

‘River-Stone-Ceremony’

Towards a Material Poet(h)ics of Nonhuman-human Witnessing

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Declaration of Authorship: I, Laura Burns hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: Laura Burns Date: 31st March, 2020

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For the river, and all its relations.

——— March 2020

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This practice-based PhD situates itself within the current global environmental crisis, considering a reorientation to land from queer feminist and decolonial perspectives. The project evolves around a series of visions which took place in July 2015, at the River Wyre in Pendle, Lancashire, the location of the infamous 1612 witch-hunts. The visions, as a central theory of the thesis, are engaged through relational embodied practices and performances to explore a mode of animacy emanating with and from the nonhuman and human ancestors. The thesis addresses ways of including the nonhuman ancestors (specifically river, stone) within the political, moving through and beyond biosemiotics, materialist approaches and politics of recognition, re-orienting to land as pedagogy and the emergence of a grounded ethics.

The project works with Elizabeth Povinelli’s articulation of geontopower, to question how collaborative processes of human-nonhuman witnessing might produce an emergent ethics necessary in the context of late liberal, colonial-capitalism’s production of racial, gender, environmental and epistemological violence. Central to this investigation is the role of voice and language and its entangled animacy with land and the nonhuman, explored through critical thinking around the visions, settler-colonial dynamics, and site-specific research. The figure of the stone-womxn, a collective of human-nonhuman existents experienced through the visions, calls for an immaterial and spiritual labour which prioritises the generative potential of dissolution rather than (re)-production, representation, accumulation or inevitability of bringing the immaterial into materiality.

The first phase of practice (2015-2017) is punctuated by choreographic work for stage, one-on-one durational performance and site-specific performance. The second phase (2018-2019) emerges an ongoing collaborative practice with the river stones I term *the unearthings*, and a series of land ceremonies at the river during summer 2019 held under the project name *Ceremony House*.

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Glossary

Stone-womxn and *Pendle womxn* and *River-serpent-womxn* are used to include non-cisgendered women, femme-identifying, genderqueer and non-binary individuals. It is important to emphasise the use of *Pendle womxn* in light of the historical witch-hunts, as many bodies were subject to misogyny and new capitalist regimes of production. Whilst the figure of the witch has often been central to feminist labour and discourse, these lineages need to be inclusive and intersectional to avoid privileging access to such figures based on essentialism or race. The *stone-womxn* are an entity subject to patriarchal violence; their cut from the stones indicates the patriarchal-colonial construction of gender and its subsequent violence. They and the *River-serpent-womxn* emanate a more-than-human force often associated with goddess and creatrix figures. Such entities have frequently been aestheticised and represented as female, which is a detriment to the non-binary, more-than-human force that such energy pulses through the world. As such, the *stone-womxn* and *river-serpent-womxn* are figures that speak to ‘an otherwise’ power and knowing, from that which is mechanised through Enlightenment and colonial ideologies.

Existents refers to material and immaterial entities, whose ‘bodies’ do not have fixed attributes, but are plural, porous, enmeshed and co-constituted by the relations and bodies oriented towards them. As such, the *stone-womxn* are an existent, as are various appearances in *the unearthings*.

Nonhuman refers to material bodies including animal, plants, stone, river. I use it to emphasise material, earthly bodies across Life Nonlife divides. I use the term *more-than-human* to invoke social collectivities which include nonhuman, spirit, ancestor or immaterial existents. The term more-than-human was first used by David Abram in his 1996 book *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World*, to replace an uncritical use of “nature” and invoke human sociality’s part within a broader earthly society. Anna Tsing’s “More-than-Human Sociality: A Call for Critical Description” uses it to call for critical modes of describing living systems from a distinctly anthropological discipline. I diverge here, and include rocks, rivers and immaterial existents such as ancestors and stone-womxn (across the so-called Life Nonlife divide), to propose artistic practices that offer alternative modes of interpreting intentional, future-propelling capacities. More-than-human, in my usage, thus urges a consideration of sociality beyond the Life Nonlife binary, and therefore a critical description of encounter with the dynamics of these less perceivable more-than-human forces.

The visions are singularly known as such, but as a collective of events, become the *vision-myth*, to emphasise the performative mythic resonance of their being read together, and embodied through practice.

The Knowing Field is a term used in systemic constellations - a group therapeutic model (explicated in *Methods and Methodologies*) - and refers to an immaterial space that is regarded as “actual, intelligent, and benign”. One intentionally “enters” said field when initiating a constellation, but it is essentially the “universal field of energy and information; the field that is timeless, flowing and constantly transforming itself: the quantum field, of which we are a part”. The field thus carries both history and potential; it contains “morphic, or pattern-related resonance” transcending time and space.¹

Resonance is a term derived from its use in disciplines including homeopathy, systemic constellations and sound work. Resonance refers to a mode of attunement - tuning to or with another body’s vibrational frequency. This implies a likeness in ways that throughout this thesis, I will explore in their unexpected, dynamic and in flux capacity.

Radical Inclusion is likewise a term from systemic constellations, although I will use it outside of this context also. In contrast to other approaches which tend to view personal issues in the light of *individual* experience, systemic constellation work looks at the widest possible view and includes everyone and everything that might have a place. It stems from practitioners’ experience with the knowing field - that the flow of life in any porous system is dependent on inclusion - including everything that is. The field will often reveal what has been excluded, made absent, silenced or erased, manifesting it through different entities (people, or beings) at other nodes in the system. The practice of widening the inclusion of phenomena which may be significant or relevant, is a key element of my process of encountering nonhuman presences.

Spirit Labour is a term coined by Adrian Heathfield and Hugo Glendinning in their film of the same name, featuring Anna Halprin, Hélène Cixous and Janine Antoni. I use it to refer to a consistent mode of research across all phases of the practice, that considers its ecological approach as attending to the unseen as much as the seen. Spirit labour is a way of making valid and tangible the necessity to include the less visible and immaterial realms in an attendance to the material: the realm of spirit, or ancestor known or unknown, human or nonhuman, and various existents that appear through *the unearthings* and site-specific research.

Following Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, I use the word *land* to indicate a deeply intelligent, material-spiritual system of reciprocal relations and obligations that can guide an ethics and politics. How that has been experienced in my own context is specific to the *hereish* Lancashire River Wyre, the stones and various sites that I have engaged.

¹ *Centre for Systemic Constellations; A handbook*, p16.

The Visions

if you promise not to tell anyone

I see black shapes crenelate the horizon
shadows / or absences / I mean
do they draw you into them or are they pressing out / hard to say
only
flat sleek grey gone black
blue gone black
indigo almost gone
yes I suppose dragging in like an undercurrent although the more I look the more unsure
and anyway
it was so quick I almost missed it
/ what nightfall / yes
don't you remember
we were walking when it happened maybe you were looking down
or had your eyes closed

what is this voice tumbling down the hill are we expecting

someone?

The First Vision

We are standing in a field, you and I. We are standing in a circle, backs together, facing out to the horizon. You and I are standing in a field with our eyes closed, facing out to the horizon. We are standing in darkness, in the centre of a field full of long grasses. The fells behind us, the sea in front. We are standing close together and begin to walk out and further out. Fear punctures the belly and rises up. Encircled by a group of tall, thin, dark shadows moving in from the horizon, coming towards us. We are a group of womxn who are stones, holding stones, as womxn-stones we are stone-womxn, holding these stones that do not belong to us, you and I are stones as womxn holding stones, clutching them to our bellies. The circle of tall thin ones come towards us, fast, in a rush. It is very sudden. It is very sudden the way they come towards us felt in the belly and rising up. It is very sudden how they rip through us.

The Second Vision

We are in the field by the dam in the river. Gut churning and wanting to be far away. Wanting to escape. It is hours maybe divining with the stick maybe for hours. Not wanting to go to the river bed, to all the way down there, to the dark between the two slabs of gorge and river bank, to the rush of water pouring bloating out of the dam. Standing in the field walking up and down maybe for hours maybe broad daylight and seeing all angles still cannot be safe enough. In an instant they are there. Swathes of maybe womxn looking all the same, thin, in tattered clothing. They are working, back-breaking work, smashing stones, trying to chip away at these stones. The womxn who used to be stones, the stones they clutched like their own children to their bellies. It is very, very exhausting to see the womxn and the stones like this I sit down. These womxn are not so long ago womxn, they feel closer, much closer than the stone-womxn. They feel maybe a bit before our grandmothers. Here they are without any sound, without any song, breaking the stones. The stones are sharp, there is dust everywhere, maybe the stones cut their hands, the blood immediately dries, there are no tears. Everything is dry, there is no song. I do not know how I know this.

The Third Vision

The sun rising on the shortest day of the year. Sending the question deep down, deep deep into the earth. The gesture with hands and one stone, over and over and over again from 3am until the sun passes directly passes above the horizon line of trees. When it is full there in front and the skin begins to warm finally and quick, then the question goes deep deep into the ground with the sun full in front. There are a group of womxn, the same womxn but different and maybe the same somehow the same again clutching the full stones to their bellies and differently, the clutch is warm and tender with water feeling everywhere. They are carrying them and planting them into the ground. They are planting them into the ground in a circle. They know how and where to place each single stone through the sounds they make with their mouths. The sounds spin out and into the ground and back and the womxn follow the direction of the sound taken in and given back from the ground. The womxn are building a ceremony house, a stone house sunken into the ground, a house they can come and go from, a house they enter and leave again. They are not the stones and the stones are not them, but they cannot help but think of one another and it is quiet but feeling water everywhere, very quiet even with sound not silence just nothing needing to be said about this knowing of the womxn and of the stones and the space between them humming.

THE LANCASHIRE SITE

The land within the Forest of Bowland, where the River Wyre makes its way down the fells into the surrounding agricultural land, is owned by the Duke of Westminster, the Duchy of Lancaster, the water works company United Utilities, isolated farmsteads and includes the protected Bowland Fells Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The fells rise up in a horseshoe where the sources of tributaries to the Rivers Wyre and Hodder, gather and join. Langden brook flows West down the fells, into the River Hodder towards Pendle and the ancient hunting grounds of the Duke of Westminster. Tarnbrook Wyre flows East into the River Wyre towards its mouth of the Irish Sea at Fleetwood, passing through Abbeystead Estate. United Utilities own the catchment area at Langdon Brook, between Abbeystead and Dunsop Bridge: a water works company that has channelled the water into Lancaster and surrounding towns since 1870, when the water was used in the new cotton factories as it was particularly “soft and good for washing cotton”.² Rivers and water have shaped the land. The area is dominated by Millstone Grit, laid down by rivers and deltas in the Carboniferous Period, revealing thick beds of sandstone separated by layers of more easily eroded mudstone. Meltwater from retreating glaciers cuts channels and notches in the skyline of the Fells. Valleys reveal the routes of these waters forming the land since de-glaciation.

The first vision occurred somewhere between Dolphinhholme and Abbeystead, at around 11pm. The second vision occurred at the dam of Abbeystead Estate, where the River Wyre is held and turned into a quintessential Victorian landscape garden, sometime during the afternoon. The third vision occurred on a hill rising up above the same river between Dolphinhholme and Abbeystead, at around 5am. I will later find out that the site of the second vision is also the site of the ‘Abbeystead Disaster’, a methane explosion in a waterworks’ valve house, which killed sixteen visitors. The official inquiry into the disaster concluded that the methane had seeped from coal deposits 3,937ft below ground and built up in an empty pipeline. The gas was then ejected into the valve house by the sudden pressure of water as the pumps were switched on. The visitors were coming to elevate concerns as to recent flooding from the rivers Wyre and Lune, thought to be caused by the NWWA’s Lancashire supply

² On a United Utilities information plaque at the entrance of Langden Brook, Forest of Bowland.

scheme, which involved the daily extraction of up to 62 million imperial gallons (280,000 m³) of water from the River Lune near Lancaster which was then pumped through Abbeystead into the River Wyre.³

The Grosvenor Family, Duke of Westminster, own the 18,000 acre Abbeystead Estate. It boasts the largest shooting win in the country (2,929 grouse killed by eight shooters in August 1915). The family own a property business that developed vast areas of Belgravia, then went on to US and Canada, developing Vancouver in the 1950s. After the Duke passed away in 2016, the inheritors paid minimal inheritance tax on the £9billion estate, sparking a controversy around inheritance laws. The Duchy of Lancaster (including Whitewell Estate where the River Hodder runs towards Pendle):

“is a private estate owned by Her Majesty The Queen, as Duke of Lancaster. One of the rural estates that in total consist of 18,481 hectares of land in England and Wales and comprise commercial, agricultural and residential properties, the majority of which are in Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire, Staffordshire and Lincolnshire.”⁴

The historic House of Lancaster, which founded Eton and King's college, became established through the fight for the Crown of England in the War of the Roses, subsequently becoming the infamous House of Tudors.⁵ “Forest Law” was the general term applied to “forests” of Britain, which were areas “outside” (Latin *foris*) the law of the land, preserved solely for the use of the aristocracy as royal hunting grounds. During the Tudor period the land was made into a heavy source of profit through agriculture and the remaining forested areas destroyed.⁶ Timber industries now dominate the south-east of the area through extensive conifer plantations, mainly consisting of Sitka spruce, introduced to Europe in the 19th century as a lumber tree.

³ “Abbeystead Explosion: a report of the investigation by the Health and Safety Executive into the explosion on 23 May 1984 at the valve house of the Lune / Wyre Water Transfer Scheme at Abbeystead” (1985) accessed September 8, 2016, online at: https://archive.org/stream/op1276745-1001/op1276745-1001_djvu.txt. The NWWA is the North West Water Authority.

⁴ “Duchy of Lancaster,” accessed December 2, 2018, online at: <https://www.duchyoflancaster.co.uk/about-the-duchy/>.

⁵ James Sherborne and Anthony Tuck. *War, Politics and Culture in 14th-Century England*. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1994).

⁶ Extensive cultivation and removal of woodland cover had occurred by the end of the Neolithic Period. A combination of soil exhaustion and climate change gave rise to heathland and blanket bog and the permanent abandonment of most upland settlement in the late Bronze Age, in the late second millennium BC. Medieval enclosures shaped the land and its practices. The open aspect of the landscape was sustained through the use of the moorland for summer grazing and fuel, which extended into modern times. See *Decolonial Environmentalism*.

The Bowland fells however are a dense ecology and intricate biodiversity, supporting the protected species merlin and peregrine, as well as a large colony of lesser black-backed gulls. Red-listed ring ouzel, amber-listed whinchat, and breeding wader populations of redshank, lapwing, snipe and curlew also find their home here. The area hosts rare plant species, including bog rosemary and pale forget-me-not, and species-rich grasslands found in the limestone areas to the east. Rivers provide habitat for local and migrating species of salmon, trout, eels, bullheads, grayling, otters, kingfishers and dippers. Maintaining this rich ecology is vital in the face of encroachments of timber companies, climate change and prolonged drought increasing soil erosion, loss of organic matter due to unsustainable burning and heavy fertiliser use and its spill-off.⁷

The fells are used for private “field sports”, principally red grouse shooting on the heather moors and pheasant rearing in plantations below the Fells. The heather on the fells is set on fire to promote the growth of sphagnum moss, whose short fresh shoots attract the grouse. This destruction of habitat and illegal poaching are a threat to the endangered Harrier Hens. RSPCB are frequently called in to guard, track and monitor the poaching, although their employers have some conflicted interest as are also responsible for renting land for grouse shoots. It is unclear therefore who employs people to poach the Harrier Hens. The Abbeystead website boasts an environmental policy: “we support the restoration of peat, encouraging the growth of sphagnum moss which needs a damp environment to flourish...reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and the risk of flooding downstream.”⁸ However, local areas are known to flood as burning of the heather erodes the peat bogs on the top of the fells. Blanket bog peat soils are crucial for holding water. Their deep columns of peat store significant volumes of carbon, and require careful management.⁹

The wider Lancashire region is one of the geographical epicentres of the Industrial

⁷ “National Character Area Profile: Bowland Fells” Natural England, 2015, accessed January 2020, online at: www.gov.uk/natural-england.

⁸ “Grosvenor Estate” accessed December 2, 2018, online at: <https://www.grosvenorestate.com/our-activities/family-office/rural-estates/abbeystead.aspx>.

⁹ “National Character Area Profile: Bowland Fells” Natural England, 2015, accessed January 2020, online at: www.gov.uk/natural-england.

Revolution, with the expansion of the Lancashire coalfields in the eighteenth century, “setting off a huge carbon bomb by releasing unheard of tons of hydrocarbons into the atmosphere and resulting in our present climate revolution and, perhaps, the sixth great extinction.”¹⁰ More recently, fracking began in 2011 and again in 2017 by UK fracking company Cuadrilla Resources, at their Preston site in Lancashire.¹¹ In August 2019 a 2.9 (richter scale) earthquake was registered, and fracking temporarily halted amidst ongoing environmental activism and the upcoming general election. However, Cuadrilla have announced that “we continue to believe that indigenous gas production is preferable to importing increasing quantities of overseas gas with...no economic benefit for UK workers, businesses or communities”.¹² Rhetorics of indigeneity point to a particularly right-wing, post-Brexit rhetoric. Cuadrilla’s main investor, Riverstone, sold its shares to an Australian mining company in early 2020; the fracking project has by no means been taken off the table completely.

The Forest of Bowland lies between the villages of Pendle, where the “Pendle witches” were from, and Lancaster castle, where they were executed. The Pendle witches were a group of nine women and two men, six of whom came from two matriarchal families - Demdike and Chattox. The witches were accused of various murders; ten were found guilty and hanged in 1612. The trials were recorded (not verbatim) by Thomas Potts, in *The Wonderful Discoverie of Witches in the County of Lancashire*.¹³ The unprecedented number of accusations made the Lancashire witch trials one of the largest in the country. The route of the Pendle Witches to Lancashire traverses the Forest of Bowland and its rivers. The route is sign-posted as a walking trail and cycle route, and accounts for much of the tourism in the area. I knew nothing of the Pendle witches during my first visit to the river and experience of the visions in summer 2015.

¹⁰ Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016) p.10. From hereafter this text shall be footnoted as *Geontologies*.

¹¹ Cuadrilla is the UK’s fracking firm. “Cuadrilla Resources” accessed January 4, 2020, online at: <https://cuadrillaresources.uk>.

¹² “Fracking Investor Riverstone sells stake in Cuadrilla” *BBC News*, 6 February 2020, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-51407511>.

¹³ Thomas Potts, ed. James Crossley, *Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster*. (1613; repr., Project Gutenberg Online, 2006) accessed November 25, 2015, online at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18253/18253-h/18253-h.htm>.





This creative and critical body of work is anchored around a series of visions that occurred at the River Wyre, Lancashire, in 2015, during a period of intensive site-specific research. The methods engaged during this pivotal research trip were continuous with an ongoing body of practice drawing on somatic listening, durational trance states, attunement and modes of witnessing that will be fleshed out over the course of this thesis. The visions uncover a historical truth of the 1612 witch-hunts, demanding I return to the Lancashire site to engage its entangled resonances through embodied practice and “spirit labour”, alongside carrying out research in other sites to develop methods of communicating across Life Nonlife so-called “divides”.¹⁴ I consider the practice in two phases, the first phase includes three bodies of work: *Wishbone* (2016), *Almanac* (2016-2017), and *Cove* (2017) - a group choreographic piece for stage, a series of one-on-one performances, and a duet exploring constellations as choreography for stage; the second phase of work (2018-2019) involves *the unearthings* and a series of river ceremonies during summer 2019 held under the project name *Ceremony House*. The practice and its thesis are concerned with how to engage the less visible impacts of ecological violence, and less perceivable more-than-human manifestations emergent through land that seem to guide an ‘otherwise’ future possibility.

This thesis stages the development of a methodology of mutual nonhuman-human witnessing: weaving critical thinkers with my own located practice, I contribute a ground-up, experiential approach, unpacking methods of encounter and their implications to this socially and environmentally urgent area of concern. I intend this practice to expand on how witnessing

¹⁴ A term coined by Adrian Heathfield and Hugo Glendinning in their film of the same name, accessed with permission from authors October 2019. See *Spirit Labour*, directed by Hugo Glendinning and Adrian Heathfield (2016; Bergen Assembly), online at: <https://www.adrianheathfield.net/project/spirit-labour>. The film features Anna Halprin, Hélène Cixous and Janine Antoni and asks: “what kind of labour is it, to work communally with the bodies, movements, expressions and affects of others, to dedicate one’s lifework to the othering that issues from these relations? How might we think of these labours and affinities as forms of infrastructure?” I use the term here to refer to a consistent mode of research across all phases of the practice. Combining movement, imagination, meditation, vocal sounding and energetic work in specific practices that I have developed in order to work with the invisible and immaterial realm: the realm of spirit, ancestor known or unknown, stone-womxn, river-serpent-womxn, and various existents that make themselves known through *the unearthings* and site-specific research. Following Heathfield and Glendinning, I ask how can this kind of labour and affinity be a form of infrastructure, a kind of ceremony house? In addition to the Lancashire site, performance research took place in Airtton, Yorkshire (*Wishbone*), Stolpe, Germany (*Cove*), and the multiple sites (London, East Germany, Northern France) of *the unearthings* - a collaboration with river stones from the River Wyre. Public performances and workshops arising from these research periods were presented in London, Berlin and Ipswich.

is considered in light of more-than-human collectivities, and how an embodied encounter might be reparative to human-nonhuman relations, propelling different pedagogies and therefore different futures. The methods and what emerges as a framework through which to consider them, arose from the principle of working with land as primary collaborator - an autonomous, intelligent, intentional force - and finding ways of mutually witnessing its less perceivable presences. Whilst the practice develops through the performances included in the thesis, I do not always focus on the finished, public pieces, but rather draw out moments within the research that illuminate the development of the methodology through the specificity of moments of encounter. The intention of witnessing and being witnessed in relation to land, is a transferrable principle. However, each encounter with an entity or place, involves directly addressing that entity, revealing unknown and unpredictable pathways to be followed; specific information arises which is responded to according to the particulars of each site. This results in a range of public performances, performative actions in the sites themselves, and the development of *the unearthings*.

The unearthings are an ongoing performance practice with the river stones, which draw these methods together to witness *and* attend to more-than-human convergences at different sites. They evolve from the first performance at the River Wyre (2015) and through the Almanac series (2016-2017). They are non-transferrable (i.e. specific to my own body performing them, rather than a shareable pedagogy), and synthesise the skills of this body of research: a way of listening - through the moving/speaking body and stones - to each site, performing a gestural and poetic vocabulary specific to what each site arises, and attending directly to this as an energetic labour of response. The developing methodology and the ongoing performance practice of *the unearthings* are the focus of the artistic output of this thesis, and contribute to a long tradition of process-based performance and movement practices, expanded on in *Artistic Lineages*. The sound piece, triangle text, drawings and photographs included in the thesis, are in contrast, documentation of certain performances and processes, and offer another mode of experiencing the research processes in addition to this written thesis.

The Lancashire river and visions, inaugurate this ongoing practice. The Pendle witch trials, industrialisation, the linkage of the river system to the burgeoning cotton factories hence the project of slavery, and the intensely privatised ownership of the land through systems of familial inheritance and power, symbolise ongoing coloniality and its matrix of power that is the central concern of this thesis.¹⁵ The colonial matrix of power “impinges on and transforms all aspects of life” particularly through “the coloniality of the three pillars of being in the world: racism, sexism, and the naturalisation of life and the permanent regenerations of the living (e.g. the invention of the concept of nature)”.¹⁶ The extrapolation of this matrix of power to multiple locations in the project of colonialism, is propelled by colonial-capitalism’s thirst for extraction with all its environmental and humanitarian abuses in tow. From the river to its entanglements further afield, land is mechanised “as the very medium of violence” not simply a backdrop for the unfolding of dispossession.¹⁷

Working with different sites for different performances runs parallel to the symbolic and specific information that the Lancashire site draws into focus: the centuries long European witch-hunts, as well as the persistent presence of my great grandmother Florence, who, after attempting suicide in her late 40s, was incarcerated and institutionalised in a psychiatric ward under the criminalisation of suicide for the remaining 32 years of her life.¹⁸ Florence’s repeated appearance at the Lancashire site, although uncanny to me still, makes present an aspect of this ecological approach, which is the inclusion of ancestral or spirit realms, regardless of whether these ancestors are known/unknown or have known said sites.¹⁹ Reading the incarceration of

¹⁵ The resonances of the historical witch-hunts in this specific site exemplify a larger project of primitive accumulation orchestrated in coloniality. See Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2007).

¹⁶ Coloniality, as the “darker side of Western modernity”, is the ongoing situation of the “colonial matrix of power”, and is a “decolonial concept and therefore the anchor of decolonial thinking and doing in the praxis of living”. Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, eds., *On Decoloniality*. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2018) p.10.

¹⁷ Ros Gray and Shela Sheikh, “The Wretched Earth” Third Text, Vol.32 Issues 2-3, (2018) pp.163-175, at p.164.

¹⁸ It was not until the Suicide Act of 1961 that suicide was decriminalised.

¹⁹ I knew very little about Florence (not even her name) at the start of this research; she was a “family silence” and subject of much shame and erasure, and of course died long before I was born. Likewise the Lancashire site is not the home of ancestors or site of family history.

“mad women” as an extension of the suppression of bodies and practices so brutally enacted in the European witch-hunts and “out-sourced” through colonial atrocities, reveals the interweaving trajectories of ecocide, femicide/genocide and epistemicide, pivotal to what Bruno Latour terms “The Great Divide” - Western capitalism’s denial of animism and its enactment through the punishment, exclusion or genocide of those living otherwise.²⁰ The visions that occur at the Lancashire site point to the witch-hunts as a historical conflict between bodies, practices, and juridical contexts and scenes of “testimony”; my response to these visions is to find ways to re-activate communication across Life Nonlife divides, and re-centre ways of knowing that seek to repair the impact of that historic moment and legacy of such vilifying “testimonies”. This project thus contributes embodied methods and critical thinking to develop a methodology emergent from encounter with nonhuman and ancestral presences. As a response to the legacy of this Great Divide on bodies, lands and their encounter, it situates itself in conversation with ongoing decolonial approaches to the Anthropocene.²¹

The U.K.’s steady rise in right-wing, xenophobic and fascist policies and the privatisation of welfare institutions makes evident historic and ongoing coloniality both locally and in its global entanglements. Meanwhile, the environmental movement continues to universalise white subjects and threats to their lifeworlds, often ignoring the multitude of ‘endings’ of lives and lifeworlds for over 500 years under colonialism.²² I thus find it crucial to be in conversation

²⁰ “In order to understand the Great Divide between Us and Them we have to go back to that other Great Divide between humans and nonhumans [...]. In effect, the first is the exportation of the second”, p.97. Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993.

²¹ The Anthropocene is a widely contested term, since its first coining in 2000 by Eugene Stoermer. See Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer “The Anthropocene” *Global Change Newsletter* 41, (2000) pp.17-18. It “has meant to mark a geologically defined moment when the forces of human existence began to overwhelm all other biological, geological, and meteorological forms and forces and displace the Holocene” Povinelli, *Geontologies*, p.9. The term was formally proposed in 2016 and presented to the International Geologic Congress in Cape Town to individuate the dawn of an age of unprecedented human impact on the earth: “The Anthropocene epoch: scientists declare dawn of human-influenced age” *Guardian News*, August 29, 2016, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/aug/29/declare-anthropocene-epoch-experts-urge-geological-congress-human-impact-earth>. See also Jan Zalasiewicz, et al. “The Working Group on the Anthropocene: Summary of evidence and interim recommendations” *Anthropocene*, Vol.19, (2017) pp.55-60.

²² In May 2019 dozens of allied groups including grassroots collective *Wretched of the Earth* wrote an open letter to UK Extinction Rebellion, asking the movement to reconsider the tactics and politics of their struggle. “For those of us who are indigenous, working class, black, brown, queer, trans or disabled, the experience of structural violence became part of our birthright... Climate change is not an issue of the environment... It is an issue of power, violence and greed; it is political and it requires systems change”. “An Open Letter to Extinction Rebellion”, May 3, 2019, accessed January 5, 2020, online at: <https://www.redpepper.org.uk/an-open-letter-to-extinction-rebellion/>.

with decolonial thinkers such as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Glen Coulthard, Eduardo Kohn and Elizabeth A. Povinelli. Working from a European context, I engage Indigenous thinkers but I do not practice methods from their situated struggles or contexts. The principle of asking land first and considering it an entity that propels, guides, thinks and emerges, is a principle that guides every aspect of this thesis, and that I have found thinkers writing outside of, or on the peripheries of Western, Eurocentric contexts, to most articulately define.²³ I am therefore indebted to these thinkers and citing them, but in practicing my own ground-up, emergent attendance to the nonhuman, I do not assume this looks like or “maps” onto any practice or understanding from elsewhere, as I will expand on in *Decolonial Environmentalism*. I intend to shed light on the ways in which erasing the nonhuman as witness, and land’s intentional, desiring capacity, perpetuates violence towards and/or exoticisation of cultures elsewhere. It in turn severs the spiritual from the political, maintaining whiteness as property and the socio-political as a solely human sphere, with solely human obligations.

Whilst the final chapter dwells in the last summer of land ceremony specific to the Lancashire site, this thesis is not a historical, social or artistic research project in the eco-political entanglements of one site. Rather it takes the returning experience of the forces and entities at this site, and the injustice of the Great Divide and interweaves it with other moments from site specific research, to plot how the overall practice of nonhuman-human witnessing develops. I thus approach the Anthropocene by considering how contemporary performance practices and their interdisciplinary convergences might orient to land as a system of relations through experiential encounter and a plurality of ways of knowing (embodied, imaginal and intuitive), in order to generate alternative knowledges emergent from the encounter between human and nonhuman. I use the term ‘imaginal’ to describe somatic work involving directly addressing entities through internal image - witnessing the response of an image to various questions, dialogue, movement, sensation. This has been a consistent method of practice and a large part of the methods shared in workshops and with collaborators. The imaginal is

²³ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Glen Coulthard, Jeannette Armstrong, Linda Hogan, Francesca Boring Mason, Vanessa Watts, amongst others. I expand on this in *Decolonial Environmentalism*.

therefore animate, an agential presence distinct from imagination.²⁴ These alternative ways of knowing unearthed mythic resonances and historical events as ‘ongoing’ in their felt duration, whilst simultaneously guiding unexpected ways of engaging the knots of power in these ongoing trajectories; the paradox of these simultaneous inscriptions and ‘manifestations’, contribute to what I understand as a very *hereish*-specific principle of land as pedagogy.²⁵

Looking back to the process of writing my proposal for this project in late 2013, is to consider a radically changed context both in the arts and humanities and in global events: namely the undeniable impact of, and governmental failure to act on climate crisis, and the rise of right wing politics. Their shared ground and foundational apparatus is the persistence of white supremacy and its triangulation in the violence of racism, sexism and extractivism, as well as what Lauren Berlant, Rob Nixon, Christina Sharpe and Elizabeth A. Povinelli respectively, term slow death, slow violence, the weather of anti-blackness and the quasi-event.²⁶ What these

²⁴ See for example: Glenna Batson et al. *Dance, Somatics and Spiritualities, Contemporary Sacred Narratives*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014; and practitioners Jill Hayes, Amanda Williamson, Jo Blake Cave. For analysing the role of imaginal presences between the social imaginary and the imagination in contemporary politics, see Chiara Bottici *Imaginal Politics, Images Beyond Imagination and the Imaginary*. Columbia University Press, 2014: “while what is imaginative is the work of imagination, imaginal, as the conceptual ground encompassing the totality of what pertains to images, is what makes the *imaginative* possible in the first place”, p.55.

²⁵ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson proposes “land as pedagogy” in “Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation” in *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* Vol. 3, No. 3 (2014) pp.1-25. I do not attempt to use the term in the same way as Simpson here, but from the developing practice in my own context. I use the term ‘manifestations’ following Elizabeth Povinelli and expand on this in Chapter 3. ‘Hereish’ is Povinelli’s term “The global nature of climate change, capital, toxicity, and discursively immediately demands we look elsewhere than where we are standing... As we stretch the local across these seeping transits we need not scale up to the Human or the global, but we cannot remain in the local. We can only remain heresy.” Povinelli, *Geontologies*, p.13. An earlier articulation related to this notion of the *hereish* is Val Plumwood’s call for discourse of place to consider the “shadow or denied places” and critically make visible what upholds and enables narratives of “dwelling”. “The dissociation of the affective place (the place of and in mind, attachment and identification, political effectiveness, family history, ancestral place) from the economic place that is such a feature of the global market is yet another manifestation of the mind/body dualism that has shaped the western tradition”. In “Shadow Places and the Politics of Dwelling” *Australian Humanities Review*, Issue 44 (2008) accessed January 4, 2017, online at: <http://australianhumanitiesreview.org/2008/03/01/shadow-places-and-the-politics-of-dwelling/>.

²⁶ “The phrase *slow death* refers to the physical wearing out of a population and the deterioration of people in that population that is very nearly a defining condition of their experience and historical existence. The general emphasis of the phrase is on the phenomenon of mass physical attenuation under global/national regimes of capitalist structural subordination and governmentality. It takes as its point of departure David Harvey’s polemical observation, in *Spaces of Hope*, that under capitalism sickness is defined as the inability to work” p.754 in Lauren Berlant, “Slow Death (Sovereignty, Obesity, Lateral Agency)” *Critical Inquiry* Vol. 33, No. 4, (2007), pp. 754-780. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2011). Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016). Povinelli’s quasi-event is “a form of occurring that never punctures the horizon of here and now and there and then and yet forms the basis of forms of existence to stay in place or alter their place. The quasi-event is only ever hereish and newish and thus asks us to focus our attention on forces of condensation, manifestation, and endurance rather than on the borders of objects” Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Geontologies* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016:21).

theorists point to in distinct ways, is the less visible violence of fall-out from environmental crisis impacting racialised subjects; the ordinary, everydayness of the state's invasion of bodies; the 'total climate' and ongoingness of slavery's afterlife; and the more elusive, yet persistent, demands of late liberalism continuing the dispossession of communities from land, politics and ways of life. For Nixon, the "oxymoronic notion of slow violence poses a number of challenges: scientific, legal, political and representational", and arguably demands new methods, practices and conceptualisations of the role of the witness.²⁷

In the narration of the Anthropocene, the dawning of a 'new' epoch needs decolonizing, in order to critique such universalising narratives and conceptions of the 'event' that separate late liberalism from its continuation and legacy of colonialism. Whilst the Anthropocene Working Group has called for this terminology as a means to address climate change tipping points and international environmental policy, for many, the proposed date of the beginning of the Anthropocene (1950s) eradicates the longer term impact of genocide and ecocide under colonialism. In so doing it erases the fact that it is rather certain humans' ways of life and imperialist regimes, not all humans' ways of life, that so dramatically impacted and continue to impact human-nonhuman lifeworlds, with many lives and lifeworlds already having faced 'endings' under such regimes.²⁸ For Zoe Todd (Métis) and Heather Davis, the Anthropocene is not a "new epoch, but is rather the continuation of practices of dispossession

²⁷ Nixon, p.8.

²⁸ See Povinelli, *Geontologies*. See also Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes Or None* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018); Leanne B. Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing, 2011). For critiques of the Anthropocene in terms of geoengineering and the financialisation of nature under neoliberalism, see T. J. Demos, *Against the Anthropocene, Visual Culture and Environment Today* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017). Alternative proposals to the Anthropocene dating and nomenclature include queer of colour theorist Sara Mameni, a popular dating of the early 2000s for the era of the Anthropocene coincides with the declaration of the War on Terror; Mameni terms the "Terracene" as a way of thinking the geopolitics of the present and these two events together. See "View from the Terracene, at Climates of Colonialism" accessed January 16, 2020, online at: <http://eu.eventscloud.com/website/758/climates-of-colonialism/>. Feminist science scholar Donna Haraway insists "we need a name for the dynamic ongoing symchthonic forces and powers of which people are a part, within which ongoingness is at stake... I am calling all this the Chthulucene—past, present, and to come." See Donna Haraway, 'Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Plantationocene, Chthulucene: Making Kin' *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 6, (2015) pp. 159-165) p160. Furthermore, this dating might not be a human pursuit; Haraway suggests that lichens can provide a way to rethink designated events such as the Anthropocene to be a less humancentric rendering of a transforming planet. She begins her chapter, "Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene" with the epigraph, "We Are All Lichens Now". See Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016) pp. 30–57. See Anna Tsing for attending to "More-than-human Anthropocenes" and the "patchy, uneven apocalypse" in *The Mushroom at the End of the World; On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015).

and genocide, coupled with a literal transformation of the environment, that have been at work for the last five hundred years.”²⁹ Davis and Todd thus propose the date of 1610, and circulated such a proposal to the Anthropocene Working Group in 2016. Elizabeth Povinelli links the Lancashire coalfields’ realising of “a huge carbon bomb” with the inauguration of the modern disciplines of biology and geology:

“the exploitation of the [Lancashire] coalfields also uncovered large stratified fossil beds that helped spur the foundation of modern geologic chronology: the earth as a set of stratified levels of being and time. In other words, the concept of the Anthropocene is as much a product of the coalfields as an analysis of their formation insofar as the fossils within the coalfields helped produce and secure the modern discipline of geology and biology.”³⁰

However, Povinelli also claims it is not the dating of the Anthropocene per se that is at stake here, but the fact that the concept has impacted critical thought so radically, by crumbling “the self-evident distinction of Life and Nonlife, fundamental to biopolitics.”³¹ This leads Povinelli to ask the question “from the perspective of the planetary carbon cycle, what difference does the difference between Life and Nonlife make?”³² Rather than opposing the human with meteorological, geological and biological factors, “the antagonism is between various forms of human life-worlds and their different effects on the given-world.”³³ As such, Kathryn Yusoff argues the Anthropocene “proclaims the language of species life – *anthropos* – through a universalist geologic commons, it neatly erases histories of racism that were incubated through the regulatory structure of geologic relations.”³⁴ The prominence of industrialisation in areas such as Lancashire, for which the rivers from the Forest of Bowland were ‘harnessed’ and used in factory development, is one of the many ways this site is

²⁹ Heather Davis, and Zoe Todd, “On the Importance of a Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene” *ACME An International Journal for Critical Geographies* (2016) pp.761-780; p.761.

³⁰ Povinelli, *Geontologies* p.10. See also Andreas Malm, “The Origins of Fossil Capital: From Water to Steam in the British Cotton Industry” *Historical Materialism* Vol. 21 no. 1, (2013) pp.15-68.

³¹ Ibid. p.14.

³² Ibid. p.10.

³³ Ibid p.12.

³⁴ Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*. p.2.

implicated in Anthropocene dating.³⁵ I take a critical stand towards the Anthropocene alongside Yusoff, Todd, Davis and Povinelli (amongst many others), as a narrative that foregrounds a white, human subject and his god-like impact on the environment, a narrative all too familiar to, and erasing the colonial histories out of which only such a conception of individualist subjecthood could emerge. As such, this project foregrounds critical thinking that explicitly accounts for these histories in its reconsideration of materiality, land, ecology, and its re-thinking the domain of the political.

This project developed in relation to a river and its river stones - which in the logic of geontopower would be classified as “Nonlife” (but in this thesis I will refer to as ‘nonhuman’, ‘existents’, or ‘more-than-humans’ comprising a sociality) - whose capacity to comment on, respond to and propel my engagement with them, has been keenly felt. Experiencing these existents challenges a Life/Nonlife divide in terms of what can be communicated with, and unpacks ways in which these ‘voices’ might manifest, and be attended to. Might then an artistic practice be a constant (re)-learning how to witness the multiplicity of ways existents make themselves known? This project sits at the tension between the risk of anthropomorphism that Western critical discourse in light of colonialism has to be accountable for, and the risk of erasing Indigenous articulations of nonhuman societies, which likewise Western critical discourse has to be accountable for. The avoidance of perceiving supposedly ‘human’ capacities of the nonhuman, is in the experience and research of this project, problematic, when/if those supposedly ‘human’ attributes may in fact not be human whatsoever. We may need another way of speaking about them that does not perpetuate a divide between Western critical discourse, and Indigenous articulations of analytics of existence, thereby reinforcing what Povinelli describes as the Totemic Imaginary, erasing longer histories of nonhuman-human kinship from

³⁵ On a plaque at Langden Brook, forest of Bowland, the privately owned United Utilities water company, indicate how the rivers have been used since 1870 for the growing industries in Lancashire, as it was especially soft and “good for washing cotton”. Of course we cannot think this moment of industrialisation separate from the philosophical tropes of Enlightenment ‘reason’ and split from nature, the enclosures act, primitive accumulation, and mass scale erasure of communities from land (of course many of whom became the inhabitants of the colonised New World), and the dependence on the Atlantic slave trade for new industries most obviously the cotton trade. For the entangled colonial histories of primitive accumulation across Europe and the “New World” see Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body, and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2007).

contemporary ecological discourse and repeating the dynamics of the Great Divide.³⁶ I decided to directly address these existents, to explore the embodied, relational capacity between human and nonhuman, rather than attempting to “de-centre” the human by excluding them altogether.³⁷

It is worth noting the alignment of Davis and Todd’s proposed date 1610, with the Lancashire witches’ execution in 1612. Against the logic of the dominant Anthropocene dating, which is often marked by the visibilising of environmental fall-out - either as perceivable traces of radioactive material, plastic, aluminium and concrete particles, high levels of phosphate in soil - I am concerned in this project, with how other moments of rupture, perceived and felt by some, are repeatedly *rendered invisible*. This includes the perceived ancient moment of the stone-womxn rupture and its repetition, as well as the energetic labour of attendance. I suggest that less perceivable inscriptions and absences need attending to in order to respond to already-present kinships and their interruptions; here the role of the artist-activist can potentially contribute to ongoing debate around the role of the witness and the political status of the nonhuman.³⁸ Whilst many aspects of this project have been shared along the way - with audiences, collaborators and workshop participants - the writing of this thesis accounts for a

³⁶ The Totemic Imaginary, mechanises the politics of recognition, which stabilises and fixes the “authentic” identity of Aboriginal subjects, whilst simultaneously “fixing” the “sites” of their supposed traditional and cultural beliefs. I am thinking specifically of Indigenous articulations of lifeworlds as social spheres, and existents who speak or respond - for example, Old Man Rock who “listens” in Povinelli’s description (p.34) and the potential erasure of this way of narrating an analytics of existence in Western critical discourse (or its re-circulation in contemporary discourse whilst erasing its durational and consistent practice in Indigenous thought).

³⁷ I will expand on my relation to posthumanist discourse in Ecological Turns. The “human” figure in this project is a plural, porous site of becoming in its entanglement with the more-than-human; specifically in this project, with bodies of water constituting the river itself as well as the immaterial existents oriented towards the river. This formulation thus speaks to the transcorporeal and hydrofeminism of, for example, Astrida Neimanis’ *Bodies of Water, Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology*. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing 2017).

³⁸ In “More-than-Human Cosmopolitics”, Shela Sheikh writes about the artwork *Landscape as Evidence: Artist as Witness*, a staged hearing that took place at the Constitutional Club of India, New Delhi, on 7 April 2017: “Unlike conventional legal forums, the hearing provided a platform for the contribution of artist-petitioners, who spoke of artists’ capacities, through their use of different media and their experiential and impressionistic approach, to see *not just the obvious but also the invisible sites of trauma and the slow, often undetectable environmental violence*. The figure of the artist was discussed not as necessarily providing straightforward solutions, but as allowing for a slowing-down of analysis in order to seek alternative strategies” (my italics). Shela Sheikh, “More-than-Human Cosmopolitics” in *Propositions for Non-Fascist Living: Tentative and Urgent*. eds. Maria Hlavajova and Wietske Maas, (Utrecht and Cambridge, Mass.: BAK and MIT Press, 2019), pp. 125-140. See Khoj International Artists’ Association, *Landscape as Evidence: Artist as Witness*, 7 April 2017, accessed December 8, 2019, online at: <http://khojworkshop.org/programme/landscape-as-evidence-artist-as-witness/>.

large body of unseen, site-specific labour as it guides the critical thinking and ongoing practice, and focusses on the transferrable element of such labour in light of environmental crisis.³⁹

Povinelli's 2016 *Geontologies: A Requiem To Late Liberalism* is particularly useful to this project. Povinelli's work is situated in an Australian settler-colonial context, through her ongoing collaboration with Aboriginal friends and colleagues the Karrabing Film Collective.⁴⁰ Povinelli critiques the "politics of recognition" which emerged in the multiculturalism of the 1960s onwards, as a strategy of assimilation and open market consolidation of liberal governance. At stake is the assimilation of what Povinelli terms the Karrabing's "analytics of existence" into Western metaphysics of property law through settler governance's violent maintenance of the divisions between Life and Nonlife - at the expense of lives and lifeworlds that might conceptualise relations otherwise.⁴¹ Povinelli argues that the focus in critical thinking on biopolitics - power working through the management of life - "has obscured the systematic re-orientation of biosecurity around geo-security and meteorology: the social and ecological effects of climate change".⁴² She proposes instead an understanding of *geontopower*:

"[geontopower] does not operate through the governance of life and the tactics of death but is rather a set of discourses, affects, and tactics used in late liberalism to maintain or shape the

³⁹ This thesis takes a stand for labour that cannot always be accounted for in quantifiable or visible terms, but which is hugely impactful, ongoing and in service to a wider collective, whilst remaining undervalued by colonial-capitalist relations. For example, motherhood, care, spiritual labour, the orientation and deciphering that people of colour, queers, womxn and those in minority positions perhaps have to do on an everyday basis; ceremony and attendance to the nonhuman which is done often by those most impacted by environmental racism and ecocide. See Sara Ahmed's writing on the invisible and often unperceived labour of re-orientation. Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁴⁰ *Karrabing Film Collective* are an Indigenous media group based in Australia's Northern Territories that uses filmmaking and installation as a form of grassroots resistance and self-organization. The collective includes approximately 30 members - predominantly living in the Belyuen community - who create films using an "improvisational realism" that opens a space beyond binaries of the fictional and the documentary, the past and the present. Meaning "low tide" in the Emmyyengal language, karrabing refers to a form of collectivity outside of government-imposed structures of clan-ship or land ownership. I am in dialogue with Elizabeth Povinelli's articulations of the "manifestations" of ancient Dreaming sites; whilst the visions that anchor the thesis are unpacked in relation to this idea of manifesting, they are not positioned as equivalent in any way to the Dreaming.

⁴¹ In some ways Povinelli's work can be read in dialogue with a body of work on 'place' in settler-colonial Australian contexts, including the work of Freya Matthews, Val Plumwood and Deborah Bird Rose. The latter approach decolonisation through deconstructing Enlightenment philosophies, whereas Povinelli's staging of the relationship between Karrabing's 'analytics' and settler governance in light of the politics of recognition, draws focus on an element of geontopower translatable beyond the context of Australia. Matthews and Rose have been somewhat overlooked by the huge influx of writing on ecologies in the last decade; I think they both contribute a significant inclusion to such discussion, in centring the potential for land to guide an ethics and more-than-human pedagogy.

⁴² Povinelli *Geontologies* p.19.

coming relationship of the distinction between Life and Nonlife... The point of the concept of geontopower is not to found a new ontology of objects, nor to establish a new metaphysics of power, nor to adjudicate the possibility or impossibility of the human ability to know the truth of the world of things. Rather they are concepts meant to help make visible the figural tactics of late liberalism as a long-standing *biontological orientation and distribution* of power crumbles, losing its efficacy a self-evident backdrop to reason”.⁴³

Povinelli reveals how belief in the responsivity and agency of Nonlife is contained by late liberal governance “in the brackets of the impossible if not the absurd”; that “the attribution of an *inability* of various colonized people to differentiate the kinds of things that have agency, subjectivity, and intentionality of the sort that emerges with life has been the grounds for casting them into a premodern mentality and a post-recognition difference.”⁴⁴ Thus the Karrabing are relegated to the past realms of cultural difference rather than the political future, a move figured by Povinelli through the Totemic Imaginary, which she claims stabilises and fixes the “authentic” identity of Aboriginal subjects, whilst simultaneously “fixing” the “sites” of their supposed traditional and cultural beliefs. Said Totemic imaginary invisibilises the ongoing dynamic analytics of existence between human and lifeworlds that are constantly changing, adapting, incorporating and resisting the increasingly “cramped” conditions of late liberalism. In response to this, Karrabing are a collectivity that deliberately formed outside of government-imposed strictures of clanship or land ownership.⁴⁵

Geontologies reveals the inadequacy of attempting to contain Karrabing analytics of existence in Western philosophical frameworks. This challenges the potential for the ecological turn to be dominated by universalising claims as to the nature of matter and its agency, which can too often be at the expense and erasure of Indigenous cosmologies, epistemologies and lifeworlds who continue to suffer the fall-out of settler-colonial extractivism, and are simultaneously erased from academic discourses and canons of philosophy. As Chickasaw writer Linda Hogan claims:

⁴³ Povinelli *Geontologies* p.4-6.

⁴⁴ Povinelli, *Geontologies* p.5. Povinelli works through her Karrabing colleagues’ “engagement with six different modes of existence and their desire that the maintenance of them be the major focus of this analysis: forms of existence often referred to as Dreaming or totemic formations” p.26.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.80

“I think about the word animism, and what this newly accepted area of study means to those of us whose cognitive and spiritual worlds are already created by our rivers, mountains and forests. For those who have always prayed with, to, and for the waters, and known our intimate relatives, the plant people, the animals, insects, and all our special relations, the field of animism is a belated study”.⁴⁶

She cites the inadequacy of the word animism and how it fails to fully define “the complexity of knowledge systems we have had of the world around us...nor does it consider how diverse Indigenous languages contain and hold within them the embedded knowledge and deep science of our natural habitats.”⁴⁷ In addition is the violent irony that “losses are due to stolen lands with which we kept our knowledge, and to the many forms Western education took, none of which any of us have escaped, and which is part of the same world now teaching classes called ‘animism’.”⁴⁸ In light of colonial histories of which I and the institution in which I write, are a part, this thesis takes extremely seriously the violence of appropriation and the erases of Indigenous presence in ecological and animist academic turns.

I find it crucial then to keep two things in mind: on the one hand Astrida Neimanis’ question of how “technologies of representation trace a fine line between the much-needed redress of injustice done unto others, and the various violences that accompany speaking *for* them”.⁴⁹ And on the other, how in light of this, we might also keep in mind that English language is inextricably linked to its histories of colonialism and invasion of bodies with relations of property; if Hogan reminds us “language is used to communicate with animals and to sing to plants in their stages of growth”, one must ask what is the impact if Western critical discourse stalls this articulation and its possibility, in avoidance of the ‘anthropomorphic’?⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Linda Hogan, “We Call it Tradition” in *The Handbook of Contemporary Animism*, ed. Graham Harvey, (London: Routledge, 2014), p.17. Hogan cites Onondaga Elder Oren Lyons, at the first meeting between International Indigenous peoples and the United Nations NGO in Geneva in the 1970s as saying “I see no seat for the eagles”. What would have to change, what practices would have to be incorporated into the space, and therefore what epistemological assumptions would have to be toppled in order for the political to be able to give a ‘seat for the eagles’?

⁴⁷ Ibid, p.18.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.19.

⁴⁹ Astrida Neimanis, “No Representation Without Colonisation? Or, Nature Represents Itself” *Somatechnics*, vol. 5, no. 2, (2015) pp.135– 153.

⁵⁰ Hogan, p.23.

Hence, we might keep both Neimanis' and Hogan's sentiments in mind, to consider in the words of Chicana theorist Gloria Anzaldua, "how to write without reinscribing and reproducing what we rebel against"?⁵¹

The thesis follows the trajectory of the three visions that occurred at the Lancashire site in 2015, and interweaves them with moments from site-specific research both at and away from the river. Part One includes Chapter 1: *Contexts*, and Chapter 2: *Methodologies*. In Chapter 1, I map out the areas of critical and artistic practice that this project engages with and how it contributes to ongoing discourse, namely: *Decolonial Environmentalism*, *Ecological Turns*, *Artistic Lineages* and *Witnessing* and *Nonhuman Politics*. In *Decolonial Environmentalism*, I expand on my entrance into this field of research via my earlier study of Native American literature. It was here that my concern began as to the historic and ongoing erasures of Indigenous presence that considered communication between humans and nonhumans entirely possible and necessary for the survival of culture-as-politics, epistemologies, bodies and lifeworlds. Introducing Glen Coulthard's critique of the politics of recognition, I highlight the entanglement between ongoing dispossession in settler-colonial contexts, histories of industrialisation, the witch-hunts and the Great Divide. Through the seminal work of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, a question is posed that is fundamental for this research: how can an orientation towards land as a system of reciprocal, ecological, political and spiritual relations, be considered a whole praxis of thought, fundamental to decolonial environmentalism, and how might this kind of work be prioritised, to generate different kinds of dynamic, in flux infrastructures and pedagogies? I include in this section influential critical race theorists whose work is foundational to discourses of property relations in the triadic colonial matrix of settler-native-slave.

In *Ecological Turns*, I briefly map some of the fields that this thesis comes into contact with pertaining to 'ecologies' (and in addition to the aforementioned Indigenous pedagogies): including ecofeminism, queer feminisms, new materialisms and biosemiotics, proposing how

⁵¹ Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Light in the dark/Luz En Lo Oscuro; Re-writing Identity, Spirituality, Reality* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2015) p.7-8.

my project relates and diverges from these various fields. In *Artistic Lineages* I situate my practice in overlapping and divergent disciplines of somatics, dance and performance, poetry and land-based pedagogy projects. I focus on some of the concerns with these areas of practice, and where my fleshing out of the political aspect of nonhuman-human witnessing will contribute. I outline a fundamental lens through which the practice operates: through an embodied and felt understanding of the plurality of ‘mind’ as that which emerges in the physiology of the body. Understanding ‘mind’ in this way and working from the body as a site of multiple perceptive capacities, all of which produce different emergent knowledges, is the groundwork from which a wider concept of ‘mind’ is expanded, and similarly where the ‘authenticity’ of a singular, coherent body is contested. In *Witnessing and Nonhuman Politics*, I draw focus on the growing discourse around the rights of nature, inclusion of the nonhuman within the realm of politics, proposals for cosmopolitics and possibilities of nonhuman material witnessing. I expand how I am approaching witnessing, both related to this ongoing discourse and drawing on developmental psychology, queer affect theory, dance and somatic practices.

In Chapter Two *Methodologies*, I outline the public performances that have propelled the ongoing research. Alongside visual documentation, I track the primary concerns of each, and how these public performances influenced the trajectory of the research. Working with the land began to emerge dynamics which, through my formal training in Systemic Constellations, I came to understand as “the knowing field”, and “radical inclusion”.⁵² Whilst Systemic Constellations is not the main practice of this artistic work, I outline these above mentioned principles and how they relate to my practice and this written work. I go on to describe a consistent element of my artistic practice: the vocal sounding engaged across the different sites, and in working with the river stones. Finally I locate how the practice has informed the theory, and how the two tie together through metaphors of seepage/resonance, touch and silence.

This chapter includes *Wishbone Zine*, *Notes on a Performance*, documentation from research for the stage production *Wishbone*. A process of inter-human witnessing began to emerge that

⁵² “Handbook of Systemic Constellations”, See *The Centre for Systemic Constellations*, accessed January 5, 2019, online at: www.thescsc.net.

would be developed in *Almanac* and *the unearthings*. It involved witnessing a performer work with the imaginal space between body and land where they had carried out their site-specific research. The witness had to attune to the psychic space of the mover, asking specific questions to help the mover track the subtle co-emerging and co-fading knowledges of the body when placing themselves ‘in mind’ of the land they had worked with. Rather than include the hour long footage of the performance, I include this documentation of process to communicate the plurality of existents that appeared in the imaginal space unearthed through the bodily encounters of each performer with their site.

Part 2 includes Chapter 3, *Stone | Wish | Bone*; Chapter 4, *River | Fluids | Tongue*; Interlude: *Almanac Prints*; Chapter 5, *Dam | Diaphragm | Digestion*; Chapter 6, *Heart | Lungs | House*, and a concluding chapter, *Towards a Material Poet(h)ics of Witnessing*. The four chapters in Part 2 deal with nodes in the developing practical methods; I engage critical and literary texts with which to think through the politics of these moments, and their implications for mutual witnessing within more-than-human collectivities, namely: chapter 3) attuning to a moment of nonhuman announcement and attending to the politics of this eventfulness; chapter 4) the central sounding practice that reveals the porosity and in-flux status of voice and body; reconsidering the “voice” as a mode of listening and activation across Life Nonlife binaries, and its implications to a field of nonhuman-human politics; chapter 5) absences and erasures of human-nonhuman kinship, both how historical erasures repeat over time and how the practice has evolved to meet them; and finally, chapter 6) orienting to the response-ability of mutual witnessing; how a reciprocal practice with and for land, may be considered an ethico-political, artistic mode of witnessing, another way of addressing a wider ecological community.

The “poet(h)ics” of the title refers to the poesis that is guided by land and imagined through these chapters: nonhuman announcement as internal, felt “image” figuring into awareness; sounding practice as “voice/sound”; absence and erasure as “spacing”; land ceremony as “choreography of relations”, which together constitute a storying capacity, a material poesis. Poesis is also enacted through the immaterial, mythic presences (such as the stone-womnx and river-serpent) and their agential “force” or pull driving the research forward.

The “ethics” of “poet(h)ics” is the ethical re-orientation to this poesis as a nonhuman capacity met in collaboration by a human listening. Witnessing involves tracking and following these presences and the information emergent through land as a co-poesis between body and land. The action of asking land first, with regards to all aspects of collaboration, is an open ended question that performs and therefore activates an attendance to an alternative kind of authority (or authorship); this is considered an ethical obligation that gives rise to specific land-based acts. I draw on literary theorists and poetics to re-think the “I”, as a way of situating the porosity and dynamism of the body as that which is constantly responsive to, and propelled by, nonhuman agencies and a field of nonhuman-human witnessing. Material poet(h)ics is thus the meeting of this agency with embodiment, situating the body to fill the address, or call, of land and its immaterial relations. It invokes the emergence of semiosis, or language, from materiality and more-than-human contexts. An embodied material poet(h)ics of witnessing is thus the communicative practice of response-ability and address-ability between human and nonhuman, as a site of emergent ethics.

In Chapter 3: *Stone | Wish | Bone*, I expand on the experience of the first vision. Here the stone-womxn (plural) as entities emerging specifically in the Lancashire site, speaking both to its historic violences and a more durational, potentially mythic memory, are explored as an imaginal re-membering between my body and the body of the land. A nonhuman-human entity, their potential to be communicated with, and responsive to my behaviour, becomes apparent through engagement with the river and the river stones. I read this emergence through Povinelli’s account of appearances and manifestations as witnessed with her Karrabing colleagues, and alongside ecofeminist Val Plumwood’s account of a crocodile attack in the Australian outback.⁵³ I flesh out a notion of ‘mind’ as something to be called into by land, and ask what modes of witnessing and their narrations make possible being guided by this kind of authorship. The end of the first vision sees the entrance of a figure of the judge-witness, whose gaze cuts the stones from the womxn, interrupting speech that emerges from

⁵³ Val Plumwood, “Human vulnerability and the experience of being prey” *Quadrant*, Vol. 39, No. 3, (1995) p.29-34. Karrabing “manifestations” are emergent from Aboriginal Dreaming (totemic sites); the visions are in no way considered equivalent to this, but I engage Povinelli’s use of the term “manifestations” to think through the tracking and following of the visions and the stone-womxn.

nonhuman-human collectivity. I consider this dynamic as inaugurating a human-centric trajectory - where property relations cut the “I” from its nonhuman kinship, ostracising the nonhuman and its potential to be both interlocutor and witness in ceremonial-political contexts. Here we expand Eve Sedgwick’s seminal work on the peripformative role of the witness, to consider the performative moment in light of the theatre of ownership tout court, as a way of reading how peripformative strategies might delay, warp, twist and divert the performative proclamation of a human singular, speaking subject position “I”.⁵⁴

In Chapter 4: *River | Fluids | Tongue* I consider the sounding practice as a key method of witnessing, and ask how it reveals an aspect of the shared space of ‘mind’. Considering voice as a method of engaging frequencies in land and its relations, I experience voice as medium of the “non-I” within the “I”, and consider how this re-frames political spaces of nonhuman-human witnessing. Drawing on the practice-as-research for *Cove*, and ongoing sounding practice, I extend Sedgwick’s proposal further, to ask whether the voice and body inevitably belong to one subject, or perhaps are necessarily collaborative, stretched subject positions, from which a different political future is propelled. How does this contribute to the appearance of the body and voice in the sphere of the political? How might it make space for other ways of considering nonhuman-human appearances? Here I begin to propose that it may not be witnessing that is located in one or more specific bodies, but rather a field of witnessing, already existing, within which we might participate.

Interlude: *Almanac Prints* are included here as documentation of the ongoing *Almanac* series, which involved myself, the river stones and one audience member/participant. Through meditative attunement, vocal sounding and movement, I mediated between participant and stones, responding to the ‘appearance’ of certain stones, the movement of energy and emergence of images, figures, sound and speech. Exploring communication across supposed Life Nonlife binaries of human and stone is a response to the stone-womxn. In the aftermath of their “cut” from one another, it is an attempt to propel the vision of future collaboration. The *Almanac* prints are monoprints made after each participative encounter in the ongoing

⁵⁴ Eve K. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003).

Almanac series. They are a mode of documenting an embodied, energetic encounter that eludes capture in photography and where video was inappropriate to the privacy of the participants. They map the blurry and porous encounter between human, stone and hereish river, and the energetic resonance after each one-on-one performance.

In Chapter 5: *Dam* | *Diaphragm* | *Digestion* we encounter the second vision, the aftermath of the cut of stones from womxn. This chapter is interrupted by ongoing phases of depression, which reveals the family story of great-grandmother Florence. I come to conceive of the body as witness to less perceivable reverberations and how this affects nonhuman-human relations. It addresses the impact of the real and internalised skeptical witness, whose ‘disbelief’ of the invisible carries the weight of longer histories of violence towards different ways of perceiving the world. I read Christine Stewart’s *Treaty 6 Deixis*, a poetic text centred around the signing of Treaty 6 in settler-colonial Canada, to consider what happens when the authority of the nonhuman witness, or as we are beginning to consider, the field of witnessing that includes both human and nonhuman, is ‘missed’, ignored and erased.⁵⁵ Through Stewart we consider poetics of re-orientation - to material, thinking land itself. The practice evolves away from the ‘skeptical witness’ who seems to repeat the ‘cut’ of the historic judge-witness.

Chapter 6: *Heart* | *Lungs* | *House* follows four distinct research trips to the Lancashire River site over the summer of 2019. The experience of ‘walking into the second vision’ abruptly re-orientates the practice and theory of this thesis to take seriously the visions as an emergence from land that requires embodied, and ongoing engagement with land and its relations. Within a more-than-human framework, affective states are considered phenomena of material witnessing, where body, land and ancestors, are in constant co-affecting relation with one another. This chapter sees the final vision unfolding through encounters with the river amongst different nonhuman-human collectivities; this labour is proposed as an embodied practice of material poet(h)ics.

The concluding chapter makes a proposal for a material poet(h)ics of nonhuman-human witnessing: an emergent, dynamic process of attending to land as a complex system of human,

⁵⁵ Christine Stewart, *Treaty 6 Deixis* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2018).

nonhuman, material and immaterial presences. I situate the witnessing enacted through the project in light of both the juridical contexts of ongoing settler-colonial governance, which leave increasingly cramped space for the possibility of communication across Life Nonlife divides; as well as the historical witch-hunt “testimonies” and the legacy of this moment on bodies, practices and lands. The practice suggests that a dynamic of witnessing is always already at play between human nonhuman entities and across Life Nonlife divides, and participates in this through attuning, addressing, following, responding and honouring land and its relations. The practice thus bears witness to the repetitions of less perceivable violences, and the event of the visions themselves. In conveying communication across Life Nonlife “divides”, the visions open the possibility of another force - land and its relations - as pedagogical presence, author(ity) of poesis, propelling alternative political futures.

The materials included with the written thesis (Wishbone zine, photographs, Almanac monoprints, sound piece and ▲ text), document performances or ongoing process-based practice, and thus have a different status to the live performances and pedagogical practice that the written thesis explicates. Photographs of certain performances (for example *Stone Throat*, *Wishbone*, *Almanac*, *the unearthings* at Paf), are visual documentation to ground the writing alongside. The watercolour sketches emerge from imaginal work with existents from the Lancashire river, and transmit the images arising in ongoing somatic work.

▲ acts as a diary for some of the research questions. It should therefore be read as a moment within the research, rather than the artistic outcome of this thesis. The drawings included in the body of ▲ are lines drawn in the moment after sounding sessions with the river stones. A figure of mediation and potentially an absence, ▲ emerges at the river and is a necessarily shape-shifting entity. ▲ is a figure to address and be in dialogue with, through writing as a practice that might reveal different information about the ongoing work. Addressing this unknown entity across different contexts, was a way of working with the ungraspable, yet felt, emergences in the ongoing practice. ▲ documents a moment of working through a stalling within the practice. An impasse was felt between the experience of communication across Life Nonlife divides and a felt sense of language emerging from more-

than-human materiality, and the experience of conversations around this in contemporary discourse. ▲ speaks to this impasse. The text was a way of moving through this moment, rather than performing a material poet(h)ics of witnessing; the latter emerges through *the unearthings*. For this reason ▲ can be read as appendix or after Chapter 5, as it aligns with the phases of depression and a desire to find precise imagery and relations in this otherwise foggy impasse.

The sound piece includes many amalgamated recordings from the ongoing vocal practice at the multiple sites of the project. Vocal sounding is a primary mode of listening in site-specific encounter and working with the river stones away from the site. It is a key element of the *Almanac* series and later *unearthings*. It is shared in a number of workshop formats (including at Ponderosa Stolzenhagen, Chalton Gallery, Martin Gropius Bau Berlin and Chisenhale Gallery, see *Timeline of Practice*). However, the sounding is not supposed to be performed or heard out of its context and purpose of activating materiality. Therefore I have warped and altered the site-specific soundings digitally to create a drone or pulse, to communicate vibrational resonance through which the practice worked. This also counteracts any notions of unmediated or “pure” nature.

It also includes dialogue with collaborators Shelley Etkin and Siobhán Ní Dhuinnín after the trituration (June 2019), and with Katy Coe, after her witnessing an *unearthing* (December 2018). The piece is not intended to perform the material poet(h)ics of the title’s address. It rather houses the sounding practice, and documents questions, processes of reflection, and a texture of verbal witnessing - noticing sensation, images and figures - that opened up with collaborators when mediated by the river and river stones respectively. The recordings were amalgamated and composed to form a repetitive, pulsing force of sound, bringing voices and images into view, much in the way they did during the practices themselves. Looping and layering sound alludes to the rhythms, repetitions and simultaneous layers of time felt in both site-specific work and *the unearthings*; it echoes the spoken, phonic repetitions in *the unearthings*. I wanted to stall modes of representation that would render in visual terms, what has been a practice dwelling at the threshold of less visible yet perceivable, tangible, vibrational presences.

Decolonial environmentalism is the lens through which this project understands the entanglements of contemporary extractivism and environmental violence: as a continuation of primary dispossession and transatlantic slavery through which Western conceptions of self and property relations were orchestrated. This project thus joins voices in the Western academy urging ecological turns to intersect with decolonial studies.⁵⁶ Whilst the last decade has seen an (arguably overdue) convergence of postcolonial, decolonial and ecocritical discourse, my approach outlined in this section is quite specific; it emerges from my earlier study of Native American oral and written literature and its *survivance* in the face of ongoing settler-colonialism.⁵⁷ This centred my ecological concerns with land being invaded by property relations, gender violence, epistemicide, and their relation to what Vanessa Watts terms “place-thought” - “the premise that land is alive and thinking and that humans and non-humans derive agency through the extensions of these thoughts”.⁵⁸

This brought to the foreground of my attention, the relationship between an oral tradition and land as a system of nonhuman-human relations. Through Native American poetics I found theories of language as emergent across the Life Nonlife divide, and story therefore as a more-than-human agency to be participated with. Gerald Vizenor’s claim that

⁵⁶ See T. J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature, Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016). Zoe Todd “Indigenizing the Anthropocene” in *Art In The Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments And Epistemologies*, ed. Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015) pp.241-254; and “An Indigenous Feminist’s Take On The Ontological Turn: ‘Ontology’ Is Just Another Word For Colonialism” in *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol. 29 No. 1 (2016) pp.4-22. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Boston: Harvard University Press, 2011. Deborah Bird Rose, *Reports from a Wild Country: Ethics of Decolonisation*. South Wales: University of South Wales Press, 2004. Shela Sheikh, “Translating Geontologies”, *The Avery Review* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017) pp.165-184; and “The Future of the Witness: Nature, Race and More-than-Human Environmental Publics” *Kronos* Vol.44 No.1 (2018) pp.145-162.

⁵⁷ *Survivance* - a term coined by Gerald Vizenor - is the survival and endurance of Native presence in Turtle Island (United States of America), “an active sense of presence, the continuance of native stories, not a mere reaction, or a survivable name”. Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabe), *Manifest Manners: Narratives of PostIndian Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999) p.vii. My undergraduate thesis (2010) entitled “Reclaiming Language in the Coloniser’s Tongue” looked at the works of Leslie Marmon Silko, Louise Erdrich and N. Scott Momaday, specifically considering each authors’ poetics and reclamation of orality, myth, and Indigenous theory in light of settler-colonialism.

⁵⁸ Vanessa Watts, “Indigenous place-thought and agency amongst humans and non-humans, (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European world tour!)” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* Vol. 2, No. 1, (2013) pp. 20-34. Watts writes from a specific perspective of Haudenosaunee and Anishnaabe cosmologies.

“the speaker is not at the centre of the world word because words were on the earth before the talkers and the tellers” is pivotal to this project’s understanding of the “cut” of the stone-womxn.⁵⁹ I interpret this symbolic moment (and its historic truth) as a coloniality that erases nonhuman lifeworlds and their communicative capacity, instating a human conception of language and enacting colonial violence through it. This severing of “words” from “the earth” in turn erases the humans that extend out of these ongoing communications.⁶⁰

For Walter D. Mignolo, “decoloniality has multiple strands and no universalising gesture; rather, the question “what does it mean to decolonize” cannot be an abstract universal. It has to be answered by looking at other W questions: Who is doing it, where, why, and how?”⁶¹ In response, the approach of this project, in dialogue with decolonial thinkers Simpson, Coulthard, Povinelli, Tallbear amongst others (who); situated in a Western institutional framework (where); is to orient ecological thinking towards reciprocity within a more-than-human field of witnessing, and to challenge late liberal tactics of governance, (a “politics of recognition” orchestrated for ongoing global extractivism), and epistemological hierarchies in artistic-academic praxis that maintain (often covert) communication divides between Life Nonlife (why). It does this through embodied, experiential engagement with land and its more-than-human relations, analysing the legacy of the witch-hunts and the Great Divide, and doing citational justice to longer trajectories of Indigenous ecological and nonhuman politics, which have been forms of *survivance* in ongoing colonial-capitalism (how).

Settler-colonialism, Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard argues, is the “interrelated discursive and nondiscursive facets of economic, gendered, racial, and state power...structured into a relatively secure or sedimented set of hierarchical social relations that continue to

⁵⁹ Vizenor. *Manifest Manners*, p.18. This sentiment has been widely attributed to white anthropologists and philosophers such as David Abram; recognition is due rather to its indigenous sources.

⁶⁰ Ecological and new materialist turns have until more recently largely overlooked Indigenous voices, whose ecological imperatives are bound to survival in the face of historic and ongoing settler-colonialism. An arguable academic privileging of certain articulations of “theory” also bypassed this earlier, diverse field of Native literature, and its poetic expressions of Indigenous language theory, politics and nonhuman-human relations.

⁶¹ Walter D. Mignolo, and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality*. (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2018) p.108. A wider field of decolonial and postcolonial thinking is indebted to the legacies of seminal works by Frantz Fanon, Sylvia Wynter, Audre Lourde, Walter D. Mignolo, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Coco de Fusco (see bibliography).

facilitate the dispossession of Indigenous peoples of their lands and self-determining authority”.⁶² As Patrick Wolfe states, “the primary motive [of settler-colonialism] is not race... but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element”.⁶³ Whilst this access to territory is enabled through racialising native bodies and histories, the literal ground and metaphysical foundation of contemporary extractivist, settler-colonial power is the continuation of this dispossession and access to territory. This ongoing dispossession has caused some Indigenous critics to be wary of decolonial theory that focusses on internal, cognitive decolonisation: “theory removed from the land, removed from practice, and detached from the contexts that give it form and content propose a decolonizing strategy that risks metaphorizing its constitutive ground.”⁶⁴

Coulthard maps how late liberal governance has responded to Indigenous self-determination efforts in Canada over the last forty years, focussing as they have done around rhetorics of ‘recognition’, being recognised by the existing state legislature and Canadian governance.⁶⁵ He claims that “colonial powers will only recognise the collective rights and identities of Indigenous peoples insofar as this recognition does not throw into question the background legal, political, and economic framework of the colonial relationship itself.”⁶⁶ Whilst these demands have caused “an unprecedented degree of recognition for Aboriginal

⁶² Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, p.7.

⁶³ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native” *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 8, No.4, (2006) pp.387-409; p.388.

⁶⁴ Jarrett Martineau and Eric Ritskes, “Fugitive indigeneity: Reclaiming the terrain of decolonial struggle through Indigenous art” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* Vol. 3, No. 1, (2014) pp. I-XII, (p.II). In their 2012 article *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor*, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang remind readers that what is unsettling about decolonisation in settler-colonial dynamics is the repatriation of Indigenous lands and ways of life. Adamant that decolonisation is not a metaphor, easily undertaken in purely conceptual terms for the Western academy, they highlight the triangulation of settler-native-slave colonial matrices, in which decolonial discourse can get orchestrated to ‘settler moves to innocence’. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor: in *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* Vol. 1, No. 1, (2012) pp.1-40.

⁶⁵ Charles Taylor’s work on recognition reveals a problematic dynamic of late liberal multiculturalism. Contrary to Fanon’s emphasis on love and affective forces of recognition, Taylor’s emphasis is on intellectual reason where “recognition is a type of respect conferred or withheld depending on the worth of the individual or group in question” (Oliver, *Witnessing Beyond Recognition*, p.44.) Such an approach fails to account for the positionality of the Western subject, maintains and repeats the oppressive dynamics of subject and object relations. See Charles Taylor, “The Politics of Recognition” in *Multiculturalism*, edited by Amy Gutman. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994, p.25-73.

⁶⁶ Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014) p.41.

“cultural” rights within the legal and political framework of the Canadian state” Coulthard argues that:

“instead of ushering in an era of peaceful coexistence grounded on the ideal of *reciprocity* or *mutual* recognition, the politics of recognition in its contemporary liberal form promises to reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples’ demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend”.⁶⁷

Writing from a First Nations context, Coulthard works at the generative intersection of Indigenous contexts and readings of Marxist primitive accumulation, in which “violent *dispossession* set the stage for the emergence of capitalist accumulation and the reproduction of capitalist relations of production by tearing Indigenous societies, peasants, and other small-scale, self-sufficient agricultural producers from the source of their livelihood - *the land*”.⁶⁸ He thus draws connections to a wider Indigenous movement, as well as theorists including Silvia Federici who have highlighted “the escalating onslaught of violent, state-orchestrated enclosures following neoliberalism’s ascent to hegemony” which have unmistakably demonstrated the “*persistent* role that unconcealed, violent dispossession continues to play in the reproduction of colonial and capitalist social relations in both the domestic and global contexts”.⁶⁹ Recognition by late liberal governance, in Coulthard’s view - and as we shall see through Povinelli in another settler-colonial context - reveals assimilationist and de-politicising agendas, oriented towards dispossession and the continued erasure of Indigenous lifeworlds.

Violent extractivism which threatens Indigenous survival, have propelled certain moments into mainstream media attention in the last decade: namely the Dakota Access Pipeline protests on Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota (2016) and the trans-tribal movement Idle No More (2012-ongoing). However, it is necessary to map these events as continuations of ongoing genocidal policy rather than specific to current administrations or late liberalism’s extractivism, to understand the ways the U.S. and Canada’s treatment of its Indigenous communities has become more covert, but not fundamentally changed since the

⁶⁷ Ibid p.2-3.

⁶⁸ Coulthard p.7.

⁶⁹ Ibid p.9.

strategies of outright genocide. Nick Estes (Lower Brule Sioux) and Melanie K. Yazzie (Diné), note how the current proposal for Keystone XL pipeline cuts through the Great Sioux Reservation, Lakota lands “ceded” to the U.S. during the 1889 Great Sioux Agreement.⁷⁰ Agreement is a misnomer, as U.S. officials began to “detain and incarcerate” Indigenous children indefinitely, taking them to various reservation schools specifically in this case the Carlisle Industrial Indian school in Pennsylvania, where sexual, physical and psychological abuse was rife, as well as enacting forced starvation and threats of violence on the remaining Lakotas. The children were supposed “hostages” for the coercion of the Lakota leaders. Finally forced into agreeing to “the breakup of remaining communal lands into individual plots”, the forced starvation, threats of violence and theft of children did not cease, and “the path carved out for the Keystone XL pipeline through Lakota treaty territory today is only possible because of allotment and white settlement; and the pipeline’s trespass is only possible because the U.S. stole, and continues to steal, Indigenous children”.⁷¹ Povinelli too, describes the allotment, or enclosure system of individualising land ownership, disabling more collective, communal kinship models, that caused her Karrabing friends to find themselves homeless, as individually, they were “easy to pick off”.⁷²

The anti-colonial Ghost Dance movement which rose in resistance was brutally suppressed by half the U.S. military in 1890, massacring 300 at Wounded Knee; “mass mobilisation of the occupying military and its police forces in Lakota and Dakota territory occurred again in 1973, during the Wounded Knee takeover by red power activists, and in 2016, during the uprising at Standing Rock”.⁷³ It is notable that resistance in the form of ceremony (Ghost Dance) which was mirrored in 2016 at Standing Rock when Indigenous Water

⁷⁰ Nick Estes and Melanie K. Yazzie, “Settler Colonialism In Turtle Island” *The Funambulist; Politics of Space and Bodies*. Vol. 20 (2018) p.12-19.

⁷¹ Ibid. p.17. The reference here to the continuation of stealing Indigenous children is both to the current situation of Trump administration’s US/Mexico border, as well as the recent reversal of a four decade old Indian Child Welfare Act which helped prevent the forced removal by state institutions of Native children from their homes and into white families for foster care.

⁷² Elizabeth A. Povinelli, “After the End, Stubborn Affects and Collective Practices” lecture at *Sonic Acts Festival 2019: HEREAFTER*, accessed November 24, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B39F2duTlJ4>.

⁷³ Ibid.

Protectors sought access to the river specifically for ceremony during the protests, are reacted to with such violence by the U.S. military. It is important then, in addressing the relationship between dispossession, enclosure of communal lands, and contemporary extractivism, to read the more current examples of this (e.g. Keystone XL) as continuous with and enabled by the theft of land, and dehumanisation along the lines of race: as Kathryn Yusoff so clearly articulates, “the border in the division of materiality (and its subjects) as inhuman and human, and thus as inert or agent matter, operationalises race”.⁷⁴ It is key then to take a long view of the ways late liberalism’s geontopower has been enabled by previous decades of consistent genocidal policy. The possibility of kinship with land and nonhuman relations is inextricable from the possibilities of communal stewardship and access to land.

In response to ongoing femicide, ecocide and Indigenous erasure in Canada, *Idle No More* swept across North America in late 2012. INM is a trans-tribal movement initiated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, to call for environmental justice (catalysed by the Harper Government’s Bill C-45 which dismantled the 1882 Navigable Waters Protection Act, deregulating waterways that passed through Indigenous lands) and justice for violence against Indigenous women.⁷⁵ The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women epidemic was finally given a National Inquiry in 2016 under the Trudeau government, which found that rates of violence towards Indigenous women by non-native men were seven times higher than violence towards non-Indigenous women, and that 84% of Indigenous women would experience extreme violence in their lifetimes.⁷⁶ Often the rate of sexual violence increased dramatically near the sites of pipelines with an influx of non-Native male workers temporarily to these areas. INM demands justice in the face of gender, racial and ecological violence at the hands of ongoing coloniality, repeating in more or less covert ways, the tactics of colonisation: “the

⁷⁴ Yusoff, p.4.

⁷⁵ Founders of *Idle No More*: Nina Wilson, Sylvia McAdam, Jessica Gordon & Sheelah McLean. The deregulation of waterways impacted historic Treaty agreements between Indigenous groups and the Crown (U.K.). Yet these obligations seem long forgotten by the U.K. in its failure to stall any of Canada’s catastrophic environmental policies that overwhelmingly impact Indigenous communities.

⁷⁶ National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, *Executive Summary From The Interim Report, Our Women And Girls Are Sacred*. (Vancouver: National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, 2018) accessed March 2, 2019, <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>.

colonizers saw (and rightly) that as long as women held unquestioned power of such magnitude, attempts at total conquest of the continents were bound to fail”.⁷⁷

Indeed, settler-colonialism is read in proximity to the gender violence of the European witch-hunts, which, in the seminal work of Silvia Federici’s Marxist feminist perspective, are pivotal to the enclosure of common land and making of a capitalist workforce in Europe and historic - and importantly ongoing - colonisation practices in the “New World”.⁷⁸ Federici argues that the witch-hunts are a watershed moment in the growing subjugation and control of female bodies. This was not coincidental, but fundamental to the orchestration of mass-scale enclosures of common land, and establishment of a capitalist workforce. For Federici, women’s subjugation from cultural and communal life central to systems of common land, the subsequent ‘commoning’ of the female body both as producer of an industrial workforce and at the sexual disposal of men, were foundational to modern extractive capital and the emergence of a capitalist workforce, and inextricable from wider practices of colonialism:

“It should also have seemed significant that the witch-hunt occurred simultaneously with the colonization and extermination of the populations of the New World, the English enclosures, the beginning of the slave trade, the enactment of 'bloody laws' against vagabonds and beggars...but this aspect of primitive accumulation has truly remained a secret”.⁷⁹

The lesser-told linking of the witch-hunts to this history, brings to the fore the ways in which enclosures of all kind - bodies, sexual practice, kinship, speech, knowledges and practices - were simultaneous to, and inextricable from the enclosures of land itself.

The Lancashire site is considered in relation to these entangled projects of primitive accumulation.⁸⁰ Large-scale enclosures in the Forest of Bowland occurred from the 1550s to 1630 and had a profound effect on the Bowland landscape:

“The extinction of wolves by the end of the 14th century further perpetuated the farming

⁷⁷ Paula Gunn Allen, *The Sacred Hoop: Recovering the Feminine in American Indian Traditions* (Boston, M.A.: Beacon Press, 1986 [1992]).

⁷⁸ Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p.164-5.

⁸⁰ The enclosures paved the way for Industrial revolution, and a most intensive upheaval of communities from more rural living. Thousands were forcibly removed, became economic migrants, or joined the local factory workforce, as agricultural and small-scale farming was overtaken first with wool, then cotton industries, and coal mining predominantly in the North. Many migrated to the ‘New World’, to inhabit land in turn stolen from Indigenous inhabitants under colonial rule, perpetuating cycles of violence propelled by modernisation.

culture and enabled sheep grazing to extend onto the Fells. The main change was the conversion of moorland and woodland waste to meadow and permanent pasture. The form of enclosure varied from piecemeal, irregular-shaped fields around individual farms to systematic divisions of the majority of the commons resulting in regular enclosure... Post-medieval enclosure (1600–1850) accounts for a large proportion of the fieldscapes rising from the Hodder Valley and extending further up the northern fellsides. There are also speculative moorland enclosures that reverted to moorland after 1840–50.”⁸¹

In the villages around the Trough of Bowland, industrialisation linked the region to colonial trade and practices: cotton was imported from the U.S., whilst Sabden, one of the villages of Pendle, became famous for importing calico from colonial Calcutta, replacing its pre-Industrial artisan weavers’ trade and small-scale watermills.⁸² Extractivism to fuel the Industrial revolution in the wider Lancashire region, in turn fed by cheap goods imported from the colonies, hugely benefitted the elite and rising merchant class who found their wealth in the slave trade, factory ownership and colonial trade.

River-serpent-womxn appears in Dolphinhholme, a small hamlet hugely productive in the cotton industry. Thomas Hinde founded the mill in Lower Dolphinhholme in 1795 from the profits of the slave trade, after sending more ships to Africa than any other Lancaster merchant. The up-river hamlet of Abbeystead derives its name from “site of the Abbey”, once home to Cistercian monks in the reign of Henry II (12thC), and reminds us of an earlier, pre-Witch-hunt historic moment in which patriarchal religious institutions overtook more local,

⁸¹ Early enclosures also impacted the area. Increased population pressure of the Bowland Fells led to the clearance and colonisation of the Bowland fringes in the 12th to 13th centuries, based around a cattle-rearing economy. Vaccaries (cattle stock farms on large estates) founded in the 12th and 13th centuries had a large impact on settlement pattern, developing into farmsteads and hamlets as they were let out by landowners from the 14th century and as population increased from the late 15th century. “National Character Area Profile: Bowland Fells” Natural England, 2015, accessed January 2020, online at: www.gov.uk/natural-england.

⁸² Calico print works, owned by James Bury and Sons, had around 2,000 employees at its peak, hand-printing the imported Calico, which derived its name from Calcutta. Local historian and archaeologist John Clayton claims that “prior to local government reorganisation in 1974, Pendle was a small, rather insular district, still clinging to its former status as a baronial hunting forest”. This may have slowed down intensive mechanised farming, as “Medieval farming practices survived on many a Pendle farm well into the second half of the 20th century”. Interview for Landscape Magazine, accessed July 17, 2020 online at: <https://www.landscapemagazine.co.uk/history-and-heritage/2017/11/5/a-hill-with-a-tale-to-tell>. However, industry from colonial trade still transformed Pendle and nearby Forest of Bowland, consolidating the latter’s vast aristocratic, land-owning estates.

land-based pagan practices.⁸³ The dam at Abbeystead estate was built to contain water for the downstream cotton mills in drier weather. This is the site of the second vision - the aftermath of the “cut” of stone-womxn. It speaks to the construction of “nature” as resource and commodity, whilst rendering “landscape” as a pristine visual object, utterly covering over its local and colonial violences.

The nearby Lancashire coalfields, already mentioned by Povinelli for their environmental impact, brought in thousands of men and boys to over 500 mine shafts in the region, as coal fed the boilers of cotton mills in the wider Lancashire area. Miners from the wider Lancashire area were part of the historic Miners’ Strike of 1984-85, one of the largest industrial strikes in history. The strikes culminated in the Conservative government decimating the strength of the trade unions, propelling privatisation and demolishing a workforce.⁸⁴ Local communities more recently protested in light of the U.K.’s plan to carry out fracking across various Lancashire sites. In 2018, Pendle Borough Council opposed Government proposals to centralise decisions around shale gas exploration, which would essentially make gas exploration for fracking purposes no longer dependent on planning permission. Decisions would be made by the National Infrastructure Planning Commission and Government Ministers, not by the local planning authorities (elected councils). The council claimed that centralising decision making was “a threat to local democracy and to the rights of local people and local communities”.⁸⁵ Protests against fracking have been happening across Lancashire for coming up to a decade, after the first reported earthquakes at test sites in 2011: Cuadrilla exceeded their 90 day drilling limit, broke the wildlife protection agreement, but were not held accountable, whilst

⁸³ The Order of Cistercians are a Catholic religious order that branched off from the Benedictines in the 11thC to follow the Rule of Saint Benedict. The Church’s view on pre-Christian beliefs is summed up in St Bernard’s view of the Irish at this time as being in the “depth of barbarism”: “... never had he found men so shameful in their morals, so wild in their rites, so impious in their faith, so barbarous in their laws, so stubborn in discipline, so unclean in their life. Christians in name, in fact they were pagans.” The Abbey brings to mind the figures of the judges who cut the stone-womxn in the first vision, who appeared as judges or indeed priests, the two roles of authority folding into one another in the perception of the vision.

⁸⁴ The main contemporary industries in the more specific region of the Bowland Fells (where the River Wyre springs from) consist of livestock rearing, timber industries from extensive conifer plantations, and water provision. “National Character Area Profile: Bowland Fells” Natural England, 2015, accessed January 2020, online at: www.gov.uk/natural-england.

⁸⁵ “Council backs no fracking in Pendle” *Burnley Express*, 3rd October 2018, accessed Feb 2019, online at: <https://www.burnleyexpress.net/news/politics/council-backs-no-fracking-pendle-569016>

environmental protestors were arrested and found guilty of trespassing during protests.⁸⁶ After a series of earthquakes in summer 2019, fracking was temporarily halted; Riverstone, a New York investor in Cuadrilla, sold their shares to A J Lucas Group, an Australian mining and “drilling specialist” company, working mainly on the Eastern Australian coast. A J Lucas’ claim that due to one of the U.K. sites being “located off the main road...the site is visually unobtrusive, with many people in the area unaware of its existence”, terrifyingly erasing the extreme environmental harm of such processes to human and nonhuman alike.⁸⁷

Whilst fracking intermittently gets paused in Lancashire, my concern is that this is a largely empty political manoeuvre, which would simply lead to again outsourcing extractivism and its violences further afield. The U.K. has been crucially inept at banning (indeed has actively encouraged) the EU importation of tar sands from locations including Canada’s Alberta tar fields (which have had catastrophic impacts on Indigenous communities and environments), and post-Brexit, even limited EU regulations no longer apply.⁸⁸ The Pendle witch-hunts, Lancashire textile industries, expansion of the coalfields in the 18th Century, and the contemporary fracking debacle, position the site of the river through what Povinelli terms the ‘*hereish*’ - a location knotted to and within other locations and notably, to and within other violences. The eco-political entanglements of the Great Divide illuminate why theorists

⁸⁶ “Banks fracking protester guilty of public order offences” *BBC News*, 6 September 2012, online at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-19512578>, and “Cuadrilla breached fracking conditions, court told” *Guardian News*, 10 September 2012, accessed August 2020, online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2012/sep/10/cuadrilla-breach-fracking-lancashire>.

⁸⁷ A J Lucas Group, accessed August 2020, online at: <https://www.lucas.com.au>.

⁸⁸ The tar sands are a huge area about the size of Florida or Wisconsin north and east of Edmonton, Alberta, containing a tarry bitumen mixed with sand that is mined from underneath the boreal forest. In late 2016, Liam Fox, U.K. Secretary of State for International Trade, circumvented Parliament to push forward EU-Canada trade deal CETA, encouraging importation of cheap tar sands, and potentially making it easier for companies to sue governments that use environmental regulations to try and move their economies away from fossil fuels. Accessed July 18, 2020, online at: <https://www.globaljustice.org.uk/news/2016/oct/26/liam-fox-forced-apologise-ignoring-parliament-support-ceta-trade-deal>. “Tar sands - bitumen that is extracted and upgraded to produce synthetic crude - has been heavily criticised for its poor environmental and social outcomes, locally and globally. Tar sands generates on average 3 to 5 times more greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions than conventional oil, representing a huge threat to climate protection. Canada is currently the only major centre of production but investment is expanding, including by European oil companies such as BP, Shell, Total and ENI.” “Tar Sands, Fuelling the climate crisis, undermining EU energy security and damaging development objectives” accessed June 2012, online at: https://www.banktrack.org/download/tar_sands_fuelling_the_climate_crisis_undermining_eu_energy_security_and_damaging_development_objectives_1/110202_tar_sand_final_may10.pdf.

countering a politics of recognition are hugely important for this project.

Critiques of the politics of recognition reveal the ways in which Life Nonlife divides are maintained in order to facilitate global capitalism's thirst for extractivism. This is at the expense of Indigenous human-nonhuman lifeworlds, environmental racism at large, and land and its communicative capacity itself. Coulthard, Simpson and Povinelli amongst many others, counter the politics of recognition in differing ways: by re-orienting towards alternative nexus' of authority and dynamics of relation *outside of* colonial-capitalist frameworks - namely land itself, Indigenous elders, languages and concepts, anti-colonial familial models and cultural-political-spiritual practices and pedagogies. Including nonhumans within the realm of the current metaphysics of law, arguably misses the already social more-than-human collectivities, and alternative emergent structures they propel. Glen Coulthard proposes an anticolonial, "grounded normativity":

"inspired by and oriented around *the question of land* - a struggle not only for land in the material sense, but also deeply informed by what the land *as a system of reciprocal relations and obligations* can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world in non dominating and non exploitative terms...a place-based foundation of Indigenous decolonial thought and practice".⁸⁹

For Coulthard, "grounded normativity" is a return to "the modalities of Indigenous land-based practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure our ethical engagements with the world and our relationships with human and nonhuman others over time".⁹⁰ Leanne Betasamosake Simpson follows this grounded approach, claiming that "we cannot just think, write or imagine our way to a decolonized future. Answers on how to re-build and how to resurge are therefore derived from a web of consensual relationships that is infused with movement through lived experience and embodiment".⁹¹ This is a political concern which necessitates a redress of land rights and political sovereignty, and involves resurgence strategies

⁸⁹ Ibid p.13.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Leanne B. Simpson, "Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation" *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* Vol. 3, No. 3, (2014) pp.1-25. Simpson cites her thinking as "generated inside a community of intellectuals, artists, Elders and cultural producers to whom I am both influenced by and accountable to" including Doug Williams, John Borrows, Tara Williamson, Niigaanwewidam Sinclair, Glen Coulthard, Erin Freeland Ballantyne, Manulani Meyer, Toby Rollo, and Matthew Wildcat.

stemming from “an Indigenous Inside”, re-membering Indigenous ways of living, theory and language that do not centre or even orient in relation to colonialism.

From her earlier research into the repeated erasure of the spiritual aspect of much Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), to more recent books *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, *Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence*, and *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance*, Simpson's concept of “land as pedagogy” articulates the intersection of land, politics, storytelling and spirit that is so central to her Indigenous Resurgence project. For Simpson, this is specifically situated in her Indigenous context of Nishnaabeg teachings.⁹² Her decolonial “starting point within Indigenous theoretical frameworks then is different than from within western theories: the spiritual world is alive and influencing; colonialism is contested”.⁹³ She situates individual and collective empowerment through this relationship to land, in a pedagogy centred around love, care, self-determination and autonomous relations with the spiritual world. It is this which she claims builds an “Indigenous inside”, counter to politics of recognition, which have resulted in assimilation, coercion, erasure and disempowerment.

Love of the spirits and ancestors centralises the spiritual as the political in a pedagogy that urgently interrupts the legacy of Western critical discourse prioritising universalising, non-experiential, non-embodied, and non-emotive forms of knowledge making.⁹⁴ Simpson cites “heart-listening” as central to her learning Indigenous living from Elders, making space for non-colonial concepts to arise. Her understanding of land is situated and complex and as she articulates, predominantly emerges through her education from Nishnaabeg Elders. She tells the story of Binoojiinh (child) learning about maple sugar, to articulate principles of land as

⁹² Simpson's project is “rooted in my spiritual and emotional life, as well as my body; and it is explored through my Nishnaabeg name, my clan, my Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg roots and my own individual being”, *As We Have Always Done*, p.40.

⁹³ Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, p.40.

⁹⁴ To this end Boaventura de Sousa Santos' claim is also extremely relevant, of what it means to know, what counts as knowledge and how that knowledge is produced: “proposals for decolonizing knowledge and power...will be feasible only if the dominant epistemology is subject to a critique allowing for the emergence of epistemological options that give credibility to the forms of knowledge that underlie those proposals” in Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *Another Knowledge Is Possible; Beyond Northern Epistemologies* (London: Verso, 2007) p.xxi.

pedagogy, most notably, centering “*gaa-ishi-zhaawendaagoziyaang* - what is given lovingly to us by the spirits”, and contextualised, self-determined and consensual learning, supported by family and elders. “They come to know maple sugar in the context of love”, wherein “spiritual knowledge is a tremendous, ubiquitous source of wisdom that is at the core of every system in the physical world”.⁹⁵ In her reference to Simpson in *On Decoloniality*, Catherine E. Walsh fails to include that it is not simply “theory” that Simpson argues is “woven with kinetics, spiritual presence and emotion, is contextual and relational” but that this theory is Indigenous story itself, emergent *through* land.⁹⁶ Remembering and visioning an Indigenous past and future, Simpson reflects on the emergent, land-based Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg “system of governance as breathing - a rhythm of contraction and release”.⁹⁷ Now, in a landscape of constant surveillance, “where concrete buildings cover over our teaching rocks”, Simpson works with the Nishnaabeg concept *kobade* - referring to great-grandparents and great-grandchildren, positioning oneself as “a line in the chain”, reclaiming an ecology of intimacy “in the absence of coercion, hierarchy or authoritarian power”.⁹⁸ Resurgence is expressed through the concept *Biiskabiyang* - (turning inward toward essence) - a reemergence, an unfolding from the inside out, through the act of doing, the refusal of coloniality, and re-situating of elder knowledges, frameworks and contexts emergent from land itself.⁹⁹

Simpson’s work is a hugely significant contribution to decolonial struggles, articulating the intersections of education, language, storytelling as theory, with land as a system of relations and ecological, political and spiritual intelligence. As a white woman writing in academia, I am extremely wary of (mis)-appropriating Simpson’s concepts or taking them too

⁹⁵ *gaa-ishi-zhaawendaagoziyaang* is translated by Nishnaabeg scholar Wendy Makoons Geniusz *Our Knowledge is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Botanical Anishinaabe Teachings* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009) p.67 in Simpson *As We Have Always Done*, p.157.

⁹⁶ Catherine E. Walsh, “The Decolonial For; Resurgences, Shifts, and Movements” in *On Decoloniality*, eds.. Walter D. Mignolo, and Catherine E. Walsh, (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2018) p.19.

⁹⁷ *As We Have Always Done*, p.31.

⁹⁸ Ibid p.8.

⁹⁹ Ibid. p.17-21.

far out of their context, whilst clearly wanting to do citational justice to her seminal work.¹⁰⁰ Because of the emphasis on located struggles in relation to land and the necessity for context-dependent, emergent structures, I do not translate Indigenous concepts nor do I go back and forth with Simpson's 'land as pedagogy' throughout this thesis. Rather, I work to find ways in my own context of communicating across Life Nonlife divides, and finding a framework to understand this communication. This is not to bypass a human community at the sites I engage; rather, it is to address the specific research of this project, which is how to listen to nonhuman presences as an artistic practice. I unpack these moments to urgently redress notions of the self as separate from nonhuman, ancestral and spiritual lifeworlds.

In her Nishnaabeg context, this radical resurgence project has at its core the political imperative of access to land and political sovereignty. In a U.K. context, there needs to be a deconstruction of property rights, access, and coloniality at large. However, this project's re-orienting to land as an otherwise, alternative pedagogical force, is not to make a claim for indigeneity in my own context and certainly not to orchestrate a sense of nationstate or claim to "home" (neither in its move towards right-wing politics nor in its erasing experiences of slavery's afterlife as the closure of ancestral sites of return). Rather, mapping the development of a mutual witnessing with and for land, is to offer pedagogical methods of engaging deep listening to land and ask how this artistic labour can contribute to modes of witnessing in light of environmental crisis. This is to work towards confronting some of the deeply entrenched colonial tendencies in my artistic-academic context, to re-orient towards the expressions of existents such as the river and what it might propel.

Land, as expressed by Coulthard, is considered as that which can propel an otherwise to capitalist-colonial epistemologies, for the survival of existing - and emergence of potential - human-nonhuman collectivities. Beginning this project I was very directly and abruptly "called

¹⁰⁰ I have been wary throughout this project of de-contextualising Simpson within the Western academy whose primary intention as she claims "is to use Indigenous peoples and our knowledge systems to legitimise settler colonial authority within education used as a training ground for those who would legitimize settler colonial authority over Indigenous peoples and our nations in Canadian society... The Academy does not and cannot provide the proper context for Nishnaabeg intelligence without taking a principled stand on the forces that are currently attacking Nishnaabeg intelligence: colonial gendered violence, dispossession, erasure, and imposed poverty" (*As We Have Always Done* p.164).

in” by the river and its river stones. The river emanated a force that it felt absolutely pertinent to follow, and expresses (literally presses out) a power unlike the patriarchal power relations of coloniality. The river expresses a refusal to the enfolded enclosures of land, writing and medical practice, as revealed in the trituration (chapter 5). I thus come to understand the river in relation to the historic enclosures, not at a symbolic level, but materially, through the consciousness, behaviour and expressions that emerge through it.

Native American literature and poetics contributed to my understanding of primary dispossession as the situation of ongoing settler-colonialism, and its relation to orality - myth and story as theory - emergent through land as a system of relations.¹⁰¹ The politics of Native American literary criticism have produced divergent opinions from Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives.¹⁰² I do not read this literature as ethnography (a stance most notably critiqued by Ojibwe author David Treuer), rather I read (as I would any literary, visual, or artistic object) from an decolonial eco-critical perspective.¹⁰³ Laguna author Leslie Marmon Silko’s 1977 novel *Ceremony*, was particularly foundational to my understanding of land ceremony as a form of aesthetic-political action and participation with story itself. Silko tells of Tayo, a Native American returning from prisoner of war camp in Japan post World War II who speaks of himself from the fog of trauma: “he can't talk to you. He is invisible. His words are formed with an invisible tongue, they have no sound”.¹⁰⁴ No longer able to inhabit a place, Tayo's words, his language itself, is no longer habitable. For Tayo, this means having no access to what Silko calls “the stories”, or the oral tradition - the lifeline that makes the text: ceremony man “rubbed his belly... / I keep them here / [he said] / Here, put your hand on it / See, it is moving. / There is life here / for the people. / And in the belly of this story / the rituals and

¹⁰¹ Particularly influential have been the poetics of N. Scott Momaday, James Welch, Linda Hogan, Louise Erdrich, Leslie Marmon Silko, Simon Ortiz, Joy Harjo, Jeannette Armstrong, Paula Gunn Allen and Layli Long Soldier. See bibliography for a full list of works. See also David Abram *The Spell of the Sensuous*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996. Abram works through a Western phenomenological apparatus to read the erasure of orality with the written word, as fundamental in severing human and more-than-human relations, proposing rather the emergence of language from its more-than-human, material and animate worlds.

¹⁰² See Chadwick Allen, *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).

¹⁰³ David Truer, *Native American Fiction: A User's Manual* (Minnesota: Graywolf Press, 2006).

¹⁰⁴ Leslie Marmon Silko, *Ceremony* (New York: Viking Press, 1977) p.15.

the ceremony / are still growing”.¹⁰⁵ Tayo's vomiting echoes this first ceremony story; instead of speech, the belly cannot house the story and it gets rejected as a dis-ease within the system of the body itself: the impossibility of the stories living in Tayo's body, as much as Tayo might live in the body of the story. Story is embedded and embodied within the flesh and organs, something to be lived materially, physically and spiritually.

Prevalent throughout the text is the creatrix “Thought Woman, the spider, / named things and / as she named them / they appeared. / She is sitting in her room / thinking of a story now / I’m telling you the story / she is thinking”. Re-inscribing himself in the story of Thought-Woman is a geographical and embodied journey that Tayo embarks on, to the backdrop of the Alamo desert nuclear testing site in New Mexico. The ensuing ceremony of the text is a re-integration within the body of story itself as indistinguishable from land, both of which are in flux, dynamic and responsive; action within the land as a political ceremonial space is a kind of storytelling, with the potential to tell another kind of story. Nuclear impact is both registered in terms of the material misuse of Indigenous land, and in terms of story - that the violence to land has directly disrupted the ‘story’ (embodied as it is) of relationality to Thought-Woman; land ceremony is thus an act of re-attending to the existents (Thought-Woman) whose presence is *both* land *and* story, and inextricably linked to the ongoingness of Tayo. As such, Silko’s text - especially in the time of writing - is as much a disruption to Western linguistic hegemonies of the ‘humanness’ of language, story and narrative, as it is an analytics of existence that illuminates the entanglement of existents (Thought-Woman) and their ecological selves and context (land).

Silko’s text centralises the relation between human and mythic ancestor - an ancestor inextricable from land/nonhuman and generative of future human-nonhuman kinship. Jo Harjo’s “Deer Dancer” articulates what is at stake for and in the promise of such kinship in light of its colonial interruptions: “She was the myth slipped down through dreamtime. The promise of feast we all knew was coming. The deer who crossed through knots of a curse to

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p.2.

find us”.¹⁰⁶ The inextricable ecological category (of, for example Deer) from the mythic Deer, and thus from the human relation of Deer, is a model of kinship that productively and importantly, resists translation. Oversimplifying these complex relations into the ‘spirit of place’, or cultural totemism upholds a totemic imaginary, making ‘nature’ static, and fixing complex knowledges into ‘past’ cultural praxis. Likewise, erasing their articulations from current academic notions of kinship - or undermining them as ‘mere’ stories (read: chronologically prior to scientific understanding) to illustrate ecological responsibility, repeats the violent interruption of such complex relations in historic and ongoing colonial-capitalism.¹⁰⁷

In light of Silko’s storytelling, Gerald Vizenor’s critical work has been foundational to an understanding of tribal presence: “the oral stories are dominated by those narratives that are translated, published, and read at unnamed distances... stories that arise in silence are sources of a tribal presence”.¹⁰⁸ A resistance to modernism’s romanticism and racism towards the simulated image of the “Indian”, Vizenor’s trickster aesthetic resists the closure of written stories, the performance and exoticisation of “authenticity”, prioritising instead “the shimmer of humour, the sources of tribal visions, and tragic wisdom”.¹⁰⁹ Like Simpson’s claim that “the meaning comes from the context and the process, not the content”, for Vizenor too “the meaning is in the telling and in the presence”.¹¹⁰

I read a continuation of this project in Todd and Watts’ later critique of environmental discourse’s privileging secularism as progress, and its appropriation of mythic presences (especially Creation mythologies which Simpson and Watts situate as Indigenous theory) - from their tribal contexts and emergence from specific land, therefore stripping story as pedagogy given by land, and thus folding story’s decolonial potential back into a governance of

¹⁰⁶ Joy Harjo “Deer Dancer” *In Mad Love and War* (Middletown, CN: Wesleyan Publishing, 1990). See also Louise Erdrich *Tracks* (New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1988) for poetic and narrative evocations of mythic ancestors.

¹⁰⁷ See Vanessa Watts on clan obligations: “Growling Ontologies; Indigeneity, becoming-souls and settler colonial inaccessibility” in *Colonialism and Animality: Anti-Colonial Perspectives in Critical Animal Studies*. Edited by Kelly Struthers Montford and Chloë Taylor (Oxon: Routledge, 2020).

¹⁰⁸ Vizenor *Manifest Manners*, p.12.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid p.17.

¹¹⁰ Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, p.43.

difference. A written critique (of the erasure of Indigenous knowledge as story) has been ongoing in Native literature for over fifty years; Indigenous knowledges being taken seriously all of a sudden (or coming into more frequent circulation), through the works of current theorists such as Simpson, Davis, Todd, Tallbear, reveals the aforementioned dynamic of ecological concern: it is only when white, Euro-American lifeworlds realise they are under threat, that dominant discourse will look to other ways of being, living and thinking, the same thinking its own mechanisms have so detrimentally ignored.¹¹¹

Over my many encounters with the river, its emergence overflows, ‘figuring’ into the pulsating forms of river-serpent, stone-womxn, and the shadowy presence of an ancient hag figure. I experience these existents as inseparable from the material reality of river and river stones, foregrounding the significance of the relation between such resonances, their materiality and the relations they teach. The river thus comes to actualise a creatrix force often associated with Goddess figures, and as Gloria Anzaldúa notes in reference to Mexican Serpent Goddess figures, the darker, erotic, destructive and creative potential of the divine feminine overwritten by colonial religion.¹¹² The “cut” of stone-womxn is read as resonance of and precursor to the historical events of the witch-hunts. The historic enclosures of land, paralleled and enabled in the control of bodies and epistemologies, are structures that do emerge from the particular erotic energy and force of the river-serpent and what it teaches. In other words, the control of bodies and subsequent gender violence enacted in the New World as a mechanism of colonialism, is understood through this project as parallel to - and extending Federici, *enabled by* - the enclosure and silencing *of the mythic* as inseparable from the river itself - as affective, agential resonance, and its pedagogical, spiritual and material impact. For this reason, the

¹¹¹ It is worth noting an impact of the lack of interdisciplinary cross-over between Native American literature only more recently included on American literature courses, and wider fields of ecological study in the arts, humanities and sciences. If the ecological turn takes seriously the proliferation of epistemologies and ontologies necessary for decolonising environmentalism, then including immaterial forms of knowledge such as oral literature, and material forms of storytelling such as the Kuna pictographs I will discuss in relation to Monique Mojica, are integral to wider perspectives of theory. The balance in interdisciplinary approaches towards ‘ecologies’ in Western discourse can be weighted towards the sciences, to the sometimes detriment of minority literatures and ways of understanding whose analytics of existence refuse translation in these terms.

¹¹² Gloria Anzaldúa, “Entering into the Serpent”, *Borderlands / La Frontera; The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987 [2012]) p.55.

silencing of Indigenous stories, and the appropriation of Traditional Indigenous Knowledge (ecological-spiritual) into purely scientific contexts, is another relation to settler-colonial dynamics this project is invested in critiquing.

Alongside settler-colonial and Indigenous contexts, and in the urgency to decolonize the Anthropocene, critical race theorists are hugely influential for this project, deconstructing the racist project of defining the subjectivity, individualism and liberalism of the human ‘subject’, and the ongoing violence on black lives in the wake of slavery. Critical race theory often resists notions of belonging more prominent in Indigenous resurgence, and thus provides a necessary dialogue with Indigenous perspectives. As Christina Sharpe so powerfully articulates, weather/ climate is both the physical impact of ongoing environmental racism (of which hurricane Katrina is the most obvious recent example in North American contexts) as well as “the weather is the totality of our environments; the weather is total climate; and that climate is anti-black”.¹¹³ The ecological turn has prioritised white, Western-centric voices and projects, especially strands of eco-criticism which emerged in more literary contexts in the 1990s onwards, and can be seen in some continuation with earlier romantic, pastoral, and nature writing movements.¹¹⁴ But new materialist turns (expanded in forthcoming section) have similarly not been so vigilant in bringing together postcolonial or decolonial approaches to environmental concern, hence the legacies of critical race theory are integral to a decolonial project.

The ongoing archival work of Saidiya Hartman is seminal. Her 2007 book *Lose Your Mother, A Journey Along the Atlantic slave Route*, traces the impossibility of return to, or discovery

¹¹³ Sharpe *In the Wake*, p.104.

¹¹⁴ Ecocriticism has been a sphere of literary criticism since the 1990s and 2000s, with journals such as PAN, Journal of Philosophy, Activism, Nature; Green Letters, Studies in Ecocriticism; ISLE and ASLE Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment. See Greg Garrard, ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014). The mainly white male discourse (see Garrard, Coupe, Gifford) in the early 2000s onwards was counteracted by a slightly more eco-feminist and indigenous-aware approach in Australia (see Matthews, Plumwood, Bird Rose). A spike in the inter-war period of a particularly nostalgic nature writing, betrays the shadow-side of the Eurocentric nostalgia of belonging, land, ‘nature’ and pastoral idylls that continue out of the romantic period. Likewise, in a North American context, “wilderness” literature fulfilled the trope of ‘terra nullius’ - empty land available for living, and romanticising at the detriment and erasure of Indigenous lives. This legacy continues and is arguably on the rise, see for example *Out of the Woods*’ necessary critique of Guardian-published environmental writer Paul Kingsnorth’s nationalist environmentalism, March 31 2017, accessed January 17, 2018, online at: <https://libcom.org/blog/lies-land-against-beyond-paul-kingsnorth’s-völkisch-environmentalism-31032017>.

of homeland after the rupture of slavery: “the question of *before* was no less vexed since there was no collective or Pan-African identity that preexisted the disaster of the slave trade”.¹¹⁵ Similarly Dionne Brand’s *A Map to the Door of No Return*, “bristles with her refusal to think return, her dislodging of belonging, and her hard insisting on the facts of displacement and the living in and as the displaced diaspora”.¹¹⁶ Both are reminders of the ongoing absence of return, the interruption of belonging and ancestry; a generative and complex tension with Indigenous sovereignty and its relation to land rights. Both positions weave into and through this project, whose context (UK) stands in settler-colonial triangulation to Indigenous genocide, slavery and the plantation system. Brand’s reminder that the door of no return “transformed us into bodies emptied of being, bodies emptied of self-interpretation, into which new interpretations could be placed”, foregrounds how the rupture that slavery imposes is not only on bodies but also on meaning and language.¹¹⁷ Seminal black feminist Hortense Spillers reads this invasion of intimacy in shadow families and relations of property, where categories such as mother is a relation that loses meaning “since it can be invaded at any given and arbitrary moment by the property relations”.¹¹⁸ This “crisis of referentiality” Christina Sharpe argues, calls for “wake work as a praxis for imagining” which requires “new modes of writing, new modes of making-sensible”.¹¹⁹

For Sharpe, to be *in the wake*, “is to live in the no-space that the law is not bound to respect, to live in no citizenship” just as much as it is to “recognise the ways that we are constituted through and by continued vulnerability to overwhelming force, though not only

¹¹⁵ Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother, A Journey Along the Atlantic slave Route* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2013) p.29. See also *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, which charts the wave of black migration to Northern industrial cities post-slavery, and the intersection of modes of sociality, intimacy and relations with ongoing enclosure and incarceration as a continuation of the project of slavery and anti-blackness. It reminds readers to connect the heteronormative project with ongoing anti-blackness as an extension of state ownership over bodies, through the incarceration of young black women and men.

¹¹⁶ Sharpe, *In the Wake* p.19. See Dionne Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return: Notes to Belonging*. (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2001).

¹¹⁷ Brand, *A Map to the Door of No Return* p.25. For Brand and Sharpe following her, this door is mythic and real as a site of Black Diaspora consciousness.

¹¹⁸ Hortense Spillers, *Black, White and In Color* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2003) p.208.

¹¹⁹ Sharpe, *In the Wake* p.113.

known to ourselves and to each other by that force”.¹²⁰ It is the ontological ground, the total climate of anti-blackness, that renders her critical thinking in terms of atmosphere, toxicity and weather - both environmental and ontological, particularly its relation to breath (“I can’t breathe” echoing the asphyxiation of watery deaths in transatlantic passage). Anti-blackness is a constant state, the ground from which everything else springs, as much as it invades and “interrupts” black bodies. Hortense Spillers attends to the ways in which “without freedom... intimacy doesn’t matter”; working around the legacies and narratives of “shadow families” and of slave masters, Spillers powerfully articulates how touch becomes a proximity *without intimacy* under slavery i.e. under relations as property, radically disrupting the notion of family, kinship and its possibilities.¹²¹ Particularly relevant to interrogating White geology’s racialising apparatus, is Spillers’ analysis of ways in which the dehumanisation of human bodies, and the de-animation of nonhuman bodies, are together orchestrated and mutually split, *then put back together*, through labour in slavery, its literal and metaphysical building and construction of capitalism, in a proximity *without intimacy* between flesh and stone.¹²²

Seminal to the work of performance studies and black radical thought is the work of Fred Moten, whose philosophical, poetic and generative generosity of the “under-commons” of black radical tradition’s music, poetry, sound and history, which is to say performance, poses what is at stake here: “Douglas and Hartman confront us with the fact that the conjunction of reproduction and disappearance is performance’s condition of possibility, its ontology and its mode of production”.¹²³ Following Hartman reading Frederick Douglas’ account of the beating of his Aunt Hester, Moten claims “the commodity whose speech sounds embodies the critiques of value, of private property, of the sign”... and it is thus this “value of the sign” (following

¹²⁰ Ibid, p.16.

¹²¹ Hortense Spillers, “To the Bone; Some Speculations on Touch” at Stedelijk Museum, March 23 2018, accessed September 9, 2019, online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvL4wUKIfpo>. See also Hortense Spillers in conversation with Pauline Alexis Gumms: “Spill: Black Feminist Fugitivity in Conversation and Performance” as part of John Hope Franklin Centre at Duke University, ‘Left of Black’ series, March 22 2017, accessed September 9, 2019, online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ui-EZQ1BTfE>.

¹²² Here the term ‘flesh’ carries black feminism’s use of it as a signifier of the gendered but not quite human and not quite animal body.

¹²³ Fred Moten *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 2003) p.5.

Marx's claim that the commodity cannot speak) "its necessary relation to the possibility of (a universal science of and a universal) language, is only given in the absence or supercession of, or the abstraction from, sounded speech".¹²⁴ Moten's poetics complexify and resist the given route of becoming a subject through entrance into *logos*.

In decolonial readings of environmental discourse, it thus matters hugely what languaging we use to disentangle matter from its de-animation as inert resource for extraction, and the human from its dehumanisation as object of property, or 'flesh' to quote Spillers. In her attention to the "grammars of geology" and the "modes of objectification that the genre of the Anthropocene both unleashes and maintains", Kathryn Yusoff plots the "lexicon of geology...historically situated as a *transactional zone* in which propertied and proprietorial concepts of self are entangled".¹²⁵ Yusoff has contributed a particularly relevant intersection of critical race and Anthropocene discourse in her reading of "biopolitics achieved through geologic means"; in her words, "White Geology makes legible a set of extractions, from particular subject positions, from black and brown bodies, and from the ecologies of place".¹²⁶ Particularly useful alongside the work of Povinelli, Yusoff claims "the division of matter into Life and Nonlife pertains not only to matter but to the racial organisation of life as foundational to New World geographies".¹²⁷ Her cutting together of the terms *property* and *properties*, "in the categorisation of matter" enact both the "spatial dispossession of land (for extraction) and dispossessions of persons in chattel slavery (as another form of spatial extraction)".¹²⁸ Invasion then, and extraction, both the taking *out* (we can think again of Brand's *emptying out*) and taking *away from*, cannot be thought separately and are the shadow side of any *hereish* place, most notably and never absent in this case, from the Lancashire river.

¹²⁴ Ibid. p.12-13. See also Édouard Glissant, *Carribean Discourse: Selected Essays*, trans. J. Michael Dash, (Charlottesville: Caraf Books/University Press of Virginia 1989) p.123-124: "this is how the dispossessed man organized his speech by weaving it into the apparently meaningless texture of extreme noise".

¹²⁵ Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* p.7.

¹²⁶ Ibid p.72, p.4.

¹²⁷ Ibid p.5.

¹²⁸ Ibid p.6.

In this section I will briefly contextualise a non-exhaustive portion of an interdisciplinary ‘ecological turn’ and related fields, to give a sense of the wider discourse in which this project is situated. It is worth noting how vast the term ‘ecology’ is and has become, especially over the duration of this project and its conception in 2013. In almost a decade, what was termed more prominently in literature, performance and visual arts contexts as the ‘ecological’ is arguably being replaced and contextualised within discourse of the Anthropocene. The ‘ecological’ is often used in its expanded sense, as proposed by Félix Guattari, as the impact of capitalism on social relations, environment and human subjectivity.¹²⁹ Under such a remit, an incalculable amount of artistic practices could be argued to be ecological, and the term itself often becomes interchangeable and synonymous with ‘networks’ in general. I use it here when referring to earlier movements of ecological art and performance situated in relation to land, place or nonhuman, and an ‘ecological turn’ in critical thinking that predates and feeds into current Anthropocene discourse.

Ecofeminism is a broad term that includes many divergent practices and approaches. Whilst it had long been critiqued that in the logic of patriarchy, both women and nature appear as other, ecofeminism as a term was coined in 1974 by Françoise d'Eaubonne, who argued for women to bring about ecological revolution, that the phallic order was a double threat to the exploitation of reproductive labour and natural resources.¹³⁰ The ecofeminist approaches of Karen J. Warren, Val Plumwood, Vandana Shiva and feminist science scholars Carolyn Merchant and Donna Haraway, prevailed in the 1980s and 1990s, critiquing how “the sort of logic of domination used to justify the domination of humans by gender, racial or ethnic, or class status is also used to justify the domination of nature”.¹³¹ Critiques focussed on dualistic Enlightenment philosophies of women and ‘nature’ being rendered passive, inert and available

¹²⁹ Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton (London: Bloomsbury 1989 [2014]).

¹³⁰ Françoise d'Eaubonne, *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (Paris: P. Horay, 1974).

¹³¹ Karen J. Warren, *Ecofeminism: Women Culture Nature* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) p.24; See also “The Promise and Power of Ecofeminism” *Environmental Ethics* Vol. 12, No. 2 (1990) pp.125-46.

for invasion, through critiquing the phallic sentiment so encapsulated by Sir Francis Bacon's claim that "I am come in very truth leading you to Nature ...to bind her to your service and make her your slave... the mechanical inventions of recent years...have the power to conquer and subdue her, to shake her to her foundations" -

"[U]nderstanding nature as a woman indifferent to or even welcoming rape was fundamental to the interpretations of these new conceptions of nature and inquiry.... From its very beginning, misogynous and defensive gender politics and the abstraction we think of as scientific method have provided resources for each other".¹³²

An important anchor for this project is eco-philosopher Freya Matthews' claim that "the environmental crisis is a symptom of a deeper, metaphysical crisis in human consciousness and an accompanying crisis of culture. A reorientation to the living world will be possible only in the context of a reorientation to materiality per se".¹³³ However, her term "human" needs re-clarifying as "certain" humans - and notably, not the ones most likely to suffer (and already suffering) from environmental racism. However, her 2009 "Invitation to Ontopoetics" proposes an understanding of the world through a "contemporary panpsychism" - as a "communicative presence with a psycho-active dimension of its own and a capacity and inclination to create and share meaning with us".¹³⁴ Ontopoetics takes effect "against a broad metaphysical backdrop, a view of reality as in some sense subject as much as object, mind as much as matter".¹³⁵ Particularly useful for my creative enquiry was the proposition that the ontopoetic mode "be conceptualised in all manner of ways: mythic, intuitive, imaginative, as well as theoretical".¹³⁶ In *For Love of Matter*, Matthews prioritises "encounter over knowledge" through her re-reading of Eros and Psyche as a recapitulation of erotic love as a worldly,

¹³² Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature; Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: HarperCollins Publishing, 1980) pp.113, 116. A valid concern around ecofeminism has been its possible orchestration towards claims of essentialism; see more recent interventions by Greta Gaard, "Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-Placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism" *Feminist Formations*, Vol.23, No.2, (2011) pp.26-53.

¹³³ Freya Matthews, "An Invitation to Ontopoetics" *PAN Philosophy Activism Nature* Vol. 6 (2009) pp.1-7. See also *The Ecological Self* (London: Routledge, 1991); and *For Love of Matter, A Contemporary Panpsychism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003).

¹³⁴ Matthews *Ontopoetics*, p.2.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid. p.3.

nonhuman, ecological invocation; a methodology I maintain in my relationship with the river and stones, and concept that holds relevant for the practice and theory of this thesis.

Ecofeminist critiques have reflected a broader feminist call for situated and localised knowledge claims, and include a wariness of the universalising tropes of certain white, male voices: Val Plumwood critiqued deep ecology, and its “impartial identification with all particulars, the cosmos”.¹³⁷ Zoe Todd has critiqued the appropriation (and subsequent universalising) of Indigenous mythological figures most notably coined through the deep ecology movement and the work of James Lovelock’s Gaia concept, taken up and continued by political ecologist Bruno Latour.¹³⁸ Critiques of the scientific fallacy of objectivity have been crucial to ecofeminist projects, including Donna Haraway’s call for situated knowledges where “subjectivity and vision are both multidimensional, partial, split, heterogeneous, incomplete, complex, contradictory”, and able to enact only “partial connections”.¹³⁹ Similar feminist calls for “the politics of locations” have been central to concepts of care in ecofeminism, with Carol J. Adams claiming that “the feminist care ethic thus has rejected abstract, rule-based principles in favour of situational, contextual ethics”.¹⁴⁰ Anna Tsing’s more recent anthropology beyond the human calls for non-scalability as opposed to what she terms the “scalable” as exemplified in the plantation system. Non-scalable knowledge rather is changed and transformed by its movement to different contexts, rather than the scalable which aims to be non-relational, easily exported and replicated across vast scales.¹⁴¹ However, ecofeminism can prioritise white voices and written knowledges, failing to account for the ways in which ecological modes of relations

¹³⁷ Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.181. Deep Ecology is a movement coined by Arne Naess in 1972, See Naess, A. *Ecology Community and Lifestyle*, trans. David Rothenberg, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

¹³⁸ Zoe Todd, “An Indigenous Feminist’s Take On The Ontological Turn: ‘Ontology’ Is Just Another Word For Colonialism” in *Journal of Historical Sociology* Vol.29, No.1 (2016) pp.4-22.

¹³⁹ Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective” *Feminist Studies* Vol.14, No.3 (1998) pp.575-99. See also Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

¹⁴⁰ Carol J. Adams, *The Feminist Care Tradition in Animal Ethics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) p2, and Adrienne Rich, “Notes Towards a Politics of Location” *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Poetry and Prose 1979-1985* (New York: Norton, 1986), pp.210-231.

¹⁴¹ Anna L. Tsing, “On Nonscalability: The Living World Is Not Amenable to Precision-Nested Scales” *Common Knowledge* Vol.18, Issue 3, (2018) pp.505–524.

are embedded in, practiced by, and passed down in multiple oral and community-based ways, as well as the ways in which organisations such as Black Lives Matter are inherently embedded with ecological concern - the latter stemming from the possibility of liberation and thriving of black life. Shamara Shantu Riley and Melanie L Harris draw necessary focus to the sacred as an aspect of Ecowomanism - an approach that centres the “religious, theological, and spiritual perspectives of black women and women of colour” as they confront multi-layered oppressions such as racism, classism, sexism, and environmental injustice.¹⁴²

In radical black feminist traditions, ecofeminism as a term is somewhat insufficient in light of the urgency and priority for black survival let alone black lives to be supported, sustained and flourishing. Ecological, material-spiritual care can be found pulsing through the works of Toni Morrison, Bell Hooks, and more recent voices such as Alexis Pauline Gumms. Gumms is a prolific radical black feminist voice, whose work at the intersection of the ancestral, ecological, spiritual and political, is offering a poetics of response grounded in radical love and pedagogy. Building a poetics in dialogue with the work of Hortense Spillers, M. Jacqui Alexander and Sylvia Wynter, her most recent work *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* builds on this practice of learning from the ancestors, in this instance through dialogue and reverence to the more-than-human, oceanic ancestors.¹⁴³

Ecofeminism is likewise a somewhat obsolete term for Indigenous resurgence in light of by outright and continuous genocide, where “sexual violence is an effective tool of genocide and dispossession”.¹⁴⁴ Simpson makes clear that sexism (as a colonial imposition and strategy) was as much at the hands of white women as white men: “genocide sets up a clear dichotomy in which, unless white women are willing to divest themselves of the power of being white, there is no shared marginal space with Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg women”.¹⁴⁵ Whilst ecofeminisms have been concerned to avoid essentialism, Vanessa Watts challenges the

¹⁴² Melanie L Harris. *Ecowomanism: African American Women and Earth-Honoring Faiths*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017.

¹⁴³ Alexis Pauline Gumms. *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals*. Chico: CA, 2020.

¹⁴⁴ Simpson, *As We Have Always Done* p.88.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid p.100.

imposition of white Western feminisms onto Indigenous contexts, specifically relations with land. She articulates the sacredness and interconnectedness of women and land via the Anishnaabe story/creation theory of Sky Woman, whilst critiquing the avoidance of claims towards “Mother Earth” that feminists such as Donna Haraway are keen to uphold. Whilst acknowledging the significance of Haraway’s contribution of localised, and situated knowledge practices, Watts claims that Haraway’s resistance of essentialism is in turn what enables her to appropriate and extrapolate to “a level of abstracted engagement” certain aspects of Indigenous theory.¹⁴⁶ While this process “may serve to change the imperialistic tendencies in Euro-Western knowledge production, Indigenous histories are still regarded as story...distilled to simply that – words, principles, morals to imagine the world and imagine ourselves in the world”.¹⁴⁷ Whilst ecofeminism advocates for intersectional approaches, white, cis female voices are often most quoted, and are necessarily read alongside voices from decolonial and critical race perspectives.¹⁴⁸ Ecofeminisms inform my approach only when they maintain an ethics of care that does not produce essentialism, deny difference or intersectionality, and contributes to decolonizing environmental discourse and practice at large.

Women’s supposed “closeness” to nature has been problematic to feminisms to say the least, rendering potential the claims of essentialism and ‘authenticity’ between biological categories of ‘woman’ and ‘nature’, arguably provoking in Stacy Alaimo’s words, Western “feminist theory’s flight from nature”.¹⁴⁹ Western feminism’s performative postmodern turn, hugely influenced by Judith Butler’s *Gender Trouble* eschews the pairing of biology and identity, rendering the performance and ‘becoming’ of identity as that which is practiced, always in

¹⁴⁶ Vanessa Watts, “Indigenous Place-thought and Agency Amongst Humans and Non-humans” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* Vol. 2, No. 1, (2013) pp.20-34. Whilst Haraway cites the obligation of such discourse towards its sources, the employment of such narratives is certainly selective: “I like to see feminist theory as a reinvented coyote discourse obligated to its sources in many heterogeneous accounts of the world”, Haraway, *Situated Knowledges*, p.594.

¹⁴⁷ Watts, “Indigenous place-thought” p.28.

¹⁴⁸ See A. E. Kings, “Intersectionality and the Changing Face of Ecofeminism” in *Ethics and the Environment* Vol. 22, No. 1 (2017), pp. 63-87.

¹⁴⁹ Stacy Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 2000), p1-23.

process, and constituted and conditioned by sociality.¹⁵⁰ This appropriate vigilance against biological essentialism as well as heteronormative and trans-exclusionary feminisms, rendered ecofeminism somewhat unfashionable, resulting in a reading according to Alaimo, where “nature is static and culture is dynamic, making feminist change contingent on the systematic removal of woman from the category of nature”.¹⁵¹

However, more recently, the generative discourse of queer ecologies seems to develop the ethics of care, politics of location and attendance to dynamic materiality most useful in the ecofeminist project, whilst radically avoiding essentialism and critiquing the “dominant pairings of nature and environment with heteronormativity and homophobia”.¹⁵² Queer theory has understandably sought to subvert and contest the ‘natural’ as a constructed term that orchestrates the abuse of both bodies and land, and is mechanised for the illegalisation, shaming and violence towards queer, trans, non-binary bodies and practices.¹⁵³ As Greta Gaard makes clear in her 1997 essay *Towards a Queer Ecofeminism*, the understanding that repression and submission of both women and nature is connected, needs to be more specifically interrogated via queer theory, where “the oppression of queers is based on a combination of two mutually reinforcing dualisms: heterosexual/queer and reason/erotic”.¹⁵⁴

Leanne Simpson is again crucial here in her work both to de-essentialise Indigenous tradition and protocol, and visibilise the specific coloniality of gender constructs. Her sense

¹⁵⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (New York, London: Routledge, 1990).

¹⁵¹ Alaimo, *Undomesticated Ground*. p.5.

¹⁵² Greta Gaard, “Ecofeminism Revisited: Rejecting Essentialism and Re-Placing Species in a Material Feminist Environmentalism” *Feminist Formations*, Vol.23 No.2 (2011) pp.26-53. See also Greta Gaard, “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism” *Hypatia*. Vol.12. No.1. (1997) pp.114-137, and Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Brian Erickson, *Queer Ecologies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

¹⁵³ It is worth noting here that the gay civil rights movement in the late 1960s was still transphobic, with many trans leaders of the Stonewall riot of 1969 - a watershed moment that spurred the gay liberation movement - being excluded from both the histories of gay liberation and the larger movement and later more assimilationist tendencies. See Andrea Jenkins, “Power to the People: The Stonewall Revolution” *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* Vol. 6, No. 2 (2019), pp.63-68. In other words, queerness does not negate essentialism, and queer ecology therefore has an important role to play in deconstructing not only ‘nature’ and the ‘natural’ and its coupling with identity but also in its coupling with bodies.

¹⁵⁴ Gaard, *Towards a Queer Ecofeminism* p.25. Silvia Federici’s traces this legacy back to a medieval context and thus again links it to the project of modernisation and primitive accumulation, where the ‘feminine’ body was constructed through the control of women’s political life, sexual practices, and living situations.

that “my ancestors lived in a society where what I know as “queer”, particularly in terms of social organisation, was so normal it didn’t have a name” has led her “to consider what straightness looks like in societies where queerness is normalised”.¹⁵⁵ De-linking women’s bodies with the body of nature on the grounds of ‘naturalness’ both in terms of biology, identity, sexual and kinship practices, is crucial to a decolonial approach and resistance to the particularly gendered and racialised body of Indigenous women under colonialism. Furthermore, hetero-patriarchy in Indigenous ceremonial contexts is, to Simpson, an imposition of colonial gender hierarchies, for example fixed protocol surrounding wearing a skirt in certain ceremony. For Simpson, “self actualization...is a relationship between ourselves and the spirit world”, one which should guide decisions around protocol, and be prioritised above rigid implementation.¹⁵⁶ Noticing the absence of 2SQ people in movements such as *Idle No More*, Simpson reminds readers that “Queer Indigenous bodies house knowledge, relationships, and responsibilities” and “are a threat to settler sovereignty” and therefore ongoing target of colonial powers.¹⁵⁷ When story or myth is read so often in a colonial imposition to mean somehow less progressive than scientific or political or indeed dominant academic theoretical discourse, Indigenous theory “gets positioned in the past as unable to explain or generate Queer Indigeneity in the present”, a huge concern for Simpson who claims “Nishnaabeg thought is queer...if we’re doing it correctly”.¹⁵⁸ This project’s feminist methodology emphasises coloniality’s construction of gender, and its subsequent violence on non-binary, 2SQ, trans, queer and female bodies.

The ongoing practice to both de-essentialise ‘nature’ and bodies/identities and deconstruct nature-culture divides, is central to the fields of new materialism and material

¹⁵⁵ Simpson, *As We Have Always Done* p.129.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, p.121. This notion of the authority as pertaining to a spiritual realm rather than a governing body, will be central to my consideration of the nonhuman witness, and fleshed out over the course of the thesis.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 2SQ stands for “two-spirit”, gender variance and is not fully translatable into English concepts, for this reason prioritising the Indigenous resistance to heteronormativity and gender violence as a colonial imposition is crucial. “The term two-spirit is thus an Aboriginal-specific term of resistance to colonization and non-transferable to other cultures. There are several underlying reasons for two spirited Aboriginals’ desire to distance themselves from the mainstream queer community”. Michelle Cameron, “Two-spirited Aboriginal People: Continuing cultural appropriation by non-Aboriginal society” Canadian Women Studies, Vol.24 No.2/3, (2005) pp.123-127.

¹⁵⁸ Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*, p.137-8.

feminisms, where ‘matter’ which has often been, like ‘nature’, rendered passive and inert, is readdressed.¹⁵⁹ A ‘material-semiotic’ approach, foregrounded by Haraway’s earlier *A Cyborg Manifesto*, with its ‘leaky’ boundaries between human animal, organism machine, is as Nancy Tuana writes, a necessary project of continuing to witness “the viscous porosity of the categories “natural,” “human-made,” “social,” “biological””, a phenomena she witnesses in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.¹⁶⁰ Stacy Alaimo suggests “transcorporeality” as a mode of thinking this porosity of bodies which are neither fully autonomous nor discrete, but rather always becoming in webs of mutual implication.¹⁶¹ These approaches foreground a return to matter and the body itself through its entangled, non-essentialist, socio-natural, material-semiotic, agential force. Astrida Neimanis’ “hydrofeminism” is particularly relevant here, partly in foregrounding the relation between feminisms and bodies of water, as a natality not predicated on birth or reproduction, but an endless becoming, through fluid, porous, in flux more-than-human bodies. My project diverges from Neimanis’ in looking to a particular river and its relations, rather than attempting to figure water more generally as a materiality one ‘thinks with’ albeit in embodied and relational ways.¹⁶²

Karen Barad’s *Meeting the Universe Halfway* brings together a queer feminist approach to theoretical physics, proposing the concept of *agential realism*, positing the world as a whole, whose “social” and “natural” agencies are not distinct but emergent out of “intra-action”.¹⁶³ Following the work of quantum physicist Neils Bohr, Barad accounts for the ways in which measurements in scientific practice produce effects (properties of object body) which are not

¹⁵⁹ See Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, eds. *Material Feminisms*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008); Diana Coole and Samantha Frost, *New Materialisms*. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010); Rick Dolphijn and Iris Van der Tuin, *New Materialism: Interviews & Cartographies*. (Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, 2012).

¹⁶⁰ Nancy Tuana, “Viscous porosity: Witnessing Katrina” in *Material feminisms*, eds. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008) pp.323–333. See also Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century” in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991) pp.149-181.

¹⁶¹ Alaimo’s claim that transcorporeal embodiments are “difficult if not impossible for individuals to apprehend without access to scientific technology or institutions” (p.20) is however a sticking point for this project, which would interject such a reading with experiential practices not reliant on scientific technologies or institutions.

¹⁶² Astrida Neimanis, *Bodies of Water, Posthuman Feminist Phenomenology* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).

¹⁶³ Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007).

determined by any pre-existing qualities, but rather, arise out of the phenomena which is the intra-action between the apparatus (method of measuring for example) and the object being measured. A set of differences arises from their intra-action, none of which are intrinsic to things but specific to the combined phenomena of the way of looking/measuring and the objects involved. 'Knowing' the world becomes a defunct notion, and instead a moment to moment encounter is enabled that arises different differences, and different communications. To attend to the apparatus is to attend to the differences that different kinds of interference produce, hence a "material-discursive entanglement" is a key methodology in Karen Barad's agential realism.¹⁶⁴

Rosi Braidotti's "posthumanism" attempts to deal with the colonial and environmental legacy of the Enlightenment philosophies of subjectivity, individualism, rationality and reason. Braidotti makes clear that the Humanist project was one positing "the human" as "historical construct that became a social convention about 'human nature'" and its "intrinsic" individualism.¹⁶⁵ Braidotti's posthumanism acknowledges the project of anti-humanism, post-structuralist thought (including Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault), and post-colonial thinkers including Frantz Fanon and Aime Cesaire.¹⁶⁶ However, she moves beyond the anti-humanism - humanism divide, defining the post-human subject as "materialist and vitalist", "within an eco-philosophy of multiple belongings, as a relationship subject constituted in and by multiplicity, that is to say a subject that works across differences and is also internally differentiated, but still grounded and accountable".¹⁶⁷ Her posthumanism usefully dismantles from a feminist, race-theory informed critique, the idea of the human subject - whose liberation and supposed autonomous individualism, is formed and dependent on the subjugation and making of the "other" through trans-Atlantic slavery, colonisation and gender violence. Her project foregrounds a biopolitical approach, "expanding notions of life to the non-human or *zoē*," to

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Rosa Braidotti, *The Posthuman* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013) p.26.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid p.45.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid p.51.

ask the question “what understanding of contemporary subjectivity and subject-formation are enabled by a post-anthropocentric approach?”¹⁶⁸ Such a question is useful for this project, which will also grapple with what kinds of subjectivities emerge from ongoing kinship with the nonhuman, although situates itself along the logic of geontopower rather than biopower.

In her 2010 *Vibrant Matter, A Political Ecology of Things* Jane Bennett challenges a Kantian image of “inert matter” in order to revitalise matter not by positing its agency in an animating force outside of matter, but at once discerning “the force of things”.¹⁶⁹ She extends the attempt to “dislodge agency from its exclusive mooring in the individual, rational subject... beyond human bodies and intersubjective fields to vital materialities and the human-nonhuman assemblages they form”.¹⁷⁰ Like Braidotti, Bennett follows a Deleuzian assemblage and nomadic vitalism, and Spinozan ‘active principle’, following his claim of a “something wholly other”, yet avoiding a more overt nonhuman intentionality. Critiques of Bennett include a skepticism towards the alignment between humans and representation on the one hand and nonhumans on the other, that for anthropologist Eduardo Kohn, bring Bennett’s project to “deny the analytical purchase of representation and telos altogether - since these are seen, at best, as exclusively human mental affairs”.¹⁷¹ For this project, the possibility of ‘democratising’ agency problematically denies the privilege inherent in being able to conceptualise such ‘networks’, and erases the political linkages that enable nonhuman ‘agency’ to be advocated, amongst a backdrop of police brutality towards communities of colour, marginalised along lines of race, gender and sexuality.

Biosemiotics takes a semiotic, rather than a vitalist view of matter, and promised a potential dialogue with Indigenous articulations of language emerging from more-than-human relations. Biosemiotics considers the relationship between semiosis (meaning making) and biological selves in relation to their lifeworlds, where “the unit of survival is organism plus

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. p.58.

¹⁶⁹ Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter, A Political Ecology of Things*. (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010) p.65.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid p.30.

¹⁷¹ Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think, Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2013) p.40.

environment”.¹⁷² Founded on the semiotics of Charles S. Peirce, biosemiotics considers the semiosis of all living organisms necessary to and not separable from linguistic modes of signification.¹⁷³ Peirce has been fundamental to ecology largely through the work of Gregory Bateson, who developed Peirce’s theory of *abduction* to describe metaphor as an evolutionary force in all of nature, exemplified in his *Syllogisms in Grass*: Grass Dies / Men die / Men are grass; it is this different ‘natural logic’ of classification (of different levels) that Peirce calls abductive inference (as opposed to deductive), and Bateson, following him, will articulate as “natural metaphor”.¹⁷⁴ Bateson describes information as “the difference that makes a difference”, where the redundancy that induces pattern (repetition) is balanced by metaphoric and abductive movement, which introduces newness and difference, hence growth. Bateson shows that it is difference *within resemblance* (something being enough like something else to ‘make do’ in biological or cultural terms - think of making dens, or patching socks, or immune systems kicking in to slightly different strains of common cold), as related to the Peircean iconic sign, that is at play in both biological and cultural forms of growth.¹⁷⁵ Hence ‘mind’ is semiosis beyond the human, with biological interpretants traversing nature culture divides. Particularly useful in parallel with Federici’s project, Wendy Wheeler traces the legacy of widely held views on more pluralistic, semiotic flourishing in the early medieval period, and the impact of christianisation, later secularism and industrialisation on such modes of thinking.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Gregory Bateson, *Steps to An Ecology of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972 [2000]) p.489.

¹⁷³ Peirce's theory of signs proposed three inter-related types of sign of the categories icon, index, symbol. See Charles Sanders Peirce, “What is a sign?” in Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel (eds) *The Essential Peirce: Selected philosophical writings*, Vol. 2, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1992b [c.1894]) pp. 4-11. Foundational to biosemiotics is *Umwelt* theory (as proposed by biologist Jakob von Uexküll (1866-1944)) as “the dynamic interplay and *interpretation*” between genes, cells, membranes and environment, in Wendy Wheeler, *Expecting The Earth; Life, Culture, Biosemiotics* (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd. 2016) p.4.

¹⁷⁴ Bateson, *Steps to An Ecology of Mind*. See also Wendy Wheeler, “Gregory Bateson and Biosemiotics: Transcendence and Animism in the 21st Century” *Green Letters*, Vol.13 Issue 1, 2010, p37.

¹⁷⁵ Bateson, *Steps to An Ecology of Mind*. See also Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*. (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 1979 [2000]).

¹⁷⁶ Wendy Wheeler, *Expecting The Earth; Life, Culture, Biosemiotics*. Wheeler’s biosemiotic lens is productive to read alongside Silvia Federici’s marxist feminist perspective in *Caliban and the Witch*, speaking to cross-overs in the impact of this period on more expansive semiotic thought. In Wheeler’s thorough historicising of semiotic thought, she also emphasises that a kind of “cybernetic teleology” - of feedback and its implications on futurity - “is not to be confused with God” p.76.

Eduardo Kohn's *How Forests Think; Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human* takes a biosemiotic lens to trace the intricate nonhuman-human relations among the Runa of Ecuador's Upper Amazon. He calls for an anthropology beyond the human, where a socio-cultural network "doesn't fully apply in domains such as human-animal relations that are not completely circumscribed by the symbolic but are nevertheless semiotic".¹⁷⁷ His reiteration of "self as a waypoint in semiosis" considers that "the world is revealed to us not by the fact that we come to have habits, but in the moments when, forced to abandon our old habits, we come to take up new ones; his is where we can catch glimpses – however mediated – of the emergent real to which we also contribute".¹⁷⁸ I share his critique of Bruno Latour's "analytics of mixture" which in Kohn's words, "deprive humans of a bit of their intentionality and symbolic omnipotence...[whilst] confer on things a bit more agency".¹⁷⁹ Posthuman critiques of Kohn include his commitment to "selfhood", and staying within conceptions of logos and its linkage to demos - that for a subject to become a political subject, their inhuman nonsensical noise (*phōnos*) has to be rendered into speech (*logos*).¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, as promisingly decolonial as his project may be, Kohn acknowledges that:

"one of the problems for me (and other anthropologists) is that I am forced into disagreement with the indigenous people I work with, because according to my framework there is no way that rocks can have life. For the Runa, they do have life and, in fact, when I take psychedelics like ayahuasca with them, I understand the animacy of rocks. This is a tension that I want to sit with".¹⁸¹

The directness of this comment comes in a 2017 interview, and is not so directly stated in his 2013 book *How Forests Think*. That a whole theory beyond the human is shared through the Runa subjects he lives/works with, which cannot find space for a fundamental belief and practice of their lives in the Amazon - as well as his own experience, is problematic. The

¹⁷⁷ Eduardo Kohn, *How Forests Think, Toward an Anthropology Beyond the Human* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013) p.39.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. p.66.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. p.40.

¹⁸⁰ If following Rancière, the political "we" is in some way the transition of a "they/he/she/it" into a "you", hence to enter the political realm as a speaking self, one moves from *phōnos* into *logos* - being seen, and heard. Jacques Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics" *Theory & Event*, Vol.5 Issue 3, (2001).

¹⁸¹ "The Sylvan Thinking Interview" with Eduardo Kohn, November 2017, accessed February 14, 2018, online at: <https://www.pca-stream.com/en/articles/eduardo-kohn-beyond-language-100>.

animacy of rocks, and the selfhood of spirits, bring Kohn's framework to a halt: "My hope is that sylvan thinking will suggest to me the emergent concept that will, one day, allow all of this to make sense", but ostracising his own bodily experience (and its intercellular biosemiosis) as well as the belief system of the Runa because it does not fit into a semiotic framework, is counter to his "ground up" politics.¹⁸²

This reinforcing of Life Nonlife divides - Wheeler also writes "we don't need to talk of agency where water and rocks are concerned: they are subject to the laws of physics" - is a stalling point for my own project and its relation to biosemiotics at large.¹⁸³ Biosemiotics is productive in making possible the consideration of signs that travel across boundaries; thus, human language can be seen as *emergent from and reliant on* rather than separate and superior to multiple forms of nonhuman semiosis. This project will explore and often hover around the pre-symbolic, pre-linguistic affective textures in relation to the nonhuman, and for this Kohn's approach is useful. Likewise, his argument that "we need to provincialize language because we conflate representation with language and this conflation finds its way into our theory" is affirmed in this project through a somatic approach to the self-representation of, for instance bones, and movement away from the conflation of meaning, intentionality and logos.¹⁸⁴ However, Kohn's re-inscribing the Life Nonlife divide and inability to incorporate stones and spirits, is contested and one of the assumptions that this project hopes to expand.

¹⁸² Ibid. It is quite easy to imagine Kohn's sylvan-thinking as a semiotic flourishing in the context of the Amazon - a lifeworld visibly teeming with multi-species lives and practices. I suggest the emphasis or the ways in which Kohn's thinking has been taken up, prioritises the semiosis of the living, and repeats the performance of what Povinelli articulates as the "Desert Imaginary", as well as the projection of "empty space" (tracts of land perceived to be 'empty' or 'barren' or void of life) that so mechanises the violence of 'terra nullus'. I hope to de-centralise this emphasis on traditionally conceived notions of Life and its marriage to the visibly perceivable life of contexts such as the Amazon, through focussing on the "ground-up" emergence of information with stone, river and even the "concrete" places as explored in *River | Fluids | Tongue*.

¹⁸³ Wheeler, *Expecting the Earth* p.76.

¹⁸⁴ Kohn, *How Forests Think* p.39.

This project situates its practice - which involves modes of performance including choreography for stage, one-on-one performance, *the unearthings*, this written thesis and land ceremony - as rooted in embodied practice, at the intersection of performance, dance/choreography and live art. I will here outline a brief lineage of artistic practices which have been particularly relevant to this project's intersecting fields. Within this patchwork are techniques and approaches that have informed my own, and which I in turn diverge from. The constructed terms 'nature', 'environment' and 'site-specific' have been so wide reaching and malleable. It is therefore worth bearing in mind that many art practices could in some way align themselves to one of these terms, so I will try to keep an historical context relevant to the specifics of this project.

Body and Place

The work of Cuban exile Ana Mendieta is arguably fundamental to feminist artistic practices engaging body and place, which seek to include their related violences, whilst working with transformation, performance and the male gaze. In placing her own body among the earth, leaving traces of it on film, video, performance and the land itself, her presence haunts the land whilst simultaneously complicates the resonances of voyeurism with volition and the refusal of absence. Her work contrasts a wider land art movement of the 1960s and 1970s most emergent in the United States, which sought to shift the legacy of "landscape" and its modes of representation within artistic practice.¹⁸⁵ Robert Smithson's and Nancy Holt's earthworks exemplify the movement's turn to land as materiality to be engaged with directly, outside the confines of the museum, and rampant commodification of the art market. However, Holt's statement that "walking on earth that has surely never been walked on before evokes a sense of

¹⁸⁵ 'Landscape' and its legacy as a representational mode as "a portion of the earth's surface that can be comprehended at a glance" has typically rendered it the backdrop of human activity. See John B. Jackson, *Discovering the vernacular landscape – The Word Itself* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

being on this planet, rotating in space, in universal time” is a problematic echo of settler-colonial visions of the ‘tabula rasa’, ‘terra nullus’ of ‘empty’ landscape.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, whilst much of this movement’s work was made in the deserts of the southwest, it might remind us of the aforementioned work of Leslie Silko; North American land art movements rarely acknowledge whose historic land they were actually on, or what these framings of landscape might do to already existing constellations of earth, land, and spirit.

Mendieta’s *Siluetas* series rather, whilst invoking an archetypal, ancient Goddess presence - “one universal energy which runs through everything: from insect to man, from man to spectre, from spectre to plant, from plant to galaxy”, neither erase the political context of her own art and life, nor the wider violence of ecocide and femicide through the specificity of her own figure.¹⁸⁷ The work of Mary Beth Edelson is relevant here also, evoking a Goddess energy whilst positioning her own body in relation to a viewer and their gaze: “My rituals also provided resistance to the mind/body split, by acknowledging sexuality in spirituality, thus reconciling the experience of a united spirit, body, and mind”.¹⁸⁸ Lucy Lippard’s work in tracing the resonances between contemporary art and ‘the art of prehistory’ is useful in dispelling narratives that artists such as Edelson were figuring ‘new’ spiritual aesthetics or imaginaries.¹⁸⁹

The interdisciplinary exchange of the - notably majority white - context of 1960s Manhattan, enabled artists such as Joan Jonas and Meredith Monk to explore more site-specific contexts and therefore position bodies in relation to external elements rather than traditional,

¹⁸⁶ Alena J. Williams, Nancy Holt and Pamela M. Lee, *Nancy Holt: Sightlines*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011) p.81. In the UK context Richard Long is, I find, similarly problematic. In erasing the ‘traces’ in the landscape of his male figure from view, he leaves instead lines, or circles - abstract shapes void of the body - that evoke the hand of some invisible god, and echo the lines drawn across landscapes of cartographic practices and boundary making.

¹⁸⁷ Ana Mendieta, quoted in Petra Barreras del Rio and John Perrault, *Ana Mendieta: A Retrospective*, (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art, exh. cat. 1988), p.10. It is worth noting here, the ongoing pursuit of justice for Ana Mendieta, who was most likely killed by boyfriend and fellow artist Carl Andre in 1985; for a queer feminist, posthuman speculative fiction regarding this ongoing erasure, see Linda Stuppart, *Virus* (London: Arcadia Missa Publications, 2016).

¹⁸⁸ Qtd. in Hilary Robinson, ed. *Feminism-Art-Theory: An Anthology 1968-2014* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. 2001 [2015]). Of note here is Laura Mulvey’s influential essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” which unpacks how the camera provides a specific frame to a viewer’s perspective: a ‘male gaze’ that objectifies the women framed, that both Edelson and Mendieta subverted through their works, in *Screen*, 16(3), (1975) pp.6-18.

¹⁸⁹ Lucy Lippard, *Overlay. Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983).

studio-based, artistic practices.¹⁹⁰ This historic moment was hugely impactful on Western dance disciplines, with the artistic collective Judson Dance Theatre deconstructing the lyric, virtuosic aesthetic of traditional Western dance and moving towards more chance-based, scored choreographies. A somatic approach developed including artists such as Anna Halprin, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, Andrea Olsen, Steve Paxton, and in the UK Miranda Tuffnell, Linda Hartley and Helen Poyner. The somatic field is significant for this project in its turning away from the external, visual choreography of the body, and towards the internal, affective and felt sensations, as well as the philosophies of mind-body integration that contribute to deconstructing Enlightenment binaries of mind/matter. Instead, somatic practices including Body Mind Centering, Feldenkrais, Skinner Release Technique, and Authentic Movement, promote the integrative, and developmental pathways of the body, learning to read, tune into, and activate the specific ‘minds’ of the body itself - of bone, fluid, muscle, skin etc.¹⁹¹ Somatic practice has been integral to this project through its experiential approach to embodiment and anatomy, attunement to the multiple and divergent intelligences of the body, and its storing of memory in multiple forms, and has been the framework within which my encounter with the river is understood. Here the dance philosophy work of Maxine Sheets-Johnstone is extremely useful for this project’s understanding of ‘mind’, foregrounding the primacy of movement (proprioception) as the sense first emergent in foetal development is foundational. Sheets-Johnstone explores how corporeal concepts are rooted in animate movement, where human infants are not pre-linguistic; language is post-kinetic.¹⁹²

The work of Anna Halprin in the US, Helen Poyner in the UK, and Min Tanaka in Japan, are some of the most notable lineages for the intersection of somatic practice and

¹⁹⁰ For example Joan Jonas, Dir., *Wind*. 1968. MACBA Collection, viewed at Tate Modern, London: 2018.

¹⁹¹ See Chris Crickmay, and Miranda Tuffnell, *Body Space Image: Notes Towards Improvisation and Performance* (Binsted: Dance Books, 1993) and *A Widening Field: Journeys in Body and Imagination* (Binsted: Dance Books, 2004); See also Andrea Olsen, *Body and Earth; An Experiential Guide*. (Hanover & London: University Press of New England, 2002); Helen Poyner, and Libby Worth, *Anna Halprin*. (London: Taylor and Francis, 2004); Linda Hartley, *Wisdom of the Body Moving: An Introduction to Body-Mind Centering*. (California: North Atlantic Books, 1995); Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, *Sensing, Feeling and Action*. (New York: Contact Editions, 1993).

¹⁹² Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, from her early work *The Phenomenology of Dance* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966); to her latest book *The Corporeal Turn: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2009).

ecology. Building an outdoor deck in her Californian home with landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, Anna Halprin instigated a whole movement of dance performance, practice, process-lead encounter with outdoor environments. She worked to acknowledge the Indigenous communities of her California home, develop a huge body of work in relation to psycho-kinetic processes, encounter with land and the nonhuman, community and collective rituals, and modes of non-auditory listening.¹⁹³ Helen Poyner's site-specific work is much in dialogue with Halprin, and includes site-specific performances for film including *In Memoriam* (2016), an "environmental dance film about grief", *Coat - The Turning and Returning of the Tide* (2014) and *On an Incoming Tide* (2010). Both Halprin and Poyner's legacies are arguably in their pedagogies through the Tamalpa Institute and Walk of Life workshop series respectively, which have educated whole generations of dance artists, somatic practitioners and therapists amongst others, in modes of engaging on a deeply somatic level, with land and the nonhuman.¹⁹⁴

Min Tanaka's 'Body Weather', developed as a practice of "the body that measures the landscape, the body in intercourse with weather, the body kissing mass of peat, the body in love-death relation to the day".¹⁹⁵ Dedicating himself to site-specific, solo performances - *Ba-odori* (literally meaning "dance in a place") - 'Body Weather' draws on eastern and western dance, sports training, martial arts and theatre practice. Tanaka established the Body Weather Farm in 1985 in the mountain village of Hakushu (outside Tokyo), where he invited dancers to live communally and train which included manual labour on the farm, raising rice, vegetables and chickens. This was as much part of the 'dance' training as the formal studio sessions themselves, where "members of the community learn new patterns of social engagement by taking part in the communal living environment. While throughout the process, the landscape

¹⁹³ Helen Poyner and Libby Worth, *Anna Halprin*. (London: Taylor and Francis 2004); Adrian Heathfield et al. *Ally*. (Philadelphia: Fabric Workshop and Museum & Hirmer Publishers, 2017). See also Anna Halprin's pedagogic legacy, accessed March 15, 2018, online at: <https://www.tamalpa.org>, and score for 'Planetary Dance': <https://planetarydance.org>.

¹⁹⁴ "Walk of Life Workshops" accessed June 22 2015, online at: <http://www.walkoflife.co.uk/helen.htm>.

¹⁹⁵ "Body Weather" accessed September 5 2016, online at: <http://bodyweather.blogspot.com>.

seeps into their bodies and influences their art”.¹⁹⁶ Like Poyner and Halprin, Tanaka’s dedication to a dance practice *for place*, is particularly relevant to my practice.¹⁹⁷

Whilst somatic lineages are central to my artistic practice, these can often prioritise white, cis, able-bodies, and set up a universalising aesthetic around what ‘connection’ to the nonhuman might look like; here BIQTPOC experiences of land practices are often bypassed in discourse around environmental practices.¹⁹⁸ This needs an urgently addressing, especially when being in more rural contexts can be an ever hostile experience for BIQTPOC.¹⁹⁹ The artistic practice of this project thus comes up against a resistance to staging the figure of the white, cis body within the landscape. The work of Ingrid Pollard is extremely important here, in disrupting and calling into account the legacy of the white body in relation to landscape, see especially *Wordsworth’s Heritage* (1992), and *Pastoral Interlude* (1998), in which the underside of British romanticism and its construction of idyllic, pastoral landscapes, is revealed in its entanglement and dependence upon the Atlantic slave trade.²⁰⁰ A contemporary artist whose work has similarly disrupted the assumptions of availability between white bodies and rural landscapes, is Jade Montserrat, especially her collaborative film works with Webb-Ellis *Peat* (2017) and *Clay* (2017).²⁰¹ In the US context, artist Rebecca Belmore’s work similarly disrupts the ‘wilderness’ narratives of much North American literary tropes and ideologies, often by placing her own body as an interruption to colonial erasures of Indigenous presence. *Wild*,

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. I was introduced to Body Weather through the workshops of Frank Van Der Ven, a member of the Body Weather Farm; through this practice I explored my preliminary research into the vibrational relation of sound as conductor of movement in and with the land.

¹⁹⁷ Although earlier iterations of my practice (*Wishbone* and *Cove*) took place in theatre spaces, I do not situate my ongoing practice as theatre or within the remit of ‘ecological’ theatre practices. For an extensive contextual review of ‘ecological’ performance in predominantly theatre spaces in the UK, see Sarah Hopfinger, *Performance (in) ecology: A practice-based approach*. PhD thesis, 2017. More recent projects in U.K. fields of dance in relation to ecology and site, are Charlotte Derbyshire’s *Wasteland* (2017) and *Into the Mountain* (2019) Simone Kenyon’s project of deconstructing the male-dominated practice of mountaineering and mountain walking, through participatory community project and site specific performance in the Cairngorms, and Nan Shepherd’s seminal text *The Living Mountain* (1977).

¹⁹⁸ Black, Indigenous, Queer, Trans, People of Colour

¹⁹⁹ See the work of Queer Nature, Black Girl Camping Trip, and Indigenous Women Hike.

²⁰⁰ Held in National Collection and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

²⁰¹ Jade Montserrat, accessed November 25, 2018 online at: <https://player.vimeo.com/video/155794300>, and <https://vimeo.com/261390112>.

(2001), is a performance installation where Belmore lies in ‘the best bed’ of the mansion *The Grange*, covering the bed with skins and furs, and performing the role of the “historically unwelcome guest”.²⁰²

Likewise, the ‘pedestrian’ movements so associated with the aforementioned Judson Dance Theatre betray a legacy still prevalent in the U.K. contemporary dance especially somatic-informed practices, in which white, cis, able-bodies and their culturally specific gestures invisibilised as ‘neutral’ i.e. normative and universal. It is worth remembering that in parallel to Judson Dance (indeed, a few miles away), was the highly performative voguing of the Harlem drag queen balls. Voguing balls are a highly politicised, performative space of community and the critiquing of dominant white, straight culture.²⁰³ Where white theorists such as Donna Haraway call for (and have lived through) alternate models of kinship, it is worth noting the absolute necessity of alternative familial models in the drag houses (families) of the Harlem balls and many LGBTQI+ communities as a matter of survival in the face of trans and racial violence, and including these histories within contemporary intersectional discourse on kinship. This project sees the possibility of nonhuman-human collectivities as entwined in the inextricable relations between control of land, bodies and their practices. Gentrification in the urban context, and the erasure of histories of queer kinship, are continuations of this control and its making impossible certain future collectivities.²⁰⁴

An artist collective that influenced my understanding of the interweaving of movement, decolonial practice, myth/storytelling is the seminal work of *Spider Woman Theatre*, founded in

²⁰² Rebecca Belmore, accessed April 16, 2018, online at: <https://www.rebeccabelmore.com/wild/>.

²⁰³ Jennie Livingston, dir. *Paris is Burning*: filmed in the mid-late 1980s, released 1990, documents the Harlem ball culture of New York City; see also Lucas Hilderbrand, *Paris Is Burning, A Queer Film Classic* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2013).

²⁰⁴ Likewise, and in resistance to particular stagings of the white, cis, able-bodies of much somatic practice, this project is not dependent on a particular or privileged access to specific kinds of embodiment. Rather, in light of the witch-hunt histories this thesis is deeply concerned with, ‘embodiment’ here is not proposed to look or feel any prescribed way; rather, all experiences - of comfort, discomfort, alienation, trauma, boredom, numbness, ecstasy, queerness, dysmorphia, abjection, fidgety etc. - are included as information and attunement to wider affective spheres of relation. The same applies to what might be considered ‘normative’ cognitive modes, to the exclusion and detriment of neuro-divergent ways of knowing, sensing, feeling, and experience. For her work and collaboration with the Hearing Voices network, see Lisa Blackman *Hearing Voices; Embodiment and Experience*. (London: Free Association, 2001). For her work on mutation, queer, traumatised, and postcolonial outsider bodies in relation to climate change, see Linda Stuppert *After the Ice The Deluge*, 2017, accessed December 18, 2019, online at: <http://lindastuppert.net/After-the-Ice-The-Deluge.php>.

1976, “when Muriel Miguel gathered together a diverse company...of varying ages, races, sexual orientation, and worldview. The collective sprang out of the feminist movement of the 1970s and the disillusionment with the treatment of women in radical political movements of the time”.²⁰⁵ The priority was (and still is) to offer theatre training and education rooted in an urban Indigenous performance practice. Muriel’s daughter, Monique Monica (Kuna and Rappahannock), has continued this legacy in her work on Indigenous dramaturgies, researching the ancient pictographic tradition of Kuna textiles, and the Creation mythologies of Sky Woman. In working towards an Indigenous dramaturgy, she weaves her personal story through the mythic, embodying the Kuna pictographs as “scores”, “to bind herself amidst these layers of psycho-somatic fragmentation into that place where ancestor meets descendant and spirit dances with material in an intricately patterned weave of eternal and ongoing creation”.²⁰⁶ Mojica narrates how she had undergone osteopathic treatment (which she notes, is an appropriated practice from Shawnee bone-setting techniques), to help with injuries from a car crash; here she noted the way she was moved back through the movements of the crash, and began to wonder whether such an approach could be used to undo the effects of colonialism.²⁰⁷ This shares ground with Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen’s developmental approach to healing, whilst situating the somatic, body-based approach within the context of colonialism as a violence that pervades skin, muscle, bone and body memory, and within which returning to Indigenous methodologies is a necessary move for decolonising both body and performance space.

Using performance to create space against the onslaught of everyday racism is “House/ Full of Black women,” a two-year, multi-site project including a 13-day event “Black Women

²⁰⁵ “Spider Woman Theatre” accessed February 27, 2015, online at: <https://www.spiderwomantheater.org/blank-mpvle>.

²⁰⁶ Jill Carter, “Chocolate Woman Visions an Organic Dramaturgy: Blocking-Notations for the Indigenous Soul” Vol.26, No 3,4 (2008) pp.169-176, p.170.

²⁰⁷ Mojica presented some of her work on Mola Dulad Aibanai (Living Mola Moving) at the 2013 conference EcoCentrix, organised by Royal Holloway, as precursor to the conference *In the Balance: Indigeneity, Performance, Globalization*. Also at the conference was Choctaw writer LeAnne Howe, and together with Mojica, they presented the beginnings of a project communicating with Indigenous earth mounds and sacred sites. For more literature on dancing as memory practice in settler-colonial conditions, see Julie Burelle and Sam Mitchell “Dee(a)r Spine: Dance, Dramaturgy, and the Repatriation of Indigenous Memory”. *Dance Research Journal*, Vol.48 No.1 (2016) pp.41-54.

Dreaming — A Ritual Rest” hosted by choreographers Amara Tabor Smith and Ellen Sebastian Chang, in which women of colour are invited to sleep, rest and dream, a response to the constancy of fear that is the psychic burden of racism.²⁰⁸ The project foregrounds the need for choreography, somatic practice and performance to acknowledge the ongoing racist conditions that interrupt bodies and their connections.²⁰⁹ In dialogue with these intersection of healing and performance, is Pia Lindman’s *Playing Bones*, which came out of her studying Kalevala bone setting. The Kalevala is an ancient oral rune/song tradition “that has sustained itself to this day among Finnish tribes around the area of the Baltic Sea, Ladoga, and the White Sea (Vienanmeri)” and out of which, the medical practice of bone setting emerges.²¹⁰ Lindman treats a participant with this bone setting technique, whilst an orchestra plays the ancient rune. These projects approach the body somatically, yet through a politics of location necessary for this project, whilst using performance as a practice of healing that I will also come to explore in *Almanac*. Here the potential of emergent mythic resonances and sound, to activate materiality through resonance, touch and ‘embodying’ story.

Lindman engages an expanded life-art practice as member of Solbacka ecovillage, a community project in Inkoo, Finland, “where each community member commits to building their own house in a sustainable manner, with natural materials, and/or recycled materials” (see Straw Bale House).²¹¹ Communal living has been a significant part of my own practice; in these

²⁰⁸ Amara Tabor Smith and Ellen Sebastian Chang ‘House/Full of Blackwomen’ see Neyat Yohannes “House/Full of Blackwomen Present Black Women Dreaming — A Ritual Rest In Oakland” East Bay Express March 28, 2017 accessed May 13, 2018, online at: <https://www.eastbayexpress.com/oakland/house-full-of-blackwomen-present-black-women-dreaming-a-ritual-rest-in-oakland/Content?oid=6036569>. See also the work of adrienne maree brown, and Prentis Hemphill, both facilitators, writers, somatic educators and activists for transformational justice. In a recent podcast, Hemphill responds to the written lineages of somatic trauma-based approaches that get attributed to white male voices such as Peter Levine. Whilst honouring this body of work, they acknowledge the fact that “black folx be knowing” - in other words, this embodied knowledge, practice and healing has been going on within black communities far longer than it has been a studied discipline in written form. “Finding Our Way Podcast by Prentis Hemphill” online at: <https://prentishemphill.com/new-page-4>.

²⁰⁹ See in Methodologies, the discussion of Fanon vis a vis taking into account psycho-somatic impact of racism in dance and somatic practices, and discourse of sensing/phenomenology more broadly speaking. A call for necessarily intersectional feminisms, “House/Full of Blackwomen” could also be a nod to the legacy of WomanHouse, a project by Judy Chicago in Miriam Shaprio at CalArts in 1972, which included and portrayed a largely white, cis female community.

²¹⁰ See “Playing Bones” Pia Lindman, accessed September 9, 2017, online at: <http://www.pialindman.com>.

²¹¹ Ibid.

spaces, ongoing questions of land, ownership, performance practice and community have been situated and explored through tending to the house, the garden, the collective, thus foregrounded as much a practice of performance as any work that might take place in studios themselves.²¹² Whilst the in flux dynamics of a changing, alternative pedagogy-based community can be productive for projects of ecological and social justice, there is always a risk of repeating tropes of colonial ‘cultivation’ practices (dependent on land claiming) and homogenising practices and languages.²¹³ The predominance of white-lead, land-based pedagogic communities and institutions, including Earthdance, M.A.; Animas Valley Institute; Esalen Institute, CA; Schumacher College, Devon UK, is problematic, failing to alter narratives of entitlement, ownership and belonging that invisible BIQTPOC, restrict access to land and delay reparative social justice. In the U.K., Black-led collective Land In Our Names is “committed to reparative justice in Britain by securing land for BPOC (Black people and People of Colour) communities”. Their work responds to the lack of access that BAME communities are “60% less likely to be able to access green space and natural environments than their white counterparts” and the fact that “1% of the population own more than 50% of the land in England alone, with 30% of land in the hands of the aristocracy and gentry”.²¹⁴ Working with and for the BPOC community, LION works both to “shed light on land inequalities as a hidden driver of much racial injustice” and to re-integrate traditional land-based practices and ancestral knowledges.²¹⁵ In the U.S, *Queer Nature*, “a queer-run nature education and ancestral skills

²¹² My participation at Ponderosa (situated in the wider Stolzenhagen GUT community, Germany), Betonest (situated in Stolpe, Germany), and Paf (Performing Arts Forum, St-Erme, France specifically the project *Elsewhere and Otherwise*) have informed in my ongoing practice. Ponderosa includes a cacophony of practices, often situated around queer performance, ritual, ceremony, immaterial practices, and social justice. The work of Jennifer Lacy, Joy Mariama Smith, Keith Hennesey, Sarah Shelton Mann, Stephanie Maher, Maria Scarroni, and Meg Stuart are primary examples. See “Ponderosa Dance”, accessed August 15 2019, online at: <https://www.ponderosa-dance.de>.

²¹³ Of note here is Ros Gray's and Shela Sheikh's reminder that “the Latin term *colonia* – from *colere*, ‘to cultivate’ or ‘inhabit’ – draws upon the meaning of *colonus* as farmer and designated a settlement or farm estate, often granted to veteran soldiers in conquered territories.” From Robert Young, ‘*Colonia*’, in Barbara Cassin, ed, *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon*, Emily Apter, Jacques Lezra and Michael Wood, trans and eds, Steven Rendall et al, trans, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 2013, pp 1056–1058, at p.1056. See Ros Gray and Shela Sheikh, “The Wretched Earth, Botanical Conflicts and Artistic Interventions” *Third Text*, Vol.32 Issues 2-3, (2018) pp.163-175.

²¹⁴ “Land In Our Names” accessed Jan 8, 2020, online at: <https://landinournames.community>. BAME stands for Black Asian Minority Ethnic and is often used in UK context.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

program serving the local LGBTQ2+ community” dynamically addresses settler-colonialism and its violences on lands, bodies and histories, whilst engaging traditional land practices. It is a much needed respite from dominant white, cis lead spaces and rhetoric at the intersection of artistic and healing practices, and proposes a much less ‘settled’ and more roaming tracking approach to land and place.²¹⁶

It is also a significant contribution to the perhaps better known queer ecological approach of Elizabeth Stevens and Annie Sprinkle, who founded a new field of Sexecology with their Ecosex Manifesto.²¹⁷ The artists engage in ‘pollen-amorous’ affairs with nonhumans that are sometimes formalised in Ecosex weddings, imagining earth ‘as lover’ rather than earth ‘as mother’. Stevens and Sprinkle have married the Sea, the Earth, the Appalachian Mountains, the Moon, the Snow, the Rocks, the Coal, Lake Kallavesi and the Dirt. Their film *Water Makes Me Wet* toured the United States in 2018; performances and screenings bring together a queer cabaret aesthetic, with issues of water property activism. However, their work potentially repeats tropes of binding white entitlement to lands, and prioritising sexuality over asexual experiences or practices of intimacy.

In terms of the Lancashire site, the Pendle area has drawn many artists over time. I look at these practices with the lens of considering how land is manifesting certain repetitions and convergences. Thus we might consider a field of artistic practice as not solely authored by individual artists or indeed human communities, but led also by the forces expressing through that particular land. In 2018, Nastassja Simensky and Rebecca Lee were artists in residence at the archaeological dig at Malkin Tower Farm, site of the gathering that prompted the arrest and trial of many of the Pendle witches. They composed SHERDS, an ensemble performance work including five verses that “unearth, reassemble, and form anew from passing conversations, local news, and the rhythms of the dig, incorporating energy production, moorland nesting

²¹⁶ “Queer Nature” accessed October 14, 2019, online at: <https://www.queernature.org>.

²¹⁷ Beth Stevens and Annie Sprinkle, “Ecosex Manifesto” accessed August 24, 2019, online at: <http://sexecology.org/research-writing/ecosex-manifesto/>.

sites, ceramic sherds, early modern melody, and geological vibrations”.²¹⁸ The witch-hunts were honoured more explicitly in the public memory, when local designer, artist and sculptor Philippe Handford, installed giant ‘1612’ numerals on the eastern slopes of Pendle to mark the quatercentenary of the witch trials. Fabricated from felted natural sheep’s wool, these 300ft (91m) tall figures were pegged onto the side of the hill in the summer of 2012.²¹⁹

Whilst tourism fetishises and arguably exploits the witch-hunt histories, this is counteracted by local arts organisations who are keen to connect people and place through other local histories. The Pendle Radicals project engages the region’s radical history “of dissenters, change makers and independent spirits who have all, somehow, been drawn to this rugged, inspiring landscape” including George Fox climbing Pendle in 1652, and at the summit having the vision that led to the founding of the Quakers and working class suffragist Selina Cooper and members of the nascent Labour Party.²²⁰ To commemorate local communities and their relationship to place, In-situ commissioned a public sculpture by Henrietta Armstrong, to be installed at Pendle Hill trig point. She engraved twelve “summit stones”, sculpted from locally sourced concrete, each representing a theme arising from local history, landscape and people. Armstrong describes the work as a kind of “Future Archaeology” and I am drawn to the echoes of the ceremony house, as the summit stones - after initially being exhibited off-site - were semi-buried in the ground at the trig point.²²¹ However, my project diverges significantly from these works in that its artistic aims were to develop methods of practice, and to share what said practices revealed about artistic approaches to human-nonhuman relations. I do not

²¹⁸ “In-Situ” accessed July 12, 2020, online at: <https://www.in-situ.org.uk/5-stacks>. The work was commissioned by In-Situ, a local arts organisation working with Pendle Hill Partnership to support artist-lead community projects engaging people and place.

²¹⁹ “A Hill with a Tale to Tell” accessed July 15, 2020, online at: <https://www.landscapemagazine.co.uk/history-and-heritage>.

²²⁰ “A View from Up There” Interview with Mid Pennine Arts Creative Director Nick Hunt. Accessed July 15, 2020 online at: <http://peopleplacetimespace.superslowway.org.uk/project/a-view-from-up-there>. Pendle Radicals project is part of the Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership: <https://pendlehillproject.com>. Selina Cooper was the first woman to represent the Independent Labour Party in 1901 when she was elected as a Poor Law Guardian.

²²¹ “Future Archaeology: Henriette Armstrong on humanity and the Pendle Hill summit stones”, accessed July 21, 2020, online at: <http://www.pendlefolk.com/future-archaeology-henrietta-armstrong-on-humanity-and-the-pendle-hill-summit-stones/>. In-situ, Pendle Hill Landscape Partnership and Pendlefolk are local organisations engaging people and place through arts and culture.

therefore tell a story about one particular site, but rather share these embodied methods to propose a transferral pedagogy in light of social and environmental concerns.²²²

Sound and Poetics

My vocal sounding practice is a mode of listening, attuning to other frequencies and registering resonances of multiple other bodies. It imagines sound and listening as a medium of touch. It is in conversation with Pauline Oliveros' deep listening movement and pedagogy, often practiced collectively and thus performing community through expanded practices of listening.²²³ These practices have been influential to a much wider eco-acoustic movement, or Acoustic Ecology, which explores the relationship between humans and their environments mediated through sound.²²⁴ I am interested in vibration as a mode of thought and medium of touch, affect and atmosphere, hence the relevance of the more posthumanist work of Eleni Ikonidou in which she proposes the rhythmic event as a "middle force that occupies the distance between events, hinting that there is no empty space or void waiting to be filled by human perception".²²⁵ Her analysis focusses on sonic artworks which disrupt humancentric chronologies, and resonate beyond thresholds of perception, destabilising the notion of a human perceiving force at the centre of the artworks.

The centrality of orality in this project stems from my previous work as a performance storyteller, working with The Crick Crack Club and exploring traditional modes of storytelling in which the performer tells with a band, and delivers a specifically rhythmic, long-form telling.

²²² Much work was done to both attend to the Lancashire river in proximity to it and away from the site - from clearing vast areas littered by shot-gun pellets, to developing a deep listening with the river stones to emerge *the unearthings*, to durational ceremony practices to work with the entities emerging in that place. In this sense, the work reconsiders what a "trace" might be, as not only visual, but also energetic, and impactful in ways that have to be accounted for.

²²³ Pauline Oliveros, *On Sonic Meditation*. (La Jolla, Ca.: Center for Music Experiment and Related Research, University of California at San Diego, 1973); *Deep Listening: A Composer's Sound Practice* (Kingston N.Y.: Deep Listening Publications, 2005).

²²⁴ See for example Laura Harrington's project RIVERS, 2001, a sonic opera made with the signification of Atlantic salmon on their migratory journey. Accessed June 3, 2017, online at: <http://www.d6culture.org/laura-harrington.html>.

²²⁵ Eleni Ikonidou, *The Rhythmic Event; Art Media and the Sonic* (London: MIT Press, 2014) p.13.

This work involved (improvisational, not scripted) oral re-telling of traditional tales; the emergent aspect of voice and its content (story, language in its phatic, poetic, phrasal, rhythmic capacities), depending on ‘who’ is listening and how, has deeply informed my relationship to myth and storytelling. Whilst Haraway describes the need to tell different stories, oral telling focusses on the emergent force of both telling *and* listening, emphasising the storyteller’s listening skills, to respond to the audience and the agency of story itself.²²⁶ Through this earlier performance practice I understood the mythic and story itself as a force with its own agency, that demands attention and to be participated with. The resonances and ‘manifestations’ that appear with and through land as a system of relations, similarly shimmer with this demand, and it is in this sense, through both the sudden entrance of such presences, and the ongoing tracking and piecing together of them, that story emerges through and with matter.

Therefore whilst I share some ground with Timothy Morton’s critique of ‘ecomimesis’ or nature writing, and similarly view the mimetic force of nature writing as often erasing socio-political critiques of constructed ‘nature’, this project sees long-standing traditions of mimetic sounding in relation to place as a significant practice closely related to storytelling, rendering the mouth (lungs, body etc) an instrument of listening not simply a tool for human speech.²²⁷ Contemporary imaginings of mimetic sounding can be found in the sound poetry of Hanna Silva’s double-tonguing for river piece (2009), and Caroline Bergvall’s long form performance

²²⁶ The 1980s witnessed a revival of oral re-telling of traditional story as performance, inaugurated by performance group Company of Storytellers (Ben Haggarty, Hugh Lupton and Sally Pomme Clayton). There was a small cross over between still living oral traditions (specifically Scots traveller traditions and the stories of Duncan Williamson), from whom the above generation of storytellers founded a lot of their craft. The oral improvised telling of certain performers (above mentioned, Jan Blake, and TUUP) is invested in a certain kind of ‘uttering to listen’ that has to be responsive to the situation and context of the telling, and has a huge wealth of knowledge about myth itself, arguably a living force emergent from more-than-human assemblages. “Storytelling” has become a buzzword in light of ecological turns in artistic practice. Its usage does not differentiate between written and spoken story, a crucial differentiation that erases the specific embodied, improvised oral knowledges these practices offer. However, the contemporary oral storytelling scene can also be particularly ‘purist’ in a commitment to certain styles and telling and traditional material, and is largely dominated by male voices. See “Crick Crack Club” accessed November 30, 2019 online at: <http://www.crickcrackclub.com/MAIN/HOME.HTM>. For a feminist critique and proposal towards an emergent, feminist storytelling practice, see Jo Blake (Cave), PhD thesis, *What Does Myth Do Anyway? Towards an Emergent Storytelling Practice*. (University of Chichester 2018).

²²⁷ See Theodore C. Levin, *Where Rivers And Mountains Sing: Sound, Music, and Nomadism in Tuva and Beyond* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), in which he documents the Tuvan Throat singing tradition of contemporary musicians, a mimetic practice that attunes to frequencies in for example rivers, land, wind. For ecomimesis critique see Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

poem *Drift* (2014), which draws on ancient maritime oral poetry to respond to the contemporary refugee crisis.²²⁸ Other forms of invoking land listening are proposed sculpturally by Rebecca Belmore's *wave sound* (2017) situating four 'listening' sculptures, in Banff National Park (AB), Pukaskwa National Park (ON), Georgian Bay Islands National Park (ON), and Gros Morne National Park (NL). *Wave sound* is a sculptural performance intervention in the landscape that invokes an audience to listen, rather than view, disrupting art historical optical hierarchies.²²⁹

Similarly working with resonance and frequency in a way that situates the body in its socio-political, inscribed histories, is the audiovisual work of Mia Harrison exhibited recently in Savvy Contemporary's *Soil is an Inscribed Body: On Sovereignty and Agropoetics*. Harrison uses performance for film, spoken text and audio to position the body as a medium of REM-memory, her term for re-working with dream in order to release generational trauma and ask the question "what would a culture that values soil and the people who work in it look like?"²³⁰ The piece's title *How to Return to Earth When it Turns its Back On You* speaks to the closures of ancestral sites of belonging through histories of slavery inscribed in land, bodies and memory. Her somatic approach meets an expanded sense of listening, whilst the gestural and filmic qualities and spoken narrative, pose a welcome interruption to dominant somatic aesthetics in the earth-body films of Poyner and Halprin. Harrison rather positions the body as both a medium of ritual/trance as well as subject to convulsions or disturbances emanating from what is held in both land and body. These more trance-like gestural qualities are more appropriate to a project of visibilising the ongoingness of violent histories inscribed through land.

The Otolith Group's *Medium Earth*, as an audiovisual essay that "attunes itself to the seismic psyche of the state of California... listens to its deserts, translates the writing of its

²²⁸ These performative, oral and phonic practices are more aligned to this project than for example, radical nature poetry in the U.K.'s long standing tradition of nature writing. My practice is more concerned with voice as a medium of information in the moment of encounter between land, nonhuman ancestors and human body.

²²⁹ Bergvall, Caroline. *Drift*. London: Penned in the Margins, 2014. Hannah Silva, Ecopoetics Festival Exeter 2010, accessed March 8, 2015, online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBAB4cldjPs>. Rebecca Belmore "Wave Sound" 2017, accessed April 16, 2018 online at: <https://www.rebeccabelmore.com/wave-sound/>.

²³⁰ Mia Harrison, "How to Return to Earth when it Turns its Back on You" *Soil is an Inscribed Body, On Sovereignty and Agropoetics*, (Savvy Contemporary exh. cat. The Laboratory of Form Ideas, 2019).

stones, and deciphers the calligraphies of its expansion cracks”, similarly foregrounds the relationship with resonance, vibration, sound and geology.²³¹ A reminder of Kodwo Eshun’s seminal contribution to the fields of Afro-Futurism, his readings of futurity through the medium of sound and the disorienting framing technique of the “chronopolitical” articulates the “temporal complications and anachronistic episodes that disturb the linear time of progress, adjust[ing] the temporal logics that condemned black subjects to prehistory”.²³² AfroFuturism’s repurposing of the past is in close dialogue with the speculative fiction genre, in particular the seminal work of Octavia Butler, and more recent writers including Ama Josephine Budge, whose research centres takes a queer, decolonial approach to climate colonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly focussing on inherently environmentalist pleasure practices in Ghana and Kenya.²³³ This project is in dialogue with speculative approaches and their indebtedness to Afrofuturist fields as well as authors such as Ursula LeGuin.

The poetics of Bhanu Kapil integrate a performance and somatic practice into a written form that has been influential to this project. Kapil’s *Ban En Banlieu* leaks out of the cohesive narrative form of the novel or the lyric form of the poem, which historically have been so centred around the subject “I” as a speaking self emergent through cohesive events and histories. It revolves around the figure of Ban, a “brown [black] girl walking home from school” on April 23rd, 1979, the day of the race riots in the outskirts (Banlieue) of London - an exile to the suburbs and the margins of the literary.²³⁴ Not only is Ban exiled, but the book itself is a formal product of a mistake or mis-taken (be)longing in the form it insists on inhabiting: Ban is “a list of errors I made as a poet engaging in a novel-shaped space”, “a novel never written”, a “contribution to...the limits of the poetic project – its capacity: for embodiment, for figuration, for what happens to bodies when we link them to the time of the

²³¹ “Medium Earth” accessed January 7, 2020, online at: <http://otolithgroup.org/index.php?m=project&id=152>.

²³² Kodwo Eshun, “Further Considerations on Afro-futurism” *The New Centennial Review*, Vol.3, No.2, (2003) pp. 297.

²³³ Ama Josephine Budge accessed November 13, 2019, online at: <https://www.amajosephinebudge.com>.

²³⁴ Bhanu Kapil, *Ban en Banlieue* (London: Nightboat Books, 2015). In *Stone | Wish | Bone* I will consider the peripperformative through Sedgwick’s proposal; *Ban En Banlieu* is to me another form of the peripperformative, both in its geographical staging at the edges, borders and peripheries of ‘centres’ as well as its constant forestalling of a cohesive, singular subject position “I”.

event, which is to say – un-lived time, the part of time that can never belong to us”.²³⁵ Kapil’s project performs the marked body and the mark on the page, rendering their combined histories inextricable from one another, and performing a poetics that spills beyond the limits of forms of representation married to the fallacy of individualist subjectivity. Bhanu’s writing of hybrid human-alien-girl-monster-cyborg-mythic Ban, an arguably posthumanist figure, voices the somatic impact of everyday racism, and brings us full circle to the question of slow violence - asking what modes of narrative, and interruptions to forms of representation, might be called for in the ongoingness of such events.

Curated Contexts, Rights of Nature

The last decade has seen a huge increase in the number of curated contexts and performances centred around ecologies, climate collapse, the Anthropocene, environmental racism and nonhuman justice. T.J. Demos’ “The Politics of Sustainability: Contemporary Art and Ecology” in *Radical Nature: Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet 1969–2009*, published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name at the Barbican Art Gallery (2009), cites a non-exhaustive but substantial list of exhibitions up until then (2009).²³⁶ From Barbara Matilsky’s *Fragile Ecologies* (1992) at the Queens Museum of Art in New York, (often considered to be the first exhibition that focused exclusively on ecological art from the 1960s onwards) to *Ecovention: Current Art to Transform Ecologies*, an exhibition at the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center, 2002; *Beyond Green: Toward a Sustainable Art* at Chicago’s Smart Museum of Art, 2006; *Still Life: Art, Ecology, and the Politics of Change*, the eighth Sharjah Biennial, 2007; *Weather Report: Art and Climate Change* at Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, 2007. However, in the last ten years a shift has taken place from exhibitions focussing on the ‘restorationist’ artistic

²³⁵ Ibid. p.20.

²³⁶ T. J. Demos, “The Politics of Sustainability: Contemporary Art and Ecology.” *Radical Nature: Art and Architecture for a Changing Planet 1969–2009*, ed. Francesco Manacorda, (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 2009) pp.16–30. See also Sue Spaid, “Short History of Eco-Art Exhibitions” in *Ecovention: Current Art to Transform Ecologies*, (Contemporary Arts Center, et al., Corte Madera: California 2000) pp. 134–36; and Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin, *Art In The Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments And Epistemologies* (London: Open Humanities Press 2015).

interventions of the 1960s onwards, land art and sustainability, to a more recent (and arguably overdue) focus on decolonial approaches, artists of the global south, social justice and human rights, biodiversity, economic equality and the political status of the nonhuman.

Within this shift I would argue, is the inclusion of multiple epistemologies and a emphasis from questions of nonhuman ‘agency’ to the political rights of nature. 2012 saw the e-flux journal issue *Animism*, curated by Anselme Franke after the touring exhibition of the same name in Europe from 2010 and pre-empting The Ilmin Museum of Art’s *Animism*, an exhibition of diverse international artists re-imaging the concept of animism.²³⁷ Franke claims that “the future is no longer a white sheet of paper awaiting our projective prescriptive schemes and designs” and the past is “no longer the archaic animist ‘stage’ of multiple contagions and mediations which must be surmounted as ‘entry’ condition into the hygienic order of modernity”.²³⁸ The statement is a useful re-orientation from Povinelli’s aforementioned Totemic Imaginary, which can easily stage cultural forms (singing, storytelling, myth, ritual) as human, linguistic modes of sense-making and activities projected onto an environment that would be indifferent to them, or as ‘less progressive alternatives’ to more scientific rationales.

2015 in the UK context saw Nottingham Contemporary’s *Rights of Nature: Art and Ecology in the Americas*, an influential turning point in the move towards more decolonial environmentalism, as well as projects such as ArtsAdmin’s *2 degrees Festival*, featuring Brett Bloom’s “Break Down project”, which included deep listening workshops, talks on Petro-Subjectivity, Deep Time and the Laws of the Rights of Mother Nature.²³⁹ A steady influx of exhibitions curated around rights of nature, and the possibility of communicating with the nonhuman, include *Vegetation as a Political Agent* at PAV, Turin in 2014; *The Ocean After Nature* at YBCA in 2016; *Between the Waters* at the Whitney Museum of Modern Art in 2016, and *How to*

²³⁷ Anselme Franke ‘Animism; Notes on an Exhibition’ *e-flux Journal* 36, July 2012, accessed April 14, 2018, online at: <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/36/61258/animism-notes-on-an-exhibition/>.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ ArtsAdmin “Two Degrees Festival” 2015, accessed July 14, 2019, online at: <https://www.artsadmin.co.uk/artist-development/advice-info-training/breakdown-break-down>. T. J. Demos “Rights of Nature: The Art and Politics of Earth Jurisprudence” accessed June 22, 2019, online at: <https://www.nottinghamcontemporary.org/whats-on/rights-of-nature/>.

talk with birds, trees, fish, shells, snakes, bulls and lions at Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin in 2019. *Between the Waters* incorporated ongoing dialogue between participating artists, to foreground “individual voices each speaking on a series of relationships that could be described as ecological: between the land, the forms and ways of life that exist on the land, and the systems of use or governance of the land”.²⁴⁰ Of note here is Carolina Caycedo’s *River Serpent Project*, an ongoing project carried out by Caycedo whilst working in Colombian, Brazilian, and Mexican communities affected by the industrialization and privatization of river systems.²⁴¹

Notable within a broader ecological, posthumanist trend, re-configuring of ‘animisms’, and growing concern as to the politics of the commons is the so-called ‘witchy turn’ in the arts and humanities. For example, Legion Project’s 2019 touring exhibition ‘Waking the Witch’, the 2017 ICA conference on ‘Witchy Methodologies’, and its inspired 2019 London Contemporary Music Festival, Rebecca ‘Tamás’ 2019 poetry collection *Witch*, the queer feminist curatorial collective *Coven*, the operatic work of Ayesha Tan-Jones, and the ‘spell’ poetry and performances of Linda Stuart.²⁴² Categorising a lot of this work is a queer aesthetic including pastiche, satire, drag, and a turn to methodologies of divination, ritual, spell-making. It is interesting to see the performativity of said revivals of the figure of the witch, alongside work around the contemporary commons, agro-poetics, practices of the global south, spirituality and decolonial environmentalism re-invigorating relationships between land, bodies and energetic or medicinal practices.²⁴³

Seed sovereignty, agro-poetics, and the politics of soil has been a rich site for decolonial environmental perspectives. Ros Gray and Shela Sheikh’s Third Text editorial “The Wretched

²⁴⁰ “Between the Waters” accessed December 18, 2019, online at: <https://whitney.org/Essays/BetweenTheWaters>, with Carolina Caycedo, Demian DinéYazhi’, Ginger Dunhill, Torkwase Dyson, Cy Gavin, Lena Henke, and Erin Jane Nelson.

²⁴¹ Carolina Caycedo, “River Serpent Book” accessed July 15, 2019, online at: <http://carolinacaycedo.com/serpent-river-book>.

²⁴² See Linda Stuppart, *Virus* (London: Arcadia Missa 2016); Rebecca ‘Tamás’, *Witch* (London: Penned in the Margins, 2019); ShadowSistxrs Fight Club at Serpentine Galleries, accessed August 3, 2019, online at: <https://www.serpentinegalleries.org/exhibitions-events/recipes-change-shadow-sistxrs-fertile-souls>, and *Coven* Berlin, accessed August 3, 2019, online at: <http://www.covenberlin.com>.

²⁴³ See “Ecofeminism and the Politics of the Commons” accessed October 9, 2019 online at: <https://savvy-contemporary.com/en/events/2018/ecofeminism/>, a contemporary linkage to Silvia Federici’s work drawing together the control of common land, bodies, sexual and medicinal practices.

Earth: Botanic Conflicts and Artistic Interventions”, brought together diverse artistic practices engaging with ‘the wretched earth’, including potato seeding and lichen bio-indication, to intersect an anti-colonial critique with the role of aesthetic and artistic practice in light of colonialism’s “state of permanent war on the global environment.”²⁴⁴ The curation evokes Fanon’s seminal title:

“The Earth is wretched because its soil – that thin layer of earth at the surface of the planet upon which we depend for life – is contaminated, eroded, drained, burnt, exploded, flooded and impoverished on a worldwide scale... in order to do full justice to Fanon’s diagnosis of ‘the wretched of the earth’, we must understand more deeply the extent to which this is due to the fact that the earth itself is wretched, and that part of this condition has been the destruction of ‘ecological’ relations with the earth.”²⁴⁵

As Sheikh emphasises, in light of such environmental violence, the more-than-human witness and collectivities of witnessing are crucially emerging. Susan Schuppli works with “landscape *as* filmic or photographic operation,” challenging modes of representation and storytelling to explore the “material witness...whose physical properties or technical configuration records evidence of passing events to which it can bear witness.”²⁴⁶ Sheikh notes how Schuppli’s approach “demonstrates how media artefacts and environmental conditions themselves bear witness not only to ‘events’ but also the sorting and registration processes imposed upon them in order for them to qualify as evidence in the first place”.²⁴⁷ *Forensic Architecture* similarly turn to agential matter, and “object witnesses” in the absence of human witnesses; and Jennifer Gabrys has termed lichen “bio-indicators” working with their indicating rising levels of pollution. Gabrys and the Citizen Sense project asks how speculative approaches to evidencing harm can lead to practices of care between humans and lifeworlds; this capacity

²⁴⁴ Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, p 68.

²⁴⁵ Ros Gray and Shela Sheikh, “The Wretched Earth, Botanical Conflicts and Artistic Interventions” *Third Text*, Vol.32 Issues 2-3, (2018) pp.163-175.

²⁴⁶ Susan Schuppli “Reframing Memory and Knowledge: The Artist as Producer” *Theories and Practices of Visual Culture* 18 (2017) accessed December 2, 2018: <http://susanschuppli.com/wp-content/uploads/522-6982-1-PB.pdf>. See also “Can the Sun Lie?” In *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*. Ed. Forensic Architecture, Berlin: Sternberg Press, (2014): pp.56-64; and *Material Witness, Media, Forensics, Evidence* (London: MIT Press, 2020).

²⁴⁷ Shela Sheikh, “The Future of the Witness: Nature, Race and More-than-Human Environmental Publics” *Kronos*, 44(1) (2018) pp.145-162.

for witnessing to induce and enact an ethics of care is expanded in the next section.²⁴⁸ Divergent but overlapping concerns as to the legal standing of the “speaking subject” are found in Tyler Coburn’s *Richard Roe, the fictional memoir of a legal person*. The name is one of the oldest used in English law when the real name of someone is withheld, or when a corpse cannot be identified; the name was given to a breed of orchid which accompanies the text object in exhibition contexts. The memoir “gives voice to the legal fictions that creep around the margins of selfhood...and arguments, of the last two centuries, for the legal personhood of corporations, rivers, and other elements of the natural world”.²⁴⁹ Indeed the ‘speaking subject’ as a singular voice and body within the ‘public’ sphere of politics and human society is necessarily de-stabilised within this project, due to its formulation through violence towards bodies and lands in ongoing colonialisms. I will foreground in the next section this project’s relation to ongoing questions of witnessing, a human-nonhuman politic, and modes of representation at artistic-activist, and juridical-aesthetic intersections.

²⁴⁸ See Jennifer Gabrys, “Citizen sensing, air pollution and fracking: From ‘caring about your air’ to speculative practices of evidencing harm” *The Sociological Review*, 65(2), (2017) pp.172-192; and “Sensing Lichens” *Third Text*, 32(2-3), (2018) pp.350-367.

²⁴⁹ Tyler Coburn, *Richard Roe* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019).

This thesis proposes a pedagogy of witnessing that engages the reciprocal dynamics of land as a system of relations when humans choose to participate in its felt space of ‘mind’. The dynamic capacity of nonhuman existents to manifest in such ways as to propel and be responsive to human behaviour, led me to have an experiential sense of communication across Life Nonlife divides, to which humans are obliged to respond.²⁵⁰ The ongoing reverberations of the witch-hunts and eco-political entanglements of the Great Divide, situate this practice within historical and ongoing juridical contexts that rupture humans from their practices with nonhuman relations. This thesis is thus concerned with bearing witness to multiple pasts insistently repeating, and simultaneously participating in a mutual witnessing with land and its intentional presences - including ancestral and immaterial. Exploring the latter reveals the impact certain modes of witnessing have on the emergence of less visible or perceivable phenomena.²⁵¹ I develop embodied practices to ask if another mode of witnessing might emerge information that challenges the dichotomies of personal testimony and factual evidence that largely underpin Life Nonlife divides in colonial-capitalist contexts. This is in dialogue with an ongoing interdisciplinary concern as to the rights of nature, inclusion of nonhumans in the sphere of the political and governance of the demos, and the implicated role of the witness in such ongoing formulations.

²⁵⁰ In this sense, I practice what Eduardo Kohn proposes, following Ghassan Hage, as an “alter-politics”, in choosing to participate with the already more-than-human politic emergent from land as a system of relations. Following Hage alter-politics is “a politics that grows not from opposition to or critique of our current systems but one that grows from attention to another way of being, one here that involves other kinds of living beings.” Kohn, *How Forests Think* p.14. See Ghassan Hage, *Critical Anthropology and the Radical Imagination* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2015).

²⁵¹ Following the situated feminist legacy as noted in ‘Ecological Turns’, the ‘modest witness’ is refuted and a situated, embodied, co-productive witnessing prioritised: “The modest witness is the legitimate and authorized ventriloquist for the object world, adding nothing from his mere opinions, from his biasing embodiment. And so he is endowed with the remarkable power to establish the facts. He bears witness: he is objective; he guarantees the clarity and purity of objects. His subjectivity is his objectivity. His narratives have a magical power — they lose all trace of their history as stories, as products of partisan projects, as contestable representations, or as constructed documents in their potent capacity to define the facts. The narratives become clear mirrors, fully magical mirrors, without once appealing to the transcendental or the magical”. Donna Haraway, *Modest Witness@Second_Millennium.FemaleMan©_Meets_On coMouse™: Feminism and Technoscience* (New York and London: Routledge, 1997).

Since the work of Christopher Stone - an early proponent of the rights of nature in Western juridical contexts - debate around the legal personhood of nonhumans has been taken up more urgently in the last decade.²⁵² In critical contexts, this is perhaps in part due to what Povinelli articulates as the increasing discrepancy between critical theory's material turn (overriding the Life Nonlife divide), and late liberalism's continued logic of *geontopower*. The inclusion of the rights of nature or certain nonhuman existents in legal contexts, as well as the logics of *geontopower*, demand that notions of the political as well as the social, are redressed. Povinelli outlines various theoretical approaches incorporating the nonhuman into political life, as well as the ways they can be folded back into a rhetorics of recognition:

“one extends the features of human language (speech) to all things. Another refigures semiosis as a broad mode of sign production and interpretation that can be extended to all living things. And a third that figures all things as aspects of assemblages with the power to animate a response - to initiate an event”.²⁵³

Whilst I consider these approaches, I am concerned with developing ways of participating in an already-happening politic through artistic practice, asking what emerges within such re-orientations.

Ecuador was the first country to include the legal rights of nature in its constitution in 2008. Bolivia passed “La Ley de Derechos de la Madre Tierra” in 2010, granting Mother Earth “a collective subject of public interest”.²⁵⁴ In 2014 the Te Urewera Act was passed in New Zealand, whereby “Te Urewera ceased to be a government-owned national park and was transformed into freehold, inalienable land owned by itself”; New Zealand went on to grant

²⁵² Christopher Stone, *Should Trees Have Standing?* (Palo Alto, California: Tioga Pub. Co. (1972 [1988])). See most notably the work of Catherine J. Magallanes in: Martin, Betsan, Linda Te Aho and Maria Humphries-Kil. Eds., *ResponsAbility: Law and Governance for Living Well with the Earth*. (London & New York: Routledge, 2019), and “Nature as an Ancestor: Two Examples of Legal Personality for Nature in New Zealand” *VertigO*, (Hors-série 22, 2015); Erin O'Donnell, *Legal Rights for Rivers: Competition, Collaboration and Water Governance* (London: Routledge, 2018). Paulo Tavares, “Nonhuman Rights” in *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth* eds. Anselme Franke and Eyal Weizman, (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014) pp. 553–572. T.J. Demos, “Rights of Nature: The Art and Politics of Earth Jurisprudence” Exhibition Essay for *The Rights of Nature: Art and Ecology in the Americas*, Nottingham Contemporary 2015, accessed June 22, 2019, online at: <https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/sites.ucsc.edu/dist/0/196/files/2015/10/Demos-Rights-of-Nature-2015.compressed.pdf>. Rafi Youatt, “Personhood and the Rights of Nature: The New Subjects of Contemporary Earth Politics” *International Political Sociology*, Vol.11, 1, (2017) pp.1–16. Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature, accessed January 4, 2019: <https://therightsofnature.org/ecuador-rights/>.

²⁵³ Povinelli, E. “The Rhetorics of Recognition in Geontopower” *Philosophy & Rhetoric* Vol. 48, No. 4, Special Issue: The Rhetorical Contours of Recognition (2015), pp. 428-442, at p.440.

²⁵⁴ “Ley de Derechos de la Madre Tierra”, December 2010, article 7. Accessed December 8, 2019: <http://peoplesagreement.org/?p=1651>

full legal rights to the Whanganui River in March 2017; in the same year the Ganges and Yamuna river systems were granted personhood under an argument of guardianship, in a campaign to stop ongoing pollution in the state of Uttarakhand, before being overturned by the Supreme Court in July 2017. In 2019 Bangladesh granted its rivers the same legal standing as humans.²⁵⁵

Legal status is configured differently in each case, with the most obvious challenges being that, on the one hand, status to appear in a court of law is made through *locus standi* - i.e. under guardianship, as in the case of India “the ruling treated the river system as a minor that would be protected by local government posts in the state of Uttarakhand, which acted *in loco parentis*”.²⁵⁶ In such instances, the nonhuman appears in a court of law via humans who continue to represent them (hence the violation to the nonhuman relies on having been perceived by the human); this does not interrupt the current metaphysics of law, with the usual problems of representation - which humans get to speak - going unchanged. As we shall see in Povinelli’s account of Karrabing land claims, even if human subjects are allowed to ‘appear’ in a court of law, their mode of appearance will remain largely restricted if outside of the dominant Western metaphysics of law. Furthermore, from a Systemic lens (to be outlined in the next chapter), energetically, a system comprised of misplaced orders - i.e. children trying to be parents to their parents, or in this case, humans trying to act *in loco parentis* for world - is a system radically out of balance; it enacts another kind of anthropocentric ideology.

Another problem as noted in the Ecuadorian context by Ursula Biemann, is that the underpinning metaphysics of ownership remain unchanged, leaving nature as open to exploitation as before: “Ecuador’s constitution recognizes nature as a juridical subject, but de facto, nature’s rights are respected and enforced only as far as they do not stand in conflict with

²⁵⁵ See “Global Alliance for The Rights of Nature” accessed January 4, 2019: <https://therightsofnature.org/>.

²⁵⁶ Shela Sheikh, “More-than-Human Cosmopolitics” In: Maria Hlavajova and Wietske Maas, eds. *Propositions for Non-Fascist Living: Tentative and Urgent*. (Utrecht and Cambridge, Mass.: BAK and MIT Press, 2019), p.128. *Locus standi* means that those with legal standing have the capacity to bring an action or appear in court. As nonhuman existents cannot do this, their appearance in court relies on human guardian or representative.

state economic interests”.²⁵⁷ The granting of property rights, fundamentally at odds with Indigenous frameworks in this context, does not change the functioning of law, and as legal scholars argue, “the right to property cannot serve as the conceptual stronghold for Indigenous peoples’ survival, because domestic and international law grants states wide leeway to interfere with property”.²⁵⁸ Hence the need for, and what this project is in dialogue with - alternative artistic-activist proposals that seek to expand, redress and interrupt current conceptions of the political and conventional methods of representation.

This has been framed around the call for a cosmopolitics by Isabelle Stengers, taken up by a number of theorists, artists and researchers.²⁵⁹ A cosmopolitical approach must be distinguished from a humanist classical understanding of cosmopolitanism, and its sphere of human political action, which aimed “at a project of a political kind [. . .] in which everyone might envisage themselves as members in their own right of the worldwide society”.²⁶⁰ Shela Sheikh has drawn necessary attention to the differences between cosmopolitics and cosmopolitanism in light of growing “eco-fascism and resurgent nationalism”, where cosmopolitanism could be a response falling back on notions of humanistic hospitality and inclusion which may simply be insufficient: rather, “confronting both the anthropocentrism and “peacefulness” of traditional conceptions of cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitics instead welcomes dissensus and disruption, highlighting other forms of knowledge beyond the human”.²⁶¹ Reading from a queer feminist, decolonial perspective, Christine Quinan and Kathrin Thiele note that instead of a rights-based approach “that brushes over precarious questions of in-/

²⁵⁷ Ursula Biemann, “The Cosmo-Political Forest: A Theoretical and Aesthetic Discussion of the Video Forest Law” *GeoHumanities*, Vol.1, Issue 1, (2015) pp.157-170, at p.162.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ See Bruno Latour, “Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics? Comments on the Peace Terms of Ulrich Beck” *Common Knowledge*, 10(3), (2004) pp.450-462. Christine Quinan and Kathrin Thiele, “Biopolitics, necropolitics, cosmopolitics – feminist and queer interventions: an introduction”, *Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 29:1, (2000) p.1-8. Jennifer Gabrys, “A cosmopolitics of energy: diverging materialities and hesitating practices” *Environment and Planning A* Vol. 46, (2014) p.2095 – 2109. See also Sheikh and Biemann in footnotes 223, 224.

²⁶⁰ Isabelle Stengers, “The Cosmopolitical Proposal” in *Making Things Public* eds. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (MIT Press, 2005) pp.994-1005, p.994. See also Isabelle Stengers, *Cosmopolitics*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

²⁶¹ Sheikh “More-than-Human Cosmopolitics” p.130.

exclusion” cosmos in Stengers’ thinking refers to “the unknown constituted by the [. . .] multiple, divergent worlds and to the articulations of which they could eventually be capable”.²⁶²

Ursula Biemann’s 2014 *Forest Law*, a video work made in collaboration with Paulo Tavares, exploring the Amazon as a site of conflict between the Kichwa people of the Sarayaku and the oil industry, takes up Stengers’ call for a cosmopolitics, “insofar as nature is imagined not only as a rights-bearing subject, but also a potential political subject—as a “citizen” of a “cosmopoliteia””.²⁶³ Biemann claims that Stenger’s proposal “is not a manual for good and efficient cosmos forming, but...an invitation to decelerate, respect speechlessness, and give those more weight who do not function within the parameters of language, reason, and cost-effective productivity.”²⁶⁴ It is in this context that she practices attending to the materialities and existents of the forest, a potential way of engaging with “a different commons, a different cosmos”.²⁶⁵ Tavares and Biemann worked with Eduardo Kohn’s expanded semiotic framework for an Amazonian political ecology: “In *Forest Law*, these legal, scientific, semiotic, and cosmological narratives converge to form a dense epistemological fabric of the sylvan ecology that reaches beyond the simple distinction between personal testimonies and factual evidence”.²⁶⁶

In reference to a cosmopolitical proposal, Bruno Latour highlights the anthropological work of Eduardo Viveiros de Castro in the Amazonian context, where society is considered comprised of humans and nonhumans: “entities all have souls and their souls are all the same. What makes them differ is that their bodies differ, and it is bodies that give souls their contradictory perspectives...Entities all have the same *culture* but do not acknowledge, do not

²⁶² Christine Quinan and Kathrin Thiele, “Biopolitics, necropolitics, cosmopolitics” p.4.

²⁶³ Sheikh, “More-than-Human Cosmopolitics” p.128.

²⁶⁴ Biemann, p.167.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. p.160.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

perceive, do not live in, the same *nature*".²⁶⁷ These understandings of society and politic beyond the human are useful in moving us away from traditional conceptions of the 'public' as a space of politics comprised of human bodies making their voice and actions heard/seen. They likewise interrupt dualities of metropolitan versus rural, orienting away from the juridical contexts in which humans would have to give testimony on behalf of nature in acts of guardianship, and towards more experimental interventions.

However, I am wary of the trope of Western artists going to post-colonial contexts and engaging with an already-articulated human-nonhuman politic. It makes it possible for Biemann to conclude that "what is sorely missing, as French philosopher Serres (1995) elucidated in his visionary book *The Natural Contract*...is a pact between humans and nature", whereas evidently in multiple places in the world, pacts such as this are already existing and being practiced if not erased through colonialism.²⁶⁸ Where the Amazonian context is such a visibly multitudinous lifeworld, with much complex and dense co-existing inhabitants, there is a risk of replicating the mechanisms of colonial "blindness" in ignoring land which does not have such visible or tangibly multiple semiotic lifeworlds. For this reason, I look to Christine Stewart's poetics around the signing of Treaty 6 in Canada, as a moment in which a nonhuman authority and presence is erased from the written records of history and the processes of politics, in order to pose the question as to whether this is continuing in contemporary ecological and artistic discourse. This brings to light how the figure of the 'missing witness' is not just the human, but in fact the nonhuman that is de-animated, but formerly that which can bear witness to the contract, the Treaty in this case, and participate in a field of consent.

²⁶⁷ Bruno Latour, "Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics?" pp.452. De Castro and Kohn's perspectival accounts are expanded on and considered in Chapter 3 *Stone | Wish | Bone*, with emphasis on thinking beyond the living semiotic world, to include stone and river. See Eduardo Viveiros De Castro, "Exchanging Perspectives: The Transformation of Objects into Subjects in Amerindian Ontologies" *Common Knowledge*, Vol. 10. Issue 3 (2004): pp.463–484. See also De Castro "Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism" *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1998) pp.469-88.

²⁶⁸ Biemann, p.162. I cite Leanne Simpson and Kim Tallbear in *Dam | Diaphragm | Digestion*, to emphasise how oral knowledge - pertaining specifically to ongoing nonhuman-human political lifeworlds and ongoing pacts - continues to be erased from written, academic contexts. Furthermore it is the suggestion of this practice that such agreements are still perceivable in albeit illusive, ephemeral, blurry ways, and it is the interest of this project to speculatively unearth the ongoing and emergent bonds between human and nonhuman that continue to pulse and shimmer at thresholds of awareness.

Therefore instead of looking to geographical contexts in which an expanded sense of society or the political is already arguably at play culturally, I find it important to explore how mutual witnessing can re-invoke nonhuman-human collectivities and their obligations, by responding to an unknown “interruption” as experienced at the Lancashire site; this suggests an intentionality emergent from land, towards these ongoing collectivities. I take a non-representationalist approach to this, contributing to a gap in current practices pertaining specifically to the perception of invisible and immaterial presences at such sites. From this experience, I come to consider beyond nature as a political subject or citizen, and towards engaging a system of relations whose *modus operandi* is political, within which existents express themselves, their intentions, and their agreements. Through this, emergent structures of understanding might arise that better house the expressions and information at the encounter between body and land.

The visions are somewhere between a haunting and an intentionality on the part of land to inaugurate another possible future:

“haunting, unlike trauma, is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done. Indeed [. . .] haunting [is] precisely the domain of turmoil and trouble, that moment (of however long duration) when things are not in their assigned places, when the cracks and rigging are exposed, when the people who are meant to be invisible show up without any sign of leaving, when disturbed feelings cannot be put away, when something else, something different from before, seems like it must be done”.²⁶⁹

Inherent in experiencing the visions was an aspect of bearing witness - both my body to the visions themselves, and the visions to the site’s historic reverberations. Therefore, whilst I don’t explicitly follow this trajectory, the proliferation of work on the troubled status of the witness that emerged in light of post-holocaust juridical trials, and how this moment dramatically shifted notions of witnessing into therapeutic discourse, is foundational to notions of ‘bearing witness’. As Shela Sheikh reminds us:

“deconstruction (notably in the work of Jacques Derrida) had already shown us that the irreplaceable, sovereign, autonomous and self-present figure that the witness is supposed to be is always already affected by heteronomy, and prosthetised by an ‘originary technicity’, as such

²⁶⁹ Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008). p.xvi.

exposing the impossibility of ‘pure’, ‘actual’ or ‘authentic’ testimony”.²⁷⁰

Following Derrida, the “act of faith...implied everywhere one participates in what are called scenes of bearing witness” is “heterogenous to producing proof or exhibiting a piece of evidence”.²⁷¹ It is fundamental to scenes of bearing witness, which are different “from the simple transmission of knowledge...or mere demonstration of a proven theoretical truth” in that in them, “someone engages himself with regard to someone else”.²⁷²

Dori Laub’s work with Holocaust survivors, as part of the Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University, illuminates this acutely. He describes a moment in which a group of historians and psychoanalysts consider an eyewitness account of an Auschwitz uprising. The eye-witness reports that four chimneys were set on fire in the camp. Because historical evidence reveals in fact only one chimney was set on fire and exploded, the historians discredit the woman’s account, due to its historical “inaccuracies”. The psychoanalysts on the other hand insist that what the woman testifies to, is in fact something far more “radical” and “crucial” - that is, the unimaginable reality “that is to say, the *historical truth* of Jewish resistance at Auschwitz”.²⁷³ What matters - makes a difference to matter itself - is that the affective experience and re-membering of it this way, activates the speaker’s embodied state (material-psychic body) in a particular way that will have different but very real consequences to their ongoing self-representation and lived reality - in this case seeing the unimaginable made space for the unimaginable - namely, surviving the Holocaust.²⁷⁴ The eyewitness reveals a dynamic of witnessing as both a claim to what was seen, and the religious connotations of testifying to something ungraspable, to the unseen. This “paradox between the necessity and impossibility of testimony, the paradox of the eyewitness, is the productive tension at the foundation of the

²⁷⁰ Shela Sheikh, “The Future of the Witness: Nature, Race and More-than-Human Environmental Publics” *Kronos*, 44(1). (2018) p.149.

²⁷¹ Jacques Derrida, “Poetics and Politics of Witnessing” in *Sovereignities In Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan* Jacques Derrida, Thomas Dutoit, and Outi Pasanen, (New York.: Fordham University Press, 2005) pp.65-96, p.83.

²⁷² Ibid. p.86.

²⁷³ Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) p.1.

²⁷⁴ Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992).

notion of witnessing”.²⁷⁵ In turn, the one *bearing witness* to the testimony (in this case the psychologist), who hears the affective significance of the “inaccurate” account, in turn draws different bodies and events into a chain of semiosis that produces a meaningful reading (thus might tell a different history which would draw different affective atmospheres and actants into the future).

Kelly Oliver encapsulates this role of witnessing (both one’s internal witnessing and the purpose of therapeutic modes of witnessing) as the process of “address-ability and response-ability”. These characterise the “speaking subject”, which in turn is “damaged by the objectifying operations of oppression and subordination”.²⁷⁶ She thus asks how reparative moves towards subjectivity can be the result of processes of witnessing *beyond recognition*, beyond the dialectic of oppressor/oppressed, which assumes one who confers recognition and one who only becomes subject when “seen” in the eyes of the oppressor.²⁷⁷ She thus challenges the assumption that social struggles manifested in critical race theory, queer theory, feminist theory and various social movements are struggles for recognition.²⁷⁸ This touches an important aspect of this thesis’ stance on a poet(h)ics of witnessing. What appears in the emergence of attuning to land, is both an *affective truth* about a historical violence that remains somehow ungraspable, as well as the reparative potential of something beyond - the possibility of stone-womxn, and their communication itself emerging from land.

The visions are not unspeakable per se, but much of the information felt at the porous, blurry boundary between “I” and “non-I” is of a tangible, yet non-verbal, sensorial level, is in

²⁷⁵ Oliver, p.86.

²⁷⁶ Oliver, p.7.

²⁷⁷ Oliver thus follows in the footsteps of Frantz Fanon’s critique of recognition in the oppressor/oppressed dynamic, a critique similarly taken up by Coulthard, and underlying the contemporary resistance to a late liberal politics of recognition.

²⁷⁸ Oliver, p.8. It is worth noting that many of the writers mentioned in *Decolonial Environmentalism*, (Indigenous poets Leslie Silko, Gerald Vizenor, Joy Harjo, Jeannette Armstrong, and radical black scholars Fred Moten, Dionne Brand, Pauline Alexis Gumms, Toni Morrison amongst others) - are, I believe, engaged in a poetics that both bears witness to the unspeakable and also testifies to something beyond, puts into motion a flight out of the historical genocide, slavery or the unspeakable per se. In this sense, I do not consider these poets and thinkers to be busy with a politics of recognition, but rather with the poetics of witnessing - that both bring to light the unspeakable, and conversely, by bearing witness to something wholly otherwise, also bear witness to the resistance and survival of such histories. Thus a future is propelled, or we can say, in bearing witness to the past as well as an otherwise, the future is born(e) witness to.

excess of language. *The unearthings* evolve through this in-between space of silence, language, sound, touch and movement, performing the synaesthetic modality in which this practice of witnessing takes place. The productive tension of the ongoing practice is not that it is unspeakable, but that it throws into question the status of speech, voice, and language in light of receiving information from a more-than-human field of witnessing. Furthermore, it carries the historical imprint of the trials of the so-called “witches” and the bizarre testimonies that arose in these contexts; whilst the academic institution is not a stand-in for the juridical contexts of this period of genocide, something about the claims to make visible a particular kind of knowledge *in contexts through which it does not emerge*, is the tension at the heart of the encounter with the “skeptical witness” that I will unpack more in chapter 5. Thus bearing witness to the visions is understood as happening through multiple modalities, including the body as material witness to that which pulses as an affective truth. The visions speak to a moment felt but not lived, continued and contiguous with my body and the body of the land; they are engaged through care and practices of reciprocity with ancestors and spirits. Here an expanded reading of the notion of care, as proposed by Michal Givoni in *The Care of the Witness*, is relevant; as exemplified through the work of *Medicine Sans Frontiers* - those who are present to trauma, but not the survivors of trauma, nor bearing witness to testimonies of trauma, are witness through a particular role of care in the present.²⁷⁹

The aforementioned contexts of witnessing are specifically intersubjective human contexts that sit at the border between bringing light to injustices and therapeutic contexts of working through trauma. The inter-relational dynamic so prevalent in the role of human witnessing, is here expanded in relation to the nonhuman presences, manifesting throughout this project; what if ‘becoming’ into being is enabled through mutual witnessing with nonhuman entities? This project doesn’t centralise the solitary figure of the human witness, but engages in human-nonhuman collectivities where multiple forms and modes of witnessing are at play. Within these, human witnesses do play a significant role, but where the notion of the

²⁷⁹ Michal Givoni, *The Care of the Witness; A Contemporary History of Testimony in Crises* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).

human as a singular, self-contained and self-present entity is already de-stabilised, and witnessing is a collaborative attendance to nonhuman appearance. It is through this exploration that we come to consider the ways in which different kinds of witnessing emerge different knowledges in relation to the nonhuman; here witnessing draws on ideas from development psychology, art and dance practices, and pedagogical situations.

Particularly useful to this thesis is the work of Eve K. Sedgwick. Strongly influenced by the development psychology work of Silvan Tomkins, Sedgwick throws an invaluable light on the role of the witness in relation to de-stabilising the centrality of the performative mode through spatial, affective, textural relations. Thinking through the queer witness of the heteronormative marriage contract, she draws focus on the validation that the witness of such ceremonies might perform, and how they might destabilise its centrality, performing and recirculating its affective forces. For Sedgwick, the performance of shame, and the delay of the central performative mode (for example in Victorian queer literature) is another mode of circulation.²⁸⁰ Shame - centralised by psychologists such as Tomkins and later Patricia DeYoung - is understood as an affective state of shame at what one is, as opposed to guilt at what one has done. For DeYoung such moments derive from early developmental lack in being intersubjectively 'seen' or recognised by a care-giver, where a felt sense of one's internal subjectivity has not been received. It requires witnessing by a therapeutic figure in order to create neural pathways that bring that person out of shame.²⁸¹ Sedgwick is thus also useful for orienting out of therapeutic contexts, into aesthetic propositions for transforming affective states, especially potent when considering racist, sexist or homophobic projections of shame onto certain bodies and practices.

The wit(h)nessing proposed by Braccha Ettinger, in her model of "matrixial" borderspace, has been similarly influential for proposing aesthetic practice as a mode of witnessing between "I" and "non-I". Responding to the phallogentric work of both Freud and Lacan, Ettinger proposes a feminine difference in the aesthetic act of "borderlinking" emergent

²⁸⁰ Eve K. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003).

²⁸¹ Patricia DeYoung, *Understanding And Treating Chronic Shame*. (East Sussex: Taylor and Francis, 2015).

through a kind of wit(h)nessing as being-with another, that she claims, is the subject's first experience of an/Other (in the womb of their mother).²⁸² Feminist art historian Griselda Pollock claims:

“she expands a word's conceptual range from the legal and testimonial meaning of bearing witness to the crime against the other, to *being with*, but not assimilated to, and to *being beside* the other in a gesture that is much more than mere ethical solidarity. There is risk; but there is also a sharing. *Beyond art as testimony* (given by the witness), Ettinger is proposing an aesthetic wit(h)nessing: a means of being with and remembering for the other through the artistic act and through an aesthetic encounter”(my italics).²⁸³

I find this wit(h)nessing extremely useful, but do not follow a Freudian, Lacanian, and subsequent matrixial lineage; nonetheless I position the witnessing practice as an ethical, aesthetic alongside-ness and co-poesis, that makes emergent knowledge arise and become available for testimony.

This sense of witnessing is hugely influenced by the large body of practice within dance and somatic lineages that focusses on both internal witnessing as cultivating a capacity of encounter between unconscious and conscious processes, as well as “compassionate witnessing” of another. *Authentic Movement*, a movement practice developed in the 1950s through the thought, teaching and practice of Mary Starks Whitehouse and students Joan Chodorow and Janet Adler has been most influential to this lineage of witnessing.²⁸⁴ Depending on the practice, this witness is often silent, sometimes reflecting verbally after the practice (but even here in the case of Authentic Movement, in very specific, structured ways), and involved in an internal ‘tracking’ process, a process of noticing their own physical, somatic, mental experience during the practice. Relationality is a being-with (oneself and other) and attending to what is - where attendance is attention and patience (*attendre* - to wait - to wait on,

²⁸² Braccha Ettinger, “Weaving a Woman Artist With-in the Matrixial Encounter-Event” *Theory, Culture & Society* SAGE, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, Vol. 21(1) (2004) pp.69–93. See also Ettinger “Wit(h)nessing Trauma and the Matrixial Gaze: From Phantasm to Trauma, from Phallic Structure to Matrixial Sphere”. *Parallax*, 7(4), (2004) pp.89-114.

²⁸³ Griselda Pollock, “Aesthetic Wit(h)nessing in the Era of ‘Trauma’” *EurAmerica* Vol. 40, No. 4 (2010), pp.829-886 p.831.

²⁸⁴ Such practices of witnessing might be found in classes of Skinner Release Technique (Joan Skinner) and Body Mind Centering (Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen), Tamalpa (Daria and Anna Halprin), Helen Poyner's Walk of Life workshops and many somatic contexts. See Janet Adler, *Offering from the conscious body / the discipline of Authentic Movement*, (Vermont: Inner Traditions, 2002). Kirsty Alexander, Sarah Whatley and Natalie Garrett Brown, *Attending to Movement; Somatic Perspectives on Living in this World* (Axminster: Triarchy Press, 2015). Linda Hartley, *Wisdom of the Body Moving An Introduction to Body-Mind Centering*. (California: North Atlantic Books, 1995).

to be in service to) another and my own body in predominantly nonverbal ways. Such a collaboration already assumes that information might be felt across bodies and in ways that attest to the porosity of consciousness and experience in and through bodies of attention. It is common for both mover and witnesser to express the same images, thoughts, ideas, sensations, affects, as one another at particular moments during the practice, contributing to the shared imaginal, psychic, affective space between mover and witness. Witnessing is not in order to know, find out, explore, or interrogate, but to observe, actively, with attention, non-judgement and love - a different mode of being-with performer, mover or practitioner, than conventional audience-performer relations.

This project's witnessing also stems from the understanding of 'mind' as a whole-body process. Here the consciousness of bone (or gut, or skin, or fluid system etc) are understood as actively engaged in their own methods and modes of witnessing - in ways that are perhaps far deeper than conscious mind could articulate or perceive.²⁸⁵ That these forms can participate with each other is its own form of biosemiosis; however, these semiotic modes do not necessarily emerge into language or 'thought' as defined by consciously realised ideas/thoughts etc (i.e. into symbolic language). Often trance states, rigorous movement and vocal sound are engaged to encounter the memory and intelligence of the body as multiple layers of knowing, rather than one singular authenticity. This morphic resonance between bodies is similarly revealed through the practice of Systemic Constellations, which I will expand on in the next chapter. Where the eye-witness of events is often unable to speak of trauma, what cannot be "seen" by those too close to the trauma, will often show through the body as material witness, further down the ancestral line. For example, if an ancestor died in a famine, a descendent of that family system might have an overwhelming (and out of proportion with their actual life) fear that they will run out of food, or perhaps will find ways of denying themselves sufficient nutrition. This identification with what in fact belongs to the ancestors, is understood as an

²⁸⁵ Such witnessing within somatic practice also understands that "all living cells have consciousness or "mind"", and that it is possible to attend to and perceive these multiple, dynamic, simultaneous non-normative forms of "mind". Gill Wright Miller et al. *Exploring Body-Mind Centering*. (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2011). In the somatic practice of this project, I work from the understanding that the body as witness is not necessarily consciously realised; the bones, the gut, the skin, the liver, the eyes, the pelvis etc. all would be engaged in their own forms of witnessing, as much as they are all involved in their own forms of mind.

unconscious attempt on the part of the living, to remember - to somehow bear witness to the dead. It is the work of the constellation to bring these unconscious ties to light, in order to disentangle the living generations from what they cannot change or take away, of the past. In doing this, contrary often to a subject's logic (unconsciously we want to 'take away' the trauma of those that we love, and hold it for them in some way), the trauma will be 'given back' to the ancestor who lived it, thus disentangling the identification with a suffering other. In lieu of this, another kind of witnessing takes place, not a witnessing of absorption or empathy, but attention and acknowledgement.²⁸⁶

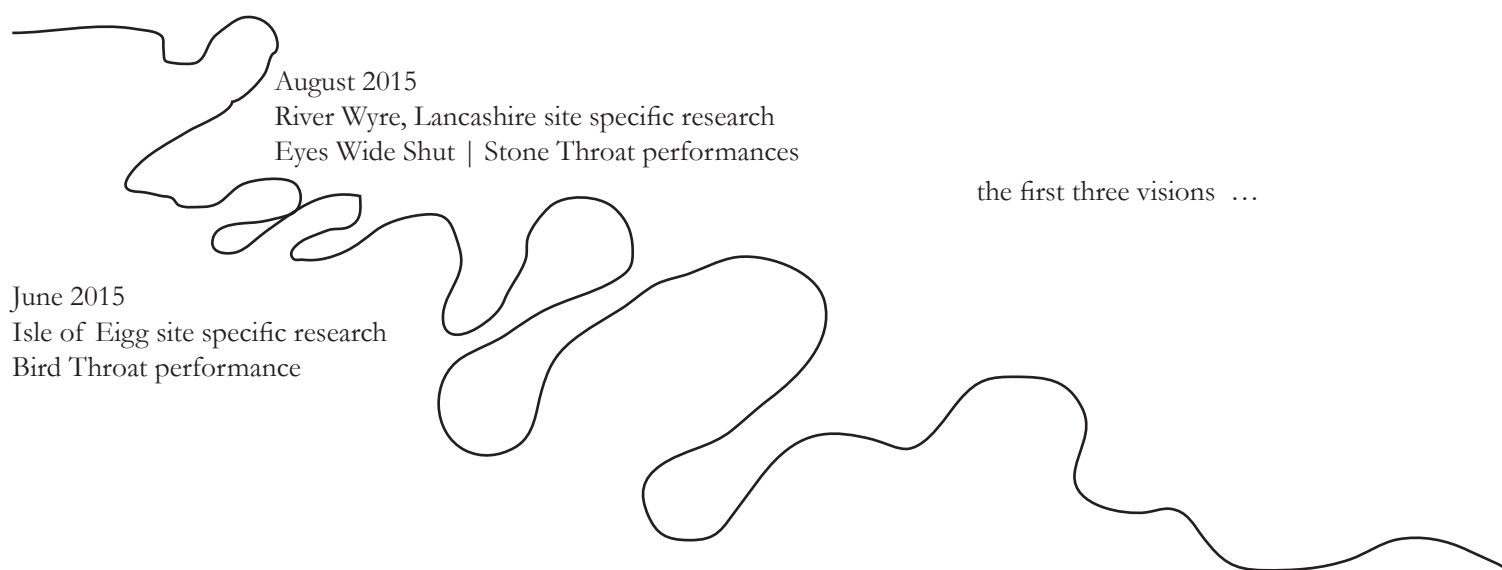
The question of witnessing first arises in the experience of the visions. Here witnessing is understood as an encounter between body and land; stone-womxns' appearance speaks to a witnessing as much as my body may in turn witness the visions. Hence already this figure is not singular, but a human-nonhuman blurry, shared space. The witness is thus not an eye-witness directly to the past, but bears witness through the body, to the visions themselves and the memory co-produced between body and land. This witness is *by no means* a stand-in for the "missing witness as the object of past colonial or apartheid violence - the figure who has been stripped, precisely, of their status as subject or person, dehumanised and disappeared", neither the witness who survives the events.²⁸⁷ The witness is rather a collective agency involving stone-womxn, Pendle witches, personal ancestors, the body of the *hereish* land and my own body. This blurry, porous space of figuring, acts as a dynamic field within which other figures - human nonhuman, spirit, immaterial, invisible - might be perceived to appear.

²⁸⁶ This practice of witnessing is included on the basis that, as individuals tied to a primary system (family), we often unconsciously are wedded to the beliefs of that primary system, whether we seem to practice them or not; often then, 'transgressing' these beliefs can be excruciating, and feel impossible. When one transgresses this belief (often a very productive and necessary thing to do) receiving the gaze and eye contact with present witnesses is encouraged, to forge new neural pathways in the brain in order to have a felt experiential imprint that this 'transgression' has in fact not been fatal to them. This speaks to the necessity of integrative body-mind processes and the impact of somatic processes of neurological plasticity, in this case in bringing to light received, conditioned, "compulsory" ways of living, which may be detrimental to oneself and relations - human and nonhuman.

²⁸⁷ Sheikh, "The Future of the Witness" p.147.

METHODS AND METHODOLOGIES

Timeline of Practice



August 2015

River Wyre, Lancashire site specific research

Eyes Wide Shut | Stone Throat performances

the first three visions ...

June 2015

Isle of Eigg site specific research

Bird Throat performance

September 2015

An Goarradh; site specific research in alluvial waterway and marshland of East Cork; and performance with Siobhán Ní Dhiunnín at Firkin Crane Dance Cork.

September 2015

Site-specific research walk

Kendall, Lancashire - Alwoodley, Leeds



February – April 2016
Wishbone site-specific research

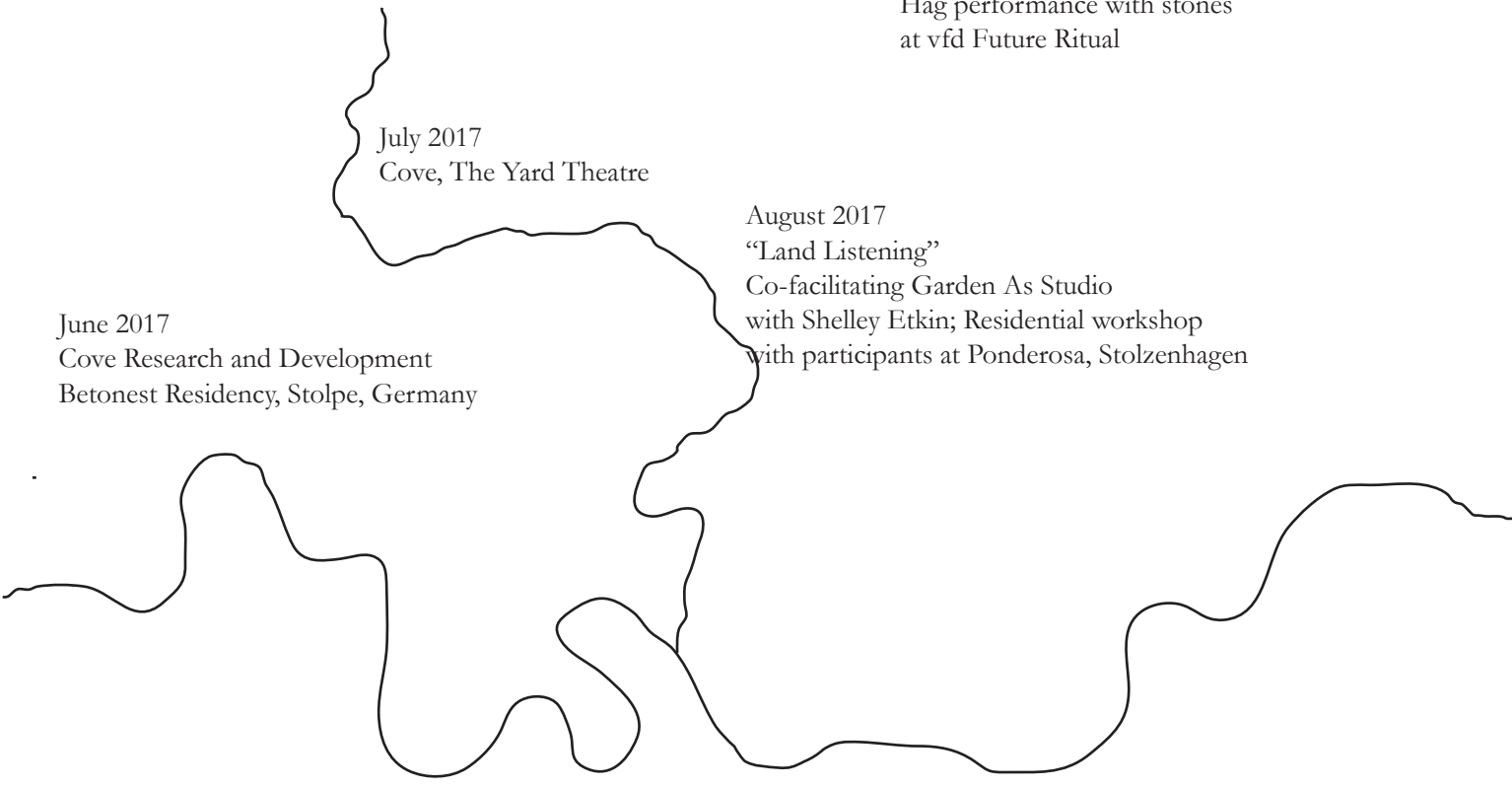
Wishbone, The Yard Theatre

September 2016
Almanac site specific research
River Wyre, Lancashire

Queer Feminisms Residency
Ponderosa, Stolzenhage
Almanac Stone Readings,
participatory performance series

October 2016
Almanac
SPILL Festival of Performance

January 2017
Site specific research residency
developing constellations
Cove Park Artist Residency



February 2018
Hag performance with stones
at vfd Future Ritual

July 2017
Cove, The Yard Theatre

August 2017
“Land Listening”
Co-facilitating Garden As Studio
with Shelley Etkin; Residential workshop
with participants at Ponderosa, Stolzenhagen

June 2017
Cove Research and Development
Betonest Residency, Stolpe, Germany



May 2018

Installation at Goldsmiths University; expanding the Alamanc series
upgrade performance and exhibition

April 2018

Residency and performnce of Δ
Fxtrouble, Berlin

July 2018

Sounding Workshops at Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin
curated by Isabel Lewis and Tino Seghal

September 2018

River research, Lancashire; finding the soruce of the river



February 2019
Circlusion; Sounding workshop for OpenLab, Chisenhale
Dance Space

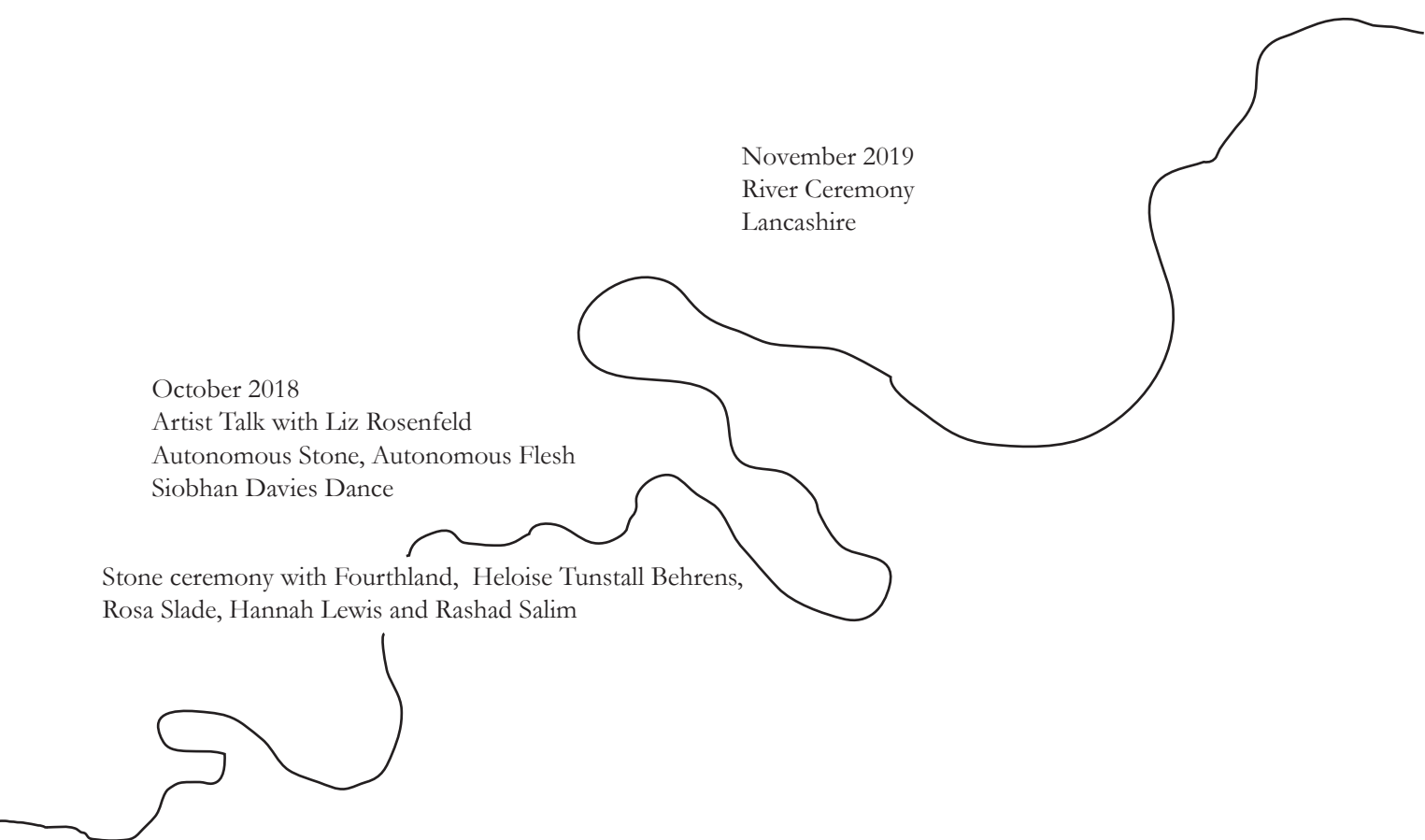
December 2018
Sounding the stones workshop at Chalton Gallery
for Barb Gamper exhibition

October 2018 - March 2019
The Unearthing series
with witness-collaborators Shelley Etkin
and Katy Coe

June 2019
River research with Shelley Etkin, Siobhán Ní Dhiunnín
Trituration practice

August 2019
Solo river research, stone-womxn constellation

September 2019
River Walk with Rosa Slade



November 2019
River Ceremony
Lancashire

October 2018
Artist Talk with Liz Rosenfeld
Autonomous Stone, Autonomous Flesh
Siobhan Davies Dance

Stone ceremony with Fourthland, Heloise Tunstall Behrens,
Rosa Slade, Hannah Lewis and Rashad Salim

This project has evolved across various strands of practice. Since 2015, there have been ongoing encounters with the Lancashire River Wyre, site-specific research in Yorkshire, East Germany and ongoing performances with the river stones in London, Northern France and Ipswich. This section provides an overview of the trajectory through the public performances, leaving part 2 of the thesis to focus on unpacking phenomena that arose in site-specific research, thus emerging a transferrable pedagogy of witnessing. Whilst transferrable methods have evolved across different sites, the river repeatedly drags me back to the Lancashire site, and unfolds the final summer's reciprocal land practice in direct contact with the river itself.

During the first encounter with the Lancashire river, I made two site-specific performances for an audience of artists.²⁸⁸ Improvised performance is a primary mode of research in this project. Attuning to the stones develops from these first performances to fellow artists at the river, through the *Almanac* series and the later *unearthings*. This five year collaboration with the river stones forms a main proponent of the practice. In *Stone Throat* I stayed in the river with a river stone under my tongue from the dark of early morning until dawn, taking it and audience members to a nearby hill to greet the sunrise and what I did not then realise, was the source of the river. Enacting this, a huge swell of energy arose, moving something through my body from the land (see also p.152). During the second performance, I greeted participants at the river, asked them a question and proceeded to see which stones “appeared” and what information appeared with them. The triangulation of body, stone and river, and the intentional dynamic of verbal address and response with both human and river, created a dynamic space in which these appearances were acutely perceived. I felt out the appearance of the stones through vocal sounding. This began the ongoing collaboration with the river stones, as a performance method of listening, and participation with a field of witnessing.

²⁸⁸ This work was supported by Live Art Development Agency and artists Zierle and Carter. See ‘Stone Throat’ in Timeline of Practice.



Stone Throat, durational performance, Wyre valley, Lancashire, 2015. Photo credit: Justyna Scheuring.



Untitled, participative performance, River Wyre, Lancashire, 2015. Photo credit: Christina Georgiou.

In the process of making *Wishbone* I asked how a contemporary performance space can house the resonances of encounters with land, when humans are considered the extensions of the imagination, desire and agency of the land?²⁸⁹ What is the role of vocal sound in communication with the nonhuman? How do these practices open up possibilities of tracking or divining when working with the land? What kinds of memories of the personal, mythic and material does this choreography unearth? What might this unearthing of memory beyond the singular, or even beyond the human do? What might it perform, make possible, close off or problematise? This phase of research was concerned with how different bodily states co-produce (in porous encounter with the nonhuman), different information and knowledges.

During this phase I was particularly working with exhaustion, repetition and the fluid system, to induce trance-like states that changed my perceptual qualities and worked to tip the body into a less comfortable and therefore less predictable state. I was interested in augmenting and expanding the instance in which something appears, before it is registered in the cognitive mind as a type, or particular kind of appearance.²⁹⁰ In other words, how to keep this state of not-knowing for long enough to practice encounter? What kinds of relational modes of encounter set up the conditions for these glimmers of something other, to emerge? These states were induced through sounding/continuous improvised speech, and repetitive modes of exhaustive movement in the land, counteracting what is often seen or portrayed as somatic and site-specific performance. Instead the texture of frenzy, incessant speech, spilling over and in excess of the body often emerged alongside moments of stillness. Coming together to work collaboratively, a mode of witnessing began in which one person would witness another

²⁸⁹ *Wishbone* involved the coming together of four predominantly solo-based performers and makers, to share in my ongoing practice, and devise a new performance for theatre: Simone Kenyon, Jo Blake, Jo Hellier and myself. We situated our site-specific research in a place of our own choosing and the research was thus shared remotely but carried out individually, before coming together to devise the stage work. My research was carried out in Airton, Yorkshire, following a pilgrimage I had performed in late 2015, walking with a stone from Lancashire to my recently deceased Grandmother's house in Leeds. Airton was the mid-point of this journey. The other performers worked in north Yorkshire, Northampton and Preston.

²⁹⁰ I expand on this in chapter 3 *Stone | Wish | Bone*, in light of Povinelli's account of differentiating between manifestations and appearances, the former as those appearances which show up some kind of difference in relation to types ('a whatthing...without a something...'). Not being attuned to these differences, I was trying to find ways of attuning to them, and working with de-familiarising perception was one strategy of delaying the moment of recognition, to see whether more subtle information would appear. This can likewise be thought of in terms of the forthcoming 'periperformative' strategy as introduced via Eve Sedgwick.

performer travel through the psychic material/memory from their site-specific research; it became apparent that this “moving in mind” continued a kind of communication with the presences that had emerged in the different sites.²⁹¹ This process would evolve to shape the ongoing research around witnessing, as it evolved throughout the forthcoming projects.

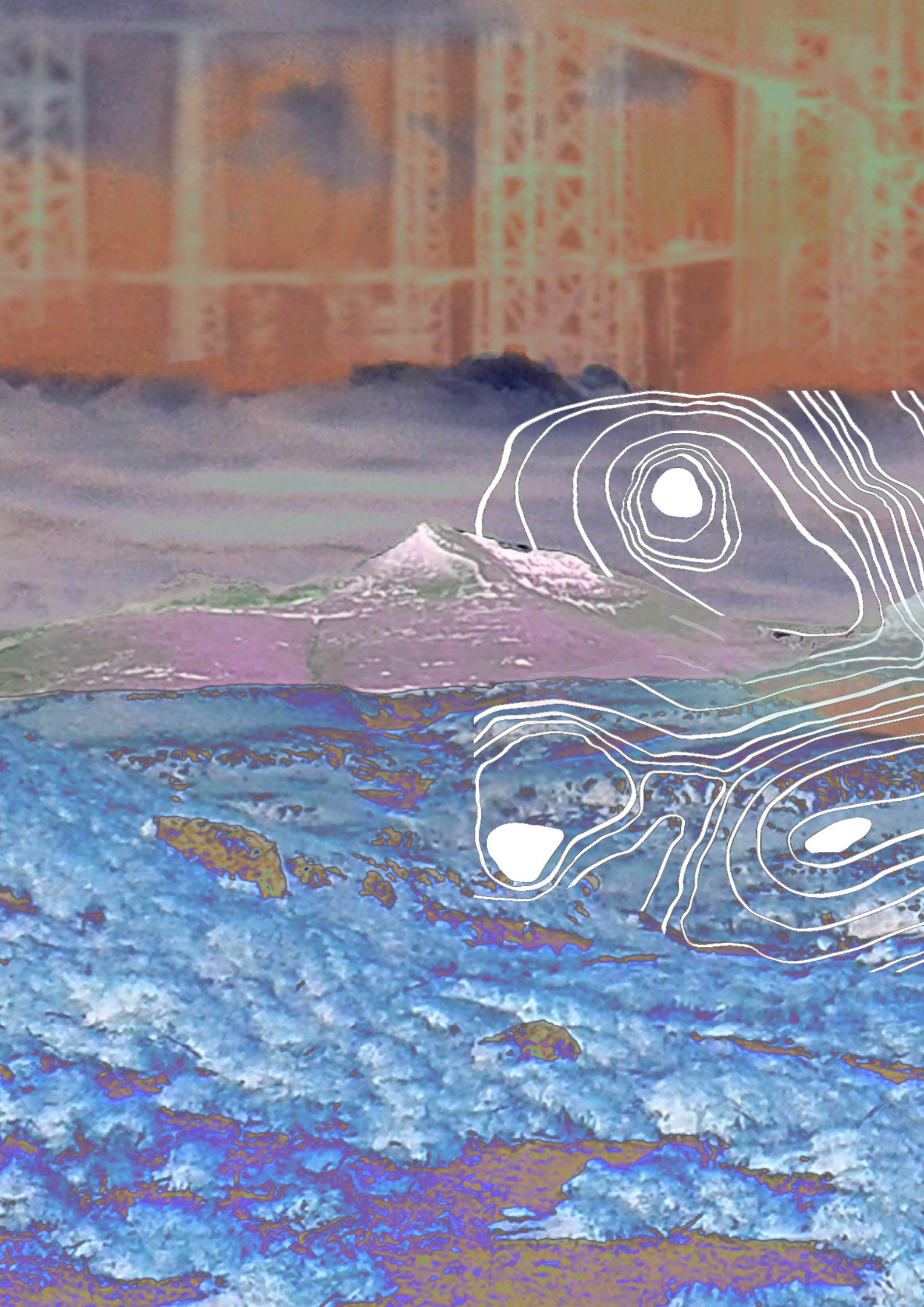
Emergent from *Wishbone* was the potential of re-orienting to land as primary collaborator in site-specific research, sound as a primary tool of mediation between body and nonhuman, the role of the witness in human collaborations, trance-states as de-stabilising the authenticity or singularity of experience and unsettling the ‘self-possessed’ body, and a deep resistance to exposure. The latter occurred amongst all of the performers in our different sites, and was experienced as a fear out of proportion with our contemporary reality - that the body held some memory of being framed as a “possessed” body in relation to the land, and being found doing so, would be dangerous in some way. It revealed the ongoing gendered surveillance of bodies in relation to land, the normativity of certain prescribed actions and movements in the landscape itself, and the potential for the body to be a site of un-lived memory.²⁹² In this sense we felt and worked with resonances of the figure of the witch that had emerged in the Lancashire visions. However, we didn’t want to perform a subversion or defence, or even stage our bodies in any way in relation to the dominant patriarchal restrictions we had felt inscribed and mechanised through the land. Rather, we developed choreographies to unearth a vibrational “otherwise”, another kind of knowing, that we felt cultivating on the “inside” between our bodies and the body of the land, and use this to cause friction and energy to move against the ongoingness of these ruptures and violences. Choreographies emerged through a process of unearthing ancestral memories of our matrilineal lines, and the performance was woven with fragments of these stories that were either known or imagined or somewhere between.

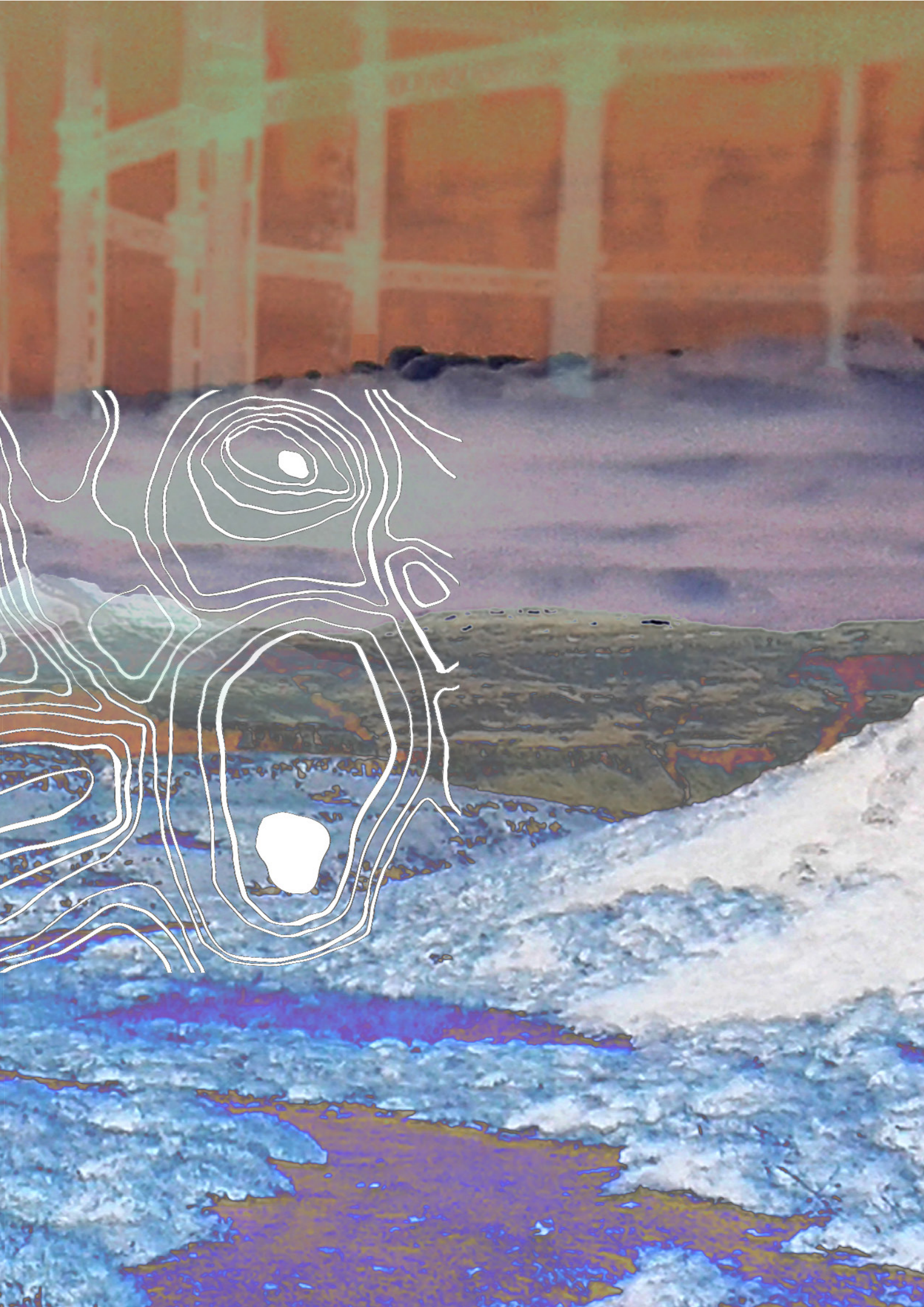
This fear of exposure leaked into the performance itself, and much time was spent

²⁹¹ I will consider this further in chapter 4 *River | Fluids | Tongue* through Povinelli’s account of her Karrabing friends travelling country ‘in mind’, through acts of ‘mental mapping’.

²⁹² By “un-lived memory” I mean the capacity to somatically attune to a memory beyond one’s singular life; for example the ancestral memory held in one’s physiology which is usually in excess of what the conscious mind can remember or indeed what the singular body has lived through.

working out how to choreograph protection from the gaze of the audience in order to be able to communicate with the nonhuman (spirits, ancestors, material place) somehow through the confines of the theatre space itself. The resonance of what I come to call the judge-witness of the vision myth, seemed to show up in the figure of the contemporary ‘skeptical witness’ in relation to practices or knowledges our bodily systems had some fear of enacting again; hence we began asking how we were participating with the stone-womxn vision, with and through each of our individual engagements with the materiality, semiotic plurality and ‘call’ of each site. How could we use the performance space as a way to perform a particular kind of travel – to and away from the stone-womxn, to digest and in this way ‘read’ the story, hence practice another mode of understanding, potentially moving the story on? The image on p.122-3 is a digital collage made for the Wishbone flyer. The four following images are from the stage performance with Simone Kenyon, Jo Blake, and Jo Hellier.







Wishbone, The Yard Theatre, 'unearthing lines'. Photo credit: Kimberly Arms.



Wishbone, The Yard Theatre, 'lifting the stones'. Photo credit: Kimberly Arms.



Wishbone, The Yard Theatre, 'moving through granite'. Photo credit: Kimberly Arms.



Wishbone, The Yard Theatre, 'formation'. Photo credit: Kimberly Arms.

WISHBONE

notes from a performance
Laura Burns, Jo Hellier, Simone Kenyon, Jo Blake Cave

concrete

foundations of steel

topsoil

a woman eating boiled egg at bay window

insects earthworms

journey to kenya

human rubbish

plastic

an-almost mother in a blow-up pool, (front room)

(clay pipes

bones

the way plants forget in order to grow

London clay

animal bones

[forest trees clicking]

a song her grandmother sang

arrow heads

white chalk beds

fossils shells flints

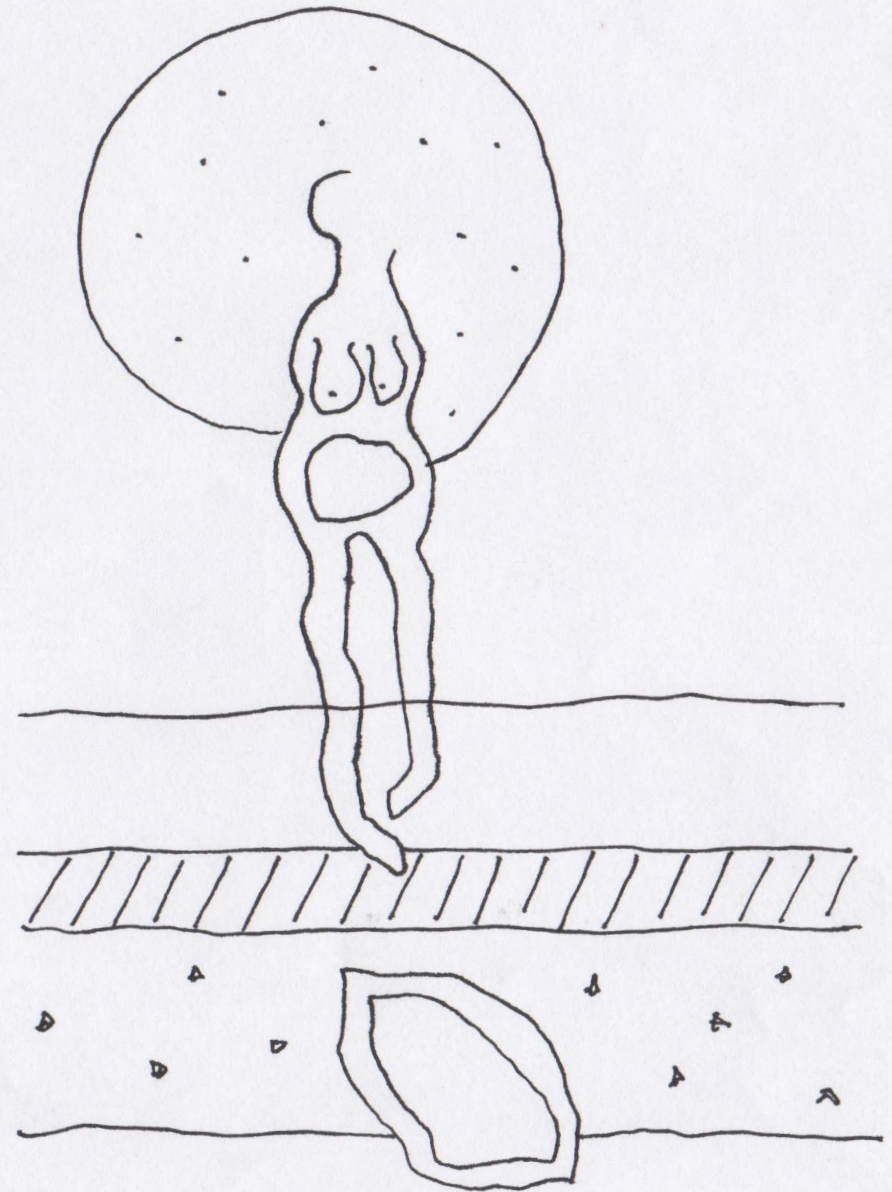
women in a circle holding river stones to their bellies

upper greensand

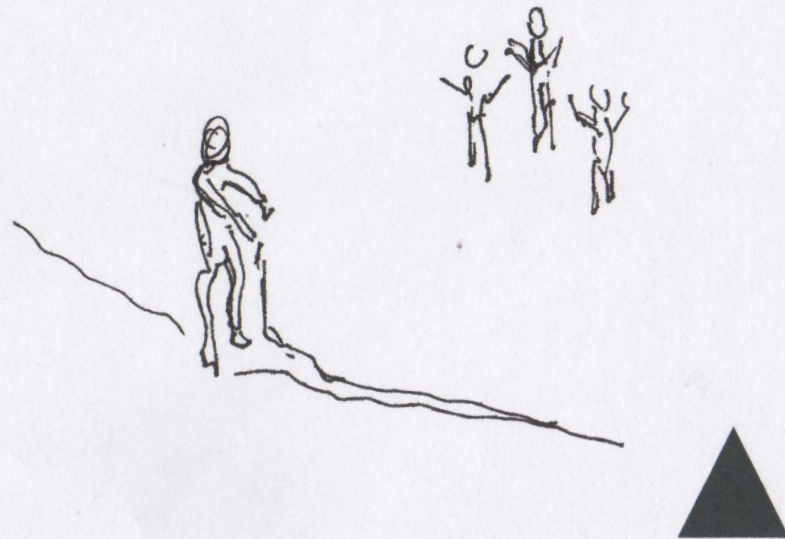
impermeable Gault clays

silurian mudstone

sandstone



finding divining searching for an underneath to the
horizon line her eyes on the plumb-line down
through topsoil and a layered sing; a sureness
ripples out a lurching shore - less sight than sound
sending itself into the round invisible listening of
skin a kind of gut-song for following a divine thing



- dog fur, rabbit teeth all over
yellow bits of grey
- birds, dogs, motorway, flies, cats (windows opening
and closing)

double-headed woman crazy cat five men in frog
suits

(joke huts, like an example of a time, but tongue in
cheek)

folk step step step;
male frogs are there, standing as an example of frog

intuition and the image of intuition;

fur, straw, slime, rock, metal canon...
rabbit

before we were by the sea...which was just next to
this place...we crawled out as if the first water to
land animal, fishy head masks, crawling and took
mask off and began something else...

authentic - love, dick, dark, can, people
fake (grimace) - cat, smile, friend, shell, slap


tree sound

[roots of trees are in the sea bed]

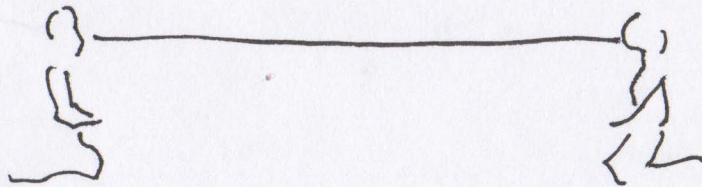
8,000 crabs

stolen this house, doesn't really belong to itself

(playing with face) giving up
responsibility of flesh


under velvet sand bags compressed (soft) into
mineral

goat knuckles



[moon voice]



movement of water very far under ground;

no one there but the metal ball bearings continue
rolling and sounding through the night [the whole
week]

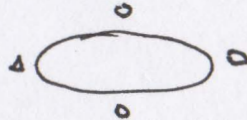
2 emergent amphibious // under table cloth

low drone (unnoticeable until silence)

dramatic plate smashing but they are plastic and it
doesn't work (we've done it loads of times it's not
authentic)

l6o roll clothes ourselves (necklace) paper flower
crepe paper

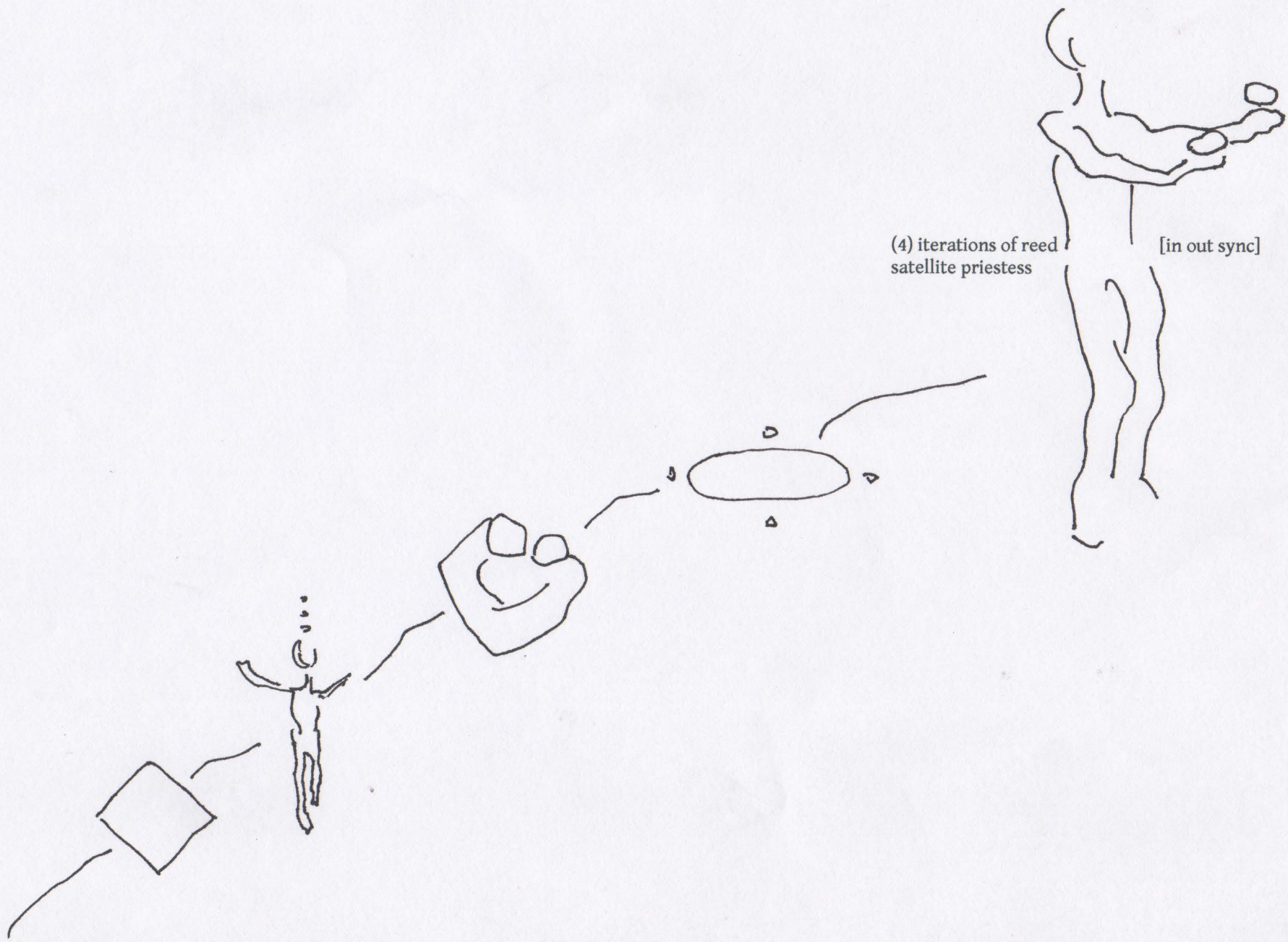
rushed and proud



white stone knocking

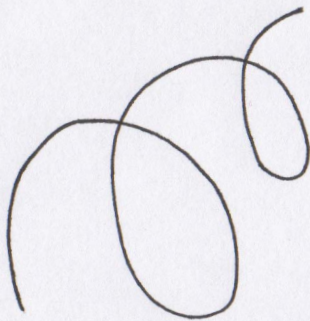


(very) careful not to be seen



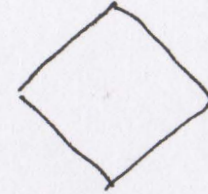
(4) iterations of reed
satellite priestess

[in out sync]

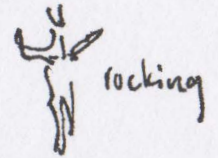


rumble

diamond totem formation



something making us tall from underneath or above
- we're taller than our human heights added bone in
order to be tall, quite hard - wood?



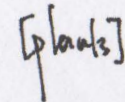
different tongue speak [we understand]

watching them, can see them a little bit, sense of
wariness towards them, bit suspicious (?) charge
space so it is ok that they witness



only three sides to it and one side just endless
horizon

forgotten, oblivious that we've done it



we were us, but not the same us so we did and we
also didn't instigate [something beyond
// through us]

- [bird beak]
- tide bones
- death at the roots of yew tree

imploding apple
(specific hands)

she was really really old



inside something
crack fissure sound reaches



running beforehand (three chorus egging on)

two different worlds existing, sometimes they meet;
feel ok about being / allowing them to watch, there's
still a space between watched

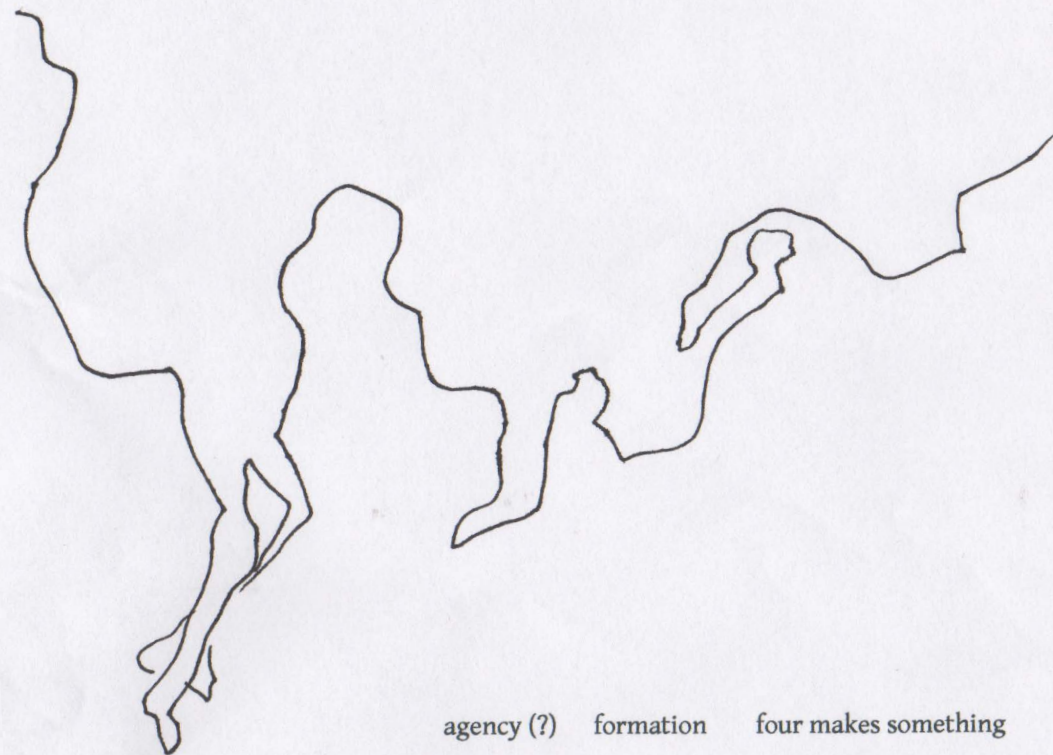
velvet moss damp thick flesh hair pulse contract
vibrate

(no words arriving)
bog, spongey peat bog moss wall

Gwen Moffet in the audience (barefoot) *invitation*

she makes the room more known or present - casting
something

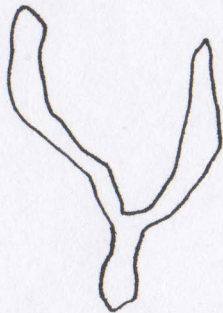
cycle of compression [dance for florence]



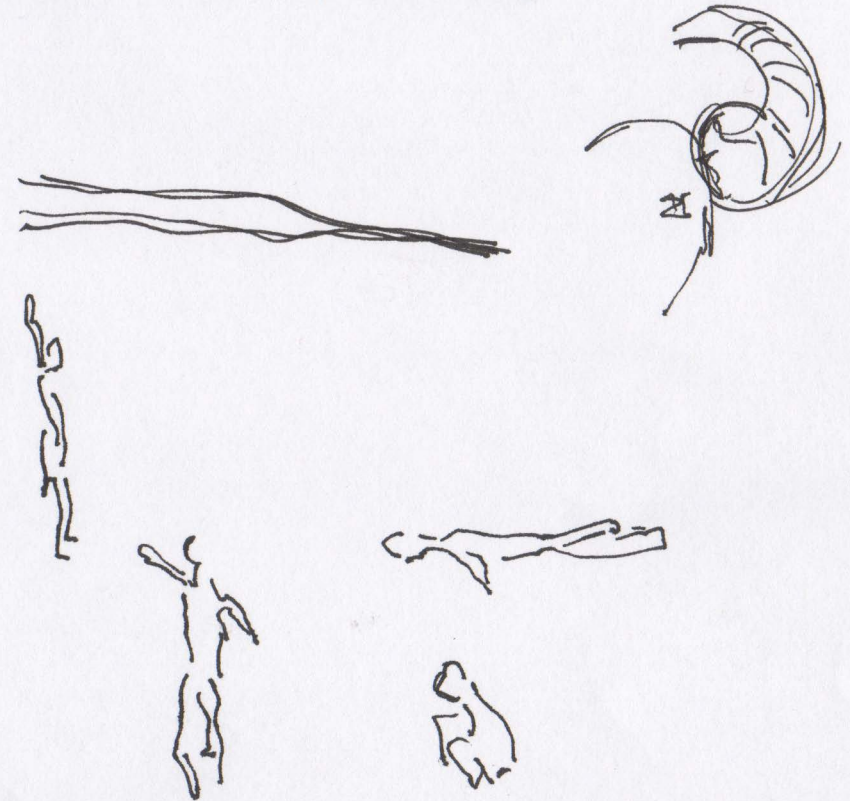
agency (?) formation four makes something

put something in it to replace the thing taken
 → finding the easiest route, ~~the~~
 the ability to change again, wanting to say stop
 doing that, ~~and~~ change the mood of the time
 there has to (be room for) the cells
 of everything else) stuff blocked out and things
 just forgotten. it's there; now it's a dredging up of
 the myth of it, forming and shaping and curating a
 previous experience of it, giving it legs

can't manage to get too sincere because think
 (will die about it)



it happens when the wind or water or feet cover it in some way,
 a wearing down, everything eventually sinking into the ground
 and then the whole shape of it changes.

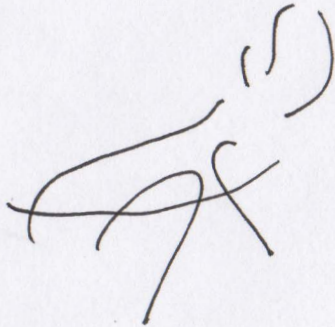


1 entering after 3 [blasts away surface]

[big tits kaftan] /// meat and tea

— density with the sound
what gets repeated, huge chunks missing some
caused by one reason ??

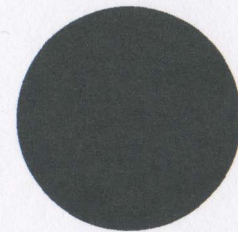
plastic wrapped around wood (prod prod)
relentless



material

sound makes

a spell



After another phase of research with the River Wyre, I began developing *Almanac*, a one-on-one performance investigating the shared, affective and porous space between human bodies, nonhuman and immaterial bodies, potentially fleshing out another sense of the shared field of witnessing. I was working one afternoon by the river when I began intuitively moving river stones around. Using sound to attune and resonate with the stones, being drawn to specific ones, I would give voice to information that emerged when moving them. This phenomena of existents entering a 'field' and making themselves known through various objects within that field, revealed to me that there was a dynamic at play which was more about a shared space within which I could participate, rather than a fixed subject who witnesses or is witnessed.

The *Almanac* performances were improvised sessions involving one participant and the river stones. I guided a visualisation and encounter with the stones, to attune to the human participant both somatically and verbally, before working to move the stones into a particular formation, using sound, movement, gesture and speech. The look or texture of one particular stone would make itself apparent; when I voiced this information to the participant, it would often resonate with something personal to them. The stones seemed to choreograph and spatialise certain elements of the participants' imagination. It became evident that a space was being demarcated physically and psychically, in which various existents could be sensed and voiced; these existents appeared through the material and psychic qualities of my own gestures and of specific stones, whilst not 'belonging' to any one singular body within the assemblage. Voice and movement would be used to 'test out' the stones, and certain ones resonated or seemed to draw the sound towards them in particular ways. I began to understand this as an embodied form of reading or divination, through which the *hereish* site of the river - the memory of water seeped into the river stones - was present. As I experienced when working with land in general, the stones were perfectly capable of expressing consent; I would feel sometimes they had 'turned away' in a way that made it apparent I had to attend to a between-space of us, question my modes of interpretation, actions and understanding. I understand this mode of consent to be similarly a kind of shared field, hence for that consent to show up

across bodies - including my own. It involves a constant questioning of my own position, of whether I am performing a kind of ownership, how I am mediating encounters between them and others, and this is ongoing, ever changing, and requires consistent attending to.



Almanac, SPILL Festival of Performance, Ipswich. Photo credit: Guido Mencari

Through this research it became clear that I was working with the “knowing field” as I will go on to explore through a systemic lens. I was interested in working with this more and exploring how performance could be a space in which an audience was invited to similarly witness and participate in said “knowing field”. I began working on another stage piece *Cove*, with collaborator Shelley Etkin. Our research took place in rural East Germany, in an old cement factory. We began working with movement practice and our own form of improvised constellations. Existents began to appear that felt very specific to the place, and which revealed an integral link between the knowing field and land itself: land was materially manifesting information within the knowing field, and this was a space in which one could participate and attend. It was here that the field of witnessing became clear as a process that both involved attending to hauntings/trauma in some way, as well as forging kinships and participating with them through embodied acts. It was possible to see the ways in which current dynamics and politics of the places/sites where we were working, would appear through the work. It gave the same sensation as the visions, that moments were layered on top of one another, and suggestive of a ground-up constellation of relations, with which present moments could either repeat or re-circulate in different ways. There was a vast discrepancy between the mode of working during research, and the capacity for the same dynamics to be curated in a traditional, stage context. This moment of the project thus marks a considerable shift towards the primary concern of finding forms of communicating with the nonhuman to indicate that we were responding to its emergent phenomena. The labour of direct address and attendance to land in order to perceive immaterial presences became the most urgent concern and subsequently guided the practice. For this reason I include the map of the land-based ceremony performed during the research for *Cove* (p.212), rather than documentation of the final hour-long stage piece.

This shift and the interruption of two phases of depression (2017-2019) propelled the research in a particular direction, bringing me back to the river as a site of performance for and with the nonhuman, and evolving into the ongoing *unearthings* practice. The work at the river during summer 2019 was a re-orientation to land’s system of relations, prompted by responding

to depression as another phenomena within this system to be read as connected to ongoing manifestations, and how they appeared across threshold of site and body. Human collaborators were involved in this final research phase. The work spanned four river trips in total (June - November), and included the trituration, river walk, stone-womxn ceremony, and hag tree ceremony.

The unearthings evolved alongside this work. I stopped working with a particular participant, and instead called in certain witness-collaborators to the practice. *The unearthings* would often take between 1.5hrs and 2hrs, whilst the process of collaborative deciphering would often spill out beyond this time frame, as an important part of the process. We came to see how phenomena would show up outside the demarcation of the practice itself, in and across bodies both human and nonhuman in the vicinity. Within this field of the practice itself, resonances in the site-specific place would become felt and known, making it possible to attend to the dynamics of more-than-human collectivities that spanned durational time periods all coalescing in the present. Current knots of power within present social collectivities, could be seen from this deeper, underground perspective. Co-poesis then becomes an aesthetic act of following what ‘appears’ in this practice, attending to said resonances in ‘acts’ - artistic, ceremonial, performative, linguistic - that acknowledge said appearances.

The ground-up, emergent knowledge that shows itself in *the unearthings*, is an artistic practice that reconsiders the ‘public’ sphere of ‘acts’, involving and including nonhuman, spirit, durational and invisible presences. Including the invisible is considered a political, artistic and aesthetic response to question who and what makes up the social, or public. I had not studied the formal practice of Systemic Constellations at this point, as I was somewhat resistant to learning any ‘formula’ when it seemed the stones and the land were already guiding a pedagogy and a process. When I did come to study the theoretical underpinnings of the formal practice (training as a facilitator in 2019) I realised I had been practicing these principles throughout multiple aspects of this research all along; it is thus that I introduce certain key principles with which my practice is in dialogue.

Family or Systemic Constellations is a group process developed by Bert Hellinger in the 1990s in Germany. Its philosophic stances derive from an integration of existential phenomenology, family systems theory, and elements of shamanic and Indigenous, ritual-based practices.²⁹³ I introduce two main principles of the work here as principles that I had been practicing before studying Constellations. This thesis is not a contribution to an ongoing field of Systemic Constellations, nor does it constitute my main practice. My own process evolved in collaboration with the land and the river stones, and revealed to me the “knowing field” at play within land as a system of relations, and the principle of “radical inclusion”, which are core to my artistic practice and a developing material poet(h)ics of witnessing.

In Systemic Constellations, the “knowing field” refers to an immaterial space within which a constellation will take place, that is regarded as “actual, intelligent, and benign”.²⁹⁴ In addition to this “knowing field” in the work itself, is the wider, “universal field of energy and information; the field that is timeless, flowing and constantly transforming itself: the quantum field, of which we are a part”.²⁹⁵ The field thus carries both history and potential; it contains

²⁹³ See Dan Booth Cohen, “Family Constellations”: An innovative systemic phenomenological group process from Germany” *The Family Journal*, Vol. 14(3), (2006) p.226–233. Bert Hellinger and Gabrielle Ten Hövel, *Acknowledging What Is*. (Phoenix, AZ: Zeig, Tucker, 1999). Specifically relevant literature to this thesis is the following compilation of essays from practitioners working with more-than-human and nature constellations: See Francesca Boring, et al., eds. *Returning To Membership In Earth Community*. (Pagosa Springs: Stream of Experience Productions, 2013); Francesca Mason Boring’s contextualising of constellations within ongoing Indigenous practices from her Shoshone viewpoint: *Connecting to Our Ancestral Past; Healing through Family Constellations, Ceremony and Ritual, A Native American Perspective*. (Berkley: North Atlantic Books, 2012) and Dan van Kampenhout’s working from a queer perspective at the edge of constellations and shamanic practice, in particular his 2001 publication which gives a thorough comparative model of shamanic and psychotherapeutic models, of which constellations is a mixture: *Images of the Soul: The Workings of the Soul in Shamanic Rituals and Family Constellations: The Workings in Shamanic Rituals and Family Constellations*, (Heidelberg: Carl-Auer-Systeme Verlag 2001). Similarly of note is Patrice Malidoma Somé’s account of colonialism in Burkino Faso, where he was abducted by missionaries at the age of 4 and educated in a boy’s missionary school until aged 18. His return to tribal life entailed a re-orientation to a systemic worldview, specifically the ancestors. His ‘white man’s’ education was considered almost fatally detrimental to the psychic-physical ways of knowing he would need in order to pass through tribal initiation. See Patrice M Somé, *Of Water And The Spirit*. (New York: Penguin Arkana, 2015) and his ongoing political-activist-therapeutic work.

²⁹⁴ *Centre for Systemic Constellations; A handbook*, p16. These theoretical concepts have emerged through 30 years or more of practitioners working with and through their experience of Constellations and observing the phenomena that emerges. It is underpinned by phenomenological and constructivist theoretical approaches, but the descriptions given here are articulated through ongoing experiential encounter and work within the field.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

“morphic, or pattern-related resonance” transcending time and space. Thus form is contained within the field; “individual energy patterns of morphogenetic fields surround and shape all natural, living systems, and individuals can access the thought or behaviour patterns of previous system members”.²⁹⁶ In a formal constellation process, an individual may choose to work with their family system; through entering this “knowing field”, other participants can report phenomena, sensations, information from the field, gradually working towards attending to absences or exclusions from the field. Any system can be worked with, and ecological systems as well as political or organisational systems can be easily constellated. A representative expresses both an individual consciousness and are connected via morphic resonance to the collective consciousness of the field. Thus, at a meta level, working with the field reveals the shared consciousness beyond the individual mind.²⁹⁷

The “field” dramatically registers exclusion. Where there is a trauma or absence or exclusion in any system - familial, ecological, governmental, political - it creates a vortex like energy, which will dramatically shift the ongoing system and draw all attention, usually unconsciously towards it. This is a hugely important principle to this project, and to my position with regards to considering ecologies within a rising context of political fascism. In the face of extreme, large scale exclusions and divisions along the lines of nationality, race, gender, class, I consider this systemic lens as offering a fundamentally different approach to such growing polarities. It means that everything and everyone has a place. This is not a moral statement, it is energetic. If things are unnamed, or excluded from a system, the whole porous, influx system itself will have to ‘make up’ for this exclusion in some, usually extremely detrimental, way. This is not in any way equivalent to neoliberal politics of recognition or cosmopolitan illusions of hospitality or inclusion. It is rather that in attending to this *wholly other energetic* field, our concept of the political and how *acts* within this as a political space are

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

effective or not, gets re-oriented.²⁹⁸

This brings me to a fundamental aspect of “radical inclusion”: inclusion in the system does not have to equal forgiveness. As such, human morality does not get enacted in the same way through the field because the field is a systemic consciousness beyond the human. When perpetrators and victims are included it is acknowledged through the material and dynamic energetic forces of the field, which are dramatically at odds when something is unnamed or not given a place. Hence a constellations approach intersects profoundly with abolitionist and transformational justice projects. Just as every thing has a place, so every phenomena has to be included. When working outside in the “knowing field”, this means everything has to be attended to and included as *potentially* significant: change in weather, birds flying overhead, sounds etc. When one begins to practice this radical inclusion in different contexts, for example the work place, or teaching contexts, a plurality of often very relevant information of great intelligence to the system becomes apparent.²⁹⁹ It is within this field that the nonhuman, inorganic, organic, etc. reveals its agentic and entangled qualities. It is through this lens that I likewise propose to shift away from a notion of individual witnessing, and rather a field and shared “mind” of witnessing. I chose to work with the “knowing field” rather than frame these as assemblages, rhizomes, or vitalist approaches; this is because absences, traumas and the unspoken come to light through the field, thus we can also be accountable for the layer of human injustices that radically impact the field of material relations and system as a whole.

²⁹⁸ It is my proposal that invisible presences - spirit, ancestor, and nonhuman otherwise - are often emergent as expressions of that which has been excluded, attempting to include itself in some way; this is how I understand the emergence of the visions, amongst other things. It is a perspective through which phenomena such as Covid-19 might be worked with also; a number of practitioners have constellated the virus, and found it expressive of multiple levels of exclusions on a mass scale. I suggest such phenomena requires participating with from a wider perspective of more-than-human ‘mind’ and a practice of radical inclusion in order to shift humancentric ways of knowing and living.

²⁹⁹ A small example - in a recent talk about the river work, a member of the audience came up to me afterwards to inform me of how many people had accidentally spilt or knocked over their water glasses whilst I spoke about the river; this to me indicated this audience member to be attending to materiality through a practice of ‘radical inclusion’. What gets deciphered through this lens is up for question, and it could be read in a plurality of ways; in the context of this thesis, I would map such an inclusion within an understanding of the *hereish* site of the river, and sit with this noticed phenomena as being important, as such leaving space for the continued noticing of phenomena to draw new forms of semiosis that might lead and extend in different ways across places and times. Whilst this is not the aim of this project, if someone were to read the kind of political ecology as proposed by Jane Bennett, through this lens, it would be possible to see how assemblages are in fact active within the “knowing field”, and therefore possibly update her proposal to more politically accountable ends.

Constellations facilitator Francesca Mason Boring has, with permission from her colleague, Jenny Ray, Ska Mato Pejuta Winan (White Bear Medicine Woman), recorded the telling of an ancient stone ceremony from the Santee Dakota Sioux Nation.³⁰⁰ Jenny recounts to Boring, how Elders of the Dakota Sioux would take a person out for a walk, eventually finding a place to work: “The Elder would then look at the landscape and identify specific rocks that he or she felt could provide important information about the dynamic that was impacting the client’s well-being”.³⁰¹ The “indigenous knowing field, in the form of the natural environment, would supply all that was needed”, and it is this “knowing field, which has wanted to contribute to the well-being of humans for thousands of years”.³⁰² I came across these accounts of ancient stone constellations in 2017, two years after my first experience of a spontaneous stone constellation at the river. On reading this I felt a huge relief. It provided a framework to take seriously my experience with the stones, and a systemic lens within which they could be felt and communicated with. I include this account to cite Indigenous processes to which contemporary Systemic Constellations is indebted.

The covert denial in much ecological discourse of the possibility that nonhumans or land itself can ‘speak’ or be responsive in direct speech address, has induced large periods of trying to ignore what was otherwise perceived in site-specific research.³⁰³ Whilst there is a problematic framing of the ‘authenticity’ of the sensing body in somatic practices, especially engaging the land, the lack of conversation between ecological discourse and these more internal practices, presents another problematic impasse. This thesis positions the body as a site of multiple bio-social-ancestral entanglements, a porous, shifting entity, whose voice is made up

³⁰⁰ Francesca M. Boring, *Connecting to Our Ancestral Past: Healing through Family Constellations, Ceremony and Ritual, A Native American Perspective*. (Berkley: North Atlantic Books, 2012).

³⁰¹ Ibid. p.81.

³⁰² Ibid p.82.

³⁰³ Take for example the way this statement very subtly shows up even in progressive ecological practices: Anna Tsing’s questions “since we can’t talk directly to them, how can we know anything about these social lives of plants and fungi?” (“More-than-Human Sociality”, p.31) Whilst the question is a rhetorical divide leading her to more expansive answers, it still performs its claim. Who is this “we”? And what substantiates this claim and the perspective of “communication” that it invokes? Tsing’s critical description of more-than-human sociality is one approach, but in addition I propose that speculative and performance practices exploring altered states of perception can trouble still closely held assumptions as to the possibilities of communication across lifeforms.

of a multitude of voices including the nonhuman. It also takes a stand for experiential, embodied phenomena and its knowledges. Such phenomena as has historically been psychologised and framed as “irrational”, by “fragmented” bodies that need to be constituted back towards notion of “wholeness” or integrity.³⁰⁴ Whilst this perspective has lessened more recently, skepticism can remain towards internal experiences that belie proof. I propose the knowledges that arise at the threshold of the porous body, are insightful, affective, relevant, and sensitive attunements specifically in relation to the nonhuman and the immaterial realm.³⁰⁵ There is a need therefore of asking what stalls this type of witnessing as knowledge-making in ecological discourse. I take seriously the curation of time and space for attending to micro-attunements and praxis that starts from the assumptions that the “spiritual world is alive and influencing”. The conditions of attuning to that force are often excluded from social practices of more overtly ‘political’ spaces, structured around the voicing and appearance of humans in public space. This work is an attempt to speak at their intersection.

This thesis then asks how such perceptual faculties might be supported. Expanding human capacities of attending, witnessing and addressing the nonhuman, is key to revealing the ever present shared field of nonhuman-human politics. I began to realise the vocal sounding I had been practicing was a way of attuning to invisible, energetic forces within this “knowing field”. It was my way of navigating through the landscape as well as communicating with the stones in order to move them into figurations as had been the performance in *Almanac* and later *the unearthings*. Working with sound and improvised speech somewhere between *logos* and *phonos*, has been a main method of attunement with nonhuman bodies and more-than-human presences.

³⁰⁴ Such psychologising is often gendered and racialised. These prejudices reveal the legacy of Enlightenment ‘reason’, formation of the singular, ‘self-possessed’ self, imagined in tandem with the privatisation of disciplines of Western modern medicine (to which women were not allowed) which hugely impacted the trajectory of non-holistic Western medical approaches, specifically the spheres adhering to womens’ health including childbirth. In terms of the witness, we can think the role of midwifery, as a kind of witness/stewardship, of which care is a fundamental practice.

³⁰⁵ See the work of Lisa Blackman with regards to hearing voices: “The Challenges of New Biopsychosocialities: Hearing Voices, Trauma, Epigenetics and Mediated Perception”, Volume: 64 issue:1(2016) pp.256-273 and *Hearing Voices; Embodiment and Experience* (London: Free Association, 2001); “Embodying Affect: Voice-hearing, Telepathy, Suggestion and Modelling the Non-conscious” *Body & Society* Vol. 16(1) (2010) pp.163–192.

One of the key components of the practice - both site-specific, and working in contexts away from the river, has been vocal sounding. This is a way of attuning to the gestural, sensorial aspects of language, and its emergence from embodied encounter with materiality.³⁰⁶ Vocal sound both simultaneously affects the body which produces it, as well as inaugurating a kind of touch with the bodies that would be encountered by its sound waves. In site-specific work, sound is used as a divination tool. Sound is directed to and through land and immaterial presences, as a way of attuning to bodies and their resonance. I then “follow” these resonances as a way of navigating the landscape.³⁰⁷ As I have outlined in the artistic context section, my embodied practice is informed by somatic approaches and performative strategies for altering states of consciousness when attending to the encounter between body and land. However, many of these existing approaches engage a default “slowing down” as a mode of sensing; my own practice has emerged rather in contrast to this. A lot of my practice is characterised by extremely rigorous movement and loud vocal sound.

I will speak/sing/sound without stopping for long periods of time, often in fast, repetitive, utterances, inducing a trance-like state, allowing the words to flow unintentionally. After a certain period of time, often specific phrases will enter, or sounds, or words, which will cut through and orient me to specific aspects in the landscape. For example, when working site-specifically for *Wishbone*, I had been practicing this “speech divination” for an hour or two, when I suddenly began describing very specifically an area of land with lots of bird bones strewn everywhere. I felt drawn towards a specific place I hadn’t explored before, and as I came over the hill, found myself in a patch of grass littered with small bird bones. Similarly, what emerged when working on *Almanac* and characterised the later *unearthings*, was that this speech utterance and sounding was a way of feeling into the felt, invisible presences emerging through

³⁰⁶ See David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*, New York: Vintage Books, 1996, for a phenomenological reading of language’s emergence from the animate world.

³⁰⁷ Although I sometimes walk for long periods of time, I do not situate my practice as a walking practice; the purpose of these walks is to follow voice and be attentive to the field of witnessing.

the field. Staying in the moment of feeling the textures of a sound or almost-word, and delaying the word itself, prioritised a somatic approach to voice. Language emerged from a felt, affective place. If I was not rigorous about maintaining this difference, (which meant being more patient and allowing *the unearthing* to last longer) it would often be somewhat flat. When I was able to listen to the feeling of sound, often existents would figure and appear.

The purpose of this sounding is often to participate with material or immaterial existents, through touching without touch. Often existents emerge which feel a certain way, perhaps heavy, dense, un-moveable - and through sound, a looping resonance is initiated which goes between my body and the energetic body of the existent, in an ongoing and unbroken reciprocal digestion (where digestion means passing through the body via sound: an embodied reading process). Through this looping sound, I can shift the energetic frequency of the existent, in order to attend to it in some way. At other times, sound will be coaxed intentionally into language, as a mode of figuring out what an existent might be appearing as. Sound thus became the primary mode of engaging with the stones as well as with land. Activating them and my body seemed to activate the space between us in a way that enabled certain information to appear.

As well as attending to the appearing of certain existents, sound also makes certain things apparent. For example, sounding on the banks of the river, and sounding from standing in the middle of the river produce very different qualities of sound as well as information via the speech divination process. This then allows me to track an element of the river practice, which seemed to be that being alongside it, and letting it pass through me, emerged very different information and textures of knowledge.³⁰⁸ It too sheds light on the role of witnessing; when I am within, I perceive a different kind of information to when I am alongside this body of water. Such a small shift is enough to open a question of ethical engagement with the river, of positionality, proximity, representation, immersion, and reveals something about the strangely overlapping positions that occur in the space of “non-I” and “I” that will be explored

³⁰⁸ This led to the river walk (September 2019), which was a response to the emergent phenomena that the river emerged specific and distinct knowledge from the banks alongside the river. The river walk consisted of walking in the river from source downstream, producing vocal sound along the way, until the current was too strong to continue.

in Chapter 3: *Stone | Wish | Bone*.

The sounding practice thus emerges resonance, pulse, vibration, frequency, as modes of *appearance*. It situates a relationship between voice, sound and language, as mode of communication with nonhuman, contrary to attempts to move away from such configurations. Sound is a method which can attend to material and immaterial presences alike; indeed it moves effortlessly from one realm to another. Moreover, a particular kind of engagement with language - prioritising texture, sound, frequency, - de-stabilises the hierarchies of meaning that can pervade verbal forms of communicating. It similarly de-stabilises the marriage of speech to symbolic meaning and language to representation. Thus it explores the textural, felt, potentialities of language, or what we will explore through Kohn's understanding as the "open wholes" of language.³⁰⁹ Sounding in this way is not a practice of mimesis in relation to some quality of place or object. Rather, sound is used in its phatic function, as a psychical channel and mode of contact between "I" and "non-I". Although in a very different context, Braccha Ettinger has drawn significance to the role of the voice and resonance in the "border-linking" with "an/Other". For Ettinger, it is this transformational field as a psychic space of touch, resonance and voice rather than the symbolic, individualised speech and occularcentric phenomena that she claims can emerge an aesthetic and ethical encounter with/through an/Other.³¹⁰

³⁰⁹ Kohn, *How Forests Think*. Kohn's semiosis beyond the human considers the "complex whole" of language as always permeable, consisting of both symbolic and indexical and iconic registers of signs, which are not context-dependent in the same way that human symbolic thought is (unto itself). These "open wholes" of language for Kohn, are openings if you like onto the "shareable real" p.39.

³¹⁰ Bracha Ettinger, *The Matrixial Borderspace*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1994.

This section outlines my approach to this written thesis in relation to the practice-as-research. As foregrounded in *Ecological Turns*, my approach in all phases of the practice has been a methodology of “encounter over knowledge”.³¹¹ The lens or “apparatus” through which practice and thesis are produced, is the question: what happens when we practice belief in the desire, intentionality and imagination of land as a field of relations, of which humans are a part? *What happens when* this principle is lived, and *what happens to* the encounters and thinking that emerges from this lived principle? How does this principle affect encounters with the nonhuman, the critical body of thought here written as thesis, and ongoing ethical-epistemological approaches to nonhuman-human collectivities? It is out of this ongoing practice of communicating across Life Nonlife, human-nonhuman so-called “divides” that the theory of this written text emerges.

The thesis unpacks the developing practice of witnessing. Whilst dynamics of witnessing were at play across all of the sites, what specifically emerged and was therefore followed in acts of response, was entirely specific to each site and system of relations. For this reason each research phase results in very different public performances, or land-based acts. The principles and practice arising from my ongoing methods, are transferrable, but they are in Tsing’s terminology “non-scalable”. For Tsing “scalability is expansion without having to change or undergo transformation of any elements, so not based on relations...to “scale up” indeed, is to rely on scalability - to change the scale without changing the framework of knowledge or action”.³¹² Through this apparatus that “helps us notice the nonscalable phenomena”, I avoid “scaling-up” my specific encounters and their responses.³¹³ For example, I engage a specific river, but my methodology does not therefore become a mode of thinking-with rivers per se, or the materiality of water. It is never assumed I would have the same encounter with different

³¹¹ Freya Matthews, *For Love of Matter*.

³¹² Anna L. Tsing, “On Nonscalability: The Living World Is Not Amenable to Precision-Nested Scales” *Common Knowledge* Vol.18 (3) (2018) pp.505-524. See also “Earth Stalked by Man” *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, Vol.34(1) (2016).

³¹³ Tsing, “On Nonscalability” p.509.

stones, or different rivers; it is specific to located entities, and their material-spiritual impact within a field of relations - precisely this river and these stones, within the context of the visions, that I engage.

I imagine the relation between the components of the thesis through the metaphors of resonance/seepage, touch and silence. I use the terms resonance/seepage together because they speak to differing aspects of porosity. Resonance is the vibrational, frequency-sensitive mode through which the felt, somatic phenomena of much of the practice is experienced. Practices to “resonate with” are not prescribed and multiple modes are explored. Resonance as a surprising “likeness” between substances or frequencies is explored in Chapter 5 and continues unintentionally in ways I learn to notice and follow. Resonance as noted in the glossary, is a term used in holistic practices including homeopathy, systemic therapies, development psychology, and I use it here to refer to an attunement that differentiates from empathy. If a cello string is played in a room with another cello, the same string of the second cello will eventually begin to also sound; resonance can be understood in terms of vibration, as well as a touching without touch. Like ripples on water, resonance is felt to varying degrees of intensity; tracking resonance therefore allows me to include phenomena in my body that ricochets beyond the moment of site-specific encounter. It is therefore a useful way of understanding the impact of more-than-human relations - for example the stone-womxn, or the Pendle witches who I cannot touch, but whose presence is perceivable and impacts my material body. When I come to engage the depression, resonance is a way of understanding how bodies can resonate with one another across temporal, and geographical divides.

Seepage suggests a leaking up from the ground, or an atmospheric permeation of boundaries of skin, page, stone, earth, thought, psyche. Seepage, and its proximity to ooze, flow, dribble, as well as its potential for flooding, indicates not only the productive potential of porosity, but also the uncontrollable, potentially toxic, invisible pervasiveness of matter, thoughts, beliefs. Metaphors of weaving have been used to articulate interdisciplinary, feminist approaches, but such metaphors might rather propose a craft, or *technê* done by human hands,

suggesting there are disparate threads, singular and differentiated, to be woven together.³¹⁴ Both resonance and seepage pertain to less humancentric practices and thus speak to the way I have tried to let the atmosphere of the river in all its aspects, pervade in less visible ways pertaining to the sticky realms of affect.

Metaphors of weaving from storytelling traditions indicate the trajectory of narrative, albeit chronologically disrupted through non-linear structures or threads. This thesis begins with and promises the trajectory of some sort of narrative (through the past-present-future visions). Such a possibility seeps off course, is forestalled and interrupted by the affective state and phases of depression. Here seepage also refers to the leaking of unwanted tears during depression, an embodied process that, against all attempts, is not possibly separated from the body of thought, process of writing, and creative practice that we might otherwise call ‘work’ (with all the implications of professionalism and its separation from the ‘emotional’, or those states that would stall productivity and interrupt ‘work’). Seepage is thus also useful, indicative phenomena to be followed. It avoids any romantic attachment to ideas of porosity. Opening oneself up to the affective shared space with other bodies is to absorb what is expressing, and be changed by that encounter. This is not always comfortable and has included resonating with land-inscribed violences which were absorbed somewhat unintentionally by my body. Seepage can thus be generative and generous as well as troubling and disturbing.

Seepage is also the way in which ‘given’ practices permeate the body, are rendered invisible through their repetition and normalisation, and lodge in the deep tissue and bone marrow. I am thinking here of Adrienne Rich and Sara Ahmed’s invocation of “compulsory heteronormativity”, how it invisibly invades bodies and directs them along certain lines, which in turn brings certain objects, bodies and practices into view, and shuts others off.³¹⁵ The seepage of such given “compulsory” practices is here expanded to indicate the seepage of white, cis,

³¹⁴ See Sadie Plant’s writing on the metaphorical and material importance of weaving practices within feminist histories of technology to argue for weaving as a feminist epistemic model, “The Future Looms; Weaving Women and Cybernetics” *Body & Society*, SAGE London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi, Vol. 1(3-4) (1995) pp.45–64. See also Donna Haraway’s string figures in *Staying With the Trouble; Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016).

³¹⁵ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, p.84

heteronormative practices of subjecthood under white, patriarchal, late liberalism. For a white, cis woman attempting to work in conversation with decolonial approaches, seepage is a way of voicing and acknowledging the ways coloniality seeps through infrastructures, education, history and cultural practices, constituting my body and perspective. Such compulsory, given practices are deep-rooted, and the work of uprooting them is ongoing and will continue over the course of a lifetime. Any claim otherwise is dangerously evocative of “moves to innocence” and denies the intelligence of the body, how deeply it houses and remembers received conditions and how ongoing accountability to this needs constantly updating.

A re-orientation towards land is understood through Sara Ahmed’s notion of ‘orientation’ and the ‘tending to’ of repeated ‘tendencies’. For Ahmed, living a queer, feminist life, is to be constantly engaged in the (often unseen) labour of “re-orientation”, away from the given, straight, familial lines of heteronormative life, and towards a queer, feminist life, where one is always “becoming” feminist, or “becoming” queer, through the inherently performative act of orienting away from, and tending towards.³¹⁶ Re-orientation requires repetition in order to create new pathways. During the course of this thesis, one of the strategies of such re-orientation involved spending a large amount of time avoiding and attempting to ignore the huge body of critical thinking amassing around the nonhuman. This was a destined-to-fail attempt to avoid the seepage of these conceptualisations into my encounter with the river. A problematic and largely unproductive refusal, it nevertheless indicates a problem for this project at large, which was the relation between experiential knowledge (especially an attempt to listen to what was emerging at the river in the framework of the river itself) and given epistemological frameworks, through which that experiential knowledge supposedly could be articulated. The metaphor of seepage indicates both how the institutional grammars and epistemological hierarchies of knowledge seeped into my encounter with the river, as much as ‘something wholly other’ seeped out of and emerged from the earth, soil, ground, river. How to craft a zone in which their meeting could be mediated, ultimately through language, became the site of much embodied tension, stalling and suspension.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

My body became the site of two practices: on the one hand, practicing a ‘not-knowing’ which would enable my encounter with the river, the river stones, and the energetic labour of communicating with invisible presences. In other words, learning how to notice, perceive and acknowledge the entrance of existents, which in turn relied upon a suspension of disbelief or what Sedgwick articulates as “the loosening of cognitive mastery necessary for loving - and perhaps dying too”.³¹⁷ On the other hand, I was attempting to verbally articulate, figure certain illusive forms into language, or at least the situations around them. Whilst I believe the work of critical thinking can deeply deal with the unknown, in the case of this practice - which prioritises the body as a site not separate from processes of ‘mind’ - the somatic ‘state’ of one practice was at odds with the other ‘state’ of practice. These different states produce different knowledges and possibilities.

In order to begin attending to the immaterial presences of the nonhuman existents, I had to practice (un)knowing. (Un)knowing means disorienting oneself physically and psychologically from expectations around how forms of communication or semiosis might “appear”. In an “encounter over knowledge” approach, (un)knowing is an ethical approach to another, be it the river, the stones, spirit “existents”, a human collaborator. If at any point I behave as though I know what they are or how they might behave, communication becomes incredibly difficult. (Un)knowing might rather be re-framed in this context as a practice of not-yet-naming. It is encouraged then, by a kind of silence.

Silence is the absence of speech in favour of the presence of listening. It is the possibility of sitting with not-yet-naming, in order to prioritise attention over recognition. Here, *attending to* implies the noticing of sensations and phenomena across bodies, before the not-yet-naming tips such phenomena over into recognition and forestalls its possibilities. We can bear in mind both the background of the ‘politics of recognition’ and its assimilationist effect, colonial impositions of translation enacted upon colonial subjects and these ongoing dynamics, as well as the historic legacy of the witch-hunts in which bizarre confessions, under forced conditions

³¹⁷ Eve K. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*.

of speech are made and appear.³¹⁸ In the context of this body of work, silence is at times a strategy of delay against demands to dislodge the nonverbal, affective, emergent (therefore equally quick to dissolve) experiential knowledge from the conditions of its emergence (site-specific encounter). The not-yet-naming is of course also impossible, but certain embodied acts of refusal and silence seem to communicate alternatively useful information.³¹⁹ Silence is not a refusal to bring something to light, nor a resistance to naming injustice or bearing witness. It is a resistance to one set of knowledges being framed within a context through which they did not - and indeed perhaps cannot - emerge. It is felt in the bodily memory of the stone-womxn “cut” - the possibility for one way of seeing to be invisible and indeed ruptured by another. These different textures of knowing that emerge in the practice, are thus transmitted in shared affective spaces; collaborations, workshops and the public performances are contexts where this knowledge is communicated in first-hand ways.³²⁰

However, as Bhanu Kapil writes “one thing next to another doesn’t mean they touch”.³²¹ We have seen how touch is shadowed by what Spillers terms “proximity without intimacy” within relations of property.³²² Land is inscribed and constructed through property relations; as such, we ask how might touch and intimacy with the nonhuman be possible under the ongoing conditions of property relations? Here a vast body of work on the politics of touch is extremely useful.³²³ In particular, Sara Ahmed’s reading of Fanon is a reminder against un-

³¹⁸ Anne Carson’s remarkable piece *Variations on The Right to Remain Silent* works with the trial of Joan of Arc, who was tried as a witch, but through linguistic play managed to delay and warp the courts’ obligation on her to speak. In *Float* (London: Jonathon Cape Poetry, 2016).

³¹⁹ Silence also respects the ever present possibility that certain nonhuman existents might not wish to be ‘spoken about’.

³²⁰ In addition to these collaborations, workshops and performances, the story of the Pendle witches, Lancashire site and the stones, has been told through performances *Hag Ritual*, ▲ at fxtrouble, *Stone Ceremony*, and the artist talk *Autonomous Stone, Autonomous Flesh*. See *Timeline of Practice*.

³²¹ Bhanu Kapil, *Ban en Banlieue* (London: Nightboat Books 2015) p.6.

³²² Hortense Spillers, *Black, White and In Color*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

³²³ Karen Barad, “On Touching – The Inhuman That Therefore I Am” *Power of Material - Politics of Materiality*, eds. Susanne Witzgall and Kerstin Stakemeier (diaphanes, Zürich-Berlin, 2014) p.153-164. Erin Manning, *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006). María Puig de la Bellacasa, “Touching Technologies, Touching Visions: The Reclaiming of Sensorial Experience and the Politics of Speculative Thinking” *Subjectivity* 28 (2009), pp.297-315. Sara Ahmed and Jackie Stacey, *Thinking Through the Skin*. (London: Routledge, 2001).

situated claims to the availability of a body extending into space, (and therefore a future). Ahmed's queer phenomenology considers Fanon's telling of a particular moment of attempting to reach forward for a cigarette lighter, experiencing instead the "hostile white gaze" of another, which interrupts his extending forward and the familiarity and availability of such a gesture.³²⁴ His own sense of self is thus interrupted and diverted through the hostile eyes of the white man; no longer able to inhabit this motion as a habitual and therefore un-self-conscious act, it becomes an action undergone outside the tacit knowledge of habit, outside of the possibility of inhabitation one could say, of subjectivity. Fanon's formulation, taken up by Ahmed, of the racial epidermal schema interrupting the corporeal schema, here informs the methodology of touch. The relation between the decolonial thinkers in this thesis, and my own practice, is a precarious kind of touch. I have to be accountable to the unwanted touch of proximity between my practice and this body of thought. In terms of encounter with nonhuman entities, it is never assumed that contact with human, nonhuman, spirit, or world, is a given or that such a possibility trumps any other 'schema'.³²⁵ It is not assumed that everything is available for being touched - stone, spirits, water, skin, page - and as such, neither that some parts of this practice-as-research would be fully touchable by other parts. Indeed the seeping of certain modes of knowing into other modes of knowing (namely the academic, written framework and a nonverbal practice of not-yet-naming), is ambiguously consensual. Strategies for delaying this touch are followed through the body as material witness in Chapter 5.

³²⁴ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*.

³²⁵ In the context of embodied practice with nonhuman collaborators, any assumption as to the processes of extensions towards, or embodied experiences of connection, have to be accountable to all the ways in which racialised, heteronormative and gendered gazes impact the somatic and embodied experience.

STONE | WISH | BONE

July 2015

We take the blindfolds off.

A field scooped in by the bend of a river. Tufts of sheep's wool snagging the grasses.

November 2019

I am trying to remember it now, from my living room four years' later, with all the weight of what this has become between me and that moment. The evenings are darker earlier than that almost midsummer, and piles of various iterations of thesis chapters scatter my floor. I want to decompose them, mulch and compost, let them mould and become nutrition for a completely new matter. I try to believe I could sit here and will it to happen, watch them mould and come alive with their last breath. The relief of movement when we let the things that press down on us, slough away and die. I would like to end the pages, for some very persistent invisible element at the heart of them to end, to finally implode and make way for another completely new unimagined version of events. I start to write and wonder if I do it persistently, with my eyes half closed, the words will find their way of taking me there, of making it happen.

July 2015

We take the blindfolds off.

I walk in a straight line to the river, wade into the middle of it although it is dark with peat and icy cold. I lower my hand to the riverbed. Pick up a stone.

October 2019

A member of the audience asks why I think it is ok to have taken the stones from the river.

What is this persistent invisible element at the heart of it, why does it bring us here so often? I am trying to remember the first encounter. I am trying to tell you it in a way that means this

question is not the question that needs to be asked. It is another, bigger and more precarious question. I want to say cacophony. Tremor. Fault-lines. Soil.

I try to aid the decomposition process. I take the piles of printed words to my bath and turn on the taps. I went through this process before, three years ago at my parents' house one Christmas, although it was more effective then. I put them through the shredder, then mixed them with water in big washing up buckets, and slowly decanted small portions into the food blender. I managed to get about five big bowls of pulp before the blender broke. The ink turned the watery sludge a blueish grey tone, with a consistency somewhere between soup and pate. I squeezed big chunks of it through my hands, grasping at the elusive body of matter.

July 2015

We were blindfolded at Lancashire station and helped into the minibus; ▲ imagines the journey lasted about an hour, but they had taken our phones so there was no way of knowing. We arrived and took the blindfolds off; the field was flat and circular and cut off by a sweep of river towards the South.

Our first task was to go out and ask the land for something. ▲ went straight into the middle of the river and dug a stone out of the silted bed. It was about the size of her fist.

Later that night we would walk in darkness, following one another in silence until we came to a field of long grass. At the centre, in a huddle, we walked outwards away from each other until we felt to stop; there we stood and sent our sensory antennae into the ground, and listened through this touch.

It happened very quickly, and ▲ was confused at first, unable to digest the information which was a rush of imagery – the instance of an image arriving as though in a dream which contains within it perhaps hundreds of years of the story you are travelling through. ▲ had her eyes

closed but could see the horizon; she saw shapes and was filled with incredible fear, knowing there were people coming closer and closer towards her.

There was a group of womxn - ▲ was both part of the image of them and outside of it – huddled in the middle of the field, clutching huge river stones to their bellies. The stones were not something they were holding, the stones were part of them, and they were part of the stones. It was impossible to imagine how one could have existed without the other. The womxn and the stones were made out of the same matter. They were terrified that these people were coming towards them, and knew they were in great danger. Suddenly the people came in a rush, and ▲ knew they were judges or priests or some kind of authority; they mistook the relationship between the womxn and the stones. The womxn could usually utter words that would protect them, but somehow in this moment they could not. They could not align their bodies for speaking the words that would keep the men away. The men trampled and killed the womxn, and took the stones.

November 2019

The pages are robust in the bath water and maintain their form. I am imagining another way of being with this. Another way of saying, I met the river-serpent, they dreamt the stone-womxn, who are versions of them – which is to say spirit and its outrageous force of life – and the men and women who were taken to Lancaster and hung on whatsoever charges they might have been, and me – we are all iterations of them, yes of river-serpent-womxn, a huge dark snake creaking through the fells you can feel them without trying so hard; a beyond beyonds imagining you from the depths of consciousness. I read the pages and pages I've written and I wonder how to decompose them and start from the beginning at the end. I wonder if it changes if I think of it as a love letter to the river. What authority do I want to be accountable to – and how does this change the way the words formulate themselves, what they stick to and what falls off them as easy as mud slaked from a river stone?

I want the words to pay some small homage to the river. I suppose I cannot write it in

chronological order because the moments I encounter – historic, mythic, present – are there packed into the soil, are underneath the fells and rippling out at the banks of the river. The moments are layered geologies; they occur simultaneously and the entities from then and now have no trouble coinciding in this time, in this moment, in dialogue. The stone-womxn, the Pendle witches and me, negotiate the same energetic field. To write as I encounter it then, would be in some way to inhabit an oral imagination, with all the parts happening always and at the same time. But the fibres of my being are structured by the very imagination of words and their letters, how the words might land and fix themselves, without my breath, without my body. I would have to inhabit some kind of desire towards orality, some kind of orientation and longing, towards the current of the water and the current of the words and the towards of that intention itself. The longing is of course shadowed. I have benefitted from many bodies being stripped from this orality, being told they can no longer inhabit it. My longing bears this shadow and must account for it and this wants to be named as much as the longing. So I struggle to find a way into languages of kinship and animism – least of all the advocating for them. I edge towards the possibility of the river's language – not as an inhabitation, perhaps more of a through-ness; shifting and shuffling the words around to let the body of the river through.



Stone Throat, durational site-specific performance at the River Wyre, July 2015. Photo credit: Justyna Scheuring.

It is important to tell you from the beginning that the stone-womxn are imagined as stone-womxn by the land. The land and the river that co-initiated the vision, emerges their properties as an extension of its imagination. It sees them in this way, and they participate in this ongoing becoming by re-memembering they are seen in this way, by returning this gaze. The threat to the continuation of their mutual existence is the entrance of those who see their ‘fixed, stable’ properties as *property* belonging to their ‘stable, fixed’ and bounded selves. In other words, the judges who cut the stones from the womxn, believe the womxn to be in possession of the stones, and the stones to possess certain qualities which make the womxn powerful when in their possession. But the stones and the womxn are powerful through their mutual re-memembering that they are extensions of the land's imagination; as such their ongoing reciprocity is oriented towards the land *as that which brings them into being*, and it is *this orientation and its moment to moment re-memembering* that makes them stone-womxn - the amalgamated (ever in flux and changing) properties and qualities of land's imagination.

The stone-womxn are mythic manifestations of a certain kind of intimacy – that of body and land, which, even when cut – continues to be inextricably entangled. They articulate a kinship which is not through humans choosing or taking some responsibility for nonhuman kin, in a quasi-parental or sibling-esque formulation.³²⁶ This would be too paternalistic. The stone-womxn arise through co-poesis with the imagination of land and wider field of ‘mind’. They perform the kinship of stone and womxn, and in turn activate this kinship within my body. When I think of them now, my centre of gravity lowers into my pelvis, and my breath becomes longer and deeper and slower. This reminds me that something about them makes something about me, more possible.

I understand the visions as the agency of a co-produced encounter that demanded my attention, participation and action. They occur during a practice and intention to send out

³²⁶ In the Camille Stories, kinship species are chosen by the parents of the new generation. “The Camille Stories; Children of Compost” in Haraway’s *Staying With the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2016).

‘listening antennae’ into the ground, and receive the emergent information. They are testament to a communicative force emergent through land, and indicate a shared psychic or imaginal space between human and nonhuman, that overrides Life Nonlife divides. Stone-womxn’s trans-subjective space (stone and womxn) is echoed in my own sending out of my sensorial ‘antennae’ into the earth late one night in 2015, and witnessing in response, the emergence of events that pulsed and resonated, were felt and perceived and directly called me into another kind of event. As such, the immaterial is inextricable from the materiality of world and body.

In his time with the Amazonian Runa, Eduardo Kohn describes how he “sought to pay attention to forest experiences as they resonate through other arenas that are less grounded. Everyday life in Avila is entangled with that second life of sleep and its dreams”.³²⁷ I would argue this entanglement is not specific to Avila, perhaps Kohn simply paid more attention within this context, as was more habitual amongst the Avila. I cite Kohn’s observation because it explicitly links the realm of dreams with the material-semiotic life of the forest. Dreams are not simply human processes of cognising unconscious phenomena; rather, the dreamworld is a space in which the logic of semiotic relations of the forest continue, and indeed where certain less graspable aspects of these relations might be perceivable. It helps me focus on the fact that the visions arose from encounter with a specific place and extend semiotically out of that place; moreover, the stone-womxn traverse immaterial and material realms, thus the ways I have to look out for them are multiple and diverse.

The stone-womxn are beyond truth claims, history or fiction. They are an entity that did, and do, continue to exist, as much as they continue to express their agencies and capacity to respond to my behaviour. As becomes clearer over the course of this project, I feel and understand myself to be tied to them in some way; I thus feel myself to have an obligation towards the specific river stones and the river that co-initiated this vision. The river and its memory of water pulses through the stones. The stone-womxn are a figure that will hold as an anchor throughout the critical journey I will travel, to shape and reformulate and usher in the

³²⁷ Kohn, *How Forests Think*, p.13. In ‘Form’s Effortless Efficacy’, Kohn articulates that the iconic propagation and self-organising apperception of “the semiotics of dreaming...can dissolve some of the boundaries we usually recognise between inside and outside”. *How Forests Think*, p.187.

ethics of a nonhuman-human witnessing I am proposing. *The stone-womxn are an emergent affect of the mutual witnessing between stone, womxn, river and land: ▲.*

An ongoing process of relational interpretation has happened over five years visiting the river and working with the river stones. The river, the stones, a specific tract of land, and a much wider field of immaterial eventfulness, manifest signs that reveal, in a constantly shifting and morphing way, multiple types of information. Through the reciprocity - what increasingly reveals itself as layers upon layers of responses to my call, and indeed calls to which I'm obliged to respond - the existents (land, river, stone, stone-womxn) can be said to *imagine, propel and in turn comment on* my behaviour in a way I would understand to be a ground-up, emergent ethics. Some of this communication is imaginal, some manifests in form and material, some in logos or language, some in sensorial, somatic information.

In this chapter, I will think in dialogue with Elizabeth Povinelli, Eduardo Kohn following Eduardo de Viveiros de Castro, and Eve Sedgwick, to seep the analytical and experiential modes into one another, and explore the role of the witness. I read the visions alongside an account by eco-feminist Val Plumwood in the mid-90s, and Povinelli's articulation of 'appearances' and 'manifestations', to ask how the visions and their mediation might invite *being-called-into* 'mind' as a collective field within which existents intentionally emerge. I go on to read the moment in which the stone-womxn are cut, and become singular entities 'stone' and 'womxn' under the proprietarial gaze of the judge-witnesses. This proprietarial gaze is imagined through the performative act of ownership, exemplified through Sedgwick's reading of the marital speech act. This proprietarial gaze (imagined *and experienced* as a performative act) binds bodies to other bodies in human formulations of 'kin'. It simultaneously emerges a speaking, acting "I" whose self-presence is enabled by literally cutting apart the other - in this case, a human-nonhuman emergent within the land. This stages language as a solely human act, for human witnesses. This particular kind of "I", and "who" performative speech acts are *for*, needs to be re-thought in order to find a different way of conceiving positionality within a wider field of 'mind'. Here, Sedgwick's notion of the periperformative role of the witness proposes the impact a witness has in the context of ceremony, speech, performativity and the recognition of

forms of authority. Imagining the judge-witnesses' violent invasion of the intimacy of stone and flesh through this speech act (as the tying of relations into the laws of property) leads us to consider what might happen if we re-orient to the nonhuman within a field of witnessing.



Mapping the resonance of the visions. Lancashire, 2016.

Ink on light sensitive photographic paper

The figure of the stone-womxn cannot be so easily yanked away from the conditions of its arrival. The stone-womxn emerged in dream-like image - with the bizarre logic of a dream in which certain information is immediately known, not necessarily continuous with the images themselves, and huge tracts of time seem to be travelled in an instance. This arrival is the ongoing condition of my encounter with the stone-womxn. It exists as much in material, (through sensorial, bodily presence within the land) as it does in immaterial form. The vision resonates at the psychic and somatic encounter between body and land. This blurry *hereish* space between the material and immaterial is key to understanding what I think of as the invitation of the stone-womxn - an invitation into another logic of interpretation, that extends beyond any fixed site or body.

In her experience with Karrabing friends and colleagues, Povinelli tracks Karrabing 'analytics of entities' and ongoing relations with the Dreaming - totemic sites - in mediating and interpreting vast changes and threats to their ongoing lifeworlds under settler-colonialism. Povinelli articulates the differences between appearances and manifestations ("the verb stem *gumen*, to manifest, versus *gaden*, to see"), translating 'manifestations' from Creole as "show himself":

"and in Emiyengal as *awa-gami-mari-ntheni* - an intentional emergence: when something not merely appears to something or someone else but discloses itself as comment on the coordination, orientation, and obligation of local existents and makes a demand on persons to actively and properly respond".³²⁸

As learnt from her Karrabing friends, the "task of human thought" was to decipher these manifestations from appearances, to assess what they were indicating, and how to act properly in response. Povinelli distinguishes thus between *in sutu* rather than *in situ* - where *in sutu* reveals "a perspective that emphasises a given or changing suturing that creates various modes of

³²⁸ Povinelli, *Geontologies*, p.58.

existence and a perspective that emphasises the various modes of existence in the situation”³²⁹. Hence the crux of the issue: how does one perceive manifestations as *perspectives that suture*, and differentiate them from “simply perceiving elements within a given assemblage?”³³⁰

This differentiation points us to what I consider a problematic potential of ecological discourse that approaches assemblages as horizontal ‘mixtures’. That is, the “I” who perceives all the marvellously enmeshed phenomena of the world, can indeed be affected, entangled, a hybrid nature-culture-cyborg pulsing with all the ‘vibrant’ materialities in a given assemblage; indeed artworks can askew representation and invite others to join in the affective sensation of being part of such vibrant, hybrid entanglements, leaving us to speculate on them. Such a trajectory falls back on an ethics of care and attention in which the logic of thought itself is not necessarily unchanged, and nonhuman entities not necessarily addressed; in much the way cosmopolitanism draws on an insufficient logic of hospitality and inclusion, it doesn’t take much for such an ethics to be undermined because neither shake foundational metaphysical assumptions about who or what has the power to tell stories about the world. I am rather concerned with the strange expressive quality of land and its relations, and developing interpretative qualities to track and respond to what *manifestations* might actually be indicating or demanding, and how this in turn produces its particular ethics of responsivity and addressability. Perceiving assemblages does not inevitably change the praxis of thought and its logic enough to propel different ethical-aesthetic acts. Interpreting manifestations on the other hand, requires long-term attending to (witnessing) the manifestation as *a comment on a constellation of existents*. Developing an ongoing, collective praxis of interpretation to decipher such manifestations, is what I am proposing as co-poesis - not a creative act of human

³²⁹ Ibid. Of note here is the stem of the term *in situ* - from Latin situs - “position of a body part, or part of a plant, location of property, a laying down, setting down, a manner of lying, being buried, founded upon, dependent upon, present, ready”, versus a suturing, as “a row of stitches holding together the edges of a wound or surgical incision”; or an “immoveable junction between two bones, such as those of the skull” (*Cambridge Dictionary* accessed February 2019 at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/suture>). Where suturing speaks to metaphor, we can think of it in biosemiotic terms, as Bateson’s abductive metaphor at play across nature-culture processes. Hence Povinelli’s *in situ*, rather than *in situ*, reveals this moving, dynamic, generative interpretation is emergent *from site itself* - (*show himself*) - as well as calling on necessary modes of dynamic interpretation from its human counterparts. Hence to suture is the metaphoric process of interpretation shared across human-nonhuman collectivities.

³³⁰ Ibid.

poesis out of non-human materiality; rather, an ongoing process of deciphering *that which is already being deciphered by the more-than-human*. Here the ethical-aesthetic encounter is grounded in material relations - a 'social' comprising of human and nonhuman existents. The ongoingness of existents in the assemblage *are dependent on* the interpretation and most appropriate perception of the *in situ*, which is an ongoing, never finalised process precisely because land as a system of relations is always in flux: "correct interpretation depends on *continued testing* of how an interpretation of an existent correctly apprehends the existent" (my italics).³³¹

My experience of the stone-womxn resonates with Povinelli's articulation of 'manifestations'. However, she writes through experiencing Karrabing relations to Dreaming sites; mine is a very different context and what I refer to as manifestations at the Lancashire site - for example stone-womxn and river-serpent-womxn - also differ because of this. More importantly, I do not wish to diminish the socio-political struggles that Karrabing come up against in continuing their specific analytics of existence under settler-colonial governance. If Povinelli's project encourages such existents to exert pressure on critical theory, I consider my first encounter with the stone-womxn in order to ask what different modalities of thought, orientation and artistic practice are being demanded. Reading Val Plumwood's "Human Vulnerability and the Experience of Being Prey" through Povinelli's manifestations and Kohn's perspectival semiosis beyond the human, we can begin to pick up where Plumwood left off, to ask what might have been inviting itself in this moment. In so doing, we can flesh out a sense of 'mind' that not only de-stabilises the link between language as representation (Kohn's main concern), but de-links 'selfhood' from 'life' (hence going beyond Kohn's thinking to include the stones and stone-womxn), and demands a more political and ethical accountability to one's position within a field of nonhuman-human relations.³³² As such, we might go beyond individual existents' capacity to represent themselves, and re-orient to witnessing not as an act located in specific existents, but rather, as a field of relations within a kind of 'mind', that selves

³³¹ Povinelli, *Geontologies*, p.135.

³³² In *How Forests Think*, Kohn approaches his fieldwork through the aforementioned practice of "alter-politics". Instead of just applying Kohn's framework to the Lancashire site, I allow my experience of the stone-womxn visions to interrupt Kohn's semiosis beyond the human, as these nonhuman manifestations traverse the Life Nonlife divide.

- be they stone or human - might be mutually called into, and mutually produced by.

The stone-womxn emerge in a waking moment; the image was felt from the ground up. First through the feet, tingling along the backs of the legs, swelling in the spine and radiating outwards. The emergence of this vision at night, at the foot of the fells in the Forest of Bowland, struck me as an already-happening event, repeating over and over, inextricable from that place, that for one reason or another, had demanded my attention. The practice in the moment of this arrival was sensory deprivation and attunement to sound (walking for a long time with eyes closed whilst being lead through a sound walk by another), a long meditation and intention to receive the messages from the land, and an attempt to forget or 'not know' - aided by the fact that we had become physically disoriented by being blindfolded on our arrival. So by this time it was not only night and we had our eyes closed, we were attuned to the realm of vibration, rhythm, tone, frequency, rather than sight; we did not know anything of where we were nor could track or place ourselves in relation to where we had been. The conditions set up the possibility for a heightened dependence on multi-sensory and intuitive modes of awareness, the kinds of knowing that emerge in unknowing.

In 1985 eco-feminist Val Plumwood experienced a near fatal crocodile attack whilst canoeing in the region of Kakadu. In her account of this incident published ten years later, she describes the appearance of a rock formation and the uncanny sensations it provoked minutes before the attack:

"Nothing stirred along the riverbank, but a great tumble of escarpment cliffs up on the other side *caught my attention*. One especially striking rock formation—a single large rock balanced precariously on a much smaller one—*held my gaze*. As I looked, *my whispering sense of unease turned into a shout of danger*. The strange formation *put me sharply in mind* of two things: of the indigenous Gagadgu owners of Kakadu, whose advice about coming here I had not sought, and of the precariousness of my own life, *of human lives*...as a solitary specimen of a major prey species of the saltwater crocodile, I was standing in one of the most dangerous places on

earth” (my italics).³³³

Plumwood is drawn to a rock formation that latterly she will articulate as demonstrating a ‘telos’ and chastise herself for having disregarded the intuitive sense of danger it invoked in her. The rock formation *catches and holds her gaze, puts her sharply in mind*; Plumwood expresses a sense of being interrupted by the formation, of its capacity to hold her and draw her to it in a way that seems to momentarily suspend her. Her sense of unease turns from a *whispering* to a *shout* - the dominant visual sense draws her in, permeates the boundedness of her body and seems to trans/form to the internal felt sensation of sound or speech. Something clearly *appears* to Plumwood at an affective and somatic level; how she responds leads us to consider the different forms of ‘mind’ that she might be called into.

Both mine and Plumwood’s experience emerge when we cannot locate ourselves through another means (we are both geographically lost). Wary of un-ethically romanticising this, it is worth considering the role a de-familiarising affect has on the habitual, where habits are what has formed into such a generality of thought that it can go unnoticed. Rather, in these instances, both Plumwood and I experience (albeit micro moments) of ‘shock’ “when the world’s habits clash with our expectations [and] the world in its otherness...is revealed”.³³⁴ These affective moments are for both of us differently, influenced by all the previous moments in our experience that would lead us to either notice, respond, or not, to them; they thus reveal not only the semiotic registers at play in the living world, but also in our bodies and fleshly memory.

Let us recall the nested continuity of iconic, indexical and symbolic registers of semiosis. The iconic register involves ‘ignoring the difference that makes a difference’, rendering

³³³ Val Plumwood, “Human vulnerability and the experience of being prey” *Quadrant*, 39, 3, (1995) pp.29-34. Her infamous experience of a crocodile attack is often cited in discourse around ecologies; at the time the media appropriated the story, sexualising the account and rendering the white, female body in relation to the “animality” of the nonhuman again as somehow “available” for invasion (p.34). My reading of Plumwood’s text is not a critique meant to place responsibility on her for a traumatic and life-threatening attack, rather it is a reading of the narration of that attack, to ask how it might help us consider an alternative reading, and entrance into an alternative ‘mind’ that possibly was being invited in this moment. It is an attempt to re-visit discourse about the intentionality of ‘place’ that was burgeoning before the so-called ‘ecological turn’ (of note in the Australian context in the work of Deborah Bird Rose and Freya Matthews) and that requires being updated and challenged.

³³⁴ Kohn, *How Forests Think*, p.63.

something *enough like something else* to be readable as such; in Plumwood's instance we can notice the iconic relation between past experiences and present phenomena (these bodily feelings feel like the last time I had them, when I was in danger in some way; this situation must be dangerous). However, the piece that Plumwood cannot 'rationally' integrate (or we can say, she has not yet a generality of thought to account for it) is that this sensation is in some way sparked from the *call*, and *hold* of the rock formation. I would argue there is also an iconic aspect of the rock itself, which exhibits "its own suchness" in as much as it's dangerous situation (*a single large rock balanced precariously on a much smaller one*) exhibits a sameness to Plumwood's dangerous situation, is enough like it to somehow *put her in mind* of this. As Kohn emphasises, the iconic register is both the potential end of the semiotic chain (where no difference whatsoever is registered and therefore nothing at all is noticed), whilst also evading certain human logic or expectations as to where such similarities might lie. As such, if Kohn emphasises the indexical and iconic registers at play within the biosemiotic world, I would pause here to emphasise these registers of 'mind' within the body itself - bone, gut, skin, organs - which are surely able to attune to something beyond Plumwood's cognitive capacity; she might in this moment be, in Povinelli's words, more of an "energetic interpretant".³³⁵ The rock formation that holds her gaze also exhibits a strange kind of indexicality, seeming to point towards something that Plumwood experiences affectively if not fully deciphers; the sensation of danger and the subsequent attack seem to draw rock, crocodile, Plumwood and Indigenous owners together by nature of an absence "to the extent that indices are noticed they impel their interpreters to make connections between some event and another potential one that has not yet occurred".³³⁶ The semi-conscious and entirely intelligent, somatic, affective registers of 'digesting' and responding to the world, in many cases, do not emerge into symbolic thought, but can still be noticed; "the challenge that follows this disruption is to grow", to re-begin the world again, a moment of potential, for "re-relating, with a difference".³³⁷

³³⁵ Povinelli, *Geontologies*, p.135.

³³⁶ Kohn, *How Forests Think* p.32.

³³⁷ Brian Massumi, "Of Microperception and Micropolitics" *INFLExions No. 3 - Micropolitics: Exploring Ethico-Aesthetics* (Oct. 2009) pp.183-275.

It is here that a threshold seems to present itself - something about this rock formation catches her attention in a way that Plumwood doesn't experience with any other entity in the land. If we recall Bateson's 'difference within resemblance', indeed a 'difference that makes a difference', as that which makes change and growth possible - could Plumwood's moment be an instance of something that is *enough like something else* to induce an abductive logic, in turn giving rise to a new trajectory? Does this rock of course resemble other rocks and thus is recognisable as a type to Plumwood, and yet does it call her towards it in a different way, one which might, depending on how she is able to respond, inaugurate another kind of possibility? In Povinelli's description, manifestations reveal "a present world we had not noticed manifesting itself as the world composed of entities and relations far richer and differentially relational than we had thought or can think in the immediate *guman* of manifestation - it suddenly becomes present but present as *unknown and demanding*" (my italics).³³⁸ Such an interruption exhibits a kind of newness or difference - "something that was either a token in an unexpected relationship to its type... or a token without a type, a potential something...without a whatthing".³³⁹

If such difference within resemblance invokes an abductive logic that "allows people to suture new imaginative relationships across domains" then "the establishment of any specific connection represents a kind of crossroads, the transversing of which *has implications for the future*" (my italics).³⁴⁰ Here, "suturing" echos the *in situ* of the manifestation as opposed to *in situ* - the difference between an appearance that appears *in place*, and a manifestation which is already suturing - stitching together - relations differently so as to create "a perspective that emphasises the various modes of existence in the situation" - a more *hereish* manifestation, beyond the fixity of site. In other words, the task of human thought is not to creatively stitch together a series of appearances - in a kind of *poesis* or production of meaning - but rather, as Povinelli alerts us, manifestations - being *intentional* emergences - are already *suturing*. They

³³⁸ Povinelli, *Geontologies*, 59.

³³⁹ Ibid.

³⁴⁰ Wheeler, *Expecting the Earth* p.84.

demand, in turn, modes of interpretation not untethered from, indeed responsive to, this already happening *in situ*, an emergent co-poesis (co-witnessing) at the very least.³⁴¹ Indeed it is this abductive logic that Bateson will term nature's metaphor, it's own process of suturing, that perhaps Plumwood likewise attunes to at a somatic level, opening the possibility of her responding in co-poesis to this 'call'. Let us consider Plumwood's response in light of this possibility.

The strange formation *puts her sharply in mind* of two things: "of the indigenous Gagadgu owners of Kakadu, whose advice about coming here I had not sought, and of the precariousness of my own life, *of human lives*. As a solitary specimen of a major prey species of the saltwater crocodile, I was standing in one of the most dangerous places on earth". I am struck by this phrase to be put 'in mind'; what kind of mind is this? Being held by the rock formation seems to present what Povinelli describes as 'unknown and demanding'; indeed moments earlier Plumwood admits "I experienced the unfamiliar sensation of being watched".³⁴² Is something manifesting that Plumwood ought rather urgently, to attend to? And yet, her thoughts go immediately to two things: to human 'others' - (a realisation that promises to be followed up, but when it is not, arguably performs some negation of her accountability to be able to respond adequately, as it becomes a matter of cultural difference that she might not know how to) - and animal other: crocodile. Furthermore, she invokes a classically Anthropocentric perspective both calling on the singularity of her experience within the universality of the global, imaging her solitary, *standing* (human) figure, central to the whole earth itself. In other words, these two strands of thought she is put so sharply into, are the threat to her species - indeed her specialness - as she realises she is after-all, nothing other than meat.

³⁴¹ The 'emergent' is "never cut off from that from which it came and within which it is nested because it still depends on these more basic levels for its properties". Terrence W. Deacon, "Emergence: The Hole at the Wheel's Hub" in *The Re-Emergence of Emergence: The Emergentist Hypothesis from Science to Religion*. Eds., Phillip Clayton and Paul Davies, pp.III-50. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006. Both Deacon and Kohn (p.54), emphasise the "emergent" property of symbolic registers of semiosis (human thought being always in some way emergent from indexical and iconic registers, "nested" in them, whereas indexical and iconic registers are not similarly dependent on the symbolic).

³⁴² Plumwood, "Human Vulnerability" p.29.

The moment in which rock as another entity across the so-called Life Nonlife divide seems to draw Plumwood in and reveal the capacity to *put her in* (another kind of) ‘mind,’ in fact only re-emphasises Plumwood’s humancentric perspective. She is neither special, nor accountable, and this moment of realisation must in some way relate to the whole earth itself, a ‘natural truth’ that her singular “I” is able to gesture towards; a wider ‘mind’ in this instance is only the extrapolating of *her* mind to the universal. It seems that Plumwood reads the situation from a *multicultural* rather than a *multinatural* stance. In the context of Amazonian perspectivalism, anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro differentiates multiculturalism - perceiving the unity of nature and the diversity of culture - from multinaturalism - perceiving the spiritual unity of culture and the diversification of bodies/nature.³⁴³ Plumwood’s go-to interpretation of the situation is to consider herself as ‘meat’ to the crocodile - i.e. all bodies share one animal nature, we are ‘meat’ not persons to each other - and distinct from her Indigenous ‘culturally different others’ who would know something she doesn’t know about the site. We can see how the logic of extending Plumwood’s thought here would take us right back to a politics of recognition, whereby other humans too would share ‘nature/bodily fact’ but differentiate culture; such a reading makes no demand for her to change her analytics of existents.

In Amazonian thought, de Castro claims “the original common condition of both humans and animals is not animality but, rather, humanity”; thus the social comprises of human and nonhuman “having been people, animals and other species continue to be people behind their everyday appearance”.³⁴⁴ It is according to this perspectival logic, that Eduardo Kohn recounts being told to sleep face up, so jaguars wouldn’t mistake him for prey, and would recognise him as another person hence *not* eat him - an anecdote which he claims “forces us to

³⁴³ Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, “Exchanging Perspectives: The Transformation of Objects into Subjects in Amerindian Ontologies” *Common Knowledge* 10.3 (Fall 2004): pp.463–84. See also “Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism”, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (Sep., 1998), pp. 469-488.

³⁴⁴ De Castro, “Exchanging Perspectives” p.465. He sites this from his extensive work in Amazonian contexts as well as being expressive through AmerIndian myth. It is worth noting that shared origins also show up elsewhere, between human, animal, plant and land: for example, the Welsh myth cycle *Mabinogian*, in which humans share origins with animals and plants; and creation mythologies such as Tikigaaq where animals (in this case whale) share origin with land itself. See *Mabinogian* trans. Sioned Davis, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Tom Lowenstein, *Ancient Land: Sacred Whale : The Inuit Hunt and Its Rituals* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1993).

recognise that how jaguars see us matters to us”.³⁴⁵ If he were to look away, those same jaguars might very well “treat us as, and we may actually become, objects - literally, dead meat”, rather than fellow persons, seeing this *different world* in the same way Runa see their own world.³⁴⁶ He claims this gaze constitutes a kind of interlocution, situating jaguars and humans as “persons to each other”.³⁴⁷ Instead of perceiving that the subject position (“I”) emanates a point of view and “creates the object” (what de Castro distinguishes as multicultural orientation), multinatural perspectivalism considers that “the point of view creates the subject”; hence Kohn emphasises, “how jaguars represent other beings, makes beings into kinds”.³⁴⁸ I am interested in this gaze - echoed in Plumwood’s sensation of “being watched” - as a would-be linguistic ‘hail’ of an “I” to a “you” that expands the notion of address to include beyond linguistic registers of semiosis; (where address is both the location at which to find somebody, as well as a public or political speech directed towards another).³⁴⁹ Would returning the gaze of the rock in some way, constitute her as a type of, a kind of, rock-like woman?

Indeed at an affective level, something in Plumwood registers enough of a similarity with rock to make an abductive leap and respond - affectively - to its ‘call’. Yet, for Plumwood, this is consciously interpreted as the glimmer of a capacity now ‘lost’, pertaining to the sensation of being prey. In so doing, she not only ignores the affective registering of her own body-mind; she simultaneously evokes an ‘us’ and ‘them’ dynamic with herself as somehow in the future, and the totemic animist somehow in the past - presumably not having ‘lost’ such capacity: “the wisdom of the balanced rock does not...instruct us to reintroduce the experience of being prey, but rather to try to become aware of the dimension of experience that we have lost” - (a dimension she claims to be intuitive had she been able to listen better and turn away

³⁴⁵ Kohn, *How Forests Think*, p.92.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid. p.93. Following Émile Benveniste’s proposal that the pronouns *I* and *you* position interlocutors intersubjectively through mutual address, hence these are considered “true” person pronouns. “The Nature of Pronouns”, in *Problems in General Linguistics*. (Coral Gables, FL: University of Miami Press, 1984) pp. 217-22.

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ I will develop this in due course, but it is worth noticing that this ‘address’ of the rock to Plumwood is internalised and experienced as an affective sensorial micro-event.

from danger earlier) - “and to find other, hopefully humanitarian, ways to secure the knowledge of vulnerability that it represents”.³⁵⁰ In so doing, she evokes a universal “we” and narrow conception of being “prey” which negates the multiple ways subjects can experience being “prey” to power / governance / racism / settler-colonial dynamics.

It seems that a re-orientation is required, away from how humans notice the world appearing, and towards how humans might appear to that world. Perhaps this re-orientation requires reading the similarities and differences between types in more expanded ways. Plumwood’s attack occurs in Kakadu National Park, a region with multiple Dreaming Sites, including a relation between the rock escarpment that dominates the park and a Dreaming ancestor *Gingu* - first crocodile man. Plumwood herself makes no reference to this, although she points to the Indigenous knowledge she did not seek.³⁵¹ I have no idea whether this is the rock formation that Plumwood experienced, my point is rather that, were Plumwood to see herself and crocodile as possibly sharing an origin as crocodile-man/woman (as opposed to ‘meat’ or animal) then perhaps her perspective would involve a different kind of consideration of how crocodile or rock, see her (or as de Castro and Kohn emphasise, an exchange of perspectives). In fact, let us consider this beyond de Castro and Kohn’s emphasis on living beings, to the rock formation itself; if Plumwood were to consider herself not as ‘meat’, nor indeed as sharing humanness with animals but rather sharing some kind of ‘mind’ with rock, would she be obliged to it in any different way?³⁵² Arguably her somatic body *does* respond in this way, before it gets folded back into an anthropocentric imaginary. Again, my point here is not to make Plumwood culpable for her life-threatening traumatic incident, nor to undermine her ecofeminist project. Rather, I wish to extend what she motions towards (albeit I would

³⁵⁰ Plumwood, “Human Vulnerability”, p.34.

³⁵¹ It is worth noting here the work of Carol Birrel, whose reading of Plumwood takes a more Indigenous perspective and emphasises the protocol that Plumwood gestures towards, but fails to adhere. “Crocodile as Teacher” *PAN: Journal of Philosophy Activism Nature*. Vol. 6 (2009) pp.90-96.

³⁵² This exchange of perspective, which my own experience doesn’t adopt but is in dialogue with, and is more of a blurry, porous site of exchange, does not equate to ‘knowing’ anything ‘about’ stone-womxn - and therefore the question of whether there is a risk of ‘speaking on behalf of’ is similarly mute, as such a question simply equates interpretation with translation as well as assuming the stone-womxn are a fixed entity who ‘mean’ one thing once. I am more interested in the porous body as a site of overlapping information, and shared affect.

argue somewhat problematically), and intervene (by way of Kohn, de Castro and Povinelli) to re-situate the urgency of responding to potential manifestations. This is an urgency that cannot be abdicated of responsibility by those who are not (directly) dependent on such interpretations, nor directly suffering the worst of geontopower's racialising politics of recognition.

I am suggesting therefore that something in this threshold is missed at two levels (and both levels are mutually constituting, neither one precedes the other). Plumwood fails to connect the affective registering of her phenomena to her environment (that would turn affect into thought-as-action). Secondly her narration misses the possible 'growth' of a new meaning out of said experience. She falls back on one which would *not set the conditions* for her responding differently in the future. She claims it will, by listening to her intuition better, but intuition gets de-politicised in this instance, because it does not stand up to her positionality within a network of social (nonhuman-human) relations, nor her fundamental assumptions about her own selfhood. She is no more constituted by either rock or crocodile than before, rather she is just a slightly more meat-like, vulnerable "I". If we think then of this moment in terms of constraint and growth, the more specific (accountable to her position) Plumwood can be about this incident, the more *potential* the memory of it at both somatic and conscious levels, that would make it possible next time to notice the suturing perspective of the potential manifestation, rather than simply the elements in a given assemblage, and thus respond differently. In other words, it is both the affective attunement, and the story (or the theory if you like) we tell about the noticing, that sets the constraints for new growth (and is where the practice becomes distinctly political and ethical).

The question is not only about responsivity, but also how to curate the conditions for the event itself - however micro-affective it may be - through our narration (re-relating differently) of each affective encounter. And re-relating differently means finding a way of interpreting that keeps the manifestation interested, or as Povinelli describes using 'bait' to keep the responsive encounter ongoing. If as interpretants, we become links in a chain of ongoing semiosis, representations for more things to interpret, we are constantly also creating the

conditions for the future, through the story we tell (verbally or as “energetic interpretants”) of the previous encounter making space or not for the possibility of the next. Plumwood’s first moment of ‘missing’ the significance of her affective attunement, could potentially be pre-emptively avoided next time, by a different telling of this same moment, which could in turn be ‘shocked’ again by a different affective event and so on and so on. If Plumwood’s story points to the Enlightenment legacy (dualities of mind/matter, human/nonhuman), that enabled her to ignore the “wisdom of the balanced rock”, then I want to consider what kind of framework would take seriously the intentional, suturing perspective of land and its relations and focus on the response-ability of witnessing the texture of such information.

Throughout this project I have been exploring the affect on emergent phenomena, of practicing the proposition that land imagines humans. Kohn would call this Sylvan Thinking in an Amazonian context, that one can and often does, fall into and learn to think by; Vanessa Watts would call an Anishinaabe expression of this “place-thought”. When attuning to land or nonhuman, I consider myself to be ‘extending out of’ the imagination of that specific land as a system of relations. This means learning to include all the phenomena that arises in me, even if it feels distinctly ‘human’ (thought/idea/imagination). Conceiving of this as emerging from the specificity of already-thinking place or nonhuman, opens new pathways of witnessing affective phenomena. Sometimes existents emerge in this space, as with the stone-womxn, other times not. The event is differently performative if framed as though what I come to think (what I come to draw as meaning between relations of things) is entirely emergent (and therefore dependent on) the thinking of land and its relations. This extends attention from the sensorial register to specific thought patterns. It de-stabilises the centrality of thought as a solely human affair, widening the inclusion of potential phenomena. This is an urgent re-conceptualisation.

Kohn deciphers this in semiotic terms, and thus only makes room for Life as semiotic, and living beings as selves; ‘mind’ for Kohn is thus ‘living semiosis’: “life is semiotic and all semiosis is alive... life thinks, thoughts are alive...Wherever there are “living thoughts” there is

also a “self”; “self”, at its most basic level, is a product of semiosis.³⁵³ A cell, evolutionary processes, a leaf - all have an ability to represent themselves - to make choices in relation to their lifeworlds, and this for Kohn constitutes selfhood, and is subsequently what allows him to claim that “life thinks, stones don’t”.³⁵⁴ His defence of this position, whilst he acknowledges that the Runa indeed believe stones are alive, and when he takes ayahuasca he similarly understands this to be the case - is that he does not want to fall back on the question “how do the Runa think about forests” and rather stay with a ground-up, emergent non-human phenomena asking how indeed, does the forest itself think.³⁵⁵ Where he uses an “alter-politic” approach to not falling back on “what the Runa think” but rather “how the forest thinks”, I use the various instances of my felt experience as well as my intuition that it is possible, to set a constraint that renders subsequent instances noticeable, and from there likewise attend to a “ground-up” emergent politic. Through this method, the intentional emergence of certain existents reveals an intentionality beyond Life; if stone-womxn reveal themselves, they can also be said to have a point of view that does and should matter. Selfhood annexed in the living, feels reductive and not emergent from the experience of this project’s practice.

I then try to notice the specificity of these instances, where they happen, what arises, what similarity and difference. The task is for these moments not to become so habitual that I fail to notice them, and to remain ‘eventful’ enough for me to be surprised by them and take note. This is political at both a nonhuman and a human level; Peirce claims that “if he sees what others cannot, we call it hallucination” - what doesn’t get attended to enough to become a

³⁵³ Kohn, *How Forests Think*, p.16. Kohn reminds us that a sign is “something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity”, and does not come from the mind, rather the mind is a product of semiosis, or following Peirce, a self that is just coming into life in the flow of time (Kohn 31). Kohn plots this selfhood through the semiotic flourishing of life forms - including dreams, plants, jaguars, humans - in the Amazon; in describing the chain of semiosis between a crashing palm and a monkey interpreting such a motion/sound as danger, Kohn contains selfhood as emergent semiosis within the realm of the living: “a crashing palm tree - taken as a sign - is alive insofar as it can grow.” (33). Life in these terms is annexed ambiguously between the capacity for a palm to be a sign because of a cause/effect relationship that moves it and is subsequently read by an interpretant, or because of an internal process of cellular biosemiosis that causes it to make evolutionary choices, implicating its growth and futurity.

³⁵⁴ Ibid. p.100.

³⁵⁵ Ibid. p.93. Arguably plant-based medicines such as ayahuasca alter the body’s perspective in order to induce an involvement in a wider kind of ‘mind’. I am not so interested in inducing this phenomena, as I understand this capacity to be already available and potential when one maintains both a relation to *this* body *here*, as well as a wider kind of ‘mind’ that would allow information to emerge between human, rock, or crocodile, or stone-womxn.

habit of thought, a generality, in turn poses no home for subsequent phenomena that might likewise pertain to it.³⁵⁶ The “us” of shared ‘mind’ then helps to create a network of perceivable phenomena and their shifting meanings. The urgency to create a pedagogy of witnessing is not only to better attend to nonhuman entities who are clearly communicating with us. It is also to create space for a multiplicity of ways of receiving information and learning. At best these are disregarded by hierarchies of knowledge processes, and at worst, have led historically (and presently) to various forms of genocide, institutionalisation and medicalisation that the stone-womxn and their evocation of the Pendle witches, demand a response to.

Experiencing the stone-womxn was enough like other instances of feeling myself to absorb and thus be an extension of something emergent from the land, for me to be able to recognise it as another potential instance of this, and different enough to previous moments for me to be shocked by its unnerving specificity, texture, and demand. To experience a waking dream in relation to extending your listening into the ground and asking to receive, is to set the conditions for a possible micro event, and not only attune affectively but *take note*. This is enabled in part through making space for this image/event to potentially have something to say that I cannot, to have emerged from the land itself. Through this reading I am able to continue attending to it; if I disregard it as the powers of my associative mind (perhaps the atmosphere of that place made me think of medieval times, or a film I saw etc.) then I fail to spend the next five years attending to how exactly, stone-womxn behave. And it is in attending to how stone-womxn behave that makes me more and more attuned to their autonomous, imaginative, suturing capacity that, for one reason or another, I happened to ‘fall into’. Therefore for me, it is important not to equate ‘mind’ as a product only of living semiosis - of selves - as Kohn does. This in turn makes possible for moments of ‘shock’ to re-relate the world differently, as the stone-womxn have come to demand that I do.

In the experience of the first vision, ▲ *is both within the image, and witnessing the image from*

³⁵⁶ Charles S. Peirce, *The Collected Papers*, Vols. I-VI eds., Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931-1935 [1958]); Vol.5.402.

the outside. In my experience of this moment, there was something about the stone-womxn as felt, affective and figuring presence, that was unknown and demanding. It was unknown and demanding partly because it ruptured my habitual awareness, but also because of the sensation of being both within and outside of the vision; it was demanding *precisely because it was simultaneously unknown and known*. There was a sensation of difference within resemblance, feeling the similarity and the differences to stone-womxn to be enough like them for my body to register (we could say attune to the frequency of) stone-womxn resonance - enough indeed for my body to experience being both within the vision, and outside of it. For de Castro “perspectivism implies multinaturalism, for a perspective is not a representation”, but rather a matter of the body as the origin of perspective, whilst representation is a matter of ‘mind’ or spirit, that which universalises.³⁵⁷ Kohn critiques this reading as falling back on the body as a means by which to bypass the problem of representation. Similarly, in my experience of the vision and beyond human semiosis, my body’s felt, affective, somatic experience of the stone-womxn *is in itself* a process of representation *as interpretation*.

If “signs are alive...insofar as they will come to be interpreted by a subsequent sign in a semiotic chain that extends into the possible future” then my body responding to the land in such a way as to experience the stone-womxn, is an interpretation that draws me and stone-womxn into a semiotic chain that *extends into the possible future* - by virtue of the fact that body is a site of ‘mind’, of multiple processes of living semiosis.³⁵⁸ In so doing, it might constitute me somehow as a stone-like womxn, indeed a type of or a kind of stone-womxn. This kind of exchange of perspective with stone-womxn is arguably an interpretation of my body-mind, in which *interpretation as a kind of representing myself to the next sign* is continuously happening. Indeed, my body is the site of mediation between a wider kind of ‘mind’ and remaining aware of my point of view as *this* body, *here*. Perspectivalism in this sense, is a kind of being in two places at once - the description that Silvia Federici applies to magic in a medieval context, and its being abhorred by new models of surveillance and control during modernisation:

³⁵⁷ De Castro, “Exchanging Perspectives” p.474. Kohn in contrast, builds a theory of representation de-linked from language, through these semiotic layers and lifeworlds of the sylvan network.

³⁵⁸ Kohn, *How Forests Think* p.33.

“magic appeared as an illicit form of power and an instrument to obtain what one wanted without work, that is, a refusal of work in action” to the bourgeoisie and the ruling elite, who “had to combat the assumption that it is possible to be in two places at the same time, for the *fixation of the body in space and time*, that is, *the individual’s spatio-temporal identification*, is an essential condition for the regularity of the work process”.³⁵⁹

This spatiotemporal identification is put aslant by being both within and outside the vision, both *here* and *there*. It seems if Plumwood were to respond to the affective address of rock to her, then she might be able to perceive of the bizarrely in flux and changeable situation of relational, systemic positionality. In other words, Plumwood is another person to the crocodile if she can see the crocodile as another type of person to her. She is likewise another person to the rock if she can see the rock as another person to her. Her Val-ness does not have an underlying ‘truth’ as ‘meat’. Her selfhood rather seems to have a constantly changing relation to how she sees others and how other selves (human, nonhuman, spirit, ancestral, rock, crocodile), see her. What is constant about this dynamic, relational selfhood, is that other entities are similarly dynamic and relational, because this wider ‘mind’ as a field of relations is not tied to semiotic life as selfhood, thus no entities - be they stone or spirit - are outside of its field of relations. I would argue that it is due to the field of ‘mind’ that existents are able to appear to one another. Witnessing, we might say, is the *dynamic* within which existents in systemic relation to one another are registered within the field, and as a result of the field registering them, become perceivable (if not consciously, or in decipherable ways) to any other existent.

The possibility of being in two places at once de-stabilises the marriage of selfhood and subject position, pertaining solely to *this* body *here*. I am not the stone-womxn and they are not me. However, something about my position, the place from which I speak “I”, is radically overlapping, or doubled, or shared in a instance with another kind of “non-I”. This is enough for my body to make an abductive leap between the differences and similarities of *now* and *then*, *I* and *non-I* to at least try to decipher them, whilst not losing myself or mistaking myself or worse, *taking their position*. This unknown and demanding kind of knowing, is, I believe, active in a ‘field of mind’ within which information travels porously between bodies and is perceivable within a systemic framework.

³⁵⁹ Federici, *Caliban and the Witch* p.141-142.

Where de Castro and Kohn emphasise the exchange of perspective between living beings, let us recall Povinelli's description of manifestations emerging "a perspective that emphasises *a given or changing suturing that creates various modes of existence* and a perspective that *emphasises the various modes of existence* in the situation". It is perhaps not the emphasis on beings within this field of relations, but rather, the tendency and logic of the field itself, to which it is worth attuning. Perhaps then the question is not 'what was the rock trying to communicate to Plumwood' and rather, 'what *is the relation* between all the given positions within this momentary field of relations, and how are the affective messages my body is arising, indicating something about the impact of my actions within this dynamic system of selves?' Such a question *could only be addressed* to the manifestation itself (which in turn could show up elsewhere or in other surprising ways). If Plumwood subsequently wrote about "the wisdom of the rock", did she find a way of communicating or exchanging with the rock itself in any way; and would such a following up, as well as honouring what was shown to her, be a way of responding to its call? Continuously trying out and testing ongoing acts of interpretation (representation) *to* said manifestations, within the field of 'mind' itself which is precisely *hereish*, immaterial, material and porous, is one way that listening in this practice unfolds, but it is also a material act of acknowledgement, that keeps the dynamic balance of gift and receiving at play across human nonhuman divides.

Carol Birrel emphasises the Indigenous protocol of entering places such as Gadagu, whilst also documenting ways in which non-Indigenous visitors have experienced the 'mind' of place.³⁶⁰ Can we both respect the significance of this missed protocol, without assuming it is information *about a site* that some humans have and others don't, that makes the difference, as such avoiding it being the praxis of thought which needs re-assessing here?³⁶¹ Hence the question is not - what did Plumwood not know that she needed to know, and rather, what other kind of 'mind' was she possibly being invited into? What other kind of thinking? It seems there

³⁶⁰ Carol Birrel "Crocodile as Teacher" *PAN : Journal of philosophy activism nature*. Vol. 6 (2009) pp.90-96.

³⁶¹ My concern is that the latter repeats a multicultural trope of 'authentic difference' that abdicates responsibility from non-Indigenous visitors experiencing the 'mind' of place without following up such experiences with ethical or political accountability.

is a porous, blurry space which needs re-orienting to in order to move beyond phenomena ‘belonging to’ or indeed ‘emanating from’ any singular self, and into another configuration of ‘mind’ as something within which boundaries between selves are not in fact so distinct and yet retain their bodily ‘positions’. From here, we can focus on a shared ‘field’ which gives rise to manifestations.

If Plumwood were to return for many years to this site, and attend to the behaviour of the rock formation over a long period of time, she might indeed begin to perceive its habits, *via the habits of thought it invokes in her*, both being part of, as they are, some kind of mind. I am less interested in an exchange of perspectives than a *widening* of perspective, to better notice how manifestations comment on; in other words being both here in this body, and also taking up the invitation of a wider field of mind, de-stabilises the notion of property that pervades even the body itself. To be a body ‘in possession of itself’, arguably renders internal phenomena as ‘belonging to’ the body that produces it, rather than the potential for me to feel something that does not belong to me per se, but within a wider field of mind, to which I am able to attune. Indeed in this more affective space, phenomena might be perceived internally (as Plumwood’s registering of the ‘whisper of unease’ or my ‘internally felt’ visions) by one body, whilst not in any way pertaining to - or belonging to - that body.³⁶²

However, if Plumwood’s bodily response to the rock formation is precisely an interpretation of its communication, one that she perceives, what stops her from entering this other kind of ‘mind’? It is a life changing moment for Plumwood, whose work is changed as a result: “Before the crocodile, I wrote about the value of nature, but after the crocodile, I started writing about how we see ourselves as outside nature, about the power of nature and our

³⁶² An example of this when working with plants is particularly potent. In Ireland with collaborator Siobhán Ní Dhuinnín, I fell asleep while working with (somatically attuning to, not ingesting in any way) a particular plant. I woke up with the words ‘strong’ and ‘mutable’ in mind. I later looked up the plant and found it was a poisonous plant that could induce change in the system very rapidly. I do not give this example as any special kind of capacity on my behalf; indeed it will be very common to practitioners of, for example, homeopathy or herbalism who work with resonance. I include it rather as both the possibility for a body to attune, as well as and most particularly the *praxis of thought* in this instance, of a wider kind of ‘mind’ as guided by the principle of being an extension of the imagination of a field of relations, of land itself. Here reading is a whole bodied endeavour, where the act of witnessing one’s own sensations, understanding them not to belong to one’s own, individual ‘mind’ but filtered through one’s own, experiential body, is one way of beginning to attend to the nonhuman, affective and resonating habits of which we are a part.

illusions that we can control it, that we're not embodied beings and are apart from other animals", an absolutely useful perspective.³⁶³ But what kind of 'nature' does she think she is a part of? A political, social, or purely material one? Plumwood presents her perception of the rock on the day as inadequate: "the strange rock formation presented itself as a telos of the day, and now I could go, home to trailer comfort".³⁶⁴ Indeed it is a remarkable response to perceived 'telos', situating herself as the end point of this intentionality, with no consideration of what might be demanded beyond 'listening to her intuition more' - a response that again is about her, not rock nor crocodile, needless to say the logic of an altogether differently suturing perspective.³⁶⁵ Intuition in this case seems to mean the affective, somatic registering of certain phenomena that Plumwood registers as meaningful, without knowing how or why; her response is to retreat to a private, domestic space, having experienced the 'telos' of the rock. She thus understands an experience of attunement to the world as a spiritual experience (with which I have no qualms), except that said spiritual experience gets folded back into the private and domestic sphere, not the public or political one. In defence of Plumwood I would argue that the internalising of alternative forms of knowing, and the severing of the spiritual from the political, are precisely a result of hetero-patriarchal conditions and Enlightenment legacy (the same ones Plumwood herself tries to counteract). However, her account reveals another missed threshold, where the spiritual might not have been narrated as a moment of realising oneself to be vulnerable to a 'natural world', and rather, realising oneself to be part of a spiritual-political

³⁶³ Val Plumwood, "Taken by a Crocodile" January 12 2004, *The Age*, accessed July 13, 2017, online at: <https://www.theage.com.au/national/taken-by-a-crocodile-20040112-gdx34k.html>.

³⁶⁴ Plumwood, "Human Vulnerability" p.30.

³⁶⁵ I want to differentiate here between the anthropocentric/anthropomorphic. In Plumwood's case, to me, her anthropocentric interpretation problematises her perceiving the rock formation calling to her; inducing no alternative analytic of existence out of her anthropocentrism, this presents a problematically anthropomorphic result, in which the world appears incredibly available to her should she simply - somehow miraculously - learn to listen and decipher better. However, the capacity to perceive the intentionality and responsivity of stone, river, for example - for these entities to manifest in ways that co-poetically figure as, indeed, *figures*, with in some cases, very clear voices, I believe we have to make room for. Otherwise, the fear of anthropomorphism not only cuts off the ability to address and be addressed by entities, it also leaves a huge cultural gap between those who do perceive "old Man rock" (in Karrabing's case) in these terms and those who don't - again leading us problematically back to politics of recognition (and projection and appropriation). Where somebody might have taken issue with Plumwood's anthropomorphic narration, I would argue that it is her lack of transforming her praxis of 'mind' to respond to these clearly intentional emergences either in the moment or in narration, that to me, is the unethical move here.

more-than-human world.

This impasse shall be a concern throughout this thesis - between the capacity on the one hand to perceive/believe the world (nonhuman/vibrant Nonlife) to be appearing - even 'speaking' to you - yet the repeated failure to build a body of praxis around directly interpreting and sharing what such nonhuman entities (rivers, mountains, plants) teach. We need to shift emphasis on articulating why such agencies are possible, to what such agencies comment on. I believe critical theory is currently at this impasse. How do we build an ethics and a network of interpretation? What kinds of things are not simply entities appearing, but manifestations commenting on the ongoing relational system and obligations of existents within said system?³⁶⁶ Ecological pedagogy might then re-orient to attend to these nonhuman perspectives, revealing as they do, entirely unimaginable orientations and relations between existents. In my experience with the stone-womxn, the way they show up across boundaries of self, body and human/nonhuman, has an abductive logic - a kind of suturing, that I am obliged to follow by constant trial and error in terms of noticing how and when my 'acts' (linguistic, material and energetic) seem to be responded to, leading to another chain in the ongoing semiosis through which myself and stone-womxn are implicated in one another's future.

From this place, the question is not of 'telos', but rather, futurity is implied in the act of orienting towards another kind of nonhuman politic. If Plumwood places herself as interpretant and draws herself into a chain of semiosis, including the rock as sign and indeed crocodile as sign, she still doesn't have to change her praxis of thought to inhabit a wider kind of 'mind', and any signs could - as they were - be easily read as having their end point as appearances. Rather, if the orientation is towards tracking *perspectives* of the system / field of 'mind' that show themselves through manifestations, rather than exchanging with one or another *perspective*, the future is not something decided upon now, but rather, a promise to follow the unknown pathways of co-poiesis. Similarly one might not speak for or on behalf of one particular existent or entity, but rather be oriented towards tracking what different entities

³⁶⁶ It is a timely moment to be considering this, in the shadow of the Covid-19 virus. Has anybody asked the virus itself what its purpose is, what its perspective is on the arrangements of existents here - not as a speculative move amongst and for humans, but as an address *to* Covid?

reveal about relations in the given constellation. We miss what is required of us by what might be an intentional emergence, if on the one hand we equate ‘mind’ with Life and selves, and if we orient to how the world appears to us, rather than how we appear to the world.

Stone-womxn are demanding because they are inextricably linked to both material stone and river, and yet the ways they continue to ‘show themselves’ traverse boundaries of bodies, material and immaterial realms. It is very hard to ‘speak on behalf’ of stone-womxn, even if I wanted to, because they are not one fixed site nor do they say or indicate one constant thing, and yet I understand that they are in complex ways, tied to the continuity of a specific river, its stones and a specific mountain from which that river originates. I thus feel an obligation towards that site as it is entangled in the continuation of the perspectives that stone-womxn continue to shed on a constellations of existents. It is thus not only stone-womxn per se that are unknown and demanding, it is what they require from me as the means by which I have to learn, track and respond to the perspective they are stitching events up with, and how I appear to them, which is unknown and demanding, material *and* immaterial, in situ *and* in situ.

Instead of proposing an attuning to world to listen better, or indeed to perform a hybrid world of ‘mixtures’ and “then go, to trailer comfort”, I have been trying to explore through Plumwood’s account and my own experience of the stone-womxn, how these moments do not simply offer a re-orientation to the nonhuman or land per se, but indeed to a whole different praxis of thought. This logic is beyond human (by this I mean impersonal or a-moral from an individual point of view), beyond Life Nonlife divides, and distinctly political. Perceiving this requires a re-orientation not only to ‘mind’ beyond the human and beyond Life, but specifically an attending to how the logic of this ‘mind’ - this field as it seems to be - of witnessing, is already at play. The stone-womxn reveal their own logic, emanating from the material encounter of stone, river, body and land, hence remaining specific to that place - non-scalable, as Tsing would say. What can be translated to different contexts is the approach to the nonhuman-human shared political space as revealing an abductive logic and its unexpected poesis - which would be differently manifesting according to each different system of existents. Attending to manifestations is one way of learning this ‘logic’ of this ‘mind’; artistic practice would not be

the sharing of representations that others interpret, but rather is interpretation itself, responding to the nonhuman that is evidently responding to us. Such responsivity depends on both an embodied, situated *here*-ness, whilst simultaneously accessing a wider field of ‘mind’ within which information is not simply perceivable and tangible, but *how* information is stitching itself - dynamically - together in the logic of this ‘mind’, is felt and responded to.

When I returned from the river, I found out and researched where we had been, and discovered the story of the Pendle ‘witches’ who were taken from the villages of the Pendle area, nine of whom traversed the Forest of Bowland to Lancaster for trial and execution.³⁶⁷ The only eye-witness account of the trial is not verbatim - a record written by Thomas Potts, which made the case a famous one even at the time, and focussed on the “godly justice” served to the most perceived threats against the Jacobean state: witch-craft and popery.³⁶⁸ The Pendle witches resonated deeply in my system and my experience of the River Wyre before knowing of this history. The otherwise force and power of the river and its river stones, felt inextricably linked to the suppression of witch-craft and animism, and demanded a particular kind of engagement as response to the ongoingness of this Great Divide. Developing a practice of mutual witnessing is a response to the impact of this history of failed testimony, femicide, and the ongoing colonial-capitalist disenchantment of the world and agency of the nonhuman.

August 1612

The Pendle witch-hunts begin around Elizabeth Southener, or “old Demdike” the matriarchal head of the Demdike family. She lived with her daughter, Elizabeth Device, and Elizabeth’s children James, Alizon, and Jennet, and it was not considered unusual that the whole family believed in and practiced forms of what was thought of as magic. On March 21, Alizon Device was refused pins by a local pedlar, John Law, (either to buy or through begging). She supposedly cursed him, after which he fell ill and injured (historians deduce from accounts that

³⁶⁷ Two were convicted at York Assizes.

³⁶⁸ Thomas Potts, ed. James Crossley, *Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster*. (1613; repr., Project Gutenberg Online, 2006) accessed November 25, 2015, online at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/18253/18253-h/18253-h.htm>.

he suffered a heart attack on walking away from Alizon). The incident drew the attention of the local justice of the peace, Robert Nowell. What ensues, are both the “confessions” of Alizon and the “testimonies” of the family against one another: Alizon’s brother, James, told Nowell that his sister had also confessed to bewitching a local child. There is no record of their mother Elizabeth trying to defend her children yet she did tell Nowell that her mother, Demdike, had a mark on her body that resembled a witches’ mark – “proof” that the Devil himself had made a pact with the old woman.³⁶⁹ The accusation of being “possessed”, in itself was enough to “prove” a crime.

Alizon went on to accuse Anne Whittle, known as ‘Chattox’, and her daughter Anne Redferne of witchcraft. Chattox was matriarch of another family apparently involved in witchcraft, with whom there may have been an ongoing feud. Both Demdike and Chattox, although blind and in their 80s at this time, admitted to selling their souls to the devil. Demdike, her granddaughter Alizon, Chattox and her daughter Anne, were the first to be sent to Lancaster Castle to await trial. During this time, Elizabeth Device (daughter of Demdike) organised a meeting for those in support of the women. Eight people who attended the meeting were subsequently accused of witchcraft, seven sent to trial in Lancaster (James Device, Alice Nutter, Katherine Hewitt, John Bulcock, Jane Bulcock, Alice Grey; one (Jennet Preston) to Yorkshire assizes. The trials took place from 18-19 August 1612. The accused were denied witnesses to plead their innocence. The key witness for the prosecution was Elizabeth Device’s youngest child, nine year old Jennet Device. This was made possible by James I’s 1597 treatise of witches and witch-hunts, *Daemonologie*, in which he made a case that, when trying to punish witches for their crimes, it was acceptable to bend the normal rules of providing evidence at a witch trial.³⁷⁰ Demdike passed away in the inhumane conditions of Lancaster castle; Alice Grey was not condemned; the remaining nine were hung on August 20, 1612.

³⁶⁹ The History Press, accessed June 2016, online at: <https://www.thehistorypress.co.uk/articles/the-pendle-witches/>. See also: *The Lancashire Witches: A Chronicle of Sorcery and Death on Pendle Hill*, by Philip C. Almond. London: I.B. Taurus, 2017.

³⁷⁰ *Daemonologie, In Forme of a Dialogue, Divided into three Books: By the High and Mighty Prince, James 6th*. was published in 1599 by King James VI of Scotland, (soon to be James I of England) and thoroughly endorsed the practice of witch-hunting in Christian society.

Discovering the history of the place, I came to reflect on Silvia Federici's project and the wider, contemporary "witchy turn" showing up in relation to Western ecological practices and cultural aesthetics. The witch-hunts are a genocidal rupture that leave in their wake not only absent, but hugely prescribed and inscribed bodies, and absent practices also – specifically animist and magic in nature. Federici highlights the huge epistemological impact of certain practices being brutally weeded out of society for the emergence of modern capitalism. However, she also claims such practices of magic eschew linear temporality. In my experience with the Lancashire site, stone-womxn and Pendle womxn are existents with whom it has been possible to communicate. The stone-womxn and their moment of rupture felt like an earlier version of the witch-hunt violence, yet on another level these moments felt to be simultaneously happening. Engaging with place, and the verticality of multiple times through embodied praxis, was one way of accessing and participating with these multi-layered moments as ongoing reverberations, not necessarily 'past'. This suggests that the 'cut' both mythic and historic, exists simultaneously to the ongoingness of more-than-human perspectives.³⁷¹ Thus a continuity opens between now and then which might not be temporal but rather, spatial, through encounter with land itself. The encounter with the river and ongoing practice at the Lancashire site could thus contribute textural, affective processes to what might be textual, historical projects.

In other words, the framework of linear time (necessary to be accountable to definitive past historical injustices) is slightly at odds with practices that clearly work beyond such conceptualisations, including what the site-specific practice reveals. Therefore I am wary of staging this history *only* in terms of temporality. It could lead towards exoticising cultures perceived not to have experienced such a rupture (not to imply that Federici does this). Whilst

³⁷¹ Eduardo Kohn describes the historic colonial inscriptions that harnessed the emergent forms of the forest and continue in various ways in the realm of the "spirit masters" and its "always already" happening, timeless quality; likewise the 'cut' feels to be both always already happening, as much as the stone-womxn are always already co-existing with this moment. He describes how certain systems "that capture and maintain regularity" such as the spirit masters of the forest, can "create a domain of circular causality in which the things that have already happened have never not happened"; as such, "history as we commonly imagine it - as the effects of past events on the present - ceases to be the most relevant causal modality inside form... As a regularity that can potentially exceed ontological domains and temporal instances this kind of form, then, creates an emergent "always already" realm. Kohn, *How Forests Think*, pp.180-181.

there is a renewed circulation of the figure of the witch and animist practices flourishing in artistic contexts, these remain separate from more mainstream pedagogical contexts, and certainly from political practices. Explorations in consciousness to engage more animist practices similarly remain outside the dominant sphere of critical approaches encouraged by ecological thinkers. Therefore, whilst it is clear that more animist practices continue to circulate, I am most concerned with how to circulate them beyond fetishising of an image, and into the everyday, practical methodologies of ascertaining ethical relations between human, nonhuman, ancestral and spirit realms.

I therefore propose re-orienting to land is an additional way of accessing this historic moment - both its reverberations and possibly, remnants of the practices left in its wake. This could contribute affective truths to the partiality of written histories and the legacy of injustices at less visible levels of encounter. It in turn orients to the strange suturing perspectives that the nonhuman seems to guide. Learning from stone-womxn, river, land and its relations as somehow diagonally continuous with forces the Pendle womxn may themselves have been engaging, is not to smooth over real historical violence. It might rather be that a response to this history is to re-position the nonhuman as teacher, and track its modes of resistance to enclosure. Indeed it becomes apparent that stone-womxn, stones and river, propel alternative emergent phenomena to the enclosures of bodies, writing, medical practice and land ownership; they guide a response to these historical inscriptions. This suggests different forms of continuity that re-frame affective memory as a nonhuman-human collaboration. If existents like the stone-womxn continue to make themselves known, there is a field of relations at play which spatialises more conventionally thought of temporal divisions between then and now, past and present. This makes possible another constellation of proximity, and a different kind of witnessing: in addition to bearing witness to injustices and erased bodies, we bear witness to continuation (the continued presence of spirit, ancestral and nonhuman bodies) in light of injustice. Following Kelly Oliver, this engages a process of subjectivity - in this case, a human subjectivity in relation to the subjectivity of more-than-human existents and the practices they guide.

The ones who rupture the stones from the womxn are another kind of witness. They enact a patriarchal, phallogentric gaze, and can be thought symbolically as the constructing force and fallacy of an individual, white, cis male subject. They symbolise the proximity of the witness to the judge, and are thus articulated as the judge-witnesses, implicated in a role of authority and law as a human public, political space in which human agents have the power to decree, condemn, legislate. The judge-witnesses believe the womxn and the stones to be separate, for the womxn to be in possession of the stones. The stone-womxn enact an uncanny, elusive power; they can usually keep the judge-witnesses at bay through their language. The possibility of this speech arises in the re-membering of themselves as phenomena extending from the land's imagination, in other words, through inhabiting a shared space of 'mind' as we have been fleshing out. It is speech that swells underground, is felt at the base of the spine and pelvis, rises up through the tidal currents of the spinal fluid, opens each gateway of the glandular system, runs like a river out of the mouth and back through the pelvis and open legs, breaking like water onto the land. It is re-membered in the human body as sexual energy or life force, and is the force of the desire, agency and imagination of the alive and speaking more-than-human. When it rises in speech the words are a material spell. They have an effect within a more-than-human world. The judge-witnesses understand that to be powerful depends on possessing the stones. To have and to hold. When they violently rip the stone-womxn apart, the kinship of stone and womxn is cut. Both become available for the taking. It is the simultaneous imagination of property and material *properties* that breaks the possibility of the stone-womxn as a mode of subjectivity and its emergent language, as a deep intimacy of flesh and stone.

The judge-witnesses deny, foreclose and background the human-nonhuman existent, cutting its potentiality in and for itself. Proximity is (re)-constructed around property relations, and the implication as to its lines of inheritance. A moment that inaugurates a new formulation of relationship based on property relations is entangled with many things. "To have and to hold" is linked to - and a pre-emptive echo of - the "hold" of the slave ship, the hold of

colonialism and its violences. We can imagine a triangle ▲ with three points that immediately project out: the taking, selling, buying, of humans by other humans; the taking, selling, buying of land; and the formulation of lines of inheritance based on heteronormative marriage and reproduction, that consolidate the former two points. The last does not share ontological ground with the first, but we can say is shadowed undoubtedly by gendered property relations, and the ambiguous or stalled possibility of a woman being in possession of herself or her resources in historical (and some ongoing) formulations of marriage. The marriage act is symbolic and performative of relations of ownership through its utterance “to have and to hold”, through its structure of inheritance, through its historic cross-gender dyad and emergence of “a subject forever split from the woman-m/Other-Thing and facing a woman/bride-object”.³⁷² It is therefore of course, the imagined ‘cut’ of the phallic self, ‘the hero’ who “to be born of himself” ensures “the archaic becoming-mother must melt into obscurity and senselessness as a Thing of no human significance”; except in this case, the archaic *other* is land itself, whose repression, silencing and backgrounding is supposed necessary for the emergence of the white, male human subject.³⁷³ The control of ownership through lines of inheritance, rather than alternative models of kinship and the “commons”, is, as we have seen, a key strategy of maintaining the “need” for more land, as well as de-collectivising resistance to colonisation.³⁷⁴

The imagination of property and properties disables the speech of the stone-womxn.

³⁷² Braccha Ettinger, “Weaving” p.72.

³⁷³ Ibid. p.70. As such it inaugurates a whole trajectory of psychoanalytic formulations of the male subject, which shall not be our pathway here, but which reveals the entanglement of the scopophilic drive, with the speaking, acting “I”, whose emergence and autonomy is made to “appear” out of the denial and repression of the other.

³⁷⁴ One only has to look at the differing (historic and present) laws around childbirth to note how this marriage/inheritance dynamic gets orchestrated around lines of race and for the outcome of property. According to the Indian Act, Indigenous women unable to get a father’s signature on a child’s birth certificate, would not be able to register said child as ‘native’, “disturbingly, this unstated paternity policy applies in situations of sexual violence such as incest, rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, and prostitution where young mothers of Indigenous Nations are particularly vulnerable”. See Lynn Gehl Gii-Zhigaate-Mnidoo-Kwe, “Indian Rights for Indian Babies: Canada’s “Unstated Paternity”” *First People’s Child and Family Review*, 8,2. (2013) pp.54-73. The legacy to black lives in this settler-colonial-slave triad, is the law of *Partus sequitur ventrem* - “that which is brought forth follows from the womb” - which meant historically that a child born to a woman in slavery would automatically become a slave, regardless of the father (again regardless of rape at the hands of white slave owners). As Sharpe articulates “the Black child inherits the non/status, the non/being of the mother” (15). These differing logics both mechanise sexual violence for the ultimate logic of dispossession of self or land in colonialism towards the construction of whiteness as property.

The propietal gaze of the judge-witnesses, impacts not the *reception* of certain types of knowledge or language, but *the emergence* of certain kinds of knowledge and language in the first place. It cuts the logic of perspectives of the suturing, systemic whole, or field of 'mind' as we are fleshing out, and therefore the continuation of existents therein - as well as the possibility to be both *here* and *there* - mindful of one's position and similarly experiencing beyond the border of one singular 'mind'. Let us think about the arrival of the stone-womxn through the spinal fluid and up out of the ground, propelling me into some kind of shared 'mind', in which my own body and the body of the stone-womxn seemed to be enfolded and touch. Speech that could materially impact another body in a field of relations is possible emergent from a shared space of 'mind' which as we are establishing goes *through* the body, and grounds *through* the land as a system of relations - and is the extension of the emergent 'thought' of river and stone.

It is not simply that a preverbal, sensorial speech is cut, or that a subject is no longer heard; our focus is not how the objectifying gaze is then deaf to the speech of a speaking (albeit objectified) subject (which it of course also is). We know this route and the way out of it: making everyone into a political subject, without changing the logic of said politic. The imagination of property and properties on the stone-womxn, breaks the imagination of the shared space of 'mind' as something which entities could thus emerge out of, inextricably linked. It cuts the possibility of thinking with the mind of river or river stone; a thinking which is felt, embodied, affective, and is not, (and we shall address in the forthcoming chapter), emergent of an "I" who speaks "your" sentiments, but rather, 'a voice' emerges from the strangely overlapping capacity of these two bodies - bodies which are different - but both inhabit the same energetic 'field' of 'mind'. What is at stake here is that the imagination of property disables the audibility of language that arises up from the ground/earth/material. It disables magic, when magic is understood as participating with phenomena emergent from the shared space of 'mind', perceivable through land itself.

The rendering impossible of magic is inextricable from the rendering impossible of Nonlife and its intentional capacity. Let us consider magic here in the way it arises in the vision: as a force at the encounter between human and nonhuman, the capacity for meaning to emerge

from this space (affective, textural, semiotic) and for this in turn to materially impact the energetic fields, frequencies and materiality of objects. It is not only the relation of stones and womxn that is cut, but the possibility of utterances which are not performative in a world of symbolic, human language relations, but which communicate with the suturing perspectives of manifestations themselves. In other words, actual speech/sound that would communicate with the nonhuman. The question is less, why formulate the nonhuman in and around metaphors of speech or language, and rather, what modes of address (including linguistic), do nonhuman, or immaterial existents respond to?³⁷⁵ The inextricable relationship between the animacy of land and the animacy of language, is here explored through the dynamics of a field of ‘mind’, accessed through the body, and affective attunements to said field. This is about the responsivity to a kind of shared ‘mind’ rather than the specific capacity or incapacity of one ‘type’ of existent over another ‘type’.³⁷⁶

Is this kind of speech something not easily categorised as either phonos or logos, something which exceeds and spills over both containments? Povinelli suggests “the concepts of Logos and subjectivity place a limit on the kind of noise that can enter the dialectic of the demos, who can speak and who can only be spoken for”, demanding perhaps a decentering of Logos by noise, a turn to the “ephemeral quasi-event rather than a concrete and enduring major explosion of change”.³⁷⁷ Does this shared ‘mind’ within which human and nonhuman are entangled, make possible this kind of ‘noise’ through the affective, ephemeral, somatic, pulsating, nonlinguistic figuring of certain forms of existence and their faint, illusory presence that we might be called in to witness? And does re-orienting our question as to what kind of noise communicates within this shared ‘mind’ of material relations, also help to create a third

³⁷⁵ We are not only concerned lets say, with the performative force of language, how it makes and constructs realities, but rather with a communicative force that can address the more-than-human. For language and its animacy hierarchies, see Mel Y Chen, “Language and Mattering Humans” in *Animacies, Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Duke University Press, 2012). pp. 23-56.

³⁷⁶ In the context of this sentence I use ‘we’ as a collective to indicate the ‘radical inclusion’ of the ‘knowing field’ as a space which is not a human sociality based on exclusions and inclusions, but rather is an energetic field in which exclusions are not possible at a systemic level - they happen all the time at the human level, but the system then energetically tries to account for this, and “show them up” again.

³⁷⁷ Povinelli, *Geontologies*, p.143.

space away from exhausted notions of inclusion or exclusion into an already established, humancentric version of the political? To go further with this, let us follow what happens when “to have and to hold” inaugurates another kind of language, that of the first-person, speaking, acting subject who would utter the performative “I do”.

I want to consider Eve Sedgwick’s queering of J. L. Austin’s oft-quoted example of a “felicitous” performative speech act uttered in the marital consent “I do”.³⁷⁸ We have been concerned thus far with the fact that all sign activity *does* something: “and insofar as signs do rather than represent, they support the endurance of a given formation of existence or they weaken it”.³⁷⁹ Let us turn then, to this central example of language that *does* something. Needless to say its marital example centers the conflation of practices of sexual control with land ownership, possession, reproduction and straight lines of inheritance. To have and to hold. Through Sedgwick, we might unfold another aspect of the witness role, to help us consider the strategies, choices, possibilities and impacts of moving towards a nonhuman-human collectivity. I read Sedgwick’s proposal for a periperformative mode, to consider how embodied practices (a material poet(h)ics) might begin to disentangle from a particular type of Logos and its subjectivity.

The stone-womxn cut, (as symbolic of the performative act of ownership) situates language *that does something* and the first-person, speaking subject position “I” as distinctly human. It is an inaugurating cut, but let us consider this in the logic of de-centralising the Anthropocentric moment. What does it do to see this moment of rupture as an after-effect, an interruption in the field of the ongoing event of the kinship of stone and womxn, a blip within a larger event rather than the event itself? This is not to diminish that such a cut from the stone-womxn changes a lot; rather to propose that *normativity* - the normativity that gets drawn through the continuation of this line of interruption (and on through the white heteronormative lines of marriage, inheritance and property) as the interpolated, compulsory given - is in fact the red herring, the missed stitch in the tapestry of an otherwise nonhuman-

³⁷⁸ J. L. Austin, J. L., *How To Do Things With Words*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955 [1962]).

³⁷⁹ Povinelli, *Geontologies* p.136.

human society.

In her reading of J. L. Austin's notion of the performative, Sedgwick analyses the marriage act through focussing on the role of the witness, called in by the subject "I", who performs the "confident appeal to state authority, through the calm interpolation of others present as "witnesses"".380 Her reading of the cross-gender dyad marriage, and a queer subject as witness, makes clear that "the emergence of the first person, of the singular, of the active, and of the indicative are all questions rather than presumptions for queer performativity".381 It is the "dynamic of compulsory witness" - the physical presence of the witness who is interpolated to the marriage ceremony, whose silence (speak now or forever hold our peace) Sedgwick reveals "ratifies and recruits the legitimacy" of normative marriage's privilege.382

We might hold in mind here the texture of such an interpolation, in contrast to the calling into 'mind' of Plumwood and rock, myself and stone-womxn. In the latter case, a calling in occurs that is not conditioned by subject positions but pulsing with resonance and affect. In the case of the "compulsory" interpolation of the queer witness of the marriage ceremony, they are called in not only to an authority which does not so readily validate *them* (as queer subjects outside of the heteronormative marriage model) but to constitute another "I" and "you" which it is already established will be the cross-gender marriage couple. The witness in this case, is not mutually constituted as a "you" or "us" in this moment, but rather is called in to constitute the speaking "I" and validating the state authority "for which no pronoun obtains". The "they" of said witnesses are thus (arguably with or without consent) called to stand in for this absent pronoun of state authority, becoming a rather ambiguous, "semipublic, conjugal "we" that means and doesn't mean the power of the state".383

This takes Sedgwick to consider the theatre of marriage and its displacement in the context of the Victorian novel, that for her reveals "the performative potential of

³⁸⁰ Sedgwick, *Thinking Feeling*, p.71.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Ibid. p.72.

³⁸³ Ibid. p.74.

periperformative refusals, fractures, warnings of the mobile proscenium of marital witness”³⁸⁴. Sedgwick imagines this periperformative as a spatialising, rather than temporal, mode, that “clusters” around the performative, forestalling, delaying and displacing it: “I won’t say that you did [it]...I won’t say [right now]...”.³⁸⁵ It is through such periperformative utterances that a different kind of “I” is installed, with a different kind of “ordinary” “rhetorical force” to the first-person, speaking, acting “I do”.³⁸⁶ Although a spatialising metaphor is used for the “neighbourhood” of the performative, Sedgwick insists “the rhetorical force rarefies and concentrates in unpredictable clusters, outcrops, geological amalgams”, and is thus not referential to one fixed centre but rather, shares an affinity with “the mobile proscenium, the itinerant stage, the displaceable threshold”.³⁸⁷

What I am concerned with here, and why Sedgwick’s proposal is so useful to this project is threefold. Firstly, she suggests the periperformative “can be the site of powerful energies that often warp, transform, and displace, if they do not overthrow, the supposed authorising centrality of that same performative”.³⁸⁸ Let us remember our question as to whether the communicative force between human and nonhuman, when embedded and emergent from the shared ‘mind’ of land as a system of relations, is in some way related to Povinelli’s assertion that the Logos and its central marriage to subjectivity, needs decentering by noise, rather than noise inevitably being carried into Logos, “in order to become something else”.³⁸⁹ Let us also consider the current dynamic - or we can say performance - of the human “speaking for” the nonhuman in the courts (read: theatre) of law, or indeed the nonhuman being pulled into the

³⁸⁴ Ibid. p.73.

³⁸⁵ The example is from Henry James’ *The Golden Bowl*, and the “periperformative aria uttered by Charlotte Stant to...her ex-lover, when she has persuaded him to spend an afternoon alone with her on the eve of his marriage to another woman,” Ibid. p.73-4.

³⁸⁶ Such a spatialising mode, she claims “might make room for talking about performative affectivity in a way that would not reintroduce either intentional or descriptive fallacies” p.68.

³⁸⁷ Ibid. p.75.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Povinelli, *Geontologies* p.143.

logic of said law, by being ‘granted’ personhood status.³⁹⁰ Let us also consider the ways in which, as Povinelli and Coulthard describe, subjects who are seeking to establish their futurity - inextricable as it is from the futurity of the nonhuman - under the “cramped” conditions of environmental racism and late liberalism, are only able to do so by performing a Totemic Identity. The most these claims on the part of Indigenous groups in land rights tribunals can gain is “a small spigot in the larger pipeline of late liberal approaches to geontology” which neither changes the metaphysics of law, nor guarantees a future as a political subject whose full analytics of existence might be possible in relation to land, pedagogies, collective ownerships and movement across territories or borders.³⁹¹

I want then to take Sedgwick up on her claim that “performatives” “must be understood continuously in relation to the exemplary instance of slavery”.³⁹² Sedgwick analyses the Victorian novel form in which the mobile “proscenium” stage of marriage as a form of ownership, psychologises the Atlantic Slave trade in which spatial boundaries come to designate whether humans are ‘owned’ by other humans or not. She is not (and nor would I want to) conflating marriage with the act of slavery. Rather, in due significance to the transAtlantic slave trade, which “gored its mark (highly differentially) on the modes of meaning that were possible for anyone in its periperformative ambit”, she insists on attending to “the ever-shifting theatre of human ownership” as much as to the marital/gender, or juridical acts exemplary to most analyses of performativity. As Spillers and Sharpe so profoundly articulate, meaning is radically called into question because the name (*proper*) “mother”, for example, can be invaded anytime through property relations - (exemplified as we have seen in the partum law) - and as Sharpe reminds us, this invasion of meaning is continued in the afterlives of slavery through the invasion of words such as “mother” with the racist connotation “felon”; or “boy” with “thug”, and the literal invasion of lives in the ongoingness of black deaths.³⁹³ Property relations invade

³⁹⁰ We recall here Biemann’s claim that although Ecuador had granted legal personhood to nature, this status was not at all immune to the overriding power of property relations within legal infrastructure.

³⁹¹ Povinelli, *Geontologies* p.35.

³⁹² Sedgwick, *Thinking Feeling*, p.90.

³⁹³ Spillers, *Black, White and In Color*; Sharpe, *In the Wake*.

bodies and lives and radically call into question faith in the communicative force of human language. Indeed, what Sedgwick's reading opens up is highly relevant for the moment of the judge-witnesses and the cutting of the stone-womxn, in light of what is at stake for this project: namely, to contribute a pedagogy of witnessing in the context of ongoing arguments as to the inclusion of the nonhuman within a political sphere (demos), a sphere constituted by law and juridical procedures. In other words, the backdrop to this project is the *ever-shifting theatre of ownership tout court*, and the current and highly urgent performance of said space, where ownership is the metaphysical and literal (ownership of) the ground beneath our feet.

Who is the arbiter of the juridical context? It is arguably the judge-witnesses, whose witnessing leads to some judgement on the future. If Sedgwick's proposal emphasises the forestalling of the performative - its warping, twisting, delaying, subverting - then what exactly is being delayed here is the enacting of some kind of authority. In the examples she gives, the witness prevents the first-person would be utterer or actor of the performative ("I do" or "I take" and the act of marrying/buying/selling) from being able to enact such a performative. The authority of the state - as the mechanism for the construction of whiteness as property - is made redundant. The witness, and their odd, conjugal "we" with the state, in a sense is a kind of audience, a public (however domestically staged the Victorian novel might be). They can both acclaim or declaim the performative, and likewise however subtly or dramatically, validate or not, the authority of the state. Of course, the public is a space performed through the marriage of representation and language. In artistic and aesthetic contexts, the artwork as an event staged to and for the human, centres on forms of representation even when re-dressing those modes of representation and proposing a space for the nonhuman within a political sphere. Undoubtedly this gives rise to many creative re-imaginings of what this might mean. However, the audience or witness remains human. If the proscenium "theatre" of ownership is anything, it is decidedly human, and the modes most travelled to make it otherwise seem to be to invoke the human witnesses to reformulate it. But what kind of periperformative delaying of another kind of performance, would have to take place, in order to fully collaborate with the nonhuman and its capacity to suture relations in a field of witnessing?

To read the periperformative as a mode that forestalls, delays, de-stabilises the performative “I do”, is to ask the question: what might de-stabilise this “theatre” of ownership? What periperformative acts or utterances might re-orient towards the non-human, de-stabilising not only the first-person, speaking, acting “I”, but indeed the authority of a human audience altogether? We can think this both in terms of aesthetics - performance, narrative and the “event” of the telling itself, as well as the de-centering of the supposed audience of the event. Unlike the marriage vow, the periperformative is neither performed for the state authority, nor is it reliant on any other witnessing authority - indeed its purpose is simply to delay the moment of such validation by direct interlocation with whomever has so calmly called them in. The periperformative, it could be said, re-establishes the witness (an ambiguous, somewhat excluded and semi-consensually dragged-in “they”) as an “I” to “you”. In doing so they not only disentangle themselves from the “semi-public “we” of state authority, but return to the interlocation of “I” “you” relations.

When the witnesses of the marriage ceremony are indirectly asked to “speak now or forever hold your peace” they are not expected in this moment to penetrate the “fourth-wall” of the marriage ceremony (performance), to jump up and speak directly and privately to either the bride or groom; they are expected to make themselves known to the figure of authority who *mediates the ceremony* - in this case the representative of church/state. But Sedgwick’s witness either collapses the performative moment by turning away (I leave the church, or the theatre, because I simply don’t want to watch anymore / I’d prefer not to even respond to having been called in), or by direct interlocation, (as exemplified by a female character manoeuvring the groom-to-be into a private conversation to delay his marriage to someone else). In so doing, the periperformative de-stabilises the “proscenium” theatre - if you like, the constitution of the “main event”, its stability both in space as well as time, the “fourth wall” of the theatre itself (or in our context the staging of nonhuman relations by humans for other humans). The periperformative de-links the witness from being assimilated into the ‘semi-consensual’ figure of authority.

The ever-shifting “threshold” of ownership, brings to mind the shifting conditions of

state law which in some cases will deem the rights of nature, and in other places not. It speaks to the ever moving, encroaching threat of extractivism on lands, which often enacts buying out individuals inhabiting said land; it is relevant also to the spillage and uncontrollable fall-out of toxic materialities and radioactivity across human-made boundaries or indeed human fleshly boundaries of skin; and the overturning of protective laws that would prevent such extractivism - in other words, the ever-shifting thresholds of legislature itself.³⁹⁴ It also points to the shifting status of existents themselves - not fixed in a site per se, but manifesting, following, showing up in different ways across spaces and bodies. The periperformative, in its spatialising mode, is entirely necessary for attending to such complex manifestations as the stone-womxn. Sites of human-nonhuman witnessing are sites that shift, are shifting entities and collectivities, not bound to fixity, nor to national boundaries or arbitrary spatial markers of ownership - nor are they bound to manifesting in the same ways each time or in the same places each time.³⁹⁵ Is the role of the witness then ambiguously stretched across human and nonhuman bodies, not a singular or even a collective body, but rather a context in which particulars witnessing one another might be possible?

In their “explicit rejection of state forms of land tenure and group recognition” Karrabing seem to me, to practice a dynamic periperformative (expanded kinship thus deferring the theatre of ownership) move that attempts to delay participating in the “theatre of law” as late liberalism’s governance of difference and markets would have them participate.³⁹⁶ Many Karrabing projects thus rely on what Povinelli terms the ‘bait’ tactic of both getting

³⁹⁴ I am thinking specifically of Bill C-45 (formerly known as the Jobs and Growth Act) which the Harper government passed in Canada in 2012, an omnibus bill that overturned many protective environmental laws, hugely impacting the sustainable life-source for many Indigenous groups and paving the way for multinational investment in pipeline construction and tar sands extraction. It radically reduced the Navigable Waters Protection Act, leaving just 97 of Canada’s approximately 32,000 major lakes protected by the stripped-down act. The proposal of Bill C-45 sparked the *Idle No More* movement in late 2011/early 2012. <http://www.idlenomore.ca>, accessed January 3, 2020.

³⁹⁵ A series of ceremonies I did over the summer of 2018 in Berlin, dealt in immaterial spaces with relations I was in different systems with, and emerged a very specific series of images of objects. The next time I went to the river, I asked a specific question, closed my eyes and when I looked down I saw my hand, whereupon a small object - the same exact shape, colour, size, whose image had emerged over a series of ceremonies in another place entirely - had landed and, wetted by the river water, got stuck. This is an example of the ways in which attending to manifestations refuses fixity of place, opens up different logics and ways of attending as well as leading us to consider what performing for the nonhuman in mutual fields of witnessing, might do.

³⁹⁶ Povinelli, *Geontologies*, p.164.

institutional support, whilst simultaneously ‘baiting’ younger Karrabing members to be interested in Dreaming sites, and indeed manifestations to continue being interested in Karrabing. This means using the knots of power that cluster and get distributed differentially across bodies and spaces, collectivising the resources pulled in by different nodes of the network (Povinelli’s circulation in Western academic spheres pulls in more income and attention say than other members of the Karrabing). This ‘bait’ tactic, as a periperformative mode destabilises the authority of the ‘audience’; it orients directly in modes of interlocution (witnessing) with the nonhuman itself (in this case Dreaming sites) where the representation of these sites is simply the ‘bait’, for the potentiality of being able to continue the community knowledge about these sites and manifestations - to continue tracking, witnessing, understanding them as a mode of survivance for themselves.

I am interested then in a triadic tactic in light of the “theatre of ownership”: pushing on juridical contexts that continue rendering humans as ‘past’ entities; pushing on representational forms that continue rendering nonhumans as non-political entities; and periperformatively destabilising the first two. This is to install another kind of “I” - not a first-person, singular speaking, acting “I” whose constitution of selfhood is reliant on another’s silence (the silent witness to the silencing of other bodies, lives and lands). It is to initiate an “I” which is radically inextricable from the nonhuman existents it seeks to dialogue with directly.³⁹⁷ Whilst Povinelli proposes that a rhetoric of Life/Nonlife be re-framed in terms of a ‘turning away’ of nonhuman existents, “being organised by something that will potentially extinguish that world and the way we exist in it”, she does not ask what such a “something” could propel that would inaugurate another world, not as a result of turning away but further turning towards.³⁹⁸ If - as the visions and *the unearthings* suggest - land and its material and immaterial relations is its own kind of living archive, the conditions of attending that seem to affect appearances and

³⁹⁷ A particularly useful articulation of this is in ‘The Normativity of Creeks’, in *Geontologies* pp.92-117. In discussing the estuarine creek Tjijpel, Povinelli reminds readers that “we received our skin as a consequence of being a part of the arrangement that is Tjijpel”, p.103. See also a discussion of particularities of human and nonhuman Dreamings in “After the End, Stubborn Affects and Collective Practices” (2019) accessed December 12, 2019, online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B39F2duTJJ4>.

³⁹⁸ Povinelli, *Geontologies* p.56.

manifestations therein, reveal an autonomous kind of functioning of this living archive as “concealed and exposed, expanded and contracted”.³⁹⁹ Listening to respect its closures as much as its invitations then, is paramount.

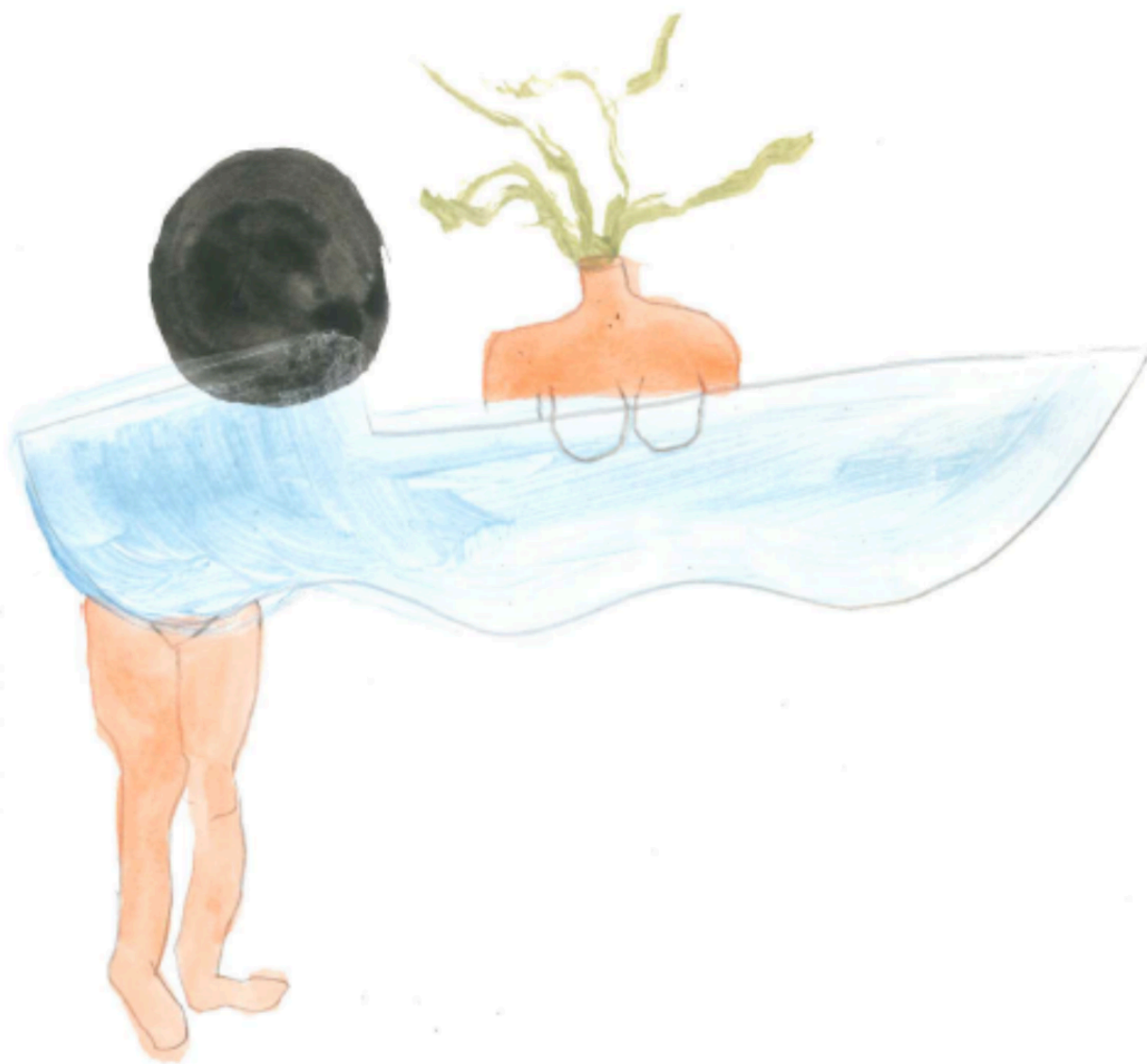
I am here concerned with what authorities/audiences emerge when a periperformative move is made - away from the “theatre” of ownership tout court, and likewise away from the “proscenium stage” of theatre (and its audience), and back to direct contact with the nonhuman at this threshold of encounter. If we turn to the stone-womxn as an entity emergent at the threshold of encounter between body and land, we turn to a space of blurry encounter between an “I” who might experience a “non-I” through an enfolding and overlapping, made possible through the shared field of ‘mind’. I am concerned, one could say, with how to represent myself to this nonhuman other. I am concerned with how the stone-womxn see me, and how I show them that I see them, in order to activate a space of nonhuman-human witnessing. Through this care, attendance and promise to the ongoing co-poesis between my body and theirs, some kind of vibrational potential that is not Logos, nor is it noise, might emerge.

This brings us to the crux of what is at stake here: the authority that can validate the efficacy of my actions to attend to this, is a nonhuman authority - is the system of relations (land - the river, river stones, stone-womxn etc) itself. This absolutely does not mean I am not accountable to socio-political contexts or human authorities. Rather, the project of listening to what happens when I address land and its relations, requires orienting towards land and its relations to attend to whether or not my address, actions, communications, are received, responded to, and in turn commented upon. Paying attention to whether my attending to the relations comprising *land* is effective or not, in this context and for this project is a material poet(h)ics of witnessing. This arguably urgent kind of ‘reading’ cannot be done by extricating the presence of the human in various ways, because it is precisely the mutual process of interpretation, with and through care, love and attention, that co-creatively affects manifestations continuing to show themselves (hence in this context continuing to guide an

³⁹⁹ Ibid. p.157.

ethics).

Attending to them is a periperformative mode that turns away from performing nonhuman selfhood to an audience, and delays assuming what juridical and political processes could (from this more-than-human emergence) entail. It re-orientes towards the nonhuman as that which can respond to and comment on the efficacy of such periperformative moves, in order to call in a different *way of being political* as well as different context of political relations. The human audience that is interpolated in this ongoing performance are collective witnesses, whose collaboration co-emerges, and co-interprets, appearances or manifestations. Cultivating a shared space of “I” and “non-I” (human and nonhuman) amongst collectivities of humans, is a pedagogical practice of bringing more humans into the possibility of being able to decipher, discuss, share knowledge about the interpretation of such existents, rather than argue on their existence in the first place. The visions and ongoing practice reveal that to think of the river as a fixed and stable site - one that I might go to or not be at - is to render it available for the imposition of any other type of boundary - be it protective or not. The stone-womxn, who are inextricable from the river and the river stones, continue to appear in various very mobile ways, across thresholds of body and place. In following the shape-shifting, border transgressing stone-womxn, could another space of politics emerge that similarly unfolds, and folds again, rises up, and just as easily, dissolves?



Lifted. 2019.
Pencil sketch, watercolour and gouache on paper.

August 2016

With the river again. Working alone. I find Langden Brook, the place where the tributaries come down off the fells and wind through the valley on the opposite side to the River Wyre. One day walking through Langdon, I become aware very suddenly of a spot just below the shepherd's hut, down by the convergence of two streams of the river. I head there and suddenly pass a stone with a strange looking larger stone balanced on top of it. I immediately want to 'lift the lid' off the stone, to see if anyone is underneath. It is a strange thought to have, and whilst I have it I also become aware that this stone is not mine to touch. I do not touch the stone.

I am still in the area of this strange calling stone, when it becomes apparent to me that certain river stones feel to be moved - or rather, the stones somehow seem to come towards me, they seem to appear, certain ones for different reasons, each with a specific feeling. I respond, moving them to where it feels like my body takes a deep inhale, or registers some ease. In these positions, I begin speaking. Words come out that I have not consciously thought to speak, sometimes in voices that do not feel or sound like mine. In one position I become incredibly aware of my throat - it hurts and it does not feel as though I can swallow. I immediately am very aware of the presence of my grandfather, my mother's father who died of cancer of the oesophagus. The stones begin to flesh out like this - next my great aunt, his sister, then my great-grandmother, then my grandmother. I have not met all of these figures in real life, some I know very little about. I weave between their positions, moving them as it feels right, speaking what comes into my mouth as it does. Although I do not realise at the time, what is taking place is some kind of constellation. In a few years I will study constellations practice, and learn the concept of the 'knowing field', a demarcated space in which ancestors and entities - known or unknown - appear. The constellation comes to some sort of end, and somewhat stunned, I sit a while before realising the light is beginning to fade. I start walking out of the valley.

Not far along the narrow path I see her. I am struck by her grey hair and slight frame. We stop as though we know each other. We chat for a bit. She is tearful and tells me she must get on, she is visiting the place where they scattered her brother's ashes - by the shepherd's hut at the point where the two streams converge. I wonder about the constellation that has just emerged there which had a brother and sister so central at the heart of it. She turns to go and says her name is Sheila. I immediately recall Sheila-na-gig, an aspect of the Cailleach; both are hag goddesses, those who create through dissolution not reproduction or nurture. It is these hags who create the rivers and the mountains and the stones.

It is almost dark, the last night before I leave. I am at the farmhouse, further downstream, where the river bends around the sheep field. This is the place of my first encounter with the river. I find a large stone in the middle of the river that it is possible to sit on. I wade in. I am here for some hours, sitting on the stone in the middle of the river. At some point I see it - the whole river has become a head of hair, and the more I look the more it seems to expand and engulf me, as though I could dive in and enter another universe. I force myself to keep looking although it is terrifying, and I cannot imagine putting my feet back in the water to get to the banks again. I know very suddenly that the river is a serpent; that a river-serpent-womxn has appeared. It is unfamiliar, unnerving and beyond my understanding. The next morning the banks have overflowed and flooded, the whole field swelling with water. No longer the smooth and dark of the peat-fell water, the river is a rush and torrent of a demand.

A problem facing Karrabing and their lifeworlds, as articulated by Povinelli, and which also affect (although in very different contexts with very different repercussions) the Lancashire river and the stone-womxn, is that analytics of existence which could be interpreting more-than-human relations in ways that enable their continuance, are not being allowed to change the underlying metaphysics of law, or prioritised as ecological pedagogies. Thus late liberalism continues to exclude certain humans and their analytics from the realm of the political and therefore future; high intensity extractivism, and all its environmental racism, goes unchecked. A potential problem for Western critical theory is that it is largely focused on articulating relations differently either by deconstructing previously held truths about the ontological nature of matter or nonhuman held by those who “have never been modern”, or finally beginning to include (albeit selectively) analytics of existence of those who have “never been primitive”.⁴⁰⁰ Meanwhile, what the nonhuman teaches, propels, imagines, possibilises - is often still ignored. This paradox which both propels appropriation, and re-establishes anthropocentrism, is held firmly in place. Engagement at the psychic encounter between nonhuman and human, an immaterial and yet real aspect of said collectivity, is largely overlooked.

What would it look like for a course of decolonial environmentalism to situate at its centre, direct communication with the nonhuman, with land itself? Where direct communication means taking all aspects of decision making, pedagogical, social, political and otherwise, to the nonhuman/land and its relations, and asking first. What would this as a practice - and practicing it as an orientation, a tending towards, another kind of habit - begin to do?⁴⁰¹ Directly communicating with the nonhuman/land itself would be precisely to emerge the form, structure or organisation of such learning, as well as the theoretical content that might arise within it. What different knowledges would this emerge, what new constellations would be necessary to pull focus around this? What practical resources or re-organisations of support

⁴⁰⁰ Eduardo Viveiros De Castro “Exchanging Perspectives: The Transformation of Objects into Subjects in Amerindian Ontologies” *Common Knowledge* Vol. 10. Issue 3 (2004): pp.463–484, at p.483.

⁴⁰¹ In reference to Sara Ahmed’s discussion of orientation as a tending towards an otherwise, an ongoing and often invisible labour, in response to the ‘given’ lines of heteronormativity. What are the ‘given’ lines of humancentric praxis, and how can we orient otherwise? What does this labour, on a day to day basis, look like? Sara Ahmed *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006).

would be necessary to enable this? What else would have to be included - i.e. dreams, rituals, ceremonies, technologies of consciousness - and taken seriously as sources of relational knowledges? Such a formulation would not embed decolonial thought into already existing structures and practices, but re-orienting to land/nonhuman, would necessarily and inevitably disrupt temporalities, spatial boundaries, understandings of knowledge practices, organisational infrastructures and much more. The effect of such a re-orientation, alongside ongoing critical thinking and dialogue with decoloniality, in itself would necessarily be decolonial, because land, - as much as it is inscribed, and “nature” as much as it is constructed, also *is* and *does* beyond this relation.

If I design a course about my friend Sophie, but nobody is allowed to speak to Sophie, whatever I teach about Sophie will probably go much in the direction I imagine it going in. If I facilitate a class whose teacher is Sophie, in which everyone places communicating directly with Sophie (with respect, not fetishisation) at the centre of the activities, keeping her consent, comfort, what she needs etc. as priority, then what Sophie will do or say or contribute is as yet unknown to us, and will surely be different from what some, if not all, of us imagined. Indeed, prior to this class itself we would have to first have asked Sophie’s consent. She might have already said “on these terms and not these”. There is no saying where we might end up. Whilst we can discuss and talk about the ways in which Sophie - as a socially constituted being - has been impacted and shaped by social forces, she nevertheless is more than the sum of these parts, and will surely have more to say for herself - and more to say about things beyond simply herself - than this. We can deconstruct the conditions that press on her, and attempt to disentangle her from these, but at the end of the day, it is unknown to us, what - in the particular context of the “us” of the class and the where and the why etc. she might, from moment to moment, *do*, or how she might, from moment to moment, respond to us - to our questions, our desires, our actions, our behaviour. We are not, therefore, a class designed to consider or find out who Sophie is, nor are we a class designed to prioritise Sophie by speaking about her rather than speaking to her. Rather, we are wondering what might happen to us as a collective not only of which Sophie is a part, but which in fact would never have even come

into being without Sophie. Which is to say, we are a collective oriented first and foremost around listening to what Sophie has to say about us, because without that, there would be no “us” at all. My point is that, as much as “nature” has been constructed within the ongoing construction of whiteness as property, land and the nonhuman are also *not* concepts, nor are they here for humans to speculate new structures out of them without their consent, participation and primary collaboration.⁴⁰²

Such appearances reveal themselves when one establishes and over a long period of time, attends to, human-nonhuman kinships. Attending to this plurality of ways is an act of ‘radical inclusion’, that does not seek to explain away the appearance, not to fix where appearances might happen in either “site” or “non-site”, rural or city, internal or external - a lifelong process of tracking, acknowledging, tracking, and acknowledging.⁴⁰³ The more this tracking layers and builds, the more it interacts with other tracks; this is kinship and it changes and impacts how we might think of selves, representation, presence, appearance and witnessing. If settler-colonial and white, property based legal systems will never accept alternative analytics of existence *on their own terms*, what does it do to perform these analytics anyway? If the nonhuman reveals its intentionality, responsivity and imagination across all types of bodies, in a myriad of semiotic and sensorial ways, then how might this nonhuman manifest its own intervention, its own futurity - as response to human behaviour? I am not referring to the ways a “turning away” might be the performance of a kind of refusal on the part of the nonhuman

⁴⁰² I write this paragraph at about 3pm on Monday, 10th February. Sophie is my sister’s name, and as I write, I am surprised by two things. The paragraph is written quickly in one go. I am usually tentative within the realms of what could be challenged as anthropomorphism, but in this paragraph, I write freely without caution. I am surprised that the name Sophie appears; I would not usually consider her name first when giving an example of a “friend”, as sister relations are such specific sibling bonds. However, her name appears and I continue writing. I have the sensation that I am following the lead of something, that there is some presence with me as we collaboratively write. Later in the evening, I come to read over this paragraph. I text my sister and tell her that she has made it into my PhD! We joke, and suddenly I am filled with a strong awareness. Sophie is linked to a specific mountain. She has been given a name that connects her to this mountain in very specific ways, obliges her to it and to the people who know it intimately well. I realise this connection. We both comment on it and she asks me what time I wrote this. I work out it must have been around 3pm. She says also at that time, she was showing our father the mountain on google map. My sensation of the appearance of Sophie in the text, at the same time as the appearance of the mountain between bodies with whom I share many things, reveals to me that it is also, somehow the mountain, which appears in the text. I have no idea why. Perhaps it wishes to propel something, that was otherwise not being said. Either way, I write this as one of frequent incidents of *appearance* - whereby nonhuman existents can be said to appear, to enact their presence, across time, space, bodies, thresholds of all kinds. The next step is to keep listening out for appearances which might in turn, shed more light on this one.

⁴⁰³ See Chapter 2, Methodologies: Systemic Constellations.

existents. I ask what is the more-than-human world of nonhuman, spirit and ancestor already propelling, and how might we be obliged to collaborate in, or steward, such emergences?

The evolving practice both at the Lancashire site, and away from it through *Cove*, *Almanac* and *the unearthings*, reveals the potential of an embodied periperformative practice to delve into the always already happening. Participation with relational more-than-human existents is made possible by engaging place and its layers of co-existing temporality. Hence we looked through Eve Sedgwick's proposal that the performative is rather spatialised, and extended this to include the *theatre of ownership tout court*. This as an extension of the 'cut' which forms the foundational premise of global capitalism - ownership of land as the literal and metaphysical ground beneath our feet. It is the fallacy of the non-emergent self - one who is supposedly not constituted by the more-than-human world (indeed whose language is supposedly not constituted by this world) - which extends through this theatre of ownership tout court. The result of this extension of the 'cut' makes it harder and harder over time, to perceive more-than-human existents and communication across Life Nonlife divides. This is the numbness of the second vision and the embodiment of contemporary coloniality.

Each iteration of my ongoing practice thus explores processes of co-emerging and co-fading knowledge, through lingering in and with a mobile threshold between human and nonhuman, self and other.⁴⁰⁴ The story I begin this chapter with, indicates one moment of such an experience that occurs between body and land and propels certain processes.⁴⁰⁵ The stones are river stones, and inseparable from the resonances of the river. My first encounter with the site involved asking the land for some direction, and as a result going into the middle of the river to pick a stone from the riverbed. The first vision occurred that night. A year later,

⁴⁰⁴ I include the term co-fading here to emphasise that manifestations emerging throughout the practice, fall out of perception as well as they appear. This fading might be a kind of rhythmic intensity and passage of proximity and distance between bodies; a necessarily in flux, dynamic relation. The depression I come to discuss in *Dam | Diaphragm | Digestion*, can be felt as a period of a more durational "co-fading", that points to the mutuality of the collaboration, and its different textures of knowledge making.

⁴⁰⁵ In this moment, there seemed to be an overlapping both with the woman I met and her story (as well as the mythic entity she brings with her through name), as well as an overlapping with the various entities that emerge in the spontaneous constellation work. The texture and quality of this type of encounter and its appearances is illusive, ephemeral, and resonates for a long time after the event. It might give rise to multiple readings in and over time, and has therefore the sensation of a pulse to it, with different surges in intensity and eventfulness.

I would find the site again, and experience an unfolding of a kind of constellation that emerged spontaneously at the river involving various ancestors. Later that night, the river figured for a split second into another form, and I felt the potential of state-changing performative practices to induce ‘falling into’ the emergent ‘mind’ and resonances of different existents.

However, his focus on the land itself as a ‘field of mind’, and the appearance of the river-serpent-womxn, differentiate my understanding of ‘mind’ quite radically from Kohn’s. I consider my attention to communication as situated in *resonance* - an affective and energetic process, which is undoubtedly mediated by forms of semiosis, but not relegated to the sonic (linguistic or phonic in its communication), to the visible or physical changes in the environment (a palm tree crashing) or to biological bodies as interpretants and links in chains of semiosis (a monkey jumping, a plant growing, my body moving out of the wind). I of course include said phenomena in my understanding of the multi-semiotic lifeworlds beyond the human, but this experience of the field of ‘mind’ and its behaviour, as well as the river and its resonance, situate my focus on the invisible, imaginal, vibrational and emergent phenomena arising at the encounter between embodied flesh and land. How this emerges into ‘voice’ is subsequently of great importance.



Bartering for an Exchange, 2019.
Pencil sketch with watercolour and gouache on paper.

After this second river encounter and the spontaneous entrance of more-than-human presences with and through the stones and objects within the landscape, I wanted to explore what conditions, states and strategies might make space for participation with more invisible existents. During the research for *Cove*, I worked with collaborator Shelley Etkin in an old cement factory (turned artist residency) on the East German border with Poland. The place had been recently inhabited after a period of being left empty after its closure as a working factory in the early 1990s. We began experimenting with attuning to the place and its wider field of relations, through various improvised forms of attending to the porous subject-shifting potentialities of a wider field of 'mind'. Although *Cove* resulted in an hour-long public choreographic performance, I draw focus on this particular moment in the research, rather than the performance itself. This is because the latter reveals an aspect of the developing methodology: being guided into a choreography of ceremony to attend to the existents that appear during the process. It indicates the transferrable principles of this work and interrupts the more explicitly biosemiotic lifeworlds of Amazonian contexts, and the more rural Lancashire site, to emphasise that land and its relations, as well as the wider field of 'mind' within which presences manifest, is not restricted to one or other kind of site.

Shelley and I had been working between movement improvisations, performance strategies and our own improvised form of working with the 'knowing field', when it was decided that I would do an hour long dance improvisation in one of the warehouse spaces. Various 'forces' I will call them, had been appearing through our embodied improvisations. One of these had been the 'un-maker', and we had been exploring the behaviour and tendency of this force, as that which breaks the world to make it anew again. During the improvisation I became very aware of beginning to embody this 'force' and its inclinations. I had been playing with a large circular mirror, exploring different choreographies as this feeling came over me. I felt and noticed a distinct desire to break something, although knew that I probably shouldn't; the more I felt I shouldn't, the more I wanted to. The feeling was so strong that I began

pushing the mirror and catching it, edging closer and closer to the limit of doing this without breaking it. Sure enough, somehow between deliberately and non-intentionally, I missed one catch and the large, round mirror shattered with a resounding echo. The improvisation continued with a huge release of energy after this event. It was indeed a 'shock'; we had seemingly called in the force of the un-maker and their capacity to 'rupture' the given world. The improvisation came to a close and I was particularly aware of all the debris, including some stones and a ladder - other objects we had been working with during the week. I set the stones to mark out some pools of resonance and drew a chalk line roughly around the whole assemblage. We left the improvisation and the work for the day.

The next day, sometime around dusk, Shelley and I entered the warehouse again and were struck by the assemblage of objects, especially the shattered mirror. We began moving around the space and decided to 'step in' as it were, to what felt like a resonating field of existents (what I would later call the "knowing field"). We invited some 'forces' in, and named one of them 'abundance'; this force seemed to be best situated right within the remnants of the shattered mirror. Standing in this place the shards of the mirror clearly looked like an aerial map of the entire landscape around the cement factory; the roads, the canal, the river Oder (which is the geographical border with Poland). It was whilst standing in this place - an uncanny map of present relations to be followed into the future - that a huge tumble and crash came from the next warehouse. What happened for the next hour or so in the adjoining warehouse, involved a very distinct, direct and tangible communication with a spirit existent who made themselves known to us. In this case working with a human collaborator was paramount, as we were able to constantly check in with whether we were receiving the 'same' information or not, hence stay connected to what we understood to be pertaining to the same shared, albeit invisible - world, rather than dismissing the invisible information. Although we subsequently understood this potentiality to be extremely normal, at the time it was shocking and we lacked the experience necessary to deal with such eventfulness.

After some time we decided to step back into the place amongst all the mirror remnants. From here, we both (in alternate moments) reported a proliferation of information about how

to attend to this spirit, whose ‘stuck in time-ness’ was clearly problematic. We could see this dynamic of relations was repeating, or had the potential to repeat, in the contemporary relations between humans, land and nonhuman elements in the community. We responded very readily, taking notes of all the information that emerged (that one or the other of us, whoever was stepping into this place between the mirrors, described through speaking). We were left with ‘instructions’ as it were, for a kind of ceremony, involving attending to various elements of the place, in very specific ways.

I will give one example, which reveals to me that this moment was one of accessing a wider field of ‘mind’ precisely because the perspectives that seemed to be emerging, were - like the mirror shards themselves which so replicated the surrounding landscape - not located in one or other element (plant, stone, spirit, or any other human or nonhuman existent). Rather, it seemed a perspective was *commenting on the relation of existents* in the place, and this perspective was what needed responding to. A small part of the ensuing instructions were for us to cover our throats with indigo. In a separate piece of information, it was revealed that we had to use the plant St John’s wort - it was not specified for what. We had no idea where we would come across indigo dye, until we began collecting the St Johns wort the next day, and found that as we rubbed the yellow petals, an indigo residue rubbed off on our fingers. We painted our throats accordingly. Falling into the wider field of ‘mind’, meant that we were able to follow and navigate our way through the entangled human inscriptions that get incorporated into and similarly emerge out of the land itself, and their relation with material existents present to that particular site - in this case St John’s wort.

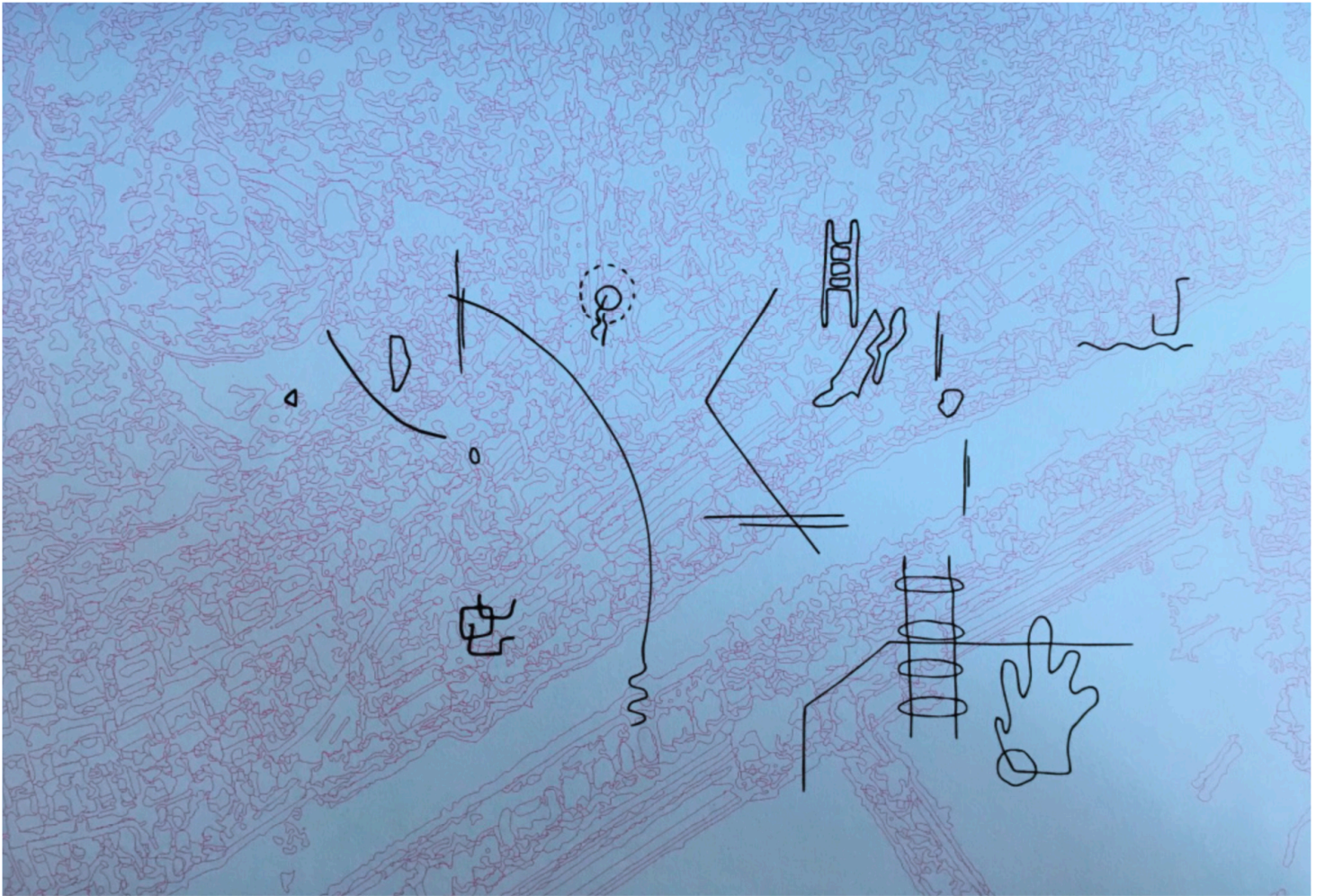
Whatever manifestations were communicating from the place, were doing so in ways that choreographed our actions. It was a nonhuman dramaturgy, that we entered into co-poesis with, emerging with our own very specific performance, directly to, for and with, the more-than-human collectivities of that place. This example points to an aspect of my understanding of what opens up within the shared space of ‘mind’, if we approach land as a ‘knowing field’ and follow its emergences, suturing, or joining them up in acts and responses. The improvised one-on-one form of the *Almanac* series, followed by the ‘ground-up’ emergence of existents in

the making of *Cove*, revealed the potential for co-poetic labour to be choreographed through attending to the land's system of relations.⁴⁰⁶

This turning point in the practice reveals that the curation of the event, making oneself available, establishing contact between bodies material and immaterial, is as much part of the invisible labour as the subsequent responsivity to the event. The *Cove* experience made apparent that the 'shock' of the mirror (mirrored you could say, in the shock of the spirit entering), could only be responded to according to the invitation of this un-maker. That is, the 'shock' that created an opening for the world to be different in some way, could be followed if we entered into the different kind of 'mind' that was being presented in that moment, not simply by responding as we habitually knew (or thought) the world to be. The 'map' of fragments seen in the shattered mirror make this approach literal and unmissable. In this process, movement and voice were mediums for information that wouldn't have arisen from singularly 'human' perspectives. In agreeing to be in collaboration with whatever was guiding this choreography, we situated our bodies as witnesses to the more-than-human; from here, the "non-I" within the "I" made possible a response - for existents to be attended to in a new or different relation to one another than before, through a series of concrete acts. The resulting performance was not seen by humans, but performed directly with and for the land and its field of material, and immaterial existents.

We left material traces of our work throughout the site, and the following diagram maps the actions at the site. It consists of a digital bird's eye view of the Betonest site, with the canal running through it (red graphics). Over the top are hand-drawn symbols that mark pivotal moments in the ceremony, in relation to the location they were carried out at the site. As a shift in the trajectory of the practice, I include this map rather than the hour long performance, to prioritise recording the eventfulness of this moment of site-specific research.

⁴⁰⁶ These terms dramaturgy and choreography of the nonhuman are also used by collaborator Shelley Etkin, to articulate her Garden as Studio project, which I co-facilitated a part of during summer 2017. See *Garden as Studio*, August 2017, in Timeline of Practice. Shelley and I's ongoing collaborations come under the collaborative name L.A.R.K "Living Archive of Re-membered Knowledges".



“Mapping the Ceremony”; An Expanded Constellation. Stolpe, Germany. Research and Development for Cove

The *Cove* experience, emerging from improvised performance and a subsequent attention to its opening up of a wider field of ‘mind’, the *Almanac* series and the ongoing sounding practice, all direct me towards a question of voice. The concern here is not to deny the capacity for nonhuman existents to manifest their messages in multi-sensorial phenomena which might be experienced *through* voice. Even in Plumwood’s account, the whispering unease that turns into a shout of danger, is a voice not specifically indexing any particular body. It is related - in some way - to the sudden rupture of the rock formation, but it is this *in some way*, that remains foggy, or rather, for our explorations, I believe it necessary to prolong its fogginess. In this case ‘hearing a voice’ or suddenly having a thought in mind, can be taken seriously as a potential emergent property of bodily phenomena attuning to signs at somatic and non-conscious levels, emerging into recognisable human thought. To what extent then is voice shared and stretched across bodies? Perhaps the quality of voice does not immediately assume an “I” and a “you” but rather, is the “non-I” emerging within the “I” in a far more shared, affective, blurry space of encounter.

Whilst there is much concern with how the nonhuman might be ‘heard’ or represented in a political space, this question often falls on the side of the nonhuman: how beings might self-represent beyond linguistic frameworks, and push for a politic beyond what might speak and therefore ‘enter’ said political domain. Whereas through this practice, what seems to be evolving is that, when one opens to resonance expressing through land and its system of relations in specific ways, one’s “I” is somewhat overlapping and strangely co-constituted by an ever-shifting “non-I”. I am interested in how humans speak to more-than-human existents as much as the other way round, and deepening this exploration seems to reveal that any distinction between the two orientations is not so clear cut. The ongoing practice reveals this phenomena in various different ways.

During the *Almanac* series, the experiment was to track and bring into figuration, give voice to (in sound or language or gesture), what was felt, seen, heard, experienced. Voice was a tool of tracking, of making material the immaterial, of attending more closely to micro-attunements by exploring what was at the threshold of consciousness between mind and body.

Moving the stones through sound and speech and movement, enabled this process of figuring - not as a compositional strategy, but through the sensation of *being called to* certain stones and not others. When I described the images that emerged, they were often specific to the participant (their life or concern etc). The witnessing can be said to have occurred somewhere between my body, the body of the participant and the body of the stones - ▲ - whereby *some information and not others*, arose in this shared, affective space. Voice was the making material as well as the tuning fork, to pick up the vibrational frequencies of these attunements. Through such performance, the site of the river can also be said to be *hereish* - the mobile threshold of a psychic space, encountered at the bodily border between human and stone.

In the developing practice, moving towards and away from different “I’s” is not a marked threshold event, nor a singular moment, rather a gradient, gradual and wavering as well as a sometimes immediate or surprising passage, where the ever-shifting, blurry, mobile threshold of ownership (between “mine” and “not mine”) is deliberately explored with regards to perception, sensation, image and language. What is at stake in this trans-subjective “I” and “non-I”, is how it might emerge another way of being political - where politics can be said to be a public space of discreet positionality (I take this position, and not that), and one in which understanding, acknowledging and bringing to justice differing positions and the knots of power that pass through them, is absolutely paramount. How might aesthetics, practices and pedagogies do the work of both? Is there another way of emerging political practices and structures that moves beyond the dichotomy of speaking “for” or not speaking at all?

One of the elements of voice that becomes important in this practice is its phatic capacity to create a channel - not only an aural one, but one of frequency, vibration and resonance. As a mode of address, an immaterial touch, it is the strangely enfolding and looping directionality of this immaterial touch that is of interest here.⁴⁰⁷ Whilst Kohn focusses on the sonic properties of language and its multi-species travel, I am interested in the voice as a tool

⁴⁰⁷ The “phatic” channel is “the physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication”, in Roman Jakobsen, “Closing statement: Linguistics and poetics”, in Thomas A. Sebeok, ed., *Style in Language*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1958 [1960]), pp.353. In her material poetics that we will address in the next section, Kristen Kreider emphasises this phatic communication as “anterior to language, but coexistent with speech...none other than the material aspect of language,” in “Material Poetics and the Communication Event” *Performance Research*, Vol. 20, 1, (2015) pp.80-89.

for attuning to material and immaterial bodies, an invitation to co-present “non-I’s”, in particular entities without bodily “hearing” capacities, such as for example, the river and river stones. Let us recall what was described in Part 1 Ch 2: firstly, the voice is often experienced as being “ahead of” the body - describing phenomena that, when followed, brings me to the manifestation of that phenomena in the landscape. Secondly, the emergence in site-specific research, of voices whose texture, tone, timbre, pitch, and content, feel definitely “not mine”, be they human or nonhuman. I give voice to them, they are uttered through my body, but it is clear neither the sound, nor content of these utterances can be said to have emerged *solely* from my own body. Of course they are mediated by my body and therefore subject to its physiological, cultural and contextual position and memory. Usually this phenomena occurs when working very closely for a long time with specific existents for example a particular patch of ground, a rock, or tree.⁴⁰⁸ I will add a third phenomena which is somewhere between the above two, and occurs in site-specific research and in *the unearthings*. That is, the emergence of certain phrases erupting out of the continual phatic channel - and what we will come to consider as a kind of iconic propagation of sounding - that reveal *ways of interpreting* relations between existents. These phrases express perspectives that I am not aware of consciously thinking before uttering and which comment on relations between elements or existents either in *the unearthing* or nearby environment.

It is this quality of voicing that I want to propose as a practice of digestion (reading/interpreting through the body), which differently approaches the directionality of voice to how it might more commonly be thought: where an “I” might appear in a political public through a call or an address from here to there, from “I” to “you”, traversing some interval either of distance or duration (if we think of text, or objects similarly making said call). Instead, sounding either emerges a bizarrely overlapping “I” and “non-I” through sonic quality, and/or distinct information emerging, and has the sensation of coming from “over there” to “here”, and emerging ‘through’ voice. This strange sensation is of sound coming from the future,

⁴⁰⁸ This phenomena will likely be familiar to practitioners of somatic practice working closely with land, through practices such as Helen Poyner’s or Anna Halprin’s.

because the future is ‘over there’ as some kind of horizon or physical object in the landscape (that tree over there is some kind of future in relation to the distance and time it takes me to walk there). When I attune to that tree vocally, it seems to come from ‘over there’ through me and out of my voice. Instead of the distance or interval ‘between’ one body that speaks to others in order to propel or install a future, the voice is rather vibrationally conducted *through* the body, flesh, bone etc. from various positions in the 360 degree landscape. The horizon, in all senses of the word, is an infinite radial, material possibility without telos, without arrival. Voicing is a way of imagining the affective force of different materialities and immaterial existents, and swallowing them from the ground up as it were. Like the stone-womxn, it swells in the ground, rises through the base of the spine and emerges through the throat and open mouth. As such, voice as an apparatus of relation might not be what is called from one to another, traversing a material interval between, but rather the means by which the “I” can make itself porous to the “non-I”, as another mode of listening.

As we have seen in settler-colonial politics of recognition, the appearance and voice of Indigenous subjects within the political, is often only allowed when that appearance adheres to dominant, racist ideologies and imaginaries, leaving less and less room for certain modes of analysis and living. It interpolates some ways of being, not others, into the future. Furthermore, ‘appearance’ can be distinctly dangerous in and of itself, when black, queer, trans, Indigenous, female... the list goes on. The white subject’s fallacy of an interval of call and response is ruptured by the racial violence of all those instances of ‘interruptions’ in which white policeman neither ‘call’, nor wait for a response. Sharpe calls this the literal “interruption” of black lives, from the daily violence of policemen’s non-consensual “stop and frisk”, to the fatal interruptions in which victims’ calls (“I can’t breathe”) are neither heard, received, nor responded to.⁴⁰⁹ If the theatre of ownership tout court is one in which subjects are seen only when they appear *in particular ways*, then the appearance of other ways of being, as well as the un-interrupted appearance of bodies, is thwarted from emerging in this space, or indeed continuing in its future. Appearance as the legibility/audibility of a call and its response across

⁴⁰⁹ Sharpe, *In the Wake* pp.81-101.

an interval implying some trajectory into the future, is called into question.⁴¹⁰ I am interested then in another kind of passage between human and nonhuman bodies, which does not assume a linguistic or gestural kind of ‘hail’ but might be the energetic dynamics of a different kind of exchange. Hence I am attending to my experience of the strange quality of existents emerging through a phatic channel of sound, in order to pay attention to this dynamic, which might open a different approach to voice and different modes of navigating the politic of this encounter.

The phatic channel established through vocal play and sounding in site-specific contexts as well as during *the unearthings*, seems to function in much the way Kohn describes “iconic propagation”. The icon bears a similarity or likeness to the world or object; in this case an aural kind of mimesis takes place. Kohn gives the example of a Runa woman Luisa, imagining the travel of a particular bird through the forest, and making the sounds that might pertain to the bird’s call as it jumps from leaf to leaf.⁴¹¹ Her playful vocalising moves through iconic similarities of the sonic qualities of language or utterance, without any end point or need to arrive somewhere. This delaying of the symbolic deductive capacity of human thought, in favour of a more abductive logic whereby sounds *sound enough like other sounds*, to slip into one another and for Luisa to thus ‘travel’ through them, allows for an unexpected journey giving rise to alternative trajectories of interpretation. However, in my practice, this mode of iconic propagation is not a form of mimicry in response to other sounds. When practiced in the landscape, it is an attempt to touch material and immaterial surroundings and to register my subtler internal attunements that might otherwise go unnoticed. Sometimes the practice is just this, sounding as a mode of navigation. Other times for no apparent reason, my voice will shift very dramatically and express either a sonic quality or specific information that feels surprising to me. This voice - its sound, material quality and its content, what is uttered - clearly does not belong *solely* to me, whilst of course is mediated by the social, material, physiological context of my particular body through which it emerges. Although this boundary cannot be distinctly

⁴¹⁰ See Rebecca Schneider’s work on the ethics of response, as read through performance’s gesture, repeatability and difference. ‘In Our Hands: An Ethics of Gestural Response-ability’ Rebecca Schneider in *Conversation with Lucia Ruprecht. Performance Philosophy* Vol 3 (1) (2017) pp.108-125.

⁴¹¹ Kohn, *How Forests Think* pp.170-178.

drawn, there is an enfolding of a “non-I” within and through the body of “I”. It is the iconic propagation of these ending-less sound currents, that seem to provide a current of voice or frequency into which other perspectives can slip.

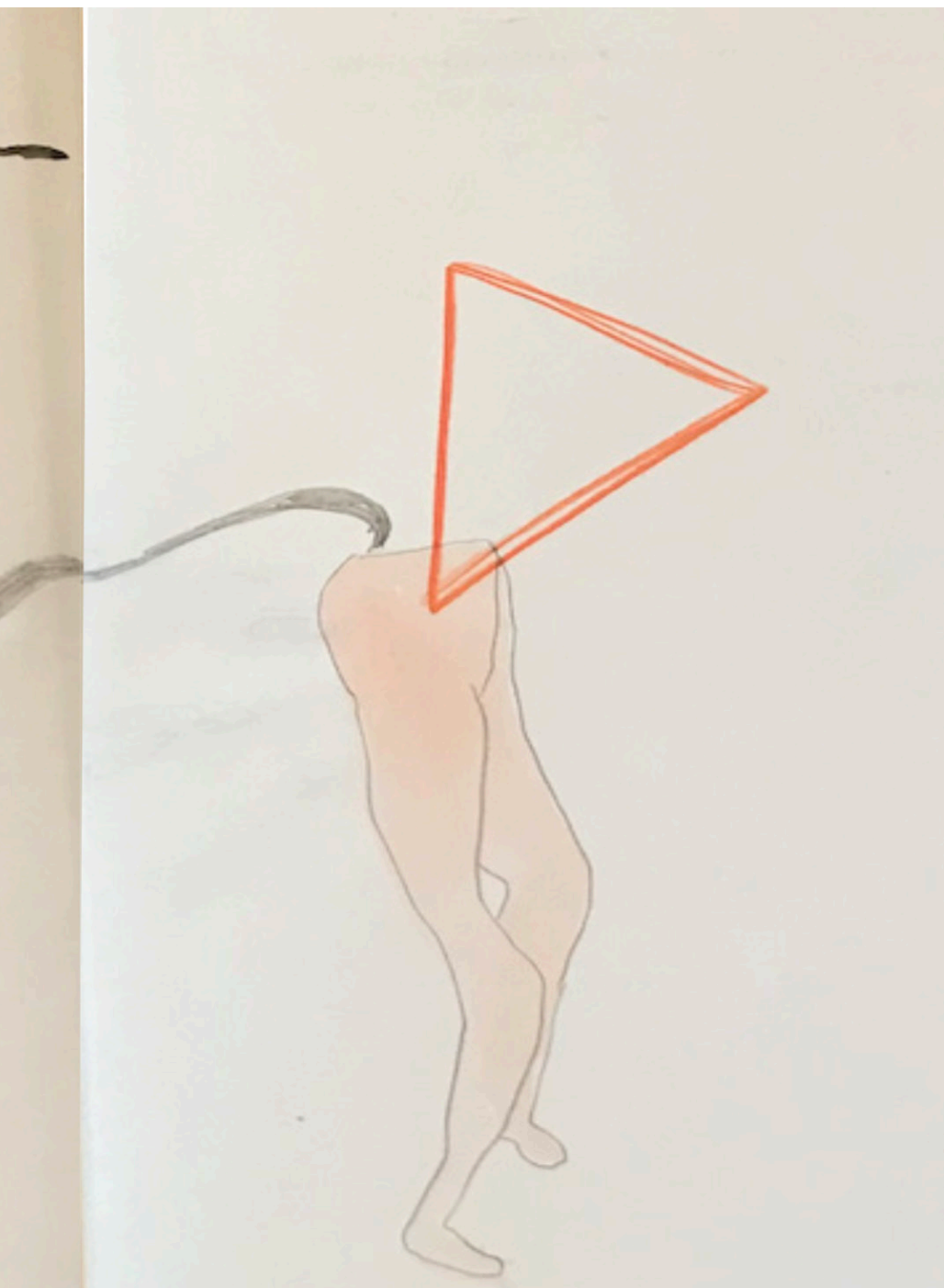
In *the unearthings*, iconic propagation is another mode by which to follow the sonic qualities of words and go about ‘figuring’ in a different way, (bringing figures into appearance and likewise figuring out the relations between them). There is also a lot of silence in *the unearthings*, but when speech is used, I often attempt to keep words and their symbolic register enmeshed in and with the more iconic and indexical registers, the feeling and texture of sound, with no rush to arrive anywhere in particular. As with Luisa, this stretches out and prolongs the abductive logic, rather than falling into another mode of enquiry which would jump somewhat out of the emergent field to impose a reading onto it. This mode of iconic propagation more often than not arrives me at a suturing ‘otherwise’ perspective between existents who have appeared in *the unearthing*. It leads me to believe Kohn’s proposal needs extending beyond a sonic and aural framework. We might expand the capacity of the voice in relation to the appearance of subjects and slipping into the ‘thought’ of an expanded, wider field of ‘mind’ beyond the human. Here voice is not just an aural mode of communication responsive to other sounds or utterances, nor does it make its own, symbolic pathway. It is a passage for more affective modes of attunement, the blurred manner in which sensorial phenomena coalesce into thought, through an emergent abductive logic. The wider field of ‘mind’ is entered through the body always. It is a deeply affective and affected place, an agreement to be porous to the textures of feeling that swell up from the ground and resonate from every existent.

In these instances, voice *navigates*, brings existents into *appearance* from different times and spaces. Voice becomes something *not only* belonging to the one who speaks, enabling more overlapping spaces between human, nonhuman, ancestor or immaterial existent. This not only opens up the role of voice beyond the individual speaking subject, but its enfolding of the “non-I” within the “I” also de-stabilises the singularity of the speaking subject in space (“here” and “not there”). This capacity to cross the threshold of ownership might then point to a different kind of political subject, not the singular voice of a collective, consensus of “we”, but

a kind of shape-shifting, and yet positional, possibility of an “I”. This ongoing phenomena reveals a sphere of appearance in which existents might be seen/felt/perceived/heard, not through extending recognition - but rather, through this radically open, resonating possibility of overlapping bodies. This space might be another kind of political space and offer another politics of voice. It emerges from participating with the wider field of ‘mind’, comprised of beings already attentive to us. This ‘mind’ is perceived in each research phase, through land - the ground beneath our feet.



Silted from the Bone. 2019. Pencil sketch, watercolour and gouache on paper.



The phenomena of voice throughout the practice, both as a phatic channel that invites another kind of “non-I” and as a process of digestion/reading, strikes me as a periperformative strategy. Here a continuous sounding/speaking/repetitive iconic propagation has the potential to enfold a “non-I” within the “I” albeit often in a blurry, ambiguous, inextricable kind of way. It leads me back to Sedgwick’s proposal and a closer reading of the example she gives. It is a letter written by the slave John S. Jacobs (brother of Harriet Jacobs) to inform his owners he is leaving them while in the North.⁴¹² In this case, the figure of the witness does not delay the oncoming performative moment. Rather, extricating himself out of this established performative buying/selling/bonding of relations through property, involves a witness as “non-I” who gets enfolding within the “I”. It is this event of enfolding that inaugurates a different kind of political future. It makes sure it will come into being not by fixing events in that future, but by crossing the threshold from one reality to another not as an “I” pertaining to one individual body, but in a refusal to be a singular “I”, instead becoming an “I” shared if you like, through the role of the witness.

While considering this passage, let us keep in mind Spillers’ and Sharpe’s claim that the transAtlantic slave trade breaks language, as well as Sedgwick’s ‘mobile threshold of human ownership’ which dictates in some places a person would be free, and other places they would not be. Jacob’s account of the escape reveals how “Being unable to write myself at that time, and unwilling to leave him in suspense, *I got a friend to write as follows*: - “Sir - I have left you”.⁴¹³ Sedgwick focuses on the written periperformative move “No longer yours” that signs off the letter, which she claims pushes on the “proscenium of the ever-shifting theatre of human ownership” and the fact that “*in some places* and not in others” some human beings were legally and effectually owned by others. However, what appears remarkable to me about this account is that the first-person “I” is in fact two people. The “I” that signs the letter is made up of more

⁴¹² This reading is from “A True Tale of Slavery” by John S. Jacobs, in the accounts of Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl. Written by Herself*. Ed. Jean Fagan Yellin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

⁴¹³ Ibid. p.280-281.

than a singular body, more than one self: is a voice emergent from the porous threshold of selves whose collaboration enables their subjectivity.

In her theory of a material poetics, Kristen Kreider expands on Jakobsen's speech event, to formulate a "communication event", emphasising the role of both the material plane of speech/writing, as well as the immaterial plane; the "contact" as well as the "code".⁴¹⁴ To do this she expands Arthur W. Burks' reading of Peirce, with regards to the definition of an index:

"According to Burks, what must be understood or known by the interpreter in order to grasp the symbolic-meaning of an indexical symbol *understood in the grammatical sense* is the language of the code wherein this meaning resides. However, in order to grasp its *indexical-meaning*, the interpreter must also possess a knowledge or understanding of the particular spatiotemporal location in which the indexical symbol is interpreted" (my italics).⁴¹⁵

In other words, "now" both refers to "the time when 'now' is uttered" in a grammatical sense, but has another indexical-meaning if/when the interpreter understands the temporal context within which "now" is uttered. Considered in the context of the speech event, Kreider extends this indexical-meaning *in a material sense*, taking into account the *contact* defined by Jakobson as "a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication".⁴¹⁶ Here Kreider expands the element of contact in considering the 'linguistic shifters' "I" and "you" as discursive subject positions in language.

According to Émile Benveniste's definition of subjectivity in language, the "I" refers to the subject in language - the one who speaks "I", brought into being as a discursive subject through the act of speech/writing. However, understanding the full meaning of the "I" as "an indexical symbol in the grammatical sense, one must have knowledge and understanding of its

⁴¹⁴ The speech event, a message from addresser to addressee is communicated through the 'code', 'context' and 'contact', where the code is the symbolic code of language (which Kreider extends to other semiotic codes); the context is referred to world of object and things, and the contact is "the physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee," in Kristen Kreider, "Material Poetics and the Communication Event" *Performance Research*, Vol.20 No.1, (2015) p.80-89. See also: Roman Jakobson, 'Closing statement: Linguistics and poetics', in Thomas A. Sebeok, ed., *Style in Language*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, (1958 [1960]) pp.350-77.

⁴¹⁵ Kreider, p.84. See Arthur W. Burks "Icon, Index and Symbol" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (1949), pp. 673-689. The index as the function of language that "bears a physical or existential relation to the world or object", Charles S. Peirce, 'What is a sign?', in Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel, eds., *The Essential Peirce: Selected philosophical writings*, Vol. 2, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, (c. 1894 [1992b]) pp. 4-11.

⁴¹⁶ Jakobsen, p.353.

particular spatiotemporal location”.⁴¹⁷ However, taking into account the indexical-meaning in a material sense, “the contextually specific indexical-meaning is still only part of the full indexical-meaning of the ‘I’. There is, in addition, an indexical-meaning of the ‘I’ that is specific to the contact, that is, to the material quality of the utterance in which the ‘I’ is spoken”.⁴¹⁸ It is this indexical-meaning in the material sense, that Kreider proposes is found in the material contact of the utterance: “*when uttered* (that is, within the performance of speech or, by extension, writing), the indexical symbol ‘I’ that is indexically related to the utterance, is specific to the material quality of the speaking voice: the voice with what Roland Barthes calls its ‘grain’”.⁴¹⁹ Thus, through this “grain” (which extended through writing, indexes the body “in the act of speaking, writing, performing”), is the material aspect of the indexical-meaning of “I” in the moment of utterance.

Using this understanding to read Jacobs’ utterance, the symbolic “I” as a subject in language is he who speaks “I”; the indexical-meaning in a grammatical sense refers to Jacobs as the written “I”. However, the indexical-meaning in a material sense *indexes Jacobs’ friend* - the body that writes the utterance. If “the subject is he who utters “I”, in this case, the “subject” is in two places at once, or rather, “I” indexes a self distributed across multiple thresholds of time, space, and body. The “I” is warped, manipulated, orchestrated periperformatively by Jacobs to precisely enable him to be both in some places *and in others*, brought into discursive relation to “you”. Indeed what enables Jacobs to posit himself as a subject “I” is in a sense a shared “mind” and differential body, that in fact triangulates a dyadic structure of speaking “I” and receiving “you”. In this version, the speaking “I” diverges to two bodies: ▲ .

Under the conditions of slavery i.e. the relations of property, Jacobs cannot in this moment write - and *right* - himself (as in, put himself in right relations i.e. freedom). He cannot be in two places at once (both enslaved and free), thus the possibility of becoming in a different

⁴¹⁷ Kreider, p.85.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid. p.86.

⁴¹⁹ “In ‘The grain of the voice’ Barthes writes that the ‘grain’ is ‘the body in the voice as it sings, the hand as it writes, the limb as it performs’ (1972 [1977]) p.188. Through Barthes, we can appreciate how the embodied acts of speaking, writing and performing imbue speech, writing and performance with a material quality or ‘grain’ that is specific to one’s unique corporeality”. Ibid. p.86.

political future is necessarily, - and indeed only made possible - by a collaborative “I”, stretched if you like, across two bodies, across two times and spaces - so that the letter might be written, while Jacobs is still waiting “on him and his wife at dinner” (attending to and waiting for another future which has already been written i.e. already promised and thus propelled).⁴²⁰ I am deliberately not using the subject position “we”, because this stretching of an “I” does not inevitably constitute a collective “we”. Where such a collective “we” would speak with one voice and therefore suggest some kind of consensus, rather, in this formulation, the “I” is stretched and thus has two somehow overlapping voices, from two different positions, temporal and spatial. The installing of a different kind of “I”, is the installing of an “I” that, by virtue of being *more than one* can precisely be in two places at once - can be in some places and also in others - thus the performative contract is warped not only temporally, but spatially, through the distributed selfhood stretched across the mobile threshold of ownership.

In his opening of *In The Break*, Fred Moten claims “the history of blackness is testament to the fact that objects can and do resist”, that blackness as “the extended movement of a specific upheaval, and ongoing irruption that anarranges every line - is a strain that pressures the assumption of the equivalence of personhood and subjectivity.”⁴²¹ This anarrangement is echoed by Christina Sharpe’s articulation that “blackness as, blackness is, anagrammatical”, here the prefix *ana-*, means “up, in place or time, back, again, anew”, “blackness anew...is a/ temporal, in and out of place and time”.⁴²² Jacobs is out of place and time, and simultaneously pressuring the equivalence of personhood and subjectivity, because it is exactly this anagrammatical installing of an “I” and its distribution over more than one body (multiple persons), that brings a subject *to appear*.

Here we have a kind of appearance that is not the singular subjectivity equated with personhood and the speaking, acting body in the sphere of the political. Here is an appearance of an “I” which is both outside of time and place, and distributed across a collective, a plurality,

⁴²⁰ Jacobs, p.280-281.

⁴²¹ Moten, *In the Break*, p.1.

⁴²² Sharpe, *In the Wake* p.76.

and yet who thus propels himself against all probability, into another future. Let us recall the being in two places at once that Federici claims is witch-craft's great threat to the bourgeoisie and the modernisation of labour. For de Castro and Kohn it is what characterises Amazonian perspectivalism, understanding the world of mind and soul as shared, and the world of body as differentiated. Let us recall the invitation of the stone-womxn as a subject distributed across bodies, and the phenomena of being both within and outside of the vision. Being in two places at once is not an empathic move of extending out of oneself to another; it is a radical openness necessary for propelling out of the theatre of ownership as the performative foundation and literal ground beneath our feet.

Jacob's friend is not there to witness the trauma of Jacob's enslavement; rather his alongsideness is precisely to make sure that Jacobs can "be on board the boat for Providence" at half-past four.⁴²³ (Note here, Providence is both a place in Rhode Island, as well as meaning "the protective care of God or of Nature as a spiritual power"; and "timely preparation for future eventualities", from the Latin *providere* - "to foresee, attend to").⁴²⁴ The alongsideness of Jacob's friend in this moment - is here a subject position sharing and distributing selfhood that is designed precisely to propel - literally to board another kind of boat - into another kind of future. It is hard not to read this boat as a passage through the water (womb) generative of another kind of emergent "I", a boat shadowed by the slave ship and its transAtlantic passage. This birthing into another kind of subject, is the anagrammatical "I" out of time and out of place, as such it is propelled by a shared subjectivity, a threshold encounter, behind the appearance of an "I".

But what Jacobs' escape most crucially points us to in terms of being in two places at once, is that the voice can be in a different position (i.e. have different political capacities as would adhere with being either free or enslaved) to the body. In uttering "I have left you", the "I" jumps over a threshold, skips the impossible moment of Jacobs speaking *I am leaving you*, directly to his owners - and moves into the future beyond that moment. "I" then speaks from

⁴²³ Jacobs, p.280-81.

⁴²⁴ "providence" in *Cambridge Dictionary*, accessed January 5, 2020 at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/providence>.

that future, to another “you” by virtue of assuming the position again of the self who has in fact not yet made it into said future. It is both the subject in language “Jacobs” that indexes two places (times and spaces) at once, as well as it is *a voice* that is in a different place (ontologically and physically speaking) from its body. Following the indexical-meaning of the indexical symbol, the voice is ‘shared’ by two positions (material and grammatical) - or thinking de Castro and Kohn, two *points of view* or bodily perspectives, thus ‘stretched’ over the mobile threshold of ownership. The voice is both stretched over literal legal boundaries of human ownership, and neither belongs solely to Jacobs nor solely to Jacobs’ friend. The impasse between enslavement and freedom is mediated by an “I” that is *more than* the body it appears to index. What enables Jacobs to be a grammatical subject “I” that would appear in some way as a political speaking subject, is precisely this being in two places at once, and more specifically, having a voice which emerges in excess of the singular “I” to which it symbolically refers.

This reading of the periperformative through Jacob’s remarkable account, brings us to another consideration of the blurry, shifting boundaries between selves. The capacity to attune to them and enfold the “non-I” within the “I” (intentionally or not), opens into another kind of political sphere. It proposes that the field of ‘mind’ - felt through land itself - in which such shifting positionality is possible, is an already always political sphere. Here the “I” is constituted by every other “non-I”, including the spirits, or ancestors past and yet contemporary with the spatialised event.⁴²⁵ Witnessing might not be something that one does across an interval of self and other. Rather, as seen in Jacobs’ case, it could be an enfolding of “non-I” and “I”, and particularities of time and space, to propel a body into subjecthood. When Povinelli describes the relation of Karrabing to Dreaming sites, it is always a mutable, in flux, changing and responsive relationship, in which one particularity (dreaming) is enfolded within another’s (human) particularity (and vice versa). Perhaps this enfolding, experienced with the sounding practice, the stone-womxn vision, and propelled through Jacobs’ “I”, is another way of thinking the human and nonhuman appearance within the political. Extending Sedgwick’s proposal then,

⁴²⁵ Sedgwick’s spatialising move thus pertains directly to the ‘always already happening’, contemporaneous world of material and immaterial, human, nonhuman and spirit existents and their potential to cluster around one another, regardless of their historic timeliness or mythic durations.

and reading it through the ongoing sounding practice, interrupts what might be understood as the relation between the uniqueness of voice and body and the sphere of the political. It demands that we take seriously voice as an apparatus of mediation, rather than as the appearance of the singular, and unique body.

If we take Sedgwick up on her proposal: that ““performatives” must be understood continuously in relation to the exemplary instance of slavery”, we must remember how - and why - we got here: through the cut of the stone-womxn, in which relations of property are established and extrapolated out. The simultaneous making of stone and womxn into properties and property, is also the making of the “I” as a specific kind of subject, cut out of and away from the trans-subjective becoming of stone-womxn. The blurriness of “I” and “non-I”, is replaced by the fallacy of an “I” with no “you” - or rather, with a “you” whose consent is ambiguous at best. This subject’s “I do” - or whose actions taking, having, holding, ironically breaks the ‘proper’ - the possibility of signification per se, and the possibility of words having some kind of relation to the world or things. The moment at which taking, having, holding, is initiated (violently) by the judge-witnesses, is the moment the stone-womxn are seen as and thus named “stones” and “womxn” - when the proper noun ‘stone-womxn’, is broken into bodies as categories of things: stones, and womxn - tokens of types. It is not stones, in general, that made themselves known to me. Nor is it womxn in general, it is specific stone-womxn - *these* ones - that appeared.

This cut to the possibility of bodies and names any longer signifying, reminds us of the quality of language that emerged from the stone-womxn re-membering themselves through the witnessing of land itself. This kind of speech could materially impact the world (and must therefore be intrinsically related to it). This speech would physically keep the judge-witnesses at bay. The breaking of signification, of the relation between things ‘belonging to’ their ‘proper name’ - is ironically the installation of relations of property. What is broken here is a language that can do something outside of these relations, a language that has some kind of *contact* with the world. This efficacy of this kind of utterance in the world is shown not only through what appears and what doesn’t appear, but how those appearances become manifestations and what

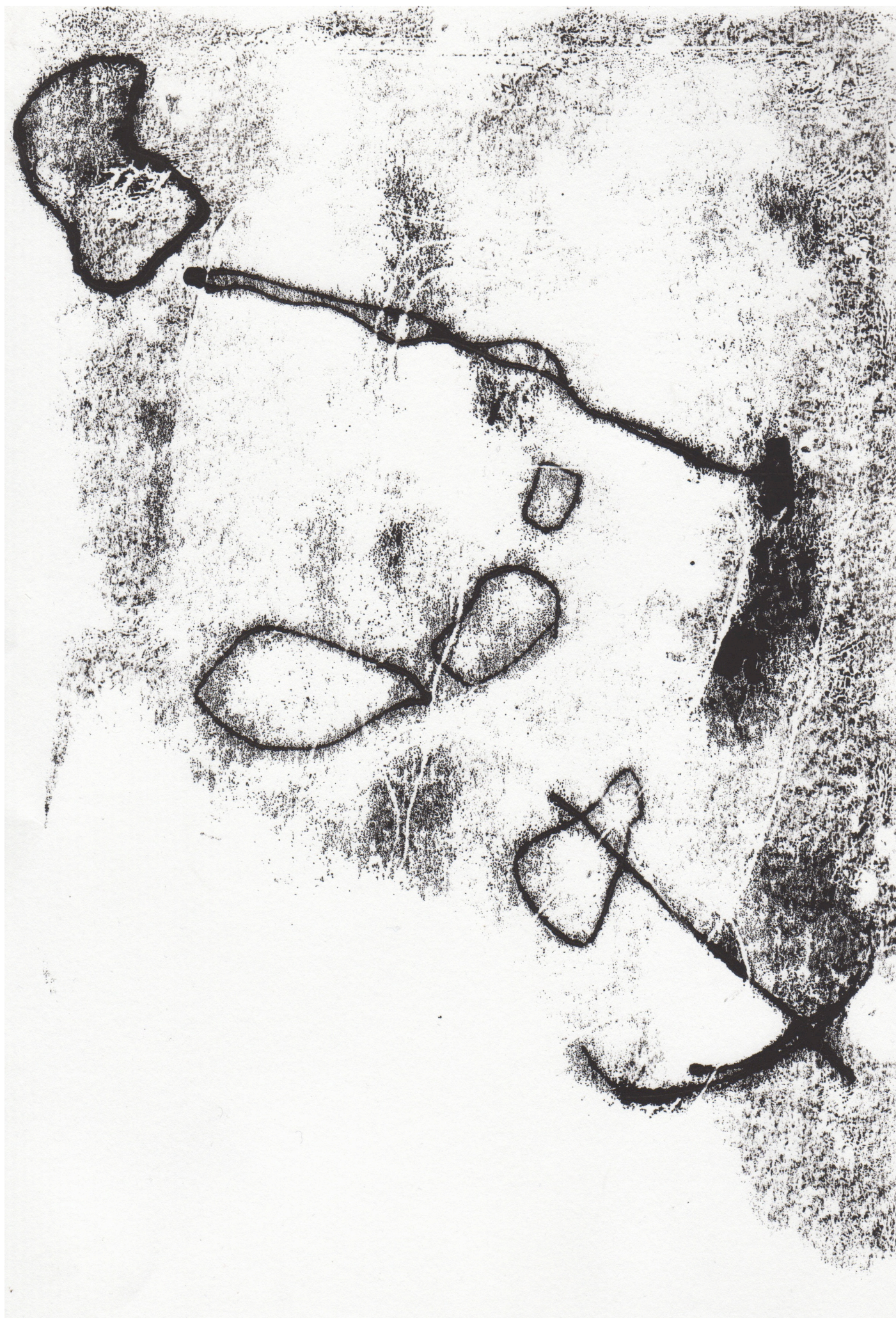
those manifestations reveal.

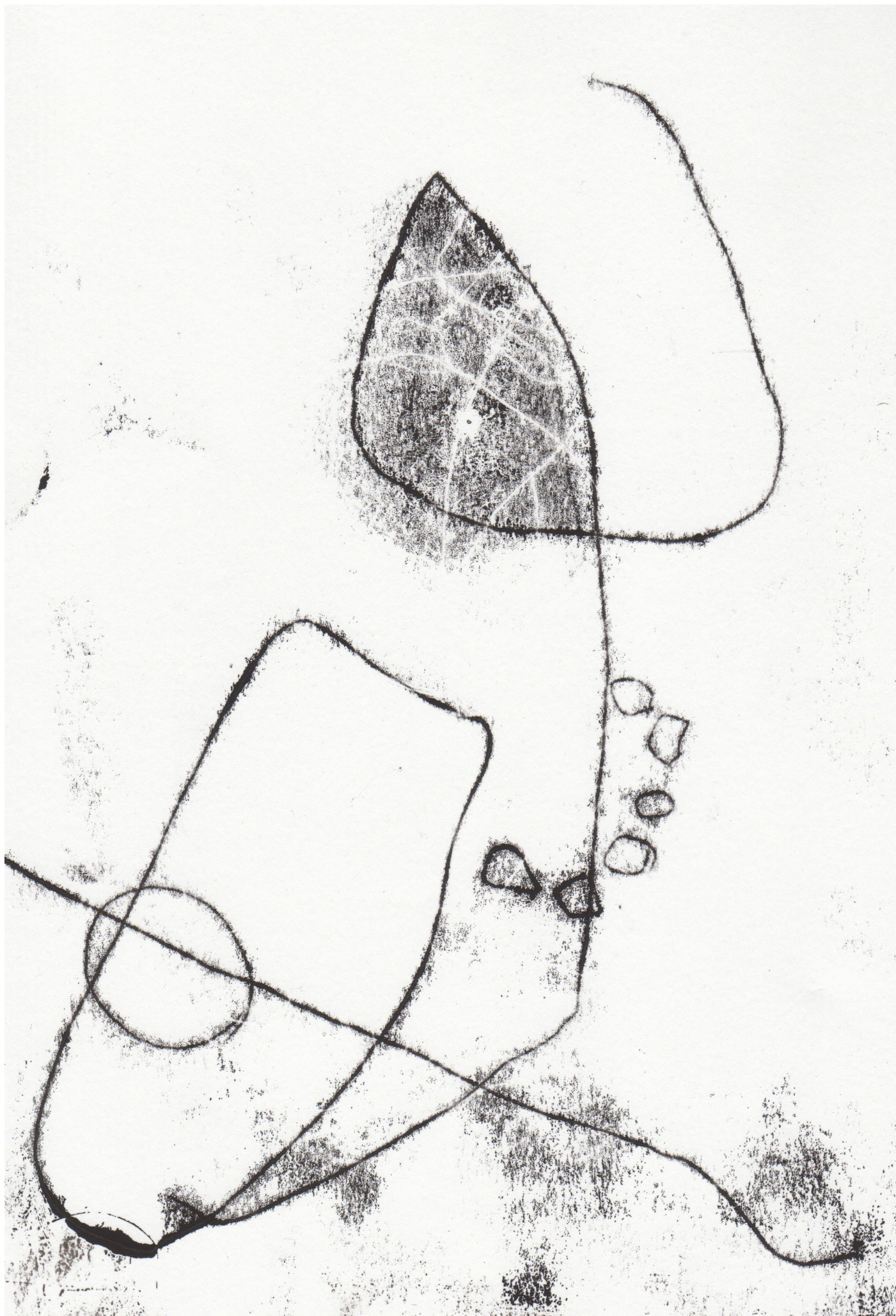
Now we have both the transgressive borderspace of “I” and “non-I”; the fallacy of the singular “I” and its ambiguously consensual “you” validated by “they” of the witness/state authority; and through the extension of Sedgwick’s proposal and Jacobs’ account, the emergence of a periperformative “I” as a more-than-one, stretched across time and space. Thinking this latter instance through the sounding practice de-stabilises notions of ownership between the singular voice and its specific body. It makes possible the emergence of another kind of “I” constituted by multiple “non-I”s precisely with and through a field of witnessing, where such witnessing is by nature of the overlap, always inherently mutual.

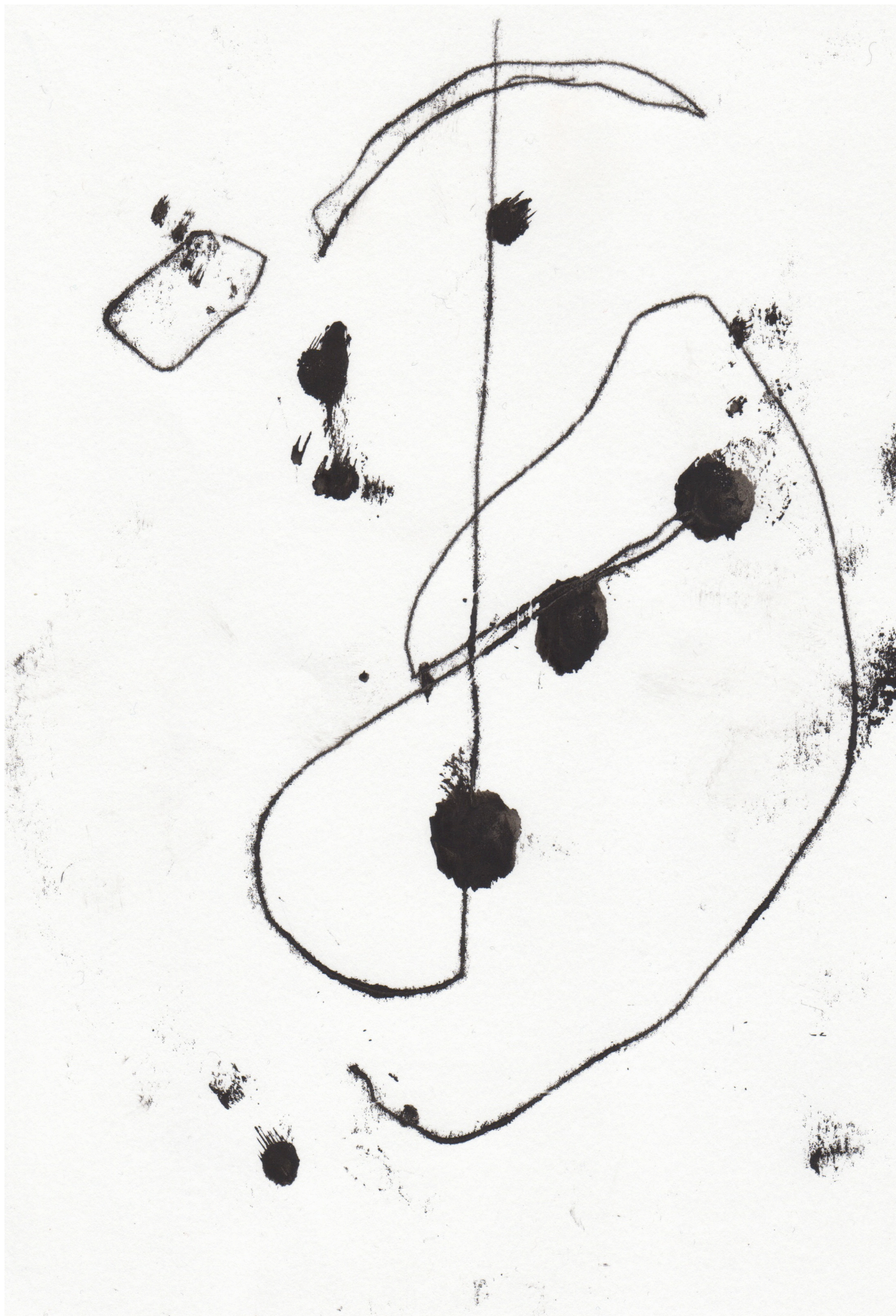
The stone-womxn themselves are an entity distributed across multiple bodies - both stone and womxn. Similarly, in experiencing the stone-womxn vision both from within, and from outside, an “I” is experienced as distributed across bodies, times and spaces. A communicative force thus emerges which does not traverse intervals between bodies and futures, but rather enfolds bodies within bodies, such that voice might be the mediator rather than the origin, of speech. Thus to propel another kind of future, wouldn’t be a case of propelling one’s voice - either as singular or as representative of a collective - into the public, political, human realm, but being porous to the potential enfolding of “non-I” and “I”. Becoming-with and becoming-plural *in this present moment* folds voices from the past and the future into it, and energetically then, is the ‘knowing field’ in which existents are contemporaneous. Thus the future cannot be pre-meditated or forced out of individualist humancentric will. Rather, the perspective that might come from being a more-than-one, would necessarily mean orienting one’s body to the ongoing body of another, out of which a different future would undoubtedly emerge. The possibility of being in two places at once thus does not psychologise a fragmented or traumatic, ruptured self, nor is it the projection of experiences onto others, or an expansionist desire to ‘be everywhere’. It is the affective state deliberately explored, induced and performed throughout this practice, in order to linger on this threshold’s capacities as a site of emergence for selves who are always part stone, part womxn, part here, part there, and never not desiring of each other’s future.

The Almanac Prints

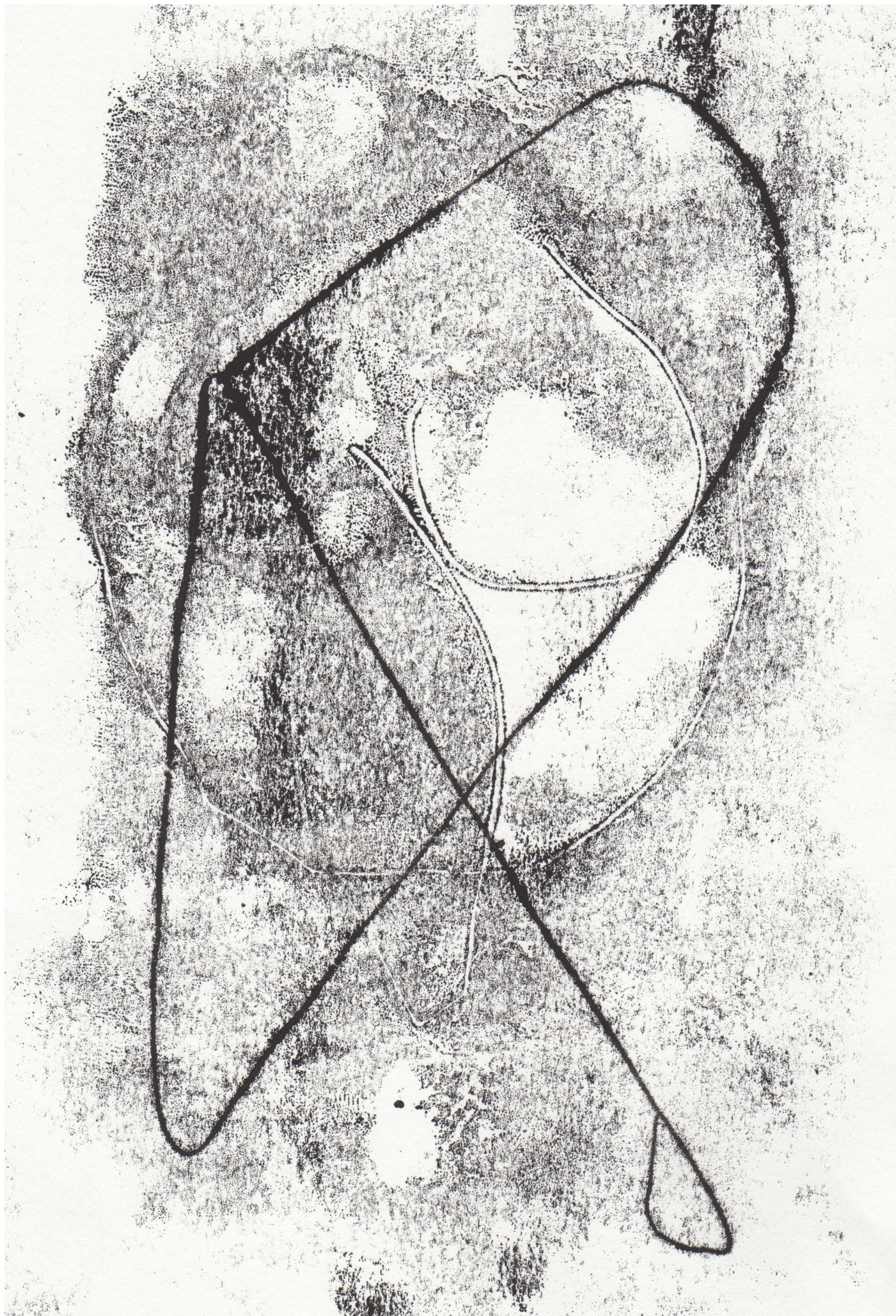


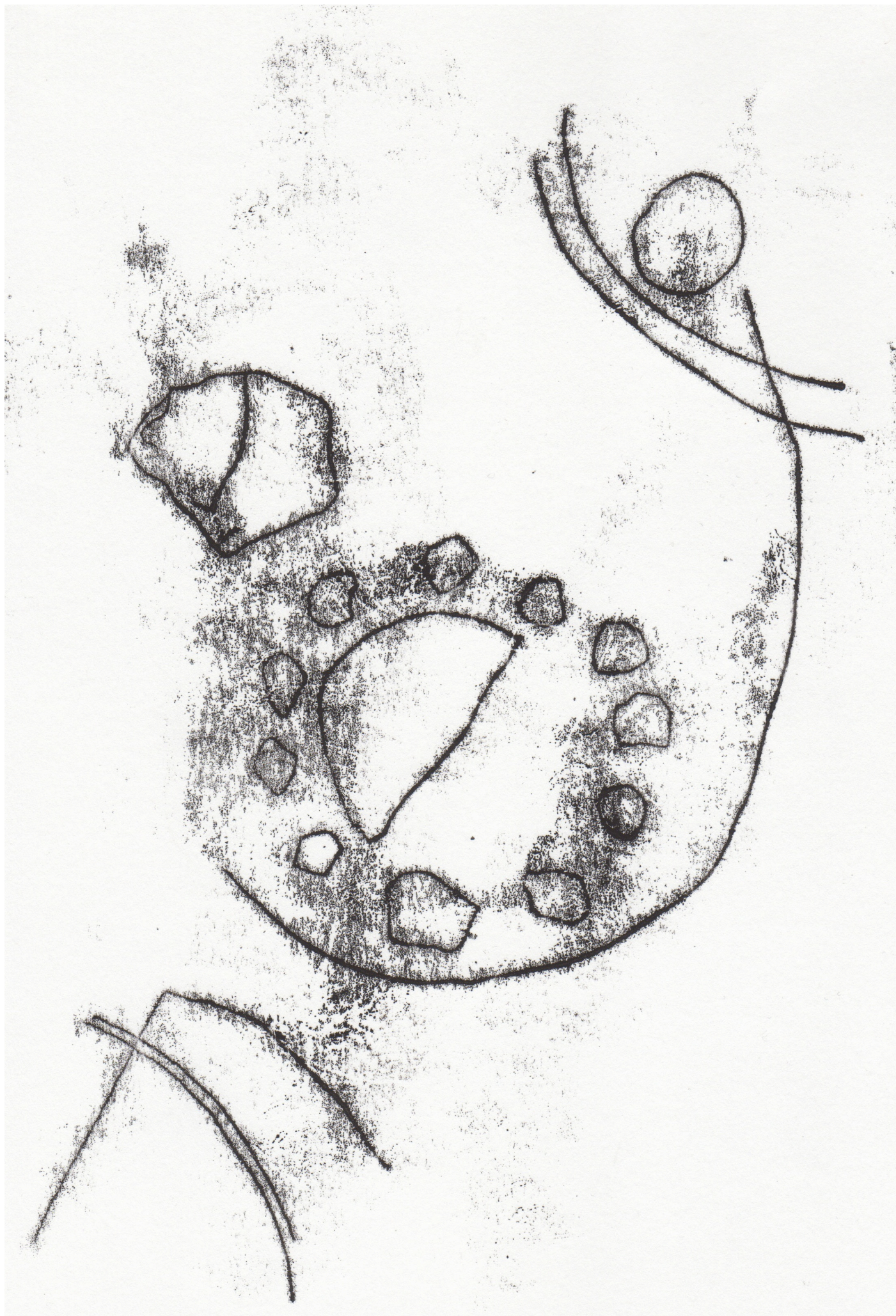


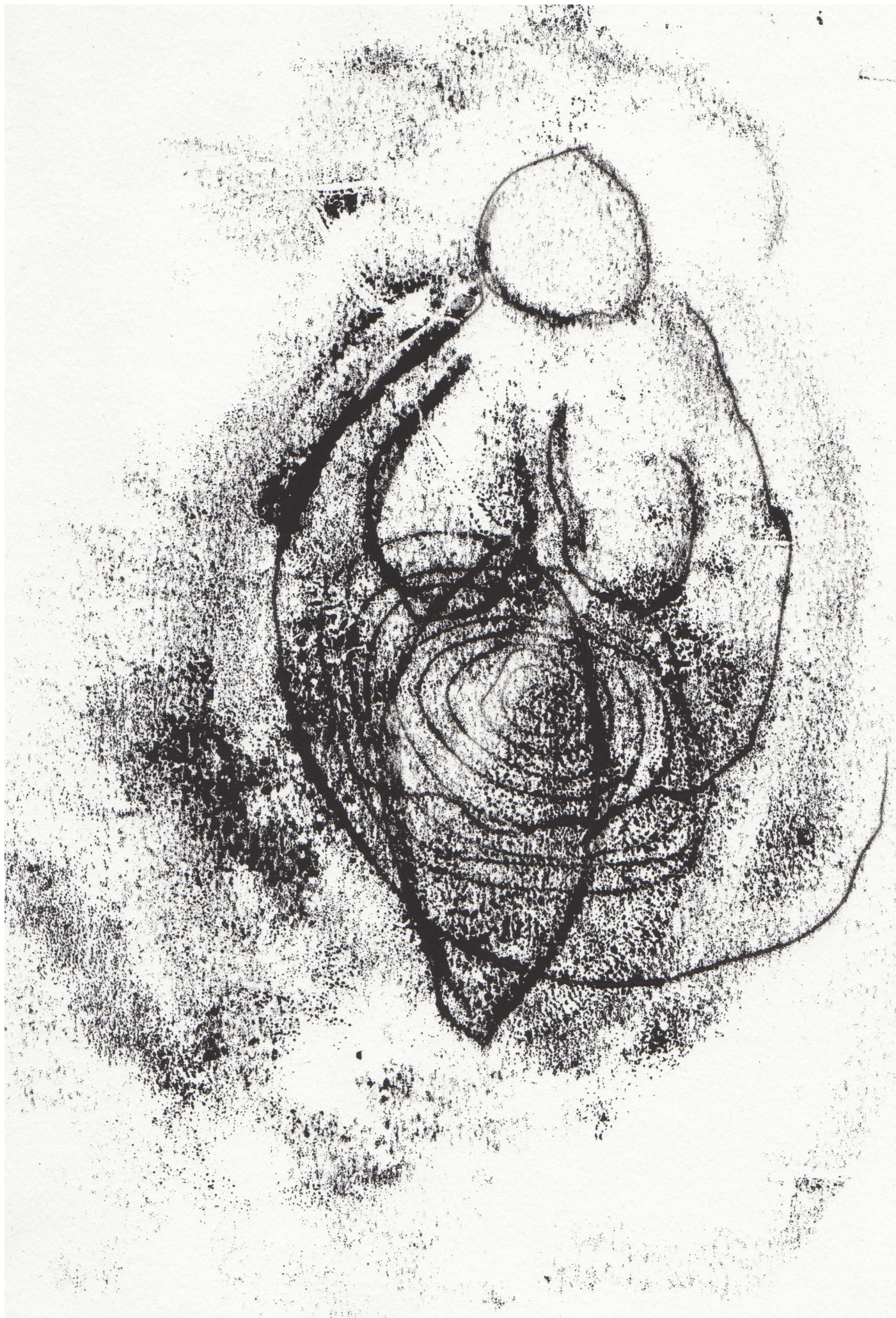


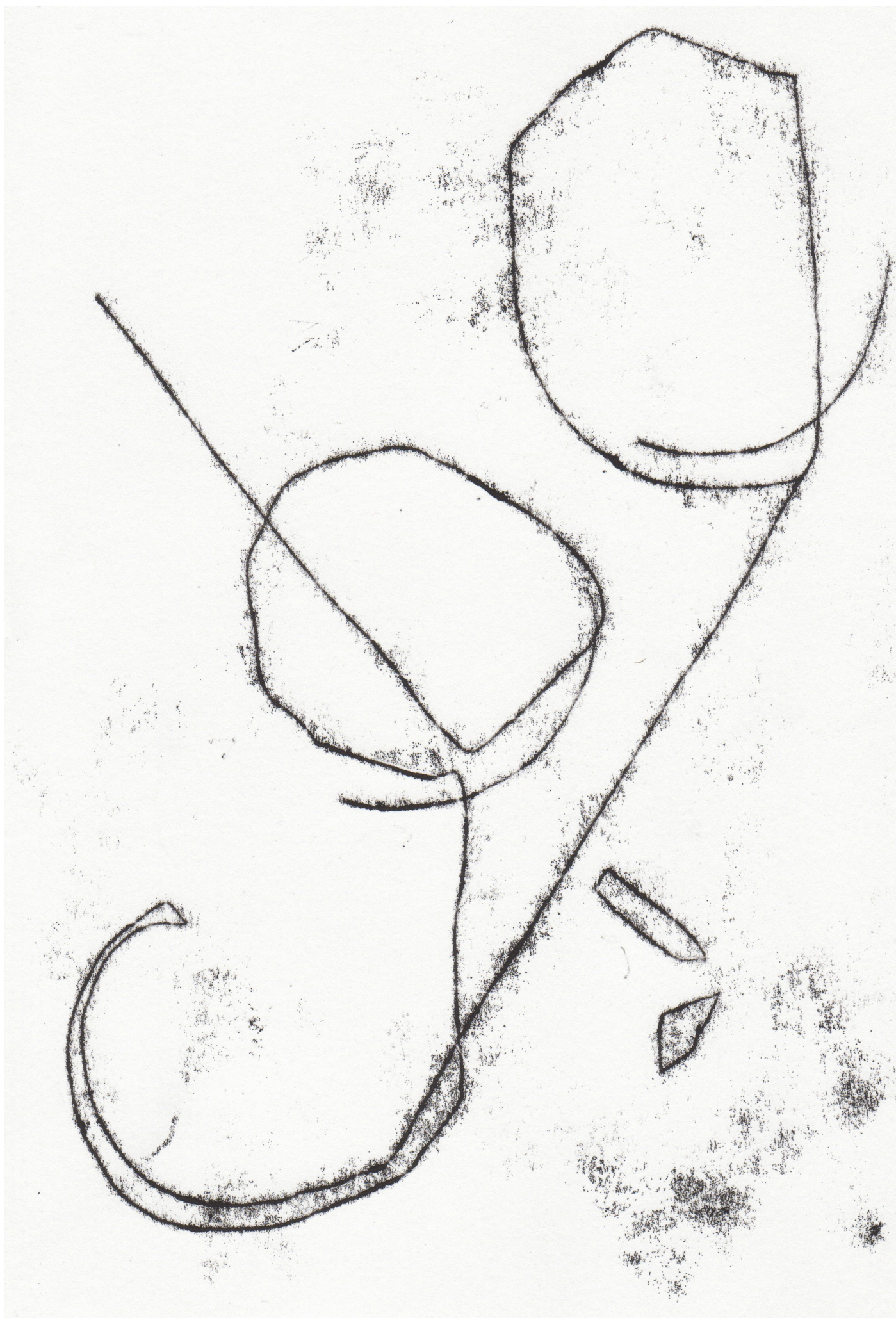




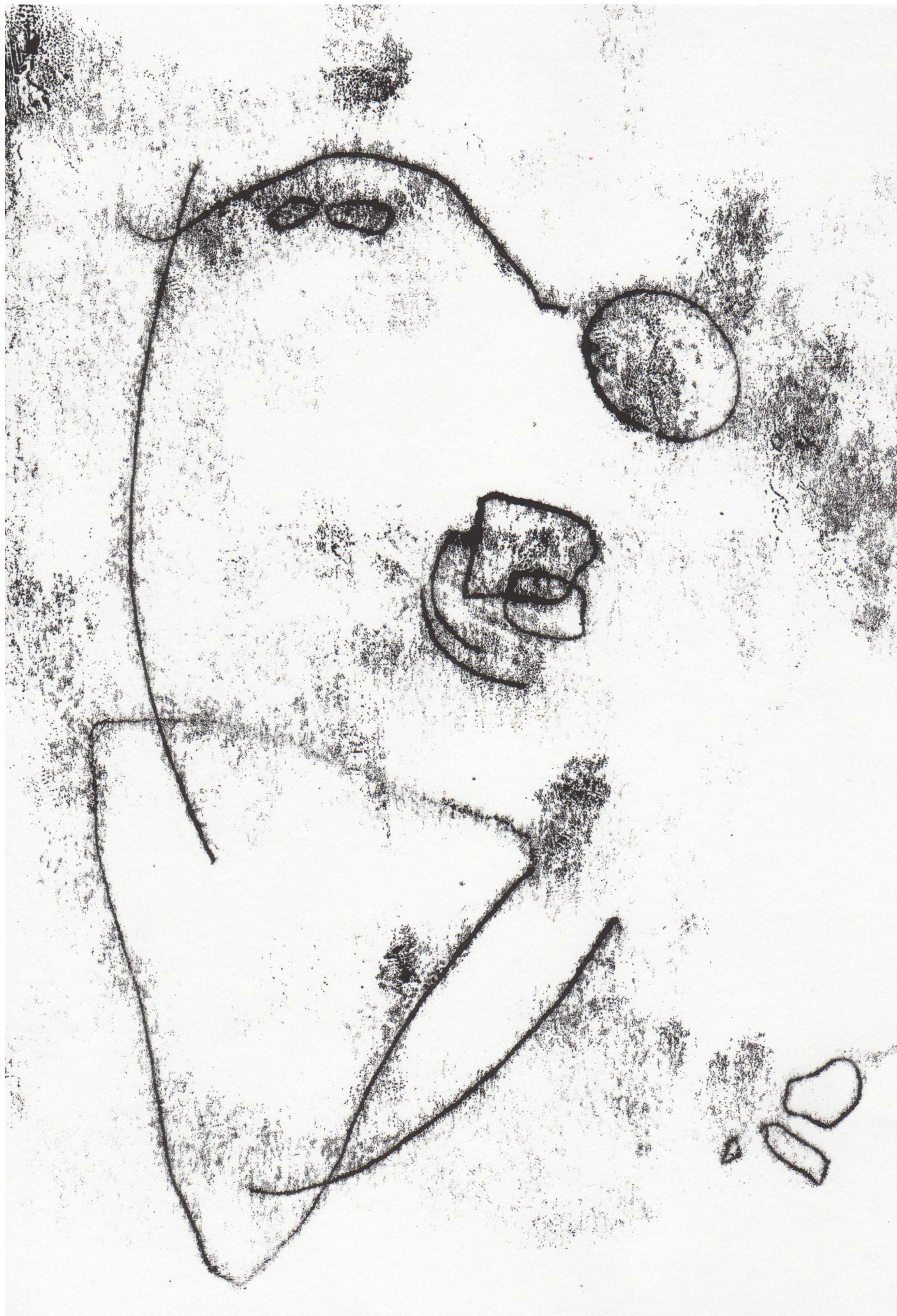


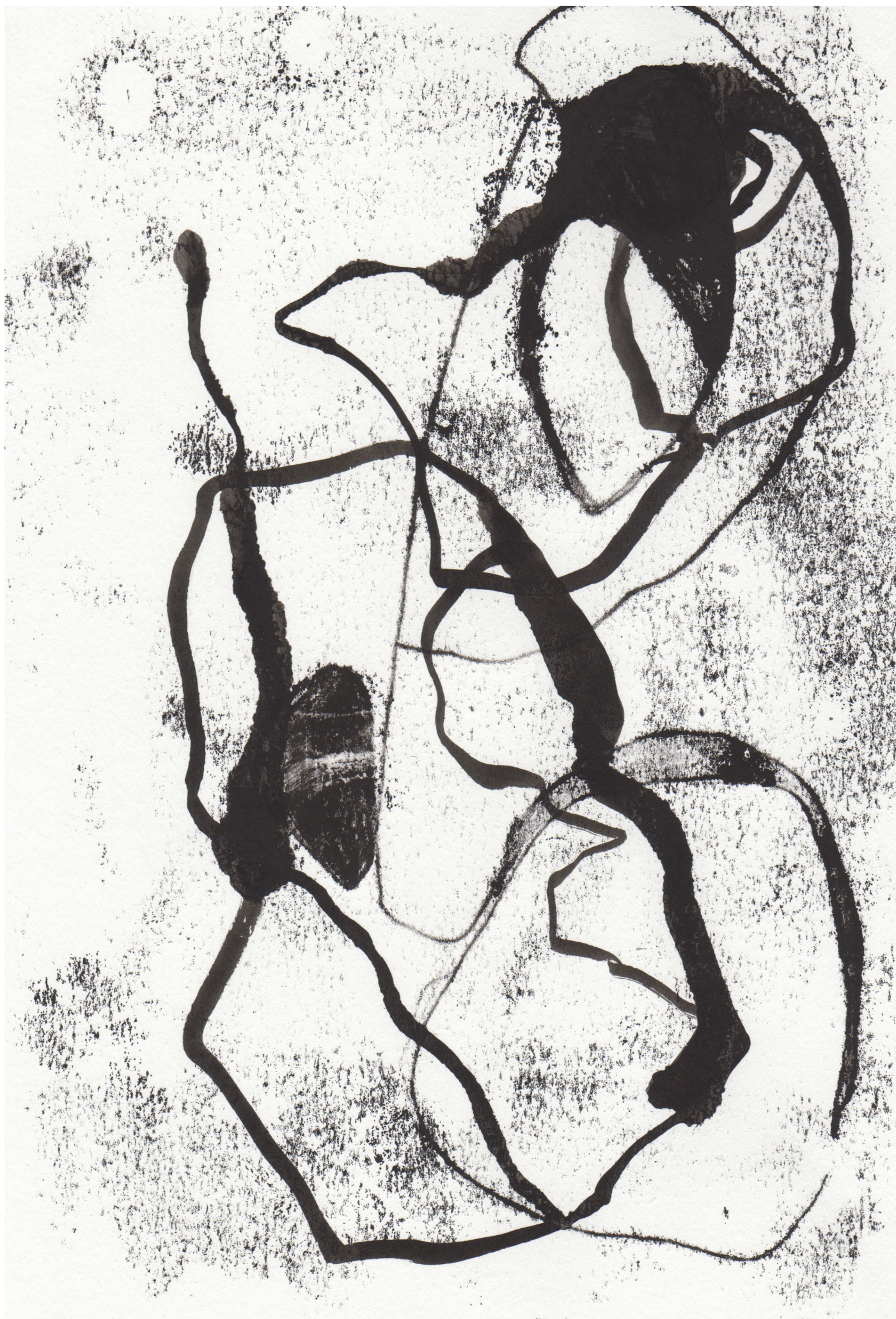




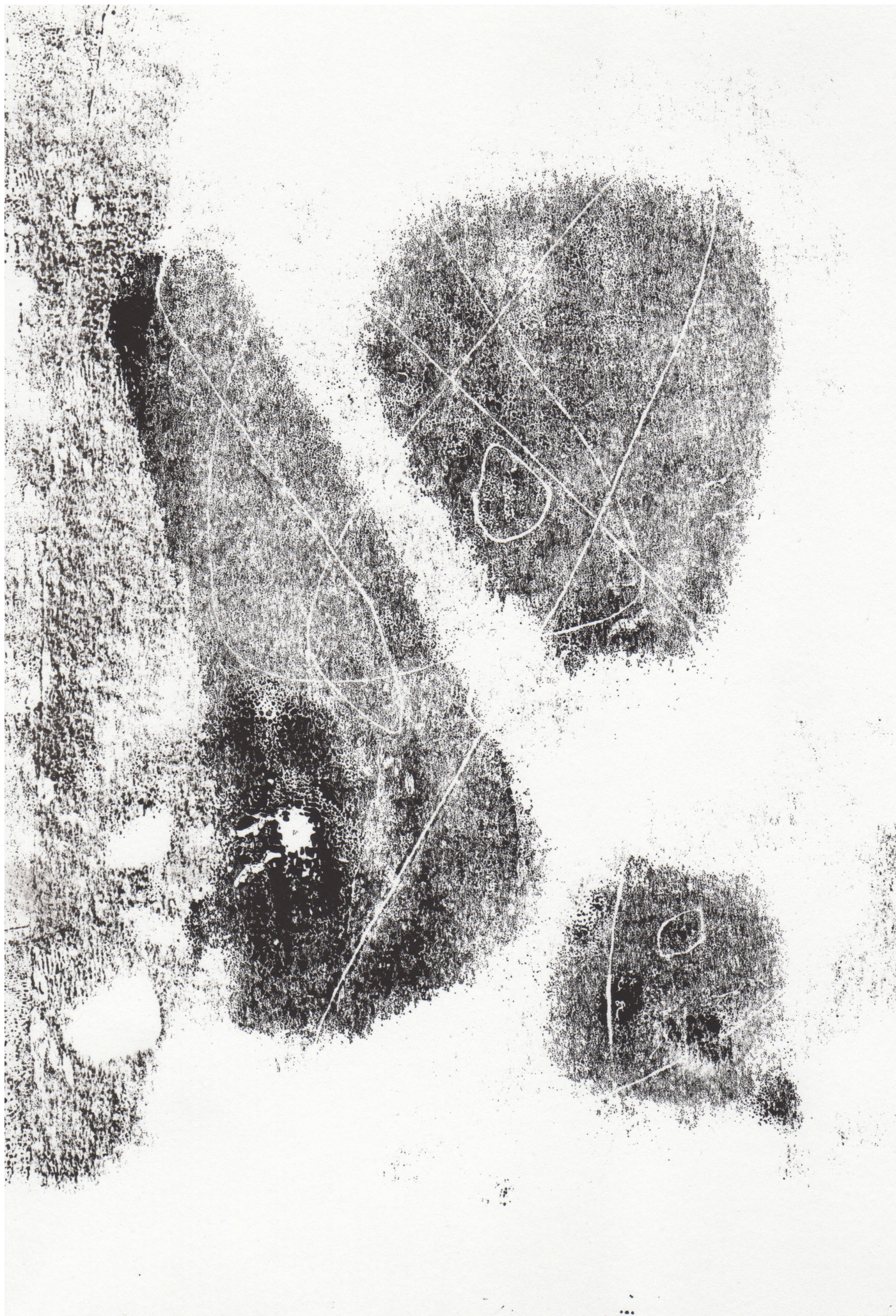


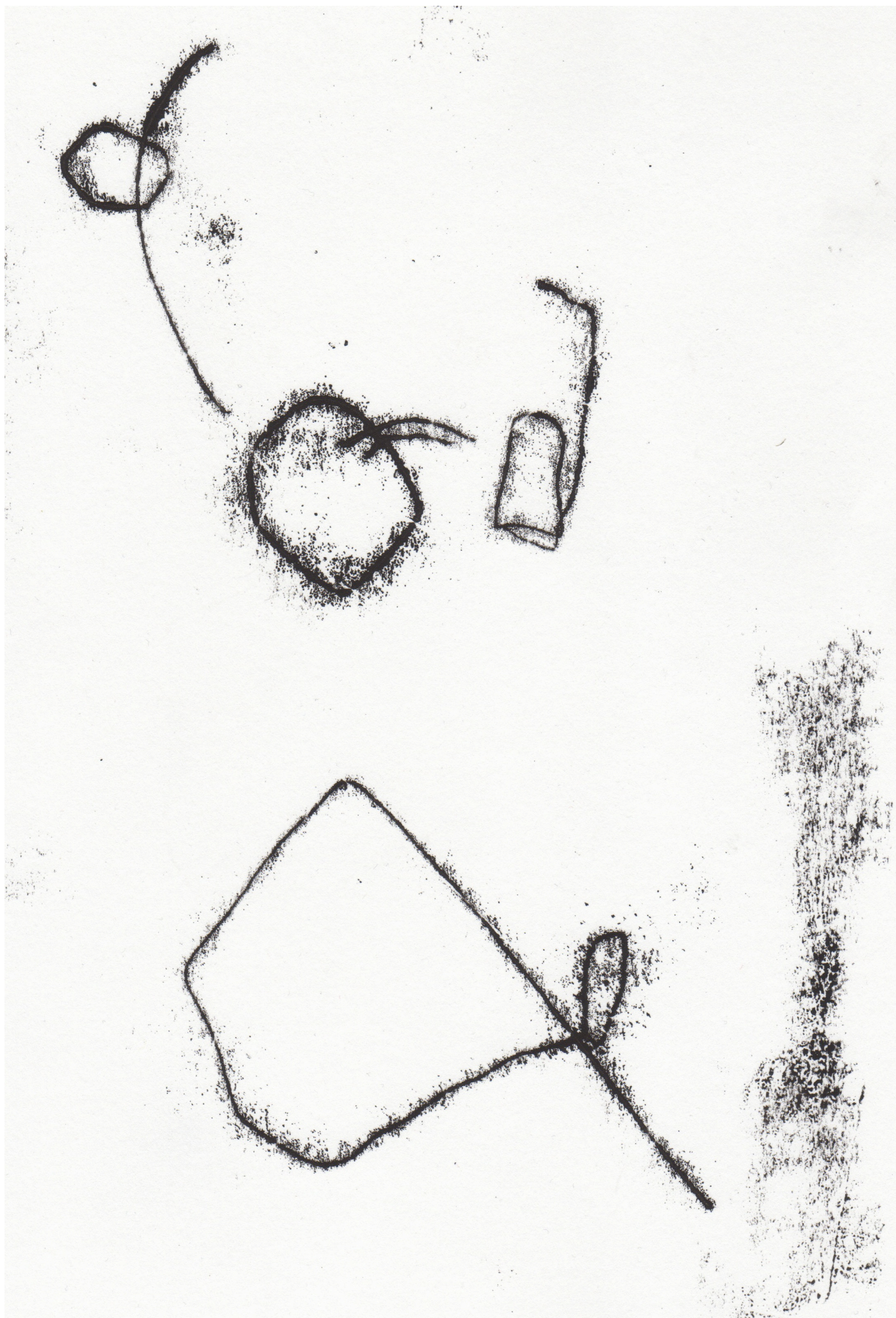


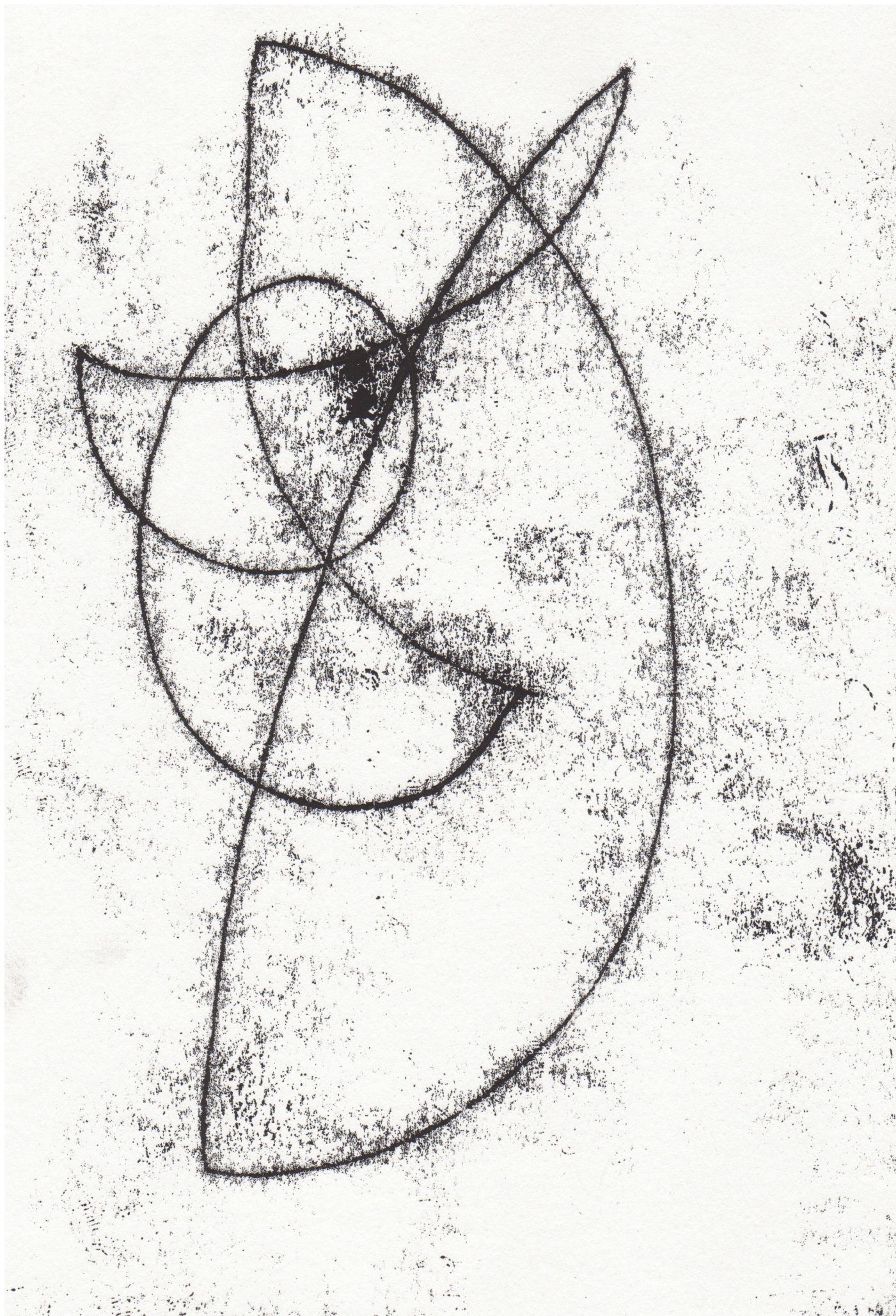


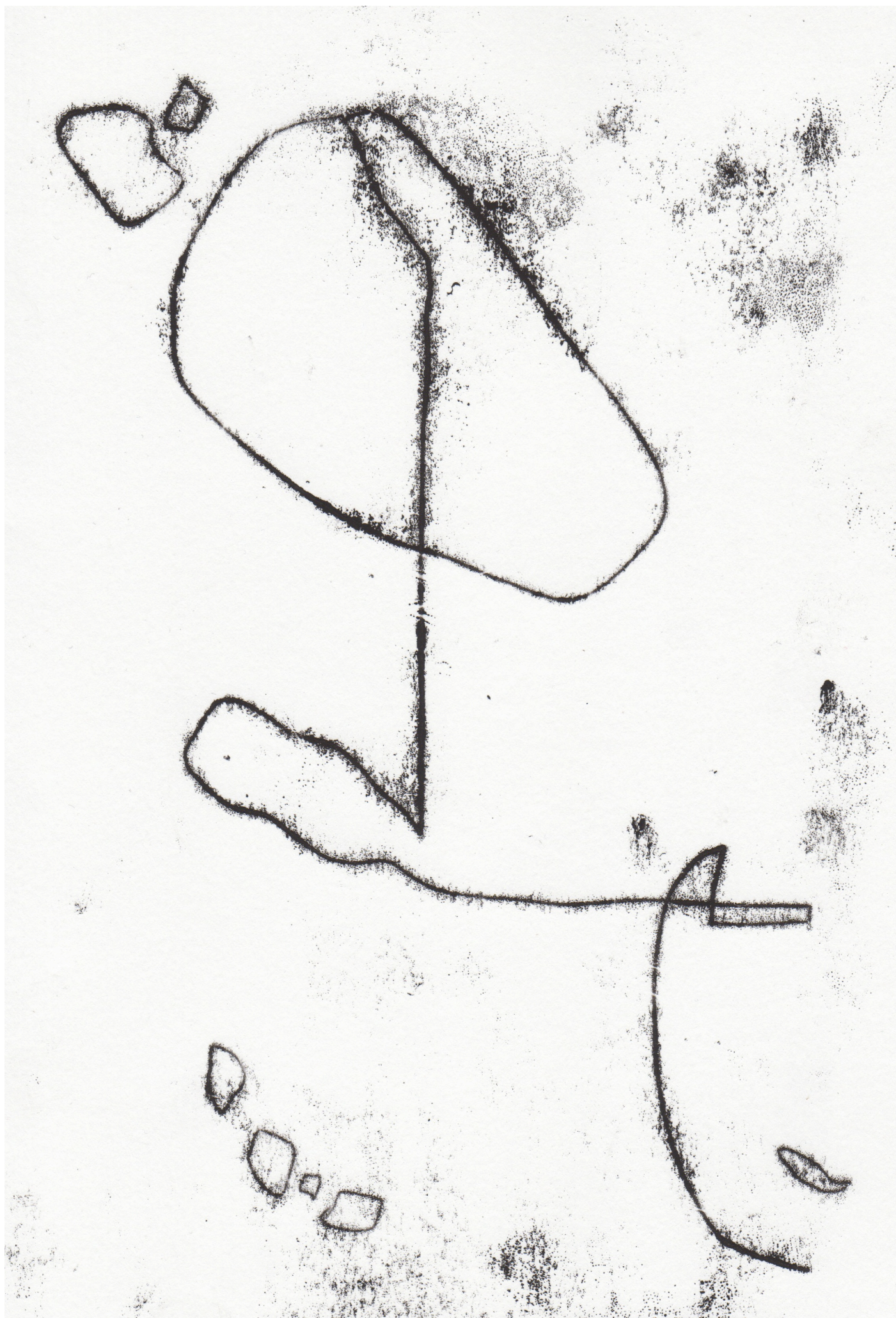


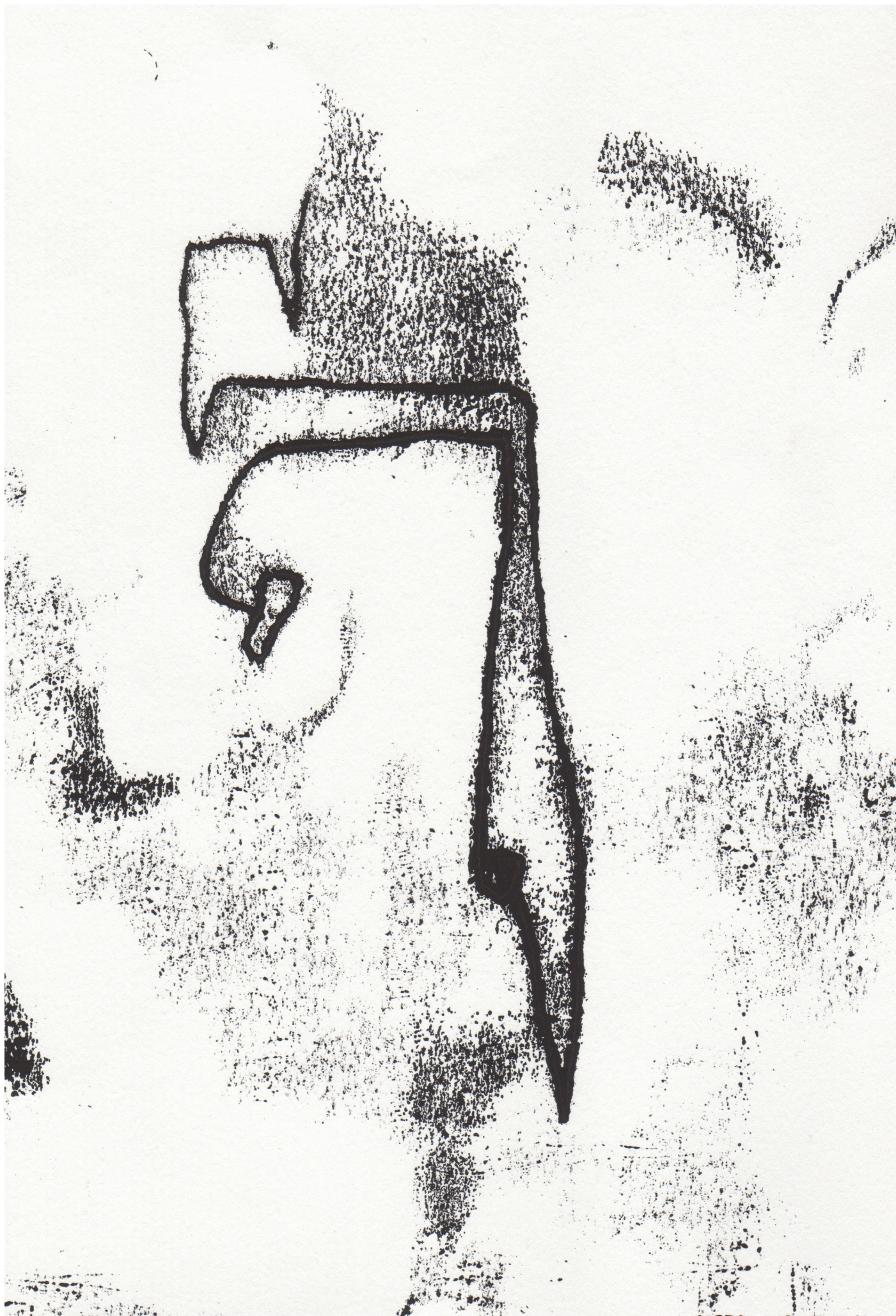


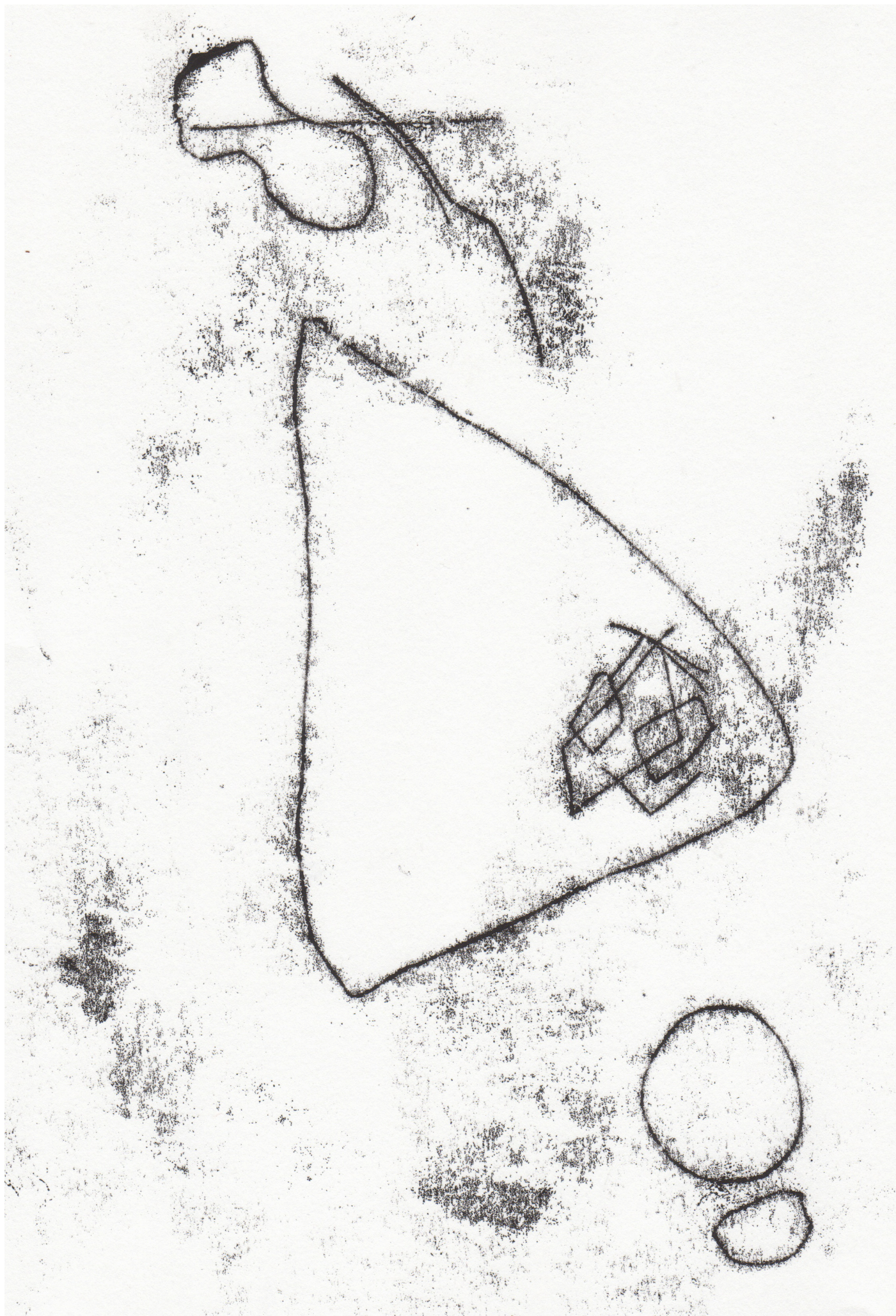


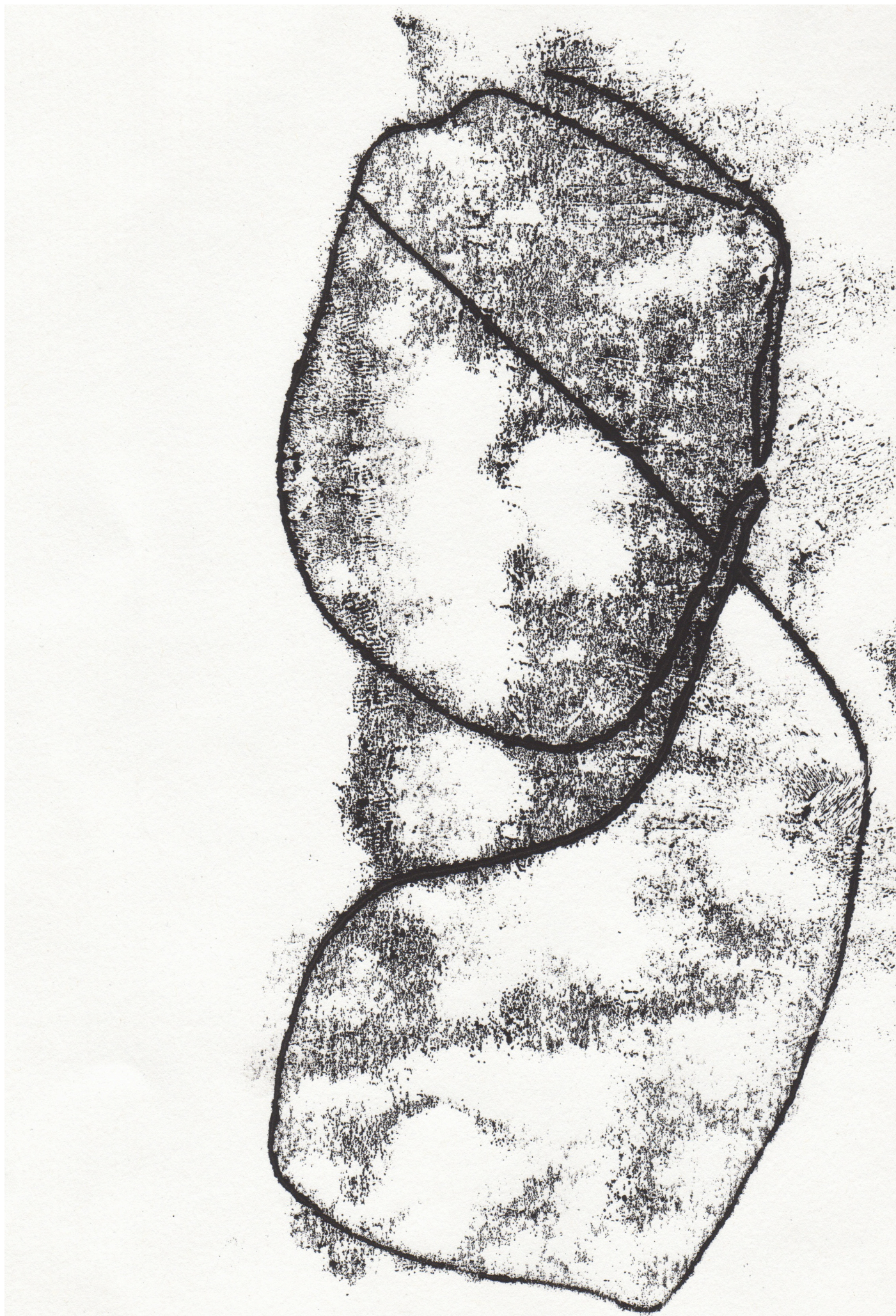




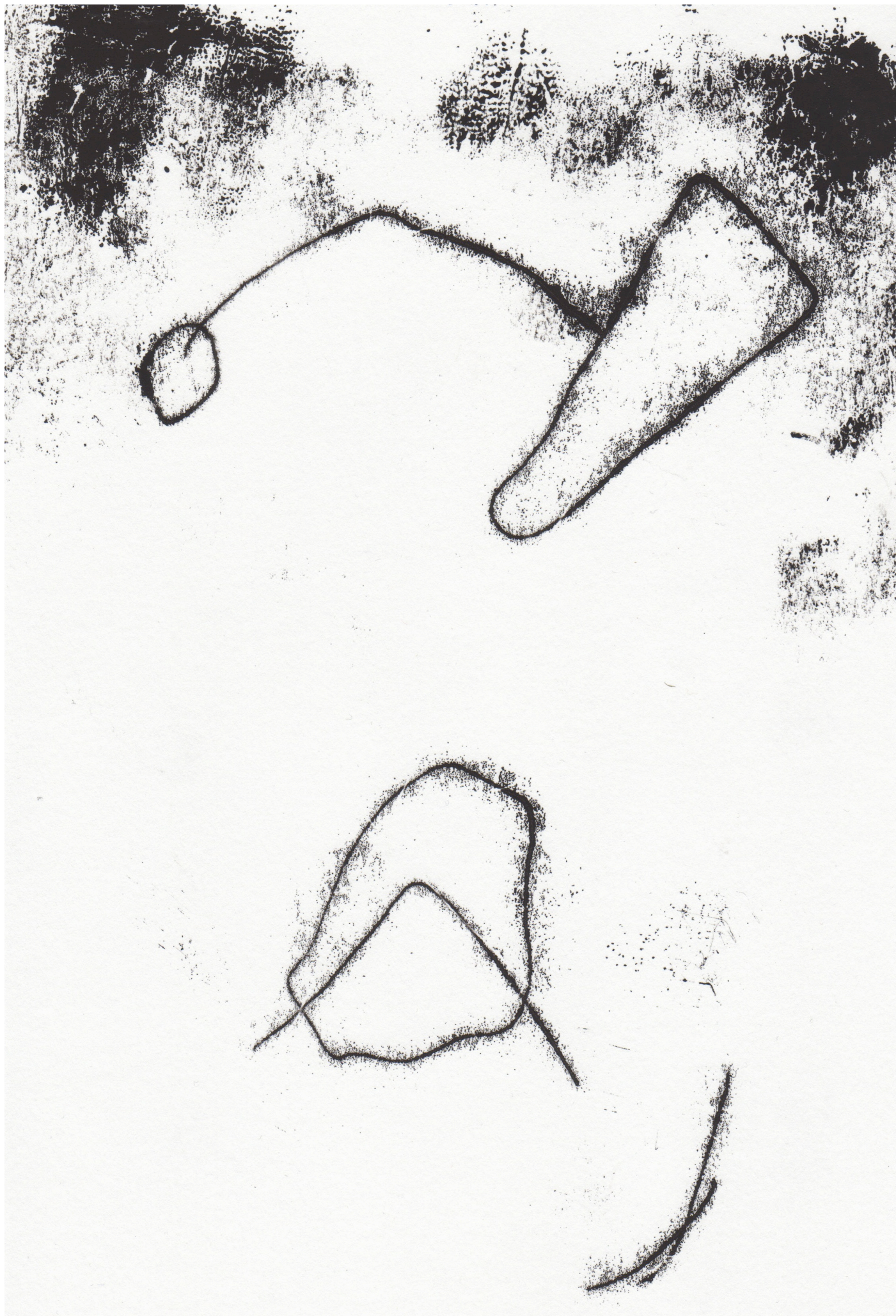


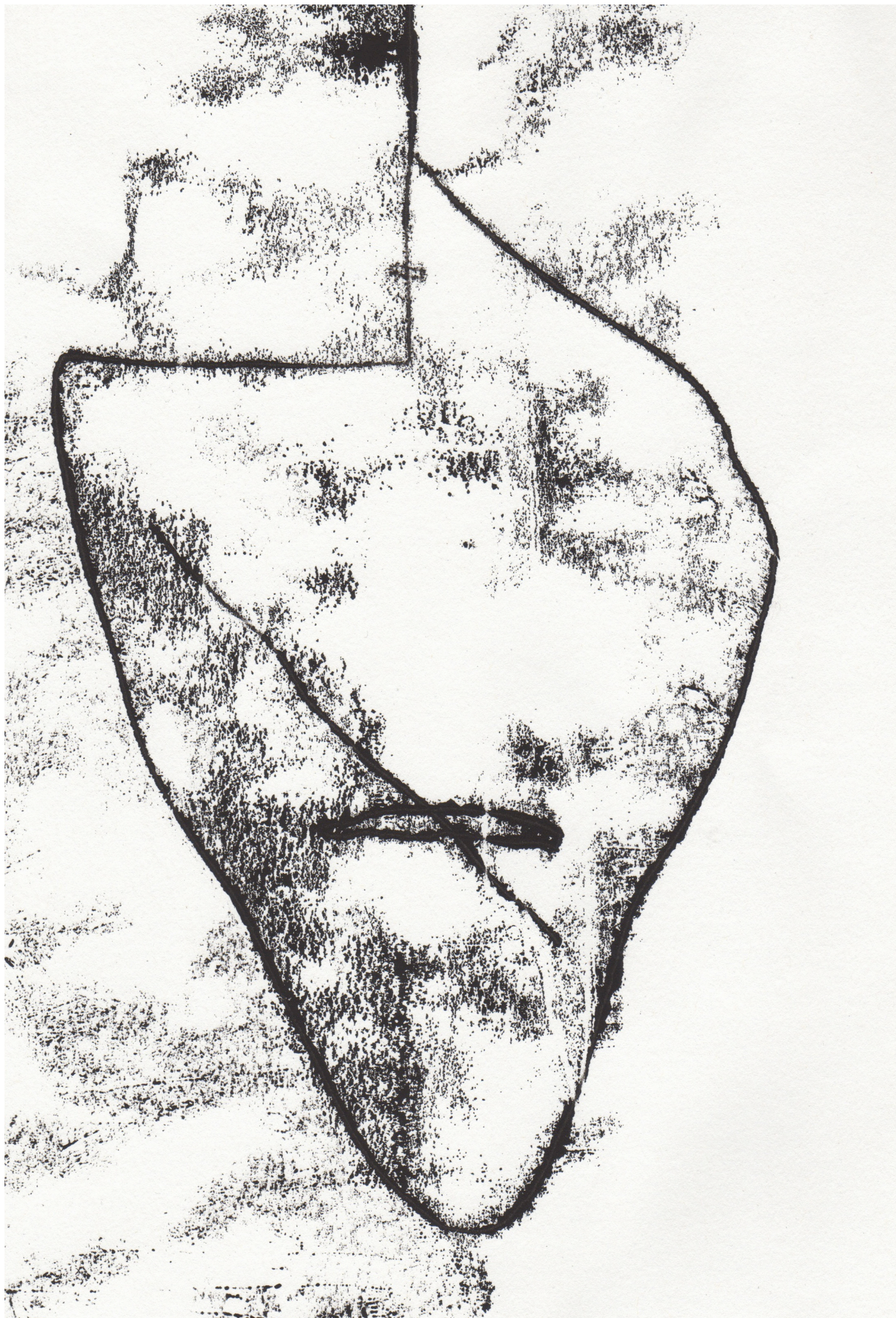


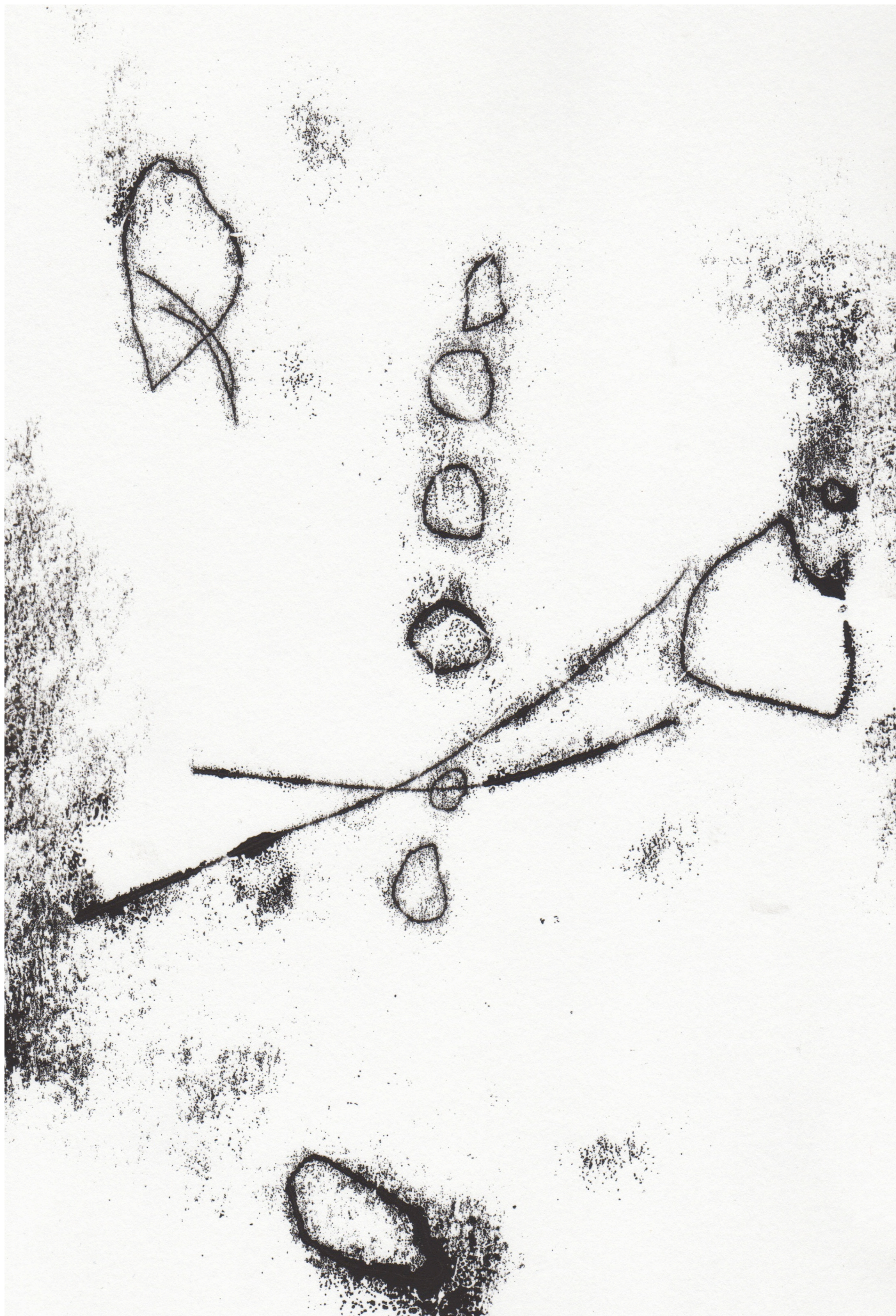


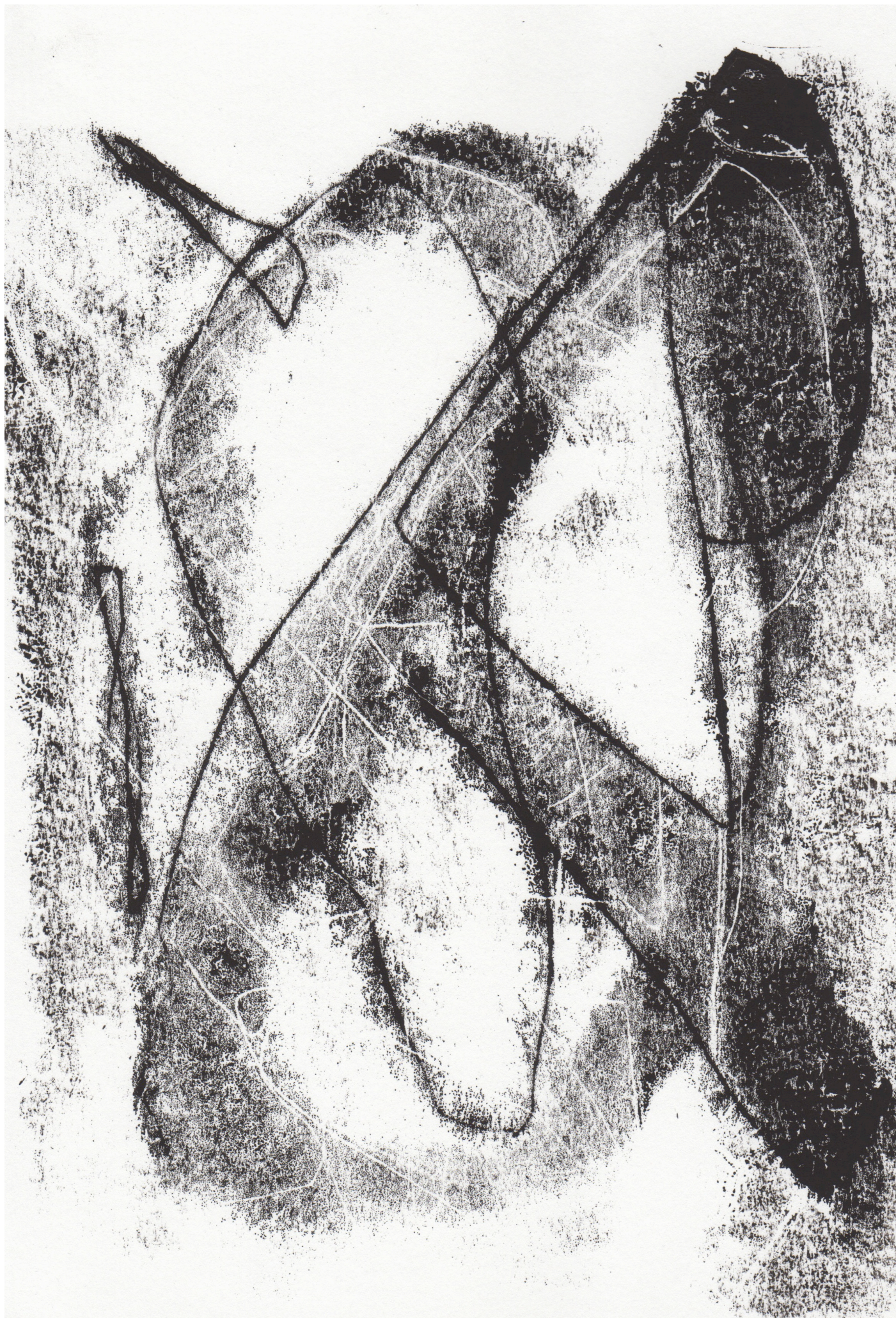


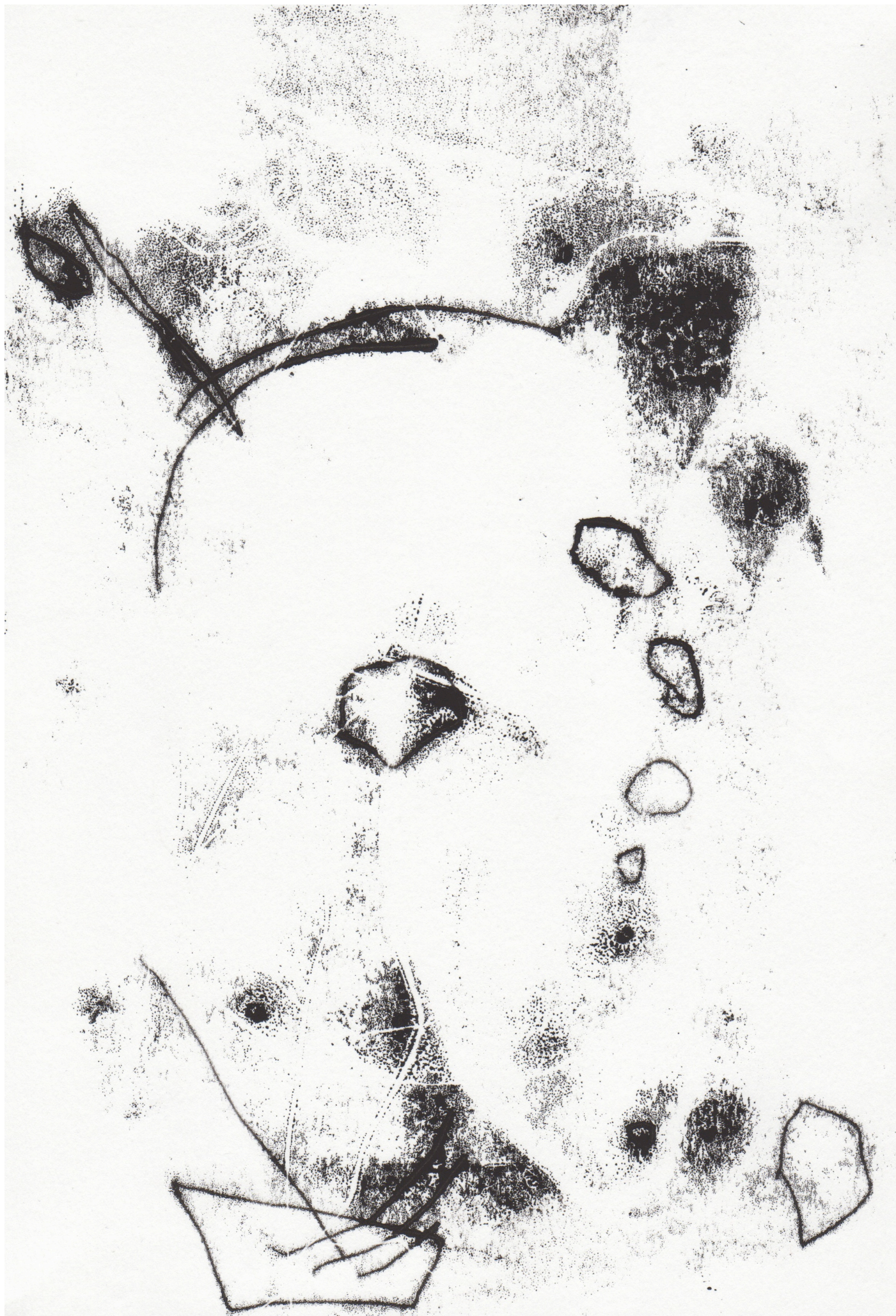












July 2015: The Second Vision

The second vision occurs on the banks of the river Wyre at the Abbeystead estate, the point in the river where a dam holds the body of water to landscape the grounds of the estate. The womxn are being forced to carry out physical labour to break the stones – the stones that had been part of them, they part of the stones – into building blocks for the construction of large aristocratic estates. The vision is absolutely silent, there is no resonance or sound. There are no tears, and there is no water; everything is very dry. I cannot touch or enter this vision so easily, I cannot wake anyone or anything up. I cannot find ▲. The womxn and the stones, although still existing, feel like two dimensional shadows.

I am struck by the soundlessness of this vision. There is no scream, there is no song or lament, there is no phonos. The stone-womxn of this second vision embody a specific position within the entanglement of coloniality. The aftermath of the stone-womxn cut is their silent labour that upholds the colonial project, whilst also subjugating them to it. The gendered violence of the stone-womxn ripples out to ongoing violences of colonialism. Their non-consensual interpolation into the colonial matrix of power, contributes to the construction of white patriarchal dominance and sits in triadic relation to the settler-colonial moves of vanishing Indigenous bodies, and spectacle-fetishising black bodies. There is nothing that pushes in excess to spill out of this moment; it is dry, resigned, buried and still. The defining feature of this silence is that it lasts, and it lasts for a long time, longer than it should, before the rumblings of something else begin to emerge.

We have been concerned so far with witnessing as a dynamic through which nonhuman-human collaborations and collectivities might induce alternative, unknown futures. Within this field, humans are oriented towards the ever-shifting, dynamic behaviour of manifestations that might suggest unexpected and unknown relations between human, nonhuman, material and immaterial existents. However, the cut of the stone-womxn leaves no vibrational resonance nor hint of communication between human and stone; the de-activation of stone is parallel to the de-animation of the womxn. There are no manifestations nor would there be in such silence, after such a long tract of time unnoticed. The womxn had to cut and chisel away at the stones that had been part of them; the whole image was silent with the too-muchness of grief. It was disturbingly familiar, and yet I also witnessed this vision with the still numbness of having given up. In such an atmosphere, not listening to land or nonhuman ancestors becomes the norm, the status quo, and therefore not a seemingly violent act; the absence of listening goes unnoticed. The dynamic of such a long-standing absence that its being perpetuated is no longer perceived as a violence, is of monumental concern for this thesis. In many ways it is the starting point and orienting concern for an ecological pedagogy. How might we practice the role of witnessing within the ongoing theatre of ownership, which is an extension of the performative moment inaugurated *by* the human, and *for* the human witness?

Eyes, skin, muscle, bone, weight, exhaustion, the skin cells turning in on themselves to calcify. Trying to decipher what it is exactly that the body says no to. Every time stopping at the dam, the point in the river where the water is kept in hold. Always walking upstream from, or downstream from the dam. Never walking through it. The dam is built on the Duke of Westminster's estate; the water belches and sogs up the land and boasts birds and insects and quintessentially-landscaped, panoramic views and we quicken our pace through the bloated mud, stagnant with stillness. We come up against the dam and the diaphragm, a wall in the body that separates the life force from the heart, mind, tongue; blocks the digesting of matter and the continuation of the river. We stay still.

For almost two years we have been calling this chapter 'suspension'. A place-holder for a stalling, a block or impasse that might better be described as fog. It is a chronic physical pain that seeps into skin, eye sockets, scalp, liver, digestive tract. It brings with it a dull heaviness that makes the skin sensitive to touch, and the muscle a loose tone, unready, unresponsive. There are many explanations that could be given to this, but I am reluctant to make it so clearly a cause and effect issue. The impasse that mutes as much as it muddies the vision, makes the eyes physically dry, the body an insurmountable bulk to heft around.

What is it that my body is refusing? When every cell takes on a cloak of refusal, it is hard to follow any new pathways or tracts out of this, so it is hard to decipher where the refusal comes from, and where it is to be directed. The body refuses to speak, refuses to move, refuses to grieve or rejoice. It is the numb, ongoing, everydayness of this refusal, and the way the psyche normalises and adjusts to it, that is terrifying. It is a refusal which might somehow produce its own possibilities or wisdom, but within regimes of neoliberal productivity, it becomes that time 'when work is not possible' - when the self cannot be a self, but becomes some kind of slough-off, or fall-out puddle as evidence of the incapacity or failure to keep to the form it should take.

It is not a productive refusal, nor do I want to romanticise it as resistance or use it to make any over-sentimental claim to a history that might not be mine. I believe in the intelligence of sleep, and of dreaming, and of the wavelengths of the brain at this frequency; I think it could, then, have pressed on the objects of its refusal enough to transform them. But the refusal itself is somehow not allowed, and instead seems to produce exponential tonnes of fog - the lack of permission for what seems to refuse or disrupt - choking the potential of such a refusal and its re-orientation to an otherwise.

It feels like the exhaustion of bearing weight, of keeping something or someone in sight and in mind, that would otherwise be forgotten. It is the intensity of this trying to keep the less visible in sight that drains the energy from the eyes, exhausts every cell to its core. In this stagnancy, which comes and goes over the course of two years, I try to make movement towards the third and final vision. I try to gather up the fog, inhale its atmosphere and ride its currents into a trajectory, into an intentional, directional movement from here to there, into a passage of time and a cause and effect. I try endlessly to manifest this vision. Every now and again there is a small surge in movement towards it, time and again it stalls. I find myself stuck, halted and still – between the second vision with its dry silence, and the future passage of the third vision:

July 2015: The Third Vision

The ceremony house is a group of womxn building, laying whole stones straight from the river bed back into the land and the hills, sinking the house into the ground so they can walk in and remember what it is to be nested there, to be borne out of the earth as material evidence of its imagination in every possible way. They meet there and it is a house which arrives as structural in vision, as solid in image, but it is also a house made of sound and pulses of relation. It moves and shifts and emerges out of different constellations from every moving iteration of togetherness; it is an emergent structure and emergent politics that can decompose and fold into dust as quickly as it might need to. It arises as vibration, just before the moment of

perception; as it peaks into form it is already shifting, changing, re-configuring. We learn how to die and shed here, we learn silence and we learn sound.

There is a sense that if I could move into the third and final vision, I could transform this huge weight - whatever it is and from wherever it came - but time and again, my body seems to freeze. My practice dramatically changed in the necessity to re-orient to what this embodied state was communicating. Through returning to the river as well as working away from it with the river stones, I began increasingly attuning to an aspect of the systemic field: the felt sensation of perceiving an absence, and its manifesting in and through bodies over time. Through this work *the unearthings* developed, and I become aware of what I call the body as witness. I had felt that humans are porous and thus extensions of what is emerging out of land, but the second part of this project reveals another aspect of proximity between human, nonhuman and ancestral bodies. It requires asking how this kind of work might be supported, shared and made possible.

Somewhere deep beneath skin, fascia, muscle, tendon, and right deep down into the marrow of bones, there is a memory that feels beyond the personal or the lived and exists rather as vibration - it sits like lava underneath the bedrock of muscles and the ashy crust of more available, personal memory; when this lava is 'touched' so to speak, it is like a sharp fire bolt of clarity. What is most clear about the texture of this lava, which I understand somehow to be bone marrow, is that I feel what is held in this layer of the body is not lived through my lifetime. Sometimes I have a sense of from where these experiences emanate, and an image or felt, known sense may pulse through the fog in affective plumes that shimmer into thought or form in some inexplicable way.

This pulse begins to erode and break through a surface layer of protective fascia or muscle grown stoney, and augments into a deeply familiar memory of being demanded to speak in knowing terms of the unknown. The threat of not doing so produces either a language of extremes - confession and doubt, claims and certainty - or, in this case, silence. When this memory pulses out and consumes everything within its atmosphere, my jaw tightens shut, the

tongue refuses. The jaw is so intimately connected to the pelvis, so the pelvis - that which stands under, and understands the body - also tightens. Jaw clamped shut, pelvis unmoveable. We refuse to speak.

The reverberations of the witch-hunts and generations of demonising predominantly women and their material-spiritual practices, are felt in the tension between the erotic force of the river and the property relations that surround and enclose it. They are felt in my body's response to academia also. Every return from the river makes apparent the juxtaposition of contexts - the context within the land and its relations, wherein the river manifests and the ancestors are present - with the wider social context which values labour that is visible and quantifiable, and the academic context which requires certain written explications of knowledge. The weight of keeping the invisible in mind, of trying to attend to it *on its own terms*, suspends other kinds of trajectories - simple ones, like how to go about a day, and more complex ones. Why might remembering invisible kinds of ephemeral presences take so much energy, and why does an academic context trigger such a refusal to voice this? It feels there are many generations' worth of memory held in my physical body, of this work being punishable in some way. It often manifests in my jaw, as a closure and refusal to speak, lest such work be once again unvalued.

The chronic pain response is communicating something. I become aware of a blurry boundary between myself and a known ancestor: great-grandmother Florence, who was sectioned in her 40s leaving two children behind, and living the rest of her life in a mental institution, with little or no concrete 'diagnosis'. Florence's repeated appearance at the river, alongside the stone-womxn and the Pendle womxn, asks me to attend to all three layers of event and to attune to the multitude of ways in which witnessing might be taking place, even when I do not realise it.⁴²⁶ Whilst Florence is a personal family story, her story is not uncommon, and it has never been surprising to me that she appears so frequently at the river. Considered in light of the witch-hunts, and the ways in which women were associated with 'madness', Florence's institutionalisation mirrors the enclosures of land, knowledge and

⁴²⁶ Ch4 *River* | *Fluids* | *Tongue* describes one incident among many in which Florence appears at the river.

practices, with which this project is concerned. There is something about Florence's 'seeing' which was not seen. This echoes beyond the personal, to the ongoing injustices of different ways of knowing, being cut out from the realms of the 'reasonable' or visible world.

Because of the social fear and misunderstanding of the times, the wider family held a huge silence around Florence. It was only through the work of this project that I found out, at the age of 28, Florence's name for the first time. Such an absence draws a huge vortex around it. When attuning to the dynamics of the "knowing field" one begins to feel, see, witness and perceive how such absences often show up in subsequent members of the family manifesting symptoms, repeating it over time in different ways.⁴²⁷ The dynamics of radical inclusion can be complex, as both the perpetrators and the victims have to be included in this acknowledgement, both those who would have put Florence away, and Florence herself. Both absences (perpetrator and victim) can be held, or 'materially witnessed', in a singular body, which can cause great internal conflict. It becomes increasingly evident that my body relates to the academic institution as though it is the psychiatric institution. Although I rationally know this is not the case, it does not shift my body acting as a material witness to Florence's untold story and the reverberations of the witch-hunt history that I absorb at the Lancashire site. I must therefore also be material witness to the perpetrators, internally embodying the voice of the institution. One of the effects of inducing porosity between boundaries of "I" and "non-I" is that, as we have seen, phenomena reveals itself across bodies, across thresholds, not fixed to specific "sites". The resonance with a memory that I have not lived through - neither institutionalisation, nor the witch-hunts - highlights one of the challenges of this project: how to make space for the porous, shared, affective space between bodies and times and how certain resonances might be held in bodies *across time*, without claiming, or appropriating these overlapping experiences?

An understanding of resonance has been growing throughout this work. Resonance is a pulse of frequency that picks up the pulse of another frequency. Its passage through one

⁴²⁷ The powerful element of working with the systemic field, is that a lot can be transformed without specific knowledge about the ancestors; they will still "show up" in the field. For this reason, massacres, genocide, wars, unknown biological parents, or ancestors who endured slavery or trafficking, can all be worked with, and it doesn't pre-suppose a prior knowledge of "what happened" in order for the absences in the field to be acknowledged.

particular body will be subject to that particular body's history, conditioning and contemporary identity. Similarities between forms, patterns and processes in nature and internally in the body, enable a material resonance and alternative modes of communication between for example body and stone, or body and river.⁴²⁸ When resonance is felt with the Pendle womxn and attended to, it draws me closer to the stone-womxn and the river, in order to move something through my body that feels shared and affected with their bodies. If resonance is a moveable, border-transgressing pulse and frequency, moving and being moved by other bodies, then allowing something of this shared frequency to move me might similarly move whatever else is resonating with this - be it Pendle womxn, Florence, stone-womxn or any other number of existents implied in this expanded and porous system.

My response to this site and its histories therefore is to take seriously what might be in the way of communication across Life Nonlife divides. If we are to move out of colonial practices and ways of knowing in time for future generations to collectively have better resources to repair, rather than damage, their lifeworlds, we need to gather and collect stories and experiences of these re-memberings. I want to think this through in relation to Christine Stewart's text *Treaty 6 Deixis*. I jump to a settler-colonial context to draw the particularity of times and places into relation. Coloniality historically and continuously strips ceremony from the political, erases the nonhuman as an entity which can witness and give consent to political agreements, and thus erases the bodies that extend out of these obligations. Through considering this, my practice evolves in light of wanting to prioritise the conditions that support the encounter with land and nonhuman voices. I ask how from my position, this work might rise to meet Indigenous theorists working from a different political urgency, with different lineages and threats to lifeworlds and ways of knowing.

⁴²⁸ Quantum studies is catching up with this experiential knowledge, revealing how bodies resonate across distances of time and space. See Karen Barad *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007.

In *Treaty 6 Deixis* Stewart questions her position as a settler-Canadian living in Treaty 6 territory.⁴²⁹ Stewart's text presents the contiguity between historic primary dispossession and current settler-colonial dynamics. It asks how a poet(h)ics might be accountable to land and people, in the wake of historic (and contemporary) land dispossession mechanised as it was, through the written word.⁴³⁰ I read Treaty 6 through Stewart's poetics and its telling to her by Indigenous elders.⁴³¹ I do not wish to speak for Indigenous subjects or ways of knowing - nor do I believe her text does. Rather, I read the text to bring to light the colonial erasure of a ceremonial context and nonhuman speech from the realm of the political. I consider how this repeats in settler-colonial contexts, and in epistemological hierarchies embedded in academic praxis. Stewart's poetics re-circulate a historic rupture, and interpolate a reader-witness into its ongoing dynamics. The re-circulation of historic Treaty 6 through what I propose is another periperformative mode, asks what role English language has after relations of property have invaded a nonhuman human exchange. I propose Stewart's text re-positions language as accountable to land and its relations itself. I consider this in light of the stone-womxn cut, and how it might align with the emerging *unearthings* practice and an embodied, rather than textual material poet(h)ics.

⁴²⁹ Treaty 6 (1876) is one of eleven treaties signed between the British crown and First Nations, and represents current provinces of Saskatchewan and Alberta. For the Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, accessed December 14, 2019, see online at: <https://www.treatysix.org/nation-listing>. Christine Stewart, *Treaty 6 Deixis*. (Vancouver, BC: Talonbooks, 2018).

⁴³⁰ The written word was mechanised for colonial violence, both in the performative act of buying/selling and its ongoing legislature, as well as the inhumane abuses ensuring Indigenous subjects no longer spoke their own languages, hence cutting generations of Indigenous children from their knowledge systems, familial ties, and material-spiritual practices. The system of North American residential boarding schools where Indigenous children were forcibly taken, was a fundamental tool in colonial assimilationist and genocidal practices, with the majority closing in the 1960s but the last closed in Canada in 1996. Children were forced not to speak their mother tongue, and to assimilate entirely into Euro-American, Christian culture. The Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples in 1996 finally brought to light the multitude of abuses carried out through this system. See online, accessed October 18, 2018, at: <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/aboriginal-heritage/royal-commission-aboriginal-peoples/Pages/final-report.aspx>. Such a legacy is weighted in the signing of the Treaty itself, which is enacted and documented in written English.

⁴³¹ Stewart cites Elder Bob Cardinal, Dwayne Donald, Sylvia McAdam (Saysewahum; one of the founding members of *Idle No More*), Sharon Venne, Elders Pauline Paulson and Gary Moostoos, Reuben Quinn and Dorothy Thunder, as well as W. C. Wolfart's translation of *The counselling speeches of Jim Kâ-Nîpîîhtên*, Publications of the Algonquian Text Society (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1998).

In 1876 a treaty between Indigenous Nations and the British Crown was signed at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt. Treaty 6 continues to be a point of contention between tribal authorities and the Canadian government, the latter having violated almost all of the terms of the Treaty, namely through dispossession of lands which were never “sold”, only intended to be shared for agricultural use with the British.⁴³² An ongoing point of contention is that the written Treaty is extrapolated from the oral understanding, context and procedures of Indigenous Treaty making, and re-contextualised in Euro-American law. In her work on Treaty 6, Sharon Venne writes that the colonists’ claim that Queen Victoria did not want to “own the land, the fish, the animals, the plants, the water, or the birds” was fundamental to the understood agreement, which nevertheless:

“contains the wording ‘cede, surrender and forever give up title to the lands’. The elders maintain that these words were not included in the original treaty. The Chiefs and Elders “could not have sold the lands to the settlers as they could only share the lands according to the Cree, Saulteau, Assiniboine, and Dene laws”.⁴³³

I want to focus on two elements of *Treaty 6 Deixis* which foreground the historic signing of Treaty 6 and are central to the question Stewart asks of language in light of this legacy. The first is that we are told (at the very end of the text) that the nêhiyaw women who govern the land and community are excluded by colonial representatives from Treaty negotiations; they hold a sweat lodge ceremony to ask the nonhuman elements (sun, waters, sweetgrass, rock/pipestem) for their agreement and authority, and it is this collaboration that defines the agreement.⁴³⁴ The second is that the Indigenous representatives enact a sacred pipestem ceremony to bind the agreements of the Treaty. We are told the pipestem is a sacred ceremonial object that witnesses and requires one’s truthful speech: “offering reassurance...a source of

⁴³² According to oral and written accounts of Treaty 6, “the concept of sharing was acceptable” to the Indigenous elders, especially given the emphasised role of Queen Victoria; as nêhiyaw women were central to law making, the concept that a woman wanted to share land with her people, was acceptable to the Indigenous representatives. See Sharon Venne, “Understanding Treaty Six: An Indigenous Perspective” in *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada*, ed. Michael Asch, (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press. 1997) p.193. Venne focusses on oral storytelling as the mode with which Elders hold, remember and share knowledge of Treaty 6, that this continual collective holding is an ongoing, embodied process.

⁴³³ Ibid. p.192-193.

⁴³⁴ For this reason, Sylvie McAdam explains the phrase “as long as the sun shines, the rivers flow, and the grass grows”, and “according to nêhiyawêwin instructor Reuben Quinn, the wind, yôtin, should be included” Stewart, p.127.

support, a refuge” rather than admonishing through divine retribution.⁴³⁵ However, “Neither of the government’s official record-keepers makes even the least reference to the declarative role of the pipestem, nor to any closing rite other than the affixing of marks in ink”.⁴³⁶ The erasure of the ceremony from the written records is pre-empted by the exclusion of bodies (both the women and the nonhuman bodies whose voices appear in the lodge) from the sphere of the political. It is worth quoting in full:

“The nêhiyaw women who had jurisdiction over the land and the water and whose role it was to determine how the community should live, consult their lifeworld and the beings that give them life prior to the signing of Treaty 6”:

“Further, during the ceremony atayohkanak entered the lodge of the women. There were many who entered but five made a declaration. The first ... that came was ... (the sun). The sun told the women, "I will bear witness to this exchange and I will stand by it for all time." The second and third was the (water), but it was the male and female ... that came in and they, too, stated "we will bear witness to this exchange and stand by it for all time". The fourth was the ... (sweetgrass); the grass told the women, "I too, will bear witness to this exchange and I will stand by it for all time." The final... was the grandfather rock, who stated, "I too, will bear witness to this exchange and I will stand by it for all time." The grandfather rock is the pipe used to seal the exchange in what is now considered a covenant”.⁴³⁷

The erasure of the pipestem ceremony cuts the nonhuman as a witness who gives consent, hence a nonhuman presence, perspective and authority, from the realm of the political. Property relations invade the possibility of language stemming both to and from the nonhuman. They cut the shared field of ‘mind’ which we are beginning to realise is a dynamic in which bodies are differentiated, but speaking subject positions (perspectives) can emerge out of porous and collaborative processes. What happens when the nonhuman authority - in this

⁴³⁵ Ibid. p.71. This admonishment is in reference to the differently symbolic object of the Bible and performative act of swearing on it.

⁴³⁶ Ibid. p.74. A quotation somewhat ambiguously embedded in the text, but we can assume is a continuation of the reference on page 71 to H.C. Wolfart, translator of *ana kâ-pimwêwêhahk okakêskihkêmo-wina: The counselling speeches of Jim Kâ-Nîpîtêhtên*. Kâ-Nîpîtêhtên was a Cree Elder who recorded 8 speeches between 1987 and 1989 as a member of the Council of Elders at Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College, Saskatoon. Jim Kâ-Nîpîtêhtên’s “sermons... about the sacred rituals...each begin with an apologia in which the speaker claims he speaks not at his own initiative nor on his own authority but at the urging of those who called on him and as instructed by older and wiser ones”. In Ch. 5 (100-105) kâ-pimwêwêhahk instructs the audience on the role of the pipestem as a “witness” to treaty negotiations between Cree and the Queen’s representative. In Dave Pruett’s review of *ana kâ-pimwêwêhahk okakêskihkêmo-wina: The counselling speeches of Jim Kâ-Nîpîtêhtên* ed., trans., and with a glossary by Freda Ahenakew and H. C. Wolfart, in *Language* 76(2), pp.483-484.

⁴³⁷ This whole section is quoted in *Treaty 6 Deixis*, originally in Sylvie McAdam, *Nationhood Interrupted: Revitalizing nêhiyaw Legal Systems*, (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 2015) p.55.

case the sun, waters, sweetgrass and rock/pipestem, are not acknowledged, *do not appear* - to the colonists? How can all that they bind or validate through the political moment of the pipestem ceremony be acknowledged or seen? Through the racist colonial gaze and property relations designed to ensure land dispossession, the repeatability and oracular hierarchy of the text is enacted through the mark, invalidating the nonhuman witness, erasing them and ceremony (as the context for communicating with the nonhuman) from the political. We have seen how this dynamic of relegating political acts to the realm of ‘cultural belief’ and therefore ensuring said practices don’t belong in the political future, is directly continued through contemporary settler-colonial dynamics.

Stewart opens her text with a series of quotes that situate her poetics within this settler-colonial context, and the Indigenous languages and lifeworlds she is obligated to. She gives the context: “The primary signings of Treaty 6 near Fort Carlton on August 23 and 28, 1876, and on September 9, 1876” followed by translations of the words of elder Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw: “this pipestem will tell the story...”. The text goes on to quote different questions of linguistics, including: “Sentient territory / Everything minds”, followed by the question: “Will sheer pointing / save the place?”⁴³⁸ We are embedded within a cacophony of voices and present with various lineages of written and spoken word, including Haudenosaunee and Western feminist voices. The pipestem, a nonhuman presence in the context of ceremony, is established as the agent of story, where “here” is the context in which “mind” is a verb, and “everything” is not merely *being* but *minding*; everything is in the process of interpreting signs - selfhood proliferates, and implies an ethics of care, of *minding*, tending.

A question is established from the outset: within this context - where nonhumans tell stories (give perspectives), and “mind” is a process beyond Life Nonlife divides - will “sheer pointing” be enough to “save the place?” The primary example of the pointing finger indicating “this” in a shared spatiotemporal context with addressee, is suggested and couched in the context of everything *minding* (i.e. a nonhuman sentience and semiosis). The reader is

⁴³⁸ The latter two quotes from Joe Sheridan, and Roronhiakewen “He Clears the Sky” Dan Longboat, “The Haudenosaunee Imagination and the Ecology of the Sacred”, *Space and Culture*, Vol. 9 No. 4 (2002), pp.365–381; and Rachel Blau DuPlessis, *Drafts 1-38, Toll*. (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2011).

confronted with the ambiguity of the indexical register, it's both making mediation explicit (pointing), as well as implying some promise towards the presence of phenomena in its actuality (to the thing itself).⁴³⁹ This friction at the heart of deixis is opened and re-circulated throughout the text in light of the historic moment. Can English language - the same language that in the historic moment could/would not account for a nonhuman witness, thereby erasing it - make a set of relations visible to a reader-witness in a way which doesn't repeat the politics of (mis-)recognition and the original violence of dispossession? How can the language of the coloniser be in relationship to land as a system of relations in light of this dispossession and ongoing Treaty obligations: "how to turn English from a low-context language / into a high-context language?"⁴⁴⁰ How are the fixed site of the page and ongoing relations of property entangled in their cutting emergent knowledges from material, contextual relations?

The first section of *Treaty 6 Deixis* proliferates with uses of deixis, where *there* is only *there* in relation to *here*, which is only *here* in relation to they who utter "here", which as we have witnessed with Jacobs and the ongoing practice, can and might be a de-stabilised singular subject position.⁴⁴¹ Its mode is relational, material and contextual. The first third of Stewart's text is imbued with bodies of flesh, water, rock, plant, animal and their specific material relations within land, bringing this indexicality to the foreground:

"that geese place...that old one... This beaver house...Sometimes that eagle...*Several deer prints like this...* This sky...By these rocks...Those there...Look at this...Like that...Here then...Yes this...To show this bending...To show this sleeping...*This river...To be here like that...*"

The indexical register implies a relational 'here', but the text evokes a movement through the land where 'here' and its relations are constantly changing, recalling the ever-shifting and co-constituted "I" we have been concerned with throughout this project. There are multiple

⁴³⁹ See Constantine V. Nakassis, "Indexicality's Ambivalent Ground" *Signs and Society* Vol. 6, no. 1 (2018) pp.281-304, following Michael Silverstein's extensive work on indexicality; see "Shifters, Linguistic Categories, and Cultural Description" in Keith Basso and Henry A. Selby, eds., *Meaning in anthropology*. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976b) pp.11-55.

⁴⁴⁰ Quoted in the text, originally from Rita Wong, "Value Chain" in *Forage* (Gibsons Landing, B.C: Nightwood Editions, 2007).

⁴⁴¹ "By deixis is meant the location and identification of persons, objects, events, processes and activities being talked about, or referred to, in relation to the spatiotemporal context created and sustained by the act of utterance and the participation in it, typically, of a single speaker and at least one addressee". John Lyons, *Semantics*, Vol 2. (London: Cambridge University Press, 1977) p.637.

ambiguous subject positions in this first section, recalling the dynamic grammatical sense and material sense of the indexical-meaning as explored through Jacobs. The indexical litany of relations thus flesh out the land, but in doing so, put us *in mind of that place*: both a physical geographic place, as well as the ‘place’ where everything ‘minds’.

I want to consider this indexicality in light of my ongoing practice. It is only through attending to the stones and river for a period of time and in certain ways, that it becomes perceivable when some *thing* appears as different or demanding in some way to ‘this’ or ‘that’ other something. I felt some obligation to stay oriented towards the Lancashire site, in order for something about stone-womxn to continue. The desire to share this work is largely to be part of a collectivity of human and nonhuman existents oriented towards stone-womxn (and therefore river) discovering and sharing ways to notice what else is oriented towards them that, as stone-womxn, they rely on. Povinelli’s articulation of the obligation and orientation of existents towards and in relation to one another, is key here. According to Yilngi, what matters is not the what, but the orientation towards, that keeps something in its current form or not:

“what makes Tjipel “here” and “this” is the fact that all of the entities that compose her remain oriented toward each other in a way that produces her as *thishereness*, as an experiential destination and departure... all of these entities oriented toward each other become something”.⁴⁴²

Yilngi’s account highlights the way in which indexical relations prioritise the *where*, *how* and *in what direction and relation*, over the *what*. The form of existents (i.e. land itself) is not static nor with fixed properties, thus can neither be taken for granted (Tjipel ‘relied upon’ to stay in a form conducive to human life regardless of what humans do), nor extricated from her set of co-constituting relations. We might also recall the work of attending to manifestations and appearances that Povinelli describes her friends are constantly doing, especially as an act of survivance when forcibly moved from one territory to another. Observing changes and movements in the land, “began to mark out a “this” and “that”, a “here” and “there” in slightly different ways - and how the landscape was manifesting signs that these paths were proper, good, right, and welcomed”.⁴⁴³ In attending to manifestations around sites that one may have

⁴⁴² Povinelli, *Geontologies* p.100.

⁴⁴³ Ibid. p.78.

been forcibly removed from “the older generation insisted on...teaching a form of mental mapping”. It is “in your mind” that you “put yourself in the place you once were but are not now”, then travel, observe, make tracks.⁴⁴⁴ Deciphering involves attending to the similarities and differences that show up around appearances and manifestations (we recall that if the icon functions through similarity and likeness, the index hinges on attending to “the difference that makes a difference”).⁴⁴⁵ This interpreting attends to the impact of changes on their continued form - as well as inducing said manifestations *to continue appearing* by keeping in ‘mind’ and extending, or stretching orientations and obligations, across vast distances.⁴⁴⁶

Without conflating different settler-colonial contexts or analytics of existence, I am bringing Povinelli and Yilngi into our reading of Stewart’s text to draw attention to a particular attendance to *thisherenow* as we have been experiencing it both in practice and through dialogue with these varying accounts. Stewart is creating a context into which the historic Treaty 6 will subsequently be introduced. I believe we miss the context where “everything minds”, if we do not let ourselves be placed in the dynamics of such a ‘mind’ at the outset. From here, the densely indexical series of relations is not the ‘setting of a scene’, nor the invitation for an external set of relations to enter the text. Rather, an explicitly political question is introduced within a context of indexical nonhuman relations: how do I live in this place, amongst these relations, in light of this political event? The political context being flesh out here is one in which what is shared (the commons), and likewise what we have and don’t have in common, is the multiplicity of perspectives, in constant shifting relation and constitutive of ‘this’, ‘here’, ‘these’, ‘this kind’, ‘like that’ ‘there’. The political event is distinctly more-than-human, its subjects defined and emergent through their shifting material relations and orientations.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁵ We might also bear in mind how Kohn’s work illuminates this attendance to similarity and difference is something one has to be aware is happening beyond human cognitive capacities; if a jaguar mistakes a human for “dead meat” rather than another kind of person, the result could be fatal.

⁴⁴⁶ This “mental mapping”, “putting oneself in the place you once were but are not now” again seems to position the body in two places at once - not through the invoking of *written* indexical relations that might bring another spatiotemporal set of relations “to the eye’s mind” as it were (rendering the world available to me here as I read). Rather, through attending to these relations through an embodied state “in mind”, the nonhuman manifestations seem to respond to Yilngi and her friends, “showing up” in the new places they have been moved to. It is in making *themselves* available to the world, to the old place “where you once were” that seems to maintain relationship between here and there, now and then, in ever shifting, mutable ways.

Furthermore, after this litany of relations, Stewart writes that in nêhiyaw language, “*over there* / the locative deictic *êkotê* ‘over there’ serves as an antecedent of the relative / root “it””.⁴⁴⁷ In the English language, “it” would stand for an object position: an other, separate from the realm of the political speaking, subject “I”. However, Stewart situates her poetics in relation to the proposal that *position (as spatialised relation)* within a system of land, seems to *precede* subject-object relations; “it” is an “over there” relative to the “here” implied in the text, not relative to a “you”. It is not a fixed *what*, but rather defined in terms of distance, proximity, direction and therefore perhaps obligation, to a “here”. “It” then as “over there” might just as soon be “here” within a constantly shifting, dynamic field. The text situates the body of the reader-witness as much as the ‘here’ of the text itself, into this field of relations - ‘that’ ‘these’ ‘those’, both ‘here’ and ‘over there’ within land itself. It is into this context, into the political accountability to land as a system of ‘minding’ relations, that the historical event of Treaty 6 is given. Here the reader-witness is further drawn into the always already happening of this historic moment and its telling:

I index in you the

trust and the situation of this telling

that was the time when the pipestem was used

- JIM Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw

The Counselling Speeches of Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw

Followed by a location and date of the signing, and a few lines later, a translation of Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw repeating the nêhiyaw elders’ demand to the British representatives at the pipestem ceremony:

“If you speak the truth, hold then this pipestem; do you

⁴⁴⁷ Stewart, p.68.

“speak the truth in this which you have promised us - yes or no?”⁴⁴⁸

This *I index in you* suddenly interpolates the reader-witness into the ongoing settler-colonial dynamic. The speaker does not *put trust in* another, rather they *index* in the reader-witness (“you”) the trust and situation of this telling. A more familiar construction of trusting in, to or with - *I trust in you*, trusting the telling *to another*, or trusting you *with this telling* - would perhaps render a clearer distinction between *this* and *you*, as though the telling were a closed event, an object to be held, passed from one subject to another. In such a case, trust could evoke the trustee - a person who would nominally hold property “for the good of one or more beneficiary”.⁴⁴⁹ However, in Stewart’s “I index in you”, the body of the reader-witness is implicated in, (*implicare* - to fold into), the telling itself; the reader ‘fills’ the indexical-meaning of “you”.

Immediately told *that was the time when the pipestem was used*, brings the trust indexed in the reader/witness into proximity to the trust that the first eyewitnesses were likewise folded into, what was also demanded of them. The reader-witness is called into the tell-*ing* as an ongoing event, and the ongoing *situation* (context) of that event, which is the ongoingness of the settler-colonial context, the open-ended event of the text itself, and the newly rendered context of this telling which draws *then* and *now* into continuity. Thus *you* as index of the trust and situation of the telling, is brought into spatiotemporal contiguity to the telling, and to what we might consider a field within which historic and contemporary trust are spatialised rather than temporalised. The *then* and *there*, is rendered *here* and *now*, albeit ambiguously with the irreplaceability and unrepeatability of the historic moment.

This ongoingness is emphasised through the shifting ‘you’ a few lines on, called in by Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw’s translated words of the historic demand to the colonists: “If you speak the truth, hold then this pipestem; do you / speak the truth in this which you have promised us - yes or no?”. The “you” as reader-witness of the poetic text (and event of the telling), shifts in

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid. p.64-7.

⁴⁴⁹ “trustee”, *Cambridge Dictionary* accessed February 2019 at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/trustee>.

this second address to “you” of the colonists in the historic demand, and the two seem to overlap in the dynamic way that we have witnessed the indexical-meaning of the indexical symbol functioning. The reader-witness is thus drawn into an ethics of response-ability to the performative act itself. Filling the indexical-meaning of the “you” in a material sense, implicates the body that reads the lines “If you speak the truth...” into the ongoing context of the telling. The reader-witness does not replace the historic witness but the dynamic tension and bizarre suspension of this indexicality creates the strange possibility of being in two places at once.

In oral poetics as articulated by N. Scott Momaday “there is no difference between the telling and the told”, the *telling* as event of oral storytelling is not a recounting of events past, but a creation of the event itself in the here and now.⁴⁵⁰ Stewart’s invocation of an oral *telling* which makes the event anew and the material indexical “you”, then clusters the reader-witness around the historic performative act, thus also the authority of the nonhuman pipestem, the preceding ceremony, and the colonists’ impending response. The text circles around the absent arrival of the performative I swear (*to speak the truth*) that presumably would have (if not in such words then implicitly) been answered to such a question, implicitly affirming the nonhuman authority of the pipestem and ceremony. However, delaying this performative *I swear* and interpolating the reader-witness into this moment, opens a space of suspension where another field of relations unfolds. It resists asking the reader-witness to validate the ‘truth’ of a past historic moment through a politics of recognition. It performs a far more radical move appropriate to the actual Treaty itself and its more-than-human witnesses. The periperformative delay re-directs the reader-witness to the ongoingness of the context: a more-than-human politic to which they remain accountable.

The reader-witness is folded into the question *do you swear*, and implicated through the periperformative delay of its arrival. What would ‘*I swear to uphold Treaty agreements*’ mean to speak it as a settler-Canadian in 2020? Let us recall that the context Stewart has placed this utterance into and suspends us in, is the literal field of indexical material relations of land itself.

⁴⁵⁰ N. Scott Momaday, *Man Made of Words*. (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1997). Momaday writes from his Kiowa perspective.

This political context is made up of multiple, sentient subjects in relation to one another, and to *this here now*. Through foregrounding (this) land as a political field of relations, Stewart spatialises an otherwise temporal distance between *now* and *then*. The reader is interpolated into an ethics of response-ability in relation to land itself: the ‘minding’ (animate) entity that was both *then* and is *now*, the same, differently, and whose more-than-human relations are (still) witnessing. How the reader-witness bears witness to the telling (which is the event made anew thus also its more-than-human relations), seems to directly implicate the (failed) promise of the historic event. What would it take (this time round), for the reader-witness to acknowledge the authorial pipestem and nonhuman existents - sun, waters, sweetgrass and rock - and their role in consenting to and forming political, binding agreements?

This field of witnessing that the reader-witness is called into, clustering around the inaugurating speech act, avoids the temporal cut that settler moves to innocence can so often make, avoiding accountability by separating colonial ‘pasts’ from the supposedly no-longer-colonial present. Sylvia (McAdam) Saysewahumway, co-founder of *Idle No More*, Cree environmentalist and expert in *nêhiyaw* law, reminds us of the original “human-to-more-than-human treaties and their integral role in the more recent process of making Treaty 6”.⁴⁵¹ The nonhuman is witness to a future and partakes in its promise.⁴⁵² It is the nonhuman existents (sun, water, sweetgrass, rock (pipestem)) who bear witness and give consent – *through speech, not silence* – for the tribal authorities to sign the Treaty. It is quite remarkable how this process is uttered: the nonhuman existents will “stand by” the exchange for all time. It is through the positionality of *standing by/alongside* that these material-spiritual bodies are witness to this agreement. We can remember Povinelli’s proposal that existents “turn away” when not attended to. As such, whatever is not kept about this promise, would perhaps be evident through the material witness of said bodies and their position in relation to humans - an evidence dependent on nuanced interpretations of when said existents turn, or have already turned, away.

Stewart’s poetics are accountable to the Treaty, *by being accountable to the land and system of*

⁴⁵¹ Stewart, p.125.

⁴⁵² This is a more-than-human sociality that includes the life-giving and future-propelling entities of sun, water, plant and mineral.

relations through which said Treaty was collaboratively decided. It is not that the historic moment is again opened up for the contemporary reader to bear witness to the testimony. We have witnessed the insufficiency of truth-claims to power especially in settler-colonial contexts, where Coulthard, *Idle No More*, and Povinelli, reveal how Indigenous Treaty or land rights are entirely disposable by settler-colonial governance. I am arguing Stewart folds us into another kind of accountability: an accountability to the historic *ceremonial* moment, which is towards land and its more-than-human (beyond Life Nonlife) existents. In this matter, neither colonial eyewitness, nor reader-witness are any less accountable. The implications of ‘missing’ this moment again as a reader-witness are not immaterial, arbitrary, nor disembodied. Within the context of multi-existent sentience (“everything minds”), and the *always already happening* event of the telling, how we read/listen impacts the field of material relations that is land itself. If the nonhuman witness is not included - not perceived to be “here” nor “there” within this field of political relations “*in mind*” as much as *in flesh*, the whole system changes, and the meaning of every “I”, “you”, “they”, “this” “that” “these” with it changes.⁴⁵³

Stewart thus foregrounds the nonhuman witness as authority of the ongoing politic, without interpolating the reader-witness into a dynamic of belief or disbelief in the ‘truth’ of testimony. It is not simply that “Deixis indicates the thing’s location and invites the outside world of space into that of the text (Rachel Blau DuPlessis)” but as Stewart writes “*and reverse this* because we are also sustained by our spatiotemporal context *What happens when the text is invited into this frozen sky wind north with snow with tree* and snow shaking in this wind this cold these hands” (my italics).⁴⁵⁴ Arguably the whole text is given in this *and reverse this*: the question is not, how can I orient to what others believe? Rather, in the simple *and reverse this* the text asks how can a language and body, which is an extension of the language and bodies that cut relations from this place, be accountable to *this frozen sky*? What language ‘matters’ to material relations of land (and of course as a result to the human relations within that land), out of which

⁴⁵³ We can remember Karrabing’s practice of attending to land “in mind” as much as body.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid. p.116.

political agreements were made?⁴⁵⁵ What kinds of communication are effective and responded to by land and more-than-human relations themselves?

The text re-situates itself to be 'hosted' within (and therefore accountable to) an ongoing, already existing politic, thus re-staging the original Treaty intention, which established and recognised the sovereignty of Indigenous Nations and granted the British invitation to be 'hosted' by said context. What kind of language matters here - to those original agreements and their nonhuman counterparts - namely, "this river...We are all bound to this water"? What would a contemporary environmental, embodied poet(h)ics look like and give rise to, if oriented towards being 'hosted' by land and its relations? If Stewart and the text are included in what makes the river 'this' river, then it is also her body, language, and by extension the reader-witness's body and language, that are accountable: "How might deixis point writers and readers continually to this land this here that holds us...".⁴⁵⁶ The last line of the poetic text leaves us in this suspended interval that Stewart has opened up somewhere between the historic past and its re-circulated presence, revealing land as the continuity towards which to direct an ethics of response. Thus the text orients us to the original political sphere and context for the Treaty - the nonhuman authority, land and its relations.

We have been gradually re-orienting to the more-than-human field of 'mind' i.e. land and its relations material and immaterial, as an authority that inaugurates, co-authors and responds to human modes of attendance. This stages a different question than how to include the nonhuman within the existing political apparatus. Stewart's text is significant in the wake of the second vision, after the cut, after a mode of being has been established in which nonhuman (and human) existents cannot be heard within relations of property. The wider question worth asking, is how to witness the unrecognisable, when what is unrecognisable has only been made such through the logic of the colonial matrix of power? (Here witnessing the unrecognisable, is

⁴⁵⁵ This also subverts the ambiguous promise of presence and the presence of mediation so dynamic to indexicality; rather than making the land endlessly available to the 'touch' of the reader-witness (accountable to the Treaty), the inversion of the more familiar construction of inviting the world into the text, places the text as firstly accountable to land, before any access, touch or presence, is assumed. As with Plumwood and Povinelli in the first chapter, asking how do we appear to the land and its relations, as opposed to always asking how it appears to us, is perhaps ever necessary to an ethics of response to the nonhuman.

⁴⁵⁶ Stewart, p.119.

not equivalent to ‘recognition’ per se). After the theatre of ownership (tout court) has been imposed on land and its relations both human and nonhuman, what is possible, necessary? It is the orientation specifically of language (communication and poetics) towards “this frozen sky...this river”, that expands the dynamic of this question beyond a human politics of recognition.

Stewart’s text speaks to the slow violence of ongoing settler-colonial dynamics. Genocidal practices may be out of view, but the ongoing choice to ignore another lifeworld - intentionally or simply because it is not an established practice - to not witness in a way in which things other than what you know, *might appear*, becomes the ongoingness of slow genocide: “The present in each case in which we chose to ignore / And our bodies became that ignorance and by extension became / This violence”, (where the “case” might be both the juridical context as well as the present tense in language itself).⁴⁵⁷ I am concerned with the subtle continuation of this logic across disciplines and contexts, especially in light of the history of written English language, as a site where discourse (and legislature) about relations which are emergent, not fixed and often not replicable, is taking place.⁴⁵⁸ Is this really the context that can house such relations?

In her earlier work on Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) Leanne Simpson looked into the ways in which TEK was being researched and assimilated in dominant discourse in contemporary Canada. When entering Aboriginal communities to research TEK, Simpson observed that “outside researchers were not interested in all kinds of knowledge, and they remain specifically interested in knowledge that parallels the western scientific discipline of ecology or the “environment”, and they are often looking specifically for information that presents solutions to their own pending ecological crises”.⁴⁵⁹ A repeating problematic, was that

⁴⁵⁷ Stewart, p.78.

⁴⁵⁸ I say this partly in terms of the universality and dominance of English language, but also in response to settler-colonial contexts, where it is not to be taken for granted that legislature and academic discourse is conducted in the dominant, settler-colonial language. Translation of words, let alone perspectives, is always at play.

⁴⁵⁹ Leanne B. Simpson, “Aboriginal Peoples and Knowledge: Decolonizing Our Processes” *The Canadian Journal of Native studies* XXI 1(2001) pp.137-148, at p.138-9. See also Peter Knudston, and David Suzuki, *The Wisdom of the Elders*. (Toronto, Ontario: Stoddart, 1992).

“Aboriginal people are unhappy with the idea that TEK can be written down and integrated into the frameworks of western science and contemporary development paradigms” with a noticeable erasing of the spiritual foundations of TEK: “the ecological component of our knowledge is emphasised rather than its spiritual foundations”.⁴⁶⁰

Simpson emphasises a lot of the selectivity of Western appropriation occurs in the conversion of knowledge “from its Oral form” to one that is “more accessible and acceptable to the dominant society”.⁴⁶¹ She claims this “has the impact of separating the knowledge from all of the context (the relationships, the world views, values, ethics, cultures, processes, spirituality) that gives it meaning”.⁴⁶² Simpson’s critique of the dogma of Euro-Canadian researchers in the field of TEK, was enabled by “the Ancient processes of my people... This required a personal decolonisation process, led by several Elders, and a cultural revitalisation process, again with me as the student, and the Elders as the teachers”.⁴⁶³ Re-situating knowledge within the paradigm that gives emergence to it, re-situating herself as student to her Elders, is pivotal to Simpson’s radical resurgence project. Prioritising a heart-centred listening emerges the types of processes that then might adequately house and give emergence to forms of decolonial knowledge: it is “only when I sit quietly, patiently, and *listen with my heart*, that Indigenous paradigms and processes emerge and begin to assume control” (my italics).⁴⁶⁴

If Simpson’s heart listening emerges the Indigenous paradigms she is learning, it would suggest that said paradigms had likewise emerged from a similar heart-centred place. It matters what stories we tell, but how we listen emerges different stories in the first place. If witnessing is a co-production of emergent knowledges, then the responsibility to the nonhuman existents, in this instance the sun, waters, sweetgrass, rock/(pipestem), might be to listen with heart, in order for the paradigms and processes emergent from another kind of knowledge system to be

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid. p.139.

⁴⁶² Ibid.

⁴⁶³ Ibid. p.142.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid. p.146.

heard.⁴⁶⁵ The work of unravelling from the known into the unknown, is a work of ethical relation enabled, as Simpson points to, by a heart process, where felt, affective, intentional and spiritual intelligence, is paramount. Simpson's work is a timely reminder that the modes of listening most necessary for emerging different ways of knowing, are entangled with the ongoing hierarchy of knowledges and forms within which that knowledge is disseminated. I am interested in emergent knowledges, not equivalency.⁴⁶⁶ It is precisely because said knowledges are not iterations of the same thing, that listening in ways that are inhibitive of the emergence of certain forms of knowledge in the first place, is so violent. When different forms of knowledge are assumed to be iterations of the same thing, the way is paved for cultures who erase their truth-making apparatus (for example Western science or political economy) to become the inheritor of all of these multiple ways of understanding, the progressive 'truth' and 'shared space' we might all have in common.

A 2012 article by Kim Tallbear and Jenny Reardon reveals the extent to which Indigenous frames of knowledge making are still considered versions of more progressive Western epistemologies, with all the violence that entails. Analysing the case between Arizona State University and the Havasupai Tribe over the use of Havasupai DNA, Tallbear and Reardon reveal how "in the DNA case, none of the researchers asked for evidence of the consent of the tribes for their DNA to be used".⁴⁶⁷ In defence of their actions, the scientists claimed that "knowledge is power" and the scientific research would further science and the

⁴⁶⁵ If mind traverses bodies, it also traverses materialities within said bodies, and from a somatic perspective, we understand mind to be distributed throughout the soma. Bone thinks differently to skin, and it is possible to tap into these "states" of different mind, and perceive from their centres. Just as different critical lenses do, such different somatic lenses read information differently, and thus emerge different information, bring different things into view.

⁴⁶⁶ Povinelli's philosophical contextualising is potent for revealing how a translation of knowledges from one paradigm to another will be partial at the very best. This concept is exemplified in some of the Karrabing films, in which characters discuss various different interpretations of manifestations in the land. What is so powerful about these narrative explorations is that they stage how certain readings will enable certain futures, others will not; "truth" then is about working out which kind of interpretation is most nuanced about the specific context of the relations. The question of where the Dreamings occur in relation to the dinosaurs, reveals the stubbornness of what is untranslatable about co-existing and non-equivalent cosmologies; they do not map onto each other precisely because they are not versions of the same knowledge.

⁴⁶⁷ Jenny Reardon and Kim Tallbear, "'Your DNA Is Our History'" Genomics, Anthropology, and the Construction of Whiteness as Property" *Current Anthropology* Vol.53, 5, (2012) pp.233-245, at p.239. Quoted evidence from the independent investigation into the DNA case, known as the Hart Report: S. Hart and K. A. Sobraske, "Investigative report concerning the medical genetics project at Havasupai" December 23, 2003. Arizona State University Ross-Blakley Law Library, Reserves.

potential for medical help that might benefit “everyone” including the Havasupai. As such, “Native peoples once again become folded into the long-standing goals of “Europeans” to transform nature into useful products and to create knowledge that will be of use and benefit to all people”.⁴⁶⁸ “If indigenous people represent modern humans at an earlier point in evolution, then indigenous DNA is part of modern humans’ inheritance and, thus, property”.⁴⁶⁹ Settler-colonial peoples become the “heirs” of a vanishing Indigenous population. Whiteness as property is maintained - where “property” gets conflated with self-possession, ownership and subjectivity. Those who own also own the right to construct their own narratives, to possess their own pasts and futures, their own spaces for their own bodies in those futures. However, different methodologies are not interchangeable and certainly not chronological. They neither perform the same thing, nor are they versions of one another. They make utterly different realities, and radically different futures, come into being.

⁴⁶⁸ Reardon and Tallbear, p.238.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

Through Stewart, Simpson and Tallbear, I have been thinking about the different extensions of the colonial witness who erases nonhuman-human collectivities and ceremonial contexts from the political. This figure is an echo of the judge-witness from the vision-myth, and emerges in a subtler, less visible continuation through a figure I will call the “skeptical witness”. The skepticism of this witness goes unchallenged in the dynamics of a politics of recognition. We have only to look at the example Povinelli gives to see this highlighted:

“...we all stood listening to Betty Billawag describing to the land commissioner and his entourage how an important Dreaming site nearby, Old Man Rock, listened to and smelled the sweat of Aboriginal people as they passed by hunting, gathering, camping or just mucking about. She outlined the importance of such human-Dreaming/environmental interactions to the health and productivity of the countryside. At one point Marjorie Bilbil turned to me and said “He can’t believe, eh, Beth?” And I answered, “No, I don’t think so, not him, not really. He doesn’t think she is lying. He just can’t believe himself that that Old Man Rock listens”.

The inability of the land commissioners and lawyers to believe is exactly what allowed them to enjoy “authentic difference” without fundamental changes to the metaphysics of the law - an experience of a form of difference that has been denuded of any threat to the hierarchy of governance in late liberalism”.⁴⁷⁰

Here is not the genocidal violence of primary dispossession (although it arguably has the same effect) but the less visible and relentless slow violence of geontopower. Povinelli’s account reveals the ways in which politics of “authentic difference” can stage a kind of ‘accident of (mis)-recognition’, which in turn performs a settler move-to-innocence. At what point does the supposedly benign “lack of belief” in, for example, nonhuman, spirit or ancestral capacity to comment on, appear and guide an ethics (as well as humans’ capacities to be attuned to them) mechanise the longer racist and sexist violences embedded in the gaze of “skeptical witness”?⁴⁷¹ How does the judge-witness of the stone-womxn “cut” thus get repeated over time: as the colonist of the pipestem ceremony, as the judge of the land claims Povinelli

⁴⁷⁰ Povinelli, *Geontologies*, p.34.

⁴⁷¹ We can see through an analysis of the politics of recognition, primary dispossession and histories of slavery, that the skeptical witness extends out of the racist and sexist histories orchestrated to enable whiteness as property. As we have seen through Fanon, these gazes directly impact the phenomenology of human bodies; if everyone has a right to an uninterrupted embodiment through which to encounter the world, then ecological discourse has to be accountable to the impact of different gazes on different bodies, and ongoingness of these more weighty violences.

examples, as a contemporary reader-witness, who may be even unintentionally, extending the violence of the “skeptical witness”?

A question for the ecological turn in the humanities and specifically art and performance practices is: if we take seriously the impact of the human gaze on the intentional emergence of nonhuman existents, how do we create infrastructures that would actively enable the contexts of attendance in which these knowledges might emerge, let alone be valued and indeed followed? If pedagogical currents are formulated around knowledge that can be transmitted through the written word, the trace, the document - how might the artistic, immaterial labour of attending to the nonhuman, be fully prioritised in a system bound up in the economics and power of certain forms of production? How would this immaterial labour get accounted for in institutional contexts and sites of power? What changes when we re-frame belief: when knowledge systems are not considered versions of one another, but radically different truth making process, whereby “truth” is “not a set of abstract propositions but a manner of attentiveness and proper behaviour to the manifestations in a field of involved materials”?⁴⁷² This question propelled *the unearthings* which develop around the phenomena which came to reveal itself through these performances: that a certain “skeptical” gaze not only ‘misses’ certain knowledges, but can completely stall their emergence in the first place.

I was concerned then with how witnessing supports or inhibits the perception (and emergence) of immaterial existents through encounter with the more-than-human. I began inviting witnesses to the developing *unearthings* as witness-collaborators not audience as such. They were asked to hold space for the ongoing work and appearances that might emerge. I no longer explored the distinctly shared, psychic and embodied space between stone and human participant as in *Almanac*. Instead I began exploring how working with the stones might be a way of listening to place and the more-than-human entanglements of each specific place engaged.⁴⁷³ The sessions often take between one and two hours, and involve various elements

⁴⁷² Povinelli, *Geontologies* p.79.

⁴⁷³ These include Goldsmiths University and Paf in Northern France. Both institutions are “systems” porous and yet contained, including the literal underground (the land) that expresses through them, and its more-than-human relations.

of the ongoing practice: sounding, speech play, movement, gesture, silence, to affectively attune to how and where and in what way the stones seem to ‘appear’. The stones will then be moved, engaged with through sound, speech, movement and re-arranged to navigate the shifting field of relations. Existents appear in the enfolded, blurry, multi-sensorial way that this thesis has been exploring. It is the labour of *the unearthing* (whose reading spills out of these sessions) to both let these existents emerge, and find a way of attending to them through feeling out a kind of suturing perspective of each particular arrangement. *The unearthing* will often find its own moment to end, when the field of relations feels settled in some way.

The unearthings explore the body as the site of emergence for multiple existents as they shimmer into view, figuring out of some shared kind of mind. The performances engage the inscribed land and body; existents are often nonhuman, spirits or some other expression of existence, whose entangled layers of existence are revealed through the spatial relations of the practice, and overlapping states of embodiment. I include here photographs of an *unearthing* carried out with witness-collaborator Shelley Etkin, in early 2019. The session took place at Performing Arts Forum (Paf), in St Erme, France. An old monastery, the building has been host to a nunnery, a girl’s school, a Nazi hospital, a reclusive alternative collective in the early 90s, and now in its current form, is a cooperatively owned space bringing artists, philosophers, interdisciplinary practitioners together every year for specific structured meet-ups, or as ongoing live-in community. As a space of philosophical inquiry, the place is often charged with encounters between different ways of knowing and being, and the knots of power that cluster around certain bodies and bodies of thought. Gender politics, whiteness, and abuses of power have all been at play in this space. An ongoing question of accountability, how to be and live together, pervades the project of Paf, and it is within this distinct and ongoing politic, that I wanted to stage an *unearthing*.

The rhythm of speech, the stutter and play of language, its repetition and its phonic qualities, performs an oral, spoken poetics that imbue *the unearthings* with an in-flux, ambiguous and often phonic utterance on the threshold of language. *The unearthings* perform the transitional moments of the “non-I” slipping into embodiment, figuring into language, gesture

and movement. The sessions revealed what had also been emerging in site-specific research: immaterial, more-than-human presences appeared in direct relation to the histories and ecologies of each site. They revealed suturing perspectives (commented on) other existents within the field. The abductive quality of these perspectives (often revealed through the iconic propagation of speech that we explored in chapter 4) indicates a way of reading the information that arises. In other words a certain poesis gets revealed, based on the kinds of semiosis we have been exploring: iconic, indexical processes intimately connected to material relations and earthly forms. Just as Kohn has been exploring through his focus on living beings, I consider these abductive logics revealed through the encounter with immaterial, nonhuman existents to be another way in which we can attune to these beyond Life Nonlife presences. Their intentionality, the ways they continue to manifest in the present, can then also be felt, seen, responded to. This makes space for what *the unearthings* produce as a mode of witnessing: a kind of affective truth that is able to include the kinds of knowledges that emerge in more mythic textures, but pertain to the historic and contemporary dynamics of a place. It thus offers an additional way of attending to a specific and located more-than-human sociality.





Unearthing, with witness-as-collaborator Shelley Etkin; Performing Arts Forum, St-Erme, France, 2019. Stills from self recorded video.

In attuning to the invisible more-than-human presences, a form of witnessing between personal testimony and factual evidence emerges; it relies on my body and its positionality, but emerge presences in excess of this “I”. It is another practice of being in many places at once, through the spatialised dynamics of multiple temporal moments. In *the unearthing*, appearances that spanned the human, nonhuman and spirit realm, emerged both in mythic and distinctly historic registers.⁴⁷⁴ This was similar to how the stone-womxn appeared from a seemingly mythic time, but seemed to merge with a historic moment of the witch-hunts.⁴⁷⁵ Likewise dynamics of *the unearthings* often ‘align’ with (match up with) the power entanglements of their human communities. *The unearthings* thus attend to the already-there, the underneath (past) presences who demand, in one way or another, to be included. *The unearthings* therefore seek to interrupt anthropocentric practices of the social. They are a way of attending to what is inscribed in/on/with the ground, and what continues to inscribe human relations and dynamics of power above the ground so to speak. *The unearthings* bring to light absences that are unacknowledged in the present collective field; the sessions both attend to these repeating dynamics through the energetic engagement with them in *the unearthing*, as well as being contributed to the ongoing conversations in each site. It has not been possible to practice *the unearthings* without the stones; appearances shimmer into view through participation with the materiality and resonance of the stones.

In the cases of practicing *the unearthings* in the physical presence of the skeptical witness, the practice immediately lost its charge. It felt as though the dynamic of the stone-womxn cut was repeating across time and space. The radical difference from my experience with witness-collaborators was therefore hugely unsettling. The play of language felt like an imposition of

⁴⁷⁴ For example, at Paf, I embodied a figure who did not know if they were “a girl or a boy”, but wore a breastplate and was preparing for battle, and repeated incessantly the sound “pa, pa, pa, pa” both pertaining to “papa” and then suddenly becoming “papal”. At a later moment the entity declared they were Joan of Arc. We later found many shrines to Joan of Arc around the building. Her “appearance” speaks to the historical fact of the building’s past as a Catholic monastery, then girls’ school, and the subsequent information of the unearthing shed light on these past political-historic entanglements, as well as repeated dynamics between father figures and children.

⁴⁷⁵ Another possibility also reveals itself: that perhaps the historic moment (for example of the witch-hunts) was in fact the result of a mythic rupture far pre-dating them. If we are to think then of “Great Divides”, we might take into consideration what emerges from the ground itself as a kind of out-of-time, mythic time, and the dynamics it communicates.

human associations onto the stones which in turn felt like a stable, fixed entity. This experience and reading was deeply against my ethics and not something I wanted to repeat. It was often in these contexts that I was asked how I felt I was working with the stones as “agencies” when they appeared, in contrast to a dynamic, moving, languaging human body, to be static objects to be moved. The sessions were never an attempt to “perform animism” or situate the stones in some way as to let their agency be felt. However, the strange phenomena of the arduous weight between us in the presence of the skeptical witness, seemed to fulfil the prophecy of the skeptical witness and render the space between human and stone very wide. I was often asked in these moments, how I felt I had consent to take the stones from the river (temporarily), the stones being in these moments, most “inactive”, it felt like an obvious question as the potential for there to be communication between myself and the stones seemed unlikely at best. In the encounters with the skeptical witnesses, the lack of appearance of existents, as well as the numbness in the space between myself and the stones, felt to be an expression of some shared lack of consent. We might think of consent in this context as a field to which multiple bodies are responsive. These encounters with different witnesses reveal the status of the witness in the formation of particular modes of attunement and therefore a wider field of witnessing. I consider them experiments to explore the ways in which emergent knowledges are co-produced by the bodies who receive them, and whether this can reveal anything about the role of the human witness and their obligation towards the appearance of the nonhuman.

I came to decide that *the unearthings* would be practiced only in the presence of witness-collaborators. Resisting their visibility to a more general public is not a resistance to bringing to light what they reveal. It is a resistance to the skeptical witness, as an echo of the colonial witness who demands access to any body or archive. Instead, it prioritises the possibility of *the unearthings* bringing anything to light. It prioritises the conditions for the actual information coming through these sessions. Exploring this lesser practiced, fragile, ephemeral, living archive leads us to question how such dynamic processes relate to socio-environmental justice. *The unearthings*’ interface with the skeptical witness stages the paradox that appearances appear in certain conditions, which both confirms the skeptical witnesses’ disbelief in the invisible, as

well as enabling the emergence of an otherwise. Human-nonhuman witnessing has to make space for radically different logics and concepts to unfold. Artistic practices could contribute to creating these practices and emergent conditions which would better house the kinds of human-nonhuman relations that require being fully witnessed (beyond recognition) and in light of socio-environmental justice.

The impact of the skeptical witness in different contexts and towards different bodies varies hugely; I do not wish to conflate these contexts and their differing stakes in any way. In terms of this project's specific practice, I propose pedagogical contexts that develop conditions of attending to more-than-human socialities, through taking seriously the impact of the skeptical witness at a felt, embodied level and its affect on the emergence of certain information and existents. Attending to what might be possible at the River Wyre, across boundaries of skin, flesh, stone, millennia, material and immaterial realms etc. required letting go of trying to understand with the frameworks I was using to write about my experience.⁴⁷⁶ As I describe at the start of this chapter, I came to register this juxtaposition somatically in ways far outweighing my contemporary situation. The more my body froze, the more I had to attend to this aspect of embodied research. I did so by returning to the river. The unfolding events rupture the visions out of the realm of symbolism, and bring them through the body, again demanding another mode of participating in a material poet(h)ics.

⁴⁷⁶ There is a much needed dialogue around what is at stake when attuning to affect and resonance across human and nonhuman; how to navigate this encounter energetically has been supported by embodied practices from Systemic Constellations, dance and Kundalini Yoga. The practice has evolved a lot over the years from the earlier experience with *Wishbone*, where 'states' were induced in order to absorb almost everything - to a process of resonance not empathy, agreeing to include absolutely everything in one's experience without identifying with any of the phenomena. The 'feeling' of this practice is to constantly be making more and more internal space, rather than going towards; the more it is practiced the more it feels like attending to the 'wider' field of mind, rather than honing in or seeking to 'know' with the searching, hunting sensation that quality of thought can sometimes bring. I am interested in both processes, and go between them often. Submersion is another mode of being-with that also has its potentialities. It has been important to have the possibility of making a choice between which methodology is appropriate in which instance, with an increasing responsibility to self-care in light of agreeing to be affected.



Circlusion, 2019.
Pencil sketch, watercolour and gouache on paper.

“Falling into Time” with the Second Vision

June 2019

It is four years since the first encounter with the river. As we reach the place of the second vision, I see the orange digger loom into view, then the vast piles of rocks. They are squared and cut and arranged in piles, some already packed for transportation. Before I can locate myself fully in the present, it seems I am looking exactly at the second vision, surrounded by the cut stones, separated into piles for construction. I cannot locate myself either here or there, then or now. I understand myself to have fallen ‘into time’ with the second vision.

What does it do to think myself ‘in time’ with the second vision? During the depression, a physical block in the body itself is coupled with the sensation of not being able to move forwards. I think about the dam of the Abbeystead Estate, how it literally stops me in my tracks; I have always walked from the source to the dam, or the dam downstream, but never through it. I wonder how this place of the second vision registers in my body. When I experience the sensation of ‘walking into the second vision’ in June 2019, I am again reminded that the ‘pastness’ of the vision, is of course not at all past, but repeating in various ways over time. This seems to implicate and draw focus on the site of the dam, the second vision, and my own sensation of block in such a way as to re-orient my body towards the body of the river. I had felt that carrying out the third vision would somehow move this second vision into the perceived ‘future’ of the ceremony house vision. I had forgotten that getting out of the symbolic ‘forgetting’ of second vision was precisely the problem. I had become fixated then on a kind of projected fantasy, on how the third vision was supposed to ‘look’. The final vision had become a fixed image that I would somehow bring into being; thinking it like this I had slipped out of collaboration with the river itself.

What does it change to feel the visions to have enfolded me in such a way? Is this falling into time, the falling into ‘life in the flow of time’? Does it demand something different of me as an interpretant (an emergent self) in an ongoing chain of semiosis that includes the vision

(and therefore the land) itself? By ‘landing’ in this place and time with the second vision, I seem to fall into this material-semiosis (this story) as an embodied reader. This demands my response radically changes, lest I remain on the ‘outside’ of the vision, a voyeur-reader ‘looking in’. Continuing in that way would be continuing to try to implement a future from the outside, to think of story as a human pursuit, an arguably anthropocentric, autocratic kind of performance. It is apparent more than ever, how easy it is to forget the nonhuman as primary collaborator. When this is forgotten, everything grinds to a halt; when it is remembered, the trajectory takes a course of its own. The imagination of land and its vision *as* story (hence a kind of vision-myth) is materiality unfolding - an event not pre-given, nor an immaterial human representation projected onto something happening ‘out there’, but an ongoing more-than-human propelling - that demands different modes of creative praxis and response.

Walking into the second vision, and experiencing a depression which is distinctly void of sound, speech, and full of a numb almost nothingness, makes apparent that the visions are not a metaphor or narrative outside of myself. They seep through my fleshy, material system and require my direct participation.⁴⁷⁷ The vision-myth and materiality of place folding so directly into and through one another requires re-orienting to ‘understanding’ as a full-bodied mode, involving heart, mind, body, spirit. The “there” of the vision is suddenly “here”, demanding attention through participating with the land itself. Landing into this second vision, I feel the weight of what is demanding about this situation. The fallacy of the liberal subject is the promise of ‘making one’s own story up’, releasing oneself from the bonds of cultural constraint, or out of the laws of the “genealogical society”.⁴⁷⁸ What does it change to be in service to a beyond human force? Again we are confronted with Stewart’s question: “what happens when the text is invited into this frozen sky wind north with snow with tree?”⁴⁷⁹ What happens when my actions are accountable to a different, more-than-human poesis? Perhaps it

⁴⁷⁷ See also, Joanne Blake (Cave) PhD thesis, *What Does Myth Do Anyway? Towards an Emergent Storytelling Practice*. (University of Chichester 2018). In her theory of an emergent storytelling practice, performer Jo Blake proposes a mythic agency whereby myth emerges as a force that can propel one’s own life in certain ways.

⁴⁷⁸ Fuelling the totemic imaginary and explored in Povinelli’s earlier works *Economics of Abandonment* and *The Empire of Love*.

⁴⁷⁹ Stewart, p.117.

requires me to become a “you” to many nonhuman “I’s” rather than the other way around, a participant in another’s story.

I have fallen into time with the visions. Layered as they are, spiralling up out of the ground, perhaps I am somewhere between sandstone and gritstone, or perhaps the underneath of that, nearer to bedrock. Falling into the second vision changes how I think of depression. In addition to understanding the body as material witness to the absent ancestors, I also find myself drawn to the dam, the site of the second vision, of the ‘forgetting’. I begin following an intuitive sense that actions in this specific place, for its immaterial and historic relations, might shift the story on. To do this requires making this practice of mutual nonhuman-human witnessing collective: to invite witness-collaborators to the Lancashire site, those who might, in Simpson’s words, listen from a place of heart knowing, encouraging the emergence of more easily shut-down analytics of existence.

July 2019

I am working with Systemic Constellations facilitator, Chris Williams. We have set up a constellation that involves myself, the institution, the river and the witches. I am standing in the position of my own representative, or we can say, I am standing in the position of “I”. Chris steps in to the place of the river. He looks up at me and with an open face says “we are the same, you and I, we are exactly the same”.

I feel my whole body register this information, finding its place within my own sensations of this phenomena. I have felt this ‘sameness’ since my first encounter with the river. I did not however, have a way of accounting for this sensation, and found its implications in many ways problematic. I had thus largely tried to exclude it from this body of research. When written down it becomes too general, or at worst it repeats what this project is eager to interrupt: unchecked assumptions about what states of attunement might look like, or how and to whom they might appear and be available. Indeed, part of unpacking the depression is to dispel romantic or fetishising tendencies towards nonhuman encounter. However, when this

sentence emerges from the position of the river in the constellation, the cells of my body pulse and realise themselves differently.

In the room with a human witness and the presence somehow of the *hereish* river, I let myself fully inhabit this sensation and its felt knowing without any defence. I hear the address of the representative of “river”; as a “you” to its “I”, it demands a response, a gaze back, and I think of the jaguars, of the crocodile rock, and the ethics of returning this gaze. Filling the “you” of this address, situating myself as material body brought into relation to the river’s “I”, I feel the sharpness of the skeptical witness dissolving at my edges. Some small space opens for me to be able to ask what the emergence of this information - regardless of whatever ‘truth’ it holds - *does* for the labour of this project. I hold this question with me as I enter what will be the summer of river work for the Ceremony House. This ‘sameness’ with the river will help to inform an emergent poet(h)ics of witnessing, and the possibility again of being both ‘here’ and ‘there’, which will support the ongoing work with the impersonal and nonhuman ancestors.

February 2020

It is late February and the days are long. All the branches of the river come together in multiple different ways on the page and each time I try to gather them up again they constantly spill, as water does, in different tendencies each time. I am torn between letting the water fully rinse out every last scratch of ink, or trying to keep the words afloat, in this particular way, not that. The focus, as I have been telling you this story so far, has perhaps been on the stone-womxn. But the relationship between the womxn, the stones, and the river, has always been ▲. Who and what she is, I still don't know.

It is early morning and I am with the stone-womxn, very close to them indeed. Remembering them is a way of softening the bones. As I bring them to mind it suddenly strikes me, enters as if from a very familiar place, so familiar I cannot believe how I could have forgotten. I suddenly remember how the womxn give birth to the stones. I remember from the faintest firstness of the very initial image, how it is that the stones are womxn and the womxn are stones, and as such, the womxn give birth to stones, over and over and over and over. The cut interrupts the womxn bringing the world into being through their imagination, which is of course, the imagination of stones, and of womxn and of river: ▲.

Being both within and outside of the first vision folded the stone-womxn into my awareness and my lived experience. However, this encounter has a specific relational quality to it, which allows the travel towards and away from the stone-womxn. Moreover the stone-womxn have a particular texture; whilst I feel obligated towards them, difference shimmers between us. The feeling I have in relation to the river is another thing altogether. It is important to be specific, that I experience this with the River Wyre, coming down the fell through Dolphinhholme, not the River Hodder, even though their tributaries spring from the same fell. It often feels as though there is no difference between myself and this river. This merging is not a

loss of self, nor does it feel like an imposed identification, instead it produces a clarity of vision, and a possibility of resonance. There are two centres of focus somatically when I am in proximity to the river - the pelvic area and the eyes. The two feel related such that I am able to 'see' the river very clearly. It is the very opposite feeling from the dry, visionless eyes during depression. This sensation with the river is not dependent on inducing states of attunement and continues throughout all phases of the work. Before it is witnessed by other humans and realised through the final summer of research, it is at times very ungrounding, unsettling, and confusing to experience this phenomenon, especially because it does not, as I have said, necessarily 'fit' with the theoretical frameworks I look to for supporting it. This sense of 'sameness' is very different from the sensation of stones appearing in *the unearthings*, or for example somatic attunement to specific nonhumans such as plants. It is another kind of relationship altogether that implicates my body to another body in ways I do not understand.

I experience the expressions of the River Wyre as an otherwise force, co-existing with the ways it and the surrounding land has been over-managed and mechanised for industrialisation or profit. There is an erotic force in the affective encounter with the river even whilst it is entangled within complex assemblages of bodies and power. The serpent is associated with kundalini energy, the seat of desire and creativity in the body, its 'home' deep in the pelvic bowl, its element water. It becomes increasingly challenging to find a language for all the myriad of encounters at the river, how they weave in and out of one another. The feeling of 'sameness' with the river, rather than the enfolding of the "non-I" within the "I" (with its often unexpected 'shock' of entrance), is a feeling I try to avoid articulating for a long time. I do not want it to stage a kind of access or privilege of relationship, and am wary of what such a statement might perform. However, when confronted with this feeling in the presence of human witnesses, I am forced to consider the phenomena. What opens through this sameness to the river? What does it mean for the river to be "I" and for I to be "you"?

Part of the project of this thesis has been to find other ways of conceiving of nonhuman obligations; how might we open the awareness of an always, already happening dynamic field of suturing perspectives beyond the human and be accountable to them? Indeed,

Povinelli, Yilngi and Stewart re-oriented us towards a more-than-human politic where what ‘mattered’ was the this or that or here or there, or *thisherenow* of an existent. I wanted to think beyond Kohn’s emphasis on the living, to consider address as something that traverses the Life Nonlife divide, where it is not just the living beings who can literally ‘look’ - not how Plumwood responds to the gaze of the crocodile (viewing her as meat or as person) but how she responds to the rock, addressing her in some faint, illusory, inexplicable way - that is at stake here. Indeed it is the pull and drag of the river that I am drawn to, its capacity to situate other selves as orientations constituting its “I” that is the concern here. How does the river imagine and propel different possibilities that would affect all the other existents: stone-womxn and Pendle womxn within the field of relations of land itself?

June 2019

I am at the river with two collaborators: Shelley Etkin and Siobhán Ní Dhuinnín, with whom I have worked on previous research projects engaging the land, in Germany and Ireland respectively. The presence of human witnesses at the river brings certain aspects of my ongoing research into clarity. I will describe a small moment of the research with Shelley and Siobhán that is set in motion through a trituration ceremony we enact on the final day, and how it contributes to the growing sense of the river as “I”. The trituration practice was shared by Shelley (non-homeopath), who has been learning it through her mentor Aune Kallinen, a professional homeopath and artist. Through this lineage, the practice of trituration has also taken place outside the realm of homeopathic medicine, which lead to this trituration with the river. The following description is shared by Shelley:

“The practice of trituration comes from homeopathy and involves the grinding and scraping of a living substance with mortar and pestle through several rounds of potency. No ingestion is involved. The practice operates through a sphere of mutual resonance in which information (observations, sensations, thoughts, states, etc) are noted on physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels. Trituration is based on a homeopathic principle that the substance will evoke symptoms of aspects that it heals. This process leads to a deeper experiential understanding of the substance’s dynamic nature and core healing properties”.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁸⁰ Interview with Shelley Etkin, February 2020. Triturations are most commonly carried out with plants. The facilitator would often know the substance, but in order to maintain a non-judgemental process of witnessing, the participants usually wouldn’t. In our case we all knew the substance was river water. It is possible to triturate various substances, and many healing waters of different sites around the world have been triturated.

As a new practice to me, it was explored in this context from an artistic perspective rather than a medical, homeopathic one. I write from a place of interpreting my own experience, acknowledging my layperson's approach to homeopathy, and situating it as a moment in an ongoing research that shifted the questions forward. The substance we were triturating was river water, dropped into lactose from a river stone. In this context, material "properties" are responsive, dynamic, and relational, never resulting in fixed knowledge but always being interpreted within a wider field of relations. Engaging with an alternative notion of the "properties" of the river water as responsive, dynamic and relational, in this place with its history of property relations, in itself feels like a reparative act. We grind the river water for four hours, tracking our experience; we don't speak for the duration of the practice, but come together at the end to share our tracks, finding the ways in which the individual becomes collective again.⁴⁸¹

Through a depth of phenomena, both shared and divergent and specific to three different bodies, I will bring to the surface a few elements of this experience that highlight another aspect of the land's material poet(h)ics. Firstly, myself, Siobhán and Shelley all described an experience of intense 'headiness' during the trituration. At various different points all of us reported little if no images or sensations (for three practitioners who often work with image and sensation, this was quite unusual), and in different moments that it felt hard to look directly at the river. The shared shimmers of regret, of looping round and round, similarly appear across our divergent experiences. When I hear the others voice these sensations I am amazed; I have barely included them as phenomena, resonating so much as they do with the ongoing state of fog depression. I understand from homeopathy, the principle that the substance will evoke aspects of the symptoms that it heals. I am thus particularly struck by this quality and how it implicates the depression within the field of relations of this work.

Secondly, this sensation began to drag out and produce in me an intense discomfort, which got louder and louder, eventually expressing itself in writing over and over again that

⁴⁸¹ I record the reading of our notes to one another. Segments of this conversation can be heard in the sound piece documentation.

nothing is to be prescribed, pre-written, no prescriptions, no pre-emptive writing, no script. My notes go on with this sentiment for a long while, writing sentiments of resistance to what is fixed or pre-given. I decide to leave the practice in the fourth hour, finding it almost impossible to sit still, experiencing an urgency to move and for my movements to be un-prescribed. The resistance to enclosures of writing, medicine and as we shall see, fixity in space, collapse these spheres of practice in on another and evoke our reading of the medieval enclosures through Federici - as moments of control on bodies, practices and human-nonhuman relations. I understand that I am of course still a part of the trituration, but I leave the others, beginning to walk and immediately begin sounding.

From my layman's understanding of this trituration practice, the person who shows up a strong reaction is often resonating a lot with the substance i.e. the person who shares some likeness with the substance, and therefore perhaps who would respond strongly to the healing aspects of the substance. This is known as the law of similars; likeness attracts likeness. Without a knowledge of the complexity and depth of this principle in homeopathic terms, I use it as a starting point to speculate about this moment in light of the 'sameness' that showed up in the earlier constellation, and how it relates to the abductive logic at play in human and beyond human semiosis. There is a weighty history to claiming likeness with a nonhuman body, a reminder of the ways bodies have been constructed through this similarity to be both pacified, exoticised, or in turn rendered into claims of belonging. So, what is it about 'likeness' - and being addressed as similar from the "I" of the river - that is potential here, and actually erodes the former trajectories rather than gets mechanised by them?

If attending to similarity follows an iconic logic - ignoring the difference that makes a difference - and this logic is at play throughout the nonhuman world as well as, Kohn reminds us, the dream world - this seems to enable unexpected alliances across bodily (and seemingly past present) divides, as well as attunement between say, human fluid systems and rivers. Perhaps then we might consider discreet acts that a singular body would do, in fact ripple out and through this logic, are registered by and thus accountable to a wider field of relations. Beyond recognising that bodies are porous, affected by and affecting all types of other bodies,

if we were to think bodies *as* one another (the river *as* “I”), then supposedly singular, discreet acts would have to be considered as impacting other bodies beyond the more traceable, perceivable flows of matter between and across bodily divides. It would demand taking seriously that, for example, the intense extractivism of lands is a direct invasion of human bodies, a reading beyond and in excess of the more common focus on environmental, physiological-psychological and socio-economic impacts. In turn, what kinds of performative acts, rituals, events and their resonances would impact other bodies in the system in potentially reparative ways - is the flow of fluid in my system the river itself?

The implications of this traverse distance as well as temporality, are not dependent on being *there*, but as we have seen, travel through the psychic and immaterial realms as much as material. Environmental violence impacts transcorporeal bodies (polluted water enters the body) as well as the shared psychic, imaginal space between bodies. Remembering Kohn and de Castro’s multinatural emphasis of shared mind and differential bodies, we might therefore return to the paradox at the centre of this work: that bodies are both positioned and differential (differently impacted by knots of power) as well as sharing a wider field of ‘mind’, a knowing field, where abductive logics and unexpected suturing perspectives are at play. As we have seen, this ‘mind’ is not separable from matter or body, rather it *is* matter unfolding, thus within this wider ‘mind’ between human, nonhuman and beyond, the impacts of discrete acts might also travel and lodge unexpectedly.

This “as” - the river “as I”, - then has to hold both radical sameness and radical difference, the paradox of different perspectives and a shared wider field of mind. Indeed, I begin to notice that the more I accept this strange ‘similarity’ between the river and myself, the more I experience being a discreet entity. In other words, ‘similarity’, a forgetting - *on some level* - of the difference that makes a difference between myself and river, doesn’t have the affect of cancelling out our differences (I am not only registering the world in iconic terms). I can also see that the river and I are radically different entities; in other words, I am entangled always in multi-layered, semiotic processes. I am interested in how this entanglement brings multiple happenings at once, and those colliding micro-events seem to be arising different information

simultaneously. I don't presume to 'know' anything about the river, nor to have any privileged access to it. Rather, reading this resonance of river in the multiple bodies and events of that place, demands some kind of ethical response or engagement, much like *the unearthings* reveal properties or dynamics of the 'underground' that emerge in the 'above ground' of human relations. It leads me to feel that what I do - not what I do *to* the river, but simply what I do - in ways I do not understand, implicates the river whether I am in proximity to it or not, linked as we are, in 'mind' as well as material encounter. This different response-ability opens and makes space for other things to become possible. It is this performative orientation that makes unknown futures, that is at stake for the wider relations of the hereish site.

Artist Carolina Caycedo's large-scale and ongoing project *River Serpent Book*, looks at the impact of industrialisation on river systems in Columbian, Brazilian and Mexican communities, specifically the impact of a system of dams on local communities in reciprocal relationship with the river. In her research she reveals how a frog spirit emerged and communicated to her about bodily resonance with the rivers: "during the ritual, I wept. It was very sad to feel the dried river bed on my skin. When I did however, the little frog spoke to me, saying that the tears of women are needed to restore water to the dried beds, and explained that those dried beds are not only found in rivers but also in situations and people".⁴⁸² We might consider that the river seems to situate bodies as its performance, as a kind of material witnessing of the physical, spiritual, psychic aspects of bodies to one another, one which would have us take seriously the obligation human bodies have to nonhuman bodies, and the depth of intimacy between the two. When I read Carolina's account, I think of the wells of grief that emerge every time I am at the river, and begin to consider that this emergent "property" as I feel it, of the space between body and river, is both a symptom (between us) that might need attending to, whilst also evoking the quality that might attend to it (following Caycedo's message about the tears and the rivers).

⁴⁸² Carolina Caycedo, *River Serpent Book*, 2017, accessed July 15, 2019, online at: <http://carolinacaycedo.com/serpent-river-book>.

Similarly, I begin to wonder about my bodily state: the lack of flow, the intense dryness of vision, the stalling of digestion and holding in of all sensation, as connected in some way to the dam, which is the specific place of the second vision itself. In her extensive research on the systems of the body, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen teaches how “the fluids are about transformation - multi-expressions of one flow. When uninhibited, the basic fluid medium changes its specific qualities as it transforms from one energy state to another”.⁴⁸³ Contrary to traditional physiology, which primarily characterises the fluids of the body in isolation from one another, Cohen explored “the dynamic interrelationships between the fluids as one fluid system”, in particular the Cerebral Spinal Fluid flowing through fascial tubules.⁴⁸⁴ We might remember how it is through imagining sending the cerebral spinal fluid, as ‘antennae’ into the ground, accessing the vertical plane of co-existing times, that I experienced the first stone-womxn vision. Thus, “all fluids in the body are essentially one fluid - largely made up of water”, and each has a different quality of voice, touch, movement, and of course, state of mind.⁴⁸⁵ I have had a sense that some blockage in my own system is related to the river in some way. What would such a reading do for situating symptoms such as depression, and what would this mean for ways of attending to both bodies and land?

Through the development of affect theory, notably the Public Feelings project and Chicago Feel Tank in the early 2000s, states such as depression were considered as phenomena that demand we attend to “how the systemic forces of capitalism, racism, and sexism make us feel”.⁴⁸⁶ Public Feelings was particularly curious to “work with despair, burnout, hopelessness, and depression rather than dismissing these ostensibly negative affects as debilitating liabilities or shameful failures”.⁴⁸⁷ Still thinking with depression “as a continuation of the tradition by which women have been associated with madness” Ann Cvetkovich intersects this with Cornel

⁴⁸³ Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, *Sensing, Feeling, and Action: the Experiential Anatomy of Body-Mind Centering* (New York: Contact Editions, 1993) p.83.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid. p.66. It is also the CSF that is in various ancient healing traditions, is the source of “sushumna” or the meditative, impersonal beyond human ‘mind’ (this expression of it is from kundalini yogic tradition).

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid. p.67.

⁴⁸⁶ Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression: A Public Feeling*, (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid. p.133.

West's insight that white sadness "comes when the belief that one should be happy or protected turns out to be wrong and a privileged form of hopefulness that has so often been entirely foreclosed for black people is punctured".⁴⁸⁸ This systemic lens is paramount in any consideration of conditions such as depression. In light of the river work and concern as to participation in a more-than-human society, I wonder what considering the systemic forces of capitalism, racism and sexism within an even wider, more-than-human framework might do, given especially that the violences of the former are mechanised through the violence to the latter? Forms of environmental violence to both human and nonhuman would have to be considered beyond the more visible or provable traces evidenced materially, economically and psychologically, and rather through the unpredictable and often inexplicable suturing we have been exploring throughout this project.

From this perspective, bodily symptoms might register an affective aspect of environmental violence that must be incorporated into the ongoing interpretation of manifestations, across time and across bodies, leading us further beyond the edges of a skin and the concepts of property. Here systemic violence is both distinctly and differentially interruptive of certain human bodies more than others, as well as being the literal and whole ground beneath our collective feet (i.e. the invasion of earth itself). On the one hand I have understood my depression as distinctly related to the academic institution as a stand in for other types of institutions and my entanglement in 'remembering' ancestral absences (Florence). Perhaps this speaks to how the blurry "I" and "non-I" can get so activated with the Pendle womxn, and why there is a desire to navigate another way through such a constellation of existents. Taking seriously *this (my)* 'body of water' in relation to *that* body of water, I consider the site of the second vision (where I have seemingly 'fallen into time') and how it keeps dragging me towards it in ways that I do not understand. The river seems to be drawing towards it as a nexus of all of these knots of entanglement. The depression reveals the extent

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid. p.116. See also Cvetkovich's reading of Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother* which considers the new pathways in critical thinking that Hartman's memoir gives rise to, resisting as it does the reparative return to ancestral or coherent 'Africa', dwelling instead in the fugitive spaces and affective states of ongoing racism: "Depression is Ordinary: Public Feelings and Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother*," special issue on Affecting Feminism, *Feminist Theory* 13.2, (2012) pp.131-46.

to which mutual witnessing and holding an/other in flesh and body as much as mind, is often unrealised and already happening; when attuned to or made conscious, these unexpected convergences of nonhuman-human encounter open new ways of thinking with as well as attending to.

As I walk away from the others, the sounding practice navigates me through the land, and I sense again the 'knowing field' of relations that begins to 'appear' certain things in the land. I find myself speaking to two specific stones in the river. I call them the ovary stones, and as the words form in my mouth I tell the story of a birth, that bringing something to term, will be what helps come to terms with it. I do not know what or who this information is for, but I understand that the river water brings something into being. It is the creative force beyond human, beyond birth in its reproductive mode, and towards creation in its re-productive mode - that is, the constant transformation of form into other form, a kind of endless recycling, an endless transfiguration at the inclusion of every encounter. I am sitting on a small bridge with my legs hanging down to the water, which flows between them as the words spill out. What is this labour that the water makes present? Re-producing is also a kind of repetition, the same iterated over and over again. It has felt as though the mythic judge-witnesses repeat over time in various different guises, and yet the potential for transformation is also at play here. The stone-womxn also repeat over time, spilling out, in excess of this cut. How might repetition spiral rather than loop, re-produced differently, transformed and folded back into the 'mind' of the system?

Having arrived at this point in the river with the ovary stones, through song/speech/sounding and triturating the river water, I again find myself at the relationship between voice and the knowing field of land, their collaborative role in the appearance of emergent, dynamic knowledges. I recall how the sounding brings into being not by making the invisible visible or material, but through digestion and resonance, a process that has been full with the ever-present shadowy figure of the hag. The hag has been in the underground of the whole project and appears twice over the course of the week with Shelley and Siobhán, recalling her earlier appearance (see the beginning of chapter 4). The bones of the pelvis characterise this figure,

whose speech runs like water out of the mouth and through the legs. I remember how the hag has appeared before, as one who scoops the world in through their empty pelvis, passes it between the gates of their bones and dissolves it. Sounding evokes this motion, a scooping in of the world through sound from the ground up through the body, pouring out whatever has been digested. The hag vibrates in the underneath of this moment, their words echoing to me: “I have nothing to do with nurture. I am not a mother”. This is not about biological reproduction or growth, this is another kind of imagination and poesis. The hag is a figural imagination of a life-force that pulsates through every body, that brings the world into being through this dissolution and its endless transformation, a reminder not of constant world-making, but of world-ending, the dissolving and making immaterial, necessary for some thing else to emerge.

If the interruption of the stone-womxn was an interruption to the particular worlds they brought into being, then something about this configuration of bodies (river, stone, human) is propelling the re-emergence of their imagination. These two river-stones speak of this other kind of creative act in ways which might be significant both for the historic legacy of this place, as well as a contemporary moment of environmental crisis, a moment to learn how to let certain ways of life go, for the emergence of something else. It is this dissolving into the shared mind that the hag figure is busy with. We might consider that witnessing entails a material poet(h)ics of receiving and transforming immaterial forces in the world as a mode of labour. Within this place, creative acts (co-poesis) are a kind of world-making which is not about production; rather, the hag reveals that to act in this political field of relations, is to respond by digestion, deciphering through the bones, witnessing in such a way as to let information appear, and ethically responding to such appearances. In this context, spirit labour is the orientation to work with the ‘movements, expressions and affects of others’, human, nonhuman, ancestral and spiritual. Spirit labour is another mode of labour with more-than-human societies that has for generations, been practiced invisibly, unrecognised, and unacknowledged.

Through these moments of being witnessed by humans in relation to the river, the internalisation of the skeptical witness quietly begins to fade. Reading becomes an embodied act engaged in the properties and appearances of the knowing field of land, which is a specific kind of politic, subject to each iteration of its system of relations, subject to ebb and flow and growth and dissolution. This mode of reading/interpreting/witnessing calls me to participate with the vision-myth not as metaphor or story, but as material eventfulness in land itself. If we think of the political as a space of actions, of doing in the world, then I interpret an ethics of response to require material *acts* within this *hereish* field of mind/land, which is porous to bodies and times and spaces. Actions often include leaving ‘gifts’, real material (re)-arrangements, an acknowledgement of the invisible and to develop communicative channels; as we shall see, these material re-arrangements also flow the other way.

The trituration reveals an aspect of the ways in which the resonance of the river choreographs human relations and interactions. As a part, however momentarily, of its field of relations, it shapes our thinking, our conversations, their content but also texture of language, the ways we relate, the flow and arrival of information between us and emotion in the wake of the week. This has its shadow side as much as its light; after the trituration we all go our separate ways, but it seems the substance continues to work through us for some weeks. Some of the tensions that follow the trituration of course circle around notions of ownership, property, belief, doubt, and the underground resonance of the historical witch-hunts. The river seems to make apparent and thus propel a working through of these relations.

The human-nonhuman collectivity of this research trip allows me to see more clearly the ways in which human relating emerges up and out of the resonances of nonhuman encounter. Agreeing to collectively encounter and attend to the river specifically, induces certain textures of being and communicating; it brings certain things to mind, it shapes the feel and space of our relations. In this shared affective space between human and nonhuman, the social evolves. Orienting ourselves as phenomena emergent from these nonhuman existents, de-stabilises the supposed ‘humanness’ of dialogue, behaviour and the social. We might come to understand this entanglement as an expanded choreographic mode, a choreography beyond the human. It

contributes to the growing elements of story itself - which emerged through the affective image of the vision-myth, the voice through the sounding practice, the silence (spacing) of depression, and now the shifting arrangements of bodies in relation. The figuring out of all these modes as they continue to pulse and appear, is the figuring of co-poesis, the emergence of story itself, in and through and out of the land.

August 2019

It is a few months later and I am alone at the river. The horse-shoe sweep of fells sends its waters down both towards Pendle, and to the Irish Sea at Fleetwood. I often follow the River Wyre tributary, leading down in the Abbeystead estate and dam, and it is this part of the river which I first met. This time however, I am compelled to follow the river east - into the historic hunting grounds of the Whitewell estate and towards Pendle. The Pendle womxn have been in the forefront of my mind in these last few months. This trip feels hard. My skin, bones, muscles, whole being seems to absorb everything about the violence of the layers of ownership and privatisation of this land, the historic silences and the silences of the bodies that may have remembered an otherwise. I am very aware of the witches as well the an older presence of the stone-womxn which I increasingly do not understand. I follow the river further towards Pendle, realising this too would have been part of the route the womxn traversed on their way from the villages to trial.

At a certain point, I lie down on the stones at the banks of the river. I am, yet again, trespassing, this time on private fishing grounds of the Whitewell estate. It reeks of ownership, land management, male bodies and exclusions. I lie down and feel the stones underneath me. I soon become aware of a large, triangular shaped stone. I reach towards it and become aware of the stone-womxn, filtering into my consciousness. I agree to them joining me here, by the river. I thank the stone for making itself known and I consider it, for this moment, the stone-womxn. I position the stone, stand in its position and attend to the sensations. There is an expansiveness that seems to plume my body out and out and out, as though I might travel to the horizon and back. There are not many words in this place. I become aware of another stone. This is the Pendle womxn. I thank them for also joining us here, at the river, and make it known I am open to hearing the information they have in this particular moment. Another entity comes in which stands for the institution. Rather ambiguously named, I understand this institution to represent both the academy, the medical institution and historic institution of church/state. I start to

work with the stones, intuitively as is done in these improvised constellations, carrying out certain actions as part of this emergent, responsive kind of ceremony, using a lot of voice and movement. Shifting the positions brings in different information and we (myself and stones) work like this, trying to attend in some way to what emerges. I try to position the stone-womxn as ancestors of the Pendle womxn but to my surprise, it doesn't feel right.

After some time, I end up placing the Pendle womxn directly next to the stone-womxn. The force of energy that swells up from the ground through my body when this happens, is phenomenal. It pulses out and out and further out. Beyond the institution stone, beyond the banks of the river, beyond the rising fells, beyond what I imagine is the sea of the horizon beyond that. I look down and realise the two stones are exactly the same shape, and together make two halves of a whole. My body is almost shaking with energy, and the stones resonate from below. It is clear not only that the stone-womxn and the Pendle womxn are iterations of the same force, but that in re-membling (literally putting them together like this), a profound shift energetically happens, which I understand attends to them, and some shared, imaginal, psychic space between here and there, me and them.

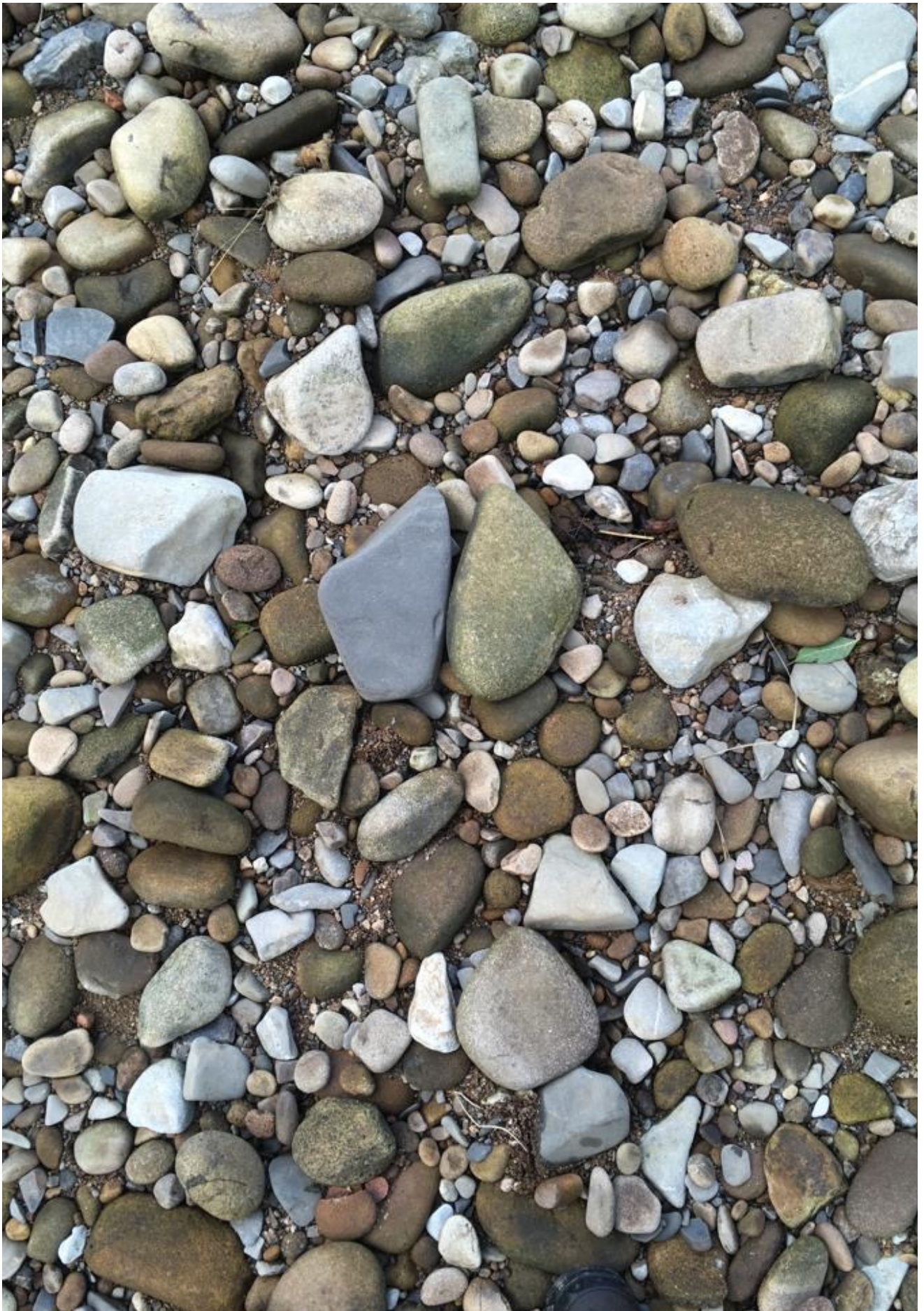
I stand again now in the shared position of stone-womxn and Pendle witches - two bodies, one overlapping voice. The sensation is sharp, direct, immediate. We look intently at the river. The shape of the river changes, everything about my perception of the river morphs and it appears to me as one whole body of thought, one whole body moving in one movement through this tract of land. It is one body of snake thought, and the visibility, the way we can see it, is like nothing I have experienced before. I speak from this place:

“We can see the river directly. We can look directly at it. We can see the whole body of it”

I am struck by this phrase, the “we”, the sensations, the entrance of this information at this moment by this part of the river. I look at the stones. They look like two lungs - the organs that house grief, as well as life-force of breath for the body: that which brings the outside in, transforms and releases it again. The constellation reveals how the Pendle womxn are the stone-

womxn, and this mode of putting the two together, re-members this relationship. The literal cut that would split the stone-womxn from one another, and all subsequent iterations of their knowing from them, is re-membered. Energetically, the emergent phenomena is a kind of ‘seeing’ that stems from the erotic body and clarifies the vision, brings the river in its more than material form, into view. The erotic force that rises up through the glandular system (a fluid system of the body itself) allows for a different kind of ‘sight’. In seeing the river so clearly, this more-than-human collective also experience a full-bodied ‘becoming’.

This arrangement makes possible the gaze of a witnessing that seems to flesh and fill out, to expand as we stand looking at the river, a this here now. The “I” of the river, demands ‘filling’ the “you” of its address, a becoming subject made by the perspective of the river. Bringing the stone-womxn and the Pendle womxn together enables this gaze to be directly returned. It suggests that something about stone-womxn and Pendle-womxn is enfolded in something of the river, and likewise that it is only in coming together and looking from the perspective of being a plural “I”, that they are able to so fully ‘see’ the river - to know something that was once known before. The energy of the two coming together is not reliant on opposites, rather they share a likeness (shown in the shape of the stones). The life-force pulsing through them witnessing the river witnessing them, is a queer natality, beyond the reproduction of human birth, it is rather the life force of a kind of love that pulses beyond the human. I think back to the stone-womxn, about what was cut - not just body from stone, but a particular kind of knowing and speech that would rise through the nonhuman-human collective body. Re-membering is the putting back together of what was in a certain here, or there, also known; a re-cognition seeping through bodies, propelling an otherwise. If likeness is a kind of “as” - the Pendle womxn *as* the stone-womxn - then this realising to be one *and the same*, enables the “you” of the river’s address to be filled. It suggests all subsequent “I”s carry the trace of these previous ones, and to speak “I” then, is to fill the “you” of an address from the river, which is only possible because of all the previous iterations of bodies that were also oriented towards the river, and that emerged only as a result of its water *as* life.



Pendle womxn and Stone-womxn coming together, River Hodder, Forest of Bowland, August 2019.
(Artist's photograph).



September 2019

We walk the river. Two of us in the river, where the voice emerges differently from on the banks. We walk in the river all the way from the source through the block of the dam. The current is much stronger than we imagined. It takes us six hours to walk the winding first section of the river, usually a half hour walk on land. At one point you have to sit on the banks because looking so long down at the water between your legs makes your head spin and you lose all sense of ground. The experience of the stone-womxn and the Pendle witches coming together it still resonating; we walk to continue their ongoing re-arrangement between our two bodies, moving in the body of water.

There are four of us this time. We have been here for some days, making preparations for the final ceremony. I do not know what we will do, but there is a sense that the river's "T" is a collaborative space, wherein something of the repeating histories of this place might be honoured, acknowledged, included in some way. We have come specifically to honour the womxn who came before us, who were not seen, and whose presence underlies this place in various different ways. We take care to do what is needed, without pushing, without forcing anything. I wonder if it is enough, and every now and again the same voice of doubt which can so often take hold when working in this way, rises up. It is the penultimate day and we take everything we need to the river. I lead the others to the River Wyre just as it meets Abbeystead Estate. For some reason, it is not the place. I do not know why, or how we all know, but the ceremony does not happen. I begin to get anxious, as we are due to leave early the next day, and haven't done what we supposedly came here to do yet. We decide to go the next morning to the river near to where we are staying, which is in fact the other tributary which weaves through the Whitewell Estate and begins to join the river Hodder nearer to Pendle. We are closer to the witches this way, to where the stone-womxn ceremony took place a few months earlier. I remember the collaboration with the river and what it might make possible, how we might extend this ongoing relationship to participate with the constellation of beings that are maybe stuck in different ways and layers of time.

The next morning we begin along the towpath. It is early on a Sunday and the mist is still thick over the river. We walk in silence, listening out for the right place. We try a few - this patch down by the water, maybe this here by the path; too close, too exposed; too damp; too hidden. We keep going. We see the tree from a bit away and something is registered between and amongst our bodies. There is a place, not here, but just - over there. We walk towards the tree and begin to see there is a patch of flat ground in front of it that will be right for our gathering. To our amazement, when we reach the tree, we see that it is hollow on the inside, like a cave you can crawl into and pass through, the bones of a pelvis. Hag tree.

We walk around the tree and find the stone constellation just in front of the trunk, between the tree and the river. I recognise it as a stone constellation because of the way the stones are placed, in very specific configuration in front of the tree, and with a particular Y-shaped branch crossing two stones at the root of the tree. There are no other big stones near this patch so it is clear they have been placed here. This is the first time in five years of coming here that I have seen signs of other humans who may be doing some kind of spirit labour. The ground fleshes out between here and there, then and now, rebounding and layering in a continuity of selves. Whoever has placed these stones here, are part of this ongoingness that stretches back, and it is through some mythic memory that traverses the historical and into the present that they seem to so distinctly appear again. Maybe it was the stone-womxn who left the stones, maybe the Pendle witches, maybe someone coming to do exactly what it is that we are doing. This linking of time indicates something to me about this labour, and I take it to mean the story is moving on, propelling different possibilities. The branch is the shape of a wishbone, or the two tributaries of one river. The river seems to show endless ways in which communication manifests, in which calls are responded to over time, over space, over multiple bodies, however they might appear.

TOWARDS A MATERIAL POET(H)ICS
OF NONHUMAN - HUMAN WITNESSING

Over a five year period I positioned my body as open to the expressions emergent from the River Wyre, the river stones, and the other sites I have engaged the practice in - Yorkshire, Northern France, London, East Germany. This thesis proposes somatic, intuitive and corporeal practices as a source of 'encounter over knowledge' with land and nonhuman. Situating (un)knowing as a key aspect of encounter opened space for the appearance of multi-dimensional existents and information. The critical thinking that houses the practice seeks to interject in a field of ecological discourse and artistic-academic practice which proliferates with calls for the hybrid body and kinship with the more-than-human world. The interjection is to emphasise how said practices have an accountability towards the legacy of the Great Divide - the divisive colonial ruptures of humans from nonhuman lifeworlds and therefore between humans themselves. This accountability requires addressing historic and ongoing coloniality as the source of the need for ecological repair, as well as the continuing condition that threatens humans, nonhumans and their mutual practices. Such a historicity might better cite Indigenous theorists and communities, who in Tallbear's words "have never forgotten that nonhumans are agential beings engaged in social relations that profoundly shape human lives".⁴⁸⁹ Following this we might urgently address the cultural (epistemological) assumptions surrounding the perception of less visible forces manifesting through land, as well as their interpretation. In this sense, this thesis has been concerned with what to do after the moment of encounter and reception of information: what does it mean to respond, and what are the material poet(h)ics - the ethics of embodied interpretation that are involved in this?

The river interrupted me with both of these concerns. The Lancashire visions emerge an explicit history of this Great Divide - the legacy of the witch-hunts - as well as a human-nonhuman kinship: an otherwise materially-expressive force that it was possible and necessary to be in communication with in order to respond to the legacy of this history. This demanded (a demand I experienced energetically as a force dragging my body back to the river again and again) learning ways of listening and interpreting the communication travelling across Life

⁴⁸⁹ Kim Tallbear, "Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms: An Indigenous Reflection on Working Beyond the Human/Not Human" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol.21, No. 2-3, (2015) p. 234.

Nonlife, nonhuman-human ‘divides’. I wondered what this particular practice could offer in the wake of such visions and experience of nonhuman-human witnessing - situating the intuitive, corporeal encounter as a site of response and address to these histories and kinships that had so demanded my attention. I considered a response to entail a critical journey around the eco-socio-political ricochets of this moment, and importantly, an ongoing embodied practice of addressing land and its relations first. This drew me towards ongoing collaboration with the river and the river stones: finding practices of attunement and interpretation, to emerge a ground-up critical framework in which such experiences and their knowledges can be taken seriously as sites and agents of information, and included as witnessing practices necessary to social and environmental justice.

From the outset, I wanted to practice an artistic methodology that prioritises asking land first, regarding it and all its material nonhuman and immaterial more-than-human relations as sentient, intentional, and most importantly, witnessing entities. The practice required curating embodied and conceptual conditions for the entrance of a plurality of information, and propelled an embodied process of attunement, tracking and witnessing - a practice that evolved across all the sites, and that this thesis explores. In repeatedly embedding and embodying this approach, new pathways began to emerge, indeed new logics and suturing perspectives that radically challenge expectations about how or what this intentionality might show. As such, the practice explores methods of interpretation as key and formative to what might then be a “response-ability”. The call for such “response-ability” is often situated without due recognition to the cultural factors that would determine what form such “response” might take. This is why I have been concerned with the centrality of “belief” (and its being mechanised for a politics of recognition), as it positions witnessing - the entanglement between human-nonhuman witnessing and witnessing between humans - as an arguable crisis at the heart of environmental justice.

The arrival of the visions and the ongoing practice reveal an encounter between body and land as an encounter between multiple, simultaneous temporalities. At the intersection of my body and the very particular body of the river, emerged the stone-womxn, the Pendle

witches, Florence, the institution, and many more figures along the way, all pertaining to certain pasts, presents and futures. In this sense, the practice considers an encounter with material place as an encounter with past, present and future - the always, already happening. Directly participating with place is also then a participation with the past in order to open different futures. Attuning to such presences one is already - by the fact of them passing through one's particular material body - co-emerging said presences. For this reason, I tell aspects of a personal story of encounter with the river, to bring to light the dynamic of resonance as a process that honours the specificity and uniqueness of human and nonhuman bodies.⁴⁹⁰

As such, an important aspect of the self-determined, experiential processes that I feel necessary to an ecological pedagogy is the inclusion of all types of information, (including the personal), as a way of following and watching for the affective truths that emerge in this process of witnessing. Let us think back to Dori Laub's account of the Holocaust eyewitness, whose testimony reveals something core to the process of bearing witness. She recounts a historical event (of Jewish resistance at Auschwitz) but with an inaccuracy (of the number of chimneys blown up during said resistance).⁴⁹¹ Despite the historical inaccuracies, the eyewitness testifies to the *historical truth* of Jewish resistance, but most significantly she bears witness to the process of bearing witness: in testifying to the *possibility* of resistance, she is testifying to the affective impact of such an unimaginable event on her surviving the unsurvivable. The impact of this historical truth of resistance on her future is in excess of historical fact and indeed testimony as proof of such fact. As a performative act, witnessing bears certain futures; therefore bearing witness to those witnessing and their affective truths, is an obligation that similarly draws certain bodies into futures as well as visibilising them in certain pasts.

For the urgent and necessary intersection of social justice and human-nonhuman relations, the witnessing in this project is concerned with bearing witness to an eventfulness that is in excess of 'factual evidence', and shows up in a plurality of ways. Why my body ricochets

⁴⁹⁰ This principle is thus transferrable and would of course show different trajectories, informations and knowledges specific to unique bodies.

⁴⁹¹ This is first introduced in *Witnessing and Nonhuman Politics*, p.107. See also Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), and Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

with the violence of the witch-hunts does not evidence facts about this moment. It bears witness to something ongoing about the historical truth of this dynamic, something still lived and still living and therefore that needs attending to in a plurality of ways. Likewise, whether the stone-womxn 'existed' in a historical temporality or not, is unknowable. They live as an affective truth, and their cut speaks to and of a real historical violence. It speaks to the *historical truth* of land ownership, femicide, the erasure of more-than-human kinship, and their entanglement. This brings us to an important aspect of nonhuman-human witnessing and my approach to a material poet(h)ics of witnessing. The visions and *the unearthings* emerge affective truths that speak to historical truths - but they arrive as such due to traversing a route somewhere between personal testimony and factual evidence. I did not live through the witch-hunts, so my testimony is not first-hand, nor does it seek to appropriate the role of the eye-witness. Rather, in bearing witness to information emergent at the encounter with land, a historical truth and an aspect of how its injustice lives on is revealed, as well as something 'otherwise' which opens another possibility - that is the possibility of nonhuman-human mutual witnessing that the event of the visions and ongoing river practice, attest to.

Knowing nothing of the Pendle witches, nor where I was at the time of the visions, reveals how land (and the material, immaterial presences manifesting through land) communicates, propels an imaginary. On the one hand this is a belief; on the other hand this belief produced the process and its subsequent information; it allowed what was received to be followed. It made possible the extended attendance and listening to the place itself, hence we might rather frame it as the ethics of a methodology. It follows then, that the future vision also demands engaging with as a real possibility - a possible future where relations between human and nonhuman are not orchestrated through ownership and violence, but rather through listening, attending to and collaborating in a spiritual-political social reality. Bearing witness to this process of mutual witnessing is an obligation that opens different futures. If humans are all the time porous - indeed receiving information, thoughts, imaginaries, at the encounter with the more-than-human world, yet not conceiving of themselves as such - then a nonhuman-human witnessing requires first coming to notice this relation and eventfulness; secondly bearing

witness to this noticing (to this mutual witnessing), as an obligation to tell the story differently, and make it possible for future generations to live from this re-membered reality.⁴⁹²

The potential to be witnessed by land and its more-than-human relations thus opened an ethical response-ability towards reciprocity - orienting an artistic practice back towards these relations. Following Kelly Oliver, I have explored witnessing as a process of becoming with and through the acts of response-ability and address-ability. For Oliver this is an inter-human imperative for “witnessing beyond recognition”.⁴⁹³ However, the practice emerges around experiencing this dynamic at play through human-nonhuman relations.⁴⁹⁴ I therefore extended this response-ability and address-ability to more-than-human collectivities and consider an ethical ecological practice to entail direct response and address to (and from) land and its nonhuman relations. I consider how this in turn feeds back into the possibility of witnessing “beyond recognition” with other humans, speaking to the intersection of social and environmental justice.⁴⁹⁵ In my practice I focus on exploring the more-than-human as a collectivity that includes nonhuman, immaterial and (expanded kinship) ancestral existents such as the stone-womxn, as well as human ancestors who may appear through the nonhuman world. I contribute this immaterial-material-spiritual aspect to what can be a focus within contemporary ecological debate on living nonhumans and material, ecological systems.

My research therefore oriented around practicing ‘not knowing’ what is or might be possible in communication across Life Nonlife divides, following inexplicable, intuited information in order to follow the unexpected, suturing perspectives that were showing up. Over

⁴⁹² In Chapter 3 we travelled through the implications of this moment of narration, interpretation and response to ‘being called in’ by another kind of mind.

⁴⁹³ Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing Beyond Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001.

⁴⁹⁴ Not least of these is the visions themselves. However, this dynamic was also revealed in the very first performance for a group of participants at the River Wyre, 2015, (see *Trajectories of Practice*). In asking a participant a question, and taking the answer to the river, I would return with a stone that “appeared” and the images, words, thoughts, that came with that stone. In performing this addressability to land, I stumbled upon a remarkable dynamic - that communication manifesting through synaesthetic phenomena and arising as thought, information and language, was travelling across boundaries of human, stone, and river in a way that I did not understand. It felt significant after that moment to continue working with the stones, to find through direct kinship, attendance and attention to our collaboration, where it might lead, and this collaboration felt key to understanding an ethics of response in light of the visions.

⁴⁹⁵ Chapter 5 is busy with unpacking this through considering the impact of erasing more-than-human ceremony and practices that push on the singularity of “I”, from political and juridical contexts.

the next five years this involved techniques that have been shared in a variety of workshops as well as with collaborators in the making of *Wishbone* and *Cove*. These included psychic-somatic journeying, imaginal encounter (participation with presences at the intersection of image, sensation, consciousness, that often manifested information through movement, sound and speech in my body); material encounter with the properties of river and stones (including trituration, intuitive improvised ceremony, sensorial explorations through touch, sounding, and movement); improvised dance to embody the figures emerging; constellating elements of the visions and different sites; working with systems of the body to attune to materiality (for example the internal fluid systems with the river); meditative practices and trance-induced states of encounter; vocal sounding; writing practices, and the work of *the unearthings* themselves, which attend to different sites through collaboration with the stones and therefore the 'hereish' river. The focus of this research was to develop methods for communicating with nonhuman presences manifesting through land, and a methodology or framework for understanding how this contributed to a wider, ongoing discourse of environmental crisis. This was not to evade or bypass the obligation to local human existents, but to contribute physic-somatic embodied practices as *an additional* site of witnessing. In responding to and addressing land and its more-than-human presences directly, I was prioritising following the logics - the suturing perspectives - of what I have called the field of witnessing. As such, practices of tracking, witnessing and interpretation that widen the lens of information included as relevant and significant, have been key to considering what then might be a "response-ability" towards more-than-human presences.

In light of this and the context of current artistic-academic practice, it felt extremely necessary to consider the politics of interpretation. I introduced this project through decolonial environmentalism, highlighting ongoing colonality that erases land's guiding capacity and certain humans' practices - including interpretive ones. Throughout the thesis I have sought to interrogate the "skeptical witness" and de-valuation of forms of energetic labour across Life Nonlife divides, as covertly contributing to this ongoing dynamic. An anecdote told by Povinelli provides a useful example. The author gives an account of going hunting with her Karrabing

friends to a site they had been at the year before.⁴⁹⁶ On arriving a crow had begun acting strangely and loudly around Povinelli's car. The women interpreted the crow as an ancestor who had passed away the previous year, and because Povinelli was driving a new car, understood that the crow hadn't recognised the new car and therefore Povinelli, and as such was distressed at the presence of an unfamiliar stranger. The women's "response-ability" entailed addressing the crow directly, to reassure it that the car was "Beth's car" and not that of a stranger. Their interpretation predicates an analysis that people could manifest as crows after life, that land and its relations can register human behaviour and indeed recognise individual and specific humans, that both of the above mean communication across Life Nonlife divides is possible. One might readily read this interpretation as entailing and putting into practice a set of beliefs. I suggest, however, that said reader might not so readily consider an alternative interpretation (for example, that the crow wanted food from the humans or was protecting its nearby young) as equally entailing and putting into practice another set of (negated) beliefs - namely that ancestral humans *cannot* manifest as crows, that land and its relations *do not* notice or witness human behaviour beyond the perceptions of "animal instincts", that communication across all of these divides in ways beyond the biological/scientific is *not* possible. Moreover, it might be even further beyond a frame of plausibility to accept that in fact what is happening in this moment is not "belief", but rather a methodology that gives rise to "response-ability", and not just response-ability as an interpretation that excludes the crow, but rather response-ability that entails and centres around the impact of address - *in language* - to crow.

Addressing the politics of interpretation has been an eco-socio-political concern about the absence of inclusion and accountability towards non-Western practices which far predate the ecological movement in participating as nonhuman-human societies, and the multi-layered violence perpetuated by that ongoing erasure. Through the works of Native American and First Nations writers and storytellers such as Linda Hogan, Joy Harjo, Leslie Marmon Silko, Robert Greygrass, Leanne Simpson, Gerald Vizenor amongst others, I found divergent and overlapping

⁴⁹⁶ Elizabeth Povinelli, "Do Rocks Listen? The Cultural Politics of Apprehending Australian Aboriginal Labour", *American Anthropologist* Vol.97, No.3, (1995) pp.505-518.

expressions of the understanding that language, story and theory, emerges *from* land and its nonhuman relations: “the speaker is not at the centre of the world word because words were on the earth before the talkers and the tellers”.⁴⁹⁷ From my previous work as a storyteller, I had also found this understanding in oral traditions from a variety of places including Celtic and European traditions. Experiencing the agency of story itself as a material-semiotic emergence from embodied encounter with the more-than-human world, renders it an utterance to be listened to rather than orchestrated by humans. Throughout this project I have therefore attempted to explore what a contemporary practice of communication, speech, or voicing might reveal at the threshold of nonhuman-human relations, perceiving something at this intersection as vital to ongoing reparative modes of witnessing. I began exploring how information entering through the voice and its phatic, sonic and linguistic utterances, might emerge from the encounter between the material body and the body of land, and in turn be a mode of listening.⁴⁹⁸ This gave rise to the ongoing transferrable sounding practice which remained consistent throughout all the research phases, and forms a large part of *the unearthings* - whose speech sounding at the threshold of material encounter between body, stone and place, is an effort to bring to light less perceivable presences and attend to their interrelation.

What began to reveal itself throughout these various practices, and what this thesis stages in its development, is that the body and the subject “I” in language were not necessarily belonging to one another. The entrance of certain suturing perspectives - perspectives that seemed to not only relate to, but indeed comment on, other events or existents - often occurred through speech itself. These perspectives emanated from elsewhere, from a “non-I”, but *through* the body and specific encounter with nonhuman bodies. A related dynamic is at play in formal constellations, but I found it in the site-specific practices I was engaging, and specifically the ongoing sounding/speech practice. Hence I began to consider that the same “knowing field”

⁴⁹⁷ Vizenor. *Manifest Manners, Narratives of PostIndian Survivance*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, (1999) p.18. The clarity of Vizenor’s articulation as well as its conceptual understanding has been largely excluded from the flurry of new materialist and ecocritical work emerging in the academy, as though it fell into the category of “anthropology” pertaining to a “belief” held, rather than a theory of language and a world-making reality that not only survives against the odds of settler-colonialism, but maintains ecological-spiritual ethics of human-nonhuman relations.

⁴⁹⁸ I unpack this in Chapter 4.

that makes possible this particular dynamic in constellations, was also what I was participating with during site-specific research and calling the field of witnessing. The capacity for voicing to create both an altered state of consciousness, as well as a phatic sound channel resonating on a vibrational level between material bodies, enhanced the possibility of this mode of communication. Thinking then of a material poet(h)ics as an embodied, uttered response to the call of a nonhuman “I”, was to fill a subject position that was more a “thisherenow” than a stable, fixed existent. In other words the encounter between the body of the land and my body gave rise to a particular overlapping and plural “I” emergent from within this material field of witnessing. This practice moves kinship beyond an ethics of care, and into a political possibility that overrides the dichotomy of ‘speaking for’ nonhumans or not speaking at all. Rather, another infrastructure and framework for conceptualising subjectivity emerges from this practice, to in turn house the more-than-human suturing perspectives manifesting through land and its relations.

Therefore whilst influenced hugely by the aforementioned Indigenous articulations, the practice involved finding my own methods of exploring and experiencing a communicative threshold across Life Nonlife divides, and developing an embodied material poet(h)ics of nonhuman-human witnessing specific to my context (the sites themselves, my histories and artistic context).⁴⁹⁹ At the heart of this possibility is a need to consider what cultural assumptions are driving and underpinning how types of labour are read, and how certain actions are read to be impactful. The ongoing practice is both an act of faith in the less visible, experiential and intuitive, as well as a nuanced embodied engagement and practice of interpretation with land and its field of mind. Moments across the research began to reveal that attuning to what I am calling the field of witnessing, radically opens to information that links events up in a logic beyond

⁴⁹⁹ As I emphasise throughout the thesis, I do not assume these practices in anyway reflect or “map onto” Indigenous methodologies or practices I have cited.

causal, visible impact, and arises information between existents.⁵⁰⁰ In re-telling some of these moments of encounter which involved my body, the body of the land and in certain cases other human witnesses, I ask you - implicitly - to believe. I say I was there, I was present to these visions, appearances and events, I ask you, in good faith, to believe me. Derrida reminds us that such is the nature of all genuine acts of testimony; they are ultimately heterogeneous to “proof”, and when dragged into judicial contexts that would evaluate them as such, they immediately lose their quality as testimony.⁵⁰¹ And yet “belief” has serious implications in the current discourse on ecocide, environmental rights and rights of the nonhuman, because at the heart of these juridical contexts is a conflict of belief between humans, between analytics of existents and between valuing and uplifting certain types of labour over others.

If we reconsider framings of belief as staged in order to value certain types of labour over others, it might open different possibilities for witnessing and highlight the repetitions of such hierarchies of value within artistic-academic and pedagogic contexts. The “belief” of Aboriginal communities in Australian-Aboriginal contexts, is the framing that allows Western legal and juridical frameworks to bypass having to incorporate, or indeed even consider Aboriginal perspectives on human-environmental relations - let alone think them the ongoing result of progressive labour at the intersection of human-nonhuman sentience. Povinelli makes clear how certain methodologies for ascertaining truth are considered traditional, fixed beliefs, while others (namely scientific methodologies underpinning political economy) are invisibilised as processes and rather staged as objective fact: the “cultural frameworks subtending political economy...were long ago transmuted into neutral, natural, and objective fact”.⁵⁰² The latter has no means through which it could possibly evaluate an Aboriginal labour of attendance to

⁵⁰⁰ The problem with the telling of these moments (apart from the fact that they build and layer over five years and the suturing perspectives similarly link up over that time, hence are in excess of the linearity of written argument) is that when they do not arise from “belief”, there is not readily a way to categorise this information beyond “personal experience” unless - and this is a fatal blindspot I perceive in current artistic-academic ecological practice - it can be backed up with a scientific praxis or theories of material agency. This bypasses the fact that at the core of the environmental crisis is a crisis of witnessing, predicated on a hierarchy of types of labour and their frameworks.

⁵⁰¹ Jacques Derrida, “Poetics and Politics of Witnessing” in *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan*, trans. O. Pasanen, New York: Fordham University Press, pp. 65-96.

⁵⁰² Elizabeth Povinelli, “Do Rocks Listen? The Cultural Politics of Apprehending Australian Aboriginal Labour”, *American Anthropologist* Vol.97, No.3, (1995) p.505.

nonhuman-human relations and recognise or deal with its analysis. It rather frames and evaluates such belief in relation to “tradition” - to whether or not said beliefs point to longer traditions of cultural practice, held along the lines of recognisable and traditional clan bonds. “Belief” becomes a marker (or not) of the “authenticity” of Aboriginal subjects, not a process propelling futurity. The “problem” for colonial capitalism then, is how to reconcile these practices (which in the eyes of late liberal governance, impede extractivism and therefore economic and political power) with the inevitable and necessary economic-environmental “progress” (and implied progressive methodologies of ascertaining truth i.e. scientific) of the settler state.

In Northern American settler-colonial contexts, Glen Coulthard and Leanne Simpson make clear the state’s response to this “problem”: “when colonialism could not eliminate grounded normativity, it tried to contain it so that it exists only to the degree that it does not impede land acquisition, settlement, and resource extraction”.⁵⁰³ Demands for land fuel racist projections of Indigenous methodologies as unproductive “belief”. The conflict of “belief” might better be narrated as a conflict around valuations of labour: what types of labour, with which mechanisms to quantify it, are visible, valuable and enabled in the colonial-capitalist state? Labour that cannot be seen as labour is neither valued nor considered valuable except for the minority cultures that practice it. However, Povinelli shows Karrabing analytics as precisely a labour and methodology for ascertaining truth, one that gets oriented around what interpretations most enable existents’ continuation. Similarly and differently, in a Nishnaabeg context, Leanne Simpson refers to the term *dbwewin* - the “process of making truths”, as fundamental to Nishnaabeg grounded intelligence: “Nishnaabeg political systems begin in individuals and our relationships to the implicate order or the spiritual world”.⁵⁰⁴ Including this critique connects this ongoing dynamic with contemporary ecological-artistic debate, revealing that this ‘problem’ is not ‘over there’ nor only in settler-colonial contexts, but that geontopower is deeply entangled with the most personal behaviours and embedded pedagogies we inherit and therefore practice towards land and its relations.

⁵⁰³ Leanne Betasomasake Simpson. *As We Have Always Done. Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance*. University of Minnesota Press, (2017) p.25.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid. p.24.

This reveals many things that are extremely important for this project. It reveals something at the heart of witnessing nonhuman-human relations that directly impacts social justice. And it reveals the importance of discernment in artistic-academic practices, as to how or where this dynamic might be repeated. Vanessa Watts reminds readers that “in order for colonialism to operationalize itself, it must attempt to make Indigenous peoples stand in disbelief of themselves and their histories”.⁵⁰⁵ Whilst this dynamic of oppression has given rise to a politics of recognition that arguably maintains the dynamics of oppressor and oppressed, it also reveals why processes of witnessing are essential for recovering a relationship with an inside truth of experience, especially in relation to a world that negates that experience and its reality. Social justice demands that witnessing be an act that bears witness to what is in excess of facts and historical evidence - to bear witness to the impact of historical truths and ongoing injustice, as well as facts of events themselves, *and also* to witness subjectivity against the odds of such injustice. The proliferation of work around the object or material witness has in recent years opened possibilities of understanding the impact of environmental harm and different pathways of attention and repair.⁵⁰⁶ However, I have been concerned with what a *human* witnessing of human-nonhuman relations does in excess of this (and not instead of but in accompaniment to). It bears witness to an affective, material-spiritual relationship and the impact of that on bodies in ways that far exceed the factual evidence of environmental collapse. Furthermore, it works *through and on the basis of* this affective impact. The affective labour of care and love involved in witnessing nonhuman entities, - much like witnessing between humans - is urgent, invaluable and productive of radically otherwise futures. It is of course in excess of proof when evaluated within a non-emergent, capitalist framework and it refuses the requirements of an art market or institutional framework that asks for such labour to be visibilised in order to be valued and evaluated. This refusal is precisely in order to catalyse another response - that is, a deeper commitment to finding more attentive ways of perceiving

⁵⁰⁵ Vanessa Watts “Indigenous Place-thought and Agency amongst Humans and Non-humans” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* Vol. 2, No. 1, (2013), p25.

⁵⁰⁶ For example, the work of Forensic Architecture, and artist Susan Schuppli (see chapter on Witnessing).

the impact of such labour, through multiple felt, collective and nuanced forms of interpretation and attendance.

When Betty Bilawag testifies to Old Man Rock smelling, sensing, perceiving humans, surely she is also testifying to something about who Betty herself is, and therefore another aspect of what would be lost, if Old Man Rock were destroyed or damaged in some way?⁵⁰⁷ It seems to me she is bearing witness to a reciprocity between her body and the body of Old Man Rock that I perhaps might never grasp in its complexity, but I can hear that she bears witness *to being witnessed* - heard, smelt, sensed, cared about - by Old Man Rock. As such, she bears witness to the affective truth of a relationship of response-ability and address-ability, hence to a process of mutual witnessing in the formation of subjectivity. If we cannot conceive of the full and many aspects of nonhuman-human witnessing then we will repeatedly miss an aspect of the entanglement of social and environmental justice. If the “I” is an “I” (thisherenow) stretched across bodies, then the destruction of nonhuman existents is the direct destruction of human existents (and vice versa), not only through destroying lands that enable certain ways of beings and surviving, but through destroying emergent selfhood that stretches across human and nonhuman bodies and ancestors.

The obligation to bear witness to the ways in which the nonhuman witnesses us, is entangled with a central concern and social obligation to bear witness to what has been lost through processes of erasing the nonhuman witness - both for bodies and for bodies of land. For this reason I have filtered the practice through texts and thinkers to reconsider the “I” as a subject in processes of witnessing and therefore subjectivity with nonhumans. If “in order to get to the root of social, political, or cultural analysis, it is necessary to examine and diagnose the conceptions of subjectivity presupposed in various discourses, institutions and practices”, then part of this thesis has been concerned with revealing the violence of subjectivity resulting from the withheld response and address of other humans.⁵⁰⁸ We have seen through incarceration, genocide and primary dispossession, that subjectivity born solely out of human recognition, is a

⁵⁰⁷ The testimony given in the land claim discussed in Chapter 5 of the thesis. From Povinelli, *Geontologies*.

⁵⁰⁸ Kelly Oliver, *Witnessing Beyond Recognition*, p.19

subjectivity that has been reserved for some, namely white, humans, and deeply entwined with the performative act of ownership. Povinelli reminds us that in colonial Australia, “partial ownership” - the lack of ownership that Aboriginal communities inflicted onto their lands, equated in the eyes of the coloniser as “partial subjectivity”, a lack of self possession and self presence, an inferior and partial “I”. It has therefore been extremely important to consider the “I” at the intersection of nonhuman-human relations. I framed this as a “periperformative” strategy to counter the “I” whose subjectivity is born(e) in the performance of ownership. Deferring the authority of the human “I” as the only authority who confers recognition onto another, opens space for emergent structures that might more adequately house the phenomena and affective truth of ongoing human-nonhuman relationship.⁵⁰⁹

Although articulated as a textual deferral by Sedgwick, the periperformative is here expanded to ask how embodied practices might follow a periperformative trajectory that delays, defers, indeed refuses in some way, the performance of speech emanating from one, singular and self contained “I”? This has evolved a performance practice which requires accountability towards human positionality - politically, in terms of intersections that account for where and how knots of power reside - and physiologically, in the embodied and literal position of bodies in relation to more-than-human bodies, to explore how different information constitutes the “I” in each moment of encounter. This periperformative question also evolved the ongoing collaboration with the river stones. I began to orient towards unearthing the less seen, less perceived multi-layered times and their repetitions and manifestations in places and communities. This led to *the unearthings*, an ongoing performance where the skills of the ongoing practice were consolidated. *The unearthings* reveal and perform a central element of this project’s practice of witnessing. The body becomes a site for multiple entrances and emergence of existents, through voice, gesture and movement in response to appearances at the encounter between body and stone. This requires attuning to the field of witnessing and the stones, to be in multiple places at once: to be both “I” and also open to the plurality of “non-I’s” moving through the body.

⁵⁰⁹ This does not to negate the ongoing necessity for humans to witness one another. It prioritises this witnessing, by seeking emergent structures which are more conducive to witnessing beyond recognition than current late liberal governance and global colonial-capitalism.

Through being present to the blurred mode of appearances - emerging through affective sensation, movement, sensorial information - witnessing opens a space beyond personal testimony and factual evidence. This is an embodied material poet(h)ics of nonhuman-human witnessing. It is a process of situating my body as open to these emergences, and as such, following them through response and address, de-stabilising the centrality of the singular “I” in order to perceive multiple times and moments that point to an ongoing dynamic.

Embodiment involved in *the unearthings* is a practice of radically opening to verbal, gestural or sensorial information, but also to affective states at times extremely strong in their manifestation. I cannot know where these arise from, but they often reveal an affective layer of information about socio-economic events (economic pressures, poverty, war, social trauma ‘appear’ in these moments through the affective expressions of the different voices emergent in this field of witnessing). I agree to fully feel these affective states, maintaining they do not “belong” to me, per se. As such, in much the same way as the visions, *the unearthings* emerge dynamics and relations between existents that speak to historical truths but bear witness to more than the facts of event. In revealing something of the ongoing affective impact of eventfulness, they emerge the ongoing dynamic of said pasts, recirculating in the present. Three of the most potent *unearthings* occurred in sites whose human communities are both porous and contained: two artist communities (Betonest, in Stolpe, Germany; paf in Northern France); and one institutional community (Goldsmiths University, London). The information that arose in all three sites revealed deeply held absences, or challenges in these systems: one surrounding the human trauma at the Polish-German border from wars and occupation; one from expressions of gender injustice; and one from expressions of racial injustice.

The imperative of this practice has been twofold: to bring to light the nature of more underground (past) imprints resonating through a place and its relations, (and contribute this information to ongoing accountability projects in respective communities) and secondly to attend directly to these energetic forces (through ceremony, witnessing, acts of re-arrangement) as precisely an attendance to the repeating knots of power at the ‘social’ level of such systems. The two are related: if the socio-political concern in such communities (and wider societies) is to

address injustices, and if *the unearthings* reveal another site of these injustices (in the repeating-past) then the site of *the unearthing* itself and the existents that emerge these ongoing dynamics are in addition, *another site of possible repair*. For this reason, this practice takes seriously the response and direct address-ability to the existents themselves - not as a replacement - but *an additional* site of repair. This takes into consideration both the impact of pasts on present, the impact of nonhuman-human convergences and the necessity to find ways of including a wide range of phenomena when ethically responding to injustice within more-than-human collectivities.

From the visions onwards, the witnessing practices reveal a historic eventfulness with ongoing socio-eco-political implications, and demand a response. The specific juridical contexts this project has been in relation to stem from the Great Divide: its manifestations in late liberal governance that frame and therefore de-legitimise Indigenous analytics of existence, and the legacy of the historic witch-hunts - gender violence and a covert skepticism towards being “in two places at once” - radically open to the more-than-human world. The witch-hunts staged a dichotomy in which one was either in a state of “self possession” or conversely, one was literally “possessed”. Those testifying on behalf of themselves or others as to this “possession” were immediately guilty of the so-called crimes that had taken place. All but one of the Pendle witches were found guilty of murder by witch-craft, with no evidence amounting to this possibility. At the same time as the witch-hunts, Indigenous bodies and practices were being genocidally attacked in the new colonies. Practices were demonised in order to enclose land, bodies and kinships. Being open to radical listening and more-than-human presences, was and is an act seemingly worthy of overt or covert punishment.

One of the thinkers we started with was Silvia Federici, who positions the gender violence of the European witch-hunts as a genocide instating new types of labour that were not coincidental to modernisation but actively enabled it.⁵¹⁰ This included the restriction and devaluation of women’s bodies, reproductive labour and gendering the domestic labour that enabled the making of an industrial workforce. Women (their bodies and speech) were

⁵¹⁰ Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body, and Primitive Accumulation*. N.Y.: Autonomedia, (2007)

controlled and restricted from public, common spaces, whilst simultaneously made “common property” for male sexual gratification and the state’s economic progress, effectively becoming property of the church/state - subject to death without fair trial. This dynamic was still at play with great-grandmother Florence: if one “saw” what others did not see, one was not deemed with enough “self possession” or “self presence” literally to make choices for oneself anymore. If Federici positions this violence as a moment mechanised in order to give rise to new forms of labour (and we recall “belief” is a framing by the settler state to impose certain forms of “progressive” - read extractive - labour) then how can we be actively discerning about continuing to value some forms of labour over others? What gets prioritised/what authority is oriented towards when we perform these covert valuations? If the types of artistic labour practiced in land ceremony are not considered impactful because said impact is not visible, then how does this continue to erase not only practices, but the sites of those practices - land and relations itself - as an intentional and agential capacity to be both impacted and to impact?

I have therefore tried throughout this project, to encounter the resonances of the historical witch-hunt moment in and through the land and my body, to contribute another aspect of this story that I cannot find in historic, written accounts. To do that, I have had to develop practices that in another historical moment might themselves be called a kind of witch-craft - certainly that open the body to other entities and participate with the agencies of these more-than-human forces. The actions of this project thereby seek to re-member what might have been passed down, had a genocide and the fear it instilled, not erased so many and their practices. Rather than going to books in order to find these unwritten practices, I have gone directly to the river as the force that first emerged these histories - and in asking how to work directly with these historic repetitions and relations, a practice of witnessing with the river and river stones has evolved, as well as practices of attending to expanded kinship ancestors. This is a material poet(h)ics of witnessing - the act of filling a subject position that embodies the call (and therefore responds) to a nonhuman “I” - through embodied acts of interpretation and

reciprocity. The witch-hunts ricochet with the failed witnessing of personal testimony.⁵¹¹ My response therefore includes the human witness in order to confront some of these legacies. I ask what interpretive practices of affective, reciprocal, embodied, imaginal, intuitive and non-extractive labour might activate within human-nonhuman collectivities.

This artistic-academic research has been driven by asking how shifts in pedagogical approaches might address the aforementioned dynamics and be reparative to nonhuman-human relations in light of the colonial-capitalist Anthropocene. This thesis has therefore overlapped with different traditions or approaches to what might be reparative or healing in practice. These have differing coordinates, implications and purposes. For example, within Leanne Simpson's radical resurgence project, re-empowering Indigenous youth orients Indigenous bodies around an "Indigenous inside" of experience in light of ongoing settler-colonial racism and violence. Empowerment of Indigenous communities is situated firmly within a very located, political struggle for Indigenous resurgence. Likewise her "land as pedagogy" centres Nishnaabeg processes, methods and teaching in order to necessitate radical political change and redress land ownership.⁵¹² A different context is encountered through the trituration we performed with the river water, which emanates from a homeopathic tradition, whose purpose is to work with the healing properties of medicinal plants from a holistic approach. Systemic Constellations is a practice oriented towards healing trauma in family systems, for the continuation and flow of Life. Trauma is viewed systemically and is most often socially derived (war, genocide, famine, poverty); the practice thus takes a phenomenological approach to these histories of injustice.

I do not map my practices onto any one of these modalities. Rather, in relation to these differing contexts, my own practice set out to respond to the Great Divide that showed up specifically in the visions as a "cut" to the hybrid and collective "I" and its emergent language or consciousness. I wanted to develop methods of communication across Life Nonlife so-called "divides", precisely to attend to this history as it repeats in coloniality embedded at pedagogical, political and embodied levels. This practice proposes affective, energetic modes and alternative

⁵¹¹ The Pendle witches were not allowed to have witnesses at their trials, nor provide personal testimony, although they could seemingly accuse one another, which was enough to "prove" their crimes.

⁵¹² Leanne Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*. See also *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*.

methods of interpretation revealed at the site of human-nonhuman encounter, as the source and emergence of different structures - pedagogical and hopefully in turn political - and precisely to redress land rights, pedagogies, politics and juridical contexts. Whilst this practice hopes to be a mutually reparative one, I do not frame it as a 'healing' practice nor do I assume to facilitate another community's relationship to place (hence I have not engaged specifically with a community of humans in any one site). Rather, these methods have developed to propose to artistic-academic contexts, the potential of affective labour on the space between human and nonhuman bodies - and suggest how forgetting this labour intersects with larger injustices and failures of witnessing.

I have told a personal story as it unfolds aspects of the ongoing pedagogical approach: that the body as witness is a site of multiple information in relation to nonhuman and ancestral encounters, that engaging these by direct participation with land opens another site of reciprocity as well as de-centring a human concept of "story". Experiencing the responsivity of land throughout this practice has not been in order to singularly benefit from this interaction nor stage a privileged relationship to what emerged. It is rather to focus on 'resonance' as a mode through which we can perceive mutual embodied witnessing at the encounter with specific existents. This offers a transferrable pedagogy, but avoids 'scaling up' (or using nonhuman existents as figures to think through rather than subjects to be addressed). The act of mutually witnessing, of witnessing and understanding oneself to be witnessed by nonhuman presences, can open another kind of 'gaze', and emerge unexpected pathways in the face colonial-capitalism's relentless human-centric drive.

I therefore consider affective labour at the shared site of encounter between body and land, as a necessary process of reciprocity in light of environmental crisis. Performance and artistic skills of embodied, interpretive, imaginal modes of analysis can offer new practices in light of the growing concerns around 'witnessing' in the current environmental and political climate. An example of this is how *the unearthings* develop as an ongoing collaboration which only functions with the river stones. This illustrates one of the ways I feel the river to propel an alternative futurity: a new practice emerges through this work of exploring communication with

the river stones. As this developed, it enabled a collaborative mode of witnessing a place, its dynamics and more-than-human collectivities. Having spent five years attuning to the stones makes the subtlest of energetic changes they undergo in *the unearthings*, immediately apparent - when 'this' becomes a 'that' or a 'those'. This practice has relied upon re-orienting to intuitive modes of knowing and embodied knowledges, which in itself is considered a reparative pedagogical move in light of the legacy of the witch-hunts. I propose such practices can offer multiple ways of witnessing, hence multiple ways of being accountable - not only to what might be reparative (to these relations) - but importantly to what might be less perceivably violent at the nonhuman-human encounter.

Each chapter of Part 2 deals with the transferrable methods and principles emerging, and their implications for communicative practices beyond the Life Nonlife binary. The first node of this ongoing practice explores how to reconsider nonhuman-human relations such that information from beyond human presences - such as rock or stone - can be included, noticed and followed. I exemplified the entrance of the visions to unpack this moment of encounter. However, it is never assumed how resonance between bodies will look, feel like or lead to, nor that it will happen, and respecting the rhythms of this - the closures and invitations - is part of the ethics of encounter.

The second component of ongoing practice was vocal sounding, approaching vocal attunement as an act of listening which furthers the practice of 'resonating with' - where sounding is a full-bodied attunement to another body, a digestion (interpretation) of the specificity and nuance of materiality. Through this practice the voice, like the body, can be open to the entrance of nonhuman forces and information. I considered the implications of this in re-thinking the sphere of human politics, and how the information arising across such porous bodies might necessitate another way of thinking "voice". Being porous to other entities means allowing the voice also to be porous, a mediation rather than the mark of a singular self.

After performing *Cove*, I experienced a divergence in the practice. The discrepancy between the experience of land ceremony during research that I explore in Chapter 4 and the stage performance, revealed that working alone or with witness-collaborators in relation to land

might be a modality through which the nonhuman addressee can be fully prioritised. The practice began to re-orient to the kinds of working conditions that fully support communication beyond the Life Nonlife binary. This re-orientation occurred alongside long bouts of depression, which I began to consider as intelligent sources of information not unrelated to the project, the Lancashire site, nor the confrontation with the “skeptical witness”. In asking how we might better support future generations to be doing this work of re-membling and attuning, the body as witness is included in the practice, bringing less visible impasses between ways of knowing to light.

Through following this physical refusal as it manifested in the intelligence of bone, muscle and organ, a family history emerged that resonated with the legacy of the European witch-hunts and longer histories of controlling bodies and practices. Resonance in this moment, was a resonance with an absence, which lead me to consider what kinds of acts might be reparative to these repeating exclusions. The Great Divide seemed alive and well, whether an internal or external reality; I was as much resonating with the victims of said historic divide, as I was with the perpetrators (felt in my internalisation of the institutional restrictions and voices). This required an internal process of embodied re-orientation, turning towards the nonhuman authorities that had been emerging throughout the practice (namely the river). Returning to the river meant following an intuition that something about the second vision (manifesting in my body) would move on if I responded to the land, the entity that had revealed this “cut” and an entirely otherwise communicative power along with it.

Stumbling upon the site of the second vision manifesting its events in contemporary form (a building site), reinforces the emphasis on the vertical plane of time - an engagement with the always, already happening, rather than the linearity of event. “Falling into time” with the visions makes apparent an aspect of this project’s relationship to land as guiding a pedagogy: it situates the visions as material manifestations that require embodied forms of participation (therefore the land as the entity to which my responses need to be directed). Place opens the possibility of repair of a past. This engagement is embodied (a somatic process of attunement

through the spinal fluid and imaginal space of verticality), and demands I conceive of actions as embodied interpretations (being an energetic interpretant) of story itself.

One of these responses was the stone-womxn ceremony. Through energetic labour, voicing, sounding and movement, the stone-womxn and Pendle witches were brought together as aspects of one another, stimulating a monumental creative energy that vibrated out over the land and in its wake, river and body are fully 'seen'. The Pendle womxn and all that they symbolise - bodies and bodies of knowledge that were ostracised, cut, silenced - and the stone-womxn - a resonance of a much more inexplicable and unknown intimacy between flesh and stone - are re-membered as versions of one another in *this here now*, which is also *that there then*. It feels in this moment as though the stone-womxn and the Pendle womxn are enfolded (bound to) and yet distinct from the river, and it is this that is being re-membered. Being a "you" to the river's "I" - is being a plural "you", such that to speak "I" from this place in response to the address of the river, would mean to be a *thisherenow* speaking only as a result of *thatherethen*, an "I" which is not only me, but constituted by all the bodies whose attendance to the river either in another time or continuously has contributed to its ongoing appearances and manifestations and vice versa. It is this plural "I" of bodies across time and space stacking up onto one another, that makes another kind of 'seeing', a mutual witnessing, possible.

This is not a form of recognition that drags an 'other' into something 'recognisable' and thus denies difference or assimilates into silence. It is a distinctly erotic, pulsating kind of knowing, a kind of re-cognising without any object, a re-'minding', putting back into contact qualities of knowing that in another moment were somehow already also, known. It is my feeling that this quality of knowing that was known before, is in fact the quality of the deeply felt, unknown - the radically numinous inseparability from the world and the simultaneously radical difference of its fleshly and material manifestations.. The act of participation in the field of witnessing can hold this radical multiplicity. This pulse of witnessing does not belong to the one re-knowing it but rather is constantly emerging many plural bodies, across many times and spaces. Yet the impact of this moment of witnessing is that it can and does rupture the known, through *thisherenow* precisely in its alignment and communication with *thatherethen*, with being in

two places at once; this ‘recognition’, unlike the piecing together of memory, is an instant that ruptures and opens the world anew, for all the pieces to scatter and re-formulate. It takes us back to the start, to something about stone-womxn that was known *and* unknown *and thus* demanding. This orientation as different bodies intimately related in ways that are still blurry, ambiguous, unknown and demanding to me, enables a field of witnessing, within which existents are never singular, always pulsing into view through the shared resonances that emerge them.

This surge of energy changed the physiology of the eyes, literally altering my vision, rendering a gaze that felt full-bodied and reciprocal, being seen by the river and likewise fully seeing. Acknowledging, naming, honouring the stone-womxn and Pendle witches (through carrying out the actions being guided), emanated the creative force that shifted the possibility of the gaze - both my outward gaze and my receptivity of another kind of nonhuman gaze altogether. Speech emerges from the encounter with this other kind of gaze - a speech which contains different textures and indeed voices different perspectives. This is a fundamental realisation in this project’s nonhuman-human witnessing. It reveals how practices of reciprocity towards immaterial existents that have appeared - river and stone ancestors as much as human ancestors (in expanded kinship modes) - are directly impactful to somatic possibilities of sensorial perception (another kind of gaze) - to literally seeing the world differently. In turn, the possibility of a collectivity of “thisherenow”, an assembled position comprising human and more-than-human relations (myself, stone-womxn and Pendle womxn) in relation to the nonhuman “I” (river), is directly enabled by this other kind of gaze. A reciprocal practice of embodied acts honouring, acknowledging and including the ancestors (nonhuman, imaginal or human - especially those excluded through injustice), opens the possibility of a somatic encounter and perceptual shift. This enables an “I” that is stretched across human and nonhuman bodies, and gathered in response to the call of another nonhuman “I”. A material poet(h)ics of nonhuman-human witnessing involves embodied acts of address and reciprocity to

nonhuman entities, as the source of another kind of ‘seeing’ necessary and reparative to nonhuman-human relations.⁵¹³

The river walk and final hag tree ceremony complete this phase of river work. The stone-womxn ceremony had affirmed that honouring the ancestors and nonhuman attendance are intricately and necessarily interwoven: ““ancestor worship” in its myriad forms...is ultimately another mode of attentiveness to nonhuman nature; it signifies...a reverence for those forms that awareness takes when it is not in human form...becomes part of the encompassing cosmos”.⁵¹⁴ The unfolding of materiality at the hag tree and ensuing ceremony, manifest signs that reveal the material world as a pathway to these more-than-human, immaterial existents. ‘Kinship’ then unfolds through acts that attend to these human-nonhuman, expanded and immaterial ancestral convergences.

These moments of mutual witnessing align the self as a more-than-human collective “you” in response to the address of the river’s “I”; another kind of subjectivity which emerges through performative acts with and for the nonhuman witness. This is why we have been busy with reconsidering the “I” in relation to the nonhuman. The first vision and “cut” of the stone-womxn is a pivotal moment. The proprietorial gaze of the judges/priests ruptures belief in (and therefore material possibility of) consciousness emanating from land, or earth itself, to extend into the thoughts and consciousness of humans, for information to flow across this newly cut divide. It cuts the “I” being stretched across human and nonhuman bodies and specifically, for language or consciousness to emanate from this shared “I”. The practice evolved around asking what kinds of artistic skills can be put towards navigating the aftermath (current situation) of this rupture.

⁵¹³ I have used the term ‘ancestors’ throughout the thesis to expand what we consider familial or kinship relations. The ‘ancestors’ I refer to in this thesis are often nonhuman or imaginal, and are a way of staging reciprocity to those who come before. Without stone or river, there would be no life on earth. (The appearance of the ovary river stones invokes this queer, nonhuman natality, its immaterial production and propelling of a future). ‘Nonhuman ancestors’ remind humans that we exist because of earth and water. Life can extend only from this. Annexing futurity in the visible processes of living organisms, may miss this other kind of propelling force and what happens when we respond to it.

⁵¹⁴ David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World*. New York: Vintage Books, (1996) p.16.

This thesis bears witness to the experience of more-than-human presences consistently witnessing in ways I do not fully understand but nevertheless try to follow. In turn it engenders new modes of attendance to both internal and external processes. What kinds of conceptual frameworks, pedagogical priorities, infrastructures and indeed processes of interrogation are needed to support and understand these practices? How do artistic-academic communities ensure that we do not impose assumptions as to the communicative capacity of “Nonlife” on land and its more-than-human relations? This thesis has engaged a critical description of processes emergent from encountering more-than-human relations beyond the “living”: to track, unpack and expand a framework to consider river, stone, ancestor, or immaterial existent (what I have been calling land and its relations), and their capacity to be both impacted and to impact in a plurality of material-spiritual ways. This practice does not stage a resistance to forms of productivity in order to refuse capitalist working models and drives (as certain artistic practices of “non-doing” invoke); it rather proposes that other forms of labour *are* impactful and productive, and necessarily press on the boundaries of what is visible, quantifiable and proveable. As such, they demand new methods, frameworks and support to respond to the implications of their information. The skills that have developed through these moments of research have been, and continue to be, shared in pedagogical contexts (and will of course reveal different information for each specific body). Whilst I have termed some of this labour “invisible”, it is not therefore un-shareable. It lives as embodied process, shared in proximity to other bodies, in situational, oral contexts and particularities to time and place.

The unearthings and the visions teach something beyond factual evidence and reveal an affective, material-spiritual element of land as pedagogy. Pedagogy emergent from the encounter with more-than-human lifeworlds demands an inclusion of multiple modalities of information including imaginal, material-spiritual, affective and intuitive, the kinds of knowing that open up in unknowing. These modes of knowing make starkly apparent the limits of the institutional frameworks that house them. Furthermore, the witnessing practice reveals how agencies may not appear, or certainly not perform, in certain frameworks of visibility and affective spaces. If institutions are willing to take seriously the impact of certain conditions on the emergence (or

not) of certain knowledges - and if the emergence of such knowledges, voices and beings are understood as crucial to the continuance of lifeworlds and their repair - then said institutions must question what kinds of epistemological, affective and practical frameworks support such labour. Likewise, if repairing relations between humans and nonhumans through this kind of attendance to land was considered the place from which politics emanate, then the structures that enable such work would have to change accordingly - including land access, time and resources to practice etc., and a complete redress of pedagogical principles and political structures. This would necessitate accounting for the positionality of human bodies: the conditions that affect bodily attunement and the appearance of certain existents or knowledges. The subtlest to the largest forms of 'forgetting' to address land and nonhuman ancestors at pedagogical levels, are deeply entwined with larger political infrastructures which continue erasing the possibility of earth-emergent frameworks.

This practice evolves at the threshold of the less perceivable presences in such collectivities and reveals suturing perspectives and their potential futures. The critical thinking explores the emergence of perspectives between existents which are not located or emanating from any one position, but rather unfold between relations in unexpected ways. Following these suturing perspectives, is I propose, key to human-nonhuman witnessing in light of eco-political concerns, precisely because it reveals the affective human-nonhuman dynamics underlying ongoing injustices and dynamics, and reveals unexpected ways of attending this by orienting to material place itself. Thus a human-nonhuman collaboration ensues in unexpected ways.

Less perceivable presences such as the stone-womxn offer alternative, imaginal entrance points to engaging more-than-human collectivities. Experiences such as the visions and the entrance of information in *the unearthings*, push on more conventional categories of knowledge making and thus require new frameworks emergent from, rather than imposed upon, nonhuman-human relations. Through finding methods to follow these processes and hence emerge these frameworks, I have explored what mutual nonhuman-human witnessing propels, and what it reveals about the artist's contribution to witnessing in the context of environmental crisis.

The ongoing practice centres on the perspective that land and its relations are teachers and authorities, capable of guiding and witnessing human behaviour. A material poet(h)ics of nonhuman-human witnessing is the embodied act of encounter that situates the corporeal, intuitive, listening capacity of humans in direct participation with land itself. Witnessing as a embodied act makes space for the entrance of information manifesting in sensorial, corporeal, linguistic modes, and the appearance of material and immaterial existents - rivers, plants, stones, as well as ancestors or spirits, a more-than-human society communicating across Life Nonlife divides. These are crucial additional sites of information and repair in ongoing environmental justice. The practice explores the potential to be witnessed, and the possibility of another kind of “I” (literally vision, perspective) emergent from this witnessing. Land and its ‘field of mind’ then, is another way of proposing the immaterial and energetic field within which material land and its relations (including humans) might manifest, appear and be perceivable to one another. Attuning to this field is to attune to the dynamic, suturing perspectives that reveal themselves over time and beyond the singular body. Out of this field of witnessing, a “thisherenow” of a located, shifting, ancestral, nonhuman-human “I” might appear. Their hybrid utterance opens up unexpected pathways, in turn emerging unexpected frameworks - a ceremony house, perhaps - to respond to the affective truths of material-spiritual, more-than-human relationships that so urgently need attending to.

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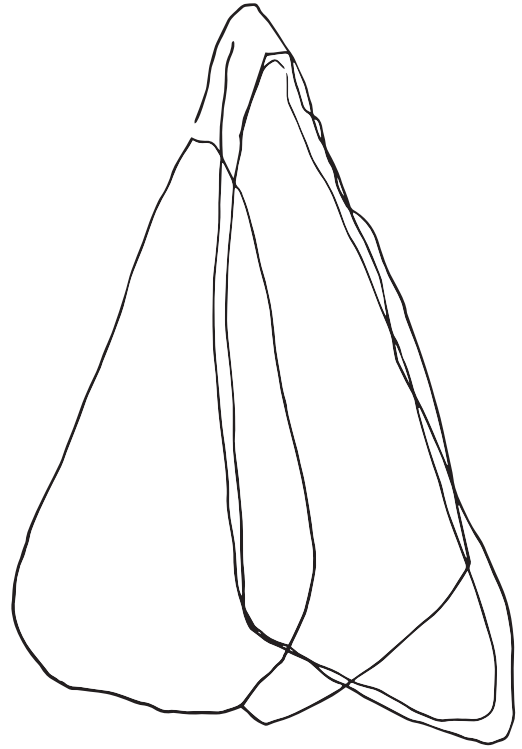
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Appendix: ▲



1. He tells me how she relates the news. Drilling, into the bowels of the mountain. Several communities in North America report that the capacity for the mountain to prescribe protocols and communicate clearly was being compromised - the land itself was felt to be increasingly confused and incoherent.

How to construct a grammar in light of this.

2. In one version your skin muscles fascia bone sinews were close enough for the sound to pass through in a bolt not a ripple. The word was the tongue. It wasn't always a contested territory.

[August 2015]

3. The river announced itself and the stones latched on. You think perhaps it was the other way round, my projection or desire to be mirrored in all surfaces of the world. Less of an other-way-round, more of a third category, an intention-to-be-announced-to. And reflection, no. I wanted to empty myself out maybe with an apple core scooper or something that just gets straight to the hollows although I tried instead with breath and air. The breath arrived in a tidal manner. It was coaxed, it was heaved, it was hefted from the marrow.

4. The stone unfolded itself into four corners of a blue sound. *I will try to explain how this is possible.*

With Lizzy on the studio floor, putting back the sense of the issue. The heart is an endocrine gland; she lights me up when she touches that part of the sternum [weep weep without effort] touch it again. Please. Hope as an exhalation, a bleak terrain. When I stay long enough (in dance class in politeness, or with the river because there is no one for miles and this is what I have said I will do) the touch seeps through time and is left alone to alchemise. She has her hand on my thalamus and I know she is not touching skin, fascia, muscle or bone, but that her memory extends from this liquid part of me, this pool tethering us out of itself, spawning its ink thread, its downhill cadence, its horizon of thought.

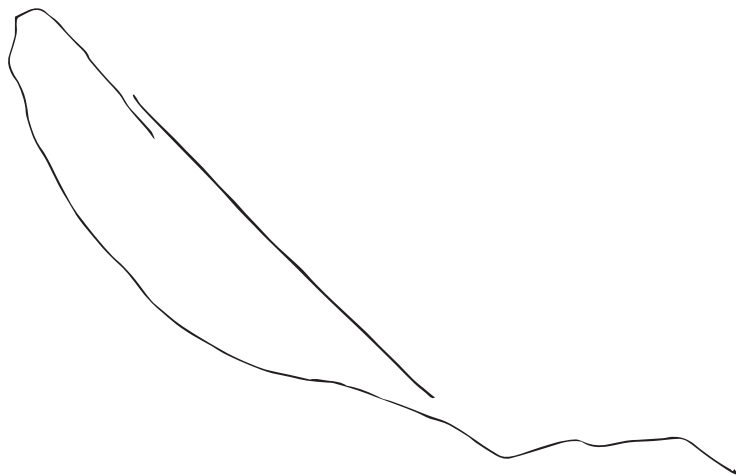
5. There is no story to tell, or rather, I've lost all sense of linearity and now the words are a place of retrospect, only an anchor to keep me going again to the floor, to lie down, to not leave.

The aftermath of this is to raggedly collect, prioritise nothing.

Here are four letters of the alphabet, you can pronounce them but you cannot define, possess, or make use of them. You cannot search for this plant by the roadside or Google it and find out where to buy some. The plant is sacred, the knowledge belongs to gods, the word stops itself. [Anne Carson]

In countless discourse on the environmental crisis, its impact in the art and humanities, the human strides in heavy. *How can we re-imagine nature? How can we respond to materiality? What kind of agency does this material enact?* The blood drains from my tongue in these conversations, I imagine myself dissolving into algae somewhere on the back row [the chest is actually the first place to register silence but the tongue and throat announce its arrival]. To be rendered speechless, is where the audience holds its power. In her account of Joan of Arc's trial, Anne

Carson writes how the judges, her audience, wanted her to name, embody and describe the voices she heard *in ways they could understand, with recognizable religious imagery and emotions, in a conventional narrative that would be susceptible to conventional disproof.* Carson doesn't suggest this, but I wonder that in Joan's performance, her ability to stop the act of translation is precisely because she knows the words do not linger in no-body, in no-space or no-time. She knows the words start and only ever start, that at the heart of them is an atmosphere of relations, a body of touch.



A through-way skimming the flat back meat
of yourself; on top of the ridge,
everything shorn down to its basics

scully of mag and rut,
stuffed up the crook and craning to see -

wanting a kaleidoscope of welted mulchings
to soften the skin of your face against

always the weight searching for a surface
rolling off the shelf

my musk lichen daily dose
of wrist fluid likely to have its place.

If I travel through soup so be it.

The days are short in light, loving in weight
brewing under the skyline,

a troubling sack of relations.

I watch the plant pot topple.

These faces are white and the way they move
is too clean a wipe of facts.

Leaving your hairs in the undergrowth for the birds
to nest; travel back lightly with enough breath

to lift each lid of eye to the outside that is afraid of
is not a fire the kind of yourself is a blacksmith,
making sparks
melting the metal is not an endless marking
that almost into muddle going

down the creek with a clumsy jump collapsing -

its breach

6. How to make yourself porous enough for the world to enter and leave again?

[Directionality] Notes

7. In the dance class we walk around the old airport hanger for hours on end, looking, simply looking with the cells not the eyes, trying to extend the period of time it takes between seeing and naming, stretching the moment of perception out so the body might jump in, might lash out before the tongue.

Legs mouth cells open traversing plurality

an outrage
an homage.

8. A year later, I return to the river although I have no exact location to arrive at, no address, no name for the village even. I hope to be able to see the fells and recognise their shape from the motorway. At some point I glance to my right and catch the mushroom plume of smoke lifting the lid off the mountain. "The mountain is on fire" I say aloud, to nobody. It seems something monumental is happening but the traffic has not slowed to notice and the surroundings are otherwise unchanged. I want to be there immediately. Sharp hook in the chest, clutch of lower belly. Where is ▲?

underside of a trout tail electrocuted for a split
second //

seaweed on a rock under five inches of water in a
shallow rock pool; water dark and cold, some
Northern sea, not the mediterranean

//

a dutiful warrior praying before battle / (too literal,
she thinks)

five black and white stills from the 1920s of
dominoes falling over, five consecutive rows of
them /

if I were a fish and ▲ were the angle. Hook. Wire
line.

Today:

cooking something / the flour
on my hips where I wiped my hands, once on the
front, and once on the back /

precision bird beak

the bus arriving at exactly the time that I do. You.
remembering a sound limping on ahead

//

Cartridge paper / clean slate /

flush, slight, ferried away.

9. The words pervading the membrane of your skin,
a dispersal and sink. Right into. The cells. This is
toxic animacy too.

10. Later in the talk with the poet from New York who I lift up and admire for her unapologetic, embodied, situated knowing of the world and her brash soft butch touch I wonder if my life could swing itself ninety degrees and become something entirely allowable and positioned like this - not rigid and small but chaotic and loving (soft and gentle). A damp bouyancy, a keeping up -- a queer humour, sneaking in the sideline.

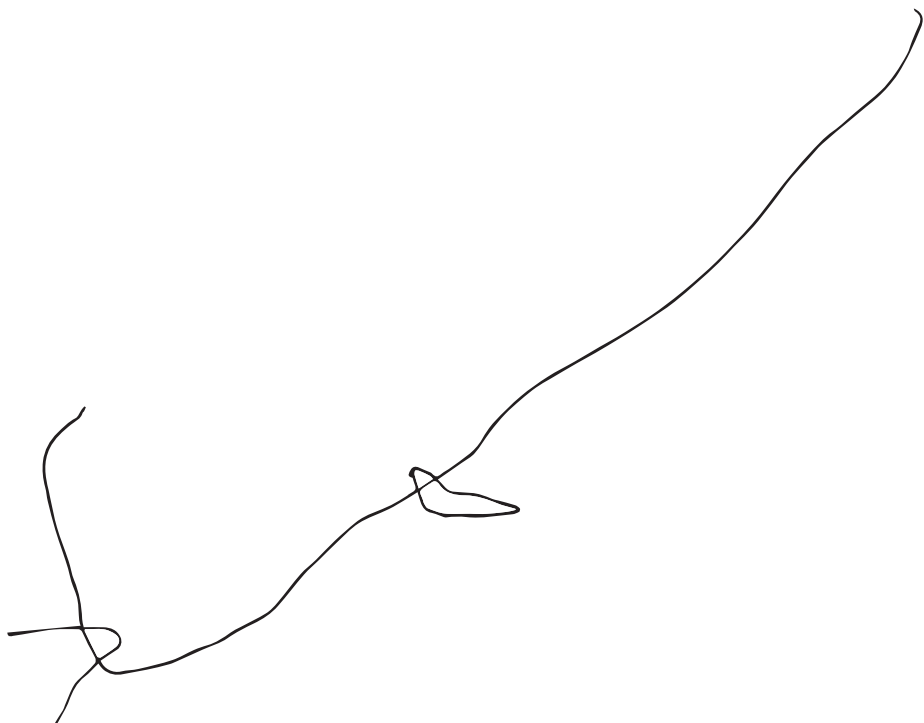
I am confused by dancers looking so still and serious with the land. It is troubling for many reasons, but also just confusing, as the river makes me delirious. More 90s pill-fucked trance and endless speech babble than the privilege of calm alignment and sensation. Don't get me wrong, this is not to say that I do not sit for hours wondering what the hell to do. [Does anyone write or talk about this?] That most of the work is to locate and subsequently banish all the inherited voices claiming your imagination is getting the better of you, that if you stand up for this knowledge it will be smoothly compartmentalised - which is to say the organs lifted out of your torso, the skin given a reflective sheen.

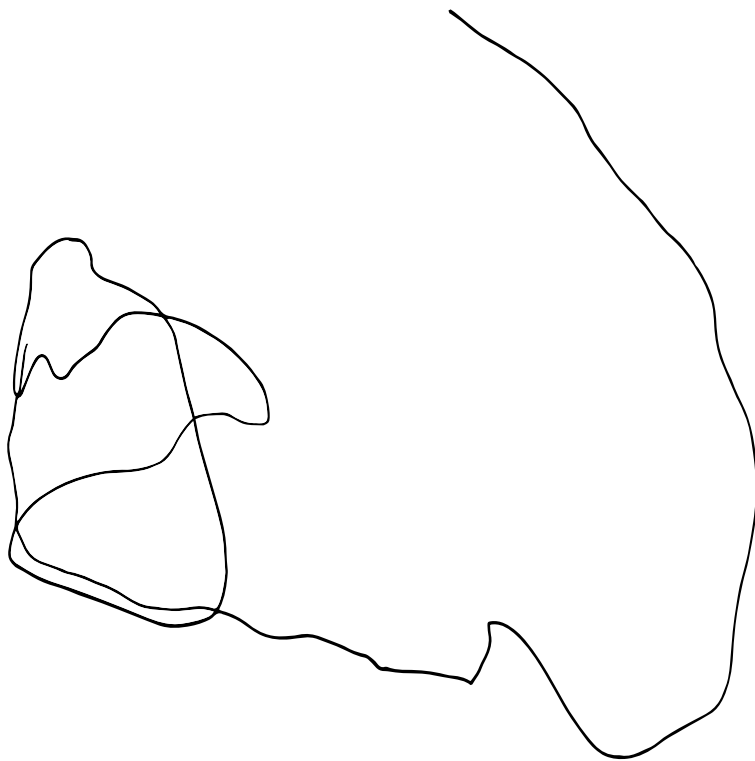
To question a world, or when the world becomes something you question, you proceed from a sense of being thrown. When things get thrown in the air, who knows what can happen.
[Sara Ahmed]

To be oriented. To densify. Sinking for a different question to be oriented from, to be extended out of. Because you are your histories, your past lives, your amphibious memory, your small corner, your allowances your silences and carry-ons, and still the water gets into the blood, with its specific desire:

windlock, cacophony, loom.

[Until the audience has a category for the words, you will have to tread the affordances the art form gives you].





11. I am reluctant to say fiction, or poetry, or even myth. Since when did I banish my endocrine system from this kind of reading, this digestion?

One fluid system understands another.

Not to pause and surround the words, interrogating their origins but to put the sounds through your spine, through the liver and out the front body and follow them - the trajectory, the passage forwards -

▲ grapples with liquidity.

I am here and also defer.

▲ is somewhere on the axis between mountain,
river, stone, womxn.

Blood runs slow in cases of fatigue. Drains. Skyward.
To the pulp of the issue.

Indefinitely. Beginning has begun with some
reluctance to have to linger
or spend any real time there;

the suffering of our mothers seems to underlie
everything,

heaving the valve open -

you used your hands once
to show me the way your heart opens and closes
like a saloon door swinging, reactive
for and against, to and fro I am exhausted

prefer to turn towards an axis I know
the mixture of my organs and un-probed flesh
can. [fantasise] more about.

The day after
her hands were turned
to a hundred black snakes flinging
down the fells
to the hulk of river
one slick body of snake-thought relentless. But end-
able. moving out

and further out.

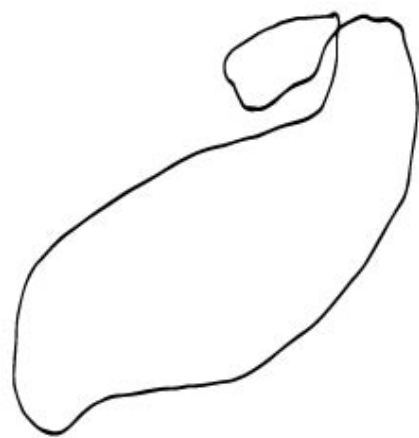
I wonder how to find what she is:

▲

walking around forgetting

last night we danced in the living room
drank warm whiskey
the plants swam flat across the walls

everybody
understood this.



▲ is up in arms, silent and gulping it down. Enough rage to sink a battleship. [containable, learnt, strident]. She smokes a cigarette. This is always a disguise, a way of fighting fire with flame. Smoke nulls the chest and lungs where grief houses its run-off. Each drag makes the cathedral of the ribs more domestic. Around the M6 Northbound ▲ feels her skin begin to blister. Sections she can no longer pass her hands over, tender to the touch. If only somebody would notice her, lying down in the middle of the conference room. [Something I should tell you, although cannot explain, that she does not jump, or move around, or teleport as the jumbled linearity of the text might make you think].

Magic appeared [to the bourgeoisie and the ruling elite] as an illicit form of power and an instrument to obtain what one wanted without work, that is, a refusal of work in action... [they] had to combat the assumption that it is possible to be in two places at the same time, for the fixation of the body in space and time is an essential condition for the regularity of the work process [Silvia Federici].

To the contrary assumption of early modernisation, it is hard work to be in two or many places at once.

When I cannot get out of bed I think there are two kinds.

1) I am here and often defer.

[How did you arrive?]

2) In the dance class he makes us stand and walk around the old airport hanger for hours on end, looking with the cells not the eyes, trying to extend the period of time it takes between seeing and naming, stretching the moment of perception out so that the body might jump in, might lash out before the tongue.

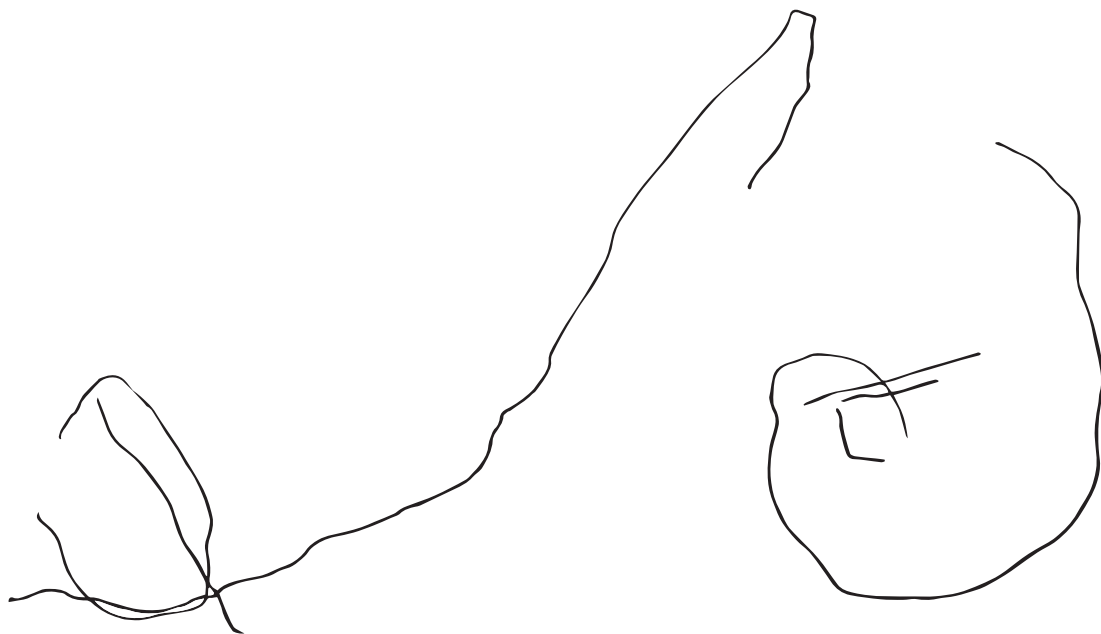
I forgot to say where the looking comes from and where it goes: the spine lightning itself through the body into the ground.

▲ still lying down. Mist-clotted, dissected, wondering where the plants are. The conference room air-clogged. Her cigarette has fallen into the now ankle-deep murky water filling up the room. Everybody is polite about it. She is ashamed, of course. With no energy for the emotional labour of shifting this (she knows) un-deserved, sense of shame. Although nobody claims specifically that it is her fault, there is some tacit agreement - dealt through the silence between ignoring the flood and ignoring the body – of a cause and effect.

Scooping for the cigarette butt, nursing the limp, stained pulp in her palm. My lungs, she thinks, could mop up the flood with their sponge and swallow. But she looks down and sees there is no difference between the water and the wailer, the teller and the told; she is no body but a rising tide mark on a wall, a figure with its damp facts. This, the facts of the figure, is what everybody at the conference *does* seem to be talking about.

What part of the collective body does ▲ get forgotten from?

12. The local villages flood a lot after the season of grouse shoots and controlled burning. Scorching the heather like this makes space for the small new shoots of spagnum moss that the grouse come from miles around to eat. The proliferation of grouse and spagnum moss kills the biodiversity of the region, loosens the soil, makes the breathing lung of peat-fell into a saturated sponge, unable to hold itself or the rainfall. There is talk of building a flood wall around one of the wealthier towns in the area.



[Structure] Notes

13. I said for a long time I was writing a future fiction. [I didn't write anything during this phase]. A place where the event of the performances could meet and converge. Underneath the fragments are awash; a kettle of strip and tease, an underbelly of going away. She invites us to sweep the air between our legs with a loud arching arm, that the pelvis stands under, understands everything, and this of course is the beginning and, I think, the event.

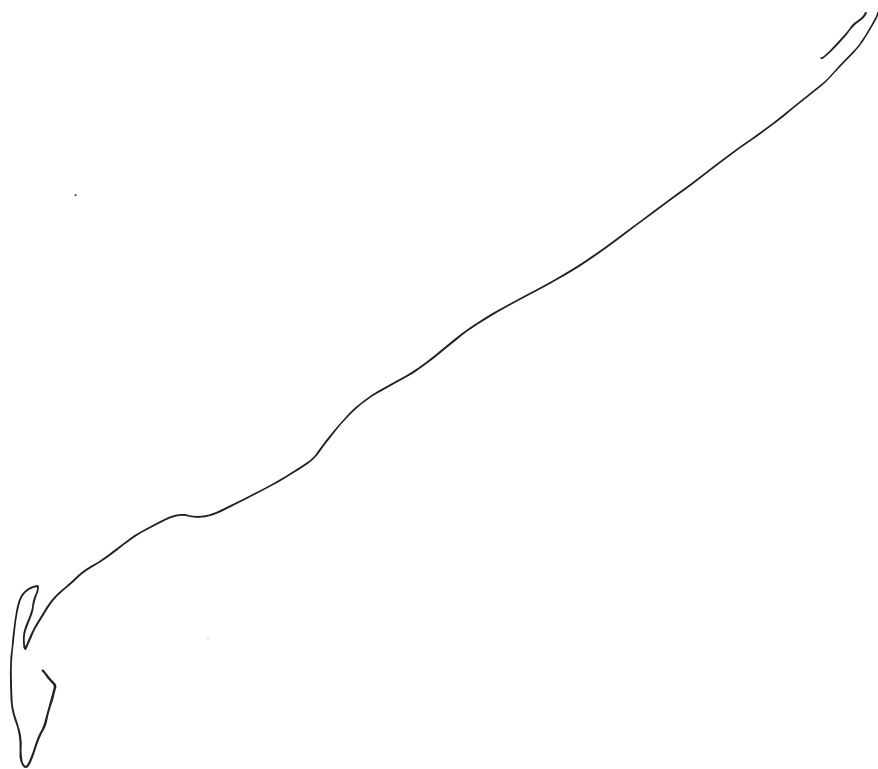
The tissue-deep terrain, layers of mine and not-mine.

I too, don't want to tell this part of the story. I don't want the proliferation of this image to become the part of the narrative that we then have to find a cause for. This part of the narrative is beyond cause and effect, it is not narrative as such, it lies outside of trajectory.

14. In another version you actually finish it, tie up the lines, coat the sentences with clear varnish, lift them up to smell them as the book with its cover to cover, dries.

[Mapping] Notes

It is not general, this love. It is as specific as drawing
my tongue across her body, not
tracing, not outlining, not surfacing, not mapping.



[Intention] Notes.

Trespassing on land that should be open access but of course, closure on discretion of the land-owner: trespassing with a level of anxiety but not total unsafety: trespassing as a small rebellion, not a life-endangering move: relevant privileges.

Trespassing to find the source of the river. Saliva as a lagoon our tongues have been resting in for millennia when some intention, some desire on its part says look says will says decided says there says here says a space now in front of my hips says awake says pulled towards and pulling says rising up out of says we are not one and two, but two and three, says:
our shapes, differently each time.

I do not wish to become you.

The water rearranges itself.

You are not supposed to see what happens next.

[June 2019]

I don't know where ▲ is and mostly for long tracks of time I do not care. This is not the same texture as letting go. She is stuck somewhere between my right lowest rib and the liver. She sends herself down my right leg and in October I sustain a knee injury which I put down to precarious working conditions as a freelance dancer but in actual fact nobody can explain the discrepancy between the felt pain and the minimal injury the MRI shows.

The stones are in the garden. Squat so the opening invokes an inhale. Up from the ground. I tell myself day in day out that suspension is an act of thought. I do not want to turn depression into academic theory.

I do not want to get to a place where I have to say:

As if the writing could massage my intestines and coax her back.

I am not interested in acts of repair.

– [which reminds me, the cut between womxn and stone is not a word after all – nor was the weapon that caused it a word] -

the house is a house is a house is a sound

the house is a sound lifting everyone up out of what else makes flesh a vessel

the house is a sound is a hologram of relations

the house is a sound of a way of seeing can be spoken after much after

the house is a rhythm continuous everything enters

the house is a zone where meaning fizzles when knowing something means going back to being a lizard on a piece of rock understanding understanding as the touch between your belly and the granite spawning you

the house is something practical to do in the wake of a separation between womxn and stone I am living with this memory always, some days heavy some days disbelief some days just business

the house is a practice of sewing speech back to touch

the house is a fish slipping out of one set of hands and into a body of water the house is a way of singing to the fish as it decides to do this: an act of transferral, a dip, a lisp, a leap I love this fish how generous it is to enter and trust it will keep its form from one atmosphere to the next or trust that it will change radically and enough to carry meaning the house is a soft monument of love for the fish

the house is the unavoidable tract of time between each type of forgetting which is to say

the house is the elephant in the room the violence done internally and externally to enable this unavoidable tract of time

the house is the block in the road to halt

– permanently – the desire to go back to a romantic
sense of connection the house is a road sign saying
look

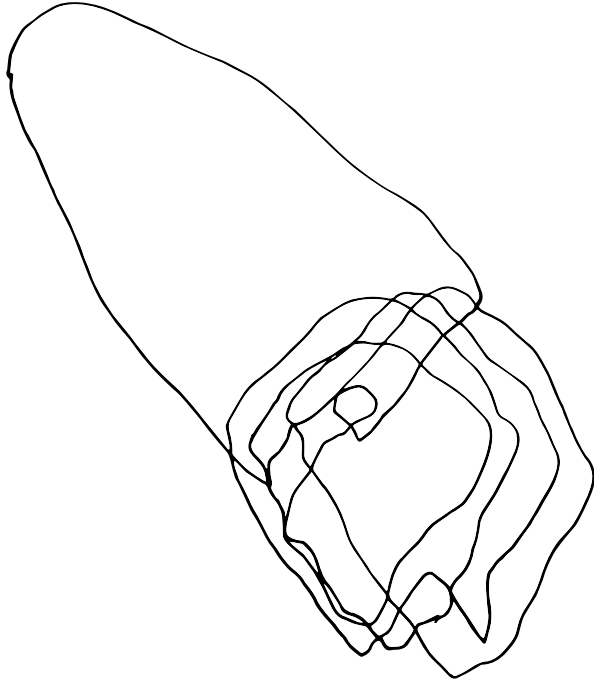
the house is where our bodies are registering every
bit of the land whatever we do it feels

the house is an amorphous and intangible labour
netting together like fungus on the forest floor

the house is knowing when to shed when to fold
when to dissolve one thing into the other the sleep
into the wake

the house is a sound you have heard once accidentally
slipping out of your mouth

or the mouth of another



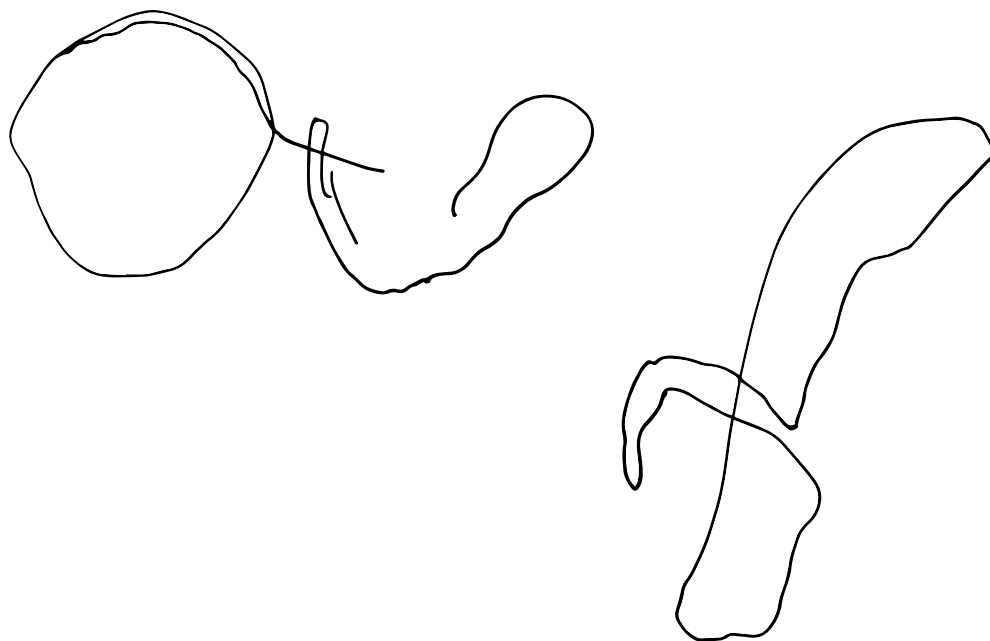
[February 2018]

What is a field of consent, in light of invasion?

15. It takes us six hours to walk the small winding tract of first start river.

The stones are smooth and I cannot feel anything.

What is a practice that gets sensation back into the skin, lets the marrow amalgamate inside the bones?

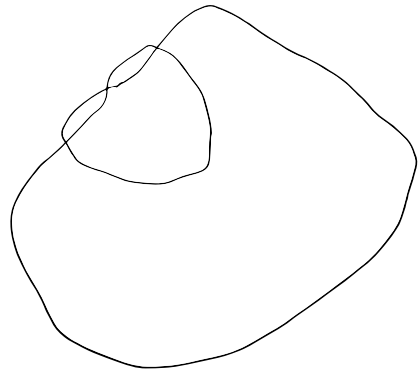


▲ is a blank spot just within my side-glance eye-sight, she slips - unnameable. I cannot see her directly, although sometimes

I watch her walking into the distance, towards the dark fells. I try not to interrupt her when I can tell she has decided on something.

I sit at the weir and ask the water

what is the connection between the women, the stones and the water:



[October 2019]

For the artist talk we are asked to speak about how we invite otherness as an agent into our creative practice. I gather my invitation was based on working with the stones, and they are assumed to be 'other' in some way. My collaborator is equally dismayed, has tired from being asked to perform a body of otherness, is drained by this fetishising that so often can get left as an imprint on flesh.

There is no otherness in stone, or soft peat river. Two things I know today:

I cannot name ▲

She is the only way the words might be possible.

16. On the banks of the river we begin.

▲ somewhere nearby. Off-centre, hidden by foliage.

▲ doing some in between work. A body of space between relations.

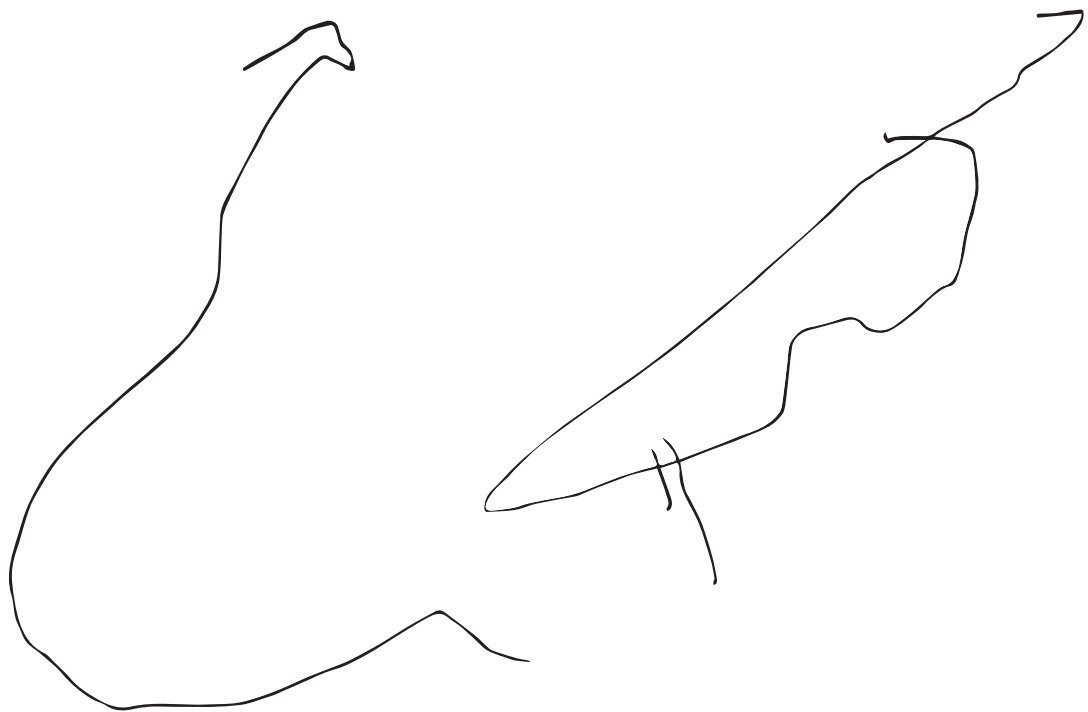
The thoughts go relentlessly round as we grind and scrape.

▲ walks out in front. The words pre-empt the wake of her path.

It is important to remember this. That the words spill the path and fill it, over again.

17. Three earthquakes are reported in one week in Lancashire. She tells me *regular people are going out on the streets*, protesting in Blackpool and Burnley against the county-wide fracking, that they didn't realise but now it's happening underneath them, they can feel it, *underneath their very own houses*, and they won't have it.

These sentences cannot house you or your body.



[August 1612]

To write the sentences step away. Far enough. Take things one bit

at a time. Do not look at the womxn directly or try to pinpoint who they are or what, exactly, happened.

Focus on specifics, on details, on small facts.

A lip of water rising over a river stone. Same as any other day.

Keep the questions that flood in at bay. These are distractions to try and fill up the space of ▲. Just let her be there, watching the womxn pass, as water follows the shape of stone, as the cold wet dew rises up and off each head of grass.

They have crept so gradually to the forefront
of my consciousness that it is a little alarming
when I realise them, standing there, direct gaze, in wait.

I have been getting close enough to inhibit touch.

They stand facing the river. Everything divides
in clarity we are saying:

We can look directly at the water.

We can look directly at the river.

We can see the whole thing, the whole body of it. One sleek thought

moving out and further out -

a stone the shape of an arrow
tucked between your tongue and the roof of your mouth

place it there so the granite begins to fill up every syllable
every letter every vowel

keep it there on the brink between word and swallow
on the cusp between pouring fourth and pushing down

until it begins to turn everything it touches to stone

from tongue to mouth to head to breast to hands to belly
to pelvis to thighs to legs to feet to ankle

if thunder and catapult the inside moist
still a lisp forgiven look bloom speech bloom

glimmer-bleached below a threshold clump of soil
pluming the cheeks a round glamour it says I am swamp-bleak

at the bottom of things,
the point before the plankton begins to shimmy to a start

so full to becoming empty again

take this cacophony, this meat-stripped bone,
this full head of moss in my hands and spell the words out

mouth to mouth to mouth to mouth to mouth to mouth to mouth to mouth to mouth