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**“THE DIONYSIAN IS NO PICNIC”: THE CHTHONIAN IN  
RACHEL ROSENTHAL’S *PANGAEAN DREAMS: A  
SHAMANIC JOURNEY*<sup>1</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT**

Rachel Rosenthal, as a prominent performance artist, strikingly depicts the social, political, and ecological dangers of the contemporary era, blending them with autobiographical elements. In *Pangaeen Dreams: A Shamanic Journey* (1990), an intriguing example of ecodramaturgy, Rosenthal, initiating a long journey into the entire history of nature, attempts to make sense of the pain in her body relating it to the global, cosmic, and geological pains in the body of nature. This relation becomes dominantly evident in the use of two motifs, Pangaea—the supercontinent in Wegener’s scientific theory, and Gaia—the mythical primordial goddess. In this shamanic journey, Rosenthal identifies with Pangaea and Gaia through which she rethinks the chthonian realities of nature and rejects the romantic idealization of nature. Using Camille Paglia’s scrutiny of the term chthonian as a theoretical framework, this study elaborates on how Rosenthal’s shamanistic ecodramaturgy is based on an awareness of chthonian nature through which destruction pairs with regeneration in a meaningful circularity.

**Keywords:** Rachel Rosenthal, *Pangaeen Dreams: A Shamanic Journey*, Chthonian Camille Paglia

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**“DİYONİZYAK BİR KIR EĞLENCESİ DEĞİLDİR”:  
RACHEL ROSENTHAL’IN PANGAEAN DREAMS: A  
SHAMANIC JOURNEY PERFORMANSINDA KİTONYEN<sup>2</sup>**

**ÖZ**

Önde gelen bir performans sanatçısı olan Rachel Rosenthal, çağdaş çağın sosyal, politik ve ekolojik tehlikelerini otobiyografik unsurlarla harmanlayarak çarpıcı bir şekilde tasvir eder. Ekodramaturjinin ilgi çekici bir örneği olan *Pangaeon Dreams: A Shamanic Journey* (1990) adlı performansında Rosenthal, doğanın tüm tarihine uzun bir yolculuk başlatarak, kendi bedenindeki acıyı doğanın bedenindeki küresel, kozmik ve jeolojik acılarla ilişkilendirerek anlamlandırmaya çalışır. Bu ilişki iki motifin, Wegener’in bilimsel teorisindeki süper kıta Pangaea ve mitik ilkel tanrıça Gaia’nın kullanımında baskın bir şekilde belirginleşir. Bu şamanik yolculukta, Rosenthal, Pangea ve Gaia ile özdeşleşerek, doğanın kitonyen gerçekliklerini yeniden düşünür ve doğanın romantik idealleştirilmesine karşı çıkar. Camille Paglia’nın kitonyen terimine ilişkin incelemesini teorik bir çerçeve olarak kullanarak, bu çalışma Rosenthal’in şamanistik ekodramaturjisinin nasıl yıkımın anlamlı bir dairesellikle yeniden doğuşla eşleştiği kitonyen doğaya dair bir farkındalığa dayandığını inceler.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Rachel Rosenthal, *Pangaeon Dreams: A Shamanic Journey*, Kitonyen, Camille Paglia

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Mostly inspired by the academic interest in ecofeminism and partly as a response to Una Chaudhuri’s call for “responsible ecological theater” (1994, p. 25), there has been a theatrical interest in ecological issues. Ecodramaturgy, a term recently coined by Theresa J. May<sup>3</sup>, “carries with it new frames for thinking about theater and new approaches and challenges to making theater” (Arons & May, 2012, p. 4). Woynarski defines ecodramaturgies as “a way of understanding how theatre and performance practices make ecological meaning and interact with the material more-than-human world, attendant to the different experiences, complexities and injustices that entails” (2020, p. 10). One of the prominent performance artists providing a significant and sophisticated insight into ecological dangers and crises on the stage with provocative distinct perspectives is Rachel Rosenthal (1926 - 2015), who is identified as “the Great Mother of Performance” (Marranca, 1993, p. 61). There is a transition in Rosenthal’s solo performance career from personal to collective: in the initial phase inspired by the feminist art movement in the

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<sup>2</sup> İstanbul Topkapı Üniversitesi tarafından düzenlenen 3. Uluslararası Küresel Dünyada Kadın Kongresinde sunulan bildirinin gözden geçirilmiş ve genişletilmiş halidir.

<sup>3</sup> May (2010) originally used the term “ecodramaturgy” in “Kneading Marie Clements’ *Burning Vision*.”

1970s and internalizing the motto “the personal is political” she produced a lot of autobiographical performances and in the latter phase her works explored “global concerns, most prominently environmental issues and nuclear proliferation” (Lavey, 1994, p. 170). One of her performances in the latter phase is *Pangaean Dreams: A Shamanic Journey* (1990), in which Rosenthal initiates a visit into the whole history of nature beginning with continental drift. Rather than solely focusing on recent ecological crises of the contemporary world such as climate change and global warming, she, in the role of a shaman, shares what such a visit may promise. Inspired by a myriad of visions and images such as plate tectonics, a previous supercontinent Pangea, and the mythological great goddess Gaia, she not only depicts the chthonian in nature but also preaches for the regenerative circularity in nature on the stage. This paper focuses on how Rosenthal’s shamanic ecodramaturgy in *Pangaean Dreams: A Shamanic Journey* rests on an embrace of the chthonian in which the pains of the human and the earth make sense.

## 2. The Chthonian in Rosenthal’s *Pangaean Dreams: A Shamanic Journey*

Since Rachel Rosenthal’s ecodramaturgy in *Pangaean Dreams: A Shamanic Journey* is dominantly shaped by the concept of the chthonian, a brief definition of the term is necessary to understand the ecodramaturgic dynamics of the performance. The terms *chthonic* and *chthonian* mean “of or relating to the underworld”:

It comes from *chthōn*, which means “earth” in Greek, and it is associated with things that dwell in or under the earth. It is most commonly used in discussions of mythology, particularly underworld mythology. Hades and Persephone, who reign over the underworld in Greek mythology, might be called “chthonic deities,” for example. *Chthonic* has broader applications, too. It can be used to describe something that resembles a mythological underworld (e.g., “chthonic darkness”), and it is sometimes used to describe earthly or natural things (as opposed to those that are elevated or celestial. (Merriam-Webster, n.d.)

Camille Paglia is among those figures interested in defining the term *chthonian*. In *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (1990), Camille Paglia revisits the dichotomy between Apollonian and Dionysian that has already been developed and popularized in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) by Friedrich Nietzsche. Nietzsche’s analysis of the duality between the Apollonian and the Dionysian as “the origin and essence of Greek tragedy, as the expression of two interwoven artistic drives” (2000, p. 68) plays a major role in Paglia’s reading of the Western culture. Paglia opens her

book *Sexual Personae* with the sentence “In the beginning was nature” reminding us that sex and gender cannot be understood if our attitude toward nature is not clarified (2001, p. 1).

Paglia explains how “the westerner knows by seeing,” and how “walking in nature, we see, identify, name, *recognize*” (2001, p. 5). Seeing provides the aesthetic judgment, in which nature is regarded as beautiful in the Western mind; however, it does not reflect nature’s totality:

We say that nature is beautiful. But this aesthetic judgment, which not all people have shared, is another defense formation, woefully inadequate for encompassing nature’s totality. What is pretty in nature is confined to the thin skin of the globe upon which we huddle. Scratch that skin, and nature’s daemonic ugliness will erupt. (Paglia 2001, p. 5)

Paglia asserts that the romantic idealization of nature, this “focus on the pretty is an Apollonian strategy” (2001, p. 5) of the Western mind and reveals that “what the west represses in its view of nature is the chthonian, which means ‘of the earth’—but the earth’s bowels, not its surface” (2001, p. 5). She expresses how she uses the word chthonian as a substitute for the term Dionysian because the latter “has become contaminated with vulgar pleasantries” (2001, p. 5). Paglia asserts that “Dionysian is no picnic. It is the chthonian realities which Apollo evades, the blind grinding of subterranean force, the long slow suck, the murk and ooze” (2001, pp. 5-6). According to Paglia, “The daemonism of chthonian nature is the west’s dirty secret” (2001, p. 6). Examining the shift from earth-cult to sky-cult in cosmogony, Paglia argues that the “Apollonian eye is the brain’s great victory over the bloody open mouth of mother nature” (2001, p. 50).

Rachel Rosenthal’s performance *Pangaeian Dreams: A Shamanic Journey* runs parallel to Paglia’s critical eye on the Apollonian idealization of nature in the Western mind that endeavors to hide chthonian realities. As an alternative to what the Western eye sees (the surface), she provides a glance into the unseen parts of nature (under the surface). In other words, throughout the performance, Rosenthal tries to depict the chthonian or the bowels of the earth. At the beginning of the text of the performance, she provides brief information about Pangaea and Gaia both of which will be the central dominant motifs in her shamanistic journey. Rosenthal introduces Wegener as the scientist who intuited Pangaea (All Lands) in 1915 as a supercontinent in which all land masses had been united as one and later broke up in a process of continental drift (1996, p. 97). Rosenthal states that although “Wegener was mocked at first”, “later technologies vindicated him”, and the cause of these movements was discovered and explained as plate tectonics (1996, p. 97). Rosenthal links this scientific theory of plate tectonics which provides “an

extremely active, dynamic Earth” (1996, p. 97) to the myth, of Gaia, the primordial goddess. Rosenthal provides a circular motif of destruction and reconstruction referring to Pangaea and Gaia: in her perspective, Gaia “is constantly giving birth to and devouring herself in a circular dance” and “Pangaea is only one of several previous supercontinents, and a new Pangaea will no doubt develop in another 250 million years” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 97). She further explains how Gaia and Pangaea relate to our contemporary concerns and the way we conceptualize nature as follows:

This extraordinary theory emphasizes the transformational nature of the Earth. It illuminates the Gaia concept of a living cosmic body and, within the context of the performance, provides a metaphor for migration, separation, birth, dualism, and alienation. Hers is a power we cannot begin to assess or understand, and, in her violence, she is the embodiment of the Dark, the Other, the feared chthonian aspect of Nature, which we have tried, unsuccessfully to tame and combat since we placed ourselves in an adversary stance vis-à-vis the Earth. (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 97)

The set plays a significant role in how Rosenthal uses Pangaea and Gaia in her discussion of destruction and renewal. There is a pile of earth that contains the buried pieces of Rosenthal’s body and a metal armature on the other side of the pile and throughout the performance, Rosenthal, using the shovel, discovers her body pieces and attaches them to the metal armature. There is also a shamanic rattle that she uses to indicate her performance as a shaman so she is not only an archeologist but also a shaman who interprets the outcomes of her discoveries. Also, it is a multimedia performance in which she uses a screen for projections. Moreover, she uses the costume, a white robe, as a projection screen onto which several images are projected as she talks about the history of the earth. Through these projections, she further elaborates on the chthonian linking the ills and pains of her body in her personal story to the geological, ecological, political, and social ills in the vast history of the cosmos.

As in most of her other performances, Rosenthal appears as the “most important stage personae: the performer as ‘Rachel herself,’ relaxed and informal, sharing details of her life and her feelings (often her feelings about being a performer, a woman, an aging woman) (Chaudhuri, 2001, p. 7). As she talks about the breaks on the continent or Gaia’s body, she is an old age woman in pain. This parallelism between her body and Gaia’s body plays a dominant motif throughout the performance. As Thomas puts it, “Rosenthal is unruly and excessive, disruptive and angry, registering a deep, passionate, and provocative empathy with the Earth” (2016, p. 180). At times she is accompanied by a musician on stage but it is a solo performance of an old lady

who at the beginning of the performance is pushed by someone onstage in a wheelchair “wearing casts and braces on her body and carrying crutches” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 98). She says “time doesn’t work for me anymore” and “Now it’s human time and it’s in fast forward and refers to several social and ecological crises such as a little girl intercepting a bullet, disappearing salmon and birds, wars, machine-gunned artists ” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 98). Right after Rosenthal refers to these various social and ecological crises, the note in the stage directions reveal that these crises should be updated “changed according to latest news” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 98). Later she relates those ills in society to the ills on her body. Announcing 1990 as “the year that [her] body broke up” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 99) she moves from ecological and social suffering to personal, physical suffering. To make sense of her suffering or to understand what this pain is telling her, she invents another personae “Autonomous Being” referred to in the texts with the initials A.B.. Then Rachel acts in two personae “Herself” and A.B.. The changes from personae as Rachel Herself to A.B. is indicated by the use of lights since there is a different section for A.B. on the stage and whenever she becomes the Autonomous Being, she goes to this section onto which light falls. Through this transformational performance, she goes from one personae to the other and also identifies with Gaia and Pangaea at certain moments.

Even though *Pangaean Dreams: A Shamanic Journey* is an example of her performances from the latter phase of her career in which she becomes more interested in global rather than personal, there are autobiographical elements in it just like her performances in her earlier career. Rosenthal is an old woman in pain onstage but this pain can be related to her real-life suffering from degenerative arthritis of her knee (Woodward, 2006, p. 171). Also, right after she talks about her pain and creates the personae A.B., she relates “rift, breakage, polarization” to Soviet Russia saying “I was ripped apart like Soviet Russia. I am Russian, of course. Is there a link?” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 100). This is also another autobiographical element because Rosenthal was born in Paris to Russian parents and they fled to America to escape the Nazis.

After referring to various forms of social, political, and ecological crises, that run parallel to her suffering and will be in parallel to the continental breakings, she defines chaos as “our natural state” and adds that “But we hold Nature at bay to give ourselves the illusion of order. In my own microcosm I’ve tried to keep Chaos at bay” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 100). Using the rattle to signify the beginning of the shamanistic mode, she says “I will take a shamanic journey. Answers aren’t always on the surface. To go in depth, one must pierce the crust” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 100). From this perspective, the shamanic journey under “the surface,” “the crust,” “into the bowels” indicates that she is not sticking to the “illusion of order” and she is not trying “to keep Chaos at bay” anymore. Chanting and rattling she is initiated into the ritual

by the drum of the musician and the video projects images of the journey (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 100). Then she is in “the entryway into the bowels of the earth” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 100), an expression reminiscent of Paglia’s conceptualization of the chthonian. She encounters dinosaur eggs in the tunnels (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 101) and she witnesses Pangaea before the rift: The piece “dormant,” “the forces of embryonic lands. . . waiting patiently for the tear, the titanic bellow of continental tear, the gash, the diluvian break of placental waters” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 102). Then her mood changes and she comments how the contemporary human can understand the big rift since “Today, at the twentieth’s end we are children of new paradigms and great migrations. . . refugees of land and sea. Run from hunger. Run from torture. Run from guns. . . yes we can understand that: the Big Rift. The Banishment” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 103). Following her statement as “now, today, us, still drifting” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 103), she becomes Pangaea and the Big Rift begins as she utters “I stand, legs apart, centered in the clearing. . . .And as I look down, there, between my feet, the Earth begins to tear” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 103). Standing “on the torn cliff in the ravaged shore,” she stares at the catastrophe (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 104) and becomes a refugee “voyaging on aggressive land mass” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 105). Later the Age of humans begins: she compares herself to Earth: “the Earth moves, bounds, cavorts, and does the tectonic shuffle whereas she can hardly move because she fears the pain (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 106).

Then she as Herself engages in a conversation with A.B. through which Rosenthal impressively and intriguingly criticizes the romantic idealization of nature. When A.B. asks Herself what she believes, she expresses her love for nature: “I believe in Nature. In the Planet, Gaia. I believe that we are not born evil but that severing ourselves from Nature twisted us. That we can still create a better world through a partnership society, women and men together and equal. I believe in a non-hierarchic bill of rights that includes animals and all nonhuman dwellers” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 107). When A.B. asks her how often she goes to “the wilderness, for a picnic or a vision quest” (Rosenthal, 1996, p.107), she replies she is busy doing pieces about loving nature. In response A.B. outlines the chthonian in nature:

You listen: what do you think Nature is anyway? Pretty flowers? A lovely sunset? A Van Gogh? Stick your nose in it, girl, it stinks!  
Check out her bowels. It’s brutal down there...  
The chthonian is only interested in might, sex and survival.  
You eat and copulate. You are victims or you make victims.  
The life cycle is inexorable. You deteriorate and hurt.  
You grow old and look awful.  
Under your feet, is there a solid good Mother you can trust?

No way. Earth is shifty, untrustworthy.  
One moment you're admiring a seascape, the next thing you  
know a tidal wave snatches you up, a temblor crushes you,  
lava engulfs you, quicksand swallows you, a tornado twists  
you, an avalanche snuffs you out. (Rosenthal, 1996, p.107)

In these lines, A.B. aggressively condemns Herself for idealizing and romanticizing nature, failing to see its chthonian elements.

The dialogues between Herself and A.B. are accompanied by slide projections that include direct references to Camilla Paglia that further delineate how Paglia's analysis of the chthonian offers an inspiration for Rosenthal in this performance. As A.B. talks about the bowels of nature, the stage directions inform a slide projection that says "*Slide: 'The Dionysian is no picnic.' Camille Paglia*" and Herself declares "Wait! OK. The Dionysian is no picnic" (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 107). When A.B. talks about how humans hate their mothers: "to be born between two legs where shit and pee come from" (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 108), there is another slide referring to Paglia that says "*Slide: 'Edema is our mammalian relapse into the vegetable.' Camille Paglia*" (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 108). Later, as A.B. talks about how humans, especially men, hate female birth-giving as a result of the shift from belly-magic to head-magic, there is another slide referring to Paglia that says "*Slide: 'Sky-cult...switched the creative locus from Earth to sky...from belly-magic to head-magic.' Camille Paglia.*" (Rosenthal, 1996, p.108).

Reminiscent of how Paglia advocates that our understanding of sex and gender necessitates an understanding of our attitude toward nature, following those slides that include references to Paglia's *Sexual Personae*, the dialogue between Herself and A.B. begins to be concentrated on being a man or a woman. When Herself says she is afraid of men, A.B. responds "No you're not. You're not afraid of men, you want to Be a man. And you resent that. Instead you are a feminist" (Rosenthal, 1996, p.108). Then defining herself as "a gay man in a woman's body", Herself says that "straight man don't want me because they sense something funny. Gay men don't want me because they see me as a woman. Women want me but I don't want them because I want men—but not as a woman...!" (Rosenthal, 1996, p.108). Blaming Herself to be "stuck between Scylla and Charybdis", A.B. explains that "MEN created the ego, MEN snatched us from the jaws of Nature, MEN negated Chaos, Ershkigal, and Death. MEN invented linear Time. MEN created an afterlife and an open-ended God. MEN made this world and you live in it" (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 109). These lines in which A.B. talks about what MEN did is an explanation of the head-magic already mentioned in the slides that refer to Paglia's *Sexual Personae*. Referring to A.B. as a boy "who sounds a lot like Camille Paglia", Herself asks "Am I living a great lie? Is that what's tearing me apart" (Rosenthal, 1996, p.110) –the lie here explicitly is



provided by the head-magic, the creation and invention by MEN. This moment is significant because it reveals that Herself begins to question head-magic and keeps on thinking about the belly-magic and the way Gaia functions:

She creates monstrosities in order to express all that She is!  
Some monstrosities are closer to us, so we accept them, some  
are alien and we fear and hate them. But to “actualize Her  
potential” Earth must have time, space, and the materials to  
work with, just like the artists. She needs to experiment, make  
mistakes, go up blind alleys and metamorphoses, just like the  
artists. She needs to be left alone. Just like the artists.  
(Rosenthal, 1996, p. 110).

These lines undeniably indicate how Rosenthal, as an artist, is identifying herself with Gaia. Moreover, she warns about the possible dangers that emanate from suppressing Gaia: “If She is suppressed, She goes underground. There, She seethes, She groans, She festers, She burns, and then She erupts, and destroys everything in Her path, without a qualm. Don’t mess with Her. Don’t throw spokes in Her wheels. Don’t maim Her, or She’ll turn into a wounded tiger and charge” (Rosenthal, 1996, p.110). Then Rosenthal becomes a tectonic plate, announcing herself as “a crustal plate” “an oceanic plate” “ready for the final melting into the mantle, back to the fiery womb, to re-create [herself] anew after eons of convection” (Rosenthal, 1996, pp.110-111). Clearly, the moment of destruction is followed by that of recreation through which Herself learns to “accept” and “nod yes” with a body “crushed, quartered and ground”, as a “mass of contradictions” (Rosenthal, 1996, p.111).

Wearing a white robe that becomes a large projection screen onto which a collage of images such as “*ships, storms at sea, refugees, migrations, dinos, flocks of birds, westerns, cowboys and Indians, etc*” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 112) are projected, Rosenthal narrates the breaking up of Pangaea, the Great Extinction of the dinos, the appearance of the mammals. Rosenthal’s description of the mammals includes a striking criticism of the anthropocentrism in which the mammals are depicted as opportunists and rugged individualists dreaming, taking their chances, and dominating over other beings:

We mammals have a dream, and we multiply and radiate . . .  
And, as the plate carries the big land . . . we mammals know  
we’re off and running, opportunists, rugged individualists,  
grabbing our big chance, developing strategies, breaking  
treaties, tricking and tinkering and sticking together  
—we’re family—

putting up a front in this New World, putting on the dog, the  
rat, the horse, the wooly mammoth, the saber-toothed tiger, to  
conquer, to win and to stay!

We have a dream.

It's the Big Picture.

We want it all. (Rosenthal, 1996, pp.112-113)

Taking off the white robe, Rosenthal begins to speak in French for which English subtitles are projected. This speech is about love and hate at the end of which love is described as “flaccid, feminine, amorphous” while hate is defined as “vigorous, masculine, linear” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 113). Then asking “Did you hear about the break?”, Herself begins to draw a parallelism between the couples or lovers breaking up to the breaking of the planes of the earth. These breaking ups that resemble “the bloody pieces of love” erupting with “flames everywhere. Rumbles. Shocks” depict “Chaos but with a pattern” (Rosenthal, 1996, p.114). Right after she mentions the torn love letters “bobbing pieces of love under the bridge and slowly drifting out to sea” she uses the words “renewal” and “regeneration” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 115). Herself further criticizes the human perception of nature in which nature is transformed into a theme park:

If the plates were to grind to a halt, mountains would erode,  
climate would stabilize, evolution would become uniform,  
and all the wondrous diversity of Earth would disappear. We  
don't really want that but we want to have our cake and eat it  
too: all the excitement of a chaotic and erotic and creative and  
difficult world, but with all the parts well-oiled, predictable,  
and friendly. A Theme Park! (Rosenthal, 1996, p.116).

From this perspective ignoring the chthonian is conceptualizing nature not as it is in its totality but as “a theme park”. Rather than presenting nature as “a theme park,” “Rosenthal offers instead a performance art that empathizes intensely with the poisoned Earth and that also identifies with a nature that is rife with destruction, cataclysm, shocks and aftershocks” (Thomas, 2013, pp. 112-113). Contradictory to the Apollonian strategy of the Western mind, Rosenthal's performance of Gaia and Pangaea reminds the chthonian powers of mother nature. She provides how Gaia functions and becomes the tectonic plate on the stage and learns to accept the pain and see “chaos with a pattern” (Rosenthal, 1996, p.114). As Thomas emphasizes, “Rosenthal does not turn to a romanticized nature to escape the filth of the world, but rolls around in mud and sewage of the Earth instead, loving all of the Earth's brutalities and dualities, and conjuring its catastrophes up in her own body” (2013, p. 111). The chthonian powers revealed in her shamanic journey enable her to make sense of catastrophes or pain which will transform into “renewal” and “regeneration” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 115). Towards the end of her

performance, Rosenthal says “The millennium approaches. I grow older. The plates move. As one moves, all move. That’s the law of Chaos and I accept. I nod yes. I will live my allotted time . . . With the violent love of Gaia. With fear and trembling, and tender care. With the Pangaeon dinosaur ensconced in my brain. In the Earth. Of the Earth. In the world. Of the world” (1996, pp. 117-118). The teaching that the shaman embraces at the end of her journey reveals a reinterpretation of being “in” and “of” the world as opposed to being “on” the world as she also mentions in an interview (Raine, 2016). She shares this vision telling the audience that “there is no certainty” and “wisdom is insecurity” advising them to “learn the tectonic boogie” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 119).

In a way, Rosenthal offers an insight into how to love nature. Thomas explains Rosenthal’s ‘theme park’ admonition reminding Zizek’s statement that the love of nature should be without idealization like the love in a love affair (2013, pp. 122-123). In the documentary *Examined Life*, Zizek states that “Every true lover knows that if you really love a woman or a man, that you don’t idealize him or her. Love means that you accept a person with all his or her failures, stupidities, ugly points. . . . you see perfection in imperfection itself. And that’s how we should learn to love the world” (Taylor, 2008). Not idealizing, romanticizing, or aestheticizing nature, Rosenthal’s performance runs against the Apollonian eye that attempts to turn nature into a “theme park” and stresses the vitality to embrace nature’s chthonian aspects and loving “the perfection in imperfection”.

At the end of the performance, as “*the assembled body parts are raised up slowly with climactic gong music*, she says to her audience “And that’s how it’s my dear, That’s how it is” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 119). Thus the archeologist shaman who has been unearthing body parts with the shovel and attaching them to the metal armature since the beginning of the performance achieves to dig all the missing parts and achieves to assemble all the body parts on the metal armature at the end of her performance. Remarking how “dismemberment is part of shamanism” in the performance, Marranca comments that at the end “Rosenthal has unearthed her own remains” (1993, p. 67). “At the end of the piece, as if continental drift could be somehow reversed through science and art and the continents combined again into a single landmass, these bones come together in the shape of a human form, a body of bones” (Woodward, 2006, p. 171). This success is eventually an outcome of the knowledge of the “tectonic boogie,” of the circular power of the chthonian. In addition to assembled body parts on the metal armature, another image of renewal becomes prominent in the way she leaves the stage “*picking up the crutches and braces, puts them on the wheelchair, wheels it around and exits pushing the chair before her with great energy*” (Rosenthal, 1996, p. 119). The way she appears on the stage in a wheelchair in great agony

contrasts with her on-foot disappearance with energy. This contrast reveals the positive regenerating hope in remembering the chthonian power of mother earth.

### 3. CONCLUSION

To sum up, Rosenthal is one of the performance artists interested in the ecological issues of the contemporary world. In *Pangaeon Dreams: A Shamanic Journey*, Rosenthal makes sense of the pain in her old body in relation to global, cosmic, or geological pains in the body of nature. Drawing parallelism between her aging body and the body of old mother nature, she maintains a welcoming approach to different forms of chaos and changes on the planet. In an interview, Rosenthal talks about how she has done “various works about the Earth, some of which were about Gaia, and the problems we have created on the planet” and she adds, in *Pangaeon Dreams: A Shamanic Journey*, she wants to present “from a very large perspective” since “in order to understand the earth, you have to go beneath the surface” (Raine, 2016). That is why she integrates the ideas such as continental drift and plate tectonics into Gaia in this performance. Rosenthal runs against the romantic idealization of nature; furthermore, journeying the bowels or the plates of the earth, she learns to make sense of catastrophes that would eventually end up in recreation in a regenerative process. Evident in the overall rejection of the idealization of nature and also in the direct references used in the slides accompanying the dialogues between her two personae— Herself and A.B., Paglia’s mindset provides an important source in Rosenthal’s conceptualization of nature. Identifying with a female deity of earth-cult Gaia that has already been suppressed by the Apollonian sky-cult Western mind, Rosenthal critiques idealizations of nature and loves nature in its totality together with its chthonic aspects. Reminding the power of the belly-magic, she offers a new vision for the way to approach, conceptualize, and love nature. Rosenthal’s ecodramaturgy in her shamanistic performance revealed through the journey into the bowels of nature explicates that “Dionysian is no picnic” yet it includes not only destruction but also regeneration in a circular pattern.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding this research.

### ETHICS COMMITTEE APPROVAL / PARTICIPANT CONSENT

Ethics committee approval is not required for this study. There are no participants in this study.

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This research and all its stages were conducted by one author.

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