

## **To facilitate a bibliodrama workshop with a trans/intercultural and an interfaith ambition**

*(At FINDHORN a special location in Scotland;-) from the 30th of August until the 4th of September, at the annual European Bibliodrama Network 2019.)*

*"To do it - and to trust the process" is an attempt to give this article another headline where the between headlines in this article tries to summarize my experiences in order to share my insights what a facilitator of bibliodrama in this kind of setting might get some help from./*  
*Lotta Geisler*

**To invite, to be invited and say YES!**

**To dare and be curious about new or unusual settings/encounters.**

This year (2019) I was *invited* to lead a workshop at the annual congress of the European Bibliodrama Network in Scotland and the steering group suggested that I should lead it with Roshmi Lovatt from England, who I have never met before.

The invitation by mail explained the ambition of the conference, to be focused on our relationship with nature, ecology and related spirituality drawing on Celtic spirituality and other faith traditions. Therefore no special denominational or religious text was given in advance, only the sentence *"Every creature, every plant, every rock and grain of sand"* and the freedom to choose a text or several and make own choices how to work. This mail also presented me to my co-leader and we both got the same question whether we could imagine trying to work together on these circumstances and both of us said yes! (This YES is of course another story; if we had said NO...it would also have been another story).

**To plan by being able to meet each other as facilitators in advance in an open atmosphere and allow spontaneity and diversity fill the encounter as a start!**

From there we started by talking to each other via internet/SKYPE (we wanted to see and hear each other, not only by writing words), and both of us checked in each other's homepages about our personal professions. Rather soon we found out that we had quite a lot of similarities in our backgrounds as creative arts therapists also with the use of drama experiences in different ways as well as counsellors and so on. We decided to meet in January in Cambridge, UK, invited and served on behalf of Dave Tatem and Ditty Tatem-Dokter from the steering group, who opened their home for a couple of days. We brought texts and stuff we thought we could need to build our workshop. This meeting helped us a lot and made us to be more concrete in advance of the conference.

*Preparation need to be open and a real encounter! There must be an agreement between the facilitators!*

**To find a generative symbol. Something that connects us with the theme and ourselves and our traditions.**

Roshmi has a Hindu and I have a Christian background and we knew we would meet and work in the land of Celtic tradition. There was a symbol of the conference, the **TRISKELION**<sup>1</sup>, a three folded old symbol, which had an input upon us both and became our generative start together with a lot of ideas and thoughts. I think this kind of an old and multiple understood symbol was (and is) generative and very helpful for an open start together with the already formulated invitation and from the attitude of the two of us. I think this is a precondition for a generative process; being open to the unknown, being curious, not being too sure and enough secure to explore new fields of life and enough aware and not easy falling unconscious into pre-judging or into a blind walk inside presumptions.

**To use earlier (your own and others) knowledge and experiences and mix it seriously, playful and in an experiential way**

We held onto this threefold ideas in many ways, both according to the content and the form. As creative arts therapist and also bibliodrama leader, I have learned a "a third" kind of voice (which could be the arts, a text, a play and so on) will help something to emerge, something that can give direction, hold the process and give new perspectives and even comfort and become a trampoline of development!

**To be aware of the need of being transparent, informative and creating a good enough safe place, including every single participant, the theme and context, the local place and ourselves as leaders before being a group really and facilitating creative challenging steps/exercises.**

We started to find out how we can talk (language question) and make a group agreement together. We let the participants share their names and expectations or reasons why they came to this conference. We, as workshop leaders, also made a presentation of ourselves and described our way to this conference.

We chose three poems in the beginning of process we thought could speak to each person. We read all three poems, we handed them out to make the participants able to read for themselves and after that asked them to find a word or a sentence.

On the floor we had created the form of a TRISKELION from simple threads, but visible and strong enough to touch and use. Every participant could grasp it with her/his hands and with chosen music we asked them to play and move with it and try to move the sound of their chosen word or sentence. We played some kind of Celtic, Swedish and Indian music, both as a help for rhythm and play. We did this in steps - from an individual perspective to a more group related movement. And then we shared the experience in the whole group, reflecting also about the movement from an individual level to a group level.

- one Celtic saying

*"I am the wind on the sea, I am the ocean wave. I am the sound of the billows. I am the seven-horned stag. I am the hawk on the cliff. I am the dewdrop in sunlight. I am the fairest of flowers. I am the raging boar. I am the salmon in the deep pool. I am the lake on the plain. I am the meaning of the poem. I am the god that makes fire in the head. Who levels the mountain? Who speaks the age of the moon? Who has been where the sun sleeps? Who, if not I?"*

*(Song of amergin - mythical Celtic invocation)*

---

<sup>1</sup> TRISKELION - the ancient Celts had many symbols, many of them revolved around a threefold theme. Triskelion Celtic symbol meaning is a trinity of themes like: Mind, body, spirit for example. There are other meanings for each of the three branches of the triskelion.

- one from a Swedish poet

*"Weary of all who come with words, words but no language, I make my way to the snow-covered island. The untamed has no words. The unwritten pages spread out on every side! I come upon the tracks of deer in the snow. Language but no words."*

(From March 1979 - Tomas Tranströmer)

- and one from an Indian poet

*"The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.*

*It is the same life that shoots in joy through the dust of the earth in numberless blades of grass and breaks into tumultuous waves of leaves and flowers.*

*It is the same life that i rocked in the ocean-cradle of birth and of death, in ebb and in flow.*

*I fell my limbs and made glorious by the touch of this world of life. And my pride is from the life-throb of ages dancing in my blood this moment.*

(Rabindranath Tagore 1861-1941)

**To let different texts and traditions have a space for itself and create an encounter  
To help the participants to grasp the opportunity how to use own knowledge and let  
fantasy play**

The next days we worked with three different texts in many different ways.

We started with a story from ***Bhagavad Gita*** (Roshmi gave a brief introduction to Hinduism and to the text we offered, telling about ARJUNA'S prayer to Krishna that is answered in Bhagavad Gita Chapter 15, verse 12 & 13) - The group then listened to the Sanskrit while forming clay in their hands. Afterwards they saw the whole Sanskrit text and found a graphic word or phrase (without understanding for most of the group). Then they inscribed it into their formed clay. As we have learned, the depth is on the surface - although hidden in the beginning- but emerging while the text is becoming loaded with meaning. Afterwards Roshmi was intensively asked to translate the Sanskrit words that the participants had chosen, an interest was there!

The second text was from the **New Testament (Acts 17:22-33)** when Paul talks to the people of Athens and tell them that he has seen that they are very religious and built altars to an unknown God. This story became a drama where the participants stepped into the roles of Paul, someone from Athens at the time and the Unknown God. These three roles met after Pauls speech in a café. We made interviews at the tables, asked who they were and what they talked about.

The third text was a Celtic ideas of creation, based on "**A tale of Great Love:** a reconstructed Gaelic creation myth" by Iain MacAnTsaoir. We grouped the participants cut the text into parts. Each group got a part to make a picture of what they read and later tell the rest of the group, in the right order of the text, which is a way to listen and get the whole content of an unknown text.

The text itself, the myth, was very imaginal and mythical. The content is somehow very violent, reminding us of all kind of human relationships, also the more problematic ones.

We had prepared roles from the text but also from the theme of the conference as well a kind of contemporary possible category, on paper, to choose for the participants. After their choices we divided them into three groups; one *family drama* (the Celtic myth), one group of *contemporary professionals upon groups or families* (they could decide by themselves who they are) and the third group upon *the theme of the conference* (a plant, a creature, a rock, a grain and sand) - and out of this we tried to work with a kind of dialogue between the myth, the nature and our different kinds of understanding.

### **To close a workshop, create a final encounter**

After the work with three very different texts, we tried to bring them all together in an encounter using the TRISKELION symbol.

In the end we placed all three texts in a kind of triskelion on the floor. The participants were invited to take roles, self-chosen out of all texts, to start in their texts (while they were pointed out in the room/form) but invited them to visit and meet other roles and visit other texts, having to pass borders between the "text"-worlds.

In the middle we also had created a space of our contemporary world as a fourth possibility to communicate with in these roles.

### **Some post-reflections**

We as co-leaders have a kind of West European urban life-experience with us by our similar educations and professions, which of course made us more similar in some ways. This was helpful for the co-leadership but probably also diminishing other possible experiences. Our attitude to each other has been very open, curious and often we used each other's ideas as an inspiration for new ideas without having "a right way", more similar to the role of a facilitator in bibliodrama, to give birth to the exploration of a theme and a content in a good enough secure and exciting way.