

A womb is not always a longed for place, yet

A beginning

For those of us who are perennially Othered, confined to outside the frame, the stories of our lives cross contested space.

Loose-footed queer lives mis-step in the open air, lacking the weighting of a fixed and grounded past.

Histories (sic) are uncovered, mapped, archived, in a chronology that proves that under different names and different guises we were always there. As if evidence precedes existence.

We bury the knowledge as seed and grow orchards and farms to walk in as real time memory. Our land grows fertile and our bellies full. We summon our ancestors to chosen family dinners. We dress like them and put on the music. Clumsy and cosy. But knowledge cannot create belonging, and longing must lead somewhere.

We accept we are the demi-gods and the semi-devils who staged a coup in Eden, stormed the throne, became creators, took the clay and made coherent, a new beginning and end. A territory for new culture and language to form.

But what is this new world without a mother?

A middle

Wait. Is that her? He is here. I have found them, mudlarking with a stranger who will become my wife.

In the silt and the residue, from scrambled code: a queer(ed) womb, an organ from a body without organs, a primordial origin, anti-Oedipal, subterranean, that can be left and returned to fluidly. A place to become and become again.

Aduno tal.

There, where the lost and wild things are.

I have heard that we enter through the sonic vibration and a slippage in time and space. When you are drawn out and dancing, simply a body moving. Then. When you forget yourself, forget to feel self-conscious or conscious of self. Then. When you move at your own pace. Then. Being with. Then.

Being with the queer(ing) womb is standing in a basement in the dark in front of a sound system, where your ears won't thank you but the reverberation feels so tangible you could lift the weight from your feet and it would carry you.

You can there. Here.

Let the pulse massage the tension from you

Let you lean

into the impossibility of placing true origins

Away from charting the root

Seeding the source

Accept

You are always in the middle

Circumvent the temptation to draw a single straight line

From the queer picket fence to your front door

Find new routes to a new home

Inarticulate, incoherent, boundary-less and multiple

Enough to hold a future and futures

Where yet to be known possibilities move through the foundations and walls as rhizomes

Storying many interconnected selves

A shared pulse is not fixed repetition but found

through presence and practice

Rhythm touching rhythm

As regular as a heartbeat

Feet move against a poured cement floor

Smooth space

A glossary

Demi-gods and semi-devils: The title of a serialised wuxia novel (1963-1966) by Jin Yong.

Aduno tal: From Dogon cosmology. The 'egg of the world' that gave birth to everything that exists.

A body without organs: "You never reach the Body without Organs, you can't reach it, you are forever attaining it, it is a limit. People ask, So what is this BwO? - But you're already on it, scurrying like a vermin, groping like a blind person, or running like a lunatic: desert traveller and nomad of the steppes. On it we sleep, live our waking lives, fight - fight and are fought - seek our place, experience untold happiness and fabulous defeats; on it we penetrate and are penetrated; on it we love." (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 1987, p. 150, published University of Minnesota Press)

Anti-Oedipal: A critique of the Freudian Oedipal complex as made by French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and French psychotherapist Félix Guattari.

Where the wild things are: A picturebook by Maurice Sendak.

The wild: "A space beyond the home but also as a challenge to an assumed order of things from, by, and on behalf of things that refused and resist order itself. Wildness names simultaneously a chaotic force of nature, the outside of categorisation, unrestrained forms of embodiment, the refusal to submit to social regulation, loss of control, the unpredictable. This sequence suggests a romantic wold, a space of potential, an undoing that beckons and seduces. But obviously, the wild has also served to name the orders of being that colonial authority comes to tame: the others to a disastrous discourse of civilisation, the racialised orientation to order, the reifying operations of racial discourse (wild "things"). For this reason, to work with the wild is also to risk reengaging with these meanings. I take the risk here because wildness offers proximity to the critiques of those regimes of meaning and it opens up the possibility of unmaking and unbuilding worlds." (Jack Halberstam in *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire*, 2020, p. 3-4, published Duke University Press)

Rhythm touching rhythm: Reference to Patrick Cowley's track Mutant Man from the Mind Warp album.

The impossibility of tracing true origins: A possible definition of nostalgia, or a possible problem with nostalgia. A direct quote from Elspeth Probyn in *Suspended Beginnings: Of Childhood and Nostalgia* (1995, GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, published Duke University Press).

Rhizome: "A rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*. The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the very 'to be,' but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, 'and...and...and...'. This conjunction carries enough force to shake and uproot the verb 'to be'. Where are you going? Where are you coming from? What are you heading for? These are all totally useless questions. Making a clean slate, starting or beginning again from ground zero, seeking a beginning or a foundation - all imply a false conception of voyage and movement... [There is] another way of traveling and moving: proceeding from the middle, through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing." (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 1987, p. 25, published University of Minnesota Press)

The middle: "The middle is by no means the average; on the contrary, it is where things pick up speed." (Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 1987, p. 25, published University of Minnesota Press)

Becoming: The self is a node in a network of multiple relations, and to set its desires flowing, one has to create connections with others - animals, plants, machines, molecules. They want 'you' to stretch your boundaries and 'become-woman', 'become-animal', 'become-machine', 'become molecular' and even 'become-imperceptible'. (Agnés Rocamora and Anneke Smelik (eds) *Thinking Through Fashion. A Guide to Key Theorists*, 2016, p. 169)

Smooth space: "Culture spreads like the surface of a body of water, spreading towards available spaces or trickling downwards towards new spaces through fissures and gaps, eroding what is in its way. The surface can be interrupted and moved, but these disturbances leave no trace, as the water is charged with pressure and potential to always seek its equilibrium, and thereby establish smooth space." (Davin Heckman in *Gotta Catch 'Em All: Capitalism, the War Machine, and the Pokemon Trainer* in *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge*, no. 5, 2002)