



dear friend,

I would like to share a few things with you before you read this zine. This zine is one in a series of six, made in six days, during my stay at PAF residency in France in the very sunny October 2022. I made these zines out of a desire to trace entangled thoughts, to assemble and disassemble experiences and theories, to weave a container of ideas to hold my relation to queer ecology.

These texts are epistemologically rooted in my own experiences, and therefore also in my affinities with the written word. I want to acknowledge the written word as a white + colonial + patriarchal tool of existing power, and my (inherited) affinity with words as a privilege in these systems of oppression. To offer a small way of breaking through the paradigm of the written word, as offering "truth" and "universality", these texts are being edited with associations, contradictions, anecdotes, by hand after print by me - and, as I'd like to invite you to, also by you. My hope is for this ongoing editing to destabilize and reimagine the printed texts.

I would also like to think of "the importance of "mistakes" in queer reading and writing". I am most likely wrong about things - and I did not write these texts with an intention of being smarter or "more right" than others, but for making relations and rupturing open "rooms to realize that the future may be different from the present". (Jedwick, Paranoid vs. Reparative Reading). I'd like to invite you, as you read this, to consider this the subjective and personal project that it is and to allow for ambiguity in your reading. As in queer ecology, let's get lost together in the web of tentacles, hyphen, entanglements.

With the form of zines, I align myself with the radical tradition of self-publishing arising from feminist movements. Zines have long been a cherished tool for sharing with small and large communities, for political agitation, for forming knowledge, for distributing art, without the apparatus of "legitimation" by institutions. Zines thus enable and invite "illegitimate", autotheoretical, activist epistemologies and the distribution of those knowledges in accessible ways for the addressed community. Embedded in this tradition, I made these zines to now share with you.

print settings: A4
double sided, folded over the short
edge, from page 3 - end, in color!

Enough fancy words - let's get to the practical! When you have printed these pages, you can simply gather all pages and fold them in half, and the page numbers will make sense. This specific page you can ignore, it doesn't belong in the zine(s). If you want to show your zine some love, you can stitch the fold together with thread or staple it.

And one more tiny thing: some of these zines are very personal, so please be gentle & I trust you with this.

Warmly,

Toni

04 hybrids, chimeras, queers

Even though I use the term non-binary for describing my experience of gender, I don't particularly like the term. The prefix "non" inevitably puts me into a relation to a binary that I have found oppressive for my experience of being a person. Describing myself with an absence of the binary rather than with my presence being something else feels inadequate: it erases and simplifies my relation to the abundance of gender experiences and identities that exist outside/across/with the binary. I am not without the binary: how could I be? I have thrown out other tethers to other descriptions: being a lesbian describes my sexuality as well as gender experience, when I think of Monique Wittigs "A lesbian cannot be a woman", or of the "Woman-Identified Woman" of the Lavender Menace. Describing myself as transmasculine has felt good, the prefix trans resonates deeply with me.

Identity is not something that is cerebrally constructed in the safe corners of an individual's brain, but it is fundamentally relational: not only to the human, but also to the more than human. Identity has "much to do with how we interpret and enact our relationality". Gender is an ecosystem, an entangled, ecological experience of relating to others and ourselves.

How do we, as queer and trans people, form our sense of self through relations with the more-than-human? In which ecosystems and landscapes do we connect to our identities, to our bodies, to our selves?

“Utilizing (our bodies) as sites for myth and ritual, as altars to the strange, mutant, monstrous, or magnificent self is a path toward ecological and cosmological coherence in incoherent times. Perhaps queer and alternative genders (and all genders) aren't just something created solely by humans but are something that we're taking part in as we collaborate with Earth's systems to mend lost or endangered connections.” (Beyond the Human, So and Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd)

The monstrous, lichen-like hybrids of this world will survive within disturbed landscapes. If we want to survive with them, we need to become monstrous, too. Maybe we already are. 70% of our Serotonin is produced by bacteria that reside within our guts. Does this not make us all happy monsters?

Being trans and queer in the cisheterosexual society we live in is an extreme condition. I want to turn to experts of extreme conditions, and examine their sympoetic identities.*

Lichen are incredible small ecosystems in themselves: An algae, a fungi, and at least one other yeast (and probably much more), form one (?) organism, so intertwined they blur together into one being, surviving with and off each other. The algae convert sunlight and water into sugars that the fungus needs, simultaneously, the fungus emits acids that allow the lichen to settle on surfaces such as rocks. Without lichen, none of us could be here: in the beginnings of the earth, when life only knew the vast underwater worlds of our oceans, there was no soil for plants to settle onto land, there were only rocks, dust, sand. And ice. Lichen were the first to prepare the land for what was to come: vascular plants, soon greening and growing continents, making our planet green. Without fungi, and without lichen, it would not have been possible.

Fungi and Algae, though, can survive on their own. What makes them pair up in these queer relations, changing the face of our planet for good?

*my point is not an essentialist all-queers-like-plants romanticization: more of the realization that we, plants and queers, would do good in standing together in our struggles. lichen are not a metaphor.

IMAGINING A BODY FROM ANOTHER WORLD

a new buoyancy around my shoulders, thick, soft
shoulder blades
a flat chest with 13 nipples
feet with dirt between the toes
long labia hugging my inner thighs
the palms of my hand cold and clear like a lake
vines growing from my feet upwards, twining
around my legs
kneecaps with bony spikes that fan up when the
knees bend
the sensation of water in my veins freed from
the parasympathetic into consciousness
dents and hills in the soft tissue of my belly
plants growing amongst my hair
moss in my armpits
tiny white flowers in my ears, sometimes flowe-
ring into a beard
tree fungi along my spine
a shifting, tilting, waving body, like kelp,
softly upright, dripping gently
dirty fingernails always
smelling like wet moss, patchouli, pine, sweat
tasting like radish *
a permeable skin for lovers, sinking into each
others bodies like inosculating trees
a body with more holes to let the wind through

en-kissing

Hybridity is often (and definitely in the case of lichens, billions of years ago) a "survival response within fractured ecosystems" or extreme conditions. In lab experiments, lichen only began to form collaboratively when the conditions were harsh and unwelcoming to both the fungi and the algae on their own. And before the symbiosis of lichen, there was another one - making life as we know it possible in the first place. Lynn Margulis Endosymbiotic Theory shows, simply and stunningly beautiful, that we are because of the being of others.

It is important to add that symbiosis does not only include mutualisms, but parasitism and hemiparasites as well. There is not always an idealistic commons, or a happily ever after - the ways of becoming with each other are complex and multifaceted.

A Kriya for Cultivating Your Inner Plant, - Natasha Myers

"Never forget this: your body does not end at the skin. Your contours are not constrained by physical appearance. Your morphological imaginary is fluid and changeable. Indeed, your tissues can absorb all kinds of fantasies. Your imagination generates more than mere mental images, its reach extends through your entire sensorium. (...) Imaginings carry an affective charge. They can excite your muscles, tissues, and fascia, heighten or alter your senses. You can fold semiosis into sensation. Perceptual experiments can rearticulate your sensorium. And by imagining otherwise, and telling different stories, you can open up new sensible worlds."

(
In a workshop on trans* somatic practices, given by Elena Rose Light, they encouraged us to ask each other: "how would you like me to see you?" - making the relationality of identity construction painfully obvious, but also giving way to the power of imagination as a sensorial, embodied practice of transformation.

The Gorgons

"The Gorgons are powerful winged chthonic entities without a proper genealogy; their reach is lateral and tentacular; they have no settled lineage and no reliable kind (genre, gender)".
(Donna Haraway)

* radish was my first-ever gender self-description. When I was about three or four, I had a striped pajama dress, pink + white, with an embroidered radish on the chest. So one day I was asked (as a control question), if I'm a boy or a girl, and answered: Ich bin ein Radieschen. I am a radish. I love to think of this.

+ Scott Gilbert

When Donna Haraway wrote that "we are all lichens", I feel a tingling sensation that trans-verses the despair at the state of the world towards a symbiotic hybridity, enabling survival. Symbionts of all sorts, all the wild hybrids and chimeras insist on the "impossibility of purity" (Greta Gaard). Focussing on contamination, on our sym-poetic becoming "guides us to possibilities of coexistence within environmental disturbance" (Anna Tsing). If Lichen can melt rock, if nettles can clear lead-toxicated soils, if plants and bacteria make the hormones for queer folks' HRT, then we might stand a chance in the mess we are in. Our identities are assemblages of attachments, longings, desires, traumas, and many other vectors of relating to one another. Thinking through the idea of hybrids/boundary-creatures/trans*ness (Hayward) opens up the possibility of "mending broken relations out of salvaged parts" (Beyond the human, So and Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd).

this also speaks to Tsing's concept of "assemblages as open-ended gatherings" - world-making out of salvaged and maybe ill-fitting parts. Like the ecosystems of the great Pacific garbage patch.

Not only individuals or species hybridize, or queer their relations in order to survive in scarred landscapes. Landscapes as large communities can do this, too: Hyperecologies are fundamentally queer, full of unlikely entanglements. See zine 05!

Sphinx

“Brasier pointed out that microscopic examination of the yellow limestone from which the Sphinx was built revealed millions of fossils of real chimeras, amoeboid protists called foraminifera that had symbiotically merged. The Sphinx and pyramids of Egypt are composed almost entirely of benthic foraminifera, which annually generate an estimated 43 million tons of calcium carbonate per year. These foraminifera, moreover, are promiscuous protists, having merged with other species, including red algae, green algae, and diatoms, photosynthetic ray beings who make the translucent spicules of their bodies of silica, living glass. The yellow limestone depicting the mixed made-up animal monster is made of real symbiotic beings, forams and diatoms and dinoflagellates swimming in the Tethys Sea during the Eocene 50 million years ago.” - Dorion Sagan in “Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet”.

monsters are apotropaic:
they ward off bad luck
and evil spirits...

Queer and trans folks have been “positioned as boundary creatures: neither fully “natural” nor fully “civilized”” (Catriona Sandiland, Lavender’s green). But if the world was made by such “boundary-creatures”, since the very beginning of life, a possibility for futures arises out of the deep past. Even more: Within the disturbance and despair of the climate catastrophe, becoming hybrids is be our survival strategy.

We (and others) might find those monstrous. They are, and the monsters have not not alone. Monsters are not only Tichen-shaped, they take many more-than-human forms. Humans have been telling stories of monstrous creatures, hybrids, since time immemorial. Turning to monsters can be helpful in situating queerness and transness in a thick web of stories that reach far into the past - and the future. The monstrous, the hybrid, can (and should be) reclaimed as a strategy of empowerment and emancipation in sympoeisis. After all, as Derrida wrote, monsters also announce futurity.

Monsters ask us to consider the
wonders and terrors of symbiotic
entanglement in the Anthropocene.
(Tsing, *Arts of living*)

the figure of the sphinx is powerful
in its persistent evasion of intelligibility
- she will not have/take the easy answers,
and she guards complexity itself, waiting
in front of temples and tombs

↳ spirituality!

with her riddle on constantly changing
human nature and her embodied hybridity
of three different beings (and various genders),
she modes (and kills) the idea of a
fixed, enclosed identity. she knows better.

SCYBORG

„there's some hope, the hope of the scyborg. Organisms in the machinery are scyborgian: as students, staff, faculty, alumni, and college escapees, technologies of the university have been grafted onto you. Your witch's flight pulls bits of the assemblage with you and sprays technology throughout its path.

The agency of the scyborg is precisely that it is a reorganizer of institutional machinery; it subverts machinery against the master code of its makers; it rewires machinery to its own intentions. It's that elliptical gear that makes the machine work (for freedom sometimes) by helping the machine (of unfreedom) break down. The lopsided bot, the scyborg, the queer gear with a g-limp—if there is anything to fear and to hope for in the university, it could be you, and it could be me.“

la paperson, A third university is possible.

The Green Man

In celtic mythology, the green man symbolized rebirth, growth cycles, fertility. The leaves are sprouting from his face, sometimes growing from the mouth, the ear, the nose - enmeshing his face in green. He is associated with many ancient gods: Freyr, the nordic god of fertility, of fair weather, of the harvest, of peace, "the source of every inspiration" (W.Anderson). Mimir, whose head, after being cut off in the turmoils of mythology and cosmogenesis, was balmed in seven herbs to be preserved in the well below Yggdrasil, the tree of life. Mimir was speaking wise words. Osiris, who was dismembered and scattered across the landscape, then put together again: I wonder if there were little pieces of moss and soil sewn into his new, argonautic body.



clay mask printed
with lavender, made
at PAF.

Fauns and Satyrs

"they found resonance with cloven-hoofed animals—the deer, the sheep, the goats. These beings embodied a grace, a light-footedness, and also a musky earthiness, too. (...) it was that they are caricatures of a campy and silly form of masculinity not available to us through any other representations. They were, in a way, an ancestral form of drag." (Beyond the Human, Atmos magazine, So and Pinar Sinopoulos-Lloyd)

gender as an ecosystem: "Far from being something fixed and subjugated, a niche is a dynamic node, a location that enables connections to others, a path to sovereignty (...). After all, the ecosystem is just niches all the way down. The freedom of the identity role, which we and others have called an eco-social niche, lies in the fugitive claim that "life is possible here"."

Cyborgs (and Scyborgs)

next page

The cyborg is resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity. It is oppositional, utopian, and completely without innocence. No longer structured by the polarity of public and private, the cyborg defines a technological politics based partly on a revolution of social relations in the oikos, the household. Nature and culture are reworked; the one can no longer be the resource for appropriation or incorporation by the other. The relationships for forming wholes from parts, including those of polarity and hierarchical domination, are at issue in the cyborg world. Unlike the hopes of Frankenstein's monster, the cyborg does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden; that is, through the fabrication of a heterosexual mate, through its completion in a finished whole, a city and cosmos. The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family, this time without the oedipal project. The cyborg would not recognize the Garden of Eden; it is not made of mud and cannot dream of returning to dust. (Donna Haraway, Cyborg Manifesto)