

you are here

the journal of creative geography



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queer ecologies

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you are here is an annual publication run by graduate students in the School of Geography, Development & Environment (SGDE) at the University of Arizona. The journal explores geographic themes through poetry, creative writing, visual art, film, performance, and other imaginable genres.

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Volume XXIII
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forward: in search of a queer ecology

What is a queer ecology?

When I began conceptualizing the 2022 issue of *you are here: the journal of creative geography*, I had nothing like an answer to this question. The theme 'queer ecologies' was merely a happenstance collision of words, a provocative mash-up of meanings that seemed to emerge out of nowhere. Yet I kept coming back to it. I wasn't sure quite what it meant, and I wasn't convinced that anyone else would either. I figured I would loft it out in the universe anyway. Perhaps it would fail, but failure is a risk of any queer enterprise, so I went ahead with it.

I could not have been more wrong. The call for submissions spread like wildfire through social media networks, cropping up across an online pluriverse linking geography, environmental humanities, art-science collaborations, and queer communities. The call elicited a response, that is for certain. Several people commented that this is the call they had been waiting for, that it spoke in an uncanny way to their work, to their visions. "This is just what I am working on right now," said a number of artists. I eagerly asked them to explain, hoping I might come to understand what, exactly, it meant to 'work on' queer ecologies.

Before long I was fielding interview requests on the topic of 'queer ecologies', which left me rather awkwardly explaining that I did not, in fact, know the first thing about this topic – I had only haphazardly proposed it as a theme for an issue of an obscure geography journal. The obscurity of the whole endeavor – the journal, the theme – made the attention it was receiving all the more curious. One day, in the late afternoon, I was stopped in the street in my neighborhood by a stranger who recognized me as the *yah* editor from my university webpage. "What you are doing is spot on," he told me before launching into his theories of queer ecologies as the sun set and we were left chattering away in the darkness.

It seemed like every day there was another connection, another coincidence. My life began to take on a magical quality – a sense of synchronicity that outpaced my ability to follow it, to make sense of it. Everyone I met seemed

to be a queer ecologist or knew someone who was. I was enlivened by the excitement, though I was also quite puzzled by the amount of traction 'queer ecologies' was gaining in my everyday life. I had settled on the theme out of a kind of academic interest, a sense that the phrase might tap into a certain kind of intellectual and aesthetic *zeitgeist* running through fields like political ecology, environmental humanities, and queer theory. I was certainly not prepared for the strange series of coincidences and synergies that 'queer ecologies' would prompt in my life – how it would come to mean everything, how it would come to change everything. Queer ecologies followed me around, posing itself at times as a question, at times as a response. I began to see it everywhere.

Now I see that I encountered queer ecologies everywhere I looked because I had been searching for it for a long time. This call – a call I now see emerged from my own inner wisdom, from my own need to recreate myself, to find a new world – came at just the right time.

Some months prior, I had come out as trans and had top surgery – an emotional, social, and physical trauma that reverberated through my world, leaving nothing untouched. Becoming trans fundamentally reshaped my life in a way I neither expected nor was prepared for. Foundational relationships in my life ruptured into total incommensurability as some cosmic force tore me loose from what I had known and what I had been known to be. At the same time, my existence as a geographer came under new pressure – I viscerally felt the boundaries and exclusions of geography pressing up against my body, confining me. My personal and professional existence came to be experienced as a kind of geologic pressure that would either destroy me or force a fiery, molten, explosive metamorphosis. Or perhaps, in a moment of creative destruction, it would do both.

The sense of trauma, loss, and rage that I encountered at every turn left me with no option but to become otherwise, to reinvent myself, to rebuild a world. In a rather unexpected way, 'queer ecologies' became the horizon of this becoming, the name for a process of self-transformation. Without consciously knowing it, I quietly began to reassemble myself, to reassemble my world and my relations. My artistic process – its own queer ecology – made a container, a space for that becoming.

Curiously enough, this process of self-actualization took the form of collecting taxidermy and shapeshifting into a satyr – a figure that I stumbled upon in a bizarre moment of intuitive vision, but that I now understand is something of

an archetype for the transmasculine. Embodying the satyr – a mischievous boundary figure – allowed me to rework my relations to this world and re-encounter it from a position of newfound power, a decidedly queer power rooted in my body's symbolic and social transgression and its endless potential for transformation.

As I announced my intention to become-goat to the universe, allies and guides appeared from every direction. I stumbled into new queer spaces that activated something deep within me. I met countless strangers who, sensing the mythic dimensions of this project, eagerly offered to be of service – with sewing, taxidermy, astrology, custom hoof production, scholarly reference points, and other aspects of this collective ritual. To them, my vision needed no explaining, nor did the idea of 'queer ecologies.' For the first time in my life, I found myself in queer spaces and queer community where my selfhood was legible – legible to others when it was not even entirely legible to me – where my becoming-otherwise was recognized and supported.

These intimacies produced space, made worlds. Through this rather strange process of transformation, and the broader project of envisioning and assembling this journal issue, I found myself linked into a new web of relations – relations of mutual recognition, care, dependency, witnessing, creativity, becoming, transformation. Before I knew it, I had found myself, in other words, in the midst of a decidedly queer ecology.

As this project comes to a close, I think I may now have a better sense of what a queer ecology is. Queer ecologies are the visions shared in these pages, for certain – a queer ecological impulse can be detected in the blurring of boundaries between self, other, and environment; the reimaginings of our collective selves and futures; the shapeshifting into other beings; the yearning for other worlds. But I see now that the more subtle work of queer ecologies is the web of relations, the intimacies, that make other worlds imaginable, recognizable, and perhaps even possible.

I am deeply grateful and honored that *you are here* has become a space to hold this web, to sketch out a collective vision for other worlds, other ways of being. It is my hope that, in collectively dwelling in this space of possibility, we can make queer lives a bit more possible, a bit more liveable – that queer ecologies can help us to recognize and reclaim the joy, euphoria, creativity, and daring brilliance of lives lived at the boundary.

Eden Kinkaid, editor

queer ecologies: an editorial introduction

It is with great pleasure that I introduce you to *you are here: the journal of creative geography's* 2022 issue: queer ecologies!

This collection of work explores and experiments with the meanings, methods, and potentials of queer ecologies. By focusing on queer ecologies, we aim to rethink and challenge dominant imaginaries of nature and environment and to imagine alternative ways of being in relation to our bodies, our environments, our more-than-human relations, and each other.

We approach 'queer ecologies' as a capacious starting point for this practice of reimagining. Here, the word 'queer,' begins from, but extends far beyond, matters of gender and sexuality. 'Queer' signals an act of unsettling, a disruption of norms and boundaries, a challenging of taken for granted categories and taxonomies. As an epistemological starting point, 'queer' denotes a viewpoint at the margins of or outside of dominant perspectives, subjectivities, and worlds. It also signals an attention to identity, to gender and sexuality, but also to race and other forms of social difference that shape our worlds and relations to each other.

The word 'ecology' can be read in the traditional sense, as the sets of relations connecting living beings with their environments. Yet we might also push it further to understand ecology as *any* web of relations, or as a mode of relationality. Understood as a more generic term, ecology thus tunes our attention to a far greater diversity of relations among bodies, spaces, and environments.

In embarking upon this project of queering ecology, we asked: what work might these terms accomplish when taken together? What kinds of productive tensions, ambiguities, and synergies exist between them? What might it mean to queer ecology, to imagine and create queer ecologies?

The contributors to this issue offer a diversity of creative responses to these questions. Drawing from our backgrounds in fine arts, dance, geography,

cultural studies, literary studies, and other intellectual locations, we explore the meanings and possibilities of queer ecologies through poetry, creative writing, performance, film, photography, visual art, and other genres. What emerges from this collective experimentation is a shared space of envisioning and enacting other visions for our selves, our individual and collective bodies, our environments, and our worlds.

This collection is thematically organized around four key sites for exploring and experimenting with the potential of queer ecologies: land, atmospheres, the more-than-human, and place.

Land

Our collective exploration of queer ecologies begins with land. We begin underground with Teed's *The Burrows*, with queer bodies burrowing in the earth and coming to know this subterranean, sheltered inhabitation. Moffett's *This Land Holds Within It a Fever* brings what is buried to the surface; through an experimental exploration of Valley Fever – a fungal pathogen emerging from disturbed soil – Moffett contemplates what it means to inhabit land and have land in turn inhabit us. Using peat as an artistic medium, Brice similarly experiments with relations between land, people, and non-human communities. Santi and Laborde explore "queer lands" as a means of rethinking our relations to land through an explicitly gendered lens.

Morphic Rooms' contribution leads us from this starting point in land toward a more expansive vision of landscape, reimagining landscapes and breaking them free of administrative enclosures. Lotfi and Beca situate their bodies in the landscape, posing queer relations between bodies, land, and various ecologies. Through poetic explorations, Bacht and Nichols critique the imaginaries and practices – maps, settlement – that produce alienated and violent relations to land and landscape. Taken together, these queered perspectives on land and landscape push back on enclosure, alienation, and exclusion, toward more relational, embodied, and attentive relations to land as a symbolic and material starting point for imagining and enacting queer ecologies.

Atmospheres

Having grounded ourselves in land, our collective direction shifts upward toward atmospheres: toward the gaseous, the elemental, the cosmic – mingling with air, skies, climates, inner and outerspace. Nichols'

poetry reminds us to “look up,” to find a queered sense of beauty and home amidst an unfolding climate dystopia. Beck’s Twitterbot, *Google sky view*, similarly redirects our attention away from the terrestrial toward the sky, questioning the politics of technological ways of seeing.

Escott’s *Metabolic Rifts and Domestic Interiors* points to the disconnections between human spaces and practices and ecological rhythms and relations. Through performance art, Doyle situates herself purposefully in the middle of this disconnection, rubbing up against and breathing in the toxic externalities of everyday human practices like commuting to work. White’s reflections on climate as a racialized atmosphere make it clear that these exposures are not evenly shared, but are the product of deep histories and inequalities.

Moore’s astrophotographs of the moon pull our vision of queer ecologies out further still. Moore experiments with queerness as irreverance – as a replicating error that might give rise to new forms. In a similar vein, Alain Co’s experimental practice of casting metal seeks new forms at the nexus of artistic intention and more-than-human agency, queering the (re)production of form. As a whole, these queer ecologies prompt us to look at the atmospheric and the ephemeral as sites in the relational production of our worlds.

The more-than-human

Having journeyed about the land and air, we then turn to the more-than-human entanglements that situate us in a community of relations. Teed and Adams turn to non-human animals and fungi, respectively, as models for queer embodiment, belonging, and becoming. In a similar vein, Losoya and Swartz visualize the entanglement of queer/trans embodiment and the more-than-human. Kinkaid’s portrait series *Natural History* considers the possible relations between transgender embodiment and ‘nature’; Kinkaid shapeshifts into the boundary figure of the satyr to pose questions about the scientific gaze, the production of nature, and the taxonomic logics that produce transness as monstrosity. Lukas is similarly interested in disrupting the gaze – here capitalist imaginaries of nature and a pornographic gaze – through collages that rework the relations between bodies, sex, and the more-than-human.

In their contributions, Teed, Knowles, Su, Oliver and Bates all reflect on the imbrication of human and non-human/more-than-human life, highlighting spaces of and for mutual engagement. Each contribution illuminates and dwells in the ambivalence, alterity, and curiosity that shape these relations. In their performance at the U.S.-Mexico border, Eisele et al. remind us that these more-than-human engagements are not always mutual or ethical – they urge us to account for the imprint of human life on broader ecological relations and imagine a more-than-human sense of place.

Place

We conclude our collective exploration of queer ecologies in place – reflecting on and situating queerness in particular places and relations of non/belonging. Meadows and McDermott offer poetic reflections on place, belonging, and nature. Fountain carries us along the non-linear pathways of memory and blues migrations. Evangelista and Fatima move between diasporic locations in a search for place and belonging, whether it be in a garden or in the infinite expanse of the sky. Sunjay’s *Bodies* highlights the violent terms of queer belonging for racialized bodies whose ‘place’ in queer communities is one shaped by exoticization and disposability. Finally, Garnes and McDonald transport us back to where we began – to landscape – to experiment with queer ways of seeing and imagining landscapes and our place within them.

...

It is with a deep sense of gratitude and excitement that I offer this twenty-third issue of *you are here: the journal of creative geography* to the world. I hope that it can serve as a demonstration of the vitality, diversity, and brilliance of creative geographies. But more than that, I hope it will remind us all of the necessity and urgency of queer visions in pushing the boundaries of geography, and in doing so, imagining and manifesting other worlds.

With love,

Eden Kinkaid, editor



land



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the burrows by corinne teed

As research into queer ecology, *The Burrows* features queer participants who were encouraged to explore the pleasures of the burrow – to ground, to sink, to nest, and then to re-emerge. Participants examined cross-species intimacy and empathy through an imagined cohabitation of underground animal burrows. While *The Burrows* situates contemporary queer portraiture within a utopic, multi-species community through the imagined co-habitation of another species' dwelling – we also sense a dystopia of being trapped and isolated from each other.

Made while in residency at ACRE in Steuben, Wisconsin.









this land holds within it a fever by raven moffett

This Land Holds Within It A Fever queers euro-centric, western, colonial, heteropatriarchal, and anthropocentric notions of family structure, health, and bodily relations to land by engaging questions around what it means to live in the land as the land lives in you. Tracking and tracing personal experiences of land-based illness through expansive poetic lenses of dirt, bodies, performance, intergenerational and interspecies communication (languages of poetry, song, and more-than-human kin), *This Land Holds Within It A Fever* takes form as multivocal storytelling through experimental, immersive video art. Bodies of land, more-than-human kin, human, disease, weather, and water play together, crashing and dancing in their entangled, webbed, and intimate relationality. This play invites moments where the boundaries between bodies break down, just as they do at sites of exposure when bodies collide. This reciprocal, simultaneous, and constantly shifting positionality ruptures constructed binaries between risk and safety, pleasure and pain, illness and survivorship, while at the same time confronting palimpsestuous relations to land that are at once exploitative, colonial, and tender. Intimate emotional relations are performed, explored, expanded, and questioned through layered soundscape and visualized through a tension of lens-based imagery which constructs, mediates, and often limits interaction between land and other actors. My dogs were collaborative filmers and performers in this work. Their bodies are battling the land-based life-long fungal infection, Valley Fever, for which this work takes its name.

As a third culture, biracial and diasporic n'l'J·Id/ white queer artist I carry my home and community inside me as memories. Those before me live in the marrow of my bones which will beget those who come after. My skin and dreams tell me stories and help me remember. My first memory is of a story, as all memories will become.

The land speaks through bodies. Like knowledge, like threading beads, it is pulled through-cosmic, corporeal, expansive, deceased. The land is multiple, expansive, ebullient, just as we are. It is all our bodies working, speaking through dance and cry. My body works in the land alongside more-than-human kin, plant relatives, and atomic-cosmic-quivering to perform ceremony: to remember, to heal, to mourn, and to grow. These land-based collaborations build collective memory and enact survivance as we celebrate cosmic bodies moving in time to the heartbeats of light particles and sound waves, trembling and world shaking. Recording technology (sound and lens-based media) entangles us, tracking us as we track back, pushing one another as a necessary and reciprocal process of breaking, changing, playing, and healing together, apart, alongside. The momentary landing points which serve as my artwork are fragments, pieces for offering. They are bits of dust and dirt, star and song, memories and future imaginings. In essence, they are stories which hope to call the land closer. My kin and I invite you to call yourself closer to the land, as well. We invite you to remember, to mourn, to heal, and we will do this work alongside. We will claim you as you claim us. Iksukapi. Thank you.



Valley Fever

This land holds within it
a fever

She has been patient
like any ancestor
urgently patient

tracks pushed down on chest

She was born of this desert
when all that is now heat
Ice

trapped waitless

In webs she roots, calling her daughters, now ancestors themselves
Calling their own daughters' daughters
down to the core
of the earth
the home

open smokehole

all dirt and

blood

The wheel turns on
infinite

Saprophytic: lying dormant since glaciers raked the land
gouging her, splitting her surface
room arose from movement

tracks pushed down on chest

The land births the fever continually
Released from dusty womb
when those who walk stumble and forget
traces, prints of pressure

trapped waitless

She is called to rise again: to be born unending
Parasitic: mercenary, she rises like shimmering heat
waves

And dances with barbed jingles into
eyes
mouth
lung
bone
brain

open smokehole

The fever takes hold
valley grass dancing deeper
She has been patient

into the openings we
forgot how to protect

tracks pushed down on chest

Land rises up within you to dust, to storm
She spreads fire, ice, blankets
dancing deeper, her steps waves
Dirt in lung

Airless

Spores in eye

Darkness

Gnaw on bone

Still

trapped waitless

Cut her ice out when we can
pour fire, pour medicine down throats when we cannot
Just to remember how to breathe
how to see
how to move
with this land now within us

A fever

an open smokehole

dances in waves

traps us waitless

as medicine

tracks rise up from our chests



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suspended

by dr. sage brice

The images presented here are fragments from an iterative process, moments in my analysis of field work in the Huleh Valley in Israel-Palestine, a critical site for the production of Israel's imaginaries of nature, land, and belonging. My work there attended to the ecologies of images, stories, and relations created in the encounter between humans, Eurasian cranes, and peatlands.

The formerly extensive Huleh wetland was drained shortly after the creation of the Israeli state and the violent expulsion of the valley's Palestinian residents. Drainage of the wetlands led to severe erosion, underground fires, subsidence, and the contamination of the Sea of Galilee, the new state's principal fresh water source. Subsequent partial restoration of the water table, intended to salvage the new agricultural land, incidentally created a new wetland in the areas of worst subsidence. The combination of open shallow water and abundant agricultural feeding grounds in turn attracted migrating cranes to overwinter in the valley in numbers rising from tens to tens of thousands over two short decades.

While the ecological disaster of the original drainage became a much-rehearsed cautionary tale in Israeli environmental politics, the arrival of the cranes has added something of a redemptive chapter to that narrative. At the same time, these large, intelligent birds complicate the ordered agricultural regime of the valley, generating new modes of conflict and co-existence that trouble that easy narrative arc. In all these processes image, matter, and word become inextricably entangled.

My working research question for the project was: how do we attend to the material efficacy of images, as constitutive material fragments that are implicated in the storying of particular landscapes? I was interested in exploring what happens when an image breaks down, fragments, and encounters other images. How does an image circulate, grab, infect, deflect, or repel?

I began to work on a complex animation sequence that combined two different techniques. A series of nineteen drawings comprise a looped movement sequence – a single repeating wingbeat evoking a crane's laboured flight. At the same time, these images continue to develop and change. The crane figures become undone and are replaced with fragments of found imagery evoking a proliferation of political stories.

The wingbeat loops as a continuous refrain, but the displacement and reformulation of images continues as an underlying, flickering current of transformational encounter.

Here the materiality of the peat comes into its own. Peat is a soil produced in waterlogged environments, where organic matter is unable to break down through processes of aerobic decay. Matter accumulates and is kept in a kind of suspended animation over thousands of years. It is a tactile accretion, and volatile – water holds the peat together, and water can as easily disperse it.

The intimate, attentive practice of lifting and reworking the peat became a method for thinking through process, thinking through prolonged encounter with material and ideal dimensions of landscape and story. The figure of the crane begins to dissolve as I draw out the image of a treasured family photograph shown to me by a former resident; a family of refugees from the Huleh Valley who were temporarily displaced southwards before making their way to another part of the country.

I tried, through the working of the peat, to consider how presence and absence are materially expressed in a landscape. The absence – the forceful expulsion – of the valley's Palestinian inhabitants becomes relegated to the past tense in Israeli public storyings of the valley. The restoration of the peat, and the arrival of the cranes, provide a redemptive imagery that seems to erase the pain and violence of earlier displacements. Yet this absent presence persists in the present tense in so many ways – not least in the ecological impoverishment of the wetland, and in the grief and attachment of people still displaced from their ancestral family homes.



scan code to
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Sage Brice
@sage_brice

Bird/peat lifting off, displaced from the page. Brush seeking relative positions of two adults and a cluster of children displaced and temporarily reassembled, transient, connections/land redistributed or lost.



Sage Brice @sage_brice · Feb 14

Faces emerging from the peat. Peat is a very tactile accretion of memories; peats held in fragile suspension by water which can so easily sustain or disperse them
[#hulavalley](#) [#crenebird](#) [#peat](#) [#grusgrus](#) [#grestri#tvalley](#) [#posthumanism](#)
[#artgeography](#) [#animation](#) [#handdrawnanimation](#)

queer lands: gendered experiments in two green heterotopias

by chandra m. laborde and ettoe santi

Land is perhaps the utmost queer ecology. The very existence of soil relies upon polyamorous insects fornicating in the mud, waste-eating bacteria making fertile compost, and other interspecies acts that defy the anthropocentric normativity of gender, sex, and naturalness. Many human societies, however, have continually attached univocal gender norms to land. Whether we have treated it as a feminine divine force, or as a masculine asset for business development, we have often disregarded the multiple queer potentialities of land.

In this essay, we seek to unearth these queer ecological dimensions. We examine two very different cases in which human institutions have attached strict gender norms to their land, as part of (failed) experiments to build “green heterotopias.” Our first case looks at the construction of a futuristic village for intensive rice farming in rural China, designed through heteromale norms of technical rationality.¹ In contrast, our second case looks at the construction of a women’s commune in the rural US, built through homonormative rejections of urban modernity and a lesbian “handmade” aesthetics. In both cases, the rigid gendered regulations defined to whom land should belong, what its role in society shall be, and what forms of production and reproduction it should elicit, all of which were conceived as “other” to their surroundings – or heterotopian. In both places, this monolithic normativity reinforced exclusionary ideologies of gender, bodily ability, race, and species, ultimately leading to moments of failure in these experiments.

By choosing a masculine and a feminine example, our intention is not to replicate the binary gender structure. On the contrary, our scope is to question this dichotomy by illuminating how binaries have led to extractive or exclusive ecologies. Whether heteromale or homofeminine, both experiments reproduced structures of oppression: the first by imposing state and corporate control on China’s rural lands, and the second by creating a

“white enclosure” that unwittingly reinforced settler colonial relations with stolen land in the rural US. In this second case, particularly, women failed to reckon with their borrowing from Indigenous spirituality and the complicated politics of privilege and white urbanity at play when going “back to the land.” We argue that establishing non-extractive kinships with the environment requires us to imagine futures that recognize and embrace, rather than oppress, the unseen queer ecologies that constitute land.

Technoscientific heterotopia on masculine land

Women have long played a key role in China’s agrarian societies. Since decollectivization in the 1980s, when village families received a small plot of communal farmlands for individual use, women (and the older people of all genders) took over farming responsibilities, while men often migrated to cities seeking temporary employment.² Following the Confucian idea that land was an extension of the traditional family, women treated farming as part of the domestic labor of care and reproduction.

Yet these feminine norms attached to land are now turning masculine. In the last decade, as a way to reduce grain prices amidst a highly competitive international food market, China’s central government ran a constellation of programs to transfer farmland ownership from village families to agribusiness corporations. Under this push for national agrarian development, farming was removed from the realm of domestic reproduction to become a practice of business production, administered by specialized working men and their high-tech machines.

Sangshan village, located on the fertile Dongting flatlands, sharply exemplifies this gendered shift. In 2015, Sangshan government and its architects redesigned village land to accommodate corporate production. Architects proposed the erasure of the ‘irregularly shaped’ family farms, and replaced them with an orthogonal grid of huge paddies separated by concrete irrigation canals. Agronomists had sized the new paddies to enable the smooth run of transplanting machines, thus reducing labor cost through economies of scale. A unified monoculture of hybrid super-rice, a machine friendly and genetically modified variety, replaced the previous diversity of crops. By demolishing family farms, state architects had conceived of village land as a blank slate. Ignoring locality,³ they leveraged universalist, masculine, developmentalist thinking to construct a “simplified ecology”⁴ that would industrialize agricultural productivity.



Figure 1. High-tech farm under construction in rural Hunan. Photograph by Ettore Santi, 2018.

The new intensive farm has also imposed a novel ecology of labor in Sangshan, one that excludes women's work. While more than three hundred village residents, especially women, had worked the land until 2015, only fifteen people, all of whom were men, received a stable contract from the super-rice firm. These farmers were required to attend classes inside a newly built community center, where company managers educated them on the latest techniques of rice production. These "specialized farmworkers," new social subjects shaped for running corporate agriculture, were imagined as necessarily male. During farmers' re-education, villagers' situated knowledges,⁵ co-produced through generations of entanglement with their land, were being dismissed in favor of universal notions from agronomy, spatial econometrics, and rice biotechnology, through which the corporations sought to maximize grain and profit extraction from the village soil.

Imagined as an exceptional space of technoscientific futurity, the super-rice heterotopia reveals the work of heteromale normativity carried on by agrarian corporations. The acquisition of farmers' land by multinational corporations entails the definition of a single line of 'normal' reproduction



Figure 2. A hybrid super-rice industrial facility in rural Hunan. Photograph by Ettore Santi, 2019.

for the acquired soil. The engineering of a single, efficient reproductive scheme on farmland caused the gradual exhaustion of nutrients and the continuous need for artificial fertilizer and pest repellents. Ultimately, this heteromale normativity underpins the extractive logics operating across the planet on local, regional, and global scales.

Handmade heterotopia on lesbian lands

The women's land movement in the US was a continuation of the consciousness-raising groups organized as part of the women's liberation movement of the 1970s. The radical scene in the San Francisco Bay Area started extending along the northern coast in search of a communal rural life that opposed urban consumption. Gradually, lesbian collectives separated from the back-to-the-land intentional communities, attempting to create a safe space away from patriarchal violence.⁶

Initially, women-only collectives included lesbian, bisexual, and straight women. They started publishing magazines that included practical notes on

country life, spirituality, and the sexual politics of homesteading. Through these publications, political lesbians built networks that led to several communes along the I-5 highway in South Oregon, which came to be known as 'The Amazon Highway'.⁷

In 1974, five women established the WomanShare collective near Grants Pass, Oregon. Dian, Carol, Billie, Nelly, and Sue (patronymics were not used in women's lands) wanted to "live near the healing beauty of nature," so they pooled their resources together, and bought 23 acres with two houses for \$27,000.⁸ Using consensus decision-making, they organized shared areas that included the kitchen, living room, outhouse, and garden. Since they wanted each woman to have their own space, in 1975, they organized the first women's workshop to build a non-hierarchical hexagonal cabin. They primarily used recycled or locally purchased lumber, old windows, and sixteen local trees.⁹ Low-tech handmade craft is a way of co-creating that challenges extractive capitalism and environmental destruction.¹⁰ This anti-patriarchal aesthetic was a form of eco-politics that questioned the stereotypical beauty of metronormativity. Feminist rural styles allowed the inhabitation of non-normative sexualities outside of the "male culture" of the cities at that time.¹¹



Figure 3. Hexagonal cabin at WomanShare. Photograph by Chandra M. Laborde, 2021.

By building their own houses, lesbian separatists blurred prescribed gender roles. This shift exposed them to richer experiences and knowledges of the environment.¹² While daily life was entangled with the cycles of the earth, lesbians identified with these lands, coming "to know the landscape as intimately as their own bodies."¹³ They understood the relationship between their lives and the land, what their actions did to the earth, and where their water and wood came from. By growing their own food, they challenged masculine ways of relating to land for resource extraction and private profit, which made them rely on labor intensive and low-technology farming, resisting the tendency to extract the maximum value from the land.¹⁴ Landykes had ceremonies, rituals, and developed their own Goddess spirituality that regarded the forces of nature as feminine, and femininity as divine.



Figure 4. Woman in a circle at WomanShare. Photograph by Ruth Mountaingrove, 1977. Coll309v2cs2_001, Ruth Mountaingrove Papers, Coll 309, Special Collections & University Archives, University of Oregon Libraries, Eugene, Oregon.

Although the lesbian interpretation of the land rejected masculine logics of techno-rationalism, women's essentialist understanding of gender was exclusionary. Admission to the land relied upon strict constructs of biological sex and unitary sexuality. This turned the collective into a space for very few people, mainly white, cisgender, able-bodied women. While seeking to

establish an alternative relationship with the land that challenged the hierarchies of patriarchy, women inadvertently contributed to the erasure of Indigenous people and kinship relations that had long inhabited that same land. Conceived as a space of feminine collectivism, women's collectives functioned as "enclosures," whose admission was a privilege granted to a restricted group of individuals.

Conclusion

In both our examples, humans adopted monolithic gender norms to regulate their socio-ecological interactions with the land. In the masculine heterotopia of the technoscientific village, the land was rearranged according to concepts of development, production, and efficiency. These approaches excluded women from having access to the land while eliciting an ecology of extraction. In the handmade-feminist heterotopia of WomanShare, women rejected land-based development as patriarchal and extractive. Yet their approaches excluded transgender women and queer folks, generated unwelcoming conditions for women of color, and failed to reckon with the histories of land dispossession and settler colonialism.

How can we formulate alternative understandings of gender, sexuality, and land ecologies that recognize the many "unorthodox" reproductivities of soil, and that are not harmful to the planet?

Queer Lands pushes us to see non-normative ways to engage with the land, which are not heteromale, nor homofeminine either. A queer mosaic of gender already stretches across posthuman geographies, allowing us to establish alternative kinships that challenge systemic exclusions, without appropriating Indigenous cosmology. A queer ecological understanding of the land, we hope, can help us reclaim spaces of queer reciprocity, which are foundational to conceive of alternative politics for different environmental futures.

Acknowledgment:

We want to thank Prof. Greig Crysler at the College of Environmental Design, UC Berkeley, for inviting us to present our research to his students. His idea of juxtaposing our case studies, as well as the discussion following our presentations, ignited a dialogue between the two of us that generated our shared perspective on queer land.

We also acknowledge that UC Berkeley, through which these researches were conducted, stands on the ancestral home and unceded territory of the Chochenyo band of the Ohlone people, who are still very much a part of society today. It is crucial that we cultivate our awareness of our participation in the ongoing practices of settler colonialism and violence that exclude Indigenous life, and of how we benefit from those practices. We know that land acknowledgments are not sufficient, and we offer ours as a starting point for accountability and action in support of transformative change.

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- ¹ Herbert Marcuse. "Some Social Implications of Modern Technology". In Arato, Andrew; Eike, Gebhardt (eds.). *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*. (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company. 138-162, 1982 [1941])
 - ² Jan Douwe van der Ploeg, Jingzhong Ye, and Lu Pan, "Peasants, Time and the Land: The Social Organization of Farming in China," *Journal of Rural Studies* 36 (2014): 172-81.
 - ³ Doreen Massey, *Space, Place, and Gender*, New edition Minneapolis: Univ of Minnesota Press, 1994).
 - ⁴ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Illustrated edition (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2016).
 - ⁵ Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575-99.
 - ⁶ Heather Burmeister, "Rural Revolution: Documenting the Lesbian Land Communities of Southern Oregon" PhD diss. (Portland State University, 2013), 2-3, 8.
 - ⁷ Sasha Archibald, "On Wimmin's Land," *Places Journal*, February 16, 2021. Accessed: March 16th, 2022.
 - ⁸ WomanShare Collective, *Country Lesbians The Story of the WomanShare Collective*, First Paperback Edition (WomanShare Books, 1976), 62.
 - ⁹ Sally Smith, "Hexagon Building," in *The Woman's Carpentry Book: Building Your Home from the Ground Up*, ed. Jeanne Tetrault (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1980), 300-301.
 - ¹⁰ Jeanne Vaccaro, "Feelings and Fractals: Woolly Ecologies of Transgender Matter," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21, no. 2 (2015): 281.
 - ¹¹ Scott Herring, *Another Country: Queer Anti-Urbanism* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2010), 81-82, 86.
 - ¹² Catriona Sandilands, "Lesbian Separatist Communities and the Experience of Nature: Toward a Queer Ecology," *Organization & Environment* 15 (June 1, 2002): 148.
 - ¹³ Archibald, "On Wimmin's Land."
 - ¹⁴ Sandilands, "Lesbian Separatist Communities and the Experience of Nature," 143.

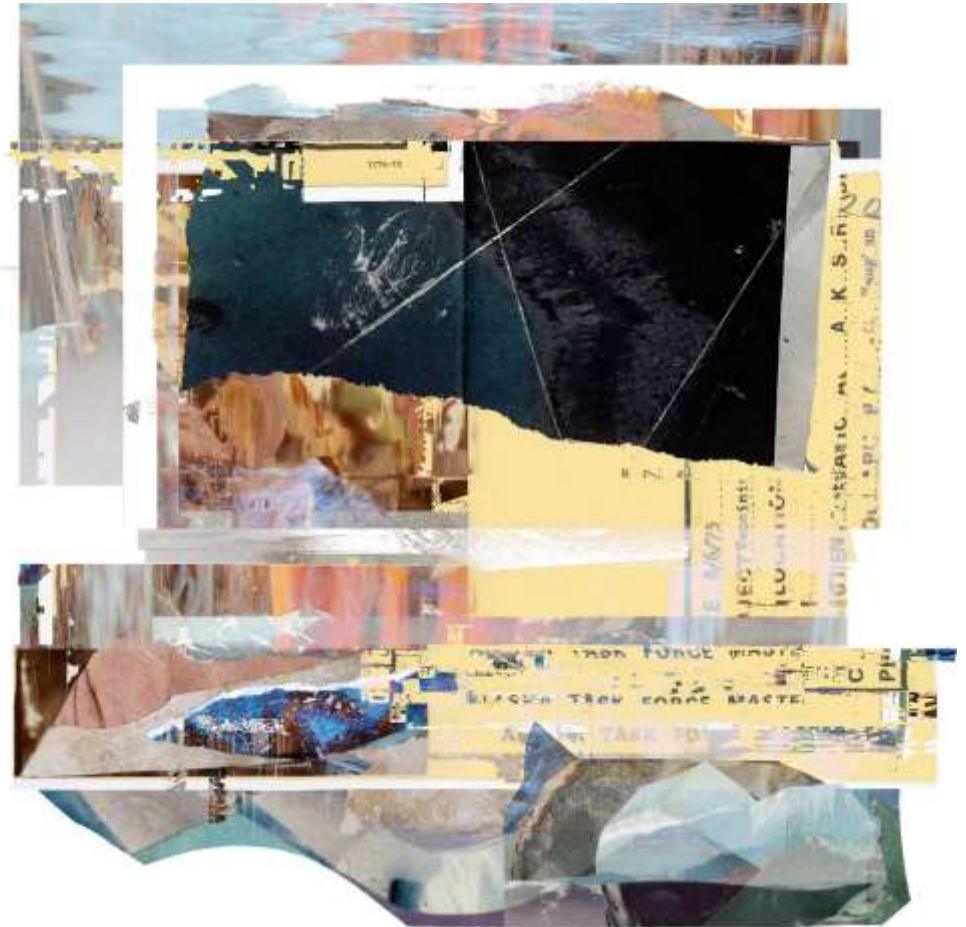
inclosures

by morphy rooms

The relationship of collage to its source material is always a queer one – a bit oblique, a bit perverse. After all, its primary operation is literally unsettling: we pry something loose from its initial position – its normative context – and we place it somewhere new, where it might not initially seem to fit. We might consider a collage “finished” when the pieces are integrated, when they come together into a new whole, but many collages generate interest by including the occasional hard-edged juxtaposition, the places where the individual pieces don’t fit, where they stick out, becoming subject to the pleasures and perils of visibility. Every collage is a queered context.

This is not to say that the original contexts – the initial positions and configurations from which our scraps have been liberated – are “natural.” Normative, yes; heteronormative, often; hegemonic, absolutely – but always constructed, always a product of ideology. At its best, collage digs into our culture’s enormous corpus of imagematter and literally deconstructs it, drawing attention to its artifice, oddity, and subtle violence, and providing glimpses of a utopian alternative. Small portals into a different way of seeing; postcards brought back from the other side.

These three pieces take images produced within the grammars of nature photography and advertising – two normative ways of looking at an ecology – and rework them into natural forms, returning the



imagery to a context less tailored for human ends. They also overlay this material with modified records from the National Archives and Records Administration which document the Park Service’s midcentury creation of a “task force” which approached un- or under-developed regions of the US (specifically Alaska) with the intention of making “a comprehensive analysis of potential national parks.” This attempt to interpret an ecology through an administrative lens, making it legible for state ends (e.g., tourism, and ultimately commerce), is precisely what we have sought to rework and disrupt. “Wildness” is a contested category, and we do not seek to “restore wildness” to these environments. Instead we hope to invite viewers to see the landscapes differently by queering the normative ways of seeing commonly used by the dominant culture.



all things that grow

by nazafarin lotfi

All Things that Grow is a series of performative photographs that imagines alternative, queer, and postcolonial ways of dwelling. The photographs display landscapes occupied by hybrid beings in which the human body merges with an orb-like form. Subverting the object/subject dichotomy, the images work against the hierarchical systems of identification rooted in the colonial project which has racialized, objectified, and exploited bodies and allowed for the extraction and abuse of the natural resources. Binaries of animate/in-animate, human/non-human, nature/culture are questioned to re-imagine our relationship to the natural environment and its inhabitants.





agave queen
flora womb
marigold mamma
by gina beca

My current body of work is a contemplation on the peculiarities of nature and our inherent connection to both flora and fauna. These anthropomorphic figures are a study of the physical and psychological world surrounding me from childhood to my present journey into motherhood. I am submersed in the loveliness of the diverse Sonoran desert and its resilient inhabitants. This has driven me to create work that reflects natural but unusual manifestations through soft and intricate watercolor.

gina beca, *agave queen*, watercolor.



gina beca, *flora womb*, watercolor.



gina beca, *marigold mamma*, watercolor.

the map is a product

by lorelei bacht

it is made of choices: to emphasize,
to spell out a reason, to hide.

every outline, color, overlay, font says
this, not that; says here is the center;

*says line up and follow orders; says
this is perfectly acceptable. my map,*

as drawn by officials, claims: *you will
need a stamp, and three to four years*

*queuing up at the office. it is irregular,
ragged, sharp and devoid of seas.*

flat as an old tire, it does not breathe.
in dreams, I travel along the textbook,

into different illustrations. in dreams,
the forest still exists, and not a single

family member tripped while crossing
the bridge to what used to be called:

home. in dreams, they offer me crayons
and say: *draw it yourself.* one of them

adds: *if you cannot afford paper, draw it
on your body, where no-one else can see.*

a guide to all the cuts of beef

by lorelei bacht

cleft and butchered, now diagrammed:
this male, this female, which is worse.

my body apportioned to king and queen.
the higher, the lesser now drawn: red

lines, cartographic and ranked. a body
is made of meat cuts: sirloin, brisket

and shank. each piece is priced, and
should not be boiled in the milk of its

mother – there is a rule to everything,
including how to consume each other.

this foot, we will call italy; demand white
wine and sunglasses. this mouth, we will

name after a river and expect salty white.
nothing will be left to itself. instead,

outlined, labelled, fought over, claimed,
reclaimed. my body, properties of

nation-states: a conference on my head,
barbed wires on my crotch. a name,

a name. a name I will fight to forget.

First published in *So to Speak: Feminist
Journal of Language and Art*, Spring 2022.

re: settlement
by caleb nichols

I.

This house
we moved
into
ok bought
I'm sorry
it's unfair
I know
but this house
was owned
by a cop
who pulled up
every root
cut down the ancient
yucca in the front yard
poured concrete over
every surface
of the back yard
laid down astroturf
white rock
perversely planted
new yuccas
he never watered
a lemon tree in a plastic pot
parched leather
as a drunk's tongue
at midnight
when we found it
abandoned
in a corner
of the lot

II.

Soil so dry
so compacted
that it took
an hour
just to break
up enough
to plant one
small shrub

many hours
breaking
dirt
hot October sun
skeined
with ash
jack-o-lantern
glow
smoke
so high it hardly mattered
except to say
the light
was different

the trees
seemed weary

watered with the parched tiny clay beads of salt
sweat e x h a la tion
chlo rin ated
res er voir
w a t e r

cut back

the dusty
weedcloth
drove the spade
arms and feet
hands and back

Josh said
read *Digging*
and yes I heard
Heaney's father's gravelly
rasp
thought of my own father

rasping
wondered if he'd ever dug
in the earth like this
in something he could call
his own
what a joke

ownership

as if I could ever
call this clay my own
if I died
tomorrow
was mulched
into the clay
as ash
planted
in a bed
near the purple salvias
that just took root
the bank
would still descend
call my loan
pick my bones
and sell my loam
to the highest bidder

III.

The garden fluttering
with pollinators
Indigo
butterflies
fat drowsy bees
thirsty hummers
in the sticky monkey flower
the purple sage
rosemary
lavender.
Like the new cafe
down the road
planted a rainbow
flag
a trans flag
decal
and caffeinated queers
now perch
at all hours
sipping
gathering
togethering

[David Attenborough voiceover]

*the bright array
of petals
are a landing pad
a beacon*

IV.

I want to till
this thirsty
soil
plant queer seeds
watch
this garden spoil
want milkweed
wildflower

fat monarchs
overwinter
oversummer
blackberry brambles and red
winged blackbirds
invasive new natives

want koalas
in the eucalyptus
to match Hearst's zebras
we lost the kangaroo
rat so let's add kangaroos
too
just nothing venomous
please
we've enough sting rays
rattlers and poison
oak to go around

what's the point
of pretending
that this won't be
a desert
by my 100th birthday
I'm not
quite half there
and it's never been
this hot
in November

even still
a new blossom
a new branch
of our rescue
lemon tree

scents the inky
autumn dark



atmospheres

i wake up thinking apocalypse, but the sky

by caleb nichols

so blue
the moon
so sliver
flaming
persimmons
tallow
wings
of yellow
butterflies
lemon
blossoms
dripping
bees
a sort
of false
summer

85 degrees
in late November

but the only thing
the clover knows

is to push
into earth
and break
towards
the light

for looking up

by caleb nichols

the gift
of a single
goose
or maybe
it was
a cormorant

silhouette
against
sky-wash

as bucolic
as Beethoven's
Pastorale

how strange
that same sky
at turns

end-times orange
or dystopic
pus-yellow

can somehow
still be
lit

in a way
that makes me
feel

safe
at home
in love

with the world



50.114512,119.32559
July 2019



google sky view by lee beckwith

"Street View is a virtual representation of our surroundings on Google Maps, consisting of millions of panoramic images...Google is dedicated to helping you discover the world around you. We go to great lengths to make sure that imagery is useful, and reflects the world our users explore."

Google Street View is supposed to be useful. The feature started out as a sponsored research project at Stanford called "Crawling the physical web."² The original project title speaks to the potential motivation for Street View: just as the search engine amasses and organizes virtual data, Street View would amass and organize real-world data. To this end, Street View has been largely successful: its imagery has been widely used by researchers and companies.³ But what if Street View imagery could be rendered non-useful?

This twitter bot attempts to answer that question. The bot periodically tweets "sky view" images, or Google Street View panoramas panned directly upwards. Each tweet contains an image, its associated latitude/longitude coordinate pair, and the month and year of capture. The inclusion of the month and year calls attention to the specific moment in time that the photograph was taken. The clouds also suggest temporality: clouds are constantly moving and shifting. If the panorama were taken a few minutes later, it is likely that the cloud formations would look different. The images tweeted by the bot are a stark reminder that the seemingly absolute, atemporal knowledge of our environments that Google holds is ultimately specific and relational.

Taking the prompt of "queer ecology" as that which reconceptualizes human relations to the non-human world, this Twitter bot refigures the human-place relationships created through Google Street View. The bot deliberately pushes back on the premise of discovering "useful" information through Google Street View, instead dropping the viewer into a collection of skies (and trees, and ceilings). The simultaneous sensations of specificity - the clouds are fleeting and their exact configurations are unreproducible - and universality-this view of the sky could be from anywhere in the world -allow the viewer to hold two conflicting ways of relating to the non-human world in tandem. Ultimately, the images tweeted by the bot inspire the following questions: How do you relate to your environment through technology? How does this technology dictate certain ways of seeing and encountering the environment? More broadly, how does geospatial technology dictate certain ways of relating to the world? And how might we push back on these imposed relationships?



scan code for
twitter account

¹ <https://www.google.com/streetview>

² <http://graphics.stanford.edu/projects/cityblock>

³ Recently, Street View imagery has been used to train models to identify pedestrian accessibility issues, quantify shade in urban areas, and categorize crops. Companies have used Google Street View to streamline road maintenance and increase tourism. One group of researchers used Street View images of houses to predict how likely the resident would be to get into a car accident. (See <https://www.technologyreview.com/2019/04/30/135556/how-a-google-street-view-image-of-your-house-predicts-your-risk-of-a-car-accident>)

Automated
50.087465,99.007848
November 2015



sky view
50.20678,95.13442
July 2018



sky view
48.572485,-122.384863
July 2019



12.995517,123.77022
May 2019



Automated
-2.00027,-45.986123
December 2018



sky view
Automated
51.585299,19.829848
July 2012



sky view
@skyviewbot
1Z1 Automated

-37.955624,175.878479
June 2020



sky view
@skyviewbot
1Z1 Automated

55.453469,-130.913495
May 2020



sky view
33.86879,130.036
June 2017



11.411308,124.923555
June 2016



sky view
37.996312,-0.886583
November 2019



sky view
33.886742,77.423355
July 2018



27.216148,86.794604
July 2018



sky view
-4.5,371224,167.117913
March 2017



411481

metabolic rifts and domestic interiors

an ongoing series of collaborations with wildflower seeds

by alicia escott



"Metabolic rift is Karl Marx's concept of ecological crisis tendencies under capitalism. Marx theorized a rupture in the metabolic interaction between humanity and the rest of nature emanating from capitalist agricultural production and the growing division between town and country."¹

Drawing on the idea of the metabolic rift, these collaborative sculptures span mental references between a post-apocalyptic space and regeneration. These works are grown from seed inside pre-consumer discarded plastic packaging. The resulting ecologies often take on a bodily shape and are relatable, the vessel holding together multiple plants growing to form one body or persona. Yet these sculptures are also collectives - a collective whose roots are entangled in relationality. The transparentness of the industrial commodity plastic exposes the soil in long tubes, subtly nodding to excrement and the ways natural cycles have been disrupted by the fact that, in the contemporary U.S., we sit on white pedestals while our shit is flushed away with pristine clean water and does not return to nourish and replenish the soil that we depend on. These works, as host plants for local pollinators are also an attempt to make artworks with and for non-human audiences.

¹"Metabolic rift." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metabolic_rift





driving to work (chemical abstraction)

by dennis doyle

2.75 mile walk along my driving commute route in a suit of car exhaust filled balloons. Documentation by Amy Hoagland.

Reaching my legs forward, the atmosphere stretches like tar around me, chemicals entrapping each of my movements in the air. In *Driving to work (chemical abstraction)*, car exhaust and human become a transcorporeal, toxic, and chemical body. Donning a suit of clear balloons filled with the exhaust typically generated by my car during my commute, I walk my commute to school, abstracting the driven route into its intimate and chemical subjects: human and exhaust. The suit visually blurs the boundaries of my body, reminiscent of staring through haze in a polluted city atmosphere. As I walk, latex, hot from the sun, rubs against my skin. This thin boundary will not hold, toxins slowly slipping through the synthetic membrane and into my lungs. Our bodies are porous as air pollution queers the false boundaries of latex and skin, city and country, tail pipe and lungs. Here I am, a merging of human body and toxins, walking the line where intimacy, kinship, humor, and pollution merge to create a queer ethic of responsibility in a future with fixed ecological toxicity.





atmospheric frontiers by eleanor white

The Weather

Weather, according to feminist scholars Astrida Neimanis and Jennifer Mae Hamilton, is "pervasive in ways that makes distinctions between the meteorological and the social rather leaky."¹ Through locating these leakages, where the atmospheric conditions of wind, rain, drought, and humidity are inseparable from the "total climate" of sociopolitical inheritances and structures, Neimanis and Hamilton reflect on which bodies are disproportionately weathered in a climate-changing world, where racialized forms of carbon privilege unevenly disperse vulnerability.²

To weather is to be worn away by exposure to the atmosphere.

Christina Sharpe suggests that, in the wake of trans-Atlantic slavery, Black bodies must continue weathering the total climate that is anti-Blackness. Attending to the resonances of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*,³ Sharpe highlights the "atmospheric density" of racism within the US: "slave law transformed into lynch law, into Jim and Jane Crow, and other administrative logics that remember the brutal conditions of enslavement after the event of slavery has supposedly come to an end."⁴ The weather has and will continue to envelop us all in an "atmosphere of anti-Blackness."⁵

This is neither metaphor nor analogy.

Along the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans, a heavily industrialized 'Petrochemical Corridor' has been constructed atop former plantations.⁶ Here, the petrochemical industry has inherited spatial logics of settler colonialism and slavery, rendering historical 'freetowns' as sacrifice zones: majority-Black communities smothered by the most toxic air in the US. According to Achiume *et al.*, UN Human Rights experts, "the combined emissions of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e) per year in a single [Petrochemical Corridor] parish could exceed those of 113 countries."⁷

Therefore, when Sharpe asserts that the weather of anti-Blackness manifests as "archives of breathlessness" she calls us to attend to these moments of breath taken, refused, or held.⁸ Throughout the archives of breathlessness,

she notes failures of hearing – in the courts, when George Zimmerman was acquitted for the murder of seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin – audible breath. In the Petrochemical Corridor, too, where the US Environmental Protection Agency is in ongoing violation of the Clean Air Act, breathing space is refused by “the state’s application of something they call justice.”⁹

Though Sharpe’s analysis specifically frames the precarious conditions of breath for Black lives in the US, asphyxiation can be read at the level of global governance. What follows is a consideration of the colonial logics of the Anthropocene and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC) as sites of asphyxiation.

Anthropocene

An archive of breathlessness survives in the earth’s stratigraphy. Whilst analysing atmospheric changes recorded in high-resolution Antarctic ice cores, geographers Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin observed a decline in atmospheric CO₂ of 7–10 p.p.m. between 1570 and 1620. This sudden transformation, described as “the most prominent feature [...] in pre-industrial atmospheric CO₂ records over the past 2,000 years,” corresponds to the European genocide of Amerindians.¹⁰

Lewis and Maslin note that in 1492 there were between 54 to 61 million Indigenous people in the Americas and by 1650 there were 6 million. Their hypothesis suggests that the Amerindian genocide and the subsequent regrowth of forests on Indigenous farmland created a reverse-greenhouse effect, potentially contributing to the fall in global mean temperatures.

Indigenous elimination continues today. Settler colonialism and its ideological mutations into petrocapi-talism, “*systematically erases difference, by way of genocide and forced integration and through projects of climate change that imply the radical transformation*” of multispecies ecologies.¹¹ Eyal Weizman, writing about Israeli weaponization of aridity to displace Naqab Bedouins, argues:

from the point of view of the history of colonialism, we no longer simply see it [climate change] as a collateral effect of modernity, but rather as *its very target and aim*. Indeed, colonial projects [...] did not only seek to overcome unfamiliar and harsh climatic conditions, but rather to transform them.¹²

Ongoing colonial (onto)logics continue to contest causality: meteorological weathering is naturalized, seemingly independent from the “human bodies that channel power and violence into the air. [Yet, as Neimanis reasserts:] The weather is neither incidental, nor accidental; it is an intra-active, natural-cultural phenomenon.”¹³

Atmospheric Frontier

In settler capitalist white supremacies, Sharpe teaches us that “the past that is not the past reappears, always, to rupture the present.”¹⁴ The Global North seeks new atmospheric frontiers of colonial and capitalist expansion. Much like the Berlin Conference of 1884 in which colonial powers divided up Africa, the 15th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the UNFCCC, demonstrated their continued afro-phobic exclusion.¹⁵ The G20 secretly drafted an agreement known as the Danish Text, which permitted an average 2°C global temperature increase above pre-industrial levels. Underpinning this decision was the *deliberately* uneven weathering of ecological breakdown: a 2°C average increase globally translates to a catastrophic 3.5°C for the African continent. In response, Lumumba Di-Aping, the lead negotiator for the G77 plus China, described the operation of the Text as “climate genocide.”¹⁶

Furthermore, the Danish Text would have hypothetically allowed the Global North to emit 2.67 tonnes of carbon per person by 2050, while limiting the South to 1.44 tonnes.¹⁷ Di-Aping condemned this as an attempt to “colonize the sky.”

Now, more than ten years later, the Global South remains asphyxiated (it was estimated that only one-third of the usual number of participants representing the Global South were able to attend COP26 due to covid-19 vaccine apartheid).¹⁸ After COP26, Satyendra Prasad, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Fiji to the United Nations, reminded “anyone in the world who is still listening to the Pacific [...] [that] to lose 1.5 is a declaration of war on Pacific Governments, it is a declaration of war on our communities and on our peoples.”¹⁹ Indeed, distant 2050 net zero targets and the withholding of climate adaptation funds jeopardizes lives by inaction. Meanwhile, the imposition of techno-fixes to low-carbon pathways reproduces dependency between the Global South and North.

In this sense, climate injustice at the UNFCCC negotiations “is part of a cyclical history situated within the larger struggle of anthropogenic environmental

change catalyzed by colonialism, industrialism and capitalism."²⁰ The total climate is a structure, not any one event: the only certainty is the weather.²¹

Weathering

As I have shown, the weather is "not ahistorical, but nor is it facilely 'made'; it is rather wrought from a specific set of conditions. This makes weather both predictable and changeable: bodies that weather also respond."²² Through locating these leakages of the meteorological and the social, Sharpe insists that Black bodies "produce out of the weather their own ecologies," as means of resisting the total climate.²³

To *weather* can also mean surviving.

In the atmospheric density of environmental racism in the Petrochemical Corridor: "We revolt simply because, for a variety of reasons, we can no longer breathe."²⁴

When twenty activists traced the 400-mile path of climatic disasters in the gulf coast from New Orleans to Houston, they pressured the Biden administration to revoke federal permits for Formosa Plastics – yet another petrochemical company. When fence-line residents of St. James Parish visited the Buena Vista Plantation Cemetery, an ancestral burial ground on land occupied by Formosa Plastics, they denounced environmental racism whilst demanding their right to breathe. When communities "continue to live within and resist the total climates of our weather-worlds, weather-marked, they persevere – interrupting existing patterns of weathermaking, for they are weather makers too."²⁵

¹ Astrida Neimanis and Jennifer Mae Hamilton, "open space weathering," *Feminist Review* 118, no. 1 (2018), 81.

² Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 104.

³ *Beloved* is based on the life of Margaret Garner, who on 27th January 1856 escaped from a Kentucky plantation, but was later recaptured and tried under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁶ Forensic Architecture, "Environmental Racism in Death Alley, Louisiana," *Forensic Architecture* (July 2021).

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⁸ Sharpe, 109.

⁹ Sharpe, 111.

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¹² Eyal Weizman and Fazal Sheikh, *The Conflict Shoreline: Colonization as Climate Change in the Negev Desert* (Göttingen, Steidl: 2015), 36, as cited by Davis and Todd, 770.

¹³ Astrida Neimanis, "The Sea and Breathing." *Oceans in Transformation, e-flux*, May 2020.

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¹⁵ Adrian Lahoud, "Floating Bodies," in Eyal Weizman and Anselm Franke (eds.) *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 515.

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¹⁹ Catherine Wilson, "Declaration of War: Pacific Islands blast COP26 pledges," *Al Jazeera* (November 2021). <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/11/27/declaration-of-war-pacific-islands-blast-cop26-pledges>

²⁰ Kyle Whyte, "Is it Déjà Vu? Indigenous Peoples and Climate Injustice," in Joni Adamson, Michael Davis and Hsinya Huang (eds). *Humanities for the Environment: Integrating Knowledges, Forging New Constellations of Practice*. (London: Routledge Earthscan Publications, 2016), 12. As cited by Davis and Todd, 771.


²¹ Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: the Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event*. (London: Cassell, 1999), 2.

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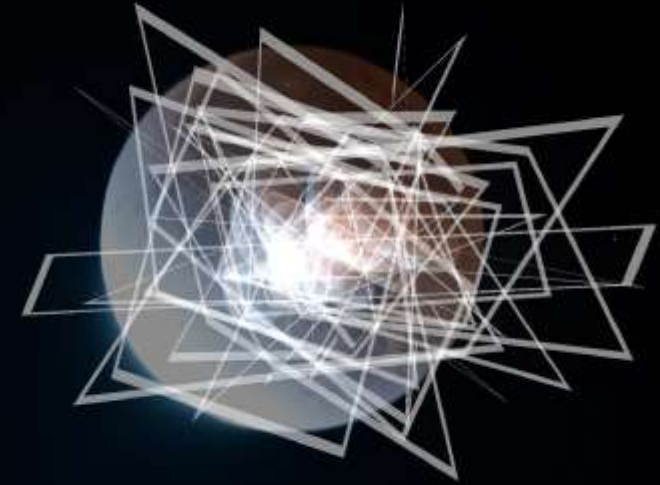
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irreverence in the lunar logarithm
by kaitlin moore

*Four stacking errors of the "Beaver Moon" Partial Lunar Eclipse,
imaged in Madison Wisconsin on 19 November, 2021*



In the early morning of November 19, 2021, the full Beaver Moon passed through Earth's shadow in a partial lunar eclipse, the longest of its kind in centuries.

In lunar astrophotography, a common technique intended to improve the signal-to-noise ratio in the final image involves stacking image stills, combining together a sequence of images of the same subject. The averaged photo, the stacked image, contains more information than a single exposure – there's more meaningful detail. For deep sky objects like nebulae or galaxies, the stacking alignment is done using stars, while for the Moon, the image alignment is done by manually aligning reference points. When those points are not defined, or defined incorrectly, stacking errors can occur.

I took more than 900 stills of the Beaver Moon lunar eclipse, producing a final, stacked image featured by several news outlets and astronomy sites covering the eclipse event. At some point during the process, I decided that I wanted to see what would happen if I calibrated, registered, and stacked the stills without defining the reference points. The four images included in this exhibit are stacks of 50 RAW stills. I shifted the stacking parameters slightly with each composite image, changing key calibration variables like light pollution removal, high dynamic range, brightness correction, and distortion compensation.

For all four “glitches,” however, I was fascinated by how these images instantiated an alternative astronomical tradition, twisting out of shape and in effect defamiliarizing an otherwise very familiar cosmological object. These stacking glitches serve as a metacritique of the underlying assumptions that guide astronomical and astrophysical scholarship, most especially the highly standardized, sequential chain of data transformation involved in producing astronomical images, from which scientific knowledge can be visually inferred.

The “glitches” are artistically intriguing, scientifically silly, and epistemologically irreverent. In compiling this project, I am indebted to Nicole Seymour's commitment to alternative affects and emotions in environmental thought. My hope is for these lunar logarithms to trace Seymour's sketch of queer environmental engagements that acknowledge the relevance of “artifice” as well as the ways in which “environmental and political stances are more a matter of emotion than rational knowledge.”¹

Standardized processes of data compilation are desirable in the production of astronomical images. Rather than foreclose error, my hope is for these stacking glitches to propagate into an active negotiation of lunar representation, endangering the reliability of the astronomical image and by extension rendering ironic and irreverent astrophysical knowledge.

¹ Nicole Seymour. *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018: 116; 230.



hey there, i'm just like you -- i found the trail

by alain co

Hey there, I'm just like You- I Found the Trail is a sculptural installation exhibiting the results of an experimental process that queers traditional casting. Pouring molten aluminum over a source matrix (used swamp cooler pads) breaks with the traditions of this ancient fabrication process. The only control that can be exerted over the process is the initial point of contact when the molten metal is poured. Otherwise, it spreads, burns, and cools as it will. Casting's traditions in producing multiples of an object makes this use highly unusual, pushing the boundaries of what the medium can do. I repeated this process multiple times in the creation of the work. Each pour contained literal traces of previous pours, as discarded aluminum pieces were melted and used for subsequent iterations. The arrangement of the results in the installation show the cycle and diversity of transformations the materials took on. These experiments investigate multiple concepts and questions – what is the boundary between material agency and personal control? How well can I illuminate it? What is the importance of relinquishing, or acknowledging inherent lack of control over the beyond-human?



scan code for
more content







the more-than-human



feral utopias

by corinne teed

In her essay “Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecology,” Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands writes “Recent queer scholarship on melancholia... is focused exactly on the condition of grieving the ungrievable: how does one mourn in the midst of a culture that finds it almost impossible to recognize the value of what has been lost?” Mortimer-Sandilands presents the embrace of melancholy as a political stance – preserving the beloved that society does not value. Relating the devastation of HIV/AIDS with that of climate change and extractive industries, she offers a framework for queer ecology. Starting from this stance of melancholy, I make work that documents voices and portraits of those on the margins. In the process, we collaboratively define our existent, ecocidal dystopia while articulating possibilities of alternative futures.

In this moment of ecological and social crisis, it feels imperative to create opportunities to both engage with and reflect on precarity and interdependence. I gather stories which communicate connection with other animal species that are not only relational but also bound up in perceptions of survival. *Feral Utopias* is a multi-channel animation that incorporates studio recordings of LGBTQ subjects and scans of 19th-century wood engravings carved by colonial naturalists. Digitally collaged together, the animation presents a speculative, other-worldly space. Audiences are immersed in multi-voiced narratives that reveal cross-species alliances in a time of ecological devastation. Participants attest to the ways they have survived homophobia, settler colonialism, patriarchy, and alienation through identification with animal species.



scan code to
view video



extravagant multitudes

by vanessa adams

One August in New Orleans, in the half-city half-swamp of the Couturie Forest, I stumbled upon an unholy stink and its source, a patch of *Mutinus caninus*, colloquially called the 'Dog Stinkhorn' for their resemblance to a pink dog dick.¹ Someone had recently put down landscaping mulch to maintain the trails and these slowly decomposing hardwood chips provided an ideal meal for this saprophytic fungi. Stinkhorns were emerging all the way down the mulched path. Some stinkhorns arched to the sky, some were just emerging from white egg-like sacks, and others lay deflated and soggy on the trail. All of them were smeared on their tip with a primordial brown goo called, 'gleba.'² This brown jelly-like substance is filled with spores and stinks of trash, feces, or rotting meat as a lure for fly dispersal.³ I've read that Victorians, such as Charles Darwin's daughter Etty, hated the stinkhorn because of its phallic vulgarity. According to legend, she would wake before dawn to gather their suggestive protrusions and burn them in secret in her study.⁴ On the other hand, I've heard from fungal enthusiasts that 'Witches Eggs,' the young stinkhorns of *Phallus impudicus* (impudent phallus), are considered by many a delicacy to pickle and eat.⁵ While I have never tried eating them, I deeply enjoy finding stinkhorns in the city. Every encounter feels like a mischievous wave, or a nod from a nasty, fabulous, and somewhat alien queer kin. Stinkhorns feel like a reminder of how disruptive, magical and strange the world – and we – can be if we let ourselves flourish beyond 'acceptable' tastes.

Exploring the mysteries of fungi is increasingly commingled with envisioning the possibilities and potentials for our own bodies, communities, and worlds. Fungi are slippery and transgressive – evading the binaries and the neat categorization of scientific taxonomy. They disrupt the hierarchies of western thought and require us to reconsider how we perceive and interact with the non-human world.⁶ Some scholars have been exploring the parallels between fungal forms and the queer body. In “The Science Underground: Mycology as a Queer Discipline” Patricia Kaishian and Hasmik Djoulakian look at the links between queerphobia and mycophobia. They explore how both queer bodies and fungal bodies can be marked as ‘other,’ and become something dangerous to warn children about, something alarming to be hidden, regulated, or controlled.⁷ As queer and trans people are increasingly attacked by politicians, investigating these interconnections feels more and more relevant.

Fungi, sex, and the queer body

Sometimes I lose track of my physical form. I want to transform but not in a masculine-feminine direction. Here, fungal and botanical metaphors are helpful. I envision myself better when thinking about the growth and expansion of a passionflower, imagining myself sending out tendrils to stabilize my meandering form and fragrant blossoms. Or I can see myself emerging like an oyster mushroom from a rotting log, engaging in everyday alchemy at the borders between the living and nonliving world and decomposing decaying matter into something new. Interest in fungal worlds has been expanding in communities of queer, non-binary, and trans people, and this attraction makes sense. While western science assigns humans male/female sexes and western thought maps out gender on a masculine/feminine spectrum, fungal species burst with an array of possibilities. The wood decomposer fungi, *Schizophyllum commune*, or Split Gill Fungus, has at least 23,000 distinct mating types.⁸ This means that as the growing hyphal tips of Split Gill fungus cruise in terrains of rotting logs and subterranean soils, they can fuse and form a union with almost any of the other mating types except their own.⁹ There are no physical differences between these multiple mating types, no “sex organs” to distinguish between them.¹⁰ The growing tips of the mycelium can simply pass a nucleus, fuse and create a new generative network with whatever compatible type they come across.¹¹

It’s not just mushroom mating types that are limitless. While we as humans are born with a relatively uniform structure for our bodies, fungal bodies are much more fluid.¹² In general, the parts of fungi we often see, mushrooms, are

but a small and ephemeral fraction of their fungal body. Mushrooms are like cherries on a tree, the fruiting forms that fungi send into the world to spread and release spores. Below ground, mycelium winds through the soil and can grow for miles. The largest living organism on earth is thought to be a Honey Fungus, *Armillaria gallica*, which spreads across 2,200 acres of Oregon, the equivalent of 1,666 football fields.¹³ When we are talking about this organism stretching for miles, we are mostly talking about its mycelium – the white spongy underground network of threadlike growing tips of hyphae that travel towards food, navigate obstacles, have sex, merge with plant roots, devour insects, and seem to constantly grow and transform.¹⁴ As Merlin Sheldrake writes, “The Latin root of the word extravagant means ‘to wander outside or beyond.’ It is a good word for mycelium, which ceaselessly wanders outside and beyond its limits, none of which are present as they are in most animal bodies. Mycelium is a body without a plan.”¹⁵ Extravagant is also a good word for us as queer, non-binary, and trans shape-shifters. We can expand and transform beyond the expected limits of gender and the body.

Indeed, fungi challenge ideas of the body as codified through sciences like anatomy. If you were to slice several lily flowers in two, you would get a sense of their general physical form – a structure of pistil, stamen, petals and stems, a repeatable shape and pattern with minor variations. This is not true for fungal bodies. If we dig up several clumps of the *Armillaria gallica*’s mycelium from different locations, they will likely all have different forms. With each sample, we will see white hyphal threads forking, branching, and spreading into the soil, but the network pattern they create is not their stable or permanent form. They will radically alter their physical shape to respond to their environment – to grow towards a fallen log as a food source or to detour around a new obstacle.¹⁶

We too are bodies in motion. Matter – food, water, blood, oxygen, waste – flows through our body systems, while our cells metabolize and die.¹⁷ While our forms cannot change as radically as mycelium, the transformative capacities of our bodies threaten established orders. In 2021, over 100 bills were issued to limit the rights of transgender people. Embedded in hatred and ignorance, these laws are also rooted in a deep fear of transformation, and an attachment to ‘fixed’ and permanent sexes, to physical forms which do not shift over time. Our own queer and trans experiences and the lives of fungi and plants tell us that transformation and change are not only natural, they are foundational properties of life on this planet.

What does it mean to be an individual? Fungi, slime molds, and the collective

Fungi challenge us to rethink neat categories, but they are not the only ones. Another boundary-defying organism is the Slime Mold. These organisms have the astounding capacity to exist both as free-floating single cellular organisms and as a complex multicellular collective organism. With the right circumstances, slime molds will fuse together, merge, and move as a collective entity – called a plasmodium – which allows them to better respond to their shifting environments, search for food, and have sex.¹⁸ In a world that feels increasingly precarious, there are lessons here. Devon Cohen, an artist and participant in the Queer Ecology Hanky Project, wrote that for them, slime molds reflect the possibilities for queer communities to work collectively to dismantle the refuse of society – capitalism, environmental waste, cis-hetero-patriarchy, racism – and digest these “into something life giving, healed, welcoming, and weird.”¹⁹

Slime molds, along with lichens and other complex organisms, can serve as a model for queer community and coalition because they challenge the idea of ‘survival of the fittest.’ This Darwinian ideology posits that organisms that are successful diverge from one another and compete.²⁰ But here we have an evolutionary alternative – collaboration – and in the case of lichens – symbiosis. Lichens are complex organisms composed of mixtures of algae, fungi, and bacteria who work together, symbiotically, to survive.²¹ Lichens are extremophiles and can survive on the shield of spaceships rocketed into outer space.²² They can live for thousands of years, but when an environment becomes too extreme, they can pause, suspend their life cycle, and revive when circumstances improve.²³ It is their partnerships with each organism providing something metabolically unique that allows lichens to thrive in harsh environments and unconventional ways.²⁴ Scientists believe it is lichen-like symbiosis, partnership, and collaboration that allowed plant life to first leave the earth’s oceans. This means that symbiosis, and the collective, are the foundations for all life on earth and should be in the forefront of our queer and trans visions for the future.

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- ¹ Eugenia Bone, *Mycophilia: Revelations from the Weird World of Mushrooms* (Rodale Books, 2013), 46.
 - ² Jennifer Kerekes, “What’s All the Stink About?” *Mykoweb: Mushrooms, Fungi, Mycology*, www.mykoweb.com/articles/Stink.html.
 - ³ Bone, *Mycophilia: Revelations from the Weird World of Mushrooms*, 46.
 - ⁴ Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change our Minds & Shape our Futures* (Random House, 2020), 212 -213.
 - ⁵ Bone, *Mycophilia: Revelations from the Weird World of Mushrooms*, 46.
 - ⁶ Sheldrake, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change our Minds & Shape our Futures*, 22
 - ⁷ Patricia Kaishian and Hasmik Djoulakian, “The Science Underground: Mycology as a Queer Discipline,” *Catalyst: Feminism, Theory, and Technoscience*, Issue 6 (2020): 10 -14.
 - ⁸ Kaishian and Djoulakian. “The Science Underground: Mycology as a Queer Discipline,” 10.
 - ⁹ Sheldrake, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change our Minds & Shape our Futures*, 42.
 - ¹⁰ Tom Volk, “Tom Volk’s Fungus of the Month for February 2000” *Univ. of Wisconsin-La Crosse*. https://botit.botany.wisc.edu/toms_fungi/feb2000.html
 - ¹¹ Kaishian and Djoulakian. “The Science Underground: Mycology as a Queer Discipline,” 10.
 - ¹² Sheldrake, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change our Minds & Shape our Futures*, 57
 - ¹³ Bone, *Mycophilia: Revelations from the Weird World of Mushrooms*, 52-53.
 - ¹⁴ Kaishian and Djoulakian. “The Science Underground: Mycology as a Queer Discipline,” 4.
 - ¹⁵ Sheldrake, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change our Minds & Shape our Futures*, 55.
 - ¹⁶ Sheldrake, 57.
 - ¹⁷ Sheldrake, 59.
 - ¹⁸ PBS News Hour, “Slime Molds: No Brains, No Feet, No Problem” *Science*, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/science/the-sublime-slime-mold>
 - ¹⁹ Devon Cohen, “Artist Statements and Bios,” *Queer Ecology Hanky Project*, 2020.
 - ²⁰ David Andrew Griffiths, “Queer Theory of Lichens,” *Undercurrents* (2015): 36.
 - ²¹ Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton University Press, 2017), 158.
 - ²² Sheldrake, Merlin. *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make Our Worlds, Change our Minds & Shape our Futures*, 85.
 - ²³ Sheldrake, 89-91.
 - ²⁴ Sheldrake, 87-89.

decay and regrowth by jorge antonio losoya

"The Latin root of the word *extravagant* means 'to wander outside or beyond'. It is a good word for mycelium, which ceaselessly wanders outside and beyond its limits, none of which are present as they are in most animal bodies."

-Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life: How Fungi Make our Worlds, Change our Minds & Shape our Futures*



jorge antonio losoya, *decay and regrowth*, digital art.



the gardener by morgan swartz

The Gardener depicts a version of my body, contrasting physical flesh with ornamentation. I especially wanted to depict the parts of my body that give me gender euphoria: my top surgery scars, my body hair, the bandage from my testosterone shot. Meanwhile, the things we choose to decorate our bodies are another layer of expression.

natural

by eden kinkaid





What possible relations exist between transgender embodiment and 'nature'?

Natural History is a response posing this question. It is a meditation on trans affect- on the structures of feeling available to trans people - in relation to the ways we imagine and know 'nature' in its various guises.

Through the assembly and inhabitation of a queer restaging of the natural history museum - more specifically a *wunderkammer* or cabinet of curiosities - I intellectually and performatively work through the relations between queerness and taxonomy, transness and nature. How is transness figured within this representational space that stands in as an order of nature? What affects, what styles of embodiment, what modes of relation are possible in this space?

Within the museum, the satyr exists as a boundary figure – an aberration, a hybrid, a transgression, an outlaw, a specimen, a curiosity, a fraud, a monstrosity – and as a figuration for transness within this natural order of things. On an affective register, my inhabitation of the museum space feels like a defiant confrontation with – and a returning of the gaze to – a structure of knowledge, of nature, that produces transness as monstrosity.



Yet too, the space cleaved out by queerness might hold within it other possible relations to nature, to science. In assembling the museum – in queering its contours, its order, its purpose – I began to experience a kind of belonging there, a different sense of order and relation, a secret, magical kind of intimacy, a strange measure of divinity, a careful kind of love. I surrounded myself with the company of other queer beings and their traces – roadkill, taxidermy, skulls and bones – a community of beings lost, detoured, and dismembered by the natural order of things.

To find and hold a place for them was to undertake a kind of reparative work – to build a new web of relations, to cultivate a strange and rather unexpected commonality with lost souls. The museum then became a place to honor them – to honor death, loss, and grief. It also became a space to honor myself, to honor my body, to honor my dejection and my alienation, my pain and my rage, but also a place to learn how to feel something else – a queered sense of belonging, of meaning, of mischief, of playfulness, of mutual recognition, of care, of magic, of power, of love.





...

Wandering beyond the walls of the museum, I dwell in other sites in the unruly production of nature – undeveloped lots where the wild things gather, places occupied by uncultivated nature alongside the traces of human transgression. These are impure spaces, spaces of encounter, spaces policed by security guards and warning signs.

Yet they feel strangely welcoming, enchanted, familiar – they are spaces where the weightiness of ‘nature’ is displaced with ambivalence, where there is a place for boundary figures and hybrids, a space at the edge where one might find a quiet kind of freedom. These are queer spaces – queer ecologies.





This project was manifested with Kai Lepley (photography),
Nesrine Rouini (photography), Astrid O'Hara (modeling)
& Athena Hagen (face painting & astrological + dramaturgical guidance)

& in the company of:

Sam Bloom (sewing assistance)
Liz Cordova (design, sewing assistance & life coaching)
Jonathan Eburne and Kimi Eisele (artistic & scholarly reference points)
Katja Fritzsche (taxidermy & natural objects)
Lauren Fritzsche (natural objects)
Kira Harris (virtual tour)
Steve Lustig (natural objects)
Sara Cavallo (co-conspirator)
Azita Ranjbar (mythical counseling & transfiguration support)
Peter Ryan (hoof production)
Rain Schumacher (taxidermy & natural objects)

& thanks to countless others who enthusiastically supported
me as I undertook this curious and mythic endeavor.



scan code for virtual
tour of the museum





william lukas, *untitled [shrooms]*, analog collage on paper, 2022.

**untitled [shrooms]
goodnight empire
river styx
gay eden
by william lukas**

In my practice, I upcycle abandoned encyclopedias and magazines to create maximalist *umwelts*- shared worlds that directly engage bodies and sensualities, flora and fauna as a symbiotic whole. Through cut-and-paste analog collage, I subvert the original purposes of vintage photographic media, which is often in service to capital (advertising), the white male gaze (traditional erotica), and settler colonialism (picturesque postcards of conquered lands). Reincarnated, these colorful composites accentuate [queer] qualities of fantasy, mutualism, desire, and carnage, espousing primordial ecological harmony and betrayal of Empire.



william lukas, *goodnight empire*, analog collage on paper, 2020.



william lukas, *river styx*, analog collage on paper, 2019.



william lukas, *gay eden*, analog collage on paper, 2019.

ya es la hora

by corinne teed

Ya Es La Hora (Now Is The Time) was made as part of a collection of prints to support the Center for Embodied Pedagogy and Action (CEPA), a project in San Juan that brings communities together in healing practices. The work attests to the necessity of “Alianzas Interspecies por Apoyo Mutuo” (Interspecies Alliances for Mutual Aid). Two queer humans embrace while surrounded by fauna and flora of Boriken (indigenous name of the island of Puerto Rico). Recognizing our shared histories of trauma and marginalization in capitalism and heteropatriarchy, both queer human animals and more-than-human kin can enable new biopolitical communities together. Now is the time to co-habitate, with more-than-human others, in a manner that enables cross-species, affective solidarity.

corinne teed, *ya es la hora (now is the time)*, screenprint.





marine life by rosie knowles

Something caught my eye out to sea, making me stop and watch for a while. I strained my vision and could just about make out a dark bobbing head. Gasping with anticipation I prayed I would find those wise, old eyes staring back at me, filled with oceanic knowing. But the glint of those eyes did not come, just a raise of an arm reaching out to slice and glide through the water. This time it was not a seal, but a human form, inhabiting and sharing the ocean, out of place but somehow deeply belonging.

My ink and watercolour drawing explores experiences of the ocean in the coastal landscape of Penzance in the United Kingdom. The backdrop of the working industrial boat yard in the harbor gives a peculiar contrast to the intimate happenings in the sea. The daily immersion of human bodies is now a familiar sight and a way of life for the small Cornish town. Seals are also commonly encountered, often making the two difficult to decipher, creating surprising human and nonhuman relationships. My on-site drawings convey heads bobbing in the harbor and on the seafront. Groups of mainly women descend to the harbor walls throughout the day and into the night, submerging and immersing themselves in the murky harbor waters by the old industrial warehouses. The metallic sounds of chainsaws and clunking of heavy metal vibrate across the harbor, intermingled with laughter as the rituals of bobbing are performed like clockwork, some swimming, most gossiping. The seals sometimes emerge from their underwater world, curiously and tentatively observing, undeterred by the human commotion. The humans must eventually leave this uncanny world and go their separate ways, pulling themselves from their seal like ways, battling with the cold, dry robes and twisted knickers, while the seals return to the murky mystical depths leaving us envious of impenetrable sealskins, deep wisdom, and limitless oceanic understanding.



notes on a honey bee's death

by kaiqing su

When I came out of shower, the honey bee was already in the room, flying frantically around my over-head lamp, buzzing its way toward the light.

This was, of course, not my first time seeing a bee. Honey bees showed up under the sun, next to my sugared soda, and among the carefully pruned flower bushes in the streets. I was told by my mother that the bee wouldn't sting if I stayed still. This tip was offered to me in such a confident tone that I was never afraid of bees. To be quite frank, I couldn't care less.

But this was the first time I was trapped with a bee in an enclosed space, at night, with no flowers by my side. It felt so strange. Unable to simply wave the bee away, I was forced to confront it. I backed up dramatically as the bee's flight route suddenly shifted towards me and screamed softly when it fell on the book that I was reading. Then I felt the minuscule vibration of its landing transmitted through the paper – I was never this close to a bee.

I didn't know what to do with it. Not exactly terrified, but unsettled. In the middle of the night, a lone honey bee flying unpredictable routes appeared more threatening and mysterious than the bees that I could simply neglect in the gardens. What if it was crazy and decided to sting me? What if it

just refused to leave? My friend back in New York collected plastic bottles, not to recycle, but to capture all the insects in his room. I used to laugh at him – just leave them alone! I regretted my comment. Now all I could do was to sit still and watch out for potential attacks – it was impossible to read or write with a bee right above me, showing no signs of leaving. The room was too little a space yet too large an entrapment.

The entrance of a single bee messed up the tranquil all-nighter I planned. After twenty minutes of staring at the bee and doing nothing, I felt unwelcome in my own room. I cracked the door open and went out for a walk, secretly hoping that this would provide a way out for the bee. When I gingerly stepped into the room again, the noise was gone, and the bee was nowhere to be seen. What a relief. It must have left, seeking another companion.

...

When I came out of shower, the bee was trying to enter the room, squeezing its body determinately through the gap between the window frames. Then the familiar buzzing noise returned.

I sighed, but was less scared. I noticed that the bee was more obsessed with light sources and indifferent to the human. But the light never fully embraced such pursuit and knocked it down every once in a while. The bee fell on my make-up organizer, music box, and pen holder. Then it quickly rose up until it fell down again. I moved the mug full of water further from the light, so it wouldn't drown.

The bee must have spent much of its energy. Instead of flying, it tried to reach the light by crawling up along the slippery wall, making...very...minimal... progress. After struggling for five minutes, it gave up making vertical movement entirely and decided to crawl on my bed, through the folded layers of my untidy sheets, so slow as if it was climbing through mountain ridges. The bee's movement became harder and harder to watch. I thought of Sisyphus and the huge rock that he had to push up everyday, just to see it roll down at night. This was no less tragic or philosophical.

Why did the bee come here? For what? Why this room? Part of me thought about how I stayed up late and my room was one of the few light sources available; part of me wanted to believe that these encounters were poetic, even romantic ones, already written in some cosmology and time-space unbeknownst to me; part of me was relieved that it was no longer making any noise and I could finally return to my studies.

Later in the night, I saw the bee lying by the side of my pillow, dead. What happened between the mountain-climbing and the death? – I was by the desk the whole time and witnessed no murder.

...

When I came out of shower, the bee was in the room. Knowing what to expect, I was not afraid anymore. After frequent visits by honey bees at night, I knew the frantic flying would soon slow down, then there would be the futile attempts to climb the wall and crawl over the bed sheet. It would fall down somewhere quietly, with its legs trying to brush gravity away. Eventually, it would die.

I wonder if it was about flying indoors – how suffocating! – since no bees ever escaped death in this room – this death chamber. Maybe the bee got in by mistake and all I needed to do was to bring it back to where it belonged? This time, with a grande-size cup from Starbucks, I was prepared. When the bee was resting on the lamp, I covered it with the cup, placed a piece of paper over the cup, and transported the bee to the outdoor hallway, where nature was. But the bee didn't seem thrilled to be back to nature. When I removed the piece of paper, it didn't fly out immediately as expected. Instead, the bee laid silently on the floor, moving slowly and weakly. It needed some time, I thought, to regain energy and take to the sky again.

The next morning when I came out of my room, my slippers rubbed against something. It was a bee, maybe the one that failed to escape the building from last night, or a new one that just met its death at the same spot. It curled up like a small ball, so light and delicate that a soft wind would carry it away.

Either way, I was confronted by this profound truth: I could never save a bee. It was early in the morning, but I felt I witnessed the end of the world. Every bee that mysteriously came into my room in the lonely night – when I was supposed to be reading or writing, but somehow distracted by this buzzing sound, which was first scary, strange and unpleasant, and now familiar, sometimes poetic – would die. The moment of encounter always started the countdown of the bee's several hours, even minutes, of life. I finally learned that the death would eventually happen, either in the room or not.

I could never save a bee. I could never save anything.

...

With some research, I learned that the bees that visited me (or rather, my lamp) at night were ones infected by a parasite called *Apocephalus borealis*. The parasites laid eggs inside the honey bee by latching on to its abdomen. As the eggs hatched, they started eating the inside of the bee, leading to its "erratic" behaviors, such as leaving the hive at night and flying in circles close to lights. These acts were described as "suicidal" and earned the infected bee the name of the "ZomBee." With its deformed wings unable to fly for too long, the honey bee usually ended up staggering around the floor, waiting for its inevitable death. After a few days, the parasite flies would come to life, emerging from the bee's dead body.

But something was missing from this scientific explanation. I felt reluctant to shovel the bee's death into the box of natural phenomena. I couldn't help pondering upon the bees' own intentions, and how each of them showed up a little bit differently. Maybe some of them came for revenge? Maybe some learned about their own impending deaths and decided to visit a strange place they had never been before?

Twenty-seven honey bees – I counted – plus all the ones that came when I was out or sleeping, and many others that lay in the history and future of this room. I couldn't stop them from getting into the room, and the window was of no help. After a while, I started to doubt whether such an attempt – to have a bee-free room – was even justifiable.

When the bees did come in, sometimes I watched them play with the lights, imagining their movements as dances; sometimes I brought them out of the room, just because they looked more energetic and were very close to stinging me; sometimes I just ignored the noise. Then a few days later, some flies showed up: did they come from the dead ZomBee body under my bed?

There wasn't any right way to deal with these encounters. But I made sure I greeted them as seriously as I could, and mourned a little before bed.

a fable for the end of the world by catherine oliver and liam bates

In England, a symbolic war has long been fought between native and adored red squirrels, and invasive and hated grey squirrels. Violence against grey squirrels is permitted, as an "alien species" whose presence has, it is thought, displaced red squirrels.² In Cambridgeshire, a queer local phenomenon is threatening to overthrow these rodent ecologies: a mutation in the local squirrels has produced a black species. In this short story, a fabulist is trying to write their last fable when they meet these black squirrels.

The fabulist, frustrated, chews their pen and stares across the landscape. More than four centuries ago, a group of wealthy men had drained the fens, to be replaced by the farmland the fabulist sees now. If the fabulist puts their mind to it, they can still recall the tall grasses, meandering waterways, and the danger- and excitement- of the fens. It was much easier back then to write fables.

Of course it was. Back then, the fabulist only had to walk a short while across these wildlands before an auroch or a wolf, a beaver or a great auk would present themselves with a lesson to learn. Even longer ago, the fabulist had brown bears and elk to commune with, and the stories spilled out. But now, the megafauna are long gone, the land itself has receded or been gouged away. A writing block is understandable, faced with the daunting task of drafting the final fable: the fable for the end of the world.

The chattering is ubiquitous and denies their any attempt to formulate thoughts and surroundings into a coherent narrative. No, refusing to teeter back into the centuries-long depression they've only just managed to crawl out of, the fabulist decides that the best thing to do, to be able to write this one last fable, is to get some air, to walk across the fens again, to try and empty the past from their mind. Into an old satchel, the fabulist throws a notebook and their glasses, laces their shoes, and walks into the hazy, sunny day.



catherine oliver and liam bates, *the fabulist*, 2022.

The signs aren't comforting. So many read some variant of PRIVATE or NO TRESPASSING. But the fabulist ignores these restrictions, passing through or over fences, nonchalantly strolling into walled grounds and gardens. A herd of grazing cows watches them go by, brown and black, yellow clips piercing one ear, declaring their fate.

For a time, they crouch beside a pond, inspecting the contents. The fishy inhabitants are glittering and vivid orange. Their speech takes a moment for the fabulist to interpret, not decoration, exactly- no, *ornamental*. These won't do as main characters; their story is limited to a single sentence, planked without ceremony into a weedy habitat they would have no chance of surviving beyond, their sustenance delivered from above, at the whim of a pink hand above the water-too contrived. Onwards then, out through the side gate, mirrored by a window reflection in the house's uPVC greenhouse.

In a leafy estate, a groundskeeper on a ride-on mower spots the fabulist wandering around on private property, despite them clearly not belonging here, and he decides to confront them about their presence. Halfway across the rugby field, the groundskeeper hesitates. In the same way he knows there's no sense confronting a hill or a rock, something in the fabulist's



posture or atmosphere suggests they are in fact supposed to be there. In any case, it's a conversation he doesn't get paid enough to have.

As the groundskeeper heads back across the field, the fabulist clicks their tongue. The sound is something like a slowed down woodpecker, with aspects of the gathering sediment of a river as it changes its path over the span of several years. Someone has piqued their attention, and they venture further into the trees to investigate. Although a busy road sits not far from here, the noise is dulled by thick growth. On either side of the worn dirt path, established evergreens intersect the bright yellow light from above.

And there, at the foot of one, half-hidden by shadows from branches and huge roots that have breached the soil, a squirrel is pawing at the ground.

Just a squirrel, the fabulist sighs, and kicks up a clod. As their foot hits the dirt, the squirrel darts out from the shadow and throws a chastising look towards the fabulist. Can this... creature... not see that the squirrel is at work, sowing the ground with promises for the future?

"What--" the fabulist's voice catches in their throat. Of course, they have seen squirrels before. In this land, the red and grey squirrels tell a tale that the fabulist has warned of, of borders, hatred, and misdirection. But this squirrel is neither red nor grey. They are, somehow, impossibly, black.

The fabulist quickly gets over their shock as their mind whirs with possibility. Perhaps this fable has a protagonist after all. Here, unbelievably, is an animal that they've never seen before... or a subspecies of one, or... something? Grabbing their notebook, the fabulist drops to their knees, aching towards the squirrel, desperate for their story.

It's not a simple one, which irks the fabulist. Nothing is straightforward anymore, it seems. This is a convoluted and misremembered tale, branching off from countless interventions, mistakes, escapes, and adaptations. All the dark century before, while the fabulist had been absorbed in their malaise, wounds to the landscape were transforming. As they healed, the scar tissue took on brand new shapes. The old, simple stories were gone, it was true, but others had learnt to thrive in their place. Some were totally bleak and violent, yes, but others, like the story of the black squirrel, although carrying aspects

catherine oliver and liam bates, *the black squirrel*, 2022.

of that darkness, covered so much time and space, and contained such a multitude of characters, inevitably, some of the narrative arcs looked like ones of hope. Not for a return to the ancient order, but for something else.

The squirrel has given enough and cannot spare any more precious daylight for the fabulist. Dashing up a nearby tree, the small black creature pauses halfway and casts their gaze back. They aren't used to being noticed and hadn't known that anyone cared about their strange colony. The others will be amused to learn of the stranger's absurd interpretation of that missing piece of DNA in their pigment gene.

The fabulist continues to look upon the squirrel. That black squirrel, so intent on their work – on sowing their future into the ground, doesn't realise how everything has changed. They haven't watched the centuries wear on this place. These fens, ever since they were drained, have been hostile landscapes, life became a commodity, everything that once had thrived destroyed or struggling. There had seemed to be no stories left, until now. This one, subtle, transmutation was nothing short of a metamorphosis.

This fable brings with it a wave of relief. The fabulist's goal is complete, but the conclusion has an unexpected shape. This fable will not exist as imagined, as the world's dying words. This could be the start of a new creative direction. The fens, like places the world over, have known the smell of extinction at the hands of humans, and yet they and their protagonists persist, flourishing in new ways, insisting on continued existence. There have been countless awful losses in the process – this cannot be a story without grief, and there is inevitably more to come – but despite the strange colour and shapes any subsequent developments will take, this is, after all, not the end.

¹John E Joseph. 2013. Alien species: the discursive othering of grey squirrels, Glasgow Gaelic, Shetland Scots and the gay guys in the shag pad. *Language and Intercultural Communication*. 13:2. 182-201. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14708477.2013.770866>

²John Gurnell, Luc A Wauters, Peter WW Lurz, and Guido Tosi. 2004. Alien species and interspecific competition: effects of introduced eastern grey squirrels on red squirrel population dynamics. *Journal of Animal Ecology*. 73:1. 26-35. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2656.2004.00791.x>



obstruction
by kimi eisele

Jaguar. Photo by Ruth Marblestone.



Animal crossing sign on Highway 2, Sonora, Mexico, southwest of the Lukeville-Sonoita crossing. Photo by Julius Schlosburg.

Sentient: *adj.*, able to perceive or feel things

They say one way to understand another is to put yourself in their shoes. I don't know if empathy is ever enough or even appropriate. But. When I am a deer, I am tender, careful, gentle. When I am a deer, I don't know "country" or "policy" or "asylum." I know the smell of trail and of water. I follow it.

The Trump administration erected 458 miles of "border wall system" along the US-Mexico border. To do so, it uprooted intact and thriving ecosystems (trees, cacti, desert scrub), destroyed sacred sites, siphoned sacred springs, plundered rivers, interrupted critical wildlife corridors, cut off animals from crucial water supplies. It inflicted spiritual and emotional damage on Indigenous communities whose very heritage depends on relationships with this land and its species. It inflicted damage, too, on newcomers who've come to love and respect this place as their own.

Many of the landscapes the wall construction destroyed were never common corridors for human traffic in the first place – they are far too rugged and remote. The construction was one man's megalomaniacal vision. He broke laws and waived acts agreed upon decades ago to protect sacred lands, water, and wildlife to build it. It is a trophy for his madness.



Construction of Trump's Border Wall, south of Organ Pipe National Monument. Photo by Julius Schlosburg.

In late September 2019, I organized a group of human animals to bring attention to new construction of the border wall, just south of Lukeville, Arizona and east of Sonoyta, Mexico. Here, on the U.S. side is Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, a federally protected wilderness area and a UNESCO-recognized international biosphere reserve. The administration waived state and federal laws – including the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Air Act – to build here and within other protected areas of border states. Not far away is Quitobaquito Spring, part of the sacred homeland of the Hia C-ed O'odham and the Tohono O'odham people and the only site in the United States where the endangered Quitobaquito pupfish, the Quitobaquito spring snail, the Sonoyta mud turtle, and the desert caper plant (the only plant that supports the caper butterfly) occur naturally.

If you don't live in the borderlands, you may have missed all this. Maybe images of the construction passed across your screen, another tragedy "somewhere." Or you bought into the rhetoric about safety and you believe, somehow, a wall will save you. From what? And at what cost? Where is your tender deer-heart?

Landscapes on either side of political boundaries are often complex and contested. But for animals and humans on the move, they are shared – contiguous, sensical, and unified, even amidst dangerous conditions.



Animals at the border wall. Photo by Julius Schlosburg.

When we channeled the animals, we did not surrender our humanity. We sniffed the air and pawed the ground with our animal senses, remaining two-legged as witnesses, stewards, sharers of place.

To become-animal is to step not out of, but beyond the human. To find refuge or fugue in something else. To transcend borders. To enter vastness. When I stood at the wall, my tender deer-heart broke. My fierce jaguar-heart dropped to the ground and roared.

In January 2021, after President Joe Biden took office, he signed an executive order halting construction on Trump's wall. A start. Now, tear the m—fucker down.

Part 1:

Videography & editing: Julius Schlosburg

Direction & concept: Kimi Eisele

Animals: Joanna Carichner, Eb Eberline, Kimi Eisele, Ruth Marblestone, Erika O'Dowd, Kate Ramlow-Meyer

Special thanks: Greg Colburn, Laiken Jordahl

Part 2:

Videography: Julius Schlosburg

Direction & editing: Kimi Eisele

Music: Vicki Brown & Christian Ravaglioli



scan code to
view videos



Horned Toad Lizard. Photo by Julius Schlosburg.



Jackrabbit. Photo by Julius Schlosburg.



place

clover

by Lucien Darjeun Meadows

Sunday morning, these white cedar walls
Multiply the tulip poplar leaves just outside.
I pray, sing, and try to mind the preacher—

Last night, I waited in my family's field,
On my back, shoeless, shirtless in clover.

You called me *Crow*. You said *Sometimes
Death would be easier than this*, and I said
Then come west with me—

But with ten generations of fathers
Mining and preaching behind you,
Holler is the only home you will ever know.

thirst

by Lucien Darjeun Meadows

Tonight, I follow the song to the river,
Brown water thick with falling brown leaves.
With a breeze, the river vibrates and breaks
Like a great wing, or a door punctuated with light.
Without wind, without you, the river hollows
Like the thigh bone I once saw a wolf suck dry.
I do not believe this thirst will ever be filled.
And still the song, a grackle or a crow—
All songs become eulogies in November.

Somehow I am standing in the water, now,
And leaves clap my legs like cold hands,
Your hands the last time we met, just upstream,
When I reached for your belt, and you
Hit my face, held it, hit it again as you said
I have never, never known you. I fell to my knees.
You left, and I am still falling, here, and if
I fell forward, I would fall through this river,
This song. But the night is too short. It always is.

shenandoah

by Lucien Darjeun Meadows

when he found you no you found
him on the mountain and you sang
he led you down through the tunnels

tell me when you first knew
to be is to be for another

tell me he wears your baby teeth
in the knob of his throat and your knees
are the moons of his subterranean sky

tell me he would hollow his bones
to keep you until you dissolve into stars

mirror

by Lucien Darjeun Meadows

*I stood before a mirror and said, fearfully,
'I want to see how I look in a mirror with my eyes closed.'*
—Hans Richter

not one candle burning	and I am pressed
against your silver depths	skin to glass
eyes closed	and I feel you
drink salt ocean	from my skin
leave me empty—	once I knew a boy
his mirror bared	twice a year
in twilight he stood	<i>changed</i> he said
<i>this soft body covered</i>	<i>in fur</i> he said
<i>when distance</i>	<i>between home and life</i>
<i>wraps tight</i>	<i>around my neck</i>
he smiles	<i>I have</i>
<i>to remember</i>	<i>what I was</i>
<i>before I came here</i>	I watched him once
and I knew—	yes if I open
my eyes if I	open these eyes
never close them	I could
make the world	disappear—

two magnolia blossoms in a glass vase

oil on canvas, martin johnson heade, c. 1890

by lucien darjeun meadows

Beyond these locked windows, a world
Of wind and birdsong. We could forget
How cardinals splash snowfields red
Beyond these locked windows. A world
Where we would stand outside in winter,
Eyes closed: we survived on swallowed light.
Beyond these locked windows, a world
Of wind and birdsong we could forget.

my queer mind goes for a walk

by james mcdermott

after Jason Allen-Paisant

when I stroll through Norfolk woodland
bluebells blackberries Golden Wonder
cheese and onion crisp packets my body
passes other walkers on the straight path
my epidermis feels their peepers burn
questions into my flesh as if I am
prey predator is that a queer body
among brambles ivy a broken bike
why does he mince through our woodland is it
to cruise for sex
the sly foxes are at it like rabbits
in the dog rose cow parsley fag packets
I am here to wander to exercise
to smell wet sedge to hear jays sing to spy
muntjacs badgers squirrels weasels hedgehogs
who see me as just another animal

wild flowers

by james mcdermott

*Hoary Plantain Corky Fruited Dropwort
Purple Loosestrife Night Flowering Catchfly*
you plants in the wrong place I pick you up

unwanted in nature's man made spaces
farm fields playing fields backyards public parks
I want you I take you in my basket

how are your shades of green deemed unsightly
Mantis Crocodile Islamic Jungle
Neon Hooker's I press you between hard covers

I don't label you weeds I name you
Hedge Bedstraw Oxeye Daisy Corncockle
Bladder Campion Forget Me Not Vetch

I preserve you you wild flowers who thrive
in nature where you survive all seasons
each bud punching through mud to unclench tiny fists

to bloom eternally long after man
who said you don't belong *Tansy Scented Mayweed*
Cocksfoot Timothy Upright Shepherd's Purse

First published in *Finished Creatures Poetry Magazine*:
www.finishedcreatures.co.uk

how queer I live on norfolk coast

by james mcdermott

after Arielle Greenberg

a sudden gust turns the reed bed
to whispering sea
the wind blows me
to wander lonely as a queer

to see all these trunks thick to the touch
their exposed skins glistening
I belly slide along muscular arms
become bird lizard caterpillar crepuscular squirrel

to gaze down on village people
tourists cruising daddies hammering pegs
erect tents to camp
duckies otters

foxes flies free ranging cocks
bushes cottages pansies dirt tracks dykes
everything always opening
everything always coming out

The final couplet of *How Queer I Live On Norfolk Coast* is adapted from lines in *'Made by Maid' is My Favourite Song* by Laura Marling and *I Want to Crawl Inside It, and You, Too* by Arielle Greenberg in her collection *I Live In The Country and Other Dirty Poems*.

blues trips through memory

by rasheena fountain

You are the road – the soundtrack for my memory. I remember you on road trips. When we were at the University of Illinois where Dad studied, I only knew you faintly, though you surrounded me like the cornfields in central Illinois. Visiting relatives provided more peeks into you; my family was my gateway into what they knew about you – about our ancestors, about the land. My first memory with you happens down I-57, further south than typical, to Mississippi. I couldn't've been more than five or six years old, and you guide me in this memory of road trips. My memories are unclear, and you have taught my mind to improvise, sometimes turning road trips into joyous occasions, even if they weren't. You allow me to fill in the holes – to reimagine the lands in my memories that have grown up with me. I recall going Down South two times, and you and time have made the memories of the two trips collide and become less linear. You remind me that these road trips are in remembrance of life and death. That's your unique quality – the ability to take pain, make it plain and digestible, even beautiful. I imagine you with Grandma when she migrated north, with Granddad as he went to the Korean War, with Mom and Dad when they made the decision to leave Chicago to pursue education in central Illinois.

Hints of you were in that big maroon van I rode in with Mama's side of the family on the road trip Down South. Grandma was there, her sister, Mama, and another cousin, too. You are so Black. You are subtle, a soft vibrato in memory. In you, we drive through the west side of Chicago in that van. I put you on repeat – the memories as a child where I see the west side storefronts, duplexes, and the corner hustlers near corner stores that fed us. You blur and bend and stretch images: intimate renditions of our stories often untold, misunderstood, and buried. I see my slice of our city – the 4D art gallery with familiar smells fading in and out, changing with each street block – moving stills of memory. I am in the van with Perlie Mae, Grandma's younger sister in K-town, where she lived, where many of us went during the Great Migration. You went to K-town too, and you are still there, even if some of us are not, even as we are displaced, migrate, and escape.

You have long traveled up and down I-57. You follow us, or maybe we follow you. I wonder if Grandma was following you on the road trip when we left the city. In this memory we weren't escaping; we are on a willful journey. I remember all the green and white city stops along I-57; the south side street markers drag into the 100s into the suburbs. City structures become less and trees with leaves wave windy hellos like church ushers showing the way. You've had different experiences in the woods. The woods could be threatening, mysterious clumps; they could change colors in the Midwest, turning summer breezes into silencing hisses. You warned me about trees. But you allow me to fill in the holes – to reimagine the lands in my memories that have grown up with me: our histories beyond the city concrete and the spaces that time has conditioned me to fear.

I play you in my mind, hammering away at time, and I see myself giggling in that van with my older cousin as she put lipstick on me. Makeup made me feel like a woman – like I was special like Mama and Grandma and the other women in the family. You loved seeing Mama and other women put on makeup too. You allowed us to push against the constant: the Church of God in Christ rules that Mama had converted to after marrying Dad. You told us that we could wear pants and dance. You allowed me to see Mama, and I enjoy her rebellion in these moments. You ain't selling me no fairytale in that van, only the possibilities in spaces where women rule. Mama later told me that my cousin was trans, and you led me to the discovery that I've not been alone in my queerness. *It wasn't nothing new*, you scream. And I remember my cousin was welcome in that van; wasn't no distinction made, or any fuss about who she is. I had heard family on both sides make fuss over gay and transgender people over the years. But, you allow me to see

truth despite the years and people that socialized me. Deep down I've known that Mama's side of the family was different than Dad's, not better or worse, just different. I see you in Grandma on Mama's side. I know Grandma had her own share of shunning and she lived how she wanted – a church usher on Sundays, but she'd cuss you out during the week, lovingly. She accepted everybody, was many of our safe haven. That's what you do, welcome, all of me in these memories: an adult, single mother, and Black queer woman. You remind me, that had Grandma known me to be queer, she would have continued to be my safe haven.

Transport me down the road, along Illinois flat lands on I-57 where trees turn into cornfields. Make the cornfields sound like weepy violin sections in an orchestra: calming and mysterious. I am warm in familiarity, but rural Illinois has sundown towns. Did Grandma know about them? Did you help her learn where to stop on rural roads? I remember Grandma showed me an old outhouse at a rural rest stop on this road trip – like she was showing me her life in another time. Grandma took me into the wilderness to a wooden shack that felt unsecure. I followed Grandma anyway into the shabby space with no toilet.

...

Grandma's cooking always took me to other places. She gave us a taste of the South in her kitchen in Chicago. Neckbones with hot sauce, collard and turnips mixed with cornbread, catfish, and salmon croquettes. I hadn't understood that her food connected her to the South – the scraps that she had to turn into wine. While on the trip, we had a crawfish boil. I had never seen anyone eat these in Up North. Around family, some I didn't know, we gathered around the bright, red, crawfish carcasses, as fishy smoke surrounded us. I thought they looked like little alien bugs, but like the outhouse, if Grandma said this was what we did, then I believed her and welcomed it. And she had told me to be open, to not judge, and that this was where she was from. So, I broke the shells, eating the thin meat from the little crustacean bodies.

"You see, it is best when you suck the head," Grandma said.

I looked down at the crawfish's bulging, dead eyes and took pause. I felt Grandma was really trying me, the picky eater. But I loved Grandma, so I did just that. And when I did, I felt proud of myself. I felt as if I had joined a new club and the sucking of the crawfish head was initiation. And it was a big initiation for me. For as long as I can remember I got an itchiness in my throat every time I ate shrimp, crab, and lobster. "I feel funny," I would tell my

parents. But they ain't listen to me. I think the idea of allergies was foreign to my family. Perhaps this is true for many Black families and could be rooted in the history of our resistance through Soul Food. We had to eat what we had.

I had never had crawfish before, so I didn't know that my undiagnosed shellfish allergy extended to these bulging-eyed bugs. My throat began to feel a scratchy, yucky mess. I stopped eating them and suffered silently, not wanting to make a fuss about the struggle in my mouth, my throat, and my arms. Luckily the swelling and the itchiness were the extent of my suffering. I don't think I told anyone. I am sure I was holding my promises to Grandma. I loved Grandma that much and was game for wherever she'd take me.

...

"This a outhouse. You got to squat," Grandma said. I remember with you to understand the landscape: the hole in the ground, the lack of plumbing, no way to flush, no cushion, our asses are exposed. Grandma showed me how to squat, and side by side, Grandma and I squatted and peed into the small holes in the ground. You show me new glimpses of Grandma – that there was more to Grandma than I had previously known. Grandma felt comfortable in areas outside of the city. Maybe she didn't hide that self from me out of any fear or preference for a city. And after squatting, you showed yourself as we moved further toward rural roads. "Now, where I am from is different than Chicago. Don't look down on where I am from," Grandma prepared me.

The road trip up until I felt you, was only an adventure – a fun ride with Grandma Down South. You were a warning, a serious tone stamped in my memory, and I wondered what was beneath it. Grandma's voice matched you in a somber tremolo against the joy in the van. As a child, I didn't know what there was to judge. I had always heard of the South talked about with pride and heard the lingering south in my grandparents' dialect, but, again, you warned me against my assumptions.

Show me unfamiliar; show me home. Show me the streets with less concrete, more browns and dusty roads. I want to be transported away from the stench of industrialization in the air. I can imagine the breezes that smell like nature: plants, the trees, and the agriculture Grandma knew. I can remember the muggy summer, and Uncle Teddy's shotgun house in Merigold, Mississippi. I find welcome in cousins' guiding me through the southern soil outside of the van.

“This is my motorcycle,” my child cousin, Lil’ Bear said.

Lil’ Bear, a small child, runs on the dirt roads along the house, smiling. He is comfortable in the vastness, in the open space that surrounded the shotgun house. I didn’t ride the motorcycle, but I vicariously live through my cousins who did. I watch them ride, unpoliced and with the confidence from family, that we would be safe outside. You know we ain’t safe Up North, that Grandma’s Great Migration wasn’t freedom. You warn me against romanticizing Lil’ Bear’s freedom Down South. You know that freedom for us is more nuanced, even if I remember it as freedom through my childhood memory. Even then, I had been able to compare freedoms. I didn’t feel that me or my cousins were free Up North; we didn’t have the carefree attitude my cousins seemed to carry. Lil’ Bear’s freedom looked more like freedom to me.

Your transport through time and space is not perfect, and my vision gets hazy like Jimi Hendrix blues, mashing and separating like tectonic plates in a subduction zone. Maybe you are prompting me, like a *Choose Your Own Adventure Story*. Maybe you are giving me that freedom. Mama has provided voice overs for my memories, corroborations on my improvised journey with you. I take Mama’s stories and my memories and submit to your interpretations of time: the family times, the dirt roads, and Grandma are constant. The specifics, you mangle, and allow me to construct. I mourn and understand loss and simultaneously feel warm in my ancestors’ smiles. And in all variations, in all these memories, I am left with you.

A: I’ve Got Memories’ Blues

You take me to a time of mourning Down South. In this memory, you surround me in that small church in Merigold, Mississippi. Your mood stench the air and makes me sad. The summer heat fizzles in the church with no air conditioning and people fan themselves to stay cool. I see people in their Sunday’s best – family, and maybe friends. Teddy, Bear, Monkey, James and Pearlie Mae are all dressed in black. I was used to you in fast tempo, uplifting melodies that made us want to dance in the spirit. Today your melody diminuendos, mimicking feelings, helping us release hovering clouds inside of the church.

You show me her in a casket: Grandma’s mother, my great Grandma. She looks familiar, like Grandma. You give us grace in time, a grace that is clear on her beautiful dark Black skin. I want you to show me her eyes, but instead she lay stiff, emotionless. And that’s when you take over Grandma; she

crumbles as pain wells up onto her face. You take control of Grandma’s mood with your high notes of sorrow. Again, the organ feeds you. You are a time machine. I am there and here. I sift through the memory of Grandma being escorted away to the back of the church and my own inability to resist you at age five and now. If Grandma couldn’t keep you at bay, then I am no match. I’ve only seen you make Grandma lose control.

Grant me memory snapshots: I see Mama next to me in the church as you make me lose control. A single tear runs down my cheeks, and you – the feeling of you – is so hauntingly clear. I lay my head on Mama, as you possess me. Our family doesn’t have rites of passage like quinceañeras or bar mitzvahs, but I now know my first time with you to be a rite of passage. You welcome, recruit, devastate, and give us hope all at once. In you, I am a part of something, even as we mourn in the Mississippi church. You hold us and give us voice in the sorrow, the pain. You held Grandma, even Up North, as more family turned to ancestors and as her own children turned into my ancestors prematurely. And as I grew, I got used to you in all your complications and variations.

A: Yes, I’ve Got Memories, Blues

I rebel in you. I want to go to happier times when I was with my great grandma in her backyard in Merigold Mississippi. I see pecans on green grass. Your presence is gentle, and the lightning bugs shine around me. I can see my great grandma; her dark skin is like Grandma’s, beautiful, glowing. I see grace in her eyes and smile, as she looks at me and my cousins playing. I’ve learned to take control of you – to improvise within the geography of my pain. You transport me to the small church often, to her funeral. But you, and my memories are not linear in time. In memory, she is awake.

This memory that I’ve held onto is life: fertile green grass, lush trees that dripped pecans onto the ground like prosperous tears, and my cousins and I collect them. I learned years ago that pecans and walnuts made my throat itch too, but these itches were inconveniences I ignore to be a part of you and the land that gives them to us freely. The abundance – the space, the range, the living outside of the city we had been socialized to only see – feels like freedom. As we run across the grass, collecting the pecans and laughing, I can clearly remember my great grandma sitting in a chair. She smiles the genuine type of smile – the kind that does kick flips and pushes its way up from the soul and parts the cheeks.

My oral histories are scarce and diminishing, but God gives me memories. My great grandma is silent in my memories, at the small church and in the backyard. Even now, I wonder so much about her and other oral histories. In memory, I improvise and reimagine that she was proud and had reached some version of The Promised Land that day seeing her great grandchildren in joy on her land. I hope that our smiles gave her some version of The Dream. I know that this time in the backyard during the road trip was before the trip to her funeral. To imagine life after death defies a truth and secular constructs. But memories don't care about constructs; they give me freedom to defy time. I reimagine my great grandma's smile, the pecan trees, and two road trips as one memory of hope. In memory, I defy you. My great grandmother lives – a fixture in that chair on the green grass surrounded by pecan trees Down South.

B: I've Got Memory, and You Give Me Freedom Blues

Take me back to the sharecropper shack, the one you gave Uncle Monkey. You helped him turn muddy water into wine: a shack into a juke joint. This is one of my favorite memories with you, one that I channel when I play you on my guitar now. You sat with us one night in the juke joint, and I didn't know what a juke joint or sharecropper was or what juke joints meant in the scope of you and the Deep South. I was sitting in history, in Po' Monkey's Lounge, one of the last surviving juke joints and a Historical Blues Trail marker. I am there with my safe haven, Grandma, in a space that was a safe haven for your women and men in a Deep South that hadn't always been kind. And I feel safe in this memory.

Remembering with you led me to images of Uncle Monkey's juke joint as an adult: on Instagram, in the *New York Times*, on *Wikipedia*, on Anthony Bourdain's *Parts Unknown*. But I remember it as Uncle Monkey's club Down South, where I sat with him and Grandma one night. The inside of the juke joint has wooden walls, Christmas lights, and the lighting feels dim. It feels small, intimate, home. Your songs play from a juke box as I sit with Uncle Monkey and Grandma at a table. The night is muggy. I imagine a cracked window lets in refreshing breezes from the fields surrounding the juke joint. I feel calm. Uncle Monkey and Grandma sit in your arms. *If only you could speak details to me, telling me memories over the years that Grandma and Uncle Monkey only share in each other's gaze. I may never know.* So, I capture and cherish small glimpses you show me from my memory's pocket. In the juke joint and in my memory, "Mom's Apple Pie" by Tyrone Davis plays on repeat from the jukebox.

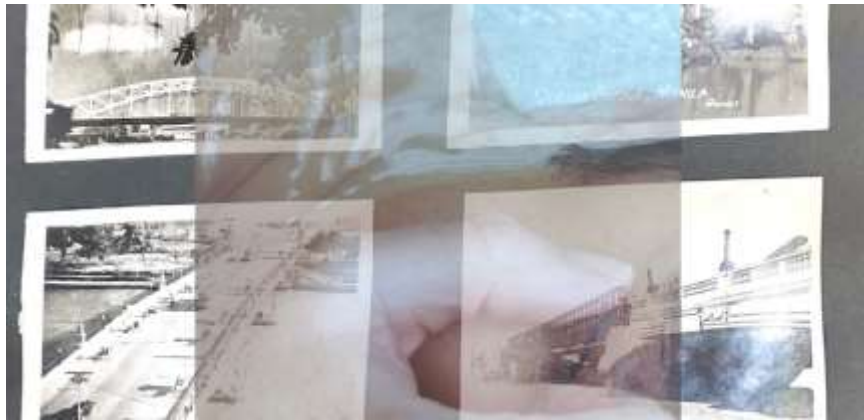
Time and you have taken Grandma. Uncle Teddy, Bear, and Monkey and Aunt Perlie Mae are now ancestors too. Each loss makes me feel less home, and home feels ever-changing for us. You carry a weight of displacement unresolved. Grandma's dream is now less centered on the west side of Chicago where she settled after the Great Migration. A lot of our family now lives in far suburbs and in different states. Now, I carry Grandma's dream with me, even though I mourn for many connections lost – the times with Grandma and the memories she carried as a bridge from the South to the North. So, I riff through my memories, improvising road trips for lost connections and for hope. As I hope, my ancestors are dead and alive, still connecting me to a past to reimagine. You, the blues, allow me to fill in the holes – to reimagine the lands in my memories that have grown up with me; the improvisations across the geography of my memoryscape guide me as I struggle to remember my way home.



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garden says breathe by al evangelista

Garden Says Breathe explores queer generational diaspora through home garden videos, archival material, and movement. My home garden has queer diasporic relations. How and when do I see these relations and when do others? I want to put up a pride flag in my garden but I am a queer brown body in the rural Midwest.¹ This screendance asks: can my garden be my queer flag? How can my queer garden be in conversation with gardens from diaspora? Garden video footage is paired with World War II aftermath photos, creating connection across time, change, cycles, and growth.² The photos highlight exterior shots of Manila pre- and post-World War II creating conversation with Filipinx-American queer ecological history.³



garden says breathe

I want my garden to say a queer man lives here.

My Filipino mother will be so proud of the yam vines. These yams feed guests. Feeding is how we show our love.⁴ These yams transform into ube cake, ube cookies, ube ice cream. They are a lot. And they are amazing.

My pride flag is my lily pad pond. It's an invasive species in the Philippines. In the river near where my parents grew up, lily pads run rampant. Lily pads are my queer flag not just because they are rhizomatic but because the newer leaves take in the air and the older leaves expel the air.⁵ Environmentalist and botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer (Citizen Potawatami Nation) writes, "The young and the old are linked in one long breath, an inhalation that calls for reciprocal exhalation, nourishing the common root from which they both arose."⁶ Instead of representing solely sexual preferences through color, my lily pad pond as flag also represents generations. Queer ancestors breathing with me underneath the surface.

As the seasons change and it starts to snow in the Midwest, my garden sleeps. The cold frost places a temporary stay. We need to rest.⁷

Except for the plants I brought inside. The clippings I've taken to make more plants keep the dances going. These plants slide into my queer kins' homes. My garden breathes with my chosen family and our ancestors breathe back.

¹ Manalansan IV, Martin F, Chantal Nadeau, Richard T Rodríguez, and Siobhan B Somerville. 2014. *Queering the middle: Race, region, and a queer Midwest*. Duke University Press.

² [World War II Damage in Manila]. 1940. University of Michigan Library. Special Collections Library.

³ Domingo, Luis Zuriel. 2022. "[OPINION] On the lack of public historians and intellectual spaces." *Rappler*, 2022. <https://www.rappler.com/voices/imho/opinion-lack-public-historians-intellectual-spaces/>.

⁴ Orquiza, René Alexander. 2013. "8. Lechon with Heinz, Lea & Perrins with Adobo." In *Eating Asian America*, 177-185. New York University Press.

⁵ Allen, Jafari S. 2016. "Black/queer rhizomatics." In *No Tea, No Shade*, 27-47. Duke University Press.

⁶ Kimmerer, Robin Wall. 2013. *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed Editions. 103.

⁷ Edidi, Lady Dane Figueroa. 2021. "Reflective Meditation with Lady Dane" In "#stay FRESHatHOME." Vimeo.

queer skies: coming in to an ecology of love

by fatima

My lover asks me:

"What is the difference between me and the sky?"

The difference, my love,
Is that when you laugh,
I forget about the sky.

Nizar Qabbani¹

I time my breathing to your heart to find the ocean. My heart will race to meet your laughter: you are sky.

Alexis Pauline Gumbs²

Queer: the way you laugh and I remember the sky
Ecology: how the sky reminds me of you, how you remind me of the sky
Queer ecology: the way my heart will race to meet your laughter: you are sky.

a queer syllogism

On dark December afternoons I read poetry by Nizar Qabbani, searching for ways to love queerly in the Damascus streets that birthed some of my ancestors: the ones who gave me my names, my eyes, my heart. *I time my breathing to your heart to find the ocean*; instead, I breathe my way through your heart to the Barada river. Looking for what is lost when home is always just out of reach, imagining the way back to a home where my capacity for love preceded any understanding of the price I'd pay for it. Time and geography glitch, torn between so many contradictions. I am searching for ways to love queerly in familiar pages that don't recognise me: 2,870.5 miles away from Damascus, 4,199 miles away from her, 15 miles and twenty-eight years from where I was born.

This is a letter I've wanted to write you all my life. And it starts, that I have started praying again. I never told you I stopped, but I did. And for years I haven't felt any divine presence. My body has felt like a shell, rejecting its own creation, ignoring the marks of divine creation in my own chest. But I have started praying again, and this letter is to tell you the story of how.

The difference between coming out and coming in is one of intention. I'll explain: recently, I attended a friend's wedding at the registry office. We came in through the front door, which is the entrance for those intending to register a marriage, and came out through the back door, which doubles both as the exit for those leaving a marriage and the entrance for those intending to register a death. At this second door, our coming in or coming out passes unmarked and unnoticed. We are simply people at a door, our intentions to register a death or attend a marriage unannounced, our joy or grief undisclosed. When I came out I had no opportunity to send the letter I had been drafting for several years. Instead I came into the new year by saying that to me, there is no difference between the love that holds the sky above the earth and the love that prompts us to hold each other.

I re-read the poem where Nizar Qabbani's *habibti* asks: what is the *difference between me and the sky*? The answer does not please me: *when you laugh, I forget the sky*. I think, queer is the way you laugh and I remember the sky. The way Audre Lorde finds no difference between writing a poem and moving into sunlight against the body of a woman she loves.³ The way I find no difference between the love that holds the sky above the earth and the love that prompts people to hold each other.

In the mornings I wake up and listen to the sound of the birds that you taught me to love. I remember waking at fajar and crying, 'I miss home. I want to go

home'. And there was a blackbird singing outside and you told me, 'listen to him. He's at home, and he's from there. And now he's here, like you. You're both from here and from there, and you will make homes in both places'. And I've never forgotten the comfort this gave me.

When we're apart, I take photos of the sky for her everyday. Some days, I send them to her. It's an act of relation, of community: ecology is how the sky reminds me of you, how you remind me of the sky. How I ask the sky: when will we hold each other again? How I listen to surat ar-Rahman as spring fills the air and hear the stars and trees in *sujood* alongside me. How I find humanity included alongside the travels of the sun and the moon, hear us all in community with the skies.⁴

Let me say it differently: my heart comes alive. My heart is animated by flames and passions and rhythms. And this time when it happened, I started praying. Because suddenly I hear and see traces of creation and divinity everywhere I turn. And the overwhelming bounty of nature that is both painful and joyful to take in, overtakes me and I cannot function without prayer. And I can't say where my love for her stops and my love for Allah starts. And I said 'her'.

Queer ecology is the way earth will race to meet sky, the way my heart will race to meet your laughter, the way I'll search for the ocean in her and find myself at the Barada river. The way British and Syrian poet lisa luxx writes 'the earth is a dyke. If you held her in bed you'd sink into the softness of her skin and she'd flex her bicep in response, knowing gold you're forbidden to mine for'.⁵

When I was 10 I fell in love for the first time. I cried every time she was near me because she was so beautiful. I've told you this before, hoping you'd hear what I was trying to tell you. The pain of suppression in my chest felt unbearable. And I never felt those feelings again until I came to terms with the kind of love I contain, and realised when I tend to it and allow it to breathe, that I start praying. That Allah is a presence I am aware of. That I feel alive and I feel unending gratitude. That you would call this 'lesbian'.

I practice my refusals daily. I refuse the separation between my body and the sea that birthed me when my mothers could not. I refuse the invention of 'natural' as something I am not, of Allah as someone who hates me, of secular coloniality as my saviour from a supposedly-oppressive faith and culture. I am not writing for those people who will insist upon these divides, I am writing for whoever seeks to be held as they rest queerly in their body

under the sky. And for you, I pray that we may come into the new year with the intention of coming in to our wholeness. The desire to meet laughter despite a heart too heavy to run. The refusal to surrender our identities to those who weaponise them against us. I pray that we come into a new year of love, a year where we start to write our own *kitab al-hobb*, a year where we find ways to love queerly in the streets that birthed us, glitching between times and geographies. They'll call it *queering*. We'll call it 'inventing and creating and finding a place to speak and to thrive and to live'.⁶

There is to me no difference between the love that holds the sky above the earth and the love that prompts us to hold each other. There is no difference.

This is my ecology of love. The softness I am trying to come in to, again and again, despite the harshness that we come out to, again and again.

¹ Nizar Qabbani, *Arabian Love Poems*, trans. Bassam K. Frangieh and Clementina R. Brown, Lynne Rienner Publications Inc., 1999, 20.

² Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals*, Emergent Strategy Series: AKA Press, 2020, 83.

³ Audre Lorde, 'Uses of the Erotic' in *Sister Outsider*, Crossing Press: Berkeley, 2007, 58.

⁴ Surat ar-Rahman: <https://beta.quran.com/ar-rahman>

⁵ lisa luxx, 'for a subculture to resist capitalist co-opting it must remain impossible to define', in *fetch your mother's heart*, Out-Spoken Press, London, 2021.

⁶ bell hooks, 'Are you still a slave? Liberating the Black female body', Eugene Lang College, 2014. Available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rJk0hNROvzs>

bodies

by sunjay em

I remember when there was a serial killer in Toronto. It seemed like each week there were brown bodies being pulled from the earth in pieces – pieces of men who had gone missing years ago, last seen in some far corners of the city's immigrant suburbs. I wondered about the man who had touched them last. I wondered – before there was violence enacted onto their beings – if these men felt desired, tenderness, warmth. I wondered how he lured each man – if there were promises of affection, of heat, of closeness.

That same month you told me to not talk to you about sex – I was to think of you as sexless. What that meant was at some point in our relationship, you saw my body, decided it wasn't worthy, it wasn't a type, it wasn't. It meant you didn't want to imagine that I could be a sexualized being either, that this body is a shame. In the meantime, I was to accept that your sex life was out of bounds for me, that the bodies you entangled with were so out of the realm of my possibility.

I spent a lot of time on my phone those days, switching between apps, dead-end conversations, trying to reconcile urgent loneliness, making plans that would never materialize. I deleted the apps constantly, vowed never to return, re-downloaded them, created new profiles, started again. I had spent most of my life feeling on the periphery of what's considered attractive, in

search of someone to see me. I often imagined myself a pile of skin that no one wants to touch.

I have always been on the periphery. I lived in one of those immigrant suburbs. I understood the distance between myself and the gay village downtown. It was there, but out of reach. I didn't care much. People love the gay districts downtown, they study them endlessly, their histories, the gentrification, the whiteness. Sometimes I'd drive downtown at night and sit in my car on the apps and see what I was missing. But in the racialized suburbs, I learned the need for anonymity, the recklessness of hushed moments of abandon, the silent agreement of discretion. Our spaces were the tricky coordinates you were given by a stranger in the middle of the night. Empty parking lots, behind an innocuous strip mall, the back of someone's car, against a tree in the park. It's sex with a social worker in a motel room because he had family visiting, a quickie in some guy's parent's garage, it's driving through an ice storm to meet a man in an abandoned bungalow. It's wondering if it will always be this way, this sneakiness, the unease with our bodies. I had never been with a white man. They weren't around, I guess, navigating these geographies.

I met you through one of the apps. I looked at your profile – a white professor of ethnic studies. It both piqued my interest and annoyed me. You were open to meeting me. I didn't know what it meant. You weren't particularly charming, but you had power, you had a lifetime of access. You were the kind of person to say things like: "I don't have a type." While other white men nod in agreement. "I like all types." While other white men nod in agreement and place "#BLM" on their Instagram profiles amidst a series of selfies with other white men. These performatives are acceptable, expected things to say and do in front of other progressive white folks, in front of racialized bodies. A way to put the issue to rest. To affirm "we're not one of the bad ones."

For you, I swallowed it though. You spent so many years abroad, in classrooms, at dinner tables, in close conversations with racialized bodies. And I didn't know what that meant, what that made you, what that made me to you. Perhaps it meant you could say all the right things, perform in the right ways to maintain arms-length trust.

I came to know the world of you. Of the other white and white adjacent bodies you collided with. There is something perverse about two white men whispering about dismantling oppressive power structures. White man pillow talk. There is something unjust about white academics who loot colonized

lands and stories, who decide to be experts on our bodies – which we've been shamed into abandoning over generations. Who receive grants to go to places our ancestors fled or were removed from.

You decided I wasn't worthy in the least forthcoming way. I understood now – you were allowed to be aloof because we allow you to be without consequence. You were desirable regardless and you had many bodies to choose from at your whim. I was met with silence, indifference, erasure, nothing. I could not be aloof. You were allowed to decide and discriminate, I was required to be thankful for any morsel of attention, to crave a response, to hold back from coming on too strongly but remain engaging. My body wasn't enough to do that, to find warmth. You said we were better as is. You said you didn't have a type.

So I created fake accounts to feel closer to you. There was Antonio, the palatable, white-presenting Latino; Jeff, the blonde jock; Aaron, the brunette jock; and Mike, the daddy. You revealed parts of yourself to all of these men – things you denied me. To me, you asserted you were sexless, someone with no drive or desire for bodies and so it wasn't personal. For Aaron, you were into biting, aggressive makeouts, cuddling. I soon abandoned my own real account – it was clear what other men thought of me – I was unworthy, unfuckable, ignorable. Sometimes when I engaged white men, they would toss me a response – maybe to assuage their white guilt – then go back to ignoring me. The white profiles, though, were a success. More men began opening up to hot but sensitive Jeff; to buff but insightful Aaron. I became a keeper of loneliness, of men trying to start anew, of playful but caring flirting. None of which, interestingly, was afforded to me as myself. It was difficult to hold onto it all as I dissociated.

It's true, I wished I could feel the warmth that these men were promised. I envied the bodies they could share, the hands and tongues they might entangle with. I imagined you with me, as them.

"Hey guapo," you'd breathe into me. My white Latino body was acceptable for you. It was true for the vaguely white Arabs too. On your arm, we will darken rooms just enough to teeter on "Other" – soulful eyes, a cute smile. Suitable with our lightly tanned skin, pointed nose, and messy scruff at an acceptable length. We're here when you don't want to date an Italian or Greek. Our bodies are passages to places that those in your white circles will find intriguing, tantalizing – you will be envied. I wondered if I was darker though, if I might still be guapo to you. Maybe. If I had the same European face.

Guapo, you repeat. Blanco, is what you mean. Palatably ethnic, is what you mean.

A white serial killer was arrested for the murder and dismemberment of brown bodies in Toronto. I wondered how he lured each man, I wondered if it was compliments to their brown skin, their dark eyes. I wondered if they had heard things they weren't accustomed to hearing – especially from white men. Praise, perhaps with sincerity, affection, perhaps with warmth. Each man was beautiful, but beautiful in a way that I know was not acceptable in the same space as the squares with the symmetrical European faces, chiseled and sculpted bodies, perhaps just rough around the edges enough to appear marginally different from the next white queer but similar enough to be acceptable for a fuck. Maybe they too scrolled through apps, tried their luck with a body they quite liked, but to no avail.

Maybe slowly, they too had learned their rank, how others value their bodies. And maybe this is how we become targets for serial killers. When slowly, each day we are told our bodies are not worth caressing, interaction, inclusion – we are told this in many ways – we internalize this. It's the darkness of our chests, our soft skins, our hair, our shapes. I wondered if this process of devaluing always leads to death, to pieces of bodies under dirt, to a man who probably appeared kind and said a few sweet things – who knew how much our bodies are disregarded to begin with, by ourselves and others – who knew we might listen to a compliment because we don't hear them often enough.



im

by lacie garnes



Imperial Valley is a project filmed near the Salton Sea in southern California. In this experimental video, I present the ever-changing landscape, seascape, and relics of the region. Through this work, I seek out the sublime in an uninhabited and monochromatic landscape. This work is informed by the vast and rich history of documentary photography along with the current environmental and socio-economic concerns that are pressing in the region.

When I left the Imperial Valley as a child in 1982 I wasn't sure if I would ever return. My family was abandoning this place as industry left when the desert water source dried up. In my youth, I appreciated swimming in the sea, playing on the beach, watching fishermen off the docks. None of this remains today. The valley as I knew it was effectively dead, yet it has called me back since 2015. I returned as an adult. A queer adult. As a photographer with a history bound to this landscape. At some point I realized that I was still connected to this place. To its crusty salt covered landscape and objects left behind. It had transformed. It was new and unusual. The vignettes I filmed from this queer desert valley show what I found to be beautiful - the duality of the sublime and the strange.



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elegy for queer eden #11301

by kevin mcdonald



There is no mall anymore. I'm just going to let you in on that right now. It's an empty field that's half gravel pit, and the only remaining building is a lone, abandoned Lord and Taylor, triple-arches rising above the surrounding hardscape. The mall proper came down in 2016. The Lord and Taylor, promised a hundred-year lease, sued the mall and held on, at least until 2020.



I've been eyeing the little used-to-be-mall scrubland growing next to the Lord and Taylor for a year or two now. I'd driven past it, ruminated on it, nurtured a little eco-crush, like I do.

In late 2021, as summer tipped the knife-edge and slid towards fall, I started exploring the campus. As the light bled out of the year, it was a perfect little evening bike ride: finish working from home, hop on two wheels, cruise around the road encircling the former parking lots and garages, now covered in plants, and watch golden hour paint the goldenrod redundantly radiant. See what I could find in the place.





What I found at White Flint was a litany: boneset and goldenrod, shaggy grasses and spent gigantic pokeweed; an odd, nutrient-poor woods, thick with black locust, cottonwood, and sumac. Little bluestem, phragmites, mullein and cattails, queen anne's lace, reeds, even a few wild, surprising asters, the purple a shock amid the green. Deer grazing, birds heading south overhead en masse. All of this tucked away here, in the gravelly waste of a mall: hardscrabble, nutrient poor, life and living in abundance. Beautiful, unmanaged, a queer hybrid ecotone of native and non.

Every empty lot giving way to a first wave of ecological succession is a potential queer eden.

It is a space trying to transcend itself. It is an unlikely tangle of biota made for hard conditions. Something about the chain-link fence surrounding this verdant wilderness, the caged in feeling of all that green, felt a little like suburbia-does-magical-realism. Like something mythic, a little post-capitalist eden, available only to those misbegotten souls who seek it, dwells on the side of Rockville Pike, three hundred paces east of the women's evening gowns in the shuttered department store. I felt like something lived in there, some *genius loci*, and if I was lucky, it might grace me with a glimpse of its hide, or a tusk, maybe one slow-blinking eye or a flick of its tail.

There's a melancholy coda, of course – no idle lot beside a busy road is going to sit forever and rewild in this United States. Someone cleared the trees and the overgrowth out – maybe redevelopment is imminent. One phase of consumerist exuberance (1977 - 2015, White Flint Mall) has ended, and whatever comes next (Folks, welcome to the stage... Miss Condos-Hotel-First-Floor-Retail) is on the horizon.

Does the cock-eyed perspective of queerness make us care care more fiercely for these spaces? Is it because I'm queer that I fall in love a little with a tragic ephemeral half-wasteland-half wanna-be-forest, making do with riotous life because it doesn't know any better? Have I known an unlikelier life, one that values things that grow in the shadow of a wrecking ball?

It is a queer form of loss when the rebel eden gets plowed under.



scan code for
more content





contributor biographies

Vanessa Adams is an artist from New Orleans, LA based in Pittsburgh, PA. Vanessa creates prints, zines, and installations exploring the life-cycles of plants, the phases of the moon and queer futures. Vanessa's work investigates how to see in places of darkness, and how to harness intuition in the face of the unknown. Vanessa was a contributing artist to the *Slow Holler Tarot Deck*, a collection of tarot cards by southern / queer artists, and is currently a co-curator of the *Queer Ecology Hanky Project*. They make collaborative botanical prints with their partner Andrea Narno, as Birds of Paradise Press.

Lorelei Bacht is a queer, multicultural poet living in Asia. A former political analyst and lobbyist, they have been using poetry to explore the embodied nature of political violence through space and time. They once were a mildly inadequate cartographer, and are far better suited for the use of words. Their poetic work has appeared in *The Antonym*, *Abridged Magazine*, *Slouching Beast Journal*, *Strukturriss*, *Rise Up Review*, *Consequence*, *The Antonym*, *ZIN Daily*, *Sledgehammer* and elsewhere. They are also on Instagram @lorelei.bacht.writer and Twitter @bachtlorelei.

Liam Bates is a poet originally from the Black Country, currently living in Cambridge. His poems have been published by various publications including *Ambit*, *Popshot*, *Abridged*, and *Anthropocene* and have been commended or shortlisted in competitions by Magma, Bridport Prize, Creative Access, and Wolverhampton Literature Festival. His first two pamphlets are available from Broken Sleep Books, and his full-length debut, with funding from Arts Council England, will be released in Summer 2022.

Gina Beca is a Two-dimensional and Three-dimensional Art Specialist with a BFA in Art and Visual Culture Education from the University of Arizona. Gina was born and raised in Tucson, Arizona and currently teaches art at Canyon Del Oro High School. Gina is both an art teacher and a freelance artist that specializes in multiple mediums from drawing, painting, printmaking and ceramics. Her work is currently at multiple establishments in Tucson, Phoenix and throughout the West Coast. To view her artwork, visit her on Instagram (@ginabeca), Facebook (Gina Beca Desert Fauna Art) or her website (ginabeca.com).

Lee 소라 Beckwith is an undergraduate student studying computer science and environmental justice on unceded Tongva territory. They enjoy farming, solving crossword puzzles, and looking at clouds. These days, they are thinking about anti-imperial environmental archives and ecopoetry. You can find them on twitter @leebeckw.

Dr. Sage Brice combines research in cultural geography with a lively contemporary art practice. Her work interrogates the politics of nature, particularly in relation to queer and trans ecologies of identity. She has an affinity for watery and fluid landscapes, and her most recent project explored problems of identity and ecology in the Huleh wetlands in northern Israel-Palestine. She is currently a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellow at Durham Geography where she is working on graphic research with trans and non-binary participants, asking what happens to everyday practices of gender under the novel spatial conditions of the covid-19 pandemic.

Alain Co is a graduate student at the University of Arizona seeking a Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture. Originally from New Orleans, they received their Bachelor of Arts in Fine Art with a concentration in Sculpture from Southeastern Louisiana University. They have works installed on sites ranging from the Tucson high desert to the Ozark foothills.

Dennis Doyle is an interdisciplinary researcher exploring queer ecologies of waste, atmospheric chemistry, and multisensory installation. Their work has been exhibited around the country, including in Pittsburgh, Tennessee, and Colorado. Their scholarly work has been published in *Nanophotonics* and *ACS Optics* and has been recognized through the Beinecke Scholarship. A Pittsburgh native, they completed a BA in Studio Arts and BS in Chemistry at the University of Pittsburgh. Currently, Dennis is a graduate student at CU Boulder pursuing a MFA in Sculpture and Post-Studio Practice and is the artist in residence at the Brakhage Center for Media Arts.

Kimi Eisele is a writer and multidisciplinary artist in Tucson, Arizona. She creates and produces stories, visual works, gatherings, and performances to illuminate kinship between people, plants, animals, and places. She is the author of *The Lightest Object in the Universe* (Algonquin 2019), a novel about loss and adaptation in a post-apocalyptic America, and her essays have appeared in *Guernica*, *Longreads*, *Literary Hub*, *Orion*, *Terrain.org*, and elsewhere. She works as a folklorist at the Southwest Folklife Alliance and is a cohort member of Julie's Bicycle Cultural Climate Leadership program. She founded *you are here: the journal of creative geography* in 1998 while earning a Master's degree in geography at the University of Arizona.

Alicia Escott is an interdisciplinary artist based in the land currently called San Francisco. She/they practice in solidarity with thinkers across fields undoing the construct of "nature" as a thing separated from us and our world. Escott work is informed by how we each negotiate our day-to-day

realities amid an awareness of the overarching specter of climate chaos, mass extinction, and the social unrest this rapid change and unprocessed grief produces. Her work makes space for the unspoken individual and collective experiences of loss, heartbreak, and grief. She/they approach these issues with an interstitial practice encompassing writing, drawing, painting, photography, video, sculpture, social-practice, and activism.

Al Evangelista is an Assistant Professor of Dance at Oberlin College and Conservatory. Al is an interdisciplinary artist whose creative process engages with social justice, queer Filipinx-American diaspora, and performance studies. His research identifies ways in which theatre and dance provoke and create change.

Rasheena Fountain is from Chicago's west side communities Austin and K-Town. She has been published in *Hobart*, *Penumbra Online*, *Jelly Bucket*, *The Roadrunner Review*, and more. She earned a MA Ed. in Urban Environmental Education from Antioch University Seattle and an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Washington, Seattle, where she is currently a PhD student in English Literature and Culture. Fountain is working on a multi-genre memoir about nature, environmental justice, land, and Blackness.

Lacie Garnes (she/her) is an artist, educator, and arts administrator currently living in Brooklyn, New York. Her practice is informed by feminist theory, environmentalism, and identity politics, along with her upbringing between the rural Midwest and the Southern California desert. She makes photographs and experimental videos that explore familial landscapes, surveillance and voyeurism, and queer belonging and identity. Garnes has an MFA in Art and Technology Studies from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and a BFA in Photography and Digital Arts from Bowling Green State University. Her work has been shown nationally and abroad.

Fatima is a Muslim, British, and Arab writer and musician. Across all her work, her intention is to imagine new worlds, to explore contradictions and seek freedoms.

Eden Kinkaid is a human geographer and queer phenomenologist who currently can be found in the School of Geography, Development, and Environment at the University of Arizona. Eden is equal parts social scientist, philosopher, and artist. They busy themselves reading, thinking, and writing about food systems, development, geographic theory, gender, and space. Eden's creative work explores and experiments with themes of queer and

trans embodiment, space, and transformation. Eden can be found on Twitter and Instagram @queergeog.

Rosie Knowles is a second year Geography PhD student at Royal Holloway University of London and is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Rosie's research explores 'therapeutic landscapes' through engagements with feminist creative methods and health geography. Rosie's project attends to the complexities of human experience and individual difference, whilst questioning traditional assumptions of 'therapeutic landscapes'. It seeks to understand everyday experiences of liminal landscapes, and the blurred boundaries of urban and nature, human and nonhuman, or land and sea, exploring these complex relationships through methods such as drawing, painting, and poetry.

Chandra M. Laborde is a PhD student in Architecture (History, Theory, and Society) at the University of California, Berkeley. She studies histories of radical ecological collectives in Northern California, and how their alternative spiritualities and politics materialize in the built environment. Laborde holds a Master of Science in Architecture from UC Berkeley, a Master in Advanced Architectural Design from the California College of the Arts in San Francisco, and a Bachelors in Architecture from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in Mexico City. She has professional design experience with ecological architecture in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico.

Jorge Antonio Losoya was born and raised in Del Rio, Texas. He holds a BA in Geography and Urban Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. In 2021 he graduated from UT Austin with his MS in Community and Regional Planning and MA in Latin American Studies. His academic interests focus on environmental justice issues in the climate, hazard, and disaster planning field through critical methods and theory. Through his art he explores his queer and Mexican-American identity as a child of the borderlands through themes of horror, science fiction, and nature.

Nazafarin Lotfi (she/her) received her MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2011 and her BA from the University of Tehran in 2007. Lotfi is a multi-disciplinary artist who explores *humanness* in relation to nonhuman bodies and places that are defined by practices of map-making and gardening. Her work has been exhibited nationally and internationally and she is the recipient of Research and Development Grant from the Arizona Commission on the Arts, Phoenix Art Museum's Contemporary Art Grant, Night Bloom: Grants for Artists, and CAAP Grant from the City of Chicago.

Lotfi is currently Matakjev Research Fellow at the Center for Imagination in the Borderlands at Arizona State University.

William Lukas is an artist-writer and educator living in occupied Susquehannock land (central Pennsylvania). Since 2013, he has worked as a teaching artist and caseworker with public schools and nonprofits throughout Philadelphia and the San Francisco Bay Area. In 2019, William was an artist-in-residence at the Vermont Studio Center; he currently organizes mutual aid projects supporting survivors of state violence. William's poetry and analog collages have been featured in indie publications such as *bedfellows*, *Neuro Fuzzy Press*, *APIARY*, and *CANAL*, along with galleries including Paxton Gate and The Minnesota Street Project. Artist website: williamjlukas.com

James McDermott is a queer writer based in East Anglia, UK. Their collection *Manatomy*, longlisted for Polari's First Book Prize 2021, is published by Burning Eye Books and their pamphlet *Erased* is published by Polari Press. Their new pamphlet of queer nature poems is forthcoming with Broken Sleep Books.

Kevin McDonald is an arts worker and Digital Content Coordinator for Glenstone Museum in Potomac, Maryland. He holds an MA in Applied Anthropology from the University of Maryland, College Park, where he focused on the intersection of ethnobotany and museum scholarship. He is interested in photography, plants, and people.

Lucien Darjeun Meadows is a writer of English, German, and Cherokee descent born and raised in the Appalachian Mountains. An AWP Intro Journals Project winner, he has received fellowships and awards from the Academy of American Poets, American Alliance of Museums, and National Association for Interpretation. His first poetry collection, *In the Hands of the River*, is forthcoming from Hub City Press in Fall 2022.

Raven Moffett (she/they) is an visual storyteller, artist, museum worker, and educator working on unceded Tohono O'odham and Pascua Yaqui land in Tucson, AZ, with her partner and three canine companions: Odin, Jasper Shash, and linniiwaa. Raven is currently pursuing an MFA in Studio Art with a focus in lens-based media (photography and video) at the University of Arizona, where she is a graduate assistant teacher in the Photo, Video, Imagining department. Raven received her BA in Art and Visual Culture with a studio art emphasis and an anthropology minor from Appalachian State University in Boone, NC.

Kaitlin Moore (they/them) is a PhD candidate in Literary Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Their interdisciplinary work rests in the slipstream between contemporary archipelagic studies and space-time studies, offering a novel account of how plural cosmologies at multiple scales might move towards realizing complex and relational perspectives within and across physics, literature, ethics, and sustainability. They are a graduate associate with the University of Wisconsin Center for Culture, History, and Environment and a Kohler Fellow at the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery, for which they are currently spearheading an art-science fusion project located at the intersection of astrobiology, astrophysics, and installation artwork. Beyond the classroom, they are an amateur astrophotographer, a published poet, and a competitive cosplayer.

Morphic Rooms is a collaborative collage laboratory founded in 2021 by allison anne (they/them, Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA) and Jeremy P. Bushnell (he/him, Dedham, Massachusetts, USA). They produce layered, abstract work that utilizes systematic parameters, creative rulesets, chance operations, and collaborative interplay as tools for interrogating or radically reimagining a collection of images, texts, ephemera, and detritus, drawn from centuries of cultural accretion and mechanical reproduction.

Caleb Nichols (he/they) is a writer from California, occupying Tilhini, the Place of the Full Moon, the unceded territory of the yak tit'yu tit'u yak tilhini tribe. His poetry has been featured in *Hoax*, *Redivider*, *DEAR Poetry Journal*, & other places & his chapbook *Teems//\\Recedes* which Chen Chen called "a gorgeous abundance" is out now from Kelp Books. He is a PhD candidate in Creative Writing at Bangor University in Wales & he is the founder of the SLO Book Bike, a queer-owned, bike-powered, pop-up bookshop in San Luis Obispo, CA.

Dr. Catherine Oliver is a postdoctoral researcher, currently employed at the Department of Geography, University of Cambridge, where she is working with chickens in London to rethink urban space from beyond-human perspectives. She completed her PhD on veganism in Britain and beyond-human geographies at the University of Birmingham in 2020, and published a book, *Veganism, Archives, and Animals*, in 2021. Catherine has published her work widely in academic and non-academic outlets.

Ettore Santi is a PhD candidate in Architecture (History, Theory, and Society) at the University of California, Berkeley. With a focus on agrarian transformations in modern China, his dissertation "Designing a Land Revolution: The Corporate

Reinvention of China's Rural Environment" maps the ongoing construction of new high-tech farms, soil science laboratories, rural ecotourism parks, and modern rural homes across China's Hunan Province. Before joining UC Berkeley, Ettore received an M.Arch from Milan Polytechnic, and an M.Arch from Shanghai's Tongji University. He has worked as an architectural and urban designer in Italy, China, and the US.

Kaiqing Su is from Guangzhou, China. She speaks Cantonese but usually writes in English. Currently, she is a Master's student at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, studying political science and cultural studies. Her research is concerned with technology, media, environmental catastrophe, and Indigeneity. The non-human unsettles her— sometimes she runs away, and sometimes she writes about them.

Sunjay is a student/researcher in Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal. He studies post-conflict urbanism and the narrativization of memory in contested cities. He is also interested in postcolonial geographies, literary geographies, and issues of race and space. and the representation of place in literature, television, and film.

[Morgan Swartz] I am an emerging artist and designer from Pittsburgh, PA. I graduated from Vassar College in 2021 and spent time abroad studying at Glasgow School of Art. My artwork deals with themes of gender and queerness, the body, and personal expression, as well as the natural world. Currently my practice is focused on printmaking and jewelry making along with original 2D visual art.

Corinne Teed is a research-based artist working in printmaking, installation, time-based media, and social practice. Their work lives at the intersections of queer theory, ecology, critical animal studies, and settler colonial studies. Much of their creative practice centers on relationships, whether through collaboration, participation, interviews, or encounters with the more-than-human. Teed currently works as an Assistant Professor in the Art Department of the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis on unceded Dakota territory.

Eleanor White is the Climate Action scholar at College of the Atlantic. As a potter and political ecologist, she is particularly interested in the unique positioning of creative ecologies in communicating, and bringing forth, decolonized futures of multispecies justice.

