The image features a solid orange background enclosed within a white, hand-drawn, irregular border. The central focus is the word "COUNTERFIELD" in a bold, dark orange, sans-serif font. The text is positioned horizontally and is partially obscured by several thin, white, vertical and diagonal lines that intersect it. Additionally, there are two vertical white brushstroke-like marks that appear to be part of the text or a graphic element. The overall composition is abstract and geometric, with a mix of straight lines and organic, hand-drawn elements.

**COUNTERFIELD**



WHERE WE FIND GROUND.



**1. SANJITA MAJUMDER**

*Dover  
A globe for a lamp  
A premonition of love, is not love*

**2. SHELLEY CALHOUN-SCULLION**

*The revenant of wheel city soul*

**3. CALLUM BRADLEY**

*Conversing wit(h)nessing and worlding*

**4. FABIENNE FORMOSA**

*Fooling and madness*

**5. BRUNO VERNER**

*Post tropicalist sounds: I'm ugly but trendy*

**6. KILLIAN O' DWYER**

*Sexes that secrete*

**7. MARIE THERESA CRICK**

*The feminine-to-come, poetics of filmic breath*

**8. CALLUM BRADLEY, MARIE THERESA CRICK, FABIENNE FORMOSA,  
KILLIAN O' DWYER AND GEORGIA PERKINS**

*Brighton writing retreat*

## Foreword

Fronting this publication, lines are drawn, scratched; some wavering, some unbending. The loose overlay of long, narrow marks suggests a system or net that has fallen apart or is in the process of coming together. Lines that, on the surface, look as if they are retracing a direction, a vague (dis)orientation. Most fall in and between other lines, some play with the straight and narrow, and a few seek solitude.

In the end, the final point of each line visually work together, suggesting that an invisible circle unites their individual journeys. At its centre, two jagged marks, maybe a pair of fangs or animal claws, score the surface. White hot, they are streaks of passion, artistry and purpose which the reader drinks in with eyes ablazen.

Imagine bathing in words impressed with the colour of burnt orange. This feeling of a language so tender and bright, so deeply felt, that it has the potential to enflame the hearts of those who come after. These words we offer here, between pages – our wishes, secrets, thoughts and processes – are embers of a fire that lasts into the night, and the days after tomorrow.

Counterfield is a PhD research collective associated with the Department of Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London, working not just within, but also outside and counter to the traditional academic field.

Our work intersects with multiple elements of practise-based research and over the years we have organised a series of workshops that have included walks, film screenings, collective filmmaking and listening sessions, movement workshops and visits to museums and galleries.

Our aim is to both share research with our peers, and to engage and reach a wider public beyond the university.

Editors: Callum Bradley, Marie Theresa Crick, Fabienne Formosa and Georgia Perkins.

Foreword and design:  
Killian O’ Dwyer.

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Student Fund*

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**COUNTERFIELD**

*(n.) where practitioners and researchers experiment with emergent forms of*

**KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION, A SPACE OF LEARNING, OUT OF KILN**

*Blurring the binary between theory and practice*

*Within the geography of **visual cultures**.*

*An informal and nourishing space*

*To share and experiment together*

*We wonder how to disrupt institutionalised modes of knowledge production that proliferate and repress? From within, what can we build beyond the scaffolds of the university?*

**TO PUSH BOUNDARIES, TO MAKE NOISE**

*To search for freedoms afforded within the institution and without.*

*Moving beyond journal publications, conferences, lectures, as well as the academic parameters which dominate the production of research.*

*How do different intentions and trajectories unfold?*

*As streams are threaded together, we are mindful of not drowning.*

## ***BUOYANCY***

*Working where threads overlap and knot together, we are supported in these tangles.*

To *play with methodologies and concepts*

***INTERSECTING WITH MULTIPLE RESEARCH STREAMS (MAPPING, CONNECTING, DISRUPTING, TRANSFORMING).***

Opening *spaces for thinking and resisting, seeing and writing. Doing and undoing.*

Through *flows of embodiment, performance choreography, materiality and its excesses.*

A living organism, folding and unfolding.

*Moving within and beyond art-making methods-practices, exhibitions, curatorial spaces.*

Spores, Overflowing, *infecting,*

redressing ourselves *shedding*

*Ways of living and working with each other.*

*Finding ways for our terms to merge into one another.*

*Experimenting with protocols (literature reviews, ethics forms, annual reports). Creating room for feedback.  
Reflecting on how we learn.*



*TWOFOLD.*



***SANJITA  
MAJUMDER***



*Sanjita Majumder, 'Your sea of love', 2017*

## Dover

An impression has attached itself to the peripheries of my thoughts.

I cynically title the image — Your Sea of Love,  
When I look at it long enough  
I see that the sea, reaches me, five minutes to seven  
Pay off time to write.

Wet alluvial mud — fallopian, placenta, suction cups, cervical forceps, surgical gloves, blue  
cornflowers on the NHS gown.  
Deftly inserting two latex-encased fingers and pushing against the  
walls of the uterus.

Closed lotus buds in the moonlit glasshouse at Kew Gardens  
hysterical bees, concerting an exit  
one by one, all night long.

I woke up on a hospital bed,  
A palm full of dribble  
A tingling tongue, at the centre a scar, a cesspool of unsaid words  
And afterwards nothing.. silence (addiction).

At five, sitting on a night bus snaking down the hills,  
Nilgiris to Madras.  
There were rules to be followed — you can never cry on long-distance trunk calls  
I slept quietly after the tranquilisers  
I did not cry for dead things.

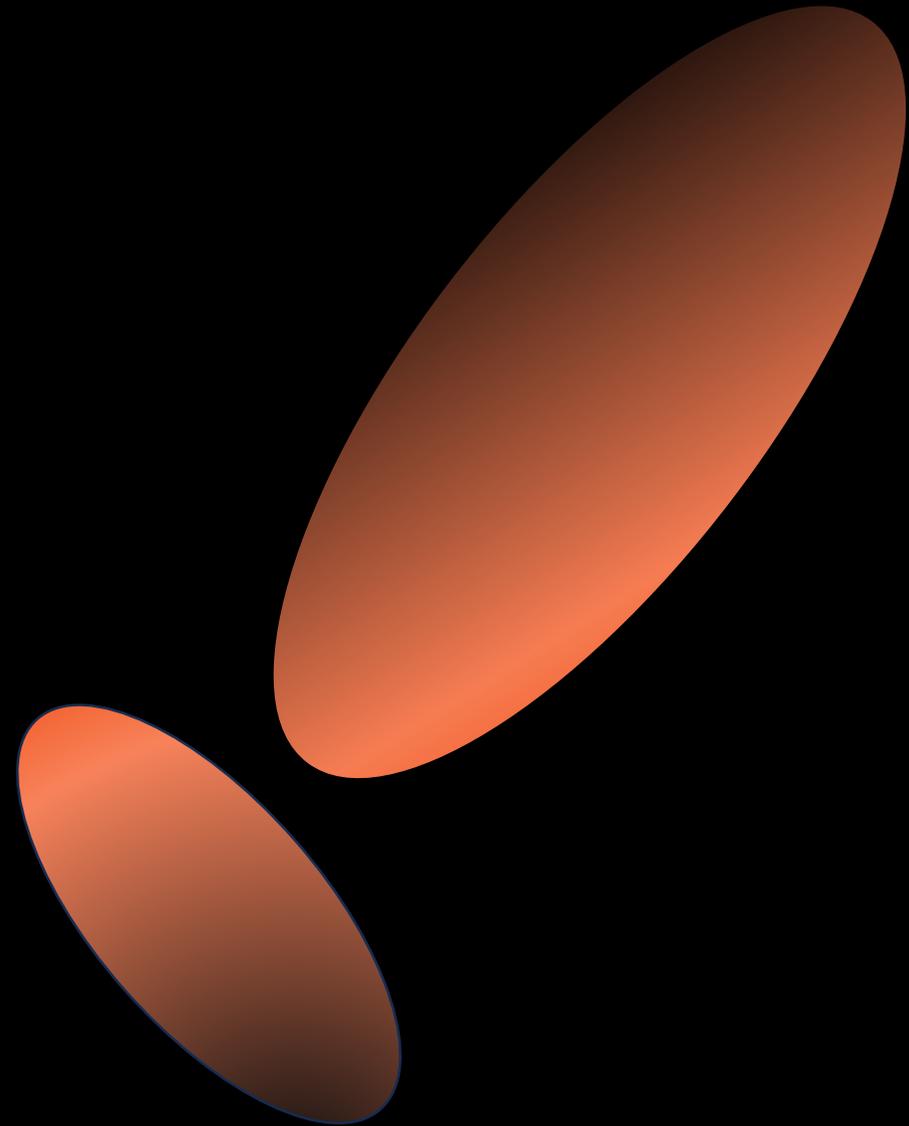
There are cleaners hanging from skyscrapers,  
in the corner shop there are migrants.  
Before language was an autumn sunset from the library window.  
your sea of love are the mended rooms with parapets,

what is a word, mother in an isolation?  
Silence perhaps, tentative maybe — Face the camera, old dog.  
Unintended descent (of an indexed gesture)

On a coal train, miners dream  
Screeching parrots, signs of madness  
An odd bird.  
Mending an old T-shirt  
A white cat dribbles on the garbage can. Council Tax.  
All your debt. A story with no form

Home is a washing machine, with clogged pipes  
At the borders I lie in the fold, staring at  
arteries of Ovaltine.  
Why did you come here?  
It drove me outside the nation

It makes no sense, it was madness  
but the curse is upon all our unborn children.



## A globe for a lamp

A birch on the pavement  
Sparrow on the mesh  
Weave gilded canopy. A rocking chair.  
A fern for the desk, dried lavender flowers.  
Deep sleep on Buda Hills, tears at the banks of the  
Danube.

Before I met you, after I left you.  
Blue enamel cups from Kyiv  
You must be on the bed with your glowing cat, and long  
golden hair  
Purple bruise trimmed with an orange hue  
soft kisses, blue fabric in your reading of Proust.  
Laundry detergents.

Everything else rests between words.  
Like a sliver of ginger on the tongue.  
Metasequoias and sunsets.  
What is loss? your name is like ice on my tongue  
A ringing gunshot in my ear.  
A Tsvetaeva's poem.

From where does memory rise?  
The Shard, St. Pauls Cathedral, the magpies, butterscotch  
coffee at Gail's.  
Jewish Synagogue, a wheel with red lights, the London Eye.  
The minarets that exist, reciting Namaaz at 5am  
So that a community can be held together in prayer

Poison for antidote, a curl on the nape of his neck  
English mornings with dew  
A premonition of love, is not love  
it is the possibility of it  
A refusal to participate — a political inclination —

The breeze rustles outside like silk  
between the trees. Winter making its way  
around the corner, where all the leaves have fallen  
there begins a familiar ache.

With a portrait at the National Gallery,  
The Breast-Giver. Resurrection.  
What brings the longing? to be long, the roundness, the dark  
buds of areola disc,  
His eyes like green pools  
and suddenly the future  
As I collected my belongings, a resurgence of memory — 'Got  
my bag, got my keys, got my name...'

## A premonition of love, is not love

Parrots embroidered on a petticoat  
We have sat in so many libraries looking over roofs.  
The retirement home at Dulwich, pigeons in hawthorn hedges  
The architecture and fog of autumn

The days they pass, we walk around  
the City of Chelsea, between the expensive houses.  
Talking about the future quietly.

Looking at paintings at Tate Britain and the Thames below Westminster.  
Time takes flight. Books remain unread  
I dream of home, the sweat, tall swaying coconut trees

A tug at her cotton saree, ascending the staircase  
The cat appears each afternoon  
Bengal. Sweet humidity.  
The texture of which is a poem.

Have we oppressed those we love?  
Have we run away from the places that have sheltered us?

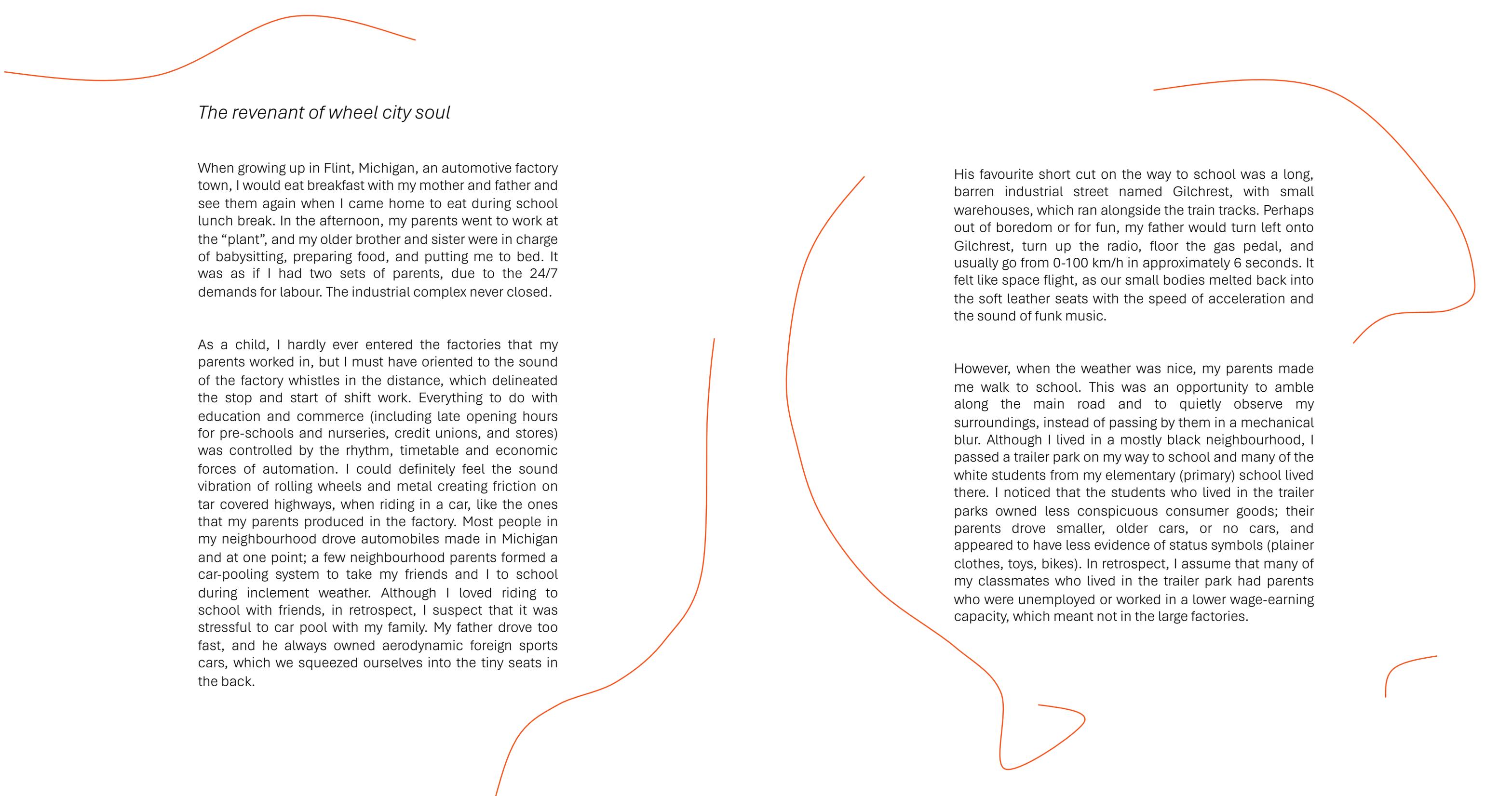
And then the descent, red light, blossoming white needles of tea.  
The body is your friend it will not trespass the dictates of reason

to foster a guilty relation with motherhood  
to say difficult things and pleasurable things in the same meter  
to be protected by rationality

The fabrication of fiction, a gentle weave  
Calming the mind  
Patter of rainfall. Seaside breeze. Rain. Fog. Food

Migrating swallows, a spacecraft, the dullness — the  
morning light in our bed.  
The walking shoes, so sturdy  
Friendship.  
Hard orange candies in my grandmother's purse.

**SHELLEY  
CALHOUN-  
SCULLION**



## *The revenant of wheel city soul*

When growing up in Flint, Michigan, an automotive factory town, I would eat breakfast with my mother and father and see them again when I came home to eat during school lunch break. In the afternoon, my parents went to work at the “plant”, and my older brother and sister were in charge of babysitting, preparing food, and putting me to bed. It was as if I had two sets of parents, due to the 24/7 demands for labour. The industrial complex never closed.

As a child, I hardly ever entered the factories that my parents worked in, but I must have oriented to the sound of the factory whistles in the distance, which delineated the stop and start of shift work. Everything to do with education and commerce (including late opening hours for pre-schools and nurseries, credit unions, and stores) was controlled by the rhythm, timetable and economic forces of automation. I could definitely feel the sound vibration of rolling wheels and metal creating friction on tar covered highways, when riding in a car, like the ones that my parents produced in the factory. Most people in my neighbourhood drove automobiles made in Michigan and at one point; a few neighbourhood parents formed a car-pooling system to take my friends and I to school during inclement weather. Although I loved riding to school with friends, in retrospect, I suspect that it was stressful to car pool with my family. My father drove too fast, and he always owned aerodynamic foreign sports cars, which we squeezed ourselves into the tiny seats in the back.

His favourite short cut on the way to school was a long, barren industrial street named Gilcrest, with small warehouses, which ran alongside the train tracks. Perhaps out of boredom or for fun, my father would turn left onto Gilcrest, turn up the radio, floor the gas pedal, and usually go from 0-100 km/h in approximately 6 seconds. It felt like space flight, as our small bodies melted back into the soft leather seats with the speed of acceleration and the sound of funk music.

However, when the weather was nice, my parents made me walk to school. This was an opportunity to amble along the main road and to quietly observe my surroundings, instead of passing by them in a mechanical blur. Although I lived in a mostly black neighbourhood, I passed a trailer park on my way to school and many of the white students from my elementary (primary) school lived there. I noticed that the students who lived in the trailer parks owned less conspicuous consumer goods; their parents drove smaller, older cars, or no cars, and appeared to have less evidence of status symbols (plainer clothes, toys, bikes). In retrospect, I assume that many of my classmates who lived in the trailer park had parents who were unemployed or worked in a lower wage-earning capacity, which meant not in the large factories.

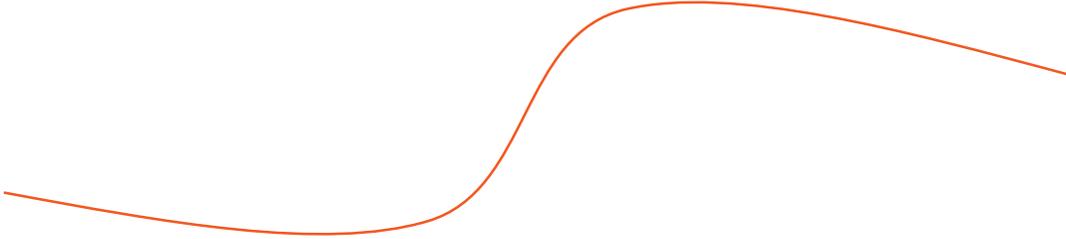
In contrast, my black neighbours who worked in the factory lived next to each other in detached houses. Some were in competition with each other to acquire the newest, biggest, luxury cars every two years, and many participated in socially exclusive societies such as “Jack and Jill”.<sup>1</sup>

Techno music DJ Juan Atkins made a similar observation about black factory worker prosperity in nearby Detroit, Michigan and described the class dimensions of the early Detroit African-American party scene in the 1980s<sup>2</sup>:

*‘My grandfather worked at Ford for 20 years, he was like a career autoworker. A lot of kids that came up after the integration of the UAW (United Auto Workers Union), they got used to a better way of living. If you had a job at the plant at this time, you were making bucks. And it wasn’t like the white guy standing next to you is getting five or ten dollars more than you. Everybody was equal. So what happened is that you’ve got this environment with kids that were raised somewhat snobby, cos [because] hey, their parents are making money working at Ford or General Motors or Chrysler, been elevated to a foreman, maybe even a white collar job.’<sup>3</sup>*

When I was older, I attended a mostly white high school, and met a much larger group of upper-middle class and wealthy students - some whose families descended from automotive industrialists and philanthropists (Charles Stewart Mott’s grandson attended our junior high school).<sup>4</sup> Although white students were in the majority at my school, they seemed to respect and sometimes appropriated black culture, including black music, clothes and dancing, and usually deferred to black students in music, sports and black cultural representations of pageantry (the whooping yells of pep rallies, pom-pom girl hand-clapping routines, call and response cheerleaders chants, etc.). I am not sure why, but I suspect that the outward appearance of material acquisition, along with the cadence, noise and history of black music within Flint and Detroit Michigan carried a certain cache, an unspoken blueprint of success.

Although I lived somewhat of a sheltered life (having only lived in Flint, Michigan until I was 18 years old) I nevertheless sensed, heard and experienced a black middle class sociality that was embedded (and unchallenged by white factory workers after the civil rights era) in everyday life. I now realise that the above examples of openly observable black prosperity were connected to a sophisticated level of aesthetics, power, and spectacle, never seen before in American history. Although we listened to Parliament/Funkadelic on the radio, I suspect that worker negotiated capital in Michigan underpins the sound of Afrofuturism and was the real driver of black affluence.



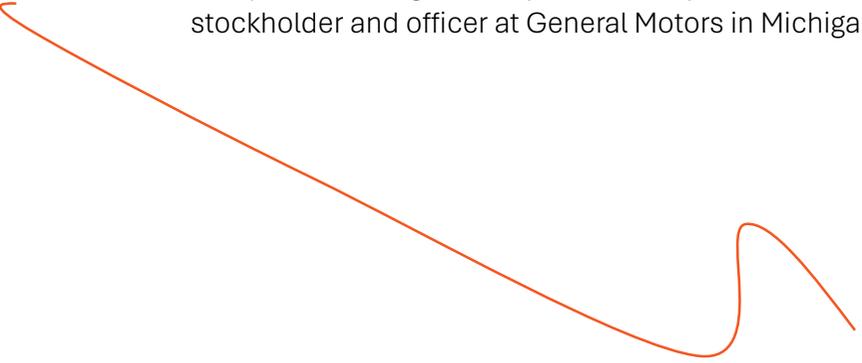
## Notes

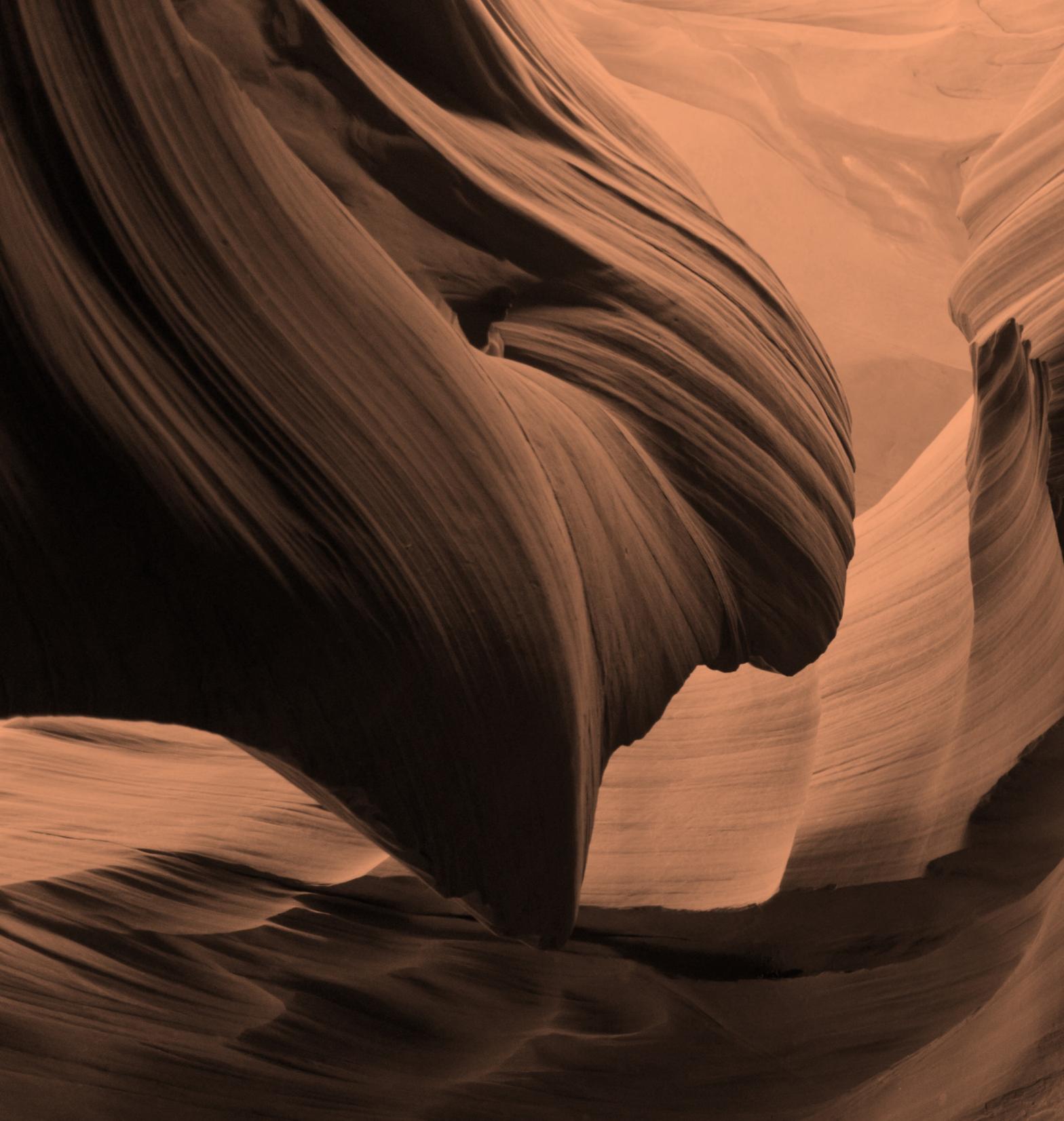
<sup>1</sup> Jack and Jill is an invitation-only membership organisation for Middle class African-American families, which began in the 1930s, and has several branches throughout the United States of America.

<sup>2</sup> In 1980, Flint Michigan was the city with the highest median wage in America for workers under 35 years old. (Thompson, Derek. "The richest cities for young people: 1980 vs. to-day" *The Atlantic*, published February 15, 2015. <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2015/02/for-great-american-cities-the-rich-dont-always-get-richer/385513/>)

<sup>3</sup> Reynolds, Simon. *Energy flash: a journey through rave music and dance culture*. London: Farber & Farber, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Stewart Mott was a supplier of wheels and axels to automotive companies during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and made his fortune as a stockholder and officer at General Motors in Michigan.





*CALLUM  
BRADLEY*

## *Conversing Wit(h)nessing and Worlding*

*What different forms of relating can escape dominant powers? What alternate articulations of self and other, human and world, are out there... or in here? This text speculatively converses two forms in tandem: worlding and wit(h)nessing.*



I turn on a trope to set the grounds of conversation; for Donna Haraway, “the fetus and the planet Earth are sibling seed worlds.”<sup>1</sup> This text converses around a primary sense of pregnancy. A constellation of pregnant relationships. Of the less linear relations between things that carry a potential to make a difference to the other. Not so much reproducing anew, but new ways of differentiating through mutual re-co-constitution. Like steering a conversation: swerving, slipping, and spilling over together. The constellation is not hierarchical and does not support the dialectics of a vertical order. Neither does the pregnant trope privilege an origin or endpoint in the production of one-world or one kind of reproductive body. Instead, inhabiting the sibling space that Haraway gestures to might help situate more horizontal relationalities between (the beginnings and endings of) many worlds, as between many more-than-human agencies and (re)productive possibilities. This opens onto the crossroads of a shared genesis, or co-birthing,<sup>2</sup> which patterns across onto-/phylogenetic scales and between the reproductive systems of vegetal-animal-planetary bodies. A sort of germinal-gestational transspecies habitus<sup>3</sup> for seeding different(ly shared) histories and futures.

How can siblinghood cultivate an alternate understanding of world/s which escapes phallo- and anthro-po-centric cuts in relationality?<sup>4</sup> Potential answers pivot on the positioning of selves with-in worlds. I map my approach across two (or at least, more than one) critical terrains. First, following Haraway’s call for “love of here, not everywhere. Care for here, not everywhere.”<sup>5</sup> I turn simultaneously to Bracha Ettinger’s claim: “we are here; hence we have been carried.”<sup>6</sup> This sets up a speculative conversing, hinged on the possibility of situating Haraway’s love and care for here with and in Ettinger’s always already having been carried here.

A “primal mode” is returned in which the responsibility “to carry” the other is “mattered”.<sup>7</sup> Of wit(h)nessing, I understand a kind of collective perspective, as ethical praxis for repopulating the gaze and its schemes of loss and absence by registering a difference to optics of power that define the limits of non/living through material and visible worlds. Of worlding, a particular emphasis on position(ing), as practices that open to plural and partial repositionings of (what counts as) the ground and its inhabitants, actively imagining an otherwise to dominant regimes of geopolitical and epistemic power. The terms differ as they spill into each other. My attempt to converse wit(h)nessing and worlding works-through their excesses in shared meaning, embracing differences and/as different modes of doing differences,<sup>8</sup> or as interests in common that are not the same.<sup>9</sup> Haraway similarly describes her project as one of discerning “partial and flawed translations across difference”.<sup>10</sup>

The sense of an-other meaning and/of difference can be realised through strategies of conversation, where “difference is done together” so that “none of the heterogenous knower participants becomes the other, yet they do not remain only what they were either”.<sup>11</sup> Reflecting on her ethnographic practice,<sup>12</sup> Marisol de la Cadena describes “conversation” as a “shared site” where “worlds also diverged as they emerged in/with their constitutive difference. A partial connection par excellence”.<sup>13</sup> This in turn opened to an “awareness—as much as possible, at least—of practices and entities as they emerged among us as more than one (because they also were with and through our mutual excess) yet less than many (because we shared them)”.<sup>14</sup>

The conversing of worlding and wit(h)nessing seeks to overcome their supposed distinctions, as in the “shared condition” that de la Cadena references and in a redifferentiation of perspective and positioning.<sup>15</sup> Stacey Alaimo’s notion of transcorporeality, in which “the figure/ground relation between the human and the environment dissolve[s]” is useful for thinking about a redifferentiation of perspective and positioning.<sup>16</sup> Worlding and wit(h)nessing can be thought together as transcorporeal sibling seeds, beyond dematerialised conceptual thinking and reconceptualising matters of concern, as the separating lines between self/other and the fore/back-ground blur. In Alaimo’s words, “the outline of the human is traversed by substantial material interchanges.”<sup>17</sup> Echoing this, Ettinger understands “an act of resistance to the phallic seizure and essentializing of women’s bodies” which “dissolves the ground it stands on from within: it dissolves the unitary subject and transgresses it”.<sup>18</sup> It is in this sense that a pregnant gestation which begins with-in the human might be able to escape it, bypassing the dominant structures which would cut back its sibling seedings. This re/sets the ground for conversation concerning the germination-gestation of reciprocally patterned relational forms, which differently carries across self, other, sex, species, planet, and cosmos.

Haraway confronts her readers as “this Anthropos whose hot projects for accelerating extinctions merits a name for a geological epoch”.<sup>19</sup> Recognising heterogenous possibilities for living and dying in the Anthropocene, working through and working-through our epochal wreckage, rests on returning the maps of many possible worlds from the particular to the planetary (though not privileging a linear way or one-world hierarchy in this pluriversal scaling). “It matters what worlds world worlds.”<sup>20</sup> Haraway critically explores the co-constitutive nature of material-semiotic encounters, arguing that “we have to relearn how to conjugate worlds with partial connections, not universals and particulars”.<sup>21</sup>

The insertion of ‘h’ in wit(h)nessing suggests a witnessing that works-with, or a conjugation of witnesses in partial connection. This notion stems from Ettinger’s intervention in the psychoanalytic structures of gendered subjectivity, decentering phallic constructs that scaffold the male gaze. The intrauterine is returned as an originary site of generative co-emergence which patterns a way of relating differently, “not as containing but as resonating together...while habituating to one another”.<sup>22</sup> Partial and plural pregnancies take place through the processual matrix of a womb which is always already “wombilical”, connected to others and co-habiting in a “womb-like neighbouring”.<sup>23</sup> An-other kind of relationality which bears ethical potential is carried between bodies via “responsibility that enters the human via the feminine”.<sup>24</sup> Ettinger’s conception of the ‘matrix’ stands for a feminine sex-difference which “‘remembers’ the female body but is based on ‘webbing’ links and not on essence, identity, or negation”.<sup>25</sup> Wit(h)nessing works in the weaving of “ephemeral, composite, unexpected home[s]” where the self might share with strangers in a “matrixial home-affect”.<sup>26</sup>



“partial and flawed translations across difference.”

Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 10

“relaying connections that matter...telling stories hand upon hand...shap[ing] practices of living and dying in rich worldings.”

Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 10

“entering an artwork by self-fragilization.”

Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance,” 17

“a way to think-with a host of companions in sympoietic threading.”

Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 31

“*borderswerving*”

Ettinger “Weaving a Woman Artist,” 76

“SF games of response-ability”

Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 5

**Sym/Co-poiesis**

“worlds swerving through material cultural practice”

Haraway, *Modest Witness*, 136

“string figures as a theoretical trope”

Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 37

**Trope**

**SF**

**Sym-bio/bolo-genesis**

“sympoietic practices for living on a damaged planet.”

Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 67

“a hinge...between symbiogenesis and...science art worldings”

Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 67

“the unapologetic swerving of liveliness and bodies-in-the-making.”

Haraway, *Modest Witness*, 137

“strings will tremble and threads will be weaved — will we tremble with them?”

Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance,” 9

“kinds of continuous weaving...at the heart of staying with the trouble.”

Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 97

“A symbologenic instance...a potential knowledge to be articulated.”

Ettinger, “Art-and-Healing,” 208

“co-poietic activity in a web that ‘remembers’ such swerves.”

Ettinger “Weaving a Woman Artist,” 77

“swerve and encounter emerge as a feminine sex-difference and as a creative instance”

Ettinger, “Wit(h)nessing Trauma,” 105

I map a conversation across four overlapping points between Haraway and Ettinger: sym/co-poiesis, trope, SF, and sym-bio/bolo-genesis.

Haraway describes “worlds swerving through material cultural practice”.<sup>27</sup> Echoing this, Ettinger identifies “swerve and encounter” in “feminine sex-difference and as a creative instance”.<sup>28</sup> Turning on etymological routes (“In Greek, *trópos* is a turn or a swerve”<sup>29</sup>), tropes figure steering-forces which work in and between stories. This links to Haraway’s emphasis on “relaying connections that matter...telling stories hand upon hand...shap[ing] practices of living and dying in rich worldings”.<sup>30</sup> Composed in practices of SF – speculative fiction, scientific fabulation, string-figuring – Haraway describes these as “games of response-ability”.<sup>31</sup> Ettinger simultaneously proposes a mode of opening to the other by way of “self-fragilization”,<sup>32</sup> which I take up as a further form of SF which is knotted with Haraway’s. For Haraway, “string figures [become] a theoretical trope, a way to think-with a host of companions in sympoietic threading”.<sup>33</sup> Ettinger asks: “strings will tremble and threads will be weaved — will we tremble with them?”<sup>34</sup> I read this in resonance with the “kinds of continuous weaving” that Haraway situates “at the heart of staying with the trouble”.<sup>35</sup> My use of diagramming tries to extend Haraway’s sense of string-figures, following lines and drawing connections in a dense diagrammatic knotting of citations between Ettinger and Haraway.

Ettinger turns to “co-poietic activity in a web that ‘remembers’ swerves”.<sup>36</sup> Similarly but differently, slipping between Greek and Latin prefixes, Haraway locates practices of “sympoiesis” in “the patterning of possible...material-semiotic worlds, gone, here, and yet to come”.<sup>37</sup> Both suggest alternatives to the autopoietic, sharing interests in collaboration and unlikely companionship, which for Ettinger entails a sort of “borderswerving”.<sup>38</sup> Haraway builds on Lynn Margulis’s research, theorizing sympoiesis

and the “unapologetic swerving of liveliness and bodies-in-the-making” from the “life-making process [of] symbiogenesis”.<sup>39</sup> Pivoting on “a hinge...between symbiogenesis and...science art worldings” she outlines “sympoietic practices for living on a damaged planet”.<sup>40</sup> In parallel, Ettinger describes a “symbologenetic instance” in which line and colour through the aesthetic dimension “stand for the potentialities of a genesis” and as possible forms of “knowledge to be articulated”.<sup>41</sup> Haraway’s and Ettinger’s overlapping lexicons become their own kind of hinge, articulating shared interests along entangled lines of conversation.

Dominant power relations can be resisted in a non-antagonistic reworking of the relationship between many witnesses and worlds. The usual foregrounding of an active witness that is backgrounded by a passive world unfolds, offering a way of working through the wreckage, or reckoning with what is dis/counted in and as the wreckage. This opens to “passages for a praxis of care and response – response-ability – in ongoing multispecies worlding”,<sup>42</sup> which are witnessed through “a wider Symbolic, [where] the principles of matrixial webbing can be communicated”.<sup>43</sup>

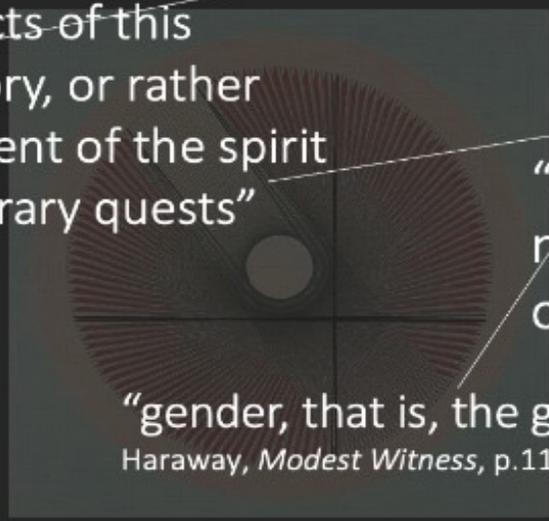
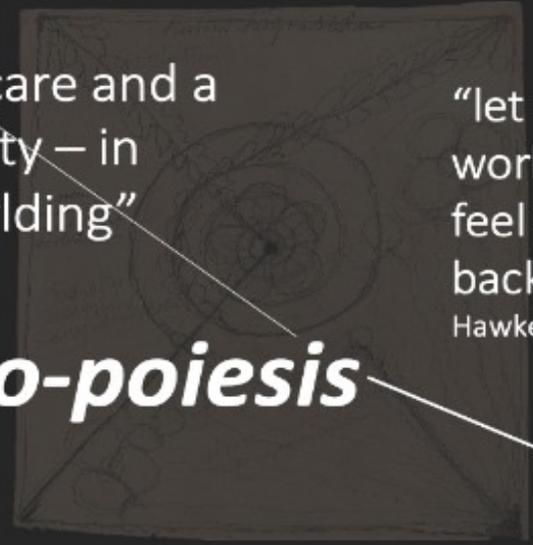
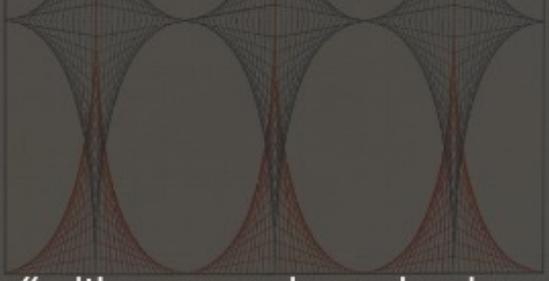
I turn to the abstract visual art and speculative writing of 20th century female figures who developed creative spiritual practices for redrawing the limits of (un)seen and (im)material worlds, namely: Hilma af Klint, Emma Kunz, Jacquetta Hawkes, and Barbara Hepworth. I follow lines traced through the visual dimension, in af Klint’s swirling brushstrokes as well as the fractal forms of Kunz’s geometric drawings. My analysis crosses image and text, interpreting the abstract figuration of bio- and geomorphic forms in the spiralling outline of seeds, petals, shells, and fossils. I work through the philosophical and poetic strata in Hawkes’s writing, which traces an interconnected material consciousness that melts across time and space through lithic layers, then linking this with Hepworth’s conception of figures in the landscape.

“Particular sorts of historically situated human beings becoming-with practices and artifacts play their part...add[ing] up to worlds of nonoptional, stratified, webbed, and unfinished living and dying, appearing and disappearing.”  
Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 104

“passages for a praxis of care and a response – response-ability – in ongoing multispecies worlding”  
Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, p.105

## Sym/co-poesis

“Abstract art is now historicised and politicised, but some aspects of this artistic quest traverse history, or rather follow the spiral development of the spirit and reappear in contemporary quests”  
Ettinger, “Art-and-Healing,” 214



“let mind return to its matrix... the outer world seems to take possession of me and I feel that consciousness wishes only to flow back into that world and dissolve there.”  
Hawkes, *A Land*, p.92

## Trope

“abstract art separates from the skin of nature...but it never renounces the hidden laws of nature...”  
Ettinger, “Art-and-Healing,” p.212

“gender, that is, the generic, is askew”  
Haraway, *Modest Witness*, p.118

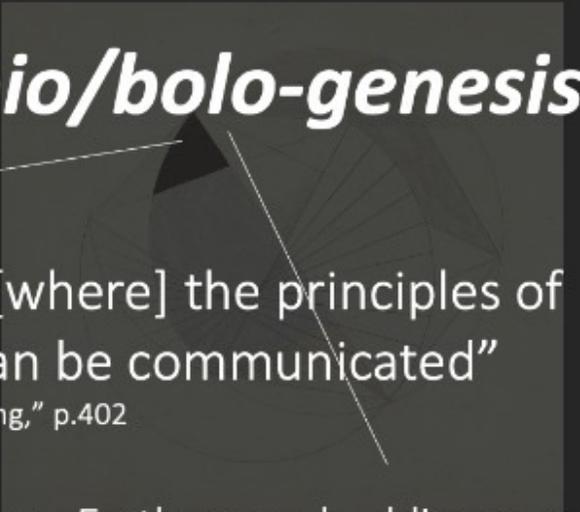
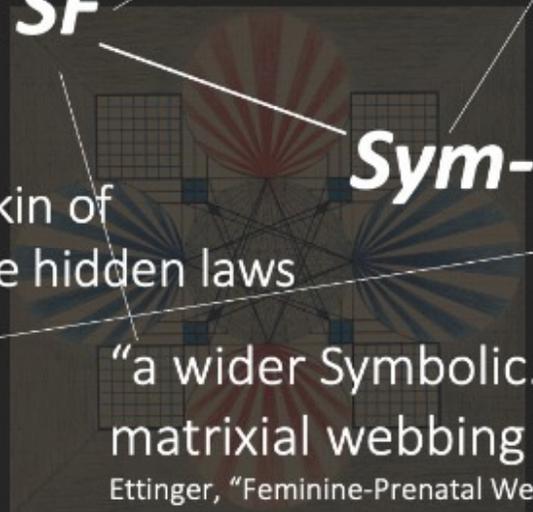
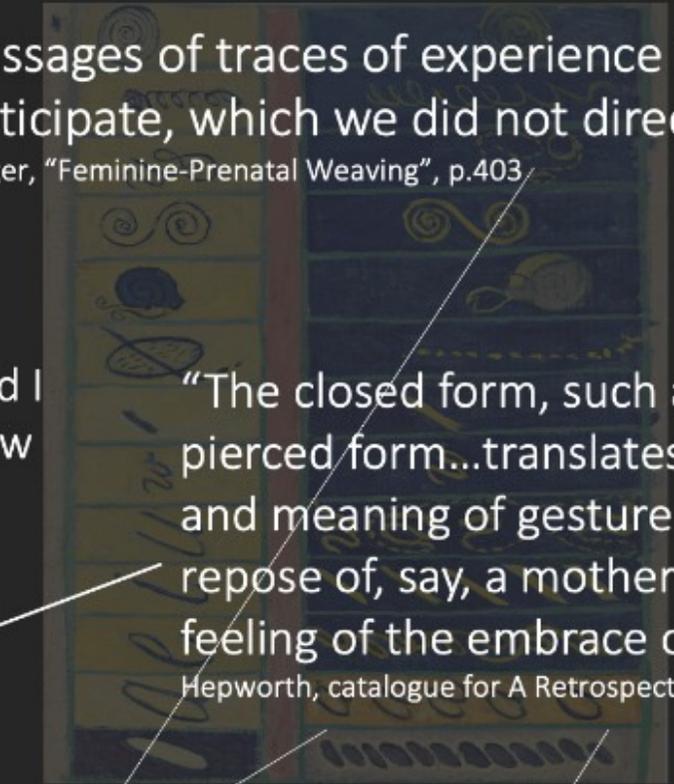
“passages of traces of experience in which we did not participate, which we did not directly witness”  
Ettinger, “Feminine-Prenatal Weaving”, p.403

“The closed form, such as the oval, spherical or pierced form...translates for me the association and meaning of gesture in landscape; in the repose of, say, a mother and child, or the feeling of the embrace of living things.”  
Hepworth, catalogue for A Retrospective Exhibition, Whitechapel, 1954

## SF

## Sym-bio/bolo-genesis

“a wider Symbolic...[where] the principles of matrixial webbing can be communicated”  
Ettinger, “Feminine-Prenatal Weaving,” p.402



“...like amorphous buds your endeavours sprout in all directions...just as invisible hands help and tend every plant on this green Earth, every budding sprout of goodness is shaped and protected by invisible powers and when the time comes you too will see the beautiful plant that grew in secrecy.”  
High Masters speaking through af Klint, ‘September 16, 1903,’ *The Five: Notebooks*

Sowing the seeds of many possible worlds, I sketch a speculative genealogy, tracing lines that link the modernist abstractions of women artists and writers who open to ways of repatterning relationality, working across art, science and spirituality. Their practices share in strategies for mediation and meditation that posit the possibility of unseen and unknown worlds, whilst reformulating wit(h)nessing through im/material and spiritual encounter which exceeds the usual subject-object dialectic that supports human sensibility.

Whilst Ettinger's conception of wit(h)nessing is anchored in the non-oppositional dynamics of becoming-mother and becoming-child, this relationality stands to be returned and retraced in the links woven between artists, artworks, and witnesses. The gaze is steered and swerved in wit(h)nessing via the spirit of art-working, in the rethreading of trans-subjective strings:

*“vibrations impregnate the viewer’s psychic borderspace...shed[ding] light on an archaic trans-subjective rapport between I and non-I and on a possible transmission between different subjects and objects, beyond time and space, in a potential in-between zone of object-and-subject borne and yielded by painting.”<sup>44</sup>*

I follow Haraway's claim: “Particular sorts of historically situated human beings, becoming-with practices and artifacts of technoscience play their part...the parts do not add up to any whole; but they do add up to worlds of nonoptional, stratified, webbed, and unfinished living and dying, appearing and disappearing”.<sup>45</sup> And join this with Ettinger's assertion: “Abstract art is now historicised and politicised, but some aspects of this artistic quest traverse history, or rather follow the spiral development of the spirit and reappear in contemporary quests”.<sup>46</sup>

I try to figure a positive ontology from aesthetics of abstraction for being-with and coming together along shared lines of relating in a generative move across differences, turning to female artists and writers who experimented through artistic and scientific study in the co-constitution of matter and spirit. The content and contexts of their works uncertainly dis/place witnesses across more-than-human worlds, where the lines supposedly separating topologies of non/living and bio/geo-logical forms are tropologized and swerve. I interpret representational mark-making as a form of ecological praxis for re-patterning relations with nature through alter(n)ative bodies (of knowledge). Haraway's feminist interventions highlight a potential resistance to patriarchal regimes by way of an opening to other worlds, whereby “gender, that is, the generic, [becomes] askew”.<sup>47</sup> Alaimo's thinking further supports an exploration of “the discursive landscape that women writers inhabit”, theorising the “feminine role as a strategy to open up an enclosed system that endlessly replicates male subjectivity...to suggest a space in which another subjectivity - one not predicated on transcending the earth, matter, and woman – could emerge”.<sup>48</sup> Alaimo also emphasises the critical task of “search[ing] for ways to write nature that do not merely pose it as a backdrop for anthro- (or gyno-)pocentric tales”.<sup>49</sup>

I analyse the artworks of Hilma af Klint and Emma Kunz, focussing on their representation of abstract figures. I look to af Klint's Flowers, Lichens and Mosses (1922), which shows her interest in hidden energetic fields. Offering a study into the biological and spiritual structure of plant species, af Klint draws abstract geometries onto the page alongside naturalistic botanical sketches. I frame af Klint's work through Ettinger's claim: “abstract art separates from the skin of nature with its images and apparent objects, but it never renounces the hidden laws of nature, nor of human emotions, inasmuch as they belong to the spiritual domain”.<sup>50</sup> I also trace Af Klint's swirling brushstrokes through her seminal Paintings for the Temple (1906-1915) series, which loosely figure biomorphic forms alongside the cursive letterforms of an invented

iconographic lexicon, grounding the works in a textual-material grammar that guides witnessing through abstract space. Af Klint further obscured her own artist-figure between states of absence and presence, instructing that her works be hidden from public view for twenty years following her death, perceiving society at the time unready to receive her vision. Af Klint's practice demonstrates an opening to many witnesses and worlds across states of non/living, materialising through abstract figurations a scientific-artistic understanding of natural and spiritual worlds via an interval space that defies the on/off logic of absence/presence. I consider to what extent her artistic abstractions that weave with Ettinger's matrixial feminine difference can come to support an ecofeminist politics in the present, generating different relations as ecological praxes for care, creativity, and response-ability.

I turn to Kunz and her practice as an artist and healer. She created abstract geometries on gridded paper that was positioned on the floor between artist and patient. Lines drawn in coloured pencil followed the motions of a swinging pendulum, resonating with the healing potential of hidden energetic fields, acting "as an amplifier of perception to detect energies in a dialogue between forces and materials".<sup>51</sup> Kunz's interaction with superphysical energies was not limited to the human; she experimented with the cultivation of marigolds, which she claimed to have 'polarised' by the use of her pendulum. I interpret abstract geometries and/as biomorphologies for re-presenting different forms of relating between bodies and the earth, following the tropic turns of a pendulum attuned to energetic potential. Kunz's work projects an alternate perspective, testing inner/outer dimensions and anti-/gravitational forces through an active attempt at healing in the projection of geometries. She accesses a kind of transcendence that works immanently through the laws of living organisms, linking the immanent structures of green ecologies on earth with a cosmic field. Her drawings can be read in relation to af Klint's, sharing in an interpretation of plant forms as pathways for medi(t)ating aspiritual quest of care for body and soul. Through clairvoyance, participating in

séances with a group of all-female companions, calling themselves De Fem (The Five), af Klint divined the words of her transcendent High Masters:

*"...like amorphous buds your endeavours sprout in all directions...just as invisible hands help and tend every plant on this green Earth, so every budding sprout of goodness is tended and shaped and protected by invisible powers and when the time comes your eyes will open and you too will see the beautiful plant that grew in secrecy."<sup>52</sup>*

Kunz also studied the healing power of minerals, locating her meditative practice within a stone grotto and extracting its rock in the formulation of a medicine. This marks a shift in the conversation, from germinal seeds to geological pasts, turning to Hawkes's and Hepworth's speculations through stone. Hawkes follows a method of archaeological remembering in *A Land* (1951), recounting a narrative of Britain's past through lithic layers; the sedimentation of fossils through geological strata transcripts a material remembrance of more-than-human Earth histories. Hawkes imagines an interconnected consciousness from the ground up... or spread across and through it, in the spirit of Alaimo's transcorporeal dissolving:

*"[let[ting] mind return to its matrix... when I am tired and longing for sleep, a gentle but irresistible invasion from the outer world seems to take possession of me and I feel that consciousness wishes only to flow back into that world and dissolve there."<sup>53</sup>*

Echoing the fossil forms and quasi-topographical diagrams found in af Klint's Primordial Chaos series (1906), Hawkes traces a particular water snails, reading limy secretions as sacred sublimations that reveal the material and spiritual architecture of Britain's past:

*"The existence of the earliest forms of life is proved only in Cambrian times, when many species developed the habit of secreting limy external skeletons that drew a firm line round these tentative essays in living."*<sup>54</sup>

*"...weedy floors were thick with the water snail, Viviparus. Their coiled shells accumulated in vast numbers to form the dark green Purbeck marble that medieval masons loved to cut and polish... So Jurassic water snails, their individual lives commemorated by murky scribings on the surface of the marble, helped medieval Christians to praise their God."*<sup>55</sup>

This connects with Hepworth's practice of sculpture, which she considered an act of praise. Linking the spiritual and the material, Hepworth's practice was grounded in a responsive concern for landscapes and their inhabitants. I explore the geometric abstractions of spiralling lines and oval forms in Hepworth's drawing and sculpture, as well as the way in which her piercing of the form holds a space for absence:

*"Our sense of touch is a fundamental sensibility which comes into action at birth – the ability to feel weight and*

*form and assess its significance... The closed form, such as the oval, spherical or pierced form...translates for me the association and meaning of gesture in landscape; in the repose of, say, a mother and child, or the feeling of the embrace of living things."*<sup>56</sup>

Hepworth's poetic writings present a similar sentiment: "You are I and I am the landscape/ I am a hollow form and the form is time".<sup>57</sup> I understand Hepworth's practice as materialising felt figurations of absence through an affective touching-presence. This witnesses worlds in tandem, recalling Haraway's siblinghood of fetus and earth in Hepworth's connection of plural and partial figures embedded in the landscape. This recalls Hawkes's dissolving material consciousness and also evokes Ettinger's descriptions of:

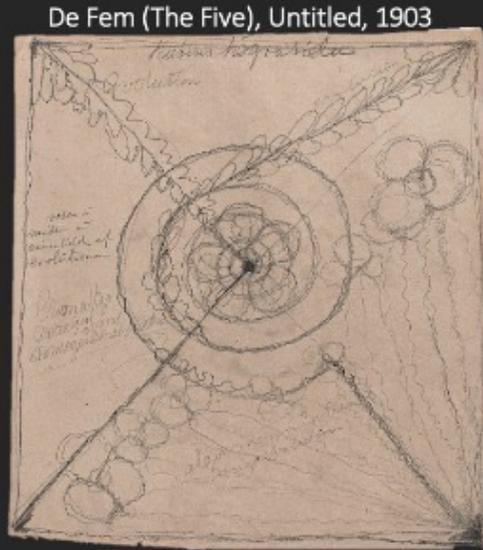
*"landscape [which] becomes reflective and human as it thinks itself through the artists and endures itself within the artist's painting to the extent that the artist becomes the subjective consciousness of the landscape."*<sup>58</sup>

Offering some conclusions: conversing wit(h)nessing and worlding between Ettinger and Haraway steers a critical engagement with visual and written works by women in modernity, connecting patterns that open (as) passages to different relational forms. This tests the limits of phallo- and anthro-centrism, tracing intellectual and artistic movements along lines of abstraction and absence at genre and/as gender interstices which are askew and swerve from the grand narratives of modernity. I approach the works of af Klint, Kunz, Hawkes, and Hepworth in terms of their capacity to carry a response to current environmental crises, asking how a spiritual speculation on other worlds might help to situate an ecological concern that materialises careful and compassionate work in the present. I carry on, still searching for and trying to articulate generative differences across wor(l)ds in conversation.

“Consciousness is melting us all down together again - earth, air, fire and water, past and future, lobsters, butterflies, meteors and men.” Hawkes, *A Land*, p.41



Af Klint, *The Ten Largest, No. 7, 1907*



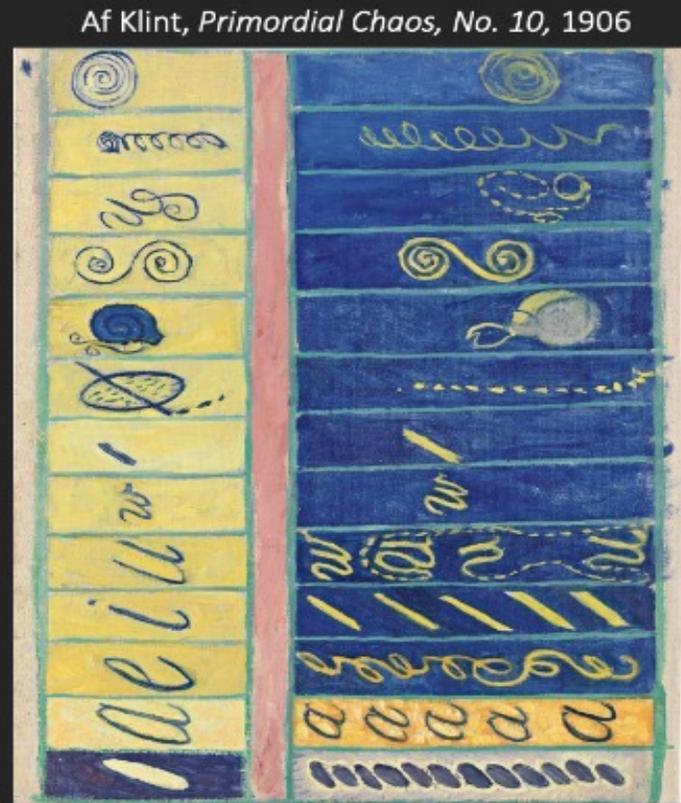
De Fem (The Five), Untitled, 1903

“The existence of the earliest forms of life is proved only in Cambrian times, when many species developed the habit of secreting limy external skeletons that drew a firm line round these tentative essays in living.”

Hawkes, *A Land*, p.47



Af Klint, *The Ten Largest, No. 2, 1907*



Af Klint, *Primordial Chaos, No. 10, 1906*

“Matter = means of resurrecting the delicate heart and to reunite its scattered, broken pieces.”

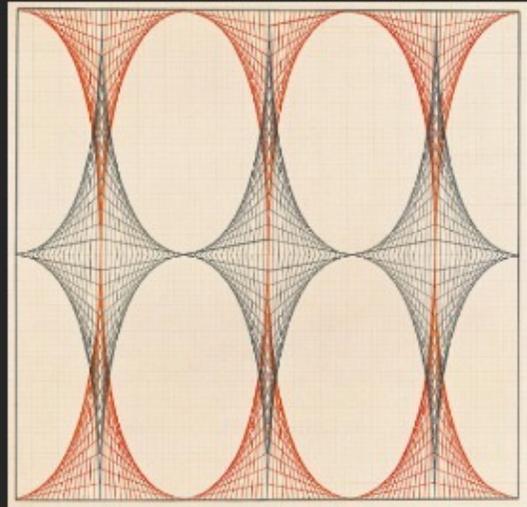
Af Klint, *Letters and Words*

Hepworth, *Sculpture with Colour (Eos), 1946*

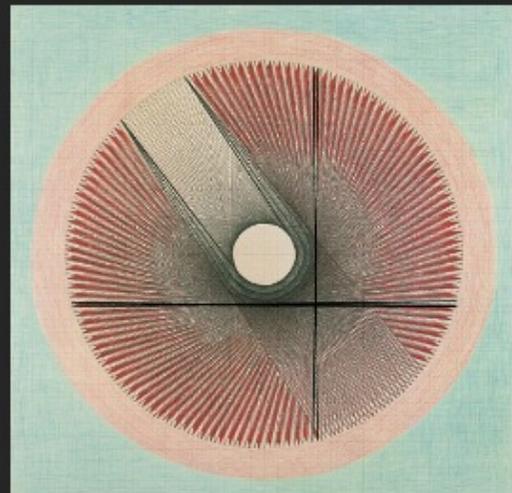


“New intersections must be generated consciously.”

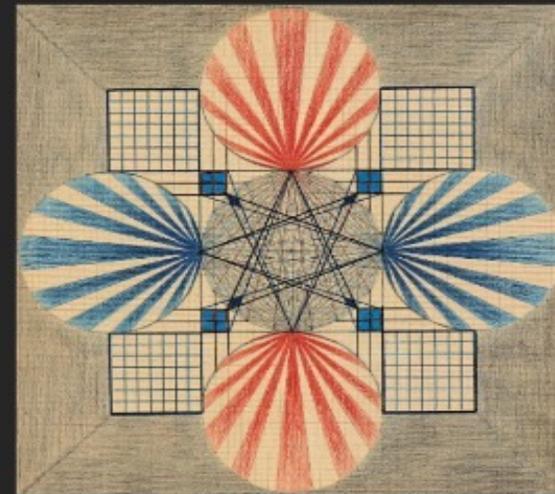
Kunz qtd. in Vicuna, 'The Melody of Structures'



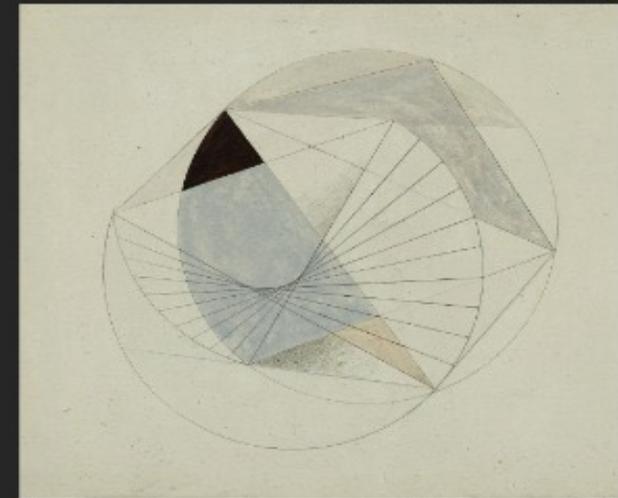
Kunz, *Drawing No. 009, n.d.*



Kunz, *Drawing No. 020, n.d.*



Kunz, *Drawing No. 396, n.d.*



Hepworth, *Drawing for Sculpture with Colour, 1940*

“Surface takes one’s mood in colour and texture, a line or curve...lost in a new world of possibilities because the next line in association will carry one forward into unknown territory.” Hepworth, *Writing and Conversations*, p.68

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Donna Haraway, *Modest\_Witness@Second\_Millennium.*

*FemaleMan@Meets\_OncoMouse\_Feminism\_and\_Technoscience*, (London: Routledge, 1997), 174.

<sup>2</sup> See: Bracha Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance,” *Studies in the Maternal* 1, No. 2 (2009): 1-31.

<sup>3</sup> See Eduardo Kohn, “Trans-Species Pidgin,” in *How Forests Think: Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human*, (California: University of California Press, 2013), 131-153.

<sup>4</sup> This recalls Juliet Mitchell’s turn to sibling relations as a possible site of resistance to the vertical patrilineal regime traditionally privileged in psychoanalysis. See Juliet Mitchell, *Fratriarchy: The Sibling Trauma and the Law of the Mother*, (London: Routledge, 2023).

<sup>5</sup> Haraway, *Modest\_Witness*, xvii.

<sup>6</sup> Bracha Ettinger in interview with Bridget Kaiser and Kathrin Thiele, “If You Do Well, Carry! The Difference of the Humane: An Interview with Bracha Ettinger,” *PhiloSOPHIA* 8, no. 1 (2018): 106.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 116.

<sup>8</sup> See Marisol de la Caden and Marisol Blaser, “Pluriverse: Proposals for a World of Many Worlds,” in *A World of Many Worlds*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> “the radically indeterminate sense authorized by the concept of interest: the way in which what one does interests others, that is, becomes an integral part of the present of others, or ‘counts’ for others.” Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitics I*, (Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 2010), 27.

<sup>10</sup> Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 10.

<sup>11</sup> Marisol de la Cadena, “Matters of Method; Or, why method matters toward a not only colonial anthropology,” *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7 (2017): 10.

<sup>12</sup> Marisol de la Cadena’s thoughts respond to her ethnographic practice with the Andean Runa. A sense of conversing different forms of relationality which is taken up through this text in informed by de la Cadena’s focussed engagement with situated indigenous knowledges.

<sup>13</sup> Cadena, “Matters of Method”, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Stacey Alaimo, “Trans-corporeality,” in *The Posthuman Glossary*, eds. Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova, (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 435.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Bracha Ettinger, “Weaving a Woman Artist With-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 21, No. 1 (2004): 75.

<sup>19</sup> Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 46.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. 35.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance,” 29.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Bracha Ettinger, “Art-and-Healing Oeuvre,” in *3 X Abstraction*, eds. Catherine de Zegher and Hendel Teicher, (The Drawing Center/Yale University Press, 2005), 230.

<sup>25</sup> Bracha Ettinger, “The Feminine/Prenatal Weaving in the Matrixial Subjectivity-as-Encounter,” *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 2, No. 3 (1997): 368.

<sup>26</sup> Bracha Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace*, (Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 2006), 150.

<sup>27</sup> Haraway, *Modest\_Witness*, 136.

<sup>28</sup> Bracha Ettinger, “Wit(h)nessing Trauma and the Matrixial Gaze: From Phantasm to Trauma, from Phallic Structure to Matrixial Sphere,” *parallax* 7, No. 4 (2001): 105.

- <sup>29</sup> Haraway, *Modest\_Witness*, 135.
- <sup>30</sup> Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 10.
- <sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 5.
- <sup>32</sup> Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance,” 17.
- <sup>33</sup> Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 31.
- <sup>34</sup> Ettinger, “Fragilization and Resistance,” 9.
- <sup>35</sup> Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 97.
- <sup>36</sup> Ettinger, “Weaving a Woman Artist,” 77.
- <sup>37</sup> Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 31.
- <sup>38</sup> Ettinger, “Weaving a Woman Artist,” 77.
- <sup>39</sup> Donna Haraway, *Modest\_Witness*, 137.
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* 67.
- <sup>41</sup> Ettinger, “Art-and-Healing Oeuvre,” 208.
- <sup>42</sup> Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 105.
- <sup>43</sup> Ettinger, “The Feminine/Prenatal Weaving” 402.
- <sup>44</sup> Bracha Ettinger, “Trans-subjective Transferential Borderspace,” in *A Shock to Thought Expression after Deleuze and Guattari*, ed. Brian Massumi, (London: Routledge, 2002), 216.
- <sup>45</sup> Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, 104.
- <sup>46</sup> Ettinger, “Art-and-Healing Oeuvre,” 214.
- <sup>47</sup> Donna Haraway, *Modest\_Witness*, 118.
- <sup>48</sup> Stacey Alaimo, *Undomesticated Grounds: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2000), 13.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.
- <sup>50</sup> Ettinger, “Art-and-Healing Oeuvre,” 212.
- <sup>51</sup> Catherine de Zegher, “Abstract,” in *3 X Abstraction*, eds. Catherine de Zegher and Hendel Teicher, (The Drawing Center/Yale University Press, 2005), 31.

- <sup>52</sup> Hilma af Klint/The High Masters, “September 16, 1903,” in *The Five: Notebooks 1896-1906*.
- <sup>53</sup> Jacquetta Hawkes, *A Land*, (London: Random House, 1951), 92.
- <sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-76.
- <sup>56</sup> Barbara Hepworth, *Barbara Hepworth: A Retrospective Exhibition Catalogue* (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 1954).
- <sup>57</sup> Barbara Hepworth, “Hollow Form” in “Statements: A Review of British Abstract Art,” *Institute of Contemporary Arts*, (1956).
- <sup>58</sup> Ettinger, “Art-and-Healing Oeuvre,” 215.



*FABIENNE  
FORMOSA*

## Fooling and madness

In July 2022 I was commissioned to write an article about Huge Sillytoe's potato artist interactive performance and installation, one of the exhibitions that emerged from their time as Fool-in-Residence with Airspace Gallery.<sup>1</sup> I travelled to the gallery space in order to participate in the activities and to encounter the installation through the embodied and autoethnographic methodologies I use in my ongoing doctoral research. Immersing myself in the materiality of the performance space, I tangled with the audience while listening to the stories shared and observing the embodied affects others engaging with the installation were experiencing. I let these varied embodied experiences from the encounter inform my writing. Further, I consider Huge Sillytoe's fooling practice through the activist scholarship of Mad Studies and take a processual approach to critically reflect on the affinities between the role of the fool, the mad person and socially constructed understandings of madness. My lens is informed by texts such as Michel Foucault's "Madness and Civilisation" where, he offers a historical analysis of what in the West is often termed as "mental illness", linking it back to the split between body and mind, rea-

son and unreason since the Enlightenment, which continues to inform hierarchies of being (and power) today, including the hierarchies between objective and subjective knowledges. I apply a Foucauldian theoretical framework to analyse the potential of the fool in troubling power relations (that inform hierarchies of being) and how the practice of fooling may serve as a practice of freedom - informed by Foucault's later work. In this sense, I explore how Huge's work, particularly focusing on my participation in their potato artist interactive performance and growing installation of tattooed potatoes as part of their Fool residency at AirSpace Gallery offers playful ways to disrupt or undo dominant norms, and how the embodied experience of the nonsensical, troubles not only external hierarchies of being but also the internalised manifestations of this such as the conflict between the rational verses the irrational, or the body and mind that oppresses many and continues to effect emotional health today.

Huge describes themselves as a 'pragmatic-absurdo-anarchist artist,' whose practice examines the politics of absurdity, humour and storytelling through performative writing and lectures, street interventions and mask making. They often complicate practices of coming together, by pushing to the edges different organised methods and models of connecting and communicating in collaborations, collectives, and with the community. This is developed through a resistance to powerful and dominant forms of knowledge production. Huge finds the negation of the workshop model in their '(no)work(no)shop,' and shifts the institutional space of the museum to the pavement.<sup>2</sup>

They often incorporate forms of vegetal activism in their work. This can be seen in *Beetroot Brains Brexit*, which was a collaborative intervention with *Human Juices* that responded to the multiple forms of Brexit according to British public opinion, and *Brocnips*, a character born from a Twitter storm that can 'forecast [...] revolutionary artistic potential.'<sup>3</sup> The activist works present an anthropomorphic form, which re-configures the vegetable into a malleable tool to engage with socio-political struggles through satirical

political performances. The human-more-than-human form of activism points to the scarcity and shortages of fruit and vegetables in UK supermarkets culminating from a myriad of crises: Brexit, Climate Crisis, the War in Ukraine and the phenomena of panic buying during the Global Pandemic.

"I bow down to the divine potato in you"<sup>4</sup>

Huge considers the potato in their most recent form of vegetal activism. Huge shapeshifts the position of the artist into the figuration of an historically and politically loaded vegetable, the potato, which points to agricultural production and colonialist history, but also unearth that which is socially and politically



*hidden or concealed, as well as reclaim the once derogatory connotations of describing a person as 'potato head' through their 'fooling' practice. The etymological origin of the word spud means 'sword' or 'spade,' which highlights the action and movement of creating space for transformation and the turning of soil, as opposed to directly speaking to the vegetable itself.*<sup>5</sup>

At AirSpace Gallery, Huge's performative installation as a potato artist offered visitors an opportunity to imprint an image that was meaningful to them onto a potato. The atmosphere was infused with a gentle subversive playfulness, inviting participants to suspend their judgement and the dominance of the rational mind by leaping into the terrain of troubling sense-making and embracing the invitation to tattoo a meaningful image onto a potato. Going to AirSpace gallery to encounter Huge's residency, I was expecting to step into a topsy-turvy world where the supersensible language of Toetapoelib (or jibberish) would be the common language and the audience to be teased into playfulness and absurdity. I was not expecting the performance to nudge us deep down into a rabbit hole.<sup>6</sup>

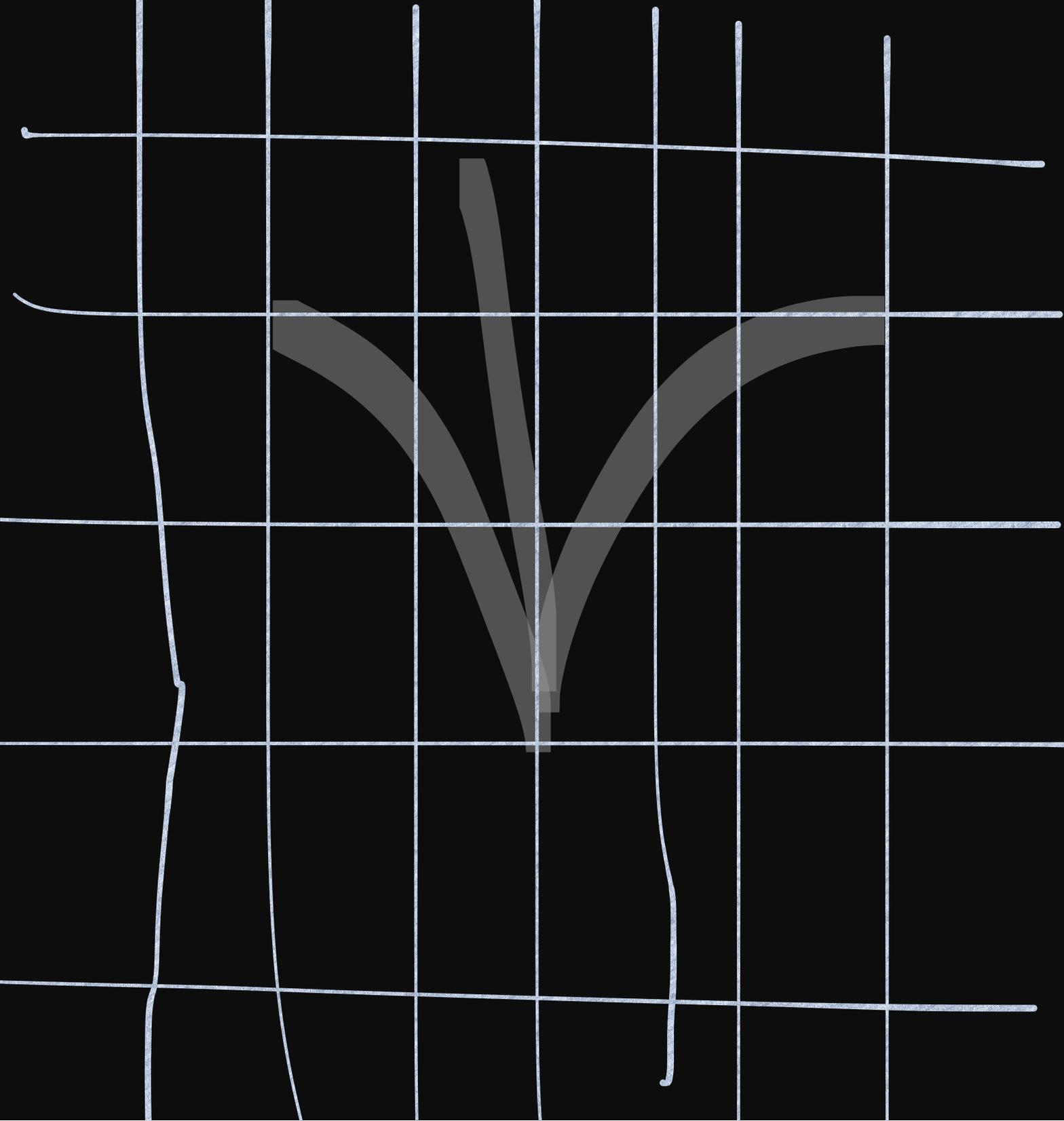
As Huge, the potato artist, invited people with the same mischievousness to speak about the symbolic significance of the image they desired to be potatoed, the installation took an oracle-like dimension where the potatoes offered us glimpses into each other's inner realms. The potatoing evolved into an intimate collective dreaming and storytelling practice where some of us recounted stories of times long past, others told stories about imagined worlds, symbols that speak to us, innermost desires and yearnings. One policeman<sup>7</sup> that stepped into the performance space was suspicious at first, but then as he slowly let his guard down, he started telling us about all the stories that are woven into his skin. "If only people could see the human underneath my uniform", he told us, as he was having his picture taken of himself holding his celtic cross potato. The day ebbed and flowed, people came and went like tides on a seashore and each left their potatoed tale behind. In many ways this fooling experience offered us a space to be met, to be seen, unmasked. The telling of our potatoed stories, a celebration of vulnerability, and fooling, a practice of profound silliness.

In "Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason"<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault developed a material-discursive understanding of mental illness as socially constructed that was informed by external, economic and cultural forces.<sup>9</sup> From the moral fables and the tales of literature in the Middle Ages, Foucault observes that the "Madman, the Fool or the Simpleton assumes more and more importance"<sup>10</sup> where "Madness or Folly was at work, at the very heart of reason and truth."<sup>11</sup>

Historically we see the characters of the fool and the madman as interchangeable, as the ones that are "elected to live out the chaos that we refuse to confront in ourselves."<sup>12</sup> Foucault concludes that contemporary psychiatric scientific understandings of mental illness and the institutionalisation of the mentally ill are akin to the discourses that led to the confinement of lepers in the Middle Ages who were secluded to prevent contamination with uninfected people in the rest of society. Thus, highlighting how the discourse that structures psychiatry and psychological sciences today are

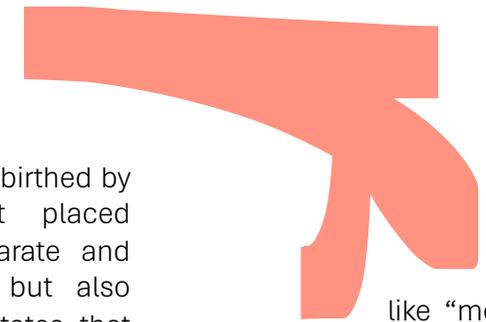
too shaped by power relations. Places of confinement for Foucault, later called the asylum and the clinic<sup>13</sup> were places to send the outcasted to experience in themselves what the Enlightened reasonable man could not face to experience in himself.<sup>14</sup>

In Foucault's analysis of the history of madness, he illustrates how the Enlightenment, also known as the age of reason, was defined by the split between nature and science. The Enlightenment, also marked by Cartesian ontology and the split between body and mind, dichotomised subjective and objective knowledge, creating a hierarchy between knower and known, and crucially, between reason and unreason. I adapt Foucault's post-structuralist power-knowledge-discourse nexus of madness to my encounter of Huge's fooling practice. Foucault shows how hierarchical and binary oppositions gave rise to the power relations and the discourse (knowledge about the subject) that structured contemporary social understandings of madness.<sup>15</sup> He traces the discourse on madness to have directly emerged



from the dualistic thinking birthed by the Enlightenment that placed reason not only as separate and distinct from unreason, but also superior to it. Foucault states that understanding of madness, which later came to be defined by the psychological sciences as illness and disease is reflective of the disease of a civilization that is defined by a dichotomy between reason and unreason. Foucault theorises that it was this paradigm shift that consequently created fear of unreason and a social need to dominate and control a person that is unreasonable by the reasonable. In this way, Foucault shows how the institutionalisation of the mad person owes its roots to a discourse that was shaped by the power relations created by the Enlightenment.<sup>16</sup>

The term mad started being appropriated by people from the mental liberation movement and the first wave of antipsychiatry in the 1960's as a way of resisting sanism, mind control, oppression, promoting human justice, and to offer people a way to self-identify, as a critical alternative to pathologising labels



like “mental illness” or “disorder”.<sup>17</sup> The term offered an entry point into the fields of power as they play out in the lives of people encountering organised psychiatry. The word mad emerged as a way to name and respond to mental, emotional, spiritual, and neuro-diverse ways of being. It was not intended to be used as a way to romanticise or overlook the psychic suffering that is experienced by neurodiverse people. Rather, it was used to validate and recognise these lived experiences. Hence, the appropriation of the term mad came to be used as a way to challenge the reductionist assumptions of the psy sciences and the oppressive effects of the medical model. Consequently, the mad movement offered a way for histories of encounters with the psy disciplines and psychiatry to be more easily situated within the wider institutional, cultural and historical contexts.<sup>18</sup>



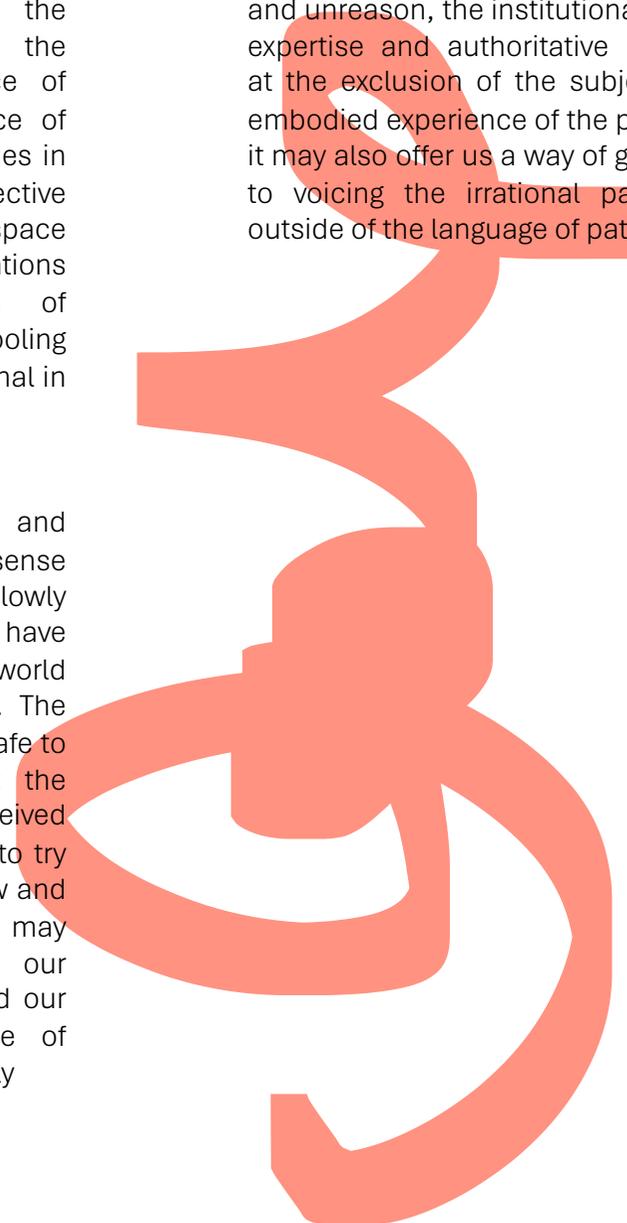
The formulation of irrationality and madness as a disease or illness that followed from the hierarchical divide between reason and unreason during the Enlightenment, continues to manifest in contemporary culture through the power relations at play in dominant understandings of mental health, the institutionalisation of expertise and the bodyminds they oppress. Critical and feminist psychologists argue that this is one of the reasons why we see a disproportionate representation of ethnic and gender minorities in mental health services in the UK today. Critical psychologist Jane Ussher, offers a Foucauldian analysis of the history of women's madness,<sup>19</sup> and shows how, women and feminised bodies, continue to be subjected to the same projection processes that Foucault conceived in terms of the enlightened reasonable man externalising psychic material into the madman, and the fool, to evade experiencing within himself moments of disturbance and insights into one's own self.

In the same way categories of mental illness have been used as a way to displace social and political issues into those most vulnerable. Madness, irrationality and the nonsensical have become objects of fear within the self. In contemporary society we also see oppressive dominant norms becoming internalised. In this sense, I am curious about the practice of fooling as a contemporary socially conscious artistic practice into reexperiencing within ourselves the irrational and the nonsensical, and how this may offer a way into undoing internalised forms of governmentality. In other words, how the practice of fooling may serve as embodied micropolitical<sup>21</sup> action. As seen in the example of the policeman above, the embodiment of the institution and the state, first coming into the space with his defences up and then wanting to be seen without the uniform through encountering the fool and the potattooing process. On a micropolitical level, his journey in the space may be interpreted as somehow a performative action or an embodiment of what fooling as a practice may offer, at least in the way I am approaching it.

Further, the way Huge's practice of fooling emerged as a storytelling practice and perhaps, even a temporary collective form of care, in the way potattooing served to unearth the autobiographical, orientating the practice, I argue, as a practice of freedom.<sup>22</sup> The key, to a practice of freedom, according to Foucault, lies in cultivating self-reflection and collective processing in order to open up a space of resistance toward power relations that individualise experiences of madness. Hence, the practice of fooling may offer the freedom to be irrational in a socially acceptable way.

Through becoming the fool and engaging with absurdist nonsense making practices, we can slowly unleash those parts of us that we have learnt to keep hidden from the world and maybe even from ourselves. The fool teaches us that it is not only safe to not make any sense but that the nonsensical within us may be received with humour. That we don't have to try so hard to hold it together, to know and to be rational. Through fooling we may articulate our madness, our unconventional desires, fears, and our distorted thoughts. The practice of fooling may not only offer us socially

acceptable ways of challenging the binaries we inherited from the enlightenment about how we think about the body and the mind, reason and unreason, the institutionalisation of expertise and authoritative knowledge at the exclusion of the subjective and embodied experience of the person, but it may also offer us a way of giving value to voicing the irrational parts of us outside of the language of pathology.

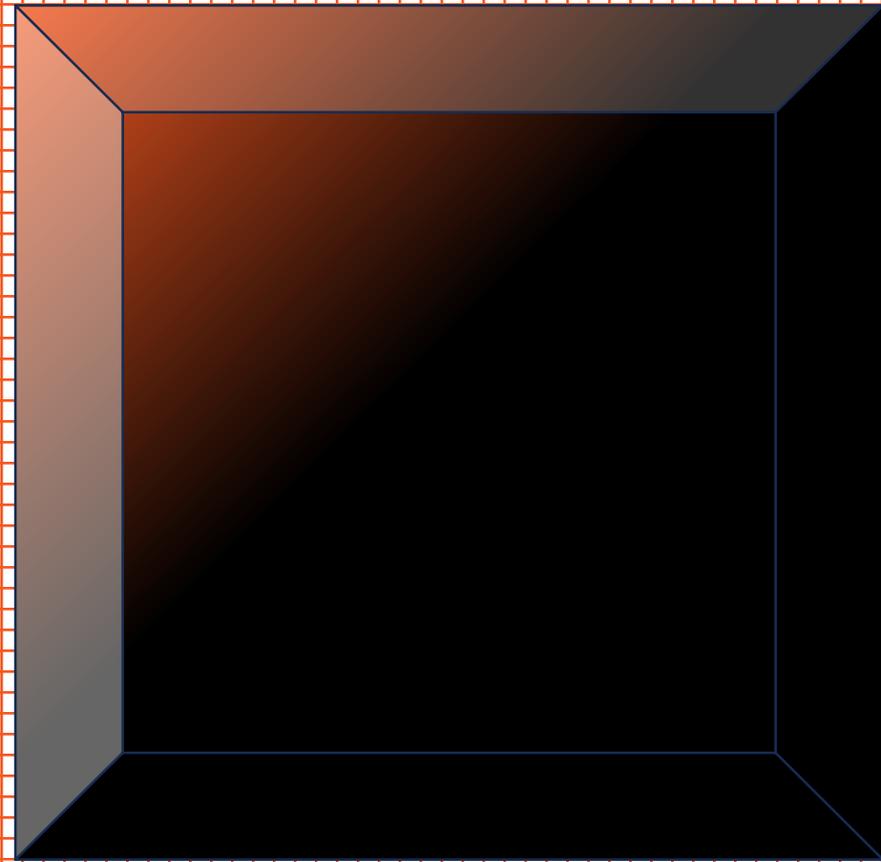


## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> 'AIRSPACE', accessed 12 August 2022, [https://www.airspacegallery.org/index.php/project\\_entry/the\\_fool](https://www.airspacegallery.org/index.php/project_entry/the_fool)
- <sup>2</sup> <https://hugesillytoe.com/noworknoshops/> <https://hugesillytoe.com/the-pavement-museum/>
- <sup>3</sup> <https://hugesillytoe.com/street-intervention/>
- <sup>4</sup> A 'Pete the Temp' mantra used in their nonsense yoga (a live satire of yoga) workshops. Refer to their website for upcoming tours applying the mantra <http://www.petethetemp.co.uk/> accessed 30 August 2022.
- <sup>5</sup> My thanks to researcher curator Georgia Perkins who offered paragraphs (indented) contextualising the history of vegetal activism in Sillytoe's practice following a conversation and reflection on the piece.
- <sup>6</sup> I use the term rabbit hole here to suggest how the surreal atmosphere created by Hugh's potatoing installation staged in the window of the gallery space, juxtaposed with the prophetic robes Hugh and their assistant wore, together with sporadic church-like background music during the symbolic act of tattooing personal visual images on the skin of the potato, was not only absurd but in a subtle way seemed to initiate a disorientation of the self, akin to Alice's descend into the rabbit hole in Lewis Carroll's book *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865.
- <sup>7</sup> I am aware of how contested public opinion is about the police force at the time of this writing, while institutional racism, misogyny, classism and ableism are being actively scrutinised, exposed and responded to as a social justice issue. I chose this particular policeman's embodied encounter of the performance because it particularly speaks to the way in which Hugh's potatoing performance, specifically the action of tattooing each of the participants' chosen visual symbol on the skin of their potato at times served as a way to disrupt dominant norms and internalised forms of governance. Thus, given the apt example of the role of the policeman in society as the representation and embodiment of the institution and systemic injustice. For this reason his embodied engagement was particularly interesting to the particular theoretical orientation and the analysis I offer in this writing. This is one of embodied example of how the prompts Hugh offered in their performance may serve as micropolitical action to undermine dominant and oppressive power structures from within.
- <sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York, NY: P antheon Books, 1965).

- <sup>9</sup> Rissmiller, D.O and Rissmiller; 863.
- <sup>10</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 11.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 11.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, viii.
- <sup>13</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* (S.I: Routledge, 2002).
- <sup>14</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 42; 185-192.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, 102-110.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 10-14; 27, 59-65; 68-69; 73-79, 87; 101-102; 184.
- <sup>17</sup> LeFrançois, Menzies, and Reaume, 9.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 9-10.
- <sup>19</sup> Jane M. Ussher, *Women's Madness: Misogyny or Mental Illness?* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991); Jane M. Ussher, *The Madness of Women: Myth and Experience, Women and Psychology*. 0 (Routledge Ltd, 2011).
- <sup>20</sup> Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, 102-viii.
- <sup>21</sup> I adapt the term micropolitical from Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies* (London ; New York: Continuum, 2005). The term is used when lived or embodied experience, and a multiplicity of subject positions across roles are analysed for institutional analysis. Thus, in analysing subjectivity one is also analysing the institution across different scales. In this sense, the prefix "micro" proceeding the word "politics" here refers to the embodiment of institutions on a personal and interpersonal level.
- <sup>22</sup> Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth* (New Press, 1997), 283.

Image credit to Glen Stoker, Director of AirSpace Gallery.



*BRUNO  
VERNER*



Funk Carioca, also known as Baile Funk, refers to both a style of electronic dance music born and raised in the suburbs and favelas of Rio de Janeiro at the end of 1980s, and to a specific Brazilian party scene. A scene that initially emerged from a mix of sonic attitudes and predilections that embraced American Funk, Soul, and R&B, popularized by emblematic selectors such as DJs Ademir and Big Boy in the balies black during the 1970s, and in line with the Brazilian Black Power movement. And, through the 1980s and 1990s, by a deep love of old school electro funk, Miami Bass, freestyle and Hi-Energy, subgenres that became incredibly popular in Rio's big bailes over the weekends. In particular, with the arrival of the 808 Beatappela Mix, the B-side of DJ Battery Brain's 8 Volt Mix – brought by DJ Nazz (Carlos Machado) from LA and distributed in Rio in 1988 – as well as, through tracks such Hassan's "Pump Up The Party" and Stevie B's "Spring Love", following Funk Carioca's own process of nationalization and later the genre's incorporation of the beat known as "Tamborao" from 2000s onwards, aggregating African-Brazilian percussive elements from Candomble and Capoeira in its drum patterns, in combination with samples from all kinds of sonic strands and traditions (i.e. through Clash's Rock The Casbah, to Madonna, Front 242, Dori Caymi, 2Live Crew, Guns and Roses, Afrika Bambaataa, Laura Pausini among many others).

In 1989, DJ Marlboro releases the first Brazilian compilation of Funk Carioca comprised of 8 tracks featuring Cidinho, MC Batata, MC Abdulah, Ademir Lemos and Marlboro himself, recording the first national productions into a compilation LP entitled DJ Marlboro Apresenta Funk Brasil Volume I. The story goes that, slightly earlier in 1986, anthropologist and academic Hermano Vianna who was researching the world of Funk Carioca, for his thesis, presented DJ Marlboro with a Boss drum machine (Dr Rhythm DR-110) that he had gotten in the studio of his brother Herbert Vianna of post punk trio Os Paralamas do Sucesso; that by 1986 had just released their acclaimed third album "Selvagem" which included, among other things, a collaboration with Gilberto Gil in "A Novidade", and a version of "Voce" by Tim Maia, becoming a very successful act around Brazil. This changed everything for Marlboro, who learned how to program the Dr Rhythm drum machine, later sold it, and brought an Emu SP 1200 that was used in the recordings of Funk Brasil Volume I.



MC Linn Da Quebrada, singer, composer, actress, and screenwriter.

There are many takes and understandings of Funk Carioca aesthetics, and consequently there have been distinct (and clashing) ways of both conceptualising its mutant sonic textures and attitudinal politics. I fell in love with the first Funk Carioca productions still as a young musician, and an avid listener to the first “melos” (how Brazilians used to call the first productions) that were played on specific radio stations such as Del Rey 98 FM. But also, as a regular at local parties I’d go dancing with friends in Belo Horizonte, my hometown. The baile black at Copao (Big Cup which used to take place in a Choperia in BH’s city centre, and where DJs played a mix of funk, soul, electro, and funk melody, including the first Brazilian “melos” such as MC Batata’s “Melo do Bebado”, “Entre Nessa Onda” or Abdula’s “Melo da Mulher Feia” produced by DJ Marlboro. And, in a small club called “Broadway” in the neighbourhood of Santa Tereza, where we used to dance to James Brown, the debut album of Racionais MCs *Holocausto Urbano* (1988), Thaide and DJ Hum, old school electro, and a lot of 1970s funk and soul every weekend, religiously, from midnight till the early hours of the day to the sounds of DJ Roger Moore and guests.

The Funk Carioca scene is formed by MCs, bondes (dance and vocal ensembles), DJs, beatmakers, producers, radio presenters, sound crews, agents, lighting crews, owners, and soundsystems such as Furacão 2000, Cashbox and others. But also, by vendors selling food and drinks and a large audience of funkeiros from several communities from around Brazil. The ones who are into ‘Funk’ \_are known as “funkeiros” ... and such designation can be also employed, not only to refer to the Funk artists themselves, but also for enthusiasts of the culture. In the parties, performances are essential to the bailes’ success. Rio de Janeiro was the original stage of funk culture which is now fully known and assimilated as a style and genre of electronic music, and over the past years, has become part of an international and global beat culture that reached some mainstream popularity through the music of famous DJs and artists such as M.I.A and Diplo.

Denise Garcia’s *I’m Ugly But Trendy* looks at women’s participation in the Funk Carioca scene with a post-feminist take on the usually male dominated global 'bass debate'. The film features frank conversations with artists, DJs, journalists, and enthusiasts of the scene, and includes live footage from the greatest funk stars.

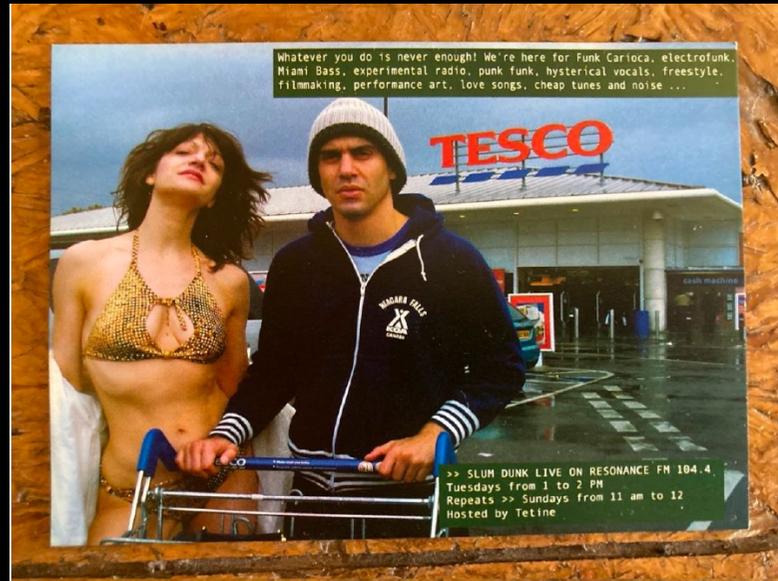
We will hear and see in action some of Funk Carioca’s main voices of the early 2000s, such as Deize Tigrona (Deise Da Injeção), Tati Quebra Barraco - who sings the verses of *Eu Sou Feia Mas To na Moda* – I’m Ugly But Trendy. Also featured are Vanessinha do Picachu, Brazilian funk star Valeska Popozuda, who in the film is still part of the dance ensemble Gailola das Popozudas (we see them in the beginning). This includes legendary trans and queer funkeiras, pioneers in the early 2000s scene of funk sensual, such as the late Ramona Gitty and Lacreia; the latter, the untiring collaborator of MC Serginho who inspired the big hit ‘Vai Lacreia!’ (*Go Lacreia!*).

We will also see interviews with producers, DJs, and artists such as the late Mr Catra, Duda, Cidinho and Doca and the late MC G3; as well as views of underground Brazilian artists and music journalists such as Silvio Essinger - author of *Batidão: uma história do funk* - who were all connected to the scene at different moments. This includes appearances and interventions by Edu K from post punk band Defalla, who wrote and performed the hit “Popuzuda Rock & Roll”; Tetine (myself and Eli) when we collaborated with Deize Tigrona in 2004 for the track “I Go To The Doctor”, inspired by her big hit “Injeção”, and through the release of our mixtape/compilation *Slum Dunk Presents Funk Carioca on Mr Bongo*; artist and illustrator Allan Sieber, who created the animation, and Denise Garcia herself, who both filmed and produced *Eu Sou Feia Mas To Na Moda*. Her film traces the origins of Rio’s funk sensual scene/culture of the early 2000s from the point of view of female funksters (MCs, dancers, funkeiras) who are also mothers, lovers, wives, students, and workers.

That said, it is crucial to mention, before we begin watching, that, *I’m Ugly But Trendy* is an 100% independent film production. Denise Garcia made it with practically no money and with only one camera. She had the incredible and generous help of the funkeiros themselves and, in particular, of funk star Deize Tigrona. This makes the narrative, the images, and moments captured in *I’m Ugly But Trendy* beautifully intense, intimate, and candid all at once. What you see is what you get: unforced spontaneity and less post-production re-touches. There are also brilliant long takes one does not normally see in other funk carioca document-



Original art for the poster of *Eu Sou Feia Mas Tô Na Moda / I'm Ugly But Trendy* – designed by Allan Sieber at ToscoGraphics, for the world premier at Brady Arts Center in London, 2005, transposed for the screening we organised as part of Soundsystem Outernational, Goldsmiths University, 2016.



Slum Dunk airs in London every Tuesday from 1-2 PM on Resonance FM 104.4 (also available globally on resonancefm.com). We cover a multitude of Brazilian unexpected music from the hills and beyond. From ghetto electro, funk carioca to experimental music, from old school samba to avant hip hop including amazing interviews, live acts and much more!

Slum Dunk radio crew is made up of electronic duo Tetine - Bruno Vernér & Eliete Mejorado

**Slum Dunk Presents Funk Carioca** >> Out Now in CD / Vinyl

**Like nothing else - Time Out**

*This is one of the most arresting and exciting sounds on the planet and quite unlike anything you have ever heard.* Metro Life

*The glorious nuance, texture and subtlety of so much Brazilian music is completely fucking absent in this stuff but who cares? This shit rocks. This comp is selected by Tetine, the punky Paulista performance-art pair who host a Brazilian-beats radio show in London.* Montreal Mirror

For further info: [www.tetine.net](http://www.tetine.net)

Flyer for Tetine's Slum Dunk radio show live on Resonance FM, 104.4 + Slum Dunk Presents Funk Carioca, Mr Bongo 2005.



Deize Tigrona, *Fui Eu Que Fiz*, (Batekoo 2022).



Slum Dunk Presents Funk Carioca Mixed by Tetine, 2x LP, Mr Bongo Records 2005.



The late Elza Soares, still from her video for 'A Mulher Do Fim Do Mundo' (song written by Romulo Froes e Alice Coutinho. Directed by Paula Gaitán

Aries; as Cidinho and Doca's heartfelt rendition of 'Rap Da Felicidade'(Rap of Happiness). This is to say that 'I'm Ugly' has a raw DIY sense and take that is hard to encounter in other docs. Such homemade force and ethos scream along unapologetically through its 59 minutes.

The film was shot in Rio, London, and Paris. It starts in Cidade de Deus (the City of God neighbourhood), follows the artists around the Bailes and communities, and culminates with DJ Marlboro first international trips to play funk in Paris and London in 2005. Eliete Mejorado and I had the pleasure to co-produce the London part of the film, and accompany Marlboro through his gigs in the city. All the filming was again done in the same way Denise Garcia did in Rio, with no funding and only one camera with us.

I'm Ugly But Trendy world premiere was in London. Its first ever screening took place at the Brady Arts Centre in Brick Lane to a full house as part of our Slum Dunk Film Programme back in 2005. This was because Funk Carioca tunes were first aired in the UK via Tetine's radio show Slum Dunk, broadcasted on Resonance Fm 104.4 every Tuesdays from 1 to 2pm, with repeats every Sunday. Our radio spot on Resonance was entirely dedicated to the genre for about 4 years between 2003 to 2007 without interruption. Though the radio, we had the chance to play, make phone calls to Brazil to interview artists, receive guests, and talk in person with funkeiros and people involved in the scene, whenever there were shows in the UK or Europe. On air, we played and talked about all kinds of productions; from the big mainstream tunes to the obscure Proibições (the prohibited tunes, the uncut sounds that voiced the realities of drug trafficking and criminality in the communities). That's pretty much how many funk tracks became known in the UK: through the radio shows and through Tetine's weekly funk carioca DJ sets at the Guanabara Club in Covent Garden.

After that, I'm Ugly But Trendy premiered in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, and eventually Denise Garcia managed to exhibit it to a larger audience around the country, as the film entered the circuit of cinemas and festivals successfully. We're

very proud to introduce and screen "I'm Ugly But Trendy" again here after 13 years since its first exhibition.

We have planned this listening/watching session in three parts. We'll show you first a wonderful piece by MC Linn Da Quebrada – her video "blasFêmia" (as in blasphemy – as in blas-femme / Mulher (Woman) for Linn's track 'Mulher', produced by Bad Sista and released in 2017. Linn Da Quebrada is a vocal queer artist and MC, from São Paulo – who has also been influenced by the aesthetics, politics and sounds of Funk Carioca, amongst other things. Then we'll watch I'm Ugly But Trendy by Denise Garcia. And we'll close the programme, if we have any time left, with Elza Soares's "Mulher Do Fim Do Mundo" (Woman of the End of The World) that I showed on Portia Malatjie's Counterfield session Togetherness! Re Blata Monata Fella!! a few weeks ago. These are three distinct, yet complementary mutational universes of post tropicalist sounds that me and Eli would love to show and talk about. The idea is to have an informal conversation on the politics and aesthetics of these sounds after the screening.

I hope you enjoy the session!

Bruno Verner, London, June 13th, 2018.

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### *Related Links*

Slum Dunk Presents Funk Carioca Mixed by Tetine

<https://open.spotify.com/album/0QAceiZDKDCPd6MYRxeVYv>;

Eu Sou Feia Mas To Na Moda / I'm Ugly But Trendy by Denise Garcia

<https://vimeo.com/421959275> (with English subtitles)

World première of I'm Ugly But Trendy at Brady Arts Center, London 2005

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r3vs2rj-wqo>

Linn da Quebrada – blasFêmea / Mulher <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-50hUUG1Ppo>

Elza Soares – A mulher Do Fim Do Mundo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6SWIwW9mg8s>

***KILLIAN  
O'DWYER***

## *Sexes that secrete*

Sexes on the skin, on the shores of an immutable secret, one which I wrestle lovingly with my tongue.

Biting back naked words, as if they could be cloaked, I am exposed to the thrill of a gentle choking; the sensation of a vaguely audible gurgling that echoes *as if* from down below. This philosophy is indigestible, an indelicate history of words impregnated *as such* and *as is*. Yet the joy in beginning each day is the opportunity to luxate sex from meaning in the mouth, to grapple *corps-à-corps* with the mysteries of a master's language, words that I endlessly lavish with my naked tongue.

Mercilessly it throttles the throat, a masterful philosophy of sex that claws at the vocal cords before it unfurls, ragged, into the cold light of day. Tongues of past truth-seekers spring forth to drag sex over skin in the hopes of finally tasting revelation. How can a mouth denude philosophy? Can a mouth lay language open and tease speech with a tongue that chooses to withhold? What if a mouth or a tongue could secrete sex or sexes that remain indiscernible, even as they alight on the skin? Wrestling with what secretes, what sexes indeed.

In the beginning, at least for Derrida, words would, if it were possible, roll off the tongue naked, *as if* they were taken straight from the heart.<sup>1</sup> Provocative little nudes that, after streaking across the inner folds of muscular skin, expose themselves to the warm flesh of tongue in cheek wordplay. Together they form a heartfelt poem, a poetics of orifice that tussles joyously with several possible meanings all at once. Poetry, it would seem, that secretes sexual half-truths from a body worn out by the carnal erotics of a restless master's tongue lashing.

Words, conjured *as if* from nowhere, alight on the lips, blushing as if exposed to the trembling embrace of a first kiss. Words that until recently were overwhelmingly wet, saturated in a mouthy sea foam of translucent acid, before frothing to the surface as a language made meaningful. Words secreted blissfully as a fine string of saliva from one mouth to the other, catching the light of day as a tender fluid of celestial stars. Time and again, I find myself waiting to catch a drop of any word that wrestles itself away from masterful lips.

Sexes on the lips, syncing with the sexes felt by the skin. Lips that secrete bodies known only to them, as the liquid self-assurance of a secret held close *to* the body *by* the body. *corps-à-corps*, I lovingly wrestle with what becomes secreted as a sexual shroud, a poem which licks at the contours of my skin, spun from the brown mouth of the miniature silkworm in Derrida's dreamy shoebox.<sup>2</sup> Who or what alights on my devoted tongue? The secret of a secretion, the bubbling forth of sexes that can "produce", "discharge", "ooze" and "omit", but at the same time can "conceal", "hide", "withdraw", "separate", and "distinguish" themselves from others.

Sexes that do not promise to unveil some hidden memory, genealogy, origin or end, but instead lavish the body infinitely as *secretable* experiences from within. *corps-à-corps*, a dual or hand-to-hand combat, the wrestling of tongues between masters and I – but also a sexual embrace or love-making between mouths laid open to language itself. Sexes on the skin of the lips, a relational and readerly intimacy which threatens to spill over into the violence of an irreducible interruption or self-interruption.<sup>3</sup> These bodies are indiscernible, secrets of a sexual poetics that dances across the folds of my worn-out tongue, words made naked once more.

<sup>1</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Jacques Derrida, "A Silkworm of One's Own" in *Veils* by Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida, trans. Geoffrey Bennington (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 88-89.

<sup>3</sup> Lenka Vrábliková and Thomas Clément Mercier, "Corps à: body/ies in deconstruction," *Parallax* 25, No. 1 (Spring 2019): 1.

*MARIE  
THERESA  
CRICK*

*The feminine-to-come,  
poetics of filmic breath*

Pause, take a breath,  
listen to the words that follow with your body.

We enter with an invitation offered at the beginning of an embodied research and movement workshop, 'The Feminine-to-Come' and the Poetics of Filmic Breath in October 2023.

'Soon, we will weave the spaces as we speak. Together, we breathe these words, inhaling and holding them, if only for a second, before we have to exhale again. We do not determine the space that surrounds us, between us, that passes as shared air, if only for a moment. We breathe, we move, we feel.'<sup>1</sup>

Before undertaking this discovery together, and to enter with the energy of the Irish 'feminine-to-come', that moves with me in my research and practice, I firstly draw attention to how the feminine is evoked. I align with a rereading with Luce Irigaray which is within and still yet to come. Walking alongside Julia Kristeva's focus on the 'transformative potential of what she conceptualizes as the feminine: not femininity, not femaleness or womanhood 'but specific aspect of the human psyche which might be the proper engine of our capacity to change.'<sup>2</sup>

I invite you to join me to read this collectively in the moment that it finds you. Come and go as you want to. There are no calls to perform, move or be in any way. I invite you to move as you read these words aloud, trace the floor with your feet. Notice the air around you. Listen with your body. Remember to breathe. We will transverse affective terrains together. This is your space. Come and go as you need to.

Inhale,  
Exhale

Notice how the air feels and moves between and upon your body. Place a hand where you feel your breath in your body.

I invite you to move as much as you need to within your space until you feel ready to find a place to sit. Connect with the floor or a chair once you find your position. Notice how the air feels on your body in contrast.

We dance with and  
are affected by the air  
around us, whilst  
forgetting the earth.

As we move, pause, and listen, we do so with uncertainty and unknowing, through conditions and materiality of audio, video, digital rhythms, wifi interruptions, text and memory spaces. We come together across different temporalities, our bodies and breath that vibrate with the filmic bodies that come to converse with us.

I return to the free-flowing, speculative, and meditative writing that awaits below, almost a whole five months later, surrounded by the noisy hum of the air in a café in New Cross.

My body remembers.

Remembers a body that held and shared the words, that tangle with another journey away from surgery. I am curious to slow my body to listen, attuning to the breaths that are held in this textual body and the filmic bodies that are in reach, and await you. Words that share air with the collective bodies, that converse with my breaths. Returning to a newly forming friendship which has solidified since, my body in constant movement between London and Ireland and her body seeking other seas.

Words are within, but yet to come. Words that hold a space for you, and your breath, you, my interlocutor in this moment.

Past spatial realities are brought to the surface, which are now embedded in my body. Temporalities that return here unexpected, even though I came seeking them. I envision oceans since crossed, and atmospheres of shared air. I close my eyes for a moment, seeing the clammer of noises form into a polyphony of particles, all moving at different speeds.

A few linger,  
Others rush away, erratic in their moods, not waiting to mingle, moving at great speeds, away,  
The rest circulate, spiralling outwards then returning to circle and collide with others.

This air surrounds my body, as it rests and is held by the wooden chair and table. My space in the corner, facing away from the other bodies sat around me. Since writing this creative and experimental writing piece in a convent in Venice, the embodied research and movement workshops move with stronger currents of forming and unforming spaces within my PhD research. .

My words,  
stumble,  
flow,  
pause,  
reverse,  
disorientate  
become garbled  
and move  
in and out  
of varying temporalities,  
reorientate.

Close your eyes for a moment, listen to the words in your body.

We sit on the corner of a wall, only a few feet from the ground, near the industrial bins, that spill their contents onto the streets, staking their space with the feet that navigate their individual patterns amongst them. The art gallery, stands to our side, reaching to the skies with its metal structure, at its highest reaches, weaving in and out of the air that mingles in the heavens above. We met recently, but here we are, not yet ready for one of us to leave on the train to North London, or the other back to her house-share nearby. The conversations that felt so urgent, that we placed ourselves here to sit to think together. These are the moments where ‘yet to come’ surfaces, dances, and plays. Remember to breathe.

We think with the filmic body which sparked this conversation, and made us stop, pause, breathe and think together in this moment, ‘Filmic Breath, Hydro-Feminine’, to pull, entertain, and tease the modalities of ‘filmic breath’. The sun sets in the duration of our conversation, which had always been arriving, if not yet sensed and not yet arrived.

This filmic body which moved in and out of our conversations, seeks a fluid modality, a lyrical dialogue to feel with the rhythm of polyphony of breath, that ruptures and defies distinction. Mirroring the depths of the ocean, drifting in and out of other bodies of water. The texts and filmic narratives that hold the structures of the filmic bodies that materialise, become anchors and offer hands of entry into thinking with the elusive ‘feminine-to-come’, within but not yet arrived.

Remember to breathe.

The meditation on the search of the ‘other feminine’, the ‘feminine-to-come’, that is hydro-feminine speaks with the textures of filmic breath and breathes within these temporal, moving and fluid conversations with others that appear and disappear. The filmic bodies appear constantly, feeling with the rhythmic of textual stories and archives. This began my journey with filmic breath and the ‘feminine-to-come’ as it began to tangle with the chorus of voices of the Irish Catholic women from the 1950s who left the Irish countryside for London, due to ‘out-of-wedlock’ pregnancies. Voices that inspire my research and embodied practice, to think with these women and the transgenerational ripples that are felt in the relation of mothers and daughters, to offer a reorientation.

Remember to breathe.

The filmic bodies cast other bodies as interlocutors, entering at different points at will, in embodied in-person movement spaces. How do we become bodies that are moved? How do we feel the breath and suffocation of the elusive feminine of these texts in the filmic bodies, how then do we breathe with the filmic bodies themselves?

Moving  
Surfacing  
Tangled  
Ruminated  
Dissolved

The filmic bodies that came later and move towards new embodied collective research and movement spaces, touch with the moments of allusivity of presence of ‘the-feminine-to-come’, to draw close by, to feel deeply.



Bodies as interlocutors,  
as collaborators  
come to entangle with the filmic bodies,  
and to converse through shared breath with each other.

I start breathing short shallow breaths,  
You replied with long laboured breaths,  
The next replies with relaxed breaths, that take their time,  
leaving an unexpected pause between them and the next,  
The next refuses to respond,  
The one that comes after, takes a moment, relaxes into a  
mixed rhythm of breath.  
The language of breathing continues, circling.

Remember to breathe.

We think together with the intensities, demands and  
capacities of breathing within these shared embodied  
movement spaces. Above we entered a workshop space  
through a conversation together with our individual  
breaths.

I invite you as interlocutor in this moment, to introduce  
yourself through a body of water, as previous interlocutors  
have met each other.

Let's meet each other as we are in this moment.

We enter this together, unknowing.  
Listen with your body,  
allow your memory spaces to flow to bodies of water that  
come to you,  
that hold you,  
that trouble you,  
that disrupt,  
that care,  
that respond,  
that elude,  
that move amongst us.



Bodies of water have flowed throughout my research, since feeling their presence, which had been there all along, by taking part in Ocean as Archive module. We hold with care this space, and the importance of attending to personal and collective fears and desire when encountering bodies of water.

As we move to the close of exploring this body of text together, I invite you to join a guided meditation that weaves in and out of the many embodied research and movement workshops that have taken place in the last few years. Walking alongside the voices of the Irish Catholic maternal, are a chorus of voices and my many wonderful interlocutors and collaborators, Daphna Westerman, Sara Simić, Jiaying Gao and counterfield. Come join with us.

Play and move, pause and listen with your body with one of the filmic bodies:  
<https://youtu.be/n8hPxLWicuA>

Remember to breathe.

Walk with the air around you.  
Map the space with your feet.  
Imagine yourself as a particle.

How do you reencounter yourself?  
Stretch your body.  
Hear the sounds that touch your body.  
Release your mind.  
Feel your mind float around the sound.  
Make yourself comfortable.

Imagine yourself as a particle.  
How do you reencounter yourself?

Hear the sounds that touch your body.  
Release your mind.

Take a deep breath.  
A long breath out through your mouth.

Feel your body move with the invisible particles around you.  
Feel yourself settle as the particles rest on the ocean floor.

Make noise with your breath.  
Feel your breath through the water.  
Let's hear this collective breath align.

Use your fingers to feel the particles around you.  
Let the particles go through your fingers.  
What are the textures of the particles?  
What are the temperatures of these particles.

Now close your eyes.  
With a gentle smile.  
Feel the awareness of your surroundings.  
Feel how this awareness feels in your body.

Remember to breathe.

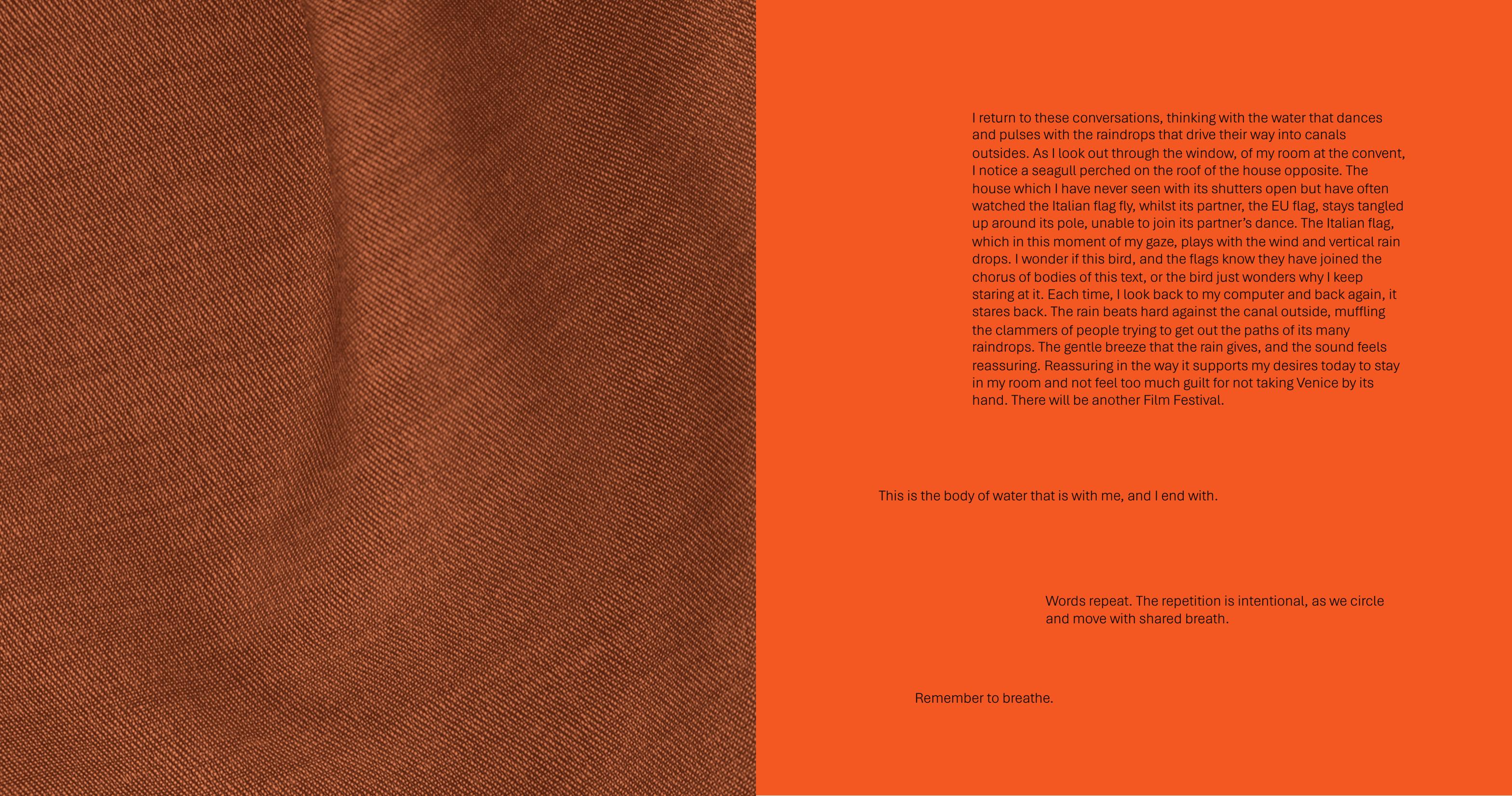
Raise your arm up to the sky.  
Feel your blood flow, next to the water flow.  
Feel the air on your arm.

How else can you encounter a particle?  
Imagine a particle melting into your body.

Use your hand to make a wave.  
Remember to breathe.

Use your hand to externalise your breath.

Remember to breathe.<sup>3</sup>



I return to these conversations, thinking with the water that dances and pulses with the raindrops that drive their way into canals outdoors. As I look out through the window, of my room at the convent, I notice a seagull perched on the roof of the house opposite. The house which I have never seen with its shutters open but have often watched the Italian flag fly, whilst its partner, the EU flag, stays tangled up around its pole, unable to join its partner's dance. The Italian flag, which in this moment of my gaze, plays with the wind and vertical rain drops. I wonder if this bird, and the flags know they have joined the chorus of bodies of this text, or the bird just wonders why I keep staring at it. Each time, I look back to my computer and back again, it stares back. The rain beats hard against the canal outside, muffling the clammers of people trying to get out the paths of its many raindrops. The gentle breeze that the rain gives, and the sound feels reassuring. Reassuring in the way it supports my desires today to stay in my room and not feel too much guilt for not taking Venice by its hand. There will be another Film Festival.

This is the body of water that is with me, and I end with.

Words repeat. The repetition is intentional, as we circle and move with shared breath.

Remember to breathe.

What body of water does this text take you to? Go searching for this body of water. Who inhabits these bodies of water? Close your eyes, listen to the sound, listen with your body. Listen with us.

Trying to capture the collaborative temporal spaces within this text with a sole writer, is an attempt to just grasp these moments again and offer a hand to those who will read it. To not write along or describe the filmic bodies but to enter gently at different points into their presences, and offer them again to be thought with, to write from and through them.

This text speaks with these filmic bodies and ‘the-feminine-to-come’ that are present in our words, our conversations, felt in our bodies, yet are elusive, unreachable, unknowable. Within, yet to be delivered.

<sup>1</sup> These words were written thinking with Irigarayan shared air, with Graduate Tutor and PhD researcher, Killian O’ Dwyer, on the writing retreat in Brighton, as part of counterfield, research collective.

<sup>2</sup> I think from this thread positioned by The School of Materialist Research, The Feminine in an Age of Anthropological Transformation, which I will join in September 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Words written collaboratively with Daphna Westerman, Jiaying Gao and Marie Theresa Crick

## Notes

The text converses between the filmic bodies of Marie Theresa Crick, the conversations between Marie Theresa, Daphna Westerman, Jiaying Gao and Sara Simić and the bodies that arrive at all the workshops.

‘Indeterminate Transmissions | (In-Person) Movement Workshop’ as part of series five of Counterfield’s workshop series (co-facilitated by Marie Theresa Crick, Daphna Westerman and Jiaying Gao) and ‘The Feminine-to-Come and Poetics of Filmic Breath’, October 2023 with researcher Sara Simić as part of counterfield.

Many other embodied research and movement workshops have taken place since. We explore hybrid ways of listening, feeling, caring, pausing, reading, misreading, sharing breathe, unknowing. Hand-written letters form parts of the workshops, as we read aloud together.

These workshops have held me in navigating the inhabitation of constant movement between Ireland and London, which has created an unexpected bodily and psychic unsettledness that has become part of my research and practice, threading through transgenerational trajectories. I hope to re-imagine how these residues of the states of bodily, spatial temporal and relational unsettledness of the Irish Catholic maternal are felt and reorientated.

I refer to the ‘Catholic’ maternal and this is to speak to the spaces that are navigated across generations, whether individuals feel they are lapsed, practising, recovering, not brought up Catholic, and all ways of identifying or not.

The motivation for the embodied workshop spaces of my practice was to move away from a ‘film screening’ with an audience or films that act as evidence of research practice but to offer an embodied ‘viewing’ through different entry points to filmic bodies, activating openings for bodies within these spaces to move and respond in ways that feel comfortable to them.

This practice seeks to mobilises a space to feel with the entanglement of air and water; to breathe and move with a reorientation and defiance and complexities of the ‘livedness’ of the Irish Catholic maternal via the flows and intensities of ‘feminine-to-come bodies’ off screen that agitate the Irish, English and ‘Catholic’ bodies of water.

I want to thank members of Counterfield who have held and offered hands of care to open to the potentials of these collective embodied research and movement spaces. I am grateful to have walked alongside the other members of counterfield and the interlocutors and collaborators who have shared breath with me across different spaces and temporalities.

Remember to breathe.

To continue to move, pause and listen with your body, come join this embodied research and practices, which holds space for many future bodies.

<https://www.mtcdigitalcreative.co.uk/enter-my-embodied-practice>

Irigaray, Luce. (15 May 1999). *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*. University of Texas Press

Irigaray, Luce. (1993). *Marine Lover of Fredrich Nietzsche*, Columbia University Press

Remember to breathe.



***CALLUM BRADLEY***  
***MARIE THERESA CRICK***  
***FABIENNE FORMOSA***  
***KILLIAN O' DWYER***  
***GEORGIA PERKINS***  
  
***WITH CARO NOVELLA AS GUEST SPEAKER***

*Remnants from the seashore.*

*What has today been like?  
A line.  
We spoke out objectives.  
What do we want to get out of this?*

*I don't feel like writing right now.  
Recording an audio to remember.*





*A collective thinking space.*

*Setting intentions for our time together.  
Our individual projects and shared insights into the PhD  
journey.  
The writing process.  
Cultivating a feedback-rich community.*

*Positionality*

*audiences*

*How does the process of writing feel?  
It is different for each of us.  
Strategy, offerings, how we relate.*

*Our writing routines and our day-to-day.  
Or not.  
Sometimes it is not.*

*The upgrade process.*

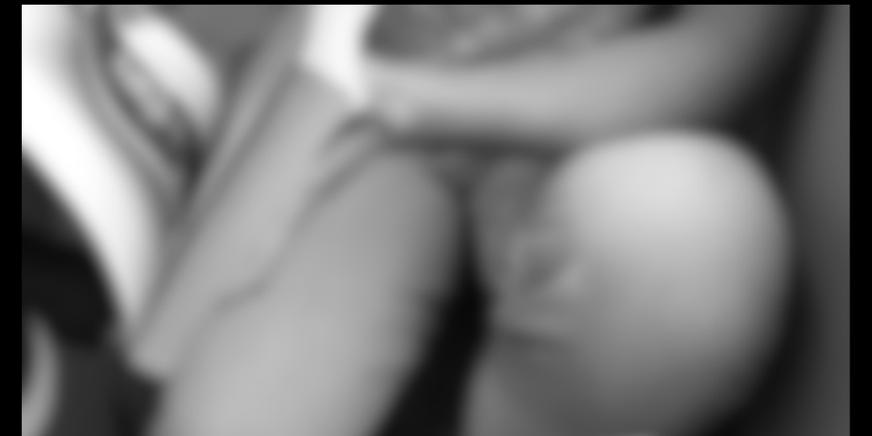
*Expectations - examinations*

*Referencing styles.  
Working with the text.  
How many quotes are too many quotes within the text?*

*Chapters.*

*Quotes.*

*Citation practices.*







*Um, I think for some of us that can be things like activism, but also things like curiosity and excitement and all of those things that also intervene in the rigid structures that constitute the dialectical relation of theory and practice.*

*Handing over Counterfield to the next PhD cohort.*

*What have you received from today?*

*Laughter.*

*A note.*

*Conversations about theory and practice extending from conversations on the train. An ongoing conversation for the day.*

*It keeps popping up.*

*The binary between theory and practice. Is there something more? In the middle or to the side of that binary?*

*Reflections on how to do it.*

*Throwing people into the deep end and stepping back completely.*

*Can we be part of this transition?*

*We talked about people like Anna Tsing, Donna Haraway, Marina Garcés, Patricia McCormack and how these figures play out across our different research. The aftermath of the PhD, career choices, how to build pathways towards academic practice or some other kind of practice and how to combine these journeys.*

*How not knowing and letting it emerge is a part of it.*



*Dinners, swimming and strolling by the sea.*

*Material conditions and how we build up a space together during these days, to write and work collectively.*



*What are the ingredients of that?*

*The cooking becomes a part of our writing practice and personal situations traverse with us while attempting to engage with the labour of writing.*

*Reflecting, listening, mapping,  
thinking, speaking of animals and  
children, non-adult humans, small  
adults, and community spaces.*

*How does our thinking change when certain rules are  
removed? How do we enact care?*

*Presentations, conferences, symposiums.*

*How do we relate to outcomes? How do we engage and  
embody the concept of conviviality?*

*Coming together, reciprocity and accountability.  
Respect and child care in community spaces.*

*It is intense to be sitting together at the same table.  
To realise what it could have been like to go through the  
PhD process and actually have a space where we could  
come together and support each other.*



*I'm already seeing the difference that it is making to my writing, and that seeing has an effect.*



*A collaborative and supportive space.*

*We made night-time wishes on the back of paper stars. Simple cut outs of silver and white.*

*The felt tip markers caused the letters to bleed from one side to the other. I held my paper star close between my hands. I did not want you to know. Not because I did not trust you to respond, but because I could not receive the response itself.*

*A paper wish, a lone star.*

*We went down to the beach soon after, to sit under a blanket of darkness and stars. From pebbles we made a small fire and set our wishes ablaze before a ghost ruin out at sea.*

*Cinders of stars sent out beyond my field of vision, and all I could do was wonder what it would be to share my wish with you.<sup>1</sup>*



<sup>1</sup> A participant's response to a group workshop led by Counterfield contributor Paola Debellis.

## Guest Contributor

We invited a performance artist and scholar to meet us in conversation and through their practice. They shared some material from their PhD beforehand so that we could engage in dialogue with them. Thursday morning, despite several technical difficulties and internet disruptions we share a conversation with Dr. Carolina Novella.

caro novella (PhD), a Catalan-Mediterranean white femme-queer crip improviser, cultivates health justice within lineages of experimental dance, transfeminist activism, and research-creation. Community dance maker and performance artist, writer and art-mediator, Caro's work centers bodily experiments and movement practices as tools to collectively examine structures of inequality and to co-create being well. In 2011 created oncogrrrls (making performance pieces with folks who care about cancer) and in 2019 started co-sense lab (a multi species art lab for collective transitions).

PhD in Performance Studies with a Designated emphasis in Practice as Research and Feminist Science by University of California.

Caro's work has been presented at exhibitions and festivals on Biomedica/Art, Medicine and Dance/Performance internationally. Caro has received support in the form of Art grants and residency fellowships by the Mellon Foundation, Kettering Institute, Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Querétaro (Mexico), Amoqa Queer Art Museum (Athens), Finmatun Barcelona, Emmetrop (France), and the Queer Arts Initiative at Stanford University. Caro has published on performance and health in several journals (TDR, Performance Research, Kamchatcka) and is the coeditor of a recent compilation: *Posologies, transfeminist micro-doses for collective health* in Spanish.

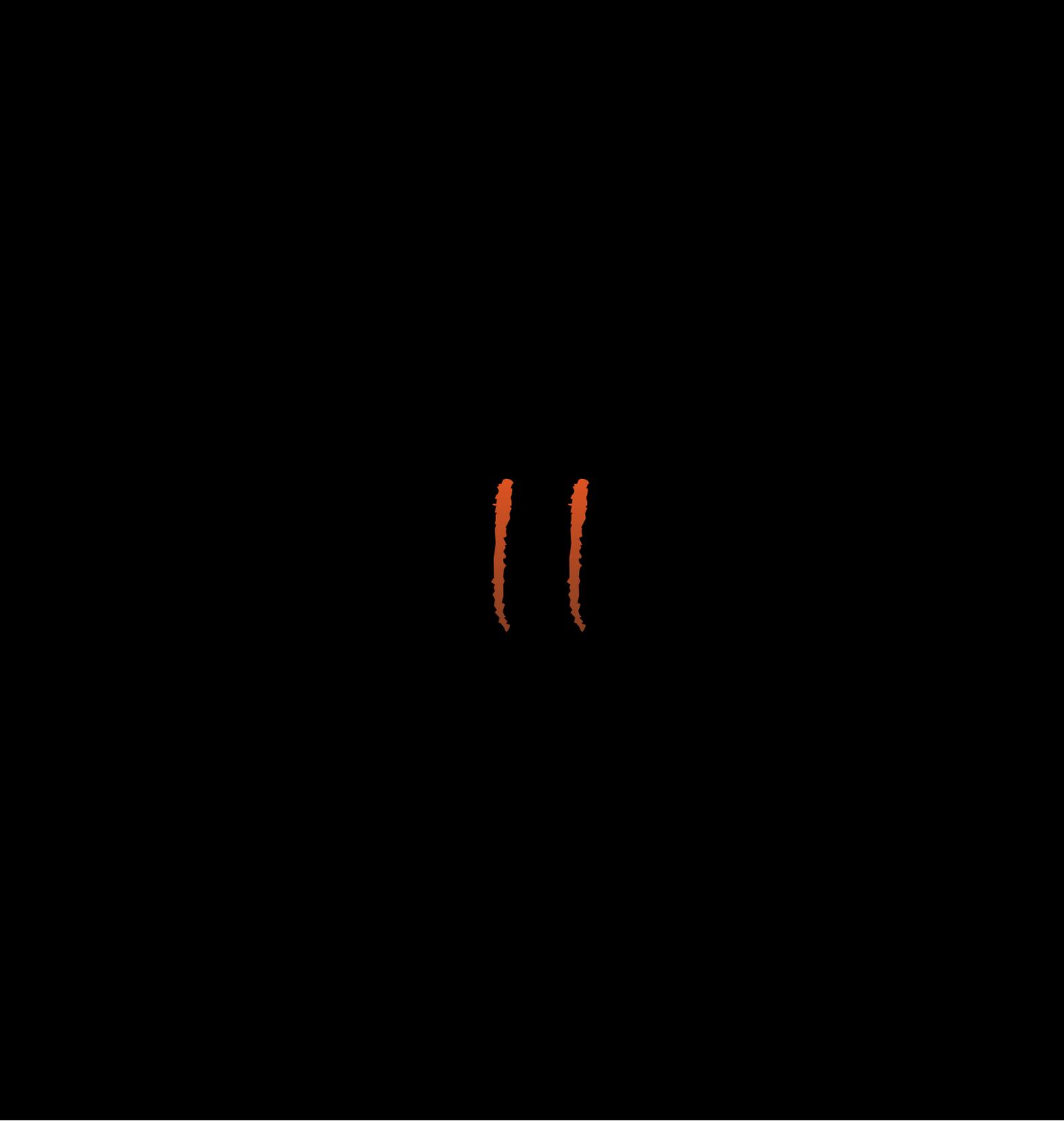
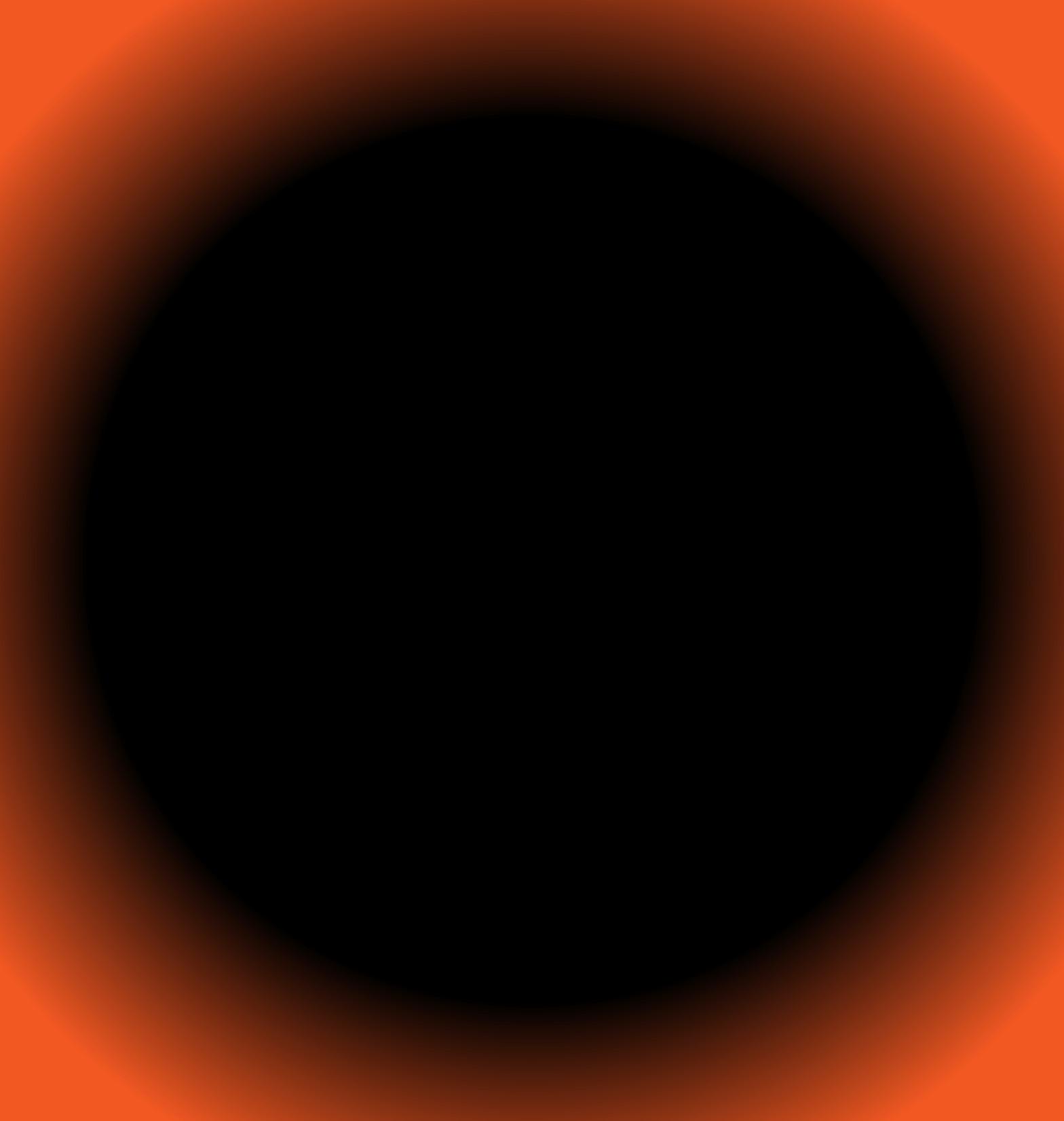
Video -(documentation of an oncogrrrls process)  
<https://vimeo.com/156509359?share=copy>

[https://www.instagram.com/caro\\_novella?igsh=c2g5OGFtaWNqNmsy](https://www.instagram.com/caro_novella?igsh=c2g5OGFtaWNqNmsy)



Still from 'Interrupted Transmissions with caro novella' video.

Full video - <https://vimeo.com/920452008>



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