**Title :** Not female-to-male but shadow-to-human: an exploration of body tracing in terms of embodiment and identity definition during gender transitioning.

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We certify that the service user mentioned in this article is one of the co-authors and as such has been involved in the preparation, writing and editing of the article and has given consent for the images of the three body tracings to be published.

# Abstract

This paper wishes to help heal the lack of trans people's representation in art therapy research that coincides with the lack of art therapy literature theorising body tracing. Supervisor, art psychotherapist and service user have come together to offer a research process that questions power dynamics and uses lived experience to explore a methodology of body tracing that differs from body mapping and so contributes a further approach in this field for working with people whose identities question the status quo of power. Specifically, we wish to demonstrate the relevance of body tracing as a tool for facilitating the gender transitioning process. We explore how it offers a lived experience in the here and now that promotes agency and an internal locus of control over what is to be modified and what is to be maintained. It creates an embodied space for a new identity to be shaped. We examine how the contextualization of creative process modalities (sensory experience, formal decision-making and symbolic meaning) within the resulting body-space aids the integration of states of self and bodily awareness and connectedness. We hope to inspire further research in this field that can support an institutionalized adoption of body tracing within an art therapy setting for gender transitioning service users.

# Plain-language summary

Art therapists have only written a little about working with trans people. The same is true of the technique of body tracing. This paper speaks about both of these areas. The service user has taken the role of lived experience author in order to work together with the art therapist and her supervisor, so that all three voices can talk on equal terms about their experiences in these areas and explore a way of using body tracing that they believe can empower people who are gender transitioning. A technique called body mapping already uses body tracing to help people who feel disadvantaged because of their identity (for example, their sexual orientation, the colour of their skin, religion, nationality etc.). Our research offers an additional approach with some distinct features. The lived experience author describes how the act of drawing around the body and then being able to modify this outline promoted a sense of control over his body, leading to a feeling of greater control over his life. This helped him reclaim ownership of his body at a time when other people were deciding the hormones he took and the options available.

Our method integrates bottom-up and top-down processes to help a person feel more connected with their body. Working on the body tracing involves many physical sensations that vary for each of the four stages of the process. Memories and thoughts may also come to mind connected with lived experiences and fantasies. The physical feelings in the body can be filtered thanks to the images and colours in the representation of the body on the paper. We hope that other people will join our research so that institutions supporting trans people can offer this service to their users.

# Not female-to-male but shadow-to-human:
## an exploration of body tracing in terms of embodiment and identity definition during gender transitioning.

"The body tracings represent a rite-of-passage for me. My art psychotherapist pointed out how they are temporally connected with my choosing my new names: how I call myself and how I wish myself to be called. I remember being surprised by this freedom: can I actually do that? Can I really be the one to choose what I want and get up and go after it? It was a revelation for me to discover that this power had always been there for the taking. I just hadn't known. I believe it was the body tracings that made me realise that I could be the one to define myself, autonomously and according to my desire. Just as I erased and redefined parts of my body's contours, I could do the same with my name, and taking it one step further: with my life."

## Introduction : Context

Empowerment. The opening comment made by the lived experience author Minghini seems to capture the importance of addressing agency whenever we work with people whose identities question the status quo of power. It rarely comes out when we work with people whose identities do not. It is visible only when attention is drawn to its absence (Hetherington, 2020). It is visible here in this special issue that seeks to redress the balance of power, to give a voice to the person who actually lived that experience. The Authors would like to thank the editors for this opportunity to approach the case study from a new perspective that enables the lived experience author to become agent of their own story. Aside from the complex ethical issues of writing about others, on reading Minghini's contribution, a whole new window of meaning appeared, a lived experience of emotions so intricate that only the person in question could capture and narrate. Our dialogue became much more than an academic article: a process of self-reflection that was necessarily intersectional (Talwar, 2010), in which heterosexual, lesbian and trans perspectives met to negotiate the space of the collective social shadow (Hocoy, 2005). A dialogue was created between identities that intersected marginalized voices that nevertheless come from within a privileged white, Western academic setting.

## Theoretical Framework 1 : Body tracing -
## Della Cagnoletta in the role of supervisor narrates.

My interest in body tracing dates back to my training years in the early 1980s, when I was attending a Master program in art therapy and I was about to become a psychoanalyst. Even if my ability to enter into a dialogue with these images was still very limited and I was embedded in psychoanalytic thinking, the art pieces were saying so much that it was impossible not to listen to them. Since then, it has become a core part of my private practice, my archive, a powerful tool for teaching body image and a key subject of my research. Together as Authors, we have searched art therapy literature and apart from my article (Della Cagnoletta, 2017, 2020) and book (Della Cagnoletta, 2010, chapters 9 & 14, ), we have found only one reference to body tracing in Waller (1993) as a form of life-size portraiture. Yet body tracing is the seed out of which body mapping developed, a widely recognised practice that exploits the body tracing's suitability for self-narration with a cognitive emphasis and a biopsychosocial approach within the framework of social justice (Jager, Tewson, Ludlow & Boydell, 2016; Gastaldo, Magalhaes, Carrasco & Davy, 2012). Here, we wish to take body tracing back to its roots and explore its potential as a lived experience in the here and now.

The Authors think that the methodology of body tracing challenges the traditional art therapy setting and forces us to move outside our boundaries, calling our own bodies into question. The process of tracing the body's contours calls for an active engagement and intimacy between two bodies, where the therapist cannot keep a distance but has to negotiate their own body and body image while depicting the other's. We could call it a transitional experience for both subjects, a potential space for transformation. The reality of body boundaries is replaced by a subtle line between 'me' and 'you' that divides and connects inner and outer worlds, fantasies and tangible reality.

This challenging of boundaries inherent to body tracing seems key in understanding its specific potential when working with LGBTQI service users. Our supervisions highlighted how the intimacy-authenticity inherent to the body tracing process connects with qualities that as an LGBTQI-identified citizen, Hetherington had felt to be her life-line and social oxygen: "My childhood experience as an outsider, whose sexual identity was a taboo, led to boundaries being lived as inherently unjust and untrustworthy. The logistical obligation to delegate agency to another in the process of representing one's body on paper seems to parallel social cisgendered norms concerning meaning attributed to the body. I felt a great responsibility in drawing Minghini's outline and remember doing so ever so slowly. This slowness seemed important in communicating that I was 'taking care' and that the line's quality was of great importance. On my hands and knees, kneeling on the floor beside him, I wished to physically communicate humility. It was important that my body did

not impose on his and that the line I drew was not perceived as unalterable." The (re-)appropriation of these boundaries becomes a fundamental process towards agency and acceptance, as Minghini describes in the modification of the contours of Body Tracing 3.

## Multidimensional self representation

Body tracings integrate many levels of identity: our inner mental life, our intersubjective experiences, our cultural background(s) and how our own body is negotiating each of these fields. Working on a body tracing mirrors early processes of engagement with the developing self, forming and transforming, changing and adjusting what I see with what I feel. If our perception involves fluctuating states of the self (Bromberg, 1996), each body tracing's configuration is the arrival point of a long process of interaction, containing both the inside and the outside and becoming a new home for the emerging self experience, as appears in Body Tracings 1 & 3.

If every artwork occupies an area between presentation and representation (Langer, 1953), body tracing is unique in covering both realms. Described by its creator as a representation of a personal image, a story inside a fantasy world, or a direct presentation of the self, it's a 'subjective-object' (Hagman, 2010) that comes alive, generating surprised bewilderment, familiarity, pride or shame. The space inhabited by the body tracing is between subjectivity and objectivity, between what Winnicott (1971, p.100) calls "me-extension" and "not-me", and hence it can be used to integrate the two: we will see how Minghini both recognises the body-image as his, and can use this recognition to deny it, reject it and in the end, transform it.

## Methodology

The body tracings described in this article follow a specific methodology I developed (Della Cagnoletta, 2017, 2020), where each phase is given its own space and time to be processed as a lived experience. Looking at the shape of your own body, traced on the floor on a piece of paper, confronts you with a sort of mirror that is not yet alive but reminiscent of the contour of a dead body. When action is taken, i.e. hanging the paper on the wall, the body tracing is brought alive and a dialogue is initiated between author and body tracing, while images and memories appear from those primeval lines revealing emotional reactions. This repeated process of immersion and emersion favours an integration of the sensory, embodied experience with the cognitive process of witnessing and elaborating what has emerged.

<u>Phase 1: creating the outline.</u> Adequate sized paper is unrolled on the floor and the person is invited to lie down, in the most comfortable position. The outline is drawn by the therapist using a chosen material. The image is observed by both and if accepted, the paper is lifted and mounted onto the wall.

<u>Phase 2: modifying the outline.</u> Each person is given time to modify the original outline. This process is about claiming ownership of the line made by another. It may be re-enforced, thickened, thinned, erased, or simply visually examined.

<u>Phase 3: completion.</u> Filling the body-image may take several sessions, weeks or month, and may be divided into stages, i.e. the internal and external space.

<u>Phase 4: dialogue.</u> Where appropriate, time may be given for the narration of stories, orally or in writing. It becomes an opportunity for greater awareness of the emotional bonds that hold the body-image together.

<u>An evolving dialectical relationship</u>

The process of tracing the body's contours (phase 1) involves two people and its result depends on the relationship between the two, starting from the experience of contiguity (Ogden, 1987) given by two surfaces that touch each other, a reciprocal encounter between the hand that holds a pencil and the body that lies on the floor. In the primary stages of development as well as during particular moments of life, "the experience of surfaces touching one another is a principal medium through which connections are made and organisation achieved" (Ogden, 1987, p. 50). Tracing one's body re-enacts what happened to the child during their process of development, shaped by a human social context in which the mother's face plays a fundamental role (Winnicott, 1971; Wright, 1991) and potentially creates a feeling of trust and acceptance towards our own body as well as towards the outside world.

When the pencil follows the body contours, body boundaries are defined together with a separate sense of the self, in which some body parts could be perceived as stronger or weaker, bigger or smaller, generating acceptance or refusal (phase 2). Synchronicity or dissonance can emerge, concurring to change the lines that define the body, following an ideal image that rests in our mind. The body tracing confronts us with the process of owning our own body, something that is not easily done, especially when it conflicts with our mental body-image, but which, as Minghini discovers, is an essential part of the healing process even when the long-term goal is to refuse the body that has been accepted.

A profound engagement with our sense of identity emerges within the potential space that the body tracing occupies (phase 3), where the creative elaboration of the artwork "acts, protects and contains, giving visibility and meaning to the unthought and the unknown as well as to the desired. Filling the image on the paper is a voyage from perception to symbolisation, searching for an aesthetic resonance that will make it come alive, encountering phases of disorder and chaos along the way" (Della Cagnoletta & Hetherington, 2020). As we will see in Body Tracing 2, in order to emerge from darkness and incoherence, we need to use our capacity of separating, keeping what is important but leaving behind what isn't recognisable anymore. Working on our own body tracing is a transitional act that allows a new body image to emerge and be narrated (phase 4).

**Theoretical framework 2 : The importance of body tracing for subjugated identities - Hetherington in the role of art psychotherapist narrates.**

<u>Differentiating within the LGBTQI umbrella:</u>
Founding the first LGBTQI-identified art therapy group in Italy in 2014 was of great personal importance because as a lesbian, artist and art psychotherapist it meant giving the city what I would have most wanted when I arrived many years previously as a confused young adult trying to make sense of my identity. I assumed that because I embraced our collective identity, my art therapy space was automatically a trans-safe place. Self-reflection has shown that that cannot simply be taken for granted. Writing this article has led the Authors to realise how trans experience is often erroneously equated to the more dominant narrative (within this equation) of LGB experience, highlighting the intersectional nature of power dynamics. It is important to clarify this because we have not been alone: Zappa (2017) points out how Pelton-Sweet and Sherry (2008) make little distinction when examining the 'LGBT' experience of coming out. But fundamental differences between 'LGB' and 'T' experiences emerge from Minghini's testimony: once hormonal treatment begins, the changes become visible on the body. This means that the trans person has little control over the coming out process. In contrast with some LGB people who 'pass', the trans person is denied agency to decide who, when or how. There is no gestation time: the new identity is exposed to public scrutiny at a fetal stage. Minghini describes how the other's gaze weighed him down 'like a mill-stone'. Once transitioning had begun, his body demanded privacy: a privacy that he was denied within a social context due to the body's inevitable visibility. He says, "I had to metabolize that body. I had to deal with it and make it acceptable to my own eyes before I could (perhaps) make it visible to others."

I realise from Minghini's writing that the LGBTQI group served him as an intermediate space: between the private and the public. It provided a symbolic 'other', a filter for the hostile social eye. Within this symbolically 'public' group space, he could assert his right to 'privacy', refuse to show his artwork by rolling it up, refuse to be part of a group piece by creating an island to one side, refuse to discuss the contents of his work. In this way, he used the art therapy group to assert the control over his intimate space that he lacked socially and publicly.

During the pre-transitioning process, the group acted as a positive social presence that witnessed and confirmed his need. His question "Am I?" turned into "Can I?" and the group provided a confirming external answer: "You can!" We see him jumping up, arms out-stretched in Body Tracing 1. It's a jack-in-a-box finally out of the box. It's a celebration of existence and the group cheered too.

But once transitioning had begun, the body tracings had to be made in a pseudo-individual setting. Minghini's shared experience in writing this article has made me reflect on the difficulty and delicacy of questioning bodily identity in a group context. The group is first and foremost an embodied experience (Della Cagnoletta, Mondino & Bolech, 2018) since my body is the vehicle through which I am present in the group. Behind the concept 'they see me' lies the implication 'they see my body' and I become a witness of the group's gaze on me. Minghini's experience clarifies the impossibility of exploring one's body under the gaze of the other when the body is no longer the <u>means</u> of exploration but becomes the <u>subject</u> of that exploration in a concrete and not a symbolic way.

A series of 'meaningful coincidences' (Jung, 1969) beyond the Art Psychotherapist's conscious control allowed Minghini the space and time to create Body Tracings 2 & 3 outside of the group's gaze. For Body Tracing 2, there was insufficient wall space available in the studio meaning that one group member had to work in the corridor. For Body Tracing 3, a series of late cancellations resulted in Minghini being the only member present that day. In both cases, as the Art Psychotherapist, I had considered changing the course of events, on the grounds that a setting that excluded one group member from the room could be unethical just as seeing one group member individually without the others present could be professionally disputable. However, my personal experience supports Jung's (1969) theory of synchronicity and I have found that when I follow events that I haven't necessarily understood at the time, even though they may seem obstructive and negative to my rational mind, I later discover their meaning and realize the importance of their happening

exactly the way they did (Hetherington, 2016). Absence can be as potent as presence: an absent group is not the same as a dyad in individual therapy. This individual session became Minghini's key moment to assert agency over his right to intimacy: an agency that was lacking in the outside world. He describes it as 'finding a secluded space in a crowded city'.

Body tracing: a mirror that promotes integrity
Minghini, the lived experience author, observes, "the body tracings placed me before a mirror that did more than simply show me the harsh truth of a crude reality: they showed me my own personal reality and the fact that if I conceded myself the opportunity I could turn my desire into my reality."

Body tracing has a special healing potential for those who have received a pathologised image of a self that deviates from social norms because it provides a mirror image with a difference. It is a mirror created by myself. Just as trans theory advocates the importance of "writing our history, and the moment that we write it, we give that history our meaning, the viewpoint of who made that history and who suffered that history, the subjective meaning and not that of the observer/outsider" (Arietti, Ballerin, Cuccio & Marcasciano, 2010, p.17), body tracing offers a person confirmation of their ability to define themselves. It opens up a path in which it is <u>they</u> who offer the image first to themselves, and then to the other.

Levine (1996) explores how Lacanian theory exposes the mirror image as not only fragmentary but based on a misunderstanding. It contains an illusion of wholeness that is not reciprocated in the child's lived experience of their body. Hence it sets up a precedent for seeking confirmation in others that always ends in disappointment: completion is diverted onto the product of an action or gesture and hence isn't internalised as a healing, embodied experience. Lacan (1977) proposes a solution in language. Levine (1996) proposes a solution in a phenomenological approach to art therapy. The Authors propose a solution in the act of body tracing.

Body tracing offers back an image that its creator recognises as 'me', but it is <u>not</u> me. Unlike the mirror, it does not pretend to be a totality but is a <u>part</u> of a whole. As such, it is 'a part of me', a momentary fragment in time. If Lacan's (1977) mirror image leaves the child with lack because they are less than what they see, the body tracing does the opposite. For I have created it and I am now enriched by new knowledge. In the child's exclamation: 'Look at me!', the body-tracing becomes <u>both</u> parts of the duet. It both offers and requests confirmation and hence it closes the circle because it is my (internal) bodily sen-

sations on observing the image (the 'felt sense' that is so important to healing trauma, [Levine, 1997] ) that validate the (external) image. It creates a record in the 'here and now' of lived experience, not only of my bodily form, but of the traces of my gestures and movement. It doesn't vanish but remains and testifies to my testimony. As such, it is a fragment that does not fragment me but takes me one step closer to completion: 'fragmented totality' (Levine, 1996).

**Practice description: The body tracings and my journey through transitioning - Minghini in the role of lived experience author narrates.**

I joined the LGBTQI art therapy group because I wanted to explore a very nebulous aspect of myself: my sexual identity. I knew I needed a safe environment, with non-judgmental people. The sessions were 3-hour long, held fortnightly from October through to June. I attended for two years and was absent once.

My very, first piece, made at the pre-group individual interview, was a faint and imperceptible, pencil kitten on A4 plain paper. When I look at that kitten today, it reaches me as an attempt not to be seen, to vanish into the white anonymity of the paper. As the sessions went on, my works began to get "noisier": they exist, it's difficult to admit it, but they do.

Body Tracing 1 : Francesca to Andrea
Occupying the space necessary to make the first body-tracing, the space my body claimed on the paper, was an incredibly difficult, but liberating experience: I can exist, I can take up space in the world. Beginning transitioning, that happened at about the same time, made me feel more or less the same way. If I think of myself before I realised I was trans, I think of a shadow, at best a person who would give up anything to melt into invisibility. Consciousness and self-awareness is giving me the liberty to occupy space, so that I too can have a place in this world. Becoming aware of my identity has allowed me to come out of a cramped, uncomfortable corner I had crawled into in an attempt to give as little trouble as possible, as if I wasn't there at all.

Body Tracing 2A and 2B : Grieving Andrea
The embarrassed discomfort of this figure before I cut it away still reaches me today. It screams, "Don't look at me!" while feigning self-confidence and using accessories (the moustache, green hair-do and sunglasses) to draw attention away from the reality of my body and its intrinsic anxiety. My attempts to conceal that anxiolytic body, the large black rectangles covering the breasts and hips, only make the unease they were trying to hide even more evident.

Although I now perceive the contradictory nature of those black rectangles, I recognise the need they fulfilled. They allowed me to keep for myself those parts of me that were unacceptable. It was important to prevent other people from seeing me in a way in which I no longer perceived myself.

Although working on my image was incredibly difficult, I recognise it as a fundamental step towards my self-acceptance. It was this clear and tangible refusal of my body, together with my confrontation of my need to distract attention away from my body's forms by means of a fanciful moustache and green hair-do, that allowed me to bring the refusal that had always been there into my consciousness. This was a process I had previously avoided because refusing one's body is painful and brings with it unpleasant consequences. I think it became possible in the moment in which its materialisation became a definite step towards self-acceptance.

The next step was a kind of incubation in which I hid the central part of my body-image, cutting it out and rolling it up, distancing it from what remained. From then on, the various objects I had used to distract attention were no longer needed as I had physically removed the parts that couldn't be looked at. What was left was my refusal - more visible than ever. The physical absence contains the visible presence of my unease. I had to isolate this and pin-point it in order to face it and deal with it.

Conceding myself the time to accept my refusal, hide the body that I could not bring myself to accept, gave me the opportunity to metabolise those negative feelings and contain them. Finally they stopped their slow corrosion of me inside below the surface of consciousness.

Body Tracing 3: Welcoming Fabrizio
I remember the individual session in which the third body-tracing was made. All the other group members were absent: it was like finding a secluded spot, a quiet corner, in the middle of a crowded city where I could sit and get my breath back in the shade before going back to the crowds in the main square. That third body tracing was a fundamental rite-of-passage that allowed me to finally and truly "own" my body in front of other people for the first time. It couldn't have been made in the presence of the group.

Allowing external elements to define the visible contour of my body removed some of the burden from dealing with that problematic entity: the contours exist, but they are subtle and in pencil, susceptible to modifications. Furthermore, I am able to relate to the world,

thanks to the various elements that characterise me besides my body: my hobbies and my passions. It is a body that is only partially defined and this leaves a lot of room for creativity. It is open to being influenced and influencing, both as subject and object. It goes a long way in expressing my sensation of having an infinity of opportunities once my identity is grounded. By this I'm referring to my self-awareness more than to the actual forms of my body that become secondary as well as modifiable.

I have a clear memory of modifying the outlines that were too painful to accept, those defining the hips and the legs in particular. Before creating this body-tracing, I hadn't considered this possible: it was a revelation. I thought I simply had to accept the unacceptable. Biology can't be changed and isn't moved by my feelings. While I am perfectly aware that I can't change certain aspects of my body, modifying the forms of this body tracing opened up a door of possibility that has been long-term. I'm still using this opening in my individual psychotherapy today. I'm discriminating those elements that truly are 'unacceptable' from those with which I can come to some sort of truce and make my peace.

The central part of the figure is still missing but its absence has a very different value. It's the absence of something in the process of becoming, not something that has been cut away. Modifying the body-tracing's outline, gave me permission to imagine myself differently, to imagine a body that I could recognise as myself without having to throw parts of myself away in order to achieve this. Those little changes to my contours triggered an awakening that represents a rite-of-passage for me in terms of transitioning. I'm not yet so at ease with my body to allow its contours to define me but I am able to imagine myself – and literally create an image of myself – with a physical body. This body tracing gave me the potential to identify this specific objective that's still work-in-progress. It's not a rigidly-defined objective: there are still questions, but it is a goal to work towards. It allowed me to finally "wear" my own body in front of other people for the first time. It's no coincidence that it gave me the strength to decide to change my name again. A few weeks later, I was no longer Andrea, but Fabrizio. No longer gender-neutral but male-identified.

## Discussion : Three body tracings; three creative process modalities; three stages of transitioning

The 'subject matter' of a body tracing is the depiction of a body image. Just like every art form, this can be created using different modalities (Ogden, 1987; Della Cagnoletta, 2010). Each modality uses a specific language, starting from a sensorial base, which is then followed by a process of division and separation in order to arrive at recognition and acceptance of the image's content, in whatever form it has appeared. The three different

modalities interplay, but we see how in each body tracing one of them becomes dominant over the others, defining a style, values and themes connected with the body image (Della Cagnoletta, 2010, 2017). The modalities may function as enablers of the therapeutic process as well as protective mechanisms to create distance from sensations and content that would otherwise overwhelm the self.

Body Tracing 1 : embodiment through a sensory approach

The first body tracing marks the end of a journey: it is the culmination of the pre-transitioning process, coinciding with the moment in which 'Francesca' becomes 'Andrea'. It is also the result of six months sensory work that began with a small, pencil kitten to reach this spectacular painterly celebration of self. Minghini reflects on how an object has to be owned before it can be relinquished. He describes his existence as Francesca as a kind of living dead. It was a period of obsessive suicidal thoughts together with the knowledge that he would never actually kill himself because that would mean acknowledging a body. Francesca's conundrum was solved in the act of embodiment, that was not the acceptance of his body so much as its inhabitance.

Bodily Concentration modality (Della Cagnoletta, 2010) : the tactile sensations of paint on skin, the physical gesture and movement necessary to make the mark, the conscious involvement of the body in the piece's creation become the means by which Minghini makes contact with his body. The hand-print, the brush-stroke, the splashes on paper become a record, a tangible memory that testifies to the physical gesture that took place. Previously, Minghini had defended himself from these sensations, a defence that had protected him from the necessity of transitioning. But in defending himself, he also separated himself from those sensations that connect us with the world. The ego is above all a body-ego (Freud, 1949). Our skin is the barrier but also the connection between inside and out (Anzieu, 2016; Bick, 1968).

Detaching from bodily perception impedes the continuity of being (Winnicott, 1956), the elaboration and awareness of emotions (Hass-Cohen & Findlay, 2015) and the integration of implicit and explicit memory (Elbrecht, 2018). It impedes living as an integrated being who can make sense out of our existence, cognitively and perceptively. The use of art materials within a safe place, the art therapy setting, became the tool that Minghini could use, at his own pace, to experiment and slowly allow these sensations to filter through the skin, permeate his embodied self and find pleasure in being.

Body Tracing 2A & 2B : protection through a formal approach

The second body tracing represents the process of transitioning itself. It is the taking apart of 'who you told me I was'. And what is left is a 'hole'. It is emotionally and psychologically challenging as it is a symbolic point of no return, a grieving of what was and a coming to terms with what cannot be changed. It means staying with the pain in order to elaborate the loss.

Formal Solution modality (Della Cagnoletta, 2010) **:** the choice of materials that limit haptic sensations and maximise control over the creative process (collage, pencil, scissors etc), the use of geometrical shapes and forms to define areas and structure the piece are the means by which Minghini defends himself from being overwhelmed by the emotions triggered by the artwork's subject matter. Organisation and order create the distance he needs to confront the reality of his body while 'avoiding looking at it'.

Body Tracing 3 : creating identity through a narrative approach
The third body tracing concentrates on self-narration and in doing so it enables Minghini to identify himself as a person who also happens to be trans. Hadley (2013) draws attention to how subjugated identities easily take over in defining ourselves: the other side of the coin to the invisibility of privilege. We all have a race, gender, sexuality etc yet words such as 'white', 'heterosexual', 'able-bodied' are rarely used for self-definition. They act as a blank canvas on which their owner may paint. Here, Minghini allows himself this luxury. The word 'trans' becomes part of the background and his body is literally framed and constructed by the things he loves.

Symbolic Narration modality (Della Cagnoletta, 2010) **:** the priority is neither the artistic process nor the form but the meaning of the image. Narration creates a symbolic container that can hold the fragments, connecting them and giving them significance.

Self-narration is problematic for subjugated identities as society has a tendency to evoke embarrassment and guilt in those whose narratives do not conform to cultural tendencies (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992). Barbee (2002) emphasises the specific therapeutic importance of narration for the trans person. Not only does mainstream society mirror back their story as 'ridiculous', but the medical profession evaluates the narrative to see if it conforms to DSM diagnostic criteria (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). External pressure is enormous. In the light of this, narration within the non-judgemental space of the art therapy studio is more than ever about empowerment and control: Minghini is amazed to discover that he could change the pencil contours of his body.

In narrating the self, he becomes able to possess the outside space. A bridge is created between the self and the other. The external, 'social' space becomes his friend. The curved line of the green grass, the top of a hill, reminds the Authors of the Little Prince's planet (Saint-Exupéry, 1943). It is a safe space in which he can play music, cycle and travel: a space therefore to be explored. A safe place then, not just in the therapy studio but also outside, is fundamental for the healthy emergence of this new body. We connect this concept with Hocoy's (2005) call for art therapy as social action: who is the patient if individual pain is the symptom of a sick society?

## Implications for research

Our research has highlighted the paucity of material within art therapy literature on body tracing, which reveals the need for comprehensive studies in this area, and in particular for research that distinguishes and defines the different ways in which body tracing can be used. At present, such definitions and studies appear to exist for body mapping, which has a cognitive and symbolic emphasis and has been defined by Jager et al. (2016) and Gastaldo et al. (2012) as the application of body tracing within a social justice framework. Such is the dominance of the term body mapping that we have found it being used in research such as Lubbers' (2019) 'Body Map Protocol' even though the protocol she refers to describes a somatic, lived experience tool for healing trauma that seems to differ in key ways from Jager et al.'s (2016) and Gastaldo et al.'s (2012) symbolic approaches that emphasise self-narration.

The Authors believe that research is needed to define and distinguish the varied ways in which bottom-up and top-down approaches can be integrated into the technique of body tracing in order to bridge the gap between mind and body, feeling and thought, personal experience and social interaction (Skop, 2016). Each approach is as valid as the other, but it is only by creating a vocabulary that honours underlying differences that we can further our understanding and make new in-roads. Dance Movement Theory has studied the implications and distinctions between body image, body self and body memory (Pylvänäinen, 2003; Chace, 1993). In the field of clinical psychology and neuropsychology, Pitron and de Vignemont (2017) have distinguished body image from body schema, the latter being connected with action and the former with perception. Our own research wishes to highlight the presence of the actual body in the construction of the body image, especially during the "tracing phase" where the Bodily Concentration modality (Della Cagnoletta, 2010) is in full action and both kinaesthetic and perceptual systems are stimulated. We invite art-based research (ABR) into body tracing that applies a system, such as Della Ca-

gnoletta's (2010) three modalities, for recognising different ways of making experience in the realm of the art process.

The Authors have seen a unique capacity in body tracing for elaborating the transitioning person's complex relationship with their changing body and hope to have shown how a psychodynamic approach is effective in contexts in which there is no "permission to narrate" (Weegmann, 2016 ). Emphasizing a bottom-up approach, our methodology heals breaches between the body and the social gaze at a different level to body mapping thus offering a complementary tool when working with subjugated identities. In this article, we have explored a single case. We know that "the value of a single study can be increased through the multiplier effect - but only if its results are disseminated and used by others" (Kapitann, 2017, p. 320).  It would be useful to have empirical research in this area to promote the use of body tracing by organizations and associations offering support to trans people. This is particularly important as the costs of transitioning can make private and alternative therapies prohibitive. Structured short-term programs could be built up by art therapists in collaboration with trans people, with body tracing forming a key component.

## Conclusion : The power of tangible experience

Minghini observes how, "the body tracings brought me into contact with what was tangible and showed me what was realistic and what was not. Modifying them helped me to distinguish those aspects that were in some way acceptable from those that were not." The series of body tracings facilitated the transitioning process because working on the body's image in such a tangible manner shifted the locus of control (Rotter, 1954) from external to internal. Minghini's body became the subject not the object, activating a process of empowerment. He described his difficulty regulating emotions during his "darkest period" of hormone treatment. Arietti et al. (2010) speak of the depersonalisation of the medicalised body. These are all processes in which psychologically, physically and emotionally the person loses control over their body and embodied identity. The process of selecting on paper what could go and what could stay, allowed Minghini to find his own way of reconciling internal desire and external reality. The intolerable became tolerable because it was no longer imposed. He had agency. In his own words: "I had permission".

The Authors' experience indicates that the potential of body tracing to increase a person's sense of empowerment makes it an important tool for working with subjugated identities. In this area, Della Cagnoletta's (2017, 2020) specific methodology for body tracing is significant because it focuses attention on the body's boundaries. Owning and controlling

the body's outline means defining what belongs inside and what must stay outside. It allows marginalized people, who have introjected an external social vision of themselves as 'outsiders', to place themselves literally in the centre of the picture, re-defining 'in' and 'out'. Experiences of social alienation can cause a person to dissociate from the body that may be perceived as the site of alienation (Hocoy, 2006; Karcher, 2017): body tracing offers an enabling experience that promotes a body image of integrity and wholeness. As such it is a mirror that heals those sensations defined by Lacan (1977) as lack.

Our approach to body tracing uses the three creative process modalities (Della Cagnoletta, 2010) to integrate a bottom-up and top-down approach. Sensory experience, formal decision-making and symbolic meaning become contextualized within the body's physical involvement, the documentation of its contours and the completion of the body-space created. The resulting body-image integrates and testifies to the different levels of consciousness and states of the self (Bromberg, 1996) involved in its creation.

As social beings, we seek confirmation, acceptance and above all harmony in the external world. In order to validate the self, we need external surroundings that reflect back core parts of ourselves, creating a space which fills safe, known and 'home'. This is what Minghini is able to create for himself in Body Tracing 3: a world which mirrors his passions, a prerequisite for coming into being. The body tracings play a key role in his discovering and creating a healthy identity that transcends medical pathologisation and reflects a 'fragmented totality' (Levine, 1996): the complexity of a living, feeling, sentient body-self. Minghini speaks of a journey that is not so much about going 'from female-to-male' as it is about going 'from shadow-to-human'. His artworks evolve from 'vaguely human semblances' to 'my own body': a quest to become 'fully human'. He says, "I had always distinctly refused to see change in myself. If it were for me, I would have remained the same for ever, keeping the same insurmountable difficulties, living with the same mental deadlock. It was thanks to the artwork that I made in the art therapy group that I realised this wasn't true: the change was evident. It was there on paper, in the materials I had used and subjects represented."

**Biographical notes:**

**Rivkah (Rebecca) Hetherington** is an HCPC (UK) registered art psychotherapist who trained at Art Therapy Italiana in Bologna (Italy) where she lives and works. She practices as an artist, having a BA in Fine Art (Winchester School of Art) and MA (Wimbledon School of Art) in the UK where she grew up. She has a private practice in Bologna where she sees both children and adults, individually and in groups. She has a special interest in treating trauma that has led her to study bilateral drawing (Institute for Sensorimotor Art Therapy) and is currently involved in bringing 'The Changing Room 11' trauma-oriented project from USA to Italy. Her interest in social justice has led her to work in Bologna's women's prison as well as in projects with unaccompanied minors and vulnerable teenagers. In collaboration with Bologna's LGBTQI centre, she set up the first art therapy group in Italy dedicated specifically to LGBTQI clients and has published her research in this field (The Arts in Psychotherapy). Her international identity also finds her working with Third Culture Kids through International School. She is a member of research groups in the fields of Adoption & Foster Care and Prison Work.

**Mimma Della Cagnoletta,** doctor in Philosophy, certified psychologist, art therapist and psychoanalyst, is co-founder of Art Therapy Italiana (1982), the association that developed the first art therapy training in Italy in collaboration with Arthur Robbins, Diane Waller and Andrea Gilroy amongst many. Former professor at the University of Milan, she has been teaching and supervising for three decades. She is now director of advanced studies in art therapy for Art Therapy Italiana. She runs art therapy groups for users and professionals in many health services and private institutions. She works with dance movement therapists in order to integrate art and movement into teaching and practice. She is in private practice in Milan, working with adults. She is supervisor of a research group on adoption and foster care. She is author of an art therapy handbook and co-author of a book on group art therapy and many articles, both in Italian and English. She is a member of the editorial board of the journal "Creative Arts in Education and Therapy: Eastern and Western Perspectives", member of the Application Review Committee and of the Research Committee of the European Federation of Art Therapists. She is a dedicated abstract painter.

**Fabrizio Minghini** graduated in Anthropology from the University of Bologna and is continuing his studies with a Masters in Psychology. His ambition is to train as a psychotherapist with the specific desire to help other trans people in need during their transition. He has lived in Bologna for eight years, after spending most of his life in his hometown, Mantua. He's involved in human rights movements and has lately developed a particular interest in death positive and death acceptance movements. He's a talented actor, having pretended to be a woman for twenty-five years, even managing to convince himself before realizing that wasn't the case.

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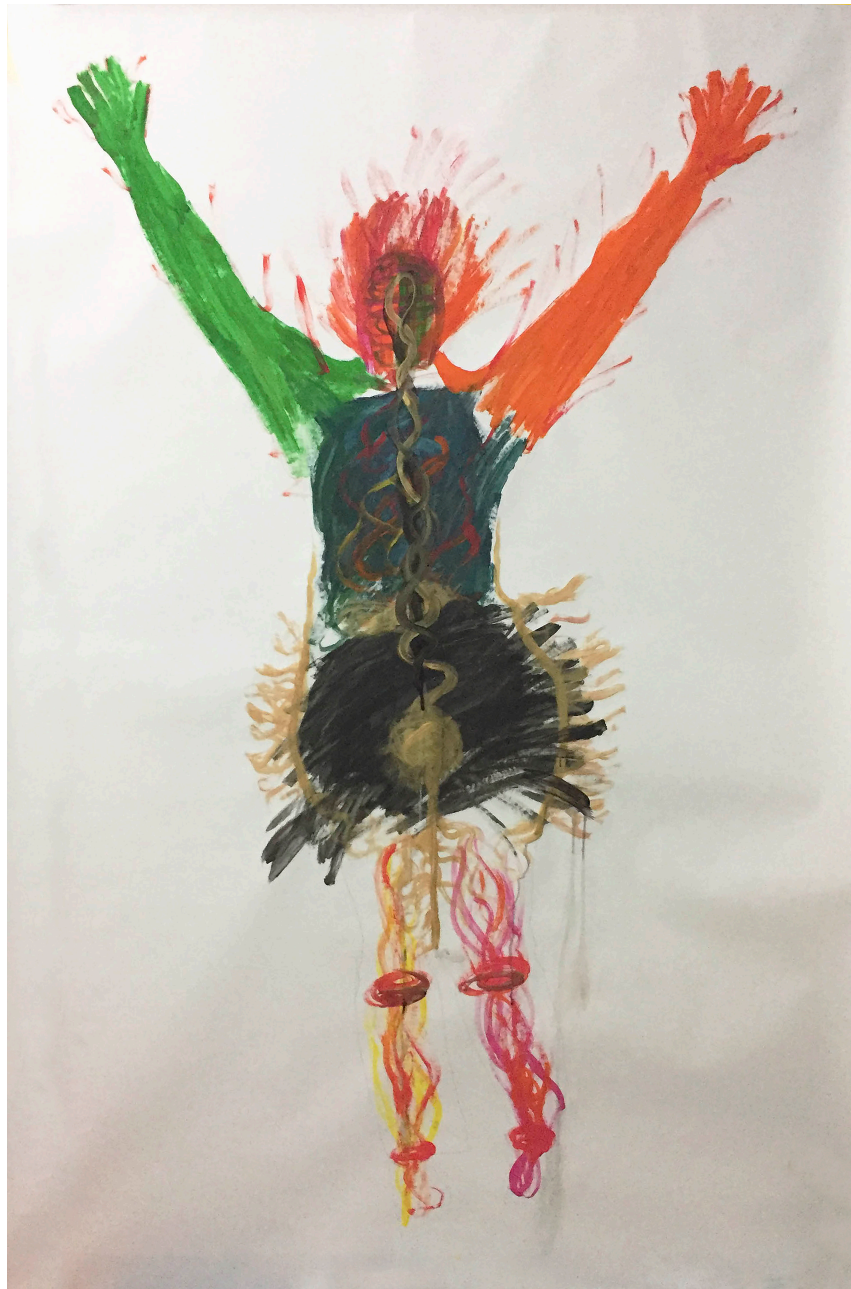
Body Tracing 1 : 220 x 150 cm, poster paint and pencil on paper.
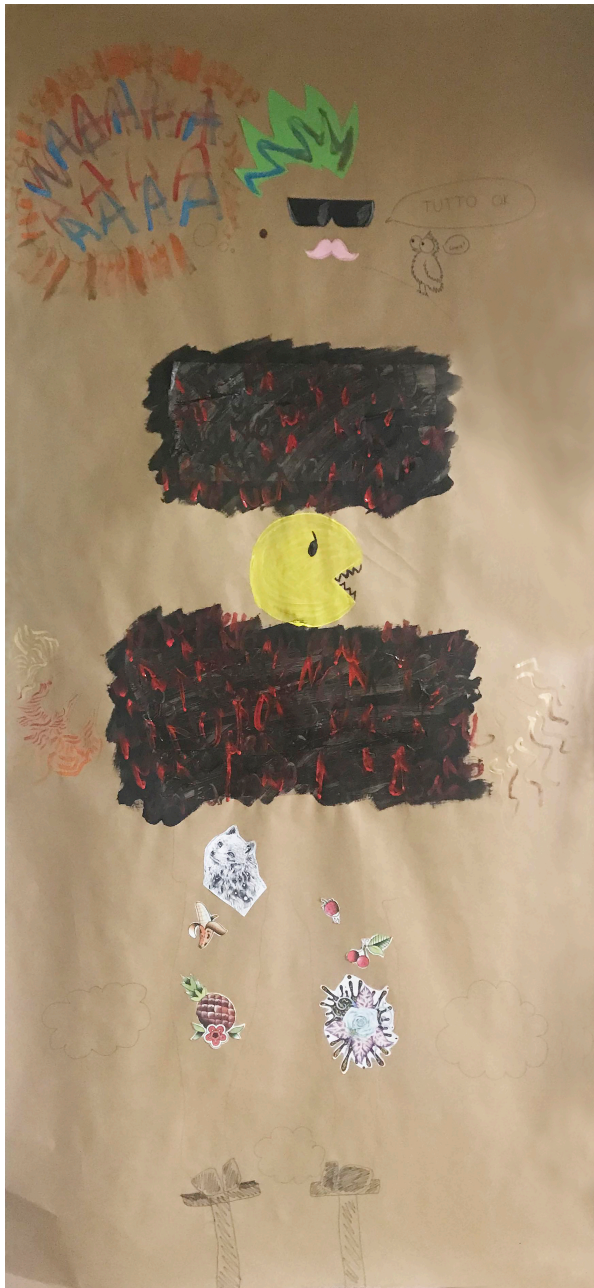
Body Tracings 2A & 2B :  220 x 120 cm,
pencil, poster paint and collage on brown parcel paper.

Body Tracing 3 : 240 x 150 cm, poster paint and pencil on paper.