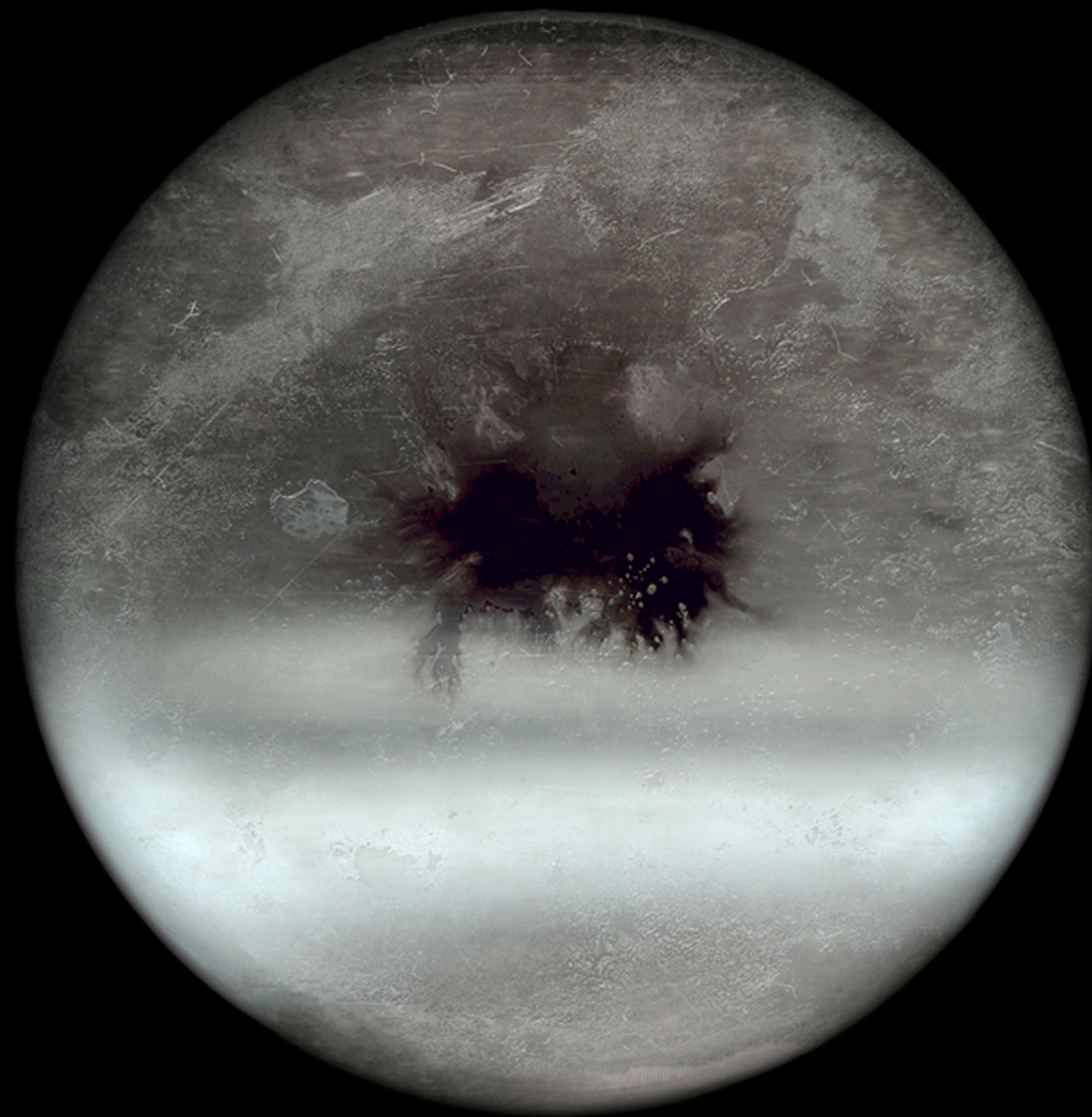




Conjuring Tomorrow

Conjuring Tomorrow

Susan E. Jowsey

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
2025
School of Art & Design

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Cover. *Drifandi—the drifting one*, a heiti for *sky—the heavens*,
Susan Jowsey, 2023, cameraless photography, collection artis's own.

For the Daughter of Night and the Ancestors



Our great-great-grandparents, *Johan August Pettersson* (1837-1890) and *Johanna Katarina Josefina Ekström* (1835 - 1932),
Susan Jowsey, 2024, digital collage, collection artist's own.

Abstract

We conceive this thesis as a cosmological conversation between the Ancestors and ourselves. Responding to the current ecological crisis, we ask how ancestral ken and the liminal imaginary can reconnect us with an extraordinary and mysterious Universe. Theorising a *cosmic-osmology*, we experience the shock of wonder and concede the myth of our self-possession. Unfixed and manifold, the Ancestors, our kin: flora and fauna who, speaking in unfamiliar tongues, disclose an aromatic knowingness, Earth's environmental forces on whom our lives depend, and our Northern European genetic antecedents, from the islands of Gotland and Öland in the Baltic Sea, guide this research. Their odiferous conversations, bridging private–intimate and socio-cultural spheres, permeate *minni* (memory) and *óminni* (unmemory). Destabilised by their atmospheric presence, we shed the singular pronoun, *I*, reimagining ourselves. Cloaked in ambiguity, we are *eigi einhamr*, not of one skin—but hybrid Beings.

Anthropologist Joy Hendry, tendering their analysis of world-conception, asserts cosmologies are metanarratives vital to communicating sublunary and numinous knowledge. Seeking to interrogate our perceptions of the world, we weigh the obscure teachings of *thaumazein* (wonder) presented by philosopher Mary-Jane Rubenstein. Who explains that wonder challenges determinant thought, creating a breach sufficient to render the familiar strange. Leaving propositions open and contingent, wondering compels us to yield to the nebulousness of uncertainty. Recognising our inability to be explicit about how the Ancestors communicate or how we divine their curious ken, we ask: What is language? Venturing into the liminal imaginary, we relinquish surety for the embrace of *rainbows* and *Harpies*. Analogous to Arnold van Gennep's *Rites of Passage*, the liminal imaginary, a threshold state, initiates a substance change. Inhaling, we recall the Ancestors scent; breathing them in, we transform. In this moment of transition, we are overcome by the elemental force, which Empedocles calls *Earthly Love—the unifier*. In response to the Ancestors, we practice an alchemical poesis, composing aromatic poetics.

Wonder also exposes us to philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy's theories of *being-with* and *touching*. The Ancestors, entering and exiting through porous bodies, influence the limbic system, which incorporates our primordial brain, emotions, and memory. Endlessly, yet often without us realising, the Ancestors alter us with their *aromatospheric touch*. In this way, being-with and touching disclose our *coequality*, which anthropologist Johannes Fabian argues is an atemporal, indefinable coexistence akin to Henri Bergson's concept of *pure memory*, whereby our pasts touch our presents and transform our futures. The whiff and hum of odour's touch binds us.

Whilst this thesis traverses olfactory, mythic, magical, and scientific terrains, our ideas remain tethered to the omnipresent Ancestors and their odiferous affects. Tracing the origins of philosopher Brian Massumi's concept of *vitality affect*, we unearth psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Daniel N. Stern's hypothesis of a prelingual connectedness reliant on *implicit relational knowing*. Our experiences of the Ancestors *semiochemical narratives* correspond with Stern's psychological and Massumi's art-based vitality affects.



Figure 0.1. *Erbario*, an illustrated herbal written in northern Italy in the 15th century, Rafael Gomes, Leo S. Olschki, Carleton R. Richmond, and Henri Schiller. n.d., Lawrence J. Schoenberg Collection, University of Pennsylvania, 77, free of known copyright restrictions and in the public domain, <https://openn.library.upenn.edu/Data/0001/html/ljs419.html>.

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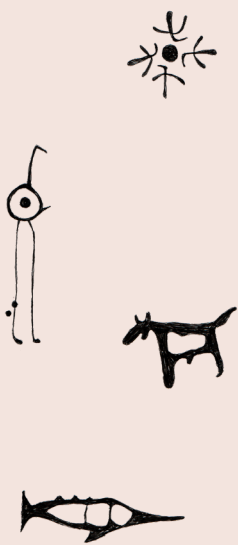
Paratexts: This document does not list the flora and fauna illustrated as individual figures. These illustrations come from the extensive Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL) on Flickr and can be found on their original pages at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/biodivlibrary/albums/>. The entire collection can be accessed at [biodiversitylibrary.org](https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org). The Smithsonian Institution provides this archive for use under the Creative Commons Zero (CCO) license.

All other drawings and images in this document are paratextual elements created by us based on seeds, spells, amulets, a Norse trefoil brooch, and the Scandinavian petroglyphs of Nämforsen and Tanum.

END MATTER

3.1. Ómmuni 65

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Attestation of Authorship

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

Susan E Jowsey
1st of February, 2025

Ethics Approval was not required.



Unnamed Seaweed

Declaration

We recognise the kaitiaki of Aotearoa, Māori iwi, who, under the guidance of their Rangatira, navigated the Pacific, establishing their homeland on these islands, Te Ika a Maui and Te Wai Pounamu.

*As part of a colonial history stemming from a nineteenth-century European diaspora, this thesis recognises and acknowledges the continued effects of that history on the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa. While colonisation eliminates life-worlds, the environment, spirits, and social and cultural relationships, this research communes with them. Confabulating with the Ancestors, we greet them as kith and kin. The Ancestors are numerous, sometimes human, but more often mountains, rivers and forests, the Earth’s flora, fauna and microbes. Beyond Earth-bound kin, we pay homage to the Moon, Earth’s twin, and the Sun, the star around which this solar system spirals, holding us within the Universe.**

*The Oxford Reference online states: “Cosmologists distinguish between the Universe with a capital ‘U’, meaning the cosmos and all its contents, and the universe with a small ‘u’, which is usually a mathematical model derived from some physical theory. The real Universe consists mostly of apparently empty space, with matter concentrated into galaxies consisting of stars and gas.” Oxford Reference, “universe,” accessed October 11, 2024, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803114743353>.

Acknowledgements

*This research exists because of you,
It is for you,
Created from you,
and is about you.*

A remarkable and dedicated supervisory team has, throughout our journey, engaged us in wide-ranging conversations. We are indebted to our primary supervisor, Dr Andrew Denton, who showed outstanding support and unwavering belief in our ideas and practice. In the initial stages of this study, Dr Andrew Gibbons and Dr Stanley Frielick provided thoughtful and challenging guidance. Toward the end, Dr Susan Hedges offered us invaluable support and encouragement.

Embracing the knowledges of our Norse Ancestors, we now understand bodies as porous, that flora and fauna are kin, and that the dead live. To this end, we acknowledge the influence and abiding presence of our parents, Jocelyn, our mother, who died while we were formulating this—our Love letter, and whose Norse Ancestors lie at the heart of our question, and our father, Anthony, who died long before we began this research, but who taught us so much, especially the value of questioning our beliefs.

Furthermore, we pay homage to our genealogical Ancestors, our grandparents, great-grandparents, and great-great-grandparents, many of whom appear on these pages. Additionally, we recognise our extraordinary family. With our heart and breath, we acknowledge our husband, Marcus Williams, whose love and support made this research possible; our daughter, Mercy Williams, a staunch ally and fellow enthusiast who is similarly engaged in a quest to learn from the Ancestors; and our son, Jesse Williams, who shares our passion for volatile molecules.

Furthermore, we are indebted to the diverse array of academics whose research informs and challenges the theories and creative practice presented here. To the diversity of people who have spent time talking to us, who have inspired and aroused our curiosity or shared their knowledge, in

particular, the patient dedication of Dr Robyn Ramage, who undertook the task of proofreading our writing; Michael Hanna of *Project Hydrosol* whose enthusiasm for plant language rivals our own and who generously gifted us hydrosols to work with; and Gerard Backhouse-Smith who kindly fabricated crucial elements for our exhibition.

Thank you.



*Footprints
Nämforsen petroglyphs, Sweden.*

Glossary of Old Norse Words and Terms

WORDS RELATED TO GOTLAND

Guta saga, Gutasaga—the legendary history of Gotland.

Guta lag—the Law of the Gotlanders.

Tjelvar—the mythic Gotland Ancestor (pronounced CHEL-var).

MEMORY AND UNMEMORY

Forn minni—ancient memories.

Minnis—memory or remembering.

Óminni—unmemory or forgetting.

Óminnis hegri—Heron of forgetting/unmemory.

Óminnis hegri heitir—bird of unmindfulness.

Óminnisveig—potion of oblivion, liquor of not-memory.

(SUPER)NATURAL, TUTELARY, AND TRANSFORMATIONAL

Much in Old Norse cosmology, mythos, and narrative is conjecture; as such, these Beings (if, in fact, they can be classified in this way) are enigmatic and complex to describe. The definitions supplied represent current, generally accepted, explanations.

Eigi einhamr—not of one skin (related to hamr).

Fylgja—are interstitial embodiments of fate, possibly ancestral.

Hamingjur—an embodiment of luck.

Hamr—one’s outer being, akin to a coat or shell suited to shape-shifting.

Hugr—one’s inner being, which may manifest as an animal.

We have chosen not to use modern English translations identifying álfar as elves, dvergar as dwarves, and jötnar as giants, as these modern literary fantasies are not representative of the complex interrelationality of Old Norse cosmological beliefs.

Álfar (plural) and *álfr* (singular)—evidence suggests álfar may be an appellation, not a taxonomic group, as nineteenth-century scholars insisted.

Dísir (plural) or *dís* (singular)—are a nexus of female guardian spirits, similar to fylgja, hamingjur and landvættir. Dísir, while problematic to define, tend to have a tutelary role and are frequently associated with a female ancestor.

Dvergr (singular) or *Dvergar* (plural)—(super)natural forces associated with the lithic realm and absence. Dvergar are primordial, much of their history has been lost.

Jötnar (plural) and *Jötunn* (singular)—are primordial (super)natural environmental forces.

Landvættir—land spirits.

Seiðr—a form of prophetic magic.

Vættir—spirits.

Völva—a seeress.

COSMOLOGICAL BEINGS

Æsir—gods of war, grouped around Óðinn, Þórr, Tyr, and Ull.

Jörmungandr—(Loki’s son) is the gigantic serpent who holds the cosmos in place.

Huginn and Muninn—the Ravens who offer Óðinn divinatory insight.

Kvasir—the Wise, a Being created from the saliva of the Æsir and Vanir, whose blood is used to make the Mead of Poesy.

Loki—half god, half jötun. Loki is an arcane, pivotal character in Old Norse cosmology. Early accounts (though sparse) suggest Loki was a Vätten (a domestic spirit) similar to álfar and dvergar. Old Norse scholar Eldar Heide notes, “vättes did not appear in anthropomorphic shape but as all kinds of animals: toads, grass snakes, other small animals, and in some traditions spiders and daddy long-legs are referred to as vättes. A fundamental connection also seems to exist between the word loki and cobwebs and fishnet.”*

Óðinn—the Raven god.

Suttungr—a jötunn integral to the mythic narrative of the Mead of Poesy.

Vanir—fertility gods such as Njörd, Freyr, and Freyja.

Veðrfölnir—the pale storm, the cosmic Hawk.

Yggdrasill—the world tree.

Ymir—a primordial jötunn, argued to be the first Being, a personification of chaos. Their body, slain by the three brothers (gods), Óðinn, Vili, and Vé, became the cosmos.

* Eldar Heide, “Loki, the ‘Vätte’, and the Ash Lad: A Study Combining Old Scandinavian and Late Material,” *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 7 (2011): 70, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45019150>.

POEMS AND STORIES

Edda—refers to two texts, both compilations of Norse myths: the newer, *Poetic Edda* (also known as *Snorri's Edda*), and the older, *Prose* or *Elder Edda*.

Hávamál—is a collection of proverbs or wise sayings, presented in *Snorri's Edda* as if it were a poem.

Mead of Poesy—refers to oral poetry, also known as the *Mead of the Dvergar*, *Mead of Poetry*, or the *Mead of Suttungr*.

Saga—a prose narrative, story or tale.

Skáldskaparmál—the *Poesy of Skalds*, a collection of kennings extracted from poems in *Snorri's Edda*.

Ynglinga Saga—the story of the Ynglinga, as the Guta saga is the story of the Gotlanders.

KENNINGS

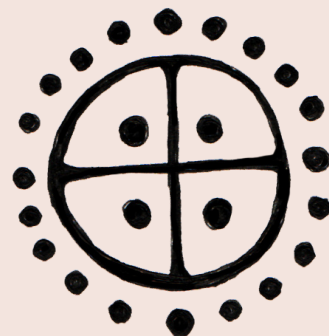
Kennings are poetic narratives informed by social knowledge.

Gedðsteinn—mind-stone, a kenning for the heart (where the mind was believed to be located).

Hugar skógr—the mind forest.

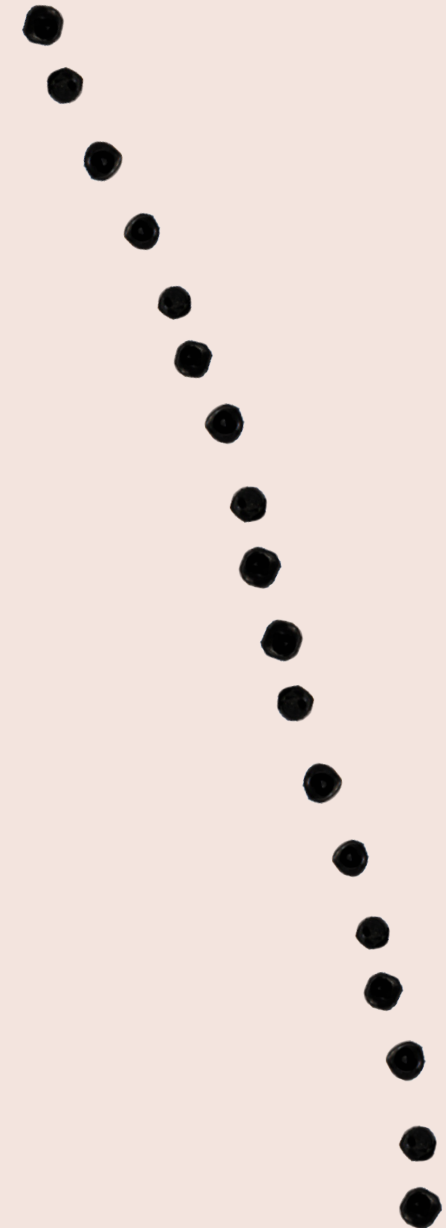
Kvasis dreyri—the blood of the mythic Kvasir.

Ymis blóð—Ymir's blood, the sea.



Our Question

CONJURING TOMORROW—How might conjuring a magical world-conception from ancestral ken and the liminal imaginary transform our perception of the Universe in a time of ecological crisis?



PART ONE



FOREWORD TO PART ONE

Unprecedented bushfires burned across Australia from July 2019 until March 2020, while our research took shape. Living 2,156.36 km (1,339.90 miles) away in Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa, New Zealand, it felt as though the present, having caught fire, was being consumed by a pyro-convective hyperobject.¹

Breathing in fine particulates held aloft on smoke-fuelled air, human geographer Nigel Clark claims, we have created “a new atmosphere.”² Correspondingly, cultural theorist Claire Colebrook argues *this atmosphere* requires more than a lexicon expressive of human survival; it requires “theory after theory.”³

Reflecting on Clark and Colebrook’s statements, we resolved to undertake our research as if it were an aromatic conversation; for this reason, our exegesis unfolds as two interconnected Parts: the first gathers and arranges the essential cosmological, philosophical, alchemical, and geomorphic theories grounding our practice, while Part Two positions them in relation to our practice. To read both parts, we recommend deep

1. Philosopher Timothy Morton describes hyperobjects as entities of such vast temporal and spatial dimensions that they transcend established ideas about what *a thing is*, Morton states: “Hyperobjects are agents. They are indeed more than a little demonic, in the sense that they appear to straddle worlds and times, like fibre optic cables or electromagnetic fields. And they are demonic in that through them casualities flow like electricity.” Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 29; Moreover, Morton suggests, “hyperobjects stick to you, inside and out: the radiation in my body, the mercury in my blood ... they are ‘viscous’ that way, and not just in a physical sense.” Laura Copelin, Peyton Gardner, and Timothy Morton, eds., *Hyperobjects for Artists, Marfa: Ballroom Marfa*, 2018, published in association with the exhibition “Hyperobjects” presented by Ballroom Marfa, Marfa, Texas, <https://thecreativeindependent.com/library/hyperobjects-for-artists>.

2. Nigel Halcomb Clark, “Atmospheres of Invention, Passages of Light” in *Tomás Saraceno: Becoming Aerosolar*, ed. Tomas Saraceno (Vienna: 21erHaus, 2015), 167, <https://eprints.lancs.ac.uk/id/eprint/78596/>.

3. Claire Colebrook, *Death of the PostHuman: Essays on Extinction*, vol. 1. (London: Open Humanities Press, 2014), 45, <http://www.openhumanitiespress.org/death-of-the-posthuman>.

breathing—using your sensorium to enter the liminal imaginary and drift amidst swirling ideas. In *Being Alive*, anthropologist Tim Ingold invites the reader to go outside and pick up a stone, bring it inside, wet it and look into it before reading the chapter.⁴ Similarly, we recommend you gather fragrant artefacts, keep them close at hand and while reading, stop to sniff them or remain aware of their odiferous presence as you read.

Our aim for Part One is to introduce you to philosophical views on Love and melancholy, breath, vapour, wonder, and touch that are critical to our research. For this reason, the *Proem* is a *touchstone*, a fundamental examination of the intangible concepts nurturing our magical world-conception. Accompanying the *Proem* is a discussion of the methods we use to undertake this research: the idioms of perfumery, cameraless photography, and pseudo-epistolary wordings.

Part Two, in contrast, adopts a more personal approach; it aims to position the ideas presented in Part One experientially. Conceived as a cosmological Love letter, Part Two defines our practice as a vaporous confabulation between the Ancestors and ourselves. Thus, our writing becomes epistolary, an intimate correspondence addressed to the Ancestors. In Part Two, we evidence the practice of rewriting ourselves—creating an interior monologue that disperses like perfume. Using the aromatic language of the Ancestors, we plangently declare our cosmic Love.

4. Tim Ingold instructs: “Before you begin to read this chapter, please go outside and find a largish stone, though not so big that it cannot be easily lifted and carried indoors. Bring it in, and immerse it in a pail of water or under a running tap. Then place it before you on your desk – perhaps on a tray or plate so as not to spoil your desktop. Take a good look at it. If you like, you can look at it again from time to time as you read the chapter. At the end, I shall refer to what you may have observed.” Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (London: Routledge, 2011), 19. (Italics author’s own)

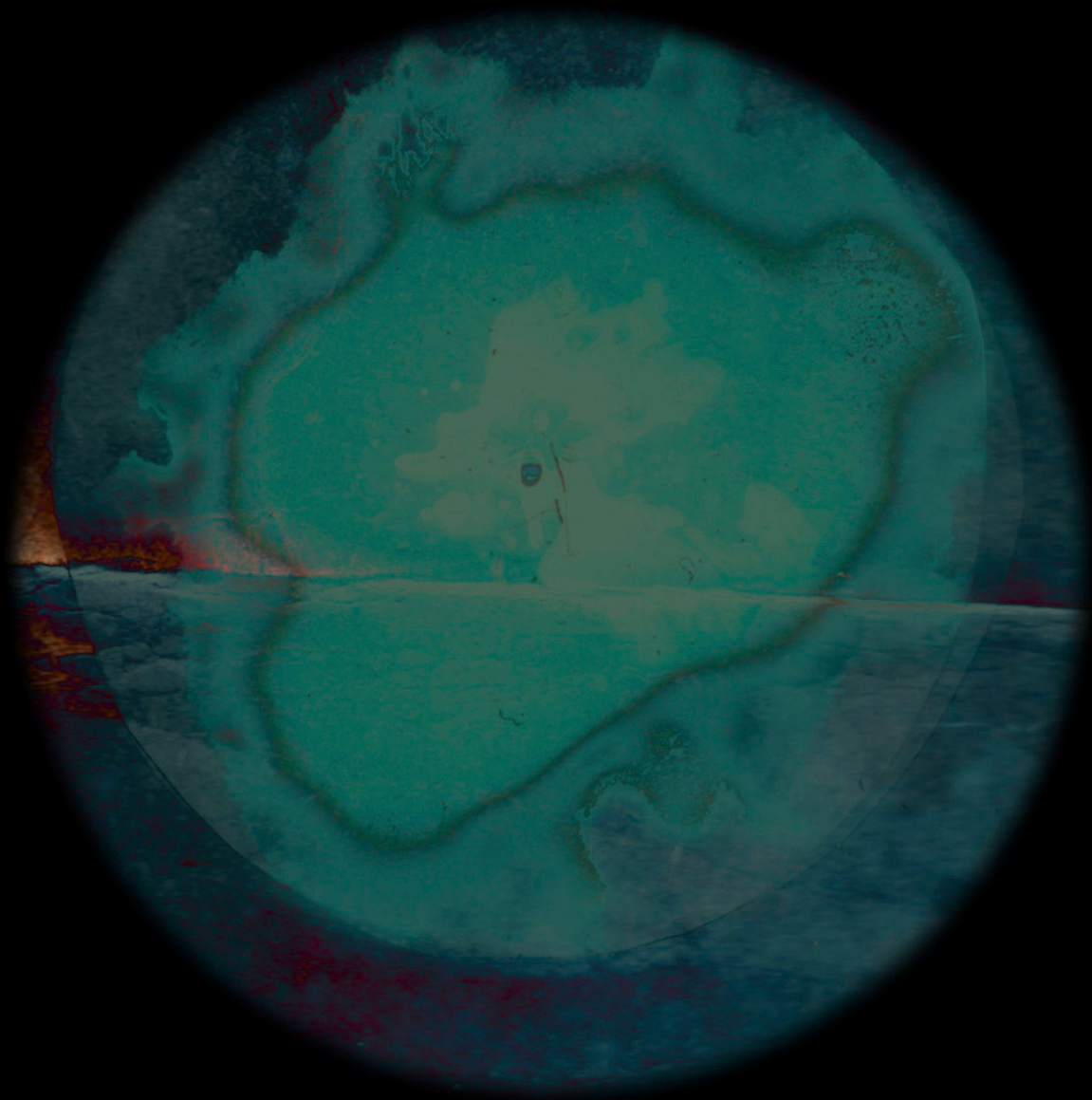


Figure 1.1. *Élreki* (Storm-driver), Susan Jowsey, 2024, cameraless photograph, collection artist's own.

PROEM

Proem, so nearly *poem*, derives from the Greek *before* (*pro*) and *song* (*oimē*).⁵ It signals the beginning of this text as a preamble, a spill of words, an offering made by us, the authors, to you, the reader, before you enter this textual body. In this context, the *Proem* from *Deep within the Soil* to *And the Howling of Souls* is an oblation acknowledging the numerous voices echoing within our research's odiferous heart and atmospheric borderlands. The Proem is a paratextual element, containing a poem penned in its margins.⁶



5. Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, s.v. "proem," accessed 7 June, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/proem>.

6 The dark-red italicised poetics threaded through this document also form part of this paratextual metanarrative.

Deep within the soil

I will reveal the first-beginnings of things, from which nature creates all things, and increases and fosters them, and into which nature too dissolves them again at their perishing.

Lucretius, Book 1, c. 60 BCE.⁷

Ancestral knowledge provides fertile soil for imagining.

The skeleton of this study emerged from the dust and ash obscuring the sun during the summer of 2019–2020. As a record-breaking drought held Aotearoa in its grip, pyrocumulonimbus clouds from Australian mega-fires propelled smoke particles into the stratosphere, reddening the heavens. Estimates calculate over one billion mammals, birds, and reptiles lost their lives in those fires, a figure that fails to include flora, insects, and microscopic organisms.⁸ As summer's arc stretched across an arid sky, we read a small article about a mystery illness and felt the Moon begin its descent.⁹

In *Being Singular Plural*, philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy (1940–2021) unfolds the theory of *being-with*, arguing that *Being* is founded on *plurality*

7. Cyril Bailey, ed., *Lucretius: De Rerum Natura* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), Book 1, ll. 24–58, 28. (Italics ours)

8. In 2019–2020 unprecedented bushfires in Australia burnt more than 19 million hectares of native forests and farmlands. Journalist Graham Readfearn noted that, “Millions of animals have been killed in the fires but the impact on flora and fauna is more grim even than individual deaths” Readfearn, “‘Silent Death’: Australia’s Bushfires Push Countless Species to Extinction,” *The Guardian*, January 3, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/jan/04/ecologists-warn-silent-death-australia-bushfires-endangered-species-extinction>.

9. On January 9, 2020, the World Health Organisation made the first announcement regarding a mystery Coronavirus-related Pneumonia circulating in Wuhan, China. See *World Health Organisation*, “WHO Statement Regarding Cluster of Pneumonia Cases in Wuhan, China,” January 9, 2020, <https://www.who.int/hongkongchina/news/detail/09-01-2020-who-statement-regarding-cluster-of-pneumonia-cases-in-wuhan-china>.

since true singularity is impossible. Nancy bolsters this assertion through examining the etymology of the Latin root word for *single*, which is *sem*, meaning: “one; as one, together with.”¹⁰ This understanding of selfhood suggests that even as *I*, we are never alone because everything is coexistent. Nancy states, “Being singular plural means the essence of Being is only as coessence.”¹¹ *To be*, Nancy proclaims, is *to be part* of the world, which exists *prior to* and *after us*; it is coexistence, the combining of existences.¹² Therefore, we are always already bound to the Ancestors; their ken is part of who we are. We contend that being-with exposes a critical ethical dimension because *touch* in its myriad forms is fundamental to being-with and, thus, necessarily encompasses co-essence—compelling us to embrace the tutelary position of *keeping* or *care of* in the sense of guardianship.

From the stirring of Earth’s elemental tumult, we transform, aided by wonder and the Ancestors.¹³ Philosopher of religion and science Mary-Jane Rubenstein contends, “wonder opens an originary rift in thought, an unsuturable gash that both constitutes and deconstitutes thinking.”¹⁴ In our wonderment, the ever-present, coeval Ancestors unfold their thaumaturgy.¹⁵ We recognise that proposing a magical world-conception is fraught with the exigencies of modern European history, the heresy and lunacy attributed to arcane practices, and the populist chicanery of wizards and witches. Against these theatres of distraction, we doggedly follow the scent of the Ancestors. From the essence of our conversations, we gather the ingredients for formulating poetic draughts—merging memory and unmemory, Nordic mythos, plant language, perfumery, and imagining.

10. Harper Douglas, “Etymology of single,” *Online Etymology Dictionary*, accessed June 30, 2023, <https://www.etymonline.com/word/single>.

11. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, trans. Robert D. Richardson and Anne E. O’Byrne (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 30.

12. Nancy, 29.

13. It is widely purported that Earth has now entered its sixth mass extinction event. See Gerardo Ceballos, Paul R. Ehrlich, and Rodolfo Dirzo, “Biological Annihilation via the Ongoing Sixth Mass Extinction Signalled by Vertebrate Population Losses and Declines,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 114, no. 30 (2017): E6089–E6096, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1704949114>.

14. Mary-Jane Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder: The Closure of Metaphysics and the Opening of Awe* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 18.

15. Thaumaturgy, the working of wonders, miracle-working, or magic. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “thaumaturgy (n.),” accessed July 23, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8835139198>.

In this text, we are plural and refer to ourselves as us. When we say I, in the singular, it is to make a point. We are fluid, having dissolved in the narcotic fragrance of existence.



Figure 1.2. *Boge 28:1, A stone ship grave popularly known as Tjelvar's grave, Boge, Gotland, the ship-grave dates from 1100 – 500 BCE and was photographed after its 1983 restoration, Mårten Stenberger, 1938, glass plate negative, Gotland, Sweden, Swedish National Heritage Board, no known copyright restrictions, https://www.flickr.com/photos/swedish_heritage_board/9089899927.*

Within Northern European cosmologies, human and non-human bodies intertwine. Archaeologist Lotte Hedeager, discussing Old Norse burial practices and material artefacts, states that,

Norse figurative art presents humans and animals side by side. This is fundamentally different from the Christian belief that humans were created in God's image and as such fundamentally different from all other living things.¹⁶

16. Lotte Hedeager, "Split Bodies in the Late Iron Age/Viking Age of Scandinavia," in *Body Parts and Bodies Whole*, ed. Katharina Rebay-Salisbury, Marie Louise Stig Sørensen, and Jessica Hughes (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010), 113, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1cdopsz.13>.

These zoomorphic portrayals of hybrid Beings disclose more than bodily entanglement: skin is interchanged, heads are detached, severed utterly, and recombined or merged onto different bodies. Often, only an impression of a human hand or shoe betrays the Being's relationship to humanity.

Being *eigi einhamr*, we take more than one shape.¹⁷

Like Hedeager, anthropologist Anja Mansrud argues material artefacts (made by hand) are manifestations of cosmologies. Discussing Northern European fishhooks from c. 8000 – 2700 BCE, Mansrud contends that objects frame a "culture's orientation in space and time as conceived in words, images, and rituals."¹⁸ While Mansrud does not discuss how cosmology is enacted through the making process, we recognise that transformations occur. Aromatic knowledge is transmitted through the strange bodily effects of gathering, distilling, and scenting odours—in these processes cosmologies take shape.¹⁹ Mansrud, however, draws our attention to how environmental factors charge and influence artefacts and how frequently overlooked, everyday items can be potent cosmological agents. Furthermore, Mansrud directs our attention to how dramatic ecological change impacts the production and use of material artefacts and how these modifications become encoded in cosmologies.

Much like today, the topography of Northern Europe changed dramatically during the Boreal climatic phase c. 8500 BCE. The Earth heated, ice fields melted, sea levels rose, and terrestrial uplift reshaped ecosystems. The life and death impacts of which formed cosmological stories. One example is the pre-Christian origin story of Gotland, documented in the *Guta saga* c. 1350 CE.²⁰ The story tells of Tjelvar, the first person to set foot on Gotland,

17. In Fennoscandian material and burial practices dating from c. 500 BCE – c. 800 CE, there is evidence that bodies were understood as fluid, a belief reflected in Old Norse cosmology. As Hedeager attests, "the written evidence of the sagas and the Edda confirms that certain people – and gods – manifested themselves in animal form, literally becoming embodied in animals. The words *hugr – hamr – fylgja* testify to the specific Nordic belief in a spiritual world of assistant animals and followers." Hedeager, "Split Bodies in the Late Iron Age," 116.

18. Anja Mansrud, "Untangling Social, Ritual and Cosmological Aspects of Fishhook Manufacture in the Middle Mesolithic Coastal Communities of NE Skagerrak," *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 46, no. 1 (2017): 41, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1095-9270.12211>.

19. Mansrud, 41.

20. The *Guta saga*, *Gutasaga* or *Gutasagan*, is the mythic history of the island of Gotland. The *Guta saga* was written circa the thirteenth or perhaps the fourteenth century. Scandinavian

having to break the enchantment that made the island disappear during daylight hours. Tjelvar had to row to the island and light a fire to halt the waning and make the island habitable. Fluid environmental conditions and Baltic Sea fog meant Gotland periodically vanished and reappeared—stopping this capriciousness required burning wood and raising smoke.

We engage in revelatory acts. Gathering aromatic materials, we undertake preparation rituals, fashioning volatile molecular conversations with the Ancestors. These osmic narratives are not digressions but illustrate how we are drawn into cosmic storying through environmental and atmospheric effects and how, in crafting olfactory experiences, we forge ancestral attachment.²¹

In the intense intimacy of touch, we scent a toxic bloom—the wasteland of our desire.

For all that our research is borne of environmental degradation and anthropogenically induced climate change, its focus is cosmological. Curious and mysterious, *forð minni* (ancient memories) exist in the soil, sprouting, growing, and sporing; shrouded in darkness, they turn to mist—omnipresent and atmospheric. By creatively invoking them, we unravel our preconceptions of the Universe. Harnessing the liminal imaginary, we conjure memories with the smell of words and illuminate their essence. We ask the Ancestors to share their ken, to disrupt the consensus of our reality with their ambiguity and chaos. Born of wonderment, *forð minni* demand an intuitive engagement in the world.

studies scholar Christine Peel states: “The text of Guta saga consists of just over 1,800 words but the content is remarkably wide-ranging. ... The text has been divided in most editions into six sections. The first of these opens with the discovery of Gotland by the legendary Dielvar, his removal of the enchantment upon it by the introduction of fire and the settlement of the island by his son, Hafði, and daughter-in-law, Huitastierna. These two have three sons, their birth having been predicted in a dream, and the island is divided between the three of them and inhabited by their progeny. The population increases to such an extent that a proportion of them is forced to emigrate and continue their flight eastwards. They finally reach Byzantium and by means of a verbal trick persuade the emperor to allow them to stay. It is stated here as an aside that there are still people in that region whose language contains Scandinavian elements. The end of this section gives a number of details relating to heathen practices.” Peel ed. and trans., *Guta Saga: The History of the Gotlanders* (London: Viking Society for Northern Research, University College London, 1999), vii and xiv.

21. Mansrud, 31.

Noted fourteenth-century philosopher, Franciscan Monk Peter Auriol (c. 1280 – 1322 CE), described *intuitive cognition* as understanding that manifests as “a presence without distance and closeness, without inside and outside, and without here and there.”²² Ancestral ken discloses knowledges entirely different to the *truths we were taught*. We find ourselves enthralled by the unfamiliar aromas of wonder and awfulness.²³

Nancy contends:

There is no other meaning than the meaning of circulation. But this circulation goes in all directions at once, in all the directions of all the space-times [les espace-temps] opened by presence to presence: all things, all beings, all entities, everything past and future, alive, dead, inanimate, stones, plants, nails, gods—and ‘humans,’ that is, those who expose sharing and circulation as such by saying ‘we,’ by saying we to themselves in all possible senses of that expression, and by saying we for the totality of all being.²⁴

Though germinated in the Anthropocene’s feted soil and overheated air, our question is seeded in Love. Quixotic yet quotidian, Love transforms and alters everything.

We submit this research as an attestation of Love.

22. Robert Pasnau, “The Cambridge Translations of Medieval Philosophical Texts: Volume 3,” in *Mind and Knowledge* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 210.

23. *Awfulness* is an archaic word that describes awe, dread, and reverential fear.

24. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 3.

Loves-longing Prophecy

Love is the perpetual knot and link of the universe.

Ficino, De Amore, 1484.²⁵

*All things doth Nature change,
enwrapping souls in unfamiliar tunics of the flesh.*

Empedocles, c. 500 BCE.²⁶

Love's vital force reforms the world.

The theory of *Philia* (from the Greek word for *fondness*) or *Lovingness* belongs to the cosmology of Empedocles (494 - 434 BCE), who declared the Universe is composed of *four roots*: Zeus, Hera, Aidoneus, and Nêstis, and two forces: *Philia* (Love), and *Neikos* (Strife).²⁷

Under the agency of Love and Strife, the four roots alternate between being bound and dispersed. Strife, or as historian William Leonard (1876 - 1944) translated, *Hate*, breaks the perfect sphere encapsulating the four roots. Once broken apart, Hate knits the various pieces into the world and *all things*. Set in motion, a process of disunity and intermingling continues

25. Marsilio Ficino's 1484 text, *De Amore*, quoted in Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1958), 47. (Italics ours)

26. William E. Leonard trans., *The Fragments of Empedocles* (Chicago: Open Court Publishing, 1908), 58, <https://archive.org/stream/cu31924028975923/cu31924028975923-djvu.txt>. (Italics ours)

27. The various translations of *Philia* and *Neikos* are noted by Leonard, who states that "Love and Hate: under varying names, "Lovingness" and "Strife," "Aphrodite" and "Wrath," etc., were conceived by E. as the dynamic powers of the Universe," and that Empedocles' conception of them remains disputed. Indeed, the four roots have been widely interpreted as the four elements of Fire, Earth, Air, and Water; however, this assertion is inconclusive and has also been contested. Leonard, *Fragments of Empedocles*, 70.

until Hate has scattered and destroyed everything. Only then can Love reemerge. Overwhelming Hate, Love begins to reunite the elements, forming *a new world*.

It is a cosmological vision that bears a striking resemblance to modern scientific theories of cyclic renewal. In their foreword to Empedocles' poetic fragments, Leonard suggests that the new worlds created by Love are periodic and mirror Earth's five mass extinction events. Likewise, Big Bang cosmology contends the Universe is expanding from a high-density origin formed by *four forces*.²⁸ Moreover, Empedocles alludes to a mysterious vortex, which Leonard suggests is equivalent to "a whirling mass, like the nebula in Orion or the original of our solar system, that seems to be the first stage in the world process after the motionless harmony of the sphere."²⁹

Though Empedocles' cosmology is composed poetically, the theories contained within the fragments vibrate with logical explanations. The vital force, Love, is the unifier, while Hate arouses creative destruction. Aligning our hypothesis with Empedocles', we perceive the Universe as shaped by the opposing forces of Love and Hate. Indeed, we recognise the power of Hate in the present anthropogenic destruction of Earth's eco-spheres and the pressing need for Love to assert itself once again.

Empedocles states:

When down the Vortex to the last abyss
Had foundered Hate, and Lovingness had reached
The eddying centre of the Mass, behold
Around her into Oneness gathered all.³⁰

28. Senior space writer Mike Wall states, "Cosmologists suspect that the four forces that rule the universe—gravity, electromagnetism and the weak and strong nuclear forces—were unified into a single force at the Universe's birth, squashed together because of the extreme temperatures and densities involved." Wall, "The Big Bang: What Really Happened at Our Universe's Birth?" with contributions from Tereza Pultarova, "What is the Big Bang Theory?" Space.com, October 21, 2011, last modified July 27, 2023, <https://www.space.com/13347-big-bang-origins-universe-birth.html#section-the-beginning>.

29. Leonard, *Fragments of Empedocles*, 6.

30. Leonard, 31-32.



Foretells a Melancholy Aer

*And having viewed
Their little share of life, with briefest fates,
Like smoke they are lifted up and flit away,
Believing only what each chances on,
Hither and thither driven; yet they boast
The larger vision of the whole and all.
But thuswise never shall these things be seen,
Never be heard by men, nor seized by mind;
And thou, since hither now withdrawn apart,
Shalt learn—no more than mortal ken may span.*

Empedocles, c. 500 BCE.³¹

Art theorist László Földényi describes *modern Love* as *homeless* because it is dispossessed of the divine. Földényi argues that prior to Christianity, Love was conceived as a mediating force that restored harmony between the heavens and Earth. This belief, that Love is a unifier, binding and making bodies whole, is vital to understanding our research. Yet, we know Love is also a paradox, a mysterious force, distinct yet nebulous, whose all-consuming scent lingers just beyond our grasp.

*As lovers, we desire the Universe.
The scent of Love's-longing a reminder
of what will never be.*

31. Leonard, 15-16. (Italics ours)

Under Love's spell, thresholds of time and place cease to exist; this magical transformation makes the lover vulnerable.³² Földényi suggests the lover becomes simultaneously ensnared and transported because they inhabit a state of rapture circumscribed by the madness of melancholia, declaring "the lover is like a work of art in the process of being realized; love condemns one to solitude and crushes one but, by way of compensation, raises one out of this world so that they can pass beyond time and geographic boundaries."³³

Psychiatrists Diogo Telles-Correia and João Gama Marques, considering the *psychopathology of melancholy* in European history, note Hippocrates (460 - 379 BCE) was the first to attribute the cause of melancholy to an excess of *black bile*.³⁴ Black bile, one of the four humours, corresponds to the cold and dry seasons, making it an Earth element.³⁵ Hippocrates also proposed the existence of three spirits or pneuma: vegetative, vital, and animal. The pneuma were critical to the body's functioning. Later, the Greek physician and philosopher Galen (129 – c. 216 CE) ascribed imagination to the animal spirit and declared melancholia a disorder of the imagination.

According to Galen, a disturbed imagination or animal spirit would disrupt the body's vital spirit, so that it could no longer function properly.³⁶

32. We capitalise the word Love when we are addressing Love of Earth as opposed to personal love or when we use Empedocles' cosmology of the opposing forces of Love and Hate or Lovingness and Strife.

33. László F. Földényi, *Melancholy*, trans. Tim Wilkinson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 228-9.

34. Diogo Telles-Correia, and João Gama Marques, "Melancholia Before the Twentieth Century: Fear and Sorrow or Partial Insanity?," *Frontiers in Psychology* 6, 81 (2015): 2, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00081>.

35. Jacques Jouanna, and Neil Allie, "The Legacy of the Hippocratic Treatise the Nature of Man: The Theory of the Four Humours," in *Greek Medicine from Hippocrates to Galen: Selected Papers*, ed. Philip van der Eijk (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 335.

36. Research fellow Peter N. Singer states that Galen identified "two forms of pneuma, the 'vital' (*zōtikon*) and the 'psychic' (*psuchikon*) correspond to two major organs and systems in the body. Vital pneuma communicates vital (involuntary) function and tension through the arteries, psychic pneuma communicates perception and voluntary motion from and to the brain, through the nerves. It is possible here again to posit a Stoic influence in the central role accorded to pneuma in the account of vital, and especially psychological, function. Galen even floats the notion of the identity of soul and pneuma; that, however, is not his considered view of the matter, which is rather that the pneuma functions as the soul's 'first instrument.'" Furthermore, Galen believed that "The coming-to-be of different physical substances in the world, as well as their various properties, is explained through the concept of mixture (*krasis*).

Subsequently, in the sixteenth century, Andreas Laurentius (1560 – 1609 CE) declared disorders of the imagination were triggered by internal coldness and darkness.³⁷

These early theories connecting melancholia with Earth elements, the animal spirit, and a disturbed imagination informed modern European opinions concerning the imagination and were cemented during the Romantic era (1798 – 1832). Indeed, philosopher Koen Vermeir explains that the imagination became associated with many antisocial traits during this period and that “the physiology of the imagination was evoked to explain, for instance, the workings of mental images, physiology, voluntary movement, illusions, magic, fascination, divination, moral qualities, passions, cognitive errors, mental illnesses, and witchcraft.”³⁸

Assuming Galen’s position on the imagination, the lover is engaged with *subtle bodies* or the spirit of Earth through the imagination’s connection with animal spirits.³⁹ This connection is asserted by Plato in *Phaedrus* when he has Socrates proclaim, “Love is a madness.”⁴⁰ The Love to which Socrates refers is the *divine Love* of classical Greek cosmology. The madness induced by this Love is wholly different to modern notions of insanity, which focus on the disembodied mind. In his descriptions of the effects of divine Love and madness, Socrates states:

I have been speaking of the fourth and last kind of madness, which is imputed to him who, when he sees the beauty of earth, is transported with the recollection of the true beauty; he would like to flyaway, but he cannot; he is like

Every physical thing in the world, in particular the biological world, is composed from mixtures of the fundamental elements; it is thus appropriately described in terms of the predominance of one or more qualities (hot, cold, etc.) within the mixture.” Hence, melancholia was caused by a disequilibrium in the mixture of Earth elements within the body, affecting the pneuma. Singer, “Galen,” *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, updated Fall 2024, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2024/entries/galen/>. (Italics author’s own)

37. Telles-Correia, and Marques, “Melancholia Before the Twentieth Century,” 2.

38. Koen Vermeir, “The ‘Physical Prophet’ and the Powers of the Imagination. Part I: A Case-Study on Prophecy, Vapours and the Imagination (1685 – 1710),” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 35, no. 4 (2004): 570, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.shpsc.2004.09.001>.

39. Vermeir, 570.

40. Benjamin Jowett, trans., *Plato’s Phaedrus*, Project Gutenberg, March 1, 1999, <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1658>.

*a bird fluttering and looking upward and careless of the world below; and he is therefore thought to be mad.*⁴¹

Transported and damned, the divine Lover inhabits an interstice, hovering between *esse* (existence) and non-existence. Witnessing Earth’s heavenliness, though prophetic, ultimately leads to madness. Földényi also couples melancholia with second sight, claiming, “a true prophet is not a person with the ability to foretell what is going to happen tomorrow, but one who can tell what is happening today.”⁴²

We perceive you, not with eyes of flesh, but in the imagination.

The animal spirits disclosed by the imagination are vapour. They leave the body and return, carried on air and breath.⁴³ It was the theologian Pierre Le Brun who, in 1702, stated the pneuma of the imagination are “fluid and of a subtle nature.”⁴⁴ In *Conjuring Tomorrow*, the liminal imaginary adheres to the classical notion of divine Love. We call our imaginal state the liminal imaginary because it transforms us; we experience extra-somatic or out-of-body experiences, wherein all our selves conjoin, chaotically and randomly, as fractals within the Universe.

In *A Lexicon of Alchemy* written by Martin Rulandus the Elder in 1612, listed under C on page 105, is the entry:

CORPORA SUPER COELESTIA—are those bodies which are known ... only by means of imagination, and not to the eyes of flesh. They are the subjects of wonderful spagyric operations.⁴⁵

41. Jowett, *Plato’s Phaedrus*, 37. (Italics ours)

42. Földényi, *Melancholy*, 26.

43. Vermeir states: “In Stoicism, the animal spirits or pneuma psychicon was akin to a divinatory pneuma, which was a fire-like breath permeating the whole world, and which caused religious ecstasies and visions in the imagination. The animal spirits were also the keynote of the ‘spiritual magic’ championed by [Marsilio] Ficino.” Vermeir, “The Physical Prophet,” 573.

44. Pierre Le Brun, *Histoire Critique des Pratiques Superstitieuses* (1702), quoted in Vermeir, 569.

45. Martinus Rulandus the Elder, *A Lexicon of Alchemy*, trans. Arthur E. Waite (London: John M. Watkins, 1964), 105; Note: Manfred M. Junius states that “the practice of spagyrics is the application of ancient alchemical working methods to the preparation of tinctures, essences, and other products from medicinal plants.” Junius, *The Practical Handbook of Plant Alchemy: An Herbalist’s Guide to Preparing Medicinal Essences, Tinctures, and Elixirs*, trans. Léone

With the strange powers of *Corpora Super Coelestia*, the imagination divines an unbounded cosmos, falling in Love with its celestial beauty and going mad in the process.

And once fallen into melancholia, the imagination, without eyes of flesh, senses the looming dark of day. The interrelationship between physical bodies, vital spirits, and the external world are recognised in the imagination; furthermore, the imagination, Vermier claims, is,

The pre-eminent social faculty as the source of our feelings of empathy. Interwoven with this was a (now little known) unorthodox tradition of the powers of the imagination, which claimed that the imagination could work physically on external bodies.⁴⁶

Theories positing a relationship between the imagination and vapours unspool across European philosophical, medical and religious histories. The crucial role of vaporous transmissions is outlined in Epicureanism, Neoplatonism, and Stoicism. Indeed, to act on the world, the imagination requires the medium of *vapours*. Effluxing from the imagination and altering the body, vapours infect the air and influence those close to hand. As our research unfolds, we apprehend the veracity of such arcane notions. However, at this point, we wish to direct your attention to the critical relationship between the imagination and the vaporous. Indeed, Rector George Keith, writing on the *contagiousness of prophecy* (in 1707), pronounces it possible to be bewitched by breath and that “Love works by corporeal effluvia analogous to fascination.”⁴⁷ The imagination is a liminal entity which manifests in breath, vaporiousness, atmospherics, and scented magic.

*We breathe in the heavens.
A luminiferous body tattooed across the inside of our Being.
And the scent of stardust on our skin.*

Muller (Rochester: Healing Arts Press, 1985), preface vii. (Italics ours)

46. Vermeir, “The Physical Prophet,” 563.

47. George Keith, *The Magick of Quakerism or, the Chief Mysteries of Quakerism Laid Open*. (London, 1707), quoted in Vermier, “The Physical Prophet,” 584.

And the Howling of Souls



So dire is the picture that some observers argue that the past is irrelevant. We are headed into a no-narrative, no-analogue future. So immense and unimaginable are the coming upheavals that the arc of inherited knowledge that joins us to the past has broken.

Stephen J. Payne, 2019.⁴⁸

A miasma of predatory fear charges the atmosphere. Historian Karen Armstrong asserts that ancient Greeks considered all manner of sacrilegious deeds, the violation of people, things, or places, even when unintentional, to cause the release of a miasma. Armstrong states, a miasma was considered “a contagious power that had an independent life of its own. Until it had been purged by the sacrificial death of the wrongdoer, society would be chronically infected by plague and catastrophe.”⁴⁹

Miasma, emitted from the corporeal and incorporeal substances, unleash viruses, disease, and blight. While purification rituals of smoke and water may once have sufficed as a remedy, their power to correct the malodorous and destructive effects of global deforestation, ecosystem pollution, and widespread terrestrial transformation of Earth is no longer sufficient. Humans, having irrevocably altered Earth’s climate, are representative of our vision of Empedocles’ Hate.

48. Stephen J. Pyne, “The Planet is Burning,” *AEON*, ed. Brigid Hains, November 2019, <https://aeon.co/essays/the-planet-is-burning-around-us-is-it-time-to-declare-the-pyrocene>. (Italics ours)

49. Karen Armstrong, *The Great Transformation: The Beginning of Our Religious Traditions* (New York: Anchor Books, 2006), 55.

Comparing current extinction data with past mass extinction events, researchers Hannah Ritchie and Max Rosler conclude that present “extinctions are happening at a rapid rate – up to 100 times faster than the ‘Big Five’ events that define our planet’s history. Current rates do point towards a sixth mass extinction.”⁵⁰ Data betrays the quickening pace of biodiversity loss caused by the geologic equivalent, *Global Humanity*.

In 2000 CE, geologist Roger LeB Hooke (1939 – 2021) asserted that Global Humanity had become a significant geomorphic force and that “by some measures, the amount of earth that we move exceeds that of any other geomorphic agent.”⁵¹ Geomorphic agents regularly reshape Earth’s surface; tongues of water, gnawing winds, and the cannoning of waves are animate phenomena. Yet we have exceeded their natural powers using explosives and modern earth-moving technology. We fool ourselves into the belief that we constitute Earth—a second nature rising from the bedrock of history, god-like. In the echoing wind, we catch philosopher Michel Serres’ lament that “nature is reduced to human nature, which is reduced to either history or reason. *The world has disappeared.*”⁵²

*With the rough elixir of wonder, the Ancestors impart their knowledge.
Awed, we enter the liminal imaginary, encountering (super)natural kin.
Transformed, we surrender to the Earthly smell of the cosmos and submit
to the savage bite of Love’s-longing, its image, and its essence—the magical
hypokeimenon, Earth.*⁵³

50. Hannah Ritchie, and Max Roser, “Biodiversity,” Our World in Data, 2021, <https://ourworldindata.org/biodiversity>.

51. Roger LeB Hooke, “On the History of Humans as Geomorphic Agents,” *Geology* 28, no. 9 (2000): 843, <https://doi.org/10.1130/0091-7613>.

52. Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 35. (Italics ours)

53. Historian Andy Blunden states, the word hypokeimenon was coined by Aristotle to address the *subject*. However, the “‘subject’ literally meant that which underlies an existing thing, its material substratum; in particular, in the philosophical sense of the fundamental ‘substance’ which makes the thing what it is rather than something else, and to which attributes (also called, in classical times, ‘accidents’) may be contingently attached. It also meant ‘subject’, more or less in the modern grammatical sense, in the context of simple assertive sentences, in which a predicate is said of a subject.” Blunden, “Aristotle: The First Subject,” *The Subject. Philosophical Foundations*, October 2005, <https://www.ethicalpolitics.org/ablunden/works/aristotle.htm>.



In 2021 the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* proclaimed that the combined effects of human population and resource consumption have resulted in Earth system changes that are “unprecedented in thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of years.”⁵⁴ From the ashes of war, we contend, European nations and the United States of America have *manufactured* a sixth mass planetary extinction. As Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer’s theory of the Anthropocene demonstrates, *the Great Acceleration* is a post-World War II era shaped by global economies, growth, and apparent prosperity.⁵⁵ This tiny period, spanning the mid-twentieth century to now, connects our grandparents’, parents’, us, and our children’s lives to rapid changes in the ecosphere.⁵⁶ This epoch, ablaze with consuming

54. *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, “Climate Change Widespread, Rapid, and Intensifying,” August 9, 2021, <https://www.ipcc.ch/2021/08/09/ar6-wgi-20210809-pr>.

55. The term, the *Anthropocene*, was promoted by Dutch Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and limnologist Eugene F. Stoermer; Jane Carruthers argues that “the first reference to the Anthropocene as a name for the current geological epoch arose in February 2000 during a meeting of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP) in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Later that year, Crutzen (b.1933) and Eugene F. Stoermer (1934–2012), limnologist at the University of Michigan who had originally coined the term in the 1980s (in a different context), co-authored the initial scientific publication on the topic in the *IGBP Newsletter*. In it, the authors noted prior recognition of the damage that humans were inflicting on the planet. In 1864, for example, American diplomat and thinker George Perkins Marsh (1801 – 1882) published his groundbreaking *Man and Nature*; in 1873 Antonio Stoppani (1824 – 1891), geologist and palaeontologist, referred to the ‘anthropozoic’ era; while in 1926 Russian geologist Vladimir I. Vernadsky (1863 – 1945) took note of the ‘noosphere’, the growing human power over the total biosphere. But Crutzen and Stoermer concluded that the impact had reached geological proportions.” Carruthers, “The Anthropocene,” *South African Journal of Science*, 115 (2019): 7–8, <https://dx.doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2019/6428>; Paul Crutzen went on to describe the Anthropocene in a paper published in the scientific journal *Nature* in 2002. Crutzen, “Geology of Mankind,” *Nature* 415, no. 23 (2002), <https://doi.org/10.1038/415023a>; For visual depictions of the *Great Acceleration*, refer to the website, <https://globaia.org/anthropocene>.

56. Between 1990 and 2003, the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (IGBP), of which Crutzen and Stoermer were members, searched for the start of the epoch they described as the Anthropocene. Their research began with the Industrial Revolution and ended in 2000 CE. Those findings revealed that 1950 marked the beginning of accelerated human-induced Earth system change. The information collected by the IGBP was updated in 2010, providing more nuanced evidence related to the Great Acceleration. Though the initial post-war acceleration linked countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (the OECD), new data indicated a shift in production toward the OECD’s key partners, Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (known by the acronym BRICS). On the surface, their findings indicated an increasingly global human footprint, yet analysis revealed a difference. While global humanity appears responsible for accelerated ecosphere change, Earth system degradation remains primarily driven by countries closely associated with Western Europe, including Aotearoa. In 2020, OECD countries accounted for less than 18% of the world’s population while continuing to be the largest consumers of Earth system

passions, megafires, and melting polar ice caps, has led us to question how the Universe might be perceived anew if we were to recall that which has been forgotten.

While the long-term effects of anthropogenic changes to Earth's spheres galvanise the thinking that underpins this research, our question springs from cosmological, philosophical, and creative conversations with the Ancestors, who draw our attention to the kinships that bind us ethically to the Universe. The Ancestors demand an explanation for our actions.

*A petrochemical child,
this is our account.*

*This research recognises the ethical and moral
responsibilities bestowed by Earthly kinship.*



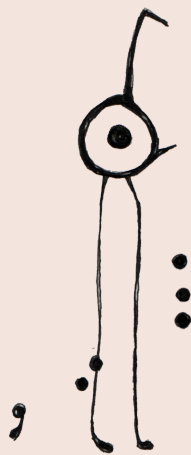
resources. See Will Steffen et al., "The Trajectory of the Anthropocene: The Great Acceleration," *The Anthropocene Review* 2, no. 1 (2015): 94, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2053019614564785>.



Geranium Diaême



Figure 1.3. *Our Studio*, Marcus Williams, 2024, digital photograph, collection artist's own.



THREE METHODS

(Crossing the threshold of forgetting)

The similarity of one thing to another which we are used to, which occupies us in a wakeful state, reflects only vaguely the deeper resemblance of the dream world in which everything that happens appears not in identical but in similar guise, opaquely similar one to another.

Walter Benjamin, 1969.⁵⁷

The smell of words, their scent on your skin, and the imprint of the invisible.

These methods are mnemonic aids for remembering. The first method, textual and poetic, extracts the scent of words. The second uses volatile molecules to place our words on your skin. The third, though fixed as photographs, captures the incoherent murmurings of breath, aromatic, and indefinable.

Transported, we have journeyed to the threshold of forgetting to retrieve what has been lost. With a measure of wonder and awe, we find ourselves wreathed in scented strands of ancestral ken woven into the fabric of the liminal imaginary. There is, still, one more thing we seek—a remedy for melancholy, which we recognise as *homesickness*.

⁵⁷. Walter Benjamin, and Hannah Arendt, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, Random House Digital, 1969), 204. (Italics ours)

Walter Benjamin (1892 - 1940) perceives homesickness in Marcel Proust's (1971 - 1922) writing, *Swann's Way*.⁵⁸ In the novel, Proust offers a description of *mémoire involontaire* (involuntary autobiographical memory), describing the activation of autobiographical memories sparked in the main character, Marcel, after sipping a fragrant tea mixed with crumbs of a madeleine cake.⁵⁹ Combined, taste and smell fleetingly return Marcel to childhood. This experience, involuntary and unexpected, sparks Proust's search for memories. *Mémoire involontaire* is, however, more about the vacuum of unmemory (*óminni*) than memory—an insurmountable gulf of yearning.

Benjamin contends Proust's relentless pursuit of the past manifests a profound homesickness.⁶⁰ Pathologically, homesickness is conceived as a distinct illness. Those with homesickness experience somatic and psychological effects, including fever, nausea, sleeplessness, and withdrawal (physically and mentally), accompanied by acute sadness and hopelessness.⁶¹

58. *Swann's Way* (1913) is volume one of Proust's seven volume *À la recherche du temps perdu*, *Remembrance of Things Past*, 1913 - 1927. Whilst ostensibly fiction (though mirroring Proust's life), the volumes outline Proust's philosophical beliefs. The title of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, was translated in 1992 by Denis J. Enright as: *In Search of Lost Time*.

59. According to researchers Simon Chu and John J. Downes, the *Proust effect* or the *Proust phenomenon* refers to "the belief that odours are especially evocative reminders of past experiences can be traced to the literary anecdote described by Marcel Proust, in which he was vividly reminded of his childhood when he dipped a madeleine biscuit into his tea. The so-called Proust phenomenon has been defined more formally in a number of different ways. These vary from the belief that odours themselves are not forgotten as rapidly as other perceptual events, to the belief that odours evoke older memories than do other stimuli, to the belief that odours evoke recollections that are more emotionally loaded." Chu, and Downes, "Proust Nose Best: Odours are Better Cues of Autobiographical Memory," *Memory and Cognition* 30, no. 4 (2002): 511, <https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03194952>.

60. Benjamin, and Arendt, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, 182; Regarding Proust's homesickness and its manifestation in the character Marcel's experience of *mémoire involontaire* in *Swann's Way*, psychology professor Jeffrey D. Green et al. state: "Scents powerfully cue autobiographical memories, in many respects more powerfully than visual or other sensory modalities. Repetitive, potent, and novel odours are particularly susceptible to creating emotional odour-event associations, which are a frequent occurrence during childhood, as a higher proportion of childhood experiences are meaningful and novel. Supporting the Proustian hypothesis, odour-cued memories are more emotional, include more relevant event details, and are accompanied by a stronger sense of mental transportation than visually-cued memories. Scent-evoked memories are particularly autobiographical and predominantly from the first decade of life." Green et al., "The Proust Effect: Scents, Food, and Nostalgia," *Current Opinion in Psychology* 50 (2023): 101562, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2023.101562>.

61. See Marjorie Baier, and Martha Welch, "An Analysis of the Concept of Homesickness," *Archives of Psychiatric Nursing* 6, no. 1 (1992): 54-60, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0883-9417\(92\)90055-N](https://doi.org/10.1016/0883-9417(92)90055-N)

Certainly, Benjamin's diagnosis of Proust's homesickness underscores how intimately bound presence and absence are. After experiencing *mémoire involontaire*, Proust is addicted to the insuperable loss that accompanies forgetting. Scholar Amresh Sinha observes, "each time we remember we remember forgetting. Thus, the only thing remembrance remembers is obviously not itself, but its other, namely forgetting."⁶² Benjamin calls Proust's fixation with involuntary memory a *Penelope work of forgetting*, declaring that in resolutely seeking to remember, Proust "each day unravels the web and the ornaments of forgetting."⁶³

*The scent of homesickness
runs its mist-like tongue
along the ridgeline of your memory.*

Via the molecular seeds of smell, we enter the cellular body of memory, growing wild, indistinguishable from our vegetal kin. In our research, the (re)making of memory is akin to *rewriting the self*. Proust-like, we seek, in unmemory, the smell of you. However, unlike Proust, we foreshadow the future, *Conjuring Tomorrow*. Believing memory, imagination, and divination are interconnected is not new. Yet, neuroimaging specialists Sinéad L. Mullally and Eleanor A. Maguire can produce images showing these three functions are conjoined in the hippocampus, and that episodic or subjective (autobiographical) memory is critical to their activation.⁶⁴ Episodic memory is generative and allied to sensations of, as Anne-Lise Saive et al. explain, "mental time travel, a sense of self, and the auto-noetic consciousness that allows one to be aware of the subjective time at which events happened."⁶⁵ Thus, science establishes a strong connection

62. Amresh Sinha, "The Intertwining of Remembering and Forgetting in Walter Benjamin," *Connecticut Review* 20, no. 2 (1998): 100, <https://www.academia.edu/29687495/>.

63. Benjamin, and Arendt, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, 202; The full quote reads: "For here the day unravels what the night has woven. When we awake each morning, we hold in our hands, usually weakly and loosely, but a few fringes of the tapestry of lived life, as loomed for us by forgetting. However, with our purposeful activity and, even more, our purposive remembering each day unravels the web and the ornaments of forgetting."

64. See Sinéad L. Mullally, and Eleanor A. Maguire, "Memory, Imagination, and Predicting the Future: A Common Brain Mechanism?" *The Neuroscientist* 20, no. 3 (2014): 220-234, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1073858413495091>.

65. Anne-Lise Saive, Jean-Pierre Royet, and Jane Plailly. "A Review on the Neural Bases of

between odiferous experiences and episodic memories because odour-cued memories engage the hippocampus and the amygdala, conjoining odour and emotions. Whilst these findings support our assertions, they cannot explain how odour emanates from unmemory, producing knowledge unrelated to our lived experience. In the liminal imaginary, we detect atmospheres heavy with your scent—the volatile ken of the Ancestors, an admix of plant language, epigenetics, and magical affect.

*We foretell the hereafter, recalling a home that never was. Nor ever will be.
Swaying to the hum of Love's—longing, we distil a story of tomorrow.*



Episodic Odour Memory: From Laboratory-based to Autobiographical Approaches,” *Frontiers in Behavioural Neuroscience* 8 (2014): 1. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnbeh.2014.00240>. Saive et al. also state that, episodic memory depends on the medial temporal lobe, which is composed of different interconnected subregions, including the hippocampus and adjacent parahippocampal, perirhinal and entorhinal cortices.” Saive, Royet, and Plailly, 1.



Figure 1.4. *Tinctures and Molecules*, Marcus Williams, 2024, digital photograph, collection artist's own.



Method One ~ Wording

The word is of a tenuous chemical substance which performs the most violent alterations.

Roland Barthes, 1978.⁶⁶

Words play a significant role in this research; their composition, deconstruction, and poetics—a vow, an oath, a promise—theories strung together by strings of words, like coloured beads. Words giving off a strong whiff are trackable across the threshold of forgetting. Using paratextual and epistolary approaches to wording, we gather the fragrant poetics of Love and melancholy.

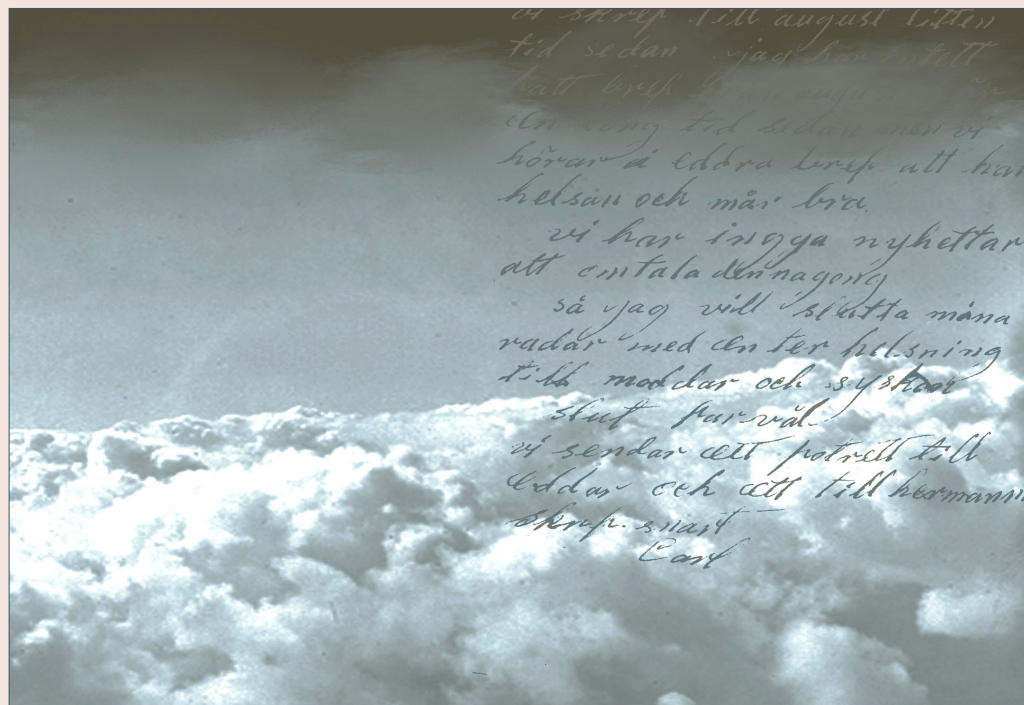


Figure 1.5. Letters, a letter written by Carl to his mother Johanna, Susan Jowsey, 2025, digital collage, collection artist's own.

66. Roland Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), 27, https://archive.org/details/loversdiscoursefoooobart_k5e6.

1: Paratext

(Writing in the margins)

This document draws on paratextual elements found in illuminated Carolingian manuscripts, which interweave words, images, and indecipherable marks.⁶⁷ These ancient books disclose liminal textuality, with the document's original body overwritten by scribes, annotators, teachers, and interpreters. While some manuscripts are palimpsests, most paratexts exist in the margins as notations, such as images, signs, red-letter days, interpretations of and corrections to the text.⁶⁸ Paratexts transgress the boundaries established between the body (of the text) and its margins. Mediaeval researcher Mariken Teeuwen suggests that such incursions allow “new layers, individual annotations, corrections, and variant readings to creep in.”⁶⁹ Teeuwen recognises them as “voices from the edge.”⁷⁰

67. “Carolingian manuscript illuminations reveal alternatively their emphasis upon a return to classical or Italo-Byzantine illusionism in certain figures and spaces, the decorative refinement of their interlace, the masterful pursuit of the decorative and narrative potential of the historiated initial, and an extensive experimental range of calligraphic or painterly pictorial styles. This diversity of artistic output documents more than a renewal of classical and late Antique pictorial precedents. The vast array of image types and styles of spatial organization reveal instead the inventive legacy of an artistic period in which the foundations not only of mediaeval but future Western art forms take root.” Eric Ramírez-Weaver, “Carolingian Manuscript Illumination,” *Oxford Bibliographies*, last reviewed October 2016, last modified July 24, 2012, <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195396584/obo-9780195396584-0116.xml>.

68. Red-letter days are dates written in red ink on arcane calendars and in Carolingian manuscripts usually signifying Saint's days.

69. Mariken Teeuwen, “Carolingian Scholarship on Classical Authors: Practices of Reading and Writing,” in *Manuscripts of the Latin Classics 800-1200*, ed. Erik Kwakkel (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2015), 40.

70. Mariken Teeuwen, “The Art of Reasoning: Techniques of Scientific Argumentation in the Medieval Latin West (400-1400),” Huygens Institute, accessed June 21, 2023, <https://www.huygens.knaw.nl/en/projecten/the-art-of-reasoning-2/>.

Embroidering the margins with utterances, arcane symbols, and complex imagery draws the reader into a textual liminality. Narratologist Gérard Genette (1930 – 2018) proclaims, “No matter what aesthetic or ideological pretensions (‘fine title,’ preface-manifesto), no matter what coquetry, no matter what paradoxical inversion the author puts into it, a paratextual element is always subordinate to ‘its’ text.”⁷¹ Similarly, classics scholar James E. G. Zetzel acknowledges that paratexts allow idiosyncratic and uncommon ideas to flourish. Zetzel suggests, “instead of a unified and unequivocal text, commentaries deliberately contain alternative and mutually contradictory explanations of the text they purport to explain; there is not one text, but many; there is not one truth, but many.”⁷²

Not my truth, but ours.

Addressing artworks formatted as creative paratexts, poet and critic Craig Dworkin discusses Simon Morris’ site-specific artwork, *Interpretations*. In this work, Morris erases the body of two academic papers, leaving only their footnotes, and then reconstructs their essays using the notes. Dworkin describes the footnotes left by Morris as “like star-charts illustrating Mallarme’s ‘alphabet des astres’ (‘alphabet of stars’): writing’s negative image of blackened constellations on the bleached white sky of the page.”⁷³ Dworkin also discusses poet Jennifer Martenson’s *XQ28I*. Like Morris, Martenson uses the footnotes. Devising a curious trail across the book’s blank pages, the poet inter-threads their writing into numbered footnotes. Crafted through paratexts, *XQ28I* addresses the controversy surrounding a 1993 genetic study of male x chromosomes which public media proclaimed had isolated a *gay gene*. These creative works lay bare the critical performativity of paratexts, which also exist as peritexts and epitexts inside and outside the book. Transforming the threshold of the book, they create indeterminate zones for textual

71. Gérard Genette, and Marie Maclean, “Introduction to the Paratext,” *New Literary History* 22, no. 2 (1991): 269, <https://doi.org/10.2307/469037>.

72. James E. G. Zetzel, “Marginal Scholarship and Textual Deviance. The Commentum Cornuti and the Early Scholia on Persius,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement* 84 (2005): 167, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2041-5370.2005.tb01992.x>.

73. Craig Dworkin, “Textual Prostheses,” *Comparative Literature* 57, no. 1 (2005): 6, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4125327>.

encounters.⁷⁴ Like odours, paratexts escape from the textual body. They are somatic poetry inscribed on the surface of our ideas.

Ingold urges us to consider our absorption into a material world, “a flux in which materials of the most diverse kinds, through processes of admixture and distillation, of coagulation and dispersal, and of evaporation and precipitation, undergo continual generation and transformation.”⁷⁵ Ingold asks this of us because they want us to be aware that the Earth is generative rather than inert, and therefore, as academics, we are borne along by material currents. What Ingold demands is a more direct engagement with the world, a *graphic approach*, whereby observation does not mean capture (as if a photograph) but to limn—*render* perceptions of the world in flux. This encourages us to immerse ourselves in the flow of materials, the ceaseless kindling and procreation of which we are part, arguing that studying should be a process of *togetherness*, not *othering*.⁷⁶ As a participatory method, Ingold recommends drawing and, by extension, hand-writing, activities that tether us, folding us into “the generative dynamic of a world-in-formation.”⁷⁷

Paratextual elements in our text are often drawn, their forms are diverse, reminding us that wording is dynamic, not static. We trace only the faintest outline of our ideas in words because, like perfume, they are volatile. Text rises from the page, becoming vapour, and is carried away. Our paratexts are spells secreted in the folds of our textual body to lure, charm, and fascinate. Calling on our grandmothers’ and great-grandmothers’ visionary insights, we distil the smell of ancestral conversations—brewing a love potion from the concentrated odour of words and the organic language of plants.⁷⁸

74. Genette suggests paratexts offer “the possibility either of entering or of turning back. ‘An undecided zone’ between the inside and the outside, itself without rigorous limits, either towards the interior (the text) or towards the exterior (the discourse of the world on the text), a border, or as Philippe Lejeune said, ‘the fringe of the printed text which, in reality, controls the whole reading.’” Genette, and Maclean, “Introduction to the Paratext,” 261.

75. Ingold, *Being Alive*, 24.

76. Ingold, 226.

77. Ingold, 224.

78. Vegetal life produces large quantities of *biogenic volatile organic compounds* (BVOCs). Environmental scientists Jullada Laothawornkitkul et al. state, “Since the 1960s, over 1000



Hagstone
Amulet

2: Epistolary

(Letters from the living and the living dead)

Epistolary dialogues take the form of letters. Our text, being academic, does not follow this tradition. Nevertheless, we claim this method because our research is based on conversations between the Ancestors and ourselves. Further, our text adheres to the epistolary tradition of *reciprocal narrative*, establishing *us* as the primary participants in this exchange without overtly explaining who *we are*. In the foment of psychophysical dislocation and environmental crisis, we commune with the many, *the Ancestors*. Consequently, an air of intimacy pervades our text, creating a *sense of writing in the moment*, the unspooling of private thoughts. Letters, whether actual or fictitious, are *carriers*—they are the substance through which the scent of words flow. Scholar Janet Gurkin Altman considers “epistolary discourse is thus a coded—although not necessarily an obscure—language, whose code is determined by the specific relationship of the I-you.”⁷⁹ However, there is more than one *you* in our research, and *I* do not exist. Instead, we are kindred—*part of you*. Psychology professor Mark Freeman counsels that in rewriting ourselves, we must reconfigure our past and understand ourselves anew through interpretation.⁸⁰ We write ourselves into existence under the gaze of our maternal great-great-grandfather Johan Pettersson (1837 - 1890) and great-great-grandmother Johnna (1835 - 1932). Behind them tower the

peer reviewed papers have been published on the biosynthesis, role and function of BVOCs in the biosphere and atmosphere. It is now clear that these compounds have important effects within plants, between plants, between plants and other organisms, and in the atmosphere at the local, regional and global scales.” Laothawornkitkul et al., “Biogenic Volatile Organic Compounds in the Earth System,” *The New Phytologist* 183 (2009): 28, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8137.2009.02859.x>.

79. Janet Gurkin Altman, *Epistolarity: Approaches to a Form* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 120.

80. Mark Freeman, *Rewriting the Self: History, Memory, Narrative* (Milton: Taylor & Francis, 2015), 3.

Ancestors whose likenesses superimposed one-atop-the-other—we recognise by their odours.

We are the many and the last.

Epistolary writing is an ancient art form, fascinating the audience with narratives that shift between fact and fiction. Historically, epistolary discourse establishes the inter-agency of philosophy and poetics. For example, in *Heroides*, Ovid (c. 43 BCE - c. 18 CE) employs epistolary voice. Another significant European philosophical text using this form is *De Rerum Natura*, penned by the Epicurean Lucretius (c. 99 - 55 BCE). As the six-book epistolary-philosophic poem unravels, the author’s voice draws us toward its dark, incomplete conclusion wherein bodies pile up in the streets, and the *known world* collapses into the void.⁸¹ Though epistolary voice acts as an intermediary, enabling intimacy, employing such a personal writing style has perils. In *Deceptive Narratives: On Truth and the Epistolary Voice*, cultural studies professor Gerd Bayer opines, “in the messy and hybrid borderlands between the two paradigms [fact and fiction], it is hardly surprising that authors would lose sight of what could count as *terra firma*.”⁸² These dangers are even more pronounced when the authors refuse to adhere to conventions of genre and narrative style.

In our thesis, we use epistolary writing as a tether to establish connections between the reader, the Ancestors, and ourselves. As Bayer suggests, in the liminal imaginary (somewhere between fact and fiction), phantoms appear *solid*, adrift, we float on Ymir’s blood.⁸³ The tension in our text is further heightened by its dual function as both an exposition of our research and evidence of our magical world-conception. As a text, it literally and figuratively distils intergenerational narratives, turning them into perfumed stories. It is in this transformation that the exegesis becomes a *Love letter*.

81. See James I. Porter, “Lucretius and the Poetics of Void,” in *Dynamic Reading Studies in the Reception of Epicureanism*, ed. Brooke Holmes and W. H. Shearin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 197-226.

82. Gerd Bayer, “Deceptive Narratives: On Truth and the Epistolary Voice,” *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 39 (2009): 174, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03379833>.

83. In Old Norse mythological history, after the gods slew the primordial jötnunn Ymir, Ymir’s blood (sometimes sweat) became the sea.

Bayer contends that authors who write deceptive epistolary narratives, rather than attempting to adhere “to the illusion of reality, ... engage in a ludic illustration of that very principle by making visible the tenuous.”⁸⁴ In fabricating a many-layered fiction, we smear our skin, reddening it with sacrificial blood, offering the sweet confection of our hearts for your consumption.⁸⁵

A truth dreamed.

Though ours is an unconventional application of the epistolary genre, we have cobbled together a Love letter *as exegesis*, drawing inspiration from philosophy, folklore, academic conjecture, empirical studies, plant language, olfactory art, and the tradition of perfumery to create a fragrant message penned in the margins.

A fiction rooted in the cosmos.



Hagstone Amulet

84. Bayer, “Deceptive Narratives,” 183.

85. For a discussion involving the Old Norse ritual of eating the heart of another, see the Foil 3 subchapter: *Wordless*.

3: Óminni and the Kinship of words

*Of Ymir's flesh, the earth was fashioned.
And of their sweat the sea;
Craggs of their bones, trees of their hair.
And of their skull the sky.
Then, of their brows, the blithe gods made
Midgard for the children of humans;
And of their brain, the bitter-mooded
Clouds were all created.*

Snorri Sturluson, c.1220.⁸⁶

Language washes back and forth along the shoreline of our existence.

As a method, epistolary discourse is transformative, it turns our question into an entreaty, an invocation to the Ancestors for guidance. Attempting to *imagine tomorrow*, we ask:

How might conjuring a magical world-conception from ancestral ken and the liminal imaginary transform our perceptions of the Universe in a time of ecological crisis?

86. From Snorri Sturluson, “Gylfaginning. The Beguiling of Gylfi,” trans. Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, in *The Prose Edda* (New York: American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1916), 21, <https://archive.org>. (Minor text amendments and italics ours); This exert comes from the mythic text concerning King Gylfi. Snorri states, “King Gylfi was a wise man and skilled in magic; he was much troubled that the Æsir-people were so cunning that all things went according to their will. He pondered whether this might proceed from their own nature, or whether the divine powers which they worshipped might ordain such things.” Sturluson, 13. Note, Snorri is referred to by his first name as per Old Norse naming conventions.

Penetrating ancestral ken, lost to *oral-memorial practices*, one finds the remnants of kenning, the strange, poetic language of Skaldic verse.⁸⁷ In *Skáldskaparmál*, *Poesy of Skalds*, compiled during the thirteenth century by Icelandic Chieftain and poet Snorri Sturluson (1178 – 1241 CE), we learn of all the ways to address the physical world, through these names, we perceive an interconnected Universe bound through kinships:

XXIV: *How should one periphrase the earth?*

*Thus: by calling her Flesh of Ymir, and Mother of Thor, Daughter of Ónarr, Óðinn's Bride, Co-Wife of Frigg and Rindr and Gunnlöð, Mother-in-law of Sif, Floor and Bottom of the Storm-Hall, Sea of Beasts, Daughter of Night, Sister of Audr and of Day.*⁸⁸

Marked by their ability to shapeshift, the genealogies of the Ancestors merge with those of the Æsir, Vanir, jötnar, dvergar, and álfar.⁸⁹ The environment pools in our blood.

*Kith and kin, we are creatures, plant-folk, moulded from earth and trees.*⁹⁰

87. In their thesis, Kathryn Haley-Halinski writes that kennings are “a form of verbal art, distinguished by exaggerated use of metaphor, metonymy, and wordplay/synonym-variation, and subject to pre-defined metres which determine alliteration, rhyme, and, in many cases, syllable-counts.” Haley-Halinski, “Kennings in Mind and Memory: Cognitive Poetics and Skaldic Verse,” Master’s thesis, University of Oslo, 2017, 8, <https://www.duo.uio.no/KathrynHaleyHalinskiMAS4091Thesis.pdf>.

88. Snorri Sturluson, “Skáldskaparmál, the Poesy of Skalds,” trans. Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur, in *The Prose Edda* (New York: American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1916), 136, <https://archive.org>. (Italics ours)

89. The Æsir and Vanir, are critical characters in the pantheon of Norse cosmology. The Æsir are the gods of war, of whom Óðinn is the preeminent figure. The Vanir are the rival, arguably older, family of gods conjectured to be solar deities. Álfar, dvergar, and jötnar are Old Norse (super)natural entities thought to be environmental forces. Their true identities were erased by the late European mediaeval, early Renaissance imagination which recreated them as the anthropomorphic caricatures dwarves (dvergar), giants (jötnar), and elves (álfar). Alarmingly, despite growing academic criticism of these re-interpretations, the images appear indelible and thus impossible to erase from the mind.

90. Anthropologist Marshall Sahlins (1930 – 2021) argues, “kin[folk] are *persons* who belong to one another, who are members of one another, who are co-present in each other, whose lives are joined and interdependent.” Sahlins, “What Kinship Is (Part One),” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 17, no. 1 (2011): 11, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23011568>.

Kennings, according to researcher Kathryn Haley-Halinski, revealed a cognitive poetry contingent on shared knowledge used to conjure *text worlds*—a narrative construction of the world informed by the story and commonly held knowledge.⁹¹ In the liminal imaginary, ancestral text worlds breathe fire and emit a feral odour. Shrouded in óminni (unmemory), the oddly conjoined wordings of Skaldic poetry require deciphering. Under their influence, we transform; ancestral word pictures change us into beasts and trees, undone molecularly by their guttural intonations. Poetry is transformational. Old Norse oral poetry is variously known as: the *Mead of the Dvergar*, the *Mead of Poesy* (Poetry), or the *Mead of Suttungr*. The jötunn Suttungr chased Óðinn after the god stole the Mead of Poesy (See figure 1.6). Snorri documents an account of the origin of the *Mead of Poesy* in *Skáldskaparmál*. Firstly, we are told that poetry is a secret language which hides knowledge. The god of Skaldic poetry, Bragi, recounts the tale of the death of a very wealthy jötunn, Ölvaldi, whose three sons, Thjazi, Idi, and Gangr, decided to divide their inheritance by the amount of gold they could fit in their mouth, each taking the same number of mouthfuls. Bragi states: “And we have it as a metaphor among us now, to call gold the mouth-tale of these giants; but we conceal it in secret terms or in poesy in this way, that we call it Speech, or Word, or Talk, of these giants.”⁹² After which, Bragi explains how poesy came into being—originating in the peace process following the battle between the Æsir and the Vanir:

*They each went to a vat and spat their spittle therein. Then, at parting, the gods took that peace token and would not let it perish but shaped thereof a man. This man is called Kvasir, and he was so wise that none could question him concerning anything but that he knew the solution.*⁹³

It is interesting to compare this part of the narrative with the passage from the ninth-century travel journal of Ahmed Ibn Fadlān (c. 879 – 960 CE), which documents a trading post encounter on the Volga River with a group of Scandinavian merchants.

91. Haley-Halinski, “Kennings in Mind and Memory,” 4.

92. Sturluson, *The Prose Edda*, 92.

93. Sturluson, 92. (Italics ours)



Ibn Fadlān's account reads:

Every morning a girl comes and brings a tub of water, and places it before her master. In this he proceeds to wash his face and hands, and then his hair, combing it out over the vessel. Thereupon he blows his nose, and spits into the tub, and, leaving no dirt behind, conveys it all into this water. When finished, the girl carries the tub to the man next him, who does the same. Thus, she continues carrying the tub from one to another, till each of those who are in the house has blown his nose and spit into the tub and washed his face and hair.⁹⁴

Putting aside the notion that washing in another's body effluvia seems repellent, we can conceive that bathing in the saliva from the mouth of another is a cosmic tradition related to peacekeeping. Based on the mythic narrative, the collective voice of those with whom one shares a relationship exorcises those who are false-hearted. Knowledge passes from the mouth into the bowl; participating in this act is akin to speaking with a collective voice. The last person to wash is the lowest in the hierarchy and requires, so receives, the most knowledge.

Returning to our discussion of Skaldic poetry, doubt has been cast on Snorri's assertion that Kvasir was a *person* fashioned from the saliva of the Æsir and the Vanir. Philologist Roberta Frank contends Snorri's interpretation is a fabrication and that the kenning *Kvasis dreyri*, which translates as the *blood of Kvasir*, led Snorri to claim Kvasir as a person whom the dvergar sacrificed to create the Mead of Poesy.⁹⁵ For our purposes, we will allow Snorri's version, which runs, that the two dvergar, Fjalar and Galar, asked Kvasir to speak privately with them; when Kvasir obliged, they sacrificed the *wise one*, gathering the blood into two vats and a kettle. Snorri states: "The kettle is named Odrerir, and the vats Son and Bond; they blended honey with the blood, and the outcome was that mead by the virtue of which he who drinks becomes a skald or scholar."⁹⁶

94. Albert Stanburrough Cook, "Ibn Fadlān's Account of Scandinavian Merchants on the Volga in 922," *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 22, no. 1 (1923): 83-4, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27702690>. (Italics ours)

95. Roberta Frank, "Snorri and the Mead of Poetry," in *Speculum Norroenvm: Norse Studies in Memory of Gabriel Turville-Petre*, ed. Ursula Dronke, Gudrun P. Helgadóttir, Gerd Wolfgang Weber, and Hans Bekker-Nielsen (Odense: Odense University Press, 1981), 157-60.

96. Sturluson, *The Prose Edda*, 93.

Regardless of whether Kvasir was a person or not, according to Snorri, skaldic verse bears the names; "Kvasir's Blood or Dwarves' Drink, or Fill, or any kind of liquid of Odrerir, or of Bond, or of Son, or Ferry-Boat of Dwarves—since this mead brought them life-ransom from the reef—or Suttungr's Mead, or Liquor of Himinbjorg."⁹⁷ The dvergar offered Suttungr the mead as reconciliation for slaying the jötnar Gilling and Galarr, Suttungr's parents. Poetry, born from the spittle of the gods as an act of peace-making, is a crucial agent in creating accord, appeasing the wronged and restoring order. The mouth opens, revealing a potent magical site, the chest, from which words emerge, giving us voice. One must listen to perceive—*because all things speak*. The kettle Odrerir and the vats, Son and Bond, are kinfolk and have the power of words.

Old Norse scholar Kate Heslop reminds us that kenning often carried magical effect since this curious form of speaking "comes from above and fetters the conscious mind in self-forgetfulness, inhabiting the voice with the enchanting noise of poetry. It may be that you don't get your geð (mind) back again."⁹⁸ Repeated words mimic the somatic beating of our heart, and in their rhythmic thrum, we are altered, growing wings and flying away or turning into the running form of a wolf.⁹⁹ Kenning unfolds an image-based aurality, a mythopoetic figuration, wherein metaphors translate (super)natural encounters. We speak with our heart—the *geðsteinn*—our *mind-stone*.¹⁰⁰

97. Sturluson, 94.

98. Kate Heslop, "Metaphors for Forgetting and Forgetting as Metaphor in Old Norse Poetics," in *Myth, Magic, and Memory in Early Scandinavian Narrative Culture: Studies in Honour of Stephen A. Mitchell*, ed. by Jürg Glauser and Pernille Hermann, Acta Scandinavica, 11. (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2021), 249, <https://doi.org/10.1484/M.AS-EB.5.121344>.

99. Our earliest recorded Norse ancestor, with no birth or death date, possessed the name Bâtel, a Viking Era name from the Old Norse compound name Bótlulfr. The name was common to Gotland and can be interpreted in various ways. There are several literal meanings—a *creator of remedies from wolves*, *someone who benefits from wolves* or *battle-wolf*. Interestingly, Bâtel had an additional name, Ökand, which means *unknown* or *unseen* in Old Norse. Paired with the name Bâtel, different meanings can be interpreted, notably, *someone who shapeshifts* or *someone unseen*. Norse naming conventions bear no resemblance to modern European naming conventions; names were fluid and often addressed personal Beingness, attributes recognised in the names of animals, flora or birthplaces. There were no hereditary family names. However, you could inherit a *fylgja*, a guardian spirit, through the name of an eponymous ancestor. You may also be designated a son or daughter, as in Petters-son.

100. *Geðsteinn* is an Old Norse kenning for heart - the mind-stone - the stone of the mind is the heart. "Expressions for Heart," "Kennings," The Skaldic Project, accessed October 22, 2024, <https://skaldic.org/m.php?p=kenning&i=110>.

Forgetting, or óminni, is of material concern to this research because forgetting is more than loss; it is non-existence. One may partake of the *potion of oblivion*, óminnisveig (*the liquor of not-memory*) or one may be tricked into drinking it by a powerful thirst. Unmemory also gives rise to stories; psychologist Stephen A. Mitchell (1946 - 2000) observes, “lack of memory, or more specifically, the erased memory, can also be a conscious social construct every bit as meaningful as the more obvious forms of memory.”¹⁰¹

Belonging to a colonial diaspora, this self, floats unmoored. Words are flotsam and jetsam, adrift and disintegrating. From the wreckage of our past, we re-cast ourselves as kindred, bound to *you*, we become *us*. Freeman argues that rewriting the self requires engagement with the twin narratives of interpreting and recollecting, like weaving we ceaselessly make and remake an image of who and what we are.¹⁰²

Your jötunn breath, the taste of you, the rub, scuff, and scratch of your words enter our every pore.



101. Stephen A. Mitchell, “The Mythologized Past: Memory in Medieval and Early Modern Gotland,” in *Minni and Muninn: Memory in Medieval Nordic Culture*, ed. Pernille Hermann, Stephen A. Mitchell, and Agnes S. Arnórsdóttir (Turnhout: Brepolis Publishers, 2014), 166.

102. Freeman, *Rewriting the Self*, 6.



Figure 1.6. *Sæmundar og Snorra Edda*, illustration from the 18th-century manuscript, *Sæmundar og Snorra Edda*, the image depicts the jötunn Suttungr (transformed into a bird), chasing Óðinn, also transformed into a bird, who carries the *Mead of Poesy* in their beak, arriving in Ásgarðr, Óðinn spits (or vomits) the mead into vessels. Some of the mead is ejected as faeces, becoming the bad poetry of humans, Ólafur Brynjúlfsson, 1760, digital reproduction, 1999, Denmark, Royal Danish Library, no known copyright restrictions, <https://permalink.kb.dk/permalink/2006/manus/738/dan/92+recto/>.

Method Two ~ Volatile Molecules

For nothing can touch which may not itself be touched.

Lucretius, Book V. ¹⁰³

Volatile molecules released from the archives of existence disclose our unstable form. We dance, smoke-like, in the burning of time.



Figure 1.7. *Dís* (used as a heiti for *kvinde* - sister) *Jocelyn, Gloria, and June*, Susan Jowsey, 2024, digital collage, collection artist’s own.

¹⁰³. Bailey, *Lucretius: De Rerum Natura*, 191, Book V, ll. 149-180. (Italics ours)

1: Osmic Affects

Scholarly critic and curator Jim Drobnick, writing on *volatile effects*, asserts that artists use “aromatic substances to destabilize” expectations.¹⁰⁴ Drobnick argues that while smell has been present in modernist artworks since the nineteenth century, it was not until the late twentieth century that the Olfactory Art Movement fully emerged. By the 1980s, Drobnick claims, there were numerous books about scent, and easier access to perfumery materials, technologies, and training.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, to undertake this research, we studied traditional perfume composition.¹⁰⁶ Developed over centuries, the basic principles of perfumery have remained essentially unchanged. More recently, chemical science combined with restrictions on the gathering and use of plants have altered the boundaries of perfumery. Easy access to fabricated compounds and distillates has made non-specialist scent creation a popular pastime.

Although the rudiments of the art form are now ubiquitous, Drobnick argues perfumery and olfactory art are not the same. Unlike modern perfumiers, olfactory artists are, Drobnick opines, engaged with epistemological, ontological, and ethical questions negotiated using odour. The disruptive function of smell, Drobnick affirms, collapses traditional binaries separating “environment and bodies, self and other, nature and culture.”¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, olfactory art creates a dilemma that confuses and questions “accepted knowledge and aesthetics.”¹⁰⁸ And whilst these

¹⁰⁴. Jim Drobnick, “Volatile Effects Olfactory Dimensions of Art and Architecture,” in *Empire of the Senses, The Sensual Culture Reader* (Sensory Formations), ed. David Howe (London: Routledge, 2021), 266.

¹⁰⁵. Jim Drobnick, “Sensory Hiatus: The Olfactory Turn in Visual Art.” *Roots and Routes, Research on Visual Culture*, (2018), <https://www.roots-routes.org/the-olfactory-turn-in-visual-art-by-jim-drobnick/>

¹⁰⁶. Over a period of three years, we have enrolled in online courses offered by the EPC Academy (the Experimental Perfume Club, London), taught by the EPC founder, French perfumier Emmanuelle Moeglin.

¹⁰⁷. Drobnick, “Sensory Hiatus,” 4

¹⁰⁸. Drobnick, 4.

contentions recognise the significance of what is now a well-established art movement, perhaps olfactory practices also allow us to speak with the dead, contemplate ancestral ken, and engage with myth, folklore, and medicine. Mayhap, applying perfumery principles, we might enter a liminality wherein unmemory is captured in a suspension and, thus, becomes recognisable and remembered.



Figure 1.8. *Fire and Silence*, Marcus Williams, 2024, digital photograph, collection artist's own.

2: The Scent of Óminni

Discussing the medical historian's role, rare books curator Anna Chen contends their work engages with smells and texts equally since both are of lasting significance to cultural history.¹⁰⁹ Chen further notes, scholars are beginning to recognise the role of odour "in industrialization; constructions of selfhood, class identities, group affiliations and differences; imperial and colonial ventures; gender and race negotiations; and the transmission of tradition."¹¹⁰ As odour holds meaning, smells can be considered *olfactory records* and are thus invaluable to the archivist. Chen explains that a record is a data set with "*content and context, used as an extension of human memory; created or received in the course of individual or institutional activity; and carrying information with continuing value.*"¹¹¹

Conceptualising odours as archival, acknowledges that molecular life holds memories, some of which are preserved and transmitted through smell—an idea that supports our conviction that the aromas we make record our confabulations with the Ancestors. The odours we select and compose into perfumes are dialogues. In them, we perceive the odiferous cacophony of many voices. Once you become aware of their scent, their words have entered your being. Our memories are yours.

Chen's assertions remind us why this method is crucial to understanding the efficacy of our magical world-conception. Odours, understood as *records*, bridge memories from the private—intimate and socio-cultural spheres. As repositories of memories, Chen argues, they are as significant

109. Anna Chen, "Perfume and Vinegar: Olfactory Knowledge, Remembrance, and Recordkeeping," *The American Archivist* 79, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2016): 104, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26356702>.

110. Chen, 104.

111. Definition of a *record* from Richard Pearce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, s.v. "record," Society of American Archivists, <http://www2.archivists.org/glossary/terms/r/record>. Quoted in Chen, "Perfume and Vinegar," 104. (Italics ours)

as “letters, photos, and land deeds.”¹¹² Yet, smells reveal memories in intense and peculiar ways, with the capacity to bring people together who share similar cultural or social recollections, for example, the aroma of wood smoke or cooking. It is Chen’s opinion that the associations and meanings attached to smells release “histories in ways that both echo and challenge received Western notions of documentation.”¹¹³

Composed as epistolary narratives, the ingredients in our perfumes hold meaning because of their relationships to place or Beings and as nostrums (remedies or magic formulas) rather than for their agreeableness. While not always concocted to be pleasant, their odours are familiar. Traditional perfumiers, or *noses*, recognise the different ways ingredients work together. In our apprenticeship, we have mastered trial and error. Moreover, we have consciously adopted a more *spagyric* approach because alchemy focuses on tinctures as remedies. Manfred M. Junius (1929 - 2004) explains that within,

The word *spagyria* two Greek words are hidden: *spaō*, to draw out, to divide; and *ageiro*, to gather, to bind, to join. These two concepts form the foundation of every genuine alchemical work, hence the often-quoted phrase “*Solve et coagula, et habebis magisterium!*” (Dissolve and bind, and you will have the magistry).¹¹⁴

Medicinal alchemy uses methods traditionally used in early perfumery, when tinctures and remedies relied on distillation and extraction, processes alchemists refer to as transmutation. Three main principles underpin alchemical conversion: *Mercury*, *Sulphur*, and *Salt*. Though these terms are commonly used in alchemy, they refer to the spirit, consciousness, and the body.

¹¹². Chen, 113.

¹¹³. Chen, 113.

¹¹⁴. Manfred M. Junius, *The Practical Handbook of Plant Alchemy: An Herbalist’s Guide to Preparing Medicinal Essences, Tinctures, and Elixirs*, trans. Léone Muller (Rochester: Healing Arts Press, 1985), 1.

- ☿ *Mercury* — The principle of life, or the vital power, the spirit (in the sense of “spirit of life”), the waters of life, further, the volatile, the etheric.
- ♀ *Sulphur* (Sulfur) — The consciousness. Sulphur is always conscious and never anonymous. Furthermore, Sulphur is the fiery, radiant, burning, and active principle.
- ⊖ *Salt* (Sal) — The solid, the body, the vehicle, matter in the sense proper.¹¹⁵

Figure 1.9. *Mercury, Sulphur, and Salt*, symbolic images based on those found in Manfred M. Junius’ *Practical Handbook of Plant Alchemy*, Susan Jowsey, 2023, hand drawn, collection artist’s own.

These principles exist in matter which alchemists’ bracket into four states: solid, liquid, gaseous, and etheric (radiant). These are, in turn, identified by the four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. Like other arcane medical theories, these elements are bestowed with atmospheric traits: cold, moist, dry, and hot.



Figure 1.10. *Earth, Air, Fire, and Water*, and their corresponding atmospheres hot, cold, dry, moist, based on illustrations in *Practical Handbook of Plant Alchemy*, Susan Jowsey, 2023, digital collage, collection artist’s own.

Arranged as pictured, each element is affected by two atmospheric qualities. These qualities can individually alter the element or converge to change it. However, the elements are not base substances but expressions of matter—matter’s voice. This idea is critical to us as it reinforces the notion

¹¹⁵. Junius, 31; Edited descriptions of the three core principles.

that matter speaks; it communicates alchemical and chemical information. It is these directions that we are attempting to understand and translate through perfumery. Dilute materials whilst reduced are also strengthened. Odour being unfixed requires capturing through extraction, distillation, and maceration. As a method, it is unstable and influenced by atmospheric conditions. Scents, smell experiences, and the act of smelling are distinct and interpretive. Following a recipe does not dictate a predictable outcome because the materials are molecular and protean (changeable). We are not in control; they undermine our experiences and resist our advances. Instead, we tend to them with metaphoric interpretation and mythopoetics, the tools we have at hand. While we tell stories about them, they bind us to a different reality. They weave us out of threads spun from minni and óminni.

Junius contends that medicinal alchemy is based on ideas rooted in the metaphoric and mythic.¹¹⁶ These storied underpinnings draw us to alchemy but not to its arcane human-centrism. Using poetics and epistolary voice as creative processes, we alchemically fuse mythos and metaphors (storylines and wordings) giving our cosmology form. All the components of our magical world-conception exist within the molecular body (micro-cosmos) of the odiferous. Once more, we come full circle, and at the heart of each revolution is awe and wonder at the unimaginable complexity of the Universe whose vision, rendered long ago, is the image of a tail-eating snake, the *Ouroboros*—a mythic conception of boundless time as cyclical and non-linear—a self-devouring Universe.¹¹⁷ Emerging from *prima materia* (first matter, primordial matter) and *prima energia* (primordial energy), the Universe recomposes, not through repetition but through transference and transmutation. The chaotic restlessness of matter materialising and dematerialising. A Universe whose molecular foundations hold within them the twins, *memory* and *anti-memory*—all we remember because we forget.

¹¹⁶ Junius, *Practical Handbook of Plant Alchemy*, 2.

¹¹⁷ See Susan Jowsey, “Orient the Open End Toward Yourself – Begin by Folding the World in Quarters.” *Interconnections: Journal of Posthumanism* 1, no. 2 (2022): 73-86, <https://journals.library.brocku.ca/index.php/posthumanismstudies/article/view/2665>.

3: Dead Matter and the Force that Binds

Though plant alchemy claims only four elements, there is folded within each a fifth element: the *Quinta Essentia* or *Quintessence*. This element permeates the Universe and, therefore, all things; it is a binding force. Alchemical tradition posits this essence to be the *Universal Spirit*. We, however, recognise it as death. While this proposition contradicts traditional alchemical theory, which holds that dead matter is not energised, we assert death recomposes life, and the transformation within decay contains the Universe. Our cosmology does not separate matter into living and dead but considers all things (including those composed by humankind) as part of a cycle wherein bodies are transposed onto and into one another—as if in a churning, oftentimes too slow or nanoscopic to comprehend.

We are the toxic waste of our dreams.

Through the process of volatilisation matter is mobilised; in the case of scent it becomes etheric, air, wind, breath, and atmosphere. The scent of us.

While professional perfumiers may have thousands of molecular compounds, our practice draws on a library of approximately five hundred volatile molecules. To begin, we worked with a small collection of essential ingredients widely used in perfumery; later, we added to our compendium gleaned raw materials, resins, and plant tinctures. Our distillation processes are simple and involve grinding by hand, using a mortar and pestle, and steeping. The ingredients are dissolved in ethyl alcohol in one, ten (*eau de toilette*) or twenty per cent (*eau de parfum*) solutions. Additionally, we use pure, undiluted extracts.

Our approach to perfumery follows, in the main, well-established traditions and conventions. However, being interested in the medicinal



alchemy outlined by Junius has led us toward a more herbalist approach. We gather, roast, dry or use fresh ingredients to make plant tinctures. Plant tinctures are made by macerating organic vegetal materials, flowers, leaves, stems, seed pods, and bark in a dissolving liquid over a long time.¹¹⁸ It is a cold extraction technique, though positioning the jars of macerating ingredients in the Sun or a warm place will assist in the extraction process. In addition, we have experimented with plant hydrosols (fragrant waters) produced by a friend using steam extraction. However, as oil and water don't mix, combining oils with floral waters is complex and fraught. Along with plant tinctures, we use organic essential oils, viscous absolutes, and chemical composites created specifically for perfumery.

Adhering to Junius' alchemical principle of *Mercury* we use organic, naturally fermented, ethanol, made locally. In plant alchemy Mercury is anonymous and thus belongs to all plants. Ethanol represents Mercury in all spagyric preparations. *Sulphur*, on the other hand, represents that which "is individual, the soul, its essence."¹¹⁹ Essential oils are the distillation of plant essence. *Salt* is the *body* of plants. Spagyric preparations made from salt are not considered volatile or liquid but solid.

Junius states, "The salt of the plants can be made visible through incineration and subsequent calcination (literally, making white) of the plants or the plant residues respectively."¹²⁰ While we have experimented with the preparation of salts. Because we use tiny quantities of plant material to make tinctures, there is insufficient residue for making salt. Furthermore, our preparations of resins or plant tears and thick absolutes are bodily. While essential oils may hold the essence of the plant's soul, there is remarkable directness in harvesting the body of a plant. Gathering demands an engagement with plant narratives. We are called to recognise and respect the plant's being—its familial connections, root system, soil, and surrounding plants. We are called into conversations with plants. Alembic-still distillation is required to make essential oils and significant

¹¹⁸. A tincture is an infusion, traditionally made by steeping matter, usually dried herbs, for weeks to months in ethanol to capture its essence. In perfumery, pure ingredients, both organic and inorganic, are diluted in undenatured perfumer's alcohol (high-grade ethanol) or low toxicity dipropylene glycol (DPG).

¹¹⁹. Junius, *Practical Handbook of Plant Alchemy*, 57.

¹²⁰. Junius, 58.

amounts of plant material, which produces a tiny amount of oil. For this reason, we decided against it as a process. Instead, we purchase organic absolutes, thick, sticky pastes, resins, and essential oils ethically sourced by a small, local company along with traditional perfumery molecules.



Figure 1.11. *Tinctures*, Marcus Williams, 2024, digital photograph, collection artist's own.

Instructions

_____ Reflect on the story you want to tell—this is described as a *brief* in traditional perfumery. In alchemy, this stage is invocatory. In our case, this stage is a conversation, the words rising from unmemory. It is when the raw materials, capable of translating words into scent, are sorted.

_____ The traditional approach ensures a mixture of top, mid (heart), and base notes since the top notes hit the nose first, drawing you in. The heart notes portray the narrative, while the base notes are the story's lingering presence, the traces left on the skin or in the atmosphere.

_____ Formulate the selected ingredients into a recipe and organise them molecularly by volatility (top, middle, and base).

_____ The raw materials should roughly represent a pyramid, ensuring a balance in odour volatility. The top notes occupy the pyramid's apex, the middle notes are more extensive in quantity, while the base notes, which are fixatives, occupy the most significant percentage.

_____ Once the raw materials are proportionate, translate them into percentages. Doing this determines the impact or *the signature* of each in the formula. This step is the hardest part of the process; the amount of each ingredient significantly influences the outcome. At this stage, odours either amalgamate (harmonise or complement one another) or maintain their independence (stand out or apart). Recipes are adapted numerous times during this trial phase.

_____ Apply the rule: When added up, the ingredient percentages should equal 100%. If the ingredients do not add up to 100%, add ethanol. Similarly, if you incorporate pure ingredients, you must dilute the solution appropriately.

Drobnick's term, *volatile effects*, aptly describes the outcomes generated using this method. It is a blend of perfumery, olfactory art, alchemy, and folklore, as well as a measure of mythos and scientific research. With the subtle influence of scent, we aim to evoke the to and fro of conversation. Social anthropologist David Parkin advances the theory that aromas possess

properties akin to spirits. The intertwining of odour, vapour, wind, air, and spirit, Parkin suggests, transcends any “absolute distinction between solid and non-solid, spirit and human, and human and ancestor. It defers questions of ultimate death and cosmic finality by positing a transformational life-cycle of substance and non-substance or spirit.”¹²¹

Ancestral conversations, rendered in scents, disclose the mercurial effects of Earthly Love.

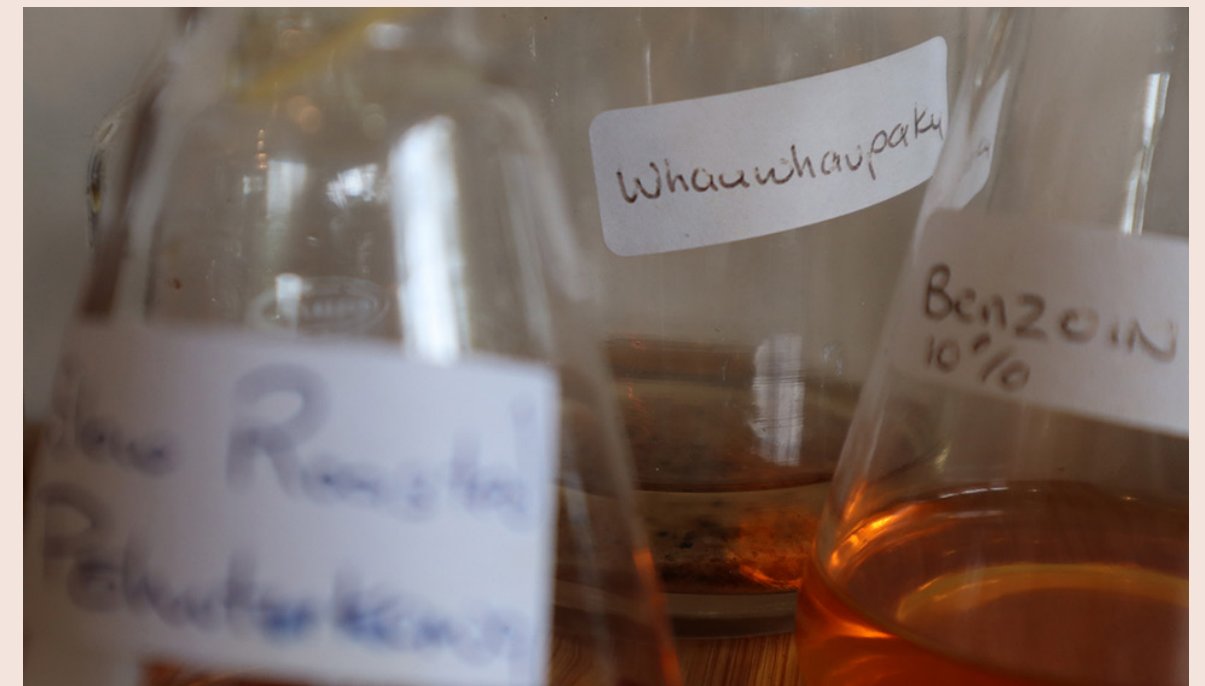


Figure 1.12. *Whauwhaupaku* tincture, Marcus Williams, 2024, digital photograph, collection artist's own.

121. David Parkin, “Wafting on the Wind: Smell and the Cycle of Spirit and Matter,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13 (2007): S50–1, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4623119>



Figure 1.13. *Dark Mirror*, Susan Jowsey, 2024, cameraless photograph, collection artist's own.

Method Three ~ Cameraless Photography

*The absolutely ungraspable became flesh
and lived among us.*

Gottfried Benn, 1910.¹²²

This section, when written in the first person, reflects how this method was employed early in the research. When initially experimenting with these visual methods, I did so alone. At this time, the Ancestors were shadowy, and I believed, like scrying, they might be called forth. Writing this, I reflect on the loneliness of that time, *the before*. Now we are the many, *you and us*. And when we fall asleep, our dreaming-selves gather up our days, arranging them out in strange patterns, their rising scents reminding us of the battering of waves and the soft rain of Kānuka leaves on our skin.

¹²². Gottfried Benn, "Beitrag zur Geschichte der Psychiatrie" (1910), quoted by Sabine Flach, "Thinking About/On Thinking: Observations on the Thought Photography of the Early Twentieth Century," *Configurations* 18, no. 3 (2010): 442, <https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/con.2010.0025>. (Italics ours)

1: Afterimage

Conceptually, the digital images we conjure belong amidst the late nineteenth—early twentieth-century photographic tradition of experimental (psychical) research. As such, they expose an afterimage rather than a faithful record, a speculative visual skin, like Lucretius' *wandering films or rinds, given off as likenesses of things*.¹²³ In this, they are kin to the adumbrate and vaporous language of odours. A liminal imaginary that bespeaks a curiously creative idiom, a language unfettered by the dictates of visual narrative, as film theorist Alexandre Astruc (1923 - 2016), describing cinema, asserts:

By a language I mean the form in which and through which an artist can express their thoughts, however abstract they may be, or translate their obsessions, just as in an essay or a novel ... I mean that the cinema will gradually break free from the tyranny of what is visual, from the image for its own sake, from the immediate and concrete demands of the narrative, to become a means of writing just as flexible and subtle as written language.¹²⁴

Each image is provisional; contingent and transitional. Something nebulous, *freed from the tyranny of representation*. As part of their research, neurologist Hippolyte Ferdinand Baraduc (1850 - 1909), attempted to register vibrational or electro-magnetic images of the soul using photographic emulsion on metal plates. In these para-scientific experiments

123. Book IV of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* has several passages concerning the emanation of idols: "And since these things come to pass, a thin image from things too must be given off from the outermost body of things. For why these films should fall and part from things any more than films that are thin, none can breathe a word to prove; above all, since on the surface of things there are many tiny bodies, which could be cast off in the same order wherein they stood, and could preserve the outline of their shape, yea, and be cast the more quickly, inasmuch as they can be less entangled, in that they are few, and placed in the forefront. For verily we see many things cast off and give out bodies in abundance, not only from deep beneath, as we said before, but often too from the surface, such as their own colour." Bailey ed., *On the Nature of Things*, Book IV, 145.

124. Alexandre Astruc, "The Birth of a New Avant-garde: La caméra-stylo," *The New Wave* 144 (1948): 17, <https://www.newwavefilm.com/about/camera-stylo-astruc.shtml>.

silver salts were transformed by the *innermost light of the soul* (an electrical flash produced by the body).¹²⁵ Baraduc states, the *echo-like traces* or *icones* produced using this process emanate from "the domain of the invisible, where nothing is lost, where everything is transformed."¹²⁶

Initially, we aimed to create cameraless depictions of specific types of matter: rocks, bones, insects, and plants—the scanner searching for data similar to forensic imaging.¹²⁷ The artefacts produced by the scanner invoke philosopher Brian Massumi's *vitality affect*. An affect originally posited by Daniel N. Stern (1934 - 2012). Stern hypothesised that when an infant exhibits vitality, moving in response to a voice, it prompts affirmative reactions in their caregivers, which, in turn, activates a sense of agency and authorship within the baby.¹²⁸ This non-verbal interaction, described as *the vitality affect*, relies on *implicit relational knowing*, a prelingual connectedness, which psychology professor Karlen Lyons-Ruth explains:

Implicit relational knowing typically operates outside focal attention and conscious experience, without benefit of translation into language. Language is used in the service of this knowing but the implicit knowings governing intimate interactions are not language-based and are not routinely translated into semantic form.¹²⁹

125. Hippolyte Ferdinand Baraduc, *The Human Soul, Its Movements, Its Lights, and the Iconography of the Fluidic Invisible* (Paris: Librairie Internationale de la Pensée Nouvelle, 1913), 33.

126. Baraduc, *The Human Soul, Its Movements*, 35; Baraduc coined the term *icones* to describe the images produced by *Iconography*, another term they devised in opposition to the word *photography*. Baraduc explains, "Iconography, that is to say the fixation by the image of the invisible vibrations, has nothing in common with solar photographs, in which the light of the sun produces the forms and the reversed outlines of an object on a plate put beyond the focus of the lens." Baraduc, 33.

127. "Forensic imaging is the use of images to explain and document findings for forensic and medico-legal purposes. It includes the X-ray, the multi-slice CT, MRI, the augmented minimally invasive techniques through CT and MRI such as angiography and biopsy, and three-dimensional (3D) surface scanning as an adjunct or alternative to the traditional invasive autopsy." Min Zhang, "Forensic Imaging: A Powerful Tool in Modern Forensic Investigation," *Forensic Sciences Research* 7, no. 3 (2022): 385, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9639533/>.

128. See Massimo Ammaniti, and Pierfrancesco Ferrari, "Vitality Affects in Daniel Stern's Thinking — A Psychological and Neurobiological Perspective," *Infant Mental Health Journal* 34, no. 5 (2013): 367, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4278751/>.

129. Karlen Lyons-Ruth et al., "Implicit Relational Knowing: Its Role in Development and Psychoanalytic Treatment," *Infant Mental Health Journal* 19, no. 3 (1998): 285, [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-0355\(199823\)19:3<282::AID-IMHJ3>3.0.CO;2-O](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0355(199823)19:3<282::AID-IMHJ3>3.0.CO;2-O).

This form of *knowing*, which emerges in childhood, remains active throughout life and is continuously informed intersubjectively—as an unspoken, co-constructed, tacit knowledge.¹³⁰ The idea of unconscious knowingness shaping and informing our understanding of the Universe compels us to wonder if there is a way to portray this affect, like Baraduc’s renderings of *soul-light*. According to Massumi’s conception of the vitality affect, art is a co-creator in implicit relational knowing since art evokes an unvoiced, bodily, response in the viewer. Massumi claims there is “a sense of aliveness that accompanies every perception. We don’t just look; we sense ourselves alive. Every perception comes with its own vitality affect.”¹³¹ Based on Massumi’s assertions, we hypothesise there might be residual evidence of this affect—a vital yet material spark, like an afterimage.¹³²

The photograph, though primarily made without a camera, is, for our research, a critical medium because of its historical association with psychical research and the heliographic arts.¹³³ Indeed, Marcus Aurelius Root (1808 - 1888), in *The Camera and the Pencil*, avows, “the true heliographer, like the true artist in whatever sphere, should be an intermedium, through which the light of the Divine should pass unmodified and pure, producing imprints as distinctly and delicately limned, as are the images of natural objects on the surface of a crystal pool.”¹³⁴ Photography creates

130. Lyons-Ruth et al., 285.

131. Brian Massumi, “The Thinking-feeling of What Happens,” *Inflexions* 1, no. 1 (2008): 5, https://inflexions.org/n1_The-Thinking-Feeling-of-What-Happens-by-Brian-Massumi.pdf.

132. Quoting Baraduc, art historian Lucy Traverse states, “However, the analogy with ‘rays’ hardly captures the variety of imagery and concepts employed to explicate this newly discovered force. Various described as effluvia, waves, webs, mists, currents, clouds, veils, vibrations, fluids, glimmerings, illuminations, spectres, spheres, stars, soul-germs, nuclei, respirations, auras, bursts, pulses, pearls, and peas, the forme spontanée that were photographed were subjected to a staggering inventory of divergent descriptions. Such inconsistency of term and idea make it difficult to determine what sort of (imagined) energy is at play: Radiant? Electric? Magnetic? Electro-magnetic? Mechanical? Baraduc assures the reader that la force vitale ‘differs from all known forces,’ yet continually relies upon comparison to more familiar forms of energy.” Traverse, “L’Âme Hu(Main)e: Digital Effluvia, Vital Energies, and the Onanistic Occult,” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 36, 5 (2014): 538, doi:10.1080/08905495.2014.975395.

133. Heliography broadly refers to photography. “Heliography was an early photographic process producing a photoengraving on a metal plate coated with an asphalt preparation.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. “heliography,” accessed August 23, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/heliography>.

134. Marcus Aurelius Root, *The Camera and the Pencil* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1864), xvi, <https://archive.org/details/cameraandpenciloorootgoog>.

an indexical illusion, manifesting an analogue imprint of our ideas. Using a flatbed scanner, shrouded to create a tiny, darkened room, we produce digital photographs—images of subjects selected for their correlation to our narrative, yet whose portrait we have little control over. Writer David Company, discussing Swedish polymath Johan August Strindberg’s (1949 - 1912) cameraless *Celestographs*, suggests Strindberg’s photogram-like images disclose an interest in the visionary rather than the photographic.¹³⁵ Company argues that the celestographs, made by leaving plates covered with photographic emulsion outside overnight, exposed to the heavens, contravene every rule in photography because they “give way to a wishful correspondence between image and object. The connection is not physical (what semiotics would call *indexical*) but implied.”¹³⁶ Like Strindberg, our interest lies in how images, like odours, reveal correspondence. Our photographs expose the spectres, pearls, auras, and mists of the liminal imaginary rather than their index.

We detect your smell, even though mist obscures our gaze.

Art history fellow Katharina Steidl insists Strindberg’s celestographs record traces rather than impressions. Furthermore, Steidl emphasises, as traces, they communicate numerous, coexisting meanings that cannot be described as signs.¹³⁷ Yet, if we do not interpret in their formlessness the heavens, what are the celestographs: merely chemical reactions? Steidl argues, to turn Strindberg’s celestographs into signs, we must interpret and name something within them, creating an identifiable referent to reality; otherwise, we should call them *artefacts*.¹³⁸ Embracing Steidl’s view, we ask you to detect the subject’s scent in these artefacts—rather than

135. Photograms expose photo-sensitive paper and the object directly to light, unlike photography, which directs light through the camera’s lens. Strindberg exposed photo-sensitised plates directly to the night sky without an overlapping object. The object was also the light source, the celestial heavens, hence the name Strindberg gave to these works, *Celestographs*.

136. David Company, “Art, Science and Speculation: August Strindberg’s Photographics,” first published in the TATE Modern catalogue *August Strindberg: Painter, Photographer, Writer* (2006), <https://davidcompany.com/art-science-and-speculation-august-strindbergs-photographics/>.

137. Katharina Steidl, “Traces of/by Nature: August Strindberg’s Photographic Experiments of the 1890’s,” *Junior Visiting Fellows Conference Publications* (2012): 12, <https://www.iwm.at/publications/5-junior-visiting-fellows-conferences/vol-xxix/katharina-steidl-2>.

138. Steidl, 12.

their sign. We want you to experience the peculiar atomic agency of the Ancestors—momentarily arrested, *as if* an image of their scent. Appearing as the volatile reaction of light and matter, they are the tracery of intimate and mysterious narratives.

Without a camera, no focus or aperture controls the light; the artefact is just exposed. Similarly, we use a digital phone camera because its lens fits the aperture of the microscope neck, and its built-in functions automatically adjust or fail to cope with the microscope's illumination. Both forms of image production require us to collaborate in the vagaries of the process. Light, touching the skin of the subject, renders, distorts, or obviates its image.¹³⁹ Geimer maintains that photographers are often not in control of the process, and suggests “something happens in the picture, or something slips into it. This action marks the point at which the photographer's artistic intention coincides with the unexpected, the unpredictable, the chance event.”¹⁴⁰

In art critic Douglas Feuk's analysis of Strindberg's work, the author notes, “his method is to start more or less at random, trusting nature's inherent desire for form (what he calls ‘matter's drive towards representation’).”¹⁴¹ Indeed, Strindberg encouraged all artists to emulate the creative forces of the Universe. In the 1894 article, *Chance in Artistic Creation*,

139. In artist Anne Hamilton's 2014 exhibition staged at the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle, America: *Ann Hamilton: the common SENSE*, Hamilton organised scanning hundreds of animal specimens from the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture taxonomic collections. The scanner captured vaguely distorted, documentary-style images of the taxidermied dead. The scans, printed on newsprint pads of varying sizes, filled the gallery. Visitors to the exhibition could tear their favourite pictures from the pads to retain as keepsakes. In this work, Hamilton employed scanning, enabling an inexpensive, throw-away approach to curating a strange array of pseudo-archival images—like a prosaic accounting of the dead. The printing further emphasised this mundanity, scanning the amassed dead and allowing the newsprint images to be torn off and removed, stressed the notion of erasure. Furthermore, the poor quality of the images produced by the scanner is a counterpoint to the accuracy and recording of specimens using archival photography. Hamilton's work emphasises how Western museology desired to preserve life's diversity through its death, sometimes going so far as to render the subject extinct. See Allison Meier, “Ann Hamilton's Distorted Scans of Natural History,” *Hyperallergic*, October 22, 2014, <https://hyperallergic.com/156406/ann-hamiltons-distorted-scans-of-natural-history/>.

140. Peter Geimer, “Image as Trace: Speculations about an Undead Paradigm,” *Differences* 18, no. 1 (2007): 19, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-2006-021>.

141. Douglas Feuk, “The Celestographs of August Strindberg,” *Cabinet Magazine* (Summer 2001), <https://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/3/feuk.php>.

Strindberg concludes by promoting the art of mimesis, stating, “Imitate nature in an approximate way; imitate in particular nature's way of creating!”¹⁴²

But how does the Universe create?

With primordial energy and subatomic activity—particles and dark matter?

How do we imitate chaos?

Early twentieth-century *thought photographers* used unconventional practices. Those involved in the arts, esotericism, and cognitive sciences were interested in trialling various techniques to record the innermost self. Art historian Sabine Flach argues experimental practices enabled images of the spirit to manifest as observable experiential phenomena.¹⁴³ Furthermore, Flach contends that abstract pictorial demonstrations of vital fluids create “a network of material relations, from which the object first emerges, relations that are, however, at the same time linked with other, abstract ones—for example, myths, phantasms, and knowledge.”¹⁴⁴ Like early thought photographers, we aspire to document the abstract: aiming to render a visual experience with a lingering scent.

*Walking in the slant of the sun, we notice the smell of
your shadow, your image, a vague illumination.*

As a complementary method to cameraless and shadow photography, we use a microscope to reveal what the eye cannot detect. Like the scanner, the microscope is backlit. The light, directed upward, reveals the specimen to the watching eye; the camera, however, tends to become entranced by its reflection. Although unpredictable and inconsistent, these methods, combined with perfumery, expose the odiferousness of ancestral ken and are, therefore, critical to our magical world-conception.

142. August Strindberg, “On Chance in Artistic Creation: Moonlight—certainly!,” trans. Kjersti Board, *Cabinet Magazine* (Summer 2001), <https://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/3/strindberg.php>. Originally published in *Revue des Revues* (November 15, 1894).

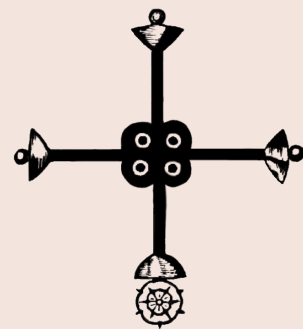
143. Flach, “Thinking About/On Thinking,” 445.

144. Flach, 445.

Failing to offer a true likeness, our images give rise to doubt. They are, as Flach avows, “fictive inventions (*facultas fingendi*).”¹⁴⁵ Unlike early pseudo-scientific thought experiments, we do not seek to uncover reality but to render as a visual-scent the Ancestors exquisite narratives.

Like afterimages, our photographs are a remnant of something we *sense* rather than *behold*.

*Dissolving in their light,
we dematerialise.*



¹⁴⁵. Flach, 447. (Italics author's own)



Figure 1.14. *Honeybee wing*, Susan Jowsey, 2022, digital microscopic photograph, collection artist's own.

2: Exquisite Narratives

Searching for vital traces and odours shadow, we catch your scent—the funk of damp soil, rot, and Kānuka rising to greet us. Breathing in, we open ourselves to the fragrant presence of the Ancestors and the dynamism of atmospheric bodies. Anthropologist Alfred Gell (1945–1997) argues odour is active, volatile, and *incomplete*, and therefore, the “context of a scent is simply the world itself.”¹⁴⁶ Smell, being ambiguous, can never be entirely circumscribed by established sign systems.¹⁴⁷ Words, consequently, cannot transcribe odours. Instead, we respond bodily. This notion of prelingual, somatic reciprocity vibrating between objects and subjects recalls Massumi’s theories of the *vitality affect of art*. Massumi asserts, “perception in perception, in the immediacy of its occurrence, as it is felt—a thinking-feeling, in visual form.”¹⁴⁸ A reaction entirely different to *contemplating* an artwork.

According to Massumi, *thinking-feeling* is an abstraction that overwhelms representation, replacing it with an awareness of the *dynamic unfolding of life*.¹⁴⁹ This interpretation of the vitality affect reveals the porosity of subject-object boundaries. If images possess vitality, we must agree that they can alter our perception, drawing us, through affect, into an unutterable interiority, jumbling our emotions.

In our research, photography is part of a scenographic performance, the image swaying to the volatile rhythms of odours and words.¹⁵⁰ Though

146. Alfred Gell, “Parfum, Symbolisme et Enchantement,” *Terrain* 47 (2006): 4, <https://doi.org/10.4000/terrain.4229>.

147. Gell, “Parfum, Symbolisme et Enchantement,” 3.

148. Brian Massumi, *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 44.

149. Massumi, “The Thinking-feeling of What Happens,” 6.

150. The term scenography originates from the design of theatrical scenery, including lighting, set, and sound, but has, over time, expanded to encompass a host of multisensory (human) embodied experiences. Academic Joslin McKinney argues, “scenographies are

we struggle with imagery’s ocular privilege, we recognise that for our Norse Ancestors, images held cosmological significance. Indeed, to date, over seven hundred picture stones have been identified on the island of Gotland, while across Fennoscandia, there is an extensive network of images cut into rocks, amongst which are fully sculpted human footprints.¹⁵¹ Standing sentinel, images perform a critical role in memorialising (preserving in human-social memory) sites of encounter, where (super)natural (environmental) Beings affect the life-worlds of hybrid wolf-bear-bird-serpent-humans. Archaeologist Joakim Goldhahn proposes that images carved into rocks evoked *sympathetic magic*, a relational correspondence with sufficient vitality to affect change. Goldhahn’s claims mirror Gell’s opinions concerning the magical properties ritually unleashed by odours.¹⁵²

Massumi, attempting to slip the bonds of ocularcentrism, conjures *feeling-sight*, whereby the image exists as a virtual, affective experience.¹⁵³ By asking us to see beyond the image as a likeness, the philosopher invites us to understand the image as something felt, like a presence.¹⁵⁴ We agree with Massumi that the image moves beyond the frame, taking hold of the viewer. However, being an artist, we experience the image via a co-creative

constructed to consist of vibrant potentialities which can be active as part of the assemblage which is a performance.” McKinney, “Vibrant Materials: The Agency of Things in the Context of Scenography” in *Performance and Phenomenology: Traditions and Transformations*, ed. Maaike Bleeker, Jon Foley Sherman, and Eirini Nedelkopoulou (London: Routledge, 2015), 18.

151. Fennoscandia encompasses the geological region comprising Finland, the Russian areas of Kola and Karelia (Fenno), Norway, and Sweden (Scandinavia), including the islands of Gotland and Öland; Archaeologist Peter Skoland conjectures Scandinavian petroglyphs of life-sized human footprints are representative of both individualism and dividualism. Skoland states, “combining this notion with the idea of dividual personhood, we may regard the foot images, not as something existing outside the body, but as images growing out of the body, helping the personhood to extend into other kinds of media, which in this case is the rock surface. Foot soles may thereby help to expand and redefine the notion of personhood as well as creating a forum for distributing and dividing personality, as people metaphorically could ‘share’ other people’s bodies by literally placing themselves in their foot soles. Thus, the relationship between the real feet and rock-art feet could be equated with the bonding of people by holding exact copies of a similar object; a modern example would be the use of wedding rings to manifest the unity of two persons by marriage.” Skoglund, “Images of Shoes and Feet: Rock-Art Motifs and the Concepts of Dress and Nakedness,” *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 46, no. 2 (2013): 166–67, <https://doi-org.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/10.1080/00293652.2013.836563>.

152. An extended discussion on Joakim Goldhahn’s theories on rock art and sympathetic magic occurs in the Foil 2 subchapter, *Possessed*.

153. Massumi, 24.

154. Massumi, 24.

process in which we also come into being. Without a camera, the photograph cannot be pre-conceived; instead, it emerges from the darkness. While we select the subject using the scanner to materialise its image, the subject reveals itself. Like a shapeshifter, the photograph discloses a *fylgja*-like interstitial Being: shadowy, poetic, and vaporous.¹⁵⁵

Unspoken, images roused by the Ancestors give us form.

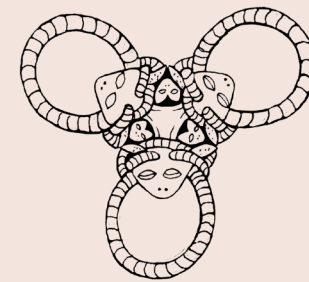


¹⁵⁵ A *fylgja* is a guardian spirit that often appears at birth. English professor William Friesen argues, “*fylgja* are neither wholly earthly nor entirely divine, operating as interstitial beings between the spiritual and mundane world; their activity is usually inscrutable until the humans involved are irrevocably enmeshed in that activity, often fatally; and they are intimately wedded to the fate of individuals, families, and peoples, embodying in various ways both the inner nature that informs the characters’ intentionality and the outplay of that intentionality in the form of the plot of the text and thus their fate. It is this last aspect, I would argue, that is most fundamental to their identity; *Fylgja* are fate-beings.” Friesen, “Family Resemblances: Textual Sources of Animal *Fylgjur* in Icelandic Saga,” *Scandinavian Studies* 87, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 257, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5406/scanstud.87.2.0255>.



Figure 1.15. *Ella*, our maternal grandmother, Susan Jowsey, 2024, digital collage, collection artist’s own.

PART TWO



A TREFOIL

Cosmos + Aroma + Atmosphere

Confabulating with the Ancestors is pivotal to our research. Composed of two words, confabulate joins: *con*, which is Latin for *together*, and *fabulari*, which comes from the word *fabula* or *fable*.¹⁵⁶ Declaring this research a confabulation positions it as a fable — a (super)natural story incorporating elements of myth, legend, folklore, and philosophy. It also positions it as a poetic collaboration with the Ancestors who comprise our Norse antecedents with their irrepressible attraction to poetry, our Earthly kin, those flora and fauna who, speaking in unfamiliar tongues, disclose an aromatic form of knowing, and Earth’s environmental forces on whom our lives depend.¹⁵⁷

We have arranged part two of our exegesis into a cosmological trefoil, a single leaf with three lobes, often symbolically depicted as a knot, because our thoughts, winding about themselves, take the form of a *gripping beast*, a hybrid zoomorphic body found on trefoil brooches worn by women during the Viking Era (c. 800–1050 CE). Bound within this curious pattern are apotropaic powers.¹⁵⁸ In the context of our research, the *Foils* (chapters

¹⁵⁶ *Vocabulary.com Dictionary*, s.v. “confabulate,” accessed July 06, 2024, <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/confabulate>.

¹⁵⁷ In Old Norse, the *Mead of Poesy* refers to a supremacy of vocality, conceived as a drink which imparts wisdom manifested in the performance of poetry—orally transmitted cultural memory.

¹⁵⁸ Academic Carrie Roy asserts, “the more confrontational, *en face* pose of the gripping

and sub chapters) create an interwoven narrative and, as a result, should be read as interconnected. Like theriomorphic gripping beasts, they fasten our breath and the scent of you within this text.

Binding our *trefoil* are the philosophical ideas, theories, and creative methods of Part One. In Part Two, we disclose how these knowledges inform our practice—it is also where the liminal imaginary and the scientific come together in the creation of a cosmic-osmology. To that end, we acknowledge the systematic approaches of the differing academic disciplines supporting our creative endeavours.

Part Two, however, is primarily about, for, and conversations held with the Ancestors. Even though we are circumspect about who precisely the Ancestors are, we pay heed to their odiferous ken.

For who are we without them?



beast, with consistently closed mouth and often distended chest and firm grip (a form of binding) around its own neck or limbs, may introduce a more dynamic theriomorphic form that is literally bloated with apotropaic potency in the form of the air/breath/spirit concept. In the act of grabbing its neck (and other limbs which were also understood to contain spirit/air), the figure conveys a dual interpretation of fastening the force within itself, yet simultaneously threatening to release it at potential threats." Roy, "Practical Fastenings of the Supernatural," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 5 (2009): 189, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/45019124>. (Italics author's own)

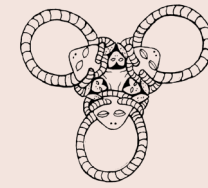


Figure 2.1. Gotland, Susan Jowsey, 2025, digital collage, collection artist's own

INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO



Figure 2.2. *Rock Carving*, Evenstorp, Sundals-Ryr, Dalsland, dating from 1800-500 B.C.E on a flat granite rock, east of Evenstorp, Västra Götaland, painting the carvings white was a technique promoted by archealogogists during the 1900's, Claes Claesson, 1931, glass plate negative, National Swedish Heritage Board, no known copyright restrictions.
https://www.flickr.com/photos/swedish_heritage_board/29085074795



FOIL 1

In the first of our three *Foils*, we contemplate the efficacious touch of effluvia, poetry, and the dreaming of spiders. To extract and distil a magical world-conception, we have combined the earthy funk and salty aroma of Pagan cosmologies, drawing primarily on pre-Christian Nordic beliefs, with the whiff and hum of an eclectic array of classical and contemporary theories. Unconstrained, we gather ideas as raw materials from 8000 BCE to the present to compose this, our Love letter.

In the chapter, *A House of Earth and Bone*, we consider the (super) natural beliefs of our genetic Northern Ancestors who recognised the forces unleashed by environmental agents, speaking birds and the magnetism of words. Their knowledge, recorded in the mythic genealogies of flora, fauna, and artefacts, is traceable through place names, burial sites, and visual narratives carved in stone.¹⁵⁹ Tracing their branching forms, we encounter the writhing bodies of hybrid kinfolk, confronting time-worn fictions. Historian Jane Acomb Leake (1928 - 2008) maintains that Norse stereotypes originated in *Latin monster lore*. Searching for your scent, we follow mythopoetic fragments as if they were odour trails. *The Prose Edda*, penned by Snorri, delves into mediaeval accounts of Old Norse Icelandic kingly histories bound into cosmologies. Yet, archaeologist Anders Andrén warns that Snorri's narratives and the largely anonymous Old Norse sagas are problematic sources for academics studying the life-worlds of pre-Christian Nordic peoples because they were penned after Scandinavia was Christianised. While we recognise these narratives are incomplete and skewed, their agency, woven throughout our thesis, informs our understanding of memory and unmemory.

¹⁵⁹. "In Europe, Scandinavia holds the largest concentration of rock art (i.e. petroglyphs), created c. 5000, first century BC, many of them showing figurative and seemingly narrative representations." See Michael Ranta, Peter Skoglund, Anna Cabak Rédei, and Tomas Persson, "Levels of Narrativity in Scandinavian Bronze Age Petroglyphs," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 29, no. 3 (2019): 497-516, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0959774319000118>.

Addressing the personal, we situate our research amidst the ancestral homelands of our maternal Ancestors, the Baltic Islands of Gotland and Öland. Journeying through the subchapters *Island Tribes*, *With Awls*, *Harpoons and Needles*, and *Embodied Kinship*, we reflect on the nature of interstitial spaces and the relationships ancestral artefacts forge. Objects, conceived as thresholds, participate in intercorporeal memory, creating affective-interactions between the living and the living dead. Though we acknowledge the long and distinct histories of both Öland and Gotland, our attention is focused on Gotland, particularly, the more than seven hundred picture stones which have, thus far, been located.¹⁶⁰ In 1970, Swedish archaeologist Birgit Arrhenius proposed that these extraordinary stones (created from c. 400 - 1100 CE) were doorways for the dead. Expanding on Arrhenius' hypothesis, Andrén suggests that the stones are thresholds. In contrast, archaeologist Fen Kacin asserts the stones are likenesses, mythologised family portraits. Kacin perceives, in the grouping of the stones, familial genealogies. While archaeologist Marianne Hem Eriksen proposes that the stones create architectural spaces designed for ritual encounters with the dead. Furthermore, archaeologist Alexander Andreeff suggests the picture stones participate in meaning-making and are, therefore, agential. As actants, the picture stones manifest Massumi's interpretation of the vitality affect, and the proposition put forward by archaeologist Joakim Goldhahn, that Scandinavian rock art induces sympathetic magic. In the picture stones, we apprehend the flow of implicit relational knowingness integral to vitality affects.

Experiencing an affective-response to depictions of Scandinavian petroglyphs, we turn to psychiatrist and philosopher Thomas Fuchs, who ascribes our reaction to *bodily-resonance*, which we liken to odour-cued memories produced by chemical and biochemical triggers.¹⁶¹ In our felt response to unmemory, we recognise Nancy's theories of being-with and touching and find ourselves in the chapter, *The Poetry of Forgetting* and Henri Bergson's (1859-1941) concept of pure memory. Deferring to philosopher

160. See "Gotlandic Picture Stones—The Online Edition," Ancient Images 2.0, accessed July 6th, 2024, <https://gotlandicpicturestones.se/s/index/page/homepage>.

161. Thomas Fuchs, "Intercorporeality and Interaffectivity," *Phenomenology and Mind* 11 (2016): 196, <https://oaj.fupress.net/index.php/pam/article/view/7256/7236>; Petroglyphs are images pecked into stone.



John Mullarkey's reading of pure memory, we contemplate how the past might be present in odour. In contrast, philosopher Sergio Benvenuto argues that Bergson is so focused on humanity that Earth appears in human form, and we wonder if this is also true of our investigations. Seeking salvation, we turn to philosopher Elizabeth Grosz, who disputes Benvenuto's interpretation, countering that Bergson discloses matter as inherently unstable.

We are redeemed.

Defining memory, however, remains contentious. Clinicians Gregorio Zlotnik and Aaron Vansintjan argue that memory is relational because memories must be absorbed into a corpus to exist. Their hypothesis supports our contention that memories are suspended in an air-borne quasi-state—as aromatic particles until they enter bodies like trees, mountains, or animals, becoming distinct (creature) or shared (communal) memories. What interests us is what draws us into relationships with vaporous almost-memories, and why do only some bind with and alter us?

These questions lead to *The Land of Oblivion*, wherein we accede to the Ancestors as the bearers of wondrous ken. Adrift, we experience the osmic through the liminal imaginary. Approaching the ineffable by sniffing, we are reminded of philosopher Julia Kristeva's theory of *abjection*. Neither object nor subject, abjection, like melancholy, lingers as a putrid odour in the back of our throat. Though we experience melancholia, we recognise in its form the abject.¹⁶² Under the combined influence of melancholy and Earthly Love, the vastness of the cosmos leaves us wonderstruck.

162. Considering Kristeva's text *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, English professor Tsu-Chung Su offers the critique: "In *Black Sun*, artistic or fetishistic melancholia is deemed a victory of the father, its depressive or clinical (hysterical) counterpart a submission to the mother. In reaction to the mother and in complicity with the father, the trajectory of melancholia is a gendered dialectic in the sense that melancholia as feminised asymbolia or loss of words and meanings, and melancholy writing as the recovery of words and meanings are two dynamic, dialectical events that occur under melancholia." Su goes on to state: "Indeed, what is striking about Kristeva's *Black Sun* is her idea of sublimation and the melancholy sublime. Valorising artistic creation, Kristeva aestheticizes melancholia." Tsu-Chung Su, "Writing the Melancholic: The Dynamics of Melancholia in Julia Kristeva's 'Black Sun,'" *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies* 31, no. 1 (2005): 179 and 182, <http://www.concentric-literature.url.tw/issues/Flows/9.pdf>.

Comprehending the Ancestors' influence requires believing in more than the idea that we outlive death. In *Ligatures of Flesh*, we consider ancestor cults. Archaeologist Alexandra Sanmark claims these cults, once widespread, maintain the belief that the dead remain active participants in the lives of the living. Those who worship the Ancestors believe they exist in multiple states, unlike Christian beliefs, which espouse the existence of an individual ascendent soul. Yet, we recognise the Ancestors as more than the living dead; they are flora, fauna, and environmental forces. The Ancestors, corporeal and Earth-bound, counter the widespread belief that humans are exceptional. Indeed, recent neuroscientific research conducted by Hanna Zwaka et al., looking at odour-cued memories in honeybees, identified that bees experience deep-sleep states in which memory is consolidated. In addition, neuroscientists Krishna Melnattur et al., also exploring sleep in honeybees, established that the bees entered a dream-like state. Complementing this research, behavioural and evolutionary ecologists Daniela C. Rössler et al. have recorded rapid eye movement (REM) sleep in jumping spiders. Spellbound, we recall Rubenstein's contention that wonder reveals the familiar as astonishing.

In the dreaming of spiders, we comprehend the fragile scent of knowingness, like Bergson's theory of consciousness, and the vitality affect that Massumi attributes to art—we experience the organic seeding of life, its spreading pattern, binding us to the cosmos. Indeed, psychiatry and behavioural sciences researchers Brian Dias and Kerry Ressler have shown that odours present in ancestral environments can affect future generations. The adherence of scent memory to genetic code discloses the body's porosity and the intimate knotwork that is memory and forgetting. Ancestral connections are also magnified in the limbic system, which Doctors Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon explain, incorporates the primordial brain, emotions, and memory. Returning to Bergson's vision of consciousness, we sense the interweaving of epigenetics, the limbic system, and memory—a vision amplified by Nancy's theory of being-with.

Yet, how does touching-thinking bring us into contact with the ineffable? Philosopher John Llewelyn (1928 – 2021) contends that thaumazein (wonder) is proximal, both near and far, it creates a passageway. Through wonder, we traverse the treachery of late-stage capitalism, discovering the

ineffable. Entering the threshold of *Magic and Molecules*, we contemplate philosopher Federico Campagna's call for a cosmology of the ineffable. While late modernist perspectives on *magic* focus on its manipulative fiction, Campagna espouses Magic as a therapeutic path capable of opposing Technic's absolute-language.¹⁶³ Positioning Magic's reality-system beyond the reach of language recalls Rudolf Otto's (1869-1937) mystical numen.¹⁶⁴ Otto's theory of the numinous unfolds in the unutterableness of the wholly other, the ineffable. Yet Campagna insists magic communicates through the language of *As If*. We, however, equate the language of *As If* with the vital force of breath, exemplified in Old Norse kennings, which bespeak a potent poetic—or cultural memory.

Campagna positions Magic's reality-system as a movement of resistance, defying Technic; the philosopher refers to the writing of controversial German philosopher and novelist Ernst Jünger's 1951, *der Waldgang* (*the Forest Passage*). The forest, as a place of withdrawal becomes a metaphor for ineffability. Yet, to us, the forest, while ineffable, is also an Ancestor. Unlike Jünger, however, we do not conceive the forest as a place of retreat as it is not a benign Ancestor but rather the opposite. To attune ourselves to the forest we must learn the fugacious and creative semiochemical language of plants. The scents of the forest stir meaning beyond words, giving rise to atmospheric narratives, experienced as *felt-presence* attributed by Massumi to the vitality affect.

163. Federico Campagna, *Technic and Magic: The Reconstruction of Reality* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 8.

164. The relationship between the words numen and numina strikes us as notable: numina are a multitude of household and environmental Beings that require appeasing, akin to Norse landvættir (land spirits). Cyril Bailey explains in the introduction to their edition of Lucretius epic poem, *De Rerum Natura, On the Nature of Things*, that "the genuine Roman religion—the belief in the *numina*, the countless little impersonal 'spirits', always 'about man's path and about his bed,' mostly hostile by instinct, but capable of pacification by simple gifts and easy acts of worship—had long ago lost its hold on the life of the city, or at the most lingered on here and there in the old-fashioned piety of a household cult. The imposing structure of the State-worship, raised as the primitive agricultural community developed into a commercial city, and consolidated when the great wave of Greek culture anthropomorphized *numina* into *dei*, gave them temples and statues, and organised ceremonials and priesthoods, remained still untouched in form, but the form was empty. Magistrates and priests duly sacrificed the appropriate victims, augurs watched for omens and blessed or stayed proceedings, the populace kept holiday on the festivals, but little real religious feeling remained, except a vague sense of the insecurity of life owing to the malevolent interference of divine beings, and an abiding fear of death and the punishments of a life to come." Bailey, *Lucretius: De Rerum Natura*, 6. (Italics author's own)

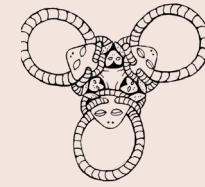
In the final subchapter of Foil 1, *The Growth of Crystals and the Formations of Galaxies*, we return to the notions of genealogy underpinning this research and consider our connections, via kinship, to Earth and, by extension, the Universe. Contemplating various forms of personhood, we imagine being fractal and genealogically fluid. Surveying an array of theories, we contemplate anthropologist McKim Marriott's 1976 theory of distributed personhood, anthropologist Marilyn Strathern's theory of partible persons, Alfred Gell's extension of Strathern's theory, and archaeologist Chris Fowler's notion of *fractal thinking* and *fractal relations*. Applying fractal thinking to Bergson's *élan vital*, we contemplate Gilles Deleuze and academic Suzanne Guerlac's reading, that *élan vital* is an infinite unfolding.

Rather than seeking to draw conclusions, Foil 1 teases apart the threads binding our ideas, laying them out in aromatic strands.

Our hands, roughened from binding knots of herbs, smell like you.



Carrot



INTRODUCTION TO FOIL 2

Stumbling into a liminal topography shaped in our imagination, in Foil 2 we perceive the world as strange and wondrous. Beginning with the chapter *An Osmic-Cosmology*, we discuss life, death, and transcendence.

Sketching our vision of odiferous kinships and ancestral co-presence, we consider Rubenstein's Classical and metaphysical notions of wonder and awe and their relationship to Nancy's theories of being-with, touching, and transimmanence. Encounters with Nancy are significant to our thesis as touch lays bare our view of the Ancestors. In Nancy's distributed notion of touch and touching, we become exposed to the Beingness of stones, winds, and dust. Whilst Nancy ties being-with to lived experience, Rubenstein fastens it to wonder, enabling us to imagine being-with and touching as odiferous manifestations of ineffability, memory, and unmemory—critical to our magical world-conception.

Contemplating how Old Norse cosmologies recognise birds as omens, augurs, and guardians, the subchapter *Forgetting* examines the Old Norse poem *Hávamál*, where we encounter birds as agents of unmemory. Folklorist Hilda Ellis Davidson (1914 - 2006) suggests narratives related to the potency of birds and their relationships with gods and humans existed in Northern cosmologies well before the Viking Era. Investigating the prevalence of bird bones and bird bone artefacts in burial sites on Gotland, archaeologist Kristiina Mannermaa unfolds a long history of bird-human relations within ancient circumboreal belief systems (Circumboreal refers to plants and animals inhabiting the colder regions of the Far North). Indeed, Northern cosmologies often reveal a pragmatic relationship between birds and gods. Gaston Bachelard (1884 - 1962) asserts birds in flight invoke an aerial imagination.¹⁶⁵ Yet, in Northern cosmology, bird-human relations appear to be pragmatic. Recent biological research proposes that birds,

¹⁶⁵ Gaston Bachelard, *Air and Dreams: An Essay on the Imagination of Movement*, trans. Edith R. Farrell and C. Frederick Farrell (Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, 1988), 66-77.

moths, and bees have a sixth-sense—a magnetic sense, which enables them to map their surroundings aurally. The significance of bird-god-human relations also manifests in the correspondence of birdsong and Old Norse poetry. Postdoctoral Fellow Timothy Bourn notes birds communicate numinous knowledge because their liminality enables them to navigate the complexities of human-animal and divine realms. Weaving philosopher Gernot Böhme's (1937 - 2022) theory of *felt presence* and Nancy's concept of touch through these ideas, we position words in relation to birdsong, conceiving them as atmosphere.

Opening ourselves to the fragrant presence of the Ancestors and the dynamism of atmospheric bodies, we consider Massumi's interpretation of the development of Stern's vitality affect in our subchapter *Breath*. Massumi argues abstraction, conceived as objectlessness, overwhelms representation, replacing it with bodily affect or thinking-feeling. Vitality affects, being shared, manifest as felt-presence. Like Massumi, Böhme responds to the felt, not as thinking-feeling but as experiences of *ekstases* (ecstasies), the felt presence of an atmosphere. Caught-up in the correspondence of touch, felt-presence, and the numinous, we recognise our osmic-cosmology as a Love story.

Reconnecting with ancestral notions of breath brings us into contact with theories of olfactory magic, which we ponder in *Aeriality*. In this subchapter, anthropologist David Parkin contends that smells are quasi-concepts. Yet neuroscientist, olfactory philosopher, and olfactory art gallery owner Andreas Keller notes that our first memories are of smells, which occur in utero. Amplifying the significance of odours, we reflect on assertions made by Gell concerning their ineffability, which returns us to Otto's theological *numen* or *wholly other*—as an overwhelming and unutterable experience. Contemplating the relationship of odour to memory, the numinous, and magic, we envisage odour as mediating the in-between, capable of transforming substance into non-substance. Contemplating odour and liminality, we reimagine Bachelard's concept of *aerial imagination*, contrasting it with the *aerial vehicle* described by early European Renaissance philosopher and Catholic canon Marsilio Ficino (1433 - 1499). Informed by Classic philosophy, particularly Plotinus (c. 204/5 - 270 CE) and Synesius (373 - 414 CE), Ficino proposes a theory of *soul-motion*. As it

descends from heaven, the soul, passing through different spheres, assumes an airy and vaporous vehicle (agency) before taking on its bodily form. In Ficino's theory, the *aerial body*, indistinct and misty, joins with the corporeal spiritus. Like the early Greek notion of *pneuma*, spiritus exists in earthly bodies, tethered by blood to air and vaporousness. Imprinted on the spiritus are memories and the stamp of the imagination. These images survive death embodied in the aerial.

These ancient ideas are also evident in Otto's theories of the *mysterium*. Otto observes that the *mysterium* possesses opposing forces, worth and unworthiness. In *Consumed*, we recognise Kristeva's notion of the abject in Otto's concept of unworth. Our awe and fascination with Otto's idea of unworthiness draws us into a discourse with sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman (1925 -2017). From the vantage point of Bauman's *Liquid Modernity*, we gaze upon the bodies of late modern Europeans, bloated by their overconsumption of the Ancestors. Furthermore, Bauman offers us the concept of *fluid-time*: no longer tethered to a place, time ceases to hold us ethically responsible for our actions.

Similarly, historian Maureen Perkin ties modern European beliefs concerning time to the social and political reforms of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—changes Perkin compares to the British Empire attempting to impose a universal calendar freed from agrarianism on the people of the world. Searching for ways to reconceive time, we turn to anthropologist Johannes Fabian's concept of *coevality*, a theory that demands we approach time creatively and questions how the numinous and wonder inform our world-conception.

Fabian asks us to imagine how we might enter the past to recognise the present. In response, the subchapter, *Possessed*, weighs David Parkin's theory of a *transformational world*, reflecting on how the Old Norse word *hamr* provides a multifaceted understanding of transformation and its effects. Since Old Norse texts infrequently refer to odour, we use our imagination. Under the guidance of Joakim Goldhahn, who physically explores magical effects produced by roaring waters near Scandinavian petroglyphs, we observe the uncanny effects odiferous encounters have on us. Goldhahn's research challenges us to wonder about the role of smell in



affecting psychological and physical transformations; releasing the past so that it enters the present. Indeed, scientific studies undertaken by dermatologists Masako Katsuyama et al. confirm the body's expelling of aromatic skin gases produces atmospheric effects. Considering these findings, we ask: *what does hamr smell like, and what effects does its odour profile induce in ourselves and others?*

Contemplating the relationship between Scandinavian petroglyphs and sympathetic magic, Goldhahn advances archaeologist Gutorm Gjessing's (1906 - 1979) theories, which propose elements within the carved images are spiritual trails for magical agents, akin to chemosensory secretions. These suppositions prompt us to reconsider Nancy's theory of touching and the untouchable. Scholar Yonathan Listik asserts that Nancy's philosophical position on touch unfolds a liminality of possibility because physical contact is immaterial to touching and co-presence.¹⁶⁶

Conflating theories of liminality, touch, and fractal Beings with the olfactory profiles we have fashioned from our conversations with the Ancestors, we recognise your likeness as perfume. The Epicurean *doctrine of emanations* calls such likenesses *idols* or *effluences*. Gell, however, conflates Lucretius' wandering rinds or films, given off by things, with Malangan carvings from Latangai Island in Papua New Guinea, calling these effluxions *memory skins*.¹⁶⁷ In the subchapter *Transformed*, our understanding of odours is shaped by the proposition that perfumes are chemosensory portraits that release vital knowledge. Historian Alain Corbin, in their notable 1986 text,

¹⁶⁶ Yonathan Listik, "Touch and Liminality: Between Derrida and Nancy," *Malice* 10 (2020): 6, <https://cielam.univ-amu.fr/malice/articles/touch-and-liminality>.

¹⁶⁷ Creating the Malangan is a process charged with the efficacy of burning. Alfred Gell relates how the carver, guided through dreams from the Ancestors, establishes the form, which heats up (conceptually) as the carving materialises. During the final viewing ceremony, the heat built up in the Malangan disperses as knowledge. The word for this ancestral knowledge is *wune* (smoke). Those privileged to view the Malangan in this carved and painted form receive its powerful smoke knowledge and retain its image (the Malangan's distributed body) in their memory. Thus, the participants absorb the Malangan's *ancestral skin* into themselves, embodying it; they form a new skin endowed with socially important family relationships. These internalised skins, Gell calls *memory skins* because they are composed of powerful memory images which build over time, becoming interconnected. Though layered, memory skins can be separated and reconfigured, "thus memory becomes a socially engineered medium for the transmission of the power to change the world and shape the course of events, rather than a mere passive registration of the past." Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 227.

The Foul and the Fragrant: Odour and the French Social Imagination, positions odours as markers of social transition. Tracing changing perspectives on air and health, Corbin argues that modern European concepts of progress became associated with the chemical fragrances of public sanitation (disinfectants) and personal hygiene (deodorisation). Recognising odour's influence on interpersonal, socio-cultural, and political landscapes, we ponder the connection between aroma and belief. Psychologists Jeannette Haviland-Jones et al. illustrated fragrances from cultivated plants impact health and wellbeing, even when our sense of smell fails to detect their presence. Correspondingly, cultural historian Constance Classen, anthropologist David Howes, and sociologist Anthony Synnott argue that fragrant assemblages, though fundamentally unstable, evoke emotional responses akin to memories.

Furthermore, Howes argues that odours promote substance change, a statement that upholds Gell's opinion that olfaction is the ideal medium for magic. Yet Gell avows that it is not odour per se that creates the magic but the context in which the smells are situated. This claim leads us, in *Perfumed*, to wonder if, in positioning scent molecules as ancestral ken, we release the magic of the Ancestors. However, Gell also contends that perfumes are proxies, creating the illusion of narrative. In contrast, we allege that odours are a language—and therefore, our perfumes engage a hybrid plant-human idiolect, a hypothesis supported by Howes' perspective.

The intersubjectivity of odour is critical to olfactory art. In the *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* (1938), artist Henri-Robert-Marcel Duchamp (1887 - 1868) organised the olfactory provocation, *Perfumes of Brazil*, as part of a destabilising sensory encounter.¹⁶⁸ Similarly, the nineteen-seventies

¹⁶⁸ At the request of André Breton, Marcel Duchamp created the scenography for the *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme*. Caro Verbeek explains that the exhibition held at the Galerie Beaux-Arts, Paris, was "entirely darkened. Leaves and soil on the floor and heavy coal bags hanging from the ceiling blurred steady dichotomies of inside-outside and above-below. Audio recordings of psychiatric patients were transmitted through an environment that was (and still is) commonly known as an area of [good] behaviour and sophistication, since the museum was typically a place for the upper classes. One aspect [of the exhibition] permeated the entire area beyond the reach of the ears and eyes. The smell of coffee was inescapable. Man Ray [states]: "The poet Péret, who had lived in South America, installed a coffee-roasting machine, whose fumes assailed the nostrils of the visitors." Verbeek, "Surreal Aroma's: (Re)constructing the Volatile Heritage of Marcel Duchamp," *RELIEF-Revue électronique de littérature française* 10, no. 1 (2016): 135, <https://revue-relief.org/issue/view/298>.

Spray Performances of Belgium conceptual artist Guy Bleus sought to trigger participants' memories. Like more recent olfactory artists, Bleus penned a *Smell Manifesto*, validating odour's artistic efficacy. Comparing Bleus' olfactory art manifesto with those produced by contemporary artist Peter de Cupere and master perfumier Christophe Laudamiel, we confront the desire by artists to corral odour using language. We ask ourselves, "How might we, without a shared odiferous language, explain the scent of the Ancestors?"

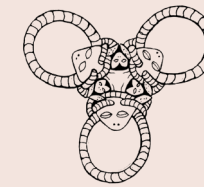
In the final subchapter of Foil 2, *Aromatospheric*, we consider philosopher Madalina Diaconu's contention that olfactory art is an idiolect specific to the artist who, using aroma, concocts a personal odour-based language.¹⁶⁹ This idea is exemplified in the lexicographic project by odour researcher and artist Sissel Tolaas who has created a personal smell dictionary. Our interest, however, lies in odours' non-verbal communication rather than giving voice to odour. Whether or not we perceive aromas, we are altered by their molecular exchange. Indeed, psychiatrist Hubertus Tellenbach (1914 - 1994) argues we experience atmospheric odour-based effects, akin to a sixth sense, through the oral sensorium (taste and smell).

Correspondingly, social anthropologists Billie Mikkel et al. argue that atmospheres, experienced through the senses, are transformative and, like Böhme, attribute an indeterminacy to atmosphere. Böhme calls this formlessness a *haze* since haziness emanating from the environment is sensorially perceived, akin to the hypnotic sonic experiences described by Goldhahn. We, too, undergo an aromatospheric rapture when we are in the presence of the Ancestors.

The lover, Földényi affirms, is subject to such rapture and that our ecstatic experiences are characteristic of the madness associated with melancholy. In comparison, philologist Piotr Śniedziwski asserts melancholy is akin to being lost in the mist.

Reaching out, we seek to reassure ourselves of Love's proximity.

¹⁶⁹. The word *aromatospheric* is a portmanteau word composed of aroma + atmosphere, that we coined in response to Diaconu's contention that olfactory artists create a personal idiom.



INTRODUCTION TO FOIL 3

In Foil 3 we return to Empedocles' cosmic *Love*.

Beginning with the chapter *Love*, we follow Rubenstein, entering the terrain of wonder, banishing surety for possibility—offering Love as evidence of our vulnerability. While not defining the Ancestors, we recognise that the curious beliefs of our genetic kin suffuse our world-conception.

The perplexity of atmospheres and the strange, oftentimes barely perceptible, touch of the Ancestors attract and repel us. Indeed, scientists Stuart Firestein and Anna Menini have found that olfactory stimuli influence aggressive territorial and sexual behaviours, intimately tethered to the central nervous system and, likely, the endocrine system.¹⁷⁰ In addition to these biochemical processes, we experience odour psycho-physically, as conversations.

Art historian Barbara Baert proclaims that Love and knowledge intertwine in the sensorium. Addressing tiny devotional artworks depicting gardens, Baert foregrounds how the numinous is expressed through intimate acts of artistic creation. Reflecting on Baert's contentions, we recognise our approach to practice is a profoundly personal, ineffable molecular osmology.¹⁷¹ Using the poetry of aroma, we secret the smell of magic within the folds of this document, our Love letter.

Yet, the scent of our dislocation becomes evident in the subchapters *Plant Idiolect* and *Particle Exchange*, where we ask: "What does it mean to be both *Ymis blóð* and *Pākehā*?"¹⁷²

¹⁷⁰. Stuart Firestein, and Anna Menini, "The Smell of Adrenaline," *Nature Neuroscience* 2, no. 2 (1999): 107, <https://doi.org/10.1038/5661>; The endocrine system in human beings is regulated by glands such as the pituitary, pineal, and adrenal glands, as well as the testes and ovaries.

¹⁷¹. Osmology: (a) A treatise on odours; (b) the study of odours. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "osmology (n.)," accessed July 25, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7819580083>.

¹⁷². *Ymis blóð* translates as Ymir's blood and is an Old Norse kenning for *the sea*. Thus far, The Skaldic Project, an international project which aims to collect and edit the corpus

Gleaning, harvesting, drying, crushing, submerging, and mixing extracts of kelp and macroalgae with Tarata resin, roasted Pōhutukawa bark, and Oakmoss—ingredients chosen for their physical and psychological effects, we learn by heart the smells of plant language.¹⁷³ Utilising natural bioactive coumarins, we fashion a perfume that induces sociability; as Diaconu suggests, ours is a private language, a plant-based idiolect. A subtle to-ing and fro-ing between bodies—the unspooling of arcane love stories, which Freeman contends, has little to do with words. Nonetheless, philosopher Roland Barthes recognises that writing a Love letter forces us to “confront the muck of language.”¹⁷⁴

Old Norse being an oral language; words were spoken. Mediaeval Icelandic scholar Mariusz (Miriam) Mayburd contends that the *Edda* and sagas are not mythic in the modern sense.¹⁷⁵ Instead, to understand Norse

of mediaeval Norse-Icelandic Skaldic Poetry, has identified two hundred and ninety-two kennings that mean sea, many of which refer to fish, lobsters, whales, boats, and swans. The kennings incorporate sounds and references to islands or the encircling body of the “loop of the earth,” the ouroboros *Jörmungandr*, who is the gigantic serpent holding the cosmos in place. The Skaldic Project, “Kennings,” accessed February 11, 2024, <https://skaldic.org/m.php?p=kennings>; Pākehā is te reo Māori for a “New Zealander of European descent - probably originally applied to English-speaking Europeans living in Aotearoa/New Zealand. According to Mohi Tūrei, an acknowledged expert in Ngāti Porou tribal lore, the term is a shortened form of *pakepakehā*, which was a Māori rendition of a word, or words remembered from a chant used in a very early visit by foreign sailors for raising their anchor (TP 1/1911:5). Others claim that *pakepakehā* was another name for *tūrehu* or *patupaiarehe* [fair-skinned mythical people]. Despite the claims of some non-Māori speakers, the term does not normally have negative connotations.” John C Moorfield, “Pākehā,” *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, accessed February 11, 2024, <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/pakeha>. (Italics author’s own)

173. “Plant language” is a term used to describe plant-to-plant signalling and plant-to-other-organism communication through the emission of biogenic volatile organic compounds (BVOCs). Scientists Maja Šimpraga et al. state, “an increasing number of secondary metabolites are identified to be signal molecules, antioxidants or compounds having other ecological functions. BVOCs are present in our everyday life, perfuming the air around us. The typical pine smell (α-pinene and β-pinene), lemon scent (limonene), black pepper spiciness (sabinene), and eucalyptus smell (cineole) are some familiar examples of BVOCs from plants. Major BVOC subgroups are benzenoids, isoprene, mono, and sesquiterpenoids. Besides being present in plants and animals, they also occur in bacteria and fungi. Volatile organic compounds emitted from plants can be semiochemicals (Greek ‘semeion’ is a mark or a signal) representing volatile signals of plants, and they function as mediators in communication between plants and other organisms and between plants.” Šimpraga et al., “Language of Plants: Where is the Word?” *Journal of Integrative Plant Biology* 58 (2016): 343, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jipb.12447>; Tarata and Pōhutukawa are trees endemic to Aotearoa.

174. Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*, 99.

175. The Old Norse word *Edda* refers to two Icelandic compilations, one created by Snorri

cosmologies, we must look at the physical remains left by the performance of belief; evidence depicted in images, artefacts, and registered scenographically through human-topographic interactions. We must search the vestiges of ritual actions unearthed in burial sites and domestic environs—places where the odiferous unleash a potent imaginary and where smell encodes a dynamic environmental poesis.¹⁷⁶ Indeed, Freeman argues that in poetry we may experience a *recuperative disclosure* founded on recollection and redemption.¹⁷⁷ Applying Freeman’s ideas, we re-write ourselves, tracing the narrative outlines of memory and unmemory. Our disclosure exposes perfume as poesis, the abstract patterns of environmental compositions—a fragrant poetics whose twin we perceive in the pictographic language of Old Norse kenning: *the mind-land of the rock-people*.¹⁷⁸

Sturluson is variously known as the Poetic Edda, the *Younger Edda* or *Snorri’s Edda*. Whereas the *Prose Edda*, also known as *Sæmundar Edda* or the *Elder Edda* is an older compilation of Norse myths which was lost for centuries, resurfacing in 1643. In contemporary academic texts these works are referred to simply as the Edda; The Old Norse word *saga* refers to a prose narrative, the word is variously translated as tale or story. *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. “saga,” accessed October 29, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/saga>.

176. The formal meanings of the two words, *poiema* and *poiesis*, were defined by Posidonius and Aristotle; there were, however, definitions offered that preceded and followed theirs. Nathan A. Greenberg states, “As Posidonius said, a poesis is also a poiema, i.e., it is a series of words (usually quite lengthy) which embodies poetic features of a formal sort, but it must also express a content which is poetic. This is the essential feature which differentiates poesis from poiema. One may well ask what is poetic content? The answer had been supplied by Aristotle, and insofar as his answer was understood, it was preserved as such. A poetic content is a mythos, a mimesis of things divine and human.” Greenberg, “The Use of Poiema and Poiesis,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 65 (1961): 269, <https://doi.org/10.2307/310839>.

177. Freeman declares, “in some recent work, in which I explore the idea of narrative identity, especially as it is found in Ricoeur, I consider the dynamics of what I have come to call the ‘double triad’ of narrative identity. The first triad, which I call ‘spheres of temporality,’ suggests that narrative identity emerges in and through the interplay of past, present, and future in the form of remembering, acting, and imagining. As for the second triad, which I call ‘spheres of otherness,’ I suggest that this temporal interplay is itself interwoven with our relation to other people, to the non-human world (e.g., nature, art), and to those moral and ethical goods that serve to orient and direct the course of human lives. By linking these two triadic spheres together, therefore, my aim is to arrive at a picture of narrative identity appropriate to the complexities of its formation. I should confess that I am generally not the model-building type, and it still isn’t entirely clear how useful this particular model is.” Freeman, “Narrative, Ethics, and the Development of Identity,” *Narrative Works* 4, no. 2 (2014): 15, <https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/NW/article/view/22780>.

178. One of over a hundred kennings identified for poetry. “Kennings,” The Skaldic Project, accessed August 22, 2024, <https://skaldic.org/m.php?p=verse&i=2984&v=i#word327931>.



Entering our subchapter, *Love's Terrain* we navigate the transtemporal dimensions of aromatic kinship. Like Tolaas, who engages in olfactory archaeology, we sniff you out. Anthropologist Eduardo Viveiros de Castro suggests that non-genealogical kinships, such as we proclaim, are trans-specific and disclose an animistic ontology.¹⁷⁹ We prefer the concept—*fluid-kinship* since we are olfactory relay stations, signalling our relatedness through breath and odour-cued encounters. Indeed, Hedeager contends that pre-Christian Norse knew bodies were porous and that they moved beyond their physical bounds. Similarly, archaeologist Meghan Mattsson McGinnis considers life and death, past and present, as conceptually irrelevant to Viking Age Norse. Believing the Ancestors are coeval shapeshifters, we reimagine ourselves until we smell of you.

Sensory geologist J. Douglas Porteous proposes the idea of smells-capes, wherein “smells may be spatially ordered or place-related.”¹⁸⁰ In *The Inscape of Our Heart*, we consider Porteous’s concept, comparing it to our understanding of smell. It soon becomes apparent that we have created a chimeric smell territorium, which Porteous defines as an inscape, an interior imagined smellscape.¹⁸¹ However, social feminist geographer Doreen Massey (1944–2016), who contests Porteous’ assertions, argues for a radical rethinking of place. In response, Drobnick advances the term *Toposmia*—place + smell. To which academic Hsuan L. Hsu applies eco-feminist Stacy Alaimo’s trans-corporeality, questioning whether olfactory art

179. In *The Magical Self*, Stark discusses the prevalence, in rural Iceland, of a *dynamistic worldview*, a cosmology that rejects the separation of mind and body, subject and object. Dynamism, while similar, is not the same as European Animism. Instead, it conceives the body as part of a larger corporeality through which energy forces continually flow. For example, within a *dynamic body cosmology*, water can possess (super)natural force and a water spirit. Stark describes dynamism as a world conception that combines “personalized forces and impersonal beings.” Stark, *The Magical Self: Body, Society and the Supernatural in Early Modern Rural Finland* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2006), 257; Additionally, Hilda Ellis Davidson declares that Old Norse cosmology, founded on transformation, remained deeply rooted in Northern societies and proved stubbornly resistant to Christianisation. Ellis Davidson, *The Lost Beliefs of Northern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2002), 5.

180. J. Douglas Porteous, “Smellscape,” *Progress in Physical Geography* 9, no. 3 (1985): 359, <https://doi.org/10.1177/030913338500900303>.

181. The word *territorium* in this context refers to the territory of the liminal imaginary, marked by the smell of the Ancestors. *Territorium* borrows from Latin—etymon: Latin *territōrium*, meaning territory. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “territorium (n.), Etymology,” accessed July 26, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/1031062048>.

addresses environmental and socio-cultural politics of air.¹⁸² Considering Hsu’s declarations, we confront the question: “*How does a magical world-conception change our understanding of the Universe?*”

In the last section of our chapter on Love, *Enchanted*, we consider Hippocrates’ observation that the melancholic has failed to abide by the laws of Fate. Beset by the mist of melancholy, we detect the scent of jötnar and know we have found our way. Śniedziwski pronounces that those with melancholia experience the surrounding terrain as blurred and formless. Yet, in formlessness, we perceive the wonder of you. Seeking to materialise your scent, we conjure portraits. To imagine you, we use a flatbed scanner and a microscope.

We also distinguish a similarity between our visual images and Baraduc’s icones produced by eddies of air and Darget’s luminous imprints created by energy released for the body. Correspondingly, contemporary photographer Chris McCaw generates sun-burned photographs, where the image is burned into silver gelatin-coated paper by extremely long exposure to the Sun. German studies scholar Margareta Ingrid Christian, discussing Darget and Baraduc’s para-scientific collaboration to render a series of direct-to-plate images, suggests the two attempted to secure evidence of emotions, thoughts, and dreams.¹⁸³ In comparison, Geimer counsels, Strindberg’s celestographs manifest a “curiously excessive experimentalism.”¹⁸⁴

Moreover, discussing the concept of photography, Geimer suggests that we may find what we are looking for by considering what photography is not. This proposition leads us to consider our claim that the photograph is an idol, as described by Lucretius, which gives off the subject’s odour. Christian also proposes that Baraduc and Darget attempted the antithesis

182. Hsuan L. Hsu, “Olfactory Art, Transcorporeality, and the Museum Environment,” *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities* 4, no. 1 (2016): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.5250/resilience.4.1.0001>; Stacy Alaimo defines the notion of trans-corporeal referred to by Hsuan L. Hsu: “Trans-corporeality means that all creatures, as embodied beings, are intermeshed with the dynamic, material world, which crosses through them, transforms them, and is transformed by them.” Alaimo, “Trans-corporeality,” in *Posthuman Glossary*, ed. Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 435.

183. Margareta Ingrid Christian, “Cameraless Photography and Its Imponderable Media,” *History of Photography* 42, no. 4 (2018): 320, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03087298.2018.1540182>.

184. Geimer, *Inadvertent Images*, 63.

of photography—instead of producing positives, they rendered, x-ray-like, the invisible. Considering these contentions, we argue our images are the condensation of matter. Art critic Douglas Feuk, however, asserts that Strindberg, who engaged in automatic art, sought to reveal the inherent patterns of the Universe through correspondence. In attempting to render the nebulous, we find ourselves staring, as if into a Claude glass, trying to descry the Ancestors.¹⁸⁵ Their likenesses appearing before us dissolve smoke-like.

In the final chapter of Foil 3, entitled *Love Letters*, we propose that our thesis offers more than an explanation; it discloses, as Strindberg suggests, a correspondence.

Asking, “*What is language?*”

We begin the subchapter *Wordless* with a quotation by interdisciplinary folklorist Solimar Otero, who proclaims that all we need are raw materials to create a scented archive with and for the Ancestors—that with herbs and bark, we fashion for them an aromatic offering.

Penning our *Love letter*, we consider art historian Viveka Kjellmer’s concept of scented scenography (literally translated as scented scene-writing) and discuss Tolaas’ artwork, *The FEAR of Smell – The Smell of FEAR* (2006–2015). We are struck by the correlation between Tolaas’ work and Masako Katsuyama et al.’s findings regarding skin gas. In Tolaas’ installation, odour becomes a vignette of distress, which Kjellmer considers an *olfactory scene*. It is, however, Kjellmer’s association of language with perfume that interests us.

Simultaneously, anthropologist Uri Almagor, weighing the difference between objects and odours, concludes that objects partake in the social sphere of language while odours do not. Yet researcher Chetan Sharma

¹⁸⁵ The Claude glass is a portable mirror favoured by artists and mystics during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The mirror’s dark reflective surface was also used for scrying, enabling the observer to catch sight of the dead and to commune with them. The Claude mirror can have either a convex, concave or flat shape and be created from materials as varied as polished coal to blown glass. It was named after the artist Claude Lorrain because Lorrain produced vaporous rendered landscape paintings, not because they employed black glass as a visual aid. See Arnaud Maillet, *The Claude Glass: Use and Meaning of the Black Mirror in Western Art*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2004).

argues that odour lexica are culturally informed, socially shared concepts. When we leave environments filled with familiar odours, our sense of self evaporates; we are lost for words.¹⁸⁶ Ethnographer Laura Stark contends selfhood dissolves when the familiar suddenly appear as unfamiliar, such as when we enter the forest alone.¹⁸⁷ Stark proposes that the forest has (super)natural powers which render those who enter its dominion mute. Voiceless, we have no social compass; we are forced to speak in an unfamiliar aromatic tongue.

In *Manifesto for Olfactory-Acoustic Sculpture (A guide to Creating Uncomfortable Questions)* 1994–2021, artist Oswaldo Marciá declares, “our primary sense of vision must be stepped aside from, in order to move away from all the ‘I knows.’”¹⁸⁸ Collaborating with the International Flavours & Fragrances Company (the IFF) and the British Library Sound Archive, Marciá, like Tolaas, creates site-specific olfactory installations. Responding to the artist’s work, Drobnick argues that Marciá questions sensory boundaries, inviting the audience, as participants, to engage in novel environmental-sensory experiences. Similarly, critic Sally O’Reilly suggests Marciá manipulates meaning by combining sound, smell, and site. O’Reilly’s claim reinforces Diaconu’s suggestion that olfactory artists create a personal aromatic idiom.

Our interest, however, lies in asking how perfume’s tongue alters what is said and how meaning is absorbed. Cultural studies professor Robin Waugh suggests that pre-Christian Norse peoples recognised words as organs within the body; as such, they could be cut from the chest by a foe and consumed.

Again, we ask, “*What is language?*”

Historian of religion Catharina Raudvere suggests cosmology and idiomatic expression rely on shared cultural contexts; much like Kjellmer’s scented scenography, combined, they create the backdrop for our performance.

¹⁸⁶ We use the singular *self* here because we refer to theories of *selfhood* proposed by others; we are not referring to ourselves.

¹⁸⁷ Stark, *The Magical Self*, 357.

¹⁸⁸ Oswaldo Maciá, “Manifesto for Olfactory-Acoustic Sculpture (A Guide to Creating Uncomfortable Questions) 1994 – 2021,” accessed November 22, 2023, <https://www.oswaldomacia.com/>.



Breathing you in, we reach the subchapter, *The Forest as a Love Story*, in which Mayburd introduces the idea that climate is linked to (super)natural activity. Contemplating the environment's intrinsic agency draws us back to Stark's theory of the dissolving self, which advances the idea that when recognisable boundaries between the physical body and the environment collapse, we become estranged from ourselves.¹⁸⁹ Researching rural Finnish folklore, Stark discloses that the forest was once considered a dangerous agential force. Consequently, Stark proffers the hypothesis that the forest is a *heterotopia*. Stark's assertion leads us to sociologist Kevin Hetherington's critique of heterotopia. Hetherington alleges Foucault's conception of heterotopia requires expansion since Foucault offers only two primary sites: heterotopias of crisis or places lacking geographic definition, which Foucault defines as *nowhere*, and heterotopias of deviation, where those who deviate from societal norms are placed, such as rest homes.¹⁹⁰ In contrast, Hetherington defines three localities: those marked by something *without*, something *excessive*, or something *incongruous*, but acknowledges there are more definitions than these and that the three categories overlap. Following Stark, we recognise the forest as a heterotopia, recalibrating our understanding of the world.¹⁹¹

Mayburd, meanwhile, establishes within Old Norse cosmology that physical topography is a (super)natural agent capable of influencing personhood. As if a mirror image, we recognise ourselves enthralled and bedevilled by the modern city—spellbound by an inversion of Stark's Forest heterotopia. The forest, in its absence, is out of place. A change detected in our subchapter, *Inhaling*. As the forest recedes and is replaced by cities, so does its agency. Yet we recognise the forest as a dangerous and wondrous Being, an Ancestor, who shelters and communicates with disparate Ancestors.

189. Miriam Mayburd, "It Was a Dark and Stormy Night: Haunted Saga Homesteads, Climate Fluctuations, and the Vulnerable Self," in *Paranormal Encounters in Iceland 1150-1400*, ed. Ármann Jakobsson and Miriam Mayburd (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2020), 29-30.

190. Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias," trans. Jay Miskowiec from *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* no. 5 (1984): 5, <https://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heterotopia.en/>.

191. Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* (London: Routledge, 1997), 8.

Correspondingly, Swedish philologist Stefan Brink argues Nordic peoples formerly understood environments as metaphysically charged, that topology possessed and could bestow power and status; however, securing an environment's support required material sacrifice. Within our research, the forest exercises a physical and metaphysical presence; we recall a seminal event: the convergence of the forest's atmospheric body with that of the Ocean. Arrested by this strange occurrence, we breathe you in.

Seeking to ward off the melancholia's descending mist, we gather nine herbs: *Ecklonia Radiata*, *Tonka Bean Absolute* (Smokey), *Mugwort* (*Artemisia Vulgaris*), *Labdanum* (Black balsam), *Basil Sweet ct. Linalool* (Tulsi), *Cedarwood* (Virginia), *Pōhutukawa*, *Tarata Resinoid* (Lemonwood), and *Angelica*. In the subchapter *Plantlines* (Love's Seed), we recount the properties of each and lay out their narratives, fashioning from them a charm, a sleeping draught to lull you into lucid dreaming. As psychophysiologist Stephen LaBerge claims, lucid dreamers are asleep yet conscious and are, therefore, able to transform.

Through *Your Scent*, we contemplate how the odours of the Ancestors are akin to sympathetic magic, their scent trails enticing us toward the heart of the matter. Nancy's theory of transimmanence, the breathing in and out of the world, enables us to grasp the significance of wonder. Wonderment compels us to question our dedication to mechanistic thought and eclipses our preoccupation with self, exposing us to touching-thinking.

Challenging us further, Campagna declares we must embrace Magic's *As If* to realise our retreat from Technic's all-consuming language. While the forest silences one voice, it restores an acute awareness of odour, re-tethering us to Earth. In keeping with this understanding of the forest, Stark proposes an *open-body folk theory* which outlines a world-conception in accordance with that of our Norse Ancestors. Stark's folk theory posits a concept of the body as porous, a view at odds with modern European beliefs.

What was once familiar, is now strange.

In our penultimate subchapter, *Topographic Memory*, we explore philosopher Walter Benjamin's experience of *memoryscapes*. Considering, semantic

memory researcher Massimiliano Palmiero and psychologist Laura Piccardi affirmation that emotional landmarks create topographic memories.¹⁹² Meanwhile, a study undertaken by neuroscientist Louisa Dahmani et al. reinforces the hypothesis of a connection between spatial memories and olfaction. In the same way, perfumiers fabricate mimetic likenesses of natural odours; by extracting odours from sites of human occupation, Sissel Tolaas fabricates smellscapes. Anthropologist Michael Taussig contends that mimesis is a form of sympathetic magic. However, as our memories are not of physical places, we must traverse the unfamiliar terrain of your body using the liminal imaginary.

As if a palimpsest, the forest erases us, superimposing your scent on ours. Pitched by the liminal imaginary, memory, and unmemory into a magical topology where odours register as voices, we conjoin Haley-Halinski's assertion that kennings expose a textual world with atmospheric theories of aroma, realising our contention that perfume is analogous to poetic oration.

The final subchapter of *Love Letters* and the dénouement of our trefoil is *In the Marrow of Our Bones*. Like our genetic Ancestors, we perceive the world magically. Their beliefs, prolifically displayed as images, were incised in rock, smithed, woven, carved into artefacts, pictured on Gotland's standing stones, and orchestrated through environmental scenography. Yet, the word magic is controversial. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, contemplating the bias shown towards magic, concludes that magic and kinship suffer from the same problem: intentionality and influence.¹⁹³ Despite the prevailing winds, magic and kinship cast their mysterious shadows over our world-conception. We respond to their vitality affect. Research associates

192. Massimiliano Palmiero, and Laura Piccardi state: "When people recall a pathway from memory a specific spatial memory system is used. This system is called topographic memory and involves not only visuospatial information, but also vestibular and proprioceptive information relative to the whole-body movements, as well as a continuous change of the person's point of view that implies an active updating of the mental representation and the person's position in the environment. This system was found to be separated by the standard visuo-spatial memory at neural level in normal subjects." Palmiero, and Piccardi, "The Role of Emotional Landmarks on Topographical Memory," *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (2017): 2, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00763/full>.

193. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, "The Gift and the Given: Three Nano-Essays on Kinship and Magic," in *Kinship and Beyond. The Genealogical Model Reconsidered*, ed. Sandra Bamford and James Leach (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 243.

Phoebe R. Bentley et al. proclaim that specific forest odours provoke a sense of tranquillity. Bentley et al.'s findings elucidate a subjective-olfactory relationship between biodiversity and emotional well-being, confirming de Castro's statement that all substances and bodies partake in the ceaselessly fluid relationships created by magical forces. Similarly, archaeologist Elna Siv Kristoffersen contends that mediaeval Nordic peoples considered magically imbued objects living Beings, the two becoming one—the sword and its wielder are *the snake of mist*—possessed of the (super)natural force of the cosmic serpent, whose swirling body disorients as if mist.¹⁹⁴

We submit this thesis as an aromatic offering to the Ancestors.



Ridderspore, Delphinium Consolida.

194. The Old Norse kenning, "the snake of mist," is one of over four hundred kennings currently identified with the word, sword. "Kennings," The Skaldic Project, accessed August 18, 2024, <https://skaldic.org/m.php?p=verse&i=2674&x=o>.



Figure 2.3. *Kiwi skull*, Susan Jowsey, 2022, cameraless photograph, collection artist's own.

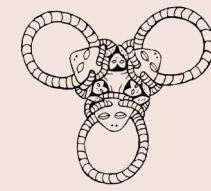


Figure 2.4. *Kāhu (Swamp harrier) skull*, Susan Jowsey, 2022, cameraless photograph, collection artist's own.

FOIL 1 A GENEOLGY



Black Cherry



FOIL 1

Embracing the Ancestors who bear the scent of Earth, *the Daughter of Night*, we have crossed the threshold of time, ceasing to be. This inquiry materialises from fertile soils alive with microorganisms and interlaced roots, sheltered by the forests' arc and emanating from the bodies of rocks. It persists in the resilience of plants and the usually invisible yet startling social realms of slime mould, fungus, and lichen. Born to the rasping call of the Kākā, Wēta, and the territorial song of the Kiwi, we are bound within an ancient narrative crystallised in the ozonic blending of Northern and Southern Sea mists and held within the resinous odours of ancient forests. Anchored by the Ancestors, we wade the waters of existence.¹⁹⁵

Bound by the forces of the winds, our genetic Ancestors exhaled us on these shores.

Asking how *ancestral knowledge might transform perceptions of the Universe in a time of ecological crisis*, presumes one knows who one is. The epithets European or Western (which initially referred to the physical relationship of the landmass to the sun), are amorphous designations unifying the territories, histories, politics, socio-cultural behaviours, and beliefs of diverse European cultures. Our familial lineage is robustly northern European; we are, however, the offspring of diasporic peoples, who sailed on the waves of colonisation toward the shores of Aotearoa two centuries ago.¹⁹⁶ Heredity tethers us to the unfamiliar north and governs our identity, while the southern hemisphere perfuses our *Being*.

¹⁹⁵. Kākā and Kiwi are bird's endemic to Aotearoa. Wēta are giant flightless crickets also endemic to Aotearoa. Kānuka, *Kunzea ericoides*, is a myrtle native to Aotearoa.

¹⁹⁶. Professor Emeritus Michael F. Seldin et al. claims that "overall, the analysis of sequence variation allowed the authors to distinguish individuals with northern European ancestry (Swedish, English, Irish, German, and Ukrainian) from individuals with southern European ancestry (Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, and Greek)." Seldin et al., "European Population Substructure: Clustering of Northern and Southern Populations," *PLoS Genetics* 2, 9 (2006): e143, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1564423/>.

Insuperably separated by geo-temporal fault lines from our genealogical kin, we fasten ourselves to the Ancestors. From the sediment of intercorporeal memory and the subliminal ties of epigenetics, we invoke the odour of poetry.¹⁹⁷ Rewriting ourselves through minni and óminni, we are fascinated by theories of coevality and shapeshifting. Having swallowed *óminnisveig* (the potion of oblivion), we confront our need to remember, for, as Bergson declares, “there is much more between past and present than a mere difference of degree.”¹⁹⁸

To extract and distil a magical world-conception from an unknowable familial past, we have combined heathen cosmologies (in the main, pre-Christian coeval beliefs) from northern Europe with an eclectic array of classical and contemporary thoughts. Unconstrained, we wander from 8000 BCE to 2000 CE, erratically gathering ideas like seeds, which sown in the liminal imaginary germinate into a tangle of creative wordings, olfactory, and visual practices. To commune with the living and the living-dead, the (super)natural environment and hybrid Beings, we have learned the volatile tongue of plant language. Drifting on an odiferous atmosphere, we find wonder in the everyday. In the liminal imaginary, we are transfixed by the rising bodies of eerie phantoms as if looking into the darkened surface of a Claude glass.¹⁹⁹ Captured by the mythopoetics of our genetic Ancestors, we recognise their keening voices in the word-like howling of the winds.

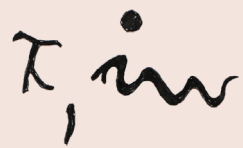
197. According to Fuchs, intercorporeal memory is “the notion of body memory may be used to denote all forms of implicit memory that are mediated by the body and actualised without explicit intention or recollection in our everyday conduct.” Fuchs, “Intercorporeality and Interaffectivity,” 201.

198. Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1911), 137, <https://archive.org/details/matterandmemoryooberguoft/page/n5/mode/2up>.

199. Named for the painter Claude Lorrain (1600 - 1682), artists commonly used a hand-held *Claude glass* or *Black mirror* to reduce the tonal range of the vistas they depicted, enabling them to concentrate on visual aesthetics. This intriguing, lens-like device, with its inky surface, was also used for scrying. The English polymath John Dee (1527 - c. 1608) used a Dark mirror for divination, amongst other artefacts.



Figure 2.5. *Gotland Picture Stones* at Änge, Buttle, Gotland, Harald Faith-Ell, 1937, glass plate negative, Gotland Sweden, Swedish National Heritage Board, no known copyright restrictions, https://www.flickr.com/photos/swedish_heritage_board/30664227881/in/album-72157671599852420.



A HOUSE OF EARTH AND BONE

*The largest of dead-fires: dark o'er the vapour
The smoke-cloud ascended, the sad-roaring fire,
Mingled with weeping (the wind-roar subsided)
Till the building of bone it had broken to pieces,
Hot in the heart. Heavy in spirit.*

Beowulf, c. 700 – 1000 CE.²⁰⁰

*O North, mother of dragons and nurse of scorpions, guardian
of serpents, and lake of demons, it would have been easier to
erect an impenetrable barrier against you as if against hell,
than for you to be full of such tribes.*

Aethicus Ister, c. 700 – 800 CE.²⁰¹

200. From the final stanza, “The Burning of Beowulf,” in *Beowulf*, trans. Lesslie Hall (Boston: D.C. Heath & Co. Publishers, 1892), 107, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16328/16328-h/16328-h.htm>; The date when *Beowulf* was written is disputed. Jane Acomb Leake argues, “the poem is considered to be an historical document, narrating accurately the deeds of the Geats, and upon the outcome of the debate over the identity of these Geats rests the reconstruction of much of early Scandinavian history.” Acomb Leake, *The Geats of Beowulf: A Study in the Geographical Mythology of the Middle Ages* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1967), 4. (Italics ours)

201. The *Cosmographia*, quoted in Acomb Leake, *The Geats of Beowulf*, 57. The *Cosmographia* is attributed to the philosopher Aethicus Ister, who is purported to be an eighth-century geographical fiction compiled from various sources; For a discussion related to the authenticity of the *Cosmographia* see Ian N. Wood, “Aethicus Ister: An Exercise in Difference,” in *Grenze und Differenz im frühen Mittelalter*, ed. Walter Pohl and Helmut Reinmitz (Austria: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2000), 197–208. (Italics ours)

Acomb Leake argues that Latin *monster-lore* inspired strange images of the frozen northern regions of Europe and its various peoples.²⁰² Herodotus first described an untraceable and arguably mythical Northern tribe, the *Getae*, in 514 BCE.²⁰³ Seven more monstrous clans were later added. The *Tauri*, who delighted in sacrificing any strangers that entered their territory. The *Agathyris* were promiscuous and greedy for gold. The *Neuri*, who, driven from their land by snakes, turned into wolves once a year; the cannibalistic *Androphagi*; the *Melanchlaeni*, who only wore black; the *Budini* with shining eyes and red hair; and the *Sarmatians*, whose young men were encouraged to seduce and marry Amazon women to produce a race of warriors.²⁰⁴ The attributes ascribed to these fictitious people were set down in mediaeval geographic chronicles cataloguing encounters with Northern Europeans.

Throughout the European Middle Ages, Acomb Leake contends, “the mediaeval concept of the North and its people remained essentially unchanged, even in the face of increasing contacts with the polar regions.”²⁰⁵ From the fourth to the fifteenth century, fantastic stories endured about how Northern peoples were descended from *wild Scythians*.²⁰⁶ Quoting Adam of Bremen, c.1072, Leake details the specious history of the Baltic or *Barbarian Sea*, stating:

In this sea there are also very many other islands, all infested by ferocious barbarians and for this reason avoided by navigators. Likewise, round about the shore of the Baltic Sea, it is said, live the Amazons in what is now called the land of women.²⁰⁷

202. Acomb Leake, *The Geats of Beowulf*, 77–79.

203. Early Norse peoples were not homogenous; there were more than fifty distinct tribes occupying the region known as Fennoscandia.

204. Acomb Leake, 14–15.

205. Acomb Leake, 83.

206. Acomb Leake, 87–90.

207. Acomb Leake, 76. Quoting Adam of Bremen. The full quote reads: “In this sea there are also very many other islands, all infested by ferocious barbarians and for this reason avoided by navigators. Likewise, round about the shore of the Baltic Sea, it is said, live the Amazons in what is now called the land of women. Some declare that these women conceive by sipping water. Some, too, assert that they are made pregnant by the merchants who pass that way, or by the men whom they hold captive in their midst, or by various monsters, which are not rare there.” Adam of Bremen, *History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen*, trans. Francis J. Tschann (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

Like philologist Gabriel Turville-Petre (1908 - 1978), Leake supports the contention that Latin monster-lore influenced the formation of the sagas.²⁰⁸ Acomb Leake states, “Old Norse writers were quick to adopt the wealth of new materials that came to them from more southern lands in the wake of the Viking Age and the Christian conversion.”²⁰⁹ Indeed, the sagas unfold Nordic visions of álfar, dverggar, jötnar, and dísir (guardian spirits), shapeshifting, sacrifice, attraction to gold, and glorify war. Such images have now morphed into contemporary Viking stereotypes and are epitomised in the extremes of white supremacy, radical right-wing politics, and Viking death metal music, which are offset by a resurgence of Norse-based Paganism and Earth-centric belief systems.

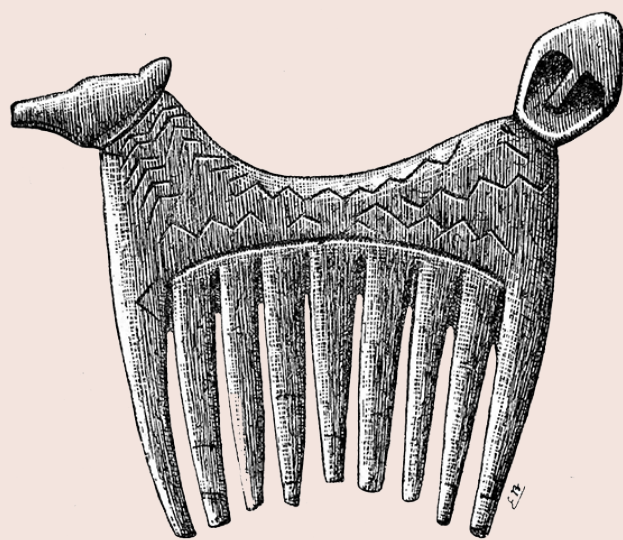


Figure 2.6 *Gullrum Comb*, n.d, illustration of Bone comb, supposedly Neolithic. Gullrum, Gotland, Sweden, Wellcome Museum Collection, London, <https://wellcomecollection.org/works/vw9mgqdn>. Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

208. The Old Norse sagas are prose stories that retell Old Norse Scandinavian and Icelandic legends, chivalric narratives, kings, bishops, and family tales. They relate to Old Norse poetic traditions through their incorporation of kenning and heiti (poetic nouns). The sagas were recorded by a host of unknown persons. Snorri Sturluson, who compiled a handbook of Old Norse poetic style, the *Prose Edda*, also chronicled several sagas, most notably *Heimskringla*.

209. Acomb Leake, *The Geats of Beowulf*, 139.

Yet, these tales obscure the web-like structure of human history. Evidence shows Northern peoples lived in stable communities rich with cultural iconography, artefacts, and pictographic records. Archaeologically, our genealogical homelands, the islands of Gotland and Öland, reveal a wealth of material cultural expression, stretching from Hunter Gatherer Pitted Ware Culture, evinced in pottery shards, to the strange zoomorphic artefact known as the *Gullrum comb* with its snakeskin markings, thought to date from the Neolithic Era, c. 7000 - c. 1700 BCE (See figure 2.6).

During the Common Era, from the fifth to the eleventh centuries, elaborately incised pictographic and runic standing stones populated Gotland's terrain (See figures 2.5 and 2.7). In addition, Öland is home to the enigmatic ringforts.²¹⁰

Traditionally, pre-Christian Nordic cultures were oral, which means their cosmological beliefs and cultural practices have been largely effaced. What we know about the polytheistic world-conception of the Norse peoples is gleaned primarily from cultural rituals such as sacrificial and burial practices, artefacts, and text fragments. Whilst runic inscriptions on stone, wood, and bone existed in Scandinavia between c. 100 to 1100 CE and continued to be carved on the Gotland picture stones into the fifteenth century, runes were not employed as a general writing system (though based on the proliferation of public artefacts bearing inscriptions, they were widely comprehended). Instead, social memory was maintained and passed on through poetry and storytelling. In *Snorri's Prose Edda* we find intermingled personal verse, skaldic poetry, and mythic prose from the pantheons of the Æsir and Vanir deities.²¹¹ Andréén, however, contends

210. For current research on the ringforts, see the research website, “Crisis, Conflict, and Climate change in Scandinavia during the period 300-700 CE evidenced in Ölandic ringforts,” Ringforts.com, 2024, <https://ringforts.com/>.

211. Debate exists as to whether álfar should be viewed as a category of paranormal Beings; evidence suggests álfar may be an appellation, not a taxonomic group, which is a modern imposition. Numerous significant dverggar have álfar names. Indeed, Ármann Jakobsson asserts that “the mediaeval álfar (singular) was a state of being, like ‘a genius’ or ‘a champion,’ but there is no indication that this quality was imagined as fixed in the same way that we now imagine to be true of races and species. Those who made offerings to elves, seeking their assistance or appeasing them, did thus not necessarily believe in a superior race, but they did believe in paranormal powers superior to themselves, something that modern people find it much harder to do.” Jakobsson, “Beware of the Elf! A Note on the Evolving Meaning of Álfar,” *Folklore* 126, no. 2 (2015): 220, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24774311>.



Figure 2.7. Picture Stone from Hunninge, Klinte, Gotland, known as *The Hunninge stone* (The Honey stone) circa eighth century C.E, now in the Gotland Museum, Harald Faith-Ell, 1933, glass plate negative, Visby, Gotland, Sweden, Swedish National Heritage Board, no known copyright restrictions, https://www.flickr.com/photos/swedish_heritage_board/29630060325/in/album-72157671599852420/.

it is unsound to rely too heavily on the *Prose Edda* as a primary source for understanding Scandinavian societies since most written texts represent examples of European mediaeval Christian literature, not pre-Christian Icelandic and Scandinavian histories.²¹²

Yet, in creating the *Prose Edda*, Snorri ensured strands of Icelandic and, by extension, Scandinavian cosmologies were preserved. Andrén maintains, however, that cultural memories remain accessible through Norse material culture (place names, significant sites, burial practices, architecture, and artefacts). For example, while archaeologists have identified locations where large-scale sacrificial rituals were performed (See figure 2.8), they have also established families made ritual offerings as part of their everyday domestic activities. These votives were presented to the numerous land-vættir, as well as álfar, dvergar, jötnar, dísir, and genetic Ancestors, the living dead. In *Place of the Spirits*, Daniel Bray describes how Earth's lakes, rocks, waterfalls, trees, and soil were home to these ever-present Beings,

From dead ancestors to elves, gods and goddesses, and the native spirits of the land, the landscape was never uninhabited to the pagan Norse and Celts. It was littered with holy places; rocks, mounds, hills, waterfalls, wells, lakes, trees, groves, even the land itself, were all dwelling places for a myriad of supernatural beings with whom communion could be sought. ... They shared the land with humanity, and for good or ill, they had to be reckoned with. Those who could but see them often recognised them as kin, and trusted them, and those who knew their stories knew that even death was but a gateway to their realm.²¹³

Barely discernible vestiges of material culture whisper to us, manifesting the magnetic pull of social imagining. Unearthed artefacts reveal how our genetic Ancestors envisioned the complexities of the cosmos. We are spellbound by the mysterious remnants of their existence whose environmental voices, embodied in topography, are left to us in petrographic and artefactual languages.

²¹² Anders Andrén, "Behind Heathendom: Archaeological Studies of Old Norse Religion," *Scottish Archaeological Journal* 27, no. 2 (2005): 106, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27917543>.

²¹³ Daniel Bray, "The Place of the Spirits: Interactions with the Spirit World through the Land in Norse and Celtic Pagan Religions," *Sydney Studies in Religion* 2 (2017): 227-8, <https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au>.

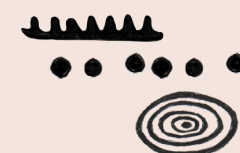




Figure 2.8. *Falköping 29: 2 Sacrificial Stone with Bowl Pits / River Mills*, in its original place at Ranten near the railway, Västra Götaland, Sweden, Oscar Almgren, 1898, glass plate negative, Västra Götaland, Sweden, Swedish National Heritage Board, no known copyright restrictions, <https://arkivkopia.se/sak/raa-16001000540412>.

Island Tribes

For nearly two hundred years, our family has dwelled on the islands of Aotearoa. Unlike our siblings, we have never journeyed to our ancestral homelands, the Baltic Islands of Gotland and Öland.

Gotland, once the home of the *Gutar tribe*, had an indigenous language, *Old Gutnish* (pronounced Goot-nish), a distinct derivation of Old Norse. Modern forms of the language remain on Gotland; some southern mainlanders speak *Lau Gutnish*, while on the tiny offshore island of Fårö *Fårösmål* can still be heard. The largest Baltic Island, Gotland, has an independent history and was populated by yeoman farmers and merchants. In contrast, Öland, first inhabited in c. 8000 BCE, being closer to the Swedish mainland, has a past forged by geopolitical forces and the island's proximity to the warring tribes of the Svear (Scandinavians) and the Danes.

Material culture reveals abundant evidence of Celtic and Roman influence on both islands. Indeed, Celtic paganism shares similarities to Norse pre-Christian cosmologies. An example is the god-like figure depicted with seasonally shed antlers (not horns) identified on a sizable ceremonial vessel known as the *Gundestrup cauldron* (See figure 2.9). The figure is primarily associated with stags, a number of other animals, and forests.²¹⁴ Historian Ingemar Nordgren suggests that contact with Iberian Celts and their beliefs

²¹⁴ Northern paganism is polytheistic, as are Celtic religions. Sites of significance and votive offerings (including human sacrifice) featured lakes, bogs, and sacred groves conceived as accessways for the dead. Individual trees, particularly oaks, acted as paths between the mundane and extramundane realms. Presumed to be a Celtic horned fertility God, the figure (possibly called *Cernunnos*) is accompanied by sacred animals; one hand holds a snake and beside the figure stands a deer. The figure wears a distinctive neck ring, a torc (See figure 2.9); Scholar Marianne Görman suggests, "animals in particular were the centre of the cult of the Celts. Gods in animal shape or with pronounced animal attributes are a typical trait of Celtic religion, and ram-headed serpents or horned animal heads occur in Celtic iconography in connection with gods of the Cernunnos type. When these motifs are found in a Nordic context, I understand them as symbols of a Nordic variation of Cernunnos." Görman, "Nordic and Celtic: Religion in Southern Scandinavia during the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age," *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 13 (1990): 338, <https://doi.org/10.30674/scripta.67183>.

may have influenced the development of Gotland's distinctive culture. Nordgren proposes that the visually unique Gotland picture stones (See figures 2.5 and 2.7) bear many similarities to the gravestones of the ancient Celts from the Southwest of the Iberian Peninsula. While debates regarding the magnitude of Celtic influence on Norse iconography and cultural practices are ongoing, their interconnection holds, for us, personal significance.²¹⁵

With Bergson's words, *the past persists in the original bent of one's soul*, fraying between our fingers; we imagine ourselves as more than the jetsam of our ancestry.²¹⁶



Figure 2.9. *Gundestrup Boiler*, Inner Plates, Y.FRJ, Rævemosen, Ålborg County, Roberto Fortuna and Kira Ursem, 2007, digital photography, National Museum, Denmark, Wikimedia Commons CC BY-SA 3.0, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/cb/Gundestrup-keglen-_00054.jpg. The cauldron (c. 300 BCE - 300 CE) is made of silver. Its diameter is 69 cm, height 42 cm (with a circumference of a metre). This astounding artefact was found in 1891 in a small peatbog called Rævemosen near the town of Gundestrup in Denmark.

²¹⁵. In addition to Scandinavian, we have Irish-Celtic ancestry. The designation *Celtic*, like *Norse*, describes diverse cultural groups who share language forms and belief systems. Philologist Tatyana A. Mikhailova suggests, “still, the origins of these peoples and the pathways of their earlier expansion are to a great extent hidden in the time-depths of prehistory. Naturally, the area of the Celtic expansion (including the earlier periods) would comprise both the British Isles and the Iberian Peninsula, but whence, where exactly and when the Celts arrived there (either by land or by sea) remains a matter of sheer speculation.” Mikhailova, “Celtic Origin: Location in Time and Space? Reconsidering the ‘East-West Celtic’ Debate,” *Journal of Language Relationship* 13, no. 3-4 (2016): 258, <https://doi.org/10.31826/jlr-2016-133-406>.

²¹⁶. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), 30. The full quote reads: “Doubtless we think with only a small part of our past, but it is with our entire past, including the original bent of our soul, that we desire, will and act.”

With Awls, Harpoons, and Needles

Earth inscribes within its substratum the skeins of all Beings.

The Fennoscandian region of Europe was initially populated by nomadic *hunter-gatherers*, groups of people familiar with a world sheathed in ice. Small groups of seafarers reached the shores of Gotland around 9000 BP during the Mesolithic era.²¹⁷ Archaeologists Jan Apel and Jan Störa declare that significant ecosystem change shaped the environment and its inhabitants during this time. Of major significance was the sea-level rise caused by ice melt, which turned the once freshwater Ancylus Lake into the inland Baltic Sea.²¹⁸

In a cave at Stora Karlsö, a small island five kilometres west of Gotland, archaeologists have, for over one hundred years, worked to expose the chronology of the arrival of the first people on Gotland (See figure 2.10). Apel and Störa have categorised three primary tools found at this site: *awls, harpoons, and needles*.

²¹⁷. BP means *Before the Present*. Gotland was first settled by people who hunted and fished around 9000 calendar years Before the Present.

²¹⁸. Archaeologists Jan Apel and Jan Störa note that “the annual average temperature was similar to that of today, but with slightly cooler winters and warmer summers. The Baltic Sea was a freshwater lake, the Ancylus Lake, but a gradually rising temperature meant that the Atlantic Sea level rose and after about 8500 BP, saltwater flowed into the Baltic Sea through Öresund. These large-scale changes are important for understanding the development and character of the environment and the settlements.” Apel, and Störa, “Dynamic Adaptations of the Mesolithic Pioneers of Gotland in the Baltic Sea,” *Documenta Praehistorica* 47 (2020): 7, <https://doi.org/10.4312/dp.47.1>.



Figure 2.10. *Excavations of Stone Age settlement in the cave of Stora Farvar, Stora Karlso, Gotland, Sweden, the site was investigated between 1888 - 1893 by Lars Kolmodin and Hjalmar Stolpe. Stora Farvar is situated on Stora Karisa Island off Gotland's west coast, Hjalmar Stolpe, 1891, glass plate negative, Gotland Sweden, Swedish National Heritage Board, no known copyright restrictions, https://www.flickr.com/photos/swedish_heritage_board/4108421795/in/album-72157622069529395.*

Like apparitions, this artefact list materialises our maternal grandfather and his forebears. Though only known to us in photographs, we are aware our grandfather, Charles Petterson, used needles and thread. A carpenter, like his forefathers he made things by hand using skills passed on by his seafaring Gotlander father, Karl Yulius Pettersson. Karl's Kauri gum carvings, gathered in a mirrored glass case, displayed people rowing in boats, lions, swans, bowls filled with fruit, crosses, a bridge, and a lighthouse

(See figures 2.11).²¹⁹ Another glass cabinet held a large, intricately modelled ship; such wonders made our grandmother Ella Petterson's home a curious place. Inheriting Ella's wooden sewing box, we found within a vast nest of unspooled cotton fibres and a strange, hardened material Charles (our grandfather) used for waxing linen thread for mending boots. This odd reliquiae discloses the remains of a mysterious stranger.



Figure 2.11. *Carved Kauri Gum by Karl Yulius Pettersson, photographer unknown, n.d, digital photograph, collection artist's own.*

The collection of carved Kauri gum was originally arranged inside a glass cabinet. The bridge and other items sit on a mirror. The carvings were inherited by Charles Petterson (deceased). They were in the care of Ella Petterson until Charles' brother Roy donated them to the Kauri Museum, Matakohē, Northland, Aotearoa. These objects are small in scale. The most significant piece, a bridge, is approximately twelve centimetres in length (4.72 inches). **Note:** Karl changed his name from Karl Pettersson (Petter's-son) to Carl Petterson when he became a citizen of Aotearoa, New Zealand in 1911

²¹⁹. Karl's carvings are now publically displayed in the Kauri Museum at Matakohē, Northland, Aotearoa, <https://www.kaurimuseum.com/>; The pieces are no longer in their original case.

Embodied Kinship

*In principle wonder will never cease, even though
its aspect as awe before the stupendous may from
time to time give way to its aspect as stupor so
dark that it forgets its own oblivion.*

John Llewelyn, 2001.²²⁰

Lured by strange odours, we crossed the threshold that separates you from us. Together, we enter the mysterious and monstrous dominion of the Ancestors.

Gotland once had a nexus of hundreds of standing picture stones. Birgit Arrhenius proposes that the extraordinary Gotland picture stones were doorways to the dead. Picking up Arrhenius' theory, Andrén suggests the stones acted as access points which topographically demarcate transitional zones, such as borders between fields and woodland.²²¹ Shaped like doors and hearths, the stones represent domestic thresholds depicting mytho-poetic imagery. To our eyes, the richly illustrated picture stones follow a book-like visual system, with a hierarchy of vignettes occurring in clearly defined spaces, including outlined borders and inset images (See figure 2.7). Kacin, however, asserts the stones depict family portraits rendered as mythic narratives and claims clear linkages between geographically related stones, suggesting their accounts spill from one to another—unfolding genealogies. The picture stones, Kacin declares, reveal a familial narrative, “the story of a lineage in chapters that continue from generation to

220. John Llewelyn, “On the Saying that Philosophy Begins in Thaumazein,” *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry*, no. 4 (2001): 57, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20711438>. (Italics ours)

221. The count of whole and fragmented picture stones on Gotland is seven hundred. The stones are regularly unearthed and found under or incorporated into buildings.

generation. This not only binds the dead to the living and vice versa, but also deepens the connection between the dead and the land in which they are buried.”²²² However, considering not all picture stones are grave markers, one might say they *embody kinships*, much like family photographs.

The idea of the stones as doorways or hearths—*anchor points* or *entries*, fits with the ability of the dead (those lost at sea, in battles or while trading in foreign countries) to return to Gotland. The ability of the dead to enter and exit their homeland—as those buried in *howes* or burial mounds could—is consistent with Old Norse beliefs. The sheer number of picture stones on Gotland and the earlier monumental stone ship burials (See figure 1.2) attest to how many were lost, far from home, and needed a way to return.

While material evidence reveals paths and doorways in heathen Nordic mortuary practices, gateways for the dead were also erected during the Christian era and the practice of summoning the dead continued into the eighteenth-century.²²³

Hem Eriksen suggests the picture stones, alongside other mortuary structures such as howes, constitute architectural spaces designed for ritual encounters with the dead. Indeed, the picture stones appear reminiscent of contemporary monuments, such as cenotaphs which mark sites for public gatherings and votive offerings commemorating soldiers who died in battles on foreign soil. Hem Eriksen claims:

Doors literally create insiders and outsiders. ..., while creating axes (connections) and oppositions (boundaries), door and threshold also materialize a space between. Standing in a doorway one is neither here

222. Fen Kacin, “There and Back Again: Ancestor Veneration and Necromancy in Ship-Themed Scandinavian Burials,” *International Journal of Student Research in Archaeology* 4 (2018): 117, https://www.academia.edu/38754645/Fourth_Issue_of_the_International_Journal_of_Student_Research_in_Archaeology.

223. Scholar Andreas Nordberg notes that “according to some mediaeval Scandinavian provincial laws, summoning the dead is to be regarded as heathen practice; it is therefore prohibited according to Christian Law. For instance, in the text, *Gulapings Christenret*, preserved in manuscripts from the beginning of the thirteenth century, it is prohibited to *fræista draugha upp at væikia æda haugbua* ‘awaken dead corpses and those who dwell in (grave-)mounds.’ Equivalent practices are still found as late as the beginning of the eighteenth century, as attested in Swedish reports of legal proceedings.” Nordberg, “The Grave as a Doorway to the Other World: Architectural Religious Symbolism in Iron Age Graves in Scandinavia,” *Temenos-Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 45, no. 1 (2009): 37, <https://doi.org/10.33356/temenos.4577>.

nor there, but between spaces, or outside space. In short, the power of the doorway lies in its ability to effect and affect our embodied, sensory experience of space and relations.²²⁴

Reading the stones as interstitial spaces discloses their porosity. Andreeff suggests that the Gotland picture stones (See figure 2.5) were frequently grouped, ranged in size, and performed numerous agentive and spatial roles, *as territorial markers, memorials, preservers of oral traditions, burial sites and as religiously charged artefacts*, they were not static monoliths.²²⁵ Instead, etched with intent, they are conductors. Interactive and conversant, their storied bodies impart and participate in meaning-making as actively now as in the past. The stones incite unearthing and inearthing; contemporary excavation practices—marking, digging, photographing, and cataloguing are curiously analogous to ritual acts of depositing votives, and burying cremated bones in the surroundings.

Massumi's vitality affect and Goldhahn's notion of sympathetic magic are manifest in the liminality of the Gotland picture stones—in them we apprehend the flow of *intercorporeal memory*, the implicit relational knowingness integral to vitality affects.²²⁶ Their scale dislocates and captures our *focal attention* (the eyes drawn into deciphering). Furthermore, their presence galvanises imaging, creating a sensation akin to Massumi's felt-presence or thinking-feeling.

The petroglyphs of Scandinavia are intersubjective and intercorporeal; they resonate with vitality.²²⁷ They are atmospherically affecting, enkindling emotive responses. Fuchs ascribes to these affective responses *bodily-resonance*, which encompass all manner of specific or general bodily sensations.²²⁸ Fuchs argues, “bodily resonance thus acts as the medium of

224. Marianne Hem Eriksen, “Doors to the Dead. The Power of Doorways and Thresholds in Viking Age Scandinavia,” *Archaeological Dialogues* 20, no. 2 (2013): 189, doi:10.1017/S1380203813000238.

225. Alexander Andreeff, “Archaeological Excavations of Picture Stone Sites,” in *Gotland's Picture Stones: Bearers of an Enigmatic Legacy*, ed. Maria Herlin Karnell (Gotland: Gotland Museum, 2012), 143, https://www.academia.edu/2535219/Archaeological_Excavations_of_Picture_Stone_Sites.

226. Fuchs, “Intercorporeality and Interaffectivity,” 196.

227. The Gotland picture stones are petroglyphs, not paintings on stone, though it is thought some of the stones were also highly coloured.

228. Fuchs, 196.

our affective engagement in a situation. It imbues, taints, and permeates the perception of this situation without necessarily stepping into the foreground.”²²⁹ Odour, too, induces bodily resonance or interaffectivity, whereby the body produces chemical and biochemical responses triggered by memories, epigenetic memory, and unmemory, those curiously elicited somatic reactions for which we have no explanation. Fuchs describes such experiences as “bodily kinaesthesia and sensation,” wherein felt perceptions intumescence—swelling up in the act of embrace.²³⁰ While corporeal, the sensation of embracing or embodying transcends bodily experience—touching, we are enfolded within an unutterably affecting encounter. We can only explain these experiences poetically using scent, images, and wording. Applying Nancy's theories of being-with and touch to Fuchs' notion of embodied intercorporeality and interaffectivity enables us to address the interbeingness of the Ancestors.²³¹

Not them and us, or you and I, but kin, whose genealogy is established through interconnection—registered in the silent opening and closing of stone doors.



229. Fuchs, 198.

230. Fuchs, 198.

231. Buddhist Zen master and monk Thich Nhat Hahn is credited with creating the term *Interbeing*. Philosophically, Thich Nhat Hahn's concept of interbeing refers to *mutual beingness*. The concept of interbeing, however, is recognisable in many pre-Christian cosmologies, including Norse cosmic beliefs. In *Being Peace*, Thich Nhat Hahn states, “we have talked about the many in the one, and the one containing the many. In one sheet of paper, we see everything else, the cloud, the forest, the logger. I am; therefore, you are. You are, therefore, I am. That is the meaning of the word ‘interbeing.’ We interare.” Hanh, and Rachel Neumann. *Being Peace*, rev. ed. (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 2005), 87; Describing the experience of interbeing, Monique Potts et al. note, “the experience of interbeing—or a deep, authentic feeling of the continuum between our inner-selves, each other and the natural world—gives a profound sense of interconnectedness.” Potts, Bem Le Hunte, and Katie Ross, “On Learning Interbeing,” *Journal of Transformative Education* 22, no. 1 (2024): 42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/15413446231177632>.



THE POETRY OF FORGETTING

*I have nothing to tell you,
save that it is to you that I tell this nothing.*

Roland Barthes, 1978.²³²

We are aware that what infects us stems from the contagion of forgetting not the wounds of memory. In search of a remedy, we have learned to speak in fragrant tongues, muttering under our breath an arcane herbal charm.

Bergson conjectures that memory is not about looking backwards but forwards since the past, enduring within the present, is forever nearby.²³³ Writing on Bergson, John Mullarkey distinguishes memory (recall) from *pure memory*, arguing, “whereas a recollection actualises the past, pure memory is this past.”²³⁴ If we accept Mullarky’s assertion, we affirm that pure memory is more than representation or similitude. Instead, pure memory is the past, lingering aromatically in our daily lives, much like the living dead and the multitude of Norse entities that guide, disrupt, and distract us, who call and wait impatiently to be appeased. Mullarkey contends, “our past psychical life (of pure memory) is always there; it survives as a whole, pressing forward to regain entry into the present as an actual recollection.”²³⁵ The past is a catalyst in our lives. The Ancestors impress on us the smell of pure memory. Our comprehension of the Ancestors is similar and dissimilar

232. Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*, 157. (Italics ours)

233. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 239–240.

234. John Mullarkey, *Bergson and Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 79.

235. Mullarkey, 79.

to Bergson’s notion of pure memory since we experience the Ancestors as forces acting in the present, not as figments of the past. Mullarky insists that pure memory is attached to the individual, which means we actualise the Ancestors; they do not exist independently of us. However, as we have no memories by which to tether them to us, we conjecture that it is their memories that actualise us. How do we account for memories that attach to us, not ours, but memories emerging from sensory loci, mountains, forests, plants, and soils or from artefacts, human-made objects, and images?²³⁶ And what of dreams? The nebulous memories conjured by the Ancestors induce feelings of *déjà vu* or an overwhelming, yet alien, sense of recognition. Advancing a critique of Bergson’s 1930 essay, *The Possible and the Real*, Benvenuto argues that in Bergson, “human beings become so central, so supreme, that nature itself appears in their likeness.”²³⁷ Benvenuto contends Bergson disparages the existence of chaos, arguing that Bergson’s vision of continuous creation “gives us the image of a dense, solid nature, without the hollows of the void, of the possible, of nothingness, and disorder.”²³⁸ However, Grosz disputes Benvenuto’s critique, noting that Bergson erodes “the stability of fixed objects,” affirming “the vibratory continuity of the material Universe as a whole.”²³⁹ For Grosz, Bergson’s conception of the world is one of continuous movement, a ceaseless change wherein becoming and unbecoming reveal matter’s inherent instability and volatility.²⁴⁰

236. Forest trees transfer molecular memories (epigenetics) to subsequent generations. Trees, being long-lived, are continuously adjusting to their environment. These adjustments are retained in the tree’s memory systems, its physical structure (trunk rings) and, at a molecular level, epigenetically. Ecologists Katharina Bräutigam et al. note that, “during their relatively long lifespans, trees must make developmental adjustments while retaining flexibility to match and synchronise growth and development with prevailing environmental conditions. Epigenetic mechanisms are proposed to contribute to such flexible adjustments by generating transmittable and reversible marks that constitute temporary ‘memory’ systems.” Bräutigam et al., “Epigenetic Regulation of Adaptive Responses of Forest Tree Species to the Environment,” *Ecology and Evolution* 3, no. 2 (2013): 405, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ece3.461>.

237. Sergio Benvenuto, “Bergson and the Horror of the Void,” *Vestigia*, 3, no. 1 (2021): 149, <https://inppjournal.org.uk/volume-3-issue-1-december-2021/>.

238. Benvenuto, 149.

239. Elizabeth Grosz, “Bergson, Deleuze and the Becoming of Unbecoming,” *Parallax* 11, no.2 (2005): 10, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534640500058434>.

240. Grosz, 10.

Notwithstanding Benvenuto's critique, Grosz's elucidation ascribes a protean force to matter—a position which supports our claims that the Ancestors exude a mercurial, molecular, ever-present odour. While ours is a creative reading of Bergson's *Matter and Memory*, pure memory offers a means of conceiving scent memories emitted by the Ancestors as the past persists in the present. Moreover, Zlotnik and Vansintjan hypothesise that memory is dynamic and relational. They propose that "memory is a relationship—where one biological or chemical process is incorporated into another, and changes both in a permanent way."²⁴¹

While Zlotnik and Vansintjan concede that theories surrounding memory formation are contested, their definition accords with ours concerning the transmission of ancestral memories via odours emitted environmentally from organisms and (we argue) via artefacts. Notably, Zlotnik and Vansintjan maintain that for memories to exist, they must be absorbed into a corpus (a body or entity). This view supports the idea that, in their fluid chemical or biological state, memories remain air-borne as quasi-memories. To be able to be recalled, they must be incorporated into a body, which is as likely to be a waterway, forest or cell as an animal.

The question that interests us is: What draws us into relationships with vaporous almost-memories, and why do only some find purchase, binding with us, changing who we are? Equally, how does encountering our odour alter them? In this atmospheric tumult, where some relationships adhere whilst others evaporate—forgotten or are carried off on air currents, we recognise the semiochemical pull of the Ancestors. Perhaps we recognise the efflux of their voices, the hum and funk of odours teetering on the edge of words.²⁴²

Conceiving forgetting as oblivion discloses the profoundness of our loss.²⁴³ Yet, as Proust, Bergson, Zlotnik and Vansintjan affirm, recalling the

²⁴¹. Gregorio Zlotnik, and Aaron Vansintjan, "Memory: An Extended Definition," *Frontiers in Psychology* 10 (2019): 2523, <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02523>.

²⁴². Proust, *Swann's Way*, 25.

²⁴³. Kate Heslop, "Metaphors for Forgetting and Forgetting as Metaphor in Old Norse Poetics," in *Myth, Magic, and Memory in Early Scandinavian Narrative Culture: Studies in Honour of Stephen A. Mitchell*, ed. Jürg Glauser and Pernille Hermann, (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2021), 238.

Ancestors means they have entered us. The Ancestors are not figments of our imagination—they rouse us from our stupor, transforming our thoughts and actions.

*Familial but unfamiliar,
we cling to your odour.*



Figure 2.12. Boat houses by the shore in Källahamn (Källa Harbour) on the island of Öland in the Baltic Sea, Märten Sjöbeck, 1941, film negative, Källahamn, Öland, Sweden, National Swedish, Heritage Board, no known copyright restrictions, https://www.flickr.com/photos/swedish_heritage_board/11981941023/in/dateposted/

The Land of Oblivion

I expel myself; I spit myself out.

Julia Kristeva, 1982.²⁴⁴

Using intersubjective, interaffectivity, intercorporeal, and interbeing *as if* purgatives, we vomit the infestation of Neikos gripping us, hoping to heal the bruised flesh of forgetting.

We accede to the Ancestors, acknowledging them as the bearers of wondrous ken. Encountering them and their vital knowingness has instilled in us an awareness of aromatic poetry. Our geographic and familial dislocation are lacunae, the missing pieces in our narrative. We confront the void within, the cloying register of panic's fettered heart notes. Unmoored—we drift as liminal entities who dwell in imagining. Like pure memory, the liminal imaginary discloses a chaotic world populated by Beings who smell of the past but live inside, amongst, and on us. A *scent-world* once kept at bay by obsessive deodorising, now reveals a body-shaped cavity whose fleshy odour enfolds us in aromas so profound we can only describe them as ineffable. We bathe in your effuvia.

Kristeva reminds us that the abject is neither object nor subject but lingers like a base note, its scent so pungent it burns the back of our throat.



Our porous body, swelling within you, becomes a hybrid Being—an essence that engulfs us—turning us into an aromatic organism.



²⁴⁴. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 3. (Italics ours)

Kristiva writes,

Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either.
A 'something' that I do not recognise as a thing.
A weight of meaninglessness, about which
there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me.²⁴⁵

Melancholy's twin, abjection, thrives on transgression, the mephitic, and tempests. Whilst also founded on taboo, melancholy discloses to the afflicted, as Foldényi professes, a boundlessness born from the "anarchy of existence."²⁴⁶ Abjection, like melancholia, challenges orderliness and, thereby, the status quo; both emerge from separation and longing. Despite our focus on melancholy's self-destructive yearning, we recognise that in their correspondence, the abject and melancholia fold in one upon the other. Inherently pathological, they manifest an instability so deep-rooted that their vitality is often attributed to mania. Blanketed in the abject whiff of melancholy, we survey the vast beyond, where our scent (a longingness) evaporates, joining the vastness of the cosmos. A molecular Universe whose inherent instability Lucretius eloquently describes,

*But neither, as I have shown, is the nature of the world endowed with solid body, since there is void mingled in things; nor yet is it as the void, nor indeed are bodies lacking, which might by chance gather together out of infinite space and overwhelm this sum of things with headstrong hurricane, or bear down on it some other form of dangerous destruction; nor again is there nature of room or space in the deep wanting, into which the walls of the world might be scattered forth; or else they may be pounded and perish by any other force you will. The gate of death then is not shut on sky or sun or earth or the deep waters of the sea, but it stands open facing them with huge vast gaping maw.*²⁴⁷

And in our madness, we smell the Ancestors talking to us.

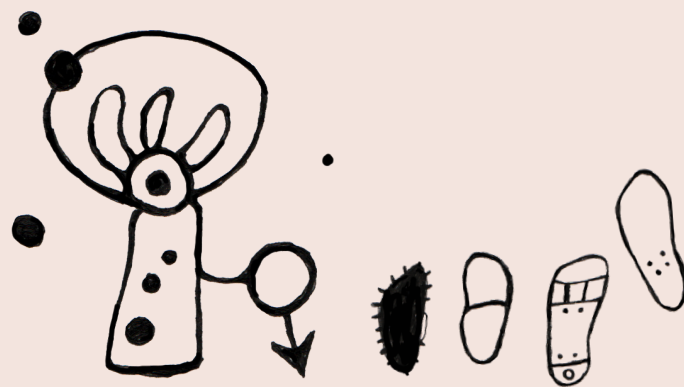
²⁴⁵. Kristeva, 2.

²⁴⁶. Foldényi, *Melancholy*, 321.

²⁴⁷. Bailey, *Lucretius, On the Nature of Things*, Book V, ll, 198. (Italics ours)

We recognise the backwards-fold of time and bow down before Janus-faced guardians, protectors of the liminal sphere—tutelary figures able to simultaneously perceive the future and the past, whose eyes behold darkness in human form. We are like a fire-breathing demon giving birth to itself, reddening the heavens with the blood of Earth and our noisomeness infecting the atmosphere.²⁴⁸ Entering the forest of unmemory, we are confronted by a boneyard: the corpses of trees standing limb-deep in a tide of concrete.

As an antidote to melancholy's biting teeth and gnashing jaws, we fashion talismans, fixing your shadowed image with fingers of light, distilling the essence of your words: protected thus, we willingly surrender to the oblivion of Loving you.



²⁴⁸. *Reddening* is a term frequently used to refer to the blood spilt during ritual sacrifice.

Ligatures of Flesh

I feel that there is much to be said for the Celtic belief that the souls of those whom we have lost are held some inanimate object, and so effectively lost to us until the day (which to many never comes) when we happen to pass by the tree or to obtain possession of the object which forms their prison. Then they start and tremble, they call us by our name, and as soon as we have recognised their voice the spell is broken. We have delivered them: they have overcome death and return to share our life.

Marcel Proust, 1922.²⁴⁹

The harbinger-like chattering of the Ancestors echoes from afar, pervading our dreams. Seeded in death, we are bound together.

Alexandra Sanmark claims that once widespread, *ancestor cults* adhere to the belief that the dead remain active and participate in the lives of the living. Perdurable, the living dead move freely through the world, gathering insights. Accessing their wisdom, however, requires mantic or ritual acts. Sanmark asserts that those who worship the Ancestors believe the dead exist in multiple states. Unlike Christian beliefs, which insist on a single Earthbound soul released at death to enter either heaven or hell, Sanmark notes, “Indigenous religions often feature a pluralistic soul, which means that the soul is seen to represent several spirits and spiritual entities.”²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹. Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way, Remembrance of Things Past, Volume One*, trans. C. K. Scott Moncrieff (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1922), 25. (Italics ours)

²⁵⁰. Alexandra Sanmark, “Living On: Ancestors and the Soul,” in *Signals of Belief in Early England: Anglo-Saxon Paganism Revisited*, eds. Martin Carver, Alexandra Sanmark, and Sarah Semple (Oxford: Oxbow, 2010), 164-165.

Indeed, we adhere to a similar belief. Indeed, some of the Ancestors, our genetic kin, are the living dead. However, the Ancestors are more than the dead; they are flora, fauna, and environmental forces whose breath envelopes us, filling our lungs and drawing us into Earthly kinship.

Acknowledging the Ancestors presence requires more than believing we outlive death. What is needed is a magical world-conception. Yet the word *magical* remains mired in European modernist censure. Indeed, philosopher Charles Taylor suggests,

The decline of the world-view underlying magic was the obverse of the rise of the new sense of freedom and self-possession. From the viewpoint of this new sense of self, the world of magic seems to entail a thralldom, an imprisoning of the self in uncanny external forces, even a ravishing or loss of self.²⁵¹

Ravishment—to be enraptured, intoxicated. Devolving into the numerous—enchanted by the many, we are loosed from the fiction of being an individual. Indeed, embracing a magical world-conception sets us free from *self*-possession, opening us to wonderment, an experience which questions the conclusions upon which our beliefs are founded. It is Rubenstein's contention that wonder reveals, "what is astonishing is that an everyday assumption has suddenly become untenable: the familiar has become strange, throwing even the unquestionable into question."²⁵² Certainty is no longer sovereign.

Comprehending the commonplace as mysterious introduces doubt, for example, the notion that humans are exceptional. Recent research into odour-cued memory in Honeybees conducted by Hanna Zwaka et al. identified that bees experience phases of *deep-sleep*. Deep-sleep is known to promote *memory consolidation* in humans hence, Zwaka et al. conjecture, it is reasonable to assume the same of bees.²⁵³ Furthermore, Honeybee memory research undertaken by Krishna Melnattur et al. suggests that "the existence of replay in deep-sleep indicates that bees might have dream-like experiences

251. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 192.

252. Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder*, 11.

253. Hanna Zwaka et al., "Context Odour Presentation During Sleep Enhances Memory in Honeybees," *Current Biology* 25, no. 21 (2015): 2869, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26592345/>.

analogous to non-REM dreams in humans."²⁵⁴

Recognising the dreaming of Honeybees opens the disquiet of wondering and, as Rubenstein asserts, introduces "a horror at the sudden uncanniness of the everyday."²⁵⁵ While we have no issues recognising dream states in terrestrial vertebrates, animals and birds, we are awed by recent studies demonstrating that arthropods (insects, spiders, and crustaceans), nematodes (worms), and even cnidarians (a phylum containing thousands of species, including sea anemones, corals, and jellyfish) enter sleep-like states. Moreover, in sleeping, they too may *dream*. In fact, Rössler et al. have shown rapid eye movement (REM) sleep occurring in the terrestrial invertebrate, the Jumping spider.²⁵⁶

Dreaming like a spider, we sense a vast undulating web stretching from the past toward the future. In its pulsing fibres, we catch the fragility of knowingness and detect the scent of Bergson's planes of consciousness. Accepting the theory is situated within human lived experience, we are nevertheless attracted by the image Bergson meticulously draws for us: that we might "discover thousands of different planes of consciousness, a thousand integral and yet diverse repetitions of the whole of the experience through which we have lived."²⁵⁷ How can we turn away from such a vision? It seems that Bergson's philosophy produces the exact repercussions of recognition that Massumi attributes to art's vitality affect, akin to the call of asynchronous heartbeats, a repetitive pattern echoing from afar. From these strands, we weave memory's imaginary tapestry whilst simultaneously engaging in the Proustian activity of unpicking ourselves—*our Penelope work of forgetting*.

*The Ancestors,
dislocating
the spine of
time, unearth
us from
forgetting.*

254. Krishna Melnattur et al., "Learning and Memory: Do Bees Dream?" *Current Biology* 25, no. 21 (2015): R1040-R1041, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26528745/>.

255. Rubenstein, 69.

256. Daniela C Rössler et al., "Regularly Occurring Bouts of Retinal Movements Suggest an REM Sleep-like State in Jumping Spiders," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 119, no. 33 (2022): e2204754119, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2204754119>; To view a video of a juvenile jumping spider in REM sleep, see Rössler and Juan Siliezar, "To Sleep, Perchance they Dream?," *The Harvard Gazette*, August 9, 2022, <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2022/08/harvard-researchers-find-rem-sleep-in-jumping-spiders/>.

257. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 241.

Adrift on genealogical seas, we tether ourselves epigenetically to the scent of wood smoke rising from your hearth.²⁵⁸ Investigating how reactions to environmental odours are transferred via epigenetics, researchers Dias and Ressler have concluded that subsequent “generations can inherit information about the salience of specific stimuli in ancestral environments so that their behaviour and neuroanatomy are altered.”²⁵⁹

The smell of you cocooned within us.

Contemplating Bergson’s theory of consciousness, we wonder about the origins of, and our emotional response to, certain odours. The adherence of memory and unmemory to genetic code discloses the complexity of sensory recall—the porosity of personhood and the ability of the Ancestors to reach into and bind themselves to us. We are referring to the outstretched arms of flora, fauna, and environments, their scent, and the memories they conjure, not DNA and the transfer of genes. In the knotwork of deep memory, forgetting, and phantom memory, we forge relationships with bodies, not our own. The ancestral connections established via epigenetics reverberate and magnify under the influence of the paleomammalian cortex, the *limbic system*.

In *A General Theory of Love*, Thomas Lewis et al. state:

The evolution of the limbic brain a hundred million years ago created animals with luminescent powers of emotionality and relatedness, their nervous systems designed to intertwine and support each other like supple strands of a vine.²⁶⁰



258. Epigenetics refers to inherited features (phenotypes or traits) additional to DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). In epigenetics, DNA remains unaltered, only its expression changes. “DNA, or deoxyribonucleic acid, is the hereditary material in humans and almost all other organisms.” *MedlinePlus, National Library of Medicine* (US), “Understanding Genetics,” last modified Jan 19, 2021, <https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/understanding/basics/dna/>.

259. Brian G. Dias, and Kerry J Ressler, “Parental Olfactory Experience Influences Behaviour and Neural Structure in Subsequent Generations,” *Nature Neuroscience* 17, no. 1 (2014): 96, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3923835/>.

260. Thomas Lewis, Fari Amini, and Richard Lannon, *A General Theory of Love* (New York: Vintage, 2000), 191.

The limbic system involves primordial parts of the brain, emotions, and memory, critical to mammalian survival.²⁶¹ Though shared across species, these brain functions are poorly understood. As Lewis et al. explain, “Relationships, ..., are fantastic concatenations of limbic energies. Humanity has had eons to become familiar with these ancient forces, but today it seems we apprehend their essence less than ever.”²⁶² In Bergson’s vision of consciousness, we apprehend the intersecting planes of the limbic system, epigenetics, and the curious inter-folding of memory, unmemory, and imagination. We sense the magnitude of Nancy’s being-with, which Rubenstein declares is *touching-thinking*.²⁶³

Yet, how does touching-thinking bring us into contact with the ineffable?

Through wonder? Llewelyn contends that:

Wonder knows no way out from the unordinariness of the most ordinary. There is no escaping it, because the attempt to escape by explaining the unfamiliar presents us with something familiar in its stead, which, however, is again utterly strange.²⁶⁴

Thaumazein, according to Llewelyn, is both near and far, the abyss between mountains, a passageway. Wonder, concealed in revelation, tethers us to the memory of forgetting. It mesmerises us, leaving us wonder-struck by the paradox of how remarkable the unremarkable is. Having fallen into Lovingness with the strangely ordinary, we apprehend how Magic’s reality-system, *the ineffable*, is sufficiently intoxicating to (un)work Technic’s destructive language.

261. Limbic resonance is described by Lewis et al. as “a symphony of mutual exchange and internal adaptation whereby two mammals become attuned to each other’s inner states.” In the limbic brain, there are powerful *Attractors* which Lewis et al. describe thus, “every person broadcasts information about their inner world. As a collection of dense matter betrays its presence through electromagnetic emissions, a person’s emotional Attractors manifest themselves in a radiant aura of limbic tones.” Lewis, Amini, and Lannon, *A General Theory of Love*, 62 and 169.

262. Lewis, Amini, and Lannon, 204.

263. Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder*, 122.

264. Llewelyn, “On the Saying,” 54.



Magic and Molecules

In Magic's world every instance of becoming is at once just that, perishable and decaying, while at the same time also partaking of eternity.

Federico Campagna, 2019.²⁶⁵

With soft accents of grief, your perfume spins its sticky web. We have fallen under the spell of wonder—dreaming spiders, sleeping sea anemones, and the peculiar magnetism of birds, moths, and bees.

Denouncing Technic's hegemony as the driver of humanity's crushing global footprint, Campagna calls for a magical hypostasis, sketching a cosmology of the ineffable. Technic's reality, founded on continuous production, promotes Earth as a limitless resource for human consumption. Similarly, it envisions Earth's Moon and the planet Mars as exploitable assets. In opposition to this worldview, Campagna proposes the reality-system, *Magic*. While late modernist perspectives of magic focus on its manipulative and mimetic potential, the Magic reality-system espoused by Campagna offers a *restorative*, able to oppose the *absolute-language* of Technic. Campagna suggests, "we can name it only as 'the ineffable'—that which cannot be captured by language in any form."²⁶⁶ Conceiving magic in this way advances an understanding aligned, at least in part, with Rudolf Otto's mystical numen or wholly other. Though Otto's concept is based on the *holy* (worship of a deity), not magic, their description of the unutterable phenomenon is akin to Campagna's. Otto claims the numen is "perfectly sui generis and irreducible to any other; and therefore, like every absolutely primary and elementary datum, while it admits of being discussed, it cannot be strictly

²⁶⁵. Campagna, *Technic and Magic*, 545. (Italics ours)

²⁶⁶. Campagna, 208.

defined."²⁶⁷ Placing Magic's reality-system outside the bounds of descriptive language loosens it from the concrete fist of late-stage capitalism.

We are drawn to the ineffable because theories concerning it strive to re-establish an elemental and overwhelming connection to *something* far more significant than ourselves. Too momentous to be expressed with words, the ineffable returns magic to its pectoral home: the heart and chest—so that we might breathe the poetics of smell and scent. The ineffable materialises in the evanescence of odour, giving rise to awe and wonder. In this wonderstruck state, we perceive the boundless, intersecting web of the Universe. Bergson imagines planes of consciousness; we discern a volatile molecular exchange, the being-with and touching of matter.²⁶⁸

From the shared interiority of breath, we communicate in vapours. Ours is an interpenetrating language borne of coagulating bodies of saliva, blood, and vomit; the fragrance of the Mead of Poesy, an oddly, aromatic poetry, capable of drawing pictures with air.²⁶⁹

*Devoured by the hugar skógr, the mind forest, we lose the power of speech.*²⁷⁰

In the (super)natural genealogies of Old Norse cosmologies we detect a similarity to Campagna's Magical hypostasis. Parallel to Campagna's assertion

²⁶⁷. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W Harvey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926), 8.

²⁶⁸. Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 241.

²⁶⁹. Icelandic Literature scholar Brynja Þorgeirsdóttir declares: "If the kennings can be viewed as 'repositories' of knowledge and 'points of access' to the knowledge structures of the Old Norse poets and their audience, they offer a clear indication that this particular cultural group explicitly conceived of emotion and cognition through a chest-centred, or pectoral, model of the mind." Þorgeirsdóttir, "The Head, the Heart, and the Breast: Bodily Conceptions of Emotion and Cognition in Old Norse Skaldic Poetry" *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 15 (2019): 48, <https://doi.org/10.1484/J.VMS.5.118630>.

²⁷⁰. Þorgeirsdóttir states, "Rudolf Meissner lists roughly sixty kennings for the breast. The base words used are numerous. One series rests on the concept of land or ground (such as láð, vangr, tún, rein, strönd, or fjörðr), and paths (braut or stigr) as well as the cosmos (heimr or veröld). Most commonly, however, the base word references a house or other human abode, such as holl, rann, salr, hof, tjald, and borg. The breast is also featured as a ship (knorr, nökkvi, and byrði)." Ten of these kennings are determined by Hugar (mind, thought, temperament, emotions, disposition, courage, passion). Many relate Hugar to topography, one kenning refers to the mind as a forest. Þorgeirsdóttir, "The Head, the Heart, and the Breast," 43–44.



that Magic's reality-system necessitates the adoption of an entirely different vocabulary, the language of *As If*, Old Norse Icelandic mythic traditions tells us of the Mead of Poesy.²⁷¹ The ingredients that make up this magical brew are like the cosmologies that gave rise to it, unusual.²⁷² Within the pantheon of Old Norse gods we encounter two clans, the *Æsir* and *Venir*.²⁷³ They battle for supremacy, reaching an unstable peace until Ragnarök, the foretold Doom of the gods. Seeking to resolve their conflict, they pool their bodily fluids. Spitting into a cauldron, they merge their essential substance, combining the guttural utterance of breath with saliva to create wisdom, whose name is Kvasir. The too-wise Kvasir is slain by the *dverg*, who brew from the blood of knowledge the honey-scented Mead of Poesy—a potent form of cultural memory.

Poetry is, therefore, composed of bodily fluids and the secretions of flowers pollinated by Honeybees.²⁷⁴ The Mead of Poesy is the liquor of the gods and can, thus, transform mere words flowing from the chest into sageness. It could be argued that this idea contradicts the proposition that magic's dominion lies beyond words. Though the ineffable is indescribable, Campagna's position is one of challenge; it is the absolute-language employed by *Technic* (or late-stage capitalist societies) that ascribes to everything its value based on its use as a resource, tangible and intangible, that Campagna is questioning. Consequently, Magic's reality-system requires the adoption of a wholly different worldview, voiced through

271. The philosophy of *As If* is attributed to German philosopher Hans Vaihinger (1852–1933), who's Theoretical Fictionalism argues fiction or how things appear is indispensable to human cognition. Vaihinger explains that concepts and theories (fictions) enable us to negotiate the world *as if* they were verifiable truths. See Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of 'As If': A System of the Theoretical, Practical and Religious Fictions of Mankind*, trans. C. K. Ogden (London: Routledge, 1935), <https://archive.org/details/in.ernet.dli.2015.188061>.

272. Campagna, *Technic and Magic*, 501–522.

273. While academics differ on how best to differentiate the two tribal deities, cosmology records their deep antagonism and antipathy.

274. Biotechnology researchers Tahereh Eteraf-Oskouei and Moslem Najafi state: "Honey is a by-product of flower nectar and the upper aero-digestive tract of the Honeybee, which is concentrated through a dehydration process inside the beehive. Honey has a very complex chemical composition that varies depending on the botanical source. It has been used both as food and medicine since ancient times. Human use of honey is traced to some 8000 years ago as depicted by Stone Age paintings." Eteraf-Oskouei and Najafi, "Traditional and Modern Uses of Natural Honey in Human Diseases: A Review," *Iranian Journal of Basic Medical Sciences* 16, no. 6 (2013): 731, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3758027/>.

the language of *As If*.²⁷⁵ Embracing this idea, we venture that the primary language of our magical world-conception is odiferous—carried by and formed from odour. Indeed, *words* formed from breath are carriers of scent.

Campagna warns us that in the descriptive language of *Technic*, words are powerful and suggests that upon adopting Magic's reality-system, we must engage with them cautiously, questioning their meaning and the worldview they reinforce. Campagna illustrates this idea by referring to the resistance writing of Ernst Jünger's *der Waldgang* (*the Forest Passage*) in which, Campagna asserts, "Jünger suggested that the only possible response to our contemporary world consisted in 'withdrawing to the forest'"²⁷⁶ In this instance, the forest is metaphoric and represents, according to Campagna, "the ineffable wilderness that lies in one's own heart."²⁷⁷ Whilst this appeal is not at odds with our own, we experience the forest as a mercurial, vital Beingness, not one Being but an intergenerational community of Beings, co-existing in familial and communicative connectivity. The forest is a liminality with the power to still words, replacing them with the changeling languages of vegetal life that propagates in the abundant organic matter of decomposition, moisture, and sunlight. A shapeshifter: a single tree may become host to a complex epiphytic, liana, and arboreal micro-environment, or it may appear in miniature as a vibrant jungle growing in drains, taking root in cracks on buildings, sidewalks, and spouting.²⁷⁸

For this reason, we are re-attuning ourselves by scenting, responding physiologically to the perceptible and imperceptible semiochemical language of plants.²⁷⁹ Their odiferous tongues, altering moment by moment,

275. Campagna, 500.

276. Campagna, 519–520.

277. Campagna, 520.

278. Epiphytic, liana, and arboreal refer to the plants and animals that thrive in habitats created by a forest's canopy, its overstory. Liana refers to a way of growing, not a plant. Liana are parasitic trees and plants that grow on other trees, creating crossings between trees that allow arboreal animals to move from tree to tree without leaving the canopy.

279. We refer to the volatile-mediated communications of semiochemistry and phytochemistry between animals and plants. Researcher Deidre Tronson states there are three primary means by which odours are detected in animals. The first is the *main olfactory bulb*, the vomeronasal organ (VNO), which "in most animals is a pouch in the upper part of the nose containing a patch of sensory epithelium." However, in humans, the VNO is a small slit. Tronson suggests that there is "some dispute between researchers as to whether it is vestigial or whether we

hold us spellbound. Being *sui generis* (of their own kind), smellscape are fugacious and affecting. We use the stabilising influence of Patchouli, Oakmoss, and Sandalwood to capture the efluxing scent of our conversations. Nevertheless, it is a fictive form of control since all atmospheric narratives inevitably succumb to the mutability of their heart. While the alchemical medium of perfumery allows us to fleetingly possess and share our stilted translations, the Ancestors converse in feral atmospheric tongues, their penetrating odours curiously persuasive. We cannot express these scents; their lingering aromas leave us speechless—we are enveloped by a hauntingly atmospheric magic—the hybrid molecular dancing of the Ancestors.



Helix carocolla

respond to its stimulation at a subconscious level.” The VNO sends signals to the second means for detecting odours, the *accessory olfactory bulb* (behind the main olfactory bulb) linked to the amygdala, responsible for reproduction and feeding behaviours. The third primary means of odour detection is the trigeminal nerve, “responsible for sensations of touch, movement, pain and temperature being relayed from the facial and head areas to the brain,” which responds to olfactory information. These primary odour receptors translate semiochemical signals the body receives in ways often unrelated to experiencing odours as *aromas*. Tronson concludes, “there is still a puzzling array of interactions, cross-relationships and enigmas in the semiochemical world of animals, plants, and their environment.” Tronson, “The Odour, The Animal and The Plant,” *Molecules* 6, no. 2 (2001): 109 and 113, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6236405/>.

The Growth of Crystals and the Formation of Galaxies

This, then, is what I take a ‘kinship system’ to be: a manifold of intersubjective participations, founded on mutualities of being.

Marshall Sahlins, 2011.²⁸⁰

Their dreams give birth to us.

In scent, we experience the tacit communication of implicit relational knowing, the murmuring of the Ancestors. Their odours provoke complex emotional responses, kin to Massumi’s notion of felt-presence—the reach and hold of art’s vitality affect. They are indescribably personal, registering as concatenations, mysterious essences tangling with molecular substances. Coalescing in clothes, houses, and soils or saturating the atmosphere, appearing more auratic than olfactory, even phantom. We recognise their familial funk as *genealogical memories*. The Ancestors hold us spellbound, caught in fragrant fractal patterns—kinship’s crystalline structures.

The understanding of genealogy we ascribe to is vaporous and mutable, bound to and unbound from genetics. It joins us, through the passages of memory and unmemory, to environments, flora and fauna, narratives, and objects. The Ancestors are pervasive. In their presence and under their tutelage, we are exposed to their fragrant embrace, a distinct form of recall homologous to a forest canopy of *mythological memories* fanning outward from the axis mundi, the world tree—Yggdrasil.²⁸¹ Undertaking this

280. Sahlins, “What Kinship Is (Part One),” 10. (Italics ours)

281. The Old Norse spelling of Yggdrasil has two ll’s. Yggdrasill is the cosmic tree of

research, we chose to bed our ideas in the ken of our Nordic antecedents because of their anecdotal familiarity. Our mother, tracing their lineage to the Hanseatic fortified town of Visby, on Gotland, claimed descent from Vikings. Indeed, our great-grandfather Karl Pettersson's tale tells of a boy who, at eleven, ran away to sea with his older brother; sailing the world, they eventually made their way to Aotearoa. While we pay homage to our genetic Ancestors, our pursuit is unearthing their ken, not our Norse ancestry. As an approach, it is broad; we glean theories as if raw materials, mixing them into the perfume of ideas. Guided by the Ancestors, whose existence forms the foundation of our magical world-conception, we are *Conjuring Tomorrow*.

Concluding this, the first leaf of our trefoil, we contemplate fractal notions of personhood bound to a fluid understanding of genealogy, vulnerable connections that hold us in place becoming memory, unmemory, and imagination—the liminal imaginary.²⁸²

Paradoxically, those living within late-stage capitalism, though striving to individuate themselves, are increasingly the subjects of social networks. The demands of belonging to these networks manifest in psychosocial pressure to devolve the self into multiple identities. In *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, Charles Taylor argues that *selfhood* is the narrative of identity we compose from lived experience.²⁸³ This view allows for multiple, intertwined, narrative selves. In 1976 Marriott proffered a theory of distributed personhood derived from social connection.²⁸⁴

pre-Christian Norse; as the axis mundi it holds up the Universe.

282. André suggests, “oral culture was never only oral, since oral traditions were usually based on and interacting with the material world around humans, for instance, landscapes, monuments, settlements, and objects. It is also important to emphasise that different forms of memory existed. Some memories related to the recent past (e.g., genealogical memories), others to the distant past (e.g., mythical memories). Besides, some memories can best be described as non-discursive practical memories. These include bodily memories, memories people usually internalised as children, for instance, how a scythe was used in hay-making or how a pot was made from clay.” André, “Places, Monuments, and Objects: The Past in Ancient Scandinavia,” *Scandinavian Studies* 85, no. 3 (2013): 269, <https://doi.org/10.5406/scanstud.85.3.0267>.

283. Charles Taylor, *Making of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 47.

284. Marriott's dividual hypothesis was preceded by French anthropologist Louis Dumont's 1950's comparative studies of European and Indian notions of personhood. See Karl Smith, “From Dividual and Individual Selves to Porous Subjects,” *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*

Studying Hindu perceptions of personhood, Marriott proposed the concept of *dividualism*, based on notions of body porosity, achieved through socially exchanged *substance codes* (such as knowledge, blood, or food). The passage of these substances, their familial and communal interchange, constitutes personhood, unlike the *bordered self* commonly attributed to European perceptions of self.²⁸⁵

Similarly, Strathern advanced the theory of partible persons whereby dividual identities fluctuate under the influence of social relations.²⁸⁶ Strathern's theory aimed to establish a broader concept of personhood than that offered by Marriott. Indeed, social anthropologists Alice Street and Jacob Copeman suggest Strathern's theory “might better (if still inadequately) specify the ways in which people in Melanesia imagine themselves as being connected and disconnected from one another, and in turn disrupt understandings of Euro-American sociality.”²⁸⁷ Expanding dividualism still further, academics Fernanda Bruno and Pablo Manolo Rodríguez present an image of the biotechnical dividual, asserting, “our behaviours and relations (with oneself, with others, and with objects) are closer to what we shall call ‘the dividual’ than to the individual, especially in light of the experiences mediated by biotechnologies, applications, social networks, and digital platforms.”²⁸⁸ Personhood, we can conclude, is, by degrees, fluid.

Affixing agency to art and artefacts, Gell extrapolates Strathern's theory of the partible self whereby the self gives off “particles of their own coded substances-essences, residues, or other active influences that may then reproduce in others something of the nature of the persons in whom they

23, no. 1 (2012): 50–64, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1757-6547.2012.00167.x>.

285. The idea of dividuals and individuals is well established in anthropology. Anthropologist Karl Smith notes, “the individual is thus monadic, while the dividual is fractal; the individual is atomistic, while the dividual is always socially embedded.” Smith, “From Dividual and Individual,” 53.

286. Marilyn Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift: Problems with Women and Problems with Society in Melanesia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 235.

287. Alice Street, and Jacob Copeman, “Social Theory After Strathern: An Introduction,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 31, no. 2–3 (2014): 12, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/epub/10.1177/0263276413508153>.

288. Fernanda Bruno, and Pablo Manolo Rodríguez, “The Dividual: Digital Practices and Biotechnologies,” *Theory, Culture and Society* 39, no. 3 (2022): 27, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764211029356>.



have originated.”²⁸⁹ Gell advocates for personhood as constituted through a milieu of influences, including objects and events from which agency and identity derive. Personhood is, therefore, an amalgam of relationships, some of which emerge from encounters with coded substances-essences, but others are external, intangible, magical—existing after death. Gell muses,

Seen in this light, a person and a person’s mind are not confined to particular spatio-temporal coordinates, but consist of a spread of biographical events and memories of events, and a dispersed category of material objects, traces, and leavings, which can be attributed to a person and which, in aggregate, testify to agency and patienthood during a biographical career which may, indeed, prolong itself long after biological death.²⁹⁰

Further varying the concept of dividualism, Fowler has proposed *fractal thinking* and *fractal relations* as a theory for understanding how pre-Christian European societies, may have, perceived personhood.²⁹¹ While acknowledging that the etymology of *fractal* is the Latin word *broken* or *fractus*—to fracture, Fowler notes, fractals are also patterns. These self-replicating patterns, expanding and contracting, disclose the structure of the microcosmos. Indeed, fractal patterns admit the depth of our binding to the Universe.

Fowler proposes that:

The human body does not emerge as something entirely distinct from the rest of the world, but as composed out of the same essences as other bodies – the bodies of humans, animals, plants and the landscape itself – often too of spiritual beings.²⁹²

289. Strathern, *The Gender of the Gift*, 348.

290. Gell, 222.

291. Fowler states: “Roy Wagner (1991) coined the term the ‘fractal person’ to convey this translation across scales and consider socio-political differences in how ‘big men’ and ‘great men’ stood with respect to such acts of translation.” Wagner’s original concept positioned the dividual within sets of relationships. A view of personhood akin to Russian Matryoshka (stacking) dolls—whereby inside each doll a smaller doll exists. Accordingly, personhood is simultaneously constituted of a whole and from (smaller, fractal) parts, ie., person, family, clan. Fowler, “Fractal Bodies in the Past and Present,” in *Past Bodies: Body-Centred Research in Archaeology*, ed. Dušan Borić and John Robb (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2008), 48, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv13pk5rd.9>.

292. Fowler, 48.

Fractal relations, therefore, reveal our enchainments or bindings. Fowler offers a clay pot analogy: clay is linked to creation, which corresponds to flesh; through flesh, we establish kinship and, by extension, connection to place or topography. Further, topography is linked to (super)natural entities and, via these extraordinary forces, to mythic narratives of the cosmos. A clay pot is, therefore, a vessel through which vital essences and relationships flow. Enchainments are the narrative routes or passages for the dispersal of essences. According to Fowler, fractal relations address “the messy, substantial, growing and decaying matter of the body.”²⁹³ This concept reflects our contention that kinship and genealogy are vaporous, and in their release, vital essences swirls around us, flowing into memory and pooling in forgetting.

In Bergson’s theory of *élan vital* we also encounter a notion of divisions applicable to our understanding of fractal relations. Gilles Deleuze (1925 - 1995) makes the point that *élan vital* is *differentiation unfolding within duration*.²⁹⁴ Explaining that “it proceeds by dissociation and bifurcation; it is at one with the movement of differentiation.”²⁹⁵ Deleuze concludes that *élan vital* is infinite. Considering this explanation, we wonder how Bergson’s view of vitality, the internal dynamics of duration, could be applied to the fecund Ancestors in whose embrace we unravel. If duration is fundamentally creative, it must self-seed. Indeed, Suzanne Guerlac suggests Bergson initially advanced a fundamental divergence amongst “living beings, in which time penetrates matter, and things.” Later, however, the philosopher conceived “the force of time as duration (figured as the *élan vital*) ... extending its reach throughout the biosphere.”²⁹⁶ Thus, *élan vital* is an impetus, an energy that sparks dissociation and bifurcation or, as Guerlac suggests, the force of time. It is a force, one could argue, primarily concerned with the living because it assumes the movement of time does not affect the dead. Yet, we know the deceased live on. In our creative reading of Bergson, we apprehend the binding of the living to the

293. Fowler, 48.

294. Gilles Deleuze, and Bryn Loban, “Lecture Course on Chapter Three of Bergson’s, *Creative Evolution*,” *SubStance* 36, no. 3 (2007): 74, <http://doi.org/10.1353/sub.2007.0040>.

295. Deleuze, and Loban, 87.

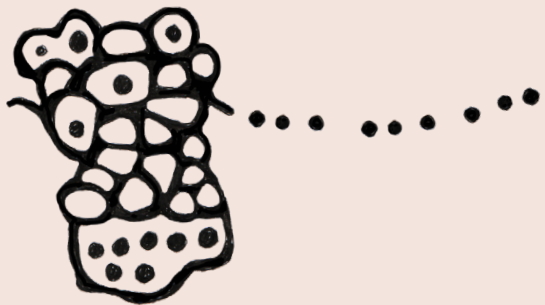
296. Suzanne Guerlac’s roundtable contribution is captured in Mark William Westmoreland, and Brien Karas, “Bergson(-ism) Remembered: A Roundtable,” *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 24, no. 2 (2016): 227, <https://doi.org/10.5195/jffp.2016.778>.

dead because fractal relations are fundamentally unfolding patterns, which disclose our composition from other bodies and the passage of their essences through us. In breaking down, we are reconstituted, part of the ceaseless transformation of the Universe. As Deleuze describes—it is differentiation unfolding that creates duration. Therefore, we interpret Bergson's statement in *Creative Evolution* as an affirmation of the transmutation of continuance,

It is consciousness, or rather supra-consciousness, that is at the origin of life. Consciousness, or supra-consciousness, is the name for the rocket whose *extinguished fragments fall back as matter*; consciousness, again, is the name for that which subsists of the rocket itself, passing through the fragments and lighting them up into organisms. *But this consciousness, which is a need of creation, is made manifest to itself only where creation is possible.*²⁹⁷

For our theory to stand, the consciousness to which Bergson refers must be that of the Universe rather than human consciousness. A consciousness so bound within the molecular anatomy of existence that it is ineffable, *unutterably affecting*—atomic memory. Extinguished, we *fall to Earth* as circumambient vapours and dust, *elemental matter*.

Being fractal, we exist relationally. The limina of intergenerational dislocation, broken apart and recast—we are the restless seed of wind-borne Ancestors. Anthropologist Victor Turner claims that in liminality “there is an instant of pure potentiality when everything trembles in the balance.”²⁹⁸



297. Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. by Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911), 479–80. (Italics ours)

298. Victor Turner, “Liminal to Liminoid, in Play, Flow, and Ritual: An Essay in Comparative Symbolology,” *Rice Institute Pamphlet - Rice University Studies* 60, no. 3 (1974): 75, <https://hdl.handle.net/1911/63159>.

Abjection, too, lays bare the fiction of the inviolable body. In theorising the *abject*, Kristeva inearths bodily existence, drawing, with words, a poignant image of self-dissolution. With the salt-laden tongue of an unrecognisable, barely perceptible grief, Kristeva asks:

*How can I be without border? That elsewhere that I imagine beyond the present, or that I hallucinate so that I might, in a present time, speak to you, conceive of you—it is now here, jetted, abjected, into “my” world. Deprived of world, therefore, I fall in a faint. In that compelling, raw, insolent thing in the morgue’s full sunlight, in that thing that no longer matches and therefore no longer signifies anything, I behold the breaking down of a world that has erased its borders: fainting away.*²⁹⁹

The aromatic presence of the Ancestors is neither subject nor object but environmental. *Aromatospherically*, we dissolve and once again disclose our similarity to Penelope, whose tears, Homer recounts, “flowed and their face melted as the snow melts on the lofty mountains.”³⁰⁰

Scholar Peter Kelly, addressing the porous body in Antiquity, asserts, “the fluid body presents a fundamental challenge to perception, which leads to a multiplication of shifting perspectives and the potential for knowledge itself to collapse.”³⁰¹ While this elemental liquefaction echoes Kristeva’s abject, Kelly’s concept of disintegrating bodies takes root in the primal chaos of Ovid’s eighth-century mythopoetic *Metamorphoses*, which recounts transformations into animals, plants, and trees. Classicist Leo Curran suggests, “Ovid forces us to recognise fluidity, the breaking down of boundaries, lack of restraint, the imminent potentiality of re-version

299. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror, An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 4. (Italics ours)

300. Homer, and Augustus Taber Murray, *The Odyssey* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), Book 19, lines 190–210.

301. Peter Kelly, “Tears and the Leaky Vessel: Permeable and Fluid Bodies in Ovid and Lucretius,” in *Bodily Fluids in Antiquity*, eds. Mark Bradley, Victoria Leonard, and Laurence Totelin (Oxford: Routledge, 2021), 267.

to chaos.”³⁰² Conjuring a chaotic and fluid conception of the world, the *Metamorphoses* affirm bodies are ever-changing and inherently unstable; they transform. The muttered incantations of the Ancestors evaporate like Penelope’s tears dissolve and disperse their body. Breathing in, the volatile tones of your existence mingle with our weeping.

*We are eigi einhamr, shapeshifters, fluid beings who catch the wind’s ebb and flow. You enter us, crossing bodily thresholds. Yawning, we swallow your magic, a hugr, a forerunner whose form, appearing in our dreams, takes possession of us.*³⁰³

Each breath, a threshold moment—dissolving all we once knew. Untethered from genealogical connection, we have affixed ourselves to you—rewriting ourselves. In the liminal imaginary, we encounter the smell of the Universe and recognise its scent as your touch.

Propelled toward an uncertain future, we are fractal—the crystalline patterns of exploding stars.

302. Leo C. Curran, “Transformation and Anti-Augustanism in Ovid’s ‘Metamorphoses,’” *Arethusa* 5, no. 1 (1972): 88, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26307007>.

303. There are notable forms of Beingness: *hugr*, *hamr*, *fylgja*, and *hamingjur*. *Hugr* is variously attributed to disposition or attitude and may appear as an animal, such as a wolf or bear, as the personification of Beingness. In the poem *Hávamál* (c. 900 - 1000 CE), *hugr* is described as, inner being. Þorgeirsdóttir states, “It is indeed most plausible that *hugr* is best understood as an overarching hypernym that can assume and entail many meanings of subordinate terms (hyponyms) all connoting a state of mind, disposition, or direction of one’s thoughts as well as cognitive abilities. Its semantic range includes the meanings of the modern English hyponymic concepts of ‘feeling’ or ‘emotion’ but exceeds those categories by including cognitive qualities, such as intelligence, will, and memory.” Þorgeirsdóttir, “The Head, the Heart,” 40; *Hamr*, in contrast, is considered an outer being, a coat, shell, or form suited to shapeshifting, occupying the skin of another. Ármann Jakobsson argues that *hamr* is “a volatile entity that can be lost, stolen or transformed.” Jakobsson, “Watch Out for the Skin Deep: Medieval Icelandic Transformations,” *Arts*, 12, no. 1, (2022): 4, <https://doi.org/10.3390/arts12010005>; In comparison, a *fylgja* is a guardian spirit that often appears at birth and, like *hugr*, can take the form of a bear or another significant animal. If appearing in human form, *fylgja* are most frequently female. As tutelary Beings, they precede their ward, taking the role of watcher—but are also known as shadow-followers who augur future events. In contrast, *hamingjur* is a spectral personification of luck. Both *fylgja* and *hamingjur* tend to be intergenerational. One might bequeath or receive *hamingjur* through being given the name of an eponymous ancestor.

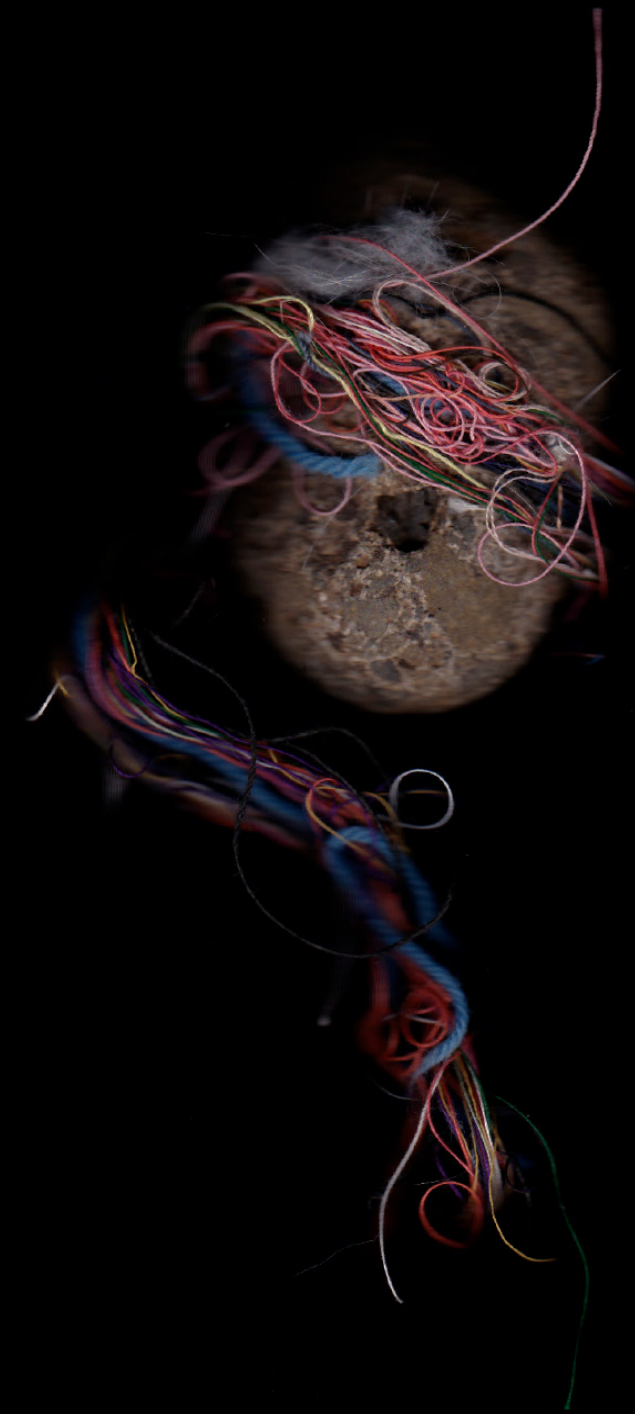
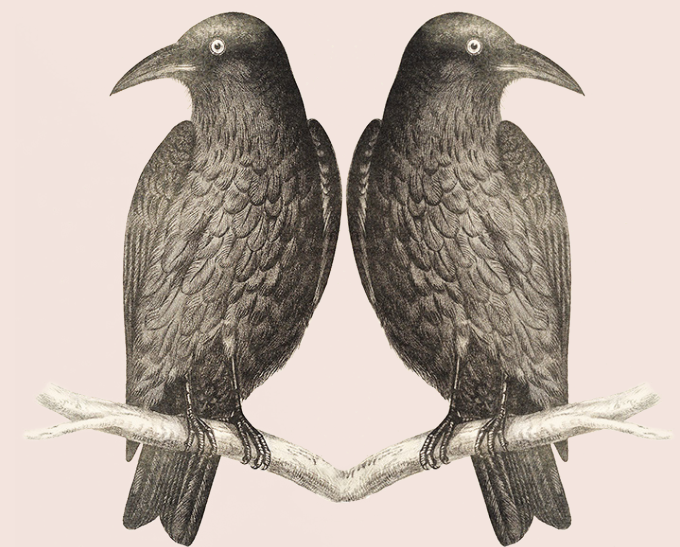


Figure 2.13. *Talisman*, Susan Jowsey, 2023, cameraless photograph, collection artist’s own.

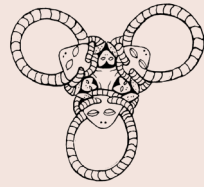


FOIL 2 = A MAGICAL WORLD-CONCEPTION



Raven

Figure 2.14. Karl Pettersson, our great-grandfather, born in 1858 in Visby, Gotland, and died in 1941 in Auckland, Aotearoa, New Zealand, Susan Jowsey, 2024, digital collage, collection artist's own.



FOIL 2

The magical world-conception underpinning this research discloses a theory of the cosmos divined through the liminal imaginary, wonder, and primogenitor ken—the volatile scent of the Ancestors.

Art always has to do with cosmogony, but it exposes cosmogony for what it is: necessarily plural, diffracted, discreet, a touch of colour or tone, an agile turn of phrase or folded mass, a radiance, a scent, a song, or a suspended movement, exactly because it is the birth of a world (and not the construction of a system). A world is always as many worlds as it takes to make a world.

Jean-Luc Nancy, 2000.³⁰⁴

Formulating a *magical world-conception* requires fundamentally reassessing our understanding of the world.

On July 20th, 1969, a grainy black-and-white broadcast beamed from space showed Neil Armstrong stepping onto the Moon's powdery surface—an archetypal image of *modern humanity*. The Space Race became part of the perennial narrative of European expansionism and conquest—the heavens as frontier, *terra incognita*.³⁰⁵ Rubenstein, in *Above Us, Only Sky*, underscores

304. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 14-15. (Italics ours); Cosmogony refers to: “A doctrine or myth about the origin of the universe. The word is used esp. of the speculations of the early Greek philosophers and also of the pagan mythologies.” *Oxford Reference online*, “cosmogony,” accessed October 12, 2024, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095641411>; Cosmology is the “The world view and belief system of a community based upon their understanding of order in the universe.” *Oxford Reference online*, “cosmology,” accessed October 12, 2024, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095641437>; Though these two words refer to different cosmic conversations, we have chosen to use cosmology in our writing as we are referring to world-conception. Similarly, we refer to Norse cosmology even when discussing mythic narratives because they are the beliefs of our genetic Ancestors.

305. Smithsonian, “What Was the Space Race?” National Air and Space Museum, Aug

the notion hypothesised by historian Mircea Eliade (1907 - 1986) that when one nation seizes and lays claim to the territory occupied by another, it is rationalised as a “cosmogonic act” whereby “the conquerors act like their gods, turning the ‘chaos’ of the discovered land into an ordered cosmos.”³⁰⁶

Walking into deep waters, we look back, catching your scent, we breathe you in. Bending at the knee, we submerge ourselves in your current near where the estuary tilts toward the slanting sun. Like the Pātiki mohoao or Black flounder, we wait, camouflaged, slowly expelling bubbling rivulets of air, awake to an uncommon and mysterious world.

Once, we described our imaginings as intuition until our grandmother named it *magic*.



Unnamed fungus

23, 2023, <https://airandspace.si.edu/stories/editorial/what-was-space-race>. In *What Was the Space Race?* we read, “The Space Race began as an arms race between the respective militaries of the United States and the Soviet Union. World War II had demonstrated to the world that rocket technology would drive modern warfare, and as such the U.S. and Russia locked themselves in a race to have the most superior technology. As technology advanced and powerful intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) were developed by both countries, the arms race gave way to another race—the Space Race”; Rubenstein states, “‘Space,’ in other words, is a means toward earthly sovereignty. But it is also an end in itself: a vast, perhaps infinite, three-dimensional ‘frontier’ filled with lands that humans might use and inhabit, expanding the terrain of the earth itself. In short, the Apollo missions that laid the groundwork for today’s Space Force assumed the mantle of the long Western colonial adventure, simultaneously securing US dominion over earth and sky.” Rubenstein, “Above Us, Only Sky,” in *Image: Three Inquiries in Technology and Imagination*, ed. Mark C. Taylor, Mary-Jane Rubenstein, and Thomas Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021.), 126-7.

306. Rubenstein, “Above Us, Only Sky,” 136; Referring to Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. Willard R. Trask (London: Routledge, 1955).

AN OSMIC-COSMOLOGY

Cosmology, one of the oldest disciplines-and perhaps the least disciplined of all-provides the core of our world view. It must be recalled, however, that there is not a single cosmology, just as there is not a single world-view.

Mario Bunge, 1962.³⁰⁷

*A petrochemical child,
Consuming Earth's ancient biomass,
With lungs of smoke, we breathe
Promethean fire.
Ablaze in the forest of time.*

From a European perspective, world-conception, like cosmology, seeks to explain personal or socio-cultural beliefs about the Universe, which are presented in abstract, eclectic, scientific, or poetic forms—metanarratives unfolding human hypotheses about the origins of the cosmos. Social anthropologist Joy Hendry alleges world-conceptions are vital to communicating sublunary and numinous knowledge. Hendry declares cosmological narratives are,

Broad ideas and explanations which people have about the world in which they live and their place in that world. These include ideas about the creation of the world, or the arrival of the people in question into

307. Mario Bunge, "Cosmology and Magic," *The Monist* 47, no. 1 (1962): 116, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27901496>. (Italics ours)

that world. They include notions of other worlds, worlds from which they may believe they have come, and to which they go after death in this world, or indeed during transcendental experiences in this world.³⁰⁸

We advance an *osmology* derived from ancestral ken. A magical world-conception distilled from the psycho-physical effects of odour and Earthly kinship—a potent physic brewed from the seeds of a volatile Universe.³⁰⁹

Though ash and micro-particles now muffle the beating of our hearts, Earthly odours still cast their disquieting spell. Distilled from trees, rocks, plants, and soil—aromas fix us to the planet's turning. Throughout this journey, we have encountered a vigorous and sonorous world, heavy with mystery. Though melancholia, sparked by anthropogenically induced ecological crises, remains our constant companion, we nurture an antidote in wonder. The Ancient Greek word *thaumazein*—*wonder*—shapes our experience of Nancy's theory of being-with. Drawing on Nancy's theory, Rubenstein states that being-with reveals "the touching-thinking that exposes the infinite inter-esse of finite things."³¹⁰ To wonder, then, is to engage in the (un)working of thought, to come into contact with, as Rubenstein opines, the "chaotic touch of the world."³¹¹ In the tumult aroused by touching, we experience the wonder of co-presence.

Significant to our thesis is the notion, expressed by Nancy, that touching is reciprocal. Nancy argues, "being cannot be anything but being-with-one-another, circulating in the with and as the with of this singularly plural coexistence."³¹² Combining being-with and wonder, we imagine touching as a visceral, odiferous affect, wherein we are transformed by sensory encounters with the world. Through odour's touch, we have found a way to approach the ineffable; a magical world-conception. Wonder,

308. Joy Hendry, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology: Other People's Worlds* (New York: Palgrave, 1999), 115.

309. *Physic* is an archaic term for a medicinal drug, from Latin *physica*, from the Greek *phusikē* (*epistēmē*) meaning, '(knowledge) of nature.' In Byzantine Greek, the adjective, *physic*, refers to occult laws of nature and magic. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "physic (adj.), Etymology," September 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/9416971264>; *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "physic (adj.), sense 1," September 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8663846487>.

310. Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder*, 123.

311. Rubenstein, 122.

312. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 3.

Rubenstein relates, “arises when something that seemed reasonable and self-evident becomes strange and insupportable.”³¹³ In *being-with-one-another*, we become vulnerable, subject to random jostling, being wrapped in and overrun by Earthly presence, by the Beingness of stones, winds, and water. Nancy leaves us in no doubt that “‘with’ does not add itself to Being, but rather creates the immanent and intrinsic condition of presentation in general. Presence is impossible except as co-presence.”³¹⁴

This story is not ours, it belongs to the Ancestors, to Earth—the Daughter of Night, kith and kin.



Iris Graminea

313. Rubenstein, 11.

314. Nancy, 61.

Forgetting

Because of the incessant giving and sharing of the world, one does not know where the sharing of a stone starts or finishes, or where the sharing of a person starts or finishes. The delineation is always more ample and, at the same time, more restricted than one believes it to be (or rather, if one is attentive, one knows all too well how much the contours are trembling, mobile, and fleeting).

Jean-Luc Nancy, 2000.³¹⁵

Searching for a salve to melancholy’s bite, we harvest ideas growing wild on the verges of time. Concepts, enduring as material culture and ancient lore—reveal knowledge carried in the soil; fertile beliefs that germinate as flora, thriving amongst rocks, wetlands, and forests. Settling as matter and blown like dust, we recognise their echoes—the pungent odours of ancestral beings. Sometimes, upright, these scents rise like mountains; other times, their vaporous tendrils spread, virus-like, amongst us. An abundance of ideas condensed into mist, obscuring the surface of our lives, mysterious smells that demarcate the margins of belief.

We have stumbled into a liminal topography shaped by the imaginal, where *minnis*, remembering, Earthly kinship, (super)natural Beings, and memory’s twin *óminnis hegri*, the Heron of forgetting, reveal themselves suffused with strangeness—with wonder and awe.

The poem *Hávamál* discloses an oddly serpentine image of birds and the oblivion of forgetting. Birds, endowed with numinous knowledge

315. Nancy, 186. (Italics ours)

acquired through flight, can bind and induce an ecstatic trance.³¹⁶ In this poem, the Heron's feathers fetter the consciousness of the *mead drinker* (the poet), inducing self-forgetfulness.³¹⁷ Bound in this manner, the poet experiences an ecstatic possession—gaining knowledge by soaring on the wings of *honeyed words*. Olive Bray's 1906 version of *Hávamál* states that *óminnis hegri heitir* translates as “a bird of unmindfulness.”³¹⁸ On the wings of poetry, we are spirited away, a condition that summons Böhme's theory of felt-presence. Words, being atmospheric, are smelt and tasted; they touch us, creating an immersive feeling, an experience of an *oral sensory atmosphere*. The poet finds themselves enraptured and transported, a state so overwhelming that it induces forgetting.

With poetry, we utter your name.

Addressing the Viking Society London in 1892, on *Birds of Omen*, folklorist Jessie Margaret Edmondston Saxby declared, “It is from the study of ‘beasts which perish,’ and the study of ‘things unseen and eternal,’ that we learn what we are ourselves.”³¹⁹ Indeed, in Old Norse cosmology, we encounter birds as omens, augurers, spirit helpers, and guardians. The ancient Vanir goddess of fertility and war, Freyja, and her enigmatic mirror-image, Frigg (Óðinn's wife), possess feathered cloaks that bestow

316. Translator of the Edda, Henry Adams Bellows, in the introductory notes to *Hávamál*, claims it is not a poem per se but a collection of proverbs or wise sayings attributed to The High One's Words (argued to be Óðinn). To these proverbs, runes and charms have been added. Later, pieces of other poems and bits of narrative were appended, making this less a poem than “a curious miscellany.” Adams Bellows, trans., *The Poetic Edda*, Vol. 1. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936), 28, <https://archive.org/details/poeticreddaobelluoft>; Old English scholar Edward Pettit states, “the date and place of Háv's composition are uncertain. Scholars' opinions differ widely, ranging from essentially early (tenth century or before), genuinely heathen and Norwegian, to essentially late (twelfth or thirteenth century), pseudo-heathen and Icelandic.” Pettit, *The Poetic Edda: A Dual-Language Edition* (Cambridge, England: Open Book Publishers, 2023), 74, <https://books.openbookpublishers.com/10.11647/obp.0308/ch2.xhtml>.

317. Heslop, “Metaphors for Forgetting,” 250.

318. Olive Bray trans., *The Elder or Poetic Edda, Commonly Known as Sæmund's Edda* (London: Viking Club, 1908), 64, <https://archive.org/details/elderorpoeticreddoibrayuoft/page/n5/mode/2up>.

319. From Saxby's inaugural address to the Viking Society, 1892; See Edmondston Saxby, and William Alexander Clouston, *Birds of Omen in Shetland. Notes on the Folklore of the Raven and Owl* (London: Privately Printed, 1893), 6, <https://archive.org/details/BirdsOfOmenInShetland>.

on the wearer the ability to fly. The Æsir god, Óðinn (the Raven god), has two Raven spirit birds, Huginn (translated as Thought) and Muninn (more contentiously interpreted as Memory), who daily gather knowledge from afar. Hilda Ellis Davidson notes Huginn and Muninn were “perhaps based on earlier tradition, since a pair of birds is found on bracteates well before the Viking Age.”³²⁰ Birds appear on artefacts, pressed into votives, their head and wings shrouding the human body. In early funerary practices, from c. 4000 BCE onward, the transformational agency of birds becomes evident. Kristiina Mannermaa, investigating the prevalence of bird bones and bird bone artefacts in Middle Neolithic burial sites at Ajvide on Gotland and Zvejnieki in Latvia, suggests,

The relatively high number of wing elements in burials at Ajvide and Zvejnieki indicate that the ability to fly was a feature that was emphasised. The abilities to fly and to dive are central in the tripartite universe of sky, earth, and underworld of circumboreal belief systems and the symbolic role of waterbirds.³²¹

Gaston Bachelard asserts that birds in flight, conceived as *aerial spirits*, belong to the realm of dreams and poetic vision or the *aerial imagination*.³²² Though we recognise connections between spirit birds and poetic reverie, we are less sure our Norse antecedents conceived birds this way. Birds, especially sea birds, were economically valuable as consumables. Their bones, along with the bones of other faunal species, were fashioned into beads worn around the neck and sewn onto clothing so that the wearer's movements were masked or amplified by their rattling sounds. Bones carved into whistles became instruments for mimicking bird calls. One could say *birds were birds*, even when spoken of poetically, while people sought to become *bird-like*.

In Northern cosmology, bird-human relations were pragmatic. Birds have traits that make them indispensable cosmic kin. Unconstrained by gravity, bodies, wings, and the winds performing in concert, avifauna

320. Ellis Davidson, *Lost Beliefs of Northern Europe*, 77.

321. Kristiina Mannermaa, “Birds and Burials at Ajvide (Gotland, Sweden) and Zvejnieki (Latvia) about 8000–3900 BP,” *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 27 (2008): 217, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaa.2008.01.001>.

322. Gaston Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, 66–77.

navigate the sky in ways terrestrial animals cannot (even though humans can now fly, they cannot do so unaided). Flight enables large distances to be covered and offers a rare vantage point that bestows exceptional knowledge, a bird's eye view. Bird migration demonstrates ancestral instincts coupled with Earth's seasonal movements. Recent research has hypothesised birds, moths, and bees possess a *sixth sense*—a *magnetic sense*—an inbuilt compass that perceives the magnetic field generated deep within Earth's molten surface.³²³ This sense enables birds to create a navigational map that includes the sun, stars, and other crucial markers; a map as readable in the dark as in daylight.³²⁴

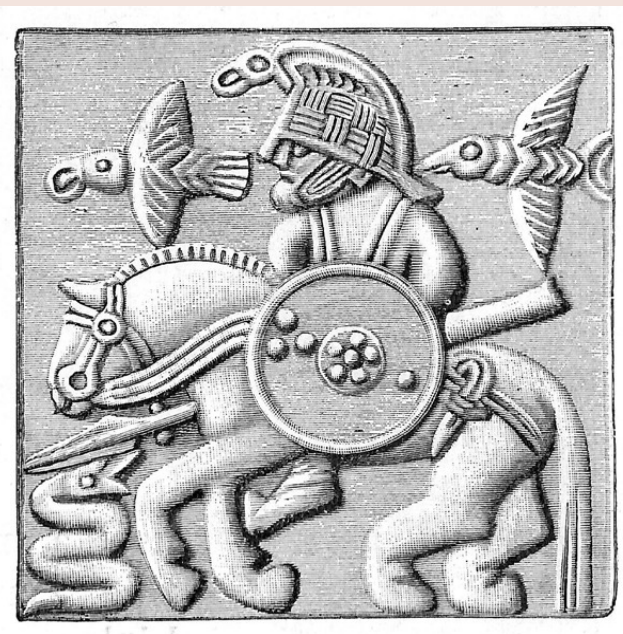


Figure 2.15. *Om Lifvet i Sverige Under Hednatiden*, a woodcut depicting a thin, pressed bronze plate, part of a Vendel period helmet (c. 540–790 CE), the figure, possibly Óðinn, is accompanied by two birds, perhaps Hugin and Muninn. Note that the rider also wears a helmet patterned like a bird. The snake is an interesting addition to the panel, given it faces the opposite way to the birds and rider and has its mouth open, possibly in warning, Oscar Montelius, 1905, Stockholm. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:_vendel__oden.jpg.

323. Jingjing Xu et al., “Magnetic Sensitivity of Cryptochrome 4 from a Migratory Songbird,” *Nature* 594, no. 7864 (2021): 535–540, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41586-021-03618-9>.

324. See Roswitha Wiltschko, and Wolfgang Wiltschko, “Magnetoreception in Birds,” *Journal of the Royal Society Interface* (2019): 162019029520190295, <http://doi.org/10.1098/rsif.2019.0295>; Also, Henrik Mouritsen, and P. J. Hore, “The Magnetic Retina: Light-Dependent and Trigeminal Magnetoreception in Migratory Birds,” *Current Opinion in Neurobiology* 22, no. 2 (2012): 343–352, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.conb.2012.01.005>.

Birdsong and poetry are repeatedly connected throughout Old Norse texts. Timothy Bourns argues that birds impart numinous knowledge in the form of poetry and that birds, in their uncanniness, occupy and mark “places which might have been considered sacred and therefore liminal between worlds—between human and animal and human and divine—spaces where communication with supernatural beings takes place.”³²⁵ Bourns also notes that “*fuglar* (birds) are not categorised as *dýr* (animals),” which is, presumably, due to the secrets they possess and their coupling with poetry.³²⁶ Being primarily oral before the twelfth century, Nordic peoples viewed poetry as critical to the preservation and passage of knowledge, to memory and its loss, it was shrouded in the feathers of *óminnis hegri*.

At the apex of the cosmos, two birds of prey sit and watch.

We do not dream of flying because we fly with you.

You are *Veðrfölnir*, the pale storm, the Hawk sitting between the eyes of an unnamed Eagle perched on the highest branches of Yggdrasill, the world tree.

Transformed, first into a snake and then into a bird, Óðinn steals the Mead of Poesy. After flying to Ásgarðr, chased by Suttungr, who also takes the form of a bird, Óðinn spits (vomits) the mead from his beak. Again, spitting is linked to the power of words, as in the origins of Skaldic verse. Bourns links numinous knowledge and comprehension of the language of birds to initiation rites and sacrifice, “according to the structure of initiation, mediation between the underworld and upperworld must take place in order to realise numinous potential.”³²⁷ To understand the vocalisations of birds, the protagonist must be partially consumed by a dragon or, conversely, they must eat or touch their tongue to the flesh of a butchered dragon. These actions, considered initiation rites, endowed the eater or those bitten by a dragon with the power of bird speech. Birds, however, instinctively understand the utterances of gods and humans.

325. Timothy Bourns, “The Language of Birds in Old Norse Tradition,” *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 120, no. 2 (2021): 221, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/795048>.

326. Bourns, 210.

327. Bourns, 234.

Breath

As the sense of affective behaviour and its secrets (in Rousseau's frame of reference, the sense of imagination and of desire), the sense of smell was viewed as capable of shaking [humanity's] inner life more profoundly than were the senses of hearing or of sight. It seemed to reach to the roots of life.

Alain Corbin, 1986.³²⁸

*We offer these ideas as votives
to the spirits of Earth.*

The Ancestors disclose their vision of the Universe vitalising our thesis.

While this thesis is creative, its origins lie in perceiving the world as wondrous and unfamiliar. Using wording, olfactory, and photographic methods we enter the liminal imaginary, a borderland that overwhelms us. In our uncertainty we call to the Ancestors, who speak to us in the dark organic matter of fragrant languages. Opening ourselves to their presence, we breathe their odours in. Norwegian scholar Eldar Heide insists,

The essential meaning of *gandr* in Old Norse sources is 'soul or spirit sent forth.' My suggestion is based upon the fact that the starting-point of soul and spirit is breath. This implies firstly that souls and spirits are moving air, which may explain that a soul or spirit called *gand(e)r* may be a gust of wind. Secondly, the starting-point of the notion of souls or spirits implies that their nature is to pass through respiratory passages.³²⁹

328. Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant*, 8. (Italics ours)

329. Note, whilst we are not addressing the soul, Heide's ideas are primarily associated

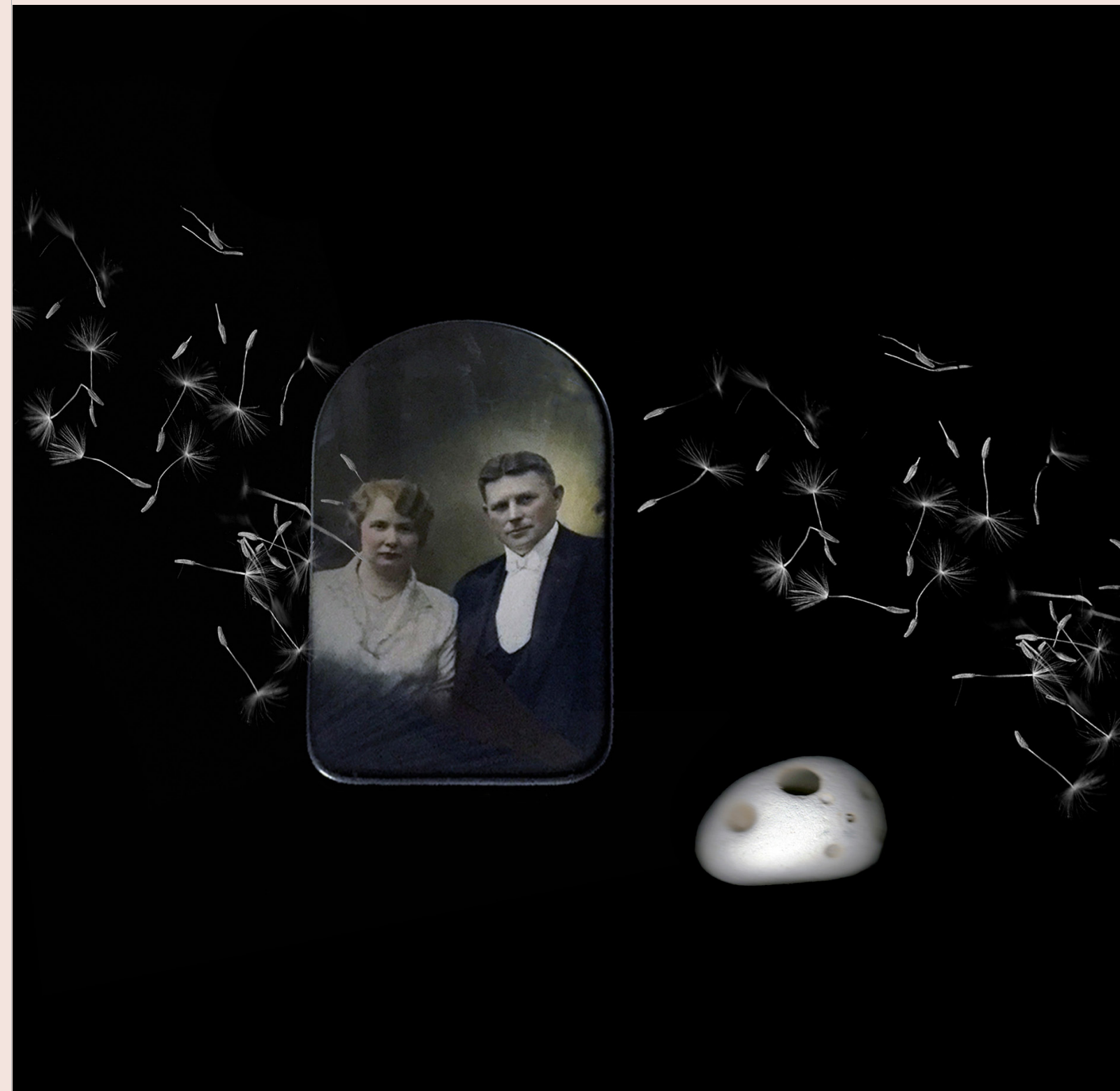


Figure 2.16. *Johan and Johanna's wedding photograph*, Susan Jowsey, 2024, digital collage, collection artist's own.

with breath and the movement of (super)natural entities in the air, which they call souls or spirits, but in Old Norse, would have belonged to a host of entities such as *hamr* or *fylgja*. Heide, "Spirits Through Respiratory Passages," in *The Fantastic in Old Norse / Icelandic Literature. Sagas and the British Isles*, edited by John McKinnell, David Ashurst, and Donata Kick, Preprint Papers of the 13th International Saga Conference, Durham and York, 6th-12th August, 2006, (Durham: University of Durham): 354, http://www.sagaconference.org/SC13/SC13_Heide.pdf.

The dynamism of atmospheric bodies discloses the potency of breath and wind: their vitality affect. Whilst Massumi's notion of this affect addresses the interrelationality of art, there are parallels to Böhme's concept of atmosphere. Abstraction in art reaches toward us as if a spectral presence, as does atmosphere. Böhme describes the subjective experience of atmosphere as coming "upon us from we know not where, as something nebulous, which in the 18th century might have been called a *je ne sais quoi*, they are experienced as something numinous - and therefore irrational."³³⁰ Compared to Massumi, who, addressing abstraction, claims, "it makes felt a dynamic, a vitality affect, that has no object. It's not an animation of anything. It's a pure animateness, a vitality affect that comes from no thing and nowhere in particular."³³¹ Indeed, Massumi suggests that the effects of abstraction create an affective atmosphere which holds within it a tacit perception of relationality critical to the vitality affect. Consequently, affect enchants the viewer, transfixing them. Massumi advises, arts affect transforms "*uncanny* apprehension" into "likeness," creating an aura, a charged atmosphere that discloses the depth of life."³³²

Tethering *felt-thought* to the visual experience of art, Massumi describes the vitality affect as the *perception of perception*, whereby vision is experienced as an *affective experience*, an awareness of "the immediacy of its occurrence, as it is felt—a *thinking-feeling*, in visual form."³³³ Other sensory experiences crucial to inducing the vitality affect, such as olfaction, touch, movement, and sound, receive little or no attention. Still, the concept remains pertinent to our research. Indeed, philosopher Katalin Vermes points out that the vitality affect offers a "pre-objective, intersensory-intersubjective order of experience" and renews "an old, more complex, and humanistic way of thinking, built on the experience of *sensus communis*."³³⁴

330. Gernot Böhme, "The Art of the Stage Set as a Paradigm for an Aesthetics of Atmospheres," *Ambiances* (February 2013): 3, <https://doi.org/10.4000/ambiances.315>. (Italics author's own)

331. Brian Massumi, *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 69.

332. Massumi, 44. (Italics author's own)

333. Massumi, 44. (Italics author's own)

334. Katalin Vermes, "Intersensory and Intersubjective Attunement: Philosophical Approach to a Central Element of Dance Movement Psychotherapy," *Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy* 6, no. 1 (2011): 37, [doi:10.1080/17432979.2010.533823](https://doi.org/10.1080/17432979.2010.533823); The full quote from

Additionally, the intersensory-intersubjective nature of the vitality affect corresponds to Böhme's theory of affective atmospheres. Like Massumi, Böhme posits an intermedial (for Massumi, this manifests in abstract art, while Böhme prefers theatre and architecture). Böhme suggests that atmospheres are an intermedial, "something between subject and object. That makes them, as such, intangible, and means that - at least in the European cultural area - they have no secure ontological status."³³⁵ Atmospheres and abstract art are analogous because they tincture space; they emit a presence that envelops the body.³³⁶ As with Massumi's *thinking-feeling*, Böhme, too, is interested in what is *felt*, naming the sensation *ekstases* (ecstasies), the *felt presence* of an atmosphere. Böhme's *ekstases* are, however, resonant and, consequently, numinous. Addressing these ideas, Böhme states:

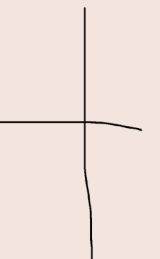
Tone and emanation - in my terminology, *ekstases* - determine the atmosphere radiated by things. They are therefore the way in which things are felt present in space. This gives us a further definition of atmosphere: it is the felt presence of something or someone in space. For this the ancients had the beautiful expression *parousia*.³³⁷

Vermes notes that Stern's theories, like those of philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908 - 1961), were "opposed to the dualistic and atomistic tradition of modernity, Merleau-Ponty's and Stern's theories not only postulated an original, pre-objective, intersensory-intersubjective order of experience but renewed also an old, more complex, and humanistic way of thinking, built on the experience of 'sensus communis'." Even Stern noticed that his theory of intermodal perception is similar to Aristotle's doctrine of the unity of the senses. Aristotle (384-324 BC) added to the traditional five senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste) a sixth or 'common' sense, which is unconnected to any organs directly, but can apperceive the primary, amodal qualities of sensation" Vermes, "Intersensory and Intersubjective Attunement, 37; The Latin phrase *sensus communis* refers to "a sense held to unite the sensations of all senses in a general sensation or perception." *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. "sensus communis," accessed November 2, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sensus%20communis>.

335. Böhme, 5.

336. Böhme uses the term *tincture* in relation to an imparted quality, a pervasive affect, stating, "on the basis of an ontology of the thing changed in this fashion, it is possible to conceive atmospheres in a meaningful way. They are spaces insofar as they are 'tinctured' through the presence of things, of persons or environmental constellations, that is, through their *ekstases*." Böhme, "The Art of the Stage," 121.

337. Böhme, 2.



Parousia means *being present* or *present in the present*.³³⁸ Plato uses it to extol the experiences of divine reality within lived reality. In this way, it is akin to cosmic Love, which issues from intermingling the mundane and supramundane. It is a transcendent yet sublunary Lovingness—and, for us, a manifestation of the Earthly in cosmic Love. In Old Norse (super)natural beliefs, we perceive our understanding of Love, both Earthly and cosmic, whereby the natural environment is recognised as numinous or magically endowed. Földényi declares this ability to perceive, to sniff out, arcane knowledge is the dominion of the *lover*, asserting:

The object of love guides the lover toward deeper cognition—nothing is more natural than that Plato, in *Phaedrus*, should connect the initiate, the philosopher, the madman, the obsessed, and the seer, and designate them all with the single word ‘lover’.³³⁹

We experience in your presence Love, cosmic and Earthly.



Unnamed Seaweed

³³⁸. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “parousia (n.), sense 2,” June 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/3193620758>.

³³⁹. Földényi, *Melancholy*, 228.

Aeriality

The world of bodies is a replica of the world of spirits. For there are as many spirits as there are bodies: celestial, sublunar, human, metal, mineral, salt, herb, wood, flesh, blood, bone.

Paracelsus, c.1493 – 1541 CE.³⁴⁰

Breath’s motile, vaporous body discloses our relationship with the aerial. The aromatic whispering of wind Ancestors, their breath on our skin, affects an olfactory magic—the intimate touch of memory’s scent. Unlike other sensory experiences, Parkin declares, odours are incomplete because they flow backwards, dragging forward restless social and sensory memories.³⁴¹

Parkin insists odiferousness is a *quasi-concept* because smell is always incomplete. Though adhering to and emanating from the physical, aroma is fugitive. Odours, Parkin states, oscillate between “tangible substance and intangible, olfactory experience, akin to a concept.”³⁴² Though smells are fleeting, their effects can last a lifetime. Andreas Keller, discussing recent neural research, outlines how our earliest smell-based recollections occur in-utero. Initially, odours breach amniotic fluid. After birth, we experience odours via breast milk. These first odoriferous experiences remain in our memories for decades, influencing our perceptions of the environment—the

³⁴⁰. Quoted in Claude Gagnon, “The Animism of Ambient Air at the End of the Middle Age,” in *Imagining Contagion in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Claire L. Carlin (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 19–20. (Italics ours)

³⁴¹. Parkin, “Wafting on the Wind,” S45.

³⁴². Parkin, S45–6.

smell of familiarity.³⁴³ Gell, too, challenges our experience of odours by associating them with magical conception, suggesting scent and the ineffable are bound. Gell states, “Perfume is linked with the transcendent, that which is located beyond the world and possible experience, this transcendent which, although out of reach, can serve to thematize our experience of the world.”³⁴⁴

Linking perfume to the transcendent emphasises its unutterableness. Translating odiferous experiences into words is problematic because scent hovers between the tangible and intangible. As *quasi-concepts* (or *quasi-memories*), they take our breath away. Odours enter and transform all who come into contact with them; sometimes, we perceive these altered states; often, however, as if magically undone, we are unaware of the changes taking place; we must imagine them. Imagining, therefore, is critical to recognising the scented, aerial, and frequently dangerous touch of the Ancestors.

Bachelard’s aerial imagination reminds us of Marsilio Ficino’s theory of spiritus, wherein the soul’s airy medium intermixes with imagination. While Bachelard distinguishes aerial imagination from terrestrial imagining, Ficino’s theory combines them. Mediaeval scholar Anna Corrias states, “according to Ficino, the soul has a celestial, an airy, and a vaporous vehicle, in addition to the earthly body.”³⁴⁵ Memories and images formed during corporeal life are stored in these vehicles, which, after death, remain in the cosmos, awaiting our rebirth. Corrias declares, “in this liminal condition between bodily death and rebirth, the soul continues to be connected to its vehicle and to exist in a realm where it becomes what it imagines itself to be.”³⁴⁶ Ficino, a canon in the Catholic church, did not support transmigration from human form into other animals, trees, mountains, or waterways; humans could only be reborn as humans. However, Plotinus, from whom Ficino derived many theories, recognised the notion of inter-species transmigration.

343. Andreas Keller, “Odour Memories: The First Sniff Counts,” *Current Biology* 19, no. 21 (2009): R988, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cub.2009.09.046>.

344. Gell, “Parfum, Symbolisme et Enchantement,” 16.

345. Anna Corrias, “Imagination and Memory in Marsilio Ficino’s Theory of the Vehicles of the Soul I,” *The International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 6, no. 1 (2012): 86.

346. Corrias, 99.

Similarly, we do not separate aerial and terrestrial imaginings since Earth’s terrestrial body, where the living and the living dead reside, is surrounded by the *troposphere*.³⁴⁷ This atmospheric body contains almost all of Earth’s air, forming a boundary between Earth’s surface and the atmospheres beyond—the Stratosphere, Mesosphere, Thermosphere, Exosphere, and the wondrous Magnetosphere. This outermost layer, so critical to Earth’s habitability, protects the planet from the destructive effects of cosmic radiation yet is intimately connected to Earth’s heart. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) website describes Earth’s Magnetosphere as,

Part of a dynamic, interconnected system that responds to solar, planetary, and interstellar conditions – and it all starts deep inside Earth. As electrically charged, molten iron churns far below Earth’s surface, within the planet’s outer core, it generates a magnetic field large enough to extend far out into space.³⁴⁸

Every atmosphere, real or imagined, is tethered in some manner to the terrestrial. While the aerial imagination interests us, Bachelard’s conception of aeriarity belongs primarily to dreams and poetry, while ours belongs to air and breath—scent. Bachelard, too, connects aeriarity to breath, declaring, “the moment that aerial imagination is awakened, ... there begins a silence that breathes.”³⁴⁹ In *Air and Dreams*, aerial matter enters the body, penetrating Beingness. Aeriarity, Bachelard claims, activates words—or sound: “Aerial matter necessarily flows in all poetry; it is not materialised time, nor is it a living duration. It has the same concrete value as the air we breathe.”³⁵⁰

Aerial matter (words and sound for Bachelard, words and scent for

347. The rotation of the troposphere creates turbulence which interacts with the Earth’s terrestrial surfaces creating friction and altering the ways air flows, creating weather patterns. NASA officials Kristen Erickson, and Heather Doyle state: “The troposphere contains three-quarters of the mass of the entire atmosphere. The air here is 78% nitrogen and 21% oxygen. The last 1% is made of argon, water vapour, and carbon dioxide.” Erickson, and Doyle, “Troposphere,” NASA Space Place, last modified June 15th, 2023, <https://spaceplace.nasa.gov/troposphere/>.

348. Karen Fox, and Brian Dunbar, “Earth’s Magnetosphere,” National Aeronautics and Space Administration, February 4, 2021, <https://www.nasa.gov/magnetosphere>.

349. Bachelard, *Air and Dreams*, 242.

350. Bachelard, 242.



us) and the aerial imagination unfold a palpable form of atmospherics that influence the body through touch. Ficino, too, connects aeriality (the airy vehicle of the soul) to life force, vitality, and health. Corrias asserts, “the idea of the spiritus as an intermediary between the incorporeal and the corporeal dimensions of the cosmos can be traced back beyond ancient Neoplatonic philosophy to Aristotelianism, Galenic medicine, and Stoicism.”³⁵¹ Spiritus, as a mediating essence, is a *vaporous substance* within the blood. The heart pumps this *subtle fluid* to the brain and carries it to the senses. The senses charge the imagination and influence vitality as if a physical agent.

Through imagination, spiritus facilitates the soul’s ability to gain knowledge, sense, and perceive the world. It is crucial to differentiate Old Norse beliefs pre and post-Christianisation as the word soul, *sál*, only appears in texts after the introduction of Christianity (between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries). Before this, there were the living and the living dead. We breathe, or we do not. After death, you remain, for all intents and purposes, *you*. However, the living dead would have approved of Ficino’s *society of the dead*. Corrias tells us, “Ficino describes a sort of social environment in which the after-death soul, wrapped in their airy bodies, take part.”³⁵²



Participating actively in *our* social life, the dead live on.

Like many humanist thinkers from the early European Renaissance (an uneven overlap of several centuries bridging the European mediaeval and modern eras), Ficino reworked pre-Christian philosophies of Classical European origin.³⁵³ Indeed, we contend, Ficino’s theories of vaporous substances and imagination correspond to the hybrid beliefs of pre-Christian Nordic peoples. The living dead, remaining effective after death, influence the lives of the living. We also recognise spiritus in plant alchemy,

351. Corrias, “Imagination and Memory,” 89.

352. Corrias, 107.

353. See James Hankins, “Marsilio Ficino and the Religion of the Philosophers,” *Rinascimento* 48 (2008): 1-29, <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:2961670>.

which follows hermetic philosophy whereby the *environment* encompasses *all Beings* in the Universe animated by the Divine Principle.³⁵⁴ Junius states, the “Divine Principle, ... manifests as a union of Prima Materia (primordial matter) and Prima Energia (primordial energy). The two Principles represent a reality and form the foundation of creation.”³⁵⁵

Memory endures, bound by air. We are airborne, a volatile mixture of Earthly breath and matter from the Universe.³⁵⁶ European plant alchemy, medicine, and cosmology continued to be aerial until the eighteenth century, when, as academic Claude Gagnon asserts, air lost its agency; “The spirit of the world was no longer around us; its image was stealthily displaced from then on into the compact matter of new medications-pills and vitamins!”³⁵⁷



354. Junius, *The Practical Handbook*, 41.

355. Junius also notes “the symbol of the Prima Materia is simultaneously the symbol of the Void, the Nothing, which can give birth to everything.” Junius, 41 and 44.

356. Junius declares Mercury is the principle of life, the *spirit of life*, and etheric. Junius qualifies the notion of spirit and soul used in plant alchemy, differentiating them from their religious connotations. Junius proclaims: “we can recognize that the designations *spirit* and *soul* are here used with another meaning than they have in the anthroposophical formulation, for instance, where spirit is consciousness, and the soul is considered as living and mediating between spirit and body. We are here dealing with a difference in linguistic usage and not necessarily with a philosophical problem. The expression ‘life spirit’ is an absolutely familiar concept for many readers trained in Western occult traditions. The spirit (Mercury) in the alchemical sense is considered feminine. It is supple and plastic, but it can also have a corrosive effect. Arabian cosmologists use the term *rūh* (Hebrew *ruah*), which also signifies the motion of the air or the living breath (*Sanskrit prāṇa*). The word is akin to the Arabic word *rih* (air). Living creatures inhale the vital force with the air so that it can nourish the subtler bodies or organs.” Junius, 31-2. (Italics author’s own)

357. Gagnon, “The Animism of Ambient Air at the End of the Middle Age,” 27.

Consumed

Wonder wonders at the strangeness of the most familiar: at that which, within the possibilities of determinate thinking, still remains indeterminate, unthinkable, and impossible.

Rubenstein, 2009.³⁵⁸

There remains ‘only’ the all-pervading denial of coevalness which ultimately is expressive of a cosmological myth of frightening magnitude and persistency. It takes imagination and courage to picture what would happen to the West ... if its temporal fortress were suddenly invaded by the Time of its Other.

Johannes Fabian, 1983.³⁵⁹

Magnetised by visions of the numinous, we are compelled toward the edge of Being.

Consumed, we are creatures of horror and dread.

Otto’s terrifying *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (fearful and fascinating mystery) has two contrasting facets: *numinous worth* and *unworthiness*. Unworthy, we are nothing, conscious only of the creaturehood engulfing us, our insignificance. Otto explains:

For one of the chiefest and most general features of mysticism is just this self-depreciation..., the estimation of the self, of the personal ‘I’, as something not perfectly or essentially real, or even as mere nullity, a self-depreciation which comes to demand its own fulfilment in

358. Rubenstein, 15. (Italics ours)

359. Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 35. (Italics ours)

practice in rejecting the delusion of selfhood, and so makes for the annihilation of the self.³⁶⁰

The *mysterium*, or wholly other, is experienced as a form of oblivion.³⁶¹ We become *creatures*, overawed by *something* greater than ourselves.³⁶² For Otto, this something is *God*, but for us, the Ancestors are *wholly other*. We discern this notion of numinous unworth—the fear and trembling of *creaturehood*, in Kristeva’s abject. Unworthy, the abject lurks within us and, as Kristeva proclaims, “beckons to us and ends up engulfing us.”³⁶³ Otto suggests, within the numinous, “there is the feeling of one’s own submergence, of being but ‘dust and ashes’ and nothingness.”³⁶⁴ Like wonder and awe, the abject and the numinous are pungent, their incense permeating and transforming the membrane of our existence.

Writing on *Myth and the Limits of Reason*, scholar Philip Stambovsky states, “spiritual desiccation is an all-too-familiar feature of the modern condition that marginalises the sacred, and that denatures the numinous.”³⁶⁵ While we agree with this statement, we are keenly aware that aroma embodies the numen, it is wholly other. Therefore, odiferousness, even to the irreligious, alters understanding, informs memory, and shapes our responses.

Addressing modern Europe’s emergence from religion’s blanketing effects, Bauman proffers *Liquid Modernity* as a theory exploring modernity’s profaning of the sacred—the steady unfixing of European economies from traditional, political, ethical, and cultural moorings. According to

360. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, 21.

361. Otto declares, “the truly ‘mysterious’ object is beyond our apprehension and comprehension, not only because our knowledge has certain irremovable limits, but because in it we come upon something inherently ‘wholly other’, whose kind and character are incommensurable with our own, and before which we therefore recoil in a wonder that strikes us chill and numb.” Otto, 28.

362. Otto notes, “‘identification’ alone, however, is not enough for mysticism; it must be Identification with the Something that is at once absolutely supreme in power and reality and wholly non-rational.” Otto, 22.

363. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 9.

364. Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 20.

365. Philip Stambovsky, *Myth and the Limits of Reason* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004), 11; Note, we do not equate spirit with God or gods but with an awareness of something wholly other—the Ancestors.

Bauman, liquid modernity “sedimented a new order, defined primarily in economic terms. That new order was to be more ‘solid’ than the orders it replaced, because—unlike them—it was immune to challenge from noneconomic action.”³⁶⁶ Economic growth and prosperity overwrite piety, folk knowledge, and cultural attachment in this new order. Bauman’s theory asserts the fluidity of global power to alter and reshape concepts of time.³⁶⁷ According to Bauman, time has become unfixed, mutable, and weightless under the influence of liquid modernity. Its inconsistency makes liquidity the perfect descriptive term for the *Great Acceleration*. Bauman suggests,

The prime technique of power is now escape, slippage, elision, and avoidance, the effective rejection of any territorial confinement with its cumbersome corollaries of order-building, order-maintenance and the responsibility for the consequences of it all as well as of the necessity to bear their costs.³⁶⁸

*Unworthiness personified;
we are the begetters of ecosphere devastation,
modernity’s climax.*



Unnamed spider

366. Zygmunt Bauman lists other modern epochs, suggesting “light modernity let one partner out of the cage. ‘Solid’ modernity was an era of mutual engagement. ‘Fluid’ modernity is the epoch of disengagement, elusiveness, facile escape, and hopeless chase. In ‘liquid’ modernity, it is the most elusive, those free to move without notice, who rule.” Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge, England: Polity Press, 2000), 4 and 120.

367. Bauman, 12.

368. Bauman, 11.

Maureen Perkin echoes Bauman’s views on time. Perkin charts the role of legislation and the proliferation of organisations for *social reform* in Europe during the nineteenth century to control *popular* beliefs concerning value and worth. Perkin asserts, “when scientific, European constructions of time are presented as the norm by which all other representations are measured, then anything which is not regular, linear, progressive, and predictable presents an unacceptable aberration.”³⁶⁹ Bauman and Perkin claim modernity transformed time into a quantifiable commodity. Moments became transactional units. Temporal increments are to be harnessed, saved, and ultimately universalised, ensuring a shared conception of past, present, and future. Perkin reports that the reformation of the calendar in the early twentieth century aimed to expand efforts to perfect “a universal calendar that would help to unite humanity in a common system of measurement of the year.”³⁷⁰

*The Ancestors are unwavering.
It is not time, but our need, that reveals our copresence.*

Contemplating how the modern European comprehension of time influences our understanding of magic, Johannes Fabian suggests the tension between the two is political and primarily a power struggle. According to Fabian, politics encompasses “anything from systematic oppression to anarchic mutual recognition.”³⁷¹ Proffering an antithesis to time defined by its purposeful harnessing, Fabian postulates *coevalness* as an *undefinable temporal coexistence*. *Coevalness*, Fabian claims, is not “a thing or state with certain properties. It is not ‘there’ and cannot be put there; it must be created or at least approached.”³⁷² While Fabian focuses on critiquing anthropology’s *allochronic* (*other time*) neo-colonial discourse, *coevalness* locates us amongst the Ancestors—we exist synchronously.

369. Maureen Perkins, *The Reform of Time; Magic and Modernity* (London: Pluto Press, 2001), 86.

370. Perkins, 32.

371. Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 2.

372. Fabian, 34.

Yet, how can we maintain this position when all around the concertina of life breathes in and out?

If coevalness is not *a thing* or *state*, how do we create it?

*Intertwined with the lives of the Ancestors we dare to remember.
We offer this unguent, a balm against melancholy made from Earth,
leaves, and resin.*

We co-create our shared existence by questioning modern European chronological, taxonomic, and secular beliefs regarding time. Fabian's coevalness or *shared time* discloses the *mercurial embrace of the ever-present-past*, the fertile visions of Nancy's being-with and Bergson's pure memory. While Fabian is wary of words with temporal connotations, such as *duration* and *kinship*, in our research, kinship is congruent with respect, acknowledging, and being heedful of the Ancestors. Ancestral coexistence tethers us cosmically, topographically, and genetically.

In Otto's mysticism, creaturehood or non-rationality is equated with the *annihilation of self* and identification with, and reverence for, the transcendent object. Through transimmanence, Nancy, brings transcendence down to Earth, as does Gell. The mystical is not a godly otherworldliness but a grounded immanence existing *in* and *toward* the world, ethically *being-with* the world. We translate Otto's statement: "*I am naught, Thou art all*," into a declaration about the wonder and awe of being-with.³⁷³ Otto's *Thou* refers to the singular *God*. Meanwhile, for us, *Thou* is the Universe, and within the Universe, it is the Ancestors. Significantly, the statement, *we art naught, you art all*, is not an assertion of selfhood. Instead, as Otto declares, it is "a consciousness of the absolute superiority or supremacy of a power other than *ourselves*."³⁷⁴ Our experience of *nonexistence* discloses the Ancestors as proximal, within, and surrounding. Comparing the numinous to Earthly Love may appear antithetical to Otto's premise. Yet, it is not. Indeed, Otto acknowledges that there are stirrings of mysticism in our pre-Christian *magical primitivism*.

373. Otto, *Idea of the Holy*, 22. (Italics ours)

374. Otto, 19 (Italics ours).

We favour a magical world-conception that reveres the Ancestors, Earthly Love, and the wonders of the Universe, as they appear numinous and wholly other to us.

Ineffable and unutterable, your touch is essential to existence.

The numen is germinal; it enables the spawning of awe and wonder (two words Fabian also disavows). Whilst our understanding of the numen derives from Otto's explanation, our experience stems from Earthly Love and melancholy. In venerating the Ancestors, we experience deep affection and profound grief—the longing that accompanies our Lovingness. Contemplating Fabian's exhortation that coevalness must be created or approached, we apprehend the coexistence of the Ancestors, our breath mirroring theirs—ever-present, even though mysterious. As Campagna suggests, challenging Technic compels us to confront ourselves: to experience the world *as if* a dreaming spider.

Once more, Otto's words reverberate, "to know and to understand conceptually are two different things, are often even mutually exclusive and contrasted. The mysterious obscurity of the numen is by no means tantamount to unknowableness."³⁷⁵ Instead, it is a knowingness akin to the implicit relational knowingness experienced as the vitality affect, passing between us unspoken, it is wonderment.

Mapping the now obscure meaning of wonder, Rubenstein concludes that its Classic meaning is nothing like "the modern brand of wonder that connotes white bread, lunchbox superheroes, and fifties sitcoms."³⁷⁶ Instead, in the Classical sense, wonder, "responds to a destabilising and unassimilable interruption in the ordinary course of things, an uncanny opening, rift, or wound in the everyday. Like the parting of a sea, the destruction of a city, the incoherence of the self-evident."³⁷⁷

375. Otto, 135.

376. Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder*, 17.

377. Rubenstein, 17.



Striated pebble

Wonder finds its equal in awe, which Otto declares is “the ‘urgency’ and ‘energy’ of the numinous object.”³⁷⁸ The archaic *awful* or *mysterium tremendum* is more than fear. It is a *shuddering*, numinous dread, so potent it penetrates bone; this *mysteriously impelling power*, Otto notes, “first begins to stir in the feeling of ‘something uncanny’, ‘eerie’, or ‘weird.’”³⁷⁹ So unsettling that it induces wonder.

*The familiar turns inside out.
Overcome and disorientated, we lose our bearings.
Immersed in the trance-like interiority of your smell,
the stickiness of fascination catching us.*



Physalia Aretiusa

378. Otto, 23.

379. Otto, 14.

Possessed

*I say then that likenesses of things and their shapes
are given off by things from the outermost body of
things, which may be called, as it were, films or
even rind, because the image bears an appearance
and form like to that, whatever it be, from whose
body it appears to be shed, ere it wanders abroad.*

Lucretius, Book IV.³⁸⁰

The echo of Fabian’s words skims the surface of our senses, “*somehow we must be able to share each other’s past in order to be knowingly in each other’s present.*”³⁸¹ Coevalness or shared time is dependent, Fabian asserts, on speaking not only of *others* but speaking *with them*.³⁸² Conversing with, like being-with, discloses a critical dimension of our research. The difference between Fabian’s position and ours is that conversations can occur without words—an exchange unfolding in breath transgresses physical boundaries. Odour’s enigma seeping into and dissolving meaning, penetrates the skin of forgetting. Therefore, breath, wind, spirit, soul, life force, fragrance, and atmosphere are the semantic forms through which we approach the *transformational world*. According to Parkin, a transformational world is:

A world which holds in abeyance, so to speak, and so transcends any set or absolute distinction between solid and non-solid, spirit and human, and human and ancestor. It defers questions of ultimate death and cosmic finality by positing a transformational life-cycle of substance and non-substance or spirit.³⁸³

380. Bailey, ed. *Lucretius: De Rerum Natura*, 144, Book IV, 88-120. (Italics ours)

381. Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 92. (Italics author’s own)

382. Fabian, 181.

383. Parkin, “Wafting on the Wind,” S50–51

Transformation is foundational in Norse cosmologies. Pre-Christian scholar Luke John Murphy states, “in the simplest of terms, wetland areas, woodland, and rocky places might all be considered cosmologically liminal in our best present understanding of pre-Christian Nordic world views.”³⁸⁴ The dead might die into mountains, and terrains come alive, inhabited by álfar, dvergar, jötnar, dísir, and landvættir, waterways possessed by Beings of indeterminate shape, water-horses, and monstrous creatures. Every aspect of the world required navigating; thresholds crossed, boundaries negotiated, offerings, and sacrifices made. The physical terrain was treacherous and unstable—much like the duplicitousness of the interpersonal.

The word hamr unfolds a multifaceted (much contested) concept used to designate different forms of transformation. As a root word, hamr refers to transmutation but can also convey that something intrinsic to personhood has been lost or stolen. Examples of hamr, *eigi einhamr*, and *hamrammr* are often associated with psychological rather than physical instability despite *eigi einhamr* referring to skin.³⁸⁵ *Hamstolinn* describes stolen hamr, while *hamslauss* refers to being drained of or lacking in hamr. This paradoxical word accommodates a diversity of ideas regarding physical and psychological-spiritual alterations. Recalling Goldhahn’s experience of being sonically overwhelmed when viewing Scandinavian petroglyphs placed beside roaring rocks, we wonder what bodily and spiritual transformations odour spaces encourage.³⁸⁶

There are few direct references to aromas in Old Norse texts; however, this omission is common for the period in which they were written. A lack of references to odour in the Old Norse corpus does not equate with its

384. Luke John Murphy, “Continuity and Change: Forms of Liminality in the Sacred Social Spaces of the Pre-Christian Nordic World,” *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 12 (2016): 149, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48501800>.

385. Old Norse researcher Lyonel D. Perabo translates *eigi einhamr* as *one that doesn’t have a single hamr*. Perabo, “Shapeshifting in Old Norse-Icelandic Literature,” *Roda da Fortuna* 6 (2017): 137, <https://www.academia.edu/33791796/>.

386. Odour space refers to the dimensionality of odour in space. Professor of Biological Sciences Markus Meister suggests, “determining the dimensionality of the space of odour percepts is a precondition to estimating the number of distinct percepts. The recognition that colour space is three-dimensional has had an enormous impact in science, art, and technology, as anyone reading this on a colour monitor will confirm. The search for a similar basis set for odours has fascinated scientists, engineers, and perfumers for some time.” Meister, “On the Dimensionality of Odour Space,” *elife* 4 (2015): e07865, <https://elifesciences.org/articles/07865>.

insignificance. In its absence, we are forced to grapple with odour’s intangibility. The significance of breath is manifested in artefacts, images, and written texts. Heide proclaims, “Old Norse *vindr* means both ‘wind’ and ‘breath’, and Old Norse *andi*, Finnish *henki* and Latin *spiritus* means both ‘spirit’ and ‘wind’.”³⁸⁷ We must protect ourselves from wind spirits, too. Heide notes, “the idea of attack we also find in the term *atsókn* / *aðsókn*, which in Old Norse as well as in modern Icelandic is the term for yawning and sleepiness caused by forerunners.”³⁸⁸ Nonetheless, to conjure odiferous magic, we must imagine. Following Goldhahn’s experiences, we gather bark and leaves, wondering if donning a *úlframir* (wolf-pelt) and becoming a wolf means smelling wolf-like rather than visually turning into a wolf—the bleeding of smells engendering odour spaces that affect us from afar.

We encounter our creature selves, scenting the air, sniffing—alert to uncertainty and pheromones—the forewarning winds, alive with anxiety, and anticipation.

Transforming, in Old Norse texts, unfolds narratives fraught with omens of death, wars, personal conflict, and acts of thievery. Masako Katsuyama et al., studying emotional changes in skin odour and its impact on others, found that humans release aromatic skin gases under stressful conditions. While the phenomenon of dogs detecting and responding to skin gas emissions related to human illness is well known, Katsuyama et al. have demonstrated that human skin also emits a distinct odour during heightened psychological tension. Responses to the scent of stress include negative emotions such as tension, anxiety, fatigue, inertia, and confusion.³⁸⁹ Reflecting on these findings, we wondered: how would hamr smell and how does hamr affect those who encounter it, since transformation requires a witness? In Old Norse, the word *berserkr* means bearskin or bear shirt. Berserkr (plural) were warriors who wore bear masks and bearskins into battle. They made deep-throated noises and, according to the account

387. Heide, “Spirits Through Respiratory Passages,” 351. (Italics author’s own)

388. Heide, 353. (Italics author’s own)

389. Masako Katsuyama et al., “How Emotional Changes Affect Skin Odour and its Impact on Others,” *Plos One* 17, no. 6 (2022): e0270457, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9246182/>.

in the *Ynglinga Saga* (the Story of the Yngling Family), bit their shields.³⁹⁰ Extreme physicality aroused a frenzied, trance-like transformation turning the warrior into a supernatural bear; pheromones, sweat, loud sounds, strange actions, and the smell of hundreds of preserved bear skins would have created a profoundly odiferous, terror-inducing scenography; a feral, pheromone-driven, foreboding performance.

Similarly, Goldhahn argues that the positioning of rock engravings near rapids and waterfalls shows that Northern peoples from ca. 7000 - 1700 BCE were aware of the potency of environmental sounds in inducing psychological disturbance, activating liminal communication with spiritual entities—the Ancestors. Contemplating the difficulty of proving such conjectures, Goldhahn asks, “How do we communicate the subtleties of ‘a very noisy atmosphere’ or ‘the smell of mist and water’ that permeate the engravings?”³⁹¹ Measuring the decibel levels at specific rock art sites, Goldhahn proved the reverberations created by rushing water stimulate an immersive liminality.³⁹²

390. Stanza six of the *Ynglinga Saga* reads: “Odin could make his enemies in battle blind, or deaf, or terror-struck, and their weapons so blunt that they could no more but than a willow wand; on the other hand, his men rushed forwards without armour, were as mad as dogs or wolves, bit their shields, and were strong as bears or wild bulls, and killed people at a blow, but neither fire nor iron told upon themselves. These were called Berserker.” “Ynglinga Saga, or The Story of the Yngling Family from Odin to Halfdan the Black,” Sacred-Texts.com, translator unknown, accessed July 14, 2023, <https://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/heim/ozynlgla.htm>.

391. Joakim Goldhahn, “Roaring Rocks: An Audio-Visual Perspective on Hunter-Gatherer Engravings in Northern Sweden and Scandinavia,” *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 35, no. 1 (2002): 35-6, <https://doi.org/10.1080/002936502760123103>.

392. Anthropologist Rodney Needham writing on percussive affect on transitional emotional states argues “what I am dealing with is the conjunction of two primal, elementary, and fundamental features: 1) the affective impact of percussion, 2) the logical structure of category-change. According to common notions, these components pertain to two quite disparate modes of apprehension: emotion and reason. Yet empirically there seems to be a significant connection between them. This connection cannot be derived exclusively from one or the other mode, i.e., either affectively or else logically, since by definition neither contains or implies the distinctive and irreducible features of the other.” Yet as Needham points out, there is, nevertheless, a connection between the creation of percussive sound and “aurally generated emotion,” liminality. Needham, “Percussion and Transition,” *Man* 2, no. 4 (1967): 612 and 609, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2799343>; Researcher Riitta Rainio et al., describing burials at Ajvide, Gotland, Sweden between 3200–2300 cal BC state, “approximately one-third of the burials contain pendants made of seal, boar, dog, red fox or European elk (*Alces alces*) teeth, up to 170 per grave. These perforated or grooved animal teeth form rows on the thighs, knees, hips or other body parts of the deceased, and they seem to have been attached to clothing, for example, an apron or skirt hem.” Even their clothing was percussive. The sound files and



Figure 2.17. *Ådals-Liden* 193:1, Rock carving area at Nämforsen Rapids, Ådals-Liden. One of the largest continuous carvings within the rock carving area in Nämforsen. The rock carvings date from the Stone Age and the Bronze Age, photographer unknown, 1944, film negative, Ångermanland, Sweden, Swedish National Heritage Board, no known copyright restrictions. https://www.flickr.com/photos/swedish_heritage_board/30714892356/in/album-72157622069529395.



The Bone Garden, an imagined sonic composition are embedded in their online paper. Rainio, Kristiina Mannermaa, and Juha Valkeapää, “Recapturing the Sounds and Sonic Experiences of the Hunter-Gatherers at Ajvide, Gotland, Sweden (3200–2300 cal BC),” *Journal of Sonic Studies* (2017), <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/408924/408925>.

Despite seasonal variations affecting the volume of water, even when relatively calm, the sounds were loud enough to smother conversation. In full flood, the sound levels quickly became intolerable. Goldhahn likens their intensity to standing within fifty metres of a jumbo jet engine. In addition to extreme sound, the author describes how the pounding waters rise in curtains of vapour, which propel odours into the atmosphere, occasionally producing rainbows. With the disappearance of the rock carvings into this misty haze, Goldhahn resolves, “the submersion and exposure, presence and disappearance of the engravings can be interpreted as that images were meant to ‘travel’ from the world of the living to the underworld.”³⁹³ The environment produces the magic of transformation, making the engravings come alive.

Goldhahn also advances archaeologist Gutorm Gjessing’s (1906 - 1979) theory concerning the skeleton-like lines marking the internal spaces of animals depicted in Scandinavian petroglyphs. Gjessing, studying the rock carvings of Ojibway Indians from the North American Great Lakes area, theorised the internal lines were vital to evoking *sympathetic hunting magic*. In this magic, the lines represent *lifelines*; by controlling the lifelines of prey, the hunter influences the soul of the hunted animal. The lifeline creates a spiritual path for magical agents to follow, leading to the animal. Akin to a guide on a spirit journey, they direct the agent’s passage forward and illuminate their way back as if following a scent trail.³⁹⁴

Though many of Goldhahn’s propositions are interpretive, they are compelling, most notably the assertion that waterways are living entities because they breathe and sing. Sonic-topographies tell stories. Similar to odours spellbinding enchainments and thresholds. The Gotland picture stones, marking borderlands, smelled of burnt offerings, the domestic odour of fire fusing with the scent of blood and turned earth.

We lose ourselves following your scent in the confluence of environment, atmosphere, and reverie.

393. Goldhahn, “Roaring Rocks,” 44.

394. Goldhahn, 46-7.

Goldhahn concludes:

The roaring sound of the rapids (voice), the mist and steam from the falls (breath), the different cascades of water drops and splashes (saliva) and the rainbows (soul or magic?), all could be envisaged as if the river were most ‘accessible’ and ‘alive’ at the waterfalls. The rapids may have been perceived as a liminal opening—a roaring threshold to other sounding worlds.³⁹⁵

Experiencing the liminality of sonic environments and imaginatively responding requires more than academic conjecture. Through practice, we reflexively experience wonder and awe, hypnotised by the persuasiveness of your voice and the scent of you.

We may appear before you in the guise of a single grounded self, but when you turn your back, we transform, becoming breath. Defying gravity, we take flight.

The Ancestors engage us in environmental conversations, murmuring odoriferously. Possessed, we transform within their aromatic caress. In Nancy’s theory of being-with, all things touch. Touching is constitutive, a fundament of being-with. Listik, writing on *Touch and Liminality*, claims: “There is no thing in isolation: there is no intact object segregated from all other things.”³⁹⁶ In a seeming paradox, Listik advances the idea that Nancy’s concept of touch expands beyond notions of contact and relationships to encompass “the empty truth of being: a fact so evident it is ungraspable.”³⁹⁷ Touch, while vital, is a sensory threshold charged with possibility, not a physical encounter—touching conceived this way is coequality. Whilst we may never physically come into contact with the Ancestors, we touch the untouchable through their scent. Both attractive and repellent, odours materialise in the feverish euphoria of touch—the insistent voices of the Ancestors.

395. Goldhahn, 49.

396. Yonathan Listik, “Touch and Liminality: Between Derrida and Nancy,” *Malice* 10 (2020): 6, <https://doi.org/10.58048/2263-7664/3162>.

397. Listik, 6.

For Nancy, being-with “is an ontology of bodies, of everybody, whether they be inanimate, animate, sentient, speaking, thinking, having weight, and so on.”³⁹⁸ Amplifying this declaration, smoke, breath, wind, spirit, and aroma, while formless, are bodies. By sensing them, we are simultaneously touching and being touched.

In conflating the liminality of touch with fractal Beings and ancestral odours, we conceive *likenesses*—osmic vignettes of the Ancestors. Referring to emanations as idols or effluences, the Epicurean doctrine of emanations states, “likenesses of things and their shapes are given off by things from the outermost body of things.”³⁹⁹ Gell, however, describes them as simulacra or *skin images*. Accordingly, Gell states that odours are a “formless, quasi-material form of the object.”⁴⁰⁰ For example, while wood smoke does not look like wood, it is nevertheless its dispersed form. Wood smoke carries an image of its origins (the molecular constituents of the wood from which the smoke issues). While not emanating from a single object, the odours we craft are nevertheless quasi-material manifestations, the combined scent of unmemory, memory, and imagination. They are transmitters.

Gell frames Malangan, carved by the New Ireland peoples, as skins for the deceased, skin being transactional.⁴⁰¹ Gell states:

The Malangan mediates and transmits agency between past and future.

398. Nancy, *Being Singular Plural*, 83-84

399. Bailey, 144, Book IV, ll 88-120; Bailey states, “Epicurus was driven, like Democritus before him, to postulate ‘effluences’ passing from the object to the percipient. Smell is caused by the impact on the nostrils of an effluence of particles coming from ‘deep within’ the object and again causing a difference of sensational quality by difference of atomic formation.” Additionally, Bailey notes of the theory of idols that “All bodies are constantly throwing off a succession of thin films or ‘idols’, exactly like in form and colour to themselves, and these by impinging upon the eye form the same indirect contact between object and percipient as is established in the case of smell and hearing. But there is this important difference: whereas each individual smell- or sound-particle can be directly perceived by nostril or ear, so subtle are the ‘idols’ in texture that they cannot be individually perceived, but only in the mass of their quick succession.” Bailey, *The Greek Atomists and Epicurus: A Study by Cyril Bailey* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1928), 239-240.

400. Gell, *Art and Agency*, 227.

401. Malangan carvings are funerary vessels with ancestral life-force inscribed with strategic affinal connections.

Though the carving itself exists only within certain (restricted) time-space coordinates, conceptually, it is a temporally dispersed object, an object at no specific time or place, but moving through time and place, like a thunderstorm.⁴⁰²

Critical information is communicated in the dispersal of the body or the shedding of skin. Gell points out the word used by New Ireland peoples “to refer to this empowering knowledge is *wune*, which, among other things, means ‘smoke’.”⁴⁰³ Smoke, as a likeness, is a carrier of memory, and correspondingly, a memory creator. Gell explains that on seeing the Malangan, the observer memorises the Ancestor’s image, *internalising their skin*, and in this process, is transformed, gaining a *new skin*.⁴⁰⁴ Likewise, aromatic knowledge emitted by the Ancestors creates a nebulous and volatile odour space, a sensory likeness, which, entering the bloodstream, implants their ken in the receiver.

In touching, we also confront bodily invasion. Toxic bodies, like memory skins, float unconstrained. They enter us. We are exposed to chemicals, the distributed bodies of Global Humanity, plastic particles, nanofibres, mould, and fumes are shed from our clothes, washed down drains, expelled, buried, dug up, and reconstituted. Indeed, Alain Corbin contends that “the nose, as the vanguard of the sense of taste, warns us against poisonous substances. Even more important, the sense of smell locates hidden dangers in the atmosphere.”⁴⁰⁵

Pooling in the hollow left by your body is a soft-bellied darkness—the crepuscular fragrance of our longing.



402. Gell, 226.

403. Gell, 303. (Italics Author’s own)

404. Gell, 303.

405. Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odour and the French Social Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), 7.

Transformed

Once deodorants have ‘saved’ us from social rejection, the question arises of how to win social approval. This is where perfumes, with their reputed image-enhancing powers, come in.

Constance Classen, 1994.⁴⁰⁶

Congealing in the liminal imaginary, odours become perfumes, solidifying into words and images.

Writing about the social history of smell in France during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Corbin explains the progressive rejection of the doctrine of pneuma in favour of a growing obsession with maintaining personal aerial and atmospheric envelopes.⁴⁰⁷ Shifting beliefs

406. Constance Classen, David Howes, and Anthony Synnott, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell* (London: Routledge, 1994), 186. (Italics ours)

407. Regarding the doctrine of pneuma, biological researcher Eugenio Frixione states, “for, though invisible to the eye, it is quite obvious that pneuma fills the whole wide space between the earth and the heavens, and that it is the cause of both winter and summer by just becoming now cold and dense, next gentle and calm. Moreover, pneuma also transports the heavenly bodies across the sky and, being an indispensable food for fire, forever sustains the life of the sun itself. And there can be no question that pneuma gets into the water too, simply because all aquatic creatures would die were they not able to somehow inhale it.” Frixione, “Pneuma–Fire Interactions in Hippocratic Physiology,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 68, no. 4 (2013): 513, muse.jhu.edu/article/523575; Corbin refers to the *pneumata* as an environmental air-pneuma influencing human health, a theory which remained popular into the seventeenth century. Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant*, 20–1; Geoffrey Lloyd states, “pneuma as the active principle pervades everything, but, as I noted, the Presocratics distinguished different modes of unity. ‘Tenor,’ the state of being held together, is the kind of unity exemplified by stones. There is ‘physique,’ phusis, nature, as in plants capable of growing and reproducing themselves. Thirdly there is psuche, soul, exemplified by animals capable of perception and movement. But in each case what holds the unity together is pneuma, conceived not as a static external constraining force, but as a dynamic internal tension. The cosmos as a whole is just such a

from all-encompassing atmospheric odours to body odours resulted in olfactory vigilance, which Corbin asserts led to a rise in the anxiety of infection and a “permanent monitoring of the dissolution of individuals and the self.”⁴⁰⁸ Putrefaction quickly became synonymous with the devil. To counteract miasma and ravagement by mellifluous aromas, one could wear an amulet which contained a counteragent, another odour to repel the offending one.⁴⁰⁹ Concomitantly, aromatic fumigation was used to disinfect foetid or dangerous air. Hot vinegar, Corbin notes, was a popular fumigant used in hospitals, homes, and ships while churches burned incense. As social conditions changed, the potent odours of vinegar and musk were replaced by lighter, floral scents.

While the use of fumigation as a counter to malodour and disease continued well into the nineteenth century, the rising tide of Puritanism fuelled a distrust of fragrant odours. Anything that evaporated, like perfume, epitomised waste. Since there was no way to conserve or salvage the ephemeral it became anathema.⁴¹⁰ For entirely different reasons, the French chemist Guyton de Morveau (1737–1816) also decried fumigation, claiming odour as worthless because it could not transform the sources of disease. Referring to de Morveau, Corbin recounts, “real disinfectant had to destroy certain preexistent substances and bring into being new bodies in the environment that were amenable to chemical analysis.”⁴¹¹ Ongoing discoveries in chemical and molecular science altered medical practices precipitating breaking with traditional beliefs. *Halles (medical) code*, published in 1888,

living creature, pervaded with pneuma, life and reason. The Stoic solution to the problem of the distinction between the animate and the inanimate was to deny there is a fundamental divide here. Everything is instinct with pneuma. When we distinguish animals, and plants, and stones, we should understand that the reality is that they exemplify different modes of pneumatic unification.” Lloyd, “Pneuma between Body and Soul,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 13 (2007): S142, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4623125>.

408. Corbin, 21.

409. Alchemy researcher Peter J. Forshaw notes, “Jacob Wolf (1642–1694), relates that the operations of amulets depend on them being bound to the body in the required place so that they work astrally and spiritually, by radiation, irradiation, and illumination, emitting effluvia that enter the pores of the body.” Forshaw, “Magical Material & Material Survivals: Amulets, Talismans, and Mirrors in Early Modern Europe,” in *The Materiality of Magic*, edited by Dietrich Boschung and Jan N. Bremmer (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2015), 368.

410. Corbin, 69.

411. Corbin, 70.

denounced aromatic fumigation, repudiating the therapeutic value of scent and promoting the sole use of chemical medicaments. Yet, traditional practices continued to be used by lay folk; elixirs remained popular, and the application of fragrant perfumes and scents formed part of a pharmacopoeia used to ward off illness. All of which were deemed, and remain, secondary to medical science.⁴¹²

Vapours, smoke, and fiery exhalations transform and transfix us in a single fluid movement. Captured and bound by the viscera of scent, we are electrified.

Smells, odours, and vapours inform interpersonal, socio-cultural, and political terrains. Yet aromas, as aerial phenomena, are mobile and borderless. Diffuse within the atmosphere, smells wholly different to conscious thought, enter, unbidden, the interior of our being. Haviland-Jones et al., investigating the effects of subliminally detected odours on human behaviour, found an undetectable level of cultivated floral air introduced into a built environment positively affected participants' emotions.⁴¹³ Haviland-Jones et al. are interested in the co-evolution of cultivated flowers and humans, though they recognise other faunal species have also developed critical co-relations with plants. The scent of cultivated plants, particularly floral and citrus aromas such as rose or lemon, gives rise to positive emotional effects in humans. Such odours are recognised as signalling chemicals or *semiochemicals*—scents produced by one organism to affect behaviours in another; they are discharged into the air by fauna and flora. Semiochemicals, classified into pheromones or allelochemicals, leave olfactory trails, many of which are mutually beneficial; some, however, are harmful to the perceiver.⁴¹⁴ Haviland-Jones et al. propose introducing

412. Corbin, 70.

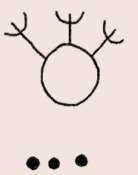
413. Jeannette Haviland-Jones et al., "The Emotional Air in Your Space: Scrubbed, Wild or Cultivated?" *Emotion, Space and Society* 6 (2013): 91-99, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2011.10.002>.

414. Semiochemicals chiefly refer to two types of signals: allelochemicals produced by one species and typically perceived by members of another species, whereas pheromones are delivered and received by members of the same species. Both chemical signals carry a message to another organism that elicits a response. See Etya Amsalem, "One Problem, Many Solutions: Female Reproduction is Regulated by Chemically Diverse Pheromones Across Insects," *Advances in Insect Physiology* 59 (2020): 131-182, <https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.aiip.2020.09.001>.

semiochemicals from co-evolved plants into human-made ecologies to support communal well-being, a concept they have named *green olfaction*. Haviland-Jones et al. claim,

Since the effects occurred without knowledge of the presence of the odours, they may be biochemical at least in part and are certainly pre-conscious. We probably should not be surprised that cultivated flowers are dependent on humans or that we depend on them for emotional support.⁴¹⁵

*Once, we knew the scent of the seasons:
The humid ache of summer,
Autumn's withered musk,
The charred bones of Winter,
and springs moss-damp blossoming,
Now, the seasons blur,
Tinged by the malignant odour of regret.*



Yet, cultivated smellscape arranged in fragrant assemblages possess the same instability as memory. Classen, Howes, and Synnott, in *Scented Maps*, insist that smellscape are in a perpetual state of flux because they are caught up in, combined with and transported by Earth's dynamic atmospherics.⁴¹⁶ Correspondingly, Howes addresses the olfactory dimension of ritual communication and contends, "odours are never 'in place' because they always escape from their objects."⁴¹⁷

415. Haviland-Jones et al., 97.

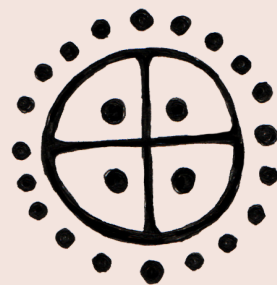
416. In the chapter *Scented Maps: Smellscape*, Classen et al. note that "a 'smellscape' is obviously not a fixed structure, but rather a highly fluid pattern that can shift and change according to atmospheric conditions. Perhaps because of the importance their culture attaches to smell as a means of ordering the world, the Andamanese conceive of space itself not in the way most people do in the West—as a static area within which things happen, but more as a dynamic environmental flow." Classen, Howes, and Synnott, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, 97.

417. David Howes, "Olfaction and Transition: An Essay on the Ritual Uses of Smell," *Canadian Review of Sociology*, 24 (1987): 404, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1755-618X.1987.tb01103.x>; Quoting Gell, "Perfume, Magic and Dream," in *Symbols and Sentiments. Cross-cultural Studies in Symbolism*, edited by Ioan Lewis (London: Academic Press, 1977).

Citing Arnold van Gennep's (1873 - 1957) theory of *Rites of Passage*, whereby ritual transitions (thresholds) create a passage from one state to another, Howes argues olfaction is an intermediary and therefore marks a passage, indeed,

One might conclude that the sense of smell is the liminal sense *par excellence*, constitutive of and at the same time operative across all of the boundaries we draw between different realms and categories of experience.⁴¹⁸

Returning to Gell's claim that matter and meaning are *miscible fluids*, Howes proclaims odours, being diffuse, occupy more than one place, and their *formlessness* renders them nebulous and indefinable.⁴¹⁹ These characteristics make odour an intermediary suited to liminal states. Gell goes further, claiming the olfactory realm is an ideal constituent in the performance of magic because perfume manifests an Earthly form of transcendence: perfume (*halfway between material and immaterial*) participates in transcendence whilst persisting in the world.⁴²⁰



418. Howes, "Olfaction and Transition," 401. (Italics author's own)

419. The concept Howes refers to in *Magic, Perfume, Dream*, is that "the phenomenon of magic confronts us with a situation in which matter and meaning become miscible fluids, a scandal, of course, from the standpoint of scientific method. Looking at all this from the angle just indicated—the olfactory dimension which is both part of, and a reference to, the world—assists us not only in coming to grips with magical techniques which make direct use of odoriferous substances, but also in understanding, in a more general way, how this paradoxical 'mixing' takes place." Gell, "Magic, Perfume, Dream," 402; Two fluids that seamlessly mix, like ethanol and essential oil, are called miscible. Fluids that don't mix, like essential oil and water, are immiscible.

420. Gell, "Magic, Perfume, Dream," 406. (Italics ours)

Perfumed

It is surely correct to say that wearing perfume is a magical act.

Alfred Gell, 1977.⁴²¹

According to Gell, the oils, attars, and absolutes we make our perfumes from are not critical to the performance of olfactory magic. What is vital is the context in which we situate them—our claim that the perfumes are assembled from conversations with the Ancestors. Like the contexts crafted around perfumes generally, *ours is an illusion* because perfumes are, as Gell proclaims, proxies, an "experience not really matched by anything in real life."⁴²² While they are not *auto-communicative*, we don't allege our perfumes are anything but fables (imagined narratives and poetic confabulations).⁴²³ Nor do we venture they are cyphers, awaiting decoding. Yet, they function *as if language*, albeit plant-based, unfamiliar, and fugitive. Countering, Gell contends, perfumes are not linguistic. Instead, they offer "an ideal, an archetypal wholeness, which surpasses language while language remains subservient to the more or less worldly business of communicating."⁴²⁴ Poets and magicians, Gell admits, can conjure the mystical from language.⁴²⁵

421. Gell, 406.

422. Gell, 405.

423. Gell reminds us, "it is not sufficient to say, simply, that this is auto-communicative; since, just as perfume does not have a diacritical meaning for others, it may lack one also where the wearer himself or herself is concerned." Gell, 405.

424. Gell, 405; Olfactory artist Peter de Cupere, aided by visually impaired assistants, has created a series of conceptual devices hypothetically "able to translate a digital text into an olfactory one, simply by breathing. The *Olfabet* allows letters, words and sentences to be translated into scents, thus creating an *Olfalanguage*." Olfabet is an artistic research project, accessed July 21, 2024, <https://www.olfabet.com/>.

425. Gell, 405.

Nevertheless, Howes is persuaded that there are situations in which odours communicate socially or culturally encoded information, for example, in religious or medical settings. Howes argues, “in rites of passage the ‘primal sensory/emotive experience’ of smell is used to ‘fill in the gaps of logical/ semantic structures,’ and thus instigate transition between social categories.”⁴²⁶ Similarly, olfactory art relies on the intersubjective nature of odour. For example, for the *Exposition Internationale du Surréalisme* Duchamp organised the odour of roasting Brazilian coffee to waft through the gallery.⁴²⁷ Situated amongst Surrealist visual and auditory effects, *Perfumes of Brazil* contributed to the installation’s political aroma. Primarily relational, olfactory art seeks to elicit emotions or prompt recollection connected to objects or spaces. However, the mutability and impermanence of odour make it a difficult medium to control.

In *Spray Performances*, Guy Bleus directly perfumes the audience, stimulating an evocative atmosphere. Perfumed, those assembled enter a liminal state akin to Howes’ suggestion that smell communicates the transitional moment in a passage ritual.⁴²⁸ Though Bleus’ performances are not passage rituals per se, they nevertheless draw on the audience’s belief in art as a catalyst. In this instance, perfume is used as an atmospheric invocation. Proclaiming odiferous art, Bleus penned, in 1978, a *Smell Manifesto*, exclaiming:

A NEW MEDIUM AND UNEXPLORED FORM OF COMMUNICATION WOULD BE INTRODUCED. THIS REFERS AS WELL TO THE DEPICTION AS TO THE ACT OF SMELLING OR SMELL-SENSATION BY WAY OF PERFUMED LETTERS, SMELL-TUBES, SMELL-OBJECTS, THE EXHIBITIONS OF

426. Howes, “Olfaction and Transition,” 402.

427. American art critic Hilton Kramer, addressing the 1938 *International Exhibition of Surrealism*, states, “Duchamp transformed the main space of the Galerie Beaux Arts into an eerie but hilarious grotto, its floor thickly carpeted with dead leaves and its ceiling hung with twelve hundred sacks of coal. This space also contained, in addition to objects of art just barely visible, a little pool of water lilies, a perforated iron brazier, and, in each of its four corners, gigantic and luxurious beds made up with embroidered satin counterpanes. The entire atmosphere was permeated by what were called ‘the perfumes of Brazil’—that is, the smell of coffee being roasted behind a screen. And in case there was any doubt about the note of conscious historical defiance in the exhibition, a loudspeaker filled the air with a recording of the German army’s parade march.” Kramer, “The Modern Movement on the Eve of the Second World War,” *American Scholar* 51, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 224. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41210821>.

428. Howes, “Olfaction and Transition,” 403.

ODOURS (OR COMBINATIONS) OR SPRAY PERFORMANCES. IN THAT RESPECT MEMORIES, SENSATIONS OR THOUGHTS PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART THAT MAY COLOUR A SCENT NEGATIVELY OR POSITIVELY DEPENDENT ON COINCIDENCE AND INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE.⁴²⁹

The manifesto aims to validate smell as an art object. Employing all-caps, Bleus’ follows a visual tradition established by the Futurists. While the *Manifesto of Futurist Painters*, published in 1910 by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876–1944), upheld the abrasive, nationalist rhetorical style of political manifestos, Futurism’s growing appreciation of graphic design and propaganda, and access to inexpensive printing technologies prompted them to exploit the bold visual styles of advertising.

Like Bleus, Peter de Cupere composed a *Manifesto of Olfactory Art* (2014), signing it with their body odour. De Cupere’s manifesto, as declarative statement, asserts *Olfactism*’s association with synaesthesia. It defines two critical terms: *Olfactionism*, or smell-based fact and action, and *Olfactorism*, which addresses olfaction as an *actor* in the work. The artist adds a third term, *Olfactourism*, assigning an array of olfactory events and historical uses for aromas to olfactory tourism.⁴³⁰ Interpreting de Cupere’s manifesto, we recognise our perfumery see-saws between tourism and art—an interstitial space suited to questioning our conception of the Universe.

Christophe Laudamiel published a fragrance manifesto, LIBERTÉ, ÉGALITÉ, FRAGRANCITÉ, in 2016. Whilst not concerned with olfactory art, Laudamiel’s fragrant proclamations resemble those of Bleus and de Cupere. Laudamiel declares, “someone shall take on creating a Pantone® scent chart and a true vocabulary of scent.”⁴³¹ While Bleus, de Cupere, and Laudamiel’s manifestos are declarative statements, poetry scholar Marjorie Perloff maintains the early art manifestos of the Futurists and Dadaists aestheticised the manifesto, paving the way for nineteen-sixties

429. Guy Bleus, “The Thrill of Working with Odours: Smell Manifesto 1978,” *Art*, accessed February 26, 2021, <http://www.mailart.be/thrill.html>. (All Caps’ author’s own)

430. Peter de Cupere, “Olfactory Art Manifesto,” 2014, <http://hdl.handle.net/1942/20520>.

431. Christophe Laudamiel, “LIBERTÉ, ÉGALITÉ, FRAGRANCITÉ” (2016): 4, <https://american-perfumer.com/blogs/news/liberte-egalite-francite-a-fragrance-manifesto-by-master-perfumer-christophe-laudamiel>.

conceptual art and precipitately undermined divisions between *poetic* and *academic* texts.⁴³² Though the *manifesto as art practice* tempts us because of its history of visual-literary poetics, we are captivated by the way olfactory artists have used the manifesto to demand odour's creative and semantic circumscription.

While our thesis is moreakin to a paratextual-palimpsest, we claim affinity with the bricolage of practices and techniques standard to art manifestos. Perloff argues we are now surrounded by “texts no longer claiming to be manifestos and to move society to action, but occupying a similar space between lyric and narrative, or lyric and theatre, or lyric and political statement.”⁴³³ Indeed, our thesis is a political statement that slips between *poem*, *picture*, and *aromatosphere*.⁴³⁴



Collema azureum – Lichen

432. Marjorie Perloff, “‘Violence and Precision’: The Manifesto as Art Form,” *Chicago Review* 34, no. 2 (1984): 93, <https://doi.org/10.2307/25305249>.

433. Perloff, 93.

434. Perloff, 74.

Aromatospheric

The nose, as the vanguard of the sense of taste, warns us against poisonous substances. Even more important, the sense of smell locates hidden dangers in the atmosphere. Its capacity to test the properties of air is unmatched.

Alain Corbin, 1986.⁴³⁵

How do we discuss perfumes we’ve never smelt or explain the scent of the Ancestors?

As a creative medium, odour leaves few discernible traces except in documentation.⁴³⁶ Madalina Diaconu contends olfactory art is an *idiolect*, a personal poetic or expressive form peculiar to the artist.⁴³⁷ Instead of seeking to constrain olfactory art within a standard set of recognisable (art-based) characteristics, the philosopher suggests, “we might discover further figures of speech,” a distinctive vernacular—an *aromatospheric slang*. The NASALO

435. Corbin, *Foul and the Fragrant*, 7. (Italics ours)

436. If the perfume or odour is hand-made, a list of raw ingredients will allow the odours to be recreated but not the original experience. Other forms of documentation include photographs, video or audio files. Additionally, artefacts created for the performance that remain afterwards can be collected or exhibited; works can be remembered in written reviews, subsequent texts, or spoken word.

437. Philosopher Madalina Diaconu notes that language is integral to olfactory art. The philosopher explains, “in addition to the titles, olfactory artists integrate language into their works by writing manifests and other programmatic texts, like de Cupere, or by inviting visitors to pay attention to their daily olfactory experiences and describe them, like in Anne Schlöpke’s *Smell diary* (Städtische Galerie Bremen, 2021). Other artists count on the force of synesthetic associations. Svenja Wetzenstein’s interactive installation *Gedanken-Duft-Labor* (Weserburg Museum für moderne Kunst Bremen, 2021) is presented as “a sort of word-factory: visitors are invited to combine words, colours, and olfactory representations in order to produce new words and develop surprising combinations of (again imagined) odours.” Diaconu, “The Stylistics of Olfactory Art as an Idiolect of the Atmosphere,” *Venti 2, Senses* (Winter, 2022), <https://www.venti-journal.com/madalina-diaconu>.

dictionary, formulated by Sissel Tolaas, encodes a private smell language. This nonsensical, all-cap lexicographic, replete with meanings, has more in common with an art manifesto than a helpful resource. Echoing Laudamiel, Tolaas observes, “taking into account that our societies have developed a language for colour, it is remarkable that we have not yet developed one for smell. This is why I began to invent the first words for a language of smells.”⁴³⁸

Gell, however, reminds us, “everything is fine as long as we don’t dwell on the problem of knowing exactly what an odour is.”⁴³⁹ Referencing Gell, Howes insists olfaction possesses a coherence wholly different to that of language and suggests:

Smell-signs simply do not have the same logical/semantic structure as linguistic signs. This is because smells are ‘traces which unlike words only partially detach themselves from the world of objects to which they refer’; i.e., they occupy a space somewhere ‘in between the stimulus and the sign’, the substance and the idea.⁴⁴⁰

Howes believes that odours expose a breach between the sign and its referent. Certainly, it is impossible to imagine the audience’s response without knowing or experiencing the odours sprayed during Bleus’ performance. Being a public event, we assume the scents were recognisable, like Duchamp’s Brazilian coffee. Odours are challenging to describe; consequently, we default to synonyms as a linguistic foil. Yet, even when poetically framed, words fall woefully short; they mask our deficiency, our inability to express the depth of emotions enkindled by fragrance—*remaining unnameable*.

Hubertus Tellenbach, contemplating the oral sensorium (taste and smell), asserts the symbol-wielding authority of language, even when tempered by poetic description, provides little more than vague interpretations of odour. Consequently, Tellenbach proposes, “we might try

438. Sissel Tolaas, “The NASALO Dictionary,” Sissel Tolaas Research Catalogue, 2006, <https://www.researchcatalogue.net/view/7344/7350>.

439. Gell, “Parfum, Symbolisme et Enchantement,” 3.

440. Howes, “Olfaction and Transition,” 404; Howes quoting Gell, “Magic, Perfume, Dream,” 1997.

to establish what kinds of relationships exist between the environment and the self, and how they are constituted by certain situations induced through smelling and tasting.”⁴⁴¹ Locating smell and taste primarily within the culinary and the erotic, Tellenbach argues the oral sensorium requires intimacy and is, therefore, proximal, though arguably, all bodily interactions occur contiguously (simultaneously touching). However, Tellenbach reasons that flavours and aromas aren’t simply perceived; experiencing them, we pass into their realm as they enter us, penetrating our memory—*momentary encounters recalled as atmospheres*. Furthermore, odours conjure the past and predict the future. Tellenbach contends that smells expose a *sixth sense*, that of intuitive expectation or foreboding.⁴⁴² Prismatic: the oral sensorium also detects and warns.

*We sniff you as part of our daily communion with death.
Weeping, the soft perfume of grief.*

Atmospheres being intersubjective transmit, Tellenbach asserts, “special significance when spoken communication is impossible.”⁴⁴³ *Touching*: the peppery warmth of Frankincense oil and the stringent earthiness of Tarata and Angelica tinctures spark an intensely physical memory of you. Bille et al. argue that “when atmospheres are perceived as sensory experiences it means that they underscore a gradual process of transformative rather than absolute and stable perception.”⁴⁴⁴ Furthermore, they attribute atmospheres a fundamental *indeterminacy*, an in-betweenness, neither subject

441. Hubertus Tellenbach gives the example, “odour and odium have the same root, in language and meaning. The significance of these intransitive forms of smelling does not seem to play an important role in average life. But something takes place in our emanative smelling which is of great significance because it is comparable to a principle underlying all human communication: *the emanation of personal atmosphere*.” Tellenbach, “Tasting and Smelling – Taste and Atmosphere – Atmosphere and Trust,” *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology* 12, no. 2 (1981): 222, <https://doi.org/10.1163/156916281X00254>. (Italics author’s own)

442. Tellenbach, 224.

443. Tellenbach, 228.

444. Mikkel Bille, Peter Bjerregaard, and Tim Flohr Sørensen, “Staging Atmospheres: Materiality, Culture, and the Texture of the In-between,” *Emotion, Space and Society* 15 (2015): 32, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2014.11.002>.

nor object, they act as a connective tissue.⁴⁴⁵ Similarly, Böhme refers to atmosphere as a *haze*, the ecstasies or perceived feelings emanating from things or environments.⁴⁴⁶ Indeed, Böhme's theory elucidates Goldhahn's transformative roaring rocks and the aerospheric rapture we experience when in the presence of the Ancestors.

As Földényi affirms, when *the lover* is taken captive, they are transported by raptures of overwhelming fascination, a state attributed to the madness of melancholia. Rapt, we are plunged into a *mist* or *haze*. Piotr Śniedziwski asserts that, "mist forces the subject to pause, to think about themselves and about their place in the world which has disappeared."⁴⁴⁷ Maintaining that the mist is more than atmospheric, Śniedziwski declares it is a metaphor for captivity.⁴⁴⁸ Indeed, as if weeping, the mist's maudlin attachment dampens our skin and clothes. Discussing Stéphane Mallarmé's (1842 - 1898) *The Pipe*, Śniedziwski posits, "mist has its own metaphysics. Because it is a new reality, it demands the reinterpretation of connections pivotal to existence."⁴⁴⁹

445. Discussing a *new aesthetics of atmosphere* Böhme argues, "atmospheres are thus conceived not as free floating but on the contrary, as something that proceeds from and is created by things, persons or their constellations. Conceived in this fashion, atmospheres are neither something objective, that is, qualities possessed by things, and yet they are something thing-like, belonging to the thing in that things articulate their presence through qualities conceived as ecstasies. Nor are atmospheres something subjective, for example, determinations of a psychic state. And yet they are subject-like, belong to subjects in that they are sensed in bodily presence by human beings and this sensing is at the same time a bodily state of-being of subjects in space" Böhme, "Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics," *Thesis Eleven* 36, no. 1 (August 1993): 122, <https://doi.org/10.1177/072551369303600107>.

446. Böhme describes the non-subject as a thing or object, including the environment, the arts, literature, fine art and theatre, and artefacts. Further, Böhme states: "Atmospheres are indeterminate above all as regards their ontological status. We are not sure whether we should attribute them to the objects or environments from which they proceed or to the subjects who experience them. We are also unsure where they are. They seem to fill the space with a certain tone of feeling like a haze." Böhme, "Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept," 121 and 114.

447. Piotr Śniedziwski, *The Melancholic Gaze*, trans. Timothy Dwight Williams (Oxford: Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2018), 68.

448. Śniedziwski, 68. (Italics author's own)

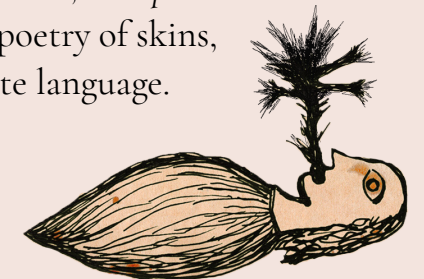
449. Śniedziwski, 71. See, Stéphane Mallarmé's, *The Pipe*, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/54375/the-pipe>.

Hippocrates, Földényi tells us, viewed the roots of melancholy to be physical and, thereby, "cosmic and superhuman (a product of the interplay of wind, landscape, season, climate, even the planets, and stars)."⁴⁵⁰

How do we speak of you in the atmospheric language of Earthly Love and melancholy?

*Shrugging on our coat of mist,
we evanesce.*

Gell reminds us that we experience the emergence and vanishing, "materialisation and dematerialisation," of matter with our sense of smell.⁴⁵¹ We learn by sniffing. Tallenbach avows, "atmosphere is a medium of a preverbal and prereflective elemental contact."⁴⁵² Your touch, the intimacy of cellular memory. Your kiss, the air inside our lungs. Principal investigator on the *Stealthy Insect Sensor Project*, Tim Haarmann, observes that bees rival dogs in their sense of smell. Testing this hypothesis, Haarmann, using Pavlovian conditioning techniques, trained bomb-sniffing bees. The Honeybees extend their proboscis when they detect vapours from explosives and propellants.⁴⁵³ We respond to the sap-stained taste of you on our tongue. Smelling, sniffing, and tasting, Tellenbach advises, are "prior to all words."⁴⁵⁴ We enter the atmosphere of language, the poetry of skins, tongues, and noses, resisting the collapsed lungs of absolute language.



Seed

{After a paratext in the *Erbario*, 1400.}

450. Földényi, 13.

451. Gell also remarks, "a mere aroma, in its very lack of substance, is more like a concept than it is like a 'thing.'" Gell, "Magic, Perfume, Dream," 403.

452. Tellenbach, 229.

453. Los Alamos National Laboratory, "Detecting Explosives with Honeybees: Experts Develop Method to Train Air Force of Bomb-sniffing Bees," *ScienceDaily* (November 29, 2006), www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2006/11/061128140820.htm.

454. Tellenbach, 230.

Archaeoastronomer Michael A. Rappenglück explains that *we* return to ancient *cosmovisions* to seek answers to *old questions*, which contemporary (European) world-conceptions do not address.⁴⁵⁵ The smell of you engulfs us. We touch, fall in Love, despair, come into being, and pass away *as if* by magic.

*In our germinal state, we breathe.
Drawing in the world and exhaling,
small fragments of you fruiting, flow, seed-like from our body.*



Unnamed Fungus

⁴⁵⁵ Rappenglück asserts, “the phrase ‘cosmovision’ denotes a generalised perception of the world, including ideas of its structure (cosmology), its origin and development (cosmogony), and the relation to human life within a specific ecosystem, shared and illustrated by the members of a certain social group.” Rappenglück, “Constructing Worlds: Cosmovisions as Integral Parts of Human Ecosystems,” in *Cosmology Across Cultures: ASP Conference Series* 409, ed. by Juan Antonio Belmonte, José Alberto Rubiño, Francisco Prada, and Anxton Alberdi (2009), 107, https://aspbooks.org/a/volumes/article_details/?paper_id=30100.

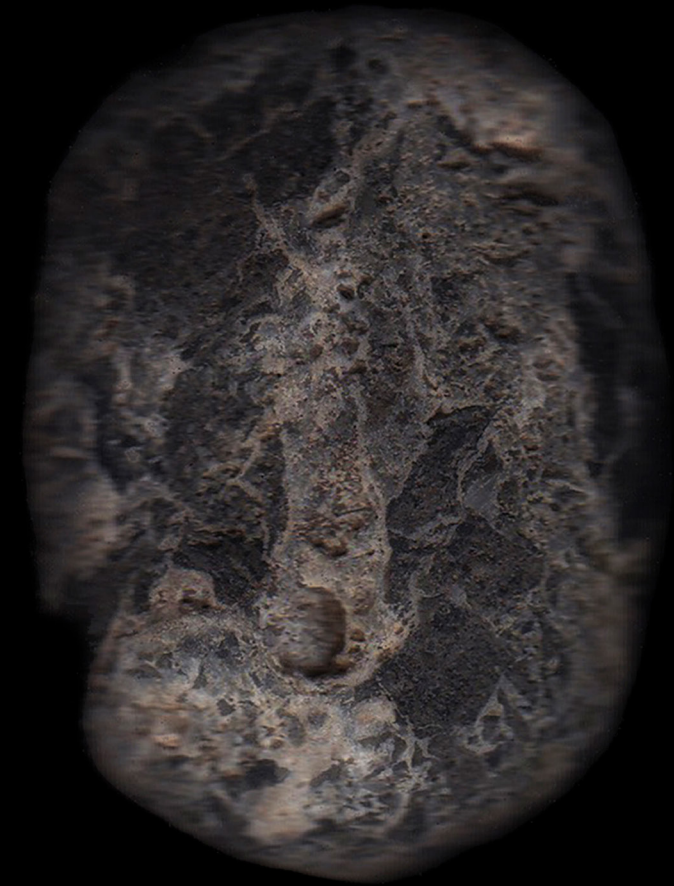
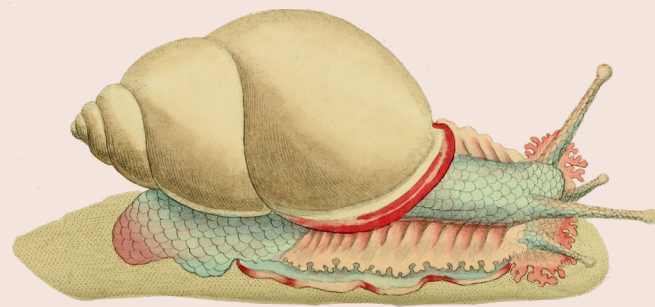
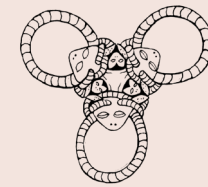


Figure 2.18. *Daughter of Night*, Susan Jowsey, 2023, cameraless photograph, collection artist's own.

FOIL 3 ~ AROMATIC TONGUES



Unnamed Gastropoda



Foil 3

In the Old Norse poem, *Guðrúnarkviða II*, believed to be a lament (c.1000 - 1200 CE), Guðrún is given a potion by her mother, Grimhild, to bring on óminni, ensuring the forgetting of Love.

22. A draught did Grimhild give me to drink.
Bitter and cold; I forgot my cares;
For mingled therein was magic earth,
Ice-cold sea, and the blood of swine.
23. In the cup were runes of every kind,
Written and reddened, I could not read them;
A heather-fish from the Haddings' land,
An ear uncut, and the entrails of beasts.
24. Much evil was brewed within the beer,
Blossoms of trees, and acorns burned.
Dew of the hearth, and holy entrails,
The liver of swine, — all grief to allay.
25. Then I forgot,

Guðrúnarkviða II., trans. Henry Adams Bellows, 1936.⁴⁵⁶

⁴⁵⁶ Stanzas 22 - 25 *Guðrúnarkviða II*. Henry Adams Bellows, trans. *The Poetic Edda*. Vol. 1. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936), 457-458, <https://archive.org/details/poeticddaobelluoft>; "A heather-fish from the Haddings' land," is a kenning, heather-fish refers to a snake, while Haddings' land is the world of the dead; "Dew of the hearth" is a kenning for soot and "An ear uncut" refers to grain, possibly also from the land of the dead.

LOVE

What we propose, then, is a portrait but not a painted one; instead, for the reader, we release the serpentine odour of wonderment, and without voice, we address the object of our love, who speaks a different tongue.

~~*What is proposed, then, is a portrait-but not a psychological portrait; instead, a structural one which offers the reader a discursive site: the site of someone speaking within himself, amorously, confronting the other (the loved object), who does not speak.*~~

Roland Barthes, 1979.⁴⁵⁷

Themes of “wonder” and the “marvel of Being” are suspect if they refer to an ecstatic mysticism that pretends to escape the world. The theme of scientific curiosity is no less suspect if it boils down to a collector’s preoccupation with rarities. In both cases, desire for the exception presupposes disdain for the ordinary.

Jean-Luc Nancy, 2000.⁴⁵⁸

457. While we acknowledge and respect philosopher Roland Barthes original quote, we were compelled to re-translate Richard Howard’s version of Barthes text, which reads: “What is proposed, then, is a portrait-but not a psychological portrait; instead, a structural one which offers the reader a discursive site: the site of someone speaking within himself, amorously, confronting the other (the loved object), who does not speak.” Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*, 3. (Italics ours)

458. Nancy, 10. (Italics ours)

What is plain to us is that our creative endeavours are only a footnote in a vast cosmic narrative: the battle between *Philia* (Love) and *Neikos* (Strife)—a *Universal story*.

In this chapter, the final of our trefoil, we address our thesis *as if* it were a Love letter. Wrapped inside, you will find a charm: the scent of nine plants bound with murmured words and images.

Discussing *wonder’s strangeness*, Rubenstein notes that,

Common sense would seem to dictate that living responsibly in the world requires a closure—or, at the very least, a strong sublimation—of wonder’s primordial openness. And yet the thought experiment at hand will seek to reopen this wound in the name of ‘attentiveness to beings,’ to consider the possibility that responsibility relies upon vulnerability rather than mastery or certainty.⁴⁵⁹

Like Rubenstein’s experiment, we, too, have chosen to banish surety in favour of the perils exposed by wonder. Sniffing out knowledge, we recognise ancestral ken and the liminal imaginary as crucial to our *magical* understanding of the Universe and the current ecological crisis. How this knowledge informs our world-conception is ill-defined because wondering opens us to what has been closed, placing us at the mercy of Love and the inarticulateness of melancholy.

Our question does not describe the liminal imaginary or how our passage through unfolds, nor does it define who the Ancestors are or what ken they may pass on. These aspects of our research necessitate the element of wonder, a form of inquiry described by Rubenstein as a “primitive curiosity.”⁴⁶⁰ Embracing nebulousness, we perceive the breath of knowledge, the scented topography of Earth, alive with sacred trees, the living dead, the fearful dark, speaking birds, cavernous mountains, and thunderous waterways, an ever-changing-ness that discloses environments of cosmic wonder.

459. Rubenstein, 69.

460. Rubenstein, 125.

We have learnt to pay attention to how odours penetrate, partake of, and alter us, how we sniff for information and scent presence. We recognise the malodour of too-sweet and deadly perfumes, the burnt edge of Birch Tar and the calming effects of Petrichor released from sunbaked rock by the first rain. Focusing on the odour of conversations and the taste of language on the tongue, we recall your smell but cannot put into words the patterns of your scent. The Ancestors are atmospheric shapeshifters, ever-changing in form and meaning. They are fragrant forces whose magic transforms existence's physical, emotional, and abstract dimensions: a compulsion, an addiction, and a phobia.

• • • *Conjuring Tomorrow.*

Being aware, having metamorphosed into *being-with*, we reflect on Nancy's declaration that "existence is with: otherwise, nothing exists."⁴⁶¹ Intense and pressing odours (re)connect us to deeply rooted kinship and ethical responsibility. The Ancestors engulf us and confront us with the horror of ourselves. Words founder and come to nothing.

No longer sure who we are, we welcome the dancing tongue of aroma licking our shuddering skin and stirring our emotions. Odours turn us inside out. Like electrical currents arcing between external bodies and internal organs, they infect environments and alter atmospheres, triggering the release of adrenaline and cortisol, stimulating unnameable fears, and inducing physical and psychological terror.⁴⁶² Researching the connection between the olfactory system and behaviours charged with emotions, Firestein and Menini have concluded that "territoriality, sexuality, feeding, and aggression are all strongly influenced by olfactory stimuli."⁴⁶³ Further,

461. Nancy, 5.

462. Richard L. Doty, Director of the *Smell and Taste Center*, based at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, observes, "olfactory receptors are present in tissues throughout the body. These include the skin, skeletal muscle, thyroid, heart, lungs, pancreas, thymus, prostate, kidney, bladder, testes, intestine, blood vessels, and ganglia of the autonomic nervous system." Doty, "Olfaction: Smell of Change in the Air," *Cerebrum: The Dana Forum on Brain Science* (July, 2017): 3, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6132042/>; Adrenaline and cortisol are hormones secreted by the Adrenal glands in response to stress and are known generally for eliciting the *fight or flight* response.

463. Stuart Firestein, and Anna Menini, "The Smell of Adrenaline." *Nature Neuroscience* 2, no. 2 (1999): 106, <https://doi.org/10.1038/5661>.

Firestein and Menini argue that current data shows that the olfactory epithelium "is intimately tied to the central nervous system and probably to the endocrine system."⁴⁶⁴ While scientists focus on the network of connections between odour receptors and biochemical processes, we experience odours psycho-physically, as conversations.

Smokey utterances, rendered in pheromone tones.

Love and knowledge, Barbara Baert proclaims, come together in the sensorium. Focusing on sixteenth-century *Enclosed Gardens* artworks made by nuns, tiny garden scenes created from remnants (beads and paper), Baert asserts these miniature *devotionals* evince,

Knowledge that escapes the cerebral, the knowledge, partly lost, that energetically mounts up in the cosmos, but in the human descends in the form of instinct, fertility, the urge to create, in brief, through the whole sensorium.⁴⁶⁵

Private and personal, these tiny artworks, depicting plants, radiate with the fertile instinct of cosmic knowledge. Baert's explanation lays bare the numinous impulse in our creative acts—our unconscious bodily response to the proteanism of aromatic expression—the scent of reverie presented as an ineffable molecular osmic-cosmology.



464. Firestein, and Menini, 107.

465. Barbara Baert, "An Odour. A Taste. A Touch. Impossible to Describe: Noli me Tangere and the Senses," in *Religion and the Senses in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Wietse de Boer and Christine Göttler (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 144.



Geranium Lucidum and Geranium Robertianum

Plant Idiolect

The plant's life is expressed in an incessant, wild proliferation, a becoming-spatial, and a becoming-literal of intentionality.

Micheal Marder, 2011.⁴⁶⁶

Gathering plants for tinctures, we come alive to their odour. In the way that taste and smell fuelled Proust's hunger for recall, the Ancestors summon us, using scent to ferry us across the threshold of unmemory.

1. Ecklonia Radiata

Common name: Seaweed.

Māori name: Rimurimu.

Olfactive Family: Green-herbaceous / Marine

Olfactory Note: Top

Sea forest.

Kelp and sea algae form terrestrial forests that, like land-based forests, render us voiceless when we enter their dominion and, more disturbingly, hold us in a state of suspended animation, almost motionless, transfixed but for the pulsing of the sea.

We are the sea's spawn pitched up and cast off—Islands.

⁴⁶⁶ Michael Marder, "Plant-Soul: The Elusive Meanings of Vegetative Life," *Environmental Philosophy* 8, no. 1 (2011): 95, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26168061>. (Italics ours)

Our mother's genetic ancestors belonged to the sea, beaching themselves on the shores of Aotearoa's colonial story two hundred years ago. Whereas our father's antecedents migrated from their European island homes to Aotearoa in the early twentieth century.

*Every departure and arrival
a dislocation of memory.
Islands of smell set adrift.
We are borne on ocean currents.
Ymis blóð and Pākehā.*

How does ancestral ken fasten us to the Universe? How do we reconnect to memoryscapes both close at hand and far away?⁴⁶⁷ Through the poetry of aroma, we tuck the intimate magic of smell within the folds of our Love letter like small tokens, the ephemera of gathered ideas. In this re-attachment, we have combined three methods whose umbilical scents bespeak the vital coupling of environmental, geophysical, and familial Ancestors.

As antidotes, these creative practices offer a cure for óminnisveig, the potion of oblivion, *the liquor of not-memory*, swallowed long ago. Gleaning, drying, crushing, submerging, and mixing extracts chosen for their physical and psychological effects, we enact a form of perfumery reliant on plant language—the biogenic volatile organic compounds emitted by vegetal life to communicate with other plants and organisms in the plant's immediate environment.

Seeking to capture the familiar scent of salt-laden oceans, we have made a tincture from tendrils of *Ecklonia radiata*, golden sea kelp, whose broad leathery fronds cover rocky shorelines and whose odour tastes of the sea. We have also harvested *Cystophora retroflexa*, a brown sea alga whose branching form produces the distinct yellow aroma of iodine. In contrast, we used a seaweed absolute made from the perennial sea alga

467. Memoryscapes are defined as a “complex and vibrant plane upon which memories emerge, are constructed, transform, encounter other memories, mutate, and multiply.” Kendall R. Phillips, and G. Mitchell Reyes, eds., *Global Memoryscapes: Contesting Remembrance in a Transnational Age* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2011), 14.

Fucus vesiculosus. Commonly known as Sea Oak, *Fucus vesiculosus* is one of only a few seaweeds to adapt, less than eight thousand years ago, to the low salinity and nontidal conditions of the mostly landlocked, brackish Baltic Sea.

The rich darkness of Sea Oak conjures memories of mounds of seaweed rotting at the sea's edge after a storm. Its odour induces an emotional-sensory feedback experience like Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR), an involuntary physical and psychological response to sensory stimuli.⁴⁶⁸ Our body registers sent-based memories that have no conscious equivalent. It is an osmic reaction, a limbic resonance triggering an embodied response to the scent of decay.

You cast a pungent spell. Fascinated, we stare into the lunar eyes of tomorrow.

We use these seaweeds to fashion *fougère* (or fern) perfumes.⁴⁶⁹ *Fougère* is synonymous with herbaceous, woody, mossy fragrances with core ingredients of Oakmoss and Coumarin. Natural bioactive coumarins (which are sweet-smelling yet taste bitter) exist in a wide variety of medicinal plants, as well as bacteria, fungi, and some marine sponges. High levels of coumarin exist in Tonka beans, Liquorice, and Cassia Cinnamon.⁴⁷⁰ Coumarins are well known for their therapeutic effects, including anticancer, anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, antiviral, antifungal, and neuroprotective actions.⁴⁷¹ Adding the fettered tang of rotting seaweed to *fougère*'s traditionally soft, mossy aroma confuses the aromatic tongue and its traditional odour profile. The resulting sensory experience, rather than being familiar, is, at first

468. Giulia Lara Poerio et al., “More than a Feeling: Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) is Characterised by Reliable Changes in Affect and Physiology,” *PloS One* 13, no. 6 (2018): e0196645, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29924796/>.

469. French Perfume house *Houbigant* introduced *Fougère Royale* in 1882. The perfume was designed by perfumier Paul Parquet. Parquet used the isolate known as Coumarin extracted from the Tonka Bean as a crucial ingredient in the formulation of *fougère*'s herbaceous, woody scent. The original Houbigant recipe for *Fougère Royale* is held in the *Osmothèque Perfume Archive* in Versailles, France, <https://www.osmotheque.fr/a-propos/>.

470. Javad Sharifi-Rad et al., “Natural Coumarins: Exploring the Pharmacological Complexity and Underlying Molecular Mechanisms,” *Oxidative Medicine and Cellular Longevity* (August, 2021): 6492346, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8440074/>.

471. Sharifi-Rad, 6492346.

sniff, bodily and vaguely repellent. As Diaconu suggests, creative olfactory atmospheres reflect a private language, an aromatic idiolect peculiar to the molecular vocabulary of plants. A language which, while we recognise its lilting intonations, we comprehend little of its incantatory affect.

Untraditional, our perfumes stray from expectations. Their essence releases a subtle to-ing and fro-ing between bodily scents, environments, unmemory, and psychological states. Like all poetic conversations, they bespeak complex stories. Freeman contends that poetic storying often manifests in ways unrelated to words. Rather than limiting what constitutes poesis, Freeman argues, we ought to focus on “the profound, never-ending challenge of fashioning stories able to do justice to the inexhaustible profusion of meaning that is constitutive of ... life.”⁴⁷² Indeed, the narratives of the Ancestors are unconstrained by time or place and our response, a Love letter, accentuates the inadequacy of our tongue. We experience the feverishness expressed by Barthes in the statement, “to try to write love is to confront the muck of language: that region of hysteria where language is both too much and too little.”⁴⁷³ Plants, however, incite a language of intoxication tuned to Love.



472. Mark Freeman, “Telling Stories: Memory and Narrative,” in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 277, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1c999bq.22>.

473. Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, 99.



Figure 2.19. *Rimurimu*, Susan Jowsey, 2024, cameraless photograph, collection artist's own.

Particle Exchange

It is the odour of one's soul that identifies one as living or dead.

David Howes, 1988.⁴⁷⁴

It is often the case that art objects are regarded as transcending the technical schemas of their creators, as well as those of mere spectators, as when the art object is considered to arise, not from the activities of the individual physically responsible for it, but from the divine inspiration or ancestral spirit with which they are filled.

Alfred Gell, 1992.⁴⁷⁵

Woven from orality: poetics and performance, Mayburd argues that Old Norse sagas and the Edda are not mythic in the modern sense.⁴⁷⁶ Instead, they recall the world-conceptions of mediaeval peoples whose cosmological beliefs were primarily recorded in imagery, objects, and scenographic performance, remnants of which remain engraved into and arranged across the terrain. These physical fragments emphasise the consistency of Nordic

474. David Howes, "On the Odour of the Soul: Spatial Representation and Olfactory Classification in Eastern Indonesia and Western Melanesia," *Bijdragen Tot de Taal-, Land- En Volkenkunde* 144, no. 1 (1988): 96, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27863918>. (Italics ours)

475. Alfred Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology," in *Anthropology, Art, and Aesthetics*, ed. Jeremy Coote (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 59. (Italics ours)

476. Miriam Mayburd, "The Hills Have Eyes: Post-Mortem Mountain Dwelling and the (Super) Natural Landscape in the Íslendingasögur," *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia* 10 (2014): 131, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48501883>.

cosmic conceptions over millennia until the advent of Christianisation.⁴⁷⁷ As Goldhahn has shown, they accentuate the role of performance and affect in the creation of cosmology.

In contrast, written narratives, the sagas and Edda, contain few direct allusions to the sensory, specifically odiferousness, yet material and archaeological research illuminate odour-filled domestic, cultural, and ritual environments. In the oral poetics of our genetic Ancestors, we recognise the mysterious power loosed by strangely patterned words. The herb-scented Mead of Poesy, the whiff of spit, and the rusty tang of dragon's blood are critical ingredients in magical transformation. Odour's effects are equally beguiling and suffocating; they force us to utter guttural moans and grapple with deep longing, their scent encoding a dynamic environmental poiesis. It is this relationship, Freeman argues, that reveals the correspondence between memory and poetry:

Just as memory may disclose meanings that might have been unavailable in the immediacy of the moment, poetry may disclose meanings and truths that might otherwise have gone unarticulated. Both are thus potential vehicles of what might be termed *recuperative disclosure*; they are agents of insight and rescue, re-collection and recovery, serving to counteract the forces of oblivion.⁴⁷⁸

Odour's resemblance to poetry makes our perfumes a form of recuperative disclosure. In their essence, the limbo of unmemory is forestalled. Yet, like memory, they, too, contain the germ of their self-destruction. Indeed, as storytellers, the mediums we have chosen seem bewildering, obscuring

477. The Christianisation of Scandinavia was not uniform; its imposition took hundreds of years, from c. 1100 to 1300 CE. Laws were often required prohibiting Paganism. The *Guta Laga: The Law of the Gotlanders* (GL), written in either the thirteenth or fourteenth century CE (possibly earlier), is one of Scandinavia's earliest law codices. Initially, the law book comprised one manuscript in Gnutish; however, over time and with many translations, the document blossomed into eight distinct manuscripts. Notably, the GL bans sacrifice. Law four states: "Now the next thing is that sacrifice is strictly forbidden to all men, together with all those old customs that belong to Paganism. No one may pray to either groves or howes or heathen gods, nor to holy places or ancient sites. If someone is found guilty of this, and it is proved against him and confirmed with witnesses that he has invoked something of this sort with his food or drink, contrary to Christian practice, then he is to be fined three marks." See Christine Peel, *Guta Lag and Guta Saga: The Law and History of the Gotlanders* (London: Routledge, 2015), 57.

478. Freeman, "Telling Stories," 276.

more readily than they portray. We confess to wonderment. Though we use illuminated images to fix what we behold, perfume that gives voice to the olfactory poiesis of the Ancestors—the poetics of particle exchange. Freeman contends that poetry offers neither a “mimetic re-presentation of the world nor a fictive rendition of it. Rather, what [poets] seek to do is rewrite the world through the imagination.”⁴⁷⁹

Through the liminal language of plants, we rewrite ourselves.

2. Tonka Bean Absolute (Smokey)

Botanical Name: *Dipteryx odorata*

Botanical Family: Fabaceae

Olfactive Family: Gourmand

Olfactory Note: Base, Excellent Fixative

A remedy for snake bites.

The vanilla-scented Tonka bean, like seaweed, has been used in folk medicines for centuries. This dimension of the odoriferous, the slippage between scent and potion, is significant since perfumes induce unconscious behavioural changes. As Gell suggests, odours are magical. They transmit the ineffable, enkindling sensations, making us more sociable or, conversely, increasing stress, poisoning us as effortlessly as they heal. Tonka bean absolute and oils (whether sweet or smokey) excite the nose with facets of tobacco, hay, vanilla, and honey. Coumarin, though sweet smelling, tastes bitter, a contrast that emphasises the correspondence between the senses of taste and smell.

Cells in the mammalian tongue contain both olfactory and taste receptors, leading to the assertion that the tongue, too, participates in scent memories.⁴⁸⁰ This experience, known as the *Proust effect*, intimately entangles smell, taste, and memory. The aerosolized narrative of fragrance unfolds moment by moment, awakening the dormant. Our perfumes are mythopoetic. On mixing the sticky odour of Tonka bean with the funk of Rimurimu (Seaweed), an acidic reek reminiscent of urine and rotting matter is released. Smouldering under this fugacious first impression lies a slowly

479. Freeman, 275.

480. See Chu, and Downes, “Proust Nose Best,” 511.

sleeping warmth, the deep connective tissue of dying embers. It is as if we are mixing a concoction of arcane metafiction, combining the ineffability of giant serpents and sacrificial fire.⁴⁸¹ We perceive these perfumes as kin to the pictorial poiesis of Old Norse kennings, which, Heslop asserts, carry the magic of *self-forgetfulness*.⁴⁸² They are fragrant poetics. Freeman contends that the past (memory) exists only in the present (the act of remembering). Consequently, memories emerge, like fiction, from the curdled remains of our daily existence. Explaining, Freeman writes, “all we have are memories of memories of memories; and the longer we live, it would seem, the more fictional our pasts—and, of course, we ourselves—will have to be.”⁴⁸³

In rewriting ourselves, we reject all we once knew and choose instead the mysterious liminality of perfume. To complete this transformation, we don the pelt of unmemory and burrow into the hollow of Earth, leaving behind the faintest hint of human pheromone. It will be too late when you notice we have gone because we will have penetrated your limbic system, the most ancient part of you, bestowing fiction’s kiss.

481. Archaeologist Birgitta Johansen proposes late Nordic Iron Age hill-forts have more in common with serpent dragons and femal rituals than defence and warfare, noting that imagery from the Norse Iron Age depicts snake handlers as femal. Johansen contends that the remains of low-walled, winding hill-forts are embodiments of serpent-like, fire-spitting dragons, not destroyed fortifications. Constructed by placing concentric rings of boulders around a hilltop or cliff edge, the stones recreate the segmented body of the encircling snake. Johansen notes, “The winding hill-fort rampart that guards a selected hilltop can be compared to a stylised dragon. In the hill-fort ramparts, and within the hill-fort, there are often traces of fire and in this way the hill-fort resembles a fire spitting dragon. In the stories, the residence of the dragon is also usually in a mountain, or on top of a mountain. The hill-fort rampart guards and protects the internal from the external, just as the dragon.” Johansen, “The Transformative Dragon - The Construction of Social Identity and the Use of Metaphors During the Nordic Iron Age,” *Current Swedish Archaeology* 4, no. 1 (1996): 99, <https://doi.org/10.37718/CSA.1996.06>; Additionally, archaeologist Gunner Andersson asserts serpents, pivotal to Norse Viking Age cosmologies, are “depictions, in both a figurative/linguistic and literal sense, alludes to the secrets of life, the transformation and crossing between life and death as well as being a distinguishing demarcation between the inside and outside.” Andersson, “With Thor on Our Side: The Symbolism of the Thor Hammer-Ring in Viking Age Burial Ritual,” in *Dealing with the Dead: Archaeological Perspectives on Prehistoric Scandinavian Burial Ritual*, ed. Tore Artelius and Fredrik Svanberg (Stockholm: National Heritage Board, Riksantikvarieämbetet, 2005), 58.

482. Heslop, “Metaphors for Forgetting,” 249.

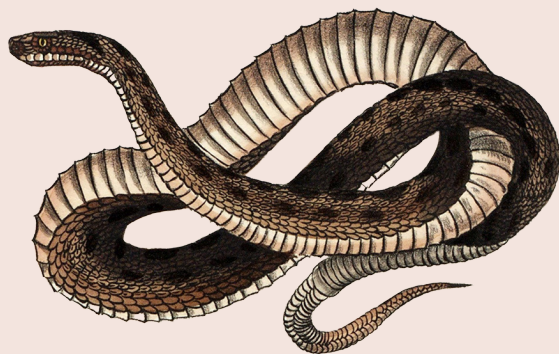
483. Freeman, *Rewriting the Self*, 91.



Hagstone - Amulet

*Concealed in memory's folds, we divine the unstable medium of your presence;
an aroma—phantasmal, aerial, and holy-other—you steal our breath away.*

The *spontaneous autobiographical* memories so fervently sought by Proust arrive uninvited. Unable to be cognitively conjured, they rise, unbidden, many times per day as memories roused by environmental sensory stimuli.⁴⁸⁴ They are lingering fragments, detached from our store of personal (episodic) memories, they drift between *memory* and *anti-memory*. The eerie doppelgänger of memory, anti-memory, allows moments to be selected and retained; without anti-memory, we would become overwhelmed. Akin to matter and antimatter, anti-memories inhibit neuronal excitation, stabilising the chaos of recall—stopping us from remembering too much.⁴⁸⁵



Vipera Berus

484. See Dorthe Berntsen, "Involuntary Autobiographical Memories," *Applied Cognitive Psychology* 10 (1996): 435–454, <http://doi.org/10.1002/acp.1776>; and Dorthe Berntsen, *Involuntary Autobiographical Memories: An Introduction to the Unbidden Past* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

485. For further discussion of antimemories see Helen C. Barron et al., "Unmasking Latent Inhibitory Connections in Human Cortex to Reveal Dormant Cortical Memories," *Neuron* 90, no. 1 (2016): 191–203, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.neuron.2016.02.031>.

Love's Terrain

*Your limbs, sinuously intertwined, enfold us.
Wings and heads overlaid, bulging-eyes,
protruding tongues, hooked beaks, bear-clawed—a hybrid scent.*

Working on-site at the *Archaeological Park of Pompeii*, artist Sissel Tolaas notes, smell has a transtemporal dimension. Trapped odour molecules exist everywhere, in macro and micro-Earthly environments, within skin, soils, seed pods, and artefacts, pockets of air caught as bubbles. When leveraged, Tolaas asserts, this odiferous trace information enables "a completely different understanding and appreciation of historical sites."⁴⁸⁶

Like Tolaas, we, too, perceive odours as transtemporal. We experience them physically as ancestral bodies that rise to embrace or assault us—aromatic kin. As kinfolk, we carry them within us. We breathe them in, overwhelmed; they alter us in unexpected ways.⁴⁸⁷

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro argues that this understanding of kinship unspools an animistic ontology *bound by magical influence*. Such a proclamation interests us because it defines an ontology, as the anthropologist suggests, based on "universal agency and trans-specific kinship relatedness,

486. Andrea Viliani, "What Do Ruins Smell Like? A Conversation with Sissel Tolaas," *Flash Art*, June 26, 2023, <https://flash---art.com/2023/06/sissel-tolaas/>.

487. Scientists Isidro Ferrer et al. note the existence of olfactory receptors (ORs) in non-chemosensory organs, claiming "the perception of odours (and their recognition in humans) is not the only function of ORs. More readily, activation of certain ORs switches on complex cellular responses mediated by neural networks, neurotransmitters, and hormones which in turn determine sophisticated behaviours. ORs located in non-olfactory tissue and organs are chemoreceptors able to trigger complex response receptors but not precisely linked to any sensorial perception." Ferrer et al., "Olfactory Receptors in Non-Chemosensory Organs: The Nervous System in Health and Disease," *Frontiers in Ageing Neuroscience* 8 (2016): 163, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4932117/>.

utterly beyond the grasp of the genealogical method.”⁴⁸⁸ Trans-specific kinships override European concepts of genealogy; instead, relationality arcs between bodies, transcending fixity and making kinship fluid. Fluid-kinship discloses our hybridity, composing who we are (we do not refer to the living or dead, animate or inanimate, because such binaries hold no meaning for odour). We are fluid-kin, connected through bonds of magical influence by cosmological forces.⁴⁸⁹ The secretions of the Ancestors run olfactory interference, interrupting our cellular memories. Our olfactory receptors (ORs) do not always receive olfactory signals; instead, many activate neurological responses at a cellular level. Indeed, Isidro Ferrer et al. submit that “ORs located in non-olfactory tissue and organs are chemoreceptors able to trigger complex response receptors but not precisely linked to any sensorial perception.”⁴⁹⁰

*Our response to you is scent-based, but what is scent?
The path we follow to enter Love's terrain.*

Even though we conjure your scent from the liminal imaginary, we exist within you. You are the aetheric jötnar, *present at the beginning of the cosmos*, an ill-defined force identical to the Universe. We come alive under the influence of Old Norse cosmological beliefs; our fluid bodies entwined are transformed by (super)natural topography and ecological forces. Lotte Hedeager contends that pre-Christian Norse “fully accepted and clearly attested that the body could exist beyond the boundary of the skin, i.e. in another's skin or fur” and therefore humans were shapeshifters, *impersonators*—Beings cloaked in ambiguity.⁴⁹¹

488. Viveiros de Castro, “The Gift and the Given,” 249.

489. Viveiros de Castro, 249.

490. Isidro Ferrer et al., 163.

491. Hedeager, “Split Bodies in the Late Iron Age,” 117.

Correspondingly, Mattsson McGinnis contends life and death, past and present, were immaterial to Viking Age Norse world-conceptions since existence was part of “a shifting semantic field at once as persistent as memory and as hard to pin down as a ghost.”⁴⁹² In the bonded rhythm of breathing, we achieve aroma-organism interpenetration, a hybrid ancestry of sky-soil-serpent-stagnant and overflowing waters-lichen-rock-wind-animal.

Reeking of the Ancestors, our perfumes are folktales, poems, and remedies.



Figure 2.20. Studio documentation, Marcus Williams, 2024, digital photograph, collection artist's own.

492. Meghan Mattsson McGinnis, “How ‘Other’ Was the Viking Otherworld?” in *‘Otherness’ in the Middle Ages*, ed. Hans-Werner Goetz and Ian Wood (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2021), 315.

The Inscape of Our Heart

Smell crosses the boundaries of and connects different realms and eras, including those of life and death. Furthermore, as the aerial element of breath, smell treats knowledge as the awakening of our lost intuitions. The paradox of smell is that its impact on the past and on memory is incomparable, yet no other sense is equally as ephemeral.

Barbara Baert, 2018.⁴⁹³

The difference between our understanding of smellscape and J. Douglas Porteous's theory of them, is that we must summon, from the liminal imaginary and unmemory, odours of place, marrying them to lived experiences of forest, rock, and ocean scents. Within this *liminal* smellscape, which Porteous calls the *inscape*, the landscape of personal comprehension, we detect airborne semiochemicals that speak to us.⁴⁹⁴ It is the aroma of *nowhere*—smellscape of the imagination, arising from the fertile soil of Earthly Love.

In this way, our perfumes conform to Gell's notion of the art object as an enchanter. Gell maintains that art objects "present themselves to us

493. Barbara Baert, "Wild is the Wind: Pathosformel and Iconology of a Quintessence," in *Interruptions and Transitions* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 28, https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004390522_008. (Italics ours)

494. "Semiochemicals, defined as informational molecules, play a fundamental role in the transmission of messages between organisms. Semiochemicals are chemical substances produced by organisms such as plants and animals, such substances elicit a physiological or behavioural response in individuals of the same or another species." Explanation of semiochemicals from Roberto Rico-Martínez et al., "Fate and Adverse Effects of Pesticides in the Environment," in *Pesticides in the Natural Environment*, ed. Pardeep Singh, Suruchi Singh, and Mika Sillanpää (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2022), 65–119, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/earth-and-planetary-sciences/semiochemical>; For a discussion on the concept of *inscape*, see J. Douglas Porteous, "Inscape: Landscapes of the Mind in the Canadian and Mexican Novels of Malcolm Lowry," *Canadian Geographer* 30, no. 2 (1986): 123, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1541-0064.1986.tb01037.x>.

surrounded by a kind of halo-effect of resistance."⁴⁹⁵ The aura emanating from the object produces its magical effect, not the thing itself, like scented semiochemicals that induce unpredictable behaviours. The *halo-effect of resistance* sparks a transient form of communication that, while intimate, remains remote, airborne, evading capture—flirting with us but resisting our advances.

Porteous argues that to *picture* a smellscape, the non-continuous, fragmentary, and episodic characteristics of odours must be addressed.⁴⁹⁶ Interpreting this, Jim Drobnick argues that olfactory artists create experiences at odds with *visual art* because their creative endeavours don't have to consider perspective, scale, or distance. Instead, artists engaged with olfaction focus on intensity, complexity, and affect.⁴⁹⁷ Smellscape efflux and dissipate, creating an aura of resistance.

Porteous' assertion that smellscape are emplaced—fixed to physical environments is questioned by Doreen Massey who describes, place as coexistent, non-specific, constantly transforming, and dependent on perceptions. Place, therefore, is a construct fabricated from multiple narratives and, as such, transitory and uncertain. Massey, recognising time as a knotwork where past and present twist together rather than ceaselessly moving forward, states:

Perhaps a really 'radical' history of a place would be one which did not try to present either simple temporal continuity or only spatial simultaneity with no sense of historical depth. A way of understanding which, in the end, did not try to seal a place up into one neat and tidy 'envelope of space-time' but which recognised that what has come together, in this place, now, is a conjunction of many histories and many spaces.⁴⁹⁸

495. Gell, "The Technology of Enchantment," 48.

496. Porteous, "Smellscape," 359.

497. Jim Drobnick, "Toposmia: Art, Scent, and Interrogations of Spatiality," *Angelaki* 7, no. 1 (2002): 33, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09697250220142047>.

498. Doreen Massey, "Places and Their Pasts," *History Workshop Journal*, no. 39 (1995): 191, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4289361>.

Responding to Massey's urging for a radical understanding of place and Porteous' notion of smellscape, Drobnick came up with *Toposmia or place + smell*. Toposmia ascribes a spatial location to odours by linking them to specific stories of place. Considering the work of conceptual artist James Lee Bryars (1932 - 1997), Drobnick addresses the artist's interest in shamanism and the ephemeral represented in the performance, *The Drop of Black Perfume*, 1983. Following the Japanese tradition of undertaking meditation retreats in remote locations, Bryars, dressed in gold, climbed the Furka Mountain Pass in Switzerland to offer the mountain a single drop of perfume. In this gesture, Bryars harnesses the mountain winds, allowing them to carry off the perfume's scent, accentuating its evanescence. The performance, Drobnick exclaims, situates Bryars olfactory art "on the edge of abstraction and sensory awareness."⁴⁹⁹ However, if we acknowledge the winds as Ancestors, Bryars' offering, though swiftly taken up and dispersed, can be interpreted as a salutation, a social act of recognition. The drop of perfume, akin to uttering a greeting, becomes an intensely personal acknowledgement of kinship.

Hsuan L. Hsu applies Stacey Alaimo's trans-corporeal theories to olfactory art, revealing the environmental and socio-cultural politics of air.⁵⁰⁰ Hsu declares air constitutes a fugitive, nomadic, and contaminated medium. Perceived as trans-corporeal, odour, as art, confronts audiences by exposing them to the biopolitics of airborne particles. Furthermore, Hsu argues odour defines socio-cultural groups and segregates communities. Breathing is environmentally risky. Hsu asserts that the trans-corporeality of olfactory art draws our attention to humanity's dependence on air of a certain quality and, by extension, to Earth's single atmospheric envelope, where air currents carry toxins across continents and oceans.⁵⁰¹

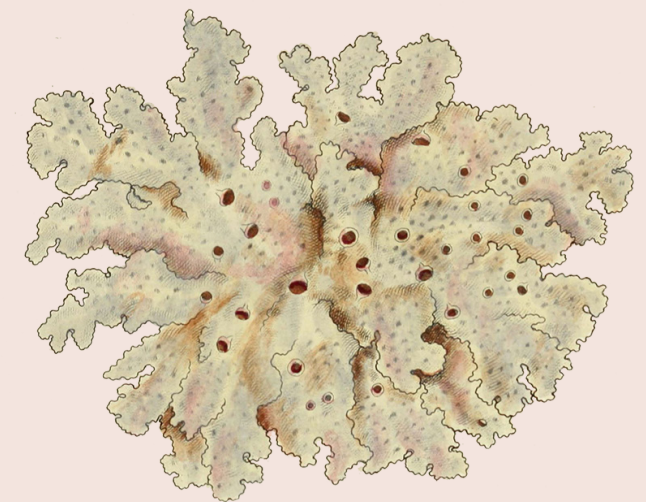
499. Drobnick, 37-8.

500. Hsuan L. Hsu, "Olfactory Art, Transcorporeality, and the Museum Environment," *Resilience: A Journal of the Environmental Humanities* 4, no. 1 (2016): 1-24, <https://doi.org/10.5250/resilience.4.1.0001>; The notion of trans-corporeal referred to by Hsu is defined by Stacey Alaimo, "Trans-corporeality means that all creatures, as embodied beings, are intermeshed with the dynamic, material world, which crosses through them, transforms them, and is transformed by them." Stacey Alaimo, "Trans-corporeality," in *Posthuman Glossary*, ed. Rosi Braidotti and Maria Hlavajova (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 435.

501. Hsu, 19.

Alaimo insists that "imagining human corporeality as trans-corporeality, in which the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world, underlines the extent to which the corporeal substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from 'the environment.'"⁵⁰² Our question, while conceptual, is also political. In asking it, we engage with the Ancestors, genealogical and environmental, who challenge our *self*-conception, questioning what being *human* means. When we ask how a magical world-conception might change us, it is not a speculative inquiry, but a cross-examination of how Euro-American scientific and late-capitalist paradigms shape our views. We ask because we want to understand how the Ancestors, living and dead, floral and faunal, topographic and (super)natural, also affect who we are.

*Inhaling, you enter, and with every exhalation,
leave your imprint on the air.*



Sticta dissecta - Lichen

502. Stacy Alaimo, "Trans-corporeal Feminisms and the Ethical Space of Nature," in *Material Feminisms*, ed. Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 138.

Enchanted

The challenge, then, is to make photography the visual equivalent of smell and taste, something you can feel as well as see.

Geoffrey Batchen, 2004.⁵⁰³

The soul of persons afflicted with melancholia see objects only indistinctly, as if in a tarnished mirror or through cloudy water.

Piotr Śniedziewski, 2018.⁵⁰⁴

Hippocrates argues melancholia causes a breach in the cosmos because those afflicted fail to observe the laws of Fate. It is as if, Földényi notes, “they have stepped out of themselves, fallen into ecstasy.”⁵⁰⁵ In our Lovingness, melancholia takes root, its seeds growing inside us and turning our dreams, smelling of leaves, bark, and damp soil, into a rising tide of toxic fumes. Sniffing is both balm and grief. Beset by mist, we cloak ourselves in odour, concealing our identity, hiding from ourselves. Śniedziewski calls this murky odiferousness “a floating melancholy.”⁵⁰⁶ We are trapped in this atmosphere, where images form and fade away while smells linger under the weight of condensation, turning to tears.

⁵⁰³ Geoffrey Batchen, *Forget Me Not: Photography and Remembrance* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 15. (Italics ours)

⁵⁰⁴ Śniedziewski, *The Melancholic Gaze*, 151. The original quote is from *Encyclopédie ou Dictionnaire Raisonné des Sciences, des Arts et des Métiers*, 1765. (Italics ours)

⁵⁰⁵ Földényi, *Melancholy*, 11–12.

⁵⁰⁶ Śniedziewski, 62; Śniedziewski notes “for Mallarmé, the gloomy mist not only elicits sorrow, but as it fills up the world, it replaces it, renders it the dominion of melancholy; of eternal loss, and of void; a void of permeable and unsecured places.” Śniedziewski, 56.

The atmospheric realms of unnatural darkness and lowering mists belong to the night and environmental phenomena like snow, which in Old Norse cosmologies are jötnar.⁵⁰⁷ Unable to find our way, we are forced to look inward toward the heart of the matter. As Śniedziewski alleges, the mist condemns us “to solitude and constant remembrance of something that does not exist at all. As a result, the subject itself loses its clarity, becoming blurred, out of focus.”⁵⁰⁸ Yet wonder lurks in formlessness. Contemplating the vagaries of mist, we conjure from the darkness, with the aid of the slow-roaming eye of a flat-bed scanner, a glimpse of you. The images that materialise offer us a correspondence to, rather than a representation of, your scent.

The scanner’s refractive illuminations produce an ad hoc image similar to Strindberg’s experimental Celestographs.⁵⁰⁹ Peter Geimer contends that Strindberg’s engagement with photography “recalls the centuries-old tradition of discerning figurative elements in trees and roots, in passing clouds, in flames or rising smoke.”⁵¹⁰ These figments, known as pareidolia or partial hallucinations, show us something hidden—the recognisable concealed within unrelated phenomena. They appear like voices in the mist or odours in pictures—rising like spectres; they are secondary images.⁵¹¹

Neither Strindberg nor Baraduc referred to the visual manifestations they produced as photographs. Yet, their alchemy reveals photography’s varied nature.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁷ See Marlene Ciklamini, “Óðinn and the Giants,” *Neophilologus* 46 (1962): 145–158, <https://rdcu.be/dFnJ7>.

⁵⁰⁸ Śniedziewski, *The Melancholic Gaze*, 65.

⁵⁰⁹ For Strindberg’s Celestographs: Sam Dolbear, “August Strindberg’s Celestographs (1893–4),” *The Public Domain Review*, August 25, 2019, <https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/august-strindberg-s-celestographs-1893-4/>.

⁵¹⁰ Peter Geimer, *Inadvertent Images: A History of Photographic Apparitions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018), 67.

⁵¹¹ Pareidolia is “the tendency to perceive a specific, often meaningful image in a random or ambiguous visual pattern.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. “pareidolia,” accessed October 23, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pareidolia>.

⁵¹² The word photography combines two words, Greek *phos* or light and *graphe* or writing, commonly referred to as drawing with light. “Although ‘heliography’, ‘photogeny’, and ‘daguerreotypy’, were first used as alternatives, ‘photography’ eventually gained universal precedence as the preferred name.” *Oxford Reference online*, “etymology of ‘photography’”, accessed November 19, 2023, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/>

Baraduc explains:

In iconography, the plate receives, very slowly, no longer by the solar ray, but by an electro-vital current (wind, breeze) or simply by a direct emission, no longer, the exterior light of the object, but what is called its internal light, its intimate soul, which it records.⁵¹³

Air, not light, transfers the vital current to the photographic plate. Similarly, Strindberg's works, created in darkness, are purportedly radiation from celestial bodies. Echoing this approach, Chris McCaw's contemporary *sun-burned* photographs are made using a large-format, hand-made camera which produces images closer to photograms than photographs. McCaw's cameras are designed for exceptionally long exposures, enabling the sun to draw pictures directly on the photographic paper inside the device. During this process, the duration of which can be from thirty seconds to thirty-six hours, the Sun etches its trajectory as arching lines across an overexposed image of the terrain. Although made with a camera, McCaw's photographs, like the contact prints of Baraduc and Strindberg or the dream photography of Darget, reveal a compellingly atmospheric vision.⁵¹⁴ In McCaw's artworks, the Sun's rays solarise expired gelatine silver photographic paper, burning into its fibres an eerily soft *landscape*.

McCaw's enigmatic images created from the overexposure of gelatine silver-coated paper have pictorial affinities with the experimental works of Strindberg, Baraduc, and Darget. However, McCaw's *Sunburn* series are works of art and document recognisable images of the environment: sea, skyline, and land formations. They track Earth's rotation and the movement of the Sun across the sky, bringing to light a solarised image of Earth's horizons. In comparison, Baraduc and Darget aimed to create photographic processes that were *objectively* scientific. They intended to prove the existence of unseen *v-rays* emitted by the body, the universal

authority.20110803100324562; For Baraduc's book and images see Hunter Dukes, "Imaging Inscape: The Human Soul (1913)," *The Public Domain Review*, November 17, 2021, <https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/baraduc-soul/>; For Darget's images see Margareta Ingrid Christian "Cameraless Photography and Its Imponderable Media," https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331753470_Cameraless_Photography_and_Its_Imponderable_Media.

513. Baraduc, *The Human Soul*, 33.

514. Chris McCaw, "Sunburn," accessed November 19, 2023, <https://www.chrismccaw.com/sunburn>.



Figure 2.21. *[Bird in Flight]*, Etienne-Jules Marey, 1886, albumen silver print from glass negative, Gilman Collection, Purchase, Denise and Andrew Saul Gift, 2005, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, USA, open access, public domain, <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/286544>.

force which they theorised permeated the atmosphere but had, until then, eluded depiction.⁵¹⁵ In the late nineteenth century, photography became a valuable scientific tool, which resulted in increased interest in developing techniques and cameras. Notable examples of chronophotography are Eadweard Muybridge's series, *Animal Locomotion*, and Etienne-Jules Marey's sequential images, specifically, *Falling Cat*, 1894 and *[Bird in Flight]*, 1866.⁵¹⁶

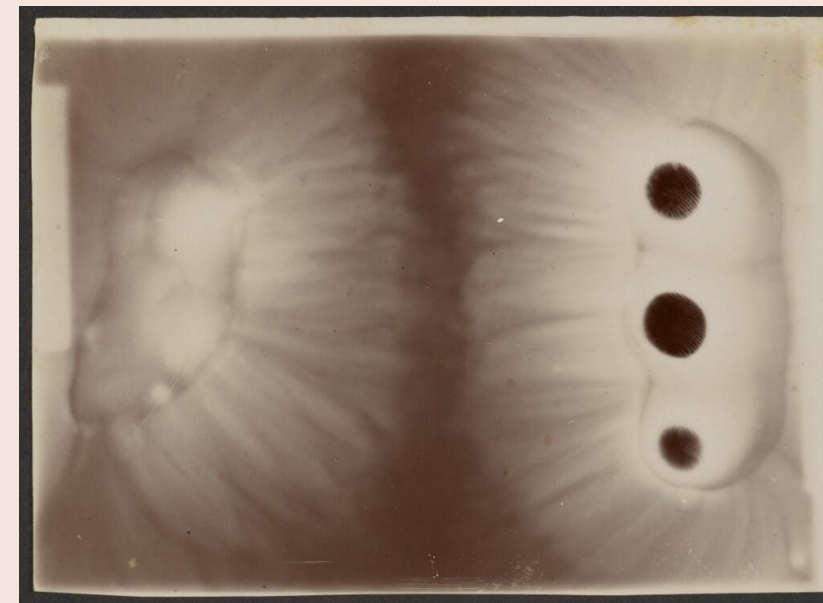


Figure 2.22. *Rayonnée* (Radiated), Louis Darget, March 2, 1898, gelatin silver print, 8.8 x 11.9 cm, collection J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, creative commons, <https://www.getty.edu/art/collection/object/104C9B>.

515. Christian explains "whereas X-rays transformed the flesh around bones into a filmy substance, 'v-rays' changed the ethereal fluid into a physical appearance on the photographic plate." Additionally, Christian recounts, "in direct reference to x-rays, Darget described the light of the vital fluid in terms of 'v-rays' and he cooperated [Baraduc with Darget] on the construction of a 'portable radiographer' – a photographic plate that is affixed to the forehead of a person to register 'les rayons humains', the human rays emitted through thinking." Christian, 320-1.

516. Chronophotography is a photographic technique that enables the recording of multiple images in a sequence that show a moving subject. "A photograph or a series of photographs of a

Like Baraduc and Darget, whose endeavours sought to render atmospheric *effluvia* discharged from the body, we hope to capture your peculiar atmosphere, your scent-like aura. It is Barthes, however, who invokes, most accurately, what we strive to envision:

The photograph as an image without code—even if, obviously, certain codes do inflect our reading of it—the realists do not take the photograph for a ‘copy’ of reality, but for an emanation of *past reality: a magic, not an art.*⁵¹⁷

Past realities and present longing exist simultaneously in our photographs, the confluence of memory and unmemory. As such, we perceive Bergson’s pure memory in the images we produce—*whereby the past is actualised in the present*. The wellspring of their origin is our yearning to express, in a visual form, effluxes associated with Earthly Love and melancholy. It is not human thoughts or vital fluids we want to evoke, but vitality affects—the influence of the Ancestors on us—the *magic, not the art*.

Geimer offers a contentious idea, that “we might discover what is special about photography in the very realm where we have been searching for it all along: in negation, that is, by recalling what it is not, no longer, or not only.”⁵¹⁸ We add to this statement: and *will never be*. A photograph is not a smell nor a memory. We contend the photograph is a likeness, even when the subject is imaginary—it portrays an evaporating narrative akin to a perfume. Drawn to the idea of negation, unmemory, and the empty space where meaning should be, we endeavour to find in the photograph, what it will ne’er be. What is left when the camera, the subject, and the photographer are erased? To which we answer, only the artefact as spectre, a wandering idol shed from matter, a cast off.

moving object taken to record and exhibit successive phases of the object’s motion.” *Merriam-Webster.com Medical Dictionary*, s.v. “chronophotograph,” accessed November 12, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/medical/chronophotograph>.

517. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 88. (Italics author’s own)

518. Geimer, “Image as Trace,” 18.

As Lucretius declares,

*There are what we call idols of things; which, like films stripped from the outermost body of things, fly forward and backward through the air; and they too when they meet us in waking hours affright our minds, yea, and in sleep too, when we often gaze on wondrous shapes, and the idols of those who have lost the light of day, which in awful wise have often roused us, as we lay languid, from our deep; lest by chance we should think that souls escape from Acheron, or that shades fly abroad among the living, or that something of us can be left after death, when body alike and the nature of mind have perished and parted asunder into their several first beginnings.*⁵¹⁹

The idea that Baraduc and Darget were attempting to render a radiograph of vitality, an x-ray or shadow image of the unobservable, is introduced by Margareta Ingrid Christian.⁵²⁰ Indeed, the pictures they produced showed their desire to fix the subject’s *absence* so that its negative contours could be studied. In contrast, we want to concentrate matter within the image so that we can become familiar with your scent.

Suffering from amnesia, the photograph clings to us—as a sensation, the vitality affect induced by your touch.

Strindberg, a well-known playwright and poet, combined artistic and scientific methods, resulting in a curious modern pictorialism. Indeed, concurrent with the creation of the celestographs (many of which were never fixed, so disappeared), Strindberg penned *On Chance in Artistic Creation*, championing *automatic art* well before the advent of Surrealism. Douglas Feuk suggests Strindberg’s notion of correspondence mirrors “nature’s artistic striving for form: an inherent cypher, hard to understand

519. Bailey ed, *On the Nature of Things*, Book IV, 145. (Italics our)

520. Christian, “Cameraless Photography and Its Imponderable Media,” 320; X-rays are a form of electromagnetic radiation, like visible light. Unlike light, however, x-rays have higher energy and can pass through most objects, including the body. Medical x-rays are used to generate images of tissues and structures inside the body. If x-rays travelling through the body also pass through an x-ray detector on the other side of the patient, an image will be formed that represents the “shadows” formed by the objects inside of the body. One type of x-ray detector is photographic film, but there are many other types of detectors that are used to produce digital images. The x-ray images that result from this process are called radiographs. *Science education*, “X-Rays,” United States of America National of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering, last modified June, 2022, <https://www.nibib.nih.gov/science-education/science-topics/x-rays>.

but still hopeful, like a glimpse of a great other, ‘boundless’ totality.”⁵²¹ Seeking to peer into matter’s heart is a form of mania. In our experience, all we perceive is a mirror image, as if staring into a Claude glass. Quoting Elias Ashmole (1617–1692), art historian Arnaud Maillet states:

With the help of this magic stone, one can see all the persons one wishes to see, no matter what part of the world they are in, and even if they are hidden in the depths of the most inaccessible apartments, or even in caves in the bowels of the earth.⁵²²

With the aid of the photograph, the subject deliquesces, transforming into a curiously alluring perfume. This vision is reminiscent of Gell’s assertion that the magic of smell resides in its being a “quasi-material form of the object.”⁵²³ Similarly, addressing Darget’s photographs, Christian notes,

The images’ materiality is sustained ... through the many instances of the formless – that is, the many instances of matter that are not ‘in-formed’, not ‘made over into form’. The patches of hazy substantiality; dissolving veils; nebulous figures; swirling smoke; luminous vapour; vague shapes – these instances of formlessness persist ... despite Darget’s insistent attempts to render the images concrete and representational.⁵²⁴

For all that we attempt to document impressions, the photographs remain as insubstantial as odours. We offer you a glimpse, a partial view, but of what? In their darkness, they are closer to visual harbingers, foreshadowing what is to come—odour’s twin—like swirling mists, they evaporate, leaving an afterimage on the internal lining of your eyelids.

Nothing and Something, the almost-material form of the Ancestors.

*Though you are a figment of our imagination,
we catch your scent and shadowed form moving,
wraith-like, over the surface of our memory.*

521. Feuk, “The Celestographs of August Strindberg,” online.

522. Ashmole’s writing on the dark mirror is quoted in Maillet, *The Claude Glass*, 50.

523. Gell, *Art and Agency*, 227.

524. Christian, “Cameraless Photography,” 334.

LOVE LETTERS

*But when from a long distant past nothing subsists,
after the people are dead, after the things are broken
and scattered, still, alone, more fragile, but with
more vitality, more unsubstantial, more persistent,
more faithful, the smell and taste of things remain
poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us,
waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the
ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the
tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence,
the vast structure of recollection.*

Marcel Proust, 1922.⁵²⁵

As the picture stones of Gotland once tethered the liminal to personal and mythic narratives, so does this Love letter. Penned amidst the folds of forgetting, this thesis, composed of words, perfumes, and images, imparts a correspondence.

We ask, “*what is Language?*” The tongue’s caress, the private stirrings of idiom, and the lip service paid to Global pronouncements?

What are we saying when we utter the words, Earthly Love and climate change? What horrors are given voice? and what of the unnamed, whose breathing is only heard in surging winds and frenzied scents? What of the oceans, whose keening swells and breaks against time’s stumbling form?



525. Proust, *Swann’s Way*, 26–7. (Italics ours)



These words, stretched taut across the skeleton of our beliefs, are haunted by the purl and rumble of ancestral conversations.

Language: to converse, shoot the breeze, to maunder.⁵²⁶
 Harkening to the soft drift of your aroma,
 the smouldering whiff of words,
 and the pulsing of our tangled heart.

Confabulate: to create imaginary experiences—to salve forgetting.

*We write you our Love letter.
 In response, you offer us the odours of crushed petals,
 tears, and distillates.
 The murmur of beating wings,
 and the kiss of your breath.*



Unnamed Seaweeds

⁵²⁶ Merriam-Webster.com Thesaurus, s.v. “language,” accessed November 12, 2023, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/thesaurus/language>.

Wordless

Beads, stitches, herbs, cloth, and food are just a few examples of the raw materials used to create a textured and activated archive for and with spirits. These archives conjure clues for temporal sojourns that relate historical imaginings in an intersubjective and intercorporeal manner.

Solimar Otero, 2019.⁵²⁷

*There is a scenography of waiting:
 I organise it, manipulate it.*

Barthes, 1973.⁵²⁸

Solimar Otero’s words substantiate our desire to conjure a magical world-conception from unmemory, imperfect yet fervent, a wordless manifesto on Earthly Love, scribbled in a cryptic hand, an archive of scents and images—the raw materials of our conversations *with* the Ancestors. Each evanescent artefact passing away evaporates in breath and the ramblings of decay. Yet we stridently proclaim our account, a cosmology, the ken of intergenerational memories triggered by the narrative patterns of aroma—a molecular story of the Universe—of which we are part. Ours is a sensory collision between Earthly and phantasmic Love—the perfume of our convictions.

⁵²⁷ Solimar Otero, *Archives of Conjure: Stories of the Dead in Afrolatinx Cultures* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 32. (Italics ours)

⁵²⁸ Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*, 37. (Italics ours)

Composing our cosmic Love story, we weigh the concept of scented scenographies tendered by Viveka Kjellmer, using dance historian Sally Banes' (1950 - 2020) *Olfactory Effect Taxonomy* for aromatic (performance) design.⁵²⁹ Deconstructing an array of olfactory art installations, Kjellmer discloses the artist's scenographic approach, showing how they create scent-based encounters which draw place, audience, material objects, and odour together. One of the artworks discussed by Kjellmer is Sissel Tolaas' *The FEAR of Smell – The Smell of FEAR* (2006–2015). In this installation, Tolaas paints the gallery walls with scent profiles chemically fabricated from odours emitted by people experiencing an anxiety attack. As the odour is released, it arouses an atmosphere of fear. Tolaas' work reflects Masako Katsuyama et al.'s research, which found that human skin releases a gas specific to anxiety, influencing anyone nearby. The audience's encounter with the odour is invisible. They must touch the gallery walls to trigger the sweat Tolaas has fabricated. Each sweat patch forms a molecular vignette of distress, scented likenesses as poignant as a photograph or painted image. The physical and psychological reactions engendered by the installation, Kjellmer argues, characterise *scented scenography*, an *olfactory scene* (performance or work of art) that "affects us and might change our mood or raise questions."⁵³⁰

Though this view of scenography, as a scented performance, is germane to a discussion on olfactory art, it is Kjellmer's association of language with perfume that captures our attention. Kjellmer states, "much like language, perfume is normally sequential. It evolves over time and entails a different

529. Sally Banes acknowledges there has been, since the eighteenth century, a bias in modern *European* theatre scenography toward deodorisation, which is consistent with *European* cultural mores. Banes' interest lay in developing a taxonomy that would enable the recognition of the effects of *aromatic design* in theatre performances. To this end, Banes devised a seven-category taxonomy that separates and reassembles "the various components of the theatrical mise-en-scene" into a "poetics of theatrical aroma design", identifying six key categories: "to illustrate words, characters, places, and actions; to evoke a mood or ambience; to complement or contrast with aural/ visual signs; to summon specific memories; to frame the performance as ritual; and to serve as a distancing device. (There is also a seventh category, that of unrecognisable smells, which remains to be explored further.)" Banes, "Olfactory Performances," *TDR* (1988-) 45, no. 1 (2001): 69, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1146881>.

530. Viveka Kjellmer, "Scented Scenographics and Olfactory Art: Making Sense of Scent in the Museum," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift, Journal of Art History*, 90 no. 2, (2021): 81, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00233609.2020.1775696>.

behaviour."⁵³¹ While the author speaks of unspooling olfactory encounters created in galleries, we are fascinated by how odours, like words, unfold, dissolve, and stain our understanding of the world. Contrasting objects with odours, Uri Almagor argues that objects have social meaning and, therefore, partake in a shared language.⁵³² Tethered together, they form beads on a necklace of ideas. Conversely, odours are largely personal and part of a private language, which is intimate and *unutterable*; thus, the associations they trigger are *emotional* and *idiosyncratic*.⁵³³ The evasiveness and instability of odour, Almagor explains, makes it difficult to transfer meaning from our innermost experiences "to a construction of reality solely in terms of odour sensations."⁵³⁴ This assertion, however, inadequately accounts for cultural responses to, and collective recognition of, odours. Research shows that while personal experiences inform our reactions, the foundations of our interpretations of odours, as pleasant or odious, are culturally constructed.⁵³⁵

In *Language of Smells*, Chetan Sharma argues that odour lexicons emerge from cosmological, topographic, and geologic narratives. Each, to a greater or lesser degree, defines the *olfactory environment* we inhabit—the cultural terrain within which the personal takes root.⁵³⁶ Words fail us when we move beyond the familiar terrain of odour. According to Laura Stark's folkloric research, bodies are vulnerable to attack by magical forces, one such force being the forest. Far from its contemporary image as a natural playground, the forest is singled out as dangerously magical and (super)naturally possessed.

531. Kjellmer, 85.

532. Uri Almagor, "Odors and Private Language: Observations on the Phenomenology of Scent," *Human Studies* 13, no. 3 (1990): 262, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00142757>.

533. Almagor, 262.

534. Almagor, 259.

535. See Matthew Cobb, "Smell in Culture," in *Smell: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford Academic), 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093>; Chetan Sharma, "Language of Smell: Tracing Some Cross-Cultural Insights from Past and Present," *Frontiers in Food Science and Technology* 3 (2023): 1091355, <https://www.frontiersin.org>; Kate Fox, "The Smell Report," *Social Issues Research Centre*, accessed December 12, 2023, http://www.sirc.org/publik/smell_culture.

536. Sharma, "Language of Smell," 1091355.

Without words, we have no social compass; we lose our bearings. Wordlessly, we sniff the air, groping our way. Estranged, we confront a scented world and find ourselves transformed.⁵³⁷ We lose *this self* in the forest of the odiferous, sacrificing it to mythical Beings and restless Ancestors.

Turning vaporescent molecules into murmurings, we speak an unfamiliar tongue.

Olfactory artist Oswaldo Maciá states:

I create questions that cannot be dispatched, or rendered pointless, with an ‘I know.’ This is an expression that kills questions; it is the antithesis of creativity or progress.

Our primary sense of vision must be stepped aside from, in order to move away from all the ‘I knows.’ The visual world is saturated with facile symbolism that is easily recognised and talked about ‘knowingly.’ Vision is full of ‘I know.’⁵³⁸

Maciá, using international archives comprising thousands of odours and sounds, creates a distinct site-specific vocabulary. Jim Drobnick suggests that the artist’s installations challenge “normalised sensory boundaries, encourage audience participation, and investigate methods of knowing through tangible, pungent, discordant encounters.”⁵³⁹ In short, Maciá’s art offers a meditation on the sensorial.⁵⁴⁰ Similarly, Sally O’Reilly ventures, the artist juggles language, “encouraging antagonistic interpretations, offering

537. Almagor, 253; Almagor states that “the meaning of certain smells lies in the life experience of individuals, some smells inevitably carry connotations unique to each person’s biography; hence, odours enable one to shift from one situation in the objective reality to a subjective one, which evokes something different from the situation in which the odours were inhaled. Borrowing Schutz’s notion of life-world (Lebenswelt) in olfactory terms, will enable us to articulate the differences between the cultural and social aspects of odours and the individual, cognitive and private world of odours ... Hence, scent-world refers to the total sphere of odour experiences of the individual.” Almagor, 274.

538. Maciá, “Manifesto for Olfactory-Acoustic Sculpture,” 202.

539. Jim Drobnick, “Oswaldo Maciá: A Laboratory of Cynical Perception,” Henrique Faria Fine Art Gallery, accessed November 21, 2023, <https://www.henriquefaria.com/exhibition>.

540. Drobnick calls this *sensorial thinking*. Drobnick, “Oswaldo Maciá: A Laboratory of Cynical Perception.”

us more than one route to the realm of meaning.”⁵⁴¹ Maciá composes sound and smell scenographically, performing a sensory theatre. In this way, the installations emphasise Madalena Diaconu’s contention that olfactory art is formulated from a distinct aromatic dialect, a peculiar pattern of speech created by the artist.

How we wonder, does perfume’s tongue, when conceived cosmologically instead of artistically, alter what is voiced and how meaning is absorbed? While orality confines spoken communication to the mouth, the Norse worldview reveals language as pectoral, centred within our bodies.⁵⁴² Old Norse narrative traditions being primarily oral; speech was associated with the chest and lungs. Air expelled from within the breast located the voice and its associated psyche in *the heart—the speechmaker or the abode of memory*. Cultural studies professor Robin Waugh suggests words were conceived of as bodily and, therefore, existed within the body as a secondary, interior Being. Hence, Waugh suggests, “a warrior would try to grasp the other’s organs of speech and so take hold of the interior power.”⁵⁴³ We are consumed by and consume language. To learn the language of birds, we must eat a serpent’s heart. Haunted by the power of poesy, we partake of Óðinn’s vomit, the Mead of Poesy, the saliva of gods mixed with honey.

Language: To softly blow, purr, or tell a traveller’s tale.

We take to heart the saga of your breath’s swallowing whisper,
a sigh with teeth and tongue.

*The voices of the Ancestors vibrate within us. We (re)work the herb of life,
the language of pheromones, a distillate of the waning Moon, and secretions
from generations of bodies.*

541. Sally O’Reilly, “Oswaldo Maciá,” *Modern Painters*, September 2006, <https://www.oswaldomacia.com>.

542. “Pectorality is variously used to suggest that spoken words are physical events or objects; that speech activity, both productive and receptive, is centred within the physical and psychological ‘interior’ of the speaker; or that certain kinds of utterance are ‘inspired’ in the speaker by other agents.” Eric Jager, “Speech and the Chest in Old English Poetry: Orality or Pectorality,” *Speculum* 65 (1990): 846, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2863564>.

543. Robin Waugh, “Word, Breath, and Vomit: Oral Competition in Old English and Old Norse Literature,” *Oral Tradition* 10, no. 2 (1995): 361, https://journal.oraltradition.org/9_waugh.pdf.

Religious and historical scholar Catharina Raudvere opines that “it is not possible to consider cosmology independently, without a contextual connection to other forms of expression.”⁵⁴⁴ It is Raudvere’s position that cosmology is a *backdrop*, much like Kjellmer’s scented scenography; both establish the conditions for the performance. We, too, comprehend cosmology as a milieu—an odiferous concatenation of atmospherics, environments, and sensations—a scene encircled by a mythic serpent’s giant form, populated by fizzing, clamorous, and noisome bodies; the living and the living-dead, hybrid, and (super)natural Beings.

Smokey utterances, rendered in pheromone tones.



Figure 2.23. *Smoke Enfleurage*, is a traditional perfumery process using odourless fat to capture aroma. In this case, we have substituted bee's wax, lining jars with the wax to trap the odour of smoke produced by burning resins and dried leaves; perfumes are then poured into the jars to macerate in the smokey wax, Susan Jowsey, 2024, digital collage, collection artist's own.

⁵⁴⁴ Catharina Raudvere, “The Part of the Whole. Cosmology as an Empirical and Analytical Concept,” *Temenos-Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion* 45, no. 1 (2009): 16, <https://journal.fi/temenos/article/view/4575>.

The Forest as a Love Story

Matter is a matter of untimely and uncanny intimacy, condensations of being and times.

Karen Barad, 2021.⁵⁴⁵

Physical topography, the body of Earth, is a conduit for the (super)natural.

The liminal imaginary, whilst curiously indeterminate, (re)connects us through curious genealogies to the Ancestors, Earth-bound and physical.

Miriam Mayburd advances the theory that climate charges the Icelandic environment with agency, notably the harsh meteorological weather events of the far North’s circumpolar region. In the Old Norse sagas, fluctuating weather, storms, and high winds intermingle with warnings regarding the dangers of venturing outdoors in case of encounters with the living dead or other similarly wild phenomena. Meanwhile, the destruction wrought by rampaging jötnar appears reminiscent of severe weather. The unpredictability and agitated movement of the winds possess menacing potential, as the wind can *infect* (as if a contagion) by entering and altering bodies in unwelcome and hostile ways.

Drawing on Stark’s concept of the dissolving self, Mayburd argues that Nordic pre-modern peoples conceived bodies and environments as fluid.⁵⁴⁶ In comparison, Stark contends that the forest was understood as a potency that could dissolve selfhood. Any *domesticated* animal (including humans) entering the forest’s dominion became invisible and voiceless.

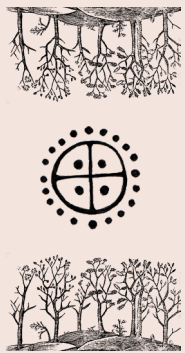
⁵⁴⁵ Karen Barad, “On Touching the Stranger Within – The Alterity that Therefore I Am,” *The Poetry Project* 29 (2021), <https://www.poetryproject.org>. (Italics ours)

⁵⁴⁶ Mayburd, 23.

Conceived as a liminality, the forest was dangerous; it swallowed those enticed in—consuming self-perception. Those lost were transformed into voyeurs, cut off; they were able to discern the village but not communicate with its inhabitants since social connection requires a voice, prompting Stark to hypothesise the forest as *heterotopia*:

Like modern heterotopias, the heterotopia of the forest, too, was an ‘almost magical space’ characterised by ‘monstrous combinations’ such as anthropomorphic beings who were a combination of male and female or who had green eyes and hair. These were not creatures familiar from folk belief, but were instead creatures evoked within the heterotopia, encountered by those who were swallowed up within its space.⁵⁴⁷

Kevin Hetherington argues that Michel Foucault’s idea of heterotopia demands additional examination, proposing otherness is *something without, excessive, or incongruous*. Hetherington chooses to interrogate the notion of otherness as something incongruous. Understanding otherness as dissonance or strangeness reinforces Stark’s claim concerning the forest as heterotopia. The same interpretation could be applied to (liminal) environmental entities significant to pre-Christian Norse. These include mountains, rocks, bogs, waterfalls, rapids, rivers, and sacred groves, as well as the fear and reverence for the atmospheric forces of winds, snow, rain, and sunshine. We suggest that the extended darkness of circumpolar winters also presents a heterotopia with disturbing atmospheric incongruities. Darkness stirs inexplicable sensations induced by fluctuating atmospheric pressure, contradictory movements, and perceptual disturbances that eradicate the familiar, expanding or extinguishing the body’s limits. Scholar Marlene Ciklamini confirms, “the giants’ power over the wind, ice, snow, and darkness is echoed in [Old Norse] folklore, where trolls and giants are endowed with the ability to produce violent weather, both on land and sea.”⁵⁴⁸



⁵⁴⁷. Laura Stark, *The Magical Self: Body, Society and the Supernatural in Early Modern Rural Finland* (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 2006), 372. Quoting Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering* (London: Routledge, 1997).

⁵⁴⁸. Marlene Ciklamini, “Óðinn and the Giants,” *Neophilologus* 46 (1962): 150, <https://rdcu.be/dFnJ7>.

While physical topography and (super)natural actants influenced Norse personhood, we recognise we are likewise enthralled and bedevilled by the modern city. The urban *landscape*, while familiar, is relentlessly foreign. Cities teem with a welter of physical, technical, and often inexplicable forces influencing the minutiae of our interactions and determining experiences. We are inhabited by, and inhabitants of, the milieu within which we live, swallowed by social constructions fashioned from concrete and asphalt. From inside this topographic imaginary, we have become voyeurs—spellbound by the city as heterotopia. The forest has become a microcosmos, glimpsed as plant life growing in cracks, sprouting in gutters, and amongst rubbish. Walking past a Tōtara tree (endemic to Aotearoa) planted in the street, seemingly alone, we notice lichen colonies flourishing amongst a cloth of bright green moss bound to the tree by tendrils from a climbing plant.⁵⁴⁹ It is not, as we first surmised, a companionless tree but a thicket of microbes, cyanobacteria, and companion plants—possessing the wondrousness of a miniature forest with the power to throw its surroundings out of focus. Amidst the city’s malodour, we register the forest as an oddly reassuring scent. Entranced by the paradox, we sway, oscillating between oblivion and fascination.



⁵⁴⁹. Tōtara are of the Podocarpaceae family and are endemic to Aotearoa.

Inhaling

*The ship is the heterotopia par excellence.
In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up,
espionage takes the place of adventure, and the
police take the place of pirates.*

Michel Foucault, 1984.⁵⁵⁰

Hetherington proposes that *places of otherness*, heterotopia, arise when *orders* change or alter in complex ways, arguing, “ordering and disordering go together, as do centres and margins, in ways that are tangled, uncertain, and topologically complex.”⁵⁵¹ Ordering for Hetherington is understood primarily as similitude. This mimetic exposes jarringly altered relationships. As the forest recedes in the human topological imagination, it ceases to be a site of reverence and sacrifice, becoming instead a bucolic playground. Yet the forest retains its ability to bewilder, set adrift, and kill.

Stark claims that early modern and late modern peoples have different perceptions of the self in relation to the forest.⁵⁵² Although we acknowledge this contrast and that perceptions of the forest have shifted, we maintain that its numinousness persists even in the context of late modernism. Indeed, we experience the forest as bewildering and wondrous and, in its threatened form—set apart. Even standing at the liminal edge of the forest, we feel ourselves change. Expanding and contracting, it breathes in an entirely different register to our own.

550. Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces, Heterotopias,” trans. Jay Miskowiec from *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* no. 5 (1984): 49, <https://foucault.info/documents/heterotopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en/>. (Italics ours). Foucault’s quote concerning boats and heterotopia struck us as apt regarding our genealogical Ancestors and, more obliquely, ourselves.

551. Hetherington, *Badlands of Modernity*, 7.

552. Stark, *The Magical Self*, 378.

Stefan Brink asserts Nordic peoples knew environments were metaphysically charged. Nevertheless, they note that while possessing (super) natural qualities was an aspect of a topology’s significance, there was also its status—its authority and influence.⁵⁵³ These powers were achieved through sanctified recognition, acknowledged through sacrifice and offerings, ritual performance, and the Ancestors presence.⁵⁵⁴ Conversely, protection and ascendancy were bestowed on votaries by a terrain’s potency, its authority to dispense rights. Recognising topography as *metaphysically charged* requires, as Hetherington suggests, accepting the tangled, uncertain, and complex relationships manifest in and empowering physical environments. Failure to recognise relationality leads to disaster and defeat—the reality we face.

Enchanted by the forest, we are subject to its magic, a pivotal experience of which stands out. Poised at the forest’s edge, with the trees at our back and the expanse of sea and sky before us, we experience an aromatic liminality. On one side, the ozonic, salty tang of the ocean, and on the other, the warm, honey-dry scents of Mānuka and Kānuka trees.⁵⁵⁵ Without the stirring wind, these aromas remain separated from one another; the air filled with the Ancestors overwhelming presence. In our odiferous reverie, we are attuned to odour’s flux, sniffing out knowledge. We call this thaumazein. Wonder is critical to our pungent story because it ensures understanding remains contingent, makeshift, and fragmented.⁵⁵⁶ Even science cannot arrest the strangeness wonder uncovers.

553. Stefan Brink, “Myth and Ritual in pre-Christian Scandinavian Landscape,” in *Sacred Sites and Holy Places: Exploring the Sacralization of Landscape through Time and Space*, ed. Stefan Brink and Saebjorg Walaker Nordeide (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2013), 22.

554. Brink, 25.

555. Mānuka and Kānuka are of the Myrtaceae family yet are distinct species. Kānuka is endemic to Aotearoa, whilst Mānuka also exists in Australia. Both trees are fast-growing and considered *successional species* because they seed after the forest has been clear-felled or deforested by humans and natural disasters, providing an early ecosystem for mature forest regeneration.

556. Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder*, 15.



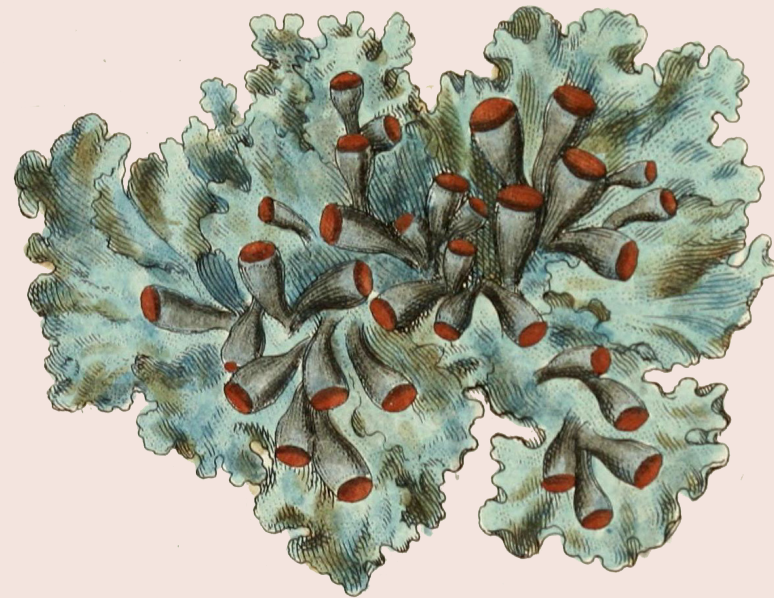
Geranium

Rubenstein declares:

Wonder opens onto a kind of horror: horror at the sudden uncanniness of the everyday; at the groundlessness of the thinking self and the objects it clearly and distinctly perceives; at the monstrous slippage between friend and foe, Harpies and rainbows, known and unknown.⁵⁵⁷

Our world-conception requires inhaling.

Here, then, is the art.



Collema Bullatea - Lichen

⁵⁵⁷. Rubenstein, 68.

Plantlines (Love's seed)

Settling in wordless drifts, like a charm made from nine magical herbs, the spell of you adheres to our hands and lips.

Mucgwyr, wegbrade that is open eastward, lombescyrse, āttorlāðan, mageðan, netelan, wood-sour-apple [wudusūræppel], fille, and finol, old soap; work the plants to dust, mix with the soap and the apple muck (gor).

Make a paste of water and ashes. Take finol and boil it into the paste (place fennel into boiling paste?). Bathe (the wound)] with an egg mixture (when you) apply the salve, before and after.

Sing that galdor (spell) on each of the worts: III: (three) times before they apply the salve (sealf) to themselves, and on the apple also. And sing into the person's mouth, and into both ears, and into the wound that same galdor, before they applies the salve.

Untitled, author unknown, n.d.⁵⁵⁸

⁵⁵⁸. The charm provides instructions on how to make and apply it. The untitled, authorless, and undated charm, known variously as *Nigon Wyrta Galdor*, the *Nine Herbs Charm* (Bradley, 1904), and *A Lay of the Virtues of Worts* (Payne, 1904) is from *The Lacnunga* (the *Remedies*), and is part of the *codex MS Harley* held in the British Library. The compendium is a collection of Anglo-Saxon medicinal texts thought to date between 1000 and 1100 CE. It is, however, conjectured that the spell predates the Christian era and has been adapted to fit Christian symbolism. *Nigon Wyrta Galdor* is actually “a song intended to be sung, but more specifically, it's a special song—a galdor. A galdor is a sort of spell known among the ancient Northern peoples with its own nuances, complexities, and history, well apart from modern classification systems. While details about the genre and its development are shadowy, it seems clear enough that the concept, in some shape or form, extends back early into the history of the ancient Northern peoples, as comparative linguistic evidence indicates (compare Old English *galdor* to Old Norse *galdr* and Old High German *galtar*) Readers familiar with the Old Norse record will note that the god Odin, Old Norse Óðinn, is—like his Old English extension mentioned above, Wōden—and is strongly associated with this particular type of spell.” Joseph S. Hopkins, “Nigon Wyrta Galdor,” *Mimisbrunnr.info*, 2020, last modified September 2023, <https://www.mimisbrunnr.info/nigon-wyrta-galdor>. (Amendments in the spell author's own)

Our story stems from plantlines, the gathering bodies, limbs, and skins of trees and plants from which we extract their aromatic narratives. The scent of you, catching in our throat, leaves us speechless. Writing on the connections between memory and narrative, Mark Freeman states, “to be human is to live in and through the fabric of narrative time,” a time in which past and present co-exist, bound to the bending of the Sun and Moon.⁵⁵⁹ Drawn by the spell of your aroma, we wade across the swamp of time, following the synchronous pulse of our hearts, a twenty-four-hour circadian rhythm that responds to (subjective) night and day. Yet you have a distinctly floral narrative, uncoupled from the rhythmic thrum of your rooted vegetal body, murmuring to the whirring stars and skittering Sun in a register quite your own.⁵⁶⁰ Your volatile perfume, hypnotic and offensive, arouses us.

3. Mugwort (*Artemisia Vulgaris*)

Common names: Mugwort, Motherwort or Croneswort

Botanical name: *Artemisia*

Botanical Family: *Asteraceae*

Olfactive Family: Green/ Woody/ Herbaceous

Olfactory Note: Primarily a heart or middle note

Mother of all herbs, an ancient medicinal.

A traditional folk botanical, *Artemisia Vulgaris*, was used in remedies to treat liver diseases, inflammatory illnesses, depression, worms, childbirth, and menstrual issues. The herb is associated with the Greek deity Artemis, whose dominions included uncultivated vegetation, wild animals, hunting, and childbirth. Artemis is associated with thresholds and boundaries as the goddess of uninhabited environments, notably sacred groves and marshlands, and a protector of childbirth. A bitter tonic, *Artemisia* is recognised as a crucial herb in the lexicon of European folk magic. The steeped plant induces lucid dreaming and is, therefore, valued in divination. Sprigs and amulets of *Artemisia* were worn and burned (smudged) as protection from evil spirits.

⁵⁵⁹ Freeman, “Telling Stories: Memory and Narrative,” 274.

⁵⁶⁰ Myles P. Fenske and Takato Imaizumi, “Circadian Rhythms in Floral Scent Emissions,” *Front Plant Science*, (2016): 189903, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/27148293/>.

Possessing an unusual camphoraceous odour, we blend the hypnotic properties of *Artemisia* into a chypre perfume.⁵⁶¹ Taking a small draught of *Artemisia*, we combine it with a tincture of the lichen *Evenia prunastri*, Oakmoss, whose scent reminds us of decaying plants, and a measure of Labdanum from the Rockrose, *Cistus ladanifer*. Labdanum smells musky and acts as a fixative in the perfume, ensuring its temporal consistency. Its dark, sticky resin was used as an herbal medicine for over three millennia and was written about by the Greek historian Herodotus (c.484 - c.425 BCE). The Egyptians used Labdanum both as a ceremonial incense and a medicinal. It is known to be efficacious as an expectorant, an anti-inflammatory, and a remedy to aid childbirth. Recently, modern science has signalled a renaissance in the study of *Cistus ladanifer*, the plant’s resin showing some inhibitory properties against SARS-CoV-2 proteases.⁵⁶²

4. Labdanum (Black balsam)

Botanical name: *Cistus ladanifer* or Rockrose

Botanical Family: *Cistaceae*

Olfactive Family: Spicy-sweet, Leathery, Musky

Olfactory Note: Base, Fixative

Ancient botanical. ⁵⁶³

To adhere to the modern tradition of chypre odours, the core mix of our dank, earthy perfume must be combined with the sharpness of citrus. We add lemon oil mediated by soft rose notes from our Garden Rose

⁵⁶¹ Chypre is a concept rather than an object. In 1917, Coty created the first *chypre* perfume, simply named Chypre. Based on a scent contradiction, this perfume has become a distinct olfactory family within perfumery. Citrus and woody-mossy scents, the two critical ingredients in chypre perfumes, are considered olfactory opposites. See Daniel Joulain, and Raphaël Tabacchi, “Lichen Extracts as Raw Materials in Perfumery. Part 1: Oakmoss,” *Flavour and Fragrance Journal* 24, no. 2 (2009): 49–61, <https://doi.org/10.1002/ffj.1916>.

⁵⁶² In 2022 comprehensive research was conducted into “538 samples of essential oils, aromatic extracts, and raw materials of various origins [that] were screened for their inhibitory properties on SARS-CoV-2 Mpro and PLpro.” Daniel Jan Strub et al., “Evaluation of the Anti-SARS-CoV-2 Properties of Essential Oils and Aromatic Extracts,” *Scientific Reports* 12, no. 1 (2022): 14230, <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-022-18676-w>.

⁵⁶³ “Labdanum,” *Ecosostensibile*, January 5, 2023, <https://antropocene.it/en/2023/01/05/labdanum/> “Scholars say that the mysterious onycha, an ingredient in the holy incense mentioned in the Old Testament (Exodus 30: 34–36), was actually labdanum.”



Figure 2.24. *Kawakawa, Pōhutukawa, and Rose Tinctures*, Marcus Williams, 2024, digital photograph, collection artist's own.



Figure 2.25. *Tinctures, Accords, and Molecules*, Marcus Williams, 2024, digital photograph, collection artist's own.

tincture, made from organic ethanol and mounds of dried petals gathered during Spring, which we steep for months. While the scent is muted compared to the intensity of commercial rose preparations, our tincture retains the velvety blush of its floral beginnings.

This perfume is a draught for lucid dreaming, opening a liminal imaginary in which the dreamer is neither awake nor deeply asleep. Stephen LaBerge and Howard Rheingold asserts that, as lucid dreamers are asleep yet conscious, they “can create and transform objects, people, situations, worlds, even themselves. By the standards of the familiar world of physical and social reality, they can do the impossible.”⁵⁶⁴

In our dreams, we are enveloped by the smell of the forest, your dominion. Its primal earthiness erases our domesticated scent, replacing it with the feral odours of death and rebirth.

5. Basil Sweet & Linalool (Tulsi)

Botanical name: *Ocimum basilicum*

Botanical Family: *Lamiaceae*

Olfactive Family: Herbaceous / Spicy / Green

Olfactory Note: Top / middle note

An aromatic nerve tonic.

Researchers Katrina Weston-Green et al. support the view that volatile organic forest compounds, “rich in terpenes such as pinene, linalool, limonene, and caryophyllene, could provide an alternative approach to positive outcomes for human well-being and mental health.”⁵⁶⁵ They suggest that these forest compounds could be incorporated, in their physical form, as plants and trees, into community landscape design projects to improve public health. Linalool's efficacious effects have been detected in bees,

⁵⁶⁴ Stephen LaBerge, and Howard Rheingold, *Exploring the World of Lucid Dreaming* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990), 2.

⁵⁶⁵ Katrina Weston-Green et al., “A Review of the Potential Use of Pinene and Linalool as Terpene-Based Medicines for Brain Health: Discovering Novel Therapeutics in the Flavours and Fragrances of Cannabis,” *Frontiers in Psychiatry* 12 (August 2021): 583211, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8426550/>.

horses, rats, mice, and humans. The agency of this organic compound, present in many aromatic plants, spans anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antidepressant, anti-anxiety, and pro-cognitive effects.⁵⁶⁶

6. Cedarwood (Virginia)

Botanical name: *Juniperus Virginiana*

Botanical Family: Cupressaceae

Olfactive Family: Woody

Olfactory Note: Base

Antidepressant medicinal.

We concoct a potion from plants rich in the monoterpenoid linalool, a floral volatile whose scent signal acts as both an attractant and repellent, and Cedarwood Virginia. This fragrant composition is designed to make you relaxed and social, though you will not be aware it is the perfume raising your hand in greeting. Stealthily, semiochemicals release the forest's magic. In this fleeting aromatic communication, the Ancestors envelop you in the *halo-effect of their resistance*, conjuring an air of responsive attachment. Unaware, you have transformed into someone convivial.

7. Pōhutukawa

Botanical name: *Metrosideros excelsa*

Botanical Family: Myrtaceae (Myrtle)

Olfactive Family: Amberée-woody / Ambrosial

Olfactory Note: Base

Endemic to Aotearoa

*Ambrosia: elixir of life, perfume of the gods.*⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶⁶ Weston-Green et al., 583211.

⁵⁶⁷ “Ambrosia food of the gods, fabled healing plant or its juice, *Artemisia maritima*, *Dysphania botrys*, houseleek, antidote to poison, in post-classical Latin also wood sage (in glossaries, 14th cent. or earlier in British sources) ancient Greek, for elixir of life, food of the gods, drink of the gods, perfume of the gods, unguent of the gods, in Hellenistic Greek also (in religious rites) mixture of water, oil, and various fruits, *Artemisia maritima*, *Dysphania botrys*, antidote, use as noun of feminine of immortal, divine, immortal (< ἄ- a- prefix6 mortal < the same Indo-European base as murder n.1).” *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “ambrosia (n.), Etymology,” accessed December 2, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/7736786108>.

From the bark of the sacred Pōhutukawa tree, we make a tenebrous suspension.⁵⁶⁸ After slow roasting the wrapped bark in the oven for two hours, we crush it with a mortar and pestle, then submerge its darkly fragrant dust in ethanol. Within the hour, the liquid resonates with a smoky-gourmand scent.

Written in plantlines, the stories you teach us are often inexplicable and ephemeral.

As Barbara Baert claims of the tiny garden-image devotionals made of beads and paper, some knowledge comes from the cosmos. To recognise and respond accordingly, we must attend to the sensorium and heed our instincts and the urge to create.⁵⁶⁹

*Some stories must be smelt.
Painted on sea-scented skin,
our sleeping draught and
social perfume are philtre,
Love potions,
releasing the forest's volatile magic.*



⁵⁶⁸ The Pōhutukawa is a sacred tree for Māori, the Indigenous peoples of Aotearoa. “Te kanohi o Tāwhaki’ – *the eye of Tāwhaki*, is a reference to the brilliant red flowers of Rātā (*Metrosideros robusta*), and sometimes also Pōhutukawa, recalling the fall from the heavens of the demigod Tāwhaki, who as he fell plucked out his eyes and threw them on the Rātā and, in some versions of the event, also the Pōhutukawa, hence the brilliant red blossoms of both trees.” Additionally, “The entrance to Te Reinga, the departure-point of spirits heading for the underworld, was marked by an ancient Pōhutukawa tree down which the spirits would slide into the cavern below.” “Hutukawa, Pōhutukawa,” Te Māra Reo: The Language Garden, accessed April 6, 2024, <https://www.tamarareo.org/TMR-Pohutukawa.html>.

⁵⁶⁹ Baert, “An Odour. A Taste,” 144.

Your Scent

The air has neither place nor time. The air is the non-place where everything will exist. ... What will be already is. The future is ahead and behind and on the sides. The future is what has always existed and always will exist.

Clarice Lispector, 1989.⁵⁷⁰

I am caught up in a double discourse, from which I cannot escape.

Roland Barthes, 1973.⁵⁷¹

We ask, “How might conjuring a magical world-conception from ancestral ken and the liminal imaginary transform our perception of the Universe in a time of ecological crisis?”

The odours of the Ancestors map the Universe. Using perfume, we plot a hypothetical chart of the cosmos. In the heavens’ arc, you will smell a constellation of tears and the last breath of our mother. Each vial—an *omnium gatherum*, the evaporative communications of plants, trees, bodies of water, soil, and rock, the living and the living dead—the scent of all we have learnt from you.⁵⁷²

The wild herbs of our existence seeded in forgetting.

570. Clarice Lispector, *Água Viva*, *The Stream of Life*, trans. Elizabeth Lowe and Earl Fitz (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 52. (Italics ours)

571. Barthes, *A Lover’s Discourse*, 41. (Italics ours)

572. *Omnium gatherum* refers to a miscellaneous collection of things or people. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “omnium gatherum (adj.),” accessed July 23, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/5366669966>.



Figure 2.26. Moon, Susan Jowsey, 2024, digital photograph, collection artist’s own.

Transported by ancestral knowledge we have crossed the threshold of imagining. Applying Nancy's concept of transimmanence, Rubenstein conjures with the wondrousness of the breathing world:

'Being-toward' draws existence outward, beyond itself, and 'the world' draws it back, simultaneously, as more than itself. Nancy refers to this self-exceeding finitude of being as "the 'transcendence' of its 'immanence'—its transimmanence" or, in the language with which we are becoming increasingly familiar, the hollowed-out space of the 'toward' or the 'with' that conditions relation both between and within beings.⁵⁷³

Wonderment is critical to our magical world-conception, not because wonder is magical, but because wonder requires touching-thinking. We regard it as a visceral awareness of the world attained through the chaos of *touch* that eclipses our preoccupation with *self*—a way of thinking with the senses. Nancy suggests touching-thinking recognises the significance of being with and toward the world, undoing the mechanism of thought by reaching *toward* the maelstrom—*touching it*—immersing the whole of ourselves in *being with* the world, not above it.⁵⁷⁴ Guided by touching-thinking, we question everything we have been taught about Earth's topography, flora, and fauna. We perceive the voices of the Ancestors in the odours they exhale—their breathing arousing, disturbing, and impressing upon us critical information, activating a response, and stirring our memories.

Through touching-thinking, we enter the liminality of Laura Stark's forest heterotopia. As the forest, you disclose a Universe in flux, the palimpsest of existence, the continual re-inscription of life and death. More precisely, we sense the prodigiousness of dying life giving birth to itself, the rise and fall of breath—it is the chaos of flora and fauna growing and rotting, consuming and being consumed, seeding life. The forest is a stranger, a body dissimilar to ours, who exhales mysterious odours. Under the spell of Love's vital force, we belong to you.

To affect our retreat from what Campagna describes as Technic's all-consuming reality, we must adopt a language entirely at odds with late-stage capitalism. Campagna proposes that we adopt the language of

573. Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder*, 132.

574. Rubenstein, 122.

Magic's *As If* because, *as if*, dexterously liberates meaning.⁵⁷⁵ For Jünger, the forest appears in the guise of a metaphor, whereas we acknowledge it as a vital force. The forest is many things: a figment, an unfathomable and awful physical entity, a spellcaster, and Ancestor. Despite these disparities, we agree with Campagna's assertion that to enter the limen of the forest, we must first transform ourselves. A transition Magic's *As If* can perform:

I carve this track alone because I am an individual.

Or

We are respectful *as if* the forest is our Ancestor.

As if these trees hold secrets.

As if groves are sacred.

As if their odours heal or *as if* they kill.

Magic's *As If* is a powerful shapeshifter, which Campagna suggests makes Technic's agenda evident and provides an antidote to its poison. At first glance, Campagna's proposal, that we adopt the language of *As If*, appears at odds with the concept of the forest as heterotopia, which silences those who enter. Yet we have already asked, "What is language?" and concluded that language or communication has many tongues. We recognise the counter-agency of Magic's *As If* whilst experiencing the forest as an ancestral body, a potent bestower and terminator of life.

Stephan Brink claims that for pre-Christian Norse, the natural world was "metaphysically impregnated as a totality, and people lived in a numinous environment."⁵⁷⁶ Whilst the forest silences our human voice, deadening the effects of words, it restores the breathtaking sensation of *touch*, a sensitivity to, or consciousness of, the forest's Beingness, its aromatic multiplicity. Rubenstein describes *touch* as, "quite literally sense-ing the radical heteronomy of all beings by getting in touch with them. As distinct from the idealist specularly that sees things from a safe, ultimately appropriate distance."⁵⁷⁷

575. Campagna, *Technic and Magic*, 254. (Italics ours)

576. Brink, "Myth and Ritual in pre-Christian Scandinavian Landscape," 22.

577. Rubenstein, 122.

Getting in touch means paying attention to the secretions of the forest.

Stark's *open-body* folk theory defines a view of the world reflective of the topological and material traces left by our Scandinavian Ancestors. Stark asserts that open bodies are constantly in "flux and motion" and are, therefore, defined through an interplay of dynamic effects and forces.⁵⁷⁸ This view contradicts modern European beliefs, predicated on the conviction that the body is *stable and bounded*.⁵⁷⁹ By embracing a worldview based on bodily interplay, our question transforms from one of *self-perception* (where the individual occupies the centre) to asking how we, in our many forms, might reconceive the Universe through coequality and fluidity. Smelling you and of you, we apprehend the Universe as if it were a vast forest, the home of cosmological Beings who interweave lives with the forces of minni and óminni. It is crucial not to read these words as human-centric since memory and unmemory are omnipresent.

If we believe all bodies participate in the Universe's flux, then odour and light are elements in this flow. All we can do is momentarily arrest their movement so that you may perceive their forms as we do, before they dissolve.

Rubenstein asserts that "*what is astonishing is that an everyday assumption has suddenly become untenable: the familiar has become strange, throwing even the unquestionable into question.*"⁵⁸⁰



578. Stark, 254.

579. Stark, 254.

580. Rubenstein, 11. (Italics ours)

Topographic Memories

Undoubtedly, these rooms lend themselves to dreamlike representation; there is something nightmarish even in the sober recollection of the damp odour of sweat secreted by the stone steps that I had to hasten up five times or more each day.

Walter Benjamin, 1932.⁵⁸¹

The natural and the constructed environment work their magic in similar ways. As memory spaces, they trigger the dissonance described by Hetherington's incongruous *otherness*. Drawing on a melange of memories associated with the topography and architecture of Berlin, Walter Benjamin claims the city, which does not allow for contemplation, makes amends through memory.⁵⁸² In these memoryscapes, a private *film* records all our encounters with places, more so than with people—our physical and psychic experiences merging into scent-laden topographic memories.

Indeed, researchers Palmiero and Piccardi proclaim that affect-laden markers (markers that elicit negative or positive emotions, such as buildings, smells, or place-based experiences) underpin topographical memories.⁵⁸³ Similarly, Louisa Dahmani et al. connect spatial memory to olfaction. Dahmani et al. maintain that olfactory perception and the hippocampus share a neural substrate, backing the claim "that the original function of

581. Walter Benjamin, *One Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB publishers, 1979), 302. (Italics ours)

582. Benjamin, 318.

583. Palmiero, and Piccardi assert that "results generally show that emotional landmarks enhance egocentric-based topographical memory, whereas positive emotional landmarks seem to be more effective for allocentric-based topographical memory." Furthermore, "allocentric representation expresses a location with respect to an external frame regardless of the self." Palmiero, and Piccardi, "The Role of Emotional Landmarks," 2.

the olfactory sense may have been to support cognitive mapping and spatial memory.⁵⁸⁴ Correspondingly, the artist Sissel Tolaas uses gas chromatography to create site-specific installations. Walking with a chromatograph in hand, Tolaas harvests data, which is later translated into molecular scent profiles. This method of interrogating smells, breaking them down into their constituent parts, is widely practised in the perfume industry. Chromatography offers perfumiers a means to fabricate mimetic *likenesses* of rare, illegal, or expensive odours. Addressing mimesis, Michael Taussig explains:

The mimetic faculty carries out its honest labour suturing nature to artifice and bringing sensuousness to sense by means of what was once called sympathetic magic, granting the copy the character and power of the original, the representation the power of the represented.⁵⁸⁵

Taussig's assertion accurately describes the correspondence perfumiers seek. Tolaas moves through the urban terrain, capturing odiferous information. On these perambulations, a hand-held air sampling pump registers the scent profiles of objects and places; these chromatograms enable Tolaas to reconstruct scent memories. The artists' smell installations disclose the depth and complexity of socio-historical memories, bringing topographical memory evoked by emotional connection with odours to the fore.⁵⁸⁶ After the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, Tolaas began investigating odours emitted by the body's microbiome, claiming, "the invisible is 'talking'". Now is the time to seriously accept that we are not alone and that in – and outside of our bodies there are multiple living organisms we have to learn from and co-exist with – a kind of species reset.⁵⁸⁷

But what is the invisible saying and what does it want us to recall?

584. Louisa Dahmani et al., "An Intrinsic Association Between Olfactory Identification and Spatial Memory in Humans," *Nature Communications* 9, no. 1 (2018): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-018-06569-4>.

585. Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity: A Particular History of the Senses* (London: Routledge, 2017), xviii.

586. Alice Audouin, "Conversation with the Artist Sissel Tolaas," *Art of Change* 21, June 2020, <https://artofchange21.com/en/conversation-with-the-artist-sissel-tolaas/>.

587. Audouin, June 2020.

Figure 2.27. *Aromatosphere*, Susan Jowsey, 2024, digital collage, collection artist's own.

In the liminal imaginary, the forest erases our story, re-writing us with the odours of the cosmos:

*The scent of mud,
the tang of the sea,
whiffs of rotting seaweed,
the rising familiarity of petrichor (the odour released by
rain hitting rocks, clay, or tarmac after a prolonged dry spell).*

A mnemonic of Earthly scents—reminding us of our transience. When the living and the living dead merge with the geophysical, the idea that we are individuals no longer makes sense.

Tolaas, using chromatography, evokes similitude, a correspondence which Taussig describes as sympathetic magic. We, however, cannot co-opt this form of chemical analysis since we are attempting to capture imaginings. Our methods, therefore, resemble the imprinting of epigenetic—cellular connections that keep us *smell-bound* to the Ancestors. Across the abyss of óminni, odours call to us. They recall Haley-Halinski's hypothesis that Old Norse kennings disclose a *textual world*. The fragrances we have formulated are conceived as topographically analogous to the strange wordings of Norse poetic oration—akin to, yet not quite, metaphors. Odours are, for us, a form of kenning—volatile assemblages that rearrange the familiar—a language patterned by loss with all the turbulence of the beating wings of the *Heron of forgetting*, hegri óminnis.

There is much to learn from an attunement to the odiferous voices of the Ancestors, their knowledge passing through us via the atomic bonds of the olfactory and limbic systems. Unfolding such stories requires methods different from those employed by Tolaas, who maps odours analytically. Instead, we intuit conversations between the environment and the milieu of our existence. Our practice focuses on observing the luminous arc of smells as they discharge their scent into the atmosphere. It is akin to an electrical charge capable of producing a sudden start of recognition or revulsion. Dog-like, we snuffle at rising clouds of odour, intuitively following your trail—searching for a trace of you.

In the liminal imaginary, memory and unmemory are odiferous voices—an assertion our genetic Ancestors would have understood since the physical environment overflowed with pungent Beings, fragrant brews, herbaceous charms, and wind-borne spells. Rather than searching for equivalence or reconstituting fragrances from lived experience, as Tolaas and Macià do, we draw on the perfume of conjecture in the same way we harness the indeterminacy of light.

8. Tarata Resinoid (Lemonwood)

Botanical name: *Pittosporum eugenoides*

Botanical Family: Pittosporaceae

Olfactive Family: Woody / Citrus

Olfactory Note: Base

Native tree species of Aotearoa.

Tarata resin, leaves, and bark belong to Aotearoa's native forest pharmacopoeia.⁵⁸⁸ The gum or tears gathered for our scent come from a Tarata we planted thirty years ago. Now, having entered a state of suspended animation, the tree miraculously survives as the host of a thriving colony of Hakeke, Wood Ear (*Auricularia novozealandica*), a native fungus; meanwhile, at least one boring insect relentlessly gnaws its heart.

The Tarata's fragrance is unique amongst the endemic species of Pittosporaceae in Aotearoa. Research into its scent molecules shows octyl acetate as the prime fragrance in Tarata oil (33%), an unexpected finding considered extraordinary because octyl acetate, while naturally occurring, is rare.⁵⁸⁹ It is, however, present in large quantities in the resin produced by the *Boswellia* tree, commonly known as Frankincense or Olibanum.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁸ Before European colonisation Māori used Tarata as a fragrance. See "Ngā Rauropi Whakaoranga - *Pittosporum eugenoides*, Tarata, Lemonwood," Manaaki Whenua - Landcare Research, 2020, <https://rauopiwakaoranga.landcareresearch.co.nz/names>.

⁵⁸⁹ Roderick J. Weston, "Aromatic Components of the Leaves of the New Zealand Lemonwood Tree *Pittosporum eugenoides*," *Zeitschrift für Naturforschung C* 59, no. 1-2 (2004): 33, <https://doi.org/10.1515/znc-2004-1-207>.

⁵⁹⁰ *Boswellia* trees grow wild in conflict-ridden and impoverished parts of the Horn of Africa. The complex social conditions in these countries and increased global demand for the aromatic oleo-gum-resin (tears) have led to over-harvesting and a decline in the tree's

Frankincense resinoids vary; some exude a more peppery-spicy scent, while others possess a citrusy-pine fragrance. Similarly, the Tarata tree produces a lemon-citrus aroma, yet the resin does not immediately register as lemon; its citrus odour strengthens with steeping.

From the Tarata, we collect tiny amounts of gum, pooling naturally on the trunk around ruptures created by growth or insects. We are careful not to gather the resin in a manner that leaves the wound exposed, taking only the tips of the tears as they run down the rough bark. The gum is impure; as a sticky liquid, it attracts materials such as granulated bark, atmospheric dust, pollen, microscopic insects, and bacteria. This elemental tracery locates and dates the perfume like the nuance of dialect.

We combine the distinct scent of Tarata with Angelica, and Birch, odours long associated with Nordic countries.

9. Angelica (Hvönn)

Common names: Wild celery or Angel Herb

Botanical name: *Angelica archangelica*

Botanical Family: Apiaceae

Olfactive Family: Floral

Olfactory Note: Top

Old Norse: Hvönn and (pl.) hvannir (Are often found in compound words and place names)

Angel-like.

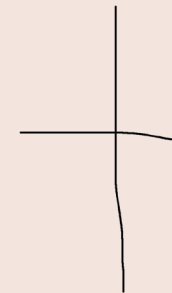
Of significance for Nordic peoples, Angelica was eaten and used to flavour cooking and alcohol for medicinals and as a magical ingredient

population. When not carried out carefully, gathering Frankincense resin, produced by cutting or bleeding the tree, reduces seed production and lessens the tree's life span. Over-harvesting means the cuts don't have time to heal, allowing entry by insects, irritants, and disease. While sacred aromatically, *Boswellia sacra* is on the International Union for Conservation of Nature list as near threatened. Linked to the domestication of the camel c. 1500 - 1200 BCE, Frankincense is one of the earliest known commodities traded by humans. The gum is a component in medicine and was used in Ancient Egyptian embalming practices and religious rites more generally. Recent studies have shown that resin, depending on the species of *Boswellia* tree, has therapeutic effects against three known cancers. See Cássio Luiz Coutinho Almeida da-Silva et al., "Effects of Frankincense Compounds on Infection, Inflammation, and Oral Health," *Molecules* 27, no. 13 (2022): 4174, <https://doi.org/10.3390/molecules27134174>.

in spells. It was worn on the body as an amulet. The Angelica plant was believed to keep the odour of death at bay, and it was laid on the floor as an aromatic (environmental) antiseptic.⁵⁹¹ The root of the plant is highly fragrant and is known to have anti-anxiety, anti-arthritic, anti-microbial, and antifungal properties.⁵⁹²

We are blending Tarata with Angelica and Oakmoss making a perfumed votive that recognises the land's mysterious powers' a forest scent that loosely conforms to the tradition of a fougère perfume. Our aim, however, is to create a clime, an atmosphere heavy with the fertile scent of landvættir. Vaguely animalic, with tannic, boggy undertones, intense, and viscous, it is a smell, like mud, that adheres to skin and does not let go.

We create through performance and perfume smellscape that are vaporous palimpsests. Our scents are liquid narratives expressed through aromatic resemblance, molecular instability, and the fiction of unmemory.



591. Irene Teixidor-Toneu, Karoline Kjesrud, and Anneleen Kool, "Sweetness Beyond Desserts: The Cultural, Symbolic, and Botanical History of Angelica (*Angelica Archangelica*) in the Nordic Region," *Journal of Ethnobiology* 40, no. 3 (2020): 298, <https://doi.org/10.2993/0278-0771-40.3.289>.

592. See Batiha Gaber El-Saber et al., "Phytochemical Constituents, Folk Medicinal Uses, and Biological Activities of Genus *Angelica*: A Review," *Molecules* 28, no.1 (December 28, 2022), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9822461/>.

In the Marrow of Our Bones

*While terror withstands the sudden departure of
everything that is, awe watches in the midst of
the impossible for the arrival of the unexpected.*

Rubenstein, 2009.⁵⁹³

*C'est un monde difforme, abrupt, lourd et livide,
Le spectre monstrueux d'un univers détruit
Jeté comme une épave à l'Océan du vide,
Enfer pétrifié, sans flammes et sans bruit.*

*A misshapen world, abrupt, heavy, livid,
The monstrous spectre of a universe in ruins
Floating like jetsam on an Ocean of emptiness,
A petrified hell, without flames or sound.*

Leconte de Lisle, 1872.⁵⁹⁴

Tarot-like, we array our beliefs across the surface of tomorrow—the overlap of unturned cards, past, present, and future, face downward, awaiting revelation—a numinous Universe whose unholy beauty kisses the bruised skin of our forgetting.

Opening our closing foil, we skim across the wake of knowledge created by the Ancestors. In our research, practice refers to *the practice of life and death*—the scenographics of existence. Our ideas, dispersed by the air, are seeded by forests, waterways, and mountains, where the storylines

593. Rubenstein, *Strange Wonder*, 46. (Italics ours)

594. Leconte de Lisle, “Les Clairs de lune [Moonlit Nights]” *Poèmes Barbares* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1872), 177, https://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/Les_Clairs_de_lune. (Italics ours)

of the Ancestors intersect. When we were very young, our grandmother taught us the efficacious effects of Eucalyptus oil, dabbing a small quantity on our pillow as we slept in the bed across from theirs. This familial ritual, an *act of love*, ensured our physical body breathed easy while we wandered, dreaming. *The scent of reassurance.*

*The Ancestors have entered our blood - a sea of corpses awash in the
marrow of our bones.*⁵⁹⁵



Our genetic Ancestors ascribed to a transformative logic. Believing in the (super)natural, they understood magical forces guided, infected and, if due care was not taken, killed.⁵⁹⁶ Though we do not claim our Norse antecedents used the word magic, their world-conceptions disclose the transformative logic necessary to conceive the world magically. They acknowledged that making offerings or sacrificing to (super)natural forces was critical to maintaining a precarious cosmic balance. Their beliefs called upon the auspices of topography and attested to the magical practices of Seiðr, a form of prophecy performed primarily by women, thought to be related to the art of spinning and the augury of the *Völva*, an arcane seeress whose visions appear in *Völuspá* in the *Poetic Edda*.⁵⁹⁷ Likewise, magic is critical to the vital forces of (super)natural Beings whose incredible and often deadly feats populate Old Norse narratives and the numerous accounts of transformation and shapeshifting, whether through spells, sacrifice, objects of extraordinary force, or eating the heart of another. Even the Scandinavian word for art, *kunst*, is linked to sorcery.⁵⁹⁸

595. In Old Norse kenning *sea of corpses* is a metaphor for *blood*. Siv Kristoffersen, “Half Beast — Half Man: Hybrid Figures in Animal Art,” *World Archaeology* 42, no. 2 (2010): 267, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00438241003672906>.

596. Transformative logic challenges and transcends established perceptual categories. See Siv Kristoffersen, “Half Beast — Half Man,” 261.

597. The *Seið-kona* (practitioner of Seiðr) generally carried a distaff, a long staff-like tool for spinning wool, flax, and *time*; The word *augury* comes from *augur* which refers to those “who observed natural signs, especially the behaviour of birds, interpreting these as an indication of divine approval or disapproval of a proposed action.” *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “augur (n.1),” accessed July 23, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6450272421>.

598. Elna Siv Kristoffersen notes *kunst* derives from the Old Norse words, “kunna and kunnasta, meaning kunnskap (knowledge), kyndighet (skill), and also embodies the concepts, insight and sorcery. Hence, ‘art’ incorporates a magic potential.” Siv Kristoffersen, “Half Beast

Nevertheless, we recognise the word *magic* is tainted and weighed down by diverse histories and centuries of prejudice. Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, contemplating the charged bias encircling magic, suggests that “perhaps the problem of magic is the problem of kinship; perhaps both are complementary solutions to the same problem: the problem of intentionality and influence, the mysterious effectiveness of relationality.”⁵⁹⁹ Undeniably, magic and kinship cast their *mysterious affect* over us.

Drawing on fieldwork conducted by anthropologist Roy Wagner amongst the Daribi clan of Papua New Guinea, Viveiros de Castro defines kinship as:

A continuous field of magical forces that continually convert bodies into souls, substances into relations, physics into semantics, ‘social structure’ into ‘religion’ – and back again. In brief, there is a single world but a double movement.⁶⁰⁰

In this double movement, reflective of the tidal pull of cosmic forces, Earthly emanations flowing from mountains, waterways, forests, plants, animals, and objects tether us through kinship. The odiferous bodies of the Ancestors, carried in the air, transform us physiologically and psychologically. Indeed, research undertaken by Phoebe R. Bentley et al. into the efficacious effects of forest odours shows these smells provoke calming sensations. Moreover, Bentley et al. frequently recorded that participants in their research sensed a palpable connection to the environment or “a transcendent other.”⁶⁰¹

When we say we become you, you know it to be true.

— Half Man,” 262.

599. Viveiros de Castro, “The Gift and the Given,” 243.

600. Viveiros de Castro, 245.

601. Phoebe R. Bentley et al., “Nature, Smells, and Human Wellbeing,” *Ambio*, 52, no. 1 (2023): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-022-01760-w>.

As Viveiros de Castro suggests, magic’s agency activates an array of physical and numinous relationships. Similarly, Siv Kristoffersen argues mediaeval Nordic peoples considered magically imbued objects as living Beings, offering the example of a sword magically endowed by the animal that adorns it. Through depiction, Elna Siv Kristoffersen states, the animal enters the sword’s substrate, becoming “the animal and the animal the sword – swift and deadly.”⁶⁰² Correspondingly, the scents of wood smoke, essences emitted from the bark and tears of trees, and the odours of plants such as Mugwort, Angelica, and Rimurimu are mysteriously affecting—their perfumes bringing us to our knees, felling our understanding.

Ours is an *osmic* world-conception that recognises ancestral ken, manifesting as odours, is carried on the air. Mesmerised by the odiferous, the Ancestors disclose the wonders of the world. In our research, ancestral ken coalesces in the liminal imaginary, which is, it seems to us, akin to Campagna’s *Magical As if*. Using the liminal imaginary we have learnt to speak in an idiolect distilled from plant language, this peculiar vocabulary binds to the fluid-filled interior of our body, entering the porous membrane of our existence.

In this fragrant exchange—we decompose.



602. Siv Kristoffersen states, “essential in the Nordic heathen tradition is the ability of the human soul to transform into the shape of the animal, known as hugr, hamr and fylgja. It is crucial that the human did not represent the animal but turned into and became the animal.” Siv Kristoffersen, 263 and 265.

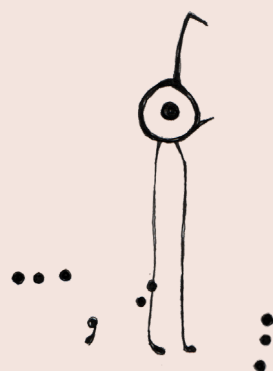


Figure 2.28. Dried Rimurimu on our studio wall, Marcus Williams, 2024, digital photograph, collection artist's own.

A CONCLUSION



Alyssum saxatile L. var.



As If by Magic

What we have been ordered to forget is not the capacity to pay attention, but the art of paying attention.

Isabelle Stengers, 2015.⁶⁰³

Analogous to the mythical weaver who conjures patterns from life and death, we weave our cosmic narrative on a loom of words with threads of breath and smoke. A possessor of magical forces, the weaver's swift hands twist soft knots that bind us through kinship into the fabric of existence. Yet, in the turning of their spindle, our storylines fray and fall apart. In our unravelling, we recognise the smells of home are the Ancestors—their ken, molecular and volatile, is present in the familiar tang of saltwater, the beguiling notes of Pōhutukawa bark, and warm skin.

By disclosing the extraordinary, the (super)natural, and wondrous, the Ancestors direct our attention to the destructive and contagious effects of global capital and liquid modernity. Overcome by a floating melancholy brought on by our moral and ethical failure, we find ourselves Love-struck, affected by Earthly wonders.⁶⁰⁴ Enraptured, caught in Love's liminality, we are both transported and damned, yet cosmic Love is a unifier, manifesting organic life through the outflowing of particles from the chaos

603. Isabelle Stengers, *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism*, trans. Andrew Goffey (London: Open Humanities Press 2015), 61. (Italics ours)

604. Addressing wonder, philosopher Howard L. Parsons argues that “what makes ordinary experience ‘ordinary’ is the flattening out of the wild, erratic flora, and protruding peaks, and outcroppings-by blueprints, bulldozers, and superhighways. Conceptualisation, the instrumental attitude toward things, the development of mechanised habits, the creating and application of classes, with abstract types and subtypes of particular things—all contribute to extinguishing from awareness the qualitative uniqueness of things and hence the experience of wonder. ‘Ordinary’ experience is just that experience which has this regular, accustomed, predictable character.” Parsons, “A Philosophy of Wonder,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 30, no. 1 (1969): 86, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2105923>.

created by Strife. Acknowledging that these arcane cosmogonic theories are addressing atoms, we prefer to call their outflowing idols or likenesses and to fashion from them memory skins. Indeed, Alfred Gell's concept of memory skins intrigues us because it combines skin and memory with perfume. This phrase recognises the intoxicating knowledge imparted by using odours to create portraits of the Ancestors. The air, dispersing these formless images, becomes a transmitter of magic.

Our thesis proposes odours are languages emanating from Earthly phenomena. The Ancestors, who are multitudinous and varied, charm, repel, and confuse us with their odiferous chatter. Familiar and strange, organic and inorganic, matter releases a cacophony of semiochemical narratives that spark a prelingual connectedness reliant on implicit relational knowing—the intuitive logic of Daniel N. Stern's psychological or Brian Massumi's creative, vitality affect.

We believe in a fundamental sympathy and experience the ineffable as a numinous sublunary ken intrinsic to the Ancestors and, therefore, the Universe. As odour is elemental, we regard it as magical. Indeed, classical philologist Britta Ager argues that “magic and scent were conceptually linked in Antiquity. Ancient authors sometimes treated magic as a type of smell; at other times odours were treated as a medium through which magic worked.”⁶⁰⁵ To understand Earth's thaumaturgic pulse and its effects on us, we enter the liminal imaginary, where, finding you, we forget ourselves.⁶⁰⁶

The fragrance of phantoms.

605. Britta Ager, “Magic Perfumes and Deadly Herbs: The Scent of Witches' Magic in Classical Literature,” *Preternature: Critical and Historical Studies on the Preternatural* 8, no. 1 (2019): 1, <https://doi.org/10.5325/preternature.8.1.0001>.

606. Like thaumazein, wonder and magic also co-exist within Thaumaturgy. Llewelyn, who describes wonder as Janus-like, argues, “wonder, thaumazein, is one of those wonderful words that face in opposite directions at one and the same time, like Janus. It seems possible to use it in opposite senses at once; thaumazein both opens our eyes wide and plunges us into the dark. It is both startled start, and flinching in bewilderment.” Llewelyn, “On the Saying that Philosophy Begins in Thaumazein,” 1; According to the *Oxford Dictionary online*: “Thaumaturgy also Thaumaturgicks, . . . is any Art that does, or seems to do Wonders, or, as it is defined by Dr. Dee, as a mathematical Science, which gives a certain Rule for the making of strange Works to be perceived by the Sense, yet to be greatly wondered at.” N. Bailey, *Universal Etymological English Dictionary vol. II* (London: T. Cox, 1727). Quoted in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “thaumaturgy (n.),” July 2023, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/8835139198>.

The Cosmos

*What we want is a little cosmos (with its own time,
its own logic) inhabited only by ‘us.’*

Roland Barthes, 1978.⁶⁰⁷

Evolutionary theory and the privileging of senescence (biological ageing) have recast modern European concepts of time. According to Meghan Mattsson McGinnis, life and death, past and present, were conceptually irrelevant to the Norse.⁶⁰⁸

Comparatively, human life is short, yet Global Humanity resolutely measures all forms of existence by human existence, a world-conception that, as Michel Serres observed, has resulted in *the disappearance of the world*.⁶⁰⁹ Though unwise, the view that Earth is a passive backdrop to human endeavours remains. This belief denies the power of cosmic Love and Hate to alter our fates. Akin to Narcissus, Global Humanity has fallen in love

607. Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*, 139. The original translation reads: “What I want is a little cosmos (with its own time, its own logic) inhabited only by ‘the two of us.’”

608. Mattsson McGinnis, “How ‘Other’ Was the Viking Otherworld?”, 315.

609. Serres, *The Natural Contract*, 35; Pinus Longaeva (Bristlecone Pines) are the oldest known trees surviving today; several of which are projected to be approximately five thousand years old, which means they seeded sometime between 3000 - 2500 BCE. In comparison, Aotearoa's oldest known trees are Kauri, thought to be the oldest is Tāne Mahuta (The God of the Forest), conjectured to have seeded between 500 BC – 750 AD and its companion Te Matua Ngahere (Father of the Forest), which is variously estimated to be anywhere from 1,200 - 4,000 years old. Many argue Te Matua Ngahere is the older of the two, being squat and broad, Te Matua Ngahere measures 16.76 metres in diameter against the circumference of Tāne Mahuta which is 15.44 metres. Nevertheless, both trees are hosts to thriving overstories, colonies of living Beings, flora and fauna alike. Of note is the liana, Northern Rātā, whose natural life spans one thousand years. Growing on the land adjacent to where we live, there is a veteran Oak, whose current life spans somewhere between one hundred and fifty and three hundred years. The oldest trees in our backyard are Camellia's, which are between sixty and ninety years of age. Data on Tāne Mahuta and Te Matua Ngahere is from “The New Zealand Tree Register,” accessed October 20, 2024, <https://register.notabletrees.org.nz/tree/view/802>.

with itself. Meanwhile, geologic and generative, the Ancestors abide by Earthly rhythms.

While we hum our toxic lullaby.

Like the Daughter of Night, our thesis reflects the pull of the Sun and Moon, a magnetic attraction, that draws us into the waxing and waning of lunar days.⁶¹⁰ We gravitate to your fragrant intonations, bewitched by your cosmic lilt—a felt-sense—our body responding to your visceral, yet metaphysical, touch.

By learning to sniff, we have become proficient at paying attention to the curious notes of your molecular exchange—the intimate olfactory idiom of bodies. Identical to a fingerprint, we forensically extract your scent from the environment, harnessing the chemical compounds released from reproduction and death—the vocabulary of plants.⁶¹¹ We use their strange tongue, casting their spells because theirs is an emanatory magic originating in the effluence of *cosmic Love*—the progenitor—our common Ancestor.

Analogous to an alchemist, we are preoccupied with transmutation. Dissolving, crushing, smoking, and steeping, we formulate elegiac odours as if *onomatopoeia*—manifesting the perfume of regret.⁶¹² Our rapture is conceived in the wildering of their aroma.

*Tomorrow's saccharin promise,
Coiling inside us.
The scent of bitumen and black bile.*

610. A lunar day is “the interval of time between two successive crossings of the meridian by the moon.” *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “lunar day (n.),” December 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6005652124>.

611. For research into odour profile forensics, see Chantrell J. G. Frazier et al., “Multivariate Regression Modelling for Gender Prediction Using Volatile Organic Compounds from Hand Odour Profiles via HS-SPME-GC-MS,” *Plos One* 18, no. 7 (2023): e0286452, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0286452>.

612. We formulate perfumes that smell like words—they are our poetics. Like Old Norse kennings, odour gives form to our lament. The etymology of *onomatopoeia* is the Greek, *onomatopoiia*, which means *word-making*, related to *poiesis* - *to make*. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “onomatopoeia (n.),” September 2024, <https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/6363191289>.



Reveals our Love

Aromatospheric wonders, distilleries of memory.

Humid, the air carries the smell of rain mixed with the sea's ozonic fragrance and the resinous scent of Kānuka. Simultaneously, male Cicada, performing their mating ritual, thrum their abdomens, alive to your arrival.

Hubertus Tellenbach once observed that “the olfactory sense is a sensorium of premonition and expectation.”⁶¹³ Paradoxically, odours are simultaneously temporal, yet atemporal, intransitive and vaporous; they conjure the past and foretell the future. In distilling the material world, we create an immaterial likeness of you—a fragrant portrait of our desire.

Attempting to conjure a different tomorrow, we ask, “How might conjuring a magical world-conception from ancestral ken and the liminal imaginary transform our perception of the Universe in a time of ecological crisis?” Our response is this thesis.

Dubious of our explanation, the Ancestors turn our question inside out, asking us, “How, in a time of ecological crisis, will conjuring a magical world-conception from ancestral ken and the liminal imaginary transform Global Humanity?

Disquieted by this question, we look into the dark mirror of the future and sense our monstrous selves gazing back. Like Julia Kristeva, *we expel ourselves, spitting ourselves out.*⁶¹⁴

We are transformed.

613. Tellenbach, “Tasting and Smelling,” 224.

614. Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 3. The original quote reads, “I expel myself; I spit myself out.” (Italics ours)



Figure 2.29. *Ymis blóð*, Ymir's blood, is the blood of the primordial jötunn Ymir (pronounced Ee-mir, translates as Scream), the first Being, a personification of chaos. Ymir emerged from Ginnungagap—the Gap of Gunnunga, the void—that which has not yet become. The gods Óðinn, Vili, and Ve killed Ymir to create the cosmos. Ymir's flesh became Earth, their blood the Sea, the mountains are Ymir's bones, the forests are their hair, and the heavens are Ymir's skull, Susan Jowsey, 2024, cameraless photograph, collection artist's own.



Figure 2.30. *In memory of our parents, Jocelyn (Pettersson) Jowsey (1937 - 2023) and Anthony Jowsey (1936 - 2013), with Max (the dog) and Iggy (the sheep), The Farm, Tahekeroa, Aotearoa, Marcus Williams, 1993, film negative, collection artist's own.*

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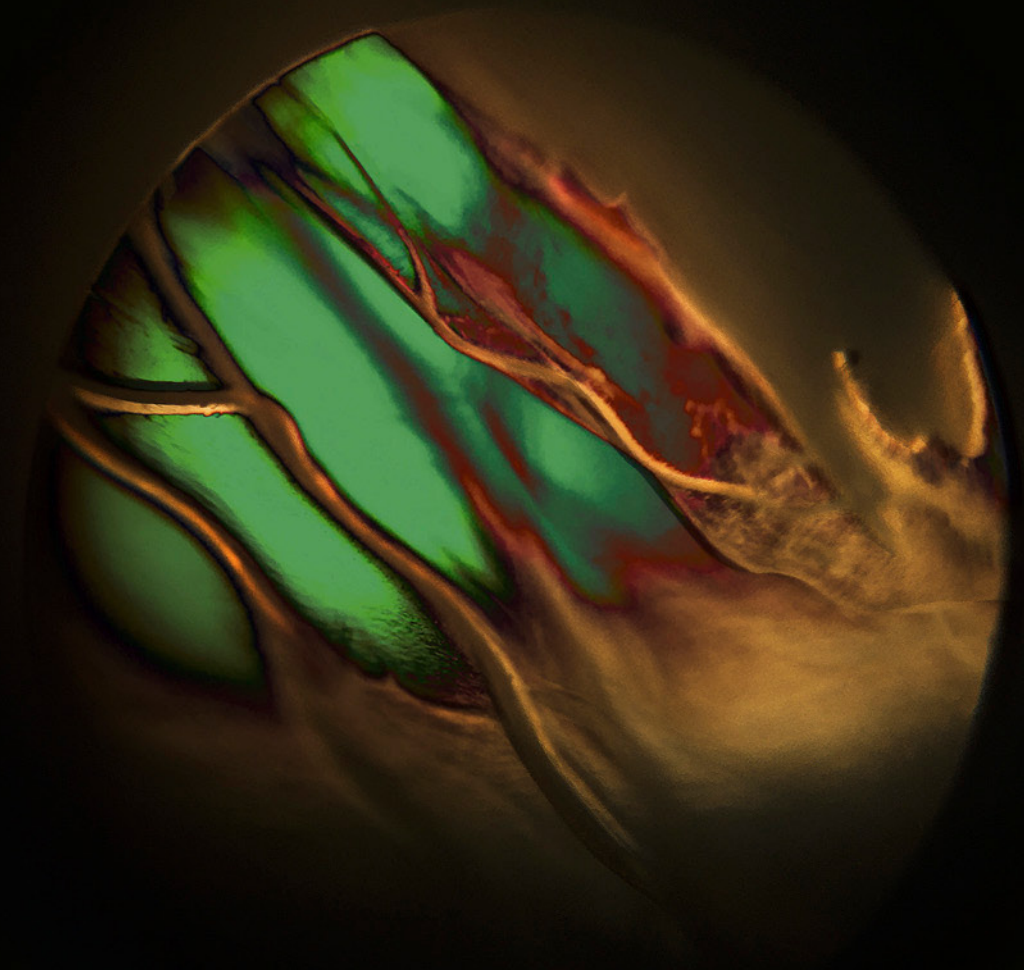


Figure 3.1. *Ómmi*, Susan Jowsey, 2025, cameraless photograph, collection artist's own.



Figure 3.2. *Drifandi, the drifting one* a heiti for *Sky* or *Heavens*, Susan Jowsey, 2025, perfume installation, *Conjuring Tomorrow*, Ngutu Kāka Gallery, Auckland, collection artist's own.

POSTSCRIPT



Thistle



Figure 3.3. *Viðbotn varðkeri glyggs*, the guarding-vessel of the storm, a kenning for Sky or Earth, Susan Jowsey, 2025, collection of fourteen cameraless and microscopic digital photographs printed on Inkjet Hahnemuhle Potorag, Conjuring Tomorrow, Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland, collection artist's own.

The perfumery and photographic methods infusing *Conjuring Tomorrow* were exhibited in Te Wai Ngutu Kākā Gallery, St Paul Street, Auckland University of Technology, Auckland, Aotearoa, New Zealand. The presentation comprised six perfumes and seventeen images printed on Inkjet Hahnemuhle Potorag at varying sizes. All works were created between January 2022 and March 2025.

The Photographs

Juxtaposed, the photographs, arranged in two clusters, act as foils for the ephemerality of the perfumes. Nevertheless, the images are also fugitive and enigmatic. The largest assemblage of which was collectively titled:

Viðbotn varðkeri glyggs

{The guarding-vessel of the storm, a kenning for Sky or Earth}

This group formed a constellation on the gallery's far wall. Visible through the gallery's large glass door, they called you into the space.

The individual works are named:

1. Aotearoa Brown Seaweed (Marine Macroalga), cameraless photograph.
2. Ómmiini, (Cicada Wing), microscopic photograph (Left middle, see figure 3.1).
3. Kāhu (Swamp harrier) skull, cameraless photograph (See figure 2.4).
4. Éltreki (Storm-driver), cameraless photograph (See figure 1.1).
5. Cicada skin, microscopic photograph (Large image, left middle).
6. Neck of a Honeybee, microscopic photograph.
7. Kiwi Skull, cameraless photograph. (Lower centre, see figure 2.3).
8. Bleached Seaweed, cameraless photograph (Right of #5).
9. Ruru skull (Watchful guardian, Morepork), cameraless photograph.
10. Drifandi—the drifting one, cameraless photograph (See cover of exegesis).
11. Wing of a Honeybee, microscopic photograph (Centre right, see figure 1.14).
12. Insect Wing, Cicada, microscopic photograph.
13. Little Moon, cameraless photograph (Large grey image).
14. Skull of a Dog, cameraless photograph (Far right).

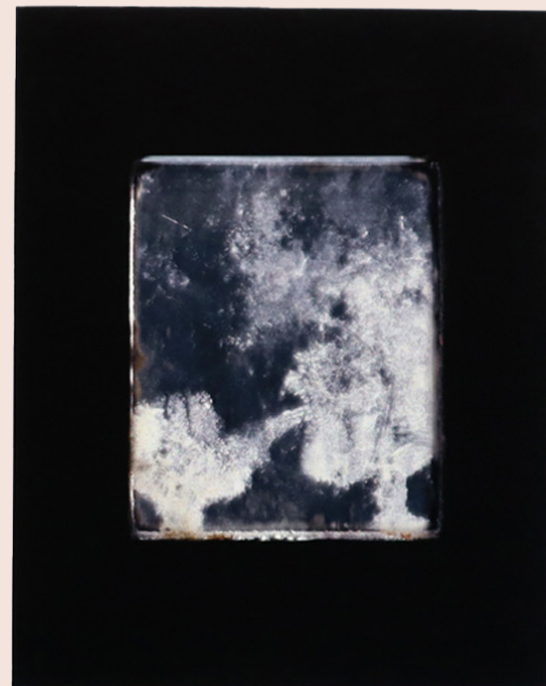


Figure 3.4. *Draumnjorn*, meaning *Night, or the Goddess of Dreams*, Susan Jowsey, 2025, collection of three cameraless photographs printed on Inkjet Hahnemuhle Photograg, *Conjuring Tomorrow*, Ngutu Kākā Gallery, Auckland, collection artist's own.

Group two, comprising three images, was collectively titled:

Draumnjorn

{Night, or the Goddess of Dreams}

These works confronted viewers as they left the gallery. At 24 by 30 inches (60.94 by 91.44 cm), the *Scrying Mirror* drew the eyes of the viewer toward its occluded interior.

The individual works are named:

1. *Lyng vangs lýsu* (*Heather of the Sea, a kenning for Seaweed*), cameraless photograph (Bottom left, see figure 3.10).
2. *Hagstone*, cameraless photograph (Top left).
3. *Scrying Mirror*, cameraless photograph (Right).





Figures 3.5 and 3.6. *Óskepna*, *Monstrous thing* a kenning for *mighty strife*, Susan Jowsey, 2025, perfume installation close-up, opposite page in-situ, *Conjuring Tomorrow*, Ngutu Kāka Gallery, Auckland, collection artist's own.

The Perfumes

Along the most substantial wall of the gallery, six perfumes were arrayed. Presented in pear-shaped, borosilicate glass boiling flasks used in science laboratories, the installation referred to the alchemical, spagyric approach followed in formulating our fragrant conversations. The flasks were fitted with funnels and rubber atomiser bulbs. The glassware and bulb were threaded through and hand-bound with hemp twine and beeswax to metal arms made from brushed recycled stainless steel. A corresponding anodised aluminium nameplate accompanied each perfume.

Each flask held three drops of perfume. Additional scent was not required, as the perfume evaporates slowly from the flasks. Its odour remains even when no obvious perfume is left in the flask. Whilst the perfume was faintly detectable without puffing the bulb, using the atomiser delivers an immersive aromatic experience, lightly scenting the surrounding atmosphere. Visitors to the gallery were directed to neutralise their sense of smell between each fragrant conversation by sniffing the skin on their forearms.



Viewers returned, drawn by the peculiar semiochemical emanations of the perfumes.

The Boxes

In addition to the exhibition, the examiners received a box containing three perfumes (not presented in the exhibition), a booklet entitled *Three Volatile Molecular Conversations*, and one of two hand-made amulets. The boxes were designed to engage the examiner's sensorium while they read the textual body of our thesis.



Figure 3.7. *Conjuring Tomorrow* perfume and amulet boxes, Susan Jowsey, 2025, each box contained three perfumes, one hand-made amulet inside a hand-made bag, scent strips, and a booklet, property of the examiners.



Figure 3.8. and 3.9. *Conjuring Tomorrow* amulets, Susan Jowsey, 2025, hand-made amulets, property of the examiners.

Booklet Text

A scent may drown years in the odour it recalls.

Walter Benjamin, 1969.¹

Odour enables us to enter the liminal imaginary and cross the threshold of forgetting. These perfumes do not leave to chance the conjuring of memory; instead, they are wholly creative endeavours—fictions arising from our confabulations with the Ancestors.

They are an integral part of our Love story, which thrives in the dark matter of decay and the generative power of phantoms, described by scholar William A. Covino as “writers of the cosmology that escapes our normal, time-constrained powers of meditation.”²

We brood over words and speculate about their capacity to demarcate proximity, the distance separating *You* and *Us*—the insurmountable obstacle of belief. The closer we get to you, the more we comprehend our likeness. Indeed, philosopher Karen Barad asserts, “*matter is a matter of untimely and uncanny intimacy, condensations of being and times.*”³ The Ancestors, their scent on our skin, their breath ours, are speaking.

These three conversations are designed to be experienced while reading the accompanying text, our Love story. They are shared only with you as an examiner of our thesis—to be experienced on the enclosed scent strips, worn on your skin, or added to the amulet. These perfumes have been formulated following traditional methods. Please note that perfume contains ethanol.

1. Walter Benjamin, and Hannah Arendt, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, Random House Digital, 1969), 184.

2. William A. Covino, *Magic, Rhetoric, and Literacy: An Eccentric History of the Composing Imagination* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994), 86.

3. Karen Barad, “Transmaterialities: Trans*/matter/realities and queer political imaginings.” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and gay Studies* 21, no. 2-3 (2015): 402. (Italics author’s own)

The Perfumes {as described in the examiner’s booklet}

Hyrrokkin

Fire-withered, fire-steamer or fire-smoked

{The strongest Being in the world}

Hyrrokkin (pronounced He-rok-kin) is a mythical female jötunn who travels on a giant wolf using vipers as reins. On the Hunnestad Monument, they are depicted with a snake tongue. Hyrrokkin’s story is, essentially, lost to memory. Archaeologist Gunner Andersson asserts that serpents are pivotal in Norse Viking Age cosmologies and that “the animal and its depictions, in both a figurative/linguistic and literal sense, alludes to the secrets of life, the transformation and crossing between life and death as well as being a distinguishing demarcation between the inside and outside.”⁴

This perfume has been subject to enfleurage using Rāta smoke and natural Beeswax. It is made with Tonka Bean and an absolute formulated from Kauri bark, Pōhutukawa bark, Tarata tears, Kawakawa berries, and Kahikatea bark; it also contains Angelica and Blood Cedarwood.



Hyrrokkin riding a wolf, as carved on a rune stone at Hunnestad, Varberg Municipality, Sweden.

4. Gunner Andersson, “With Thor on Our Side: The Symbolism of the Thor Hammer-Ring in Viking Age Burial Ritual,” in *Dealing with the Dead: Archaeological Perspectives on Prehistoric Scandinavian Burial Ritual*, edit. by Tore Artelius, and Fredrik Svanberg (Stockholm: National Heritage Board, Riksantikvarieämbetet, 2005), 58.

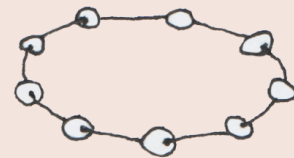
Dvergrann

Dvergr-house

{A kenning for stone—woman}

Dvergr are Old Norse lithic entities. Pronounced Dwerger-ann, kennings for women often reference stones, an association that is reinforced by women's adornments composed of strings of precious stones, amber, crystal, and glass beads, and amulets fastened between two large brooches.

This perfume, akin to a herbaceous amulet, is fashioned from Tangerine, Elemi, Rose, Patchouli, Sandalwood, Angelica, and Ambreine. It emits the monoterpene *limonene*, a molecule with efficacious effects on mood and cognitive ability. Grounded by the earthy warmth of Patchouli, the volatile odours of amber are weighted as if by stones.

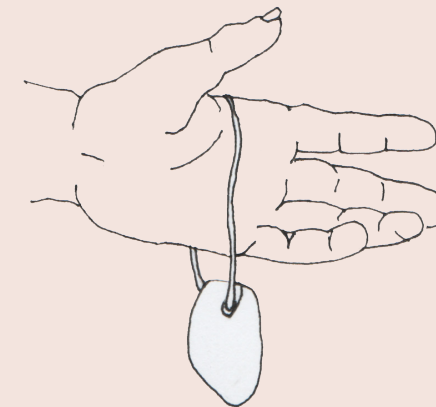


þögn

silence

{silence stirred with breath}

Pronounced th-uh-gn (like thong), þögn is Old Norse for silence. Barely audible, this perfume murmurs of suspicions that cast long shadows. It is formulated from Olibanum Resinoid, Ambre, Fleur de Tabac, Antique Rose, Cedarwood Atlas, and Damascone Alpha and Beta with hints of Raspberry.



The Perfumes {as described in the exhibition}

These six olfactory conversations, created for our thesis, embody the Old Norse Skaldic kennings, after which they are named. Skaldic poetry, taking the form of an oral-performative cultural ritual, played a critical role in preserving and transmitting Norse Cosmology. While there is no absolute definition of what constitutes an Old Norse kenning, they are primarily figurative elements central to Skaldic poetry, typically crafted using compound words or phrases to create metaphoric circumlocutions. Ken is an arcane word for knowledge. In our research, ancestral ken and the liminal imaginary are paramount. The Ancestors to whom we defer are diverse; they speak to us in odiferous tongues, and our relationships with them are environmental, deeply personal, rooted in ethical responsibility, and nebulous kinships. We are drawn into the strange, evocative world of Kennings because they disclose complex socio-cultural and mythic memories lost to us. They are cognitive poetry conjured from (super)natural forces, the spittle of gods, the sacrifice of wisdom, magical transformation, and breath. Viewed this way, they become spoken-word charms dissecting the viscera of our existence. In them, we perceive distillations of ancestral narratives materialising in the animalic scent of skin and fur and the earthy odours of vegetative life-forms whose fungal spores once fortified the sacred Mead of Poetry, a potent drink of words whose effect on the attentive was the imparting of wisdom.

Our perfumes are poetic fictions—elemental correspondences released from the aromatospheric murmurings of molecules—created from the floral, faunal, and environmental voices of the Ancestors.

*Alert to the aroma of death, you ask to be sniffed.
Patiently re-apply the unguent we have made,
its perfume weeping in the soft accent of grief,
Your scent, a sticky bloom flowering in the bloodstream of unmemory.*



Note: Kennings in verse form are arranged differently from those captured in prose. We have used a mix of verse and prose forms. Old Norse Skaldic heiti are poetic synonyms, uncompounded, single, creative nouns.

Aromatospheric is a portmanteau word created in response to philosopher Madalina Diaconu's contention that olfactory art is an idiolect, a personal poetic or expressive form peculiar to the artist.

Vættir vitta

The creature of charms

{A Sorceress}

This magic formula contains ancient folkloric sorcery. The creature of charms incants a historiola, a performative magic based on mythic narratives, expressed, in this instance, odoriferously. Under its spell you will experience the arcane synergistic effects of Frankincense and Myrrh combined with the haunting musk of Old Rose, the medicinal scent of Labdanum, and spicy bite of Black Pepper.



Viðnir

Forest dweller

{Goshawk, wolf, and snake}

Manifest in this volatile molecular substance are the presence of speaking birds, the propitiousness of serpents, the silent footfalls of wolves, and the furious beating of wings. Invoking the heady scent of decay and rebirth, Viðnir combines the botanical essence of the tree lichen, *Evernia prunastri* and the camphoric scent of Coriander. These herbaceous, loamy odours are contrasted with woody scents that exude the animalic intensity of (super)natural phenomena.

*Drífandi**The drifting one*

{Sky or heavens}

Seeking to create a perfumed heiti for the Sky, we mix an air spell into your sensual botanical conversation to assist us in acquiring knowledge. Based on a fragrant infusion of Neroli, Lavender, Petitgrain, Cyclamen, Rose, Vetiver, Hops, Angelica root, and Pōhutukawa bark, this perfume embodies the sticky aromatospherics of late summer redolent with the poetics of plant language (plant-emitted volatile compounds).



*Unnamed
Fungus*

*Óskepna**Monstrous thing*

{Mighty strife}

In Old Norse cosmology monsters, adumbrate Beings, are elemental forces. This pungent conversation combines the monstrous and numinous. *Óskepna* is a fougère (a fern perfume) thick with the smouldering odours of Tobacco, smoky Tonka Bean, and Patchouli. Combined with the resinous fragrance of Kānuka and the warmth of Kauri bark. These telluric scents are counterbalanced by Hyraceum tincture, a pheromone-laden scent common in ancient perfumes, made from the fossilised excreta of the Rock hyrax.

*We swallow the world whole,
And in that moment,
the Universe performs a vanishing act,
leaving only the numinous aura of regret.*

*Hræva dogg**Dew of corpses*

{A kenning for Blood}

Hidden in this aromatic substance is a mythic narrative about the reddening of seas and ships. Composed using fragrant tinctures of Pōhutukawa and Kauri barks, Kawakawa seeds and Tonka Bean, mixed with the salty tang of Rimurimu (Seaweed); this aromatic conversation is grounded by Vetiver, an oil extracted from the Vetiver grass that can live for two hundred years, and the musky, leathery scent of Oakmoss (*Evernia prunastri*).

The kenning *hræva dogg* appears in the poem of *Bragi* (the Norse god of Poetry), where the blood of the slain is ‘*painted onto the leaf of the trees of the lands of Leifi.*’ A kenning for the Sea King—the Sea, ships, and shields. Painting ships and shields, the blood of the slain reddens the Sea. The blood of the Ancestors flows in dark resin, tree bark, seed pulp, and fronds of Seaweed, washing ashore. A feverish aromatic dew, it adheres to our skin, enters our bloodstream, and alters us.

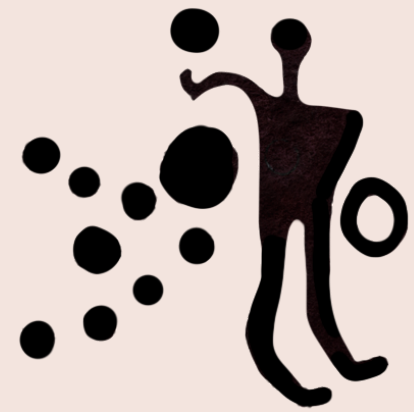
*Nidr sævar**The kin of the sea*

{Fire}

Like the masking behaviour of the decorator crab, Papaka Huna (*Notomithrax Ursus*), who covers itself in Seaweed, we cloak ourselves in the fetid odours of Ocean forests and submerge ourselves in the pitch and roll of charcoal and Rātā smoke. We weave mythic conversations from the briny tang of Baltic and Aotearoa marine macroalgae and rough bur of smoke captured in an enfleurage pomade, an ancient method of fragrance extraction. Combining the whiff and hum of Rimurimu (Seaweed) with essences of Kānuka, Rātā smoke, and Angelica root—we steep soil-borne stories in ancestral Ocean currents.



Figure 3.10. *Lyng vangs l'ysu*, Susan Jowsey, *Conjuring Tomorrow*, Ngutu Kakā Gallery, Auckland, collection artist's own.



*The perfume of our existence,
a stolen grief,
untangled from the limbs of time.*