

Dichotomy and intersubjectivity

Louise Morton

Arts therapist statement

I often use writing as a professional reflection tool. This piece emerged following a particularly charged session with a young client who has experienced sexual violence. I found myself marvelling at how vastly different our personal realities are and yet we are able to come together each week in a shared space, which sometimes feels like an 'in-between' world or 'other land', something spiritual and beyond the scope of everyday experience. I feel an immense sense of gratitude to be in this profession and to work with people in this way.

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She draws herself in cages and chains
her memories behind locked doors
while I try to stop myself complaining about lockdown measures.

I luxuriate in my daily showers
while she 'comes to', cowering in the corner when she tries.

She avoids sleep and all its connotations
as I stretch out in my cosy bed.

She has suffered more in her nineteen years than I/she/we can comprehend
yet she can still turn her face to the sun,
and she can envisage a future where she has wings.

As she thanks me for helping her feel safe and heard
I feel the hand she is stretching out to me –
small and fine,
strong and wise
and I feel the significance of that touch.

This work is sacred.
I feel like we might as well be meeting in a hall of worship;
there is something ethereal about this dimension we encounter each other within.

She tells stories of the monsters and ghouls that haunt her,
brings fragments of memory like shards of glass in her hands –
we examine the pieces,
take note of how they feel against her skin, the weight of them.

She drifts into their reflections
and we bring her back to the present through the image of her cat.
The scope of what it means to be human and alive is suddenly borderless.

Later that evening I delight in holding my baby,
her hands on my face
small and fine,
soft and warm.

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