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## EXPERIENCING INTERNATIONAL BIBLIODRAMA WORKSHOP “HEAVEN AND EARTH” IN HAMBURG

Die Autorin beschreibt ihre Eindrücke und Erfahrungen in der ersten Woche des Advanced European Bibliodrama Facilitator Trainings mit Krystyna Sztuka und Wolfgang Wesenberg im Haus am Schüberg bei Hamburg im November 2017

This human life, all its rich figures, lights and shades. Also the person who I am may be seen as a work of art. I have my special style of being in this world and I express it through everything that I am; how I talk and walk and think, through my facial expressions, my gestures, my voice. A French philosopher, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) said that it is exactly through this bodily being that we can learn about our world. I am my own body. The wisdom of my body is even deeper than my thoughts. My own style of being is present in me also when I read the Bible. My response to the text can happen only in my bodily presence, since it is in my body that I exist. Also when I'm thinking or talking, I am present in my whole being. This bodily aspect makes it possible to respond to the texts of the Bible in so many different ways. And it is exactly here that this Bibliodrama experience starts.

The frame of my experience is near Hamburg, in Haus-am-Schüberg, the second week of November. I am happy to meet a friend and a Bibliodrama-leader-colleague from my own Bibliodrama course on my way to Hamburg. And I am eager to meet all the other participants of this international workshop. It has been a long time since I have been able to participate in a group myself. I feel ready to learn what happens in the intersection of my own life and the Bible text. I enter on the threshold of learning what happens when colors and outdoor activities are part of the bibliodramatic process.

### Learning about the personal colors

This workshop starts by painting a personal picture. We search for the colors and shapes that express something about our mood, our existence in this moment. We work together, in the silence until our paintings are ready. Then we introduce ourselves to the others through our paintings.

By painting my picture I learn about my inner landscape. Later on, I'm asked to paint also my personal frame. All this has to do with my vision on God and holiness. When I later reflect on my experience I realize how important this is. In order to experience Heaven and Earth, there has to be an inner landscape where these entities can meet.

### Learning about Heaven and Earth

This workshop has a theme as wide as can be – Heaven and Earth. We approach it through three different texts. The first one is Gen 1:1. What a powerful experience it is to go outside, look at the landscapes through a special frame and then focus on one horizon, where the Heaven and the Earth intersect each other. After finding that landscape every one paints that picture. What happens is a mystery: it is the burning bush that I see on the canvas after using the colors. I didn't intend it so, it just happened. In the tree that I was painting there was a burning bush hidden in it. I learn that God's mystery is right in front of me, just waiting for to be revealed. It is also very intense when we share our painting processes in groups of four persons. We don't just look on the paintings, or talk about them, but we respond to them by our movements and finally we prepare a performance through which we introduce one of the paintings to the whole group. In our performance the burning bush comes alive, as well as our desire to meet the One who says I am who I am.

In the end of the workshop I have another very intense experience. This time, we are focusing on the verse promising a new heaven and a new earth (Rev. 21:1). We make the usual body work before entering into the text. I enjoy the way we are reading the verses. We walk through the hall and whoever wants, may step on top of special cubes and read the verse aloud to everybody. How many different voices, different styles of saying the same words! The text becomes alive through the movement; through the different tones it is expressed. This is one aspect of Bibliodrama. It makes us remember that the written is not just a dead block but comes alive every time it is lived anew.

After reading the text we are invited to prepare a group performance outside. In our group we prepare our scene. Each of us searches the right place where to put the painting and the frame. We situate ourselves as well in this landscape and we try to say aloud these verses. It is a very powerful experience. The text becomes a common promise of something new. It is not only my own property but a shared reality. Also when we perform it to the others, the same idea of having something in common, for all of us, is very present.



### Learning about the bibliodramatic frame. Text or theme

Bibliodrama process starts and ends with a text; this time we have first the theme. Then we have several texts on that theme (Gen. 1:1, Mt 6:9-13/Mt 6:10, Rev.21:1). After the process, I'm convinced that it can be done this way, too. In fact, a thematic Bibliodrama workshop could be a profitable way to focus on some challenging topics that we are discussing for example in my own evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. Unlike church politics, Bibliodrama is always an open process, letting people learn together and from each other, letting creativity overcome the divergences of the backgrounds.

### Experiencing a role or presenting it

In the process there was a moment that led me reflect on the question of authenticity. We had worked in a small group on a theme of social exclusion and inclusion that had become relevant through one painting made in the process. After some discussions, we performed the painting. That is we lived the inclusion happening in the roles that we had chosen. This moment was a deep experience of trust and truthfulness. There was something sacred in it. But when we were asked to do that on a scene for an audience, we were unable to reproduce it. When reflecting on this "failure", the question of living the role, playing it for one self or presenting it for the others seemed to be important. The best drama somehow happens in me. As soon as I try to reproduce something from the outside, I lose the intensity. The text is helpful in letting the drama happen in me. It orientates me into the roles. It offers a secure frame for what I'm doing. At its best, Bibliodrama enables oneself to try different roles, to experience variations of one's ego and finally, thanks to the imagination, to see the whole world in a new manner. Through reading the texts and living in their world we come to understand also ourselves better, as Paul Ricoeur (1913-2005) says in his narrative hermeneutics. Bibliodrama has to do with my identity, which is both bodily and narrative.

### Language – barrier or not

Participating in this international workshop convinced me that Bibliodrama knows no language boundaries. The language of Bibliodrama is the creativity in all its aspects, the group process in all its variety, the personal research for the meaningfulness of the Bible. This can happen in so many

ways that it becomes unimportant whether you share the same language or not.

### Widening the frame

I am very grateful of this possibility to participate in this workshop. The leaders of this workshop had a nice way of conducting the process. The atmosphere was open, welcoming and warm and one felt safe being oneself in the group. This happened also because of the participants; they were accepting and supportive. It was easy to connect and co-operate, joyful and deeply meaningful at the same time.



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