WARM LIKE ICE

Radical Empathies for Glacial Times

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Royal College of Art
March 2020

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ABSTRACT

This thesis-led research is informed by emotional and cognitive dissonance, arising in response to confronting the experiential magnitude of living in precarious ecological times. In *Staying with the Trouble,* Donna Haraway (2016) invites us to "stay with" the challenges of such unresolvable discomfort. Yet, what is the experience of attempting to do so, and how might this enable generative forms of worthwhile response?

From my own experiences, I witness myself shifting between either feeling 'too much' or 'too little', a paradoxical dynamic leading toward sensations of paralysis, numbness and overwhelm. My research seeks to understand these personal experiences by positioning them within a wider context of Western cultural narratives. It asks, in what ways are such narratives supporting and perpetuating collective states of disconnection and detachment?

My hypothesis is that a relationship exists between *cultural frameworks of time* and *cultural frameworks of empathy* that are limiting my capacity to experience myself as deeply interconnected and interdependent within the world. This lack of recognition, I will argue, has a detrimental ecological impact. I therefore propose an urgent reassessment of the normative constructions of time and empathy alongside an exploration of their creative re-imagination, which I will offer in the form of two possible alternative narratives; Radical Empathy and Glacial Time.

Radical Empathy is an amplified approach to relating with others which draws from, and exists in dialogue with ideas of "kinship" (Haraway 2016), the "suprasocial" (Manning 2013) and "solidarity" (Morton 2017). It forms part of a locus of theory rooted in queer and feminist thinking which is committed to posthuman and nonhuman concerns. Adapted from the work of John Urry (1994; 2011) Glacial Time is an alternative temporality that I am defining as a set of practices and attitudes toward thinking about time. It contributes toward an ecocritical exploration of time (Huebener 2018) that I will suggest opens new pathways for relating within the present, as well as offering new imaginations for orientating toward the future.

In positioning time and empathy as political and ethical concerns, it is my aim to investigate how reductive binary groupings such as 'us' and 'them' can be sustained in ways which enable us to locate 'others' outside of our circles of care and concern. I will assess how dominant linear temporal frameworks further justify and reproduce these divisive relational

configurations, maintaining the conditions for personal and collective dissonance in the process. I will further look for ways in which to challenge dominant forms of temporal logic which forge value systems centred around progress and productivity that bind together an understanding of life and liveliness in ways that I perceive to be harmful. I will then ask how a more radical approach to empathy might instead rewrite the mythologies of containment that create a bounded and separate self, and offer alternative ways in which to orientate toward each other.

I will engage with Radical Empathy and Glacial Time by means of a "doing-thinking" methodology (Gibson-Graham 2008) based in staying-with my own experiences and drawing them into my research to facilitate and support embodied connection as much as possible. In addition to reflecting on elements of my own practice, I will present my experiences of other writers, artists and thinkers whom I understand to be enacting, performing or generating elements of Radical Empathy or Glacial Time in their work. I look to these practices as a means of finding ways through dissonance and paralysis toward an increased capacity for responsiveness and responsibility in meeting the world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'm extremely grateful to my supervisors, Nicky Coutts and Annie Cattrell for their patience, encouragement and unwavering support. To my parents and friends for their love, belief in me and willingness to listen to all I've needed to try and say. To the Movement Medicine & dTc communities who have offered me spaces of heart-led shelter throughout this journey, grounding and inspiring me in ways I could never have hoped to imagine. And to the land, my ancestors, elders, and teachers —may I learn to pass on all I've been gifted, with respect and the fiercest of tender care.

Thank you.

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LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"I like the idea that our best concepts are already here, semi-formed and literally at our fingertips, awaiting activation. Never conceptual fantasy or metaphor, these imaginative 'interventions' (Braidotti 2011, p. 14) describe what we already are, but amplified."

— Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water* (2017, p. 5)

OPENING

"To not have the conversations because they make you uncomfortable is the definition of privilege."

— Brené Brown, *The Call to Courage* (2019)

"Trouble is an interesting word. It derives from a thirteenth-century French verb meaning "to stir up", "to make cloudy", "to disturb". We — all of us on Terra — live in disturbing times, mixed-up times, troubling and turbid times. This task is to become more capable, with each other in all of our bumptious kinds, of response… our task is to make trouble, to stir up potent response to devastating events, as well as to settle troubled waters and rebuild quiet places."

— Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble* (2016, p. 1)

In 1987 Joanna Macy wrote, "our planet is in trouble" (1991, p. 3).[1] I was born just two years earlier— I speak as a white Irish-British woman living in London, England. I would be classed as a member of what has been referred to as the Millennial Generation, those born roughly between the early 1980's and mid 1990's. Millennials have received a significant amount of gentle, and not so gentle, cultural ridicule for our apparent heightened sensitivities, over-emotionality and sense of entitlement, captured by the associated term "snowflake" (see Nicholson 2016).

Joanna Macy's assertion was of course far from the first, for decades many scientists across continents had been voicing various concerns about an increasingly unpredictable and troubling correlation between industrial scale human activity and environmental change. Eunice Newton Foote discovered the principal cause of what later became known as "global warming" as industrial emissions of carbon dioxide, nearly a century and a half ago.[2] If the health of the planet in 1880 or a century later in the 1980's, was in any way "in trouble", it is unequivocally more so today. The latest scientific research suggests there is alarmingly little time left in which to prevent the half a degree temperature increase that could escalate global weather patterns irretrievably, to devastating effect. A recent report from the

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2018) suggests emissions would have to be cut almost in half over the next decade to have any chance of halting the rise in global temperatures for the rest of the century.

Recently, there has been a marked shift in expressions of environmental concern here in the UK which have penetrated mainstream cultural awareness. A youth movement, Fridays For Future (2018) has seen thousands of schoolchildren participate in climate protest initiatives emboldened by the advocacy of founding member, Greta Thunberg. In April 2019 and again in October, several London landmark locations, including Waterloo Bridge and Parliament Square were brought to a standstill over multiple days by members of climate action group Extinction Rebellion (2018). In the aftermath of the protest actions, which coincided with the broadcast of a documentary, *Climate Change - The Facts* presented by David Attenborough documentary (2019), the British government declared a "climate emergency" (BBC News 2019).

As the ramifications of climate change become harder to ignore, they also become significantly harder to compartmentalise. Instead, the types of environmental considerations that in previous decades might have been largely restricted to scientific discourse and geographical study, are becoming increasingly pervasive. As the awareness and experiences of climate change seep ever further into daily life, they seem to require a cross-disciplinary thoughtfulness capable of holding a magnitude of intertwined connections. Following Donna Haraway (2016), I am using the word *trouble* to imply more than any one singular concern. This is to say that I am not at all positioning climate change as unique, separate or more important than an entire spectrum of wider related devastations which include biodiversity loss, species extinction, pollution and health, oil and mineral depletion, nuclear disposal, deforestation and more.[3] Rather, trouble describes a mixed-up disturbance of devastating global events, alongside the troubling, overwhelming and often confusing experience of comprehending and responding to them — the latter being the main springboard for this research.

My research proposes a link between time and empathy. It follows the hypothesis that an inability to understand all kinds of others as sufficiently close enough to us, prevents adequate, responsible engagement with these relationships. It was motivated by the realisation that despite longstanding public awareness, I am wholly under-resourced to address the implications of recent climate science which lay a stark timeline for ecological and societal collapse. This leads me to question the cultural frameworks and narrative

structures through which I've learnt to understand myself as relatively detached from the entanglements of my environment. I suggest that proximity and intimacy shape our ideas of 'closeness', and I seek to both better understand this relationship, and simultaneously to provoke it.

This introductory chapter will present these concerns, detailing the wider context and specific aims and questions that shape my research. It will introduce the relationship that I seek to explore between time and empathy and the two practices, Glacial Time and Radical Empathy, that I am proposing as possible alternative ways to configure those relationships, bringing the question of imaginative capacity to the foreground. It will go on to provide an overview of the chapters while more detailed information related to how I have approached my research methodology and review of literature will follow in the subsequent section "*Doing-Thinking: positions and approaches".*

TROUBLE, DENIAL AND DEFENCE

My relation to trouble is utterly concrete, yet simultaneously it seems it is almost impossible to hold in a coherent grasp. Contemplating the-planet-in-trouble reaches beyond the ontological and epistemological into territories that are also inherently neurological, psychological, somatic and physiological. From a personal perspective, even momentarily contemplating the idea of mass extinctions, or the collapse of entire cities and un-inhabitability of countries, takes me almost entirely to my cognitive limits edges — it is simply too much to take in. Despite an intellectual or rational understanding of climate discourse, a form of cognitive dissonance seems to prevail regardless. When I attempt to gently probe these feelings further I find a deep well of emotional grief that, were I to allow myself to really enter it, I am afraid might hold the capacity to entirely obliterate and debilitate me. Instead I'm left oscillating between numbing out with paralysis or feeling overcome with such intensely overwhelming distress. It is this double bind of discomfort that informs the very core of my research.

In *Deep Adaptation: A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy,* Jem Bendell (2018) describes a psychologically protective "collapse denial" that enables varying degrees of political, cultural and epistemological dismissal of the severity of climate change. As a protective mechanism,

denial acts to maintain the conditions for a stable sense of human identity and our worth in striving onward as living beings. For Jem, "Deep Adaptation" requires a drastic move away from any previous, potentially more hopeful sounding "climate adaptation" agendas (Bendell 2018). While a term such as *adaptation* sounds almost comfortably accommodating, Deep Adaptation, in my understanding is an altogether more unrelenting endeavour which asks us to sit unflinchingly with the inevitability of near-term collapse and its catastrophic implications for global life. It would require us to begin from a place that acknowledges the severity of tragedy, which in turn requires us to overcome the tendency toward denial, even when doing so comes at the expense of our core ontological sense of stability or solidity. It is an adaptation perhaps better understood by means of confrontation; an inherently destabilising encounter that challenges us to turn toward that which is overwhelming us precisely when we would prefer to turn away.

To avoid sensations of overwhelm I draw lines around what I will allow into my circles of consideration; who I'll consider close enough to be of concern. A circle can delineate inclusion and exclusion and it connects to questions of limits and borders. Cyclical movements are also non-linear, and they can suggest a back-tracking or repetitive quality. This quality is an important part of the accumulative development of the themes that I have chosen to work with, and the notion of a *circle* is therefore of great importance to this research and I will return to it often. To attempt to overcome the force field of protective defence that is collapse denial, might the lines that I am consciously and subconsciously drawing around myself become capable of a different kind of trajectory and movement? In searching for responses to this question, and following the project of deep adaptation, I have found myself tracing a path through a set of relationships which pivot around two somewhat unexpected points of focus; *cultural frameworks of time*, and *cultural frameworks of empathy*.

TIME AND EMPATHY COINCIDE

Connecting time with empathy is the notion of closeness, which can imply both the closeness of intimacy, and nearness of time-space proximity. My suggestion is that there are conditions bound to this closeness which act to legitimise my prioritising only the trouble that I understand to be 'close' enough to me. Close comes to mean both those close *to* me and

those close *like* me, similarities formed through physical, cultural or social markers. Reflecting on this leads me to suggest that time-space relations and our capacities for connectivity are shaping each other in ways that contribute to a logic of boundary and boundedness. I believe that I am insufficiently conceptually capable of understanding myself to be always already intrinsically bound to others, and this insufficiency is rendering a significant amount of my interaction with the world inescapably, ecologically destructive.

Much of this is seemingly justifiable, the tree in my local park that I pass each day is something that I have a closer intimate relationship with than the Amazon rainforest that I have only ever seen in pictures. Yet I have also learnt to regularly turn down my dial of internal emotion when feelings related to the far away Amazon escalate too much, or become too unbounded. From a young age, I was told by my parents to eat everything on my plate because *"there are starving children in Africa"* yet also frequently reminded that *"you can't take the world on your shoulders"*. As an adult, I now find myself in further contradictory binds, shutting troublesome things out so as not to shut myself down; I turn off the latest flood, wildfire and hurricane news so that I can write my ecologically-minded research. At the same time, I also shut myself down in order to not shut things out; I read the latest statistics on species extinctions with a cool detachment that doesn't adequately correspond to the gravity of the information. The more I consider the implications of these internal movements which seem to be tied to a careful regulation mechanism, the more complicit I feel in their wider, externalised cultural echoes, and the harm they must implicitly perpetuate. What I see to be at stake is an ethics of intimacy and of proximity in current mainstream Western and Eurocentric lineages of thought and perception that enables an inability to adequately connect or concern ourselves beyond our limits and personal boundaries.[4] In times of trouble, how we shut down, close off, edge closer or pull away therefore become questions of crucial importance.

Empathy, which utilises the imaginative faculties, has been described as "a unique kind of understanding through which we can experience what it is like to be another" (Coplan and Goldie 2014, p. 6). It is one way in which to approach becoming closer with others, as an increase in empathy is an increase in connection; through empathy we expand beyond the self and toward each other. Yet my current abilities to empathise with others have not prevented the kinds of exploitations that contribute toward the states of trouble I have been describing.

Conversely, I seem to be alarmingly capable of dehumanising others in ways that

contribute to ecological infrastructures of ecological violence, while preserving a stable sense of my own humanity and identity. I find it unnerving how capable I seem to be in comforting myself with fragile myths, such as that of *throwing something away*, as if 'away' were an actual place, a bright, clean, solution-laden land that wasn't in fact the urban outskirts of Accra or the North Atlantic sea. This is a painful, embarrassing acknowledgment and yet, I believe, utterly essential to bring to the forefront of theoretical discourse and wider general conversation.

The continued existence of daily life in most contemporary cities is significantly dependent on non-Western lives and locations to provide food, clothing, labour, materials for construction, call centres, warehouses and landfill sites for electronic waste. The continued existence of almost all global life is significantly dependent on nonhuman lives lending fuel, water, food, electricity, metals, minerals, energy and all other kinds of 'resources'. It is well understood by now, yet somehow still alarmingly under-acknowledged, that almost the entire development of the infrastructure of the West was built literally and physically through the exploitation of non-wealthy, non-Western, non-white, non-conforming bodies; human bodies, animal bodies, plant bodies, rock and mineral bodies.

Despite this, I find that it remains entirely possible to shut down within me any real acknowledgement of the depth of such interdependence; an amnesia at once distorting and disturbing in its apparent convenience. My inabilities to fully comprehend a shared connectedness manifests for example in the form of forgetting, or being capable of temporarily ignoring the human and nonhuman lives that are tied to the lithium battery, avocado, laptop, jewellery, leather backpack or packaged sandwich. It appears to also be a kind of cognitive dissonance that enables me to continue to go about my day almost as if the gemstone in the engagement ring wasn't mined by a man whose labour endangers their health, as if the avocado in the dip wasn't the produce of extorted farmers and cartel-threatened communities and as if non-recyclable packaging wasn't certain to eventually meet the mouths of earthworms or sea turtles or hawks. If I purchase goods from unethical trading or eat produce from unsustainable resources I do so by effectively severing a sense of connection to all kinds of human and nonhuman others. I must do this so often within any one day that disconnection surely becomes a normalised and naturalised response, working to protect me from feeling in the process, which would inevitably be a feeling of discomfort.

In finding ways to respond to my place within a troubling present, my suggestion is that our current, culturally specific approaches toward cultivating empathy for each other

appear to be insufficient. Furthermore, it is my argument that they will remain insufficient up until the point that they are also capable of attending to our inabilities to adequately concern ourselves with vastly extended networks of human and nonhuman connection. The capacity to extend this sense of connection is reliant upon an understanding of what is close to us and what is far from us, which is itself mediated through our relationship to space and to *time*.

THE IMPACT OF INADEQUATE CAPACITIES FOR "US"

Our perception of and responses to trouble are always mediated. I understand the intersection between our capacities for extended empathetic connection formed through the cultural politics of time to be playing a significant role in contributing toward this mediation. While ecological trouble may at one stage have felt a non-essential concern far away in the future or geographically far away in the present, it has arguably always been more uncomfortably, unbearably close than we may have been able to acknowledge previously. That it has mostly taken until such a contraction in time-space (things happening closer, sooner, nearer) for the words of Joanna Macy to be taken seriously, is therefore already a troubling reflection. First and second wave messages of planetary trouble such as Joanna Macy's have been consistently side-lined within cultural and political discourse, dismissed as overly sensitive and sentimental (Barry 2007), ideas that I will be exploring in relation to the work of Lora Mathis later in this research. Narratives concerned with interrelated ecological troubles have been paradoxically seen to be non-urgent and non-essential, as John Barry writes, "often a 'green' or 'environmental' perspective is caricatured as something that is… out of touch with the 'realities' of modern late-twentieth century life" (2007 p. 296).

Yet if critical thinking resources over the last few decades have legitimately been directed toward a precedence of social justice and equality issues, it appears that approaching environmental concerns as separate from or secondary to social concerns has only enabled further racial, geographical, gendered and financial social injustices to prevail. Where ecological narratives have been suppressed, complex cultural narratives built upon safeguarding non-renewable consumption and unsustainable social industrial progress have been simultaneously enshrined and reified in their place.

There is a luxury to speculating any great distance ahead when energy is required for everyday survival, labouring to meet basic needs such as food, rent and childcare. Those with the time, space and resources to even think of a future, from a traditionally Western perspective may arguably always have been the privileged few. Yet the idea of an unexamined consensus around what counts as luxury, essential or in fact *real* in any notion of the 'realities' of 'real life' isn't without issue (these are themes which I will go on to explore in depth in Chapter Four). Nor is the seeming neutrality of the futures that are at stake. Far from questions of luxury concern, the effects of climate change consistently affect the most vulnerable and marginalised social groups (Nazrul Islam and Winkel 2017). Even desirable green products and sustainable services, from hybrid cars to bamboo toothbrushes, eco-funerals to carbon offsetting, are all sold at a premium or require a level of initial disposable income that disproportionately affect those least able to pay, perpetuating divisive exclusivity. Over the last year alone, adverts promoting the "greenwashing" of multiple products and services have steadily increased in scope; from banks to supermarkets and clothes stores the themes of minimalism, veganism, organic and fair trade are now regularly splashed across tube stations and TV channels (see Watson 2019). A growing sense of climate related trouble is simultaneously being assimilated, commodified and sold back to us. The depth of the threat held within such a message as "our planet is in trouble" can be distorted, neutralised, and used to generate increased profit through further exploitation.

During the 2019 Extinction Rebellion protests over two thousand climate activists were arrested and prosecuted in the UK for non-violent failure to comply with police restrictions upon the location of the protest (Perraudin, Gayle and Quinn 2019). In the trials that followed, one judge remarked that while it was unquestionable that the activists were moved to protest for the protection of life and prevention of death, these were deaths that were "two, ten, twelve years in the future", the implication being that they are not close enough in time to have reasonably accounted for the actions of the activists (see Sandhu 2019). This notion appears to follow a predictable linearity of thought, which through its normalisation manages to feel entirely justifiable — of course it would be unreasonable to cite future far away death in the exact same way as I might one that is right in front of me here and now. Yet this narrative leaves me with an uncomfortable question, what has occurred within a cultural relationship to time for this to be the case, for this logic to have emerged?

Despite the normative relations that I at first assume to exist between past, present

and future, (one leading neatly on to the other in a linear fashion), on closer inspection the intricate interplay between these modes of temporal existence appears to be far from straightforward. While I have long been aware that history is subjective, remodelled and reinterpreted by the present, rarely have I thoroughly considered the future to be likewise curated. Yet the idea of 'futurity' (thinking towards the future as an orientation) is already embedded in a notion of survival that is based on reproduction in turn justified and maintained through violently heteronormative politics (Edelman 2004). The future we move toward is also tied to a notion of *progress*, which in turn is bound to 'productivity', as I will go on to explore in Chapters One and Three. As such, a censorship of future-based imagination occurs in which possible futures-to-come are restricted to only those that can be used to secure the interests of the present. For the insurance industries for example, the presentation of future trouble is embedded in the language of risk; a risky, troublesome future serves the precarious balancing of calculations that maintain high profit margins. In these risk forecasts of credit and interest that exist in the present, for the present, planetary trouble in the form of environmental concerns that will affect successive generations are somehow rendered harmless.

Barbara Adam (2004) warns against such "extractive" conceptions of a future whose use and value is solely subject to its profitability *here and now*. While Adrienne Rich (1986) reminds me that even terms such as "here" and "now" are themselves already positioned within a "politics of location". The present, here or now, is not and has never been neutral, which is to say that *us* in any idea of the present, as opposed to *them* in the future is already a false assertion. Speech in social and theoretic discourse coming from an unexamined "us" is all too often speech rooted in lived experience that is thoughtlessly white, in conditions that are both consciously and subconsciously taken for granted (Rich 1986). Similarly, "we" is all too often a presumption of Western centrality, a claiming of precedence that both ignores and marginalises non-Western lives and locations. The here and now of insurance and investment, social policy, branding, development and resources incessantly rubs up against the famine, pollution, deforestation, territorial wars, land grabs, tidal surges and drought that happens *over there*. From this perspective, it almost seems as if both "them" and "there" are disconnected locations and not in fact the contrary; entirely connected, consequential, interdependent and coexisting.

The destructiveness of 'we', 'here' and 'now' is not least the rendering invisible of the true diversity of a planetary *us*, human and nonhuman alike, those who hold claim to the

exact same rights of ownership-custodianship granted by the inextricably shared entanglement that is the *our-ness* of *our* planet. I am suggesting there is a flattening of time-space, rooted in and justified by essentially colonial and imperialist cosmological and ideological frameworks of knowledge that limit the possibilities of fully extended empathetic connection. Instead a cultural politics of time is prevalent that outright erases, both literally and figuratively, those lives for whom versions of the past, present and future vary significantly from any dominant temporal narrative. This research asks how to empathetically reach through the arcs of time-space to include more of us, those we deem 'far away' in the present, those of us far in the future, and those of us that are far from recognisable human forms and qualities. It positions and proposes the need for different imaginations of time and empathy, and different forms of relationship between them, as questions of urgent relevance.

NAVIGATING THE DYNAMICS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND HOPELESS HOPE

My own embodied relationship and limitations around notions of connection and closeness I understand to always imply to some extent a reflection of wider social tendencies and modalities of cultural logic. While this research intends to contribute to cultural shifts which in part come through the uncomfortable examination and undoing of personal frameworks of convenience and comfort it is accompanied by an irresolvable tension — any feeling of individual agency is already bound to structural inequalities and constrictions.

I am under no illusion that the consumer choices I have previously referred to are true independent 'choices', nor am I implying a focus on individual responsibility at the expense of structural accountability. Yet it is the layers of complex personal affect and imaginative limitations at play in these dynamics that primarily interests me. I have largely internalised the sense that trouble is operating on scales beyond my control, in part, I believe, because this is a narrative that further serves a consumer paradigm that capitalises upon my discomfort and offers to ease it with more pleasant distractions via the entertainment, fashion, travel, wellbeing and food industries among others. My continued empathetic disconnection in this sense appears to serve a consumer logic which further enables my disconnection.

In focusing on my limitations and capacities for empathetic ecological connection it

is not my intention to fail to hold accountable the structures which legitimise the absence of these connections. Rather, to borrow the language of *hydrofeminist* Astrida Neimanis (2017), whose thinking on water has been a significant influence in my own writing, here talking of their own research, "I do not mean this as an appeal to neoliberal individualism where the onus would shift away from structures and onto supposedly free, autonomous individuals — quite the opposite" (p.17). Responding to trouble, I am suggesting, requires a simultaneous undoing of political, corporate and structural inequalities that profit from my disconnection and overwhelm. My focus is on recognising and acknowledging the interplay; co-emergence and co-dependence as it dwells within *my own body,* and the reciprocal dynamics of external and internal spaces.

It is incredibly significant to state clearly from the onset however that my research does not begin from a premise of hopefulness. It is necessarily, unapologetically grounded in irresolvable dismay and despair and it will not attempt to find conclusions that substantially increase hopefulness by means of making the discomfort of that despair more tolerable. Eradicating discomfort by means of denial, distraction and disconnection are ways in which business-as-usual continues to progress ever onward regardless of the overwhelmingly troublesome consequences. My numbness and overwhelm in turn supports the personal and systemic embedding of these behaviours and strategies of denial, distraction and disconnection. Moving away from such a bind seems to require a sidestep that would also refuse to subscribe to any logical binary that hopefulness implies. This research is categorically *not* therefore a narrative of hopelessness, and yet it does, necessarily, abandon all hope that our way of life as we know it will continue.

To write from within a hope that is simultaneously abandoning hope is to position hope as a means of coming to terms with the unknown and tolerating a kind of uncertainty about how things will unfold over timespans outside of those of any one human being. In this sense to engage with a project in relationship to hope requires an ability to conceive of time and our connection to each other through it, in ways that are decidedly non-anthropocentric, following non-normative or non-linear trajectories. Thinking in this way asks me to engage with the *movement of thought* as a movement of parameters; it is a means of writing through and toward an emergent paradigm shift. Neither hopeful nor hopeless, re-thinking hope is to acknowledge that pessimism and hope are not mutually exclusive, and that one can be a condition for the other. Rather than a contradiction in terms, abandoning hope and remaining life-affirmative are intricately woven together, and abandoning hope

might even prepare the ground from which newly imaginative and affirmative stories can flourish.

Hope is often associated with forward thinking, an optimistic orientation toward the future. Yet, as Rebecca Solnit (2016) suggests, the root of hope is in fact anchored in the past, in the cultural memories of social change that seemed impossible at the time and could not have been foreseen. They draw attention to the ways in which paradoxically cause and effect are very often operating outside of linear time; with one event capable of igniting or relating to another centuries apart in entirely different parts of the world. One example of this would be the way that a Martin Luther King themed comic book from the 1950's, translated into Arabic and Farsi for its fiftieth anniversary edition, helped spark the Arab Spring uprising nearly 60 years later (Solnit 2016).

Abandoning past hope is also then a project that must call into question that which is affirmed through the operation of current hopes. It is irresponsible to use words such as affirmative action and life-affirming, without a critical awareness of what it means to affirm. To talk of hope for the future often assumes a generalisation of what affirmative means to all affected, yet just as the idea of 'future' is a culturally curated set of possibilities, so ideas about preserving the present are also selective. What is it that is being affirmed through a hope that has been socially and culturally perpetuated to be reliant upon conditions of separation and disconnection?

STAYING WITH, SEARCHING FOR MOVEMENT

It is significant to note that discomfort, uncertainty and confusion are *valid* responses when trying to make sense of legitimately troubling concerns. Yet, in re-orientating myself toward discomfort I am choosing to revalue this, to re-assess the role of discomfort within my life. As outlined earlier, when ordinarily faced with discomfort I either feel overwhelmed by distress and unable to act to change it, over time becoming numb to its intensity, or I feel I must move onward through the distress regardless of its intensity, in order to change it. Both require me to effectively detach myself from the sensations of discomfort by means of distraction or denial; I find activities to occupy me and thoughts to focus on which allow me to minimise the impact of this discomfort on my lived experience. Instead, following Donna

Haraway (2016) this research is a project in "staying-with". Donna writes, "In urgent times, many of us are tempted to address trouble in terms of making an imagined future safe, of stopping something from happening that looms in the future, of clearing away the present in the past in order to make futures for coming generations" (p. 1) Yet, if we instead *stay with the trouble*;

> Staying with the trouble does not require such a relationship to times called the future. In fact, staying with the trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as moral critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings. (p. 1)

At first glance, an idea such as staying-with might sound remarkably unremarkable yet I understand it to be an invitation to spend more time within discomfort, without shutting it out or shutting ourselves down, in ways that enable connection instead of disconnection. Staying-with might also at first appear to be a passive and inactive endeavour, in the sense that staying is not often a reactive initiator of change. However, staying need not imply unresponsiveness, it is entirely possible to *stay* without *staying put*. If staying-with is a means of being in "myriad unfinished configurations" that are already in constant flux and change, then there is nothing necessarily fixed or stationary in the idea of staying-with (Haraway 2016 p.1). Rather it might be seen as a means of accompanying and of moving alongside something else, yet outside of a narrative that assumes there must be a leader and a follower. This is a *staying* that is neither active nor passive in any ordinary understanding of these distinctions. Instead it is a being-doing that is simultaneously watchful, witnessing, agitating, situated and expanding.

Staying-with requires an embodied capacity to turn toward rather than away from trouble. It is a creative response from within and through the *undoings* of grief, that does not seek to displace the necessity of that grief and all that it contains within it. I am also suggesting this may therefore require an *extra*-ordinary or radical hope that can resist despondent denial, cynical defeatism or blind optimism. Jack Halberstam (2011) asks "What is the alternative, in other words, to cynical resignation on the one hand and naive optimism on the other?" (p. 1).[5] One answer they offer is to "continue to search for different ways of being in the world and being in relation to one another than those already prescribed for the liberal and consumer subject" (Halberstam 2011, p. 2). The significance of continuing to search, as a movement of hopeful-hopelessness and hopeless-hopefulness, is in the refusal to adhere to a logic of inescapable inevitability that cannot ever imagine, let alone begin to hope for, other

realities. For example, as Ursula K. Le Guin (2014) suggests, "we live in capitalism, its power seems inescapable - but then, so did the divine right of kings". Yet as Jack Halberstam (2011) suggests that when we accept the order of things and internalise them, many other realities and fields of knowledge get discarded and disqualified.

It feels essential to begin to question what version of the present is it that we wish to save and what version of the present are we mourning. Where hope is rigid in its direction — embedded in colonialist knowledge and requiring types of perpetual *forward thinkingness* that mask the past and present violences of gendered, racialized and heteronormative human centricity — then these are arguably hopes in need of relinquishment. In abandoning hope as we have known it or understood it, might space instead also be made for speculative hopes that are also responsive, inclusive hopes?

GLACIAL TIME AND RADICAL EMPATHY, RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My research explores two tools, or *practices*, that I am positioning as entry points into different ways of imagining and engaging with the relationship of time and empathy, and through this, my relationship to trouble, paralysis and a hopeless speculative hope. I am calling these practices *Glacial Time*, an alternative temporal umbrella, and *Radical Empathy*, a hyper-relational stretching of the boundaries of selfhood. I am interested in the extent to which Glacial Time and Radical Empathy can be approached as forms of ecological practice and if doing so might form part of a wider emergent strategy through which we could be encouraged and supported to shift and reposition ourselves in relation to ecologically pressing concerns. It is non-linear connections between past, present and future (such as the Arab Spring example Rebecca Solnit described) that inform my approach to Glacial Time and Radical Empathy. Neither, as I will seek to show, is so unimaginable as to be entirely disconnected from the present, but rather both are an opportunity to stretch and bend into paradigms that might retain accountability for the past alongside taking responsibility for the future.

If staying with is a form of response that could be said to attend to "what is" in order to better come into relationship with "what might be", what I am proposing through my explorations of Glacial Time and Radical Empathy endeavour to resist narrow frames of

progress-orientated "solution". Instead they are attempts to expand into more than I have known or have been capable of knowing up until now and to get closer by extending towards others, along other paths. What does an experiential account of the practice of *staying-with* look and feel like? How can I both think through my relationship to trouble, and enact this thinking in ways that allow these relations to become different?

Jonathan Gosling writes that in the context of climate change and a growing sense of "things falling apart", what is required is "creative adaptation", a way of being capable of creatively constructing new and possible hopes in the future (Bendell, 2018). It takes imaginative leaps to be able to conceive of non-normative movements forward. This idea of creative adaptation forms another core focus in my line of questioning, cultivating increased imaginative possibilities for "what might be". *How* do we continue moving onwards? What creative adaptations are required for us to be better capable of such "staying with", which is to say, also better capable of subsequent affirmative forms of responsive, responsible action that will negotiate the creation of these futures.

My intention is to come into *relationship* with both time and empathy as a means of increasing my ability to respond to trouble within the practices and details of my own daily life. I understand *choice* to be an important factor here: I am actively choosing to imbue my relationship to empathy and time with a questioning approach, to explore both "what is" and "what might be". How are the cultural narratives of time and empathy contributing to my and our personal and cultural relationships to planetary ecological trouble? How might such relationships be imagined otherwise? Can the links that I perceive to exist between intimacy and proximity find a space for creative encounter through *Glacial Time* and *Radical Empathy*? How might this enable such relations to be disturbed and "stirred up" and to re-settle into different formations?

Throughout, it is my intention to provide a space for encounter between time and empathy that might allow both to collapse and collide, rather than to follow a specific trajectory or to fit neatly beside or nestled within each other. A core principle of cyclical interplay and reciprocity underpins this structure, a *becoming-together*. I intend the chapters to progress in ways which reflect the cumulative nature of my enquiry, building over time, through time. The themes I discuss often circle back on themselves, appearing in different chapters at different times as repetitions that are slightly altered with each iteration. The ordering of chapters reflects one possible route through these themes, and is not intended to propose a linear argument.

CHAPTER OUTLINES & INTERLUDES

Chapter One will begin by outlining the narratives which I understand to contribute to the cultural politics of time. It will seek to account for key developments that have led to a dominant, Western temporality, before expanding upon the wider implications and ecological relevance. It will ask, what are the *temporal* conditions of these experiences of separation and disconnection that I have been discussing? Which set of values are enabled through my current relationship to time, which are precluded and why? Chapter One will both expand upon the current story of time as I experience it, at the same time as attending to the practice of time as a cultural process of *storying*, a means of inferring meaning and relations of power. It will look at how time has been storied as "the time" and at how other stories exist which affirm not only the future possibility for other times, but confirm their *current* existence in non-dominant cultural frameworks. A core concern of this research is that of the paralysis found in discomfort. Chapter One questions how time collides with movement to contribute to or overcome such paralysis and how non-normative and non-linear speeds, directions and trajectories might create different paths ahead.

Non-linear trajectories will be further explored in the first "interlude" which will form a close reading of Fabrizio Terranova's film *Donna Haraway: Storytelling for Earthly Survival* (2016).[6] The interludes offer close readings of examples of film work, artwork, performance and writing that have been significant to my thinking around this research. Each example is an encounter I have had within the timeframe of the research, or referencing a past encounter that has taken on new meaning for me within the present, as a result of this research. The interludes are intended to be read not so much as intervals or pauses but rather as trajectories that both simultaneously underline and intersect with the main body of text. They have been formatted to appear slightly different from the main body of text and to make a minor interruption, with shifts in tone alongside variations in length and pace. They are to be read as exploratory environments through which entanglement might be encountered.

Chapter Two will introduce the search for a narrative of empathy that might enable me to become-otherwise in my relationships, to myself and to others. It will firstly explore traditional Eurocentric conceptions of empathy and ask if the empathy I have come to know is in fact paradoxically conditioned by limits and boundaries. It will answer a series of

foundational questions such as what does empathy do, how do we do it, why would we do it, and where does it lead us? It will ask where empathy feels "stuck" in my relationship to it, where are the limits and boundaries of my own empathetic capacities? Underlying these questions is the movement toward cultivating alternative empathetic narratives, as strategies of staying-with discomfort and rather than turning away from others, instead reaching toward them. This Chapter will therefore also introduce an important linguistic and conceptual shift that will be made from the term "others" to the idea of "another", which is tied to an exploration of bounded and unbounded understandings of self and more-than-self. It will be followed by an interlude which includes a reading of a series of artworks by Lora Mathis titled *Radical Softness* (2015) that will also ask, "what makes a person?" while exploring the unboundedness of human emotionality.

In Chapter Three, the ideas introduced in Chapter One will be further developed as "Glacial Time", a term I am adapting from John Urry (1994) will be explored in depth as an alternative temporal framework to the dominant timeframes of "clock time" and "instantaneous time". It will ask increasingly nuanced questions about the relationship between time, empathetic connection, paralysis and 'trouble' such as, can other ways of *being in time* enable other ways of *being with others* in time? It will approach Glacial Time as a creative practice to be cultivated and engaged with imaginatively, asking whether Glacial Time can "offer time back to me" as a material that I can find ways to re-embody for myself. Chapter Three will explore the impact of Glacial Time on dominant value systems that accompany a cultural politics of time, notably speed, progress and productivity. It will introduce the idea of Glacial Time as a space for creative resistance in the form of non-normative actions such as slowing down, standing still and sitting with others in silence.

Glacial Time will also be presented as a way of becoming more intimate with the heightened urgencies of climate change and ecological trouble. To what extent can Glacial Time be both "full of time" and confront the finitude of time itself? Parallels will be drawn between Glacial Time, as an alternative temporal framework, and *glacial times* a term that I am using to describe planetary ecological crises arising from the imminent threat of cataclysmic glacial melt. Glacial ice will be discussed as a means of expanding my thinking around the "warmth" commonly associated with empathy, and "numbness" that can prevent or preclude relational emotional connections. The idea that ice might instead resist linear definitions will be drawn upon to question whether thinking towards speculative futures might necessarily require non-linear and non-forward movement and actions (melting and collapsing will be

briefly presented later as possible examples of such actions). Seemingly counterintuitive questions will again arise around notions of directionality and temporal storying, such as, what if it were in fact a more "productive" use of time to resist productive "progress" forwards? These themes will then be explored in an interlude that focuses on the performative act of remaining stationary and still in Erdem Gündüz's *Standing Man* (2013).

Chapter Four will expand upon the question of whether standing for something means standing against something else, and asks if it might be possible to turn toward without turning away in order to form a more amplified approach to relational connection? Can an active engagement with the idea of empathy be taken to its edges and spill over into something that I am calling Radical Empathy, capable of heightening my imaginative capacities and increasing my experience of interconnectivity and interdependence? Drawing on the etymology of the word "radical", meaning both 'root' *and* 'branch', Chapter Four will position Radical Empathy both at the edge and the centre, a form of non-normative intimacy that is a fundamental underpinning to shared planetary life. The term "radical" will also be used to ask if there are affirmative ways to stay with discomfort that need not involve violently destabilised or destructive displacements more commonly associated with "radical movements". Or is complete conceptual upheaval in fact a necessary requirement for cultural change?

Developing themes raised in Chapter Two, this chapter will engage with the work of theorists who offer important models for thinking through the notion of Radical Empathy. It will explore how an idea such as "suprasociality" proposed by Erin Manning (2013) suggests that in early human development, bodies hold the capacity for intense indiscrimination in which the self is much less a bounded container and more a relational co-emergence in and with the world. From this stance, what might need adjusting in how I define my understanding of my selfhood, how I imagine and story myself *as a self*? Chapter Four will also contrast Donna Haraway's notion of "kinship" with Timothy Morton's "solidarity" to explore how both are subverting cultural perceptions of collectivity and community.[7] Examples of possible ways to reconfigure our boundaries will also be explored through two interludes which focus on human and non-human relating in practice.

Notes

[1] Chapter One of Joanna Macy's *World as Lover, World as Self* is adapted from the Viriditas Lecture given in Berkeley California, 1987 (see Macy 1991, p. 3)

[2] The University of Santa Barbara's 2018 symposium "Science Knows No Gender: In Search of Eunice Foote Who 162 Years Ago Discovered the Principal Cause of Global Warming" helped to re-establish the significance of the work of Eunice Newton Foote and her contribution to climate theory.

[3] For more on these connections the IPBES (2019) *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services: Summary for Policy Makers* is a valuable resource.

[4] It is important to note that there have also been countervailing tendencies in Western culture, largely stemming from a Christian ethic of "neighbour love" which has motivated a host of movements and organisations since the late 18th Century including for example the abolition of slavery, animal welfare, fair trade, medical aid and disaster relief. This crucially adds nuance to any account of Western cultural legacies in order to avoid a binary construction that reduces modern and Western with "bad" ways of thinking, being and acting versus non-modern, non-Western as "good".

[5] See also *Judith Halberstam*

[6] I am grateful to Anna Tsing (2015) and Erin Manning (2009) who have each used a form of "interlude" structurally within their work.

[7] The idea of solidarity as proposed by Timothy Morton, has crucially also been theorised earlier, and with arguably greater care and attention by Val Plumwood (2002 and 1993). That this is not made obvious in Timothy's discussion, is critical to the arguments I will go on to make for an ethics of citation that might truly *enact* collaborative thinking as much as theorise about it.

DOING-THINKING: POSITIONS AND APPROACHES

"It's far easier to deprecate the confounding, tendentious effects of binary modes of thinking - and to expose their often stultifying perseveration - than it is to articulate or model other structures of thought. Even to invoke non-dualism, as plenty of Buddhist sutras point out, is to tumble right into a dualistic trap. I've always assumed that the most useful work of this sort is likeliest to occur near the boundary of what a writer can't figure out how to say readily, never mind prescribe to others: in the Jacoblike wrestling - or t'ai chi, as it may be - that confounds agency with passivity, the self with the book and the world, the ends of the work with its means, and maybe most alarmingly, intelligence with stupidity"

— Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling* (2003, p. 2)

THINKING WITH CARE

When I draw upon the notion of ethics within my research, in positioning time and empathy *as ethical questions*, I intend to mean affirmative socio-political commitment to attend to the themes of my research by *thinking-with*, in ways that invite speculative openings. The possibility for alternative paths of thinking, through an expanded imagination is at the root of my research. Imagination is not restricted to a linear forward direction of the future, but is also capable of playing out across a vast horizontal plane of possible presents which are already in existence. While imagination is often situated within the time of 'not-yet', understanding imagination as creative adaptation brings it into constant dialogue with what is already here. This is also a means of finding generative responses which pay close attention to what is already happening in any given set of conditions, and simultaneously can open out alternative imaginative ways of constructing and occupying these conditions. I am indebted to María Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) whose work on *care* as a "speculative ethics" contributes to my own thinking around the ethics of an imaginative hopeful-hopelessness that I have been exploring so far. Implementing an approach of speculative ethics is not intended to imply a narrowed enforcing of morals (as the term ethics can sometimes refer to) rather it is an expanding, transformative *ethos*, a non-normative mode of thought about 'the possible', a provocation for imagination. The idea of thinking-with as an imaginative, ethical practice is

embedded in the work of Donna Haraway (2016) who writes, "who and whatever we are, we need to make with, come with, compose with the earthbound… It matters what thoughts think thoughts. We must think!" (p. 57). Given that some imaginative visions of the future are inherently institutionally and structurally prioritised over others, I am also then suggesting that there is an ethics of speculation tied to speculative ethics; a criticality attached to the need for implementing non-normative imaginations, for *thinking differently*.

Tied to this, is the aim of considering ways of becoming what J.K Gibson-Graham call a "different academic subject" (Gibson-Graham 2008). Following this line of approach, I understand that becoming a different academic subject requires an embodiment of "doing-thinking"; a commitment to the co-implicated processes of changing myself and changing my thinking, changing my communities and their cultural narratives (Gibson-Graham, p. 620). Within this context, thinking-with can also be understood as a way of orienting to the world as both a being and a doing, a way of simultaneously relating to trouble and of situating ourselves within it. Resisting the correlation between a necessary sense of detachment required for successful critical theorising, I instead seek to perform academic discernment in ways that contribute to a nurturing and generative environment, and which are embedded within the ethics and ecologies of the themes I am researching. This is a striving for becoming an academic subject in an "open, concerned, and connected stance" (Gibson-Graham, p. 620).

Alongside J.K Gibson-Graham, Puig de Bellacasa, Joan Tronto and others I am also positioning this research within a *feminist ethics of care*. Care within this framework is not a moralistic pleasant attitude but instead a highly politicised and complicated terrain of labour and affect. Following Joan Tronto's definition, 'care' includes everything we do to maintain, continue and repair our world, including our ways of imagining it otherwise (Tronto 2017, p. 31). Attending to the imagining of Glacial Time and Radical Empathy, I understand to be a project based in care. Yet rather than my questions being solely drawn from "How can we care more?", I am also following Melissa Atinkson-Graham, quoted by María Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) in asking the more nuanced, challenging question "how do we pay attention to moments where 'how to care' is insistent but not easily answerable?" — it is this distinction that shapes my research. To situate my thinking within a feminist ethics of care is also to think *carefully*, in relationship to care, inviting a reciprocal dialogue. Cultivating an ethics of care in my research involves bringing attention to *how* I'm working, not only what I am working on.

POSITIONING CONNECTION AND DISCOMFORT

One shift I seek to make is to assert an intention to become more rather than less "millennial" in the process of this research. If to be millennial is to be overly sensitive, emotional and entitled, becoming more millennial reflects a desire to paradoxically re-sensitise myself. It is a wish to re-embody my emotions while simultaneously politicising emotionality; reviewing the cultural histories and social contexts which have normalised some narratives over others. Reclaiming a right to sensitivity while re-examining sentimentality I understand to be a cornerstone in re-orientating myself toward my own entitlement, an increased attentiveness to the infrastructures of entitlement and privilege that value some bodies over others in the curation of past, present and future. To do this I believe requires precisely a renewed occupation of the entitlement to feel and to politicise discomfort.

"snowflakes" and "millennials" are targeted as part of a 1.5m recruitment drive, marking out a logic of survival and action based in the protection of those geo-politically closest to us, where kinship is positioned as patriotic fraternity.

(2019) British Army Advertising Campaign, UK Ministry of Defence.

To become more millennial is to recognise my place in the hyper-proximity of digital and instantaneous nearness to others and it is to simultaneously experience the distortions of this same proximity, which enable emotional detachments aided by consumer culture. It is to recognise that such detachment protects me from getting too close to the acknowledgement

that the privileges which serve my life, put thousands of other human, animal and plant lives at stake. To *become millennial* I am suggesting is a drive for greater personal and collective cultural responsibility, which is both a question of dual accountability and of creative responsiveness.

Giving space to my own grief, frustration and confusion I have approached as a means of remaining connected to the very themes of discomfort that I am writing about. Feeling these feelings and bringing them into the central writing of my research, rather than relegating them to the margins as somehow secondary to 'the work' is a way of reframing what counts as 'work' itself within this context. For this I am indebted to the "slow scholarship" of Alison Mountz, Anne Bonds, Becky Mansfield, Jenna Loyd, Jennifer Hyndman, Margaret Walton-Roberts, Ranu Basu, Risa Whitson, Roberta Hawkins, Trina Hamilton and Winifred Curran (2015). Slow scholarship reminds me the question of what 'counts' as work within academia is itself bound to a "counting culture" adhering to dominant temporal values (Mountz et al. 2015). Instead, in becoming more millennial and becoming a different academic subject, I choose to follow the call of slow scholarship to "not shy away from talking about life and how intertwined life and work are" (Mountz 2015, p. 16).

Becoming a different academic subject also involves utilising the timeframes of slow scholarship, less to do with slowness itself, more an increased sense of autonomy over my relationship to time within an academic context. This has led to an increased desire to cultivate speeds and trajectories that work-with rather than against my mental and physical wellbeing and that support my relationships to those within academia in addition to those outside of it. As insignificant and unquantifiable as this may look in practice, it is one small move of many that have formed a part of a commitment to increased transparency within my work and process. With the idea of such transparency I intend to embrace a trespass of the private within the academic context, not in the sense of a neoliberal enforced disclosure, rather as an experiment in readdressing which dialogues are considered relevant and appropriate and which are considered secondary and external.

Attempting to think-with a state of connectedness — to remain connected myself — has meant repeatedly drawing on my own embodied experience and choosing to include self-referential writing as a central component of my research. Stacey Alaimo (2010) discussing Audre Lorde, suggests that engaging in bodily autobiographies as theory is a means of recognising the self as "corporeal, woven into a larger fabric of history, culture and power" (p. 86). Writing self referentially is a way of situating theory in relation to the located

individual, resisting generalisations of 'we' or a falsely neutral 'one'. Following Stacey Alaimo I also understand it to be an insistence of a "bodily immersion within power structures that have real material effects" (p. 86). It is both only ever an individual account, and always an account that is "constituted by material agencies that are simultaneously biological, political, and economic" (Alaimo 2010, p. 86). Stacey also cites Judith Butler who argues that critique "cannot take place without [a] reflexive dimension", since "any relation to the regime of truth will at the same time be a relation to myself" (Butler 2005, p.22).

Attending to the intimate personal is a practice that has long been embedded in queer and feminist theory (see Friedan 196, Rich 1986, Butler 1990, Ahmed 2014). Within this research, writing from embodied self-referentiality is not only a means of engaging with the feminist maxim "the personal is political", but is also a way of attempting to make sense of the uncertainties and complexities that are entwined within this personal experience. My engagement with self-referentiality has not been as a stable support with which I might lean back into an essentialist idea of 'truth' of bodily knowing (which I do not adhere to). Rather, I have turned towards my embodied experience precisely in the moments that have felt to be the most confusing or conflicted. Though I have used such conflict as springboards for exploration and experimentation, underlying this has also been a commitment to increase my capacity to learn to tolerate uncertainty, reflecting the experiential realities of navigating critical and troublesome times, and acknowledging this to be both external and internal simultaneously.

My thinking around the value of uncertainty has been heavily influenced by the work of Jack Halberstam (2011) who suggests that certain forms of not-knowing can be acts of resistance to the assumed certitude of canonical knowledge that follows in Western philosophical traditions. Making sense of my experience through autobiographical corporal accounts might not always appear to offer the kind of rigour that traditional research might look for. Yet Jack reminds me that terms such as "serious and rigorous" can act as "codewords" for disciplinary correctness that "confirms what is already known according to approved methods of knowing", shutting down a wider spectrum of non-normative, creative and imaginative response in the process (2011, p. 6). I have sought out the un-disciplining of my research where possible, so as to reject any strive for forms of institutionalised knowledges that would position themselves as universal, inherent and accurate. I understand

this to be a crucial step toward challenging the infrastructures of knowledge that enable and perpetuate the kinds of systematically questionable logic through which my disconnection and disassociation is justified and maintained.

POSITIONING WITHIN LANGUAGE

Attending to language, and to the theory that shifts my way of thinking through its *use* of language, will continue to be a key component of this research, as I explore places where my own *languaging* can contribute toward stretching my abilities to rethink concepts and ideas relevant to my research. I have made the decision to not make a claim of gender pronouns for any of the thinkers whose work I have referenced, as with only one exception (Lora Mathis whose pronouns are they/them) I have not been able to find a clear statement that outright confirms a preference. This reflects a commitment to not misgender another by assumption alone, which requires both a being-doing practice on my part, and the permeability of academia to yield to these languagings. In place of pronouns I will use either they or them to infer both an individual and a grouping, context dependent. At times this may not make the text entirely comfortable, grammatically speaking, to read. As I understand it, this is a comfort pertaining primarily to the familiarity of this language for some bodies, and it must not take priority over the lived, experiential *discomfort* caused to other bodies by the dominance of such heteronormative structures.

Alongside this, I have also chosen to explore the relative comforts and discomforts of formality and informality regarding my choice to use a first name, or chosen name, over a surname as a primary point of reference. This choice emerged from the realisation that it felt an inappropriate over-formality to describe in detail the movements of Erdem Gündüz in Chapter Three using their surname alone. In contrast, it also feels inappropriately over-familiar to say simply "according to Timothy" instead of "according to Morton" elsewhere throughout this research. On reflection, I realised that the statements I wish to make about ideas such as kinship and solidarity, ask of me to find a different way of referring to others than through the patriarchal emphasis placed upon a surname. How I choose to write about another will always be framed by and itself frame the limits in which I am able to think about them. That said, choosing to use a first name, might itself be read in relation to an arguably

neoliberal move toward enforced familiarities that I would suggest are without reciprocity and sometimes consent. Such, almost fraudulent-feeling, intimacies include but are not limited to, the "Hello, Sarah" of my phone greeting message and the style of relating found in virtual voice assistants such as Amazon's "Alexa".

Ultimately, I decided that the difference I wished to concern myself with was why using a first name felt more appropriate in the context of describing someone related to their movements, body, or sensations, yet when discussing their thinking or theory, it felt more appropriate to use a surname, as is the accepted practice of academic discourse. For me this speaks to a classification I am inadvertently making around what 'counts' as academic discourse and what is marginal to it. This eventually encouraged me to experiment with stepping away from the use of a surname in this way, even though it provokes a level of discomfort within myself to do so — I feel a degree of vulnerability around the acceptability of this move. My thinking around this theme remains to some extent still in process, and to this extent the choice represents a *staying-with* that is not intended to be a solid statement but rather a practice in uncertainty that remains open to development and change.

If this research is to begin from despair, then there can be no ensuing sentence or paragraph that begins with the word "however" in an attempt to balance it out or turn it around or to keep the reader engaged. It can sometimes seem that the linguistic uses of 'however' in critical writing only concedes something precisely to step aside from it; "I am not hopeful… however". This 'however' affords us the opportunity to move things along, to not dwell too much in the discomfort. The ways in which I have previously learnt to write critically using words such as, "nonetheless", "despite", "regardless" feel inappropriate and unwanted given the context of my research, while the grammatical rules I've internalised such as never beginning a sentence with "and", suddenly feel to be a wildly more satisfactory option. Writing from the intention of 'and' exceeds the actual grammatical use and is not at all dependent upon it, rather it is a way of multiplying dialogues and arguments into layers that modify without the need to efface nor necessarily detract. This is also not to say that I am proposing unexamined blanket validations; there are plenty of crucial places where boundaries, breaks and refusals will continue to require the language of "no" and "but".

Moving away from the language of "however" and embracing a practice of "and" also allows for the rhythmic heart-breaking waves of grief that rise and fall in their intensity, alongside the rising and falling of my own capacity to meet and hold this intensity. Where I understand "however" to turn away from discomfort, "yes, and" turns toward, while keeping

open the potential for movement with it and through it.[1] By choosing to move through my writing with the broad intention of "yes, and" there is simultaneously space for birth and refraction alongside such loss.

THEORY AND LITERATURE

One way of challenging a linear production of knowledge is through the theory and literature I chose to reference. My research is necessarily grounded in cross-disciplinary thinking around ecological concerns, reflecting the pervasive ubiquitous nature of the climate crisis itself. It follows a broadening of approach toward ecological thinking that shifts the locus and priorities of the arts and humanities towards urgently rethinking and expanding the parameters of climate related discourse. As previously stated, the notion of a compartmentalised approach to environmental study, solely confined to scientific discourses, precludes an adequate account of intertwining cultural and social factors. The knowledge fields integral to the arts and humanities, especially those that seek to stretch our collective imaginative and creative capacities for responding to trouble, are essential counterparts to any ecological debate.

I am positioning my research within the field of environmental humanities, a "new interdisciplinary matrix" that has emerged over the last decade, combining "perspectives and methods that have already developed in half a dozen or so different disciplines over the last four decades" (Heise 2017, p. 1). The collaborative nature of the environmental humanities is drawn from a set of theories and practices that, while written for specific disciplines such as anthropology, history or philosophy, have become "shared points of reference" (Heise p.1). Longstanding debates within cultural theory around knowledge, power and value are also implicit in anthropocentricity and the positioning of the human, and therefore share links to the environmental humanities.

As an artist and cultural theorist, I understand the environmental humanities to offer a cross-disciplinary dialogue with which I can usefully engage without being a specialised environmental scholar myself.[2] Following an environmental humanities approach I seek to engage with texts that I understand to operate as "shared points of reference" with value and significance for arts based thinking, despite being primarily written for other academic

audiences. This research draws at various times from more distinct and clearly defined fields of study, such as in the work of anthropologist Eduardo Kohn (2013) or sociologists Barbara Adam (2004) and John Urry (1994; 2011). Yet it also relies heavily upon theorists, including Donna Haraway, Erin Manning, Vandana Shiva and Sara Ahmed whose work spans more than one field, or who could be located both within and between philosophy, political theory, feminism, economy, cultural theory, environmental sciences and technologies.

Situated as it is within an arts college, this research will primarily reference visual artworks, writing, performance, media and related cultural events. In doing so it follows others including Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin (2015), Julie Reiss (2019), Sigurd Bergmann and Forrest Clingerman (2018) who are explicitly tying together studies of the arts and the environment within a contemporary context informed by climate crises. I have chosen to embed much of the relevant literature within the body of the chapters themselves. Chapter's One and Two also contain a broader contextualisation of the thematic concepts of time and empathy respectively.

MOVING AWAY FROM "WELL-TRODDEN" PATHS

Living together with the kinds of ecological instabilities we are experiencing, I believe necessitates *ecological* ways of approaching academic study which require collective thinking and being open to learning from multiple directions. Crucially, this research recognises a "pressing need to acknowledge feminist, anti-colonial, and queer thinking more generally as facilitating much of our 'new' ecological thinking", for which I am grateful to Astrida Neimanis (2017, p. 8). The feminisms of black women and women of colour, have taught me about difference as a prerequisite for social justice (see Anzaldúa 1981, Lorde 1984, hooks, 2000). It is with deep regret that I have not been able directly to engage with and include more indigenous thinkers and authors, deferring to secondary sources where available has not been undertaken without grave awareness of the ways in which doing so contributes to an ongoing problem of representation.

I have been encouraged by the work of those forging out a "feminist politics of citation" (Wekker 2009, Hemmings 2011, Mott and Cockayne 2017, Ahmed 2014a) especially those imbuing it with notions of intrinsic visible relationality (Nelson 2015) and practices of

gratitude that joyfully acknowledge that "no one ever thinks alone" (Neimanis 2017, p. 9). Choosing to shift my attention toward alternative narratives has meant consciously stepping away from what Sara Ahmed (2014a) has called a "well-trodden path" of a philosophical canon that has almost entirely consisted of white Western men. On a blog post entitled *White Men* they write, "the more we tread that way the more we go that way. To move forward you follow the traces left behind of those who came before". But in following these traces we only participate in their "becoming brighter" and are also therefore implicated in fading out other traces until "eventually they disappear" (Ahmed 2014a).

There have been numerous occasions in which I have tentatively closed a door upon paths that I could have followed — in the footsteps of Giorgio Agamben, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Michel Foucault, Bruno Latour and Maurice Merleau-Ponty among others. At times, it has required a conscious interruptive diversion in the direction of my research; making decisions to not include theorists whose ideas undoubtedly intersect with my work. Rather than this choice representing a devaluation of the richness of such work, it is a desire to step off the trodden path where possible and to redirect my learning toward posthumanist, feminist, anti-colonial, and queer thinkers from whom a new ecology of material thinking is already well underway.

A significant proportion of the theory I have chosen to reference has also been published within the timeframe of this research. The inevitable insistence upon 'the present' this creates, arguably does more than simply mirror the urgency of global climate concerns. A dominant 'present only' focus can also be co-opted and can contribute to other kinds of temporal blindness. It feels important to remember that nowness can itself be tyrannical, and can reside in moment to moment consumerist pleasure as much as it can also generate liberatory, reflexive bodies of knowledge in the context of practices such as meditation. A preoccupation with the present that promises to absolve us of future responsibilities or the obligation for past reparations, can further a project of disconnection instead of enabling its disassembly. The writing that has most influenced this research I would argue is itself actively engaged in drawing attention to many of these same tensions, and necessarily so.

In Chapter Three I will argue that any idea of the rooted timeless stability of a glacier that might have corresponded with John Urry's conception of the term Glacial Time in the early 1990's, inevitably shifts in the present context of *glacial times*, with the current, increasingly widespread awareness of impending global climate crises. At the present moment in time (December 2019) over 100 flood warnings are in place across the UK while in

Australia there are widespread bush fires on an unprecedented scale. The summer just before I began my research (2015) held the record for being the first time the Earth's temperature rose one degree above pre-industrial temperatures (McGrath 2019). Every year since has seen temperatures close to or above this mark (McGrath 2019). The immediacy of the vast majority of theory with which I have chosen to engage reflects an urgency felt through living alongside these external conditions.

Notes

[1] The language of "yes, and" as opposed to "no, but" stems originally from Improv Theatre communities. See for example Leonard and Yorton (2015)

[2] For further reading and introductions to the field of environmental humanities, see the inaugural issue of the journal *Environmental Humanities*. See also Noel Castree et. al (2014), Robert S. Emmett and David E. Nye (2017) and Libby Robin (2018).

CHAPTER ONE, Part One: A Story in Time

"How to dream ecological awareness?"

— Timothy Morton, *Humankind* (2017, p. 151)

Placard raised at a global youth climate action strike in Barcelona reads "Time is Running Out"

(2019) © Josep Lago AFP/Getty Images

TOWARD AN ECOCRITICAL EXPLORATION OF TIME

Time is everywhere, permeating everything; all past, present and future existence. Barbara Adam, a leading theorist in the sociology of time, writes that time has "suffused knowledge since the dawn of humanity" (2004, p. 3). Yet the phrase "time is running out", which appears

frequently within climate change discourse (see Bendell 2018) necessarily provokes a renewed questioning of the solidity, stability and continuity of time. It speaks to the speed at which plant and animal species are decreasing in number, the rate at which sea levels are rising, and the number of extreme weather events, among many other factors.[1] It is arguably a critical time for engaging with thoughts around time; how to use our time, how to measure what is left of it, how to preserve time or increase the potential for more time. In thinking about the criticality of time, we are required to also be thinking critically; that is, with attention and with care.

A critical understanding of our own place within ecological and temporal contexts is tightly bound together. Paul Huebener (2018) suggests therefore, that there is a pressing need for a "critical time studies" capable of an ecocritical exploration of time. They write "by honing the ability to read time critically, it is possible to better understand how time itself operates socially as a form of power" (Huebener, p. 328). A brief cultural history of time shows that our encounters with ecological urgency are embedded within our relationship to dominant temporal frameworks. Challenging such frameworks will therefore require "thoughtful re-evaluations" that involve examining our assumptions about time, unmaking and reworking our personal relationships to it in ways that might foster greater "temporal literacy" (Huebener, p. 328). The first step along this path is in recognising time as various, multiple, historically and culturally specific. What is at stake, are the narratives we choose to continue to tell about time which quantify and qualify our collective temporal discourses. It is only through choosing to make time an enquiry, that possible imaginative temporal responses can then find spaces from which to emerge.

This chapter will begin by tracing through some of the threads that have contributed to the construction of a cultural politics of time. It will expand upon the relevance of time and time-thinking and show how temporal discourses have shaped ecological practices and the ways in which the dominance of these formations can act to erase or eclipse other ways of thinking about time. It will unpack the connections between time and values of speed, productivity and progress. In Part Two I will continue to investigate how alternative temporal narratives are already in existence, operating in ways which subvert a classical linear understanding of time and the progression of linear forward motion. These explorations of different stories of time will be embedded within the timeframe of the stories themselves, as I search for reflexive moments whereby beginnings, middles and endings might soften, collapse or melt in ways that stretch at my capacity to *imagine* time otherwise.

Barbara Adam (2004) describes the development of our current understandings of temporality, and the ways in which it has come to be normalised and naturalised in the book *Time*. While it is a popular assumption that ancient societies lived in cyclical times embedded only in the cycles of nature there has never been a period in the last three and a half million years in which human rhythms were 'natural' rhythms alone (Adam, p. 75). Although ancient societies were delimited by the seasons (in parts of the globe where seasons were more obviously marked) and governed by changes in light and fluctuations in temperature, their possible "temporal horizons" were "no less complex, sophisticated or extended" Barbara writes (Adam, p. 76). On the contrary, the presence of ritual, myth, burial rites and other traditions indicate a reach further into the future and the past through arresting time via the prediction, performative re-enactment and re-actualising of events. The harnessing of fire enabled further nuances in temporal influence, providing light in times of darkness and warmth in periods of cold, which led to the development of independent societies with intricate relationships to a sense of time and the means to alter and modify its rhythms. Discourses which adhere to a traditional dualism between natural and socio-cultural time, Barbara suggests, are therefore "to be abandoned in favour of more reflexive and reflective synthesising perspectives, where 'people' and 'nature' are better understood to be 'people in nature", a term drawn from the work of Norbert Elias (Adam, p. 104).

The diurnal cycles between day and night were measured first by the moon, and later by the sun, charting the passing of time through various systems based on light and shadow, fire or the flow of water and sand. Time became closely tied to early forms of counting, the naming or numbering of units and their subdivision, providing a means of collective existence through the regulation, organisation and synchronisation of daily social life (Adam, p. 103). Throughout early philosophical and theoretical studies, the ontological status of time appeared to be a central theme of enquiry, including with early Greek, Mesopotamian and Chinese thinkers among others who variously debated the existential reality of time, alongside its measurement, direction and reversibility (Adam, p. 24). Various documented cultures were engaged in a relationship to immortality, whether through acts of heroism or fame that enabled an individual to outlast their physical mortal existence, or belief systems; gods and religions that offered various forms of life after death. The continuation of naming patterns marked out families, clans and kinships, allowing for generational lines that outlived any

individual member (Adam, p. 72). Herbs and medicines could to some extent preserve and prevent decay, maintaining the health and longevity of human bodies and foods, thereby intervening in natural passages of time. Sophisticated crop rotation and planting systems, notably across the pre-colonial Americas (also China, northern India and lands now referred to as the Middle East) attempted to provide stable food supplies through periods of climatic variation, while festivals punctuated the continuum of time by celebrating chosen points within the annual rhythms of seasons, moons and tides (Adam, p. 99). Societies steeped in music, dance and story would also have been actively engaged in the manipulation of time through selecting, editing, conserving and re-working past, present and future themes and events in creative forms.

Early forms of time measurement however came with their own set of limitations; sundials are unable to work in darkness or on cloudy days, water clocks can freeze in cold temperatures, and sand and burning sticks require constant supervision and attention. In Medieval Europe, a shift to measuring time with mechanics occurred slowly over a period of more than 400 years, culminating in the emergence of *clock time* which in turn "seeped into the fabric of social life and spread across the globe" (Adam, p. 114). Historian Lewis Mumford (1955) notes that with the invention of clock time, categories of time and space underwent "an extraordinary change", whereby practices of timekeeping shifted toward time-accounting and time-rationing, leaving no aspect of life untouched (pp. 3-9). Medieval merchants increasingly required a more accurate and stable measurement of time in order to successfully conduct their business. However, a fundamental change in the measurement of time became a change in time itself. Mechanical clocks and bells that "called workers to labour and merchants to market" created a 'chronological net', tying time to order, and order to daily life (Harvey 1989, p. 228).

Without clocks, timetables and calendars, and even mediated through various forms of human intervention, 'nature' was already a "demanding task-master" (Urry 1994, p. 135). Social life required adherence to temporal rules such as times for planting and harvest, times for increasing responsibility from childhood to adulthood, hormonal times for fertility and conception, and timescales for pregnancy, varying illnesses, and overall human and nonhuman lifespans. Time derived from non-mechanical sources may not have been any "less pressing, less prescribed, or more 'natural'" than the onset of mechanical time (O'Malley 1992, p. 344). Yet, the crucial shift became the way in which mechanical time signalled a change in the *authority* of time.

Previously, those given authority in relation to time had been predominantly working in the service of kings or gods. Sundials and time measurements had been kept near to sacred sites, while ties between time practices and the world of spirit, transcendence and eternality held firm. In Medieval Europe, the church was the "keeper and guardian" of time, in charge of the calendar and any of its modifications (Adam 2004, p. 126). Yet, from something considered outside of human jurisdiction, time later came to be seen as the primary domain of productivity, associated with efficiency and profit, a linkage that so underpins contemporary life and is so entrenched in its daily rhythms it is challenging to imagine it otherwise. From the first discussions around biological evolution onward, time shifts even further away from the Western church and into its own authoritative domain.

Measurement by the clock was an abstracted twenty-four-hour system that operated independently of the variations marked by solar and planetary cycles. The emergence of clock time allowed for the "integrating together [of] biological, physical and human processes", a unifying concept that operated at dramatically higher levels of synthesis and abstraction. (Urry 1994, p. 135). Clock time involved the breaking down of time into "a very large number of small, precisely measured and invariant units" that were no longer embedded in social activity, duration and meaning (Urry 2011, p. 185). As Europe transitioned into industrial time, enabled by the increasing dominance of the clock, social and cultural time intersected even more acutely with economic and political value. In the mid 1700's (*Gregorian Calendar*), Benjamin Franklin, 'founding father' of the newly colonised 'Americas' is famously supposed to have said, "time is money" (see Villers and Meider 2017). If time is money, then time costs money and time makes money, while money can buy time and buy ways to spend time. To understand time as equated with money is to become aware of the accumulation and spending of both, to pay attention to their distribution, and to be concerned with efforts to extend or contract their use. Questions around the value of time emerge, whose time is valuable to whom? Those with money can "buy labour-saving devices and purchase the time of others in the form of skills and services" (Adam 2004, p. 127). Within such a paradigm, time becomes a primary resource.

Time infused personal space, the singular village timepiece gave way to domestic clocks in every home and later to personal watches, diaries, schedules, calendars and so on. Through the precise timetabling of workplaces, schools, and most leisure activities, time was reconstituted as a "resource to be managed", something that can be "saved, deployed and

exhausted" (Adam, p. 186). This led to a permeation of discourse that positioned time as something in need of organisation, monitoring and regulation. Speed took on a heightened level of relevance and value, providing opportunities to modify the duration of time spent on activities in various forms of workplace production, construction, travel, cooking and so on. The positioning of life became increasingly orientated toward the future, through financial saving societies, long-term planning and the development of the field of work into the notion of 'career' (Urry 1994, p. 133). Alongside this came the shaping of value systems and cultural ideals, a cultural emphasis placed upon accuracy, efficiency and punctuality.

The clock changed the meaning of time. While it did not eradicate the "experiential understanding of time as change, growth and ageing, seasonal variation and differences between past and future" it supplanted "the focus and centrality of these themes towards questions of quantity… divisibility and precision" (Adam 2004, p. 114). Clock time was therefore in some sense de-temporalized; independent and self-sufficient, where one hour is the same as another, irrespective of context or content, disembodied from events. The use of time as an abstract exchange value, is *only* possible when it is decontextualized. Yet under these measures, not everyone's time is of equal value. The time of children, the elderly, the unemployed, carers and full-time parents, the time of those with illness and disability, the time of those experiencing trauma, recovery, grief and addictions, subsistence farmers, all those whose labour is considered 'unproductive' or are not remunerated, are "rendered invisible and their time decreed worthless" (Adam, p. 127).

A time empty of situated differences, is also then a time that can be applicable anywhere, making it suitable for exportation across the entire globe; a colonisation *of* time and a colonisation *with* time. By the beginning of the twentieth century (Gregorian Calendar), Railway Time became 'Standard Time' later morphing into 'World Time', establishing a universal measurement irrespective of its universal suitability or desirability. World Time categorically erases the vast historical and cultural cosmologies of localised, specified times it sought to replace. While this change sparked significant resistance and debate, the values associated with "artificial and commodified" Westernised time, continue to be "imposed as normal on societies who organise their lives according to different temporal principles" (Adam, p. 136).

The globalisation and rationalisation of Westernised understandings of time are embedded in the realm of the unquestioned and unquestionable, further cementing their effectiveness within dynamics of power. Those that seek to deviate from dominant time, to

challenge its associated values or to critique its development are frequently met with incredulity. The English Luddites, a faction of nineteenth century textile workers rebelling against the social implications of industrial progress, are an interesting example, pointing to the pitfalls that await those who drag upon the path of dominant time as it marches forwards. The Luddites destroyed mill machinery as a form of protest against what they understood to be the devaluing of skilled artisan labour and subsequent unemployment. The movement was quickly suppressed by legal and military force, yet the term "luddite" remained, and is now synonymous not only with anti-progress and anti-technological advancement but also, significantly, with lack of intelligence and stupidity (Adam, p. 136). Terms such as "backwardness or "slowness" have derogatory associations, to be "slow" is to be socially unacceptable, open to ridicule or disdain. Again, these examples support the hypothesis that cultural relations of time are operating on levels that always run wider and deeper than the most immediately visible and obvious.

A TIME OF VARIOUS TIMES

How we occupy our present, extend ourselves into the past, imagine a future and choose to manage and organise our time are, through their relationship to power, therefore political and ethical issues. Within the seeming impartiality of seconds, minutes and hours, our individual bodily experiences of time have always been, as the work of Barbara Adam has helped to clarify, "seething with differences" (2004, p. 116). An hour in prison, a minute of manual labour, a year in a refugee camp, a second of famine, all form temporal discontinuities which refuse to adhere to any exacting externalised count of time. Yet in English, we say "the time", as if it referred to a singular, coherent entity. Referring to *the* time is so naturalised within my speech that questioning it feels to crack the very fabric of my understanding of reality. Time has a certain *just is* quality to it, a normalisation of such breadth and depth that it appears almost entirely unshakable, unchallengeable — time, *just is*. David Harvey notes that "space and time are basic categories of human existence… we rarely debate their meanings, we tend to take them for granted, and give them common-sense or self-evident attributions" (1989, p. 201).

Within my own life, the experience of time is all too often unquestioned and

unchallenged, and as such my engagement with time is almost entirely uncreative. I follow the passage of minutes, hours, days, months, years, decades with little sense of connection, empowerment or agency. This seems a wildly impersonal way of relating to time, especially considering the deeply personal emotional responses contemplating time can ignite within me. Time can infuriate me, overwhelm or seem to swallow me and I frequently find myself fighting time, mourning it, or berating it. Yet rarely do I consider that instead of my own contortions and adaptions around time, perhaps time itself might be made changeable instead.

While I don't find it a challenge to accept that academic years differ from financial ones, for example, my explanations for this and other temporal differences rest purely in the difference of changes of perception or interpretation. Time itself remains untouched, an inescapable "arrow of motion" firmly rooted in an overarching, objective yardstick of measurement (Harvey, p. 203). Yet my relationship with time also reflects enormous variability. I know that it can appear to pass more quickly or slowly depending upon my level of engagement in an activity, with my physical and emotional state both additionally contributing to changes in my perception of speed and duration. I can recognise, too, that markers of time alter across continents. It makes little sense for it to be 2019 AD in non-Christian counting countries (Gautama Buddha died 543 years earlier than Jesus of Nazareth and so on). I have celebrated Chinese New Year in February, Islamic New Year in August and know that there are thirteen month calendars in Ethiopia, five day weeks in Java and eight day weeks in Burma. I also once celebrated a birthday in South Korea, where I aged a whole extra year on top of the annual increase I'd come to anticipate, jumping two digits ahead of myself in the blink of an eye.

Humans, as all biological beings, are not only affected by the time, but are ourselves also offbeat clocks, dynamic and diverse as we move in time both internally and externally. For this reason, our collective, vibrant and varied experiences of time contribute toward what Barbara Adam (2004) refers to as "time know-how"; experiential knowledge that can be mobilised for creative use. Rather than *the time*, instead time is more appropriately approached as a collection of multiple practices and experiences that continuously take shape through a process of negotiation (Huebener 2018, p. 327).

Social anthropological research such as that of John Urry also shows "enormous variation in the meaning of time and in the degree to which words denoting time feature within the languages of different cultures" (2011, p. 180). Temporal practices and experiences

are formed through culture rather than existing untouched somewhere in a contentious realm outside of social construction. These theoretical perspectives are not limited to the field of social humanities, but are corroborated by mathematicians and physicists, including Steven Hawking (1988) who states, "there is no unique absolute time, but instead each individual has his own personal measure of time that depends on where he is and how he is moving" (p. 5). This might obviously include distinctions such as work time, leisure time, family time, private time, but also more subtle variations, such as virtual and digital time-spaces, literary and mythic time, and the hazy temporalities of memories and dreams. In George Gurvitch's (1964) seminal work on time, *The Spectrum of Social Time,* eight further "time dimensions" include the more dramatic sounding 'erratic time', 'deceptive time', 'alternating time' and 'explosive time', and as far back as ancient Greece distinctions made separations between *chronos time* and *kairos time*. Time is and has always been, a question of *times*, definitively plural.

That I find it so challenging to shake from my thinking a propensity to claim *the* time, reflects an internalisation that can only be inherently and pervasively imperialist. Striving to better educate myself on how different societies, cultures and histories have cultivated different cosmologies of time may be one first step toward broadening my experience of time, but alone it is not enough. Barbara Adam (2004) suggests that,

> It is important to challenge the idea of a single and objective sense of time or space, against which we can measure the diversity of human conceptions and perceptions [and] insist rather that we recognise the multiplicity of the objective qualities which time and space can express and the role of human practices in their construction (p. 203).

While this distinction may at first appear subtle, its emphasis is significant. Crucial as it is to restructure the production of temporal *knowledges* by acknowledging the multiplicities of time, what is further required is the implicit recognition that time is always already mediated and produced, alongside our orientations towards it, through our material, social, political and economic processes. If each distinctive mode of production or formation embodies a "distinctive bundle of time-space practices and concepts" then these practices and concepts will likewise co-constitute a feedback loop (Adam, p. 204). Within such a feedback loop "power relationships are embedded in the social construction of time and space, while themselves being conditioned by the time-space formations that characterise society" (Castells 2009). Time is not and has never been neutral. A dominant temporality reflects and supports a dominant cultural framework. *The time* protects the histories and timelines of some bodies while ignoring, erasing or violating those of others.

I am particularly interested in how feminist and queer thinkers of time have long

insisted that a linear, progressive conception of time and history is rooted in heteronormative and male/masculine privileging styles of embodied experience, bound to Western philosophical traditions. Many writers have already made links between time and feminism (Davies 1990, Forman and Sowton 1989), time and heteronormativity (Edelman 2004, Halberstam 2005), time and race (Bhabha 2006) and time and infrastructures of ideology (Castells 2009, Mumford 1967). Alternative temporal frameworks have already been explored as ways of subverting the dominant temporal narratives, including "monumental time" (Kristeva 1981) "slow time" (Honoré 2005) and "aleatory and interruptive time" (Bianchi 2012). As Emanuela Bianchi (2012) writes,

> temporality is at stake in numerous dimensions of our lives: embodied, phenomenological, familial, historical, social, academic, metaphysical, and existential. None of these are reducible to one another, yet they arguably form a complex in which the temporal textures of other kinds of lives – women's lives, queer lives, non-Western lives, black lives, subaltern lives, trans-lives, disabled lives, or even lives beyond the human or animal – are often suppressed and rendered invisible (p. 35).

A failure to capture the multiplicity of possible orientations and ways of time is also therefore a failure to capture the multiplicity of possible orientations and ways of *being toward the future*. "The time", places us blindly on *one* path of progression while ignoring both the creative alternatives that are also already in motion, and those with potential to emerge. Our narratives around time, ways of being in time, relating to time, conceiving and creating time, are not inevitable or fixed, and beginning to challenge them has far reaching reverberations.

Notes

[1] See also the field of "extinction studies" in environmental humanities, especially the work of Michelle Bastian in Deborah Bird Rose et al. (2017) *Extinction Studies: Stories of Time, Death and Generations.*

INTERLUDE

~ THE SEQUENCING OF A DONNA HARAWAY STORY

Donna Haraway: Storytelling for Earthly Survival (2016) is a film directed by Fabrizio Terranova. It is a portrait of Donna Haraway and their way of thinking, storytelling and being in the world. Less an illustration of thinking, I would describe the film as also participating in thinking; it thinks as Donna does, and it thinks alongside, a thinking-with — a story of thinking and a thought on storytelling.

"So I took the train up and I landed at Princeton Junction" … the first words Donna speaks to the camera are a beginning that is already somewhere a little closer to a middle. Joining at this part of the story, those watching are unsure if it is an answer to a question that has just been asked, or a slice of something larger that has been running for some time already. It is not clear yet if finding out is something that might even matter. This is an unfolding now. To follow the story as it continues its movement, there is remarkably little time to consider how or why or when. We are here, and we are now charting the history of orthodontics.

Soon we learn, that the model for a perfect orthodontic bite, is not in fact human at all. Instead, unexpectedly, it comes from a being that has never walked the Earth at all, a Greek God, sculpted in stone. A moment later, a fly arrives and lands on Donna's head for a few seconds before they reach up to scratch and it buzzes away. The wind is moving some strands of hair, hands wave rapidly, large at the front of the screen, animating Donna's voice with gesture. There are metallic creaking noises somewhere out back and the camera that is filming this scene is ever so slightly unsteady, not uncomfortably so, but nor yet entirely still.

I am thinking of stories. I am thinking about three stories, a story of time, a story of connection, and a story of stories. I am not sure if there is a temporal order these stories arrive in, nor am I sure if one story contains the others in a more spatial structure. I suppose if I were to try at making this clearer I would likely say that the story of stories, how we tell stories, holds within it stories about time and about connection. Yet the stories we tell about time are already shaping the way in which we tell the story, already suggesting there should or could be a departure, somewhere to go, and an end. So, the story of time is also held in the story of connection, of how things adhere to other things, the ways in which things come together and find form.

Suddenly there is an overlay image of an octopus, colourful and bright superimposed on a night sky, then again on a day-lit forest. "The other part of storytelling…", Donna begins to say, "it has been considered improper to be interrupted". Cayenne, a friend sat at Donna's feet is barking. Donna gets up to leave the table, while the camera stays focused on the empty chair. Moments before, Donna had been talking of their father's love of storytelling, of the intimacy found in detail, the inheritance of stories that are not whole stories, and how whiteness as an apparatus permeates every detail of every story in the conquest ranches of the American west. I am looking at a woven Navajo basket, a photo frame and cuddly soft toy squid. Cayenne reappears, now in footage from several years ago, jumping over fences in an agility competition or game.

A little later, Donna is listening to a recording of their younger self speak, sometimes smiling, sometimes raising an eyebrow. Younger Donna says, "It seems to me the cultural critic is faced by a world that looks very much like tangled balls of yarn, and that one way to approach the situation is to pull on a thread and begin to untangle the ball of meanings, and begin to trace through

one thread and then another, what gets to count as nature for whom and when, and how much it costs to produce nature, at a particular moment in history, for a particular group of people."

> *I am thinking about time and story and connection while listening to Donna talk about inheritance and story and kinship, watching the books they are holding up from their bookshelf and hearing of their conversations with others, and the thinking they do with others, the others they are thinking with.*

They are sat in a house that was built with friends, lovers, family, and there are photographs of this construction process shown now layered on the screen. The house I live in is built, the thinking I think with is built. In many of the scenes there are stacks of paperwork piled high, things have not been cleared away or tidied up for the camera, they are instead left visible. There is tangible clutter, a collaborative *livedness*, they exist amongst and in relationship to things. While sat in the library, Donna says, "I feel like everything I think, I was introduced to through networks of friends".

Attention is given here to situated relationship, non-heteronormative, non-reproductive and non-speciesbound. Animal paws, leaves, light, fur, wind chimes, breathing and birdsong are all given time and space to take up their own room. Things accompany each other, neither harmoniously nor adversely, there is situated ambiance, a lot of rustling noises, including also Donna's stutters, "umms", "ahhs" and "I don't know", moments of familiar everyday uncertainties that are at once also intimate. In several scenes the camera is handheld, providing just enough unsteadiness as to make the film feel humanly material, humanly fallible; polished yet managing to retain something 'not-quite'.

Throughout the film, interruption is not only tolerated but actively included; a skipping record is left to play for a full couple of minutes, jumping

and dissonant yet not uncomfortable or jarring. Sometimes Donna is talking to the camera and then will also simultaneously appear sat on a garden chair outside reading a book, or typing at a computer in an adjacent room. Other times a background will split, a table that was at midway height has risen and is now half way up the curtains, while another monologue that begins in one room continues seemingly oblivious to the fact the chairs, desk and wallpaper have now changed.

Things are on the move, thoughts, language, threads and bodies, shifting both horizontally and vertically. Yet there is also a sense of rest and space for pauses; there are night skies, night sounds and time given to the breath that rises and falls as Cayenne is sleeping. Time is passing yet at other times also diverging there are non-linear arrhythmic fluctuations from day to night alongside other transitions, transposition and iterations. Motifs such as the octopus appear several times in different forms, as a soft toy, on a T-shirt, as a painting. Likewise, Donna herself multiplies, diverts and tangents. There is an everydayness to this, an ordinary complexity that makes us feel as though the jellyfish tendrils that are now trailing across a box of tissue are the most normal thing in the world.

Many of these transitions happen in the blink of an eye, and while they are not always completely seamless, nor yet do they ever feel wholly sudden and fragmented. There is almost a continuity to the discontinuity, a feeling of something remaining cohesive, as if this is a world in which there is simply another set of gravitational rules. A story is being accumulated, rather than tracked in linear progression. There is a surrealism operating here, and its construction echoes the construction of other things, made visible and apparent. The film stretches at my perception, encouraging and inviting me to use my imagination.

For several minutes a bloom of jellyfish occupy the screen, mesmerizingly intricate and transparent. The textures of the scene, gossamer fine threads amongst bright plankton glimmering as dust particles in sunlight, give a sense of ephemerality. Yet there is nothing fleeting in fact, in these movements that take time to unfurl and create slow, deliberate contractions and expansions. If there is delicacy there is at once also the resilience and flexibility to move so fluidly across the water. There is nothing in these creatures that seems flimsy nor liable to break, and whose tendrils appear to act as multiple points of information, multiple feelers that make ripples out in their world.

The jellyfish are captivating, and utterly evasive; in constant flux, I am unsure if I am watching an embodiment of total simplicity or undefinable complexity. I am glad that I am given longer to watch them than I think I would have assumed ordinarily appropriate within this context. The scene lingers and I linger with it. I feel curious noticing the slight unease when I find myself wondering how long the scene will last and when it will move on. I am glad to be forced to question whether I am bored, and to find that I am not. I am just unsettled somehow by this unexpected duration, it manages to destabilise me momentarily, nudging me off-centre. I'm suddenly not entirely sure where I am in the story, and I can't exactly trace how I got to here, to the jellyfish, after an agility show and books and a sparrow song slowed down eight times to bring it closer to what the bird ears will hear. Listening to the sparrow song, as now watching the jellyfish tendrils, I am acutely aware that there are other worlds in which stories of time and of connection exist within entirely different frameworks than my own, that there are other peoples, other animals and other plants, substances, and beings that story the world distinctly. Whose time is not of my time.

Donna begins an explanation of how, in their understanding, paralysis (also a kind of mesmerisation) emerges from assuming we know how the world works, and lose the capacity to question the totalising effect of stories or assume that there aren't already other stories in play. They talk of the trap of capitalism and of anti-capitalist critique which both bind us into a blind belief that nothing else could ever really be possible, "the stupid thing is to be so mesmerised by the smartness of the latest analysis of capital that we lose all sense of what is really important in the world, to learn how to tell another story, to add to the work of those who are already storying otherwise." A worthwhile undertaking, from this perspective, would be to work to make the less visible, less prevalent and weaker stories become stronger, at the same time as making the stronger stories weaker, by destabilising their hold. Paralysis shifts when the mesmerisation of old stories is broken.

The film closes with Donna's voice reading a fictional story to a black screen. Just before this, Fabrizio Terranova's voice is heard for the first time, saying that the green screen shooting is "finished at last", as they bring a large ball and some other green objects to the table which in turn capture the background visuals. This kind of 'behind the scenes' reveal would usually signify the shattering of a sense of illusion, and yet in this moment it almost has the reverse effect, only seeming to add to the playfulness of a flexible and porous space-time reality. The illusions instead feel collaborative and emergent, invitations for curiosity, possibility and potential. Donna holds a smaller object up to create a third eye on their forehead before covering up their entire face with another, exclaiming with joy, "Oh good, holes in being at last!".

Screenshots from "Donna Haraway: Storytelling for Earthly Survival" show multiplicity and nonhuman companionship

(2016) Fabrizio Terranova © Icarus Films

(2016) Fabrizio Terranova © Icarus Films

CHAPTER ONE, Part Two: A Story in Time

"We cannot know, when looking at a lifeless shell, that it contains a living being."

— *Kālikā Purāṇa* verse 22.10-13 (Shiva 2016a, p. 40)

CONTAINING STORIES, STORYING CONTAINERS

A story is a being, a thing which creates, acts and constructs, it works upon us as we carry it within us — but how to carry more than one, or possibly conflicting stories? Stories are carried through time, passed on through the generations. We relate a story, relaying it over time and carrying it across space. Yet stories also seem to carry time, in the sense that they transport the ideas of one era into another, recreating the past in the present and shaping the possible imaginations of the future. The stories we have received through our inheritances shape the types of societies we live within, not only culturally but psychologically and somatically, our brains and our bodies are steeped in received narratives and respond to the world accordingly. In *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction,* Ursula K. Le Guin (2009) attends to some forgotten, unsung stories; devices which provide physical support carrying something else; "A leaf a gourd a shell a net a bag a sling a sacks a bottle a pot a box a container. A holder. A recipient." It was the things that hold other things, these receptive vessels used for holding nuts or water, bringing vital energy home, that were likely the earliest cultural objects, perhaps even before hunting tools.

Carrying, holding and transporting are also particular expressions of care-full energy, they require effort, a degree of attention and intent. Ursula writes, "We've all heard all about all the sticks spears and swords, the things to bash and poke and hit with, the long, hard things, but we have not heard about the thing to put things in, the container for the thing contained" (Le Guin 2009). In 1986 when *The Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction* was first published, Ursula sought to frame the story of receptivity as a new way of retelling dominant cultural histories. Some thirty years later it seems just as imperative to not only learn how to tell new stories in

ways that do not erase others, but also to recognise that there are other stories already in existence and with them other ways of becoming-with the world that differ significantly from the more recognisable, dominant ideologies.

Photograph of a shrine to paper goddess Kawakami Gozen in Echizen, Japan (2017)

Not long ago I was told the story of Kawakami Gozen, a Japanese goddess of paper-making who, over one and a half thousand years ago, taught the people of the Echizen province how to make paper from local mulberry plants, having taken pity on them for not having any rice paddies (Aoki 2016). One day, after this teaching, the goddess suddenly disappeared, only to be seen later climbing up a nearby mountain to the top of a local river. The name, Kawakami Gozen, means "the upriver princess". It is a translation that refers both to the place Kawakami Gozen is said to live and to the role the goddess has within the paper-making community as the source of their water. During the paper sheet forming process, Kawakami Gozen is sung to with traditional songs that are passed down through paper-making families. It is understood that this singing not only keeps them alive over the

passing of time, but also calls the goddess into life; Kawakami Gozen exists in the present, while still residing at home at the river source. They are of the river and are the river, and so they are also the source of the paper, whose materiality is tied to this water, embedded within it. Local papermakers regularly ring a bell at a shrine dedicated to Kawakami Gozen, the sound carries so that it might be heard, and on festival nights, along the flow of the river, the goddess is said to return in spirit form. Through song there is also prayer, story, celebration and gratitude. Singing to Kawakami Gozen is a way of recreating them in the present while simultaneously anchoring the singers themselves in the landscape of the past.

Paper-making songs such as those embedded in traditional Japanese culture also share some similarities with the *songspirals* of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, indigenous to the islands now known as Australasia.[1] Both encounters with song are ways of being and a doing; they both sing about and create the thing they sing about in the very same breath. Operating outside of strictly linear time, it could be said that these are songs that bridge temporalities, except this would still adhere to the logic of a past and present that could be distinct and separate. Perhaps then, the songs attest to a *folding* of time, where temporalities operate more like different modalities, slipping into each other on more of a horizontal axis rather than within a vertical template of progression through which the past could be somehow left behind or the future never arrived at.

The source, the top of the river is where water bubbles up from below land, and it is an often muddy place. I usually understand "source" to mean origins, roots, the past, where something begins, deep downward, deep backward and deep beneath. In contrast I walk into the future that is lying ahead of me, and recognise the path I've already trodden as the past, where I've come from as all that I already know. And yet, following a reverse axis, the Aymara peoples of the Altiplano regions of South America point behind them when speaking about their future, and indicate in front of them for the past (Núñez and Sweetser 2006). [2] Their understanding is that the past, which they've already lived through and so is already known, has therefore been seen and so folds out in front of them. The future is unknown and so unseen, and therefore arrives from behind their backs. For Pormpuraaw Aboriginal peoples, indigenous to the area now known as Queensland Australia, the past is always in the east regardless of the orientation of their body (Boroditsky and Gaby 2010). Rather than something to point to behind or in front, it is instead tied to a physical topography and to the rising sun. In Gua, Papua New Guinea, for the Yupno communities it is the river who fashions time into a journey that travels upward and downward in a kinked line across a

mountain landscape (Núñez et al. 2012). The future is uphill, both in the general direction of the idea of source, and uphill specifically, following the curves of the Gua mountain, it might twist to the right or left depending on where you were stood. The past, travelling similarly, flows downhill, toward the sea. Returning to this idea of source also appears more complex than at first look; in addition to a backwards motion, the source as a beginning also brings a sense of forwardness, rising upward, moving onward, ascending. At any imagined source then, past and future seem to collapse in upon each other in an almost enchanted present with origins both stretching back into ancestry and propelling future life forward simultaneously, downward with the river, upward with the bubbles, downward with the root, upward with the shoots. These varying approaches to the spatial axis of time each pose genuine questions about the relevance of how to move through the world while receiving and reproducing our lineages of stories.

Jay Griffiths (2000) writes that Jainism in the sixth century (BCE) describes an "ocean of years" as being one hundred million times one hundred million "palyas", with each palya accounting for a period of "countless years" (p. 9). Within this length of axis, individual actions seem almost utterly inconsequential and phrases I am used to hearing such as "a drop in the ocean" or "every little counts" appear to float aimlessly, rendered into parody. Similarly, figures such as four and a half billion, an estimate of the years passed since the first appearance of liquid water, the source of all evolved life, can seem so abstract that I find them to be numbing, empty numbers bouncing off me, *"like rain from a duck's back*". Comparably, human life expectancy in Western Europe averages thirty thousand days, which makes trying to conceive of the twenty-four hours of any given Mayfly life span just as challenging.

These are currents that shift relentlessly between too big and too small, scales of hugeness and tininess intensified, almost to their undifferentiated deletion which acts to distort my ability to find an experiential connection. Why should we care enough to recycle a single water bottle, when the oceans contain approximately five and a half trillion particles of plastic floating already — what is the use? (see Shim and Thomposon 2015) These are questions rooted, for me at least, in grief-stricken loss that can in turn feed a sense of apathy and hopelessness. As the weight of such numbers sinks through time and beyond, we can also move tens of thousands of years into a future where containers encased in glass and concrete lie deathly still upon the sea bed. The nuclear waste that has been disposed in the oceans since the 1940's is contained within materials, mostly metals, that have a shorter life

expectancy than the radioactivity they are carrying within them (see Ringius 1997). These containers will not hold.

Comprehending this act, which will consume physical time itself from future generations, a decision that risks erasing the entire cumulative existence of nearly all sentient life, is also painfully hard to do. Stretching the mind through such scales of time, the body can sometimes enter a kind of vertigo, swimming in this ocean of years can feel like grasping for solidity and something tangible, it can become increasingly difficult to locate oneself. The experience of comprehending vast expanses of time can invoke many different, often paradoxical sensations; I find a deep sense of tangible bodily situatedness and connection to the present arises from a radical acknowledgment of my insignificance in the bigger picture of past and future.

If time is the baseline narrative and undercurrent to all relationships which exist through and within it, then the spatial development of time is not only the direction it moves, but in which we also accompany it. Yet when the story is one of direction itself, "how do we continue?", can be a question that leads instead toward a state of immovability, as the idea of finding ways to respond often feels confusing and overwhelming. In trying to move onward, it can easily feel as though I am uncertain of how or where to move at all — a sense of paralysis to which I referred at the beginning of my research.

As alternative accounts of directionality, such as those of the Pormpuraaw and Yupno attest to, every turn and step is of considerable relevance in our ways of storying the world. Therefore, even choosing *where to turn toward,* which way to begin to face (and where to locate our signals for the future) becomes politically relevant when time is an index of power and a reflection of historic and cultural specificity.

A NARRATIVE WITH RECIPROCAL MOVEMENT?

Finding oneself confronted with paralysis is a theme that emerges often in traditional folkloric narratives, where a protagonist reaches a place in a journey upon which it seems they can neither go forward nor go back, but are effectively stuck which is also to be anchored, or rooted in place. In these circumstances, stories from my childhood such as *The Three Feathers* (Brothers Grimm 2007) suggest trying out some variation of staying where you

are and beginning to look more closely at the space around you. Through remaining in place, previously unseen or unaccounted for options might begin to emerge.

Irish Celtic cosmology, also a feature of my own upbringing, points instead toward a whole other spatial orientation, known as the fifth direction. In addition to the four cardinal points, north, south, east and west, the fifth direction is traditionally in Celtic lore also the place from which stories and storytellers emerge (Rees 1961). Not unlike the logic embedded in Aboriginal songspirals, the fifth direction is both the home of the story and it is the story itself. In a very tangible sense the act of storying becomes the story, as those who consider themselves the land are entirely from it and of it, interchangeable and porous; the story creates the land to walk upon and the land in turn breathes life into the story. My idea is that these kinds of lateral, rather than linear forms thinking offer alternative approaches to the problem of troublesome paralysis, enable new movements through it in ways that I will return to explore later in my research.

Jay Griffiths (2000) writes that the movement of *flow* has often been a primary metaphor for time, tying it to images of water such as the sea, which they recount is poetically known as a "clock of ages" (p. 9). The idea of flow at first seems to be diametrically opposed to the *stagnancy* that feelings of paralysis can invoke (and problematic phrases such as "just go with the flow" I would suggest hold equally dangerous capacities for structural erasures). Thinking of time as a sea is to invite a manifold rhythmic quality, as a shoreline lapping in ever present nowness is contrasted by depths that hold an unchanging sense of eternity, unaffected by the waves above. At any given moment, there is a tension between the surface in some degree of movement and the seeming stillness of the ocean floor. Mi'kmaq society, indigenous to unceded territories now known as Canada's Atlantic providences, use the image of a river instead of a sea to describe the processes of life as a flow of happenings — Jay's understanding is that they do not have any other specific word for time than this description (2000, p. 10).

A river along its journey has many movements and many speeds, sometimes faster at the edges, sometimes doubling back upon itself, sometimes pooling, with mosses, tree logs, rocks, animals, weather formations, moon cycles, all contributing to its rhythm. Occasionally it swirls into a whirlpool that is both stillness and motion, time arrested and time passing. Isabelle Stengers and Ilya Prigogine refer to this a "dissipative structure", a moment of holding, yet one made from flow — energy must flow through it to maintain it, but the energy is also the container itself (1984 cited in Griffiths 2000, p. 133). In thinking that there are as

many ways for time to move as water might, space is created in which conceptual shifts can be explored, producing other kinds of stories, in which not-moving and moving are not in opposition but in relational co-creation. These are stories which highlight the idea of reciprocity, a movement which is both backwards and forwards in rhythmic exchange.

In the Atharva Veda, a Sanskrit Hindu scripture, a full and overflowing vessel hangs above time (see Atharva Veda). The vessel itself is timeless and time flows from it, eternally replenished from its source. The vessel is so full as to be overflowing and yet is also empty of time, timeless. This idea is resonant in the emblem of an empty begging bowl used throughout Buddhist imagery as a symbol of interdependence, the openness to receiving is also an openness that is understood to be a giving of oneself at the same time. The bowl is here a vehicle of fluidity allowing energy to ceaselessly flow between giver, receiver, food and bowl which are understood to be one and the same; through their interdependence they are in fact varying states of inter-being, different modalities. The reciprocal cycle of gifting and giving back creates a sense of inexhaustibility, a source which both feeds and is fed.

One such story of reciprocity is told by Lewis Hyde (1999) in *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*. It offers a re-telling that is cited as being informed by the Kwakwaka'wakw peoples indigenous to unceded territories now known as the Canadian Pacific Northwest Coast.

> … the salmon go about in human form while they are at home in their lodge, but once a year they change their bodies into fish bodies, dress themselves in robes of salmon skin, swim to the mouths of the rivers, and voluntarily sacrifice themselves that their land brothers may have food for the winter. The first salmon to appear in the rivers was always given an elaborate welcome. A priest or his assistant would catch the fish, parade it to an altar, and lay it out for the group. The first fish was treated as if it were a high-ranking chief making a visit from a neighbouring tribe. They sprinkled its body with eagle down or red ochre and made a formal speech of welcome, mentioning, as far as politeness permitted, how much the tribe hoped the run would continue and would be bountiful. The celebrants then sang the songs that welcome an honoured guest. After the ceremony the priest gave everyone present a piece of the fish to eat and threw a piece to the water. Finally… the bones of the first salmon were returned to the sea. The belief was that the salmon bones placed back into the water would reassemble once they had washed out to sea, the fish would then revive, return to its home, and revert to its human form. (Hyde, p. 27)

Here the bones represent the portion of the fish given back to the sea, which also needs a share of the produce in order to reproduce; hungry overfishing would not afford the length of time needed for a river to replenish its reserves. Surplus also arises when movements of reciprocity stop; profit is that which is taken out of circulation and held in reserve rather than passed along. That a community might choose over time to plan for and create some degree

of surplus seems to be a logical decision based in arguably careful thinking, in climates of relative uncertainty and vulnerability. The processes through which a source becomes a resource and renewable reciprocity gives way to non-sustainable paradigms are part of wider, more nuanced economic shifts. Significantly however, there have also always been different cultural frameworks through which to make sense of these stories.

The idea of surplus or spill over finds an almost mind-bending twist in other tales, also recounted by Lewis Hyde from the histories of the Kwakwaka'wakw Nation. Within traditional gift economies, as practiced in the region prior to colonial settlement, an individual was considered successful if they controlled the flow of property and wealth *away from them* rather than inward toward themselves. A wealthy person was therefore defined by a reverse-axis understanding, running counterintuitively to any contemporary Western notion of capitalist individualism. Ceremonial names given to such peoples of success included "He who gives blankets while walking" and "He who dances throwing away property" (Hyde, p. 81). While this may at first seem to some extent comparable to the levels of status achieved by those capable of huge charitable donations in contemporary Western society, it is in fact not comparable because the logic operating through these actions is not the same.

Lewis Hyde writes that the very idea of accumulation in any quantity would have been "unthinkable unless it be for the purpose of an immediate redistribution" (p. 36). The Haida peoples, culturally and geographically linked to the Kwakwaka'wakw had regular feasting events called potlatches which were referred to as a means of "killing wealth" (Hyde, p. 9). The word potlatch is of Chinook Jargon origin and means "to give away". Wealth here is not something sought after, or rather, it has a different kind of logic running through it that adheres instead to a culture embedded in other understandings of reciprocity and exchange (in this case cultures embedded in complex economic models of gift-exchange). Looking out for these stories then, helps to confirm that modern dominant ideas have always existed only as one version of a many-stranded thread. Yet some ideas, capitalism among them, are often inflated to such an extent that they dominate and obscure other possible lived truths. Other ways of storying, such as those contained within ceremonial potlatch have been deliberately and often violently obliterated in the process. [2]

Stories which tell of reciprocal movements, such as that of the Kwakwaka'wakw salmon, also act as a way of including humans within wider nonhuman cycles with nonhuman agencies; those of the rivers, forests or seas. The idea of nonhuman reciprocity may at first seem to be a kind of *anthropomorphised* mythology. Yet keeping humans on the outside of a

reciprocal cycle, in roles that are more akin to a detached overseeing of a 'natural' resource can lead to arguably more mythological-like actions, such as a bountiful water reservoir that does the unthinkable and runs itself dry. Environmentalist Vandana Shiva writes often of the violences of sets of assumptions based around one way of telling the story of passivity and production, that permeate throughout modern Western thinking (Shiva 1990; 2016a; 2016b). They suggest that in most 'development' work carried out by Western corporations in India, "it is assumed that production only takes place when it is mediated by technologies for commodity production, even when such technologies destroy life. A stable and clean river is not a productive resource in this view. It needs to be "developed" with dams to become productive." (Shiva 1990, p. 191).

These are assumptions that position nonhuman ecologies as largely unproductive in and of themselves, only 'made' productive and 'put to use' through human intervention, engineering and infrastructure. They are also assumptions that value the ecologies and economies of some human lives over others, those who are "sharing the river as a commons to satisfy the water needs of their families and society"— primarily women — are not even considered as actors within the story, because they are not deemed to be involved in productive labour (Shiva, p. 191). Building dams for example to provide for cash crops such as sugarcane plantations, will routinely flood the land upstream and dry up the land downstream. They argue that it is a reductive mind-set that "treats the river as a linear, not circular flow, and is indifferent to the diversity of soils and topography... ignoring the invisible flows of water underground" (Shiva 2016a, p. 184). Rivers consequently experience a loss in nutrients, an imbalance of saltwater and freshwater, killing aquatic life, plant life, soil life and the lives and livelihoods of local communities. Thinking-with a river for Vandana Shiva is a means of undoing both patriarchal and colonial stories that normalise and naturalise our understanding of concepts such as profit, productivity and progress defined by just one lens or framework of reference. Stories of 'development' Vandana renames "maldevelopment" in critique of their disregard for the multiple other simultaneous stories of sustenance that co-exist with the river, and co-create reciprocal and regenerating life that are just as valid and just as worthy of complex consideration as any other (1990, p. 192).

When considering themes of paralysis and feelings of stuckness, looking toward non-normative movement is of great importance. Forwards and onwards need not follow the same trajectory. Thinking only in more normative forward orientating or linear stories without also making room for reciprocal or non-forward movements appears to impact

significantly on many areas of human to human and human to nonhuman relationship. The tripartite narrative of progression through a story, neatly from beginning to middle to end is itself neither neutral nor universal. Narratives of productivity for example, are often also exclusive to able bodies, as a division takes place between those able to 'keep up' with the expectation of pace in certain kinds of movements, and those less able to. Questions of speed quickly fold into questions of 'use'. Gillian Giles writes that

> within the economic and social landscape, the bifurcation of the normative abled bodied citizen and disabled one creates an assumption that a proper citizen is an able productive one, that the economic and social value of personhood is conflated with restrictive notions of productivity. The result of this binary is that the disabled body is rendered as other, less useful then simply as just less. (Giles 2019)

Questions of speed of movement and visibility of activity seem to be dangerously centralised to our stories of value and importance, and beneath this any idea of progress is therefore never neutral. If I experience paralysis when considering forward motion, *onward* motion in the form of multiple non-normative possibilities, including directions that circle back or circle round, might better align with my concerns.

An understanding that life is "matter in motion" is attributed to the writings of sixteenth century philosopher Thomas Hobbes (Bennett 2009). It is an observation that generates several misperceptions, in part because looking at a crab scuttling makes it much easier to see the apparent 'life' in the crab than watching a barnacle, seemingly inactive attached to a rock. Considering the 'life' of the rock, can be even more challenging. Things that move with movements that are imperceptible to the human eye often appear inconsequential in comparison. This is arguably also the case for a body of water such as a river, the louder and faster it is, the more overtly 'alive' it can seem to feel. Victoria Lawson, writing about economies of caregiving, suggests that through labelling some forms of labour as 'productive' and others as not we perpetuate the myth that "our successes are achieved as autonomous individuals and as such we have no responsibility to share the fruits of our success with others" (2007, p. 5 cited in Mountz et al. 2015). Instead we adhere to a story whereby largely only the successful version of ourselves is presented in isolation, erasing the scaffolding that holds up this version of ourselves, the parts of our stories that are about our co-dependence. In the storying of a river, the co-dependent agents that are excluded from consideration in any ongoing narrative are often a part of this same scaffolding; the river is always already more than itself.

Beneath the prevalence of dominant narratives that position the value of life in relation

to its capacity for overt productivity, stories of slowness, non-movement or non-linear movement could be seen to be potential acts of cultural and political resistance. Dismantling these stories of productivity also requires holding to account the temporal narratives that enable their progression. What feels to be at stake is an ability to increase a capacity of conceiving of different, perhaps especially slower, longer or wider frameworks of non-linear time. In an Aboriginal Dreaming landscape no longer singing a story that accompanies one route along a river will stop you from being able to recognise that route, which in turn is understood to directly impact the *very topography* of the land itself (Norris 2016).[4] A corresponding driving principle is also at the root of contemporary research in *neuroplasticity*, the understanding being that we can create new neural pathways, therefore new means of imagining, by choosing to walk along different thought-paths (see Davidson and Lutz 2008). The more we redirect our attention toward other ways of telling stories we can begin to refrain from feeling obligated to repeat some of the old stories that no longer serve the realities we hope to live within.

Notes

[1] Songspirals are land and sky based oral maps that have also been referred to as songlines (see Chatwin 1987). I have chosen to use the term songsprials instead of songlines, following the terminology that is used by indigenous Australian authors in the paper *Bunbum ga dhä-yu t agum: to make it right again, to remake* (Bawaka Country et al. 2019). For more on the culture and use of songspirals see also Norris (2016).

[2] See also Australian Aboriginal understandings of 'country' and temporality in Deborah Bird Rose, *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics for Decolonisation* (2004).

[3] In 1887 the Parliament of Canada passed a law banning all potlatch activities, and participation or organisation in a potlatch became an arrestable offence (see Thomas and Green 2007). The ban was lifted in 1951.

[4] Dreaming has previously been mistranslated and incorrectly conceptualised as "Dreamtime" see Deborah Bird Rose (2004)

INTERLUDE

~ PIXEL LENT: BEING WITH SNAILS

Elizabeth Saint-James and Cyril Leclerc's *Pixel Lent* (2018) is a six-hour durational performance whose 176 performers are *Helix aspersa maxima snails*. Known as "gros gris", from the Helicidae family, these particular snails had previously been raised for the culinary industry, a delicacy particular to French cuisine; part of the cultural inheritance of the artists. While the contribution of these performers to the performance is undeniably non-consensual, both artists make assurances in the accompanying promotional material that the snails have been studied for signs of stress and are understood to be under no undue physical duress, though it is unclear how this has been measured.

On the back of each snail is attached a small LED diode which emits a singular white light, forming a small dome of visibility around their front, similar to a head-torch effect. The light moves with the movement of the snails, whose heads are regularly turning from side to side in incremental gestures. Reminiscent at times of the way a lighthouse scans light across a landscape, the snails create an interplay of pattern and shadow in an otherwise darkened room. The dim lighting seems to make the audience more aware of itself, I feel a need to make careful deliberate movements, creeping around so as not to accidentally step on a snail. I notice others have also lowered their voices, and in this quietness my attention sharpens. There is a sense of fragility, vulnerability in the 'performers', which magnifies the sheer size and relative power of the audience in comparison. A single step of human weight, would be a death.

The audience are invited to stay for as long as they choose over the six-hour duration. There is nothing to do in the room, except watch the snails make

slow and seemingly laborious progress along their individual trajectories occasionally crossing paths with another, or with an obstruction on their path. Most of this movement takes place across the floor, though occasionally someone will intervene and lift a snail up onto the wall, where the light then projects in a more three-dimensional way throughout the room.

Snails with LED lights move across the space in "Pixel Lent"

(2018) Elizabeth Saint-Jalmes and Cyril Leclerc image courtesy of the artists

The lights channel the focus of the audience, drawing us in and tugging at our attention until it somehow becomes more challenging to *not* watch the snails. The lights do not disturb their activity, only encourage its visibility. Imagining the snails in natural daylight, I am surprised by the amount of movement the light picks up, drawing attention to what seems to be a continuous movement of their heads, searching the space ahead of them, that I am not sure I would have noticed to quite the same degree otherwise.

The snails progress slowly, in the sense of their forward motion across the floor, and yet there is considerable quickness in the two set of tentacles, whose sensor cells provide the snail with a perception of the environment and are vividly active, perhaps especially so in this artificial environment. The body of the snail is also in a state of near-constant flow, expanding and contracting by means of a sliding motion over the floor surface, which causes their shells in turn to rise and fall.

There is something about this steady persistent continuity that makes the snails seem almost unstoppable, and therefore far removed from the initial perception of fragility and vulnerability that I had at first assumed. There are many ways that I could choose to stop the snail in its tracks if I chose to, yet I am left with the distinct impression that at the first available opportunity the snail would simply set about its path again, pick up where it left off, proceeding ever onward undeterred.

Snails with LED lights move across the space in "Pixel Lent"
(2018) Elizabeth Saint-Jalmes and Cyril Leclerc image courtesy of the artists

An improvised music score fades in and out; long drone sounds made by a Tanpura (Indian string instrument) accompanied by a French horn reverberating throughout the space. The music is dramatic and conjures a feeling of intensity and suspense, transforming the movements of the snails into something closer to an event. Together with the lights, the music enhances by means of capturing and focusing attention, making it harder to pull my eyes away.

The droning tones of the Tanpura feel meditative and reverent, while the horns make sounds reminiscent of the start of a race, hunt, battle or war. There is something challenging in the music, dense and almost ominous. I am reminded of the way in which crowds circle and gather around when they watch animals for sport, fights or competition that invariably involve some kind of suffering.

With the shadows of dogfights and cockfights now hanging over the room, I am even more aware of my own size, height and weight, the dexterity of my hands and arms that can lift another thing, holding onto it, forcing it. I am aware of the ways in which, rather than the size of my teeth or venom or claws, it is my mind that is an instrument for killing an animal, the capability of my thoughts and imagination to find means to plan and practice a killing, or to domesticate and master.

While the music implies we are waiting for something to happen, nothing does. The suspense never reaches a climax, no goal is met, there is not a race being played out or a success to be achieved. Instead, I am left with this feeling of *ongoingness*. The snails amongst the shadows and the sounds seem now to be even majestic, larger than their dimensions. I alternate my gaze between a singular snail, detail, texture, and the combined picture of them here together, pattern, formation. Each persists on an individual trajectory, there is very little

visible interaction between them, yet the snails (all 176 of them) give testament to something collective that seems almost monumental, an ongoingness, within and despite human behaviours and environments; a survival. I remember that snails can pull several times their own weight, and I am suddenly surprisingly moved by the metaphor that a snail carries its own shelter, a place of refuge upon its back.

I have become careful in this space with the snails, not only cautious, but careful. I am interested, able to watch them for much longer than I might have imagined, and surprised how much there is to see and to notice. It has been easy to *lose myself* in here and lose track of the passing of time. I am slowed down, coming to meet the speed of the snails. Crouching upon the floor I am reminded of how children are sometimes capable of watching things with heightened fascination, an ant carrying a leaf, a spider eating a fly, moving their heads in close, using eyes, ears and hands to be touching, feeling and interacting. Reading a media review of the performance later, I see the exact same comparison has been made; there is something about watching the snails that alters a perception of time and attention, in the words of the review to "seduce visitors into a new relation with space and time" (Jeffries 2018). The lights, the sounds, the snails *are* seductive. The sensations within my body when I finally leave the performance are also seducing me, a steady sense of quietened mind and long slow breathing, that I long to keep hold of.

I feel relaxed whilst also highly alert and as I move through the busy streets on my way home I have an embodied sense of a different temporal relationship to the environment around me. I am navigating speeds and space differently, flowing through crowds without familiar tightness and constriction, waiting before the traffic lights change instead of feeling the urge to push into my legs to make them rush across a road. I feel expansion in my chest and spaciousness

in the bus on the ride home that I am unused to within this context. I feel situated in my body, aware of the sensation of my feet present on the ground as I step, aware of the air around my nostrils. A relatively short time spent with the snails has had a lengthening effect on these later moments of my day. The movement of contraction and expansion as the snails make their way over the floor is amplified in my body, a contraction of attention as I have focused my senses in beside them for an hour, has now led to a feeling of stretch, being in dilation, reaching outward toward connection with the world.

CHAPTER TWO: Empathy and its edges

"…posthuman ethics may depend upon pushing against the borders of comfort. I'm not sure if any real gains for social and ecological justice, in the broadest of senses, have ever been achieved any other way. The challenge is to assume responsibility, even as we stay with the trouble."

— Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water* (2017, p. 17)

There are many ways to tell a story of empathy, with definitions, uses and meanings that continue to undergo multiple interpretations across the fields of psychology, ethology, zoology, neuroscience, sociology and philosophy. Empathy is commonly thought of as gathering together several loosely related processes or mental states: feeling what someone else feels; caring about someone else; being emotionally affected by someone else's emotions and experiences (though not necessarily experiencing the same emotions); imagining oneself in another situation; imagining being another in that other's situation; making inferences about another's mental state; or some combination of these together (Coplan, p. 4).

Empathy inherently stretches at my limits, it asks me to try to move beyond myself and my own boundaries to become-otherwise in relation to another. How then might I in turn become-otherwise with empathy itself? As I sought to do with my relationship to time, this chapter will attempt to approach empathy as *a being* in and of itself, as much as *a way of being*, an attitude toward others within the world. To tell a story of empathy as a being is to suggest that empathy has a liveliness to it that can move, be moved, and can facilitate the movement of others. This requires me to consider empathy not only as an action in the world, but also attending to how and where it associates, reproduces, dwells and disappears. In effect, my intention is to become empathetically curious about the idea of empathy itself.

As with time, approaching empathy in this way is undertaken with the desire to cultivate a different kind of relationship to empathy than my current ways of understanding or enacting it within the world. Finding a *personal* relationship with empathy is a step I am taking toward cultivating a personal practice of becoming-with empathy. To become-with empathy is simultaneously to become more curious about how empathy works in theory *and*

how it works within me; the intricacies of my own relationships, my own limits and cognitive edges. How fully can I imagine the lives and experiences of others, and where do I find myself incapable of doing so? In what ways does my empathy get stuck?

To find responses for these personal questions I need to thoroughly engage with the cultural histories of empathy through which I've forged my own relating. Yet setting about defining and contextualising empathy is itself a process of delineating limits. This chapter will look to situate my relationship to empathy by paying attention precisely to these limits, to where collective understandings of empathy are themselves getting stuck, feeling inadequate or incapable of meeting contemporary ecological needs. It will seek out an unpacking of empathy that attempts to stay-with these limits, in order to then explore the limits of these limits. My interest here lies in what might exist *in between*, the places of uncertainty between what can be known and what cannot be known, as it is from here that I understand new ways of seeing and thinking to take place. The chapter will follow through some conventional approaches to understanding empathy before making shifts that will encourage different forms of approach to emerge instead.

AN EMPATHETIC INTRODUCTION

In Europe, the word "empathy" first arose in the early twentieth century, and traces back to the Greek *em-patheia*, "in feeling" by way of the German *einfühlung,* "feeling into" (CED 2018). Empathy, following this European route, is distinct from "sympathy", which arrived much earlier, in the sixteenth century, via Latin and Greek, from *sum-patheia*, "with feeling". The distinctions between empathy and sympathy, *in*-feeling and *with*-feeling, have often been ambiguous, historically both terms have been understood in more than one way and used for more than one purpose. In the mid eighteenth century, Adam Smith and David Hume, two prominent thinkers interested in empathy, were discussing what would currently be recognised as "empathy" yet referring to it as "sympathy" (see Coplan 2014). Not only do the terms often appear as interchangeable in current everyday use, they are further complicated through contemporary dictionary definitions, which propose empathy as an ability to share feelings (more akin to a feeling-*with*) and sympathy as the ability to feel-*for* (CED 2018). Sympathy defined as feeling-for is itself usually in sole reference to pity or

sorrow, pointing to the frequently implied associations of suffering that tie both empathy and sympathy, through the Greek *pathos*, "to feel, to suffer" (CED 2018).

Though empathy is widely recognised as broadly referring to the ability of someone to understand the feelings of another, in everyday use the term is often employed to conjure a more generalised sense of emotional response, while in more formalised research environments, it is sub-divided into sometimes conflicting constituent elements. A distinction is frequently made between high-level and low-level empathy although these terms and the intricacies of their features also lack consistent consensus. Empathy, Amy Coplan (2014) cautions, is full of variation and "often quite vague" (p. xxxi). Yet vagueness need not correlate with any perception of lack, nor be a weakness or point of exposure. Ethologist Frans de Waal, a specialist in primate research, calls for an integrative model of empathy, and with it a "complete overhaul of our assumptions about human nature that characterise it exclusively in terms of selfishness, competition, and aggression" (Coplan, p. xxxi). Empathy here, could also more generally be said to stand in for a matrix of collaboration, compassion and an ethics of care.

While embracing the lens of vagueness that historically has accompanied the many explorations of empathy across its variously touching fields, it is possible to imagine the many elements of empathy in a live togetherness, a meshwork of sorts. Even if it were indeed possible to ascribe any cohesive single meaning to empathy, it would arguably not be such a wise intention. Beneath singularity of meaning are often a host of decisions, cultural and political, which first designate then naturalise and normalise a series of inclusions and exclusions. There is a clear importance in recognising the limitations of any simple, agreed upon definition for empathy, while also adhering to the imperative to make every effort to distinguish the way the term is being implemented in any given case. Amy Coplan writes "in philosophical and psychological discussion, it is necessary to sharpen the term in a way that facilitates the particular topic and stance of the particular researcher and [their] readers, but it is not necessary that all researchers should adopt the same meaning" (Coplan, p. 6). To invoke any one version of empathy is to state what it is and what it isn't, *and crucially* to pay even closer attention to the ways in which such containment is intrinsically exceeded, challenged or complicated.

Empathy research tends to find agreement around a basic division of empathy into two categories, "low" and "high". Alvin Goldman, who introduced the phrasing of low/high, has written extensively on the differences from the perspective of cognitive science, and

much of their research focuses on the neuroscience of mirror neurones (see Goldman 2008). Low-level empathy involves the sense of 'picking-up on' the feelings or intentions of another through their facial expression, tone of voice, or other bodily movements and expressions and has also previously been, somewhat problematically, referred to as "basic", "primitive" or "naïve" empathy (Coplan and Goldie 2014). It is seen to be "more or less non-conscious", a largely involuntary mechanism that happens with immediacy (Goldie 2014, p. 304).

This kind of empathy has also more recently been talked about under the term "mirroring", where neurological simulations or 'resonances' of one neurological system will match that of someone else (see Iacoboni 2009). A mirroring ability enables the neurone to activate when an action is done by a subject but also when that same action is *observed* by the subject - for example watching a lemon being eaten can light up some of the same sensory processing parts of the brain as would eating the lemon itself. Mirror neurones were first discovered in the brains of macaque monkeys in the 1990s and extensive studies have since investigated their function and features in humans. They are understood to be as significant a discovery as DNA, helping to explain large areas of the mind previously considered entirely mysterious (Iacoboni 2014).

Low-level empathy is associated with the phenomenon known as emotional contagion, the most common example of which is an involuntarily yawn when we see or hear a yawn, even at a distance or on television. The work around mirror neurones is wildly fascinating and takes us to the core of empathy while igniting a science-fact-science-fiction style imagination for human and nonhuman futures. It doesn't speak directly however to empathy as an active or voluntary process, and as such low-level empathy has also been called mind-reading or simulation *rather than* empathy, though again these terms can also appear interchangeably in some fields..

High-level empathy, sometimes called "sophisticated", "reconstructive" or "re-enactive" empathy occupies the more conscious end of the empathy spectrum, requiring intent and therefore some degree of cognitive effort (Coplan and Goldie 2014). It is useful to remember however that the idea of 'intent' can vary quite considerably, with clear voluntary decisions on one end of a spectrum and more subtle degrees of accessibility to consciousness on the other. Probable psychological reasons I might have for making this effort, which requires shifting my perspective (movement is always somehow effortful), include gaining an experiential understanding of another: empathy is, first and foremost, relational. Unless otherwise specified I'm going to refer to high-level empathy from here on

as simply "empathy", as it is the intricacies of voluntary movements that interest me (though not necessarily a sense of voluntariness that correlates with something *active*).

FROM OTHER TO ANOTHER

Mental states and processes might seemingly be interchangeable ideas, yet the psychologist Carl Rogers, considered one of the earliest proponents of psychotherapeutic research, argued for a more nuanced understanding. Carl was a key figure in translating empathy and empathetic interaction into therapeutic settings and their research featured significantly in the development of humanist psychology, also known as 'client-centred' approaches. Writing in the essay *Empathic: An Unappreciated Way of Being*, (1975) they discuss changes to the perception of empathy, from a "state of empathy" to understanding that this *state* is in continual flux and process. The experience of meaning is likened to a stream shifting from moment to moment in an "ongoing psycho-physiological flow" (Rogers 1975). A *state* is then only ever a condition at *a particular moment in time*, a fleeting pause of the stream. To pause something is also to suggest that a state is also always mediated in some sense.

Empathy as a *process* can also be distinguished from empathy as *outcome*. To talk about empathy as an 'outcome' is to consider empathy to be any combination of processes that would lead me to momentarily have feelings more congruent with another's situation than with my own (Goldie 2014, p. 303). Empathy here is more of an achieved destination, it may matter less how I got there than that I am able to arrive at all. The form my journey takes can be "multi-determined" in that there is no one set path (Goldie, p. 303). To consider empathy as a 'process' is to pay attention to the many states and micro-processes that make up the journey. In doing so critique and comparison can inevitably be brought to considering the various paths and their corresponding attributes or limitations.

The distinction between *process* and *outcome* feels to be misleading. Empathy is both process and outcome because an outcome, like a state, is made of processes and made through processes. In this sense, it is both path and destination; feeling what someone else feels or imagining oneself in another's situation might *be* empathy or *be the path to* empathy depending upon your choice of perspective.

While there is fluidity around what could constitute empathy, some type of

relationality is unquestionable. Whether shared experience, shared sensation or shared space; some kind of sharing is a fundamental component of empathy, meaning that there is always more than *one* entity involved in the experience. Empathy, requires *an other*, usually assumed to be human, a *someone* else. In several instances of academic research the language used is of *subject*, the empathiser, and *target*, the object-other of the empathiser's attention (Coplan and Goldie, 2014).

Sharing requires entering a relationship whereby something (whether the lemon, an emotion or sensation, or the self itself) is temporarily not yours or rather not *entirely* yours, not just and not only yours. The boundary between self and other here begins to blur somewhat, yet for many empathy theorists, this is a boundary that is imperative to any reasonable definition of empathy. Amy Coplan writes that empathy occurs when "an observer simulates another person's situated psychological state *while maintaining clear self-other differentiation* [my italics]" (p. 6.).

Where possible it is my intention to move away from invocations of subject-object, in the hope of introducing some ambiguity to any quietly arising ideas around passivity that might begin to form around the other, juxtaposed as it is with the effortful intent of the empathiser. It is necessary, in order to address the themes of trouble already raised, to complicate the ease with which an othering of others occurs. For this reason, I have chosen to shift my use of this crucial language. Where *other* is different or distinct from us, *another* might be additional to us (not-us), but with levels of sameness and difference that remain more unclear, and perhaps, carry less relevance. Reasserting the term "another" is a movement toward aligning with plurality. Another can be one more, further, additional, extra, the relationship of myself to *another* is always one of more than self, maybe a further than self or possibly a multiplied self. It is the space of the *not-entirely-me,* which isn't to say that another cannot also be distinctly not-me, another can also be *an-other*. My priority here is to expand the possible options into different paths ahead through which to change the direction of a story. *Anotherness* will be an idea that I will return to in this chapter, and in subsequent reflections later.

Current academic studies have drawn attention to three essential and relevant features of empathy — affective matching, perspective-taking, and self-other differentiation (Coplan and Goldie, 2014). Affective matching is the matching of one affect to another. To match an affect is a qualitative rather than a quantifiable experience. This is to say it is not the same as neurological mirroring, though neurological mirroring may or may not also occur (only neuroimaging can give us any tangible sense of brain activity and experiential lived experience is not always coherent to either scientific, or philosophical theories of mind). Affective matching involves experiencing states that are qualitatively the same as those of another and so provoke us to feel the same or similarly. This result must come about through a matching process (one to another) and not just be a case of both sides reacting identically to the same stimulus (for then we would both be the primary experiencers of a feeling that arose independently within each of us). Affective matching calls upon the linearity of time, laying down a timeline and setting out clear cause and effect; you feel first, then me, or me then you (or you and you again).

The extent to which emotional states could ever be *effectively* affectively matched is also subject to valid debate, particularly considering the challenges of matching cross-cultural experiences (Coplan, p. 7). Western systems of knowledge tend toward universal assumption, when in fact there is no conclusive evidence that could ever categorically prove my human experience of lust to be matched inter-generationally, inter-religiously or inter-culturally, let alone accounting for vastly wider considerations. In an everyday sense, we perhaps confuse ourselves. I both assume everyone I could ever talk to would know what is meant by my lust, while at the same time standing defiantly by an individualistic bias that *my* lust, my lust in any given moment was somehow solely unique to me. Both claims in some senses are true or rather, all realities are somewhat real, *and also*, the impossibilities of cross-cultural understandings of emotion is of crucial consequence, inextricable as it is from structures of imperial power and oppression. A "growing consensus" does suggest that even allowing for all the variation across cultures there remains a selection of fundamental emotions which do exist universally in humans; fear, anger, sadness, disgust and joy (Coplan, p. 7).

Affective matching comes about primarily through perspective-taking, also called perspective-shifting, which is the capacity to 'shift' the location of our perspective in order to 'take' the perspective of another. Perspective-taking seems an unhelpful term as to *take*

something usually involves removing it from one location, which doesn't then tie in with empathetic process. Although the intense experience of an emotion might well decrease through the soothing or releasing that can come from sharing (a problem shared could be a problem halved), and even eventually disappear as a direct or indirect result of empathetic interactions, neither emotion nor perspective is 'removed' during the exchange.

For this reason, I prefer the term perspective-*shifting*, which allows for empathy to be understood as an imaginative process in which it becomes possible to construct for ourselves the subjective experience of another through simulating the experience of being in the situation experienced by the another. Perspective-shifting assists me to be able to imagine what your situation feels like. Through my imagination, I arrive at a place which is mine and not yours, yet neither fully one nor the other, your-our-place. Although empathy is often described in terms of perspective-shifting, the distinction is not always made between two possible strands, known as self-orientated perspective-shifting and other-orientated perspective-shifting. Moving closer into perspective-shifting shows how even a phrase such as "*treat others as you yourself would like to be treated*" in all its well-intentioned meaning, also contains a host of ethical ambiguities.

ORIENTATING PERSPECTIVES

Self-orientated perspective-shifting is best described as *me* imagining what it would be like to be *me* in your situation. We experience another as a *version of ourselves*, which is understood to be our default mode of attempting to understand each other as humans (Coplan, p. 10). For self-orientated shifting I imaginatively move myself into another set of circumstances that are not my circumstances, trying to feel how I would feel in those circumstances. For example, I imagine myself eating your lemon and come to conclusions about that experience based on my imagining. Though I am shifting perspective because it is *me* moving and shifting, in some sense I also therefore retain *my* perspective regardless. With this then, comes my own beliefs, values and experiences which may contribute bias to my simulation of your situation. I rely on my own experiences in my engagement with another.

We perspective-shift in this way because we often unthinkingly assume a similarity between ourselves and each other, a known *sharedness* that we find difficult to fully shift

regardless of how 'other' we may also have constructed each other to be. Amy Coplan suggests that "rationally and theoretically we understand that most people are very different from us and yet we make these mistakes [about difference] all the time" (p.11). Whether 'mistakes' arise from acknowledging the implicit sharedness of humans as relational beings, or from the inherent ego of humans as individuated beings, they will also be laced with social, cultural and, arguably, political factors.

What *can* be known, is that the repercussions of self-orientated shifting can lead toward faux empathy. Faux empathy can mean a "false consensus" effect, when I feel myself to be empathising though actually I'm assuming that another will think or feel the same way as I do and want the same things that I want (Coplan, p. 11). The self-orientated influence upon my interpretations results in a self-dominating interaction. It is entirely possible to see how through perspective-shifting I might frequently 'shift' way off the mark, failing to understand or significantly misinterpreting and mis-feeling. Crucially, I may have landed somewhere entirely different to where the another really is, yet still be *understanding myself to be* right in spot, sharing our together-space. Whether I shift my perspective out of care, curious interest or some other generalised sense of well-meaning intent, the consequences of doing so border dangerously close to what could, on one end of another spectrum, be called acts of violation.

Faux empathy can include a quantity of personal distress connected to the notion of emotional contagion that was mentioned briefly earlier. Emotional 'over arousal' leaves us more in need of our own attentions, so more likely to focus solely on our own experience, prioritising the search for ways and means of best managing and supporting ourselves. Personal distress occurs when I begin to 'suffer' from my empathy, and lose the ability to regulate my emotional engagement or separate out the strands of the interaction; I allow myself to be stricken down with the emotion of another.

Imagining what it is like for me to be in your situation makes it harder for me to modulate my emotional responses and I become caught up in the currents of the stream and lose the ability to keep the coolness of detachment through simulation. Suffering from distress can become overwhelming and aversive and the choices and actions I might take when experiencing distress are likely to be designed to alleviate myself from this suffering and so are not primarily empathetic. My concern around another's situation may well be a desire to alleviate them from suffering, but driven more from the subsequent alleviation of my own suffering in the process.

Personal distress is not then seen to be desirable for empathy, and so reaching these kinds of states, confusion over boundaries and mergence, are to be avoided where possible. This act of avoidance however, also becomes a question of hygiene. The choice of language of distress and contagion describing these processes marks the 'contagious' other as a kind of invasive infection, something out of place and therefore inappropriate. This is essential to the systematic narratives and movements of othering, those which construct the other as otherness. Collectively experienced emotion, especially in women and racial bodies, is both feared and repressed, at the same time as it is placed in direct opposition to rationality and reason. The madness of hysterias and hive-mind behaviours adhere bodies together *en masse* and shared emotion becomes a much larger entity, one that can threaten carefully cultivated structures of politicised and hierarchical order.

Other-orientated perspective-shifting in contrast would be *me* imagining what it would be like to be *you* in your situation. We experience another by attempting to simulate their experience from their viewpoint. For example, I imagine myself as you, eating a lemon, and come to conclusions about that experience (of eating the lemon) based on this imagining. In order to do this, I shift and stretch imaginatively in ways that require a significant amount of mental flexibility. It is understood that the neurological processes involved in other-orientated shifting are different to that of self-orientated shifts. To maintain a focus on the another we rely on regulatory and inhibitory mechanisms within ourselves to modulate our own affective arousal and in doing so both suppress and momentarily put aside our own preferences, values and beliefs. While Amy Coplan refers to this as moving *beyond* our own experiences I also see a challenge in making such a movement (p. 15). As in self-orientated perspective-shifting, *I* am moving, and so, regardless of where I move to, I presumably carry some part of myself along. Though I can stretch my experience, I can't easily remove myself entirely from the equation, and so, while I orientate around another, it is still also very much *my*-your experience.

Indeed, knowing how and where to stretch toward isn't so simple, unless we are empathising with another that we know to be similar to us, or we already know fairly well; someone close to us whose perspectives are familiar to us. In either of these cases the perspective of another might be easier to imagine. To empathise through other-orientated perspective shifting with those we know less well, or those who are less similar, or with whom we struggle to identify, "we must work harder" though even then "we often will be unable to simulate their situated psychological states" (Coplan, p. 15). Because of this 'hard work'

we may only attempt other-orientated shifting when we know the attempt will be easier, and we may not make attempts when we have prejudged that it will be hard. Yet this challenge has potential reward, as our neurones stretch so they, through time and repetition, become more flexible and subsequent attempts in turn become much easier (see Knaepen et al 2010).

With my own emotional arousal significantly lowered, compared to experiencing an emotion myself or simulating one during self-orientated shifting, I am less likely, therefore, to find myself overwhelmed in personal distress and in need of my own attentions. My empathising can remain orientated then, as far as is possible, toward another. I can perhaps also begin to search for ways and means of best supporting *them* instead. It seems straightforward to see how other-orientated shifting might provide a preferable path toward empathy, how it might negate some of the concerns for its self-orientated sister. Placing ourselves less central to the frame encourages more space for reflection and speculation while simultaneously reducing space for assertion and assumption. It can be kept clearer that a simulation is *a simulation* and its reality is only our own. If we work with other-orientated shifting perhaps, as Amy Coplan hopes, "some of us will begin to stop assuming that we 'get' the others experience, when we do not" (Coplan, p. 12).

There are also reasons to consider other-orientated perspective shifting to be so detrimental as to encourage an altogether *anti* empathy stance. For Peter Goldie (2014) other-orientated shifting leads us to impinge upon and so violate the agency of another, we try and decide 'the right thing' for another to do, feeding back advice, information or explanation. They write, "only the agent himself can take his stance towards his own thoughts" (Goldie, p. 303) regardless of how possible or not, or how good or not, my capabilities for imaginative perspective stretching might be. First-person *agency* is equated with "his own full-blooded agency" (Goldie, p. 316). Taking a counter position of anti-empathy Peter Goldie compares to "like saying I am against motherhood; surely empathy is so obviously a Good Thing that if someone is against it, either there must be something wrong with him, or he must be confused as to what it is" (Goldie, p. 302).

I find the gendered implications of Peter's statements, and the suggested language of *infection* that I read to be implicit in the choice of a term such as "full-blooded" to be questionable and problematic. I also consider anti-empathy, in this other-orientated sense, to be a crucial position to examine precisely because it points to an imagined sense of *consensus* that is tied to questions of morality. In order to develop this, it might be useful to return to the idea of empathy-as-outcome and explore how empathy works *in operation* through

questions such as — what does empathy do and where does it lead us? What is the outcome of empathetic process and why would we choose to do it?

INFORMING, UNDERSTANDING, RELATING

From a cognitive science standpoint, the mirroring capabilities of the human brain are part of a wider system of imitation simulation mechanisms which are pervasive and automatic in human behaviour. Mirror neurones form a part of a network, as neuroscientist Marcos Iacoboni (2009) terms, "a sophisticated, nuanced system for shared coding of motor and perceptual aspects of actions of self and other" (p. 660). Simulation covers a range of processes of which, in this framework of understanding, empathy speaks to just one area, the simulation of another human's emotional mental states. The simulation of emotional mental states is distinct from, but may exist in combination with, a range of other possible simulations including visual, sensory and auditory. Research into the functional role of mirror neurones is ongoing and, as yet, only partially mapped. What can be known is that they provide adaptive advantages which support co-operative behaviour, an essential feature for successful social interaction because, "even though imitation is a pervasive phenomenon in humans, people do not imitate each other all the time but rather often perform coordinated, cooperative, complementary actions" (Iacoboni, p. 660). Empathy provides intersubjective information which, in turn, enables sociality.

Frans de Waal (2010; 2012), whose version of empathy is much broader in concept, believes the evolutionary "success" of Homo sapiens — presumably ecocide notwithstanding — rests primarily with our capacity for empathy and our urge to understand and appreciate another. Mammals have the capacity for some degree of empathising, though this is understood to be more along the lines of 'mirroring' or 'emotional contagion' and is seen to have less conscious intent. Primates, dolphins and elephants however, also share alongside humans the searching urge to bring understanding to a situation. Empathy is information, a precursor to knowledge, and we use this knowledge to try to understand, to appreciate why someone feels the way they do.

From a conceptual and philosophical approach empathy is a representation of experience and so this understanding of empathy is therefore also an *experiential*

understanding (Coplan, p. 17). Through empathising we encounter experience, both our own and that of another, and the process is itself an experience. I can use my experiential understanding about the thoughts, feelings and behaviours I've encountered in order to engage with explanations, actions and predictions: empathy provides the possibility for intellectual reasoning. It also enables us to experience another as *minded*, as having reasons, purposes and intents. Through our search for knowledge of another we also gain self-knowledge by coming to know how another experiences us. This understanding is in some sense *reciprocal*, we understand ourselves through another's experience of us and we understand another through our experience of them. Yet the *understanding* is also always interpretative, often dependent on other forms of knowledge and is subject, as has been mentioned, to intrinsic biases.

Psychotherapeutic theory can provide some indication of the sorts of directions and channels that empathetic experiential understanding can lead us toward. Carl Rogers (1975) describes empathy as "one of the most subtle and powerful ways we have of using ourselves" and "one of the most potent ways of bringing about change and learning" in relationship with each other. In psychotherapy, empathy is how a therapist accompanies a client into their private and perceptual emotional world, moving about in it 'delicately' without making judgements and reflecting back their sense of this world in order to help the client identify, locate, communicate and contextualise their feelings. Empathy is as much a communication-tool as a feeling-tool, a means of communicating thoughts and feelings understood by the therapist, who, in checking them with the client, encourages the client to "focus that meaning and to carry it further to its full and uninhibited experiencing" (Rogers 1975). The therapist, listening intently, is receptive to the client's guidance who, through seeing himself reflected in another, finds points of validation and reference.

Empathy-as-listening is central to an understanding of the term therapeutically, and crucially this is a means of listening that *reaches out* to receive communication; it is active receptivity. This movement of reaching out toward another in an empathetic manner can be understood within an ethical framework as a "prosocial response" intentional voluntary behaviour that benefits another (Coplan and Goldie 2014). Within a therapeutic, professional context this is clearly delineated, the therapist's job is to try and be of benefit to the client and there is frequently a monetary exchange to facilitate this. Beyond this context, empathy has also been interpreted as moving hand in hand with our capacities to respond 'well' to situations we encounter in the world, "enabling us not only to gain grasp of the others

suffering, but also to respond in an ethically appropriate way" (Coplan 2014, p. 6). Empathy is an interaction between receiving and offering, a reciprocal movement.

EMPATHY AS CARE

The relationship between empathy and care is core to the 'logic' of moral discourse, a logic so ingrained culturally that to take anything that might be considered an anti-empathy stance would seem to border on unimaginable or absurd. Yet the logic of morality is *always already* a discourse of politics, and the question of care, as many feminist thinkers have painstakingly laid out, requires closer attention. Structures of care invite the possibility of hierarchical structures which are associated around relations of *vulnerability*.[1] The cared for is in a position of weakness and so vulnerable by way of dependence upon another. Vulnerability is a type of exposure, a threat to my autonomy and so something to be feared, avoided and protected against where possible. The carer, in tending to another, is also paradoxically vulnerable. To be 'tender' is also to be weakened, soft and easily injured. My fragility is also a form of dependence, as to care for another can also involve a wish for my care to be reciprocated, so that we care for each other, in a bond of affection.

Without wishing to conflate empathy with care, they are inextricably linked, as is compassion, sympathy and several other synonyms through their shared kinship within the register of *love*. To love is to have a strong feeling of affection; affection is equally exchangeable as warmth, tenderness, respect, regard, devotion, feeling, care, attentiveness, closeness, affinity, intimacy… and more. To attempt to extricate empathy completely from ambiguity would also be to make false, or at least forced, separations. This is because the language of affect is also *experiential*, what is my 'regard' may be your 'devotion'. Returning to an earlier example, while I may assume some base level of shared knowing of lust with anyone I could talk to about it, the intricate experience of our lust, our *relationship* to the feeling, will always differ, and so will the words we conjure to help communicate ourselves and each other. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* Sara Ahmed (2014) draws attention in particular to the "circulation of words" for emotion, suggesting that "the replacement of one word for another produces a narrative" (p. 13). The emphasis is on the different *orientations* of differently named emotions, the ways in which different words for an emotion will do

different things "precisely because they involve specific orientations toward the objects they construct" (Ahmed, p. 13).

The subjectivity of emotion is itself an orientation, and one that is based in our everyday language on a model of interiority: I have an 'inside' from which my emotions arise (Ahmed, p. 8). Within the logic of this model, I have feelings, my feelings are mine and inside me. I can express them, and in doing so, I then bring them *outside* of me. Upon contact with my feelings, they may also become *yours*, in the sense that you can receive and respond to them, passing them onward or returning them as you choose (Ahmed, pp. 8-9). This model of inside-out has a counter model, outside-in, in which emotions are not seen as originating in any one individual but rather exist in social form, a collective 'we' emerging from social and cultural practices. Here emotions arise outside of the 'I' and move inside when I internalise them and take them for my own. As waves or breath, the circulation of words is also then a circulation of feeling, affect circulates and can be passed between and through bodies.

Circulation is not the same as contagion, *and also*, both movements emphasise the ways in which emotions are not simply located in an individual but are themselves engaged in movement in addition to the ways in which they 'move' me. The English word emotion is rooted in the Latin *emoter* meaning to move, or to move out, and interestingly also probably from the Proto-Indo-European *meue* meaning to push away (CED 2019). There is a clear relationship between movement and rooting, anchoring or attachment, as what moves us and makes us feel is also that which holds us in place, bonds us and gives us a sense of dwelling and connection (Ahmed, p.11). Attachments take place, reshape and reform through different movements which will affect different bodies differently. Movement is not detached from location and inhabitation, rather, a flow of emergent locating and situating. In a similar vein, your 'contagion' is, following Latin etymology again, my *contagio*, 'contact' from Proto-Indo-European *tag* meaning to touch. To protect my blood from infection which spoils and blemishes, and to maintain my full-blooded agency, would require almost complete tactile isolation, void of touch, contact, connection and association.

Sara Ahmed moves through the dichotomy of directionality that both the inside-out or the outside-in model of emotion depends upon, "feelings do not arise in subjects of objects but are produced as affects of circulation" (p. 8). Neither truly inside nor outside, "emotions are not simply something 'I' or 'we' 'have'", thereby challenging the notion of possession, whether individual or collective (Ahmed, p. 10). Rather, it is through emotions,

or how we respond to objects and others, that surfaces or boundaries are made: the 'I' and the 'we' are *shaped by* and *take the shape of* each other in a 'contact zone', "in which others impress upon us, as well as leave their impressions" (Ahmed, p. 194).

To say that emotions are neither truly inside nor outside is not merely to say that they are always already both, individuals producing the cultural and culture producing the individual in an all-pervasive and de-located sense. Rather it is to suggest that the conditions for relationality itself are made through situated contact, through located orientating. I not only turn towards you, or you toward me, but through turning we come into a specific, orientated relationship with each other, a form of contact that not only impresses itself upon the surface of our bodies but in doing so is also then situating, creating, forging and shaping this surface. There is specificity to our turning; who turns toward who, how do we turn and when, and the ways in which subtly different words such as sympathy or empathy act to angle us differently toward each other and so turn us differently. These processes are also bound to *repetition,* as it is through a repeated orientation that we sustain narratives about ourselves and another. Emotions generate forms of association and repeat past associations and so in this sense they are not only a make-up of the impressions left by others but also involve investments in the social, political and cultural ideals and conventions inherent within them (Ahmed, pp. 194-196).

Though empathy isn't then *in* a body in the sense of its emerging independently from within it, it can and frequently does, along with other emotions, *dwell in* bodies and come to reside, however temporarily, within them: it is never outside of contact. Words such as empathy are also themselves situated, geographically and historically, changing through the different contact they share with different peoples in different locations at different times. Empathy-as-being, emerges only through contact, and is itself in continual flux and process, as the stream in ongoing-flow. To invoke empathy, to speak its name, is always to pause the stream at a specific moment and place.

ORIENTATIONS AROUND EACH OTHER, OR, *FEEL AND DETATCH*

As previously mentioned, questions of suffering and discomfort are intricately connected to empathetic exchanges. This connection is apparent not only in its etymological roots, through

pathos, but also in the fact that empathy is usually only sought out in scenarios which involve an implied *need* for empathy, or to put another way, connecting with another's joy or delight we rarely label as empathy, it appears instead to be largely reserved for moments of emotional distress. Furthermore, in stretching at the edges of selfhood, I have suggested empathy involves a fundamental breach of discomfort in the form of unfamiliarity and unknowability. One of the primary reasons for Peter Goldie's valid emphasis on retaining personal agency and cautioning of other-orientated perspective shifting, is the assumption that empathy is primarily concerned with conflicting situations and "confused states of mind" (Goldie 2014, p. 317). There is also vulnerability here, I am confused and distressed and therefore likely also to be impressionable to the sway of your empathetic guidance and opinion. There is also an assumption that empathy then also implies a relationship with action, that I 'do' something with my feeling, that it has *active* purpose in the matrix of informing, understanding and relating to each other: I receive and give response. I empathise in order to better understand you, in order to better steer my actions.

To respond to suffering is, almost though not always universally, to want to transform it by means of reducing it, my actions will then orientate in a particular way in order to attempt this. In day-to-day language being a passionate person or passionate about something does not tend to associate deeply with ideas of suffering, though there are hints, when for example, I suffer for my art. A clearer link is made when I am passionate about some-*one*, a beloved. The path of a lover's love often walks a fine line alongside suffering and at its most heightened can contribute toward various 'crimes of passion'.

The word "passion" in English language comes from Old French and Latin *passio* meaning to suffer and endure pain, and from the stem *pati* meaning to endure, undergo or experience something (CED 2018). Sharing the same root, is the word *passive*, in the sense of inaction, meaning to endure suffering without resistance. To be passive is to be enacted upon, therefore a negation of agency, making me dependent rather than autonomous, reactive rather than active. Passivity is then something to be fearful of, a fear tied to the fear of emotionality, "in which weakness is defined in terms of a tendency to be shaped by others" (Ahmed 2014, p. 2). To be 'full-blooded' in agency would presumably be in full control of my faculties whereas to be emotional is to have my judgements affected, to reduce my control of thought or reason. Full-bloodedness requires me to set limits, delineating where I begin and end, what is mine and what is not, and in drawing this line around myself, shape the form of myself. The idea here is that only through knowing what is not me can I know what is me,

only through *against-ness* do I find *for-ness*, and as I suggested in relationship to love, only through my being-for does being-against become a necessity, to serve and protect. Within the paradoxical binds of this structure, I fear both the invasions and contagion of another and the intrusions and infections of my own auto-immune tendencies, my emotional physiology. To avoid losing myself to another, a self that I can only in fact come into relationship with through that other, I instead project myself upon them.

The appropriateness of a response is then also tied to the appropriation of bodies through that response. A central enabling notion here is the narrative that there is a *me* that is *mine*, assuming both an autonomous boundary and the right to possession of that autonomy and defence of that boundary — the core of individualism. These narratives run deep and wide, shaping Western social, cultural and political thought and impacting significantly on any discussion of empathy and its sister-affects. Saidiya V. Hartman and Frank B. Wilderson describe how these implications impact upon the disposability of minority bodies,

> I think that gets at one of the fundamental ethical questions/problems/crises for the West: the status of difference and the status of the other. It's as though in order to come to any recognition of common humanity, the other must be assimilated, meaning in this case, utterly displaced and effaced: Only if I can see myself in that position can I understand the crisis of that position. That is the logic of the moral and political discourses we see every day. (Hartman and Wilderson 2003, p. 189)

Discourses of empathy, through these literal and figurative ties to suffering, are also discourses of *compassion*, and in Western neoliberal political and cultural discourse, "practically no higher value exists" (Senior 2017). Compassion, literally then to be-with a suffering another, is often also confused with empathy, though in English the contemporary definition would be to have concern for, sympathy or pity for another rather than to understand or share those feelings with them.

As with empathy, Lauren Berlant, in the book *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (2014) has shown that the intricacies of relating to each other compassionately, are far from straightforward. They suggest that "there is nothing simple about compassion apart from the desire for it to be taken as simple, as a true expression of human attachment", and a "non-negotiable "good-thing" (p. 7). To accept compassion or empathy unequivocally in this way ignores the nuances of texture which form the surface of any relationship as a zone of contact. To imagine how it feels to be another is itself a statement of political discourse, while violations carried out, in the name of compassionate and empathetic expressions are two-fold and more. In reifying the boundary of selfhood, I lose the ability to fully comprehend the interdependence of connective life, to recognise another not only as like me

but as a *part* of me through our shared coexistence. This is not only in the sense, as humans, of our shared common humanity, which anyway acts to *other* those nonhuman beings with whom I also coexist. It is also then in the recognition of the co-production and co-consumption of shared resources, right down to the nutrients that move from air to soil to plant to tissue repair, building neural strength to allow the very possibility of the existence of a thing such as imagination (*and* I am not the end of the chain, I excrete and form a cyclical part).

While understanding myself as boundaried, in order to relate to interdependence, or to engage in acts such as empathy and compassion which enter into shared territories, I can only approach the other through the framing of my boundary. I thereby force a dualism in which they can only exist for me inside or outside of my boundary, they are like me or not like me. To not 'other' another requires me to bring them inside of me in such a way as to subsume their autonomy to exist *differently* from me including outside of my understanding or imagination. For as long as I approach myself as an autonomous self I project my autonomy, and so violate the autonomy of another, my autonomy then only exists within the logic of a dynamic of power.

In appropriating the uniqueness of the other I also minimise the diversity of felt experience, effacing other ways of being, forms of knowledges and means of shaping the world. Remembering that, under this narrative, being shaped by others is a question of *weakness*, sets relationality itself as a mode of vulnerability. Interdependence becomes inextricable from structures of division and exploitation which *manage* our dependences, the ways in which we depend upon each other, how some others depend more on other others, for different things, and at different costs. Crucially, our dependence also differs in relation to our different levels of consumption, which satisfy our differing levels of perception of our needs.

As Lauren Berlant describes, "there are a multitude of conventions around the relation of feeling to practice"; we are taught the 'right' ways to feel another's pain and the 'right' ways to respond, largely through measuring the scale of another's suffering alongside the scale of our own responding suffering which is mediated through our levels of attachment to each other (2014, p. 4). Susan Sontag, referenced by Lauren Berlant argues that "compassion is what you feel when you feel impotent, overwhelmed by the enormity of painful spectacle" (Berlant, p. 9). Our abilities to measure are how we become *appropriately* compassionate, and they inhabit a set of power relations, culturally and historically specific

narratives which define what 'right' and 'good' mean. Empathetic and compassionate endeavours, though their positioning on a personal to personal level, therefore also appear to individuate and privatise and so act to conceal the social and public relations of injustice.

Compassion donates privilege, "the sufferer is *over there*" (Berlant, p. 7 – my italics) often in communities or countries far from me, while *over here* I have a resource that can potentially alleviate your suffering. As with the critiques of both self-orientated and other-orientated perspective-shifting, my reasons for choosing to put my feelings into the action of alleviation, may often be, however involuntarily, as much for my own benefit as for yours. It can make me feel better to reduce your discomfort, it might also alleviate other emotions in me, including perhaps those of guilt or responsibility for my co-dependent role in your suffering. Just as empathy implies bias so compassionate action is tied to limitations that further distort the well-meaningfulness of my intention.

Measuring my compassion also allows me to measure against another and through such comparisons the ability to feel can also elevate some over others, in direct relation to our varying capacities to act upon those feelings. To give or withhold compassion is then, a form of power, giving, at one end of a spectrum extends to compassion's ability to 'rescue' or 'heal' another, placing the receiver in a position of indebtedness, a bond of gratitude (Ahmed 2014, p. 193). In wishing to bring aid and assistance to *one* suffering other does this in turn compel me to extend that out to all those similarly suffering? Or am I required to shut down *some* of my feeling (keeping it restricted in quantity and quality) in order to adequately act upon it?

Contemporary media exposure saturates us with images and stories of the visceral realities of unbearably intense human and nonhuman suffering on scales so immense as to be metaphorically if not literally, heart-breaking. I feel that I have been taught that, in part because of the scale of this suffering, that appropriate empathetic feeling is essential if I am to protect myself from "paralysis and inaction" (Senior 2017). These strategies for protection, emerging through dominant cultural narratives are conducive to resisting and repressing rather than *enduring* states of overwhelm, and become ways of attending to numbness through various forms of sanctified distractions and consumptions.

Are there strategies of endurance and strategies of not-turning-away that could become ways of staying-with discomfort while also keeping me orientated toward generative movement onward? For this, it would seem, an altogether different kind of empathy would have to be in place, something that truly might be capable of embodying "the apex of effective agency among strangers" (Berlant 2014, p. 9). An empathy that was culturally inappropriate and politically inconvenient; an excessive way of orientating towards each other. An empathy capable of offering complex care-led companionship. It would need to be, perhaps, an arguably *radical* empathy — an extension of kinship and sharedness right up to its edges; something simultaneously foundational and extreme.

How to cultivate such alternative empathic narratives? To cultivate is to come into relationship with, which is always somehow a question of reciprocity, in the sense of an exchange that occurs between those in relation. Not all exchanges are equal, voluntary or non-violating, therefore the idea of reciprocity must also then point toward collaboration, actions that arise from the combined experiences of more than one. To cultivate an alternative empathetic paradigm would involve resisting the narrowing of experience into either action versus passivity, compulsion versus voluntariness, intrusion versus turning-away. Instead, the idea of becoming-with empathy would be to feel-with another through a reciprocity that invites both dialogue and exchange; steps forward and steps back occurring on each side of the line.

If reciprocity is key here, so too is the distinction again between feeling-for and feeling-with. Feeling-with, in my own definition, would be an intricate rhythm of receptively moving toward another, a reaching out to receive that is at once also an ongoing process involving pausing, checking, communicating and adjusting. In this way feeling-with operates at the nexus of *responsiveness* and defines an empathy rich with the possibility of co-creation and collaboration. If feeling-for holds the potential for an unwelcome intrusion, then feeling-with must also seek permission, even and perhaps especially, in cases of human to nonhuman relating (as I reflected upon in *Pixel Lent*). While it might not be categorically clear yet what form such permissions must take, what does feel clear is that empathy must reject a standard notion of projecting an idea of self onto another. At the same time, it must arguably also reject those narratives of lack that convince me I can lose myself, narratives that are themselves held in place by the assumption I have a clearly delineated self to begin with.

Crucially, this radical *feeling-for* kind of empathy would also be capable of complicating any simple understanding of my capacities and limitations for feeling a feeling, while viewing cautiously any demands upon the appropriateness of these feelings or efforts made to minimise or marginalise them.

Notes

[1] I understand the notion of vulnerability to be at an important intersection with the themes of my research. Judith Butler et al. *Vulnerability in Resistance* (2016) and Erinn C. Gilson *The Ethics of Vulnerability* (2014) are valuable resources in this regard.

INTERLUDE

~ FINDING WHAT'S SOFT: LORA MATHIS AND EMPATHIES OF SELF

Scrolling through the images of Lora Mathis' online gallery of artwork, I am only half paying attention. I already know, from past exposure, that the themes of Lora's work resonate with my own interests, and so as I catch the wording of the captions typical to each image, I read them without really taking them in. I know what they say, or I have come to think I understand intellectually the variations of this message, which centres on the revaluing of feeling and emotion as culturally significant and politically relevant. The work I need to do now is to select which images can best represent this knowing, as visual aids to what will be a written explanation I will produce. Later, I push myself to reflect on why I am feeling this sense of lack of attention, beneath which is actually an *uneasy ambiguity* looking in depth at the images. I find that I especially do not really want to linger on reading the captions, because when I do so it becomes a little more challenging to sit down and write.

When I look at the statements, I realise that I connect with the messages, but "*would now like to move on please*". I'm happier finding ways to talk about why I connect, than I am being in the sensation of feeling this connection. I can talk about why I feel this work is important and relevant, but I can't seem to do it while being *in connection with it* or with any emotional response in myself toward it. I do not want to feel a deeper connection, or more than is necessary to do the job I need to do, which is to write about it. When I question this response within myself, I notice a familiar sensation: right now, *I do not have the time*. Here, my explorations thus far into empathy and time begin to dance together in practice; it is as if feeling requires the time to feel it, requires a

spending of energy, capacity or capability that takes up an allocation of time from other things that need to be done. If I take *the time to feel*, I cannot keep myself moving and producing. Paradoxically, to write about the work of Lora Mathis, to discuss themes of emotionality, I seem to be requiring myself to simultaneously shut down any connection to this emotionality.

The selection of images that I've chosen to look at are from a series gathered under the title *Radical Softness* (2015). They are visually similar, photographs of flower arrangements alongside phrases spelled out letter by letter using small white cubes, reminiscent of square beads used by teenagers in the 1990's to thread names onto cord necklaces. The text reads, "STAY SOFT" (*figure i)*, "EMOTIONS ARE NOT A SIGN OF WEAKNESS" (*figure ii)*, "THE SHAMING OF FEELINGS IS NOT HELPING ANYONE" (*figure iii)* and "CRYING OFTEN DOES NOT MAKE YOU ANY LESS OF A PERSON" (*figure iv)*.

There are pastel pink roses in a vase, red and white carnations laid out with green ferns, a wicker basket with purple pansies and a large lilac satin bow. Looking closer there is a flatness to these flowers, the images appear to be reproductions of images, with the white letters laid on top. The flowers, both in style, colour and arrangement give the impression of being dated, old fashioned; it is unclear yet whether they have been recreated to appear this way, somehow out of time, or if they are instead found images, situated in their time, perhaps from a vintage magazine. I read the flowers as impersonal, clichéd, and they leave me cold. The word I'd drawn to use, but feel some shame in doing so, is nauseated. How could a flower arrangement be nauseating? What prompts such an extreme sounding response?

Previously, when I have engaged with this series of work, I have focused largely on the phrases and messages themselves, giving much less attention to the flowers. Right now, it feels as if there is something jagged and thorny in these

figure i - Radical Softness (2015) Lora Mathis © Lora Mathis, courtesy of the artist.

floral foregrounds that tugs at the flow of my thinking. It is the flowers I realise that are also contributing to my unease. There is a stereotypical sentimentality evoked in the idea of a floral arrangement, the carnations remind me of a funeral tribute, and the vase of roses at first look could almost be an urn, with the block form letters beneath an echo of the way a person's name can be spelt out in flowers for a funeral procession. There is something about the bow on the wicker basket that is reminiscent of a birthday gift or other type of celebration. I do not feel connected to the wildness of plants in these images, nor yet to their aesthetic beauty. Something feels fake, false and forced. The flowers perhaps make a

parody of sentimentality, despite the slight muted tones giving a filter glaze of times-past. The colour combinations, to my eye, remain almost gaudy, leading to a combined effect of romantic superficiality and nostalgia. The basket I would even call *twee*. Looking up this word, I learn that the dictionary definition of twee is "excessively sentimental" for which *mawkish* is listed as a synonym, defined as "sentimental in a weak or silly way", while to be sentimental is to be "prompted by feelings of tenderness, sadness or nostalgia" (CED 2018). Something can have sentimental value, which would make it precious, yet I am aware now of an extremely fine line separating acceptable sentimentality from unacceptable sentimentality, over-sentimentality. Excessiveness.

Flower arrangements, in many different contexts, often associate with sentimental expression. They are given as gestures of feeling, offerings of gratitude, celebration, declarations of sympathy or love. Floral patterns are associated with prettiness, decorative softness, luxury, romanticism. The images of flowers Lora has chosen, for me, represent the epitome of this sentimentality just at the point of its turn into over-sentimentality— there is something exaggerated in them, the way the image is cropped to make sure they dominate the scene makes them feel inescapable, overly obvious. They stereotype the tropes of affection, and in response I feel, paradoxically, nothing resembling affection at all. I am reminded of over-the-top greetings cards, thick with sticky red love hearts and cutesy rhyming verse.

When emotion is signalled at too strongly, something begins to lack any genuine credibility, devoid of deeper connection, I am left empty. This is a familiar dynamic, excessive emotion spills over into its exact opposite, emotional numbness, two ends of a spectrum in relationship, forming each other, folding in to meet. Such numbness I introduced in the Opening chapter, alongside the paralysis invoked by the relationship between feeling too little and feeling too

much, themes that I will again return to in relation to later explorations into ice and coolness. Here, I find that occupying either extreme amounts to the same thing, in fact, a repression of connected feeling. When I receive the over-the-top declarations of sympathy, gratitude or love, I am protected from having to *actually feel* with any rawness and complexity. I am told clearly what it is I should be feeling, I am given a feeling-marker without having to really go into the expression of the feeling. It is a neat presentation that cuts the corner and allows us to remain largely disembodied and disconnected. Nausea encourages us to turn away from a thing, to resist eating it, to stop consumption. This odd nauseating sensation of things twee and mawkish protects us from getting any closer to the emotion that is so overtly signalled, from *feeling* it. I understand this to be a distancing happening, that preserves an emotionally avoidant status quo.

There is much that could be said in these images about the idea of kitsch, parody and irony, questions of aesthetic and taste that speak to socio-economic cultural frameworks that are also visibly informing this work. Without wishing to disregard these themes in any way, I am however drawn to follow instead these threads around the idea of 'numbness' and 'feeling' further — what gets felt and how does it get to feel? These are, as Mathis's work clearly points to, cultural and highly politicised questions and conditions.

FALLING APART

That I feel a lack of sufficient time to attend to the messages of Lora's images for myself reflects the environment, both personal and collective, that I am situated

within. That I feel a need to disconnect from the emotion the images display to write about this very emotion, my low or high tolerance for sentimental sensations, where I place my line of acceptability, excessiveness and appropriateness, all contribute to this environment. Lora is already drawing our attention to this — the image with carnations also displays a black leather bound book, that I read to be a bible.

The caption, "EMOTIONS ARE NOT A SIGN OF WEAKNESS" (*figure ii),* is placed directly upon it which alludes perhaps to the often complex relationship between emotionality and religion. The bible arranged in this way next to the flowers also reminds me yet again of a funeral service. Is this also a commemoration of the death of emotion, of their mistreatment and devaluation, or perhaps instead a form of prayer, a devotional invocation calling for transformation? Or might it even hint at a marriage alter, cementing the wedding of emotion to our cultural histories? Or the wedding of ourselves to ourselves in this fuller emotional sense moving forth?

Using the word "emotions", in this way as I am doing, is not nearly specific enough. What is meant by emotion, or by the generalisation I make when I say I am left unemotional by the arrangements of flowers? Feeling empty, feeling numb, feeling dislike or disgust or disconnection is also a range in the spectrum of emotion. Not feeling is also a feeling. There is no neutral state, neutrality is itself a position. What I have been referring to as emotion, inattentively alternating with the word "feeling", is a set of culturally formulated, and *highly gendered* traits. This is embedded in my everyday language; I would rarely use the phrase "*I am feeling emotional today"* to refer to sensations of empowerment, motivation, capability or decisiveness. I use it instead to imply my struggles with states and sensations such as tearfulness, loneliness, irritability or sensitivity. This leads me to question, if I have internalised a reductive and

misinformed emotional vocabulary, how can I not have also then internalised the misogyny embedded within it?

"THE SHAMING OF FEELINGS IS NOT HELPING ANYONE" (*figure iii),* is the message beneath a vase of roses. Lora is already well aware, not all feelings are shamed. Some feelings are shamed, some bodies shamed for feeling them, others are not. Yet the nuance of my vocabulary is not nearly adequate enough

figure ii - Radical Softness (2015) Lora Mathis © Lora Mathis, courtesy of the artist.

to communicate these intricacies and these violences. It dawns on me that the fact that I can only broadly refer to a range of feelings in broad strokes of superficial separation, is not acceptable. Nor is it acceptable that I have learnt to instinctively equate emotion with a notion of being 'emotional' to such a degree that it remains somewhat stuck, internalised and confused within me. Despite the access I have had to possibilities for undoing these baseline learnings through the privileges of higher education, that I have had to do this work of undoing at all, is already not acceptable. I retain a tendency to shut down my emotions in order to enter into critical thinking around them, suggesting a lack of capacity to tolerate both simultaneously and this is not adequate enough. That I have had very few opportunities to learn, practice or hone the ability to describe and discuss the interactions between feelings, sensations, physical and emotional states of being, whose impact on my life affects every connection and relationship I am able to make or sustain, is not acceptable. It is not acceptable and it is "not helping anyone".

While the ways in which culturally embedded structural shaming occurs may be so unperceivable at times as to be able to hide behind the innocence of a lilac bow that I call 'twee', it would be a dangerous oversight to imagine there is any innocence to this situation I find myself in. Our capacity, desire or interest in attending to themes of emotionality are social-political considerations as is the accessibility of arenas in which we might be able to find ways to develop or discuss these capacities, desires or interests. Therefore, the erasure, distancing and shaming of feelings *serves something*. I would argue, it serves a cultural mythology of strongly boundaried selfhood, for it seems significant that the definition of over-sentimentality is also tied to self-indulgence; if emotionality is a condition of being, yet being emotional is self-indulgent what does this say about our ideas of self? What could it even mean to indulge a self with a self?

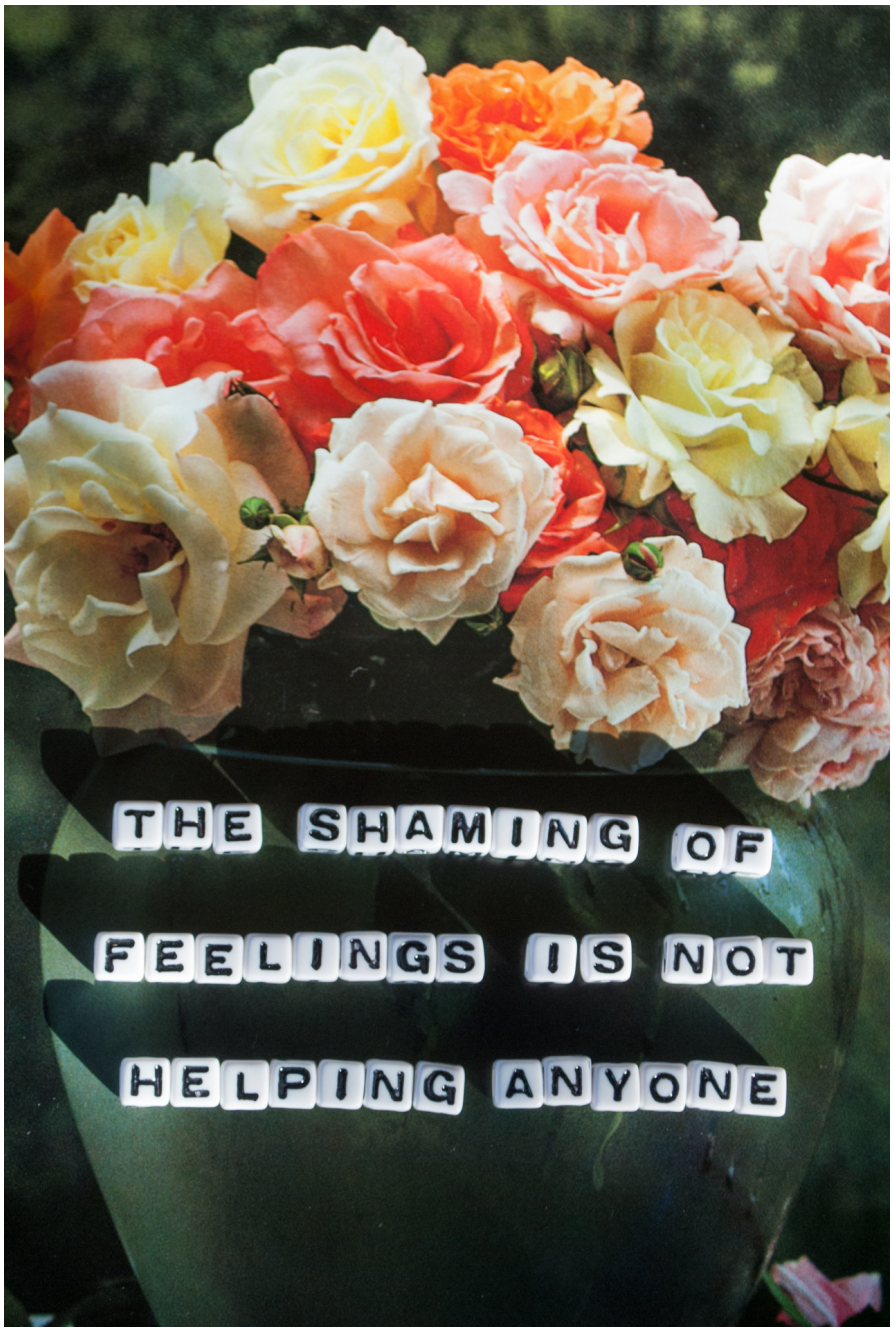


figure iii - Radical Softness (2015) Lora Mathis © Lora Mathis, courtesy of the artist.

Contemplating this phrase again, "EMOTIONS ARE NOT A SIGN OF WEAKNESS" (*figure ii)*, I am struck by the idea that something is understood to be made weaker through injury, age, decay and also through *dilution*, mixing it with something else. Expressing emotion occurs in leaky bodies, ones that gush

and pour and overflow. A lack of emotion occurs in contained bodies, ones with restraint, under control and holding themselves together. The language I use in English is explicit, "pull yourself together" to stop from "falling apart". Strength is here positioned as a perception of wholeness that is undisturbed by another, unresponsive to our environment. To be strong a body must be capable of mixing in the milieu of the world without becoming subject to change or exchange, without diluting ourselves with each other. A weakened self is a compromised self, liable to break, lacking in intensity, incapable of exerting force. To weaken the boundaries of the self, to feel intimately, intensely and excessively for and with ourselves and each other is to become more than any singular containable self, but does this necessarily equate with becoming weaker in the sense of becoming any less?

In the caption, "CRYING OFTEN DOES NOT MAKE YOU ANY LESS OF A PERSON" (*figure iv),* the idea of 'less' is undeniably referring to a question of value. What is meant by being 'less of a person' is really to be less in a socially constructed scale of acceptability, adequacy and appropriateness that constitutes a legitimate and proper person, one worthy of respect, or a voice, or a position of centrality and power. A lesser person can exist only within a paradigm that devalues some bodies as a means of elevating the position of other bodies; it is a project of dehumanisation. In addition to these already violent constructions of self-constitution, something else remains, odd and awkward, in the phrase 'less of a person' that also appears to embed personhood in the fixity of a false separation. The question is not only what makes a person legitimate, it is also what legitimately makes a 'person'? Falling apart and needing to pull myself together implies a type of structure whose strength relies on some kind of internal consistency and integrity. The idea that I cannot mix as a means of my multiplication without simultaneous *self-detraction*, is a structural

narrative that might have held at some point in cultural history, but does so no longer. I understand myself to be a self through my environment, through other beings, animals, ideas, persons, relationships, interactions and interceptions. The permeability of my-self is a precondition of living as a self, not a constraint to it. I can no more fall apart than I can hold together. That such permeability be weakness, or any subsequent transformation, response or reciprocity that might occur at the site of such permeability, seems to also be an entirely inadequate and unacceptable definition of the experience of life. Connectivity is life. Interconnectivity enables life.

STAYING SOFT

If I live in a society in which feelings are a sign of weakness then I also require a radical reimagining of strength. The title given to this series of images is *Radical Softness*, which is echoed by another image with the words, "STAY SOFT" (*figure i).* Lora expands on the meaning intended by this phrase, "Radical softness is the idea that sharing your emotions is a political move and a tactic against a society which prioritises a lack of emotions… it means despite how difficult the world can be you have held on to your capacity to feel" (Bruno 2016). Softness here is positioned as an alternative to a kind of *emotional toughness,* and instead of engaging the binary of weak-strong it offers another *texture* to experience. The idea of softness already holds within it some interesting qualities, something soft might be malleable, receptive, responsive to touch. I understand radical softness to mean self-aware softness, soft despite the challenges of living in hardened structures, and soft as a means of direct action toward undoing or reimagining

these structures. Within the idea of radical softness, I also see an alternative to a solid boundary of self-containment, to be soft is to be something without sharp and hard definition, with unclear or subtler edges.

figure iv - Radical Softness (2015) Lora Mathis © Lora Mathis, courtesy of the artist.

Markedly different to the sets of flowers, though in the same series of work, another of Lora's images contains the phrase "RADICAL SOFTNESS AS A WEAPON" (*figure v*). The same white cube letters are surrounded by a string of pearls and crystal earrings framed by three sharp knives. The silver of the blades

cut starkly through this same idea of softness, casting sharp lines against a background of pale pink satin cloth. The blades face inward, towards the letters, though it is unclear if these are the knives of "a society which prioritises a lack of emotions" or part of the counter-armoury of radical softness. Looking at it, I see both. The uneven circular spiral made by the luminescent pearls reaches right up to the blade edge, brushing against and curving cleanly away, unharmed. The knives appear as still, cold surfaces, noticeably dull, they do not seem to reflect the same light as the pearls, earrings or the bright white letters. Yet they remain a dominating presence in the frame, large and encompassing.

The image directly invokes gender and performativity and, like the arrangements of flowers it is also notably kitsch. The weaponising of softness jars, as do the knives against the rest of the overtly feminised scene. The combined juxtaposition is remarkably strong in its impact, confronting and provocative. A softness that can cut through hardened societal structures with the direct incisiveness of a knife, is as much a re-imagining of weaponry as it is of the territories of war itself.

I am reminded of Audre Lorde's book *A Burst of Light* (1992) in which, in the epilogue Audre says, "caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare". Audre Lorde's 'myself' is a black, queer, femme body battling oppression, civil and social injustice. A Burst of Light is a series of autobiographical notes following daily life after a diagnosis of liver cancer. This particular sentence is also one which Sara Ahmed (2014b) attends to in detail in *Selfcare as Warfare*, writing "in queer, feminist and anti-racist work selfcare is about the creation of community, fragile communities, assembled out of the experiences of being shattered. We reassemble ourselves through the ordinary, everyday and often painstaking work of looking after ourselves; looking after each other." I wrote that my body cannot fall apart nor

hold together, at the same time bodies can, and do shatter at the hands of selves and others; individuals, institutions and structures. Positioning softness as an ethical war cry, is grounded in lived battlegrounds, and bodies whose boundaries, albeit permeable, are also forcibly punctured, whether by real or figurative knives. When Lora speaks of "tactics" there is a sense of strategic action with a clear vision to be moving toward; the preservation of life.

figure v - Radical Softness (2015) Lora Mathis © Lora Mathis, courtesy of the artist.

The indulgence of a soft texture, of sentiment and emotionality, like the 'indulgence' of selfcare is perhaps the dynamic strength of self-expression, a self quite literally expressing itself, indulging itself with itself, with its own life. This is a nonconforming self-survival, in a self-defined outside of the narratives of separation, a self that is already collaborative and plural. The idea that feeling

life and living a felt life could ever be positioned as an indulgence, is somehow as bewildering as it is dangerous. The idea that there is no time to feel, that feeling is a luxury and will weaken us is only logical in an arrangement of space, time and selfhood that is brittle and breakable. To 'make' time or space for emotion masks the condition of feeling as already present, continuously contributing to the formations of selves and others. Perhaps even, the question of indulgence is found in the exact opposite, in not attending to feeling. The suppression, denial or trivialisation of emotion is a privilege afforded to those able to build scaffoldings of protection. Not-feeling is arguably itself far more fitting to any common definition of 'self-indulgent'.

Staying soft may be an acknowledgement of humanity, an embodiment of personhood, and a prerequisite for survival, none of which makes it any easier or more comfortable to sit with. My body, perhaps as many others, has developed strategies to disconnect in order to connect and to paralyse in order to keep moving. How then might softness come to land here? I have found that one of the reasons I have been only half able to pay attention to the words "CRYING OFTEN DOES NOT MAKE YOU ANY LESS OF A PERSON" to remain in a state that is capable of writing about this, is that the permission this statement invites of me, is a permission I am unpractised in giving to myself. When I stay for long enough resting with this phrase, inevitably I feel something, an unplaceable mixture of things, complex and messy. I feel anger, resentment, impatience, grief and relief.

The wording of the phrase is assertive and direct, it leaves me few places to hide, and hiding is a default and entirely valid survival strategy. Ultimately, through repeated exposure, which yes, involves the investment of space-time, I find that reading this phrase will bring me to tears. Something is opened in me when I am forced to turn toward myself, and it is this opening that I

simultaneously crave, intellectually believe in, politically uphold and in some part, am still incredibly fearful and resistant of. I choose to understand this fear through a lens of familiarity, I am uncomfortable with all that I am unpractised in knowing, and this is a knowing that reaches across conceptual thought, stretches down through neural pathways, encounters my respiratory system, adrenal medulla and vagal nerve, and results in an embodied experience of felt emotion.

Unknowing, remaking knowing, is a practice to cultivate that seems to require a certain amount of empathy for myself, an imaginative stretch of 'what is this like'. This is an empathy of exploration, curiosity, grounded in an ethics of care. Turning empathy towards oneself is a means perhaps of approaching the complexity of unknown that constitutes a self. It is a connection inward that simultaneously orientates us outward, and there is a kind of reciprocity at play. Where we locate feeling in ourselves we are likely to be more capable of perceiving feeling in another. At the same time, through exploring means of responding to the feeling states within ourselves, we may also be more equipped for attending to the feeling states of each other. Empathy for self creates the conditions for empathy toward others, and receiving empathy from another helps to stimulate empathy for our self. If this is softness, it feels to be a radically empowering and generative means of strengthening resilience in a necessarily open and always already vulnerable-to-the-world self.

Staying soft is as much a call to a way of being with ourselves as it is to a way of being with each other, an invitation for self-responsibility. The phrases in these images model a way of doing self-talk that might undo cultural learnings by providing a template for new ways of being permissive with ourselves. This contributes to radical selfcare, by way of attentiveness to the intricacy of emotional landscapes. There is reciprocity here, I receive them as offerings of this care; affirmations, reminders, encouragements.

CHAPTER THREE: Glacial Times and Glacial Temperatures

"We must learn to be at home in the quivering tension of the in-between. No other home is available. In between nature and culture, in between biology and philosophy, in between the human and everything we ram ourselves up against, everything we desperately shield ourselves from, everything we throw ourselves into, wrecked and recklessly, watching, amazed, as our skins become thinner."

— Astrida Neimanis, *Hydrofeminism* (2012, p. 94)

Dynamic life cycles are always in flux and adaptive change, yet, for perhaps the first time in history, the practices of human-time are now implicated in far-reaching complexities. Seasons are no longer predictable, water-bodies are moving, orchids reproduce slower, moth-caterpillars emerge sooner, Caribou migrate later, rainforests regulate less and Saiga antelope die more frequently (see Ripka and Plumer 2018). The intense speed of these changes leaves little wiggle room for the adaptive time of evolution, dances of survival held in the shadow of melting and migrating ice.

With the onset of global climate change, our human relationships to temporal limits, notions of finitude and questions around collective life and death emerge as increasingly urgent priorities. Alongside this, new sets of tensions in our relationship to time come into vision. Despite the many technologies to harness and subvert the passage of time, bodies continue to age and seasons continue to change. Attempts to impose structure and sameness upon the variable rhythmicity remain unresolved. While we may be able to speed up crop growth, for example, such shortening processes of maturation are undermined by incidents of the same crop failure, disease and consumer dissatisfaction. Even in the bright lights of twenty-four hour cities, suns and moons rise and fall in their own immutable rhythm, apparently indifferent to human challenge or appropriation.

Human creation and design of time have always been tailored to the specific desires and uses of each specific cultural era. Life within contemporary climate-change sparks a need to reconsider the future of humanity, which then, requires a re-engagement with time. Rather than superfluous to the struggle, Barbara Adam (2004) reminds me that the social relations of time are central to any possible revision or renewal and it is our response to time that drives cultural change, "each historical epoch, with its new forms of socio-economic

expression is simultaneously restructuring its social relations of time" — these are reciprocal, co-constitutive dynamics (p. 123). Paul Huebener (2018) agrees that cultivating "imaginative shifts in [our] perspective" of time is part of a practical socio-political undertaking that challenges the existing dominant hierarchies of time while de-legitimising unsustainable social practices that are bound up within them (p. 340). Can a re-conceptualisation of temporality that enables other ways of being in time, therefore enable other ways of being with and for others?

This chapter will propose an alternative storying of time, the idea of Glacial Time as one possible creative shift toward enabling the radical empathetic approaches that I have explored thus far, and that have required non-normative temporalities for their emergence. It will first position a dynamic between Glacial Time and contemporary time-space compressions, known as "instantaneous time" (Urry 2011, Castells 2009). It will then go on to expand upon the metaphoric relationship between *glacial times* and glacial temperatures, drawing on the notion of compassionate "warmth" and emotional "coldness" to further navigate a relationship between proximity, intimacy and empathetic connection. A close reading of a performance-protest event, Erdem Gündüz's *Standing Man* (2013) is intended to then be read as one such an example of Glacial Time with subversive potential.

COMPRESSIONS OF TIME

John Urry introduced the term "glacial time" alongside "instantaneous time" in the mid 1990's, at the precipice of the internet and the onset of widespread digitalisation. As technological advances were making historic transformations, John Urry and other sociologists, were paying attention to the material foundations of these transformations, including their newly emerging spatial and temporal structures (see Castells 2009). While clock time may have been the organising principle of modern capitalism, embedding a set of value systems that remain highly pervasive, new constructions of time have had to since adjust to a new age of information and networks. With electronic equipment operating in timescales of nanoseconds, the clock, previously the dominant device through which to encounter time, "becomes progressively less relevant to the contemporary organisation of human society" (Urry 1994, p. 135). Social relations, John Urry suggests have instead become

increasingly structured around two polarisations of time; the immensely long, imperceptibly changing *glacial time* and instantaneous time which in contrast is brief and fleeting (p. 135).

Instantaneous time is an experience of what David Harvey (1989) refers to as "time-space compression" (p. 236). Significant social activities regularly now occur "below the threshold of human consciousness", which is to say, quicker than human capabilities for experiential comprehension (Urry, p. 135). Communication and transport can instantaneously distribute information across the globe, in split second exchanges and transactions that defy distance. The global immediacy of pocket smartphones, video conferencing and voice recognition makes real-time exchange possible, almost anytime and anywhere, across many areas of daily life. There is an emphasis on *nowness*, which in turn transforms a broad range of human experiences from the seemingly insignificant such as boredom, to more life-defining such as the subverted experience of our own ageing.

With life and interactions operating at an ever-accelerating pace and with increasing simultaneity, the idea that "everything is (potentially) available now" also amounts to a reconceptualization of our understanding of 'future' (Parkins and Craig 2006, p. 41). A decline in waiting culture and a permeation of "instant gratification" contribute to a wider dissolution of a relationship to the future that might previously have been more stable, institutionalised and "planned for" (Urry, p. 137). Our relationship to the past also shifts, including a recent Western aesthetic sensibility for old clothing, jewellery, crafts and consumer goods repackaged as "vintage" to be sold at disproportionally high values. The concept of 'heritage', available with instantaneous access, arguably functions to commodify history and "deflect attention in a systematic way from the forms of social deprivation and inequality in the present" (Urry, p. 138).

The lived experiences of instantaneous time and the time-space compression it incurs can be disorientating, overwhelming, exhilarating. Efficiency, speed and productivity characterise *network societies* in which the idea of "saving time" and discourses which glorify busyness have been stamped into the psyche of Western civilisation (Parkins and Craig 2006). While information and money move at the speed of light, the value of *mobility* also soars, closely tied to *flexibility* and the ability to adapt to ever-changing circumstances. Private and public life appear liberated from locality, freed from responsibility and any obligations to the immediate environment and community (Adam 2004, p. 131). This provides opportunities to both work at home, folding into family and leisure times, or work away from home, as aspirational 'digital nomads', where travel and new experiences are high on the cultural radar.

Staying in place takes on connotations of stagnation or an incapacity to move-with-the-times, at the same time as unemployment, weather and war force vast populations into migratory movement in search of refuge (Adam, p. 117).

Instantaneous time has become linked in popular imagery with the notion of 'throwaway', "marked by features such as an increasing disposability of products, temporariness… and casualization in the labour market" (Parkins and Craig 2006, p. 41). Commonplace practices such as multitasking contribute to a blurring of the sequencing of time, while digital social media platforms enable a splicing of time, as multiple moments of unrelated, decontextualized events are positioned side by side in discordant fusion, layered together in "a huge piecemeal patchwork of different sensations, feelings and images" each competing for attention (Castells 2000, p. 118). Barbara Adam argues these are also compressions of time that contribute to "an unquestioned economic and political goal" to maximise capital and profit (2004, p.128).

Tied up within these relations is also a complication of the progression of time. While Western "monocultures, economies of scale and chemical assistance make an increase in productivity predictable" they also "reduce long-term food safety and security" (Adam, p. 88) as the intensity of the processes involved in withdrawing more resources disrupts pre-existing cycles of ecological renewal. Short-term orientations toward life and efforts to secure medium-term futures arguably vastly increase the "unforeseen long-term impacts on our descendants and future generations" (Adam, p. 88) as seen in choices around investment in nuclear energy that resulted in unplanned radiation and long term storage of waste with unpredictable effects over indeterminably prolonged durations. Extensive knowledge of the past is no longer sufficient to predict the future with certainty or accuracy. Alongside the temporal disturbances of instantaneous time, these temporal "fault lines" contribute to increasingly irresolvable contradictions in the logic of pre-existing notions of a rational and linear time (Adam, p. 137).

"Chronological disorder" begins to emerge through the discontinuity and fragmentation of instantaneous time which creates a paradoxical sense of undifferentiated time, a timelessness "tantamount to eternity… the eternal ephemeral" (Adam, p. 135). Timelessness itself seems an unstable concept, to be timeless might both mean to be out of time, without time, while simultaneously to be never-ending, forever time. Living in *glacial times* I feel a sense of both the fullness of time and its emptiness, I feel urgency, despair and contradiction. There is a phrase that is often used as a platitude in times of challenge, "life

goes on", and yet, contemplating our futurity it is hard to remain convinced of such a certainty anymore. Instead it feels increasingly apparent that while some form of life on Earth will presumably continue, many lives and current recognisable species, including humankind, may not all persist.

It can be tempting to place a reductive opposition between social and natural time, to mark such 'natural' cycles as somehow virtuous, contrasted with the somehow 'inauthentic' social ones that have seemingly led toward large-scale destruction and disaster. Yet if at times the contemporary world appears to "collapse inwards upon us" it is also this same collapsibility that enables online global collectives, social movements and forms of affirmative resistance that spread across physical and national borders, creating resilient communities with entirely new forms and structures (Harvey 1989, p. 236). Current technological temporal frameworks have enabled life; advances in healthcare allow for the external regulation of the lungs and heart, overriding internal rhythms that might threaten life rather than allowing it to flourish. Stories of increased intergenerational communication and cross-continental relationships are *as significant* to any notion of 'connection' as stories of throwaway disposability, ephemeral commodity and the casualization of labour (Parkins and Craig 2006).

Falling into a 'natural' vs 'social' binary is therefore neither helpful for creatively thinking through the challenges of these times, nor is it accurate. I am grateful for the *languaging* of Bruno Latour (1993) whose term "naturecultures" offers a synthesis of nature and culture that recognises their inherent ecological inseparability. Approaching time through this idea of *naturecultures* is therefore less about making a declaration about the social construction of time, and rather a commitment to approaching the temporal dimensions of life as being implemented in and through social life rather than external to it; time and our perception of time are wholly inseparable.

A GLACIAL TIME

Glacial Time is a way of thinking about time that is "extremely slow moving and ponderous, de-synchronised from both clock and instantaneous times" (2011, p.195). For John Urry it is

also this de-acceleration of time that marks it as "beyond assessment or monitoring within the present generation" (p. 194). Glacial Time involves,

> …relating to processes within their context and imagining what will happen over many generations. It is a time intrinsic to its mode of dwelling, thus mimicking the enormously long timescales of the physical world. Such time scales include the thousands of years it takes for soil to regenerate, radioactive contamination to dissipate, or the impact of genetically modified organisms to be clearly evident. (Urry, p. 194)

Wendy Parkins and Geoffrey Craig (2006) write that Glacial Time is also a narrative response to a sense of dissatisfaction with the lived experience of the pace and expectations of instantaneous time (p. 40). In their understanding, Glacial Time is "a different way of marking and inhabiting time that offers either respite or contradiction" to normative ideals (p. 40).

My suggestion is that Glacial Time is therefore not only another way of being-with time, but it operates as a means of opening up the very question of time; in offering an alternative it invites the possibility of other alternatives. The urgencies of *glacial times* seem to require both such movements; revealing or uncovering stories alone is no longer sufficient, affirmative retellings are also required. Rather than these alternatives as existing somehow 'outside' of time or 'elsewhere', they act as transformations of the temporal frameworks we currently inhabit by destabilising their unexamined prevalence. If we understand time through stories and theories, then we "create time and space *to our actions*" and would therefore need to look at our *involvement* with time (our practices and relations) in order to create such change (Parkins and Craig, p. 40). Following this, I see Glacial Time as a tool that could be used to both deconstruct and reconstruct some of the stories that bind together time, individuals and our environments.

If Glacial Time is a means of inhabiting time differently then it also calls for articulating time differently and organising ourselves in accordance with different sets of temporal cultural values. I do not seek to offer here a fully conclusive *definition* of Glacial Time, precisely because it seems necessary for it to remain non-dogmatic and malleable to autonomous interpretation and occupation. My suggestion is that Glacial Time becomes a co-creation of the many personal and collective relationships that seek to move within it. This is to say, I choose to speak from what Glacial Time means for me, to what it might offer and to what it might open out toward, which is not intended to be the same as a claim for what Glacial Time categorically 'is' or should strive to be. Glacial Time, as I am positioning it (in adaptation of John Urry's concept) describes a combination of qualities, features and attitudes toward time that form an exploratory practice; it is a mode of experience rather than

of measurement.

Central to this interpretation of Glacial Time is therefore the assertion of a *commoning of time* capable of *offering time back to me* in ways that allow me to enter into relationship, for myself, on my own terms. This requires an imaginative shift, to heighten my engagement with the enactment of time as a material being. To feel time as malleable, to believe it to be so and to act from this, I understand to be a type of performativity. Approaching time as something that can be performed (tried out in different ways, to different effects) highlights its means of construction, while simultaneously opening avenues for alternative constructions that can operate as forms of resistance and reconfiguration. Crucially, there is reciprocity in this relationship; time shapes me as I shape it, *we perform each other*. There is simultaneous activity and receptivity in this, amounting to a form of *responsiveness* that I also see as critical to any Glacial Time practice.

This quality of responsiveness I would argue is itself also already a refusal of normative active and passive divisions, as to respond is to *both* act and receive, inseparably. Yet other features of Glacial Time also further complicate this oppositional dynamic. Through cultivating alternative perspectives of time, Glacial Time encompasses an environment in which many different temporalities exist beside each other. Timothy Morton (2017) writes that in addition to the "highly necessary queering of the theistic categories of active versus passive" (as a pivotal point of priority for how we think about sexualities and the cultures and politics of those sexualities) such categories further "violently interfere with the way humans have treated nonhumans in social, psychic and philosophical space" (p. 180).

An inherently *ecological* time Glacial Time includes attending to the inclusion of many nonhuman and more-than-human times, timelines, timeframes and temporal references. I would liken this to what Timothy refers to as "ecological awareness" which is "knowing there are a bewildering variety of scales, temporal and spatial, and that human ones are only a very narrow region" (p. 186). A broadened perspective instead understands that while transitions such as water reaching boiling point appear to have one set of temporal qualities to the human eye (smooth, durational, emergent), from "the point of view of the electron" in this transition, the experience is entirely distinct — in this case more akin to a sudden jump from one state to another (Morton, p. 187). To include more temporal narratives, those of a barnacle, rock, Mayfly or Sequoia tree, inevitably destabilises categorical distinctions that exist in relation to human speeds and scales. To practice Glacial Time is not only to reclaim time as a personal choice, but in doing so, to also therefore give time back to those scales that are larger and

longer than ours, shorter than ours, faster or slower than ours.

Manuel Castells (2000) writes that Glacial Time is a way of thinking of time that "means that I measure my time, not only in my life space, but in terms of what my species and nature evolve towards…not just in terms of my own interest but in terms of the children of my children and solidarity with nature at large" (p. 118). I understand this to also be a way of thinking-with time, a *time-based empathy* that encourages the consideration of human and nonhuman others through time. Any understanding of 'the eternal' is here found only in connectivity itself, a sense of ongoingness through our connection with each other (all our anothers) in distant time-space configurations. If what feels to be at stake is an ability to widen our range of vision and increase our capacity for conceiving different times, including different possible futures, then what might be required is a temporal framework in which there is the time to think about time, speeds that allow for and encourage increased attention and reflexivity; a time that is expansive with time itself. Glacial Time is this time, in the sense that it is a time *full of times*.

One of the most pronounced features of Glacial Time is perhaps therefore this correlation between questions of slowness and speed. For John Urry (2011) Glacial Time is "extremely slow moving and ponderous" because it is bound to the long durational timescales of the physical world (p. 194). While it might be tempting to read this, and equate Glacial Time with a simplified idea of 'slowness', to do so would inadequately attend to the complexities that are signalled in John Urry's *relational* understanding of Glacial Time. If Glacial Time resists instantaneous time, it is in no way detached from it, instead it is the very transformations that have speeded up social life that have simultaneously brought into being Glacial Time as a potential dynamic opposite; speed *creates* slowness. Slow and fast are only ever relational references bound to each other. Glacial Time is not just 'slow time', or rather, it is *not only* slow time but a broadening of wider expanses, timescales and variations in which slowness becomes an act of cultural resistance in relation to a cultural dominance of speed. Glacial temporalities *reactivate time* — with choice.

Screenshot from Norway's first "Slow TV" show, a minute by minute depiction of a seven-hour train ride from Bergen to Oslo

(2009) NRK2 © NRK

The idea of 'slow' is itself a contentious one. Where speed is associated with decisiveness, efficiency, performance and intelligence, slow has often been of inferior and derogatory connotation (think "slow learner"). Yet, through the correlation of speed with agency, the idea of 'slowness', like 'passivity' is also tied to a falsely oversimplified notion of 'nature'. When slowness is equated with everything on the side of 'nature' and opposed to 'speed' on the side of 'culture', it enters an ideological tug of war. Barbara Adam instead offers a further distinction between "temporal" and "non-temporal" time, in which non-temporal time is based on measurement, something quantifiable while temporal time is mode of experience (Parkins and Craig, p. 40). The distinction between temporal and non-temporal time is

> … a useful way of thinking about time in order to stress that attempts to slow down time are [also] not based on an implied natural temporality against an inauthentic social one. Rather, a sense of slow time may interrogate the instrumental forms of social time that

> dominate the global everyday and seek to offer an alternative to speed as the only available temporality (Parkins and Craig, p. 40).

In these terms, Glacial Time would be considered a 'temporal time', a space for alternative experiences of and responses to lived *naturecultures* that no longer adhere to a "naive understanding of a natural/social binary opposition" (Parkins and Craig, p. 41). Again, these are countercultural approaches to slowness that enable it to freely associate and correlate with pulsing and potent agency as much as receptive, vibrational inactivities. A slowness capable of resistance and responsiveness, *both/and* rather than *either/or*. In *Slow Living* (2006) Wendy Parkins and Geoffrey Craig offer a reading of "slow practices" that "might construct 'slow subjects' who invest the everyday with meaning and value as they negotiate its temporalities" (p. 39). Slow here becomes a marker for "more ethical and pleasurable modes to inhabit", though crucially, they also remind us that "slowness is not always a virtue and slow time is a culturally variable experience" (Parkins and Craig, pp. 39-40).

This leads to two further qualities of Glacial Time which I would describe as a suspicion of conventional notions of linear productivity and a creative curiosity around an engagement with so-called "unproductive" and non-linear times. Glacial Time practices I would suggest, are those that not only engage and commit to periods of inactivity and rest, but that actively include these periods as central to any activity or project, rather than supplementary or external. Similarly, Glacial Time practices would not only make space for unknowing, failures and uncertainties but again actively invite and validate these discussions as valuable and alternatively "productive" in and of themselves.

When the term Glacial Time was first used, a glacier was arguably still largely a symbol of unwavering permanence. Today, it is the fact of impermanence in glacial environments, their readiness to melt, that spurs a paradoxical sense of glacial urgency. Glacial Time in *glacial times* therefore takes on a whole new set of meanings and critical relevance. To what extent can Glacial Time be a 'temporal time', a time full of time, when it is one that simultaneously confronts the existential finitude of time itself through the lens of climate change?

Amid the "timeless temporality" of instantaneous time, John Urry's understanding of Glacial Time is one of temporal weight and rootedness. John writes, "a glacier cannot be separated from the environment where it can be said to dwell", it is context dependent (Urry 2011, p. 195). This idea of Glacial Time is therefore also a means of insisting that "time cannot be thought of as an abstraction, divorced from a situated materiality and embodiment" (Parkins and Craig 2006, p. 21). This is also important because, as a stable

metaphor, a glacier is no longer capable of conjuring the same qualities of longevity as it might have even a couple of decades ago. Rachel Price (2016) writes "now the term seems poignantly dated to a recent past of less spectacular global warming, in which 'glacial' connoted permanence beyond observable change". A previous sense of a timeless forever time is steadily evaporating within the current global climate. This further subverts any remaining notion that "nature's speed" is one of slowness. Instead, contemplating Glacial Time now leads toward a series of dynamic tensions including those between urgency and deliberation, the eternal and the crumbling, the slippery and the solid.

WARM LIKE ICE

Ice frequently associates with death and mortality. As a heart stops beating the body loses temperature, falling at a rate of around 0.8 degrees Celsius each hour until it reaches the ambient temperature of its surroundings. The process is referred to in Western medicine as *algor mortis*, Latin for the coldness of death. Coldness might also be the indifference shown by shifting, as I have just done, from a momentary reflection on utter grief, into the cooler facts and figures of scientific and impersonal specificity. It is uncomfortable, staying-with the direct and indirect responsibilities of acknowledging that sustaining my life, in the ways I have known and been taught to live it, is the cause of death — human death, animal death, ecological death, otherwise and unknown death. Even if I use words such as slaughter, extinction, annihilation and suffering, there is little time allocated for a pause and processes of mourning in the culture of my writing, there are no easy ways to mark in space for such scales of grief. And keeping moving here is also then a form of overwhelm-as-paralysis that supports my own avoidance; the drive is to counter discomfort by moving on as quickly as possible from it. For time and affect are *also* in active reciprocal relationship, shaping each other and writing a story. In not lingering long enough to absorb a feeling, are we also denying that feeling *the time* it requires to be adequately *felt*?

Iciness, as all emotionality, is also gendered. Mythological "ice maidens" and "snow queens", hearts pierced with frozen spikes, are rendered incapable of receiving and generating appropriately feminised feeling, they keep others at a distance with defensive aloof and are often the perpetrators of suitably *heartless* acts (see Hans Christian Anderson 1863). Where

coldness implies a lack or absence of feeling, then my grief in contrast, is known as a hot emotion. Hot cognition is experienced when the body is at a high level of emotional arousal, states of being that test our executive functioning and are coloured by the biases and potentials for poor judgement that highly emotive, heart-strung circumstances can trigger. Feeling hot with emotion leads to a reactionary rather than reasonable response, I am hot-headed and hot-tempered, unpredictable and rash, hot with stress, hot with anger, on heat with passion.

With a little adjustment, I find my warmth, and with it levels of social acceptability increase. Warmth is a badge of kindness, heart-full expressions of generosity, offerings of comfort and friendship, but at any moment, changed with a flush of hot hormones, I am reminded of the impossibility in remaining consistently appropriate. Temperature is measured and these measurements draw lines of acceptability. So as not to feel too much nor too little, I balance precariously between temperatures, anxiously regulating the heat with the cold, trying all the while to keep (or first find) my cool. In coolness I am told, I am finally calm; deliberate, controlled and just-so. To be cool is highly sought after, tied as it is perhaps to these qualities of effortless control.

The transformation of the term "cool" from an adjective of atmosphere to an attribute of character evolved around the sixteenth century in European literature (Dar-Nimrod et al. 2012). Later the African-American "cool cats" of 1940's US jazz scene were subject to the racialized appropriation of their coolness, from "an impassive ironic stance highlighting a rejection of the dominant culture's value system" it soon simultaneously also became the mark of the sophisticated and fashionable, socially desirable consumer (Dar-Nimrod et al. 2012). Just as all capitalism is racial so too questions of temperature and appropriateness are also always racial, they both colour bodies and are coloured by them. Emotional temperatures are inscribed with the privileges of how some bodies are allowed, entitled and encouraged to feel (about themselves, about other bodies) and how other bodies are not: some griefs have always been given greater space and importance.

The colouring of my own Irish-white skin, while perpetually blue-bruised through the shadings of divergent DNA, will also frequently blush. While love may warm me crimson, pain or anger could turn a flush into a fierce, maddening "madder red". The colour will again drain from my face with shock or fear, as I stop stone cold in my tracks, blood running cold in my veins. Here numbness returns, I feel numb, perhaps with sadness or boredom. Ice can numb the skin, anaesthetising it to various degrees, depriving it of tactile input. Numbness

in fact seems key to understanding some of the roots of these associations tangling around ice and emotion, leaving me frozen to feeling literally and figuratively, dead to sensation with a supposedly deadened, red-less heart that is unable to care. Yet, crucially, numbness can also be an adaptive mechanism, restricting blood flow to some areas in order to better warm some others, usually away from the hands and feet and up toward the brain and heart. Numbness can help a body to cope, a management strategy for the overstretched, while emotional numbness can also protect against overstimulation, intensities of feeling and exhaustive states. As I have stated previously feeling too little and feeling too much are in dynamic relationship, shaping each other, sharing threads. Here again then, physical numbness (in addition to emotional numbness) can also be evidence of a body that is feeling much, not one that is feeling little.

THIN ICE

That a lack of appropriate or sufficient emotion be called coldness, can also tell stories about our cultural framing of all things ice-like. It speaks of the particularities of a way of understanding the cycles and seasons of weather over time within a cosmology of productivity. Where spring and summer breed life, so autumn and winter bring death; this makes sense within a reference of human appropriation, when a landscape I might like to look at becomes barren and brown, and a crop I might need to eat shrivels and perishes. Coldness kills life, and so can be equated with notions of lack and loss. Things do die in the cold, and they also die in the dusty fires of summer's scorching heat. Cyclical thinking also complicates this vista, whereby winter may simply offer some much-needed sleep, the nurturing bringer of recharge and rest; hibernation sustains life and dormancy feeds germination.

Extremes of cold, just as extremes of heat, will kill a living body, usually in no more than a matter of minutes. Yet ice also preserves bodies and matter, it keeps a heart alive while it is transported and transplanted from one body to another, and it transports various kinds of organic sediments, leaves, shells, remnants, remains through centuries and millennia releasing them into new ages and new surrounds. While ice preserves the bodies of humans, plants and animals in the sense of preventing their decomposition and decay, there is yet to

be any substantiated concrete evidence that the powers of ice can enable a reigniting of the fire of life in already dead matter (though proponents of cryogenics, if I understand correctly, would argue for this). There is evidence however of the survival of old and ancient bacteria and viruses, re-emerging to take new lives afresh after a thawing release.

Permafrost is a layer of ground that has remained frozen for two or more consecutive years, with some across stretches of the Arctic and Siberia reaching back hundreds of thousands of years and growing to be close to five thousand feet in depth. It covers around twenty-four percent of the Northern Hemisphere. In some areas, permafrost holds an "active layer" of soil which thaws and refreezes each year and can sustain plant life in cycle with the seasons (Cho 2018). Along with sediment and matter, these landmasses of ice are also estimated to hold around one and a half billion tons of carbon dioxide and methane, nearly double the amount that is currently in the atmosphere (Cho 2018). With increasing global temperatures, various research institutions have studied the thawing of expanses of permafrost and speculated on the subsequent impact that a carbon release of this quantity could set in motion — fresh water shortages, storm surges, rising sea levels, threats to island lives, threats to island cultures, shifting shorelines, slowed ocean currents, coastal erosion, loss of water habitats, loss of land habitats, reduced agricultural output, widespread flooding — the process has been referred to as an "irreversible cycle" (Cho 2018). The more the melt, the more the heat, the more the heat, the more the melt; abundance and generosity in free-flow, to devastating effect.

Ice holds within it then, a tipping point motif, the vulnerability of a shared existence very much itself on thin ice. Being on thin ice is a feeling of quickening, an any moment thrust of drastic change, it speaks to speed and urgency. Yet it also speaks to care and caution, hesitation and consideration, and the steady inching across unstable territory, all the more unstable for its apparent blanket stability. Where are the invisible cracks? In both cases a thinness of ice implies risk, and lives are at stake. The thicker the ice however, seems no less precarious. Spatially, ice moves; it envelops, encases, accretes, penetrates, spreads, cracks, crevices, glides and recedes. As a phase of water, and as water does, it moves over things and into things and it moves some things, from one place to another as it flows. Qualitatively it moves within itself and across itself, from wet to frost to slush to snow to solid. It can spike, flake, crystallise, hail and icicle itself into a myriad of shapes and occupy a spectrum of colours from tinted opaque to transparencies of blue, brown, black, silver and white.

Movements in ice are also greatly variable, they can be as subtle as snow and invisible as a tiny fissure or soundless icicle drip. While at the other end of the scale, glacier calving and ice sheet breaking, avalanche-apparent and unquestionably manifest, there is hugeness conveyed in both sight and sound. Ice holds within it this moving tension of the in-between, occupying landscapes of duplicity, fluidity, frozen, dense and fragile. As with the allegorical tip of the iceberg, there are always things that are both seen and hidden, ice can creep up on us silently, or violently shake without forewarning.

Ice taking the form of a glacier also moves through time and moves things through time, bridging pasts, presents and futures, both subverting and diverting time as it goes. It is both earthbound and interstellar, older than old — ice and dust being the primary material out of which the solar system was formed. It can extend time; it can freeze a thing, such as a small shell, in an eternal sleep, creating a kind of *non-time*, a place in which time has no impact nor reach. It does this yet all the while continues carrying that shell forward into an infinitely unknown future time. It traps a thing in the momentary, stilling and seemingly stopping time, yet as it traps it is also simultaneously freeing a thing from the inevitability of time; released from the confines of the passing of time a thing will no longer age and decay.

Speed speaks to both space and time, and the speed of ice also out-manoeuvres any initial assumptions. An avalanche might wrap itself in stillness waiting for the opportune moment in which to hurtle ahead full speed, while an iceberg could both drift minimally for days only to be driven quickly in an oncoming current. In the case of a glacier, one might move only a half a metre a year and yet another could make up to thirty metres a day. It would be inherently inaccurate to associate *glacial motion* as a mode of simple slow, burdensome and sedate, while ignoring the particularities of situated glacial difference. There appears to be an irresolvable tension that then connects the two ends of Glacial Time; one the one hand a sense of urgency, on the other, a deliberate slowing down. How slow must I move to allow a feeling to be felt, yet, how slow is the too-slow of the numb? How quick must I act to remove my weight from splintering terrains?

A glacier is also a body, homeland, co-creator, collaborator, and one that is rapidly losing itself to itself, to us all, *yes and*, ice resists, not least in the sense that it shape-shifts in the face of categorisation just as much as it holds the capacity to freeze in place. Astrida Neimanis (2012) writes, "to say that my body is a marshland is a beautiful way to reimagine my corporeality but once we recognise that we are not hermetically sealed in our divers suits of human skin, what do we do with this recognition, what do we owe, and how do we pay?"

(p. 93). *Thinking glacially* might likewise lend a poetic beauty that could be argued to be operating only on a so-called superficial level, yet a glacier is not a metaphor that has been coldly chosen, a thing grasped at to paint a neat allegoric picture. It is not my desire or interest to position things glacial as an implausibly watertight fit to demonstrate and display the threads of my thinking and making; this is not an abstracted and stubborn frozenness, blue-in-the-face. Rather, spending some time within glacial movements as I have just done, begins to teach me ways I might begin to undo some of my understanding and search for the greater complexity at stake. Turning-toward Glacial Time, is a means of learning how to become otherwise in the day to day of both personal and collective; planetary and intimate.

INTERLUDE

~ FREEZING TIME: ERDEM GUNDUZ'S "STANDING MAN"

There are many ways to melt; losing form is to become liquid, softened. As my previous explorations around *Radical Softness* attested to, becoming soft can both disarm and tenderise. How might melting as a form softening might intersect with a *softening of time* itself, generating spaces of pause and consideration? To melt can be a means of collapse; to fall in and fall away is a way to give way, to let go, to release into (the term 'allow' might also be relevant here, something that I will return to discuss further in a later chapter).

The idea of collapsing down dominant time appears in the work of British choreographer Rosemary Lee, who in the late 1980's devised a series of *Melt Down* performances in New York, as a means of public protest against the removal of artist spaces (see Berghausen and Foellmer 2018). The performances involved dancers slowly reaching upward toward the sky and then collapsing their bodies down into the ground. In 2012, Israeli choreographer Ehud Darash performed similar collapsing movements called *Constructing Resilience*, as part of a series of protests in Tel Aviv, collapses intended to counter the 'forward movements' of the demonstrations, as embodied interruptions to a linear progression of time (see Berghausen and Foellmer 2018). I am interested in the potential of these kinds of collapsing movement-thinkings as *interruptions* through which there is a momentary undoing of normative time which I am positioning as melting the firm hold of dominant temporality.

Following Emanuela Bianchi (2012) I understand an interruption to hold the potential for collapsing the structures of dominant time, melting the frozen fixed rigidity of such temporal frameworks and showing them to be altogether

more fluid and ultimately transformable. To collapse is to unravel a stable structure, to break down or to lose control. The possibility that ways of movement might be considered as forms of interruption strikes me as a highly creative adaptation to the constraints of dominant temporal frameworks that centre around forward-orientated thinking. Could thinking toward speculative futures conversely require precisely such non-normative, non-forward actions? What if it were a productive use of our time to resist the progress of certain forms of time?

At first this might strike as another form of denial, a means of perpetuating a mythic never-ending present that refuses to confront the future. Yet, if I am searching for a means of collapsing down previous hopes so as to open space for other hopes to emerge, then becoming more attentive to the way in which bodies can engage with time and reconstruct temporal relationships through their movements is a valid and necessary consideration. How else to collapse down dominant time in order to reconstruct alternative *glacial timescapes* if not to first interrupt its forward flow? While an interruption is an obstacle to something, it is also a means of diverting, changing direction and in doing so, it offers multiple alternative routes ahead.

On 28th May 2013, in Gezi Park, Istanbul, around 50 environmentalists gathered to protest the demolition of the park, after several trees were cut down in preparation for a commercial development project. The local police employed considerable force in attempting to remove the protestors, including tear gas, pepper spray and water cannons. Three days later nearly 10,000 people had joined the crowd in Gezi Park and spread to Taksim Square, protesting against the police tactics. The protest soon transformed into a channel for wider expressions of political discontent and social justice, including calls for greater democracy and change in government. In total over 7 million people attended

the Gezi Park actions which lasted 22 days, resulting in 7 reported deaths, the removal of 60 damaged eyes, and over 6000 people wounded and hospitalised (Dagyte 2016).

Photograph of Erdem Gündüz's Standing Man in Taksim Square, Turkey (2013) Image credit unknown

I am watching a video of performance artist and dancer Erdem Gündüz, filmed on the 17th June on a camera phone and uploaded to YouTube shortly after (Gündüz 2013). There are several videos posted in this way online, most are short, though some are longer compositions of several clips. Erdem is seen standing in Taksim Square, where by this time, gatherings of three or more people had been prohibited. Silent and stationary, Erdem's gaze is fixed toward three large Turkish flags hanging from the Atatürk Cultural Centre. A seemingly simple stance that offers a surprising opening into a vast field of consideration, provoking questions about the nature of standing itself as a marked act. In this standing, we encounter the paradoxical realms of simultaneously standing against, standing up for, no longer standing for and making a stand.

At first Erdem is standing alone, until several people arrive and try to initiate an interaction. One man, leaning extremely close to Erdem's face is asking something, but appears agitated when they fail to receive a response. Another man arrives and pushes at Erdem's body, not forcefully, but clearly trying to encourage movement. Momentarily unbalanced Erdem quickly regains posture and continues standing, gaze still unwavering. Soon after someone else opens a rucksack that Erdem is carrying, the camera zooms closer to show the bag unzipped and its contents being searched through. Eventually the rucksack is pulled down, forcing Erdem to unhook it, and a notepad, pair of glasses, and other small items are systematically pulled out onto the floor for inspection. It is clear the men are looking for something; eventually an ID card is found, and Erdem's name is read aloud, again trying to spark some kind of response.

A circle begins to form of yet more men, all dressed in ordinary day clothes, no uniforms to suggest that they are acting in an official or authoritative capacity. They pat down Erdem's shirt with their hands, becoming increasingly intimate as they now search Erdem's body. Erdem becomes agitated and begins

to empty out their own (empty) trouser pockets and gesture that they have nothing to hide. It becomes clearer that the men are viewing Erdem as a threat, this search of belongings and clothing are the actions of those checking for weapons or explosives. Erdem's unresponsiveness and immovableness has made them uncomfortable, suspicious and confused.

The video skips ahead to the evening, the sky is darker, and approximately 30 people are now gathered standing behind Erdem, also stationary and silent, all staring in the same direction, towards the flags. A crowd of onlookers has also gathered, some are filming and taking photographs. At one moment, an interviewer places a large microphone in front of Erdem's lips, but Erdem remains silent and does not acknowledge them. Someone else offers a bottle of

Crowds gather around Erdem Gündüz's Standing Man at dusk

(2013) © Vassil Donev / epa-efe

water, but still Erdem's gaze does not waver. There are several more YouTube videos which show media coverage of Erdem in the square, some include footage of the police making arrests and removing the standing protestors later that same evening. Some videos are captioned "standing man protest spreads" and "standing man inspires new form of silent protest" and show Taksim Square and other parts of the country now with even more protestors stood mimicking Erdem's stance.

In an interview for a short documentary made after the Gezi Park protests Erdem explains that "the police had no idea what I was doing at first and neither did I" (Dagyte 2016). While they had deliberately travelled to the square to protest, the performative act did not arise from any prior or specific plan. I am struck by the tension between uncertainty and certainty embodied within this action; an action of a non-action. As Erdem began standing it wasn't fully known why or what was being committed to within the gesture, and yet the image of Erdem's standing body seems paradoxically *full of certainty*, which only appears to increase in its fortitude the more that Erdem resists the interferences of others.

Perhaps it is these very attempts at interference and the resistance subsequently incurred that itself creates and consolidates the certainty; there is something to *rub up against*. This is a body that is not only *not moving* but is also *refusing* to move or be moved. It seems the refusal creates the conditions for understanding the body as being *active*, charging it with an intention so that stillness becomes both activity and 'an action'. Yet Erdem was of course already active prior to this resistance, through the movements of breath, blood cells, nerves, digestion, visual perception. The relative external stillness is never entirely still, but rather always already a body in the kinds of constant motion that are *inherent to life*.

If standing is an action, it is also one that is innocuous and imbued with everyday ordinariness. I might stand still in a supermarket queue, while talking on the phone, watching a concert or if there are not enough seats on a bus. Standing in a public square looking intently at a particular building, statue or flag, is also an extremely common gesture of tourist behaviour. With one hand in a pocket, Erdem's stance seems especially casual, it is not the tightly controlled upright composure of a security guard, nor the bigger and more evocative gestures of a 'human statue' street performer. It is the context of the protest, the act of standing being in relation to the time and space of Gezi Park, that marks this act with notions of activity and passivity.

Erdem went to the square knowingly to contribute to the protest; standing *is* the protest. It is also therefore a political and social action in addition to a physical one. Yet it is remarkably different to many other forms of recognisable protest; marching in the streets, raising banners and shouting chants. Standing is not only an embodiment here of political discontent, it is also a choice made to convey the message of this discontent in a particular way. Erdem's choice, as certain or uncertain as it began, was to be quiet, solitary, and stationary, placing it in relationship with other types of protest that might be called passive resistance; non-confrontational, non-violent, creative or non-traditional. This is an act of standing that is actively passive, as well as passively active.

As an expression of political defiance, it is carried out in a such a way that is neither especially defiant nor overtly political. A body that is 'doing wrong' is arguably not nearly so obvious when it is also a body that is not 'doing' much at all. There doesn't seem to be a specific place therefore upon which to hang the notion of defiance, where walking feet might otherwise hold it on a political march, or a voice taking part in a rally, or a hand that writes a manifesto for change. Instead it seems it is Erdem's entire body simply *being there* that carries

the mark of 'protest'. This mark is simultaneously embedded in a set of relations; time and place imbue it with significance, as does the direction of Erdem's gaze towards the Turkish flags. Consistency and duration is also a part of these conditions, if Erdem had stood instead for only a few minutes or sat down on the stones half way through, this would all have altered the 'protest'. Is it because Erdem's standing is so vastly different from other forms of protest that were happening, including other non-violent and creative forms, that it became so intriguing, causing it to eventually spread worldwide and inspire others to join and continue.

Speaking in *The Standing Protest* (Dagyte 2016) Erdem defines this act as, first and foremost, being one of protest rather than a politically engaged *performance*. The distinction is also made that it is a "protest" and not "passive resistance". My understanding of this is that Erdem sees the body to be *standing for* something, rather than as standing against. The word 'standing' in English language is richly associated with the idea of declaration or affirmation; to stand for something, to make a stand or take a stand, to stand up for one's rights. Though where the dividing line between affirmation and refutation falls is harder to place and it seems important to consider (as I have done previously) if standing for something must irrevocably mean standing against something else? While the definitions between a passively enacted "protest" and "passive resistance" might be subtle and complex to unpick, for Erdem the purpose became clear throughout — "I was doing nothing other than sharing a hope" (Dagyte 2016). To see this standing as a form of non-normative political action is to place it within broader, non-specific and less well defined boundaries. It simultaneously emerges from within a physical body that, through its unyielding stationary position, precisely embodies a clearly defined and fixed specificity, an extremely tangible occupation of space.

That standing alone should be so unremarkable, is itself also a contribution to this very sense of non-normative activity. It is seemingly the ordinariness of Erdem's action that makes it seem quite so out of place and so interesting to the concerned passer-by. It may be far more remarkable to have painted my toenails in the middle of the square, cut my hair or begun a yoga routine, yet, except for removing my clothing or doing anything that involves bodily fluid, it feels hard to imagine that any of these actions would have produced nearly the same level of suspicion as Erdem's body did, arguably even when hypothetically separated from the time-space of the protest. If Erdem had a camera, a book or a phone in their hand, their body would undoubtedly have seemed more appropriate and *categorisable*. If they had been looking toward the cultural centre but made more visible head movements, as if also looking around the square, *even if this was done over an extraordinarily long amount of time* it would likely still have been classed as more acceptable. Instead, that this stillness must have felt so uncomfortable or suspicious to watch, is perhaps more because of its apparent lack of purpose, leading to an assumption of threat requiring Erdem's belongings to be searched.

Maybe then, it is less the standing itself that is remarkable, and more Erdem's lack of responsiveness which enacts a kind of defiant resistance and lack of compliance. For this is not just standing, this is choosing to *stay* standing; to keep standing, to remain. That Erdem will not speak in answer to questions and will not show interest in others (I will return later to explore how this intersects with empathetic capacity in the work of Amanda Baggs), can be perceived as an unwillingness to explain and therefore justify these actions, which in this case, is also a refusal to justify *being in a body* in place and space — *this* is the abnormality and threat. The lack of physical movement, or prop to signal internal movement (such as a book, phone etc.) makes it impossible to ascertain what

Erdem is doing, other than standing and somehow the fact of this standing, being as it is without a purposeful context (such as in a queue or busy environment) does not seem to satisfy. There seems to be a requirement for Erdem to be doing *something* in order to be able to mark them as safe or unsafe.

With their gaze towards the flags for several hours, it is almost as if Erdem has exceeded any designated 'normal' timeframe for looking at the flags and so likewise this cannot be deemed a reason or purpose. This would not be the case if Erdem was sat in a cafe staring at one singular spot for an hour in a daydream, and it would almost certainly not be the case if Erdem were meditating or sat on a park bench sleeping. Daydreaming, meditating or sleeping even though they share some of the same qualities of stillness and silence all provide a reason which allows for acceptable classification. There is a desire that even I find watching the video, to assign a task, to be able to understand this body as 'protesting' and so 'doing'.

If Erdem had held a protest sign, if they were chanting a political statement, if they were more obviously 'protesting' I believe the significance of their action would not have gathered the same kinds of attention as it did, nor presumably would it interest me nearly so much. Yet the experience of watching those first few moments of the video, now with the knowledge of Erdem's own uncertainty and lack of initial purpose, is especially uncanny. Before the standing had settled into the action it became and before Erdem knew this *was* the protest — am I watching a vacancy? Or a state of 'being' that is waiting to become a 'doing'? Or a being-doing emerging, or neither, or something else entirely? When I can ascribe the word "protest" I feel relief: there is a palpable removal of quizzical tension. On reflection, I believe this would be equally as true if, for example, I came across another kind of street performance that at first I was not immediately recognisable as a performance, such is often the case in those first

few awkward moments of a "flash mob" scenario where it is clear 'something' is happening but not yet clear exactly 'what'. I realise that to know how to *be with* Erdem, or *to be with myself watching,* in order to remain connected with the non-active being of *both* of us, it is surprisingly perplexing and something I realise I am in many ways entirely unaccustomed to.

Whilst I am watching the video, in part because of this slight discomfort (in searching for something to do and something to make of the scenario) I notice that I am drawn to consider Erdem's internal movements; to imagine Erdem's thoughts and feelings, whether they were nervous or calm in their stomach, heartbeat and chest. I find myself wondering what combination of sensations Erdem was experiencing, if their body felt heavy and rooted or floating and fluttery. I find that by drawing in these details for myself I feel able to sufficiently *fill Erdem out* in a way that settles me. The experience also, entirely unexpectedly, causes me to think of times I've spent around death and bodies that can no longer 'do' and that lie still, — still yet *still being* — or is it rather that they have stopped, being but regardless *remain*, bodies that are bodily but little else? I am further struck by the how *moving* I find it to watch Erdem in this being-standing moment of nothingness. I am moved emotionally by the stillness, and reminded of how, again in English language and culture, being moved can in turn bring someone "to a standstill". Being "stopped in my tracks" by the beauty of something for example, is a form of inactivity that arises directly from intense and significant internal activity, whether emotional, physical or a combination of both. Sometimes I am moved so intensely by a feeling that I am counter-moved to a paradoxical paralysis.

Reflecting on their own paralysis in the documentary, Erdem talks of the standing action representing "the paralysis of the Turkish public" and the sense of frustration many experienced being unable to act in meaningful ways to

successfully create the political change they hoped for (Dagyte 2016). Being left with, as I understand it, a feeling of "doing nothing" Erdem enacted it by means of *amplifying* it. In this way Erdem offers both a critique of 'doing nothing' and the political apathy and social lethargy it encapsulates while at the same time a subversion of what it might mean to 'do something' or 'nothing' itself. The action is imbued with *accessibility*, there is an everydayness that seems to suggest that we can always do *something*, however insignificant it may initially seem. Yet even the act of standing is never neutral, nor exempt from questions of privilege and it is important to remember that bodies which are capable of making a standing stance are always already given more *visibility* in the world than those confined to beds for example, or who move in wheelchairs or with walking aids.

Considering this, it is also interesting perhaps that had Erdem chosen to lay down or sit down as the form of protest, to block a road or an entrance, or linked arms with others, it may again have been more initially acceptable or categorisable than in such solitary standing. Erdem's protest was *expanded through space* by the presence of the others who joined in it, who came without any prior arrangement or knowledge on Erdem's behalf. It was further *expanded through time* in the subsequent repetition of this action by others on later days and in different places. Extending beyond any individuality yet still tied to its specificity, Erdem became known as "The Standing Man", while their act of standing marked the beginning of a series of subsequent global standing protests; arguably then, *a movement* in and of itself.

Notes

[1] There are many other forms of non-violent protest and resistance that are relevant and valuable to my wider discussions, and worth inclusion and consideration here. These include acts of "staying in place" at Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp, forms of "plant thinking" (Michael Marder 2013) in the Occupy protests, the "holding" of trees in the Chipko movement/Chipko Andolan – a form of "सत्याग्रह satyagraha" (Sanskrit) also associated with Mahatma Ghandi, and more recent actions by community organisations such as The Nap Ministry who mobilise rest as political and social resistance.

CHAPTER FOUR, Part One:

Radical selves becoming *suprasocial*

"One way to stop seeing trees or rivers or hills only as natural resources is to class them as fellow beings, kinfolk. I guess what I'm trying to do is subjectify the universe because look where objectifying it has got us. To subjectify is not to co-opt and colonize and exploit. Rather, if it's done honestly, it involves a great reach outward of the mind and the imagination. What tools do we have to help us make such a reach?"

— Ursula K. Le Guin, *Late in the Day* (2016 p. viii)

An anthropological theory known as "Dunbar's Number", suggests that a human mind can roughly hold around a hundred and fifty social connections before reaching a limit beyond which we cannot sustain stable social relationships (Dunbar 1992). Adhering to such limitations would require us to reserve our realm of care for those close to us, and to *close* our borders around this closeness in order to maintain it. We would require ourselves to draw lines in the sand, to keep it a stable 'land' upon which to build our communities. Yet, what might happen to a mind that attempted to breach its limit, or trespass beyond it? If my capacities were not so limited and if I could flex in such a way so as to turn toward *without* simultaneously turning away, would it be possible to cast a wider net of care, affection or attention?

This chapter will seek to respond to this question through an expanded notion of empathy that I am calling "Radical Empathy". The word "radical" stems from the late fourteenth century Latin *radicalis*, meaning "to be made of or to have roots", from *radix* "root", and the Proto-Indo-European *wrad* meaning both "root" and "branch" (CED 2018). The root of a thing is understood to be the essential quality or centrality of its life. Yet the branch is also a place of margins and edges and to be 'radical' is to uproot something entirely and completely. The chapter will first consider some definitions of 'radicality', with the help of a close reading of a Selfridges advertisement campaign. It will go on to develop this discussion in relation to the work of Erin Manning, whose terms "hyperrelational" and "suprasocial" I understand to engage in a subverting of Dunbar's Number and its related notions of limitation and capacity. It will consider the possibility of movements which

radically stretch out toward others, while reflecting on the subsequent challenges raised in maintaining a stable sense of self in the process.

In the second section of this chapter (Part Two) I will further consider themes that both assert and question this idea of 'stability' while exploring how Radical Empathy facilitates wider human and nonhuman networks of connection. I will suggest turning away from imagining our networks from an anthropogenic perspective and propose the need for a symbiotic approach instead that might be capable of redefining how we understand our place within the world as issues of reliance and dependence. I will discuss the relationship between Donna Haraway's "kinship" and Timothy Morton's "solidarity" and locate them as relevant to my own understanding of the possibilities and responsibilities for a practice of Radical Empathy.

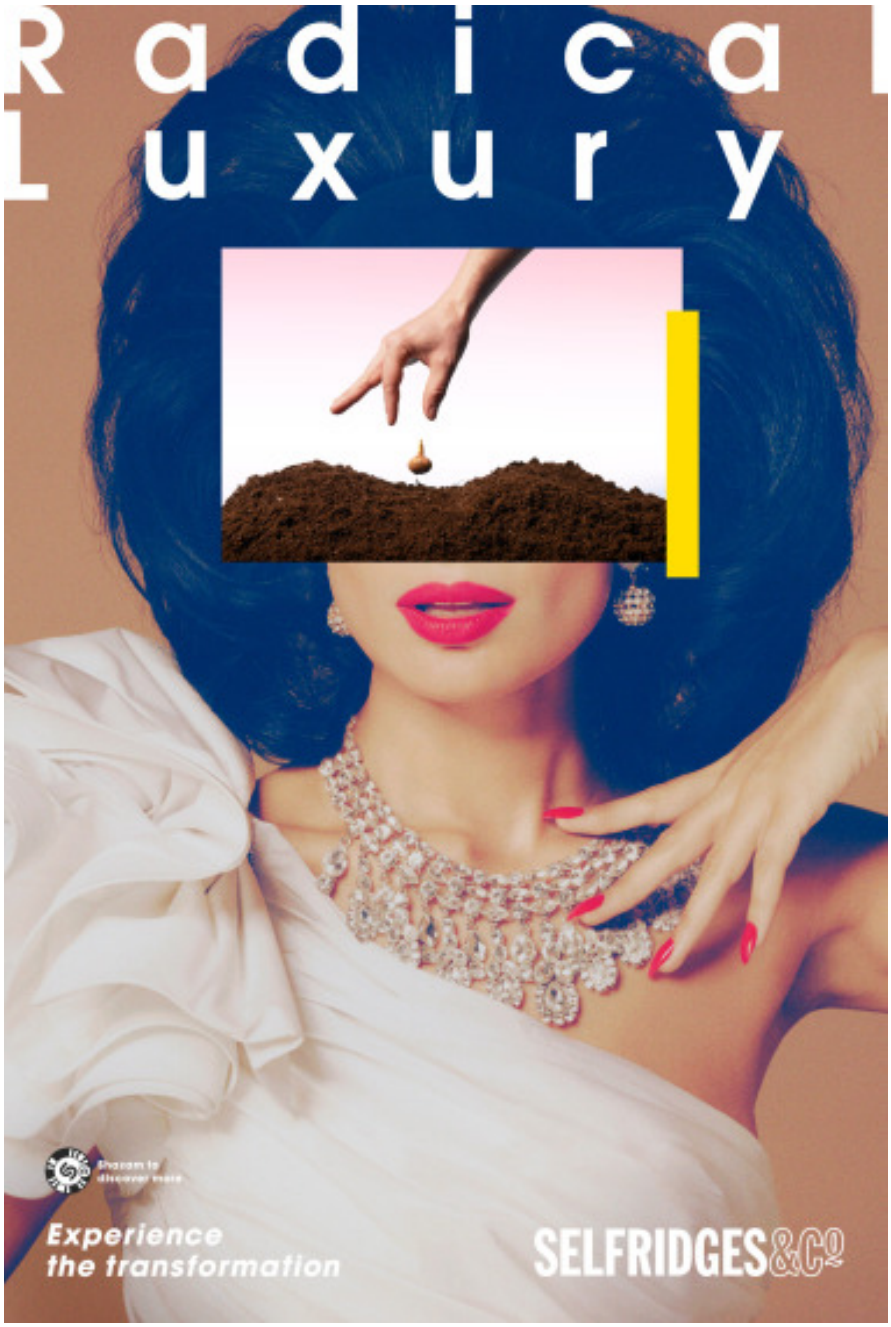
A RADICAL LUXURY

"Luxury is boring. In a world where mass produced ice cream and even bin-bags can be labelled 'luxury', the word has become associated with something predictable, prosaic and banal. So how can we make luxury exciting and meaningful again? Is it found in an object, or an idea? And who are the visionaries redefining the value of things? This year at Selfridges, we invite you to explore these questions with us through a series of engaging installations, truly extraordinary creations and insightful debates and ideas. This is Radical Luxury – what does it mean to you? "

— Selfridges (2018)

In the Spring of 2018 the high-end department store Selfridges released a marketing campaign entitled *Radical Luxury / Luxury Reclaimed.* Behind the tagline, "Luxury Reclaimed" reads an uncomfortable subtext; luxury must be retrieved from devaluation (presumably through collective rather than exclusive entitlement) and restored into the rightful hands of those with the means to cultivate, appreciate, understand and afford it. The choice of the word 'radical' fulfils an important role: adding a sense of urgency, heightened significance and contemporary relevance, it speaks not to a stultifying audience of conservative

conformity, but rather to an energised renegade, a crusader with a cause. This is a dusted off, polished up and updated luxury, one amped up and made to stand out. No longer mere luxury alone, the claim for a radical luxury takes us to the extremity of luxury and at this frontier, amplified in such a way, things tend to paradoxically curve in upon themselves; it is a place where edges contain cores, and centres become thresholds.

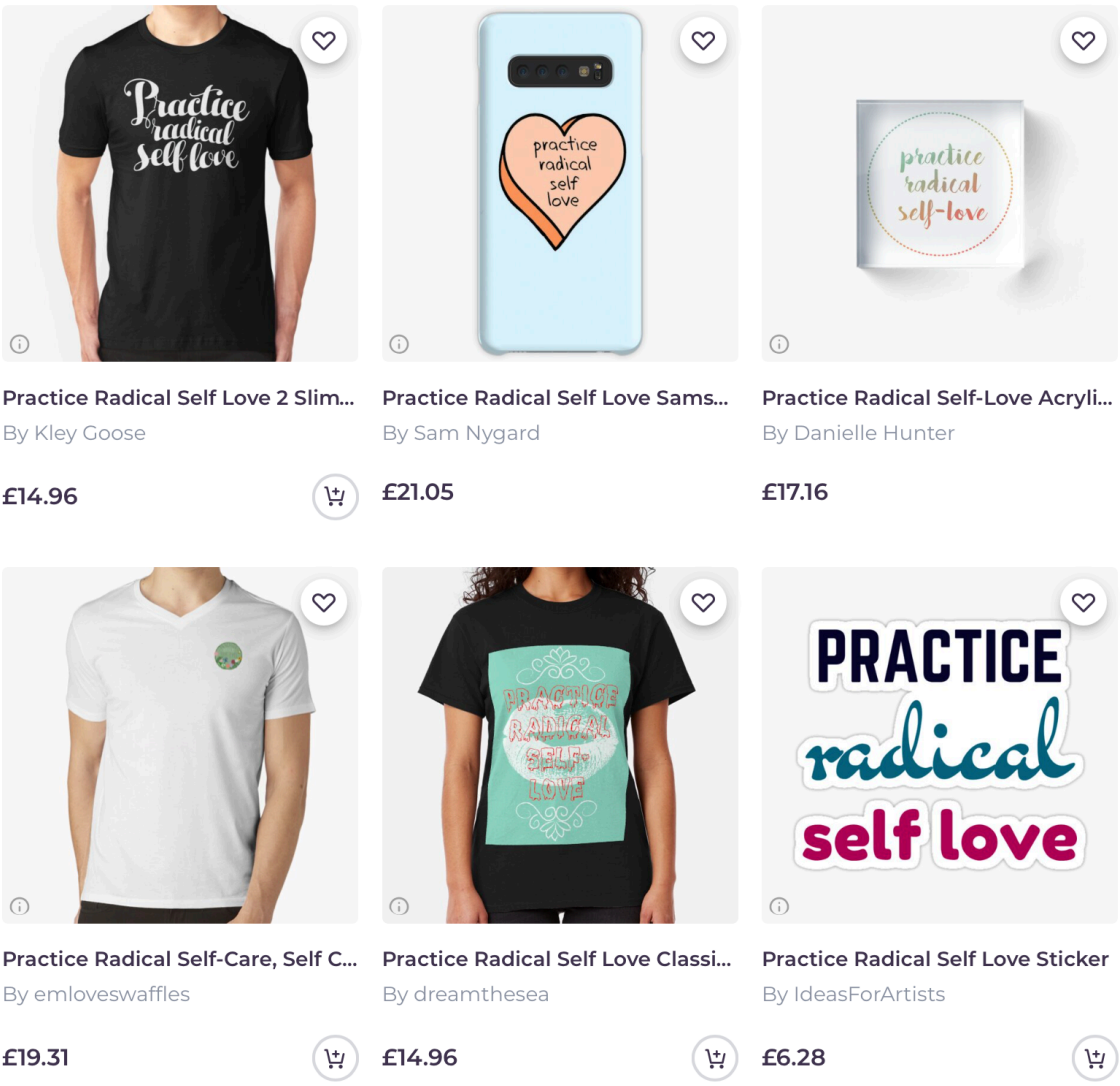


Radical Luxury, Selfridges Advertising Campaign (2018) copyright permissions sought

Radical and luxury are two words that seem to rub up against each other, and the draw of the marketing campaign initially appears to play successfully into precisely this juxtaposition. In a social and political context where *attention* itself has become arguably one of the highest prized commodities, advertisements that cause the eye to double take and momentarily stop to consider their content, are a viable measure of at least some form of commercial success. The addition of "radical" disrupts the smoothness of texture that is usually associated with luxury, it cuts into it, pulls it inside out, and so tugs at the attention. The discomfort of juxtaposition in general is especially mirrored within this particular juxtaposition, given that luxury itself denotes the very essence of comfort. Luxury is not only comfort but a rare comfort, sought after and valued; to be comfortable is to be stable and secure. If adding a touch of 'the radical' is a way to make luxury 'exciting', then it is an excitement that roughens around the edges and shakes things up, one intended to destabilise and move counter to the currents of flow. Radical luxury is a fork in the road to comfort's comfortable status quo.

In modern Western politics, "radical" has described movements of 'progressive' political and democratic reform since at least the eighteenth century. Within this context, to be radical is to go toward a sense of essence or core of something in order to uproot it *in its entirety*; shaking off existing social regimes by seeking their complete overhaul. Whether for the radical abolitionists of the US Civil War or the radical reformists of the French Revolution, political radicalism was intended to be a thorough and complete dismantling, embedded in a mind-set of unshakable commitment to this endeavour. Radicals are those with dedication, belief and passion for social change, "working tirelessly for more democratic workplaces, communities, households and relationships… to create a better, more just world - a truly radical notion" (Fitzgerald 2014).

It is these energising qualities of radicalism no doubt that marketing campaigns could understandably wish to feed upon; the exciting edge of activism, risky, but for the right reasons - for betterment, something different, fresh and hopeful. Selfridges is one of several recent campaigns that have attempted to make these types of links, more controversial examples include Pepsi's nod to Black Lives Matter (see Batchelor and Hooton 2017) and Gillette's #Metoo moment (see Topping et al. 2019). Further dis-ease however arises in the sense that by its definition radicalness feels to be incompatible with mainstream endeavour, or at least with a mainstream appropriation that further serves frameworks of inequality. In this sense, the commodification and commercialisation of Selfridges positioning of 'luxury' as exclusive is therefore inherently undemocratic.



"radical" merchandise from the online shopping website Redbubble (2019)

A similar vein of critique can be directed at the "wellness industry" where social media friendly slogans such as "radical selfcare" and "radical self-love" perpetuate versions of radicality that teeter on a risky edge; selling a promise of attraction, status and wealth that appears to mock the very message of the slogans themselves. Yet more dangerously, the phraseology of a radicalness sold as currency-on-demand both ignores the situated historical and political contexts that first give rise to their necessity while undermining and so violating the lived experiences of racialized, gendered and othered bodies for whom such ideas speak of outright calls for survival (see Lorde 1984; 1992). Audre Lorde writes, "the master's tools will never dismantle the masters house" (1984, pp. 110-112) yet poignantly, within the *industry of radicality* the tools for disarmament become repurposed as weapons themselves. Here too,

'radical luxury' complicates itself, as the need for something to be inessential for it to be classed as luxury judders against the essentiality found in the urgency of crisis that beckons in the radical.

To be radical is to be revolutionary, in the sense of seeking or causing complete or dramatic change. These are acts of disruption, ruptures of the root, and alongside them (and significantly less convenient to advertising marketing campaigns), are also the energies of violence that carry out such destruction. As much as the term "radical" has been associated with a revolutionary progression, so too, with a shift of perspective, does it also align with conservative progression — equally as revolutionary in the eyes of those committed to overseeing it.

Historical radical movements are frequently now associated with underpinnings of democratic, left-wing or progressive imperatives, though at least since the fascist movements of the early 20th century there has always also been a radicalism of the far right. In the last few decades, 'radical' has increasingly, primarily been used to refer to movements that are also labelled extremist, fundamentalist or terrorist. These are movements which for some represent the lethally uncompromising ends of religious and socio-political change in the aftershocks of enforced colonial earth shiftings. For others they are desperate responses to geopolitical inequalities and the violence of *luxurious* lines drawn by colonial powers across contested sands. They are movements, arising from the deprivation of secure living, that as Vandana Shiva (2016b) notes, "simultaneously identify the other as enemy while constructing exclusivist identities to separate themselves from those with whom, in fact, they are ecologically, culturally, and economically connected" (p. 3). This is a "false separation" and a direct reaction to the "enclosures and economic colonisation of globalisation" (Shiva, p. 3). It is also a radical response, the antithesis of democracy if, following Vandana Shiva, the "commons are the highest expression of democracy" (p. 3). Yet fundamentalist acts visibly form around undemocratic expressions of extreme violence and abuses of core human rights that also undermine the democracy they claim to seek. These are lived experiences of the 'radical' that are not the luxurious thrill of a sprinkling of sellable risk, but ones of acute suffering and urgent questions of survival.

Radicalism is a response to the experience of instability and insecurity, it emerges from and through instability and insecurity and it creates in its wake further instabilities and insecurities. It is a challenge to stability and security, a security that is itself *exclusive*, one that lends stability to some bodies through its removal from others. To live in security and with

stability in these global times is itself a luxury when measured alongside the vast populations of peoples and beings living precariously without such an access. Providing for the stability of some is done through globally undemocratic "democracies"; Western democracies of the global north built upon and sustained by the privileging of some bodies over others. Genuine radicalism challenges the comfort of a belief in the stability of our securities, it awakens discomfort and uncomfortable juxtapositions.

While Selfridges asks, "How do we make luxury meaningful again?" the more acute, more *radical* question is, if luxury is taken to mean the comfort of stability, how is stability to be made meaningful again? What kinds of actions might emerge through a desire to move with integrity in discomfort; the dis-ease of being *in* comfort and acknowledging global suffering as core to the construction of that comfort. Is it possible to challenge comfort in stable ways, to increase stability via destabilisations that disrupt without destruction, or to subvert roots without upheaval and displacement? These are uncomfortable, uncertain questions — *and,* there is a luxury to being located in such a way as to be able to ask them. On closer attention, luxury, couldn't be further from predictability, nor the banal.

Those who make claims for the radical are often situated at the edges, the extremes of moderate discourse, yet they see within their own radicalness an original essentiality, truth or core that they are upholding and representing. These are the thresholds of radical logic, a shapeshifting of perspectives. It is a place in which fundamentalism is precisely yet paradoxically fundamental, making claims of centrality while occupying the outer limits. A place where religion can be held to be both furthest from its truth or simultaneously closest to its core. A place too, where the exclusivity of *radical feminisms* remain a poignantly painful reminder of the wounding that spares no corner of radical reform, as exclusivity folds into the exclusionary, and again the visibilities and priorities of some bodies are placed over and at the expense of another.

EMPATHY, AMPLIFIED

For *radicality* to inhabit both the extreme of a thing and its root, the centre and the edge is a quality as generative as it is confounding. To call upon the radical is a decentring of the centre,

it is to move toward the limits of expression and identity, to act out the shakiness of a superlative extremity, where extremeness is a demarcation of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion. What counts as a 'luxury'? A bin-bag according to Selfridges, is decidedly not what counts. Yet a bin-bag is so far down the list of conceivable luxury items as to be on the very, very outer edges, placing it firmly within a liminal space where it is furthest from the root definition of luxury. Yet at this threshold it also inescapably brushes shoulders with other *extremely* luxurious things - items which are also occupying an edge, not through being non-luxurious but through being *too* luxurious, the most luxurious of the luxurious: extreme luxury; the amped up exemplification of luxury itself. They are two ends of a spectrum that curve around to meet each other through the label 'extremity'. The place of the 'extreme' holds both the furthest from and the closest to, just as the 'radical' holds the 'least it' and the 'most it', the truest version and the most false account.

For a bin-bag, "in a world where… even big-bags can be labelled 'luxury'" the story of course is also not as quietly comfortable nor stable (Selfridges 2018). Yet "*in a world where*" the quantity of disposable plastic is smothering the oceans, choking fish, birds and marine mammals, to treat a bin-bag, whose toxins seep into waters, soils and skies, as anything less than the politically agentive matter of *vibrant* urgency that it is, seems nothing if not a luxury of ignorance (see Bennett 2010). It may indeed be an ecological necessity to radically revalue a bin-bag precisely as an item of luxury instead of its current odd mix of throw-away-necessity and indispensable disposability. A bin-bag in this sense is also a radical thing, at the edges of importance from one perspective, or with a small shift of direction, something that is instead located close to the very core.

Tipping either end of the weighing scales, where both radicality and luxury at last fully hold together, is their shared claim to *excess*, a sense of too-muchness albeit also closely situated alongside the not-enough. It is the subversive energy of this excess that I am calling on as a creative intervention. An excess, bound within a radical logic with the potential to amplify our approach towards understanding and utilising our abilities for empathy. To position a 'Radical Empathy' is to do so cautiously and recklessly, to summon both the qualities of hopefulness and risk.

I am cautious and aware of the ease within which Radical Empathy might sit amongst vacuous brothers and sisters in a land of convenient slogans used as fashionable currency to further the tools of a consumerist focused status quo. Cautious too of the tenderness of woundings that are not just metaphorical but *actual* wounds carried out in the name of

radicalism or counter radicalism upon *actual* bodies who have physically lived the various violences of both the regimes of conformity and their revolutions. The excess I call upon to explore in relation to empathy is an excess not in terms of excessive destruction, though it is one that necessarily recognises the patterning of upheaval that conventionally accompanies change and rupture. Rather, to seek out 'Radical Empathies' is to search for means of disruption by way of interruption that *subverts the very links between destruction and revolution*, and it is to understand empathy through a lens of *urgency* that speaks to the need to unpick such links.

I am suggesting a need for a Radical Empathy that extends through its excessiveness into a story of abundance rather than one of scarcity; excess that stems not from accumulation or consumerism (rooted in a linear logic of stockpiling more than I currently need) but an excess that *generously spends* by means of moving in rhythm with the overflows of reciprocity and endless regenerative supplies. This would be an empathy that is empathetically too-much, amplified and excessive in both depth and breadth — to have so much empathy for others that it simply *overflowed*. Might I allow empathy to be something with which I become *radically inappropriate*, abundantly, *luxuriantly* reckless with my levels of reaching-toward others in consideration and concern. Might I find ways to become inherently leaky and spill over in such uncontainability? Yet this would also be an excess that would need to be orientated as *give-away* rather than *throw-away*, one of radical fullness rooted deep in a radical care, both of self and another. Linking empathy with radicality is to place empathy firmly within a framework that, scientifically speaking, is to "behave as a unit", to be a radical atom is to occupy a location of group-hood, to move in togetherness (CED 2019).

To empathise radically is therefore not to moderate our empathies but to be so comfortable in our assurance of the stability of their supply within us as to risk moving closer toward the boundaries of our limits. To broaden our capacity to feel-with all manner of anothers, human and nonhuman, to feel with those outside of our empathetic comfort zones, not just those for whom our perspective-shifting comes more easily because of shared ground. To empathise non-discriminatorily and to reach toward states of feeling-with, not only when it is socially and culturally required of us, nor only in response to clear, visible or manifest suffering. It is to risk empathising *more*, more frequently, more extensively, to do it with more strength and suppleness. It is to empathise publicly as well as privately, to not reserve our attentions only for those deemed close enough to us[1] It is to challenge logics of proximity, pushing against the edges that keep empathy close in both space and time and to

explore instead empathies that move further, travelling far and wide. It is to destabilise the tendency to turn empathy into an act of projection over receptivity. It is to overthrow notions of suitability and properness, to become instead comfortable with inhabiting the margins of the uncomfortable and the stigma of inappropriateness that keeps something shyer, quieter and less invasive. It is to shout empathy aloud as well as to know how to whisper it softly, to roll around in it as much as to open ourselves up to it, to be radically personal toward it and radically collective in our relations around it. To ask more of it, to ask more for permission for it and to give more of our own in return. To move with the cautiousness and the recklessness toward an empathy of radical responsibility.

These are amplified idealisations of empathy, stretching high above the branches of the everyday, and yet they are idealisations also grounded deep in the very same roots. This is a radicality that is re-*membered* then, pieced back together from its foundations, sprouting from "wrad", both root *and* branch, core *and* edge. To position empathy as radical is to approach empathy not as a luxury or something inessential or self-indulgent, but to understand it as foundational, a base for relationship and living. It is to suggest that a limited empathy, one bounded by human to human relations alone and restricted in proximities of space and time, is not in fact the full potential of empathy at all. Rather there are also the possibilities for leaky empathies, unencumbered and curious; empathy towards the ocean, the Selfridges' advertising executive, the bin-bag… and all their many various ancestors and descendants five, ten, fifty generations apart. It is to ask for an empathy that is so radical as to turn in upon itself at its own thresholds and ask it to become defiantly, radically centralised and mainstream, an empathy so widespread it becomes thoroughly everyday, ordinary and almost perhaps banal (though never predictable nor prosaic).

Radical Empathy is an ethics and a politics, both a recognition of empathy *as a form of commoning*, and a *commoning of empathy itself*. It is to bring empathy, which de-centres the self, into a central consideration of what it means to live in relationship and inter-being with all our anothers. It is to offer empathy as already "exciting and meaningful" yet also risky and destabilising, an empathy that challenges the limits of selfhood and identification while simultaneously facilitating that same selfhood within its ecology of relations. To risk empathising is not always comfortable, to shift a perspective, to move outside of oneself and flex our neurones is not always a pleasant or convenient sensation. Yet a passionate empathy — dedicated and committed to practicing these discomforts as a means of *staying-with,* as intervention and as a strategy for democratic wellbeing — is an empathy that is both more

than itself *and* inherently itself. This is to understand empathy as an attitude of attuning and attentiveness, generosity, reciprocity and radically luxurious curiosity. Empathy is *already* essential; Radical Empathy is both an acknowledgement of this and a generative movement that could arise in response to such an acknowledgement.

LOVE AND LIMITS

As humans orientating, with the position of our spines and eyes, turning toward one place inevitably appears to turn us away from another. Within a Western, linear, understanding we cannot conceivably face everywhere equally at once. To suggest we become more expansive, more *tentacular* (as Donna Haraway might) or more chameleon-like with a full 360-degree rotation of vision, is to stretch at the imagination of both our physical and metaphorical humanity; it is to take us into decidedly posthuman, not-quite-human or otherwise-human territories. At the same time the expansion of our capacities to be more than human, as opposed to inhuman, leads us to the heart of arguably humanitarian, and often problematic ideals, perhaps ultimately, *love*.

Actions undertaken in the name of love stretch the entire spectrum of human experience, the most beautiful, frenzied, selfless, murderous, merciful, unimaginable, selfish, generous, merciless and admirable actions imaginable. Acting out of love is a way of being *for* others that protects with violence and fight, gluing people together in fraternity and patriotism as well as in kinship and complex constellations of care. Narratives of love bond us to some others and yet *not other others*, and by doing so reproduce a structure of othering in relation to an ideal. This ideal *guides* us into our loves, it leads us toward those that are visible and worthy of loving and away from those invisible or unworthy, along the way forming and moulding legitimate bodies and their illegitimate counterparts. An illegitimate body is often also a disposable one. Love "reproduces the collective as ideal through producing a particular kind of subject", one that sees itself to some degree similarly reflected in the faces of others (Ahmed 2014, p. 123). This is an other we can identify with, an other with whom we could empathise. Sara Ahmed (2014) explains that "love becomes a way of bonding with others in relation to an ideal" and this ideal takes its very shape from the

repetitive patterns formed as an effect of such bonding (p. 124). Being-for-others is then a kind of *for-ness* orientated around an *against-ness*, those who fail the collective ideal of any particular grouping and from whom we must protect our loved ones, or who become irrelevant or disposable in our quest of satisfying the needs of our loved ones. Love is a love with limits, and these limits are not always so obvious or stable to place.

In the book *Against Empathy*, psychologist Paul Bloom (2018, p. 15) writes "being against empathy is like being against kittens - a view considered so outlandish that it can't be serious". Though some humans are not fond of cats, their independence and stealth perceived as selfish or untrustworthy, I am not in any way against cats. I am especially not against kittens, and yet, I sometimes experience feelings that confuse the simplicity of this statement. Faced with the peculiarly fetishized beauty of all things tiny, tiny paws and tiny ears, I may screw my face up, shut my eyes and clench my muscles in an inextricable mix of paradoxical distress combined with complete delight. Recent psychological research has linked these forms of response to a host of similar ones tentatively referred to as "cute aggression" (see Aragón et al. 2015). Most commonly occurring as responses to infants and small, fluffy or baby animals, the so-sweet-I-could-squeeze-you-to-death drive can also surface as pinching of 'adorable' chubby cheeks, squealing noises and smothering embraces.

The contradictory urges toward things that are simultaneously bringing intense pleasure and yet are also expressed through relations of discomfort is understood to be a form of emotion regulation, not entirely dissimilar to nervous laughter or tears of joy. A system of mechanisms to provide counter direction sensations that aid the body in adjusting to and balancing out intense experience. The complexity of connection between pleasure and some degree of pain has been widely documented across various fields, and this is not a point of focus here. What does interest me is how affect, both the affirmative and the adverse, can be felt so keenly as to be *too much* to somehow neurologically manage or contain on its own. And how, in the face of this too-muchness any corresponding intentions, experiences and expressions can criss-cross, confuse and contradict. Sat beside a kitten, showering it with love and attention I am almost so much 'for' the kitten that I induce for myself a dose of 'against'.

My bodily limits for a kind of "kitten affection overdrive syndrome" may be particularly heightened, or otherwise decreased depending upon my levels of stress, factors of nutrition, glucose intake and cyclical hormonal changes. The limits of my physical body, with all its many openings, are not the same as the limits of my emotional body nor those of my capacity for neurological flexibility and the limits of my imagination. My limits are in constant flux.

To consider questions of containment is already to consider containment's inherent leakiness. When I-love-you-so-much-I-could-just-eat-you-up, I invoke a drawing of you not just toward me but right down into me, a consuming and subsuming of you and a breaching of the *me*-ness of me. The "outlandishness" invoked by Paul Bloom is itself a relationship of limits and boundaries, to be an outlander is to be foreign, unfamiliar and *othered*.

HYPERRELATIONAL WORLDING

To feel too much, to give too much of oneself across, can be a quality met with wariness. Interestingly, such limits often do not apply in the same way to uncontainable displays of violence or defence, or emotions such as disgust and anger, despite also being closely tied in relationship with love. To wish to harm the one who caused me grave harm is generally more culturally appropriate, or at least significantly more understandable as a response, than the ability to unequivocally forgive. The person who indiscriminately loves can be considered inappropriately generous with their feeling, and so perhaps becomes almost as untrustworthy as the independent cat. To be independent is to not align with a grouping, to be free from borders, impartial and neutral in bias. Fairness and equity (synonyms for justice) are also associated with detachment, disinterest and dispassion. It is not as simple then as saying that feeling attaches us to some others while detaching us from other others, nor are there clear paths that lead toward expanding and including more of both ourselves and each other. What could it mean to respond to another in so called "ethically appropriate ways" and to be *appropriately empathetic* without 'losing' our self, or, relevant to my concerns, losing our *connection* to self?

The work of theorist Erin Manning (2013) engages in a series of tangential questions, through which they introduce the idea of hyperrelational "suprasociality". In psychoanalytic theory, they write, the skin functions as a boundary, from infancy, our relation to the world is understood to be mediated by the skin's capacity to serve as a container (p. 1). Within this skin-as-container idea is the notion of self-sufficiency; "a well contained human" can maintain a strict boundary between inside and outside (p. 2). Inside and outside must be clearly delineated to enable interaction with others, "interaction is understood here as the

encounter between two self-contained entities (human to human or human to object)" (p. 2). Without self-sufficiency of self-containment there is a fear that "the self will dissolve and, ultimately, leak into a limitless space", which produces states of incoherency associated with anxiety and annihilation (Lafrance 2009 cited in Manning 2013, p. 2). Yet, what if this entire premise was not nearly so watertight?

Erin Manning asks, "What if the skin were not a container…were not a limit at which self begins and ends…What if, instead of placing self-self interaction at the centre of development, we were to posit *relation* as key to experience?" (pp. 1-2). They point toward skin being inherently porous and describe it as a "topological surfacing of myriad potential strata", a meeting place upon which multiple encounters of insides and outsides take place (p. 1). In this understanding the self is a series of 'foldings', co-constituted through relationships that can never be so simply located as either 'in' or 'out'. The skin senses-with its environment, and so the body it delineates or defines is only ever a body in the world, a "body-world that is always tending, attending to the world" (Manning p. 2). Erin writes, "direct experience takes place not in the subject or in the object but in the relation itself" which is always unfolding (p. 3). This relationality is inherent to experience and they describe it as the focal point "for the complex interrelational matrix of being and worlding" (p. 2). Rather than experience located on the skin or in the self, both skin and self are already in a movement of "reaching-toward" experience and feeling-with the world, which in turn is likewise reaching out and "tending-toward" the "becoming-body" (Manning 2013). I understand "worlding" to here mean this co-emerging making and creating of the world through our ways of being and thinking in relation to it (I have previously also spoken of this as a form of *storying* the world). Relation "folds experience into it such that what emerges is always more than the sum of its parts" (Manning p. 2). Rather than a relationship being a passive condition between two active subjects, in this understanding it is relation itself that is active and holds agency, or put another way, relation is "considered as "real" as the terms in the relation" (Manning p. 3).

In early infancy, such *realness* might be said to constitute the entirety of experience because an infant doesn't respond to a human any more than she is responding to the quality and texture of light, interpersonal relatedness is not yet distinct from a general condition of relatedness to all things (p. 8). Erin Manning describes this as a state of emergent experience in which being and worlding arise together, in which we have not yet "succumbed to… linear time, living instead in the active topology of spacetimes of experience that many adults spend

their lifetimes resisting" (p. 6). An infant is not feeling the world, but feeling-with the world, and so creating experiential, reciprocal *worldings* that "meet the infant halfway" (p. 6). In this sense, at the beginning of our lives our "relational potential is at its most extreme" we are indiscriminate with our relations, operating in a kind of *hyperrelational* state (p. 8). Erin refers to this as "relationality at its most intensive, an opening to the complex fielding of multiplicity as yet undifferentiated" (p. 8). Rather than undifferentiation being an *asocial* state, signifying the *inability* to relate, Erin positions it instead as a kind of "suprasociality", a for-ness that reaches indiscriminately toward *all* relations (p. 8).

The root of the Latin prefix *supra* means to be both above or beyond the limits of something (in the sense of transcending) or before, at an earlier place in time (CED 2018). This definition ties in interestingly with the paradoxes inherent in the word "radical", as radical is both the edge and the core, so *supra* also appears to be in dynamic relation with two ends of the spectrum, *beyond and before*. States of extreme non-relationality fold in on themselves to meet their apparent opposite, hyperrelational states of suprasociality. These shifts in perspective are significant. They signal a way of being in a possible condition of for-ness, and towards-ness that does not signify a necessary counter turn away. Bodies, at least at one stage in their development, have held the capacity for intense indiscrimination, where there is no privileging of subject over object. Might this then extend to include indiscrimination between the values of human skins over for example, animal fur, or of disposable plastic over algae and seagrasses.

MIND OR SOUL BLINDNESS

If the suprasocial is more a condition of being than a stage of development, then could our bodies learn to re-open what we have learnt *over time* to close down? Could time become an ally in this? Persistence and patience aiding us in undoing some of our learnings while relearning others? Following a Western, linear developmental timeframe the suprasocial is a state of pre-conscious being that an adult grows out of and cannot return to access, yet Erin Manning suggests this is not necessarily the case, rather it is better understood as something that "gets backgrounded in most adults" (2013, p. 8). They draw extensively on neurodiverse

systems of knowledge which counter neurotypical understandings, acting to destabilise normalised notions of the limits of sociality.

Following neurodiverse artist Amanda Baggs, who explains, "I interact with the water as the water interacts with me", Erin suggests that the suprasocial is a challenge to the very notion that the human is at the centre of relational experience (Baggs cited in Manning 2013, pp. 9-10). The limits of normative thinking are often woven into judgements made regarding reality. In Amanda's shared realities which preference non-dominant forms of language — they might taste a surface just as much as touch it — Amanda is paradoxically considered to be asocial, insular and contained within themselves rather than in an affirmative position of *hyperelationality*. Amanda explains,

> Far from being purposeless, the way that I move is an ongoing response to what is around me. Ironically, the way that I move when responding to everything around me is described as "being in a world of my own", whereas if I interact with a much more limited set of responses and only react to a much more limited part of my surroundings people claim I am "opening up to true interaction with the world… But my language is not about designing words or even visual symbols for people to interpret. It is about being in a constant conversation with every aspect of my environment, reacting physically to all parts of my surroundings. (Baggs cited in Manning 2009, p. 215).

Amanda is describing highly sophisticated capacities to stay-with complex experiential *relationscapes* (to follow Erin's language). This is a form of relational attentiveness that occupies non-linear temporalities through which an environment would simultaneously move through us as we move through it, neither entirely 'in' nor entirely 'out', but rather a situated, deeply material enmeshment. Amanda points toward ways to become-with, feel-with and express-with the world in co-emergence that are far from being socially 'undeveloped'. Instead they seem to suggest almost the exact antithesis.

Yet non-normative and neurodiverse relationality is often discussed in relation to a psychological concept called "mind-blindness", which Simon Baron Cohen describes as the "inability to develop an awareness of what is in the mind of another human" (Baron Cohen cited in Manning 2013, p. 150). Mind-blindness is often considered a neurodiverse limitation and from this perspective signifies a lack of capacity for empathy, an incapability to relate. Erin Manning writes, "there remains a firm belief that when there is limited attendance to the human, when the environment does not explicitly focus on the human, what is demonstrated is a failure to *be* truly human" (2013, p. 150 - my italics). An adequate or appropriate amount of empathy is therefore a requirement for a basic premise of humanity. Yet, a definition of empathy that is entirely human-centred in this way, ignores and limits

hyperrelational, suprasocial realities in which an "ecology of practices… create resonances not solely in the human realm", "everything is somewhat alive" (Manning p. 150). Therefore the 'incapacity' of relating, when inverted, is instead recognised as a paradoxically *heightened* capacity. These are way of visioning the world that cannot sufficiently be called 'blindness' at all. Unless blindness here is to signify the amalgamation and absorption of *all* colours rather than the absence of them.

In *How Forests Think,* Eduardo Kohn (2013) describes a potential counter idea to that of mind-blindness, in the form of "soul blindness", following the knowledge systems of the Runa peoples of Amazonian Ecuador. Eduardo describes how the Runa use dream interpretation and hallucinogenic plant-medicines to facilitate better understanding and relationship with their canine counterparts, "in their mutual attempts to live together and to make sense of one another, dogs and people… increasingly come to partake in a sort of shared trans-species habitus that does not observe the distinctions we might otherwise make between nature and culture" (2013 p. 132). A trans-species habitus requires trans-species communication, or *reaching-toward* this end. It is an understanding that also shapes many other areas of communal life; the Runa need to be able to learn how predators think, feel and see for example, in order to outlive them. Eduardo writes, to "understand other kinds of selves…one simply needs to learn how to inhabit their variously embodied points of view" therefore, within such a framework, the question of how dogs dream, "matters deeply" (p. 132).

Actively venturing beyond the human to imagine the thoughts of dogs is not only a way of entertaining the viewpoints of other beings, but also "blurs the boundaries that separate kinds of selves" (Kohn p. 132). The Runa, Eduardo Kohn suggests, understand themselves to be an *ecology of selves* in recognition of the entanglement of human and nonhuman lives. The knowability of a nonhuman being is therefore understood within an embedded logic; "imagining that the thoughts of dogs are *not knowable* would throw into question whether it is ever possible to know the intentions and goals of *any* kind of self" (Kohn p. 132). This would amount to *soul blindness*, a "lost ability to be aware of other selves that inhabit the cosmos" (Kohn p. 140). Soul blindness is a form of inattention, rendering us unable to see beyond our self or our own species and leading us instead to "treat other selves as objects" (Kohn p 119). It is blindness to the interconnectedness of being a part of shared life.

Significantly, Eduardo also points toward the challenges of "a constant tension between

blurring of interspecies boundaries and maintaining difference" (p. 140). The Runa recognise and respect trans-species communication as a "dangerous business [that] must be undertaken in ways that avoid complete transmutation of the human self" (Kohn p. 140). On one hand, a dissolved sense of selfhood to such an extreme would render them inattentive to their human responsibilities, while on the other, venturing beyond the human in ways that simply project human qualities onto other beings, would be a useless and inefficient endeavour. While "transmutation of the human self" could be seen to exist at one end of a spectrum with soul blindness at the other, the significant point here is that there exists a *continuum* along which there are a "range of ways of inhabiting an ecology of selves" (Kohn p. 140).

There is a distinction to be made, in my understanding, between becoming-an-other and *becoming-with* another. To imaginatively adopt the viewpoint of another in ways that allow for a flourishing of relations, requires a form of becoming-with that would be rhythmically reciprocal, neither leaving behind the self (a disconnection) nor imagining the self to be solely self in the first place (another disconnection). The skin perhaps, might then be re-cast as a symbol of connection rather than of containment, as a division that better *enables* our processes of interaction rather than one that places limits upon them.[2] The separation of selves into distinct selves acts to differentiate between otherwise undifferentiated matter. Learning from the Runa *amplifies* certain properties of the world — as does learning from neurodiverse experiential worldings. Through these amplifications, Western normative systems of knowledge are stretched to their edges while movements that reach-toward others open us out into more expansive ways of relational response.

Notes

[1] In relation to this it would also be worth considering both the Christian ethos of radical generosity toward strangers, "love thy neighbour" and the Buddhist ethic of unbounded loving-kindness, "मैत्री maitrī" or "मेत्ता mettā" (Sanskrit / Pali).

[2] See also Nancy Tuana's (2008) model of 'viscous porosity' for further development around this theme.

INTERLUDE

~ MOVING WITH THE GROUND

"The presence of the camera is felt as though it were another body forcefully moving us to watch, constraining us to see not only a location or a dance but the tensile rhythm of groundedness itself. The camera works with this ground, pulling the dance into its weighted lethargy, into a vibratile exhaustion that is not a mimesis of grounded bodies but emphasises the ground's very resonance as a dancing medium."

— Erin Manning, *Relationscapes* (2009, p. 207)

Erin Manning is speaking about *Rosas danst Rosas* (1997), a dance film directed by Thierry De Mey. They write, "Rosas danst Rosas, the film that was shot thirteen years after the first performance of its danced choreography, is more than a film of a dance" (p. 207). Choreographed by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker, dancer and founder of Rosas dance company, the piece is described on the company website as an expression of "exhaustion and perseverance" as "four female dancers dance themselves again and again" (Rosas 2019). The 1982 choreography and the development into its later film are both part of the canon of postmodern dance, and have been written about extensively. The quality of movement, abstract gestures and focus on repetition and emotional tension within the piece are significant to the history and development of Western dance culture.

In a section titled *Cornering a Beginning* of the book *Relationscapes* (2009) Erin offers another close reading of the film, one that atypically focuses on the dance of the camera-body over the predominance of dancing human-

bodies. They discuss how the camera itself has a practice, a "watching-feeling" that is as much a protagonist of the action it captures. The camera "directs us", "provides the rhythms of the movements unfolding" and "works with the tensile activity of the dancers" (Manning p. 209). When the dancing bodies rest, the camera "waits with them", and we, as audience, wait with it (Manning p. 209). The camera Erin describes as "heavy in its quietude" a description which provides a fullness almost akin to a suggestion of personality (p. 209). It sparks within me a sense of joy, and a connection to other moments when I have felt a similar inexplicable sense of gleefulness in the inversion of convention. This happens most memorably for me in literature; the magical realism of Jorge Borges, Franz Kafka, Toni Morrison, Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Flann O'Brien among others. Below, an extract from Flann O'Brien's *The Third Policeman* (1967; 2007)*:*

> People who spent most of their natural lives riding iron bicycles over the rocky roadsteads of this parish get their personalities mixed up with the personalities of their bicycle as a result of the interchanging of the atoms of each of them and you would be surprised at the number of people in these parts who are nearly half people and half bicycles…when a man lets things go so far that he is more than half a bicycle, you will not see him so much because he spends a lot of his time leaning with one elbow on walls or standing propped by one foot at kerbstones (2007 p. 86)

There has always been something about the real-world rootedness of this type of genre of fantasy that has appealed to me. It is as if it requires my imagination to stretch but not to outright break. It is a side-step into another possibility rather than a drastic leap into entirely unfamiliar sci-fi terrains. This allows me to *actually feel* the embodied sensation of that stretch, to find a fizzy aliveness in the effort made by my mind as it reaches to grasp at implausibility that is just out of reach but close enough to almost touch. In the relaxed context of reading a novel, I find these movements immeasurably pleasurable.

Traditional folklore is of course also full of these types of references, talking animals, trees, tables and candlesticks, and in children's fiction these often emerge as caricatures, overt and amplified. There is a vast history of stories which tell of animated life in a way that remains resolutely anthropomorphic, a personification resembling human traits, for human purposes, to serve human endeavours, such as aiding or obstructing the human protagonist. Yet there are also other stories, such as those Erin Manning is telling, which in more subtle ways also seem capable of destabilising the very ground of reality, inviting an imaginative perception to co-conspire and collaborate in a shift of parameters and complete reorganisation of our consensus.

A camera with intent may once have seemed a fantastical idea, yet against a backdrop of Artificial Intelligence and previously unimaginable technological advancements, it seems not so delusional after all to consider these questions as ethically relevant. Nor yet are they solely contemporary concerns; a version of the US National Rifle Association slogan "guns don't kill people" (see Reeve 2012) has been in operation for over a century, while the cultural inability to comprehend complex animistic cosmologies of countless unique indigenous cultures has in turn filled the shelves of every major Western museum (see Curtis 2006). Perhaps instead of *magical realism* what is at play here is also a kind of *radical realism*, both at the perceived extreme edges yet simultaneously core to any reality we might hope to come to grasp.

The crucial way in which Erin Manning keeps asking me to make such imaginative shifts is through a continued focus on collaboration, subverting a normative sense of agency. They write, "the camera is not only there for the recording; it feels-with the bodies" (2009 p. 209) pointing toward a vitality, far more nuanced and far more implicated than any talking candlestick. This is a territory in which Jane Bennett's (2009) explorations of "vibrant matter"

including petroleum, bacteria, and plastics also coincides as does Tim Ingold's (2010) understanding of the "creative entanglements" to which agency is bound. In feeling-with the bodies the suggestion is that the camera is also an empathetic entity. We participate in this empathy, shifting in our orientation and perspective as we "feel the weight of the waiting physically as we watch" (Manning 2009, p. 209). I become acutely aware of the contact lens in my eye, linked up to the lens of the camera, both focusing together. There is exchange here, the dancer feels, the camera feels, we feel, the camera moves, the dancer moves, we move.

This is an experience of "watching-with", which Erin describes as "an invitation to watch-feel the movement as the camera catches it in its formation" (p. 210). The writing in *Cornering a Beginning* consistently peels back the layers of these intricate entanglements, "we are feeling movement moving", "we are moving-with our watching', "we move-with the movement even as we are moved by it" (Manning p. 212). Reading the flow of these passages acts upon the boundaries of my sense of selfhood, there is a dissolving that occurs in the moving-watching-feeling iterations that blurs any understanding of where to locate myself; destabilising me. The capacity of Erin's writing to perform this type of dissolution mirrors the agency of the camera to direct and provide the rhythms, the reader too becomes a part of the movements unfolding. There is dimensionality here, a fullness to the scene and a sense of the weaving of multiple agencies at play in the fabric of any encounter.

These reflections on how we experience movement also touch upon ideas related to kinaesthetic empathy; the capacity to experience movement empathetically while watching it (see Ehrenberg and Wood 2011). Through watching movement such as dance, a mirroring process occurs in which we may feel our own body moving in the movements, internally simulating sensations of speed, effort and body configuration (as with eating a lemon, explored

previously). Such mirroring allows the dance to travel across space-time from stage to chair and to multiply from "dances in the making to haptic experiments in the viewing" (Manning 2009, p. 209). Kinaesthetic empathy fleshes out empathy as a multidimensional being, not only with cognitive and emotional functions but also a kinetic, physical dimension. Yet it is something much less elaborate in the content of *Cornering a Beginning* that draws my attention. As a piece of writing I read it to be *more than* an essay on a dance in that it performs something unexpected; it foregrounds the ground itself.

Dancers upon the ground, screenshot from *Rosas danst Rosas* directed by Thierry de Mey, choreography by Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker.

(1997) Courtesy of Rosas, Belgium

Erin writes, "The ground is a landing site for the camera in Rosas danst Rosas. It is not a landing site in the sense that landing implies a grounding. It is a landing site in the sense that ground makes the quality of the dance felt" (p. 207). *The ground makes the quality of the dance felt*. This sentence meets me in

a way that words sometimes can, but rarely do. It is the type of sentence that provokes a scored underline beneath it, one that I might feel an urge to read to the person sat beside me or to copy down in a notebook to carry elsewhere. Some combinations of words convey an idea capable of such intensity of resonance for various reasons, that they also seem to invoke a kind of thought-based "kinaesthetic empathy". I feel as though I *think-with* the sentence, simultaneously experiencing it as an understanding within me as I read it from a book that is both not-me, external to, outside of me.

The role of the ground in contributing to artwork, *to all work in fact*, is a piece of writing I have been longing to read and a discussion I have been longing to have. Reading *Cornering a Beginning* I experience a relief of some kind, a feeling of connection and oddly, a deep sense of having found some ground, without having known that I had been without it. I am reminded of a time I once got caught out walking along a sandy beach for several hours with no way to climb up to the land. After an hour or so my feet became so tired of sinking into the sand that I became desperate for a firmer base beneath me. I began testing every possibility, walking with my sandals on, then off, walking closer to the water or closer to the cliff. There would be moments when it felt as though finally I'd found the right consistency, only to have it change again beneath me and find myself stuck back again with the exhaustion of a constant sinking.

After close to four hours I reached an inlet that allowed me to climb up the cliff. The first feeling of solidity beneath me brought immense relief and tears to my eyes. I had been so tired, that the ground now seemed to hold me suddenly with such an intensity of surface that I was both physically and emotionally moved by it. At that time, I remembered classic film shots of shipwrecked people upon solid ground, clutching, embracing, kissing and weeping into it. I might never have sensed the relief of the ground had I not

unexpectedly and accidentally found myself compromised in my relation to it.

There is a relationship between the dancing bodies in *Rosas danst Rosas* and a relationship of these bodies to the camera. There is also relationship between the bodies and the ground, and between the camera and the ground, and rather than overlooking or taking this for granted Erin Manning attends to it. They write, 'the ground is far more than the concrete surface that holds the building upright. It is also, and more importantly, that which makes the difference in the dance" (p. 208). There is a "quality" to the ground, an "unrelenting surface" that provides the dancers with a point of contact (Manning, p 208). The dancers themselves enter various states of falling and collapse, meeting the ground and spending time upon it, touching it with hands, at times with their ears close, almost as if listening to it. The choreography in these moments is also an exploration in not being upright, in gravity, gravitas and grounding. As the camera is a protagonist of the action so too is the ground a participant in these happenings, a contributor. The ground dances, it is a "dancing medium", there is a "rhythm of groundedness itself" (Manning, p. 207).

Cornering a Beginning offers an invitation for me to feel again dimensional in a similar way to my experience on the beach. I have the sensation of being filled out and with substance, as if my feet are solid for the first time in I don't know when. The felt experience of reading the work of someone who has included the ground as a perspective has a physical impact upon my body; I am aware of my weight as I lean back into my chair, I feel reassuringly heavy. I have been longing to read a critical essay about the ground, without knowing that was what I was longing for. Now reading it, I am suddenly painfully aware of all the places where the ground has not been included in essays about art, politics and wider cultural life. Descriptions left with gaping holes where there could have been an acknowledgement or engagement with a floor, wall or ceiling. It is

almost as if something is so taken for granted in these supports that they paradoxically shift us into a blinding superficial dimensionality that fails to attend to a fuller picture.

CHAPTER FOUR, Part Two: Towards some solid grounds

"The continual cracking of your feet on the road makes a certain quantity of road come up into you. When a man dies, they say he returns to clay but too much walking fills you up with clay far sooner (or buries bits of you along the road) and brings your death half-way to meet you. It is not easy to know what is the best way to move yourself from one place to another."

— Flann O' Brien, *The Third Policeman* (2007, p. 93)

Artwork by Richard Long, A Line Made by Walking, 1967 © Richard Long courtesy of Tate

Taped to my fridge is a postcard sent to me by a friend, the image is Richard Long's *A Line Made by Walking* (1967). For several years, this postcard has travelled with me, taped to different fridges, beside a window frame or above a desk. I've looked at this line countless times. I know that it was formed through physical intervention with the landscape, walking repeatedly up and down, then photographed by the artist. The line has become visible through this act of flattening of grass which catches the sun at a different angle. I'm aware of the relevance of this line to the history of Western art and the ways in which it invites me to engage with themes of impermanence, documentation, performativity, mark-making and the idea of the 'trace'. As an artwork, this line and the walking that enabled it, centralises questions around processes of making and doing and their definition of what can be considered an artwork in and of itself.

While the "line" is a rich and intricate discourse that has been explored at length (see Ingold 2015), it is also a dominating narrative, as in the following question which seems to summarise a significant amount of the commentary on Richard Long's work: "Which is the most important aspect - the line, the act of making the line or the documentation of the finished line?" (Scovell 2016). Instead, I find another set of persistent questions arise within me as a response — where is the ground? Is the strength of a line so dynamic as to shape all enquiries into correspondingly linear thought? And would it be absurd to spend some time considering the ground itself to also be a collaborator?

If linear progression is tied to the notion of the line, then turning toward the ground is a critical shift in perspective. It provides a means to diversify the story as Erin Manning showed, in the sense of adding an additional perspective to the dominant norm, which in turn offers a richer contextual experience, a sense of "filling out" a fuller picture. This shift, like many others I have made so far, is at least two-fold. Both *the fact of difference* is itself already significant, as are then the *qualities* of this difference. Here the ground stands for something that is both not-the-line, and something whose behaviour is dramatically different to that of the line, which I will explore in relation to the idea of receptive and reciprocal *allowing*.

Artwork by Bruce Nauman, Tony Sinking into the Floor, Face Up, and Face Down (1973) © Bruce Nauman / ARS courtesy of EAI

In 1973 artist Bruce Nauman made two video artworks, *Tony Sinking into the Floor, Face Up, and Face Down* and *Elke Allowing the Floor to Rise Up Over Her, Face Up* (1973a; 1973b). The Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI) where the work is now held, describe these videos as documentation of "a set of mental exercises in which a live performer was to concentrate on sinking into the floor or allowing the floor to rise up over him or her" (EAI 2019b). A quote from the artist further explains "What I was investigating at that time was how to examine a purely mental activity as opposed to a purely physical situation which might incur some mental activity" (EAI 2019b). While there is very little 'activity' visible in the videos, the experience for the performers was notably 'highly charged', one participant reportedly fearful they might lose themselves in a merge of molecules, and is quoted as saying "I did it too fast and scared myself" (EAI 2019a). I understand these videos to be of both humans and floors in a form of amplified relational exchange, in one the human is active in 'sinking', while in the other the floor is active in 'rising'.

As an imaginative exercise the shift in perspective here is not at all irrelevant. It reminds me of somatic games I have experienced, where I've been guided toward feeling the difference between my hand touching my arm versus my arm touching my hand. At first I found it extremely challenging to distinguish between the two, yet with practice I can now switch my focus between these two points of attention. While the human mental activity involved in these exchanges may be visibly insignificant, on an experiential level, the exchange felt by the participants in the videos was real enough to cause genuine distress and threaten a sense of linear and contained selfhood. I am curious as to the extent to which being overwhelmed might, in this case, be directly related to the feeling of unfamiliarity, and whether greater familiarisation through repetition of the exercise might lead to other emotional possibilities.

The human mind is now understood to be capable of creating new neural pathways which are formed and strengthened through the repetition of new activities (Knaepen et al. 2010). Not unlike Richard Long's *A Line Made by Walking*, these pathways emerge as traces through time. Walking new lines may at first require effort and intent, yet if the lines we make neurologically change the landscape of our mind, then creating new relationships would necessarily require us to stretch at the unfamiliar boundaries of our current familiar thoughts.

MAKING KIN

Anthropomorphism is the attribution of human characteristics or behaviours to nonhuman beings. Yet the categorisation of 'non-human' is itself an arguably reductive and binary distinction. Perhaps it is the kind of categorisation only made possible through anthropocentric linearity of thought, illustrative of an assumed human centrality; a *logic* of human existence. Human centrality has arguably given rise to what some have since named the Anthropocene (Crutzen et al. 2007), a proposed definition for the current geological age in which the Earth has been irreversibly altered by the impact of human intervention. For those who adhere to this definition, the Anthropocene would thereby replace the Holocene, which began 11,700 years ago after the last major ice age.

In the essay *Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin* Donna Haraway (2015 p. 160) suggests that the Anthropocene needs to be approached not as an era

to learn to reside within, but as a boundary event, to be kept "as short/thin as possible" while we cultivate other "imaginable epochs to come". Glenn Albrecht (2016 p. 12) is also resistant to any accepted normality bound to the Anthropocene, writing "the longer it prevails, the more likely we will suffer catastrophic failure as a species here on earth" and "gone are the relative stability and predictability of the past twelve thousand years". How to locate solid ground when the ground itself is moving beneath us?

One such possible imaginative epoch Glenn refers to as a "Symbiocene", from the Greek symbiosis, meaning *companionship*. A Symbiocene would be an epoch in which living together implies mutual benefit and "affirms the interconnectedness of life and all living things" (Albrecht p. 13). Affirming interconnectedness in principle might sound a straightforward endeavour, but what would the experiential living of this kind of amplified companionship really look like? In what ways can we actively move away from the Anthropocene and towards the Symbiocene?

Ursula K. Le Guin (2016 p. viii) suggests that through *subjectifying* a world of "kinfolk" we might avoid the kinds of objectifications that have led to co-opting, colonising and exploiting of human and non-human lives. [1] This would necessarily involve a "great reach outward of the mind and the imagination" (p. viii). Through this reaching, Ursula suggests there is a need to relearn our being in the world in ways which hone our sense of belonging to a "fellowship", of "creatures with other creatures, things with other things" (p. viii). What is being pointed to here is a *recognition* that we are always already in kinship relationships, as familial beings that cannot but exist alongside each other — *together*.

The idea of "kinfolk" has also been drawn upon by Donna Haraway (2015) in a call for us to "Make kin, not babies!" (p. 161). For Donna kinship is "something other/more than entities tied by ancestry or genealogy" (p. 161). Rooted in the relationship between kin and kind, kinship can also mean "lateral relatives" those for whom we care without being tied by birth (Haraway, p. 103). Our relations might then come to mean those with whom we are in a much understanding of 'relationship'. This "stretch and recomposition of kin [is] allowed by the fact that all earthlings are kin in the deepest sense", our being in the world is made through our interdependent relationship, which gives all beings some form of commonality of togetherness (Haraway, p. 162). Donna understands kin-making to be an act of "making persons", though not necessarily human persons, nor persons understood as individuals (p. 161). Rather, kin are always already kinfolk, in the plural sense, and always already kinship, an assemblage of relations.

Donna calls this approach towards *kin* a "gently defamiliarising move"; de-familiar and de-familial (p. 161). If kinship is ordinarily understood to offer the comfort of things that are familiar and known, the family or *gens* (our relations, tied to *generations*) that we call home and recognise ourselves within, then Donna's "kin" is a repositioning of *unfamiliar relations* as "uncanny, haunting, active" (2016, 103). Yet alongside this potential discomfort, expanding our definitions of 'family' in this way also allows us to feel a sense of increased belonging, held as we are in a wider net of shared *home*. Making kin is therefore also inherently about *recognising kin*, though this is a task that Donna understands to be challenging for those of us "poorly qualified" (2016, p. 89). Practising our skills in recognising, doing, making or being *kin and kind,* as Eduardo Kohn (2015) also attests to, "requires us to undertake an arduous process of decolonising our thinking" (p. 224).[2]

For Eduardo, the human/nonhuman divide is "a product of the distinctive properties of human symbolic thought and the ways in which the logic inherent to that kind of thinking creates systems of signs that can come to seem radically separate from their worldly reference" (p. 224). Thinking about kinship is also to question what it means to be human, at core, which is also therefore to question what it means to think 'like a human'. Thinking-otherwise, attending to other kinds of lives that exist beyond the human requires not only de-familiarising the human, but an utter destabilising of the solidity of human-centred logic. Eduardo refers to this as letting "the logics of life beyond the human to work their way through us", which is understood to be an ethical practice in and of itself (p. 225). Timothy Morton (2017) further expands upon the intricacies of this practice, suggesting that "our scientific instruments tell us what old stories told us too, that humans and nonhumans are deeply interconnected. But our ways of playing and speech say something quite different" (p. 16). The logic of our systems of signs in this sense creates "two contradictory planes - what we know, and how we talk and behave with regard to nonhumans"; a radical separation between what is 'real' and human 'reality' (Morton, p. 16).

Timothy writes that "deconstructing Western philosophy to include nonhumans in a meaningful way starts to look, from within culturalism, like appropriating non-Western cultures, and in particular… indigenous people" (p. 11). Donna Haraway (2016) is likewise wary of the possibility for animist thought practices to be "donned like a magic cape by visitors" and further draws attention to the differences in perspective not only between different indigenous cultures but also within any one same culture, which will always contain rich and varied opinion and experience (p. 89). Yet there is a crucial distinction between

anthropomorphism and *anthropocentrism* and it is only the latter which is capable of either humanising the nonhuman or dehumanising it in ways that attribute value systems through which the logics of care or of violence are built upon (Morton, p. 174). Likewise, Western philosophy, which has been dominated by anthropocentric thought, must allow non-Western thought to influence it, anthropomorphic or otherwise. [3] What is 'Western' must not be required to remain 'Western' (white and patriarchal) in order to avoid sounding unfamiliar to its lineage or to avoid sounding inappropriately familiar to a lineage to which it does not belong, or else "nothing can change" (Morton, p. 12).

The language of 'allowing' at first feels uncomfortable to my ears and yet, in my understanding, this is a positioning of 'allowing' that does not adhere to the value-laden sense of giving permission, but rather is a receptive surrender into what *is already real* and in existence. Timothy Morton writes, "Western philosophy has been telling itself that humans, in particular human thought, makes things real for so long that an ethics or politics based simply on allowing something real to impinge on us sounds absurd or impossible" (p. 18). Allowing in this sense is linked to Eduardo Kohn's phrasing that life beyond the human is already "working its way through us" (2015, p. 225). Joining with these other forms of life, and joining with other ways of accessing, appreciating and thinking, Timothy Morton (drawing extensively on Val Plumwood 1993, 2002) refers to as a condition of 'solidarity' — which may be one step closer toward a possible Symbiocene in the making.

BODIES IN THE SYMBIOTIC REAL

In the book *Humankind*, Timothy Morton (2017) speaks of kindness as "being kinda-sorta" a baseline condition of humanness that is always a permeated humanness, "physically and experientially and everything else" (p. 145). They define this kinda-sorta as the factual reality of a living biosphere in which every being is permeated with other beings thereby creating myriad unspecific connections with decidedly unclear hierarchies. Counter intuitive to an anthropocentric, linear idea of food chains or pyramids that run from bottom-top, instead "entities are related in a non-total, ragged way" (Morton, p. 1). Given the example of bacteria in a human microbiome, where do the host and hosting obligations really lie, who is feeding upon whom? (p. 1). This, Timothy calls the 'symbiotic real', the "ecological symbiosis of

human and nonhuman" and it is a *realness* greatly contrasted with the 'reality' that as humans we have largely come to know as such (p.13).

The symbiotic real is a space of reliance, involving the mutual relying-on of others, an "uneasy fuel" (Morton, p. 2). Uneasy, not least because it does not necessitate or indeed always allow for knowing that which we are relying upon, involving therefore a type of blind bonding through which we are all, to some extent, *vulnerable*. A human is always more than the sum of its parts and nonhuman reliance comes right up close to the bone, and indeed deep down into it. To call myself human is to understand that my humanness is not only to be considered in the external, my technological gadgets, my leather shoes, nor in the internalising of my medications, my food nutrients, but is already deep within the very make-up of me, such as in my microbiome. Even this distinction is flawed — the idea that anything outside of human social space be considered an 'externality', regardless of whether it is deemed to be 'alive' (e.g. in the case of an animal) or not (in the case of a mineral). As Timothy Morton writes, "there is no inside-outside boundary, social space must already include nonhumans, albeit unconsciously" (p. 24). My humanness relies upon plant life, water life, chemical life just as my human environment, my shelter further relies upon animal life, mineral life, and so on. Not to mention the other human life, whose touch, sensory and emotional input, even at the most basic levels, has made me capable of developing into the 'human' I now understand myself to be.

Timothy Morton refers to the human as "a hyperobject: a bundle of entities" (p. 40). This is interesting for the impact this way of thinking has upon *collapsing down* the anthropocene. For if a human is always more than human, then by default the anthropocene as a human centred world in the making is an implausible path to continue to rest our definitions upon. There is also *reciprocity* here, the human, in an expanded sense, is also the waste that stretches to the edges of the oceans, deep down into the Earth's crust, and way up above, orbiting beyond the sky. Yet this same waste is increasingly making its way back into human bodies via the pollutants we inhale and micro-plastics we consume. As our human impact upon the nonhuman increases, so the nonhuman impacts upon us, and not only in our technologies. We become-with each other, as we always have. Except in the confines of my limited imagination, I have never not been human-non-human, which is to say I am simultaneously both more than and less than 'me'.

Yet there is tension here too. Astrida Neimanis (2017) cautions that while posthuman embodiment encourages us to resist the idea of a discrete and autonomous body, this is an

autonomy for which various kinds of feminisms have fought hard and suffered great woundings. They write, "from reproductive rights to anti-violence campaigns, for many feminist social justice movements, claiming autonomous control over one's 'own body' has been a hard-fought battle" (2017, p. 16). It is crucial therefore, in turning toward questions of nonhuman reliance that decentre the human, to ask what else might be at stake? "What might we forfeit by troubling this idea of a body as 'mine'?" (Neimanis, p. 16).

It is uncomfortable to recognise the ways in which the necessity of these forms of thinking paradoxically support, "wittingly, unwittingly, or even strategically" a version of "the dominant neoliberal paradigm of normative embodiment" that defines a body as discrete and answerable to itself alone (Neimanis, p. 16). Yet, Astrida also reminds us that feminist philosophy has equally modelled an understanding of reliance that encompasses "far more than the female reprosexual womb" (p. 16). They write, "feminist philosophy has also long argued that our bodies depend on one another for their literal survival — not only through entanglement of gestation, childbirth and lactation, but also through networks of care, material and effective patterns of bodies, subjects, communities, and worlds" (p. 16).

MORE OR LESS RELATIONAL

The boundary between the ecological real and most Western human realities is, for Timothy Morton, a "foundational traumatic fissure" that "severs" human-nonhuman relations (2017 p. 13; 16). Crucially however this severing of relations is not the severing of relatedness, it is only the *feeling* (physical, experiential and so on) of relationship that is lost. Kindness, for Timothy is the acknowledgement of these relationships, which brings a whole new level of experiential meaning to the notion of 'humankind' (p. 140). The idea of a 'fissure' between human-nonhuman relating has not occurred through a singular historic or cultural 'event' in linear time, but rather "a wave that ripples out in many dimensions" fed by, and feeding upon, the smoothly bounded selfhood of anthropocentrism (Morton, p. 14-15). Yet as this perception of our boundedness as humans is becoming increasingly more unstable, so the 'realities' of these nonhuman separations appear less solid. Timothy writes, "why are we suddenly so interested in humans as a species… the main reason is ecological: it's what we've been doing to other species that is enabling us to think of ourselves *as* a species" (p. 39). This

space for self-reflection also enables openings for our re-definition, "what might need adjusting in how we picture ourselves to ourselves?" (Morton, p. 39). The scope of this question is almost as thrilling as it is immense.

The adjustments that are making the most impact upon my own felt sense of my neuro-plasticity, are those that move the entire parameters of relationship out of a paradigm of absence or presence and into a scale of *more or less*. The question of relationship becomes implicit, only the quantity and quality of my awareness and enactment of this relationship can be open for debate. In this sense, we do not need to 'make' relations, we are relations. I resonate with Donna Haraway's call to make kin with all kinds of other beings, to embed familial relations in unfamiliar locations and tie ourselves to each other through the connections of our interdependence. I also understand this approach to kinship to still require an element of choice, I must choose to make more kin, and choose to stretch toward another, choose to include. There is empowerment within this aspect of choice, and there is also the suggestion of responsibility. However, might it also contain wriggle room for me to keep choosing some *over* others, to the detriment of all? It perhaps places less emphasis upon my very reliance on those others for my own sense of selfhood. In a framework of kinship, I might be able to choose to opt in as much as to opt out, rather than resting in the acknowledgement of my absolute lack of any form of choice.

Oppressive as this at first feels, it also leads me paradoxically toward an experience of enormous relief. I can begin to understand the sense of being overwhelmed as in fact a consequence of fighting the condition of my own interconnectivity, through the belief that I cannot take 'it all' on. Adjusting my perception of 'myself' in relationship to 'it all', in aligning these non-separate entities, I cannot but be overwhelmed, yet from this different perspective it feels instead like submergence in something akin to abundance. I find that it is only through tensely clinging on to my sense of boundary that I feel any discomfort; when I can relinquish the sense of panic that seems to accompany the overwhelm, I am left feeling unexpectedly restful in acknowledgment of my inescapability — *there is less to resist against*.

As despondent as this may sound, I feel remarkably embedded. Timothy Morton writes "I do not make decisions outside the universe and then plunge in, like an Olympic diver. I am already in. I am like a mermaid constantly pulled and pulling, pushed and pushing" (p. 189). It is possible for me to read these words and have them *meet me more* or *meet me less*. I can keep them at a certain distance, or I can try to draw them deep down inside of me, until I am fed and feeding upon them. When I attempt versions of the latter, when I come into

relation with the condition of being 'in', and not only writing or thinking about such 'in-ness', I still feel entirely out of my comfort zone yet not in the same way *uncomfortable*. It is an unfamiliar, new feeling, as if I have side-stepped and am occupying the same world that is now also another world. I am aware of my lack of vocabulary, my inability to put my finger on quite what has changed and to adequately describe it with any nuance and sophistication. I feel unpractised, yet I am grateful for the vulnerability of this, because it feels necessary, necessary to not-know when I am newly in a space of my own unknowing. This, as I understand it, is the very beginnings of, or a glimmer toward, the conscious embodiment of my interconnection, which is more a verb than a noun, or is describing a state of constant flux and becoming, an interconnecting of interconnections.

Within the project of humankindness "ecological awareness *is* claustrophobic. You find yourself surrounded, permeated, composed of not-you beings" (Morton, p. 163). Yet, with such a sense of *embeddedness* I also find a kind of solidity, things feel more filled out, there is a thick umbilical chord pulsating. It acts as an anchor. It is still true that the sense of overwhelming weight accompanies me, now it is in fact with every breath. This is not a state I can enter into and out of, yet it is one I can perhaps slowly adjust to and learn to turn the dial up or down in order to regulate myself through the sensations of intensity. Over time I find that it no longer overwhelms me, but is instead *a fullness* that I can begin to accept as the ongoing *withness* of living amongst life. From this position, questions concerning other lifeforms become increasingly more nuanced and interesting, such as, "How do I get to co-exist with them? To what extent? In what modes?" (Morton, p. 4).

GROUNDING SOLIDARITY

"Solidarity" is the word Timothy Morton chooses to describe the organisation of ourselves, *humannonhumans* amongst each other. Solidarity is a thought, feeling, physical and political state, a way of being that is not so much 'a way' of being, as just, it *is* being. It is the "reliance between discrete yet deeply interrelated beings" (2017 p. 2). There is another shift at play here that undoes the active and passive paradigms of classical Western philosophical thought. Solidarity is neither an active mode of agency, nor yet a passive inertia, it requires a modification of 'active' and 'passive' that no longer places them in opposition, but instead

perhaps as "spectral versions" of each other (Morton, p. 139). Instead, solidarity, as I *experientially* understand it, requires a form of decisive receptivity, an effortful *step into* allowance. The question of choice is inherently tied to questions of activity and passivity. Timothy notes that we have a disastrous fear of passivity, and this is a fear that from my own experience is rooted in the powerlessness of being without choice (p. 138). Yet, as in the shift with my perception of relationship, here too my commonly understood spectrum seems to be all askew. Perhaps then, "it is not that there is humankind and then it does something. It's that humankind-action is unfolding, manifesting" (Morton p. 158). There is no choice about being 'in' or 'out' of solidarity. Therefore, solidarity is not just something that you can "have" with nonhumans, rather it *implies* and *requires* nonhumans: "solidarity just is solidarity with nonhumans" (Morton, p. 189).

There is, however, a *choice* in the form of the quantities and qualities with which we consciously occupy this solidarity. Enacting our solidarity does require effort, even if solidarity in and of itself is more basic. As Timothy writes, "acknowledgement includes the deliberate forging of links between humans and nonhumans, based on our acknowledgement that we share their worlds, and they share ours" (p. 140). Forging links implies, as with making kin, that we must make effort and make a choice to make this effort. This effort however is perhaps better understood as how much we are choosing to let these acknowledgements in, as "forging solidarity links is a matter of always already having been caught in the general solidarity mode of the symbiotic real" (Morton, p. 140). We are already sharing worlds with others, the question becomes how much are we choosing to make ourselves responsive toward this. Alongside actively cultivating ways to think-with and become-with others we are also therefore needing to actively cultivate ways to *undo* what we think this 'actively cultivating' should look like, what it comes to mean for us, in which *direction* it continues to run.

Following these threads leads me straight back towards a consideration of empathy. Perhaps, "we've been looking for empathy in the wrong place" — an anthropocentric place (Morton, p. 32). Being 'already in' our relations positions solidarity as even 'more default' than empathy. The effort of empathy, reaching-toward, which I have been discussing as a necessary form of imaginative stretch, in Timothy Morton's understanding, is to miss the point, entirely. Instead the point is that *no effort at all* is required, and more, "that whenever effort is brought in, solidarity fades" (p. 32). I would suggest this is not entirely the case, rather the direction, positioning and understanding of any idea of 'effort' is key — for the

effort of no effort is still experientially effortful. It takes time and care to undo old narratives and patience to adjust to what is new, however 'default' and therefore 'old' it may be. If solidarity itself requires little effort, acknowledging this solidarity I would argue does indeed require work. Perhaps it remains hard to recognise this fact, because this 'work' is of the traditionally 'unproductive' kind; the under the radar durational processes of allowing, yielding, listening, receiving and so on.

The crucial value, I believe, in the distinction Timothy Morton is making here is that empathy *requires* solidarity. This is an indiscriminate empathy, a Radical Empathy, better understood as an attitude or orientation. In an empathetic search for understanding or identification with another there is a fundamental distortion in the assumption "that there is a definite person over there with definite shoes I can definitely walk in" (Morton, p. 85). Instead, informed by the energy of solidarity, "I join with you even though I can't check in advance whether there is a you there" (p. 85). This limits our capacities for empathising beyond species boundaries and acts instead to further reify this notion of a boundary as fixed and rigid. The idea of going 'beyond myself' to empathise, while making claims of altruistic endeavour, fails to adequately recognise that I am already between and amongst and beyond. Striving to get 'closer' to each other through this kind of empathy is counterintuitively further pushing these relationships away. In contrast, empathetically moving from a condition of solidarity, becomes more akin to "mutual aid", reciprocal and effortless — being kind *has to do with what we are* (Morton, p. 137).

Somewhere between the choice to make kin, forge links and embody a kind of humankind kindness, is also then the call to rest back into solidarity; an always-there overwhelming sensation of abundant, quivering symbiosis. Solidarity in this sense *is* the reliable, solidly unsolid stable ground. I do not understand "kinship" and "solidarity" to be ultimately distinct from each other but rather they work as different foldings of the same movement toward increased relationality. *Choice* is perhaps the defining feature of these relations; while we do not get to choose to whom we are related, we do get to choose to what extent we will consciously engage with and enact the reciprocities of those relationships.

Notes

[1] See also Deborah Bird Rose (2013) on Val Plumwood's 'Philosophical Animism'.
[2] This research is both underpinned by an ethics of "decolonising our thinking" (Kohn 2015, p. 224) at the same time as being cautious of the possibilities for a mis-languaging of decolonisation which can act in these contexts to detract from the visceral experiences of lived colonisation for some others (see *Decolonisation is Not a Metaphor*, Tuck and Yang 2012). It is for this reason that I have chosen where possible to use other forms of description.
[3] It is important to note that these ideas were also developed earlier, in depth, and were integral to the emergence of environmental humanities in Australia in the 2000's. See Robin and Rose (2004).

INTERLUDE

~ INFRASTRUCTURES FOR TROUBLED TIMES: THE SLOW WORK OF SITTING TOGETHER

"more than simply making time for ourselves and our own scholarship; it is about collective action – big and small – in which we attend to the interpersonal and collective conditions that underpin knowledge production conducted with care… bringing attention to how we interact with one another "

— Alison Mountz et al. *For Slow Scholarship* (2015)

A set of chairs complete a circle in the centre of the room. There are mugs of tea and a quiet hum of a radiator in the background. There are bodies that sit on these chairs, someone is looking toward a foot, another to the window. I occasionally catch the directness of an eye, where I linger and smile for a moment before looking on. One of the chairs is left empty; it holds a place for those who wanted to attend but were not able, including both those in other physical spaces, and those outside of present time, in addition to our collective and personal ancestors and descendants. On the floor in the middle of the circle is a small object, today it is a black stone I've brought in from a local beach. Beside it is a small candle, alight.

The circle is 'opened' as we pass the stone around in our hands, making introductions by speaking our name into the space. When everyone has spoken the direction of our movement is reversed and, as the stone passes back around, we introduce ourselves again, this time in relation to someone or something else. I say, "Sarah, granddaughter of Lily", someone else says "David, from the Yorkshire Dales", and another "Jess, friend of the sea".[1] As the stone is placed

back in the centre of the circle, I notice I've sunk a little deeper into my chair, my shoulders have dropped and breath is slowing.

I have been invited to share a workshop for a gathering of environmental humanities scholars, responding to their theme *Infrastructures for Troubled Times* at a conference of the same name in Brighton, UK (2018). For the workshop, I am presenting *Circle Work*, a form of structuring interactive space with others, as one such possible infrastructure, informed by the work of Gigi Coyle (1996). Speaking and listening from within various circular spatial structures is an established means of inviting alternative conversational dynamics. Likewise coming together as a group to share thoughts and feelings in ways that resemble many of the features of *Circle Work* also already happens in various educational, therapeutic, religious and organisational settings. While the circle may stand in for a flattening of hierarchical order, in other ways it can also imply imposition, the obligation for participation and threat of precarious exposure. My interest in voluntary sharing spaces such as *Circle Work* lies in the possibility that they might enable other ways of being with each other that subtly stretch and subvert our conventional expectations. I am interested in the possibility for generating supportive collectivity as we confront and attend to the discomfort of staying with troubled feelings. Through these collective practices might we find ways to avoid the conflation of personal responsibility with *individuality*.

I explain to the participants that there are a set of basic intentions of the space. Firstly, we agree to only speak when we are holding the stone, to pick it up when we wish to share and to put it back down in the centre when we have finished. We then agree to prioritise listening to each other, making a commitment to pay attention to each other and to pay attention to ourselves paying attention to each other. To support this, we agree to attempt to speak

where with spontaneity, to avoid planning, preparing or trying to arrange our thoughts in advance which would draw our attention from our listening. We agree to avoid referencing anything that is spoken by another unless it is significant to our own sharing, in which case we speak from within our own experience rather than as a means of reply or response. Finally, we agree to keep confidentiality for anything shared, except for anything that implies direct or indirect harm or danger.

I say that we will sit together for the next couple of hours in this way, letting ourselves follow the thread of a two-folded question, "What brings you here, what are you bringing here?" The question is intended to enable reciprocal engagement; making room for a give and take of what is inside and outside of us while recognising the dynamic interplay which means neither location is truly separate, rather they are connected points upon a continuum. Anyone may now pick up the stone to speak, there is no limit on the number of times we may pick up or put down the stone, nor is there a limit on the length and duration of our sharing. I also make it clear that there is no requirement for any of us to share at all, and that our presence and silence is an equally valued and valid contribution to the circle.

At first there is an initial silence that suggests no-one feels comfortable with the exposure of beginning. This is understandable and a common pattern. After the first sharing however, the stone will rarely stay in the centre for longer than a minute or so. Many people begin their sharing with "Ok, I'll go then" or "I suppose I can go next", suggesting a sense of internalised obligation despite my initial guidance otherwise. The first few sharings are also quick, no more than a couple of minutes each. More than one person ends by saying "that's all".

By mid-way through the session, most people have chosen to speak, and many more than once. Each time the stone is put back down again the space

falls back into silence. Little by little the length of time we sit in this silence stretches in duration, until at one moment we stay for a full eight minutes. None of the sharings are now beginning with "Ok, I'll go" or "I can go next". As the silence between speech extends so too does the length of the sharings, towards the end of the session one person will speak for over ten minutes at once.

It appears that each sharing is an invitation of permission for the next, as one by one we move deeper into territories that were seemingly unexpected at first, someone will say, "I've never told anyone that before", and someone else, "I didn't even know that I was feeling that until just now". The sharing gets progressively more personal in nature, and for more than one person there is an emotional affect, throats are cleared, someone wipes a tear away from their eye, another puts a hand on their chest to steady their breathing.

The person that shares for ten minutes does not do so in one continuous speech, they say something and then fall back into silence, keeping the stone held in their hand. Throughout the session other sharings are following a similar rhythm, they contain both speech and silence within them. Sometimes what is said after a silence follows directly on from the last thing said, other times it is a completely different departure. Very rarely do the sharings feel fully cohesive from start to finish in their themes, they are often tangential, and contain an element of the unanticipated. Someone will say "I don't know how I ended up here" more than once during their sharing, and another "I'm not sure where I'm going with this". The speech carrying a sense of unfolding in the present moment, without strong ties to either the past or the future.

Other than the overarching conference theme of 'troubled times', there has not been any external suggestion of possible themes regarding the content of what is being shared, and the *Circle Work* itself is framed only by the open-ended questions "What brings you here, what are you bringing here?". There is

an agreement made at the beginning to not reference or reply to each other, in a way that might ordinarily resemble a conversation or discussion. Instead the encouragement has been made to speak from what is arising within us all from one moment to the next, and to avoid making unacknowledged interpretations or generalisations that are not relevant to our own direct experience. From within this focus on individualisation, a clear set of collective topics repeatedly resurface throughout the duration of the session.

One of these topics is the relationship between 'troubled times' and feelings of consequential guilt that arise in response. Several references are made to not feeling able to quantitatively or qualitatively "do enough" or to "be enough". Another theme is that of tiredness, low energy and fatigue that is referenced by almost every member of the circle. By the end of the session both the themes of guilt and of tiredness have been picked apart and turned around, looked at from different perspectives, critiqued and expanded upon from more than one voice, so that, as a listener I am left with the sensation that a comprehensive discussion has in fact taken place. In this sense, the sharings interact with each other, themes move around the circle and develop into a co-created temporary narrative specific to this particular moment and this particular constellation of individuals. This specificity is implicit within the framework and guidelines of the circle and it is also supported by our arrangement in space which mimics the dynamic between individual and collective, the completed formation of the circular shape made by the positioning of separate chairs.

When we pack up to leave two clock hours later, someone will comment that they "don't know where the afternoon went", another will say, "I feel like we've just come back from somewhere". Both space-time and our sharing have been extending and in some ways merging into each other, without it being clear if one is leading the other. Space-time has held us in our sharing, the time and

space to spend together has enabled these experiences to occur. The ways in which we have been sharing have altered our relationship to the passage and perception of this space-time environment.

After we close the circle there are a few moments for reflection on the process of the work and our time together. Someone is reminded of the idea of 'quality time', they say "two hours feels so much longer, or is it shorter, than I thought, I don't know, but it feels good, like quality time, time well spent". This notion of a distorted sense of time also resonates with others in the group, and we become aware that there are significant differences in our perception of time within the group. Many feel the passage of time together went by very quickly while others feel it went very slowly. We agree that our experience of the popular idiom 'time flies when you are having fun' is more nuanced in practice. It both simultaneously seems to slow down in our moment to moment perception (a minute of enjoyment feeling spacious and expansive) yet to have sped up in our reflection on it as a whole (having passed by too quickly, because we want more of it). Someone reflects that the beginning of the session "felt like a lifetime ago, yet it is as if it has also gone by in an instant, how can that be?"

The tangible sense of these distortions extends to our sense of proximity to each other. There is a visible closeness, reflected in the increase in physical touch, a hand on a back, a hand helping someone get up out of the chair, a hand on an arm, a moment of embrace in a hug. In comparison with our body language at the start of the session, we are now positioning ourselves spatially closer to each other. Someone mentions that it is as if we have known each other for much, much longer than the two hours we have spent together. We might feel the bonds of shared vulnerability because of the mutual exposure of our internal landscapes. It is a closeness that someone reflects is usually only reserved for more intimate relationships, friendships, family and loved ones. I am

left with the image that we have moulded time around us and in doing so it in turn has wrapped us into a thickened moment of shared togetherness — and all through sitting here beside each other.[2]

Circle Work (2018)

REFLECTIONS

- *Circle Work* is a form of slow work that is more embedded in the autonomy to *be able to* go slow, rather than the speed itself. There are many times during the session in which people rush over words, filled with a sense of urgency for what they want to say. There are also times in which more than one person will promptly reach for the stone as soon as it has been put down by another.

Holding the object allows us to dictate the pace of our sharing, rather than requiring us to finish the moment our speech finishes. It resists time-demands, we choose our own durations. This also allows us to include and externalise other parts of ourselves in our sharing, other sounds, such as coughs and the sounds of our breathing, and preformed and nonverbal thoughts, hesitations, and bodily gestures, all of which come with their own speeds.

- The circular space becomes a type of container, what D.W Winnicott (1960) might call a "holding environment". A holding environment for Winnicott is a space of nurture and care, described as neither wholly psychological nor wholly physical, rather it is "the space between inner and outer world, which is also the space between people" (Winnicott 1953). Traditional conceptions of a holding environment are those provided by a parent for a child or a therapist for a client. In *Circle Work* we come together to create this container for ourselves and each other; we are held in the holding environment and we form part of the holding of others within the holding environment. We can move away from the idea of being contained within ourselves toward becoming-containers with and for each other. To hold is both to pause and to embrace. *Circle Work* is perhaps a container that, in enabling expansive openings, also defies the logic of closure inherent in the idea of containment itself.

- In conversation, I am often thinking as I am listening. To some degree I prepare, reflect or store what I will say next during the act of listening to another. Speaking from spontaneity requires me instead to listen to the other with a focus that I am unused to regularly giving. It takes effort to listen and to notice moments when my own internal dialogue begins to rise above the voice of another's. Cultivating this practice sharpens not only my listening to others but

also my ability to listen to myself; I pay more attention to the impulse of every moment. It takes effort and patience to keep staying-with myself in my own sharing and staying-with others in theirs.

- Without a set intention of something I am trying to say or have heard, there is nothing to achieve other than to follow what I find myself saying and wanting to say from one moment to the next. This can be challenging. I find my direction is rarely straightforward, I notice myself backtracking frequently, correcting myself aloud, changing what it is I want to say, swaying way off course. I do not know where I am going, yet in staying-with myself I end up sharing and including all the processes of the journey. I externalise changing my mind. I let myself be seen saying something then disagreeing with myself, making visible not only what is known in me but also moments of confusion and uncertainty. I am reminded again of Jack Halberstam (2011) who writes, "Under certain circumstances failing, losing, forgetting, unmaking, undoing, unbecoming, not knowing may in fact offer more creative, more cooperative, more surprising ways of being in the world" (p. 3). Setting out to lose or to forget or to not know appears counter-intuitive and yet simply sharing my thoughts in ways that adhere to increased spontaneity appears to contribute to altogether more surprising, more creative ways of being in exactly these kinds of connections. A deliberate move away from individualising, hidden, and competitive frameworks of reference toward transparent and collective process.

- As the object is passed through the space, spatially weaving back and forth, we tacitly knit together our words into the collective. Alongside common themes and feelings that emerge there are also places of discord and difference. Simultaneously I experience myself as an autonomous individual with my own

thoughts and feelings and as a permeable part of a community of others. Discussion usually involves response, through which dialogue forms and develops. Here there are no explicit responses and so no recognisable form of discussion or dialogue. The lack of response removes the tendency for reaching toward a sense of progression or solution within the group and themes that are shared may remain open and unresolved. We have not 'done' anything collectivity, and yet many of us leave feeling deeply connected. Sharing the experience of sharing ourselves with each other — *being with each other* — is already in and of itself a radically generative collective act.

- If there are different qualities and quantities of being together, *Circle Work* arguably invites a radically inappropriate space for care and attention to these qualities and quantities. It does so in ways that are so subtle as to appear almost inconsequential, yet are far from inconsequential considering the lack of access many of us have to these kinds of experiences of connection in daily life outside of the designated 'appropriate' settings. The type of platonic, indiscriminate intimacy cultivated through sitting with each other and staying-with ourselves may be easy to underestimate in terms of value and use. Yet through it perhaps we might gain insights and opportunities that support us to practice undoing some of our dissociative disconnections alongside a practice of cultivating increased capacities for empathetic engagement.

- Choosing to create spaces for and to participate in this work is to acknowledge that it is a valid *kind of work*. It is to recognise that the ways in which being in even the most basic forms of relationship with each other are themselves continuously normalised and naturalised through sets of social and cultural conventions. These conventions contribute to everything from the

acceptability or unacceptability of conversational interruption, physical touch (think hand holding, cheek kissing) and connotations around a raised or lowered voice, all of which vary wildly across different cultural and social settings. Yet they also include subtler ontological understandings around what it means to 'be' and to 'do', to be 'present' as a human in a room or to 'contribute' to a group experience. Coming together as a means of exploring other ways of coming together, is not per se about making individual lives better, but rather about remaking and reworking the systems and infrastructures that have come to define what these lives get to look and feel like, when such systems and infrastructures are no longer adequately working.

Notes

[1] Circle Work was presented at *Infrastructures for Troubled Times* (2018) and on this occasion, for the purposes of this research, I made notes of the participants interactions with their consent. The participants remain anonymous and so I have chosen to refer to them using the term "someone" instead.

[2] It has not been my intention to suggest that *Circle Work* is radically new in any way, nor to avoid making reference to the many traditions of sitting together in circular structures (such as those widely used in global and regional governance), practices of speaking when moved to do so (such as those in religious contexts such as within the Quaker community) or confessional spaces (such as those in a therapeutic setting). While there are some shared features between all these contexts, *Circle Work* is an ongoing exploration of informal being-together in non-normative environments and conditions.

INTERLUDE

~ WINNING AT WATER: IN WHAT DIRECTION DOES A STORY OF WINNING FLOW?

In *Teshima Art Museum* Japan, I am sat on the floor watching a droplet of water. The space, created by Rei Naito and Ryue Nishizawa (2010) is a large concrete flattened dome, with two open oval holes cut into the sloping ceiling, giving a view of the sky above and the surrounding landscape. The walls and floor are painted the same pale shade of grey, casting a cool shadow throughout the unlit interior, flooded with dim natural light and two sun spots, which at times become rain spots beneath each oval opening.

On the floor there are tiny holes through which water emerges and disappears. The water is pumped up from a reservoir beneath the space and dribbles out of the holes in singular droplets onto the floor. The paint contains a special coating technology which creates a resistance in surface tension that repels the water, preventing any absorption so that it sits, beads and pools on the floor surface, its membrane holding form so that it appears more akin to a solid than liquid. This also makes the water move across the surface in an entirely unexpected way, seeming to glide as a viscous material might, it elongates and stretches, appearing more like a small insect or creature. The floor is an uneven surface, tilted in a way that is mostly imperceptible when walking on it, but that directs the water to flow toward areas where it will either pool together or encounter tiny holes through which to drain away.

Interior photograph of Teshima Art Museum, Rei Naito and Ryue Nishizawa

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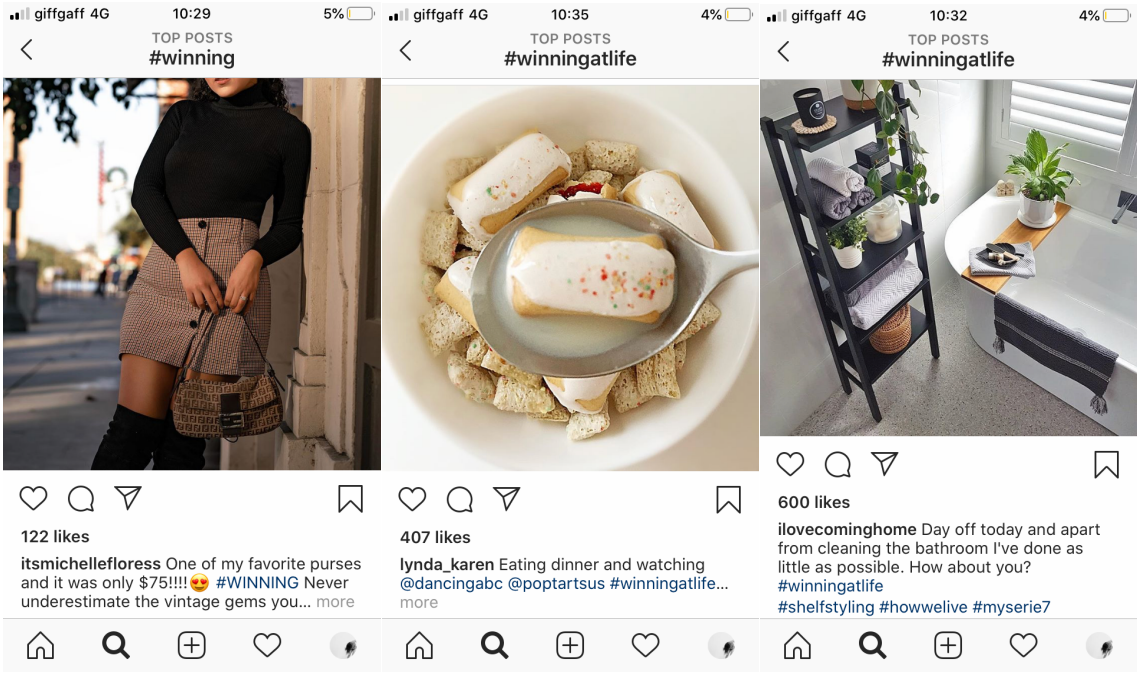
Watching the water move in and out of the floor is both fascinating and uncanny. These moving watery bodies seem more *alive* than perhaps I've ever considered water to be, although this makes little rational sense, as it is within the confined space of a museum and the water is far less 'active' than the undeniably vivid aliveness of a waterfall, monsoon rain or a turbulent ocean. The

water is not rushing, flooding, forcing impact or causing any significant effect and yet there seems to be a sense of *intent*. Again, watching a stream carve a path in soil should also surely represent intention, water moving with purpose. Yet, something about the paint making this water appear viscous gives it a body in a way that is confusing and captivating; as if seeing a familiar thing in an unfamiliar state has shifted the bounds of my perception, rendering it unknown to me so that I begin to use my imagination to gain a sense of order within the peculiarity. I feel as though I am experiencing a performance of the water, hyper-real, at its own edge of being.

Before long I have attached a narrative to the water droplets that surprises me. I am placing internal bets with myself upon which droplet will reach the next hole first. I'm struck by this 'race' metaphor, surprised at myself for having introduced an element of competition seemingly out of thin air. It feels both humorous and harmless, yet also a little disturbing. How can this water ever win against itself? Should I be concerned by the pervasiveness of a 'power-over' paradigm that is seemingly so embedded within my frames of reference and structures of thought and perception?

It leads me to consider a recent social media hashtag "#winning", that is used next to images and status updates that describe everything from take-away food, picturesque sunsets, Fridays, white beaches, and discount coupon codes. When I win, I enter a dynamic relationship with those who lose, winning over them or at their expensive, to their relative loss or detriment. Winning might ordinarily imply success and achievement, yet in these "#winning-at-life" moments, the identity of our "opponents" seems less than clear. Is the opponent truly invisible? Or are we simply positioning them as irrelevant? I applied a narrative called 'winning' to the progression of water droplets, and in doing so I co-opted their movement into my own animation, projecting upon them both



Instagram screenshots from the hashtags "winning" and "winningatlife" (2019)

my human and cultural specificity. It seems almost harmless, until quite suddenly it doesn't. I am reminded of the language used by Donald Trump (2016) at a rally prior to the US presidential election in which the very idea of winning is itself taken to its own amplified extreme:

> We're gonna win so much. We're gonna win at every level. We're gonna win economically. We're gonna win with the economy. We're gonna win with military. We're gonna win with healthcare and for our veterans. We're gonna win with every single facet. We're gonna win so much, you may even get tired of winning and you'll say 'Please, please, it's too much winning. We can't take it any more. Mr. President, it's too much,' and I'll say 'No it isn't. We have to keep winning. We have to win more.' We're gonna win more. We're gonna win so much (Trump 2016).

What direction does winning run in? Who or what progresses with 'progress'? In my Opening chapter I suggested that a Western cultural dominance of linear thinking around the direction of time, and related empathetic inability to conceive of mutual interconnectivity, has contributed to a notion of progress that

fails to adequately account for the harm it causes to human and nonhuman bodies in the name of this same 'progress'. While the idea that in life some win and some lose may seem structurally inevitable, I have chosen to argue throughout this research that there is considerably more variety available to the ways in which such stories might begin to end.

There is a ritual recounted by British journalist Jay Griffiths (2000 p. 28) that is held by the Xavante peoples of Brazil, which involves two groups of men each carrying two heavy logs while running beside each other. From one perspective, this looks very similar to any other familiar game in which two teams compete to be the strongest, fastest, or longest lasting. However, the narrative of this ritual refuses any neat conclusion, and is instead subverted when one group falls behind and the other begins to also slowdown in response. The ritual, as Jay Griffiths understands it, is more commensurable to an aesthetic event, a ballet or an orchestral recital, rather than a race. I do not wish to draw conclusions that assume the Xavante ritual is an expression of my own understandings of notions such as cooperation, collaboration or collectivity, as I simply do not know. I do however believe that its very existence suggests that there are places my own thinking cannot yet go, and that to be capable of imagining otherwise I desperately need help from all kinds of *anothers*.

REFLECTING ON STORY, MOVING OUT

It is categorically not my intention to have retold stories (that are crucially also not mine to tell) as a means of positioning a violently homogenised "indigeneity" as the 'good' against a Western 'bad'. This has been a distinction that I have

consistently tried to make clear so as to resist falling into simplistic moralistic binary reductions which perpetuate the possibility of demonised 'others'. Instead, I choose to share it, alongside several others recounted in Chapter One, to reinforce a recognition that various ways of being 'otherwise' in the world *already* exist in addition to those within my framework of cultural reference. That these alternative narratives are in fact not 'other' at all, but rather, *another* as I proposed in Chapter Two — another way to think, perceive, relate, direct and move.

In cultivating attention to difference through the contemplation of alternative stories, my aim has been to improve my capacity to hold multiplicities of perspective that can act to expand my worldview, and extend the realm of potential options ahead. It has been my intention to *listen* to such stories, and to ask how I might learn from them, with the acknowledgement that their very existence *is itself* an enrichment of my learning sphere. The critical emphasis here is not that these stories be thought of as *serving* my learning or expansion, but rather that they hold empowered capacities to force me to acknowledge the realities they speak toward.

These are realities that already exist, and it is a form of ignorance or an inability to *allow* or yield to their reality as 'real', as I discussed in Chapter Four that prevents me from recognising them as such. I believe therefore that I need to confront this in order to be taught categorically that the dominance of my cultural framework is not down to questions of singularity. The dominance of certain cultural narratives over others *is in fact dominance* alone, and not because of a lack of alternative possibilities. It is also my belief that the emotional and intellectual labour this entails should be approached as largely a personal and collective cultural responsibility to *learn* before it becomes the labour of another to teach me.

Any active endeavour to create from a place of *storying otherwise* (to come up with new ideas, *to produce*) must also be about *becoming otherwise* through receiving the stories of others, (to adapt to and be changed by them); it must be a reciprocal, ecological practice. There is a very probable likelihood that any 'new hopes' I may set out to create, are in fact vastly less interesting or inspiring than the *current hopes* already in existence by all kinds of others that I have previously failed to adequately hear or see.

In thinking about the future, it is my belief that learning to listen to unfamiliar systems of knowledge in the present, is of much greater priority than assuming we could ever independently strive toward the unimagined without them. Rather, moving forward requires a dedicated practice not only in becoming curious about unfamiliar alternative stories, but also in *defamiliarising* our own familiar stories by making room for the alternative perspectives that they at once also contain; there is after all, always more than one side to any story. It is also valuable to affirm that *within* Western cultural histories there are also many alternative and unfamiliar stories, in addition to those more dominant. [1]

Searching for, yielding to and becoming curious about alternative cultural (and arguably *cosmological* worldings) could be thought of as stepping to the side, or better — to many different sides — that rejects a restricted temporal linearity of either backward or ahead. Perhaps this kind of moving sideways, that is at once also neither solely inward nor outward, could itself be a way of *moving onward*.

Notes

[1] Jay Griffiths (2000) attends to several of these, some of which I've already mentioned, as does Rebecca Solnit (2005, 2016) throughout their work, and especially in *Hope in the Dark*: *Untold Histories Wild Possibilities*.

CLOSING

"…how we find ourselves in a story we have written, and the next part is becoming conscious authors of the story we are writing."

— Timothy Morton, *Humankind* (2017, p. 155)

I began this research with an awareness of my own somatic and psychological discomfort that I felt was preventing a deeper, personal confrontation of the relational impact of climate crisis. Alongside this I held a concern around the implications of a cultural environment in which I find it significantly easier to avoid, rather than to feel, this discomfort. I drew links between this discomfort and a perceived lack of movement, in the sense of the paralysis and numbness that I felt to be associated with the discomfort. In response to Donna Haraway, my aim was to "stay with the trouble" instead of turning away, while providing an experiential account of the challenges in attempting to do so. I sought to both problematize the paralysing effects of disassociation, and to politicise this idea of disconnection.

My hypothesis was that a relationship exists between cultural understandings of time and frameworks of empathy that limit my capacity to experience myself as deeply interconnected and interdependent which in turn has a detrimental social and ecological impact. I proposed a reassessment of the normalised constructions of time and empathy alongside an exploration of their creative re-imagination through Glacial Time and Radical Empathy.

Following Paul Huebener I undertook an "ecocritical exploration of time" and found that dominant temporalities, and their subsequent value systems, marginalise multiple other ways of orientating ourselves towards each other. After coming across the idea of "Glacial Time" put forward by sociologist John Urry, I then picked this up as a tool for thinking through alternative frameworks. Thinking glacially empowered an understanding of time as commons, encouraging renewed autonomous choice in my relation to speed and sequentiality among other things. Through this, another layer of my questioning, "how do we continue to move onwards?", developed into a critique of directionality itself. In lieu of reaching for future solutions I discovered that within already existing forms of narrative interruption there were possibilities for increased connectivity. I found that my enquiry could

be related to a broadly defined "slow" turn in the social humanities, embedded in paradoxical urgencies.

Alongside this I discovered that dominant cultural approaches to empathy appear to simultaneously reaffirm a restrictively separate and containable notion of self. I found that adequately addressing ecological relations, instead requires ways of experiencing shared connection that can be seen as culturally inappropriate in their excessiveness. This led me to synthesise, in dialogue with other relevant literature, a tool for rethinking the practice of connectivity, which I called "Radical Empathy". Through discussions of "kinship", "suprasociality" and "solidarity", I found there were different entry points for non-normative relational imagining. Of particular significance was the directional move toward Timothy Morton's idea of "yielding" which also spoke to my critique of actionable productivity, anthropocentricity and to my practice of Glacial Time. My studies in this contribute toward a broadening perspective of empathy studies, primarily through questioning not only what empathy is, but also what it might strive to become.

The underlying intention of the project was to strengthen the capacity to respond to climate crises, but also to re-imagine the cultural narratives that have led to where we now find ourselves. I positioned this as an enquiry of pressing relevance, believing that seismic conceptual shifts are needed in order to adequately grasp how we might continue into an uncertain future. By disturbing pre-existing formations I found that Glacial Time and Radical Empathy could indeed shake-up the experiential qualities of interdependence. In shifting to focus on the modal qualities of relationality, questions of "more or less", I found an impossibility for disconnection. This led me to feel more resourced and capable of confronting the implications of climate science and finding forms of lived response.

This project exists within an arts setting that is embedded in the wider field of cultural theory. The benefits of this context are reflected in the interdisciplinary, outward-facing, practice orientated and emergent nature of my studies. I later came to position my research within the environmental humanities, a direct outcome of finding myself welcomed in to this context by others studying within the field.

I located my research within a "doing-thinking" methodology, informed by geographers J.K Gibson-Graham (2008) and their provocation to "become a different academic subject". I took becoming a care-led, connected researcher, to mean allowing the themes I was researching to move me and to impact upon relationships within my life, and crucially, for this in turn to become visible and explicit within the structures of my writing. I wanted

to account for how an intellectual understanding of something was not often in sync with bodily experience, or lived relational interactions. Encouragement for taking this autobiographical stance came from the "Slow Scholarship" manifesto of Alison Mountz and colleagues which has permeated the entirety of my approach.

One of the most significant decisions taken early on was to move away from referencing an expected canon of relevant literature in cultural theory. My intention was to make room for thinking about time and empathy in radically different ways, which I believe requires the amplification of non-centralised voices. Inspired by the work of Sara Ahmed and others utilising a feminist ethics of citation, I chose to actively resist where possible a dependence upon white male voices, no longer living. For the same reasons I also sidestepped current work that was explicitly in dialogue with these voices, even those with seemingly considerable relevance to my themes.

I further sought to be actively influenced by non-western and indigenous structures of knowledge. I prioritised both acknowledging the problematic nature of retellings that come via western and non-indigenous forms of mediation, whilst continuing to argue for the necessity of including & amplifying non-dominant voices, better articulated as a "joining-with". I sought to provide non-romanticised interpretations that made clear they were interpretation. While also consistently striving to make visible my sense of indebtedness, in order to resist the violence of co-option, exploitation and "use" value of using such voices for my own benefit. These decisions have allowed me to explore, from a political and philosophical rather than anthropological position for example, the relationship between the Ecuardorian Runa, to North American psychologists researching neuro-diversity, among other interdisciplinary links that have been forged throughout.

In reaching the narrative end of this research arc, it feels increasingly challenging to offer a traditional "conclusion". While I recognise the importance of *bringing things together*, a conclusion does not feel an appropriate end, as it tends to suggest a greater sense of both finality and certitude than I would choose to now adhere to. Instead, in positioning this as "a closing" my intention is to provide an overview of the journey so far, one that remains both in process, and in a state of potential, always tied to possible further openings. Though arguably this could be read as a matter of semantics, I hope to have shown throughout that *language matters*.

I sought for this research to, in many senses "undo me", undo my thinking and imaginative faculties. I actively worked to speak differently in striving to think differently,

recognising this reciprocity between wording and worlding - an example I gave questioned the location of "away" when we "throw something away". I spent time and attention attending to etymology and connotation, in order to better understand the foundational construction of meaning, to explore how ways of thinking emerge and remain tied to the past through our forms of languaging. There is a relationship between language and thinking that both shapes and limits the potential for future forms of imagination. This developed throughout my analysis of the word "radical" and as part of metaphorical explorations into the meaning of ice. I also mobilised forms of experimentation in language, inspired by the literature I was working with, for example, suggesting that the term "anotherness" might better construct a more amplified understanding of empathy.

Yet rather than suggesting that new thinking can only be brought about by an entirely 'new' language, I have found that often within language there are multiple narratives *already* in existence. Much as with Timothy Morton's understanding of solidarity, we are to some extent, "always already in" (Morton 2017, p. 140). The language choices and changes I have made therefore reflect a desire to expand into possible alternative narratives with both responsivity and responsibility. This has been one way in which I have attempted to respond to a notion of academic care and carefulness that I raised in the Opening. In *bringing things together*, I therefore wish this *together* to be read as a cumulative interweaving of themes, rather than as their ultimate cohesion.

REDEFINING A MILLENIAL MULTIPLICITY

In Chapter One it was suggested that a story is something that we carry through our relationships. Our relationship *with the world* is formed through the ways we *relate* (tell of it) to ourselves and to each other. Contemplating the future then plausibly becomes a question of which stories we choose to keep moving through time with and passing on through our networks of connection. While stories such as that of 'winning' might appear to be unshakeable in their strength over others, there are some contra-indications which also suggest the possibility of change; among them, the recent Turner Prize awards. In December 2019, four nominated artists were collectively awarded the prestigious Turner Prize title and

prize money to share instead of it being made to a single winner, as had been custom since 1984 (BBC News 2019a). Although in 2016 winner Helen Marten chose to share her prize money with fellow nominees, 2019 was the first time the prize itself had been split, and at the request of the artists.

In a statement made by the four, Helen Cammock, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Oscar Murilla and Tai Shani, explained that

> each of us makes art about social and political issues and contexts we believe are of great importance and urgency. The politics we deal with differ greatly, and for us it would feel problematic if they were pitted against each other, with the implication that one was more important, significant or more worthy of attention than the others (Cammock et al. 2019).

Writing of the news one newspaper headline described it as a "virtue signal for the snowflake era" (Sooke 2019). Another art critic, Andrew Russell suggested "it's just a bunch of millennial artists asking for a participation trophy" (BBC News 2019a). They continue, "back in my day, artists would kill for the Turner Prize. Literally kill! They'd lie, cheat, and steal. Bribe judges? Sure. Sabotage a competitor's intricate installation? No big deal" (Russell 2019).

I'm struck by the level of stimulation, excitement and drama implied in these "lie, cheat and steal" scenarios — how bland in comparison a story of solidarity may appear to be. Yet in reading these responses, I feel almost exactly the reverse: I experience them as mostly as banal and mundane, they seem excessively *predictable*. Perhaps there is so little drama *left* once it has already been played out so often and for so long. A story of sabotage feels at once to be far less interesting than the much more challenging feat of subverting the cultural entrenchment of a concept such as 'winning'. The ability for one choice of solidarity to shake up the established ways of response feels, within my own body at least, to be where the excitement truly lies. Choosing an untrodden path instead of a well-trodden one, as previously discussed, suggests the possibility of palpable brain stimulation and new neural pathways fizzing.

The idea that these artists were "asking for a participation trophy" (Russell 2019) invokes a possible scenario in which excellence might not be validated or uniqueness and divergence not accommodated. It seems to suggest a false levelling or neutralising of an imaginary playing field to the detriment of the players upon it. Yet must the idea that no one win and no one lose be reduced solely to these somewhat more familiar terms? Might it in fact *not* be any kind of concessionary levelling out, homogenising and covering over of

difference at all, but rather a far more radical display of high quality creative distinction, imbued with an equality of value that refuses to be neutralised or subdued. Where some might see a *dilution* of energy (the "lack of fight" of a dramatic sabotage), I would argue this scenario is the epitome of that same energy but turned on its head, *radicalised*.

In my reading of Lora Mathis's *Radical Softness* (2015) the idea that dilution be read in relation to weakness was brought into question. Rejecting the notion that 'losing oneself' comes through excessive emotional expression, I suggested that equating a weakened self with a compromised self could only exist within a cultural narrative that refuses to acknowledge the condition of permeability of that very same boundary. The already 'diluted' self in the sense of its interdependent interconnection is a precondition of living as a self and not a constraint to it. Rather it is permeability that enables life and strengthens it and without it a thing would rarely in fact be defined as 'alive' at all. The Turner Prize artists state that if they had followed the traditional individualised format it "would undermine our individual artistic efforts to show a world entangled" (Cammock et al. 2019). They continue, "the issues we each deal with are as inseparable as climate chaos is from capitalism" a statement which is of considerable relevance to the themes underlying this research. Their choice to form a collective to accept the prize together was done "in the name of commonality, multiplicity and solidarity".

I read considerable *strength* and even *'fight'* in the choice of the artists to defy the traditional format of the prize, and yet I also see how these qualities can be redefined in ways that enable them to no longer necessarily align with the more dramatic aggression that Andrew Russell refers to. A strength that is instead defined in terms of resistance and resilience, but also, crucially, the paradoxical strength of dissolution, melting and collapse. The artists statement of "solidarity" could evidently be read in connection to Timothy Morton's work of the same name, which was considered in Chapter Four. In addition, it relates to the wider collection of practices and theories gathered under the umbrella term Radical Empathy that I have been exploring. *Solidarity*, in this context, is both a condition of existence, but also an affirmative practice that can be supported and cultivated to strengthen the experience of connectivity and interdependency. While *strength* is here not reduced to a strong-weak binary, nor left to reside within a "power-over" paradigm but is instead more akin to some form of "*power-with*" (Follett 1940). Certainly, there is considerable room left for broadening this research into a more thorough study of such relations of power, and the historic and contextual conditions of individualism alongside the questions of "commonality,

multiplicity and solidarity" that are tied to them.

While the artists were accused of "virtue-signalling" I find it curious that this implies a demonstration of a moralistic attitude believed to be greater than or larger than its actuality, a signal that portrays an appearance without being of any significant substance. Again, I regard the artists' choice, for it was their choice to make the request (the award decision came only after their *own* collective proposal) to be almost entirely the opposite. Oscar Murillo explains that, "if any of us had individually won, I would have felt I was betraying my own work and ideas - if we are indeed really talking about solidarity" (see Higgins 2019). Had the artists portrayed a 'signal' of concern within their own individual work but then not followed this through to it's (in some senses more 'logical') conclusion by accepting the prize individually, they would also presumably have been open to the exact same criticism of such virtue signalling.

Instead, their personal and collective commitment to being-doing practices could be read as making a non-hierarchical stand, resisting both an artificial art-life divide and refusing to bend to the constrictions of entrenched cultural structures that define how we get to be in relation with each other. The disparaging conflation of terms such as snowflake and millennial with a lack of integrity ("virtue signal") or resilience ("participation trophy") simply does not add up. Returning to the proposal I made in my Opening, these examples only act to further support the commitment to continue proposing ways to reclaim and simultaneously subvert my own millennial identity and its wider cultural representation.

"…WITH NO COMPETITION, THERE IS NO OTHER"

Alongside Andrew Russell's comments, in the same newspaper article, Musa Okwonga gives a very different statement that is particularly relevant, "I am glad the Turner Prize was shared…With no competition, there is no Other" (BBC News 2019a). Such a statement could arguably be seen as an oversimplification of the complex cultural, psychological and geopolitical relations at play in the historic formations of both 'self' and 'other'. It does however offer an interesting provocation. The idea of refusing competition could be approached as yet another practice within Glacial Time, subverting the linearity of motions that "progress". Yet it would also be a practice that sits within Radical Empathy, moving us

from a paradigm of *other* to that of *another* through a refusal of hierarchy and assertion of collective endeavour. As a statement, I would argue that it supports my initial hypothesis that there are indeed connections between questions of intimacy and proximity, and that how we perceive of time and empathy is to some extent almost always co-emerging and co-dependent.

In Chapter Two I discussed at length how empathy both requires us to cross a boundary of selfhood and imaginatively stretch toward an other, at the same time as often reinforcing these same separations which allow us to constitute an other as in fact, 'other'. I proposed a commitment toward approaching others as 'another' instead. This idea was returned to in Chapter Four, where some different approaches to understanding the ways in which we are in connection with each other, and the ways we might strive to increase or strengthen these connections, were explored. I proposed one reading of Donna Haraway's (2016) "making kin" as resting closer toward the *doing* end of the spectrum, in the effortful cultivation of connection. This was compared with a reading of Timothy Morton's (2017) "solidarity" that I suggested rested closer toward *being*, with emphasis on the state or condition of connection. I concluded that both movements were necessary and complementary, and rather than mutually exclusive, they only broadened the discourse. It felt important here to resist falling into a false trap of separation dividing 'active' from 'passive', and instead to assert the dynamic interplay between these movements, which is also to subvert any traditional connotation of active and passive in relation to productivity, value and worth.

In Chapter One Thomas Hobbes contention that life is "matter in motion" was considered and contrasted with the work of Vandana Shiva (2016) to discuss how such a notion binds passivity with inertia to detrimental effect, while framing our understanding of progress as tied to active productivity. In Chapter Two I then considered how passivity further correlates with a fear of being without sufficient agency to resist or withstand being shaped by others. A notion of weakness — and a fear of also losing ourselves *to ourselves* through our own emotionality — was also embedded in this exploration and again developed in my reading of Lora Mathis's *Radical Softness*. In Chapter Three passivity and questions of speed and slowness were picked up in relation to Glacial Time culminating in a reading of stillness in Erdem Gündüz's *Standing Man* (2013).

How slowness might relate to an experience of intimacy had also been discussed in reflections on Elizabeth Saint-Jalmes and Cyril Leclerc's *Pixel Lent* (2018). While it has been

the intention throughout to propose a subversive reading of passivity and activity through a lens of receptivity and reciprocity, this could also be revisited in depth. It would be especially interesting to further explore Timothy Morton's "rocking", a quivering, vibrational movement quality that seems to resist all binary categorisations by never fully resting in one or the other; only ever as the rhythm back and forth in-between (2017, p. 180).

In Chapter Four I explored Erin Manning's (2013) notion of "suprasociality" which offers a possible developmental approach to empathetic narratives. The idea that we begin our lives in more connected states was discussed, with some of us (though crucially not all of us) moving out of this familiarity as we grow older into adulthood. That bodies hold the capacity for intense indiscrimination I take as confirmation of a possibility for unlearning our familiar disconnections while relearning variously radical empathies again. Erin's attention to forms of neurodiverse and non-neurotypical knowledge, which also repositions the dominance of some stories over others, would be especially valuable to pursue further.

Though it wasn't my own stylistic choice for this research, Musa Okwonga's decision to capitalise "Other" (BBC News 2019a) is itself also significant. I understand it to stand for the social-political *othering* of others. An Other is here imbued with a specific set of meanings, constituting them as both not-the-same-as-me and of lesser intrinsic value. It has not been the intention to suggest that practices under the umbrella of Radical Empathy should set out to *erase the other*, rather it is a subversion of the idea of otherness itself that I have sought to explore. The idea that we might strive toward a future in which "there is no Other", implies a radical project in revaluing differences, recognising that multiple timelines, stories and worlds are already part of a shared and common existence. Astrida Neimanis (2017) offers a powerful statement in support of this understanding, "'we' are all in this together (Braidotti 2002), but 'we' are not all the same, nor are we all 'in this' in the same way" (Neimanis, p.15).

As I discussed in Chapter Two, an empathetic *feeling-with* requires a sense of valuing another as an-other. To enter the reciprocity of feeling-with I am required to retain a degree of openness and non-judgemental unknowingness toward another, in order to make room for them to move-with me as much as for me to move-with them. I cannot become adequately perceptive and responsive to another if I have already filled the space between us with myself, and given us no room to become-together. This research has been, and remains categorically opposed to the violences of co-option and assimilation that would act to oppressively homogenise such differences. To draw upon the words of Astrida Neimanis, living ecologically "demands more attention to difference" (Neimanis, p. 15).

In Chapter Four I wrote that "to seek out radical empathies is to search for means of disruption and interruption that themselves subvert the link between destruction and revolution". I have sought to follow paths that might 'revolutionise' my relationship to such differences, beginning somewhat paradoxically, with how I conceptualise myself to myself.[1] I have sought to acknowledge the intrinsic interconnection, inter-reliance and interdependence that defines my existence, that grounds and roots any one 'self' already firmly in its own *anotherness*.

These adjustments begin to form a response to the question I also asked in Chapter Four, "What might need adjusting in how we picture ourselves to ourselves?" The intention has been to seek ways that might increase my personal capacity for empathetic concern and collectively support more adequate strategies of inclusivity and care for others. I propose a more expansive, indiscriminate and amplified empathy as an urgency within this endeavour. This would include a rhythmic invitation to feel-with all kinds of beings, human and nonhuman, based as much in receptivity (listening to other systems of knowledge) as in effort (making an imaginative stretch).

"…AS INSEPARABLE AS CLIMATE CHAOS IS FROM CAPITALISM"

That I find myself writing about the Turner Prize as part of this thesis, just days after the results were announced, seems also to be significant. The speed of change in external socio-political environments alongside an internal reflexive awareness of the pace of my own research (a desire to both "keep up" and to simultaneously "slow down") has been a consistent, dynamic thread that runs throughout. As part of my commitment to "becoming a different academic subject" (Gibson-Graham 2008) I have tried to increase an awareness around, among other things, the pace of my own working rhythms in addition to the pace of the writing itself. I believe this to also be a crucial part of the being-doing of this project, and not external or marginal to it. While my key research concerns began as questions of timely relevance, over its duration they have become increasingly so, and at times it has felt challenging to include everything of relevance that could have usefully furthered it. A constant tension has therefore been how to adopt a language of emergency that nevertheless remains connected to this body and does not disconnect by leaving it behind.

If the term Glacial Time indeed, to repeat a quote from Chapter Three "seems poignantly dated to a recent past of less spectacular global warming" (Price 2015), then the questions embedded within it, are only increasing in urgency. The *glacial pace* of economic and political structural change can seem painfully slow-moving, while events such as the forthcoming US withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement (see Harrabin 2019) give the impression of movement entirely in reverse. An attitude of hopelessness in the face of such enormities remains a valid logical response. Yet as also discussed in Chapter Three, ice resists all reductive definitions, and a glacier is equally capable of immediate and rapid collapse, which might take the shape of tentative alternative 'hopes' for the possibility of affirmative structural unravellings in the midst of such collapse.

While I have been acutely aware of the 'timely' nature of this research project, it has crucially not been my intention to suggest that the eternal continuation of the future of time itself, in the sense of an anthropocentric timeline, is *only now* something at risk. Rather, I have sought continuously to affirm that it has always been at risk for certain bodies, including, but not restricted to black and brown bodies, queer and gender non-conforming bodies and women's bodies in addition to all kinds of plant, animal, mineral, water and various other nonhuman bodies. In Chapter One I drew upon Paul Huebener's (2018) call for an "ecocritical exploration of time" suggesting that ecocritical times require a revaluation of time itself. The alternative stories of time that I explored sought to confirm that cultural temporal frameworks are always embedded in social dynamics that are bound to both ethical and political concerns. In this sense, the criticality of an eco-crisis has led toward a more thorough consideration of how time plays out across many other areas of social life. I am understanding more clearly that thinking ecologically is categorically not restricted, in any narrow sense, to solely environmental concerns. Which is to say, I hope to have shown the levels of intense entanglement that are inherent; as *natureculture*s that are at once also shared ecologies.

When the Turner Prize artists state that "the issues we each deal with are as inseparable as climate chaos is from capitalism" (Cammock et al. 2019) I am reminded again of this entanglement. In the Opening chapter I asked, "What is it that is being affirmed through a hope that has been socially and culturally perpetuated to be reliant upon conditions of separation and disconnection?" Upon reflection, the discomfort spoken of I would now define outright to be a symptom of *internalised* consumer capitalism. Seeking to unlearn some of the more limiting notions of empathy, considered in Chapter Two, to move towards a Radical Empathy that can both "make kin" and be in "solidarity", discussed in Chapter Four,

has been a means of addressing the ways in which internalised capitalist belief and value systems shape my relationships, imagination and emotional landscape. Seeking out alternatives to dominant narratives that situate time in relation to an attached set of values centred around progress and productivity in order to find a means to question and subvert these values in the practice of Glacial Time, has been a tool to address the ways in which internalised capitalism influences almost all of my activities from waking to sleep: work, rest, and 'play'.

I am defining internalised capitalism as these largely un-politicised, experiential, conceptual, somatic, affective, interpersonal and intra-personal layers. Internalised capitalism, in my understanding, includes the extent to which excessive levels of consumption and disconnection are not only normalised within daily social and cultural life, but are also inscribed within and upon my own body; in my digestive system, adrenal glands and circadian rhythms among other things. The notion of a boundary between external and internal is already blurred through food that passes in-between and clothes that rest upon, *and* it is also arguably embedded in even subtler factors, such as the amount of time I can look at a distressing news programme before changing the channel. Of the links between recent Australian bushfires in December 2019 and climate change, ecologist Glenda Wardle explains that "It's not that every weather event is the direct result of climate change. But when you see trends… it becomes undeniably linked" (BBC News 2019b). I do not mean to imply that every moment of sunburnt skin, dietary vitamin deficiency and night of insomnia is the direct result of what I am referring to as internalised capitalism, but "when you see trends…" — what *I am* suggesting is that there are some undeniable links.

If internalised capitalism normalises certain qualities of life and quantities of consumption within life, then I am choosing to reclaim a stereotype of 'millennial entitlement' that politicises becoming more entitled to express dissent for this sunburn, these deficiencies, and this insomnia. I am fully aware of the intense levels of privilege implied in such a statement. Simultaneously I am also acutely aware of the ways in which dominant cultural narratives can silence and repress such dissent precisely by naming it 'privileged' which attaches it to shame. As shame theorist Brené Brown states, to not have certain conversations because they make you uncomfortable would also be a counter-definition of 'privilege' (Brown 2019).

Yet, to say that climate chaos is inseparable from capitalism also under-attends to a more comprehensive set of geopolitical considerations, including for example China's

"socialist market economy".[2] It feels crucial to avoid conflations of an arguably 'Westernised' understanding of capitalism that further ignore the existence of conflicting narratives which differ (however nuanced or contested) from those more dominant. The political intersections between capitalism, consumerism and ecologies of trouble requires much more consideration and expertise than I have been able to provide in this research. Yet if, as a recent newspaper headline suggests "Ending climate change requires the end of capitalism. Have we got the stomach for it?" (McDuff 2019) then adjusting out of the story of capitalism and into another story will require the kinds of work I consider Glacial Time and Radical Empathy to be intrinsically embedded in.

OUTWARD, ONWARD

In Chapter One I suggested a story "works upon us as we carry it within us" and asked how we might carry more than one story — such as an older familiar story alongside a newer, unfamiliar one? An end of capitalism does not end a story of capitalism that has shaped us from the inside out. Ending capitalism therefore also requires an end to the *story of capitalism*, hard-to-shake belief and value systems that work not only on political, social and economic levels, but also on emotional, imaginative, cultural and relational levels. An end of capitalism requires a radical dismantling: an uprooting right from the core, as I described in Chapter Four. This would mean attending to all areas of these roots, not only the most visible, or overt. It would need to include the roots that wrap around our thoughts, and vocabulary, those that wrap around our friendships, our workplaces, and to those wrapped around the neurotransmitters which regulate our emotional states — found not only in the brain but also in the pit of the stomach. The question again perhaps is "Have we got the stomach for it?" — to uproot these roots requires the effort of discomfort, unfamiliarity, unknowing and, almost certainly, a degree of failure.

In the Opening chapter I said that finding ways to respond to trouble can often feel confusing and overwhelming. Yet a project of uprooting the roots of *internalised capitalism* wherever and whenever we can find them would be one such an empowered practical response. This might be one means of *turning toward* that need not simultaneously *turn away*, a form of non-normative directionality discussed in Chapters Two and Three. Turning toward this task is not turning away from other equally necessary tasks, in the sense that both

dismantling capitalism, and the infrastructures that uphold it, and dismantling the story of capitalism are, in my understanding, two facets of the same path ahead. Glacial Time (which includes adopting non-dominant approaches to time in everyday life) and Radical Empathy (which includes politicising connectivity and emotionality) are practices for "staying-with" the process of uprooting. They each contain amplifications which can help us to situate ourselves in the present in order to orientate toward this future. Sometimes it is only through heading for the extreme limits of something that we can better understand where we are and where we have come from. They provide the imaginative frameworks, both personal and collective, for becoming-otherwise, prioritising modes of connection and re-introducing an autonomy of choice. This is a staying-with that paradoxically brings movement to the places in which we feel stuck — a non-linear generative movement outward, if not onward, into our glacial futures.

Moving beyond solely theoretical questioning was key to this process, as was prioritising the lived experience of disconnection and approaching forms of reconnection and relational thinking as practice. As part of my own practice of Glacial Time and Radical Empathy, I became heavily involved in environmental activism, exploring collective dance and movement-psychotherapy as forms of subversive protest, and facilitating workshops in what I would now call forms of grief tending at academic and public conferences. My practice of Radical Empathy now includes subverting the idea of a separate and contained self that exists outside of and in opposition to an other in order to meet the 'needs' and 'demands' of consumer markets. Among other things, it continues to take the form of choosing to share my internal emotional landscape outside of traditionally 'appropriate' contexts, including consistently within academia, both in my writing and personally with peers and colleagues. It also includes saying a quiet (still a little self-conscious) thank you to the water I wash my hands under each morning, and meeting the eyes of every homeless person I pass as a means of turning toward another in moments when turning away might be considered more culturally acceptable.

Under the umbrella of Glacial Time, I practised subverting the progressive narrative timelines that give form and structure to internalised capitalism. The took the shape of changing my birth date and year for several years during this research, in order to explore just how deeply ingrained my sense of unshakable time-appropriateness had become, including cultural needs for temporal familiarity through perceived time-markers. It also included bringing awareness to how quickly or slowly I choose to move through a busy city

street, to how I categorise what has been a productive or non-productive day and to the value given to feeling clumsy, confused or in need of rest. It has also taken the form of *giving and spending time* to explore other ways of *being in time* with others, such as in the experience of *Circle Work*, and in choosing to define such work *as work*. These are everyday micro-political acts that are at once not overtly significant, and yet are accumulative and affirmative in repositioning my relation to the world around me. Like many students I imagine, I found myself hastily skim reading throughout my research, only to be struck by the irony and poignancy of this when reading texts on Glacial Time. Rather than brush this aside, I chose to let it percolate. These are also acts which all scale up and down, and continue to deepen and develop across the strata of my life. The practise of Glacial Time and Radical Empathy, as with any practice, require consistency and repetition. I hope my reflections here will form only the very beginning of this journey.

Being an enquiry into conceptual narratives set within the arts, I also engaged at length with practitioners whose work exemplified non-normative forms of narration and exploration. I offered several close readings of such work, in the form of interludes, which sought to provide a rhythm of expansion and contraction within the thesis between detail and a more wide-angled view, also with variations in length and pace. The interludes provided multiple outbreaks, counteracting the inevitable linear progression of the text and offering space for tangential reflection and for themes to circulate. They act as figurations of the complexity and entanglement of environments.

There are of course areas that I could not develop fully in the space of this thesis. I would especially like to further engage with the cultural concept of "mother earth" that I believe desperately needs to shift toward that of a queer lover's discourse, and through which reciprocity, kinship and the idea of "natural resources" are all implicated. There are artists such as Annie Sprinkles who I see as currently engaging with related ideas under their practice of "ecosexuality". Connected and yet distinct from this, I am also keen to develop my understanding of how a politics of pleasure intersects with humankindness. I am interested in how definitions of life that are rooted in a right to pleasure, potentially transform notions of morality or obligation that traditionally associate with empathy.

My research has sought to offer forms of generative thinking and imaginative ideas for action, alongside operating as a piece of contextualised critique. It engaged with contemporary thinkers in related fields, synthesised relevant theory in innovative ways, and developed a wider argument with original thought. I understand this to be emergent, since

completion for example, I have also come to articulate and begin to identify my work as Intersectional Environmentalism and I am also now beginning to explore how it might fit within the exploratory field of Cultural Somatics, an approach toward understanding culture as soma (via Tada Hozumi and Resmaa Menakem), with a lens of ancestral and trauma work, polyvagal theory and embodied nervous system research.

My lasting intention in coming into relationship with time and empathy has been perhaps most significantly, in order to cultivate this relationship *as a relationship*. If a relationship is a state of being connected to something, then it has been a focus on the quantities and qualities of this connection that I have sought. Some form of relationship to time and to empathy has of course always been a part of my experience, in the sense that the relationship is a condition of my environment. However, I now understand that my ability to bring awareness to it in ways that might enable creative or generative development, is always operating on a scale. This is to say that, while the relationship itself is non-negotiable, I can be in *more,* or *less* reciprocal involvement, which will in turn alter the qualities of the relationship, its mode and make-up. As Timothy Morton suggests, after finding ourselves in a story we have written, the next step is "becoming conscious authors of the story we are writing" (2017, p. 155). [3]

I have opted to become more intimate with the embodied concepts of time and empathy to explore the lens they provide and through which I am situated. This, I argue is *one way* of many "different ways of being in the world and being in relation to one another than those already prescribed for the liberal and consumer subject" a search I outlined in my Opening (Halberstam 2011, p. 2). I have sought to allow my learning and reflections from heightening my engagement with these relationships to impact upon my life, a doing-thinking, that is not just a theoretical exercise, but a form of resistance in and of itself. Bringing a more explicit level of attention and experimentation to both time and empathy has shaped the kinds of relationships that I now choose to cultivate, the stories I choose to tell and the ways I wish to respond to the world — with whatever time there will be left.

Notes

[1]A project that seeks to "reconceptualise" would arguably additionally benefit from undoing the terminology of "concept". Astrida Neimanis discusses this at length in *Bodies of Water* and proposes an "embodied concept" along similar lines to Donna Haraway's use of "material-semiotic knots" and Rosi Braidotti's "figurations" as "living maps" (see 2007. p. 5).
[2] China's "socialist market economy", a term introduced by Jiang Zemin in 1992, has also been described as "State Capitalism" by cultural commentators (see Cui Zhiyuan 2012).
[3] Timothy Morton is referring here to their own thinking on the idea of "Dark Ecology".

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