An image and a picture differ in that the image, being the natural speech of imagination, cannot be drawn from or inserted back into the real world. It is an animal native to the imagination.

--Robert Bly on the Deep Image

Agenda

Field Session: The Concreteness of Land
Introductions
Creating the Journal
Writing with the Senses
Sketching the Land
Plucking the Web

Classroom Session: The Transformations of Land into Self
Associative and Metaphoric Meaning in the Surreal
Writing the Question and Answer poem
A Poem of Collage: Where I Am From

Field Session: The Concreteness of Land

from Story from Bear Country
by Leslie Marmon Silko

You will know
when you walk in bear country
By the silence
flowing swiftly between the juniper trees
by the sundown colors of sandrock
all around you.

You may smell damp earth
scratched away
from yucca roots
You may hear snorts and growls
slow and massive sounds
from caves
in the high cliffs above you.

from "The Rose" Theodore Roethke

I think of American sounds in this silence:
On the banks of the Tombstone, the wind-
arps having their say,
The thrush singing alone, that easy bird,
The killdeer whistling away from me,
The mimetic chortling of the catbird
Down in the corner of the garden, among
the raggedy lilacs,
The bobolinks skirring from a broken
fencepost,
The bluebird, lover of holes in old wood,
ilting its light song,
And that thin cry, like a needle piercing the
ear, the insistent cicada.
Journal Entries

1. **The Silence of Hearing**: to begin, close your eyes. Listen to the sounds and the "between" sounds. Write down as closely as you can the sounds you hear. Example: hiss of dry grass, drone of black fly.

2. **The Art of "Not Seeing"**: choose a partner. You will take turns being blindfolded and lead around by your partner. What do you feel with your hands? Your face? Your feet? What do you smell? When you are done "not seeing," take off your blindfold and write your impressions down as specifically and concretely as you can.

3. **Eye of the Poet**: choose a one yard square section of land. Sketch what you see in that one yard down to the fallen seed half hidden in the winter dirt.

4. **Plucking the Web**: describe what you see that is celestial, of the plant kingdom, the kingdom of animals, minerals, of man, time of day, seasonal details, how you feel, others in your family that come to mind here. Again, be as specific as possible, as detailed as possible using concrete and sensory language.

Classroom Session: The Transformations of Land into Self

**Surrealism**:

*Based on the belief in the superior reality of certain forms of association heretofore neglected, in the omnipotence of the dream, and in the disinterested play of thought*

---Andre Breton, Surrealist Manifesto, 1924

**Associative and Metaphoric Meaning**

**Rain**

It is the sinking of things.

Flashlights drift over dark trees,
Girls kneel,
An owl's eyelids fall.

The sad bones of my hands descend into a valley
Of strange rock.

**Notes:**

________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
What Were They Like?
Denise Leverov

Did the people of Viet Nam
use lanterns of stone?
Did they hold ceremonies
to reverence the opening of buds?
Were they inclined to quiet laughter?
Did they use bone and ivory,
jade and silver, for ornament?
Had they an epic poem?
Did they distinguish between speech and singing?

Sir, their light hearts turned to stone.
It is not remembered whether in gardens
stone gardens illumined pleasant ways.
Perhaps they gathered once to delight in blossom,
but after their children were killed
there were no more buds.
Sir, laughter is bitter to the burned mouth.
A dream ago, perhaps. Ornament is for joy.
All the bones were charred.
it is not remembered. Remember,
most were peasants; their life
was in rice and bamboo.
When peaceful clouds were reflected in the paddies
and the water buffalo stepped surely along terraces,
maybe fathers told their sons old tales.
When bombs smashed those mirrors
there was time only to scream.
There is an echo yet
of their speech which was like a song.
It was reported their singing resembled
the flight of moths in moonlight.
Who can say? It is silent now.

Crazy Poems of Question and Answer: a short exercise
1. Everyone write down two What Is questions on small separate pieces of paper. On a two other separate pieces of paper, write down two totally unrelated "answers" as separate descriptive statements or phrases that come from your journal.

Examples of questions: What is a light year? What is Love?
Examples of "answers": It is a red, red shoe/Splashing through rain puddles.
Horses grazing/ Beneath the quiet/Shadow/Of a cloud.

2. We'll gather questions and answers into two separate piles and then randomly choose a question and then an answer and read them together.

A Poem of Collage: Where I Am From

1. Taking a few minutes for each, freewrite the following:
   a. rituals: personal, familial, cultural
   b. names of family or loved ones
   c. all of your names—public and private
   d. your secret treasures or symbolic objects
   e. favorite foods
   f. special family sayings
   g. the places of your family: past and present

2. Write down this title on a separate piece of paper: Where I Am From

3. Choose one of the following lines for the first line of your poem or use "Where I am from"
   a. I dream of journeys repeatedly (from Theodore Roethke)
   b. In the weather of the heart (from Dylan Thomas)
   c. My hands are
   d. I have come all this way
   e. In a dark time, the eye begins to see (from Roethke)
   f. The only thing that can relied on is (from Snyder)
   g. You tell me that silence is (from Cohen)
   h. You see, my whole life (from Nikki Giovanni)
   i. Moment to moment, the body seems
   j. In a dream, I returned to the river of (from WS Merwin)

4. Begin writing your collage poem using your journal observations and notes, your freewriting material and your "borrowed" first line. You can repeat your first line throughout your poem; you can organize your poem so that each stanza comes from one piece of your collected materials, ie. first write about family rituals, then celestial elements, then favorite foods, etc. You might consider letting your last stanza focus on the names of your family and your names ending the poem with your simple given name.

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Questions and Answers from the Window Rock, New Mexico Session

What is learning?
Sun rising to highlight clay,
Red with the blood souls of ancestors
Returning home to the depths.

What is music?
Voices echo off cliffs,
ricocheting against animal
dog cries, splash into water.

What is sound?
Subtle green plants.

What is personality?
Tall, round mountains

What is school?
Laughing.

What is light?
It is a murky water.

What is water?
It is a dry, yellow cowpie.

What is water?
Birds chirping in the distance.

What is love?
It is a gently
flapping
of the water.

What is mud?
Air so cold, it has a crisp sharpness.

What is success?
The sun's warmth on my skin.

What is life?
Warm and peaceful.

What is beautiful?
The hustling cold wind.

What is faith?
Voices, but no body.

What is happiness?
The lake cold and icy.

What is time?
Gliding across the blue expanse,
a dark ribbon, smoky coal,
settling eventually on the land.

What is peace?
Ice shattering like glass.

What is forgiveness?
It is a jagged-leafed,
low-growing, green plant.

What is happiness?
Walking through the crunching,
crackling sound of dried reeds.

Questions and Answer from the Holbrook Arizona Session

What is culture?
It is Saint's Day.
What is celestial?
It is the scatter of light
through pinholes of hope.

What is happiness?
It is the day of the dead.

What is a dam?
It is the lingering
of grandma's holiday cooking:
tamales, posole,
empanadoas de manzana.

What is happiness?
It is learning a language,
hearing the different sound
each makes, practicing
over and over until finally
the correct words.

What is home?
It is happy faces.

What is home?
It is the sound of laughter
coming from the playground.

What is turbidity?
It is the strength of moon beams
on the window sill
as I gaze at the velvet dark.

What is medicine?
It is the waking of the earth
as it trembles and shakes.

What is it to learn a language?
A beautiful moonlit night.

What is a birth day?
It is a moonlit
path upon the snow.
It is a flowing stream.

What is life?
It is the gasp of breath
of my grandson's words
"Nana!"

What is life?
It is Dad's old hat
teetering
as his massive voice
broke the silence.

What is life?
Silvery minnows
chanting the evening song.

What is love?
Who is the head of your life?

**Group Poem after Field Session: The Concreteness of Land**

**Journal Entries**

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**Group Poem from Red Lake**

**At Red Lake**

The majestic red rock
Is overlooking the peaceful valley,
Rings of water
moving outward.

At Red Lake,
I feel the crisp cold of the morning
And dogs barking off in the distance.
At Red Lake,
I am a bit frozen
But everything that surrounds me
It does not seem to bother.

At Red Lake,
the crunching, crackling sound
of walking through the dried leaves,
Voices but no bodies,
Nature captivating spirit.

At Red Lake,
groaning from the north,
coming close, chatter of insects from the west
behind brambles trampled beneath.

At Red Lake,
a roar of an engine,
a soft, but cold breeze,
the sun's warmth on my skin.

**Group Poem from Silver Creek**

**At Silver Creek**

At Silver Creek,
cool November breezes kiss my cheeks.

At Silver Creek,
the cool clear water stands sedately
with bushy tamarack and willow.

At Silver Creek,
the coolness of the sand pours into your hand,
escaping past your fingers.

At Silver creek,
the live plants soft and cool to the touch,
And the dead plants dry and crumbly.

At Silver Creek,
the winding erosion is most always true.

At Silver Creek,
the reflections cast by the Autumn sun
in the late afternoon
define the crevices of the canyon wall,
the hidden arroyos of the landscape.

At Silver Creek,
the majestic materials and structure of the dam—
a reminder of history.

At Silver Creek,
sinking in the sugary sand
envelopes my ankles,

the smell of sand and sage
floats around me
and then tumbles through my senses.

At Silver Creek, the water walks silent.
It carries me to home—
it feeds my memories as it feeds the desert—
my desert home.