Advanced Study Institute

Cultural Poetics of Illness and Healing
Embodiment, Enactment and the Politics of Experience

Division of Social and Transcultural Psychiatry
Department of Psychiatry, McGill University

June 28, 2019
Montréal, Québec

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Cultural Poetics of Illness and Healing:
Embodiment, Enactment and the Politics of Experience

Language is the most distinctive feature of the human mind, through which we fashion our lifeworlds in the process of poiesis, giving voice to suffering, making sense of our predicaments, and finding ways to heal. Each language of suffering and affliction is deeply rooted in a cultural history, geography, and community. Every expression of distress and process of healing draws from these shared languages even as individuals improvise new hybrid forms. Understanding the creative functions of language must be central to a psychiatry for the whole person. This conference brings together researchers in cultural psychiatry, mental practitioners, and scholars engaged in studying how language constructs experience through embodied metaphor, narrative enactment, and situated performance.

Presentations will explore the ways that cultural resources surmise our linguistic capacity and modes of self-constitutio in the experience and expression of symptoms and illness and in the processes of identity transformation and healing. Topics will include: 1) the cognitive science of language, metaphor, and poiesis from embodied and enactivist perspectives; 2) how cultural affordances, shared background knowledge, discourse and practices enable and constrain poiesis; 3) the cognitive and social poetics of symptom and illness experience; and 4) the politics and practice of poetics in healing ritual, psychotherapy, and recovery.

conference program

Friday, June 28, 2019 / 08:30-20:00

8:30-9:00 Registration
9:00-9:30 Welcome & Introduction
Toward a cultural poetics of illness and healing
Laurence J. Kirmayer, McGill University
9:30-10:00 A little taste of heaven: Metaphor in bodily experience
Raymond W. Gibbs, Jr., University of California, Santa Cruz
10:00-10:30 Scaffolded cognition and mental disorder
Somogy Varga, University of Memphis
10:30-11:00 Break
11:00-11:30 Loving and knowing, voice and relationship: Inviting participation in autistic language
Hanne De Jaegher, University of the Basque Country
11:30-12:00 And the flesh was made word: Romeo and Juliet in the Kingdom of Cratylys
Bradd Shore, Emory University
12:00-12:30 Lunch & Poster Session
12:30-14:00 Panel: Embodiment, Metaphor, and Poiesis
14:00-14:30 Chekhov, Mad Studies, and models of mental difference
Bradley Lewis, New York University
14:30-15:00 "We thought they were bobbleheads": How engaging inner-city youth in the creation of poetry and song challenges the prevailing narrative
Debbie-Ann Chambers, University of the West Indies
15:00-15:30 To Di World: Jamaican soccer, poiesis, and post-colonial transformation
Geoffrey Walcott, University of the West Indies
15:30-16:00 Break
16:00-16:30 Body and soul: On metaphor, magic and mental illness in Mexican Curanderismo
Louis Sass, Rutgers University
16:30-17:00 The politics and poetics of code switching
Cécile Rousseau, McGill University
17:00-17:30 Panel: Politics and Poetics of Suffering and Healing
17:30-18:30 Reception
18:30-20:00 Film: A Thousand Years of Joy

The ASI Conference will be preceded (June 26-27) by a 2-day workshop for researchers working in this area. Enrolment in the workshop is limited.

Register for the workshop or the conference online at: www.mcgill.ca/tcppsych/training/advanced

The Advanced Study Institute is part of the 25th Annual Summer Program in Social & Cultural Psychiatry
Division of Social & Transcultural Psychiatry, McGill University

For more info: www.mcgill.ca/tcppsych

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