que contive.*

*Capaz ou incapaz,
Entre conflito e desconforto
Tentei manter a paz.
Abriguei-a neste meu porto.*

*Entre suor e coragem
A nossa sessão prossegue.
Já não há ponto de viragem
Este grupo sim, consegue!*

THE SESSION

Inside, I carried a warmth,
A memory full of sweetness.
This work is a praise
To a past full of love.

From the silence I held,
The warmth turned to sweat.
The dialogue then emerged
In the space I contained.

Capable or incapable,
Between conflict and discomfort,
I tried to keep the peace,
Sheltering it in my harbor.

Between sweat and courage,
Our session continues.
There's no turning point now
This group, yes, it succeeds!

Criatividade para viver?

Isso sim quero oferecer!

Mas sinto difícil este conviver,

Os meus anos não se fazem valer.

Forte e competente?

Elude-me o excelente.

Procuro sim é adaptar-me

E insisto, é para ajudar-me!

Com frio termino

Este trabalho intenso.

Um suspiro elimino,

E sinto o que penso!

Creativity to live?

That's what I want to offer!

But I find this living difficult;

My years here do not prevail.

Strong and competent?

Excellence eludes me.

I seek instead to adapt,

And insist, it's to help myself!

I end in the cold,

This intense work.

I let out a sigh,

And feel what I think!

Session #6

October 1st, 2024

11 Users present (1 new)

PERDIDO

Terapeuta, Animador?

Nada disto é esclarecedor!

Medo tenho ao desconhecido,

Contudo, ele é recebido.

Para cá e para lá

Parece tudo brincadeira!

Deixa essa tolice, vá,

Fala-me da dor verdadeira.

A tua nobre sapiência,

Partilhada de sincera maneira,

Deixa em mim uma impotência

Forte, como a cegueira.

Difícil é a experiência

De manter a respiração,

Não alterar a vivência,

E suster a sensação.

LOST

Therapist, Entertainer?

None of this is clear!

I am afraid of the unknown,

Yet it is welcomed.

Back and forth,

It all seems like play!

Drop that silliness, come now,

Tell me about true pain.

Your noble wisdom,

Shared in an honest way,

Leaves me feeling powerless,

Strong as blindness.

It is difficult, this experience,

To keep breathing steady,

To not alter the living moment,

And to hold the sensation.

Confio, no entanto,

Haverá um descanso!

Apesar de tanto pranto,

Alcançaremos outro lançaço.

Assim vou crescer,

E apesar de pouco saber,

Procuró enaltecer,

Essa tua força de viver.

Presente apenas estou,

Só perdido assim encontrarei,

Mesmo sem saber para onde vou

A pessoa que um dia serei.

I trust, however,

There will be rest!

Despite so much weeping,

We will reach a new level.

Thus, I will grow,

And despite knowing little,

I seek to elevate,

That strength of yours to live.

I am only present,

Only by being lost will I find,

Even without knowing where I go,

The person I am yet to become.

Session #7

October 4th, 2024

14 Users present (2 new)

NADAR (SUPERVISÃO)

A nadar procuro

Um apoio no meandro

Deste rio que é a vida,

Entre nós aqui compartilhada.

Da tolerância à gratidão,

Até aos céus peço uma mão.

Procuro um apoio assertivo

Para aqui encontrar o sentido.

Neste rio remando

Sinto uma sensação de alívio.

Agarrado a um fio, nadando,

Em suspirado desanuviado.

Solto um suspiro de contente

Com apenas isto em mente:

A profissão levo p'ra frente,

De corpo e alma presente.

SWIMMING (SUPERVISION)

Swimming, I seek

Support in the meander

Of this river called life,

Shared here among us.

From tolerance to gratitude,

I ask for a hand from the heavens.

I seek assertive support

To find meaning here.

Rowing through this river

I feel a sense of relief.

Clinging to a thread, swimming,

In a sigh of release.

I let out a contented sigh

With only this in mind:

This profession I carry forward,

With body and soul present.

Quem corre, não cansa.

Nada por gosto e alcança

Uma confiança ancorada

Nesta aliança sagrada.

Remo e já nada temo!

Mas é pura ilusão...

Esta procura do supremo

É uma soberba lição.

Em cada exalar,

Encontro uma exortação.

Nadar pede respirar

E fazer supervisão...

He who runs, does not tire.

Swims for pleasure, and finds

A confidence anchored

In this sacred alliance.

I row, and I fear no more!

But it is pure illusion...

This search for the supreme

Is a humbling lesson.

In every exhale,

I find an exhortation.

Swimming requires breathing

And supervision.

Session #8

October 8th, 2024

11 Users present

RESISTÊNCIA

*Será das maiores defesas
Contra a falta de braveza.
Resistir é a nossa natureza
Frente às internas tibiezas.*

*Resistir é a tendência
De uma mente pobre.
Não vê ainda o nobre
Em aceitar a divergência.*

*Mas resistência induzi
Em resposta à relutância.
Pus então em evidência
Um padrão que reproduzi.*

*Este insistir na rigidez,
Nada deixa florir.
Inibe o descobrir
De renovada lucidez.*

RESISTANCE

It may be one of the greatest defenses
Against a lack of bravery.
To resist is our nature
In the face of internal weaknesses.

To resist is the tendency
Of a narrow mind.
It does not yet see the nobility
In accepting divergence.

But resistance I induced
In response to reluctance.
It thus brought to light
A pattern I reproduced.

This insistence on rigidity
Allows nothing to bloom.
It stifles the discovery
Of renewed lucidity.

Resistir é impedir,

Parar o inevitável,

É domar o incontrolável,

E negar o seu existir.

To resist is to impede,

To stop the inevitable,

To tame the uncontrollable,

And to deny its existence.

Fluidez e perspicácia,

Para águas terapêuticas

De notas enigmáticas,

Navegar com eficácia.

Fluidity and acumen,

For therapeutic waters

Of enigmatic notes,

Navigate efficiently.

Parece tudo uma folia!

Serei eu capaz?

Deixem-me em paz,

Já não tenho energia!

It all seems a folly!

Am I capable?

Leave me in peace,

I have no energy left!

Session #9

October 11th, 2024

6 Users present

ENCONTRO

Encontro intimidade

Neste grupo menor.

Faz-se luzir a identidade

De cada um em pormenor.

Do número pequeno

Emerge a cumplicidade

Para o seu mundo interno

Revelar com autenticidade.

Movimentos plenos e habitados,

Audazes, agora espelham

A liberdade soltam tranquilizados,

Por entre as vozes que partilham.

Facilitada a gestão

Com atenção e escuta,

Promovida a compreensão,

Da emoção em luta.

ENCOUNTER

I find intimacy

In this smaller group.

The identity of each

Shines in detail.

From the smaller number

Emerges complicity,

To reveal their inner world

With authenticity.

Movements full and inhabited,

Now bold, they mirror

The freedom released in tranquility,

In between the voices they share.

Managing made easier

With attention and listening,

Promoting understanding,

Of the fighting emotion.

*Reconcilio com o chão,
Sempre sereno e persistente.
Este dispensa da razão,
É apenas um apoio permanente.*

I reconcile with the ground,
Always serene and persistent.
It dispenses any reason,
It is merely a permanent support.

*Encontro então a gratidão
No seio desta viagem.
Um passado levo à retidão
Levando-os à outra margem.*

I find, then, gratitude
At the heart of this journey.
I challenge a past
And guide them to another shore.

*Vislumbro pois em mim
A confiança e tenacidade
Que a ti desejo, enfim,
Neste percurso sem idade.*

I glimpse within myself
The confidence and tenacity
That I ultimately wish for you,
On this ageless path.

Session #10

October 15th, 2024

9 Users present

TRISTE NÉVOA

Cerrada esta névoa

De um poço sem fundo.

Uma palavra que atordoa

E uma quadra que confundo.

Ao procurar a sensação

E encontrar a felicidade,

Terminei em contradição:

A tristeza fez-se verdade.

Sensação incómoda

Não a consigo afastar.

Ficou como uma nódoa

Que não consigo limpar.

Carrego uma tristeza

Do induzir algo bom.

Pensava que trazia leveza,

Terminamos noutro tom.

SAD MIST

Dense is this mist

Of a bottomless pit.

A word that stuns

And a verse that I confuse.

In seeking sensation

And finding happiness,

I ended in contradiction:

Sadness became truth.

An uncomfortable feeling

I cannot push it away.

It stayed like a stain

That I cannot clean.

I carry a sadness

From inducing something good.

I thought I brought lightness,

But we ended on another note.

*Estranha sensação,
Toda esta contradição.
Ofereci uma bênção,
Não fui feliz, perdão.*

A strange feeling,
This whole contradiction.
I offered a blessing,
But I wasn't successful, pardon.

*Mas a tristeza há que abraçar,
Nela a felicidade achar.
Nada mais há que forçar,
Apenas a experiência aceitar.*

But sadness must be embraced,
Within it, happiness find.
Nothing more to be forced,
Only the experience to be accepted.

*Somos em contrariedade,
Bizarro e complexo ardor.
É uma ambígua verdade
Que nos dá vida e cor.*

We are in contradiction,
Bizarre and complex ardor.
It is an ambiguous truth
That gives us life and color.

Session #11

October 18th, 2024

7 Users present

FINAL

Neste meu final,

Em completa pertinência,

Surgiu uma resistência

Em nada trivial.

Do fecho e da mudança,

Reconheço querer distância

Mas em plena confiança

Lembrei-me da sua importância.

Entre beijos e abraços

Observei a despedida

Deste trilho de percalços

Que até nós trouxe vida.

Em seus movimentos,

Muito carinho e gratidão.

Até pensei por momentos

Não passar de uma ilusão.

ENDING

In this ending of mine,

In complete pertinence,

Resistance arose

In no way trivial.

Of closure and change,

I recognize a desire for distance

But in full confidence

I remembered its importance.

Between kisses and hugs

I observed the farewell

Of this path of hardships

That brought us life.

In their movements,

Much care and gratitude.

For a moment I even thought

It was nothing but an illusion.

Mas a sinceridade

Revelou uma satisfação.

E em completa honestidade

Pediram continuação.

But sincerity

Revealed satisfaction.

And in complete honesty,

They asked for continuation.

Alívio enfim

Em sentimento oposto:

Querer chegar ao fim

E preservar o posto.

Relief at last

In an opposing feeling:

Wanting to reach the end

Yet preserve the post.

Perdura o prenúncio

Do regresso à partida

Neste próspero reinício

De uma nova vida.

The omen lingers

Of returning to the start

In this prosperous renewal

Of a new life.