[Prepublished draft of chapter in A. Voss & S. Wilson (eds.), *Re-enchanting the Academy* (pp. 267-268), Rubedo Press]

ENGAGING THE NON-LINGUISTIC MIND: RE-ENCHANTMENT BEYOND WORDS

Paul Stevens

Enchantment is something which is almost impossible to define yet we know it when we encounter it, or when we feel it is missing. This makes it hard to write about enchantment, and even harder to write about how we might go about *re*-enchanting anything. Yet this very difficulty is a clue to the nature of enchantment: it is mysterious, it is magical, it is all those things that the dominant, often Western science influenced, worldview is not. It is on the tip of our tongues yet we can only talk indirectly about it by referring to fairy tales and folklore, myth and metaphor. It is something which can only be understood by experiencing it, by feeling it in the way our bodies come alive, become part of a living, animated world.

Yet it is often something which academics banish to the depths of the unconscious or subsconscious mind: that subliminal realm which we *cannot* directly experience, which can only partially affect our everyday experience. Enchantment thus becomes something we can only dream about, not real or meaningful in the waking world. This, I believe, is the wrong way to think about it.

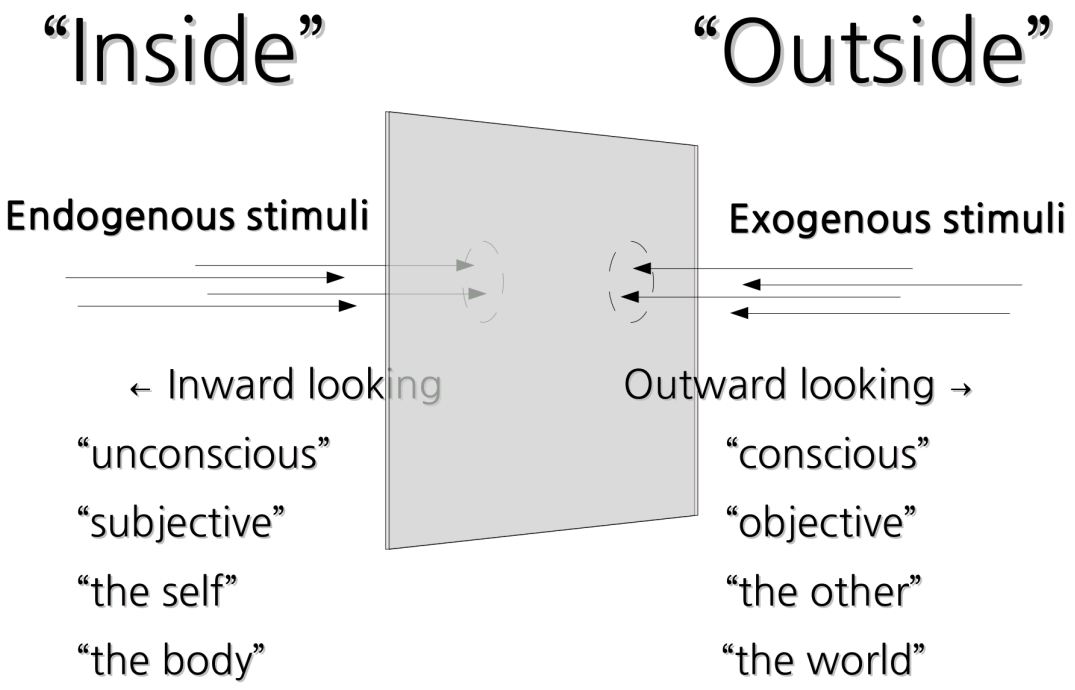


Figure 1. Mind as a surface

Instead, let us start by thinking about how we commonly visualise a mind. As an analogy, think of a mind as being a kind of surface, having an inside and an outside (see Figure 1). The inside surface looks inwards, at all of the things we think of as being part of our interior world: subjective experiences, thoughts, feelings, sensations from the body. This side of the mind-surface is all about the self, and is seen as being the where the sub- and unconscious resides. In other words, it is a realm of the imagination, of fluid fantasy and everything that is in some sense 'not real'. The outside surface looks outward, into the 'real' world. Objective, shared experiences that happen in a rational, orderly manner. It is the realm of the social, the other, where the conscious mind is presumed to be dominant.

To this way of thinking, the mind-surface envelops the inner, private self. It is the boundary that separates real and unreal, the mundane world from the enchanted. It keeps us separate, discrete; autonomous; isolated entities moving through the world but not really being a part of it. Endogenous stimuli (mostly seen as 'subjective') from the body, from the self, can only be felt by their effect on the inner side of the mind-surface; exogenous ('objective') stimuli can only register on the outer side of the mind-surface. Above all, each of us can never really know what it is like 'inside' another entity: what is within each mind, that enchanted realm beyond the boundary, is forever out of reach.

Yet what if this way of visualising the mind actually creates the separation? What if the two apparent sides of that mind-surface are actually just the two halves of a continuum, with what we thought of as being inside instead just being further away, harder to perceive, from the outside? In other words, what if what we thought of as an impenetrable boundary was instead just a corner we couldn't see around? A kink in the surface which we can iron out? (see Figure 2)

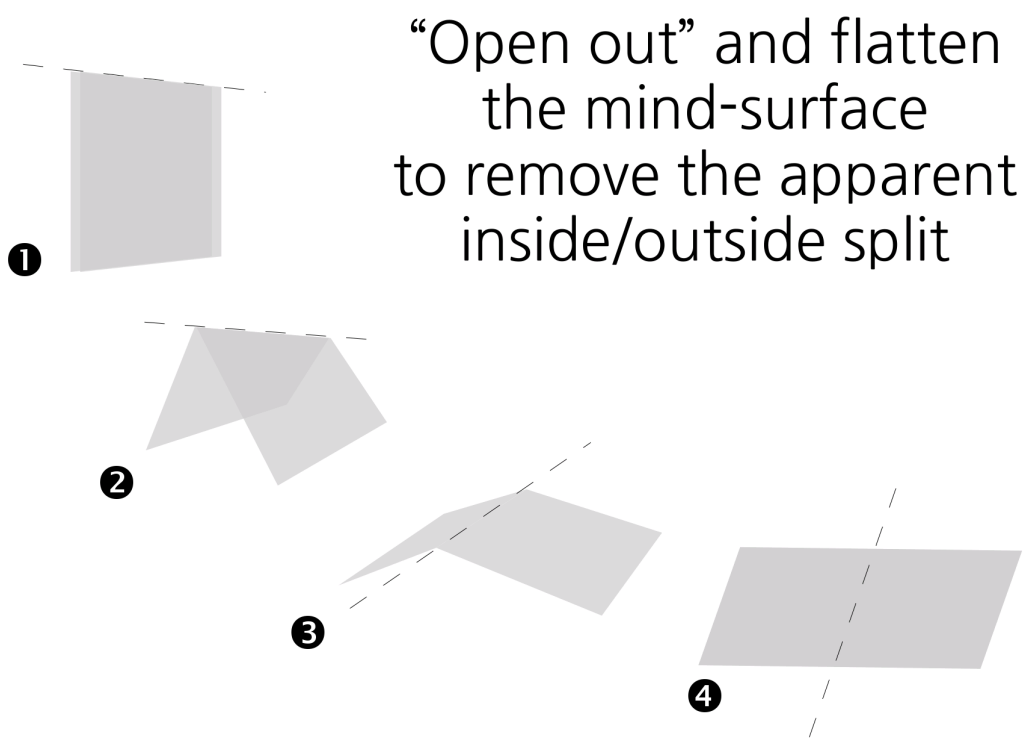


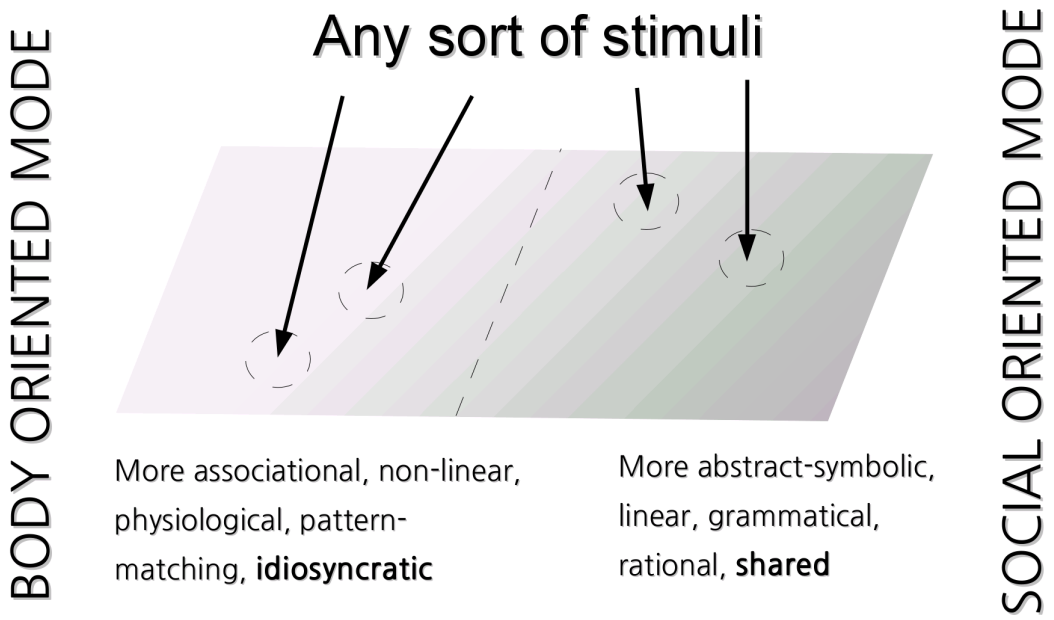
Figure 2.

Unfolding the mind-surface

But, in this case, why was the 'inside' harder to perceive by those 'outside'? In what sense was it further away? Whatever we originally thought of as being 'inside' does undeniably have different qualities. We think of 'inside stuff' as being harder to talk about, more idiosyncratic, impossible to point to and say 'look, that's what I'm talking about!' So going back to our analogy of mind as a surface, albeit now a flattened-out surface (see Figure 3), we can re-conceptualise what endogenous and exogenous might mean.

Figure 3.

Mind as a continuum



Let's start with the 'outside', the source of enxogenous

stimuli. Whatever else we are, humans are social creatures. So much of our minds and bodies evolved to interact with others, and social oriented behaviour is so dominant that we use it as the basis for our interactions with apparently inanimate objects too (if you disagree, I'll leave it up to you to explain why people name and assign a gender to their boats, or why you were whispering encouragement to your car the last time you drove up that steep hill...). So it seems appropriate to re-label the 'exogenous' right-hand side of the diagram the *social oriented* world, the realm of the other over which we have only indirect control.

That being the case, the 'endogenous' left-hand side of the diagram must be the realm of the self, that which we have at least some control over. An appropriate relabelling would be the *body oriented* world.

We can now see that it might be harder to find a qualitative difference between stimuli originating from the 'outside' social oriented world and the 'inside' body oriented world; exogenous and endogenous are just labels we assign depending on *where* on the mind-surface those stimuli appear to arrive. Any boundary between the two is thus much more arbitrary than it first appeared. Immediately this has an appeal, as our everyday experience is often much more ambiguous than we like to admit. Did I really see something move, or just imagine it? Did I reply to what you said, or to what I thought you said? And, just by reimagining the mind in this way, it implies that the enchanted realm is now only separated by a mere mist of perception rather than an impenetrable boundary.

Going back to those questions — why was what we originally saw as the 'inside' harder to perceive by others, and what might it mean that the left-hand side of the mind-surface was 'further away'? — we now have some answers. The left-hand side is body oriented: as each of our bodies differs due to genetics and experience, that end of your mind-surface will be idiosyncratic, shaped by the form of your body and especially by the complex network of interconnections between your neuronal cells that make up your embodied brain. It is not that that part of your mind is inaccessible per se; it is just that it is hard to communicate its nature to an other person, and equally hard for that other person to interpret what you are saying in such a way that they can relate it to their own idiosyncratic 'inner' mind.

This is why that apparent boundary forms. It's a line marking 'here be idiosyncratic dragons'; a demarcation that, as we grow, we map out in implicit negotiation with others, soon learning at which point most people back off and think we are weird, or sharing too much, or 'have no boundaries'.

The exact placement of your boundary will always have some flexibility depending on who you are with: further to the body-oriented left for those you have an affinity with, further to the social oriented right for those you do not know or trust, and moving further back and forth depending on mood, confidence, and many other factors.

The reason it is so hard to communicate what is on the inner side of the boundary is that we tend to express things in language: a form of consensus communication that is firmly a part of the socia oriented world. As such, it is always going to convey only an approximation of what is occurring in the body oriented world. Simply put, we can lose a sense of enchantment when we try to reify an experience by putting it into words. Words, especially in Western languages, have a rigid grammatical structure. Words are logical, structured; they reshape any experience, giving it cause and effect, placing it in the linear timeline of past-present-future, reducing the fuzziness and idiosyncracy to recognisable (and so communicable) categories.

Yet, as we have all experienced at some point in our lives (often in childhood), the enchanted realm has subtleties and nuances that words cannot completely describe. Every experience is unique, with colours, shapes, smells and sensations that are malleable, in constant flux, so delicate that paying them too much attention can bring about their dissolution. Some get closer than others in being able to articulate what it is like in an enchanted world. Poets play with words, breaking the rigidity of grammar to hint at what is behind those words. This happens at the expense of clear understanding: for some, poetry revitalises memories of similar enchanted experiences, but for others it is simply word-play, seen as pretentious rather than an act of re-enchantment. Writers and effective teachers often turn to simile and metaphor, weaving tales of magic, of fantastical creatures or otherworldly lands. There is enchantment there, but it is distant, seen as a work of fiction (not 'real') or New Age philosophy (usually used to mean a pseudo-understanding at best). Music can get even closer, abandoning language all together to describe enchantment in the ebb and flow of a melody, shaped and paced by rhythm, emotion and landscape intertwined in the pitch and timbre of the instruments [Daniel Levitin, This is your Brain on Music (London: Atlantic Books, 2006)]. Music can carry us away, back, within, transcending the boundary to speak directly to the body oriented mind.

By considering these three areas — poetry, metaphor, and music — and looking at what qualities they share, we can find techniques to reliably bring enchantment back into academia, and perhaps to bring it back into everyday life as well.

Hypnosis

One of these techniques is exemplified by a phenomena long associated with being enchanted: hypnosis. This can be defined as 'A state of consciousness involving focused attention and reduced peripheral awareness characterised by an enhanced capacity for response to suggestion', a recent formulation with wide consensus from the *American Psychological Association's Society of Psychological Hypnosis* (www.apadivisions.org/division-30/about). Yet it is not so much the state itself which is of interest here but the way in which that state is reached. Although there are diverse ways of achieving hypnosis, a typical procedure involves two main steps:

1. The creation of a rapport between hypnotist and client
2. A period of hypnotic 'induction'

If performed satisfactorily, these result in the attainment of a 'trance' state (really an alteration in consciousness as per the definition above) wherein therapeutic change or self-development is more easily achieved. This state is one in which metaphor and associational logic are dominant. The client might experience the enactment of symbolic rituals, a meeting with their past or future selves, the shape-shifting of their body, or travelling in the blink of an eye to far-off lands, both fictional and real. While what they experience is not logical in terms of the social oriented world, it is powerful, and can bring about significant behavioural and attitudinal changes when they return to that everyday world. In short, they have been enchanted.

So let's look at those two steps in more detail for indications of what a (re)enchanter might need to know. First of all, rapport can be defined as 'sympathy, harmony between individuals, an emotional bond or connection' [Les Brann, Jacky Owens, and Anne Williamson, eds., *The Handbook of contemprary clinical hypnosis* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell 2012), 89]. It is about feeling comfortable with each other, engendering a reciprocal feeling of trust, a mutual agreement to share an experience together. While hypnosis is often perceived as the effect or influence *of* the hypnotist *on* the client, it is actually an interactive relationship between the two, with much of the effort being on the part of the client. Indeed, a common maxim amongst hypnotherapists is that 'all hypnosis is self-hypnosis'; the hypnotist is there to guide, to facilitate, to safeguard, and simply to accompany the client while they go on a journey together into the inner realms of the client's mind. Rapport is, in whatever context, about feeling safe enough with someone to let them travel with you across that self-imposed boundary on the mind-surface, knowing that they will accept what you discover

together without judgement or fear. As the rapport grows, each journey can go deeper beyond the boundary, making new, shared discoveries every time.

The first lesson for the (re)enchanter is therefore to encourage rapport with your intended companions. Be genuine. Make the attempt to show you might share a particular perspective, or at least have empathy where perspectives differ. Have confidence in what you say, whether in person or in print: you are offering a gift, not asking permission! This requires trust on your part as well as theirs, as you need to put your*self* back into your work, thereby exposing parts of yourself that you might think of as being private rather than public. There will always be the risk that you get hurt by ridicule or being patronised, but you may also make that connection with an other, or others: the first step in re-enchanting your work and their world.

The second step was the induction. In hypnosis, this is seen as the process by which an altered state of consciousness occurs in the client, and, to some extent, where a complementary empathic response occurs in the hypnotist as well. Typically this induction process will involve some form of relaxation and harmonisation of bodily responses. So, for example, the client might be taken through a progressive relaxation exercise, breathing deeply in a calm and comfortable manner while allowing each muscle group to relax systematically, all the way down from head to toe. The resultant state is then encouraged to deepen through the hypnotist's use of carefully chosen words and phrases, spoken with particular attention to tone and rhythm, intended to multi-sensorially evoke specific imagery. This should not be taken to mean that the relaxation need be passive. Equally effective would be a more dynamic procedure, where the client chants or dances their way into a state of narrowed attention, with the use of music or song, or other sensory stimuli that evoke the same kind of imagery through tone, rhythm or synaesthesic association.

So the second lesson for the would be (re)enchanter is to be aware of the manner in which you present your work, whatever the medium used. If speaking, then consider the tone of your speech. If you wish to speed up, elevate, excite your audience, raise your tone. To calm them down, go deeper, signify importance, lower your tone. This works best when it is complemented by the content, so match the tone to what you are describing: a decreasing, quietening tone if describing something which is shrinking, descending, slowing; an increasing, louder tone if describing something growing, rising, speeding up. If writing, create the same effect by association: in English, red tends to be larger, more dangerous, angrier, closer than blue; sussuration is 'heard' as calmer and quieter than roar; faster is 'heard' as more speedy than 'slow'. Even the characters you might use in a written

narrative can help: a female child will usually be 'heard' as saying something in a higher voice than a male adult, especially if you have previously primed your audience with a vivid description of these narrators.

Much easier to think about in relation to the written word, but just as important to verbal presentation, is the rhythm of delivery. Whether it is you speaking or your writing evoking an imagined voice in the reader's head, the rhythms can be used to change their perception of what you want to convey. Short words or hard consonants are rapid, punctuating bursts that rev up the percipient and focus their attention on you; longer, languid, alliterative words send your audience into a state of drifting reverie. Pauses especially can say more than the words themselves. They are:

Calming.

Slowing.

Space clearing.

Offering time to think.

All of these approaches move us deeper across the mind-surface, taking us away from the social oriented right side to the body oriented left side. The words themselves remain on the right but the tones and rhythms in which they are spoken go deeper; they mimic the older, deeper 'language' of the body. Speeding up and slowing down heart rate and breathing. Mapping onto the highs and lows of activity in the brain. Reaching below the cognitive centres of language processing to resonate in the deeper limbic structures of emotion, memory, needs and desires, patterns that existed before we ever learned to speak or read [Ellen Dissanayake, 'Prelinguistic and preliterate substrates of poetic narrative', *Poetics Today 32* (2011): 55-79].

Once you have guided your audience towards an altered state of consciousness, then enchantment becomes easier. While maintaining the idea that the rhythm and tone of the words are often as important as the words themselves, you can now go further. In such a state, your audience is more open to seeing associations, to absorb any metaphors used to explain and illustrate specific ideas, to the reality and efficacy of magical thinking. There is more of a willing suspension of previously held beliefs such that they will fill in any gaps you leave (whether purposely or otherwise) to

assimilate what you are saying in a way that makes sense to them. This is indeed enchantment, and one in which your audience are willing, active participants. It is the difference between presenting *to* an audience and inviting them to come *with* you on a shared journey allowing them to perceive things for themselves, and perhaps to reciprocally offer insights back to you.

Nature

Another technique can be discovered through looking at the roots of *why* the kinds of patterns evoked by poetry, metaphor and music became so deeply embedded in our minds. This takes us into the evolutionary history of humans, and the realms of ecopsychology: the study of the inter-relationship between humans and the rest of the natural world [Theodore Roszak, *The Voice of the Earth* (Grand Rapids:Phanes Press, 2001)].

For most of their evolutionary history, our human ancestors, like all other creatures on Earth, lived in environments that were modified only by the action of weather, vegetation, and the un-augmented action of living creatures. They were immersed in a world of natural patterns: shapes that were produced by relatively simple biological, chemical, and physical processes. While diverse, these patterns shared some common forms: they were *fractal*, having a self-similar geometry that arises from things growing and dividing, being weathered, disintegrating, decaying. Think of a fern leaf: the overall shape of the plant is repeated in each frond, and repeated again in the individual leaflets, and yet again in the subleaflets. Fractal patterns that repeat as you 'zoom in' to higher magnifications. Rivulets of water in sand show the same patterns as rivers seen from space, as the path that lightning takes when it strikes, as the branching of trees or the blood vessels in your body. The natural world is composed of fractal shapes, fractal sounds, fractal textures. As humans are (though we often forget this) also a part of that world, we too are fractal: our bodies, our physiology, and our minds. We learn not just by adding new information, new knowledge, but by building on what has gone before. The patterns we learn as infants are expanded upon, linked together to form more complex yet still self similar patterns as we grow through childhood; layers of yet more complex, self-similar patterns of behaviour and thought are added as we become adults. All that we were is implicit in who we now are, and in who we will become [Paul Stevens, 'Embedment in the environment', *Perspectives in Public Health 130* (2010): 265–9].

As a result of this, we all respond favourably to fractal patterns whenever we encounter them in the world becasue they resonate with the fractals within our minds and bodies. We find such patterns

and shapes easier to perceive, restful, calming. If we see a picture of trees, or waves on a beach, or mountains silhouetted against the sky, we are instinctively drawn to that image, tend to express an preference for it over other images that are less fractal (usually human made, urban scenes and objects). Similarly we respond well to other modalities that are fractal: the sounds of birds singing and the wind blowing through leaves; the feel of flowing water, or natural fabrics. It works even if we consciously think we don't like nature: our bodies still respond, becoming calmer, less excitable, relaxing. Poetry, metaphor, music: all mimic these forms, bring the rhythms and patterns of nature into an all too often abstracted and nature-isolated human world.

What this means is that the environments in which we find ourselves affect us deeply, beyond the linear logic of the social oriented world. Places that we would consider to be natural, especially wild places, give us more immersive, embodied, embedded experiences. The world becomes a bigger, more expansive place that we feel much deeper in the mind, further to the left of our mind-surface. Anyone familiar with folklore and fairytale will have noticed the preponderance of natural phenomena — fairy forests, mystical mountains, sun-dappled seas. The organic shapes and patterns of the natural world are themselves a fascinating path to enchantment.

So the final lesson for the (re)enchanter is this: choose your place wisely. Think about — feel! — the buildings and spaces in which you learn, work and give out your ideas. Ask yourself how they feel to be in, what emotions they engender, what associations you have with them. The kinds of emotions, sensations, intuitions you feel are likely to be the ones your audience will feel when they listen to or watch you, what they will subtly respond to when they read your work. If you can, choose a place of strength from which to present your work: a location in which you feel comfortable, a room with natural colours and textures, with window views of trees, or with lots of interior plants. If that isn't possible, then use natural imagery in your work: images of leaves and flower, naturalistic colours, organic decorations and symbols, words which evoke a sense of being connected to the natural world, and structures and patterns which are reminiscent of natural growth or, when appropriate, decay. Embed your message in a fractal kaleidoscope, implicitly contextualising the knowledge within a wider environment, and so enticing your audience to explore an enchanted world.

On some level, we have always known that enchantment is fundamentally about feeling connected to something. Even the primary dictionary definitions (e.g., in the Merriam Webster dictionary www.merriam-webster.com) usually include terms like 'being attracted to' and 'holding your

attention'. There is a recognition that there are certain qualities, specific attributes, that we cannot help but be drawn to, and fascinated by. But beyond this, the idea that enchantment is about 'being under a spell' signifies that we are in a different state of being when enchanted, spell also meaning 'words held to have magic power'. We know that the right words, written or spoken, have the power to change the way we think and act. What this essay offers are some hints as to how you can choose and deliver those words in the most enchanting way.

Bibliography

Brann, Les, Owens, Jacky, and Williamson, Anne, eds. *The Handbook of Contemprary Clinical Hypnosis.* Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

Dissanayake, Ellen. 'Prelinguistic and preliterate substrates of poetic narrative', *Poetics Today 32* (2011): 55-79

Levitin, Daniel. *This is your Brain on Music.* London: Atlantic Books, 2006.

Roszak, Theodore. *The Voice of the Earth*. Grand Rapids:Phanes Press, 2001.

Stevens, Paul. 'Embedment in the environment'. *Perspectives in Public Health 130* (2010): 265–9.