



You do not have to wait for them to come around: familial estrangement and the queer imagination

Avery Rabbitt

Harm occurs in relationship; healing occurs in relationship, too.

Amanda Machado points out that, in Spanish, the word estrangement shares an etymology with the word *extrañar*, “which we say when we miss someone”. While familial estrangement is a common– yet hush-hush– phenomenon, ‘a silent epidemic’, LGBTQ+ folks have disproportionately suffered while negotiating different levels of familial estrangement, coming up against the heart-breakingly impossible demands of choosing between missing their families of origin or missing their own lives.

Psychotherapy’s default emphasis on repair can fail to acknowledge the experiences of people living with a rupture so powerful, it revokes the intimacy of family ties which are widely considered irreplaceable. Respondents in academic studies report a lack of support and a deep sense of stigma around familial estrangement. LGBTQ+ families may not adhere to the ideals, norms, and rituals so deeply ingrained in our social narratives, but as such the queer imagination can offer insight into a way of healing that decenters and reclaims reconciliation.

For Sarah Schulman of *Ties that Bind*, it requires an “ethic of intervention”, where homophobic families, for instance, are held accountable. For Machado, it involves “Queer Noche Buena, a new vision of love and spirituality that was waiting when I no longer only focused on the way things have always been”. For Donna Haraway, it is making kin with more-than-human earthlings. In these models of relationship, we are met with the astonishing possibilities of what home can be and what stories we may tell about it.

For this workshop, a drama therapist will facilitate a group-devised myth around the theme of familial estrangement followed by a Sesame-style enactment. Participants will explore the landscape of the myth, finding and making objects, resources, poems, songs, and more, culminating in the development of a home-making ritual. All practitioners welcome.



Biography

Avery Rabbitt is an international drama therapist and cross-disciplinary artist based in Wales. She is an HCPC-registered Creative Arts Therapist (Dramatherapy), a member of BADth (the British Association for Dramatherapy), Dramatherapy Cymru, the Wales Arts Health and Wellbeing Network, and serves as an elected Digital Communications Officer for WATAF (the Wales Arts Therapies Advisory Forum).

Recent Publications & Presentations

Rabbitt, A. *Donna Haraway's Animal Symbionts and Speculating Eco Soma Responses*. **European Federation of Dramatherapy (EFD) Conference: Human and Nature in Dramatherapy**.

Rabbitt, A. **Slumgullion: A neuroqueer long-distance hiker's questions about landscapes in drama therapeutic relationality**. *Drama Therapy Review*, 10 (Disability, Chronic Illness and Debility Justice in Drama Therapy: Global- Political Perspectives). 39-62.

Rabbitt, A. (2023). *Slumgullion: A neuroqueer long-distance hiker's questions about landscapes in drama therapeutic relationality*. **North American Drama Therapy Association (NADTA) Annual Conference 2023**. Vilakazi, Nonkululeko.

Rabbitt, A. (2022). *The Performativity of My Blackness*. **British Association of Dramatherapy (BADth) Annual Conference 2022**