



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 exerting 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". (Jedgwick, *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

06 present futures and apocalyptic utopias

I have been using terms like futurity and utopia promiscuously, and often been called naive for my steadfast belief in a better future. Therefore, I wish to shine some light on what a queer ecological future might mean - and why the possibility of such is inherent in our times.

We have found ourselves in the Anthropocene, or Capitalocene, or Plantationocene, or whatever name you want to give the mess we have made. Not to reiterate this too much, but we are really, really, fucked. The Anthropocene is first and foremost a fancy title for catastrophe.

The Anthropocene has not only located human activity in a context of geological time, but has also brought with itself a particular configuration of time perception as such.

The apocalyptic dimension of our "epoch" fix us in a kind of temporal arrest - that is, waiting for the teleological "end of times". It seems we stand on a temporal brink into an abyss of apocalypse. In this narrative, the only option is to go backwards, to slowly retreat into a past we imagine to have been a better, a "simpler" time. In this past-future, some kind of telos will await us, be it salvation or purgatory. Time, in this narrative, narrows down to a one-way-street, straight and laid out. There might be some cross-roads where choice occurs, like the colored lines on the climate models show - 2, 4, 6 degrees. None of these future scenarios look too good, and it is easy to find oneself with a transfixed stare into the abyss of a "future" catastrophe.

The formulation of the Anthropocene has been criticized abundantly by many people much smarter than me, especially pointing out that there is no such thing as "humanity" - that in fact, the Anthropos is white, cis, male, able-bodied, and christian-socialized. This tiny fraction of "humanity" will also most likely be the least affected by the catastrophes he has unleashed. As there are many more "humans" and other more-than-human people than the Anthropos, there are also many more configurations of spacetime than the apocalyptic, hegemonial Telos of a looming Future.

"Narratives of the Anthropocene emphasize environmental violence a the totality of the planetary combined with an imminent apocalyptic horizon that, together, encourages responses as massive and urgent, hence assembling the enormous earth system scale of problematizing with the ethically fraught timespace of the emergency as a justification for suspending ethics." (Michelle Murphy: against population, towards alterlives)

A narrative of a looming catastrophe so big that only global shifts of massive scale can stop it has its advantages in mobilizing people, however, paradoxically, it also paralyzes communities and individuals, feeling powerless in the face of such a planetary issue. The feeling of an existence "on the brink of" extinction/catastrophe/apocalypse/etc locks us in a present that is only a waiting room for the future. When Michelle Murphy asks, "For whom do these scalings of the problem make sense?", we get a glimpse on the temporal "god trick" (Donna Haraway) that is performed in the constructions of these storylines. Only from a "gaze from nowhere" it can seem like we are all waiting for catastrophe, only from a kind of unmarked whiteness, straightness, maleness, and able-bodiedness is it possible to construct the narrative of 1 present leading, causally, to 1 future. The reality might be much more like "The Neverending Story", where the abyss pops up everywhere, arbitrarily, creating holes in bodies, space, time.

*"we broke the earth and now we fall through time.
deep gashes in the ground. we scale the edges of our
knowing. the smoother the worse, the more jagged, the
better. what we stand on is not masonry. it is the torn
place unhealed. the footholds come from how unclear
the break." (Alexis Pauline Gumbs, M. archive)*

The reconfiguration of the apocalypse as an ongoing event, many holes instead of one abyss, is reflected in Donna Haraways use of the term "urgencies" "rather than emergencies because the latter word connotes something approaching apocalypse and its mythologies. Urgencies have other temporalities, and these times are ours." (Staying with the trouble)

Karen Barad wrote that "Questions of space, time, and matter are intimately connected, indeed entangled, with questions of justice." - providing not only a starting point for thinking about queer ecological futures, but an opening into radical politics. Through situating ourselves and relating to each other in the spacetime topologies we inhabit, "a space of agency in which the dynamic intra-play of indeterminacy and determinacy reconfigures the possibilities and impossibilities of the world's becoming" can open up.

The Anthropocene-in-the-making is by no means a neutral territory, but was conceived of in a white and colonial landscape: When W.E.B DuBois defined "Whiteness" as "ownership of the Earth for ever and ever", not only the Earth is described as white property, but the future itself is configured as a white, colonialist timeline. How might we disrupt this timeline and make other futures/pasts/presents possible?

Apocalypse, traced back to its etymological roots, simply means "revelation": What is revealed/what has already been revealed in the Anthropocene? Coal, rare minerals, gold, gas, the entrails of the Earth revealed to the open air, countless landscapes and mountains gouged and gutted. Yet, Apocalypse might also be read "as a revealing of what no longer serves and a reorientation of how to live on Earth." (Beyond the human)

this hegemonial configuration of the future translates to the individual level as well, where one's own imagination of one's future is locked into (homo)normative "dreams". (thanks to Flavia Pinheiro for this insight!)

Let us begin with asserting that the apocalypse is already here. Many marginalized communities are intimately familiar with the end of the world.

Colonialism meant inferno for countless numbers of peoples - a genocide is an apocalyptic event. But not only an event: the continuations of genocidal technologies have woven themselves throughout "history". Adorno wrote, in the wake of the terrors of the Holocaust: "What is being enacted now ought to bear the title: "After Doomsday" - the apocalypse had already occurred, and the present was merely a "ferment of future destruction". Here, the singularity of the Holocaust is to be understood in astrophysicist terms: rippling through spacetime, unsettling gravity like a black hole would do, and curving spacetime topologies - changing the fabric of spacetime itself, and therefore all possible movements within.

For the marginalized and oppressed, the end of the world has become imaginable, as Juri Koch writes in his beautiful essay "The pains of the dying kind". He describes a third eye grown for the marginalized and oppressed, an eye that "sees many things differently. It is able to see the world as it will be after the finite departure that threatens us. The eye of the other vision. The eye that secures traces. The eye that scans for perpetrators and killers. The eye of cross-border foresight."

This eye of securing traces, of looking beyond doom, resonates with James Baldwin's notion of time, when he said: "My own effort is to try to bear witness to something that will have to be there when the storm is over, to help us get through the next storm. Storms are always coming."

"It is entirely conceivable that we will one day live miserably in a thoroughly ravaged world in which lesbians and gay men can marry and serve openly in the army and that's it."

- Tony Kushner

re-thinking the perception
concept of time within
this future is possible...



The world has already ended/is always ending. Kathryn Yussofs fantastic book "A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None" asserts that powerfully. Already in the title she refuses white colonial futures powerfully: In which direction of futurity does the "or None" point towards to in Kathryn Yussofs title?

The formulation balances between blank refusal and an open threat, re-siliencing the the title itself. It evokes a punk slogan of "No Future", and maybe this is not too far off: ecologies often seem punk in their ability to resist human authority. (Apocalyptic ecology, So and Pinar Sinoupolous-Lloyd). "No future" is not as hopeless as it may sound, but instead disrupts one particularly violent line of future. A "Futurelessness" is evoked, as Jessica Hurley describes it, as in "not an obliteration of possibility" but rather "a place to stand, a place where we might yet construct a world in which to live." "Futurelessness is the temporal kind of equivalent or side of this moment of refusal to cohere into sense, to be fixed into place." Therefore, Futurelessness can be a way of stepping across/into the abyss, to do the thing that does not "cohere into sense", but makes meaning/reconfigures matter as it goes. Beginning with "No future" or Futurelessness "as a way of clearing/subverting the spatiotemporal narrative you have been fixed into" (Hurley) poses a possibility for situating ourselves in spatiotemporal topography in order to rupture open capacities for movement.

The queer poet CA Conrad wrote "there is no / center and not four / directions/ but the / infinite / way / out" (Ecodeviance, poetry collection).



made with Julia in the village
occupation of Lutzerath, after
a workshop on weeds and resistance
strategies. Translation: weeds
never die.

As these lines of flight open, cutting through the Anthropocene, those who refuse to keep on walking on a timeline steadily towards destruction, those who disrupt this hegemonial temporality in "fleeing, seek a weapon," as Deleuze wrote.

Without waiting for a better moment to arrive, these spatiotemporal lines of flight (towards an arsenal of new stories) are always already present. "In our strange world / death is the absence of the body / In the forest / death is the presence of the body / a new terrain feature." (Death is a place, apocalyptic ecology blog). In the forest (or in any other ecosystem), the author writes, a dead animal/plant feeds ten others, becoming a new terrain feature/future. Death - or Apocalypse - in an ecological, entangled world are far from being endings, but rather branchings of futurities.

Queer ecological thought can be a gateway for us to find "a potential for recomposition that exceeds ongoing aftermaths" (Michelle Murphy). Re-composing the many deaths of the Anthropocene, there is a possibility for mending our relations with salvaged parts. Or rather: there are infinite possibilities. We need to begin noticing the many different temporalities and futures-in-the-making, sprouting from the composted present/past. In this thick web of times, many possibilities arise:

Decomposition as Re-membering: breaking down into pieces and re-arranging the past so it may become a future. Can rotting become healing? How many critters can feed on a dead body? What is the resistant potential of compost?

"The space of possibilities does not represent a fixed event horizon within which the social location of knowers can be mapped, nor does it represent a homogeneous, uniform container of choices. Rather, the dynamics of the spacetime manifold are iteratively reworked through the inexhaustible liveliness of the manifold's material configuration, that is, the ongoing dance of agency immanent in its material configuration."

(Karen Barad in Meeting the universe halfway).



these configurations are not naturally "pleasant, innocent, beautiful or free of dangers." (Utmir), however, focussing on agency ruptures open spaces of re/dis-assembling anew, always.

The "dance of agency" is danced by all creatures, even by ghosts, within our ecological world. If everything is because of something else, then this "dance of agency" draws routes towards co-existence - and there is potential there, utopian potential even. After all, we are still here, despite the ongoing apocalypse, still becoming, always emerging, re-composing our worlds. "A politics of survival-as-resistance" compels us to fabulate our coexistence with no impossibilities as boundaries for the imaginary and the real. "We are driven by the persistent desire to persist", wrote Juri Koch, and as we persist, manifold futures-in-presents emerge. Michelle Murphy has called this Alterlife; and rather than an "after-life" her term allows for simultaneity.

"Alterlife compels speculations about futurity and potentials of being otherwise. Alterlives shares with responses to the anthropocene a politics of non-deferral which is a commitment to act now. But this politics of non-deferral is not driven by the logic of the emergency, the scale of the planetary, or the container of the nation state. It is a politics of non-deferral interested in the humbleness of right here, in the scale of communities, and in the intimacies of relations."
(Michelle Murphy: against population, towards alterlives)

"Intimacy does not require
recognition, but describes
creative engagement" (Christodoulos Schrader)
Appreciation of dissonances?

"We make too much history.
With or without us
there will be silence
and the rocks and the far shining.
But what we need to be
is, oh, the small talk of the swallows
in evening over
dull water under willows.
To be we need to know the river
holds the salmon and the ocean
holds the whales as lightly
as the body holds the soul
in the present tense, in the present tense."
- Ursula K. Le Guin

If we think through simultaneity, we situate ourselves in a spatiotemporal landscape. Those landscapes, like all landscapes, are patchy assemblages, connected through multispecies entanglements. To live "alterlives", then, is site-specific and site-responsive. This is a radically different ways of conceiving futures than the detached yet imminent apocalypse that the hegemonial narrative of the Anthropocene has to offer. Futurities/Alterlives are threading throughout our "present" in "the condition of already being co-constituted by material entanglements with water, chemicals, coil, atmospheres, microbes and built environments, and also the condition of being open to ongoing becoming." If Alterlives and Futures are already here, within the ruins, we are compelled to both HOPE and ACT.

Insisting on the possibilities of diverse and more livable futures is a refusal of letting the hegemonial narrative of the apocalyptic telos of the Anthropocene kill us. Insisting on survival is the manifestation of the „otherwise“, the „elsewhere“ on a damaged planet.



„The present is not enough. It is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging (...). The present must be known in relation to the alternative temporal and spatial maps provided by a perception of past and future affective worlds. (...) It is the work of not settling for the present, of asking and looking beyond the here and now.“ - Muñoz, *Louisinga Utopia*

→ to insist on futurity within the present!

Thus, when I speak of Utopias, it is not born out of a naive sentiment or idealism - quite the contrary: my belief in Utopias is derived from the fact that they exist within the ruins. The term “Temporary Autonomous Zones” gives us some clues on how these utopias are time-responsive and exist in their own temporalities. These Utopias have nothing to do with visions of “a land of plenty” or even paradise, instead, they are bright spots of cohabitation where humans and more-than-humans foster good relations of care, kinship, love and respect. These relations are filled with responsibilities, obligations and work - Utopias are not magic, detached places where we can hang out and be fed all the time, but places of feeding each other. Utopias must always be plural, they are not one teleological endpoint of salvation after history - they are real places and times in the patchy landscape of our cohabitation on Planet Earth. Utopias are also not opposite to dystopia: they exist within dystopia. This is what makes them so powerful: the possibility of life despite destruction. Utopias can end, can fail, must begin anew, in a state of constant emergence and recomposition - as “Becoming is not an unfolding in time, but the inexhaustible dynamism of the enfolding of mattering.” (Karen Barad). “

Not believing” in Utopias is simply not an option in times of Apocalypse.

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Jula, a friend I met in the village occupation of Lutzerath, put it this way: „I have seen that it is possible. I cannot be convinced by hopelessness - I have seen a better place.“ She said this as we sat on the edge of a lignite mine, drinking coffee.