

Transitions 1997 - 2024: Artistic and Scientific works between Psychology and Religion

Kathrin Rothenberg-Elder, 2024

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Background



Kathrin Rothenberg-Elder 6/2024, © R. Rothenberg

Since my ph.D. thesis about Christian transitional rituals 1997 – 2022 enlarged as an inquisition about monotheist transitional rituals - I worked as an artist and scientist in the field between religion and psychology.

Born 1967, I studied psychology, practical theology and Modern German Literature.

I work as an appointed professor at the University of Applied Science Diploma, and still as an artist, mostly as a poet and 'photocompositor'.

My climate engagement as part of Scientists For Future & Servas International is another story which sometimes melt in those works.

I live in a multireligious and atheist family and community.

The Purpose

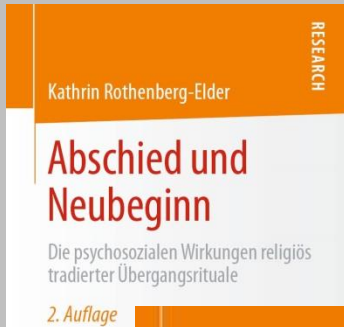


In this times of transition we need dialogue, art and storytelling is one of those tools.

Religious fields can promote those rooms of encounter, development, safety and understanding.

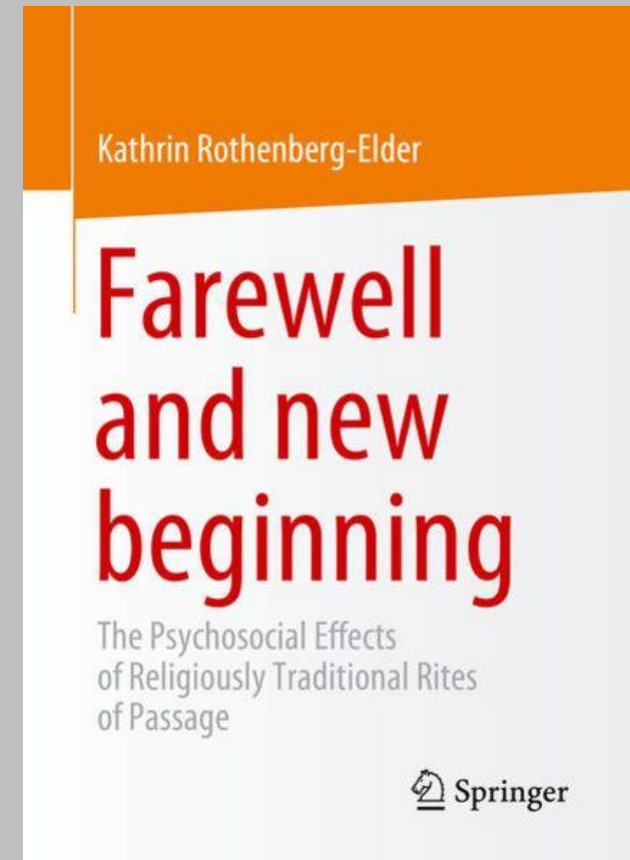
Hereinafter a short presentation of my projects in those fields:

Projects 1997 - 2024



Farewell and new beginning

Life is full of transitions. These transitions have to be addressed, shaped, processed and integrated into our lives in some way. Regardless of the belief in a God, traditional structures always come into view, here especially religiously traditional rites of passage such as baptism and circumcision, communion and bar mitzvah, marriage as well as convalescence, death and funeral rites. What is the psychological function of religiously traditional rites of passage today? This question was investigated with the help of interactive interviews with functionaries and members of the religious communities of all three monotheistic currents in Northern Europe, flanked by two interviews with atheists.



The Pentateuch-Project



A photographic multilayer project about the Pentateuch, the Five Books of Moses.

It contains around 140 works, inspired by quotes of all five books, in highest standards of religious sensitivity and was exhibited internationally in several places, including places of worship of all three monotheist religions.

To exhibit and transport it easily it is printed on fabric in the tradition of processional flags.

Some examples here:

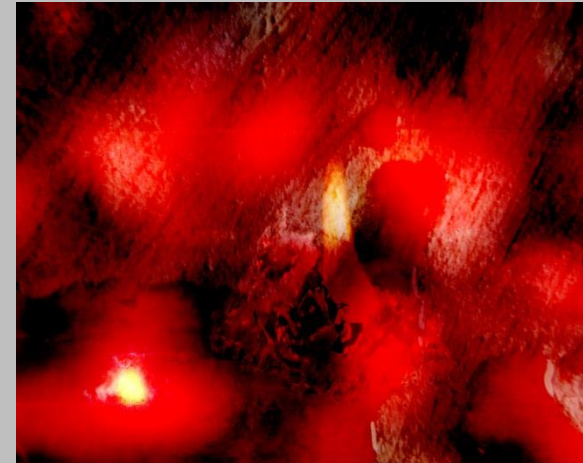
The Pentateuch-Project: Examples



Gen 28 12 Surah 15 9



Ex 2 3



Lev 3 9 Surah 22 34



Num 6 26



Deut 11 13 15

The Purim-Project



The biblical story of Esther, the Jewish heroine from the Bible, and of Eva Moses Cor, who survived Auschwitz as a child, are told in two strands: They are stories of courage - and of how important it is that we remember, because memory can help protect ourselves and others. I illustrated the stories myself, which are told in parallel, in colorful photo compositions.

News of the day: Poems and pictures on the Psalms



“For many generations of Jews and Christians, the biblical psalms were a natural and everyday part of their lives, a guideline for their prayers, a reflection of their emotions, a way of experiencing and searching for God. For many centuries, the psalms have been recited, sung, set to music and rewritten by the devout and the less devout, by believers and doubters. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, the Psalter has become very alien to most people. On the other hand, the lyrical approaches of contemporary poets repeatedly demonstrate its relevance, the human depth of the old texts, as well as the elements of lasting topicality and transcendence. With this volume, the artist and poet Kathrin Kiss-Elder presents her intensive study of the biblical psalms: with her cycle of 150 poems and just as many photo tableaux, she follows the entire Psalter and examines each psalm poetically and in an intensive imagery.” (Ohlert, 2017)

Some examples here:

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News of the Day: Poems and Pictures on the Psalms - Example



Psalm 12: My Own Voice

“My own voice

I am drowning again
in my misery.

In the images of me that others have of me
my existence is irreversibly distorted
and wiped away.

I no longer recognize myself.

Who could teach me now
and help me in the complete darkness
when I am almost transparent
and my own voice

breaks? [...]” (Rothenberg-Elder, 2017)

Further Projects I:

Sacraments of Everyday Life

Sacraments of Everyday Life is a collection of stories and - much more sparsely - photo compositions about the fascination of the sacramental. The initial inspiration was the concept of the sacramental by theologian Leonardo Boff. He pursues a very practical everyday approach by demonstrating in his Little Sacramental Doctrine (1976) how everyday artifacts are transformed into a kind of sacramental event that dresses the objective, immanent with symbolic, transcendent elements. I started this work since the offshoots of my dissertation in 1997 and still continue today. The elements in it are always dedicated to a concrete thing such as "fire", "cable drum" or "scrabble".



Onions, 2012

Further Projects II: The Night of Pessach

One of my current projects is a modern Haggadah, the ritual guide for Passover – for modern, multi-religious and often atheist people, perhaps even multilingual like our own family...

The project includes carefully modernized texts in German, Hebrew and English as well as photo compositions, like this example.



Erew Pessach, 2024