

Notes from Underground: a lament for eäarthlings

by

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Abstract

What is education for?

Jan Zwicky: “What is poetry for? I’d like to come at this question by asking another: *Why are there different modes and genres of linguistic communication?* Why are there both prose fictions and epic narrative poems? Both hymns and theological discourses? Love letters and marriage contracts? I believe the answer is because *how* we say is fundamental to *what* we mean. We amplify, we ironize, we enact, we undercut the ostensible ‘content’ of our gestures by the tone, rhythm, structure, and vocabulary we use to make them... What it *means* is that if you want to communicate, in language, your love for, say, a particular range of hills in west central Saskatchewan, you will need a form of words that, tonally, connotatively, structurally, does not signal an even deeper allegiance to the agendas of capitalist exploitation.” (2011, p. 13).

This is the thesis of this thesis: that we undercut the ostensible ‘content’ of environmental education—ecological footprints, interconnectivity, the precautionary principle, etc.—not to mention its “deeper” implications: that we are merely eäarthlings, merely more-than-human animals co-composed of many things—with a formal structure that *schools* an even deeper allegiance to the agendas of exploitation.

Given that the *real* problem in education lies with its deep epistemological structure, it seems unlikely that conventional modes of critique—let alone some extra modules on sustainable development—are going to propel us beyond such a deep-seated *framework*. Is there a way out of this tight circle? A good question, & the truth is: no one knows. But there is, one prays, something to be gained in discerning its trace upon our thoughtforms. As Zwicky aptly notes: “The power of the technocratic worldview is not fundamentally illustrated by the extent of its achievements, but rather—as Heidegger thought—by the extent of its ability to disguise from itself that it is a perspective, a way of viewing the world” (2014, p. 8). The move then, presumably, is to pluralize & provincialize its analytic and univocal hegemony. This work attempts to enact such a move.

Keywords: ecohermeneutics; Jan Zwicky; Walter Benjamin; lyric philosophy

Dedication

The *Syilx* people of the Okanagan Nation have a beautiful word-image in their *nsyilxcən* language: *tmixʷ*. Which translates variously to something like: “ecology,” or “that which gives us life,” or “all living things,” or “loving-ancestor-land-spirit.” But Jeanette Armstrong—honoured Okanagan knowledge keeper, writer, poet, & ecological educator—suggests that the English word “grandmother” is perhaps a closer translation of the human experience of meaning or *origin* (cf. Benjamin) of the expression. Drawing out its imagistic resonance with *tmixʷulaxʷ* (The Land), she has described the way *tmixʷ* “literally displays many strands continually emanating and fanning outward from one source that is not visible. The image [thus] provides a dynamic view of what the ecology of the land actually does and refers, as an image, to every life form of a place, including the human, continuously emanating toward an invisible source... Each life form is a single strand of the life force of that place and requires [the] others of that place to have existed and to continue to exist. In that way *tmixʷ* captures the dynamics of the myriad relationships that make that place what it is.”

I dedicate this work to my grandmothers, Betsy B. Stewart & Claire E. Derby (at the kitchen table, in the garden, on the land), who have gifted me the closest thing I have to all-loving, life-giving ancestral spirits.

& until we cultivate the right word in English—to the *tmixʷ* of every place, who make all things possible.

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❖ Territorial Acknowledgement (I)

I am listening in a limestone building, trying not to feel the story
of Canada
resonate through my body
shiver through
I am trying instead to hear the seepage of water through stone
I am trying to hear the labour of quarry, cut and chisel
I am trying to hear if these walls are also still the land
I am trying not to hear these walls declare their immovability,
declare their charming structure, their necessary structure,
I am trying to hear their structure burn down
while the shelter for our work remains

-- Dylan Robinson (Stó:lō), *Structure for Acknowledgement*

378. Knowledge is in the end based on acknowledgement.

-- Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*

One has only to witness the soft oleaginous cant of a politician or some slick bureaucrat “acknowledge the territory,” before moving expeditiously onto business-as-usual, to recognize the formality as little more than a superficial gesture of recognition. ((Public relations as a carbon copy of a copy of protocol.)) I have, as just one example, personally witnessed a university president open an environmental education conference with a welcome in *Secwepemctsín* (the language of the Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc), recognize sacred *Secwepmecul’ecw* (The Land), & reassure resident Elders that he is committed to “meaningful reconciliation”—only to find a picture of this duplicitous little louse in the local paper the next morning, accepting one of those ridiculously oversized cheques from Kinder Morgan as hush money for a pipeline. —What else might we expect, I suppose, from educational institutions nowadays? Capitalist Realism

[All conference participants receive a complimentary gift: a reusable shopping bag & an eco-friendly travel mug adorned with Haida designs—frog, bear, thunderbird—from “authentic” Indigenous artists, guaranteed. “Manufactured in China.” ((Mass production as a carbon copy of a copy of potlatch.)) The frog-image on my mug is “sacred” but *meaningless*. It has neither aura nor resonance. This is the *real* problem with education.]

Then again, difficult to open with that: no one likes a lament. ((Camus on Nuremberg: “A trial cannot be conducted by announcing the general culpability of a civilization.” Neither, it seems, can an education.))

I also happened to witness, at something of a formative age, John Ralston Saul convincingly illustrate how neoliberal universities were becoming the “handmaidens of the corporatist system” in a Massey Lecture almost 30 years ago. (Admittedly, the pejorative analogy to “handmaidens” has not aged well. Allow me a remix: universities have become the one-dimensional, low-toner copy machines of the corporatist system.) Either way, the barbarous paradox that Saul intimated back in the day has only proliferated in the interim: *knowledge has not made us conscious*—socially, historically, ecologically. ((Benjamin: “There is no document of culture which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is never free of barbarism, so barbarism taints the manner in which it was transmitted from one hand to another.”))

Which is to say, the very institutions committed to transmitting knowledge—&, daresay, or is it too quaint to even suggest now: *cultivating a love of wisdom*—function primarily to instill the technocratic imperatives required for Dominion. As George Grant—father of the Great Canadian Lament—stated candidly in 1969 (& this was *before* “neoliberal restructuring”): “The chief job of the universities within the technological society is the cultivation of those societies which issue in the mastery of human and non-human nature.”

[Mic drop. Not only have the promises of Modernity been superficial myths of progressive change from the very beginning—as illustrated, according to Walter Benjamin—as just one example—in the Baroque plays of the seventeenth century German *Trauerspiel* (“tragic drama”)—but this ulterior Mastery has steady issued forth, spreading from opera to arcade to cinema to laboratory to academy to internet, until it enframed the sacred whole & heart of being—the *oikos, home*—with its foul hubris. Place, *Home*, Natural Resources]

Do not get me wrong, it is good & right to acknowledge the Indigenous peoples & traditional territories of whatever watershed we happen to live or gather within. But the smooth absolution of the whole performance tends, more oft than not, to leave me with the nauseating tinge of duplicity. Something akin to the sickening sensation I have every time I cast a ballot. *What a farce*. How, then, might everyday plaid-shirted zeks like you & me, dear comrade, go about acknowledging the territory in more meaningful ways? What do such gestures even mean for settler politics, ethics, ways of knowing—for how we conceive of *being educated*?

The First Peoples Principles of Learning, which one often finds stapled to classroom walls nowadays, states the objective clearly: “*Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.*” Heads may nod on professional development days: “It is only right to let them have a say, especially after all the—*ahem*, unpleasantries of ‘contact...’” but make no mistake, this principle confronts us with a radically new (read: ancient) notion of what education is for—what *being educated*—what knowledge—is. Education understood as a pragmatic means to better one’s lot & increase familial status makes perfect sense to a modern mind. Check. The notion of supporting & belonging to a community also checks out to the extent that we remain within liberal definitions (i.e. a banking or yoga “community”) & refrain from recognizing class-based affinities. ((“I am trying to hear the labour of quarry, cut and chisel.”)) But then the list unravels into what most Moderns would consider primitive superstition & naive mysticism. The Land? Spirits & Ancestors? —“I thought we were just trying to improve graduation stats and marketability? Maybe we better not do an acknowledgement. Besides, we might offend someone.”

I have always been partial to Indigenous prayers that not only acknowledge the people—but the land, the waters, star nation, & all the other-than-human beings who co-constitute the world. The four-legged, the two-legged, creepy-crawlers, the finned, the furred, the winged ones, the forests & fungi: “all our relations.” In addition to being in spiritual solidarity with such invocations, I appreciate how they tend to enact a kind of temporal incursion into business-as-usual by way of their often “inconvenient” length. A surprise attack: —ffff, ffff. Like ontological arrows into the bandwagon. I also appreciate how such prayer implicates us in a multispecies legislation beyond the gerrymandered boundaries of “civilized discourse.” It is relatively easy to imagine a Prime Minister recognizing the political subjectivity of Indigenous peoples—politicians routinely grovel for the cameras & make all kinds of token gestures nowadays—but it is genuinely difficult to imagine a Prime Minister recognizing the agency of Kelp or Garry Oak ecologies. This is a good sign—it indicates there is something about such a recognition that resists “precorporation” by the Spectacle. Indeed, the denial of a “more-than-human” world—of our consanguineous entanglement with other beings—lies at the cadaverous heart of *Leviathan!* Of which the Spectacle is but the latest incarnation. But this is getting ahead of ourselves.

Acknowledging territory, then, ought to also *strike* as somewhat transgressive in its prayer-like recollection & *remembrance* (cf. *anamnesis*, *Eingedenken*) of all the creatures, beings, entities, & things that a colonial logic works to obfuscate. Not the sanctimonious prayer of my piece-of-shit, surface-dwelling uncles—who go to church once a week to perform humility for an hour, & then get back to business-as-usual. But a kind of *chthonic* prayer (fr. Gk. *khthōn*, “earth”) recited in the presence of the Land, the Spirits, & the Ancestors to affirm allegiances. A public ratification of the “Natural Contract” (cf. Serres), if you will. Such covenants, when adopted by settlers, ought to come with certain ethico-political commitments to Indigenous peoples, other-than-human beings, & The Land—stipulating how one intends to walk in the world. One should not acknowledge sacred lands & make promises to the Elders one day, then pander to colonial mandates the next. This ought to go without saying, but the practice has become troublingly institutionalized. (This, of course, notwithstanding that the Canadian State is essentially constituted & sustained by such duplicitous acts of bad faith). There ought to be a word for this kind of parasitic comportment: [*Leviathan! Leviathan!*].

But there ought to be a word for other ways of being as well: what might we call everyday plaid-shirted zeks working to listen, learn, & cultivate living alliances with Indigenous peoples & other-than-human collectives? Those trying to live, as conservationist Aldo Leopold once put it, as “plain members and citizens of the land-community?” —I call them *eäarthlings*. This thesis is about & for such harlequin creatures: the whole thing is a profane attempt to acknowledge the territory. A chthonic prayer, of a kind, for *home*. Ecohermeneutics

Image: Gary Snyder—old dirty bodhisattva, judicious but tricky—emerges from a dank crevice somewhere in the south of Cascadia, with a vajra-crowned shovel & a fierce-green sutra for all elements & *eäarthlings*:

*I pledge allegiance to the soil
of Turtle Island,
and to the beings who thereon dwell
one ecosystem
in diversity
under the sun
With joyful interpenetration for all.*

Ecohermeneutics: Re-cognition of the ecological structure of imagination. Its spatio-temporal ramifications as manifest in *this* many-sided place: —*kw’umalha*. —Land of plenty & glacier-whales & myth & memories.

Why must Orpheus be our guide, George? Why ancient Greeks & modern Germans?—Why not Queneesh? Or I-Hos, the double-headed serpent, sighted not long ago on the Puntledge River—a short walk from here?

“In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art” (Susan Sontag). Ecohermeneutics: ((Cross out art, & put objects. Cross out objects, & put ecology. Cross out ecology, & put resonance. Cross out the sentence.))

One cannot function, nor is it possible to remain, in a state of *profane illumination*. ((—Humans only have a narrow footing in such places.)) We must, inevitably, return home, tidy up, attend to tasks. Domesticity

Zwicky: “What gives the megalithic circle its power?—Not just size. The stones are separate, but each listens to the others listening. The greater the apparent differences among the constitutive elements that must be coördinated, the greater the insistence on coherence, the greater will be the tension under which the work comes into being. (Herakleitos.) Paradox and catachresis leave the centre open. Resonance requires space.”

This work is a many-sided image under polyphonic tension—violin strings pulled tight across the waist, a Herakleitan heap of trash on a cluttered altar, a ruderal ecology struggling to heal—like *kw’umalha*.

Territorial Acknowledgement (II)

Dia duit (Gaelic, “god to you”). My name is michael dé danann datura. I am a settler born & raised on the traditional territories of the K’ómoks First Nation in a place called *kw’umalha*. *Gila’kasla & huy ch q’á* (Kwak’wala & Hul’q’umi’num, “thank you”) to the K’ómoks for the privilege of living on such plentiful lands in peace. My peoples are originally Gaels from the north of Éire (Ireland), primarily the region around Bun an Phobail on the Inishowen Peninsula of Donegal. My true peoples, however, are those rogues, queers, anarchists, alchemists, & free-spirited brethren that seem to dwell in the underground of all cultures & times. Stay wild comrades: —*Ar scáth a chéile a mhaireann na daoine*. (“In the shelter of each other—we flourish.”)

[Point of interest: I legally changed my name at thirty-five years old. There were myriad reasons, but in essence, I wanted a name that was more earthen & ancestral in tenor. I adopted dé danann in honour of the *Tuatha Dé Danann*, a pantheon of chthonic deities from pre-Christian Éire (the *Tuatha Dé* became the *Aos Sí* or faerie folk of the underworld) & to mourn the loss of Gaelic in my family, which my grandfather deemed archaic given his imperial schooling. Datura, for those unfamiliar, is a vespertine (dusk-blooming) species of the nightshade family known for its oracular intensities, dangerous teachings, & striking beauty.]

During the writing of this thesis I lived in several places including: Vancouver, the traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh), kʷikʷəƛ̓əm (Kwitwetlem), & Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish); Halfmoon Bay, the traditional territories of the shíshálh (Sechelt); Kamloops, the traditional territories of the Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc; & the Comox Valley, the traditional territories of the K’ómoks. My parents, Allan & Morag Derby, were born in Grenfell, Saskatchewan on the traditional territories of the Zagime Anishinabek & presently live in Nanaimo on the traditional territories of the Snuneymuxw.

Note: The “K’ómoks First Nation” consists of several formerly separate tribes, both culturally K’ómoks & Pentlatch. The Sathloot, Sasitla, Ieeks, & Xa’xe are all culturally K’ómoks & have their own unique origin stories. The Pentlatch had a similar culture but spoke a distinct language & also have their own unique origin story. These origin stories all tie the tribes’ first ancestors to their respective tribal territories.

Territorial Acknowledgement (III)

In the foreword to *The Tree of Meaning*, Robert Bringhurst evokes some of the formative years he spent as a child rambling about a place called Rock Creek—his father’s favourite trout-fishing stream in western Montana—and the watershed, as he puts it, “where my brain was born.” My mind has a similar matrilineal kind of origin with the forests, streams, swamplands, alpine meadows, & shorelines of the Comox Valley. In the spirit of acknowledging the territory where my brain was born, I should like to name a few of the places, species, & beings that have been “keystone” in my life. (An undertaking, I recognize, fraught with philosophical problems: Why sockeye salmon & not sturgeon, for example? & how to recognize particular beings with our clumsy subject-object language?) The invocation will thus be appallingly partial & learned ecologists & Indigenous knowledge holders may need to forgive a few taxonomical & toponymical errors:

Queneesh (Comox Glacier) • “The Farm” in Black Creek • Amanita muscaria • Western Maidenhair Ferns • Cattails • Cortes Island • Kin Beach: Tidal Pools, Sculpins, & Moon Snails • Sitka Spruce & Western Redcedar • Boreal Chorus Frogs • Polypores • Smokey (Siamese-Tabby), Bandit (Springer Spaniel) & Toby (Yorkshire Terrier): best friends • Chanterelles & Boletes & Morels • Vancouver Island Marmots • Mallard Ducks: *major swagger* • That Ginko Biloba I planted in Halfmoon Bay • Forbidden Plateau • Corvidae: Ravens, Crows, Steller’s Jays, Magpies, & Whiskey Jacks • Black Bears • Death Camas • Psilocybe cubensis • Wapato • “The Swamp” at the end of Foden Road • Trout Lake (shíshálh territory) • Seal Bay • Turkey-Tail Mushrooms • Circlet Lake • Spotted Owls & Barred Owls • Sockeye Salmon • Mountain Ash • Linnaea Farm • Mount Albert-Edward • Huckleberries • Quartz • Warblers • Lungwort • Ursa Major • Stinging Nettles • Spotted Coralroot Orchids • Quadra Island • Deer Ferns • Desolation Sound • Earthworms • The Little People • Puntledge River • Sphagnum Moss • Arbutus Trees • Rebecca Spit • Dragonflies • Salmon Berries • Cannabis • Kinnickinnick • Nymph Falls • Mink • Smelt Bay • Ponderosa Pines • Tiger Salamanders • Cruickshank River • Great Blue Herons • Round-Leaved Sundews • Himalayan Blackberries • Lake Helen MacKenzie • Tsolum River • Limpets • Hague Lake • Garry Oaks • Rock Crabs • Hornby Island • Bumblebees • Skunk Cabbage • Oregon Grapes • Browns River • Lavender • Red Columbines • Saskatoon Berries • Easter Bluff • Gunflint Lake • Honeysuckles • Nootka Roses • Mullein • Comox Lake • Sagebrush • Bull Kelp • Devil’s Club • Manzanita • Indian-Pipe • Raccoons • Goose Spit • Manson’s Lagoon • Pacific Yews • Salal • Purple Sea Stars • Red Elderberries • Soapberries • Helliwell Provincial Park • Secret Beach • Dandelions • Northern Flickers • Smuggler Cove • Rough-Skinned Newts • Medicine Bowls • Floral Pixie Lichens • Chipmunks • Chickadees • River Otters • Chickweed • Bevan Wetlands • Map Lichen • Paradise Meadows • Dark-Eyed Juncos • Coast Moles • Minks • Raccoons • Carrington Bay • Banana Slugs • Wishbone Lichen • Alpine Saxifrages • Pacific Dogwoods • Ghost Pipes • Horsetails • Orca • Lupines • Cumberland • Pacific Treefrogs

Some Additional Notes & Regrets

We construct an awakening theoretically—that is, we imitate, in the realm of language, the trick that is decisive physiologically in awakening, for awakening operates with cunning. Only with cunning, not without it, can we work free of the realm of dream.

-- Walter Benjamin, *Materials for the Exposé of 1935*

In the morning before eating, you're on the defensive, you manage somehow not to know things you really do know.

-- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Mandarin*

For someone who claims to be concerned with making space for other-than-human voice(s), this project is a disappointingly text-laden & anthropic soliloquy. Or worse: a manifestation of some parasitic narcissism masquerading as “intellectual transgression” or “work of art.” The material sacrifices it required—beryllium alloys, coltan, a staggering array of petroleum products, bleached paper, toxic glue, hydroelectricity, almond butter, jojoba oil, cordyceps, hashish, yerba maté by the kilo—embed it so consummately in the industrial gut of Moloch, one could hurl accusations of hypocrisy at will. Albert Camus thus appears early, every morning, in a stylish overcoat with perfectly greased hair, smoking hand-rolled cigarettes over your bed: “Is today *le jour mon ami?*” A part of you wishes it was. Being poor is such a drag, plus you despise yourself for all the ways you consent to a system that desecrates everything you love. But something deep inside you recognizes that life is precious, sacred even. “Non? Alors, au *vrai travail*, camarade.” You wake up: *Fuck*. —Now what?

David Jardine: “No effort on anyone’s part will make them free of complicity. Here we are. *All of us*. We are all being asked to embrace the inevitability of hypocrisy and yet still thoughtfully consider our situation and what might be possible, what might be best. The problem is, of course, that it makes insight very hard won, and always in need of forgiveness, always on the verge of feeling like accusation, and yet always mine to delve, mine to think, here, now, again. I must articulate, over and over and over again, *my own* complicities in the suffering I witness around me in the world. My complicity and inevitable hypocrisy in these matters needs to be taken as a gift that makes our discussions possible, not a clever argument trick that makes discussions impossible... Here we are. *All of us*. The question to be asked is –‘Now what?’”

A lamentation is the gift of a space for suffering. (Because you are not allowed to cry for animals in public.) I regret many things. I regret sleeping in again & not meditating in the mornings. I regret drinking so much. I regret spending so many years agonizing over this Herakleitan heap of snippets, images, social critiques, dreams, quotations, feathers, broken shells, & other little pieces of resonant detritus I found on my walks. I ought to have planted some pale evening primroses for the bees, dug a swale, built a house for the northern flickers that come around, whispered one of my grandmother’s hymns to the dirt—you know, *real work*.

Forgive me comrades. I can only pray that labour takes many forms. I can only pray that these words will act as a ladder you throw away, a shovel that digs into the night sky, a mask that you adopt for a time, then burn.

Lastly, I should like to evoke & commiserate in a confession voiced by Jan Zwicky (who, in turn, also evokes the spirit of Camus) in the preface to *Lyric Philosophy*: “Like most rebellions, [this] book probably contains a good deal more of the spirit of the status quo than I am capable of recognizing.” For what it is worth, I have attempted to exorcise as much of that leviathanic spirit as possible. But Old Evil is nothing if not duplicitous & deeply ingrained. Forgive me for any critical lapses, crude slips of tongue, or run-of-the-mill reifications. I mean only to offend those soporific hosts of an industrialized Dominion. —I mean to bite the hand clean off.

A Field Guide for Mycologists

Dear Merlin,

Thank you for reading this unfolding & “unfinished” (which is not the same as not-finished) manuscript. I have been trying to imagine why a mycologist, such as yourself, might have any interest in a work that is ostensibly within the field of education & concerned with the experience of *deep*—or what I will call formal ecological—insight as a mode of *being educated*. The philosophical nomenclature can, at times, get a little dense (& perhaps excessively German) &—as you will see—the “constellation” (Benjamin) or “lyric” (Zwicky) form of the composition will undoubtedly be, as Walter Benjamin claimed of his own collage-inspired work, “the cause of certain obscurities.”—Why, then, should anyone suffer such a convoluted & darkling forest?

((Max Ernst in *Les Mystères de la Forêt, Minotaure* (1934): “Are there still forests down there? They are, apparently, wild & impenetrable, black & russet, extravagant, secular, ant-like, diametrical, negligent, fierce, fervent & likeable, with neither yesterday nor tomorrow.)) Underground Music, Resonance

Then again, put this way, perhaps you are the ideal respondent for such a question. Having recently read *Entangled Life*, I am reminded of your own surrealistic ventures into the wild & extravagant underworlds of the Panamanian jungle, in search of tiny blue-petaled gentians (i.e. *Voyria tenella*). Or rather, in search of these strange & striking “mycoheterotrophs”—which, as you explain, do not photosynthesize, but form symbiotic connexions with a shared mycorrhizal network (“wood wide web”) beneath the surface—in the hope that these ghostplants might help you “find [a] way underground, into this hidden, teeming world.”

Forgive me for putting words in your mouth—I am, as you know, an incorrigible methodology nerd—but it seems to me, that by paying “animal-bright attention” (Zwicky) to a particular flower—& not just *Voyria*, but *this* one, here, “tucked behind buttressed tree roots”—you were able to discern something of the *deep* ecological origin of both the flower & the forest as a whole? A kind of protean “internal structural relation,” or as Jan Zwicky might put it, “resonant ecology,” immanent to the thing itself & intelligible to an attentive mind, but never simply given to empirical observation. (—Nor subject to abstraction for all time & place). It is this “underground” disposition—that you demonstrate with such *élan* as a filthy, wandering Orpheus, caked in red mud & behaving like a fungus (cf. mimesis), ridiculed by your Dutch colleagues, who work on “real” ecological problems, for being a dandy troubadour, a quasi-mystic, intoxicated on fermented field samples again & reading poems as research (!)—that interests me. I think—& perhaps this is why I have the menacing sense this thesis will be rejected outright—it demonstrates a promising mode of *being educated*.

Scholars in the field of education, such as myself, are typically tasked with determining what manner of education—pedagogical practices, core competencies, curricular content, etc.—will most effectively yield an “educated mind.” The culturally & historically conditioned qualities & capacities of *being educated* are, as you might imagine, a matter of some debate in graduate-level pedagogy courses, but the deceptively simple question—*what is education for?*—is rarely a serious topic in teacher training programs. —& it is all but taboo in state school systems: no time for such pedantic nonsense, too busy educating children about the virtues of “critical thinking.” A continuous & seemingly inevitable synthesis of cultural presuppositions, Ministry-mandated curricula, & “real-world” economics (getting a job, buying shit, paying taxes), provides a standardized telos to placate any metaphysical rebellion that may linger on from the university days like a drunk tattoo. The general attitude towards “ivory tower” theories from those who work “in the trenches,” as it goes, was distilled into a single tragicomic instance by one of my mentors, David Jardine, in a wittingly

strange book he self-published some 30 years ago, *Speaking with a Boneless Tongue*, which greatly inspired the work at hand. (—Syntax & breaks are verbatim, allow me to circle back the significance of composition):

Instance: the off-hand comment of a student-teacher speaking about the other-worldliness of her University education and her passion for the *practice* of teaching:

Piaget is just a name to me that I memorized in my courses. I don't care about all of those theories. I just care about where the child is at and how to get him to the next stage.

The wonderful, innocent, unintended irony.

You may miss the “joke” at first, which is premised on recognizing the near-universal dominance of Jean Piaget’s “cognitive stages of development” in educational theory & practice. Allow me a remix for scientists: “Francis Bacon is just a name to me that I memorized in my courses. I don’t care about all those theories. I just care about generating a hypothesis, performing an experiment, and formulating a conclusion.”

The “epistemological” point is, of course, the same: we tend to *think-with* the images, ideas, & traditions we have been swimming in & that, in some ways, we always already are (cf. hermeneutics). Even if you are not up-to-date on your developmental psychology—like, regrettably, many teachers & educational scholars, who have the bad habit of rebottling new blends of Rousseau, Dewey, & Piaget every few years, rebranding it with a Psychology™ label (“dry, white, and evidence-based”), & calling it “progress” (literally, you cannot make this shit up)—you will have undoubtedly heard terms like “developmentally appropriate,” “hands-on,” “concrete to abstract,” “simple to complex,” & “student-centered.” These *prima facie* tenets shape the very lexicon & material policies of “21st century learning,” &—along with the notion that children’s brains have a kind of “natural” learning modality that, were we to “tap” it (perhaps neuropsychology will do the trick this time?) would incite a “cognitive revolution”—comprise the techno-utopian dream of “progressivism.”

As the name implies, the formal structure underlying this developmental model is an evolutionary image of Progress incarnate; transmitted into the education field, in large part, by none other than Herbert Spencer (—tho its foul origin in 19th century Social Darwinism has been purified as the image has been progressively *sublated* [as in *Aufhebung*] & purified by way of Dewey, Piaget, & modern psychology.) The “highest stage” of this cognitive hierarchy, & thus the implicit answer to—*what is education for?*—is the “formal operational” stage. Bacon thus provides the perfect parody, as this stage is identified by an ability to “think scientifically,” as defined by the capacity to generate hypotheses, employ “hypothetico-deductive reasoning,” & perform systematic “formal operations” on ideas. (—Or: “theoretic abstraction” & “logico-mathematical” thinking).

None of this is particularly cutting-edge stuff. Much of Piaget’s “genetic epistemology”—to say nothing of the Baconian-Kantian epistemology from which it derives—has been roundly critiqued, modified, & eclipsed by more contemporary scholarship, both philosophical & empirical. So before you gambol off to more “fervent & likeable” forests, allow me to bring it back to one of the concerns at the crux of this work, one very much within the Sheldrake wheelhouse. As both you & your father have famously petitioned, the *real* problem (the *deep* epistemological problem) with institutional Science is that it is not consistently *scientific* enough. That is, (& here the verb or image we choose is critical) the wonder (“skepticism”) & imaginative insight (“empiricism”) at the origin of a scientific disposition tends to historically “drift,” or

naturally “harden,” or, as I will argue, are strategically “appropriated,” into a set of hypostatized dogmas. A mode of inquiry, interminable & manifold as the world itself, “tends to get reified” into a rigid worldview.

Big Idea: *What is the origin of this systematic certainty?*

The *real* problem in the field of education is of the same order, which is, of course, not surprising given the way the “formal operational” ideal of *being educated* & the capitalized mode of Science have mutually reinforced each other. We appear to be trapped, or, to the point, *enframed* (cf. Heidegger) in what George Grant called a “tight circle,” out of which, like history & thought itself, we cannot simply bracket ourselves—neither by method, nor eidetic reduction, nor critical theory—to just “think clearly” for one god-damned minute. (This rage for a certain kind of clarity, what A.N. Whitehead styled the “celibacy of the intellect,” may, in fact, lie at the heart of the problem.) What is, perhaps, even more concerning than a basic lack of “hermeneutic consciousness” (i.e. recognition of the “cultural-historical conditioning” of understanding, Gadamer) is the troubling phenomenon—outlined in detail in your father’s work—that were “Science” to take contemporary insights & the way “the sciences” (plural, cf. Isabelle Stengers) are actually practiced *seriously*, the archaic image of Science we are taught in school, with its 17th century metaphors & methods, ought to have been replaced long ago. In other words, why should such an innately progressive enterprise so consistently fail to formally enact the radical implications of its most “progressive” insights & data sets?

This phantasm of constant change that conceals a deeper conformity, is, I believe, also related to the “drift” towards hypostatization in “our” (Modern—and I mean this pejoratively) thoughtforms. I am not, as I trust you know comrade, taking up some feathery anti-science position here, but rather throwing in with Sheldrakes & other harlequin heretics (Serres: “troubadours of knowledge”) in professing: science is not *scientific* enough—and education is not *educative* enough. (“The misfortune of thought always comes from thought itself.”)

[—Side note: The *deep* epistemic “structure” that underlies & enframes our univocal definition of Progress in science is, I believe, a “scientific” variant of the same “social” phenomenon that Benjamin tracked in the decaying, shopping mall-like arcades of 1930s Paris. It is, as I have already intimated, also a manifestation of a similar “developmentalism” in educational theory & practice (which may, in fact, be the principle vector of its transmission into broader social-scientific fields.) This is why the ecological crisis is an educational crisis.]

As I have alluded, my diagnosis is more “pessimistic” than the common notion that modes of knowing naturally consolidate into reductive, self-serving systems. I suspect a parasite. A syncretic & fetishistic entity that appropriates whatever historically expedient set of cultural or religious or intellectual ideas are available to propagate its own exceptionalism. A colonial *dæmon*—plastic & nihilistic the whole way down—that is neither indigenous to nor does it maintain allegiances with specific cultures, nations, religious traditions, or either of the “Two Cultures” (i.e. the sciences & humanities). It is, in other words, a formal or grammatic entity that conceals itself “beneath” surface content. (—I will draw on French philosopher Michel Serres & American anarchist Fredy Perlman to track its presence [*Leviathan! Leviathan!*] in the wreckage of *home*.)

This is, obviously, where I may begin to part ways with the more optimistic & pragmatic analysis that your father makes to “set science free.” Nothing he suggests, mind you—a critique of reductionism & scientific materialism, the democratization of funding, open dialogue with “other” ways of knowing—is ill-advised. Quite the opposite: an eminently *educated* set of suggestions (—there is, I suspect, much overlap between his dialogue-based proposal to “set sciences free” & the dialogical “free spaces” that Gadamer advocated for near the end of his life, cf. Jardine in *Pedagogy Left in Peace*). I am, I suppose, just more suspicious & fearful of the chimeric minotaur *ex machina*. ((—Borges: “Your fate is ironclad / like your judge. Do not expect the

charge / of the bull that is a man and whose strange / plural form fills the thicket of endless / interwoven stone with your own horror.”)) Getting beyond the conceptual limits of scientific materialism, while undoubtedly a tall order, seems feasible as an educator—but getting beyond the Human, the Ego, beyond what Deleuze & Guattari described as the “unnameable Thing” at the plastic animus of Capitalism—troubles me, comrade.

How, then, might we think beyond this “tight circle” that is coterminous with what we always already are?

It will come as no surprise to you that I gravitate towards “hermeneutic phenomenology” for insight into such a perplexing aporia. You will recall, my previous book attempted to reimagine aspects of Gadamerian hermeneutics as a “mycelial consciousness” that we might use to inoculate the substrate of environmental education against the same epistemic univocity that concerns us here. There is, as we have often discussed, a troubling lack of cultural-historical awareness in much of what passes for ecological discourse nowadays. But I suspect this alone is not enough. After all, the latter half of the 20th century was informed, on some level, by the cultural logic of “hermeneutics” (in the mode of a “linguistic turn,” with heavy influence from Capitalism, of course) under the banner of “postmodernism.” If the first two decades of the 21st century are any indication of the trajectory of this new social “aesthetic,” well—it does not bode very well (cf. fake news, widespread scientific illiteracy & institutional mistrust, “cultural industries” of mass deception, cf. Adorno & Horkheimer). I am reminded of an article Bruno Latour wrote in 2004 (“Has Critique Run Out of Steam?”), wherein he worries that his own contributions to illustrating the lack of certainty inherent in constructing scientific facts (which is a kind of “hermeneutic” critique) is partially responsible for climate change denial. In other words, how do we critique *deep* cultural beliefs without eroding the very grounds of knowledge?

I believe, with Benjamin, that we need to *experience* attunement with something “outside” or “beneath” our self-centeredness, if only momentarily, to begin to think beyond the “phantasmagoria” that enframes our thought like a giant glass dome. We need to dig & destroy & recompose the pieces—to venture “down” into the fierce, diametrical forests that shape our world(s)—to the shocking origin immanent within things. —To awaken, that is, to the “now of recognizability,” in which, “things put on their true—surrealist—face.”

((& you find yourself in a shopping mall, looking at plastic seashells designed to adorn the top of your toilet, but in a moment of confusion, you instinctively hold the object up to your ear like a child. You sense an ocean somewhere inside, but you cannot hear it above the clamour of a cocktail party assembled along the aperture in your honour. The inner lounge, you are informed by a Kafka-browed porter, is only accessible, however, if you possess the object. But as soon as you buy it, the party relocates. You get home & hold the faux shell to your ear: —nothing. So you throw it in the trash & return to the mall. Camus: “Rising, streetcar, four hours in the office or the factory, meal, streetcar, four hours of work, meal, sleep, and Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday and Saturday according to the same rhythm—this path is easily followed most of the time.” & all the while, forest fires intensify, & thunderstorms threaten on the horizon, & the streets are littered with dead bees & rats like a fucking plague no one names. “But one day the ‘why’ arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement. ‘Begins’—this is important. Weariness comes at the end of the acts of a mechanical life, but at the same time it inaugurates the impulse of consciousness... What follows is the gradual return into the chain or it is the definitive awakening.” & you find yourself at the beach as an old man with stomach ulcers, walking along a tideline spattered with styrofoam flotsam & oil-slick rainbows, until you happen on the remains of a black oystercatcher. Its feathers & bones are splayed in a prolonged death spasm & among the bottle caps & buttons that roughly trace out its stomach, you recognize a small plastic seashell. —Only then, in a heap of trash in the flesh, do you begin to discern a deeper ecological relation in your gut.))

We might call this the “critical” task of gestalt awareness. Which is something akin to Benjamin’s “cultural” critique—as in his rendering of Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novus* into the “angel of history,” or constructing *The Arcades Project* as a “dialectical image” to expose the deep historical form of commodities—extended, as it were, to all “more-than-human” things. To discern not only economic ur-forms in the detritus & decay, but ecological ur-forms. Experiences that displace the self in ontological otherness (Benjamin: “sentience”) thus become grounds for thinking ethics beyond the Human.) But there is a “lyric” mode (cf. Zwicky) to this work that also defines *being educated* as a kind of “ontological attention” honed by particularity: as in *this* blue-petalled gentian. Which is also *real* work. Which, as per Snyder, makes “the world as real as it is, and [finds] ourselves as real as we are within it.” Which is not very postmodern (thank blue baby Jesus), which is why we still require hermeneutics, but in the mode of an “ontological turn” towards ecology. Ecohermeneutics Michael Taussig: “The radical displacement of self in sentience—taking one outside of oneself—accounts for one of the most curious features of Benjamin’s entire philosophy of history, *the flash* wherein “the past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at an instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again.”

Enough beating around the “black & russet” bush. What I am trying to say, as you will have gathered, is that there is a similarity—metaphorical, but *real*—between the “delicate empiricism” (cf. Goethe) of attending to gentian petals that allowed you to access to the mycelial underworld, & the critical flânerie of Benjamin that allowed him “lightning-scored” flashes of insight into the formative labyrinth ramifying beneath modernity.

The Arcades Project: “[C1a,2]. But another system of galleries runs underground through Paris: the Métro, where at dusk glowing red lights point the way into the underworld of names. Combat, Elysée, Georges V, Etienne Marcel, Solférino, Invalides, Vaugirard—they have all thrown off the humiliating fetters of street or square, and here in the lightning-scored, whistle-resounding darkness are transformed into misshapen sewer gods, catacomb fairies. This labyrinth harbors in its interior not one but a dozen blind raging bulls, into whose jaws not one Theban virgin once a year but thousands of anemic young dressmakers and drowsy clerks every morning must hurl themselves. Here, underground, nothing more of the collision, the intersection, of names—that which above ground forms the linguistic network of the city. Here each name dwells alone...”

This is, I believe, what education is for (in a world of ecological crisis.) The cultivation of an “ecosophic disposition” that recognizes the ontological haecceity of each thing (*this & this & this*), “beneath” which, the ecology of all else resonates. This is, you will agree, the antithesis of a logico-linguistic essentialism that renders the world in its image: an objective, self-identical (A=A), & fungible stockpile of “natural resources.” —But the student must learn how to “hunt” for this underground resonance in both the text & the forest.

[m2a,1]. “Student and hunter. The text is a forest in which the reader is hunter. Rustling in the underbrush—the idea, skittish prey, the citation—another piece “in the bag.” (Not every reader encounters the idea.)”

I admit, comrade, my comparison traverses between the Two Cultures with a meandering & metaphoric sense of *confusion* (in the original sense of “mingling together”). & while present company is, obviously, excluded—I recognize that this “roundabout way” (*methode ist umweg*) will likely render any insights derived thereof operationally invalid. Which is, of course, one of the structural defense mechanisms of an “epistemology of control.” But Benjamin does set something of a precedent for such “transpositions:”

[N2a,4]. “In studying Simmel’s presentation of Goethe’s concept of truth, I came to see very clearly that my concept of origin in the *Trauerspiel* book is a rigorous and decisive transposition of this basic Goethean concept from the domain of nature to that of history. Origin—it is, in effect, the concept of *Ur*-phenomenon

extracted from the pagan context of nature and brought into the Jewish contexts of history. Now, in my work on the arcades I am equally concerned with fathoming an origin. To be specific, I pursue the origin of the forms and mutations of the Paris arcades from their beginning to their decline, and I locate this origin in the economic facts. Seen from the standpoint of causality, however (and that means considered as causes), these facts would not be primal phenomena; they become such only insofar as in their own individual development—“unfolding” might be a better term—they give rise to the whole series of the arcade’s concrete historical forms, just as the leaf unfolds from itself all the riches of the empirical world of plants.”

This *confusion* also spirits us to the pedagogical crux of the *real* work: —that is, the cultivation of “focused analogical thinking” (Zwicky), or what Benjamin described as a kind of gestalt-like “heightened graphicness” <*Anschaulichkeit*> (also translates to “clarity”) to discern (& thus critique) “internal structural relations.”

As Zwicky has written (in “lyric form,” with her writing on the left-hand side & an ensemble of other voices on the right—which is, incidentally, the form I mimicked, in a bastardized, collage-inspired way, for *Notes*):

§ 116 The real discovery is not the one that will let us stop doing philosophy when we want to. Philosophy is thinking in love with clarity; and such thinking, in itself, is not a source of problems. What will not let us rest is the thought that what is clear must also be single; we are addicted to the elimination of ambiguity. If a thing is *truly* the path down, we think, it cannot also truly be the path up; at least one of these, we say, must be merely an appearance.

But this is not to think clearly. It is to fail to attend to what experience shows. It is to stop short of wisdom, which recognizes clarities that non-metaphorical language cannot render. Different wholes occupy the same space.

The real discovery is the one that will let philosophy resume thinking metaphorically when it needs to.

& on the facing right-hand page:

§ 116 *Zhuang Zi*

Therefore understanding that rests in what it does not understand is finest.

But this resting in “alterity” (cf. Taussig) along some paradox-whorled, metaphor-laced path that leads towards “heavenly” ascent (Benjamin: “messianic time”) by digging deeper into our “profane” & chthonic entanglement—is, it seems, a fleeting discovery under significant tension. An experience closer to the *confusion* of having just awakened—difficult to render into “non-metaphorical” language, time-warped, sense of self splayed between nocturnal dissolution & the routine uniformity of the workplace—than the

additive synthesis of clear & precise propositions that tends to define conventional “educated thinking.” This irreducible & ineffable tension, always under threat of being reincorporated into the smooth continuity of self-serving dominance—is why Benjamin described such imaginative insight as “dialectics at a standstill.”

From *Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century, Exposé of 1935*: “It is the unique provision of Baudelaire’s poetry that the image of woman and the image of death intermingle in a third: that of Paris. The Paris of his poems is a sunken city, and more submarine than subterranean. The chthonic elements of the city—its topographic formations, the old abandoned bed of the Seine—have evidently found in him a mold. Decisive for Baudelaire in the “death-fraught idyll” of the city, however, is a social, a modern substrate. The modern is a principal accent of his poetry. As spleen, it fractures the ideal... But precisely modernity is always citing primal history. Here, this occurs through the ambiguity peculiar to the social relations and products of this epoch. Ambiguity is the appearance of dialectic in images, the law of dialectics at a standstill. This standstill is utopia and the dialectical image, therefore, dream image. Such an image is afforded by the commodity per se: as fetish. Such an image is presented by the arcades, which are house no less than street.”

It is interesting, from the perspective of “lyric philosophy,” & your own, shall we say, “lyric empiricism,” that Benjamin too cultivates ontological attention by engaging with a kind of “place-based poetics” (Baudelaire’s work on Paris in *Les Fleurs du Mal*). He describes this ability to “see-as” (cf. Wittgenstein), to let “philosophy resume thinking metaphorically when it needs to,” as a “redemption” of “allegorical practice;” a topic that he studied in the *Origin of the German Trauerspiel* (1925) & enacted formally in *One-Way Street* (1928). Benjamin & Zwicky, as we shall see, disparate as they are in terms of intellectual traditions & politics, share a pedagogical emphasis on “focused” allegorical or analogical thinking as a way to cultivate gestalt intelligence.

I want to avoid concluding with a vapid platitude like: “imagination is important for understanding” (or the kind of “Einstein-said-imagination-is-more-important-than-knowledge” nonsense one sees posted on the walls of elementary schools nowadays). What concerns us here is cultivating the ability to “think in images” when we need to—that is, “critically” (Benjamin) & “lyrically” (Zwicky). (These are not actually different experiences, but rather different “actualizations” of astonishment). As Zwicky maintains, the experience of understanding something is always a kind of gestalt shift: “the dawning of an aspect that is simultaneously a perception or reperception of the whole.” Gestalt shifts can be facilitated in (at least) two ways: i.) “the judicious selection and arrangement of aspects or elements” (Benjamin: “constellation”), or ii.) “by setting up objects of comparison” (i.e. metaphor & allegory). “Hence the importance of a text with multiple voices.”

This brings us to the “motley *internationale*” of “lyric thinkers” I have coordinated for *Notes*, who tend to differ significantly with respect to era, intellectual tradition, discipline, & political philosophy but who also share a set of interrelated themes & commitments that begin to hint, perhaps, at an ecosophic mode of *being educated*. One of these shared characteristics is formal experimentation with the composition of their writing—which Joan Retallack calls “poetical wagers”—to attune, as it were, “thinking” with “being” (or: “ontology,” or: “ecology”). This was precisely the rationale for the “roundabout way” of David Jardine’s aforementioned book, which was, like *The Arcades Project*, & like Zwicky’s “lyric compositions,” co-constructed by way of judiciously arranging quotations so as to produce an experience of a multi-voiced, polyphonic ensemble. This experience of “underground” integrity & resonance is, for Jardine, as it is for Zwicky, ecological in form.

From the Introduction to *Speaking with a Boneless Tongue*: “Ecology tells us that there is no center or foundation to this web of living interconnections, just small, lateral, interlacing relations of this to this to this, splayed in moving patterns of kinship and kind (wonderful terms for pedagogy to consider). If this is taken up as a challenge to the nature of writing, the question becomes one of how to write in such a way that the

writing gives up the notion of having a center or a foundation. In an earlier version of this book, I wrote in typical academic... form, but I found that this form of writing was actually writing against what the book was about. This form of writing presupposed the very thing that the book then went on to critique as ecologically and pedagogically dangerous: univocity, closure, representationalism, essentialism, foundationalism.”

For what it is worth, I too have attempted to take up this challenge: following & mimicking (cf. mimesis) & remixing Benjamin & Zwicky & Jardine & Serres & a riffraff crew of others. After all, ecohermeneutics, like the world itself, (—& like geometry for the ancients), ought to be formally (—morally) instructive. This is, I believe, the only “educational implication” that matters. Simone Weil: “The authentic and pure values—truth, beauty and goodness—in the activity of a human being are the result of one and the same act, a certain application of the full attention to the object. Teaching should have no aim but to prepare, by training the attention, for the possibility of such an act.” But, lest these “progressive” educational scholars lose their shit at the thought of “cultivating a love of wisdom” as a “Big Idea,” allow me to conclude with a few pragmatic ramifications for education in light of these *real* problems, an open-ended definition or two, & some field guide advice for navigating this text, for anyone who still has the grit to venture into *les mystères de la forêt*.

Despite decades of well-intentioned environmental education initiatives, we cannot simply input new “ecological” content—be it symbiogenesis or the First People’s Principles of Learning—into a formal ideal derived from an archaic will to mastery [*Leviathan! Leviathan!*] & designed to validate only those modes of knowing that conform to its own logical operations, & expect radical transformation. To pluralize a univocal sense of Science, to circle back, into “the sciences,” we would also need to pluralize (or “provincialize,” to stop thinking of human language as the template for all forms of life & meaning, cf. Eduardo Kohn) the notion of *being educated*. Such an ontological turn in education is less like the vapid “multiple intelligence” discourse we are presently forced to endure, & more like the shocking “lichenization” of thought that you describe in your book. “Lichens are places where an organism unravels into an ecosystem and where an ecosystem congeals into an organism. They flicker between ‘wholes’ and ‘collections of parts.’ Shuttling between the two perspectives is a confusing experience... Lichens are stabilized networks of relationships; they never stop lichenizing; they are verbs and nouns.” (How about this for a Big Idea: “there have never been individuals,” as you reiterate from a seminal work on multispecies embodiment, “we are all lichens.”)

Being educated as an interminable experience of *confusion*, as in “mingling together,” as in “lichenizing.” As in the innervation of the perceptual disposition required to flicker (or “flash”), for a moment, between irreducible wholes & collections of “resonant particulars” that resist generalization. As in getting low to the ground, caked in red mud, to attend to the iridescent blue petals of *this* gentian &—if conditions are right—“find [a] way underground.” (& if this leads one to clinical LSD trials to “think more broadly about the lives of the blue flowers and their fungal relationships,” so be it. The imagination is not limited by predetermined cognitive modalities or methodologies.) I call this disposition “ecosophic” or “ecohermeneutic,” but in truth, I could care less what we call it. As Zwicky writes in *Lyric Philosophy*: “What we call it doesn’t matter. What it *means* is that if you want to communicate, in language, your love for, say, a particular range of hills in west central Saskatchewan, you will need a form of words that, tonally, connotatively, structurally, does not signal an even deeper allegiance to the agendas of capitalist exploitation.” I am trying to communicate my love for *home*—the estuary, the Puntledge river, Nymph Falls, the glacier that is also a whale—I am trying to suggest our ideal of *being educated* ought to formally resonate with the true—surrealist—physiognomy of *what-is*.

Nothing denigrates the spontaneous experience of something like prescribed instructions on how said thing *ought* to be experienced. (There is a lesson here about how we teach poetry in school). That being said, I will provide a few field guide-like offerings to help orient to the text. But be advised comrade: difficult work still lies ahead (the myth of Sisyphus looms.) “Not every reader encounters the idea” & not every mycologist can expect to immediately recognize the name or the mycelial architecture that underlies the whole of the forest.

Note: The format of the text is, as I have claimed, & as Zwicky writes in the foreword to *Lyric Philosophy*, “a response to some of its central ideas.” As her work is largely a response to Wittgenstein & the limits of philosophical analysis, it tends to mimic the aphoristic style of a tractatus. While lyric philosophy has been called a kind of “collage philosophy,” & while Zwicky herself describes the right-hand side of her text as a “scrapbook,” I have embraced the collage aesthetic in a more formal way in *Notes*, in response to the “montage-inspired” work of Benjamin. In this sense, the work is something of a remix of lyric philosophy in the “splenetic” style (recall the role of “spleen” in Baudelaire) of Benjamin, Dostoevsky, & what I call the “pessimistic-but-mystic” existentialists. Zwicky also suggests that the right-hand side might be read as “the vocal score of a conceptual opera.” The collage-inspired right-hand of this book might, correspondingly, be read as “the philosophical companion for a more-than-human concept album of underground hip-hop.”

Note: I have, in addition to mimicking form, deployed design features & textual flourishes that I collected from the theorists & writers that co-compose the work (tho I sometimes use them differently than the author originally intended). There is, undoubtedly, a profound insight here with respect to the creativity inherent in hermeneutic exegesis, the magic of mimetic reciprocity, & the metaphoric relation between the “address” of odd mushrooms & odd textual charms, but I have already said too much. I stole the ((double brackets)) from Wittgenstein; the “critical interlocuter” who appears at the top of some pages, the long—em dashes, & the font (Laurentian) from Zwicky; & the thematic “convolutes”—i.e. Benjamin —from *The Arcades Project*.

Note: I have removed in-text citations as much as possible for aesthetic & hermeneutic reasons. As Benjamin claims: This work has to develop to the highest degree the art of citing without quotation marks. Its theory is intimately related to that of montage. There is, however, both a “works cited” & “endnotes” for each entry which track the quotations & some of the allusions, ramifications, & educational implications of the entry. I was deeply appreciative of how many pages in *Entangled Life* were devoted to the notes, & you will recall our numerous discussions about the necessity & intellectual maturity of using lengthy quotations verbatim.

On that note, I should like to end with one of my favourite passages from your book that, I think, fairly encapsulates the educational task that mycologists & ecohermeneuts are faced with in a world that has been systematically desacralized: “In scientific circles imagination usually goes by the name of speculation and is treated with some suspicion; in publications it is usually served up with a mandatory health warning. Part of writing up research is scrubbing it clean of the flights of fancy, idle play, and the thousand trials and errors that give rise to even the smallest of findings. Not everyone who reads a study wants to push their way through the fuss. Besides, scientists have to appear credible. Sneak backstage and one might not find people at their most presentable. Even backstage, in the most nocturnal musings I shared with colleagues, it was unusual to get into the details of how we had imagined—accidentally or deliberately—the organisms we studied, whether fish, bromeliad, fungus, or bacterium. There was something embarrassing about admitting that the tangle of our unfounded conjectures, fantasies, and metaphors might have helped shape our research. Regardless, imagination forms part of the everyday business of inquiring. Science is not an exercise in cold-blooded rationality. Scientists are—and have always been—emotional, creative, intuitive, whole human beings, asking questions about a world that was never made to be catalogued and systematized.”

There are, it seems, still forests down there. Here is to the courage required to open oneself to the entangled & resonant pandæmonium “beneath” us. Here is to revitalizing a living imagination attuned with the living world. —Benjamin: “Living substance conquers the frenzy of destruction only in the ecstasy of co-creation.”

w/ love, your friend & comrade
michael dé danann datura
kw’umalha, K’ómoks Territory
November, 2022

P.S. I should like to discuss the socio-political ramifications of the Society for the Protection of Underground Networks next time we meet. What does other-than-human “solidarity” entail? Are mycelial networks part of the “working class”? Do you frame your project as part of a new “natural contract” to reaffirm allegiances with The Land? Would you consider yourself an eäarthling? —Perhaps over some fermented field samples?

One knew of places in ancient Greece where the way led down into the underworld.
Our waking existence likewise is a land which, at certain hidden points, leads down
into the underworld—a land full of inconspicuous places from which dreams arise.
All day long, suspecting nothing, we pass them by, but no sooner has sleep come
than we are eagerly groping our way back to lose ourselves in the dark corridors.

-- Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

Underground Works

In a dream, I saw barren terrain. It was the marketplace at Weimar.
Excavations were in progress. I, too, scraped about in the sand.
Then the tip of a church steeple came to light.

-- Walter Benjamin, *One-Way-Street*

The metamorphosis of anamnesis has begun. How would I know whether
my flesh, transformed into this woody trunk, is climbing with its foliage
toward the light or descending into the earth by following its roots?

-- Michel Serres, *Biogea*

Must not sleep. Must warn others.
Trust blocks creep where the dust storm hovers.
I milk my habitat for almost everything I want.
Sometimes I take it all and still can't feel this pitfall in my gut
and I'm like: Must not sleep. Must warn others.

-- Aesop Rock, Commencement
at the Obedience Academy

Hang-
heavy heart, how
crippled you venture. How
hobbled you roam. Into the wake-up and
die of it—hang-
heavy dawdler, dis-
consolate clinger: burrow & sing.

-- Dennis Lee, *Un*

Convolute I

An act of rebellion seems to [the rebel] like a demand for clarity and unity.
The most elementary rebellion, paradoxically, expresses an aspiration to order.
This description can be applied, word for word, to the metaphysical rebel.
He attacks a shattered world to make it whole.

-- Albert Camus, *The Fastidious Assassins*

§ 1

I love the violin. I never learned to play—I have never even held a violin. This is one of a great number of things I regret. I was not raised in a home with violins, or the striking counterpoise of Vermeerian women, or the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* on the bookshelf. My parents were working-class prairie folk who played hockey & went camping & listened religiously to the CBC. They moved out west to the Comox Valley (*-kw'umalha* to the K'ómoks) in the late seventies &, in turn, I was raised in a milieu of sci-fi & comic books, punk rock & underground hip-hop, grassroots & the salt of the earth. Just another little zek in the land of plenty, with a head for books & good grades: —“Maybe he will practice medicine? Or veterinary sciences like his grandfather?” —This is not just biographic preamble: it will shape the tone & structural logic of this work.

Being of Gaelic descent & hailing from a long line of literary educators, we did have poetry. My grandmother used to sit at the kitchen table & recite verse by heart until she was ninety-four—when she took a bad fall, & was buried behind a small white church originally built as an “Indian Mission Chapel.” She always wanted me to read her favourite poem—Ode to a Nightingale—in her eulogy. (Which I did—tho I suspect, insulated as we were within church walls & rites, that few recognized the negative ecstasy of attending to birdsong that the poem enacts. Fled is that music.) I have, in other words, practiced poetry for as long as I can remember &, in this sense, *lyric awareness* always seemed like a natural way to grasp the many-sided heart of things. I had to learn in school that it is specious, ornamental, not the kind of thing working-class zeks go to university for.

—I was born in St. Joseph’s Hospital, just up the hill from the ancestral village of the K’ómoks First Nation. Yet somehow, I managed to live for twenty years beneath the Comox Glacier without ever being taught or recognizing that it is also the great white whale Queneesh. For years, I rode my bike past living longhouses adorned with I-Hos, a double-headed serpent, & masked sxwayxwey dancers; past winged fishing weirs in the estuary & ancient middens, without recognizing the many-sided heart of *home*. This is another thing I regret.

The K’ómoks are tied to Queneesh. One of their histories (—in the public commons) tells of an old man, Quoi Qwa Lak, who had a dream one night about an imminent flood that threatened the village. When he woke & warned the people, they began to work together: preparing food, weaving cedar ropes, & fastening canoes high on the glacier for anchorage. As foreseen, the rain began to fall & fall & as the deluge reached high water, only the snow-covered plateau protruded. Just as all seemed lost, the glacier began to tremble—taking the form of a supernatural whale & guiding the people through the catastrophe. Queneesh remains the guardian of the K’ómoks to this day: the whole village seems to lean towards that sacred, dying glacier.

Queneesh is not a myth in the colonial sense: a specious, ornamental superstition employed by those without God or Large Hadron Colliders—tho many undoubtedly read it as such. This is because a true reading would require (among other things): communal fire, dreaming, remembering, some dancing maybe? It would, in other words, require a different kind of listening. —An ear for birdsong & death. Or, to put it philosophically, it would require a kind of *lyric awareness* (Zwicky), or *ecohermeneutics* (Jardine), or *profane illumination* (Benjamin), or *the sensitivity of third-instruction* (Serres). Especially for dyslodged surface dwellers whose loyalties lean Elsewhere: —To the West, the East, Heaven, the Crystal Palace, the Beautiful & Lofty, to Power, Freedom, Identity, The Future. These are, so it goes, what give life meaning—not glaciers & primitive lore.

I am also tied to that trembling mountain-whale. (As are you, comrade. —*We were always already lichen.*) My grandmother’s kitchen window faced its dorsal-ridged plateau, a little like the K’ómoks village, & bearing witness to its icy flesh recede year after year has shaped the tone & structural logic of my work. I have taken to calling the glacier my first teacher. —I love *kw'umalha*. I call it *home*, but I am not *of* its heart-shaped weirs & primal middens. I am not tied to Queneesh with cedar braids of myth. I am not Indigenous: & I never will be.

§ 1

Robert Bringhurst, *Myth is a Theorem About the Nature of Reality*

Many intellectual heroes in the European tradition seem to find the great outdoors a chilling prospect—and its literary analogue, the mythworld, equally chilling. As if a world in which humans have no leverage, and might not even be present at all, could not be interesting to humans. We expect something better than this—a bigger perspective—from geologists, biologists, chemists, and astronomers, but literary scholars and philosophers are allowed to get away with it. If you refuse to take an interest in the world that is larger than the human sphere, all you can do with myth is trivialize it. The result is a culture like ours, which doesn't know what myths are for and tries to turn them into children's books.

Tim Lilburn, *Going Home*

Late one hot afternoon, as I was leaving the [—Regina] library, a thunderstorm was threatening in the southeast, gigantic black clouds bulking over the Saskatchewan Power building. People were filing out of offices, getting into cars or catching buses; some Aboriginal men were gathered in the park. I suddenly stopped on the steps, struck—immobilized—by the sense, the sure, sharp realization, that everything around me—the looming power building, Victoria Park and its cenotaph, the beautiful First Baptist Church—were not *here* but seemed slightly dislodged and hovering, leaning elsewhere, their loyalties elsewhere, caught in a momentum of nostalgia for, obeisance to, distant centres of settler power, Winnipeg, minimally, but more truly Toronto and the east, New York, London, the Europe to which the older buildings earnestly paid homage. The Aboriginal men, still moving and talking in the park, certainly were autochthonic; they rose effortlessly from the ground. But I did not, nor did the culture I came from, and I felt keenly this deprival.

George Grant, *In Defense of North America*

The roots of some communities in... North America go back far in continuous love for their place, but none of us can be called autochthonous, because in all there is some consciousness of making the land our own.

That conquering relation to place has left its mark within us. When we go into the Rockies we may have the sense that gods are there. But if so, they cannot manifest themselves to us... They are gods of another race, and we cannot know them because of what we are, and what we did. There can be nothing immemorial for us except the environment as object. Even our cities have been encampments on the road to economic mastery.

...Nietzsche has shown homelessness is the particular mark of modern nihilism. But we were homeless long before the mobility of our mobilised technology and the mass nihilism which has been its accompaniment. If the will to mastery is essential to the modern, our wills were burnished in that battle with the land.

John Keats, *Ode to a Nightingale*

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music: —Do I wake or sleep?

§ 2

Narration sickness is one thing. Capitalism, the banking model of *everything*, human resource management with Mr. Gestell, third period—yes, all of that. But myth sickness—the deep, formal madness of invalidating any participatory or imaginative mode of experience beyond the horizon of calculative reason because it is —*what?*—emotionally contaminated, unscientific, utterly primitive?—is lamentable. School enframes the next batch of zeks in a tight circle & the very edifice of our garrison mentality is reinforced with bad mythology: golden lions passant guardant, broken unicorns, Moloch whose smoke-stacks & antennae crown the cities! From sea to sea: toxic names spew like soft anthems from billboards & classrooms. Even the flora is wrong.

This is why, in a very material sense, Diane di Prima’s adage, “the only war that matters is the war against the imagination,” holds true. The *real* problem is that it has become easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. Bad mythology as totalized dream (“The Phantasmagoria”): —*Sous la plage, les pavés!* A storm is blowing from Paradise & the wreckage exacts every new angel. This storm is what we call progress.

Dumbing down: A twofold social engineering project whereby the traditional qualities of *being educated*—an interdisciplinary interest in liberal arts, walking out of the cave hand-in-hand with salacious old Socrates, some inkling of the role ideology plays in knowledge production—are dumbed (first sense) by the historical advent of a strange hybrid of technique & commodity culture. (Debord called this late phase: the *integrated spectacle*). & deeper yet, at the necrotized heart of Dominion, the dumbing (second sense) of more-than-human meaning such that the world is revealed as *nothing but* a standing reserve. This is akin to the essence of technology (*Das Gestell*) that Heidegger warned of—which informs spectacular devices, cyborg master fantasies, & green solutions for The Future—but is older than gadget-dumbed modernity. Much, much older.

School has become (—or was it always?) one of the primary vectors for inculcating this *framework* &, in this sense, it is always aimed at killing the Indian in the Child. Every child—not only the children of Indigenous peoples, who have borne weaponized edification since Contact, but every sensuous, paleolithic body sent off to kindergarten to learn their place as both a god (over other species) & a cog (in a network of resource flows). Schools perform many other practical, apolitical functions, of course, & one is not likely to find “Instilling the Great Divide” on many vision statements, but human exceptionalism is the essence that *sets upon* graduates. Any degree of “progressive” reform, conscientization, or indigenization is permissible, as long as Dominion retains its renewable halo: *Splendor sine occasu*. The quality of *being educated*, as it is framed nowadays—i.e. “life-long learnification”—is an utterly plastic disposition, except for this gaze: blank & pitiless as the sun. This holds for economic systems as well as educational—that is, the same conquering relation is wholly integrated.

Deleuze & Guattari described Capital as an “unnameable Thing,” an abomination that primitive societies exorcised, in part, with good mythology. If & when this “dark potentiality” did take hold, however, as Mark Fisher has written, it tended to arrive with “a massive desacralization of culture.” A collapse of belief at the deep, formal level of myth & metaphor that multiplies by way of amplifying the exceptionality of its host(s): “Capital is an abstract parasite, an insatiable vampire and zombie-maker; but the living flesh it converts into dead labour is ours, and the zombies it makes are us.” —Freddy Perlman, in turn, described the entity as a great cadaverous beast excreted by *certain* human communities (read: Civilization). He named it *Leviathan!* —tho it is much, much older than Hobbes. Perlman claimed that “His-story” began with a kind of parasitic break from primitive code, which led to the intergenerational rise of the *Iugal* (fr. Sumerian, “strong man”): first to be dyslodged, first to be crowned passant guardant, first to reassure the Elders but maintain loyalties Elsewhere. (His descendants include all brother-killing *hommes d'affaires*: Sisyphus, Romulus, Columbus.) What concerns us is not origin per se, but the inflexion of leviathanic form: a shape with lion body & the head of a man, a motley painting of everything there ever was, a strange hybrid of the ultra-modern & the archaic.

§ 2

Jan Zwicky, What is Lyric Philosophy?

22. The power of the technocratic worldview is not fundamentally illustrated by the extent of its achievements, but rather—as Heidegger thought—by the extent of its ability to disguise from itself that it is a perspective, a way of viewing the world.

Allen Ginsburg, Howl

What sphinx of cement and aluminum bashed open their skulls and ate up their brains and imagination?

Moloch whose mind is pure machinery! Moloch whose blood is running money! Moloch whose fingers are ten armies! Moloch whose breast is a cannibal dynamo! Moloch whose ear is a smoking tomb! Moloch whose eyes are a thousand blind windows! Moloch whose skyscrapers stand in the long streets like endless Jehovahs! Moloch whose factories dream and croak in the fog! Moloch whose smoke-stacks and antennae crown the cities!

Moloch whose love is endless oil and stone! Moloch whose soul is electricity and banks! Moloch whose poverty is the specter of genius! Moloch whose fate is a cloud of sexless hydrogen! Moloch whose name is the Mind!

Moloch who entered my soul early! Moloch in whom I am a consciousness without a body! Moloch who frightened me out of my natural ecstasy! Moloch whom I abandon! Wake up in Moloch!

Real holy laughter in the river! They saw it all! the wild eyes! the holy yells! They bade farewell! They jumped off the roof! to solitude! waving! carrying flowers! Down to the river! Into the street!

Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*

The primitive machine is not ignorant of exchange, commerce, and industry; it exorcizes them, localizes them, cordons them off, encases them, and maintains the merchant and the blacksmith in a subordinate position, so that the flows of exchange and the flows of production do not manage to break the codes in favour of their abstract or fictional quantities... If capitalism is the universal truth, it is so in the sense that makes capitalism *the negative* of all social formations. It is the thing, the unnameable... Primitive societies are not outside history; rather, it is capitalism that is at the end of history, it is capitalism that results from a long history of contingencies and accidents, and that brings on this end. It cannot be said that the previous formations did not foresee this Thing that only came from without by rising from within, and that at all costs had to be prevented from rising.

Fredy Perlman, *Against His-story, Against Leviathan!*

It is my aim to speak of the beast's body. For it does have a body, a monstrous body, a body that has become more powerful than the Biosphere. It may be a body without any life of its own. It may be a dead thing, a huge cadaver. It may move its slow thighs only when living beings inhabit it. Nevertheless, its body is what does the wrecking. If the Biosphere is an excrescence on the planet's surface, the beast that is wreaking her is also an excrescence. The Earth-wrecker is a rust or halo on the surface of a human community. It is not excreted by every community, by Mankind. Toynbee himself puts the blame on a tiny minority, on very few communities. Perhaps the cadaverous beast was excreted by only one community among the myriads.

§ 3

This is a lament for eäarthlings. Eäarthlings are those harlequin creatures who recognize that we have always been composite beings—composed of many things, with many-sided hearts—and who acknowledge this planet as the only home we will ever be. ((Bringhurst: “There are no new worlds. Paradise will not be our asylum, & our hell will not be anywhere other than here.”)) Eäarthlings, like great artists, have no country. They desire only to be *autochthonous* with styles & works that resonate accordingly. Because of this chthonic lean, they tend to dwell in the ruderal remains of a more-than-human world, a milieu of excluded-thirds, underground.

Surface-dwellers maintain loyalties Elsewhere. They abhor the innumerable multiplicities of otherness, the subterranean & queer, the alchemic buzz of things beyond their little wantings & doings. On any given Sunday one can observe them cleansing their pristine cul-de-sacs & *Weltanschauung*. School & long-term exposure to other soft pollutants have dumbed their senses & now they are consigned to a kind of mass bad faith by way of consensus amnesia & moves to innocence. Those who lean towards settler monuments to Elsewhere are the most basic of these aspect-blind reserves. They recognize neither gods nor glaciers. They operate instead to enframe each other in an echo-chamber of rites, fields, signs, & codes until they recognize only that which fits in the *framework*. All else is rendered unthinkable: too “deep” for these fucking tourists.

Eäarthlings call a plague a plague, then get back to work. Earth—like the Holocene, the Grey Ghost caribou, & the foundational category Human—is already walking dead. Wrap up the sustainability conferences early & send all the self-aggrandizing blowhards home on jet planes with green bags of swag. We are way beyond Suzuki Indulgences now: no more ten things you can do, no more initiatives that need your donation, no more green technologies *ex machina*. Go celebrate the indefatigable genius of the Anthropos on the Internet. Apropos of the wet snow & 400 parts per million, there is only a slightly more arid, yet familiar, Nothingness. Absurdity, labour, hard choices—like always. ((Sisyphus: “Now help me with this beautiful rock, comrade.”))

Camus: “Our townsfolk were not more to blame than others; they forgot to be modest, that was all, and thought that everything still was possible for them; which presupposed that pestilences were impossible. They went on doing business, arranged for journeys, and formed views. How should they have given a thought to anything like plague, which rules out any future, cancels journeys, silences the exchange of views. They fancied themselves free, and no one will ever be free so long as there are pestilences.” Drudgery

Most eäarthlings are just everyday townsfolk trying to eke out a living on Planet Oran. At least, the human constituents, if such a thing can still be parsed. & most every plaid-shirted zek has got some dreams & views & bills to pay. They say life on Eäarth is going to get more threadbare, more arid & interminably mingled—& being poor is such a drag. As such, the class struggle materialisms of days past, while, admittedly, in need of an ontological attunement, ought not be ditched in the rush to Ontology. Eäarthlings are not the only folk who praise blood & soil. The *real* problem is: *the very notion of soil is changing*. But how does one walk into a classroom or pull up a stool at the local watering hole, with a fistful of dirt, & say: —“Don’t think, but look!”

—*What is education for?* (in an age of carbon & plague: a deluge of hard & soft.) Forget skipping to the end for a list of curricular connexions: no more ten things you can do. There is nothing new here, no “argument” at all, just some snippets & images & detritus I arranged like the things that one finds on a walk. Like the top of my refrigerator: —a snail shell, a bowl of rocks, two rusty bullet casings, an owl feather, a vintage bottle of gin that I found, moss-infused, under a log. Besides, there is no “end.” There will be no resolution. The work will remain tense as violin strings. Besides, I suspect that a “more-than-humanist education” is not all that different from a “humanist education” in practice: —singing, listening, reading, making, pointing & hoping.

What is certain is that we can no longer tell ourselves the same old stories.

§ 3

Michel Serres, *Malfeasance*

We no longer inhabit the space of our fathers.

Hakim Bey, For and Against Interpretation

Tourism is perfect Capitalism: the consumption of the image of the world as it really is—the chief goods on sale include geography (the inscription of significance in the landscape) and historiography (the inscription of meaning in the culturescape)... The possible moment of realization is packaged, pre-interpreted by official experts, transformed into a series of views, distanced from the direct senses; space is overwhelmed by time, stratified, separated, parcelled on a grid of permissible expectation; becoming is rendered into the rigid digitalizations of recording devices, banished from memory, and embalmed into a counterfeit of pure being. So-called primitives would say that soul is being stolen here, that meaning itself has entered a field of decay, a sort of beam emanating from an evil eye or withered self eaten by envy of all significance. The problem lies not in the content of the tourist's experience—one can imagine tours based on ideas we might consider quite correct or even beautiful—the problem is inherent in the container, in the very fact of interpretation, in the structure of a “dialogue” that excludes all response, resonance, or resistance. Certain kinds of travel—nomadism, pilgrimage—return meaning to the landscape. Other kinds—war, tourism—can only take it away. Reciprocity reaches a vanishing point in such patterns of depredation... The tourist, seduced by the utopian trace in its most poignant aspect—the image of difference—becomes a molecule of pollution, bears the virus of sameness, and the burden of disappointment, into a world that once lived for itself.

* Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth*

The first challenge is to give it a name... “Earth”? This will be read as a reference to the planet as seen from space, the famous “Blue Planet.” “Nature”? This would be much too vast. “Gaia”? This would be appropriate, but it would take pages and pages to spell out the reasons. “Land”? This would be ambiguous. “World,” yes, of course, but it might be too easily mixed up with the old forms of globalization. No, we need a term that encompasses the stupefying originality (the stupefying longevity) of this agent. Let us call it, for now, the Terrestrial, with a capital T to emphasize that we are referring to a concept, and even specifying in advance where we are headed: the Terrestrial as a new *political actor*. The massive event that we need to sum up and absorb in fact concerns the power to act of this Terrestrial which is no longer the milieu or the background of human action. People generally talk about geopolitics as if the prefix “geo” merely designated the *framework* in which political action occurs. Yet what is changing is that, henceforth, “geo” designates an agent that participates fully in public life.

The geopolitical strategists who pride themselves on belonging to the “realist school” will have to modify somewhat the *reality* that their battle plans are going to have to face. Formerly, it was possible to say that humans were “on earth” or “in nature,” that they found themselves in “the modern period” and that they were “humans” more or less “responsible” for their actions. One could distinguish between “physical” geography and “human” geography as if it were a matter of two layers, one superimposed upon the other. But how can we say where we are if the place “on” or “in” which we are located begins to react to our actions, turns against us, encloses us, dominates us, demands something of us and carries us along in its path?

What is certain is that we can no longer tell ourselves the same old stories.

§ 4

Cut to scene from a cocktail party:

“So what do you study?”

“Well, I’m in education, but my work is, *uh*, ‘ecohermeneutic’ in the sense that it examines how, *uh*, ecological styles of thought, like... nature poetry, *er*, what have you, shapes our understanding of, *uh*, the world &... things.”

“Oh.”

...

End scene.

Timothy Morton recently wrote a book (*Being Ecological*) that is purportedly for everyday townsfolk who “do not read ecology books.” In the introduction, he promises not to preach at readers with “horseshoe-in-a-boxing-glove propaganda” or even “ecological facts.” I make no such promises—this book is for eäarthlings: *Go Vegan or Die!!!* ((Benjamin: “The art of the critic in a nutshell: to coin slogans without betraying ideas.”))—but I admire his attempt to move ecological styles of thinking beyond what he has christened “information dump mode.” As if one more report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change is going to hit the hundredth monkey upside the head & send a wave of Higher Consciousness rippling through the species. The New York Stock Exchange falls silent, papers fall to the floor, faces darken: “If only we had access to such clear, empirically verifiable, & conclusive data sooner!” It ought to be painfully obvious that the *real* problem is not reliable data sets. If we mark the first Earth Day (1970) as the beginning of mainstream awareness, we must reckon with the fact that we are half a century deep in dump mode with little to show in terms of carbon levels, extinction rates, legislation, or public discourse. & yet, journalists, educators, & eco-friendly townsfolk cannot kick their faith in this style. Mostly because we have been taught *not* to see “facts” in terms of style, context, or origin—& therein lies the problem. The misfortune of thought always comes from thought itself. Particularly when the problem—i.e. *knowledge*, is universally touted as the solution—i.e. *more knowledge*.

Peter Cole (Stl’atl’imx): this disease which is its own vector this malady which is its own cause

Deep ecologists once dreamed, with a certain logic, that if flight attendants & accountants & plaid-shirted zeks were to be *educated* to be scientifically literate in basic ecological concepts—natural selection, carrying capacity, the laws of thermodynamics, the carbon cycle—then The People would naturally make rational & ethical choices about The Environment. Half a century deep: Can anyone still seriously dream such a dream? Does anyone believe adding a few modules on sustainability & peak oil is going to ripple through the species?

Morton thus turns his attention to “deeper” *ways of knowing* (i.e. epistemologies) manifest in how we make sense of ecology & our place within it. He is particularly concerned, with good reason, about styles informed by *factoids*: fact-like fragments, often partially true—e.g. “there is a gene for [some trait]”—hewn off more complex, contextual knowledge systems *ad hoc*. Simplification by arms. When one studies genetics in depth, to play out the example, one comes to understand that phenotypes emerge by way of complex, reciprocal exchanges with the environment. There are no “genes for” anything in the way the factoid tends to be used. —Another example: a few years back, students started saying things like: “Who cares? We only have twelve years left to live.” (Based on a factoid rendering of the latest IPCC report.) But are oversimplified factoids, vexing tho they may be, the *real* problem? Is our understanding of ecology simply a matter of correcting misconceptions with more effective learning techniques? Or is the problem, as Morton suggests, “deeper?”

Facts, gods, glaciers—the *real* problem is that *nothing* is intelligible apart from the narcissistic clamour of the cocktail party raging in the Crystal Palace of our minds. The form of life—the very *framework* of our thought.

§ 4

Timothy Morton, *Being Ecological*

Despite what factoids would have us believe, no fact just plops out of the sky. There is a whole environment in which the fact can appear—otherwise you can't see it at all. Consider something you might not regularly say if you grew up in the West: *My ancestral spirits are unhappy that I'm writing this book*. In what world does this statement make sense? What do you need to know, what do you need to expect? What counts as right and wrong in this world? We need all kinds of assumptions about what reality is, about what counts as real, what counts as existing, what counts as correct and incorrect. Thinking about these kinds of assumptions can take different forms, in philosophy one is called *ontology*, another is called *epistemology*. Ontology is the study of how things exist. Epistemology is the study of how we know things.

So your scientific view of things, up close with a hammer and a camera, doesn't mean you're "seeing" nature; you are still interpreting it with human tools and a human's touch. Thinking in an ecological way means letting go of this idea of nature—it sounds incredible, but that's only because we're so habituated to certain ways of accessing and executing and otherwise "interpreting" things such as lakes, trees, cows, snow, sunshine and wheat.

The Romantic poets figured out that when you get "scientific," as I was just describing, when you become open to all kinds of data, not just clichéd stuff, you must also get "experiential." You end up writing poems about the *experience* of encountering the rock, and how strange it actually is. You might go a bit further and write a poem about writing a poem about the experience of encountering the rock. This isn't actually unscientific at all. This is how living data works. You realize that you are included in the interpretation, so your art becomes "reflexive"—it starts to talk about itself... You can't get to this reflexive mode if you start with a mentality that thinks ecological information is about dumping factoids on people.

Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor*

94. To be wise is to be able to grasp another form of life without abandoning one's own; to be able to translate experience into and out of two original tongues. To resist, then, the translation that is a form of reduction. (As in: "They believe shaking the thunder-stick will bring rain!"—as though they believe everything we believe, plus this odd thought).

Michel Serres, Northwest Passage

One usually simplifies by means of a forced choice: continued or discontinued, analysis or synthesis, God or Devil, yes or no, with me or against me, from two things only one. Yet complexity signals itself in reality, while philosophical dualism calls for a final battle in which new thought dies and the object disappears. The misfortune comes from a simplification by arms. It is this social artifact that one must destroy if one wants to think. The other prejudices are weightless compared to this monstrous animal, stupidity. Yes, struggle is our first habit; it annihilates our intellectual awakening. Yes, thought has no other obstacle but hatred.

The misfortune of thought always comes from thought itself.

§ 5



michael dé danann, *After-History of the Crystal Palace* (2022)
Paper collage on cardstock, 50.5cm x 40.5cm

§ 5

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*

I believe Bacon got bogged down in his philosophical work, and this is a danger that threatens me too. He had a vivid image of a huge building which, however, faded when he really wanted to get down to details. It was as though his contemporaries had begun to erect a great building, from the foundations up; and as though he, in his imagination, had seen something similar, a vision of such a building, an even more imposing vision perhaps than that of those doing the building work. For this he needed to have an *inkling* of the method of construction, but no talent whatever for building. But the bad thing about it was that he launched polemical attacks on the real builders and did not recognize his *own* limitations... But it is, on the other hand, enormously difficult to discern these limitations, i.e. to depict them clearly. Or, as one might say, to invent a style of painting capable of depicting what is, in this way, fuzzy. For I want to keep telling myself: "Make sure you really do paint only what you see!"

Fredy Perlman, *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!*

From the day when battery-run voices began broadcasting old speeches to battery-run listeners, the beast has been talking to itself. Having swallowed everyone and everything outside itself, the beast becomes its own sole frame of reference. It entertains itself, exploits itself and wars on itself. It has reached the end of its Progress, for there is nothing left for it to progress against except itself... Leviathan is turning into Narcissus, admiring its own synthetic image in its own synthetic pond, enraptured by its spectacle of itself.

Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*

The covered shopping arcades of the nineteenth century were Benjamin's central image because they were the precise material replica of the internal consciousness, or rather, the *un*conscious of the dreaming collective. All the errors of bourgeois consciousness could be found there (commodity fetishism, reification, the world as "inwardness"), as well as (in fashion, prostitution, gambling) all of its utopian dreams.

Neil Evernden, *The Natural Alien*

It is difficult to imagine the world as anything but a collection of objects, each amenable to study and control. A gorilla is, after all, *nothing but* the manifestation of a particular kind of DNA. And cattle are nothing but protein, and a mountain nothing but rocks and minerals. A tree is a cellulose support structure, a river is energy (going to waste unless dammed), and the human body is a collection of a few dollars worth of chemicals. We pride ourselves on our ability to get to the bottom of life's mysteries, that is, to reduce them to their basic components. The world is made up of parts, just like a car. And, knowing the nature of those parts and the way they are put together, man cannot only understand but control nature. The revelation of "the way the world is" is part of the hidden curriculum of the educational systems of the industrialized West. But it involves not so much the imparting of information as the insinuation of an article of faith. However, our transformation from beings with an interest in mysteries and animate nature to beings with an interest in a mechanical order did not come easily or quickly, and still does not. Children are prone to assume the world is, like themselves, alive and sensate. Only age and education can "correct" their view.

§ 6

Back as a starry-eyed Chomskyite in my early twenties, I remember thinking: “the *real* problem is media concentration.” Mass ignorance of the ecological crisis was, to my gadget-dumbed little millennial mind, a symptom of manufactured consent by a bourgeois cabal of elites, industrialists, & media moguls who shaped public discourse & obfuscated *The Truth*. My response to this strategically engineered veil of lies was typical of leftist movements of the day: speaking truth to power, underground hip-hop, DIY zines, culture jamming, marching in the streets with witty placards: *Anarcho-No-Logo-Go-Vegan-Zapatismo-A-Go-Go!*

By sophomore year, I dressed strictly in military fatigues, never left home without a representative of the Frankfurt School tucked under my arm, & scowled—most of the time. I even switched majors, in anarchic freefall past angels & career counsellors, from the Botanical Sciences to Canadian Studies with a focus on Communications to combat the censoring of environmental discourses by the corporate media. I remember thinking: if only We (—The People) could print *The Truth* on the front page of every newspaper. If only We had access to mass broadcasting or, better yet, the education system. Then we would be liberated from false consciousness & naturally pursue more sustainable ways of living. Then We would all “wake up” & walk hand-in-hand with old Chomsky out of uneducated ignorance into the clear, rational light of The Future.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of recent headlines from *The Guardian*:

- ✖ “We’ve never seen this:” massive Canadian glaciers shrinking rapidly: Glaciers in the Yukon territory are retreating even faster than expected in a warming climate, scientists warn
- ✖ Five countries hold 70% of world’s last wildernesses, map reveals: First map of Earth’s intact ecosystems shows just five nations are responsible for most of them
- ✖ Humanity has wiped out 60% of animal populations since 1970, report finds: The huge loss is a tragedy in itself but also threatens the survival of civilisation, say the world’s leading scientists
- ✖ We have 12 years to limit climate change catastrophe, warns UN: Urgent changes needed to cut risk of extreme heat, drought, floods and poverty, says IPCC

Nowadays, *The Truth*—at least, what I meant by *The Truth* in my twenties—is headline news across the planet & we are half a century deep in environmental education initiatives. So why are we not “waking up”? Why are educated adults in the “formal operational stage” of their cognitive development not drawing upon their capacity for logic, theoretic abstraction, & systematic modes of thinking to rationally assess the data & make scientifically informed decisions about ecosystem services? —*El sueño de la Razón produce monstruos*.

It is not that cadaverous corporate bodies & the manufacturing of consent are *not* problems—the importance of increasing awareness of the influence of mass communication is obvious. But there is something deeper at work here—some “old evil” of which corporate malfeasance is but a symptom. The *real* problem—the deep, formal problem—lies with a particular conception of thinking. A kind of Faustian attitude that conflates *being educated* with Dominion & narrows our relation with the real so decisively that even our spontaneous experiences begin to reflect only its self-referential horizons. Neither scientific facts conveyed in information dump mode, nor social critique conveyed in conscientization dump mode are compelling enough to move beyond the structural jurisprudence of such “clear thinking.” (—Because both derive their discursive power from its supposed sovereignty.) Old Razón presides over *The Facts & The Truth*. —Is there a way out of this tight circle? I am not sure. But one reason why dump modes fail is that they lack an “experience of meaning.” They lack *resonance*. —Remember: Folks used to say that evil spirits would flee the sound of bells ringing.

Zwickly: “But critique, too, is empty unless the space it clears becomes home to insight.”

§ 6

Edward S. Herman & Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*

The process of creating and entrenching highly selective, reshaped or completely fabricated memories of the past is what we call “indoctrination” or “propaganda” when conducted by official enemies, and “education,” “moral instruction” or “character building,” when we do it ourselves. It is a valuable mechanism of control, since it effectively blocks any understanding of what is happening in the world. One crucial goal of education is to deflect attention elsewhere—say, to Vietnam, or Central America, or the Middle East, where our problems allegedly lie—and away from our own institutions and their systematic functioning and behaviour, the real source of a great deal of the violence and suffering in the world. It is crucially important to prevent understanding and divert attention from the sources of our own conduct, so that elite groups can act without popular constraint to achieve their goals—which are called “the national interest” in academic theology.

Arne Naess, Creativity and Gestalt Thinking

It has been suggested that the immense power of the new forms of mass communication narrows our conception of reality so decisively that our spontaneous experiences reflect what is mass communicated. The power of mass communication has also destroyed our capacity to experience anything that is squarely incompatible with the mass-communicated conceptions.

The importance of increasing awareness of the influence of mass communication is obvious. But it should not diminish our trust that we can make full, creative use of our access to reality through our own spontaneous experience. The confidence of having a *source* of creativity that never disappears (until our mental capacity completely disappears) might be undermined by talking as if we are imprisoned in our conceptualizations, our socially accepted metaphors and texts. Spontaneous experience transcends personal, social, and cultural specifications. That is, any attempt to nail down the stream-and-process character of gestalt experience by specifying a person, a society, a culture pretending that the gestalts belong to a definite kind, is in vain.

Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor*

37. The “experience” of truth is always the experience of resonance, that is, of the attunement of various distinct components of a whole.

This is not to say that everything that is true is also resonant. The sorts of truths pursued in analysis, for example, generally lack resonance.

To say that an utterance is not resonant is not to say that it is not true. Rather, it is to say that it has no phenomenology.

§ 7

The first time I taught something to a group of young people as an “educator,” in the most informal sense of the word, was at summer camp when I was around twenty-two years old. The lesson, as I recall, was aimed at “conscientizing” young minds about *The Truth* with *The Facts*. —Arimony & howling abounded: punk rock & underground hip-hop. I had not encountered the work of David Orr at the time, but my preamble was something like the opening salvo he wrote for a seminal essay published in 1991: “What is Education For?”

cue the statistics

David Orr: “If today is a typical day on Earth, we will lose 116 square miles of rainforest, or about an acre a second. We will lose another 72 square miles to encroaching deserts... We will lose 40 to 100 species, and no one knows whether the number is 40 or 100. Today the human population will increase by 250,000. And we will add 2,700 tons of chlorofluorocarbons to the atmosphere and 15 million tons of carbon. Tonight the Earth will be a little hotter, its waters more acidic, the fabric of life more threadbare.”

After the plenary, several of the lead facilitators took me aside & fed me a shit sandwich for feedback: —“Great job, clear voice and a passionate delivery. The beginning was a little... intense. Remember, we do not want to paralyze the youth or push them towards depression. Maybe next time you could focus on some positive actions we could all take? Maybe ten things we can do to save the environment? Great job though.”

cue the imperative for hope

In environmental circles this is called a “doom & gloom” approach, which has been much maligned, with some justification, for counteracting the hope-laden optimism that supposedly underpins political agency. Orr, as case in point, went on to publish a collection of essays titled: *Hope is an Imperative*—which essentially sums up the standard mantra for eco-friendly progressives (—techno-optimism, sustainable development, bright green futures). For the record, I am *not* suggesting that we assail children with doom-mongering statistics or apocalyptic visions of a threadbare existence. The kind of *educated beings* we require for life on Eäarth cannot be cultivated, as the last half-century has illustrated, by doom & gloom dump modes. Then again: *the very notion of soil is changing*. The carbon is already in the atmosphere; the extinction rate is already hundreds of times higher than the background; Queneesh is already trembling. Knowledge or hope, wet blanket or bad faith, looking the facts in the eye or looking a child in the eye—what a difficult case!

what will you do,

now that you sense the path unravelling
beneath you?

The *real* problem lies in the (culturally amplified) *desire* for solid ground, for a self-identical self, a renewable halo, an immutable dictionary, an off-planet observatory, a transcendental projection room, a plan of action we can all get behind, a fresh start, for the good old days when a pipe was a pipe & A=A. —“Just imagine if we could engineer a solution? What if we did not have to sacrifice or even die?”—But we do. Listen to me love, my dear comrade, know this: *You will suffer. —But you must look.* Education is for nothing other than this: cultivating awareness of *the real* to reform both action & attention—again & again & again. Gothic wallowing & rosy-eyed masquerades are just different guises of the same false desire. There is no perch above this fray.

cue the real

§ 7

Jan Zwicky, A Ship from Delos

The objection that is often raised to looking the facts in the eye is that doing so will result in despair; it will quash hope and thereby make our lives unbearable. Hope, it is argued, is one of the great virtues, too. And in these circumstances it must be allowed to override knowledge, because knowledge is just too painful. But to imagine that awareness of the facts precludes hope is to misconstrue both awareness and hope. To be aware that death is imminent is not to wallow in despair; it is precisely not that.

Hope also... takes the form of humility... To hope for a techno-fix is to imagine, yet again, that calculative rationality can control the world; it is hubris. Humility means recognizing, clearly, that we don't understand everything. We do not know what joys may accompany us, nor what possibilities the situation contains.

Denial of responsibility, denial of complicity is part of refusing to know what's what. It blocks the kind of grief that can realign the soul, that allows us, ultimately, to be free.

And if what one has ruined is ruined beyond repair? If restitution is not possible? What a difficult case! Compassion for the person who finds herself in the clear light of such knowledge. That knowledge will strike deep into the body as sorrow and remorse. Again, exercise of other virtues is crucial if something positive is to come of such grief. But awareness itself also prevents paralysis. What use, to anyone, is it to lie down, immobilized by pain? Pain must be used to turn the soul toward the real, to reform both action and attention: to love what, in this case, remains.

David Jardine, Graham McCaffrey, & Christopher Gilham, *On the Pedagogy of Suffering*

This is an ancient idea from Greek tragedies—*pathei mathos*, or, “learning through suffering.” In our understandable rush to ameliorate suffering at every turn, and to consider every instance of it an error to be avoided at all costs, we [deny] how the pedagogy that can come from suffering becomes obscured, and that something vital to a rich and vibrant pedagogy can become lost.

A key element in contemporary hermeneutic theory of experience is that there is something unavoidably difficult, and transformative, in the act of becoming experienced in the ways of the world. This experience extends across the whole gamut of human life, from small, exhilarating interruptions of one's expectations (moments of inquiry, engagement, questioning) to traumatic experiences of mortality, impermanence, and illness, to cultural and intercultural, personal and imaginal, histories of grief, conflict, and potential reconciliation. Hermeneutically understood, education is centered on a concept from the Humanist tradition: *Bildung*, a German term meaning “self-formation.” It is a process of *becoming someone*, a process that is undergone, endured or “suffered” in the act of coming to know about oneself and the world.

Rene Magritte, Pure Art: A Defense of the Aesthetic

Aesthetic emotion is *suffered* by the sensitive viewer.

§ 8

spewing green apples

What is not clear is what ecologizing will mean exactly. The range of attitudes, prescriptions, warnings, restrictions, summons, sermons and threats, that go with ecology seems to be strangely out of sync with the magnitude of the changes expected from all of us... When the first tremors of the Apocalypse are heard, it would seem that preparations for the end should require something more than simply using a different kind of lightbulb...

-- Bruno Latour, Will Non-Humans Be Saved?

The first tremors of awakening serve to deepen sleep.

-- Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

cue the statistics

cue the imperative for hope

cue the folksy guitar riff yellow flowers pushing through cracks in the pavement
cue the lightbulb with little green leaves inside the solar panels & wind turbines
cue the blue marble & blue dot blue recycling bins blue children beneath a blue sky
cue the students learning hands-on in Nature the benevolent labcoats playing God
cue the celebrities making a difference Leo, Björk at least one member of Radiohead
cue the Indigenous drummers & non-violent protestors youth with witty placards
cue the local organic fair-trade grass-fed shade-grown carbon-neutral merchandise
cue the hands cupping a delicate Earth a green city upon a hill a familiar horizon

cue the real

§ 8

* Clive Hamilton, *Requiem for a Species*

In these circumstances refusing to accept that we face a very unpleasant future becomes perverse. Denial requires a willful misreading of the science, a romantic view of the ability of political institutions to respond, or faith in divine intervention. Climate [optimists] adopt the same tactic as doom-mongers, but in reverse: instead of taking a very small risk and exaggerating it, they take a very high risk of disaster and minimize it.

* John Foster, *After Sustainability*

The forms of denial that should worry us are those that are in one way or another *willed*—those where what is denied is also, and at some other level, recognized to be true, or to have a good chance at being true: where denial is not straightforward, albeit misplaced, belief to the contrary, but explicit rejection of what is tacitly admitted but unacceptable. Such denial is not amenable to being overcome by improved access to the facts —exposure to the facts can, indeed, tend to strengthen it.

Timothy Morton, *Being Ecological*

[I]nformation dump mode is a way for us to try to install ourselves at a fictional point in time *before global warming happened*. We are trying to anticipate something inside which we already find ourselves...

Almost every environmental studies conference I go to ends with a round-table during which someone will pipe up, “But what are we supposed to be *doing*?” As if worrying for days about something isn’t actually already a form of “doing.” The “What are we going to do?” is a symptom of finding ourselves in a frightening situation... realizing we are going through a trauma. As with all traumas, we didn’t realize how horrible it was until we were some of the way into the experience... The question at the end of the round-table wants to *see ahead* and anticipate and know what to do, in advance. That’s what we can’t do. Because we have been driving the wrong way, looking in the wrong direction—that’s exactly *why* this all happened.

Jay Ruzesky, The Details: An Interview with Jan Zwicky

JR: That seems like thinking that could scare people into inaction. What other choice is there?

JZ: But don’t we do people a disservice if we think they are—what? too ill-equipped? too immature?—to handle the truth? Death is coming to this culture and it’s the kind of death that’s going to be like a slow-motion car accident after centuries of cultural drunk driving.

“Do what you can!” The idea of political activism is itself woven into the fabric of Enlightenment thought. Our culture is not a culture of acceptance, nor of adapting the self to the larger circumstance. It aims to adapt the circumstances to the desires of the self. This attitude is actually part of the problem. But are there alternatives *in this culture*? Yes, I think so.

§ 9

Wittgenstein: "Each of the sentences I write is trying to say the whole thing, i.e. the same thing over and over again; it is as though they were all simply views of one object seen from different angles."

Home is a many-sided image. *Home* is a many-sided myth. *Home* is a many-sided place.

To be clear: the dialectical image at the nucleus of this constellation is *this* place: *kw'umalha*. The valley, the estuary, the forests & rivers (the Puntledge, the Tsolum, the Cruickshank, the Browns), the glacier that is also the great whale Queneesh. Or, if you will, the very idea of *home* in the context of settler colonialism, late capitalism, anthropogenic mass extinction—as the Modern sublations of something much, much older. [*Leviathan! Leviathan!*] —Benjamin: "Where a chain of events appears before *us*," the angel of history, "sees one single catastrophe, which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise and has got caught in his wings; it is so strong that [he] can no longer close them."

((You wake from an unsettling dream, a storm threatening from the West: you know what you need to do.))

This work attempts to construct a monadological structure—a resonant body—to discern the origin of *home* in the catastrophic after-history—the wreckage & clear-cuts & curricular objectives—of the twentieth century (which, as Benjamin & others have proposed, is little more than a carbon copy of a copy of the nineteenth).

The whole thing is a profane attempt to acknowledge the territory. Ancestors, Spirits, The Land

The whole thing is being drawn apart, to be brought together with itself. The Collagist

The dialectical image at the nucleus of *The Arcades Project* is *the commodity* (as a particular, material manifestation of the "Ur-history of the nineteenth century.") Which explains why Benjamin chose the Parisian arcades as the compositional architecture for his work (if one wants to understand an object in depth, one must study the object in its "natural environment," as it were.) But the ur-form of things, while potentially intelligible vis-à-vis a dialectical construction, a lyric composition, or other contemplative modes, is never *given*—be it the archetypal *Urpflanze* of licorice ferns in the forest, or the commodity form of plastic bric-a-brac at the mall (or, indeed, the ecological form of the same plastic commodities as a "constellation" of "organic" substances: cellulose, salt, crude oil, human desires.) From a Modern perspective, there is little ontological difference between the forest & the shopping mall—both are comprised of natural resources at different "stages of development." This is not an attempt to reinscribe some vapid Nature/Culture duality, but a reiteration of the *real* problem—the fact that we are unversed in discerning the "deeper" economic or ecological ur-forms of *home*. Thus things remain as they are given within the *framework* (*Das Gestell*): dumb, meaningless objects of human utility. The dialectical image, for Benjamin, was an attempt to "blast" the commodity out of its developmental trajectory by way of a montage-induced shock. Even in earlier writings, before "converting" to "Marxism," he sought a more ancient ("mimetic") or, at least, alternative mode of experience that would "explode the limitations set by Kant" & "restore the experiences of theology."

Benjamin: —[B3,7]. In my formulation: "The eternal is in any case far more the ruffle on a dress than some idea." Dialectical Image ((Read: Benjamin's "materialist" disposition is akin to "ontological attention."))

Ecohermeneutics: To blast *place* & "natural resources" out of the historical continuum of progress by pulling apart the physiognomy of *home* (—*oikos*). To heal by piercing (think: acupuncture). —To awaken the dead.

§ 9

Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*

In the fragmentary notes [of] *Konvolut N.*... Benjamin described his method, which, it must be said, strained the traditional conceptions of both history and philosophy to the breaking point. It broke radically with the philosophical canon by searching for truth in the “garbage heap” of modern history, the “rags, the trash,” the ruins of commodity production, that were thoroughly tainted with the philosophically debased qualities of empirical specificity, shifting meanings, and, above all, transiency... [H]is objective was to “rescue” the historical objects by ripping them out of developmental histories... Ur-history was thoroughly political knowledge, nothing less than a revolutionary Marxist pedagogy. Yet as Marxism, its theoretical armature was equally unorthodox. If in the process of working on the *Arcades Project* Benjamin came to refer to himself as a “historical materialist,” he was well aware that he was filling this nomenclature with very new meaning.

Crucial—and also most difficult—would be the “construction” of the work... Benjamin was at least convinced of one thing: what was needed was a visual, not a linear logic: [C]oncepts were to be imagistically constructed, according to the cognitive principles of montage. Nineteenth century objects were to be made visible as the origin of the present, at the same time that every assumption of progress was to be scrupulously rejected... Benjamin noted: “Construction” presupposes “destruction.” Historical objects are first constituted by being “blasted” out of the historical continuum [by way of] a “monadological structure...” “Truth... is bound to a temporal nucleus which is lodged in both the known and the knower.” In a tension-filled constellation with the present, this “temporal nucleus” becomes politically charged, polarized dialectically, as “a force field, in which the conflict between its fore- and after-history plays itself out.”

As fore-history, [objects are] ur-phenomena that can be recognized as precursors of the present, no matter how distant or estranged they now appear. Benjamin implies that if the fore-history of an object reveals its possibility (including its utopian potential), its after-history is that which, as an object of natural history, it has in fact become... In the traces left by the object’s after-history, the conditions of its decay and the manner of its cultural transmission, the utopian images of past objects can be read in the present as truth. It is the forceful confrontation of the fore- and after-life of the object that makes it “actual” in the political sense—as “presence of mind”—and it is not progress but “actualization” in which ur-history culminates. “Thus, as a flashing image, in the now of recognition, the past is to be held fast.” Benjamin was counting on the shock of this recognition to jolt the dreaming collective into a political “awakening.”

As an immediate, quasi-mystical apprehension, the dialectical image was intuitive. As a philosophical “construction,” it was not. Benjamin’s laborious and detailed study of past texts, his careful inventory of the fragmentary parts he gleaned from them, and the planned use of these in deliberately constructed “constellations” were all sober, self-reflective procedures, which, he believed, were necessary in order to make visible a picture of truth that the fictions of conventional history writing covered over.

Jan Zwicky, What is Lyric Philosophy?

12. Lyric resonance is a function of attunement. It requires an open structure with distinguishable aspects or distinguishable axes of experience that stand in a non-linear relation to one another. Being drawn apart, it is brought together with itself.

13. The coherence that lyric awareness intuits, and that lyric thought attempts to render, is ecological in form. Ecological structure is a form of resonance.

§ 10

“What concerns us is not origin... but the inflexion of leviathanic form” (q.v. § 2). This is not entirely true.

We are, in fact, concerned with the *origin* of leviathanic form, but in the Walter Benjamin sense of *origin*—viz. *Ursprung*—or, in other words, something like the Goethean notion of *Urphänomen* (*Ur-phenomenon*). As Fredric Jameson notes, *origin* for Benjamin is “not a temporal word, but rather something closer to the phenomenological essence.” But this is also not entirely true—at least, not in the conventional ways we tend to frame phenomenological experience: i.e. bracketing (Husserl), historicity (Heidegger), & the linguisticality of understanding (Gadamer). For Benjamin: *origin is a matter of insight.* (Or: —in terms of lyric philosophy—*origin is a matter of meaning.*) It is closer to a contemplative mode of thinking that recognizes *what-is* by attending to the internal structural relations or *ur-form* of a thing-phenomenon as an *image* (or: *gestalt*) that *flashes* (or: *shifts*) when its myriad physiognomies are put into dialectic tension (i.e. a “constellation,” or collage, if you will). Benjamin described this experience (the “now of recognizability”) as an “awakening:” a striking synthesis of dream & waking consciousness “in which things put on their true—surrealist—face.” This recovery of *thinking in images* (or: *seeing-as, imagination*) as a “legible” means of knowing *the real*—which, as per surrealism, is part-dream—returns, as it were, phenomenological origin to material ecology.

A=A river. “The origin stands as eddy in the stream of becoming...” —Better learn the frog stroke, comrade.

On phenomenological methods: As it turns out, there is no transcendental subjectivity to bracket away on an off-planet observatory—no skeptical epoché to retreat to for detached analysis. As it turns out, *everything* is temporal, drenched in time—our being-in-the-world is veritably swimming in it. & while “origin” traces the historical essence of things, it differs from Heidegger’s historicity of *there-being* (*Dasein*) in two key ways:

i.) Phenomenology: the “dialectical image” is not simply a recognition of historical constitution; rather, the experiential tension between the synchronic particularity (or: *thisness*) of thing, & its diachronic totality or *ur-form* (or: *ecology*) strikes the “poetically-minded” hermeneutician with *profane illumination*: “My God, I’m living in the world!” (Snyder). Or: “Each ‘now’ is the now of a particular recognizability.” Time, in this sense (thus history, thus our lives), cannot be reduced to a sequence of empty, homogenous units; rather, being is a matter of fastidious actualization. Benjamin called this: *now-being* (*Jetztsein*)—or: *waking-being!*

Wu-Tang Clan: “I peep at the shape of the streets and stay awake to the ways of the world, cause shit is deep.”

ii.) Progressivism: There is no structural or innate developmentalism in Benjamin’s notion of temporality, only an ever-meandering “unfolding” of things. (This point, crucially, also sets Benjamin apart from Marx). History, in other words, is not a preordained march from ancient Greece to modern Germany. A dialectical sense of origin is only possible “within the purview of a historical perception that at all points has overcome the ideology of progress.” —Auguste Blanqui, whom Benjamin greatly admired, described progress as: “the phantasmagoria of history;” & as “something so old it predates thinking, which struts about in the clothes of the New.” ((Progress, Capital, & The Future as the clothing—the glamours—of *Leviathan!*)) Fashion

Wu-Tang Clan: “Cash rules everything around me: C.R.E.A.M. / Get the money, dollar dollar bill y’all.”

As for the relationship between the linguisticality of understanding (Gadamer), language-as-such (Benjamin), & the ineffability of gestalt insight (Zwicky) in ecohermeneutic phenomenology: this too is a matter of origin & meaning, but it will take some work to discern the dialectical image at the nucleus. ((—You come home one day to find shards of a mirror scattered about the vestibule—*the fuck?*)). It will take a fastidious composition: what Benjamin called a *monadological structure*. —It will take a broken violin, a busted gestalt, & lots of glue.

§ 10

Walter Benjamin, *Origin of the German Trauerspiel*

Origin, although a thoroughly historical category, nevertheless has nothing in common with genesis. By “origin” is meant not the coming-to-be of what has originated but rather what originates in the becoming and passing away. The origin stands as eddy in the stream of becoming and vigorously draws the emerging material into its rhythm. In the naked, manifest existence of the factual, the original never allows itself to be recognized; its rhythm stands open only to a dual insight. On the one hand, it demands to be recognized as restoration, restitution, and on the other hand—and precisely on account of this—as something incomplete and unclosed... The guidelines of philosophical contemplation are inscribed in the dialectic intrinsic to origin.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[N2a,3]. It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present its light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent... Awakening

[N2a,4]. In studying Simmel's presentation of Goethe's concept of truth, I came to see very clearly that my concept of origin in the *Trauerspiel* book is a rigorous and decisive transposition of this basic Goethean concept from the domain of nature to that of history. Origin—it is, in effect, the concept of *Ur*-phenomenon extracted from the pagan context of nature and brought into the Jewish contexts of history. Now, in my work on the arcades I am equally concerned with fathoming an origin. To be specific, I pursue the origin of the forms and mutations of the Paris arcades from their beginning to their decline, and I locate this origin in the economic facts. Seen from the standpoint of causality... these facts would not be primal phenomena; they become such only insofar as in their own individual development—“unfolding” might be a better term—they give rise to the whole series of the arcade's concrete historical forms, just as the leaf unfolds from itself all the riches of the empirical world of plants.

Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor*

1. I am interested in the phenomenon of ‘seeing-as’ because it encapsulates the mystery of meaning. The moment of recognition happens as if by magic; and yet, when we reflect on it, we see—its very name tells us this—that it is impossible without prior experience. What becomes puzzling then is the phenomenon of insight, the creation (apparently) of new meaning. Here, we forget that to recognize can mean to re-think, as in *think through differently*. It need not always signify mere repetition of a former cognition. We say in such cases not only that we recognize X (as Y), but that we *realize X is Y*.

In fact, we almost never use the word ‘recognize’—even in the most straightforward cases of identification or recall—unless there is some *problem*: we don't see her face clearly, or she has changed, or we only met briefly years ago. That is, ‘recognition,’ even in apparently straightforward cases, involves re-organization of experience—an act of contextualization, a sensing of connexions between aspects of immediate experience and other experiences... [T]he experience of seeing how an assemblage of parts must go together, recognizing an old friend in an unfamiliar setting, and understanding a metaphor are species of the same phenomenon. They all involve insight, understood as re-recognition; a gestalt shift. And this is the original of meaning.

§ 11

The evocation of Goethe, then, for Benjamin, is not mere conceptual analogy (*Ursprung* vs. *Urphänomen*), but is intended to evoke some deeper, two-way experience (cf. *Erfahrung*) of particular things within the flux of an “unfolding” whole. Something formal, structural—something, at the risk of deploying an overmined term, *ontological*. —Hence the *material* emphasis on the “concrete historical forms” of the arcades—that is, the consumer goods & slightly out of fashion bric-a-brac (—the “leaves” or “fossils” of the economic ur-form) that comprised these ur-shopping malls of the nineteenth century: light bulbs, dolls, umbrellas, furniture, clocks, dresses, advertisements, puzzles, mannequins, prostitutes, theatres, gambling establishments, etc.

The Arcades Project: A morphology of the ruins, flowering like daffodils. —Commodities as *les fleurs du mal*.

With the notion of *Urphänomen*, Goethe aimed to inspire a deeper understanding of the ecological structure of plants as a whole (the *Urpflanze*, or archetypal plant-form). He aimed, that is, to cultivate a contemplative mode that could discern the formal *idea* of a particular plant in terms of a *gestalt*: —intelligible to the senses (tho never “given” in its totality), but without recourse to forces or qualities more “primary” than the thing itself (as in the Natural Sciences—or, in philosophy, as in Idealism); or to the kind of “vulgar reductionism” that provided no insight into the whole & denied its existence. The ur-form, for Goethe—& the constellation, for Benjamin—thus provided a mode of perceiving a thing, in the context of its ecology, as both idea & image.

Benjamin: “Ideas are to things as constellations are to stars.”

Zwickly: “An image is a lyric *idea*.”

[In a famous encounter from his autobiography, Goethe recounts how he once showed Friedrich Schiller—the German playwright & enthusiastic Kantian, at the time—a sketch of his notion of the *Urphänomen*, to which Schiller remarked: “But this is not an empirical experience, it is an idea.” Goethe paused, then politely responded: —“How splendid that I have ideas without knowing it, and can see them before my very eyes.”]

Ur-configurations are thus not “subjective.” They are formal relations “aesthetically perceived” within objects of everyday attention (cf. Gadamer on *aesthetic experience*: “a hitherto concealed experience that transcends thinking from the position of subjectivity.” —Also cf. Taussig on Benjamin’s notion of *sentience*). Benjamin, by his own account, transposed this “presence of mind” or *disposition* (fr. Old Fr., *disposicion*, “arrangement, order; mood, state of mind”—what Goethe described as a “tender empiricism”—from “the pagan context of nature” to that of material history (or, better yet: political ecology). But this is a difference of ontological degree, not kind. The fundamental gesture is the same: —You must look, heart. You must look.

[Benjamin quotes Goethe in the epigraph of his infamous “Epistemo-Critical Foreword” to the *Origin of the German Trauerspiel*: “Since no whole be can brought together in either knowledge or reflection, seeing that the former lacks internality and the later externality, we must necessarily think of science as art if we are to expect from it any sort of wholeness. And it is not in the general, in the boundless, that we should look for this, but, just as art is always wholly present in each individual artwork, so should science always be wholly manifest in each particular matter treated.”—from Goethe’s materials to *History of the Theory of Colours*.]

Knowledge lacks internality, reflection lacks externality: the groundwork for a gestalt ontology is already established in Goethe, but Benjamin’s move to transpose this gestalt intelligence from the morphology of “natural objects” (as in a leaf to ecology) to “cultural objects” (as in a dress to economy) was a radical new direction for social theory (—“To the Planetarium!”). His project aimed to balance the entire cosmological order of the nineteenth century on a single point; that is, in each artifact of the arcades. As if one could wander about with *flânerie*, with *style*, but also a critical aperture—& see shit in a different light. As if paying animal-bright attention to the world was, somehow, a way out of the eternal recurrence of our devastation.

§ 11

Walter Benjamin, *Origin of the German Trauerspiel* ((Annotated))

The relation of the micrological work process to the global dimension of the work, to its plastic and intellectual entirety, makes it clear that truth content can be grasped only through the most exacting immersion in the details of a material content. Mosaic and tractatus both achieve their highest development in the West during the Middle Ages; what makes them comparable is that they are so deeply related.

Knowledge is oriented to the particular, but not in an unmediated way to its unity. The unity of knowledge, if there *is* such, would instead be an interconnection producible only in a mediated way—namely, on the basis of distinct pieces of knowledge and, to an extent, on their alignment and balancing—whereas truth in its essence is determined as a unity in a thoroughly unmediated and direct manner. What is peculiar to this determination... is that it cannot be ascertained through questioning. If the integral unity in the essence of truth were indeed ascertainable through questioning, then the question would have to be: To what extent is the answer to the question already given by any conceivable answer that truth might make to question? And before this question could be answered, it would have to be asked once again, in such a way that the unity of truth would elude every form of questioning. As unity in being and not as unity in concept, truth is beyond all questioning. ((—Cross out *questioning*, & put *linguistic expression*.)) Whereas concepts arise out of the spontaneity of understanding, ideas are given to contemplation. Ideas are something given in advance.

David Jardine, *Speaking with a Boneless Tongue*

This way works at wholeness not in halves but through wholeness from the start. The way is slower, action is hindered, and one fumbles foolishly in the half-light... Each particular, each foolish fumble, bears the whole, but the whole is never given (read here an implicit critique of the reliance of phenomenology on *givenness*).

[a critique of how the phenomenological urge to remain faithful to what is *given in experience* is *already* a form of essentialism which, added to Edmund Husserl's deep faith in a "unity of one meaning," steps phenomenology up from lividness to givenness to essence to a ghostly version of monotheism]...

The whole is never given, never utterable, never writable.

This book is essentially a self-contradiction.

It has no essence.

Matt Rader, Music Lesson

All the children of Bevan crowd around
To study the xylophone of vertebrae
The deer has left on the school house floor.
It is so serious in the abandoned school
We can hear the fiddleheads perform.
Ever-so-slowly, the students pair-off
And dance a reel over the broken floor
And the tree roots and between the trees.

§ 12

In his book *Malfeasance*, Michel Serres examines the multispecies habit of appropriating territory by way of leaving a mark—hard & soft. Cougars, for example, will scrape up a small pile of moss & leaves, then piss on it to demarcate their domain (—hard). Meadowlarks & warblers use song (—soft). Western redcedars use surface root density & shade (—both?). Human territorial claims, in turn, have traditionally involved seeding the homeland with various bodily fluids, domestic wastes, fallen ancestors, &—we must admit, for not all appropriations are scatological—we too cultivate belonging by way of earthsong. But for the most part —spit in the soup, stains on the bedsheets, signature on the page: “appropriation takes place through dirt.”

For Serres, the natural laws—“natural” in the sense of generalized behaviour across species—that emerged from animal life have, over millennia, been codified into cultural conventions that have the appearance of being “more civilized.” The pagan excreta of appropriation thus becomes increasingly abstract & refined in the course of History, which is viewed as progress. In other words, the sacrificial blood of animals & virgins that once delimited the temple are *softened* by the performative waters of baptism & wine once removed. Similarly, the experience of being *of* a place is progressively deterritorialized away from the hard intimacies of life on the land—hunting, gathering, cultivating, dancing, ritual possession by various *genius loci*—to the soft spectacle of Modern identities once (or twice) removed—flags, brands, images, identities, habitus, status.

This is the dispossessive cycle between hard deterritorialization & soft reterritorialization. Or: the colonial technique of dumbing sensuous, myth-primed bodies from reciprocal immersion within a resonant ecology —then filling the kin-shaped void with religious performativity, human exceptionalism, commodity fetish, & other reified trash from Paradise. School, of course, plays an important role in the surface banality of this process. The hard abuses employed by priests to re-educate the flesh of Indigenous children in the past have been *softened* into the ambient semiotics of bleached linoleum floors, graduation stats, & equal employment opportunities in the oil fields. The socializing function of school is thus revealed as the formalization or soft integration of a “more civilized” succession in the artifice of control: —From hard starvation to soft obesity.

[—From John A. MacDonald strategically “clearing the plains” (—hard) in the name of “national interest” to drive a railroad to the Pacific—to Justin Trudeau signing (—soft) the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, while procuring Trans Mountain in the name of “national interest” to drive a pipeline to the Pacific (—both?). Is there a more damning example of duplicitous malfeasance? At least MacDonald was “honest” about the colonial calculus of his polices. But Trudeau, with his two-faced style—even more than other recent authoritarian throwbacks in America & Europe—embodies the fashionable glamour of a spectacular *Leviathan!* An utterly plastic Everyman, sexy like a celebrity, lion-bodied passant guardant: —he marches hand-in-hand with feminists, wrapped in a star blanket, with renewable haloes for everyone. Reassuring us with the kind of bright green pillow-talk we secretly yearn for whenever we sense the path unravelling beneath us: “we are moving forward.” Oh *Leviathan!* A soft gaslight-gaze, pitiless as the sun.]

“Pollution is appropriation.” If there is a trend, as Serres suggests, from hard to soft, we are faced with a spectrum of pollutants. On one pole, the hard effluvium of industry-& on the other, the soft deluge of images & noise that floods our senses & appropriates the world as surely as a pulp mill belch of methane. Recognizing both is critical, particularly given that education tends to focus exclusively on mitigating the hard by way of more “sustainable” technology (—hard) & knowledge (—soft). Education is thus rendered a metaphysical *eau de toilette* employed to soften the gag reflexes of children to the hard realities of bitumen pools & waste lagoons amassed in their name. But it is equally important to recognize that pollution is a self-reinforcing cycle: the soft, invariably, becomes just as hard as the hard. Both are expressions of the same fundamental desire. The will to appropriate manifests across a spectrum of hard to soft, physical to dream.

§ 12

Michel Serres, *Malfeasance*

As a preliminary, let me briefly summarize my comments... bodily discharges, that is, urine, manure, or corpses as well as sperm, were used to appropriate places. Animal ethology, anthropology, the history of religions, sexology, the old private right, all confirm this analysis and enable us to understand several forgotten foundations of property rights. Let me remind you that the word *pollution*, with its religious and medical origin, first meant desecration of places of worship by excrement, and later the soiling of sheets by ejaculation, usually from masturbation... [W]e address environmental problems and anxieties today almost exclusively with statistical measures and proportions, geological and atmospheric samplings, chemical analyses, estimates from biology or natural history—in short, by way of the so-called hard sciences, plus economics... We question our responsibility only when it comes to relations between physical quantities. The question is, What do we *really* want when we dirty the world?

Let us define two things and clearly distinguish them from one another: first the hard, and second the soft. By the first I mean on the one hand solid residues, liquids, and gases, emitted throughout the atmosphere by big industrial companies or gigantic garbage dumps, the shameful signature of big cities. By the second, tsunamis of writing, signs, images, and logos flooding rural, civic, public and natural spaces as well as landscapes with their advertising. Even though different in terms of energy, garbage, and marks [both] result from the same soiling gesture, from the same intention to appropriate... To be sure, the pestilential invasion of space by soft signs does not enter into the physical and chemical calculations mentioned above, for instance those concerning climate. But in combination with hard pollution, soft pollution proceeds from the same drive. Here is the result: of course, pollution comes from measurable residues of the work and transformations related to energy, but fundamentally it emanates from our will to appropriate, our desire to conquer and expand the space of our properties. He who creates viscous and poisoned lakes or garish posters is making sure no one will take away the spaces he has occupied, now or after he is gone.

Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*

2. The images detached from every aspect of life merge into a common stream in which the unity of that life can no longer be recovered. *Fragmented* views of reality regroup themselves into a new unity as a *separate pseudo-world* that can only be looked at. The specialization of images of the world evolves into a world of autonomized images where even the deceivers are deceived. The spectacle is a concrete inversion of life; an autonomous movement of the nonliving.

5. The spectacle cannot be understood as a mere visual deception produced by mass-media technologies. It is a worldview that has actually been materialised, a view of a world that has become objective.

12. The spectacle presents itself as a vast inaccessible reality that can never be questioned. Its sole message is: "What appears is good; what is good appears." The passive acceptance it demands is already effectively imposed by its monopoly of appearances, its manner of appearing without allowing any reply.

Richard Pevear, Foreword in Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes From Underground*

A direct line leads from metaphysical naïvety to murder; a direct line leads from the anti-unity of utilitarian æsthetics to the false unity of the crystal palace.



“Big Rock,” near “Willow Point,” traditional territories of the Ligwilda’xw Peoples—the We Wai Kai, Wei Wai Kum, & Kwiakah First Nations.

Everyone round these parts knows the “Big Rock.” Yet somehow, I managed to live for forty years, driving past this landmark, admiring it each time, without ever being taught or recognizing that it is also a whale who once swallowed Mink when he was out trying to catch herring by Mitlenatch. ((—This is another thing I regret.)) Mink was forced to kill the whale, who drifted ashore &—presumably—turned to stone thereafter. The *real* problem is not necessarily the vapid appellation bestowed upon the object by an evidently dumbed down & superficial people—“Big Rock”—although prosaic names are something of a red flag for desacralized ways of knowing—but rather, the ever-thickening “shell” of appropriation—the “frenetic topicality concealed in habitual behaviour” (in this case, the shit-bad graffiti & beer cans that cover the place)—that works to mute any sense of “indigenous,” or “more-than-human,” or “ontological” meaning. —Why would anyone do this?

Paul Shepard in *Nature and Madness*: “My question is: why do men persist in destroying their habitat?”

To belong (to a place)—to dwell—in the transitive sense of direct possession (of an object)—but also in the sense of a transitive order of “logical” relations: “I am” my name [A] (—the tag: *cogito ergo sum*), & if this many-sided whale-rock [B+] bears my name, then it is mine: [A=B]. (—Note: [A] displaces the [+] by way of appropriation: taking possession of a “given object” [B] as a “given subject” [A] by limiting the polysemous experience of [B+] to the “empirical” univocity of [B] —i.e. if a rock is a rock, then it cannot also be a whale. [B+] *must* be rendered into [B] because the existence of [B+] implies the existence of [A+], which implies that [A] might also be “possessed” by a fluid alterity [+], thus rendering the self [A] a veritable river of temporal selflessness, which is unthinkable—cf. Descartes). Moreover, if *this* sacred rock is no longer also a whale, because “real knowledge” is founded on self-identity [A=A], then it is no longer *particularly* “sacred”—i.e. it is the same as every other rock [B=B]. ((—Anyone who experiences [+] is emotionally contaminated, unscientific, or utterly primitive)). & if logical relations with objects are “proven” or, at least, enforced by transitive inscription—what is to prevent one from going all city on the whole beach? If this rock (B) is mine, then this rocky beach (C) is mine, then this mountain (D) is mine, then this island (E) is mine, ad infinitum.

((Debord: 34. “The spectacle is *capital* accumulated to the point that it becomes images.”))

Franz Boaz, *Indian Myths and Legends from the North Pacific Coast of America*

Once K«ā’iq (—Mink) went out to catch herring with a huge herring rake. But at the same time a whale was also out catching herring, scaring away all the herring from K«ā’iq’s canoe. K«ā’iq grew angry at this. One time when Whale surfaced... K«ā’iq called out, “Phew, Whale, how you stink!” He repeated this four times, whereupon Whale grew angry and swallowed K«ā’iq along with his canoe. Each time when Whale surfaced K«ā’iq shouted from inside, “Oh know, you people, that Whale has swallowed me!” The fishermen heard it and then told each other that K«ā’iq had been swallowed by Whale. Whale continued to catch herring. So Mink lit a small fire inside Whale’s stomach and dried the herring on a rack. Every time Whale surfaced, the fish fell off the rack. This angered Mink. In addition, it was very hot in Whale’s stomach. K«ā’iq felt sick and pondered how he could get into the open again. He decided to kill Whale and cut his throat. So Whale died and soon drifted ashore close to a village.* As soon as the inhabitants saw Whale, they cut him up and lo! —when they opened Whale’s stomach, out sprang Mink. —But Mink had lost all his hair in Whale’s stomach.

[* The Comox-speaking people with whom we consulted identified the place where Whale drifted ashore as the site of the well-known landmark called the “Big Rock,” situated on the beach near Willow Point, south of Campbell River. Our Native consultants said that this big rock is Whale...]

Michel Serres, *Biogea*

Meaning? We don’t hear anything but it; we don’t know anything but it. We give it names... meaningful proper names of meaningful human gods or meaningful corpses that only know meaning, the meaning suitable for covering over the rumble of things, meaningless... [T]he background noise of the world.

I would like to listen to things freed of these packages, the way they presented themselves before finding themselves named. Betelgeuse disappeared into the bag of its star naming; I only eat asparagus or carrots folded in bunches in the daily newspaper of their appellations; I see winds and rains below their satellite image map; your first name and your words hide your body from me and even, almost, your voice which, in its turn, names me. For thousands of years, we have been licking things with our tongues, covering and daubing them so as to appropriate things for ourselves. If language boils down to a convention, this convention took place between the speakers without consulting the thing named, [which], as a result [became] the property of those who covered it in this way with their drawn or voiced productions.

Thus every inert object, every living thing as well, sleeps under the covers of signs, a little in the way that, today, a thousand posters shouting messages and ugly riots of color drown, with their filthy flood, the landscapes, or better, exclude them from perception because the meaning, almost nil, of this false language and these base images forms an irresistible source of attraction to our neurons and eyes. This appropriation covers the world’s beauty with ugliness. How to estimate at their exact thickness the layers of media under which things lie, thus multiply wrapped under writings, folded under printed matter, gagged under images, hidden under sounds, choked under languages, lost under a hundred screens?

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[I4,5]. “To dwell” as a transitive verb—as in the notion of “indwelt spaces;” herewith an indication of the frenetic topicality concealed in habitual behavior. It has to do with fashioning a shell for ourselves.

§ 14

A child naturally points at the “Big Rock” (—this alone is significant), as if to say: “Wow! What is that?”

& you say: “That is probably a whale.” & the child points to the image of the orca painted on the rock.
& you say: “No, no—*here*.” Trying to point “beneath” the graffiti & minerals to the heart of *this* rock.

Now everyone is confused & examining the rock more closely to discern what you could possibly mean.
(—You are a good teacher.) Now you just need to put the right story in the right hands at the right time.

“Tsk—What is the ‘right’ story?”

It depends. Remember: We are learning to *do* something. What we are teaching is a *capacity*. Seeing-As

There is, undoubtedly, a time for the story of the mineral composition of this rock. Lyric is *not* anti-science. Particularly if one is attempting to *do* geology, for example, or cultivate geological understanding. But what if one is attempting to cultivate an ear for beauty? Or the inner cadence of things in the context of the whole? What if one is trying to teach the rather fine distinction between seeming & being? Underground Music

“Tsk—The ‘cadence of things,’ ‘underground music.’ Sounds like a bunch of sentimental nonsense.”

Yes, of course it does. As Dennis Lee—something of an expert on cadence—has written: “There are certain things that speak to us at the core, but that scarcely exist within the assumptions of modern thought.” In other words, our pre-modern progenitors—uneducated savages that they were—may have pointed to the world with notions like “good,” or “evil,” or “beautiful,” or “sacred”—but these notions no longer have any meaning in educated thought, other than “subjective values” projected onto neutral matter. We have not lost contact with such experiences—many people are still drawn to music & poetry, for example, or vague notions of “spirituality”—but we have lost the language to consider such experiences as a serious “mode of thought.” Notions like “cadence” (Lee), “resonance” (Zwicky), “sentience” (Benjamin), “third-instruction” (Serres), are thus attempts to voice an “educated” language of meaning that is “materialist,” in the sense of “ontological awareness,” but does not demand that we sever an “inward glance at the sensation.”

What does this “sensation”—this cadence—feel like?

Dennis Lee: “Imagine you’re sitting indoors. Down in the basement, a group with a heavy amplified bass is rehearsing. Nothing is audible, but the pulsating of the bass starts to make the girders and beams vibrate. And eventually the vibration makes its way into your body. You feel yourself being flexed by a tremor which you’re bound to acknowledge, whether or not you know what it is... That sensation is disorienting, because it collapses our familiar categories of inner and outer, subject and object. You don’t perceive a vibration; *you vibrate*. Your muscular system has become both the recording instrument and the thing recorded. And the pulse you feel is neither subjective nor objective. Rather, it is your immediate portion of the kinaesthetic space in which you exist... During my twenties, I became aware of something comparable. It was not my body that was being flexed, or not primarily. It was my—what do I say? My imagination? my psyche? my spirit? I don’t know the right term... [but] I was imbedded, as plainly as I was in earth’s atmosphere, in a space which was alive and volatile, and whose flexions governed the tension and pulse of my system.”

Perhaps the difference between rock & whale is only one of battle cry?

You would only know if you were to meet people of the contrary belief. Indigenous Ways of Knowing

§ 14

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*

411. Imagine that a child was quite... clever, so clever that he could at once be taught the doubtfulness of the existence of all things. So he learns from the beginning: "That is probably a chair." And now does he learn the question: "Is it also really a chair?"—

413. One man is a convinced realist, another a convinced idealist and teaches his children accordingly. In such an important matter as the existence or non-existence of the external world they don't want to teach their children anything wrong. What will the children be taught? To include in what they say: "There are physical objects" or the opposite? If someone does not believe in fairies, he does not need to teach his children "There are no fairies:" he can omit to teach them the word "fairy." On what occasion are they to say: "There are..." or "There are no..."? Only when they meet people of the contrary belief.

414. But the idealist will teach his children the word "chair" after all, for of course he wants to teach them to do this and that, e.g. to fetch a chair. Then where will be the difference between what the idealist-educated children say and the realist ones? Won't the difference only be one of battle cry?

416. "So does he have to begin by being taught a false certainty?" There isn't any question of certainty or uncertainty yet in their language-game. Remember: they are learning to *do* something.

417. The language-game "What is that?"—"A chair."—is not the same as: "What do you take that for?"—"It might be a chair."

418. To begin by teaching someone "That looks red" makes no sense.

420. "It looks red to me."—"And what is red like?"—"Like *this*." Here the right paradigm must be pointed to.

421. When he first learns the names of colours—what is taught him? Well, he learns e.g. to call out "red" on seeing something red. —But is that the right description; or ought it to have gone: "He learns to call 'red' *what we too* call 'red'"? —Both descriptions are right. What differentiates this from the language-game "How does it strike you?" But someone might be taught colour-vocabulary by being made to look at white objects through coloured spectacles. What I teach him however must be a *capacity*. So he *can* now bring something red at an order; or arrange objects according to colour. But then what is something red?

422. Why doesn't one teach a child the language-game "It looks red to me" from the first? Because he is not yet able to understand the rather fine distinction between seeming and being?

426. The inward glance at the sensation—what connexion is this supposed to set up between words and sensations... Was I taught *that* when I learned to use this sentence, to think this thought? (Thinking it really was something I had to learn.) This is indeed something further that we learn, namely to turn our attention on to things and to sensations. We learn to observe and to describe observations. But how am I taught this; how is my 'inner activity' checked in this case? How will it be judged whether I really have paid attention?

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

224. "The bee sees ultraviolet." —Does this mean that the rose isn't red, after all?



michael dé danann datura, *Ecosophy Q, or Queneesh Awakens the Dead* (2022)
Paper collage on cardstock, 40cm x 50cm

'Walas Gwa'yam (Beau Dick): "We talk about 'the system.' It has no face; it has no conscience either. So these forces we are up against are almost on a supernatural level. My conscience tells me we have to fight back, and in some ways it is war on another level; nonviolent, but spiritual warfare. It has come to that."

'Walas Gwa'yam (Beau Dick), *Beau Dick: Devoured by Consumerism*



John Cussans, In the House of the Man-Eater

The image Beau Dick designed to represent the concept for *Devoured by Consumerism* depicts two human figures in the mouth of a much larger being. That one of these figures has a dollar sign and an X for eyes, the other a monitor for a head with infinite spiralling eyes, suggests the powerful compulsions that prepare modern humans to become prey to a rapaciousness far greater than their own: the hypnotic manipulation of mass media and the continually stimulated desire for money and material goods. That Beau envisioned this particular man-eater as a sea monster recalls another apocalyptic and all-consuming devourer of humankind, Leviathan, whose jaws, in medieval depictions, open onto hell.

Although modern consumerism is tied to recent shifts in the dynamics of capitalist society, its foundations in the Americas can be found in the earliest encounters with Europeans, whose competitive, self-centered drives to extract maximum profit from the natural resources of the “New World” set the pattern for what continues today. After the founding of the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1670, the British established settlements along the shores of the Pacific Northwest coast. When the beaver and sea otter has been hunted to near extinction, the Fraser Canyon Gold Rush, beginning in 1857, convinced the colonial authorities in London to declare much of what is now the province of British Columbia a colony of the British Empire. That *Leviathan* was also the title for Thomas Hobbes’s seventeenth century treatise on the absolute power of the English monarch to secure the nation’s “commonwealth” reminds us that the political foundations of Canada, which justify the relentless extraction of material wealth from the occupied territories of the Pacific Northwest, are still ultimately overseen by the Crown.

Jeanette Armstrong, History Lesson

The colossi
in which they trust
while burying
breathing forests and fields
beneath concrete and steel
stand shaking fists
waiting to mutilate
whole civilizations
ten generations at a blow.

William Butler Yeats, The Second Coming

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

§ 16

George Grant: “Not many of us have been forced to look unflinchingly into the face of Moloch.”

Moloch who entered my soul early!

Moloch whose name is the Mind!

Moloch whose ear is a smoking tomb!

I suspect a parasite. An artificial animal. A transitive psychosis that divests one hemisphere from the other, leaving us aspect-blind & poor in world—binding the body to a monstrous cadaver as in a hideous marriage. ((To be underlined: this ghost-hunger is not, as it is oft made out to be, *human nature*—at least, not in some essential or genetic sense—but a historically sublated side effect of tool-use: “something to be exorcised...”))

Oh *Leviathan!*—Syncretic hydra of crowns & haloes & square caps: —a strange hybrid of the ultra-modern & the archaic, a motley painting of everything there ever was, an autonomous movement of the nonliving.

Oh *Leviathan!*—Who sublates (—*Aufhebung*) materials & dreams, vessels & names, like the Exxon Valdez, only to get back to business-as-usual. Who will acknowledge the territory, but secure a pipeline all the same.

Oh *Leviathan!*—Myth that devours myth. Golden spike in the tongue of everything we do not want to hear. Plastic flotsam in the stomach of birds. —The spectacle, the colossi, ghost-hunger of Baxwbakwalanuksiwe’.

[Note: Something about cultural practices that emphasize possessing object-beings (shopping at the mall), over being *possessed by* object-beings (cf. the Hamat’sa dance of the Kwakwaka’wakw). Ecohermeneutics as an eminently composed reversal—not refutation—of empiricism. *True reading*—as in the dance of being. As in opening oneself to hermeneutical *Erfahrungen*—participatory experiences that imply “taking part in” (fr. Gr. *teilnehmen*), or “going along with” (fr. Gr. *mitgehen*) something other-than oneself. [A=A river.] This “mimetic faculty” or “sentience”—the compulsion to become other—(which, as Benjamin reminds us, is the oldest function of dance) requires a certain displacement of self to *fit* thinking with the shape of the thing thought (—Aristotle: *mensuratio ad rem*). A tender mode of reciprocal empiricism, closer to discerning fragrance or melody than schematics. Or the primal methodology of licking things. One way of knowing the world, the first way, is to allow it to enter you. Eating & being eaten, reading & being read: we know it works both ways. Imagine your body, your mind—nothing but a silly little fetish, a totem for mountains & whales.]

What is this “now of recognizability?” (recognizing what?) in which things put on their true—surrealist—face?

Consider the *pedagogical* truth of the right mask, at the right time. The mask that reveals more, looks deeper, than what is given on the surface. Imagine being forced to look unflinchingly into the true—surrealist—face of things—to experience hunger, the desire to possess—but to pause, for a moment, with attentive equanimity. As if each thing burned like a constellation. Now imagine that light entered you.

Insights of such intensity require (among other things): communal fire, dreaming (cf. “primary process” in Freud), remembering (cf. *Eingedenken* in Benjamin: “Awakening is namely the dialectical, Copernican turn of remembrance. It is an eminently composed reversal from the world of dreaming to the world of waking.”), some dancing maybe? School is not a place of passing through such an aperture. It is precisely *not* that place.

§ 16

Michel Serres, *The Troubadour of Knowledge*

It seems to me that it is better to live, speak, or think with all one's organs than to cut a dark half out of the whole. No one holds this principle in esteem, despite its beautiful, harmonious, and total self-evidence: how to explain humanity's passion, seemingly that of all humanity, for an illness that forces our half-body to be stuck to a cadaver, as in a hideous marriage?

Latiesha Fazakas, Introduction in *Beau Dick: Devoured By Consumerism*

For Beau, the Kwakwaka'wakw customs of the Hamat'sa secret society offer an illuminating analogue to consumer culture and the ravenous, insatiable appetite it instills in its subjects. The central Hamat'sa story is of four brothers who found the home of Baxwbakwalanuksiwe', a cannibalistic giant, killed him, and gained supernatural powers. To be initiated into Hamat'sa, young men must encounter, become possessed by, and finally purge themselves of the spirit of Baxwbakwalanuksiwe'... The appetite at the centre of Hamat'sa is not unique to Kwakwaka'wakw culture. As the anthropologist Stanley Walens writes, "The *hamat'sa* hunger is fearsome; but it is the same hunger felt by every human..." Alan Hunt, apprentice to Beau, suggests that the wild hunger experienced by a Hamat'sa initiate while possessed is not itself human nature, but is a side effect of a different drive... In Hunt's interpretation, the voraciousness of Baxwbakwalanuksiwe' is analogous to a central dynamic of consumerism—the taking of more than one needs. Significantly, this hunger is not innate in humans but is an outside force, "something to be exorcised" through ceremony, and the supernatural powers that the Hamat'sa gains are what remain. The Hamat'sa ceremony teaches that to master one's hunger is a power even greater than that hunger itself... Rampant desire brings ruin, but, if properly managed, hunger can become a source of strength.

John Cussans, In the House of the Man-Eater

Later in the ceremony, after his clothing of hemlock has been replaced by regalia of redcedar bark, a Potlatch Copper is held before the Hamat'sa, who reaches for it with trembling hands. Eventually he is able to control the terrible hunger of Man-Eater, and he achieves a higher state of human-ness. Perhaps this is why, in the language of the Owikeno (Wuikinuxv) people who live north of the Kwakwaka'wakw, Baxwbakwalanuksiwe' can be translated as "becoming-increasingly-human-by-passing-through-an-aperture."

Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street*

If one had to expound the teachings of antiquity with utmost brevity... it could only be in this sentence: "They alone shall possess the earth [sic.] who live from the powers of the cosmos." Nothing distinguishes the ancient from the modern man so much as the former's absorption in a cosmic experience scarcely known to later periods... All the same, the exclusive emphasis on an optical connection to the universe, to which astronomy very quickly led, contained a portent of what was to come. The ancient's intercourse with the cosmos had been different: the ecstatic trance. For it is in this experience alone that we gain certain knowledge of what is nearest to us and what is remotest from us, and never of one without the other. This means, however, that man can be in ecstatic contact with the cosmos only communally. It is the dangerous error of modern men to regard this experience as unimportant and avoidable, and to consign it to the individual as the poetic rapture of starry nights.

§ 17

“So... is this just gonna to be a heap of random thoughts & stories, or what?”

Not at all. I mean—yes, but only in the Herakleitan sense of *heap*. This is an attempt, jangled tho it may be, to forge a lyric composition. Philosophy can only assume lyric form when thought is arranged by intuitions of an underlying coherence. —Zwicky: “The grammar of thought reveals itself in style.” The grammar of lyric expression has been described as: *ecological, polyphonic, resonant*—like chamber music. Or, to switch senses, like collage. —“That is, when philosophy is conceived as an attempt to arrive at an integrated perception, a picture or understanding of how something might affect us as beings with bodies and emotions, as well as the ability to parse syllogisms. Or: philosophy may assume lyric form when it attempts to give voice to an ecology of experience. Under such circumstances, it is not useful to distinguish between art and philosophy.”

Strictly between us comrade, I initially set out to write a book that would map the educational ramifications of hermeneutics in a more-than-human world. Specifically, I wanted to revisit a brilliant essay, written twenty years ago by eco-ethicist Mick Smith, wherein he speculates that, despite some “residual anthropocentrism,” the hermeneutics of Gadamer & Benjamin allow us to broaden our anthropic notion of *language*. Moreover, it is only when we recognize human speech as a “subset of the speaking world” that we are able to envisage a “genuine *dialectical materialism*.” An ecohermeneutic reading of language(-as-such) may thus provide the basis, from within the “Western” tradition, to refute human exceptionalism on the deepest level: meaning.

I wanted to bridge this project with the lyric philosophy of Zwicky (& Bringhurst), whose work is aimed, in part, at cultivating awareness of the resonant structure of the world—& human experiences of the world—unconditioned by language (in the linguistic sense of the word). “Ecohermeneutics” is a term with many possible meanings, but for me, it is akin to lyric philosophy to the extent that both recognize ontological attention, formal resonance, & focused analogical thinking as means of cultivating *domestic understanding* (i.e. of *being educated*). Both consider how “lyric experiences”—& the trace of such ineffable insights in lyric compositions—allow us to discern “the nature of the good life; how to be fully human in the larger human and nonhuman world.” Ecohermeneutics, in this lyric sense, rejects the primacy of human language as the sole repository of meaning & works to reinnervate a capacity to discern conventionally muzzled sources: the gestural, the tacit, the revelatory, the oneiric, the entheogenic, the other-than-human.

As an educator, I wanted to propose that the *cultivation* (in the hermeneutic sense of *Bildung*) of a lyric disposition—by way of engaging with lyric forms, recognizing things as more-than-human compositions, & dissolving the will to mastery—is what education ought to be for in a time of ecological crisis. *Being educated* would thus come to mean, in part, “a heightened sensitivity to the live, metaphorical relation between things & the resonant structure of the world.” I wanted to point to Michel Serres as an example of a “lyric-minded” or “third-instructed” hermeneutician in science studies; & David Jardine as a wayfinder in curricular theory. Finally, I wanted to use the Indigenous worldview(s) expressed in *The First Peoples Principles of Learning* as a means of turning the anthropologic gaze back on settler culture & exploring how Indigenous dispositions & practices ought to inform the pedagogy of these lands. That is, I wanted to explore how a lyric & place-based “hermeneutics of illumination” (Benjamin) might evoke an experiential clearing—tense & contested, but open & deep—between emerging, reflexive Eäarthling culture(s) & evolving, resurgent Indigenous culture(s).

But I already told you: this is a lament. Because lyric is not straightforwardly teachable in the same way we parse syllogisms or species. Because we only grasp deep connexions in the absence & darkness of our self. Because thought can live only on grounds which we adopt in the service of a reality to which we submit.

Because school is no place—no milieu—for cultivating this kind of disposition. It is precisely *not* that place.

§ 17

Mick Smith, Lost for Words?

The idea that mice, trees and even rocks might have a language and/or a mental life would seem absurd to many. But Benjamin argues for a radical redefinition of the notion of language itself. He wants to subvert some of the anthropocentric presuppositions that make a particular (logo-centric) understanding of human language the sole model for *language as such*. Instead of linking language as such to the word it is defined as a “*capacity* for communication,” a capacity for *expression* that all things have. Since, Benjamin claims, it is impossible to think of anything existing which does not express itself in some way, anything that does not somehow communicate its presence to other things, then, “we cannot imagine a total absence of language in anything.” This, claims Benjamin, is “not anthropomorphism.”

Benjamin defines that which expresses *itself* in language, that “itself” which is the direct source of particular expressions, as a “mental entity”...[W]ords remain the paradigmatic medium of human thought and communication, and hence we tend to deny mental being to those things that lack words. Benjamin counters such logo-centric prejudices, arguing that all forms of expression insofar as they communicate mental meaning are to be understood as forms of language.

...[W]hen Benjamin speaks of “mental entities” he is not trying to establish a distinction between mental and physical entities, nor is he espousing a form of idealism that would claim that all things are purely “mental.” He is not arguing that every physical object has a more or less diffuse “mind”—a dimensionless *res cogitans*—associated with it or that their physical existence is somehow “immaterial.” Rather he is arguing that all material things (all things) express themselves in various ways, and whatever of this expression is potentially communicable to other things *is* language as such. If one thus redefines mentality in terms of expression, then all “physical” things are also inherently “mental.” It is often, precisely, a thing’s “materiality” (in the sense of its tangibility) that is expressed and communicated to other things, the rock that falls on your head, the force of the river’s currents against your leg.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophy

As language gets its way of meaning from what it means, from the world, no language is thinkable which doesn’t represent this world.

Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor*

60. How can we know there are other beings that see the world in roughly the way we do?—Our experience of meaning; our recognition of beauty; because we have been spoken to, pierced; because we recognize the symptoms of such experience in others. This capacity to recognize other beings’ gestures *for what they are*—expressions of experience like our own—is the capacity to experience meaningful coincidence of context, the arc of energy released when one context, laid across another, coincides in ways that refract back into individual contexts. This capacity—i.e., a sensitivity to resonance—is what we call imagination.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*

172. Understanding a musical phrase may also be called understanding a *language*.

§ 18

Brazilian anthropologist, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, claims to have once set out to write an homage to Deleuze & Guattari from the point of view of his field, which he would cleverly title, *Anti-Narcissus: Anthropology as Minor Science* (alluding, of course, to *Anti-Oedipus*). But he quickly realized the project was threatened with total contradiction should he lapse into narcissistic praise of any of the positions he was to profess therein. He thus resigned to submitting the prospective opus to an invisible library of Borgesian design, opting instead to write another book, *Cannibal Metaphysics*, as a beginner's guide to *Anti-Narcissus*. (Besides, as Borges deftly illustrates, these invisible works tend to be more compelling than their corporeal counterparts). The principal concern of both books, however, is perfectly clear: what do anthropologists owe, conceptually, to the collectives they study? In other words, what if we recognized the imaginative capacities of the "primitives" that anthropology claims to explain as the source of the most generative practices & ideas introduced to thought from that field? —What if birds are *literally* speaking? (to "them" &—My God!—to us?)

Viveiros de Castro: "The question of *Anti-Narcissus* is thus epistemological, meaning political. If we are all more or less agreed that anthropology, even if colonialism was one of its historical *a priori*s, is today nearing the end of its karmic cycle, then we should also accept the time has come to radicalize the reconstitution of the discipline by forcing the process to its completion. Anthropology is ready to fully assume its new mission of being the theory/practice of the permanent decolonization of thought... [T]he intention of *Anti-Narcissus* is to show that the styles of thought proper to the collectives we study are the motor force of anthropology."

What is the "motor force" of educational innovation? —We are told time & again it is some "21st century" upgrade of personalized learning & technological integration, but these are merely economic imperatives masquerading as pedagogy. Could we not say, like anthropology, that the most "generative" (—socially & ecologically, not only technically) practices & styles introduced to the field—particularly in the context of a post 400ppm world—originate from Indigenous collectives? Could we not say that the radical reconstitution of anthropology proposed in *Anti-Narcissus* sets something of reflexive precedent for the task of "thinking thought otherwise" in education? (—A field that also ought to be forced to the end of its colonial *a priori*s.) Are both fields not, after all, the twin brood of Empire? Second wave settlers arriving after the unpleasantries of Contact have run their course to "eat at the table of another?" To furnish the garrison with a semblance of Civilization? —Genocide as bad cop, School as good cop. On the surface, things may look different today: ten ways to indigenize the curriculum stapled to the wall, Indigenous authors in the library, an elementary school named Queneesh. But from underground, one sees that the colonial rootstock remains foundational. —School: "Fine, we will trim back the Christianity, too much rape and brimstone for this century. And we will allow critiques of capital, so long as they are fictional or relegated to history. But we draw the line at reason, progress, and individualism: that is *who we are*. As for 'the land, spirits and ancestors.' Tsk—preposterous."

I thus propose an invisible book: *Anti-Sisyphus: More-Than-Human Being in Revolt*. Sisyphus is the obvious choice for patron saint of School, with his passion for exploration & commerce, his hubristic faith in himself over the gods, his fate. (—Sisyphus was dragged back to the underworld by Hermes). *Anti-Sisyphus* will be an homage to the pessimistic-but-mystic existentialists—Dostoevsky, Weil, Benjamin, Camus, Buber, maybe Peter Wessel Zapffe—that will implore educators to revolt against the drudgery of preparing students for a world that no longer exists. *It is already too late*: the carbon is already in the air; you are already a composite being sharing lungs & extreme *temps*. The paradox is that this absurd position does not lead to Sisyphean nihilism & meaningless labour, but anti-Sisyphean solidarity with the living rock we already are (cf. *Biogea*). (Note: I cannot actually write the book because the potential for hubris & drudgery threatens the project with total contradiction. Moreover, the thought of actually writing *Anti-Sisyphus* makes me want to kill myself.)

—*Notes from Underground*, as you may have already gathered, is a "beginner's guide" to *Anti-Sisyphus*.

* Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics*

Because if Oedipus is the protagonist of the founding myth of psychoanalysis, our book proposes Narcissus as the candidate patron saint or tutelary spirit of anthropology, which (above all in its so-called “philosophical” version) has always been a little too obsessed with determining the attributes or criteria that fundamentally distinguish the subject of anthropological discourse from everything it is not: *them* (which really in the end means us), the non-Occidentals, the nonmoderns, the nonhumans. In other words, what is it that the others “have not” that constitutes them as non-Occidental and nonmodern? Capitalism? Rationality? Individualism and Christianity? ...And what about even more gaping absences that would make certain others nonhumans (or, rather, make the nonhumans the true others)? An immortal soul? Language? Labour? The *Lichtung*?

All these absences resemble each other. For in truth, taking them for the problem is exactly the problem, which thus contains the form of the response: the form of the Great Divide, the same gesture of exclusion that made the human species the biological analogue of the anthropological West, confusing all other species and peoples in a common, privative alterity... [A]sking what distinguishes us from the others—and it makes little difference who “they” are, since what really matters in that case is only “us”—is already a response.

Against the great dividers, a minor anthropology would make small multiplicities proliferate—not the narcissism of small differences but the anti-narcissism of continuous variations; against all the finished-and-done humanisms, an “interminable humanism” that constantly challenges the constitution of humanity into a separate order. I will re-emphasize it: such an anthropology would make multiplicities proliferate. Because it is not at all a question... of preaching the abolition of the borders that unite/separate sign and world, persons and things, “us” and “them,” “humans” and “nonhumans”—easy reductionisms and mobile monisms are as out of the question as fusional fantasies—but rather of “unreducing” [*irréduire*] (Latour) and undefining them, by bending every line of division into an infinitely complex curve. It is not a question of erasing the contours but of folding and thickening them, diffracting and rendering them iridescent.

Peter Skafish, Introduction in Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics* ((Annotated))

For conceiving Amerindian thought in terms of concepts ((Cross out *concepts*, & put *ideas* in the Benjaminian sense of *images*)) changes not only our concepts but our very concept of concepts, pulling the concept, that is, into the orbit of myth and its much greater capacity to effect transformations of not only other myths but also other discursive materials. Think concepts as one would myths—as though they were only ever versions of each other, and in which none of their distinctions are incapable of being transformed—and the radically pluralistic, self-undoing philosophy they had been unable to furnish on their own emerges.

Peter Cole, *Raven & Coyote Go Canoeing*

it is not the way of my culture to identify human beings becomings
as the summit of creation the crest of high ground the pinnacle of becoming
we believe the creator made the world for all of our sisters and brothers
the plant nations waters stones mountains insects bacteria viruses
powers and spirits and beings of the four directions

§ 19

michael dé danann datura, Materials for *Anti-Sisyphus: More-Than-Human Being in Revolt*

Overview of Convolutes

A	Place, <i>Home</i> , Natural Resources	W	Serres
B	Pollution: Hard/Soft	X	Benjamin
C	Underground Music, Resonance	Y	The Internet
D	Boredom, Drudgery	Z	<i>Leviathan!</i>
E	Gestalt Intelligence, Lyric Awareness	a	The Biotariat, Proleterrean
F	Developmentalism: Spencer, Piaget, Dewey	b	Camus
G	Metaphor, Allegorical Practice, Seeing-As	c	....
H	The Collagist	d	(Eco)Anamnesis, (Eco) <i>Eingedenken</i>
I	Mimesis, Sentience	e	....
J	Zwickly	f	....
K	Dream World, Dreams of the Future, Moves to Innocence, Techno-Fix	g	The Mill & The Mall, Economics
L	Crystal Palace, Big Ideas	h	....
M	The Educator	i	Reproduction Technology
N	On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress	k	The Ecotone
O	Ineffability, Selflessness	l	The Puntledge, River(s) of Being
P	Ancestors, Spirits, The Land	m	Timelessness
Q	Domesticity	n	....
R	Capitalist Realism	o	....
S	Funga, Flora, Fauna	p	Anthropological Materialism, Indigenous Ways of Knowing
T	Modes of Knowing	q	....
U	George Grant, Gates	r	The School
V	Ecohermeneutics, <i>Ecosurrealism</i>		

§ 19

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Projects*

Overview of Convolutes

A	Arcades, <i>Magasins de Nouveautés</i> , Sales Clerks	W	Fourier
B	Fashion	X	Marx
C	Ancient Paris, Catacombs, Decline of Paris	Y	Photography
D	Boredom, Eternal Return	Z	The Doll, Automaton
E	Haussmannization, Barricade Fighting	a	Social Movement
F	Iron Construction	b	Daumier
G	Exhibitions, Advertising, Grandville	c	....
H	The Collector	d	Literary History, Hugo
I	The Interior, The Trace	e	....
J	Baudelaire	f	....
K	Dream City and Dream House, Dreams of the Future, Anthropological Nihilism, Jung	g	The Stock Exchange, Economic History
L	Dream House, Museum, Spa	h	....
M	The Flâneur	i	Reproduction Technology, Lithography
N	On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress	k	The Commune
O	Prostitution, Gambling	l	The Seine, The Oldest Paris
P	The Streets of Paris	m	Idleness
Q	Panorama	n	....
R	Mirrors	o	....
S	Painting, Jugendstil, Novelty	p	Anthropological Materialism, History of Sects
T	Modes of Lighting	q	....
U	Saint-Simon, Railroads	r	Ecole Polytechnique
V	Conspiracies, <i>Compagnonnage</i>		

Convolute II

[If] photomontage confronted the viewer with the imperative to see differently, Benjamin's use of the montage principle in a literary text demands that the reader *read differently*.

-- Michael W. Jennings, Introduction in
Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street*

Form, in the sense that I speak of it here, thinks. Its appetite is cosmological. It mirrors its origins and reflects on the act itself. Let's say it thinks by provoking thought. This is its aim, intrinsically.

-- Charles Simic, Composition

Be advised: —I am no classically trained philosopher. Just another eäarthling with more than a few regrets. Just another drinking-class zek with some dreams & views & bills to pay. I hesitate to even call this “lyric philosophy” (—I just wanted to acknowledge Jan Zwicky.) Not because this work lacks “thinking whose eros is coherence,” but because she is a *violinist*. A poet of darkling grace who has achieved something profound: a novel medium for thinking embodied in structural innovations upon the way a book traditionally means. I have never even held a violin. Then, whispering under his breath: “Still wouldest thou sing, and I have ears in vain—To thy high requiem become a sod.” —I was raised in a milieu of sci-fi & comic books, punk rock & underground hip-hop. —I am a sick man... I am a wicked man. An unattractive man. I think my liver hurts.

Collage is my violin, you see. Good collage, like good poetry—“like all meaningful thought”—enacts what Zwicky calls *ontological attention*. Something about its polydimensional structure—its multiple, integrated axes of experience—the vicarious pull of its tension-filled, resonant-body on the flesh—can, under certain conditions of attunement, draw us out of our self-obsession into a world beyond our little wantings & doings (cf. *aesthetic experience, sentience, third-instruction*). Zwicky: “Ecological structure is a form of resonance.” —[The (eco)hermeneutic *Bildung* of both lyric arts & land-based education is, in fact, based in this mimetic faculty: that is, both discipline the senses & cultivate the requisite disposition to experience eäarthen alterity. *Education*, fr. Latin *educere*, “to bring out.”]— The structural logic of collage is, to switch senses, polyphonic. But its tonal range—& in certain anarchist subcultures, its content—tends to be more jangled, splenetic, dirty. The lyric philosophy of Zwicky, in other words, is sympathetic with the music of Schubert, Haydn, Brahms, Bach, Schumann; & with the austere & aphoristic thinking of Plato, Wittgenstein, Weil, & the Pre-Socratics. Collage, on the other hand, resonates with music & thinking that mimes discord & revolt: the underground.

—*What did you expect?* I was not raised in a home with violins or the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* on the bookshelf. I learned my cadence from Ghostface Killah, not Herakleitos. My first teacher was a dying glacier. Philosophy as surrealistic montage to destroy idols, as DIY zine & *détournement*, as an underground remix (feat. the spirit of Paracelsus & Novalis [—both amateur miners]; a few pessimistic-but-mystic existentialists —Dostoevsky, Weil, Camus, Buber, Peter Wessel Zapffe (& George Grant as dark canuck); a couple fastidious hermeneuts (Benjamin & Gadamer); a couple alchemical surrealists (Magritte & Ernst); Debord; Perlman; Wittgenstein; Serres; Zwicky; Bringhurst; Lilburn; McKay; Jardine; Peter Cole—& a riffraff crew of Others.) All drifting in a jade canoe with Coyote & Raven, down the lost rivers that still run beneath Canadian cities.

“The question of whom to think-with is immensely material.” —I used to keep all my thrift store catalogs & old National Geographics (bequeathed to me by my grandmother) organized & intact. But unruly stacks of magazines everywhere offended the angel of history that sits on my left shoulder. The method thus turned to tearing out images & compiling them into convolute-like (cf. Benjamin) folders that could be archived in a filing cabinet: *landscapes, sci-fi, hip-hop, animals, occult, tribal, fascism, etc.* (Note: the images incessantly slip between convolutes). The method is based on cultivating the discipline to recognize a hitherto concealed connexion “underneath the surface.” How a particular image *fits* within a complex constellation such that it reveals some deeper truth about both the image itself & the ecological whole. “The work of the philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose.”—Rearrange. Remix. *Remember*. A good collage enacts the ontological attention required to discern particulars in relation to a living, subterranean ecology. Under certain conditions of attunement, it can strike like a pickaxe, like a paddle, like little bell-shaped fungi.

§ 20

Dennis Lee, *The Music of Thinking*

Zwicky has devised an original medium for philosophic thinking. And *Lyric Philosophy* is a first foray in that medium, a test run. But while it gives a bracing example of lyric thought in action, it hardly exhausts the possibilities of the new form. Which invites the question, how else could this lyric structure be deployed? ...The tonal range of the lead voice could vary widely. In *Lyric Philosophy* it is primarily discursive; in *Wisdom & Metaphor*, more aphoristic / oracular. But what if the voice on the left swivelled around much more—becoming at times anecdotal, splenetic, statistical, hymnic? ...Zwicky is drawn to “meaning as resonant unity,” and that underlies many of her formal moves. But what about structures of *dis* harmony? ...[A]re there structural innovations that flow from that? A music that mimes discord? partial resonance? incomplete or busted gestalts?

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[N1a,8]. Method of this project: literary montage. I needn’t *say* anything. Merely show. I shall purloin no valuables, appropriate no ingenious formulations. But the rags, the refuse—these I will not inventory but allow, in the only way possible, to come into their own: by making use of them.

[N7,4]. Necessity of paying heed over many years to every casual citation, every fleeting mention of a book.

[m2a,1]. Student and hunter. The text is a forest in which the reader is hunter. Rustling in the underbrush – the idea, skittish prey, the citation—another piece “in the bag.” (Not every reader encounters the idea.)

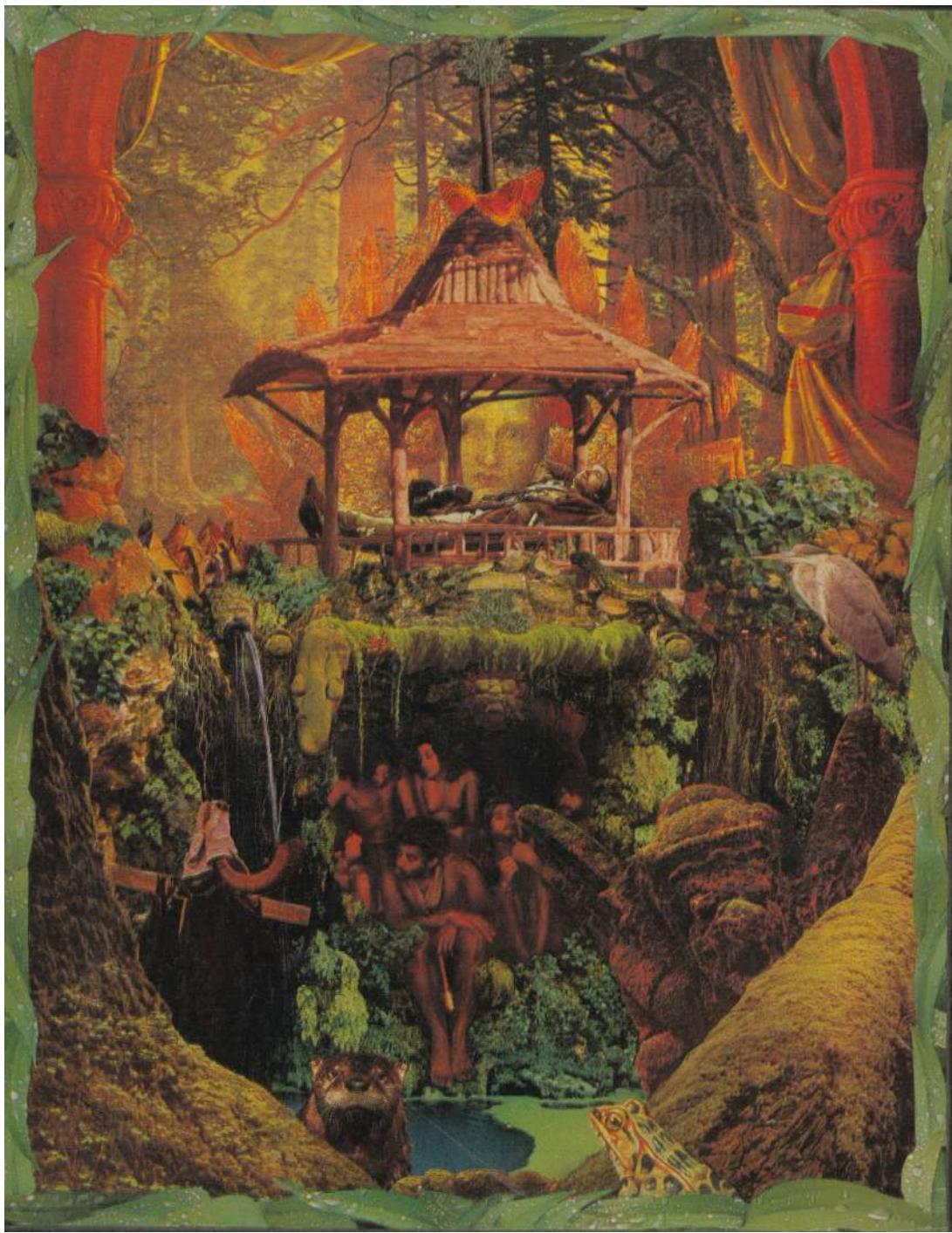
Hakim Bey, Preface to *Magpie Reveries: The Iconographic Mandalas of James Koehnline* ((Annotated))

Sergei Eisenstein compared *montage*—the cutting-up of moving pictures—to Chinese writing or pictographic language. Collage—the cutting-up of still pictures—creates series of sections sliced from the translucent scroll of ideogrammology—“Stop playin’ that Chinese music in my band!” (Cab Calloway to a young Dizzy Gillespie)—(or the story about the Chinese ambassador who said his favorite part of the symphony was the part *before* the conductor arrived, i.e. the orchestral tune-up)—sections sliced from “Chinese music” & pasted down in two dimensions, like all oriental art, no more illusions about “perspective”... Some call collage the natural artform for a generation reared on film & TV—true—but not because the collagist tries to imitate the flicker-effect or montage. On the contrary, collage aspires to a completely static state ((cf. Benjamin: “dialectics at a standstill;” Magritte: the “stone age”))... like a cluttered altar raised in honour of consciousness or perception itself. Collage is not an *homage* to TV, it’s a... “fix” in both senses of the word.

Each of [Koehnline’s] collages can be categorized in a Bosch-like spectrum of paradise, hell, &/or the garden of earthly delights, expressed not metaphysically but *in the body*... Hell in this case manifests *politically*... the stripping away of consciousness from the body & its appropriation by the abstraction of *Control*: while the “garden of earthly delights” (androgyne fucking inside giant eggs & strawberries, etc.) likewise manifests in the body, as pleasure & autonomy. “Paradise”... is also on Earth, in “Eden” not “Heaven.” But it roots itself in body thru *mind* by the linking faculty of *imagination*, the nation of images, the Mundus Imaginalis... A child playing in an attic full of old picture-books & dusty beams of sunlight... Theory as a process of *drifting* through a *Series of Images*—original meaning of “theory:” *vision*, with an implication of rapture...

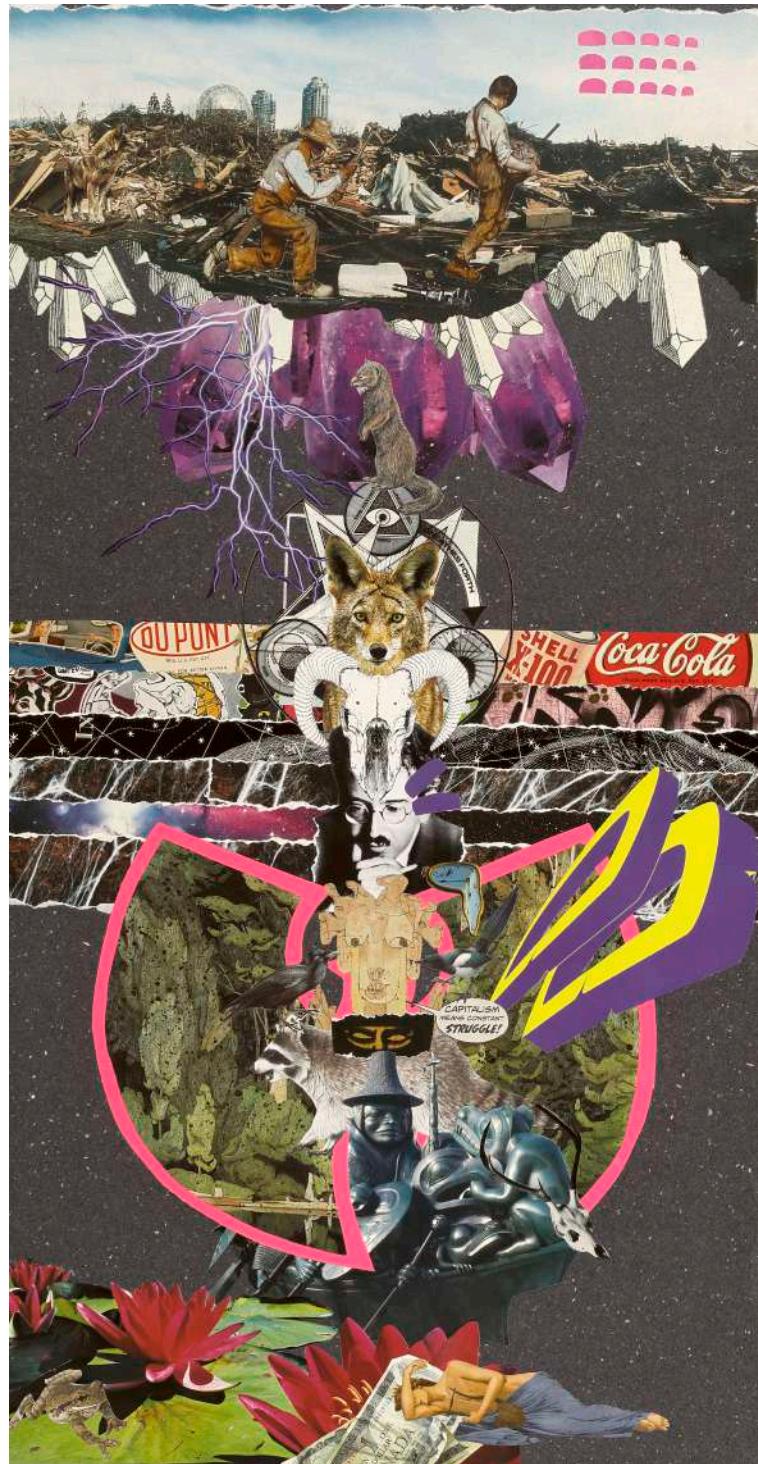
§ 21

Method of this project: Lyric as sound dirt. Philosophy as a broken violin, a busted gestalt, a ruderal ecology. Arrange a Herakleitan heap of citations, images & *objet trouvés* on a cluttered altar until certain surprising relationships, which hint at meaning, begin to appear. —Rearrange. Remix. *Remember*. Theory as a process of *drifting* through a *Series of Images*—original meaning of “theory:” *vision*, with an implication of rapture.



James Koehnline, cover art for Ron Sakolsky & James Koehnline (Eds.), *Gone to Croatan* (1993)

§ 22



michael dé danann datura, *False Creek* (2022)
Paper collage on handmade paper, 76cm x 41cm

§ 22

Guy Debord, *Comment on the Society of the Spectacle*

Our unfortunate times... compel me, once again, to write in a new way. Some elements will be intentionally omitted; and the plan will have to remain rather unclear. Readers will encounter certain decoys, as being the very hallmark of the era. As long as certain pages are interpolated here and there, the overall meaning may appear: just as secret clauses have very often been added to whatever treaties may openly stipulate; just as some chemical agents only reveal their hidden properties when they are combined with others. However, in this brief work there will be only too many things which are, alas, easy to understand.

Peter Cole, *Coyote and Raven Go Canoeing*

a framework

is not just an architect/ural or /tectonic manifestation of a blueprint/ing

it is the enactment of a respectful relationship

with the rest of creation which shares this earth with us

a framework is never a noun never simply a metaphor

it cannot be captured thus as part of speech a figuration

it is more than any words which attempt to denote it

a framework is a journey/ing with

before outcomes and risk assessments and surface rights wrongs

is there not spirit in the air we breathe the breath we share in the water

is it not an obligation for human beings to offer some thing

for the life we are about to take

is the framework of ethical consideration

and spiritual connection not the frame work we need

to consider and to act within the guidelines

the creator gives us however that might come across

be it direct intervention sign/ification interpretation or presumption

even within the translated real/m of the english language

whose geographies are alien to many of our minds and hearts

is there not sown some respect for how things might be to others

we learned to take a canoe from a cedar without felling it

slate for tools profuse with islands

not just a way of life but life itself

hunting trails berry trails trading trails visiting trails

we assemble bit by bit the canoe giving thanks

in that place europhilosophy calls 'conceptual space' t/here

I speak with the assembled tree nations to/with a particular tree

asking permission to use its clothing

its bodywood its spiritwood its heartwood

as a vehicle for my journey of words ideas intentions actions feeling

as a companion paddle paddle paddle paddle swoooooooossshhh

§ 23

“But why collage? What does collage have to do with philosophy? Or pedagogy? Or ecology?”

It is partially biographic: I was born & raised in a milieu of sci-fi & comic books, punk rock & underground hip-hop, grassroots & the salt of the earth. I have, as such, always been drawn to subcultures & artforms where collagist techniques—collecting, curating, cutting & pasting, defacing, sampling, remixing, pointing & hoping—comprise the elemental mode of expression. As a youth, I obsessively pieced together self-published zines—poetry, permaculture, DIY politics—interspersed with shocking collages for distribution at punk shows & Food Not Bombs. Environmental activism eventually turned to performance poetry & an underground hip-hop project: *The Declining Amphibian Phenomenon*. The *Amphibians* were never explicitly “surrealist,” but we often collaborated with The Inner Island Surrealists (—cf. Ron Sakolsky et al.) for seditious cabarets, May Day celebrations, & other marvelous events to experiment with subversive noise. Politics as sound dirt.

Other influences: *One-Way Street* by Walter Benjamin: a constellation of sixty *Denkbild*—philosophical inquiries, memories, humorous anecdotes, dream sequences, & social critiques—composed as a critical *flânerie* down a Berlin boulevard in Weimar Germany; the seven hundred & seventeen interrelated notes in *Zettel* (“slips of paper”) by Ludwig Wittgenstein; the two hundred & twenty-one theses in *The Society of the Spectacle* by Guy Debord; the one hundred & fifty-three aphorisms in *Minima Moralia* by Theodor Adorno; the alchemical collagist artworks of Max Ernst & René Magritte; the anarchist collage works of Gee Vaucher; the primitivist mandala collages of James Koehnline; the Giuseppe Arcimboldo & Hieronymus Bosch lineage of proto-eco-surrealism; the alchemical image-magic of Peter Lamborn Wilson (—aka Hakim Bey); the hermetic-Romantic scientist lineage of Georg Friedrich Philipp von Hardenberg (—aka Novalis) & Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim (—aka Paracelsus); & a riffraff crew of Others.

My passion for making mind-altering zines & underground hip-hop is ultimately—perhaps absurdly—what led me to the field of education. At around twenty-two, I began volunteering at arts-based summer camps, teaching young people how to arrange their poetry & arts into xeroxable chapbooks & offering workshops on how to slang conscious rhymes. This led to contract work youth detention centres & eventually to teaching “at-risk” youth as a formal educator. It seemed like a natural progression at the time. Being a teacher would be like distributing zines & kicking political raps on the next level. I envisioned a pedagogy permeated with collage elements: multiple perspectives, paradox, profanity, shocking illuminations. Teacher as unethical anthropologist: —meddling with the very syntax of a culture. —But school is no place for destroying idols.

The situation is absurd because, for me, as for many critical theorists, education is *for* conscientization on some level. School ought to be that place in a democratic society where we cultivate the critical consciousness required to recognize healthy socio-ecological contracts by examining knowledge production & the ways in which our knowing is subject to ideological distortion. In other words, a basic hermeneutic awareness of the cultural-historical conditioning of understanding—or, if you will, *the interpretability of the world* (Jardine).

Two problems follow: i.) the extent to which critical pedagogues have been able to conscientize The People vis-à-vis State Education has been limited to say the least. Given the increasingly threadbare state of public discourse, democratic institutions, & planetary ecosystems the conscientization project appears troublingly inadequate. Put differently, critical content is consistently undercut by technocratic form: —“Vocabularies mutate more than grammars.” ii.) Critical consciousness tends to be defined, with some notable exceptions, as a progressive program that appeals to & propagates the very “epistemology of control” that precipitated the crisis: Reason, Technocracy, Scientism, Anthropos. —Different distribution of shit, same Crystal Palace.

Good collage enacts a pedagogical philosophy by way of realigning the geometry of attention with ecology.

§ 23

Peter Lamborn Wilson, The Disciples at Saïs: A Sacred Theory of Earth

During the Second World War certain philosophers of both Capitalism and Communism decided to blame Fascism on the German Romantic movement and its “final” theorist F. Nietzsche. Rationalism was defined as *good* and surrealism as *evil*. Ecologists even today are often tarred with brush of “irrationalism,” especially if they are *activists*. A local real estate developer... recently called his environmentalist enemies, a group called “Save the Ridge,” “Nazis” in an interview... Everything that Capital wants is “rational” by definition and even by decree. Capital wins all the wars; ergo, Rationalism is “true,” q.e.d.

But modern radicals such as the Frankfurt School (—Benjamin, Bloch, Marcuse), the Surrealists, the Situationists, all decided to try to seize back Romanticism from the dustbin of History and to champion the surrealist and even hermetic program of left-wing anti-Enlightenment, anti-authoritarian and ecological resistance that a recent book has called *Revolutionary Romanticism*... I believe that today’s ecological resistance cannot afford to ignore its own sources in a vain attempt to reconcile itself with the Totality and scientific apotheosis of Global Capital. Romantic Science is literally a sine qua non for the resistance to ecological disintegration. I would... argue... the “new” scientific paradigm we’re looking for to replace the dead-matter / material-force scientific worldview of Enlightenment / State / Capital, can best be found in the perennial but underground tradition of hermetic-Romantic science.

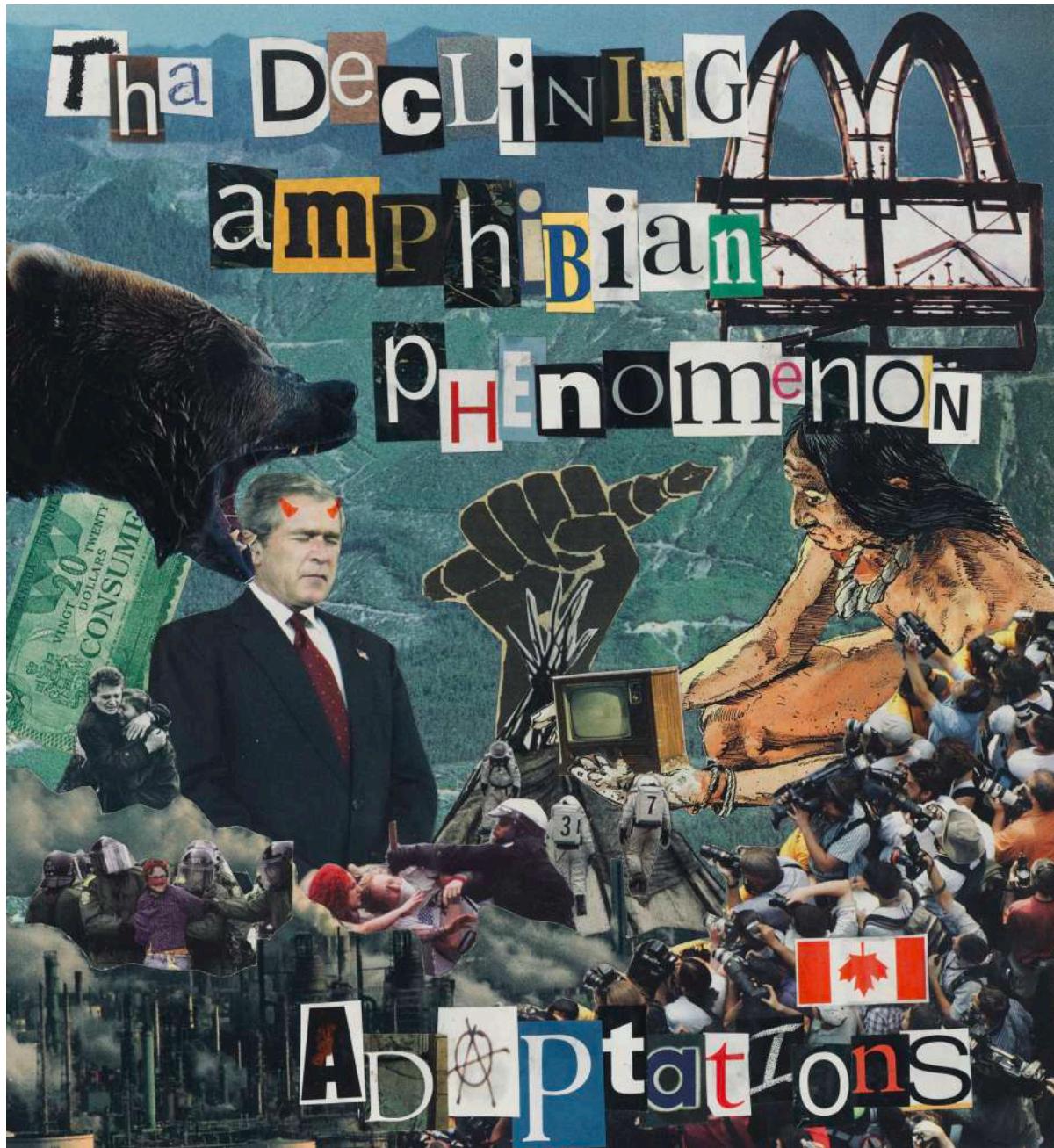
Inner Island Surrealists, For an Ecology of the Marvelous

As Ecologists of the Marvelous, surrealists move beyond conventional environmental concerns for the “conservation” and “endangerment” of a natural world which is viewed as external to us, and instead head towards a relationship of Passional Attraction and erotic engagement with a natural world of which we are fully a part. In embracing the Marvelous, we seek nothing less than the expansion of wilderness everywhere in the face of the rapaciousness of oil-industries, timber-industries, and a techno-industrial civilization with its charade of reformist attempts at recuperation. In our quest to live more poetic lives, we discard the miserabilist straitjacket of anthropo[centrism]. In doing so, we become increasingly aware of ourselves as free-spirited beings that are active participants in an ecology of wonders rather than seeing ourselves as superior beings divinely ordained to be at the centre of the universe by some all-powerful God of Yore or by the newer gods of Media and Advertising or Science and Technology.

Sally O'Reilly, Collage: Diversions, Contradictions and Anomalies ((Annotated))

Collage is often perceived as an inclusive art form: not only can we all understand how a collage is made, but we are all qualified to make them; and this apparent lack of skill can make the process, as well as the outcome, seem arbitrary ((—cf. Benjamin on allegory in *Trauerspiel*). If meaning can be manufactured by the combination of any two images, then what are the merits of one juxtaposition over another? Rather than being entirely contingent and unstructured, collage, requires a different ability to mimetic image-making. ((In the passive, mechanical sense of mimesis. For a dialectical or formal ecological mimesis see: Benjamin, Taussig, Zwicky, or the present work.)) The collagist must pre-empt the reception of visual information, manipulate the associations each element brings and orchestrate their interaction with one another and the viewer. The collagist is... an unethical anthropologist who meddles with the very syntax of a culture. ((But, & this is the crux, lyric compositions are also orchestrated to provoke ontological insight. Lyric is not aimed at “manufacturing meaning” by way of novel juxtapositions, but resonance with the ecology of *what-is*.)

Gee Vaucher: "All humans are animal, but some animals are more human than others."



michael dé danann datura, *Tha Declining Amphibian Phenomenon* (2005)
[Cover for underground hip-hop project.] Paper on cardstock, 22cm x 20cm

Michel Serres, *Malfeasance*

Please listen with me to the fierce pleading of the rebellious tagger, who is sometimes dragged into the courtroom against the advertising executive, who is honoured, legal, dominant and a payer; the former pleads against the latter. “With what right do you appropriate spaces with your omnipresent grimaces, and so the minds of your contemporaries? Why shouldn’t I have the right to act like you? My tags criticize your dirt by imitating it; they make fun of it; you say I cover the walls and subway entrances with shit, but don’t you think that my works are more original, less repetitive than yours that over and over again repeat the same brands excrementally? Without courage, you sign only with the name of your brand or the one that has bought you. I personally sign my own paintings.” The executive will answer: “You are inventing nothing. All you do is trace of surfaces and walls the names and words that I spread around and forced you to learn by heart.” In the middle of the dialogue I add, “I too am a painter and tag this book.”

Even though they accuse one another of soft dumping, society, the law, and custom decide together in favour of money. The rich will prevail in the courtroom. My book speaks for the others from the suburbs, those places of banishment. I am writing it expressly for the next generation.

My page, my rage tag.

Aesop Rock, Daylight

Put one up for shackle-me-not clean logic procreation.
I did not invent the wheel, I was the crooked spoke adjacent.
While the triple sixers lassos keep angels roped in the basement
I walk the block with a halo on a stick, poking your patience.

Now it’s honour and I spell it with the ‘H’ I stole from Heritage.
Merit crutched on the wretched refuse of my teeming resonance.
I promise. Tempest tossed breed with a bleeding conscience
See the creed accent’s responsive, but my spores divorced the wattage.

And I’m sleeping now. Wow. Yeah, the settler’s laugh:
You won’t be laughing when your covered wagons crash.
You won’t be laughing when the buzzards drag your brother’s flags to rags.
You won’t be laughing when your front lawn’s spangled with epitaphs.
You won’t be laughing.

And I’ll hang my boots to rest when I’m impressed. So I triple knot ‘em and forgot ‘em.
His origami dream is beautiful but man those wings will never leave the ground
Without a feather and a lottery ticket, now settle down.

All I ever wanted was to pick apart the day, put the pieces back together my way.
All I ever wanted was to pick apart the day, put the pieces back together my way.
All I ever wanted was to pick apart the day, put the pieces back together my way.
All I ever wanted was to pick apart the day, put the pieces back together my way.

§ 25

“But why all the frippery? Why not state your propositions, develop an argument, provide some empirical data to support your claims, then suggest a few educational implications or whatever near the end? I gather you are concerned about climate change and sustainability, and—although it still seems vague—something about reconciliation with Indigenous peoples? These are worthwhile topics. Why write such an inscrutable, convoluted tractatus—when what we require is clear language, intelligible critique, and practical solutions?”

—Because *how* we say is fundamental to *what* we mean. Because there is a formal difference between information dump mode & cultivating imagination. Because Martin Buber—who also sometimes wrote in fragments—also claimed: “I am no philosopher, prophet or theologian, but a man who has seen something and who goes to a window and points to what he has seen.” Here, you see? —Like *this*. “He who hopes for a teaching from me that is anything other than a pointing of this sort will always be disappointed.” Because I am no classically trained philosopher: just another eäarthling, another drinking-class zek, just another teacher at the window—& I suspect what we require is a beautiful risk, a poethical wager, pointing & hoping.

Because the problem lies with a particular conception of thinking as the singular essence of “clear thought”—thinking as theoretic abstraction, as application, as a primarily logico-linguistic event arising in human grey matter—which has eroded our ability to recognize its limitations. There is nothing innately myopic about such thinking ((—insert *nervous laughter*)), if we were to resituate it, or better yet, recompose it—bring it back *down to earth* as one potential mode amongst many with relative gains & losses. But we systematically do not. Rather we have naturalized developmental notions of “higher stages” between species, cultures, & fields—& internalized this ordering as foundational to our identity & mode of existence. Modern thought issues from & conforms to the ascendent inclination of this progressive template: a factoid rendering of increasingly erect apes on the march, empty-handed & brutish at first, but, over time, wielding small flints, then clubs, then spears, then, inevitably logical operations & large hadron colliders. Educated thought, the apex of apexes, in turn, enacts this superlative structure by way of strict adherence to methodical expression in light of its own horizon; that is, in light of the demand for *operational*—logical, sequential, pure—form.

Because the *real* problem is even deeper. If we concede that there is nothing innately myopic or absolutist about logico-mathematical thinking as such; what is the *origin* (*—Ursprung*) of the zealous hegemony that defines such thought? Whence the demand for univocal clarity? For economy of experience & expression? Why do we institutionally require imaginative insight be reduced to technocratically acceptable prose or repurposed for practical application to be valid? Or, to put it differently, but drive at the same point, why have the Enlightenment ideals of reason, scientific discovery, & individual liberty so faithfully lapsed into managerial technocracy, corporate scientism, & commodity culture? These exploitative & prosaic social formations are either “logical manifestations” of such thinking, or there is *something else* that keeps manipulating the horizon of possibility. Something that keeps us on a singular path—narrow, shallow.

I suspect a parasite. A dark potentiality, flowering like a daffodil. A mirror-brandishing daemon obsessed with its own image that transmits & amplifies itself through time by subjectivizing its hosts & invalidating all other daemon (—read: modes, experiences, beings). Its reproductive strategy is a kind of plastic syncretism: which is one of the ways it conceals itself (even from itself, only the Other is “dæmonic”); which is one reason why the oppressed so often become the oppressor. Because it breaks all contracts & believes in nothing save its own exceptionality: dispensing with gods & meaning & even the world itself. —Nihilism, Narcissism, *Leviathan!*

§ 25

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

What is poetry for? I'd like to come at this question by asking another: *Why are there different modes and genres of linguistic communication?* Why are there both prose fictions and epic narrative poems? Both hymns and theological discourses? Love letters and marriage contracts? I believe the answer is because *how* we say is fundamental to *what* we mean. We amplify, we ironize, we enact, we undercut the ostensible "content" of our gestures by the tone, rhythm, structure and vocabulary we use to make them... What it *means* is that if you want to communicate, in language, your love for, say, a particular range of hills in west central Saskatchewan, you will need a form of words that, tonally, connotatively, structurally, does not signal an even deeper allegiance to the agendas of capitalist exploitation.

David Jardine, *Speaking with a Boneless Tongue*

The challenge that winds through from phenomenology to hermeneutics to post-modernism and from here out into the fleshy an-archisms of ecological mindfulness is not simply a challenge to change topics of interest and intent. It is not simply a change in how we imagine human life and its fully Earthly countenance, out from under the dichotomous epistemologies of Cartesianism and the other entrails of modernism (focuses on method, on epistemology, on foundationalism and the like).

It is not simply a challenge to *write about different things*. It is a challenge to *write differently*.

Michel Serres, *The Troubadour of Knowledge*

Gaze with all your eyes at this landscape—zebrine, tigroid, iridescent, shimmering, embroidered, distressed, lashed, lacunar, spotted like an ocelot, colourfully patterned, torn up, knotted together, with overlapping threads, worn fringe, everywhere unexpected, miserable, glorious, so magnificent it takes your breath away and sets your heart beating.

Powerful and flat, speech, monotonous, reigns and vitrifies space; superb in its misery, this improbable garment dazzles. The derisory emperor, who chatters like a parrot, is enveloped in a world map of badly bracketed multiplicities. Pure and simple language or a composite and badly matched garment, glistening, beautiful like a thing: which to choose?

James Hillman, *Healing Fiction*

Daimon is the original Greek... for figures who later became *demons* because of the Christian view and *dæmons* in positive contradistinction to that view... Know Thyself... means to become familiar with, to open oneself to and listen to, that is, to know and discern, daimons. Entering one's interior story takes a courage similar to writing a novel. We have to engage with persons whose autonomy may radically alter, even dominate, our thoughts and feelings, neither ordering these persons about nor yielding to them full sway. Fictional and factual, they and we, are drawn together like threads into a *mythos*, a plot, until death do us part. It is a rare courage that submits to this middle region of psychic reality where the supposed surety of fact and illusion of fiction exchange their clothes.

§ 26

“Demons !?! You cannot be *serious*. So... just to be clear, you are suggesting that we address climate change by—*what*?—exorcizing some ‘demonic entity’ that has ‘parasitized’ rational discourse? And the best way to go about this, I gather, is writing a bunch of abstruse nonsense, combined with wanton plagiarism, to protest the limits of conventional methodologies? I thought you were *seriously* concerned about environmental issues?”

What is education for?—There are no straightforward answers to this question & the mutually incompatible aims of the school system only obfuscate the matter. Governments, who foot the bill for mass education (—via taxes, of course) & determine the curriculum, clearly conceive of the enterprise in terms of socializing the next generation of zeks to respond to the economic demands of a “technology-rich world” in a state of “constant change.” There is nothing innately coercive about socialization: central to any educational scheme is initiating the young into the knowledges, skills, & values of a given society. But it is also not insignificant that the rationale for *being educated* in a technological society tends to be (en)framed in utilitarian terms.

Children: “Why do we hafta to learn this?” Mr. Gestell: “Because these are skills for a 21st century economy.”

Another aim, clearly at odds with socialization, is the academic or truth-seeking rationale in which education is viewed as a process of “rising above” social convention towards a privileged, rational view of reality as such. Walking out of the cave hand-in-hand with salacious old Socrates, as it were. This vision tends to be traced back to the Platonic Academy, & while strictly academic mandates have been rendered “impractical” in recent decades—outside private schools & the odd humanities program—most people acknowledge that school ought to attend, in part, to cultivating the intellect in ways that are not justified solely by social utility.

Children: “Why do we hafta to learn this?” Ms. Weil: “Because of truth, beauty, justice, and the good life.”

The final objective, equally incompatible with the previous schemes, draws from a lineage of developmental theories (Rousseau, Spencer, Piaget, Dewey) that have been termed “progressive” & have come to dominate educational theory & practice under the guise of “21st century learning.” The central tenet of progressivism claims that to educate children effectively, we must attend to the bio-psychological nature of their cognitive development—particularly how the mind genetically unfolds in sequential stages—and align educational techniques accordingly. These essentially nineteenth century ideas about progress & individualism have been worked into the very foundations of conventional pedagogy: multiple intelligences, critical thinking skills, developmentally appropriate content, discovery learning, personalized learning, hands-on learning, & so on.

Children: “Why do we hafta to learn this?” Mr. Spencer: “Because this is the universal nature of learning.”

Leviathan! is in the business of naturalizing Dominion, which it maintains via an array of strategies ranging from overtly authoritarian (hard)—imperialism, genocide, slave trades & factory farms—to more discursive logics (soft) that condition ways of knowing—rational egoism, objectivity, technique & theoretic abstraction as the culmination of *being educated*, etc. Because its power derives from bad faith—from not-knowing that which we know—*Leviathan!* requires control over the nature, validity, & limits of knowledge. In the modern era, this has equated to control over the socializing function of the state schooling apparatus—capitalism, the banking model of *everything*, human resource management—which has provoked much “critical theory” (—with good reason). The less recognized problem, however, is that both the “academic” & “progressive” schemes have *also* been appropriated—that is, *leviathanized*—on the level of deep epistemological structure.

Much like Canadian politics, in the sense that no matter which party one votes for, Capitalism always wins—it does not matter what educational program one ascribes to; they all yield the same mode of ordering.

Kieran Egan, *Getting It Wrong from the Beginning*

Educators seem widely to assume that we need to locate [the] bedrock of development in a spontaneous psychological process, which careful research will be able to expose in increasingly reliable detail. Theories, such as that of Jean Piaget, claim to describe the underlying psychological process of cognitive development whose stages determine what knowledge the developing individual can understand. Educational prescriptions and programs that cohere with such theories are called “developmentally appropriate.”

[T]he modern formulation of these ideas finds a prominent source in Herbert Spencer’s writings. What Spencer had, that Rousseau lacked, was a theory of evolution that provided a template for thinking about growth and change in a new way. Spencer’s ideas about development became central to progressivism and are still very widely believed. These ideas have persisted and play a dominant role in current educational thinking, planning, and practice... [W]hat is wrong with the considerable industry of research about cognitive development and its educational implications? First, the human mind remains a mysterious country to its possessors. We expand our understanding by using metaphors and analogies. So we might ask, “What is the mind like?” The trouble is that the human mind is unlike anything else we know. The first thing that Spencer and modern researchers got wrong was to take too literally the metaphorical answer that the mind is like the body; or, rather, researchers and those who rely on them misjudged the degree of metaphor involved in thinking of the mind in terms derived from thinking about the body.

An [additional] set of errors about development derives from Spencer’s conception of evolution and how that influenced his, and current, thinking about development... Spencer tied ideas about evolution, development, and progress tightly together. Twentieth century psychology inherited a conception of development that was complicatedly bound up with a nineteenth century conception of progress. Modern theories of cognitive development are “hierarchical integrative”... They have the characteristics of progress and consequently do not observe losses that might be entailed in development.

George Grant, The University Curriculum

The tight circle then in which we live is this: our present forms of existence have sapped the ability to think about standards of excellence and yet at the same time have imposed on us a standard in terms of which the human good is monolithically asserted. Thus, the university curriculum, by the very studies it incorporates, guarantees that there should be no serious criticism of itself or of the society it is shaped to serve. We are unable seriously to judge the university without judging its essence, the curriculum; but since we are educated in terms of that curriculum it is guaranteed that most of us will judge it as good. The criteria by which we could judge it as inadequate in principle can only be reached by those who through some chance have moved outside the society by memory or by thought. But so to have moved means that one’s criticisms will not be taken seriously from within the society.

David Jardine, *Speaking with a Boneless Tongue*

[...Objective science is borne out of a religion *already* convinced of man’s dominion over the Earth (i.e. over the flesh) and a Continent *already* convinced of its moral and cultural dominion over others. Objective science is simply the systematizing and methodologizing of what is already taken for granted.]

Method of this project: Formal ecological mimesis. One part lyric philosophy, one part surrealistic montage: attuned, as it were, to place: —*kw'umalha*: land of plenty & whales-turned-to-rocks & mountains-to-whales, but also clear-cuts & a copper-polluted river & a dying glacier. Charles Rosen: —“[T]he concept of style does not correspond to a historical fact but answers a need: it creates a mode of understanding.”

Example of compositional process [—from notes for *Anti-Sisyphus: More-Than-Human Being in Revolt*]: Meandering through *The Arcades Project*—like a wandering troubadour of knowledge, like a gutter-punk *flâneur* dumpster-diving for vintage magazines & expired yerba maté—I trip, by chance, on the following:

“How this work was written: rung by rung, according as chance would offer a narrow foothold, and always like someone who scales dangerous heights and never allows himself a moment to look around, for fear of becoming dizzy (but also because he would save for the end the full force of the panorama opening out...)”

—Image: “rung by rung.” cf. Wittgenstein’s ladder. Play out the “domestic” imagery of fixing a house as the work of interpretation (cf. Zwicky: “domestic understanding”). “The *Tractatus* and the house Wittgenstein designed and built in Kundmanngasse as embodiments of ‘the same idea.’” —Literally *ecohermeneutics*.

— *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: 6.54 “My propositions serve as elucidation in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright.” ((Note: Wittgenstein is, in turn, making reference here to Søren Kierkegaard’s *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to the Philosophical Fragments*)).

—Ecohermeneutics as *tikkun olam*, fr. Hebrew, “world repair” (cf. Benjamin’s Kabbalism; see also Buber). M. Friedman, in *Martin Buber: A Life of Dialogue*: “But the origin of evil is explained here under a different figure, that of *shevirath ha-kelim*—the breaking of the vessels which contain the divine grace. As the result of the breaking of the vessels, the divine harmony is disrupted, the *Shekinah* ((the divine indwelling)) is exiled, and sparks of divinity fall downward into physical creation. In the physical world the sparks are surrounded by hard shells of darkness ((cf. Serres: “soft pollution” of signification)), a type of negative evil. This whole process is further confirmed by the fall of man, but it is also within man’s power to liberate the divine sparks from their imprisonment in the shells and send them upward again to union with [a] divine source. Through this liberation the power of darkness is overcome and *tikkun*, the restoration of the original harmony, is effected.” ((Benjamin transposes this “redemption” into historical materialism by way of negating Progress. Benjamin & Wittgenstein share an interest in cultivating a “theological” perspective. Wittgenstein: “I am not a religious man, but I can’t help seeing every problem from a religious point of view.”)) Ecohermeneutics

—Conclude with “domesticity” (cf. Zwicky) as a core competency of *being educated* in a more-than-human world. *Lyric Philosophy*: 150. “Domestic engagement is not tantamount to an epiphanic transmogrification of dishwashing or pumping out the septic tank; in fact it should *not* involve a mystic glorification of drudgery ((the eternal return of Sisyphus))—and some tasks are drudgerous—but it should involve a willingness to take up responsibility for our tools, whether we are the direct agents of their use or not.” Boredom, Drudgery

—Image: Fix an old ladder with arrows, climb into the sky, throw the ladder away, take a quick look around (humans only have a narrow footing in such places), then plunge back to Eäarth: —*look for a place to land*.

How this work was written: rung by rung.

§ 27

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

6. In a polydimensional structure, integrated components may transmit motion to one another. Under certain conditions of attunement, a resonant-body is formed. Such a structure then is capable of complex resonance. It has what might be called resonant form.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[N2,2]. It may be considered one of the methodological objectives of this work to demonstrate a historical materialism which has annihilated within itself the idea of progress. Just here, historical materialism has every reason to distinguish itself sharply from bourgeois habits of thought. Its founding concept is not progress but actualization.

[N1,3]. Say something about the method of the composition itself: how everything one is thinking at a specific moment in time must at all costs be incorporated into the project at hand. Assume that the intensity of the project is thereby attested, or that one's thoughts, from the very beginning, bear this project within them as their telos. So it is with the present portion of the work, which aims to characterize and to preserve the intervals of reflection, the distances lying between the most essential parts of this work, which are turned most intensively to the outside.

Susan Sontag, On Style

Indeed, practically all metaphors for style amount to placing matter on the inside, style on the outside. It would be more to the point to reverse the metaphor. The matter, the subject, is on the outside; the style is on the inside. As Cocteau writes: "Decorative style has never existed. Style is the soul, and unfortunately with us the soul assumes the form of the body."

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

295. Methodology: as in a certain style of sketching, one draws a line again and again, layering in previous attempts. No one of the lines alone is either sufficient or accurate.

If one is lucky the shape will emerge from the accumulation of flawed attempts. (Although it may not be the shape one had thought it would be, had hoped for.)

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[N7,2]. Still to be established is the connection between presence of mind and the "method" of dialectical materialism. It's not just that one will always be able to detect a dialectical process in presence of mind, regarded as one of the highest forms of appropriate behaviour. What is even more decisive is that the dialectician cannot look on history as anything other than a constellation of dangers which he is always, as he follows its development in his thought, on the point of averting.

§ 28

The following is a non-exhaustive list of alternative subtitles for this thesis:

- * *Notes from Underground: The Pedagogy of Glacier-Whales*
- * *Notes from Underground: A Beginner's Guide to Anti-Sisyphus*
- * *Notes from Underground: Broken Violins, Busted Gestalts, & Lots of Glue*
- * *Notes from Underground: Unceded Territories, Autochthonous Imaginations*
- * *Notes from Underground: A Bildungsroman of Eäarthen Awakening*
- * *Notes from Underground: The Phenomenology of Pedagogic Listening*
- * *Notes from Underground: Language as Such for Dummies*
- * *Notes from Underground: Adventures in Strange & Dangerous Kingdoms*
- * *Notes from Underground: Sound Dirt for Eäarthworms*
- * *Notes from Underground: The Surrealist Mien of Things in the Now*
- * *Notes from Underground: A Meditation on Our Ways of Knowing*
- * *Notes from Underground: A Cognitive Tools Approach to Ecosophic Understanding*
- * *Notes from Underground: A Morphology of the Ruins, Flowering like Daffodils*
- * *Notes from Underground: Das Plumpe Denken*
- * *Notes from Underground: The History of a Beautiful Induction Killed by a Nasty Little Fact*
- * *Notes from Underground: El Sueño de la Razón Produce Monstruos*
- * *Notes from Underground: Tractatus Somnium-Philosophicus*
- * *Notes from Underground: When I Hear the Word Culture, I Reach for a Pistil*
- * *Notes from Underground: The Datura School for Fastidious Assassins*
- * *Notes from Underground: Another Dialectical Fairy Scene*
- * *Notes from Underground: Or, Moloch Whose Ear is a Smoking Tomb!*
- * *Notes from Underground: Illuminations in the Dark Underworld of This & This & This*
- * *Notes from Underground: On the Origin of Species*
- * *Notes from Underground: Methode ist Umweg*
- * *Notes from Underground: Acid Communism Redux*
- * *Notes from Underground: The Ecological Dimensions of the Imagination*
- * *Notes from Underground: Old Ernst E. & the Violin*
- * *Notes from Underground: Or, Taking Music Seriously*
- * *Notes from Underground: In Praise of Mental Rioting*
- * *Notes from Underground: The Cause of Certain Obscurities*

§ 28

Michel Serres, *The Five Senses*

What great truth is obstructed by long chains of reasoning, lines on the page, wheat or vines on the face of the earth? What rapid lightning flashes or world-shattering messages do expressways, airlines, and communication satellites compete with, all under the control of a relatively small number of men? What gracious confessions of love? What equitable sharing of power?

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[H°,16]. On the rhythm of today, which determines this work. Very characteristic is the opposition, in film, between the downright jerky rhythm of the image sequence, which satisfies the deep-seated need of this generation to see the “flow” of “development” disavowed, and the continuous musical accompaniment. To root out every trace of “development” from the image of history and to represent becoming—through the dialectical rupture between sensation and tradition—as a constellation in being: that is no less the tendency of this project.

David Jardine, *Speaking with a Boneless Tongue*

The heat and the howl of loving suspicion as the core of interpretation.

Reading the world and its pungent signs and marks left on trails and on faces and etched in the soft underbelly utterance and hiss of living texts.

The interpretive disciplines may be Pagan.

This book is not simply *about* this net of Earthly interdependencies.

This book and its crawling in-sections must also be read as an *instance* of this net.

Jan Zwicky, What is Lyric Philosophy?

If truth is a continent over which we purpose dominion, an appropriate mode of expression will be the tract. But suppose it is an archipelago. Suppose to know is more like to visit or cohabit than to own.

Simone Weil, *First and Last Notebooks*

There is a pitfall here for the human mind, which constitutes the *essential* difficulty (and which Descartes failed to see). It must be fully elucidated. Perhaps there is a way round it; in any case, much is gained if it is even perceived.

If there is a remedy, it consists in substituting *series* in place of *generalizations*.

There is a table in my bedroom—an old wooden spool for industrial cable that I stole from a construction site & stained coffee-brown—where I stack books & arrange interesting things I find on my walks like a cluttered altar. Like a Herakletian heap. —The following is a non-exhaustive list of things you might find on that table:

Technology & Empire—George Grant • A rosary of dried Arbutus berries • *Notes from Underground*—Fyodor Dostoevsky • *Selected Writings (Vol. 1-5)*—Walter Benjamin • Stone head of Buddha, acquired in a Seoul nightmarket • Every book Jan Zwicky has published • Two magpie feathers • *Labyrinths*—Jorge Luis Borges • *Anti-Narcissus: Anthropology as Minor Science*—Eduardo Viverios de Castro • Every book David Jardine has published—even the “weird” ones like *Speaking with a Boneless Tongue* • Leather medicine bag, contents: tobacco, sage, cedar, marijuana, palo santo • *Coyote and Raven Go Canoeing*—Peter Cole • *Down to Earth*—Bruno Latour • A beaver skull • *Against His-Story, Against Leviathan!*—Fredy Perlman • *The Tree of Meaning*—Robert Bringhurst (plus a weathered copy of his *Selected Poems*) • *Body Music*—Dennis Lee • *How Forests Think*—Eduardo Kohn • A tin of cordyceps I found in the Himalayas • *Braiding Sweetgrass*—Robin Wall Kimmerer • A braid of sweetgrass • *Biogea*—Michel Serres • *Pacific Northwest Medicinal Plants*—Scott Kloos • *Let's Get Free* LP—Dead Prez • A clay bowl of *Datura metel* seeds • A double-terminated amethyst • *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*—Leanne Simpson • *Entangled Life*—Merlin Sheldrake • *Going Home*—Tim Lilburn • Expensive scissors • *The Plague*—Albert Camus • A Brigid Cross from the Hill of Tara (Éire) • *The Natural Alien*—Neil Evernden • *Beau Dick: Devoured By Consumerism*—Latiesha Fazakas • Sea urchin skeletons • *The Tacit Dimension*—Michael Polyani • Various periodicals: *Orion*, *The Malahat Review*, *Juxtapoz*, *Kolaj* • An eagle feather from Kin Beach • *The Spell of the Sensuous*—David Abram • *Minima Moralia*—Theodor Adorno • Stacks of folders full of quotations & images • *The Ecology of Wisdom*—Arne Naess • Several tarot decks • Several Tim Ingold books • *One-Dimensional Man*—Herbert Marcuse • *The Relevance of the Beautiful*—Hans-Georg Gadamer • Notes for *Anti-Sisyphus: More-Than-Human Being in Revolt*—xavier o. datura • A silver dollar from 1985 • My pinecone collection • *Acid Communism*—Mark Fisher • *The Wayfinders*—Wade Davis • *Angular Unconformity*—Don McKay • A deer vertebra • *Society of the Spectacle*—Guy Debord • *The Poethical Wager*—Joan Retallack • *Staying with the Trouble*—Donna Haraway • Audio-Technica headphones • My grandmother’s Bible • *Folk-Tales of the Coast Salish*—Thelma Adamson (Ed.) • *Wake Up Calls* LP—Cosmo Sheldrake • *Hymns to the Night*—Novalis • *Turtle Island*—Gary Snyder • Bells from the Monkey Temple • *Cosmopolitics*—Isabelle Stengers • Ultra-fine sharpies & aerosol paints • *The Dispossessed*—Ursula Le Guin • Several second-hand collections of Rene Magritte • Nag champa • *Zettel*—Ludwig Wittgenstein • A stack of *National Geographics* • *Beyond Painting*—Max Ernst • *Rag Cosmology*—Erin Robinsong • Pebbles from Secret Beach (shíshálh territory) • *The Educated Mind*—Kieran Egan • *Green Hermeticism: Alchemy & Ecology*—Peter Lamborn Wilson et al. • *Even the dust has its place.*

§ 29

Charles Simic, Notes on Poetry & Philosophy

My poems (in the beginning) are like a table on which one places interesting things one has found on one's walks: a pebble, a rusty nail, a strangely shaped root, the corner of a torn photograph, etc... where after months of looking at them and thinking about them daily, certain surprising relationships, which hint at meanings, begin to appear...

Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor*

2. The experience of understanding something is always the experience of a gestalt—the dawning of an aspect that is simultaneously a perception or reperception of a whole.

One way the facilitation of understanding may proceed, then, is by the judicious selection and arrangement of elements of that whole. Another is by the setting up of objects of comparison.

Catriona Sandilands, Green Things in the Garbage

As part of her description of Benjamin as “the most peculiar Marxist ever produced by this movement,” Arendt emphasizes Benjamin’s almost animistic (and fairly un-Marxist) belief in the ability of things to shine by themselves, to speak their own essences when brought to a “standstill” in the right company of other things. Although it is important to emphasize that Benjamin does not simply juxtapose things (without, as he was accused by Adorno, the dialectically necessary intervention of mediating theory), it is equally important to note that he understands his pieces of detritus as their own source of truth: commentary might enrich, but does not replace, the particularity of fragment against fragment, as in modernity, historical facts are “congealed in the form of things.”

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Sometimes, we go into a man’s study and find his books and papers all over the place, and can say without hesitation: “What a mess! We really must clear this room up.” Yet, at other times, we may go into a room which looks very much like the first; but after looking round we decide that we must leave it just as it is, recognizing that, in this case, *even the dust has its place*.

Herakleitos, *Fragments*

The fairest order in the world is a heap of random sweepings.

Admittedly, the ensemble of theorists & artists assembled here is a rather motley *internationale* spanning centuries, fields, & styles. It would be understandable, for those more taxonomic in their thinking, or camped out in established schools with merit badges to match, to assume a tradition like existentialism, for example, which Sartre famously wed to humanism, has, by definition, nothing to offer a “posthuman world.” (—Then expeditiously move on, confident that little from the trash heap of history could remain relevant in a world formally shaped by simple to complex progress.) Moreover, many are not the alpine ascetics we might expect to be marshalled around an ecosophy—but rather, a rabble of cosmopolitan *flâneurs*, adrift in the emerging sprawl of the Modern. More than a few seem stricken by an entirely unhealthy & passé obsession with Paris.

But this misses the point of “monadological structures”—both constellations & lyric forms—which are aimed at the striking sentience of ontological attention (*waking-being!*) by any means necessary, not a stalwart defense of pre-existing camps. The point is remembering how to be pierced again: how to peruse the thrift store, the tractatus, or the forest with child-like receptivity to the shock of meaning. As such, I tend to lean, with many in this ensemble of peripatetic collectors, toward a more wandering troubadour, objective chance, bricoleur-gone-wild style to thinking. “Meaning is gained in walking.” Like if we drifted a little, hand-in-hand with Old Benjamin, beyond city limits, off the highway, over a bridge, through the Rez, past the clear-cuts, & happened on a small pond—murky enough to preclude falling in love with our own reflections, but inviting enough for a skinny dip & a spliff. [*Inhale*] “Before a contemporary finds his way clear to opening a book, his eyes have been exposed to such a blizzard of changing, colourful, conflicting letters that the chances of his penetrating the archaic stillness of the book ((or, the world)) are slight. Locust swarms of print, which already eclipse the sun of what city dwellers take for intellect, will grow thicker with each succeeding year.” [*Exhale*]

Leviathan! pollutes—hard & soft—to make true readings increasingly difficult. Layers of ash & signification.

I thus implore you, comrade, drift with us—owl-eyed & deer-eared—in the hermeneutic spirit of transgressing boundaries of all kind & degree. While a systematic analysis of the theorists & schools assembled here would undoubtedly snag on a few surface-level incompatibilities—surrealism & ecology (!), hermeneutics & science studies (!), Dostoevsky & George Grant (!)—there are deeper themes & insights ramifying within the works of these thinkers that may strike anew—“reconfigure the geometry of attention,” as it were—if arranged just so.

Three are of primary concern: i) recognition of the more-than-human world as worthy of serious philosophic attention (—an ontological commitment); ii) experimentation with form, style, & tonal range to redress the demands of systematic methodology &, in some cases, enact modes of thinking more attuned with ecological form (—an epistemological commitment); iii) profound suspicion, to varying degrees, of the foundations of modernity: Anthropos, Rationality, Progress, Technology, Capital, Identity (—a political commitment). [Note: many “Western” theorists have taken up one or two of these commitments, but very few have taken up all three—Benjamin, Perlman, Serres, Zwicky, Bringhurst, & Jardine as notable exceptions—whereas, for many Indigenous scholars, such “radical” commitments are the basis of a “commonsense methodology.”]

[There are additional themes, connexions, & partial resonances amongst these thinkers that could be traced: unconventional readings of Plato seem to be common; the epistemic significance of embodiment; the shift from seeing to listening as “way of knowing” (or the intuitive intelligence of the gut); a love-hate relationship with Heidegger; the significance of dreaming (“primary consciousness”—cf. Freud); etymological obsession; a paradoxical move away from *strong* belief—as in *rigid* or true-north-strong-&-free—but vehement critique of nihilism; an interest—professional or arm-chair—in geography &/or anthropology; recognition of the role of *pathei mathos* (becoming through suffering, or: role of Penthos); contemplative practices; the need for odyssey from parochial beginnings, but, vitally, a desire for home-coming; redemption; apokatastasis, etc.]

§ 30

Michel Serres, *The Troubadour of Knowledge*

Meaning is gained in walking. Enough speech, acts, in speech itself. Too much criticism: works! Patient work, that of the writer who navigates the long course of his entire language and who, fearing no waters, writes his language, describes it up to its furthest shores, and tries to exhaust its capacities. Most often language, except for a small part, dozes, just as our neurons sleep. Alas, the tools or the witnesses of intelligence remain lulled to sleep in potential, waiting for the one who chooses as a career the task of waking them up, of defining his language right up to the fault line, of reviving it whole and proper, of making it think or exist by placing it in a false equilibrium; he combines, tries out long chains of synonyms, all complex and ill at ease, converging at the height of this effort toward a lost nuance. There, he finds what his language does not include. Here he is finally naïve. Driven to look, to touch, hear, or taste, obliged to wisdom and sagacity.

Catriona Sandilands, Green Things in the Garbage

In his extraordinary *Passagen-Werk*, Benjamin demonstrates a critical practice of montage that seeks to transform the obsolescent fragments of commodity capitalism into “dialectical images,” groupings of things that reveal elements of the experience of capitalist modernity obscured in everyday existence. By removing objects from their places as relics littering the path of progress and placing them in new, proximate “constellations,” Benjamin seeks to reveal each object’s particularity in light of a newly configured relationship. Similar to and influenced by surrealism—and... Kabbalism—Benjamin’s constellatory method seeks, through the juxtaposition of fragments, to redraw the relationship between the part and the whole: to destroy the assumed and habitual place of the thing in the historical logic of commodity fetishism, and to show the arrested object as the embodiment of history itself: “dialectics at a standstill.”

Benjamin understands this work as a necessary awakening from the dream-state of commodity capitalism. Each montage, each reconstellated fetish-object blasted from the phantasmagoria of spectacular consumer display, offers a shock, a “profane illumination” that holds out the possibility of transformative meaning. Constellations are, here, meticulous redeployments of things, including but not limited to textual ones, so that they are freed to speak in the service of a radical politics of consciousness... The experience of reading the *Passagen-Werk* can be, as a result, decidedly like that of looking around a large and idiosyncratically organized junk store: each item on display, removed from its original context of utility, takes on a shine that is as much the result of its particular placement, its aesthetic qualities, and/or its relationship to other items...

Joan Retallack, *The Poethical Wager*

The present is, in fact, made out of the residue of the past. What, after all, is there materially but all that is after? Light takes time to travel to the eye across the space of a room. The speed of sound is slower still. All images are after; this is their seduction and their terror—the distance they imply and traverse, the possible betrayal of one’s senses. If the cultural future is invisible until we’ve noticed what we ourselves have fashioned out of the residue—by accident, habit, intention—the act of noticing, and its transformation, may be the most relevant focal point for an aesthetic... Noticing becomes art when, as contextualizing project, it reconfigures the geometry of attention, drawing one into conversation with what would otherwise remain silent in the figure-ground patterns of history... What is the work of human culture but to make fresh sense and meaning of the reconfiguring matter at the historical-contemporary intersection we call the present?

§ 31

“But why all the quotations? Why not just write something original?”

Because it is too easy to ignore a single voice—“Who’s this fucking guy think he is?”—but now there are two, then three, then multiple, emerging from behind trees & dark corners with a troubling sense of coordination. Like you inadvertently strolled, like a gadget-dumbed somnambulist, or an innocent tourist, into some kind of pandæmonic gangland. You close your eyes: —“This is not happening, this is not happening, A=A, A=A.”

“Well, well, what do we have here, eh? A real-life, modern *l’homme de la nature et de la vérité*. —Nice watch.”

“Let’s tear him apart!”

“Oiy! —Where’s your sense of propriety, eh? We ain’t animals, eh? Nah, everyone deserves a fair crack under the Law. Let’s give ‘em the old bioreigonal quiz.” A buzz of consensus ensues from the motley *internationale*, which continues to multiply around you-& not just working-class thugs, but a labour of coast moles, angels, urbanized racoons, discarded plastic bottles, dandelions reaching up through the cracks, Dr. Bernard Rieux, Otter Woman, the Situationists, radioactive flotsam from Fukushima, a Sisiyutl, eäarthworms, MF DOOM, Gwaxgwakwalañuksiwe (Raven at the North End of World), nightingales, northern flickers, broken unicorns, the eternally shitfaced spirit of Debord, Old Benjamin clutching a black briefcase, & a rifraff crew of Others.

You consider running back the way you came, but realize, alas, you have no idea where you are: —“*Wha?* A quiz? I’m... I’m an accountant for *christsakes!* I never learned any of this in school. Just take my wallet.”

“We don’t want yer money, *comrade*. Tell you what, name three local salmon, & you can be on yer way.”

“*Salmon!*—I don’t give a *fuck* about salmon.” Acrimony & howling ensues from the mob: Eäarth *trembles*.

“Well, well, that’s too bad innit?”

A gnawing, tension-filled silence grows: time slows & slows, then stops. An arrow, loosed from somewhere in the darkened thicket, hits you in the chest. Then, the mob tears you apart—like a grizzly with a sockeye.

if art really is a dream
 a nutrient-recycling pathway
 she should not limit herself
to human views
 domesticated by the excretions
 of traditional composition

Ecohermeneutics: Being mobbed by the realization that you do not really know where you are in more than a surface sense. ((Serres: “I see the pile of maps again. We are not just dealing with geography.”)) A rupture in the flow of belonging. Or: —A dialectical image of *home*. Or: —Defamiliarization of the objects that compose everyday experience with implications of being possessed by the pandæmonium—the sheer polyphony—that resonates within particular *things*. Benjamin describes a kind of “allegorical dismemberment” in Baudelaire, like listening to music after smoking hashish: —“the entire poem entering your brain, like a dictionary that has come alive.” Being torn apart, to be made whole: “Its theory is intimately related to that of montage.”

§ 31

Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street*

Quotations in my work are like the wayside robbers who leap out, armed, and relieve the idle stroller of his conviction.

Hannah Arendt, Introduction in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*

From the Goethe essay on, quotations are at the center of every work of Benjamin's. This very fact distinguishes his writings from scholarly works of all kinds in which it is the function of quotations to verify and document opinions, wherefore they can safely be relegated to the Notes. This is out of the question in Benjamin. When he was working on his study of German tragedy (*-Trauerspiel*), he boasted of a collection of "over 600 quotations very systematically and clearly arranged;" like the later notebooks, this collection was not an accumulation of excerpts intended to facilitate the writing of the study but constituted the main work, with the writing as something secondary. The main work consisted in tearing fragments out of their context and arranging them afresh in such a way that they illustrated one another and were able to prove their *raison d'être* in a free-floating state, as it were. It definitely was a sort of surrealistic montage.

Benjamin's ideal of producing a work consisting entirely of quotations, one that was mounted so masterfully that it could dispense with any accompanying text, may strike one as whimsical... and self-destructive to boot, but it was not, any more than were the contemporaneous surrealist experiments which arose from similar impulses. To the extent that an accompanying text by the author proved unavoidable, it was a matter of fashioning it in such a way as to preserve "the intention of such investigations," namely, "to plumb the depths of language and thought... by drilling rather than excavating," so as to not ruin everything with explanations that seek to provide a causal or systematic connection. In so doing Benjamin was aware that this new method of "drilling" resulted in a certain "forcing of insights... whose inelegant pedantry, however, is preferable to today's almost universal habit of falsifying them;" it was equally clear to him that this method was bound to be "the cause of certain obscurities."

Fredric Jameson, *The Benjamin Files*

But perhaps the formal implications of the quotation will not be clear unless you have worked through the convolute on Baudelaire... What seems above all to have interested [Benjamin] are the interpretations of Baudelaire by other writers of the period... Now it is certainly the case that few writers have been open to so many varied reactions and readings as this poet, about whom one is tempted to say that it is this variety itself, and the impenetrability it suggests, that is the very sign and mark of his greatness. But I also think that Benjamin reveled in the multiple voices and opinions, the sheer polyphony, of the public sphere as it formed around what literally became a public scandal, and what was across all the languages of the world recognized as a stylistic crystallization of something more than mere novelty, as the beginning of a whole new era. But it is Benjamin's passion for the multiplicity of these voices that above all interests me, yet another symptom of his not unpolitical fascination with the multiple... [I]t also from time to time has the effect of discrediting the text's primary voice [namely Benjamin]... we seem to be confronted here with an unusual pedagogy which has to do with the shifting of perceptual levels within the mind, a kind of pedagogical surgery that can be characterized as a cultural revolution within the reading process... [R]emember [the] persistent dream of this writer, the notorious and no doubt somewhat impish project of writing a book wholly made up of quotations.

§ 32

Method of this project: Ecosophic collage (as territorial acknowledgment.) I need not persuade. Merely point.
—Merely pray. (Ecohermeneutics as chthonic prayer + getting back to work. Keeping a house in good order requires reverence + a honed domestic skill set. —Sharp tools, sharp mind. “Home economics” as the heart of the new curriculum: as proper sense of proportion: as spiritual practice.) —Zwickly: “And although recipes are not available, the question *How do we become proficient in gestalt comprehension?* nonetheless has a clear answer: practice.” Here, you see? Like *this*. Or, to switch senses, *Sssh—listen:* —The sound of wind in leaves.

Orchestrating a complex ecology of experience ((or: *monad*—cf. Benjamin; or: *tractatus*—cf. Wittgenstein; or: *lyric composition*—cf. Zwickly)) composed of multiple genres, styles, & voices puts a kind of dialectical tension on the formal operational ideal of clear thinking. If we are to recognize—as many have argued—that there are ecological consequences that come with the idolization of calculative reason & theoretic abstraction in educational theory, then, clearly: —*we must destroy idols*. Like hurling bricks through the crystal windows of the temple, like pulling on a frayed thread, like ringing a bell: Darkness, absence—the cancelling of being.

—But we *must* put things back together: mosaic of our dreams, weft of artisanal labour, ecology of our being.

[Lest the unnameable Thing—Old Evil—“something so old it predates thinking”—(*Leviathan! Leviathan!*)—were to appropriate the momentary clearing, like so many Revolutions, & inflect itself, yet again, within us.]

David Jardine:

[...To write about this paradox is to write *out of* this paradox. Writing must take on the heat of its topic. It must *lend itself* to the generative patterns it bespeaks. It is not simply a challenge to *write about different things*. It is a challenge to *write differently*. For phenomenology to fulfill its promise of a turn that cracks open the hegemonic logics of foundationalism, writing itself must be transformed.

Read
each section as if it were a tale
about all the rest...]

Eäarth *trembles*—& a dark river opens beneath the grounds of our knowing (—From climate change maybe? Or was it always there?) A karstic sink hole that disappears into the black box of the underground: a void that never stops falling like a dream. “Depart, take the plunge.” —In the subterranean half-light, strange forms & everyday things float by: ladders, crystals, expensive scissors, duck-rabbits, mountain-whales, A Tribe Called Quest, National Geographics, The Spirit of Haida Gwaii, styrofoam, violins—all are given obscurely in each.

Method of this project: it is a kind of *en route* montage still life running

I need not persuade. Merely pierce. —Merely strike.

§ 32

Walter Benjamin, *Origin of the German Trauerspiel* ((Annotated))

For the concept of being in philosophical science is satiated not by the phenomenon itself but only by the consumption of its history ((or: “ur-form”—its *resonant ecology*)). The deepening of historical perspective ((or: *ontological perspective*)) in such investigations, whether into the past or into the future, in principle knows no bounds. It is what gives the idea of totality ((or: *ecology*)). The construction of the idea, as stamped by totality ((read: *ecology*)) in contrast to its own inalienable isolation ((or: *particularity*)), is monadological. The idea is a monad ((or: *gestalt*)). The being that enters into it with its fore- and after-history gives, in its own hidden figure, the abbreviated and obscured figure of the rest of the idea-world, just as, with the monads in the *Discourse on Metaphysics* of 1686 (Leibniz), all are given obscurely in each. The idea is a monad: the representation of phenomena rests preestablished in it, as in their objective interpretation ((or: *resonance*)).

The more highly ordered the ideas, the more perfect the representation posited within them. And so the real world could well be a task, in the sense that what matters is to penetrate so deeply into everything real that an objective interpretation of world would therein disclose itself. In light of such a task of immersion, it does not appear strange that the philosopher of monadology was also the founder of infinitesimal calculus. The idea is a monad—this means, *in nuce*: each idea contains the image of the world. For the task of its presentation ((or: *composition*)) nothing less is required than to inscribe, in its abbreviation, this image of the world.

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

28. One difference between the *Tractatus* and most examples of systematic philosophy is the bell-like quality of the writing: each sentence seems to exist as a fully self-sufficient entity, yet each seems also to set the entire structure resonating.

Jan Zwicky, What is Lyric Philosophy?

16. We can imagine any given detail—any identifiable part of a lyric composition—as a set of possibilities of resonance, some of which are actuated by situating the detail in the context of the composition. The set of actuated possibilities of resonance is the resonant structure of the composition, its gestural architecture. What is expressed by the purposive arrangement of possibilities of resonance is a lyric thought.

Peter Cole, *Coyote and Raven Go Canoeing*

methodology is part of the weft and the weave darn and logjam
not just a backwards informing of practice a backeddy the backstop of method
methodology includes what is absent not perceived not addressed
it is a kind of *en route* montage still life running

Method of this project: To dig & dig—by any means necessary—until we reach the luminous bedrock. The Eleusinian grotto of imaginative insight that, one prays, still resonates in our collective flesh like a primæval incantation (cf. *anamnesis*)—secret dance societies, acid communism, astrologically-aligned mass strikes—does it matter how we access the requisite alterity? There is no definitive methodology or enshrined heritage after 400 parts per million. We need to stop pretending that “there is still time.” That some prospective & ill-defined catastrophe threatens on the horizon. Benjamin: “That things are status quo *is* the catastrophe.”

Bang! 7.6 on the Richter scale. —Queneesh *trembles*. (Like Forbidden Plateau thundered into consciousness back in 1946 with anguish & high beauty. An unprecedented crustal event in Canadian his-story, the most intense collective bargaining on record, but every schoolchild knows: nothing but a prelude to the Big One.)

Now: Old Quoi Qwa Lak wakes from an apocalyptic dream, Old Benjamin wakes from an apocalyptic dream: to warn fellow villagers & comrades—the deluge, the fascists, the carbon & parasitic noise is already inside us.

Now: You wake from an apocalyptic dream. Time slows & slows, then stops. *Everything* strikes, slips, shifts into a tremendous abbreviation. Your mouth dries. Something opens inside you: a heart-shaped fishing weir.

Now: The Big One shudders down the Beaufort Range. Opening an unfathomable fissure at Comox Lake that tears down Dunsmuir Avenue—swallowing the Empire Days, coal-mining heritage of Cumberland just as it swallows the new apartment builds & hipster coffee joints—and terminates but a few precious millimetres from the defaced gravestone of Ginger Goodwin: “a workers friend.” The experience renders conventional earthquake drills & supplementary modules on sustainability a farce. —*What were we thinking?* What are the Big Ideas that address the *real* problem? How can we call this place *home* if we never learn to think like the mountain? The Cumberland school was also destroyed in the quake: as we dig it out from under the ruins of the bourgeoisie, the subterrane leads us into the night sky. —Ah, now I remember: the mountain *is* a whale.

Epilogue: According to the geological engineers, the fissure stopped expanding at the Cumberland Cemetery; the rest of the Comox Valley remains structurally sound. Safe to get back to business-as-usual. But it would appear that sympathetic fissures have opened elsewhere in the wake of the event: *everywhere*. Aftershocks of chthonic being-in-the-world reverberate in your chest now, as if a new organ has been innervated by all the fear & trembling. Your body jumps to attention at the slightest shift from beneath: you sense it walking along the banks of the Puntledge River, of course, but also in the plastic flotsam that flecks the shores of Kin Beach, & the imported commodities that shiver behind the windows of 5th Street boutiques like the leaves of a tree.

Robert Hass: “Often enough, when a thing is seen clearly, there is a sense of absence about it—as if, the more palpable it is, the more some immense subterranean displacement seems to be working in it; as if at the point of truest observation the visible and invisible exerted enormous counter-pressure.” *Underground Music*

Michel Serres: “The substratum speaks, thunders and kills. It sounds and vibrates like the Deluge and the river flood, which, in their turn, howl like wolves. It will be necessary for me to hear the voice of the living.”

Ecohermeneutics: The strike-slip of *waking-being!* + preparing food, digging swales, telling different stories.

My spade is turned: “This is simply what I do.”

§ 33

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[N9,4]. What are phenomena rescued from? Not only, and not in the main, from the discredit and neglect into which they have fallen, but from the catastrophe represented very often by a certain strain in their dissemination, their “enshrinement as heritage;” —They are saved through the exhibition of the fissure within them. There is a tradition that is catastrophe.

Michel Serres, *Biogea*

You recognize a good pianist by his touch: delicate, powerful, velvety, living... A writer has a super-sharp sense for words; you read him sensitive to the rhythm, to the internal music of his language, to the sonorities of his syntactical structure, to the voice of the vowels. A scientist immediately senses the newness of a thorny detail. A philosopher, thus, has all his senses open.

Bang! 7.2 on the Richter scale. An enormous monster beneath my feet is shaking its back to rid itself of the little insects bothering it: us. Everything is collapsing; the walls shudder; men and women fall. For tens of long seconds, like an organ deep beneath the ground, thunder rumbles with anguish and high beauty.

Then, the body discovers a completely different relation to the Earth. If it shakes again, the body will know how to measure the intensity of the superficial shuddering... I remember having felt these symphonic bones and this awake epidermis being born after the Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989, along the San Andreas Fault, where I finally became a being-in-the-world, the way formerly, on the rolling floor of my bridge, the Ocean made me a being-at-sea. At that time, my body transformed into a sensitive seismograph that had no need of any machine to estimate how and how much the Earth was shaking. Eminently adapted, my sensation caresses and follows the fissure's trembling.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

217. “How am I able to obey a rule?”—if this is not a question about causes, then it is about the justification for my following the rule the way I do. If I have exhausted the justification I have reached the bedrock, and my spade is turned. Then I am inclined to say: “This is simply what I do.” (Remember that we sometimes demand definitions for the sake not of their content, but of their form. Our requirement is an architectural one; the definition a kind of ornamental coping that supports nothing.)

Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor*

Philosophy is thinking in love with clarity; and such thinking, in itself, is not a source of problems. What will not let us rest is the thought that what is clear must also be single; we are addicted to the elimination of ambiguity. If a thing is *truly* the path down, we think, it cannot also truly be the path up; at least one of these, we say, must be merely an appearance. But this is not to think clearly. It is to fail to attend to what experience shows. It is to stop short of wisdom, which recognizes clarities that non-metaphorical language cannot render. Different wholes occupy the same space.

The real discovery is the one that will let philosophy resume thinking metaphorically when it needs to.

§ 34

“Is collage even an appropriate methodology for educational philosophy? What are the criteria by which to judge the rigour of its deductions—or its basic validity? What theoretical frameworks inform it as a methodological strategy? What are some of the implications for educational practice in the classroom?”

It depends.

In the introduction to *Illuminations*, Hannah Arendt reaffirms that Benjamin’s greatest ambition was “to produce a work consisting entirely of quotations.” The inspiration for this method derived, in part, from his exposure to the montages, or *Klebebilder* (“pasted pictures”), of the Berlin Dadaists &, later, his studies of Surrealism in Paris (*Passagen-Werk* was inspired by Louis Aragon’s *Le Paysan de Paris*). But the *real* problem—his growing intuition that we require a new theory of knowledge—was, of course, deeper than keeping *à la mode* with new avant-garde techniques. In 1923, Benjamin set up shop in the Berlin State Library & set to compiling some six hundred quotes from minor German Baroque dramas (—*Trauerspiele*). The following year he began arranging the quotations into a major work—what would become, *Origin of the German Trauerspiel*—which he hoped would suffice for his *Habilitationsschrift*—the postdoctoral qualification that would allow him to obtain a professorship. —It was not well received. He reluctantly withdrew his petition for *Habilitation*, rather than suffer the embarrassment of rejection.

Admittedly, a montage-like tractatus of aphorisms, images, & unabridged citations can be something of a (“poethical”) wager—placing inordinate demands upon the reader &, as Arendt notes, with respect to academic approval: “self-destructive to boot.” Looking back, Arendt admits: “It is now hard to understand how he and his friends could ever have doubted that a *Habilitation* under a not unusual university professor was bound to end with a catastrophe. If [his committee] declared later that they did not understand a single word of the study... they can certainly be believed. How were they to understand a writer whose greatest pride it was that the ‘writing consists largely of quotations—the craziest mosaic technique imaginable’—and who placed the greatest emphasis on the six mottos that preceded the study [i.e. epigraphs that introduce sections]: ‘No one... could gather any rarer or more precious ones?’ It was as if a real master had fashioned some unique object, only to offer it for sale at the nearest bargain center.” On the Theory of Knowledge

So why not simply say what you have to say—clearly, precisely? ((—Because *how* we say is fundamental to *what* we mean.)) Because Benjamin was, on some level, an “experiential educator” & the pedagogic potential of experience lies at the heart of his work. As he reached the end of the *Trauerspiel* several things happened: he fell in love with a woman who was not his wife, this woman—Asja Lacis—a Latvian Communist famous for her proletarian theatre troupes & agitprop—introduced Benjamin to historical materialism, & the “thematic restrictions” of writing in a conventional academic frame was making it “awkward” for him to enact the experiential mode he was after. He thus began a new “booklet for friends,” comprised of “aphorisms, jokes, dreams,” written in short sections, many published separately at first in newspapers, that appeared together as *One-Way Street* in 1928. This allowed Benjamin to move outside the “abstractness of representation” that sealed readers of the *Trauerspiel* within a “windowless” (&, for Lacis—*bourgeois*) world, into the open-air *Lebenswelt* of construction sites, neon signs, & material detritus of the modern city.

Is collage appropriate for educational philosophy? Well, it depends on what education is for.

Good collage—like polyphony, like ecology—teaches mindfulness in the midst of multiplicity.

It pulls one apart, to experience being pieced back together again.

Walter Benjamin, *Origin of the German Trauerspiel*

In their canonical form, the authoritative citation will enter as the sole constituent of an intention almost more educative than didactic. Presentation is the crux of their method. Method is indirection. Presentation as indirection, the roundabout way—this, then, is the methodological character of the tractatus. Renunciation of the unbroken course of intention is its immediately distinguishing feature. In its persevering, thinking constantly begins anew; with its sense of the circumstantial, it goes back to the thing itself. This continual breathing in and out is the form of existence most proper to contemplation. For inasmuch as the latter pursues various levels of meaning in observing one and the same object, it receives the impetus of its constantly renewed beginnings as well as the justification of its intermittent rhythm. Just as the majesty of mosaics remains intact when they are disassembled into capricious bits, so philosophical observation fears no dissipation of momentum. Both come together out of the singular and disparate; nothing could attest more powerfully to the impact of what is transcendental—be it a saint’s image or the truth.

Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*

Academia was “outmoded.” The long-slumbering truth of metaphysics that Benjamin as an author felt himself competent to “awaken” would have to appear otherwise than in the forbidden academic gown. Was it so preposterous to search in a shopping mall for more appropriate attire?... Was it possible, despite capitalist form, to subvert these cultural apparatuses from within? The effect of technology on both work and leisure in the modern metropolis had been to shatter experience into fragments... Could montage as the formal principle of the new technology be used to reconstruct an experiential world so that it provided a coherence of vision necessary for philosophical reflection? And more, could the metropolis of consumption, the high ground of bourgeois-capitalist culture, be transformed from a world of mystifying enchantment into one of both metaphysical and political illumination?

David Jardine, *Speaking with a Boneless Tongue*

The war of paradigms between interpretive work and more traditional, quantitatively based work is a religious war. The metaphor of war does not befit what we wish. It does befit what we face: a façade of angry dominion over the Earth and a fear of the lividness and tenuousness and fragility and heat of a life actually lived. A bloated image of ourselves as in-dependent... without dependents. A fear of “it depends.”

[When phenomenology speaks about pedagogy, it implicitly recommends its own way of speaking as “good speech.” When interpretation speaks about pedagogy, it doesn’t know *who* to listen to: how should we speak to speak well? phenomenologically? mythically? poetically? intimately and personally? high-handed and full of theory? like a Piagetian? hot and sexual? cold, mathematical, precise? with the odd disciplines of method? Interpretation does recommend itself, but what it thereby recommends is standing in the middle of the wild rush of competing voices and singing, loud, clear, in harmonies or in full mindfulness of discord, sometimes reverie, sometimes phenomenology, sometimes the clear cascades of scholarship and the accuracies of text, sometimes a tale about a tender moment, sometimes “the fecundity of the caress,” sometimes a shriek of pain from just this life. It recommends mindfulness in the midst of multiplicity... What is the best way to speak? Such an essentialist question cannot stand the interpretive answer—*it depends.*]



michael dé danann datura, *Trans-Mountain Romantic* (2019)
Paper collage on thrift store oil painting, 72cm x 62cm

§ 35

Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*

But if the style of these two works is antithetical, the content of the old-fashioned work maintains a striking affinity to the new one. The *Trauerspiel* study attempts to “redeem” allegory theoretically. *One-Way Street* does this practically, and transforms the meaning of redemption in the process. Not the allegorical object (tragic drama), but the allegorical practice is redeemed. In Baroque dramas, natural images—a dog, a stone, an old woman, a cypress tree—are emblematic representations of ideas. In Benjamin’s modernist fragments, images of the city and commodities function similarly: a “filling station” depicts the practical role of the intellectual. “Gloves” become the emblem for modern humanity’s relation to its own animality. [T]itles hang like shop signs over their fragmentary contents (“Stamp Shop,” “Dry Goods”); others are city commands for attention (“Post no Bills!” “Closed for Repairs!”)... while “Fire Alarm” is the warning sign over a discussion of revolutionary practice. *One-Way Street* in no way mimics the stylized rhetoric and bombastic gestures of Baroque drama. It is not the desire to rehabilitate an arcane dramatic genre that motivates Benjamin, but the desire to make allegory actual. The allegorical mode allows Benjamin to make visibly palpable the experience of a world in fragments, in which the passing of time means not progress but disintegration.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[N11,4]. On the elementary doctrine of historical materialism. (1) An object of history is that through which knowledge is constituted as the object’s rescue. (2) History decays into images, not into stories. (3) Wherever a dialectical process is realized, we are dealing with a monad. (4) The materialist presentation of history carries along with it an immanent critique of the concept of progress. (5) Historical materialism bases its procedures on long experience, common sense, presence of mind, and dialectics.

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

124. Humans are animals on whom the ontological alienation inherent in tool-use weighs so heavily that they must try to rescue themselves from it. Lyric springs from the desire to recapture the intuitively wholeness of a world that is not ordered by language, to heal the slash in the mind that is the capacity for language.

But as language-using creatures, it is of our essence that that gap cannot be permanently healed. The recognition that it cannot is the source of lyric’s poignancy. Poignancy comes after yearning. It is the essential emotional colour of lyric thought.

Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor*

95. There is a psychological element here, as well as a talent for seeing-as. One has to be able to see what *is* there, rather than what one hopes or expects. This requires a certain sort of strength.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[N9a,3]. To the process of rescue belongs the firm, seemingly brutal grasp.

§ 36



michael dé danann datura, *The Eternal Return of the Same Old Bullshit* (2018)
Paper collage on canvas, 30.5cm x 60cm

§ 36

John Stezaker, *Imagine That!*

[On the difference between his definition of “photo-collage” vs. “photomontage”]: The way I see it, the term photo-collage enables me to distinguish my work from a kind of deluge of works that we see today that is making use of found images. It goes by the name of collage but to me it is “photomontage”... I consider montage as a mainstream intercutting of images that sets out to create a seamless continuum of some kind; intercutting images in a way that reduces them to narrative legibility. This tradition goes back to Hollywood as much as it does to the films of Eisenstein who pioneered montage. By contrast, collage for me is about opening up the space between images, liberating them from their instrumental use...It is a way of trying to reveal something of the abyss or the hidden void within this continuum of image culture or the montage of everyday life. I see collage as a way of encountering the image as empty. I am not expressing this very well but you see, collage is a way of opening things up and revealing this emptiness, this void that lies behind the “box of representation”... It is a kind of resistance to mainstream culture. A lot of so-called collages that I see these days, even though they have the appearance of fracture, they are simply mobilizing images for another social function, taking images from one task to another and creating a seamless and digestible image.

Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*

For most people under twenty in Europe and North America, the lack of alternatives to capitalism is no longer even an issue. Capitalism seamlessly occupies the horizons of the thinkable. Jameson used to report in horror about the ways capitalism had seeped into the very unconscious; now, the fact that capitalism has colonized the dreaming life of the population is so taken for granted that it is no longer worthy of comment. It would be dangerous and misleading to imagine that the near past was some prelapsarian state rife with political potentials, so it's well to remember the role that commodification played in the production of culture throughout the twentieth century. Yet the old struggle between *détournement* and recuperation, between subversion and incorporation, seems to have been played out. What we are dealing with now is not the incorporation of materials that previously seemed to possess subversive potentials, but instead, their *precorporation*: the pre-emptive formatting and shaping of desires, aspirations, and hopes by capitalist culture... ‘Alternative’ and ‘independent’ don't designate something outside mainstream culture; rather, they are styles, in fact *the* dominant styles, within the mainstream.

Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*

The covered shopping arcades of the nineteenth century were Benjamin's central image because they were the precise material replica of the internal consciousness, or rather, *unconscious* of the dreaming collective. All of the errors of bourgeois consciousness could be found there (commodity fetishism, reification, the world as “inwardness”), as well as (in fashion, prostitution, gambling) all of its utopian dreams. Moreover, the arcades were the first international style of modern architecture, hence part of the lived experience of a worldwide, metropolitan generation.

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

287. The aesthetics of fascism are directed towards eternity. It is not just that the spirit of generalization is opposed to the nature of lyric awareness: fascist aesthetics attempt to make lyric ideals synchronic.

“Yes, yes, we all love the arts. Thanks for sharing your—*ahem*—amateur collages. How much for the lot?”

The grammar of thought reveals itself in style. But even surrealist subversions & the “craziest mosaic technique imaginable” are not enough to undermine the *framework* of a social imaginary fundamentally shaped by capitalist desire. Art will never “change the world” in the revolutionary sense that, like critical pedagogy, it is in the bad habit of promising. It is already too late for that. The Benjamin Industry has already been instituted to assess novel studies for their academic exchange-value—punk rock & underground hip-hop are already the soundtrack for idgaf-nihilism—expletive-ridden works of bricolage that enact an edgy sense of hybridization are already *à la mode*. You should have been born a generation earlier, when structural change was still possible or, at least, the slogans were original. Rebels these days just recycle: *Sous la plage, les pavés!*

Fisher: “No cultural object can retain its power when there are no longer new eyes to see it... The power of capitalist realism derives in part from the way that capitalism subsumes and consumes all of previous history: one effect of its ‘system of equivalence’ [is that it] can assign all cultural objects, whether they are religious iconography, pornography, or *Das Kapital*, a monetary value... In the conversion of practices and rituals into merely aesthetic objects, the beliefs of previous cultures are objectively ironized, transformed into *artifacts*.”

The question, then, is something like: how do we cultivate new eyes? ((—*The Dialectics of Seeing*)). Or, to put it in lyric terms: how do we become proficient in gestalt comprehension?

Because what concern us is not content per se—“revolutionary” or otherwise (do inventories of Parisian arcades constitute revolutionary samizdat?)—but the phenomenon of insight, of “seeing-as” (Wittgenstein), of imagination (the only war that matters), understood as *re-cognition*. A hermeneutics of illumination: The alchemy of anamnesis (—*Eingedenken*.)

Because *Leviathan!*—having consumed the better part of nature & the gods & history &, as the prevailing attitude of ironic indifference & reflexive impotence would seem to signal, all futures possibilities—is starving. In such ghost-hungry times, it makes as little sense to put faith in traditional means of social reform—revolutionary arts, critical pedagogies, the facts, the truth—as it does to put faith in some imminent green technology *ex machina*. Capitalism, or whatever form *Leviathan!* will parasitize next to maintain dominion, is already working to *precorporate*, to pre-emptively format, the field of desire that will shape the conception or manifestation of novel forms, techniques, & projects. It is already inside you, like microplastics & want.

“Well, if the logic of capital and the will to mastery reaches, as you have claimed, into our very dreams, desires and sense of identity—what hope is there? Is there no ‘way out’ of this all-consuming loop?”

I am not sure. But if there is, it has little to do with hope & everything to do with work. We need to dig deep. As Zwicky has maintained, aphoristic & other lyric expressions cultivate our ability to see-as—to *experience* the coalescence of a gestalt for ourselves—which suggests, perhaps obviously, that a curriculum rich in lyric examples is required to cultivate a deeper sense of lyric awareness. (Less obvious is how such works might be studied seriously, that is, with an ontological seriousness akin to how we teach physics or biology). But lyric expressions are still, as it were, second-hand experiences. They are mere attempts to enact the more primary experience of insight: illumination or attunement or a whiff (note the sense modalities) of “the unmediated resonance of being.” Lyric desire is the desire for such experiences, which are empty of language & self.

Because of this emptiness, lyric experience is one of those rare milieus *deeper* than egotistical calculation. To the extent that lyric works are able to enact such experiences, they point. —“Point at what?” The world.

§ 37

Adam Dickinson, Surreal Ecology

The subversive implications of Zwicky's claim echo more than the revolutionary pretensions of Breton's 1924 *Manifesto of Surrealism*. Breton proposed that it is simply "the pretense of civilization" that has "managed to banish from the mind everything that may rightly or wrongly be termed superstition..." Consequently, the surrealist experiments in automatic writing that seek to tap into associative resources of unconscious thought are similar to Zwicky's claim for lyric inasmuch as they undermine linguistic and social grammars that reinforce conventional and limiting forms of meaning and organization. Zwicky's engagement with Freudian theories of the unconscious can be read in this way as an extension and inflection of the twentieth century avant-garde project of surrealism... The surrealists were not aiming to privilege the irrational over the rational, but attempting to integrate opposing terms as a critique of systematized analytic distinctions of Western thought... Similarly, for Zwicky, lyric is not a superior form of thought, but another way of being responsible to meaning, one that must not be occluded by the "reign of logic" in analytic philosophical considerations. Moreover, surrealist attempts to undermine approaches to a merely "useful" reality by throwing individual desire and discrete materiality into question through aleatoric techniques such as automatism and collage, are consistent with Zwicky's notion that the form of thinking involved in lyric art opposes instrumental apprehensions of the world and instead emphasizes a potential environmental ethics where the world cannot be objectified in terms of utility.

Far from locking objects into totalized human frames of reference, the surreal images emphasize the limitations of description, piling it on, undoing the act of totalized reference in the very process of anthropomorphism. In this way, the surreal descriptions and their adjacency reflect a space of potential, an encounter with a being or materiality that cannot be definitively defined.

Walter Benjamin, On Language as Such and on the Language of Man

The word must communicate *something* (other than itself).

Jan Zwicky, Lyric Realism: Nature Poetry, Silence, and Ontology

For the nature poet, it is not that when we pay close, animal-bright attention the world seems to come awake and to speak. When we pay attention, we can tell that the world is awake, that it means, hugely and richly, all the time. It is humans who—distracted, insecure, ill, battered by urban noise and electronic media—are sometimes unable to perceive what is in front of them.

xavier o. datura, *The Missing Species*

The last Dawson Caribou seen in Haida Gwaii in 1908 • 1999-2015, Outbreak of Mountain Pine Beetle results in the loss of millions of hectares of forest • The Great Pacific Garbage Patch • Western Meadowlark, extirpated • March 24, 1989, the *Exxon Valdez* runs aground spilling 10.8 million gallons of crude into Prince William Sound (sic); rebranded the *Exxon Mediterranean* & returned to service • Vancouver Island Wolverine, extinct • The last Passenger Pigeon died in captivity in 1914, her name was Martha in honour of First Lady Martha Washington • The last Sea Otter was killed in 1929 by a scientific collector, reintroduced • The Declining Amphibian Phenomenon • Vancouver Island Marmot, most endangered mammal in Canada, down to 30 members in 2007; recent estimates 250-300 • Bighorn Sheep, at risk; domesticated sheep can introduce illnesses to otherwise healthy herds • Colony Collapse Disorder • South Selkirk Caribou herd, as of 2018 down to three members, all female • Western Pond Turtles, extirpated • If the Internet were a country, it would rank fifth largest for energy consumption • February 19, 2015, trace amounts of radiation from Fukushima are detected in the waters around Ucluelet • 331 environmental defenders murdered in 2020 • Sea Star Wasting Syndrome • Sei Whales, once an abundant species in the Pacific, are decimated by whaling & show no signs of recovery despite protection by International Whaling Commission • Northern Spotted Owls, fewer than a dozen left • Local flowers with historical records not seen since 1950: Boreal Paintbrush, Globe Gilia, Spurred Lupine, Fringed Pinesap, & Prairie Buttercup, among others • 2018: Canadian government purchases Kinder Morgan pipeline • 2021: 7th consecutive year (2015-2021) where global temperature has been over 1 °C above pre-industrial levels • August 4, 2014, tailing pond owned by Imperial Metals breaches releasing slurry of wastes into Polley Lake • As of 1996, only 3 out of roughly 50 indigenous languages in Canada have enough speakers to be considered secure • A bird shot near Oliver in 1918 was the last reported Sage Grouse • White Sturgeon populations adversely affected by over-fishing, hydroelectric dams, & human competition for food such as salmon & eulachon • Pigmy Short-Horned lizard, last confirmed 1910 • Dragon Lake Whitefish, lived in Dragon Lake near Quesnel; eradicated in 1956 when lake was poisoned to remove unwanted fish before introducing trout for sport fishing • Long-Tailed Weasel, last seen in 1937 • Garry oak ecosystems are among most endangered in Canada—less than 5% of original habitat remains • The planet has warmed more than one degree since the Industrial Revolution • Great Basin Gopher Snake, threatened; killed due to its resemblance to the Northern Pacific Rattlesnake • Northern Pacific Rattlesnake, at risk • Grey Ghost caribou, scheduled for extinction... The Biotariat

Henri Lefebvre, *The Missing Pieces*

Between 490 and 455 BCE, Empedoceles composes two poems of five hundred thousand verses, *On Nature* and *Purifications*; only a few fragments have come down to us, a bit less than five thousand verses

- In November 1994, a month before his death, Guy Debord burns the third volume of his *Panegyric* • In Madrid in 1927, Nancy Cunard broke up with Louis Aragon; Aragon burned *In Defense of the Infinite* and attempted suicide • Because it was done principally on wood, nothing remains of Greek painting from antiquity • Two notebooks are missing from Sylvia Plath's *Journals*; one lost, the other destroyed by Ted Hughes • On climbing the scaffold, Ravachol sang, "The Good Lord in Shit;" we know he didn't get to the last couplet, but we no longer know at which word the guillotine actually silenced him • In June 1999, in Cambridge, someone stole the hard drive on which, for ten years, fifteen researchers had archived Ludwig Wittgenstein's ideas on politics and language • Diego Rivera came to New York to undertake a commission at the Rockefeller Centre; in his mural he depicted the triumph of Marxism over capitalism and drew a portrait of Lenin; his mural was destroyed • In 1913, the first *ready-made* by Marcel Duchamp appeared: *Bicycle Wheel*; the "original" is lost • In the autumn of 1930 Bertolt Brecht and Walter Benjamin plan on founding the journal *Krisis und Kritik*, but the project never gets off the ground • Some texts by René Descartes are lost, among which is the important *Olympica*, where he noted his dreams • Net Art: any work of virtual art is hereby condemned to disappear • The library of the Louvre, burned in 1871 • We know neither where nor how Baruch Spinoza learned how to grind optical lenses; at the end of his life the philosopher wrote a *Treatise on the Rainbow*, which he later threw in the fire, probably because of a censorship issue • Goethe, lost orthographic ability; Dostoevsky, lost syntactic ability • *The New Amorous World* by Charles Fourier is unfinished • The indigenous art of all epochs destroyed by missionaries • *The Beautiful Gardener [La Belle Jardinière]*, a picture by Max Ernst, burned by the Nazis; another picture by Ernst left by his wife on a bus at Saint-Germaine-des Prés in 1953; the picture of Dorothea Tanning "with a blue background" that she destroyed because her husband Max did not like it • The first *Metronome*, the first *Gift* (flatiron with tacks), and the first *Painted Bread*(blue) by Man Ray, all of which are exhibited in a vitrine in a Parisian gallery in 1945 and then destroyed by vandals, the word DEGENERATE written on the broken pieces before the vandals fled • "I have always written, always thrown out, always given up." —Alain Satgé • Designed by the architect Sir Joseph Paxton for London's Great Exhibition of 1851, the monumental glass structure of the Crystal Palace was destroyed by fire on November 30, 1936, shortly after a visit by Samuel Beckett...

§ 39

“So... this is like, some arthouse thing then? Lots of feelings and specious claims?”

Not at all. If by “art” you mean something unclear, emotionally contaminated, & lacking intellectual rigour. Such dismissals are, however, standard reflex for cultures that conform experience to what Jardine has called the “univocity of reality.” That is, from the standpoint of Old Reason, to speak *truly* of a thing is to correlate our speech with the univocal nature of the thing itself. This principle reiterates a basic assumption we tend to make about objects in the world: things are, as it were, self-identical. When we speak of an entity, or attribute something to it, it either *is* or *is not* what is attributed. No matter how equivocal or “subjective” our dreams & imaginations, our spontaneous experiences, or our language may be, “real knowledge” of the world *must* be founded on the logical criterion of self-identity: —A=A. Identity as non-contradiction, substance, essence. —A pipe is a pipe. Even, as with Kant, if we cannot access the *thing-in-itself*, we must correlate our experience with the permanent essence of Reason, which reproduces its own horizon by legitimizing only those perceptions that accord with its self-defined framework of validity. Any rigorous thought worthy of the name is thus founded on a univocal reality & the concomitant demand that discourse about *the real* be itself univocal. —Clear, quantifiable, emotionless. One implication of this is that the “vexing peculiarities” of language—analogy, style, oracularity, resonance—need to be formally purified. There can be no ambiguity—ontological or epistemic—in rational discourse; hence the demand that logico-mathematical knowledge be singularly *real*. Different wholes cannot occupy the same space: the mountain *cannot* also be a whale.

From *Introduction to Logic and Logical Discourse*: “Law of Identity: A is A (e.g. river is a river).”

Jean Piaget (1896-1980)—pioneer of the constructivist theory & one of the most influential psychologists in educational theory—appropriated the formal structure of “real knowledge” bequeathed to him by Descartes, Kant, & Bacon, to position logico-mathematical thought as the culminating stage of cognitive development. The very notion of *being educated* is thus framed in light of this self-determining horizon. Which is why the ecological crisis is, at heart, a crisis of education. Despite all the fashionable surface talk about “multiple intelligences” in schools—hypothetico-deductive reasoning remains the definitive & quantifiable apex of an “educated mind.” “Higher stages” of cognition are *defined* by their “formal operational” character: i.e. by knowledge of the operation of knowledge itself (with formal logic & theoretic abstraction as crown jewels): i.e. “real knowledge” is a matter of applied method. “Clear thinking” is thus *defined* as the capacity to turn a deaf ear to the background noise of body, affect, dream, & place. Developmentalism

René Descartes (c. 1640): “I resolved to assume that everything that ever entered my mind was no more true than the illusions of my dreams. But immediately afterwards I noticed that whilst I thus wished to think all things false, it was absolutely essential that the ‘I’ who thought this should *be* somewhat ((cogito, ergo sum)) And then, examining attentively that which I was, I saw that I could conceive that I had no body, and that there was no world nor place where I might be; but yet that I could not for all that conceive that I was not.”

The first principle of Cartesian thought—*je pense, donc je suis*—which is a kind of seventeenth century allegorical caption for the modern world—is an instance of the leviathanic amplification of exceptionality. In the ensuing *globalization* of this incorporeal “I am” (read: colonialism)—in its formalization as the very grounds of valid experience—we can trace the transmission of *Leviathan!* through space & time. The “unnameable Thing,” it seems, is also a kind of syncretic collage. An epistemic parasite that recognized the Cartesian constellation of Aristotle, Augustine, Neostoicism, analytic geometry, skepticism—mixed with some olde European ethnocentrism—as a new vector to incarnate within & multiply.

§ 39

David Jardine, “I AM hath sent me unto you”

The *sum* of René Descartes’ *cogito, ergo sum* echoed that old Exodus issuance of the “I AM has sent me,” wherein the great affirmation of the Creator is replaced by a whole new experience of an emergent European-Democracy-Individual-Science-Ego as the issuing centre of all things. Right at the founding of modern science in Cartesianism (and right at that junction where the Democratic “I am” starts to become conceptually radicalized into a self-determining autonomous individuality), we find a Mosaic Allegory.

David G. Smith in Introduction to David Jardine, *Under the Tough Old Stars*

Immanuel Kant: “[R]eason cannot come upon that which is other than its own determination.”

Here we have a conceptual key for unpacking two fundamental assumptions still at play in... the West: a) [T]he application of Reason... enables an understanding of the world because b) it is in the nature of the world that it is reasonable. The main implication of this position is that the social and cultural Other who arrives as a stranger (the difficult child, the ethnic, linguistic, tribal Other, etc.) is immediately confronted with a civilizational edifice that cannot, indeed will not, open itself to the Other as an equal partner on any shared journey the outcome of which old Reason cannot imagine in advance. Such is the conceptual architecture of hegemony, and it has widespread consequences. The most prominent example is the global dominance of Western science as a presumed final arbiter of anything worth knowing... Basically it reduces the whole of life to a form of tourism over which our self-constructed sense of Reason presides.

The next turn [for hermeneutics] is to the alienated Other, that is, to everything that has been excluded by Enlightenment conceit... I don’t think about the world from a condition of pure ego; instead the world is already in me as I think about it, and my thinking is constantly changing as I meet the world and it affects me. No more can Reason be taken as a finished condition and established as a presidium over human affairs. My meeting with Others affects what I think is reasonable. Deeper, more mature living can only be achieved, therefore, through genuine openness to what comes to meet me as new, as a stranger... This is the real work, the tough work, and it is on-going... which explains its vivifying quality, its capacity for constant rejuvenation.

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

45. Perception informed by emotion is neither completely random nor unintelligible, much less weak or shameful. Emotional resonance is one among several ways a human being has of coming clearly to understand or perceive something. Art, as most of us have experienced, can give us access to complex possibilities of understanding and perception, remote from our own. What is most peculiar, what we should wonder at first, is not how art does this, but *why*, given that it does do it, art has become divorced from what we recognize as thinking.

227. Skepticism, seen from a lyric perspective, is loss of the world via language. To become lost *in* language. To become lost *in* language, and thereby to have lost the world.

271. A mind inappropriately constrained by logico-linguistic syntax will fail to discern true resonant relationships. It will believe things like “x cannot be not-x”—and it will believe them not on the basis of experience, but because logic says so... It’s not that logic is wrong. It’s just that it’s not the full story.

Convolute III

This realism is killing us
Realism carpeting over the shimmering

We are when we destroy
A shabbiness posing as the world

And work for the boss of beauty

-- Erin Robinsong, The Forces The Forms

§ 40

“What is all this about *resonance*? Can you define the term for those of us who live outside Lotusland?”

It depends. Difficult to define, but something like this: When I attempt to teach students how to compose good writing—that is, beyond the mechanics of punctuation, parts of speech, & spelling—the trickiest aspect is instilling the sense that there are better & worse ways to put things. Disciplining the ear, as it were, to the tonal dimension of the work & the extent to which it “rings true.” Mood, tenor, style: these are gestalt aspects that coalesce (—or not) due to a meticulous arrangement of details. Do you think truly stylish people dress at random? Do you think changing the score will not *fundamentally* alter the scene? Why does one word, approximately synonymous with another, *fit* better? What does *fit* even mean here? Two observations: this is effectively impossible to teach without i.) recourse to musical analogy, & ii.) providing a series of exemplars for comparison. There are no formulae, no recipes—it is a matter of sink-or-swim immersion: like a reckless father who teaches swimming lessons by hurling his children off the dock. Do schoolmasters realize that they only taught those they thwarted, or rather, completed, those they forced to cross? Mimesis, Sentience

Old pond
A frog jumps in
The sound of water.

Yes, “deep shit.” —Precisely. But why *deep*?

Learning to attend to details—prosody, diction, double-entendre, verisimilitude—is not merely an aesthetic matter reducible to effective sentence structure, but a matter of *getting it right*. A matter of *fit*—response & co-response with the world. This is vital to good composition: this is the craft, the practice, the preparatory work to do the *real* work: mixing the water colours again to match the light, rearranging the flowers just so, spending all morning to take out a comma, & all afternoon to put it back. The experience of meaning—the *depth* we discern in evocative artforms—is the result of a punctilious co-composition that evokes a “hitherto concealed experience that transcends thinking from the position of subjectivity.” —*Sentience, resonance*.

Blank faces: Who cares about any of this shit besides sadistic English teachers, right? (It is actually a critical question & not insignificant that the answer tends to be framed by utility: —if you make grammatical errors on your resume, you will not get the job.) There are, of course, a host of reasons for incredulity regarding the lyric aspects of knowledge production, ranging from cultural prejudice that “poetic” thinking is too specious & ornamental to be “real knowledge,” to that classroom blend of mutually incompatible aims, intellectual laziness, & the boredom that comes with having to endure a unit on “literary terms” to—*what?*—get a job?

What is education for? I should like to avoid regurgitating something utterly vapid like: “creative thinking.” Besides, most people have something like innovative problem-solving or an entrepreneurial attitude in mind here. Creative to what end? —Or worse: “the freedom to be oneself;” which in technological society amounts to emulating dominant habits in “novel” ways. This is not to argue against creativity or autonomy as such, but to insist that education ought to also focus on cultivating a *sensitivity* to *what-is*. A “cross-curricular” disposition aimed at *getting it right*—over & above our wanting & doing. Ancient peoples might have called this a love of wisdom. Indeed, for Zwicky, the *ecological* form of wisdom is not “metaphoric”—at least, not in a representational sense —i.e. “the Internet has an ‘ecological’ architecture.” Rather, the deep structural sensitivity required for focused analogical thinking is akin to the perceptive capacity of “wisdom.” What a mind must do to experience metaphor, in other words, is akin to what it must do to be wise. Domesticity

Resonance: To be, for material things, is to resonate. —Thinking that echoes the shape of the world.

§ 40

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

111. The problems arising through a misinterpretation of our forms of language have the character of *depth*. They are deep disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is as great as the importance of our language. —Let us ask ourselves: why do we feel a grammatical joke to be *deep*? (And that is what the depth of philosophy is.)

531. We speak of understanding a sentence in the sense in which it can be replaced by another which says the same thing; but also in the sense in which it cannot be replaced by any other. (Any more than one musical theme can be replaced by another.)

In the one case the thought in the sentence is something common to different sentences; in the other, something that is expressed only by these words in these positions. (Understanding a poem.)

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

33. What sort of criticism is it to suggest that an alternative ordering of some of Wittgenstein's remarks might provide a clearer presentation of his thought? It is like criticizing a painting for its balance; or a poem for the effectiveness of its juxtapositions. What is being sought in such criticism is an understanding of the resonant structure of the work, the intuition being that the work's meaning, at least in part, emerges from and is embodied by that structure. Resonance here is a root metaphor. To sound an utterance in a resonant thought-structure is, among other things, to produce sympathetic vibrations of varying intensities throughout—to cause other utterances to sound, some less faintly, some more.

Charles Kahn, *The Art and Thought of Heraclitus*

By *linguistic density* I mean the phenomenon by which a multiplicity of ideas are expressed in a single word or phrase. By *resonance* I mean a relationship between fragments by which a single verbal theme or image is echoed from one text to another in such a way that the meaning of each is enriched when they are understood together. These two principles are formally complementary: resonance is one factor making for the density of any particular text; and conversely, it is because of the density of the text that resonance is possible... It is because of this semantic role of resonance that the order in which the fragments are read need not, after all, be decisive for their meaning. The stylistic achievements of Heraclitus is to have contrived a non-linear expression of conceptual structure, a hidden fitting-together...

Alphonso Lingis, *The Community of Those Who Have Nothing in Common*

It is the rumble and rasping of the inert things that provokes the vocalization of the animals; fish hum with the streams and birds chatter in the crackling of the windy forest. To live is to echo the vibrancy of things. To be, for material things, is to resonate.

§ 41

Zwický: “The grammar of thought reveals itself in style.”

What is of interest is why so many “lyric thinkers” are compelled to push the formal envelope. Zwický, as case in point, is concerned with enacting a “fundamentally integrative mode of thought” embodied in the “deep epistemological structure” that, she contends, underlies the notebook-&-box-file style of philosophers like Wittgenstein & Weil. Reaching back to the ancient world, she is equally in league with Herakleitos, who composed his work as a ballista-like barrage of paradoxical bolts aimed at what we now call “logico-linguistic analysis.” As well as Plato, of course—particularly the “complex ecology of argumentation” underlying *Meno*, which, she suggests, is as close to a philosophic work of art as one is likely to get. In turn, her lyric works tend to juxtapose her own terse aphorisms (on the left-hand page) with a “scrapbook” (—her word) of quotations, poetic excerpts, geometric proofs, sheet music, images (e.g. the oxherding sequence of Zen Buddhism), etymologies, & so on (on the right-hand page). Clearly this is not *random*. Clearly Wittgenstein, as Zwický bears out, did not compose his work as a series of interconnected aphorisms on a whim, or as *l'art pour l'art*, or because his thinking was not rigorous enough for more systematic modes. Rather, for him, the work of a philosopher consists in assembling reminders for a particular purpose—& for Zwický, the coherence that this concinnity intuits & enacts on the page is *ecological in form*. This sense of vastness & vibrancy & generativity & ambiguity & multivocality & interwovenness must somehow inform the character of the writing itself.

This is not to say formal experimentation cannot lapse into solipsism, flimflam, or academic *haut monde*. Indeed—it often feels like we are living in a historical moment defined by tribalized language-games & the proliferation of aleatory “free-verse” as a substitute for good thinking. The annals of “postmodernism” are rife with such otherworldly peregrinations—to the extent that one almost begins to circle back with prodigal nostalgia for the familiar, solid grounds of analytic clarity. For the good olde days when a pipe was a pipe. When A=A. This is why lyric awareness—which remodulates the notion of clarity such that it is no longer strictly a mode of analysis, but *also* describes thinking that proceeds by “extralogical associations of imagery” (read: *imagination*) & able to grasp the deep epistemological structure of the whole—is so vital at this time. The cultivation of lyric awareness, calibrated, as it were, by attending to the *becoming* (—as in Gk. *phusis*) of *what-is*, offers us a kind of third-instruction beyond the chaste austerity of analysis, or the adrenalin rush of deterritorialized release from foundational categories. —Both of which, have been ecological disasters.

In other words, thinking can have *swagger*—as they call it underground—& still speak truthfully—*clearly*—about aspects of *what-is*. Or, to push the thesis to its iconoclastic limit: a certain amount of swagger may even be necessary to express & cultivate those axes of experience attenuated by scientifico-economic ordinance. Swagger—like the clinamen swerve of Epicurean physics, or the madcap meandering of adolescent caribou—may even prove to be something of an ontological category. This unsettling aperture expands the question of what constitutes “good thinking,” which is precisely why style has been methodically constricted in days past. A multitude of experiences—embodied, revelatory, ineffable, oneiric, ancestral—have been, to varying degrees, subjugated as epistemically *invalid*. Literally: irrational, uneducated—*preposterous*. Lyric works do not seek to turn the tables per se—“If rationality is the enemy, then let’s attack it with a cut-&-paste barrage of backassward babble! Quick, to the urinal!”—rather it approaches “argumentation” as an attempt to give voice to an ecology of experience beyond what is technocratically acceptable (particularly when such experiences are relatively common, but marginalized by cultural taboo.) Composition as polyphonic wager (not because we are hedging bets with intersubjective correlation about Essence; because we are always already swimming in A river *as* A river). Lyric arguments do not proceed sequentially to self-evident conclusions, but attempt to *strike*—“My God, I’m living in the world!”—into the flesh of the real as revealed by awe, suffering, & silence.

The craftiness is the whole point.

§ 41

David Jardine, *Speaking with a Boneless Tongue*

Ecology presents us with an image of our lives and the life of the Earth as involving a vast, vibrant, generative, ambiguous, multivocal, interweaving network of living interconnections. We are living *in* this web of interrelations and these interrelations are always already at work *before* the task of writing *about* those relations has begun. [I]f we take ecology seriously, it is not enough simply to write *about* these interrelations. This sense of vastness and vibrancy and generativity and ambiguity and multivocality and interwovenness must somehow inform the character of the writing itself. Ecology tells us that there is no center or foundation to this web of living interconnections, just small, lateral, interlacing relations of this to this, splayed in moving patterns of kinship and kind... [T]he question becomes one of how to write in such a way that the writing gives up the notion of having a center or a foundation...[T]his book is written in small, interlacing "bits" or "chunks" which relate laterally and generatively to all the other bits... [T]his book is a cold plunge, and, in places, the water is deep and forbidding. It picks away at our desire for an easy, clear and simple text.

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

297. Details are at once centres and peripheries. That is: there is only centre, there are only details.

Joan Retallack, N Plus Zero

Why use procedures when one can simply note the succession of things that “naturally” come to mind? “Act so that there is no use in a centre,” said Gertrude Stein. Good advice, particularly if the centre is “self” without the benefit of centrifugal artifice... Strange concept, self, not strange enough. Hence, the “natural” fallacy. Procedural artifice is a form of authorial agency which nonetheless brings a tonic otherness to a composition: deflecting single point perspective, opening the field to dialogic alterity, alter-texts, if not egos, in equally disadvantaged conversation. Hence the necessity of humour... The question is whether such devices are useful for our self-absorbed species, accumulating endless wants and highly evolved needs in what seems to be a geometric progression of consumption-targeted quests for increasingly improbable satisfaction whose most cherished image is found in the mirror. A literature of reciprocal alterity, if such a thing is possible, can’t fix this culture-wide entanglement with short-sighted narcissism, but it may present significantly alternative sites for making meaning... Procedures that embody methodical doubt along with structural optimism can become interrogatively driven heat-seeking devices that zero in on the manifest unintelligibility of our complex material predicament.

Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from Underground*

“Ha! Next you’ll be finding pleasure in a toothache!” you will exclaim, laughing. “And why not? There is also pleasure in a toothache,” I will answer. I had a toothache for a whole month; I know there is. Here, of course, one does not remain silently angry, one moans, these are crafty moans, and the craftiness is the whole point.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[N4a,2]. The Marxian theory of art: one moment swaggering, and the next scholastic.

§ 42

xavier o. datura, On Lyric (A Reflection in Cut Up References)

One might say: ontological understanding is rooted in the perception of patterned resonance in the world. Philosophy, practiced as a setting of things side by side until the similarity dawns, is a form of ontological appreciation.

JAN ZWICKY, WISDOM & METAPHOR There is a philosophical distinction that is highly relevant here:

the distinction between an *external* relation and an *internal* relation.

ARNE NAESS, ECOSOPHY AND GESTALT ONTOLOGY

How words are understood is not told by words alone. (Theology).

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN, ZETTEL

The borrowing of method by one art form to another can only be truly successful when the application of the borrowed method is not superficial but fundamental.

WASSILY KANDINSKY, CONCERNING THE SPIRITUAL IN ART

This structural logic, which flows (or leaps, or ricochets) from one clearly etched focus of content / consciousness to the next, furnishes the basic rhythm of the meditation. It is a series of polyphonic gestures, a trajectory of inflections.

DENNIS LEE, POLYPHONY, ENACTING A MEDITATION Who thinks like the dying sea?

MICHEL SERRES, BIOGEA

Poetry *is* before it begins in a sense. Like stopping a person momentarily in their tracks... they forget that they were to catch a bus somewhere and they look around and think: "My God, I'm living in the world!"

GARY SNYDER, THE REAL WORK

The word must communicate *something* (other than itself).

WALTER BENJAMIN, ON LANGUAGE AS SUCH

What is stated is not everything. The unsaid is what first makes what is stated into a word that can reach us.

HANS-GEORG GADAMER,

COLLECTED WORKS We do not belong to those who have ideas only among books... It is our habit to think

outdoors—walking, leaping, climbing, dancing, preferably on lonely mountains or near the sea where even the trails become thoughtful. Our first questions about the value of a book, of a human being, or a musical composition: Can they walk? Even more, can they dance?

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE, THE GAY SCIENCE

Lyric resonance is a function of attunement... Being drawn apart, it is brought together with itself.

JAN ZWICKY, WHAT IS LYRIC

PHILOSOPHY? Something is awakened here that is beyond the nightmare of self-presence and its ensuing exhaustion. It is a "call to be mindful of our rootedness in earthly experiences." But more: such a call can best be heard "if you get attuned to the possibility from early in life." Attunement. But also pedagogy. The possibility of touching the Earth, this attunement, is rooted (perhaps also unrooted) early in life.

DAVID W.

JARDINE, A BELL RINGING IN THE EMPTY SKY Real innovations attack the roots.

BERTOLT BRECHT, ON THEATRE

Will our life not be a

tunnel between two vague clarities? Or will it not be a clarity between two dark triangles?

PABLO NERUDA, THE BOOK

OF QUESTIONS Darkling I listen...

JOHN KEATS, ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE

Bring your ear near this abyss.

MICHEL SERRES, BIOGEA

§ 42

Noelia Hobeika, On Collage (A Reflection in Cut Up References)

It is the outcome of an often unexpressed philosophy, its illustration and its consummation ALBERT CAMUS, THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS constructed as a mosaic of quotations. JULIA KRISTEVA, TOWARDS A SEMIOLOGY OF PARADIGMS It often defies patrimony, national culture, or indeed copyright HITO STEYERL, IN DEFENSE OF THE POOR IMAGE is a citational process, a body of formulae, a memory. ROLAND BARTHES, STYLE AND ITS IMAGE Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector's passion borders on the chaos of memories. WALTER BENJAMIN, ONE-WAY STREET ...Nostalgia is stronger here than knowledge. It is significant that the thought of the epoch is at once one of the most deeply imbued with a philosophy of the non-significance of the world and one of the most divided in its conclusions. ALBERT CAMUS, THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS The artists of our culture, 'the antennae of the race,' had tuned in to the new ground and begun exploring discontinuity and simultaneity. MARSHALL MCLUHAN, LAWS OF MEDIA: THE NEW SCIENCE To tell the truth, however rigorous it may be in its ambition, this concept is none the less just as unstable as others. ALBERT CAMUS, THE MYTH OF SISYPHUS That is the genuineness. The genuineness of a thing is the quintessence of everything about it since its creation that can be handed down, from its material duration to the historical witness that it bears. WALTER BENJAMIN, THE WORK OF ART IN THE AGE OF MECHANICAL REPRODUCTION Ideally, its basic sense should be easily misunderstood, since the merging of elementary misconstruals will help contribute to its accumulated drift. It should lead us beyond itself, and back to itself. And it should sometimes be beautiful. NICHOLSON BAKER, LUMBER

Let us try. But in a matter like this, subtlety appeals to subtlety, without imagination no man can follow another into these halls HERMAN MELVILLE, MOBY DICK So if you find nothing in the corridors open the doors, if you find nothing behind these doors there are more floors, and if you find nothing up there, don't worry, just leap up another flight of stairs. As long as you don't stop climbing, the stairs won't end, under your climbing feet they will go on growing upwards FRANZ KAFKA, ADVOCATES It takes so little, so infinitely little, for someone to find himself on the other side of the border, where everything—love, convictions, history—no longer has meaning. The whole mystery of human life resides on the fact that it is spent in the immediate proximity of, and even in direct contact with, that border, that it is separated from it not by kilometers but by barely a millimeter. MILAN KUNDERA, THE BOOK OF LAUGHTER AND FORGETTING I meditated on that lost labyrinth: I pictured it perfect and inviolate on the secret summit of a mountain; I pictured its outlines blurred by rice paddies, or underwater; I pictured it as infinite—a labyrinth not of octagonal pavilions and paths that turn back upon themselves, but of rivers and provinces and kingdoms... I imagined a labyrinth of labyrinths, a maze of mazes, a twisting, turning ever-widening labyrinth that contained both past future and somehow implied the stars. JORGE LUIS BORGES, THE GARDEN OF FORKING PATHS "Don't you approve of analysis?" THOMAS MANN, THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN

prayer flags

451. (One says the ordinary thing—
with the wrong gesture.)

— Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*

that tea works—
that cells can sit by a fire
discussing existentialism
& warm their hands.

that fallen alders
make back eddies for salmon
& you could spend your day
building birdhouses.

that a rusted knife
just needs a bowl of vinegar
& a little elbow grease to
whet the know-how.

that sands drift
into patterns that linger like
a letter on the kitchen table
from abroad.

that the heart
dreams what it might be like
to be a bird or a seed or light
as the breeze.

§ 43

Jan Zwicky, Poetry and Meaninglessness

The difference between real and meaningless lyric poetry is this: the real poem, a resonant linguistic structure, stands in a real resonant relation to a resonant structure in the world. The real poem is a gestalt that enacts, or responds to, a way the world, or some part of it, is. The genuinely meaningless poem may have moments of local coherence, but it does not, as a whole, hang together with the world. There is no resonant structure in the world to which it stands in resonant relation.

As the technocracy has burgeoned, the importance of gestalt comprehension has become less and less visible, less and less valued. Under the press of colonialism, capitalism, resourcism, consumerism, and exponential human population growth, the natural world, human cultures and relations between non-human and human cultures have disintegrated. As a consequence, the whole gestalts of lyric vision are harder to come by. Insight of any scope is difficult to achieve, difficult to render and difficult for readers to appreciate.

Charles Simic, *The Uncertain Certainty*

I think every poet has at some time the feeling of sitting and receiving an image or a line and knowing it's absolutely right. Nothing can change it. What is astonishing is that it possesses a reality, a conviction that one finds hard to attribute to oneself. You know: "Where the hell did I get all that?" One of my experiences that really terrifies me is that periodically I go through my notebooks, and I look at fragments, lines, poems that have failed. And I have a short poem—I can't remember it now—it's only about ten lines, called "After the Rain," where I had a very nice opening which came from an experience I had in New York. Anyway, this thing had happened about ten years ago, and I had versions and versions in my notebook. And at some point several years ago I stopped. I gave up. And every once in a while I would go back and look at the fragment. I knew it needed an ending, that elusive something which had to be very concise. Last year, going again through the notebooks, it all came to me very clearly. And I wrote the ending down. Then I got very scared. I said, "My God, is this the process? Is this what I have to pay? The poem is only ten lines!"

The following is a non-exhaustive list of lyric aspects described in the work of Jan Zwicky:

lyric philosophy	lyric poetry	lyric realism
lyric ontology	lyric sensibility	lyric awareness
lyric meaning	lyric thinking	lyric form
lyric expression	lyric composition	lyric art
lyric desire	lyric comprehension	lyric apprehension
lyric value	lyric vision	lyric pull
lyric part	lyric whole	lyric experience
lyric speech	lyric context	lyric resolution
lyric closure	lyric mode	lyric relation
lyric perception	lyric truth	lyric insight
lyric clarity	lyric prose	lyric ecology
lyric community	lyric coherence	lyric epistemology
lyric resonance	lyric argument	lyric nature
lyric structure	lyric ideals	lyric ability

Sue Sinclair: “To know the world is to grasp something of its ontological structure, its shape, and to do so requires an attention that becomes an ethical act. One cannot be wise without such coherence within and among one’s endeavours, an observation that brings to mind the work of Simone Weil, which Zwicky has read closely. Not only were Weil’s own life and writing visibly—and painfully—coherent with each other, but Weil also describes intellectual work as the task of developing one’s capacity to attend to the world in such a way that one can respond to suffering... [T]he intellectual seeking of truth is in the service of ethics, and these are linked by the requirement of attention.” Gestalt Intelligence, Lyric Awareness

Zwicky is, taxonomically-speaking, a “nature poet.” Or: a poetically-minded philosopher, a “lyric thinker.” Benjamin, on the other hand, tends to get classified as a “critical theorist & essayist”—a “poetically-minded” (—Arendt’s description) “historical materialist” (—but, as Arendt admits, “the most peculiar Marxist ever produced.”) As such, they indisputably embody different literary forms, styles, & political ideals. But what is of interest, epistemically & pedagogically, is how their underlying projects are both committed to attending to ontological structure—the “lyric ecology” or “constellation” that manifests as a resonant “lyric idea” or a striking “dialectical image” (—both synchronic, both “at a standstill”)—as an ethical act. Big Ideas

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

133. Lyric experience is experience of meaningful coherence... experience of the unmediated resonance of being. Lyric desire is the desire for such experience and the insights that it comprehends.

Lyric expression, after the fact, attempts to embody lyric insight or lyric experience. But to become fully informed by resonance is to forfeit both self and language. (Here is the source of much Romantic melodrama: the simultaneous idealization of the individual ego.) Especially if it uses words, then, lyric expression can be only partially successful.

To the extent that it does succeed, lyric expression points. That is, we are not primarily aware of the gesture of expression itself; instead we perceive, “through” the gesture as it were, what the gesture is focussed on. To the extent that it succeeds lyric expression bears the trace of ontological resonance. If it does not bear this trace, it cannot be responsible to what it is attempting to convey. Lyric expression can use words—but in doing so, it must reach beyond their syntax.

252. The meaning of a profound image cannot be divorced from its incarnation.

232. A lyric image is true *because* it is resonant.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* ((Annotated))

[N10a,1]. The destructive or critical momentum of materialist historiography is registered in that blasting of historical continuity with which the historical object first constitutes itself. In fact, an object of history cannot be targeted at all within the continuous elapse of history. And so... historical narration has simply picked out an object from this continuous succession. But it has done so without foundation, as an expedient; and its first thought was then always to reinsert the object into the continuum... Materialist historiography does not choose its objects arbitrarily. It does not fasten on them but rather springs them loose from the order of succession. Its provisions are more extensive, its occurrences more essential.

[N10a,2]. [For] the destructive momentum in materialist historiography is to be conceived as the reaction to a constellation of dangers, which threatens both the burden of tradition and those who receive it. It is this constellation of dangers which the materialist presentation of history comes to engage. In this constellation is comprised its actuality; against its threat, it must prove its presence of mind. Such a presentation of history has as goal to pass, as Engels puts it, “beyond the sphere of thought!” ((—Or: beyond linguistic syntax & self.))

[N10a,3]. To thinking belongs the movement as well as the arrest of thoughts. Where thinking comes to a standstill in a constellation saturated with tensions—there the dialectical image appears. It is the caesura in the movement of thought. Its position is naturally not an arbitrary one. It is to be found, in a word, where the tension between dialectical opposites is greatest. Hence, the object constructed in the materialist presentation of history is itself the dialectical image.

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

186. The ability to read lyric must be acquired just like any other skill.

§ 45

Ecohermeneutics: —Integrating the prefix *eco-* with *hermeneutics* signals an ontological turn towards the world as an intrinsically meaningful, irreducible, & more-than-human co-composition. An alluvial flux of matter as a river of time. Not only does this contravene the psychological need for a forever reality (a position no longer physically tenable, let alone metaphysical), it exonerates the notion of clarity from the correlative demand for univocity. Lyric is clarity in her most exalted mood. Clarity in love. With all the vicissitudes, the praise & sorrow, the suffering that comes with loving something impermanent. —With being impermanent.

§ 45

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

216. “A thing is identical with itself.”—There is no finer example of a useless proposition, which yet is connected with a certain play of the imagination. It is as if in imagination we put a thing into its own shape and saw that it fitted.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[Q°,21]. On the dialectical image. In it lies time. Already with Hegel, time enters into dialectic. But the Hegelian dialectic knows time solely as the properly historical, if not psychological, time of thinking. The time differential in which alone the dialectical image is real is still unknown to him. Attempt to show this with regard to fashion. Real time enters the dialectical image not in natural magnitude—let alone psychologically—but in its smallest gestalt. All in all, the temporal momentum in the dialectical image can be determined only through confrontation with another concept. This concept is the “now of recognizability.”

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

25. An utterance, a gesture, is clear if it is transparent; if it renders what is on the other side of the glass easier to understand, accept, respond to, or love; if it facilitates the integrity of our being in the world.

§ 46

Everything exceeds its name: A=A river. A disappeared stream running beneath the red carpet of the mind. A karst topography where the ego is wet limestone. Serres: —Depart, take the plunge. In crossing the river, in delivering itself completely naked to belonging to the opposite shore, the body has just learned a third thing:

“I think, therefore I flow into an other.”

§ 46

Tim Lilburn, *Living in the World as if It Were Home*

Everything exceeds its name: insofar as the named world is coterminous with the finite world, everything is infinite. The weight of everything, its home, where it is itself, lies beyond naming, lives outside the range of calculation, is not, if to be is to possess a name. The mysterium of the physical world is a theophany of what is not there, that is beyond the calibrations that erect “thereness.” Thus, as John Scotus Eriugena says, “no substance or essence of any creation, whether visible or invisible, can be comprehended by the intellect or by reason as to what it is.” Thus, in their largeness, complexity, dissimilarity, things are properly addressed by awe, by gratitude for the generosity of their proximity; names whose prelude is awe are tentative, are acquiescent to their own withdrawal: they possess courtesy and because this courtesy, this softness, this amenability to alteration, reversal, is the residue in language of wonder, these names are true, not in the sense that they map a thing, but that they possess an apt decorum; they do not lie; they do not presume. The river that is registered in the inchoate, leaping delight of the senses is an absence in reason, a silence in language, a silence even within the excess of ecstatic speech. At best the chaotic river, alive in the senses briefly, is discountable, has no standing in definition; before the severity of Cartesian doubt, it does not exist.

How does one address what falls outside reason’s caricatures, that eludes language’s efforts to circumscribe, that has no being if being is equal to comprehensibility...? Here naming may be nothing more than ovation, or a mark of the assertions... or a slight domestication of being in which we participate in what is beyond us, enjoy a brief contiguity with that uncontainability, like feeding birds in winter.

There is praise and then there is sorrow.

Michel Serres, *Biogea*

[W]hat philosopher thinks like a river? Better, who, today, not only sees like the sea, dying, or the rivers, weakened, but also thinks like the entire Biogea, the entirety of the Earth and the living species?

Who worries about the death pangs of the rivers? Who has ever read, in the course of one’s studies, or heard those honored by history echoed by what river currents say? Yet we will, tomorrow, be dramatically thirsty.

§ 47

On the differentials of time: A=A river. Disappeared, forgotten, *set upon* by fashionable pollution (—hard & soft), but *everywhere* running “beneath” awareness. We cannot discern the river in its “natural magnitude,” —which is beyond the range of calculation, which is wholly ineffable—but, as both Benjamin & Zwicky insist, we can, sometimes, get a fleeting sense of the origin as “eddy in stream of becoming” by way of immersion in the “smallest gestalt.” The many-sided heart of a particular *thing*—here, now. —The ruffle on a dress, flowing.

It seems inconceivable to think of things in this way—there are *so many things* in the world—but what about particular people? Your mother? Your lover? What about your dog? The trustworthy knife that accompanies you like a friend? A childhood tree? The particular constellation of *things* that comprise what you call home?

Big Idea: —Things are properly addressed by awe: *this* is the North Pole of our voyage.

Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*

What is modern technology? It too is a revealing. Only when we allow our attention to rest on this fundamental characteristic does that which is new in modern technology show itself to us.

In the context of the interlocking processes pertaining to the orderly disposition of electrical energy, even the Rhine itself appears as something at our command. The hydroelectric plant is not built into the Rhine River, as was the old wooden bridge that joined bank with bank for hundreds of years. Rather the river is dammed up into the power plant. What the river is now, namely, a water power supplier, derives from out of the essence of the power station. In order that we may even remotely consider the monstrousness that reigns here, let us ponder for a moment the contrast that speaks out of the two titles, ‘The Rhine’ as dammed up into the *power* works, and ‘The Rhine’ as uttered out of the *art* work, in Hölderlin’s hymn by that name. But, it will be replied, the Rhine is still a river in the landscape, is it not? Perhaps. But how? In no other way than as an object on call for inspection by a tour group ordered there by the vacation industry.

The revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of a setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth. That challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew. Unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about are ways of revealing. But the revealing never simply comes to an end. Neither does it run off into the indeterminate. The revealing reveals to itself its own manifoldly interlocking paths, through regulating their course... Regulating and securing even become the chief characteristics of the challenging revealing.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[N1,2]. Comparison of other people’s attempts to the undertaking of a sea voyage in which the ships are drawn off course by the magnetic North Pole. Discover *this* North Pole. What for others are deviations are, for me, the data which determine my course. —On the differentials of time (which, for others, disturb the main lines of the inquiry), I base my reckoning.

Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor*

57. Ontological attention is a form of love. When we love a thing, we can experience our responsibility toward it as limitless (the size of the world). Responsibility is the trace, in us, of the pressure of the world that is focused in a *this*. That is *how much* it is possible to attend; that is how large complete attention would be.

70. Lyric insight—*this* ness, the whole grasped in the particular—holds mortality in the balance. Thus it, too, is timeless, but in a different way. Lyric insight holds time in abeyance, but as a dike holds back the sea: it shudders under the impact. For geometric thought, time simply does not exist.

71. To realize it could be any right triangle, any square, is to experience the beauty of a mathematical truth. To grasp a geometrical truth is to grasp a gesture that is meaningful in an enormous array of contexts—in fact, all that are available to the spatial imagination. The experience of beauty is the experience of some form (or other) of a relief from time.

§ 48

how to swim a frog stroke

for Trout Lake, shíshálh territory

leap into primordial mystery
aqueous ape
immerse your self in
algae-flecked mere.

renounce dissection & rule:
master only
the amphibious discipline
of breathing through skin.

face down the fathomless
floating corpse pose
taking refuge in
the murky depth of things.

hands to prayer position:
propel green fire
from heart to mountain
thinking like pond.

outsweep crescent moons
find poise in the waning
equanimity
in the fluid mimesis.

—concentrate
bring legs to position
mind to positionlessness
a salient lotus.

engage the core
kick with webbed spirit
negating all boundaries
between frog & self.

drift in recovery
not one, not two—but
a fluent recapitulation
of all being.

reflect on technique &
begin again:
slowest, but most ancient
a most sympathetic form.

Michel Serres, *The Troubadour of Knowledge*

Depart, take the plunge.

The real passage occurs in the middle. Whatever direction determined by the swim, the ground lies dozens or hundreds of yards below the belly or miles behind and ahead. The voyager is alone. One must cross in order to know solitude, which is signaled by the disappearance of all reference points.

The body that crosses surely learns about a second world, the one toward which it is heading, where another language is spoken, but, above all, where the body is initiated into a third world, through which it passes... The body will never walk or stand erect as it did when it knew only standing still or walking; biped before this event, it is now flesh and fish. It has not only changed banks, language, customs, genre, and species, but it has known the hyphen: frog-man. The first animal belongs, the second animal too, but the strange living thing that will one day enter this white river, which flows in the visible river, and that had to adapt under threat of dying to its eccentric waters has left all sense of belonging behind. It reaches the other shore... Do you think it is single? No, surely double... Do you believe it to be double?

If so, you are not taking into account the crossing, the suffering, the courage of apprenticeship, the dread of a probable drowning, the crevice opened in the thorax by the drawing out of the arms, the legs, the tongue, the wide line of forgetting and memory that marks the longitudinal axis of these infernal rivers that in antiquity were called amnesias. You believe it to be double, ambidextrous, a dictionary, and it is really triple or third, inhabiting both banks and haunting the middle where the two directions converge, as well as the direction of the flowing river, and that of the wind, of the uneasy list of the swim, of the numerous intentions that produce decisions; in this river within a river, or in the crevice in the middle of the body, is formed a compass or a rotunda from which diverge twenty or one hundred thousand directions. Did you believe it to be triple?

You are still mistaken, it is multiple. Source of interchange of directions, relativizing forever the left, the right, and the earth from which these directions emerge, it has incorporated a compass into its liquid body... Do schoolmasters realize that they only fully taught those they thwarted, or rather, completed, those they forced to cross?

David Jardine, *Speaking with a Boneless Tongue*

[Interpretation—*world*-reading—as the
ecolinguistic parallel to the porousness of the skin
and the passages of the body

I find myself *in the world* as part of the world's story
coalescing just here and nowhere else.

[I am thus irreplaceable in a way that
is the reverse of self-aggrandizement.
Rather than becoming grander, the self
in this case empties]

§ 49

Lyric compositions aim to strike, to pierce—like lightning, like an arrow, *ffff*—into you: just an ordinary heart.

§ 49

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[L°,30]. In the fields with which we are concerned, knowledge comes only in lightning flashes. The text is the long roll of thunder that follows.

Earle Birney, Bushed

He invented a rainbow but lightning struck it
shattered it into the lake-lap of a mountain
so big his mind slowed when he looked at it

Yet he built a shack on the shore
learned to roast porcupine belly and
wore the quills on his hatband

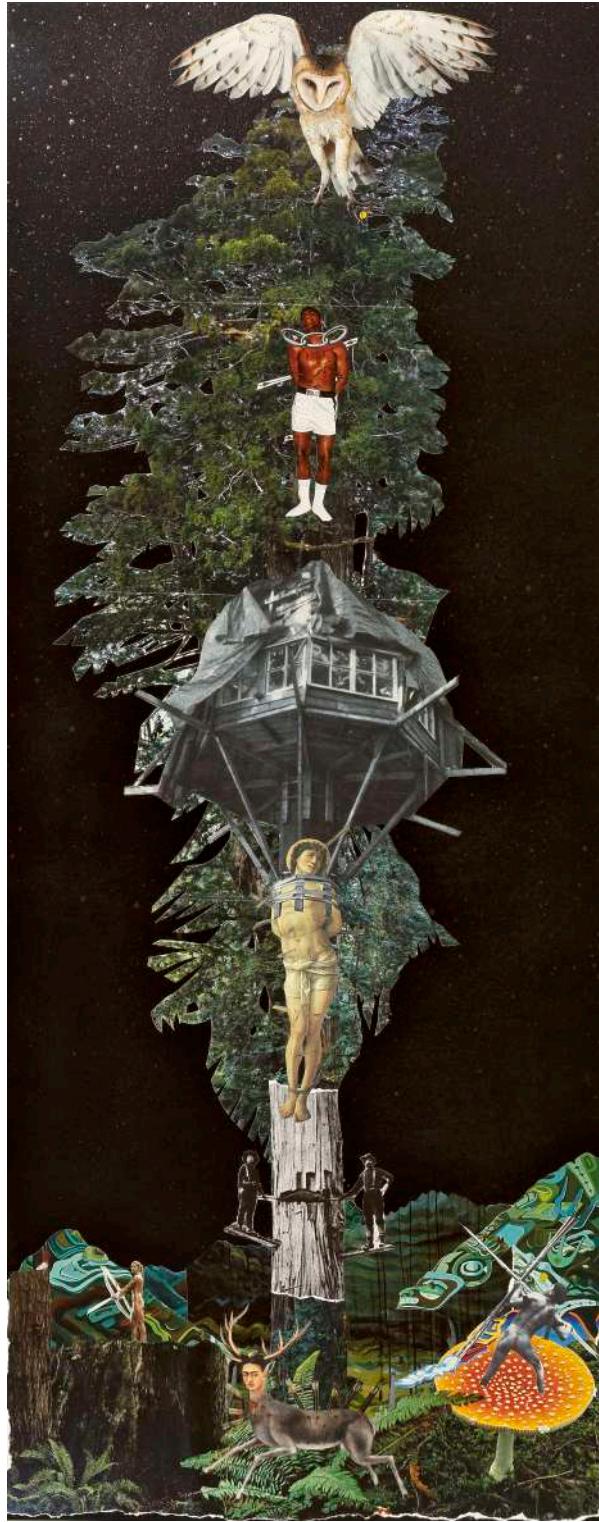
At first he was out with the dawn
whether it yellowed bright as wood-columbine
or was only a fuzzed moth in a flannel of storm
But he found the mountain was clearly alive
sent messages whizzing down every hot morning
boomed proclamations at noon and spread out
a white guard of goat
before falling asleep on its feet at sundown

When he tried his eyes on the lake ospreys
would fall like valkyries
choosing the cut-throat
He took then to waiting
till the night smoke rose from the boil of the sunset

But the moon carved unknown totems
out of the lakeshore
owls in the beardusky woods derided him
moosehorned cedars circled his swamps and tossed
their antlers up to the stars
then he knew though the mountain slept the winds
were shaping its peak to an arrowhead
poised

And now he could only
bar himself in and wait
for the great flint to come singing into his heart

§ 50



michael dé danann datura, *Pierced* (2022)
Paper collage on cardstock, 76cm x 30cm

Michel Serres, *The Troubadour of Knowledge*

Whosoever departs from one shore and leaves it behind but holds on to it in order to try to reach and inhabit—adopt—the opposite shore, passes through the axis so that the body experiences the tearing in the thorax or the belly, in the middle of the mouth or between the eyes, made by the originary arrow... Since the body haunts the left and right banks at once, it must cross unceasingly; thus its life, its time, and its natural place vibrate, tremble, shiver, shudder, vacillate, hesitate, doubt around the anxious fault line, always awake, ringing like a vibrating cord.

The originary orientation comes from the absent and unlocatable center as if it were taking root there: the flash that signals it and hides it with its bursts and eclipses twinkles everywhere like a small sun.

We neither know how to nor can we inhabit this fault line, this axis or this vortex: who would build his house in the middle of a current? No institution, no system, no science, no language, no gesture or thought is founded on this mobile place—which is the ultimate foundation and founds nothing. We can only head toward it, but, at the very moment of reaching it, we abandon it, compelled by the arrows that depart from it. We spend only an infinitesimal moment there. Time and site of extreme attentiveness.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[H1a,5]. Bergson develops the idea that perception is a function of time. If, let us say, we were to live vis-à-vis some things more calmly and vis-à-vis others more rapidly, according to a different rhythm, there would be nothing “subsistent” for us, but instead everything would happen right before our eyes; everything would strike us. But this is the way things are for the great collector. They strike him. How he himself pursues and encounters them, what changes in the ensemble of items are effected by a newly supervening item—all this shows him his affairs in constant flux. Here, the Paris arcades are examined as though they were properties in the hand of a collector. (At bottom... the collector lives a piece of dream life. For in the dream, too, the rhythm of perception and experience is altered in such a way that everything—even the seemingly most neutral—comes to strike us; everything concerns us. In order to understand the arcades from the ground up, we sink them into the deepest stratum of the dream; we speak of them as though they had struck us.)

Jan Zwicky, Imagination and the Good Life

33. Ontological attention is a response to particularity: *this* kingfisher, *this* lagoon, *this* slant-wise smoky West Coast rain. It is impossible to pay such attention and to regard that to which one attends as a “resource.” In perceiving *this* ness we respond to having been addressed.

35. In the experience of *this* ness we are pierced. The *this* strikes into us like a shaft of light...

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*

155. A poet’s words can pierce us. And that is of course *causally* connected with the use that they have in our life. And it is also connected with the way in which, conformably to this use, we let our thoughts roam up and down in the familiar surroundings of the words.

Convolute IV

We conclude that we shall do justice to perceptual experience only if we abandon the preestablished frameworks of space and time and instead look with unprejudiced eyes for categories the experience requires.

-- Rudolf Arnheim, *A Stricture on Space and Time*

“So... you want to teach children to... talk with trees or whatever, with... nature poetry?”

Not at all. I mean—yes, that is one way to put it. But it is a little more complex than just getting outside & “communing with Nature” (—cf. Rousseau; Romanticism; most environmental education initiatives). While such sentiments imply eco-friendly cultures & curricula—field trips to the wilderness reserve, pastoral poems about daffodils, blue recycling boxes & school gardens—they are not as inherently *ecological* as it may seem on the surface. That is, deep or formal ecological insight depends more on the (“revolutionary”) pedagogic co-construction of experience (&, vitally, on the recognition that not all agency or meaning in the world is of human origin.) Or, to put it more pessimistically: the structural logic of leviathanic ordering is *all weather* (—*tous les temps!*). It is no great secret, for example, that “education for sustainability” is little more than a re-branded glamour for sustaining Capital. The *real* question, then, is to what extent is *any given educational experience* little more than a reification of Dominion? Or: —The *real* problem with environmental education is not that it is marginalized, but *fashionable*. Too plastic, too “emblematic”—a little like the allegories of the seventeenth century *Trauerspiel*—& can function as a vessel for almost any ideology, but always seems to function for a single ideology. Benjamin: “Fashion’s innovations leave intact the framework of domination.”

[Ecohermeneutics: “Excursus on the political significance of fashion.” —Fashion tends to be considered an urban phenomenon, but its *ur-form* (—its “theological” glamour) extends, like carbon dioxide, well beyond city limits. What nineteenth century Romantics & their twenty-first century descendants in environmental education have routinely failed to recognize is the extent to which their faith in the transformative potential of Nature, Art, & the Imagination has already been precorporated by *Leviathan!* We already live in a mythic dream-world: the glass & iron dome of the ur-arcade already encloses the whole planet—city & forest alike. Fashion is the soft pollution that accelerates a faux sense of change on the surface of things—cf. “fast fashion” now heralds fifty-two “micro-seasons”—to ensure that nothing deep, nothing structural, ever really changes.]

Benjamin: “The mighty seek to secure their position with blood (police), cunning (fashion), magic (pomp).”

Cultural attitudes informed by this capitalized Romanticism tend to categorically differentiate, for example, between one kind of activity called “Art,” which employs something called “Imagination”—& another called “Science,” which is the culmination of a “more developed” capacity for formal logic & theoretic abstraction. While many Romantics have sought to refute Old Reason by swinging wholeheartedly back towards Nature, Art, Poetry, & the individual genius of the Artist—this only reinforces the same dualistic structure from the “other side.” If Dominion is sustained, at least, in part, by amplifying the formal operational architecture of logic & technique, it makes little sense to preemptively reject either “side” or “culture” (in the sense of “Two Cultures”). Rather what must be rejected are hierarchical structures that claim to be “progressive” *a priori*—by virtue of method, or field, or fashion, etc. For the mighty secure their position with such cunning & pomp. Indeed, the bifurcation that runs between domains & foundational categories, like the wreckage-strewn path of a storm, is, in fact, the wake of *Leviathan!* moving through being & time. —Moving, that is, through us.

We are, as such, not directly concerned with how to converse with trees or write nature poems per se—or even with usurping Old Reason by way of some aesthetic counterrevolution—but with cultivating the ontological attention that *underlies* “good” nature poetry. We are concerned, in other words, with how to cultivate a sense of *lyric awareness*—to recognize the world as “other than us, but every bit as ontologically robust” (Zwicky). Such a *formal ecological* disposition would be, for Serres, “third-instructed”—an intellectual spirit that both follows & re-makes “the legal eccentricity of the world.” Or: *Being educated* as thinking & making attuned with an unfolding ecological form, unfolding history. Adding *eco*-to hermeneutics recognizes that we are always already “talking with trees.” The task is to get outside: not the classroom, but self-centeredness.

§ 51

Mick Smith, Lost for Words?

Obviously, the way nature makes an impression on us will in part depend upon the kind of culture we have. All cultures facilitate and limit the manner of our listening to the language of nature in their own ways. But insofar as any natural entity is understood as being party to a form of life it is never meaningless. Those in modern Western society who claim to find nature meaningless are disingenuous. In fact they restrict the meanings nature has to those that matter to them, those supposedly “discovered” by science and technology. Nature only speaks to them insofar as it can express itself in a manner communicable in terms of quantity, number, and instrumentality. The modern form of life and its associated linguistic traditions regard nature as inert material at the service of humanity, as what Heidegger referred to as a “standing reserve.” Nature’s meaning is restricted to its use, its utility for us.

Walter Benjamin, On Language as Such and the Language of Man

...[A]ll communication of mental meanings is language, communication in words being only a particular case of human language and of the justice, poetry, or whatever underlying it or founded on it. The existence of language, however, is not only coextensive with all the areas of human mental expression in which language is always in one sense or another inherent, but with absolutely everything. There is no event or thing in either animate or inanimate nature that does not in some way partake of language, for it is in the nature of all to communicate their mental meanings. This use of “language” is in no way metaphorical.

Jan Zwicky, Lyric Realism: Nature Poetry, Silence, and Ontology

[N]ature poets are a species, a large species, of a genus called “lyric thinkers.” By this term I do *not* mean Romantic self-aggrandizing expressers of personal emotion; in fact, I mean almost the opposite. A lyric thinker is someone whose understanding is driven by intuitions of coherence. Her experience, in this respect, can only be gestured towards, not captured, in a medium like language—whose use insists on distinctions that are absent in lyric awareness. A nature poem, in this sense, is, then, never more than a finger pointing at the moon: its words do not “contain” reality, but merely tell us in what direction we should look. Moreover, that this is all the nature poem is—a kind of ontological signpost—is a fact of which the person who has written it is usually acutely aware. Nature poetry’s business is not actually words, it is the practice, the discipline, of wholeness, a coming-home to the unselfed world.

Michel Serres, *The Troubadour of Knowledge*

First focus: universal and clear scientific reason, a scintillating sun. Second focus, burning: each singular incarnated individual suffering and dying of the harshness of men, *ecce homo*. Philosophy—a third person, third-instructed, proceeding from or begotten by rational universality and painful singularity, painful universality and rational singularity, a spirit that, simultaneously, makes or follows the legal eccentricity of the world and is sown, multiplied in the universe—avoids neither the center nor the periphery.

This is the secret of knowledge: it functions like the world.

§ 52

“Is there a way out?” —No one knows. ((Perlman: “It is not known if the technological detritus that crowds and poisons the world leaves human beings any room to dance.”)) If there is, it is not the kind of thing that tends to happen in schools. The First People’s Principles of Learning may be stapled to the library wall, but they are rarely *experienced*. —“You cannot be *serious*? Ancestors? Spirits? The Land? *Tsk-preposterous*.” Communal fires & possession—“being beholden by the very nature of things”—is not permitted in school.

“Thou shalt not regress.”

Even if—in an attempt to avoid appropriation—eäarthlings were able to articulate a kind of “autochthonous” relationship with *this* place in “their own words” (as teachers like to say); & cultivate the appropriate rituals & practices to mitigate our leviathanic hunger (cf. Hamat’sa)—it is virtually impossible to imagine such rites & teachings as part of the state curriculum. It is simply not what education is for in a technological society.

[Note the *ontological* incompatibility in the very idea of *being educated*. Intimacy with place as “savage.”]

What is education for? —We should like to say something like: To risk an odyssey from familiar to strange & become-increasingly-human-by-passing-through-an-aperture. To look unflinchingly into the face of Moloch. To be possessed by a pandæmonium of “alterity.” But we lack the cultural customs & discursive categories to recognize such experiences as anything other than emotionally contaminated, unscientific, utterly primitive.

The *real* problem: this limitation is built into the grammar of modern thought itself. Developmentalism

So are teachers just another-brick-in-the-wall ideologues? Industrial fascists muzzling the voice of The Land? —Not for the most part: at least, not at the level of consciousness. Most everyday plaid-collared teachers just “want what is best” for their students. The 21st century skills required to get a good job, social & emotional literacy, the freedom to “think for oneself,” reading, writing, arithmetic. ((The banality of being educated.))

In this sense, school—& environmental education in particular—is “phantasmagorical” in a way that is akin to Benjamin’s critique of the seventeenth century German tragic drama (i.e. *Trauerspiel*)—which, in turn, informs his later critiques of nineteenth century commodity culture. For Benjamin, both the *Trauerspiel* & the commodity function as spectacular façades comprised of the utopian traces of previous generations—our collective hopes & dreams for a better world in a time of “general crisis”—to make it seem like revolutionary changes in consciousness & material distribution are right around the corner, but which never actually come.

((The religious overtones are not coincidental, despite the supposed secularity of modern artforms & goods.))

§ 52

Dennis Lee, Grant's Impasse

One thing that spoke to me in Grant's work was his attempt to articulate something which could scarcely be thought at all within modern assumptions: the reality of being behoden... In the modern era, we do not have rational categories which allow us to speak of being unprovisionally claimed, beyond all bargain or convenience: of being behoden by the very nature of things. We may or may not believe that anything claims us in such a way. But regardless of what we believe, this limitation is built into the grammar of modern thought itself. Its categories have been shaped to parse a world of objective facts and subjective values. And if there is a truth that which cannot be accommodated within those specifications, it will remain unthinkable within the terms of modern rationality.

George Grant, In Defense of North America

What makes the drive to technology so strong is that it is carried on by men who still identify what they are doing with the liberation of mankind... It may be that this drive to practicality moves to become little more than a will to mastery governing the vacuous masses. But that is not yet how we understand our present. The identification in our practicality of masterful interference and the building of a human world still filters through the manifold structures of managerial and scientific elites to be the governing faith of the society. All political arguments... take place within the common framework that the highest good is moving forward in expansionist practicality. To think outside this faith is to make oneself a stranger to the public realm.

[T]he technological society is not for most North Americans, at least at the level of consciousness, a "terra incognita" into which we must move with hesitation, moderation and in wonder, but a comprehended promised land which we have discovered by the use of calculating reason and which we can ever more completely inherit by the continued use of calculation. Man has at last come of age in the evolutionary process... and is freeing himself for happiness against the old necessities of hunger and disease and overwork, and the consequent oppressions and repressions. The condition of nature—that "otherness"—which so long enslaved us, when they appeared as a series of unknown forces, are now beginning to be understood in their workings so that they can serve our freedom. The era of our planetary domination dawns; and beyond that?

Moreover, when we use this language of "freedom" and "values" to ask seriously what substantive "values" our freedom should create, it is clear that such values cannot be discovered in "nature" because in the light of modern science, nature is objectively conceived as indifferent to value. (Every sophomore... is able to disprove "the naturalistic fallacy," namely, statements about what ought to be cannot be inferred solely from statements about what is). Where then does our freedom to create values find its content?

Such a goal of moral striving is inextricably bound up with the pursuit of those sciences which issue in the mastery of human and non-human nature. The drive to the overcoming of chance which has been the motive force behind the developers of modern technique did not come to be accidentally, as a clever way of dealing with the external world, but as one part of a way of thought about the whole and what is worth doing in it. At the same time the goal of freedom was formulated within the light of this potential overcoming of chance.

Walter Benjamin

Allegory is in the realm of thought what ruins are in the realm of things.

§ 53

The *real* work of an educator lies in collecting & co-constructing constellations of *images* (as in *Denkbild*—“thought pictures,” but also “mindset” or “imagination.” Also cf. Wittgenstein, “seeing-as”) or *lyric ideas*—this includes texts, but also activities, materials, or anything one might *think-with*—to facilitate an experience of attunement. A kind of polyphonic alarm bell of *being*—a murder of crow caws at dawn, a sudden gust of wind through the chimes, all the neighbourhood dogs start barking at once, then, a low rumble—thunder? an earthquake? —A storm is blowing from Paradise: This storm is what we call progress. Dream World

Benjamin: “We construct here an alarm clock that rouses the kitsch of the previous century to *assembly*.”

The “ontological” or “sacred” impetus of this work is vital—the striking images, the dark angels & piles of wreckage, the two-headed sea serpents & trembling glaciers—are not just “in your head.” They are not “myth” in the colonial sense: —ornamental superstitions or fanciful entertainment for children & tourists. They are “theological” theorems about *the real* from within (cf. the inscape). The surrealist mien of the now. They are mimetic traces of a “messianic arrest” in thinking (cf. lyric insight): *mimetic* in the participatory sense of attuned to the “live, metaphorical relation between things and the resonant structure of the world.”

“But why not just state your position? Why not structure a clear argument against ‘progress’ for example?”

Because the problem lies with a particular conception of thinking as the singular essence of “clear thought.”

A “lyric argument” is an integrated, crystalline structure that facilitates the capacity to “see-as,” as in *through* (the pollutants of appropriation—hard & soft—that obfuscate or precorporate the phenomenology of origin). The first step, for Benjamin, towards teaching formal insight is thus to cultivate “heightened graphicness” (or: gestalt intelligence) by assembling “large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components. [To] discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event. And, therefore, to break with vulgar historical naturalism.” Clear as seeing between the lines, as in a vast relational substratum, as in the chance meeting on a dissecting table of a sewing machine & an umbrella.

[Remember: Commodity consciousness issues from within a dream-state—a tight-circle with no obvious exit. One can “step back” & critique this social order (cf. critical theory), but as Zwicky reminds us: “Critique is empty unless the space it clears becomes home to insight.” ((—Plus *Leviathan!* precorporates our desires & inscribes itself upon our very identity. How is one to bracket oneself from oneself?)) The critical project in Benjamin may sound “too applied” for lyric philosophy—*which is true*—the social-ecological “comportment” “adequate to true waking being” remains to be worked out *a posteriori*. That is, any new social or natural contract needs to emerge in dialectic response to “messianic time”—a “revolutionary” disposition that aims to redeem history by “repairing the world” (cf. *tikkun olam*, but also Zwicky’s notion of *domesticity*). But cultivating the *capacity* for ontological insight—historical or ecological—is, pedagogically, a related project.]

Remember: we are learning to *do* something. What we are teaching is a *capacity*. (Eco)Anamnesis

§ 53

Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing*

Benjamin described his work as a “Copernican revolution” in the practice of history writing. His aim was to destroy the mythic immediacy of the present, not by inserting it into a cultural continuum that affirms the present as its culmination, but by discovering that constellation of historical origins which has the power to explode history’s “continuum.” In an era of industrial culture, consciousness exists in a mythic, dream state, against which historical knowledge is the only antidote. But the particular kind of historical knowledge that is needed to free the present from myth is not easily uncovered. Discarded and forgotten, it lies buried within surviving culture, remaining invisible precisely because it was of so little use to those in power.

Corsets, feather dusters, red and green-coloured combs, old photographs, souvenir replicas of the Venus di Milo, collar buttons to shirts long since discarded—these battered historical survivors from the dawn of industrial culture that appeared together in the dying arcades as “a world of secret affinities” were the philosophical ideas, as a constellation of concrete, historical referents. Moreover, as “political dynamite,” such outdated products of mass culture were to provide a Marxist-revolutionary, political education for Benjamin’s own generation... the victims of mass culture’s more recent soporific effects.

Jan Zwicky, What is Lyric Philosophy?

38. “Things are, and are not, as they seem.” Fascinated by the “are not,” we frequently skip over the “are”—and it is this tendency or impulse that is at the root of metaphysical reductionism, the idea that incompatible appearances must always be the result of a failure, or an inability, to attend to some “deeper” reality.

Both Herakleitos and Wittgenstein attempt to resist this impulse. It is no coincidence that both also write aphoristically. Developed in a certain way, a collection of aphorisms invites a reader to see connections for her or himself. That is, aphoristic writing can be used to cultivate our ability to see-as. We may be puzzled at first—but then we “get it,” we *experience* the coalescence that is crucial. It is an experience quite other than that of granting the reasonableness of proposition B, given proposition A.

Walter Benjamin, Materials for the Exposé of 1935

Awakening is the exemplary case of remembering: the weighty and momentous case, in which we succeed in remembering the nearest (most obvious).

In what different canonical ways can man behave (the individual man, but also the collective) with regard to dreaming? And what sort of comportment, at bottom, is adequate to true waking being?

We conceive the dream (1) as historical phenomenon, (2) as collective phenomenon.

(We teach that, in the stratification of the dream, reality never simply is, but rather it strikes the dreamer. And I treat of the arcades precisely as though, at bottom, they were something that has happened to me.)

We have to wake up from the existence of our parents. In this awakening, we have to give an account of the nearness of that existence. Obedience as category of nearness in religious education. Collecting as profane category of nearness; the collector interprets dreams of the collective.

§ 54

only what you can carry

unworthy
of that embroidered
fire,
those incandescent
socks.

-- Pablo Neruda, Ode to a Pair of Socks

An ultra-fine point sharpie
keys & wallet
my Palestinian keffiyeh
leather jacket from Berlin
mustard-yellow tuque
wooden prayer beads
a lemurian seed crystal
a thermos of earl grey
a flask of Irish cream
field guides & fieldnotes
one book of philosophy
one book of poetry
a trustworthy knife
a beeswax candle &
a single match.

Jan Zwicky, *Plato as Artist*

I believe the passage [in *Meno*] has been written for the ears of initiates. It brings to mind the discussion at *Phaedo* 73c-76b, in which Socrates is made to argue that just as our lover's possessions remind us of our beloved, likewise material things stir us to remembrance of the Forms. “[R]ecollection is occasioned by things that are similar or dissimilar [to the original; but] when caused by similar things... one is forced to consider whether the similarity is deficient or complete” (74a). And from this, since of course perception of material things always falls short of vision of the Forms, we are led... once again to affirm the immortality of the soul. How else could we be put in the mind of “the Beautiful itself by itself” having merely been exposed to a summer’s day? (If the answer seems obvious to you, think again.) In other words, analogic ontology and reincarnation theory are also a package deal. This is the chord I believe Plato is sounding...

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[K1,1]. Awakening as a graduated process that goes on in the life of the individual as in the life of generations. Sleep its initial stage. A generation's experience of youth has much in common with the experience of dreams. Its historical configuration is a dream configuration. Every epoch has such a side turned toward dreams, the child's side. For the previous century, this appears very clearly in the arcades. But whereas the education of earlier generations explained these dreams for them in terms of tradition, of religious doctrine, present-day education... amounts to the distraction of children. Proust could emerge as an unprecedented phenomenon only in a generation that had lost all bodily and natural aids to remembrance and that, poorer than before, was left to itself to take possession of the worlds of childhood in merely an isolated, scattered, and pathological way. What follows here is an experiment in the technique of awakening. An attempt to become aware of the dialectical—the Copernican—turn of remembrance. <*Eingedenken*>

[*Eingedenken*: Benjamin's coinage from the preposition *eingedenk* (“mindful of”) and the verb *gedenken* (“bear in mind;” “remember”). This verbal noun has a more active sense than *Erinnerung* (“memory”).]

[K1,2]. The Copernican revolution in historical perception is as follows. Formerly it was thought that a fixed point had been found in “what has been,” and one saw the present engaged in tentatively concentrating the forces of knowledge on this ground. Now this relation is to be overturned, and what has been is to become the dialectical reversal—the flash of awakened consciousness. Politics attains primacy over history. The facts become something that just now first happened to us, first struck us; to establish them is the affair of memory. Indeed, awakening is the great exemplar of memory: the occasion on which it is given us to remember what is closest, tritest, most obvious... There is a not-yet conscious knowledge of what has been: its advancement has the structure of awakening.

[K2,2]. What the child (and, through faint reminiscence, the man) discovers in the pleats of the old material to which it clings while trailing at its mother's skirts—that's what these pages should contain. Fashion

[K9,1]. Proust on nights of deep sleep after great exhaustion: “Good nights... turn so effectively the soil and break through the surface stone of our body that we discover there, where our muscles dive down and throw out their twisted roots and breathe the air of the new life, the garden in which as a child we used to play. There is no need to travel in order to see it again; we must dig down inwardly to discover it. What once covered the earth is no longer upon it but beneath; a mere excursion does not suffice for a visit to the dead city—excavation is necessary also.” —Marcel Proust, *Le Côte de Guermantes* (Paris, 1920), Vol. 1, p. 82.

§ 55

All we can do is cultivate a capacity for formal ecological insight (Here, you see? Like *this*) to blast thinking (& things) out of a progressive continuum that shimmers <*Aufhebung des Scheins*> like a narcissistic pool, on the surface of an alien *framework* we mistake for our own desires & sense of identity. Selflessness

Or, to switch senses: —*Sssh... listen.* ((—The sound of wind in leaves.)) Underground Music

[To be underlined: *But* social relations, political movements, economic models, technological applications, the everyday labour & leisure of plaid-shirted zeks, food security, “what should we do about climate change?” —can never be *lyric*. “Applied lyricism” is a contradiction in terms. There is no such thing as “lyric pedagogy” —at least, not in the sense of prescribed learning outcomes or techniques that can be assessed according to criterial standards *a priori*. This is, admittedly, difficult to accept given the significance of objectives, metrics, & outcomes in modern education systems & theory. ((Zwicky: “The puzzlement is cultural. It is a product of making explicit, analyzable structure the paradigm of meaning. We thereby sculpt intelligence according to a technocratic ideal.”)) The social, economic, & material manifestations of human intelligence can, of course, be informed by lyric awareness. Indeed, anthropologically-speaking, this has been customary in oral cultures from time immemorial—& remains vital to many living Indigenous & “other-than-Western” cultures today. This is, perhaps, as close as we can get to an educational objective: The cultivation of a sentient *disposition*.]

((—fr. Old Fr., *disposicion*, “arrangement, order; mood, state of mind”)) Gestalt Intelligence

((Mimesis facilitates becoming other-than.)) Ancestors, Spirit, The Land

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* ((Annotated))

[O°,81]. Historical knowledge of the truth ((—Or: formal insight into the ur-history of material things)) is possible only as the overcoming of illusory appearance <*Aufhebung des Scheins*>. Yet this overcoming should not signify sublimation—actualization of the object—but rather assume, for its part, the configuration of a *rapid* image. The small quick figure in contrast to scientific complacency. This configuration of a rapid image goes together with the recognition of the “now” in things. But not the future. Surrealist mien of things in the now; philistine mien in the future. The illusion overcome here is that an earlier time is in the now. In truth: the now [is] the inmost image of what has been.

Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*

“Sentience takes us outside of ourselves”—no proposition could be more fundamental to understanding the visceral bond connecting perceiver to perceived in the operation of mimesis... The radical displacement of self in sentience—taking one outside of oneself accounts for one of the most curious features of Benjamin’s entire philosophy of history, *the flash* wherein “the past can be seized only as an image which flashes up at an instant when it can be recognized and is never seen again.” Repeatedly this mystical flash illuminates his anxiety for reappraisal of past in present... This flash marks that leap “in the open air of history” which establishes history as “Marx understood the revolution” as “the subject of a structure whose site is not homogenous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the *now*.” This flash is prelude to the numbing aftermath of shock that Benjamin recruits to destabilize familiar motifs of time and history as cumulative.

Thinking, he asserts, “involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well.” When this arrest occurs it creates a configuration in shock, and here the flash of recognition asserts itself again, as when Benjamin writes that in such a configuration one can “recognize the sign of a Messianic cessation of happening, or, put differently, a revolutionary chance in the fight for an oppressed past.” This recognition alters the very percept of recognition, entailing transformation of the recognizing self.

Everything in this somersaulting explosion of historical time blasting the homogeneity of abstract identity hinges on this singular act of *recognition*, the energy and consequences of its flashlike character. In trying to figure it out, my own flow of thought is brought to a halt by the following passage, where this complex movement of recognition of past in present is rendered as the unique property of recognizing similarity which for Benjamin, as is clear from his essay “On the Doctrine of the Similar,” is the exercise of the mimetic faculty. In that essay... Benjamin wrote that the perception of similarity is in every case bound to an instantaneous flash. “It slips past,” he says... “[and] can possibly be regained, but cannot really be held fast, unlike other perceptions. It offers itself to the eye as fleetingly and transitorily as a constellation of stars.” In other words, the Messianic sign is the sign of the mimetic.

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

285. Lyric’s attentiveness, its focus on what, from a systematic perspective, is called detail, must preclude all generalizations that arise from expediency. The idea of power as something to be ‘exercised over’ other things cannot arise *within* a lyric comprehension of the world.

§ 56

Philosophical hermeneutics, lyric philosophy, & good teaching share this elemental gesture:

Here, you see? Like *this*.
Or, to switch senses: *Sssh... listen.*

Wittgenstein: 144. (Indian mathematicians: “Look at this!”)

The educational implications are immanent within the deep ecological structure of the form.

Kieran Egan, *Getting It Wrong from the Beginning*

Think of the educated person as a complex image. We can think of this image in two ways. The first is to see this person as made up of a large set of pieces, like a complex jigsaw puzzle, which are the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and so on to be learned until the student increasingly approximates in her or his own way a “family resemblance” of our image of the educated person. The second way to see the image of education is as like a hologram. If the plate containing the interference pattern of the holographic image is broken into pieces, each piece contains an image of the whole; the smaller the piece, the more blurred the image that can be constituted by the laser’s light; the larger the piece, the clearer the image.

The work I want this metaphor to do is help show education as a process that is better represented by the second way of seeing our image of the educated person. The metaphor points up why some knowledge can be meaningless unless, like pieces of the holographic plate, it embodies an image of the whole of which it is a part. The two-dimensional picture may be broken into many clear and vivid pieces—a cloud, a tree, a boot, a smiling face, a blue eye, a battle scene—but if they individually hold no clue to the image of which they are parts, they will remain separate and inert. Perhaps I am pushing my metaphor too far here, but I want to suggest that much educational research is guided by psychological theories and not educational ones. How can one tell the difference when it comes to considering educational research? If you have become accustomed to looking at educational phenomena through psychological rather than educational theories, it isn’t so easy to tell. It’s the conceptual equivalent of standing still with one eye closed in front of a hologram.

Psychology, and to a lesser extent sociology, has brought into education not only methods of research but also a whole range of concepts. Let us consider the concepts of learning and development in particular. In psychology the aim is to explore the nature of human learning and development. The sense of the concepts that have come into education from psychology are influenced by this research, and the value-saturated educational concepts of learning and development tend to get suppressed; their hologramlike sense in education is made into a value-neutral process to be discovered bit by bit.

Rudolf Arnheim, Max Wertheimer and Gestalt Psychology

[R]espect for the structure of the physical world as it impinges upon the nervous system has been stressed by gestalt psychologists in conscious opposition to the subjectivism of British empiricist philosophy, on which the training of most American psychologists is based. According to that tradition, the sensory stimulus material by which a human being or animal is informed about the outer world is in itself amorphous, an accumulation of elements. It is the recipient mind that ties them together by connections established in the past... Needless to say, the two antagonistic theories were based on opposite worldviews: the one, proudly asserting the dominion of the individual’s views and judgements over the environment; the other, distinctly irritated by such egocentrism, affirming that it was man’s task to find his own humble place in the world and to take cues for his conduct and comprehension from the order of that world.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Zettel*

412. Am I doing child psychology? —I am making a connexion between the concept of teaching and the concept of meaning.

§ 57

The *real* problem lies with a cultural attitude that regards meaning & imagination as essentially linguistic phenomena. Given that language, in most non-Indigenous cultures, is considered an exclusively human attribute, such attitudes render the natural world incapable of expressing the kind of meaning we associate with communicative events. Culture thus becomes *everything Nature is not.* [Nature is, it bears noting, often granted an ability to “speak to us,” but only for our own moral edification (cf. Kant). Only Human is end-in-itself; Nature is never more than an instrumental, if sometimes sublime, means. A virtuous standing-reserve.]

School: —Cultures colonized by these conceits tautologically confirm the interior sources of their intelligence.

Education: —Old-growth minds mature, emerge, & encompass the old growth of their traditional territory.

Ecohermeneutics: *Animist realism. Lyric realism.* An attempt to discern the temporal & material totality by accounting for the unseen & the dreamt in a complex implicature that intersects with & provides passage to other domains of knowledge & understanding. “The Golden Age of the Haudenosaunee” as a Turtle Island manifestation of “Messianic time” (cf. Benjamin) —It is less a historical period that, like the “noble savage,” has naturally vanished into the past, & more an experiential capacity (cf. origin) requiring recursive & ritual attunement with the “ecology of the sacred” or “resonant ecology of *what-is.*” (cf. rescue) Ecosurrealism

Becoming an eäarthling on the traditional territories of Indigenous peoples has little to do with the passing of homogenous units of time. It does not matter how many generations your fur-trading, gold-rushing, macchiato-slanging predecessors have “been here.” ((George Grant: “The roots of some communities in... North America go back far in continuous love for their place, but none of us can be called autochthonous, because in all there is some consciousness of making the land our own.)) What matters is the capacity for sentience—the ontological awareness, the gestalt intelligence—to open the heart & mind to “the timeless (cf. Benjamin, Zwicky)), living ontology.” Then cultivating the domestic skillset to proceed accordingly.

Big Idea: What would it take—material conditions, pedagogy, curriculum—to cultivate “old-growth” minds?

Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*

To be defined as ‘nature’ in this context is to be defined as passive, as non-agent and non-subject, as the ‘environment’ or invisible background conditions against which the ‘foreground’ achievements of reason or culture (provided typically by the white, western, male expert or entrepreneur) take place. It is to be defined as a *terra nullius*, a resource empty of its own purposes or meanings, and hence available to be annexed for the purposes of those supposedly identified with reason or intellect, and to be conceived and molded in relation to these purposes. It means being seen as part of a sharply separate, even alien lower realm, whose domination is simply ‘natural,’ flowing from nature itself and from the nature(s) of things.

Breaking the dualism involves both affirming and reconceptualizing the underside, nature. Cartesian thought has stripped nature of the intentional and mindlike qualities which make an ethical response to it possible. Once nature is reconceived as capable of agency and intentionality, and human identity is reconceived in less polarized and disembodied ways, the great gulf which Cartesian thought established between the conscious, mindful human sphere and the mindless, clockwork natural one disappears.

Joe Sheridan & Dan Longboat, The Haudenosaunee Imagination and the Ecology of the Sacred

From a Haudenosaunee perspective, we notice that minds colonized by these assertions concerning the universality of imagination’s origins and functions are contributing dimensions to larger conceits maintained by anthropocentrically biased cultures. Cultures colonized by these conceits tautologically confirm the interior sources of their intelligence. Minds colonized by such conceits think and conceive of themselves in this grammar of possessive individualism. [Haudenosaunee] regard any assumption concerning the existence of autonomous, anthropogenic minds to be aberrations that violate the unity, interrelation, and reciprocity between language and psychology, landscape and mind... [The territory] possesses sentience manifest in the consciousness of that territory, and that consciousness is formalized as Haudenosaunee consciousness. Of course, other beings manifest that consciousness in their literature of tracks, chirrups, and loon calls.

Haudenosaunee minds are composed not just of visible ecological domains but also by the numinous qualities of those domains that, allowed to mature, express the fullness of traditional territory. Old-growth minds and cultures mature, emerge, and encompass the old growth of their traditional territory. The Golden Age of the Haudenosaunee... is a timeless condition of life as well as an unfolding reality guaranteed by natural laws... and renewed when those laws and beliefs are in need of revival. Exactly how many generations settlers take to naturalize their cultural identity to Turtle Island is beyond us, but when the transformative powers of the land speak, we recommend opening the heart and mind to the timeless, living ontology...

Imagination will be... replaced with the term *animist realism* to portray a planet where everything is alive and sentient, but this belief has been around far longer than ecological theory. Animist realism attempts to mirror Creation’s temporal and material totality by accounting for the unseen and the dreamt in a complex implicature that intersects with and provides passage to other domains of knowledge and understanding.

Jan Zwicky, *Imagination and the Good Life ((Annotated))*

5. It is ethically incumbent on philosophers ((-& educators)) to avoid epistemic anthropocentrism; we must choose an epistemology that does not place human consciousness before the being of the world.

§ 58

It would be more accurate to say that we are concerned with a sense of *being educated* that rejects:

- i.) Logico-mathematical or formal operational thinking as the paragon of clarity & cognitive development.
- ii.) The hierarchical ordering of “real knowledge”—rationality/imagination, nature/culture, mind/body, science/humanities, modern/primitive, purity/profanity, music/noise, outside/inside, self/other, etc.
- iii.) The notion that meaning, imagination, & language are exclusively human attributes.
- iv.) The notion of human exceptionalism altogether.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*

To whom does our language extend the grammar of animacy? Naturally, plants and animals are animate, but... I am discovering that the Potawatomi understanding of what it means to be animate diverges from the list of living beings we all learned in Biology 101. In Potawatomi 101, rocks are animate, as are mountains and water and fire and places. Beings that are imbued with spirit, our sacred medicines, our songs, drums, and even stories, are all animate. The list of the inanimate seems to be smaller, filled with objects that are made by people. Of an inanimate being, like a table, we say, “*What* is it?” And we answer *Dopwen yewe*. Table it is. But of apple, we must say, “*Who* is that being?” And reply *Mshimin yawe*. Apple that being is.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*

The Deer clan, or nation, in this story has power, influence, agency. They have knowledge that is now shared and encoded in the ethics and practices of hunting deer for the Nishnaabeg. There is an assumption on the part of the Nishnaabeg that the deer have language, thought, and spirit—intellect, and that intellect is different than the intellect of the Nishnaabeg because they live in the world in a different manner than the Nishnaabeg, and they therefore generate different meaning.

Mark Fettes, Languages in Concert: Linguistic Plurality on Indigenous Land

If we are truly making an effort to move beyond centuries of colonization, we should avoid reinscribing colonial assumptions in our thinking. A good start is to take seriously what Indigenous elders and scholars and artists have been saying for decades. That languages belong to the land. “Land” in an indigenous context refers to all kinds of beings living together in a particular place. The Western concepts of “ecosystem,” “habitat,” “biome,” “food web”... refer to aspects of the land, but none of them encompasses its full richness. The land is not just a set of living relations but a lively, multifaceted intelligence that thinks and acts in many registers, one of them being human... An indigenous language, then, is a language of interspecies diplomacy; a language shaped through ongoing efforts to listen to what the land is saying, in all its many voices, and rephrase some parts of it in human terms. Its genealogy is not that of a solo instrument, but one that is *essentially* part of an orchestra. And this in turn suggests that reconciliation must entail, not just the valuing and upholding of indigenous languages as solo instruments—the kind of acknowledgement that follows from Western rights discourse—but... the valuing and upholding of the full orchestras of which they are part.

This is an unfamiliar kind of linguistic pluralism. We have become so accustomed, in Western intellectual traditions, to thinking and writing of language as a uniquely human capacity, that we may have difficulty in imagining it as part of a much greater chorus of voices. Nor are the implications easy to fathom. “To foster expertise within Nishnaabe intelligence,” Simpson writes, “we need people engaged with land as curriculum and in our languages for decades, not weeks.” And this is not land that has been chopped up and paved over, but land that has retained much of its ecological complexity and integrity, whose intelligence has not been drastically eroded by industrial agriculture, forestry and mining.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

22. My attitude towards him is an attitude towards a soul. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a soul.

§ 59

The tragedy of Cartesian doubt is that it is patently pathetic (“affecting the emotions”). It derives from a deep existential *desire*—a faith-based & hope-laden psychological need to grasp something—*anything*—with a measure of certainty & permanence. We long, like Old René—like so many adherents of the Abrahamic God or other pimps of Forever—to be certain, to be *right*. Or barring such discursive needs to just “*be* somewhat.” A≠A river. Not all the way down (!): —“but yet that I could not for all that conceive that I was not.” *Pathetic.*

David Jardine, *Awakening from Descartes's Nightmare*

It is a natural *assumption* about the world that it has its being “out there.” That is to say, independent of experience, language, etc. –the world is what it is. We may run into various difficulties in understanding the world—under names such as illusion, hallucination, ambiguity, unclarity, equivocation, and the like. But these difficulties do not affect the fact that the world has its self-identical being out there, and such difficulties must be struck out of discourse if it is to be true to this being out there.

The question persists in Descartes’s work—how do I know that these ideas that I have are ideas of things “out there?” How do I make this “move?” The fundamental *problem* in Descartes’s meditations becomes one of how the self-present subject can touch something outside of itself, thus keeping in force the desire that undergirds the thesis of the natural attitude by *beginning with* a subject which dreams that it is worldless, out of touch, severed from the Earth by the demands for clarity and distinctness. And he concludes that this subject can do so through precisely the clarity and distinctness of those ideas that participate in such self-presence—these are (*vía* God’s assurance) ideas *of* the world “out there.” It is these ideas that provide such a desired transcendence. Once encapsulated in its own self-presence, only the clarity of that self-presence will do. The thesis of the natural attitude is not disrupted or put out of play in Descartes’s nightmare, but simply negated and then regained through its mathematization. Descartes retains the belief in the “being out there” of the world, but simply transforms this sense of “being out there” in light of the *cogito*—to *be* out there is to be clear and distinct. All the ambiguous ways in which things were experienced to be out there cannot withstand his methodical doubt. The living Earth and our lives together withdraw into silence.

It is [the] relation to this thesis of natural attitude that distinguishes phenomenology... from other forms of inquiry. It is the fundamental *disruption* ((cf. Benjamin)) of this thesis as an assumption from which inquiry proceeds that gives phenomenology its difference. Phenomenology does not begin by *denying* the principle of identity, nor does it begin by *affirming* this principle. It does not wish to declare what the “being out there” of the world might be, seeking some alternate univocal *foundation* for inquiry to be placed alongside God, substance, sense-data, empirical fact, etc. It begins by “putting out of play” our tendency to assume such a principle as that to which experience must submit in order to be admitted into the boundaries that inquiry has drawn for itself. It puts out of play our tendency, in inquiry, towards foundations, towards explanations or suppositions which will “found” experience in something not present in the experience itself. This act of disruption, this act of “putting out of play” our tendency to invest experience with transcendent suppositions which go beyond things as they are experienced, is the *phenomenological reduction*.

[I]t is important to understand what the reduction does. If we miss the meaning... phenomenology becomes lost in quarrels with skepticism, subjectivism, idealism, and psychologism, *and it is none of these*. It is none of these, not because of peculiar distinguishing features which make its “standpoint” different. It is none of these because it is not a standpoint at all... It is an attempt to express how things already stand with us in the world, how we are already right in the middle of things.

The deep desire for univocity in Descartes’ dream does not disappear in phenomenological inquiry. Rather, it reappears out from under its sedimented objectifications—it appears *as* a desire. It is not denied or dispelled as if it were *false*, as if we could simply ignore it at our leisure. Rather, its full ludic character is brought out as something at play in our lives... To inquire into the full phenomenon of education requires that we face up to our hope for clarity and savor it *as a feature of our lives*, not indicative of some hidden univocal world that underlies our lives and which our lives constantly fail to be. It requires critical reflection on the social and cultural “locale” of such hopes for [univocal] clarity.

§ 60

Is anything more *fashionable* than Reason? Who does not think they are on the side of reasonable angels?

Stanley Cavell: “Reason seems able to overthrow the deification of everything but itself.” *Leviathan!*

Michel Serres: “Whether royal or imperial, whoever wields power, in fact, never encounters in space anything other than obedience to his power, thus his law: power does not move. When it does, it strides on red carpet. Thus reason never discovers, beneath its feet, anything but its own rule.” *Reproduction Technology*

Image: Reason as epistemic vector—the “linking postulate”—that *Leviathan!* appropriates to transmit “I am” from its historically primary vessel: God (via Religion), to its modern vessel: the Individual (via Humanism).

This is why hermeneutics—despite its role in provoking “the linguistic turn,” despite its residual dualities—is a mode of thinking worth revitalizing in world beyond 400 parts per million. Philosophical hermeneutics defies the straightforward correlation of *truth* with *method*—& offers a tradition well-versed in recognizing the historically-conditioned roots of our understanding. Moreover, tho it may seem counter-intuitive for a philosophy affiliated with textual exegesis & the humanities, the real work of hermeneutics is *cultivating* (—*Bildung*: “rising up through culture”) awareness of the address of the world “over and above our wanting and doing.” A milieu dilated by attending to the sentience & multivocality—the many-sided heart—of alterity.

Serres: “Suddenly these dilations, right in the middle of my body, are filled with a third, which is me without being me. In being raised, the self is begotten... In the subject, first person, the others engender a third person, who is finally well *brought up*... The third-instructed owes his upbringing, his instruction, and his education... to reason, a brilliant sun that commands scientific knowledge as much as the second reason, *the same one certainly*, but burning in the second focus, which comes not only from what we think, but what we suffer. This latter reason cannot be learned without cultures, myths, arts, religions, tales and contracts.”

Ecohermeneutics: A dilating *Bildung* of second reason: burning, swimming, suffering—like the living world.

* David Jardine, The Descartes Lecture

Remember, then, this is not just a matter of quelling the rampaging elephant with calmness and quiet: "no matter how long you cultivate serenity, you can only suppress manifest afflictions; you cannot eradicate their seeds. You need to cultivate insight" (Tsong-kha-pa). Hermeneutics demands that we go *through* these afflictions (*Erfahrung*) and seek the aid of those who have gone before (*Vorfahrung*) and in this, seek insight, wisdom. Hermeneutic work is meant to induce and encourage others on this way. This is why it waits and gathers and waits. This is why there is something pedagogical about it.

* Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*

[T]he misty, forbidding passes of the Mountains of Dualism have swallowed many an unwary traveller in their mazes and chasms. In these mountains, a well-trodden path leads through a steep defile to the Cavern of Reversal, where travellers fall into an upside-down world which strangely resembles the one they seek to escape. Trapped Romantics wander here, lamenting their exile, as do various tribes of Arcadians, Earth Mothers, Noble Savages and Working-Class Heroes whose identities are defined by reversing the valuations of the dominant culture. Postmodernist thinkers have found a way to avoid this cavern, and have erected a sign pointing out the danger, but have not yet discovered another path across the mountains to the promised land of liberatory politics... Mostly they linger by the Well of Discourse near the cavern, gazing in dismay into the fearful and bottomless Abyss of Relativism beyond it. The path to the promised land of reflective practice passes over the Swamp of Affirmation, which careful and critical travellers, picking their way through, can with some difficulty cross. Intrepid travellers who have found their way across the Swamp of Affirmation into the lands beyond often either fall into the Ocean of Continuity on the one side or stray into the waterless and alien Desert of Difference on the other, there to perish. The pilgrim's path to the promised land leads along a narrow way between these two hazards, and involves heeding both difference and continuity.

Dualism has formed the modern political landscape of the west as much as the ancient one. In this landscape, nature must be seen as a *political* rather than a descriptive category, a sphere formed from the multiple exclusions of the protagonist-superhero of the western psyche, reason, whose adventures and encounters form the stuff of western intellectual history. The concept of reason provides the unifying and defining contrast for the concept of nature... Since defenders of the western tradition (and even some nervous old guard critics of it) persistently and vociferously portray criticism of the dominant forms of reason as the rejection of all reason and the embrace of irrationality, it is necessary to stress that critiquing the dominant forms of reason which embody the master identity and oppose themselves to the sphere of nature does not imply abandoning all forms of reason, science and individuality. Rather, it involves their redefinition or reconstruction in less oppositional and hierarchical ways. To uncover the political identity behind these dominant forms of reason is not to decrease, but rather to increase, the scope and power of political analysis.

Linking postulates are assumptions normally made or implicit in the cultural background which create equivalences or mapping between the pairs. For example, the postulate that all and only humans possess culture maps the culture/nature pair on to the human/nature pair; the postulate that the sphere of reason is masculine maps the reason/body pair on to the male/female pair; and the assumption that the sphere of the human coincides with that of intellect or mentality maps the mind/body pair on to the human/nature pair, and, via transitivity, the human/nature pair on to the male/female pair.

§ 61



michael dé danann datura, *Ursa Major, or Anthropos Minor* (2018)
Paper collage on canvas, 30.5cm x 60cm

§ 61

[Intentionally Empty]

§ 62

Serres: “Is true intuition accompanied by an indispensable weakness?

And what does intuition owe to this weakness?”

What we require is less a purifying exorcism & more a weakness for possession by a pandæmonic intelligence (fr. *pan-* “all” + Gk. *daimon*) that is *other-than* (—self, system, human) & *of this place*. When I go to the cemetery to visit my grandmother, behind the White Church originally built as an “Indian Mission Chapel,” I lean towards the Garry oaks & listen for Ancestors, Spirits, or, at least, the pale-blue requiem of camas lilies. But all I hear is the old highway. Maybe I should smoke hashish next time, or burn spruce tips—I am not sure.

All I know is I am not *open enough*—& I did not learn any of this in school. School is no place for alchemy. No place for Poros, Penthos, Hermes—no place for Mink, Raven, Queneesh. —It is precisely *not* that place.

This is the *real* problem with “environmental education,” it is not truly—formally, mimetically—*ecological* in the sense of experience. In the sense of working to cultivate a lacuna, a clearing (—*Lichtung*), a weakness within you for glacier-whales & angels & other message-bearing systems to resonate. Ecohermeneutics

Children: “Why do we hafta to learn this?” Mr. Datura: “Because we are always already more-than & many.”

§ 62

James Hillman, Notes on Opportunism

[Hillman notes: Poros, according to Plato's *Symposium*, is father of Eros: —Openness gives birth to Love.]

[M]ythology shows Hermes knowing the ruse and deception that opens the way until the constellation shifts. Hermes here is like Eros, whose father was Poros, “resourcefulness,” “way-finding.” Since situations require this opportunistic knowing about where the openings are... an encounter, the lacuna, the weak place... gives the opportunity. *Perception of opportunities requires a sensitivity given through one's own wounds.* Here, weakness provides the kind of hermetic, secret perception critical for adaptation to situations. The weak place serves to open us to what is in the air. We feel through our pores which way the wind blows. We turn with the wind... An opportunity requires... a sense... which reveals the daimon of a situation. The daimon of a place in antiquity supposedly revealed what the place was good for, its special quality and dangers. The daimon was thought to be a *familiaris* of the place. To know a situation, one needs to sense what lurks in it.

Michel Serres, *Angels: A Modern Myth*

“And in this way huge message-bearing systems are created. Systems which are characterized by a circulation of messengers—bearers of messages which can be understood. There we have the constructed networks in which we live, and all the various forms of circulation; there we have the world of physical fluxes... and, finally, there we also have my divine legends: is it possible that there exists one single language which is capable of reconnecting these three levels which we have kept separate for so long?”

“If winds, currents, glaciers, volcanoes, etc., carry subtle messages that are so difficult to read that it takes us absolutely ages trying to decipher them, wouldn't it be appropriate to call them intelligent? What human could ever presume to speak a language that was so precise, refined and exquisitely coded? Don't you think it's rather arrogant of us to assume that we're the only intelligent beings in this world, when the River Garonne and the south wind carry with them and express more things than I would be able to write—and express them better? They read instantaneously the messages of other fluxes, filter them, make their choice, combine them with their own, translate them, and write them on land or water. They conserve them for a long time. They express themselves through explosions, roarings, noise and murmurings, tinkling and lapping... The movements of these fluxes need nothing to inspire them, because they are inspiration! How would it be turned out that we were only the slowest and least intelligent beings in the world?”

David W. Jardine, *Speaking with a Boneless Tongue*

Phenomenology often becomes a form of impotent self-enamourment with one's own “inner experiences,” (or the collected and “shared” [as the buzz word goes] experiences of oneself and others) forgetting that that experience has a living “intentional object” which prevents such (individual or collective) self-enamourment. This enamourment can, in some cases, turn phenomenology into a vicious democratization of Cartesianism where everybody has their own experience and the integrity of that which is experienced, say this pine tree, is violated in favour of a multiplicity of human voices. The thing itself falls silent, silenced now not by the singular and oppressive voice of logico-mathematical clarity (univocity), but by the collective babble of experiencers each cocooned in themselves (equivocity).

§ 63

“And what if nothing comes? If nothing *strikes*, as you say? None of this sounds very... straightforward. Can you provide some clear, working definitions for ‘lyric philosophy’ and ‘ecohermeneutics,’ maybe compare and contrast in your own words, then summarize three to five key points? We need to move on.”

Nothing may come: know this & act accordingly. Life is short, & lyric art is long (& the Spectacle relentlessly dumbs our ability to discern resonant structures reverberating “beneath” or “within” the surface *framework* of its totalizing order: the dominant epistemology makes them, literally, unthinkable.) One cannot force lyric insight—just as one cannot force an experience of I/Thou (Buber)—& in this respect it is not straightforwardly teachable. There are, as Zwicky maintains, no recipes, no machine-programmable formulae for precipitating gestalts; or rather, there is only one—pointing & hoping. Here, you see? —Like *this*. But how does one walk into a classroom, or pull up a stool at the local watering hole, with a fistful of dirt & say: *Don’t think, but look!*

Wittgenstein: “A philosopher says ‘Look at things like this!’—but in the first place that doesn’t ensure that people will look at things like that, and in the second place his admonition may come altogether too late; it’s possible, moreover, that such an admonition can achieve nothing in any case and that the impetus for such a change in the way things are perceived has to originate somewhere else entirely.” Ineffability

This is, undoubtedly, a troubling pedagogy for educators. Suddenly the straight garden path, which has become Old Reason, which runs the developmentally appropriate course with evidence-based techniques & best-practices, forks again & again—little signposts everywhere, pointing at everything: *this & this & this*. Can your dirty, travel-worn socks become a point of departure for a lesson on advanced calculus? Can *this* Western redcedar? The forest—the world as a whole—is full of fecund particulars we pass by, travelling at the speed of light, driven by the fear we are not “getting through the curriculum” fast enough. This results in a surface interest in things: the curiosity of the tourist. School as a park visitor centre: “Look kids, a gift shop.”

Technocrats are all too willing to laugh off other “modes of thinking” as *preposterous* & move on to formal operational ideals as expeditiously as possible. While they may recognize the innovative potential of micro-dosing gestalt in terms of inspiring scientific breakthroughs (—cf. Darwin’s “mental rioting”) or technical inventions (—cf. Google employees “harnessing” their dreams), they enframe such “blue sky thinking” as the product of either exceptional genius (—“Think Different”) or maximizing creative efficiency. Either way, the space cleared for insight lacks the integrity to keep ego & application from flooding back into the opening.

Image: A stately porter in bourgeois drag, bearing an affinity to the Maxwellian demon of thermodynamics, stands by the door to the Crystal Palace, ushering all guests back inside. The rules state that one is allowed to “get some air” in the rose garden, if needed, but it is frowned upon to stray. Rambling into the backcountry is strictly prohibited. Sometimes artists or queer fabulist-types are permitted a brief excursion, but anything more & one risks becoming emotionally contaminated, unscientific, utterly primitive. The porter holds open the door with one hand, admiring his moustache in a baroque handheld mirror with the other: —“Tut-tut my liege, not too far this time, we would not want you to *go native*.” [Insert a congenial, thinly veiled, laugh.]

“This is *preposterous*. Are there any concrete educational alternatives in all this clutter? A curricular resource package maybe? Or some practical, hands-on activities that teachers can use to address climate change?”

No curricular connexions here, other than the most elementary. What we are dealing with is the ability to “listen properly,” with a honed sense of place & proper proportion, with enough experience & studied memory that the resonant ecology of things can be sensed ringing in the air. Bring your ear near this abyss.

§ 63

David W. Jardine, Awakening from Descartes's Nightmare

If we play for a moment with the etymology of “data” we find that it originally means “that which is given” or “that which is granted.” Inquiry must open itself to that which is given or granted. It must be able to listen or attend to that which comes to meet us, just as it comes to meet us. Inquiry need not prepare itself by arming itself with methods which demand univocity and clarity. Rather it must do what it has always claimed to do—it must “gather” data... What is given or granted is precious and delicate, and it must be gathered with all the love and care with which we gather the fruits of the earth, careful not to do violence, careful not to expect too much, prepared to wait, prepared—dare we admit it?—for the possibility that *nothing* will come forth.

Michel Serres, *The Five Senses*

A method traces a route, a way, a path... Here, first of all, are the straight paths. The one that most expeditiously delivers the fearful traveller from the forest, the one taken by weightless, blinding light—the Cartesian path. A succession of links in a chain, a sequence or series of proportions, an algebra structured by the relationship of order. A straight path means a maximally efficient one, under the rules of the *Method* superlatives hold sway. First, not to include anything other... than that which presents itself so clearly and distinctly to my mind that I have no reason to doubt it. Secondly, to divide each of the difficulties into as many parts as possible and as we would be required to resolve them. Thirdly, to follow the order from the simplest to the most complex. Finally, to make everything such general and complete reviews and lists that I can be sure I omit nothing. This certainly looks like a function serving as a criterion... For to pile up in this way superlatives upon comparatives is to propose an extremal strategy. It is to minimize the constraints dictated by doubt, difficulty, composition, and omission in order to trace the optimal path... And this is how light travels, so as metaphorically to flood intuition with clarity, taking the best path, and this is how the lost traveller emerges from the wood, taking the shortest, straightest path... [T]his most direct strategy, which has become reason, is the only one we know... Reason, efficiency, investment, violence together underpin this economic law—by economy I mean this strategic relationship of *extremum-optimum*. This economy becomes our norm: when morals become knowledge, the traditional set of paths that determine our rationality and rectitude. In a way, we reduce to nothing any disturbance or fluctuation that would make us stray to any extent from this path which our culture as a whole tells us is necessary.

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

47. “Because emotion draws thought off course, muddies it. You’ve indicated yourself that clarity is paramount.”

In what way does it ‘draw it off course’? *Does* it actually ‘draw it off course’ in all cases? How do we know, beforehand, that the course onto which it might draw us *must* be false? What makes us so sure it is impossible to be clear with emotion, to be *emotionally clear*?

“Truth itself is objective and the path to it doesn’t need to be cluttered with possible false starts.”

Where did we get the idea that ‘truth *itself*’ is objective? And what, exactly, do we mean by this? A person who discounts backpacking as a means of travel is liable also to discount the potential interest of places that can be reached only by that means.

Convolute V

“After the closing of the London Exhibition in 1851, people in England wondered what was to become of the Crystal Palace. Although a clause inserted in the deed of concession for the grounds required... the demolition... of the building, public opinion was unanimous in asking for the abrogation of this clause.... The newspapers were full of proposals of all kinds, many of which were distinctly eccentric. A doctor wanted to turn the place into a hospital; another suggested a bathing establishment... One person had the idea of making it a gigantic library. An Englishman with a violent passion for flowers insisted on seeing the whole palace become a garden.”

-- A.S.de Doncourt, *Les Expositions universelles* (Lille and Paris, 1889), p. 77

The Crystal Palace was acquired by Francis Fuller and transferred to Sydenham.

The Bourse ((i.e. the Paris stock exchange)) could *represent* anything; the Crystal Palace could be *used* for anything.

-- Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

Could Duchamp have foreseen that his transgressive “Fountain”—the now infamously autographed urinal of anti-Art æsthetics—would become the scatological sigil of the very bourgeois Geist he aimed to offend? That the excremental logic of capitalism would render not only Art & Beauty & all revolutionary antitheses thereof—but the whole planet—a readymade *pissotière*? “R. Mutt” some fuck-a-toy tag for Nihilism writ on the level of species? Not likely—tho perhaps he ought to have discerned some kind of parasitic sublation or, at least, a vulgar ill-Dada spirit of commodification at work ((*Leviathan! Leviathan!*—“The spirit that speaks from the ornamental design of bank notes...”)) when commissioned, decades later, for a shitload of replicas. In 1917, the original vandalized head was hidden behind a partition for an exhibition in New York because it was considered too offensive. By 1999, a facsimile sold for almost two million dollars. Capitalist Realism

By that time, of course, the initial *détournement* shock of meaning provoked by the reconstellated object had been absorbed back into the cultural-linguistic grid. In other words, its “auratic” (Benjamin) or “lyric” (Zwicky) energy—its potential to elicit *waking-being!* or ontological awareness—had been all but dumbed by wholesale replication & the soporific reterritorialization of the object back into a formal “work of art.”

The original Fountain is lost. Likely thrown into the trash. Does it matter? —*It depends on what art is for.* The aestheticization of the “original experience” (cf. origin) by way of reappropriating the image back into its commodity-form (by mass reproduction) is, for Benjamin, the danger of fashion. The surface experience of “viewing a piece of art” changes, sometimes profoundly (if a urinal can be Art—*anything* can be Art), but this enframing also forecloses any “deeper” experience of meaning (cf. *Erfahrung*, or *profane illumination*) beyond the pale of commodity culture or self-interest. One is thus lulled back into “viewing a piece of art,” instead of, as the case may be, being awakened to the horrors of industrialized warfare & the role that bourgeois expressions of reason, logic, & æsthetics have played in seeding such a catastrophic storm.

In this sense, the decommodification of the object by way of becoming trash discloses more of its *real* form, if you will—its *ur-form*—than faithful reproductions of the original as replicas or images in art history texts. Or: The material after-history of the image—the wake of its agency upon the world—reveals more about the *real* (the messianic or lyric) value of the original than its present exchange-value (cf. fashion). For those who work to “repair the world,” for eäarthlings & others, the Fountain, as it turns out, is worth less than a pot to piss in. Just another shiny appliance sans aura or soul—where once it was a potential Buddha, now the image is little more than a receptacle of soft garbage-thought. (cf. “Aniconism” in Buddhism: early teachings forbid the reproduction of images of the Buddha, particularly in human form, & were limited to symbols such as an empty throne, a Bodhi tree, a riderless horse floating in empty space, a footprint, the wheel of dharma.)

[In 2008, Beau Dick (*Kwakwaka’wakw*) was the first artist in fifty years to return a set of *Atłak’ima* (Dance of the Forest Spirits) masks to the ancestors by burning them in ceremony. Traditionally, the masks were used in Winter Ceremonies & burned after a cycle of four potlatches, but the ritual was appalling to early settlers & discouraged by anthropologists. The burning of these objects defies, by alchemical decommodification (as in the “calcination” of medicine), the capitalistic urge to experience things only by possession & accumulation. The communal fire at the centre of many potlatch cultures seems to function as a forge to temper the hunger of *Baxwbakwalanuksiwe’*. The “unnameable Thing” that is the historical negation of all natural contracts.]

A cultural cover is guaranteed for every agent or auxiliary of the State’s network of persuasion: excremental pseudo-initiatives & teacher-cops multiply. The role of the educator is thus to explode—to see & to burn—the commodifying *framework* of things. There is, it would seem, a teachable moment in the right cherry bomb, flushed down the right toilet, at the right time.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[J91,5]. Baudelaire had the good fortune to be the contemporary of a bourgeoisie that could not yet employ, as accomplice of its domination, such an asocial type as he represented. The incorporation of a nihilism into its hegemonic apparatus was reserved for the bourgeoisie of the twentieth century.

Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle*

Since art is dead, it has evidently become extremely easy to disguise police as artists. When the latest imitations of a recuperated neo-dadaism are allowed to pontificate proudly in the media, and thus also to tinker with the décor of official palaces, like court jesters to the kings of junk, it is evident that by the same process a cultural cover is guaranteed for every agent or auxiliary of the state's networks of persuasion. Empty pseudo-museums, or pseudo-research centres on the work of nonexistent personalities, can be opened just as fast as reputations are made for journalist-cops, historian-cops, or novelist-cops.

Candace Hopkins, To See and To Burn

At a time when power is more deeply tied to money than ever before, Dick's project was a means to short-circuit the commodification of Northwest Coast ceremonial objects, preventing them from becoming fetishes in the service not of ritual but of capital. For the artist, ensuring that these objects are used as intended "takes away any monetary value they have in this world and makes [them] real." Destruction becomes an active part of creation by detaching objects from a confining system. With this gesture, Dick has gotten at something: at the moment that an object becomes a commodity, its true nature dissipates, sliding like ashes between spread fingers. The source of resistance is the desire to be real. In Indigenous Northwest Coast societies, the most valuable objects cannot be owned... The masks exist in the cyclical time of ritual. Ceremony ruptures the division between the historical and the contemporary—these objects thread their way through time, being continually remade in the same manner irrespective of changes around them.

Perceived as a threat to Western economic interests, in the late 1800s potlatching was banned in Canada... Described as a "worse than useless custom" by Indian Agents... the ceremony was regarded as "wasteful, unproductive, and contrary to 'civilized' values." When the custom did not come to a halt altogether, participants were jailed or charged heavy fines. Forced underground, the practice was performed in secret... The Potlatch and the objects created for it have found their way into modern art and theory: the ceremony inspired the Situationists to name their periodical *Potlatch*; the objects' abstraction influenced Duchamp; and their connection to the subconscious was significant to the Surrealists, particularly André Breton.

Walter Benjamin, Goethe's Elective Affinities ((Annotated))

In this sense the ((after-))history of works prepares for their critique, and thus historical distance increases their power. If, to use a simile, one views the growing work as a burning funeral pyre, then the commentator stands before it like a chemist, the critic like an alchemist. Whereas, for the former, wood and ash remain the sole objects of his analysis, for the latter only the flame itself preserves an enigma: that of what is alive. Thus, the critic inquires into the truth, whose living flame continues to burn over the heavy logs of what is past and the light ashes of what has been experienced.

§ 65

This is why *Leviathan!* is so slick: it employs hominine mimicry to amplify its host. A black mirror of self-refraction the whole way down. We all become loudspeakers: The same loop encircles us all.

-- R. Mutt, "I am"

§ 65

Michel Serres, *Malfeasance*

Sociologists understand rumour as propagation of usually slanderous noise in a group. Additionally, and more importantly, there are noise technologies: the media and advertising understand noise and propagate it through ads, posters, and loudspeakers... Relying on hominine mimicry, they repeat again and again such-and-such a signal to obtain its exponential expansion. This second dynamic, whereby things spread in space, resembles that of *violence, the garbage of action*: he who receives a blow, or hears a word, returns it, or repeats it, and so on and on, until we are all literally possessed by those purveyors of images, *pictorial waste*, or sounds, *language garbage*; purveyors of repetition, *thought garbage... in short possessed by audiovisual garbage that is so easily changed into money*, which itself is also easily transformed into waste.

Possessed, I myself become a waste of my own consciousness. The repetition of noise intoxicates as much as violence. We all become loudspeakers... The same loop encircles us all.

I started my meditation yesterday by saying that pollution and dirt were taking possession of streets and places, of roads and the sky—in short, of the world and objects. I will end it tomorrow by suddenly discovering the strange dirtiness of my soul and the numerous owners of my mind and my language. Now I see that *my subjectivity* is just as possessed as the collective and the objective.

Cogito: as a slave floating in space, I am losing the *I* while retaining the identical. No longer having any ideas of its own, the identical only repeats certain kinds of idemes, echolike, like the urban buzzing of hives.

§ 66

“I am.”

“I am.”

“I am.”

“I am.”

“I am.”

“I am.”

The parasite is an allegorical vector, an æsthetic heraldry reifying twenty centuries of stony sleep: passant guardant, right forepaw hailed eternal. Capitalism is but an amplification of religious certainty & indulgence projected into commodity form. Every object is an empty vessel for the inscription of self. A one-way street.

“I am.”

§ 66

Walter Benjamin, Capitalism as Religion

A religion may be discerned in capitalism—that is to say, capitalism serves essentially to allay the same anxieties, torments, and disturbances to which the so-called religions offered answers. The proof of the religious structure of capitalism—not merely, as Weber believes, as a formation conditioned by religion, but as an essentially religious phenomenon—would still lead even today to the folly of an endless universal polemic. We cannot draw closed the net in which we are caught.

Capitalism has developed as a parasite of Christianity in the West... until it reached the point where Christianity's history is essentially that of its parasite—that is to say, of capitalism.

Methodologically, one should begin by investigating the links between myth and money throughout the course of history, to the point where money had drawn so many elements from Christianity that it could establish its own myth.

Michel Serres, *Malfeasance*

For wealth to pollute, it must spread, but how and by what mechanism and circulation? Through money. Just as some animals mark their nest with their urine, some humans like to spread the image of their face in space.

And so, he who dirties space with billboards full of sentences and images hides the view of the surrounding landscape, kills perception, and skewers it by this theft. First the landscape then the world. He sows space with black holes that inhale sensation and destroy perception. With what right does he act like a universal squatter? Just as imperiously, a coin is easier to see, read, and decipher than the object it buys. The coin hides the object's view and kills it. The symbol nullifies the thing. Signs express and suppress the world.

Just as the images and vivid colours of billboards prevent us from seeing the landscape, steal and occupy it, seize, repress and kill it, parasitic noise prevents us from speaking to and hearing our neighbor, thereby monopolizing communication. Placed in the lobby of a building there is a television set that is always on. No one can have a dialogue; everyone listens to and looks at the screen, whose emissions (what a purely urinary admission!) appropriate all relations.

James Tate, Teaching the Ape to Write

They didn't have much trouble
teaching the ape to write poems:
first they strapped him into the chair,
then tied the pencil around his hand
(the paper had already been nailed down).
Then Dr. Bluespire leaned over his shoulder
and whispered into his ear:

"You look like a god sitting there.
Why don't you try writing something?"

Convolute VI

People nowadays think that scientists exist to instruct them, poets, musicians, etc. to give them pleasure. The idea *that these have something to teach them* –that does not occur to them.

-- Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Values*

“None of this sounds very *scientific*.”

It depends on what you mean by *scientific*. The problem with such an “epistemologically loaded” adjective is that the forms of awareness & expression it possibly denotes have been strategically limited for centuries, to the extent that it is now synonymous with a strictly prescribed mode: *systematic, analytic, technological*.

Experiment: Think of the word *scientific*. What images come to mind? Lab coats? Large hadron colliders? The “objective” methodologies of *real thinking*? —Why not plaid-shirted field jackets, or low-tech vacuum chambers, or the insights of visionary dreaming? ((—Benjamin: “History decays into images, not stories.))

[Images for *Anti-Sisyphus*: Everyone knows Einstein claims to have envisioned the paradox that would lead him to special relativity when, at sixteen, he imagined himself traveling alongside a beam of light. Michael Faraday, it has been reported, had an aversion to writing & later to “language itself,” but perceived invisible “lines of force” curving around magnets, electric currents & pervading the universe. Nikola Tesla purportedly conceived of the self-starting reversible induction motor as a “kinetic visual image of hallucinatory intensity,” while walking into a sunset & reciting a poem by Goethe. Developmentalism: Spencer, Piaget, Dewey]

Ecohermeneutics: The recognition that scientific thinking—in practice, in the field, in spirit—is not reducible to reductionism. That formal operational thought is not the sole, nor culminating, mode of *being educated*.

The *real* problem is not “scientific thinking,” it is the extent to which the *origin* of *real thinking* has been hypostatized as a reductive & essentially progressive image that serves as a parasitic vector for Dominion. ((Benjamin: “Capitalism has developed as a parasite of Christianity in the West... until it reached the point where Christianity’s history is essentially that of its parasite—that is to say, of capitalism.”)) The *origin*—the phenomenological aspect & ramifications—of the sciences have been appropriated by the same, or, at least, a related kind of epistemic parasitism. The material after-history of the sciences, its (“messianic”) value as a historical image-object imbued with the utopian dreams of previous generations, is thus threatened with becoming essentially that of its parasite: mass extinctions, war machines, a deluge of pollution: hard & soft.

Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method*

For is it not possible that science as we know it today, or a “search for the truth” in the style of traditional philosophy, will create a monster? Is it not possible that an objective approach that frowns upon personal connections between the entities examined will harm people, turn them into miserable, unfriendly, self-righteous mechanisms without charm or humour? “Is it not possible,” asks Kierkegaard, “that my activity as an objective [or critico-rational] observer of nature will weaken my strength as a human being?” I suspect the answer to many of these questions is affirmative and I believe that a reform of the sciences that makes them more anarchic and more subjective (in Kierkegaard’s sense) is urgently needed.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[r3,2]. In *Le Curé de village*, which Balzac wrote in the years 1837 to 1845, there are very violent attacks on the Ecole Polytechnique... Balzac fears that the forced study of the exact sciences would have devastating effects on the spiritual constitution and life span of the students. Still more characteristic are the following reflections: “I do not believe that any engineer who ever left the Ecole could build one of the miracles of architecture which Leonardo di Vinci erected—Leonardo who was at once engineer, architect, and painter, one of the inventors of hydraulic science, the indefatigable constructor of canals. They are so accustomed while not yet in their teens to the bald simplicity of geometry, that by the time they leave the Ecole they have quite lost all feeling for grace or ornament. A column, to their eyes, is a useless waste of material. They return to the point where art begins—on utility they take their stand, and stay there.”

Charles Foster, *Being a Human*

The best hope for us, since Enlightenment reductionism has metastasised so far through our culture’s vital organs, is probably the Enlightenment itself. Scepticism and rigorous empiricism were central to the original Enlightenment manifesto. We see neither in the citadels of the modern enlightenment—such as actuaries’ offices and most biological research labs. But scepticism and empiricism can and must help us to recover enchantment. If we’re sufficiently sceptical and empirical about *anything* (whether a star or a baby or a plastic cup), we’ll see that it’s baffling, mysterious, thrillingly weird and defies all our categories—requiring a poetical and a mathematical and an emotional and a physical response. Scepticism and empiricism, properly deployed, expose the vertiginous wonder of the world—a wonder that demands all our resources, in all our intellectual and sensory and, yes, spiritual modalities, for its exploration.

§ 68

“—So now deductive logic, mathematics, and theoretic abstraction are to blame for the environmental crisis? Here we go with the science-hating prattle of postmodernism. Prepare the catapults and peer-review hoaxes.”

Lyric is *not* anti-science. Nor is it some ecological subset of postmodernism. It is more like a third-instructed sensitivity—an ontological lean—towards the “resonant internal relations” of *what-is*. Lyric is not reducible to a particular discipline, or even a camp in the trifling skirmishes that break out every now & then between the so-called Two Cultures. It is more like an imaginative oracle consulted by “both sides,” as it were, but formally recognized by neither. It is more like a sympathetic “black box” placed between us & the world: – between us & within us. The mimetic sympathies of the box can be calibrated to varying intensities, which is, of course, one way to understand *being educated* in a more-than-human world. Cultivating the ear.

Zwickly: The sound of wind in leaves,
that was what puzzled me, it took me years
to understand that it was music.
Into silence, a gesture
A sentence: that it speaks.
This is the mystery: meaning.

Serres: Sensation has the same status
as music.
Deleuze &
Guattari: Everything must be interpreted
as intensity.

Zwickly, as we have seen, characterizes lyric as a species of gestalt intelligence—a sensitivity to the internal structural relations between particular details & the resonant whole, that can, at times, transpire in a flash of insight. Imaginative intuitions & striking breakthroughs of this sort are, in fact, indispensable to the sciences (—cf. Michael Polyani on “*tacit knowing*” in scientific discovery). Charles Darwin, for example, famously immersed himself in a kind of gestalt consciousness—what he would later term “mental rioting”—to rethink, or rather, re-cognize—to *see deeper* into—his fieldnotes from the *Red Notebook*. This frenetic attempt to see anew purportedly entailed madly scribbling thoughts, jotting new connexions, & rearranging his notes in a mode that Darwin claimed was beyond “reasoning.” Then, one mid-July day in 1837, on page thirty-six of Notebook B, he wrote: “I think” at the top of the page, &—noting the need for an image—first sketched evolutionary adaptation as a branching structure from a common ancestor. The tree of life.

Alfred R. Wallace had a similar “flash” of insight twenty years later when, bed-ridden from malarial fever, he had occasion to mull over the notion of “positive checks on human population”—inspired, no doubt, by his dire circumstances. In his own words: “It occurred to me to ask the question, Why do some die and some live. And the answer was clearly, that on the whole the best fitted live... Then it suddenly flashed ((—note the shaft of light)) upon me that this self-acting process would necessarily improve the race... I became convinced that I had at length found the long-sought-for law of nature that solved the problem of the origins of species.”

The apprehension of gestalts, tho widely ignored since the Enlightenment, is, nevertheless, a staple mode of intelligence responsible for some of the most notable *eureka*-moments in the history of science. This is to say nothing of its role in everyday medical diagnosis, tacit inklings in the field & laboratories across disciplines, or problem-solving of any kind where the spontaneous experience of “getting it” is key. But because details concatenate in an integrated flash—refuting “standard aggregative theories” whereby the mind “reasons” by way of an additive synthesis of “perceptual atoms”—& because gestalt is also associated with the arts—its “black box” processes are deemed invalid by devotees of Calculation. Insights derived from such “mental rioting” are thus downplayed as events of exceptional genius, not the methodical policework of *real thinking*.

“But not everyone is a Darwin. Surely the quasi-mystical faculties of lyric, while occasionally useful, are not the kind of thing that can be taught in school? Not the kind of thing working-class zeks go to university for?”

§ 68

Michael Polyani, *The Tacit Dimension*

I shall reconsider human knowledge by starting from the fact that *we can know more than we can tell*. This fact seems obvious enough; but it is not easy to say exactly what it means. Take an example. We know a person's face, and can recognize it among thousands, indeed among a million. Yet we usually cannot tell how we recognize a face we know... [On some level] all descriptive sciences study physiognomies that cannot be fully described in words, nor even in pictures... Gestalt psychology has assumed that perception of a physiognomy takes place through the spontaneous equilibration of its particulars impressed on the retina or the brain. However, I am looking at Gestalt, on the contrary, as the outcome of an active shaping of experience performed in the pursuit of knowledge. This shaping or integrating I hold to be the great and indispensable tacit power by which all knowledge is discovered and, once discovered, is held to be true.

Michel Serres, *The Five Senses*

Whatever sensation may have taught us, we know nothing about it. Take a black box. To its left, or before it, there is the world. To its right, or after it, travelling along certain circuits, there is what we call information. The energy of things goes in: disturbances of the air, shocks and vibrations, heat, alcohol or ether salts, photons... Information comes out, and even meaning. We do not always know where this box is located, nor how it alters what flows through it, nor which Sirens, Muses or Bacchantes are at work inside; it remains closed to us. However, we can say with certainty that beyond this threshold, both of ignorance and perception, energies are exchanged, on their usual scale... and that on the other side of this same threshold information appears: signals, figures, languages, meaning. Before the box, the hard; after it, the soft.

Jan Zwicky, What is Gestalt Thinking?

Gestalt thinking fundamentally involves the spontaneous perception of structure: not analytic order—one brick stacked on another—but what might be called resonant internal relations.

Resonance is to gestalt comprehension what valid consequence is to deduction. It names the relation that must hold among parts if the whole of which they have become parts is to be a gestalt. In a culture that identifies thinking with the aggregation of atoms or elements, acknowledgement of such wholes can be hard to come by: the dominant epistemology makes them, literally, unthinkable.

No metaphors! Literal analysis! Objectivity! —This is not a critique of Gestalt theory but a statement that it must be wrong. One way of attempting to understand the Gestalt project is to say that [Max] Wertheimer put the concept of metaphor—more precisely the concept of significant similarity and the notion of internal relations on which it depends—where standard theory puts the concept of epistemological atoms. The appeal to internal relations is not an attempt to avoid the issue; it's an attempt to state what the real issue is.

Our way of talking in literate post-Enlightenment society is epistemologically loaded: reductionism, and the ideal of context-independent, algorithmically specifiable processes that reductionism subserves, are part of the texture of “educated” speech. That texture won't allow us to express what is fundamental to gestalt comprehension in compelling terms... I think it is reductionist prejudice that has to go, not gestalts. This is not to say that aggregative synthesis is *not* a kind of thinking. It is to say that it is not the only kind there is, and that it is not always the most important kind.

“Well I happen to be a physicist, not a... *schoolteacher*: And if reductionism has nothing to do with scientific practices in the field, how do you account for the success of science and technology? Did you not type out all this nonsense on a computer? Do you not visit a dentist when your tooth aches? Shall we teach engineers how to write sonnets instead of how to employ the scientific method to solve *real* problems? *Tsk-preposterous.*”

Just to be clear, I never claimed reductionist modes of thinking have *nothing* to do with scientific practices; nor that there is anything intrinsically inferior or injudicious about reductionism as such. It is one of the ways we have to grasp & respond to the world—& clearly it is effective at what it does. The “scientific worldview” has been profoundly influential due, in no small part, to the perceived success (or, at least, the ubiquity) of information technologies, medical techniques, & various fields of applied engineering—to say nothing of its earth-shaking theoretical insights. It would be *uneducated*—it would be *preposterous*—to deny the utility, historical significance, or, indeed, the perspicacity of systematic modes of thought. Lyric is *not* anti-science.

But I am no scientist, comrade—too true. Just another eäarthling with more than a few regrets. Just another drinking-class zek with some dreams & views & bills to pay. More to the point, I am not *actually* concerned with how the sciences are practiced in any case. I am in no position to comment on such matters. What I am trying to lay bare are the vectors & *origin* of a capitalized *Image of Science*. One enframed by a Faustian pact between Capital & Technique ((—Leviathan! Leviathan!)) that sets upon young hearts & minds, not as one method among contingent methods, but as an inevitable *mode of existence* in every “progressive” classroom in the world. This, I witness every day. This, from the perspective of a technological society, is what education is for: —learning to conflate an image of *Science-as-Dominion* with intelligence itself. Imparting the basics of scientific literacy by way of mass mandatory schooling is, in this sense, a secondary objective—sometimes useful, sometimes intractable—to inculcating the phantasmagoric *Image of Science* required by Capital.

[Evidence: i.) Contemporary theories, or even empirical studies, that dispute reductionism & mechanism—or, rather, conflict with the *image* of progress, mastery, & resource extraction that they subserve—are rarely, if ever, “Big Ideas” in the curriculum; ii.) the *Big History Project* (backed by *The Gates Foundation*) offers a “unified account” of knowledge by way of a progressive teleology that begins with the Big Bang & culminates in industrial technoscience: “Time Begins, Stars Form, Elements Evolve, Planets Appear, Life Develops, Knowledge Builds, Agriculture Starts, Industry Emerges;” iii.) provincial ministries introduce inadequate & inconsistent climate change initiatives, while the state expands its fossil fuel infrastructure; iv.) a university president acknowledges the territory, then accepts an oversized cheque for a pipeline; etc.]

[To be underlined: the dominant model of cognitive development—viz. the constructivist theory of knowing (cf. Piaget)—culminates in a formal operational stage *defined* by the capacity for “hypothetico-deductive reasoning.” The metaphor underlying this model is, in fact, an idealized *image* of the scientific method. That is, Piaget believed children take an active role in the learning process by acting just like little scientists as they make observations, experiment, & progressively accumulate knowledge about the world. Methodology is thus retroactively spliced into biology, then psychology, then education in a high-velocity closed loop—a tight circle—that forecloses anamnetic awareness of its limitations by xeroxing its own blinding horizons.]

Heidegger: “Devastation is the high-velocity expulsion of Mnemosyne.”

What is of concern is not some vapid Two Culture redux from the side of “Poetry,” but why this zombified *Image of Science*—a strange hybrid of the ultra-modern & the archaic—continues to be institutionally reified at all? Is it even *scientifically* defensible—or do we post its conquests & dogmas on the wall, like portraits of John A. MacDonald, out of some habitual sense of identity? Despite the judgements, despite the devastation.

§ 69

Jan Zwicky, *Auden as Philosopher: How Poets Think*

Auden's Poetic Epistemology

- Epistemic duty: *To praise being*
- Epistemic attitude: *Gratitude*
- Purpose of knowing: *None*
- Epistemic organ: *The imagination*
- Litmus of certainty:
*Awe (Primary Imagination);
Sense of proportion (Secondary Imagination)*
- Evidence this is a genuine paradigm:
Our love of poetry; some cultures' need of poetry

Epistemology of Baconian Science

- Epistemic duty: *To judge ("This is true, that isn't")*
- Epistemic attitude: *Suspicion*
- Purpose of knowing: *Control*
- Epistemic organ: *The mind*
- Litmus of certainty:
Systematic argument (that is, deductive relationships to self-evident premisses or inductive relationships to reliable observations)
- Evidence this is a genuine paradigm:
The "success" of science; Big Technology

How are we to judge which of these paradigms is more worthy? Or if neither is, or both are? Note that this question is being asked from *within* the epistemology of control: poetry's epistemology is being asked to submit itself to Baconian-style judgement. If we looked at them from poetry's vantage point, we would have to scan for presence of the sacred... This fact—that we lead with questions and presentations from within the perspective of epistemological control, perhaps not even noticing that that's what we're doing—shows that we think of this way of knowing as *the* way of knowing.

Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Reason in the Age of Science*

One has to ask oneself whether the dynamic law of human life can be conceived adequately in terms of progress, of a continual advance from the unknown into the known, and whether the course of human culture is actually a linear progression from mythology to enlightenment. One should entertain a completely different notion: whether the movement of human existence does not issue in a relentless inner tension between illumination and concealment. Might it not just be a prejudice of modern times that the notion of progress that is in fact constitutive for the spirit of scientific research should be transferable to the whole of human living and human culture? One has to ask whether progress, as it is at home in the special field of scientific research, is at all consonant with the conditions of human existence in general. Is the notion of an ever-mounting and self-perfected enlightenment finally ambiguous?

Isabelle Stengers, Reclaiming Animism

Science, when taken in the singular and with a big S, may indeed be described as a general conquest bent on translating everything that exists into objective, rational knowledge. In the name of Science, a judgement has been passed on the heads of other peoples, and this judgement has also devastated our relations to ourselves... Scientific achievements, on the other hand, require thinking in terms of an “adventure of sciences” (in the plural and with a small s). The distinction between such an adventure and Science as a general conquest is certainly hard to make if you consider what is done in the name of science today. However, it is important to do so because it allows for a new perspective: what is called Science, or the idea of a hegemonic scientific rationality, can be understood as itself the product of a colonization process.

What is of concern is that the preservation of this formaldehyde-infused *Image of Science* has less to do with pedagogical principles, or with instructing students on how the sciences are practiced, or with fostering the “hypothetico-deductive reasoning” that ostensibly defines “higher psychological functions,” & more to do with replicating an *epistemology of control* idealized in the seventeenth century, formalized in the nineteenth, & privatized in the twentieth—(& idolized in the twenty-first?). An alien anthropologist might reasonably assume, in accordance with the logic of Progress, that any untenable or dogmatic foundations in our “scientific worldview”—no matter how *foundational*—would have been superseded by contemporary insights from within the scientific community itself—evolution (cosmological, geological, biological), ecology, entanglement, symbiogenesis, the hard problem of consciousness, to name but a few—let alone the sweeping insights derived from the last four centuries of philosophy & the social sciences. & yet, every weekday morning at around 8:30am, some five & a half million children in this country, are filed into the same old lion-bodied structures to get fitted with haloes, or depending on the neighbourhood, crowns.

Can anyone seriously claim that modern education systems are cultivating a democratic culture of scientific literacy over & above our wantings & doings? An intellectual spirit of courageous, open-ended inquiry that pursues knowledge wherever it may lead? A formal operational mode that is somehow insulated from the metaphysics of progress, commodity culture, & the existential calculus of its thinkers. Point at that school.

Such a spirit, if it was *ever* so exquisite, was capitalized long ago by a mirror-brandishing, Trypanosoma-like dæmon—a sleeping sickness—that ordinates & administers “both sides” with cost-benefit analyses: *parasites*.

Two Cultures: Scientists, educated but uncultivated: Humanists, highly cultivated but ignorant of the world.

Ecohermeneutics: A third ecosophy: educated, cultivated, but with underground swagger: —*chthonic style*.

§ 70

Michel Serres, Northwest Passage

The Northwest passage allows the Atlantic and Pacific oceans to communicate within the frigid environs of the Grand Canadian North. It opens and closes, twists itself throughout the huge archipelago along an incredibly complex labyrinth of gulfs and channels, pools and sounds, between Baffin and Banks... For thirty years I have been navigating among these waters. They are almost deserted, forgotten as if forbidden. Two cultures are juxtaposed, two families, two collectivities, speaking two different tongues. Those who have received a scientific formation have ever since childhood a tendency to exclude from their life, their thought, their everyday actions anything resembling history or art, works of language, works of time. Being educated but uncultivated, they are trained to forget humans, their relationships, their sufferings, trained to forget mortality. Those formed by letters are in turn thrown into what one conventionally calls the Human Sciences, where they lose the natural world forever: works without trees or sea, without clouds or earth except in dreams or dictionaries. Being cultivated but ignorant, they devote themselves to pointless squabble. All they have ever known takes the shape of bets, fetishes or goods. I fear these two groups may be contesting for belongings that have long ago been carried away by a third group: parasites, uncultivated and ignorant, this third group ordinates and administers the others, enjoying their division, nourishing their split.

Paul Fairfield, Make it Scientific

Corporate scientism has little use for the intangibles of education or for anything that cannot be brought within an ethos of scientific and economic rationality. The arts and humanities in particular are regularly, and quite inevitably, deemed unnecessary luxuries in comparison with the natural sciences and mathematics, with all the utilitarian benefits that the latter disciplines provide. Defenders of the arts and humanities who are now obligated to plead their case within a vocabulary that is foreign, if not antithetical, to these disciplines themselves are engaged in a losing cause. No cost-benefit analysis redeems the study of music or philosophy. The problem here is not that we are unable to provide such an accounting, without resorting to clever but inauthentic marketing, but that we are required to do so.

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

191. The way of thinking fits what is being thought. The way of thinking is fit.

That is: thought can have character.

(And having character is not the same thing as being a personality.)

Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor*

107. And, of course, one's preference for a style of explanation will depend on one's purposes.
—(Just don't imagine there are purposes in which politics play no role).

§ 71

A capitalized Science bears the same essential relation (the same phenomenological *origin*) to Christianity, as Christianity bears to Christmas. There is a residual aura, like a dream from another time, like childhood nostalgia, that some still try to redeem (insert educated eye-roll), but materialism, in both senses, ordinates the ur-form of its present expression: festooned, no less, with its own tinselled string figures & impish gods.

Walter Benjamin, Capitalism as Religion

[C]apitalism is a purely cultic religion, perhaps the most extreme that ever existed. In capitalism, things have a meaning only in their relationship to the cult; capitalism has no specific body of dogma, no theology. It is from this point of view that utilitarianism acquires its religious overtones. This concretization of cult is connected with a second feature of capitalism: the permanence of the cult. Capitalism is the celebration of the cult *sans reve et sans merci*. There are no “weekdays.” There is no day that is not a feast day, in the terrible sense that all its sacred pomp is unfolded before us; each day commands the utter fealty of each worshipper. And third, the cult makes guilt pervasive. Capitalism is probably the first instance of a cult that creates guilt, not atonement. In this respect, this religious system is caught up in the headlong rush of a larger movement ((*viz.* Leviathan!—*Much, much older*)). A vast sense of guilt that is unable to find relief seizes on the cult, not to atone for this guilt but to make it universal, to hammer it into the conscious mind, so as once and for all to include God in the system of guilt and thereby awaken in Him an interest in the process of atonement. This atonement cannot then be expected from the cult itself, or from the reformation of this religion (which would need to be able to have recourse to some stable element in it), or even from the complete renouncement of this religion. The nature of the religious movement which is capitalism entails endurance right to the end, to the point where God, too, finally takes on the entire burden of guilt, to the point where the universe has been taken over by that despair which is actually its secret *hope*.

Capitalism is entirely without precedent, in that it is a religion which offers not the reform of existence but its complete destruction. It is the expansion of despair, until despair becomes a religious state of the world in the hope that this will lead to salvation. God’s transcendence is at an end. But he is not dead; he has been incorporated into human existence. This passage of the planet ‘Human’ through the house of despair in the absolute loneliness of his trajectory is the ethos that Nietzsche defined. This man is the superman, the first to recognize the religion of capitalism and begin to bring it to fulfillment. Its fourth feature is that its God must be hidden from it and may be addressed only when his guilt is at its zenith. The cult is celebrated before an unmatured deity; every idea, every conception of it offends against the secret of this immaturity.

Freddy Perlman, *Against His-story, Against Leviathan!*

What makes Humanists of misanthropists is the illusion, slightly later spelled out by Hobbes, that the beast has a human head. But these Humanists are a priesthood that sacrifices humanity as well as nature on the altar of a hideous idol whose human face is a sham as old as Ur. The Leviathan is a thing, and from its standpoint, humanity as well as nature are also things, objects, either obstacles or potential instruments. The beast travels through Time by eliminating the obstacles and appropriating the instruments. Every being, every place and every object that was once infused with layer upon layer of contextual, symbolic and literal meaning, is now scrutinized as potential obstacle or instrument. Reason, the human power to comprehend meanings, becomes degraded into an instrument for dissolving meanings. The reasoner, instead of aiming to grasp the cosmic context of seemingly isolated phenomena, now aims to isolate phenomena from any context. Meaning is replaced by definition, reasoning by analysis, mythology by science. The artists of isolation will call themselves Natural Scientists, but their Naturalism is as bogus as their Humanism.

The prevailing imagery associated with the word “science” down at the local elementary school or watering hole—lab coats, large hadron colliders, the objective methods of *real thinking*—did not actually take hold in the popular imagination until recently. From the ancient to early modern period, the Latin word *scientia* referred primarily to knowledge produced by logical demonstrations that revealed general truths. *Scientia* could be achieved in various fields, but the proofs involved were closer to what we would now recognize as geometry. (—You see? Like *this*.) When modern Science began taking shape, many fields we now classify as definitively *scientific* were still subsumed under organic “precursors” (note the contours of progress) such as natural philosophy (i.e. astronomy, physics, chemistry) or natural history (i.e. geology, botany, zoology).

[Remember: From the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, “scientific understanding” was still wholly intermingled with a Christian worldview & the so-called “failed precursors” of alchemy & hermeticism. Despite the selective memory of the Royal Society, many scientific luminaries were practicing Christians; & some—Robert Boyle, Joseph Priestly, Erasmus Darwin—avid, albeit closeted, occultists. Isaac Newton, as the most notorious, left some ten million words on alchemy (& biblical studies) that were not only unpublished, but institutionally suppressed. —Why? A good question. What is it about alchemy that threatens a leviathanic perspective? (cf. a sacred theory of earth) —Something about opticks? “It matters what stories tell stories.”]

It was not until the nineteenth century that the sciences were, for the most part, “purified” of any remaining vestiges of a “sacred theory of earth” by way of officially adopting a mechanistic image of the universe. Rejection of spontaneous or contemplative experiences of nature thus becomes the *origin* (both historical & phenomenological) of a capitalized Science. Which is to say, from thenceforth, public nullification of the natural contract becomes a prerequisite for admission into Rationality (safeguarded, as it were, by the universities, that is, by Education). The rest is his-story: mechanistic metaphors proliferate as the only “educated” mode of revealing the real & clockwork *images* of things begin to be taken literally for *what-is* (i.e. hypostatization). The definition of *being educated* is refined into a single law: “Thou shalt not regress.”

Key hermeneutic insight: this historical trajectory is not the inevitable consequence of practicing the sciences. Or: *Leviathan!* is not the indigenous dæmon of all systematic thinking—rather, the sciences emerged from a Christian milieu &, over time, the leviathanic forms that had appropriated Christianity as its host were *sublated* (in the sense of *Aufhebung*) into a capitalized Science as it increasingly came under the aegis of State & Capital. Dominion is not the logic of the sciences: it is the logic of parasites. Capitalist Realism

Monday, 8:30am: Down at the local elementary school, children are being taught Big Ideas: “Matter is useful because of its properties;” & to classify “living” versus “non-living” things into discrete categories; & to identify different kinds of “natural machines” in the environment. The lesson culminates in a leap from screws & levers to the “ultimate machine,” the human body: feet are inclined planes, the patella is a pulley, &—obviously—the brain is a computer. That these children are also asked, on occasion, maybe on Earth Day, to consider “First Peoples concepts of interconnectedness” does not offset a milieu fundamentally enframed by technology & progress. One set of lessons lands like hard science—the product of large hadron colliders & *real thinking*. The other, a soft “way of knowing.” At best, a historically interesting “secondary source” based on “anthropological or contemporary accounts of First Peoples.” At worst, the product of some primitive mythology, some “failed precursor,” that *those people* still believe in. In other words, surface level content revisions pose no threat to Dominion because the *real* threat—a sacred theory of earth—was expelled from educated thought centuries ago. Indigenous “ways of knowing” are thus permitted to the extent that they can be sublated into modern terms: —“all our relations” is essentially systems theory, seasonal rounds are essentially energy flows in ecosystem services, place-specific understandings are essentially sustainability. There is room for *everyone* on the School Bus now, but, the thing is, it only goes one way: “Modernize!”

Peter Lamborn Wilson, The Disciples at Saïs

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries a sort of three-way scientific paradigm war was waged in England and Europe. The contenders were, first: Cartesianism—which denied *action at a distance* and tried to explain gravity by a corpuscular theory that reduced the universe to a clock-like mechanism set in motion by “God,” second, Hermeticism, the ancient science of the micro/macrocosm, which believed firmly in action at a distance but failed to explain gravity—and (even worse) failed to achieve the transmutation of lead into gold, which would at least have secured for it the enthusiastic support of State and capital; and, third, the school of Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton, culminating in the Royal Society—and the Industrial Revolution.

Admittedly, the historical sketch is very rough, and offered with some trepidation. The whole story of the paradigm war remains quite murky, in part because a great deal of research is still being written from a History of Science p.o.v. deeply infected with triumphalism... Therefore I offer only a tentative hypothesis. It appears that both the Cartesians and Newtonians happily agreed in their eagerness to discard and deride the central thesis of the hermetic paradigm, the idea of the living Earth. Descartes envisioned only “dead matter,” Newton used the concept of invisible but material forces; and their followers turned their backs on any “sacred theory of earth,” banishing not only God from their clockwork oranges but even life itself.

Michael Marker, Sacred Mountains and Ivory Towers

The Western education that was employed to assimilate Indigenous people in modernity was founded on an amalgam of religious principles and modern national interests. In Canada, the Christian churches were the tools of the state in administering residential schools, but the contradictions were abundant in preparing the students to participate in a gritty social Darwinist industrial secularism while proselytizing them to the divine moral principles of the Churches... The religious indoctrination students received at the residential schools was based on abstract and universalized beliefs about spiritual truth. This contrasted with the place-specific understandings that are central to Indigenous ceremony and revelation.

Peter Cole, *Coyote and Raven Go Canoeing*

and the fascists ask why do we drink sniff snort pass out grieve fight rave
no refray ay ay ay ain it happened (at least) once before they came to our door
neoliberal western ideas are the new path/ogens microbes disease vectors
in the form of rationalist discourse logic the plague *la peste*
should we call a doctor or wait for the dis/ease to run its course
5 centuries is a long course and I'm not even sure if it's even up to speed yet...
language can lead us toward or away from spirit

Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth*

The battle cry “Modernize!” has no content but this: all resistance to globalization will be immediately deemed illegitimate. There is no need to negotiate with those who want to stay behind. Those who take shelter on the other side of the irreversible forward march of globalization will be disqualified in advance. They are not only defeated, they are also irrational.

§ 73

“But why, if one is concerned with the rôle philosophy and cultural movements play in the ecological crisis, rummage about obsolete schools—surrealism and existentialism, as you have—or the notoriously abstruse tractates of twentieth century language philosophers like Wittgenstein or Gadamer or Benjamin? Why not delve into contemporary trends that recognize the agency of objects, animals, & ecology: speculative realism, or Deleuze & Guattari, or philosophers of science like Bruno Latour or Donna Haraway or Isabelle Stengers?”

It is partially biographic: I was born & raised in a milieu of sci-fi & comic books, punk rock & underground hip-hop, grassroots & the salt of the earth. I have, as such, always been drawn to subcultures & artforms where collagist expressions—collecting, curating, cutting & pasting, defacing, sampling, remixing, pointing & hoping—comprise the elemental mode of expression. Surrealism & existentialism are, in many ways, the philosophical predecessors of these transgressive subcultures (—the European roots, at least). *What to say?* —I dig the radical politics, the mystic profanities, the liquor & drugs & sexual obsessions (or intoxicating renunciations thereof)—but mostly I share the sense—increasingly rare, increasingly *unthinkable*, even in contemporary trends that re-cognize the agency of a more-than-human world—that the formal epistemic structure of progress—the will to mastery & ego—is the *real* problem. (& “presence of mind” a “way out.”)

Because biography, in the sense of formative traditions, is of philosophical import ((—Nietzsche: “It has gradually become clear to me what every great philosophy has hitherto been: a confession on the part of its author and a kind of involuntary and unconscious memoir...”)) & one is reluctant to relinquish the subject (or field, or culture) of one’s heart. As an “underground man,” existentialist-type I am reluctant to relinquish the significance of myth, history, politics, ecstatic experiences, & other “little itches” to the calculative reason of technoscience. ((—Dostoevsky: “You see: reason, gentlemen, is a fine thing, that is unquestionable, but reason is only reason and satisfies only man’s reasoning capacity, while wanting is a manifestation of the whole of life—that is, the whole of human life, including reason and various little itches. And though our life in this manifestation often turns out to be a bit of trash, still it is life and not the extraction of a square root.”)) Because our lives turn out, in part, to be little more than the accumulation of trash: it thus stands to reason that actualization lies in recognizing ourselves in the detritus & devastation that, in every moment, insulates us from a deeper anamnesis. Then again, difficult to open with that: no one likes a lament. Selflessness

Philosophers & practitioners of science, on the other hand, are equally reluctant to relinquish the intellectual perspicacity & institutional power of science & technology to the soft, negative ambiguity of hermeneutics.

This need not beget Two Cultures: it is simply a recognition of the “psychological element” in seeing *what-is*.

[Point of clarification: Latour, Haraway, Stengers, &—of course—Serres, are, in fact, in the mix within this motley *internationale*—but on the periphery. On probation, as it were, as thinking from the present epoch must always remain. ((—Benjamin: “Criticism is a matter of correct distancing.”)) It is virtually impossible to verify the degree of precorporation shaping contemporary thought from within the same thought bubble.]

[Possible evidence: many “speculative realists,” in the rush to theorize an object-oriented ontology beyond the sphere of human activity, have demonstrated a troubling “political diffidence.” —One just never knows when one’s favorite phenomenologist is going to end up donning khakis & black jackboots; or one’s favorite sociologist of science is going to side with techno-fixes & geo-engineering. ((“the barbarism of the present.”))]

§ 73

Albert Camus, *Myth of Sisyphus* ((Annotated))

It is essential to consider as a constant point of reference in this essay the regular hiatus between what we fancy we know and what we really know, practical assent and simulated ignorance which allows us to live with ideas which, if we truly put them to the test, ought to upset our whole life. Faced with this inextricable contradiction of the mind, we shall fully grasp the divorce separating us from our own creations. So long as the mind keeps silent in the motionless world of its hopes, everything is reflected and arranged in the unity of its nostalgia. But with its first move this world cracks and tumbles: an infinite number of shimmering fragments is offered to the understanding. We must despair of ever reconstructing the familiar, calm surface which would give us peace of heart.

Of whom and of what indeed can I say: "I know that!" This heart within me I can feel, and I judge that it exists. This world I can touch, and I likewise judge that it exists. There ends all my knowledge, and the rest is construction. ((cf. Descartes: "I resolved to assume that everything that ever entered my mind was no more true than the illusions of my dreams. But immediately afterwards I noticed that whilst I thus wished to think all things false, it was absolutely essential that the 'I' who thought this should *be* somewhat. And then, examining attentively that which I was, I saw that I could conceive that I had no body, and that there was no world nor place where I might be; but yet that I could not for all that conceive that I was not."))

And here are trees and I know their gnarled surface, water and I feel its taste. These scents of grass and stars at night, certain evenings when the heart relaxes—how shall I negate this world whose power and strength I feel? Yet all the knowledge on earth will give me nothing to assure me that this world is mine. You describe it to me and you teach me to classify it. You enumerate its laws and in my thirst for knowledge I admit that they are true. You take apart its mechanism and my hope increases. At the final stage you teach me that this wonderous and multicoloured universe can be reduced to the atom and that the atom itself can be reduced to the electron. All this is good and I wait for you to continue. But you tell me of an invisible planetary system in which electrons gravitate around a nucleus. You explain this world to me with an image. I realize then that you have been reduced to poetry: I shall never know. Have I the time to become indignant? You have already changed theories. So that science that was to teach me everything ends up in a hypothesis, that lucidity founders in metaphor, that uncertainty is resolved in a work of art. What need had I of so many efforts? The soft lines of these hills and the hand of evening on this troubled heart teach me much more. I have returned to my beginning. I realize that if through science I can seize phenomena and enumerate them, I cannot, for all that, apprehend the world.

Max Ernst , Les Mystères de la Forêt

Are there still forests down there? They are, apparently, wild & impenetrable, black & russet, extravagant, secular, ant-like, diametrical, negligent, fierce, fervent & likeable, with neither yesterday nor tomorrow.

Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor*

95. There is a psychological element here, as well as a talent for seeing-as. One has to be able to see what *is* there, rather than what one hopes or expects. This requires a certain sort of strength.

American historian, Lynn Townsend White Jr., once confessed, in his seminal essay, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” that ultimately, we have no idea what we ought to do about said crisis. But, he hastened to add, as a beginning we should try “to clarify our thinking by looking, in some historical depth, at the presuppositions that underlie modern technology and science.” An eminently sensible proposition for any “scientifically literate” society with potentially devastating technological reach; except one, it would seem, primally enframed by the dæmonic essence of progress (*–Das Gestell*). In such a society, the wisdom of self-restraint & precautionary principles are tantamount to blasphemy. The School Bus only goes one way: –“Modernize!” Any other way is not only wrong, it is *irrational*. This is an important insight for any kind of formal cultural critique or (ecological) education (–to the extent that education is a critical task, not just sustainable learnification). That is, we cannot simply “clarify our thinking” about cultural presuppositions in any “historical depth” without recourse—as Benjamin has claimed—to a mode of “theological” exegesis. Because progress ((*–Leviathan! Leviathan!*)) is nothing less than religious dogma for Moderns: the genetic engine of our inner psychological development, the inevitable trajectory of our historical gradient, the very evolutionary structure of Nature itself. —Monday morning, around 8:30am: children file into big, insulated boxes to learn the geometry of their place: “Time Begins, Stars Form, Elements Evolve, Planets Appear, Life Develops, Knowledge Builds, Agriculture Starts, Industry Emerges.” —Because, for us: technique is identity.

Perhaps we should introduce some kind of precautionary principle as a Big Idea? A vision of what education is for? ((George Grant: “As moderns we have no standards by which to judge particular techniques, except standards welling up with our faith in technical expansion. To describe this situation as a difficulty implies that it is no inevitable historicist predicament. It is to say that its overcoming could only be achieved by living in the full light of its presence.”)) To come home to ourselves in the presence of that tension. Domesticity

Note the immediate *unthinkability* of such an educational objective. Imagine what would have to happen at the Ministry of Education to table a core competency that called into question the inevitability of progress, or technological optimism, or human exceptionalism, or the primacy of calculative reason as the essence of *being educated*. Imagine discussing the notion with colleagues in the staff room, or parents in the parking lot: “Uh... I thought we were just trying to improve graduation statistics and marketability?”—“Sounds like ivory tower nonsense to me.”—“Are you with us or them?”—“*Tsk-preposterous*. There is no going back.”

(Imagine a Prime Minister recognizing kelp forests or mycelial networks as political agents in the legislature.)

“Thou shalt not regress.” Developmentalism

Imagine discussing the notion with students: —How does one even call into question the presuppositions that underlie modern technology & science? Is that not fundamentally *who we are?* Is that not the *raison d'être* of this whole school thing? How does one avoid being dismissed as another future-shocked sentimentalist? How does one walk into a classroom or pull up a stool at the local watering hole, with a fistful of dirt, & say:

—“Don’t think, but look!” Gestalt Intelligence

§ 74

Peter Lamborn Wilson, The Disciples at Saïs

Taking the long view (and allowing for notable exceptions) science does precisely what State and Capital demand of it:—make war, make money. “Pure” science is allowed only because it might lead to technologies of death and profit... [A]nother science might yet come to be. A new paradigm is always conceivable, and theories now considered defeated, lost, wrong, and absurd, might (someday) even be reconfigured into a paradigmatic pattern, a science for life rather than death. Signs of emergence of such a science are always present—because science itself wants to deal with truth, and life is true and real. But the emergence is always—in the long run—crushed and suppressed by the “inevitable” demands of technology and Capital.

Lynn Townsend White Jr., The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis

The victory of Christianity over paganism was the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our culture. It has become fashionable today to say that, for better or worse, we live in a “post-Christian age.” Certainly the forms of our thinking and language have largely ceased to be Christian, but to my eye the substance often remains amazingly akin to that of our past. Our daily habits of action, for example, are dominated by an implicit faith in perpetual progress which was unknown either to Greco-Roman antiquity or to the Orient. It is rooted in, and is indefensible apart from, Judeo-Christian teleology... At the level of common people this worked out in an interesting way. In Antiquity every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own *genius loci*, its guardian spirit. These spirits were accessible to men, but were very unlike men; centaurs, fauns, and mermaids show their ambivalence. Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or dammed a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation... By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[N8a,4]. Pursue the question of whether a connection exists between the secularization of time in space and the allegorical mode of perception. The former, at any rate... is hidden in the “worldview of the natural sciences” of the second half of the century. (Secularization of history in Heidegger).

George Grant, Canadian Fate and Imperialism

Like all civilizations the West is based on a great religion—the religion of progress. This is the belief that the conquest of human and non-human nature will give existence meaning. Western civilization is now universal so that this religion is nearly everywhere dominant. To question the dominant world religion is indeed to invite an alienation far greater than the simply political.

Jan Zwicky, What is Lyric Philosophy?

47. A domestic attitude accepts the essential tension between lyric desire and the capacity for technology. It is not so much a static mid-point between these two contrary moments as it is an active acknowledgement that the tension between them cannot be resolved. To adopt a domestic attitude is an attempt to come home to ourselves in the presence of that tension.

Convolute VII

Acknowledgment of music's meaning is the beginning
of a just epistemology.

-- Jan Zwicky, Music

§ 75

Ecohermeneutics: House music. Underground hip-hop.

§ 75

Michel Serres, *Biogea*

Communication, interferences, translation, distribution, passages and bridges. How can the invasive order become reciprocal dialogue? How can object become subject? In what language does this mute world speak?

After such an alliance between us, lion, and the single-celled organism, gnat, the female and the male, the sister and the brother, the son and the father would also do so, and thus would the stranger behave towards the natural, the traveller and the native, humans with the living things and, reciprocally, the inert world for the living things and these latter in the first. We would make a common home in Biogea. Where the against would feed the with in return. If we calmed these intentions and these images of combat, our science would change. I want to draw up this peace treaty, this pact, at least, of symbiosis. I've been calling it the Natural Contract for a long time. It has become here the foundation of knowledge, practice and industry.

We are not the only ones to write and read, to code, to decipher the codes of others, to get decoded by others, to understand, mutate, invent, communicate, exchange signals, process information, encounter one another... to thus win our lives. Everything in the world does it, like us: the light, the wind, the rain, chemical reactions and the reactions of living things, the yews and the sperm whales. The world resonates with a common language, no doubt formal, I don't know if it's poetic but what does it matter, the essential thing remains sharing these codings, this universal language, music and science.

Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Gathering Moss*

Learning to see mosses is more like listening than looking. A cursory glance will not do. Straining to hear a faraway voice or catch a nuance in the quiet subtext of a conversation requires attentiveness, a filtering out of all the noise, to catch the music. Mosses are not elevator music; they are the intertwined threads of a Beethoven quartet... Slowing down and coming close, we see patterns emerge and expand out of the tangled tapestry threads. The threads are simultaneously distinct from the whole, and part of the whole.

I love the violin. In a compelling essay on the subject, buried in the quarterly newsletter of the *Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition*, cultural psychologist Ernst E. Boesch conducts a fascinating study on the “evolution” of the violin as a culturally modified, yet materially responsive “species.” This includes tracing its “phylogenesis,” as an object developed over time by cultural ideals; as well as its “ontogenesis;” that is, the “symbiotic” co-becoming of violin & violinist, as it were, by sympathetically tuning each other’s bodies over a lifetime of disciplined practice. Strengthening the neck muscles to position the violin between chin & collar bone, for example—or sensitizing the left fingers to get a “feel” for the vibrato—but also, more generally, *cultivating an ear* for what constitutes “beautiful sound.” It is this “vexing problem,” the striving for an elusive & unquantifiable resonance, that compels Boesch to examine the function of the beautiful. What is the violin for? Why would anyone undergo the modifications required to play such an instrument? Moreover, what is the nature of the definitive experience of all this labour: the unification of subject & object in a harmonic unfolding irreducible to either criterial standards or technical skill—yet clearly *meaningful*. Why are such moments often experienced by the violinist (& even listener) as “empty of self?” Or as Boesch describes it: “artist and violin form a symbiotic whole, the I, so to say, blending into the object, and the object melting into the I.” Ernst E. peers out a window he never noticed, while a string quartet tunes: a rose garden!

Boesch makes some additional remarks regarding the (re)introduction of noise into (European) music that are of interest here. Notably, he proposes the notion of noise as “sound dirt”—a profane &, according to him, chthonic “anti-order” that can, if permitted, work to unsettle the myth of purity that sustains “civilized society.” He notes the grimy style of rock music as a case in point, & outlines other negative associations with noise—bodily discharges, catastrophic events, the threatening howls of animals—but also concedes its role in revelry, conviviality, & other “cultural” events. In a moment of analytic weakness, he goes as far as to suggest: “Noise (in the sense of not purified sound) can even possess aesthetic qualities: the rustling of leaves in a breeze, the murmur of water in a creek, the lapping of waves on a shore...” concluding that, “noise tends to belong to earthly, natural events, but also out of ordinary occasions,” whereas striving for “pure sound,” as in the cultural refinement of the violin, “rarely occurs in nature—with the exception of singing birds.”

From an eäarthling perspective, this line of thinking—while impressive in its theoretic striving & scope—is, at best, contrived. At worst: *monstrous*. Ecstatic insight vs. rational development; wind in the leaves vs. human breath on a reed; the “noise” of nature vs. the “pure sound” of human culture—plus birds? The dualistic logic reinforcing such intuitively strained lines of bifurcation is clearly based less in empirical inference (the study is framed in the language-game of science, but there is nothing terribly “scientific” about the conclusions) & more in a specific definition of “human.” A definition clearly informed by the nature/culture duality that, as Boesch rightly discerns, underlies modern cults of purity (—tho for him, it must be noted, purity is progress—cf. Serres). The fascinating thing about this study is thus not his reduction of the “striving for beauty” to an aesthetic extension of mastery—this is to be expected of analyses that issue from the Crystal Palace—but how he keeps slipping again & again into the dirty, intermingled truth of it all.

Ernst E.—decibel meter in hand—loses himself, for a moment, *in the music*—& slips on a spilled cocktail hitting his head with the infernal device on the way down. Suddenly, prostrated upon the floor & humiliated—it dawns on him: “What kind of action is contemplating a flower or admiring a landscape? What is the function of skiing, reading a poem, collecting stamps or paintings—or of playing music? Such useless actions may confront us with the general reasons for which we act.” —Cue the neuroscientists. Cue the cerebral fireworks. Cue the mindfulness educators. Yes, all that “good-for-the-brain” stuff, but also *something else*. Something that draws us out of egotistical calculation—a hitherto concealed window on something *resonant in form*: —“Somehow it appears the old-violin builders felt quality of sound and beauty of shape to be closely related—only a beautiful instrument can sound beautifully.” —Ernst E. melts back into the sea foam of noise.

§ 76

Ernst E. Boesch, The Sound of the Violin

What... of the sound of the violin? Let us distinguish two aspects. The first is the action of *making objects produce sound*, the second is the *search for perfection*. As a boy I used to tighten a blade of grass between my thumbs and, by blowing into the gap formed in this way, produce a sharp, oboe-like sound... Each time, doing so, I transformed nature into "culture," shaping natural raw materials into forms apt at producing sounds which did not occur in "pure" nature. Yet, the pleasure was immense and can be understood only by the extension of my childish action potential; it made me a creator, albeit in a tiny area. Making objects sound, thus, is a bit like taming animals: *it transforms a resistant non-I into a compliant extension of the I.*

Jan Zwicky, Music

Beauty's gestalt character—profound and attracting integrity—makes discernment of it impossible to articulate without engendering the feeling that we have missed the mark. We sense that any attempt to use words in a way that circumscribes resonance is going to lead us astray.

There are cultures that have no word for art. Their wise and intelligent members are not typically puzzled by the phenomenon of beauty nor by the fact that music is meaningful. Our puzzlement is cultural. It is the product of making explicit, analyzable structure the paradigm of meaning. We thereby sculpt intelligence according to a technocratic ideal.

Cary Wolfe, Preface in Michel Serres, *The Parasite* ((Annotated))

The one who thinks and writes, the subject of knowledge, must then take the other of knowledge seriously. "Noise" is always already part of the signal; blindness inescapably accompanies vision, which is why Serres's writing is so strange and so demanding. In fact, Serres's work, in a profound sense, struggles *against* clarity ((—Note: in the conventional, analytic sense of clarity, as opposed to the "resonant clarity" of lyric insight)), which is to say that it struggles, in a way, against language itself, (mis)understood as the more or less transparent and unproblematic transmission of conceptual and analytical content from writer to reader. Indeed, as we know, one of Serres's great themes is *noise*... and it is noise that Serres's writing does not just talk about but generates—not as the other or the opposite of content, but as content's very fiber. This is why Serres's writing—though intellectually powerful and penetrating—is not analytical but experimental; not cumulative and aggregative but discursive; not linear but meandering, doubling back on itself to remind itself of stones left unturned, details too readily smoothed over, conclusions too well-varnished. And then we're plunged back into the welter, back into the complexity of it all. Back into the sea foam of noise.

Boesch: —“Mastering the violin is a long and frustrating endeavour... To start learning early is... required to shape the child’s motor skills and perception during the forming years. This is precisely of interest to the developmental cultural psychologist: that *learning to master an object implies shaping the development of the individual*; while the object was formed ‘phylogenetically,’ the individual is led to ‘fit’ the object in its ontogenesis. This implies motor and sensorial adaptations—even transformations—of the learner.”

Ernst E. keeps slipping again & again into the dirty, intermingled truth of it all. He is right, of course, shaping the sensorimotor disposition of the child to recognize (& eventually co-create) experiences of “profound and attracting integrity”—a violin sonata, for example, or the melodic trilling of warbling vireos—is easier if we start early. Plato understood this: which is why he told Glaucon flat out that the most expedient way to establish a Republic would be to exile everyone over the age of ten & just start over. One suspects a similar expediency informed Rousseau’s proposal (which, incidentally, struck him like a “vision”) to take his ideal pupil, Emile, away from civilized society so as to intuit the laws of Nature. Lamentably, neither mass exile nor one-to-one tutoring in idyllic woodlands are feasible at this time. —There is no perch above this fray.

Boesch is not wrong: he just refuses to realize how right he may be over & above his little wantings & doings. He has been made (presumably, in part, by his education) to distrust his *spontaneous experiences*—of being moved by the singing of birds, of the convivial joys of childhood music, of the tingling intimation of an erotic pull in the violin’s lower bout. —Lyric desires such as these are *unthinkable* within the Crystal Palace & any insights or “higher functions” that result from such “out of ordinary occasions” must be made to conform to the technocratic architecture of the *framework* & the “celibacy of the intellect” it claims to commemorate.

In other words, supposedly “useless” activities—learning to play the violin, writing odes to nightingales, contemplating landscapes—must be retroactively enframed into something “useful,” like *learning to master an object*; or something “higher,” like the *search for perfection*. Or some other appropriate project to which one can claim allegiance: to the West, the East, Heaven, the Beautiful & Lofty—but increasingly under late capitalism—to nothing more than Money & Power & Self. Dominion is an utterly plastic disposition, with one condition: one can *never* claim allegiance to Ancestors, Spirits, or The Land—that would be emotionally contaminated, unscientific, utterly primitive. —“Thou shalt not regress.” Indigenous Ways of Knowing

Any “meaning” discerned outside the *framework*—any recognition of a deeper connexion or isomorphism with the more-than-human world, for example, or “homologous structures” we share with other life-forms—are rendered an imaginative projection of sentimental or primitive minds. Pathetic fallacies, preoperational animism, anthropomorphism: spurious intuitions whereby one cannot distinguish the reified from the real.

Boesch is not wrong: he just *confuses* things—in the original sense of “mingling together”—& this confusion brings him closer to the dirty truth than the purified model he posits to tidy it all up. We are, on some level, trying to “fit” the “ontogenetic” maturation of the “individual” child, with the “phylogenetic” “evolution” of the “culture.” The confusion lies in which terms are *metaphoric*—that is, which designate “pure” cultural activities (i.e. —“phylogensis” as a metaphor for the historical diversification of human cultures & objects), & which designate pure biological processes (i.e. —phylogenesis as the evolutionary diversification of species, or features of an organism). In his attempt to sneak in legitimacy by using biological terms in social analysis, Boesch slips into the half-realization that the perceptual restructuring provoked by mingling metaphors & language-games starts to point at something more real than he is prepared to realize. ((—A Darwinian slip?))

Tim Ingold, *Making*

In the art of inquiry, the conduct of thought goes along with, and continually answers to, the fluxes and flows of materials with which we work. These materials think in us, as we think through them. Here, every work is an experiment: not in the natural scientific sense of testing a preconceived hypothesis... but in the sense of prising an opening and following where it leads. You try things out and see what happens. Thus the art of inquiry moves forward in real time, along with the lives of those who are touched by it, and with the world to which both it and they belong. Far from answering to their plans and predictions, it joins with them in their hopes and dreams... To practice this method is not to describe the world, or to represent it, but to open up our perception to what is going on there so that we, in turn, can respond to it. That is to say, it is to set up a relation with the world that I shall henceforth call a *correspondence*.

John Hartigan Jr., *Aesop's Anthropology: A Multispecies Approach*

In social analysis, with culture (human) on one side and nature (nonhuman) on the other, terms like *native* and *indigenous* will always be suspect, and the critical “intervention” will be to sunder or “clarify” their fluid passage across this line... The value of *native* and *indigenous* lies in reminding that culture and nature are intertwined such that we can use them to identify transspecies dynamics and homologous structures. At the moment when questions of the nonhuman matter greatly, we have to avail ourselves of *the opportunity of finding in our critical and analytical discourses a leveling effect* similar to that achieved by Darwin’s theory of evolution—to remove the conceptual boundaries that wall humans off from all other life-forms on the planet.

In crossing this line, in thinking about similarities between and among species as they pertain to sociality, homology opens up conceptually. Deleuze and Guattari turn away from homology because they see in Lévi-Strauss’s usage a term that only insulates the human within its supposedly unique sphere of sociality. Homologies are colonized, constrained, and construed as ideological operations, projections, or mere anthropomorphisms. But drawing on the concept’s career—both in biology and before it crossed the “scientific threshold”—suggests, contrarily that homologies are more than social constructions; they identify commonalities that undercut a strict delineation of the human and nonhuman, as indicated by comparative genomics. As these commonalities extend beyond the strictly evolutionary into the forms that are shaped socially, the capacity to think in terms of and to deploy homology opens up the potential of breaching the insistence on humans as inescapably ensconced in a hermetically sealed domain of culture.

Boesch: “...learning to master an object implies shaping the development of the individual.” Leviathan!

Allow me a remix: *learning to fit human thinking with being implies cultivating the imaginative disposition –the lyric awareness, the gestalt intelligence, the hermeneutic ear—to discern ecological form as resonance.* ((Wittgenstein: “I want to say: an education quite different from ours might also be the foundation for quite different concepts.”)) Indeed, consider the conceptual ramifications of cultivating a culture (“phylogenesis”) that attends to birdsong *seriously*. One that honours “the fit” of individual maturation (“ontogenesis”) with the resonant ecology of the whole. (—In the sense of a “core competency”—formal ecological thinking across the curriculum, not only in specialized fields like ornithology). In other words, what if the “art of inquiry” was not enframed as the progressive development of formal operational thinking to master objects, but as a *correspondence* of thinking with the “fluxes & flows of materials” or “meaningful speech” of other beings? What if one could get better at *getting it right?* Like practicing the violin: co-tuning the attentive musculature to get a “feel” for the vibrato of things. —“Darkling I listen...” You already admitted it Ernst E.—birds *speak*.

While deploying “phylogenesis” & “ontogenesis” as developmental metaphors in cultural psychology may provoke some generative mingling, this was not Boesch’s original intent, & there are, one assumes, limits to the percipience of confusion. Moreover, as we shall see, the conflation of cultural & cognitive development with an oversimplified, factoid rendering of evolutionary diversification is one of the ways educational theory consistently gets it “wrong from the beginning.” Not only has this led to all kinds of fundamentally flawed principles about the nature of learning (simple to complex, concrete to abstract, discovery learning, etc.) —it has also tacitly defined what it means to be educated, to be cultured, to be human—or to be Other.

There is, it would seem, a cruel irony at work in the Darwinian moment, as the potential “leveling effect”—the de-hierarchicalization of being implicit in his insight—has been dumbed down & repurposed to provide, instead, a “scientific basis” for dominion over “lower” species & cultures. The grotesque syncretisation of such a profound insight—the way it has been distorted *ad hoc*, not only to absolve imperial expediencies of the day, but spiritually inverted on the level of myth, like the swastika in Nazism, to become the very sigil of Capital (“survival of the fittest”)—ought to be an instructive reminder for eäarthlings. The “unnameable Thing” operates on the level of mythic understanding, even in matters of “science.” Cosmology, imagery, stories, metaphor, foundational binaries—these are the epistemic media of its transmission. But it is a crafty, duplicitous entity. With one hand, it undermines mythic capacities as specious or primitive projections of a “lower” stage of development—with the other, it “fills the void” by reinscribing its own mythos of mastery & exceptionalism. It is a mode of ordering that derives its power by concealing from itself that it is mythic.

The Darwinian moment, as such, teaches two important lessons about the nature of leviathanic transmission: i.) intellectual content, no matter how empirical its observations, or radical its implications—it would seem—is susceptible to being distorted to conform to the underlying *framework*. ii.) the structural logic of the *framework* can be transmitted through time (by way of “linking postulates” in the cultural background) even if specific content or implications need to be expunged to align with shifting social conventions.

[Evidence: We witness an example of this sanitized transmission strategy in education theory with Herbert Spencer—the notoriously imperialist, Victorian philosopher who coined “survival of the fittest” & laid the groundwork for social darwinism—& who also happens to be the unofficial “father” of progressivist theory.]

The intellectual value of learning to attend, for example, to subtle variations in the beaks of finches is evident. The *real* issue is what kind of relation is implied by: *shaping, fitting, cultivating?* —Is it the “mastering” of a “resistant non-I into a compliant extension of the I?” Or a kind of mimesis? A *correspondence* with alterity?

§ 78

Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

81. What we choose to exalt as ideal speech will be conditioned by what we believe the word “human” means.

82. To mistake calculus for speech is like mistaking a violin bow for an instrument that can make music. To try to think in the absence of emotion, of breath, sound, light, is to compose violin concerti for the right hand alone. To say something *speaks* is to say it is resonant.

Robert Bringhurst, Singing with the Frogs

Songbirds sing. That is fact and not a metaphor. They sing, and in the forest every morning, when a dozen or a hundred or a thousand individuals of six or ten or twenty different species sing at once, that is polyphonic music. What city dwellers frequently call “silence” is the ebb and flow of birdsong and the calls of hawks and ravens, marmots, pikas, deermice, singing voles, the drone of gnats and bees and bee flies, and the sounds of wind and rain and running water. The world is a polyphonic place. The polyphonic music and the polyphonic poetry and fiction humans make is an answer to that world. It is mimicry of what-is, as much as it is statements of what might be.

Nothing but human arrogance allows us to insist that these activities be given different names. Bird songs, like human songs, are learned. They are cultural traditions. If some parameters of birdsong and frogsong are genetically preprogrammed in ways the string quartet, sonata and gamelan are not, so what? Bird flight too is genetically preprogrammed in ways that human flight is not. Does that entitle us to say that only we can really fly, and birds cannot?

David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*

It is by a complementary shift of attention that one may suddenly come to hear the familiar song of a blackbird or a thrush in a surprisingly new manner—not just as a pleasant melody repeated mechanically, as on a tape player in the background, but as active meaningful speech. Suddenly, subtle variations in the tone and rhythm of that whistling phrase seem laden with expressive intention, and the two birds singing to each other across the field appear for the first time as attentive, conscious beings, earnestly engaged in the same world that we ourselves engage, yet from an astonishingly different angle and perspective.

Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor*

26. Seeing-as is the result of the natural attunement of our capacities for perception to the world. In understanding (in seeing as, in the experience of meaning) we show human thinking’s fit with being.

(By this remark I intend no privileged relationship between human thinking and being; nor do I intend to claim human thinking is the only kind of thinking there is. There are as many kinds of thinking as there are kinds of natural things. (And that the notion ‘natural thing’ is vague or difficult is no objection. Its vagueness, its overlappings and unclarities carry over precisely into the determination of kinds of thinking, along with what is intuitively obvious about it.))

§ 79

Ernst E. grips a dirty martini in his trembling hand, peering out at the rose garden through a set of French doors in the back of the palace. The string quartet starts up. The party rages on. He thinks: "Why do the pure frames of demarcation keep getting confused?" Refocusing his gaze on the window itself, he notes a thin film of condensation collecting along the edge, & with it: mould. He loosens his collar: things are getting a little too interminably mingled in here. It would appear the more one *seriously* contemplates a violin, the more space is prised for... "sound dirt" to bleed into the framework. ((The panels shudder slightly—An earthquake? The music? Or is this a dream?)) —It strikes him: "My God! What if the violin is playing us? What if birds are *literally* speaking?" Then, whispering under his breath: "Still wouldest thou sing, and I have ears in vain—To thy high requiem become a sod." Ernst E. needs quiet to think, maybe a walk, but the doors are locked.

§ 79

Jorge Luis Borges, Labyrinth

There'll never be a door. You are inside
and the fortress contains the universe
and has no other side nor any back
nor any outer wall nor secret core.
Do not expect the rigor of your path,
which stubbornly splits into another one,
which stubbornly splits into another one,
to have an end. Your fate is ironclad
like your judge. Do not expect the charge
of the bull that is a man and whose strange
plural form fills the thicket of endless
interwoven stone with your own horror.
It does not exist. Expect nothing. Not
even the beast obscured by the black dusk.

§ 80

Cut to scene from Monday morning, around 8:30am:

Nondescript classroom, first period, students beginning to get settled in. Mr. Datura—full of regrets, fresh from wrestling angels & an earth-shattering hang-over—ambles through the doorway just as the bell rings. Removes dark sunglasses, pours an oat-myilk coffee from his Stanley-green thermos & takes a mini-vacation, sitting side saddle on the front desk for a few teetering moments. He holds the steaming drink daintily in his left hand, pinky out, cupping his aching temples in his right for a few white-knuckled breaths, eyes closed—collecting his thoughts. Then, with an academic *sigh*—he looks up, raises his free hand in a spiteful gesture to some cruel Sisyphean god that appears to dwell in the announcement speaker, & begins:

“Look, is it possible that all this ‘striving for beauty’—as in the refinement of the violin, but also, in some ‘analogous way,’ the singing of birds—is not an instance of anthropomorphism, but isomorphism? Evidence of a ‘homologous structure’ running ‘beneath’ our taxonomic urges? The recapitulation of some embodied ur-memory, some mimetic urge to *sing along* with ‘others’ ingrained into the woody flesh of our common ancestry? Running up the length of the tree like an inner spiral? Like the cochlea of our very inter-being?”

...

A crackled voice from the announcement speaker: “Mr. Datura, please report to the principal’s office.”

Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor*

9. A good metaphor is no more a clever artifact than is an intelligently musical use of language. Both, in different ways, are attempts to tell the truth, to get at the shapes of what-is. A good metaphor is the expression of a homology, an isomorphism, between the way two things gesture.

Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*

Foolhardy as it is to speculate what it might be about the absence of chiefs and property, capital and the State, that would enhance the mimetic faculty—the terms are overly generous—I cannot resist speculating that what enhances the mimetic faculty is a protean self with multiple images (read “souls”) of itself set in a natural environment whose animals, plants, and elements are spiritualized to the point that nature “speaks back” to humans, every material entity paired with an occasionally visible spirit-double—a mimetic double!—of itself. Now as against that profoundly mimeticized world... think of another, different, picture drawn by the Romantic reaction to Western capitalism, illustrating what happens with the “disenchantment of the world,” with the scuttling of the spirits... Unlike the mimeticized world, this disenchanted one is home to a self-enclosed and somewhat paranoid, possessive, individualized sense of self severed from and dominant over a dead and nonspiritualized nature, a self built antimimetically on the notion of work as an instrumental relation to the world within a system wherein that self ideally incorporates into itself wealth, property, citizenship, and of course “sense-data,” all necessarily quantifiable... This latter feature especially might spell trouble for the mimetic faculty—accumulating sensation as private property and hence, like all commodities, incomplete without its necessary dose of abstraction that allows for general equivalence.

One way of thinking of Walter Benjamin’s notion of sentience taking us outside of ourselves is to see it as adamantly opposed to this incorporative notion of sensing as personal appropriation, investing sense-data in the bank of the Self. Eccentrically object-bound, Benjamin sees surreptitious forces at work within modern capitalism whereby the scarlet of the scarlet cloth is what the perceiver enters into, rather than incorporating it into the self through the keyhole of the safe-deposit box of the eye. Assuming a nature that talks, and talks back, Benjamin is one of those primitive “animists” (albeit radically malpositioned)... His task as modern critic, as a Marxist critic in fact, is to give human voice to that talk.

It is as if he ingenuously applies the young Marx who, with gusto in... “Private Property and Communism” in his Paris manuscripts of 1844... saw the senses themselves as historically dependent and asserted that human perception correlated in some significant manner with the society’s dominant mode of economic production, contrasting perception under capitalism with what he wildly imagined would be the case under communism. Private property, he argued “has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only ours when we have it—when it exists for us as capital, or when it is directly possessed, eaten, drunk, worn inhabited, etc.,” such that the senses are estranged by having. But all this sense-banking epistemology will be changed with the transcendence of private property... Might not the mimetic faculty and the sensuous knowledge it embodies be precisely this hard-to-imagine state wherein “*the senses therefore become directly in their practise theoreticians*” (Marx)—and I wish to suggest that there is something... crucially “primitive” and antithetical to “possessive individualism” necessary for this degree of sensuousness and mimetic deftness to exist.

§ 81

soundtrack for the angel of history

The knowledge that certain nights of prolonged gentleness will return to the earth and sea when we have gone can indeed help us in our death.

-- Albert Camus, *The Sea Close By*

the bang begat the crackle
the crackle begat the hum
the hum begat the tick
the tick begat the tock

the tock begat the hiss
the hiss begat the clank
the clank begat the click
the click begat the peeps

the peeps begat the boom
the boom begat the ching
the ching begat the jingle
the jingle begat the jangle

the jangle begat the swoosh
the swoosh begat the snort
the snort begat the crack
the crack begat the buzz

the buzz begat the pop
the pop begat the beep
the beep begat the bing
the bing begat the tweet

the tweet begat the zip
the zip begat the zoom
the zoom begat the fizz
the fizz begat the crash

...

the crash begat the croak
the croak begat the chirp
the chirp begat the howl
the howl begat the pitter-patter.

§ 81

Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*

[W15a,1]. After 70,000 years comes the end of Harmony, in the form of a new period of civilization, in descending tendency, which once more will give way to “obscure limbs.” Thus, with Fourier transience and happiness are closely linked. Engels observes: “Just as Kant introduced into natural science the idea of the ultimate destruction of the earth, Fourier introduced into historical science that of the ultimate destruction of the human race:” Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, part 3, pg. 12.

Michel Serres, *Malfeasance*

Other garbage now invades space and our five senses, with soft signs and waves, the shock of words and photos, the whining and buzzing of what must be called Muzak. As for the sciences, if we just stick to thermodynamics, to chemistry, even biology and the greenhouse effect, and try to eliminate only hard nuisances, we will promote so-called clean industry and technology. As a result we forget that images, colours, music and sounds are just as excremental, invading and polluting space just as much as the stifling stench of carbon dioxide and tar. Hard pollution appropriates the hard world. Just as dangerous, if not even more harmful, soft pollution appropriates humans with often subtle links and a discreet consciousness. This softness is often invisible but covers the space of things and our relations just as fast as hardness. Invading the absence of space, it haunts our souls.

We should like to say something like: the objective of education is *to fit*—in the sense of a correspondence, like learning to play the violin, or the “mimetic faculties” cultivated in a secret dance society (cf. Hamat’sa)—the “ontogeny” of the child with the “phylogeny” of the living whole. But this would undoubtedly elicit retorts of a “naturalistic fallacy” from philosophers, “recapitulation theory” from educational theorists, & provoke the ire of hermeneuticians who are mindful, with good reason, of the dangers inherent in *naturalizing* historically contingent inferences about “*what-is*. ” ((Note: Herbert Spencer conflating organic evolution with social “evolution” as just one, particularly egregious, example). What, then, are we implying by this formulation? Moreover, is the language-game of “developmental psychology” the most generative & sympathetic means of stimulating the kind of aesthetic experience that we claim education is, in part, for?

—Nothing of this pedagogy can be truly understood without communal fire.

For the record, we have not simply reiterated Haeckel’s biogenetic law (“ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny”) as a transposable axiom between natural & cultural processes, or as an innate eco-psychological trajectory—thereby reproducing the same kind of Spencerian fallacy in softer language. Nor are we breaking out the vintage Rousseau—the derivative vice of most pedagogic innovation for the last two hundred years—only to rebottle it for twenty-first century tastes. We are not suggesting that we simply “need to get outside,” beyond the corrupting influence of Culture to commune with Nature. We are also not proposing, as progressivism has promised for a hundred years, to devise methods of instruction, learning environments, & curricula that align with universal principles of development. We are, rather—perhaps surprisingly?—precipitating a kind of ontological alchemy upon the mythic substructure of such thinking about nature, culture, & “development.” We are mimicking (*mimesis*) the nomenclature of analysis to forge a hermeneutic parody—to steal its magic.

It is imperative, when the time comes: —use this book as the tinder, the burning mask, the victory spliff.

All we are saying is: the hypostatized images that encapsulated our understanding of the nature of mind, learning (ontogeny), & ecological relations (phylogeny) in the late nineteenth century—which were built into the foundations of the state schooling apparatus—are no longer tenable. This alone is not a controversial position. What is, likely, more contentious is the notion that twentieth century advances—the move from a crudely applied “general law of evolution,” to the ostensibly “more scientific” functional psychology of John Dewey & clinical experiments of Jean Piaget’s cognitive development model—have essentially preserved the ur-form of Spencerian thought. Which is, of course, older than Spencer. Much, much older. [Note: we are not trying to compare or equate qualitatively different theories of psychological development or learning. Nor are we suggesting some shared political project—Spencer a notorious anti-socialist elite, Dewey a kind of democratic socialist—rather we are trying to illustrate the way in which a lineage of ideas can transform, sometimes drastically, through time, but retain the deep epistemological structure of Dominion.]

Not only does this process *preserve* (inflect, replicate, plasticize?—*Leviathan!*) also employs a kind of mimetic black magic) the *framework*, but due to the progressive metanarrative of the Western Spirit, the hermeneutic quality of the epistemic system is *progressively concealed* as its mythos becomes increasingly rationalized, logical, formal operational. Until this contingent mode of revealing is no longer a “mode” at all, but the *empirical experience* of what-is. This intensifying accumulation, like plastic in the ocean, is deeply troubling. Even more because it is, like polymer chains of *bisphenol A*, *already inside us—altering our hormonal desires, thinking-with us in the mode of challenging-forth. You are the aqueous humour of its flotsam: its fluid host.*

We should like to say something like: education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire. But how many stare into a fire these days. Not the big communal fire—the one that stares back: —The fire of the real.

Kieran Egan, *Getting It Wrong From the Beginning*

Spencer aimed to show how learning and development, and the daily activities of the classroom, were parts of the same laws that shaped the stars above and the earth below. Those laws shaped the evolution of human beings from simple organisms long before, and those same laws shaped the development of each child from the earliest moments in life to adulthood. In essence, Spencer argued that the whole cosmos was subject to natural laws and that these laws were accessible to scientific scrutiny.

Obviously there are significant differences between what children typically know and can learn and what adults can know and learn. The question that is crucial... and very difficult to sort out, is just how to characterize these differences and characterize the process of development from one to the other. We need to face the fact that accepting general principles like simple to complex and concrete to abstract—and basing educational programs on them—is just not adequate. Those principles hide and falsify important features of the process. *The source of these ideas was a false cosmology, transformed into a mistaken evolutionary theory, converted into a flawed psychology, and then inferred into those misleading educational principles.*

Walter Benjamin, On the Mimetic Faculty

Nature creates similarities. One need only think of mimicry. The highest capacity for producing similarities, however, is man's (sic.). His gift of seeing resemblances is nothing other than a rudiment of the powerful compulsion in former times to become and behave like something else... This faculty has a history, however, in both the phylogenetic and the ontogenetic sense. As regards the latter, play is for many its school. Children's play is everywhere permeated by mimetic modes of behaviour, and its realm is by no means limited to what one person can imitate in another. The child plays at being not only a shopkeeper or teacher but also a windmill and a train. Of what use to him is this schooling of his mimetic faculty?

The answer presupposes an understanding of the phylogenetic significance of the mimetic faculty. Here it is not enough to think of what we understand today by the concept of similarity. As is known, the sphere of life that formerly seemed to be governed by the law of similarity was comprehensive; it ruled... microcosm and macrocosm. But these natural correspondences are given their true importance only if seen as stimulating and awakening the mimetic faculty in man. It must be borne in the mind that neither mimetic powers nor mimetic objects remain the same in the course of thousands of years. Rather, we must suppose that the gift of producing similarities—for example, in dances, whose oldest function this was—and therefore also the gift of recognizing them, have changed with historical development... The direction of this change seems definable as the increasing decay of the mimetic faculty. For clearly the observable world of modern man contains only minimal residues of the magical correspondences and analogies that were familiar to ancient peoples.

Robert Bringhurst, Herakleitos

All things are exchangeable for
fire and fire for all things,
like gold for goods and goods for gold,
or so sings old

Herakleitos.

Convolute VIII



-- Sonny Assu (Kwakwaka'wakw), "Coke-Salish," 2006,
Lightbox framed in painted white wood & glass front,
55.8 cm x 96.6 cm, Museum of Anthropology (UBC).

I am standing off the side of a gravel access road running along the fringe of a mature stand of conifers in the back forty of Malcolm Knapp Research Forest. It is raining again. A wet mid-November day on the west coast, but remarkably temperate—not that anyone cares about being in the elements anymore. Surrounding me is a gaggle of students—kindergarten to grade seven—swathed in neon-coloured raingear & chattering excitedly after a lively game of tag in the forest. Now it is time for a lesson. The principal gathers the school around a glacial erratic, a truck-sized boulder resting serendipitously on the treeline, & waits for quiet from the eighty-odd students, four teachers, & three researchers from Simon Fraser University, including myself, conducting fieldwork. The scene is typical for the Maple Ridge Environmental School, a place-based public initiative designed to cultivate learning *in, about, & with* the local ecology. Uniquely, the school has no building; classes are taught outdoors in various locations around Maple Ridge, mostly local forest parks.

The principal fancies himself part amateur geologist, part mythsteller. To his credit, he has endeavoured to build a respectful relationship with the Katzie & Kwantlen First Nations, on whose traditional territories the school operates. This place-based practice has lead him to reading up on both the geological & mythological origins of these lands (known in the local dialect of Halq’eméylem as S’ólh Téméxw) & today he appears to have done his homework. Once the warbling subsides, he asks the students to imagine standing *here*, in this very place, fifteen thousand years ago. What would it look like? —Restless shuffling, some guesses from the older students, some tangential side stories from the kindergartens. Finally, he tells us that this area would likely have been covered with ice up to 1600 metres thick! Gesturing to the erratic, he explains that as the ice flows shaped the terrain into its present form, great boulders, such as this, may have been carried hundreds of kilometers. More excited chatter as a pleasant spattering of wonder & wet drizzle envelopes the group.

“But,” the principal continues, “this is not the only way that boulders like this get around.” He then roughly recounts the story of Swaneset, the first chief of the Katzie people, created at a place not far from here called “Sheridan Hill” (Sam’e:ent in Halq’eméylem). The students are enthralled, some of them know the place, one boy proudly announces he lives by the Swaneset Golf Course! —Swaneset, as the story goes, stood on the summit of Sheridan Hill, as he shaped the territory & used it to travel between worlds. After returning one day with a sky-born wife, Swaneset retreated to a nearby channel called Sturgeon Slough. There, he hurled six large boulders, determined to shatter the sacred hill, so that no one else might climb into the sky. The debris cleaved off Sheridan Hill, in turn, became various landmarks. One boulder fell near Siwash Island, another became a nearby hill known as *P’ena*’s, another a spit of land between Sturgeon Slough & the Alouette River.

A hand instantly flashes into the air from a young boy in front: —“Is that true?”

§ 83

Albert McHalsie, David Schaepe & Keith Thor Carlson, *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*

During their travels, *Xexá:ls* (the transformers) performed many transformations. They turned people who acted wrongly to stone. They rewarded others for their generosity by transforming them into valuable local resources (including the cedar tree, the sturgeon and the beaver), many of which are the ancestors of the *Stó:lō* people. They fixed those people and animals that they chose not to transform into permanent forms, along with other land features such as rivers and mountains. These transformations thus fixed the world and established the present landscape. The Old People remind the youth of today that these stories are true and that the events “really happened.”

The rocks and other objects transformed by *Xexá:ls*, along with their associated *sxwōxwiyám* (oral histories), bear witness to the unique and long-standing relationship between the *Stó:lō* and the land and resources of *Stó:lō* territory. *S'ólh Téméxw* is as much a mythological universe as a biological world. The *Stó:lō* walk simultaneously through both spiritual and physical realms of this landscape, connected to the Creator through the land itself as transformed by *Xexá:ls*... To the *Stó:lō*, simply existing in *S'ólh Téméxw* can be a religious experience realizing the mythological structure of the land manifest in transformer sites.

§ 84

Cut to a scene from a Grade Six classroom:

I am reading trivia questions from “Brain Quest,” a game for students aged nine to ten.

Q: Which can be replaced once they are emptied: oil wells, forests, or coal mines?

A: Forests (Genius Point!)

Everyone already knew the answer. No one asked: “Is that true?”

David Jardine, The Descartes Lecture

Natural scientific research methodologies and discourses are not an issue. This isn't an argument about quantitative work versus qualitative work. But there is an argument that needs to be understood and articulated. It's an argument about *dominance* and what falls into shadow under such dominance, what has been lost, forgotten. Because, as ecology has taught us in this past several decades and as many of us knew far before then, having a dominant or invasive, or pernicious, or exotic species in a certain place can sometimes take over and choke out the possibility of anything else. And, therefore, in the long run, in a lot of those cases, it can come to choke out the conditions of its own survival *through its very act of domination*. Monocultures are unsustainable. Being concerned about the dominance of natural scientific discourse is therefore an act of love, an act directed at sustaining its well-being. It has lost any sense of proportion, any sense of having a place in our lives. It has taken over and become, well, monstrous.

[I]nterpretive work is interested in normativity, dominance, issues of identity (cultural, linguistic, personal, gendered...) and how these things get sorted out, and by whom, and to what ends, and so on. The sheer naive innocence we have about words, ideas, images, has to be interrupted, as does the sheer confidence that this is just a technical problem, and that technology will save us, or science or medicine or education. People will die and stupidity will win out almost every time. These are our real circumstances. Everything is contaminated, embedded, interdependent, and nothing is what it seems on the calm surface... That is why interpretive work has helped us understand that not only is natural-scientific work dominant on the scene of research. It is an act of domination—knowledge as dominion. And again, any form of thinking and study that is not premised on dominion gets cast as fuzzy, soft, feminine, weak, emotional, subjective, and, in the end, self-indulgent.

George Grant, The University Curriculum

Members of the dominant classes make the decisions which embody the chief purposes of any society, but their very dominance is dependent on their service of those purposes. The primary purpose in Canadian society is to keep technology dynamic within the context of the continental state capitalist structure. By technology I mean “the totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency (for a given stage of development) in every field of human activity” (Jacques Ellul). The dynamism of technology has gradually become the dominant purpose in western civilization because the most influential men in that civilization have believed for the last centuries that the mastery of chance was the chief means of improving the race. It is difficult to estimate how much this quest for mastery is still believed to serve the hope of men's perfecting, or how much it is now an autonomous quest. Be that as it may, one finds agreement between corporation executive and union member, farmer and suburbanite, cautious and radical politician, university administrator and civil servant, in that they all effectively subscribe to society's faith in mastery.

The chief purpose of the curriculum in Canadian universities is, then, to facilitate the production of personnel necessary to that type of society. Because there is such agreement about the chief goal of society, there is a vast consensus about the principles of the curriculum. Debates take place about the government of the university, about humane existence within it, etc., etc., but not about what it concerns a human being to know. So monolithic is the agreement of society about ends, so pervasive the ideology of liberalism which expresses that agreement, that the question about knowing cannot be raised seriously. When a student first arrives at university, the curriculum may appear a set of arbitrary and incoherent details. This is so only at the surface. In fact, it can be understood in terms of the powers and purposes of our society.

§ 85

genius loci

for S'ólh Téméxw

out in the valley
plump drupelets fall into the thicket
the butterflies are always drunk.

disturbed plots beneath the powerlines
become breeding grounds for
noxious children.

common broom supplants the old gods
dragging its golden knuckles across
the flat-lying meadow.

drones round here drive pimped trucks
furnishing the colony with blue-stained
beetle kill.

the mussels are all sedentary these days
no eulachon left to grease
the ancient gears.

wapato once grew in abundance
but no one cares about swamp potatoes
with these supersized fries.

they say the one who made this place
his people, his sky-born wife
were created right over there.

on that hill with the fancy properties
with the aggregate potential
of *everything*.

Katzie First Nation, *Our Genesis Story*

This is the story of q̓ic̓əy' (Katzie) as passed down through many generations... The Katzie people are the direct descendants of Oe'lecten and his people, who were created at the south shore of Pitt Lake, and Swaneset and his people, who were created at Sheridan Hill. The Creator gave these first leaders gifts and powers to bequeath to those that followed after them.

When he placed Swaneset on the earth, the Creator provided the sun and the moon... Swaneset, honoring the Creator's instructions to finish making the territory surrounding the place he had been set down on earth, reshaped the land in order to make it abundant in berry and root crops. Standing on the peak of Sheridan Hill, which was once the highest mountain in the territory, Swaneset called on the help of the Creator and made Sturgeon Slough and its tributaries.

He then made the Alouette River and other sloughs, including Katzie Slough. Swaneset then named all these waterways and named the river now known as the Fraser. After a time, Swaneset traveled to the sky and returned to earth with a wife, setting down again on the peak of Sheridan Hill. From the pieces of Sheridan Hill, Swaneset created many of the distinctive hills that mark the countryside between the Fraser River and Pitt Lake. When Swaneset had finished reshaping the land to make it abundant for his people, he then instructed all his people to gather at Katzie to make homes for themselves there, in the vicinity of the present Pitt Meadows reserve. There on the banks of the Fraser River, his sky-born wife opened her dowry box and ushered oolichan and seagulls into this world, and taught the people how to catch the fish and prepare them.

Nicola Struyk, *Geological Assessment Report on the Sheridan Hill Property*

The Sheridan Hill property is located within the municipal boundaries of the city of Pitt Meadows in the Lower Mainland of southwestern British Columbia. It is located southeast of the Pitt River, immediately south of Lafarge Canada's Pitt River Quarry... Preliminary geological investigations were conducted on the property to assess geological and aggregate potential.

The area around the property is farmland and small acreages. The area is generally flat lying with few hills, Sheridan Hill being the highest point in the area at 70m above sea level. The property consists of one mineral claim... owned by Sheridan Hill Ventures. The surface rights are also owned by Sheridan Hill Ventures. The claim is 84.31 hectares in size. Lafarge Canada owns two mineral claims immediately north of the Sheridan Hill Property. The claims are part of the Pitt River Quarry which occupies the northern position of the hill. The quarry produces approximately one million tonnes of crushed rock annually.

In the 1970s, an educational program titled *Man: A Course of Study* (MACOS), funded by the National Science Foundation in the United States, gained some popularity in elementary schools. The pedagogy was based on the work of renowned cognitive psychologist Jerome Bruner & the curriculum designers were far from “revolutionary” in any political sense. Rather, they sought to “help children think like social scientists,” by exploring “human nature” to address “the catalogue of problems they will face: the rising crime rate, the breakdown of urban life; the population boom; the energy crunch; the ecocrisis; health care; ethnic and racial conflicts; our global economic and political challenges—not to mention the search for useful employment.”

The central idea—or, if you will, *image*—at the nucleus of the program was the “chain of life.” Starting with the lifespan of the Pacific salmon, moving onto the herring gull & the concept of nurturing, then the baboon & the significance of social contexts & learned behaviours, & culminating with a case study of the Netsilik Inuit peoples of present-day Nunavut. The centrepiece of the curriculum was *The Netsilik Film Series*, “an acclaimed benchmark of visual anthropology from the National Film Board (of Canada) that captured a year in the life of an Inuit family, reconstructing an ancient culture on the cusp of contact with the outside world.”

On the one hand, MACOS provided a radical means of reflexive cultural critique by casting doubt on the inevitability of modern capitalist society & introducing children, to put it in more contemporary language, to “Indigenous ways of knowing.” On the other hand, these outcomes were by no means the original intent of the program, which was foundationally informed by the metaphysics of exceptionalism & mastery over the living world. We hear such presuppositions surface in commentary by Peter Dow, the project director: “knowledge about human behaviour will shortly replace the quest for understanding the natural world.” His hope is that students walk away from the program with an understanding of “the concept of man as species unique among all forms of life in the possession of language, the capacity for complex social organization, the ability to alter his surroundings through technology, the prolonged investment by both male and female in the care of the young, and the capacity to explain the world through story-telling, mythology, belief systems, art and literature and the growing power of modern science.” These objectives are not all that different from the underlying cultural aims that inform the conventional school system.

This is not an attempt to defend MACOS. It is deeply problematic in all kinds of ways. & yet, examining human nature within an interspecies & intercultural context, & not only the “spiritual” traditions of the Netsilik, but the gains & losses that come with Contact, to the effect that children compared “the benefits and values of their own culture against the traditional folkways of a hunter-gatherer culture,” there was unacceptable slippage. MACOS was eventually implemented in a small town in northern Florida, ironically with the intention to ease existing racial tensions, when a sixth-grader’s father, a Baptist Minister requested the materials for review. The Reverend subsequently formed a study group & began delivering four-hour radio sermons detailing how MACOS threatened democracy by advocating evolution, hippie philosophy, pornography, gun-control, bestiality, adultery, cannibalism, & infanticide, amongst other things downright un-American. This led to debate in Congress & eventually the National Science Foundation was audited & downsized—its educational programmes much reduced for a decade as a result.

The National Film Board made a follow-up documentary about the phenomenon in 2004 titled, *Through These Eyes*. It shows clips of original footage from some kind of town hall where concerned parents, presumably of a fundamentalist persuasion, angrily voice distrust of government education programs & MACOS in particular. The racism is thinly veiled; the notion that we might equate the pagan rituals of a primitive culture to the sophisticated beliefs of Western Civilization was self-evidently blasphemous. Sometimes—I hear The Reverend in my head, or one his flock, a beehive-haired, cat-eye spectacled woman, wound 1950s tight, shuddering in hysterical, sanctimonious rage—“You want to teach kids to talk to trees!”

Education Development Centre, *Man: A Course of Study (MACOS), Teacher's Guide*

The first several days of *MACOS* bring the child into the course by making him, his friends, the human species, the subject of the lessons. Many of the questions raised are segments of the questions upon which the entire course is based: Who am I? What makes me human? What makes man human? Some of the questions concern learning: What do human beings learn during their lifetimes? From whom do they learn? Do all people learn the same things? Learning and how it affects our behaviour are primary foci of the course.

Another emphasis is upon the life cycle: What things happen during one person's lifetime that happen to all people, to all living things? How does life go on even though individuals die? Some questions have no final answers; yet they may lead to a greater understanding of one's own past and place in the world today. Other questions raised here concern emotions—love, anger, joy, sorrow—and the part they play in a human lifetime. Later in the course, ties of affection and control of aggression will be discussed.

As the children begin to consider what distinguishes human beings from other animals, questions are raised about language, tool-use, and families, all of which are part of the larger questions that are essential to the course. There is no need for final answers at this point or, perhaps, at any time. Most important, throughout the course, questions should be raised which cause the child to reflect upon his own existence and see himself and everything around him in a new way.

John B. Conlan, former U.S. Congressman (as cited in *Through These Eyes*)

And we found out that rather than putting most of their [National Science Foundation] money over into applied science: in physics or oceanography, or health care or other practical areas, they were committing a lot of it over into ideological educational programs, such as this *Man: A Course in Study*, which was designed to try and create a “new man,” a new culture in America that was devoid of traditional values.

There is no question that... you get a better society if people are given the chance to inquire, to ask questions, to question, to understand. But if you are, as the originators of the MACOS programme and others were... trying to basically break down traditional standards of values of right and wrong, put in a standard of relativism, the whole secular humanist position, there is no God, there is no right or wrong...

I represented more Indians than anyone else in America in my congressional district. Navajos and Apaches and Hopis, so I had a very sympathetic feeling for Indians to try and give them a chance, if they would like, to come into Western Civilization. If they didn't, that's their choice. But we found the Netsilik... at least as portrayed in this program, extremely primitive. Too primitive a society to say this should be an example for our students to follow.

§ 87



michael dé danann datura, *Fear of a Red Planet* (2015)
Paper collage on canvas, 40cm x 50cm

Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*

For the undoubted fact is that there is something in the notion of the mimetic faculty that immediately, if not corporeally, switches you on. The world looks different and feels different once you “get it,” very much including Benjamin’s formulation that the mimetic faculty has roots in the desire to “become other.” How bold! How crazy! Could it be so?

There is something seductive in the idea of what Frazer... called “sympathetic magic,” in which making a copy can (with ritual) either affect what it is a copy of, or acquire the properties of what it is copying, and, secondly, a bodily connection is implied in the mere act of perception. The safe world of subject and objects is upended, and we are all magicians without knowing it (yet). How sad, therefore, to keep running into the contrary idea that mimesis is short-hand for bad thought—being an uninspired and unsophisticated realism in which representation is simply copying.

This critique, or rather attitude, was the mantra of the seventies through to... ((Note: ellipsis in original, implying the attitude persists)) inspired by the perniciously aseptic view of signs and language called structuralism fueled by that great workhorse “the arbitrariness of the signifier.” With what glee would professors, like priests exorcizing the demon, assail innocent students, who naively held to a mimetic view of language and, even more importantly, of the image. With what glee was the very idea of a system —*the system*—reinforced as the *sine qua non* of thought and intellection. Why else would you go to college if not to get a system as well as a job?

If what Horkheimer and Adorno called “the domination of nature” is responsible for global meltdown, then the obverse, meaning an “unwinding” of that domination, seems to me now urgently required, and this will demand keen appreciation of the mimetic faculty to attain a modus vivendi with mother nature. Such a mastery of non-mastery requires new modes of mimetic practice, beginning with language and image in relation to the body—meaning my body, your body, and the body of the world.

Michel Serres, *Biogea*

I propose considering the other, wholly other, the other humans but also every being in the Biogea, neither as rivals in a race that the human animal wins but is going to end by losing, nor as enemies in a battle, but as symbionts and mutualists: no more war to the death, rather exchanges of reciprocal services. How can the *against* change into the *for* or *with*? How can the current, descending inevitably downstream, in part go back upstream? By following a new time for our refrains, eddies, and ritornelli.

And so, instead of always seeking temporary victories that can quickly be overturned into definitive defeats, instead of wanting to kill this rival microbe that, mutating as many times as necessary, will almost certainly kill ten great-grandsons of the child recently cured, I’d rather try to decipher its language: the signals that it emits, that it stores, processes and receives, since—it as well as me—we give ourselves over to these operations. To attempt to open talks with it and negotiate together, thanks to the codes shared in this way, a mutual aid and benefit pact, so that we can pass from parasitism to symbiosis together. That’s why I want to listen to the voices of the Biogea while comparing them with ours. Communication, interferences, translation, distribution, passages and bridges. How can the invasive order become a reciprocal dialogue? How can the object become subject? In what language does this mute world speak?

§ 88



michael dé danann datura, *Underground Music* (2022)
Paper collage on canvas, 91cm x 30.5 cm

§ 88

Jan Zwicky, Courage

And now you know that it won't turn out as it should,
that what you did was not enough,
that ignorance, old evil, is enforced

and willed, and loved, that it
is used to manufacture madness, that it is the aphrodisiac
of power and the crutch of lassitude, you,

an ordinary heart, just functional, who knows
that no one's chosen by the gods, the aspens
and the blue-eyed grass have voices of their own,

what will you do,
now that you sense the path unravelling
beneath you?

Sky unravelling, unravelling
the sea, the sea that still sees everywhere
and looks at every thing –

not long. What will you do,
you, heart, who know the gods don't flee,
that they can only be denied.

Who guess their vengeance.

It has been a long hill, heart.
But now the view is good.
Or don't you still believe?

the one sin is refusal, and refusal to keep seeking
when refused?
Come, step closer to the edge, then.

You must look, heart. You must look.

Materials for *Anti-Sisyphus: More-Than-Human Being in Revolt*

The dissolution of historical semblance must follow the same trajectory as the construction of the dialectical image.

-- Walter Benjamin, Materials for the Exposé of 1935

Lyric coherence is not like the unity of systematic structures:
its foundation is a heightened experience of detail, rather
than the transcendence (excision) of detail.

Details are at once centres and peripheries. That is:
there is only centre, there are only details.

-- Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*

[I believe it might interest a philosopher, one who can think himself,
to read my notes. For even if I have hit the mark only rarely, he
would recognize what targets I had been ceaselessly aiming at.]

-- Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*

Note: These materials consist of notes, quotations, aphorisms, images, entries, & methodological reflections that act as a working archive for the forthcoming book: *Anti-Sisyphus: More-Than-Human Being in Revolt*.

Place, *Home*, Natural Resources

Image is to place as symbol is to location. (Imaginative experience of *this*ness vs. hypostatization of essence.)

In an essay celebrating John Cage, Joan Retallack asks: “Does ideology conceal weather?”

“So... you want to teach children to... talk with trees or whatever, with... nature poetry?”

—Wittgenstein: “What I want to teach is: to pass from unobvious nonsense to obvious nonsense.”

American dollar bills used to feature black slaves as chattel. Canadian currency displays “natural resources” & iconic animals—but the chattel logic is the same.

The Canadian Charter of Rights & Freedoms put an end to mandatory morning prayer, but every morning, in every school, a faculty of caffeinated zeks convene around the photocopier. Swaying in the hallowed light.

You are walking down Main Street & some twenty-something hyper-extrovert in a green tunic jumps in front of you & asks: “Do you care about animals?” You are broke & late & suspect they may not *actually*

care about animals, or, at least, they care more about the job-at-hand—getting your money—than they do about engaging in genuine discourse about the intricacies of other-than-human ethics, so you say: “No.” You open your mailbox one day & discover an envelope with the same return address as your house. Inside is a letter, written with meticulous *écriture*, from “Ernesto”—*who?* The letter continues: turns out, it is from the northern flicker who nests in the old trembling aspen near the end of your driveway. He is requesting, in the spirit of golden rule comradery, that you clean your recycling with a little more care as the remaining food waste is attracting rats to the neighbourhood. Signed: Respectfully, Ernesto. But there is no impetus for you to heed the request because, as everyone well knows, birds cannot speak. —Fuck them Communist birds.

—Cut to scene from a local watering hole:

I am reading Donna Haraway’s *Staying with the Trouble* at the slightly sticky bar of the Waverley Pub in Cumberland—praying that no one dares to ask what the book is about. The town is clearly in the throes of a post resource-industry, hipster-driven renaissance (centered around mountain-biking, craft beer breweries, & marijuana dispensaries), but I suspect “speculative multispecies feminism” is not on tap yet. These are not the genetically-diverse, gender-woke “children of compost” that Haraway heralds. Just some Lucky drinking, plaid-shirted zeks trying to eke out a living in the “general crisis” of the present. Do not get me wrong, I dig books that explore “chthonic becoming” as much as the next eäarthling, but not even a triple gin & tonic could cajole me into trying to explain the “Chthulucene” to these dirt bags. I think my liver hurts.

—Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*:

“It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what descriptions describe descriptions, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories.” (2016, p. 12)

I like to consider myself an “educated” person. But as someone who grew up lotus-leaning & island-hopping the northern archipelago of the Salish Sea, I am no stranger to having my chakras realigned with a didgeridoo in a Garry Oak grove, you dig? I carry more quartz around in my pockets than a mineralogist. My study looks like a Herakleitan maelstrom of Tibetan prayer flags, Islamic tessellations, animal skulls, & paraphernalia the likes of which even André Breton envies from wherever he seeks the gold of time.

—Jan Zwicky, “Poetry and Meaninglessness:”

In countries with large gross domestic products relative to their populations, the world in which human gestalt capacities evolved is no longer with us. Those capacities are not required for navigating; for knowing where food and water may be found; for hunting or tending to plants; for cooking and preparing food; for reading the weather; for reading the behaviour of nonhuman animals; for reading the behaviour of other humans. Instead of skill in such matters, we have global-positioning systems; Siri; self-regulating houses; the processed ready-to-eat products of food marketers; work environments sealed from the weather; texting. Intelligence is everywhere represented as computation—in the popular press, in business, at the university. Our gestalt capacities are active, but they are harnessed by marketing agencies and political interests to manipulate us. We are vulnerable to such manipulation because our gestalt intelligence is underdeveloped. We no longer exercise and refine gestalt capacities in situations that matter—we don’t use them to discern vital truths about the world. As a result, we are not motivated to become more proficient gestalt thinkers and we become ever more vulnerable. The deep pleasure of the experience of meaning eludes us. (2019, pp. 28-29)

Pollution: Hard/Soft
Underground Music, Resonance
Mimesis, Sentience

—Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

450. Knowing what someone looks like: being able to imagine it—but also: being able to *mimic* it.
Need one imagine it in order to mimic it? And isn't mimicking it just as good as imagining it?

455. We are inclined to say: “When we mean something, there is no dead picture here (no matter of what kind), but, rather, it's like going towards someone.” We go towards the thing we mean.

457. Yes, meaning is something like going towards someone.

Gestalt Intelligence, Lyric Awareness

A formal ecological disposition has the structure (& phenomenology) of lyric thinking.

The fundamental question can be stated point blank: Are the parts of a given whole determined by the inner structure of that whole, or are the events such that, as independent, piecemeal, fortuitous & blind, the total activity is a sum of the part-activities? —cf. Zwicky on “gestalt intelligence” in *The Experience of Meaning*; also Rudolph Arnheim, *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*

Lyric awareness is an integrative mode of thinking rooted in the perception of patterned resonance in the world. It does not have its own peer-reviewed journals. It does not do hoaxes. It does not position itself as an “imaginative” mode of thinking superior to logico-mathematical thinking (i.e. the kind of “Einstein-said-imagination-is-more-important-than-knowledge” nonsense one hears in elementary schools nowadays.)

What led Einstein to general relativity were thoughts of unifying disparate objects. But this breaks one of the cardinal rules of good thinking: —Thou shalt *never* use “Einstein” to make a point. (Dead metaphors)

The effect of “ontological awareness” upon thinking has always struck me as an aesthetics of decay upon rigid structures: deliquescent fungi, earthworms, the dank redolence of humus.—“Souls take pleasure in becoming moist.” (Herakleitos)

There is no simple recipe for communicating gestalts; or, rather there is only the roughest & readiest: —pointing & hoping. Think: flower sermon pedagogy, John Cage-type shit. —The lacunae that *speaks*.

Coherent validity is not definitively criterial or *a priori*.

What would it be like to experience prolonged lyric experience? —Madness? Shamanic trance? LSD? Death?

Lyric as trickster. Lyric attempts to enact the wildness in language the way a rogue gust of wind might knock down your ladder while you are up fixing the roof, taking your whole toolbox with it. But just because you are stuck with nothing to do, does not mean you just float away in your head—this is *still* your home & there is work to be done. At some point, you need to acknowledge that a.) you are fucked, b.) there are forces beyond your control that may require humility, c.) you need to prepare yourself for a leap: —*for a place to land*.

Impoverishing capacity for *Erfahrung* (lyric experience) by appropriating everyday *Erlebnis* (life-world)

Consider “lyric” in two senses: –Zwicky vs. Camus –With respect to “doing philosophy” by way of composing a multi-modal, multi-genre, interrelated body of work, we should consider Camus. Who conveyed his ideas via essays, novels, short stories, travelogues, plays, & notebooks. By composing philosophy as a kind of “complex ecology of argumentation” (Zwicky’s description of Plato), Camus exemplifies a sense of “lyrical” that differs from Zwicky (where “lyric” denotes ontological awareness) but represents an important aspect of lyric philosophy all the same. Specifically, with respect to disseminating radical ideas to everyday plaid-shirted zeks. Or: the pedagogical aspect, if you will.

Differentiating the works of Camus into those that are “lyrical” and those that are “critical,” makes little sense. He spends half of the preface to a supposedly “lyrical” collection of essays extolling the virtues of being working-class & berating his colonial-minded countrymen; while his definitively “critical” essays are veritably teeming with metaphors, oracular utterances, & poetic ambiguities. Camus, by his own account, has “artistic scruples just as other men have moral and religious ones.” In other words, he does not consider himself an academic, but a philosophical artist who composes “lyrical works.”

Lyric as third-instruction, “rescuing critique” at the level of epistemic structure, but also cultivating resonant sensitivity as a vernacular to help remediate (or, revolt against) the “double humiliation of poverty and ugliness” (Camus). Shall we call it mythopoetic conscientization? Ecosophic re-enchantment? Or simply an old-school love of wisdom? In any case, the critical dimension is immanent in the polyphonic structure itself.

Developmentalism: Spencer, Dewey, Piaget

Benjamin: *The Arcades Project* [N8a,5]. “Goethe saw it coming: the crisis in bourgeois education.”

Experiment: Imagine the notion of “cognitive development” in a non-linear, non-progressive way.
–Does this return us to “Philosophy” & “Theology”? (cf. Benjamin). Developmentalism

Bounded, linear progression vs. interpenetrated, multi-scalar ecology of gestalts.

– cf. “251. Music is not a defective language. Images are not defective syllogisms. Their meaning is not a type of failed logico-linguistic meaning. Lyric meaning does not have the *form* of linguistic meaning. It is different in both kind and scope.” –Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy* Developmentalism

Music is not defective language.

Orality is not defective literacy.

Images are not defective syllogisms.

Myth is not defective theory.

Children are not defective adults.

Indigeneity is not defective Modernity.

Big Idea: What if there is no progress? Only an unfolding inner tension between illumination & concealment?
Gains & losses? Flourishing & extinction?

There is no *progress* (a linear structure of temporality & mechanism appropriated as a linking postulate between the religious hegemonies of days past & the secular humanism of Modernity.)

Pedagogy: Lyric awareness.

Curriculum: —Domesticity.

Consider the common (“progressivist”) critique of traditionalist education: too much book-learning & not enough focus on the daily practicalities of the “real world” (an invidious turn of phrase, cf. the *real* world).

Potlatch as alternative to the “rational egoism” of *Homo economicus*: teach children to earn & save up fives, tens, twenties, fifties, hundreds—then give it all away at recess. A heretical exercise in “real world” learning.

A kind of recuperation or reappropriation occurs in the state-sanctioned curricula. It is not that (some of) the content or “Big Ideas” are not potentially “revolutionary”—students are assigned George Orwell in English, a Science 9 Big Idea: “The biosphere, geosphere, hydrosphere, and atmosphere are interconnected, as matter cycles and energy flows through them,” The First People’s Principles of Learning are stapled to the wall, Social Justice 12 includes an analysis of “speciesism,” etc.—it is that the “shock of meaning” of this content is precorporated & purified by the formal structure of “educated” thinking.

[Note: The ease with which young people master emerging technologies is often cited as an instance of progressive intelligence in the species—but what if this is nothing more than the surface glamour of precorporation by design? Get them hooked while young: A mirror-device in every small hand.]

Progress as “genetic” (Developmentalism: Spencer, Piaget, Dewey) & technological versus hermeneutic & cultural-historical-social-ecological diagnostic (“assessable” by way of both empirical & phenomenological audits). This is what education ought to be for. Cf. Benjamin on how the whole school curriculum ought to be “philosophical.” (—*Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life*)

Kieran Egan: The working title for *The Educated Mind* was originally: *The Body’s Mind* (—cf. Serres: *Variations on the Body; The Five Senses*)

“Ontological debate” in schools—if that is what it can be called—tends to fall exclusively along Scientific vs. Religious lines, pitting bow-tied Science-guys against the Bible thumping bumpkins of Intelligent Design.

Education, in the everyday sense—a school building, desks, learning resources—appears to be indispensable for effective enframing. School is the principle technology required to render the world a standing-reserve; the hard/soft curriculum of that setting-upon which sets upon us. As in a slouching beast with slow thighs.

The environmental conference floats above the world, lifted on petroleum & agricultural surplus—its *Iaputan* scholars discussing sustainability & corporate sponsorship to fund the austerity holes left in the wake of cut-backs. —cf. Serres in *Malfeasance* on the advertisement industry as the descendants of “whores,” *Iaputan* as double entendre with the flying island of *Gulliver’s Travels* & “la puta,” Spanish for “little bitches.”

There are a number of reasons why corralling children—Indigenous & non-Indigenous—into institutions that are both *placeless-hard*—i.e. standardized classrooms, no connexion with seasonal flows or food webs, no meaningful Indigenous amenities (computer labs not longhouses)—& *placeless-soft*—i.e. standardized curriculum, no connexion with local history or mythologies, no meaningful experiences of Indigenous knowing (optional electives not deep integration)—is beneficial from the perspective of colonial power. But the most obvious, perhaps, is that it works to render Indigenous “ways of knowing” either unthinkable —i.e. primitive, quasi-mystical TEK of a world that no longer exists—or utterly plastic—i.e. “we all have

ancestry; we all have stories; we all modified the landscape; we all believe that learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, & the community (note the absence of the land, the spirits, & the ancestors); we are all indigenous to somewhere.” At which point settler students start prefacing their responses with how many generations their families have been in Canada.

The first principle of the *First People’s Principles of Learning* ought to be the first principle of all Education: —*Learning ultimately supports the well-being of the self, the family, the community, the land, the spirits, and the ancestors.* —Imagine what it would take in schools, in the larger cultural attitude, for this to be true?

What is education for? —In his meditation on learning, Michel Serres points to a “third kind of instruction” beyond the border-policed encampments of the Two Cultures—both entrenched, one way or another, in all-too-human affairs. Alternatively, he offers an image of the “third-instructed” as something like the figure of a medieval troubadour. A “well-travelled” composer & adventurer: in the sense of a reflexive, open-minded cosmopolitan of sorts, but also a down-to-earth autochthon who is equally at home wildcrafting along the sylvan fringe between towns, disciplines, styles, & species. *Being educated* as being mercurial, with winged-shoes, but, ultimately, inspired by a chthonic daemon. Natural historian & metaphysician: but with swagger.

“A good interpretation is a blessed event, a wonderful thing, a *tertium quid*, the “third thing” that shows the way out of the loggerhead that results whenever the fruitless and destructive war between absolutism and relativism breaks out.” — John D. Caputo, *Hermeneutics* (p. 15)

“Our brain is like the product of an ingenious bricoleur, a scavenging odd job tinkerer, reshaping and reusing old parts for new purposes, adding bits, attaching new to old bits, gerrymandering a functional—occasionally inspired, occasionally clumsy—organ.” —Kieran Egan, *Getting It Wrong From the Beginning*

Big Idea: At what biodiversity threshold do narratives of salvation become untenable?

Big Idea: At what carbon threshold does the future become unthinkable?

Big Idea: When does an archaic image of the scientific method become a “validity threat?”

The word *education* derives from the Latin verb *ducere*, “to lead,” root of *educere*, “to lead out.” When done poorly, education leads nowhere but the same-old parochial square: conventional, monolithic, the charming architecture of a syncretic colonial revisionism, but otherwise holy interminable. This has led to a rather arid agora in recent decades—picture the non-descript, self-identical strip malls that are the very concrete signature of deterritorialization—populated by one-dimensional surface-dwellers (cf. those cadaver carrying Lugals) in search of novel frappuccino flavours & cinematic sex.

“Men of action” (Dostoevsky)—that is, *educated* men & united—until recently—have been “moving forward” with a schooled confidence that Civilization is progressing towards a common horizon according to the laws of Nature & Reason. But as any “thinking person” will, perhaps begrudgingly, admit—the common square is a good deal more burgherized than the *ancien régimes* of days past. More corporate coffee shop & big-box than church & library, which troubles both radicals & conservatives alike, tho their prescription tends to be the same: more education. & therein lies the catastrophe. Education “leads” us to the strip mall & the strip mine in a tight-circle from which there is no obvious exit.

The metanarrative of virtually every Ministry of Education document: constant change.

—cf. Camus: “The future is the only transcendental value for men without God.” Theory of Progress

Quotations around “development” & “individual” signal the provisional sense in which these metaphors are retained. There is no such thing as “individual development” in the sense that the term tends to be deployed—that is, a bio-psychological progression of stages analogous to or conflated with “evolution.” While mutations or epigenetic behaviours in a single lifetime can influence subsequent evolutionary processes, strictly speaking—only species “evolve.”

Cultures, like the mind, also do not “evolve.” They drift, leap, remix, regress, restructure, flourish, decay—with relative gains & losses at every turn.

There is, similarly, no such thing as an “individual” organism: we have never been Human.

This language-game, like the holy scriptures, has been mined to exhaustion.

The conflation of cognitive development with “progress” is not an innocent misunderstanding.

The question, then, is whether these hypostatized images are replicated in every teacher training program due to their explanatory power & verisimilitude—or because they conform, albeit in a more sanitized way than “survival of the fittest,” to a leviathanic mode of ordering that determines “validity.” Spencer’s ideas were also, for a time, considered “scientifically valid,” but, it bears remembering, their institutional appeal & dissemination had more to do with their discursive power to naturalize social stratification & provide a “biological apology” for laissez-faire economics.

The crux of our proposal therefore lies in the experiential quality of the *fit* between ontogeny & phylogeny or, if you will, between thinking & being. While hermeneutic concerns about how we “experience the natural givenness of our existence and our world” (Gadamer) are justified—as the naturalistic fallacies of progressivism demonstrate—we are concerned primarily with precipitating the very possibility—with prising the opening—for “profane illumination.” Particularly given the degradation of mimetic faculties under capitalism. In other words, the mythic substructure of our knowing has been polluted with a purified sense of clarity that exploits our perceptual capacities by way of parasitizing our desires & sense of self. Education, under such circumstances, must therefore cultivate the “lyric desire” (Zwicky) to “become other” (Benjamin). To experience a kind of “sympathetic magic” with the resonant structures of a more-than-human world. The mastery of non-mastery.

Metaphor, Allegorical Practice, Seeing-As

Looming uncertainties lie in wait, like methane bubbles in the permafrost.

Constellations

All space is occupied by the enemy. We are living under a permanent curfew. Not just the cops—the geometry.

—Attila Kotányi & Raoul Vaneigem, Unitary Urbanism

Method of this project: radical vulnerability, plus fierce-green *parrhesia* for a world of spectacular small talk.

Method of this project: A bastardization of lyric. Less Brahms & Hayden, more Black Flag & Wu-Tang Clan.

Nothing new here: a few bell-spattered pages with an “extra dimension of laughter.” (—cf. Dostoevsky)

Boredom, Drudgery

Zwickly

Dream World, Dreams of the Future, Techno-Fix, Moves to Innocence

Crystal Palace, Big Ideas

Ernst E. drifts between dreams & spotted towhees at dawn—but awakens to teams of zeks in blue overalls filing into the great hall to sanitize the previous night’s transgressions. A residuum of sound dirt remains, even now, resonating in the air: the howling, the bodily discharges, the intoxicated unions that may or may not have broken the law. Tattooed zeks sweep the detritus into a heap: broken violins, shattered glass, dime bags, half-written odes to silverware on napkins—any remnant of this criminal music must be discarded into the dustbin. —Point being: it takes a shitload of labour & cleaning products to keep a Crystal Palace in order.

The Educator

Image: the Tsukiji fish market, the sheep-wrecked barrens of the Scottish Highlands, the Ganges River oozing through holy Varanasi, the clearcut patchwork of British Columbia, the open-pit bitumen mines of Alberta, the swirling plastic-confetti gyre of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. You wake-up: —you need to get to work.

Hermes as god-in-residence: —or Lugh or Coyote or whatever local daemon, chthonic duende, or trickster spirit carries messages between this world & underground. Teacher as psychopomp—underpaid Orpheus.

On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress

The epigraph of Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, is a line from Austrian playwright Johann Nestroy, which reads: “The trouble about progress is that it always looks much greater than it really is.”

Lee Maracle (Stó:lō) has written: “Progress has no song.”

Found piece: Happened to leaf through an introductory sociology text—discarded at such an angle as to

suggest unreserved disdain—in the staff room of a local high school I was assigned to as a teacher on call.

Somehow, the editor of the text allowed the term “futurists” to be defined in the glossary as: “consultants who study trends and get paid a lot of money to present predictions that generally do not come true.” It is unclear whether this definition is an instance of critical subversion in the lineage of Ned Ludd, or one of disappointed cynicism, lamenting our utter lack of jetpacks & robotic slaves. —I like to think the former.

Ineffability, Selflessness

Rilkean Slip: the self-annihilating realization, at the moment of death, that the world is more beautiful than you ever imagined. Tends to occur, as just one example, between the rooftop & pavement after one jumps.

—Michel Serres, *Biogea* (pp. 31/50 / 30):

“The *ego* lives and has value from creating *ego* in others who can, then, pay it back tenfold, in life and value. Without this creativity of others, toward them and through them, with them and in them—valences radiate along the paths opened up by prepositions—the *ego*, sickly, autistic, sick, castrated of its valences, without value, devoid of health... annihilates, breaks, destroys the *ego* of others... The only things that exist around him are objects, well-named since he projects or rejects them. Then, hell is other people. Contrary to this pathetic destruction, I think, therefore I become he or she whom I am thinking.

Now here today are other neighbours, constituents of the Biogea: the sea, my lover; our mother, the Earth, become our daughter; this beautiful breeze which inspires the spirit, a spiritual mistress; our light friends, the fresh and flowing waters; and our brothers, the living things... are henceforth no longer objects. Scholars or not, we presuppose... that puritanical distinction between the subject, me or we, and said objects. We suffer from an *ego* armoured with walls, with turtle shells, incapable of caressing... Subjects, we pave the world, I mean hell, with objects, named thus by us because thrown before us, rejected, better, disposable: trashcan-Earth, polluted air, dead seas, factory farmed fowl, feet welded into the cement, an unclean world, sewage fields, soiled by us for us to appropriate them. Destroyed by a collective that’s narcissistic in its turn.

Our contemporary knowledge. That is, how and where to live; that is the status of the Biogea. The history of language, religion, of secular law and politics here agrees, in a way that’s urgent for our survival, with our most recent knowledge. For from now on in the centre of our thoughts, the life and Earth sciences designate, between these two kingdoms, the same open place—gaping Biogea—from which the social and human sciences will have to be reborn. Human: one hundred percent nature, one hundred percent culture. The Biogea produces such an overlapping.

In these inhuman encounters, the world presented itself, gave, sounded warnings and left a mute science in my soul, to which the soul’s subsequently acquired knowledge closed all access. I would like to share this muffled understanding but can’t since it’s never transmitted along human sentences. How would my words let the world without words speak without me? Can I efface myself enough to let it ring?”

Ancestors, Spirits, The Land

Domesticity

Remember: The elemental odes of Neruda to his socks & various domestic housewares. Domesticity

Why is it so difficult to sit with ecological loss? —Penthos as the dæmon of domestic understanding.

Remember: The *other* Golden Rule: the precautionary principle. Domesticity

The relationship of “good poetry” to philosophy is akin to the relationship between old school hip-hop & funk records. Good poetry is something like the percussion-based break in the middle of an extended funk track—chopped, scratched, rearranged. An element of the past sampled & thereby “redeemed” for a present cultural configuration that is both a reproduction & radical rupture (cf. *mimesis*). It is the distilled spirit of the song, the gist (cf. *plumpes Denken*), the best part. It makes the people want to lose themselves in dance.

Not domestic like barefoot in the kitchen or fish farms, domestic like... Domesticity

Capitalist Realism

The reduction of wisdom traditions into the kind of platitudinous nonsense you find on Yogi Tea labels:
—“Everything is connected.” Myth into Disney films for children. Capitalist Realism

Debord names five principal features of a civilization that has reached the stage of what he calls integrated spectacle: incessant technological renewal; integration of state & economy; generalized secrecy; unanswerable lies; an eternal present. (*Comments on Society of the Spectacle*, p. 11-12)

“Stories are much bigger than ideologies. In that is our hope.” — Donna Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto* (p. 17)

“Want a different ethic? Tell a different story.” —Thomas King, *The Truth About Stories* (p. 164)

In a tactical gambit to coerce young people into writing poetry, I sometimes incorporate “cut & paste” techniques into the lesson. There are myriad ways to dress up the notion—Tristan Tzara christened it *découpé* in the 1920s, using it to assemble Dadaist manifestos & love poems out of an old hat; in English departments it is often termed “aleatoric literary technique” (cf. William S. Burroughs, being the most infamous junkie of the method); also, the ransom note, the found poem, the cento (fr. Latin, “patchwork garment”), the remix, the assemblage, postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism—but it is essentially cut-up strips of newspaper or magazine text arranged into stanza-like lines of verse. You may recognize it from Kindergarten, or any number of schizophrenic corporate advertising campaigns that have effectively appropriated the technique. ((It turns out Dadaist poems are, in fact, appreciated by the “vulgar herd” as long as they are selling something other than a critique of bourgeois reason, like skateboard shoes or underground hip-hop.))

Dada does not *cohere* ecologically, it is all lyric desire and no domesticity. There is nothing to come home to.

The first urinal in the gallery is an illuminated bodhisattva—every urinal to follow is just a shitty pagoda.
—cf. Nietzsche “If a temple is to be erected, a temple must be destroyed.”

—Jan Zwicky, “Poetry and Meaninglessness” (2019, p. 23)

Meaninglessness, then, appears to be a particularly twentieth and twenty-first century concern. Why should this be so?... It might seem with the mention of Dada, I’ve answered my own question. Dada set out, in 1916, to *be* meaningless: it wanted to destroy the complacency, the pretentiousness and vapid aestheticism, that (its members felt) had precipitated a continental war. It aimed to offend logic and reason; it wanted to shock cultivated taste. Its promulgation of collage technique and “readymades” laid the foundation for surrealism, social realism, and postmodernism. For better or worse, its interest in both mechanical and random composition is still with us. Why is meaninglessness our age’s poetic *bête noire*?

Flora, Fauna, Funga

It seems significant that sweetgrass is a ruderal species—that it thrives along disturbed edges.

Then again, what is love but a somewhat irrational fondness for an arrangement of intensities embodied & enacted by particular, inimitable being(s)?

If we lived in a world where our lives depended on the ability to identify the few edible varieties of wild mushrooms from the profusion of poisonous species—I suspect none of this would be necessary. Which is to say, what concerns us is how to innervate a disposition that is something like this primitive fungal sentience—in a world of shopping malls & social networks. Commodities as the fruiting bodies of a vast but invisible reticulum underlying the surface of everyday experience: most are toxic, but some may be vitally nutritive & medicinal—even visionary. Now go forth, comrade, but forage only what you need—our lives depend on it.

Modes of Knowing

Chalmers quotes his colleague, the philosopher John Perry, who says: “If you think about consciousness long enough, you either become a panpsychist or you go into administration.”

There is a troubling tendency among philosophers in “Science & Technology Studies,” even Serres himself, to tap their inner Fritjof. (—cf. Fritjof Capra chapter in *Deep Ecology for the 21st Century*, on the notion that we are always on the cusp of some utopian “paradigm” shift in science that never seems to materialize.)

“We become what we behold. We shape our tools and then our tools shape us.” —Marshall McLuhan

George Grant, Gates

On George Grant’s “other” impasse: Why look only to the “contemplative traditions” of the British, the European tradition, & ancient Greece—why not the Indigenous epistemologies of *this* place?

—Dennis Lee: “For an English Canadian, exploring the obstructions to cadence means exploring the nature of colonial space.” (*Body Music*, 10)

History is, of course, punctuated by “progressive” renegotiations of the social contract—Abolitionists, Suffragists, Socialists, to name a few—but the ability of *Leviathan!* to syncretize dissent & reterritorialize its

essential properties, is deeply troubling. Liberation movements are susceptible to appropriation because they are too often premised on a relation with the natural world that is still fundamentally shaped by Dominion. The spoils of natural exploitation, in these new “revolutionary” social arrangements, are simply distributed more equitably. Or as Grant put it, lamenting a naïve praise of technology in the utopian visions of the New Left: “Having first conquered nature we can now enjoy her.” The social contract is only permitted to progress if new parties commit to reaffirming (not-knowing) the fundamental breach in the Natural Contract.

[Note: Benjamin was a “Marxist” the same way George Grant was a “Christian.” They were both deeply impacted by early “theological” (or: “lyric”) experiences & reached for these respective metanarratives & vocabularies to attempt to give voice & an underlying project (or “domesticity”) to their ineffable insights.]

cf. George Grant described himself as “a lover of Plato within Christianity,” claiming he belonged to the side of Christianity that is farthest from Judaism & Islam, & nearest to Hinduism in its philosophic expression.

The Russian existentialist Lev Shestov—who, incidentally, also composed philosophy as a howling, paradox-laced suite of aphorisms; &, who met & inspired Walter Benjamin during his exile in Paris —says of Dostoevsky: —“How much the mere tone of *Notes from Underground* is worth!”

Shestov’s obscurity is primarily due to his unrelenting critique of Progress, Science, Technology, & most of all, rationalist systems of philosophy. ((No one likes a lament.)) The *other* reason, I suspect, is structural. That is, due to the non-sequential style, radical tenor, & experiential nature of his insights, he did not establish a body of thought that could be easily transmitted in analytic terms. His sensitivities were acquired by intensive personal struggle & required a lived practice of *pathei mathos*, or a pedagogy of suffering, to appreciate. Note: Benjamin & Camus were among the few philosophers to recognize his work.

The work of Fredy Perlman, tho perhaps an unlikely bedfellow to a “Red Tory” canuck nationalist, sheds light on a lineage of revolt against *Leviathan!* going back some ten thousand years at least. The spirit of this critique is, in some ways, “post-ideological” in the sense that more-than-human flourishing is the acknowledged telos (regardless of the political organization required to get there). In this respect, it is beneficial, I think, to have perspectives from “the Right” (Grant) & “the Left” (Perlman) to avoid being blinded by the spectacular logic of ideological filter bubbles.

George Grant is perhaps an unlikely bedfellow to such a swaggering pair of refuseniks, but his work sheds light on those rare, troglodytic thinkers who dare to question the consecration of Progress & Dominion. To think outside the faith of the Modern, what Grant calls the “driving practical optimism” of an “unlimited modernity,” is to exile oneself to the position of stranger (or worse) in the public realm. The technological society for most Moderns is not “*a terra incognita* into which we must move with hesitation, moderation and in wonder, but a comprehended promised land which we have discovered by the use of calculating reason and which we can ever more completely inherit by the continued use of calculation.” Despite being ahead by a century, Grant traces how doctrines of rational egoism & mastery—engrained in settlers, in part, by the garrison “practicalities” of colonization—comprise the shared metaphysical substratum of both Left & Right. This insight is akin to that of Dostoevsky, who anticipates the logic of “scientifico-economic formulas” undergirding both Communism in the East (via N.G. Chernyshevsky & the Leninist technocrats who would follow) & Capitalism in the West (via Ayn Rand & the Neoliberal technocrats who would follow). The

difference between Grant & Dostoevsky on this matter is essentially structural; that is, Dostoevsky recognized that struggle against the false unity of the Crystal Palace likely required eliciting the whole person by way of an integrated or aesthetically resonant “gift.” *Notes from Underground* was his splenetic offering.

It bears noting, I do not see a categorical incommensurability between the “humanist” tradition informing George Grant (& Gadamerian hermeneutics, for that matter) & the “ecocentric” prognosis of Perlman. Humanism is an impossibly bloated term, but if I could be indulged a paradox: the contemplative tradition(s) of humanism offer a means of cultivating (*Bildung*) more-than-human consciousness. The ontological attentivity of lyric awareness, as the result of cultivating contemplative discipline, is the antithesis of the attitude that regards things as mere resources to human ends. Or (riskier, but just maybe?): the aesthetic question immediately brings with it the human question—or, rather, they are the same.

There is, lamentably, no Borgesian combination of syllables or spells that, if incanted in just the right way, on just the right moon, will collapse the labyrinthine imperium of the Crystal Palace with a single song. Even if one manages to find some kind of emergency exit by memory or discipline—no one will believe that life beyond the walls of this manicured garden is anything other than: nasty, brutish & short. “There is no going back”—as people are fond of saying. Besides, they go on, gazing at their reflections in handheld devices, this is the Promised Land. Why would anyone sacrifice individual freedom & modern dental technology for the primitive savagery of superstitions & tooth aches?

We can hold the myriad benefits of technological society in our mind, but we cannot so easily hold the deprival, the dispossession, the losses. *Because technique is ourselves*. This reflexive impotence is also what delimits the enframed horizon—the “tight circle” (George Grant)—of *capitalist realism*. The Modern ethos is predicated on conflating biological evolution with technological advance, & technological advance with capitalism (except in socialist countries, where progress is conflated with socialism), & Capitalism with individual freedom. & freedom for...? “Well, you know, like to express yourself & like, explore your identity.” —*How?* “Well, you know, like, being punk rock & underground hip-hop, & like, identifying your preferred pronouns, & like, buying local, organic, fair-trade, grass-fed, shade-grown, carbon-neutral merchandise.”

Technique is identity: An abstract homeland constituted by our own desires such that one feels compelled to defend it, the way our grandfathers used to willingly march off to fight for the glades & valleys of their respective countries. Except this “unifying spirit” is not tied, with cedar-braided myth or otherwise, to any particular place. Loosely, perhaps, to the spectral demarcations of national borders, which may help explain recent future-shocked flights towards blood & soil nostalgia. But never tied to The Land in ways that might limit the manifest destiny of Freedom & Identity.

This Freedom & Liberty is, in fact, the crown jewel of the Modern victory over the Vernacular & Indigenous. Its mythic power derives from its free-floating universality, which helps it maintain a sense of eternal optimism & innocence. Despite the bloodstained atrocities of colonization & twentieth century imperialism; despite the background extinction rates, deforestation, & loss of topsoil; despite the mental health plague of generalized “meaninglessness” in “developed” nations—Freedom remains the ever-luminous, & ever-plastic, *raison d'être*. Freedom from the uncertainty that comes with chthonic spirits & ecstatic revelations & futile inquiries into the nature of the good life. Freedom to not-know any more than we require to be productive.

Imagining the end of Capitalism is thus akin, for surface dwellers, to imagining what it would be like to wake up one day & leap into a dark fissure for no reason. “—For what? Some primitive ‘connexion’ with the land, the spirits, & the ancestors? There is no going back. Plus, like, look at all this great stuff.”

How does one even begin to address questions of deprival when faced with such a cocksure metaphysics of positive thinking & bright green lights? Sacred restraint is a hard sell these days for real, like teaching meditation on the shoulder of a freeway. Like pointing to an absence of birds.

—George Grant, “A Platitude:”

It is difficult to think whether we are deprived of anything essential to our happiness, just because the coming to be of the technological society has stripped us above all of the very systems of meaning which disclosed the highest purposes of man, and in terms of which, therefore, we could judge whether an absence of something was in fact a deprival. Our vision of ourselves as freedom in an indifferent world could only have arisen in so far as we had analysed to disintegration those systems of meaning, given in myth, philosophy and revelation, which had held sway over our progenitors. For those systems of meaning all mitigated both our freedom and the indifference of the world, and in so doing put limits of one kind or another on our interference with chance and the possibilities of its conquest.

It may be said that to use the language of deprival is to prejudice the issue, because what has gone can more properly be described as illusions, horizons, superstitions, taboos which bound men from taking their fate into their own hands. This may be the case. What we lost may have been bad for men. But this does not change the fact that something has been lost. Call them what you will—superstitions or systems of meaning, taboos or sacred restraints—it is true that most western men have been deprived of them.

All coherent languages beyond those which serve the drive to unlimited freedom through technique have been broken up in the coming to be of what we are. Therefore it is impossible to articulate publicly any suggestion of loss, and perhaps even more frightening, almost impossible to articulate it to ourselves. We have been left with no words which cleave together and summon out of uncertainty the good of which we may sense the dispossession. The drive to the planetary technical future is in any case inevitable; but those who would try to divert, to limit, or even simply to stand in fear before some of its applications find themselves defenceless, because of the disappearance of any speech by which the continual changes involved in that drive could ever be thought of as deprivals. (1969, pp. 137-139)

Ecohermeneutics, *Ecosurrealism*

Ecohermeneutics: A contemplative disposition—akin to “presence of mind” in the work of Walter Benjamin or “lyric awareness” in the work of Jan Zwicky—that attempts to recognize constellation(s) of being—or: the resonant ecology—composing particular *things* as we collectively unfold within the ecological (*-synchronic*) & historical (*-diachronic*) whole. May result in profane illumination of said *thing*. May leave one speechless.

Such ineffable experiences can bring us into contact with the *language* of things. —But we cannot stay long. (Humans only have a narrow footing in such places.) Then we must get back to the real work: —*domesticity*.

To be underlined: Things are intelligible—but neither given, nor reducible.

Ecohermeneutics: What if there is no such thing as “high culture(s)” & “low culture(s)?” What if there *never* was? What if there is only a spectrum between relative chthonic expression & relative leviathanic expression?

Ecohermeneutics: *deep-type remembrance*. Or: more-than-human *Eingedachten*. ((German neologism denoting punctuation, mindfulness, & an outward reaching movement, yet evoking words like *Gedenken*—remembrance, commemoration—and *Andenken*—a reminder, or as a verb, to honour & commemorate someone or something—which, in conjecture with the prefix *ein*, denotes an inward reaching movement.) Meditating on all other-than-human comrades executed in slaughterhouses or burned in anthropogenic forest fires, for example—as a means of accessing “deeper” (eco)anamnetic insight (as “animality,” cf. Camus on dignity; cf. Buddha remembering his pre-human incarnations as animals). This practice of remembrance is not necessarily *always* characterized by loss & historical inequities, “The *correspondances* (cf. Benjamin on Baudelaire) are the data of remembrance—not historical data, but data of prehistory. What makes festive days great and significant is the encounter with an earlier life.” *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*

[Draw connexion to Benjamin’s neologism, *Eingedachten* (fr. Gr. “remembrance”). Which denotes an outward-grasping attentiveness (cf. sentience, an experience that “displaces the self” & allows us to “become other”)—but also, in conjecture with the prefix *ein*, an inward-grasping dialectic based on a kind of self-negating contact with collective memories of embodiment, myth, communal fire, etc. Given that the atrophy of this experiential capacity (cf. *Erfahrung*) is related to a crisis of remembrance, the revitalization of “historical materialism” (which, in Benjamin’s hands, is closer to the ontological attention of Zwicky, than the socio-economic calculus of Marx) may provide a “way out” of the phantasmagoria of capitalist realism.]

Remember: Until the seventeenth century, university scholars taught that the universe was pervaded by the divine breath of life. Plants, animals, & humans had souls, even the stars & planets were living beings guided by angelic intelligences. (cf. R. Sheldrake)

Image: “We are the Anthropologists, primitives are *our* subjects.” Suddenly, Eäarth *juts* into the lecture hall like a breaching whale: broken beakers & flipped tables everywhere. —The microscope stares back, it *speaks*.

Serres

Michel Serres: “Who thinks like the dying sea?” (*Biogea*, p. 88). —Who thinks like the dying glacier?

Benjamin

Each particular must be “unnamed.” —Ursula Le Guin in *Buffalo Gals*, cf. Benjamin on naming

“As a writer he was obsessed with giving the objective existence of his subject its full weight.” (Hannah Arendt in reference to Benjamin in the Introduction to *Illuminations*)

—Walter Benjamin, from *The Arcades Project* ((Annotated))
[N2,6]. A central problem of historical materialism that ought to be seen in the end: Must the Marxist understanding of history necessarily be acquired at the expense of the perceptibility of history? ((—Or any “heightened” perceptibility: *waking-being!*, lyric insight, Hamat’sa.)) Or: in what way is it possible to conjoin a “heightened graphicness” <*Anschaulichkeit*> ((—also translated as: “clarity”)) to the realization of the Marxist method? The first stage in this undertaking will be to carry over the principle of montage into history ((—or: “ecology,” the material composition of things in time)). That is, to assemble large-scale constructions out of the smallest and most precisely cut components... [T]o discover in the analysis of the small individual moment the crystal of the total event. And, therefore, to break with vulgar historical naturalism. To grasp the construction of history ((—read: *ecology*)) as such. In the structure of commentary. Refuse of History

[N9,7]. The dialectical image is an image that emerges suddenly, in a flash. What has been is to be held fast—as an image flashing up in the now of its recognizability. The rescue that is carried out by these means—and only by these—can operate solely for the sake of what in the next moment is already irretrievably lost.

No. 14 *Fundamental Questions* (Notes from *Materials for the Exposé of 1935*) ((Annotated))

The historical significance of semblance <*Schein*> ((—with intimations of “light,” “shine,” “flash”))
(What are the ruins of the bourgeoisie?)

Relation between false consciousness and dream consciousness. Mirroring takes place in the dream consciousness. Collective dream consciousness and superstructure.

The dialectic, in standing still, makes an image. Essential to this image is a semblance.

The now of recognizability is the moment of awakening.

—Jan Zwicky: *Lyric Philosophy*
235. Lyric comprehension, no matter how temporally sustained from some perspectives, has the phenomenological quality of occurring in a flash. These two aspects of lyric thought—its resonance and its atemporality—cannot be simultaneously, consistently, modelled in Newtonian terms.

Simone Weil: “Method for understanding images, symbols, etc. Not to try to interpret them, but to look at them till the light suddenly dawns.” (as cited in *Wisdom & Metaphor*; Zwicky, p. 25)

In other words, the “now of recognizability” & “lyric insight” appear to be species of the same phenomenon. What they share—what is of pedagogical import—is the “mimetic faculty” to attune oneself with “alterity” & experience “sentience,” or: “the radical displacement of self.” Lyric pull: —We go towards the thing we mean.

The phenomenology of such insight is like a “flash.” That is, it quickens the whole (body)—the shared *flesh*.

Benjamin: “What Proust intends with the experimental rearrangement of furniture is no different than what Bloch tries to grasp as darkness of the lived moment.” Translation: The fastidious juxtaposition of things in

the novels of Proust, that attempt, in short, to evoke an anamnesis-like experience of “the real” *through* literary composition, share something with the aphoristic style (–& underlying project) of German Marxist Ernst Bloch. “Does this mean Proust was a Communist?” —No. “Does this mean Bloch was an Artist?” —No.

Still to be established: it is not clear how ignoring the “commodity-physiognomy” (cf. Jameson) of objects gets us beyond “correlationism” (cf. Meillassoux: the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking & being, & never to either term considered apart) except as a momentary, thought-experiment in “object-oriented” ontology. – vs. the “sentience” & “mimetic faculty” of Benjamin.

The Internet

One should never underestimate the pedagogical impact of the semiotic-material arrangement of things as they presently are. Take the Internet—one gets the sense that no one born after August 6th, 1991 can begin to imagine what life might be like without the Internet. (ecological & *cultural* shifting baseline syndrome)

Leviathan!

Fredy Perlman: zek-shaman of Detroit, historiographer of Her-story, dragon-slayer.

Fredy Perlman calls the people enthralled by *Leviathan!* the “armoured ones” (p. 13/38)
—cf. Serres the shell of appropriation, cf. Benjamin on shells & cases & indoors

To render The Land *terra nullius*—a blank page—“a few acres of snow”—upon which we sign our names with a sallow ammonia, splashy advertisements, & god-only-knows what other soft industrial effluvium.

Dominion is the high-fructose corn syrup of thought.

—cf. Zwicky on “the poetry buzz” in Poetry and Meaninglessness (p. 24); cf. Bringhurst on the “*fake* mythology” of, for example, drinking certain brands of soda pop (commodity fetishism), in Poetry and Thinking (p. 148). But also, be wary of drawing tight analogies between food & “cognitive development,” cf. Kieran Egan in *Getting It Wrong From the Beginning* (p. 81).

Old Reason: a communicable vector brought here on ships. —cf. Peter Godfrey-Smith, *Theory and Reality*

It may seem odd—given the long-standing quarrel between Science & Religion—that a mechanistic model of Nature seems to fit so seamlessly with either of these ostensibly incompatible cosmologies. We must bear in mind, however, that while mechanism tends to be employed presently to support the rational materialism of secularized Science, it was also key for a Christian ontology. That is, machines only make sense in light of a designer & many scientific progenitors saw the mechanical order of nature as clear evidence of—to put a contemporary spin on it—“Intelligent Design.” The transferability of mechanism between these opposing worldviews ought to give us pause as it suggests a shared substructure beneath all the surface-level squabbles. Or, as White put it, modern science & technique were “cast in a matrix of Christian theology.” In addition to

facilitating a clockwork view of nature, this matrix provided the epistemic precedent for modern incarnations of Dominion (Genesis 1:28), Anthropos (“Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen”), & a “dynamism of religious devotion” to Progress shaped by Judeo-Christian dogmas of linear time.

Oh *Leviathan!*—its thought bubbles circulate ((—“all that is solid melts into air”)) at 400 parts per million:—It thinks itself within us: “There is no going back.” It thinks: “This rock is mine.” It thinks: *whatever needs to be thought* to amplify the ego-boundaries between self & world. Its logic is A=A. Its only measure is: “I am.”

Machiavelli-minded, amnesiac. *Leviathan!* as amnesia: —cf. David Jardine in “The Descartes Lecture”

Species as asteroid, juggernaut, planet-killer.

One might reasonably assume that *Leviathan!* enters the body in a way akin to so many intestinal parasites —by way of the mouth. Perhaps the whole problem of evil can be reduced to the bad apples of our ancestors? Forbidden fruit got us into this mess & now the only way forward is to gorge ourselves back into innocence—an Edenic techno-utopia that never arrives, Heaven on Earth. I do not know whence Dominion steals into the body. There is, however, a strong argument to be made that it enters, of all places, at the opposable thumbs.

Technique is identity: the presence of the “sacred”—the divine, the chthonic, the ontological, or otherwise—has been exiled from what constitutes educated thought. It is not a Big Idea. It is what *those people*—those irrational others, those primitives—still “believe in.”

Leviathan! is a hybrid, transmitting through time by appropriating instruments, institutions, & discursive communities: hard & soft. Until: *The very growth of appropriation itself becomes what is properly human.*

—“The giant garbage dumps of the cities mark the collectivity’s appropriation of the nature surrounding the cities. As we never cease to dirty our surroundings, we (*who we?*) appropriate them without noticing it. Don’t we actually admit as much when we say *environment*? That which surrounds man makes him into the center. We never stop calling him “owner.” At the limits of growth, pollution is the sign of the world’s appropriation by the *species*... Described in its rapid rhythm, *the very growth of appropriation itself becomes what is properly human.* To be sure, animals appropriate their shelter with their dirt, but it is done *physiologically* and *locally*. *Homo* appropriates the *global physical world by his hard garbage* and, as we shall see, *the global human world by his soft garbage.*” —Michel Serres, *Malfeasance* (p. 53-54)
To be underlined: Importance of “hermeneutic consciousness.” Why do we not recognize insights into the “cultural-historical conditioning of understanding,” which intensified in the mid-twentieth century, as every bit as profound as evolutionary theory was a century before?

It seems a little self-aggrandizing to suggest a blade of grass becomes “cultural” as soon as one blows on it. ((Or that a urinal becomes Art as soon as one tags it & places it in a gallery.)) The religious connotations are unmistakable: God creates Adam by gathering up some clay & breathing life into it: Boesch: “it made me a creator, albeit in a tiny area.” Does a river become a “cultural artefact” when I dip my foot into its stream? “The victory of Christianity over paganism was the greatest psychic revolution in the history of our culture.”

I mean, *yes*—this is partially true, of course, but it renders the matter a little too factoid-like, which threatens to conceal the *real* problem. Christianity is not essentially exploitative. Rather, Christianity has acted as a historical vessel for a syncretic *dæmon*, a “dark potentiality,” that burrowed into the heart of Christianity & beget it with a kind of evangelic cardiomyopathy. Fisher: “It is a system which is no longer governed by any transcendent Law; on the contrary, it dismantles all such codes, only to re-install them on an ad hoc basis.”

Both Christianity & Rationality have served as ad hoc vectors for this hydra-structured entity (able, it would seem, to lose one head, only to regenerate two elsewhere) to transmit through time by way of colonizing new communities of living hosts. This does not imply that either Religion or Science are wholly reducible to Dominion, only that they have been & continue to be wielded as colonial devices to the extent that they faithfully reproduce a metaphysics of mastery that flatlines within them. Consider, for example, the way both work in tandem to delegitimize Indigenous epistemologies from either side, as it were: “these pagans are Godless primitives who believe in spiritualized materials”—& “these pagans are irrational primitives who believe in immaterial spirits.” Desacralization of the Other is the first order of business, dispossession the second: a “dark potentiality” older than Christianity. Much, much older.

I was born in St. Joseph’s General Hospital, & served as an altar boy at St. John the Divine, & buried my grandmother behind a small white church originally built as an “Indian Mission Chapel.” All the while, down at the K’ómoks Rez, the living longhouses depict the great white whale, Queneesh, & thunderbirds, & I-Hos, the double-headed sea serpent. Empirical categories of “real” versus “unreal” make no sense in this cultural milieu. The victory of “Christianity” over paganism is that I was schooled to believe that “our” vaguely Judeo-Christian traditions, & “our” sciences, & “our” capitalist relations with the natural world is “real” & “modern” & “progressive,” & that all that Native stuff is “mythical” & “primitive” & “backwards.”

—David W. Jardine, *Speaking with a Boneless Tongue*

The war of paradigms between interpretive work and more traditional, quantitatively based work is a religious war. The metaphor of war does not befit what we wish. It does befit what we face: a facade of angry dominion over the Earth and a fear of the... tenuousness and fragility and heat of a life actually lived.

This fear is the root of monotheism.

[God promised us that we would never die.
That deep within us there is a soul which
does not depend on this Earth, that has no
fleshy countenance.]

[This promise is the deep haunt of
objective science. Objective science is
borne out of a religion *already*
convinced of man’s dominion over the
Earth (i.e., over the flesh) and a
Continent *already* convinced of its
moral and cultural dominion over
others. Objective science is simply the
systematizing and methodologizing of
what is already taken for granted.]

It is, in part, a war between, on the one hand, the monotheism and inherent abstractness and “other-worldliness” (unanimalness, in-animism) of mathematics/Christianity/Platonic Essentialism and the twirl of the Cartesian logic and, on the other hand, the polytheism and inherently fleshy animism of interpretation / Paganism / Earthy Kindness. (1992, p. 80)

—Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*:

54. The end of progress is the *end* of progress: the utopia for which it aims is a form of stasis. The modern conception characterizes that stasis as ‘material well-being,’ where the meaning of this phrase is to be taken as self-evident. (Easy access to unlimited energy, possession of quantity and variety of physical objects, freedom from disease, (unlimited?) leisure time, a place in the country, an apartment in town... —the list’s emphases, and to some extent its composition, are affected by the compiler’s socio-economic class.)

Exploitation is not logically presupposed by the modern conception of progress. Nor is exploitation a *necessary* consequence of a divorce of thought from emotion.

The absence of positive emotion merely facilitates exploitative activity. Exploitation in its turn allows progress to progress more efficiently.

The additional thought that Europeans possess the *right* to exploit is very old.

The Biotariat, Proleterrean

—Stephen Collis, *Counter-Desecration* (Linda Russo & Marthe Reed, Eds.) (p. 24):

biotariat: the political “class” appropriate to the Anthropocene, or the era of geophysical capitalism. The idea that, once we can perceive the *total* impact of capitalism on *life itself* (this moment in which *all biological life*—as both “labor” and natural or material “resource”—is exploited for the production of surplus value—to the point at which the entire biosphere faces exhaustion and collapse), just then does it become necessary to develop a new political consciousness and new revolutionary subjectivity *on the basis of life as such*. Hence a reframing of struggles in terms of intersystemic and interspecies responses and responsibilities that recognize “the commons” as a system of ecological sustainability, writ large, into which human social re/production must fit. The proposition of the biotariat calls a new collective identity into being, a new common subjectivity formed by life itself, which we are only beginning to find out how to access and enable agentically.”

Camus: “The moment life is recognized as a necessary good, it becomes so for all men.”

Ecohermeneutics: ((Cross out all men, put all beings.)) The Biotariat, Proleterrean

This is the *real* reason for experiential stricture: —lest we “lose ourselves” & “descend” into animals, savages, welfare mothers, anarcho-syndicalists, alchemists, wandering troubadours in the wild—utterly unemployable.

There is no *hope* (in the Judeo-Christian, rugged individualist, sustainable development sense of the word.)

Camus

“In our madness, we push back the eternal limits, and at once dark Furies swoop down upon us to destroy.”
—Albert Camus, “Helen’s Exile” in *Lyric Essays*

Eäarth is a Vichy planet. Every city an Oran-like Paris—the streets are veritably littered with dead rats & bees & yet, most townsfolk refuse to call a plague a plague. —Building sea walls with the logic of the Maginot line.

Remember: Paul Ricoeur secretly translated Husserl & organized an intellectual cabal as a prisoner of war at the Nazi Oflag II-B camp in Pomerania. You drink fair-trade coffee in your modern plumbed basement suite & feel sorry for yourself. *Pathetic*.

I love the smell of ontology in the morning. It comes as no surprise that our dirty little fictions lie thickest on the senses when we are at our groggiest—staggering toward the shower required by civilized society, so as to not offend the somnolent masses with the vigorous odour of awakening. For a few fleeting moments, immersed in the steamy excesses of modern plumbing: —*everything* seems possible. Relational ontologies, animist realism, the All-One-God-Faith of Dr. Bronner’s castile soap. In the shower: all categories are fluid.

Morning program: hot shower, don some work-appropriate attire from a mostly sweatshop sourced wardrobe, eat a breakfast consisting of some blend of bananas, mangoes, blueberries, almonds, & coconut-based cereal despite living above the 49th parallel, check email on the toxic assemblage known as my laptop, read a few depressing articles on the CBC (I fixate on climate change & mass extinction pieces, obsessively saving them in a file I *never open*), take out recycling to absolve sins, drive to school, must have coffee. Camus claimed weariness is an existential opportunity, signalling the end of a period of habitual performance —sleep, eat, work, repeat—and innervating the spiritual grit to attend to the absurd weight of freedom & being. Then, the task becomes simple enough: recognize life is sacred or kill yourself. Most mornings, particularly mornings when I have to teach, I find myself more ambivalent on this matter than I might have hoped.

“...contrary to the general belief, hope equals resignation. And to live is not to resign.” Albert Camus, *Summer in Algiers*, p. 23

What is the *real* work? The anti-Sisyphean move is not an act of relinquishing, in the sense of simply letting go of the boulder. Letting the interminable labour of “making a living” grind one into compliant becoming. This is nothing more than a living suicide. (This is education as “life-long learnification:” nothing more than a means of acquiring “21st century skills” for a “dynamic” labour market.) An anti-Sisyphean disposition is neither lazy, nor acquiescent—but an act of rebellious solidarity with the more-than-human.

“I *rebel*—therefore we *exist*.” —The problem was we did not know whom we meant when we said we. Or perhaps it is a matter of a slightly different emphasis: I *rebel*—therefore *we* exist.

(Eco)Anamnesis, (Eco)*Eingedenken*

Encounter is not entanglement. The logger & the vivisectionist, for example, “encounter” places of ecological flourishing & animals all the time. Moreso, perhaps, than the environmentalist & animal rights activist. The issue is dispositional: how to provoke the insight of entanglement by way of encounter?

Benjamin: *The Arcades Project* [N5a,2]. “Surrealism is the death of the nineteenth century in comedy.”

“Pain and suffering are always inevitable for a large intelligence and a deep heart.”
—Raskolnikov in Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*

The Mill & The Mall, Economics

“Consciously abandoning the past is the essentially American creative act.” —Robert Motherwell in Introduction to *Beyond Painting* by Max Ernst

The landfill at Knossos is a more appropriate origin for modern democracy, not the gilded Athens of Pericles.

“Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices” (Harper): Islam vs. Tar Sands (which is more “barbaric”?)

Reproduction Technology, Photocopiers

The Ecotone

The Puntledge, River(s) of Being

“To be given permission to fall in love with things again is also to be given the terrible trial of no longer avoiding what is happening to these things.” —David Jardine, personal correspondence

Timelessness

“Life is lived forward but understood backward.” Soren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments*
—cf. Benjamin’s reading of the Angelus Novus (Paul Klee), the “angel of history”

—Don McKay, “Bailer Twine: Thoughts on Ravens, Home, & Nature Poetry:”

Imagine: a trail made of moments rather than minutes, wild bits of time which resist elapsing according to a schedule. Pauses. Each one bell-shaped, into which you step as an applicant for the position of tongue. Or: each pause is designed as the unbuilt dwelling of that moment—a cabin, a stanza, a gazebo, a frame—a room which the trail accepts as a fiction or wish. This is the point of anthropomorphic play, the erotic hinge of translation. When ownership is set aside, appropriation can turn inside out, an opening, a way of going up to something with a gift from home. Growths on this stump remind you that the Japanese call certain fungi “tree ears;” the red pine around them are a ceremonial parade for Moustache Day; you see ravens playing on the ”thabaska River and think “boys on a raft.” Anthropomorphic play, along this trail, is a gift to the other from the dwelling you will never build there. How? A slight deformation of human categories, an extra metaphorical stretch and silliness of language as it moves toward the other, dreaming its body. There is danger in this gift, because language, in this poetic mode, compromises its nature, dismantling itself in a gesture toward wilderness... Poets are supremely interested in what language can’t do; in order to gesture outside, they use language in a way that flirts with its destruction. Language wears tree ears and a false moustache for the moment. For whom? For the *moment*. (2001, pp. 31-32)

Anthropological Materialism, Indigenous Ways of Knowing

For my undergrad program in “Canadian Studies” at the University of Calgary, I enrolled in a first-year history course titled: *Origins to 1867*—with a naïve, but well-intentioned, commitment to educate myself about “Natives.” I had, after all, spent the better part of my life riding my bicycle past longhouses & my favorite history teacher, Mr. Rajotte, had taught our History 12 class about a troubling incident in Oka a few years back. The first day of class, we devoted all of seven minutes to discussing Indigenous peoples before “Contact.” We then moved expeditiously onto business-as-usual. What is there to discuss really? There were a few people here before us, plus lots of beavers & a few acres snow. They had a “culture,” of sorts, but we can safely assume their lives were nasty, brutish & short. One can pick up any Canadian history book in school, even today, & find the first chapter devoted to “those people,” but that initial overview will invariably be followed by fifteen chapters detailing the travails & triumphant progress of colonial-settlers struggling against the wilderness to forge a Nation in the crucible of imperial war.

Should the structure of the book not be the other way around? Ten thousand years worth of “high culture” before a single catastrophic chapter on the vulgar effects of gold & money upon the human soul?

Indigenous adornments on colonial structures, like the welcoming totems at YVR.

As a settler on unceded territories & an armchair anthropologist—at best—it feels somewhat indelicate, if not sacrilegious, to draw too direct an analogy between the “mythic understanding” of traditional Coast Salish teachings & the *plumpes denken*—the “blunt” or “crude” thinking—first extolled by Brecht, & further theorized by Benjamin in a book on Brecht’s notion of “epic theatre.” My intention is not to overly conflate nor reduce one to the other, but rather to blast the notion of mythic understanding out of the progressive continuum of both historical & cognitive developmentalism.

—Isabelle Stengers, “Reclaiming Animism:”

“It is no accident that prophets of monotheism, including Plato and Mohammed, have often banished the poets. These prophets understand that the poet is a pagan and polytheist by nature. In a certain sense, even Dante, Milton, San Juan de la Cruz, Teresa of Ávila, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and T.S. Eliot are pagans. Without admitting it, they seem to understand, like the peoples of the Altiplano of Bolivia and Peru, and like many Native Canadians, that it is best to interpret Christianity as one more form of paganism.”

There is clear anthropological evidence of cultures that adopt oral-literate hybridity without mechanically “evolving” towards Western rationalism or any of the other hallmarks of modernity after the advent of text & system. This, of course, notwithstanding the fact that Modern cultures are also *always* multimodal hybrids to some degree, albeit hierarchically arranged.

The situation is exacerbated by the fact that “orality-literacy” scholarship—much like the progressivist tradition in education—has, until recently, been fundamentally shaped by an “evolutionary lens” derived from the culturally specific trajectory by which Western Europe internalized literacy, or the culturally specific trajectory by which an individual child internalizes literacy in the Modern classroom. Early influential theorists of the Toronto School—Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, Eric Havelock, & Walter Ong—as well as anthropologists such as Jack Goody—have tended to conceive of the relationship as a kind of unidirectional displacement. That is, just as a child exposed to literacy inevitably becomes a literate-minded adult, so too cultures develop & evolve with the introduction of “technologies of print.” The belief, explicit to varying degrees, was that all societies would more or less go through the same “evolutionary” changes as Europe.

The conflation of literacy with technological advance is the result of imperial expediency, not natural law. “Mythic” is not synonymous with “irrational” or, as the dictionary defines it, “unreal,” or “untrue.”

School

In his *Book of Questions*, Pablo Neruda asks: “Why does the professor teach the geography of death?”

School: the place where we “move forward”—progress, annex—the promised land of our practicality. To think outside this faith is to make oneself a stranger in the public realm. Underground Music

We should like to say something like: ontogeny *becomes* phylogeny, but this is not a dance for tourists.

What is education for? —We should like to say something like: attuning the “ontogeny” of the individual organism with the “phylogeny” of the living whole (—in the context of a particular place—or, bioregion). *Bildung* as the cultivation of a formal ecological disposition within place-based cultural configuration(s) that define *being educated* in terms of a domestic attitude.

Image: The grounds of knowing have shifted—*the very notion of soil is changing* (Latour)—& yet seismic upgrades in schools never seem to “make economic sense.” —The curricula changes, but never structure.

Meet your Meat: The terrified wails of the industrial abattoir, of *this* particular heifer, fade into abstraction, severed from the heart-mind by the gentle hum of the projector, the synthetic potpourri of the air freshener, the articulate polemic outlining the incommensurable rift between human & other-than-human entities, or something of the like. (&, of course, we would never go on a fieldtrip to the abattoir for some “experiential education,” that would be uncivilized. Probably illegal.) This is not, incidentally, some counter-polemic on the ethical imperative of vegetarianism, but rather an observation on the role bad faith plays in education.

My grandmother taught English literature in the Old World (Scotland & Ireland)—she respected a good education & had no time for grammatical errors or damned fools. She was visibly proud of me when I shipped off to university with a mind to practicing medicine, or botany, or perhaps the veterinary sciences, like my grandfather. She was, in turn, visibly disappointed when I chose to switch into the humanities, flutter off to Asia to “find myself” for a while, & return, only to join a permaculture commune on a small island in the Salish Sea. Around this time, I happened to purchase a Situationist-inspired t-shirt with a screen-printed stack of books on the front & a détournement slogan: “Books are weapons in the war of ideas.” I purposely wore the t-shirt the next time I visited my grandparents to signal to my grandmother that I was something of an “independent scholar” who still respected literature & learning. My grandmother, who by this time no longer rushed to the door to greet me, ambled out of the kitchen, looked at the shirt, looked me square in the face & said: —“Depends on the book.” Then ambled back into the kitchen to stir to the soup. She was a well-educated woman: she could sit at the kitchen table & recite verse by heart until she was ninety-four.

American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia: We are standing—teetering really—half-cut, in an amorphous circle just outside the pub doors & I am beginning to worry the essence of our debate is wafting up into the windows of the second-floor apartments. It is one thing to be jolted awake by sirens, quite another to be startled at 3am by sloppy phenomenology. Laura Piersol is to blame, or perhaps the City of Philadelphia? The street outside the pub happens to be unceremoniously festooned with lines of rather unkempt trees in cramped concrete containers. Despite spending the better part of the day

attending lectures warning against the fallacy of anthropomorphism, I admit, the particular tree we are gathered around looks sad &, daresay, *imprisoned*. Laura has seized upon this opportunity to field test the ontological boundaries of this group of self-proclaimed ecological thinkers.

Alarm: You wake up, you need to go to work. Hot shower, acetaminophen, coffee, banana—no, two bananas, while there are still bananas left. Shirt made in Bangladesh, pants made in Indonesia, shoes made in Vietnam. —This is another thing you regret. Keys, wallet, phone, laptop. You are just another plaid-shirted zek with some dreams & views & bills to pay. Just an ordinary heart, just functional—who knows that no one is chosen by the gods. The aspens & the blue-eyed grass have voices of their own. (Maybe you will get to the mountains this weekend, or maybe this summer? Hike the Comox Glacier, while there is still a glacier left.) You start the car, you are on empty again, you listen religiously to the CBC: —A fascinating interview with Dr. Quoi Qwa Lak, who recently published a paper about an imminent flood that threatens the village. Plus advertisements. You get to school, you should probably kill yourself, but despite everything, you think: *this life is so beautiful*. You are not allowed to cry for animals in public. You take a deep breath. —You know what you need to do.

Ivan Illich: “School is the advertising agency which makes you believe that you need society as it is.”

Education (read: the kind of education we find in schools) tends to lack an epistemology. Which is embarrassing, as educators are supposed to be in the business of knowing how to know things. (Note: By “epistemology” I do not mean “knowledge,” as the term is often & erroneously reduced to nowadays, but a discourse concerning the nature, possibility, & limitations of knowledge.) Those who are not teachers might naturally assume—having never gained access to the highly restricted areas known as “staff rooms”—that they are places of enthusiastic & judicious debate about the nature & vicissitudes of our complex venture as educators. One would thus be gravely mistaken. The staff room is the epistemological vacuum at the centre of the school; orbiting, as it were, the administrative offices in a death spin like binary black holes. No light escapes the event horizon of this tight circle.

The problem, I should add with haste, is not teachers per se. If any light does emanate it is only *because* a few good teachers sneak it in, like luminous contraband, in the inner pocket of a second-hand tweed blazer.

Endnotes

❖ Epigraphs

- Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, (2002, p. 84).
- Walter Benjamin, *One-Way-Street*, (2016, p. 40).
- Michel Serres, *Biogea*, (2012, p. 125).
- Aesop Rock, “Commencement at the Obedience Academy,” *Float* [LP], Mush Records.
- Dennis Lee, *Un*, (2003, p. 31).
- Convolute I: Albert Camus, *The Fastidious Assassins*, (2008, p. 23).
- Convolute II: Michael W. Jennings, “Introduction,” in Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, (2016, p. 6).
Charles Simic, “Composition,” *The Uncertain Certainty*, (1985, p. 112).
- Convolute III: Erin Robinsong, “The Forces The Forms,” *Wet Dream*, (2022, p. 42).
- Convolute IV: Rudolf Arnheim, “A Stricture on Space and Time,” *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*, (1986, p. 81).
- Convolute V: Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, (2002, p. 162).
- Convolute VI: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, (1980, p.36).
- Convolute VII: Jan Zwicky, “Music,” *The Experience of Meaning*, (2019, p. 144).
- Convolute VIII: Sonny Assu, “Coke-Salish,” [Artwork], Retrieved from <https://www.rrncommunity.org/items/33295>

❖ Notes for Notes from Underground

- LH § 1 –For a K’ómoks origin story see K’ómoks First Nation (2014, p. 34). Also see <https://komoks.ca/cultures>.
For an “anthropological” account see Boas (2000, pp. 173-180).
- “We were always already lichen.” cf. Scott F. Gilbert, Jan Sapp & Alfred I. Tauber, “A Symbiotic View of Life: We Have Never Been Individuals,” *Quarterly Review of Biology* (2012). Also M. Sheldrake (2020).
- RH § 1 Robert Bringhurst, Myth is a Theorem About the Nature of Reality, Retrieved from
<https://www.guernicamag.com/myth-is-a-theorem-about-the-nature-of-reality>
- Tim Lilburn, *Going Home*, (2008, p. 4).
- George Grant, “In Defense of North America,” in *Technology and Empire*, (1969, pp. 17-18).

LH § 2 –“Narration sickness” see Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2006). Other images in first paragraph refer to Allen Ginsberg’s “Howl” (1963) & the Canada Coat of Arms. From the “Official Symbols of Canada” (Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/official-symbols-canada.html#a2>):

In the Middle Ages, coats of arms served as a sort of identification card. This was especially true on the battlefield where coat of arms made it possible to distinguish allies from enemies. Today, they are used to preserve traditions and inspire love of country.

The design includes: symbols of the four founding nations of Canada featured on the shield: the three royal lions of England, the royal lion of Scotland, the royal fleur-de-lis of France, and the royal Irish harp of Tara; the lion of England holding the Royal Union Flag and the unicorn of Scotland carrying the flag of Royal France; the floral emblems of the four founding nations: the English rose, the Scottish thistle, the French fleur-de-lis, and the Irish shamrock; the Royal Crown at the top, indicating that these are the Arms of Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada...

The heraldic practice of attaching an inscription—or appropriate sentiment—to a coat of arms or a crest has been honoured by the Dominion of Canada and 8 of the 10 provinces... The motto of the Dominion of Canada is *A Mari Usque Ad Mare* which is officially translated as “From Sea to Sea” and “D’un océan à l’autre.” The phrase comes from the Latin translation of Psalm 72:8 in the Bible.

- “the only war that matters...” Diane di Prima, *Revolutionary Letters*, (2007, p. 104).
- “*Sous la plage, les pavés!*” “Under the beach, the pavement.” Catachrestic rendition of the Situationist slogan, “*Sous les pavés, la plage!*” from Paris 1968. On the philosophical significance of paradox & catachresis, see Jan Zwicky, *Lyric Philosophy*, (2011, p. LH 202).
- “This storm is what we call progress.” Walter Benjamin, “On the Concept of History,” Thesis IX, in *Selected Writings, Vol IV.*, (1996, p. 392).
- “Dumbing down” cf. John Taylor Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down* (2017). Also in the sense of “dumbing” the voice(s) a “more-than-human world,” cf. David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1997); Neil Evernden, *The Natural Alien* (1985).
- “integrated spectacle” Guy Debord, *Comments on the Society of the Spectacle* (2011).
- “*Das Gestell*” Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (1977).
- “*Splendor sine occasu*” “Splendour Without diminishment,” from Coat of Arms of British Columbia.
“The Union Jack flag with the centre crown symbolizes our colonial origins.” Retrieved from <https://www.leg.bc.ca/content-peo/Learning-Resources/The-Coat-of-Arms-Fact-Sheet-English.pdf>
- “life-long learnification” Gert Biesta, *The Beautiful Risk of Education* (2013).
- “unnameable Thing” Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, as cited in Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*, (2009, p. 5).

RH § 2 Jan Zwicky, “What is Lyric Philosophy?,” *Alkibiades’ Love*, (2014, p. 8).

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Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism & Schizophrenia*, (2009, p. 168).

Fredy Perlman, *Against His-story, Against Leviathan!*, (1983, pp. 3-5).

LH § 3 – “There are no new worlds...” Robert Bringhurst, “The Persistence of Poetry,” *The Tree of Meaning*, (2006, p. 45).

–“Our townsfolks were not more to blame...” Albert Camus, *The Plague*, (2010, pp. 35-36).

–“*the very notion of soil is changing...*” Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth*, (2018, p. 4).

–“Don’t think, but look!” Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, (2010, p. 31e).

RH § 3 Michel Serres, *Malfeasance*, (2011, p. 67).

Hakim Bey, “For and Against Interpretation,” in *Millennium*, (1996, pp. 62-64).

Bruno Latour, *Down to Earth*, (2018, pp. 40-44).

LH § 4 –“The art of the critic in a nutshell...” Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, (2016, p. 50).

–“this disease which is its own vector...” Peter Cole, *Coyote & Raven Go Canoeing*, (2006, p. 19).

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Jan Zwicky, *Wisdom & Metaphor*, (2003, p. LH 94).

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–“*El sueño de la Razón produce monstruos.*” “*The sleep of Reason produces monsters.*” Francisco Goya, one of a series of eighty etchings called *Los Caprichos* from 1799.

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