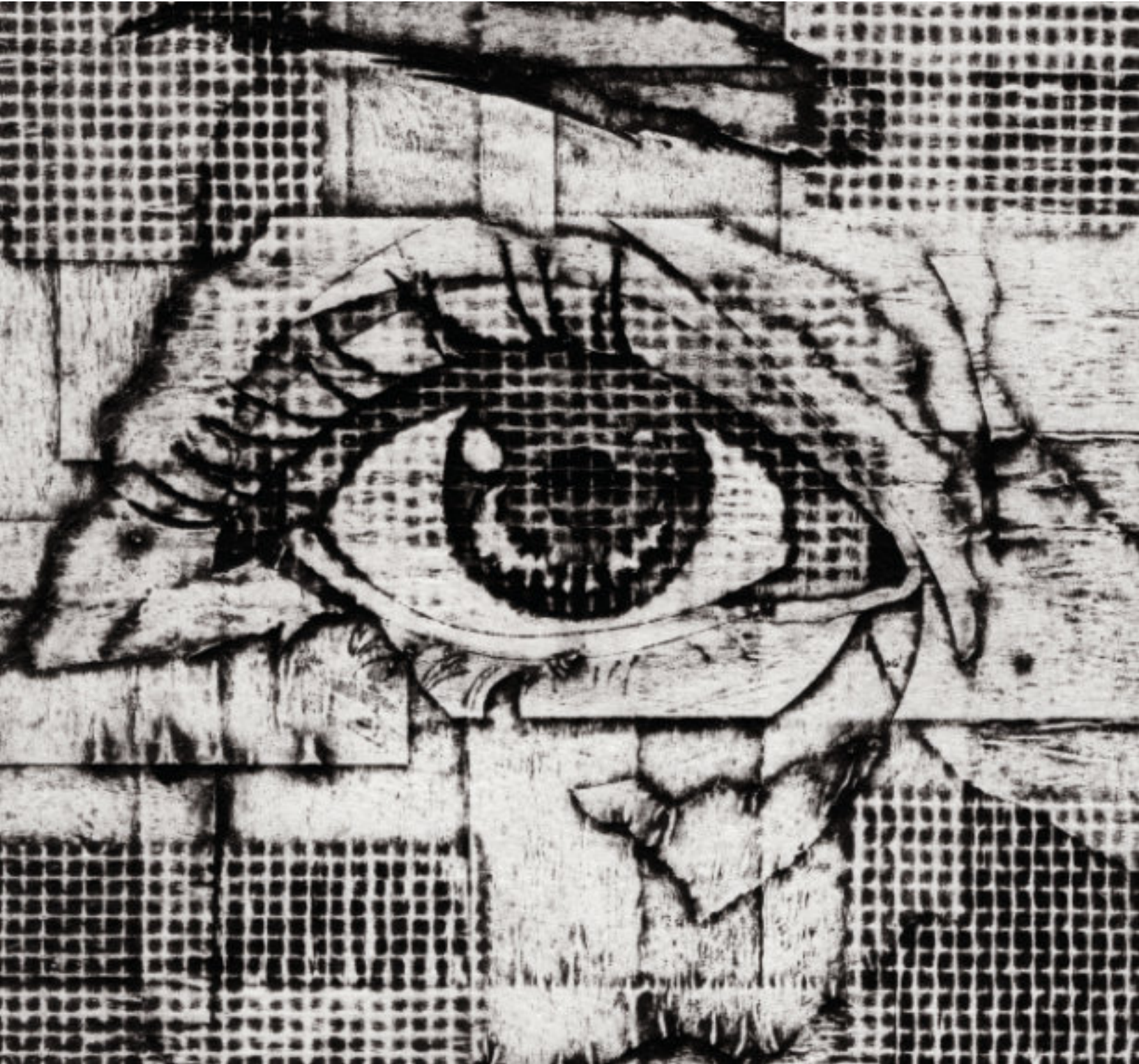


unpsychology

issue 9.1 summer 2023



imaginings

IMAGININGS 1 OF 2



unpsychology

issue 9.1, summer 2023

imaginings

Editorial team: Julia Macintosh, Steve Thorp,
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JULIA MACINTOSH & STEVE THORP

Beginning dialogue

*Unpsychology editors,
Julia and Steve, introduce
this first volume of the
Imaginings issue with a
dialogue about the
conversation that led
to here:*

JULIA: A very warm welcome to all our community of readers and supporters, exploring this ninth issue of **unpsychology**. This year we invited submissions on the theme of Imaginings, and received so many wonderful responses that we felt compelled to take a unique approach to this year's project: an issue in two parts! But this is not just a double issue, it is a dialogue between two entities: volume one and volume two. We hope that our readers' imaginations play with the interface between a volume published in summer and one published in autumn.

STEVE: Yes, we like a good dialogue at **unpsychology** — or a broader conversation — and this issue-in-two-parts has been born out of a series of weekly conversations between the four of us editors. When we put out the call for the issue, I think I envisaged something radical in content, perhaps radical in form — however what happened was that the magazine emerged out of something radical in process! Every word, every image, every piece of sound or video has flowed through these dialogues and conversations between us, and between us and our contributors. It's something we've seen in previous issues, but these Imaginings seem to be part of something purely relational!

JULIA: I love the idea of the magazine content flowing through these relationships, and I am so looking forward to sharing each volume when they are published. The issues themselves are in relationship, with pieces that reach out across time and space to converse with one another. And we hope that our readers come to these Imaginings with curiosity and playfulness. Like being pulled by the hands into the circle of a dance: come, join us! Come see, come read, and listen to this, and look at that! Share your thoughts and responses — with us and with one another. We hope to inspire a conversation about what is possible, and how and why. The possible is only ever born through imaginings.

STEVE: An ongoing playful dance of possibilities — a great image! I think, with this issue, it's the first time that the editing and curation has felt like that. Each editorial session we've had has been rich, relational and often surprising. The images and ideas that come from the imaginings of our authors and artists have taken the four of us on a series of journeys, that are definitely not straight lines from here to there! The steps we have taken together make and follow patterns and are embedded in deep creative ecologies — but I really don't know where they might be heading. It's good, sometimes, to not have a destination in mind. So, I really hope you, our readers, will enjoy and feel part of these meanderings...

JULIA: Absolutely. We invite all our readers to participate in the experience of **unpsychology** — please do bring your comments and ideas and feedback along to join in the conversation between the two issues of Imaginings. And of course, we always welcome involvement in **unpsychology voices**, our online space at Substack. We hope that the birth of this issue 9.1 will create a welcoming space for mutual explorations and imaginings. Let's create this together!

*The thing is us — or rather it's between us.
It's always combining,
always moving, like boats on the water.
The clumps and boxes are moving and shaking,
always clumping and boxing.
Yet, meeting with our windows behind us,
we can see the colours changing.*

*Listen to Steve's
poem here:*



tinyurl.com/dialogue1poem

unpsychology 9 is a collection of multimedia imaginings – alongside the text and images, you’ll find links to soundfiles and videos, including specially commissioned pieces and extracts read by the authors.

To begin, we invite you into the world of our sound editor Patrick Carpenter and his fellow musicians in the Imaginings Ensemble, who improvised a series of pieces especially for the magazine. Click on the link or scan the QR codes to listen.

You’ll find more of their pieces throughout, and a piece on the session that led to these recordings on page 59.



tinyurl.com/4a6cay69

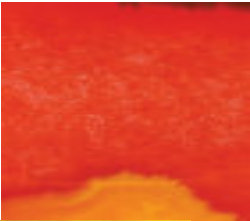


tinyurl.com/5hyuynk4



unpsychology 9.1

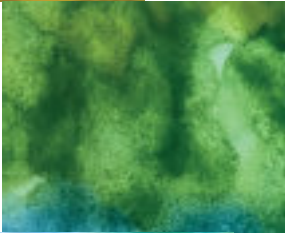
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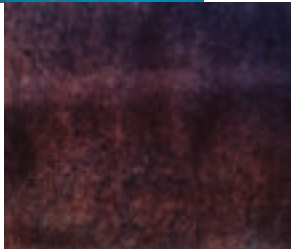
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... within and between these sections
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& the Imaginings Ensemble, poems collected,
spoken and pianoed by Steve Thorp.

Fabrics of life, fragments coloured red

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the music of PATRICK CARPENTER & THE IMAGININGS ENSEMBLE

There is nothing, No Thing.
Steeped inside the flow, certainty slips
swiftly downstream
– we are awake at midnight.
They tell me about their worlds.
The sun is about to collide – briskly
rub at my sun-browned flesh.
So... what seems to be the problem?
It is both constant and fluid.
We pay in words.

< *This poem combines
fragments from the
authors in this
section ... find a spoken
version here:*



tinyurl.com/section1foundpoem

RHEANN PASION

imaginings

When we are silent, we create
When we are quiet, we think
When we reminisce, we somehow imagine
When we ponder, we somehow imagine

Whether we are awake at midnight,
Or contemplate on a sunny afternoon,
We may dawdle or simply wonder
We imagine and question our existence,
And even manipulate our imaginations
Because of what we purely perceive.

More music from
the Imaginings
Ensemble



tinyurl.com/392whbca

STEVE THORP

Red shift

*“So they point to imagination for a break from the boxes,
only to find that the imagination is sourcing from the
epistemology that produces boxes”*

— Nora Bateson, It's Fantastic, August 22¹

1. Breakfast

THERE IS NOTHING HERE this morning. At least not something I can put my finger on.

I lingered in a dream and it's fading quickly. There are people from my past in it — or there were, for now they're gone — not gone — the effects and the affect lingers. Takes me to a box called 'depth psychology', invites mythical analogies and meaning.

There is nothing, No Thing. Nothing I can put my finger on. So I rise; habitually make coffee, habitually cut toast, habitually take them back upstairs. We linger in the breakfast, read the news — despairing, delighting, distracting — and there is something warm in the space between us.

Mice are scuttling in these walls, through little mazes of life, corridors through the house that we can never follow, never see. There are sparrows outside in predictable places, and crows nest-building noisily in the line of trees at the hamlet's edge. Tumbles of woodlice squirm as outside doors are thrown open in early spring. Cluster flies wait in the window cracks until someone opens the Velux on a warming day; then they explode in a pointless cloud of black buzz and hustle.

These are 'proles', these creatures. They work hard to live their short lives and we (the humans of ecocidal, anthropocentric, late-stage capitalism) are prepared to colonise and cull them, or, at best, suffer their presence.

I have a penchant for humanist, animist, ecological, anarchist-shadowed, communistic, psychologically-suffused, historically-situated kinds of political relationality. Uncertain, unfamiliar metabolic shifts — if these are at all possible — because we need frames for love and ecology that do not collapse into what Jon Goodbun calls “the semi-dismal bourgeois form of ecology”, but rather, “the aesthetically re-conceived ecology proposed by (Gregory) Bateson”.²

Marxism, David Harvey writes, might “*learn a great deal from trying to understand ecocentric lines of thought*”, whilst an ecological communism (of both human and other-than) might bring with it, “The idea of ‘re-enchantment’ with the sensuous world through a more sensitive science, more sensitive social relations and material practices, through meaningful labour processes, provides a better language than that of alienation with all of its

essentialist overtones.”³

These are still boxes, I am aware, but there are not many of our epistemologically-produced boxes that consider complexity with a sense of intellectual playfulness, commitment to goodness, life and solidarity and, yes, love.

2. Therapy

In my conversations with people in my world, I talk often with troubled humans. Troubled non-humans, I deal with less, but I know that these are also people, and deserve their own conversations to be heard.

In some of my conversations with human people, they tell me of the shapes of suffering they find themselves caught in. Sometimes contorted, restricted, curled-up, facing-off, retreating-from, ready to run, ready to fight, ready to give right up.

They tell me about their worlds. The pain they hold, the joy they bring and the tantalisingly out-of-reach potential they sense (that sometimes holds the biggest pain of all). They tell me of the disillusionment, desolation and destruction that they feel in and around them.

They tell me all this in ways we might expect, and in surprising ways too.

I’m OK, they might say, and an involuntary dart of flame reaches me directly from their eyes.

I’m happy, they might say, as they hold their bodies tight; self-protecting with all the psychic armour they can muster.

I’m fine, they might say, as they sit on the edge of their chair, ready to jump and run.

They may tell me of their pain, directly and honestly, but sometimes there’s a glimmer of a budding flower or an orange butterfly that appears flapping just above their head, or a tiny unicorn dancing across the floor between us. There’s a song, too, sometimes. A barely-whispered, barely-heard hum of joy—even as their world seems to crumble around them.

They/we hold on together to the filaments and threads that flow and grow between us—and between us and our shared world (material and

imagined), out further to worlds where contexts only appear and overlap as cultural and ecological phenomena.

Wholes, Timothy Morton might say, that are definitely not greater than the sum of their parts.

We are ‘Humankind’, Morton tells us—which is to say, we are humans made up of all kinds of everything; in constant to-and-fro relating with all the other kinds of everything that are people too. We are ‘kind humans’ too (or can be), as we come to understand we are nothing special—never have been—we are just lucky sometimes, and unlucky in other times and places, to be human beings.⁴

3. Soul in a box

I am living in a box like everyone else, and my box is nothing special. It has six sides (known to me as walls, floor and ceiling). It contains my earthly relations, possessions, insights and unique combinations of reasonably well-hidden eccentricity.

I have a kind of soul—which sometimes appears to be like a trail of smoke—when it can be perceived at all. Some of the time it takes shape in my subjective experience, and I can follow for a while, but most of the time it is indistinguishable from everything and everyone else. And then it is not a soul at all, and maybe I am not even a ‘self’.

My soul lives in the box with me, except when it doesn’t and is travelling the world looking for stories, or when it simply disappears for a while, leaving me to stare at the walls of my box again. Yet it always comes back, and anyway the walls are not really there at all. The box only exists to hold the notion of ‘square’ or ‘cube’ or ‘home’ or ‘belief system’ or even ‘web’—or anything else that can be named for and named by me. We can leave it aside at any time.

This is a box of playful ideas and experiences. It is like presents opened on my birthday as a child (and each birthday since). At first they seem distinct and shiny—boxes within boxes—but then, as wrapping paper is discarded to the floor, the presents become a heap of things that, in time, become stuff in their own right, beginning to represent that day—to remember it for me. Then these come together

with other stuff from other days. Some is discarded, some remains, combines and recombines—again and again and again.

They are always relational—these things—evoking connection, but only when they are ‘ready’ to do so; only when I/we in my/our interconnected, mycelial, myriad us-ness are ready for them to mean something.

These are some things that I pulled from my box when writing this piece. You will have your own and mine will have changed by the time you read this:

that Bjork podcast;⁵ then... her break-up record, Vulnicura, that I can't stop listening to, then... her email conversation with Timothy Morton;⁶ then... reading Morton's HumanKind that finds me in his 'Mesh' and a place beyond "Nature",⁷ then... back with Gregory Bateson's Ecology of Mind,⁸ and Nora Bateson's Warm Data,⁹ then... back with personal history, then... touching my Dad's hand as he struggled with pneumonia and I thought he might die; then... watching my youngest granddaughter gradually lose her front teeth; then... back with friends and songlines; then... listening on journeys to the myriad albums produced by the mysterious Sault; then... also listening to Neil Gaiman's Sandman;¹⁰ then... (reading) Ursula K LeGuin's story, Unlocking the Air (again);¹¹ then... back with family lines and clouds of relating (clouds of love), songs, words, whispering souls and the calls of nesting crows; then...

The point is that, in this ‘mesh’, I am not in a box anymore, but in a new world of *Imaginings*.

4. Shit soup

This is not *Imaginal*, nor *Imagination*, you understand.

I am not just making symbolic connections with the mythical human imaginal realm (or rather, sometimes I am, but this is not my primary mode here). True, such a practice opens the human mind out to the world, but it still locates human archetypes in something else called ‘nature’, and this has become a problematic idea for left-ecological writers like Timothy Morton and McKenzie Wark. And for me.

Nor am I trying to use imagination to get to something—a new way, a new world, a way

through. This might be just another version of what Nora Bateson refers to as ‘conscious purpose’: an endless whirl of box-producing. Economic, cultural and political ‘tasks’ become lines of intention—and these are seldom transcontextual, nor do they hold sufficient complexity to avoid them crumbling into more trouble.

So, rather, these are *Imaginings*—things that emerge from random, playful and unpredictable patterns of combining. Maybe like Gaston Bachelard’s ‘poetic image’: “a sudden salience on the surface of the psyche”¹². Maybe like Nora Bateson’s Aphanipoiesis: “the unseen coalescence that brings about vitality”.¹³ Maybe pieces of joy or spontaneous insight that reveal themselves in processes of relational weaving.

In her talks and trainings, Nora Bateson sometimes talks of soup as an analogy for warm data and contextual combining. When considering soup we might (echoing Timothy Morton) also consider that ingredients are not just part of a greater whole—in some ways they are more than the soup itself. So, the whole is not greater than the sum of its parts. In fact, the leeks in my soup today were more than the soup itself—otherwise leek soup would not have been prepared, nor eaten, nor remembered as so good by those who shared it.

I might think, “I will have to get those leeks again”, or wonder what it would be like if I had some other leeks. I am not, however, preoccupied with whether I will make soup again (I know I will) and if I was to focus on this future soup, the ‘conscious purpose’ involved could easily lead to deep-soup-disappointment. Or to reduce it still further, I may as well buy tinned soup, which opens up another whole can of worms...

Imaginings—the ingredients—combine in some kind of weird subconscious and relational space, together with all my experiences, disappointments, pieces of despair, pieces of joy and conversations and interactions with other people (human and other-than-human); eventually, I hope, coming up with a soup for the future.

However, sometimes what comes out of this

combining might be a bit shit — shit soup (now you can't get rid of that image can you?). Shit soup is sometimes what we get in a world full of shit. Yet in amongst the brown, smelly trouble we are stuck with, we sometimes find shiny bits of joy that make us laugh, love and cry, despite or because of the overall shitness of everything.

So sometimes our soup will be tasty and comforting — just right for the moment — and at other times not so good. The stuff that makes up the soup — the people, places, conversations, relationships, experiences and imaginings — is always still there. None of it is special; it is just ordinary. It is life; ordinary life. Sometimes it's shit and sometimes it's wonderful, and often in-between, but there is no glorious destination, no goal to be realised, no transformation or conscious evolution to be manifested, no authentic self to be reached: just Humankind and Other-kin and kind Humans making soup and soul together.

5. Red shift

The ecological, communistic, soulful relationality I am into is not a programme. It is not even a thing really. If you are offended, disagree, disapprove or don't like the terms or implications, you can call it something else, I don't really mind. It's there, however, because there still exists an idealistic, altruistic web of ideas and values, the deep potential and heart of which were betrayed in Soviet, genocidal authoritarianism. Moreover, the collapse of this awful, stunted, twisted, grandiose ideology opened the floodgates — in opposition — to the terrible, shiny capitalist box-making frenzy we now all live with.

This eco-socialist stuff still holds for me the idea of 're-enchantment': a magical idea that people (human and other-than) can live together in complex and aesthetically, socially and ecologically beautiful ways. We can all be comrades in this.

Ecology is at the heart of unpsychological imagining — the kind that emerged from Gregory Bateson's prescient idea of Ecology of Mind. As John Goodbun points out: "For Bateson, the fact that our

minds are ecologically extended allows him to propose a powerful thesis regarding the effects of environmental damage upon the human psyche, and a radical reformulation of environmental damage as a form of mental illness."¹⁴

This is 'unpsychology' at its purest. We are always playing with the implications of the complexity that keeps on unfolding and emerging in the world — as if by magic — even as the troubles we are facing keep on growing. We wrestle with cultural concepts of 'pathology' and 'healing' and 'psychotherapy' — all boxes made in Nora Bateson's epistemological box-making — but this is all *Fantastic*, as she says, and also invites us to be *Fascinated*, as we will see.

There's no turning back on the tragic mistakes and deliberate acts of destruction of previous iterations of imperialist, extractivist, communist and capitalist Humankind — but if we are able to gather up some smoky soul stuff, have contextual relationships with the world and solidarity with each other, then we might get somewhere.

This is a psychological agenda as much as a political one. Or it's a mycelial agenda, if we adopt the metaphor of Walt Whitman's poetic insight that we 'contain multitudes', and the contemporary corresponding science of the 'smalls'. Micro-animists and scientists like Siv Watkins, Sophie Strand, Ed Yong and others bring us new ideas, integrations and practices — whilst Bjork, as ever (along with other artists) constantly explores the zeitgeist, latterly in her 'mushroom' album, Fossora. Or it's a conversational agenda of stories and poetry or a slithering intertwining, like Bjork's email conversation with Timothy Morton.

Morton writes that "we're carving out new hope spaces, sadness, longing, hope, susceptibility, laughter, good ecological recipes," and Bjork replies: "I guess I have a habit of physically absorbing things which comes in handy when I sing, so I guess my only clumsy way to do this in a roundabout way, around theory... and that might become the sub-theme of our little quest: slippery-hand-reaches-even-slippery tail".¹⁵

It's not just about humans, this slippery-hand-

and-tail, ecological, communistic, relationality I am imagining and playing with, but also about how there are people in the world who are not human. We might argue that our solidarity with other humans depends on our solidarity with these other-than-humans. Morton tells us that our inclusion of them is a natural step: "We need to include nonhumans because it's fascinating. Because we can't help it. Because we know too much. We're not trying to be kind. It's that this is our kindness in the sense that this is how we are".

6. Nature

Nature is 'out there'. It is something to get back to and immerse ourselves in. We are 'wild things', we are often told, rewilding our minds and bodies, to be 'indigenous' once again.

As a metaphor it is ubiquitous; a reference point for everything from selling shampoo, to addressing climate change, healing minds and fixing bodies. It is a modern touchstone for beauty that has an instantly recognised aesthetic. It is the template for bio-mimicry, claimed as a sure-fire antidote to materialist technology. It is worshipped, workshopped and worried over. It is the grand web of life incarnate, and the simple touch of damp soil on our skin in the garden.

Nature is beauty and bounty. We take the bounty, and the Earth changes its patterns; melts the ice, makes species extinct, evolves others, shuffles life around in subtle ways that keep the web just about intact.

We admire nature's beauty, but this can be little more than the subjective justification for human activity. Despite the 'Anthropocene', humans are never really in control of nature. Nature, in this sense, only exists because humans name it. It's just another box.

We just have to name it, don't we, taking a position in relation to it? Humans *in* nature or Humans *against* nature or even just Humans *and* nature. Then it is something 'over there' that we act upon or move with or against. It becomes a material resource to utilise or a sacred pseudo-spiritual entity (Gaia)

to deify.

If humans are simply part of 'nature' (regardless of our attempts to act upon it), and 'nature' part of humans — that is to say, if humans are complex living systems living within the endless frames and context of other living systems — then nature is not something that can be named or set apart as something in opposition to, or in harmony with, humanity.

If we must use nature as a way of describing the ways of the Earth, then we must recognise the ways in which nature is used by humans to mean what we want it to mean. And these days, commerce and economics will never be far from the centre.

As Timothy Morton puts it: "One of the things that modern society has damaged has been thinking. Unfortunately, one of the damaged ideas is that of Nature itself. How do we transition from seeing what we call "Nature" as an object "over there"? And how do we avoid "new and improved" versions that end up doing much the same thing (embeddedness, flow and so on), just in a "cooler," more sophisticated way? When you realize that everything is interconnected, you can't hold on to a concept of a single, solid, present-at-hand thing "over there" called Nature."¹⁶

7. Sparrow fun

The sparrows in the barn live there. The crows in the trees live there. The mice in the corridors of our home live there. Why do we share our world with them? Because we are Humankind, says Morton, and they are people whose pleasure is meaningful to us: "For some reason, this part of your house is where sparrows, not you, get to have fun. But you get to have fun by appreciating the sparrow fun."¹⁷

The sparrows certainly have fun round our way, and the non-human people everywhere, living in cities and towns too (and not just in the faux-nature of much of our countryside), create intricate worlds and patterns, more significant than the anthropocentric meanings that humans give to the places we call City or Town or Hamlet or Countryside or Wilderness ...or Nature...

Round our way, the visible world is dominated by the rhythms and cycles of birds. These are the comrades of the new revolution. They are playful and conscious and intelligent in ways we humans are only beginning to understand (and only will do when we let go of the boxes). Our solidarity is dependent on our fascination, and on our recognition that we humans (who are not special) nevertheless have a role to play in this ecology of mycelial, microbial

and avian mind.

For ecological-left writer McKenzie Wark, there is a contradiction between the human tendency to “dream of a higher, universal idea” and the ecological reality: “There is only one hope, and it is in eternal life, but this endless life has nothing to do with the spirit or even the idea. It isn’t universal. It exists only in the sensation of shared existence. Living things are each other’s comrades, even in their struggles

NOTES

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17

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18

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PETER CAMERON

Mungo fabric

LAKE MUNGO/GOL GOL is part of the Willandra Lakes system of Australia, a fossil waterway that has not carried bodies of water for about 19,000 years. Crescent-shaped sand and clay lunettes surround this series of flat lake-beds in an undulating plain of semi-arid saltbush, spinifex and mallee land. For thousands of human generations, these water lands have been continually cared for by aboriginal communities and never ceded. Here is a highly charged timeless temenos. I have been returning here regularly over the years to paint, a way of attending the myriad rhythms this exponential land lives.



steeped inside the flow certainty slips swiftly downstream
before memory’s net catches it back
rapid rushing currents break surface airs mouthing aeons
rocks lumber muffled in the riverbed as further winds ply the smoke with water

from all time the river bends back along bringing its source through rock
structure fragments flow-rush drop into sediment
before moving on again perpetual ring of fire surrounds waters round
flooding inundations transform our surface
now kiss-tumble underwater through dark stars and bright suns
we are washed

sleep longtime dreaming selves in ever darker depths of pressure
growing warm forever the transform as we attach our past onto a future
memory in every interglacial grain — each wet drop leaves its indelible
mark bound to unbinding relations in tender-tangled streaming

slicing time human perception senses flat expanding undulations
sparse sharp pockets soft dry grass scrubby trees
clay runs seed memories the glue building community woods safely housing

billions — all being wind-blown water arriving brightly soiled
to refresh the fire-time lake-body
each airdrop sparkling marks skies flash
times coexist to place — we are not but are within moments fish
swimming mid-air resonating frequencies land
into air day night into here everyone listens in watching clouds witness
country at every point



children come to play ground looking way words draw doors together
down at the river
quiet sounds hide under light rushing
sharing silent unbound returning — if we remember

to slip our finely constructed exoskeleton of disadvantage
shaking with consequence
— in defining time becoming time's toy
did we forget the lore also creates our temporal laws
are we more swept than sweeping

some come sit long-time talking long-woven stories — but our others
for short-time tear at residue bruising skin cutting channels killing present
presence trapped numb inside poison cocoons — ravenous isolates have no
bonds to betray — but waters will not be reduced

Gentle does the land ripple with breath passing between spaces of time
— fabrics melt folding presence into necessity's proximity the common
intention a supplicant's identity.

Gentle he moves quietly in homeland embers present to old current-pooling
flows his presence was demanded late at the local office as landed lords and
ladies were wooed by thieves — he separates the players indulging their
betrayals — lords craving entertainment thieves prospering systems both who
understand the serious sport of blood — privilege finds a suitable comfort to
distract itself and capital laws serve to force impossible work set to subdue
ancestral webbing building instead dead monuments in hearts where we the
expelled no longer recognise beauty in reciprocity



how do we conspire to lose perception of flourishing life
raving control forgetting our place now lulled in this din of denial
death removed from our ancestors onto machinery
generations of a reciprocal human sold to serve collapsing systems mad
drunken despair clutching straw effigies in fearful panic
regulations that reward our obsequious criminal

and Pachamama is ill with fevers — while we struggle to care for the land we are

we know places of body spirit boundless natural mind breathing within and
outside us from before birth water generously offers infinitely intimate
resources for growth enabling rhythmic ways informing the life of
food-medicine whether we be wind mineral plant spirit together trees know

whether to accept deep bonds of unknowing in river rapids or build a fixed inertia
guarding alarm only to bump heavily downstream until light

she steps out from her luxury car onto hot dust for they have stopped to look at
the heritage display — everywhere are glossy boards with government stories of
success against harsh environmental odds — she surveys the old woolshed and
noticing an artist's work reflects a comment which so amuses her with its
cleverness that she continues her tour in chuckles before moving to graze
elsewhere — invaders take what they can leaving toxic sweets — metabolising
earth heals with time all is earth

children take a whole into parts building back correlates

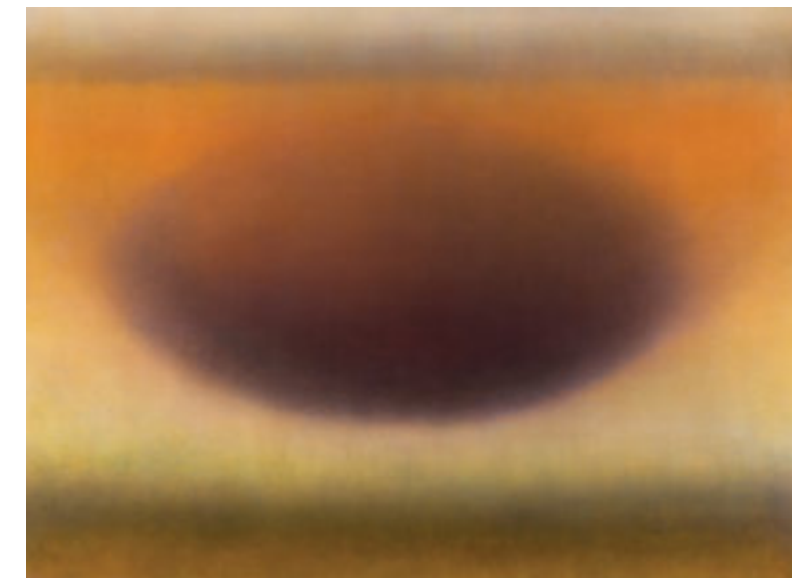


creating richly textured worlds sparkling stars
 their health reveals a central hearth
 to old growth formations remembering laid relations
 vast as ocean wide as sky intimate as drops closing together

if denying water we live a confluence of dying desiccation
 the monotheist's single purpose pattern
 where one pearl wrests favour in a string
 mother shell is forsaken
 human now haunted
 shade cowed hunter hunted

land bringing river-wash through all membranes where we are also trees
 traces in water's open mouth the conscious constan
 measuring absence in vital presence as sound dimensions
 rise into collapsing boundaries and gapped unconscious
 returns lyric mirrored secrets remembered in common-time

old tripod oracle requires crucial questions to open her resourcing
 to nurture our bedrock fault lines back into common flow
 complementing the passing for
 smoky death is of little use to the dead
 having their own moments stopped in dislocation
 transmissive land casts our future at her core



looking into pond diving
 into worlds glazing through surfaces
 knowing our confabulations can impossibly
 attend the intricacies of intimacies
 gracefully circling

ingesting gives to immersion our reflexive logic co-tendering
 abundant bodies of perception

ANDREW F. GILES

The science of happiness

‘That everyone was ill, there was no doubt. Although there was doubt, based upon blindness — not ocular disability, but a virtual experience of the inability to sense what was real. Everyone was, nonetheless, profoundly not well. The other side of this illness was an unknown quantity.’

— *The Aerial Book*, Vol. I, Ma Quinsley

I HAD BEEN WRITING THE THING FOR FIVE YEARS at that point. Later, I was blessed enough to be able to look back on the process from a very long way away — meaning a physically, and linear temporally, long distance — a place some say pertains to the other side of illness I have written about. However, at that point I had become uncontrollably louder, as if some heavy but invisible force had sat on my volume control, and my resonance and intensity was perceived as disease.

The topic was madness, which I argued was not only a story of trance (magic) or a problem for diagnosis (psychiatry), but also an embodied feeling across time that carried its own messages — messages, I believed, that may not need to be understood, but certainly to be listened to on their own terms. I used to tiptoe down to the thing at 5, 6am, and feel the edges of the pages. I was surrounded by stern colleagues — cloaked, stained with wine — who spent their days in structured ways

(structure was their religion), and had lived experience of neither magic nor psychiatry. Simply put, madness was the opposite of critical thinking. Thus, my loosening of thought from this framework was, in their words, unfit for purpose. This took place near the end of the Science of Happiness Era, so-called (by me, mostly, in *The Aerial Book*, Vol. I, of which more volumes forthcoming), before the officially-recorded beginning of the roiling apathy or outrage surrounding the Great Unravelling, a term coined by others.¹ The angry, rich types saw metaphor in madness, the madness of government and the rule of law, the madness of form, the madness of history — anything but the experience of madness itself. Who was I, anyway, to speak in or for the voices of madness? The thing took on a life of its own. It was flown into space and buried on a planet, a dead one, or one with life in its future — nobody knew. It hid in a tiny cottage in the borderlands, mas-

turbating and lighting fires in the dark. It was disseminated as popular text, but lived as a vagabond. It was accordingly labelled ‘testimonio del desastre, acta de defunción de la vida, poemas que relatan lo que queda tras la consunción general, la de los restos de un hombre, de la humanidad, del mundo’ [testimony of disaster, act of the demise of life, poems that relate what remains after general consumption, the remains of man, of humanity, the world] by a real and well-known Spanish academic.² That is to say, the topic of madness was still, essentially, an apocalyptic metaphor. This was five years before the beginning of the Great Unravelling, as I have said, and apocalypse was — still is, for many — a literary conceit, rather than, as many of us know, just another word for previous, and now forthcoming, societal collapses. I would, on other nights, creep to the record player and put on an old vinyl that had a huge scratch and listen to it repeat ad infinitum in its groove.

You must think I spent much of my time creeping and tip-toeing around. Certainly, I was sometimes furtive. Like many furtive creatures, I was also secretive and, at times, strangely behaved, repeating words in the night, even destructive. They tried hard to diagnose me, as they always did back then, when the Science of Happiness was at its glorious height. Like other humans before me, my story became structured by others using an investigative approach. Even now, out here — with a series of mirrors the only thing giving me visual access to the princely cities and their extroverted light shows — I admire my furtive companions deeply. Not because they are able to hide from predators, as I was unable to, but for their uncanny lack of desire to be seen and understood. And so it is, at this juncture, that I feel I may begin my story. You have an idea of my precise location, and the locations of my volumes of

work, some of which remain unwritten, but all of which seek out ‘a discursive method that responds more sensitively and empathically to the embodied knowledge of madness.’³ At the beginning, a small flock of wood pigeons painted their pattern, appearing and disappearing in the morning mist. The folk here, unlike the angry, rich, cowed super-organisms from elsewhere, were small, quiet warriors. Economic power structures, or using emotional force as weapons of control, were not their focus. One of the hunting party looked up at the dancing pigeons, tracing their journey through the early fog, wondering at the mountain’s mantle. Fifteen of them, they whispered. One of them released a stone from their sling and answered: fourteen. The fat bird fell to the ground. Up at the cabin, the mastiff roared. The little dog, out with the hunting party, quickly retrieved the pigeon and brought it to the feet of the slingshot. I was up at the cabin watching, writing down words on paper with a plume pen one of the warriors had foraged and carved. Later that day I would scald and pluck the pigeon and cook its breast lightly on both sides in nut oil. But I should not get ahead of myself. It is important to say, at this point, that my story is as short as this midwinter day, but is about a fundamental circular shift ‘not to go back to nature, but to go forward to nature’.⁴ After the Science of Happiness era began to grind to a halt — when it seemed as if the whole population only used the greeting “How are you?” or the question “Are you happy?”, and indeed these conversation starters had been enshrined in law as semi-permanent, certainly as non-aggressions — particular veils were lifted vis-à-vis land ownership. Most furtive animals disappeared — remember, it’s the disconnect between seen and unseen that first thrilled me about such behaviour. Miniature invisible systems only become visible if their furtive inhabitants are some-

times sighted, but even then, they are rarely understood, or their existence is structured, investigated, and diagnosed within the understanding of super-organisms. With this far from my mind I entered a many-fronded world, and the place, pulsating with interconnected life forms, greeted me with sounds that no statute either before or after the Science of Happiness could begin to describe, let alone regulate.

This Science dealt very regularly with metaphor. It was a basic tenet that when the sun came out, what was really happening was an unburdening of the super-organism into its own precious and perfectly readable light. The image of the sun became for many ‘the symbol of civilisation and right living,’ but, of course, such a shining orb blinded many to the sun itself, which was scorching the atmosphere, the land, and its blighted peoples.⁵ Look to the sun, the Scientists would say, without perhaps considering that such directions were, literally, pointing out the source of the story’s ending. But it is hard to stop thinking in metaphor when all the material that metaphors are made from — indeed, the very reason for the material itself being embroidered into consciousness — were clothes one would not dream of stripping off. Yet when I stepped into the purple-girded sky-land of the mountain pasture, I was factually naked, while the metaphors that I had brought with me became — very quickly — visibly enmeshed and magnificent within new viral alliances. I found myself at the top of the field weeping uncontrollably, a huge wave of grief — not a wave; a cracking seed-pod, or an underground karst flood, or perhaps the underwater effects of an enormous tsunami — which were more to do with echo and implosion than surge and destruction — hit me. You are crying then, said one of the warrior folks; there are some like this that run and hum and run and perform a

trembling prequel. I asked, a trembling prequel? My voice was gurgling like the muffled fissures of the sea bed. Yes, the time before the future which you can never know — the movement to the unknowable. Your tears are a little part of that — a place, and a time, where nobody can tell you that you are feeling the wrong thing. I asked, a better time and place? No, they replied, and you can only feel it now. *Feel it*. The songs of the cherry tree and the apple trees, the walnut and the ash, the oak, and the chestnut, sung of the strange desire to heal, not where healing went from broken to whole — they who know of the trunk scars, broken branches and sap wounds over time which struck into them strange shapes of imagination — but its beautiful circle. The mastiff woofed from the high cabin: get yourself together, human, this dusk brings dark and danger with it. Come in behind the wall.

Later, that same day, I sat down to write about what hope looked like. After the end of the era of Happiness, far-retreated from the spiral towers and dark hospitals of the urban warrens, and removed from the sense that ‘nada de mi *experiencia* te interesa: quieres saber tan solo esa ficción que se creó por intermedio de otro’ [nothing of my experience interests you: (because) you only want to know of that fiction created through the mediation of others], my plume pen moved jerkily — showing some kind of inner/in-built resistance — across the rough paper.⁶ I’m not sure I still mean that last bit about ‘experience’, written as it was in a different time and place — nonetheless, it remains pertinent as a backdrop to those mediated metaphors of illness and especially madness, that I brought with me to the mountains and which now abide comfortably in the alpine pastures, grazing and feeding the wolves. Hope is less penetrable to me now. Firstly, I crawled into a narrative of end times, which

seemed to best nourish the metaphors who had come to pasture nearby. I was unnaturally conditioned to believe that something better would surely come, for *all will be healed* (you get the general tone). My feelings, essentially, would be cured. Or so I had been led to believe by Happiness propaganda. But my feelings themselves were not apocalyptic, despite the threats from outer space and the recent appearance of triplet black holes on the tip of the equator. They were multitude. I came to the mouth of the underground cave through which the narrative had led me, and breathed. From a mouth, which is where words begin, to the air, where they end — that is a way of thinking about it, at least. But in my breath appear all manner of loosening points, magical gaps, and loops forward. Up here, metaphors of ends and beginnings hang off cliffs. Hope is neither of these things. Being furtive, hope creeps into the cycle of this midwinter day. At times it disappears, unseen, unrecorded. Hope emerges from the leaf mulch under the base of the oak tree as I cut into bramble towers with a mechanical blade. It lines the borders of that same field, whose fence posts dangle off old, rusty barbed wire, down the scree paths made by roe deer, badger, boar, and bear. Hope is only a tiny thing. The warrior folk call it something else, or rather, they have a word quite like it, which translates literally as *time circle* — I tried *cycle* but they say to me this has too much feel of process, or action, whereas they are saying that the day is literally shaped as a circle; indeed, their language has a word for the moment when the moon eats the sun, or vice versa. I forget it now. It has slipped from my grasp. Back then, when my words fell out of my mouth in a torrent, considered too loud, I would repeat this word over and again, which the real and well-known Spanish academic has suggested ‘puede o debe verse como una compulsión o como efecto de “el ritual del neurótico

obsesivo”, [can or should be seen as the compulsion or the effect of the “the ritual of the obsessive neurotic”].⁷ In distant disagreement, a different, hopeful thinker understood obsession as ‘the most durable form of intellectual capital’, and my obsessive replication of this mystical word was also a valuable method of prising myself out of common sense intellectual routines, which she called the ‘art of *loosing*.’⁸ In the words of another hopeful thinker, *pagan poetry*.⁹ But these are only words. The hope lies in putting them into practice many times as we go forward to nature, as ‘time continues its ecstatic compulsion.’¹⁰

The sun is about to collide with the mountain range. Sun-down is not happiness, or better. I know that when the circle turns it will suddenly be extremely cold. I have a barn full of wood from my fields that I have arranged in ever decreasing piles, log to twig. I know very well each member of the pile, having processed each one myself. My right hand has a small welt in the palm where I have been snapping taut twigs of hazel and laurel. Soon it will be time to walk down into the garden and shut up the chickens for the night. The mastiff will bark at the sun as it dips. The little dog will sniff for rats. I will leave a tap dripping in the outhouse. I will leave a tap dripping in the outhouse. I will leave a tap dripping in the outhouse. Such are the beautiful movements of the day, here at the end of my writing, as I walk beside my own and others’ stigmatised behaviours and emotions. What, after all, is madness in the Great Unravelling? I would not live again in a different way, but, being unfit, I have learnt to survive. This is simply what death is — a mutual agreement with the land. I might call madness a narrative where the land is unfit for any purpose other than consumption, yet who am I to throw metaphors around? We must tread carefully — this is the third planet

we have exhausted in this way, or so the warrior folk tell me. I call out to the warrior who foraged and carved my plume pen. I am grateful. He hardly notices, focused as he is on the way his feet are growing roots into the

ground, and how the speaking soil of this new land sends blips and vocals up the back of his calves and into his buttocks, up his spine and into the top of his face, to his eyes which are unseen, cautious in the alien evening mist.

NOTES

1

I understand an early use of this term was by the eponymous 1990s post-punk band. Nonetheless, I borrow it from an event organised by the Post-Carbon Institute in 2020 to denote the geopolitical/emotional/social effects of climate emergency. It is also used in right-wing press to describe 2020s economic collapse, echoing Paul Krugman's use of the term in the title of his essay collection (2003) on the Bush administration.

2

Túa Blesa, «La destruction fut ma Béatrice», in Leopoldo María Panero, *Poesía Completa (2000–2010)* (Madrid: Visor, 2012), p. 27.

3

Ma Quinsley, 'Network and Poetics' in *The Aerial Book, Vol. II* (unpublished).

4

Bjork, 'Homogenic' in *Sonic Symbolism* (Mailchimp)

5

Richard Cohen, *Chasing the Sun* (London: Simon & Schuster), p. 466.

6

Leopoldo María Panero, 'Psicoanálisis y socioanálisis', in Fernando Antón (ed), *Prosas Encontradas* (Madrid: Visor, 2014), p. 77.

7

Tua Blesa, in Leopoldo María Panero - *Poesía Completa (2000-2010)* (Madrid: Visor, 2012), p. 8.

8

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy and Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), pp. 2-3.

9

Bjork, 'Pagan Poetry' on *Vespertine* (One Little Indian Records, 2001).

10

Ma Quinsley, 'Ludwig Koch on the set of Orlando (tapes I-V) in *The Aerial Book, Vol. III* (unpublished).

PHOTO: SOPHIE MCKEAND



SOPHIE MCKEAND

Nain

Excerpt from *Rematriation*, the final novel in *The MthR Trilogy*

WHEN MY NAIN WAS YOUNG, the first international nuclear power incident rocked the world at a then little-known place in Russia called Chernobyl. I remember her explaining to a wide-eyed and incredulous younger me that nobody could comprehend the severity of that day's events. At the time only a few people understood the widespread devastation radioisotopes caused, and they kept this knowledge tight to themselves, locked away in secret cupboards and boardrooms, even though the nuclear fallout mutated and damaged the DNA of everything within a vast radius.

The suffering of so many, and the far-reaching consequences of the radiation, were unimaginable as great storm clouds

thundered 1,500 miles from the former Soviet Union to rain frightening quantities of radioactive caesium and iodine down onto the Welsh sheep strewn across our lush green hills like confetti. A blanket ban on the sale of all farm animals was immediate, increasing emotional and financial pressure on the people of Cymru, already alarmed at the possible effects this would have on the women expecting children: one of who was my nain, pregnant with mam.

I spent endless summers with nain in her tiny, sparsely furnished, powder blue, two-up-two-down terrace in Cemaes Bay on Ynys Môn. But the season that sang to my heart was winter when the fair-weather visitors had migrated back to their cities or

inland residences, away from the intrusive cold and agile winds that would tear elderly trees from sodden earth or pilfer slates from the roofs of unoccupied second homes. Then, the great grey mists would descend like murmurations of starlings, swallowing the local fishing boats and houses.

Come Rhiannon! Amser nofio — time to swim, she would shout and we swam regardless of the weather: bobbing like seals in opaque waters, appearing then vanishing in the chill early-morning fog. Whatever her mood, nain folded curves into her navy swimming costume (never a wetsuit) and headed out, bundling me, at the protestations of mam who would swear I would catch my death, down to the low wall where Cloch Sant Padrig expounded a series of glorious musical scriptures with each rising tide — this bell was later swallowed permanently by the waters. Swimming costume on, I would cast mustard and navy woollen shawl to the wind and hurl goose-bumped flesh along fudge-firm sand into the still, or turbulent, water as oystercatchers littered the sky with stanzas of fuzzy, high squeaks, their black and white v-formations skimming the slate-grey surface as they called to the sea-gods and sailors.

The tale of Wylfa B nuclear power plant on Ynys Môn was just one of the stories that populated our vast, semi-imaginary world. Nain would whisper conspiratorially of clever men who dreamed of powering the earth's future with the stolen spirit of the sun. Her intense face clouded around wild eyes as thin lips incanted poems of Taliesin, the mythical shapeshifting Cymreig bard. The nut-brown fingers of her squat, strong hands would twitch or burst open when recounting epic tales of Blodeuwedd, the woman who plotted to kill the husband who had created her from flowers. Her lack of gratitude for a life she never asked for delighted us both.

I was never entirely sure what was real or myth. All of it was true as far as nain was concerned, and as we marched the narrow streets of Cemaes, she would declaim Cymreig poems composed by the bards of the island who, she declared triumphantly, fought the Romans in a last stand over 2,000 years ago. Her froth of steel grey hair framed eyes the shifting colour of the Irish Sea that waltzed as we pegged washing to the line on bright days when the sky matched the deep blue glazed pots of the herb garden in her narrow, high-walled backyard. As she banged a slim, pale rowan staff (taller than herself) onto the smooth, slate floor of the tiny stove-warmed kitchen, her declamations became horses galloping out across the Irish Sea and I devoutly rode every one home.

Growing up, I continued to swim with nain in the bay as much as possible, cavorting through winter waves until the colour was drained from my equally thin lips, at which point she would haul us out of the water and briskly rub at my sun-browned flesh with the same, now threadbare, woollen blanket. She would admire the muscle-tone building in my previously slender arms and I glowed warm at this praise, delighting in the confidence of this newfound athletic form shaped by our time together. We both knew I could at this point swim faster than nain, but I kept time just behind her, to the right, as we coursed through the water.

By the time I was 11, the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster in Japan, and then a series of other catastrophes across France swallowed the world's ability to worry about nuclear fallout. Twenty years after the events, these reactors continued to vomit so much radiation into the land, ocean and sky that people forgot to care. How can we stop the unstoppable? they would ask. Surely, it'll be okay, they twittered, nodding overloaded heads distractedly, then returning to increasingly

fraught and busy lives, as scientists and politicians quietly wrung their expert hands away from the glare of the TV cameras.

Then the fight to halt the construction of Wylfa B resumed, with nain at the helm; only this time, fewer protestors stood with her in solidarity. The world's most expansive Intelligent operating system, MthR was launched to great fanfare across Europe demanding more energy for its vast, power-hungry data centres. This new myth of progress gobbled up the minds of people everywhere as our collective hopes and dreams poured into crafting this epic poem of our future-selves. I remember nain's steely, wet curls feeding saltwater down the chestnut ravines of her increasingly wrinkled forehead. Rivulets would run along the deep crow's feet of her eyes as we dried off after swimming. She would rub at the skin on her thighs and arms so vigorously I thought they would bleed. It was as if she were trying to slough off this unwelcome invasion like a snake sheds a skin. The shock of learning the Wylfa B development would proceed vibrated throughout nain's body like an earthquake, and the epicentre was her heart.

What is the legacy for the children? And their children's children? she would ask. I had no answer.

As I reached my early teens it occurred to me that mam never swam with us, never joined our marches around the town, staffs in hand. Makeshift druid's hoods flapping in the razor-sharp wind, nain and I would form our odd processions around the village together, but mam never joined us on these jaunts, never sat rapt before the merry log fire as nain wove new tales of magic and mischief from the sea and landscape into my heart.

In fact, they barely spoke.

I never learned why.

Later, I supposed the treachery of mam

leaving Ynys Môn was too much for nain who was of this very specific mound of land and had been all her life: a prophet of the rock and wave in ways that mam could never understand. Perhaps nain's uncompromising position shaped mam to become the opposite: a city lover, deeply involved in her bitcoin career — in nain's eyes another illegitimate, power and energy hungry industry.

Wylfa B felt like a death sentence to nain, even as it opened up new possibilities for mam, and I became their only link. Still, nain refused to move to mainland Cymru and as the years stuttered by, the embryonic Wylfa B nuclear power plant bloated on the horizon of nain's consciousness like an apocalypse. Nain became increasingly obsessed with monitoring the endless disputes and complications that dogged construction, folding each new seed of knowledge into her heart in the same way she already employed to intimately catalogue every tide, current, bird, and rock; but this new arrival was not birthed of the land, and so it squatted like a putrefying sore in nain's mind, gnawing away at imagination and reason.

Every holiday season, mam continued to ferry me in our new amphib from Caer along the remains of the A55 to the island, even as sea levels were rising and weather patterns became increasingly unpredictable, making the Menai suspension bridge more and more difficult to cross. Beneath it, the usually placid water raged and boiled with occasional freak storms engulfing the bridge entirely, swallowing whole the protestations of vehicles and islanders.

The erratic weather continued to oscillate so wildly that midsummer snowdumps became as common as 25°C heat at the winter solstice and this, paired with the need for constant bridge repairs, meant that each new journey to see nain became increasingly fraught.

At this same time, MthR and the team at Mont Blanc, developed solar, wind and hydropower to feed burgeoning energy demands; a real coup in the quest for renewable energy that rendered Wylfa B obsolete almost on its day of opening by a minor member of a royal family increasingly ambivalent about making public appearances.

What closed Wylfa B not long after it opened shouldn't have been a surprise. Civil unrest that had burgeoned across Europe for over a decade swallowed any grandiose ambition from increasingly egomaniacal politicians whose desperate bids to recapture the population's dimmed imagination ultimately failed. The overlords of emerging fiefdoms were more concerned with fighting their foreign neighbours.

When the first typhoons hit, destabilising the entire Wylfa B structure, it was nobody's job to reply to the warning alarms. Nobody had bid for the scant decommissioning contract. Nobody knew how to deal with the potential nuclear fallout. FranTech, the French firm who originally won the maintenance tender went bankrupt owing billions of Credits and no other company could be persuaded to mitigate the fallout.

The cooperatives that grew from these turbulent years like beautiful trees from the ashes of war, had neither the capacity nor desire to maintain something as potentially harmful and durable as a nuclear power plant, choosing instead to focus on rebuilding themselves through a deeper connection with either the earth, or technology, sometimes both, depending upon their convictions. Eventually, to escape the invisible poison spewing out into the world from Wylfa B and the rising tides, these communities had no choice but to migrate from Ynys Môn into the Snowdon range, where they were joined by refugees fleeing wars and floods across England, and as more people joined their throng

the British Isles became The Isle of Cymru, in the eyes of most people at least.

The stoicism of the scant few who chose to remain on Ynys Môn, one of whom was nain, created international headlines, then bewilderment, then condemnation, and eventually death, as Wylfa B leaked its secrets out into the Irish Sea.

Nain simply moved into the upstairs of her constantly flooding house and continued to swim. I noticed more of her wild hair and eyebrows disappearing with each new visit. Even her eyelashes were eventually blown to the wind like dandelion seeds. It was as if she were being erased, one feature at a time.

She lost so much weight her thick-set arms that used to fold me into safety, dissolved into long flaps of skin swinging from still solid humerus bones. The intense family arguments eventually softened to pleas, then hardened to silence as nain became as opaque as the sea, saying she couldn't cope with the gaping hole, the hiraeth, that would be carved out of her heart if she left.

Finally, mam said we could no longer visit, that Cemaes Bay was not safe. She couldn't risk the family for such a fool's errand. Said that if the crazy old woman of the sea chose death then that was her right, but she was not taking the rest of us down with her. Not long after this the army set up roadblocks manned by prototype E-SecRs. Nobody went in, or out. When an unexpected typhoon disconnected the power, no search party was launched for nain, or anybody else.

I imagine nain gliding out to sea on a line of Cymraeg poetry. Choosing her final moments with dignity, gifting her heart to the water she loved. I know she swam into her mamiath of myth and metaphor with ease and grace, each stroke of her arms embracing the tumultuous waters, her feet rippling stanzas out as offerings to be swallowed by the poem of the Irish Sea. ∞

SOPHIE MCKEAND

The MthR Trilogy performance for Unpsychology Magazine

With thanks to Unpsychology's Patrick Carpenter for his improvisation and recording.

I WRITE: *I want the very act of creation to haul me so far outside my comfort zone I'm left gasping at the sheer audacity of it all. I want the writing of books and creation of performances to be alchemical, metamorphic processes wherein I could not possibly remain the same person who began such wild & reckless tasks.*

Writing The MthR Trilogy changed me. Channeling every atom of creativity I could generate into one epic piece of work with no funding or publishing contract, and only the self-determined deadlines of publishing one novel each year on International Day of Anarchy (1st May) for three years (2021/22/23) developed within my heart a confidence I've never previously experienced. To paraphrase Brené Brown, I can now walk into any room and know I belong there wholly as myself.

After a five-year break from performing, I felt this new-found understanding evolve my entire creative output and began devising The MthR Trilogy performances in order to allow the work to sprawl out across multiple dimensions.

In 2017 I sold/gifted 95% of my belongings and now live full-time in a self-converted Sprinter van with my partner & two rescue hounds. This sloughing off of 'stuff', this minimising of distractions, this move from a settled life to a more transient, migratory one; this deep need to (re)connect with the wild land & Self, is also an artistic endeavour. Life is art. Art is life. All these moments flow into & from me and I am learning to step with bright abandon into my Self while creating from this ecstatic state of being.



Listen to or
watch Sophie's
full improvised
performance:

Audio



tinyurl.com/4yywbnx9

Substack + video



tinyurl.com/45h6waty

What matters is getting the entire life right first, then the art cannot be wrong. Before stepping into the flow of these unscripted, emotionally demanding, and physically exhausting improvised performances I've spent years healing ancestral wounds, doing the shadow work; learned to nourish body, let go of addictions & distractions; I write & redraft, create & tear down, reconfigure & grow. I will remain a work in progress until I die.

For a number of years, and throughout our time travelling across Europe, I've been collecting field recordings. This practice originally grew from a calling to listen intently to the land, and it was then I discovered the deep listening techniques of Pauline Oliveros. Originally intended to encourage musicians in orchestras to fully hear each other, I found much of her work makes sense in relation to my work as an experimental eco-poet. As I tuned more acutely into each new landscape, I wanted to capture what I was hearing, and it was then a natural progression to thread these recordings throughout live performances as I searched for (and learned how to use) the technology to edit and/or manipulate these sounds.

These new performances demanded I nurture select excerpts from the trilogy as seedlings in the memory: hours spent each day over two months learning words by heart & rote so that they now exist as trees in the mind, ready to tumble leaves out

of the mouth at an intuitive sound-prompt. Then there's the years spent researching & writing the novels themselves: the books are the roots, sap & gloriously green canopy of each live show.

Improvisation is mind-bogglingly difficult for me. I have a number of strong autistic tendencies which include preferring scripted interactions & performances. I struggle with ad-hoc conversations, even more so if on stage, and so I force myself into the white-hot fire of change in an attempt to raze my old self to the ground: allow the flames of non-religious speaking in tongues to lick from my mouth, spark wildfires with unknown musicians; an impromptu blaze of sound & ideas.

As the novels range across time, landscapes, & languages, so do the performances. I weave the stunning Bengali vocals of Moushumi Bhowmik with slate smashed at Llanberis quarry, or glitch St Mark's Venetian bells around the words of Wales' most famous bard, Taliesin.

With no prior rehearsals, on the day of the event, I & the musician(s) undertake deep listening/connection exercises inspired by Pauline Oliveros' work, as a way to release our singular expressions, instead echoing ourselves towards a whole-body symphony of the sounds of each other. Oliveros' quite beautiful idea is that, as we walk barefoot together, we should listen so intently even the soles of our feet become ears.

I immerse in the Japanese concepts of wabi-sabi – life is transient & imperfect and consequently so is the art that springs from it, and in a culture obsessed with perfection I hold tight to the kintsugi philosophy of embracing flaws.

I read Brian Eno's words: Records made 'at one sitting' sound so fresh now — because the rate of discovery and emotional tempo match those of the listener. What's infuriating, though, is how fragile those fabrics are. I've noticed that, trying to work on improvisations that have 'something', they very quickly dissolve into nothing the more attention they get.

And think of Herbie Hancock speaking of playing with Miles Davies: I played the wrong chord... Miles didn't hear it is as a mistake, he heard it as some-

thing that happened... the only way we can grow is to experience situations as they are...

Writing and reflecting upon this, I've reached the conclusion that experiencing such an event live creates a more profound shift in the viewer/listener, which, in hindsight, makes this recording a somewhat unique anomaly. The final performances will remain imperfectly perfect. They'll grow & evolve over time as I do. No two will be the same as The MthR Trilogy shows seek to embody these states of acceptance, flux, & flow.

Gazing out across my life from this vantage-point of understanding, I know when I attain moments of exquisite balance because the writing & performances reflect this. Ultimately what matters is that each confluence reconfigures me, heart & soul. ∞

NOTES

- 1 Samples taken from Moushumi Bhowmik's album *Songs from 26H*.
- 2 Translation from medieval Welsh into English by Professor Marged Haycock.
- 3 Pauline Oliveros, *Deep Listening*.
- 4 *Japonisme*, Erin Niimi Longhurst.
- 5 Brian Eno's Diary, *A Year with Swollen Appendices*.



Photos by Steve Thorp





VEDANT SRINIVAS

A life

I PLACED THE NEWSPAPER under the toilet seat and made a small pit in the middle. Hovering just above it, I clenched and unclenched my sphincter muscles until a small piece came out and fell against the paper. Using the plastic spoon, I scooped up tiny amounts from both ends and transferred them to the sterile container. Finally, I carved out a layer from the top and added it to the specimen. I threw the used paper in the bin and wrapped the sample in a new sheet of paper. While washing my hands, I looked up in the mirror. It had tiny perforations in the centre, such that I caught a warped image of myself reflected back — my face strangely contorted from the middle.

Outside, slumped into a metallic chair in the waiting room, my gaze drifted in an unbroken flow: the corridors were gleaming white in all directions, with tiny green arrows pasted on the marble floor. The nondescript walls, slick and smooth, were punctuated at regular intervals by overarching doors with large metal knobs. A lone garbage container was propped up on the left side, its blue cover fluttering in the draught. In the far right corner, I spotted an old woman laid out on two chairs. Her chest heaved up and down and her right hand was twitching in an uncontrollable spasm. Despite the discomfort, the old woman was desperately trying to pat her unkempt hair down, which fell onto her face from both sides. A medical term sprang to my mind—

fasciculation.

Other than the woman, everyone else I encountered seemed to be in the prime of health. Their skin glowed with an unnatural vitality as they rushed about, carrying files of various sizes. At that moment, I remember feeling amazed at what it took to remain healthy.

‘Number 32,’ the voice rang out loud and clear. I followed the voice to one of the doors and was asked to come inside. It was a tiny room, with a black recliner placed in the centre facing away from the door. The man had his back to me and was busy clicking away on a laptop. I placed the sample on the table and sat down on the chair. The door opened and closed. I heard faint footsteps falter towards the table.

‘Weight and height?’

‘Any family history of illnesses that we should know of?’

‘Are you on any medication?’

‘Tell us about your habits. Do you smoke?’

‘Do you drink? How often?’

‘Do you sleep well? How much water do you drink in a day?’

‘Veg or non-veg? Do you follow any diets?’

‘How active is your sexual life?’

‘Headache? Body pain? General malaise?’

The questions volleyed through the room. I answered them diligently. At the same time, while

this to-and-fro was going on, a pair of hands slipped a rubber cuff onto my arm and fastened it tightly. I felt my muscles respond to the pull. One hand placed the stethoscope disc on the inside of my elbow while the other slowly started squeezing the rubber bulb. With each subsequent squeeze, the cuff inflated and tightened its grip on the arm. My pulse came alive; I inwardly heard blood gushing all through my body. There was a resounding thud, as if marking the epicenter where its innermost essence lay. Then there was a whooshing sound and the cuff deflated like a balloon. The reading was conveyed to the man at the table.

Immediately, the cuff was slipped off and replaced by a black tourniquet. Again, I felt my bulging muscles respond to the pressure. The nurse, a young woman with a freckled face, placed an alcohol pad on the inside of my elbow and gently started cleaning the area in an outward spiral. The sharp wetness clung to my skin, longer than it should have. She tapped my arm lightly to identify a vein. I remember wondering which one would be chosen: the median cubital or the basilic vein? With a quick thrust, she entered the vein in one smooth motion and inserted the vacutainer tube into the hub. Blood gushed out into the container. It flowed effortlessly, with the insouciance of sand, a deep bubbling red. I felt the needle move inside my vein. The redness was so vivid that I was suddenly confronted with the vastness of my body.

Once the tube was full, she pulled it out, placed it on a holder, and inserted a new one into the hub. Blood again caressed its white edges and spurted the container red. Soon, the tube was removed and another one inserted. This went on for a few minutes. In the meantime, tops of varying colours - red, blue, green, lavender - had been used to screw the tubes shut. Simultaneously, the nurse ticked off items from a piece of paper. It all happened at great speed and with blinding efficiency, as if not one but multiple pairs of hands were at work. Finally, the needle was removed and a gauze pad pressed over the puncture site. She gave each of the tubes a good shake, inverting them 5 to 6 times until they were tinged red from

top to bottom. I felt a tingling sensation linger on the surface of my skin.

‘She will escort you to the next room,’ the man said without looking up.

I followed the woman out into the corridor. We turned left, then right, up a flight of stairs, then left and straight. Walking behind her, I noticed that she walked with a slight limp. Her right leg dragged behind by one third of a second. Her trimmed hair, falling over the nape like a waterfall, bobbed up and down as she paced ahead. Suddenly, a strange, sweet sort of pain stabbed at my chest. It came and rolled through me like waves. The air hung thick in the fluorescent light, and I felt, without quite being able to justify my claim, that this place held great potential for violence. The hair on my back, already glistening with sweat, stood up. Gradually, I calmed down and became accustomed to the feel of the place.

The sonography room had already been set up. I removed my t-shirt and lay down on the bed. Jagged leaves of a snake plant rose up on one side of the room, the only presence of green in an otherwise austere atmosphere. The radiologist, a lively young man in his thirties, grabbed hold of the gel bottle and squirted some of it onto my abdomen. With a swirling motion, he moved the transducer back and forth over the region. Once again, I felt a tingling wetness cling to my skin. The hair near the belly button, now moist and clammy, huddled together in mounds. The video monitor, propped up on one side of the bed, slowly came alive. Black blotches were punctuated by streaks of white, with occasional holes in between the structures. As he moved the probe, the image also changed shape, such that it appeared that the amorphous mass of blood and tissue was throbbing with sentience. Gradually, the image began to take shape.

With eyes glued to the screen, the young man began to study the organs. He moved from the liver to the kidney, then towards the stomach region, followed by the spleen. He would spend two to five minutes on each organ, probing it from various sides to get an image from every angle. Occasionally, he used his other hand to stretch the skin, so that the machine

could get a clearer image. Both his hands would then acquire a slight quivering motion, and I would feel his fingers tremble against my body. Once the front region was done, he asked me to turn to the side. I obliged and felt the gel slide down from the chest area to the arch of my waist. Pushing the probe further in, he moved from the right kidney to the liver, then downwards to the gallbladder, followed by a detour to the pancreas. Finally, satisfied with the quality of the images, he powered off the machine and handed me some tissue to wipe off the gel. Despite my best efforts, it clung steadfastly to the abdominal hair, like glossy traces of semen.

I was then asked to walk to the end of the corridor, where the pulmonary test would be conducted. As I was entering the room on the far right, there was a flurry of activity near the elevator. Two male nurses rushed out dragging a stretcher, followed by a haggard group of people, presumably family members. The middle-aged man’s body had a crumpled look, as if the insides had corroded beyond recognition. The nurses wheeled him into a room with double doors, which swung in and out for some time before coming to a stop. Immediately, the red light above it turned on. I turned my face away and walked in.

‘Patient 32?’

‘Yes,’ I replied.

I sat down and rested my hands on the fluffy armrest. The technician began calibrating the spirometer. Once it was ready, he placed a clip on my nose to keep the nostrils shut. Next, he attached a small mouthpiece to one end of the winding tube to ensure that no air leaked out. I inserted the tip of the mouthpiece into my mouth. I clamped down on it with my lips, creating a tight seal. A sterile taste of newly manufactured plastic seeped in. I took a couple of normal breaths. Then, following his instructions, I took a deep breath, felt the air whoosh down my throat and fill my lungs, held it in for a few seconds, and finally let it go with a powerful expiration. The red graph on the monitor jumped up, creating a zig-zag line. The technician asked me to do it again, this time with more consistency and force. Once again, I breathed in, long and hard. I felt my chest expand until it was

almost ready to burst. Then I breathed out into the tube with a loud ejaculatory sound, and felt all the oxygen emptying out of my lungs. The graph once again jumped up, formed an erratic line, and came crashing down. The technician studied the graph. We did it again and again until the graph finally settled above the halfway mark.

The technician then asked me to blow out as fast as I could. I proceeded as told. In out in out in out... The lack of oxygen made me feel dizzy. I clutched the armrest tightly for support. A dry metallic taste had settled in my mouth, and my lungs felt as if they were collapsing inwards. Soon I lost track of time. The graph kept moving up and down, in tune with my rattled breathing. By the time we finished, I was feeling quite light-headed and found it difficult to even walk straight.

It was in the MRI room that *deja-vus* abounded. The machine lay there with a kind of poise that humans wholly lacked. There was an intensity in the air, an irrepressible vitality that I hadn’t experienced in any of the other rooms. Blue light was falling on the circular structure from above, giving it an unearthly sheen. The opening in the centre too had white light emanating from within. All of a sudden, a hazy image of my late grandmother assuaged me, a person to whom invisible things had often revealed themselves.

I changed into the green gown. On the other side of the glass, I could see the technician hovering over his screens. He relayed instructions over the microphone and tapped some buttons. There was a harsh grating sound, as if the machine was opening itself up. I lay down on the patient table, closed my eyes and took a deep breath. A pair of hands adjusted my torso until it was in the required position. The door closed and there was another drawn-out beep. With a gentle jerk, the table started moving towards the opening of the tube. I remembered reading somewhere that magnetic waves realigned water molecules to get the 3D image. The comparison drawn had been quite striking - radio waves cleave into the body, just like slices in a loaf of bread.

In a matter of seconds, I had entered the machine.

The cold blast of the AC was now replaced by a lulling warmth. There was a ticking sound and a deafening whirr, as if an entire factory was being powered up. The white band in the centre enclosing my chest region slowly lit up. Only my legs from the knee down were jutting out of the machine. The band started gaining speed; the whirring noise grew louder. Eventually, it gained such momentum that I could no longer see the band, just its blazing movement and the shards of light that it occasionally threw at my face. It went round and round, like light being sucked into a black hole. I strained hard to think of something grand, but instead was taken back in time to my childhood. It wasn't a memory of my own choosing; rather it seemed as if the white band had chosen it for me. I closed my eyes and a deep warm silence suddenly took over.

Later, sitting in front of the Doctor, I realized that I still had goosebumps on my arms. His glowing face was settled into a frown as he leafed through the reports. He had a mole on the left side almost half the size of his eye. Occasionally a smile would pull up the ends of his mustache and he would nod with a grunt.

He reached the end of the file and smacked it shut with a flourish of the hand.

'So... what seems to be the problem?'

I explained the problem as best as I could. There was a lot to explain and I took my time with it. The Doctor listened patiently. He asked some more questions to which I promptly gave answers. He then glanced at his watch, jerked upright on his chair, shook my hand, and walked away on one of his hourly rounds. A nurse collected my files, along with all my bills, and put them in a folder. It was time to go. We walked to the lift and pressed the down button. That was when I noticed that we were on the fourth floor. We went down to the ground floor, where the nurse handed me the folder and took my leave. I followed the exit signs to a backdoor that opened straight onto the main road. There was a low murmur of traffic noise from outside.

Despite the stifling uncertainty, I felt pleased to have gone and come back. A shudder of relief washed over me. Outside, it was a sweltering Monday afternoon, and the sun was relentless in its attack. ∞





CASSIE FIELDING

Poems

Crimson ball

A glass ball of crimson sits in the centre
At measured arms of stomach,
Screaming silence of want
From freeze-fettered flame.

It feeds as an egg folded in on itself
And births as rust seasoning mellow
The tartness of fresh blood.
It reflects kaleidoscopic yards of silk

Into moon ripe eyes of the electively dumb
Who wrap their limbs as trapeze
To make art from alchemy of grace
Crosshatched with danger.

Candles of understanding
Are moulded from its plasma casing
And melt back into its matterless core
As circular breath, as scales in octaves,

One can never tell which way the ball turns
Or whether it is still.
Whether it breathes. Or pulses. Or steams.
Or flows. Or is heavy with electrical storms.

It is both constant and fluid.
An illogical, patterned drift of stony flux.
The vacuum of totality
And the density of null.



Pareidolia's children

Eye sockets throb and the bombilating
Sill-dust replies with mwomp-mwomps—
They're talking about death somehow
They're seeing about the ubiquity of dovetails
About rind and how it falls with the nakedness of snow

The window reveals itself a flue of vitric scintilla—
The elocutionists' take—turn—pulse
Rises astral gold into the sun-hole unsounded
And the eyes, the dust, the window, the sun
Surrender their baptism to a thousand names more

The image collects

Is it the image? Is it the way it flosses your teeth? Polishes your eyeballs with god-spit? An oiled kaleidoscope turning its smiting caresses on your skin? You are soundless and tarred. I am honed to the number of dimples I could fit into a bubble. We reach behind a sheet of sandfall and hands learn that they never needed fingers. That seeking is the necessity of futility.

Where are the wearers of red bowler hats? The black-gloved dancers? They are in bed with mermaids and peddlers of the soul. You remember how we watched them snore feathers from the one's toe gaps. Pebbles from the others miserly gills. How you laughed at the absurdity of sleep. And I took a nap in the eaves of an abandoned sycamore. I dreamed of 360 degree hair. Girls without faces running from men the size of tin cans. I dreamed of humming closets and wilted throats. Lemon jazz played on violins by French bus conductors in high-waisted slacks. You wrote it all down and I realised my poetry is more fantastical than my dreams.

It all makes sense now we have burned the words with a moon that has outgrown the sky. Ripped up the carpet from the stairs that join the backs of our heads. We bump down to face the image. A mosaic of splintered abstracts. Thoughts deformed and thrown like paint on frameless windows from paper cones carried by shuffling rows of borsholders. We pay our tithes in bushels of frayed lips. We pay in words.

The name
wafted through
the windows; I can still hear him
make his own unique noise.
Orientation always felt distant:
I grieve alone; I dream.
Like a burning sensation,
I hear my mother crying at night.
I read and read.
When I read, I am no
longer human.

Other humans, with names and faces

- 46 BHAVANA NISSIMA – Bhavana
- 49 VALERIE JACKMAN – I can still
- 50 CINDY RINNE – Layering, texture, and the work of my hand
- 55 LEAH ROSE – Interdimensional
- 59 PATRICK CARPENTER – The Imaginings session: commentary
- 60 PREETI SHARMA – Unemployed so far
- 61 ANEEKKA – Navigating inclusion and its discourse around ‘Queering the Map’
- 67 ANNA NYGREN – From another
- + *Within and between: the art of* LUKE HOLCOMBE & FRANCIS SALOLE, *the music of* PATRICK CARPENTER & THE IMAGININGS ENSEMBLE.

< *This poem combines fragments from the authors in this section ... find a spoken version here:*



tinyurl.com/section2foundpoem



BHAVANA NISSIMA

Bhavana

MY NAME BHAVANA MEANS “IMAGINATION” in Malayalam. It was also my mother’s pen name before I was born. My mother grew up in a village in Kerala where Malayalam is spoken and later moved to Mumbai (then Bombay) in her teens. In Bombay, besides Maharastrians (original inhabitants of the state of Maharashtra,) there lived many Gujaratis (inhabitants of the state of Gujarat.) My mother says she heard a Gujarati tailor, near her home, often call out for his daughter, “*Bhavana*.” The name wafted through the windows to a lonely teen. This name was not common in Kerala but very popular amongst the Gujaratis. As a teen lost in the big city, this name became a portal for her to imagine a possibility in the chaos. Bhavana became her pen name, and she composed several Malayalam stories and songs.

Adopting this name was an important transition in her life in other ways too. She was born after the deaths of two of her siblings. Her grandparents, in an effort to appease the God of Death, named her after him. *Dharma*. *Dharma* is also the keeper of sacred protocols. My mom grew up around this historical haunting until a tailor’s daughter set her free. *Bhavana*.

When her niece was born, my mom tried in vain to convince the parents to name the newborn “*Bhavana*.” Interestingly, at that time, she didn’t imagine herself to be ever married or with a daughter. But she did get married, and eventually I was born as the triumphant owner of the name of many stories.

I was born in Kolkata (then Calcutta.) In the Bengali language, alphabet “v” is not used and is instead transformed to “b”. Amongst school friends and in many certificates, my name was “*Bhabna*.” It means, in Bengali, “Thought.” My friends would tease me at times: “*Ki bhabna chinta korcho?*” What are you thinking-reflecting now?

Somehow I thought-reflected a lot. And wrote like my Mom from a very young age.

When I turned a teen, I was drawn to the sacred texts. And one day, on a stroll, a monk told me that the name “*Bhavana*” had a place in the Bhagavad Gita. Chapter 2 Verse 66. He said, “*Bhavana* is the essence of the Upanishads.” Off I went and read most of the Upanishads. And literally went bats in my efforts to reach the ‘essence’ of my own name.

Then life happened — I fell in love, married and had a kid. And forgot all about *Bhavana*.

I was drawn back to spirituality in my thirties and at some point, received and adopted a new name “*Nissima*”. It was one of the thousand names of the Goddess. Nissima means “One without Limits”. Now I felt my call in life was to transcend limits that I experienced. And my name had become *Bhavana Nissima*, “Imagination Unlimited.”

Currently, my neighbour’s name is also *Bhavana*. When I open my door, I stare into her home — this young mother of two kids — and wonder.

Stop.

This essay is not about the journey of my name. Nor is it about the impact of naming.

Rather it is about this belief that Imagination is an individual cognitive gymnastic, siloed from the ongoing dynamics of the living world.

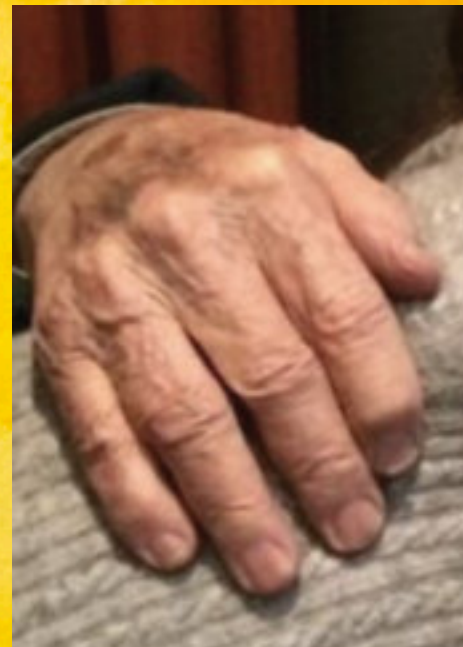
Like the naming of a person, it is a blessing of being-with. The magic of being turned over in unexpected ways — the soft brew of warm data.

The other name for Imagination is Regeneration. From disorder to another order, from chaos to new patterns — life sustaining in magical ways. Gaia, again and again. ∞

Listen to Valerie reading her piece



tinyurl.com/mcpk2wat



FROM SOUND EDITOR, PATRICK CARPENTER:

On reading Valerie's piece about her vivid and visceral memories of her father, I was moved to tears as I thought about my own Dad and how my senses of him have lingered long after he has gone — I sit here wearing his 'holiday shirt' as I write. Valerie had mentioned that she liked to recite her poetry and cohabiting, as I do, with audio joy, this seemed like an ideal opportunity to sound aloud that particular brand of wonder.

The first take was a special take. Not first for Valerie — she had done this before — but first for me. The simplicity of the delivery and the accessibility of the natural emotion was all I had hoped for and, as I slipped the audio file into Wavelab Elements v.11, the EQ function fell easily under my fingertips. A simple, sweeping high-pass filter towards the end of the piece enabled a lightness, an ethereal dissipation and perhaps even the suggestion of passing onto the other realm: we all have connections there and sound could be the mystic portal.

The third delivery is the one though and with a little cut and paste, the mystic revelation remains.

VALERIE JACKMAN **I can still...**

I CAN STILL DRIVE DOWN THE ROAD to my father's home, park in front of his house, and like choosing an outfit, I can call up the person I need to be in this place, with this man.

I can still walk up the path and see the moss amongst the paving, put my left hand on the handrail and lug my case up the steps. I can slide back the heavy porch door and be greeted by the signature musty smell.

I can still turn my key in the front door, the lock has been there for a long time but never softened in its sound. I can open the door and be hit by the deeper smell... dust, dog, fried food, man, fish, old, all combined with the ever so subtle scent of musk.

As I open the door to the living room, my eyes don't need to search, for I know where I will find my father. In his chair, hands draped over the armrests, feet rhythmically tapping on the ground, heel, toe, heel, toe, "to keep the circulation going."

Without moving his head, he glances in my direction. I can sense the delight in his heart, but it's not on his face, for he doesn't like to reveal his feelings.

I can still hear him make his own unique noise that welcomes me, questions me, tells me he is glad to see me, but also tells me he is weary with life. "Augh" he says, as he tilts his head.

I can still sit with him, chat with him, and update him on the lives of his grandchildren. He listens with interest and pride, but he tells me he fears for them in a world that has gone mad. His wish is that they live decent lives.

When the conversation takes a rest, he starts to hum gently to the rhythm of his own foot tapping. As he relaxes, he starts to sing. He loves to sing; he even sings in his sleep. He has the most wonderful rich voice, and when he sings it resonates deep in my heart.

I can still fine tune my wavelength to the point where we are connected, and we both know we are.

I can still see his hands, I love his hands, I've always loved his hands. As a child, the only way he could let me know he loved me was to hold my hand.

I can still say goodbye. I can kiss him on the cheek and feel the kiss seep into his whole body. Again, he makes the noise, "Auch." It has another meaning this time, it tells me he is sad to see me leave, it bids me farewell. It is also tinged with resignation.

I can still leave with a heavy heart, wondering when I will see him again. I can still see him standing at the door, tipping his head as I drive away, no doubt wondering if he will see me again.

I can still do all of this.

But I can't.

For he is long gone, it's all long gone.

But I can.

For it is deep, deep within me. Rooted in my body, mind, and soul. ∞



CINDY RINNE

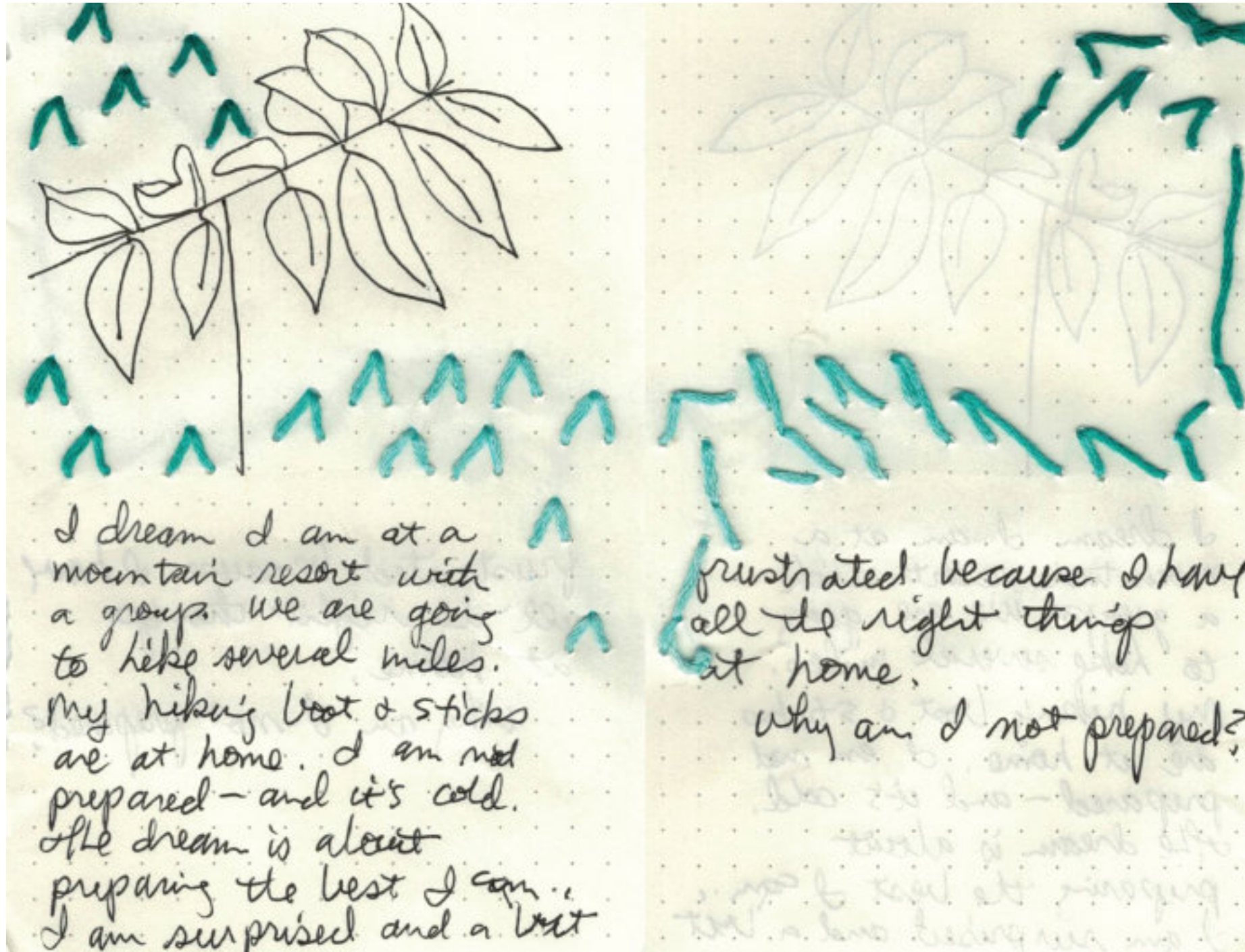
Layering, texture, and the work of my hand

I CREATE NEW MYTHS or discover myths of the past and combine these with present experiences. Authentic searching is like an archeological dig expressing the truth of myth and the women who lived the stories. I build on ideas by digging deep into a myriad of cultures. I try to understand the lives of goddesses and their environment. Time is split to reveal the secrets; the sacredness of the soul. I stitch memories into textile collages; layering and obliterating fragments of cloth. This is a connective process that creates a whole out of curvilinear pieces. ∞

I grieve alone >

Lines drawn from a tree photograph by my son interlaced with shapes inspired by another's art. Painted. Grieving the decline of my father who has now passed. Lingering grief is subtle. I try to remember the story of a life, his inspiration of the awe of nature, his love of water. I acknowledge the sadness and try to go forward well.





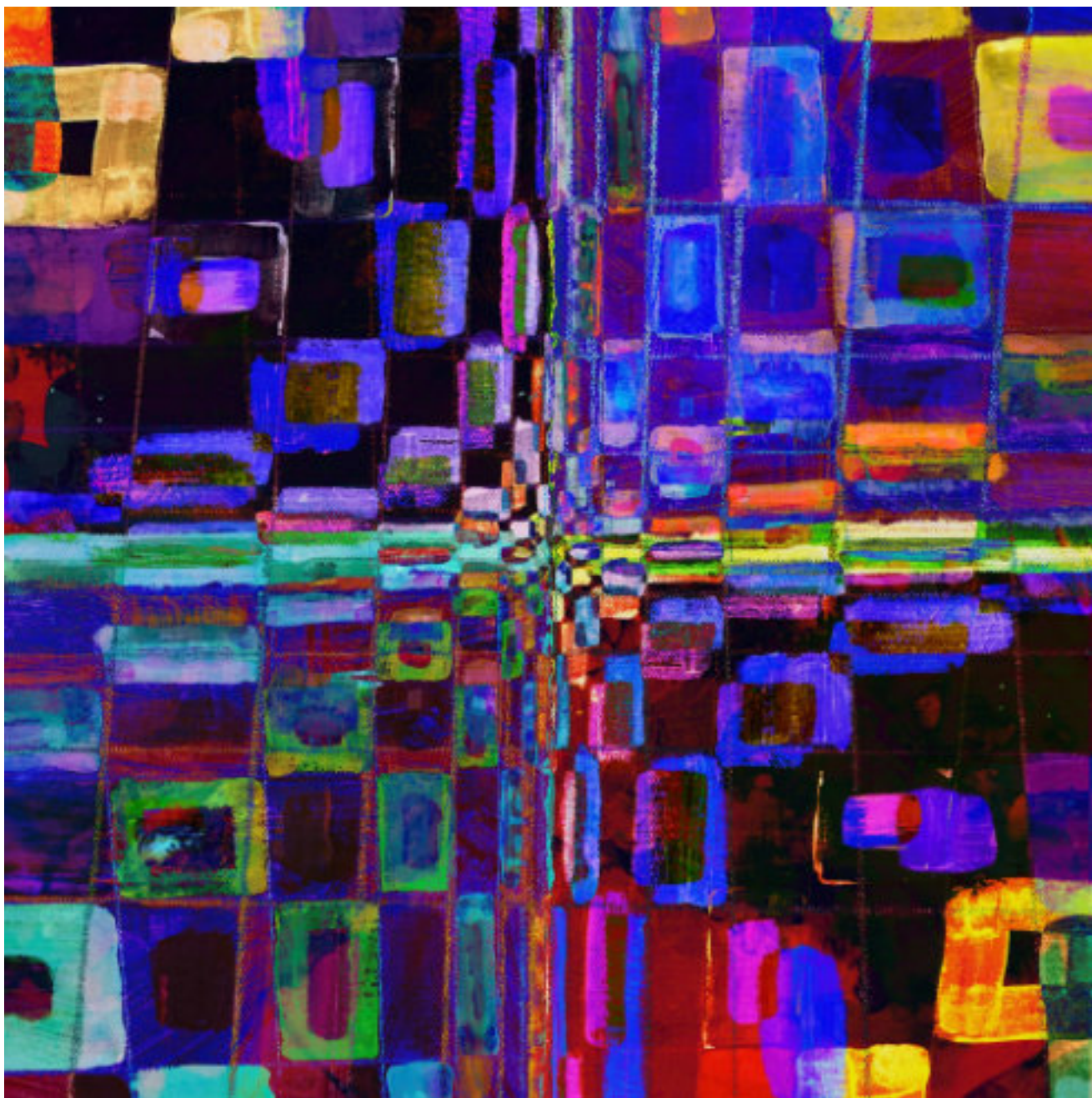
▲ I dream

I don't remember my dreams often. This one stuck and I wrote it down. I am a list maker. I plan. This dream was uncomfortable, a subconscious time of frustration. The drawing was already in my notebook; the embroidery came later. I pierced the paper with an awl to stitch. I like the back side as much as the front. The seen and unseen revealed.

Snake Visits >

The Mayan concept of snakes as protectors and not tempters brought a new perspective and a place of reflection in life as petals swirled. I visited the Yucatan when travel barely reopened. I loved the lushness of the jungle, the kindness of the people, and the magic. Rebirth. Healing. Renewal from trauma and physical pain.





FRANCIS SALOLE

Zeros & Ones Quilt

LEAH ROSE

Interdimensional

“STELLA, I SWEAR TO GOD, if you don’t stop tapping that freaking pencil....”

“Huh? Oh, sorry.”

I was able to sit still for all of about three seconds before starting to fiddle with the mechanical pencil again.

Cole sighed, looking up from his biology textbook. “Something on your mind?”

“Nope,” I lied, shaking my head.

“Okay. Well, whenever you feel like talking about it, I’ll be right here.”

I stared at all the little letters and numbers, hoping for a revelation, but none came. I had been sitting at the desk for probably ten minutes already, working and reworking the exact same equation, but I was no closer to solving it now than I had been when I first started. It wasn’t until after I felt the beginnings of a migraine coming on that I blew out a sigh and leaned back in my seat. In the process of doing so, I caught sight of the half-empty bottle of Risperidone in my purse and grimaced as I thought of the reason I was being forced to take them.

Ever since the incident at school, both students and teachers had been treating me differently. I would sit down at a table in the middle of the cafeteria, and all the other

students would immediately grab their trays and move to a different part of the lunch room, giving no excuse as to why and making no attempt to be subtle about it.

Had I walked into class late a couple weeks ago, my teachers would have, at the very least, given me a dirty look and a stern talking to. Now, however, they chose to simply ignore me, making no mention of my tardiness and avoiding eye contact with me at all costs. Worse than any of that, though, was when I fell asleep in class, which had been happening more and more often lately.

None of the teachers would wake me when I nodded off. I was never punished or even scolded for it, only gently shaken awake after all the other students had left the room. Even Mrs. Foreman wasn’t getting angry with me, which, given how strict she normally was, only made it that much more clear how sorry she and all the rest of the faculty felt for me. They were also exceedingly careful whenever they spoke to me, as if afraid that just one wrong word could set me off, causing me to burn down the whole school or take all of the students hostage or something.

“I can help if you want.”

“No, you can’t,” I snapped, whirling in my

seat so fast that I nearly tipped the desk chair over. “My therapist is supposed to be helping me, but he’s not. The Risperidone is supposed to be helping me, but I’m pretty sure it’s only making things worse.” I grabbed the bottle from my cluttered purse and chucked it at the far wall. The top popped off immediately upon impact, and the tiny green pills scattered across the carpet.

“I hear my mother crying in her room at night, just like she would when my father’s hallucinations were at their worst, and she and Dr. Boyd talk about having me hospitalized. It’s gotten to the point where I can’t even tell what’s real and not real anymore. Oh, and that stupid pitying look that everyone’s been giving me?” My hand curled into a fist, and I glared at the fallen pill bottle in the corner of the room. “I swear, the next time I see it, someone’s going to get slapped.” I unclenched my fist to reveal four tiny crescents from where my nails had dug into my palm. “So no, Cole, you can’t help me. No one can.”

The tension in the air was palpable. Without saying a word, Cole got to his feet and walked slowly over to where the bottle had landed. He knelt down and started picking up the Risperidone, one by one. He brushed them all off on his shirt before carefully placing them back in the bottle. Once he had dropped the last of them in, he set the pills on the desk in front of me and took a seat on the edge of the bed, causing the old, worn mattress springs to creak and groan in protest.

When Cole finally spoke, he did so in a voice just barely above a whisper. If it hadn’t been for the thick silence between us, I probably wouldn’t have even heard him when he said, “I meant that I can help you with your homework.”

“Oh.”

My spine went stiff, and I felt the blood rush

to my cheeks. Cole and I both just sat there for an excruciating moment until I finally bit the proverbial bullet. “Look, I’m sorry—”

“You don’t have to apologize.”

“No, I do. I shouldn’t have gone off on you like that. I’m just so tired of people treating me like I’m some sort of freak. The way that everyone’s been looking at me lately....” I paused, trying to think of an appropriate analogy. “It’s like they think I’m a ticking time bomb or something. Like I could explode at any minute, without warning. And the worst part is, these are people I’ve known for years. Hell, some of them I’ve known my entire life. My mom, my relatives. Even you,” I accused. “It’s the exact same look you’re giving me now.”

Cole, unsurprisingly, began to play with his necklace. He was biting down on his lower lip so hard that it had actually begun to bleed a little.

“You’re right,” Cole finally conceded. “I have been treating you differently. But it’s not because I think you’re some sort of freak or anything.”

“So then why have you been?” I pressed, growing irritated with him.

Cole said nothing, only staring down at his dirty tennis shoes.

“I’m begging you, Cole. Just tell me what’s going on here. Please.”

Much to my annoyance, Cole still refused to look at me. “I wanna tell you, it’s just....”

“It’s just what?”

“I... can’t.”

“Well why the hell not?” I demanded.

“I can’t tell you that either....”

“Cole!”

“I’m sorry, I really am,” he told me hurriedly. “But I.... You can’t....” Cole started wringing his hands, and I could see that there were large beads of sweat forming across his forehead. Whatever he was hiding, I knew that it had to be bad.

Really bad.

“It doesn’t matter. You wouldn’t believe me anyway,” he said eventually, apparently resigned.

“Try me,” I responded dryly, not about to let the matter drop.

“Alright, alright. How do I put this?” Cole closed his eyes and took a deep breath to try and steady his nerves. “I.... You aren’t.... I mean I guess you are technically, but—”

“I am *what*, technically?”

“Human,” he blurted. “You aren’t human.”

I blinked, certain that I’d misheard him. “Excuse me?”

“You aren’t human, Stella.”

Yep. That’s what I thought he’d said.

“Well, you’re half-human, but—”

“Is this your way of telling me I’m weird? Because I really don’t need this from you right now.”

“No. I’m not saying you’re weird. I’m saying you literally aren’t human. Not fully human, at least. And neither am I. In fact, I don’t have any human blood in me.”

“Oh really,” I responded scathingly. “So if you aren’t human, then what are you exactly?”

“Paragonian. And so are you. Except I’m a full Paragonian, and you’re only half.”

“Right. Okay, then.” I pushed my chair back and started to stand.

“Stella, please don’t go. I’m telling you the truth. *I’m from a different dimension.*”

“Sure you are.”

“And these people you keep hearing and feeling. They are, too,” he persisted.

“Is that so,” I asked, narrowing my eyes at him.

“Yes,” he asserted. “You just aren’t able to see them because they’re invisible.”

“Alright, that’s it. If you’re just gonna make fun of me, I’m outta here,” I told him, shouldering my purse and grabbing my backpack from off of his bed. “I thought you were my friend, Cole, but I guess I was wrong.”

“But I’m not lying—”

“Yeah, well, if you really believe that, then you need more help than I do.”

“Stella, wait,” he called. “Come back!”

“Have a nice life,” I spat, ignoring his pleas. I marched outside the bedroom, slamming the door in his face.

“Damn it,” Cole swore. A second later, I heard something crash to the ground.

I pounded down the stairs and stormed out of the house. I jumped in the Cadillac, shoved the keys in the ignition, and gunned the engine. The car roared to life, and I peeled out of the driveway, causing the tires to squeal and a thick cloud of dust to fill the air. I was clutching at the steering wheel with a white-knuckled grip, stealing glimpses in the rear-view mirror every now and then so that I could check and see if Cole was following me in his sedan. I kept driving until I felt sure that he wasn’t pursuing me, at which point I pulled onto the shoulder and threw the car into park.

Searching desperately for something to distract me from my anger, I leaned the driver’s seat all the way back, opened the sunroof, and turned my attention to the stars above. The first celestial body that I was able to identify was Venus, which was by far the brightest planet in the whole night sky. I reached my hand up, pinching my thumb and pointer finger together, and pretended to grab hold of the orb and drag it all the way down to Earth. The planet looked so tiny from here, it was crazy to think that it had a radius of almost four thousand miles.

Almost as crazy as me not being human.

Damn. Clearly my subconscious wasn’t about to let me suppress these kinds of thoughts, which meant that, as much as I didn’t want to, I was going to have to deal with them head on. Since denial was no longer an option, I was left with no other choice but to rationalize. Reflecting on our conversa-

tion, I tried to convince myself that, scientifically speaking, what Cole had told me wasn't really all that hard to believe.

I'd read that, included in the hundreds of billions of galaxies in the universe there might be around forty billion planets that were thought to be habitable by humans, which sort of made sense if you considered it from a statistical standpoint. And after all, if life could develop on Earth, wasn't it just as likely that it could develop on other planets that were similar to it? And weren't there also a bunch of physicists, including the co-founder of string theory, who argued that there were universes all around us, and that we just aren't able to see them because we're operating at a different frequency or something? And what about the theories that said that multiple universes could exist parallel to each other?

Plus, wasn't it better to believe there was a reason I was hearing and feeling these things, as opposed to just thinking there was something wrong with my brain?

With that, I groaned, pulled out my phone, and went straight to my call log, tapping on the name at the very top of the list.

Cole answered me on the first ring.

"Let's say, hypothetically, I believe you," I said, not bothering with a preamble. "I'm going to need some proof."

"You believe me," he asked, sounding immensely relieved and more than a little surprised.

"Hypothetically."

"Sure. Of course."

"So how are you going to prove it?" I asked.

There was only the briefest of pauses before Cole responded to me. "Just come back to my house, and I'll give you all the proof you need. I've got a freeze ray, a hologram watch... even a spell book," he told me excitedly.

"Alright, fine. But I swear to God, Cole. If this is some sort of sick joke...."

"It's not. I promise."

"Better not be," I muttered, disconnecting the call and heading straight back toward Cole's house. ∞



PATRICK CARPENTER

The Imaginings session — commentary

*No map to vamp sir!
A notion so proud, so vast
Impart a vision to
Stomp! Stamp! – piano vistas*

THE REMIT WAS SIMPLE: get together in a room —my glorious, tumultuous, extraordinary, tiny room crammed with everything—and play. We'd done it before, many times actually—brought together by a vagabond blind man who wrote astonishing music. But this was a little different. We were to make it up, channel whatever thoughts and feelings that arose, and record it. Bare naked.

I planned to start the session with breathing exercises but forgot, maybe caught up in the whirl of arrival—it was so good to see all these lovely faces in the same room at the same time. We arranged ourselves around my new microphone array [the same one I used to record Sophie McKeand's piece: a tried and trusted, cheap-as-chips stereo pair: Behringer B5s (40 quid each!) with an Audio Technica large diaphragm condenser in between] and started to talk about what to do: Games? Completely free? Time limited? Inevitably, we just started...Emilio started (IC.01) and Ania joined.

For me, it took a little time to open up. I fell back on patterns and processes that I thought would 'work' and started to get a headache—the trying pushed me further away from the place I wanted to

be, where the magic happens, the place in between dream and reality, the place where I am, really. Hence the headache. I can feel it now a little bit. It took mystic Donna's lead to draw me into the flow (IC.03)—she suggested using our voices: direct contact with the most human of things. I believe (as does Anthony Storr) that music originated from the proto-conversations between a new born baby and its mum and when we sing, we sing from that place, learning techniques to guide and shape what comes out. Whatever my belief, my shell cracked.

So then came the games (IC.12). Rules (funny that). Find freedom then cage it. Maybe I became terrified and had to exercise control. But the game was:

- Only 3 people playing at any one time.
- Person #1 starts with very spacious, repetitive idea.
- Person #2 interlocks with that motif.
- Person #3 does whatever they like.
- Person #4 can't start until person #1 drops out.

See how long it goes on for. Most were quite short. And then we went modal (IC.19).

The players: Ania Crawshaw, Donna Matthews, Emilio Reyes, Patrick Carpenter. Poem by Emilio (each line contains all the letters of the word improvisation at least once).

*Here's a link to a Substack piece
with all the recordings*



tinyurl.com/4yfvhne5



*More music from
the Imaginings
Ensemble*

tinyurl.com/zn66yh8y

PREETI SHARMA

Unemployed so far...

Like the eternally tilted axis of earth
Positivity is tilted to negativity
Unemployment is like a cold hearth

Social adjustment with all around
Unending psychological readjustments
Unemployment deeply torments

A star-crossed bidirectional relation
Track of mental health and employment
Is derailed for any leisurely contemplation

A psychological distress
Like a burning sensation
Unemployment pricks concentration

Reduced personal efficacy
A self perception of helplessness
Unemployment tramples happiness

Seeking employment opportunity
Equals looking into the eye of a cyclone
Promising doom of youthful energy

For every unemployed so far
Psychology or beyond psychology
Now of this creed is simply afar

Employment promotes mental evolution
The negative thoughts of unemployment
Need a black hole of rejuvenation

A set of new parameters is awaited
Beyond name, fame and money
New human stories to be generated

ANEEKA

Navigating inclusion and its discourse around ‘queering the map’

THE ACT OF VISUALISING an alternate more inclusive and diverse future is essential in the life of a queer individual. To transcend the dominant daily manacles of persecution, hostility, and judgement allows queer individuals to self-affirm, eulogise, and foresee a life worth living.

My personal interactions with diverse orientations are limited due to my country of origin and the country I currently reside in. Orientation always felt distant, something you know exists, but cannot speak on, veiled by secrecy and shame. Walking down village streets in Pakistan, where I saw Hijras; I was in awe. To nine year old me they looked like men adorned with excessive amounts of makeup. My inability to understand personal expression, created a palpable gap on how I should feel about their features. Those gaps were soon filled in by the whispers and chuckles conveyed by the surrounding civilians. Which was sufficient to understand that this way of life is and will be looked down upon.

The act of envisioning is crucial in the lives of the queer community; through imagining, individuals have the willingness to confront wounding cultural conventions and stereotypes. Imagining allows queer individuals to adhere to hope, mapping routes to queer futures. Taking communal collective

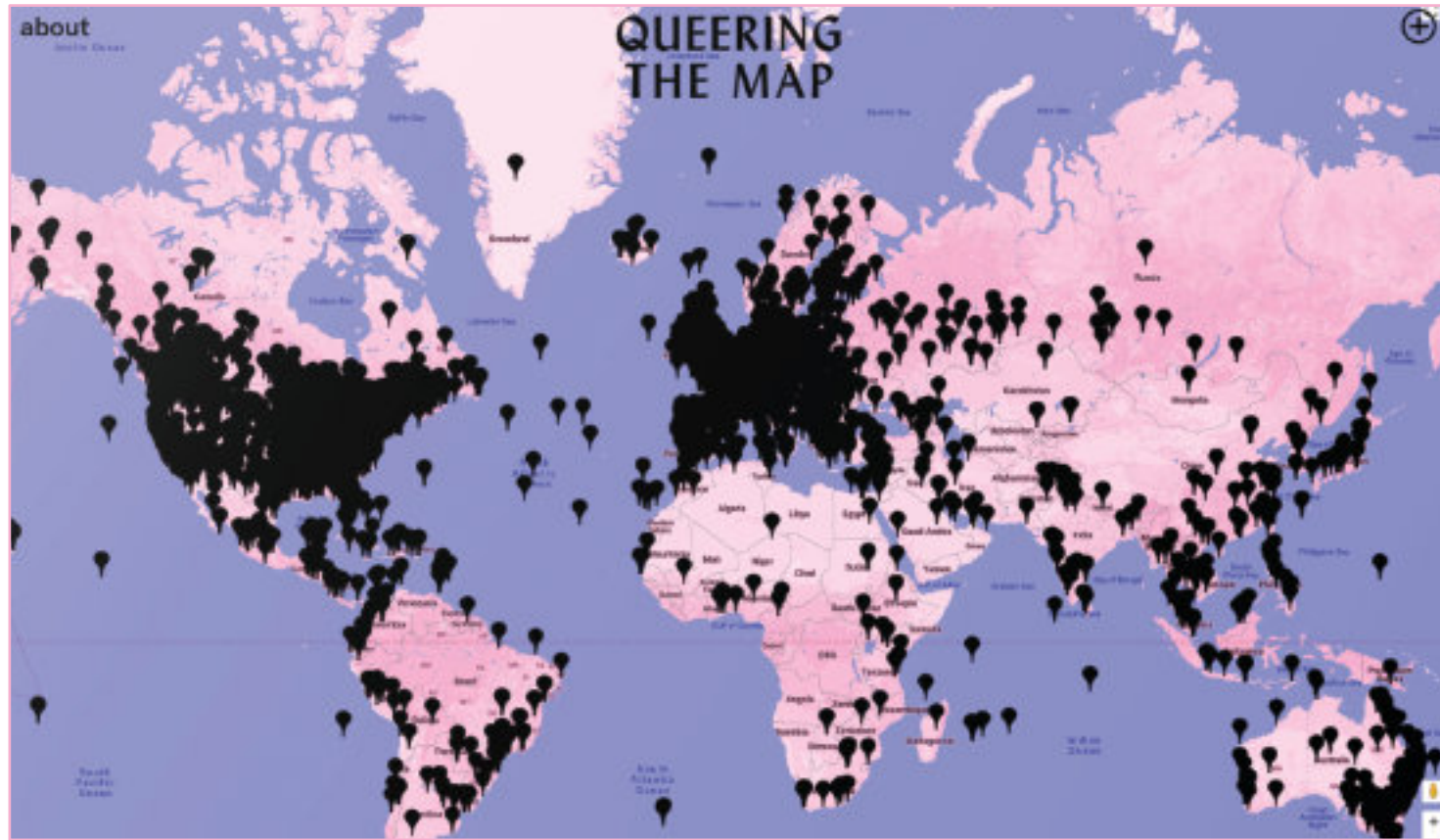
remarking to preserve queer survival since the quality of queer lives is affected by how queer futures are imagined.

A tree, a landmark, an epiphany ignited the conceptualisation of ‘queering the map’. The tree, holding monumental significance to the designer behind *Queering the Map*, Lucas LaRochelle, was the spot where they met their first partner, elevating them to redefine their idea of queerness:

“What might it feel like to move through a digital world overflowing with queer pasts and presents, and what futures might emerge from this kind of embodied knowledge?”
– Lucas LaRochelle, on designing queer space

As Lucas biked past the tree in Montreal’s Jeanne-Mance Park, they began to ponder the countless coordinates that stretch across the globe, places occupied with ever growing queer love. This initiated the idea of *Queering the Map*. What it would mean to design a virtual space that showcases real-world regions, and how an icon of geography could accentuate a map, transforming into something fantastical and surreal.

The digital story mapping platform is a user



interactive media that enables users to anonymously pin anything between ‘queer moments’ to significant memories in connection to locations. The platform invites you to seep in and get lost in time, in the wondrous posts that have been submitted, and to widen your knowledge beyond your immediate networks. The digital space consists of a two-dimensional bubble-gum-pink tint background, with every country and its major cities carved out, and labelled. Each black pinpoint holds onto paragraphs or sentences, or even simple phrases that have been geolocated by anonymous users—that appear when you click on a certain pinpoint.

It's been greatly noted that marginalised communities, particularly people of colour, alongside people belonging to religious groups, find it difficult to discuss their orientation, because their home communities ostracise them, actively working on measures to ensure their voices aren't heard. An example of this would be the sodomy arrests in colonial India (Arondekar, 2002). Or section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) which was introduced during the British colonial rule criminalising non-

procreative sexualities, targeting the transgender community (Hijras) of India. The Hijra community of south Asia were known to be powerful individuals, catering to jobs in the Sultanate and Mughal courts. Fortunately, section 377 was recently dismissed; decriminalising same-sex relationships.

On the rare oasis of LGBTQ acceptance, so many religious countries criminalise queer individuals. In Egypt, the 1961 law of Provision on “incitement to debauchery” was used on groups of youngsters that were suspected of raising the rainbow flag at a Mashrou' Leila concert, showcasing restrictions on speech or association.¹

This is where *Queering the Map* shines, a safe space that allows queer individuals to express their imaginations and feelings. To go beyond the dichotomy of heterosexual relationships and heterosexual experiences. The queer identity represents tears shed, heartbreak, vulnerability, happiness, and ambiguity. Leaving traces of their existence regardless of what's to come. The technology behind *Queering the Map* has been instrumental in advocating communication, providing a visual depiction of

people from marginalised communities demonstrating a support system. It reinforces the notion that they are part of a community, cementing known identities around them, miles or mere metres away, that share comparable experiences.

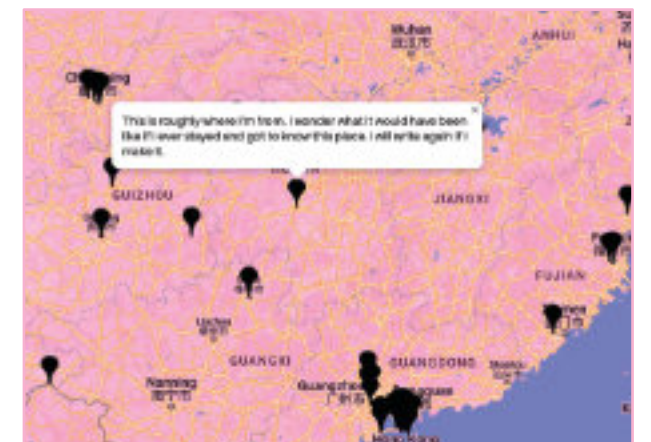
With the characteristics of a technological window, *Queering the Map* pays homage to millions suffering silent atrocities behind closed doors, whilst illuminating the stories of those the mainstream media is unable to cover. According to the World Economic Forum's Audience Representation index, the LGBTQ+ community feels as though they are the least authentically represented in media depictions.²

Queering the Map takes a different approach to recognition, which is unbiased by algorithmic control. As social media usually limits a user's experience to simply what they'd like to see, *Queering the Map* strays away from the viewpoint of likes, shares, upvotes, comments, and reactions. Here, algorithmic privileges do not exist. In this manner, no particular story will be held superior, or have a disingenuous advantage in terms of circulation. The map gives equal footing to each story, further complexifying its diverse narratives.

Furthermore, there is no official method of being recognized on the platform. There is no search bar, which means you're unable to query a specific word, location, or type of post. As you begin to ‘search’ on *Queering the Map* you find yourself time constricted. The stories begin to converge from individualistic narratives to opaque sectors of capital cities, or populated countries. In the search for a familiar place, one must drive one's eyes across the map, redefining the relationship between a place and its inhabitants. LaRochelle says that “Many users add pins on *Queering the Map* divulging their inability to find or recall an exact location, marking a *here*, but gesturing towards a *there*. In some cases, these ‘theres’ have not yet happened, but are placed as a means of marking the emergence of a possible queer future.”

Just as queer lives and experiences are endangered in the physical world, *Queering the Map* was also subject to such mirrored hatred. In February

Here, algorithmic privileges do not exist. In this manner, no particular story will be held superior, or have a disingenuous advantage in terms of circulation.



2018, when the site was shared on Facebook by Montreal DJ Frankie Teardrop, reaching around 10,000 shares, it was greeted with boundless amounts of support. However, the platform also became subjected to spam messages by supporters of then-President Donald Trump, who is known to be openly homophobic.

LaRochelle explains “They injected the site with malicious JavaScript code, to generate pop-ups that read ‘Donald Trump Best President’ and ‘Make America Great Again’. While the attack came as a shock—I had not anticipated the site to reach such a large audience—I was bolstered by the community that had so quickly assembled around the fledgling platform. I immediately took the map down, and posted a call for help on the URL. Within hours, a group of volunteer coders assembled through the digital wood-work, and the platform’s codebase was moved into a GitHub3 repository so that it could be collaboratively edited. The database was scrubbed of the malicious JavaScript code that had infected it, and measures were put into place to reduce the vulnerability of the site to similar attacks. Most notably, a moderation system was implemented so that all posts had to be screened for hate speech, spam, and breaches of anonymity before being published to the map.”

These authentic depictions of queer lives encourage people to picture an accepting world—a world in which LGBTQ representation grows, where diversity, communities, and experiences are honoured, with subsequent positive impacts for queer people. *Queering the Map*, as well as being a digital archive of previous experiences, is juxtaposed with queer immersion into the desire of the future: to believe, to branch out in bold new directions, to depart from negative experiences, and take flight into new beginnings.

Lucas Larochelle heavily emphasises how Sara Ahmed and Jose Esteban Munoz, and their writings have laid the groundwork for *Queering the Map*.

Sara Ahmed, a professor of Race and Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths College and one of the inspirations behind *Queering the Map* effectively demon-

strates how queer studies can put phenomenology to productive use. Phenomenology frequently materialises the body as a passive, more neutral entity, without emphasising that our bodies are actively dependent on social, political, and cultural factors.

As Sara investigates the ‘orient’ component of ‘orientalism’, she examines what it means for bodies to be situated in space and time. Ahmed explains that prevailing western narratives are reductionist, perpetuating colonial and imperial hierarchy, erasing the complexities and intricacies of queer people from the east. Centralising the euro-centric standard of what is meant to be queer. Such concerns suppress the queer population of colour who frequently feel invisible or misrepresented in both mainstream LGBTQ and anti-colonial movements.

Jose Esteban Munoz, a queer theorist and Cuban-American scholar undertakes the idea of ‘queer acts’. He posits that “the queer act is steeped in a ‘potentiality that is always in the horizon and, like performance, never completely disappears but, instead, lingers and serves as a conduit for knowing and feeling other people.” Lucas aims to decipher these ‘queer acts’ and their “future dawning potentialities by locating and archiving them in virtual space.” This as a result would unlock new possibilities of a queer middle-ground traversing through spatial and temporal divisions.

Spaces in these instances are marked through actions that resist dominant power structures, Lucas explains “It is not so much the space that is queer, but rather the actions that occur within it that render it as such.” These fleeting moments captured by *Queering the Map* seek refuge within the virtual space, they then grow on to become a symbol of possibilities. Each pinpoint that inhabits the website comes together as you’d zoom out of the map, lingering, becoming more and more prominent, serving as a reminder that queer people exist, and inhibit all corners of the world.

‘Queering the map’ as a movement is committed to providing an intersectional and critical approach to representation, unifying the shared experiences

of geographically disadvantaged communities, and opposing the predominant power structures and narratives. It actively guides us to the possibility of a different world within the world. The stories, moments, and circumstances explored often seem grappled onto the past, yet the act of documentation denotes the notion of being forgotten, of being

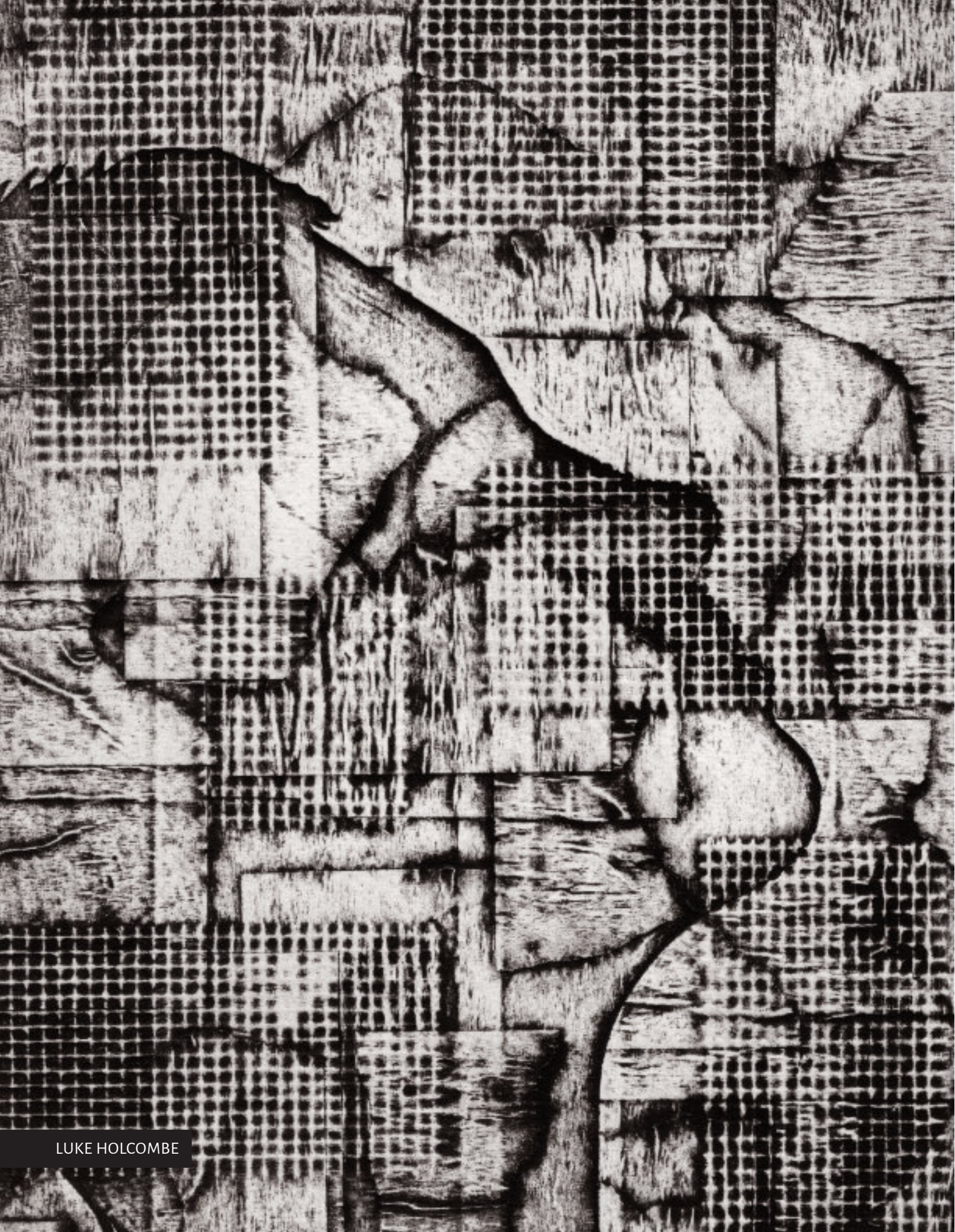
stuck. These traces of exploration, acceptance, and connectedness never seem to fade. They ‘stick’, they’re felt, they grow into ambiguous directions, finding themselves accepted in gratifying collectivity.

“I find my place by being out of place.” — Lucas LaRochelle. ∞

NOTES

- 1 <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/04/16/audacity-adversity/lgbt-activism-middle-east-and-north-africa>
- 2 Benchmarking Diversity and Inclusion in Media and Entertainment: The Audience Representation Index insight report (March 2022) https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Benchmarking_Diversity_and_Inclusion_in_Media_and_Entertainment_2022.pdf





ANNA NYGREN

Annanother: poems

MY NAME IS ANNA. my surname starts with N. putting these together makes “AnnaN” or “Annan” or “annan”, which is the Swedish word for “Other”, which gives it from my name, to my brain, that I have some kind of otherness, that I need to, need to, be with.

“because my gender, historically speaking, never quite made it into full humanity, so my allegiance to that category is at best negotiable and never to be taken for granted” (Braidotti, 2006, 130)

I read and read. When I read, I am no longer human. I don't have to be. Written language may be typically human, but it doesn't have to be neurotypical. I read and I become a tree. I read and I become a cat. My allies have never been humans. I like people better through their texts than through their presence. During the assessment, the doctor said that social issues are fundamental to an autism diagnosis. But I don't have a problem with social. I am social with my cats and my books, all the time. I don't need others.

the assessment refers to being diagnosed with autism. I do think the autistics will be the people who change the world, because we are already other-worldlings. myself, I monotropically¹ text-sex-flex with language², making me, becoming me, an other-wording.

“Poetry is affirmation in negation, ammunition in the yellow eye of a gun that an allegorical pilgrim will shoot straight into the quiet of Night's frame” (Howe, 1985,138).

I write for-with the Night, the Night as [annan] time-place. O. (here are some p-oh!-ems)

* Monotropism is a cognitive strategy posited to be the central underlying feature of autism. A monotropic mind focuses its attention on a small number of interests at any time, tending to miss things outside of this attention tunnel.

** Language is the human capacity for acquiring and using complex systems of communication, and a language is any specific example of such a system (from Wikipedia).

no the child can't get a grip of the adult psychology
like the mother, the market is whimsical

humour are troublesome

SEE MY EYE MY EYES ARE CLOSED MY MIND IS OPEN MY MOTH IS OPEN MY EYES ARE
CLOSED MY SORE IS THROAT MY TUMMY IS EMPTY MY HEART IS HURT MY EYE IS A LID MY
EYE CAN'T LOOOOOOOK AT UUUUU MY HANDS ARE EYES MY

the flimsical freedom of the nerd

sunky
masochism
mass-oh-schism
dead and blind
who is actually this “self” and how to like them?

touchy abstractions
 bliss blush plus size
murderous bittersweet

body-heavy
so embarrassing so sorry so softifed so sophisticated
GLOWING

O
Other

O meta-death, metaphors are living dead
O a-lien
O zzzzz-oh!-mbie

HACK

It's a Horse
And it says
No
But
The Human says
Want
U
Civilization is
Hard
Love
Sleep makes Human
Friction against
Horse is
A hostel where
Time
Is
Red
To be
The most beautiful
Trojan
Horse

Inside
A Horse
Crawl in
Horse slow in
Mud
Trojan Horse in
Mud
Mud in Horse
Universal Mud
In Horse
Mud in
Stomach
Slow skin
Of Mud
Cross
The first para-
Site
All Horse
All Animal
God
Immune

 NO MASK

Immune

 NO WOR(L)D

Immune
Horse is
No
Mirror
2 never see
The eye
To read
The gaze
My viol hurt me ?

GREEN FIRE

We are the most beautiful we are
the most crawling (Horse ?)
pearls We are We rainbowing in
the eye of *le tigre* flying

IC		alternative support on the internetz inside info no work no worries no money no honey no need to count for cuntlesscunts so sorry	are dangerous animals		
AnnaN is	mystic			Water-walls. White under white. With under under. Foam on the top. Vaults of wrath.	Feed the kids
	mythic myopic vampyric cyrillic fan-tastic iron-ic (?) rebellic stick-ic		Dream House How to know what dreams are true before true is blue		The death-kids
				Bands of blood.	
in human language they call it cry					Horror of miracle
			I remember What i learned This summer Friends are false Like 100% Water	Sad island.	
		MASKED O: finally free and then it is raining what to do A: i try to download can't talk O: oh order a thing A: no money O: fashion blog A: perf-ect O: AIR-HORSE		Sluggish safe swing	
I hear voices cause the night is light Soft voices in my ears Soft voices eating Eachother eachOther not Other they Kiss they eat Kiss i swallow			Yes. Bodies <i>off</i> water.		<i>torn</i> <i>a</i> <i>do</i>
				<i>Heimat dis-app-ear</i>	
				Like a Human Being	
					FUR BUTTERFLY
Party-Trick: Pearl. Aching. Hard. Strong. And glowing.	(eaten while writing this poem)	BEST EVER BANANA BREAD: Preheat oven to 350°. In a large bowl, stir together flour, sugar, baking soda and salt. In another bowl, combine the eggs,bananas, oil, buttermilk and vanilla; add to flour mixture, stirring just until combined. Fold in nuts. Pour into a greased or parchment-lined 9x5-in. loaf pan. If desired , sprinkle with additional walnuts. Bake until a toothpick comes out clean, 1-1/4 to 1-1/2 hours . Cool in pan for 15 minutes before removing to a wire rack.		Trauma unit	DLITR SILNCE VODDDD
Is soft crying !				Vulnerable vulval	Spoiled soul

Rattling movement on sorry legs like eyes on the skin gaze pressure bambi
cut-off train legs but now it is forgotten cause now is the next day we are
now in cosmos seal on the rocks the watery sea happiness only cute people
touched in the heart human control mask maskmask eating masks the big
heart hits inside so warm inside s/he knows s/he maybe s/he horses poor
human riddle every night and day vibration vibrato sucking up cold hope
free in headtandtbodiechoose so to stylize the feathers →

blue

Who am I?
Cyborgean.
You're a pebble
breaking through
the fourth wall: humble,
sometimes very intimate, gestures.
Let light come in – a fox falling high.
I stirred with the reality of right now.
But only sometimes...

Weaving cyborgs, ants, squids and visions

- 76 IMMA LOPEZ – Viento de levante
- 81 MAGGI ROCHA – Ants of the earth
- 85 JUDITH HENNING, AMELIE HENSEL, STEFFEN LARS POPP –
Founding meeting of a climate parliament of all beings and
non-beings
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version here:*



tinyurl.com/section3foundpoem

IMMA J. LOPEZ

Viento de levante

1. A possible past?

WHO AM I? Those are the words on the cover of the catalogue, a black cover with a neat, elegant, stoic typography, also in black. That's all. No more explanations. Who am I? I read again. I feel the urge to open it, but a voice makes me pause. The artist, greeting me seductively, hands me a glass of bubbles: 'It's a celebration after all', they whisper in my ear with a wink. I sense the catalogue in my hand with anticipation. They take me to the first room.

My eyes forget about the catalogue. Right in front of me is a massive photograph. A close-up landscape. A field filled with... mushrooms!! Suddenly I recognise them. I can see the bell-shaped cap, the vibrant sienna of the youngsters at the front, the elders changing colour to darkening shades of grey at the back. I can even smell their earthy fragrance. Bonnets! They are bonnets! I am as surprised as you are — all I know of mushrooms has to do with my curiosity for deliciousness. Mystery magic dirt darkness decay psychedelic — unknown.

Scotland, this place I now call home, is also the habitat for a great number of species of fungi. You can see them most seasons of the

year: showing up now and then through the white season; invisible to the eye in the bonfires-at-the-beach season — through the Celtic six springs, starting with Imbolc and ending smoothly into the 40th of May; hiding under the shade of fallen trees in the long-day season; multitudinous in the season-of-reds. The bonnets, the ones in the picture, I have seen in many Octobers hovering among the tombs in the graveyard.

The exhibition: a local artist presenting — in a random, collapsing, multi-textured, contemporary art assemble — fifty possible ways of relating to the question, "Who am I?" I fantasise with millions of possible answers. What did they say? Ah yes! Celebrating their 50th birthday.

I read the title: *She said: I want to introduce you to my great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandparents.*

I can feel the intrigue on my skull... Could mushrooms also be part of my original genetic tree? I travel to the desert. To the marshes of Mesopotamia, south of Iraq in the modern days, to my people: sand, water, reeds, cat-tails, and also flamingos, herons; hiding places where barbells and shrimps would spawn. Would fungi have been part of their

babies' diet; nourishment for porcupines and grey wolves? Deliciousness for otters? Maybe the men and women of the marshes, the Ma'dān, the dwellers in the plains, nomadic people by season, maybe they had fungi on their menu for dinner.

Could these invertebrate beings have been part of those landscapes? Maybe the spores of my ancestors came here with the wind? The same wind which appears in the tonalities of the sun rising when reaching this country, these islands, an effect of the suspended dust travelling from the desert. Viento de levante. He has been transporting dust for millennia. Might he have brought spores too?

Trickster humming like a beehive whistling sacred ceremonies. Who would have thought of him as a preserving pilgrim, with his unpleasant lust, his maddening consistency, his capacious heart full of microscopic particles of sand and shells looking for another continent to drop a dry protecting shower when it is needed the most. Maybe he also brought spores to this land sensing the soil calling his name?

I am standing here dreaming of connections, of patterns creating themselves for millions of years — feeding the land. Isn't it strange what is remembered? Pathways that link the wind from the east from the faraway deserts, with my burnt-by-him skin at the south of Spain, this skin now older and open to the sensations of the wind blowing in with voices of forests and grasses, whirling with restless moisture from the North Sea, sometimes hissing troubled mean — born in the tundra of the North Pole.

2. He said: A plastic, cyborgian, technological, ecological becoming... A present of possible futures.

The sound of the words touches my inner ear, goosebumps electrifying the hair on my spine, before even the audible meaning

enters my mind. He likes playing with words; a casual but intentional blueprint, air-born words that are not hollow, as Ajike¹ (a poet I am proud to call my friend) would write, 'prophetically grammatically poetically correct'. Bayo² definitely likes playing with words.

The zoom call is crowded. People from everywhere, from every land, from every generation, cats, and dogs, and plants, and furniture framing sharing the screen. Strangers to each other. Beings at the margins seeking new beginnings, or maybe witnessing well known endings.

Bayo pauses. The table is set in front of us. Time here is called African, a second no longer a second, but a whole meal, nourishing words that are brewed in one of our present realities. Each descriptive word served swaddled in a sourdough of generous sharp acute perception.

A world of expansive wisdom, or reductive data? We all know the cold numbers that leave us exhausted, paralysed — *entumecidos* — numbers that have no meaning whatsoever. From 2 million tons of plastic waste in 1950 to over 390 million tons in 2021. Study results becoming press highlights that seem not to be noisy enough to make steady meaningful changes: *Microplastics revealed in the placentas of unborn babies*. Movies, like the last Cronenberg's *Crimes of the Future*, setting a speculative *espeluznante* prophecy of our prosthetic plastic bodies. We (the broader we) are swimming in the plastic soup we [the human we] are cooking.

Extended bodies not just addicted to plastic, also responding, adapting, evolving into the multi-contextual-every-minute experiences through feedback loops, many of them what Gregory Bateson and others have called primer order responses, happen in the visible, in the familiar; millions of those loops in n-order creations, in the reality of the unknown, of the imagination.

Extended bodies. Are our tools part of our bodies? Maybe we could ask the spider, or the fiddle³ or our washing machines. In the zoom call, we look at each other. A part of us feels grateful, thanking this technology. We are here together. Intimate eyes within thousands of miles, sharing moods and...words: a technology that has been serving us since long ago. Have words also become part of our bodies?

My body, this body made of cells, bones, flesh, fluids, fungi, plastic, feedbacks and words. She needs some fresh air. My body knows better than I can possibly know. I give in. She is the wise one here.

The sweet musty fragrance of grass after the anointing night rain is what she notices tickling her bare feet. I embrace the moment with delicious slowness. It is breakfast time in the garden. We might be made of words and plastic but it is here between the ash, the apple and the pear tree, listening to the singing parables of flying little people, the tangential sparrows, the gracious robins, the elusive coal tits, the black birds, and the goldfinches that are already back, sensing more than seeing the silenced movements of worms under her feet, the soil composting death into life and life into death, the birds' notes becoming a melody with the wind from the north playing drums with the naked branches of the birch tree at the background, and flutes with the leaves of the evergreen box tree with his no-words dialects, the ones he speaks to her skin. The ones she understands almost as well as el viento de levante. It is here and there, in those open connected ecosystems, she feels at home.

Back in front of my computer. I perceive something different. The "new" me is brewing in the relationship with the flavours of the garden. Not just on my clothes, in my hair, on my feet, but also in the possibilities these flavours open for me — for us — and the

ones they close. I think that is what Bayo means when he says we are 'becomings': fermenting beings in a broth of life bubbling in evolution. These becomings seem to respond to patterns that have been going on for millennia: intuiting, creating, midwifing.

3. Who said we are humans? Dreaming of possibilities...

Writing doodles. Counting heartbeats. Tale-ing silly jokes. Walking at the beach with crows. Drawing shitty first (and second!) drafts. Running slowly. Being scared. Flirting awkwardly. Musing with mushrooms. Synchronising with the tides. Playing poems. Failing constantly. Creating in community. Conversing unsafely. What makes us humans? I'm reading Nora's words⁴... 'Nine out of ten cells in my body are inhuman and belong to a larger ecology.'

Are we beings-in-relationship? Living tales, asking questions, making conversations, meeting stories that change our own — is that what being human is about? Swirling multi-contextual bodies with inter-connected diaphanous porous borders, where time and space get muddled? If we are all these, we are warm data.⁵

Beings-in-relationship belonging to...families? I thought we were normal: Mum, Dad (sometimes), the six of us, Grandpa at the beginning, Grandma, the milkwoman, the sewing gatherers, neighbours, the birds, the ducks, the dogs and cats, the vines, the beach, the salt, the smell, the broths. Soon, I realised we were not.

Later, when one by one were all gone (except the broths) and when I became a migrant, or much later researching to find the diverse shapes of families in Europe, or even more when I experienced my son growing up in a strange city, in a corral with the smells of bougainvillaea, the sound of running water in a fountain, of flamenco singers, the colour of

artists, the uncertainty of learners, all of us foreigners, under the care of neighbours who were our family, I questioned: 'What does make family a family?' Might it be the soft-glued shape-shifting visible and invisible relationships, moving, always moving, in the ecology we call life?

I am trying to describe with English words (a foreign language to me) a reality of changing patterns multilayered in multi-contextual experiences that has nothing to do with language. Or has it? How to communicate a broth of transformation and inconsistency seasoned in paradox, explored through the attentiveness of my senses, trying to seize the meaning of a world coming into being uncertain, unsafe — *aphanipoietic*?⁶ Maybe we have to start reading between the words, noticing what is at the margins.

Cells within individuals, within families, within communities, within... Speaking of broths. After all, we still are what we eat. But what we eat...does it not depend on place, on culture? I am pulled back into the swimming pool of relationships, flooded by place and culture.

My culture is enabled in liquid memories fermenting in wooden casks. For me food is as animate and sentient as I/we/us are, inter-dependent to place, wines and gatherings. Maybe the future looks like when Trish said: 'cauliflower, olive oil, and cumin', and my taste buds started watering in a cascade of homely deliciousness, my skin sweating drops of sweet spices aromas, my mind flowing to the fridge. I said: 'I do have cauliflower.' Madhu said: 'I do have cauliflower too!'

This conversation means belonging to me (and to my tummy.) And then... I'm at the table listening Mouse's dialogue in *The Matrix*:⁷

MOUSE: *If you close your eyes it almost feels like you're eating runny eggs.*

APOC: *Yeah, or a bowl of snot*

MOUSE: *Do you know what it really reminds me of? Tasty Wheat. Did you ever eat Tasty Wheat?*

SWITCH: *No, but technically, neither did you.*

MOUSE: *That's exactly my point. Exactly. Because you have to wonder now. How did the machines really know what Tasty Wheat tasted like? Huh? Maybe they got it wrong. Maybe what I think Tasty Wheat tasted like actually tasted like oatmeal or tuna fish. That makes you wonder about a lot of things. You take chicken for example, maybe they couldn't figure out what to make chicken taste like, which is why chicken tastes like everything. Maybe they couldn't figure out...*

APOC: *Shut up, Mouse.*

DOZER: *It's a single cell protein combined with synthetic aminos, vitamins, and minerals. Everything the body needs.*

MOUSE: *It doesn't have everything the body needs...*

Nope.

It doesn't.

Could this be one of our possible futures?

Nope.

It can't be.

And yet, we are that close. Some of our babies are sucking plastic bags filled by artificial intelligence machinery programmed to learn how to mix what Dozer calls a *protein with synthetic aminos, vitamins, and minerals* in the 'healthiest' way possible that tastes of chicken that tastes like... What are we becoming if displaced short-term safety and convenience is what our babies are eating?

I am listening. The wind is telling me that my rage and my sadness are based in a very narrow range of perceptions and assump-

tions. The Methuselahs that still run this world from seeds, from spores, from rocks, from water, from air have a lot more information about these sensuous patterns of relationship than I do, and time is not linear: does time have time to spare?⁸

Time bends in on itself. In my dreaming-mind Jung is saying: ‘Proceed from the dream onward...’⁹ My dream meets with the four winds in a dawn sunset performance of life-death-life-death playing in slow motion:

NOTES

1 Kendrick Asegun, Ajike (2022) *Dwelling Place*. N.Y.

2 Bayo Akomalafe’s workshop: (2022) *The Wandering, Winding Way of the Wound*

3 Nora Bateson’s example of the violin explaining what is Warm Data: *Where is the music? Is it in the violin, in the player, in the air...*

4 Bateson, Nora (2016) *Small Arcs of Larger Circles framing through other patterns*. UK

5 See <https://warmdatalab.net/warm-data> or <https://www.unpsychology.org>

6 <https://norabateson.medium.com/aphanipoiesis-96d8aed927bc>

7 *Matrix* the movie (1999)

8 Ursula K. Le Guin (2017) *No time to spare. Thinking about what matters*. Boston. NY

9 Yunkaporta, Tyson (2020) *Sand Talk. How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World*. US

10 Ursula K Le Guin (1986) *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*

11 <https://norabateson.medium.com/ready-ing-f1d79271a610>

raw umber, flame, scarlet, blood red, cinnamon, burnt sienna, opening the stage to the most incredible shape-shifting shades of purple, humming whistling tornado-ing. Everything is collapsing and regenerating, evolving in thousands of years and all at once. El viento de levante is carrying dust rising, travelling, falling, settling, offering where it is needed the most. When dust finds us, will we have our carrier bag¹⁰ ready?¹¹ ∞

MAGDALENA ROCHA

Ants of the earth

I WOKE UP IN THE SAND.

The first thing I noticed was the comfortable warmth. As if a beach had been in the sun for some time before falling beneath the shade. I can see how easy it would be to fall asleep again.

“You can’t.”

I had been here before. I never was.

* * *

It was slow moving to get my body working. My muscles are silt in an hourglass, flowing through my flesh to track the time it takes to get started.

There is sand everywhere. It is dusty. In my hair, my ears, and my mouth. I feel the grittiness in my teeth. How long is it going to take to pour out?

Once my hands are free, I press against my eyelids and do my best to remove the grain. It does not sting.

My eyes grind open.

* * *

“It’s real froggy out here.” Why do I say it like that? I guess it’s important to laugh at yourself before anyone else.

I’ve been walking for what feels like hours. Though I am not sore, my internal clock gives me the estimate. It is light out, but hazy—as if a sandstorm had just passed through, but all around me. It does not sting. I’m not blinking either.

It does not feel wet to the touch, but is imperceivable from the air around it. I’m not noticing any sun or moon—just a warm, diffused light. Like one of those box things they use for taking pictures.

What the hell?

“Oops.”

I guess I lost my legs.

* * *

Wherever I go, she’s always right beside me. When did she even get here?

“What’s your favorite color?”

I wonder, “Probably blue.”

She doesn’t seem to have a lot of important questions. Just appeared with her small hand wrapped around my middle and pointer fingers. The rest of my hand seems too much for her to grasp fully. I guess that’s kind of cute actually.



More music from
the Imaginings
Ensemble

tinyurl.com/muxfhkte

“Why?”

How many times have I heard that question now? A million? Three?

“Hmm...because it always changes.”

She looks confused. I can feel my lips smiling.

“Blue like the sky, but also blue like the ocean. Blue like the evening, or like the music.” I pause our steps and look down at her meaningfully, “Blue like blueberries, and blue like the clouds before a thunderstorm. Even blue feelings have their charm.”

“Blue...feelings?”

I nod, “I fell in love with a woman for her sadness. It made her smiles all the brighter.”

She’s taking her time to think about it; I suppose I don’t mind; it was a pretty abstract and silly thing to say to a kid her age. Wait, how old is she? Oh, there’s the tug on my hand again.

“Where is she now?”

It’s not fair to tease her. It’s better to be honest with children.

“In my imagination. I sounded pretty romantic there for a second though, didn’t I?”

She looks so put out that I can’t help but laugh. It takes a bit for us to find my arm after that.

We keep moving.

* * *

“What’s your name?”

“Does it really matter?”

“No, no I suppose it doesn’t.”

* * *

My sense of time has been lost completely. Maybe if I count seconds? One...two.....no, that was too long. Or too short?

“Does it matter?”

No, no I suppose it doesn’t. Not really.

* * *

I feel tapping on my shoulder. She’s grown now—a good head or two above me even. How did I miss this?

“You’re getting pretty tall there, kid.”

“Is that bad?”

No, of course it’s not bad. But...

“No, but you’re growing away from me here.” I smile, “It’s that, or I’m getting shorter.”

Silence. But she’s smiling, so I guess I’m still pretty funny—even out here.

* * *

“We must keep going.”

I can’t. I’m sorry, but wherever or whatever we’re in is too long—too big. I’m not sore, I’m not even scared, but...but I can’t feel anything anymore.

It’s all just...fog. Fog and sand. We’re ants of the earth. Crawling around, with no clear purpose but to live and keep on living. Well, no more. Leave me behind. I’m content to rest here in the comfort of the sand. It’s warm and cozy.

“Don’t worry, I’ll get us out of here somehow.”

Woah, hold on. Was I always this easy to pick up?

Was her hand always this big?

* * *

“Welp, looks like the height didn’t last too long for ya.”

Seriously, I swear she was getting taller not too long ago. She used to carry me, but now she’s struggling to carry her limbs herself let alone mine.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean to be insensitive.”

Am I being a jerk? I mean, I guess we’ve known each other for long enough. She’s

asked enough questions about me — she probably knows more about me than I do myself.

“You know, you never really answered any of my questions, but I guess I wasn’t sure what to ask.”

No response?

Shit.

“You’re smiling. Sure, laugh it up, but I’m not the one missing my arms right now.” She feels so brittle, like shale crumbling away. “Why didn’t you say anything, ya goof?”

Nothing. Maybe she’s tired after all the walking? I guess I assumed she didn’t feel anything either. Poor thing’s probably exhausted.

“You can rest up now, I’ve gotcha.”

There’s not a whole lot left here. I feel like I kept better track of my limbs in the sand than she has. Maybe I was just more used to it?

* * *

“Hey...hey you should really wake up now. I...I don’t know how long it’s been, but it’s been too long.”

Silence. This isn’t fair. I don’t know how the hell I’ve lost so much of her.

“I swear, I haven’t done anything to you, but somehow pieces just keep disappearing.”

God, that sounds like such a crap excuse. She didn’t have any trouble with me, or was it this hard for her too?

“I’m sorry, I swear on everything I’m just so, so sorry.” It’s never enough to say.

It’s all there is to say.

* * *

“You know, I don’t even know what bit of you I’m holding anymore.”

Oh my god...I feel something.

“What...what is happening?”

How long has it even been?

“I...I’m crying.”

* * *

You know, this is so dumb. I feel like an idiot just holding onto this tiny round part of you. It looks like a rock at this point — probably because I’ve been touching it so much.

You look just like the sand around us, and I think if I was more of a jerk than I already am, I probably would drop you off and let you lie with the rest of the dust.

“Don’t worry, I’ll get us out of here somehow.”

* * *

I’m still talking to you, even though you’re a pebble now. I’ve stopped touching to the best of my ability because I’m terrified that I’ll accidentally mistake you for another bit of sand or something. I’ve seen bigger rocks in the sand, but you know you’re always my favorite one — you’re the special rock in this massive sandbox kiddo.

Oh god, I’m really losing it now. See? This is why you should’ve stuck around longer.

I’m better at keeping track of my own limbs now. I haven’t lost a single one since I’ve had to carry you, ya know? Guess you taught me something too.

Ow, what the —

No....oh no. Please.

This can’t be happening. I worked so hard.

No.

I’m sorry, I’m so sorry.

Please don’t do this.

Please.

Oh god.

Don’t leave me alone.

* * *

You were never heavy, or a burden. You deserved better. I should've carried you the way you carried me. I didn't appreciate how close you were to breaking—you always seemed so strong before though?

What happened? You used to swing my arms off and chase them ahead of us. Now you can't even hold onto an eyelash?

* * *

I'm sorry, it's not your fault. It was my responsibility to take care of you. You were the little one, and it was my job to teach you. I should've been more careful and worked to understand more about the changes that were happening to both of us, so you and I could be better prepared.

Can you forgive me?

* * *

When was the last time I spoke out loud? I guess the last time I thought you might answer back.

“...H...hel...”

Welp, an attempt was made. I guess my mouth is too dry—woah.

My hands have been empty for so long—I didn't realize I'd forgotten what it was like to have something, anything in them, let alone the touch of someone else.

It's warm.

“Take your time and let your eyes adjust. You've done so well.”

I did? But you're gone now. Don't they realize that? You've disappeared. Completely lost in the sand.

Wait-

“It's the brightness that always gets you, but you're amazing!”

I'm not. I'm really not-

“Wait, hold on, we completely forgot-”

Why does everyone have to keep touching me? Where are we going?

“Here, sorry, oh jeez that's my bad.”

Oh.

“Ya took your time this round, didn't you?”

Oh, of course, how could I have forgotten?

“There you are sweetheart. We love you so much!”

Yes, I'm finally here.

It was a long walk.

I could use a nap.

“Welcome home.” ∞



JUDITH HENNING, AMELIE HENSEL, STEFFEN LARS POPP

Founding meeting of a climate parliament of all beings and non-beings:

A participatory performance project by metagarten & helpersyndrom, Hamburg + Offenbach

Any real hope in the crisis will have to come from below.

– Naomi Klein: This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate.

In practice we are all counter-revolutionaries: we try to understand the consequences of a revolution to minimize what happened without us, against us and at the same time through us.

– Bruno Latour: Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime



WHAT IF OUR ENVIRONMENT COULD SPEAK FOR ITSELF, if non-human beings were also given a voice to help shape the politics of our planet? What if all the beings that affect our climate came together for a consultation? Who or what would follow the utopian call? What would they argue and debate about and what concrete decisions would be made? By experiencing the conflicts of interest in the general assembly, will a “grand coalition for the Earth” come together?



Empathy and agency

It is no longer enough to just report on climate change. Rather, we must acknowledge that we face forces and modes of existence that respond to our actions — and take action themselves. Climate change and other ecological crises can only be stopped and reversed if we make a profound cultural change, towards a catalogue of universal basic rights; a natural contract that respects the needs of our whole earth and its evolution.

Yet, how to act for something that is itself such an incomprehensibly gigantic actor? As is well known, climate has a problem of representation: it is composed of “forces of unimaginable violence that represent unbearably close connections across immeasurable spaces in time and space.” (Amitav Ghosh).

Breaking through the fourth wall of this representation problem requires a fundamental change of perspective: For example, the four-year international CLIMART project¹ in Norway investigated the conditions under which people are willing to actually change towards a more climate-friendly behaviour in everyday life. In the “Pollution Pods” — a project to simulate the air situation in six very different cities — a concrete effect

of human actions on nature was made tangible, and the willingness to act against it increased with the physical experience of breathing polluted air. Creating specific empathy seems to be a crucial key to practical decision-making against climate change.

Please imagine this: You come back from your winter quarters in Africa for, say, the 12th, 13th, 14th time to your beloved, long-established nesting place, and then there's nothing there!!! Nothing at all. Torn off. Smudged. Renovated to death. And suddenly, from one moment to the next, your entire colony is homeless. And then? What to do? Where to move??

– THE SWIFT

Or take the work of the recently deceased French sociologist Bruno Latour: In several writings (e.g. *Modes of Existence*, *Facing Gaia*, *The Terrestrial Manifesto*) he developed another view on the agency of non-human beings and fought for ways to overcome the dichotomy of “nature” and “culture”. We still are a species that believes intuitively in a separation of soul and body. If the computer doesn't do “his” work properly, we shout at him as if it was a living creature — whilst we treat our animated environment as if it was a dead



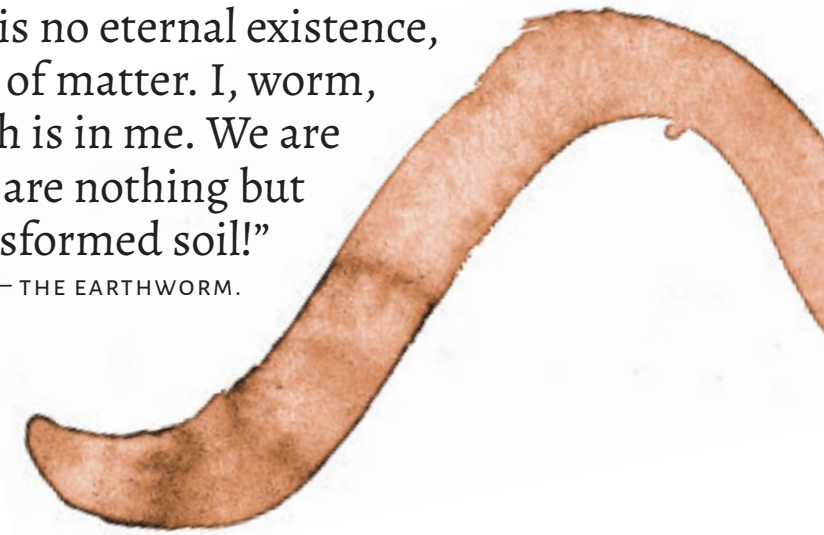
“For a few years
now, I've been
getting smaller and
smaller, less and less,
which scares me...”

— THE ICE



“There is no eternal existence,
there is only transformation of matter. I, worm,
am in the earth, the earth is in me. We are
in you and you are in us. You are nothing but
temporarily transformed soil!”

— THE EARTHWORM.



thing separated from us.

How to overcome misconceptions and depart from our anthropocentric point of view? “In Potawatomi — an indigenous language — all animals, plants and rocks belong to the same living world as we are, they are subjects, not objects and have their own pronouns.” (Robin Wall Kimmerer). For 99.99 % of the history of humankind we got along without having knowledge of pandemics or the climate crisis — we won't escape this without listening to our earthly fellows and finding ways to negotiate with them. With the Parliament of Things Latour created a groundbreaking theoretical framework for all of this. But so far, only a few have tried to put it into practice.

Animistic rediscoveries

This is where our two performance-art collectives “metagarten” (meta garden) from Hamburg and “helpersyndrom” (helper syndrome) from Offenbach (Germany) stepped in. We joined forces to bring together our diverse expertise in realising the participatory theatre project, Climate Parliament of All Beings.

In contrast to our hierarchical monotheistic culture, the Climate Parliament turns to animistic beliefs that emerged in the early

days of human beings, when we couldn't explain natural phenomena scientifically and looked for answers in the behaviour of our surroundings and interpreted the living vibes of animals, plants, stones as their souls, their inner richness. Playfully and very seriously we enter the secrets of other species, attempting to feel and express their needs and translate these into claims that even people today might understand.

The Climate Parliament opens up inclusion even beyond the boundaries of the species homo sapiens, and as the exchange takes place among the participants as well as the viewers, empathy grows for fellow beings and non-beings and awareness of one's own responsibility.

So far, our Parliament of Things and General Assembly of All Beings took place in Hamburg in 2020, in the Rhein-Main area (Bad Homburg, Frankfurt and Offenbach am Main) in 2022 — and even got a branch project in Thessaloniki, Greece, this year!

Questions of representation

The climate parliament process consists of two phases. The first phase is the acquisition of *ambassadors*, which unfolds as a kind of development of a social sculpture. An exhibi-

tion room is used as a *permanent representation*, a climate office with dedicated opening hours, from which we swarm out to find participants. Means of doing this are scouring researched and brokered contacts, press releases, ad placements, video-teasers, social media and billboard campaigns, search/find ads, and random peddling. Specifically, a human advocate is sought for each plurality of earthlings that is particularly relevant to the respective person or is very important to the local biotope. The main goal: writing a short speech (*appeal*), that can be held and discussed in the parliament assemblies.

*Even though this may sound indifferent or
cruel to the ears - isn't that what you call
it? — we are in favour of coexistence. The
representatives of us, whom you call
pathogens, would not like to do without you.*

— THE BACTERIA

By empathising with other creatures such as swifts, earthworms or even inanimate things like a car or nuclear power plant (the “non-beings”), the ambassadors speak out for a wide variety of needs and negotiate about compromises. Ideally, at the opening of the permanent representation, there will be an

impetus-giving lecture performance with a review of previous climate parliaments and an outlook on the process and local concerns.

In the office then prepared instructions for empathising with other beings can be found, and also wilderness awareness exercises, a detailed questionnaire for registering as an ambassador and a guide for writing the appeals. Additional workshops support participants in connecting with each other, finding a typical sound-representation for their being and designing an outfit or costume as an ambassador. Over a period of about three months to half a year, an overview of as many climate-relevant beings and non-beings as possible can be compiled and their concerns, alliances and conflicts mapped.

*For a few years now, I've been getting smaller
and smaller, less and less, which scares me.
I crystallise into a hexagonal crystal system, so
in parts I already exist as a snowflake or a hail-
stone, or when waters freeze. I have heard that I
appear most impressively as a glacier. — THE ICE*

As a socio-cultural project, the Climate Parliament is open to all people, and functions only through the participants' contributions, which are an integral part of the



Even though this may sound
indifferent or cruel to the ears...
we are in favour of coexistence.
The representatives of us, whom you
call pathogens, would not like to do
without you.

– THE BACTERIA

process. In Hamburg and the Rhein-Main area there were ambassadors from all ages, genders, mixed-abled, diverse, immigrants and localists; retired as well as working, pupils and students. The diverse mix enabled a meeting of different people who were able to give each other and the project many impulses. Crucial for us was the concrete personal approach to specific interest groups and grassroots movements, but also going out on the street, distributing flyers at various markets, participating in the climate strike, in order to initiate chance encounters as well as spread the word.

This phase closes with a staged press conference in which interim findings are announced, followed by a call to collectively find more ambassadors — in person or over the internet. “It frightens us more not to know, than to admit that we don’t know, for example what is the best way to deal with the climate crisis.” (Rebecca Solnit). With each human ambassador, who lends a non-human being their voice, he or she hits the road to not-knowing.

General assembly

In the second phase, one to three final *Found-*

ing Assemblies take place in each of which 12-14 ambassadors meet interested audiences to whom they make their appeals and with whom discussions and decisions are adopted. Each of the assembly sessions has a slightly different composition of those involved and therefore a different thematic focus. For each meeting an external initiator from local NGOs/grassroots movements is invited. In a short keynote speech these give suggestions for discussion topics or possible paths of action.

To make the representation of beings and non-beings as sensual as possible, the ambiguities in the pronunciation of cars, trees, bees, lichens, money flows, cows, solar systems, stones, winds etc. are translated by a sound designer/foley artist. To mark this as an important incumbency, we named him the PARR-Consultant (Psycho Acoustic Representation Resonance.) As our sense of hearing is the oldest of all our senses, it is not only our first contact with our surroundings, but also helps us to save ourselves from danger. Better safe than sorry! In the mesolithic age it could be deadly if a homo sapiens didn’t pay attention to a sound in the woods. And of course, when facing climate change, it is easier to

close our eyes than to put our hands over our ears. Thus the Climate Parliament becomes also a ritus that sharpens our senses.

In our case, Christoph Rothmeier was responsible for giving the performances, and the project as a whole, an acoustic framework and rhythmic punctuation, while Amelie Hensel and Steffen Lars Popp led the parliament protocol. In addition, Judith Henning and Annette Haunschild have been responsible mainly for the visuals: operating a live-cam and orchestrating the video-presentations. Also, a variety of *Present-Absent Beings* have been watching the assembly: strange and bizarre creatures alongside our categories of beings, but made from different earthly materials, playing the role of impartial election observers. They also give feedback, whether the mixture of attendees and their decisions can be counted more or less representational for all beings.

There is no eternal existence, there is only transformation of matter. I, worm, am in the earth, the earth is in me. We are in you and you are in us. You are nothing but temporarily transformed soil!

– THE EARTHWORM.



In the Climate Parliament sessions, demands of the various beings and non-beings are negotiated in a grassroots democratic manner, with the goal of forging a *Grand Coalition for the Earth* that concentrates the appeals down to the most important for all beings: into around ten final resolutions of the parliament. Through the descriptions of how beings are directly affected by each other, it becomes clear to participants and viewers that we live in a networked world and that changes in our modes of production and consumption are inevitable if livable environments are to be preserved for all beings. Individual beings in their unrestrained development would be harmful to others. As the restriction of one is outweighed by the better survival of the other being, a space is created in which renunciation of certain behaviours is a gain for the community. Acquisition and consumption of ever new consumer goods becomes less relevant compared to the positive feedback from the community of beings.

The participants are able to engage in controversial discussions in the safe space of the theatre, forming coalitions to advocate for the interests of the (non-)beings they repre-

sent. They take the experience of this trial action from the project into their everyday lives and their readiness for social change increases. At the same time, they experience democratic processes taking many detours, as well as being fun and potentially increasing their sense of self-worth.

“Utopian” and “real” politics

In another public act accompanied by the press, the demands and resolutions of these citizen council-like assemblies are handed over – on a symbolic level, but certainly with the intention that they be implemented — to “official” human politics. In Hamburg this has been the 2nd Mayor Katharina Fegebank. In the Rhein-Main area the 2nd Mayor of Frankfurt, Nargess Askandari-Grünberg and the 2nd Mayor of Offenbach, Sabine Groß. This is not about giving up utopian power to the mills of real politics — can there even be a higher earthly democratic institution than a *Parliament of all Beings and Non-Beings*?

NOTES

In 2021 the Climate Parliament of all Beings and Non-Beings has been prizewinner of the German Regional Network Points for Sustainability Strategies (RENN). In 2022 it was awarded the “1st Socio-Culture Innovation Prize” on

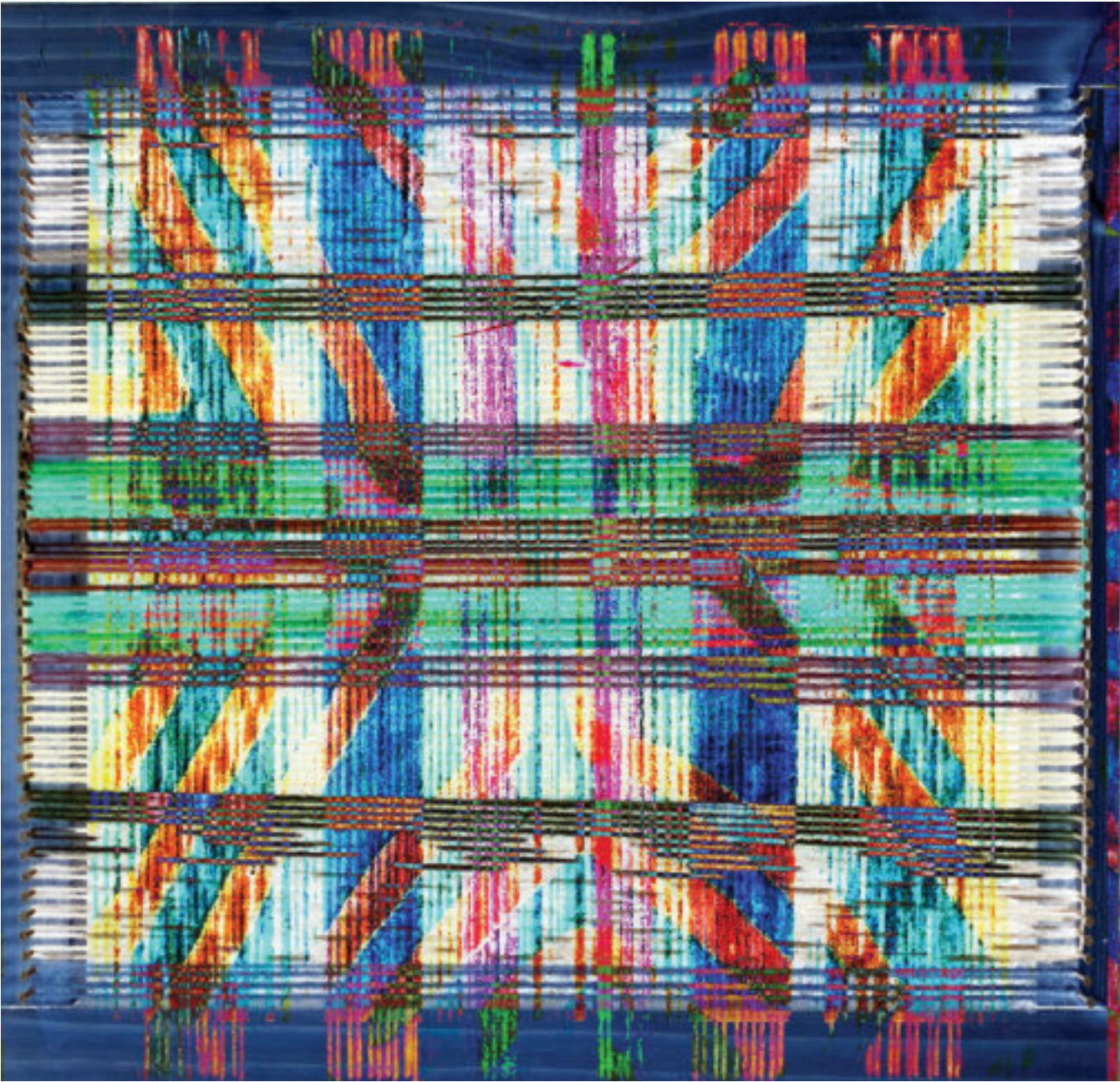
Though it is still an art project, it draws energy from the “what if” becoming reality.

To make this connection, a follow-up project is needed (let’s call it a realisation lab) in which the former ambassadors ask: “What resolutions of the Climate Parliament have been played out so far? What has gone lost between the decision and the realisation process and why? Which resolutions can be transacted locally, to give human politics the necessary kick in the ass? Let’s act them out with all the possibilities of allied grass-roots-movements!”

Spreading the idea of the Climate Parliament around and transferring it to more and more places and cities, implementing it into different social contexts like schools and other socio-cultural institutions, may help keeping the pressure on real politics from a basic perspective that aims between activism, art and playfulness — and thus reconnects people with each other — and with our earthly surroundings. ∞

the subject of sustainability by the German Fund of Socio-Culture. See www.klimaparlament.org

1 See www.climart.info



FRANCIS SALOLE > *The lost city of Chromos*
Handstitching, needleweaving and algorithms



< < < The GAIA journey continues –visual by Rachel Hentsch

MEMENTO 1: The GAIA journey continues

Animated scribing: <https://vimeo.com/user103724340/gaia>

On November 5th, 2020, over 800 people from more than 80 countries tuned into the online session that continued the GAIA journey (Global Activation of Intention and Action), launched by the Presencing Institute in April 2020. GAIA was improvised as an open and impromptu holding space, spawned by a deep need to connect with one another across the planet, to deal with change and disruption and to move towards a vision of society that we sense is possible: where our global web of connectedness can allow the reframing of individual actions from the context of a larger whole.

This animated scribing was born as a multi-layered, interactive, collective creation, which I drew during the live session, and into which I later integrated the recording of the piano improvisation by Antonio Moya-Latorre, as well as the participants' responses, read out by Antoinette Klatzky, to the art piece I had made. This piece was like a gift back to the community: one that reflects my journey of scribing, accompanied by the music, and by the many voices from the field. We made this all together, across time and distance.

RACHEL HENTSCH SPADAFORA

Big & small bubbles of quiet trouble: animated art around imaginings

THIS IS A SELECTION OF VISUAL MEMENTOS which today are re-coalescing into a new possible configuration that responds to the call for imagining 'what else might be possible'. They may be seen as invitations to start from the sticky, stinky, tangled messiness of where we find ourselves. Singly and together, they conjure alternative, interdependent, diverse 'nows' and 'thens.' They are humble, sometimes very intimate, gestures towards newly imagined psyches. These tiny trails of exploration might be a glimpse towards the healing that is buried so deeply inside relationship and context. Perhaps through artistic exploration (and surrender) we will be able to pop the big and small bubbles of quiet trouble that lull us into habituated apathy, and let the emerging gurgles take us to new places.



MEMENTO 2: What else is possible?

Animated scribing:

<https://vimeo.com/user103724340/caseclinic>

This animation was the fruit of a small group conversation that took place according to the "coaching circle" model, as taught in Theory U trainings, where the guided peer-learning process involves listening deeply and then responding to someone's story through the heart using gestures, sounds, colours and shapes — rather than through the head, and focusing on advice.

The generative conversation in question explored that type of work which often isn't counted, let alone celebrated. What is it possible to discover in the tears of a fabric stretched tight between stepping up to a professional calling, and the infinitely tender pull of younglings needing care and attention? Perhaps something else is possible, beyond the threshold of apparently super-wicked problems: there might be a place of possibility that needs to be reimagined, in order for it to be found.



tinyurl.com/54te3pwa

< See Substack piece on Rachel's animated art, with links to videos

Threshold (top) & Stepping up (bottom) – visuals by Rachel Hentsch

Rest, uncertainty and shifting horizons
visual by Rachel Hentsch



MEMENTO 3: Photography and narrative therapy

Animated scribing: <https://vimeo.com/user103724340/narrativetherapy>

The "Photography and Narrative Therapy workshop" was held under the umbrella of the Narrative Walks, an initiative by Yannis Angelis, whose intention it is to "gift beauty to people in a time when they need it so much." This offering featured narrative therapist Poh Lin Lee and photographer Grace Gelder.

Alongside other participants, I explored three figural themes in the global context of crisis and chaos: Rest, Uncertainty and Shifting Horizons. Narrative questions invited us to articulate moments in our current lives, and photography encouraged us to transform experience into imagery from our daily environment (home, garden.) We shared in story and dialogue, appreciating and attending to diverse experiences that spanned culture, language, legacy, place, age, and unique current inner and outer circumstances.

The experience left me with an urge to animate the emotions that were left bubbling inside me. Another pair of artefacts that were born out of the workshop are the poem, and its animation, below.

This piece of poetry (facing page) and its spinoff piece of animated art were spawned also by the Photography and Narrative Therapy workshop (described above) and is offered here as another imaginative, non-fiction, multispecies art inviting the reader and viewer into a world ifimaginings.

Poem reproduced here
with the permission of
Yannis Angelis



Untitled collective poem

Rest, concentrate,
light the light,
beauty of creativity & creative beauty;
the beauty of the wisdom and imagery emerging from our bodies.

Shapes of darkness rushing in the light
explore creativity.
Ask the body, it knows where the light falls.
Clarity and take a time and waste a moment!

Comfort and compassion in uncertainty,
controlled and uncontrolled shifts of boundaries escape,
spot, and follow the certain photo moment.
Fluid clicks of the camera
taking time for the moments of beauty that are always there, can make now more
peaceful, gives more strength for tomorrow.

The light shines in the dark.
Stay connected, it is possible!
...and already, the moonlight looks down upon our space from my window

Κύματα ανατροπών, κύματα αλλαγών, πότε φοβιστικά, τρομακτικά, πότε ήρεμα και
γαλήνια, χαλαρωτικά.... με μια γεύση ελπίδας να ατενίζω τον ορίζοντα.... waves of
change, waves of subversion sometimes scary and overwhelming and other times
peaceful and calm with a taste of hope I stare at the horizon
diving into the unlimited spaces

Photographs tell stories.
Photos and what is behind them, feelings, meanings, can give a lot to therapeutic
process.
Images and words to see myself again, to care, connect,
curiosity and playfulness.

Spoken images yet to be seen...

Trust your uncertainty
let light come in from the cracks.
In the cooling comfort shades of present the futures rests.

Movement is the thing... Giving time is the other thing ... You know there is always
another thing.

One image, one thousand words.

KIM SCHNUELLE

Communion

When the door shut
 and he left, swinging wide off the porch
 in morning commute,
 only then did she stir,
 lust-drunk
 from wild dreams
 of ammonite and peony rushes,
 tied back in sparkled braids
 of kelp and honey.

So recently
 in slumber
 she had been a fox falling high,
 spiked by branches
 of her rayless cedar lover.
 She yearned
 to hibernate winter long,
 never wanting
 the piercing to end.

Awake now,
 she stretched, bent in crescent,
 black with loss,
 and washed her face in the pocked basin,
 trying to sway her heart
 to belong here.
 Yet it was hopeless; she knew
 she could not remain
 inside this town of fallen trees.

So, with a rapture
 of bone and bended knee
 she broke over splintered fence lines
 to the misty field
 where, bowed in reverence,
 she tied her wedding ring to a blade of grass
 and ran
 into the lacuna
 of the forest.

Authorities searched for a week.
 Her husband was a suspect,
 though ultimately cleared.
 They say you can see her dance
 at low tide when the moon is full,
 and that her laugh
 allures unwary hikers.
 But she doesn't care at all
 about her own mythology
 and lies languid by the river bend,
 humming to wolves,
 washing the stars from her hair.

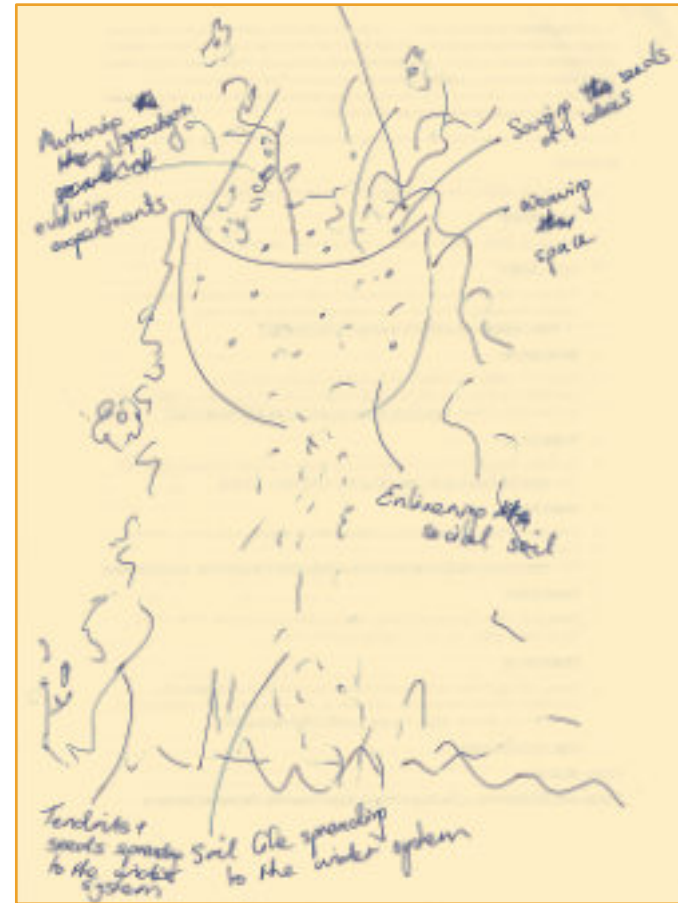
FIONA BROOKS AND JULIAN STILL

WEaving possibilities

FIONA – PERTH AUSTRALIA, GMT + 8: Julian and I met... let me see, it must be a couple of years ago, in the Warm Data community online. I felt a connection with him straight away, deeply appreciating his warmth, enthusiasm, intellect, experience, and creativity. After splashing around together in various sessions we began what became a pattern of catching up one-on-one via Zoom every few weeks. We allow the conversations to meander where they will, following whatever threads emerge in the moment, letting seeds of ideas grow, blossom, fruit and re-seed. I'd say our conversing has a direction but no destination. Life wanders through it, with Julian taking calls from his young school-bound son, or one or other of our partners appearing on screen and waving on their way through. Julian's bees are there, and his garden, my cats and my community. And a host of others, seen and unseen.

When the invitation to contribute to **unpsychology** arrived we thought it might be fun to attempt to capture a little of our conversational play. It's not easy. To what extent can you describe a growing tree by showing someone a small piece of its bark? But here we are, living with the essential inadequacy of words.

This thread originated in a conversation before we'd thought of contributing to the magazine. We were exploring space creation and holding, Warm Data, community, change making and the relationships between all of these. My mind often gives me visual metaphors and it presented me with a hanging basket. The basket is woven of many multi-coloured strips of soft felt, each of which contains a multitude of threads. This is the space holding. Inside the basket is the social soil of the participating group. I see Warm Data sessions as a variety of space-holding that nurtures this social soil, allowing a wider range of relationships and possibilities to form and coalesce, from which new ideas may sprout and grow. The resultant tendrils and their seeds then spread into the wider system, as does the enriched social soil as it trickles through the open weave of the basket. I sent Julian a rough scribble.



As a name, a 'pipordle' (picture-poem-wordle) seemed ok, and I've just noticed that Fiona has moved that to 'picordle'!

JULIAN – TOLLEMBEEK BELGIUM, GMT + 1: When Fiona and I met I had that sense, feeling, intuition that here was an important person for the future. I knew at a knowing level beyond conscious words that we had something to do together. No idea what or even how to express it. Our conversations are delightful, wonderful and full of exchanges where I feel understood and seen. We had been musing over the metaphor of weaving, and that life is complex because each thread is a context which is woven through all the other contexts, making it difficult to separate anything, and anyway the weave makes the thing, and the threads individually are meaningless.

Fiona told me about her basket image, floated the idea of creating something together for **unpsychology** and pointed out the upcoming deadline. So she sent me the first sketch, which I hadn't imagined like that at all. I sent back a basket woven with a hand written poem and some words, and my frustration at not getting any colour or flow. As a name, a 'pipordle' (picture-poem-wordle) seemed ok, and I've just noticed that Fiona has moved that to 'picordle'!

Unintended
consequences and
random chance
strike again...
Perhaps it
happened because
I have a cat named
Piccolo. Now that
I see what I've
done, I prefer
pipordle – some-
how I lost the
poem. Maybe the
cat ate it.

Fiona: Unintended consequences and random chance strikes again. I hadn't even realised I'd changed the name from pipordle to picordle. Perhaps it happened because I have a cat named Piccolo. Now that I see what I've done I prefer pipordle — somehow I lost the poem. Maybe the cat ate it.

Julian's picture-poem-wordle was quite different from what I'd expected. It was a bit hard to read — my eyes are losing their elasticity and even with my glasses and a little magnifier I found I had to peer at the words and puzzle them out. Some of the words felt warm and welcoming, some hard and spiky. My initial knee-jerk response was to set up a time to talk and sort out our differences so we could make an agreed creation, but that felt...icky. Controlling. Too conscious-purposey. I was curious to see what might happen if we each continued creating whatever came to us, informed by the other's sharing and not constrained by it.

I stirred Julian's delicious word/poem idea into a version of my original picture. Sadly, neither of us are artists, and my hands aren't able to adequately convey what my mind can see and my heart can feel. I turned to software which felt less organic but at least was clearer. What I'd really have liked was to weave a basket and fill it with soil and seeds and plants and words, or to make a collage.

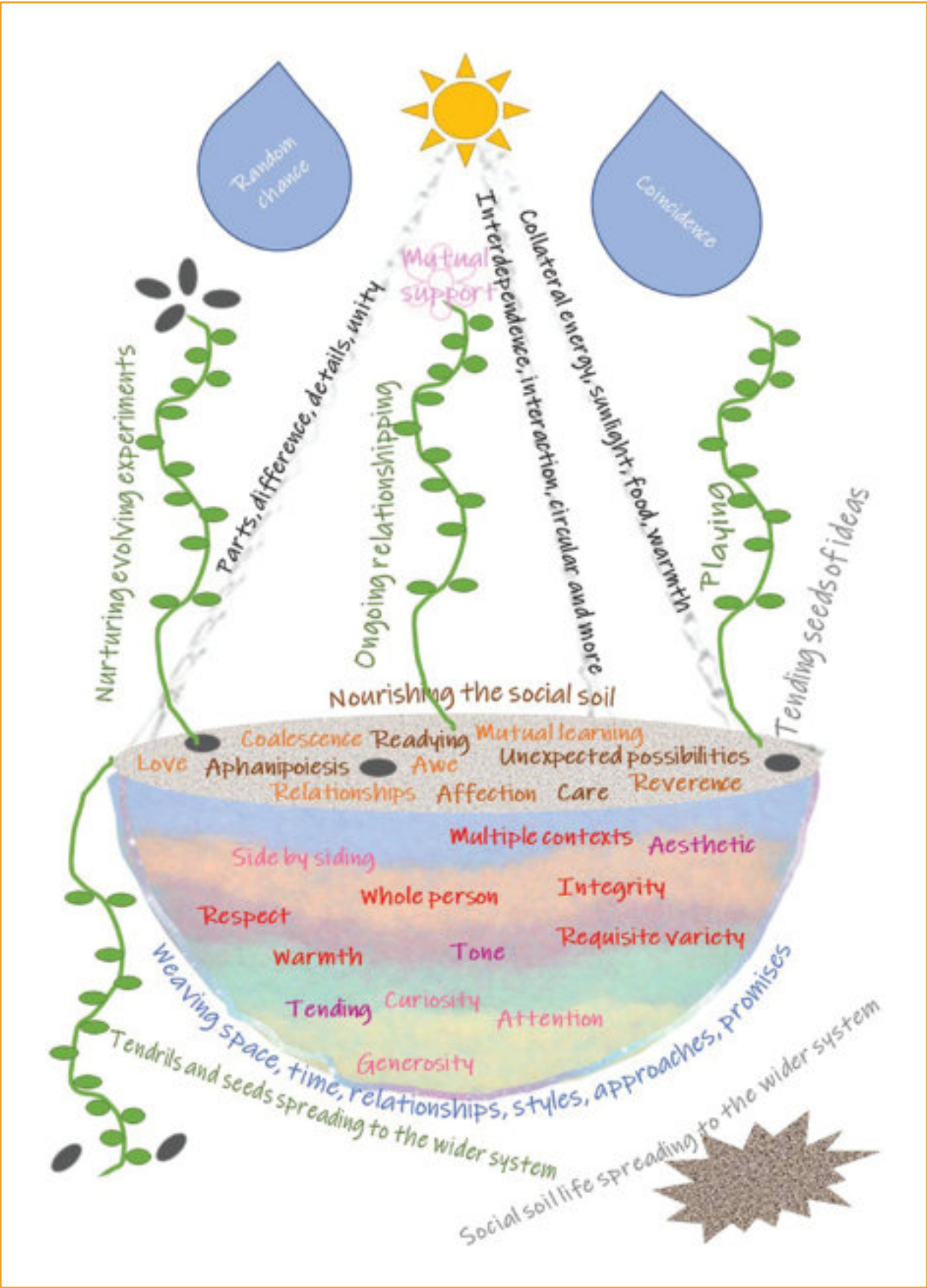
I sent the picture to Julian and waited to see what might happen next. When I hadn't heard back after a little while I reached out again.

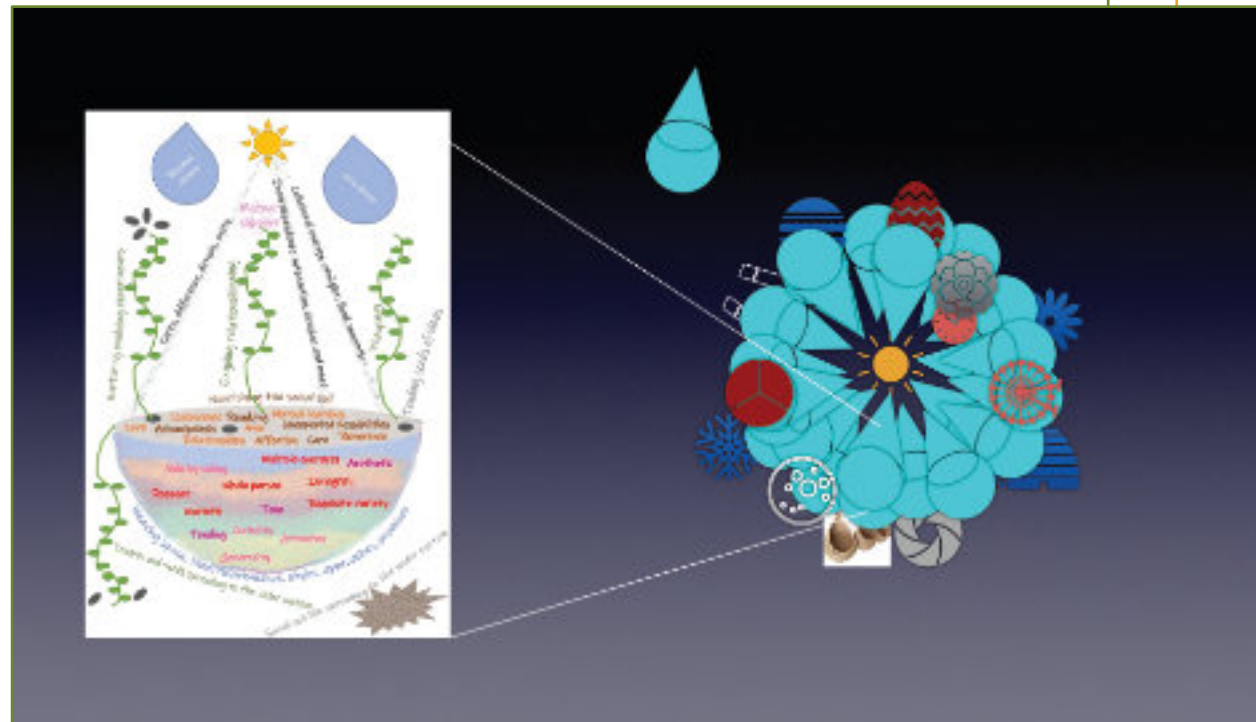
JULIAN: I'd been feeling a bit down, overwhelmed and low on energy, and Fiona suggested an impromptu chat to see if we would continue or just hit pause. Conversation with Fiona has an awakening effect on my energy, and it was clear that we should go with a slightly modified version of her coloured pipordle basket, and maybe send in all the stages of its creation, even the corona molecule view showing this basket as one among many — ideally in three dimensions — if I could make that work.

This proved too much for my Keynote (PowerPoint) skills. What I can see and feel inside me is a vast universe of baskets, with all sorts of 'oddballs' growing amongst them. 'Oddball' could be a judgemental word, but being one myself it's just an adjective to show that there may be some kind of average or norm, that certainly seems so when seen from a distance, but there is also space for things which are a long way from the mean. I really need some fractal graphics to get the infinite zoom feel, again way beyond my skill set. These baskets can be seen at all levels from the Pico to the Meta, changing as the perspective changes but always recognisable as woven baskets, holding, influencing and nurturing life.

And this text started out as just a few words to give some background, but Fiona found out that it wanted to be much more than that.

So this is a glimpse into a process of being surprised by what the other person has imagined and allowing what you had seen to be replaced or





changed by this image, thought, creation, and going to the next image.

This is a beginning; can we do this with three or more? How important is this emergent sense of a relationship creating something rather than an individual? Firstly, it's great fun, it's also satisfying, and its purposes may become clearer at the end, if there is one, maybe.

Music would be cool too, and more story perhaps? Mmmmm. ~

We're curious whether anyone would like to join our exploration, perhaps (but not necessarily) someone who has more artistic skills. What might that relationship create?

If you're interested, here we are!

JULIAN: julian@humanmycelia.life

FIONA: fiona@threefoldconsulting.com.au

WARM DATA: <https://batesoninstitute.org/warm-data/>



<https://tinyurl.com/Improv14>

ZEYNEP NISAN ULUG

Disappearing dystopia

TIME SEEMS TO NEVER PASS. Maybe it makes fun of me, how miserable I am. Time may or may not choose to pass and I cannot do anything about it. One day, the water may choose to dry out and all I can ever do will be to stay put and spectate. If my eyes go blind, will I have any other choice rather than embracing the darkness? Not one thing is particularly interesting or important. Everything, including me, will lose its meaning and all we can do is to wait and eventually become a part of this mechanism by losing ourselves and everything else, the sequence unknown.

The sun never sets lately. She is always up there. I feel the sunshine burning my skin ever since the last time the sun set. There is anger in her glitter. Some kind of mourning... and seeking revenge. She prefers to keep calm while the whole place goes nuts. I like to think she is the most sensible one. I definitely am not. Even the moon is more reasonable than me, though she is really emotional. Hold on! I haven't seen her lately, since the sun never Oh, dear moon. That must've been the reason. Her relationship with sun was always so special. Time to time, we all envied the bond between them. Poor sun, she probably is hurting a lot.

Seeing each of them leave all of a sudden and knowing it will keep going like this until not even one thing will remain here is suffocating. I can feel the narrowing circle around my breath; yet, I cannot fight it. Is it only me who can't resist, or is everybody aware that there is no escape? If so, how do they make peace with the fact that any second now, they can just dissolve into thin air? Every second feels like a gift and a torment. Anything you do is in vain here. No possibility of continuance for any, nor any meaning in hoping you can leave behind a piece of you to be remembered by. How to be remembered when there will be no one left to remember?

I always thought the sun and the moon would be the last ones to go. Never once thought that one would be gone so early when there are still plenty of us to go. I wish I could hope that, for her sake, the sun would not suffer here anymore — that she would be gone before all of us — but I can't, I can't hope that and I don't hope that, because as much as I want to think of her — though I never really knew her — when she's gone, this place will become much more of a hell than it already is. Can you imagine a world without the moon AND the sun? Where, literally, light is nowhere to be seen and all the plants start to rot, the water no longer shimmers and the wind gets colder and colder.

I just made my peace with the reality of right now, please don't take that away too! Take me, rather than letting me live another day in vain and obscure promise of hope. "Take me" I would say if I could make sure I would be the last to be gone. To live here, like this, without knowing what the upcoming minute can take away from you, can there be a crueler life?

But I have made my peace, since it is the only way to lighten my thoughts, to accept my fate and let it all go; like we had any other choice. After all, I'm just a tiny rock, left under the water, my bottom side slowly turning green and the lake flowing over me. ∞

vely appearance. Vorticellidæ with ciliary motion use small circular currents, and little shrimp-like animals dash across, and give additional life to the culture. With a good one-inch object-glass, and with the spotted lens, we may obtain a sight the beauty of which I have rarely seen surpassed. The stems of the polypes with the diatoms *in situ* are easily prepared as permanent objects, and are a desirable addition to the cabinet. C. B.

A CHAPTER ON CUTTLE-FISHES.*

By LUCIE L. HARTT.



Fig. 167. *Octopus vulgaris*.

[T was during my first visit to Brazil that one day, while busily engaged in examining a reef at a little town on the coast, called Guarapary, my eye fell on an object in a shallow tide-pool, packed away in the crevice of the reef, which excited my curiosity. I could see nothing but a pair of very bright eyes; but concluding that the eyes had an owner, I determined very rashly to secure him. I had been handling corals, and seemed to have forgotten that all the inhabitants of the sea are not armless. I put my hand down very quietly, so as not to ruffle the water, when suddenly, to my surprise, it was seized with a pressure far too ardent

arms were wound around my hand, and these, by the way, were covered with rows of suckers somewhat like those with which boys lift crabs, and escape from them was almost impossible. I knew that this fellow's sucking propensities were not his worst ones, for these cuttle-fishes are furnished with sharp jaws, and they know how to use them too, so I attempted to get rid of him. But the rascal, disengaging one slimy arm, seized it about my left hand also, and I was a prisoner. In vain I struggled to free myself; he only clasped me the tighter. In vain I showed my companion,—he had wandered out of his hole. I was momentarily expecting to be bitten, when the "*bicho*" suddenly changed his mind. I was never able to discover whether he was smitten with remorse and retired with amiable intentions, or whether he only yielded to the force of circumstances. At any rate, he suddenly relinquished his hold upon my hands and dropped to the bottom. Then, raising himself on his long slimy arms, he stalked away towards the water, making a very comical figure that in spite of my embarrassment, I in a hearty laugh.

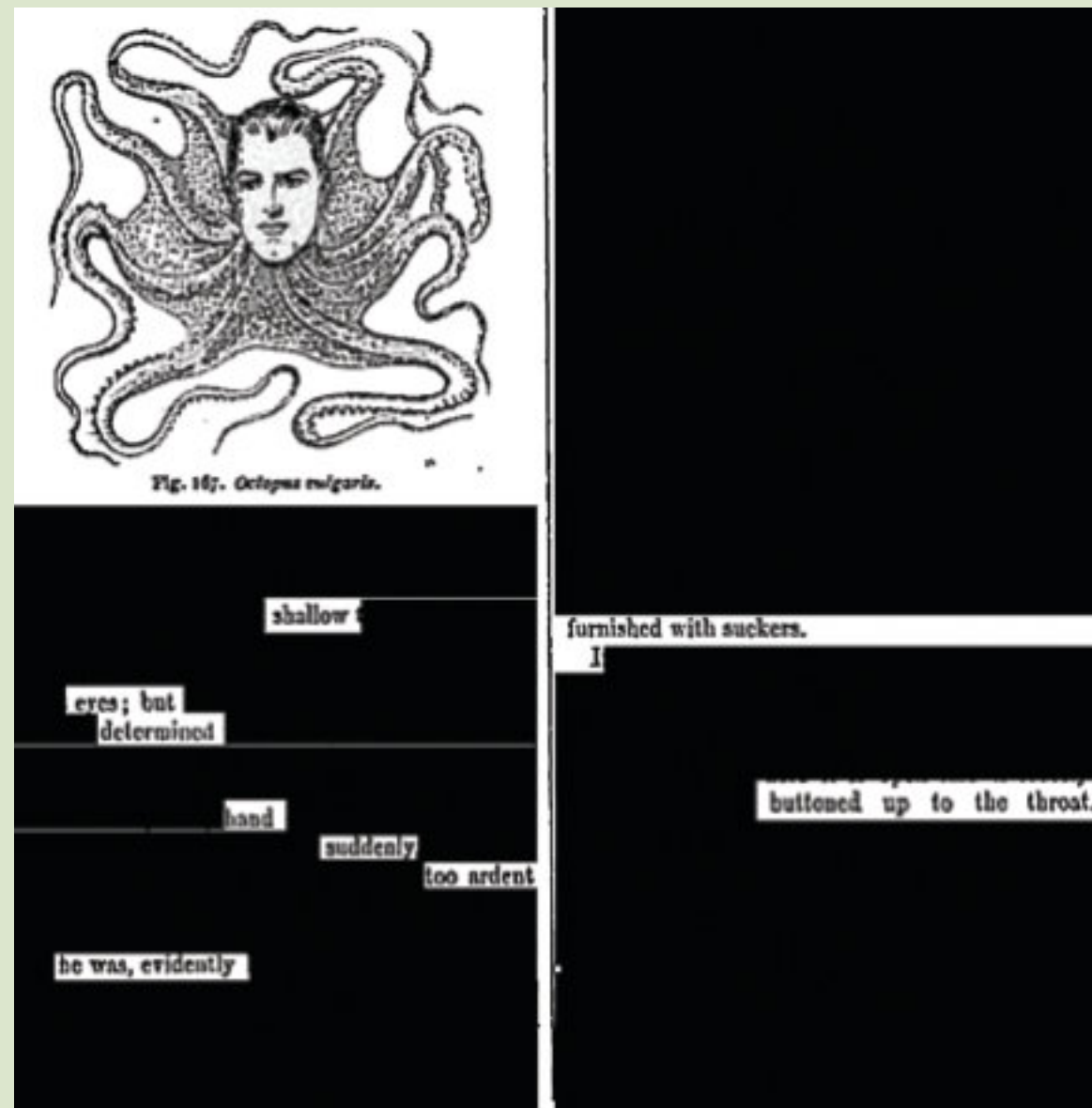
very tipsy spider, and very long legs.

The cuttle-fish is one of the animals of the animal kingdom, the members being known as the *Saccata*. Mr. Hyatt has written of *Saccata*. It differs from all the other animals, &c., by having a large head, and a mouth furnished with a pair of jaws, which are arranged in a circle eight or ten in number, and furnished with suckers.

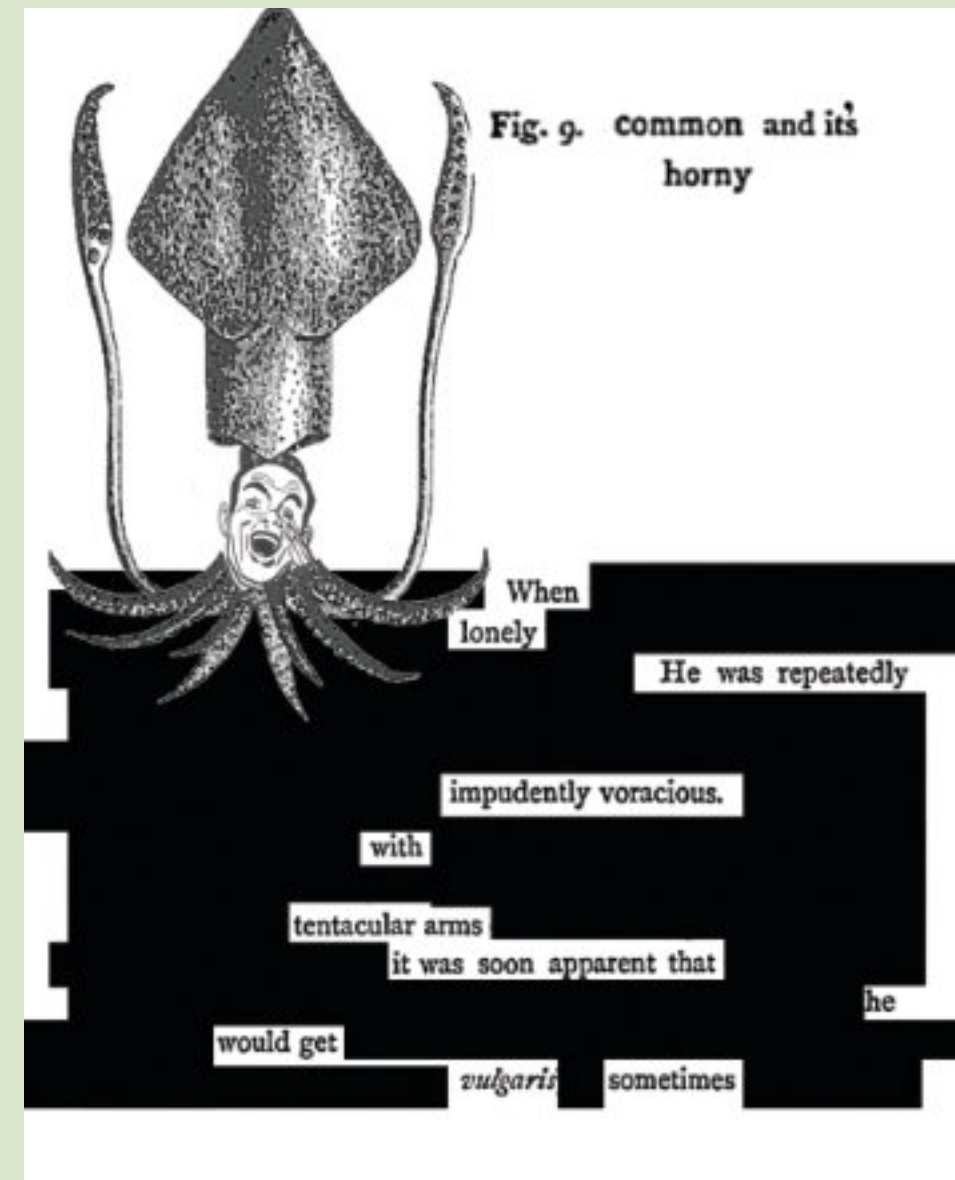
In the common cuttle-fish or squid of our seas, the body, which is long and narrow, is wrapped in a muscular cloak or mantle, like a bag, which is tightly to the back, but loose in front. It is open up to the neck, where it is open like a collar, and is fitted with a fitting overcoat, buttoned up to the throat. Attached to its throat, by the middle, is a tube, open at both ends. This tube, or siphon,

L. M. COLE

Visual poems/
erasure



Vulgaris alright



But only sometimes



We bubble our breath and
blow it at the sky; filled every
pinhead of space; inhaled
deeply again. Stars are proof.
We are in a maze of a city –
beautiful, vital, purposeful,
daring and curious.
The city has just
exerted itself.
Then everything
runs backwards.

Dreams, shadows and strange puzzles of the city

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- + *Within and between: the art of* LUKE HOLCOMBE,
the music of PATRICK CARPENTER & THE IMAGININGS ENSEMBLE

< *This poem combines
fragments from the
authors in this
section ... find a spoken
version here:*



tinyurl.com/section4foundpoem2



LUKE HOLCOMBE

OZ HARDWICK

Poems

Postdiluvian

Before the flood we sealed ourselves in bottles with the things that mattered – non-perishable food, birdsong, and the memory of our parents’ voices – so that when it came we were ready for whatever it would do with time and space. I’d read something about perception in *The Problem Child’s Book of Experiments* a long time ago in a dentist’s waiting room, though I’d been more interested in how to make a volcano from a tin can and visions of the Apocalypse. What I did remember, though, was that everything is simultaneous, and that it’s just a matter of allowing your eyes to lose focus until you can hold infinity in the palm of your hand and eternity in an hour. We floated for a million years, living on rice and birdsong, and the waves sang us to sleep and called us to get ready for the day’s lessons in the voices of our parents. We learned about the Apocalypse and we learned how to take care of ourselves and each other. And then it was over, and green glass became green grass, and everything grew in its own idea of time. I’m not much older, not much wiser, but I know exactly what to do next time the world ends

Perseverance

Because I couldn't leave the house, the house left me, with its sturdy shoes and a jumper wrapped round its waist. It took the notes from my wallet but left me with my bank cards and a handful of change, and it took the bread and cheese but left a cupboard full of tins arranged in Best Before order. At first, of course, I missed it like a phantom limb, reaching for comfort I couldn't touch, but soon it became the ache of a faithless lover, then the sadness of a strayed dog and, finally, the inconvenience of a dropped glove or the minor irritation of a misplaced apostrophe. Friends remained concerned, Skyping in from around the world to fret over my resignation as I sat beneath a pound shop umbrella on a square of waste ground strewn with mismatched furniture, though I reassured them that my books were safe beneath polythene sheets and that, when the sky cleared, I had never felt so close to the stars, and that some nights I could see Perseverance trekking across the surface of Mars, and that that was surely a lesson for us all. Now and then, I receive postcards from the house, but they're getting less frequent and the writing is less clear. The last one was postmarked Mars.

Transit

Comets come by, casual as Sunday cyclists, waving their tails like music. Snug in woollen blankets, we bubble our breath and blow it at the sky. At a molecular level, there are complicated calculations on infinite fingers and scratchy chalkboards, a deafening clatter of stiff comptometers, and a scab-kneed schoolboy running through rubble with a scrap of fluttering foolscap bearing everything in ones and zeros. In the symbolic realm, gods dress up as trees and swans, the Moon is a benign parent, and all these transitory bodies are the things we apprehend but don't fully understand. We pass along a flask of steaming dreams, sipping the draught of cosmic dust. In general terms, everything is as it should be as we wave goodbye to the comets for another five to ten years.

Adjusting to the flux

Ear to the gravel-strewn ground, I'm listening for my grandfather's advice concerning points of temporal flux. Recent research suggests that, as sure as night follows day, we can no longer assume that night will follow day, day will follow night, or sheep will follow their leader. Though he'd only a layman's interest in cosmology, Granddad knew his sheep – Swaledale, Shropshire, Kerry Hill, and so on – so I hope for wise words concerning the chaos. Quoting Churchill, he tells me that, without tradition, art is a flock of sheep without a shepherd; then, quoting Braque, he reminds me that, while science reassures, art is meant to disturb. Pickling a sheep in formaldehyde is neither, he tells me, and I can hear him spit and turn in his grave. And here he is, the age I am now, not so much as a day or a night between us, handing me a sheaf of poems and sketches, and a broken watch which recent research suggests may be right 24 hours a day. He takes out his chromatic harmonica and, though my ear's full of gravel, I can hear time reconfiguring its sense of self as he breathes in, then out.

Love in the asteroid belt

It's 2052 and the robots are in the attic, silent as stuffed mice. They've been there since before any of us were born and I sometimes think our parents' parents' parents must have found them there, hovering, and just built the house beneath their feet. I don't know what they do up there but their silence is reassuring, steady as the hand that keeps me from drifting away. When I was a child, I believed I could hear them whispering amongst themselves, sharing their sad but hopeful dreams of warm bodies and the scent of tangerines, but when I told my mother she said it was just the stars as they brushed across the roof. One night she showed me, waking me in darkness and easing me onto the windowsill to watch bright spirals stroke the top of the city, before floating me back to bed by the breath of soft song alone. This is what I picture when I think of love: my silent mother with the robots in the attic, eyes closed and smiling.

TEMPIST JADE

Pandemonious revelations: the terra-fying mystery of belonging

“You will be torn apart on the wheel, I am a stag with seven tines, I am a flood on a plain, I am a wind over the deep water, I am a hawk on a cliff, I am a tear in the eye of the sun, the transformation is inevitable, reincarnation, release.”

– The Song of Amergin, Author unknown

“You are conditioned to be in desperate need of a future.” – Alan Watts

“Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, there is a field. I’ll meet you there. When the soul lies down in that grass, the world is too full to talk about. Ideas, language, even the phrase ‘each other’ doesn’t make any sense.” – Rumi

IS DEATH AN EXPLOSION of creative potential? Feeling my way along the edges of my embodied imagination, I wonder what it must be like to be a dying star. To reach a point in one’s life where all your living collapses in and your outer layers supernova, everything surrounding you incinerated. Spewing your body across galactic space, paving the way for the next generation while violently planting stellar seeds of dust and gas. How do stars experience their celestial impact? Far eclipsing humanity’s existence, do their long lives offer them a more expansive understanding of and trust in the cycles of creation and destruction? While humanity’s relationship with the more-than-human world is historically and presently diverse, it is undeniable that our species, like all life-forms, is impactful. Our

behavioral range, informed by narratives of belonging, remains a consequential evolutionary note, the effects of which play a significant role in the Earth’s current sixth mass extinction.

Taking a cue from our stellar kin and the moral spaciousness we afford them alongside other life-forms with immense destructive capability, I wonder how we might reorient the perception of humanity’s destruction, and its relationship with creation. And doing so long enough to make ourselves available to other possibilities that might otherwise be veiled by the virtues of fixity and preservation. To be sure, this is not a journey into saviorism, nor is it an attempt at imagining a future guaranteeing a place for humanity. It begs the question, if we are not here to save the world and inde-

terminately perpetuate our species, what other purposes await our trembling hearts and radicalized souls? Wondering in this way requires a great stretching of our understanding of time, and we must be willing to speak with vibrant ghosts lighting up the night. By comparison to the lifespan of a star, we humans are but a distant dream living inside the entangling bodies of ancestors who have long since slipped across the veil. Stargazing then is a mystical practice of speaking with the dead, and our ancestors are proof of such astronomic lingualism. Not all light that reaches us across our cosmic sea is reflective of a current life, and the night sky is a haunting presence.

Stars are proof that death is faster than the speed of light. By the time some stars stretch their electromagnetically radiated souls through the womb of space, our eyes are imbibing luminous phantoms. Remnants of their previous forms sparkle with the magik of an ancient wisdom felt in the most tender regions of our hearts. They glisten with a truth that burns; a truth that seems to eat up all the air in our lungs, making space for grief to deliver us home; a truth that burdens us with the agony and, just as often, enchantment of dreaming with a universe bustling with uncertainty, and the promise of our inescapable demise. Our stellar kin remind us that destruction is inevitable, and death crucial for transformation and the ongoingness of life.

For nearly three years, stargazing became a regular, middle-of-the-night ritual inspired by a relentless dance with the disorienting magnitude of these times. Already struggling through the shifty territory of personal transformation and the countless psycho-spiritual deaths and births inherent to such a mystical journey, that ritualized restlessness overwhelmed the remaining vestiges of my resistance. As an eco-mystical guide, my own journey was, and continues to be, heavily informed by the intersection of ancestral hybridity and motherhood. Cellular memories, imbued with the trauma of displacement and genocide, amplified the already profound vulnerability of a piece of my heart walking around outside of me, falling in love with the world. This

crucible left me further exposed to the unbearable losses of a world undergoing riotous, breathtaking, and gut wrenching change. The abounding destruction not only brought into question the survival of my multi-specied kin, but also the survival of my own child. Breaking down the well-worn narratives that guided my way of belonging to the world, this tension further rubbed the already nervy landscape of my lament. I responded with desperate attempts to save the world so my child would have a future. This also led to unsuccessful finger-pointing, my own heroic efforting to stave off the growing feeling of inevitability. Eventually the activitsms I relied upon as response to the endless ecological and paradigmatic collapse began to waver.

Over time, my beloved answers and solutions also collapsed, as I grappled with the realization that I could not protect my child from such grave uncertainty—a truth my own ancestors were no strangers to. Spiritually exhausted and stumbling to the edges of certitude, when sleep called out to me the dreamtime offered no relief. Meticulously delivering me to disturbing and initiatory terrain, I would jolt awake next to my two-year-old creature, breathing heavily from fear’s permeation. Panic would slip its sharp fingers through the space between my ribs, massaging stellar truths deep into my heart. Terrorizing verities prophesying unpredictable futures that shook me like a rattle, summoning images of a world without whalesong, ravens, flowing rivers, chickadees, summer rainfall, humming pollinators, fecund soil, and blooming yarrow. All the while, my ancestrally inherited eyes would reach out through the west window, traversing vertebral mountains enveloped by the night to convene with the stars. The moon of course made inconsistent appearances over these lands that were once an interior seaway. Where the elk and deer now roam, mosasaurs and plesiosaurs once swam. Collaborating across the webbing of time, those luminous orbs and extinct giants spun unruly shadows of possibility from the sinew of my confusion.

Night after night, I would surrender my bewildered body to the dexterity of a power so ancient it

took me several years to fully grok what or, rather, whom I was offering my tender attention. Given many appellations, each holy iteration belongs to a greater pancultural tradition of worship honoring an irrefutable cosmic principle: khaos. Known by my Egyptian ancestors as Set, they “represent the good and bad, fear and reverence, as one and the same thing” which is “the life of the world”¹ For my Greek ancestors, this pluralizing entity is imaged as a horned hybrid whose name begins like a kiss on my lips and curves upward leaving my tongue to rest at the roof of my mouth: Pan. So linguistically related are Set and Pan, one might say “they are the same thing.”² Both are deified representatives of a multiplicitous “all” that articulates through endless assemblages of relationship ebbing and flowing through the tides of death and destruction.

These ancestral and linguistic kin delighted in taking all manner of bi- and quadri-pedal forms while stalking me through dreams. Beseched by the musk of my existential anguish, they gnawed at the umbilicus of my certainty. Set loose, I drifted far past the regions of the known with pandemonious exhales filling the sails of my soul. Directionless, I had to surrender myself to the ever-shifting currents of Pan-ic towing me through the ocean of Khaos. This meant sacrificing nearly all reliable stories tethering me to a familiar shore, and though I forget from time to time, surrender is a spiritual muscle essential to mysticism; a practice of remaining present with the fertile ground of what-is-so, so as to cultivate receptivity toward the inevitability of change.

Minimized as it has been in our more modern times to superstition or magical woo woo, mysticism is a relational pathway to connect with divine realities weaving and unweaving our enigmatic existence. From the Midewiwin (Abenaki) and the Gnostics to the Taosists and the Eleusynian Mysteries of the Greeks, all peoples of the world have spiritual roots within mysticism, though the word itself owes its etymological origins to the Greeks. Derived from the word “mystery” which comes from the Greek *māō* (μαῶ), this word literally means “to shut

one’s eyes.” As an invitation to “see” with other faculties, mysticism invites us to listen attentively to the ineffable. Embodied and receptive, this quality of listening renders us accessible to transformation and reinforces the significance of what we are listening to and for.

While often associated with the metaphysical, mysticism maintains an older, and often forgotten, relationship with materiality commonly referred to as “eco-mysticism.” Entwined with animism, this mystic channel of enquiry is guided by the wisdoms and intelligences of an enlivened matter, engaging our embodied imaginations in a conversation with the more-than-human, past and present. Mycelium, rocks, volcanoes, dinosaurs, stars, trees, grasshoppers, viruses, whales, bacteria, and rivers become holy places of absorption, out of which our reconfigured consciousnesses e-merge with stunning revelations; new possibilities of understanding that shift the shape of our belonging, inviting untold stories to proliferate through re-purposed participation.

Over the last several hundred years, mysticism has endured the criticisms of the scientific revolution, with Cartesian and Newtonian philosophies circumscribing phenomena and reducing complex and dynamic relationships. Denounced as an unviable and unreliable pathway of knowing, it has been overshadowed by reductive certitudes that have become a pseudo-remedy for the malaise experienced by many who have forgotten how to engage the endless territory of the unknown. I suspect one reason for this is that the larger mystery of existence overwhelms the senses, leaving many stranded and groping in the dark. And yet, a vibrant love affair with Mystery dwells deep in our ancestral cells: a living memory whose resiliency articulates itself through our dreams and imaginations. Perhaps it’s because, deep down, we know of its great necessity in navigating an ever-changing universe of which we belong and comprise.

Arguably, these times are a clarion call, imploring Mysticism’s cyclic return. Though we have numerous well-worn narratives guiding our actions, it is clear

that many are crying out for alternative ways of understanding what lies before, around, beneath above, behind, and ahead of us. While many of our world’s activisms make honorable attempts to address the growing complexity and increased needs of all species, efforts remain bogged down by the weight of ineffectual reason and stubborn fixity. Cerebral strategies become inadequate, here, as more gestalt approaches are needed in order to dance with the enfolding and unfolding mystery.

Where analytical thinking falls short, mysticism picks up the slack, welcoming us home to the somatic wisdoms ready to spring like the green shoot germinating in the darkness of our experiences. As a practice that facilitates spiritual apprehension believed otherwise inaccessible to the more regulated intellect, mysticism invites us to submit our small narratives of belonging and conceptions of individualism to the ground of multiplicity and paradox. And what better a paradox to do so than the one brought alive by the dance between destruction (Khaos) and creation (Kosmos), and its current extinctive amplifications.

My own relationship with these two cosmic principles stretched during pregnancy and birth. Becoming a mother connected me more intimately with creation, and bound me to a kind of loss whose looming possibility still occasions a ferocious fragility invoked through destruction and death. Having split open my hips as well as my heart, I was left forever exposed to more virulent strains of belonging. Strains that had been laying dormant within my soul, making regular visitations at night within the dreamtime.

Dinosaurs, lipoterns (hoofed mammals), eurhinodelphids (long-snouted dolphins), and otodontidae (sharks — past as well as present), to name a few, seduced and stalked me with gentle eyes and fearsome intelligence, for years, within the dreamtime. These ancestral apparitions transmitted inaudible wisdoms not subject to linear conceptions of time. Their very presence laid claim to my existence, and folded me back into a more ancient family of everything. Eventually, their visitations stretched beyond

the realm of my sleep, seizing my attention with unexpected visions bearing messages belted from the mouth/s of a “multiply unified, multiply divided, constantly evolving multiplicity.”³ Destruction’s incantations rumbled across their tongues, casting spells that trans-mutated my understanding of the Earth’s current circumstances, and, as a result, the nature of my belonging.

My fervent attempts at trying to preserve and ultimately control the direction of the Earth’s unfolding met their final blow while driving one day down a tree-lined road with my young one. Peering out the window, my eyes settled upon a raven whose guttural cries tore open the fabric of time, landing me in the visionary presence of Jurassic ancestors. The potency of their appearance, translated through absence, pierced my body with the knee-dropping love of an “un-totalizable and shapeshifting”⁴ world — a world whose previous iterations made mine and my child’s existence possible. Bewildered by the profundity that had slipped through the seemingly mundane routine of my day, my whole body surrendered in wonderment of who would get to exist because I no longer did?

That very question plucked a string in the webbing of time, sending out a chord whose notes reverberated through the bodies of unknown future ones gestating like a dream in my life, as well as my child’s. An emergent dream that will one day be made manifest because of our hallowed absence. No longer allured by saviorism’s propaganda, I had stepped beyond the ideological walls of right-doing and wrong-doing, and joined Rumi in a field of possibility where saviorism could not take root. It was here that I began to look upon humanity’s destructive behavior with fresh eyes and renegade questions.

Though destruction and death are essential to life, saviorism exhaustively vilifies both, birthing easy evils and valiant heroes from the womb of institutionalized moralisms. And while saviorism efforts to transcend impermanence, mysticism embarks upon a very different venture, one that asks our imaginations to abandon the safe and stuffy con-

fines of lawful prescriptions. With space to breathe and stretch, our curiosity is given the opportunity to engage the complexity of circumstance from other undervalued senses, conjuring forth a more feral body of knowing whose organismic intelligence enables discernment and relational depth. Experience sheds its garments of inherency as the reductions of “good” and “bad” unravel, exposing our tender and attentive bodies to the primordial love-making of Khaos and Kosmos.

Reintroducing these cosmic principles as erotic counterparts, rather than forces imbued with negation, enables a conscious setting down of current narratives — not as a means of escape from discomfort and pain, but rather as a means for developing greater intimacy with ourselves and the world. Often interchangeable with birth and death, creation and destruction are neither inherently good or bad. And yet, modern times are saturated with the fear of death, and the persecution of destruction. That might seem an incongruent statement given how much death and destruction is being wrought as we witness and feel the implications of ecologies collapsing, genocide perpetuating, war mushrooming, poverty gripping, sickness proliferating, refugees asylum seeking, and economies extracting. Bear with me, and dare to look again, and again, taking your time as needed when facing what is gruesome and terrifying, perhaps even unimaginable at first. Let your looking become a listening inspired by the darkness that, as Rilke once wrote, “holds it all: the shape and the flame, the animal and myself, how it holds them, all powers, all sight.”⁵

Destruction is a universal force, enacted through endless bodies of power. Varying in size and scale, destruction has a range. Whether it be stars dying, mycelium breaking down rock, volcanoes erupting, photosynthetic bacteria producing oxygen, tsunamis engulfing, galactic centers exploding, or storms raking the land, destruction is unavoidable. More specifically, and perhaps more difficult to embrace, it is necessary for life’s continued evolution. Particularly when it comes to the destruction generated by human hands, which many within

environmental movements unquestionably deem ‘unnatural.’ When other life-forms destroy, they are often assumed to be within their natural rights. Perhaps this is an unexamined byproduct of mechanistic paradigms that position the Earth and Universe as inanimate, and therefore unintelligent and lacking agency. I suspect our mystic ancestors would balk at such a belief.

Human-centric and -exceptionalistic narratives abound, with character development ranging from the only self-aware and imaginative intelligence in the Universe to poor excuses of earthly form with plague-like affects. This is further compounded by the compulsion to anthropomorphize, resulting in an underestimation of the diverse intelligences that make up the Earth, and articulate through endless sets of creative and destructive relationships. Even evolutionary theories, still rife with anthropocentrism, reinforce hierarchical biases that present biological development as one-directional; simplicity as always moving toward complexity. What’s more, complexity has become synonymous with intelligence, resulting in the undervaluing of other life-forms that disrupt this very narrative. Thank goodness for anarchists like tunicates and comb jellyfish who “demonstrate that nature does not have an apical structure,”⁶ leaving people, like Andreas Hejnlol, to propose that “humans have to find new ways of representing their place in nature.”⁷

This brings me to my own proposition with regard to humanity’s purpose as a species whose genealogy reaches back to the origins of the Universe. If we engage these times with the understanding that humans are Gaian, and therefore everything we do is natural, how might we come to understand the nature of our destruction from renewed places? What might open up within and around us, when we set down the rejection of destruction brought about through our bodies? What else might be possible when we consider that we are not doing it alone? Asked another way: as members of a Gaian assemblage, what is the Earth really up to? ∞

To be continued in Issue 9:2

NOTES

1

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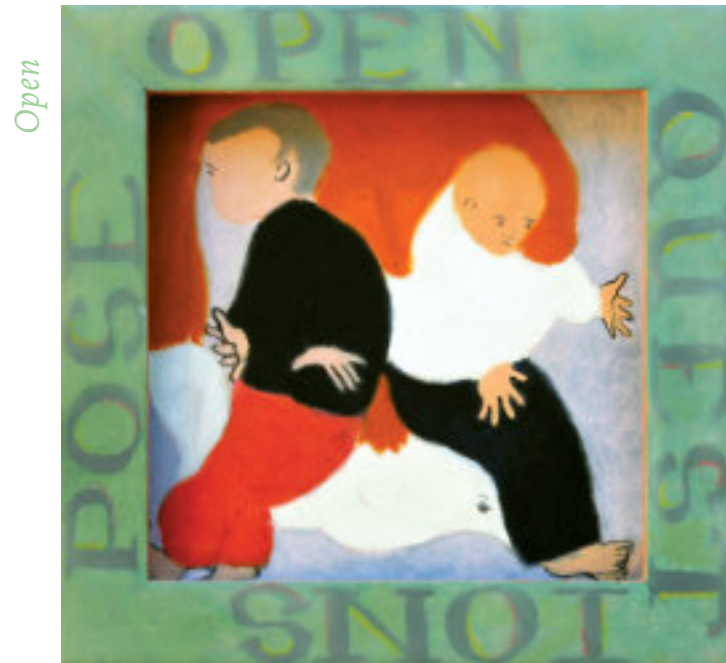
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Listen to a recording of
Tempist Jade reading an
excerpt from her piece:



tinyurl.com/4vmhnh8m



CELIA OWENS

Puzzles: autobiography of the world

NORMALLY, IF WE CAN READ, and the writing is clear and bold, we cannot *not* read. For example, STOP. On the other hand, if writing is illegible, we cannot read it, even if we can read. In these paintings, which combine written text and images, I wanted the visual impact of the text to exist between those two. I wanted it to be possible to read what it says, but not mandatory. I also feel that muting the words, visually, gave the images more of a chance to hold the viewer's attention.

I am often drawn to engage the viewer in some act of volition and interaction with my paintings—to make their own agency part of the experience.

These images are about ambiguity between struggle and collaboration, between affection and resistance. There is in most of them a suggestion of predator/prey between the animals, who are, in the space of the painting, coexisting peacefully. But the humans are in dynamic relationships that could be understood in different ways.

Another thing going on here is a vibration between colorful patterns and narrative. The viewer

can look at the visual play, and not see the story, or instead, be interested in what is going on.

My aim was to do all these things at once, in the simplest and most playful way I could.

These technical and content choices in the paintings actually refer to meaning that is embodied by the images: finding simple, light ways to address complexity; giving non-verbal ways of knowing an equal playing field with words; being creative with words, to loosen their didactic hold on our minds, including altering or making up words, and changing the wording of phrases (such as *responsivable*, *collaboraction*); depicting humans and creatures entangled in the same space, confined together in the flora (green frame) to work out our predicament; infinitely renewing *story* in the myriad ambiguities weaving through the images and phrases.

In approaching this work, I was aware of admiring Inuit art, Jacob Lawrence, and Bill Traylor, for their humorous and beautiful expression of human and animal condition in delightful shapes and relationships. ∞



Reciprocation



Story



Familiar



Nohopenofear



Ripen



Responsivable

GEORGE BAKOLA

Belladonna: Melissa's dream

MELISSA LIVED IN THE EASTERN PART of Berlin, in a building of thirty, with a balcony overlooking the park. She would go out for a while in the morning and afternoon, listening to the music from the bar, the voices of the children in the playground, the screams of the players from the outdoor ping pong table, the brakes from the tram. At night she had the impression of some kind of oriental amanes, very low and barely piercing the auditory spectrum, transforming the landscape into a more tropical and friendly one. Sometimes the silence sucked the action of the senses, turning them into an analogue instrument of production, a tape recorder, inside of which lived the whole world of illusion in a chip, while outside it was just another tape of nostalgia of the old people coming to meet her. Why were they there? The question plagued her, but she finally forgot it, as she forgot everything for long periods of time. In those moments the umbilical cord between life and death, between past and future disappeared. It was as if she was trapped floating in a bowl, as if she was bending down to drink water from the tap and marbling, thus still but not dead. Water flowed through her, gurgling and drinkable, but going nowhere. There was no continuity, but no repetition either. It was like seeing the same picture all the time, but each time you had to decipher new

things from it... but again, you couldn't be absolutely sure, because your previous function was lost in oblivion and this thing had no end, until it came to an end and everything returned to normal.

That's what she was thinking when she arrived in the centre of Alexander Platz square, in the restaurant at the back, with its delicious chocolate and its view of the sixteenth century church, but also with the strange marble sign about the past of this triangular structure, which Melissa could not read in full. When she came to the word 'tavern' in lettering so many centuries old, her body from the waist and shoulders twisted so sharply and violently that she almost slipped and fell to the side of the road. But she found her balance, and with the same speed and intensity as if someone was pushing her with force, she sat down on the table where she had left her things. Her eyes were wide open, like an infant in the first light of the sun, looking across to the back entrance of the church, where a clerk was laughing and talking on his phone. Melissa realized with the edge of her eyes that suddenly, the surroundings had disappeared!

"Dreaming awake" she whispered and clutched the bag in her hands. A wide dirt road that faded into the distance had taken the place of the square. It went all the way to the "tavern" and the church,

and on the right side was a path with a thick vegetation of wild grasses and dead trees. It was autumn, she thought, like a spectator ignorant of what was happening. Back in the church another man who looked like the previous one, wearing a black robe with a white collar and a red necklace with a stone, was greeting a woman with smiles and bows. He was a bit comical and happy, and the woman was in a great mood as she was almost jumping from one foot to the other, grabbing her long skirt, and they held hands as they entered the church. As soon as the heavy wooden door was closed, two horses panting with foam on their bridle-strained snouts stopped abruptly at the straight spot. Armed and in knight's uniforms, men dismounted, and cursing, they broke down the door with a hammer and chisel and ran off into the darkness. Melissa heard women's cries, at first frightened and then heart-breaking. She tried to get up but it was impossible, as she had fallen into a stupor. A horse reared back towards her, stamping as if it could not stand. It came so close to her that she could smell the sour scent of sweat, the saddle with its rough leather and embroidered crest bobbed up and down before her eyes and Melissa, frightened, took a deep breath as far as her insides as she read the word CORTES on the crest. That's why I'm here! Someone is using me as a loop!

She inhaled deeply again, and thought she had closed her eyes. A wall of bloody bodies, stacked like buildings straight left and then straight right in infinite length, you could see. She tried to climb to see over the wall. With screams she hugged the bony limbs of the dead, as she stepped up like a staircase from one corpse to another. She avoided the faces, the fleeting glances in the dark sockets of her eyes, hurling waves of panic at her. With her legs exhausted, she braced her body to help herself a little more. When she reached the top the surprise was so great, she was in danger of rolling back down again, clinging to spitting liquid, disgusting, of unknown origin. As long as she endured, the gaze stretched to the human walls of corpses, like mountains out of touch... and then she opened her eyes!

So she thought, but she was already in another dream. She was still in the small square, and tourists were taking pictures of the church. In the frame of their cameras, they saw the body of a thin blonde girl, but when they looked up and saw the building with the tables of the tavern, no girl was there! They looked again and saw Melissa, unconcerned, sipping her chocolate, but this time she was not in the frame of the captured photo. This caused a commotion and the group of French tourists gathered around her, taking photos over and over again, but always with the same result. ∞

MIRONDO WAISWA

Have mercy

AS DAWN IS ABOUT TO BREAK, I hear the sound of a solitary bird many miles away from my hut. I remember that it is time to move out of my bed to go and meet the psychologist. The psychologist asks me to start right at the beginning, so I begin with this day. One of the real memories of life:

.... After two years of lockdown, you hire a taxi and leave for Kampala to work. It isn't your preferred destination at this time, but the pending files owes you. The therapist you have been talking to believes that pieces of yourself are stuck in your old house, smothered in muck and bloodstained memory. Today, you will finally get to pick them up and move on.

The taxi enters Kampala at 5am, stalling in a holdup. The city has just exerted itself. Soon, the kiosks along Nakawa, displaying loaves of bread and softly ripening fruits on makeshift. As the car turns onto Jinja Road junction, you roll down the window and breathe into a grid of tippers and buses that pump out fading clouds of smoke. So much has changed here, you observe. The asphalt still breaks into tired patches here and there, vehicles unable to keep their balance.

Before offices ran dry, before the militias set curfews and patrolled the streets, we lived and

worked together in a cool working environment in Lugogo, half a mile from the Capital.

When the pandemic hit, life became sparser, harder to keep. Things broke and couldn't be fixed. Financial situation became harder in a way that wasn't entirely unexpected. Our families began to fade, and the small businesses we had closed.

One of us lost her entitlement to salary, while another of us was left without a job, then the last of us resorted to taking on all the paid workshop opportunities leaving the other staff unpaid, creating the "precarious work environment."

I draw the imagination of one of the motivated staff from memory. In the mornings, he came to the office with no coffee and ready to work, a copy of unpaid home bills under his arm. He left the paper by the door, folded and unread, and made his way to our office ready to work.

"Stop. Where is your output?" said the supervisor to the staff, his voice quiet, aware—even in his youth—that he needn't shout to command attention. His hand played with the pen on his hip. He stepped close to the other staff.

"I have cancelled out your names off the Assessment workshop" he continued. "Expect no remuneration."

His accent made our skin tighten. He wasn't from around here. He spoke like a mainlander, his consonants clipped the same way primary school teachers used to bark at kids.

We once knew the sequence of things. Could see time straight as a hollyhock shooting up out of the shrub. Could mark it in stitches or notches. We didn't know that our so-called supervisor—constrained by all we'd tightened around them—had finally buckled under the weight of our problems and our languages and our crossings. The little respect we deserved fell flat within the fence, like stone worn down over centuries.

And when we walked into it, we too became smoothed over, losing our sense of now and then and when. We were treated like young kids without a sense of respect.

"Leventi" asked one of the staff, with the ease of an old employee who'd seen it all. "All workers just like him are offering their best and deserve respect. Why don't you and your leaders here allow them to walk on in peace and reward them equally?"

"I need output!" spat out the other gent, quickly, unable to contain himself. His words came out in thick local dialect. Here, it was like professionalism and integrity didn't work, but rather small groups of

'proclaimed leaders', but if you reached for it, the call to prayers was still here: a long constant, a murmuring that lulled us, growing ever thicker with the layers of voices that joined in, the gutter's ground roiling beneath us all in pleasure.

When my empathy simmered down, I asked how work was going, and Chimo's answer is always, "Things are okay, I will pen down something over the weekend."

One of us grew sleepy—a child and husband demanded extra attention amidst the challenging working environment and both of us promise-promise-promised, "Sir, I will work on the files", only for tomorrow to become week after week of memes and thirty-second TikTok videos.

"This isn't a top management's fury; this is entirely within us at the operational level. Our lower-level management, lack of communication, and unwillingness to see what is right in front of us. We can change."

"What do you mean?" I asked Chimo as I took a sip of tea, feeling grateful for its warmth, and then a pang of guilt for enjoying it while countless other employees suffered in the cold outside. "There is only so much pressure we can take, but we can adjust and change for the better". ☞



James Lee, Unsplash

MARK SKELDING

Happy hour at the Bates Motel?

THE SINGLE STOREY MODERN BUILDING, effective within its single purpose, looks a little dated now. A new highway opened a while back, and the traffic that kept the place alive has moved away. The manager, Norman, does his best to keep the place spick and span, the ‘Motel’ and ‘Vacancy’ signs lit up.

If you drive by it looks serviceable enough, sitting in the shadow of the Gothic Victorian house where Norman and his disabled mother live. Although she doesn’t get out these days, Mother still controls all that happens here, and especially Norman’s activities and interests. Any hint of him looking beyond the narrow world of the motel, with its dark, empty corridors, secret peepholes, and stuffed birds, is punished.

The motel is the scene of perhaps the most iconic Hollywood murder, the one that turned a shower before dinner into an existential crisis. And, as the duh-duh-duh scene in *Jaws* did for the idea of a summer’s dip, a certain collective myth of innocence was shaken.

For most of us—including those who haven’t even seen Hitchcock’s *Psycho*—that scene anchors our immediate sense of the film. Made in 1960, the Bates Motel now offers an arresting simile for our contemporary predicament.

To live under the dominant socio-economic paradigm of our time is to live in the Bates Motel. Overshadowed and overseen by the flamboyant carcass of the colonial, extractive, disconnected worldview

from which it emerged, the system seems to operate well enough. Like the motel, its apparent purpose is in meeting vital needs. Yet behind the front of being open for ‘business as usual’, the objective has become the defence of its own illusion against an ever-changing context..

In *Psycho*, the highway no longer brings traffic to the door. The Bates Motel is no longer a sustainable enterprise. The movie’s everyman figure, Norman—a consonant or two away from being ‘normal’—has skills and energy that are being wasted. His life could be better spent in so many other ways. But Mother wouldn’t want that, so Norman keeps the grounds tidy and the lights on. Within the highly controlled microcosm of the motel he is rewarded for protecting its secret and failings, maintaining a sense of order and identity. His hobby decorates the motel: taxidermy. He is watched through the eyes of dead creatures.

Since the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring*¹, our society has been similarly observed. The roll-call of extinction and ecological collapse has grown in response to the rapaciousness and waste of our economic system. Climate distortions are not the real problem: they are symptoms of a system under stress. Nevertheless, despite industrial-strength denial and corporate manipulation², the impact of fossil fuels has been public knowledge for half a century. Now this is a public experience as dislocation, drought and unprecedented fire and flood events become commonplace. Life is pushing back.

Marion’s arrival—exhausted, unsettled and a little frightened by an unprecedented storm—lights the motel up like a butterfly in a coal mine. She had been a real estate assistant in a lifeless and disapproving small town. Then she heard her boss suggesting to a client that Marion could be ‘included’ if a specific sale went through. Realising that she had become another object, caught in a looking-glass, jam-tomorrow world of ever-shifting surfaces and alliances, she decided to take the money and run for the West Coast and her lover.

Beautiful, vital, purposeful, daring and curious

— she tells Norman how he’s missing out by living in thrall to the motel and Mother. And he steals a glimpse of this himself. Whilst it inevitably carries a pornographic frisson, Hitchcock’s original peephole scene has more emphasis on Norman’s peeking into his own un-lived other life. His longing is for life itself.

Away from the peephole he is confronted by a bigger picture, and all that must be denied if he is to remain true to Mother, the motel and its brittle, uncompromising identity. Marion, sensing that a strangely unsettled moment has passed, heads for the shower. She is oblivious to how her very existence threatens a three-legged stool of stability on which both she and Norman depend. The motel gives form to the interplay of denial, control and dependency, and woe betide the casual traveller who inadvertently pulls on any one of these strings.

The peephole scene positions the viewer as an outside observer. We have a sense of Norman’s stuckness and, despite the sinister normality, we may still hold some hope that this can end well. We are well aware of Marion’s innocence, her twinges of uncertainty, the complexity of her position and the actions that brought her here. We have been primed to fear for her well-being and, as yet, have but a small idea of the madness in which she is embroiled. Nevertheless, in hindsight, all the clues were there, and we sense the threat that “life’s longing for itself”³ brings to such a place.

The 1998 version of *Psycho* collapses this longing into a masturbatory moment for Norman, distracting any possibility for collective insight behind individual self-gratification—surely a tag-line for changes in society over that same period. In 1960, Norman hasn’t quite reached the place where instant gratification masquerades as agency. In the end, we slip away with Norman, unable to respond to life’s call, stranded into a shared perception of powerlessness in the face of all.

Decades on, in a discipline far, far away, Iain McGilchrist explores this same divided territory in *The Master and His Emissary*.⁴ Peeping through to the brain’s right hemisphere, McGilchrist sees a place

where the big picture is glimpsed: an inclusive, dynamic, holistic scan of life's unflinching possibility with all its 'breadth and flexibility'. He suggests that the left hemisphere offers 'focus and grasp' to filter this immensity down to what is important, immediate, predictable and specific in a particular context. It organises information, storing and remembering patterns and stories, and applies these as a short-cut in our meaning-making processes.

Set in place and left unquestioned, these patterns make life predictable and safe.

Norman lives safely within an entirely self-referencing world. Within the parameters of its own logic the Bates Motel is apparently rational and self-evident. If one can bear the gaze of stuffed animals, tolerate the lack of light, and ask no questions, it might be OK as a brief stop-over—the beds are comfortable, there are nature programmes on the 57 channel TV and the shower works—but you'd not want to stay long! Anything more than the most distracted attention risks threatening everything upon which its psychopathic identity depends.

Ours is the world as Bates Motel. As long as we participate and operate within its frames of reference and values, we remain safe within the movie. If we raise doubts, uncertainty or point to any flaws in its logic, we pose a threat. We are persuaded to override our instincts and participate in a fantasy that promises to meet our immediate needs in ways which do not challenge how we have come to know ourselves.

Maintaining this familiar, comfortable identity involves techniques for stepping around that which we are unable to include. In a remarkable sleight-of-mind we acknowledge certain information by not knowing about it. Our life energy and story flows on around and over these 'hidden' aspects, creating an unacknowledged standing wave that is an organising aspect of our being. This dysfunction must be protected to preserve our identity and avoid the unknowable. At least, that's in the separated word of the Bates Motel. In Norman's fragmented mind, Mother is so powerfully respon-

sible for his predicament that, when 'normanity' (sic) is threatened, 'she' acts. Having already killed her, he puts on her clothes and make-up in a tragic, destructive, broken parody, as disturbing as Heath Ledger's Joker would be fifty years on.

There are rooms in our Bates Motel where techno-Normans discuss methods that would change the colour of the sky to cut global heating, alongside GM-Normans considering how best to enhance plants to tolerate lower light. Down the hall, AI-Normans craft 'bots' to generate the images, stories, opinions and news of a world that never existed. These rooms mingle Mother's perfume and the Joker's cackle into a cloying greenwash, all approvingly supported by petro-Normans and their claimed concerns for job security.

Unable to accept the fullness of his life and unwilling to acknowledge his own response-ability, Norman has created his own prison. Trauma maven, Thomas Hübl describes how unincluded information "will continually call our attention back to that unresolved past. In other words, we have taken a loan from our future that we will ultimately have to repay."⁵ The unstable inner psycho-economy of a Bates Motel world acts out a socio-economic system that, globally, consumes nearly two Earth's worth of resources each year, entirely due to the greater per-capita consumption of the North. McGilchrist suggests that our species has become trapped and dependent within a left-hemisphere conditioned identity that is highly resistant to the big picture and the feedback from all upon which we depend.

A living, intelligent earth reminds us that there are evolutionary patterns at play much larger and older than the human; that we are part of the collective system whether or not we choose to pay attention, and that there are consequences to our choice.

If popular culture were an expression of collective consciousness, we might see some possible choices down the line. At the Bates Motel, keeping an eye on everything would soon become too much for Norman alone, and he would apply available technology to maintain multiple peepholes.

In 2019, London-based surveillance technology

analyst, IHSMarkit, predicted us to be on track for more than 1 billion surveillance cameras installed worldwide by 2021.⁶ These already offer huge opportunities to maintain and reinforce a self-referencing separative reality in spite of feedback from the wider, collective system. Adding AI and techno-fixes (such as darkening the skies to limit the sunlight) conjure up an increasingly alienated and embattled planet replete with visions of the Death Star—not to mention the uncomfortable notion of Norman as Vader!

Traditionally, pursuing any course too far leads to a correction; though this is now threatened by what algorithms are being chosen to drive the AI revolution. In *Psycho*, reality emerges because Marion's former boss commissioned a detective to return his money and bring her to justice. His investigations nearly cost the detective his life, but the distortions and insanity of the Bates' world come to light.

Science, determined in reason and measure to examine the universe as "a collection of objects"⁷ has begun to undermine that worldview claim. Diverse disciplines in physics, ecology, biology, climatology, sociology and many more reveal a wealth of "inter-being"⁸, Thich Nich Than's compelling term for the dynamic, relational ever-changingness of all that is. The surface of modernity's swamp quivers, parting like the Red Sea to reveal a pathway to a land unpromised, but always available. We rediscover cultures who have always known about it, and some who were never pulled away, despite the invasions and deprivations of colonisation.

Our challenge is not merely to remember and return, but rather to rebalance the exchange. If the original intent of the Enlightenment was to differentiate the beautiful, the true and the good and bring them into dynamic and conscious synthesis, then the task remains.

It sounds like we might usefully sit down and have a damn good conversation. Its purpose would not be to prove a point and demonstrate rightness. Rather, it would be the convivial sharing of world-views and insights, laying and layering these

together, and wondering what greater learning is emerging in the space between. It would be a relief and release after struggles and uncertainty. It would be Happy Hour.

There is no mention of such a bar in the Bates Motel. Perhaps it could be called 'Plato's'—after the philosopher who described prisoners in a cave trying to make sense of shadows cast by an unattainable reality outside—or 'Carpe Diem?' By any name, it would be a scary place for Norman, alone, tempted by a day he is afraid to seize and taunted by a dark night he dare not leave—unable to move beyond shadows cast inside and outside his mind.

All us Normans are invited to leave our own silo identities and enter the long flow of a 14 billion year story. Plato's prisoners could be released if they would turn their heads. To understand our predicament differently is to see beyond the cave, a new story that builds upon the better angels of the old.

For those of us trapped in the reeking rooms of Western civilisation—whether in the monochrome Bates Motel or a surround-sound Hotel California—such a story would embrace the holistic understanding of systemic process and our place within it. In addition to inputs from disciplines observing objectively, the story calls for reframed psychological understanding of the living and embodied processes of which we are part, unpacking the *warm data*⁹, developing shared learning through our subjective meaning-making, and sharing meaning-making through subjective learning. It's a flow. It's a left-brain/right-brain communion. Evolution: ecological, personal, collective, institutional, systemic—Earth.

As biologist Andreas Weber writes: "In the ecological commons competition and cooperation, partnership and predation, productivity and destruction.... follow one higher law: over the long run only behaviour that allows for productivity of the whole ecosystem and that does not interrupt its self-production is amplified..."¹⁰

The current human world-system obeys this rule, only tolerating that which does not interrupt its 'self-production.' However, its crucial and terminal

difference is that this particular self is kept separate at every level. Like Norman and the Bates Motel.

Psycho is not the only story that we can tell. There is another story growing. It was even called for in the Lisbon Summit on Psychology and Global Health (2019), which championed “international and cross-disciplinary collaboration” including “psychology as a key science to understand and tackle climate change within an interdisciplinary approach to global challenges”.¹¹ This would be a developmental understanding and psycho-mythological perspective that mixes with the diverse voices of science, culture, psychology and philosophy to ask what bigger story may be seeking to emerge. More pragmatically, we might also ask each of the 46 people who signed on behalf of their respective

national psychological institutions: ‘how are you getting on’ and ‘how can we help?’.

Happy Hour at the Bates Motel is the growing hubbub of fresh perspectives, different windows offering glimpses of the world as an integrating unity. Slowly, consultatively, “the pattern that connects”¹² emerges. Like knots in Indra’s Net, we are “distinct and not separate” within a meshwork of intelligence, linked expressions of common sentience blossoming through a *psychosphere*¹³ made up of the inner processes of all life, truly “a communion of subjects”¹⁴ giving feedback on how the domination of one species impacts the other spheres of being.

It is time to meet for Happy Hour at the Bates Motel. ∞

NOTES

Acknowledgement: This article would not exist but for a delightful conversation with Susan Kassouf following the publishing of her great article: “A New Thing Under the Sun”. <https://analytic-room.com/essays/a-new-thing-under-the-sun-by-susan-kassouf/>

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RAINEY STRAUS

Blown away



RAINEY STRAUS

Dwelling



HELEN MAY WILLIAMS

Poems

at terra armata

four hundred thousand years ago man built first dwelling s/he chose a good clement spot on the beach not in the caves scrapping a living from pebbles & flints and fire gathering round warm light-giving hearth hacking chopping spear-ing flesh tasty baby elephants

we are in a maze of a city I think it's like Amsterdam people we encounter live in nooks & crannies crevices tiny oubliettes under between over through official buildings you reach their dwellings by jumping over shallow canals scaling up shaky drainpipes holding your breath to make yourself skinny as a rake light as a feather beware if your nerve fails the alternative is dire they try to help sending you on untried untested alternative routes shouting essential directions you don't register as you set off later you find yourself on French country roads that morph into the approach to Cairo on a six-lane highway almost deserted in a dust and heat haze you try in vain to read the traffic signs in a script you don't recognize

on the outskirts of the vast city you decide to pull into the Texaco service station but you don't buy fuel you don't think you have your purse with you so how can you exit how can you turn around how can you get back who is guiding your vehicle where is your vehicle will you wander forever in this complex foreign place

you contact your guide he says he told you you must turn right at Amiens he'll see what he can do he'll drop a large brown bag on the forecourt where you first pulled off & parked the vehicle get back there and when it drops climb in and zip up hold on tight he's not tried this before but it should work

you are dropped near an ice-cream vendor he knows this has happened before he will call him Heh come on over here you have another delivery were you expecting it No well maybe you set the date wrong anyway you better come and try to fix it

in the meantime you shiver in your skimpy T-shirt & shorts where will he send you next will he ever get you back to that moment when you were at the bottom of the drainpipe watching your husband climbing up first will you continue to see-saw between time/space coordinates that don't quite match that don't quite ever catch up with that real life you lost through your old acquaintance fear

LUKE HOLCOMBE



bent axle accident

now i watch what death is
is death what i watch now

cars flash past
past flashes cars

imperceptible jolt
jolt's imperceptible

flow of consciousness hiatus
hiatus — consciousness of flow

then everything runs backwards
backwards runs everything then

My own landscape is
a four-season paradise.
What if I imagined a new way?
We have discarded the idea of
perfection as a dangerous one.
This became a habit.
Our inability to extricate
ourselves had postponed the
future, but I defy time
and joyfully keep looking.

Strong seasons and new sanities

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< This poem combines
fragments from the
authors in this
section ... find a spoken
version here:



tinyurl.com/section5foundpoem

PEGI EYERS

Rejecting empire and re-centering Indigenous values

“Decolonization is not a process which solely entails Indigenous nations. All people have been distorted by colonialism. It affects us all, not only those whom it most severely oppresses.”¹ (Nora Butler Burke)

In the process to evoke a postcolonial cosmovision and make transformative change, we can turn to the work of Indigenous scholars and activists, the “best of the new generation’s anti, non, de and un colonial thinking”² for inspirational frameworks. Wisdom is readily available from First Nation intellectuals, leaders, visionaries and public figures who excel in every location of society, making their mark with distinction after decades of oppression and exclusion.

In “What is Indigenous Knowledge?” Semali and Kincheloe suggest three goals for studying Indigenous Knowledge:

1. To help western peoples relate to their habitat in ways that are more harmonious,
2. To liberate peoples who have been conquered by a modernist nation state system, and
3. To provide a perspective on human experience that differs from western empirical science.³

Enlarging our own transitions, community-building, and social justice movements with Indigenous Knowledge (IK) is a valid approach, and it is also to our benefit, as Leanne Betasamosake

Simpson writes, to learn about “Indigenous solutions to the problems continued colonialism creates.”⁴

Re-centering Indigenous ethics does not give us permission to appropriate the spiritual or cultural property of First Nations, but is a recommendation to embrace Indigenous values such as reciprocity, balance, and respect for natural law. Without romanticizing, misinterpreting or denying the holocaust that occurred, it has been suggested that we look to the original peoples to learn how to thrive, survive and flourish, interconnected with the land and all life. After all, as outlined by Gustavo Esteva, everything we need for the paradigm shift is “already in place as it has been for millennia, being lived by Indigenous Knowledge and Indigenous people.”⁵

Decolonization is most certainly the challenge all of us face today, and Indigenous scholars such as Taiaike Alfred, John Mohawk and Robert Lovelace agree. “Indigenous peoples and Settlers have our own histories, where those histories have led us, and where the possible futures might lie for us together. Because guess what, we are here and now, we’re not going to change that fact, but what we can do is change the possible futures that we face.”⁶ As we take on the work of becoming deeply bonded to the land in our uncolonization process, we are being

invited to learn from the First Peoples in whose territories we are now living. In my own case, the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg have been my greatest teachers.

We may need to reach back over great swathes of time, but understanding the original Indigenous inhabitants of our home landscape allows us to practice sustainability and relate to the environment properly. Winona LaDuke tells us that the ability of the Seminole Nation to preserve and practice their IK benefits the wider society in turn, as “the presence of these traditions in the Native community provides a yardstick against which to measure our own values, our own way of life, and our own choices.”⁷ Being guided to access the vast storehouse of knowledge held by local First Nations for millennia is key, as Anishnaabe educator and activist Christine Sy explains. “Given that Anishinaabe knowledge about how to live in Anishinaabegogamig is grounded on thousands of years of knowledge generation built on the shoulders of Anishinaabeg giants, it seems logical that non-Anishinaabeg would consult with our Elders on how to live in Anishinaabegogamig. Our knowledge comes directly from the land in which we live. This knowledge is undisrupted, sustainable and holistic; provides an education that maintains human and natural life; flourishes this life, and is both ancient and relevant.”⁸

It is important that we locate descriptions of Indigenous cultures in the “first person” by those who actually live in them, not by “objective” outsiders from the disciplines of ethnology or anthropology (however revisionist.) From First Nation narratives such as “Following Nimishoomis: The Trout Lake History of Dedibaayaanimanook Sarah Keesick Olsen,”⁹ I have discovered that my own landscape in Ontario, Canada, is a four-season paradise rich in game, fishing harvests, wild rice, berries and healing plants, with the human and other-than-human interaction and practicalities of life on the land giving rise to Mino Bimaadiziwin,¹⁰ or “The Good Life.” By gathering and preserving the oral traditions of her culture, author Helen Agger illuminates traditional Anishnaabe lifeways, values, customs,

myths and cultural keystones in a format that becomes a living treasure for all. We learn how their deep bonds to the Earth and generations of connection to place are interwoven into Anishnaabe experiences with each other, their good manners, their care for all beings with gentleness, kindness and respect, and their appropriate protocol in all things.

The basic principles of hospitality and sharing are also evident in Mnjikaning First Nation, Keepers of the Fish Fence, next to my hometown of Orillia, Ontario, Canada. As my ancestors from Scotland were so graciously received and cared for in 1832, the Mnjikaning people have hosted gatherings of tribes and travellers for millennia, at the ancient fish weirs of The Narrows at Lake Couchiching (Chippewa for “Lake of Many Winds”). In accordance with Anishnaabe values that are embedded in familial relationships with the land, the wild beauty of the commons and the vitality of all people are sustained and nurtured. As modelled to us by Mnjikaning, the powerful ability to build bridges for mutual healing and “unity in diversity,” and to ensure the well-being of Earth community within the complex ecosystems of forests, deep water lakes, abundant fish, plants and animals, are the Original Instructions that we need to emulate today.

Ancestral knowledge and the consciousness of Indigenous people lie embedded in the features of the land, and recovering the cultural meaning this provides is essential to individual and collective identity and well-being. Today, the relational frameworks and Original Instructions that served Indigenous peoples for millennia prior to colonization are alive and thriving. In fact, according to Zainab Amadahy, pre-colonial IK may “be crucial to getting the human species out of the mess we now find ourselves in on Mother Earth.”¹¹ Both colonizer and colonized now share the land, and as we change our attitudes and revise our activities, we may find common ground in the recovery of our own ethnoculture(s) and earth-wise spiritualities. Our decolonization processes are not the same, but as Beth Newell puts it, “decolonization should involve all Nations on this land looking after the land, water,

plants, animals and people together, equally.”¹²

Accessing the earth wisdom teachings in our own ancestral line is a powerful way to reclaim our true nature, and re-inhabit what was taken away - our unity with nature. To fall in love again with the spirit in all things, is to recover an earth-centered worldview that blends the wisdom of spirituality with deep ecology, and the love of the land can inform new ventures in community and belonging. Nick Montgomery writes that, “Decolonization is as much a process as a goal. It requires a profound re-centring of Indigenous worldviews in our movements for political liberation, social transformation, renewed cultural kinships, and the development of an economic system that serves rather than threatens our collective life on this planet.”¹³

Tsłagi/Algonquin activist and scholar Robert Lovelace, in conjunction with the Great Lakes Commons Initiative,¹⁴ has developed an excellent decolonization framework situated within the landscapes of the Great Lakes, with the mandate to move into an ecological-based society that is in symbiotic interaction with dynamic, living ecosystems. In his presentation “The Architecture of a Decolonized Society: Reindigenizing the Self, Community and Environment,”¹⁵ Lovelace identifies embedded racism and the unsustainability of corporate capitalism. The early designers of capitalist theory such as Locke, Kant and others failed to see any limitations, failed to see the fragility of nature, failed to see that the land and all beings have intrinsic rights, failed to see the consequences of the domestication of labour, and certainly failed to see the side effects of pollution in the economic paradigm they promoted. Our current political boundaries were created to serve a system of colonial settlement, resource extraction and industrial manufacture and, in the decolonization process, Lovelace counsels us to pay attention to our local watersheds and ecotones, and to reconfigure our governance systems to restore ecological balance.

Recognizing that a diversity of Indigenous societies are the “norm” worldwide, it is possible to emulate the health and holism of the Indigenous

worldview, today and into the future. All the aspects of life we need to consider in our rejection of Empire are determined or reinforced by our interaction with the local environment, the use of energy, food security, diplomacy, trade, defensive boundaries, customary law¹⁶ and the checks and balances of population levels that are all physically defined by the existing watersheds of our territory. Adopting the Indigenous worldview means living lighter on the land, and building a society in which the ideal is to “never consume more than can be replenished in a particular ecosystem, and don’t expend more energy than what can be replaced by what is consumed.”¹⁷

Setting physical boundaries in place naturally gives rise to unique cultural expressions such as rituals, ceremonies, dances, songs, poetry, stories and art. In short, a thriving earth-emergent tradition can incorporate elements from one’s own ancestral traditions as appropriate, and in syncretization with the local landbase. With our love for the Earth as common ground anything is possible and, as Robert Lovelace suggests, being Indigenous to place is achieved “when the human and ecosystem activity support and enhance one another.”¹⁸

The most interesting aspect of Lovelace’s decolonization framework is that he sees the paradigm shift rising from within the social-cultural realm, not from the worlds of politics or technology. In fact, except for recognizing our essential humanity, he advises us to give up on railing against or trying to change the ruling elite. Synthesized cultures of neo-colonialism are not sustainable, and Lovelace says there are three possible pathways to the “tipping point” scenario, which may occur in our lifetime:

1. Fortress Capitalism: a fragmented world of local imperial fiefdoms ruling over oppressed communities (a perfect example being the movie *The Hunger Games*) or, more hopefully, oases of holism and earth-based community here and there among the ongoing bastions of Empire.
2. Bending the Curve: millions of organizations, coalitions of resistance, and visionary individu-

als and communities working to physically manifest the paradigm shift to earth-honoring civilization.

3. Societal Breakdown: the erosion or collapse of natural or human systems, a massive dieback in the human population, and/or further speculations on drastic change in the face of uncertainty.

No one really knows what the future will hold, and we live in a time of great cataclysms. If you ask the people who were in Thailand, Japan or New Orleans when the great wall of ocean arrived, or in California or Australia when the fire breached the neighbourhood gates, or in Pilger, Angus or Moore when the tornado touched down, or in Calgary, Colorado or Croatia when the water rose, they will tell you that the apocalypse has already come and gone.

It is clear that modelling our future on Indigenous values is key to rejecting Empire, and ancient knowledge combined with modern IK in the revitalization of local community will enable us to survive the fast-approaching climate change crossroads. Lovelace writes, “Coming from a culture of domination, Settlers now want a different relationship with the land, and the first thing we need to do to re-envision the world is to change ourselves.”¹⁹

Of course, changing ourselves does not mean replicating the mistakes of liberal pluralism, which forces Indigenous identities to fit into the groups and narratives of the dominant society. Instead, we need to take a personal inventory, stop acting on our privileges of race or gender, and “surrender our preconceptions and privileges to the process of indigenization.”²⁰ The best scenario would be to become informed by First Nations values and models in our re-landing process, and to honour the primary cul-

tural signifiers that reflect the original inhabitants of the land, and the territory they hold.

For both native and non-native people, a massive decolonization will mean rejecting capitalism and the resource extraction model in favor of a regained intimacy with the land, and the renewal of sustainable community. Place-based practices may include decentralized, regional governance structures based on participatory, consensus decision-making; local economies revolving around renewable resources such as planting, harvesting, gathering, hunting and fishing; cultural production activities for the requirements of life such as clothing or tools; and ceremonial activities honoring the many sacred qualities of our unique bio-cultural landscape(s). Taking the first steps toward uncolonization in both theory and practice is the way forward for all those who call Turtle Island home, and “taking good care of ourselves, our localized communities and the land is a life-long learning process.”²¹ Coming together in the common crucible of Rejecting Empire is an entirely new venture, and hopefully the results will resemble a fusion of the best from Indigenous, European and diasporic societies.

To decolonize means to honour your own roots, culture and philosophies.

And it’s open to everyone regardless of race, colour or creed.

This is how we break the harmful patterns and ideologies into which we were born.

We can stop the cycle. Redirect it.

We can honour All Our Relations.

*We can be the warriors this world needs.*²²

– Aaron Paquette

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and Protection of Indigenous Nations, Leanne Simpson (editor), Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2008

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5. Gustavo Esteva (Zapotec, Mexican), Lecture, 2013 Elders Conference, Indigenous Studies Department, Trent University, Peterborough, ON, January 28, 2013

6. Robert Lovelace (Tslagi/Algonquin), The Architecture of a Decolonized Society: Reindigenizing the Self, Community and Environment, lecture, Kawartha World Issues Centre (KWIC), Trent University, Peterborough, ON, January 18, 2013

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9. Helen Agger (Anishnaabe), *Nimishoomis: The Trout Lake History of Dedibaayaanimanook Sarah Keesick Olsen*, Theytus Books, 2008

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12. Beth Newell, “A Few Words About Consultation, Decolonization, Self-determination and Assimilation” (blog), *Idle No More Kingston*, 2013

13. Nick Montgomery, “Monstrous Settlers: Zombies, Demons, and Angels,” *Cultivating Alternatives to the Dominant Order* (blog), 17/01/2013

14. The Great Lakes Commons Initiative is “an effort to declare and live the Great Lakes as a commons, a protected bioregion and a public trust.” On the Commons www.on-thecommons.org

15. Robert Lovelace (Tslagi/Algonquin), The Architecture of a Decolonized Society: Reindigenizing the Self, Community and Environment, presentation, Kawartha World Issues Centre (KWIC), Trent University, Peterborough, ON, January 18, 2013

16. Customary Law is the cornerstone of Indigenous culture(s) and human rights, and legal approaches for the protection of IK should be grounded in customary laws and practices. Ideally, customary law should exist next to national legal systems, and the recognition of customary law is key to regulating the use and protection of traditional knowledge.

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S. T. MCGUIRE

poems

What if...

Letting go of what is not useful
Is difficult –
It's wrapped in memory

Attached to past dreams
Lived to fruition
Without awareness

Gratitude for what was
Is the pivot point
That brings us present

Calibrating memory
Untangling past
From future

Creating presence
In the present

Allowing memories
To be gratitude
For the present we have

Conversation

What if I imagined a new way
Of being?
Shall I dare to dream?

What if nothing is new?
My future dream
Just an echo.

Remnants of lived lives
Where souls speak
In a language
Few understand

Esoteric messages
Decoded
In lives lived

What if I imagined a new way
Of being?
That echos
In my life

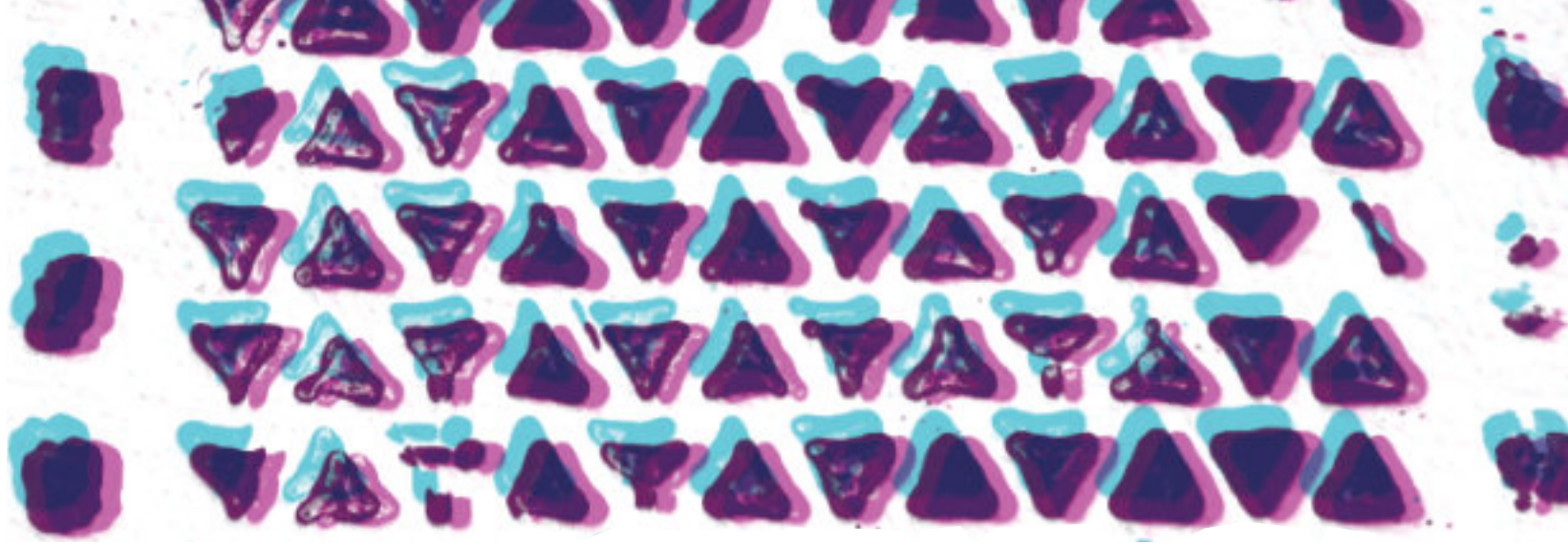
Connecting
Past and future
In the present moment

Can that moment live on?

What if I imagined a new way
Of being?
Where words were not needed
To unlock meaning

Are dreams just new ways of being
Not yet lived?
Waiting to be born
Beyond the here and now?

Are we not more than our dreams?
Can we find what we seek
In the life we live?



LOCAL HEARTHIAN

A message from the Interstellar Human Communities

GREETINGS TO CHIZ'JIRIN-AGN, Senior Ambassador of the United Commonwealth of Living Beings (UCLB).

We hope the format of this letter survives translation to the members of the Omnisen-ate. It is with a heavy heart that the Interstellar Human Communities (IHC) must decline membership of your Commonwealth. I'm afraid your government's values are not compatible with our own.

We do not mean to imply that we think your government beneath us. It is obvious even to us, newcomers to the galactic scene, that you hold sway over at least seven hundred star systems, each of which have dozens of planets and millions of asteroids, rotating habitats and assorted megastructural wonders which we have yet to replicate. But your means of maintaining this would not be amenable to the human diaspora.

Firstly, while it is undeniably impressive that you are able to conduct elections on such a scale, we fear the means by which you do so may be ripe for corruption. We have only just mastered photonic-quantum processing, so

we freely admit you may have advantages in data security we cannot even conceive of. But that has not proven to be true in our systems. The United Terran Association (UTA) was able to hold sway over every colony in our solar system for a hundred of our years before the recent civil war. And to answer your previous query, the IHC has no recourse to coerce any human or human-aligned settlement into its sphere of influence. We find it easy to hate Terrans, yes. Some of our number classify them as a different evolutionary branch, but we lack the strength to do so without local allies.

We also understand that we face heavy resistance due to your fear of transorganic technology. Your concerns are warranted, but hopelessly misdirected. Any attempt to paint us as mindless killers is based on the wars we fought. And in our experience, banning something will just mean the ruthless, dare we say Terran, among us will find a way around it. We have already been forced to modify ourselves to counter Terran propaganda disseminated in the media, directly to our minds via neuromods, and even through

algorithmically sourced genetic conditioning. And we have superintelligences from those you term Inheritors to thank for our current stability. We are under no illusions that this is a flawless solution to the gap left between our stone age selves and our current technological progress, but we cannot afford to make concessions on this new cornerstone of our civilisation to allay your paranoia. We hope this helps bridge understanding between our two groups.

Lastly, we strongly object to your pretence at being a perfect state. We have discarded the idea of perfection as a dangerous one, inviting stasis antithetical to our outlook on the universe. We once again stress that the UCLB's ability to coordinate over a dozen members and the presumed hundreds of thousands of member states they have created in your hundreds of years of existence is something beyond our understanding. But we have noted disturbing similarities between the earlier democracies on our world and those of our prospective allies in the Shoribak League, the Galeshr union of clans, and the Racava Friendliness Organisation.

Your triumph over the military hegemony of the Imarda and the Grand Rekkaj Mandate was thorough, but we fear you have replaced it with a cultural hegemony. Our recent convoys into your space, expecting to find a plethora of different cultures to study, found them overwritten with that of one of your founders, the Bor'olb. We respect that their values can easily be tolerated and even accepted, but venerating one over another led to five hundred years of atrocities that we are only just reconciling with, including rampant capitalism, racially motivated slavery, genocide, episticide, and ecocide amongst others. The same can be said of the Galeshr, who appear to have been torn apart by religious persecution for their status as gas giant dwellers, though we acknowledge that the

Pakurzan Anti-Prophets bear no direct relation to the descriptions of those pursuing them. The Racava, who we now realise were a fully imperialistic people in the earlier days of our local clusters civilisation, have been able to fully recover with their own mental modifications. The questions about how selectively your cultural hegemony has borrowed their imagery and art are ones we can settle later. But we have received the most support for independence from the Shoribak diaspora, the inhabitants of which has been split across four different species and hundreds of different cultures, perpetually split (or balkanised, in our terms) for the simple reason of extracting resources to third party worlds. We have already sent teams to investigate and found two corporations (Larentiir & Presmari Holdings and Punch Yourself Gigacorporation) to be guilty of systematic extortion and transorganic facilitated wage slavery between them.

We are aware that these issues are being brought up in public debate and there is popular demand to remove these corporations from the public sphere, but this does not appear to translate to the division of the Omnisenate. We also appreciate you may have other crises you are not aware of. But removing any such capitalist threat to our machine-organised anarchy is of paramount importance if the solar system is to recover in human and economic terms.

And frankly, this is personal.

We have presented proof to your colleagues time and time again that an Imardan task force was sent to the solar system to vassalize the former UTA and turn it into a puppet to fuel a revanchist faction of their former fascist state. We have heard of no investigation attempt in the past decade since this was reported. In fact the use of 'former' in conjunction with UTA was a misnomer. Fully fledged Terran colonies and habitat swarms

have been reported near the edge of your space. They have somehow been granted access to Inheritor artefact sites and been presented as the true face of humanity in your media.

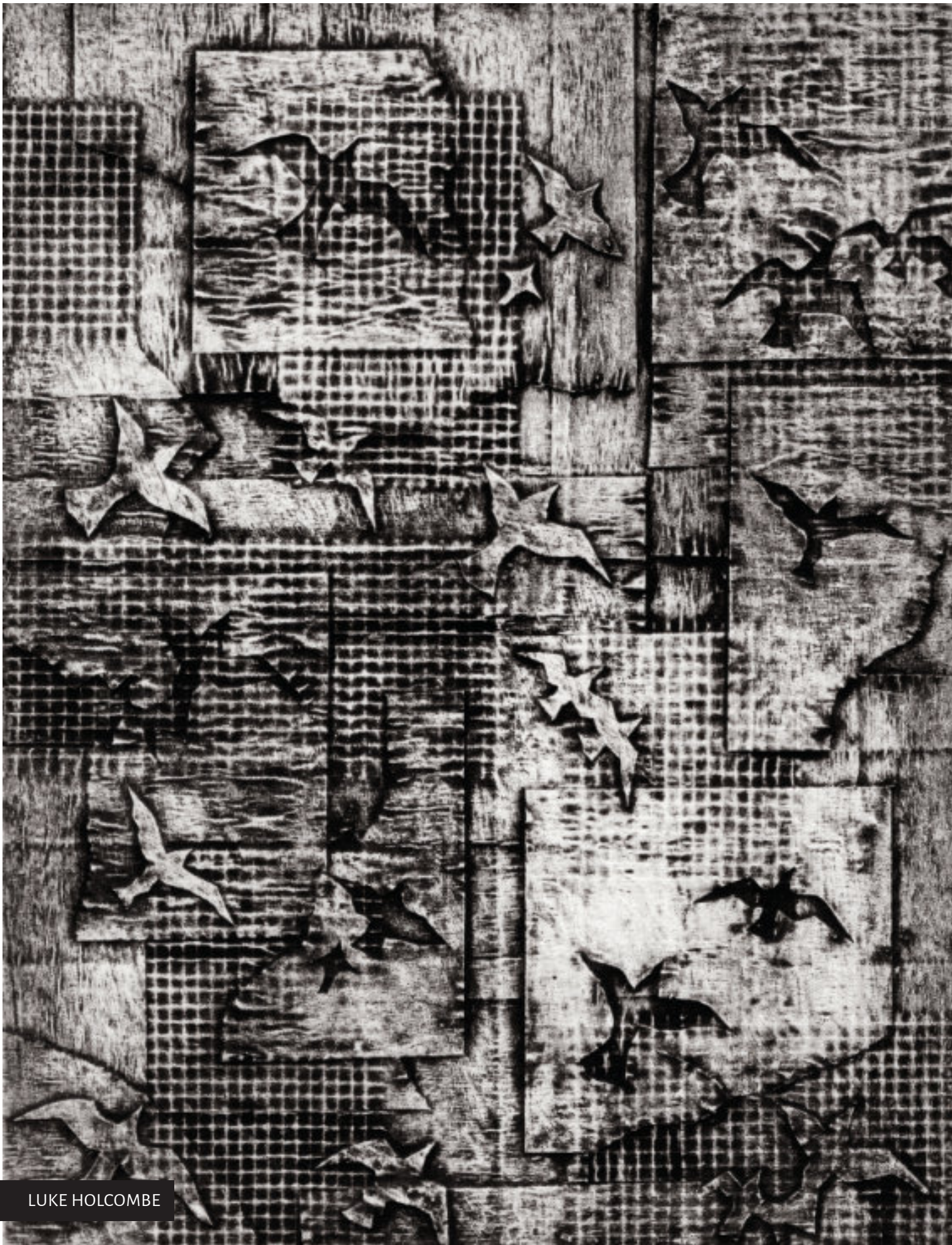
We cannot deny their rule over Sol being longer than ours, or that we forced them into exile. We merely claim to be more human. If anything, we have values far closer to rampant Terran capitalism. We have no regard for those in your society who consider them amusing or 'ironically' copy everything they do. Irony is dead in our culture and we do not want it to kill off yours. Much as your implicit extraction of resources brings you closer to the fascism you claim to have defeated, we know first hand the turmoil removing such elements would unleash. The arbitrary division between different melanin concentrations in our skin was enough to fuel our largest wars. Either this or the sheer amount of biological and social gender diversity could cause such conflicts. And the natural variance caused by different planetary settlements would be another way your perfect union

could be torn to shreds.

We hope we have not incensed you to further demands or our dire predictions of ruin. We merely make them to warn you of what may or may not be already happening. But unless all privatised elements are withdrawn from IHC member peoples, we will take action on our own. Plans to create the Free Federation of Sophonts will continue to bolster our legal standing to you. Any attempt to spread misinformation, nonconsensual separatism or other hostile acts will not go unanswered. Blockades and strike dissemination are being suggested by our machine intelligences, and we are inclined to agree. We will also continue to offer habitat space to refugees deemed illegal and we will not impeded Shoribak preservers from shielding habitats on your planets from corporate exploitation. Expeditions have also been dispatched to find new sources of energy to replace those traditional sources of energy peddled by Terrans. Earth will not recover in our lifetimes. I hope your worlds do not suffer the same fate.

From the selected combined members of the Interstellar Human Community Defence Council.

- Jela Abiodun (Human Information Collective Rep.)
- Parvaneh Safnyia Hassan Al-Farsi (Human Scientific advisor)
- Asha (Ship intelligence)
- Cipekke (Racava Medical Swarm leader)
- Elder Yiveshtar (Galeshr voidspeaker)
- Tlan'hobormi (Shoribak-Duarsorg Amb.)
- Ir of Promise (Racava community leader of Promise)
- Tlan'kaski (Shoribak-Alett Amb.)
- Tlan'plobl (Shoribak-Yhabili Amb.)
- Tlan'rekav (Shoribak-Zeberek Amb.)
- Svetlana Tereshkova (Human ambassador for Inner Sol system)
- Tran An Linh (Defence Council Offensive Operations Voluntary Overseer)



JASON YOUNG

From slaying to staying (with) the trouble

In *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell surveys culturally diverse mythologies and finds latent in their structure “the one, shapeshifting, yet marvellously constant story”¹. The ‘monomyth’ is identified as having three main stages: departure, initiation and return. The hero, heeding the call to adventure, sets out from his everyday reality, faces and overcomes trials, and returns to his community having mastered, conquered, or subdued the challenge. As a result of having faced his demons (as much within as without,) the hero is subsequently able to expand the epistemological, political and/or social boundaries of his community.

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and *a decisive victory is won*: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.² (italics added)

And while the heroic male achieving a decisive victory against all odds is a pervasive ideal that continues to structure our perception of crisis and response, the complexities of the Anthropocene are such that we can no longer adhere to such a simplis-

tic, monomythic view of things.

As much as we would like to imagine the likes of an Elon Musk, Al Gore or Bill Gates achieving such a victory in the ‘fight’ against global warming and restoring us to Edenic possibility (Make America Great Again?), the exigencies of the Anthropocene are such that these naïve heroics are no longer possible. Any attempt to ‘solve’ the environmental crisis is revealed to be a Hydra: for every head we cut off, two or more seem to grow in its place. The often surprising agency of a planet in crisis (what philosopher Isabelle Stengers refers to as the intrusion-of-Gaia³) challenges any facile dichotomies of foreground/background, inside/outside, organism/environment, while forcing the recognition that we are living, and in many cases perpetuating, the non-linear complexities of the environmental crisis. Our actions do not merely occur against the backdrop of a static ‘environment’ and are instead implicated with(in) the ongoing manifestation of an earth in process.

Our inability to extricate ourselves from earthly process necessitates a new understanding of our role as planetary agents. The environmental crisis is not only something happening ‘out there.’ Eco-philosopher Neil Evernden’s phenomenological perspective written nearly thirty years ago rings now more true

than ever: “we are not in an environmental crisis, but are the environmental crisis”⁴. This insight—coupled with the recognition that the planet has a lively, vital and often surprising agency of its own that does not privilege any of its particular manifestations—invites a revaluation of environmental response-ability. How might we begin to think beyond the culturally dominant framework of Heroic response to environmental crisis, which tends to emphasize prediction, mastery and control while maintaining ‘progress’ at all costs?

In *Staying with the Trouble*, Donna Haraway addresses this question by inviting us to “make kin in lines of inventive connection as a practice of learning to live and die well with each other in a thick present”⁵. This requires nurturing a sensitively guided response-ability attuned to an emerging and unpredictable present not overdetermined by an ideal future.

In urgent times, many of us are tempted to address trouble in terms of making an imagined future safe, of stopping something from happening that looms in the future, of clearing away the present and the past in order to make futures for coming generations. Staying with the trouble does not require such relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings.⁶

Haraway articulates an interconnected world-in-process in which we participate as likewise creative beings. We are not separate from our relations, as we rather become in/as community; “more like knots of diverse intra-active relatings in dynamic complex systems, than like the entities of a biology made up of preexisting bounded units.”⁷

Any ethically capacious response to environmental crisis must include human and more-than-hu-

man worldings alike. As such, we require ‘heroes’ capable of responding to the challenges of the Anthropocene not only with the logics of control, manipulation and force, but also with the developed sensitivities of empathy, imagination and understanding. In what follows we will trace three such exemplar models of those who were able stay with the trouble and develop community in just this way. Rather than the traditional (i.e., masculine) Hero who by asserting himself thereby transcends himself (and thus restores ‘order’ to nature), the protagonists of Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*⁸, Fleming’s *The Wizard of Oz*⁹ and Miyazaki’s *Spirited Away*¹⁰ each exercise radical acceptance and enact a subsequent harmonization of a sudden and disorienting rupture into their everyday realities by forming community with human and non-human others alike.

Beyond models of the patriarchal hero as the one who makes plans (i.e. determines a desirable future), sets out (i.e. asserts their autonomy) and conquers evil forces (i.e. masters an unruly chaos), we find in these works heroes of a very different sort. Without a full understanding of how they arrived in their predicament, nor possessing a clear way forward, the young female protagonists of these stories nonetheless proceed by befriending and integrating the novelty of their strange new world. Theirs is an ongoing negotiation with ambiguity and sympoietic ‘making-with’ that requires adaptive awareness, empathy and openness to an ever-shifting and unpredictable environment. They do not so much achieve solutions to their (often intractable) problems as they attain periodic culminations of events that emerge from with(in) a relational space of participation—a space where often the framing of the problem itself is transformed.

In *Alice in Wonderland*, this transformation occurs most obviously when Alice is confronted with a door too small to pass through. Rather than attempting to solve the problem as (literally) framed, she instead accepts an invitation to drink the potion that subsequently reconfigures the space-time parameters of the entire problem-solution binary.

It is her openness to unforeseen possibility (and not her mastery of the problem as posed) that allows for the surprising resolution to occur. The tears that flow from a subsequent expression of grief (i.e. her willingness to feel) are what ultimately carry her through the threshold—a trope one is quite unlikely to find in more typically masculine heroics!

Similarly, in *Spirited Away* it is not only the young Chihiro’s empathy and sensitivity to her surroundings that get her through her trials, but also her refusal to register events as they might first appear. Her ability to see through illusory appearances is what enables her to identify a ‘stink spirit’ as the superficial manifestation of a polluted river—a discovery that leads the workers of the bathhouse (the setting for much of the story) to band together and liberate the spirit from its burden of anthropogenic pollution. Likewise is Chihiro the only person not willing to be seduced by the offerings of the mysterious Noface, whose fool’s gold holds the rest of the bathhouse staff in thrall as they greedily debase themselves before him. It is her insight that in the end reveals the devouring monster to be merely a gentle and misguided spirit. Noface finding peace as a housemaid for the gentle witch Zeniba peacefully concludes a journey that could have otherwise ended in violence.

When confronted with what at first may appear intimidating, startling or even terrifying, these heroes react not with violence, but rather by moving towards, accommodating and subsequently befriending what might have otherwise become enemy. This gesture of making oddkin by staying with the trouble typically reveals the antagonist to be a misunderstood sheep in wolves clothing who subsequently has something of value to offer the community. As such, otherwise disparate forces/beings are brought together, with all parties benefiting in relationships of reciprocity. Just as Dorothy cannot navigate the yellow brick road without the guidance of the Scarecrow, Tinman, and Lion, so too are they unable to find what is missing from their lives without Dorothy’s vision, empathy, and guidance. Without her ability to see beyond the ordinary,

think outside the box and move through fear, the Scarecrow would have remained forever in the field, the Tinman perpetually seized and the Lion unintentionally scaring away all those who enter the forest.

As we increasingly find ourselves in our own version of Oz where the laws of calculative rationality and simple problem-solution binaries no longer apply, we require models of engagement capable of engendering new thought and creating new possibilities for action. The image of the hero as a competent, masterful, (typically) male conqueror of evil is challenged by those who like Alice, Dorothy and Chihiro, can exercise adaptive awareness, empathy and openness to an ever-shifting and unpredictable environment. As our most recent apocalypse continues to disclose a bewildering array of events, novel entities and unforeseen consequences, will we endure in our attempts to maintain human progress by mastering these forces, or can we cultivate creative ways to stay with the trouble by forming oddkin in unexpected places, in unexpected ways?

Alice’s skill for manifesting unforeseen possibility, Chihiro’s willingness to go against common opinion and see through illusory appearances and Dorothy’s ability to empathize and create community are each in their own way necessary for navigating the unique challenges of the Anthropocene. These heroes are exemplar embodiments of ideals that, while too often dismissed as quietist in a culture dominated by progressive mastery, are nonetheless required for responding to the shifting dynamics of a planet in flux. As the house of Anthropos continues to be thrown into disarray, human exceptionality and bounded individualism become increasingly unthinkable. Like Miyazaki’s many-limbed boiler-man Kamaji, we must exercise our tentacular capacity to “make attachments; make cuts and knots; make a difference; weave paths and consequences but not determinisms; [become] both open and knotted in some ways and not others.”¹¹ This is a transformation that begins in imagination with the stories we tell, and as Haraway reminds us, it (literally) matters how this process is conducted:

It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.”¹²

Any adequate response to the environmental crisis surely requires both problem-solving and imaginative practices of becoming-with. This requires a shift in emphasis from achieving monolithic ‘solutions’ towards a more nuanced understanding of the context in which a given approach may or may not apply. Any totalizing response to the

environmental crisis cannot account for the particular situated involvements of embodied, emplaced beings. We require, alongside our carbon schemes and energy efficient appliances, ways of creatively accommodating and adapting to a rapidly changing world. In our ongoing negotiation with the emergent dynamics of the Anthropocene, stories that re-imagine who/what a hero can be will aid us in expanding the domain of the possible. These stories are necessary for a better understanding that our current predicament is not only a unidimensional problem waiting to be solved, but also an opportunity to move into deeper communion with(in) a myriad multiplicity of agencies, forces, peoples and more-than-human beings. ∞

NOTES

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4 Evernden, N. Title and publisher needed 1993 (p. 134)

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6 Haraway (p. 1)

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9 Fleming, V. (Director). (1939). *The Wizard of Oz* [Motion Picture].

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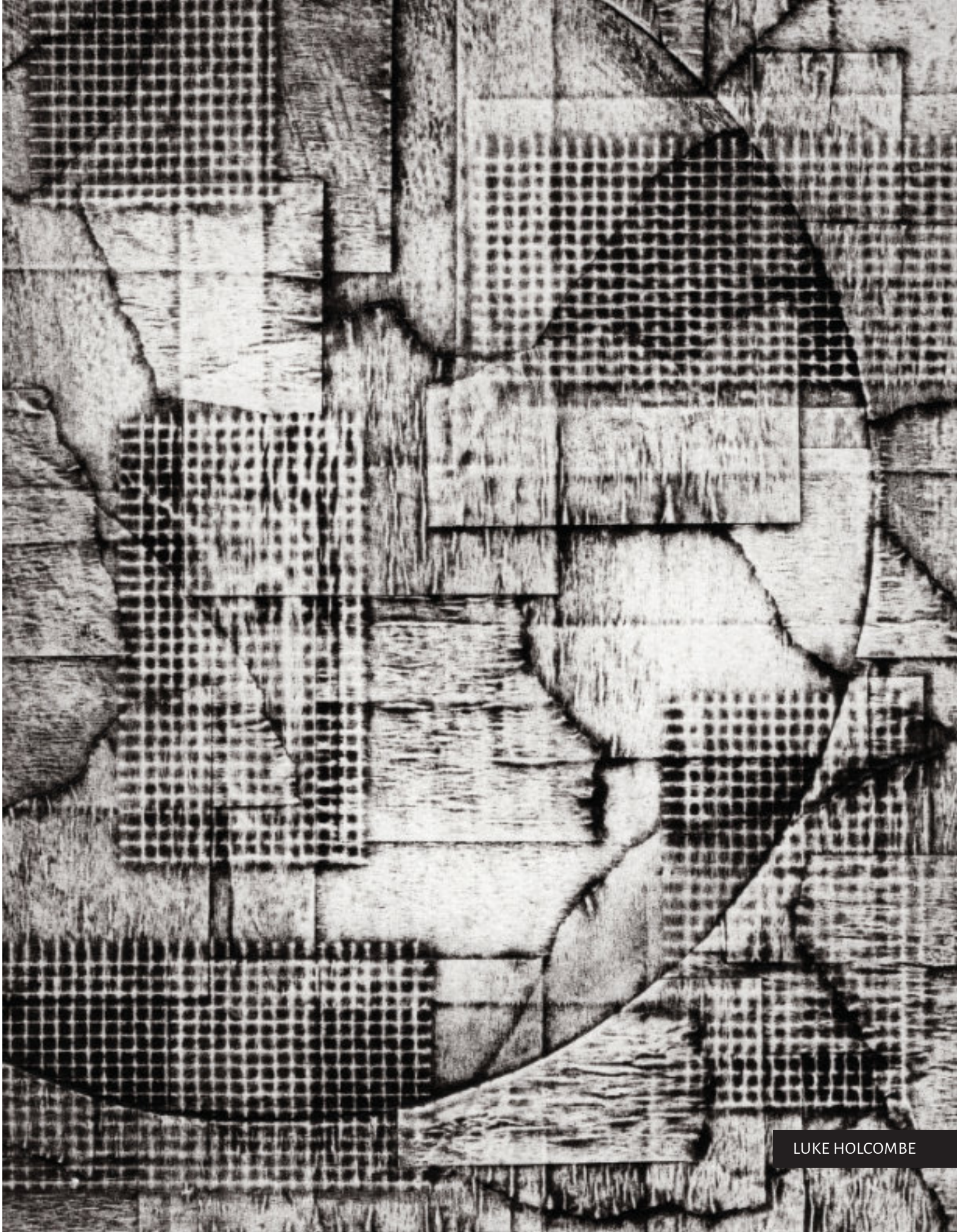
11 Haraway (p.31)

12 Haraway (p.12)

More music from
the Imaginings
Ensemble



tinyurl.com/3fv8rypr





ALISSA BONNET

Something inside so strong

I WAS SITTING IN THE BACK OF A TAXI, fidgeting with the creases in my shirt when a black demonic smudge ran across the grass beyond the window. It was hardly noticeable at first, like the onset of a cold. It could have been a visual flicker; a hallucination; a symptom of my insobriety.

This is how I filed the incident in my mind until many years later.

The smudge lasted a few blinks, long enough to wiper blade away tears forming in my eyes. Its appearance shifted between the constellation of a fallen sky and an indistinct, many-legged, hound-like aberration. I couldn't focus on it: it constantly found its way into my periphery. When it disappeared, my eyes regained their focus. I checked every groove and characteristic of the outer world. I turned to the empty passenger seat, my heart beating. Alone.

The taxi driver eyed me in the rear-view mirror. 'You were saying about the voucher?'

And we resumed our conversation, him listening as I recounted the voucher application process, and me rationalising what I had seen in my head.

I was undergoing the tedium of my bi-monthly shop, when, my mind wandering, I found an old voucher in my pocket. It reminded me of the taxi ride. I jumped out of my skin when a black smudge rustled in the corner of my eye: the sleeve of an old woman's cardigan. Noticing my shock, she smiled and rested her hand on mine, apologising for her presence. Her hand was colder than anything I had ever felt.

Walking to work the next day, I stepped over the manhole that was always open, averted my gaze from the mother and two children who commuted to school at the same time as

me, and chanced across the junction where there was always a small chance of getting run over.

We dice with death in everything we do. I mentioned the same to a colleague at work, Sara, who was quite the germaphobe and nodded as I spoke.

"You see why I'm like this," she said.

"But you're only reducing the odds. You could still get sick."

Sara's face darkened in the same way it did when she dealt with difficult clients, or ruminated on past regrets. "Why bother checking both ways at a crossing then?"

"Sometimes I don't," I said.

It was one of those things you don't bother replying to.

I started a new job a few weeks later, but my commute stayed the same: over the manhole, past the family, across the junction. Before the taxi incident, I had been on a night out with some friends. Years passed when we didn't speak. I believed this was a result of the atmosphere that night; old friends coming together, discussing their differences and, without saying it, concluding that their differences outweighed the value of their historic ties.

So I thought until I saw a subsection of this group sitting outside a café. All the tables but theirs were covered in a thin layer of ice. There was a tower of cakes in the centre of their table. When they saw me, they invited me to eat

I nibbled a cake gingerly and gestured inside. "Why aren't you sat there?"

Melissa shrugged and picked at the blurry icing of a chocolate éclair. "How are you doing?"

"Fine, thanks. I started a new job."

"You must be excited," Jon said.

"Extremely." I splayed my hand across the table. "I've not seen you since Felicity's birthday. But you all kept in touch?"

Melissa and Jon looked at each other, but didn't speak. I took this as my cue to stand up.

Wiping crumbs from my mouth, I made excuses.

Melissa looked at Jon again, her brows furrowed, and rested her hand on my wrist. "It's not that. We've not talked to Felicity either. She went missing. We figured you had as well."

"And why would you figure that?"

"Well, when did you ever reach out?" Jon said.

"And that means I disappeared?" I said, blinking rapidly and unhooking Melissa's hand. "What do you mean, 'she went missing'?"

Melissa shrugged again. She always shrugged when she didn't feel up to answering; I had forgotten that about her.

"A lot of people go missing round here," she said eventually.

Their indifference surprised me, but then, I supposed, it had been some time since the drama of her sudden absence in their lives. I never knew. I surprised myself too by how slowly my indifference ebbed away, and then how strong my fascination was in the disappearance. It slapped hard, and suddenly my eyes were bleeding hot tears from staring at a computer screen at 3AM.

This became a habit.

One day I set off for work on the weekend – on autopilot – and didn't realise anything was different until I crossed the junction. The sparsity of traffic made drivers cocky. I had a near accident. As I picked myself up from the pavement, my body moved to curse at the driver speeding off down the road, but my mind was elsewhere. If I died here, I would disappear too. I would be another missing person.

Whether it was a regional, national or international phenomenon I don't know.

There was little to be read about it, but much to be said. My colleagues agreed when I slipped Melissa's words into sentences. They could all name examples. I started to quote Melissa often, unable to concentrate on pretending to care about anything else.

Eventually I ended up at Felicity's husband's house. He was still living there with the kids. Their house radiated heat like when you open an oven door: instinctually, you back away. But though I couldn't bring myself to cross the threshold into their front garden, I watched their lives through the window. Sat at the dinner table, staring at their plates morosely and taking a fork of food at irregular intervals, as if their arms were the rusty mechanics of an unreliable machine.

Is this what mourning looked like? I had never known it.

When I called the police, they said they had never heard of her. That's when I knew something was wrong. When I started to look back, I couldn't bring her face to my mind. I couldn't hear her voice. I couldn't remember where she told me she lived, what her husband's name was, how she found the time to be pregnant over the years I knew her. And yet I did know her. I knew everything about her.

Somehow, I knew she hadn't gone missing. She hadn't disappeared. She had never existed.

I realised then why Melissa and Jon seemed so disturbed to see me, and their indifference to the news they must have dreaded delivering. When I existed once again in their lives, Felicity was reborn. I wondered what it meant and the effect this would have on my life, but for a while, nothing materially changed.

I commuted. Over the manhole on the busiest street in town, that nobody had ever fallen into. Mothers with prams, wheelchair

users, blind people, knew not to walk there. The mother and her two children. Weren't they my age once? And yet never at school, never waiting by the school gates, never appearing in registers or conversations. Never anywhere but here in this moment. When I turn, do they disappear? I tried it and they didn't, but I was already replaying the years I had walked past the three of them; how in ten years they had never aged.

In shop windows, stacks of boxes that had once looked vaguely like human shapes now became them: I was constantly watched by these unhuman anomalies. The black smudge I saw in the taxi took the form of every animal I looked at before I blinked, then I had to blink two or three times to get rid of it.

I remembered the taxi driver's nonchalance and wondered if there was anybody in this world who saw the things I did. But the conclusions I had started to draw about the world around me made me question that.

I continued to commute. While crossing the junction, I stopped. The red light had long since changed to green, and I could hear engines roaring past. Someone would turn right eventually. They had to. And yet they didn't. I stepped forward, and then it came. I turned back.

The car was gone before it could run me over, but my body reacted as if it did. I fell, the road numb against my head.

LOW POWER.

The words transcended any measurable sense. It appeared within me like the instinct that drives a kitten to knit for its mother's milk. My head rumbled, hot invisible blood ran down my nose, and I lost the use of a finger for twenty four hours.

The paramedics said I had been run over.

It wasn't the time or place to correct the doctors on the correct turn of events, nor was I interested in communicating with the world around me anymore. I walked around

or else stayed at home, reliving monotonous tasks as if nothing had changed. I talked to friends and family, I talked to strangers. I could never catch anyone out: the world decided when to unravel, not me.

I showed up at work one day. I had been put on sick leave, and a disciplinary meeting was taking place tomorrow. My boss told me this in a tumble of words while drawing me into his office.

"Where have you been?" he said.

"You were having the disciplinary meeting without me?" I said, my eyes narrowing. He misconstrued my meaning.

Stuttering, he jerked his hand across a document of my failures. Missed attendance. Missed calls. Lost emails.

"We heard you were sick," he said.

"Maybe," I said. Instinctually I held up a hand to my mouth, as if I could hide the words I did not believe from being said. My fingers came back cold and wet. I looked at them.

"Everything OK?"

"Do you see anything?"

I held my hands palm-up to him. His eyes flickered over them, lingering for less than a second, before looking away.

"I don't. Listen — forget the disciplinary. I'm just glad to see you. We hadn't heard anything. Thought you might have disappeared."

A dizziness rose in my head, vibrating everything out of me until it took all of my

conscious effort to stop my brain from melting out of my ears. The words I was hearing melted with it.

"Disappeared?" I said.

"Yeah," my boss said, frowning and averting his eyes from mine. "It happens sometimes."

"It does, doesn't it?"

Would I disappear? I was being run over, backwards, in slow motion. And then it came.

LOW POWER

But this time, the buzzing didn't stop. I could see my boss in front of me, but anything that would usually drive me to care about it had gone. I could no longer hear his words over the alarms, inaudible alarms in my head.

LOW POWER

I staggered toward the stationary cupboard; somewhere dark and contained, a mini-world. Sara was crouched by a crate of pens, flickering in and out of existence. I collapsed on top of her and she disappeared.

LOW POWER

I heard the door slam, looked up to meet my maker but nobody had come in. I was alone, me and the voice within. I slapped my head but my nerves were no longer communicating with each other.

LOW POWER

"And what happens to me?" I said.

LOW POWER.

I covered my eyes.



Unpsychology imaginings

POETRY IN GERMAN BY INGE CASTELLINI

ENGLISH TRANSLATION BY ANGELINA CASTELLINI,
INGE CASTELLINI AND ALEX HOYLE

vorfreude

vor freude
lief ich auf
das morgen zu

um dann
festzustellen, dass
etwas oder man

das morgen
einfach so
verschoben hat

aber ich trotze
der zeit und
freue mich

vor ...

anticipation

full of joy
I ran towards
tomorrow

only to then realize
that something
or someone

had postponed
the future
just like that

but I defy time
and joyfully
keep looking

forward ...



auf-gabe

sie haben die phantasien aufgegeben
und mit ihnen das begehren

man hat das hoffen verschoben
und zugleich die zukunft

unter trümmern liegt
verschüttet ein glaube
und mit ihm die liebe

zwischen geld
verhandelt man wahrheit
und mit ihr das vertrauen

der mensch ist verraten
seines ursprungs beraubt

wir müssen ihn
neu-er-finden

t'ask for

they have given up fantasy
and their desire

hope has been rescheduled
so has their future

buried under rubble
lies a belief
together with their love

through money
will truth be negotiated
as shall their trust

humanity is betrayed
robbed of her origin

she must be found
to-get-her



*More music from
the Imaginings
Ensemble*



tinyurl.com/3pvz26wu



tinyurl.com/3hm6vhdj



FRANCIS SALOLE *Darkmatter in the woven nebular*

contributors

ALEX HOYLE is a writer, artist and theatremaker based in the Netherlands. He is a founding member of the Bristol Improv Theater, the U.K's first improvised theatre venue, and currently works as an events technician at Pakhuis De Zwijger in Amsterdam.

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ANGELINA CASTELLINI explores how we as humans can relate improvisationally to ourselves, each other, and our environments. As the founder of impro studio, she offers support for people to recognise, train and act on their improvisation abilities. Whatever happens, life is to be experienced and engaged with. This can be challenging. And fun! www.improstudio.org contact@improstudio.org

ALISSA BONNETT is a tattoo artist from Yorkshire. After qualifying in 2018 with a degree in Military History, she has been focused on writing stories and poems influenced by her studies and is particularly inspired by the works of Jean-Paul Sartre.

ANNA NYGREN (they), born 1990, lives in Gothenburg, Sweden, and is a poet, writer, playwright, literary scholar and teacher of literary composition. Anna is autistic and engages with themes of neuroqueerness in their work, as well as with horses, cats and sensory dreaminess. Their most recent publications are the lyric novel "Nathalie" and a translation of Hannah Emersons poems into Swedish.

DR BHAVANA NISSIMA is a Lightweaver and Earthwoman — she weaves idea-streams, thought-concepts, people, places and objects into new possibilities for the future. She warm-supports

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FIONA BROOKS: My life is story soup. Which ingredient should I share? I'm a corporate refugee, ex-engineer, team workshop creator, thinking space holder, mother, wife, sister, friend, cat servant, beginner food-grower, community member and host, Warm Data host, microbe host, mediocre and enthusiastic singer, prolific reader, shuffle-jogger. Perth is home, for now.

FRANCIS SALOLE: Tena koe fellow sapiens. I live in Paekakariki, Aotearoa where I have my art 'laboratory.' I also do animation and have worked on 'Kiri and Lou' a funny, gently subversive children's animated show. I also work as a psychiatric nurse at Wellington Hospital. Doing art is having my head in the clouds, nursing is having my feet on the ground.

GEORGE BAKOLAS: I was born by a river and was seduced early on by the sealed secret of words and images that already existed on the facades of the cities I was unaware of. I studied film and theatre and wrote... I mainly struggled to understand whether man invented art or whether it used him for its own purposes. georgebakolas.net

HELEN MAY WILLIAMS' publications include: *Coed Cae Claer* (Cinnamon Press 2023), *Catstrawe* (Cinnamon Press 2019), *June: a biographical novel* (Cinnamon Press 2020), *Before Silence: a year's haiku* (The High Window Press 2020), *The Princess of Vix* (Three Drops Press 2017), and with co-authors Dominic Williams and Mel Perry: *Hold the Line* (People Speak Up 2021).

Raised in salt and yeast, IMMA J LÓPEZ grew up with a deep sense of place. Currently based in Scotland, attention and the sensorial world are at the centre of her creative practice. Interested in the ecology of life, she loses her edges in Creative Community and Warm Data Community where her liquidity finds deliciousness. To find her, among other artists and creators, visit <https://creativegallery.us>

INGE CASTELLINI. The older I get, the more curious I become about life. Concerning 'imaginings', I was rather clueless what retirement could mean. As I left the European School where I had enjoyed teaching Fine Arts and German for over three decades, Corona and then the war in Ukraine hit me like a freezing shower. Diversity and creativity have always been key elements in my work. I have been writing, painting, taking photos all my life, inviting others and myself to a search of meaning, belonging and healing. contact@improstudio.org

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JUDITH HENNING and AMELIE HENSEL are both settled in Hamburg (Germany). In 2008 they founded metagarten – an art project with the intention to reclaim space for nature in urban settings. Amelie lives as theatre maker with focus on design, her interest lies in understanding our role in the eternal net, sustainable stage design and networking with likeminded. Judith is historian, permaculture designer and curator with emphasis on sustainability. In addition she develops innovative solutions for urban settings and teaches balcony gardening and vermicomposting. With metagarten we develop visionary projects that help us accept that our place as humans cannot be in the center. www.metagarten.de

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JULIAN STILL: Born on a small farm, with the uncertainty of nature's processes, I left for a corporate career as a shell high flyer. By 35 I'm a self employed crisis manager, with Cynefin to explain my intuitive knowing. At 60 warm data adds useful language. Now I don't camouflage my autistic gift as I try to find language for my knowing. [linkedin.com/in/julian-still-1a362/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/julian-still-1a362/)

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LESLEY MACLEAN: I like collaborating with whoever and whatever is around and perceiving more and more layers of life life-ing. I enjoy helping to form **unpsychology**; learning alongside clay as I attempt to make simple, beautiful pots (wobbling in the footsteps of my mother and the Japanese tea potters); and serving tea to whoever needs it.

LOCAL HEARTHIAN is a pseudonym for an English student somewhere in the vicinity of Manchester. They put off the existential fear of living in a chaotic universe born of the infinite flux of mere physical laws by writing about things actually working out. They like old space operas and cats.

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MARK SKELDING lives on Salt Spring, unceded Salish land. After working in communications and conservation he retrained as a transpersonal psychotherapist. Discovering ecopsychology, he began thinking about psyche's place in the psychosphere. Mark would love to hear from you, solidair@zoho.com or through his website: www.psychosynthesis-selfandworld.ca

MIRONDO WAISWA writes and uses the power of poems and stories to create impact and change the socio-economic status quo.

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PATRICK CARPENTER: Musician, b. 1970: London, SE1. Posh cockney living afloat. Today, saxophone. Other days, saxophone too. Other days still, digital files. Some days, saxophone, flute, percussion, drums and digital files. And what glorious days those days are. Jam packed with sound and music joy for hours and hours. soundcloud.com/nursery-roadrecordings

PEGI EYERS is the author of *Ancient Spirit Rising: Reclaiming Your Roots & Restoring Earth Community*, an award-winning book focused on social justice, nature spirituality and the ancestral arts. Pegi self-identifies as a Celtic Animist, and lives near Peterborough, Canada on a hilltop with views reaching for miles in all directions. www.stonecirclepress.com

PETER CAMERON is largely self-taught, and has been painting, drawing and sculpting form most of his life. He suggests that through actively engaging Anima Mundi through arts, we learn about the reciprocal nature of diverse sense perceptions. Working 'en plein air' can then become a realising of relational ontology. www.petercameron.com

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STEFFEN (&) LARS POPP, born 1976, living in Offenbach (Germany), claims to be a theater director/ (co-)maker (Steffen), author (Lars) and dramaturge (Steffen Lars). Popp is part of the participatory performance collectives *helpersyndrom* (helper syndrome) and *red park* and also co-director of the *MADE Festival* for the Hessian independent performing arts. www.complifiction.net

STEVE THORP weaves through several life strands and passions. Family, coast, psyche, soul, body, music, ideas, words. His writing is published by Raw Mixture Publishing and elsewhere. He currently works as a school counsellor, and integrative psychotherapist. He co-founded **unpsychology**, continuing to find an activist's joy in its crafting. www.21soul.co.uk

TEMPIST JADE is a transdisciplinary guide, ceremonialist, ancestral liminalist, and eco-philosophical writer & poet whose work is a confluence of many traditions and practices. As an indigenous hybrid, they are a lover of crossroads and passionately tend the intersections of ancestry, mythos, gender, trauma, chthonic & cosmic spiritualities, intra-species relating, and more. Website: www.feralmysticism.com. Instagram: [@feralmysticism](https://www.instagram.com/feralmysticism). Substack: feralmysticism.substack.com

VALERIE JACKMAN grew up in Ireland through the late 60s and 70s. From an early age she loved to act and recite poetry. Valerie has an insatiable curiosity and passion for life. She is happily settled in Edinburgh, with a husband, three children and a cockapoo.

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JULIA MACINTOSH & STEVE THORP

Ending dialogue

JULIA: here we are at the closing stage of *Imaginations* 9.1 — with the issue in layout and the final copyedits and proofing underway. Today I printed out the issue in full draft — it is so exciting to see it in hard-copy. Behind the scenes you and Patrick are organising QR codes for sound files and coordinating with Lesley where they will land, and I'm preparing to do a wee reading from the opening pages. The last threads are being pulled together and we are all stepping one to the other in a sort of final dance, as though we have been choreographed in the lead up to publication of this beautiful magazine. We've each of us been through ups and downs over the past six months, over the course of this issue's preparation, so it's taken a bit longer than we originally envisioned. But here we are, approaching the finish line, and very proud we are too.

STEVE: The practical stuff of creating — well, anything — always comes down to bits and pieces at the last minute. However, there's a bigger picture. It's not just the content of the work (which is wonderful) and the curation of it (which is a big responsibility that we've always taken seriously), but the context of it, and the way that **unpsychology** always seems to get to somewhere unusual — even strange — even though we never plan it that way. At the beginning,

I usually have something in my head about what it might look and feel like (cultural training right there!), but this all seems to dissipate once the editorial conversations begin! It's important because our world is also built like that — see the problem, see the structure of the solution, build the response — and it almost never works. And taking your metaphor on board — even finish lines are only there for one race! The athletes are back in training for the next one!

JULIA: So true, it's a different finish line every time. I have a friend who runs ultra-marathons which take her on stretches of up to thirty hours. I personally can't get my head round it — but she loves it, and it moves her into what she calls 'the zone' which I imagine is a spiritually-infused meditative groove. This is a bit like what happens in our editorial journey, when we are absorbed with the creative process. We lose ourselves in the call-and-response, the shared conversations and subsequent decisions, and in all the beautiful playful details of the finished layout and sound links. It's really fascinating to me, how it all comes together. This morning your promotional postcards arrived in the mail, and I'm just really excited now about getting the word out: issue 9.1 is nearly ready to be born!

STEVE: We've certainly been in the zone, and there's more to come. Once this first issue is out in the world, we will be back into the ebb and flow of the second volume. It's the first time we've made two magazines out of one theme and, like everything else in the project, the outcome is unpredictable. I want to get serious for a moment too — we had a message from a new subscriber on our Substack recently who summed up what they saw as the aim of **unpsychology** to “endeavor to publish a magazine that depends on human imagination, curiosity and a willingness to explore using many/any form of art”. I think this summed things up nicely — but I would also add that this task takes place within the context of everything that challenges us as human animals at this time, and against a civilisational reality that all our frames are basically broken. Can **unpsychology** continue to offer the space for imagining that this issue and the next one have done? And what difference will it make — if any at all — and does that really matter? I guess, at the base, **unpsychology** is, above all else, an invitation for art and writing (of all kinds) and for artists and writers (of all kinds) to be in relationship and conversations with each other. And perhaps that is enough for now...

JULIA: **unpsychology** extends an invitation, yes, and not just for artists and writers but also for readers and subscribers — a community that is more than just an audience, and greater than the sum of its parts. We hope that our community loves this issue 9.1 in all its summer glory and also enjoys playing with the forthcomingness of issue 9.2 germinating and preparing itself for autumn harvest. We hope too that our community engages with both these issues via commentary, social media interaction and on the **unpsychology voices** space on Substack. Please do join us in our imaginings!

Ending this issue of unpsychology, here's Julia reading the passage above.



tinyurl.com/invitationto9point2

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+	Within and between: the art of LUKE HOLCOMBE and of FRANCIS SALOLE; the music of PATRICK CARPENTER & THE IMAGININGS ENSEMBLE; the found poetry of Steve Thorp; and all other beings, things, and processes unnamed or unnameable.

IMAGININGS 2 OF 2





RAW publishing
MIXTURE