

**Review of Jungian Arts-Based Research and “The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico” by Susan Rowland and Joel Weishaus**

Rowland, Susan, and Joel Weishaus. *Jungian Arts-Based Research and “The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico.”* Routledge, 2021. 246 pp. ISBN-978-1-138-31079-7 / 9-781138-310797. \$60.00 (hard cover), \$39.00 (pbk).

Reviewed by Sandra Luz del Castillo<sup>1</sup>.

*Jungian Arts-Based Research and “The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico”* is a visionary inquiry introducing arts-based research to Jungians and Jungian mythologically informed depth psychology to arts-based researchers. The authors—Susan Rowland, Jungian scholar and academic, and Joel Weishaus, poet and digital artist—join their two distinct bodies of work to introduce and illustrate the epistemological and ontological value of Jungian arts-based research (JABR). It is important to note that the book is unconventional in that it has two authors and two genres, including critical prose by Rowland and a full-length collection of poetry called “The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico” by Weishaus. The first five chapters are by Rowland, while Chapter 6 is Weishaus’s creative work and includes an interwoven glossary and commentary. Because these dual features present challenges to a reviewer, I avoid confusion by indicating authorship in explanatory statements at the start of sentences and by giving page and chapter numbers in the citations at the ends of the sentences.

In the first five chapters Rowland makes a compelling argument for JABR as a transdisciplinary methodology that extends the range of knowing and being in making new knowledge. In these opening chapters, Rowland teaches by doing. Joining Jungian psychology with the four genres proposed in the *Arts-Based Research Primer* by James Rolling, Jr.—analytic, synthetic, critical-activist, and improvisatory—she meticulously examines both C. G. Jung’s *The Red Book* and *The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico* by Weishaus. As Rowland argues, both books constitute Jungian arts-based research and converge as artistic and poetic expressions of the psychological and existential predicaments of the twentieth and now twenty-first centuries. The sixth and final chapter is Weishaus’s *The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico*, which blends his poetry with Jungian thought and scholarship in a kind of word play that brings to the fore the existential threat of the nuclear weapons industry and its eerie roots in and devastation of New Mexico. In a unique presentation, Weishaus juxtaposes the soulful world of poems with a glossary on opposing pages; the glossary provides historical context for nuclear enchantment, while exposing its unconscious and apocalyptic trajectory.

It should be noted that the words “nuclear” and “enchantment” in the title allude to the spell of the subject/object split, as Rowland notes, that is, modernity’s scientific paradigm “taken as the ultimate paradigmatic guarantor of truth and reality” (28, chapter 1). Drawing from Lee Worth Bailey in *The Enchantment of Technology*, Rowland begins her inquiry with an analysis of the subject/object split and its powerful spell as today’s standard for objective truth. The subject/object split paradigm attributes an obtuseness to

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the object, which, as Rowland argues, relegates the object to a mechanical or lifeless status. While this paradigm has facilitated the creation of modern society, it has perpetuated the naïve illusion that technology and weapons constitute a series of soulless objects manufactured by humans. In this way, it fails to take into account the hidden effects of the object, thereby blinding us from what Rowland describes as “the irrational and largely unknown passions it is endowed with” (28, chapter 1). In essence, the subject/object split excludes the psyche and—thus proves insufficient. Rowland drives home the perils of excluding psychology from a paradigm that measures truth and knowledge. Shining light on the unconscious trajectory of instinctually driven objects, she notes:

From flying machines to nuclear bombs, the notion of their inertness is a powerful enchantment from which they fundamentally derive, and . . . in turn, install in future generations. This enchantment is a dangerous spell woven by the unconscious and enacted everywhere. . . . [T]he consequences for relations with matter and nature in this notion of knowing subject versus dumb object are everywhere around us in the present climate emergency. (28, chapter 1)

In addition, Rowland’s passionate examination of the art, calligraphy, and narrative in *The Red Book* demonstrates JABR by emphasizing Jung’s soul-guided practice of active imagination: “the making of art is mysterious . . . not directed by consciousness, it reveals what is unknown to the collective” (88, chapter 4). Unpacking Jung’s personal confrontation with the psyche as he depicted it in *The Red Book*, Rowland follows the painful split from the beginning, here between the “I” and the spirit of the times and the spirit of the depths. In this context, we find not only Jung’s individual struggle but also that of the collective in an expression of the mood of a world painfully divided. Indeed, Jung’s visions in *The Red Book* began just before that outbreak of World War I.

In chapter five Rowland introduces *The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico*: “part poetry, part essay, part encyclopedia” (144), it offers another window into arts-based, Jungian-informed research. Through poetry, scholarship, and Jungian concepts, Weishaus paints an image of nuclear New Mexico that unearths its philosophical roots, inception in labs, and devastation of land and people in the name of security. His skillful inquiry brings to light the autonomous and unconscious nature of the atomic weapons industry, as well as the paradigm and spell that keep it all in motion.

Weishaus’s symbol-laden poetry opens with a glossary on the preceding page. **Here**, he defines terms and phrases from the poem and cites references. These pages can be read in any order. For example, a stanza from Weishaus’s poem “Missile Park” reads, “Circles of missiles were tested then discarded, / propped up like mutant trees gloating over targets / they never hit in recurring tailpipe dreams” (211, chapter 6). In the glossary on the preceding page, we find ten words and phrases that Weishaus cites in the poem and their significance. These include “Propped up: White Sands Missile Park was established in 1955 to exhibit examples of missiles and rockets that have been tested on the range” (210, chapter 6). Not only does the poem convey the starkness of the industry’s trajectory, but its references also lay bare the cunning use of terms like “park.” Here, the word park is a deliberate euphemism used to promote nuclear weapons. Usually defined as a large public green area in town used for recreation, park in this context sugar coats what is in essence a

dumpsite for discarded missiles and rockets, a desert mirage of a never-ending cycle of doom for public consumption.

In the fourth stanza of the poem “Star Wars,” Weishaus incorporates acronyms and code names used in the nuclear weapons industry: “A Cathedral radiates from its center endless circles of corpses, brilliant pebbles flying through a paradise of acronyms:

BONZO dreams of the ultimate bananas hanging like a

WIMP within HOPE of beaming arms; a real

WACKO of an image consummated

In a seemingly SAFE place. (215, chapter 6)

Citing John W. Dower and John Junkerman in the glossary, Weishaus reveals the significance of such terms in the context of his poem: “Cathedral: The [Nagasaki] bomb exploded directly above the Catholic cathedral of Ukrami, immediately killing the priests and those who had gathered to worship. The dead were scattered in endless concentric circles, with the cathedral in the center” (Dower and Junkerman 87). Weishaus also breaks down the seemingly innocuous acronyms to reveal their meanings: “BONZO: Bulwark Order Negating Zealous Offensive,” “WIMP: Western Intercontinental Missile Protection,” “HOPE: Hostile Projectile Elimination,” “WACKO: Wistful Attempts to Circumvent Killing Ourselves,” and “SAFE: Mutual Assured Safety” (214, chapter 6).

This back-and-forth between poetry and glossary in effect constitutes an unraveling of the weapons industry’s euphemisms implemented to simplify, justify, and promote the nuclear weapons agenda and perhaps even fool itself, while concealing its true nature. I would add that Weishaus’s innovative approach reserves opinion and judgments for the reader. In my view this juxtaposition and word play invite teachers and students to cross fields and, through reflection and discussion, to address humanity’s existential threat in a meaningful way. As Rowland puts it, *The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico* stands as testimony to the belief of the dedicated writer that “art can help save us, that it is in fact a necessary condition for saving ourselves” (145, chapter 5).

Through *Jungian Arts-Based Research and “The Nuclear Enchantment of New Mexico,”* Rowland and Weishaus shape a transdisciplinary methodology and open epistemological paths that join Jungians together with arts-based researchers and audiences across disciplines, including the art-loving public. This crucial body of work plants a seed of hope in academia as a way to engage the psychological and existential dilemmas playing out today on our divided, COVID-ridden, climate-changing planet. As a Jungian and a ritual artist, I feel that Jungians, teachers, artists, and arts-based researchers can benefit in profound and meaningful ways from the unique transdisciplinary methodology that Rowland and Weishaus provide.

### **Contributor**

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