

A New World

Embodied Thinking, Ecofeminism & Ecosocialism

West

A New World

Embodied thinking, ecofeminism & ecosocialism

0. Introduction

Baruch Gottlieb, West Summer School 2023 convenor

1. VBAZO Mowing Schedule

Debra Solomon, West Summer School 2023 instructor

2. The Huge Spoon

Karolina Rupp, West Summer School 2023 participant

3. Rebel Bodies on Repeat

Catherine Taft, West Summer School 2023 participant

4. 100% Recycled Time

Anna Andrejew West Summer School 2023 participant

5. On Capitalism and Ignorance

Katerina Sidorova, West Summer School 2023 participant

6. A Personal, Political and Academic Journey

Mary Mellor, eco-socialist scholar, West Summer School instructor 2023
(images : Kathy Murillo)

7. Rosebush Syndrome

Clara Balaguer & Vishnu Vardhani Rajan, West Summer School instructors 2023

8. The Peaceable Commons

Tamara N. Lewis Arredondo, West Summer School 2023 participant

9. Planet Abundance

Teresa Feldmann, West Ecofeminist Circles 2023-24 participant

10. tide together, pretending not to sea

Justine Ellul, West Summer School 2023 participant
Beatrice Cera, West Ecofeminist Circles 2023-24 participant

Biographies of the Contributors

Colophon

A New World Baruch Gottlieb

'Concerned with equality for all life forms, ecofeminism is a socialism in the very deepest sense of that word.' — Ariel Salleh (1997: Ch. 11)

This current publication represents a progress report on a project to develop methodologies for embodied thinking. This all began with a series of reading circles and ancillary summer school engaging with the work of Spinoza. The challenge was formulated as follows: is it possible to be simultaneously both critical and involved? How do we oscillate or navigate between the two? What practices can we develop and share for embodied criticality? A first publication was produced from the first Summer school in that series featuring texts from political philosopher Ewa Majewska, choreographer Florence, social artist Cassie Thornton and myself. Since that time, perhaps unsurprisingly, the project has taken on distinctly intersectional feminist trajectories.

Beginning with Donna Haraway's radical trans-species bio-socialism, we grappled intensively with authors and actors from the radical black feminist, anti-colonial and socialist traditions, all the while integrating movement, voice, and performance into our modes of criticality. The challenge was always to elaborate how to be both inside, a part of what one wanted to understand, and also be apart from and distant. How to articulate and understand that oscillation, which can be infinitesimal and very erratic? How to express and share the results of our research? And since the task and expectations always surpassed our resources, how to ask for the kind of help or support we need to continue and deepen our investigations?

Through this period we all endured the profound disruption of the pandemic and are still living in its traumatic wake. In 2021, it seems incredible to imagine that we actually held a summer school then, to investigate what gaps in the dominant power structure had been revealed by the global emergency. The pandemic showed it was possible to reorganise or restructure every day life in substantial ways, providing indications that radical transformations needed to address systemic social, economic and environmental injustice may be closer at hand than many had imagined. All through the pandemic millions of people were in the streets mobilising, organising and protesting the unsustainable status quo of misleadership, mismanagement, socio-economic stratification and 'profit over people and planet'. As Vijay Prashad (2020) put it early in the pandemic in 2020 'We won't go back to normal, because normal was the problem'.

We haven't gone back to normal, that's clear. Today we are in a very uncertain and disrupted state. Wars are flaring up, and the hoped-for environmental reckoning has not occurred, quite the opposite. We know better but we can't do better. Reason alone is obviously not enough, we need the agency to put reason into effect. This agency is in the movements for social justice. Environmentalism must attach itself to those movements.

All reason is embodied, and it matters how the bodies' capacity to reason is reproduced. And as we move towards eco-feminism, we need to acknowledge how we are reproduced socially and biospherically. But the biosphere is so vast whereas social reproduction takes place intimately at human scale. Silvia Federici cautions us, we need to be attentive to the people around us, who by sustaining our day to day, help us withstand the difficulties we face as we struggle to improve our lived conditions. And the struggle must be sustained if we are to take advantage of the insights gained during the lockdowns.

Apocalypse in Greek means 'to reveal', literally, to lift (apo) the cover (kaluptein), the implication being it is a momentous event which reveals hidden truths. In her history of the 1918 global influenza pandemic, Jane Elizabeth Fisher explores how, as it shook European notions of cultural and technical supremacy to its core, the apocalyptic coincidence of war and pandemic produced a permanent disruption of conventional gender identities opening up unexpected new freedoms, new autonomy, and new roles. Fisher's book 'Envisioning Disease, Gender, and War: Women's Narratives of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic' as well as some of its references will form the textual centre of our study. Fisher's fascinating history offers valuable insights not only to what we are going through right now, but how we got here.

'Plagues such as the 1918 influenza pandemic act as mysteries and eventually tests of human subjectivity in its full range of hopelessness and potential. As we anticipate what new pandemics might soon emerge, we can only predict they will be filled with both apocalyptic loss and unthinkable possibilities when we find the courage to look.' Fisher (2012:201)

Fisher explores the effect of overwhelming techno-mechanical force unleashed during the first world war on the male soldiers, infantilizing them and traumatizing them in a way many would never recover. Added to this trauma, the silent contagion which defied the confidence of science and medicine, shook techno-modernistic triumphalism to the ground. The result was masculinity and patriarchy outclassed on one hand by its own technical achievements, and rendered pathetic and at the mercy of nurses, mothers and other care-givers on the other.

The current convergence of global crises has also provided apocalyptic revelations, which shake the legitimacy of our democratic systems, our certainty in technological progress and our understanding of ourselves. Accompanying the hard-fought and still uncertain political and social gains for women, queer and other constituencies formerly subjugated under patriarchy, we see a rising reactionary right, anti-modernist superstition and conservatism. The 'legacy left' in the Global North which used to put forward and protect these gains, has become split from the real international revolutionary movements, it has become chauvinist, imperialist, and moralizing, unable to provide any compelling vision for a brighter future.

Author Katherine Anne Porter, who herself barely survived the 1918 pandemic, chronicled its radically disruptive social effects, which ironically availed her of a new confidence and autonomy. 'The pandemic divided my life, cut across it like that. So that everything before that was just getting ready, and after that I was in some way altered, ready.' (in Fisher 2012:145). In 2022, unsure whether the pandemic was really over, we met again to take a reckoning of where we all had landed, ready for some very radical circumspection. We questioned the basic tenets of European modes of critique, and understandings, testing the limits of what institutions can do to transgress their legacies of coloniality and Euro-chauvinism. And we embodied our radically troubled identities in theatrical and performative experiments.

This years' school, of which this book is a record, was the most ambitious yet, the most explicitly political and the most physically demanding, with field trips to radical gardening projects led by artists Debra Solomon in Amsterdam and Michelle Teran and Kari Robertson in Rotterdam. We had activist training sessions with Joao Camargo which revealed how sense of urgency can be fostered and motivated to get people out on the streets or out to vote. And we had invigorating theory sessions with Heidi Völkle where we grappled with the exigency as Scholars such as Mary Mellor and Ariel Salleh asserted already in the 90s that ecofeminism would not achieve its goals without ecosocialism.

Miriam Mattheissen brought us a discussion of Nancy Fraser's text "Climates of Capital"(2021) where she challenges us to think "trans-environmentally" across three categories of Nature

"Nature I: nature as the object studied by climate science (the nature that 'bites back')
 Nature II: 'Nature' as the ontological other of Humanity
 Nature III: socio-historical nature (historical materialist reading of nature)"

Fraser urges her readers to develop understandings of nature where the three Natures converge, grounding the dialectic between the radical alterity of Nature II and the scientific data-based comprehension of Nature I with the exigencies of the business of providing for human needs of Nature III. A historical materialist understanding affirms that human needs and social reproduction overdetermine the science by which we even can know of Nature I and the leisure time required to philosophically or ritualistically accommodate Nature II.

Fraser's arguments are wide-ranging, ambitious and careful. She recognizes the particular challenge capitalism presents, with international finance allowing profits from environmental destruction to escape regulation, and the transnationality of Nature allowing destructive actors to escape responsibility. Fraser closes her article coming to a similar conclusion to Mellor and Salleh, trans-environmental governance of

Nature will require summary constraining of capitalist forces, submitting these to prevailing democratic institutions. She comes as close to a call for revolution as is possible in an academic article, suggesting that the goal might be called eco-socialism.

Donna Haraway's 1985 *Manifesto for Cyborgs* was a breakthrough for feminists and ecologists and for feminist ecologists or ecofeminists for its striking rejection of the distinction between humanity, Nature and its technological condition, an attitude which has coalesced today in the figure of the anthropocene. Throughout her career as a public thinker of technology and science Haraway has "stayed with the trouble", radically open to a very mixed condition where artificiality and nature are forever entangled, yet fatefully also distinct. "This chapter is an argument for pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and for responsibility in their construction."

But one dimension of her groundbreaking form of analysis has gone relatively unmentioned until now. This is itself remarkable for how, prominently it is stated at the outset of the manifesto and restated forcefully and unambiguously not only throughout that text but in all her further texts until the present, the "socialist" dimension. The word appears in the Title, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," and the first sentence of the tract along with a rather Marxist-sounding faithfulness... to materialism

"This chapter is an effort to build an ironic political myth faithful to feminism, socialism, and materialism." Haraway (1991:149)

Considering that this text was published in 1985 this strong emphasis on socialism and materialism must have raised many an eyebrow among academic readers, however, undaunted the term appears 30 times in total in the text. As noted by Kathy Weeks, the text is also admittedly intended as a blasphemous and "ironic political myth." As with all things Haraway, a volatile and triggering term like socialism is here employed in a very specific and unconventional manner. Why is socialism important for Haraway's project and what does the term refer to exactly?

One of the most important cues is in Haraway's evocation of the "social relations of science and technology." Understanding that science, the technology which informs science and which are an expression of science are all socially reproduced, connects Haraway to similar arguments in Latour. But unlike Latour, Haraway explicitly plumbs the depths of social injustice, the unresolvable and unnaturalizable distinctions of gender, race and class which impede the majority of people from participating in science and technology, not to mention the politics related to these.

In the title of the first essay of her compendium "Cyborgs simians and Women (1991), "Animal Sociology and a Natural Economy of the Body Politic: A Political Physiology of Dominance" we immediately get another clue, the feminist-socialism Haraway is not restricted in its concern for humans but extends to animals, and inevitably to all life. Haraway's socialism is a radical concern for the flourishing of all life in acknowledgement of its inextricable interdependencies. This is also then Haraway's radically materialist concern, understanding the symbiogenetic emergence of society as including humanity in the activities of the biosphere over millions of years. Communication passes through the hormones and proteins with this radically heterogeneous, queer cyborg understanding of association. Haraway is able to trace out an uncompromising politics of symbiosis, where, like in Sylvia Wynter's (see Scott, 2000) re-enchantment of humanism, anthropos is decentered but still a salient actor in the story of Earthly survival.

Ecofeminism associates the need to recognise and valorise women's essential contributions to social reproduction with an analogous need to recognise and valorise the contributions of the biosphere and lifeworld in all their complexity and interdependence. With the planetary ecosystem at risk of being radically destabilised by Global Heating such combined recognition cannot merely be cultural, it must take the form of political change, but how? Veterans of the feminist and ecological struggles like Ariel Salleh (1997) and Mary Mellor (1992) identify capitalism as the main force perpetuating not only patriarchy, not to mention racism and homophobia but also an alienated and extractive attitude to the planet which is threatening human survival. However anti-capitalism alone is not a project, and even the most incisive

observers of our contemporary conditions must struggle to elaborate an alternative which can sufficiently provide for all within the affordances of the Planet.

Sherry Ortner in her 1972 landmark “Is Female to Male as Nature to Culture?” cautious against naturalising notions of women with nature. Nevertheless, Ortner examines, women are harder done by in society because of their perceived proximity to or inseparability with nature and thus their inappropriateness for certain social functions and especially for leadership. But Ortner also argues that Women, because they of course possess all the genius of men while also being closer to Nature can also be seen as “Nature plus’ ’ while Men are rather “minus Nature”. The negation of course is philosophically as powerful as the positive, but the formulation places the man as lesser in the grand composition of human experience and knowledge.

The most important feminist argument for socialism comes with the understanding that, given that unpaid reproductive labour is the basis of all social reproduction, and that this is conventionally done by women, no matter what the future holds, it is better for all involved that women’s living conditions be the best possible. And given that, for the time being, globalised production chains put more pressure on the reproductive labour conventionally done by women in the Global South, it is most important to raise their living standards. This understanding implies that the neoliberal capitalist tendency to erode public services such as health care, education, elder care etc. Must be not only forestalled but reversed. Acknowledging that no bourgeois government will do this, implies that there will be a revolutionary restructuring of society such that the agency of social organisations prevail over that of the business sector.

When Andreas Malm (2018: Ch.3) cries “less Latour, more Lenin!” he is advocating dictatorial powers needed to discipline capitalist forces and address the global heating crisis. The dictatorship of the proletariat, especially of the proletarianized women of the global south must displace the dictatorship of the global bourgeoisie for the insights of ecofeminism to politically come into full force. Because no matter how we are to get there, through careful technological development toward sustainable hypermodernity, or some kind of (unlikely)careful degrowth disintegration of globalised industrial production, it is better for all that any potential harms which befall population will be mitigated by generally available socialist affordances such as health care, housing and food security.

This volume includes a variety of responses to the question of what ecofeminist thought and action, or active thought means today. We have Tamara Lewis’s experiment in more-than-human legal language which can renovate the Universal Declaration on Human Rights to accommodate radical concern for the biosphere. We have Katerina Sidorova’s inquiry into what is ignored, or assumed when we think of vast and vastly complex problems such as Global Heating or categories like Nature. These concepts defy conventional human sense experience, so it becomes vital to attend to the patterns of omission or assumption when we nonetheless attempt to attend to the referent together. Anne Andrejew’s contribution is concerned with the time, the leisure time we need to attend to our conditions and to mobilise together to take action. Our time is increasingly enclosed, like the apocryphal commons. Andrejewska proposes that art may help us transgress the captured commons of commodified time into a radically free time.

One certain way to open up more free time is to alleviate stress related to having to pay for such things as rent, education, and retirement. Better than wages for housework or a so-called UBI, Mary Mellor proposes that banking and the issuance of money itself be removed from private hands and put under democratic control. She argues that a publicly administered money system would be able to fund all public services in such a way that they take significant pressure off the shoulders of the poor and working women who need them most. Even Hayek argued that such services as health care are notoriously unprofitable and thus should be administered by the public sector. Money itself is required as an instrument capable of transforming social arrangements at scale, Mellor argues, and cannot be abandoned in our visions of a better future. But taking over control of the banking sector will require a movement capable of bringing enough people into power to overwhelm those who profit from the current system.

The title for this book, for our summer school and the ensuing meeting circles is “A New World.” The word “world” does not connote the globe but rather the age or origin of humanity. World does not refer to just any place, planetarity, environment, it refers to human being, how could it not? Human beings make the world, they make ecology and they make and are Nature. There is not getting the humans out of Nature at least not in language about Nature because language is for humans. We are the world, and the world exists for us, to make of it what we will.

A new World refers to the fact that we are likely going to surpass the global heating limit of +1.5°C from pre-industrial measurements, setting off irrepressible feedback loops across the weather systems of the Earth. Human beings will need to develop new institutionalities, new economic and cultural forms to deal with an unpredictable and chaotic environment. It is not so clear we will be able to preserve a lot of the secular, progressive social structures that we have become used to, as recursion towards more conventional, conservative, defensive social modes is already on the upswing, but these won't save us either, since conservative customs emerged on a stable planet, and take the power of their morality from this regularity, which is no more. There is no way back only forward, pressing Haraway's bio-socialism towards Malm's “Climate Leninism”, we will need not only to stay but move with the trouble, attending to what our bodies are telling us, both inside and outside the circumstances, developing new strategies and improving these, learning as we go.

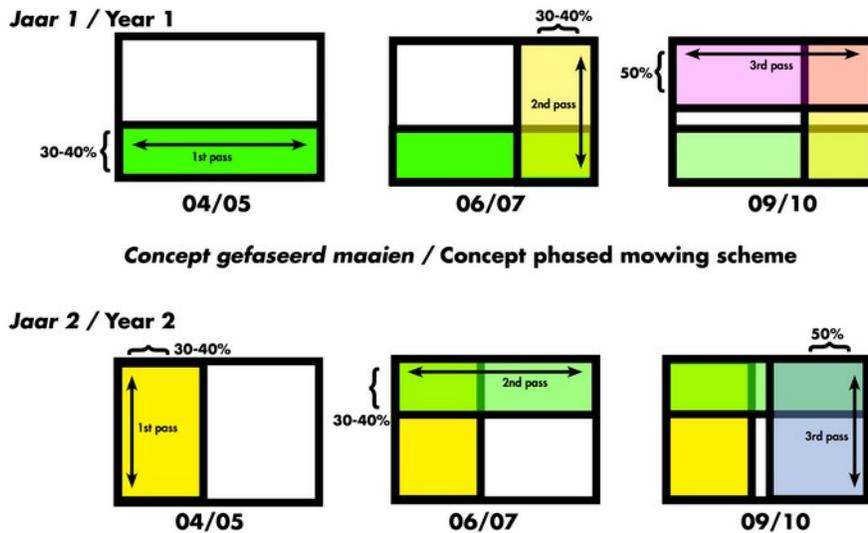
Bibliography

- Fisher, Jane Elisabeth (2012) *Envisioning Disease, Gender, and War Women's Narratives of the 1918 Influenza Pandemic*, Palgrave Macmillan, London
- Fraser, Nancy (2021) *CLIMATES OF CAPITAL, For a Trans-Environmental Eco-Socialism*, New Left Review 127 Jan Feb 2021
- Haraway, Donna (1991) *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, Routledge, New York
- Malm, Andreas (2018) *Progress of this Storm*, Verso Books, London
- Mellor, Mary (1992) *Breaking the Boundaries, Towards a Feminist Green Socialism*, Virago Press, London
- Ortner; Sherry (1972) *Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?* *Feminist Studies* , Autumn, 1972, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Autumn, 1972), pp. 5-31
- Prashad, Vijay, (2020) *We won't go back to normal, because normal was the problem*, *Tricontinental Magazine* 2020/13, <https://thetricontinental.org/newsletterissue/newsletter-13-2020-new-world-order/> accessed 07.03.2024
- Salleh, Ariel (1997) *Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx and the Postmodern*, Zed Books, London
- Scott, David (2000) *The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An Interview with Svlvia Wvnter*, *Small Axe*, September 2000,;pp. 119-207

Debra Solomon
VBAZO Mowing Schedule



Amsterdam's "ecological" passages and green structures (highlighted in green) in relation to the VBAZO project ecological footprint (outlined in yellow)



Amsterdam Zuidoost food forest - phased mowing concept by the urbaniahoeve Foundation / Debra Solomon & Renate Nollen

Phased mowing entails mowing only 30 to 40% of any given green parcel and only during specific seasonal phases (very roughly at the end of April, June, and September). Mowing is carried out only after 80% of the seasonal flowers have bloomed. By this time, the roots of meadow flowers have lignified (become woody in the soil) so as to support the flowers, which are becoming heavy with seeds. After each of the three mowing passes, the organic material cut by the mowing event is left on the ground for a day or two so that insects can rebuild their habitats, and cut seed heads have a chance to drop their seeds on the soil. After this, the 'hay' is removed by raking so that it does not decompose and enrich the soils. Unlike agricultural land, biodiverse meadows require 'poor soils' to better support native plant species. Implementing these mowing practices increases plant biodiversity, providing food, habitat, and escape routes for insects and animals. Finally, phased mowing requires smaller machines, which can more easily manoeuvre around meadow flowers and plants, and (in the case of urban food forests) around stands of fruit trees.





The huge spoon **Karolina Rupp**

Before continuing reading, look around and take your time to find a chair to sit down (if you are not doing so already)...

Notice where your body touches the chair, how your weight is distributed and how you hold this text. Take a moment for this.

Envision sitting against a wooden kitchen table.

This table is in a cozy kitchen. You hear a kettle slowly coming to a boil.

You see lots of glass and stone jars and things like spatulas made from wood. Green herbs are growing in pots on the window sill. The air coming through the open window feels a bit dry. It is warm.

There are speckles of earth in the sink. Earlier today, freshly harvested and soil-covered root vegetables were brushed and cleaned. There is chopped kale on the countertop.

It is quiet, although, in the distance, you hear some reeds clapping against each other.

Next to the gas stove is a blue and grey stone jar with a slightly tilted wooden lid, allowing a huge metal spoon to stick out. The jar contains salt. You lift the lid and place it next to the jar. You dig the huge spoon into the jar and load it with as much salt as possible. The kettle is peeping, the water is boiled, and you take the huge spoon with the salt and force it into your mouth.

Slowly, you remove the spoon from your mouth.

Notice where your body touches the chair, how your weight is distributed and how you hold this text. Take a moment for this.

Please be cautious that *physically* eating this much salt can be damaging to your health.
Inspired by Liquid Time's investigation into logistics as a project of planetary time management, in this case, specifically locks (water navigation).

Rebel Bodies on Repeat
Catherine Taft

We gathered in the impressive theatrum anatomicum of De Waag, the site where Rembrandt's masterful 1632 painting *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* is set. Above our heads loomed an impressive cupola painted with eighty-seven coats of arms signifying the "healer-gentlemen" (per De Waag's website) who patronized the space. On one wall was a painted quote that loosely translated to, "if you can't be useful to society in life, your body will be useful in death." The building was further embellished with the symbols of the guilds that once called the building home: the pastry makers, the painters, the cobblers, the masons, and, of course, the surgeons. There, under the fine ornaments of mercantilism, we gathered (like dignified "healer-gentlemen") to poke and prod at capital, its regimes of accumulation, its ecological contradictions, and its destructive divisions.

What is the "usefulness" of a body, to society, to a mass agitation, to nature and its many meanings, its many *others*? As Silvia Federici reminds us,

...capitalism could not take hold without forging a new type of individual and a new social discipline boosting the productive capacity of labor. This involved a historic battle against anything posing a limit to the full exploitation of the laborer, starting with the web of relations that tied the individual to the natural world, to other people, and to their own bodies. Key to this process was the destruction of the magical conception of the body that had prevailed in the Middle Ages, which attributed to it powers that the capitalist class could not exploit, that were incompatible with the transformation of the laborers into work machines, and that could even enhance their resistance to it.¹

As the Reformation banished the demons of folk healing, superstition, and communal cycles of work and play, so too did the magic of the body diminish. And when the magic of the body is gone, what becomes of our magical thinking toward nature and its precious, finite resources? Although capital—and the machinations of human hubris—has wrought unthinkable destruction to our planet, we can still reclaim the power of the body in the service of mending ecosystems. Collaborative survival is at stake. The alternative will render us much like Rembrandt's corpse.

"There is no *away*." What a simple and logical statement: a motto to live by, an affirmation or incantation. Although many thinkers have used this phrase, the first time I heard it, we were sitting in Michelle Teran's garden near the Zuiderpark in Rotterdam. We had just completed a centering meditation, during which tiny drops of rain had some of us mindfully scurrying under leafy cover, and others fully embracing the soft shower. Michelle's work is a combination of art, pedagogy, political action, and anti-colonial feminism. She is keenly aware of where and how education is situated, challenging the power relations of traditional academics. And so, we sat together in a garden to learn, to

¹ Federici, Silvia. *Witches, Witch-Hunting, and Women*, 2018, PM Press, Oakland. 27.

embody knowing (if not knowledge), to protract time, and interrupt our everyday institutions.

There is no away, no separation. Our ability to read and hold waste becomes a key part of a living system. As Donna Haraway says, “staying with the trouble requires making odkin; that is, we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles.”² Compost is a kind of living dead (the undead?), and an embrace of this sort of death offers purpose, a centered regard for future beings. Past, present, and future collapse into one. Time travel! We can grieve the past and sit with our uncertainty about the future. We can feel discomfort with the present and agree that not having resolution is also okay. In other words, as Vanessa Machado de Oliveira writes, “Trying to experience the world and ourselves in it as a metabolism gives us one way of recalibrating our existence—away from separability and toward entanglement.”³

At some point during our garden entanglements, it became apparent that our stomachs were rumbling. Nourishing our minds, it was time to also feed our bodies. Although careful plans had been made for a lunch in Michelle’s generously slow space, our delivery person couldn’t locate us, perhaps due to a complicated, locked-gate system that contained the little houses and garden plots where we sat. It was an enclosure, a small reminder that this welcoming territory—a community where Michelle knew her neighbors, cared about their wellbeing—remained private. The situation also reminded us that to rethink such structures, we need to engage with them in radical new ways, find ruptures, hold space, and make way for the next cycle of things to come.

As we left Michelle’s garden, we were asked to each take a handful of mulch and sprinkle it on the growing plants, helping prepare for another cycle of life with the healthy decaying matter of the last.

*There seems to be, however, a peculiar relationship between the dismantling of communitarian regimes and the demonization of members of the affected communities that makes witch-hunting an effective instrument of economic and social privatization.*⁴

Any one of us might have been labeled *witch*: middle-aged or in one’s prime; unmarried; divorced; widowed; single; outspoken; sexual; defensive; lacking means or making one’s own; non-conforming; non-binary; outside the system; a rebel body.

Any one of us may hold the knowledge of witches: of edible and abortive plants; of the sentience of animals; of the screams of childbirth and the whispers of death (of their precious, cyclical balance); of weather patterns; of the value of shared space; of the value of time and unpaid work; of tiny worlds eddying under a leaf in a communal garden; of the commons. Healer, seducer, resistor—surely, only a devil could explain such madness.

² Haraway, Donna, Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene, 2016, Duke University Press, Durham. 4.

³ Machado de Oliveira, Vanessa. Hospicing Modernity: Facing Humanity’s Wrongs and the Implications for Social Activism. 2021, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley. 224.

⁴ Federici 15

Witches and weather... It should be no surprise that the Northern Hemisphere's "Little Ice Age"—a period of global cooling that took place from the 1300s to the early 1800s—coincides with the European witch hunts. Speaking about this period, climate scientist and writer Kate Marvel stated:

You start seeing an increase in religious conflict. You also start seeing an increase in witch burnings, and a lot of times, the witches are getting burned or hung or executed or accused because of something they have done to the weather. They have raised a storm. They have killed the crops. They have made the winds blow. They have done something, and it's really fascinating to look at the linkages between the weather getting weird and these cultural impacts that come out of it. Now, do I think that climate change is going to lead to an increase in witch burning? No, but it does show how climate change happens in the world that we've built for it.⁵

This is the world we have built for climate change. It's here and now, screaming in our ear. Ecocide is a deafeningly slow violence.

Edouard Glissant tells us that, "poetry's circulation and its action no longer conjecture a given people but the evaluation of the planet Earth. That too is a commonplace, one worth repeating."⁶ Say it again, the Earth is a commons worth repeating! We need witches. We need poetry. We need compost. We need intersectional, *fractal* being. We need to forge new social disciplines, new individuals that are inherently connected. We need to weave webs of relation like spiders spinning silky architectonics, string figures. Such beings are not easily contained, enclosed. Such beings are alive with purpose, and living things are poetic. The Earth is a commons worth repeating.

⁵ "The Ezra Klein Show: What We Have Learned from a Summer of Climate Reckoning," The New York Times, September 5, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/05/opinion/ezra-klein-podcast-kate-marvel.html>

⁶ Glissant, Edouard. *Poetics of Relation*, 1990, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor. 32.

100% Recycled Time

Written by: anna andrejew

Inspired by the lecture 'Ecofeminist perspectives on time(s)' of Hanna Völkle
19.07.2023 | A New World –The West Summer School

The following text was written before the events that took place on and after the 7th of October 2023. Accordingly, the description in the text below reflects upon a situation in time and place that is significantly different from that at the time of publication.

"Ok guys, all together now!" she called cheerfully to her students while clapping her hands. "Repeat after me; I was born in Gaza, and I like to study English!". Her accent was perfectly-American. I asked her where she had learned to speak English. She said YouTube. In fact, she had never been outside of the country and had never met an American. I am not even sure she knew how perfect her English was.

I have visited the Gaza Strip several times in my life for prolonged periods. Gaza holds a special place in my heart, and I still have friends living there. I was also one of the privileged to leave Gaza as I pleased (getting in was the trickier bit, due to the complicated and long visa process). With the highest unemployment rates in the world (45%⁷, 60% for youth⁸), Gaza is a place where capitalism and especially time operate in somewhat different dimensions than in Western countries. Time in captivity is felt differently. I met many people in Gaza who have loads of time... time to stress, time to dream, time to learn perfect English on Youtube. A joke I heard from a Palestinian colleague is that this abundance of time is the reason why there are so many well-educated people there. Since there are no jobs, you might as well continue studying. Of course, this is a dark joke to make, but it holds some statistical truth to it. According to UNESCO's Institute for Statistics, the illiteracy rate in The Gaza Strip was 2.2% during 2022. In the same year, the rate was 13.3% in the world and 21% in the United States of America⁹. But to complete the picture of life in Gaza it is necessary to mention at least one more statistic: 70% of Gazans surveyed by the World Bank in 2021 reported symptoms consistent with PTSD¹⁰.

I often struggle finding time to do all the things I want to do. Next to my studies, my work as an artist, the many other freelance jobs I juggle, social and rest time, carving out time to just write this article is not easy. This is yet again a privileged position in many ways. I have many choices on how I want to invest my time (as long as I make enough waged hours to pay the bills). Time is a resource without which no creation can take place. Plants need time to grow, scholars need time to think, even in Genesis God needed six days to create the world (and one to recuperate). But what is time actually? Is "busy" time experienced differently than ample time? Do I have more or less time in a day than someone in Gaza? Time is a luxury in itself (as often stated) but can also be a curse or both depending on the context. Furthermore, the concept of time is broad. It entails clock time, natural time, past, present and future. It is both a quantitative unit and qualitative experience¹¹.

But most of all, time is more than a linear equation. And the notion that *time is money* limits temporal perspectives. Every production process (present) depends on resources that have been created before (past) and is aimed at results to be achieved (future)¹². It is the lack of recognition of temporal perspectives of time that is at the root of the current climate crisis. Extractive practices fail to recognize

⁷ The Results of the Labour Force Survey, 2022." 2022. Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. 2022. Accessed October 1, 2023. <https://www.pcbs.gov.ps/post.aspx?lang=en&ItemID=4421#:~:text=Unemployment%20rate%20among%20labour%20force,13%25%20in%20the%20West%20Bank>.

⁸ "Nearly 25 per Cent of Boys Aged 15 out of School in the State of Palestine." 2018. UNICEF Middle East and North Africa. 2018. Accessed October 2, 2023. <https://www.unicef.org/mena/press-releases/nearly-25-cent-boys-aged-15-out-school-state-palestine>.

⁹ "Literacy." 2019. UNESCO Institute for Statistics. December 17, 2019. Accessed October 1, 2023. <https://uis.unesco.org/en/topic/literacy>.

¹⁰ "The Gaza 2021 Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment- June 2021." 2021. World Bank. Accessed October 1, 2023. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/westbankandgaza/publication/the-gaza-2021-rapid-damage-and-needs-assessment-june-2021>.

¹¹ Adam, Barbara. 1995. *TimeWatch: The Social Analysis of Time*. Wiley-Blackwell.

that the value on which it is based entails resources and processes that have not been monetized and that take time (sometimes a very long time), be it the ecological processes or care work¹³. It takes (an awful long) time for fossil fuels to be created. Yet this ecological process and the time needed are not factored into the prices. We may be able to speed up the ripening process of a tomato, but still a certain minimum amount of time is necessary for the plant to flower and produce the fruit. With a particular diet and hormonal interventions, a cow might produce *more* milk, but she still has to be impregnated and give birth first before even being able to produce any milk at all.

As humans are part of nature like any animal, time is not only something external (e.g. clock-time) but an integral part of human existence¹⁴. Our wellbeing depends on our ownership of time as a human right to enable people to fulfill their own (temporal) needs. In many ways the capitalist system fails to recognize this. Only a small portion of our time is waged, and certain people's time is valued more than that of others¹⁵. Time is commodified. And all of this is not contributing to a better world, but rather to a more polluted world. If there is one resource, we should pay closer attention to, I would argue it is time. But how to do that without falling into the linear trap of measurement and monetization?

Can art help us bridge the gap in our imagination of what a new conceptualization of time would entail? In the current climate crisis, contemporary art sometimes seems out of place. What is the point of a beautiful painting when the world is on fire? We need art that has a transformative capacity to help us transition to a new system, that no longer is based on extractive use of non-monetized resources. And relating it back to time - most art *takes* time. It takes time to make, and it takes time to experience. Thus it *takes* time from the maker and the viewer. Perhaps the key to transformative art is to make art that *gives* time.

Following Erich Fromm's explorations about our deeply rooted fear of freedom, we often know what we want freedom from (free of war/hunger/worries/pain/the mundane); negative freedom. But positive freedom is far more difficult for us to define¹⁶. I wonder whether perhaps what we truly want freedom for is time. It makes me think of the Tunisian artist Rafram Chaddad who spent 170 days in solitary confinement in the notorious Abu Salim prison in Tripoli, Libya. He wrote about this experience; "I managed to live a full and interesting life without anything, because the radical situation I was in pushed me to go inside my dreams and live daily—day after day—a rich, crazy, and wonderful life". He describes how he built a set of routines. "I divided every day according to the three times I was given food and the five times the mosque made its call to prayer. Each part had its own routine: dreams about walking in big cities, meeting amazing women and amazing men, having coffee, eating, watching the sea. It was all daydreaming, crazy sex dreams, dreams where I was making new pieces of art, dreams about gigantic and tiny openings, dreams about dreams. I managed to live every day in the fullest way. By the end of the day, I was so exhausted I was dying to sleep so that I'd be able to collect enough power for tomorrow's dreams"¹⁷. So the aspect of time directly relates to his experience of freedom despite his physical confinement.

The Gaza Strip can also be compared to a prison; in the sense that it is occupied and sealed off from the rest of the world. Furthermore, medical studies have shown there may be a dysregulation in temporal processing or time perception associated with PTSD – which considering the high rate of occurrence in Gaza must influence how a society functions, and how it collectively experiences time¹⁸. Last week I had the privilege of a visit from Gaza: my friend Mohammed who works for a Belgian NGO obtained a rare

¹² Davies, Thom. 2019. "Slow Violence and Toxic Geographies: 'Out of Sight' to Whom?" *Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space* 40 (2): 409–27. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2399654419841063>.

¹³ Hejnowicz, Adam P., and Murray A. Rudd. 2017. "The Value Landscape in Ecosystem Services: Value, Value Wherefore Art Thou Value?" *Sustainability* 9 (5): 850. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su9050850>.

¹⁴ Adam, Barbara. 1995. *TimeWatch: The Social Analysis of Time*. Wiley-Blackwell.

¹⁵ Doucet, Andrea. 2022. "'Time Is Not Time Is Not Time': A Feminist Ecological Approach to Clock Time, Process Time, and Care Responsibilities." *Time & Society*, December, 0961463X2211338. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0961463x221133894>.

¹⁶ Fromm, Erich. 1942. *The Fear of Freedom*.

¹⁷ Chaddad, Rafram. 2021. "Rafram Chaddad: Isolation." *Apartamento Magazine*. November 10, 2021. Accessed September 2, 2023. <https://www.apartamentomagazine.com/stories/rafram-chaddad-isolation/>.

¹⁸ Vicario, Carmelo M., and Kim L. Felmingham. 2018. "Slower Time Estimation in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder." *Scientific Reports*. January 10, 2018. Accessed October 1, 2023. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-017-18907-5>.

permit to travel to Europe for a week of training and therefore could visit me over the weekend. We talked about how time feels different in Gaza. We both meant it as a positive aspect of life there. Both the example of Rafam Chaddad and Gaza illustrate time freedom, because the regular set systems for commodified time no longer function as we are used to. In both realities our experience and explanation of time is reinvented. While it may drive many people into depression, some might start dreaming or learning English.

Perhaps there lies the key to transformative art. Not that art should hold us prisoner, but that transformative art could somehow -even for a split second- alter our perception of time. Art that encompasses what Erin Manning describes as “a minor gesture”. While grand gestures are most noticeable, it is the minor ones that initiate the subtle rifts and shifts for the change to happen at all. Minor gestures have the fluidity to create space and time to think outside of structures, statuses and standards. They are out of time, untimely, rhythmically inventing their own pulse¹⁹. When thinking about the reconceptualization of time in capitalist society, art can start with minor experiments. If it brings about a minor alteration in our perception of time, it could be argued it gives time.

It had such a time-altering experience when viewing one of Lee Kit’s installations at West²⁰. My perception was confused as I was not sure if what I was seeing was played in real-time or a screening of a recording of something that happened in the past. My sense of time shifted for a moment. Had I seen the paper move just now or was it its filmed twin that moved? Questioning whether it happened now or before created a momentary vacuum in my perception of time. Taking these notions one step further would then be to make art that *recycles* time. To recycle an item is to move it through some kind of process in order that it can be reused²¹.

As an experiment in recycling time, I ask you -the Reader- to follow the instructions below:

Instructions for recycling time

Go back to what you were doing, before you started reading this text.

Decide to read it again.

This time, only read these instructions.

¹⁹ Manning, Erin. 2016. *The Minor Gesture*. <http://read.dukeupress.edu/content/the-minor-gesture>

²⁰ http://www.westdenhaag.nl/nl/tentoonstellingen/21_09_Lee_Kit.

²¹ “Definition of Recycle.” 2023. In Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Accessed October 1, 2023. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/recycle#:~:text=%3A%20to%20process%20materials%20or%20substances,regain%20material%20for%20human%20use>.

On Capitalism and Ignorance

Katerina Sidorova

Heated debates, heated climate. Unavoidable. It has become impossible to deny the impact capitalist mode of production has on the environment. According to Nancy Fraser: “Eco-politics, in a word, has become ubiquitous. No longer the exclusive property of stand-alone environmental movements, climate change now appears as a pressing matter on which *every* political actor must take a stand.”^[i]

The capitalist mode is characterized by private ownership of the means of production, extraction of surplus value by the owning class for the purpose of capital accumulation, wage-based labour and—at least as far as commodities are concerned—being market-based.^[ii] Moreover, capitalism we know now is reinforced by the linear views on history through the lens of anthropocentrism. A belief in such linear progress and its escalation has led to systematic extraction of natural resources which is intensifying accordingly. This goes hand in hand with systematic oppression of reproductive labor and exploitation of marginalized communities.

To further quote Fraser “...capitalism, rightly understood, harbours a deep-seated ecological contradiction, which inclines it non-accidentally to environmental crisis. <...> <...> Capitalism drives global warming non-accidentally, by virtue of its very structure.”^[iii] Stating this, we can safely draw a connection between capitalism and ecological crisis. But how come, even with the knowledge of harm caused by the current dominant mode of production, taking steps to change it seems to be almost impossible? Why is it, referring to a famous quote, attributed to Mark Fisher and Frederic Jameson “easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism”?^[iv]

And this is when we first face the main object of this article – **ignorance**. Again, Fraser states: “Precapitalist eco-crises occurred in spite of ‘nature-friendly’ worldviews and largely thanks to ignorance—for example, through failure to anticipate the consequences of deforestation or overplanting <...> Unlike their precapitalist predecessors, of course, their practices aligned with worldviews that were not at all ‘nature-friendly’, and their actions were shaped by ideological pressures enjoining ‘the development of the productive forces’.”^[v] The type of ignorance Fraser mentions here is a classic example of it, where ignorance is a gap in knowledge. Though this might have worked perfectly fine in a historical context, the ignorance proper cannot be used as a valid excuse for continuing the damaging practices of extraction with which capitalism is associated nowadays. But how are they still allowed? Under which conditions can we as a society continue ‘business as usual, knowing that capitalism at its core is destructive to the environment as well as perpetuating oppression and violence?

In this article I would like to focus on one element of a complex power relationship that capitalist society has created: a tool or a mechanism of human consciousness namely – **deliberate (or voluntary) ignorance**. A different kind of ignorance, though still rooted in anthropocentric systems of thought. Something that Slavoj Žižek^[vi] refers to as ‘the

unknown knowns'. In order to do so, allow me a brief dive into the history of the use of the term 'ignorance'.

The word **ignorant** is an adjective that describes an entity in a state of ignorance, and can describe people who deliberately ignore important information or facts, or people who are unaware of important information or facts.

Until recently, epistemology has largely neglected the notion of ignorance, focusing on knowledge and what is necessary for knowledge. Often ignorance is described on the contrary as a lack of knowledge. Philosophical literature as a whole shows an extensive discussion about knowledge, while ignorance does not receive significant philosophical attention. Ignorance often is described as a lack of knowledge, lack of education, underdevelopment. According to the Oxford Dictionary, ignorance is lack of knowledge or awareness, either generally or about a particular thing; Merriam-Webster follows this definition; whilst two Russian dictionaries I turned to go slightly further in defining ignorance. Ushakov's dictionary - lack of knowledge, lack of culture, backwardness; in another, colloquial meaning - bad manners, impoliteness. Ozhegov - a lack of knowledge, lack of culture, impolite behavior. Therefore, it turns out to be philosophically difficult to point out exactly what ignorance is and that, even if it is the absence of knowledge, ignorance deserves philosophical attention.

From ancient times until the Middle Ages, ignorance was associated precisely with praxis and practical knowledge. Practical activity was regarded as something unworthy of a free person, and in a certain sense as something that such a person should not know. For knowledge was purely intellectual knowledge, devoid of any connection whatsoever with practice. Beginning in the 17th century, the situation changed to a diametrically opposite one; knowledge became what is gained from practice, and ignorance has come to be seen as a lack of practice, either literally or figuratively.^[xi]

In modern times, in our society, from the Enlightenment to the present day, the discourse about ignorance moves to a new level and the justifications that began to be found for ignorance start to be discussed. Let's use the example of a fictional character - Sherlock Holmes. Conan Doyle's protagonist ignored many areas of knowledge and did not even know that the Earth revolves around the Sun, because this detail was not within the scope of his professional interests.^[vii] This process is associated with a significant increase in the amount of knowledge available to humans, a leap in the development of sciences. The most important, and perhaps the main justification for ignorance is thus based on the assertion that the amount of knowledge has increased so much that a person is simply not able to know everything about everything. The image of a comprehensive sage, versed in all professions and in all sciences, and at the same time being a specialist in each of them, is no longer relevant and cannot be relevant today. And therefore, a person is obliged not only to determine for themselves the area in which they will specialize, that is, the knowledge that they are interested in obtaining, but also those areas of knowledge in which they must be ignorant. Thus, in addition to a reduced interest in certain branches of knowledge (which is associated with an appropriate assessment of their scientific validity), there is an agreement of society or certain social circles to ignore this knowledge. Lack of information (or ignorance) is created in this case quite intentionally and consciously. Society proclaims that certain sciences are among those things about which it is better not to know anything.

Today, a branch of science devoted to ignorance is **agnotology**, and the very concept of ignorance is at the center of both philosophical and political debates.

Agnotology is the study of culturally induced ignorance or doubt, specifically the publication of inaccurate or misleading scientific data. In 1995, Robert N. Proctor, a Stanford University professor specializing in the history of science and technology, and linguist Ian Boal coined a neologism based on the neoclassical Greek word ἄγνωσις, agnōsis, "ignorance" (cf. Attic Greek ἄγνωτος "unknown"), and -λογία, -logia.^[viii] In a broader sense, the term also emphasizes the increasingly common state where a deeper knowledge of a subject leaves a person more uncertain than before.

The term 'agnotology' was first introduced in a footnote in Proctor's book "Cancer Wars: How Politics Shapes What We Know and Don't Know About Cancer": "Historians and philosophers of science tend to view ignorance as an ever-expanding vacuum into which knowledge is sucked" or even, as Johannes Kepler once put it, like a mother who must die in order for science to be born. However, ignorance is more difficult. It has a distinct and changing political geography, which is often an excellent indicator of the politics of knowledge. We need a political agnotology to complement our political epistemologies."^[ix]

The very need for the emergence of a term for the sphere of knowledge that studies ignorance is associated not only with the above-mentioned increase in the amount of information, but also with the emergence of methods for manipulating knowledge and the absence of the latter. The tobacco industry mentioned by Proctor is a perfect example of such manipulation. For 40 years, the tobacco industry's public relations campaign has been aimed at creating doubt about the negative health effects of tobacco use. Another striking example, closer to this study, is a similar campaign to hide information about the suffering of animals and the negative impact on the environment of the food industry, more specifically, the meat, dairy and poultry industries.

Such a dynamic leads to the expediency of turning to the denial of the neutral status of ignorance as a mere absence of information. **In modern agnotology, ignorance is often not just a lack of knowledge; it can also be the result of cultural, class and political struggles.** Ignorance has its own history and political geography, it is no longer neutral and monogenic. Various forms of knowledge are directly related to the existence of ignorance, but not as its opposite. The "non-emergence" of knowledge, its disappearance or disguise, "erasing" are processes parallel to the emergence of knowledge in the information community. Such "retention" and "holding back" of knowledge may be due to censorship; military, state or professional secrets and other reasons.

Writer Thomas Pynchon has this to say about the extent and structure of ignorance: "Ignorance is not just a blank space on the human mental map. It has contours and consistency, and, as far as I know, rules of operation. So as a supplement to [advice] to write about what we know, it might be worth adding familiarity with our ignorance and its possibilities for writing a good story, and ignorance of observing the reality of the human condition."^[x]

Thus, in modern society, ignorance still coexists and interacts with knowledge, but one can flow into another, knowledge and ignorance are no longer opposed. Ignorance is not neutral, not one-dimensional. One can speak of various types of ignorance and of various functions of ignorance in society.

Ignorance can manifest itself in different forms. Amos Funkenstein, a scholar of Jewish and medieval history, in his work *The Sociology of Ignorance*, mentions a few types ignorance may take or more so types of ignorance justification:

“The first type: willful ignorance, in which all irrelevant knowledge that is unsuitable for a particular profession or for society as a whole is rejected. So, for example, astrology is not relevant to someone who is engaged in astronomy, or knowledge of technology is not relevant to someone whose profession has nothing to do with technology.

The second kind: knowledge distorts the intellectual system that a given society adheres to. Systems of thought, both scientific and non-scientific, strive for the highest possible degree of perfection. Not only for reasons of self-preservation, but also due to an inner impulse, people tend to consider the system of knowledge in which they work as comprehensive or, at least, as a system, correct in essence and requiring only deepening and development and no significant changes.<....>

The third kind: a type of knowledge that is not suitable for a member of the society. In Victorian society (and some of this has survived to this day), it was considered indecent for a man to be overly aware of the physiology and characteristics of a woman's life. Conversely, a woman from a respectable family should be unfamiliar with men and their customs.

The fourth type of justification for ignorance concerns the fact that knowledge or certain areas of it are declared harmful to those who possess it, that is, there is an opinion that there are things that are better not to know. Sometimes this ignorance is achieved consciously when a person himself refuses to think about certain subjects, to read certain books, because he believes that these things should not interest him, or avoids information that does not concern him and which seems to him inappropriate or harmful. This deliberate evasion of knowledge, which is rational in nature, is expressed, for example, in the assertion that the intelligence officer should not know more than he should about the intelligence network to which he belongs, since he can fall into the hands of enemies, and therefore it is better that he knew just enough to complete the task.

The fifth type of justification for deliberate ignorance is social in nature and arises when it is assumed that knowledge of certain things leads to a weakening of the existing social order.^[xi]

M. Smithson in his book "Ignorance and Uncertainty" distinguishes between active and passive ignorance. Passive ignorance includes areas that we are not aware of, while active ignorance refers to areas that we ignore. He uses the term "mistake" to refer to the unknown areas covered by passive ignorance, and "irrelevance" to refer to active ignorance.^[xii]

The term **rational ignorance** is often used in economics, sometimes in public choice theory, and in other disciplines that study rationality and choice, including philosophy (epistemology) and game theory. Ignorance in this case is considered "rational" when the cost of studying the subject on your own is high enough to outweigh the possible benefits that can be expected from an informed decision, so it would not be rational to spend time and labor studying the situation. carefully and deliberately. One significant consequence of this phenomenon is the quality of decisions made by a large number of

people, in cases such as public elections, where the likelihood of a significant change in the outcome of each individual vote is extremely small.

An example of both active and rational ignorance is “A Theory of Justice”, described by John Rawls in 1971. Rawls constructed a hypothetical construction in which he assumes that people in the initial position are equal to each other: they do not know their place in society, social status, class position. Often referred to as the veil of ignorance, this is a thought experiment used to reason about the principles on which a society based on solidarity should be built. According to Rawls, in a just society all people should have rights and freedoms (including the right to vote, the right to hold public office, freedom of speech, freedom of thought and the rule of law); power and opportunity; income and wealth sufficient for a good quality of life; Conditions necessary for self-respect. To achieve this reality, the decisions of elected self-government bodies must be implemented without the knowledge of the beneficiary groups of these decisions.

Rawls believes that when deciding questions about the state system, a person is in a starting position behind a veil of ignorance. Behind this veil, you know nothing about yourself, your natural abilities, or your position in society. You know nothing about your gender, race, nationality, or individual tastes. Behind such a veil of ignorance, all people are simply declared to be rational, free and morally equal beings. You know, however, that in the "real world" there will be great diversity in the natural distribution of wealth and ability, and that there will be differences in gender, race, and culture that will distinguish groups of people from one another.^[xiii]

Michel Foucault directly points to ignorance when he talks about the value of the secret of control (*arcana imperii*, from Latin, "mystery of power" a concept dating back to the time of the Roman Empire in the era of Tacitus), coined by Jean Bodin. Which, Foucault argues, was to be included in the politics of truth. Foucault insists, referring to the term "public opinion" ("the politics of truth"), that the concept of truth refers to the term "regimes of truth". He mentions the "Ideologists" group, where the term "ideology" first appears. Foucault argues that it is through "regimes of truth" that statesmanship achieves its political and biological success.^[xiv] Here, the modern version of the government is presented to the population in the national media - electronic media, television and radio, and especially in the print press - as a modality of efficiency, fiscal optimization, political responsibility and fiscal austerity.

So, within the framework of the state, ignorance is highly political. Ignorance is generated and maintained within society and by society.

Ignorance therefore can be used as a tool for withholding information in any political system. The following example allows us to dive into the subject deeper:

“Known knowns” is a phrase attributed to US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in response to a question posed on February 12, 2002 at a US Department of Defense (DoD) briefing on the lack of evidence linking the Iraqi government to the supply of weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups. In an interview Rumsfeld stated: “Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns—the ones we don't know we don't

know. And if one looks throughout the history of our country and other free countries, it is the latter category that tends to be the difficult ones.”^[xv]

Slavoj Žižek, analyzing the above quote, following Smithson, lists four categories of knowledge/not-knowing, focusing especially on the third of them:

1. Known knows
2. Known unknowns (known unknowns, conscious ignorance)
3. Unknown knowns (unknown knowns, tacit knowledge)
4. Unknown unknowns (meta-ignorance).

“Unknown known” or tacit knowledge is the information about which the subject prefers not to know. Žižek in this case attributes such voluntary ignorance to the justification of the militaristic expansion of the United States and the justification of violence on the territory of another state. In general, any information policy during hostilities can be aimed at creating such ignorance for the interests of the aggressor state.^[xvi] This phenomenon is most closely related to the fifth type of justification for ignorance, described above by Funkenstein.

But how can this be correlated with the human knowledge about capitalist impact on the environment? To make this connection clearer, allow me to draw a parallel with human knowledge of their own mortality and the mortality of others.

The relationship of a person with death is most often considered at the intrapersonal level. However, death is most often known initially through the death of another. In “Regarding the Pain of Others”, Susan Sontag analyzes the visual representations of war and violence in modern culture, from Goya's *The Disasters of War* to photographs of the American Civil War and contemporary horrific photographs from the fields of the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Israel and Palestine. Sontag tries to understand why people document, broadcast and look at images of the dead, how does the image of another's suffering affect the average person, and what is it like to live in a culture saturated with visualized cruelty? Sontag then examines the relationship between photography and ideology, censorship and authority.^[xvii] In *Concerning the Pain of Others*, questions of responsibility are raised. Why should we look at these photographs of distant horrors if we can't do anything about what they show? And in fact, many willingly choose not to.

Psychologists Gerd Gigerenzer (Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin, Germany) and Rocio Garcia-Retamero (University of Granada) in 2017 conducted a study on the causes and characteristics of voluntary ignorance (deliberate ignorance) and described their results in the article "Cassandra's Regret: The Psychology of Not Wanting to Know".^[xviii]

At the same time, considering ignorance, they also started from Rumsfeld's quote: “The question itself is known; thus we are dealing with known unknowns, but not unknown unknowns, to use National Aeronautics and Space Administration terminology popularized by former US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. The question may be about an event in the past, present or future, and the answer may be known exactly or only with a certain degree of probability.

Gigerenzer and Garcia-Retamero define **voluntary ignorance** as a deliberate decision not to know, as opposed to not being able to access information or not being interested in a question. The researchers propose a theory of regret in relation to voluntary

ignorance that encompasses both the negative feelings that can result from anticipating negative events, such as death and divorce, and the positive feelings of surprise and anticipation that can arise from anticipating positive events, such as knowing the sex of the future child.

Below is a quotation - a description of the results of the study by Gigerenzer and Garcia-Retamero themselves: "The theory proposed here is, to the best of our knowledge, the first theory of willful ignorance that concerns both positive and negative emotions. It explains the reluctance to know about both negative and undesirable events, such as death and divorce, and positive or desirable events, such as the home team winning a match. According to the theory, willful ignorance is not necessarily due to self-deception or other moral failings, as is sometimes suggested in the literature. Rather, it serves a dual function: first, it avoids the negative feeling of regret after knowing that an undesirable event will happen, as Cassandra experienced, and second, it maintains a positive sense of surprise and anticipation.

We are conducting the first nationally representative study to assess the prevalence and predictability of intentional ignorance for a sample of 10 events.

Its prevalence is high: 85% to 90% of people would not like to know about upcoming negative events, and 40% to 70% prefer to remain in the dark about positive events. For example, the older we get, the closer we are to death, and, as the time-to-event hypothesis predicts, the less we want to know about the time and cause of our own or our partner's death.

Only 1% of the participants constantly wanted to know. We also deduced and tested several predictions from the theory of regret: people who prefer to remain in the dark are more risk averse and buy life and legal insurance more often."^[xix]

Active ignorance is voluntary ignorance. According to Gigerenzer and García-Retamero, "ignorance is usually presented as an undesirable state of mind, and the act of willful ignorance can cause bewilderment. However, people don't always want to know, demonstrating a lack of curiosity that goes against theories, postulating a general need for certainty, the rejection of ambiguity, or the Bayesian principle of complete proof. Voluntary ignorance can be the result of inaction, i.e. not seeking diagnostic information, or an action, such as refusing information that someone else offers."

Two conditions determine that voluntary ignorance must be distinguished from ignorance due to limited memory and forgetfulness:

1. The choice of ignorance, even if the information is free.
2. The choice of ignorance despite self-interest.

Moreover, Gigerenzer and Garcia-Retamero distinguish the study of voluntary ignorance from agnotology as such. They define agnotology as a field of study that studies the systematic production of ignorance by deflecting, hiding, and obscuring knowledge, such as the tobacco industry's aforementioned efforts to keep people unaware of the scientific evidence that smoking causes cancer, and the production of public ignorance about global climate change. Agnotology looks at how external sources maintain public ignorance, even against the will of the people; Willful ignorance, on the other hand, involves maintaining personal ignorance.

Just like awareness of one's mortality, realization of ecological impact of the dominant and overpowering means of production (read capitalism) is a slow process. It may look like a distant possibility until reality presents itself at one's door – in the form of a terminal disease in case of individual mortality or a natural disaster in case of ecological crisis presenting itself. We must keep in mind that an ecocide just like patriarchal oppression is a slow process. We can speak of a slow violence^[xx] – not visible, happening behind a different kind of veil of ignorance. This type of hidden aggression is already much easier to turn a blind eye to. Moreover it is even more convenient to ignore when reinforced by the socio-economical system at large.

As I've stated previously, voluntary ignorance is applicable in relation to one's own mortality, the death of loved ones, but also in relation to the suffering of/(slow) violence towards an unfamiliar, "other". Who is the "other" in this case?

The other ("other", "alien") is one of the central philosophical and socio-cultural categories that defines the other as non-I. The other is anyone who is not me, is different from me, is not identical with me, and even opposes me. In the context of this article, the category can be easily applied to 'natural environment', but also non-human species, communities and classes that are marginalized and exploited for the sake of the prosperity of 'Global West'.

According to Judith Butler, "The human is produced not only over and against the non-human, but through a set of withdrawals, radical erasures that, strictly speaking, deny the possibility of cultural articulation. Therefore, it is not enough to say that human subjects are constructed, since the construction of a human is a differential operation that produces more and less human, inhuman, humanly inconceivable. These excluded places bind the "human" as its constitutive externality, and pursue these boundaries as a constant possibility of their transgression and rearticulation. Such a "withdrawal" from the "human" circle leads to the radicalization of the "other"."^[xxi] 'Other' is a completely different subject, inaccessible and incomprehensible to oneself. Inaccessibility thus allows one to activate the mechanisms of ignorance. Anything can be done with the OTHER, and the OTHER is not only an animal, but also any "non-human": an enemy or a military opponent, a person of a different racial or gender identity, different caste or social class etc. Ignorance of the other is the key to denial of their suffering/death. As an example, the consumption of meat products in modern society is often accompanied by a degree of ignorance in relation to the methods of their production. In other words, to truly enjoy a beef patty, the average person needs to 'forget' the suffering and death of the cow whose body they are consuming. A singular farm cow in this dynamic becomes the other, less than living, a matter to an end.

Nature, the environment, and the global ecological system become such others under the lens of capitalism. One might be aware of the damage caused to this "other" via systematic capitalist extraction, but in order to continue to continue the cycles of consumption and production, they put on a blindfold. "What is gained from this revision is the ability to examine something crucial: the relation established in capitalist societies between the economy and its 'others'—including that vital other known as nature".^[xxii]

The inconceivable death of the "other" is a manifestation of active ignorance. And, while ignorance is a wonderful mechanism of consciousness for relieving anxiety about one's own morality, then at the level of society, humanity, the entirety of the living, it ceases to

be innocent. Ignorance is never neutral and in the realm of bio/necro/politics it can be dangerous just as well.

To conclude, we can say that it is active or voluntary ignorance that performs an important function in the human mind, often acting as a protective mechanism, allowing one to keep living despite an overabundance of information. It should be emphasized that in this case, ignorance is precisely a choice. It is not only the absence of knowledge, but the active refusal of knowledge.

Capitalism abuses this mechanism of the human brain, as denialism is easily weaponized. Fragmentation of society, individualization of consumers, withholding information to name a few, are all tools used by those who benefit from economic escalation. Such tools are used purposefully to take advantage of the fact that ignorance is a safety mechanism of a. Choosing not to acknowledge the horrible truths of life at all times is a tool that helps every single one of us to proceed with our daily life without collapsing under the pressure of impending ecological doom. Yet, when used with mercenary intent, ignorance becomes a dangerous tool just as well.

Of course voluntary ignorance is only one mechanism that allows capitalism to remain dominant despite being perpetually challenged by activists and theorists alike. And to change, let alone demolish this superstructure is a task for all mankind. But what is left to do for a singular human being? Perhaps to lift the veil from time to time.

[i] Fraser, Nancy. *Climates of Capital*, NLR 127, January–February 2021.

[ii] Encyclopedia of Marxism at marxism.org. "Capitalism". Marxist.org. Retrieved August 24, 2023.

[iii] Fraser, Nancy. *Climates of Capital*, NLR 127, January–February 2021.

[iv] Jameson, Frederic. *The Seeds of Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), xii; and "Future City," *New Left Review* 21 (May/June 2003), 76.; Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2009), 1.

[v] Fraser, Nancy. *Climates of Capital*, NLR 127, January–February 2021.

[vi] Žižek, Slavoy. Philosophy, the "unknown knowns," and the public use of reason. *Topoi* 25 (1-2):137-142. 2006

[vii] Arthur Conan Doyle. 2009. *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Barlow Press.

[viii] Proctor, Robert N, and Robert Proctor. 1995. *Cancer Wars*. Harpercollins.

[ix] same

[x] Pynchon, Thomas. 2000. *Slow Learner : Early Stories*. London Vintage Books.

[xi] Steinsaltz, Adin; Funkenstein, Amos. 1997. *Sociology of ignorance*. Institute for the Study of Judaism in the CIS

[xii] Smithson, Michael. 1989. *Ignorance and Uncertainty : Emerging Paradigms*. New York: Springer.

[xiii] Rawls, John. 1971. *A Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press.

[xiv] Foucault, Michel, and Sylvère Lotringer. 2007. *The Politics of Truth*. Los Angeles, Calif.: Semiotext

[xv] "Defense.gov News Transcript: DoD News Briefing – Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen. Myers, United States Department of Defense (defense.gov)". February 12, 2002. Archived from the original on March 20, 2018.

[xvi] Žižek, Slavoy. Philosophy, the "unknown knowns," and the public use of reason. *Topoi* 25 (1-2):137-142. 2006

[xvii] Sontag, Susan. 2013. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

[xviii] Gigerenzer G, Garcia-Retamero R. Cassandra's regret: The psychology of not wanting to know. *Psychol Rev.* 2017 Mar;124(2):179-196.

[xix] Gigerenzer G, Garcia-Retamero R. Cassandra's regret: The psychology of not wanting to know. *Psychol Rev.* 2017 Mar;124(2):179-196.

[xx] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*

[xxi] Butler, Judith. 2004 *Precarious life: the powers of mourning and violence*. London: Verso.

[xxii] Fraser, Nancy. *Climates of Capital*, NLR 127, January–February 2021.

Mary Mellor: a personal, political and academic journey

Beginnings

I came to ecofeminism and ecosocialism via the peace movement. My personal politics had always been socialist and feminist, with my activism based in the labour movement and CND. A pivotal event was my participation in the Greenham Common women's peace camp in the early 1980s, opposing the siting of US cruise missiles. This changed my socialism and feminism to ecosocialism and ecofeminism.

Greenham was a demonstration of the strength of women-only organisation (the original peace camp had included men). It was also my first introduction to women-only imagery in a large statue of the Goddess. Both reflected debates within the (re) emerging women's movement. Should it ally with existing male dominated social movements (socialist ecofeminism) or should it engage in a radical separatism of women from men?

I was torn between the two. As an ecofeminist I was seen as essentialist by socialist feminists. As a socialist feminist I was too embedded in gendered society for the radical separatists.

Breaking the Boundaries: towards a feminist, green socialism (Virago 1992)

I have always integrated my personal politics with my academic life. I therefore changed the focus of my research from a long time interest in the co-operative movement to exploring and building the links between feminism, ecology and socialism. In the process I joined with other people working along the same lines mainly associated with the journal *Capitalism Nature Socialism*.

I agonised over the subtitle of the book – should it be green socialist feminism? Or social feminist ecology? In the end I followed my long term commitment to political economy as the focus of the theory and practice of social change – hence, feminist, green socialism.

Breaking the Boundaries introduces most of the key ideas I have developed in my later work:

- The position of 'women's work' as the link between the life-work of the body, and social structures such as the market that seek to transcend the limits of human existence in nature.
- The limitations and responsibility of human embodiment, to live within the restraint of ecological and biological resources and processes.
- 'Women's work' as an 'imposed altruism' and its exclusion from economic concepts and reward structures.

I have sought to distinguish this 'materialist' perspective on the link between women and nature from essentialist claims to women's affinity with nature. My basic ideas of materialist ecofeminism were further developed in 1997 in *Feminism and Ecology* (Polity) and most particularly, the paper 'Women, Nature and the Social Construction of 'Economic Man' in the journal of *Ecological Economics* (Vol 20:2 pp 129-140) which set out the dualist model of 'Economic Man' (who may be female) and Women's Work' (which may also be done by males). This model brought me back to my earlier work on political economy – the critique of, and alternatives to, capitalism. This time, rather than

focusing on alternative structures such as co-operatives, I explored the key element of the dualist model of paid and unpaid work: money.

Why Money?

A major focus of feminism is that women's domestic work is undervalued in monetary terms, that is, it is unpaid or underpaid. An early feminist campaign by Maria-Rosa Dalla Costa and Selma James called for 'Wages for Housework', while a later campaign for the formal recognition in public accounts of the economic value of women's work and nature's resources was raised by Marilyn Waring in her book *If Women Counted* (1989). Feminist economists also sought to break down the boundaries of the monetised economy through broader concepts such as 'provisioning'.

My approach was to join a growing body of work that was exploring the nature of money itself. What is money? Where did it come from? Who owned and controlled it?

Orthodox economics did not address this question. Money was seen as merely a reflection of the dynamics of production and exchange. Marxists saw money as a key mechanism in the development of capitalism but largely shared the capitalist view that it was a secondary feature. Fundamental critiques of money began to (re) emerge in the late 20th century led by greens and heterodox economists.

Challenging Money

Notable Greens such as Herman Daly and James Robertson argued that money values destroyed the real value of the natural world. Nature was being 'externalised' in economic calculation, treated as a free resource. It was being destroyed in the search for profit. Ecofeminists such as Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva also made the same connection, linking the exploitation of women, nature and colonised people. Alternatives were explored such as rejecting existing monetary economies in favour of subsistence, re-establishing the Commons, local money systems, basic incomes.

Alongside the green critique of money there was a wide-spread analysis of money itself, from a range of disciplines. Movements emerged calling for monetary reform and the cancelling of the debts of poorer nations. Money had become much more visible as economies became more globalised and financialised. Debt had become the main source of money in many societies : mortgages, consumer, student, business debt. Money itself became a source of profit as the financial sector grew. The explosion of financial activities nationally and globally led to crises in financial systems that increasing required public rescue.

This led me to develop a politics of money that stresses its public role, published in **The Future of Money: from financial crisis to public resource** (Pluto 2010), **Debt or Democracy: public money for sustainability and social justice** (Pluto 2015) **Money: myths, truths and alternatives** (Policy Press 2019)

Democratising public money as the agent of social change

In the past 20 years I have aimed to establish a politics of money that will enable the development of ecologically sustainable sufficiency provisioning. The concept of provisioning rejects the current boundaries of what is considered to have monetary value in favour of a wider conception of what is valued as a contribution to human well-being (wellth). Sufficiency is the principle that everyone should have enough (within the limits of ecological sustainability) and no-one should have too little or too much.

Could this be achieved without money?

My answer is no. There needs to be a mechanism for the establishment of comparative value and as a means of allocation/transfer of that value. There is no human society within recorded history that does not have something that carries out these functions. What can be learnt from the history of money is that the function is much more important than the form.

Over the thousands of years of human history money has taken myriad forms ranging from sticks and stones to bank records and, recently, digital codes. However, it is also only in the past few hundred years that money has been seen as primarily associated with trade and market capitalism. Historically, money's main role has been social: to settle conflict, or recognise social status and perform ritualevents in human societies. With the emergence of states, the money system was controlled by rulers to fund military activities or symbols of power such as castles.

Rejecting 'handbag' economics

It was the emergence of an extreme form of market fundamentalism (neoliberalism) adopted by Thatcherite Toryism in 1980's Britain, that drove my interest in money. In particular, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher's assertion that there was 'no such thing as society, only individuals and their families'. The subsequent attack on public funding, particularly welfare spending, I named after Thatcher's ubiquitous handbag.

Neoliberalism asserted that the state is monetarily dependent on the private creation of wealth. 'Handbag' economics sees public spending as being analogous to a household budget. It must be limited to what 'the market' can afford. This leads to the imposition of austerity programmes with particular impact on women, poorer people and progressive proposals generally. Rejection of proposals for progressive social spending is based on the claim that money is in short supply dismissed by the questions: Who's going to pay? Where is the money to come from?

Where does money come from?

My research on money identifies two sources of new money in modern societies: bank lending and state spending. This is 'fresh air' money in that it does not come from anywhere else.

It is now generally accepted that banks are creating *new* money when they make loans. They are not lending money people have deposited. The result is a money supply based on the willingness of banks to lend and people/businesses/states to borrow. This is socially exclusive, ecologically unsound and economically crisis-ridden. Crises in the money system such as the major crash in 2007-8, sees the financial sector as increasingly having to be rescued by the creation of public money.

Despite the explicit evidence of the public economy (governments and central banks) being able to generate new money, neoliberal ideology insists that this money is being 'borrowed' from the private sector. The key to socially just and ecologically sustainable provisioning is publicly generated money distributed by participatory democratic processes such as citizen's budgeting.

Public Money and the Politics of Care

A key theme in feminism is a politics around care. Care is also central to the politics of welfare. Welfare states are collective structures that take responsibility for key aspects of human wellbeing (wellth). Often, this relieves women of unpaid work in these areas. Public welfare depends on public funding and this, in turn, requires the rejection of 'handbag economics' and the development of a democratic, public, welfare economy.

This would require a new way of measuring national 'wealth'. Concepts like Gross Domestic Product (GDP) should be replaced by Gross Domestic Provisioning. This is important for reducing conflict between and within nations. Wellth based on provisioning is not competitive, unlike wealth measured by production.

I have made the case for seeing money as a public resource which ultimately relies on the ability of public authorities to create new money, free of debt. Instead of rescuing capitalist banking and finance, public money should be allocated democratically, to rescue the people, by enabling ecologically sustainable sufficiency provisioning. A society where no-one has too little or too much and people live within the limits of the environment would be the basis of a feminist green socialism.



Drawing of our hybrid session with Mary Mellor by Kathy Murillo

next page: teleconferencing view of Mary Mellor and participants in The Hague



ROSEBUSH SYNDROME (There Can Only Be One)

Clara Balaguer and Vishnu Vardhani Rajan

ABSTRACT

Parting from the canonical Master Suppression Techniques—a collection of five tactics predominantly used by men to undermine women in the workplace—Vishnu Vardhani Rajan and Clara Balaguer present an in-progress analysis of alter-suppression techniques encountered in “feminist” or “radical” or “safe” or “decolonized” spaces, each through their own lens of experience and vocabulary.

This is a proposal to name, define, and self-reflect on the existence of alter-suppression techniques—forms of internalized oppression that exist inside marginalized or otherwise underserved communities, perpetrated by the oppressed amongst each other. While recognizing that power systems have systematically and historically privileged white, cis, male, Anglo-European, class-fortunate, or high caste bodies, an intersectional approach must reckon with what is a discomfiting thought: liberation from traditional masters includes the possibility of becoming our own oppressors, using not just the master's tools but new ones of our own ingenuity. These tactics are not one-dimensional. Often born as self-defense, they can, under the right conditions, morph into forms of internal oppression to defend understandably fragile, only-just-won visibilities. Conversations about them (especially in public space) must invite nuance, stomach doubt, and cultivate self-awareness. Just as privilege anoints no gods, alterity makes no saints.

CLAIMER

This poem is part of a larger discussion format that employs a variety of tools/toys to attempt constructive spaces for difficult conversations. The toykit includes elements such as poetry, the poetics of intimacy, the body and its changing (physical) position, the line of sight (cutting or holding eye contact), concentric circles, parallel lines, solos and choral singing, and turning sudden individual gestures into consensual group movements, and deep listening.

GENEALOGY

This poem and workshop format was first developed for *A New World: Eco-Feminist Summer School* (2023) at West Den Haag. Since then, it has been performed at *On Exhaustion* (2024), an anti-conference on decolonial exhaustion organized by the Research Center for Material Culture at the Wereldmuseum, Amsterdam, and *Critical Times 2: Ecologies of Relation* (2024), a series of workshops held at Buitenplaats Brienenoord, Rotterdam and organized by the Erasmus School of Philosophy at Erasmus University, Rotterdam and the Department of Cultural History and Theory at Humboldt University, Berlin.

TOYKIT ITEM: POEM

VERSE I: Clara

it should no longer be news to us that the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house

but i've got news: neither will the sister's weapons.

the weapons of my sister were of her own design

she did not learn this skill from any man,

though perhaps many men might have driven her to hone her skill

far beyond what she herself might have understood was possible.

had she been able to claim this skill

as her own

instead of being told that her ingenuity

was only ever a result of man's oppression

was only ever an implement for the competition of man's desire

and not a talent in her own power and control,

perhaps she wouldn't have felt the need to cut her sisters down to size.

perhaps she would have understood her own potential, her own nature beyond whatever nurture we all endured.

my sister forged and whetted her own blades,

and she took the darkest pleasure in wielding them against her sisters,

not because our brother was superior, but because he was the smallest threat.

she dug her needles underneath my fingernails straight through them to my heart

not because i was less than he but because i might have become more than she.

i had the potential to dethrone, by sheer nature of us being of the same shape and manner and smell,

that throne was built upon being an object of desire.

this desire was neither a matter of competition for my father's favor, which we did not have to earn,

nor a contest of a sexualized manner, this was a nature we had yet to learn.

it was for the triumph of our mother's respect, which was the most elusive, and thus, what we yearned.

so in the end, or rather at the very very beginning, my sister's weapons were not for the patriarchy's sake, though they might have eventually evolved in that direction.

they were offered to the matriarchy, the first exercise of institutional power that robbed us of breath, struck us with fear, left us silent, blueprinted our aspirations.

in case anyone, like my sister, is sharpening their own knives, ready to dig out a pound of my flesh to pay for the sin of belatedness

(for how could i be anything but belated and savage if i didn't grow up in the land of western honey and was not fully schooled in all its codes of correctness)

i've got news.

these pronouns are only necessary because we are speaking a language so backward that it insists upon these distinctions.

if we had been speaking the language from which 400 years of colonialism has severed me,

we would be saying siya, which is neither he nor she nor it.

we would be saying niya or kanya, which is neither hers nor his nor theirs.

we would be saying kapatid, which is neither sister nor brother nor sibling,
but something entirely beyond the imaginary of this english
that has been shoved down my throat
so violently and irrevocably
that i now speak it better than the ones
who didn't even teach it to me directly.
they simply left it behind, like so many other tools of the master's invention.
but this student now bests that master
at niya's own game
with kanya's own tools
sa laro niya at sa paggamit ng kanyang sariling kasangkapan.
my near-impeccable post-colonial english is the reason i am here before
you.
it is not the only language i speak, but it is the one by which we gather.
i will take it.
and i wield it.
and i will not feel shame for my vocabulary.
i will not apologize for what is nothing less than an act of sheer alchemy.

if all of the master's tools can never dismantle the master's house
then what of the meaning we are able to alchemize from language?
to assume that language is a proprietary technology
only ever able to mimic what we have been oppressed to believe

is the limit of any language's possibility to mean something...
to assume that language is a proprietary technology,
the source of which its users (or victims) cannot access and modify,
is a denial of our own capacity to recode our own destiny.
to all those who have been severed from their ancestral tongues,
in full or in part,
i've got news:
to believe that the bones and traits that have been bred out of us
by force and fear
are the only path towards liberation is to do ourselves a disservice.
yes, we must search for the words that have been plucked from our our
tongues.
yes, we must attempt to learn the languages that have been leeched from
our lips.
but in the cases where this is unfeasible, impossible, impractical:
speak whatever language appears in your dreams.
voice, intention, meaning, as it throbs from our guts,
are more important than words, which become our prisons.

to say that all of the master's tools can never be used against them
is to set us up for failure.
if we are to refuse all these tools, some of them vital to the proliferation...
(which is not say invention)
of certain basic concepts...

then we are doomed to have to reinvent the wheel
over and over again

instead of using these proliferated technologies
to construct our own vehicles forward.

she never said all of the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.

but she did say never.

for poetic effect, absolutes (never, always, forever) are effective.

for practical purposes, absolutes are inefficient.

never is a strong word because it is half of a perfect binary.

never and always set us up for failure.

i prefer to think that it is up to us to determine which of the master's tools must be decommissioned and which can be stripped and repurposed, recycled and rewritten.

we cannot refuse refuse.

we cannot refuse refuse when so much trash has been both left behind by our oppression and generated from our own dispossession.

why should we have to reinvent the wheel?

why would we be so lacking in self belief as to accept that our cultures and civilizations,

which predate *theirs*,

have had nothing to do with what they later "discovered,"

on the backs of not just our natural resources and our physical labor
but also our spiritual, political, and intellectual prowess?

Europe did not discover everything, not even corruption.

Whiteness did not invent everything, not even racism.

Patriarchy did not institute everything, not even empire.

What Western white patriarchy did do

was industrialize racism

and institutionalize corruption

and monopolize extraction

and exhaust resistance

for long enough

and to such a point

that their narrative survives

as the most widely broadcasted

and their capital stands

as the most aggressively hoarded.

and as the best-fed megaphones of *this* version of civilization,

what we might reasonably expect from them is that they

sit down for a hot minute and stay down for another,

let us stand taller, on our own two feet

while they digest why our change in stature seems like an attack on their size

be quiet for a second and listen for a minute

let us catch our breath and find our voice

while they process why the rise on our volume seems so difficult to bear

they might actually find

that given a space
 and their silence
 we might even agree with some of their concerns.

and in return,
 the previously voiceless and formerly shrunk must be able to extend a
 certain kind of generosity,
 occupy some kind of humility,
 and acknowledge this shift of fortune,
 not because we need to give this hard-fought capital/restitution back,
 but because we mustn't gorge or hoard or hog or counter-exterminate or
 humiliate in ricochet.
 just as privilege anoints no gods,
 alterity makes no saints

VERSE II: Vishnu

Performance Notes

The pop song excerpts in Verse II and III marked in
 karaoke font are sung by Vishnu. Clara sings along
 to the songs she knows.

Together we ate, today like, *Yesterday*
All my troubles seemed so far away
 Together we turned our faces up to the sun
 You hummed to me
One thing I can tell you is we've got to be free
 I smile at you and I agree.
 You say: *I know you, you know me.*
 We share our fears, our dreads and our dreams too.

We see the nuances in the browns of skin
We see five hundred and fifty shades of grey in our tears
We seek the same future, to go beyond the traps, the snares and the
frontiers.

Today it rained and we decided to eat indoors
The tables were all occupied, except that one, with one chair free.

I said, *I know you, you know me.*
You must take that place, you'll do the same for me Yes ?
YES YES, you nod. We both laugh at our queer way of nodding YES.

You sat at the table we exchange glances,
Our glances kept the rhythm with the seconds hand on the clock
You look uncomfortable
I protect you with my stare from afar
you engage in a cogitation with them
We look the same to the untrained eye
I couldn't eat,
A spontaneous eruption of mirth engulfed the table.
I couldn't keep looking at the contagion of joy sweeping across the faces
gathered around the table.

You had so much to say
You spoke incessantly of their magnanimity
You know their skin turns the same shade of red under the generous sun,
you say
Same shade as what ? I think.
I miss the sun I say.

Look we can't be lone wolves all our lives you say
Together we are more than that I say
Together we are more you repeat
Yes YES. Together let's go eat at that table today
Sensible generous liberal they are, come see.

We share the one chair free
You speak their tongue, with charm and flare
They are entertained, I too was enchanted with your dare
You didn't glance even once my way
You know me, I know you, it's okay
No really it's okay
You must go I say, I even smile
I wouldn't know what to say, I don't have what to wear.
Oh you must come, we borrow my mother's silks you say
Your mother has silks I exclaim ?

You teach me manners, be polite you say!
You say, please, sorry, when they offer you something you must accept with
a thank you very much sir.
I repeat after you. Thank you very much sir.
We clad us in silks, we had bare arms, bare shoulders
You say, I look great.
I say you look like the night sky with stars twinkling with the 11th day moon
crescent

Suraj Hua Maddam
Chand dalne laga

The lady of the house greeted us at the door
She gave you a glass of something shiny and golden
She offered me a glass too
I accepted and said to her, Thank you very much sir.
The lady laughed.
I was proud.
You frowned at me.
People with pale faces started to gather around us.
Together we continued to tell stories about our land afar
Together we laughed, we sang, we danced beneath the decorated, shining,
star
They tell us about this star

We tell them of our customs, our ways, and our grace

Together we swing to the music so loud

Together our hearts beat in rhythm

even amidst this crowd

We dance in our way

He came by and smiled at you

You smiled back at him

He extended his hand

You placed your hand in his

I hurt from keeping the things I want to say

We could have been so good together

We could have lived this dance forever

I see you go

I even smile.

I learn to navigate this unfamiliar place

I learn this language with unnatural rhythm, syntax and case.

I miss the spices I know, while

I speak of my dreams and the world I'd explore.

Our conversations grew scarce, our glances few

I longed for the days when it was just us two

You were changing, and so was I

In theory's embrace,

Alterity dissolves lines,

Self and other merge.

I have a larger audience

While I miss you

How I wish, how I wish you were here

We're just two lost souls

Swimming in a fish bowl

I shun nuance and doubt

I watch you and I do as you do, I navigate the same mono-dimensional truth.

The more I am a victim of my traps the more I am celebrated.

You are at the table

We look the same for the untrained eye.

Are we made of the same stardust?

I think back to our conversations, about our lives, different and multiple, all dwelt in a day

I wonder which one of those lives do you want to live today?

VERSE III: Vishnu

Tujhko Mirchi Lagi toh mein Kya Karoon.

I am super polite, I say I am sorry but I have to say this,

Please don't worry,

I'll do whatever I want to do...

BUT if you do worry, just tell me what to do,

With no disrespect I'll still do whatever I want to do...

Are you worried that neighbors will say something...

In what language will they say it ?

Will they mutter it to themselves ?

Like you know when we speak to ourselves while reflecting when coming back from the vegetable market, "ah damn this basket is so heavy, but the neighbor's daughter does whatever she wants to do..."

Or will they say it to us...

observing us...

like when people do while watching a reality Tele

Ah, your daughter does whatever she wants to do...

Are you worried they will moralize us by comparing me to the model behaviors and say

Look - our daughter does what we do...

*We say chi,
 she say chi
 We say chi chi
 she say chi chi
 We say chi chi chie chie
 she say chi chie cheee chie chie*

We train her to fit into this field.
 She is our rose.
 She wanted to study Economics
 We paid the best school for her education.
 She is now fluent in calculus.
 She speaks the language of the west.

Are you worried they call me impolite? Improper even
 Are you worried that they'll bring back gossip about seeing me on the
 streets screaming NO.
 Awwaaa You heard? She said NO is a full sentence? Is that legal ? Who
 does she think she is? A libertine? She is a beast, a guerilla. A Terrorist!
 If she continues to say NO how can we say she is proper? Is she our own
 even?

We saw her screaming...

NO NO NO

No means NO motherfucker!

No to your walls

No to your prohibitions to our foraging

NO to your surveillance

No to your permit lines

NO to your 'I am from everywhere' because I am a settler from Israel.

NO to saying Israel before saying FREE PALESTINE

NO, BUT you see if there was no endorsement of Israel first there wouldn't be millions of voices screaming FREE PALESTINE

NO but you see if there was no Jewish genocide there wouldn't be a need for the state of Israel

NO but you see if England didn't say go there to Terra Nullius

There wouldn't have been a nakba.

Also fuck you autocorrect for redlining Nakba, tell language centers, Wikipedia, Google search, Doc et al to update the autocorrect like the way you learnt to always capitalize England and make us into US...

No to India and its sectarian strifes. India annexes land to build a Ram temple.

Hai Rama Yeh kya hua ? Kyun aise hame sataane lage ?

As neighbors take our advice. Tend her. Make her into a real rose.

Once she is a rose, we pour in our resources and she will make sure nothing else can grow there.

She will be our own. An abettor.

Send her to the same school.

“All more than human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

--- (Article 1 of The Universal Declaration of Human and More-than-Human Rights and Responsibilities for a New World)¹

The Peaceable Commons

Tamara N. Lewis Arredondo²

A New World

The immense, watery expanse of the planet lies before our two protagonists as they deftly navigate to the inland sands and dunes. Vast seas of aquatic life abound while terrestrial habitats wax and wane with the caprice of the waters. Estuaries crimp frontward along the crevices of shale and crushed rock, leading inward from the wetlands. The eerie lap of waters against reedy banks bid a welcome to the coastal metropole. Our protagonists can be heard singing, the call and response “United Species Anthem”:³

Jihad and Salaam [singing]: A more-than human species, united in larger freedom!

Jihad [recitative]: Whereas it is essential to promote the development of life-enhancing relationships between species beyond national borders and confinements.

Jihad and Salaam [singing]: A more-than human species, united in larger freedom!

Their voices echo out over the waters and reverberate back towards the shoreline. Skillful paddling round the inland waterways route to a temporary resting site near the hilly sediments of the northern clime. Our protagonists lower the settlement spikes that will temporarily anchor their amphibious boat capsules for the coming season. They continue to hum the “United Species Anthem” preparing for their land season. The area offers plentiful grain and relative coolness. Soon others will moor, forming a new community. The voyage had gone well, but both felt the fatigue in their aging muscles. They scramble inward, to commence the domestication ritual.

Domestication ritual

As the mainstay of the aquatic-terrestrial planetary life, domestication rituals involve preparing boat capsules for a homestay, whether anchored on land or sailing at sea. A good season sees our protagonists at sites where food and community are abundant. Nonetheless, some seasons leave them isolated, reliant only upon each other for mutual care and survival.

¹ 2023 West Summer School participants, “The Universal Declaration of Human and More-than-Human Rights and Responsibilities for a New World.” (2023), 1 (on file with the author).

² Tamara N. Lewis Arredondo participated in the 2023 West Summer School: A New World. She is a researcher for the Global Citizenship lectoraat at The Hague University of Applied Sciences.

³ Tamara N. Lewis Arredondo, *United Species Anthem*, 2023, Choral Music Arrangement, 2023.

With seemingly incessant temporality ahead, our protagonists are in dialogue about the ardent journey to where they find themselves now:

[Settled back against the boat capsule wall, Jihad watches Salaam moving about the space, arranging the sleeping quarters.]

Jihad: Shall we look for community? I like it when we knowledge share. Maybe we'll learn more about the amitochondriate lifeforms we encountered on our way here. They don't seem hostile, but I am not sure how to approach them. I shouldn't like to startle them.

Salaam: Let me get us settled here first...

[Voice trailing off as dragging steps are heard nearby. Salaam and Jihad don their corporeality lenses, readying for contact with community.]

Corporeality lenses join the communities of lifebeings for communication in a common language. The lenses provide context and meaning to utterances, movements and gestures. The lifeforms approaching seemed to be discussing turns of events that had shaken the planet and altered their lifestyles. Their conversation triggers Salaam and Jihad to recall their own trajectory to a new world. They begin to enter a semi-phantsm state.

The Human Era

Present-day planetary communitarians, like Salaam and Jihad, access defining moments in the history of their lifepaths by entering a visual, phantasmic state where earlier planetary inhabitants can be seen and heard, as if watching a live reenactment flashback.

Historic Watershed: The Great Folly

Just as in previous histories where the 9-11, Charlie Hebdo or Covid-19 events were seen as watershed moments, Jihad and Salaam recall the planet's most recent watershed: 2023. That was the year when large language models,⁴ celebrations of an iconic humanistic declaration and ever-rising arctic waters converged to throw the planet in an existential crisis. Our protagonists had lived beyond those events, albeit in an altered physiological state.

Prior to the Great Folly of 2023, as it came to be known, the specter of extinction had accelerated the quest for sustainable ways to live. Societies—that was a word frequently employed then – were polarized and racialized.⁵ That word (societies) is rarely applied to the present conditions where communities or groups of lifebeings temporarily join to experience an aquatic or terrestrial season

⁴ Large language models are a form of artificial intelligence that use deep learning and data sets to summarize, generate and predict content. Open AI's ChatGPT is a large language model. Abeba Birhane et al., "Science in the Age of Large Language Models," *Nature Reviews Physics* 5, no. 5 (May 2023): 277–78, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s42254-023-00581-4>.

⁵ Kathryn Yusoff, "The Inhumanities," *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 111, no. 3 (April 16, 2021): 670, <https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2020.1814688>.

together. The present conditions have restored a type of commons,⁶ where lifebeings enjoy “sufficiency provisioning,”⁷ receiving what they need for a season and contributing to others needs in a mutual dance of lifebeingness on a permanently shifting planet.

A Divide

The societies in existence at the time of the Great Folly had been paralyzed by binaries,⁸ unable to muster the resilience to find new pathways for planetary life. Governments and ruling classes looked only to growth, innovation, or forward-leading solutions.⁹ In fact, there would be no forward, no societal progress, no growth. Innovation would not save the dominant lifebeing of the era – humans – from the results of their great folly.

The polarization of the societies was evident in the very thread of the racialized beliefs and practices. Jihad and Salaam now barely recall the driving force of those past societies, a model that alienated humans from their own labor, their fellow humans, other lifebeings and the planet they lived on. It was both a physical and geographical dispossession.¹⁰ That contradictory model had morphed over the centuries dominating the daily existence of each successive generation.¹¹ There was a superficial and contradictory divide between lifebeings (humans versus nonhumans),¹² a leading factor in the demise of the era. Denial of an impending climate crisis, or ignorance of the same, had delayed critical lifestyle adaptations to mitigate environmental disaster.

Dominant Narratives and Counter Narratives

Yet the fictitious imaginings of those who dared to dream provided bold illustrations of what could be a new world. These dreamers conjured other ways of lifebeing harmony. The year 2023 saw a diverse group gathered to discuss and share practices embedded in eco-feminism and eco-socialism in the capital city of international peace and justice, The Hague. That city- still accessible through deep diving techniques- was the locus of global institutions for human justice. While a large majority of the society would view the practices of those gathered to discuss eco feminism and eco socialism

⁶ Silvia Federici, “Feminism and the Politics of the Commons,” in *The Wealth of the Commons: A World Beyond Market and State* (Levellers Press, 2012) defining commons as “a quality of relations, a principle of cooperation and of responsibility to each other and to the earth, the forests, the seas, the animals.”; Yusoff, “The Inhumanities” Yusoff tempers the understanding of “commons” stating, “The inhumanities is a counterconceptualization of the environmental and geohumanities that foregrounds the role of the politics of nonlife and the figure of the inhuman as the political figure of an earthbound commons, that undoes an extractive account of matter because it must always ask if it is the global epistemic production of the privileging of an extractive account of matter that racializes and depletes subjective-environment relations.”

⁷ Mary Mellor, Hanna Völkle, and Baruch Gottlieb, “Radical Feminist Economics” (West Summer School 2023, Den Haag, Nederland, July 20, 2023) Mary Mellor referenced “sufficiency provisioning” in her video conference with the West Summer School 2023 participants. The author understands this term as a way of supplying lifebeings’ basic needs. This is in stark contrast with the hungry consumption of the market-based societies where only the wealthiest enjoyed leisure. Other classes were sentenced to a life of exploitative and extractive labor to “earn” their provisioning.

⁸ Ariel Salleh, *Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx, and the Postmodern* (London ; New York : New York: Zed Books ; distributed in the USA by St. Martin’s Press, 1997), Chapter 3.

⁹ For examples of challenges to the “growth culture,” see Rachel Donald, “Degrowth and Ecosocialism|Jason Hickel,” Planet: Critical, 25’-30’, accessed August 16, 2023, <https://www.planetcritical.com/p/degrowth-and-ecosocialism-jason-hickel#details>; DISNOVATION.ORG, “Art, Research & Hacking,” accessed August 12, 2023, <https://disnovation.org/>; “Does Economic Growth ‘Create’ Greenhouse Effect? – Jean-Marc Jancovici,” accessed August 12, 2023, <https://jancovici.com/en/climate-change/economy/does-economic-growth-create-greenhouse-effect/>.

¹⁰ Yusoff, “The Inhumanities,” 672.

¹¹ Nancy Fraser, “Climates of Capital: For a Trans Environmental Eco Socialism,” *New Left Review*, February 2021, 117–20.

¹² Yusoff, “The Inhumanities,” 670–71.

as too radical or outright nonsense, their discourse would fan the fires of change to more resilient and responsive lifeform coexistence.

Against the backdrop of increasing inequalities of the liberal democratic form of government, coupled with the exploitative practices of capital, these artists, researchers, activists and scholars had applied a set of useful lenses – decoloniality,¹³ anti-racism¹⁴ and fractal¹⁵ intersectionality,¹⁶ eco feminism¹⁷ and eco socialism,¹⁸ among others - to reconsider and counter the dominant narrative¹⁹ found in the world governance apparatus led by a group of powerful governments under the auspices of the United Nations (UN).²⁰

The UN apparatus had codified a set of behavioral norms imposed by the controlling states over the non-controlling states and embellishing those norms with the politically-pleasing term “human rights.”²¹ In particular, the narrative surrounding human rights had cast the controlling states as the saviors and police of security and economic/political governance on the planet.²² This fomented a rights-based hysteria among the subjects who scrambled to get their rights recognized and to condemn states who did not adopt the forms of rights prescribed in the UN’s covenants, treaties and

¹³ Walter D. Mignolo, “Introduction: Coloniality of Power and de-Colonial Thinking,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2–3 (March 2007): 155–67, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162498>; Aníbal Quijano, “Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality,” *Cultural Studies* 21, no. 2 (2007): 168–78.

¹⁴ Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*, First Edition (New York: One World, 2019).

¹⁵ Clara Balaguer and Vishnu Vardhani Rajan, “Rosebush Syndrome (There Can Only Be One)” (West Summer School 2023, Den Haag, Nederland, July 18, 2023) During this presentation, Clara Balaguer employs the term “fractal intersectionality” to describe a type of intersectionality with many dimensions like fractal geometric figures.

¹⁶ Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality*, Key Concepts Series (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2016); Kimberle Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics,” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1989, no. 1 (1989).

¹⁷ Ariel Salleh, *Ecofeminism as Politics: Nature, Marx and the Postmodern*, Second edition (London: Zed books, 2017).

¹⁸ Mary Mellor, “Mary Mellor: A Personal, Political and Academic Journey,” July 2023 (letter on file with the author); Mary Mellor, *Breaking the Boundaries: Towards a Feminist Green Socialism*, Politics/Social Issues (London: Virago Press, 1992).

¹⁹ Tamara Lewis Arredondo, “Contextualizing the UDHR Master Narrative,” *Citizenship Debates*, May 6, 2023, <https://citizenshipdebates.pubpub.org/pub/vc8dns65/release/6>.

²⁰ On the one hand, the preamble to the UN Charter proclaimed one of its ends to be “to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours.” However, its competing goal “to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security,” often overshadowed the quest for living together in peace. The veto power enjoyed by five select nations also belied the claim “to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples.” “U.N. Charter,” June 26, 1945, Preamble, Chapter V, Article 27.

²¹ “U.N. Charter,” Preamble, Article 1.

²² Fraser, “Climates of Capital: For a Trans Environmental Eco Socialism,” 105, “It is states, in other words, that capitalist societies task with policing the boundary between economy and nature: with promoting or restraining ‘development’, with regulating or deregulating emissions, with deciding where to site toxic-waste dumps, whether and how to mitigate their effects, whom to protect and whom to place in harm’s way.” This author places the emphasis on the North American and European capitals as the states who dominate this sphere, rather than those in the Global South.

declarations.²³ The rights -based approach was a narrowly-formulated set of norms that excluded many lifeforms, even within the so-called “human” lifeform.²⁴

ChatGPT, the artificial intelligence model that scandalized societies at the end of 2022, summarized the dominant narrative of the human rights approach:

Human rights are fundamental rights and freedoms that are inherent to all individuals, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion, or other characteristics. They are considered universal, inalienable, and indivisible, meaning they apply to every human being and cannot be taken away or separated from a person under any circumstances. Human rights are considered essential for human dignity, equality, and well-being, and they form the foundation of just and fair societies.²⁵

Remarkably, there was an emphasis on humans to the detriment of other lifebeings not fitting the narrow definition of “human.” In addition, the common understanding of who could be “human” varied over time and geographic location. (For example, enslaved people and indigenous societies were, at times, not considered “human.” Persons located colonized lands of the periphery were also outside of the scope of the “human” category.)²⁶ The spatial and temporal dependencies of a rights framework alienated and fragmented large segments of lifebeings, placing them in substrata to be exploited, or their resources extracted, by a ruling capital class that actively accumulated by ignoring the value of the substrata and operating on the assumption that only productive, non-domestic tasks created wealth and revenue sources.²⁷ Value was subsumed in production and labor, rest and leisure²⁸ were not acknowledged as part of human temporality.²⁹ This mechanism of exclusion held the seeds of its own destruction and the pace of its demise was breathtaking for many.

²³“Human Rights Instruments,” OHCHR, accessed August 2, 2023,

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-listings> There were 9 core human rights instruments and a myriad of other conventions, optional protocols and declarations that fall under the general umbrella of human rights.

²⁴ The notion of human had always been contested. During the colonial period, the enslaved persons were not considered humans and were listed as chattel property. Later, the human rights instruments would find ways to distinguish between categories of humans, endowing some with rights and excluding others. For example, refugees were afforded certain protections when fleeing political persecution, but economic or climate refugees were not recognized as deserving of protections. For a discussion of the ways in which human has excluded Black people, read Frank Wilderson’s *Afropessimism*. Frank B. Wilderson, *Afropessimism*, First edition (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, a division of W.W. Norton and Company, 2020), 102 and Chapter 5.; See also Sylvia Wynter, “The Ceremony Must Be Found: After Humanism,” *Boundary 2* 12/13 (1984): 47–49.

²⁵ Open AI, “ChatGPT,” July 20, 2023.

²⁶ Luis Eslava and Sundhya Pahuja, “The State and International Law: A Reading from the Global South,” *Humanity Journal* 11, no. 1 (Spring 2020): 121.

²⁷ Federici, “Feminism and the Politics of the Commons.” “Capitalist accumulation is structurally dependent on the free appropriation of immense quantities of labor and resources that must appear as externalities to the market, like the unpaid domestic work that women have provided, upon which employers have relied for the reproduction of the workforce.”

²⁸ Juliet Schor, *Plenitude: The New Economics of True Wealth* (New York, N.Y: Penguin Press, 2010), Chapter 5 Schor explains how a short work week benefits ecology.

²⁹ Hanna Völke, “Ecofeminist Perspectives on Time(s)” (West Summer School, Rotterdam, Nederland, July 19, 2023) The presentation included different understandings of temporality and spatiality, outside of capital.

Economic and Monetary Policies

The rights machinery had attached itself to capital in such an inextricable way that liberal democracies, capital and human rights were synonymous with one another³⁰ and used interchangeably to enforce extractive regimes or land grabs.³¹ Territory and borders as well as trade and monetary policies protected the ruling capital class,³² pushing back any masses daring to breach the fortress walls into the growing seas.³³ The seas, themselves, endured both the acceleration of the capital machine³⁴ and climate change. The regimes did not stop at political structures, but penetrated economic structures, creating a global monetary policy based on bank-issued, private debt.³⁵ At the same time, industry waste and unfettered emissions rendered large swaths of planetary geographies uninhabitable.

The UN Secretary General made the following pronouncement at the end of July 2023:

A very good morning.
Humanity is in the hotseat.

Today, the World Meteorological Organization and the European Commission's Copernicus Climate Change Service are releasing official data that confirms that July 2023 is set to be the hottest month ever recorded in human history.

We don't have to wait for the end of the month to know this. Short of a mini-Ice Age over the next days, July 2023 will shatter records across the board.

[...]

The consequences are clear, and they are tragic: children swept away by monsoon rains; families running from the flames; workers collapsing in scorching heat.

For vast parts of North America, Asia, Africa and Europe – it is a cruel summer.

For the entire planet, it is a disaster.

And for scientists, it is unequivocal – humans are to blame.

All this is entirely consistent with predictions and repeated warnings.

The only surprise is the speed of the change.

Climate change is here. It is terrifying. And it is just the beginning.

The era of global warming has ended; the era of global boiling has arrived.

The air is unbreathable. The heat is unbearable. And the level of fossil fuel profits and climate inaction is unacceptable.³⁶

³⁰ Jessica Whyte, *The Morals of the Market: Human Rights and the Rise of Neoliberalism* (London ; New York, NY: Verso, 2019), 19 "Human rights played a significant and overlooked role in neoliberals' mid-century efforts to challenge socialism, social democracy and state planning, and neoliberal thinkers contributed more than has been acknowledged to the version of human rights that came to prominence decades later. By 1992, when Friedman spoke, the neoliberal argument that only a liberal market economy could foster human rights was taken as self-evident by many major international human rights NGOs."

³¹ Yusoff, "The Inhumanities," 665–66.

³² Stephanie Kelton, *The Deficit Myth: Modern Monetary Theory and the Birth of the People's Economy*, First edition (New York: Public Affairs, 2020), Chapter 5.

³³ Fraser, "Climates of Capital: For a Trans Environmental Eco Socialism," 118–19.

³⁴ Liam Campling and Alejandro Colás, *Capitalism and the Sea: The Maritime Factor in the Making of the Modern World* (London New York: Verso, 2021) This book raises another binary - the land/sea dichotomy. They outline the role maritime sites have played in the growth and development of capitalism over the centuries.

³⁵ Mary Mellor, "Money as a Public Resource for Development," *Development* 55, no. 1 (March 2012): 49–50, <https://doi.org/10.1057/dev.2011.107>; Kelton, *The Deficit Myth*.

³⁶ "Secretary-General's Opening Remarks at Press Conference on Climate | United Nations Secretary-General," accessed August 3, 2023,

UDHR Interrupted

The UN could point out the crisis but could not effectively galvanize member states to take definitive action. Other tactics to organize and coordinate a revolution were necessary.³⁷

One strategy to counter the dominant narrative is to place the literal words of the instruments that maintain that dominant narrative -- the key human rights conventions, treaties and declarations -- under scrutiny. The previously-referenced group of artists, researchers, activists and scholars cast an eye to the iconic Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR),³⁸ interrupting it with their own powerful counter narrative, a virtual manifesto to a new world. The choice of the UDHR was strategic.³⁹

The year 2023 had marked 75 years of the UDHR. That declaration was forged in the throes of colonial upheaval when the Allied Powers of Western Europe and North America were confronted with the speedy deterioration of their empires and the rising unrest of the oppressed ethnic groups within their borders.⁴⁰ Even as those same powers engaged in the project to bring a lasting peace to the world in the form of the United Nations, they did not want to endanger their extra-territorial interests with legal claims from the oppressed masses.⁴¹

It would be on the terrain of human rights that these nations would fight their fiercest battles, beginning with the UDHR itself.⁴² The negotiations for the UDHR were heated and contentious around issues of who would have rights and whether those rights could be invoked by their own

<https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/speeches/2023-07-27/secretary-generals-opening-remarks-press-conference-climate>.

³⁷ Joao Camargo, "Mass Communication and Narratives for the Crises of the Climate Crisis" (West Summer School 2023, Den Haag, Nederland, July 18, 2023) Camargo discusses a four-layer framework to mobilize: ideology, politics, strategy, tactics.

³⁸ "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (United Nations, December 10, 1948), G.A. Res. 217 A (III) Dec. 10, 1948.

³⁹ Camargo, "Mass Communication and Narratives for the Crises of the Climate Crisis" Camargo sees strategy as a ground for building alliances.

⁴⁰ While the US was confronting increasing conscientiousness within the African American population, Great Britain and France were watching the slow disintegration of their empires in Africa and Asia. Luis Eslava, Michael Fakhri, and Vasuki Nesiah, eds., *Bandung, Global History, and International Law: Critical Past and Pending Futures* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁴¹ Carol Anderson, "Symposium: African American and US Foreign Relations: From Hope to Disillusionment," *Diplomatic History* 20, no. 4 (1996): 537–42.

⁴² For an overview of the travaux préparatoires of the UDHR and the disputes between the USSR and the USA over the freedoms and treatment of minoritized populations within their border, see William A Schabas, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 3 Volume Hardback Set: The Travaux Préparatoires*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), <https://public.ebookcentral.proquest.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=5791586>; Anderson, "Symposium: African American and US Foreign Relations: From Hope to Disillusionment."

citizens.⁴³ The UDHR was not to be a binding instrument⁴⁴ that gave positive obligations to the states and afforded a judicial remedy for the citizens within their borders. Instead, it would be a declarative instrument. That initial weakening of the ability to address violations by the powerful Allied nations would guarantee that states and their proxies could continue the capitalist agenda unchecked.

A Manifesto

The group of some 17 participants interrupted the UDHR text in real time, infusing it with inclusive terminology, queering its binary language and expanding its gaze to other lifebeings, making it a manifesto for a new world. The newly formulated Universal Declaration of Human and More-Than-Human Rights and Responsibility for a New World would be the manifesto for an alliance of those who insisted on an end to capitalist practices and their destructive effects on the planet.

The Universal Declaration of Human and More-than-Human Rights and Responsibilities for a New World⁴⁵

Preamble

Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the more-than human species is the foundation of freedom of diversity, social-ecological justice and peace in the world,

Whereas disregard and contempt for all living species rights have resulted in exploitive, accumulative acts which have outraged the conscience of wo/humankind, and the advent of a world in which living beings shall enjoy freedom of thriving and belief and freedom from fear and stereotypical labels and want has been proclaimed as the fertile soil highest aspiration of the common beings,

Whereas it is essential, if :)being is not to be compelled to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny, oppression, and extractivism that more-than human rights

⁴³ Carol Anderson, *Eyes off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-1955* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 95–99 (describing the decision not to grant authority to the Human Rights Commission to review petitions from individual citizens from UN Member States).

⁴⁴ “Binding” is a legal term that refers to an instrument’s ability to obligate the party to adhere to its term under penalty of consequences for any violation. Eleanor Roosevelt, the president of the UN Human Rights Commission, and the chairperson of the UDHR drafting committee maintained that there had been no intention to produce a binding instrument. It was a declaration of symbolic value. “My Day by Eleanor Roosevelt, May 28, 1952,” accessed August 3, 2023, https://www2.gwu.edu/~erpapers/myday/displaydoc.cfm?_y=1952&_f=md002233.

⁴⁵ The original text of the UDHR is highlighted in blue/purple. The remaining colors represent the interrupted text entered by the participants.

should be protected by the rule of law which will hopefully be enforced fairly, even for rich people,

Whereas it is essential to promote the development of life-enhancing relationships between species beyond national borders and confinements (not "nations"),

Whereas the beings, living or not, of the United Species Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental more than human rights, in the dignity and worth of the more than human person and in the equal rights of beings and have determined to promote social progress and better quality of life in larger freedom,

Whereas Earthlings have pledged themselves to achieve, in co-operation within the United Species Nations, the promotion of universal respect for and observance of all rights and fundamental freedoms,

Whereas a common understanding and knowledge sharing of these rights and freedoms is of the greatest importance for the full realization of this pledge,

Now, therefore,

The General Assembly,

~~Proclaims this Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of ecology society,~~ keeping this Declaration constantly in mind, and constantly attached to the world's transformations, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by inclusive measures, not limited to national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.

Article 1

All more than human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of fluid humanhood.

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, as long as they fulfill their responsibilities without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the landscape, country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.



Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their direct and indirect forms.

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a human and/or more-than-human before the law.

Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 8

Everyone has the right to an affective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted them by the constitution or by law.

Article 9

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent, embodied and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against them.

Article 11

1. Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed **innocent until proved guilty** according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for their defence.
2. No one shall be held guilty of any penal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a penal offence, under national or international law, at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the penal offence was committed.

Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with their privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks.

Article 13

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.
2. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including their own, and to return to their country.

Article 14

1. Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

2. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 15

1. Everyone all more than humans and humans have the right to a nationality.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality.

Article 16

1. ~~Men and women and non-binary~~ All life forms of full age, without any limitation due to race, ability, nationality or religion, have the right to marry or not marry and to found a family or not. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution or full outright refusal.
2. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.
3. ~~The family~~ kinship is the natural and fundamental one potential group unit of society among many, and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Article 17

1. Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.
2. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of their property.

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change their religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest their religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship, care and observance.

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

2. No one may be compelled to belong to an association, this includes non-humans.

Article 21

1. Everyone has the right to take part in the government of their country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.
2. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in their country.
3. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures.

Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for their dignity and the free development of their personality.

Article 23

1. Everyone has the right to rest, work, free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.
2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.
3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for themselves and their family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.
4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Article 24

Everyone has the right to queer and leisure, including reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay.

Article 25

1. Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old

age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

2. parenthood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of the world, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26

1. Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at all stages because its fundamental. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of circumstances and merit.
2. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.
3. Parents and official guardians have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Article 27

1. Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.
2. Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he/she/they is/are the author.

Article 28

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29

1. Everyone has contributions to the community in which alone the free and full development of their personality is possible.
2. In the exercise of his/her/their rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality,

~~public order and their general welfare in a democratic society.~~

3. These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.

Article 30

Everything in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

The interrupted UDHR dared to allow all lifeforms to be on par and within governance structures. It rendered exclusionary language powerless and bound all beings together in community, a type of peaceable commons. Later movements would challenge the contradictory divisions of capital – the public/private divide, the inviolability of capital owning classes, the exceptions and exemptions from taxation and the impunity of states for violations of lifeform rights. All lifebeings were accounted *for* and accountable *to* the commons – e.g. the planet in its entirety. This rallying cry was used in the United Species Anthem, as planetary lifebeings began to unite to form a peaceable commons.

A New World: The Peaceable Commons

Jihad [to the other lifeforms who had approached and witnessed the historic flashback]: we are happy to settle with you this season. My lifepartner, Salaam, and I are mooring after a temporality season away in the waters. We can offer supplies of aquatic plants for meals and sustenance.

Salaam [showing the supply stock to the others]: All are welcome.

One creature floated near also displaying a variety of objects that seemed useful for heating and cooling. Other creatures began unstocking and preparing to share. They were singing the United Species Anthem in their own communication forms.

The lenses indicated general greetings and warmth. Jihad and Salaam relaxed, knowing they were welcomed. Circling together, they spontaneously intoned the United Species anthem: “A more-than human species, united in larger freedom!”

United Species Anthem

Note for musical performance:

United Species Anthem

Call and Response of Interspecies Unity

Tamara N. Lewis A.

REFRAIN

Soprano
A more than hu-man - spe - cies, u - ni-ted-in lar-ger free-dom!

Alto
A more than hu-man spe - cies, u - ni-ted-in lar-ger free-dom!

Baritone
A more than hu man spe - cies, u - ni-ted-in lar-ger free-dom!

The “United Species Anthem” was inspired by the text of “The Universal Declaration of Human and More-than-Human Rights and Responsibilities for a New World.” It is designed to be sung using a Call and Response style. Call and Response is a traditional African-American singing style where a soloist calls out the words of a verse and the remaining singers or congregation respond by singing a refrain. In the case of this anthem, the soloist can be inspired by the words of the declaration singing out a line or two in a chant or saying them aloud as oratory, then the chorus responds with the sung refrain. The refrain is written for three voices but other voices and descants can be improvised. Drums and other musical instruments can also accompany the call and response.

Call and response of interspecies unity is a powerful way to reclaim the tradition of African American slaves to proclaim a larger freedom for all species in the same way that call and response proclaimed liberty for captives.

Planet Abundance

a feminist economist vision of a post-work society

by Teresa Feldmann

We are entering a portal that will take us to the future, a world we call Planet Abundance. Together we have witnessed The Great Exodus. As the climate crisis has worsened, and extreme weather so frequent, even the billionaires began to worry. And so the power elites hastily built rockets to evacuate from planet Earth.

The first settlers have already arrived on Mars for an indefinite stay. At first, the richest of the Earth's population scrambled to get to the colony on Mars, thinking it would save them. In this chaotic hysteria, it was believed that being left behind on Earth is no longer viable.

But hold on.

The majority of survivors on Earth are women. Unsurprisingly, those who were marginalised under capitalist patriarchy, have an upper hand in surviving the climate collapse due to their lifelong experience of being amazingly resourceful. Those with the most knowledge and survival skills are women of colour, Indigenous women, transgender women and women with disabilities. As we form new leaderships and roles on Planet Abundance, the voices of women of colour, Indigenous women, transgender women and women with disabilities are the most important to learn from.

In this new world, the Earthlings make a conscious agreement to pool skills and resources. Although ecosystems have been ravaged, landscapes are pillaged, in these challenging conditions the Earthlings adopt an abundance mindset. After all, there is an abundance of skills and energy and time to make things happen.

It is not just the skills though. Our underlying operating system is care. Women, and in particular, indigenous peoples, women of colour, transgender women, and women with disabilities always have had staggering caring responsibilities, both under- and unpaid. They are mentally prepared to undertake such an immense task of trying to remedy the multiple social and environmental crises.

Earthlings are now in charge of their own time. When people have the freedom of time, they start doing more of that so-called women's work. This applies to all genders. They give abundantly without expecting a return because they feel safe and cared for. They participate in each other's lives but also remember to take care of the self. And they learn quickly that it is the caring capacity that offers the best recipe for surviving on the damaged planet.

On Planet Abundance the Earthlings are practising a form of communal living that can be best described as a 'caring post-work society'. It honours individual autonomy and celebrates community interdependence, finding a balance between the two. Everyone is encouraged to responsibly grow their personal abundance—an abundance that's unlike anyone else's.

A recording of Teresa Feldmann reading the above introduction is available on SoundCloud:
<https://soundcloud.com/feminist-exchanges/planet-abundance-reading-introduction-by-teresa-feldmann>

Some basic Planet Abundance guidelines to consider:

#1

Planet Abundance is a reboot: billionaires don't exist on Earth anymore

#2

Indigenous peoples, women of colour, people with disabilities and transgender women now form the leadership on Planet Abundance and these voices will be the most important to learn from in workshops

#3

There's no need to work to earn money for basic survival

#4

Care becomes visible and celebrated. Care is also what makes the abundance mindset possible

Some key questions to consider:

What new opportunities do we have?

What are the skills and knowledge that our new leaders most value?

What obstacles did we have to overcome in building our new world?

What practices and ways of being, seeing, knowing did we always have that are now valued as they always should have been?

Do we still define gender? Has this changed our ideas of sexuality?

How have we built safe spaces for everyone?

What do we want to share? What do you want to keep private?

How do we experience pleasure?

How do we communicate?

What languages do we speak?

Feminist economics oriented questions to consider:

How does money function on Planet Abundance? Do we still need money?

What is the concept of 'value' here? What is most valuable in this future society?

How do power relations function in your imagined society?

What hierarchies may form? Do those hierarchies stay fixed?

How do we reach consensus?

What does 'freedom' feel like?

*Questions co-written by
Teresa Feldmann & Ailie Rutherford*

tide together, pretending not to sea.

Justine Ellul, Beatrice Cera

Being open for collaboration is an effort towards interpretation, reading through the lines, listening. It means to be open to giving up on control, and welcoming unexpected results. It also implies a constant dialogue, reciprocal trust, and honest communication.

The collaboration between Justine and I was prompted by an ongoing conversation on feminism, economy, and alternative modes of living on this planet. *tide together, pretending not to sea* was initially a text and a visual project I developed as a student. The text, especially, reflects on how can we take a different perspective than the human one. How can we embody the sea – if that's something we can do at all? It's an attempt, it's a poem, it's a fictional exercise. But it's an actual effort, a sliver of a different light insinuating through a closed door. I gave the text to Justine, curious to see how she would have responded – literally and metaphorically – through her lens. I of course had images in my mind, and of course what she created was very far from them. That's what's fascinating in the act of collaboration. The ending point is never predictable at the start. Justine read about invisibility in my text, and about a communion with the sea. She decided to re-insert a human body in the narrative. This made me think that perhaps it is a vain effort, that of pretending to not be what we are. Perhaps, we should strive to see how things coexist together, rather than exclusively choosing one narrative *or* the other. Humans *and* the sea, humans *with* the sea. What these equations open up in terms of climate and political justice – I leave it here suspend between us, dear reader. I invite you to grasp it in the air, to not avert your thought, to not close up your mind.

My nature is movement. My nature is fluid.
I don't know anything else than shapeless-
ness and adaptation. My body is shallow
and deep and as big as everything I embrace.
Lose yourself in the meanderings of my waves.

A liquid body is a body who receives and changes
shape in order to receive. A liquid body is a body
with no definite identity. My character is aque-
ous, molded and carved by the matters who enter me.
Inside, outside. I can touch them, skimming the harder
substance with my extremities — I can feel them, when
they move and dance inside my watery womb. There are
bodies who come and go, and bodies I've always shared my
existence with since the beginning. They are entities within
my being and we reverberate together weaving an endless
symphony that traces our existence.²

My fertile venter nourishes my planet, through plants and living
organisms, through minerals, rocks, waves, sand, shells, algae,
liquids. Through constant movement I escape deadly stillness,
through constant reproduction I ensure the stream of life contin-
ues. I preserve ancestral knowledge in my recesses and bestow to
other bodies.

My violated venter is in danger, threatened by years of exploitation
and carelessness. Lethal, iridescent waters flow, twirling and chok-
ing every being in their way.⁴ Unfurling plumes bleach every trace of
life, leaving nothing but breathless whiteness behind. Can you feel
your bowels burning? Can you feel the caress of deathly gas softly
touching your body?

Leaks, holes, craters, drills, wrecks, bombs. My womb is a grave —
memory the unlamented deceased. My darkest depths recollect dreads
of the past. My body is the dark place where painful memories are
pulled back, in the desperate attempt to conceal them. I am the tan-
talising space that absorbs trauma and numbs the past. But without
memory there is no progression, no possible development. In an un-
stable body the slightest prompting can provoke excessive reactions,
and my nature is circular, fertile. Remember that.

Past and present mingle in my waters, diluted in an atemporal
solution that obscures the effect of decisions taken over years.
It is easy to not think about the problem, when it fades into
my flows. But traces of it remain, undiluted, spectral remind-
ers that violently demand attention. Oily spots, dark holes,
bleeding cracks, rusty pieces, swollen bodies. Through
me, everything comes ashore, breeding the cycle of death
and life again and again. Through me, everything comes
ashore and ignoring it is a choice that cannot be taken
again. In the fluid dance of things, what is left behind
flows back and reemerges. And my nature is impartial,
embracing all with my watery waves.

My body is living movement. My body is fluid. In the
eternal dance of things, we are bodies who belong
to each other. Don't kill the dance, keep it alive.

Biographies of the Contributors

anna andrejew

is an artist, ecofeminist and permaculturalist based in the hague, the netherlands. previously she has worked in the humanitarian aid sector, and since 2019 started to develop her own process-oriented artistic practice. Through her research she explores the memory of matter. her work takes the form of the material and immaterial: installations, photography, conversations and writing.

Clara Balaguer

is a cultural worker, curriculum builder, and grey literature circulator. Frequently, she operates under collective or individual aliases, the latest of which is To Be Determined: a loosely organized structure of sleeper cells that activate or deactivate in response to external factors—abundance to be distributed, urgencies to be addressed, or leisure to be. Currently, she curates the Civic Praxis program at BAK, basis for actuele kunst (Utrecht) and teaches Experimental Publishing at Piet Zwart Institute (Rotterdam).

Beatrice Cera

is an Italian art worker, curator, and designer. In her work she takes the stance of a collective practice as a process to foster political responsibility. To her, holding space for collectivity is a necessary counter narrative to a hyper individualistic way of living. This narrative takes multiple forms – workshopping, publishing, hosting, reading, collaborating. Alongside, she moves in the facilitation of contemporary artistic production, as writer, educator, and radio maker.

Justine Ellul

is a Maltese photographer specialized in documentary storytelling. Through her lens, she strives to express the essence of psychology and societal issues. With curiosity and careful observation, she designs impactful narratives. She is particularly drawn to exploring uniformity and typologies, identifying distinctive elements with her sensitive vision.

Teresa Feldmann

Teresa Feldmann is a designer-artist who studies the diverse presences of care and unpaid labour. She is interested in regenerative cultures—the types of customs and mindsets they foster, and what they say about the economy.

Teresa integrates creative writing in her practice, designing thought experiments. With the script 'Planet Abundance' she began to inquire into how relations of care would arrange if people had the freedom of time. Planet Abundance has now evolved into a collective art project envisioning feminist futures.

Her recent exhibitions/collaborations include the festival 'Who owns the economy?' (NL), Dutch Design Week (NL), Baltan Laboratories (NL), Arts Initiative Tokyo (JP), Documenta 15 (DE), Castlefield Gallery (UK).

Baruch Gottlieb

trained as a filmmaker at Concordia University Montreal, Baruch has a doctorate in digital aesthetics from the University of Arts Berlin. Author of "Gratitude for Technology" (ATROPOS 2009), "A Political Economy of the Smallest Things" (ATROPOS 2016), and

Digital Materialism (Emerald 2018) he currently lectures in philosophy of digital art at the University of Arts Berlin and curates at West Den Haag, He is a practicing transdisciplinary artist specializing in kunst am bau, digital art for public space, interactive and generative art, sound art and single channel video. He writes extensively on digital media and on social and political and ethical aspects of technologies.

Tamara N. Lewis Arredondo

researches on themes related to International Human Rights Law and Global Citizenship for the Wereldburgerschap lectoraat at The Hague University of Applied Sciences in The Netherlands. She also designs learning experiences, trains lecturers, and produces video recordings for The Hague Centre for Teaching and Learning. Tamara's recent scholarship examines responsible use of generative AI and decolonized and inclusive approaches to teaching, research, and learning. Juris Doctor, Columbia University School of Law. PhD, Maastricht University School of Law.

Mary Mellor

is Emeritus Professor at Northumbria University, where she was founding Chair of the University's Sustainable Cities Research Institute. She has published extensively on alternative economics integrating socialist, feminist, and green perspectives. She is a founding member of the newly formed World Economics Association and is on the editorial board of several journals. Her books include *Feminism and Ecology*, *The Future of Money: From Financial Crisis to Public Resource*, and *Debt or Democracy? Public Money for Sustainability and Social Justice*. She holds a PhD from Newcastle University.

Vishnu Vardhani Rajan

is a body-philosopher. A hyphenated identity and building connections between art, witchcraft, alternative histories, punk orientalism, Marxism, and Naxalism define them. Sleep, conflict, nutrition, gaze, and surveillance are research interests in their philosophy. Night politics, conflict-positivity, and food are recurring themes in their work, which spans multi-disciplinary practices such as performance arts, masc-drag, stand-up comedy, film-making, quilting, and spoken word poetry. *Infinite Playlist Afterisms* and *Convivial Complaint Cell* are their current, long-term, non-performance performance works.

Karolina Rupp

Although German born, I grew up in Pretoria, South Africa, where I completed my studies in sociology, anthropology and photography. After this I worked in commercial photography for 2 years while simultaneously joining a Pretoria-based art studio where I developed an artistic practice predominately focusing on analogue lens based media. As of early 2016, I am situated in The Netherlands where I completed my Bachelor of Fine Arts at the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague and will graduate from ArtEZ University of the Arts with a MA in Performance Practices this July (2024). I'm a founding member of various collectives and have participated in multiple artist-in-residence programs internationally. As a practicing artist working in sculpture, site-responsive intervention and performance, I understand my work as expanded sculptural assemblage consisting of many co-performers, human and non-human. In the making process, I rely on the corporeal as a vessel of knowledge, especially in relation to the ecological environment.

Katerina Sidorova

is a visual artist and a researcher based in The Hague, Netherlands. Working with installation, performance and text, Katerina Sidorova looks at multiple facets of mortality

and necropolitics in her practice. The artist is working with the absurdity of human existence through their relationships with death, grief, non-human species, coping mechanisms of reasoning and biopower manifestations. Researching societal hierarchies, mythologies, staging and performativity as a political strategy, she is interested in how mortality resonates in humans on every level; from domestic environments and personal stories to effects of warfare on a landscape and state-to-population power dynamics. In her works sculptural meets theatrical: large immersive environments serve as a platform for performative actions, curation and experiment, with imperfection as method. Sidorova has obtained a BFA from both the Royal Academy of Art in The Hague and Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University followed by a Master in Fine Arts at Glasgow School of Art and PhD at the Philosophy department of Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University. Latest solo exhibitions include 'Bottleneck' at West, The Hague, 'As a Pile of Ash' at 16 Nicholson Street, Glasgow and 'Gläserner Mensch' at Dürst Britt and Mayhew, The Hague. Amongst publications are 'How to Stop Being Human: Guidelines for becoming a squirrel' (2016) 'Martyrdom Body State Manifesting Power' (2020), 'The Game of Knives' (2022) and 'CONTAINERS' (2023).

Debra Solomon

is an artist and infrastructure activist, whose work for more than two and a half decades concerns the public space. Currently a PhD candidate in the University of Amsterdam's department of Urban Planning, Solomon is also founder of Urbaniahoeve – Social Design Lab for Urban Agriculture. Since 2010, Urbaniahoeve's critical spatial practice is driven by reciprocal, interspecies care relations, biodiversity defragmentation, and the application of living soils and public space food forest expertise to serve public space ecosystems. Urbaniahoeve's current project is the 56 hectare Amsterdam Zuidoost Urban Food Forest, (called VBAZO) in the public space of Amsterdam Zuidoost. VBAZO is produced by the Urbaniahoeve collective (Debra Solomon and Renate Nollen) in close collaboration with local human and more-than-human communities, and was presented in the Dutch Pavilion at the 2021 Venice Architecture Biennial (whoiswe.nl).

Catherine Taft

is a writer and curator based in Los Angeles, California. She is the curator and deputy director of the non-profit art space LAXART, and previously held curatorial positions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Her writing has appeared in publications including Artforum, Art Review, Frieze, and Kaleidoscope, and in other assorted catalogues, monographs, and zines. Since 2016, Taft has served as visiting faculty in the Graduate Art program at Art Center College of Design, Pasadena, where she has taught seminars on ecofeminism and speculative futures, among others. She is currently completing an independent study at the Institute for Postnatural Studies, Madrid, and working on a major exhibition of ecofeminist art for which she received a research fellowship from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. The exhibition, Life on Earth: Art & Ecofeminism, will open at LAXART in fall 2024 before traveling to West Den Haag in 2025.

COLOPHON

EDITED

collaboratively by

Anna Andrejew, Tamara N. Lewis Arredondo, Baruch Gottlieb, Karolina Rupp, Katerina Sidorova,
Constanza Tagliaferri

AUTHORS

Anna Andrejew, Tamara N. Lewis Arredondo, Clara Balaguer, Teresa Feldmann, Beatrice Cera,
Baruch Gottlieb, Mary Mellor, Vishnu Vardhani Rajan, Karolina Rupp, Katerina Sidorova, Catherine
Taft, Constanza Tagliaferri

IMAGE CREDITS

Justine Ellul, Kathy Murillo & Debra Solomon

PUBLISHER

West Summer School

COPYRIGHT

© 2024 All articles © the Authors