



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". (Sedgwick, 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.

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

Warmly,

Toni

**01 coming across plants**

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Coming out as non-binary has changed my way of being in the world profoundly. These processes come slowly to me, they shapeshift and grow underground of my daily life, only to then crack open to the surface like mushrooms after rainfall. This process of cracking open is a painful one, as much as it is liberating. When my transness began pushing through the surface, towards the air, I have had to learn many things about myself again. It has been painful, too - the soil, the underground, was in many ways a safer space than being outside in the open. But only out in the open, I could connect to other beings, only outside in the open air, I could multiply my sense of self, I could grow upwards, I could become a part of queer ecosystems.

Many parts of my transness, I think, are still submerged in the soil, threading through my memories, my behavioural patterns, my traumas. But they feed the fruiting bodies upwards. In how many ways being queer and trans has changed my being, I cannot fully comprehend. However, ecological thought has been a way, a portal almost, to understand my queerness, my transness through many unexpected ways.

I want to state that this text(s) are epistemologically rooted in my own, personal experience. This is in no way aspiring to formulate "universal" truths, or even something that is true for someone that is not me; and it shouldn't be: my story is situated, specific, remaining always entangled (in the form of these notes). Donna Haraway writes: "we need stories that are just big enough to gather up the complexities and keep the edges open and greedy for surprising new and old connections." I try to make space for many loose ends, in the hope that maybe some will reach out and entangle...

In the process of my social transition, I found myself growing gradually more distant from my surroundings. A strange rupture was opening, and social situations that seemed easy and comforting became increasingly difficult to navigate. Some spaces became inaccessible, as I could not safely risk a coming out. Doors closed. Some people began treating me differently, some treated me the same way even though I felt I had changed profoundly. I could not move as freely as before, not without significant concessions to my wellbeing.

And of course, that is only one part of the story. Simultaneously, I found new friends, new circles, new solidarity. Spaces that I now had to move in with a different caution became specked with little nods of fellow queers, small conversations in front of elevators. My mullet had finally grown, becoming somewhat symbolic. Queer folks reading me as queer is one of my most joyful experiences, and being surrounded by more and more queer folks instilled a soft knowing in my body: a sense of belonging and becoming with others.

And somehow, during this time, the plants entered the picture, relentlessly stretching their roots into my body. Reorienting myself left me lost for a while, and while wandering aimlessly, I began to notice the plants next to the sidewalks, the trees in the streets. I believe I was looking for Allies. I found them in chlorophyllic teachers, all around me. There was something to plants that drew me in, that again instilled a sense of potential belonging.

This is of course a privilege, being recognizable without danger - while mostly, my significances were subtle, available to fellow queers. These can be empowering \*

\* if not used as templates for new storying.

I found myself alienated from a lot of humans I had previously surrounded myself with. But I also found myself increasingly alienated from the human category as such: so many things did not seem to add up anymore. I was falling through the cracks of the human categor(ies): there seemed to be no space for neither/nor, no space for complexity, no space for my sense of self.

*becoming monstrous*

But if the human category is no longer fitting, where to turn to? Being a child of the Anthropocene, as a white European, I thought I was as removed from what we call "Nature" as you could be. White superiority above "Nature" is strongly engrained in my ways of thought, and in my surroundings. The way that I view(ed) "Nature" is so strongly informed of neat fields of agriculture, of something that needs "protection", of something that is fundamentally outside of me and my life. I chose to engage with "nature" from an environmentalist perspective, only to reinforce some white moral superiority. The systems that had put the planet in a state of catastrophe, that I thought I was opposing, had snuck into my way of relating to the world.

Nature was not something I could easily find belonging in. Getting closer to my more-than-human environment challenged me to radically re-think and re-imagine my place in the world - and the world(s) as such.

Furthermore, I was not only separated from Nature by false dualisms of western, white thought - but now, after coming out as non-binary, I was actively excluded from the Natural world. Who I am, fundamentally, was deemed "unnatural". In the hegemonic scripts of reproduction, of species survival, queerness is abnormal, destructive, "a waste of resources". "To be natural is to fit into a straight human logic of heterosexual reproduction", writes Caspar Heinemann in "Fucking Pansies".

The category of the human was expelling me, as it did many other marginalized folks - being white and privileged in many ways, I had not before realized how narrow this category was. My personhood was up for debate, a matter of choice, a "radical-left opinion". And I had already learned from (Black) feminist legacies, that trying to get a seat at a table where those ex/inclusions were debated, was a horrible idea. *I did not want to be human again.*

I was falling through the cracks of "nature/culture", belonging to neither.

*like Latour, Latour, and others*

*(Interestingly enough, Alexander v. Humboldt, who significantly shaped our views on Nature, was gay.)*

*When I capitalize Nature, I am referring to the notion of Nature/nature that is prevalent in western, white-dominated, patriarchal and colonialist societies. From this formulation of Nature we are distant (or too close), masters in the world to shape it as we wish, and we are definitely not queer.*



x →  
the mushroom at the end of  
the world. |

And suddenly, reading Haraway and Tsing, across nature and culture, I found the neither/nor/both/and/across. It was called many names, among them "queer ecology": it was a lifesaver.

Queerness and Ecology are stitched together by their suffering under western/white ideas of classification and hierarchy. Both know, deeply, that dualisms are insufficient, that things are always more complex than they seem. The hegemonial category of the human cannot cope with the abundance, the complexity, the relations that form senses of identity. Unmaking these scripts of classification is a liberatory practice.

I was beginning to realize that queer ecology could "not simply (be) satisfied with felling the anthro-ontological universals figuring the exclusion of many from the elite status of human," but clearly imagined a beyond/across/trans: "a critical reenvisioning of life" (Hayward, Tranimalities). This re-imagining of the entangled mess that life is, meant, indisputably, that somewhere in this mess, there would be space for me, too: a space in the open, a communal space, a space that could hold complexities - in short: a world that could hold many worlds.

Queer ecology is a way for me to heal from estrangement, to find power and agency in the cracks and crevices of classification and categorization. There, I found a kind of belonging "that foregrounds a desire that is fragrantly wayward and composing a deterritorialising rhizome, instead of a declaration of loyalty to family". (Chisholm 2010, 380) This kind of "unsettled belonging" re-configured my way of relating to the more-than-human as well as the human, queering my relationships to both, making care, love and intimacy possible across/trans (species) difference.

x I am also beginning to see a way of healing my relation to the conservative area I was brought up in. This place is called "Rhön", and it is an area where humans and "nature" / nature and culture have been so closely related that they've been supporting each other in reciprocity for centuries. It's a landscape of agriculture, forests, fossilized seashores and endless views. Re-connecting with this place allows me to see how it might have shaped me: the deeply instilled belief that human/more-than-human coexistence can flourish.

All fotos in this zine have been taken by my father, who raised r  
me in this landscape.

So this is not only a cerebral story. It is a deeply embodied experience. Not only was my relationship to the world changing, but the relationship with my body, too: the way of being in my body, of inhabiting this vessel, became infinitely more complex. Having a body allows us to relate in the first place: but relations are not inherently a good thing. Having a body meant that my body was being read by others according to their classification and categories. Instances where I realize the fundamental gap between my experience and my perceived appearance most shockingly are when cis-hetero men flirt with me. It is such a disheartening crash of relations. *(do I not look queer enough)* Experiencing gender dysphoria made my body a site of struggle, too: unsettling my inhabitation. From time to time, it feels like my body cages me rather than contains my being, as it is met with restrictions, with boxed categories from the outside. These violent mechanisms impact a capacity for movement.

*and the inside, too - navigating internalized sexism and misogyny is incredibly complex, sometimes making it very hard to "feel" secure or safe in one's body, or gender.*

*I have often felt that my body is too small for me, my skin too tight. This embodied experience activates my imagination, my desires to be monstrous - and it draws me close to the more-than-human as leaking, contaminating, radically relational, worlding beings.*

*"Holobiont" is decidedly not the same thing as ONE and individual. Rather, in polytemporal, polyspatial knottings, holobionts hold together contingently and dynamically, engaging other holobionts in complex patterning." (Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*)*



Once, a person asked me if my use of they/them pronouns pointed towards an idea of being more than one, of not wanting to be contained in the singular. Recalling this question is painful, as the person asking proved to meet me with ignorance and queerphobia - but in some way, I feel drawn to their interpretation of they/them. Maybe these pronouns do not only describe my identity outside of the gender binary, but also hint at the multi-species body that we call "human". Lynn Margulis' "Holobiont" cannot not be trans: when there are beings even within our very own guts that reproduce in a myriad of non-heterosexual ways, then maybe my body can again become a home to my transness.

Transness is relational - as Eva Hayward writes, it is in the very word of "with, through, across". Transness is informed by the relations we have, how we move through the world we inhabit. Queer and trans folks know that they are shaped by their environment deeply, in a myriad of great and horrifying ways. We know, we live in the embodied experience of being made through and with others.

(Beyond the Human, Jo+ Pinar Jinnopoulos-Lloyd)

L> or 04



My father's favorite trees are Ginkgos: ancient, beautiful creatures. I learned today that Ginkgos sometimes, inexplicably, change sex/gender - and a "male" tree suddenly bears fruit on one of their branches.

"Homo sapiens is nothing more to me", wrote Veronica Forrest-Thompson in The Greenhouse.

Recently, a dear friend asked me: where are you at in your transness?

I want to answer: I am here, in the garden. I'm harvesting fruits, I am dispersing seeds, I am pruning the legacies of my violently cishetero upbringing, grafting my transness on the fruit trees. I am blooming and withering away at the same time. But growing. Becoming with others.

Maybe my garden can become a shelter for others, too.