



## Ecologies of Embodiment: Video Essays III

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Polly Hudson, "These Hands: an EcoSomatic approach to a woman's labour – of the body, and on the land" (6:31). This video essay is part of an ongoing practice as a gardener and dancer, a long-term project at an inner city urban allotment, entitled *And So we Sow*. The work responds to notions of women's labour from an EcoSomatic and eco-feminist perspective, drawing on principles from releasing dance practices particularly Skinner Releasing Technique, from permaculture, and from wider embodied engagement. // Ana Luiza Azevedo Dupas, "Practice of Resting, Reading and Translating the Text: 'Hapticality, or Love'" (9:52). This video shows fragments of the workshop: "Practice of resting, reading and translating the text: 'Hapticality or love,'" held online in the context of IV EIRPAC event in September 2021. From the practice of Eutony, participants of the workshop are invited to a somatic reading, and "transcreation" of the text, which is an excerpt from Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*. // Lea Spahn and Hana Magdonova, "'Within the Memories of a Mountain': Posthuman Embodying as Techno-material Becoming" (11:00). This video essay is based on footage from performance artist Hana Magdoňová during her 39-day stay in Hády – a renaturating quarry in the post-socialist Czech Republic. Through an immersive layering of (video)images, sounds, and spoken words, the essay depicts embodied encounters with this space and reads them through feminist materialist and posthumanist thinkers highlighting the entanglement of bodies, technologies, things, and other beings on a planetary scale.

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**Keywords:** EcoSomatics; permaculture gardening; eco-feminism; Skinner Releasing Technique; rest; Eutony; hapticality; posthuman phenomenology; feminist materialisms

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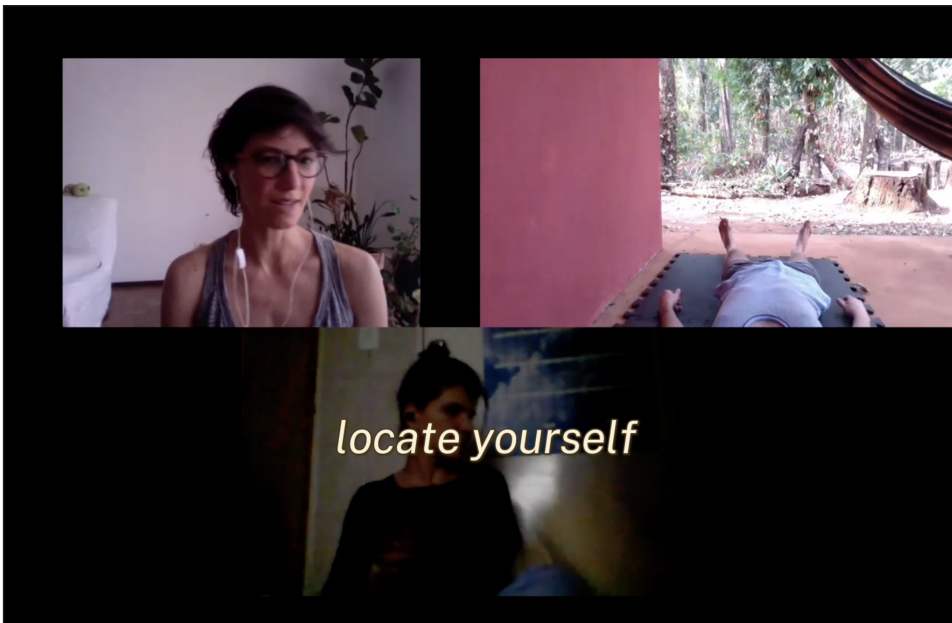


## VIDEO ARTICLE

Available to view here: <https://doi.org/10.16995/jer.9222>.

Available for download here: <https://doi.org/10.16995/jer.9222.mp4>.

## STILLS FROM THE VIDEO ARTICLE





## VIDEO ARTICLE TRANSCRIPT

[Note: This is a transcript of a video article. Onscreen text appears left justified, while spoken words are indented. Individual elements from the transcript, such as metadata and reference lists, may appear more than once in the document, in order to be properly read and accessed by automated systems. The transcript can be used as a placeholder or reference when it is not possible to embed the actual video, which can be found by following the DOI.]

[0:10]

**These Hands; an EcoSomatic approach to a woman's labour- of the body, and on the land**

polly hudson

'These Hands' is part of an ongoing practice as a gardener and dancer, a long-term project at an inner city urban allotment, entitled 'And So we Sow'. The work responds to notions of women's labour from an EcoSomatic and eco-feminist perspective, drawing on principles from releasing dance practices particularly Skinner Releasing Technique, from permaculture, and from wider embodied engagement.

Keywords:

EcoSomatics, permaculture gardening, eco-feminism, Skinner Releasing Technique.

EcoSomatics is described as an area of research and practice that combines the knowledge systems of somatics and ecology to expand our sense of self, and to include our wider relations by re-rooting us back into our bodies, and awakening our sensory perceptions (Cudney & Rozek 2022).

[Polly Hudson:]

These hands

These hands hold space.

Space for her, for him, for them.

And for me.

These hands have fluttered, moaned and raged, trembled and shaken.

These hands reach out, feeling the earth shift and move beneath them

Untangling tissues and uncoiling pain.

These hands carry weight-

weights of grief and of loss,

heavy weights.

And barrows full of decomposing matter.

These hands that are holding stories in my cells- passed through generations of women.

These hands: strong and resilient,

they tend and are tender-

plant firmly on my body, finding the density and depth that I inhabit. Feeling the breath move beneath them.

fingers as delicate as a butterfly's landing.

These hands reach for comfort in the dark of the night, in the dawn light.

Hands that have furrowed lover's flesh,

located bones along a spine,

traced from the dip between clavicles to the tip of a shoulder,

mapped the contours of face,

curled fingers and palm around a heart.

These hands find the satin soft skin of a neck with the very tips of my fingers,

and sigh.

These hands ache and hurt sometimes, a tightening around the bones it seems.

Age and wisdom?

These hands have reached into space,  
the air dense and with a tangible viscerally, as if liquid,  
tasting the temperature of the air.

These hands have pulled you tightly towards me as you reach for my breast with  
your open mouth. Tears falling on your head as my milk flows.

These hands have cleaned bodily expulsions and excretions, mopped floors, washed  
dishes, and wiped away tears.

Hold on I say, hold on. These hands will make it ok.

These hands have held on for dear life whilst you rage and rail, all fury and anger  
and venom.

Till it passes.

These hands have held you gently while you float in the ocean,  
one hand cradling your skull and one under the bony landscape of the pelvis,  
until you can float on your own.

These hands dig up the first potatoes tumbling out of the earth.

They pick the fruits of my labours, squash blackflies covering the tops of plants  
and wash in council bins full of water, silky and warm from the sun.

These hands have chopped, and stirred, and cooked.

These hands brush and touch- herb plants, flowers and vegetables releasing their  
scent.

These hands dig, becoming scratched and sore.

They plant seeds,  
toiling and digging deep,  
delving into soil, and soul,  
planting seedlings of hope, and of love.  
they water,  
and they wait.

Dr Polly Hudson is a teacher, artist, gardener, writer and dancer. Her practice engages with process within artistic making, ethical embodied approaches to teaching and leadership, and EcoSomatics, with a current focus on working class women's labour of

the body and on the land. Polly is a Reader in Dance at Birmingham City University, UK, and Head of Movement at Royal Birmingham Conservatoire.

[6:47]

**Practice of resting, reading and translating the text: “Hapticality, or love”**

Author: Ana Luiza Azevedo Dupas (UNIFESP)

Keywords: Rest; Eutony; Hapticality.

Abstract:

The video shows fragments of the workshop: ‘Practice of resting, reading and translating the text: “Hapticality or love”’, held online in the context of IV EIRPAC event in September, 2021. From the practice of Eutony, participants of the workshop are invited to a somatic reading, and “transcreation” of the text, which is an excerpt from Fred Moten and Stefano Harney’s “The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study”.

Short bio:

Ana Dupas is an artist and eutonist. Her practices cross the territories of dance, performance, and somatic education.

References:

Harney, S; Moten, F. (2013) *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*. New York, NY: Minor Compositions.

Tápia, M. (2013) *Haroldo de Campos: Transcrição*. São Paulo: Perspectiva.

[Ana Dupas:]

So you’ll have some time to find  
yourself in this space  
notice yourself in the space you’re  
locate yourself  
with your materials  
create this plot  
this comfortable space for rest  
allow yourself to rest

This workshop was held online (respecting the social distance imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic) by Ana Dupas, with collaboration of *Grupo de Estudos de Toque e Cuidado* (São Paulo, Brasil), in the context of the IV EIRPAC – Encontro Internacional de Reflexão sobre Práticas Artísticas Comunitárias (Porto, Portugal) in September, 2021.

The proposal is also part of the master research of Ana L.A. Dupas, at the Interdisciplinary Master Program in Health Sciences at Unifesp (PPGICS – UNIFESP, Santos, Brazil), with guidance of Prof. Doc. Marina Guzzo, in which the author proposes a conceptual journey through studies of touch, from the skin to the concept of hapticality.

Thanks to participants of the workshop that kindly provided their images:

Bruno César Costa, Thiago Costa, Cecilia Goes, Erika Alvarez Inforsato and Raquel Cabral Pereira Boavista Carvalho.

[Ana Dupas:]

What has changed  
in your thoughts  
from the moment you lay down?  
Also in your internal rhythms?

The workshop begins with a practice based on Eutony, a somatic methodology developed by Gerda Alexander, which seeks to activate awareness of tactile sensitivity as a starting point for an experience of regulating tone and vegetative, sensory and motor functions.

[Ana Dupas:]

How is the contact between your skin  
and the surface your body is supported on?  
As you make this very small movement with your head  
maybe you can come to feel  
that somehow the whole skin moves  
and maybe you can notice this wrap that is the skin  
and every very small movement you make  
can reach your fingertips  
the inside skin of your mouth  
there is water  
saliva

When air enters the nostrils and touches the lungs  
 it touches all that inner skin  
 of the tube goes to the lungs  
 it doesn't stops happening

From a state of rest, provided by the practice of Eutony, participants are invited to start reading, and “transcreating” the text “Hapticality, or love”.

The proposal of transcreation” is based in Haroldo de Campos’s concept, that works with a perspective in which the hierarchy of the “original” is undone, and the recreated text becomes a “transcreation” rather than a translation. The focus is not on “understanding”, but on feel what the authors felt when they wrote.

[Ana Dupas:]

What is the rhythm that these words give  
 as well as the materials you came in contact with  
 and you can stay in touch with it  
 touching the skin  
 How the text touches our eyes  
 our ears  
 our mouths  
 our heart frequency  
 the rhythm of breathing  
 this feeling that the text perhaps evokes  
 of feeling together

[Participant 1:]

*“Never being on the right side of the Atlantic  
 is an unsettled feeling,  
 To have been shipped is to have been moved by others, with others.”*

[Participant 2:]

*“In the hold, in the undercommons of a new feel, another kind of feeling became common.  
 This form of feeling was not collective, not given to decision  
 (...)*



*When Black Shadow sings ‘are you feelin’ the feelin’?’*

*He is asking about something else.*

*He is asking about a way of feeling through others, a feel for feeling others feeling you.*

*(...)*

*Its skin talk, tongue touch, breath speech, hand laugh.*

*This is the feel that no individual can stand,  
and no state abide.”*

*This is the feel we might call hapticality.”*

[Participant 1:]

*“Hapticality, the touch of the undercommons*

*(...)*

*Skin,*

*against epidermalisation.*

*(...)*

*Rest with those who insist on not to be one.”*

The participants share their thoughts, sensations and reflections during the practice, also talk about the tensions between work, rest and translation in the context of the lockdown imposed by the pandemic.

[Participant 2:]

This tension between work and rest,

it’s not that there’s a choice

(either work or rest),

but a proposal that there’s something possible to do in this tension,

between these two.

I’ve been creating a lot of images,

I also find it very difficult to rest,

and especially now for me,

rest is a bit of an abstract thing,

because I feel like my body is always very contracted,

sustained, even when I lie down.

I wrote it like this:

In the discontinuous continuity of the skin  
because it is porous  
it's always being interrupted and interfered with  
in its interstices  
in this discontinuous discontinuity  
there is an animic continuity with the ocean.  
*"Never being on the right side of the Atlantic"*  
Being in the skin,  
making it territory,  
taking the Atlantic as a territory  
thinking in the middle  
the passage as territory  
plastics,  
the islands of garbage that surround the planet  
(as if we were producing a skin)  
I kept thinking about this animic dimension,  
of the expanded body,  
as it undoes certain ways of bordering (right?)  
and redo it in this skin record  
that it is a membrane  
a border  
that is not interdict  
It allows for a certain indiscernibility,  
in the contact, in the reception of the other,  
That's what this text is all about, feeling with the other.  
I thought of the fermentation of bread  
This translation thing  
Resting the translation  
I kept thinking about bread dough  
That has to rest and that it ferments  
And then there's something that's beyond our control,  
that ferments and ferments.

[Participant 1:]

It's a rest

That has movement

I really liked the idea of resting the dough

[16:43]

### **“Within the memories of a mountain”: Posthuman Embodying as Techno-material Becoming**

Field notes: 39 days at the plain (Magdoňová, 2021)

[Lea Spahn]

“Through the whole northside horizon extends a mountain. Mmm... Not really a mountain, more like a four-stepped wall. They called it a multi-level quarry. And here, at the very bottom, in the deepest mining level, within the mountain, I stayed for 39 days...trying to survive...” (Magdoňová, 2021)

With this video article, we attempt an experimental strategy that refuses to resume portraits of a landscape that we have inherited from dualist and romantic imagination of ‘nature as other’: We do not want to take the human out of the picture. Because human traces cannot be erased. They intervene in temporalities, cause material reconfigurations. We will trace these “entangled materializations of which we are a part of”, as Astrida Neimanis says (2015, p. 40).

Therefore, this video article does not disguise the act of filming or the presence of the filming person. By actively keeping the presence of the researcher tangible, we want to raise questions of how research practices may change, when they address the act of researching as entanglement (Spahn, 2022)? One may hear the breathing of the body, even see the heartbeat’s pulsation in the shaking hand holding the camera or the minute continuous balancing movements of the hands; the body is never still. So the human body, merging with and amplified through the camera’s eye, and the bodies of rocks, plants, and other beings become a relational techno-material assemblage (Paterson and Dodge, 2016).

Field notes: 39 days at the plain (Magdoňová, 2021)

[Lea Spahn]

“The plain is a vast space, surrounded by higher terrain. Just the west side extends into the sky. And exactly from here, I enter ...” (Magdoňová, 2021)

Hády is the memory of a mountain outside of Brno in the post-socialist Czech Republic and a symbol of the extractivist logic at the core of the Anthropocene. Just outside of Brno, Hády radically transformed in the 1960s with the start of limestone mining. It gradually turned into a multi-level quarry. In the first phase, two flat quarry walls were created on two sides of the hill – Džungle and Růženin lom. In the second phase, between these flat quarry walls, mining continued until 1997 transforming the landscape into a stepped terrace which creates the typical face of Hády to this day. After mining was terminated, the Hády Land Stewardship Association began the re-cultivation of the now protected land. With Donna Haraway, Hády can be analyzed as ‘natureculture’ (Gesing et al. 2019), a space where we can observe the entanglement of different species, practices and policies.

Though the land is now protected, the traces of human intervention are greatly noticeable: the quarry terraces, imprints of truck tires, the transportation infrastructures as scars of the mining – but also left-over trash, stone messages on the lower terraces built by visitors, newly created paths by walkers and bikers all are visible traces. Nevertheless, the re-naturation process allows insights into processes of a greatly biodiverse ecosphere that also hosts a number of rare thermophile plants that have appeared due to the new geological conditions after mining.

Field notes: 39 days at the plain (Magdoňová, 2021)

[Lea Spahn]

“Me, as an archetype of weeping woman, sitting at the bottom of the waste, of the useless, after the precious has been mined, torn out... Maybe with my non-human relationship I help to a new fullness, a redefinition. My move in the post-humanist party by being here together with the other blown grains. Both they and I somehow sprout in specific-species need... Beautiful culturenature! I exist within and contribute with my consciousness a tiny piece of this multidimensional organism. I embody it and it embodies through me. Post-romanticism. The Bardic song of the 21st century.” (Magdoňová 2021)

This said, we follow the scholarship of environmental humanities, a field in which a wide range of scholars address global environmental change through interdisciplinary research and explore the potential of new environmental imaginaries that address naturecultures as entangled more-than-human life worlds (Neimanis et al., 2015). In line with feminist materialist thinkers, the complex interplay of ecospheres is perceived as multi-species entanglement that

regards non-human organisms and phenomena as agential (Haraway, 2016). As a consequence, we perceive bodies not limited to human bodies but as (im)material entanglements that are ever ‘in becoming’, as Rosi Braidotti pointed out (Braidotti, 2013).

This is also articulated in Stacey Alaimo’s concept of transcorporeality in which she highlights the entanglement of bodies, technologies, things, and other beings on a planetary scale (Alaimo, 2008). In addition to that, transcorporeality also highlights the implicatedness of bodies of all kinds, of vast temporal and spatial scales. In this way, the re-naturalizing quarry can be experienced as a memoryscape in becoming – it tells the stories of an anthropocentric extractivism based on the conception of ‘nature as resource’, it gives insights into vastly different temporalities of organisms and materialities and is a space where socio-material practices that emerge from the heritage this quarry is become tangible.

Field notes: 39 days at the plain (Magdoňová, 2021)

[Lea Spahn]

“Today, I decided to clean the left-over garbage. I pick up the plastic piece of a mining truck tire and find an ant colony underneath. Oh! My co-habitants! The ants suddenly uncovered, quickly picking their larvae and pulling them deeper down to the earth! What have you done; Hana? How will you react now? Should you continue with ‘purification’ (or cleaning the waste up) or should you return the piece of plastic back? It is obviously already used as a benefit for another multispecies collaboration. Think, Posthuman, think!” (Magdoňová, 2021)

As memoryscape, the quarry allows to perceive landscape as a “becoming-in-place”, as Jones points out (Jones, 2015, p. 4). In her perspective landscapes are made through human practices of re-membering. Memories, texts, images and practices have a performative power, they write themselves into landscapes and enact them. However, from a posthumanist perspective, landscapes are naturecultures that can also be analysed as co-constituting. It is not only humans with their memory but, as Karen Barad formulates, “[t]he world ‘holds’ the memory of all traces; or rather, the world is its memory (enfolded materialisation)” (Barad, 2014, p. 182). In that way, memory is the tracing of processes of materialization. Memory is a human capacity. But to trace the becoming of a landscape is to become acquainted with a specific history of intra-actions. This process includes one’s own partial knowledge but it does not dominate, it is about listening to the becoming of others.

Today, the land is a protected area also cared for and a site of multiple interests, again showing how humans bring each other into existence in an ongoing process that is linked to political narrative, policies, societal discourses, social practices, weather changes etc. (Varfolomeeva, 2021).

Field notes: 39 days at the plain (Magdoňová, 2021)

[Lea Spahn]

“As we usually perceive stone as stable and unchanging, this experience gave me an insight that stone is subject to a quick change. Over and over again, I am witnessing how other elements are shaping the plain. The sun is burning, bursting the soil and cracking the stone. The wind can be really sharp here, it crashes into the rocks and gets into the smallest clefts in the minerals. And then, there is rain which is usually very helpful and brings this needed freshness with it. But I saw a downpour which was louder than the thunder and millions of drops were hitting the ground. The bare rock transformed into a river with wild little waterfalls.” (Magdoňová, 2021)

These “eco-affective entanglements” (Ladino, 2015, p. 155) may be articulated through the posthuman perspective on material, interconnected intra-actions that extend imaginations of relations to more-than-human configurations. Therefore, we follow Astrida Neimanis in thinking that “we can cultivate ways of imagining our lived experience as decentered, if always transcorporeally implicated” (Neimanis, 2017, p. 42). It is about openness to the entangled process of world-making. It is about the ‘becoming with’ and acknowledging the implicatedness of what matters.

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Varfolomeeva, A., 2021. Destructive care: Emotional engagements in mining narratives. *NJSTS* 13–25.

### **Bios:**

Dr. Lea Spahn is a researcher, performance artist, and facilitator with a focus on feminist materialisms, posthuman phenomenology, aesthetic research, and political ecologies. Currently, she is part of a European research project on aesthetic education for democracy and teaches dance education and performative research at the Philipps-University of Marburg.

Hana Magdoňová is an artist, theorist and researcher, educated in the field of Performance Art, educated both in fine arts and theatre. Nowadays, she focuses her work on the topic of pre-media art, defined within her PhD research project in the Department of Art History and Theory in the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Technology in Brno, Czechia.

**Short abstract:** This video essay is based on footage from performance artist Hana Magdoňová during her 39-day stay in Hády – a renaturating quarry in the post-socialist Czech Republic. Through an immersive layering of (video)images, sounds, and spoken words, the essay depicts embodied encounters with this space and reads them through feminist materialist and posthumanist thinkers highlighting the entanglement of bodies, technologies, things, and other beings on a planetary scale.

**Credits:**

Academic text: Dr. Lea Maria Spahn

Field notes: Hana Magdoňová

Video: Hana Magdoňová

Voicing: Dr. Lea Maria Spahn

Video editing: Hana Magdoňová

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