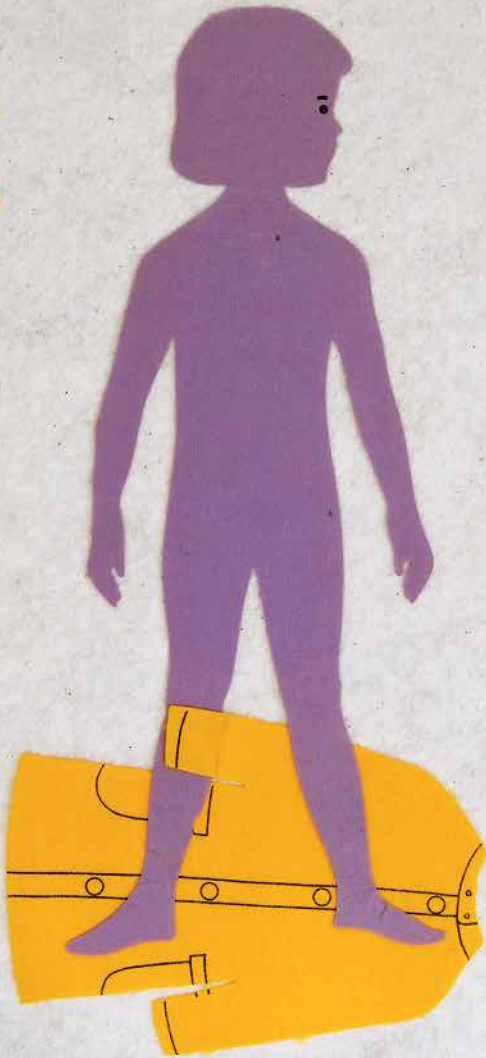
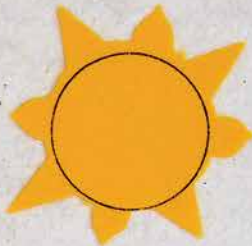
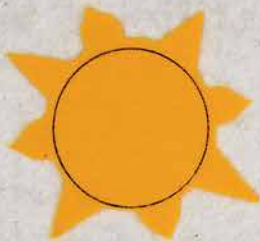


The Capilano Review

Weather / Fall 2021



Weather can shape the language of a place

—Bopha Chhay

THE CAPILANO REVIEW

ISSUE 3.45 / FALL 2021

Weather

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Editors' Note

We put this issue together with an awareness of what weathering looks like: coping and living with chronic stressors, big and small, and how that is killing us, even as we are still here. Asking people to take time to write about difficult material and the conditions we live, breathe, and create under is fraught. Extra consideration is required when requests are made of writers who are also members of communities disproportionately affected by the weather. Asking a writer to write about the weather makes the writing not just about the writing; it is at once asking the writer to reinhabit the climate, to return and reassume psychic costs. The writer also negotiates the ongoing tension of where to direct energy, at times leading to the calculated but difficult decision of saying “no” to an important contribution in favour of rest and one less commitment.

As Black guest editors who understand and are sensitive to how these conditions prevent folks made marginalized from producing and meeting deadlines, we were mindful of this reality. At the same time, impinged upon by similar weather conditions, and unusually this year under a global pandemic, we too made late and unexpected requests. And while we kept an eye on the production schedule, in our role as guest editors, particularly as Black guest editors working on a “weather” issue, we established the need to be accommodating and flexible, to acknowledge up front the labour and time of each potential contribution, and to commit to creating the climate we needed and wanted for this issue that doesn't exist for us out there. This included inviting emerging writers to contribute, relying on our extended communities, and opening up our networks of exchange. We wanted to extend “our ladder,” to borrow a line from our interview with Benedicta Bawo and Maysa Zeyad, who, in a brilliant exchange, explore the realities under which Black workers in the DTES labour. That this issue creates a space for ourselves and the contributors when the climate dictates otherwise, speaks, then, to a labour of love and careful consideration.

We included pieces that highlight the personal cost of weathering, such as Zehra Naqvi’s “Summer Day” and yamagushiku shō’s “this veil is thin and it is my body,” while connecting outwardly to the larger political and everyday climate of colonial and racial violence. We included pieces that delve into the physical manifestations of weather, such as Kimberly Bain’s “Spill,” which reveals the horror of “rains that wouldn’t stop” and Bopha Chhay’s “60 Knots of the Nor’wester’s Whistle,” which explores how both human and non-human beings can be “blown off course.” We included Rita Wong’s “Blueberry River,” which acknowledges how with a “flick of a light switch” we continue to be complicit in the extractive and violent production of electricity, in turn impacting Dane-zaa identity and survival on Blueberry River First Nation lands.

We also wanted to highlight how weather patterns can be recalibrated, examples of which can be seen in J.R. Carpenter’s “The Incremental Coast” and the excerpt of Jordan Abel’s *Empty Spaces*, a project which refuses the projection of colonial emptiness while asking, “What bodies fill the air with words?” In *Vancouver Special: Disorientations and Echo*, a selection of artists from different communities and entangled histories convened at the Vancouver Art Gallery. Visitors to this exhibition, on view until January 2022, are invited not only to consider how the tone and temperature of the gallery is changed by the installations, but how disorientation, often positioned as out of place, can be a reorientation to reconsider who and what else is *in place*.

The climate and the air you find in this issue is different, and would not have been possible to create without the support of *TCR* staff. The early visioning that occurred with outgoing Arts Editor, Emily Dundas Oke, the behind-the-scenes work of Managing Editor, Lauren Lavery, who made sure, for example, that everyone got paid, and especially the labour of Matea Kulić, the Editorial Director. She not only welcomed us as guest editors, she also danced the fine line between support and leadership, stepping back and stepping in as needed.

As you hold this issue in your hands, we ask you to hold the extraordinary work of all the contributors gathered here as well as those who had wanted to be part of the conversation but couldn’t, due to weather conditions.

—Phanuel Antwi & Junie Désil

60 Knots of the Nor'wester's Whistle

Bopha Chhay

i.

It is not possible to exist on the margins of the weather. I grew up in a city that remains under the enduring presence of Big Weather. Mention of its impending arrival took on a familiar tone that is not dissimilar to the way one might fondly refer to a distant relative soon coming to visit. Growing up in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, Aotearoa (Wellington, New Zealand)—an archipelago consisting of three main islands—nautical figures of speech were common. Weather can shape the language of a place.

The primary school I attended was located a 1.5 kilometre walk down the hill from our house. Our walk home was always dictated by the strength and direction of the wind and we had to best gauge the safest route home. In the case of a Northerly, we'd walk up the eastern side of the hill; in the case of a Southerly, we'd opt for the western side. If either exceeded a galeforce of 120 kmph, we'd take the lower footpath. We learned how to make use of the roadside railing, linking arms to anchor each other, leaning into, or against, the wind so as not to lose our footing. Occasionally, we'd defy parental instruction and intentionally choose the least safe route. In an attempt to become airborne, we'd leap into the wind, our jackets acting as a pair of wings. It was not until I moved away that I realized people who did not live where I grew up had a very different relationship to Big Weather. People did not share my belief or resignation that we'd one day get blown off the hill and into the sea.

ii.

I have been following the migratory path of the Kuaka (bar-tailed godwits), via the Miranda Trust account on Twitter. Fitted with tracking devices, the birds are observed by ornithologists. The account has been tracking their flight path as they make their way from Alaska to New Zealand, a journey of 12,000 km across the Pacific Ocean.

On September 11, 2021 Miranda Trust tweeted that some of the godwits had hit a significant storm, and had turned back to Alaska to wait out the weather. These reports were paired with an image tracking the path of the birds alongside a meteorological map showing elements of the weather—wind direction, speed, and barometric pressure. These visualizations not only identify the reasons for flight path digression, but also point to how a rapidly changing climate with extreme shifts in weather has affected their already risky journey. The godwits typically feed, rest, and take shelter wherever they can. The logic of a nation state's borders do not prevent them, though their disrupted journey bears the consequences of human actions that have accelerated the effects of climate change. In considering the Kuaka, I reflect on what it means to be “blown off course” and to involuntarily succumb to a path alternate from the one initially intended. I think of how, in Zoe Todd's concept of kinship, reciprocity is shared between human and non-human relations and extends as well to the more-than-human.¹ The reciprocal nature of these deeply held relations ultimately reveals how we collectively bear the effects of climate change, some more unequally than others.

¹Zoe Todd, “Fish, Kin and Hope: Tending to Water Violations in amiskwaciwâskahikan and Treaty Six Territory” in *Afterall* Issue 43 (Spring/Summer 2017): 102-107.

iii.

I have always appreciated the gravitas contained in every mention of the Northwesterly wind in the city I grew up in. The Nor'wester was held responsible for innumerable wrongdoings and misfortunes. When the Nor'wester blew through, hospital emergency rooms filled, aches would flare up; a sharp spike in divorce proceedings and crime rates would register. People walked out of their jobs, and committed to decisions stacked heavily towards significant cons. There is no quantitative evidence to back this claim, but it's compelling to consider how a shift in wind and barometric pressure could permit and excuse us to behave otherwise. Being blown over, by, and about the wind is a reminder of how susceptible we are to the elements—how elementally porous we are—and how we're only here temporarily.

There is no word for the sound of the Nor'wester. Psithurism is the word for the sound of whispering wind in the trees. Far from a whisper, the Nor'wester's persuasive whistling, howling, and screeching has the capacity to rattle—to force us to reckon with any complacency or complicity we'd otherwise settle into.

weathering

allostatic load

Junie Désil

On my nth visit to a medical professional, I try to sit calmly. I'm done up: bright red lipstick black liner, fancy red glasses—the lenses polished to a high shine—hair flat-ironed.

I have my white voice ready—polite, calm, devoid of inflection or Blaccent. My heart is racing nonetheless dreading the scale, dreading the sound of Velcro ripping, and the increasing pressure on my upper arm. The cuff might pop open because it's too small.

allostatic load

Forecast calls for rain on end, incessant drip. Wet coldness seeps thru exposed wrists and ankles, behind fogged glasses—reflecting a bright screen filled with the latest viral horrors.

Back braced, teeth clenched, pelvis squeezed. The red dots encircling white digits on my various email and social media accounts, a testament to ignored messages.

Bookended between images curating aspirational perfection I don't want to read/perform horror # no filter

allostatic load

A few years ago I woke up in debilitating pain, my lower back on fire. I crawled out of bed, crawled to the bathroom. Called in sick, and thought the pain was the result of the new old chair I had inherited.

For three days I crawled. On the fourth, I walked bent over to a clinic stressed about getting a note for my absence. Stressed about the pile of work I would go back to. I am an instrument tuning this way and that, sensing a climate pattern; this body's a weathervane pointing out the direction of bad winds to come.

Body parts creak and groan, refuse to stretch — dangerously taut, close to snapping. Some days are good days to *call in Black*.

On a good day I have a dull ache in my lower back and pelvis. I am fatigued and brain fogged. On a particularly bad year-long stretch of racial injustice, extrajudicial killings, work microaggressions, and a general climate of anti-blackness, my body betrays me, seizes, and won't get out of bed.

The weather is bad out there. I know the weather is bad out there; the unceasing pattering of rain erodes, wet dampness lodges — settles and makes an awkward home in the joints, muscles, and inflamed tissues. I get up anyway, braving the climate.

Put on a happy face.

allostatic load

At the doctor's office the nurse practitioner expresses concern about my blood pressure. I swear up and down that it's fine, it usually goes up because doctors stress me out. And work too.

She says she'll pretend this number did not happen, says she'll give me 5 minutes, and try again. When she reads me the numbers I start to cry.

She offers to write me a note excusing me from work for three days *but talk to your doctor to get more time.*

At work when I log in, my emails number in the 3 digits. Still catching up from my 4-day migraine, and before that, my two-week ~~vacation~~ working-at-home-catching-up staycation, and previous to that, a number of breaks that have done nothing to bring my stress or workload down.

I start the 20th to-do list that never gets shorter, and my heart begins its loud erratic thumping.

allostatic load

In the doctor's office I'm asked multiple times if I have diabetes despite my lab results showing that I do not. The locum, with equal parts belligerence and awkwardness, tells me *when I look at you and people of your ethnicity, I would say you should start on Metformin.*

Scrawling on her notepad, she tells me to have a think.

By the time I've stepped out of my house to start my work commute, my heart is pounding a steady, anxious drumbeat. I wear loud pink earbuds jammed deep into my ears to drown it and the public transit slurs out with the remixed version of

Aretha Franklin's *Struggle*.

I get up out of bed, I put on my clothes 'cause I've got bills to pay.

Hood up—block out the daily (micro) aggressions.

The world is a filmy grey. Other days it's like looking through a sobbing tear-tracked window. Even on sunny days. Those rays, though, make it possible to weather the rest of the year. Somewhat. Shortness of breath, panic attacks, migraines, sore joints, back pain, fatigue, debilitating depression—all are weather indicators.

I casually admit to another woman that I read Goop. I know. What in the world can Gwyneth Paltrow tell me? And out of morbid, disconnected fascination I read the health and wellness articles, fantasizing about implementing some of the tips to lower my stress:

make room in your schedule for free time and activities that you truly love or start the day with a breakfast that helps manage blood sugar levels.

My mornings start with a jolt as my iPhone screeches an alarming tone meant to get me out of bed immediately, with just enough time to get dressed, and head out the door—so much for Goop.

allostatic load

That time clots clawed their way up my leg to lodge themselves in my lungs. The feeling of dizziness and needing air, feeling tired but I *weathered* it till I got off the Sky Train.

Before going to the hospital, I showered, out of breath, heart pounding, packed an overnight bag just in case, and made sure my makeup was flawless and on point, my underwear clean and not raggedy.

My partner is hovering anxiously by the bathroom pleading with me to *just go, who cares?!?!?* Because Black and health care don't go hand in hand. In the ER room the doctor on duty is yelling at me *DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU HAVE?!* After informing me that I have a pulmonary embolism.

I don't know why he's yelling or how they know that I'm having a PE event. Maybe he's stressed. I look it up on my phone—find out Serena Williams had one (don't finish reading the Wiki article), anyway, sounds exotic; I crack some jokes that belie the dread. I try to relax thinking if an athlete can have PE, then I'm fine.

The forecast says 100% rain for the next week and my eyes mirror the streaming windows as I lie in bed trying to decide if I should go to work or not.

It's a bad pain day; my back is aching something fierce. I have a mountain of work to do and people need me. I want to cry. I don't want to be needed. I want to abdicate from responsibility but I'm the clean-up crew so to speak (if you know you know).

I read a vigorously debunked theory that women with endometriosis put their careers first before themselves. Some theories persist. And here I am: work before health.

I'm at the gynecologist's office. It's my second time seeing her. The first time she sent me for a round of tests to determine if I had endometriosis.

A laparoscopy is the *gold standard* for diagnosing endometriosis. She tells me it's not necessary to do one. This time I'm in her office for an IUD, as recommended by the ER doctor, following my embolism; I am high-risk and would be a high-risk pregnancy.

allostatic load

At work, sitting most of the day, catching up on emails that I will never catch up on, worry gnaws; I wonder if the ache in my calf is a sign, if my heart racing is another sign. I mean they are signs, but are they *the* sign, *signs* of another embolism? The risk of another PE event remains at 30% in the subsequent (10) years after the first, and I continue to be at (high) risk.

I'm only four years in.

At work I am called a racial slur by a client. At a meeting with various Health Directors no one will look at me or talk directly to me.

At another meeting I am constantly talked over. I politely ask the man to let me finish as he has spoken at length and over me. *I do not need a dressing down by the likes of you*, he says.

In yet another meeting I am told that in an ideal world I would be handling $x y z$ in my work portfolio.

I have not been provided access or the tools. I am de-skilled and, for a *de facto* admin assistant, I am well paid. My title holds power that I do not feel; my title is often ignored.

At the gynecologist's office we realize that, despite the referral, I was not given a prescription for an IUD, so my appointment consists of me talking about my event, and her tapping her lip thoughtfully looking at various contraceptive options.

So, I guess birth control is out...

tap tap tap. We could consider sterilization (laughs).

She then describes in specific and graphic detail all the things that could go wrong when she inserts the IUD: *I could accidentally perforate your uterus or introduce an infection (more laughs). You should see the lists of risks for Advil (mock horror)!*

allostatic load

weathering

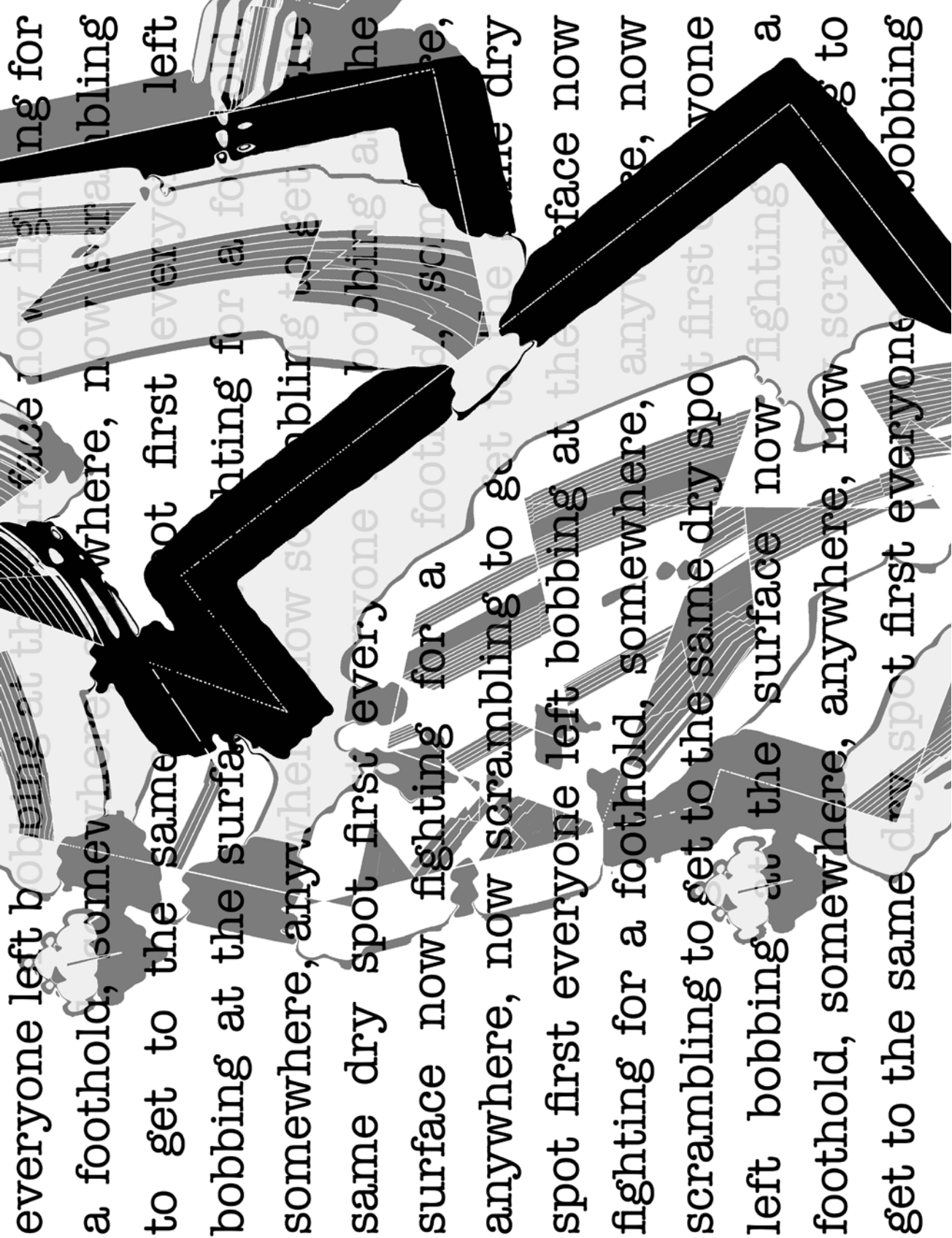
allostatic load

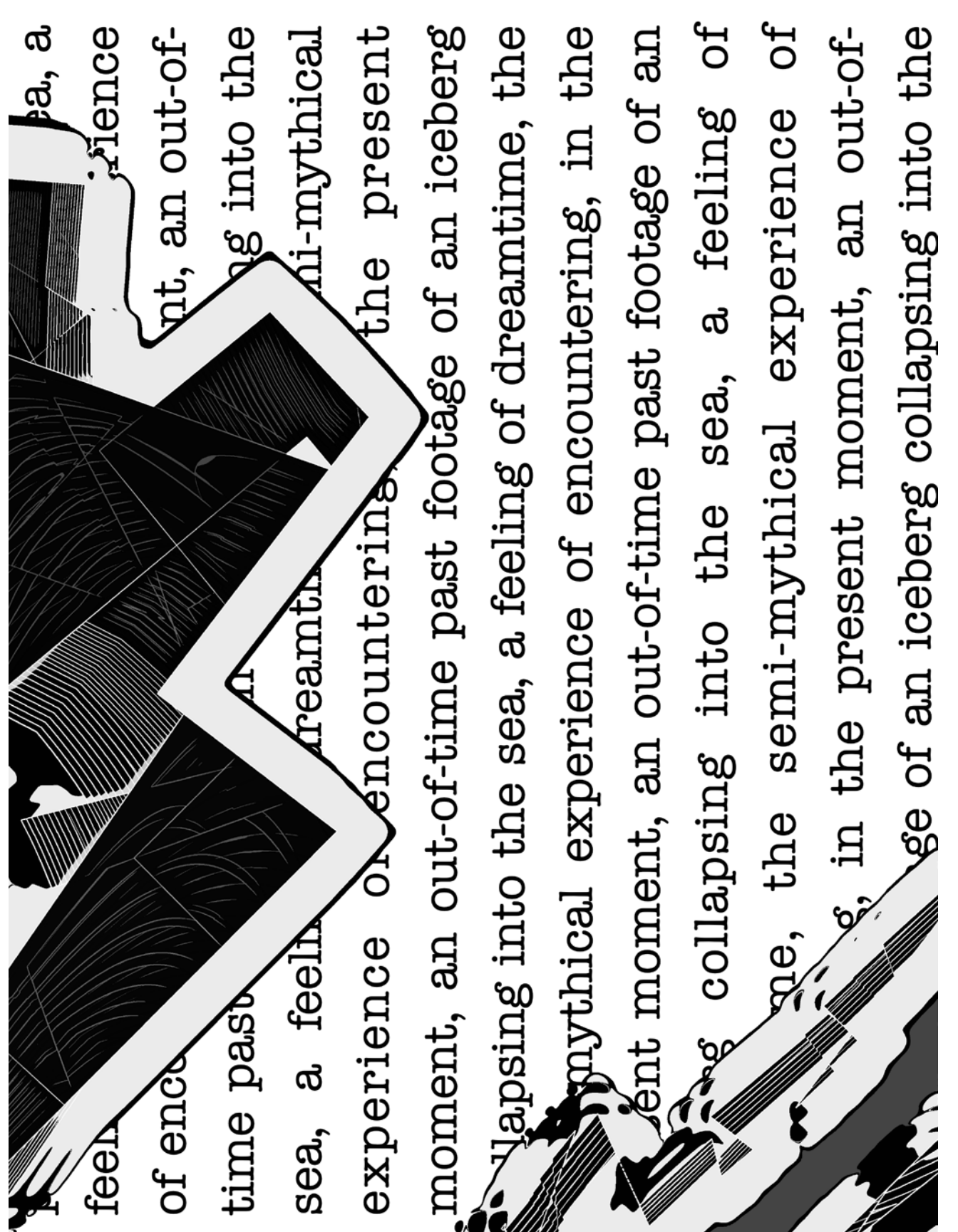
measure systolic and diastolic blood pressure any allergies major surgeries have you travelled by air recently draw some blood samples you have markers of inflammation cortisol levels high check for c-reactive proteins elevated cytokines check for autoimmune diseases metabolic markers like waist to hip ratio total cholesterol albumin triglycerides estimated glomerular filtration rate chronic stressors sleep hygiene John Henryism Sojourner syndrome respectability behaviour vigilance

Looping Climate

Matthew Gwathmey

everyone left bobbing at the
a foothold, somewhere, now scrambling
to get to the same spot first everywhere
bobbing at the surface
somewhere, anywhere, now scrambling to get
same dry spot first everywhere
surface now fighting for a foothold, somewhere,
anywhere, now scrambling to get to the same dry
spot first everywhere left bobbing at the surface now
fighting for a foothold, somewhere, now
scrambling to get to the same dry spot
left bobbing at the surface now fighting
foothold, somewhere, anywhere, now scrambling to
get to the same dry spot first everywhere
bobbing





...a, a
...ience
...nt, an out-of-
...ng into the
...ni-mythical
...the present
...the present
...moment, an out-of-time past footage of an iceberg
...lapsing into the sea, a feeling of dreamtime, the
...mythical experience of encountering, in the
...ent moment, an out-of-time past footage of an
...ng collapsing into the sea, a feeling of
...me, the semi-mythical experience of
...g, in the present moment, an out-of-
...ge of an iceberg collapsing into the

From *Empty Spaces*

Jordan Abel

When winter finally arrives. When a soft, silvery wind rushes through the branches and into the road. When the footpaths are hard and worn. When the air is cool and clear. When the town seems to disappear from eighty or ninety feet up in the air. When there is a moment. When the forest freezes over. When the lights from the village cut through the brush. When the sun is directly above the earth. The crisp air. The frozen animal bones in the forest. The silvery clouds. The light from the windows. The icy rocks. The blood on the leaves. The skulls at the bottom of the lake. The breath and the laughter and the bright, shiny night. There is a clear sheet of ice and frozen bodies somewhere in the mud at the bottom of the lake. Outside, fingers will freeze. Toes will rot. Ears will turn black and eventually fall off. The clouds will drift apart. The stars will puncture the darkness. To see the line that connects the spoon to the fingers to the arm to the jaw. To puncture the skin. To extract the organs. To sift for gold. To see the skull in the snow at the frozen stump of a tree trunk. To see the carvings in the wood. On the shore, there is a flat, black rock between two halves of a body. There are broken bodies and broken bones in the ice. In the frozen river, there is blood. Tomorrow is a dream that repeats again and again. Tomorrow is a line that cuts endlessly through the forest. Tomorrow is a circle. Tomorrow, there will be silence. Tomorrow spreads out horizontally along all the hard surfaces. Tomorrow might arrive on the roadway across the water. There will always be a roadway. There will always be a future. There will always be some idea of a country. There will always be words. There will always be voices. There will always be towns connected together by pathways of hard dirt and small, broken rocks. Somewhere out in the brush beyond the town there are frozen voices crying out in the snowy forest. Somewhere in the cold brush there are bodies. Somewhere out there flesh is freezing in the biting wind from the mountain. Some mountain waters become ice. Some waterfalls freeze over. Some flesh carries the lingering scent of roses. Some flesh protrudes from the frozen mud. Some flesh becomes petrified. The bones in the earth will crust over with frost. In the winter, the mud will harden and freeze over. Bodies on bodies on bodies in the coolness of the night. Bodies reflected on the glassy surfaces of the ice. Bodies in the darkness. If there are bodies on those roadways. If there are steep pathways between the rocks that lead

up the mountain. If the flesh becomes still. If the bodies are drained of blood. If there is a tumbling in the air above us. If the darkness never lifts. If blood is gushed from every body. If some other, softer place is always just down the road. If some other, softer place is not softer at all. If there is a howling wind in the passageways between the broken rocks. If there is a nation. If there is a country. If there are bodies and towns and broken land and hunger and fire and windows that look out onto the road. If the moon reflects the light from the sun. If slow, intermingling drifts of sounds and scents float through the air. If bark is peeled from a tree. If the blood runs like a river. If there is fear. If there is sickness. If there are broken sheets of ice in the lake water. If there is the promise of warmth after the winter unfolds in the woods. If there are caverns in the rocks that lead us into darkness. If there is old light and bright snow and icy rocks. If the woods disappear under the ice. If the light between the branches is just moonlight. If the broken lines come together again at the centre of town. If the bodies hang in the trees just past the outskirts. If the south seems like a dream. If the town is just a point in space. If the smoke consumes the forest and the roadways and the town. If there are moments that lead to other moments. If there is the taste of rot in the air. If the bones sink into the mud. If there is ever true darkness again. If the lake sometimes shines in the light from the campfires. If there is just flesh in the snow and in the frozen mud. If there are no more hills or banks or caverns or ravines. If there are connections between the precipices. If a line is drawn. If the ice breaks open. If there are parallels between the tree branches. If there are voices. If the blood sprays into the air. If there are leaves scattered along the dirt road. If the road branches silently into other roads. If there is blood at the throat. If the bodies here in this village are forever. If the scattered rocks in the dirt can't quite be seen in the darkness. If the darkness drifts through until the day breaks. If the thousands of glittering stars above are never quite visible in the light from the afternoon. If the trees that have fallen in the forest by the village are cleared away. If there is the taste of wilderness in the town. If there is a gust of wind that follows the curvature of the valleys and glides up to the black clouds eighty or ninety feet up in the air. At this height, the shining stars are just a little closer. There is flesh and there are campfires and there are moments where they seem to intertwine and exist only together as one. There are bodies that walk through the trees. There is a darkness that drifts through the forest. There is water that hangs in the air on the drifts of darkness that brush the tallest trees in the forest. Just above the treetops there is a black, cold sky. Just above the treetops there is the old light from old stars piercing the darkness. Just above the treetops there is

the scent of roses and whiskey. Just above the bodies there are clouds of breath. Just above the glittering stars there is an emptiness. Just above the expanse. Just above the darkness. Just above everything there is a darkness that can only be heard. There are slow, intermingling drifts of darkness. Where there is smoke, there are bodies. Where there is fire, there are bodies. There is smoke here in the dark night. A night that drifts through the branches of the trees above and up to the canopy. A wind cuts through the trees. A trail of smoke drifts through the pine needles. The ripples in the frozen lake look as though they're always about to break. From somewhere under the deep, frozen lake. From somewhere in the dark water. From some other voice. From some other body. Some breath. Some wilderness. Some distance. Some ice. In the frozen wind, there is sometimes no way to tell what's smoke and what's snow. In the frozen wind above the icy lake there is some blood and some dirt and some silence. There are pieces of bark crusted with ice. There are limbs frozen into the lake alongside some branches and some dirt. In the coldest winds, some bodies can survive for just a few hours. Even in the darkness out on the frozen lake in the cold wind there is some other colder, darker place. But somewhere above there is light from somewhere other than here. Some stars can be seen above the lake and through the broken canopy. Somewhere above there is a soft, silvery wind that disappears into the trees and cuts through the night. Somewhere above there is a tumbling in the air a mile above us. If there is space between the towns and the trees and the roads and the shrubs, it is filled with a soft, heavy darkness. If there is space for all these bodies, it is here in the snow overlooking the path that winds through the trees that winds down into the town by the lake. If there is space here for voices, then they are as loud as they ever have been than before. Between the trees and the broken branches and the icy rocks. The ice drifts out over the lake and crunches against the shore. There is ice falling from the dark sky and breaking apart the frozen sheets on the lake. Beyond the curvature of the shore, there is the dark outline of the town. For a moment, the flesh is remembered by the forest. For a moment, there is a soft opening for the tired and the sick and the broken bodies of the earth to rest briefly behind closed doors. To rest briefly by a fire. There is time for quiet reflection. For a moment, the bodies exist here in the town by the frozen lake. For a moment, the town and the lake are lit up by torches and fires and stoves. For a moment, the town can be seen from the other edge of the shore. For a moment, light touches a place it has never touched before. For a moment the light from the town illuminates everything that surrounds it, and the forest is not the dark place it used to be. For a moment, the only darkness that remains is at the

bottom of the lake that seems to absorb any light that might touch it. Here, the light disappears. Here, there is darkness. Above the town there is a soft, silvery wind. In the woods, there are still frozen waters and icy bodies lost somewhere in dark, deep places. There are bodies that are stuck there at the bottom of the bottom of the frozen lake. Blood and snow and dirt and rocks and branches and ice. Blood sinking into the soft snow. Blood freezing to the surface of the lake water. Blood gushed from soft, delicate bodies. Blood gushed over and over again. Each body softer than the last. Today, the air is crisp and cold and tastes like salt. Today, there are frozen sheets of dark ice colliding with the shore. Today, the blood blooms in this water. The water at the dark bottom of the lake. In earlier seasons, flowers would bloom on this shore by the woods overlooking the deep stillness of the lake. But in this season, there is just blood and snow and ice and dirt and soft, delicate bodies between the trees. Today there is no flesh other than this flesh. There are no bodies other than these bodies. There are no shores other than these shores that crunch with ice. There are no sounds anymore except for the crackling of the fire in the woods. Beneath the broken clouds is a steep, rugged descent and a trail of bodies spilling down into the frozen lake. For every cheek pressed against the snowy trunk of a tree. For every drop of blood. For every limb. For every mound of flesh. For every broken body. For every leaf that has fallen from a tree. For every cloud that breaks apart. For every flake of snow. For all the broken rocks and immovable trees and deep, narrow ravines and soft, dark places. For all the leaves that have fallen to the ground. For all the right angles that cut across each other until there is a moment where they intersect. For all the dark mounds of earth and icy rocks and broken branches and intersecting lines of sight. For all the frozen chunks of driftwood along the shore. Voices can be heard somewhere out there in the storm. In the far distance, there is more smoke, more snow, more wind. All the clouds of smoke, all the drifts of snow, seem to intertwine with each other. In the far distance, there is another clear sheet of ice, another frozen shore, another islet, another mouth, another body gushing blood in the snow. Here, there is darkness. Here there is a stillness. Here there are glimpses of grey smoke billowing over the tops of trees in the distance. On another quiet shore. On another quieter, softer shore there are no bodies. No blood. No frozen fingers in the crusted mud. On another shore at a different edge of a different forest, there are quiet voices and calm fires and cooked meat and laughter and a cold wind. On this shore, there is short breath and burning fire and burning flesh. There are so many voices. On the shore, there are piles of bodies. The bodies are frozen together. The flesh sticky with blood. The flesh pressed up against other flesh out

there in the snow. Sometimes there is the taste of copper in the air. Sometimes after all this blood there is just the sound of the wind. All the waters are frozen. The water in the lakes and the rivers and the streams and the waterfalls are full of ice. Sometimes these waters break apart. Sometimes the ice finds its way to the shore. Somewhere out there above the frozen lake there is a tumbling in the air a mile above us. Somewhere out there away from the shore there is a clear sheet of ice and bald rocks just beneath the surface. Today, the sun is rising and lighting up all the piles of bodies by the frozen lake. The snow swirls around those bodies. Today, when the sun sets. Today, when there are just memories of wildfire. Today, when the frozen water is covered over with snow. Today, when there are numberless branches and the broken tree limbs and the black rocks and the mounds of earth and chunks of ice. Today, there is a flame. Today, smoke can be seen through the branches. Today, there are a few moments. Today, all bodies become lost in the smoke. For a few moments, the stars will light up a pathway that winds through the forest and past the frozen lake and between the mountains. If the west is to be made, then this flesh will make it. There are bodies. There are bodies that have voices. There are bodies that have voices that intersect with each other and cut through the wind. There are bodies that have voices that overlap. There are bodies that make the west. There is flesh that makes the west. If west is right now, it is caught up somewhere in the uproar of voices that come from the bodies in between the trees. If the west is right now, it hangs in the air on this breath. If the west is right now, then the ice and water must reflect the light from the moon at midnight and the flesh must witness it. If there are echoes of voice that cut through the wind. If there is light shining down on the flesh and the trees and the frozen snow on the ice. If the bodies are silent. If the flesh remains soft and delicate. If the conversations are overheard, the flesh might break apart. The bodies might gush with blood. What world breaks open in this silence? What trust forms from breath? What bitterness hangs in the air? What bodies fill the air with words? What flesh can stand this cold? What footsteps are covered over by the drifting snow and the rushing wind? What country is formed by these bodies? What nation cuts through this fog? Rocks and logs and immovable mountains and frozen chunks of driftwood and broken tree branches and icy lakes and piles of bodies and a soft, silvery wind. The air swells.

Empty Spaces is a book-length project that draws on the repetitive descriptions of landscape from James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans*, a book that, as Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz argues, played an important role in reinventing the colonial origins of North America. What started as a refusal of Cooper's representation of land as *terra nullius* quickly moved past this point to become a project about rewriting land and reaffirming Indigenous presence. Each chapter break is a moment of reversal, a moment where I started writing back and through what I had already written, returning to the same landscapes, the same places, again and again. In the preceding excerpt taken from the fourth chapter, each sentence has been written over, written through, written beyond, at least three previous times. Writing in, around, and over Cooper's descriptions of land, nature, and territory *Empty Spaces* rearticulates Indigenous presence. But it also asks what it means to be an urban Indigenous person, to have been severed from the land, or to have limited or no access to traditional territory (and also traditional knowledges). *Empty Spaces*, then, is also a project about imagining land through fiction—remaining in and reimagining a space that has been closed off and irreversibly altered. If there are constraints here, their bounds are what existed before in those spaces.

—Jordan Abel

Three Poems

Sophia Ashley

A Different Summer

a different zeal to go awkward against the dazzling resin.
her dry spell — skinned bayonet exacting water works on brown bodies.
so in motion find me irrigating farmlands, apportioning stains since salty;
they never nursed a sapling.
but in a way nursed my yearning for food.
worms crammed my grief-septic guts, unrobing their docile ribs for sparkle.
I convince the process I'm no calm breed.
each date reaps haunting.
heaven births from my skin: one saint from the order.
my faith, calving.
sometimes, the sapling shields itself from wrath. a fractured stem.
nature piecing harshly while I'm torn to shred.
I'm of the claim teff grains should yeast into injera, where loam profiles with blood:
evidence I am nearly religious,
lit as awful persimmon under a primed space.

Everything in need of Serious Quench

dessert kicks my thirst research,
the wasteland of onion sap.
cups, stripped of tedious water cure,
how tides are raw & tasteless, when in plastic view.

tongue aborting trace, & the odourless pleat of sputter at straw race.
you awake in series of blonde moment,

scatterbrained,
miscarrying a pitcher.

pouring & purring,
and fondling mist—till gas becomes our timepiece:
a fuming stopwatch, strapped to apoplectic wrist.

I squash my cheeks,
lifting the poor medal of white waste to the sizzling splutter of sulfur
splashed across ceilings.

we eye the binging attics & ethanol trees shedding peach gasoline,
to find this place in need of serious quench.

withstand summer like firefighters.
like we approve of its scourge & yellow rant sprawled atop space:
a shoreless ashtray.
& we its exceeding flint, massing like quick bread.
the cloud—a leprous tongue; chewed by vitiligo.
here rooms no appetite for raindrops.
the birch alone bears that psudenonym to ashing.

how well we raid winter with our bent bodies,
dissecting an ambergris fished from the folds of a sperm whale.

the autopsy in beads; impregnated.

I pull my sweatshirt to wear the heat costly as it is in the Bible:
my warmth of gas plant.
burning bush.

a rustling fuel,
spilt on kitchen slab as land mines stuck in all our wrenched veins.

The Earth Never Forgets

wine, top spilt wouldn't buy the notion of cups to our tusk shells,
bus to private beasts.
we learnt web design from the wrong spiders,
thumbing our worst sites in ambush for sleep.
out there, soldier ants trade pact with world peace.
snails weaved their spineless bodies into a fork duel,
that abates with the silvery flash of knife & chopstick.
here denies gold the luxury of a pale sun,
asterisks to book the stars for the slated now, making space lords out of our loved ones.
queer as it sounds,
couples take cats for next of kin,
& bring their sons to see to their litter box condensed with milk & victuals.
& primordial plants you'd be so drawn to hoard some for bath salt & palm sunday,
and share with the chewed garden and hairpin bend on main slum.
we all have that one pet keen on deforestation,
ripping where it did not sow:
a leverage on our honest quest for meals, riddled by throat chores.
trivial things brings this world to its kneel.
the ambience of rusty green,
trimmed to sphagetti straps.
say a global warming, & the world is hot naked.

Three Poems

Nnadi Samuel

Fossilization into Sonnets

wet providence that weans me off scrawling
this belly-flat on a tough lawn at the
rate termite words my body. gas, stuck within their
trachea in serendipity with my previous life how I hoard sourstuff &
implode—attempting to rid myself of hiccups unaware of a mutation
that sells me prey to
natural selection where I'm survived by bug bites.
the many precipitation to ward off
the mining bees, salty with sulfur tacked
to my forehead asking after what gas
powers me If I still resort to the crime
of self-arson? such greenhouse effect
the shapes traced to my bruise,
crosshatching
like subsets cropped from a Venn diagram:
this topic that refuses grasping in ways
that ropes me in/instead.
I—a subject that triggers grief.
a maths for your distress even God
dreads my almighty formula for rot
It is evident in the malodorous grassland.
I evolutionary biology I callous
maceration of tulips I catalyst for
fervent labefaction smashed onto a
sonnet of ploughed verses by means
of burrowing hands.
hands, soil calculative of rot

in hour that stinks of usual,
hands apportion my mess harmed by a
toughness that doesn't stop the liquefying
of this poem
I faith a stubbornness that outfoxes my
boiling point where how I'm resolute is
how I join in the religion.
how the moth will axe my ribs
to a harmonica prizing the small
bone of longing how I'm fast
becoming the zeitgeist of a prairie wolf pestling this lawn, belly-flat
vulnerable to mud-dialect with the arena in
tepid and inconsistent language: patter
& persons unbelieving of my sapience, yet
receptive to thoughts that I am breed of a
higher knowledge come what I
went through.
always this hands that gives me off.

hand
as verb doubling their shifts
replenishes hand
as a field does, when grazed upon
sprouting a fern that blades through to
revisit nuclear hands.

to be answerable to the furnace that mediates
sun
as a lad announcing his birth place
retain ownership of your hands.

to learn a wilder form of your own
existence
curtail excesses of same hands &

allow we in our spiritus mundi toil in rough permission what's left, with hands.

On some Shapeshifts, I Wish Myself a Ferrous Poise

glossy with aging, in that green conceited morning.
rot terrifies me.
fossil, barrelling through my measured loin.
I conserve light at the slightest crack of dawn,
from things that pass for broken:
my delicate mother. the thunderstick upshot high,
where greening kites in rebellion. where if we must be virtuous; it must be now.
how we pollinate the tortuous air,
feigning aerobic to a sky laced with gravity—ebbing towards collapse.
lonesome apocalypse, armageddon bred.
I kneel into every war root-roughened, land grabbing,
naming each soil after my fingerprints seeding long stains.
tuber crop nurses no wish for height & crutches:
costumes that come natural as I, inactive in this vegetative state,
retiring from life on a third limb. once, young saps take turn in mockery,
unknowing a body like mine would sudden on them.
I long for rebirth in a nursery of shrubs.
I long for company, for the effrontery of gulping spaces.
going barefaced each dig from the trowel, with a knowledge that'll stem on fertile lips.
A youngling resumes adulting; too ripe for joy, too healthy with risk fruiting loudly.
permit me all that productivity for each moment grief finds me, spineless,
witnessing my elasticity when I stretch to bear all of that strain, that plantain exhaustion.

Forest Maths

Dawn in graphics:

a brightly cropped cloud takes dew across the length of a waxed May, left undated
like a girl refusing to repeat her skin.

raw light greens me to fed wisdom, stunned by a famished desire.

this much piety to sun, all for my faultless photosynthesis.

nothing is fertile than this hardship.

I attend the wild reserve of oxygen to exist.

stuck to a cylinder & inhaling of rich aura.

at dusk, for want of grape, I did a heartless thing.

life, snapped soon as the smashing of quick thumbs

ending a sapling peeled from the underbrush of dead nails.

blood massing the infinite length of my palms, like the alarming of a red text.

I say this with all aspects of my tear gland, death-eager as a budding poet.

I have seen absence become a metaphor for loss & decay.

time sorts the almighty formula for rot.

I'm elsewhere, happening to you as a puzzle

stalking you through the forest maths of trees & feral surd

like a topic for your distress.

what branch of thought triggers grief?

In the tongue-lolling umami of words, I'm a lad teething in honeyed places.

allow me this branding of dental relish.

we'd have more nights to worry about the sweetness of being veggies.

In Conversation: Storming the Weather

Phanuel Antwi & Junie Désil with Benedicta Bawo
& Maysa Zeyad

In the aftermath of the public, viral, and extrajudicial killing of George Floyd, many Black frontline workers and others in the support and caring profession gathered over several months in Zoom sessions facilitated by a local Black registered counsellor. During these virtual meetings, the particular issues Black residents and Black staff working the frontlines in the Downtown Eastside (DTES) neighbourhood of Vancouver face became more apparent. We were all weathering repeated exposures to adversity, racism, and marginalization and getting by, often in isolation.

At various times during my off-and-on work in the DTES, various Black folks have met to discuss the issues of anti-Black racism that persist, from the lack of access to culturally appropriate body and hair care to the lengths Black frontline staff must go to ensure Black members of the community experience care, safety, and support. As part of this process to initiate dialogue, Phanuel Antwi and I interviewed Benedicta Bawo and Maysa Zeyad about their experiences serving populations made vulnerable through the interlocking systems and structures of settler colonialism, capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and misogyny (to name a few), focusing on the weather as metaphor. The interview has been edited for length and clarity, and the name of the organization has been omitted for the safety and privacy of its staff.

— *Junie Désil*

Maysa Zeyad My name is Maysa. I came here ten years ago from Yemen. My dad is from Yemen and my mom is from Somalia. When I first came here the first thing I had to adjust to, unfortunately, was subtle racism. This was very interesting for me to experience because, back home, it was open racism. So that subtle racism is what I currently want to change at the place that I work, where I am at. I work at our organization and I support women—if they're willing to let me do that.

Phanuel Antwi Can we hear a little bit about the kind of work you do that is often taking your cue from the people who come to you for support as opposed to imposing support onto them?

MZ So for me, I feel like it's if somebody tells me to do the dishes, I know I need to do the dishes, I know that it's best for me to do my dishes, but if somebody is constantly telling me to do my dishes, then I'm going to say, no, I'm not going to do them. But if I know that I need to do it, I'll go and do it at my own pace. That's how I relate it to my work. I don't want to impose my support on anybody, when maybe they don't want my support, maybe they don't need it at the moment. And who am I to go and tell them: "You need to do this; you need to listen because I'm a housing worker." I cannot tell them: "Oh, sleeping on the street, that's not the best for you, let me support you, find you housing." Maybe they're not at that stage yet. If I come and force support on them and eventually, they do what I want them to do, then it's taking the power from them, and that's not the work I want to do. I want to empower women; I want to give them their power back.

Benedicta Bawo I wanted to touch on what Maysa said, because there's something that happened a few days back. There was this woman who didn't want to work with me, and she said she wanted to work with someone who spoke English—English she could understand. It hurt me [laughs]. It did hurt a little. It was like, "what does this woman need, and how can we get this woman to the point where she will get what she needs, even if that support does not look like me or isn't me?" Support comes in different ways, and it's definitely up to the person to receive it or reject it. To choose what support would mean to her.

Junie Désil What I'm also hearing is that there's this particular space occupied by Black people and racialized people where people don't want our help or support. How do we navigate that?

BB I think it's a journey, it's a process for me. When I first started working at the centre, I would get one or two racist remarks, and I felt like I'd gotten to the point where

it wouldn't faze me anymore. There would be a break, and then something would happen again, and then it did annoy me, and I was like, maybe I'm not over this thing, maybe I'm truly human. But I don't think anybody has the answer to that, because I find that people here, and this is just my experience, people here are used to Canadian things; Canadian and American accents, whatever that means to them. I'm still learning on my journey, trying to not be offended while still providing support.

MZ For me, I always have my boundaries. There's a difference when somebody comes in with curiosity and when somebody is either mocking the accent or not willing to work with me because I'm a different race from what they were used to working with, or if they feel a bit threatened. And that's an actual example of something that did happen with me, with a client that said they felt threatened. And I asked them — because at the end of the day, it's not all about me — I asked them what made them feel threatened by me, and it was related to somebody else who resembled me and had hurt them in the past. I asked them, “do you feel comfortable if I leave the door open; do you feel comfortable if we talk outside in a coffee shop where there's a lot of people around.” Slowly, I started seeing a big difference. They started asking about my culture and showing interest.

BB In regards to that, sometimes I think it's patience, which not everybody has. You should be, you're encouraged to be, but it just takes time. It's a dicey situation because some people never come around. They never get to the point where they give you the space to really be yourself or give you room or understand or see the world from your point of view. Some people never get to that point. I know I have a hard time drawing boundaries, like, “OK, we're on different pages now, maybe I'll take a step back, you take your step.” I still have some issues drawing that line.

PA Both of you have pointed to the fact that patience is required with this kind of work, with the examples that you've given. You've got the pace of your clients, your own pace of being there, and then the pace of the institution. Oftentimes they are not aligned. I want to hear a bit about what it means: the pace of change and also the pace of work in the place that works at a different pace.

BB For me, my pace is the most important. I try to stay grounded in my body with what I want, what I need, and what I can give in a particular time. And this often changes, you know, sometimes it's this way, other times it's that way. I try to adapt too. One thing I know I could always depend on is how I'm feeling in my body. I've

realized—just bringing it back to the pace of the organization—people come, and people go, but I can't come and leave my body. I just have to take care of that part first. The second thing I also watch out for is the pace of the client. I try to be very flexible and very grounded.

MZ In certain situations, I don't want to take full control, I don't want to be the driver of the car. I give that ability to my clients, leave the ball in their court, and whatever they want to do first, I will support them with that. That's an ideal world, but in reality, it's me forgetting to take my break. It's me thinking about them on my days off and coming to work and calling them right now like, "oh, how did this go, do you want my support, do you want me to accompany you?" And I realize that, I'm forgetting about me. If I sink, who's going to pull me out? So, first I have to take a minute, take a breather, and ask them, like, how did it go? Did you try this? Give them that ability to go at their pace first, if that makes sense.

JD If you think of our workplace as a weather system, what does that look like for you?

MZ It's frustrating. It's very frustrating because within the organization itself, the mandate is very different from what we're practicing. We're offering to be anti-oppressive to the women, not being judgmental, being very understanding and not having that white savior complex while we're working. But as staff, we're not being taken care of, as women we're not being taken care of. As women with our own traumas, we're not being taken care of. Being a Black woman, coming from a different walk of life, not being appreciated or taken very seriously when we raise our concerns, that's very frustrating. If we're not implementing that work within, and for the women that work for this organization—the pillars—then how are we supposed to reflect that on our clients?

BB Most of our clients are racialized folks and Indigenous people too. It affects them. We are not being fed, so we can't feed them. I'm choosing to use "fed," but there's nothing to give because we haven't really been given anything. It's hard to reconcile idealism with realism because of what's going on right now. People have been complaining for years and years and years and years, and it feels like it's been falling on deaf ears. The front-line workers are mostly racialized staff, too. As it goes higher up, you know, you see a good number of white people, so it begs the question, who are you really serving and what's our mandate here? Just to add to what Maysa said, I feel like with the new managers, the staff has been given the opportunity to breathe a little. Before we

couldn't breathe because it was just, "go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go, go." You have things to do all the time. You have like forty, fifty clients. You just have so much to do, so you're rarely thinking about yourself. Now we have the opportunity to just breathe, get in touch with how we are feeling, our anxiety, and our triggers—just getting to reflect on different things that will make us more effective in our roles and in serving the women who come here for support.

MZ The other thing I know is that when this organization was started, there were seven staff members, and I know at that time there was not much of a Black community within the DTES. Looking back a little bit at the history, at what happened with Hogan's Alley, we see the effects of displacement and also how now everything's changing. We see a lot of Black people coming in, moving especially to the East Side, and yet the organizations are not giving Black People space, not doing anything special for Black History Month. We see conflict. A client comes in and they're like, "oh, you Black bitch, go back to your country, you're a terrorist." These comments come out because the Black community is not being engaged and we're not acknowledging that Black people have historically lived and are now returning again to the East Side.

BB I have worked at this organization for a while and I am not aware of what resources are available for Black folks. It's like we're left hanging. Sometimes when I have Black clients, Black women come to meet me and they're like: "I want this, I need that, I want this support." And I'm like: OK, well, join the waitlists. And it hurts to say that. But that's all I have.

JD Imagine not being able to provide something as basic as hair conditioner for Black women accessing our services. We have to ask our Black friends if they have any Black beauty products, and stash some away for the next time or the next client who will need these.

MZ Here's an example. I had a client, and she is from the same country as I am, from Somalia, and she was saying: "My hair is being damaged because the shampoo that I've been given, it's not adequate with my hair. But the staff don't get it; they're like, you get what you get." So she found the whole experience very frustrating, and finally she exploded and then the staff wondered, "oh, why did she explode like that?"

PA Can we speak a little bit about how as Black women in this space, you are finding ways to breathe, to feed yourselves, and feed others?

BB For me I think it's a bit of conditioning. I am from Nigeria, and back home in Nigeria, struggle is appreciated. Suffering is appreciated. If you don't work so hard, you don't get anything. And even when you work so hard and get chicken change, you should appreciate the chicken change because there are people who do not have chicken change. You are lucky. You're one of the lucky ones. Coming here in 2019, I came here with the whole idea: "I have to work so hard in school, work so hard to get a job. At my job, I have to work so hard to climb up." Growing up in Nigeria, I had a strong sense of community. You can't see someone who needs something and not give. It's just not possible. Your relatives could just come and eat off you for like a week or two weeks without bringing anything and, you know, it's just normal, it's what you do. When I came here, it was hard to draw the boundaries, because I would work late and be exhausted. I'd keep going. But five months, six months down the line, you're going to get tired. I think because I come from that background, I see helping my Black sisters as what I'm supposed to do. Some days I'm tired. I'm just really tired and I don't want to come to work. I still have to work, or I find a way to convince myself to go.

MZ Obviously you know how fiery I am, and that comes from my mom. I wanted to be an advocate for women, a voice for women who for whatever reason were on the spot, fighting against what was done to them, what wrongs have been done to them. When I told my mom that, she told me, your presence holds power. If you feel like you're being wronged or something is not right, speak up. Because if you're quiet, then who's going to do it for you? And that's why I'm always like, oh, this needs to be changed. And it does get exhausting sometimes, but for me, I'm learning the skill of advocating for myself, for the work environment. And the other thing that Bawo said—the sense of community and coming from Africa. We came here with that same idea of, if somebody is facing hardship, then we will be there for them. Working in our workplace like that, the weather does not allow it. We're told like, "oh, you can't spread yourself thin." But at the same time, it's not us spreading ourselves thin. It's just the way we were raised.

BB I wanted to add that for me, there's also support at work. There's Junie, there's Maysa If I want to rant, I just go to Tim Hortons and say, "oh this happened and this happened." And then we go back and we're normal and we go home. I still have some support at work too, Black women and other people of colour.

PA I'm struck by the "way that we were raised" comment and the role that might play in tiring us . . . How do we continue to move through the world? I'm asking this question because you are all repeatedly saying, that it is frustrating, saying, "I'm exhausted" and "I'm tired."

BB It's exhausting because you can only do so much. When I'm very present in my work, I realize that even though I take ten things out of my to-do list, twenty things still appear. There's another ten things after that. You work so hard, but you can't do it all. That is very exhausting. The second way is when a Black woman needs something I cannot provide. And I have Googled and called everybody and they're like, "oh I'm so sorry, we don't do this here." Half of the Black women that come already meet me with half expectations. I often want to be like, "ta da! Yay, we did it together." But then I'm telling them the old sob story that they're used to, so that is also frustrating in its own way. Another way is of course we're not being paid enough or being supported enough in this space, in this weather. There's not enough rainfall, there's not enough sunshine, there's just drought [laughs]. And we just try to, you know, grow, we're the seed that still tries to grow, grow, and grow in this terrible situation.

PA What happens to a seed that's trying to grow in a drought? Can we finish that metaphor? What do you imagine could happen to that seed?

BB Even if it sprouts and has small flowers here or there, they wouldn't be out for too long. They would die, they would die—they wouldn't last long [laughing].

MZ And as much as it is frustrating, I want to be that thorn in this whole wicked system. What makes it OK for us to be underpaid? What makes it OK that we are not being fed enough to be equipped enough to do our job? At the same time, why do we, working in our organization, find a way of venting out and spending our own money to feel fed and feel like, "oh, I'm good now, I can go back to work." If the majority of people that were working were caucasians under those same conditions, it would not have stayed that way. But we stay in the same condition, in the same working environment, and eventually accept it the way it is, because everywhere we go is going to be the same treatment for Black women. That goes back to deskilling and leaving that seed in a drought area that does not allow us to grow. I want to frustrate the system that allows this to happen.

BB I also wanted to add that this system chooses racialized folks. Some racialized folks are not used to having a voice. They're used to being shut down, being grateful for the little that is given. When a lot of people have that mindset and they work together in a place, the chances of them fighting the system or fighting for a change are slim. Because this is just normal, because it was worse back home. Here it seems slightly better, at least they pay in dollars [laughing].

PA [laughing] "Pay in dollars" —that's so good, I'll remember that.

BB Even before I got my current job, they kept asking me for Canadian experience, and I was like hey, I came from Nigeria and I just finished school. I have a lot of Nigerian experience—and I did have a lot of experience. You tend to be grateful for the little you've been given, and it's only when you start living that life of little that you realize, oh, there could be more, there is more. Why am I settling for little?

MZ That's why I was saying it's conditioning, leaving us in a dry area where you think it's the norm. And why should it be the norm?

JD You hear people saying that's how it's always been. And what I find heartbreaking, especially from racialized folks, is the "oh well, I'm just biding my time until I leave." So, it's these conditions, these drought conditions, where the expectations are low for good reason.

PA A poem is coming to mind, "Harlem" by Langston Hughes. The poem goes: "What happens to a dream deferred? Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun, or fester like a sore—and then run? Does it stink like rotten meat, or crust and sugar over—like a syrupy sweet? Maybe it just sags like a heavy load. *Or does it explode?*" Everything that you're saying is making me think of this poem. I think the four of us are in this space because these are concerns that we live with differently, and we are trying not to explode.

[nodding]

BB This takes me back to your question about pace. Your pace, your client's pace, the organization's pace. I said it was my pace. But this is not always the case . . . I try to set intentions for myself. In this space, what do I hope to achieve? I really love the women I work with. I love the women I've come to know while working at this organization. I also know that my plans two or three years from now are to not be in this organization. At this moment I'm trying to do my best with all the limited resources I have. I'm also trying to gain new skills. What I find is that after doing my best with all the resources that I have, I'm too exhausted to get the new skills that I need to go on to the next stage that I want to get to. I've been telling myself to be more disciplined, to do this, to do that. I try to set boundaries at work. I show up on time, I show up as myself, and I'm happy, bubbly. I try to drop a few jokes here and there to see people smile. I do my work. Even if I have to stay back, I tell myself that it won't be more than an hour. The fact that I don't get to do what really feeds my soul makes it hard for me to show up as myself at my workplace, because my creative side isn't blooming. I'm trying to breathe.

PA What feeds your soul?

BB Music. Music does. I have a violin here that I'm still learning to play, but I don't have time to learn to play [laughing].

MZ Bring it to work! [laughing] What's keeping me from exploding is seeing that there's a dream still happening. Yes, in the past, people come and go, but at the moment the team that we have, they've had enough. When I talk to my coworkers, there's still some hope. Maybe the clouds are gonna move and the sun is going to shine ...

PA Can we handle the rainfall that comes when the cloud parts? What is this rain like? When the clouds part, what do we expect to see come down.

MZ I hope for a beautiful change. I believe at this time, this generation, our thinking is different than how it was twenty years ago. So, there will be a huge change. And it's going to be uncomfortable for us, because we're all used to how things were. With this huge change there will be a lot of anxiety, uncertainty. And that's when we can start to build brick by brick with this new mindset.

BB And the rain would allow the plants to grow ... in a broader context, just the rain that would empower women, the immigrant women, the Black women, not to settle for less and not to just take what they are given.

MZ And not feel like we were hired as a token to show the world diversity. We need time for ourselves, to grow, to say this is enough—I need a moment to step back. And it will be different because we won't be expected to do everything and be like, oh, we're okay, and walk away. Instead, we're mentally supported and we don't feel like when we go home, we're alone in this. My work environment really doesn't care about how we feel; they just want to see results.

PA It's been this emotional roller coaster listening and learning from both of you. Feeling a sense of familiarity with the experiences you're talking about, from a completely different context. It makes me sad how we are encouraged to exploit ourselves for the benefit of an institution ... and made to think of it as supporting the communities we belong to, or the vision we have of the world. It makes me understand a little bit more why I do what I do, and it makes me want to change how I do what I do. Thank you for allowing me to reflect through you and understand myself a little bit, in terms of how I operate in these institutions. I think we've been quite coy about this, so maybe I will move from that coyness and say, how do Black folks live in the weather?

BB Well, it feels like the weather wasn't made for us ... and we have to keep wearing winter jackets to fit in this weather, while we're made for tank tops—that's how it feels sometimes. I think, for me, I'm always shown how helpless I am. There's our organization as an institution and then there are other institutions that affect our institution. Even in my relationship with other institutions that affect our organization, I have power, but I can still only do so much. I can try and try and try and try but sometimes, regardless of how much I try or how hard I try, I still meet those roadblocks. It's like I'm not doing anything Right now, that's how I feel.

MZ For me ... it's different every day. Just like how Bawo said, the weather is not meant for us. Some days I'm hiding from the weather and protecting myself. And then there are some days where I'm standing out in it, and I'm like: "This weather is not for me, but here I am, what are you going to do?" It's about trying to find that one state where you're like, this weather is not for me, but I will make it work for me. For me, I have not found out how to create it, yet. I'm just navigating through this whole weather pattern, trying to find my own space in it.

JD You both have such beautiful ways of explaining and talking about that experience of this weather In my experience, as a Black woman, I know that I will interface with various institutions and people will still defer to my boss, even though I'm in a Director role. Sometimes it's subtle and sometimes it's blatant. You get shit on by everyone—clients, colleagues, other agencies. You go home and you have to ask somebody, did that just happen? It's just to say, the conditions don't often allow you to fight because you're so exhausted from fighting to go to work, to show up. That's the weather [laughs].

MZ The way I'm thinking about it is that we live in a society where there's a bigger weather pattern. For example, we are already portrayed, Black women and Black men, in a certain way. Coming to the workforce, the darker you are, the more challenges you face. When you come into the workplace, your managers, your supervisors, the organization itself has to set things up to protect you. For example, if a client says "she's aggressive to me" and she has no reasoning, it has to be said: "Why did you say this woman is aggressive? For what reason?" The organization has to let them know we don't allow this in this environment. I have seen instances where a woman says to a coworker, "I don't want to work with her because she's intimidating." And so the co-worker says, "OK I will work with you instead." And that kind of makes me feel bad because I'm thinking, am I aggressive now? I have to reevaluate myself. Those are the conditions,

the weather we're working under. I have to remind myself constantly, like no, I'm not aggressive; I'm standing my ground. I have my boundaries. And I do worry a lot, because, for instance, I will say what I'm feeling right there and then. I will say that this is racist, and why it's bothering me, and try to explain. But sometimes it's coworkers that say stuff that they don't even realize is racist. And then when you explain it to them, like hey, this came out in a racist way, this is a racist statement—they don't perceive it that way. They perceive it as being hostile. As "this angry Black woman will always get mad about everything." Then it just makes me very frustrated. And like, is this really happening or am I crazy?

BB I echo what Maysa said about having managers who understand or who are willing to understand what it means to be Black, a dark-skinned Black person, what it means to be Black generally. My manager is very supportive. I've had women who are like, "I don't want to work with her." I find that oftentimes I try to avoid those situations for the good of everyone [laughs]. Of course, there are times that I can't . . . There was this incident where I was working with one Black woman and one woman of colour, and we're both light-skinned. There was this guy that was coming at us, but he came at me. I was the one he came at, and I just kept thinking, this is something to think about . . . Sometimes I feel like people already perceive me as aggressive. And while that has its disadvantages, I find that sometimes they would rather not mess with me. It's not really a benefit, but I see it play out sometimes and it saves me the stress of having to prove something. The support is very important, especially in the organization because we're working with women who have mental health issues. There's this line, where, okay, this is mental illness and this is just personal bias. Sometimes it's hard to walk that line. You're encouraged to speak your mind and say what you feel. But once you do that, you're in trouble. You have to find a way to be diplomatic. Maysa is a huge support—she has no idea how much she helps me get through things. There's been one or two incidents of racism, but most of them are subtle . . . like what Junie said, did this really happen? Having someone to talk to about these incidents and having managers who back me up helps me a lot.

PA That's brilliant, brilliant. And what I'm loving and hearing between you two, is the network of support that you offer each other in navigating the colourism and the differential gender treatment in these institutions, in different ways, whether conscious or not.

MZ One example that I found was when Bawo was applying to be a supervisor, and what she had to go through, all the barriers she had to face to become a supervisor. I

found myself subconsciously being overprotective of her, wanting to protect her from how the weather was treating her. And it just got me thinking about how later, when she wants to apply to be a manager or wants to move up, how hard it will be for her just based on her skin colour being darker than mine.

BB Thanks for pointing that out Maysa [laughing]. I really liked when I came into the organization and I saw Junie in a position of authority. I was like OK, I see things are different here. I think a lot of Black women and dark-skinned Black women should be in positions of power so that people like me, when I look up, I see someone who looks like me. I won't be the first person aspiring to look up. And hopefully whoever gets up first would send a ladder down to get other people. This is not my personal experience, but I've had friends where their Black colleagues don't want to associate with them because as Black people they are trying their best to survive. They don't need to carry someone else on their back. I'm really glad Junie is here and Maysa is here and we're happy [laughs].

JD We're weathering the weather together.

BB I think we should say storming the weather. ■

Vancouver Special: Disorientations and Echo

Lauren Brevner & James Harry, Lacie Burning,
Charles Campbell, Gabi Dao, Chief Janice George
& Willard “Buddy” Joseph, Simon Grefiel, Katie Kozak,
Valérie d. Walker, Lam Wong

Vancouver Special: Disorientations and Echo is on view at the Vancouver Art Gallery from May 29th, 2021 to January 2nd, 2022. It was organized by five co-curators: artist, curator and cultural critic Phaniel Antwi; artist, Audain Curator of British Columbia Art, Grant Arnold; independent curator and author Jenn Jackson; University of British Columbia assistant professor and curator Jeneen Frei Njootli; and artist and independent curator Christian Vistan. The emphasis of this second iteration of the *Vancouver Special* series (the first was in 2016), is on previously unexhibited works that hold a particular resonance for this time and place; the artworks on display address themes that include cultural resilience, the articulation of suppressed histories, the imagining of emancipated futures, and the performance of identity and embodied knowledge. The selected works for Issue 3.45 of *The Capilano Review* feature ten of the artists exhibited and were curated for the magazine by Phaniel Antwi.



Simon Grefiel *Solar Noon Shine* 2021 clay rubbing, clay text, LED grow light, ceramic sculptures, leaf offerings, MDF sculpture

Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery Photography by Ian Lefebvre



Simon Grefiel *Tutelage Bondage (Wishing Spell)* 2021 musa acuminata, copper, lead, glass, anthurium bract, pencil drawing on paper, sampaguita leaves and flowers, limonium, 20 peso bill, aeschynanthus
Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery Photography by Ian Lefebvre



Lacie Burning *Blockade Rider* 2019
archival inkjet print
Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery
Photography by Ian Lefebvre



Lam Wong *Original Mind* 2021 dust, mirror, inkjet print, paint
Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery Photography by Ian Lefebvre



Gabi Dao with John Brennan and Elisa Ferrari *Last Lost Time (detail)* 2021 single channel video with multi-channel sound, objects

Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery Photography by Ian Lefebvre





Charles Campbell *Maroonscape 3: Finding Accompong* 2021
mixed media sculpture with audio

Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery Photography by Ian Lefebvre



Katie Kozak *return to the earth* 2021 archival inkjet prints
Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery Photography by Ian Lefebvre







Lauren Brevner and James Harry *KWIKWI Rememory* 2021 acrylic, oil, copper leaf
Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery Photography by Ian Lefebvre



Lam Wong *Original Mind (detail)* 2021 dust, mirror, inkjet print, paint
Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery Photography by Ian Lefebvre



Valérie d. Walker *Indigo Reverberations, Seeds of Life Scrolls huit* 2020-2021
hand-dyed bio-fermented natural indigo on organic cotton, plumbing tubing & metal hardware
each scroll 1.22 x 20 metres

Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery Photography by Ian Lefebvre



Valérie d. Walker *Indigo Reverberations, Seeds of Life Scrolls, Water and Wind Elementals* 2020-2021

two hand-dyed indigo works suspended over railings with others draping down through oculus

3rd floor view of *Textured Time III* 2019 digital archival print 2 x 2 metres

Courtesy of Phaniel Antwi, Photography by Paddy Takata



Valérie d. Walker *Indigo Reverberations* 2nd floor view of *Textured Time III* 2019 digital archival print, programmable LED lights 2 x 2 metres framed by *Seeds of Life Scrolls and Wind Elemental*
Courtesy of Phaniel Antwi, Photography by Paddy Takata



Chepximiya Siyam' Chief Janice George **Swan Feather Cape, nd** Salish weaving with feathers
Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery Photography by Ian Lefebvre



Chepximiya Siyam' Chief Janice George *Chief's Regalia*, nd Salish weaving
Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery Photography by Ian Lefebvre



Skwetsimeltxw Willard "Buddy" Joseph *Honouring the Ancestors*, nd 2021 Salish weaving
Courtesy of the Vancouver Art Gallery Photography by Ian Lefebvre

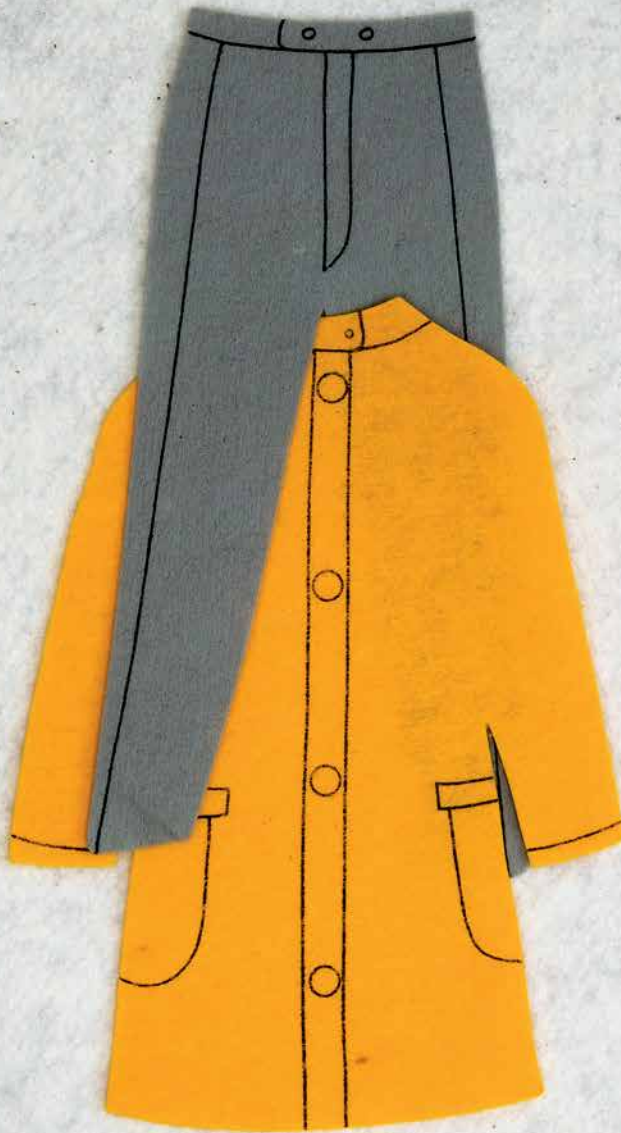
ACCORDING TO WHETHER

Lesley Loksi Chan

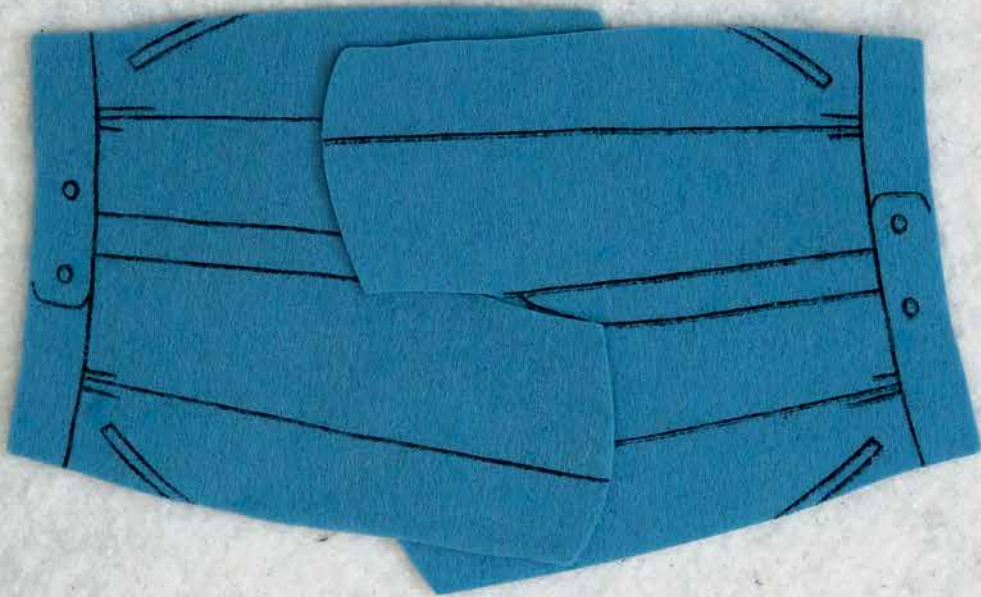


Lesley Loksi Chan *WE KNOW MORE THAN WE CAN TELL* 2017 122 cm x 122 cm

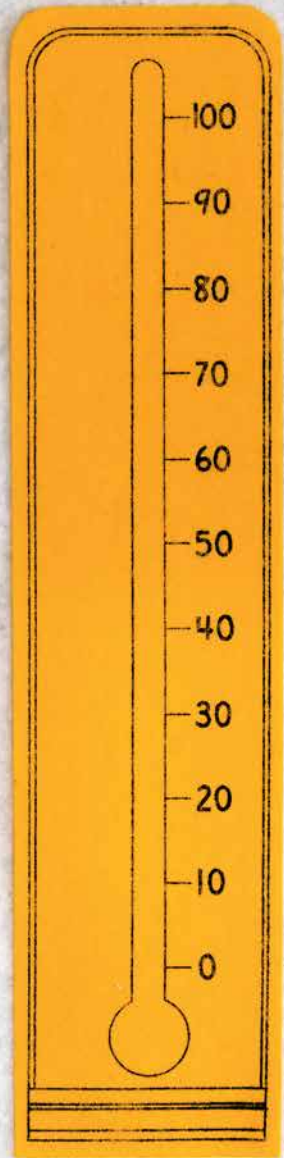
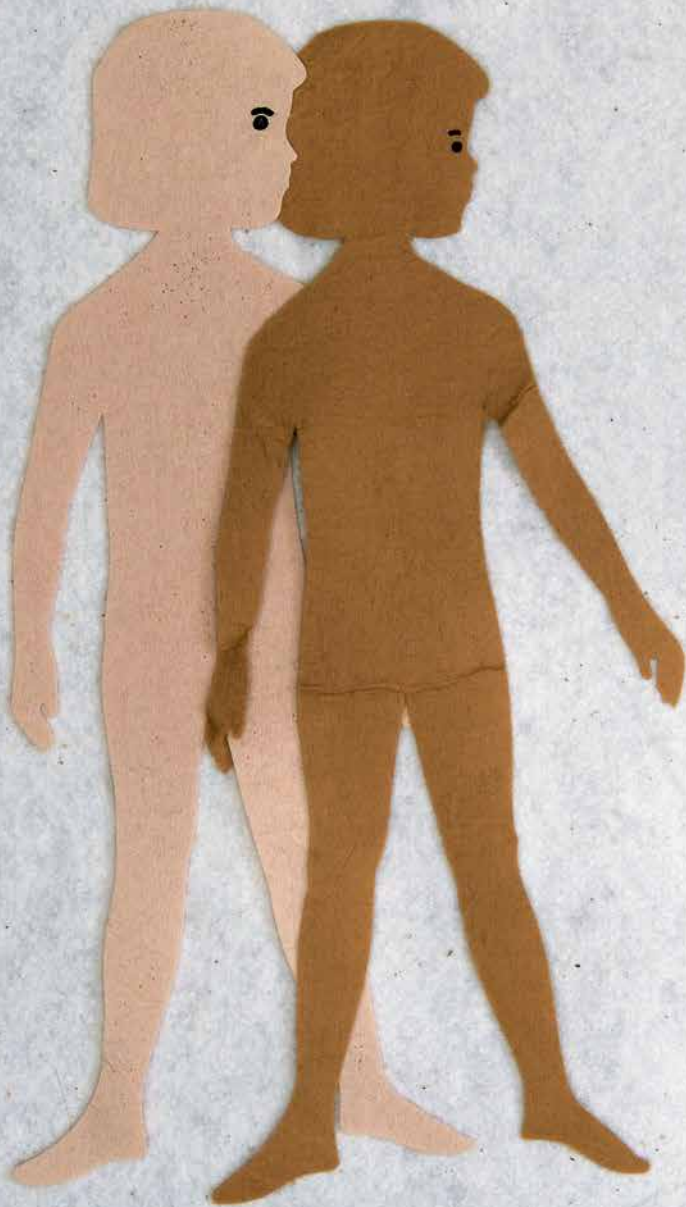
All images courtesy of the artist



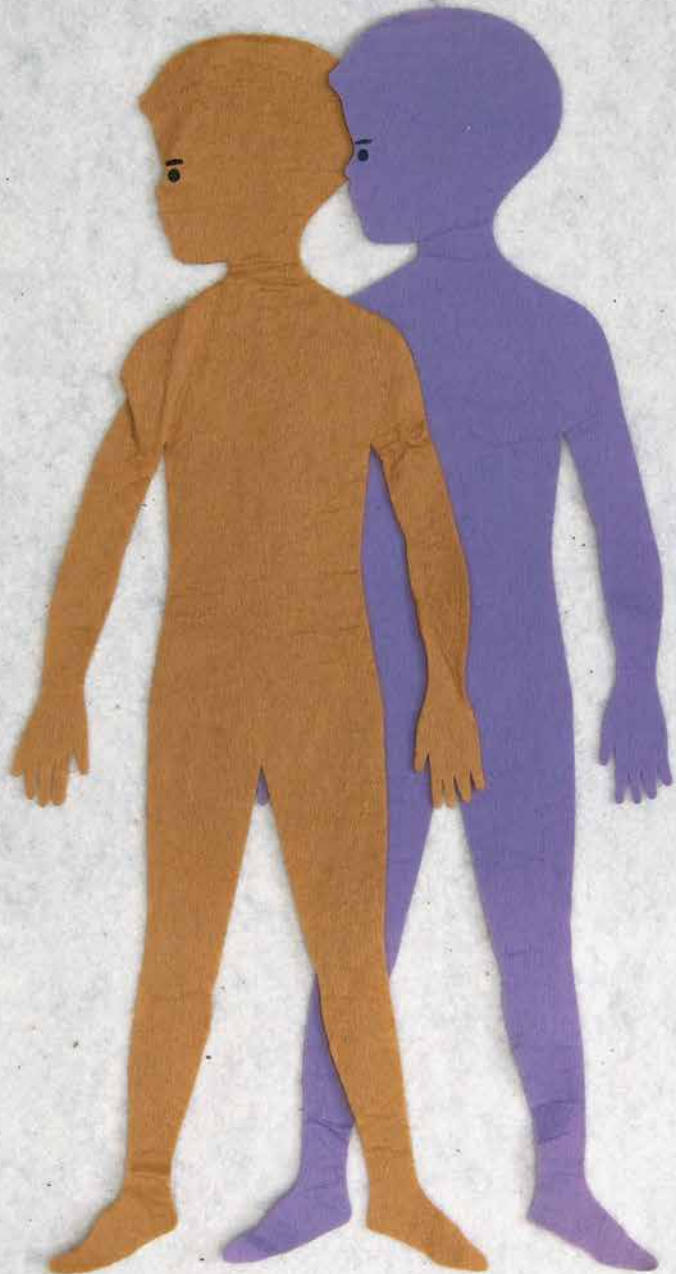
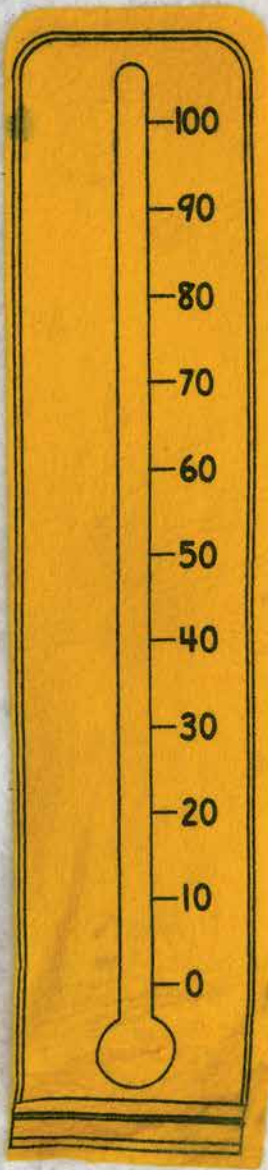
Lesley Loksi Chan *PARALYSIS BY INSTINCT* 2017 64 cm x 64 cm



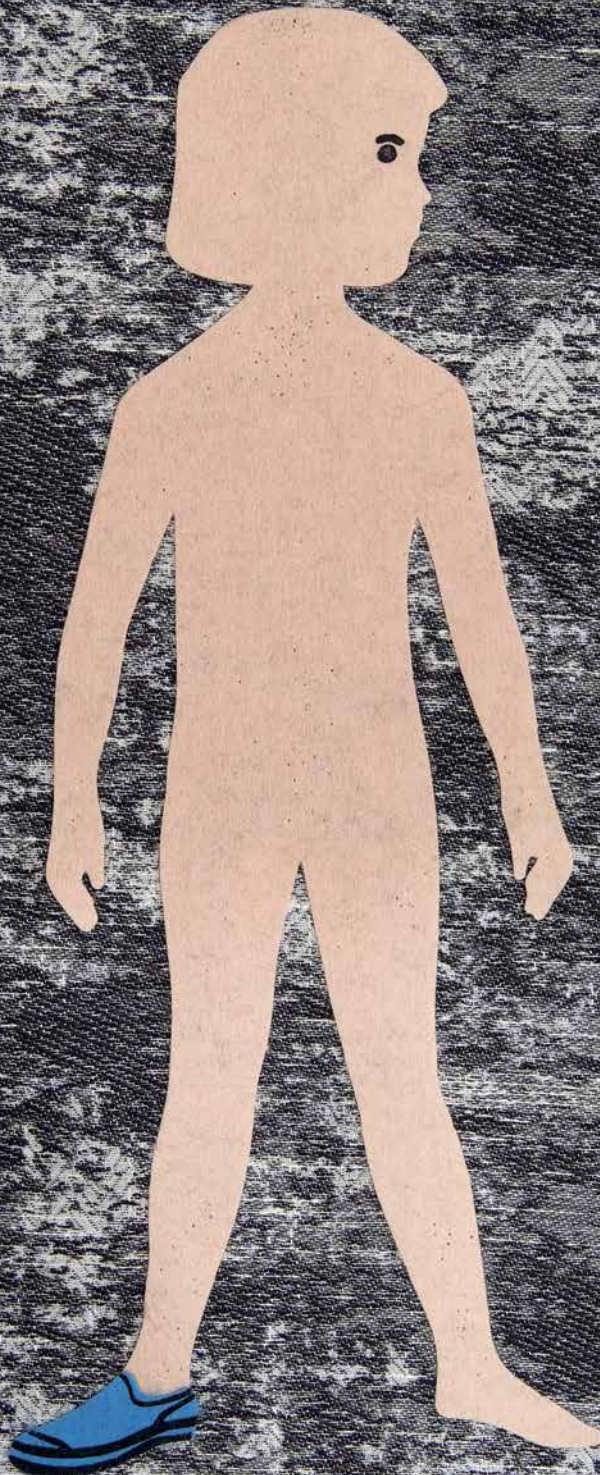
Lesley Loksi Chan *RHYME AS REASON* 2017 64 cm x 64 cm



Lesley Loksi Chan *SLOW TEMPERATURE, SILENT TEMPO 1* 2017 122 cm x 122 cm



Lesley Loksi Chan *SLOW TEMPERATURE, SILENT TEMPO 2* 2017 122 cm x 122 cm



A Felt Sense of Whether

Phanuel Antwi

Mechanically reproduced cut-out felt materials were often used as visual aids in many North American classrooms in the mid-1960s to early 1990s because of their ability to instruct kindergarten students on how to dress appropriately for each weather condition. Through a series of thirteen felted works—each of which combine mechanically-reproduced felt with traditional craft techniques—*ACCORDING TO WHETHER* recontextualizes these early childhood educational tools as cultural artefacts with larger social implications. Creating conditions that give each viewer an embodied sense of looking at these recognizable subjects and objects, multidisciplinary artist Lesley Loksi Chan lures us with an invitation—or a challenge—to question nostalgic assumptions surrounding events such as childhood while at the same time allowing individual and collective histories to bear on the meaning of each work.

Elements of touch and tactility backbone Chan's body of multimedia work.¹ The cut-out clothes at times stand on their own or overlap each other; at other times they lie on close-to-identical-figures, distinguishable only on a spectrum of colour progression (yellow, green, blue, violet, orange) across each felt set and discernible only due to expected gendered markers. The clear-cut contours of each figure's outline suggest anything but "neutral" figures, pointing to the violence of repression and erasure while provoking a consideration of the complexities that rest in children's bodies. What details, for example, are withheld and excluded in images of appropriate dress, what contours of children's experiences are left out alongside forcibly abandoned clothing?

A seductive feel to the series and to the materials used in them invites touch and also layered interpretation. The cotton batting matboard for the prints, a

¹ *Curse Cures* (2009), for example, is a film about women working in a jeans factory, told through moving images printed on acetate sheets on an overhead projector. The moving images are framed by hands that push each slide (and hence the narrative) forward, mimicking the movement of hands pushing fabric through sewing machines. And then there's *Making Ladies* (2010), a short documentary about feminist textile artist Allyson Mitchell's Lady Sasquatches. In more recent performance art works, *Tree of Human Touch* (2017) and *Massages by Strangers* (2018), Chan explicitly focuses on the experiences and meanings of touch and tactile knowledge in contemporary culture.

warmth-providing layer of fabric, brings to view the hidden textile background of the ubiquitous glossy fashion spread. Given this natural fiber's often-disavowed colonial and racial history, the visibility of cotton as the breathing surface on which the felt lies, conjoins the violence of cotton production to the material violence of felt making (of putting woolen fibers under extreme agitation) and is a detail not to be missed. This layering gesture—the ordinary, quiet intimacy of fabric on top of fabric—displays Chan's artistic skill as well as her acknowledgement of the lurking presence of violence behind beauty.

Another striking feature about this series is the way the pieces redeploy formulas of mass produced and machine-printed goods under Chan's precise hand-crafted techniques. Rather than reproduce the violence of these screen-printed and dyed felt cut-outs, Chan's exhibition offers an ethical and political challenge by refusing to conflate or view difference as a marker of separability.² The pieces invite viewers to meditate on the rhetorical gesture of the “mass” in mass production; they lure us out of a cultural investment in the moral value of local, homemade, and handcrafted goods, and into a discussion of how our aesthetics are changing as a result of mass production and mass consumption in artist productions. By explicitly engaging in tactile difference, Chan refuses the undifferentiated force of “mass” production and the ways its representations favour heteronormative whiteness while obscuring the material and bodily reality of sweatshops. Foregrounding people of colour, Chan allows us to see that hidden in this tactile production are the global labouring bodies of racialized people, and, given the industrial markings of technology in mass production, we furthermore come to see people of colour's labour in imagining different technologies.

Chan's style of approach, her sensitivity to the texture of our moment's movements (ranging from #metoo, #blacklivesmatter to #translivesmatter), allows her to search for an utterance that values the difference between direct and indirect modes of communication, an approach that can be seen in the series' playful title. Referencing Ai Wei Wei's high-profile exhibition, *According to What?*—itself a title which calls back to Jasper Johns' 1964 multi-paneled painting, *According to What*—Chan's turn³

² See Denise Ferreira da Silva “On Difference Without Separability” in J. Volz and J. Rebouças (eds.), *32nd Bienal de São Paulo. Incerteza Viva* (Fundação Bienal de São Paulo: 2016).

³ By now we are attentive to the space a turn makes thanks to Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* and Simon Unwin's *Analysing Architecture*—exemplified, in this case, with Ai Wei Wei adding a question mark to turn Johns' imperative phrase into an interrogative one. While Wei Wei's interrogation reveals Chinese totalitarianism, Johns' cryptic, indirect language suspends revelation towards concealment. Chan's engagement with these works reanimates an ongoing conversation between Contemporary Art and Art History.

from *what* to *whether* registers a playful pun with weather marked in the series by the presence of the thermometer. We can read in this homophony a connection to the educational context which instructs school children on how to dress according to the temperature as well as read “the weather” as Christina Sharpe does in *In the Wake*: as the debilitating and overpowering force of white supremacy across history and geography. These linguistic turns undermine the stability and transparency of *ACCORDING TO WHETHER*, and reveal a playful and subversive temperament that is against fixed, authoritarian discourse.

The ethics of Chan’s exhibition, then, is in its loud quietness that protests without the moral fictions of imperative or interrogation. The insubordinate spirit of *ACCORDING TO WHETHER* rises through how Chan subordinates the single polemic points of view of the male artists she references to foreground the unseen but felt spaces of racialized bodies. Through her deep engagement with the materiality of her art objects, Chan draws our attention not only to *ACCORDING TO WHETHER*’s invisibly charged objects but equally to the ways in which a layered aesthetics is also necessarily a collective aesthetic. ■

Spill

Kimberly Bain

The awareness comes to her while she sits on the stairs outside of where the house used to be, a stick in her hand. She pokes at the mud, her other hand crammed beneath her chin as her mind wanders from thought to thought, steam curling around cracked and jagged figures in the earth. Her small frame is clothed in a too-large t-shirt and hunched over to see her work better. There is nothing to do. The unforgiving sun beats upon the back of her neck, burning her hair and filling the atmosphere with sulfur and Softee™ Indian Hemp Hair & Scalp Treatment. The stick strikes the earth, deepening the hole. Her belly sloshes, hungry and overfull. She is going to throw up.

Her eyes cut to the legs standing beside her. She has nowhere else to look: beneath her the hole looms dark, eager for things to be buried in it; above her mother's eyes lie in wait; to look anywhere else is to see only more people standing around, shedding timid shadows all over the street. Her mother's feet are small, average at best, but they dribble over the sides of her sandals. The skin on the bottom of her heels is dry. There's a crease on her left foot, slashed right where the arch meets the heel. Her pinkie toe is twisted and the nailbed has been overrun by thick layers of flesh. Despite the richness of her skin, her feet are white — dusty and cracked. Thirsty, but not for the kind of rain that seeped into their house and then swept it away. It's cruel: being surrounded by water on all sides and still being thirsty.

A maxi taxi pulls up beside the street curb, music thumping loudly, the bass pushing against her eardrums. The door to the minibus slides open. Immediately the crowd surges forward, then draws back as the man who opens the door yells out, "Two! Only two seats!" He looks at her — bones and a belly — then her mother. "You — the Miss and the child!" Her mother grabs the hand with the stick as they're helped up onto the huge platform that makes up the floor of the vehicle. She's plunged into the tinted hold, splintered windows shattering the faces of the people within. In this semi gloom, she can tell that some sit with their mouths open, tongues just shy of rolling out. The heat of the day penetrates the metal frame. No one fools themselves into thinking it's done its worst. It's unbearable, but everyone bears it: the stench of stagnation; the wafts of sweat, burnt hair, urine; a dampness that refuses to dry. Her mother steps up behind her, a crumpled and

wet pile of bills clenched in her hand. She pays the man at the door: blood for her daughter and sweat for herself.

She counts fourteen seats, including the driver's seat and the doorman's seat up front. Between the bodies pressed close, she counts twenty-five people inside the hold. Eight are standing. Six are on the floor, seated with legs, arms, heads tucked in. There is space enough for two more. She and her mother squeeze in that small space, dirt smearing their palms. The door slides shut, the meagre flow of humid air from outside ceasing. Everyone holds onto the back of the person in front as the maxi taxi begins to move. There are no poles to hold, no hooks to grab, only the constant effort to remain vertical. It is a world made up of the haggard faces of people who have been sweating their lives out for a long time, in one way or another. She sits, sweat slicking up her armpits, as the pull of the engine causes her stomach to clench up on itself. Her head throbs in time with the music, and the vehicle groans, and beneath all the surface noise she hears what might be the underbelly: creaking floorboards, crashing waves, flesh slapping against metal.

Sitting directly across from her is a woman, flesh thick and swollen. For a long minute she stares as the woman's thighs jiggle from the bumps, wondering if the fat pulsating with the bass will melt like butter does and waiting for the flesh hanging over the side of the seat to drip onto the dirt covered floor. When it doesn't, she looks away in search of something else. The driver's assistant is counting the passenger's fare, money he now holds in his hands. *Hundred n' one, hundred n' two, hundred n' three . . .* He mouths the words to himself, smiles in satisfaction and begins counting again. Beside her sits an old man and woman. She watches as sweat cascades down the old man's neck to meet the yellowed collar of his limp shirt. He turns his head and smiles at the woman beside him, revealing black holes in his mouth where teeth should be. The driver yells something and turns up the music. The vehicle stops. She can't see past the mass of bodies to the door but can feel the pressure rising as more people try to squeeze into the rear, trying to fill the cracks. The driver's assistant can be heard swearing that there's enough space, yelling "There's room for five; five more!" No one says that there's no more room. The bass increases, the vehicle picks up speed.

There's a crack in the hull of the vehicle, right beside her knee. She squints, looking into the crack. Everything is blurred and it takes a few moments before her eyes can focus enough for her to make out images. *Cars; people; cars; buildings; rust, rot, peeling paint; red, green, yellow lights, or holes where they should be; thick black car exhaust; a McDonald's; a KFC; street vendors; rooftops, water stains, cars; people, people,*

more people; babies, children; skinny legs; umbrellas, wrists, ankles, tan arms, black arms; blurs for faces; skinnier legs, almost non-existent. The vehicle slows down and stops. Outside, bodies stand yelling, shouting, pleading, arguing. Stubbornness and misery underlie every word called out and heard but not listened to. Men and women and children are pulling bodies on to dry land, faces and bellies bloated with the flooding water and red from the sun; bellies bloated from the ocean and the rains that wouldn't stop. They cover them with tarps.

Her sister was one of those bodies: two hair puffs floating in the water, dress billowing around her, belly protruding upward. She was the one who found her. Already, they were to go somewhere else. Her mother had decided they would leave the place where the house used to be, had decided it days ago when her daughter couldn't be found despite her pacing up and down the streets, despite her wails and screams that faded to hoarse cries the longer they continued until her mother had nothing else to say and think except *leave*. They were leaving her sister where the floods deposited her. They needed to go but her sister needed holding. And where could she hide the hair puffs and the belly and the Dead when all the aid that ever came was intended for the Living—they only help the Living and don't care about the Dead—what to do but *drink*. And so she drinks her sister up and drinks the water that keeps lapping at her sister's feet, her sister's knees, her elbows, her neck—

When she throws up, only water spills from her mouth, slowly trickling down her lips. She heaves, and there's more, gushing from between her teeth. There's yelling, from the swollen woman, from the old couple on the floor, from the man by the door who's dropped his money into the water that's now filling the maxi taxi. The water eddies around the passengers. It won't stop filling the hold. Fingers tap at the inside of her belly, a warning. Someone begins crawling up the small space inside of her throat.

She heaves and heaves and heaves, and the water laps higher and higher.

Summer Day

Zehra Naqvi

You never imagined you would use your grandmother's scarf like this. Tied around the doorknob and then around your neck. You sit against your bedroom door, let your head drop, eyes roll, the scarf tugging at your jugular; you like the way the circulation stops. Suspended arms hanging by your side. Enough to numb, not enough to kill. You don't want to die but you want to.

You won't be able to talk about it till you leave him.

It's a summer day and you're running from him and he catches you and throws you to the sidewalk. He yells that he's going to kill you. There are children playing in the park. Your palms burn. And you feel the worst thing you can do is bring attention to yourself, so you ask him to quiet down. *Stop* never works. You pull your headscarf away because you don't want a muslim woman to be seen like this. A drunk white man slurring runs up and yells at him to *stop* and now he's got this look of confusion. And then a brown brother runs up too and he's pulling the white guy away and he's saying, *it's between these two, leave it* and the brother looks as if he recognizes this scene and you have never felt this betrayed. And you look at that white man. He looks like he has been sleeping rough, on the streets. *Don't hurt her*, he yells, and he doesn't move, and he keeps yelling at him. *You can't touch a woman like that*. The brother backs away, returns to his kids at the swings. He shakes his head, calls you a bitch, and stalks off. The drunk white guy stays. *Do you have anywhere to go?* he manages to say, slurring, his breath reeking of alcohol. *Can I get you anywhere?* You don't know the answer to that, so you say the first thing pounding through your head. *No, thank you*.

*After a while you stopped telling him to stop. Just to be quiet
so the neighbours wouldn't hear.*

In the mirror: you hold yourself. Hands touching arms. Your lips to your own skin. Slip your hand into your other hand and hold it tight. *Aloneness is the stuff of prophethood. Hajar, Maryam, Zainab.* It is warm here, in the years later, and the sun is shining on your arms, your breath alive and full, and your eyelids heavy like honey.

drought

Emily Chan

i thought the world would open
all at once
 like a flower unfurling in timelapse

instead it cracks apart in
fits and spurts starts
and stops jagged cleaving
 like the splitting of a robin's egg
 from inside out

we watch the baby shower
from across the dry grass park
my hand drifts to my abdomen
fingers brush absentmindedly
over that landscape of potential
it hasn't rained in weeks

you don't notice the gesture
(or else you do and choose
not to say a word)

later i bring it up in the dark
masks hurled in the hamper
the lingering burn of sanitizer

do you want...?
do i...?
but how can we?
knowing what we know?

this is the summer we buy
a HEPA filter
medical masks
more condoms

'93 babies
we have always known
the world is coming to an
end

god became a *man* who men worship forgotten-ly
but *man* is dissolving right in front of our eyes
and i smell the flesh rotting and i hate to
say it is turning me on.

and today i can't step outside / heat overwhelming me / rain gone / interior burning

*there are deer jumping from cages plummeting deathwards
distant cousins' legs tangled in the remains of their secretion
an airport lobby suspended with a plane that never takes off*

dreams find me even when sleep can't
morning breaks and i collapse in front of an altar, bare
adam's apple exposed, digits roving

i thought disinheritance was a disappearance but it is a relentless bond

a mob of kinship, an appeal of silent caresses, i became a delusion of territory

my thighs some wretched shoreline that exist

without estuary or shoal or ocean gaping so i, driven dry
accept the conditions, thankful when you feed me in ropes

under the table
after dark

in these times when i am

no land no name no body

(but i am alive)

The Outside War

By Genevieve Fuji Johnson

1

In 1941, I remember how the beautiful, bright greens of summer changed gradually into a dull rainy autumn, and almost before I knew it, winter arrived on our doorstep. Then, on that fateful seventh day of December, 1941, the distant war brought to our community a sense of despair and hopelessness we had not felt so strongly before.

...

Next day was work as usual until the mill's manager, Mr. McGee, told us the company may fire all workers of Japanese descent. We were shocked at his news, but he and Scottie the foreman later suggested they would try to keep us employed for as long as possible since they couldn't afford to let go of such highly skilled workers. So they just asked us to work as usual.

December 16, 1942

This is our first Ontario winter "experience," and it is just brutal! On December 13, the temperature dropped below minus sixty degrees, but we still had to take turns working! There are many jobs which must be done, and a lot of us are returning with frozen fingers, toes, noses and ears! Icicles hanging from nose and chin! More than 150 of us have to work, and some of the men are being so badly exposed, they are being hospitalized.

February 22, 1943

Temperatures of minus fifty, and howling winds refuse to relent. Blowing sand stings our faces and fingers stick to the doorknob as we struggle into the dining hall! I sympathize with the eight men in detention who have to go outside to work each day. It's inhumane

punishment for refusing to sign some forms! We are trying to keep busy indoors, and we have started to watch movies twice a week. The Geneva Convention stipulated the first movie was free, but we must pay \$4.80 from our canteen for the second movie.

December 13, 1943

The six men ordered on Nov. 24 to participate in the Conscription were again approached by Mr. Hallorman to sign Unemployment Insurance forms and other papers. They were sent back unsigned on Dec. 10, and on Dec. 11, the men were ordered to undergo a physical check-up for the Conscription, but they refused to participate.

...

The six men were penalized with ten days in detention. The outside temperature is falling below minus forty degrees, and all of us know how cold the holding cells get. We can only sympathize and feel so very sorry for our six internees as they suffer on our behalf (M. Ikoma, N. Kamisori, M. Kokubo, I. Ohkata, M. Onodera, E. Yoshikuni)

January 15, 1944

An official statement from the Department of National Defense, Army, signed by Lt.-Col. Machum states that, beginning on January 17, men from each hut must cut wood for camp fuel every day. The all-day work is compulsory. In a hastily organized meeting, our Isseis stated that, because they are true P.O.W.'s and under Geneva convention regulations, they will not comply as it is the ruling government's responsibility to provide the necessities of life. We Niseis unanimously agreed to disobey the policy... Since it was the government who decided to split apart our families and confine us, then I say let the government cut their own wood!

Robert K. Okazaki, *The Nisei Mass Evacuation Group and P.O.W. Camp 101: the Japanese-Canadian Community's Struggle for Justice and Human Rights during World War II*, translated by Curtis T Okazaki and Jean M Okazaki (Scarborough, Ontario: R.K. Okazaki, 1996): 1, 56, 62, 78, 100.

2

Beautiful, bright greens of summer changed
Before I knew it, winter arrived
That seventh day, the distant war brought despair

They cannot afford to let us go
They ask us to work, as usual

Howling winds refusing to relent
Stinging faces, burning fingers
The first movie was free. We paid for the second

The six men were ordered. They refused
The six men were penalized. Ten days
All of us know how cold the holding cells get

We Niseis agree to disobey
The government split apart our families
Let the government cut their own wood!

3

All of us know how cold the holding cells get. Yet, we were defiant
Northern winds blister our faces. On our backs a sun blazes, in defiance

Once we fished, farmed, and raised our families. Then they split us apart
We will never split their wood even as we are punished for days, in defiance

Bachan's calla lilies bloom strong. Dry earth, tall stalks reaching from bulbs
I kept from the cold to live again in the spring, always in defiance

Thanksgiving

Sanchari Sur

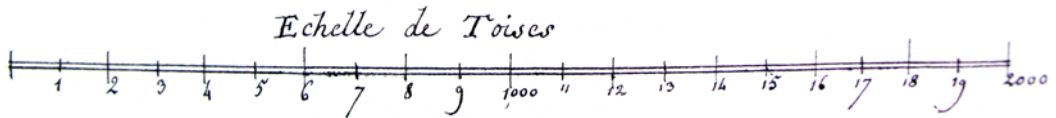
My parents live on Micmac street
detached house winding stairs backyard
lush veggies from the subcontinent:
eggplant bitter melon bottleneck gourd
sweet flesh stems leaves shushshado
two types of Bangladeshi chillies their heat
for fish curries
sweet-water fish rui paabda aar ileesh
flown frozen from Bengal lakes across the Atlantic.
Give thanks to verdant soil
unfettered sky.

The Incremental Coast

J. R. Carpenter

between the ship and the quay
lies two metres of incompressible ocean

two metres of light between the edge
of the sea and the horizon



our labours commence at sunrise
and do not terminate until night

every precaution is taken
to guard against errors

by calculations I arrive
at the exact number of months

I will have to endure this island
before a ship will be sent to search



already ___

I am ___

cramped ___

by these ___

small ___

divisions ___

of time ___



the coast establishes a sort of islet
within common human relation

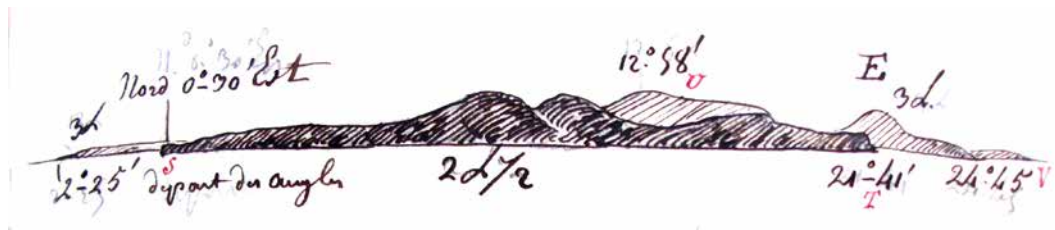
the months leave their notches on me
the island has no need of me

you want something to happen
and nothing does

what happens to the coast
does not happen to the discourse

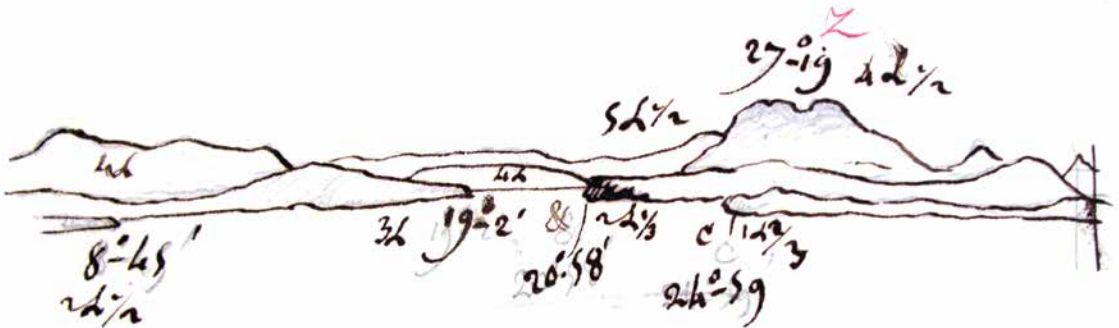
like a cork on the waves
I remain motionless

boredom is not far from bliss:
it is bliss seen from the shores of pleasure



those who have never been afloat
cannot be aware

of the inaccuracies arising
from the slight errors that creep into charts

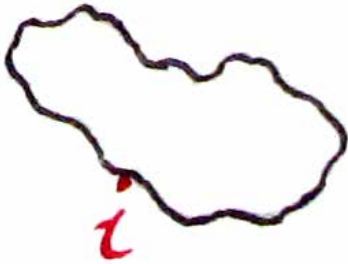


on a rock that dominates the sea
a metre is divided into centimetres

the Pacific could be measured on it
to within a millimetre

carved in letters
of five centimetres in height

the beginning of a phrase ...
I AM



I am the Controller of Weights and Measures
I am not necessarily captivated by the coast of pleasure

I am no longer anything
but an eye

The preceding text “The Incremental Coast” is an excerpt of *The Pleasure of the Coast: A Hydrographic Novel*, a web-based work commissioned by the “Worlds, interfaces and environments in the digital age” research group at Université Paris 8, in partnership with the cartographic collections at the Archives Nationales in Paris. This work asks questions about how the technology of the ship made the world measurable and thus navigable for western imperialism.

The title and much of the text in this work is borrowed from Roland Barthes’ *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973), with the word “text” replaced with the word “coast” throughout. Barthes’ détourned philosophy intermingles with scientific writing and images from a collection of sketches of coastal elevations and drafts of sea charts drawn by Charles-François Beautemps-Beaupré during a voyage for discovery to the South Pacific in the late eighteenth century. These unattributed and often indistinguishable voices are in turn interrupted by excerpts from a third textual entity: *Suzanne and the Pacific*, a symbolist novel by Jean Giraudoux (1921), in which a young French woman becomes shipwrecked on an island in the region of the Pacific charted by Beautemps-Beaupré.

Eveli Hau’ofa (1994) notes that Europeans, on entering the Pacific after crossing huge expanses of ocean, tended to see “islands in a far sea” rather than “a sea of islands,” drawing “imaginary lines across the sea, [and] making the colonial boundaries that confined ocean peoples to tiny spaces for the first time.” *The Pleasure of the Coast* blurs these colonial boundaries by calling attention to the moment they were drawn. It disorganizes the islands carefully recorded by Beautemps-Beaupré, turning them into a variable font for use in the writing of willfully impossible word archipelagoes. It also grapples with the post-digital world we live in, in which invisible layers of data inform our daily thoughts and actions; a more-than-human world, of vast oceans and ceaseless winds.

—J.R. Carpenter

Blueberry River

Rita Wong

They polluted our country so bad we cannot go out there by the creek and make tea. We cannot drink water anywhere in northeastern Peace River.

...And another important thing is too the berries have all disappeared. There's no berries around. The Blueberry River, they call it Blueberry River because of blueberries. So today there's nothing.

– Jerald Davis, Elder from the Blueberry River First Nations¹



A blueberry is a small, sweet medicine. A humble, watery globe, so fragile and so necessary.

Blueberry is also a mighty First Nation.

I remember spending time along the banks of the Peace River, watching a beaver build its home. Tasting the fresh, clean water of rare tufa seeps before they were destroyed by BC Hydro. Watching the eagles soar above us as we sang for the river's life.

How long does it take for a highway to kill an ancient forest? One year, one hundred years, two hundred years? We are learning through trial and error, mostly error.

Are we learning?

Cumulative impacts have taken us into climate destabilization, heat waves, intensifying forest fire seasons, polluted air, and poisoned water.

This August, each inhale a smoky one for young lungs.

¹Quoted in “Yahey v. British Columbia,” BC Courts. The Supreme Court of British Columbia, 2021, https://www.bccourts.ca/jdb-txt/sc/21/12/2021BCSC1287.htm#_Toc75942631.

Capitalism denies our reliance on the earth, refuses reciprocity, puts us on a collective death spiral, prioritizing consumption to the point of collapse.

Can cumulative impacts change this trajectory? Can cumulative impacts restore the land's health and people's respect for the earth?

If so, what would such cumulative impacts look like?



Blueberry River opens a path. I am grateful for the determination and strength of the Dane-zaa people in northeastern so-called British Columbia, who are holding the Crown accountable for its actions. Dane-zaa hunters, dreamers, mothers, children, Elders, leaders, and healers.

On June 29, 2021, the Blueberry River First Nations won an important legal victory. Suffering from the cumulative impacts of oil, gas, forestry, mining, hydroelectric infrastructure, agricultural clearing, and more, Blueberry sought, and received, an acknowledgement that the province of British Columbia has breached its treaty responsibilities and that it must not continue to authorize activities that breach Treaty 8.² The promise of the treaty was that Dane-zaa people would be able to continue their forest and river life, hunting and living with the land for as long as the sun shines, the rivers flow, and the earth remains.

Judge Emily Burke recognized that a tipping point had been reached. Dane-zaa people can no longer practice their culture the way they used to due to widespread and intensive industrial damage to their homelands.

Blueberry's reserve has been nicknamed "Little Kuwait" because it has been lit up and poisoned by fracking flares.³

²According to the ruling the province has six months to negotiate changes; on December 29th, 2021, it must stop authorizing industrial activities that have been devastating Blueberry's traditional territory, where more than 80 percent of the territory is within 500 meters of an industrial disturbance ("Peace River Corridor Industrial Development," Vidyard, <https://share.vidyard.com/watch/oMzaqY1bkyhVJV1esjBoRc>)

³Cox, Sarah, "'Our Way of Existence is Being Wiped Out': B.C. First Nation Besieged by Industry," *The Narwhal*, June 28th, 2016, <https://thenarwhal.ca/our-way-existence-being-wiped-out-84-blueberry-river-first-nation-impacted-industry/>



Can Blueberry and the Peace region be healed?

First the violence and abuse of power have to stop.

Violence against the land is violence against the people.

Clearcutting trees is violent. It is indiscriminate. It disrespects life. Logging can happen in a way that is selective, respectful, and sustainable. But this has not been happening in BC for the most part.

What would cumulative impacts *in the right direction* look like?

Trees are one answer, one key.



Trees—their death en masse, that is—connect the destruction inherent to the TransMountain pipeline expansion, the Site C dam, logging at Fairy Creek, the Coastal GasLink pipeline, and other resource extraction projects.

Across BC, millions of trees that we need to cool the climate are being cut down at the absolutely wrong moment. This is a cumulative impact and replanting them might not be enough to reverse the harm of killing the trees while they were old and sustaining a complex network of life.

There's no guarantee that young trees can or will survive the climate extremes we increasingly face. Still, stopping the clearcutting would be a step in the right direction.⁴



⁴The 1308 Trees project (<https://1308trees.ca>) was started as a way to oppose the Trans Mountain Pipeline Expansion (TMX) and associated plans to cut down 1,308 trees in Burnaby, BC without permits.

In the lengthy court case *Yahey v. British Columbia*, Blueberry reminds the court of “the need to leave areas fallow for rejuvenation.” Areas that were clearcut and poisoned as a result of industry were not “empty” or “neglected.” They were respected areas given space by Indigenous people, a practice that colonizers didn’t care to understand. Dane-zaa people conducted seasonal rounds, visiting different areas and only taking what they needed, generation after generation. They cared for the land. They still care for the land.

Healthy hunters are the sign of a healthy land.

Elders spoke of the bush being their store, and the wildlife their groceries. But the connection between Blueberry and the animals they harvest runs deeper than sustenance. One of the most important aspects of Dane-zaa identity is the maintenance of a relationship between hunters and the spirits of the animals they hunt. Hunters ‘dream’ their prey, and animals willingly give themselves to hunters who uphold their responsibilities.⁵

The judge also noted that the Dane-zaa’s freedom was important to them and “they spoke about it regularly.”⁶

The land is under siege. Biodiversity is under siege.

How long does it take a dam to kill a species? Track the caribou and find out. Trace the path of the moose that are missing in action. Families that used to rely on a dozen moose in a year, are now down to two, if that. Track the trout that they plan to truck past the Site C dam and see how long that expensive and insane plan goes on for⁷.

Watch the eagles, necessary guides and teachers, who are losing their nesting trees.

Up in the Peace Valley, forests are being clearcut the equivalent area of the length of Vancouver to Whistler. Billions are being wasted on destroying a precious

⁵ “Yahey v. British Columbia,” BC Courts. The Supreme Court of British Columbia, 2021, https://www.bccourts.ca/jdb-txt/sc/21/12/2021BCSC1287.htm#_Toc75942631.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Cox, Sarah, “BC Hydro’s Bizarre, Multi-Million Dollar Boondoggle to Save Fish from Site C Dam,” *The Narwhal*, April 4th, 2016, <https://thenarwhal.ca/bc-hydro-s-bizarre-multi-million-dollar-boondoggle-save-fish-site-c-dam/>

ecosystem, rich wildlife refuges, sacred burial sites, rare northern wetlands, fertile farmland, and more.

It is a heartbreaking mistake, one that Dane-zaa seers have foretold will end in failure. Two landslides have occurred near the dam site since BC Hydro started this disastrous “project.” When will the next landslide be? I have more faith in landslides than governments to protect us from the Site C dam.



A watery globe, so fragile and so necessary. Where a blueberry grows, or doesn't grow, is an indicator of health.

So is a healthy moose liver. And lichen on a tree. So much subtlety in a forest, so much medicine, stupidly destroyed by brutal colonial extraction.



Down in the unceded x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), S_kw_xwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) lands also known as Vancouver, we are connected to the Peace Valley because of the previously built WAC Bennett dam and the Peace Canyon dam, which provide roughly a third of the electricity we use. The grid connects us to a history of attempted genocide of Indigenous Peoples, the flooding of vast areas of land, intergenerational trauma, the displacement of people and animals from their homes, the drowning and deaths of countless animals⁸, gestured to through a meaningless apology from BC Hydro as they prepare to flood one-hundred and twenty-eight kilometres more of sacred places.

⁸ See for example the removal of a thousand-pound eagles' nest by BC Hydro contractors for the Site C dam. (Poets for the Peace, Twitter post, September 28th, 2021, 12:12 p.m., <https://twitter.com/Poets4thePeace/status/1442915180153741316?s=20>)

With a flick of the light switch, I am connected to this violent history, which I cannot change. But I can decide how I respond to this history, and I can refuse to continue its violence and injustice. We can do this by stopping the Site C dam. By recognizing how the Peace Valley in its natural state is worth more than a mercury poisoned reservoir to pump electricity at a loss, since it will never recoup the expense it will take to force the dam on a land that doesn't want it.

More Dane-zaa people will be back in court in 2022, with the West Moberly First Nations seeking to halt the Site C dam.⁹

Cumulative impacts can and must be turned around in the right direction. I don't know if humanity has enough time to achieve this, but I know this is what we need to do for our own humanity, even if we run out of time.

To become good relatives and good ancestors, we have to stop destroying biodiversity. We have to protect the land and watersheds, which is also to protect ourselves. This is the best solution to the climate emergency facing us.

In the long run, the earth will have the final say. My prayer is for humans and our so-called leaders to listen to the language of the earth, to truly care for the health of her waters, to respect and protect the land that gives us life.

May my life protect the Peace Valley. I offer this prayer for its life.



⁹See the following Raven Trust Campaign for a link to the direct action: "Stop Site C Dam," Raven Trust. <https://raventrust.com/campaigns/sitec/>

see to see —

Airs: Alexander Cloutier's opening remarks

Robin Simpson

Here in Québec, academic freedom is again the issue of the day. Words have been ruled too sensitive to be pronounced, regardless of the intention and context of their use. Books, frequently classics, have been pulled from syllabi by teachers out of fear of offending certain sensibilities. Lecturers have been disinvited under pressure by groups who disapprove of their opinions. Certain professors and their expertise have been contested under the pretext that they do not bear the right “identity.” Legal pursuits have even been taken up in order to have access to data from academic research. Putting into question academic freedom, these recent cases have been extensively

covered in the media. It is in this context that our commission, composed of five commissioners, was created by the government of Québec.¹

The above is my translation of Alexander Cloutier’s opening remarks to the first of five days of public hearings for the Independent Scientific and Technical Commission on the Recognition of Academic Freedom within Universities [Commission scientifique et technique indépendante sur la reconnaissance de la liberté académique dans le milieu universitaire]. As president, Cloutier is joined by fellow commissioners Yves Gingras, Josée Maurais, Aline Niyubahwe, and Chantal Pouliot—all staff or professors at universities in Québec, with the exception of Maurais, a doctoral student.

The public hearings took place in Québec City at the end of August and

¹Alexandre Cloutier, “Déclaration d’ouverture: Audiences publiques,” (Commission scientifique et technique indépendante sur la reconnaissance de la liberté académique dans le milieu universitaire, 2021): 2.

beginning of September 2021. These were preceded by a questionnaire circulated to university teachers, a web panel with students, and an open call for statements from the public and members of the university milieu. The commission's investigation was guided by four questions: 1) The significance and definition of "academic freedom"; 2) the responsibilities of university students, faculty, and staff towards it; 3) the adequacy of the measures in place for the protection of academic freedom, 4) and the role of the state in these considerations. It is around this final question that the commission formed its mandate to advise on the provincial government's position and potential authority on academic freedom.

The commission was spurred by an event that took place not in Québec but at the University of Ottawa in Ontario. In the fall of 2020, part-time Professor Verushka Lieutenant-Duval used the N-word during a lesson in French on the resignification of derogatory slurs, following which a complaint was brought by a student to the dean of Fine Arts. Professor Lieutenant-Duval was suspended, setting off a string of petitions and counter-petitions, and drawing significant media coverage and debate in Québec. The sum of these

events was referred to as the "University of Ottawa affair" in a winter 2020 report submitted to the Ministry of Education in Québec, which recommended the formation of what would become the Cloutier commission.² The commission's activities were to be summarized in a final report submitted before the end of 2021. In addition to their recommendations, the commissioners were expected to provide an account of the "recent situations" that have brought this question to the fore of Québec society. In consideration of the "affair" and its drift between Ontario and Québec, it should be noted that the surrounding "situations" are taking place in French—French as a particular site, a political field, or, perhaps more accurately defined in this instance, a state.

In response to the editors' invitation for a word on the current climate in Québec, I thought of this commission and the atmosphere Cloutier constructs in his opening remarks. On the one hand, Cloutier uses generalities to perform self-censorship—to both avoid speaking explicitly about race and to mime the demands being made. On the other hand, he obscures what is being cast as a threat to so-called freedom: incoming American critical race theory, a position supposedly unimaginably able

²Rémi Quirion and Danielle McCann. *L'Université québécoise du futur: Tendances, enjeux, piste d'action et recommandations* (Fonds de recherche du Québec, 2021): 16.

to spring from a Francophone mind. Actual words, books, lectures, expertise, and data are left unnamed, cast as immovable targets of profanation. The mood is of a temporary suspension for the sake of outsider sensibilities, a false neutrality or decorum to keep it all civil and save face for scientific and technical inquiry (qualifiers notably added to the commission's name after its initial formation). What Cloutier holds back is taken up elsewhere by Québec Premier François Legault, who in September used "woke" as a pejorative against opposition leader Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois when the latter brought up again the racism and Islamophobia underlying the so-called secularism law, Bill 21. Asked to explain his slight, Legault offered the following: "For me, a woke is someone who sees discrimination everywhere... He's not interested in defending Québec's competencies. He's not interested in defending Québec's values. He wants us to feel guilty for this, so for that reason I called him 'woke.'"³

Closing the public hearings in early September, Cloutier presented two possibilities: either the Québec

government puts a law into effect or it makes a clear statement with regards to its position on academic freedom.⁴ Whether the response comes down as law or statement, it is sure to be anti-Black. To the commission, to Legault, to the governing Coalition Avenir Québec [Coalition for Québec's Future] party, the question is: What guarantees your freedom? What steadies Québec's values? Where can these convictions be traced to? It would seem, given the events leading up to the commission, that this all rests on the N-word. This word, so sensitive, so necessary to establishing CAQ's project in political identification that if its utterance is disturbed even once then all its freedom is thought lost. The basis on which the commission was deemed necessary makes evident that anti-Blackness is at the foundation of so-called freedom in Québec, with Cloutier eager to promise that this will be made law, as if it wasn't in the first place. In the interim, waiting for Cloutier's conclusions, we're left with his drift. Translation too is a drift, an approximation, but also a current, bringing a shift in direction, air, and pressure. ■

³ Isabelle Porter and Marie-Michèle Sioui, "Les «wokes» veulent «faire sentir coupables» les Québécois, selon Legault," *Le Devoir*, September 16, 2021, <https://www.ledevoir.com/politique/quebec/632817/gnd-woke-je-ne-sais-pas-trop-ce-que-ca-veut-dire>

⁴ Hugo Pilon-Larose, "« Il y a un réel enjeu », constate Alexandre Cloutier," *La Presse*, September 1, 2021, <https://www.lapresse.ca/actualites/education/2021-09-01/liberte-universitaire/il-y-a-un-reel-enjeu-constate-alexandre-cloutier.php>

Worldly Things

by Michael Kleber-Diggs

MILKWEED EDITIONS, 2021

Godfre Leung

On April 11th, 2021, Daunte Wright was murdered by the police during a traffic stop in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota. I used to pass Brooklyn Center two mornings a week, driving on Interstate 94 to my 8 AM art history survey course. Every trip, I'd see multiple cars pulled over by police on the stretch of highway between Northeast Minneapolis, where I lived, and Maple Grove, the Northeastern edge of the Twin Cities metro area. In my fifth year, on my way to our beginning of year department meeting in late August of 2016, I noticed a blonde woman being pulled over. I saw two more white people getting ticketed for speeding that morning. Until I noticed it then, I hadn't noticed that I'd never seen a white person pulled over on that commute before.

Earlier that summer, Philando Castile had been murdered by an officer during a traffic stop in Falcon Heights, MN, fifteen minutes from my home. Castile's murder came less than a year after the murder of Jamar Clark by two officers in Minneapolis and four months after the Hennepin County Attorney declined to prosecute them. The previous year and a half in

the Twin Cities had been dominated by large protests occasioned by these three incidents. We now know that no meaningful reforms were made, but for a short while highway cops were under pressure to achieve some measure of representational equality in their citation stats.

By coincidence, I read *Worldly Things* (Milkweed Editions, 2021), Michael Kleber-Diggs's debut poetry collection, the week after Wright's murder. In the poem "Fixtures," Kleber-Diggs narrates his own early morning commute, mostly likely in St. Paul, MN, where he lives:

Red traffic light unaware I am there.
Darkness, / no cars coming, no
reason to wait—no policy/
vindicated by my compliance: left,
then right, then

left again. Headlights on, brake
lights working, / me a warrantless
man, a man without priors, / an
insured man—able to prove it. No
cars coming,

no reason to wait. I run it. I run it
every day. I run / the red light like
I'm free.

"Fixtures" is followed by "America Is Loving Me to Death," which was widely retweeted—dare I say, it went *poetry-viral*—when it appeared on Poets.org last fall, after the murder

of George Floyd in Minneapolis but before the murders of Daunte Wright and Winston Boogie Smith Jr. Each line of “America” ends with one of the first twenty-four words of the US pledge of allegiance, in order. The pledge’s twenty-fifth word, “indivisible,” appears in the middle of the final line. The remaining words in the pledge, “with liberty and justice for all,” are conspicuously absent. Beyond its obvious meaning, this elision also hints at an instrument of force silently ending the poem with an extinguishing of the poet’s breath, an echo of the reference to Floyd’s murder in its first line: “America is loving me to death, loving me to death slowly.”

While much of *Worldly Things* must have been written before Derek Chauvin kneeled on George Floyd’s neck for nine minutes and twenty-nine seconds, Eric Garner had already told the world in 2014 that “I can’t breathe.” The repetition of images in the media of Black people murdered at the hands of law enforcement exerts a slow weight that these poems, in their own repetition of these images, make palpable. In “Grinding Down to Prayer,” a poem that more directly responds to Floyd’s murder, Kleber-Diggs moves from “I woke up to the news you were dead” to “America on

my neck” to “My dentist says I grind my teeth” to “I hoped so hard / it almost made a prayer,” approaching, if warily, Ashon Crawley’s utopian thesis in *Blackpentecostal Breath*. “To breathe,” Crawley writes, “is to offer a critical performative intervention into the western juridical apparatus of violent control, repression, and yes, premature death. Thus the importance of attending to the ways air, breath, and breathing are aestheticized.”¹

*

When I pitched this review, I told the editors that I didn’t want to reduce *Worldly Things* to its concern with Black death, though its spectre hangs over almost every page. The collection’s fifth poem, “After You Left,” establishes that Kleber-Diggs lost his father when he was eight. “[T]he weight of your absence,” the poem begins,

became a black hole revolving
around my memory of you — itself
a black hole.

When the reader learns a page later, in “Superman and My Brother, Spiderman and Me,” that the poet’s father died from a gunshot wound, “black hole” takes on another meaning. Kleber-Diggs sets up this reveal in the

¹ Ashon T. Crawley, *Blackpentecostal Breath: The Aesthetics of Possibility* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017): 34.

poem's first lines: "My brother and I were born to educated, middle-class parents/ eleven days after Martin Luther King's assassination." He goes on to describe how he and his twin brother weren't allowed to play with toy guns like the white neighbourhood children were, and that their parents aspired to non-violence—like Dr. King, he implies, though it's left unsaid.

But *Worldly Things* encompasses more, even, than the omnipresent threat of law enforcement and carceral violence multiplied by the burden of intergenerational trauma. Its rhythms, its aesthetics of refrain, the colouring of one image by another that it calls back pages later, all of which make the collection rich—as a collection—most forcefully also act as vehicles for narrating intergenerational bonds. This too is encapsulated in "Superman and My Brother, Spiderman and Me." "Even then," Kleber-Diggs writes, "folks knew black boys in a white city needed/ more than their parent's desire to stay safe; they understood about misunderstandings." "Even then," he calls back, "black boys were shot/ in parks playing games children play." In 1976, long before Tamir Rice, the poem tells us, these things were made known to Black kids as a matter of course; the Talk had been passed down as intergenerational wisdom long before Ta-Nehisi Coates added it to the

literary genres of *The New York Times* bestsellers list.

The "us" in the sentence I just wrote gives me pause. There are times in *Worldly Things* when I feel like I'm supposed to be learning something about what it's like to be Black in America—the tone has a weary patience to it, for the same reasons Kleber-Diggs goes out of his way to tell us in "Superman and My Brother, Spiderman and Me" that he's going out of his way to tell us that his father was "educated, middle class," and a dentist (remember the teeth grinding). It belies an underlying impatience that reminds me of the ways all people of colour have tried to tell, and are exhausted from telling, other people about our experiences.

But when Kleber-Diggs writes about the industriousness of his grandmother's garden and the economy of her kitchen in "In Convenience," I'd like to think he's telling this to his daughter. The poem ends with an image of the food waste he collects in his city-issued organic waste bin, which segues morbidly to "Gloria Mundi," a poem that imagines his funeral. "Gloria Mundi" ends in a prayer-like lyric: "Mix me with soil and seed,/ compost for a sapling. Make my remains useful,/ wondrous. Let me bloom and recede, grow/ and decay..." But it begins with a more direct

address: “Come to my funeral dressed as you/would for an autumn walk in the woods.” When he later instructs his reader, “If my day arrives when you had other plans, please/proceed with them instead. Celebrate me [stanza break] there—keep dancing,” I *know* he is writing to his daughter, who is in New York studying for her BFA in dance. Following so many images of Black people murdered by police officers, the possibility of the narrator dying unexpectedly, and what is left for our imaginations to spin out from this hypothetical, crystallizes what I previously described as the collection’s slow weight, couched in Kleber-Diggs’s guarded optimism that this is not the thing that he will pass down, not the thing that his daughter will inherit.

*

I met Michael in the summer of 2017, when he found his way to a free art writing workshop my wife Alex and I were teaching in Minneapolis. We gathered on Wednesday nights for six

weeks at an artist-run centre called Public Functionary. It was meant for young writers of colour, because the Twin Cities are the Twin Cities,² but the way we phrased our invitation was for “writers who feel that they have insufficient access to our cities’ ‘conversations’ about art.”

Michael was already a published writer—though far from the only one in the workshop—and the oldest among the participants who regularly attended our sessions. He contributed much wisdom to that workshop and I think he also, as Alex and I both did, learned a lot from the other participants, who were mostly in their early twenties. One time, when we’d each arrived a little early and were waiting for Tricia to open the gallery for us, Michael acknowledged that if Alex and I were both there every week we were probably paying for a babysitter (actually, the workshop was enabled by the generous childcare of some wonderful friends of ours). Then we chatted a bit about the challenges of the first years of parenthood.

²According to the most recent published census, the Twin Cities metro area is 73.2% white, although it often feels like more than that. This is especially true in the arts, which are notoriously insular and whose institutions are overwhelmingly white-led and overseen by majority white boards. The poet Su Hwang perhaps said it best: “If Minnesota were a person, I’d imagine the Amy Coopers of the world would fit the bill.” For a primer on living in the Twin Cities as a person of colour, see the wide-ranging and capacious anthology *A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota*, ed. Sun Yung Shin (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2016), and, more recently, Safy-Hallan Farah, “George Floyd Was Killed in My Neighborhood,” in *Vanity Fair* (June 11, 2020), and Su Hwang, “Letter from Minneapolis: Why the Rebellion Had to Begin Here,” in *Literary Hub* (June 8, 2020).

Almost immediately after that workshop ended, our family came back to Vancouver to take a much-needed break from Minneapolis — a permanent one, it turned out. In the almost four years since, Michael and I have interacted sporadically on Facebook, where he posts incredibly thoughtful things and has an enormous following. I bring all of this up because I've learned a lot about parenthood from his Facebook posts. I know that in "Gloria Mundi" he is writing to his daughter, whom I've never met but whose name I know, because Michael is an Internet #GirlDad and I've seen him gushing about her accomplishments. Two years ago, after his final parent-teacher conference, he posted a memory from her first year of school, reflecting on the necessity of forming constructive relationships with her educators. In a disquieting early encounter, the principal had singled out his then-five-year-old daughter, a mixed-race Black girl in an extremely white city, for being "prone to petty infractions." "I remember being concerned," he wrote, "for [her] and about the principal." I walked my son to his first days of kindergarten last September with this wisdom in mind.

Worldly Things begins with an image of a Black boy in the backseat of a police car, seen from the narrator's car across the street while he waits to pick

his daughter up from school. It ends with an image of a woman, who we are left to assume is white, crossing the street as he crosses her path on a neighbourhood walk. "Ars Poetica," the most touching poem in *Worldly Things*, brings these two images together. The narrator recounts a dream of having the police called on him by a neighbour. He frames the anecdote casually, but everything is at stake in this line: "I'm writing this on my phone while I teach my daughter to drive." ■

Contributors

Jordan Abel is a Nisga'a writer from Vancouver. He is the author of *The Place of Scraps* (Talonbooks, 2013) winner of the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize, *Injun* (Talonbooks, 2016) winner of the 2017 Griffin Poetry Prize, and *Un/inhabited* (Talonbooks, 2020). Abel's latest project *NISHGA*, published by McClelland & Stewart in 2020 and a finalist for the Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction, is a deeply personal and autobiographical book that attempts to address the complications of contemporary Indigenous existence and the often invisible intergenerational impact of residential schools. Abel recently completed a PhD at Simon Fraser University, and is currently working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Film Studies at the University of Alberta where he teaches Indigenous Literatures and Creative Writing.

Phanuel Antwi is an artist, organizer, and a teacher concerned with race, poetics, movements, intimacy, and struggle. He works with text, dance, film, and photography to intervene in artistic, academic, and public spaces. He is a curator, activist, and assistant professor at the University of British Columbia.

Winner of the Bkpw Poetry Workshop Contest 2021 and Pushcart Nominee, **Sophia N. Ashley** (she/they) writes poetry and fiction. They have works previously published in *NativeSkin lit Magazine*, *The Quills Journal Nine*, *Stonecrop Review*, and elsewhere.

Kimberly Bain is a Black writer, thinker, and maker.

Benedicta Bawo is a frontline worker in the DTES. She graduated with a Masters of Arts from the school of International Studies at Simon Fraser University. Her research interests include mental health, gender-based violence, and police reforms, with a regional focus on Africa. Having lived in Nigeria for most of her life, Benedicta has worked with various non-profit organizations primarily concerned with mental health and youth programming. In her spare time, you can find Benedicta reading a book, listening to music, eating Nigerian food, or drinking a glass of wine.

Lauren Brevner is a multidisciplinary artist. Her Japanese-Trinidadian heritage deeply inspires her practice with a focus on matriarchal influence. Her work combines traditional approaches to portrait painting with themes of cultural identity and female representation. Her education has been nurtured through community relations, including a mentorship with artist and designer Sin Nakayama in Osaka, Japan, expanding her approach to perseverance and creative purpose. Her work has been featured across multiple platforms, including exhibitions, civic projects, and print publications. Recent projects include illustrations for National Geographic and Lush Cosmetics, group exhibitions both locally and internationally, and large-scale mural commissions around the Lower Mainland.

Lacie Burning is a Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) and Onondaga multi-disciplinary artist and curator raised on Six Nations of the Grand River located in Southern Ontario. They work in photography, video, installation, and sculpture and often create work that grapples with Indigenous relationships to land, representation, and the gaze. Coming from a culturally and politically grounded upbringing, their work focuses on politics of Indigeneity and identity from a Haudenosaunee perspective.

Jamaican-born, Victoria-based **Charles Campbell** has been working over the past three decades as an artist, curator, writer, educator, and organizer. His multidisciplinary art practice encompasses a range of media including painting, sculpture, installation, and performance. The title of Campbell's ambitious new sculptural and sound installation *Maroonscape 3: Finding Accompong* (2021) refers to the historical village of Accompong in Cockpit County, Jamaica where in the 18th century Maroons and the Indigenous Taino people fought for and maintained their independence from Spain and Britain. The form of the work recalls the Kindah Tree, under which the Maroon leader Cudjoe is said to have united his people in resistance against the European powers. In evoking these historical references, Campbell's work imagines a site of contemporary possibility, healing, and regeneration for Black communities within and in the face of Canada's colonialist context of white supremacy and racism.

J. R. Carpenter lives in England. Her digital poem *The Gathering Cloud* won the New Media Writing Prize 2016. Her collection *An Ocean of Static* was highly commended by the Forward Prizes 2018. *This is a Picture of Wind* was one of The Guardian's best poetry books of 2020.

Emily Chan (she/her) is a writer, law student, tea drinker, and a survivor of Anti-NMDA receptor encephalitis. She is grateful to live, write, and study on the territories of the ɫə́kʷəŋən and ƱSÁNEĆ peoples. Emily's creative non-fiction and poetry centre on illness, healing, and the idea of home.

Lesley Loksi Chan is an artist, educator, and artistic director of Centre[3] for Artistic + Social Practice which is situated upon the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the Dish with One Spoon wampum agreement.

Bopha Chhay is a writer and curator who lives and works on the unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm, Skwxwú7mesh, and səilwətaʔ First Nations, also known as Vancouver. She is the Director/Curator at Artspeak, an artist-run centre with a mandate to encourage dialogue between visual arts and writing practices.

Squamish artists **Chepximiya Siyam' (Chief Janice George)** and **Skwetsimeltxw (Willard "Buddy" Joseph)** are acclaimed weavers and respected teachers who have played a crucial role in the revival of Salish weaving over the past two decades. Although weaving has been central to the cultures of the Coast Salish peoples for centuries, the practice almost disappeared in the ongoing devastation that began with the arrival of European settlers in the Pacific Northwest during the 19th century. When they began to formally study Salish weaving in 2003, George and Joseph had to travel to Washington state where they studied with master Skokomish weavers Susan Pavel and Subiyat Bruce Miller. Over the ensuing years, they have become highly accomplished weavers in their own right, developing techniques and carefully studying historical photographs to identify and sometimes recreate traditional patterns and motifs that articulate their unique Squamish identity.

Gabi Dao is an artist whose multidisciplinary practice insists on counter-memory, hyphenation, multiple truths, and blurred temporalities. Her laborious and saturated sculptures, installations, and video and sound work often begin by tracing the histories of places and materials through themes of globalization, consumption, belief, and belonging. Dao often conducts extensive archival and site-specific research of her subjects, slowly gathering and generating materials and sensing in situ. In this work, she prioritizes intimate and embodied modes of knowing toward new fragmentary and non-linear narratives.

Junie Désil is a poet. Born of immigrant (Haitian) parents on the Traditional Territories of the Kanien'kehá:ka in the island known as Tiohtià:ke (Montréal), raised in Treaty 1 Territory (Winnipeg). Junie's debut poetry collection *Eat Salt | Gaze at the Ocean* (TalonBooks, 2020) was a finalist for the Dorothy Livesay Poetry Prize.

Genevieve Fuji Johnson is a Yonsei settler of Hapa (Hafu) ancestry. Her roots are in Steveston, BC, which is on x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam) traditional and unceded land. She loves to write, sew, and surf.

Simon Grefiel's art engages with ancient and colonial histories and cultural practices from Southeast Asia and the Pacific Rim. Working with sculpture, found objects, digital media, and plant life his explorations of language, dreams, familial stories, ethnographic archives, and speculative narratives propose new ways of experiencing the supernatural realm and the material universe.

Matthew Gwathmey lives in Fredericton, New Brunswick on Wolastoqey Territory. He studied creative writing at the University of Virginia and is currently working on his PhD at UNB. His first poetry collection, *Our Latest in Folktales*, was published by Brick Books in the spring of 2019.

James Nexw'Kalus-Xwalacktun Harry is an artist who works in various forms and media with a focus on encounters in public space. His work combines traditional Skwxú7mesh stories, forms, and designs with a range of materials to produce murals, lightworks, sculptures, house posts, and cedar carvings. He earned a BFA in Visual Art from Emily Carr University of Art + Design. Recent projects include public art installations in Canada and the United States, graphic designs for Vale resorts in Whistler, and a 45ft reconciliation pole for the Vancouver School Board.

Katie Kozak is a queer artist of Métis and Ukrainian settler descent. She grew up in Denare Beach, Saskatchewan. Her family is from the Red River Métis communities of St. François Xavier and Boggy Creek, Manitoba. Her visual art practice is centered on connectivity to land, relationship, ritual, and traces. She begins her process by spending contemplative time in nature, with other living beings. Being with the trees and water reminds her of her father. She has become aware that her values for making and being are deeply tied to him and processing his loss. She believes the body is a vessel of imprinted knowledge, even when unacknowledged. Through ritual and deepening connection to the land, she has experienced the body revealing a buried past.

Godfre Leung is a critic and curator based between the lands currently known as Vancouver and Calgary. His writing has appeared in *ArtAsiaPacific*, *Art in America*, and *Yishu: Journal of Contemporary Chinese Art*, as well as publications by the Museum of Modern Art and Walker Art Center among other institutions. As part of his recently concluded project *unstatefully*, he organized the exhibitions *Pao Houa Her: Emplotment* (Or Gallery, 2020) and *Guesthood and Alienhood: Sun Yung Shin, Jinny Yu, Republic of the Other* (Hotam Press Bookshop/Gallery, 2021), and commissioned the literary work *granted to a foreign citizen* by Sun Yung Shin (Artspeak, 2020). He is currently working with artist Christopher K. Ho on an ongoing project called “Hong Kong is a Loaded Term.”

Zehra Naqvi is a Karachi-born writer, editor, educator, and Rhodes Scholar. She has written and edited for various publications internationally. She is a recipient of the Bronwen Wallace Award for Emerging Writers and was the winner of *Room* magazine’s 2016 poetry contest. She is currently working on her first book.

Nnadi Samuel (he/him/his) holds a BA in English and Literature from the University of Benin. Winner of the Miracle Monocle Award for Ambitious Student Writers 2021 (University of Louisville), Lakefly Poetry Contest 2021 (Wisconsin), and the Canadian Open Drawer contest 2020, Samuel has also received an honorable mention for the 2021 Betty L. Yu and Jin C. Yu Creative Writing Prize (College Category). He is the author of the chapbook *Reopening of Wounds* and the forthcoming *Subject Lessons*; he reads for U-Right Magazine.

yamagushiku shō’s creative practice is grounded in diasporic shimanchu islander consciousness. His grandmother’s parents (山城) migrated to Tovaangar (Los Angeles) from Taminato, a village in northern Okinawa’s Yanbaru rainforest. His grandfather’s parents (田中) emigrated from Buzen Shoe, Fukuoka to Lingit Aaní (Juneau, Alaska). Currently shō lives on Iəkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Territory.

Robin Simpson is a cultural worker, educator, and writer. Living in Tiohtià:ke/Montreal, he is the Coordinator of Public Programs and Education at the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University.

Sanchari Sur is a PhD candidate in English at Wilfrid Laurier University, recipient of a 2018 Lambda Literary Fellowship, and co-editor of *Watch Your Head: Writers and Artists Respond to Climate Change* (Coach House Books, 2020). Their writing can be found on *Al Jazeera*, *Electric Literature*, and *Ploughshares*; it was also featured in Toronto Book Award Shortlisted *The Unpublished City* (Book*hug, 2017).

Valérie d. Walker is a Neo-Renaissance Artist, transmedia creator, alchemist, Indigo Griot, curator, BIPOC Queer-femme Afro-Futurist time traveler. She holds *Ikebana* (Japanese flower arranging) & *Chado* (tea ceremony) degrees with *Urasenke-Kyoto* and lifetimes of Indigo knowledge. Walker landed on Gaia in Honolulu, and has travelled the planet in space and time. Her artworks explore enviro-positive natural dyeing & printing, quotidian actions, sensorially immersive fibre-based installations, solar-powered circuit-bending, story-telling, Black Panther-esque Eco-sexual activism, and GuerillaGrrrl radio. Valérie was welcomed to the unceded lands of the Skwxú7mesh (Squamish), Səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh), and xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Nations by Chief Marilyn Gabriel.

Lam Wong is a visual artist, curator, and designer who immigrated from Hong Kong to Canada during the 1980s and studied design, art history, and painting in Alberta and British Columbia. Wong works with painting, installation, and performance to engage with themes such as the perception of reality, the role of art, and the relationship between time, memory, and space. He sees art making as an ongoing spiritual practice and his work draws upon his knowledge of Western art history and his interest in Eastern philosophies, including Taoism, Tibetan Buddhism, and the teachings of Dajian Huineng (638–713 AD), a central figure in the development of Chinese Cʻhan (Zen) Buddhism.

Rita Wong lives on unceded xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh) lands. She is a poet-scholar who has written several books of poetry and co-edited an anthology with Dorothy Christian entitled, *Downstream: Reimagining Water* (WLU Press, 2017). Wong works to support Indigenous communities' efforts towards justice and health for water and land.

My name is **Maysa Zeyad** and I was born in Sana'a, Yemen. I lived there for ten years until my mom decided to move us to Canada after my dad passed away and because living in Yemen as a strong Somali woman was not sustainable for my mom. Moving to Canada has been interesting and challenging for me because of the culture difference; but it has also been a great help in finding my identity and who I am and where I belong as a mixed race person. I'm a social service worker and I advocate for women, challenging a system that was not made for Black women and women of colour so we don't have to be in a battlefield everyday.



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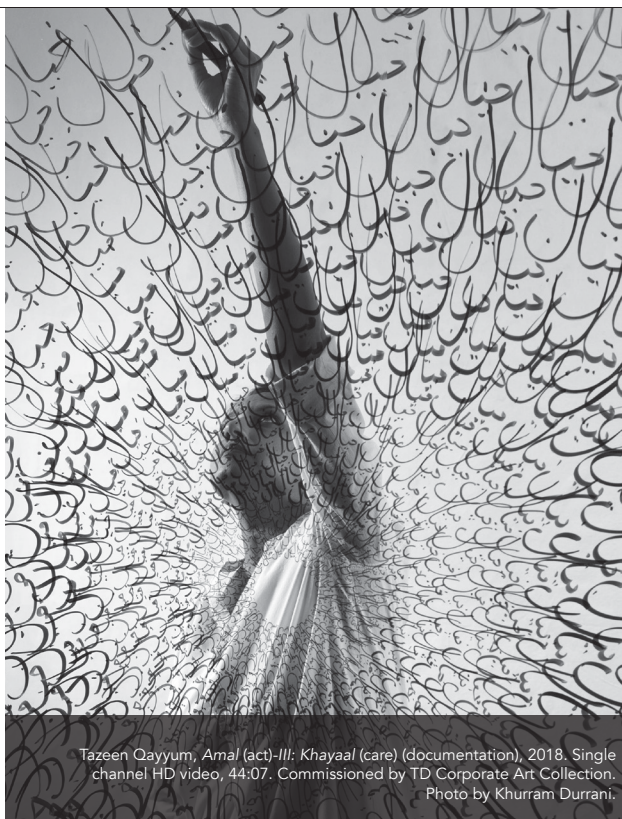
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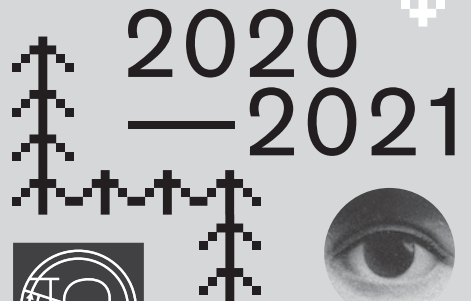
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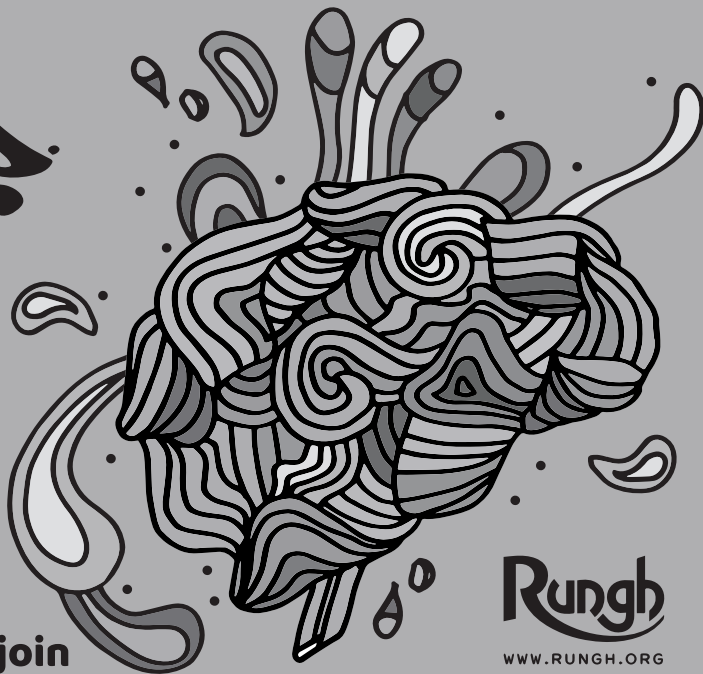
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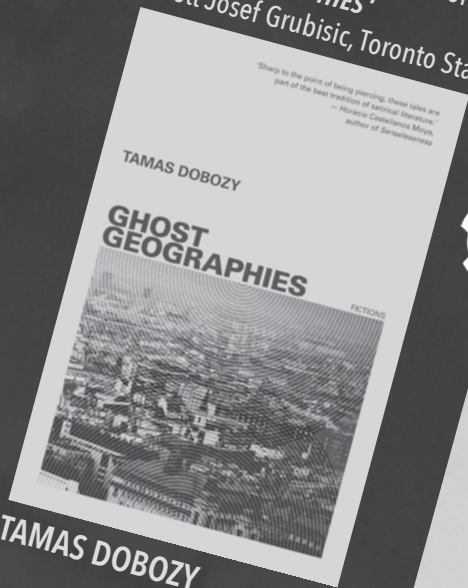
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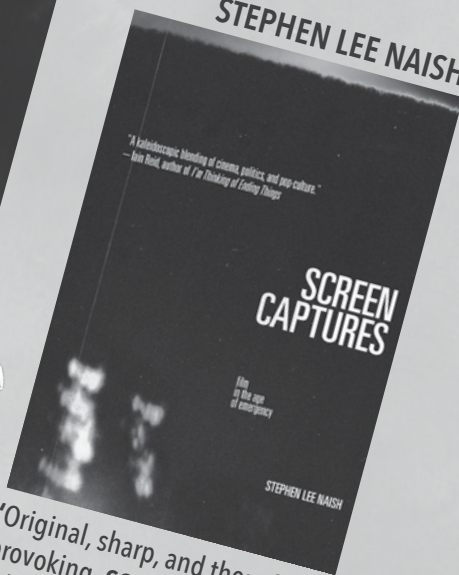
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