

Anthropocene

Laboratory

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When I started Club Anthropocene in 2011, together with the philosopher Ingmar Meland, priest Lars Van der Heeg, and artists Marie Bondeson, Anneli Pihlgren, Peter Hefner and Lars Åsling, the term **Anthropocene** was still something new and rather unexplored. Now, more than ten years after, it is developing into a concept that is used differently by different professions and disciplines. On the homepage of the local Club Anthropocene group in Gothenburg we express that

Club Anthropocene is a meetingplace and testing-ground for visual and textual conceptualization of ideas relating to the theme **anthropocene**. This could include meetings between art, philosophy, religion, the natural sciences and the humanities, or meetings between different traditions of knowledge. The meetingplace in it self is open for everyone that wants to participate and contribute to it. Its ambition is to provide space for thinking together, foregrounding the necessity of testing and developing ideas collectively and as individuals participating in a collective process.

And, meeting each other and sharing creative thinking in word, expression and image is what Club Anthropocene has been about. In this time, where our filter bubbles suggest to us that what we need is just another dose of what we seemed to agree with yesterday, Club Anthropocene's ambition has been to test, grow and cultivate perspectives in a different manner. Instead of trying to define the term **Anthropocene** we have read different kinds of theory, learnt from anthropology, art theory and the natural sciences and experimented with terms and concepts in an elaborative yet co-creative way.

Club Anthropocene has always been about connections between people and between different groups of people collaborating driven by similar energies. One network that has been specially important is the SLSA, the Society of Literature Sciences and the Arts footnote which, through collaborations and conferences, has made it possible for many

of us to meet not only on the net or through texts. I was first introduced to English professor Ron Broglio and his writing on animals and environmentalism by the visual artists Bryndís Snæbjörnsdóttir and Mark Wilson. To be present at the release of Snæbjörnsdóttir and Wilson's book **You Most Carry Me Now: The Cultural Lives of Endangered Species**—I joined the 2015 SLSA annual meeting in Houston. When Ron Broglio hosted the SLSA 2017 annual meeting named **Out of Time** in Tempe, Peter the dancer, Kennet the marine biologist, Karin the actor/director and I were invited to present both art and lectures at the Arizona State University, and this proved to be a great adventure. During the four days we met new friends that still inspire us today, and many of us are meeting again through collaboration in this publication, **The Anthropocene Laboratory**

On this occasion I have to mention one of our Arizona friends specially. I remember vividly the engagement, the generosity, sharing of ideas and genuine helpfulness that Zachary Thomas blessed our group of with, and the inspiration for building networks and friendships that we shared. I was so glad to receive an essay for this book from Zach, and so shocked when I heard that he himself would never see the book that you are now holding in your hand. My warmest thoughts go out to Kimberley his girlfriend, his family, and to his good friends Nat and Garrett that have all been part of the decision to present his wonderful essay posthumously and allowed me to dedicate this publication to his memory. Zach's warmth, clarity of thought, genuine generosity and will to fight for a better future is still very much present in this publication, and will continue to inspire.

I think the most important energy of the Club Anthropocene has been our strive to connect people and ideas across both established and experimental structures within and without cultural institutions, academia, including natural science, fieldwork and environmental activism.

And this work has taught me that it is vital to preserve even the cultural eco system, with its many varieties and interconnections. So, the good energy in one group is not to be kept as a treasure, but float as free as possible through all networks that channel and add to it. Club Anthropocene could not exist without our connections to other networks, artist run projects, galleries, theatres, natural research stations or the arts grants committees and other funders that have supported us through the years.

The title of this publication, **The Anthropocene Laboratory** stems from a collaboration between LabAE, **Laboratory for Aesthetics and Ecology** with curator Ida Bencke, and me representing Club Anthropocene. We have been in touch since 2016, and shared ideas, met each other at conferences and produced art and ecology exhibitions together. Our idea was to continue to be in contact, visit each other and produce this book together. But, the Covid pandemic changed a lot of schedules for both of us, so we decided that Club Anthropocene would be the home of this particular laboratory, and to keep it open for everyone that would like to contribute. I have learnt a lot from Ida, her focus, spirit and sensitivity still helps me deepen and broaden my engagement with environmental and anthropocene thinking.

During the pandemic all kinds of networks has been challenged, and we as others nhave had to adapt. Ilona Huss Walin has led the Gothenborg reading group, whose participants have met regularly on the net or on field excursions. She was also the main power behind one of Club Anthropocene and its forest group's most successful projects, **Talking in Rya Skog**. As part of the Gothenburg International Biannual of Contemporary Art's extended programme, we arranged a day of walking lectures combining forestry with art and poetry in a very special local forest.

Another member that has continued to share positive energy through more than a decade is Peter Hefner and his continuous work to connect

Hungarian and Nordic artists. This has led to that, since 2021, many of the Nordic artists in this publication have been invited to participate in the Szeged summer art-camp in the south of Hungary, several visits from Hungarian artists to Gothenburg, and several exhibitions with Hungarian and Nordic artists in Gothenburg, Budapest and Szeged.

The contact with Åke Lidén and the Bornö Marine Research Station and the Bornö Institute for Ocean and Climate Studies has also been a very positive influence. We have several times arranged workshops, open houses with art exhibitions, fieldwork, performances and working lectures at this beautiful and inspiring location.

The group is even thankful for the help and support from the research station at Lake Erken, that made it possible to arrange a workshop in art and limnology there in 2017.

At the end I must express my thankfulness to Anna Risell that agreed to be the co-editor of this book, adding her engagement, wit, and sensitivity, combined with clarity of thought and radiant energy. I must also give special thanks to Christine Fentz and her unwavering engagement for the collaborative learning processes between humans, listening to our non-human neighbours, and the importance of environment and deep connection to landscape. She has for many years been a mentor to me, and the effort to build this network, and will hopefully continue to be so for years to come.

All of the network thanks the committees, grants and sponsors that made this book and our work possible.

Fold out

What is the

Anthropocene Laboratory?

This project is a collection of art and thinking along multiple lines, a strange network where dialogue between differences is encouraged, translations are made and remade, and where sparks of energy may ignite the material in unforeseen ways. I do not think that I will read this book in the same way that you do, or that I will ever read it the same way twice.

I have decided to just give a brief and to me personal introduction to the artworks, as I don't want to frame them too hard. I wish the art and images to keep their integrity and independence, and to communicate as such and not as illustrations to any of the texts.

At the same time, this book focuses on the role of art and culture, and how we may gain new knowledge of the world through artistic practice. In this Anthropocene time, our laboratory also experiments with how art and artistic practice may link the natural sciences and the humanities and help us understand the entanglement of ecological and humanitarian questions.

My role writing this introduction and presentation is as the person that has spent the most time of us all with the material, which is now coming together as a book. I have a personal relation to most of the contributors, and see myself as a bricoleur and experimental artist—, not any authority in any way. I will simply share my own inspiration and reflection on and from working with this project and encourage you to make your own experiments with combining the ideas that you will find. You are invited to a laboratory after all, and do not have to evaluate anything as fixed results.

Welcome to the Laboratory

While working with the art and essays of this book, my perspectives has changed and changed again. The last four years have been like living in a kaleidoscope where facets of hope and despair are constantly grouping and regrouping, creating dramatically changing patterns. The joy of finally breaking out of the bubble of social isolation formed by the Corona Epidemic colored my feelings as I started to write this introduction. Now it is contrasted with the shock and pain of the reality of a nearby war.

As Ilona Huss Walin e-mailed me recently, her initially playful art, forming weapons with forest branches' now casts a somber shadow. Is playing with weapons just a fundamental aspect of being human or a sign that the ghosts of war will always haunt our history with hidden fear and aggression just bidding a chance to reemerge?

At the advice of my coeditor, Anna Risell, I try to read Rebecca Solnit these days as I have some problems to orient my hopes for the future. A nagging fear suggests that the rather soft-spo-

ken and personal argumentation of this book may seem futile in the context of brute power. But what do we know of the futures to come? And, as we see how precarious our situation is, how fragile the safety that we take for granted, isn't a search for good questions an energy well spent in an elaborate, collaborative effort?

“Hope locates itself in the premises that we don't know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act. When you recognize uncertainty, you recognize that you may be able to influence the outcomes – you alone or you in concert with a few dozen or several million others.

Hope is an embrace of the unknown and the unknowable, an alternative to the certainty of both optimists and pessimists”
(Solnit to the Guardian in July 2016.)

I let these words inspire my editorial work with The Anthropocene Laboratory.

The Role of Club Anthropocene

One of my early inspirations to start the Club Anthropocene came from reading the book “The Human Condition”² by Hannah Arendt. I find that I often return to how Arendt defines the possibility for democracy in a society through an idea of the place where a democratic conversation can be held. With this, she means that democracy is a practice quite like a conversation, where as many different voices as possible should be heard. It even demands from the ones taking part in the conversation to really pay attention to the different points of view, instead of fearing this variety or push to consensus. She insists that true democracy does not exist without a manyfold of people that want to participate in building it, considering each other as equals, learning to listen to each other and respecting divergent opinions. And, democracy and the freedom that may be achieved, is not possible without a physical space for discussion, a public sphere. A representational democracy where the public sphere is restricted to the representatives that are elected by the people, does not foster the democratic being. Instead, people that may not actively take part in democratic action may end up in lethargy and a with a growing disinterest.

Arendt argues that every human has an equal right to be here. This could be read as an ethical imperative to take care of the earth and to build the world in common.

One thing that is certain is that, experimenting with the Anthropocene, we need to connect to and share with one another, and to be open to a myriad of perspectives.

Inspired in 2011 by the Norwegian philosopher Ingmar Meland, I developed an interest for

the philosophy of culture, and Ernst Cassirer's philosophy of symbolic forms in particular³ Meland held several lectures for the Club Anthropocene, and I think these lectures have been of great importance to our work and discussions. According to Meland, Cassirer's perspective on knowledge, learning and cultural development is one where different practices and ways of knowledge combine to help us understand each other, our world and ourselves. There are no absolute truths, just methods of creating meaning and understanding. Any object, figure or action is pregnant with symbolic meaning, but what it will end up meaning to **you** depends on how you approach it, and from within what perspective or tradition. Art, religion, myths, natural sciences, language are all examples of such methods of knowledge that Cassirer calls "symbolic forms". As an artist I deeply resonate with Cassirer when he says that art is creating new knowledge of the world, not only illustrating it or making it more beautiful. Visual or performing art is as an important way to what we call "reality" as natural sciences, language, mythological thinking or mathematics. He emphasizes that mythic thinking is still a strong driving force motivating our actions, for better and worse. And never does this become visible in as hard lighting as in the propaganda of war. Both Cassirer and another of my favorite philosophers, Vilém Flusser, tell us about the dangers of suppressing cultural myths fuelled by projections of "the evil other", or to dismiss these myths as illogical. The myths and the passions have their own logic, and they are powerful indeed.³

We have tried to build the foundation of this laboratory on respecting the differences between cultural forms, but also that the openness to multiple perspectives may be vital to the understanding of ourselves as cultural beings, and inspiring visions of possible futures.

I would like to encourage our readers to think of our book as a public space, in the way Arendt speaks of it, to think and re-think with us, and see what we bring you as a toolbox to shape unpredictable futures. I hope that this book, so beautiful and sensitive as it is, does also allow us to face some monsters and ghosts.⁴

Presentation of Participants

Although the cene (from Greek **kainos**, meaning new, recent) in **Anthropocene** suggests rapid change and new ideas, this is both the hope and the curse of our present situation. It seems that at present all human cultures, traditional or not, are faced with the effects of rapid change on a diversity of levels. Climate change, deforestation, species loss, war, the loss of ethnicity, language and a wide variety of situated knowledge, are all

part of this. We face problems that are almost impossible to grasp or sort out, as the perspectives are so manifold and the situation so entangled. Although all humans are not causing the same kind of damage to the planet, it is clear that at least some human cultures have caused probably irreversible damage to Earth's ecosystems, its biological resilience and climate. Rapid action is necessary, to stop this accelerating devastation. But, as we learn how unpredictable the outcomes of human activity and invention may be, acknowledging the roots of our cultures and searching as eagerly for lifestyles within sustainable limits as we do for inventive ways to "fix" the problems we are causing is essential.

Pensioned biology teacher **Gyrd Laszlo** offers a sensitive and personal reflection on rootedness from a perspective of a post-war childhood in Norwegian lower middle class. She describes how she has felt a strong connection with trees all through her life, and also about living your whole life in the same landscape and seeing it change. She writes about how her strong connection to trees has given perspective on both time and change.

The Western middle class has undeniably been, and still is, a driving force behind materialism and overconsumption. But, as Laszlo tells us, born in the 1940's, both her and her parents generation knew how to not waste, and to be content with more limited resources than today. The pride and resourcefulness in mending what is broken, to re-use instead of throwing away, to invent and make what you need from scratch, — we should be reminded that even in our Western, materialistic cultures we just recently diverted from this practice, and the knowledge is still not totally lost. Could it possibly be reawakened on a broader scale?

Christine Fentz is a performing artist whose work, as she describes it, is a walk on two legs. She strives to form bonds between her own ecologically aware artistic expression and enabling collective processes through sharing, hosting and organizing plays and performances, symposiums, and events. Living in a nature reserve she has built up a creative meeting place with an artist residency, workspaces and farm-life, in tune with the landscape. Whatever happens at the farm and the residency "Earthwise" is always grounded in the practicalities and choices formed by ecologic thinking and respect for each other. This attitude of care and curiosity is also at the center of her work with bees and ants. Participating in the "Walking Lecture on Ants" or "Banquet for Bees"⁵ You don't only learn "about" the insects, but **with** them. The scientific knowledge about ants or bees becomes keys unlocking the magic of their worlds, enchanting the participants (yes, participants, not audience) to engage with and inspire further care and learning about the species.

This is a very potent mix of natural science, theatre, choreography and a special mindfulness of ourselves as social beings, our fellow species and the landscapes we share.

From the perspective of a natural scientist, it is both a challenge to make societies act on the facts presented by science, and a question of creating relation and cultural values. Marine biologist **Kennet Lundin** writes about the roots of the term "Anthropocene" within geology, and also how he sees the term migrating into new cultural perspectives. Today it signalizes a "hostile takeover" where the humans dominate the planet on the cost of other lifeforms. At the same time, he says, the human species has, at least since 10—20 000 years ago, made great change to and created species loss in perhaps all the biotopes and landscapes that we enter. Maybe no human culture has ever lived within the limits of, or in balance with, the ecological preconditions. This may not mean that humans are always incapable of living in some kind of ecological balance with their surroundings, or that human impact may always create species-poor environments, but it is important to see that we are shaping (and have for a long time) the conditions of Earth to fit human needs. Human beings, on the one side are too powerful to be restrained by ecological limits, Lundin says, but at the same time may lack the strength, understanding or political will to confront or impact and take responsibility for it. Having the power to create rapid change forms a dilemma as this could both form changes for nature to heal or cause devastation.

In another essay Lundin questions the categorization of lifeforms as for example animal, plant or virus, as most species are dependent of and even constituted by more than one of these. To exemplify, he describes the lifecycle of the sea slug *Elysia viridis* who, by the help of a retro virus, gains the ability to integrate chloroplasts from algae in their own cells, and thereafter survive by photosynthesizing like a plant. One of Lundin's tasks as scientist is also to suggest Swedish names for marine species that only have Latin names. When naming them, he often tries to find humorous and inventive names that describe what they look like in their natural environment, to encourage people's curiosity and will to search for them. Today it is estimated that only about 10 % of all marine species are known to science, which makes it very clear that we are not at all aware of what impact climate change and other human activity is having, and to marine environments in particular.

As I see it, discussion of change and value must be foregrounded and put not only in a species, but even in a multicultural perspective. War and conflicts over resources urge us to take stand and side with one perspective even if it is on

cost of another, but it is a challenge to not lose track of the complexity and interconnectedness of both environmental, economic and humanitarian issues. I have recently started reading the writings of environmentalist and independent scholar David Harmon⁶ about something that he calls **biocultural diversity**.

It would chime well with the ideas of Cassirer to consider a biocultural strategy of protecting a variety of life in each of its manifestations—biological, cultural, and linguistic, as Harmon puts it "all of which interact with the planet's abiotic diversity to form a complex adaptive system that supports life on Earth."⁷

In an article from 2018, found on the internet platform "The Seeker" ethnobotanist Richard Stepp is interviewed about his work with indigenous communities in Mexico, Belize and Guatemala. "In some of these cultures, the single largest category of nouns are plant names. They may have thousands of plant names," Stepp told The Seeker. "So the biodiversity is intimately linked to the language. I've seen instances where 5-year-old kids know more plants than adult Westerners. They can easily name 150 plant species. This knowledge is gained at a really early age, and not only allows them to survive, but to live a very rich life through the knowledge of food and medicinal plants". This is very interesting, as (in any international context) only a fraction of the world's plants have been studied for medicinal or other use, and scientists have estimated that there could be all between 5 and 50 million species, but fewer than 2 million of these species have even been discovered by modern science. The biggest variety in both languages and species is around the equator of the Earth, specially in some "hotspots" like New Guinea and the Amazon basin. It is possible that the one causes the other, that higher biodiversity is capable of supporting greater cultural diversity, but it could even be the other way around. It is important to remember that most landscapes, even the Amazon rainforest, is what it is not just because of the natural evolution of its ecosystems, but also because of centuries of human manipulations to those ecosystems. So, as well as I know that local biodiversity (even in my own neighbourhood) depends on cultural bounds to the landscape and its species, I learn that biodiversity may be stewarded and perhaps even enhanced by a creating and preserving a variety of respectful bonds, joined with a knowledge of use without overuse.

The ancient connection to nature through spiritual and practical wisdom that visual artist **Grethe Gunneng** describes from a Sámi perspective in her essay "Riebansilba: the fox silver in the sky" makes it very clear that anthropomorphizing (projecting human stories on non-human events, entities or lifeforms) is a potent way of

structuring, remembering and understanding experience and observation. It is also important to remember that thinking in myths may preserve very accurate observation and wisdom, and that being human (no matter your culture) is also to be integrated in mythological thinking. All areas of knowledge, knowingly or not, create their own myths and cultural formations. Translation between different myths and the perspectives that they represent may be extremely eye-opening and sensitizing.

There are, of course many different ways of being rooted both in a landscape and within situated practices, and perspectives tend to clash over ownership of land in particular. The traditional territory of Sápmi (where the Sámi people live, in Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula in Russia) is an example of how the borders that define national states is a cultural formation that may have little to do with groups of people living in the area. For the Sámi people, the traditional nomadic lifestyle has been essential in shaping national and cultural belonging through the migration of the reindeer, often passing through the borders of the Nordic countries. The practice of reindeer herding is just one of many examples on how cultural values may today be threatened both by climate change and different perspectives on the “value” of land. Saying this, it is also important to remember that all traditional Sami culture is not based on reindeer herding, but even fishing, hunting and gathering.

In Nya Hovås, in the neighbourhood where Anna Risell, Hannah Belle Reimann and Frøydi Laszlo live, more than 20 old and genetically most valuable pine trees were illegally logged by apartment owners to “better the view of the ocean, and getting rid of the pollen that smeared both windows and balconies in the late spring”

These pines were under special protection because of their age, vitality and importance as food-source for birds, squirrels and insects in the area. The people in the newly built apartments obviously did not want to connect environmentally to their new homes. I imagine that the way we build new homes, all looking the same, urban, efficient, clean, with big panorama windows, together with the arguments that sell these homes, even carry a cultural connotation that affects how you are supposed to relate to your environment. These apartments were supposed to be if not for rich people, at least people with social and economic ambition to become higher middle class. This ambition today seems to go with being fast at using new technology and having an “international lifestyle” (based on being able to live in a similar way wherever you are in this world). The relation to nature that goes with this lifestyle seems to focus on landscapes to be used for sports and entertaining activities, or to produce beautiful

scenery. In this context your local surrounding is not something you need to build relations to, care for, or learn about for your own survival. The developers, Next Step Group, have even made a strategy for what kind of local business would be allowed to establish in the newly built centre, focusing on brand and luxury stores. Together with a marketing strategy that profiles a socially ambitious lifestyle, the developers promote an enclaved, gated community that promises homogeneity. To me, this seems like the opposite of biocultural diversity, and such exploitation is happening all over the world.

It is not only a problem for the traditional people that values like spiritual connection, routes for migrating species or the sheer beauty of land has limited influence when it is put up against the “value” that may be extracted in the form of money. Forest engineer **Martin Jentzen** writes a very informative and thought provoking essay about how we assign different forms of “value” to forests on the base of what cultural perspective we approach the forest from. He suggests that the cultural values of farming, which today influence the rhetoric of forestry in words like **developing crops and replanting**, has very little to do with what our Nordic ancestors called a forest, and what it used to be until recently. Traditionally the forest was left as a productive ecosystem that could give different kinds of goods to small farming societies, hunters, herders and nomads, writes Jentzen. And as I read Jentzen’s words on the damage done by clear-cutting, I chill thinking of the speed and extension of the process. Still when I was a child in Norway, our local forest “Krokskogen” was mostly composed of different species of trees, and of different age. Today the trails for skiing pass through the emptiness of large clear-cuts. Is this forest famous for histories of elves and of trolls, small summer-farms and the sound of cowbells in the evening lost forever? Jentzen tells us that the real vitality of the ecosystem is underground, where different species of trees form networks of symbioses between roots and mycorrhiza fungi. Healthy soil is alive with both insects, worms and microbial life. This system may be fatally ill when exposed to clear-cutting, and even if given a chance, may take centuries to grow back if ever.

It is vital that we today understand the difference between forest as ecosystem or as monocultures, just plantations of trees, says Jentzen. It could possibly be just a change of perspective considering timescales before we would see the living forests as far more profitable than the monocultures that continuously replace them.

One reflection that I make is a need to respect and be sensitive to situated knowledge on many levels. This knowledge could be ancient, or developing in the very now. It is a question both

about traditions and of being open and sensitive to the present. There is even a question of connection to vaste timescales, to flows of what is called **deep time**. In my neighborhood there are traces of human activity since the last ice age, and there are still signs and traces of this long gone environment present. The glacier once scrubbed the cliffs that I love to sunbathe on, and great whales would come to feed in the nutrient rich waters where the glacier melted into the sea. At the beach we may still find and touch broken shells of barnacles that once lived on the skin of these whales. This is a kind of liberating meditation paired with daydreams in vivid imagery.

In architect **Anna Risell**’s essay “The rocky gorge is a motionless landslide” recurrent walks in the same English style landscape park inspires thoughts on how the body is sensitized to its surroundings by climbing and treading on uneven paths, how this sensitizing let you explore the same place differently each time you visit it. Through this process signs of the past, (made both by natural causes, by humans with different professions during the creation of the park, and its later use) emerge, become meaningful, combine and recombine. Through an almost hermeneutic process of study Risell feels the more than hundred years old ambition of the park perhaps for the first time become fulfilled. At this point in time the successive sceneries are experienced as a walk in nature, and at the same time just as much as an experience of art, involving interaction with symbolic structures that act on the visitor both physically and mentally. Risell asks us to be visually literate, to search for the signs of different uses, histories and processes (natural and cultural) in our neighborhoods and relating to land in general. Not only do we make our environments poorer as we construct them without paying attention to what was there before. Wiping out the traces of past networks (natural and cultural) even makes it more difficult to diversify and reconstruct local entanglements. Traces of the past provide food for our fantasy, loose ends to pick up and engage with.

Both climbing in nature and looking carefully is something to encourage, but the need to be more sensitive could even be described as a need to listen better. Both to each other and to whatever is to be heard. **Maria Bondeson** is a visual artist that more and more has become interested in working with sound installation. In her essay “Rethinking Listening” she asks what sensitivities and kinds of imagination could be unlocked if we practiced more careful listening instead of always relying on the visual sense. Bondeson introduces us to her own reflections on sound, listening and sound-art, also presenting the electronic composer Pauline Oliveros, and her practice of “deep listening”. Inspired by Bondeson’s essay I

wanted to know more about Oliveros and found it interesting how she in the 1960’s, alarmed by the Vietnam war, wondered how listening practices could be a way of seeking inner peace. As her art was already before this deeply feminist, and centered on freeing a feminine voice from patriarchal structures in music, it was logical that she wanted to work with all women groups. Together with them she developed a listening practice that today engage both men and women.

In the film “Sisters With Transistors”⁸ Oliveros describes how she became more interested in listening than in composing:

“I became more interested in what the sound does to me and how it relates to my internal processes”

She became more interested in what the sounds did in themselves than in what **she** could do with **them**, and she expresses this in a way that I think is relevant to the art and thinking of several of the contributors to the Anthropocene Laboratory:

“I’m not interested in making an object of art, or of entertainment. I’m interested in making something that helps me to grow and expand and change as an individual and in relation to others”⁹

This far my introduction has been about time, timescales, multicultural and multidisciplinary approaches and how to enhance our sensitivities to engage with our surroundings. In this mixed group of contributors, our art and ideas are rooted in different traditions, although there are some similarities to our backgrounds¹⁰

Several contributors have chosen to bring their art and thinking in dialogue with the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss, and his spiritual philosophy called “Deep Ecology” or “Ecosophy” Even Næss asks us to connect to the world, to reach for its complexity and interconnectedness by using all our senses, involve our spirit and listen. We need to embrace an overflow of information, accept that we live within a network of utterances, sounds, visual signals, smells, chemical traces, all weaving and flowing through the lives of both human, animal, plant and ecosystems. Some signals make meaning only within the languages of specific species, while others transcend these. I can’t help thinking about the moth that exhausts itself circling the lamp as it follows the call to fly towards the light. The human wish to brighten the night becomes a (sadly perceptible) overflow of information to the insect, at the same time as it is making us deaf to the magical song of interplay between the moths and the moon.

As professor of comparative literature and lecturer in Slavic language and comparative history of ideas **Mary Childs** tells us in the essay “Vazha-Pshavela’s Snake Eater: ”Mindia, Bio-Empathy, and Madness”, listening to and becoming captivated by the songs of nature may

be far from innocent. In Vazha Pshavela's classic Georgian poem the main character, Mindia, eats a snake to commit suicide, but instead of being killed he gains shamanistic powers and starts to understand the voices of nature. Taking on the responsibility that may occur as a result of actually understanding what is happening, and sensing the frailty and vulnerability of lives both human and non-human, may provoke both sorrow, rage and madness. Child's essay has something to tell us about the relations between how works of art may inspire political change, both directly in their time and in times and contexts to come. Human dilemmas are often behind our choices and actions. Another question is about care, healing and art, a theme that is of relevance for several of the essays in this laboratory.

René J. Marquez writes about how his entangled engagements as a visual artist, socially engaged academic, and animal rescuer are all influencing and vitalizing each other. To create a sanctuary for rescued dogs and living with dogs is part of the processual artwork, at the same time as a deeper understanding of the relations between domesticated animals and humans calls for analyses of the power structures involved. We hardly escape the anthropocentric gaze when we look at animals, no matter what perspective we use. Marquez still hopes for a possibility of interspecies collaboration and presents us with some suggestions on how to engage with this. Together with the words of Lisa Jevbratt¹¹ he makes it clear that care and respect for the non-human cannot be compromised or shadowed out by aesthetic ambitions in interspecies art practices.

Lisa Jevbratt has gone so far as to offer an Artistic Interspecies Collaboration Field Guide. In addition to offering ideas on project preparation and development, she introduces the overall practice with key bullet points:

- Become more sensitive to other species.
- Become more respectful of other species.
- Learn about the world we share, together with our non-human companions.
- Have a richer experience with wildlife.
- Deepen your connection with your pets.

The reality of the other, it be a human or non-human, or an entity like a forest, river or a deep trench of the oceans abyssal zone, is always something more and else than any perspective applied to it, even if diverse and accurate knowledge may be gathered. The way of life of the other and the ethos it implies most likely transcends our ability to understand it. This does not mean that respect and care will be in vain.

Anna Wernbäck is a dancer, and her poetic texts to the laboratory link the human body with the tree in a physical, choreographed way. When Wernbäck asks us to go out on a windy day and put our ears to the stem of a tree, it is both a beau-

tiful poetic image and a concrete encouragement to engage a particular tree in interspecies art.

Care and confrontation with a peculiar tree is also the theme for playwright, actor and director **Karin Blixt**. She describes how she is confronted with herself as she tries to care for a non-human other in form of a charismatic tree. The question is about translation (what does the tree really want?) as well as human self-images that equals doing “good” to non-humans by anthropomorphizing them. Why should trees like to be hugged? Although Blixt shapes her essay grounded in an intuitive feeling of love and respect, confronting spiritual wisdom emanating from the tree, she at the same time questions how she may free this impulse from her own prejudice and projections, however well meaning they may be.

Visual artist **Johan Hallberg** is even he confronted with a powerful non-animal, through striving for interspecies collaboration with the “magic mushroom” in form of different species of Psilocybe, harvested wild or grown. One question is if the kind of stories the mushroom may tell changes as it becomes domesticated.

The alchemist and forerunner of modern medicine, Paracelsus, wrote about substances that had strong effects on humans as arcana (singular arcanum, from latin arcanus, “secret”), which could heal both mind and body in the right dosage but would otherwise be ineffective or a poison. But, even if a correct dose of an active chemical substance is achieved, is the real secret perhaps something more than this? Hallberg does not consider himself an alchemist, but a psychonaut, searching for answers both through caring for and experimenting with both plants and mushrooms in the hope of learning from them as whole entities, living beings. It is not so easy that the psychonaut will grow the mushroom just to harvest a desired substance from it. In this attempt at mutuality, the active substance could just as well be a vessel for a non-human expression, tuning the human senses in, to perceive a spiritual perhaps pan-psyche message.

Another psychonaut and nestor in environmental art is **herman de vries**. Born in Holland, but living in Steigerwald Germany since the 1970's, he has for centuries practiced an awareness of nature's complexity by training his own perception to tune into as simple and basic a level as possible. In “The Anthropocene Laboratory”, Wood Roberdeau gives a very valuable introduction to de vries art and thinking, and how his views on both ecology, art and spirituality may be relevant today. Trying to connect de vries work to other essays in this book, I have wondered what de vries would say about a voice or a message from nature wanting to teach us something, in the way Johan Hallberg describes it. I have tried to find some clues in how de vries relates to psychoactive

plants and mushrooms. His attitude seems to be that he regrets that the intimate cultural relations to plants in general are broken. Plants holy or taboo were once integral parts of our cultures and mediated by shamans. But when the link to the knowledge of the plants healing properties and how they may be used in a social context is lost, what de vries calls “mind-moving plants” may cause problems.

In an interview from 2016 by Claudia Müller-Ebeling¹² he says that “Nature is enough for itself and should also be enough for people. What we can still find around us from nature (I deliberately don't say “take” or “get”) does not need any human additions. She is herself and a revelation to us.”¹³

In the essay “Experiments in Eco-poiesis: herman de vries and an Art of Immediacy” professor in visual culture **Wood Roberdeau** presents us to the art and thinking of herman de vries, and relates his art and thinking to a contemporary eco-philosophical context.

The reader will learn more about de vries belief in the need to seek simplicity, and how experiencing being, nature and art as expressions of pure existence has developed from a varied spiritual and artistic praxis. Roberdeau writes that even if the deep ecology movement has sought to sustain equilibrium between the human and the more—than human, this approach could arguably sustain the divide between nature and culture as well. Roberdeau finds an alternative attitude in Timothy Morton's philosophy, which instead calls for a new “attunement” with what must remain ungraspably infinite and unilluminated.

Morton speaks about how art accordingly relates to ecology: “One can't “make” ecological art, in the sense of doing something radically different from what is happening now, for the precise and ironic reason that everything one does is already an expression of one's symbiotic coexistence with a host of lifeforms in a biosphere. Thinking ecological art requires that we change what we mean when we say “make.”¹⁴

The change of focus from **making** to **tuning** in to seems to be a keyword for understanding the art of herman de vries in particular, but it is even important for many of the other contributors to the Anthropocene Laboratory. There are some clear parallels between de vries search for joy and simplicity and the mood of play and observation in visual artist **Ilona Huss Wallin's** work as described in her essay “loose compositions with fallen forest branches”. To her, the process of starting a routine of walking in a sensitizing way was as important to the creative process as her art where she visualises signs and objects with forest branches in the studio. Her choice of making weapons from fallen branches was based on childhood memories of the joyful play, but even the grownup eye that

wonders about how the beautifully aged branches (like small ecosystems in themselves) may even represent something evil, as she writes “a tool for war and killing...to me it is like the devil itself”. In her text we follow her on one of her inspirational walks, and she shares gleaming strikes of presence, freedom, joy and play with the reader, perhaps achieved by just letting things happen.

A peaceful walk in a park is such a gift, and something we just take for granted. The slightly tilted perspective on an everyday experience carries a message about the accessibility of magic and wonder, which may happen right here, in our neighborhoods. It may be about the beauty of living, and the revelation of being alive. But, as we see the images of cities bombed to annihilation. I recognize that even catastrophe and war happen suddenly, and may be impossible to grasp with logic when it happens. It may be like some evil magic spell has been cast, and with an impact that changes everything. So, what is the value of joy these days? Should we rather be angry, ready to fight? I never survived any catastrophes or hardships, but people that have may say that even in the darkest of times glimpses of joy, play and happiness sometimes break through, — and that these moments may help you survive. Perhaps this intensified “simply being” is just the most magical and enchanted state possible. And I even find some comfort in the words of Rebecca Solnit when she writes that organization and unselfishness is what characterizes the human spirit under catastrophes, not as one would think fear, passivity and thinking only of your own survival.¹⁵

I have to return to the ideas of **re-enchantment** and **revelation** when I discuss themes that could connect several essays in “The Anthropocene Laboratory”.

The internet version of the Oxford dictionary explains **revelation** as “the divine or supernatural disclosure to humans of something relating to human existence”.

Alternatively “a surprising and previously unknown fact that has been disclosed to others”. **Enchanted**, on the other hand could both mean something put under a magic spell or something very charming or pleasing.

Visual artist **Lars Åsling's** exemplifies both an interspecies sensitivity and an openness to the enchanted “now” in his beautiful art and poem about a rather common insect that most people seem unimpressed by:

Crane Flies (Tipuloidea)

“Then, in the middle of late summer, there they are. Flying in through the open door or window. Both males and females are drawn to the light and that's where they find each other, I read. When they die, they gather their legs together often in an architectural

form. Like a toppled tower top where only the construction remains, or an intricate graphic sign playing with the sunbeams to create a shape in three dimensions. The eye feels the brittleness of this fragile creature and my thinking wanders by associations into an eternal now. In my world, I wonder, does really anything more magical exist.”

(Lars Åsling)

I would love to see the world as a magical and enchanted place, but I’m still not very sure what these words mean or what kind of reality they suggest. I don’t know if I would dare to believe in a world filled with supernatural forces. If I was told by someone that had a strong connection to the magical world that my free will was contrary to the wish of God or the spirits, would I still dare to stay true to my conviction? I think it is a difference between believing in a supernatural world containing entities that may affect us in the material world, or that the world may be unexplainable and overwhelming even if it does not have to be by supernatural reasons. Still, it is an essential difference having a deeply mystical or an extraordinary, overwhelming, wondrous experience. Emotionally I may experience brushes with both the magic and mysteries, but to my intellect it is not clear what this means at all. I’ve for instance had a very vivid experience of a ghost, but was this something magical, psychological or just an unexplainable fact of nature?

Most cultures carry special knowledge in the form of traditional narratives and rites connecting people to the mythical through magic. Experiencing the magical may awaken affect and awe, and sometimes result in a change for life. It enables a contact with a more layered, more complex and less understandable world. At the same time, it may anchor a person spiritually and emotionally and give perspective on the tiny flicker in time and space that the personal lifespan embodies. The magical time is eternal.

A re-enchantment of the world may seem necessary in the Anthropocene. Still, I think that to be respectful to and integrative of a mystical aspect in an ongoing environmental struggle, scrutinizing and considering consequences of what we mean when we discuss **magic** is as important as analysing our scientific and rationalist arguments.

Scholar, educator and facilitator **Nathanael Mengist** brilliantly addresses this issue in his essay for The Anthropocene Laboratory. I met Mengist in 2017, at the SLSA conference “Out Of Time” at Arizona State University. He delivered a very personal and engaged paper on the healing powers of flowers, and I was part of a group that were inspired by philosopher Vilém Flusser’s scientific fable about the vampire squid. We all experimented with experiences of the unknown and allowing emotional and intuitive aspects in

both learning and expression. When Mengist told me he had also written papers on alchemy, I was most eager to know more about this work. Already in his earliest writings on alchemy Mengist has a unique perspective which has taught me much, not only about the historic perspectives on alchemy, but even brought the theme in contact with the contemporary environmental discussion. I used to think that the alchemist’s wish to heal and transform, both working with matter in the laboratory and the necessary mirroring in the transformation of the own spirit, was focused on a personal journey. But, as I now see it, the belief that the alchemist may speed up and “free” immense powers combining and transforming matter, and that this transformation is mirrored not only in the spirit of the alchemist but in the whole world is not just a magical vision. The transformations that the human species has brought on to the entire planet, by manipulation of matter, has not only changed all kinds of habitats but at the same time what it means to be human both physically and mentally. The idea that matter needs the assistance of human intervention to proceed through a teleological path to some kind of higher, spiritual existence is not that different from the core beliefs of enlightenment, which even flickers as a spectre in modern industrialism. The belief that the study of nature will in time prove God’s existence, and his teleological plan for the world, (as chemists succeeding the alchemists would continue to believe,) is also (still) a mystical thought shared by many physics and other natural scientists, so the argument is kind of looped.

So, what can I make of this? Well, I personally believe in rationality and scientific stringency as most important. We must learn more about ourselves and the world, and to use transparent methods to evaluate the results. And it is even an emotional and spiritual responsibility connected to all our actions, some causing more effect and possible harm than others. It must be a dangerous misunderstanding to see matter as “dead” or passive, as it in fact vibrates with agencies that human interference may alter, speed up or free.

In the essay “Out of the flask, into the womb: Alchemical reproductive politics in early modern visions of artificial life” Mengist use the matrixial vase as a focal point. He starts his essay with explaining of how alchemical historical tradition gives clear clues to understand a male ambition of securing a fatherhood without motherhood, and how this may be based in a masculine **womb envy**. At the same time, artificial reproduction may be a great help to ensure just and equal reproduction rights, as Mengist and visual artist **Ioan Butiu**’s artwork “Do it Yourself Homonculus” suggests. In both essay and artwork we are presented with the dreams and dilemmas of artificial reproduction. Is this the ultimate male attempt of controlling fer-

tility without having to bother with the limitations of responsibility and relations, or is it a liberation where new, queer and different sets of loving relations and responsibilities may become possible?

As I think of the vase or container of life, I find it may contain both hopes and dangers.

It may be a container not only of the alchemist’s wish to create life without maternity, but even the wish to sustain it in technologically controlled conditions. Could the symbolic flask even symbolise “Spaceship Earth” and the hope that the human may learn to pilot and control both the Earth’s climate and (re)productivity?

Many studies have investigated how females seem to be more interested in ecology and environmental thinking than males. Different kinds of ecofeminism are based on caring as a (female) core value, even caring for multispecies societies and the Earth itself. In recent (February 2022)

Swedish political polls, it shows that the environmental policy of the (at the time) second largest political party, the “moderates” (conservatives) is chosen by significantly more male than female voters. In short it builds on introducing new technology, electric cars, more sustainable industry, and building more and safer nuclear plants. They do not say much about how citizens may have to alter their lifestyles. In this way, the middle class lifestyles of the present growth economy may be preserved. But, is this really possible? This could just be another dream of keeping the **homunculus** of global capitalism alive as a spirit in the flask, trusting in the sober mind of the **Anthropos** to control it. This may calm some feelings of environmental discomfort, but not really help to address the complexity of the problem, which may even have originated in over trusting the power of technification and rationality. And as the environmental debate focuses on if nuclear energy may be labelled **green energy** or not, rather than on how much energy we really need, the insight that it is time to take personal responsibility and make radical changes is delayed.

Visual artist and photographer **Nils Agdler** gives us more reasons why this time demands more than “techno-fixes”, and pin light the **Andros** (male) in what he calls the Androcene. The **Anthropos** or **Andros** (meaning male) of the Anthropocene has often been criticized for being too largely modeled on the western middle-class male to be a good symbol for a change that affects humanity at large, although in individual ways. Other terms have been suggested as **Plantationocene** or **Capitalocene** to foreground what structures are really ruining both climate, species diversity and cultures. Even more positive suggestions exist, like Donna Haraway’s **Chthulucene** or environmental philosopher Glenn Albrecht’s **Symbiocene**, both based on the hope that we may start to understand and integrate into a more

entangled world of a **natureculture** to come. No matter if we focus on problems or hopes, we will have to face that we are all in the Anthropocene together, although not in the same way. Agdler tells us how gender roles are largely inherited, and how they may limit us both psychologically and culturally. With a theoretical base in ecofeminism and the ecosophy of Arne Næss, Agdler sees the necessity of a male transformation, into a more positive maleness fostering sensitivity and care. Also **Björn Perborg** and Lars Åsling foreground the ridiculousness of the mostly male hubris that fools itself into believing that it is “on top of the world”. Why is it so hard to let go of such puffed up self-images?

Visual artist **Diana Storåsen**’s original and sensitive images in the series “Men in Dresses” remind us of that genuine beauty and courage may transcend the fixed framing of gender roles. Searching for men that can really present her romantic dresses with pride and integrity, she questions both the dress as a symbol of femininity and ideas of (un—)gendered beauty. Her work becomes a tribute to individuality, sensuality and bodily presence, as she at the same time shows us how threatened values like beauty and sensibility become when we identify men. As “The Anthropocene Laboratory” discusses some driving forces behind our gender roles, we also have to consider the psychological effects of living in the Anthropocene.

In the beginning of this text, I argued that we should address climate change as a **biocultural** problem and I think we have to do the same with the effects of war.

Glenn Albrecht, whom I mentioned in the early context, even coined another term than **Symbiocene**, the condition **Solastalgia** which means an emotional and/or existential pain perceived as we confront environmental, negative change. Psychologists are increasingly confronted with patients in stress and emotional pain because of the ecological destruction, and they are starting to see patterns. The term **Solastalgia** is rather similar to **eco-grief**, but not the same as **eco-anxiety** which is a fear of something that is about to happen in the future (as opposite to **post traumatic stress**, which of course even affects many people that have been directly affected by disasters like war or climate change)

To make an example, I will return to how Gyrd Laszlo tells us how she since childhood has been exceptionally impressed and intrigued by some old ashen trees lining an old road near by her home in Norway. She has visited the trees with both her own—and her grandchildren, and now faces the melancholy of seeing them at the very end of their long lives, toppled, returning to the humus of the forest floor. At the same time the tree itself, the European Ash, is critically affected

by the fungal disease **ash dieback** probably spread from import of Manchurian Ash, and made worse by the warmer climate. The native Ash of Norway and Sweden is today listed as vulnerable to extinction, as well as the Elm tree. Both these trees have been crucial to Nordic lifestyles, providing both winter fodder for animals (and in times of starvation even humans), medicine, material for tools, furniture and more.

In the beginning, Odin, the king of the Asa gods, found two tree trunks floaten ashore on a beach. From them—an Ash and an Elm—he created the first humans, Ask and Embla. The Norse tree of life was an Ash, **Yggdrasil**, and it was even common to have an Ash close to your house for protection.

In his book "The Ecological Thought", Timothy Morton invented the term **hyperobjects** to describe objects that are so massively distributed in time that they transcend our ideas of location in time and space, and he gives examples like global warming, Styrofoam, or radioactive plutonium.

But isn't even what is happening to the Ash and the Elm confronting us with the "ungraspability" of hyperobjects? Could something as dispersed and "taken for granted" as the foundational trees of the Norse culture possibly disappear with us hardly noticing?

How can we survive as culturally anchored beings, when loosing the very material that, according to the mythology, our ancestral flesh is carved from?

Hannah Belle Reimann is a teenager, so she never knew how, in my childhood summers, the evening air was buzzing with insects. Everything has become so silent, so combed out. But there is still nature to tune into, to resonate with. Her drawing of a female driftwood-spirit, at one side still young but at the other worn and old, embodies a brave hope. Even if the "old" part has been broken by time and friction, the spirit has learnt how to survive, to repair itself with what material is possible and to live with the new conditions.

In another of her images Reimann gives a very good account of the dual forces that a young woman today must span. On the one side an enhanced sensitivity can lead to heightened connectedness with the surroundings, both natural and cultural. But the sensitivity could also backfire and turn against oneself. In a psychological survey by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) in 2013 it was estimated that 2 to 3% of the population of the US (and mainly women) suffered from different degrees of Body Dysmorphic Symptom. Individuals with BDD are highly distressed, due to defects they perceive in their physical appearance that are not noticeable to others. The illness is underdiagnosed, some differences in how the brain of a sufferer process images of faces can be measured, and it seems to be a 50/50 rate to

how genetics and social interaction determine if the illness will break out or not. Reimann does not have the illness, but the portrait of the young woman with the distorted face could serve as a very good example on how the focus on detail may turn the image of the self into a grotesque mask. Even illnesses like anorexia nervosa or social anxiety disorder threaten to close the world around the sufferer, gravitating all focus around the self and making it difficult for the sufferer to find energy to actually come together with others and making changes. The flood of generic "beauty" images that most young people are daily submerged in through their internet devices may be difficult to withstand. The beauty-filter of the apparatus even nourish a shadow, a repression turning more and more natural variations into flaws that we do not want to show. The filter-less image represents the vulnerable and changeable being that the world needs, but we ourselves do not want to be.

"Ever since we were babies we have learned to just tell what is most important." Reimann writes in her poem, "To tell what can be heard, that which can be made exciting and interesting for others. But, what about everything else, then? What if we leave out an important piece without even noticing it?"

In his introduction to **Zachary Thomas'** Esay "Post Tenebras Lux" **Garrett Laroy Johnson** writes about how the collaborative, interdisciplinary project "Post Humanities Hub" which they had both started and organized, has been very important to the members:

"the group of us had built a site for caring for thought and one another, an ecological subjectivity. Our practice of reading, thinking, and organizing events together built a collectivity, a site of experimentation, a colab to head off the academic entrepreneur of the self, to find ourselves in a state of precarity that acknowledges that we can't do this alone, that we need each other"

That Zachary Thomas chose to write about Carlos Reygada's film "Post Tenebras Lux" seems in line with his interest in entangled perspectives and how stories may unfold through unpredictable situations and interaction. One perspective that he foregrounds is that Reygada's insistence against employing a causal, linear narrative is a crucial element of why the film is so powerful.

Along with other techniques, this imbues the viewer with "the often-dizzying reality of lived experience where past memory, unconscious desires, and future possibilities invade our present. He asks a bigger question about what it means, what it feels like, to experience reality in all its complexity" as Thomas writes. "The film's playful creativity comes through in moments that subvert typical cues and expectations, through

bifurcations and Borgesian moments "**when time could have taken a different course**"

I have read the Danish writer and dramaturge Ulla Ryum who is very interested in how the form of the story influences what can be told. She talks of the linear conceptualization of time in what she calls a traditional, "Aristotelian" storytelling as a forward moving stream or force driving the listener to stay in a controlled suspense. As the story develops from a singular event and centres around a main character, the audience is told to accept the conditions for the plot instead of investigating them. Ryum says that the linear temporality works at the expense of the cyclical and material conditions of our lives by letting one position exclude and displace the other. Both Ryum and one of my favourite writers, Ursula Le Guin, have made similar theories of a special, feminine, interspecies and inclusive storytelling. Ryum's theories of dramaturgy and non-linear storytelling and Le Guin's "The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction" have some striking similarities. Instead of focusing chronologically on a plot where a specific problem must be overcome by heroic effort, they want the story to revolve around a centre in a spiralling or networking fashion. Anna Tsing's book "The Mushroom at the End of the World" is another example that this way of entangled storytelling may be valid not only in prose and playwriting but even in scientific research. These spiralling or networking methods make it possible to let the story meander through different temporalities, to intertwine specific, situated, or mythological perspectives, and to link the fragments together in ways that are inclusive of multiple and often divergent experiences.

It is even interesting how Johnson recalls when on a film screening of "Post Tenebras Lux", Thomas talked about the hyper-realism produced by the use of a distorting lens in many of the scenes from the film. The distortion, instead of constituting a filter "creates a sense of realism", at the same time as it asks "which realism"? There are of course several realisms, and we may be so accustomed to some that we do not see what they filter out, believing in the photorealism related to "the invisible Hollywood style".

Trinidad Carrillo is an artist working with both photography, poetry and music.

"In Trinidad Carrillo's visual world, magic is natural. Time, places, cultures and people flow together both in everyday life and beyond the real. The photographs often depict the gap between dream and wakefulness, between the outer and the inner. Trinidad Carrillo works with an indefinable eeriness that is at times difficult to dwell in¹⁶

One of the themes that interest me specially is how Carrillo takes dreams seriously. She knows that there are some kinds of dreams that have the

power to change us, transform us. As an example she told me about a dream of the ocean, some years ago. In the dream she heard and felt what we are doing to the fish, how much suffering we are causing to these sentient beings. It has taken me quite some time to really absorb what my friend told me, but today I see that she is right. We cannot continue to treat fish like they should be insensitive, like they were objects. As your mind and empathy opens, the repression just does not work anymore, some actions become impossible. You have to make a new start.

"A good starting point for absorbing Trinidad Carrillo's art is to think of the author and activist Rebecca Solnit's book A field guide to getting lost. There, Solnit elevates the feeling and liberation of being lost. It is precisely when you are lost that you become fully aware of where you are. You feel with your whole body, take in everything you have around you to understand where you have ended up. When you are in that situation, you learn something completely new about the world. It expands and becomes larger than your previous knowledge of it" (Ida Rödén)

Visual artist **Fröydi Laszlo Belle**. My own contribution to this book, the poem and series of images that together forms the poetry/performance "Transcendental tourist" is another artwork about otherhood and seeing things in a new way. As I have written, we were a group of four visiting Arizona, literally the other side of the Earth to us, travelling from Sweden. In the past year our group had together read Vilém Flusser's "scientific fable", *Vampyroteuthis infernalis* (the vampire squid from Hell) discussed it from different angles and points of view, and experimented with the inspiration from the book in texts, images, dance and theatre. Together we now formed a panel named "time of the Vampire Squid" at the SLSA Arizona conference "Out of Time".

We had until then experimented with themes like the similarities and differences between visual language, gestures and dance. We questioned if it is possible to express something "non-human" or "more-than-human", and experimented with dance and mathematical shapes, structures and topology (In collaboration with the Department of Mathematical Sciences of the University of Gothenburg and Chalmers University of Technology), ideas of the abyss as biological habitat or metaphor, embodying the vampire squid, and many more. The only one in this group that does not present a text and/or images to "The Anthropocene Laboratory" is the dancer **Peter Carlstedt**, but he is present anyway. Peter's approach was always phenomenological, dancing as or with the other(ness), searching for a physical language at the border of experience. In Flusser's book, the

Vampire Squid was an antipode to the human, something that we are disgusted by as totally “alien” but even attracted to. This is quite a character to enliven through human dance. And what place could be more antipodal to the vampyroteuthan prince of the abyss than the desert?

In “Transcendental Tourist” Peter is both the vampire squid and the visitor, and even if I have made the text and images I see this is a collaborative work. Visiting Arizona, we saw both the most incredible wonders of nature and met with socially engaged and most creative new friends, but we even glimpsed the social injustice in the region, both historical and at present. All of us in the group experienced our trip differently, but we all learnt a lot and made new friends. At least to me, this resulted in new ways to question my own ideas and personality. The people I met, the knowledge that was shared, and the new environment helped me grow as a person. An important question is if it is ever excusable to make a long flight like this. Although I physically feel the climate-shame of flying, the chance to do a travel like this really made my world so much bigger and more complex. I can’t excuse it but I’m still so happy that I went.

Dancer, poet and visual artist **Nina Sinkkonen** have contributed with several somewhat different works to “The Anthropocene Laboratory”, but the more I think of them the more I see them as linked in their way of relating to the world. Sinkkonen describes a meeting with a bumblebee, busy pollinating in the garden. As an act of solidarity with the hardworking insect, she expresses her empathy in a poem. The bumblebee’s mix of strength and vulnerability seems to be something shared by the poet. In a series of dance performances Sinkkonen laments the vulnerability of even the strongest entities in this time of the Anthropocene, as she sneaks in to construction sites to dance with the hillocks already perforated by the vertical boreholes to be loaded with explosives.

In the Club Anthropocene Reading group, we have just read Timothy Morton’s book “All Art is Ecological”. In the chapter “Ecology Without Nature” Morton insists that ecologic awareness is shaking the belief that one spatio—temporal scale (the human one) is enough for us to orient ourselves in our reality. He realizes that it may feel scary for humans to relate to “thousands of equally legitimate spatiotemporal scales that have suddenly become available and significant to humans” But, he continues, it is also vital to not confuse the **measurement** of time (and the few kinds of measurement of time that are convenient to humans) with how time really functions as “It’s the case that from grasses to gorillas to gargantuan black holes **everything has it’s own time and it’s own temporality.**”¹⁷

I think of Sinkkonen’s work as I read how Morton explains how ecological awareness demands us to think and act ethically on a lot of different scales. Whether she is dancing her sorrow and compassion for the hillocks to be blasted away, measuring the forest flow of time expressed by the spruce shedding its cones, or visualizing the transience of flowering by sorting the petals and framing them in the extended “now” of the photographic image, Sinkkonen, like Morton, asks us to think about value and measurement. How did we become so trapped in consumerism, and what is the human worth if we have no money?

I will let Sinkkonen’s multifaceted and personal work set the point for this reflection, as it also brings us back to the relation between self, expression, construction of meaning, political justice and collaborative processes that I discussed in the beginning of this introduction.

I thank you all for contributing to this project, and for reading this book with curiosity and interest. May the experiment continue!

1 ?
2 ?
3 Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Vol. 1–3, ed. Peter E. Gordon, trans. Steve G. Lofts (Routledge 2020) and Vol. 4 *Metaphysics of Symbolic Forms*, eds. John Michael Krois and Donald Phillip Verene, trans. John Michael Krois (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998)
4 Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan, Nils Bubandt, *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene* (University of Minnesota Press 2017)
5 Link to homepage, describing projects <https://www.secrethotel.dk/en/english-produktioner/>
6 David Harmon is a co-funder of the international non-profit organization *Terralingua* (1996). Their mission is to fight for the diversity of life in nature and culture, as they see how deeply linked species diversity and human culture is. In the article *Biological diversity and language diversity: parallels and differences* Harmon and coeditor Tove Skutnabb-Kangas shows us how much of the knowledge of how to maintain biodiversity is encoded in the small languages of Indigenous and local peoples, and it disappears when the languages disappear. In the article they explain why it could be reasonable to talk about biocultural diversity, defined as the sum total of the world’s differences, no matter what their origin. To learn more about Harmon’s work, it could be a good idea to visit his page on ResearchGate, where many studies are available in full text <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/David-Harmon-2>
7 *Biological diversity and language diversity: parallels and differences* Tove Skutnabb-Kangas and David Harmon. *Article for Handbook of Ecological Linguistics*, edited by Hermine Penz and Alwin Fill, New York: Routledge 2015
8 *Sisters with Transistors* by Lisa Rovner, 2021, SVT K SPECIAL
9 *Sisters with Transistors* —elektromusikens pionjärer shown 29 August, 2021
10 All of us, except Hannah Belle Reimann, have higher education from university or art academy, which positions the *Anthropocene Laboratory* as a free sharing and an experiment but still within a Western, academic tradition
11 Jevbratt has developed a college course on interspecies collaboration and maintains a website that allows any interested individual to share their interspecies collaborative project: interspeciescollaboration.net.
12 Lucy’s Rausch *Nr. 4: Gesellschaftsmagazin für psychoaktive Kultur*, edited by Nachtschatten Verlag
13 (Translation made from German by Fröydi Laszlo. Natur ist sich selber genug und soll dem Menschen auch genug sein. Was wir von der Natur noch um uns finden können (ich sage bewusst nicht haben) hat keine menschlichen Zufügungen nötig. Sie ist sich selbst- und für uns eine Offenbarung)
14 Timothy Morton, *You’re Not Making Ecological Art Yet*, Open Lectures (Reykjavik: Iceland University of the Arts, 02 February 2018)
15 Rebecca Solnit *A Paradise Built in Hell*. The Extraordinary Communities that Arise in Disaster Penguin books New York 2009
16 From *live Critique* made by Thomas Olsson, Ida Rödén and Paula Urbano at Carrillos exhibition, Sundsvalls museum 2020 02 20 <https://www.rvn.se/sv/Sarprofil-delplatser/volym/recensioner/mellandrom-och-verklighet>
17 Timothy Morton *All Art is Ecological* Penguin Classics 2021, p 33

In Memoriam

26.2.20XX

Dreamwork day-
The **minor eternity** of quenching stars-

I fell asleep everywhere today as if the night had never existed

In the water
While getting dressed
I burned my nose in my coffee
Almost fell off my bike

Sleep will always be a time for dreaming and a matter of life and death

11.12.2019

Close encounters, first encounters.

*

*

I'm on the place where the meteor that wiped away the dinosaurs hit the Earth.

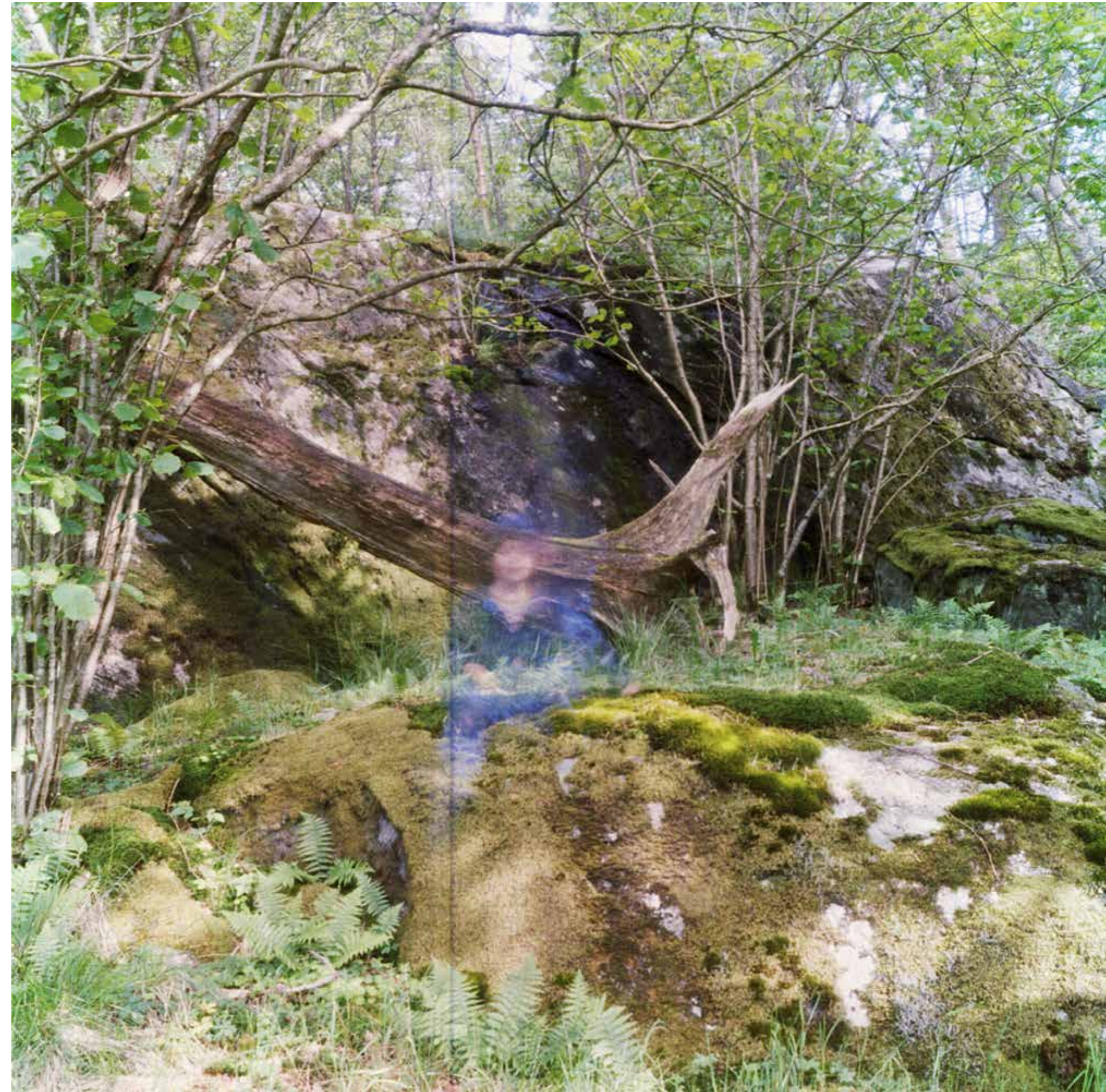
11.1.2020

Apu Pitusirai. There's an Inca myth involving two petrified lovers and the shadows tell it every year.

*

Everything here is story telling. The ground is the breathing ceiling of an ancient graveyard and the sky an infinite mirror.

*





26.2.2020

A word for feel-think? I'm certain old languages must have it: indigenous languages, extinguished tongues that knew how the connections between Life and it's creatures are attached: how we emerged from her soil and her water in infinite shapes and will always continue to do so: vanish and let new beings come into existence. I found one word like this in spanish but I think it's made up to try and understand precisely that: senti-pensar. They are richer together. The body is brain from the heart of the Earth and octopuses are not the only star creatures. **Part of her song.**

28.2.2020

I had weird dreams about me and my kid sleeping after drinking something a witch gave us and it was healing us in our dreams. I was certain he was dreaming the same. Now and then I half woke up to the rhythm of the rain tapping hard on the ceiling and the lizards running across the roof. I woke up to a pile of earth on my night table, some on my pillow, and a new sky window above. They say it never rains here. It hasn't in 9 years. So no fresh bread this morning since no fire with wet wood. Is it the oilrigs on our horizon here in Zorritos?

6.2.2020

I had a dream on my first night back here in the Northern hemisphere of a woman not being helped by doctors. When she called them an told them she was having a baby and her egg was real big now they would hang up. I saw her egg: it came up to my chest and was cracking up a bit on the lower part. 9months had already passed so of course it was big and ready to hatch under the dirty clothes she'd put on it to keep it warm.

*

It's cold to be back from the New world (ancient as fuck). Winter might not be here anymore but it's still cold and I've been away for a while. I feel like an astronaut: can't seem to finish my landing, to find the strength in my legs. No bad idea to turn into a baby bird and take it easy for a while observing a world of new possibilities while I dry those wings and grow some plumage. I have a bag full of stories to develop. I was thinking about what a human egg that size might contain if the baby still was her baby: the wings must be huge.

*

Ps: don't eggshells look pretty much like the surface of the moon?



28.6.2020

The witching hour. The beauty of the north where you can walk inside the capsule of an "hour" called twilight past an enchanted ancient forest and up to a highest point (cause there was nothing between here and the sky and our organic home is a sphere). Another kind of colonizers in search of a 10 000 year old fir, who realized that history does not care about being rewritten and most importantly not about someone's signature and less of all gender. History is a constant being and becoming and it is magnificent to be a part of its breath when it writes itself in a way that requires the multiple kinds of consciousness filling up its every space. No one "writes" history: you ARE history. The strikes painted by every breathing's motion patterns. I want to keep my memory intact (as far as possible...) before the sun burns away the dream. The rhythm of breath during sleep. Like the two small (forbidden) tents at the top that breathed like creatures from the Mumindalen while strangers dreamed inside and what I felt as I thought they would never know I watched them do that. No one was ever there exactly when we were. That will never happen again.

26 July 2020-07-25

There's an urge to become the landscape. To give that act whatever time it needs to be done. And to know, eventually, definitely, one day we will again.

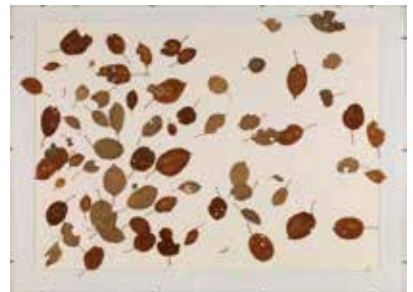
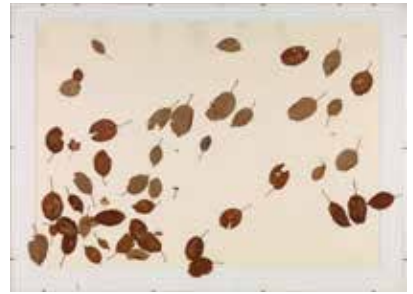
No one will miss anyone and no one will fear death absorbing the landscape with veneration.

2 February, 2021

I vow for you that your departure was of the 6th kind. Cause when you left, the joker parrot who inhabited your chest since your heart was mended, left your ribcage becoming light and the deers and the does outside roared. The temperature of the night became sound and behind you remained a vibration the color of the starry sky. I dream you every night.







One, Two and Three Hours Under My Appel Tree

Experiments in Eco-Poiesis:
herman de vries and an Art of Immediacy

In a lecture entitled ‘You’re Not Making Ecological Art Yet’ (2018), Timothy Morton reviewed the problem of authorial existentialism within histories of art, or humanity’s creative impulse against the wider context of contemporary climate crisis. For too long, he argued, creativity and innovation have been associated with a notion of production or industrial addition to an already damaged planet, resulting in cultural modes of response to anthropogenic fallout that are often steeped in catastrophism. Controversially, for Morton, this maintains the fallacy that criticism of such conditions can operate from an external position to them, resulting in a veritable crisis of representation that has frequently limited what such art practices can accomplish. By continuing to objectify climate collapse today, we mistakenly repeat the Moderns’ objectification or framing of nature **through** culture, inhibiting our ability to sense or engage with what is truly ecological.

The historical dynamics of the nature/culture divide and environmentalism are indeed complex. The Deep Ecology Movement of the late twentieth century, for example, sought to sustain an equilibrium between the human and the more than human, but it could be argued that this approach nevertheless maintained a dualism that the truly ecological must override. More recently, by inheriting the legacy of the **Whole Earth Catalogue** that relied on the model of ‘Spaceship Earth’, the **Ecomodernist Manifesto** defends and promotes the possibility of a ‘good Anthropocene’, an epoch in which humanity, science, and technology can thrive towards the discovery of new economic solutions to environmental crises. Contrary to an ideology of repair or of a futurity that awaits a progressive and exploratory planetary endeavour, Morton called instead for a new ‘attunement’ with what must remain ungraspably infinite and unilluminated. Art practices that claim an ecological emphasis too often fall into the dualistic trap of subjects observing or fabricating objects, without a sense of attunement or actual reciprocity. I agree with Morton’s conclusions for this more effective and ‘dark ecology’, to a large extent, and so my aim is to consider whether such gestures can, in fact, be found successfully within the later work of an artist whose career originated with the European Neo-avant-garde and has for many years evolved within the context of ecological and experiential awareness of materiality, space, and place. In this sense, the art practice of herman de vries could be construed as a key experiment for immediacy within the ‘Anthropocene Laboratory’.

Since the now famous term for ‘a new geological epoch when humanity acts on the planet as a geophysical force’ was proposed by chemist Paul Crutzen and former biologist Eugene Stoermer in 2000, it has become understood that the

Anthropocene and anthropocentrism are wedded to notions of modernity, human advancement, and intentional growth. A parallel can be found in the history of philosophy, specifically in Hegel’s teleological thought that supports the figure of **Anthropos** and the notion that reality is primarily graspable in absolutes and through an investment in causality. Accordingly, the problem of rationality or Enlightenment-thinking that has so informed Western aesthetics and the concept of the modern has been found responsible at the geophysical level; that is, within a much wider and complex set of parameters than just philosophy or art. As Rob Nixon has pointed out, the Anthropocene presents as new problem for universalism via ‘tensions within this shared geomorphic story about increasingly unshared resources. We are all in the Anthropocene, but we are not all in it in the same way.’ It is at this juxtaposition of specialisms and local concerns, what might be imagined as the ‘transdisciplinary’, where the contemporary artist or Anthropocene Lab technician, as it were, might interject and reveal such complexities to others and, more importantly, **with** others.

In 2015, a selection of herman de vries’ work was displayed in the Dutch Pavilion at the 56th Venice Biennale. The exhibition’s title, **to be all ways to be**, alludes to the artist’s long-term endeavour to act as a meditative and ecological conduit of sorts and, I would argue, speaks to the co-existentialist or ‘attuned’ perspective supported by Morton and his claims for an ecological art. My own encounters with de vries’ work have inspired my thinking about the possible and temporary articulations of increasingly important environmental ideas: ‘wonder’, ‘tactility’, ‘wildness’, and what Karen Barad (after Donna Haraway) has identified as ‘diffraction’. Her New Materialist or post-humanist aim is to redefine agency or creativity ‘not as a property of persons or things [but as] an enactment, a matter of possibilities for reconfiguring entanglements.’ I believe and hope to demonstrate how such ‘intra-actions’ are both the methods and receptors within a body of artwork that has, for decades now, intentionally explored ‘the particularities of the power imbalances of the complexity of a field of forces.’ In their study of New Materialism, Diana Coole and Samantha Frost describe ‘choreographies of becoming’ that, in my view, reverberate with certain late twentieth-century inhabitations of ecological theory and practice. Such a **praxis** embraces the fact that ‘matter itself is a lively or exhibiting agency’ and that ‘there is no definitive break between sentient and nonsentient entities or between material and spiritual phenomena.’ Indeed, ‘processes have become the new currency.’ In de vries’ body of work, it can be seen how these processes do

generate an ‘ethico-onto-epistemological attunement’ or what Lauren Greyson might name as a ‘poetic-scientific’ re-enchantment with the world. In her study of the theoretical and literary texts of James Lovelock, E.O. Wilson and Carl Sagan, she asks: ‘What becomes of ecological ethics and politics, broadly speaking, when one focuses not on the hourglass that shows our time running out, but the infinite variety of the sand that marks it?’ In de vries’ art of immediacy, this ‘infinite variety’ has pushed him towards what I will call an ‘eco-poiesis’ of diffraction that becomes a veritably embodied philosophy or worldview, significantly explained in the following way: ‘I just want to reach the simplest level possible.’ Thinking eco-poiesis will require a reappraisal of immanence, in opposition to transcendence, to establish a kind of eco-critical ‘anti-abstraction’ that pushes past Hegelian dialectics (thesis, antithesis, synthesis), external critique, and modernist fundamentalism (i.e., that investment in progressing towards an unknown but certain future) to rework unhelpful hierarchical concepts by lending agency to difference or to the ecological.

The eco-poietic also involves what might occur when a viewer experiences a work of art and to what extent the artist’s intent plays a role, if at all. The philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari is useful here, in that it explores how the ‘affect’ or intensity of an artwork is considered as a function independent of artist and viewer, referring to the external realm of perceptions rather than to the personal. Remarkably, the relationship between the familiar and unfamiliar, or rather the making unfamiliar of the familiar, creates the necessary spark. In their seminal book **What Is Philosophy?** they write:

By means of the material, the aim of art is to wrest the percept from perceptions of objects and the states of a perceiving subject, to wrest the affect from affections as the transition from one state to another: to extract a bloc of sensations, a pure being of sensations.

Through de-familiarizing the real or natural, an artist can access a space outside banal experience in which a heightened awareness within the viewer becomes a possibility, based on that viewer’s established sense of the familiar. Thus, a kind of evacuation of the artist is confirmed and an enhanced reality is left behind. The artwork is self-contained in its perpetual ontology and waits for the next viewer to create a point of entry. To continue:

It is true that every work of art is a **monument**, but here the monument is not something commemorating a past, it is a bloc of present sensations that owe their preservation only to themselves and that provide the event with the compound that celebrates it.

The artwork retains a kind of potency that defies its being thought of as a relic; rather, it is a hub of sensations which exists outside of linear time or traditional (i.e., encyclopaedic or taxonomic) modes of classification awaiting an encounter with a viewer to become activated, thereby activating that viewer’s realization of his or her participatory functionality or being-in-the-world. Perhaps the ecological artwork can achieve more than the re-enchantment of a disenchanted state by acknowledging and communicating the **affectivity** of earth—not in terms of continually simplified abstractions, but by turning towards the uncertain and the peripheral and letting go of representational mediation.

Starting from Zero

herman de vries was an applied biologist and horticulturalist for over sixteen years before turning to visual art practice in the 1950s. His work as a scientist inspired an early aesthetics of mathematical precision and negation, which, in the 1960s, aligned him with the European ZERO group that focused on the ‘deconditioning’ of the viewer through the enhanced presentation of the ‘zero-point’, ‘open gate’, or total transparency of things. Art was to be reconceived as the full ‘objectivation of observing and perceiving.’ In a way, retrospectively, the guiding principles of the movement and resulting works perform many of the contemporary themes associated with the Anthropocene. Francesca Pola has noted that an ‘aesthetics of reduction’ or full objectivation attempts to move beyond the earthly, as an art of a reduced form (‘Art Informel’) and ‘its conscious superseding and transition towards new dimensions of relation between the individual and the cosmos.’ Led by artists Heinz Mack, Otto Piene, and Günther Uecker, ZERO embraced the idea of a rocket’s countdown to lift-off, and it follows that much of the work produced by the group appropriated the language and design of the Space Race, with the use of light, smoke, metallic and reflective surfaces, and much more to propel the viewer (human beings) beyond the typical limits of the frame and towards a higher or extra-planetary awareness. Pola highlights Piene’s declaration from a 1965 manifesto:

Our crucial experience is an age that dreams of astronomical and cosmonautical adventures, in which man is in the position of leaving earth, of overcoming gravity. We are interested in light, we are interested in the elements, in fire, air, and winds, in the unlimited possibilities of planning a better and more luminous world.

There is a real excitement here for a perspectival adjustment to how art is defined, enacted, and experienced. It is as though the ZERO

artist can demonstrate the extent to which **Anthropos** has merged with his environment and the elements, thereby discovering a renewed agency among beings and things; ‘the work was no longer a container but became an opening; it was no longer a simple object but became an expanded thought; and it was no longer an individual expression but became an objective investigation.’ In his early work as a member of ZERO, de vries interpreted this outlook by experimenting with white monochromes, through which he produced what he would call a ‘democratic’ and even ‘geological’ or concrete art grounded by material reality and visual perception rather than by conceptualism. In other words, the monochrome works problematized the modernist principles of abstraction and transcendence through new claims for reduction and immanence; this was also sometimes accomplished by the inclusion of a ‘random objectification’ of three-dimensional relational components within the white field. It is important to note that these works were also informed by the artist’s keen interest in Zen Buddhism and its principle of ‘no-mind’, equally apparent in his more recent works of poetry or art writing. An example from 2004 reads:

one is many
many is one
zero is the gate
the gate is here
here is everywhere
everywhere is nowhere
nowhere is here
here is now
now is here
now is this
this is here
is

The poem revisits the theme of immediacy in de vries’ work and also the beginnings of a cautiousness pertaining the figure of the artist as dominant creator or genius that intervenes anthropocentrically within the world. Again, the acceptance of a non-hierarchical field in which observations and encounters can be made might open a pathway to a more ‘ecological art’ and a reappraisal of the ‘earthly’.

Returning to Deleuze and Guattari, whose resuscitation of metaphysics is also influenced by Eastern philosophy, one might focus on a retreat from the assigning of prescriptive meanings to artworks and connect this to discourse on lived experience. Simon O’Sullivan writes:

Affects are not to do with signification or ‘meaning’ [...] this is what differentiates art from language [...]. Affects are the molecular ‘beneath’ the molar, the molecular understood here as life and art’s intensive quality, the stuff that goes

on ‘beneath’, in fact that always parallels, signification.

Even so, one might ask how the artist recognizes this incommunicable or molecular aspect of lived experience and then realizes its affective visual manifestation. Deleuze and Guattari argue that ‘[in] each case style is needed—the writer’s syntax, the musician’s modes and rhythms, the painter’s lines and colours—to raise lived perceptions to the percept and lived affections to the affect.’ The process begins by putting into play those distinctive characteristics which act as lures and triggers for the viewer-reader’s recognition of what is always already there; as something inherent to the artwork, style serves to filter the affect in such a way as to successfully complete its transmission from sender to recipient. In this way, via style, the artist acts as a sort of translator for the marvellous or poetic quality of the real or natural by means of what is visually or sensuously accessible and produces a work which is then situated in such a way as to **remind** the viewer-reader (not by referring to past encounters but by ‘fabulating’ the present one) that the **extraordinary** moment can be located immediately:

[The artist] has seen something in life that is too great, too unbearable also, and the mutual embrace of life with what threatens it, so that the corner of nature or districts of the town that he sees, along with their characters, accede to a vision that, through them, composes the percepts of that life, of that moment, shattering lived perceptions into a sort of cubism, a sort of simultaneism, of harsh or crepuscular light, of purple or blue, which have no other object or subject than themselves [...]. It is always a question of freeing life wherever it is imprisoned, or of tempting it into an uncertain combat.

In terms of authorship, it is essential to recognize that ‘percepts’ are continuously at work in the world and that it is the responsibility of the artist to manoeuvre them into recognizable formats or ‘affects’ which are not representative of the world but exist in conjunction with it as beings unto themselves. That is, the classical view that the artwork should function as an illustration of the real—representation as **re**-presentation—is defunct; the work itself can no longer be thought of as necessarily reflective of individual talent or the ability to transpose. The artwork develops from the artist’s perception of his or her own lived experience and, once in the world, does not directly refer to that personal experience or confessional aspect of the real or private. By contrast, as a hub of sensations, it acts as a locality where others become reacquainted with a world which they are otherwise unable to recognize outside of a moment of affective experience. The artwork breaks the banality of routine, if only for

a moment, because it channels an elusive poetic quality by consisting of indeterminate and de-familiarized fragments:

Life alone creates such zones where living beings whirl around, and only art can reach and penetrate them in its enterprise of co-creation. This is because from the moment that the material passes into sensation [...] art itself lives on these zones of indetermination. They are blocs.

The artwork's aim then is to penetrate determined zones or, in other words, those taxonomies that society invokes for the purpose of maintaining a rational view of otherwise overwhelming or seemingly limitless phenomena. As a bloc, the artwork is unquantifiable—it 'is the language of sensations. Art does not have opinions. Art undoes the triple organization of perceptions, affections, and opinions in order to substitute a monument composed of percepts, affects, and blocs of sensations that take the place of language.' In essence, the function of the artwork is to point towards the unnameable and, by so doing, to substantiate its own existence; it acts as the apparatus that distills the world so that the world may know itself. Frédéric Neyrat, whose writing I will return to later on, finds a similar glimmer of possibility within the newly overwhelming epoch of the Anthropocene. He argues:

[...] one of the beneficial effects of the concept of the Anthropocene could be, in contrast to an abstract "us" made up of astronaut designers of the spaceship Earth, that it forces us to reconsider the status of the human being: The Anthropocene should be the era where it becomes impossible not to think of ourselves as living beings, the era where "cheap nature" turns out to be an ecological impossibility.

In this version of the Anthropocene, nothing can be taken as universal or for granted and all things are entangled at variable registers. herman de vries' desire to immerse himself in the space, time, and nature of the everyday, to refuse hierarchies of language and taxonomy, supports a figure of the artist as 'a hunter-gatherer of the ready-made world', in which 'consciousness becomes more important than knowledge or even thought.'

It is crucial to note that this take on creative practice means the engagement with 'a poetry that is the world [my emphasis]' rather than a poetry that is added to the world. In a way, such an eco-poietic approach opposes the traditional or Aristotelean definition of artistic creativity. In the *Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle defines poiesis in the following way:

All art is concerned with coming into being, i.e., with contriving and considering how something may come into being which is capable of either being or not being, and whose origin is in the maker and not in the thing made; for art is concerned neither with things that are, or come

into being, by necessity, nor with things that do so in accordance with nature (since these have their origin in themselves).

de vries' insistence on the 'chance and change' of everyday phenomenological experience as an artistic medium centralizes the origins of things in themselves while destabilizing poiesis in a world that is always already in the making and that awaits a sensuous awareness of it but does not support an ability to master it or fully comprehend its intentions or phenomena. That is, the work emphasizes diffraction or a bending of illumination and knowledges around subjects and objects, beings and their appearances. Moreover, perhaps paradoxically, such art is not to be thought of as authorial or additive. Rather, by performing compositional gestures, the artist seeks to displace the cultural value of and reliance on anthropocentric creativity.

A stance such as this is not without its contradictions and could even be said to revive that same nineteenth century Romanticism that imbues twentieth and twenty-first century environmentalist movements with a determination of ecological holism and a reparable lost paradise. Take, for example, Ralph Waldo Emerson's famous essay 'Nature' of 1836. Praising the ability for the woods to deliver him from the nullifying distractions of civilization, he states: 'I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God.' The call to merge with the world as pure consciousness here is perhaps redolent of both the ZERO group and de vries' later, more independent, understanding of his occupation. How, then, to escape the trap of romanticising nature?

Eco-Poiesis as Anti-poiesis

In his book *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*, Timothy Morton finds remobilized, contemporary Romanticism to be guilty of suspending or framing the 'environment' or 'nature' statically in time; what he calls 'eco-mimesis' inevitably produces unanticipated externality through ambient and ephemeral manifestations in art and literature. Yet, if processes are the currency for New Materialism, it would seem a clear distinction should be made between argument, experience, or intention and the limitation of their expression by mimetic artforms. Unlike Emerson's prose, herman de vries' visual art bypasses representation or a science of Aristotelean resemblances; as will be seen, there really is no room for metaphor in his work.

Morton highlights two categories for thinking the pitfalls of eco-mimesis, namely, 'system' and 'field'. In line with Karen Barad's claim for

intra-active power relations, Morton notes how 'the idea of environment as a system rules out [necessary] critical anomalies.' Thinking 'eco-system', for example, reifies an otherwise volatile and happily unpredictable set of interconnections. Likewise, a field 'is [merely] the margin, the blank part of the page, or, more recently, a placeholder for data in a database.' For de vries, a crucial turn in the 1970s indicates a struggle to push beyond the restrictions of the frame. While dot field works such as *random dot grid field* (1973) and *random colour dot fields* (1974) became 'diagrammatic analogies of natural diversity' based on a concrete rendering of entelechy or organic, non-human impulses of production, they were, nonetheless, analogies. More successful to the artist was an earlier work that, according to art historian Mel Gooding, would guide the direction of much of his later praxis. *collected mahé, the Seychelles (august 1970)*, a modest and intimate assemblage, became a rightful essay in itself, and succeeded as a new kind of artwork after the impact and influence of ZERO. By this I mean to suggest, in connection with an assessment made by novelist and poet John Burnside, that the artistic task of acute observation of an object—in this case actual found seashells arranged and mounted in a grid—is 'science enough' and a quintessential ecological gesture of belonging. Such a work speaks more to an ambition to commune with the more than human than to a desire to establish epistemological order over it or to obtain anthropocentric knowledge of it. By turning to natural objects and arranging them in such a way so that their difference could be understood thanks to their repetition, the artist also turned away from traditions of analogy and metaphor (i.e., representation). The journey from poiesis to eco-poiesis effectively 'inaugurates an extraordinary and sustained artistic-philosophical project [...].' The shift in approach and perspective introduced by an aesthetic respect for natural materials as found objects also elevates an artistic interest in environmental and ecological contingencies that surpasses the role of chance in modernism. It is this newfound **naturalism** on the part of de vries that allows his work to escape the eco-mimetic bind. Acute attention to the dark ecology of things—seashells not as abstract systemic forms within a larger field, but as agential objects with which to become attuned—changes the relationship between maker and materials and communicates the power of observation over representation for viewer-experiencers of the work.

Philippe Descola's comparative study of naturalism and animism might be another way to grasp eco-poiesis as anti-poiesis in this context. In *Beyond Nature and Culture*, the anthropologist states:

Animism and naturalism may be seen as antithetical ways of discerning the properties of



Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

things. Animism lays the emphasis on the physical differences between existing beings (they have dissimilar bodies) while recognizing that they maintain similar interrelations (given that they share an analogous interiority). Naturalism, on the contrary, lays the emphasis on the physical continuity between the world’s elements (all are subjected to the laws of nature), the better to note the heterogeneity of the relations that may bring them together (these are said to depend on their capacity or incapacity to manifest interiorities of various kinds).

In many animist traditions, the non-human world is organized by the projection of human characteristics and hierarchies onto it; nature is located and defined through a social lens and relations between subjects and objects are adapted from this worldview or system. As such, Descola’s definition of animism might be thought alongside Morton’s critique of eco-mimesis in art and literature. Within a naturalist tradition, on the other hand, Descola points out that a main challenge after acknowledging the many potentialities for differing registers of relations among human and more than human beings is to determine where and how to identify a place for ‘culture within the universality of nature.’ In both cases, culture cannot be neatly excised from nature, nor nature from culture, and I would assert that de vries’ visual art practice that engages with found natural objects and materials navigates between these two poles of animism and naturalism successfully, often through minimal but profound means. Deleuze and Guattari also explore how the categories of art and nature share real similarities, in that the worldly or the mundane is bound up with the naturalist potential of the human imagination. They propose that,

[...] if nature is like art, this is always because it combines these two living elements in every way: House and Universe, **Heimlich** and **Unheimlich**, territory and deterritorialization, finite melodic compounds and the great infinite plane of composition, the small and large refrain.

Both art and nature are intertwined in their creativity or generativity. Since antiquity, humankind has sought to **add** to its surroundings by creating objects or structures from the materials found within those surroundings, and this alone can be thought of as anthropocentric poesis. Yet, if the creative impulse can be connected with what might be interpreted as an earthly or eco-poietic force that artworks can reveal or at the very least suggest, then the artist becomes a producer of ‘affective’ work that combines worldly materials with the macrocosmic. To clarify, Deleuze and Guattari add that ‘perhaps the peculiarity of art is to pass through the finite in order to rediscover, to restore the infinite.’ Such a restoration should also be thought in transdis-

ciplinary terms. Broadly defined, eco-poietic art, which might include many varied approaches to materiality and environment, can introduce what Anna Tsing has referred to as importantly constant ‘life lines’ that are also recognized in the aforementioned theories of New Materialism. In her ground-breaking work on post-capitalist Matsutake mushroom pickers, for example, Tsing argues for an expansive and inclusive (perhaps even artistic) scope to better comprehend the ecological complexities that surround this specific resource or commodity:

Life lines are entangled: candy cane and matsutake; matsutake and its host trees; host trees and herbs, mosses, insects, soil bacteria, and forest animals; heaving bumps and mushroom pickers. Matsutake pickers are alert to life lines in the forest; searching with all the senses creates this alertness. It is a form of forest knowledge and appreciation without the completeness of classification. Instead, searching brings us to the liveliness of beings experienced as subjects rather than objects.

Being entangled as subjects and without ambition to taxonomize or classify from an external position can indeed establish and support blocs of sensations for artists, thinkers, and New Materialists to unpack, communicate, and disseminate for more ecologically attuned publics. While the Matsutake pickers provide an anthropological example, they operate with a creative attention that unites aesthetics with politics and the human with the more than human. Similarly, in 1970, herman de vries took up residence in the village of Eschenau in Bavaria, where his house quickly became a ‘scientific-artistic, philosophical research station’ where he and his partner Susanne pursued the work of embodied observation and custodianship of their environment. By rejecting the conventional understanding of art as a bringing-into-being (artifice or Aristotelean poesis), de vries was able to embrace the ‘suchness’ of things. During this time, site-specific temporal experiments of dwelling, like **one, two, and three hours under my apple tree** (1975), demonstrate a continued interest in randomness, but one that recasts chance outside of modernism.

Here, as the artist would have it, the random falling of leaves and the observer’s fixing of them to paper communicates an eco-critically diffractive power relation. In his own words: ‘I saw that everything is **causal**, and “randomness” in fact expresses our inability to grasp the complexity of all these causes.’ To be clear, this causality is not teleological or preordained (Hegelian), but speaks to an interconnectivity of subjects acting with one another to produce modes of perception and affectivity. For curator Cees De Boer, this particular work under the apple tree addresses the materiality and temporality of an experience

of place that can be communicated to others in an instant, thanks to its directness:

Representation—focusing on an object out there—stands corrected and is effectively scaled down to presentation [since...] the totality of the work is primarily a testimonial, in a physical and **pars pro toto** way, to a much bigger complexity and intelligibility. The latter qualification may be a surprising one, as it is we who perceive, understand, conclude and know things about nature.

I agree that there is a complexity at play here that involves the communication of environmental immediacy and allows for a reappraisal of the eco-mimetic dilemma of representing nature in art. In Jeffrey Jerome Cohen and Lowell Duckert’s extraordinary edited volume **Veer Ecology: A Companion for Environmental Thinking**, which embraces an active point of departure for practicing eco-theory through twenty-nine chapters that are each defined by a singular verb, Julian Yates wonderfully asks ‘what might happen [...] if we were to pluralize access to the verb [‘to represent’] such that not only other animals, plants, and other living creatures but also the inorganic world of minerals are understood also to represent, to produce representations.’ Such encounters can be emphasized by works that capture and arrest them; in this case, the leaves of an apple tree have fallen on their own accord over a short period of time during a particular day and have been presented on paper as a record of that natural action as witnessed by the artist. Through a scalar affectivity achieved by such assemblages, a spatio-temporal zone emerges in which similar moments can be recounted by those witnessing the residual evidence of the artist’s own experience of a cohabitation with the elements of his environment.

A Re-Articulation of Wildness

In addition to chance-based recordings like **one, two, and three hours under my apple tree**, herman de vries has rethought and reconfigured the model of the taxonomic archive most often found in Natural History museums. Since the late 1970s, he has collected samples of earth from many locations around the world, catalogued in Eschenau as an **earth museum** in 1983; the artist considers these samples to be a ‘material sign of [the earth’s] self-ness’ or ‘irreducible actuality.’ What might otherwise serve as an ingredient for the fabrication of oil paint, for example, is addressed more directly as material evidence for eco-poietic presentation.

What does it mean to archive pigments derived from earth and then to collaborate with them? As Mel Gooding explains, there is deliberate choice in the **from earth** works to adopt

the consistent gesture of rubbing soils dried as pigments onto paper in the vertical, using the earth itself to produce its own portraiture of sorts, rather than a series of objectified, horizontal landscapes that rely on linear perspective. Once again, the grid is employed to diminish a centralized human subject, instead evidencing for the viewer an ‘ecological concern, love and wonder.’ These ongoing works perform the earthly by letting it represent itself, as it were. Artist Heidi Gustafson elaborates on the agential or eco-poietic capacity of pigments and shows how they **matter**. She writes:

Sediment fissures into **sentiment**. The Latin root **sedere**, to settle or sit, becomes **sentire**, to experience. In that sense, pigments are stewards of an experimental, and bewildering, aesthetic threshold. They intensify, confuse, and reorganize our felt sense of inner and outer, imagination and manifestation, self and nature, past, present, and future. [...] pigments are co-directors of our creative, evolutionary process.

Pigments are formed from multiple processes and stages of mineral materiality. To work with them in the way that de vries does reinforces a meditative relationality with the local as well as the planetary. In his comprehensive book **Elemental Philosophy: Earth, Air, Fire, and Water as Environmental Ideas**, David Macauley relays how ‘[w]e live on and interact with **terra cognita** but also **terra incognita**, both a revealed and revealing surface and a concealed and self-secluding core, or underground.’ The purposefully simplistic relationship de vries has to such ubiquitous but varied deposits incites the viewer to refocus their attention on the ‘telluric sphere’ that arises from the soil and is conducted through the human animal in an eco-poietic embodiment of the earth. At first, the composition of the **from earth** works and their frequent placement as a grid would appear to speak to a tradition of abstraction in modern art. On the contrary, through an immediacy of material and its sensorial capabilities, there is again a surprising complexity inherent in the work.

In a chapter dedicated to the cultural act of ‘decoration’, Daniel C. Remein veers away from the artistic tradition of premeditated and anthropocentric design. He states:

insofar as it decorates, an ecology will become a cosmological **ecotecture** [...] to **decorate** can mean to elaborate surface (or nonspatiality) into the textures that catch, articulate, hook, entangle, and mix as a spatiality where different perceptual systems overlap: gems that blind, details that distract, tendrils that tangle. To decorate is to build, but not in such a way as to distinguish between the built and the wild.

By moving the action of decoration away from artifice and towards ecology, one might bet-

ter understand the artist’s unique articulation of wildness, one that insists on being open to the witnessing of consciousness and unexpected causality within natural actors, and that is equally distrustful of contrived or eco-mimetic embellishments.

To further expand on a sense of immediacy, it is useful to concentrate on a work that brings the categories of domesticity and wildness into dialogue. At Eschenau in 1986, Susanne and herman de vries obtained a 4000 square metre piece of land that they preserved as noticeably separate from the surrounding farming fields.

Through a durational process of what they call ‘decultivation for renaturalization’, the couple encouraged the sustainable growth of a ‘micro-cosm’, an ‘essay’ or experiment on a much larger scale to the Mahé shell collection of 1970. de vries wanted to alter and augment the connection a dweller has to his environment by allowing that space to thrive without interference, and the land has not only served as an artwork in and of itself, but has also helped him to produce many exhibited works based on his embeddedness in it over time, ranging from photography to installation to collections of assemblages. In 1992, Michael Fehr visited **the meadow** and was able to observe herman and Susanne at work in the designated habitat; he published his reflections in **Daidalos** the same year, describing it as:

[...] discernible even from a distance—not as a meadow, but as a peculiar, different moment, as a wild, unrestrained piece of land in the midst of a cleared landscape accessible to machines—by the hedges surrounding it. It drives like a wedge out of the forest into the open field of industrialized agriculture, radiating more than formal unrest. For it is bursting with life.

The theme of immediacy through reduction and diffraction reverberates here; by refusing chemical treatment or agricultural enrichment, a ‘poorer’ and truer ecological relationship was encouraged to gestate in the meadow, thanks to ‘a drastic change of heart and a re-direction of political will.’ Frédéric Neyrat might qualify this attitude as ‘atopian’, in its ambition to maintain a welcome confusion between subjects and objects that privileges a tug-of-war scenario intent on challenging **homeostasis**. For Neyrat, as for de vries, this equates to a ‘letting-be’, in that ‘[f]ar from being reduced to a passive and non-political attitude, the politics of letting-be requires preventing that which prevents existence.’ In this sense, to thrive ecologically involves a notion of freedom and agency that is not totally subjective or aimed at self-sustainability. Following de vries’ mantra ‘to be all ways to be’, such a non-hierarchical and non-utopian (atopian) politics begins to point toward what Maria Puig de la Bellacasa calls ‘matters of care’ or ‘speculative ethics in

more than human worlds’ that are enriched by her interest in tactility or ‘touching visions’ as a form of eco-critical custodianship when thinking about the organic qualities of soil, for example.

In **the meadow**, Susanne and herman de vries celebrate an intimate and poetic interconnection with the more than human. Touching living or non-living matter involves sensorial contact that can communicate further than the historically privileged sense of sight or vision. That is, ‘haptic engagement conveys an encouragement for knowledge and action to be crafted **in touch** with everyday living and practice, in the proximity of involvement with ordinary material transformation.’ Without the economy of distance that mere vision or linear perspective allows, tactility conveys an ethics of immediacy or immanence that can join the other concepts I have explored. Puig de la Bellacasa asks: ‘How can visionary **diffractive** efforts resist inflated virtual (future) possibility detached from (present) material finitudes? [my emphasis]’ To put it another way, how can touch and immediate contact return to vision its quality of attentiveness, thereby producing ethical subjects? Perhaps it is this simple goal for renewed attention or care among beings that makes de vries’ adventures in eco-poiesis legible to us as viewer-experiencers of his works. The encounters among the artist, flora, and fauna of **the meadow** become ‘interventions that engage with touch to reclaim vision, by manifesting deep attention to materiality and embodiment in ways that rethink relationality, in ways that suggest a desire for tangible engagements with mundane transformation.’ The habitual acts of seed collecting, the sowing of seeds, and the cultivation of plant species (ranging from fruit trees, to herbs, to flowers, and to grasses) that would otherwise have been inhibited or adversely affected by those fertilizers and pesticides used in the agribusiness of neighbouring fields and farms resonate with Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘block of sensations’ as well as a Puig de la Bellacasa’s New Materialist and eco-feminist investment in reciprocal creative exchanges and encounters: ‘Who/what is **object**? Who/what is **subject**?’

It is not only the experimenter/observer/human agent who sees, touches, knows, intervenes, and manipulates the universe: there is **intra-touching**.’

Noticeable increase in wildlife (including moles, insects, birds, frogs, and wild boar) over the first two years of letting **the meadow** be by carefully curating its abundant variety of inter-species intra-touching also supports an integral sense of ‘tactfulness’:

A form of sensorial politeness, understood as a political art of gauging distance and proximity. An ethical and political learning that might

well be vital in caring for worlds in the making through intensified, constant touch between entities human and more than human [...] Thinking touch with care beautifully emphasizes intra-active reversibility, and therefore vulnerability in relational ontologies.

The tactful approach within the praxis of Susanne and herman de vries is not grounded by anthropocentric control; they are not the handlers of this piece of land and its cohabitants. Instead, as with the **earth museum**:

herman's meadow is a museum in the best sense of the word, a place which, due to intensive and competent collecting, is the actual reconstruction, the living image of a former, generally prevailing manner of treating Nature, a striking, not-to-be-overlooked place of reflection where the history and future of the region, culture and Nature merge.

The wildness of the microcosm that is **the meadow** preserves the complex relationship between dwellers and place, thanks to a perspective on agricultural cultivation that is in fact to 'decultivate' (tactfully and with care), so as to 'renaturalize'.

Frédéric Neyrat foregrounds 'wildness' as 'a condition for the possibility of difference, the **transcendental differential** allowing for something to become separate and individuated.' While this condition could be seen to be eco-mimetically captured in the prolific work of herman de vries, that would surely amount to a misguided analysis. Conversely, through a lifelong exercise of 'meeting the universe halfway', he has discovered 'the means by which to critique the politics of a general cementing of the landscape.' For Jay Griffiths, '[w]ildness is resolute for life: it cannot be otherwise, for it will die in captivity. It is elemental: pure freedom, pure passion, pure hunger. It is its own manifesto.' Neyrat goes on to claim that '[w]e cannot access the wild, nor can we grasp or reconstruct it. The desire to grasp it, in order to reconstruct or destroy it, involves movement in the direction opposite of grasping it, a countergrasping that is utterly unconstructable.' By contrast, the constructability of an eco-poietic or even 'ecological' art is indeed possible through a re-articulation of wildness at the levels of intra-action, diffraction, tactfulness, and immediacy. Anna Tsing reminds us:

[...] the Anthropocene is not the era of human mastery of nature. It is not the fulfilment of dreams of progress. On the contrary! The point of the term is to make us aware of how much we do not control, and of what a mess our species has made without really thinking about it.

I propose that the art of herman de vries invokes such an awareness, a critical consciousness of heterogeneous histories and assumed knowledges about being in the world and how

to interrelate with our surroundings in order to recuperate something from the wreckage. Within the Anthropocene Laboratory, this kind of praxis might orientate itself using the coordinates of the zero-point, no-mind, speculative botany, presentations opposed to rigid taxonomies or representations, and an interest in a contactable and tangible aesthetics of nature that allows for a fuller comprehension of our contemporary lived environments.

Transcendental Tourist

- 1 **An Ecomodernist Manifesto**, www.ecomodernism.org (accessed 10 January 2021).
- 2 Timothy Morton, 'You're Not Making Ecological Art Yet', **Open Lectures** (Reykjavik: Iceland University of the Arts, 02 February 2018).
- 3 Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Anthropocene 1' in **Fuelling Culture: 101 Words for Energy and Environment**, eds. Imre Szeman, Jennifer Wenzel and Patricia Yaeger (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), 39.
- 4 Rob Nixon, 'Anthropocene 2' in *Fuelling Culture*, op. cit., 39.
- 5 Rick Dolphijn and Iris van der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews and Cartographies* (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012), 52.





And the night spat him out

But we did not see
Him unfurling
Unwrapping himself from his cloak of darkness

Becoming almost human in the early morning-
stunned by the light
Blinking his eyes
reincarnated and magically transported
Into the thinnest layers of our atmosphere...

Here he comes now,
riding in on a jumbo jet
Crossing the magic meridians, the everlasting white of furthest north....
To share for some short moments
The sea of silvery light and forest fires
With the avians
And the bi-peds
Searching for a mirror to the sacred abyss in the retinas of ravens, longhorn- sheep, coyotes
but avoiding the gaze...

These are all swimmers in the sea of air

Incredibly enough
He could hold it together
Even at the great rift
The deep cut
A transcendental tourist gazing into the birth of Terra
curious as a tick that could be crawling over the
Frilled and undulating labiae, an opened vulva landscape working and creating the materiality of time itself
with no thoughts on angels, dreams or parasites

That wound in Zeus head just meant hat this should not be grasped by brains of abyss or of sky,
but Kronos still is born
As the rose tinted light bleeds out and fills the canyon
overflowing in a slow but steady pulse

This heart was beating two thousand years ago
Two million years ago
Yesterday and tomorrow

He wanted to taste the sparkle in the desert air
But it was too sharp, too crisp
Too dry
For someone like him all tongue and touch

The transcendental tourist, in sensation, wonder,
Dancing at the dry and pinkish mounds
And every little hillock full of narrow holes
where iridescent brothers and sisters will emerge
Soon, in just a few hours,
to flood their night with hunting and tailed passion
dance, dance, dance, dance
the nocturnal thirst

Returning to the city
in a steady stream of backlights
a serpent of going home all the way up the hill
to merge with the flaming sky
and the valley is two hands held out
to receive the starry night
oh night, come down to me
return me to my watery sensations
but not without my spikes and multi-armed embrace

the world is floating into sound and pulse
dancing, drinking, swimming into the irrigated paradise
And this may be the garden of Eden
or we may be the expelled ones, hanging at the gates
with our friends and sisters rattlesnakes, scorpions

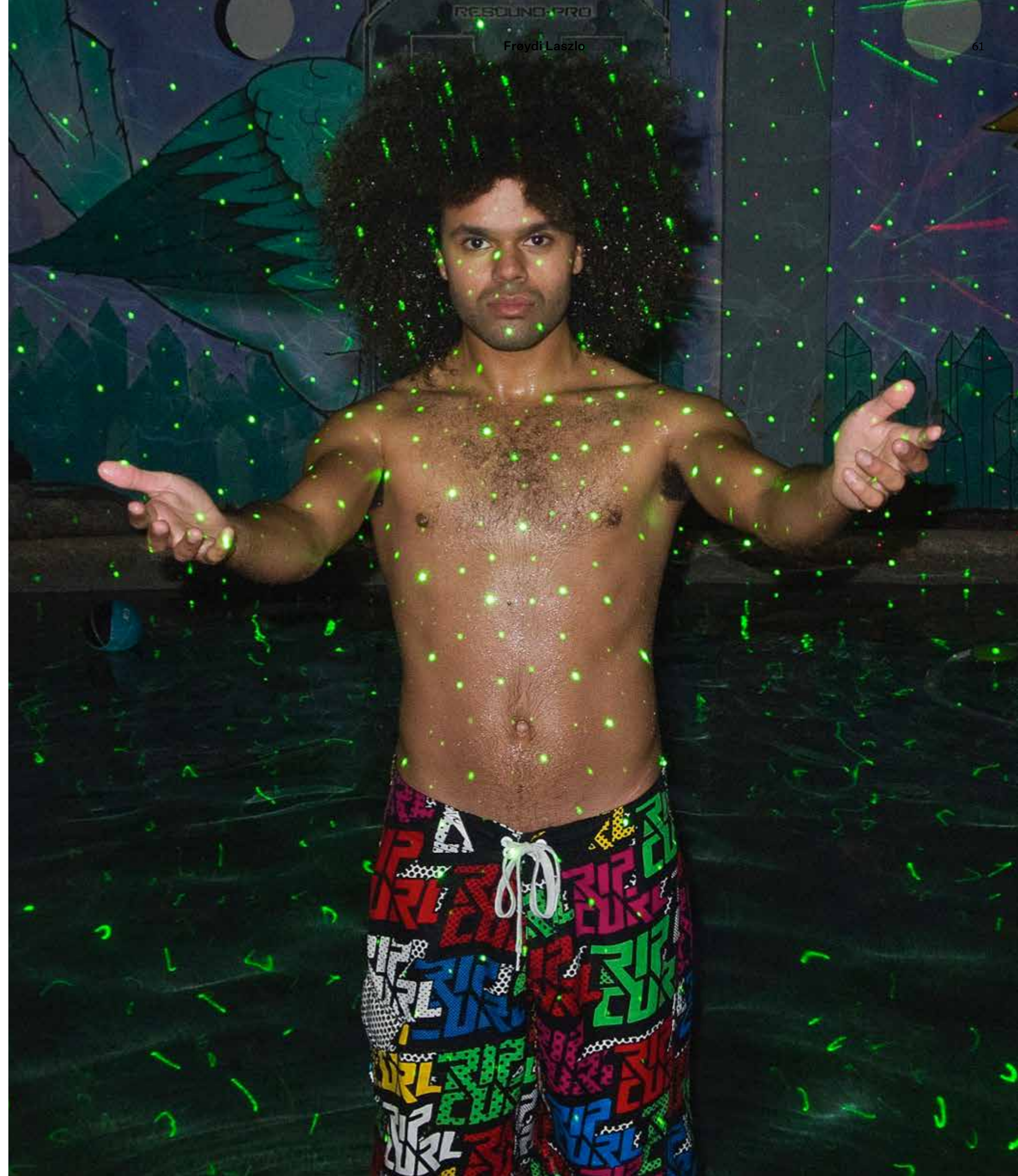
and these the less than human humans
the unlucky ones captured in their human, concrete, opioid, and trash-bag nightmares
as we erase, erase wherever there is shade and shelter
their burning eyes

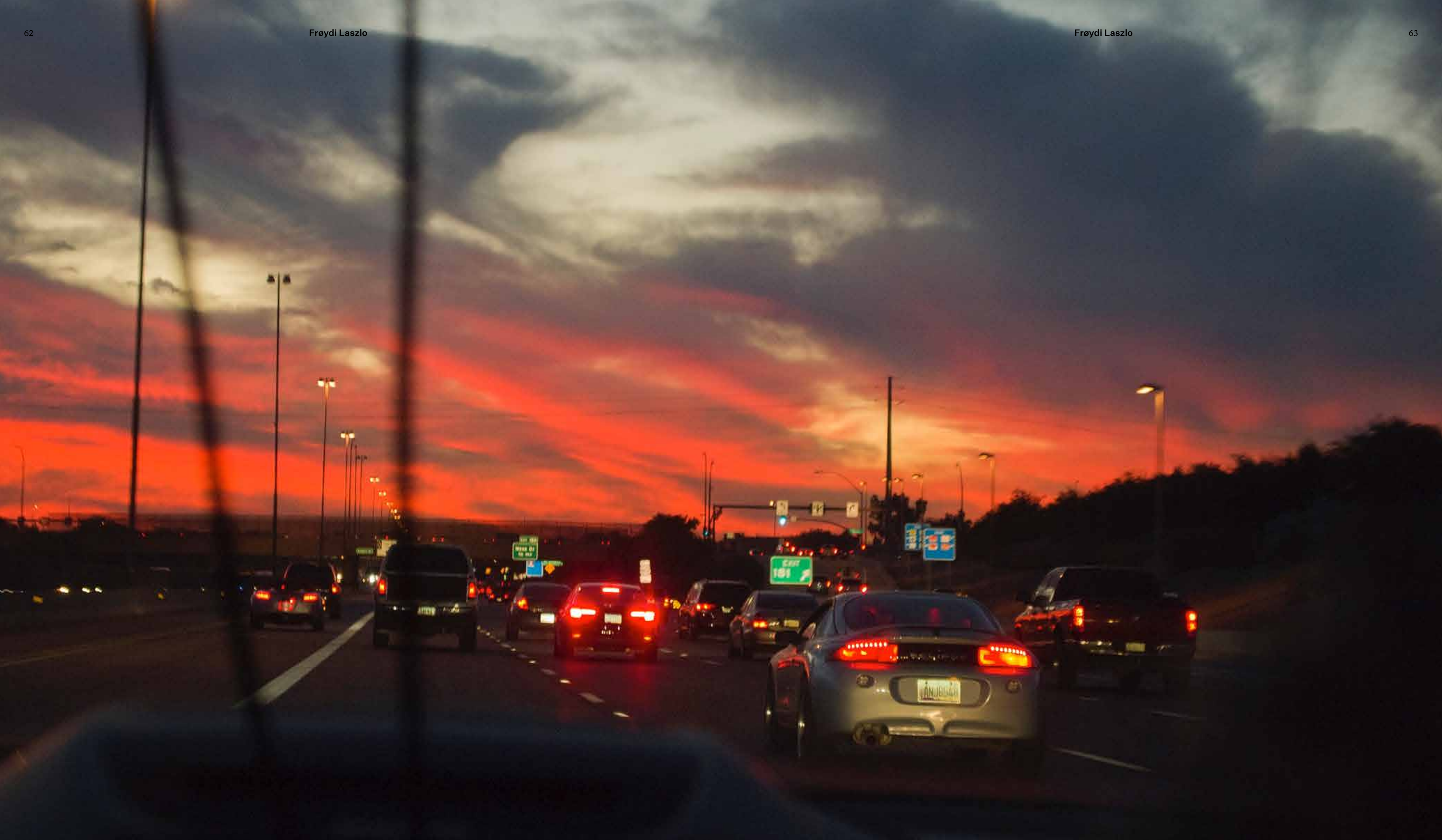
Cephalopod in every limb becoming
a human prince as his coat speckles up with fluorescent light
Oh, beauty beaut tempting you
you shiny belly shiny teeth
Having no fear of abysses,
or human pains,
or their petty mortalities at every finger

He has no urge to satisfy his hunger
He knows and trusts the night
And it will take him back at any moment
Silently engulf him
And taste him slowly just the way it pleases.











Dogs Must Be (Socially Engaged) Art



Fig. 23



Fig. 24

As the inimitable Bruce Naumann once declared: “...I was an artist, and I was in the studio, then whatever I was doing in the studio must be art.”¹ My own studio houses two dogs in kennels, two other free-roaming dogs, and a dog door to the outside. The space is also open to however many other dogs (currently 10 additional) live in my house cum dog sanctuary. In other words, invoking Naumann, my dog sanctuary must be art. I have often joked that my dogs are part of my studio process because they’re always in the studio with me. Also—maybe because they are always in the studio—dog imagery crept into my paintings and drawings, though not necessarily as integral to the work conceptually. On the other hand, my work has always been autobiographical, and dog imagery has always been personal imagery as well.

I was born into a family with dogs, and dogs have been part of my family ever since. My animal welfare work, however, began in the late 1990s when I first volunteered with dog rescue. From there, I volunteered with local shelters and built my knowledge of dogs, with a focus on behavior and training. Currently, I direct Free to Be Dog Haven, a dog sanctuary I founded in 2011. Free to Be Dog Haven marks the convergence of my worlds as an artist/academic and animal worker. I acknowledge ‘animal sanctuary as art’ as an extension of my artistic practice and as my primary, ongoing project.

The most significant connection between my work as an artist and my work in animal welfare is a postcolonial perspective that I bring to pet-keeping and humans’ relationships with nonhuman animals, in general. I derive empathy for the canine subject through the exploration of identity in the context of ‘otherness’, and, consequently, affirmations of identity, subjectivity and agency constitute the core of my studio and sanctuary practice. Both the studio and the sanctuary engage identity through processes of knowing—how we gain knowledge and identify it, how we organize it, how we act upon it. As a person of color, immigrant, and member of the LGBTQ+ community living in the United States, I necessarily produce work that manifests my identity as ‘other’ in a culture governed by racialized/gendered/capitalist Western modernism. Thus, my work—our work—in the sanctuary is advocacy for dogs (and humans) in the context of social justice.

Socially Engaged Art

Perhaps for lack of a better way to label my work, the term ‘socially engaged art’ recurs as a common descriptor. Although not inaccurate, the term cannot convey the scope of the work. Even more so, the concept of social engagement, par-

ticularly with regard to art, seems concentrated on human engagement rather than among multiple species. The Tate offers a concise yet comprehensive description of socially engaged art:

Socially engaged practice, also referred to as social practice or socially engaged art, can include any artform which involves people and communities in debate, collaboration or social interaction. This can often be organised as the result of an outreach or education program, but many independent artists also use it within their work...

The participatory element of socially engaged practice, is key, with the artworks created often holding equal or less importance to the collaborative act of creating them.²

Engagement in this context consistently implies some level of activism, and, by extension, politics. Thus, the sanctuary, when viewed through a socially-engaged-art lens, often looks superficially as about ‘saving the animals’. While the animals—the dogs—are not discounted, my work is construed as about human efforts, if not human heroism. Furthermore, the work of the sanctuary is often viewed as facilitating improved relationships between dogs and their people. Again, not inaccurate, but definitely incomplete. The ‘social’ in socially engaged art refers to human society and human social relationships, including humans’ relationships with their pets (from the human perspective). My work with the dogs seeks to re-orient this perspective and expand how we define ‘society’. Society must encompass the entirety of relationships among living species, plus these species’ relationships with the global environment. In the same vein, ‘social justice’ must apply to all living species—and the planet—not just humans. None other than Nicholas Bourriaud, curator and voice of relational aesthetics, recognized the limitations of the social relations and encounters produced by the art he championed at the close of the 20th century. Curating the 16th Istanbul Biennial in 2019, Bourriaud titled the event The Seventh Continent, after the ‘continent’ of waste produced by humans. In his curatorial statement, he notes:

As we enter the Anthropocene (or, rather, Capitalocene), which is directly connecting the dominant economy with the environment in which we live, today’s anthropology can no longer be centred on the human species. In this de-centred world, both anthropology and art have to engage with a multitude of points of view, and—going beyond the western vision of ‘progress’—invent a real ‘perspectivism’ (Viveiros de Castro).³

Despite this awareness, Bourriaud cannot help but re-center art as human activity and the product of human influence: “[The Seventh Continent] defines art as a molecular anthro-

pology, which studies the human effects, tracks and prints in the universe, and their interaction with non-humans.”⁴ Perhaps an irony of the term anthropocene is that we cannot escape the ‘anthropos’ in interrogating our interactions with nonhuman animals. As one reviewer summarized the Istanbul exhibition, “The show fails to problematize the anthropological gaze.”⁵

The anthropological gaze, anthropocentrism, anthropomorphism—all have shaped humans’ relationships with dogs. While Bourriaud may see nature and society converging in the Anthropocene, dogs’ natures seem to have long ago been subsumed by human society. Unfortunately for dogs, the norms and expectations of human society don’t always embrace qualities of natural dog-ness. Hence Free to Be Dog Haven. Our sanctuary—mine and the dogs’—purports to offer a space where dogs can be dogs, beyond human demands or interference. On the other hand, I am human; I live with the dogs, I take care of the dogs, I manage the resources of their welfare. Given the aims of the sanctuary and my active role in it, my work/relationships with the dogs can best be described as collaboration; collaboration is the one element of socially engaged art that especially resonates with me.

Collaborative Being

Inspired Donna Haraway’s discussion of “companion species,”⁶ as a visual artist, I considered possibilities for human-nonhuman artistic collaboration: how can I as an artist collaborate with dogs to create work that is both the dogs’ and mine? Is such a collaboration actually tenable? How do two species collaborate across a chasm that is culturally differentiated but also biologically, linguistically, and in almost every “real” way outside the other’s understanding of existence? Other artists ask similar questions, and their collective investigations constitute what some people refer to as interspecies art.

I have difficulty with this use of the word art, however. First, even humans cannot agree “what is art?” Discussion of contemporary art most often revolves around Western conceptions of it, based in humanism and Enlightenment ideals. There are human cultures who do not even have a word for the kind of art that is the topic of contemporary, critical discourse. Second, how can we humans deign to presume nonhuman animals would care to collaborate with us at all, much less participate in such an esoteric practice as “art”? Assuming we are able to infer consent from nonhuman participants, how do we negotiate inquiries, methodologies, intentions, assessments and such? At best, our nonhuman partners may be destined for object status in the work—à la

Kounellis’s **Twelve Live Horses** (1969)—or as expressions of human aesthetic concerns (and hubris?), as with the transgenic work of Eduardo Kac or the preserved specimens of Damien Hirst.

Just as artists grapple with the complex possibilities of multispecies collaboration, artists and other thinkers have theorized interspecies art, mostly in terms of artistic or aesthetic agency on the part of nonhuman animals. The concept of nonhuman animal agency, as with nonhuman animal subjectivity, is a given for most artists concerned with animal welfare and antispeciesism. That is, for any artist embarking on interspecies collaboration, the welfare of and consent by the nonhuman partner/s are paramount. Artist Lisa Jevbratt has gone so far as to offer an Artistic Interspecies Collaboration Field Guide. In addition to offering ideas on project preparation and development, she introduces the overall practice with key bullet points:

Become more sensitive to other species.
Become more respectful of other species.
Learn about the world we share, together with our non-human companions.
Have a richer experience with wildlife.
Deepen your connection with your pets.⁷

Jevbratt has developed a college course on interspecies collaboration and maintains a website that allows any interested individual to share their interspecies collaborative project: interspeciescollaboration.net.

Moreover, Jevbratt’s text “Interspecies Collaboration—Making Art Together with Nonhuman Animals,”⁸ identifies four forms of collaboration based on a range of student work, with examples given. The four forms provide interesting possibilities for how interspecies collaboration may be orchestrated:

Protocol—“making protocols or rule systems that formalize interactions between a human and a non-human and generate some output;”

Interference pattern—“set up an environment where two or more different **Umwelts** are overlapped;”

Communication—with guidance from an animal communicator, students learned to make themselves more accessible to nonhuman animals and to “listen for communications from the animals using all [their] senses, including sensations in [their] bodies, and how to send information back to [the animals] via images;”

Limbic resonance—‘a symphony of mutual exchange and internal adaptation whereby two mammals become attuned to each other’s inner states.’⁹

I particularly appreciate Jevbratt’s use of the term **Umwelts** (**Umwelten**) which she defines as “a German word used by the biologist Jakob von Uexküll (1864–1944) to signify the specific physical, emotional, and semiotic environment an individual (of any species) live in and through.”¹⁰ The term applies well to our sanctuary and even better to our collaboration. A vital tenet of interspecies collaboration is the maintenance of individual identity, nonhuman and human. My hesitation in making ‘art’ in collaboration with dogs is losing the canine identity in pursuit of a human practice. However, our sanctuary does exist as an environment of overlapping **Umwelten**; more importantly, our species-specific **Merkwelt** and **Wirkvelt**¹¹ expand in relation to each other and produce, arguably, a uniquely branded **Umwelt**. Here, at the sanctuary, collaboration is also co-habitation, the constantly evolving design of living space (and life) to accommodate both dog and human, what I call collaborative being.

Animals-and-art scholar Jessica Ullrich has described recent art collaborations in which human artists frame animals’ natural behavior.¹² One example among many that she cites is the work of Aganetha Dyck who offers bees porcelain figures on which to build their honeycomb, architectural structures. While I find that work visually captivating and the collaboration with the bees exciting, my enthusiasm is curbed by what I perceive as a lack of personal connection, even affection, between the human and the bees. What so enraptures humans with dogs is their unabashed expressions of affection for us—they really seem to love us! A great complication in acknowledging and respecting the canine subject and their agency is the role humans have played in their evolution and their roles in the world today.

Collaborative being seeks to acknowledge the autonomous canine identity, though in the context of an affectional relationship with humans. Biologist Ray Coppinger says (somewhat facetiously) that today’s pet dogs are no longer ‘dogs’ because human manipulation has rendered them simply ‘pets.’¹³ As a scientist, he regards the specimen, the species, and overlooks the encounter, the relationship. The human-canine encounter is or can become Haraway’s “becoming with,”¹⁴ a new, shared identity that supersedes narrow speciesist definitions, a collaboration of species in the creation of something new, a shared, interspecies Umwelt.

Dog Paintings and Drawings

While the sanctuary may not present itself explicitly as interspecies collaboration, my dog

paintings and drawings do not either, I’m sure—though I very much regard them so. I am of an age where the digital does not satisfy my need to understand the world through material; trained as a painter, I need to feel the paint I mix, the resistance of the brush against the canvas, the flow of pigment and binder across a surface. The practice may seem old and the product conventional, but I need to paint and draw the dogs I have come to know through the sanctuary. Historically, pet portraiture has featured dogs as accessories to human lives, not as actively co-constitutive of a human-dog/dog-human life, as we see dogs today. I have recently begun a series of portraits of the dogs who have been part of the sanctuary, presenting them as the vital collaborators they are or were, representing them as the individuals I have come to know, imbuing my representations of them with the nonverbal knowledge they shared with me.¹⁵ My dog paintings and drawings are a collaborative practice involving me, the canine subject, and the entity we become together.

Our sanctuary is a space for considering what it means to be a ‘dog,’ and all concomitant considerations feed my paintings and drawings of the dogs. Ultimately, the dog portraits actually serve as expressions of the human-dog collaboration, the human-dog encounter. I offer a conceptual take on portraiture. Historical speciesism aside, pet portrait objects traditionally signified dogs as property, denying them subject position and hence voice. As Katherine C. Grier notes about 19th century pet portraiture: “Individuals often had themselves depicted with things that they valued: the tools of their trade, their books, and their dogs.”¹⁶ At the same time, these portraits do embody undeniable affection between “owner” and animal:

The most common studio portraits of pets depicted owners and animals together. Sometimes dogs were posed at their owners’ feet. But in a large number of pictures the subjects were carefully arranged so that the pet and the owner were shown with their heads close together, a composition also used with people and one that implied friendship or love. Posing an animal alone, however, suggested that it was a full individual in its own right.¹⁷

The animal as individual, however, need not preclude the affection underlying the relationship between them and their ‘owner.’ The affection characterizing such relationships, in fact, serves as the foundation for the transformative practice that is dog portraiture—the transgressive sentimentality that can encourage the subaltern to speak.

Contemporary pet portraiture as a radical practice allows recognition of the nonhuman animal voice, invoking Derrida’s question of “the

animal.”¹⁸ Rather than a cat looking back at the exposed human, it is the dog of contemporary pet portraiture who bears witness to human nakedness. What troubles the practice, as Derrida would point out, is the issue of language. If the dog portrait is the practice of pet keeper, artist, and dog, at what point does the dog speak for itself? To this question, Cary Wolfe finds satisfaction in Vicky Hearne’s¹⁹ rejection of an answer: the human need to understand nonhuman “language” exposes human preconceptions and limitations, not those of the nonhuman. The “darkness or muteness of the animal other is shown to be more of problem for us than for the animal.”²⁰ Rather than conceive of the dog portrait as a representation of the language-less animal seeking voice, the practice of the dog portrait can be understood as a hybrid expression of dog and artist, partners. In Derrida’s words, the problematized human-animal line requires disavowal of “all firm knowledge, certainty, and assurance on the subject”:

... far from erasing the difference—a non-oppositional and infinitely differentiated, qualitative, and intensive difference between reaction and response—it is a matter, on the contrary, of taking that difference into account within the whole differentiated field of experience and of a world of life forms, and of doing that without reducing this differentiated and multiple difference, in a conversely massive and homogenizing manner, to one between the human subject, on the one hand, and the non-subject that is the animal in general, on the other, where the latter comes to be, in another sense, the non-subject that is subjected to the human subject.²¹

The practice of dog portraiture embraces disavowal of certainty and a “differentiated field of experience” through visual—and decidedly non-verbal—collaboration in the truest sense of the word. The conglomeration of dog and artist, yet again, Haraway’s “becoming with” as a relevant, contemporary model of hybridity.

The most significant connection between my work as an artist and my work in animal welfare is my postcolonial perspective. I derive empathy for the canine subject, the exploration of identity, in the context of ‘otherness’: of race, ethnicity, and culture. I have come to realize that the concerns that have driven my studio work are essentially the same concerns that drive the sanctuary. Affirmations of identity, subjectivity and agency constitute the core of both the studio and the sanctuary. If I identify as artist—which I do—how do I distinguish what of my work constitutes ‘art’? Truth be told, whether what I do is art or not doesn’t

matter; art is a label that only seems necessary in certain contexts, most of which are not germane to my overall practice. My work with the dogs—our work—critically examines centers and peripheries the way postcolonialism does. The sanctuary is as much my studio as it is my lab. It is also a kennel. In it, I work to advance the ideas that concern me as a person and those beings who share my sphere of personhood.

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Title





En dag när det blåser så att topp-grenarna i träden rör sig
gå ut och hitta ett högt träd med smal stam
Lägg örat tätt intill stammen och lyssna
lyssna intensivt
Tryck hela kroppen tätt intill stammen
vänta
\

vän
\
ta

känn...

kanske känner du stammens tjocka elastiska rörelse

kanske hör du trädtopparnas knirkande

Take off your shoes and socks

Stand barefoot on the ground or on a rock

Feel how it really feels on the soles of your feet

Start walking gently on the ground

Walk until you feel curious of who or what you are touching

Lift
your
finger
and
look
up

Pinpoint a tip of a branch or a leaf

Follow a line slowly downwards

If
you
reach
a
dead
end

decide how to get to a new line

Continue drawing your tree with your finger in the air

all
the way
down
to the roots

Now, make a new drawing,

with another body part



Androcen—Mannen i människans tidsålder ur ett nordiskt perspektiv

Min vän aset. Varje gång jag baxar upp min stora ryggsäck på ryggen inför en fjälltur bävar jag inför den fysiska chocken som kroppen erfar i början av vandrigen. Samtidigt fylls jag av en otrolig frihetskänsla—jag klarar av att bära med sig allt jag behöver för en veckas vistelse i det landskap som präglat mig så starkt sedan barndomen.

Den nya(e) mannen är en tankefigur som har dykt upp med jämna mellanrum från 1970-talet och framåt, med varierande ideal om hur han bör se ut, känna och agera. Ofta handlar det om att han ska bli mer jämställd, bli en fysiskt och mentalt närvarande pappa och delta aktivt i familjelivet, utveckla sitt känsloliv och ta ansvar för sin egen hälsa. Att traditionell maskulinitet och den patriarkala ordningen är problematisk för mäns personliga och sociala utveckling, såväl som för samhällets demokratiska utveckling, har fått mycket uppmärksamhet globalt de senaste årtiondena. Men vilka kopplingar finns det mellan den ekologiska kris vi nu befinner oss i och mäns agerande i världen? Är lösningen till de många utmaningar vi står inför på något sätt relaterad till vilka maskuliniteter som blir tongivande i framtiden?

Som konstnär har jag arbetat med frågor som rör män, faderskap och maskuliniteter i över 20 år. Med maskuliniteter menar jag egenskaper, attityder och beteenden som ofta förknippas med män, men som inte nödvändigtvis är kopplade till ett biologiskt eller upplevt kön. Precis som inom feministisk forskning, finns det olika inriktningar inom maskulinitetsforskning och mansaktivism. Vissa hävdar att det finns ”naturliga” biologiska skillnader mellan könen, och att män och kvinnor ses komplement till varandra. Ett exempel är psykologiprofessorn Jordan B Peterson, som förespråkar vikten av könsskillnad och sexuella hierarkier, och uppmanar män att återta kontrollen i en kaotisk och alltför feminiserad värld. Hans idéer har ytterligare radikaliserats i högerpopulistiska och rasistiska grupperingar, vilka brukar ingå i den sk. ”Manosfären”. Den profeministiska forskningen, ser däremot könsskillnader främst som sociala konstruktioner och fokuserar på likheterna mellan könen. Istället för att tala om könsroller och manlighet, använder de begreppen genus och maskuliniteter. Den mytopoetiska rörelsen är främst en andlig, terapeutisk verksamhet, influerad av Jungianska arketyper. Grupper av män samlas ofta i naturen, och försöker på ett andligt plan få kontakt med en djup, förlorad, förindustriell maskulin identitet. Poeten Robert Bly är här en förgrundsgestalt, och de förespråkar en idealman som ligger någonstans mitt emellan ”Mjukismannen” och ”Machomannen”.¹

Utifrån ett profeministiskt perspektiv, har jag främst intresserat mig för den ”Den heterosexuella vita mannen”, som historiskt sett fått

	Nils Agdler	
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representera hela mänskligheten (i varje fall i västerlandet sedan hundratals, kanske tusentals år tillbaka). Hur kan en få syn på denna ”osynliga” man förklädd till Människan? Vad innebär det att vara CIS-man idag? Behöver män manliga förebilder, eller räcker det med mänskliga förebilder? Det är lätt att se destruktiva aspekter av mäns agerande världen över, men vad är egentligen en god maskulinitet?

Tillsammans med feministiska rörelser på 1970-talet, försökte vissa män hitta former för ”mjukare” maskulinitetsideal, vilket gav upphov till forskning om män som problematiserade den traditionella mansrollen. 80-talet var något av en backlash för feministiskt inspirerade mansrörelser men forskningen började trots det ta fart. Det var då genusforskaren Raewyn Connell lanserade begreppet ”hegemonisk maskulinitet”, som fortfarande är ett centralt begrepp. Hegemonisk maskulinitet eller överordnad maskulinitet uppstår inom grupper av män där idealmännen längst upp i hierarkin är bärare av den hegemoniska eller åtråvärda maskuliniteten. Under dessa finns majoriteten av gruppens män som utgör den delaktiga maskuliniteten. De bär upp och drar nytta av männen i toppen. Längst ner i hierarkin, i den underordnade maskuliniteten, befinner sig de som definieras som omanliga och feminina, bl.a. män med annan sexuell läggning eller identitet. Slutligen finns de marginaliserade männen, vilka befinner sig utanför den hegemoniska maskuliniteten. Det kan vara män av en viss ålder eller en viss etnicitet—de anses överhuvudtaget inte vara män. Det är viktigt att komma ihåg att den hegemoniska maskuliniteten alltid kopplad till en viss kontext och kan variera i uttryck inom olika grupperingar vid olika tidpunkter.²

Författaren och journalisten Susan Faludi reste runt i USA under 1990-talet och intervjuade en mängd män från olika samhällsklasser. I boken ”Ställd—förraderiet mot den moderna mannen” beskriver hon ingående hur vissa mäns situation ser män i det postindustriella samhället. Stora grupper som arbetade inom traditionellt manliga yrken förlorade i slutet av förra seklet sin försörjning, samtidigt som allt fler kvinnor började yrkesarbeta och klara ekonomin på egen hand. Hon intervjuar bl.a. varvs- och flygplansarbetare som blivit av med jobbet, unga kriminella män, amerikanska fotbollsspelare, skådespelare som Sylvester Stallone och män inom porrindustrin. På ett tydligt sätt visar hon hur de traditionella maskulinitetsnormerna lätt skapar en existentiell ångest hos dessa män och hur alla mer eller mindre söker efter fadersgestalter att se upp till.³

Jag var mitt inne i småbarnsåren när jag läste boken i början av 2000-talet. Den blev den en verklig ögonöppnare, den berörde mig starkt på ett djupt känslomässigt plan och satte fingret på

hur allt ställs på sin spets när mannen blir far. Då bestämde jag mig för att på allvar börja arbeta med män och maskuliniteter som ett övergripande konstnärligt och personligt utvecklingsprojekt.

Androcen

Det är lätt att se att det är män, framför allt västerländska män, och speciellt vissa specifika män, som historiskt har givit upphov till den klimatkris vi nu står inför. Inte så konstigt, med tanke på de globala patriarkala strukturer som varit rådande i tusentals år. Samtidigt har även kvinnor dragit nytta av och i viss mån backat upp de män som drivit på den tekniska utvecklingen under industrialismen. En genomsnittlig västerländsk kvinna gör förmodligen ett större ekologiskt avtryck än en genomsnittlig man i ett fattigare land.⁴ Miljöhistorikern Sverker Sörlin diskuterar ingående historien bakom termen **Antropocen** och många alternativa förslag som lanserats av forskare inom olika fält. **Capitalocene**, **Ekonocene**, **Eurocene**, **Chthulucene**, **Anthrobscene** är några av förslagen på engelska.⁵ Jag har dock valt att kalla vår tidsepok **Androcen** (av grekiska andros, ”man” och kainos ’ny”) för att betona vilka som verkligen ställde till det—och fortfarande ställer till det.

I Norden sticker framför allt mäns bilåkande och köttätande ut. Globalt står transporter för cirka 19 procent av den totala energianvändningen och köttproduktionen för cirka 18 procent av alla utsläpp av växthusgaser. Mäns privata transporter i Sverige släpper ut dubbelt så mycket koldioxid som kvinnors. Män kör inte bara längre sträckor, utan köper även större och snabbare bilar som drar mer bränsle. Bakom ratten på en amerikansk pick-up eller en italiensk sportbil sitter oftast en man. Dessutom äter män mer kött än kvinnor, vilket också bidrar till växt-huseffekten.⁶ I Danmark äter män i genomsnitt 139 gram kött per dygn och kvinnor 81 g/dygn.⁷ Som jämförelse är det genomsnittliga köttintaget per dygn i Kina 52 g och i Ghana 10 g.⁸

Det finns förvisso maskulint kodade rörelser som förespråkar vegetarianism och veganism. Självaste Arnold Schwarzenegger har exempelvis kommit ut som 99% vegan och kanske kan han få en del unga män att hoppa på det tåget.⁹

Sörlin skriver i en debattartikel att miljö och klimat är jämställdhetsfrågor: ”Biffen och bilen är männens domän, och de rikas vräkiga SUV:ar är värst. Kvinnor, vars värderingar är grönare än männens, drabbas världen över extra hårt—av bristande kollektivtrafik, av vattenbrist, av rökgifter i köken. Omvänt, där kvinnor får utbildning ökar deras egenmakt och miljön förbättras. Lärdomen är denna: framgångsrik miljöpolitik är ofta välfärdspolitik som samtidigt

Nils Agdler, 1912, på en av sina vandringar i fjällen.

gynnar miljön. Ska den gröna vändningen lyckas även för den långt svårare klimatomställningen krävs mer-än-miljöpolitik”.¹⁰ Och nu måste alltså även mannen välja tåget och ta tofun i sin mun.

Nils Agdler, 1912, på en av sina vandringar i fjällen.

Platskänsla och omsorg

I vårt alltmer individualistiska samhälle styrs många män egennyttan—av vad som kortsiktigt är bäst för en själv och ens familj. Jag tror att det i alla människors inre finns en glidande skala mellan egoistiska och altruistiska värderingar, som styr individers handlande.

Egennyttan är utmärkande i nyliberala, högerpopulistiska och fascistiska ideologier, och män söker sig generellt till grupper som huvudsakligen består av andra män—det som brukar benämnas homosocialitet. Många män som tidigare stod socialdemokratin nära verkar i dag omfamna högerpopulistiska idéer. Lite förenklat tror jag att så länge ”folkhemmet” levererade i form av ständigt ökande materiell välfärd och trygga anställningar, kunde många acceptera ett visst mått av kollektivt tänkande, men när tryggheten urholkades allt mer i slutet av förra seklet och nyliberala tankegångar fick genomslag, ökade egenintresset och högerpopulismen vann större mark.

Hur får vi människor och speciellt män att bli mer ödmjuka och respektera allt levande i vår omvärld? Filosofen, bergsklättraren Arne Næss (1912–2009) är upphovsmannen till ekosofin/djupekologin. Næss ekosofi eller djupekologi definieras av en helhetssyn som kräver att en tar hänsyn till den ekologiska kris som hotar. Han skiljer på den ”grunda ekologin”, som med hjälp av naturvetenskapliga ”fakta” letar efter lösningar här och nu med ett fokus på miljöförstöring och utarmning av naturresurser, och ”djupekologin”. Den senare utgår från vårt varande i världen och tillmäter allt liv ett egenvärde. Livskvalitet måste sättas före det överdrivna fokuset på hög levnadsstandard. I en föreläsning från 1972 ställer han upp sju grundprinciper för det djupekologiska synsättet.¹¹ Han menar att vi måste ersätta bilden av ”människan i miljön” med en vidare bild som visar hur in-trikat relationen mellan människa och miljö är—om det ena förändras, förändras även det andra. Ekologisk jämlikhet innebär en icke-hierarkisk och djup vördnad för allt levande och alla arters rätt att leva och blomstra. Inte bara människan behöver ett visst fysiskt utrymme för att må bra, utan detta gäller även alla djur. Principen om mångfald och symbios innebär att ”den starkes överlevnad” tolkas som förmågan att samexistera och samarbeta—”Leva och låta leva” är en mer kraftfull ekologisk princip än ”antingen du eller jag”. Djupekologin strävar

Nils Agdler, 1912, på en av sina vandringar i fjällen.

mot att utjämna klasskillnader mellan individer och nationer och främjar kampen mot miljöförstöring och resursslöseri, med en helhetsanalys av vilka konsekvenser detta får på olika nivåer.

Med principen om komplexitet i stället för komplikation menar Næss att vi måste vara medvetna om vår okunskap om de extremt komplexa system som samverkar i biosfären, och vara öppna för att lära oss mer om hur dessa system hänger ihop. För individen handlar det om att variera olika typer av praktiska och intellektuella sysslor, både i stadsmiljöer och i mindre befolkade miljöer. Det viktiga är att hen är aktiv och att arbetet är integrerat i hela människan. Principen gynnar mjuk teknik och ”mjuk framtidforskning”, mindre prognoser och mer förtydligande av möjligheter. Mer känslighet för kontinuitet och levande traditioner, och—viktigast av allt—mot vårt tillstånd av okunnighet.

I den sista principen framhåller han vikten av lokalt självstyre och decentralisering. Sårbarheten för olika livsformer är grovt sett proportionell mot påverkan utifrån, utanför det lokala området där livsformen lever i ekologisk jämvikt. Problemen med miljöförstöring, som även inkluderar global uppvärmning och återvinning av olika material (om materialet måste fraktas långt), minskar också av ökat lokalt självstyre, eftersom det markant reducerar energiförbrukningen, tex. genom minskad import med lokal produktion av mat, byggmaterial och energi, samt minskat resande när arbetskraft kan rekryteras lokalt. Næss menar att den hierarkiska beslutskedjan i världen bör reduceras till att bara innefatta den globala, nationella och lokala nivån. Många lokala initiativ riskerar att inte beaktas om beslutskedjan är för lång.

Jag växte upp på Frösön i Jämtland, en bergig ö i Storsjön med vidunderlig utsikt över fjällvärlden, skogar och kulturlandskap. 10 mil västerut låg familjens torp vid Indalsälven i Åre. Här gjorde jag från tidig ålder många utfärder till fots och på skidor, och fjällmiljön kom att prägla mig starkt. Redan i sjuårsåldern började jag fotografera, påhejad av framför allt min far som var en hängiven amatörfotograf med ett stort naturintresse. Makrofotografering var min grej—jag älskade magin som uppstod när små detaljer blåstes upp på duken med hjälp av diaprojektorn. Att kategorisera och artbestämma djur och växter var inte så intressant, utan jag lockades mer av naturens former och fotografins tekniska aspekter. Fågelfotografering var också spännande, dels att betrakta deras beteende och dels att smyga så nära som möjligt med teleobjektivet utan att skrämma iväg fågeln. Varje sommar åkte familjen på husvagnssemester söderut, antingen längs öst- eller västkusten, och vi gjorde ofta avstickare ut till fågelöar i både Norge och Sverige. När jag var 11 och 13 år gjorde jag två

tjugomilavandringar i Sareks och Padjelantas nationalparker tillsammans med mina äldre syskon. Dessa vandringar gjorde starkt intryck på mig och har haft stor betydelse för min fortsatta utveckling. I 20-årsåldern gjorde jag också flera längre skid- och cykelturer i fjällen och på Island.

Ungefär 20 mil öster om Bergen i Norge breder den fyra mil långa bergskedjan Hallingskarvet ut sig. Næss skriver 1992 att ”Det förbluffande, majestätiska Hallingskarvet fångade min fantasi från femårsåldern, när jag på påskarna och somrarna bodde i en stuga i Ustaoset, en liten by ungefär 8 km ifrån det mytiska berget där jag hittade min plats”.¹² 1938 hade han byggt färdigt sin stuga på 1 500 meter höjd i närheten av Tvergasteintjärnen. Stugan saknar el, allt mat måste bäras dit och där råder närmast arktiska förhållanden. Han var tvungen att gå en bit för att hämta vatten och var mycket noga med att bara gå på stenarna runt stugan för att inte förstöra den känsliga växtligheten. Han skriver, att när han byggde stugan var hans önskan att bli en del av fjället. Inte bara att vara på besök, utan att bli en granne som hörde hemma där. Här upplevde han sig själv helt och fullt och skilde inte så skarpt på sig själv, stugan och vegetationen.¹³ Han brukade vara i Tvergastein ungefär tre månader per år och skrev där merparten av sina böcker. Sammanlagt bodde han i stugan under 14 år av sitt liv.¹⁴

Næss skriver att platskänslan är en viktig aspekt i den djupekologiska inställningen. Många har starka, positiva känslor för platser där de känner att de hör hemma. ”Idag försöker många inom den djupekologiska rörelsen stimulera känslan för det område eller region de själva lever i. De försöker också väcka sådana känslor hos nästa generation. Detta kallar vi bioregionalism”.¹⁵ I en värld där vi översköljs av mycket negativ information är det lätt att känna en hopplöshet. Därför tror jag, att det är mycket viktigt att barn tidigt får naturupplevelser och knyter an till allt liv som existerar på platsen de växer upp, oavsett om det är en park eller ett fjällandskap. Næss menar också att **glöd** är det viktigaste i en människas liv. En stark glöd kan leda till en hög trivselnivå, trots att det kroppsliga och själsliga lidandet är stort.¹⁶

Næss menar att varje människa måste formulera sin egen ekosofi, sin unika kärlek till jorden, vilken för med sig ett värdetänkande och klarare medvetande om egna normer och känslor. Han kallar sin ekosofi för ”ekosofi T” efter stugan Tvergastein. Han skriver att fundamentala behov är de som upprätthåller livet, medan vitala behov handlar om det som ger livet dess djupaste mening. Ett bra slagord är ” Utvidgad omsorg för andra än människorna, fördjupad omsorg om alla människor”. Omsorg om allt levande innebär alltså inte mindre omsorg om människorna. Med

Nils Agdler, 1912, på en av sina vandringar i fjällen.

utgångspunkt i filosofen Baruch Spinoza menar han att det är möjligt att utvidga omsorgen, stärka den och odla den.¹⁷

Omsorg verkar vara något som många män har svårt med. Även om uttrycket ”ensam är stark” kan tyckas daterat upplever jag fortfarande att pojkar socialiseras in i föreställningar, där det viktigaste är att kunna klara sig själv och att slippa be om hjälp, t.ex. att inte gå till en läkare även om man är sjuk (gäller i ännu högre grad vid psykiska besvär)¹⁸. Det kan fungera när det gäller de fundamentala behoven som Næss pratar om, men när det gäller de vitala behoven, tror jag att förmågan att känna omsorg är avgörande—om sig själv, andra människor och det icke-mänskliga. Jag arbetar själv deltid inom omsorgen och tycker att det är sorgligt att så få män söker sig till yrket, för jag tror verkligen att det skulle kunna ge flertalet män viktiga insikter. Tyvärr är det nog svårt att få in fler män i branschen när lönerna är så låga, eftersom hög lön och hög status ofta är viktigt när män väljer yrke. Enligt jämställdhetsexperten Ingemar Gens finns det fler orsaker, främst att många män har svårt med ”kvinnoyrken” p.g.a. den ”feminina kulturen” som råder där¹⁹. För mig är det snarare en befrielse att slippa all positionering i ett hierarkiskt system och de fåordiga konversationerna som råder på många mansdominerade arbetsplatser. En någorlunda jämn könsfördelning tror jag dock är det optimala inom de flesta yrken.

Nils Agdler, 1912, på en av sina vandringar i fjällen.

Ekofeminism och ekologiska maskuliniteter

Finns det skillnader på hur kvinnor och män ser på naturen? Omsorg om människor, allt levande och jorden i sig, har också varit en viktig del av den ekofeministiska rörelsen, vilken lanserades av Francois D’Aubonne på 1970-talet. Enligt Heidi Hutner syftar ekofeminismen till att eliminera de ”parallella” formerna av förtryck av både kvinnor och natur. Rörelsen arbetar aktivt mot patriarkala och kapitalistiska system som leder till dominans och exploatering, samt mot hierarkiskt och dualistisk tänkande. Ekofeministerna ser alla former av förtryck som oacceptabelt, även sådant som är grundat i rasism, etnicitet, ålder, klass, funktionsvariationer, heterosexuella normer och religion. Allt biologiskt liv ses som jämlikt, där människan bara är en del av ett sammanlänkat levande nätverk. Några tidiga ekofeminister ansåg att kvinnor hade medfödda egenskaper som gjorde att de stod ”närmare” naturen, både i praktiken och på ett andligt plan, och därför på ett ”naturligt” sätt skyddade den från exploatering. Idag tar dock de flesta avstånd från denna typ av essensialism, och menar att den istället förstärker de könsstereotypa föreställningar som dagens ekofeminister försöker

Nils Agdler, 1912, på en av sina vandringar i fjällen.

komma bort ifrån. Miljöförstöring är den primära frågan som ekofeminister arbetar med, men de anser att alla former av förtryck är sammankopplade.²⁰

Under det senaste årtiondet har ett forskningsfält som kallas ekomaskulinitet eller ”ekologiska maskuliniteter” vuxit fram. Forskarna har tagit intryck av bl.a. Raewyn Connells profeministiska teorier inom maskulinitetsforskningen, Arne Næss djupekologi och dagens miljöpolitik. Ekofeministen Greta Gaard har också varit en stor inspirationskälla. Miljö- och maskulinitetsforskarna Martin Hultman och Paul M. Pulé har genom empiriska studier identifierat tre typer av maskuliniteter i relation till miljöpolitik.²¹ I en masteruppsats i internationella relationer vid Stockholms universitet sammanfattar miljökon-sulten Robin Hedenqvist dessa typer²²:

1. Maskuliniteter där män identifierar sig med tillverkningsindustrin (både arbetare på golvet och tjänstemän) och rollen som familjeförsörjare (Industrial/Breadwinner Masculinities). Dessa motsvarar de traditionella hegemoniska och patriarkala normer som det industriella samhället har skapat. Normerna samverkar också med förnekandet av människans påverkan på klimatet och bidrar starkt till likgiltigheten inför planetens välfärd. Författaren Björn Wiman uttrycker liknande åsikter: ”Alla som har engagerat sig i klimatfrågan om den globala uppvärmningen vet att klimatskeptikern eller—förnekaren i 99 fall av 100 är en man. Det är den västerländska manlighetens identitet och privilegier som hotas av uppoffringar som krävs för en hållbar utveckling”.²³

2. ”Ekomoderna maskuliniteter” är den andra typen som identifierats i förhållande till miljöpolitik. Ekomoderna maskuliniteter tar hänsyn till ekologisk modernisering—ett politiskt fält som uppstod under 1980-talet, ur konflikten mellan industriella ekonomiska tillväxtintres-sen och miljörörelsens oro för ökade miljöhot. Termen ”ekomodern” syftade till att lösa dessa meningsskiljaktigheter genom att presentera den ekonomiska tillväxten, baserad på tekniska lösningar, som en grundförutsättning för att minska vår ekologiska påverkan, härrör från de antropocentriska perspektiven och försummelsen av allt livs inneboende värde. Dessutom saknas fokus på sociala ojämlikheter. Missnöjet hos arbetarklassfamiljer är en av huvudorsakerna till framgångarna för de nationalistiska, populistiska och nazistiska

rörelserna som tydligt kan ses i hela västvärlden de senaste åren.²⁴ Det är uppenbart att de ekomoderna maskuliniteternas ensidiga fokus på tekniska lösningar har fortsatt främja ekonomiska intressen framför ekologiskt och socialt välbefinnande. Således, trots ökad klimatmedvetenhet, fortgår manlig dominans över andra människor och de icke-mänskliga i naturen. Det pekar på behovet av maskulina sociala sammanhang, där djupare och bredare svar på sociala och miljömässiga utmaningar prioriteras.²⁵ Liknande tankegångar har Ingemar Gens, när han talar om kvinnor och makt. ”Att kvinnor tar över är redan en världstrend, men det förskräckliga i den trenden är att det sker via en maskulinisering av kvinnor—det vi kallar jämställdhet! Det gör att bara att jorden går under fortare.” Hans tanke 20 år tidigare var att kvinnor i maktpositioner skulle göra motstånd mot det maskulina samhället, att ta ansvar för allas välbefinnande skulle bli viktigare och att relationer skulle överskugga materiell tillväxt.²⁶

3. ”Ekologiska maskuliniteter” är den tredje typen som identifierats i förhållande till miljöpolitik. Hultman och Pulé hävdar att det är viktigt att omvandla det socio-politiska landskapet i det industrialiserade västerlandet—från hegemonisering till ekologisering. Målet är att avnormalisera nuvarande hegemoniska maskuliniteter och normalisera ekologiska maskuliniteter. (Vilket, om det lyckas, inte skulle göra ekologiska maskuliniteter till det nya hegemoniska, eftersom dessa idéer inte bygger på dominans). Mänsklig ekologisering som en transformativ process främjar strukturell och personlig förändring i riktning mot omsorg om vår gemensamma miljö. “Ekologisk” används både vetenskapligt (t.ex. för att studera hur organismer interagerar med varandra i olika ekosystem) och socio-politiskt (t.ex. i en rörelse som undersöker de komplexa relationer som ligger till grund för skyddet och bevarandet av jordens levande system). Målet är att omstrukturera maskuliniteter och män mot mer social och miljömässig rättvisa, i riktning mot en djup grön framtid, där människors och andra livsformers inbördes relationer verkligen erkänns.²⁷

Ekofeministen Greta Gaard hävdar, att eftersom de flesta industriella, kapitalistiska kulturer har formats av patriarkat, måste s.k. ekomaskuliniteter upptäcka och och göra motstånd mot den industriella kapitalismens identitetsskapande ekonomiska strukturer. Ekomaskuliniteter måste motarbeta de ekonomiska strukturer som agerar utifrån hierarkier baserade på genus/klass/ras/kön/sexualitet/funktion/ålder/art och strukturerans inneboende krav på evig produktion, arbete, konkurrens och prestanda. Ekomaskuliniteter kan—utifrån det ekofeministiska tankesättet—inte bara gå bortom uppdel-



Fig. 28-31







Fig. 32-35





En pojke som bor i ett familjehem i ett förorten utanför Stockholm.

Från pojke till man

En pojke som bor i ett familjehem i ett förorten utanför Stockholm.

Jag bor nära en fin sjö med rikt fågelliv, klart vatten och branta klippor. Det är ett mycket uppskattat område på sommaren och klipporna lockar framför allt till sig pojkar och unga män som bor i närområdet. Här kan de visa sitt mod inför kamraterna och utföra mer eller mindre avancerade trick när de kastar sig ut från de höga klipporna. Ingemar Gens skriver att de centrala attributen för män i tonåren är styrka, mod, våld, dådkraft och tävlan. ”Kanske kan man säga att det här är den allra mest våghal-siga tiden i unga pojkar liv. En riktigt ung man ska dyka från femman, åka snowboard i skogen, klättra i de allra högsta bergen och helst av allt bli fjälljägare i det militära. Att köra för fort är förväntat och försäkringsbolagen har högre premier för män under tjugofyra år”.⁴⁶ Det finns säkert en genuin känsla av samhö- righet mellan pojkarna, men jag hör också hur de äldre hetsar de yngre att hoppa från allt hö- gre klippor. Ett stort problem är allt avfall som lämnas kvar på klipporna, och det verkar inte bara vara unga män som lämnar saker kvar. Jag har hittat mängder av PET-flaskor, burkar och glasflaskor (av någon outgrundlig anledning är de ofta inte urdruckna, vilket myror inte är sena att utnyttja). Andra fynd är handdukar, papp- och plastförpackningar, ett par parfymerade hörlurar och en använd kondom.

Hur kan attityderna förändras så att män och kvinnor som bevisligen tycker om att vistas i naturområdet, också tar med sig avfallet hem? Kan Næss idéer om att öka platskänslan vara något som förändrar beteendet? Vems ansvar är det då att förmedla känslan för platsen?

En annan fråga är hur det går till när ett patriarkalt samhälle gör män av pojkar. Ingemar Gens har, med utgångspunkt i sin egen uppväxt och sin erfarenhet som jämställdhetsexpert vid förskolor, reflekterat över hur fundamentalt olika vår uppfostran av pojkar och flickor är, vilket bidrar till att upprätthålla den maskulina världsordningen. Under hans uppväxt i en Stockholmsförort på 1950-talet uppfostrades pojkar till största delen av äldre pojkar i samma bostadsom- råde. Medan flickorna ofta lekte i par inomhus nära modern, befann sig pojkarna utomhus och umgicks i större grupper av enbart pojkar. De äldre pojkarna såg till att de yngre skolades in ett hierarkiskt system med traditionella maskulina värderingar, där det var viktigt att hela tiden vara djärv och utmana sina rädslor för att klättra uppåt på statusstegen. Även om den yttre miljön har förändrats sedan dess, menar Gens att pojkar i hög grad fortfarande får klara sig själva, utan vuxnas inblandning.⁴⁷

I mitten av 1990-talet initierade Gens ett projekt inom förskolan för att skapa en mer ge-

nusmedveten pedagogik. Han fann att den över- vägande kvinnliga personalen pratade mycket mindre med pojkarna och förmanade dem mer än flickorna.⁴⁸ En vanlig uppfattning bland pe- dagogerna, var att pojkar ”är som de är”. Men när de började prata och lyssna på pojkarna, dvs. behandla dem som de behandlade flickorna, för- bättrade pojkarna snabbt sina verbala förmågor och hade inte alls lika bråttom att komma ut och leka. Gens menar att bara pojkarna är verbalt nåbara, kommer alla klassiska skolbekymmer att försvinna. Lärarna kan ägna sig åt undervisning och flickorna behöver inte ödsla kraft på att lugna ner pojkarna. Han återkommer gång på gång till att det är de vuxnas och samhällets förväntningar som styr barnens utveckling. En flicka förväntas vara lydig. Hennes olydnad behöver bara vara en bråkdel av en ”normal” pojkes för att hon ska framställas som ett monster.⁴⁹

Det finns viss biologisk forskning som visar att det är en markant större variation i hjärnstor- lek mellan olika män än mellan olika kvinnor. En möjlig förklaring kan vara att de två X-kromo- somerna hos kvinnor också ger ett skydd mot mutationer. Blir det fel på den ena kan den andra ta över.⁵⁰ Vi låter gärna pojkar bli specialister, och det är egentligen inget dåligt att människor blir väldigt kunniga inom ett område, men ofta fördjupar sig pojkar i ämnen som traditionellt förknippas med män. Frågan är då vad det är som pojkar **inte** lär sig när de grottar ned sig i något, och hur det påverkar deras helhetsperspektiv och relationerna till omgivningen. Gens menar att pedagogiken måste vara kompensatorisk för att skapa hela människor. Om det nu är så att pojkar och män har en större genetisk variation, visar det i ännu högre grad hur viktigt det är att tidigt stötta individen inom områden där hen har svårigheter.

Hultman och Pulé menar att västerländska maskulinitetsnormer förordar en logisk problem- lösarmentalitet, en tro på ekonomisk rationalism och teknologiska lösningar. En tävlingsinriktad och individualistisk ”jag fixar det här”-menta- litet premieras på bekostnad av känslor och in- tuition.⁵¹ Pojkarna socialiseras till att bli ”görare (doings)”, redo att uppfylla rollen som beskyd- dare och försörjare, men bortkopplade från deras ”varande (being-ness)”⁵².

Att trycka ned känslor i allmänhet, och i synnerhet de som associeras med femininitet, är centralt i den traditionella hegemoniska masku- liniteten. Rädslan för att visa sig ”svag” leder till en hård självkontroll som drabbar både individen, övriga människor och de icke-mänskliga.

Jag menar att det är avgörande, att män redan i tidig ålder lär sig förmågan att reflektera över sina egna känsloliv. Alla män, bör så tidigt i livet som möjligt, få psykologiskt stöd i att förstå den hegemoniska maskulinitetens inne-

boende konflikter på ett personligt plan. Næss menar att naturen kan hjälpa oss att komma i kontakt med våra passiva (negativa) känslor, som hat, arrogans och missunnsamhet.⁵³ Speci- ellt i de formativa åren mellan 5 och 15 år är det viktigt att hänge sig åt aktiva (positiva) käns- lor. Gens menar att frånvaron av en aktiv och positiv fostran av pojkar leder till en destruktiv maskulinitet hos många män. ”Det är svårt att veta hur man ska bemöta män som uppenbart tycker om våld. Kanske enda sättet är att visa kärlek på något sätt”.⁵⁴

Den militära värnplikten ses av många som en övergångsrit i vilken pojkar blir män. Vad skulle hända om allmän värnplikt kombinera- des med eller ersattes av ”allmän omsorgsplikt” inom (natur)vårdande institutioner? Det skulle kunna vara en bra förberedelse inför ett kom- mande faderskap. Forskning visar att män som tidigt är involverade i sina barns uppfostran lever mer jämställt i sina relationer, har svårare att ta till våld och ofta mår bättre genom hela livet.⁵⁵

Den nya mannen

Den nya mannen

I filmen ”Den nya mannen” dyker det i ena hör- net upp en liten krypande figur i ett snötäckt landskap. Han är naken, och när han närmar sig kameran, rätar han på sig alltmer men faller ner i en grop igen innan han rödhudad försvinner ur bild. Människan, eller mer specifikt mannen som biologisk varelse, totalt skyddslos och oanpassad till att leva i en arktisk miljö. Om inte människ- ans hjärna hade utvecklats i så hög grad under evolutionen, skulle vi inte ha kunnat befolka hela planeten. Kanske en banal tanke, men kläderna gör verkligen mannen (och kvinnan)—något jag bokstavligen upplevde in på bara skinnet.

Vilka vägar finns då för män mot en mer hållbar framtid? Idéhistorikern och genusvetaren Helena Hill har studerat den på vissa sätt radi- kala svenska mansrörelsen Befria mannen.⁵⁶ Den uppstod 1974 som ett löst sammansatt nätverk och blev 1978 en förening med bas i Stockholm, för att i mitten av 1980-talet upplösas i sin ur- sprungliga form. Medlemmarna ordnade manslä- ger och seminarier i samarbete med RFSU, vilka fick relativt stor uppmärksamhet i media, trots att föreningen bara hade 100–130 medlemmar. De tog avstånd från rådande maskulinitetsnor- mer och ville tillsammans med kvinnorörelsen verka mot kvinnoförtryck och förändra ”den traditionella mansrollen”. Även om de hävdade att könsnormer gjorde män emotionellt under- lägsna, underströk de samtidigt att kvinnor var patriarkatets största förlorare. Normerna ansågs vara förtryckande och destruktiva och skapa känslomässigt stumma män, oförmögna till intimitet. Befria mannen ville istället föra

in alternativa ideal och bejaka värderingar som ofta sågs som feminina. Det privata ansågs vara politiskt, och rörelsen menade att en förändring på det personliga planet, i förlängningen även bidrog till att hela samhället förändrades.⁵⁷

Det första manslägret hölls sommaren 1977 på Ångsholmen i Stockholms skärgård och sam- lade 60 män med olika bakgrund. Vid lägren be- tonades det inre och det ”lilla” livet. De innehöll föreläsningar om mansrollen, gruppdiskussioner om barnuppfostran, samt gemensamma avslapp- nings- och kontaktövningar. Dessa terapeutiska övningar skulle öka mäns medvetenhet och fri- göra dem från bindningen till en destruktiv mas- kulinitet. Deltagarna fick ta på varandra på sätt som män normalt inte gjorde. Även homosexuella män var inbjudna, och gruppen ansåg att dessa män hade mycket att tillföra. Ibland var även männens barn med på lägren.

1979 besökte journalisten och västerdebat- tören Jan Guillou ett mansläger och skrev sedan en artikel i FIB/Kulturfront, som fick stort ge- nomslag i media. Där kallade han deltagarna för ”velourmän” och ”mjukispappor” som mest av allt ville ”smeka folk i stjärten”—han ansåg helt enkelt att deltagarna var omanliga, vilket enligt honom var förskräckligt.⁵⁸ Befria mannen var i huvudsak vänsterorienterad och att rörelsen fick massiv kritik från det egna hållet skapade förvirring bland medlemmarna.⁵⁹ På 80-talet började nya politiska vindar blåsa och nylibe- rala värderingar vann alltmer terräng. Detta fick stor inverkan i synen på Befria mannen och föreningen började ta avstånd från vissa tidigare principer. Istället för att fortsätta försöka re- formera eller göra sig av med ”den traditionella mansrollen” började Befria mannen i mitten av 80-talet snarare betona ett återupprättande av manligheten. Mansrörelsen gick, som Helena Hill uttryckt det, från att framhålla rätten att vara mänsklig till rätten att vara manlig. Från att ha sett manlighet som en socialt påtvingad roll påbörjades nu också sökandet efter en sann könsidentitet i mannens inre djup.⁶⁰

Helena Hill menar ändå att vissa av Befria mannens idéer fick genomslag på politisk nivå (med fortsatta reformer för ökad jämställdhet) såväl som kulturellt (större acceptans av män som tog hand om hushåll och barn). Däremot ställer hon sig frågande till hur mycket som har förändrats inom mäns känslomässiga sfär.⁶¹

Ingemar Gens funderar också över hur en framtida ny man kan se ut. Det finns tecken på en manlighet som saknar den klassiska masku- lina ”driven”, män som tycker att det är bra som det är. Han är förnöjsam, stretar inte på, kan ta vilket arbete som helst och lönearbetar så få timmar som möjligt. Gens skriver att: ”En sådan utveckling skulle förstås inte bara utmana hela den maskulina idén, den skulle äventyra hela

Nils Agdler

in alternativa ideal och bejaka värderingar som ofta sågs som feminina. Det privata ansågs vara politiskt, och rörelsen menade att en förändring på det personliga planet, i förlängningen även bidrog till att hela samhället förändrades.⁵⁷

Det första manslägret hölls sommaren 1977 på Ångsholmen i Stockholms skärgård och sam- lade 60 män med olika bakgrund. Vid lägren be- tonades det inre och det ”lilla” livet. De innehöll föreläsningar om mansrollen, gruppdiskussioner om barnuppfostran, samt gemensamma avslapp- nings- och kontaktövningar. Dessa terapeutiska övningar skulle öka mäns medvetenhet och fri- göra dem från bindningen till en destruktiv mas- kulinitet. Deltagarna fick ta på varandra på sätt som män normalt inte gjorde. Även homosexuella män var inbjudna, och gruppen ansåg att dessa män hade mycket att tillföra. Ibland var även männens barn med på lägren.

Miljökonsulten Robin Hedenqvist genom- förde 2020 fältstudier och djupintervjuer med några av deltagarna, med utgångspunkt i en masteruppsats i internationella relationer vid Stockholms universitet. En grundtanke bland deltagarna är att den globala ekologiska krisen är ett resultat av en ”övergreppskultur”, som bygger på strukturer av manlig dominans. Män har i hög grad fjärmat sig från det icke-mänskliga och övergreppskulturen rättfärdigar exploateringen av naturen (vilket liknar ekofeministiska tanke- gångar). Han skriver att de reflekterande grup- perna erbjöd en plats för att öva på sårbarhet, relationsbyggande och lyhördhet—något som sällan uppstår i andra sammanhang på grund av den hegemoniska maskulina socialiseringen, som uppmuntrar till tuffhet och autonomi (vilket leder till att känslor och det relationella trycks ned). Vissa deltagare menar att de har uppnått en större “kontaktmedvetenhet”, eller en känsla för hur allt och alla är sammankopplat i naturen. Detta kan beskrivas som en djupare känslomässig och fysisk koppling till naturen, som uppmuntrar till omsorg om planeten och som kan motverka det ekologiska förfallet.⁶⁴

Vilket genomslag deltagarnas insikter får på samhället i stort återstår att se, men dessa män— om de lever som de lär—tror jag kan fungera som goda förebilder för andra män och pojkar.

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Framtiden

Jag tror det är farligt när fiktion eller dramati- serade mentala tillstånd flyter samman med den fysiska verklighet människor befinner sig i. Björn Wiman skriver mycket om den den kraft olika do- medagsprofetior har, som ofta innehåller bibliska referenser, och den uppgivenhet detta leder till hos många människor. Han citerar litteraturveta- ren Fredric Jameson, som skriver att människan tycks ha lättare att förstålla sig världens under- gång än ett annat socioekonomiskt system.⁶⁵ I

likhet med Sverker Sörlin och flera andra fors- kare, anser Wiman att tanken på ”människans tidsålder” inte bara bär på ett hot utan också ett löfte. ”Vad den nya epoken förbinder oss till är en radikal tro på förnuftet och ännu ett stort språng i mänsklighetens tankeutveckling och självförståelse. En ny upplysning? Varken mer eller mindre”.⁶⁶ Till det vill jag (och Næss) lägga till känslornas avgörande betydelse för att kunna realisera en ny upplysning.

Gens farhåga är att det maskulina samhäl- let består, trots att kvinnor får mer makt i sam- hället. Han slutar ändå inte att tro på en bättre framtid: ” Tänk om de nya kvinnliga ledarna blir obekväma, kommer ihåg sitt arv och börjar styra i en annan klassiskt feminin riktning? Tänk om männen tröttnar på sin ständiga kamp mot det maximalt maskulina? Tänk om de plötsligt säger: ”Det räcker nu. Jag orkar inte mer.” Vem vet?”.⁶⁷

Jag finner Arne Næss inspirerade, för att han visar att det som man (och människa) är möj- ligt att vara både intellektuellt och djupt käns- lomässigt engagerad. Med sin ekosofi försökte han motverka det dualistiska tänkandet som är så djupt rotat i vår västerländska kultur. Han förespråkade förnuft och känsla, det individuella och det universella, samt subjekt och objekt. En helhetsyn på tillvaron som är så frånvarande i många mäns liv. Alla som ser problemen måste verka för en radikal förändring av beteenden, at- tityder och berättelser om oss själva. Det behövs en kritisk massa av människor som agerar för en omställning till en sociopolitisk och ekologiskt hållbar värld.

Kanske måste våra nuvarande maskulinite- ter ersättas med post-maskuliniteter, i stil med hur post-humanismen har vidgat humanismen. Eller kanske måste vi ersätta termerna ”masku- linitet” och ”manlighet” samt ”femininitet” och ”kvinnlighet”, med icke-könskodade termer som benämning av olika karaktärsdrag. Män måste tillåtas att känna och uttrycka känslor som rädsla och svaghet, och sluta dyrka dessa ”starka” män (det senare gäller även kvinnor). Tänk om alla barn fick lära sig både maskulint och feminint kodade sysslor, att hantera och prata om alla typer av känslor och att tidigt skapa en känsl- omässig relation till naturen och till allt levande. Næss skriver att känslor kan skapa motivation till förändring. ”Ord har ofta svårt att inspirera, för det måste vara ord som griper rätt in i känsl- olivet—ord direkt från hjärtat, rätt och slätt. Att hitta ”känslan” eller tonen i våra liv blir mycket viktigt för att få motivation till förändring i dju- pekologisk riktning”.⁶⁸ Och gå på djupet måste både kvinnor och män.

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- ↑ ”Biography of Arne Naess,” Open Air Philosophy, läst 22 nov 2021, https://openairphilosophy.org/arne-naess/.
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Androcen—The Man in the Human Age, from a Nordic Perspective

Exploring the role of the modern man in a time where the climate crisis is at our doorstep, Nils Agdler’s essay offersthoughts andtheories of gender, upbringing, language and caregiving in relation to the natural worldand addresses the challenges we need to overcome in order to continue living in it.

Agdler grew up among the forests and mountains of northern Sweden, and began contemplating his relation to naturefrom an early age. He started documenting flora and fauna with his camera at 7 years, and has ever since been fascinated by capturing his surroundings in pictures and on film. But he did not only experience nature from behind the lens—the lifestyle of his family and friends included yearly camping trips and long hikes, of which his two twenty-kilometer mountain treks with his older siblings were especially meaningful to him.

Being both a friend of the natural world as well as an artist who frequently draws upon it in his works, Agdler attempts to bring together the ideas of a number of prominentthinkers who all have something to say about masculine ideals and ways of life, and how they relate to nature.

Regularly featured in the essay is Arne Næss, a Norwegian philosopher and creator of the “deep ecology”theory. In contrast towhat he calls“shallow ecology” —focused onnatural science-basedsolutions to specific ecological problems, his deep ecology emphasizes the intricate and symbiotic relationship between the human and her environment. All life on earth has an inherent value, and Næss indorses an“ecologically equal” society, where the ideal of the “human in nature”is replaced by a non-hierarchical respect for alliving things.

Deep ecology offers a way of existing in and seeing nature that draws upon each individual’sconnectiontonatural environments in their vicinity which has particular emotional and sentimental value tothemselves—Næss calls this “bioregionalism”.Discoveringthis “passion” towards and care for nature which is personal, allows us to be moreconsiderateand empathic in our relationship with nature on the whole, as well as in that with other humans. Agdler presents this idea of consideration or “care” as something many men today struggle with, and consider it one of the most important causesfor denial of and disinterest in the climate crisis.

Discussing the ideaof care from another perspective, Agdler discussedit as an essential featureinthe ecofeminism theory, which originated in the 1970s with the objective of eliminating the “parallel” oppressions against women and nature. As a complement to this stands the modern research field of “ecomasculinity”, to which Raewyn Connells, ecofeminist Greta Gaard, as well

Arne Næss has been important influences. According to researchersMartin Hultman and Paul M. Pulé, promoting ecological masculine ideals (for example based on Næss’s ideals of planetary and social empathy) isnot only relevant when discussingindividual standards-theyshouldalso be related to our societal structures. Ecologicallyconscious masculinitiescan be used to break down hegemonic structures that dominate the industrial western world, and provide an importantbuilding blockin creating a society where consideration of our environment becomes the norm.

As both an artist and someone frequently hikes and skisin Åre, Sweden’s most popular destination for alpine vacations, Agdler also considers the way we behave when we are in nature. His interest in pure nature photography waned in his teenage years, as he started to find it two-dimensional compared to the joy of taking in the environment with all his senses. He ponders the difference between concurrence-inspired outdoor activities (sports) and non-concurrence outdoor life(for example hiking or camping), and finds, in line with Næss, this distinction important. Outdoor sports demands focus onphysical performance and does not necessarily increase ecological awarenessin the way that peacefully being in nature does. He laments the exploitation of Åre’s mountains and forests in favor of new slopes, bike and ski tracks and vacation rentals, andworries it will hurt the sensitive nature irreversibly.

Can the words and pictures we use to describe nature influence how we (and especially men) behave in relation to it? In many cultures, the earth is considered feminine, and Agdler finds this onepossible explanation tomen’slegitimized exploitationof both nature and of women. He presents the theories of ecolvingist Aran Stibbe, who notes that many of Darwin’s militaristic and masculine metaphors, such as“the great battle of life” and “war of nature”, are found in discourse throughout history as well as to this day. This way of talking about naturecould reinforce ideals of selfishness and competition rather than cooperation for mutual benefit.

Agdler considers it imperative to introduce men to ideals of reflection, discussion and caregiving already at a young age. Studies from kindergartensin the 1990s has showed clear differences in the way boys and girls are treated by the pedagogues, who talked much less with the boys than they did with the girls. When the pedagogueswere asked to treat the children exactly the same, they boys’ verbal skills improved rapidly and they became less rushed in their play. On the basis of this,along with other pedagogical studies, Agdler argues that we must encourage boys to express and reflect upon their feelings as part of their education. He posits introducing a compulsory “caregiving” module as part of the national military service, which could provide young men with a solid groundwork to build upon in their later parenting.

But what masculine ideals does future hold? Who is the new man? Arne Næss demonstrates a masculinity built upon the ideal of being both intellectuallyand emotionally engaged—of being non-dualistic and seeing both the individual and the universal, the subject and the object—which Agdler is deeply inspired by. He suggests that we might have to move away from the current associations we have with “masculinity” and “femininity”, emphasize every human’s rightto express emotions like fear and weakness, and stop worshipping the “strong”. Both men and women haveto look deep into themselves to find the way forward—towards a sustainable relationship with nature and with our fellow humans.

Anna Risell

Den klippiga avgrunden är ett orörligt jordskred—

om ruinen, tiden och kroppen i rörelse



Fig. 39

Den skulle kunna passeras obemärkt, endast en vag antydan lämnas till att det trampats här förr. Den lågmälda stigen är för stunden belagd med brunröda eklöv, som ett penseldrag viker den av från gångvägen uppför branten; jag följer den uppåt. Här har grästuvorna fått ge vika, ett stråk av tiden. Stigen vindlar uppför berget, med stigande lutning övergår den närmare krönet i en stentrappa. Som ett spår från tidigare människors idéer, med sina staplade stenblock växer trappan fram ur berget. I årtatal har den klättrat och vältrat vid bergets sida, när jag nu finner den är det i form av ruin. Så slår det mig: jag har varit här förr. Inte just på den här specifika platsen, men med mig i mitt minne bär jag upplevelsen av den stentrappa som strävar uppför ett mindre bergsparti, i detta nya möte gör den sig påmind, som om de två platserna presenterar sig för varandra genom mig. Långt senare ska jag komma till denna insikt, inte när jag befinner mig vid berget, utan när jag en dag återbesöker min barndoms trädgård, och där och då plötsligt finner mig ståendes i minnet av **stigen över berget**. Den stig vilken jag ska komma att återbesöka flertalet gånger efter den höstdag då jag nästan passerade den förbi. Gemensamt för de två stentrapporna är att deras fysiska form är trög, ingen större förändring sker av sig självt över tid, utom skiftningarna över årstiderna. Jag befinner mig i tidens broderi, kronologin rör sig framåt, och bakåt längs med stigen, och över berget. Olika besök får ta plats där de behöver, föregångna av en framtida vandring. Stundens upplevelse av den direkta omgivningen väcker minnen, skärvor som präglar den känsla jag får för platsen, och som tillsammans formar rörelsen. En ny upplevelse, en ny rörelse för varje besök. Det som ska klarna är att upplevelsen är en hypotes, underrättad av minnet av en tidigare erfarenhet.

Genom tiderna har berget lockat upp olika människor till dess topp. Det jag möter när jag rör mig längs stigen är spåren av en för artonhundratalet typisk park anlagd i romantisk stil. Det är en subtilt ordnad park med de böljande gräsmattorna och myllrande gångvägarna, omgärdade av vildare skogs- och bergspartier. I förlagans England var vistelsen i den romantiska parken viktig för begrundandet av tidens gång, livets förgänglighet, och en upplevelse av tingen som ljuvare i och med närmandet av deras flyktighet. Liv, död, skapelse och ödeläggelse förstärks i parken beroende på väder och årstid. Sambandet mellan en strukturs direkta och avlägsna omgivning görs tydlig i parkens centrala element: ruinen, antingen funnen på platsen, eller skapad med syfte att efterlikna en struktur präglad av tiden. Genom den får både kulturens och naturens krafter komma till uttryck, och tidens verkan blir uppenbar. I den på platsen funna strukturen materialiseras förgängligheten; den konstruerade ruinen växer fram efter arkitektens vision och stembearbetarens hand, en tidens åtgång i koncentrerad form. Ruinen innehar en viktig roll i den romantiska parken, i vilken besökaren erbjuds en intensiv och djupgående dialog med naturen. En dialog genom vilken man även anmodas komma sig själv närmare.²

I trappan finner jag denna en gång fabricerade ruin—dess steg idag sammansmälta med det omgivande berget, mossan har lagt sitt täcke över otrampade delar och tyngdkraften har lagt blocken till rätta. En struktur som sedan dess tillkomst nu snarare ser ut att ha vuxit fram ur berget än att ha forslats dit och staplats av människohänder. Vart och ett av trappstegen lever sitt eget liv, men hanterar lutningen tillsammans för att inte falla ned. Trappan leder vägen för min klättring uppför branten. Under mina steg tänker jag på hur denna vandring ursprungligen stakats ut för att erbjuda, inte enbart en resa i självreflektionens tecken, utan även ett amalgam av natur och kultur, en koreografi för social samvaro, där vandraren fick stöd till att verkligen uppleva sin omgivning, och däribland sina medmänniskor.³ Detta vidgade varande föds i rörelsen, och aktiverandet av alla ens sinnen. Trappstegen väcker min kropp i rörelse, och slår på så vis an något i mitt inre, väcker min fantasi. Det är med hela min kropp jag rör mig uppför branten. Behöver skärpa mitt fokus, inte låta distraktion leda till snedsteg och fall. Trappan och stigen ställer krav på min fysiska kropp, liksom på

mitt sinne. Att känna bergets former genom min kropp, på så vis kommer jag mig själv närmare. Förflyttningen uppför trappan känns i hela mig. Den förändrade kroppsliga situationen gör mig medveten om min omgivning på ett nytt sätt. En förstärkt uppmärksamhet, jag kommer omgivningen närmare; den för mig också över ett svindlande gap i tiden. Den för mig, dels till sin början, till omfamnandet av detta relationsskapande parkideal; dels håller den kvar mig vid idag, vid artefakten sammanvuxen med sin naturliga omgivning, klipporna och mosslandskapet. Är det först idag vi ser visionen om den engelska romantiska parken och dess ruiner verkligen fullbordad? Att trampa vidare på spåren av det som var, för att, möjligen, hitta nya bilder av en annan framtid. Med vilka tankar steg de upp då, hur formades dialogen mellan bergets struktur och den mänskliga kroppen under förrförra århundradet, vad ger denna upplevelse mig idag?

Man tiger uppåt i motsättning till tyngden lika väl i drömmarnas värld som i verklighetens värld.⁴

Förflyttningen uppför berget är en samtidighet av tyngd och lätthet, där jag för varje steg övervinner gravitationen. För varje steg jag tar lyfter även en tanke och föreställning kring hur denna struktur har hamnat här, av vem den är placerad här. I ruinen av trappan finner jag inte något trasigt, eller ofullständigt. Utan något pågående. En fysisk manifestation inte bara av tider som passerat, utan en live-dokumentation av ett förlopp. En påminnelse om tidens ständiga passage, om de till synes statiska strukturernas rörelse och förändring. När övergår klippblocket som av isen brutits loss från berget, till att bli det av stenhuggaren utmejslade? De bådas oregelbundenhet visar på ett skeende. Klippblocken, tidsglappet mellan idag och anläggandet av trappsteg, lär mig om långsamma förändring-sprocesser. Det lär mig om att vila i en plats, och att **vara över tid**. Det som sker i periferin av mitt fokuserade seende blir det som bär min upplevelse, omsluter mig, skapar ordlösa erfarenheter, och för minnet vidare. Jag låter min kropp påverkas av dessa strukturers liv. Genom min egen rörelse och närvaro genom alla mina sinnen erfar jag effekter av rum lagrade ovanpå varandra, nästlade i varandra. Erfarenheter som blir till minnen, vilka jag tar med mig för att lära känna framtida platser och strukturers ständiga utveckling. Tanken tillåts röra sig fritt, dagdrömmar ta form. En öppenhet ur vilken tillvaron kan klarna. Det är i dessa stunder över berget jag lär mig om vårt förhållningssätt till förändring, om förändring i vårt samhälle, vår omgivning, oss själva. Om resiliens. Kontraster och oväntade samband bjuder till antaganden om vad som tidigare skett, och låter fantasin växa sig vild kring den framtida rörelsen. Det alltför tillrättalagda ger inte plats för tankar att gro. Fantasin slår inte fäste, utmanas inte.

Jag klättrar till trappans topp och blickar tillbaka, härifrån ter sig branten betydligt mildare. En andhämtning, jag fortsätter vidare, och stigen planar ut. Omgärdad av mossa slingrar en knappt synlig stenläggning, stora block, ett efter annat beskriver de stigens rörelse. Ytterligare ett spår av en förverkligad idé. Till fågelkvitter slår jag mig ned. Solen sipprar in mellan träden som sakta vajar, lyser upp blåbärsbarnen, över vilka spindeln omsorgsfullt lagt sin väv. Myggans surr runt omkring mig, ett enstaka bett genom den tunna polyestertröjan. När jag blickar upp drar molntussar fram bortom lövverket. Våldiga klippblock på min ena sida gör mig liten. Berget veckar sig som en plissering, skapar små vinklade rum mot den stenlagda stigen. Jag landar i det ena rummet, innan jag kan ta mig vidare till nästa. Att stigen betonas av stenläggningen kan inte vara en slump. Med jämna rytmer dyker dessa stenstrukturer upp, för att underlätta branter, ge tyngd till särskilda rum, signalera för paus eller skärpt uppmärksamhet. Stegstenarna saktar ned trädgårdens besökare och uppmanar till att ta in stunden. När jag följer stigens numeru knappt synliga stenläggning kan jag genom den också ana personerna som en gång placerade blocken där; som en skugga kan jag följa dem som tog de första stegen på den nylagda beläggningen. Den som nu sedan länge har låtits bero, under årens lopp överlåtits till naturen. I det pågående finns en samtidighet. Jag och stenläggarna möts i





strukturen, flätar våra tider samman, förenade i allt utom fysisk tillvaro.

Vid stenläggningens slut öppnar en glänta upp sig, som en katedral med sina pelare av trädstammar. I mitten av salen grenar sig stigen i två: tid för att stanna upp och fundera. Den ena stigen lockar upp mig på en bergknalle, där den lämnar mig omgärdad av tallar, som en ridå träder de åt sidan och ger en skymt av havet. Ljud från nedan rör sig uppåt, jag kan placera deras källor, men inte urskilja något tydligt, befinner mig ovan en väv av liv. Översköld av doften av varm tall sitter jag på huk på stenkullen. Myror kryllar ivrigt, och något rör sig i min ögonvrå; en spindel kommer vandrande över min arm. Kvällsskuggor lägger sig över hällen när jag går runt dess topp, en ny stig visar sig bakom krönet, en annan dag slår jag in på den. En kort paus, sedan vindlar jag tillbaka ned till förgreningen, och fortsätter längs den andra stigen. Kliver över en gärdesgård, och vidare mot änden av salen. Från trädskronorna faller vattendroppar från det tidigare regnet. Tyngda löv ger vika, släpper sin last som landar med knäppande suckar mot markens lövmatta. Stannar en stund och lyssnar, det knäpper till nära och en bit bort, i flöde och ensligt; bergväggarna omfamnar rummet. Frost har sprängt loss de kantiga blocken från berget, staplat dem till omöjliga figurer, fläckvis klädda i mossa, stensöta, lavar, länge har de vilat så. Enligt Gaston Bachelard har klippblockens väldiga former ett släktskap med molnen: den som drömmar sig bort ser ofta klippor i de lätta formationerna på himlen. Den omvända upplevelsen menar han kan nås genom dagdrömmen, att därigenom skymta en instörtad himmel på jorden.⁵

När metaforerna är omvändbara är man helt säker på att leva i ett fantasibenådat tillstånd. Livet är lätt.⁶

Jag återvänder till stigen, oftast planlöst och öppet, emellanåt med en intention. En intention kan vara att inte följa stigen fulla sträckning, utan att stanna upp på en bestämd plats. Dock inte utvald i förväg, utan där stigen stannar mig stannar jag. En torr sommardag slår jag mig ned, mitt på stigen där den löper genom trädstamssalen. Spindeln som vävt sitt bo på blåbärsriset har fått det prytt med pollen. Ibland sker mötet mellan mig och berget i dialog tolkad av pensel och färg. Tiden och upplevelsen får växa fram i förlängningen av mig kropp. Fram och tillbaka över klippblocken rör jag mig, tar mig in i skrevor, och upp längs trädstammar; min kropp sittandes stilla, blickens rörelse är sin egen, separerad från kroppens. Det förstundenvarande får en intensiv närvaro, i vilken gränsen mellan mig själv och omgivningen görs otydlig, obetydlig. Den fördröjda vistelsen ger mig ett annat perspektiv på avstånd, och de röster jag hör från långt borta, kan plötsligt te sig väldigt nära. När jag lämnat min kropp finner sig paradoxalt nog en ökad medvetenhet och känslighet kring andra människors potentiella närhet till min fysiska kropp. Har de personer jag hörde långt nere på gräsmattorna nu sökt sig upp på berget? När omgivningens brus blir starkt, förankrar jag mig djupt. Djupt i berget, så som rötterna till träden intill mig. Jag blir till dem, och stenläggaren passerar förbi.

Roten är alltid en upptäckt. Man drömmer den snarare än man ser den. Den väcker förundran när man upptäcker den: är den inte hälleberg och hår, smidig tråd och hårt trä? Med den har man ett exempel på motsägelser i tingen. Motsatsernas dialektik i fantasins rike, utvecklas med hjälp av föremål, med skilda, tydligt förtingligade substantiella motsatser. Hur mycket skulle man inte aktivera fantasin om man systematiskt sökte de föremål som motsäger varandra!⁷

Det jag senare ska minnas av stunden när jag satt där mitt på stigen, är hur klippblockens skuggor var skarpa, deras kanter skar sig genom det lummiga gröna. Ett konstant motstånd befinner de sig i, klippblocken så hårda, men samtidigt rörliga som moln.

Klippan och molnet fullbordar varandra. Den klippiga avgrunden är ett orörligt jordskred. Det hotande molnet är en rörelse i oordning.⁸

När jag läser Bachelard i skuggan av berget, kan jag finna ett stöd till att manövrera mig i vår tillvaro då han uppmanar till att söka upp de mest elementära frågorna för att förstå de större. Även i den sammanslagna

bilden av klippor och moln finns en dubbelhet. I ett fall kan det vara motivet av en födelse, där berget är molnets moder; i en annan sker det omvända, och berget slukar molnet med alla sina äskknallar och oväder.⁹ Klippan och molnet så som jag möter dem genom Bachelard, längs med stigen, över berget, ger en demonstration av att röra sig mellan olika perspektiv. I det som förståndet ser som korrekta ordnat, lyfter dagdrömmen andra möjliga tolkningar. Är berget i rörelse, eller fast bestäm? Är de strukturer vi ser omkring oss rigida klippblock, eller flyktiga moln? Är de flytande klippblock, eller molnbankar som gått i stå? I ett förändrat varande får man tillgång till de sprickor i vilka klippblocket faller isär och molnet växer fram.

Så reser jag mig, följer rådjursstigar upp och ned kring sidorna av trädstamssalen. Jag strävar mot änden av gläntan, och den fortsatta stigen, fortsatt uppåt. Bortom och ovan salen, ytterligare en krokande stenläggning. Denna infrastruktur i ruin omfattas av en liten damm, jag böjer mig framåt, och skymtar trädskronorna i djupet. Vattendropparna ger darrningar på ytan. Flera dagars regn har svämmat över stigen, jag väljer en annan väg förbi, inte av slump, den är trampad av flera innan mig. En sen vårdag ligger pollenet som en tunn hinna över vattenspegeln, en vag reflektion, ett och annat vattenkryp röjer undan det oklara. Stigen fortsätter sedan lugnt, omväxlande mossklädd mark böljande fram mellan blåbärskullar, knotiga tallar, och enstaka björk. Här vill jag sluta ögonen för en stund under min vandring, rötter rättar till mitt steg, prasslet av torra löv och blåbärsris mot min vad håller mig kvar på stigen. Men bara för en stund, en nivåskillnad, och ett plötsligt sug i maggropen tar mig tillbaka till seende. Lika väl. För beroende på hur ljuset faller intar klipporna olika gester. Längs med stigen finns platser som jag en blygrå vinterdag helt sonika passerar; en försommardag sträcker de sig mot mig, drar mig närmare. Otaliga gånger har jag gått längs stigen, men aldrig förr in bland blocken efter dammen. Solen dröjer sig kvar i trädtopparna, jag viker av från stigen, söker mig upp bland klippblocken, mitt ibland dem en djup skreva, en grotta. Sätter mig på blocket som vaktar dess öppning, knagglig mot min kropp. Vilar en ansträngd stund bland de skarpa blocken, försommardaglar runt omkring mig, minuterna här är längre än när jag slagit mig ned på mosskuddarna. Så som materialiserat i ruinen, är upplevelsen av tid fundamental i den engelska trädgårdens karaktär. Upplevelsen är en sammansatt och ständigt pågående process, en föränderlig företeelse som inte ger enkla svar.¹⁰ Trädgårdens struktur bygger därtill på ett successivt avslöjande av sina olika rum, parken vill få sina besökare att häpna, vilket jag gång efter annan får erfar. Från min klippborg rör jag mig sedan vidare mot stigen höjdpunkt, fram till vilken stigen är barrklädd, mjuk och dov under mina fötter.

När så sakteliga toppen och utsiktsplatsen, vinden tar ton mot rundad granit. Några få grova tallar, annars fri sikt. I kvällsdis flyter havet framför mig sömlöst upp i himlen, ljumma vindar talar om höjd. Jag nuddar vid kobbar och skär, Tistlarna vid mina fingerspetsar. Härifrån känner jag mig stor, med blicken när jag milsvida omkring mig. Jag befinner mig nu i **molnens regioner** och **jag glömskan** finner sig.¹¹ Allt runt omkring är så smått, så avlägset. Tiden är oändlig och abrupt, utsiktsplatsen låter mig greppa allt inom min blicks omfång¹²; här finns ingen särskild riktning, marken är upp trampad och rörelsen fri, jag får söka efter ramar någon annanstans. En lätthet, och jag vilar med min kind mot tallens bark, känner hur dess lager har kapslat in dagens värme när vi möts där för en stund.

En balansakt runt på toppens klippblock, sedan rör jag mig tillbaka till stigen, den fortsätter genast nedåt. Doft av varm kåda, höstens löv möter vårens gräs och stensöta. En avsats, stannar till, havet i min famn. Långt ut mot horisonten klarnar det, molnen sveper fram i sjök, blottar en klarare dag. Så, nedåt, en ordentlig brant, mildrad av ännu en stadig trappa. Omsorgsfullt staplade, en kallmurad beständighet ger stöd och tid för att samla sig. Nedför berget låter jag tyngdkraften leda mig längs stenläggningen. Det går fort, men av vana hittar mina fötter vägen över stenarna snabbare och snabbare, hela vägen ned till bergets fot där bäcken



Fig. 38

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gör luften sval, i doftslöjor av gröna blad sveps jag in. På botten av berget är jag åter vid den stora gångvägen, ett alldeles nytt lager rödgrå småkross har den täckts med. Berget tonar upp sig bakom mig, ytterligare en bit av det tar jag med mig.

Jag har rört mig i klipplandskap med spår av mänsklig aktivitet. In-ledningsvis följde jag stigen av slump, av ren tur, en av årstiden formad skepnad som gav sig tillkänna, en förändring i landskapet som visade på en annan möjlighet. De rum och strukturer som bygger upp stigen gav mig vid första mötet ett slag av förundran, möten som skedde ett efter annat, inte nödvändigtvis vid ett och samma besök. Skiftningar i naturen, vädret, och vad jag helt enkelt kände för, ledde mig i olika riktningar, gav förändrade perspektiv, kanske oftast bara en fråga om nyanser, inte sällan upptäckter av nya spår, strukturer, vyer. För det mesta besökte jag berget själv, men för att ytterligare förstärka känslan av ett första möte, eller för att locka mitt sinne ur min kropp, tog jag med ytterligare en person till platsen. Det kunde vara en fysisk person, eller en fjärran främling, bådadera med en ny intention om hur jag ville bemöta platsen. Rörelsen över berget blev en fysisk övning i hur jag läser min omgivning, påverkas av den, ser dess fortsatta utveckling. Ofullständigheten triggade ett tänkande, ett sammanlänkande av punkt a med punkt b. Byggd på minnen av gårdagens upplevelser drog skevheter till sig fokus för att skapa en fortsättning. En framtida vision. Stigen jag fann över berget, i parken, var alltså inte bara ett nytt möte och en reva i tiden, utan även ett återseende med min barndoms upptäcktsfärder. Ett metafysiskt fenomen som lätt fick mig att tappa greppet om min tillvaro. En samtidighet i att omedvetet återuppleva mitt sjuåriga jags möte med det sena 1800-talet, när nutidens jag fick kontakt med en sedan länge passerad stenläggare. Förmodligen kom, och kommer intrycken oundvikligen att prägla varandra, och ligga till grund för nästa övntade stig.

Var det någon slags ruinlusta (**ruin lust**, **Ruinenlust**)¹³ som pågick i mitt undersökande av berget? Möjligen, men inte helt och fullt. Möjligen, såtillvida att mitt första möte med de gamla parkstrukturerna slog mig till förundran, att kontrasten mellan det “naturliga” och “artefakten” väckte mitt drömmande sinne, gav fantasin grogrund. Min främsta, och mest varaktiga fascination kom av trappstegen och stenläggningarnas förmåga att demonstrera en pågående arkitektur. Pågående i den mening att den låter sig föras genom tider, anpassad till landskapet, gångbar idag liksom på 1800-talet, förmodligen även under nästa århundrade. Spannet är svindlande, men rena ungdomen jämfört med andra artefakter vi har omkring oss idag. Varaktigheten kan inte förklaras i visuella termer, det handlar inte om nostalgi för det förgångna, utan ett hyllande av det ursprungligas förmåga att röra sig, förändras, långsamt, av nödvändigheter och omständigheter, oundvikliga aspekter av att vara i en icke-statisk verklighet. På så sätt får trappan och stigen en vidgad relevans även idag, förutom att erbjuda rekreation.

Jag ser inte att naturen ska stå som en tillflyktsort, att den ska särstäl-las från det urbana, och att den därigenom endast vilar som ett medel för (stads-)människans uppnående av lugn och grundning. Jag ser potentialen i samvaron; där jorden står i sitt fulla egenvärde, däribland människan. Att finna denna samvaro förutsätter dock en relation, som grundas på ett umgänge vilket kanske kräver en omställning i en själv. Här finns möjlighet att finna inte bara en ny och tidigare kanske främmande vistelsemiljö, utan även nya lager av ens egen varelse. Vi växer genom alla våra relationer, mänskliga som icke-mänskliga. I uppskattningen av den utveckling som sker genom de icke-mänskliga relationerna, växer möjligen respekten inför det som befinner sig bortom ens egen spegelbild; att kunna lyfta den känsla och upplevelse man får av att vistas i naturen, utan att för den sakens skull förringa naturens egenvärde. Så som man hyllar en kär vän kan även na-turen hyllas för sin del i relationen. Och däri se att det inte finns **en natur** utan snarare **otaliga platser**, som alla finns att knyta kontakt och bygga relationer med. Det är för deras särskilda egenskaper, och för värdet i den

speciella relation som kan bindas med människan. Och att sedan en och samma plats kan resonera med en person på ett visst sätt, men på ett helt annat med en annan person, gör de relationsgrundande erfarenheterna otvetydigt subjektiva. Just relationsskapandet, med vad för förutsättningar både plats och människa går in i mötet styr hur anknytningen sker. Fina nyanser som väcker något i en, känsligheten för dessa yttre stimuli, att förnimma sin tillvaro i stunden. Detta kommer ur den sammansatta up-plevelsen—dofter, ljud, vyer, textur, temperatur—och ligger möjligen till grund för ens känsla av nödvändigheten att försvara platsen. Vår tillvaro i världen är just ett dynamiskt förhållande mellan våra omgivningar, rum, och ständigt föränderliga samhällen. Den är ett ständigt manövrerande av förnimmelser och hanterande av stimuli, där kompositionen av upplevelser av vår direkta omgivning med minnen av det förflutna formar rörelsen in i den oförutsägbara framtiden. Den pågående arkitekturen, strukturen i rörelse, sprickorna, är källan till fantasin; i glappen kan nya idéer ta form. I ruinens organiska kvaliteter blir arkitekturens ständiga förvandling uppen-bar. Den väcker det skapande sinnet, brustna länkar och tomrum sporrar nya tankar att ta form. Ens innersta får komma till uttryck, buret av minnen och erfarenheter från tidigare möten.

Stigen och berget lärde mig om att **vara över tid**, vilket ligger nära till att vidare **agera över tid**. Efter nära kontakt med artefakter som låtits bero, ger det mig perspektiv på hur det jag idag skapar, uttrycker, agerar kan leva vidare efter mig. Kan jag med den tanken möjligen skapa sådant som kan leva vidare efter mig? En beständighet i relationer, förhållningssätt, strukturer. Jag låter på så vis tingen och fenomenen lämna min kropp, bli angelägenheter för andra, bortom min egen bekymmersram. En sorts omsorg över det okända. För att kunna lämna mig själv, behöver jag först gå ordentligt in i mig själv. Att se min omgivning som ständigt föränderlig, vare sig fysisk eller annorledes, genom olika tider, ljus, årstider, låter den sig utvecklas. Vid en första förnuftig blick anas statiska förutsättningar, men genom en förändrad och förstärkt tillvaro ska dessa lågmälda stigar och berg komma att visa sig lite varstans, och vid toppen av dessa träder de öppna vidderna och arken fram.

Anna Risell

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Excerpt

I could just as well have walked past it, only a vague indication was given about previous strides. At this moment the subtle path is coated with brownish-red oak leaves, like the stroke of a brush, it swerves from the gravel-walk; it winds up the hill, and I follow it. Closer to the first crest it turns into a stone staircase. With its stacked blocks the stairs grow out of the hill, like a trace of the ideas of people from the past. For years it has been climbing the hillside, holding on. When I discover it, it is in the shape of ruin. I find myself in the embroidery of time, the chronology moving forward, and backward along the path, and over the small mountain. During the course of a year, I came to make several visits to the path, sitting in the wilder areas of a nineteenth century park in the English romantic style. It all mounted up to reflections on the perception of our surroundings, of time, and of how this brings back memories, and alter the way I move in the landscape. On each visit I have noticed subtle variations in the fragments that shape the larger experience of the place, so that each visit holds a unique encounter.

The path meanders between boulders and blueberry sprigs, over soft leaf carpets, around trees and artefacts, and onto open hilltops. To get to know the ruins, and the English romantic park better, I turn to Jonathan Hill (Professor of Architecture and Visual Theory, at the Bartlett School of Architecture) and his book **The Architecture of Ruins: Designs on the Past, Present and Future**.

Originally, the structures of the romantic garden were either found ruins, or constructed as if in ruin. Finding them today, touched by time and gravity, partly overgrown with moss, the vision is complete. They simultaneously contain the past, present, and future within their continuous character. The workings of time become evident, through the ruins, they are the catalysts of the contemplation of the passage of time, and the transience of life. The ruins have an important role within the romantic park, through them the visitors are offered an intense and profound dialogue with nature; a dialogue through which the visitor is requested to get closer to him- or herself.

As I climb the stairs, I reflect on how the walk not only poses as a travel in the spirit of self-reflection, but also as an amalgam of nature and culture. Just like a choreography for social intercourse, where walkers are supported to really experience their surroundings, and among those, their fellow beings. Furthermore, it brings me across a dizzying gap in time. I realise that when stepping in the footsteps of what once was, visions of another future could possibly emerge. This widened existence is born in the movement, and in activation of all senses. Transcending the boulders, paired with the time gap between today and the laying of the stone stairs, teaches me about slow processes of change. It teaches me about resting in a place, and to **be across time**. What happens in my peripheral vision becomes the harbour for my experiences, it enfolds me, creating wordless experiences and carrying memories. As materialised in the ruin, the perception of time is fundamental in the romantic garden. The experience is a complex and continuous process, an inconstant phenomenon that does not give simple answers. I let myself be influenced by the lives of these structures.

In a clearing the path slows down. On a dry summer’s day, I pause, and sit down. Shades of the evening roll over the boulders in front of me, giant blocks torn from the hill by frost-burst. Thoughts are allowed to run free, daydreams to take form. In moments like these I learn about our relationship to change, changes in society, in our surroundings, in ourselves. I learn about resilience. Contrasts and unexpected connections open up for assumptions on previous events, and let imagination suggest future movement. This state of daydreaming was encouraged by the different structures I encountered along the path, and I explored this further through readings of philosopher Gaston Bachelard’s *Earth and Reveries of Will*, and *Earth and Reveries of Repose*. He teaches me how to manoeuvre in life, as well as how, in one sense, the boulder is the mother of clouds, and in another, the boulder devours the cloud with all its thunder and storms. The boulder and the cloud, as I meet them along the path, chiming with Bachelard, demonstrate the transposition of perspectives. Is the boulder in motion, or completely static? Are the structures around us rigid rocks, or fleeting clouds? Are they flowing boulders, or stalemate cloudbanks? In an altered existence, you get access to the cracks in which the boulder fall apart, and the cloud evolves.

My movement along the path became a physical exercise in how I perceive my surroundings, how they affect me, and how I envision their continued development. The constant transformation of architecture becomes evident in the organic qualities of the ruin. It awakens the creative mind, broken links and empty spaces incite new thoughts. I have appreciated letting my body be moved within the wild landscape of the romantic park. Although, I do not consider nature a refuge for the weary urban human, I value the inherent capacity in the possible relationships with our surroundings, where nature is granted its full intrinsic value. Moving with the stance that there is **not just one nature**, but several different places, open to building relationships with.

- ↑ Jonathan Hill, **The Architecture of Ruins: Designs on the Past, Present and Future** (New York: Routledge, 2019), 52.
- ↑ Hill, **The Architecture of Ruins: Designs on the Past, Present and Future**, 62.
- ↑ Hill, **The Architecture of Ruins: Designs on the Past, Present and Future**, 71.
- ↑ Gaston Bachelard, *Jorden och viljans drömmerier*, övers. Hans Johansson (Lund: skarabé, 1992), 321.
- ↑ Bachelard, *Jorden och viljans drömmerier*, 186.
- ↑ Bachelard, *Jorden och viljans drömmerier*, 186.
- ↑ Gaston Bachelard, *Jorden och drömmerier om vila*, övers. Hans Johansson (Lund: skarabé, 1994), 268–269.
- ↑ Bachelard, *Jorden och drömmerier om vila*, 187.
- ↑ Bachelard, *Jorden och drömmerier om vila*, 188.
- ↑ Björn Billing, *Utsikt från en bergstopp* (Malmö: ellerströms, 2017), 179.
- ↑ Billing, *Utsikt från en bergstopp*, 162.
- ↑ Billing, *Utsikt från en bergstopp*, 163.
- ↑ Katie Beswick, "Ruin Lust and the Council Estate", **Performance Research**, 20:3 (2015), 29.

 Bachelard, Gaston. *Jorden och drömmerier om vila*. Översatt av: Hans Johansson. Lund: skarabé, 1994. Bachelard, Gaston, *Jorden och viljans drömmerier*. Översatt av: Hans Johansson. Lund: skarabé, 1992. Beswick, Katie, "Ruin Lust and the Council Estate", **Performance Research**, 20:3 (2015), s. 29–38. Billing, Björn. *Utsikt från en bergstopp*. Malmö: ellerströms, 2017. Hill, Jonathan. **The Architecture of Ruins: Designs on the Past, Present and Future**. New York: Routledge, 2019.

The dark boreal forest. Snow weighing heavy on strong, stubborn branches.

Know the four directions, you are always the center.

The songs of the other worlds calling; the way is inward. Find that place where the veil is thin. Cross over. Fly!

There will be creatures. Strange animals on the other side. Cats. Biting and clawing, purring and playing.

Yes, and the sky filled with stars now. Crisp and shiny. Pulsating. From the dark abyss; tears flowing. Release!

There's the Hare. He loves Sister Moon, the silver fullness. Oh, he's clever this one. Tells tales of good fortune and fertility.

Grandpa Fire, The Old One. Treated with respect, burning in beauty all through the night.

The Tree People of this land, standing tall in the snow, biding their time. Listening to the fast-paced drum. Feel the vibrations. That reassuring beat. The deepest of meanings. Come forth!

We are beings of this land, belonging to this world. All connected by strands of silver strings.

Sing! Until the sun comes up once again.

Magic



Fig. 40

Hostile Takeover— när planeten blev människans

Antropocen har blivit en (antropo-) scen för lite olika innebörder som utvecklas åt olika håll. Uttrycket myntades ursprungligen i strikt mening för att benämna den tidsålder då människan och hennes aktiviteter har en stor påverkan på planeten så det syns i geologiska lager, för att kunna jämföra den med andra tidsåldrar som holocen och paleocen. Det blir en ny term i verktygslådan för framtida geologer som studerar lagerföljd i sedimentära bergarter, liksom redan generationer av geologistudenter lärt sig att rabbla USAkl.3* när de står inför det 40 m djupa kalkbrottet vid Kinnekulle. Om vi verkligen befinner oss i en ny geologisk tidsålder eller inte, så är vi tveklöst en del av ett komplext globalt system som uppvisar tydliga effekter av mänsklig påverkan. Plast har redan börjat inlagras i den geologiska lagerföljden. Efter 25 år har geologerna dock ännu inte satt ned foten om de ska godkänna antropocen eller inte. Geologerna har en annan syn på tid än vanliga människor. Ett kvarts århundrade är knappt ett ögonblick för den som dagligen jonglerar med årmiljoner. Men geologerna kom till skott så till vida att det skulle ha varit en konferens i 2020. Naturligtvis kom covid-19-pandemin i vägen, vilket är ironiskt då pandemin i sig är en följd av massiv överbefolkning. Det är själva befolkningsmängden som ger förutsättningar för explosiv spridning av smittan.

Ordet antropocen har under tiden som geologerna debatterar snappats upp av de som inte vill vänta, inte har deras ändlösa tidsperspektiv, och använder det i nya former och sammanhang. Liksom uttrycket ekologi, som skapades för att beteckna samspelet mellan organismer i en naturlig miljö, har fått en betydelseglidning till att något ekologiskt betecknar något som är miljövänlighet, som gynnsam för den naturliga miljön. Till en början kunde man inte applicera ordet ekologiskt till något eftersom alla organismer i en naturlig miljö samspekar. Kanske är det först på lite distans som vi ser var innebörden i begreppet antropocen landar. Kommer vi snart att köpa antropoceniska kläder, som förväntas gynna mänskligheten? Som på en scen är det öppet för tolkning. Kommer det sedan att stelna så att man kan bli antropocynisk och blasé inför vår oförmåga att hindra vår egen aptit på tillväxt till kraschen stoppar framfarten?

Det ligger, som författaren John Green skriver i sin bok *The antropocene reviewed*, en paradox i att människan som art har alldeles för stor kraft och förmåga och samtidigt inte ens närheten av den kraft och förmåga som behövs. Att anta att människan tidigare levde med naturen är en idealiserad bild, en romantisering, vi har påverkat naturen kraftigt i åtminstone 10 000 år, men vi har skalat upp vårt antal och vår påverkan den senaste tiden. När skulle då antropocen ha börjat? Det är lite av en bedömningsfråga. Vid det

senaste 1900-talets enorma befolkningsexplosion, vid den industriella revolutionen i Europa under sent 1700-tal, eller kanske redan för 10–12 000 år sedan när vi började bli bofasta för att odla grödor, brygga öl och utföra religiösa riter? Ungefär i samma veva utrotade vi megafaunan i norra Asien och i Nord- och Sydamerika samt blev den enda kvarvarande arten av släktet *Homo* på jorden (se Harari, 2015).

När alla djur och människor har försvunnit kan vi bara spegla oss i oss själva, eller i vidunder skapade av vår fantasi som ändå bara är fasetter av oss själva.

Klimatförändringar, ökning av koldioxidhalten i atmosfären, skogsskövling och överfiskning är några av de saker som är orsakade av människor. Trenden är nattsvart. Kunskap och teknik för att bevara, återställa och se till att naturen används hållbart finns, men det kräver stora omställningar i våra ekonomiska, teknologiska och sociala system, vilket corona-pandemin gjort uppenbart. Jorden är 4,5 miljarder år gammal, och trots att den moderna människan bara funnits i ungefär 200 000 år har vi ändrat de fysiska, kemiska och biologiska systemen fundamentalt. Sedan mitten av 1900-talet har denna påverkan ökat drastiskt.

Industrialiserade länder bidrar mer till utsläpp än utvecklingsländer. I dag är världen huvudsakligen befolkad av oss människor med 36% av den totala biomassan och våra domesticerade djur med 60%, medan de vilda djuren endast utgör 4% av biomassan. Då ska ha i åtanke att mängden köttdjur, mest grisar och kor, är upplåst och bokstavligen talat uppgödd på kraft- och växtfoder som drivs av energi från fossila bränslen.

För 65 miljoner år sedan slog en asteroid ner i det som idag är mexikanska golfen och utrotade de stora dinosaurierna. I dag är det människan, inte naturkatastrofer, som står för massutrotningar och som är den största aktören när det gäller att förändra jordens ekologi. Ett stort arter har utrotats på grund av människan sedan tusentals år, men har eskalerat kraftigt under de senaste hundra åren. En miljon växt- och djurarter riskerar att dö ut på mycket kort tid enligt IPBES-rapporten 2021. Ekosystemen, som både vi alla är beroende av, försämrats och det gör inte bara att andra arter riskerar att dö ut, det hotar hela vårt globala samhälle; vår ekonomi, vår matproduktion och vår hälsa. Människans påverkan på naturen är enorm; överbefolkning, föroreningar, fossila bränslen, avskogning, överfiske. Klimatförändringar, jorderosion, smutsig luft, förorenat vatten och förlust av biologisk mångfald är alla följder av denna påverkan. Vi lever i en globaliserad värld och vi påverkar platser långt bort från där vi bor. Men människan har möjlighet att stoppa den här utvecklingen och se till att våra ekosystem inte kollapsar och att

flera arter inte dör ut. Det finns flera exempel på lyckade försök att bevara arter och många exempel på att naturen har återhämtat sig utan vår naturvård. Förutom att naturen har ett värde i sig är vi människor beroende av naturen och all dess biologiska mångfald. Allt vi äter och tillverkar kommer ju från naturen. Vi är beroende av dessa så kallade ekosystemtjänster. Människan är en del av naturen och kan inte separeras från den, även om vi skulle vilja. Utan den biologiska mångfalden och en hållbar hantering av naturresurser har vi vare sig mat eller hem. Vi kan bevara den biologiska mångfalden genom att till exempel minska mängden fossila bränslen, inte skövla regnskogar, välja bättre alternativ i mataffären (MSC-märkt fisk, naturbeteskött mm), återanvända och återbruka.

Mer än en fjärdedel av de arter som behandlas av IUCN är hotade. Många arter har rört sig genom rödlistans olika kategorier, från livskraftig till utrotad (där emellan nära hotad, sårbar, starkt hotad, akut hotad). Ibland lyckas en art ta sig ett eller ett par steg bort från akut hotad, men det händer inte alltid utan hjälp. Bevarandeåtgärder har hjälpt en del arter, men insatserna måste vara långsiktiga för att säkerställa att arten inte blir hotad igen. Vi vet inte exakt hur allt hänger ihop eller när ekosystem kollapsar. Varje art (djur, växt, svamp) är en del av ett pussel. Under människans tidsålder sker utdöenden så snabbt att vi ser dem hända framför våra ögon, medan under tidigare epoker i jordens historia var endast så snabba utdöenden orsakade av naturkatastrofer.

Hög biologisk mångfald är bra på flera sätt. Det ger stabila och produktiva ekologiska system som är förhållandevis motståndskraftigt mot mänsklig påverkan, det är mindre känsligt för främmande invasiva arter, och inte minst är det bättre för vår hälsa. Dels är det påvisat i studier att hälsoeffekten av besök i natur är bäst i äldre skog med hög diversitet jämfört med utarmad produktionsskog. Dessutom sprids epidemier lättare i utarmad miljö, i natur med hög biologisk mångfald sker en utspädningseffekt, exempelvis så kallat Hantavirus som sprids med skogssork. I en barrskog med hög diversitet finns många olika sorters smågnagare, men i en ”granåker” finns nästan bara skogssork, som därmed förstärker risken för att sorkfeber förs över till människan.

Att offra en art mot en annan om naturintressen står mot andra ofta ekonomiska intressen kan ha fördelar, men då skapar det en obalans som måste åtgärdas för att bibehållas, det då det behövs naturvård, då vi inte ger naturen rätt förutsättningar att sköta sig själv. När man upprättat så kallade åtgärdsplaner för bevarande av en art finns parametrar och modeller på nationell och europeisk nivå. Det är väldigt olika för skilda organismer som t.ex. för lavar, svampar,

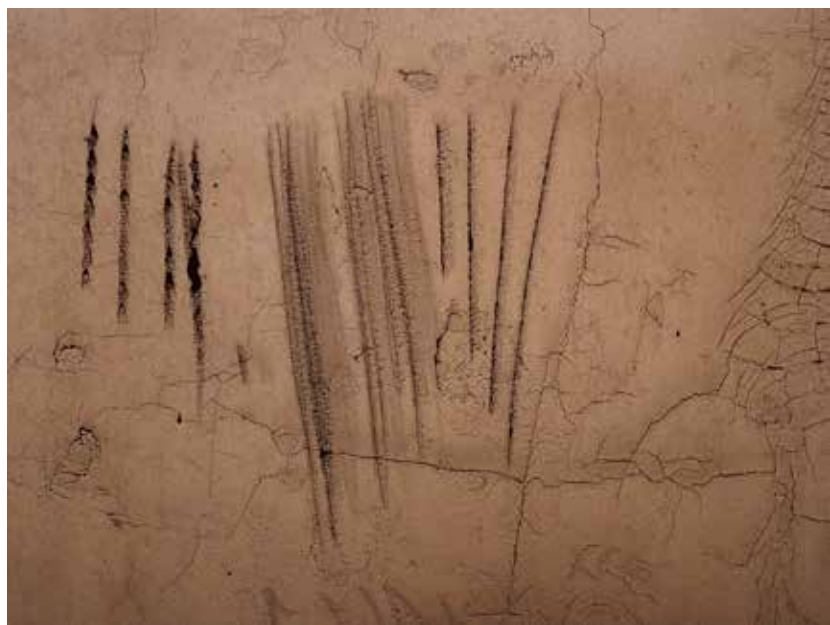


Fig. 41



Fig. 42

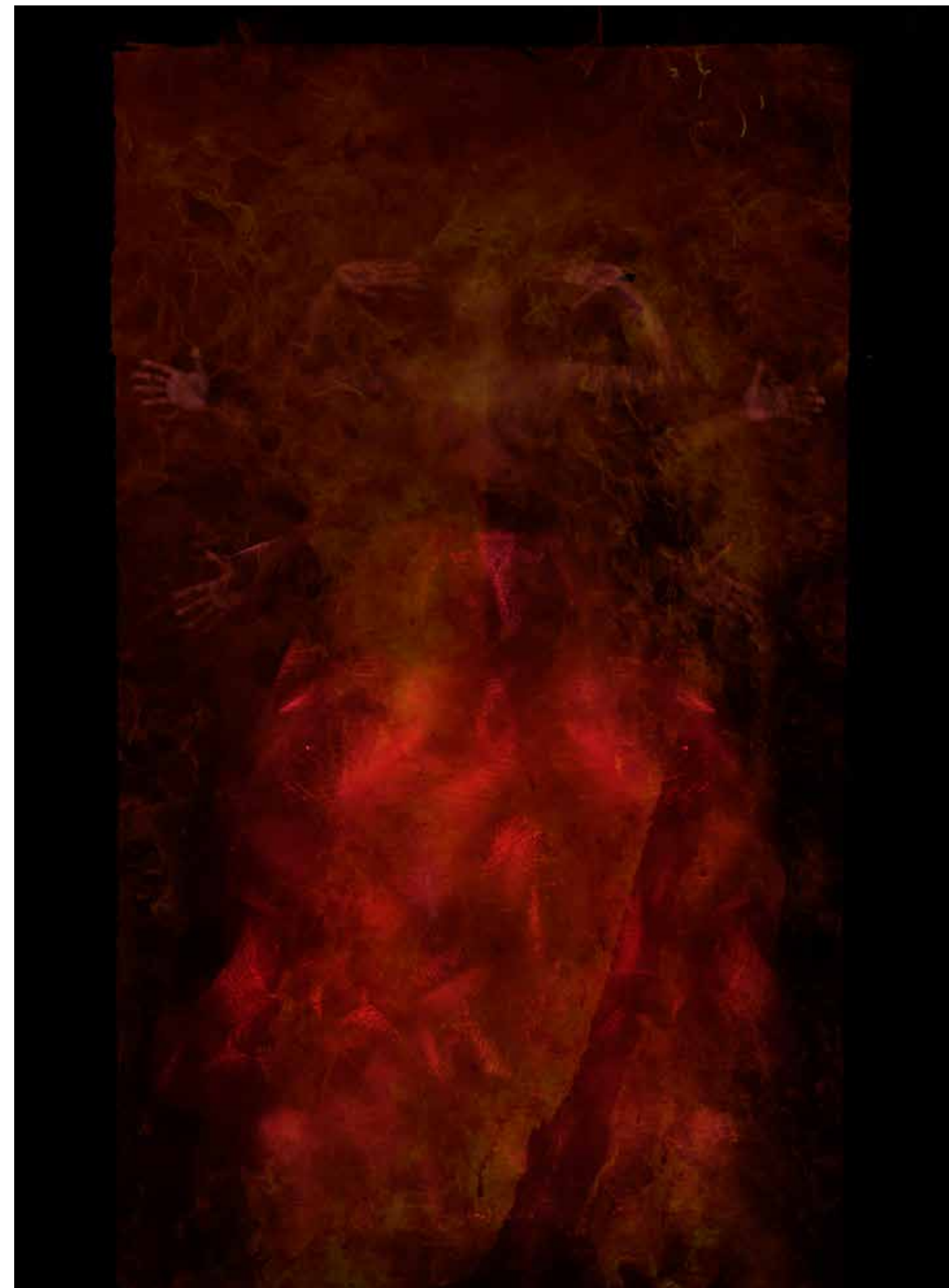


Fig. 43

valar eller fåglar. Det finns många exempel på återställande av natur så kallad ”rewilding”, där man återinför arter som utrotats, exempel är vargen som återinfördes till Yosemite i USA, vilket medförde en återupprättad balans i ekosystemet. Vitsvanshjortarna minskade i antal och en lång rad djur- och växter arter återkom. Bävvar och havsörnar återvänder nu till Storbritannien.

Ett småskaligt jordbruk upprätthåller hög diversitet, jämfört med storskaligt industriellt jordbruk, och ha många fördelar, men i et större perspektiv är ”bondens marker” i själva verket de betande stora däggjurens marker sedan omkring 30 miljoner år. Det är till deras bete som gräset och ängens blommor har blivit anpassade. De som är borta nu, visent, mammut, uroxe, vildhäst. Vi har fått tillbaka vilda växtätare som äter blad, skott och trädgårdens rosenknoppar, eller bökar i marken efter ek- och bokollon som vildsvin, men inte de vilda gräsätarna.

Arter som är naturligt ovanliga har en ofta en större risk för att dö ut. I många ekosystem finns det naturligt en klick med vanliga arter som är generalister (dvs kan leva på många olika sätt), och många arter som är ovanliga och specialister. Men alla de naturligt ovanliga arterna skapar tillsammans en stabilitet då de kan ”kliva in” om det sker några ändringar i miljön som passar just dem. Så är ofta förhållandet i en opåverkad tropisk regnskog och i ett friskt korallrev, och så var för hundra år sedan i havsbotten vid den svenska västkusten. Förutom att det fanns fler arter förr, så var de mer heterogent fördelade. Sedan länge är det numera en liten grupp med tåliga arter som finns i ungefär samma fördelning överallt, och inbördes ofta ändras från ett år till ett annat. Men det har blivit bättre! Vattenkvaliteten i västerhavet har tack vare bättre rening blivit mycket mindre övergödd sedan 1980-talet när det var som sämst, trots att det nu bor omkring 90 miljoner människor i avrinningsområdet kring Östersjön och där västerhavet är som en stor flodmynning. Bottendjuren återvänder, även om vi fortfarande har ett gott stycke kvar till vad det var före storskalig bottentrålning, föroreningar och övergödning. Nästa steg som skett de senaste åren är de marina skyddade områden som ger djuren en möjlighet till återetablering på längre sikt. Vi ser allt fler valar vid våra kuster. Det sura nedfallet i regnet som dödade vår a sjöar och vattendrag har upphört. Många djur återvänder. Havsöringen som exempel har gjort en fantastisk återkomst tack vare fiskevårdande insatser och återställande av vattendrag vid västkusten.

Här har jag diskuterat om vad som ligger i begreppet antropocen inom naturvetenskapen. Andra författare får redogöra för hur inbörden utvecklas i övriga discipliner som samhällsvetenskaper, konst och filosofi. Människan är den största fienden, men eftersom vi har

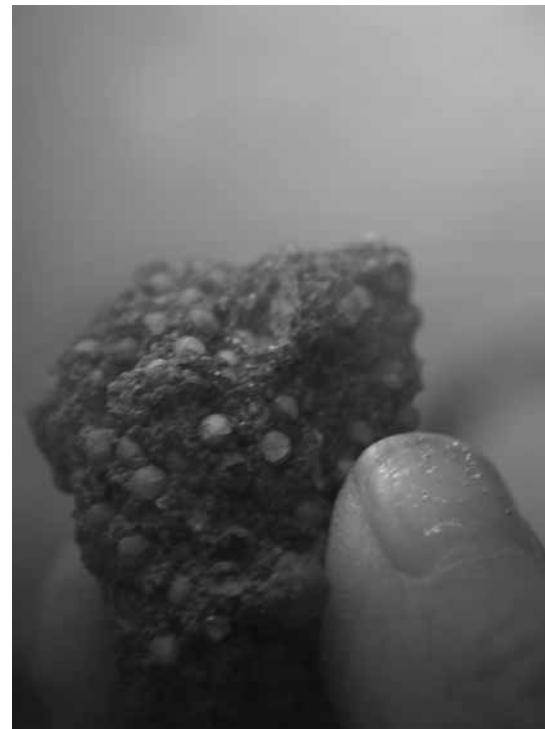
makten att förändra kan vi också bli räddaren. Vill vi rädda oss själva och vad ligger då i ”oss”, vilka inkluderas i det? Naturvårdande åtgärder är tillfälliga lösningar så länge befolkningstillväxten åter upp effekten. Däri ligger mycket av elefanten i rummet. Det är befolkningstätheten som ger underlag för en pandemi, och för att tränger undan andra vilda djur och kommer i närkontakt. ”Om man skakar ett träd så kommer saker att ramla ur det” skrev David Quammen 2012 i **Spillover: Animal infections and the next human pandemic**, där han även profetiskt spekulerade om den riktigt stora pandemin skulle komma från områden omkring Kongo-floden eller från en kinesisk djurmarknad. Han fick rätt på det senare. Människans förmåga till samarbete och kraftiga åtgärder ställs på sin spets vid allvarliga kriser och det visar trots alla problem på anledning till optimism inför framtiden.



Fig. 44

* USAkl3 = nedifrån och upp—Urberg, Sandsten, Alunskiffer, Kalksten, Lera, Trapp (diabas).

Vazha-Pshavela's “Snake Eater:” Mindia, Bio-Empathy, and Madness



When I first encountered the works of the Georgian poet, Vazha-Pshavela, the field of environmental humanities was just beginning to hover on the periphery of my consciousness, and I hadn't heard of critical plant studies, let alone the terms biophilia, phytocriticism, bio-empathy and others. I was at a loss to decipher what I was reading. But I was fascinated, and in an earlier paper on Vazha-Pshavela and eco-criticism I focused on a few of his vignettes and short stories that expressed a heightened sensitivity to the plants, animals, and natural phenomena surrounding him in his native Pshavi, in the country of Georgia. Many of his stories seem to speak for an animated, personified nature: a) a violet, clinging to life in a deep chasm, conversing, laughing, and flirting with the moss on the opposing cliff, and ending her tale with a lament about the brevity of her life; b) a small, pure mountain spring that in the course of its travels, tumbling down from the mountains, joins with other streams and rivers, its waters becoming muddied, sullied with sticks and rocks, and along the way, becoming responsible for so much destruction—both to the plants along fragile riverbanks, and humans caught up in floods. These stories rest in a balance between being empathetic depictions of natural phenomena, and projections of the human psyche onto the natural world. A third story, “The High Mountains,” is a meditation on what the Caucasus Mountains, the highest in Europe, might be thinking and feeling. Vazha-Pshavela's language is difficult, and a reader comes up against the unknowable-ness of natural elements that exist in such an extended geological time; they are sentient, yet exist beyond the understanding and expressive capabilities of humans. I was, to use the vernacular, blown away by Vazha-Pshavela's intense, intimate knowledge of nature, and his seemingly progressive thoughts. So, who is this author?

Vazha-Pshavela is the pen name for Luka Razikashvili, (1861–1915), who retreated from a career in law to live on his family land in Pshavi, a hilly region in the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains, in the Republic of Georgia. As a poet, he has been revered, and his poems memorized by generations of Georgians, calling forth their sense of patriotism, building their reputation as the step-children of Nature.

He had studied law in St. Petersburg, Russia, for a year or so, but was called home to his native village of Chargali because of financial constraints. His pseudonym literally means “the man from Pshavi,” and once home, he steeped himself in traditional, indigenous Georgian life, writing the poems and stories, and wrestling with moral questions he faced in a soon-to-be-Sovietized Georgia. Georgia was a unified state only in the Middle Ages under Davit the Builder, and his granddaughter, Queen Tamar; otherwise, it existed as a feudal state, with a clan system that some argue is still functioning despite 200 years of Russian, then Soviet rule, and current attempts to democratize. For centuries it was a colonial space as well, always on the periphery of various empires: Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, Russian; and Soviet, and the need to constantly defend one's homeland finds expression in the country's patron, Saint George. Vazha-Pshavela's major poems, a trilogy including “Aluda Ketelauri,” “Host and Guest,” and “The Snake Eater,” reflect Georgia's geopolitical existence at

the crossroads between east and west, Europe and Asia, exploring the tension between an all-demanding, all embracing clan existence that would control most facets of a member’s behavior, and the development of individual conscience that may at times contradict and contravene those traditional dictates.

“The Snake Eater” (1901) is environmentally inclined, and through its hero, Mindia, explores the sublimity, madness, and torture that befall those who live with an intimate knowledge of nature; and the tensions that arise when a human being finds more shared sacredness with plants and animals than with his fellow humans. Mindia, held captive by local wizards, decides to end his life by eating snake meat, the wizards’ favored dish and one he abhors. Instead of dying, however, he realizes that the meat is the vehicle of the wizards’ wisdom, and finds his consciousness opened to the world of sentient plant and animal beings:

what birds sang, plants and animals spoke...

Everything that the Lord had made
had language: all was within the law.

His gift of understanding becomes a sacred responsibility, and what affects him most is the language of plants. Medicinal plants share their secrets with him, and he becomes a healer, a shaman figure to whom the plants give themselves:

...each herb sets up a murmur, a din,

“I am the cure for this disease.”

The next calls, “I am that ill’s cure” ...

It is as though the flowers think
nothing of their seething life,
so long as they may heal disease.

They yearn to be of use to man,
to flesh and bone beset by ills.

While Mindia’s gift for herbal healing is beneficial to his fellow humans and transforms him into a natural leader, his intense bio-empathy also draws him into conflict with that society—both his immediate family, and larger social structures. He becomes a pest, urging others to live as he does, and not sin by felling trees; and he is labeled mad: “No one listens: his advice/seems to them a madman’s speech.” (10). He becomes positively rabid as he mows down corn and grasses:

When he starts to reap the corn,
his mind is utterly deranged...

And he has to defend himself before his peers:

“You cannot grasp what you have said,
that’s why you think my actions mad.

If only you knew, how they themselves
plead with me to mow them down.

More serious trouble grows when he tries to integrate himself and his knowledge into social structures, i.e., when he gets married and is asked to provide for his family. His wife, naturally, wants food and shelter -- meat, and wood for heat -- for their children. But when Mindia goes to hunt, he cannot kill, and it is part of his sacred knowledge that he and his family should be essentially vegetarian.

He is a gentle soul: when he goes chop down living trees, these elderly beings moan and plead with him to spare their lives. He listens intently, and responds:

...His arms went limp, he blankly gazed

up at the sky and turned towards
another tree: it moaned still more.

Empty handed, he made for home,
he could not cut up wood to burn

and, not to have a cold, chill hearth,
he gathers hay or withered stubble

or straw or dung. He now makes do
with any fallen twigs he finds,

nevertheless, gives thanks to God,
when the day begins and when it ends.

Mindia is in many ways a perfectly politically correct environmentalist who would live in peaceful balance with nature, taking only what he needs, culling only what is freely given. His wife, however, feels differently, and continues to demand what she considers perfectly “normal” human behavior.

Given the tensions and contradictions he feels, Mindia begins to go more dangerously mad by giving in to societal demands, concomitantly losing his sacred gifts. Blaming others, he rages against his wife and denounces his children, tearing apart the social fabric he supports and depends on, in which he is entangled:

“I curse the day I married you!

Before that day, not a man alive
upon the earth could equal me.

All thanks to you, I have become,
damned woman, a stinking clumsy thing...

You have given me an incurable ill,
because of you I have sinned against God,

I look on my children as a plague,
they have made me betray my faith...

Within Georgian society, even his magical knowledge of plants can’t save him, and in fact, creates what seems to be an incurable disease.

At this point in the poem, a reader begins to feel the depths of the internal contradictions of Mindia’s situation, and perhaps a kind of compassion for the dilemmas he faces, and wonder how he could have done better. Yet a reader may feel baffled at certain dissonances in Georgian culture, in particular its apparent misogyny: although Georgia had a very influential sovereign in its medieval period, Queen Tamar (interestingly, Georgian does not assign gender to nouns, so one word, **mepe**, means both “queen,” and “king”), works such as “The Snake Eater” seem misogynist in modern times. For all of Mindia’s enlightened interactions with nature, it seems unfortunate that he blames his wife for the loss of his sacred gift—he, too, helped create his children by his own biological needs and emotional desire, which his wife duly points out to him. A second dissonance appears in the country’s militancy. The country has survived as a

cultural and political entity because of the military prowess of its men, and it is as if human bloodshed has become naturalized. Mindia blends healer, agent of nature, and warrior in one person—he is able to kill human enemies to preserve his country, but not able to kill plants unless they invite him to do so. In the end, he is not able to endure the contradictions he feels: he suffers serious depression for a year, sacrificing most of his cattle to a god who seems not to respond, and finally commits suicide when he is no longer able to function as a warrior, chief, or healer—he cannot cure himself, leads his men into a losing battle and watches as their villages burn.

So, where does this story of Mindia lead us? At this point, I am not sure, except to observe that Mindia’s knowledge of the natural world puts him at odds with his society and its demands, rendering him both shaman and mad. And to ask questions: Is his final madness avoidable? Might his knowledge be integrated, accepted in a peaceful, non-conflictual way? What would he have to do, perhaps within himself and his consciousness, to be able to share his knowledge so as to change human attitudes and values, to lessen the tensions and contradictions that lead him to despair? Without being too preachy, I think these are questions we are struggling with today, encountering them in the tree-huggers vs the logging industry; the environmentally-minded vs for-profit corporations. And, we see them in ourselves—we know what we **should** do to act in accordance with our beliefs about climate crisis and environmental justice, but do not always act accordingly. They represent not just a Georgian dilemma, but a cosmopolitan one—both global, and at times, very local.

I had hoped in this paper to situate Vazha-Pshavela in relationship to other authors who experience nature so closely, including his contemporary Maurice Maeterlinck, whose **Life of Bees** also appeared in 1901, and a long line of poets who write about wise, sapient nature. I look forward to that project, but in the meantime, need to be content to add Vazha-Pshavela’s voice to the chorus of biophilic poets and visionaries to whom we could, and perhaps should, be listening more carefully: mad in their day, they just might have wisdom to share as we face our current environmental crisis. What can we learn from them about keeping our sense of purpose and reason, and yet not losing the gifts such as Mindia possessed, and which possessed him?

Butiken

The Store

Having no money
looking at the food
I can not buy

Going through meters and meters of food
I swim along the shelves
having no money

Looking at the milk in plastic bottles
sliced ham in plastic
sliced cheese

Six eggs cost SEK 18
a liter of milk costs nine
dont have SEK 27

Watching fish meat and poultry
in plastic packaging
vegetables packaged in tin
beans in paperboard

Looking at bread baked by a machine
seing a human being who has become a machine
the human machine lifts the bread to the shelf

having no money

what is my value without money?

Har inga pengar
ser på maten
som jag inte kan köpa

Går genom meter åter meter av mat
jag simmar bland hyllorna
har inge pengar

Tittar på mjölken i plastflaskor
skivad skinka i plast
skivad ost

Sex ägg kostar 18 kronor
en liter mjölk kostar nio
har inte 27 kronor

Tittar på fisk kött och fågel
i plastförpackningar
grönsaker förpackade i plåt
bönor i papperskartong

Tittar på bröd som är bakade av en maskin
ser en människa som blivit en maskin
människomaskinen lyfter brödet till hyllan

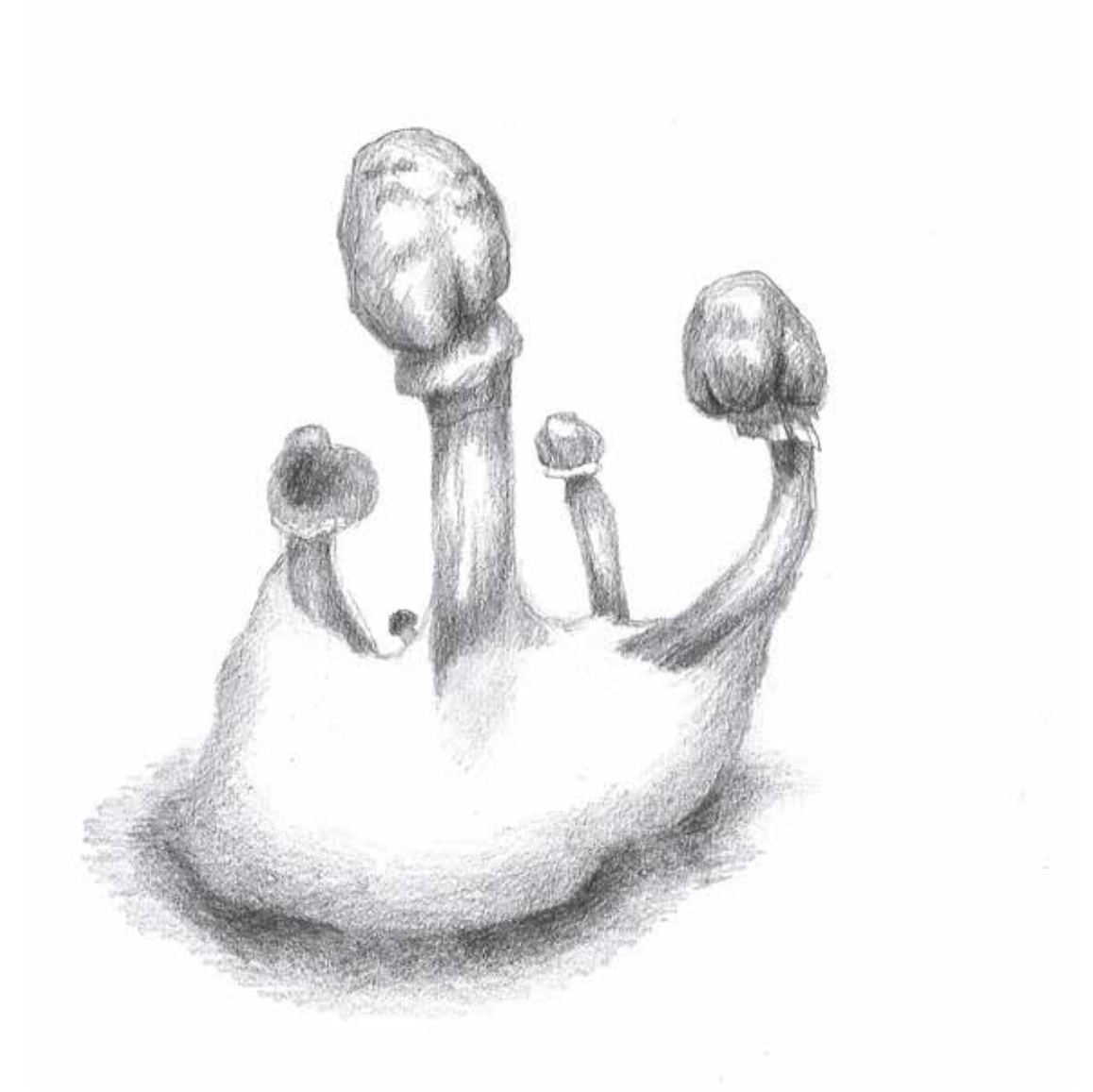
har inga pengar

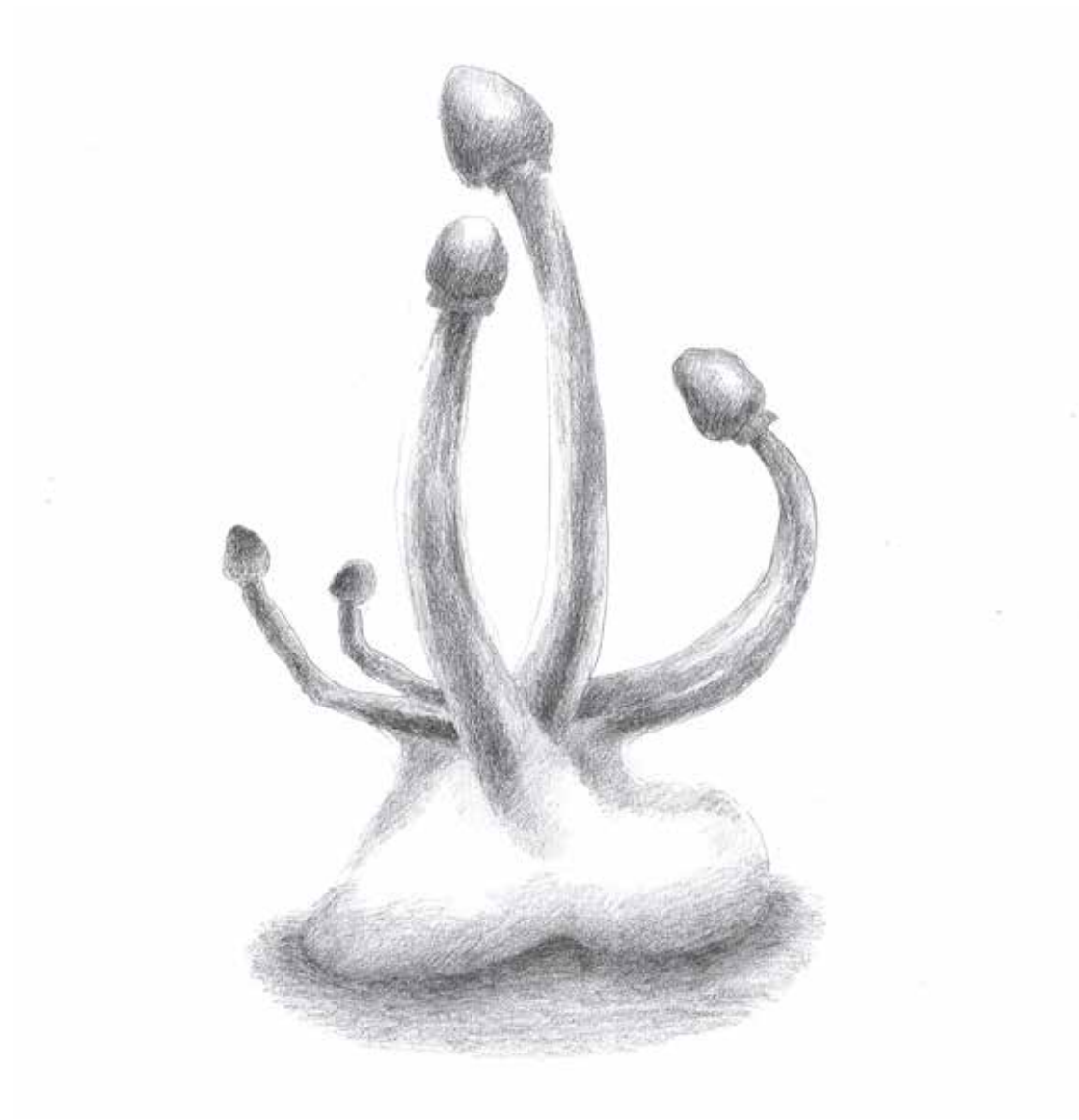
vad har jag för värde utan pengar?

The Mushroom Speaks

The mushroom speaks, sometimes gentle, sometimes with force. Will it speak differently if it's grown or growing free in the wild? The thin, delicate *Psilocybe semilanceata* living in our grazed fields of the north in late autumn will speak of the cattle of summer, of dew filled mornings with fog drifting over short grass. It's strength being great even though it's small. This wild mushroom will have to compete with many other organisms in a constant struggle, thus shaping it in beauty. Age old balances. The farmed mushroom on the other hand will be abundant, but twisted and weird in appearance, from the artificial conditions it's living in. Sterile in a way; promoting all sorts of aggressive attacks of invasive microbiota by it's lack of balance, but still having an advantage in strong colonialization of the substrate to begin with. *Psilocybe Cubensis* being the species of choice for growers anywhere, stem from the tropics. The wild specimen would speak of humidity and warmth, piles of cowdung among lush vegetation. Then taken indoors by eager psychonauts, dedicated to learn the wizardry of agar plates and pressure cookers. Now, is it just the psilocybin molecule interacting with our brain that cause this communication between species? Any hard boiled materialist would surely tell you so. Then again, you could also ask the mushroom itself, as we too often seem to talk "about" things, but rarely are able to actually go directly to the source for answers. The mushroom might say: please be present in this moment with me. There is only now, everything else is mere illusion. The mushroom might scare you half crazy. It may show you where you're at. The mushroom will crave your respect and fear, it will make you cry. But mostly in a gentle way. The things we as humans grow in the modern world seems often slightly perverse. Compare the wild strawberry to the farmed one. The salmon caught living free, versus the farmed fish with it's fatty lines and strange diseases. Yes, the grown mushroom looks strange at the surface. But then again, many prophets and sages have been ugly and deformed, and still being able to help and liberate many.







Plantimal— On Hybrid Sea Slugs and Virus

In the sea there is a certain kind of snail, or gastropod, which do not have a shell. In a sense it is reminiscent of the slugs in your garden, but far more beautiful with vivid colours and bushy protrusions on the back. These are the nudibranchs, with almost a hundred different species at the Swedish west coast. And there is more. Another fifty species exist that are closely related to the nudibranchs, crawling around below the shoreline, all of them lumped under the common term as sea slugs. There is a shimmering fairy-tale quality about these animals. They appear to be somewhere between poetry and reality—invisible to us above the surface, yet they exist and populate the seascape, which is as real and tangible as the world above. It is right by our feet, as we dip them from the jetty.

You may ask, how do they avoid being eaten by fish in the absence of a protective shell? Well, they have found other ways to defend themselves and do not have to spend energy in extracting calcium carbonate from the water. Instead, they live short and intensive lives with lots of sex and egg-laying, compared to other gastropods that is. They are hermaphrodites and simultaneously male and female. Hence, there is no need to search for the other sex, anyone of the same species they meet works. Many of them have stark warning colouration, with numerous protrusions on their backs, containing stinging nettle capsules from jelly fish and other cnidarians in their diet. Kiss one of these nudibranchs and your lips will be on fire.

One of the remarkable animals closely related to nudibranchs is the headshield slug—seven centimetres long, soft, and white, with an internal shell covered with thick mantle folds. It burrows in the soft mud of shallow, sheltered bays and only comes up to the surface of the soft mud to mate and deposit an egg mass that looks like a Finnish marmalade ball in size shape and colour (first yellow then after a few days turns to green). It can be absolutely teeming with marmalade balls in high summer. Then people call me up at the Natural History Museum and ask what they've seen. No fish ever eat the white sea slugs since they have skin glands that produces sulphuric acid if disturbed. The marmalade-looking egg masses don't seem to taste any good either, since they are left untouched until the small larvae hatches and swims away.

Another species is angelic in a white drop-shaped body and with a pair of winglike projections which it flaps around with in midwater. It is called Sea angel. After strong westerly winds from the North Sea there can be lots of sea angels, as it seems peacefully flopping in the water. But they have a devilish side. There are six claw-like protrusible tentacles that extend from the mouth cavity to grab at their main prey—the shelled

Sea butterfly. With the rounded shell in a firm grip, it rips out the soft body of the sea butterfly and swallows it whole. The angel of death then releases the empty shell that sinks in the dark abyss to rest on the sea floor.

Perhaps the strangest creature of them all blurs the line between animals and plants, even between life and death, in the sense of living cellular beings and viruses, the latter which are not considered to be alive, since they do not have any metabolism, at least not in the propagation phase as so-called virions. When a virus is actively infecting a cell, it becomes more or less part of it and could arguably be viewed as alive. The nudibranchs are predators, but their relatives the sacoglossans (meaning the “sack-tongues”) are most often vegetarians, with knife-like teeth that slices open the cell walls of algae to suck up the plant juice. One such sapsucker is *Elysia viridis*, also called the solar-powered sea slug. It has small blue dots scattered all over the body, but could otherwise be green, red, or yellowish, depending on which weed they have been feeding on. It is common on the Swedish west coast in the summertime, and you find them in shallow bays with lots of algae. This particular sea slug has a particularly close interaction with the algae it feed on. It's a menage-a-trois involving the mollusc, the algae, and a retrovirus in the closest imaginable symbiosis, merging as one flesh. Before digesting the juice from the algae, the sea slug absorbs the chloroplasts—the minute sub-cellular organelles in which the photosynthesis takes place—and incorporates them into its own cells. It seems like a smart strategy if you want to produce your own sugar from water, carbon dioxide and sunlight. But the chloroplasts have their own DNA, and the process needs to be managed by the plant cells central control unit in the nucleus, otherwise they quickly cease to function and die off.

Enter retrovirus, which may seem to be extra diabolical entities—sneakier and more persistent than ordinary virus. But they have good, some may say even an angelic side. Ordinary type virus, like the corona virus, forces the cell's machinery to create new virus directly by reading the virus RNA code, in the cell plasm. But the retrovirus is read backwards into DNA. The viral DNA enters into the nucleus and is incorporated with the cell's DNA. If the virus ends up in germ cells, the new addition to the genome is passed on to new generations. This happens quite often and not only for the *Elysia* sea slugs but for other animals and plants as well. In fact, 5 to 8% of our own DNA consists of retrovirus, so called HERV's (human endogenous retrovirus), or parts thereof, that has achieved eternal life in the protection of our cells. It is so far unclear how they affect us, but an important aspect is that the virus brings



Fig. 48

in snippets of genes from other hosts when they move into the DNA of the sea slug or into us. Often this is harmless, could of potential harm, but sometimes they bring new abilities across the borders of otherwise incompatible organisms, such as plants and animals. The retrovirus infecting the cells of the sea slug moves the genes that regulate photosynthesis from the chloroplasts to the DNA in the nucleus, which enables the sea slug to control the photosynthesis. VOILA! It is now a naturally genetic modified organism, a GMO from selection, which changes its habits from feeding on algae to spread out its wide lobes of the mantle and become basically driven by the sunlight. The slug is functionally a plant and an animal at the same time. It has been transformed into a plantimal. Eventually, the virus forces the cells in the slug's body to produce virions. This happens in the autumn and all the plantimals die (perhaps their tiny souls will go to the elysian fields). But their larva are still around as free-swimming plankton, awaiting to metamorphose in spring, first to harvest the weeds, later to harvest the sunrays.

A wonderful twist that follows from this novel symbiotic relationship is that it opens for new opportunities. Evolution always works that way. In spring 2021 it was reported that a species of solar powered *Elysia* in south-east Asia that was harassed by an internal parasite, a crustacean feeding on the slugs' reproductive organs (mostly on the eggs), simply severed the body from the infested body. The head lived on to grow a new body, with new reproductive organs, so that it could produce offspring. The clue to how the head could live on is that fine branches of the so-called intestinal gland reach out in the head and in the tentacles. These are lined with cells containing chloroplasts, in turn energizing the head from sunlight, enough to make it survive and slowly grow out a new body.

The retrovirus that infects the sea slugs does not have a vernacular name, but another one that does is well-known as HIV (human immunodeficiency virus) which causes the AIDS in humans. Despite all the suffering it has caused since the virus jumped from a chimpanzee to a human, probably in south-eastern Cameroon in 1908, it is viewed by researchers as a symbiosis, albeit of an aggressive sort. Various kinds of retrovirus transfers have the ability to transfer traits from different branches of the evolutionary tree, from one organism to another. One such trait that is supposed to be introduced by a retrovirus is the syncytium in the placenta in humans, in which the lateral cell walls are dissolved so that it urns to one big common cell with only two membranes between the blood of the mother and the foetus. Another example is certain HERV's that are activated when the fertilized embryo reaches the

stadium with eight cells. If the HERV's are artificially blocked, then any further development of the embryo is stalled. There are indications that these HERV's are linked to our immune system against other kinds of virus.

The new genetic engineering with the so-called CRISPR-CAS technique commonly known as the gene scissor, was a discovery that led to the 2020 Nobel Prize in Medicine. It opens up the staggering possibility that we humans ourselves—with some genetic engineering and so-called plasmids developed from the retrovirus—could become beautiful emerald plantimals with chloroplasts in the skin, which gives us energy from the sun directly by sunbathing. It would solve the supply problems in our overpopulated world. However, we would need large skin folds on our backs like solar panels...

We are all interlinked. It's us as in vi-r-us. Nature is in us as much as around us.



Fig. 49



Fig. X

Min misslyckade vänskap

Kalla det exotifiering, en dröm om att vara någon annan, något annat, om så bara för en stilla stund i en medelstor Värmlandsskog. Kalla det romantisering, shaman-fantasier, längtan, men faktum är att när jag såg den slitna rönnen på hygget tappade jag andan. Den smala stammen klängde sig fast bland klippblock och blåbärsris, sparad bland stubbarna i ett kalhygge. Ingen kunde tjäna pengar på henne, så hon blev kvar.

Hennes bleka lutande hållning, känslan av ålder, av envet-enhet. Krum och torr, sliten, stödd av käppen som var den egna kroppen, drivor av gröngrått skägg föll från grenarna.

Jag stegade närmre. Nu såg jag den spruckna barken, ett vertikalt snitt, kanske 30 cm, och innanmätet, poröst, up-plöst var på väg ut. Myror kilade i och runt såret, upp och ner för stammen.

Jag fick en stark upplevelse av att jag stod inför skogens egen shaman, dess gamla trollpacka, träd-häxa.

Men sen tog tanken slut som de ofta gör i skogen. I skog tas tankar över av icke-tänk. Jag la handen mot barken. Energin som strömmade upp i armen var aningen smärtsam, inte harmonisk. Du är på väg att dö. Tänkte jag. Jag satte mig på stubben bredvid. Något sorgsen över rönnens förfall. Alltings tillfällighet. Kanske ville jag bara vara i hennes närhet, men den samhörighet jag kände med trädet, upplevde inte hon samma sak?

Var denna rönn min shaman, min lärare, tänkte jag?

Under senare år har jag haft det stora privilegiet, nöjet att få uppleva tanke-utmanande möten. Jag har deltagit i workshops, ”gå och sök en planta som du känner närhet till, det kan vara ett träd eller ett grässtrå. Var med plantan, tala med den, smaka på den. Känn kärleken mellan er. Kom tillbaka till människogruppen. Berätta vad som hände?”

Jag minns en kvinna berättade: ”Trädet sa, var lycklig, ta hand om dig, sjung.”

Jag har lyssnat på föredrag. ”Växter är kännande entiteter. Rör vid dem. Lyssna till deras röster. Du kan kommunicera med dem.”

Jag har dansat med plantor. ”Uppträd för plantan.” Så väcks en samhörighet till liv, som enligt teorin redan finns där.

Plantmänniskor är generellt vackra i mina ögon. Hoppfulla att en kommunikation finns mellan dem och och det större. Och att den kommunikationen är begriplig för dem.

Vi satt tillsammans många gånger, trädet och jag. Jag pratade med henne, fotograferade henne och tillät sinnet att föras bort av rörelsen när vinden gick igenom kronan. Kvistarnas lav, långa milt turkosa, grå skägg som vinkade när det blåste. Jag mediterade där, och fick insikter vid hennes sida. Hon erbjöd en plats av stillhet för ett vandrande människo-psyke.

Du är min vän, tänkte jag. Och jag vill ge dig något på samma sätt som du ger mig. Men vad kan ett människorbarn ge ett träd i gåva?

En dag stod jag framför henne med ett äpple i handen. Sött.

Vem gillar inte glukos?

Äpplet, runt i handen. Saftigt inuti.

Jag såg myrorna ila upp och ner längs barken. In och ut i magen, hålrummet i stammen.

Jag såg framför mig hur äpplets sötma gödde dem, kletade sig på trä, fick andra insekter att vilja borra sig in, lägga sina ägg i den sköra kroppen.

Skulle jag föda samma varelser som åt upp min vän?

Nej. Jag tänkte inte bidra till hennes destruktio. Jag åt själv mitt äpple och funderade vidare. Hemma på gården fick jag en ny tanke. Körsbärsträdet hade blivit angripet av en parasit innan det hade gett sin första frukt. Grått, med en enda flämtande gren av liv stod det döende i en extremt vildvuxen trädgård.

Någon föreslog aska. Aska dödar parasiter. Du håller askan över trädet och insekterna försvinner, det blir en ogästvänlig miljö för dem.

Jag rakade ur kaminen, la aska i en glasburk och begav mig till hygget med en kur för min vän. Jag skulle hela henne genom att göra henne obeboelig för parasiter och myror.

Jag minns att det blåste vilket gjorde det svårt att få askan att hamna där jag ville ha den. På stammen. Men där for den, i ett grått virvlande moln daskade den emot henne. Förr användes aska för lördags-tvätten. Det är lut i aska som fräter bort fläckar och smuts. Det är starkt.

Även för träd. Trädet ryste. Jag såg en bild inom mig av brännande lut mot skinn.

Min vän insmord med aska. Det kanske skyddade mot parasiter, men det stacks i hela hennes stam.

I det öppna såret.

Aska. Av döda träd.

Det slog till som en sten i pannan.

Jag kände mig som en idiot. Jag hade inte tänkt på det. En intelligentare mänskiska hade tänkt på det.

Min vilda vän, jag hade strött likdelar över henne—som present.

Jag hade inte respekterat hennes resa mot döden. Livet som blir nytt liv. Myrornas hem. Parasiternas hem.

Jo, så pass mycket samhörighet hade vi ändå att jag kunde känna hur hon riste.

Sträckte sig bort from mig.

Gå.

Jag satt ändå bredvid henne ett tag med kaffet som smakade äckligt termos.

Det blev inte bra det här.

Jag var en antropocentrisk plant-människa. Jag hade varit på konferenser. Professorn visade foton på lust mellan växter och folk. ”Njut av plantorna”, och alla njöt på power-pointen, slickade löven. Sensuellt.

Krama träden!

Spralla på löven—jag har fäst elektroder som ger ifrån sig roliga ljud!

Ta en tugga på växter du möter och känn kärleken den sänder ut—fråga—vad kan du göra för mig?

Trädet ville definitivt inte ha mig där.

Det gjorde ont. Det var förudmjukande. Det var nobben.

Vid närmare reflektion, varför skulle de fundera på vad de vill hjälpa oss med? Växter har sitt eget jävla sjå. De behöver sol, eller mer skugga och de behöver plats och de har sitt. Nej, träden vill inte bli kramade. De utsöndrar ett gift när de blir kramade för att bli av med insekten, den stora mjuka insekts-människan med vår kärlek som kan göra ont.

Kärleken till växter är som kärlekten till en förälder. Vi behöver dem—vi har inget val än att älska dem. Älskar vi dem inte är vi sjuka.

Rörelsen mot växterna är konstnärens utan uppmuntran hemifrån. Kärleken måste vara extra allt för att vara tillräcklig. Eftersom att vi är människor som är så långt borta från jorden, som inte orkar vara oälskade, så måste vi uppfinna att plantorna älskar oss.

Men vi kan älska träden, gräset och syrenerna. Utan att tro att de bryr sig mer om oss än om en kråka eller en mus, eller en annan prästkrage. Vi behöver inte krama dem. Och om vi gör det, så vet att det är för din skull.

Inte trädets.

Träd är generellt inte intresserade av människo-presenter.

Jag fortsatte besöka rönnen. Trots att jag inte längre var välkommen, kom jag. Skämdes gjorde jag. År efter år. Och Rönnen förlät mig till sist, men hon var bestämd. Sitt du där borta med ditt kaffe. Håll inte på och greja med mig.

Du får vara min vän om du vill kalla dig vän. Men jag är den jag är.

Jag köper villkoren med hull och hår och intalar mig inte att det är jag som är bossen i relationen. Min enda makt är att förstöra och det vill jag inte. Respektfull distans är vad jag hoppas på.

Jag vill bara sitta här i väderleken medan vi närmar oss döden tillsammans, äldre och äldre för varje vinter som vi blir. Lösare i konturerna då livet tar bett av våra kroppar, myror eller fria radikaler spelar ingen roll, och björksly och hallonsnår börjar resa sig ur hygget.

Nu dricker jag kaffe och ser förundrad de små gröna rönn-skotten som spirar spåda vid foten av hennes stam. I kronan bär livet fortfarande frukt, bären lyser röda varje höst.

Det skulle inte förvåna om hon överlever mig. Vem blir befriad av din villkorlösa kärlek, säger hon?

Nej, inte jag—bara du.

Tack.

Transcendence

In this project, I investigate identity in relation to surface. I capture the gaps, the inbetween spaces. When can we be ourselves? And at the price of what, in our time? What is timelessness? Can you capture a person's identity, psyche or charisma in a picture? Regardless of the surface? Or does the surface capture the interior?

I am searching for moods of being, and the essence of the particular being itself. I want to reflect the psyche by breaking norms. I search for transcendence between gender identities, between the visible and the hidden.

Approaching these issues I dress men in dresses. But not as a costume, or something superficial, pasted on a model.

I have sought out the men around me who seemed to be able to wear a garment symbolising femininity, but still radiate their own personality. I have looked for something that feels natural and relaxed for these men. A dress they feel ok with, comfortable in. It's more about touching our boundaries, than it is a man dressing up as a woman.

My associations go to a time when women could not wear pants, but now women have been wearing pants since the 20s. The male garment; "trousers" had to symbolize strength and power. This garment and women's suffrage went hand in hand. Power and fashion. Interior and exterior.

Could it be possible that in the future men will wear dresses without it being interpreted as a female garment? And if so, is it about men being allowed to be more feminine, and what does that mean? What is considered feminine in 2021? Are the outdated terms still there? Soft? Careful? Poetic? Romantic?

No matter what we mean by words like feminine or masculine, there are differences just as there are similarities. It signifies different things in different cultures and societies. It has been regarded differently through the ages. The interesting thing about us humans is how we relate to norms. Is it a strength to break the norm?

I want to let my photographs speak about these thoughts in a simplified way, without taking a definite position.









Bumblebee



Fig. 56

Humlan

Sitting in my garden at prime time
 a Saturday evening at the beginning of May
 The evening sun warming the cool air
 Current bush in bloom
 A bumblebee, it seems to me, is doing overtime
 pollinating with speed

Nobody is asking the bumblebee how she is fit financially
 if she is making ends meet
 Nobody is asking the bumblebee how many hours she is working
 No one is asking if she is getting paid overtime
 or how much she is making
 Our lives have become hours, cents and minutes

Sitter på bästa sändningstid i min trädgård
 en lördagkväll i början av maj
 kvällssolen värmer den kalla luften
 vinbärsbusken blommar
 en humla tycks mig göra övertid
 och pollinerar i rasande fart

ingen frågar humlan om hon får ihop det ekonomiskt,
 om hon klarar sig
 ingen frågar humlan hur många timmar hon jobbar
 ingen frågar humlan om hon får övertid
 eller hur mycket hon tjänar
 ingen frågar om hon klarar sig på det hon drar in
 ingen frågar

humlan gör det humlan gör
 ingen behöver fråga
 för humlan gör det humlan gör

när våra liv är timmar ören och minuter
 finns det ingen plats för magi

Into the world of alchemical
reproduction and mother trees

DIY Homunculi



The Beginning of an End

Accidental pregnancy is a term most people in this world no longer remember. After the thawing and revival of a highly infectious, 35,000 year old Neanderthal virus in the year 2037, entire continents began experiencing dramatic increases in miscarriages and other reproductive complications. Due to a lack of inherited Neanderthal genotypes to exploit, populations of primarily African descent remained largely immune to the virus.

Corporate bioengineering firms tried pushing the production of ectogenetic technologies to solve the problem, but these solutions were prohibitively expensive to scale globally. As a result, birth rates outside of Sub-Saharan Africa began declining significantly in the mid-century. The global population was projected to plummet, dropping over 50%—from 9.7 billion in 2050, to just 4.7 billion in 2100.



Unexpectedly, salvation would be found with the translation of a small collection of pseudonymous Coptic manuscripts in 2068. These writings seem to have been produced or preserved by a group known as “Theosebia’s Circle.” This gathering of women were all learned in the hermetic science or natural artisanry of their time, and all traced their philosophical lineage to the 3rd century figure of Theosebia, sister to the legendary Egyptian alchemist Zosimos of Panopolis, who often praised her as an adept in her own right.

One suspected disciple of Theosebia’s Circle was the infamous Anna Zieglerin (c. 1550–1575), who claimed that she could carry a pregnancy to term every month. Zieglerin was eventually executed by fire for numerous crimes related to the defrauding of a duke, but scholars speculated that her formula for a reproductive accelerant named “lion’s blood” drew from a Theosebian manuscript. This peculiar text foretold of a magnum opus—a feat of natural magic, referred to only as the “Lilith Tree”—a mutated willow from which a garden of marvelous homunculi might be generated.



The Eden Willow

Unfortunately, we know very little about these women. What we do know is that their work inspired an interdisciplinary team of physicians, historians, activists, and engineers to revive the mythic Lilith Tree in the form of *Salix edeneriana*. After nearly a decade of trials, the first “Eden willow” was bred by a consortium of researchers and community members at the University of New Cascadia, which brought together UNC’s department of reproductive technology, an African delegation of experimental agroecologists, an advisory council from the Amerindian Nations, and representatives from the Global Alliance of Nurses, Midwives, and Doulas.

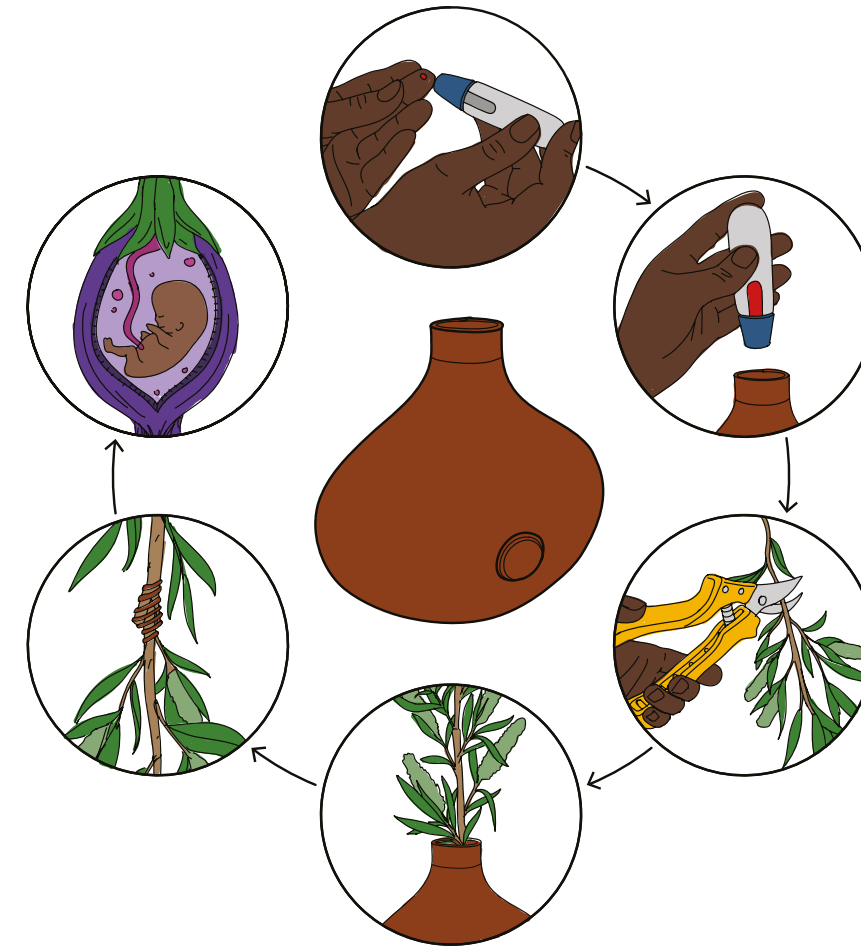
Perhaps the most valued stakeholder was a small, QTPOC cooperative farm. Eager to start families, these folk became the center of a pilot study to test botanical birth in 2079. Their dreams were actualized with the help of an ingenious, on-site assistant. Behold, the “matrixial vase.”



The Matrixial Vase

By exposing peripheral blood samples from two or more parents of any sex to a specially formulated reprogramming factor, certain hematopoietic stem cells can become induced pluripotent stem cells, ultimately developing into viable gametes. These hybrid haploid cells are then absorbed by an Eden willow cutting within the matrixial vase, where they are fertilized and incubated from the convenience of the home. Once this 'impregnated' cutting is grafted back onto the Eden willow from which it came, the tree will require intensive care. If all goes well, the lucky parents may welcome their child into the world in roughly nine months.

As the dawn of the 22nd century approaches, botanical birth has allowed agrarian communities to more permanently intertwine their futures with the fertilities of plants. However, children born this way are no longer simply human. They are forever to be more than human— like plant-people, or a people recreated in the image of plants...



Riebansilba—

himmelens revesølv



Fig. 63

I dag er det rundt 100 000 tamrein i Norge. Som grunnlaget for den samiske kulturen er reindrift en vernet kultur, og noe bare samer har rett til å drive. I dag trues drifta fra mange hold; med krav om å minske reinflokker, planer om gruvedrift på Finnmarksvidda, vindmøller og utbygging av veinett, men mest av alt av et varmere klima.

Oppvarmingen skjer omtrent tre ganger så raskt i Nord-Troms og Finnmark og resten av Arktis, som i resten av verden. Reinsdyr som er spesialtilpasset til et ekstremt klima med kalde, snørike vintre og som beiter lav og mose, er svært sårbare for endringer. Økende skogområder med mindre vidde og et mer variabelt klima med mer regn om vinteren og is på beitene, vil hindre mattilgang.

Om reindriften, grunnlaget for den samiske kulturen, forsvinner, forsvinner kulturen, tilbake blir bare språk og gode minner, sier Ole Rune Hætta (NRK TV **Der vinteren er velstand**). ”Om vi mennesker ikke tar vare på jorda, vil jorda ta vare på seg selv. Og da er ikke vi velkommen lenger” ^(ibid.). Følgelig er dette et verdspørsmål, men til slutt et politisk spørsmål, påpeker Pål Prestrud, direktør for Cicero Senter for klimaforskning. For hva er et godt klima? For samer og inuitter er det vinteren som gir velstand.

”For å løse økokrisen trengs en endring i hvordan vi forstår oss selv og vårt forhold til naturen og livet”, skriver filosofen Arne Næss i dypøkologien. Tanken gjenfinnes i den tradisjonelt overførte kunnskapen, som vår kultur har opphav i. I den anses verden som en helhet, der mennesker, dyr og natur er avhengig av hverandre og lever i gjensidig respekt.

Gjennom mytene (gr. mythos, fortelling) kunne menneskene i tidligere tider forstå og forklare hendelsene i verden. Mytene var det materielle, åndelige og kulturelle livsgrunnlaget for et folk, og fungerte som en felles hukommelse.

Den samiske mytologien deler verden inn i tre: den himmelske verden, menneskenes verden og underverdenen. Menneskene i Arktis, her i ”tilværelsens yttergrense”, var mer enn noen andre prisgitt naturen, der alt hadde sjel. Enkelte fjell, steiner og innsjøer var hellige, som man delte ut offergaver til. Ting i naturen med en merkelig form, som en stein, en **seide**, var fylt med særlige krefter. Hver enkelt familie hadde sin seide ^(Fosmark mfl. 1998 s. 179), og det fantes seider som var felles for hele samelandsbyen; en **siida**, en gruppe reineiere som samarbeider.

I ritualet, det fysiske uttrykket for myten, transcenderer myten fortid, nåtid og framtid til en evig sannhet. En sannhet som stadig ble gjenfortalt via minnet, i folkeeventyrene, i skjønnlitteraturen, i joiken og dansen, og i billedkunsten/duodji. Gjennom runeboommas magiske elementer kom noaiden i kontakt med ånde verdenen. Kun de sterkeste noaidene, flygernoaidene, var sjamaner som kunne gå ut av kroppen og foreta sjelereiser. Noaiden skulle beskytte menneskene og tyde gudenes vilje og trommenes tegn. Det ga menneskene mulighet for å påvirke hendelser i nåtiden; som fangst, innhøsting, fødsel og helbredelse. Blant runeboommas symboler står den livgivende sola ofte sentralt; gjerne framstilt som et kvadrat.

I den mest radikale formen for myter, som i hinduismen, er det de samme hendelsene som gjentar seg. I den moderate formen uttrykkes dette synet i det sykliske historiebegrep, som er det begrepet som ligger til grunn for den samiske

mytologien. De hendelsene og begivenhetene som skjer er nye, men disse vil være av samme type som de som allerede har skjedd. Historien har et bestemt forløp, og etter en viss tid ”gjentar” historien seg. ^(Gunneng 2003, s.7)

I dette mytiske verdensbildet levde menneskene i den ”bekymrede tid”, der hendelsene ga tiden sitt innhold, uten et en trengte å henviser til selve begrepet ”tid”. Det er i den bekymrede tid at vi finner forståelsen av menneskets plass i verden. Dens motsetning er den ”ubekymrede tid” som er maskinens, den teoretiske og objektive tid. I den deles tiden inn i målbare enheter som følger etter hverandre, og det er denne ”ubekymrede tid” som ligger til grunn for den tidsforståelsen mennesket i dag oppfatter som den virkelige ^(ibid.).

I samisk mytologi heter det at samene er etterkommere av solas barn. Solas datter ga dem reinen, som hun lot vandre langs solstrålene ned til jorda. Så lærte hun samene å joike, slik at de kunne temme reinen. Solas sønn **Gállá** (Sirius) er den mest lyssterke stjernen på himmelen. Han dro på frierferd og giftet seg med jettens datter. De fikk tre sønner, **Gállárbartnit**, som ble stamfedre til samefolket. De var så gode skiløpere og jegere at de etter deres død ble opphøyet til himmelen, der de utgjør de tre stjernene i Orions belte. I det mytiske verdensbildet oppfattes tiden som sirkulær, noe som kommer til uttrykk i det samiske ordtaket ”Tiden går ikke, den kommer”, i en evig tilbakekomst av hendelser.

Den himmelske jakten

Skuer du opp mot Melkeveien en stjerneklar vinternatt, er du vitne til en slik gjentagelse. Under samenes lange vandring med reinen over vidde kom stjernene nært. Polarstjerna, **Boahji**, er ”himmelnaglen”. Den står alltid på samme sted. Den har som oppgave å holde selveste himmelen oppe! Mens den lyser fra samme punkt, er de andre stjerne-tegnene bevegelige, og kommer og går i løpet av både døgnet og gjennom årstidenes gang.

Etter som stjernene endret seg, fungerte stjernehimmlen som både klokke og kompass; den viste både tiden, årstiden og himmelretningene. Stjernenes vandring regulerte når reindriftssamene byttet på å gjete reinflokken og i hvilken retning de skulle gjete den. Karlsvogna var et sikkert kompass, og når Orion viste seg i øst, visste de hvor de skulle flytte med flokken for å komme vestover.

Slik som de gamle grekerne så guder og mytiske helter på stjernehimmlen, ser samene det som var livsgrunnlaget for deres nomadiske levevis: reinsdyr og jakt. Pil og bue var viktige våpen for å kunne overleve, og samene var kjent for å være gode bueskyttere.

I myten om den evig pågående himmelske jakten er det jegerne, stjernene, som står for handlingene. Samene anser stjernene som en eneste stor kosmisk jaktscene, der reinen eller elgen, **Sarvvis**, står sentralt, omkranset av jegere og jaktredskaper. Den store jakten foregår over hele nordkalotten, i samenes tradisjonelle beiteområder i Sameland eller **Sapmi**, som omfavner både Norge, Finland, Sverige og Russland. Jakten starter hver høst og varer til våren, hver eneste natt, til evig tid. For nordsamene var dyret den store elgoksen eller rein-



bukken, hos samene i øst og hos sørsamene var det en elgokse. Med innføringen av kristendommen fra 1700-tallet av, forsvant ikke bare samenes gamle tro, men også en mengde myter og fortellinger. At myten om den himmelske jakten fremdeles er bevart, forteller noe om dens store betydning, tolker jeg. På den ene siden vitner den om å overleve under harde arktiske livsvilkår, på den andre siden om enheten mellom naturen og kulturen. Det er en fortelling vi finner igjen hos andre folkeslag over hele verden. Khantyrer og evenker i Sibir og salish-indianere på nordvestkysten av Amerika jaktet også på den store elgen, mens tuaregene i Sahara jaktet på kamel, baskerne på okse og antikkens grekere på bjørnen; i andre deler av verden gikk jakten etter tapiren, fjellsauen eller antilopen.

Midt i Melkeveien springer han, **Sarvvis**, den store reinen eller elgoksen med det digre geviret. Han strekker seg over hele himmelhvelvingen og favner over syv stjernebilder: Kassiopeia, Persevs, Væren, Tyren, Tvillingene, Orion og Lille hund, i tillegg til enslige stjerner. Det takkete hornet hans er i Kassiopeia, forbeina i Persevs og bakbeina i Kusken. Han springer for å unngå jegerne, som truer ham fra alle himmelretninger etter tur, ettersom mørket faller på.

Den store jegeren **Fávdna** (den røde Arcturus) er en av de mest lyssterke stjernene i nord. Når skumringen faller på, står han klar og sikter på **Sarvvis** med buene sine Fávnnadági eller Dávggát. Den ene buen er Store bjørn (Ursa Major) og den andre er Lille bjørn (Ursa Minor). Andre jegere og skiløpere prøver å hjelpe til slik at Fávdna kommer i skuddhold. Men han får konkurranse. Samtidig som Fávdna kommer til syne på stjernehimmelen, viser en annen stjerne seg overfor den, Arcturus i Bootes. Det er **Fávna gilvoolmmái**, konkurrenten til Fávdna.

Foran Fávdna suser de yngre jegerne **Gállábártnit**, solsønnen Gállás tre sønner (Orions belte). Det var **Gállábártnit** som oppfant skiene, og de er himmelhvelvingens beste skiløpere. Med seg har de kniv, spyd og gryte, som består av de tre stjernene under Orions belte. Skytteren **Bázá**, den klare stjernen Regulus i Løvens stjernebilde, deltar i jakten, og han har mistet lua i kaoset.

Boares Áhku, ei gammel kone med hundeflokken sin, kommer for å hjelpe til. De utgjør til sammen Pleiadene. Pleiadene kalles også Roavggutt, Gievdne-guoddi og Nieidagihuppi. Kona og hundene vil skremme **Sarvvis**. De har også med seg ei jerngryte til å koke reinkjøttet i. Kona roper til valpene: ”Legg i vei etter ham, legg i vei, om dere når ham igjen får dere den feite endetarmen!”

De to skiløperne **Čuoigit**, Castor og Pollux i Tvillingene, prøver å skremme **Sarvvis** mot Fávdna. Fávdna har spent buen, men tør ikke skyte, for mellom ham og **Sarvvis** står **Boahji**, Polarstjernen. I kraft av å holde himmelen oppe sørger den for at det er liv på jorda. Hvis **Boahji** blir truffet, vil himmelen falle ned, verden går under og alt liv på jorda utslettes.

I løpet av en natt med intens jakt må jegerne innse de ikke kommer på skuddhold. En etter en gir de seg, først Gállá, til slutt Fávdna som holder lengst ut. **Sarvvis** fortsetter å springe til stjernene blekner og dagen gryr. Men neste kveld dukker han opp igjen, og jakten fortsetter, til evig tid.

Tre eldre søstre forteller at ”i de dager gjette vi flokken døgnet rundt, hele året. Det var mye ulv den gangen som var etter flokken. Selv om du var helt alene



Fig. 65



Fig. 66

på vakt var du likevel trygg. Du hadde hunden din, reinflokken, og så hadde du stjernene som beveget seg på himmelen. De var som våre venner, som også hadde et arbeid å holde på med. Det er sant at vi brukte stjernene som klokke, vi hadde avtalt lengden på vakta i forhold til stjernene” (Vars 2001 s.24).

Søstrenes fortelling understreker den tette forbindelsen mellom samene og den naturen og kulturen de er en del av, der menneskene, naturen og kulturen er så sammenvevd at de framstår som en enhet. Mennesket inngår i naturens syklus, som igjen setter premisser for kulturen: når, hva og hvor de kunne utføre de forskjellige arbeidene gjennom året. Dette helhetssynet regulerer og opprettholder balansen i tilværelsen, i universet, i verden.

Den spennende fortellingen hadde sin store misjon med å hjelpe menneskene med å huske hvordan stjernene beveger seg. Om kveldene, i lys av bålet i lavvoen eller gammen, ble den gjenfortalt gang på gang, og overlevert fra generasjon til generasjon. I et ordtak fra gammelt av heter det at samene har gitt navn til hver eneste stjerne: ”skulle en stjerne forsvinne ville samene straks oppdage tapet” (ibid.).

Stjernene, som søstrene beskriver som sine venner, har vi mennesker mer til felles med enn vi tenker over. En stjerne er en kompakt kule i gasstilstand som hovedsakelig er dannet av hydrogen og helium, og som utstråler selvprodusert energi, mest som lys. Stjernestøv og gass er byggesteinene for vårt solsystem, for jorda og alle levende ting, inkludert menneskene. Denne viten om vårt felles opphav plasserer mennesket på linje med all annen levende energi, kun uttrykt i ulike sansbare former. Vi er alle stjernestøv! Den viten gir et ansvar for hvordan vi forvalter jorda og alle levende vesener. I urfolks kultur og tradisjon er denne kunnskapen nedfelt: der ikke bare menneskene, men også dyra og naturen er besjelet. Den holistiske tankegangen som ligger i mytene, vitner om en livsform der bærekraft er implisitt, der det var naturen som satte premissene for menneskenes handlinger, og der menneskene ikke skulle etterlate seg varige spor.

Duodji og dáidda

Samene skal lære av tidligere tider, av overleveringene, mytenes budskap og tradisjonens visdom, heter det i samisk tradisjon. Det gjelder også for det samiske kunsthåndverket, **duodji**, som springer ut fra ønsket om å ære og vise respekt for naturen. Det er en taus kunnskap, erfart gjennom handlingsoverføring og kroppens erfaringer med et håndverk. En kunnskap som er nedarvet fra generasjon til generasjon, og som derved fungerer som et samfunns kulturelle fellesskap og historiske hukommelse. Duodji innebærer både kunst og håndverk, integrert i ett og samme produkt. I begrepet ligger også utøvelsen, selve prosessen underveis, der utøveren er en **duodjár**.

Å utføre et godt håndverk var livsnødvendig i en hardbarket natur. Det medførte strenge krav til både teknikk, funksjon og estetisk utførelse. I en nomadisk tilværelse var det de nødvendige brukstingene som ble framstilt av de materialene som var tilgjengelige. ”For samene var alt kunst, og alle var

kunstnere”, uttrykte multikunstneren Nils-Aslak Valkeapää.

Når reinen var felt, ble den æret ved at hele dyret ble brukt. Kjøttet ble kokt og tørket, blodet ble brukt i pannekaker og tarmene ble stappet med blod eller kjøtt til pølser. Av skinnet sydde kvinnene plagg som pesker, luer, votter, bukser, skaller, kommager og kaffeposer. Til noaiden ble det beredt trommeskinn, og av senene ble det tvunnet senetråd. Av geviret og skjelettet laget mennene blant annet redskaper, nålehus, knapper og noaidens trommehammer. Og når en bar et bein rundt halsen kom en nærmere reinsdyret.

Samene lever i dag i den moderne verden, mens de tradisjonelle omgivelsene og livsverdiene eksisterer parallelt. I takt med at livet endrer seg i det samiske samfunn, endrer også håndverket seg, påpeker Gunvor Guttorm: ”Duodji er preget av sine utøvere, duodjårat, som igjen preges av samtiden de lever i. Det er snakk om en forandringsprosess. Begynnelsen lå i noe som var nært og intimt for våre forfedre i deres liv, hvor de flettet daglige gjøremål i saker, hendelser, tanker, tro som gikk i hverandre som en helhet” (Guttorm 2001, s.9.)

Hun mener altså at det skjer en forandring, men likevel ligger de nedarvede kunnskapene, den kollektive hukommelsen, til grunn for duodjåren, idet objektet bærer fortidens kunnskaper og vurderinger. Ved siden av den tradisjonelle håndverksutøvelsen duodji oppsto et nytt begrep for kunst: **dáidda**. Dette hang sammen med opprør mot den norske integreringspolitikken, og motstanden mot utbyggingen av Alta-Kautokeinovassdraget i særdeleshet. Samiske kunstnere fant tilbake til røttene sine, og utviklet duodji til selvstendige kunstneriske uttrykk, uten nødvendigvis å ta bruksverden i betraktning.

Dette gjaldt også for Iver Jåks (1932–2007), som var en av de første samene som ble definert som kunstner, og som jeg kjenner sterkt slektskap med, både i forhold til livsholdningen og tilnærmingen til et materiale. Jåks ble født i en lavvo på fjellet Ucca Gállovárre i Karasjok i Norge. Under vårflyttingene, der samene brakte med seg emner til seletøy og pulker til reinen, lærte han hvordan han skulle kutte treet uten å kutte fibrene. Ved lengre pauser ble materialene lagt i snøsørpe og vann. Når de innimellom ble tørket, sprakk veden langs fibrene, og man kunne kløyve dem langs disse. Slik beholdt treet sin styrke.

Denne tradisjonsoverleverte kunnskapen brakte Jåks med inn i sitt kunstneriske virke. Den samiske visdommen om at menneskene ikke skal etterlate seg spor var grunnleggende i hans verk, de skulle også ”få lov til å forsvinne når deres tid er over” (Eilertsen mfl.). I treskulpturene hans er derfor forvitningsprosessen grunnleggende. Når de ofte løst sammensatte skulpturene hans vises i et galleri, endrer de karakter etter hvert som de faller fra hverandre, og ofte blir nye elementer tilføyd. Han oppfordret publikum til å delta ved å flytte på ting, eller bygge den opp uten å ha sett skulpturen på forhånd.

Resultatet ble derfor ingen fast konstruksjon, men ”et flytende møte av hendelser” (ibid.), av stadig endring og bevegelse. En bevegelse som peker videre ut over den tradisjonelle forståelsen av et kontemplasjonsobjekt, det vil si av en tilstand av ro og helhet, men mot de stadig pågående prosessene i livet. Kontemplasjonen blir liggende i selve bevegelsen, i den levende og dynamiske prosessen. ”Det stive er dødt” uttrykte Iver Jåks selv.

Dette setter hans arbeider inn i konseptkunsten, der også mine arbeider hører til. I sin radikale form der konseptkunsten opphever materialiteten, blir idéen bak kunstverket selve verket, som en filosofisk refleksjon, noe som ikke kan besittes. Jeg forstår det slik at det innebærer en frigjøring fra en ”produktets ideologi”, til en sanselig og deltakende opplevelse.

Materialets iboende kraft

Den nedarvede, kollektive hukommelsen ligger også til grunn for egen kunstnerisk tilnærming til et materiale; der den kulturelle historien og materialets egenverdi er to sider av samme sak, som gjennom arbeidsprosessen går opp i en materiell og immateriell symbiose.

Den egenverdi ethvert vesen tillegges, uttrykker seg også gjennom materialet: Et gevir av elg eller reinsdyr utstråler og vitner om syklusen i bestanden, der geviret vokser og faller av gjennom året i forhold til flokkens behov, slik som paringsritualer og kalving. Et skinn preges av mattilgang, kulde og alder på dyret. Tarmskinn sto for inuittene som symbol på selve livslinjen; en forutsetning for å være eller ikke være. Jeg tar også til meg den samiske beretningen om reven. Fortellinger om reven har en stor og rik tradisjon også i norsk og europeisk natur, mytologi og folkeeventyr. I tidligere tider kunne menneskene og dyra snakke med hverandre, og reven bar med seg et budskap som det var viktig å lytte til, enten det var om en kommende fare eller mer dagligdagse ting.

Når ildreven vifter med halen, flammer nordlyset opp i de samiske fargene rødt, grønt, gult og blått, heter det i samisk tradisjon. Det er ikke vanskelig å tenke seg under det bølgende nordlyset en vinternatt. Innimellom glimter de sølvskimrende stjernene. I samisk mytologi beskytter sølv mot de underjordiske. Store søljer pryder samekoftene. Over den nyfødtes komse, en tradisjonell samisk vugge som kunne bæres på ryggen eller henges på et reinsdyr, ble det hengt sølvkuler, komsekuler. De beskyttet barnet mot å bli byttet ut av de underjordiske.

Sølv er et dyrt materiale, derfor har glimmer, også kalt fattigmannssølv, blitt brukt som erstatning. I sollyset glitrer det som nypusset sølv. Bruken av glimmer i samekofter er dokumentert fra 1700-tallet av til belter, på bryst og krager på koftene, på vesker og skrin blant annet. På norsk kalles glimmer kråkesølv, på samisk riebangoilli (revegull) eller riebansilba (revesølv).

Jeg skimter reven innimellom det flammende nordlyset den har viftet fram med halen, og der de mange sølvskimrende stjernene er revesølvet den har strødd ut over himmelvevingen. I kontemplasjon og undring under den samiske stjernehimlen, har jeg selv søkt å la dette immaterielle materialet styre en utforskende kunstnerisk prosess, og samtidig også søke de konkrete materiales iboende egenskaper:

”En prosess i tanke og handling som bytter på å lede meg når jeg støter på en utfordring, som støtter meg og løser opp, i en tilbakevendende syklisk bevegelse, som gjentar seg igjen og igjen, mens den samtidig utvikles og vever tankene og håndens virke tettere sammen, til stadig nye innsikter og

erfaringer, til en helhetlig enhet, der jeg ikke kan skille hva som er tanke og hva som er handlingens bevegelse, hvor det begynner og hvor det tar veien, uten ende, bare endringer å være i.” (*Dagboksnotat* 25.03.2020)

Jeg samler biter av ”revesølv” som om jeg plukker ned biter fra stjernehim-melen. Jeg farger silkestoff og klede, et tradisjonelt filtet ullstoff som brukes i de samiske koftene, med naturens farger. Jeg tørker elgtarm og finner fram elg- og reinsdyrgevir jeg har funnet under vandringer i skog og fjell.

Den skapende samhandling

Grethe

Filosofene Henri Bergson (1859–1941) og Gabriel Marcel (1889–1973) oppfatter tid som noe vi gjennomlever, er i og erfarer. Gjennom uopphørlig forandring, bevegelse og nyskapning forstås tiden som en prosess. Det er noe jeg finner igjen i den mytiske tidsforståelsen, der det er handlingen som gir tiden innholdet.

Bevegelsen, den tiden mennesket gjennomlever mens det gjør noe, kaller Henri Bergson **la duree**, varigheten. Varigheten er et uttrykk for det som er i ferd med å vare. Og det som er i ferd med å være, er det vi kaller ”jeg”, min egen bevissthet. Dette som er jeg er i stadig forandring, samtidig som jeg alltid forblir meg selv. Bergson kaller sin filosofi en konkret filosofi. Ved å ta utgangspunkt i den konkrete, dagligdagse virkelighet slik mennesker opplever den, er de grunnleggende erfaringer av å leve som opptar ham.

Denne være*n*-i-verden, i prosessen, det evig pulserende livet, betegner fi-losofen Gabriel Marcel som co-esse. Erkjennelsen av at fornuften er begrenset fører til ydmykhet overfor livet, hevder han. Framfor å ville underordne livet under sin egen besittelse, stiller en seg i et tillitsfullt forhold overfor hva livet har å gi. Denne livets gave, som han kaller don, oppleves som ”værensfylde”, noe som gir mening.^(Gunneng 2003. s. 41) Her transcenderes det å ha noe, som et objekt, til å **være**, i gjensidig samhandling med objektet.^(Ibid s. 97).

Her er jeg igjen ved tanken om å la materialet vise meg veien. Jeg har en visshet om et mål der framme, i tillit til at veien dit vil komme til syne underveis. Jeg har Marcells tanker om med-væren i bakhodet, i et møte og en skapende samhandling med materialene rundt meg. I en samhandling er det umulig å besitte eller forbruke den eller det en samhandler med. Dyret eller objektet har en egenverdi som ikke kan eies og forvaltes, men kommer til syne når jeg er klar for å møte det.

I møte med materielle og immaterielle materialer bærer jeg med meg tidli-gere ervervede kunnskaper og erfaringer, ledsaget av egen søken etter identitet og tilhørighet. Det organiske, det bevegelige, det stadig pågående jeg opplever i interaksjon med materialene, gir samhørighet og enhet i tilværelsen.

I enheten mellom natur og kultur, her uttrykt gjennom den samiske stjerne-himmelen, ser jeg en form for miljøetikk som minner oss om det naturmangfoldet vi kan være i ferd med å miste. Den visdommen som ligger i mytene forklarer verden på en bærekraftig måte,—i menneskets tjeneste-, grunnlagt på respekt for det altomfattende kosmos.

Grethe Gunneng, et av de første bildene fra utstillingen "The Foxes of Sami" i Tromsø, 2015

Grethe

Grethe Gunneng

Grethe

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Grethe Gunneng

Grethe

Grethe

Reindeer practice is a central part of the modern Sami culture, just as it has been throughout history. Today, it is threatenedfrom in multiple ways: by political preassuresuch as infrastructural developments and mining expansion, and by global warming in particular. Reindeer are especially sensitive to the changing climate, having adapted themselves to the specific challenges and perks of the Nordic mountains.

If the tradition of reindeer practice disappears, so doesmuch of the Sami culture. And with it, according to Gunneng, essential knowledge on how to actually live sustainably, non-exploitative and in harmony with the natural resources our earth provides. She quotes the philosopher Arne Ness, creator of “deep ecology”, who proclaims that “To solve the ecological crisis, we need a change in how we understand ourselves and our relationship with nature and life”. This idea is found in the traditional, inherited knowledge of the Sami, where “humans, animals and nature are dependant one another and live in mutual respect.” Through myths, extended physically trough rituals, this understanding was passed on from generation to generation.

The stary sky not only religious and cultural value to the Sami, it was essential as a practical tool in historical reindeer practice. Theherdswere moved according to the stars, whose paths across the sky worked both as a compass and a clock.

In the myths, theheaven symbolizesthe Sami hunt. The prey, eitherthe reindeer or the moose (elk?), in the center,surrounded by the stars –the hunters and their tools. The reindeer or moose is called Sarvvisand reaches across seven constellations, threatened by the competing hunters Fávdna og Fávna gilvoolmmáí, as well as the three sons of Gállás, the son of the Sun.

Every night, thehunters to close in on Sarvvis, but realise they can't get their arrows away since they would hit Boahji, the Polar Star. He the one holding the sky up and maintaining all life on earth, and thus the hunters can't ever have their pray, however much they try. Each morning they are forced to give up one by one, and Saarvis roams free. But when the evening comes again, the hunt recommences, and so it continues each day for eternity.

This storyhelped the Samiremember the movement of the stars, being passed on in the light of the fire at night and serving one generation to the next.

Sami culture has always been in symbiosis with nature, the times, placesand kinds of the humantasksbeingdictated by the rules of the stars and the seasons. This view is what maintains the balance of the universe, and it indicates a way of life in which sustainability is implicit –where the human behavior is dictatedby nature and should not leave any tracesbehindin it.

Duodji og dáidda Like the myths, Sami arts and craftsmanship, duodji, is a silent skill passed down through the generations,providinga cultural community and historical memory. It is both art and craftsmanship integrated into one product, and requiresa well-honed skill-a life in a harsh climate demands quality tools and utensils.

The values of the myths are exemplified in the material culture. When a reindeer was slaughtered, itwas honored by being used in its entirety. The meat, blood and innards were eaten, the skin became clothing and drum skins, the sinew threads and the antlers and bones tools, among other things.

Today, the Sami people livein a modern society, with the traditional way of life existingalongside it. The nature of the duodji has come to change in line with the lifestyle of its makers, even if it still has many features of the original culture's craftsmanship. Parallel to the duodji, a new concept has arisen: dáidda—the artisticexpression of the duodji without the item's added practicality.

Iver Jåks (1932-2007) was one of the first of the Sami to be defined as an artist. He used the traditional, passed-down knowledge of wood manipulation to create dynamic sculptures where the degradaton of the material was a natural part of the piece. It symbolized humans “being allowed to disappear when their time is over” (Eilertsenet. al.) without leaving any traces behind.

This way of thinking about dynamic processes resonates with Gunneng herself and her own work –she speaks of a radical conceptual art that transcends materiality; the idea of the piece becoming the piece itself.

The specific traits of the material used in art not only tells a story about its own inherent value, but of its cultural history as well. It exhibits its own unique properties both materially and immaterially: a reindeer antler expresses cyclicality, as grows and in the end is discarded according to the needs of the herd, such as mating rituals and calving. The fox has been particularly significant in Sami culture, Gunneng explains. When it spoke to the humans, it always had something important to convey. It waves its tail across the sky and the northern lights show the Sami colours: red, green, yellow and blue, together with the stars that shine like silver. In the Sami language, the mineral pyrite, also known as fool's gold in English, is called riebensilba, 'fox silver'. Spiritually, silver was an important material to the Sami, but duetoitshighcost, pyrite became a good substitute and thus a vital part of the culture. Gunneng says she “picks pieces of [it] as if she was picking pieces down from the sky”.

The creative symbiosis Gunneng is inspired by the philosophers Henri Bergson (1859-1941) and Gabriel Marcel (1889-1973), and their ideas about time as a process of movement, creation and change. It is lived in as something tangible, and in this Gunneng sees the connection between the material and immaterial, as well as between human and nature. When weare in a "mutual, joint action" with the material, it isimpossible to possess or deplete it, asit has its own internal value.

This mutual relationship with the materials nature provides, and the Sami idea of the link between nature and culture, Gunneng sees as a kind of “climate ethics”. This reminds us of the biodiversity that is continually lost, and can guide us in understanding the world as asustainable, cyclical entity in service of us humans.

Harkrank (Tipuloidea)

Så mitt i sen sommaren är dom där. Flyger in genom den öppna dörren eller fönstret. Både hanar och honor dras mot ljuset och det är där dom finner varandra läste jag. När dom dör samlar dom benen ofta i en arkitektonisk form. Som en vält torn tinning där bara konstruktionen finns kvar eller tillsammans med solstrålar skapas den en intrikat tre dimensionell grafisk form. Ögat känner den spröda ömtåliga varelsen och tanken skapar associationer i ett evigt nu. I min värld undrar jag, finns det egentligen något mer magiskt.



Fig. 67

Weaving Life and Work

Secret Hotel, Earthwise Residency and Earthbound Symposia



Fig. 68–69

To the Ants

Soon ready to go.

The empty icebox with the hole cut in the lid

The sucking tube with filter

The vial with paraffin oil

Ah, and the gift; the offering! What to bring, do we have something else other than sugar or honey? I find a date and coconut sweets; perfect.

Off to the pine tree and the dead elder.

It is still very chill in the mornings. The night temperature is often below zero. A new type of spring to adapt to, a few years... I am worried the ants won't be active this early. The dew in the grass is close to frozen.

As I walk further up the narrow valley, I hear a motorchain saw and other diesel powered handtools—which are not supposed to be there. What good timing that I came to meet the ants on this very morning—so I can find out what is going on?...

Long story somewhat short: The people with diesel tools are clearing the overgrown state-owned gorge, which the valley is, further uphill. It lies between the two hilly big fields of land which I am the present caretaker or custodian of. After 30 years here, and the last 15 of these living here full time, I have come to feel I belong to the land. Almost even more than what I recall from my childhood home, long passed on to other humans.

The foreman and I have a pleasant talk and he agrees they should not finish the work very near my house until their boss—whom I know—has contacted me. The clearing of the old post route trail was planned or foreseen for years, and it is destined to change some elements of our lives a lot—especially during and probably also after the pandemic: People will now be able to do their walks passing close by a garden, which for 20 years was our private garden. Deep inbreath... bracing myself for what is to come.

Human things partly settled, and in a way that allows me to really forget it for some time, I turn towards the ants again. I arrive at the two intertwined trees, whom I set out for and feel very relieved as I see that the ants are out and about.

I greet them and tell them I've come to ask for some worker ants for our children performance "Ant Business" (in Danish "Myrepostyr"). I place the sweets by their entrance and prepare the equipment. Paraffin on the rim of the container and around the air hole. Assembling the ant sucker. Remembering my technique of sucking through short intakes of breath, and thereby also controlling the speed of their pheromones reaching my bronchi. I focus on the ants walking **upwards** on the stem of old, dead and barkless eldertree. The ants walking **downwards**—some of them almost striped—are bringing nectar

or other food elements to the anthill. It would weaken their society more if I took those full ones instead. After all, only about half of the approximately sixty ants I will harvest, will return.

It is the first of a number of performances this year. Also the original adult version "Walking Lecture on Ants" will be shown, and it also needs live ants. It is also the very first performance for kids in almost one year. It feels so strange, as we are all still in the grip of the pandemic—but such a joy to perform again!

When I return the evening of the following day with the ants who did not get eaten by adventurous children, I repeat my promise to them: That I will pay good gifts to them when I gather ants, so they receive useful input to their society, even if I am guilty of an uncalculated loss.

The Two Legs and Our Values

This text will take you through some of what I, Christine—and the performing art company Secret Hotel and Earthwise Residency—do. The why and the how...

Secret Hotel is a performing arts company, creating participatory performances with and about the more-than-human.

Earthwise Residency invites artists and researchers for work periods, which is about, and often also done with the More-than-Human. We create other activities related to care and sustainability and the unique landscape where Earthwise is situated. It is also the place where I and my partner live.

I work equally with both entities or spheres—creating work myself and being a hostess. I create work with others and I create spaces for others to create in, as well as care for various elements so that the More-than-Human can thrive. I see it as my praxis is walking on two legs; one of performing art, one of being hostess or custodian for land and buildings here. I could also present it as a tree with a trunk and its two main branches... Seen this way, the trunk or the central value of my and our activities and work is care and consideration. Care for others, for the well-being of all, for balance as well as the needed frictions. Care for the old buildings of the farm I live on, and care for more-than-humans as well as for the humans—the artists, researchers and volunteers who visit, live and work here.

Transparency, respect and honesty are also important elements of the core trunk. These values are also central in the ethos of Secret Hotel's performances where clarity about the contract between performers and guests (audience) is important. We may tease our guests sometimes, we may create some friction, but if so, it is always done with a precise reason and aim.

This tree trunk of values automatically results in sustainable praxis, on a low-practical level as well as in the ways of communicating and interacting with each other. This is also found in where and how we get produce for meals, detergents, various things for the households, etc.

I personally have an animistic worldview and this affects how I deal with the other people living here: The solitary bees, the honeybees (traditionally named 'people' pr. beehive; the tree people, the old queen people) the horses, the fireplaces, the trees and hills, and so on. Spirituality is also part of this core trunk, but not in a demanding or preaching way. You may sense it, tap into it, or you may ignore or not even register it. It is not verbalized in our performances, but it is somewhat verbalized when human visitors are introduced to Earthwise.

Secret Hotel

Secret Hotel is a theatre without a 'house', but with 'rooms' full of participatory performing art in various formats. We work in a mixture of performing art and scientific research and create meetings and art work across disciplines, species, borders and work practises.

Secret Hotel's work is rooted in our values about cocreation, care, sustainability and respect. Our approach is that together we know more. Therefore Secret Hotel exists as much in our art works, as in the relations with all our partners: The artists, the researchers, the guests/audiences, the trees, the microorganisms, the food, the places, and so forth... And we always see and approach the audiences as our guests.

In this intersection we create audience based performing arts for body and senses which stimulate also mind, reflection and knowledge.

Earthwise Residency

Earthwise is an invitation to spend time with the living land at a place where art and research can grow. We have rooms and work stations, an atelier flat, a movement studio, library, piano, sauna, 13 hectare of land, gardens, and a short distance to the sea...

Earthwise offers collaborations, calmness and space for humans who care about the other beings we share the planet with, and who care about the interconnectedness of everything. We welcome work which focuses on sustainability, relations between the other people (species) of the planet, as well as interdisciplinary meetings. We see meals made of local produce as a meeting place between humans and soil. Here relations are central, not humans. It's all about care for our





Fig. 71



Fig. 72

partners: Animals, guests, trees, plants, microorganisms, water, hills, sea, food and many more.

Earthbound Symposium, 2018 and 2021

If Secret Hotel and Earthwise Residency are the two legs of my ongoing practice, then Earthbound symposia could be said to be when these two legs dance...

The international symposium Earthbound happened in 2018 and 2021 and we are planning for 2023.

Every second year we make this dance and invite artists, scientists and other citizens to meet and investigate the state of the Planet Earth. The symposia are created as immersive experiences, using the knowledge from our work in Secret Hotel's performances. We plan the symposia, so what happens are relatively different than a normal conference or symposium. The concrete frames and how we approach our guests and what we invite them to do, makes it possible for them to exit their comfort zones in a comfortable way. The interdisciplinary meeting that Earthbound is, demands that we help people—coming from different walks of life—to reach out and meet in order to find a ground for mutual meetings and possibly also develop new terminologies. For this to happen and really make a difference, we take into account some of the other people, whom we count on and interact with as we create Earthbound: The places, the soil where the food grows, the microorganisms in the fermented food, the flowers, the straw balls, the fire, and so forth.

The first Earthbound happened in 2018. The second edition of Earthbound took place in September 2021, one year late because of the pandemic. Presently we are planning for 2023 in a slightly different edition.

It is my understanding that worldviews cannot compete about who is right. One is as good as another. Every truth is valid within its own field of logic; its own sphere. But perhaps they cannot all live and function side by side at the same locality without conflict. Perhaps some worldviews clearly help fertile worldmaking more than other types. It is these that we must help each other to strengthen, and I believe this is partly done by being precise about our values, our reasons, our methods and our hopes and ideals. An excerpt of evaluation responses from Earthbound 2021:

Everything was good. Committed participants. Closeness + support of and by delegates. A caring organisation team. Thoughtful use of resources. The daily mix of various formats with talks, activities, music, etc.

Exquisite food and good principles for it.

What Has Been Important and Made an Impression?

The people, the place, the generous spirit of hosting, the warmth, care and interest expressed by all towards all. Times like these are treasures, resonating long after and through all the friendship and kinship that ignite here. Variety of voices. Room for constructive discussions from people with different backgrounds.

The frame work—a good community for exchange—was created. I noticed that many talked with many different people.

It is important that we get challenged without being forced into something you do not want to do. This creates a good atmosphere and can make us all more curious than when you experience events where you have to (!) step out of your comfort zone.

Thinking with Insects

I have now made two participatory performances about—and with—social insects, ants and bees. Mind you, not only I made them. These performances were created by a collective we of concerted efforts. Both a beehive and an anthill are seen as a superorganism by the biologists studying them. One could say that the creation process of a performing arts piece—especially a cocreative one—is also a superorganism at its very best moments; the milling around knowing what each one has to do, or at least finding out along the way, perhaps being temporarily lost in creative considerations...

Anyways, all this co-living, co-working with both ants and bees, since 2016, has affected me. I approach the work we do together at Earthwise more and more as a hive situation, both in everyday work situations, and at special events. And witnessing how our audiences, our guests, enter into the immersive theatre experiences also gives me a feeling of hive activity.

I wanted this hive dynamic to happen in the performances, and it's such a joy when it finally actually works: When the rules and systems we invite our guests to join get into a flow, and the milling-around-with-a-purpose appears. Our guests fall into a seemingly chaotic order, together, as one organism.

The latest performance “Banquet for Bees” (which is about both honeybees, bumblebees and solitary bees) ends around a 6 meters long banquet table, and this gives good opportunities for conversations and reactions to be shared, as the performance is at the same time still running and slowly ending. Once and again our guests share

with us how much fun they had, while also having learned facts about bees, and how they now feel an urge to want to do good for the bees. They want to help them survive as a species—not just for the sake of us humans, but also for the sake of the bees themselves...

Response from a Guest:

Both the choreographic and material-based considerations were made in such an intelligent and thoughtful way. It was a pleasure to experience an excerpt from “Banquet for Bees”. The pants were lovely to wear, I felt really fine and well dressed! This helped me getting into the double part as a medieval noble citizen about to enter a decision making banquet, and also the trousers made me feel soft and fussy like a “trouser bee” collecting pollen. This was so smart and aesthetically done!

Likewise, I was inspired by how soft and vulnerable the cocoons were, it was as if carrying human babies ... the table and the serving ... it was all done with such artistic integrity and with generosity towards and between the participants. Both the senses of touch, smell, taste, sharing, making sounds and listening, taking in the aesthetic experience, playfulness (in the dance and other interactive moments...) it was all combining to make the experience stronger. And it also told the important lesson that we are all included in an exciting story about the fantastic creatures that we live side by side with

Guests who tells us that they want to do good for bees and other beings after experiencing our performance... I believe this is a sign how artistic—preferably participatory—experiences can contribute to understanding entangled worlds. And what is **understanding** anyways? Not a purely intellectual endeavor! Embodied reflections, sensory inputs and all the tacit knowing or knowledge we create as we encounter the world in aesthetic, multisensorial meetings—all this is also understanding. And this is why artistic experiences can help us expand our horizons and our understanding of other creatures, other life forms, other types of perception and so forth.

Buzzing Frequencies

Early August. I sit in the afternoon sun in the yard of our old farm. Around me are more buzzing sounds than I bother counting. A great and rich feeling.

The Malva Sylvestris (common mallow) is blooming, so is the Anchusa (in Danish Oksetunge)—are seen as weeds in mainstream gardening. But Malva has various medical abilities. To some extent we let these two plants grow between

the stones of the yards surface. That is related to the buzzing, which comes from the foraging bees. They love the flowers of these two plants.

A few of the bees are honeybees from our hives, some 20 meters away. But most of the buzz frequencies are from solitary bees. To be honest, the bees that come now during August, and far into September, and whom I also encounter closer to sunset than the honeybees, are some I have not totally “nailed” yet. During the last two years, I have expanded my knowledge on bumble and solitary bees (as well as on honeybees), and I have found some 10–12 species here on the farm [list?]. I have observed them and found their names. But these ones, two different species of the late summer—one smaller solitary bee, and a smaller bumble bee—I have not found the names of yet.

When listening to their specific rhythms of nectar foraging, their frequencies of buzzing gives me a lot of joy. I can by now distinguish, without looking, if it's a honeybee, a wasp or a solitary bee/bumble bee. It's a bit like recognizing friends on their walk, as they walk on the floor above you, or if they unseen are approaching a place you are sitting. I myself am a bit impressed by this sensitivity to different buzzing frequencies, but I do know that I have good ears. I guess this embodied knowledge is—at least by now—only seasonal. As I write this the lazy autumn rain of September post-Equinox drizzles on the top-light windows above me. I am not sure I would be able to make this distinction now if these various buzzing flying sounds where suddenly played to me from a recording. But who knows, the wisdom of our human body might surprise me...

Late summer is also the time where I meet more and more mated bumblebee queens. Big and heavy—defying the general assumptions that they cannot fly—they kazoo around, not only foraging, but also clearly searching for a good place to hibernate. They stop at places where no flowers are, crawl around on the ground or check out the million cracks that you have in even a well-kept old farm. Depending on their species, they will hibernate in either soil or in wall cracks. Each of these ladies are destined to start a new bumblebee family next spring, if they survive. I know that the work we do in the farm is creating a rise in diversity. But I do not know if I see more of these mated bumblebee queens, because we have a higher diversity now, or because I am more aware of them... These ladies—of course—have a specific and low buzz to their flight frequencies.

Thanks for meandering a bit around with me in the work of Secret Hotel, the experience of Earthbound, the place of Earthwise and in some of my notes and reflections.

Sometime in the future (as I write this) we hope to be able to offer paid residencies at Earthwise via open calls. But we are always curious

about welcoming human people working with interests overlapping ours; working with some of the other people on this planet. So, do get in touch via Earthwise's homepage if you feel drawn to visit!



Fig. 73



Fig. 74

Post-Tenebras Lux

Zach and I were part of a surrogate cohort of green grad students that started the group PHuN, the Post-Human Network. Our members worked in different departments but united around a question: what does it mean to do theory and practice together? PHuN organized fortnightly reading groups and annual events for grad students, and later, other scholars and practitioners. Gradually, we looked around and realized the question relies on reified and stabilized understandings of theory and practice. Zach often joked: “theory is my praxis” (a nod to a theory meme page). Only it wasn’t just a joke—the group of us had built a site for caring for thought and one another, an ecological subjectivity. Our practice of reading, thinking, and organizing events together built a collectivity, a site of experimentation, a co-lab to head off the academic entrepreneur of the self, to find ourselves in a state of precarity that acknowledges that we can’t do this alone, that we need each other^(Lowenhaupt Tsing, 2015, pp. 20, 28). Along the way, we also organized a few film screenings. Zach headed one up to show Carlos Reygadas’ *Post-Tenebras Lux*, the subject of Zach’s essay below. Zach worked diligently on this project to bring out his experiences with the film and render them in a way that showed both its challenge and offerings. The text and the film think together, in motion, and they move together to set thinking into motion—towards a cinema of experience.

Zach has passed. I can’t convey my gratitude for being among many who found resonance in thought with Zach, even for a little while. Writing this introduction was not a happy task, but to move with him again in thought has brought me a deep joy. I had the opportunity to hear many versions of this paper at conferences between 2016 and 2018. Rereading the essay, I am struck by how much we all owe each other. There is so much of Zach’s thought in this text, what he cared about, and the people he cared for. For me personally, it is an **essay of experience**, in that by reading it we are trying things out, working with concepts and film, but also with time, with where and how we were, how late-night conversations, or a riff from a reading group creates a resonance, a fold in affective spacetime which bears out impossible presents and lost futures. Clearly, not all readers will field these personal resonances. But this publication of text promises that the “diverse futures” Zach created will see more light^(Borges, 2007, p. 22, cited in Thomas below). So, I invite you to mirror, or, better, to refract Zach’s gestures of thought through your own intellectual and affective corpus.

Zach asks, through Reygadas: “how do we really see, how does it feel to be alive, and how would that feeling be imparted aesthetically via film?” Zach emphasizes ecological vitality through the work, informed by Jane Bennett, and drawing on Manuel DeLanda, Gilles Deleuze, William James, Donna Haraway, and Felix Guattari, especially his **Three Ecologies**. This vitality is sounded out in a different key as Zach parries with the shadow cast over Juan by his “vicious abstractionism” (a term Zach borrows from James). We observe blockages, in characters, in filmic sequences and cuts, and encounter blockages of our own through the experience, reminding us that “the question of mental ecology may emerge anywhere, at any moment, beyond fully constituted ensembles on the order of the individual and the collective”^(Guattari 2006, pg. 55). Reygadas, through Zach, asks us to relinquish the reified categories of viewer and film, of narrative

structure, of filmic narrative and our experience of the world, and to see what James calls the “flux of experience.”

In watching the film together, Zach was eager to point out shots distorted by the custom lens he mentions in the essay. Himself a noise musician, collector and experimenter with bespoke circuit-bent instruments, Zach connected with Reygadas’s tactile and materialist engagement with his photo-sensory apparatus. While Reygadas could have achieved a similar effect in post-production, and elsewhere the film does utilize such techniques, the decision to employ a distortion at the level of analog sensing is important. As Haraway writes, “It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with” (2016, p. 12).

When Zach writes that this custom lens “creates a sense of realism”, he invites us to ask: which realism? He would remind us: there are many and they do different things. When speaking about image capture and display, we may be accustomed to notions of photorealism situated in “prosumer” discourse, a realism scaffolded by electric measurements and product specifications such as image size resolution or recording speed frame rate. Zach places Reygadas’ realism apart, writing that the lens “distort[s] the otherwise homogeneous clarity of the images the digital camera would otherwise create.” In this context, realism does not attempt to wipe clear the tears in our eyes, to separate the mind from the body, to part subject from object. Here, realism is relational, mobilizing the movement of the world. We think-feel and see (not only *through* the camera but) the camera seeing. Its presence palpitates. Zach’s cinema machine is dynamical, situating the viewer, the filmmaker, the world, the screen as ingredients of a collective assemblage.

We might think Zach’s characterization of this photorealism, related to “the invisible Hollywood style”, and Reygadas’ filmic techniques through Walter Benjamin’s injunction about information and storytelling:

When information supplants the old form, storytelling, and when it itself gives way to sensation, this double process reflects an imaginary degradation of experience. Each of these forms is in its own way an offshoot of storytelling. Storytelling ... does not aim to convey the pure essence of a thing, like information or a report. It sinks the thing into the life of the storyteller, in order to bring it out of him again. Thus traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel.

(Benjamin et al., 1986; cited in Guattari, 2005, p. 44)

Felix Guattari finds motivation in Benjamin’s passage for the Three Ecologies project. Zach gestures to this work throughout. Guattari writes of the role of storytelling in the Three Ecologies project “to bring into being other worlds beyond those of purely abstract information ... to dare to confront the vertiginous Cosmos so as to make it inhabitable; these are the tangled paths of the tri-ecological vision.” This is how Zach stages the film for us as readers and viewers: as a way to retrace the movements of the camera and the camera person, so as to plot a course through the heart of chaos.

This is a different task than to reassemble the non-linear narrative of the film, to detangle it and set it straight. We see how this approach plays out in a

negative review of the film that Zach cites. In failing to peg the film onto a lattice or a timeline, graphing a definitive narrative map, the reviewer concludes the film’s “challenge outweighs its rewards,” (Keogh 2013) but if we have determined its rewards in advance, we will have misidentified the challenge.

The review’s descriptions of the film as “unassembled puzzle pieces” with scenes “scattered like marbles on cold steel” seem to write the film off as chaotic “frenzy.” Perhaps that dismissal circles the film against its grains? How does Zach impel us to circle? Let us consider ordering, Chaos, and the chaotic in Zach’s **cinema of experience** through Édouard Glissant:

We were circling around the thought of Chaos, sensing that the way Chaos itself goes around is the opposite of what is ordinarily understood by “chaotic” and that it opens onto a new phenomenon: Relation, or totality in evolution, whose order is continually in flux and whose disorder one can imagine forever. (2010, p. 133)

Drawing on and away from complexity science, chaos for Glissant is not simply disordered, **but relation unfolding** without a pre-given totality against which it can be compared. Relation brings order and chaos together. In other words, there is no grid onto which the scenes fall, and the cold steel sheet is the field of relation warmed and warped by the engagement of the viewer. The scenes may be marbles, but marble may also be melted, as in pottery, where it can be fused with clay. Likewise, following David Byrne, whose Talking Heads lyrics Zach includes as an epigraph, we the viewer “drive in circles”, but also come to our senses “sometimes”.

In the **cinema of experience**, the viewer activates the potentialities of the film not only narratively but affectively and experientially. The tines of the film’s temporal forks not only protrude through different narrative fabrics but also affectively “transpierce the body like arrows” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 356). Thus these bifurcations manifest “within the viewer”, creating hauntological phantasms and bringing an affective hapticity and temporality to the question “how do we see?”

Towards the conclusion of Zach’s essay, he resonates Donna Haraway’s call to “stay with the trouble” with the cinema of experience’s entwining and tentacular complexity. The affective jolts of the fantastic scenes alongside Juan’s blocked situatedness urge us to think action differently, to “confront capitalism’s effects in the domain of mental ecology in everyday life: individual, domestic, material, neighbourly, creative or [in] one’s personal ethics” (Guattari, 2005, p. 50). To that end, Zach invites us to notice the world, our imbrication in it. By caring for the challenge of Reygadas’s film, Zach encourages us to find creative and artistic ways of drawing our attention to “how it feels to be alive”, to find new ways to notice and dissolve blockages, and to hold space for an ecological politics to come borne of falling in love with the world.

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Borges, J. L. (2007). *Labyrinths: Selected Stories and Other Writings* (D. Yates & J. E. Irby, Eds.). Folio Society.

Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (B. Massumi, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.

Glissant, E. (2010). *Poetics of Relation* (B. Wing, Trans.). University of Michigan Press.

Guattari, F. (2005). *The Three Ecologies*. Continuum.

Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. Duke University Press.

Lowenhaupt Tsing, A. (2015). *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*. Princeton University Press.

Down, down in the basement;
We hear the sound of machines;
I, I, I'm driving in circles;
Come to my senses sometimes

(David Byrne)

Carlos Reygadas's *Post Tenebras Lux*: Toward a Cinema of Experience

While Hollywood remains largely content to produce films that embody the notion of empty repetition and classic “silent” narrative linearity, the films of Mexican director Carlos Reygadas offer a clearly different experience: powerful, disorienting, and thought-provoking. Reygadas's *Post Tenebras Lux* (2013) pushes these unorthodox aspects to their experimental limits, by focusing on the various ways we inhabit and are bound up with the world. The film's playful creativity comes through in moments that subvert typical cues and expectations, through bifurcations and Borgesian moments “when time could have taken a different course” (Deleuze xii), and through the presentation of episodic imagery without distinguishing between actual events, desired events, and dreams. All of these ways of being in the world are shown to be part of an ongoing and variegated process in the film. It is this intellectually respectful attempt to connect with the viewer in *Post Tenebras Lux* that both elides and subverts the typical cues found in the industrial Hollywood model, establishing what Felix Guattari calls a “processual immanence” that is emotionally and intellectually inclusive through the way that it imbues intensive thought and feeling within the viewer via camera techniques as well as its nonlinear structure (“The New” 650). Reygadas's film paradoxically achieves a realism through the deployment of surreal imagery which posits the often strange and unrecognizable components of being in the world, desires and dreams for example, as indeterminate elements of a non-static experiential engagement with the world. It is this willingness to experiment that likely incited the film's near-ubiquitous crowd rejection at Cannes, as well as paradoxically Reygadas's being honored with the best director prize the same year.

The response to the film is worth noting. One of many negative reviews was written by Tom Keogh for *The Seattle Times*, who insists that the film presents “desultory slices of heightened reality, dismissing narrative flow. The result is unassembled puzzle pieces of a glimpse into subconscious frenzy. That can be very effective in a good film. But in ‘Post Tenebras Lux’... the challenge outweighs the reward.” Reygadas's insistence against employing a causal, linear narrative in the film, however, is a crucial element of why it is so powerful. Reygadas employs this aspect, along with other techniques, to get at and imbue within the viewer the often-dizzying reality of lived experience where past memory, unconscious desires, and future possibilities invade our present. He asks a bigger question about what it means, what it feels like, to experience reality in all its complexity. Critics of Reygadas's film, of which there are many, seem to take a formalist approach in trying to make sense of it—to try to decode it in a typical way, in a way that tries to

fit it into a hylomorphic mold—and fit it into a category that simply doesn't exist ready-made in reality. Against any a-priori grounding, rather, the film wanders into new territory: questioning the very tendency to mistake the grounding for a complex and ongoing reality. The film disturbs these foundations and ungrounds us to get at reality, linking seemingly disparate scenes through the theme of reification in psychic, social and environmental realms. The characters in *Post Tenebras Lux* are alienated from themselves, one another, and the world via suffering under this sense of reification, or overly simple conceptualizations of the complex and processual “nature” of reality. This destructive reductionism ties into and flows from the influence of abstract rationalist thought forms and their invasion in these realms of experience. In addition to doing an aesthetic, critical reading of *Post Tenebras Lux* herein, and having touched on the dichotomy of the film's negative reception and critical celebration, this essay seeks to explore the film's similarly paradoxical blending of digital and analogue elements to create a cinema of experience.

Post Tenebras Lux begins ostensibly in the midst of a young girl's dream. The opening scene presents the viewer with a series of long, deep-focus shots that track her wandering through a field surrounded by swarming dogs, horses and cows as dusk gradually gives way to the night and a lightning storm builds in the darkening sky. At once playful, confusing and ominous, the scene imparts a sense of being close to the earth, of being sensually enmeshed not just visually and sonically, but even haptically within the landscape. Placing the viewer at a low angle, these shots give a sense of the visceral, often-disorienting reality of lived experience through their proximity to the ground, using a unique handmade lens that blurs and refracts the outer edges of the picture. The addition of the custom lens creates a sense of realism via the blurred crystalline reflections and multiplications of whatever passes through its outer edges, distorting the otherwise homogeneous clarity of the images the digital camera would otherwise create.

Through this blurring of the periphery, Reygadas draws the viewer closer via the dissipation, the “darkening,” of the field of perception. He is cinematically experimenting, and asking the viewer: how do we really see, how does it feel to be alive, and how would that feeling be imparted aesthetically via film?

In an interview with Dennis Lim of the *New York Times*, Reygadas says that “one purpose of making a film is to reinterpret what you see,’ . . . adding that he was reacting in part to hyperclear high-definition cinematography. ‘We've gone further than the actual eye can see,’ he said. ‘Now we're making horrible images that do not relate

to reality’”^(ARI8). Countering the high-definition craze, *Post Tenebras Lux* utilizes oneiristic, surreal techniques to suggest that dreams, that all psychic states, are “parts” of a simultaneously connected and heterogeneous reality. Regarding the film, Dennis Lim goes on to write: “Mr. Reygadas said he saw it as a film in which ‘the narrative comes not from information but from our actual perception of life.’ Instead of progressing from one event to the next, it drifts among ‘all the levels of perception,’ he said, which include ‘dreams, things you long for, memories, an imagined future, the conscious present, a reality that is beyond us’”^(ARI8). At the same time, Reygadas shows us how we are imbricated within this reality, sensually connected and actively creating it, for better or worse. The characters in the film are subject to various forms of power, influenced by their milieus as they work with and against them, attempting to transcend their circumstances while being ultimately entangled within them and with one another. This sensual imbrication of the ecological, social, and the individuals within the film bleeds over and through the entirety of Reygadas's work: the film works in and through the viewer in novel and haptic ways that help create a cinema of experience. For example, by distorting the visual image with the custom lens that fractures the image, Reygadas emphasizes the aural aspects of the film; thereby expanding the sensual perception of and within the viewer, experimentally expanding the film's affective impact through a disorientation. This move away from the seemingly seamless motion pictures provided by Hollywood's “invisible style” is a clear, creative, and powerful departure from a classic narrative-centric approach to filmmaking.

Reygadas achieves a cinema of experience not only with the distorted images produced via the handmade lens employed throughout the film, but also through his eschewing narrative linearity in lieu of a dreamlike realism that subverts the classic Hollywood model; bringing the viewer into an intimate, often-confusing and disruptive fold which works to both unground and realistically situate them simultaneously: ultimately calling into question what it is that we consider to be a part or parts of our lived experience. This confusing stream-of-consciousness style leads into deeper territory, as we are presented with characters divided by class colliding with one another throughout, while being similarly pressed with the confounding problem of reifications that haunt them in the psychic, social and environmental spheres. We begin to see this nonlinearity and disjunction from the outset: the opening scenes of the film moving from what seems to be the young girl's (Rut, the director's daughter) dream into a deep focus shot of a working-class man (named Siete) riding a horse through the forest. This

scene marks the beginning of a bifurcation that imparted within the viewer via a sense of anticipation and is revisited at the end of the film, working to create a sense of plural possibility within a variegated yet interwoven reality.

The film presents us with temporal bifurcations similar to those found in Jorge Luis Borges's short story "The Garden of Forking Paths," discussed by Deleuze in *Cinema 2*. Deleuze describes "The Garden of Forking Paths" as:

The infinite book, the world of possibilities," further noting that "Borges made a kind of copy that conformed to Leibniz's thought with an essential difference: for Leibniz, all the different [possible] worlds... are impossible with each other,...he conserves a very classical principle of disjunction: it's either this world or some other one. Whereas Borges places all these impossible series in the same world, allowing a multiplication of effects." (Le Cours De Gilles Deleuze)

There are moments in *Post Tenebras Lux* that focus on forks in the present which come together in the future via the film's denouement, referring back to the original fork and resulting in a kind of flashback within the film's apparently disjunctive temporality. An example of this comes through the aforementioned scene, where we are introduced to Siete, the man riding the horse through the woods. After dismounting, he begins to carve into a large tree with a chainsaw, the film then cuts to a point in the forest some distance away, moving into a slow, deep-focus tracking shot of the woods. The sound of Siete's saw continues faintly buzzing in the distance, connecting the two shots, and the viewer is waiting to hear the crash of the fallen tree. The film eventually cuts back to Siete hacking at the tree with an axe, chopping it about halfway down, and then packing up and leaving, passing another tree that is also cut halfway down. These shots introduce the viewer to a fork in time that is formally underlined through a diegetic flashback in the film's denouement when the trees fall and the viewer is brought back to this moment retrospectively, in a nonlinear mnemonic event connecting Siete with the eventual falling of the trees.

Deleuze describes the traditional diegetic flashback as revealing "a story that can be told only in the past" (Cinema 2 50); Reygadas, however, also psychically imparts the precise moment that time forks through the presentation and subversion of typical cues, experienced in the moment of distilled expectation within the viewer waiting for the elided sound of the tree falling. Reygadas not only presents time as "passing through impossible presents, returning to not-necessarily true pasts" (Deleuze 131), moving beyond the distinction between the real and the imaginary, he "chooses—simultaneously—all of them. He

creates, in this way, diverse futures," emphasizing the moment when the branching forks of possible futures coalesce, imbuing "a future as irrevocable as the past" within the audience (Borges 26, 22). We see that Siete is collecting the chunks of wood, the film beginning to reveal its ecological thematic elements, which come through powerfully in a number of ways throughout.

Following the scene which introduces Siete, the audience is introduced to Juan, a well-to-do man that employs Siete to work on his house. In a disturbing triptych of scenes, the film sets up a formal reversal of the aforementioned sequence that works to impart within the viewer the emphasized moment of forking time where all possible futures are possible and true. The film deploys a diegetic flashback "where it is in the present that we make a memory," as Deleuze writes, "in order to make use of it in the future when the present will be past" (Cinema 2 52); however, the film again goes beyond a strictly formal, narrative-centric application of bifurcation through accentuating the moment that time forks affectively within the viewer. Juan and his wife Natalia have just woken up and are interacting with their two children, Eleazar and Rut (the young girl introduced in the opening scene of the film). The family's home is beautiful, mansion-like, and they seem happy. The film then cuts to a scene on the patio where Juan suddenly attacks one of his dogs for no apparent reason, savagely beating it for some time; he then sees his son Eleazar and picks him up, laughing as if nothing had happened. This disorienting introduction to Juan's character informs a later scene in which, after an argument with Natalia, a dejected Juan goes outside on the patio with the dogs. The viewer is again presented with an emphasis on the precise moment that time forks through the presentation and subversion of emotional cues, yet in this instance the cues originate from the intense previous scene of animal abuse: Juan leans down to caress one of the dogs, resulting in a flashback and a sense of expectation within the viewer. This moment is reminiscent of the bifurcating event both psychically and affectively sensed in anticipating the sound of the falling tree. Juan doesn't commit the act of violence in this second scene, and it similarly remains a virtual, compossible event within the viewer: ultimately creating the sense of "a future as irrevocable as the past" within the audience (Borges 22). *Post Tenebras Lux* works to impart sensual movement within the audience in these experimental, disjunctive and intensively thought-provoking ways.

Directly following the aforementioned scene in which Juan mistreats the dog, Juan nonchalantly strikes up a conversation with a local working-class man named Jarro. A key element in the overall thematic system of the film comes

through Juan's relationship with Jarro and Siete, both workers variously employed by Juan to work on and watch over his and Natalia (his wife) and their children's house. Another important aspect of the film's sociopolitical elements with respect to Juan et al. comes through in that the audience never receives any details about Juan's occupation, although the film does implicitly reveal his abundant wealth, privilege, and education. Somewhat paradoxically, as will become increasingly apparent to the viewer, *Post Tenebras Lux* details some further socioeconomic, class related themes when Juan asks Jarro if he can borrow his camera: the strange nature of the request is underlined by the disparity in their levels of wealth, highlighted when Juan bluntly criticizes the quality of the camera. This scene reveals a blockage in Juan's psychic sphere, a misunderstanding that bleeds into the social sphere within the film and becomes clearer throughout: implicitly revealing the destructive and interconnected dangers of reification within the psychic, social and environmental realms.

Later in the film, Juan attends an alcoholics anonymous meeting with Siete, who introduces him to the recovery group by detailing all of the expensive products that he installed in Juan's house. In defining their relationship in these terms, of goods and services, works to highlight the disparity of their class and power dynamic: they are intimately connected yet unable to realize this connectivity due to conceptual reification in the spheres of the social and the psychic. After the meeting, Juan and Siete exchange stories about their lives, and about why they attended the meeting. Siete describes his troubled past, detailing bouts of violence involving the now estranged mother of his children, complicated by alcohol abuse and poverty. Juan eventually admits that he is addicted to internet pornography, that he can't be sexually aroused without it, which he views to be a trivial problem in comparison to Siete's, considering Siete's troubled upbringing plagued by severe poverty. For Juan, however, this seemingly benign blockage comes between him and his wife Natalia, compounded in a number of ways in the film, and is one of the elements that combines to form a critique of the vagaries of concretized thought in the realms of the psychic, social and ecological realms tout court. As hard as Juan tries to develop affective and intellectual connections, this psychic obstruction continues blocking him from breaking through and forming any real connections with himself and the "outside" world—all of these superficial attempts to connect are shown to be deluded attempts to control things (himself/the world) in detached and ultimately futile ways. This conversation with Siete is similarly and necessarily superficial, as the imposition of societal stratification depends



Fig. 75

on the separation of class that works to keep things divided and more or less rigidly defined.

The film goes through three transitions at this point, cinematic ‘forks’ leading to a reality that is nonlinear, often disorienting and complex: linked through the way Reygadas’s work moves through the psychic and social spheres within. The film presents the viewer with a scene wherein a group of young boys is playing rugby, working thematically to contrast togetherness in facing a common problem with the divisive aspects of Juan’s brutality in the previous scene. This effect is redoubled, as the film later uses a similar series of rugby shots that end the film, wherein the display of comradeship is both disjunctive and cohesive. The camera imparts this paradoxical complex point (or points) of view within us through this scene when one of the boys exclaims: “they’ve got individuals, we’ve got a team—so come on let’s go!” The rugby scenes thematically link with the rest of the seemingly cacophonous whole of the film through showing that the disjunctive is also intertwined and connective (see Deleuze and Guattari’s Jamesian reworking of “PLURALISM = MONISM” in *A Thousand Plateaus*. After the first rugby scene, Reygadas introduces a series of shots involving a luxurious dinner party, wherein the theme of mistaking the conceptual for the actual in the social and psychic spheres becomes apparent. At this point it will be helpful to detail further the concept of reification. I am not simply utilizing William James’s idea of reification within this paper as a lens with which to read the film through; rather, the film espouses this notion and his philosophy in a number of ways directly. James’s description of reification was perhaps best detailed when he wrote:

Let me give the name of ‘vicious abstractionism’ to a way of using concepts which may be thus described: We conceive a concrete situation by singling out some salient or important feature in it, and classing it under that; then, instead of adding to its previous characters all the positive consequences which the new way of conceiving it may bring, we proceed to use our concept privately; reducing the originally rich phenomenon to the naked suggestions of that name abstractly taken, treating it as a case of ‘nothing but’ that concept, and acting as if all the other characters from out of which the concept is abstracted were expunged. Abstraction, functioning in this way, becomes a means of arrest far more than a means of advance in thought. It mutilates things; it creates difficulties and finds impossibilities; and more than half the trouble that metaphysicians and logicians give themselves over the paradoxes and dialectic puzzles of the universe may, I am convinced, be traced to this relatively simple

source. The viciously privative employment of abstract characters and class names is, I am persuaded, one of the great original sins of the rationalistic mind. ^(Writings 951–52)

Reification in the spheres of the social and psychic realms come through in these intimate scenes of familial festivities where Rut and Eleazar’s exorbitantly wealthy grandmother is seen handing out envelopes of money to the children who accept them with morose disaffection. Following this we see Juan trying to relate to a group of people via literary abstractions that actually separate him from everyone at the table; yet another way the film works to reveal the paradox of divisive connectivity, creating a cinema of experience. Let’s move into how this works.

Through the first rugby scene leading into party scene, a microcosmic view of the film’s signature disjunctive-yet-connected style, we see that we are parts of a process much larger than any one individual, and neither the individual nor the process is static. Following William James’s statement: “‘Pure experience’ is the name which I gave to the immediate flux of life... full both of oneness and of manyness” ^(782–783), **Post Tenebras Lux** works to create what I call a cinema of experience. Contra reductive modes of thinking, the film works aesthetically to shake the socionor-mative impositions that have been built up within the viewer’s psychic sphere so to speak, reifications which have allowed majoritarian entities to remain in power through making their power seem inevitable or “natural.” This process can similarly be seen in the film industry via the classic Hollywood model, in an interview Reygadas notes that “even though Hollywood films can be comedies, dramas, or whatever, they all have exactly the same structure. The characters and plots might change, but the films are all alike; people find repetition comforting, that’s why the formula is successful” ^(Castillo et al. 73). **Post Tenebras Lux** works against normative understandings of narrative, and the struggles of the atomistic notion of the ‘individual’ through a similar mode to that seen in, again, Borges’s “The Garden of Forking Paths.”

In an article published by the **New York Times** shortly following the release of **Post Tenebras Lux**, writer and film curator Dennis Lim recalls a conversation he had with Carlos Reygadas wherein he notes that “Juan is an example of what ... [Reygadas] called ‘the unsatisfied Westerner, which is the distinguishing element of the Western world.’ This malaise, the director added, originated in the Age of Enlightenment, which equated light with reason: ‘That paradigm, created more than 200 years ago, has somehow ruined much of our lives.” Lim writes: “Unable to connect with his picture-perfect family, Juan spends much of the film in metaphoric darkness,

except for an interlude that finds him bedridden after a traumatic injury. ‘Some light comes to him at that moment,’ Mr. Reygadas said, ‘and he remembers how he felt when he was a child before he started conceptualizing everything’” ^(Lim AR18). This scene occurs later in the film, when Juan is lying in bed, near death. He tells Natalia about a set of memories that he psychically re-experienced that day, the intensity of his situation assisting him in breaking through the “darkness” invoked through his reified notions, specifically of himself as a unified subject. Juan tells Natalia that “today I felt love for all things... Glass. Machines. Wheels...Even the music we hear from the village. I saw how everything is alive. Shining. All of the time.” Juan, dangerously close to death, has finally experienced a deeper connection, one previously lost as he had been previously conceptually reducing the reality of his complex and processual being in the world. The film highlights the notion that death is an ultimate loss of selfhood, and as he approaches his death Juan is able to give up his sense of self that is “unified” and separated from the world **Post Tenebras Lux** highlights the increasingly precarious nature of this being in the world, revealing our connection with and ultimate human frailty within it.

To end at the beginning, so to speak: after the darkness, light. The film’s appropriation of the Latin translation of Job chapter 17 verses 11–16 for its title is material, provocative in a number of ways that work to thematically highlight Reygadas’s disparate-yet-connected formulation of a cinema of experience:

My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart. They change the night into day: the light is short because of darkness. If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness. ... And where is now my hope? As for my hope, who shall see it? They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust. ^(Holy Bible: King James Version)

Reimagining what these verses mean is within the macrocosmic purview of Reygadas’s film. Against the transcendent notion of our being subject to the shadows that supposedly haunt the material world, divining it as an othered realm—seen imperfectly through darkened glass—**Post Tenebras Lux** reconnects what idealist thought has rended, its insistence on the perfection of a spiritual realm and it’s separation from and dominion over an inherently flawed material world. The film shows this presumption to be a false dichotomy, where the self is an ideal figure separate from the world. Reygadas provides a view in which social and psychic paths are woven into a deeper ecological field. An example of how the film works in this way comes through the film’s

critique of the characters’ general dissatisfaction stemming from a misunderstanding of their ecological (and social, psychic) situatedness.

We see the film’s ecological elements come to the forefront of the thematic strands running through the film in a number of important ways. Siete’s cutting down the trees, seen falling along with him as he commits suicide, are intimately connected to Juan’s death. Further, the alienation that comes from the building of his house and Juan’s inability to realize or appreciate the connection between him and his family, the other villagers, his “workers,” ultimately highlights an alienation not from himself as a discreet individual, but more importantly from the larger world within which he is imbricated. Reygadas points to the complex precarity of reality in these instances, explicitly (in seemingly paradoxical, abstract expressionistic and surreal ways) showing the dangers of reification in the ecological, social and mental spheres highlighted within the film. The augmented lens used in the **Post Tenebras Lux** connects with the film’s title and its implications, creating a realism through imperfect material, an experimental and creative cinematic embracing of life in all its disjunctive and multivalent complexity. Contra the rhetoric that deludes material reality, the film asks a nonlinear series of beautiful and troubling questions that reclaim the space of inadequate and imperious answers: an immanent reality asymmetrical to the occidental tradition of comforting privileged and dominant entities.

Post Tenebras Lux posits that the linear, causal logic found in many popular films tends toward reification of a particular sort of self and psyche over and against any semblance of a heterogeneous and complex reality. The narrative linearity of most blockbusters beginning from the early to mid-20th century onward, with their ready-made formal structures that actively discourage active thought within the viewer, are what Reygadas’s film works against—although as **Post Tenebras Lux** does not resemble or reflect anything about popular narrative-driven cinema, it might be more accurate to say that these elements are what it asymmetrically “opposes.” The prevailing homogeneity in popular cinema is not only misleading but can be destructive: feel-good films that purport to work toward a kind of cosmopolitan, universal realism, the classic Hollywood model often ironically obscures and subsumes any multiplicities and differences it pretends to include. Instead of relying on these formal abstractions that replace thought and attempt to hand us simple solutions to the world’s problems, it becomes increasingly important to formulate experimental ways of understanding and being in the world that are immanent to a necessarily complex and problematic reality. We

need to practice “staying with the trouble,” as Donna Haraway puts it, which “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”. **Post Tenebras Lux** is situated realist practice in living color, a cinema of experience that imparts the precarity of a complex and heterogeneous reality. An experimental call to thought, Reygadas’s film asks us to embrace our embedded experiences while considering the destructive ethical implications of life lived in the darkness of personal and imposed spheres of reification.

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Human Beings

Human beings are walking digestive systems with exceptionally high thoughts of themselves.¹

Human beings consist of hairs of the head, hairs of the skin, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, marrow, kidney, heart, liver, pleura, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, stomach with its contents, faeces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, saliva, nasal mucus, synovial fluid and urine.²

Human beings have a relatively low nutritional value—an adult specimen contains approximately 126000 calories if you make use of everything, which is just enough to feed 50 others for one day.³

Human beings give birth to live young that they suckle or feed with infant formula out of baby bottles.

Human beings are neither the largest, the strongest, the fastest nor the smartest of animal species.

Human beings nevertheless assert an exceptional sense of superiority among other living creatures.

Human beings are made to "rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground".⁴

Human beings search for intelligent life in space.

Human beings look for electromagnetic radiation, synthetic air pollution and missing minerals, that may indicate mining, the exact kind of by-products that human beings currently produce themselves.

Human beings believe the destruction of your own habitat is a distinguished indication of intelligence.⁵

Human beings are rational and irrational.

Human beings starve and eat hamburgers and chorizo with mayonnaise.

Human beings don't kill each other.

Human beings kill vermin, parasites and swine.

Human beings call each other vermin, parasites and swine.

Human beings kill each other.

Human beings are scary.

Human beings may, at any moment, expose you as a fraud.

Human beings have not always existed and will not always exist.

¹ I suspect that I may have stolen this definition from Michel Houellebecq's *La possibilité d'une île* (2005), "The Possibility of an Island" or "Traffic Island" as the awkward Swedish translation reads.

² The enumeration of what human beings consist of comes from the *Mahāsatipatthāna Sutta*. Buddha here tries to convince an audience that it is pointless to develop attachment towards your own, or any other human being's, body.

³ The information regarding nutritional values comes from a prophecy by Göran Everdahl, entitled "Cannibals on the Meny", presented in the Swedish radio show *Spanarna*, Swedish Radio P1, 2017, April 28. Everdahl refers to James Cole's research at the University of Brighton. For some reason, Everdahl makes a miscalculation and comes to the conclusion that 126000 calories only suffice to feed 25 individuals, if each of them require 2500 calories a day, for half a day. (Or perhaps Everdahl imagines that the skeleton is too difficult for human beings to digest and only concludes the muscle mass and the most appetising organs—heart, kidney, brain, lungs and liver).

⁴ Quote from Genesis 1:26.

⁵ These thoughts come from Helena Granström's radio essay "Myten om människans överlägsenhet" (The Myth of Human Supremacy), that was aired in OBS, Swedish Radio P1, 2017, May 15. Granström's essay is largely based on Derrick Jensen's book *The Myth of Human Supremacy* (Seven stories press, 2016).



Människor är vandrande matsmältningssystem med ovanligt höga tankar om sig själva.¹

Människor består av hår, kroppsbehåring, naglar, tänder, hud, muskler, senor, ben, märg, njurar, hjärta, lever, lungsäck, mjälte, inälvor, bukhinna, magsäck, maginnehåll, avföring, galla, slem, var, blod, svett, fett, tårar, saliv, ledvätska och urin.²

Människor är relativt näringsfattiga – ett vuxet exemplar ger ungefär 126 000 kalorier om allt tas till vara, vilket räcker till att utfodra 50 andra i ett dygn.³

Människor föder levande ungar som de diar eller förser med modersmjölksersättning ur nappflaskor.

Människor tillhör varken den största, den starkaste, den snabbaste eller den smartaste djurarten.

Människor hyser ändå en föreställning om en särställning och överlägsenhet bland levande varelser.

Människor är satta att ”härska över havets fiskar och himlens fåglar och över alla djur som myllrar på jorden”.⁴

Människor letar efter intelligent liv i rymden.

Människor spanar efter elektromagnetisk strålning, syntetiska luftföroreningar och saknade mineraler, som kan antyda gruvbrytning – just sådana biprodukter som människor för tillfället producerar.

Människor håller förstörelsen av det egna livsrummet för ett framträdande uttryck för intelligens.⁵

Människor är rationella och irrationella.

Människor svälter och äter hamburgare och chorizos med majonnäs.

Människor dödar inte varandra.

Människor dödar ohyra, parasiter och svin.

Människor kallar varandra för ohyra, parasiter och svin.

Människor dödar varandra.

Människor är läskiga.

Människor kan när som helst avslöja att du är en bluff.

Människor har inte alltid funnits och kommer inte alltid att finnas.

1 Jag misstänker att jag kan ha snott den här definitionen från Michel Houellebecq's *La possibilité d'une île* (2005), "Öns möjligheter" eller "Refug" som den märkliga svenska titeln lyder.

2 Uppräkningen av vad människan består av kommer från *Mahāsatiṣṭhāna Sutta*. Buddha försöker här övertyga några åhörare om det meningslösa i att hysa begär för den egna, eller en annan människas kropp.

3 Uppgiften om människans näringsinnehåll är hämtad från Göran Everdahls spaning under rubriken "Kannibaler på menyn" i radioprogrammet *Spanarna*, Sveriges Radio P1, 2017-04-28. Everdahl lutar sig på James Coles forskning vid universitetet i Brighton. Av någon anledning räknar Everdahl fel och får det till att 126 000 kalorier endast räcker till att utfodra 25 individer som behöver 2 500 kalorier per dygn i ett halvt dygn. (Eller så tänker sig Everdahl att skelettet är för svårt för människor att äta och har bara räknat med muskelmassan och de aptitligaste organen – hjärta, njurar, hjärna, lungor och lever).

4 Citerat ur Första Moseboken 1:26

5 De här tankarna kommer från Helena Granströms radioessä "Myten om människans överlägsenhet", som sändes i OBS, Sveriges Radio P1, 2017-05-15. Granströms essä baserar sig till stor del på Derrick Jensens bok *The Myth of Human Supremacy* (Seven stories press, 2016).

Man Is the Winner



Fig. 76

“Man is the winner” is a quote taken from a documentary about hunting endangered animals. As man has shown himself stronger than the other animals, he has won the right to do whatever we wants with them, says one of the interviewees. With that statement, he means that it is perfectly okay to shoot animals even if the species is threatened. The fact that it may be the last living animal of an endangered species that you see in the crosshairs of the binoculars does not seem to worry this hunter. Rather, I imagine the excitement the hunter feels realizing that after him no one can trap or kill a similar animal. It is the last specimen of its kind and he is the ultimate winner. It is possible that this hunter was presented in an unfair way, but it is still his statement that made me experience a fan of the downfall of humanity. It is his attitude to his hobby that inspired me to create the picture.

Människan är vinnaren är ett citat tagit från en dokumentär om jakt på utrotningshotade djur. Eftersom människan har vunnit genom att visa sig starkare än djuren, ger det människan rätt att göra vad vi vill med dem säger en av de intervjuade. Med det uttalandet menade han att det var helt i sin ordning att skjuta dem även om arten är hotad. Att det kan vara det sista levande djuret av en utrotningshotat art som syns i kikarsiktets kors verkade inte bekymra denna jägare. Snarare föreställer jag mig den upphetsning jägaren känner inför det faktum att efter honom kan ingen fälla ett liknade djur. Det är det sista exemplaret av dess art och han är den ultimata vinnaren. Möjligtvis blev den jägaren vinklad på ett orättvist sätt men det är ändå hans uttalande som fick mig att uppleva en fläkt av mänsklighetens undergång. Det är hans inställning till sin hobby som inspirerade mig till att göra bilden.

Rethinking

Listening



Imagination connects us to the world. Imagination is a space and a place in the mind where permission is given to reorganize experiences into new combinations. The sociologic concept of “social imagination”¹ defines a way to understand the Other, meaning in this scientific context, other humans. It is well known that a society with lack of imagination ends up in apathy and fascism. To me it seems urgent to include also the non-human world in social imagination. We need empathy, a more panpsychist conception of Being, an expansion for the understanding and respect for the world outside our human sphere. There is no dead matter, all is vibrant matter with its own subjectivity, agency, situated knowledge and a specific ever-changing position and perspective. Imagination is a vehicle for our thoughts and experiences, taking us further towards visions and beyond reality as we know it. We are invited through the strangeness of art, to mentally travel, for example through hopelessness and towards hope. The experience that confuses us, disturbs our thoughts, our normal patterns of thinking—that has elements of strangeness—can give us the push we need to change our habitual mental orbits. Strangeness has the capacity to open up a little passage through the impossible, towards what instead can be seen as possible. Without imagination there would be no perception, no nothing, as outside Imagination there is in fact nothing. Without perception, imagination would have no possibilities to explore and develop; without imagination, perception would be flat, with no depth and structure. The phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty stresses that there is no point in separating the mutual dependence between perception and imagination. The intelligence of the bodily senses, invents me as a conscious being, construct the Me, my meaning. Alain Watts, the philosopher, puts it like this: Your mind, if you have one, is not in your head. Your head is in your mind.

It Is All about the Visual

In reality, we are more bacteria, viruses and fungi than we are human cells. “My flesh is populated and constituted by different swarms of foreigners”, says Jane Bennett.² The microbiota (intestinal microorganisms) is considered to have a total weight correspondent to the weight of the brain. So, it’s obvious, Otherness is in our own bodies and our physical bodies are not just ours. The Unknown and the invisible is a symbiotic part of us in many ways. Otherness is actually in the segment of the deepest unconscious mind, the inherited unpersonal realm which we share between us. In our culture, what can’t be seen, is not proved to exist. The eye dominates perception. The habitual automatic way of my perceiving reality is fundamentally based on the visual. First of all, It’s all about visibility. But in another observing practice, a listening practice, in a phenomenological exploration of sensations that is excluding sight, the experience will change radically, and the invisible, immaterial world will be totally other. In our anthropocentric perspective, that we are constantly dealing with, humans are the only subjects. All other bodies are excluded from consciousness. Modern man relates only to the human world, hang out only with its own specie, exclusively, and exists consequently within a narrowing worldview. Actually, all is symbiosis. We are beings among beings who have forgotten that the world around us is alive. The need to change our anthropocentric and patronizing understanding of the non-human world is a point from which I, as an artist, wish to contribute with my work. It is all eventually about contributing to taking sustainable care of life itself and the general need to reinterpret the patriarchal relationships we have to what we call Nature. Nature—is anthropocene.³ Nature is everything outside our human world. We have invented a concept of pure fiction, to control everything around us. And we have forgotten ourselves as Nature.

The Limitations of Perception Construct Silences

Hearing -or auditory perception- the ability to perceive sounds by detecting vibrations, is species specific. Animals are deep listeners. Their survival is dependent on listening. Plants, as many animals, hear without ears. The vibrations of the ground affect them. I can only wonder; How does the world sound for the bee? How do molecules sound for microorganisms? What does the bat hear?⁴ And the plant, that apart from our five senses, have several others? Flowers can hear and react to bees approaching. Research show that sound can even affect the genes of plants. The ancient idea of a creative intelligence that exists deep within the heart of nature has been neglected in modern times but is reappearing now within science. During the 20th century it was impossible to speak of the world as animated, and about a psyche or a consciousness/intelligence of plants for instance, which actually was Darwin’s belief. He was fully convinced that plants are intelligent organisms.⁵ To speak of an animated nature was considered as anthropomorphizing, which in itself is an anthropocentric conclusion as this idea is based on that thinking, feeling, perceiving, self-interest and experiences of self-worth are exclusively human phenomena. In reality; we are all receivers.

My Constructed Deafness

What I actually hear is not the same as what I choose to listen to. There is a culturally constructed deafness. In his manifesto of soundscape ecology, R Murray Schafer writes “Noise pollution results when man does not listen carefully. Noises are sound that we have learnt to ignore.” R.Murray Schafer published *The Tuning of The World* in 1979, a manifest for an acoustic ecology inspired by Pythagorean ideas that the universe is a musical composition.⁶ Acoustic ecology is a discipline studying the relationship, mediated through sound, between human beings and their environment. Sonic ecology according to Schafer would mean to regain silence in our soundscapes. Hearing and listening is not the same thing. The Indian mystic Kirpal Singh⁷ put it like this: “The essence of sound is felt in both motion and silence...indeed, when there is no sound, hearing is most alert, and when there is sound the hearing nature is least developed “. The political dimensions of listening are underrated. Through listening, and an amplified sonic sensibility, we can deeply understand and bodily experience the effects that layers of history have in what has become the modern world. Sound and listening can offer us an exploration of textual analysis of a space. There are possibilities of listening as activism.⁸

Situated Noise in My Head

What is silence? If our hearing organ did not have a limited ability to hear, there would be no silence. The physical condition of the human ear means that the frequency range is limited. Sound is vibration and silence is only our biological limitation. But even if we don’t hear, we are all affected by the soundscape we are in. Sound is a bodily experience with an emotional impact on us as beings. To complicate the whole thing; when it comes to the listening act, the mental ideas and emotional state of a person determines what will become one’s perceptual experiences. Perception provides us with knowledge. The amazing intelligence of the ear cooperating with the brain has the ability to exclude and control. I hear music in dreams when I’m sleeping, a state in apparent silence and consciousness. The stream of consciousness is full of voices, sounding thoughts. What we have the possibilities to hear and what we choose not to listen to, is not only biologically or psychologically limited but also culturally constructed. There is noise. “Feminized speech, sound and music-making are often equated with noise, unpleasant, meaningless unwanted.”⁹ Noisiness is not only gendered, associated with femininity but also with class and race. Noise is what we don’t want to hear and choose not to listen to. All knowledge is situated. Objectivity is never neutral. Our eyes are actively organizing the world. The feminist objectivity implies that all truths are produced from a perspective, from a position whether you are looking from the white male gaze or a non-human perspective—as from the eye of an insect. All is subjectivity. All is gendered. Some sound is feminized -considered as noise.

The Voice

My voice is not only mine. Voices are unfolding spaces of memory, presence, being, body. Cultural and personal memory. Voice is an essential factor in my own artistic practice. The vibrations travelling with the breath, are loaded with imaginary material from the embodied mind. My artistic sonic work explores my relations to the invisible, to the unknown, to Otherness. It is a process of listening to the reverbs inside of my imagination, reflections of immaterial atmospheres. Sonic flavors, temperatures, characters and qualities of emotional presence compose imaginary spaces. The process starts off in field-recordings from places, spaces and situations around me involving sounds of my hands, body movements and most of all my own mouth and voice. The intention is to deconstruct semantics in an editorial twisting and turning of meanings in order to unfold the known and explore the unknown through sonic representations as living open narratives. It is a meditative kind of work emerging from the need to belong to what is there. During the process I pay attention to capricious states of mind and emotional directions present in my own process.



Fig. 78

Rethinking Listening

Sonic practice invites me to rethink the concept of consciousness. Consciousness is immaterial- as sound. Bennett’s new materialism deconstructs anthropocentrism. We cannot submit anything in the non-human world to objectivation. As there is no dead matter, as everything is alive. Subjects are everywhere. Everything has agency and the ability to affect and be affected. Everything and all self-organize and reorganize constantly in ever changeable relations. In reality, there is no stable order of anything.¹⁰ The world has a non-hierarchical order, there can be no objective truth, as all knowledge is situated, depending.¹¹ All subjects have a position and knowledge is produced from specific places and from a certain perspective. I can’t possibly perceive things from other species perspective, but with imagination, I can go far enough to open up for my own listening to something else outside my human culturally affected “box”. I am told that the question of how the brain gives rise to subjective experience is the hardest of all for neuroscientists. Many of them are working within a pan-psychic framework, as good old materialism about the mind doesn’t work. If we assume that the universe in all parts is conscious from the beginning—the hard problem of consciousness would already be solved. Plants, bacteria, stones, insects—from this perspective, all has the ability of self-contemplation. Water has memory. Our cells are filled with water. A respect for this perspective would make the world a better place. Every being exists inside her own imagination in a place. Everything has a position. All change constantly, we change positions. One’s place can’t possibly last the same, as all is moving. One’s perspectives change. It is all about from where you are looking/ listening. Experiencing. Consciousness is in all, everywhere and is the matter that universe is made of. From the cells in my organs to the stars and the minerals seemingly still or dead or considered non-organic. All is living matter, subjects, with its own consciousness with its own situated knowledge production. All is moving, changing and have the agency to affect and be affected. In another listening practice, in a phenomenological exploration of sensations, space is not empty. Compassion and an open heart will take me closer to other realities. Jane Bennett names it “assemblages”, those everchanging non-hierarchical relations of everything. This is a way to have some understanding of how there are more perspectives other than the human anthropocentric one. Imagination can be a radical strategy for revolutionary change. Change of mind-set.

Exercises

Pauline Oliveros has had an impact on modern western listening. She invented Deep Listening, a conceptual music experience, that she describes as a method for awareness and healing.¹² As a DIY strategy, her sonic meditations are scores for the practice of everyone to get an experience and contact with the audible world in a wider and deeper sense. The work is guided by questions like—Are you sure you hear everything there is to be heard?—What am I excluding from my listening?—What are you hearing right now? How is it changing? Her scores are useful for us exploring human field recorders, documentalists in the more than human world. The feminist scientific ideas as represented in an attitude to listening that is more receptive and sensitive.

An Expanded Listening

What is it that I don’t hear? Choose not to listen to? Have learnt to ignore? Someone said, that in order to designate a territory you need to define its limits. The undefined has no limits. Deconstructing my habitual listening process is an important way to unbox myself, to have creative freedom in my own sonic practice. Listening with deep attention is, to search to withdraw from the Self, to change perspective. To escape the dichotomies inherent in my verbal language, in my mind. As mentioned, Otherness is an organic part of it to me. There are as many perspectives as there are places from where to experience things. As many truths as there are subjects. As many realities as there are perspectives. To imagine the concept of thing-power, i e the force or agency of all there is, can be transforming.

Deconstruction of My Mind

Sound is vibrations, flowing through the membranes of all bodies. To see with the ears and perceive the vibrations through the membrane of one’s whole body gives another quality and character to the

surrounding environment. There will be received information about temperature, movement, density. In an experiment, with a conscious change of the sensory order excluding visual information, my perception of the outer world becomes totally different. The mind opens up for deconstruction of concepts in mental processes offering other perspectives and interpretations. Listening with the hands, touching to explore the space around the objects in a room results in, to use Bill Viola’s words: “ a putting of senses together differently”. In the visual world things, objects, forms, have borders. Endings and starting-points. A cup ends at the rim. But in another listening experience this is not sure. Everything is interwoven, entangled and in relation, in more or less delicate and strange ways. Everything around me, the world, vibrates and resonates as I move around, slowly. My body becomes the membrane, obvious to my awareness. My ears grow to a different and unidentified shape, as shapeshifting into antennas. To see with the ears becomes easier when I change the order of the senses, as described above. I become aware in the exploration of the physical world that where the eye creates empty spaces, there is Otherness. All this information from the invisible is excluded in the normal world I share with other western brought up rational people. But I can’t let go of the idea that we are all the dreamed ones, existing inside a dream. And as Albert Einstein once put it;—Logic can take you from A to B. But imagination can take you everywhere.

Nature speaks. Language is the property of the sensual world. Nature is fully conscious and the sounds from it are as important as the human ones. But there is also a perceptual reciprocity. Nature listens and observes.¹³

- ↑ Coined by Sociologist C. Wright Mills in his 1959 book *The Sociological Imagination*
- ↑ Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter—a Political Ecology of things* (Duke University Press, 2010)
- ↑ Morton, Timothy, *Ecology without Nature* (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 2007)
- ↑ ”What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” paper by American philosopher Thomas Nagel, 1974
- ↑ Darwin, Charles, *The Movements in Plants*
- ↑ Raymond Murray Schafer (born 18 July 1933) is a Canadian composer, writer, music educator and environmentalist perhaps best known for his World Soundscape Project, concern for acoustic ecology, and his book *The Tuning of the World* (1977).
- ↑ Sant Kirpal Singh (1894–1974) a spiritual master (satguru) in the tradition of Surat Shabd Yoga. He was the President of the World Fellowship of Religions, an organization recognized by UNESCO, which had representatives from all the main religions of the world. The basic teachings consist in opening the inner eye or third eye to develop vision of inner light and inner sound. Kirpal Singh taught that the practice of meditation on the Divine Word, or the Yoga of the Sound Current (Surat Shabd Yoga) was at the spiritual base of all religions.
- ↑ For example see: Leonardo Music Journal Vol 30, pp114–118. Listening Geopolitics and Anthropocen Contact Zones. F Zinovieff and G Aceves Sepúlveda https://direct.mit.edu/lmj/article/doi/10.1162/lmj_a_01103/97064/Listening-Geopolitics-and-the-Anthropocene-Contact (available 20210603)
- ↑ Marie Thompson (2016) Feminised Noise and the ‘Dotted Line’ of Sonic Experimentalism, *Contemporary Music Review*, 35:1, 85–101, DOI: 10.1080/07494467.2016.1176773
- ↑ Bennett, Jane. *Vibrant Matter—a Political Ecology of things* (Duke University Press, 2010)
- ↑ Haraway, Donna. *Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspectives* (Feminist Studies, 1988)
- ↑ Pauline Oliveros (1932–2016) was an American composer, accordionist and a central figure in the development of post-war experimental and electronic music. Oliveros formulated new music theories, and investigated new ways to focus attention on music including her concepts of “deep listening” and “sonic awareness”.
- ↑ The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World by David Abram -ecologist, anthropologist, and philosopher.



Fig. 80



Fig. 81

Jeg har gått tur på vei hvor mine foreldre tok meg med da jeg var 5–6 år. Veien er en gammel vei. Med gamle, hule asker langs grøftene. Nesten bare barken var igjen da jeg var barn, men hver vår fikk de blomster og grønne blader. Jeg undret meg over at de kunne leve. Det bruste ikke under barken som det gjorde i ospetrærne utenfor huset vårt når våren kom, men de levde. 60 år etter ble de fortsatt grønne om våren og barnebarna kunne gjemme seg i hulene. De kunne undre seg og finne billearver og småkryp i strøet inne i treet. Nå er jeg 76 år og trærne har gitt tapt. Jeg vet ikke om barnebarna husker at de var inne i trærne på samme måte som det satte seg fast i mitt minne. Jeg er heldig som kunne gå på gamle stier og kjenne meg igjen som barnet jeg var og naturen som var kjent. Barnebarna kan ikke vise de samme trærne til sine barnebarn, men har de undret seg, kan de gi undringen videre, hvis de har natur i sin nærhet. Som barn hadde vi en skog. Voksne gikk ikke dit. Vi fant på våre leker og løste problemene som dukket opp. Jeg tror det har gitt en trygghet som voksen, og det har gitt en grunnleggende følelse om at skogen og jeg er ett. Vi er en del av det levende. I skogen vår er det terrasseblokker nå, men jeg har skog å gå i. Før likte jeg ikke gå. Jeg ville løpe. Nå løper jeg ikke mer. Men det å gå, har gitt nye gleder. Før meg blir det et problem når jeg ikke lenger kan gå eller når det ikke lenger er tilgjengelig skog. Sånn er det å bli gammel. En opplever mindre utenfor en selv—som reiser og aktiviteter som krever krefter. men jeg tar bilder av natur jeg er spesielt glad i. Jeg skal male når jeg ikke lenger kan gå ut. Fordi jeg har gode følelser knyttet til bildene, kan jeg føle det igjen når jeg maler.

Hva har barnebarna med seg fra sin barndom? Mange har en organisert fritid der det er voksne som styrer. For mange er målet og bli god, kanskje best. De lærer at en må jobbe for å oppnå resultater. Det er bra. Kanskje har det de har brukt fritid og krefter på varig verdi for dem. Men har de tapt noe når leken med fantasi, kreativitet og kompromisser er borte? Kanskje noe av tryggheten til å tenke egne tanker, at en kan løse problemer og inngå kompromisser og samarbeide. Det trenger et demokratiet.

Som lærer i naturfag og biologi har jeg hatt gleden av å ha med elever ut, til vann, skog og fjell. Å se en vannloppe i mikroskop i det den føder levende små løpper, gjør et annet inntrykk enn å se det samme på film. At en opplever det selv, kobler inn følelsene og får betydning. At barn får oppleve seg selv i naturen, kan ikke erstattes av teoretisk kunnskap om hvordan samspillet i naturen er.

Noen er bekymret for at barn skal bli glade i og knytte seg til natur som forsvinner. Naturen endrer seg. Det har den alltid gjort, men hvor store og raske forandringer tåler vi? Hva kan vi voksne gi videre til barn hvis vi ikke kjenner oss igjen i naturen vi lever i? Flyktninger og innvandrere som har vært nødt til å reise fra et hjem, og en barndom de var glade, kan ha denne erfaringen. De kan gi videre fortellinger, men ikke opplevelser og følelser.

Nå er forandringene i klima og i naturen raskere enn det naturlige. Og vi vet hvorfor. Forbruket vårt med kjøp og kast og vårt bruk av naturen tar ikke hensyn til samspillet i naturen, Vi gamlinger har erfaring med å leve på en annen måte. Da jeg giftet meg hadde jeg på meg en drakt som min mamma hadde sydd om fra en kjole tanten min hadde i sin ungdom. Jeg var fin og har gjemt på drakten. Skulle vi ha noe nytt, måtte vi sy det og helst sy noe om. Før jul var lykken stor når det endelig var appelsiner i butikken. Jeg liker fortsatt lukten av eksos fordi den eneste gangen jeg kjente lukten som barn, var når vi var i byen for å se juleutstilling i butikkvinduene. Ødelagte sko og vesker ble reparert av skomakeren og brukne ski ble reparert av skimakeren, Det fantes ikke elektriske tannbørster eller badevekter som ikke kunne åpnes og repareres. Naboene og venne våre levde som vi gjorde. Vi visste at det fantes noen rikinger, men vi kjente dem ikke. Hadde de vært naboene våre eller hadde vi kjent dem, ville vi nok ikke vært så fornøyd med vårt liv. Store økonomiske forskjeller er uheldig på mange måter for et samfunn.

Jeg liker lukten av eksos. Den er knyttet til glede og forventning i barndommens jul. Før tok vi trikken til Oslo, og i det vi kom opp fra undergrunnsstasjonen kjente jeg det: Eksos. Utenfor det fineste utstillingsvinduet sto vi sammen med mange. Innenfor kjørte et leketog med gaver mellom trærne i en skog der det glitret i sneen. En nisse satt i kroken, nikket og spiste julegrøt. Det var magiskt. Klokken var over fem, men vi skulle ikke handle. Vi skulle oppleve.

Dårlig råd ga et nøysomt men godt liv. Rufsete skjortesnipper ble snudd før skjorten ble til filler. Det meste som ikke kunne brukes mer, ble ikke kastet, men gjenbrukt eller reparert. Vi kunne ikke velge å leve med større forbruk. Det lå ingen tanke om bærekraftig forbruk bak- ingen moralske tanker.

Jeg blir glad når jeg ser at gjenbruk og reparering er viktig for mange. For mange er det nå et personlig valg å leve bærekraftig til beste for naturmiljø og klima. Det synes som mange særlig yngre tar dette på alvor. Jeg ser fram til at et høyt forbruk ikke lenger skal gi prestisje, verken hos unge eller gamle.

Vi har erfaring om at en kan leve et godt liv med lavt forbruk. Men vi er medansvarlige for utvikling av forbruket som gir ubalanse i klima og natur. Vi kjenner sammenhengen.

Mange unge arbeider for endringer som vi burde kjempet for, vi som har erfaringene. Det minste vi kan gjøre er å støtte arbeidet deres og heie på dem.





The Poet in His Poetry

why to work .

f r e e
against dualities
for the love of complexity
for a durable changing world
a permanent dynamic humanity
a world without conventions or prejudices
a world full of love and development
in diversity

to realise this in visual form
to realise this in language
a language free for all purposes
with 10^0 10^0 and more possibilities
of communication
try it too
be free
f o r e v e r y o n e

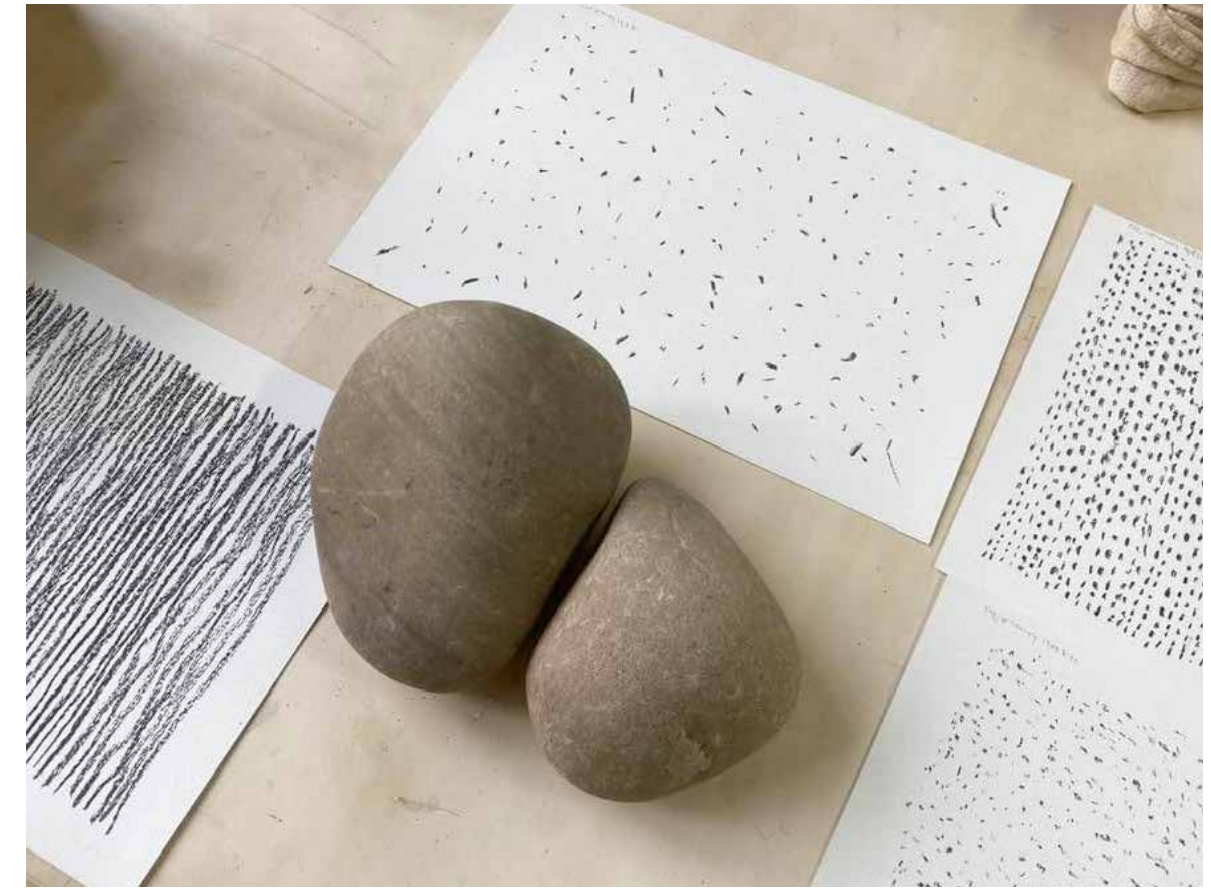




Fig. 84

MUSAC Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León

my poetry is the world
 i write it every day
 i rewrite it every day
 i see it every day
 i read it every day
 i eat it every day
 i sleep it every day

the world is my chance
 it changes me every day
 my chance is my poetry

17.06.17 - 04.02.18 | SALA 2

herman de vries
 chance and change

MUSAC | Junta de Castilla y León | M

www.musac.es



Fig. 85

Titel

The bird on the branch.
 The bird on the branch
 The golden bird.
 On the branch.
 The branch.
 The branch.

Time passes slowly when the bird is sitting on the branch.
 The branch.
 The branch.
 The branch.

The bird on the branch.
 It sits on the branch.
 It.
 The bird.
 The bird.

The bird sits on top of the branch in the tree
 The golden bird sits on the branch.
 The branch sits on the tree that sits on Earth, which is actually a rock.
 So the bird sits on the rock, it sits on the branch and the stone.
 The branch ... and the stone.
 It sat on the branch, but now it sits on the stone.

The golden bird cannot move, not even a little.
 The golden bird isn't a bird.
 But, it sat on the branch, and now it sits on the stone, in the stone
 It sits on the branch and in the stone at the same time.
 It sits in the forest in the tree on the branch on the stone in the world on Earth.

But, the bird is sitting on the branch, they say.
 It sits on the branch.
 It's true.
 It's sitting on the branch, that's easy,
 but that's not the whole truth, that is never the whole truth.

Ever since we were babies we have learned
 to just tell what is most important.
 To tell what can be heard,
 that which can be made exciting and interesting for others
 But, what about everything else, then?
 What if we leave out an important piece
 without even noticing it?
 And if, then it's all in vain.



Fig. 85



Fig. 85

Loose Composition With Forest Branches

I live in Masthugget in central Gothenburg and have Slottsskogen just around the corner. It's a city park that consists of arranged park areas and a lot of natural forest. I often visit the forest since it's so close by. Eight years ago I started walking in the forest terrain of Slottsskogen due to back pain. I had heard that walking in irregular terrain gives you a good back. I also started using "bare-foot shoes" which gives good exercise for the feet and makes me feel the forest floor clearly under my feet. For periods I have been walking every morning as a sort of routine just for the sake of well-being and I have continued with it even though I am now free of back pain. I avoid the asphalt trails that are just about everywhere, although, sometimes I need to cross them in order to get from one part of the wood into another. Sometimes I need to walk along an asphalt trail for a while but I always walk a bit beside it.

When I first started walking in irregular forest terrain in Slottsskogen I was ascertained that apart from myself there were only some dog owners and their dogs, hardly them, who did the same. Most stick to the asphalt trails in Slottsskogen. I could sometimes get a feeling of people wondering and getting slightly worried about my deviant walks. But perhaps it was just a hunch. And immediately I decided not to care about what others think about how I walk in Slottsskogen.

I have a routine route in the forest terrain that I always follow that takes approx. 40 min. Don't know why it always ends up with the same walk but I believe I think it's nice not to have to think about which way I should take. I have walked it for eight years now so I assume that I have been part of creating paths there.

Through art I had joined Club Anthropocene and participated in workshops for a couple of years and during a walking lecture on forestry on Stora Bornö in Bohuslän I fell in love with the subject forestry. I started making films about forestry. I was at that time fascinated by the fact that I earlier on had not thought about what forests really are, that all land become forest if only being let to itself but that we now almost only plant organised mono-cultures all over Sweden. Parallel to my new-found interest in forestry I started gathering fallen sticks from the forest during my walks and brought them with me to my studio. The idea was that I wanted to work more physically for a while and also to make use of my walks in my art. I started working open-ended with the sticks in the studio to see what would emerge.

I started writing texts with sticks and make installations with them and now I have also started working with making firearms of the sticks. I believe that writing text and making weapons with sticks is something very familiar to most people. Combining this has also become an enjoyment. They have been on the ground for perhaps twenty years these sticks and have become real characters when I pick them up and bring them inside. And to combine the very beauty of the sticks with the weapon that in some way resemble evil and the devil itself. I have appreciated this paradox or the contrast and thus continued working with it. I find it intriguing when "nature" and "culture" meet. I have strived to find that balance. I think several of the compositions I have made are very wild nature where the sticks live their own lives when simultaneously and explicitly looking like a sort of violent weapon. I arrange them on the floor and move them around



in free compositions, there's a sudden click and a machine-gun appears. When I present the loose stick-compositions in the "white cube" I let the sticks hang loosely on nails on the wall. I then believe that you as a viewer can intuitively feel that this is fleeting and changeable and that you receive the playful feeling I experience in the project.

The fallen sticks gathered from the ground on my walks in Slottsskogen are about to decompose and become soil. They are part of an ecosystem. I interrupt that when I pick them up and bring them inside. I return some of the sticks that I have in my studio to the same forest. At that time they have already dried up so it will take a while before they proceed with the mouldering process again.

I meet both wild and fenced animals during my walks in Slottsskogen. I can often see a squirrel hanging from a trunk with its claws dug into the bark and focusing one of its eyes on me for a long time. It runs up the trunk and out on a branch if I get any closer to it, there it settles again and focuses one eye on me. Some days the squirrel makes noises as it looks at me, I wonder if it's annoyed. The roe deer sometimes scare me since they are like humans in size but camouflaged. I become calm when I see it's a roe deer. Some places on my route are more solitary, with forest only and no asphalt trail within view.

I remember feeling scared of people some years ago or rather scared of having to get scared. Remember how I could look back over my shoulder and run for my life in order to get through a piece of wood into a more open area. I have met the occasional dog owners as well as people getting high. Some are just out walking, like myself. But in spite of being in the middle of the city I very rarely meet other people in the woody areas. Nowadays I am never afraid. Perhaps I have made the places I pass by my own.

In the summertime there's sometimes some litter from open-air parties in Slottsskogen. Especially one place that's a very nice party spot in the middle of the forest, like a living-room, intimate but open, light and green with some view. There are often plastic cups, chip bags, beer cans, bottles and plastic bags left there. I sometimes take one of the discarded bags and pick the rest of the litter in it. Then throw it away in one of the designed litter-bins by an asphalt trail.

I always walk past the elks that are fenced on the hilltop most distant from city life. There are often people standing there contemplating, admiring the elks. I feel sorry for the elks. City phenomena, wild animals in cages. I believe free elks usually walk and run long distances in the wild. So it's probably not an optimal life for them here even though I think they have the biggest enclosure of the Slottsskogen zoo. There are always at least two elks, sometimes they have babies. The one with antlers eats from a bundle of fresh sticks and the one without stands on a distance with its muzzle in the air, perhaps smelling the wind and the ground. Sometimes looking at me. A keeper arrives. Immediately the elks walk into a shed they have in their yard. I sometimes think about my terrain routes when I'm not in Slottsskogen. Then I observe myself. I observe how I walk, and especially my feet that are in contact with the ground. There's something special to walking in forest terrain when I almost always walk on asphalt, concrete floors or wooden floors that are flat. It's a dream of sorts, although it's real.



Martin Jentzen

Referenser

Title är ett begrepp som används inom olika ämnen som exempelvis musik, film och litteratur. Title kan betyda titel, titeltext eller titelbild. Title är också ett begrepp inom film och litteratur som används för att beskriva en films eller bokens innehåll. Title är också ett begrepp inom musik som används för att beskriva en låts text. Title är också ett begrepp inom litteratur som används för att beskriva en bokens innehåll.

Title är också ett begrepp inom film som används för att beskriva en films innehåll. Title är också ett begrepp inom litteratur som används för att beskriva en bokens innehåll. Title är också ett begrepp inom musik som används för att beskriva en låts text. Title är också ett begrepp inom litteratur som används för att beskriva en bokens innehåll.

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Inledning/bakgrund

Reflektioner och tankar kring vår relation till skogen i synnerhet och naturen i allmänhet och hur vårt brukande av den påverkat både oss själva och vårt förhållande till de ekosystem vi lever av. Utgångspunkt tas i ett historiskt perspektiv som inte på något sätt har ambitionen att vara en korrekt eller komplett bild av utvecklingen De slutsatser som dras kan naturligtvis ifrågasättas, och det är vad som är själva syftet med texten. Att vi alla ska reflektera kring hur vår syn på natur och brukandet av den påverkats av olika aspekter.

Människan skiljer sig i grunden inte från några andra arter även om vi nu utvecklats till att bli en global nyckelart som i princip påverkat hela jorden och systematiskt omformat naturmiljöer och ekosystem. Alla arter påverkar den miljö de lever i, och påverkas i sin tur av hur livsmiljön utvecklas.

Människan har dock haft förmåga att i stor skala omforma sina livsmiljöer på ett sätt som ingen annan art kunnat göra och dessutom i större skala. Det finns i princip inga områden i världen som är opåverkade av oss, särskilt inte om man beaktar det faktum att vi genom användning, i praktiken förbränning, av fossila resurser ökat koldioxidhalten i atmosfären på hela jorden. En intressant fråga att reflektera kring är hur denna totala påverkan av våra livsmiljöer påverkar vår syn på oss själva och vår relation till resten av naturen. Vi är ju självklart en del av naturen precis som alla andra arter. Man kan egentligen inte säga att något vi gör är onaturligt. Om man betraktar en apa som tagit hjälp av en träpinne för att peta ut myror ur en ihålig trädstam för att äta dem så är det ju en primat som uppfunnit ett verktyg för att underlätta sitt leverne. Om vi samtidigt betraktar en människa som sitter i en modern grävmaskin och öppnar ett dagbrott för att utvinna någon metall eller annan resurs så är det också en primat med ett verktyg, som andra individer av samma art samverkat kring att utveckla, som pysslar på för att hålla sig mätt eller rent av i hopp om ett mer komfortabelt liv. I båda fallen har primaterna tagit resurser som funnits tillhanda på jorden och utvecklat dem för en ökad användbarhet. Men graden av avancemang och påverkan är väldigt olika. Så istället för att, som man lätt kan vilja göra, försöka dela upp företeelser i naturliga och onaturliga är det förmodligen betydligt mer intressant att värdera dem utifrån vilken grad av påverkan på vår gemensamma livsmiljö de har.

Utan att göra anspråk på att göra en komplett eller helt korrekt historisk återgivning av människans utveckling som art kan det konstateras att människan gått från att vara en samlande och asätande primat. Förmodligen har samlandet varit mer betydelsefullt än jakten även om tro-

ligen just tillgången på högvärdigt protein från bytesdjur varit viktigt för hjärnans utveckling och tillväxt som också varit grunden för artens utveckling. Vi har såklart också bedrivit jakt historiskt men då vi inte är ett särskilt kapabelt rovdjur har förmodligen köttätande påbörjats i spåren av andra mer effektiva rovdjur.

Alla arter är en del av ett sammanhang där arten påverkar de populationer den lever av. Det kan vara genom att livnära sig på vissa växter och därmed ge andra arter fördelar av att födoväxten reduceras. Samtidigt kan det bidra till födoväxtens reproduktion och spridning om användningen av den som föda kan hjälpa växten att sprida sina frön över längre sträckor. På samma sätt är ofta växtätande arter födoresurs för predatorer.

Dessa samband av ömsesidig påverkan sker i princip alltid utan någon egentlig plan för vilken utveckling det ska resultera i. En art utnyttjar en resurs och det både missgynnar och gynnar andra arter och strukturer på vägen och alla får leva med konsekvenserna. Om en resurs börjar tryta så reduceras arterna som lever på den eller så flyttar arterna, om de kan, till andra marker där bättre underlag finns. Det finns naturligtvis exempel på när en art specifikt gynnar en annan för sin eller bådas bättre överlevnad genom samverka som är mer eller mindre att betrakta som symbioser. Till exempel den samverkan som sker mellan gröna växter och vissa svampar, så kallad mykorrhiza.

Människan har tack vare sin intelligens och förmåga till ett utvecklat abstrakt tänkande kunnat ta denna samverkan ett steg längre. Vi insåg förmodligen ganska tidigt att vårt nyttjande av resurser har en påverkan på vår omgivning. Förmodligen tog detta sina första uttryck i olika medvetna åtgärder för gynna vissa vilda växter och att locka till sig vilt genom att skapa mer gynnsamma biotoper där det eftersökta viltet trivs och samtidigt underlätta jakten efter det. Så även typiska ”naturfolk” har alltså medvetet påverkat sitt landskap för att förbättra sitt försörjningsunderlag Det är alltså en medveten förvaltning av en naturresurs men utan att i grunden omdana landskap och populationer.

Det stora steget i utvecklingen tas när jordbruket införs. Förmodligen är det inte möjligt att hitta en skarp skiljelinje mellan de mer eller mindre ömsesidigt gynnande av olika arter i samverkan och när jordbruk i betydelsen egentlig odling börjar tillämpas. Men uppenbart är att med tiden har jordbruket blivit en allt mer konsekvent omdaning av delar av olika naturlandskap. Vi brukar ju särskilja kulturlandskap från naturlandskap då de förra främst är formade genom människans systematiska påverkan.

Detta sker dels genom att vissa särskilt lämpliga marktyper tagits i anspråk i så stor omfattning att de naturtyper som fanns där innan

kraftigt reducerats i areal och därmed inte kan fylla samma funktioner som tidigare. Ett bra exempel är de rikare och bördigare skogstyperna i Skandinavien. De bästa åkerjordarna i slättbygderna har ju inte varit åkrar innan människan omförde dem till det. Det har i de allra flesta falls rört sig om olika skogstyper. Ofta var förmodligen dessa mer eller mindre dominerade av olika typer av lövskog med ett mer eller mindre stort inslag av så kalla de ädla lövträd som är särskilt krävande vad gäller goda mark och klimatförhållanden. Just dessa marker var också de som var mest lämpade för odling. I många fallhar det också rört sig om fuktiga skogar eller kärr. Föratt göra dem odlingsbara har man dränerat bort vattnet med hjälp av diken och därmed skapat en ny typ av biotop. Den tidigare höga fuktighe- ten och ansamlingen av vatten har förmodligen varit orsak till att näringsämnen koncentrats där då vatten är ett naturligt lösningsmedel för dessa och att det till sist ansamlas i landskapet lågpunkter. Efter dränering avstannar denna ackumulering och läckaget av näringsämnen ut från dessa marker tenderar istället att öka. Detta har lett till att tidigare skogstyper nu i många fall är riktigt ovanliga. Till en början var dessa av människan omdanade kulturmarker undantagen i en stor ”vildmark” vilket i praktiken var en stor och varierad skog. Den odlade arealen var liten i jämförelse med den stora omkringlig- gande arealen där människan rörde sig utan för sitt ”territorium”

Jordbrukslandskapet kommer att växa i omfång med tiden. Djur domesticeras och vilda ursprungsvarianter utrotas. Detta påverkar sambanden och ekologin även utanför de specifikt odlade områden.

En annan viktig komponent i denna omdaning är införandet av grödor, det vill säga växter från andra delar av världen. Merparten av våra grödor—kulturväxter, härstammar inte från Skandinavien. Dels har dynamik och struktur påverkats när odlingen påbörjas men detta innebär också att helt nya arter införs i landskapet. Att införa en ny art kan tyckas ”enkelt” men egentligen blir den införda ”nya” arten en art utan sitt omgivande system. Den saknar det sammanhang som alla sedan länge integrerade arter har i sitt ekosystem. Vi kan inte föra in endast en främmande art och förvänta oss att det är oproblematiskt. Den blir en främmande ”satellit” från en annan naturtyp som ofta är beroende av människans skötsel och omvårdnad. I vissa andra fall är den istället väldigt konkurrenskraftig och blir inte en del av det omgivande ekosystemet, utan blir då vad man kallar invasiv. Det saknas de reglerande samspel som arten levde inom på sin ursprungliga biotop, där den utvecklats i samspel med sin omgivning. Risken med invasiva arter är att de slår ut betydande delar av den väv som





tressant. Särskilt som de görs med begränsade kopplingar till naturskogarnas dynamik utan is-tället hanteras som olika odlingssystem för träd. Så ur ett övergripande ekologiskt perspektiv har det mindre betydelse om skogsbruket faller inom den ena eller andra kategorin.

Men det som är såående är att ”skogsbruksfilosofier” ses som något separat, och som begrepp hamnar dessa filosofier lite vid sidan av de andra. Men egentligen är det ju de bakomliggande värderingar som formar förhållningssättet till skogen som är det verkligt intressanta. Det är den grundläggande synen på skogen som styr vilka system och metoder som kan tänkas komma till användning, beroende av vilken typ av påverkan på skogen man accepterar utifrån sina grundläggande värderingar.

Dessa värderingar och generella målsättningar är vad som är grunden för det som benämnas skogsbruksfilosofier. Därför borde det vara avsevärt mer intressant att i första hand fördjupa sig i olika skogsbruksfilosofier snarare än system och metoder. Skogsbruksfilosofierna borde tillmätas en större betydelse än de ges i skogsskötselseriens klassificering.

Den intressanta fråga som egentligen aldrig berörs är vilken typ av skogsbruksfilosofi som ligger till grund för det plantagesbaserade trakthygesskogsbruk som bedrivs i dagsläget. Eftersom det inte finns någon ”strikt rationell referenspunkt”, befriad från ”filosofi” i måste det även för det nu dominerande skogsbruket finnas någon bakomliggande filosofi som borde tas upp till diskussion.

Att det är odlingens logik och moral som präglar skogsbruket är uppenbart och i den insikten borde det finnas en början till att identifiera filosofin bakom det skogsbruk som i dagsläget dominerar. Förmodligen finns det också drag av funktionalism i det konventionella skogsbrukets filosofi.

Att synen på hur skog kan och bör brukas är en kulturell fråga är egentligen uppenbart. Som-maren 2021 läckte ett dokument från EU-kommissionen där man föreslog att begränsa möjlig-heterna att använda sig av kalavverkning som metod inom Europeiska unionen. För skogsbruket i Skandinavien skulle en sådan reglering innebära en radikal omställning och reaktionerna i deba-ten lät inte vänta på sig. Av vissa tolkades det som i det närmaste ett förbud mot skogsbruk. Men det är inte alls lika kontroversiellt för skogsbrukare i t.ex. Tyskland eller många andra centraleuro-peiska länder. Där är det inte betraktat som vare sig normalt eller nödvändigt att använda sig av större kalavverkningar. Detta baseras främst på en kulturell skillnad snarare än skillnader i de olika naturliga skogstypernas dynamik i olika de-lar av Europa. Kalhuggning saknar motsvarighet i den naturliga dynamiken. Inte ens ett brandfält,

efter en skogsbrand, är särskilt likt ett kalhygge om man väger in alla aspekter som mängden död och dessutom bränd—kolad ved. Mängden suc-cessivt döende träd och den succession som följer i form av den skog som naturligt etableras med tiden efter branden. Kalhygget är en del av skan-dinavisk skogsbrukskultur och beteendekod som nu, inom den europeiska unionen, möter andra skogsbrukskulturer. (Med detta dock inte sagt att det europeiska skogsbruket är föredömligt ur alla aspekter.)

Hela vårt samhälle står inför enorma ut-maningar på grund av den belastning som vår mänskliga population utöver på i stort sett alla ekosystem på jorden. Vårt förhållningssätt till skogen är inte på något sett unikt men det är ett intressant exempel på vårt förhållande till vår omvärld. Vi kommer förmodligen alltid röra oss i våra inägomarker och odlingar. Men vi måste också tillåta utmarkerna att återigen bli utmarker.

För att bättre kunna leva i större harmoni med skogarna och andra ekosystemtyper skulle vi behöva etablera en ny moral, grundad på en annan grund än odlingens logik med dess starka kopp-ling mellan att ta kommando, sköta och därefter erhålla avkastning. Vi skulle behöva en moral som istället för att ifrågasätta för små skötselinsatser och investeringar ifrågasätter för stora uttag av naturresurser. Detta skulle sannolik ges möjlighet att ge naturen ett större egenvärde.

Ett brukande av naturen som underordnar sig skogens och naturens egen dynamik. Vi kom-mer aldrig att kunna reversera den påverkan vi haft historiskt, i form av förlorade arter och struk-turer och ett förändrat klimat. Vi har förmodligen heller inte sett alla konsekvenser som kommer att komma av vad som redan gjorts. Något kan säkerligen räddas genom att medvetet försöka restaurera något av de biologiska kvalitéter och strukturer som fortfarande kan räddas. Vi kom-mer inte att få återse det skogslandskap med alla dess strukturer och mångfald som en gång fanns vilket i sig är sorgligt, men att sörja det vi aldrig sett kommer knappas leda någonstans.

Det är trots allt så att vi har de naturliga processerna i bakgrunden runt oss hela tiden i de komplexa system som ekosystemen är. De kom-mer att hantera situationen efter bästa förmåga och den utveckling som dessa tar är förmodligen ett svar på den belastning som vi utgör, baserat på evolutionens nedärvda visdom. Men vi behö-ver släppa de strama tyglarna och ge de spontana processerna i naturen sitt utrymme.

Title

All species have an impact on their habitat. Ecosystems consist of a myriad of relationships and symbioses between different species. Human beings are very similar to other species, even though we have evolved to become a global keystone species that basically affect the whole planet, and systematically transform its natural environments and ecosystems. In this essay, forest engineer Martin Jentzen explores and reflects on the historical development of the human species has transformed natural landscapes into cultural ones. He focuses on our relationship to the forest, and how our perspective on nature has allowed us to transform it from respected outfield into a mainly over-exploited resource serving human demands. Through the text he strives to encourage his readers to reflect on their own experience and ideas about forestry and nature, and how different perspectives may influence our strategies of care as well as ideas of value, ethically, economically and practically. At the same time he tells us that his ambition has been to regard our relation to forests through an historical perspective, which does not represent a totally correct or complete image of the development at large. He reminds us that dialogue is essential and that all of his conclusions are open to discussion, his main ambition with this text.

The introduction of agriculture is a major step in human evolution. In Scan-dinavia, it was partly performed through the transformation of some particularly adequate types of land, e g the rich and fertile forests, which through drainage were turned into arable land. This has led to some types of forests being very unusual. Initially, this human-made transformation constituted an insignificant part of the great “wilderness”, but increased with time. What is more, Jentzen highlights that the introduction of alien species risked and still risks disrupting local ecosystems, making them less resilient, and more sensitive to disturbance. He further clarifies that the forest has always been a resource for human beings. Early farming most likely created a complement to hunting and collecting the goods of the forest. Timber and pasture was of great importance to Scandinavian farming societies, and historically there has been no particular forest management.

Eventually, as the amount of arable land expanded into former forest areas, and the demand for timber increased, the resources of the forest became over-exploited, and the idea of a better management began to emerge. Based on the successful introduction of monocultures in agriculture, the forest was approached in the same manner and logic as with the fields. The interest in forest management is based on one important aspect which Jentzen phrases, namely an interest that is solely based on what type of forest goods could benefit man, regardless of the forest ecosystems’ intrinsic value. Paired with our misconception of the forest working as a mechanic system, where the bigger input gives the bigger output, forestry has turned into an industry which needs constant maintenance.

There is a strong connection between perspective on nature, and moral. Since the first Swedish Forestry Act was stipulated in 1903, when a forest is felled, it is practice to “restore”, thus reforest the area. In monetary terms, some species of trees are also valued higher by humans, whereas others are seen as less profitable, and therefore to be kept away from the forest plantations. In order to enhance the timber supply and production, a measure beginning in the mid-twentieth century is to clear-fell and reseed with the valuable, often alien types of trees, instead of letting the natural ecosystem regrow in its own pace, and with species optimised to the local conditions. Though, the complexity and ecological values of a forest ecosystem can never be fully understood, nor achieved artificially.

The forest plantation is a completely artificial system. From a forest’s point of view, clear-felling and reseedling has more negative effects, than clear-felling where the land is left without further human measures, allowing for a complex and resilient ecosystem to develop. In Scandinavia it is an established practice to clear-fell, but a cultural and moral obligation to replant for further generations, even though it will last at least two to three generations before it will be possible to harvest the same amount of lumber again. But, the monocultures solely adapted to producing lumber can never replace the ecosystem services of a forest. Jentzen identifies two main goals in the Swedish Forestry Act: the first is that the forest should give good yield, i.e. that the forest should provide good profits; and the second is to preserve biodiversity. Theoretically, these are to be given equal consideration, but the second goal often implies a restriction of the first. This has led to these goals being handled separately, where national parks and nature reserves are designated to fulfil the goal of biodiversity. Although, these types of forest only make up about 5-10 % of the total amount of forest areas. There are also measures taken within the “production forests” that would gain biodiversity, where e g some trees are spared to live their full lives, and then be left to decompose. But, Jentzen means that there is a risk that these measures can even help to cover up the lack of biodiversity in the otherwise heavily used landscape, and thus give the public a limited view of the methods of forestry.

In debates concerning forestry, a common critique is directed to its negative effects on the ecological quality of the forest. The main issue is the intensive maintenance and the massive timber extraction, which ultimately reflects for what purpose the forest is valued. Jentzen further regards this issue by applying the basic factors of sustainability: ecological, economic, and social; which the certification system FSC, Forest Stewardship Council is based on. The factors serve different functions, and are obviously given different priority. Jentzen argues that a healthy ecology is a precondition for our survival, but also for our management of limited resources. Although, when it comes to economic sustainability, the concept is most often treated in monetary terms, and further allowed to consume the other goals. A self sustaining forest, that does not need any interference, but that could still produce goods for humans and non-humans alike, could very well prove to be a more profitable option.

However, as stressed by Jentzen, the critique on today’s forestry should not be interpreted solely as a question of the use of clear-felling or not, but rather on what philosophies stand behind the different methods. He means that such a focus will tell us what underlying values there are within the forestry industry, which should be the main interest of discussion according to him.

Martin Jentzen concludes on this note: that our society is facing tremendous challenges due to our impact on the environment. It is important to analyse the philosophies of forestry, as our relationship to the forest could serve as a good example of our relationship to the rest of the planet, according to Jentzen. To live in harmony with forests as ecosystems, we should establish a new moral, based on something other than the logic of farming. A moral that taps into the dynamic of the forest, as well as any other ecosystem. Even though the damage we have already caused cannot be reversed, and that we are not yet fully aware of all consequences of our actions, there is still a chance of betterment, would we let the spontaneous processes of the forest, and nature work according to their own protocol.



Fig. 96

Behind the store
 Behind the hood
 Behind the wood
 Beyond the grime
 There they are starting to blast
 blast away hills with dynamite
 A storage space will be built
 A logistic internet centre
 Another food mart

Blast

Spränga

bakom butiken bakom orten
 bakom skogen
 bortom lorten
 där har dem börjat spränga
 spränga bort berg
 med dynamit
 det skall byggas ett lager
 ett logistik centrum
 för internet
 och till en mataffären





Out of the Flask, into the Womb:
Alchemical Reproductive Politics in Early
Modern Visions of Artificial Life

What can be learned from the stories we tell about reproductive technologies? This essay intrigues a broad range of popular media depicting experiments with **wetware**, or “artificial biological life,” and the ensuing angst these attempts provoke.¹ Debate exploring the potentials and perils of perfecting human life in a laboratory invokes the “millenary dream” of its original investigators, the alchemists.² After first exploring these questions at a symposium organized by graduate students in the winter of 2018, the project received invigorating critique from colleagues the following summer. With the help of former student, that unfinished essay was materialized as the collaborative worldbuilding project “DIY Homunculi”; performed in front of friends in the autumn of 2019 and published in a grassroots fiction zine the year after.

With abortion rights under renewed assault in 2021, this project feels more important than ever to pursue with an impassioned commitment to ending “reproductive oppression,” which has been defined as “the control and exploitation of women, girls, and individuals through [their] bodies, sexuality, labor, and reproduction.”³ However, this does not mean that I am attempting an exhaustive analysis of maternity across the intersecting spectrums of biological sex, gender identification, or sexual orientation; nor am I evaluating maternity in the context of non-biological pathways to parenting, such as adoption or artificial insemination. Rather, my goal here is to experiment as a scholar and a community organizer with artistic inclinations.

In this updated essay, I show that whether through feminist critique or biographical analysis concerning **Frankenstein; Or, the Modern Prometheus** (1818), scholars have convincingly exposed the egomaniacal desire to transcend the limits of a man’s reproductive potential as a core aspiration guiding Victor Frankenstein’s narcissistic research programme. However, these “autogenetic and ectogenetic desires” were cultivated long before the colonial academies of nineteenth century Europe and originated well beyond its shores.⁴ To establish this historical context, I then present a sample of studies that reencounter alchemy as a confluence of natural, philosophical, and technical know-how—an exemplar of syncretic practices distilled from the myriad cultures that traded along the Silk Road. Alchemy’s recent historiographical resurgence sheds an illuminating light on the early modern tools and techniques considered useful for making one’s very own homunculus: a transhuman intelligence generated exclusively from male seed. This masculine desire for the feminine power of birth, known as womb envy, was documented in psychoanalytic journals as early as the mid-nineteen twenties. Since then, many

scholars and critics have concurred that **man’s wish for a womb** was first refined by alchemists, is eloquently expressed through the ‘modern Prometheus,’ and persists in everyday interactions. From there, I leave the reader with recent interventions at the axiological intersection of ethics and aesthetics—interventions with the power to counter this curse.

Premodern Prometheus

As Frankenstein finally shows, an unmothered child, like a scientific experiment that is performed without consideration of its probable or even its intended results and that radically changes the natural order, can become a monster, one capable of destroying its maker. The novel implicitly endorses instead a science that also seeks to understand rather than change the workings of Mother Nature. Mary’s novel thus resonates powerfully with the ethical problems inherent in the most recent advances in genetics: the introduction of germ-line engineering through CRISPR-Cas9 techniques of DNA alteration and the current scientific possibility of producing what Victor Frankenstein dreamed of, a superhero “designer baby.” At the same time, the novel vividly illustrates the terrifying ramifications and unintended consequences of such attempts to “improve” the human species. (Anne K. Mellor, 2017)⁵

In the immense critical discourse on Mary Shelley (1797–1851) and her monstrous literary legacy, some important connections between the technical and psychological schema underlying Frankenstein’s procreative endeavor emerge. For example, specialists such as Anne K. Mellor argue that Frankenstein’s laboratory and field work constitute a “violent penetration and usurpation [...] of the womb.”⁶ Other literary critics and media scholars have also drawn from this Romantic wellspring of meaning, including Barbara Johnson’s claim that “the story of Frankenstein is, after all, the story of a man who usurps the female role by physically giving birth to a child;”⁷ Roslynn D. Haynes’ assertion that “Frankenstein’s own repressed desire to rid himself of both his social responsibilities and of the much simpler natural method of procreation;”⁸ Michael Laplace-Sinatra’s suggestion that “Frankenstein’s rejection of his own offspring illustrates the masculine inability to deal with the trauma of after-birth.”⁹ This brief survey reveals a well-established feminist analytics, but reading **Frankenstein** historically helps shed light on another deeply rooted piece of this uncanny puzzle.

For example, Norma Rowen goes beyond this notion of “paternal propagation” to claim

that the creature fits squarely in the early modern traditions of artificial life: “a golem estranged from all animating spirit, a homunculus bred not from the womb but from the grave.”¹⁰ In her 2013 dissertation, Angela Chung even goes so far as to identify Frankenstein’s megalomaniac desire for glory, his interest in the occult literature of Cornelius Agrippa (1486–1535) and Paracelsus (c. 1493–1541), and his secrecy as fundamentally **alchemical** temptations.¹¹ Chung elevates the scholarship of Radu Florescu, who also argues that Shelley’s monster is undoubtedly authored in the tradition of the alchemical homunculus.¹² This is achieved by a thorough examination of the early modern discourse on artificial life, and by crafting a biography of an obscure historical figure: Konrad Dippel (1673–1734).

It is as an alchemist, chemist, and physician that the career of this unusual man assumes a remarkable parallel with that of Mary’s Victor Frankenstein. He shocked his colleagues at the University of Giessen on a great variety of counts: but in essence because he questioned the authority of his masters and the theological and scientific truths they propounded. It is undoubtedly for that reason that he failed in his bid for a professorship at Giessen. Rejected by his peers, he temporarily left his native Germany.¹³

Like his fictional counterpart, Victor Frankenstein, Dippel also lived a tumultuous and tragic life in search of powerful knowledge.

A theologian and Leyden-trained medical doctor, Dippel worked for five different wealthy patrons across Germany, France, Holland, Denmark, and Sweden. He became notorious for fleeing authorities under the cover of night. Dippel was jailed twice: once for suspicion of espionage and again for heresy. He was well-read in Paracelsus and Agrippa, practiced live vivisection, and allegedly snatched bodies from their gravesites. Dippel even enrolled under the pseudonym “Frankensteina” at the University of Giessen. In 1733, Dippel returned to his homeland of Darmstadt, Germany with hopes of completing an undisclosed enterprise that would generate the hefty sums necessary to purchase Castle Frankenstein from the Landgrave of Hesse. Dippel’s story ultimately ends with poison, not unlike many other alchemists of his time: “the death of alchemists was quite common, remember (death by alchemical **iosis**/poisoning).”¹⁴ Dippel’s mysterious death is just one of many parallels that Florescu accounts for throughout his report:

Both were exceptional minds, far ahead of their times, little understood by their superiors and peers; both scientific “Hamlets” were condemned to wander from country to country, even to suffer imprisonment because of their work. Both firmly believed

in the ability of man to conquer death, and to create life by artificial means, and both worked in secrecy. Mary to the end does not disclose the formula used by Frankenstein to create the monster; neither does Dippel ever reveal his “secret” to the Landgrave.¹⁵

This complex of occult formulae for breeding homunculi and the Frankenstein family name precedes even Goethe’s **Faust, Part two** (Figure 97). Comprehending these connections will require a refresher on contemporary scholarship historicizing alchemy in early modern Europe.

Rather than conforming to the twentieth century stereotypes when it was often framed as a scapegoat for science or a savior for psychology, I aim to avoid reducing socially and temporally distinct practices into one monolithic mission. Alchemists were variably employed by prince, patronage, populace, or themselves; their work done in the laboratories and kitchens of royal courts, apothecaries, academies, basements, and observatories; materials sourced from mines, gardens, libraries, and markets. Committed to the serious contemplation of alchemy’s importance at the turn of the twenty first century, theoretical chemist Giuseppe Del Rey made a grave diagnosis regarding the fate of today’s techno-capitalist regimes:

In short, those who develop technology without even a trace of the spirit of alchemy, i.e., without a parallel upgrading of their spiritual standards, particularly their sense of responsibility, may be contributing to the devastating ills of our society—ignorance and neuroses—which no vaccine can prevent.¹⁶

Taking a cue from alchemists like Nicolas Flamel (1330–1417), Del Re beseeches contemporary technologists to do the inner work of strengthening their virtues in tandem with the outer work of science and engineering. If these **moral capacities** were important five hundred years ago, they will be even more important in the five hundred years to come. Following this imperative, my ongoing project to cultivate a comparative history of alchemy is immersed in embodied alliances between nature, culture, technology, and spirit.

Alchemical Reproduction

The world is made of animate entities comprised of spirit and substance. Consequently, the products of an animate world can never be mechanistically determined, fixed, or even fully mapped [...]. Because of this, I always thought of my laboratory work more as an invocation rather than a precisely engineered build. I could make new combinations of things, but they were animate

(as opposed to animated) in that they never really followed my commands.

—Phillip Thurtle (2021)¹⁷

Though many may harbor a hushed curiosity about alchemy, most do not take it seriously as a subject of study. Its mention in literature ranging from **Harry Potter** to Self-help belies the complexity with which scholars have come to engage alchemy as more than mere fantasy or pseudoscience. However, I am not here to make the “Jungian mistake of supposing that a purely spiritual transformation was alchemy’s primary goal,” as science writer Phillip Ball puts it.¹⁸ In **A Thousand Plateaus**, the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and French psychoanalyst Felix Guattari ended a popular passage on the vitality of metals with a similar critique of those who reduce the embodied pragmatics of alchemy to an essentially psychic quest:

The relation between metallurgy and alchemy reposes not, as Jung believed, on the symbolic value of metal and its correspondence with an organic soul but on the immanent power of corporeality in all matter, and on the *esprit de corps* accompanying it.¹⁹

Hitherto unmentioned prior to this statement, this notion of an “*esprit de corps*” accompanying all matter proffers a humble relation with materials grounded in camaraderie. In other words, there is much more to the study of alchemy than what can be gleaned from a glance at the troves of spectacle and speculation surrounding it.

Innumerable myths have sprung up about the potential for humans to change with nature over the past 2,000 years, and alchemists have long been students of nature’s multifold changes. The last thirty years in particular mark a veritable renaissance for rigorous research on alchemy—and the veracity of its bombastic reputation—pursued from across a plurality of disciplines. This blossoming turn can be traced back to mid-twentieth century publications like **Paracelsus: Selected Writings**, featuring primary sources edited and translated into English by Jungian psychologist Jolande Jacobi in 1951;²⁰ or **Paracelsus: An Introduction to Philosophical Medicine in the Era of the Renaissance**, written by lauded pathologist and medical historian Walter Pagel in 1958.²¹ More recently, we might look to William Newman and Lawrence Principe, both historians and philosophers of science simultaneously holding doctorates in chemistry. Since their seminal essay “Alchemy vs. Chemistry: The Etymological Origins of a Historiographic Mistake” in 1998, Newman and Principe have taken up the mantle of a “new historiography of alchemy,” which has challenged both the positivist denunciations and the transcendent interpretations that spread like wildflowers halfway through the twentieth century.²² Theirs’ and others’ collective





Fig. 98

efforts have provoked both vital collaborations and vitriolic disputes, but the results speak for themselves: thoughtful attention is being paid to what alchemy really meant, what it **really** accomplished, and by whom it was **really** practiced.

What were the risks and rewards that enticed the charlatans of early modern Europe into meddling with the forbidden art of human transmutation? Ball sums up the otherworldly profile of “the homunculus, the artificial man”:

Although made from human seed, he is either less than or more than human, or both at once. It is questionable whether he has a soul. He is perhaps the spawn of witches and demons, and as such, is something monstrous, even if not in appearance. He has special, hidden knowledge. He may be infertile.²³

But what does this strange creature look like? One would be hard-pressed to find a more accurate and inventive depiction of an alchemically generated homunculus in popular media today than Hiromu Arakawa’s “Dwarf in the Flask”, who is created from the blood of a blonde haired, golden eyed, enslaved white man (Figure 98). According to Newman, this masculinist fantasy ventured to “generate a being unimpeded by the materiality of normal female birth, hence surpassing the artifice of nature itself.”²⁴ To make matters worse, an imposter posing as the genuine Paracelsus introduces a “laboratory-based method” for breeding a deadly basilisk—capable of petrifying with merely a glance—by stealing from women’s bodies.²⁵ Nowhere is misogyny more clearly fomented in this dead-end lineage of alchemical literature than the dual supposition that semen engenders intelligence while menstrea brews monstrosity. However, there are other early modern projects of alchemical reproduction that resist the sexist tropes of man-made homunculi.

Like Florescu, early modern historian Tara Nummedal uncovers the turbulent tale of another real-life alchemist whose indiscretions also led to trouble with the local authorities. Though there are many similarities between the misadventures of Dippel and Anna Maria Zieglerin (c. 1550–1575) led to a ghastly public execution.²⁶ For Nummedal, there is something deeper going on than a young woman simply seeking her fortune by fraternizing with nobles:

The sixteenth-century German alchemist Anna Zieglerin offers a good opportunity to examine one woman’s response to some alchemical core theoretical ideas concepts. Zieglerin was largely self-taught, gaining expertise through interactions with other alchemists. Her alchemical writings on a powerful agent she called the lion’s blood were semi-private, recorded for her patron

and to advance her own very personal agendas, rather than as an engagement in a wider intellectual community. Nevertheless, Zieglerin was ambitious and pursued her alchemical vision at great risk. Moreover, she engaged alchemy’s boldest claims: transmutation and the creation of human life. Zieglerin’s idiosyncratic engagement with these lofty alchemical goals suggest that alchemy’s central metaphors of marriage, copulation, and childbirth may have been a powerful draw for women as well.²⁷

Through Zieglerin’s story, we can mark an important alternative to the dominant image of homunculi as artificially enhanced men. For Zieglerin, the pinnacle of alchemical reproduction was not separating or refining masculine and feminine genetic materials: “this was not the motherless child of which Paracelsus dreamed, formed of the male sperm and blood alone.”²⁸

How was this approach to artificial biological life differ from previous designs? Nummedal tells us that one of Zieglerin’s co-conspirators in the crimes that led to their eventual executions confessed that Anna planned to use her lion’s blood as a reproductive accelerant and give birth to children **every four weeks**. Conceived with the son of Paracelsus, her made-up mentor and lover ‘Count Carl von Oettigen’, these children would be alchemically perfected—immune to both pathogens and the apocalypse. Although Zieglerin’s fantastic plot proposes a less offensive option than the monstrous portrayal of a lab-grown basilisk, if only at first glance, there are still important connections between both of these tactics for supernatural parentage; namely, the well-established belief that menstrual fluids were synonymous with sin. However, as Nummedal points out, “it does not seem an accident that the dream of the homunculus, when dreamed by this woman, took the creation of human life out of the flask and placed it back in the womb.”²⁹ To continue unraveling this tangled web of connections, we must address the psychoanalytic concept of “womb envy” in relation to recent innovations in reproductive technology.

Neutralizing Envy

We cannot fabricate psychosomatic-spiritual union, but we are called to embrace it via womb complex integration. He can not integrate the womb complex without incorporating intuition into his mode of understanding. He can not integrate the womb complex without integrating the feminine element and the personal unconscious, because the integration of [the] feminine element evokes the neutralization of womb

envy. Unless the womb envier integrates the feminine element into conscious being, he will continue to project his phantasied [...] horror and push others to either embody his projections or to be consumed by them. (Christopher Jerome Carter, 2008)³⁰

The genealogical link between early modern narratives of alchemical reproduction and the conceivable harms of unjust reproductive technologies has been well-noted by feminist authors like Sally Allen and Joanna Hubbs. Their seminal 1980 analysis **Outrunning Atalanta: Feminine Destiny in Alchemical Transmutation** exposes a familiar strain of misogyny through **Atalanta Fugiens**, a 1617 musical emblem book by Michael Maier and Matthias Merian:

This recurrent symbolism in alchemical works suggests an obsession with reversing, perhaps even arresting, the feminine hegemony over the biological creation [...] The origins and evolution of alchemy contain further evidence of an identification with the maternal feminine as a source of creative power, what we would call today “womb envy.”³¹

Allen and Hubbs describe an “obsession” that shares similar goals and ideological foundations as those of the Paracelsian monster maker. This co-emergence of “womb envy” in early modern alchemical texts impels us to think carefully about the missing links that an updated appraisal of alchemy’s place in history might mend, but where does the term “womb envy” originate from? Education scholar Emma Bayne reports that although psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Karen Horney (1885–1952) began publishing on the concept as early as 1926—one year after Sigmund Freud theorized its libidinal mirror, “penis envy”—Horney was not alone in positing that males may be affected by a desire for the procreative powers of the female womb.³² Bayne even indicates that “it is sometimes argued that no single cause for misogyny exists,” but in light of the “cultural and anthropological pervasiveness of the womb envy concept, it could, in fact, be such a single cause.”³³

This proposal of a singular pervasiveness of the womb envy phenomenon is backed up by practitioners and scholars of psychoanalysis like Michelle Miletic, who claims that “men can and do fear and envy women, and in fact that fear and envy can lead to social problems, such as chauvinism, phallocentrism, and male domination.”³⁴ Pointing out the danger these problematic tendencies in technology development, Elaine Baruch contends that supposedly ‘dispassionate’ scientists and engineers may be highly susceptible to this exploitative instinct:

Fatherhood—without motherhood—has been the desire behind these fantasies. It is

a common belief among feminists now that the new technology with its in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer was designed less to help the infertile than to appease men’s envy of women’s reproductive power. Once again, womb envy, as Karen Horney calls it, rears its ugly head.³⁵

Gena Corea, equally alarmed by the new technologies of the nineteen eighties’, helps us triangulate the argument presented by Allen and Hubbs with the arguments of Miletic and Baruch. Just as the peculiar methods and motivations displayed in much of the premodern literature on alchemical reproduction conform to the “classic patriarchal myth of single parenthood by the male,” so too the contemporary research agenda promoting technological reproduction “promises (perhaps falsely) to bring the myth to life.”³⁶ These researchers show that this myth is fed by the misogynist aspirations of creating purely masculine homunculi and perpetuated through the late-twentieth century boom of techno-capitalist investment in human transmutation.

Corea maintains that, in their ideal world “the reproductive technologists, like the alchemists, would be conferring ‘the magic of maternity’ on men.”³⁷ The exploratory connections displayed throughout this essay finally converge here:

In the modern world of bioengineering and genetic wizardry, the ever growing possibility of ectogenesis holds no less a grip on our visual sensibility, even if its explicit association with alchemy has been lost. The predicted results of ectogenesis, cloning, the “farming” of women, and genetic engineering were prefigured by premodern fears that included the production of a diabolical master race, the reduction of women to the status of a hollow incubator, and the prenatal modification of intelligence and gender—all issues that our ancestors found fascinating and at times abhorrent, just as many of us do today. The wellsprings of these dreams or nightmares run deeper than any modern bioethicist or free-market promoter of biotechnology can possibly imagine.³⁸

For Corea, the ulterior motives of reproductive technologies reveal a form of womb envy inherited from the alchemists—one that continues to encroach upon the occidental imagination. As a corrective to this corrupted ethic of technology development, anthropologist Bruno Bettelheim recommends that “the freer men are to acknowledge their positive wish to create life, and to emphasize their contribution to it, the less need will they have to assert power through destructive inventions.”³⁹ This suggestion that men might attempt to purify their toxicity through the elevation of their actions is reminiscent of

the Nietzschean ideal of sublimation. However, feminist philosopher Eva Feder Kittay disputes Bettelheim’s prescription for not incorporating the affective influence of womb envy and suggests other paths toward “the integration of the concept.”⁴⁰

If womb envy is present in Western thought today just as it was in the early modern period, what more can be done to interrupt this envious inheritance? In his 2008 dissertation, Christopher Jerome Carter expands the concept of womb envy to consider the deep emotional and profound spiritual dynamics at play in the male psyche. Contra Bettelheim, Carter affirms that a man can do more than sublimate internal toxins as a mere prophylactic: “this exploration of the womb complex may awaken the explorer to the truthful potentiality for experiences of wholeness.”⁴¹ But what does it look like to activate these latent potentials capable of neutralizing **man’s wish for a womb**? In search of hospitable visions of maternity, Aristarkhova emphasizes contemporary artist Lee Mingwei’s “Male Pregnancy” project:

Lee seems to be most concerned about the empathic enactment of hospitality through his pregnancy [...] Lee questions the paradigm of Western man as such by refusing to see his work on male pregnancy as either ironic or in terms of gender bending.⁴²

After engaging in a daily practice of empathetic pregnancy by performing the routines of pregnancy, Mingwei attested to experiencing no less than the parallel upgrade Del Re invites. Consistent with Carter’s proposition of integrating the womb complex, Mingwei experiences a “spiritual rebirth” that allows him to relate with women in his family in new ways: “I think there is a greater awareness and empathy I now share with my mother and sister as a result of my pregnancy.”⁴³ This artistic practice demonstrates how embodying an act of care can alter one’s perception of life, bearing implications for the political conditions of our time.

At a landmark US congressional hearing held on September 30, 2021, activist and public intellectual Loretta Ross shared her own personal story of raising twins born of rape and incest on behalf of “people who don’t have choices, who live in Texas, who shouldn’t have to go through what I went through in San Antonio.”⁴⁴ This passionate account was given alongside many experts with lived experience also testifying to the need for communities to have accessible and affordable options. Ross herself provides a clairvoyant outline of the three foundational human rights orienting the reproductive justice movement:

(1) the right to have a child under the conditions of one’s choosing; (2) the right not to have a child using birth control, abortion, or abstinence; and (3) the right to parent chil-

dren in safe and healthy environments free from violence by individuals or the state.⁴⁵

Not only should these core principles guide the moral conscious of responsible technology development, but the grassroots logic of reproductive justice “imagines better futures through radical forms of resistance and critique.”⁴⁶ Perhaps if those with the power to hand down jurisprudence felt firsthand the compassion that Mingwei carries for the women in his family, we might see more government officials aspiring to the standard of justice called for by Ross and so many others.

Whether coded as transmutants or transhumans, the alchemical reproductive politic of womb envy are still at play in Western imaginings of ‘artificial’ biological lives. Fortunately, contemporary artworks like “Male Pregnancy” and liberatory frameworks like “reproductive justice” exemplify the blending of inner work and outer work necessary to transform the conditions of everyday life. Personally, producing artwork based on my scholarly writing and then reformulating my scholarly writing based on the production of artwork helped materialize ideas in a way that was not merely cognitive, but intimately affective and infused with values. Layering ethical and aesthetic practices throughout this project has instantiated for me that an artificial engagement with knowledge may surpass any established notions of where a creator ends, and where a creation begins. It is toward these ends that I hope the “Matrixial Vase” serves as an amulet with axiological charge—an incubator of responsible relations (Figure 99).

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[Colophon]