

Dreamscapes of Belonging

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Abstract

Jungian Art-Based Research (JABR) is a distinctive methodological framework that explores the intersection of analytical psychology and the arts. It primarily utilizes Jung's theories of the psyche, integrating these with artistic processes to investigate and express unconscious dynamics. Susan Rowland, a pivotal figure in this field, has significantly advanced the understanding of how Jungian theories can be applied within art-based research (Rowland, 2023). Her contributions elucidate how artistic expressions act as mediums through which the unconscious can be explored and articulated, thereby offering profound insights into both individual and collective unconscious processes. The objectives of Jungian Art-Based Research are manifold. Firstly, JABR aims to provide a methodological approach that allows researchers and practitioners to delve deeper into the symbolic and transformative potential of art. This is achieved through the engagement of the unconscious in the creation and interpretation of art, thereby fostering a holistic understanding of the psyche. Secondly, JABR seeks to expand the scope of psychological inquiry by incorporating artistic expressions as legitimate sources of psychological data. Lastly, it aspires to foster a dialogue between psychology and art, encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration that can enrich both fields. By integrating analytical psychology with artistic creativity, JABR contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the human experience, offering valuable perspectives that challenge conventional research paradigms.

This paper presents a personal journey through the application of Jungian Art-Based Research (JABR), initiated by attending a course by Susan Rowlands. It delves into the transformative experience of exploring the multiverse of dreams and their impact on the author's professional and personal development. The exploration began with the author's repetitive dreams, characterized by detailed urban landscapes, serving as the primary material for research. By physically mapping these dreamscapes and integrating various symbolic materials, the author engaged in a deep, introspective process, highlighting the non-linear and spiraling nature of JABR. This journey further intertwined with reflections on identity, homelessness, and the longing for a sense of belonging, amplified by historical and cultural dislocations. Through spontaneous dance and subsequent reflections, the author confronts the disillusionment with idealized spaces and faces the reality of changing perspectives and attachments. The paper concludes by pondering the broader implications of our attachment to the Earth, suggesting that our efforts to save it might be hindered by our need to name and possess, rather than embrace its intrinsic, unnamed existence. Through a Jungian lens, the author proposes a reevaluation of our relationship with the planet, advocating for a detachment from specific names to foster a more universal and sustainable connection.

Keywords: Jungian Art-Based Research, dreams, feeling of belonging, naming.

In October, I attended Susan Rowlands' course^[1] on Jungian Art-Based Research (JABR). I became familiar with this discipline in 2022, and I seized the opportunity when it arose. I was expecting to learn about the right methodology and terminology, and to give names to the practices I encountered in my clinical and individual therapeutic work. I received that, but there was an unexpected gift. I was catapulted into a new oscillation style, or, if you prefer, a melody that stuck with my mind. Entering differently into the dreams' multiverse catalyzed ongoing and newly formed processes and got intertwined with my usual response style to new stimuli.

In this text, I will share my personal experience with JABR, which began with the course, where I was both the subject initiating the process and the object of my exploration. It then continued to live its own life, where I entered different horizontal, vertical, inter-subject, inter-object, and temporal dimensions, bringing my personal material to the collective sphere. These new dimensions gave a new perspective to my initial material, evolving towards a more complex and collective questioning of why humans are failing to save their only home, this planet.

The Jungian Art-Based Research process is far from linear. It creates loops. These loops are, in fact, one spiral; each turn brings something additional. Each new layer doesn't annihilate the previous one – each is farther from the starting point but still contains it.

My starting material was my dreams, not all dreams but repetitive ones with a clear spatial organization. Last years, since the pandemic, my unconsciousness had been building an oneiric world. First, it was a tiny world, town-sized with streets and well-defined bus stops. Then there were other towns and cities, some countryside, clearly belonging to different geographical coordinates and with more complex transport systems. There were dream versions of Paris, New York, Göttingen, Belgrade, etc. I was slowly and systematically mapping my dream spaces. Nature was present, people as well but they were secondary; the city urbanism and inter-city transport system were the main contents. People were part of places, belonging to them, as much as the exact routes and shortcuts my ego had to take in dreams to reach its destination. As dreams progressed, I was able to situate my apartment (unrelated to reality) and its interior design and composition even in details, how sunshine illuminates some corners and how dusty is the surface of the kitchen table. I was very intrigued by these dreams, especially because I would suddenly remember these urban landscapes in my daily life, often correctly "naming" the unspoken emotion in the therapeutic *athanor* thanks to the dream image.

My first line of work was very scholarly. Looking for texts and articles, as usual, supported by Jungian psychology and symbolism. Dreams elements, which I call here 'dreamscapes', were my guide, as object of my research and as the real subject of it, guiding me to be the vessel (or object) of their incarnation into awaken world. I needed to materialize it, to see it, and to name it. I started building it with common materials in my surroundings. I didn't specifically buy or look for anything. I started drawing as I would draw a map, connecting it on the closest big paper in my room. It felt unprotected. I surrounded my dreamscapes with eye makeup removal pads. Every evening of this work, before going to bed, I would remove my makeup (my chosen and accessible Persona) and glue the pad on the paper until they made a circle, I added

a few ginkgo leaves. The dreamworld map was protected horizontally by the pads, but I needed something more. I had to see them and also to camouflage them. Again, it wasn't totally right – it was too static. I needed *the possibility* of movement. Under the paper, I put a spider toy, one you can manipulate by remote control. It wasn't stable, but there was a possibility of movement and security of not crushing even if it started moving suddenly. It was just right. I was missing an adhesive. I added different green-colored wool threads, until it seemed satisfactory by my bodily sensation even with my eyes closed.

In parallel, I was reading a lot, trying to give words to my experiences. However, nothing was speaking to me until a sentence: "Leaving the house is the obvious activity for a migrant who has no home anymore" (L.Schmidt^[2]). There it was, my homelessness. It struck me deeply. So simply, so many times said, analyzed, verbalized and still here. Coming from ex-Yugoslavia, even more from a very polarized family, communist and anti-communist, where God was annihilated, worshiped and feared, my loyalty is lost in the family and cultural history. When I have to say where I am from – well, I will let Marina Abramović answer this one for me: "When people ask me where I am from... I never say Serbia. I always say I come from a country that no longer exists.^[3]" I am desperately searching for something that has lost its name but still had an earth. And I again I refuse the earth where I was born because there is no more a name I am attached to. Jane Jacobs^[4] says that the town separates us from the savage outside; it brings solidity to nomads.

Being a 21st-century European nomad, I am asking myself if this is all about coming home. I spent my youth days on the streets of Belgrade protesting every day as a member of student demonstrations against Slobodan Milošević. This sort of activism colored the beginning of my adulthood. Twenty years later, I started demonstrating against climate change actors. Is there a link? Is this again a search for home for a future homeless me? Rapidly, I was satisfied with this answer. This was when I presented my up-to-date final work. All made sense. Earth is our home; only by feeling our attachment to it can we search for its survival. It sounded easy, clean, and so right. But I continued.

My November days began with body movement. With no artistic aspiration and absolutely guided by the intuition that this could be the right moment for me to find some rest from my hectic life, I joined contemporary dance classes. ... Which ended up being spontaneous dancing classes with two leitmotif exercises: one, exploring the interior home and another, dancing the sound with three rules: don't move your feet from the ground, close your eyes and be honest with yourself. And there I was, again, in my dreams, even more in my dream apartment. I was exploring it this time by body movements. And it started to be something else. A big disillusionment; the more I became familiar with it, the more I realized that there were images from my childhood, replicas of the no longer existing world. And it was dusty, so dusty, and in a way, boring. And again, dancing without feet moving, all became intense and filled with potential for movement, a spoken barrier that gave place to sensation. Something changed. So, I kept on dancing in my dream apartment until I felt the urge to get out without doing it.

More synchronistic things happened in the meantime, one I will mention here. I watched an avant-première of the film "Lost Country^[5]", which I sincerely recommend, with the presence of director Vladimir Perišić. One patient, a Russian woman having a thymic decompensation since the start of the war in Ukraine, not being able to identify to the Russian role in the conflict, mentioned to me that there was a Cannes prized Serbian movie at the Geneva cultural center. Not

knowing what it was about, I found myself watching the story of Belgrade student demonstrations against Milošević, the same I participated, from the perspective of a teen boy from a deeply polarized family where *status quo* of dying Yugoslavia was desperately preserved. I won't spoil the excellent movie, but the end came as a shock to my personal story. Even more, after a film discussion where the director, who is about my age and fled to Paris after the war, was avalanched by numerous nostalgic comments from the public, he said that liberation could come out of accepting non-belonging. In a way, Yugoslavia is dead. I knew that, but I needed to hear it. That night, I had a dream. I was reaching my usual luxury spot in dreams, an amazing swimming pool in my dream New York. But I saw suddenly that its façade was falling down. It wasn't so fancy and it was in dream Vancouver, and it was just fine, just a common city with a common trains and streets and swimming pools, but no trace of idealization. I woke up totally disturbed. Dreams change, active imagination changes; what else changed? What does it mean for the earth, for the attachment to it, for my conclusions, for my homelessness question? What name do I look for, what earth I am saving, am I only replacing dead Yugoslavia for please-don't-die-Earth?

Dreams came to the light of consciousness. I named them. I desperately need to put names on them: Paris, Kikinda, Yugoslavia... Dreamscape was lovable because there was an imagined Earth I could love according my names and then they became part of my consciousness. But there was something behind that sabotages that idyllic love story. Dreams were not anymore hidden. Something was beneath which made a blurry picture, a yellow façade and dust. I needed to turn my work upside down. It wasn't right anymore.

And there it was, a water-lily.

A world with movable roots. How do we name its earth when it's water? What if we are failing to save our planet because we give it more our personal, Jungian complexes-enriched names than trying to be simply in the spectrum of Name, homeless in names and "homefull" in Name? Loving Yugoslavia as name makes me condition my love toward the earth on which I am brought and judge the other earths that somebody else named them theirs. Earth exists, planet and soil and water. As a waterlily, our relationship to our roots depends on perspective. Maybe waterlily knows exact water coordinates of its birth, but we only see it slowly moving, surviving, adapting and being free and nourished at the same time.

Attachment is necessary but if needs desperately to become named, the fight for its name can lead to destruction. Maybe it is our fear of homelessness, emptiness, transparence in the Chronos reign? Maybe « dying Earth », changing names and knowing that future can change given-by-us names irritates us? Do we have too many names because the Name makes us short-lived and replaceable? Can we allow us to belong and fight for future when our existence is so vulnerable? Did the process of naming make us possessive of now no matter the future?

In order words, can we love earth and Earth which has no name given by us? Mapping dreams spaces and searching for naming my interior processes through Jungian Art-Based Research, allowed me separate from the real spaces and real names. Somehow, Yugoslavia still lives in me even if I call it Vancouver or Paris.

References

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5. [^] <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt6430442/>, consulted February 10th 2024