

TILTING (2)

Issue 07

The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge

May 2020



Ivetta Sunyoung Kang, *Proposition 1: Hands*, 2020. Single-channel video, 4:33. Performed by Ivetta Sunyoung Kang and Eric Dong Ho You. Modified from 16:9 aspect ratio. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

tilt (n.1)

"a joust, a combat," 1510s, perhaps from tilt (v.1) on the notion of "to lean" into an attack, but the word originally seems to have been the name of the barrier which separated the combatants, which suggests connection with *tilt* in an earlier meaning "covering of coarse cloth, an awning" (mid-15c.). This is perhaps from *tilt* (v.1), or related to or influenced by *tent*. Watkins derives it from Old English *teld* "awning, tent," related to *beteldan* "to cover," from Proto-Germanic *teldam* "thing spread out." Hence, also *full tilt* (c. 1600). Pinball machine sense is from 1934.

tilt (n.2)

"condition of being tilted," 1837, from tilt (v.1).

The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge is a serial broadsheet publication produced by the Blackwood Gallery, University of Toronto Mississauga. Initiated in conjunction with *The Work of Wind: Air, Land, Sea* in 2018–19 to expand perspectives on environmental violence through artistic practices, cultural inquiry, and political mobilization, the SDUK is becoming a signature Blackwood publishing initiative in 2020.

As an organization addressing the challenges of the 21st century through artistic-led research, the Blackwood’s ambition is to convene, enable, and amplify the transdisciplinary thinking necessary for understanding our current multi-scalar historical moment and co-creating the literacies, skills, and sensibilities required to adapt to the various socio-technical transformations of our contemporary society. Such a commitment requires a lithe methodology that is rooted in the arts, inspired and informed by emergent methods of curatorial research, and shaped by transdisciplinary engagements with collaborators from a host of other disciplines and partners working outside the university, whether in industry, business, government, or civil society. This methodology is necessary for contemporary research-based practices because the so-called “wicked problems” that challenge the stability of contemporary societies can no longer be addressed from a single disciplinary perspective.

THE SOCIETY FOR THE DIFFUSION OF USEFUL KNOWLEDGE (SDUK)

The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK) composes and circulates an ecology of knowledge based on the relationship and antagonism of “useful” ideas. The name of this innovative platform is borrowed from a non-profit society founded in London in 1826, focused on publishing inexpensive texts such as the widely read *Penny Magazine* and *The Library of Useful Knowledge*, and aimed at spreading important world knowledge to anyone seeking to self-educate. Both continuing and troubling the origins of the society, the Blackwood’s SDUK platform asks: what constitutes useful knowledge? For whom? And who decides?

TILTING

On March 23, the Blackwood put forward a call for submissions, in response to the irrefutably global provocation of COVID-19 currently reconfiguring nearly every aspect of life on Earth. The call recognized that these uncertain socio-political circumstances demand agile, dynamic, and multifaceted responses. In their recent book *Now*, the agents of The Invisible Committee call for us to generate desirable social and political worlds through an improvisatory *tilt*: strategic action that cuts transversally across vertical hierarchies and horizontal networks—privileging neither, in favour of an “intelligence of the situation.”¹ With decisive actions implemented by individuals, organizations, businesses, and governments, the Blackwood, as a public gallery within a university, asked: how to acknowledge this pandemic as a “matter of concern,” while responding to its broad-ranging effects across our networks of artists, writers, and cultural workers as a “matter of care”?² An urgent and provisional response comes in the form of *TILTING*, a special digital issue of the SDUK.

TILTING (1) (April 20) and *TILTING (2)* (May 8) bring together selected contributions from this call, in an attempt to support those who have been unmoored from their sources of financial resources. These contributions, alongside a few conceptual provocations from supporters of the Blackwood, are gathered in the pages that follow and on a new SDUK publishing microsite at blackwoodgallery.ca.

The Blackwood Gallery gratefully acknowledges the operating support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the University of Toronto Mississauga.



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Please note: the Blackwood Gallery and offices are closed throughout spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, staff are reachable by email only.

tl;dr part 2

Editorial

*How is it that the only ones responsible for making this mess
got their sorry asses stapled to a goddamn desk?*
—Tom Waits, “Hell Broke Luce”³¹

... continued from **SDUK 07: TILTING (1)**.

In the first half of this editorial, we described some of the motivations for *TILTING* and developed a series of conceptual, biological, and political points of departure for our current thinking and action; we’re grateful for the warm reception of our new platform and the generous circulation of SDUK contributions from part one.³² As we continue to follow the vicissitudes of the situation—maintaining our social distancing even as the egregious realities of *economic* distancing led us to FFS murmurs and exclamations of RUFK—at times the imbecility of certain political leaders left us shouting STFU at the pixels on our screens; at other moments, we were buoyed by #GADFE memes shared by our grandparents, each a pointed reminder of the indefatigable humour conjured by our elders, and the need to both fight back *and* laugh back.³³ Now, we’re back in part two to take up a number of additional matters of care and concern at stake in the increasingly kaleidoscopic crisis and its many ricochets reverberating across mental, material, and social sites and scales.

Among the many observations that have preoccupied the last weeks in collective self-isolation, one is especially revealing as we do the work of a public art gallery from home. In 2013, Anthony Townsend noted that the most common message over internet-connected mobile phones was: “Where are you?”³⁴ As billions of people across the planet lock down, we’ve been wondering if the most frequent question asked online these days might now be: “Can you hear me?” As we solicit from our digitized interlocutors this simple prefatory confirmation, there is a deeper meaning that we must also bear in mind: Who is being heard in this crisis? Who is de facto muted? Who is eligible for these conversations, however stuttering and glitched out, as we learn to collaborate otherwise? In “The Masked Philosopher,” Michel Foucault remarks: “One is in single file because of the extreme meagreness of places where one can listen and make oneself heard.”³⁵ As lineups proliferate online and on the street, we ask: Where and when are we able to speak of our suffering, sorrow, pain, and anxiety if social communication now relies on access to bandwidth as a prerequisite to participation?

After winning the Palme d’Or in 2019, director Bong Joon-ho betrayed the Cannes media scrum with the following delocalization: “When I made *Parasite*, it was like trying to witness our world through a microscope. The film talks about two opposing families, about the rich versus the poor, and that is a universal theme, because we all live in the same country now: that of capitalism.”³⁶ Capitalism: the definitive, global pre-existing condition that has (again), through *this* crisis, self-explicated its complete and utter failure as a logic for social organization. There is no *going back* from such an unnerving planetary unveiling. As Benjamin Bratton contends, “The sense of emergency is palpable and real. But instead of naming this moment a ‘state of exception,’ we see it more as revealing ‘pre-existing conditions.’ The consequences of poor planning (or no planning), broken social systems, and isolationist reflexes are explicit. Vigilance should be held not against the

‘exception’ on behalf of familiar norms, but against the return to those dysfunctional norms after the coast is declared clear. We must keep the focus trained on the pathologies revealed and in doing so willfully inhabit the difficult ramifications of change.”³⁷ As the number of deaths from COVID-19 passes 260,000, we do well to remember that many of the inequalities described as “pre-existing conditions” are, in fact, the result of structural patriarchy and racism.³⁸ When even air pollution was described recently as a possible vector for transmission, this scientific confirmation only reaffirmed our sense that racialized capitalism and gender inequalities are the *causes* of the crisis and not accidental side effects.³⁹

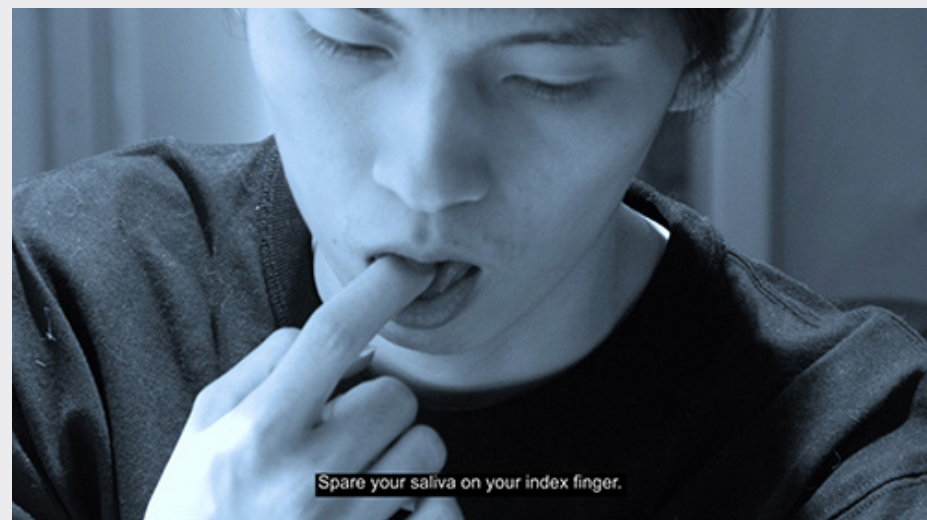
According to Elizabeth Grosz, “The biological body, if it exists at all, exists for the subject only through the mediation of an image or a series of (social/cultural) images of the body and its capacity

¹ The Invisible Committee, *Now* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2017), 158.

² María Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

Proposition 1: Hands

Ivetta Sunyoung Kang



Proposition 1: Hands imagines warmth spreading through a hand exercise called "Make Electricity on Hands," a children's game played in South Korea. This project was initially created as a participatory video installation, but given the circumstances as a result of COVID-19 (including social distancing as a fundamental practice to limit the virus's spread), this project's hope to encourage touch among participants has become unadvisable. Yet, the images and instructions still evoke the imagined sensations of touching hands and enjoying bodily experiences of physical intimacy, while at once confronting fears around viral transmission through saliva (even that of those we love).

Exercise Steps

1. Sit comfortably on the floor. Look at the other person's eyes. And hand in one of your palms with trust.

2. Grasp his or her right wrist with your hands. Realize that the other person's hands are cold.

3. Slap the palm six times until you have it awoken.

4. Admit that you cannot help those hands get warmer. However, you can wake up the depression of the person's palms.

5. To comfort the depression, concentrate the blood flow of the arm from the top to the bottom.

6. Encourage the person to grip and release the grasped hand. This action should be repeated as many times as her or his age.

7. Do not spare any room on the designated palm where present concerns could invade.

8. Seize an understanding that every finger has unspoken present. Rub the palm and each of the fingers until any trace of blood disappears.

9. Spare your saliva on your index finger.

10. Coat the saliva on your finger onto the centre of the other's palm. Make sure the wrist is firmly being seized.

11. Slowly rotate the finger above the centre in the direction of the Earth's rotation. It is important to imagine the Earth's rotation while releasing the wrist at the same velocity.

12. The person will feel the warmth spreading on the palm.

13. Take a turn, and entrust your palms to the other person's hold.

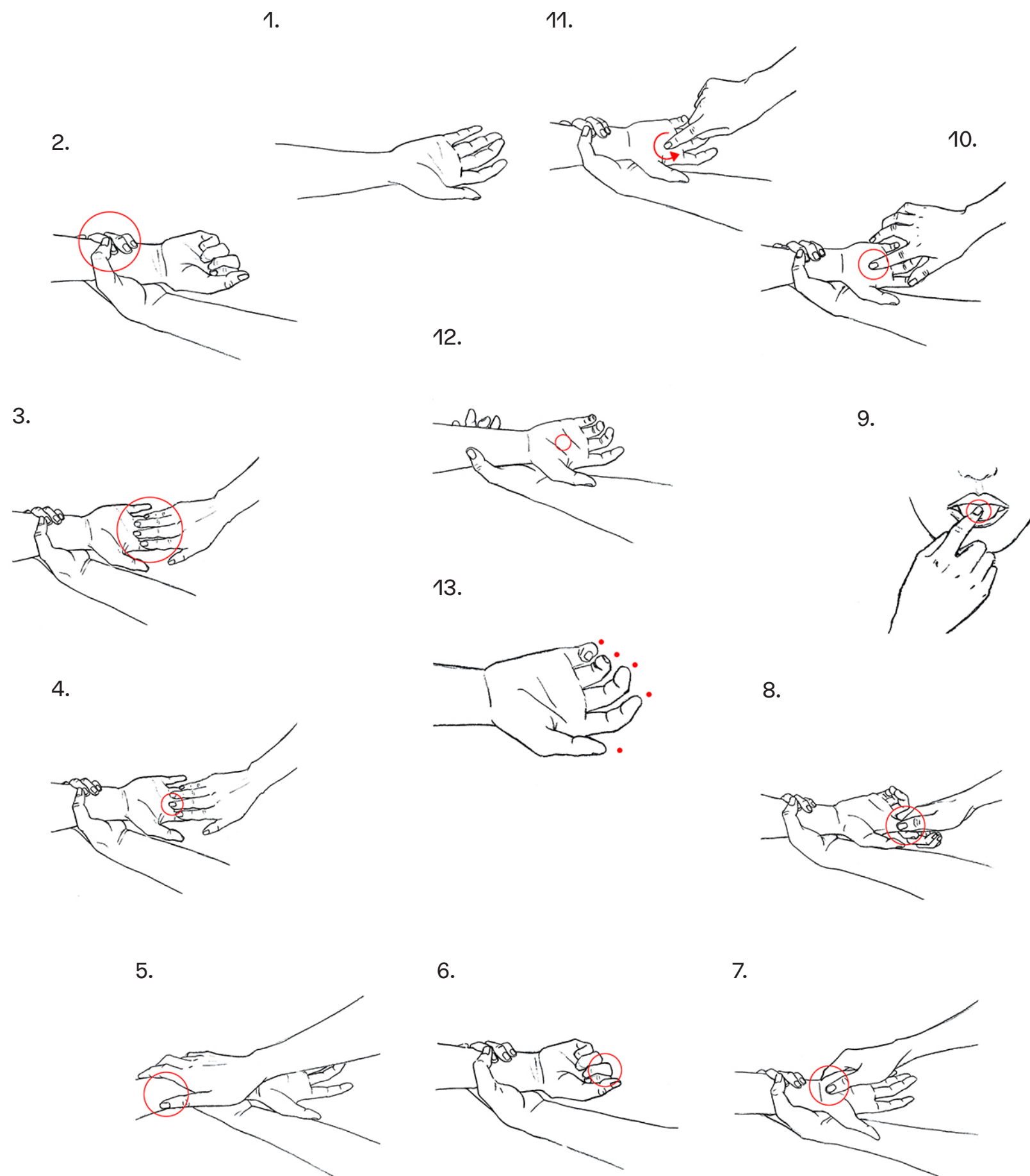
Left: Ivetta Sunyoung Kang, *Proposition 1: Hands*, 2020. Single-channel video, 4:33. Performed by Ivetta Sunyoung Kang and Eric Dong Ho You. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

Facing page: Ivetta Sunyoung Kang, *Warming Hand Exercise*, 2020. Inkjet print. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

Ivetta Sunyoung Kang is an interdisciplinary visual/video artist and writer based in Montreal since 2012. She obtained her MFA at Concordia University. She makes work across moving-image based media, text, and performance and also writes poetry and fiction. She has presented films and videos at numerous film festivals and galleries, including JeonJu International Film Festival, South Korea; Chennai International Women Film Festival, India; Leonard and Bina Ellen Art Gallery and MAI, Canada; and SomoS Art House, Germany. She is a co-founding member of an artist collective called Quite Ourselves.

Warming Hand Exercise

For The Anxious Mind



A Social Interaction Using Your Hands To Tolerate The Uncertainty Ahead of Your Future

Breaking with the Past: The Radical Possibilities of Collective Vulnerability

Jarrett Robert Rose

With the natural rhythm of daily life interrupted as a result of COVID-19, many struggle to find direction as the future has suddenly become less predictable. While some heed the call to practice social distancing—an act of solidarity—others gleefully meander through crowded public space—an act of dissent. The virus—seemingly so far away for many, yet too close in reality—is all the more eerie in that its existence is often invisible to its hosts, a fact that can ignite profound feelings of panic, confusion, and distrust.

When the clear path is lost, a tension between self and society sets in. On one hand, the global upheaval that is COVID-19 elicits a feeling of camaraderie amid what is a collective tragedy—the shared sense of despair felt when encountering stories from around the world of lives lost and hearts broken. On the other hand, lack of resources and disrupted supply chains can evoke the driving force of survival, a looming individual tragedy—the fear for oneself and one’s family. In a single day, one may vacillate between wanting to help those most at risk and wondering if they can afford next month’s rent. Is it “normal” to feel so conflicted?

In *What about Me?: The Struggle for Identity in a Market-based Society*, psychologist and psychoanalyst Paul Verhaeghe discusses the tension between sovereignty and solidarity—the self and the collective—that shapes our character. Identity, writes Verhaeghe, is the balancing act between these two poles—the harmonizing between wanting to unite with, yet distance ourselves from, the group.¹ However, it is the structure of society that shapes our social ontology, and largely dictates where on the spectrum our personal and collective psyches fall.

Capitalism functions on a theory of the human as *homo economicus*, a being naturally inclined to pursue personal welfare at the expense of the universal good. It was Thomas Hobbes, celebrated theorist of liberalism, who opined that if not for an overbearing government, human life would be “nasty, brutish, and short.”² Today, the tenets of neoliberalism have accelerated the notion of the atomized self, facilitating the rise of a strict market rationality with entrepreneurialism and personal responsibility being the hallmarks of our social ethos. In *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution*, political theorist

Wendy Brown argues that in our current milieu of precisely crafted scarcity and struggle, virtually every sphere of human possibility, public or private, has been “economized.”³ Not only are we pitted against one another, justifying inequality through a fetishism of competition and hierarchy, but collective politics has in many parts of the world—particularly in the United States, now the epicentre of the crisis—also become unimaginable, leaving democracy itself unattainable.

While COVID-19 makes its way across our globe, invading our social and political veins and disrupting the global economy, the urge to emphasize the personal over the collective, selfishness over altruism, is beckoning. Quarantine, isolation, social distancing—those of us sitting at home, lives on pause, feeling lonely and disconnected, peer out the window and wonder, “When will this end?” Yet in each corner of the globe we are all, as a species, exposed to the same crisis, and the collective nature of our human struggles is being brought out by the pandemic. The time has come to recognize our shared interests and forge a new world order.

As Verhaeghe shows, when the symbolic order is disrupted, our connection to the past becomes severed, and we are no longer our same selves. The virus, in disrupting that order, has unveiled a new reality, one that thrusts the interconnected nature of the human condition back into collective consciousness—the same nature that Western individualism and the ideology of capitalism mask so well. Yet it is through this unfortunate experience that we are forced to reflect on the fleeting, vulnerable state we all share. As the poet and philosopher David Whyte writes,

Vulnerability is not a weakness, a passing indisposition, or something we can arrange to do without, vulnerability is not a choice, vulnerability is the underlying, ever present and abiding undercurrent of our natural state. To run from vulnerability is to run from the essence of our nature, the attempt to be invulnerable is the vain attempt to be something we are not and most especially, to close off our understanding of the grief of others. More seriously, in refusing our vulnerability we refuse the help needed at every turn of our existence and immobilize the essen-

tial, tidal and conversational foundations of our identity.⁴

The reality of trauma evoked by the pandemic symbolizes the presence, and fear, of the unknown. Yet we seem to forget that it is the unknown that is intrinsic to our being. In *Giving an Account of Oneself*, feminist philosopher and queer theorist Judith Butler argues that we neither completely choose the social relations that shape us, nor the language we use to describe those experiences. In other words, we are collectively vulnerable to the limits of self-knowledge. Never being able to provide a full “account” of ourselves—a description of who we are and why—means that we can never achieve full transparency with regard to the nuances of lived experience and nor should we expect this from others. Because of this, Butler posits the need for a universal ethics based on the human condition: our inherent inability to be held responsible for what has been imposed upon us. In this line of thinking, we are already in solidarity, for you didn’t choose this life, and neither did I.⁵

We have a responsibility to realize our collective humanity through our collective vulnerability, the latter of which has become all too salient in the fight against COVID-19. Underscoring common welfare means setting aside social relations steeped in market rationality—like short-term profits and just-in-time production of medical equipment—for a humanism that promotes the well-being of all, especially those who have been marginalized in various ways. The recognition of unity across the board can pave the way for a new, representative politics.

There is a foundation upon which to build this new representative politics—and it is one that recognizes joy alongside the need to disrupt the prevailing order. In *Radical Happiness: Moments of Collective Joy*, Lynne Segal explores the project of leaving aside individualistic pursuits of contentment for a shared sense of enjoyment with others, and the radical possibility contained within such moments. Segal says that even in unfortunate moments like these, we can reclaim the prospect of delighting in others while, and for the purpose of, making a change.⁶ This line of thinking extends from the political theorist Hannah Arendt, who writes in *On Revolution* that happiness itself is not a private matter, but comes

from a sense of shared interest in one another, in mutual belonging, and in active involvement in public affairs. It is, in other words, the only way toward true democracy.⁷

The lessons of COVID-19 force us to take seriously the claims of the sociologist C. Wright Mills, who in *The Sociological Imagination* wrote that “personal troubles” are “public issues.”⁸ In this moment of united vulnerability, let us seize the radical possibilities entailed in envisioning a new collective nature for humanity.

1 Paul Verhaeghe, *What about Me?: The Struggle for Identity in a Market-based Society*, trans. Jane Hedley-Prole (Melbourne and London: Scribe, 2014).

2 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London: Printed for Andrew Crooke, at the Green Dragon in St. Pauls Church-yard, 1651).

3 Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism’s Stealth Revolution* (Brooklyn, New York: Zone Books, 2015).

4 David Whyte, *Consolations: The Solace, Nourishment, and the Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words* (Langley, WA: Many Rivers Press, 2015).

5 Judith Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 1st ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2005).

6 Lynne Segal, *Radical Happiness: Moments of Collective Joy* (London: New York: Verso, 2017).

7 Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).

8 C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

Jarrett Robert Rose is an American international student and doctoral candidate in the department of sociology at York University. His intellectual and pedagogical orientations are located at the nexus of power, psychosomatic health, identity, and social theory. Currently, Rose studies the normative social, political, and therapeutic implications of the revival of psychedelic healing and counterculture.

On Solar Futures

Imre Szeman

Will solar energy...save us? And does COVID-19 increase the likelihood we will be saved by it? I’ll provide answers to these questions below. But before I do so, I can’t help but begin with some cautionary remarks about questions and answers in the midst of our current situation.

The advent of COVID-19 has induced some commentators and theorists to make bold prognostications about the future of sociality, climate change, and, of course, capitalism. Besides the problem of reading tea leaves before they are dry (and they are hard to read even then), this rush to judge a still-unfolding event troubles me. Critical theory, as I understand it, isn’t about forecasting a future still to come, a task that assigns the critic the role of prophet or clairvoyant. Nor is it about taking on the role of Cassandra, sounding an alarm that no one takes up (and employing this very failure to affirm the import of a critical viewpoint). Theory works best as a tool for critical analysis rather than as a crystal ball that endlessly repeats the same message: the current moment is a moment unlike any other.

In the field of energy studies, the most prominent pronouncements of this kind have concluded that *this* is the moment when fossil fuels will at last be seen to have passed the torch to solar (taking “solar” here as a shorthand for renewable energies of all kinds). This may be the case; it also may not. I am less interested in pondering the implications of COVID-19 for the future of energy than in assessing what *isn’t* being considered in these pronouncements. To all those eager to announce the coming age of solar, a mechanism that will save us from our own worst tendencies, I can’t help but ask: Why would we want or expect an energy technology to rescue us from anything?

Just what is solar energy? At its core, it contains a double promise: *energy without fuel* (that is, without matter) and access to an *infinite amount of energy*. Getting past the need for fuel opens up the possibility of using energy without environmental consequences. No fuel means: no spent fuel rods to bury; no carbon dioxide to manage; no poisoned land to recondition. In the drama of sustainability, solar is the hero that appears in the nick of time to save us from ourselves—much like, I have to say, COVID-19, which has been treated by some as a substitute for what politics couldn’t manage to achieve on its own.

The infinite energy promised by solar can’t help but lead one to speculate about how we might live without energetic limits. Will we imagine different ways of being in relation to one another? Will we stop

worrying about accumulation and possession because each of us will become Sun Kings, energy “prosumers” living in households able to generate their own energy and so able to do whatever we want when we want? Infinite energy promises pure freedom, the dream of liberalism and socialism alike, and a freedom that is for the first time without environmental consequences. It’s why solar energy generates excitement beyond its potential to reduce atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide. Solar contains within itself potentially revolutionary possibilities, a transformation of infrastructure that underwrites deep social and political change as well.

Energy without fuel; energy as infinite energy. However we might make sense of the social and political ramifications of this possibility, we have to begin from a startling realization. We have always used energy as energy and not as fuel; and we have also always treated energy as if it were infinite. This is as true of history before the discovery of fossil fuels as it has been in the aftermath of their appearance. A graph of energy use after the Second World War mirrors the hockey stick-shaped spikes in COVID-19 cases experienced by every country in the world. Global warming has caused us to think more seriously about the implications of using fuels as if they were infinite. Yet nowhere have we come close to flattening the energy curve—or even having a real interest in doing so; an energy quarantine seems unimaginable to politicians and publics alike. When we think about the possibilities of solar, we need to be alert to its ideological function. By promising infinite, clean energy, solar energy allows us to continue to think of energy as we always have, while conveniently pushing aside the environmental worries troubling us about the use of fossil fuels.

Solar permits fossil-fuelled modernity and the social and political presumptions fuelling it to get away scot-free; by erasing fuel and finitude from the picture of energy use, it powerfully reaffirms our current disastrous assumptions about what energy is for and to what ends we use it. Solar is a quick techno-utopian fix that sidesteps the difficult work that will need to accompany the creation of any solar futures worthy of this title. When it comes to energy transition, COVID-19 is a distraction, a force too-quickly imagined as shaping history for us so that we don’t need to do it ourselves.

Imre Szeman teaches at the University of Waterloo. He volunteered this text in solidarity with *TLLING* contributors and the Blackwood.

technology of care, an email thread between two sisters across borders

Mirusha Yogarajah

Nanthini Yogendran <nanthini26@gmail.com>
To: Mimi Yogendran <mimi3@gmail.com>

Thu, Mar 26, 2020 at 8:58 AM

hi mimi,

how's it goin?

i've been slowly losing my shit while being either at home or heb. i have had the opportunity to buy knitting needles without actually knitting and make some good-textured, bland-flavoured bread. but my roommates and i have been vibing so hard and playing so many rounds of fishbowl and taking evening walks, things that we wouldn't have time for if we weren't in quarantine. even with that, i really can't fucking wait for this to be over. i forgot how much people NEED routine to feel whole. i've been lollygagging too much and want to feel like a person again.

yesterday i went on a city of austin permitted stroll to get some time to think because all this time alone has forced me to sit with my thoughts and that rarely goes well. i stopped by this creek that i usually stop at when i'm sad and sat by the water for a while until i thought about the city ordinance and was scared i was gonna get fined for sitting so i sucked those tears back into my eye sockets and went home. pretty lame that i can't stare at a creek.

i talked to appa this morning and he was hellsa drunk like early early in the morning. which i lowkey kinda get cause i too have been drinking more than i usually do out of boredom. and trying to avoid thinking too much. i have a couple of friends that are doing drugs a lot more because there is NOTHING TO DO. but like mood.

i hope u and miles and beet are holding up and doing ur own version of baking bread and playing fishbowl.

talk soon
love,
nanthini

Mimi Yogendran <mimi3@gmail.com>
To: Nanthini Yogendran <nanthini26@gmail.com>

Thu, Mar 26, 2020 at 9:54 PM

dear nanthini,

happy 22nd birthday! the world is currently halted in many ways, but i know that whatever future exists for us will demand your innately caring nature and commitment to preserving the terrain and wildlife of this earth. i am saddened that we cannot be geographically close to one another and the order of the world is uncertain at this time, but know that there is comfort in routine, in sun, and, in many ways, the ease of accessing people and their ideas via technology. i personally find a deep comfort in knowing that you exist and practice love and understanding profoundly. i hope that your birthday is filled with clarity and peace, today and every day.

miles and i have been playing scrabble, working, and doing edibles from time to time.

i've also been *plotting* my takeover. i had a conversation with my friend in new york and she practices such deep love that i didn't know existed in worlds that exist simultaneously with capitalism. she spoke about how capitalists are in need of guidance during this time because we are currently witnessing who places their values exclusively in their productivity and output. we, as radical tamil women who reject notions of productivity and place value in environmental systems and the nurturance of the land, have to help capitalists with their mental health. some of these folks have never taken time to merely sit, reflect, and do absolutely nothing. capitalism is a means of being avoidant—folks can dump all of their efforts into contributing to capitalism without truly confronting themselves. the pandemic is a scenario that no future foresight work predicted and it is forcing people to see the core structures of capitalism fall apart, much like the core structures of people are deteriorating. we must practice love and nurture folks who may have not practiced the same radical politics that we practice. that, i believe, is true love.

all this to say, i am saddened by the impact of a pandemic that resulted from the environmental degradation that humans are responsible for. human activity, productivity, is what caused this honestly. i hope that we can heal our relationship with the world and you can cry by a creek whenever you want.

in regard to appa—it is sadly inevitable. when you give an alcoholic no reason to leave the home, they are going to drink. that, along with the province's decision to keep lbos open, even though i would hardly call it an "essential business," is why self-isolation is an arduous/violent task for many. i wish we could give appa safety during these times, or at least a home large enough where interaction with appa could be limited. i am sorry that you had to experience that so early on during your birthday. i hope that he sleeps early due to the drinking and can give appa and yasha some peace.

alright, i love you and will write to you soon,
mimi acca

Nanthini Yogendran <nanthini26@gmail.com>
To: Mimi Yogendran <mimi3@gmail.com>

Fri, Mar 27, 2020 at 7:17 PM

hi mimi,

ya it's kinda odd to think that we have to help people who have fundamentally disagreed with our ways of living. i've never thot about how the pandemic is forcing people to face themselves but i was actually able to see that today. my friends and i went to a usually empty park today and it was filled with people (who were still practicing social distancing). it was so great to see everyone go about and just enjoy themselves and their company and the beautiful flowers that come around this time on those trees that we would see on our drive to stony point. and the bluebonnets!! like damn imma miss those when i make like a tree and leaf texas. but facing yourself for too long can be a problem. like i keep finding myself thinking about things i really don't need to be thinking about too deep and keep circling some ideas that i'm not tryna circle all the time.

liquor stores here are also classified as an essential business but like????? the fuck???? i keep thinking about how awful it would have been if i had to be quarantined w appa and appa, like if this had happened when i was in middle school, and how i would literally hate my life. i'm so thankful to live here lol.

love u 2,
nanthini

Mimi Yogendran <mimi3@gmail.com>
To: Nanthini Yogendran <nanthini26@gmail.com>

Sun, Mar 29, 2020 at 2:07 PM

hi babes,

thank you for your love and words.

beet is so funny, i will take him on a walk and he will sit or lie on the ground because he is so stubborn and doesn't want to go back home. one time i had to carry him back and that's no joke because the guy is sixty pounds! he's so cute though and i can't handle it.

what have you done to cope with how you've been confronting yourself? do you think any of the confrontation has been beneficial for you? i think those confrontations can be good for a person, if time is taken for that person to recognize that they have grown, they have the potential to grow, and that these confrontations aren't a part of a person's permanent state of being. however, the setting of being in a pandemic amid these confrontations is probably difficult because it is very difficult to still deeply care for yourself when you cannot really leave the home. i hope you can cook hefty meals and have conversations with yourself about your love for yourself as well.

i do feel immense pain for those in situations of violence and having to be confined to spaces with their perpetrator. our duty should be to check in with appa and yasha and relieve them of duress when we can, i.e. help out with a grocery bill. i hope they have comfort in long strolls and rest.

i was driving on the highway today and this car was going incredibly fast and i was really thinking, where are you even going? back to your house? what is the point of that speed? i've also found immense frustration with people communicating that they're bored. ok so you don't have the virus, you aren't working, you have a home and food, please stop complaining. appa told me the other day that she still has to go to her factory job and the only precaution they take is checking her temperature before she enters the building? it's inhumane that they are financially forcing brown aunties who are older to work. appa does express that she has friendships at her work, so i hope they are all caring for one another.

i find that i keep using the term "hope" in this email, but maybe that's how we cope with uncertainty.

giving you a hug from six feet away,
mimi



image1.jpeg



image2.jpeg

Mirusha Yogarajah received her master's of public policy degree from the University of Toronto in 2019 and, before that, she double-majored in ethnic studies, political science, and liberal arts honours. She chose these academic pursuits in order to have a tangible and productive means of addressing systemic inequities. Through this work, she refined her approach to policy by prioritizing iteration and the end-users of policy. She uses storytelling and design to create narratives that galvanize change. Her work aims to showcase the multifaceted experiences of being a person on the margins and the delicate and intimate experiences they host alongside survival.

tweet_name: Northeastern U. ->
As an emergency room technician
this @NUBouve student cares
for patients and cheers on
her fellow #healthcare heroes: <https://t.co/Y1SwwGRU3a>
#NUexperience <https://t.co/w02q1JZX1T>

retweet_name: mindreaux -> Justo
ateriza luego del puente y
sin llevarse ningún cartel...

repeat if colour doesn't change

tweet_name: TwiterBaz (تويتز باز)
→ Right to
Life and Liberty are non-suspendable
Fundamental rights. These cannot be
taken even in a declared
Emergency. But the secret of
having an Undeclared Emergency is
the government does not have to follow any rules i.e. this
is a clear ANARCHICAL government
behaviour.

simile

repeat if colour doesn't change

retweet_name: राहुवादी -> Re uest
You all Kindly follow
my backup account @Namo_Anuj in
case of emergency. I will
follow back.

repeat if colour doesn't change

Nicola Privato, *W.E.I.R.D.: Emergency* (video still), 2020. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

W.E.I.R.D.: Emergency

Nicola Privato

W.E.I.R.D. (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic) reflects the inherent bias in knowledge production, where a small fraction of the global population—roughly 15 per cent, the *W.E.I.R.D.* demographic—speaks on behalf of the whole. This musical composition is necessarily (and deliberately) affected by that bias.

W.E.I.R.D. is a generative score for a soloist, unwittingly created by Twitter users, whose tweets are used in real-time for live performance. Privato's program downloads and displays tweets containing a keyword—in this case: "emergency." That keyword affects the score and its visualization, which is projected live when the work is performed.

"Emergency," the second movement in this three-part composition, follows the publication of "Uncertainty" in *TILTING* (1), and will be followed by "Identity," to be published online by the artist in the coming weeks.

Privato's keywords derive from the influence of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, whose writings on late modernity highlight a deep-seated sense of ambivalence and unease, where ambitions for order and rationality are always haunted by upheavals to traditional notions of economy, culture, and society.¹

Whereas the first movement in this composition used individual tweets, a collec-

tive sentiment of emergency is indexed in this second movement, which is driven by tweets gathered in twenty-second intervals. "Emergency" proceeds at a frenetic pace as Twitter users employ the word with increasing frequency, its usage peaking as a correlate to the waking hours of the *W.E.I.R.D.* demographic. The dissonant, flashing, and blinking result aptly documents collective anxieties.

Privato's work builds a dynamic between score and improvisation, notation and performance. Centred on the chaotic dynamics of globalized modernity, Privato draws on his traditional jazz training to consider how musical practice and performance can respond to turbulent change.

Click the image above to see the full video.

¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000).

Please note: this video contains flashing lights.

Nicola Privato is a Venice-based musician and digital artist. Privato studied jazz guitar at Trieste Conservatory, graduating in 2010. He has played national and international festivals (Veneto Jazz, JAM, JEFF, Ubi Jazz, Treviso Jazz, Palermo Jazz, Mediterraneo Jazz, and many others) while experimenting with electronics and programming languages, and developing interactive audiovisual installations for musicians exploring the ways technology, social media, and information can be integrated in music performances.

COVID-19 AR

Mitchell Akiyama

I'm imagining a dream I didn't have: the novel coronavirus has enveloped me, and while it hasn't made me sick yet, it has thoroughly infected my perception. The virus has hijacked every bit of sensation that passes through the bubble made of COVID-19 that surrounds me. That dog over there is or isn't a carrier of the coronavirus; my most recent breath has or hasn't welcomed the virus into my system; every number is an index of COVID-19 before it's the number of apples in the bowl on my counter. I can still discern a world outside of COVID-19, but there's a persistent virus-skinned overlay that I can't disable. I'm not actually dreaming, so I don't need to wake up to realize that life is now an Augmented Reality interface: COVID-19 AR.

COVID-19 AR isn't unlike Google Lens or IKEA Place—apps that display information on top of a live feed from one's phone camera. While phone-based AR provides the option of looking away or closing the app; COVID-19 AR's operating system is thought itself and can't be shut off, not even in sleep. The interface has an extraordinarily efficient capacity to reveal things to us that we already know. Or, more accurately, it superimposes what we already should have known over what we now know. The pandemic, apparently, has exposed the many faults in the foundation of Western, capitalist society. The crisis has exposed "global frailties and inequalities"; it has exposed "shameful treatment" of our elders; it has exposed the "holes in our social safety net." COVID-19 AR gives us a representation of what was already there to begin with—the uneven distribution of resources, environmental collapse, systemic violence against marginalized peoples—draping an overlay of those very same things across our field of experience. Since the real and the virtual have now, for many of us, fully traded places, I suppose it makes sense that COVID-19 AR clarifies what was already clear.

The Exposure Engine that powers COVID-19 AR also both detects and amplifies cliché—an unprecedented technology that, in a perversely circular fashion, reveals just how unprecedented the effects of COVID-19 really are. "COVID-19 is an unprecedented crisis," even though "it didn't come out of the blue"; patients are presenting with "unprecedented" blood clots, even though, prior to the pandemic, 100,000–180,000 Americans and 10,000 Canadians were dying from embolisms every year; in Canada, the pandemic triggered an "unprecedented 500,000 jobless claims" in one week in March 2020, and the national government answered with a financial aid package of "unprecedented billions," which topped the precedent of the unprecedented \$114 billion bailout of

Canadian banks after the 2008 financial crisis. But an important feature of COVID-19 AR is its History Browser, which without too much complicated navigation, shows that "COVID-19 is not unprecedented nor unpredictable." Modern societies have weathered pandemics and economic collapses of similar or greater magnitudes, and COVID-19 AR allows quick, random access to precedent capitalist strategies that governments and institutions will employ to reboot a world that is as similar as possible to the disenfranchising, pipeline-bisected, trickle-up operating system that is currently experiencing a fatal error.

But there is a bug in COVID-19 AR, a glitch that is its greatest feature: in Simulation Mode, the platform models possibilities (however limited and incomplete) for care, for action, for the redistribution of capital, that are desperately needed. In surreal-time, I'm witnessing developments that were previously thinkable but seemingly impossible: inmates are being released from prisons in Canada and the United States, even if rates of release aren't nearly dramatic enough to protect prisoners or guards from infection. The ACLU is working with Republicans to free inmates—what if the COVID-19 AR decarceration simulation is actually modeling a future that was only ever a dream? I've felt cynicism towards government aid packages that will probably do little more than bail out corporations, resuscitate the oil sector, and perpetuate the never-ending shell game of working-poor debt. But I'm watching in credulous disbelief as Spain is poised to implement Universal Basic Income as a "permanent instrument." COVID-19 AR is performing some sort of real-time rendering of the naïvely-held possible impossibility of affordable rent in major urban centres as Airbnb-driven real estate speculation starts to crash, as tenant-organized rent strikes gather momentum, and as governments temporarily ban evictions. COVID-19 AR suggests that, in some jurisdictions, artists and freelancers should be protected from the precarities of the gig economy as in Germany where the government has allocated €50 billion to support its cultural sector.

Maybe none of this is really real. But it would be a mistake to believe that any of this isn't unreal either—to bleakly assume that exploitation and decimation are the only predictable outcomes. I'm fumbling for a pause button or shutdown sequence in COVID-19 AR that I know doesn't exist as I recall that Brian Massumi says that Gilles Deleuze says that the virtual is always real.

Mitchell Akiyama teaches at the University of Toronto. He volunteered this text in solidarity with *TILTING* contributors and the Blackwood.



Kara Ditte Hansen and cheyanne turions

Reaching in the ways that reaching has been possible, this back-and-forth exchange is born from an investment in the burgeoning and embodied knowledges that arise as we move through this time of physical distance, self-isolation, and fear. We want to capture something of the beingness of our days and the means we avail in order to cope, believing that repercussions cascade, yoking how we move now to the worlds that await us.

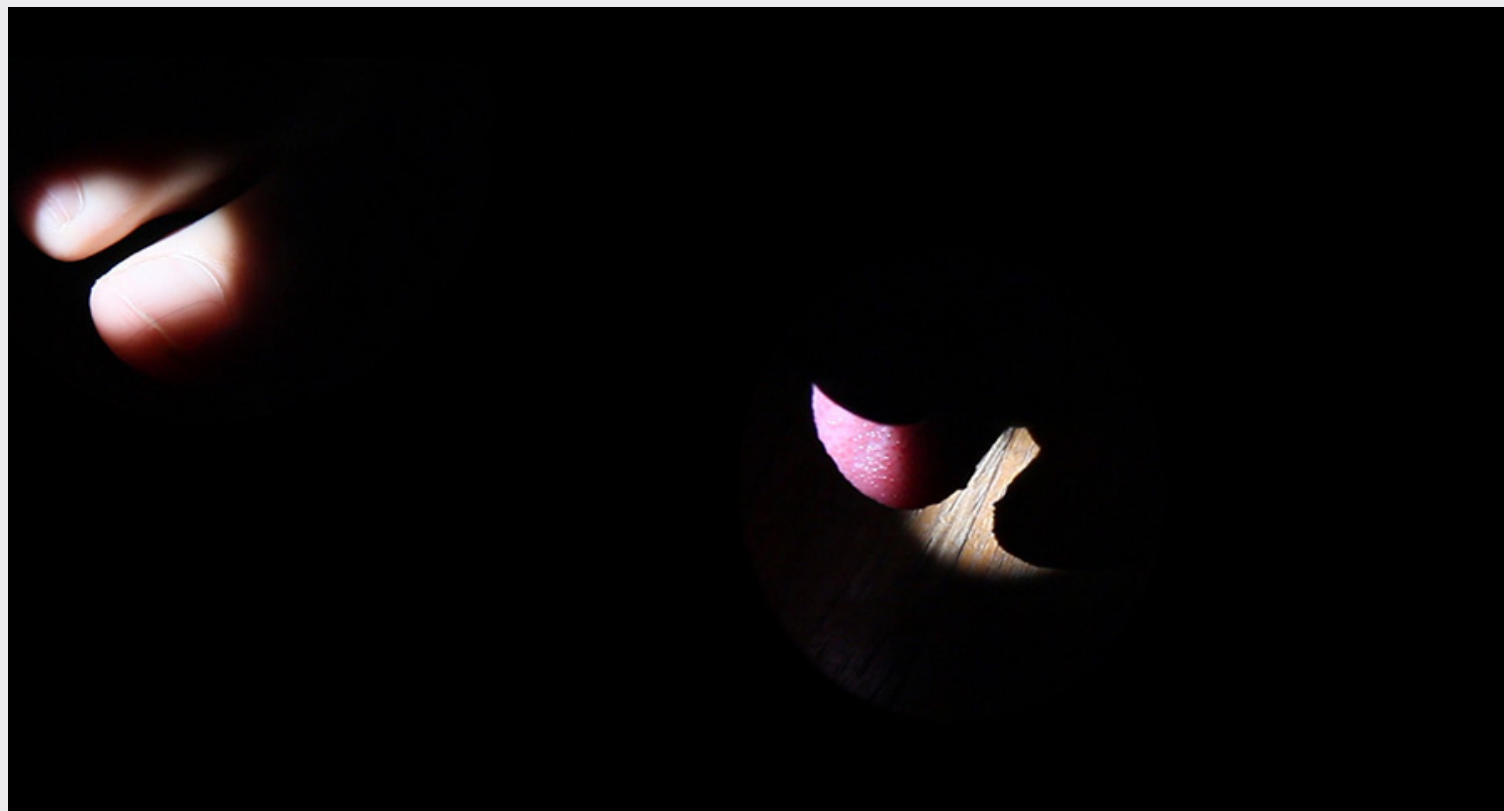
Recovery as Fragility

The proposition of recovery risks connotations of “conquest” and that is not the concern here. Rather, here, recovery is what is made in the ashes; it is what can be taken from collapse and used as tinder to light new fires. Oriented in this way, recovery is a practice of setting the stage for what comes after.

In these days of plague, recovery is not to be well (or not only), but to be fragile with bald-faced humility. It is to reveal what is already present, and to inculcate a consequential care beyond its usual limits.

This kind of recovery, if it is to be recovery at all, follows the contours of a body to where its limits break, which is to say that those limits were never solid to begin with. The passage of this new illness, invisible as it often is, relies on the permeability of flesh. And so we inculcate new choreographies. The making of a meaningful life, albeit different for all, relies upon the structure of a day. And so we find ourselves struggling to give shape to these days and weeks, hoping this is only passage, leading to an elsewhere, otherwise. Recovery is also to give credence to what has always been, which is to accept the savvy of our systems to conceal themselves to all but those who suffer by them—easier to imagine than to enact for those who stand as beneficiaries. This, then, is now the labour of fragility, to invest in making these kinds of recognitions possible, knowing anew that these systems structure us all, unevenly, and that what has been an easy ignorance will no longer do.

Recovery as Disorientation



Kara Ditte Hansen, *Recovery as Disorientation*, 2020. Single-channel video, 01:45 min. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

Recovery as Patience

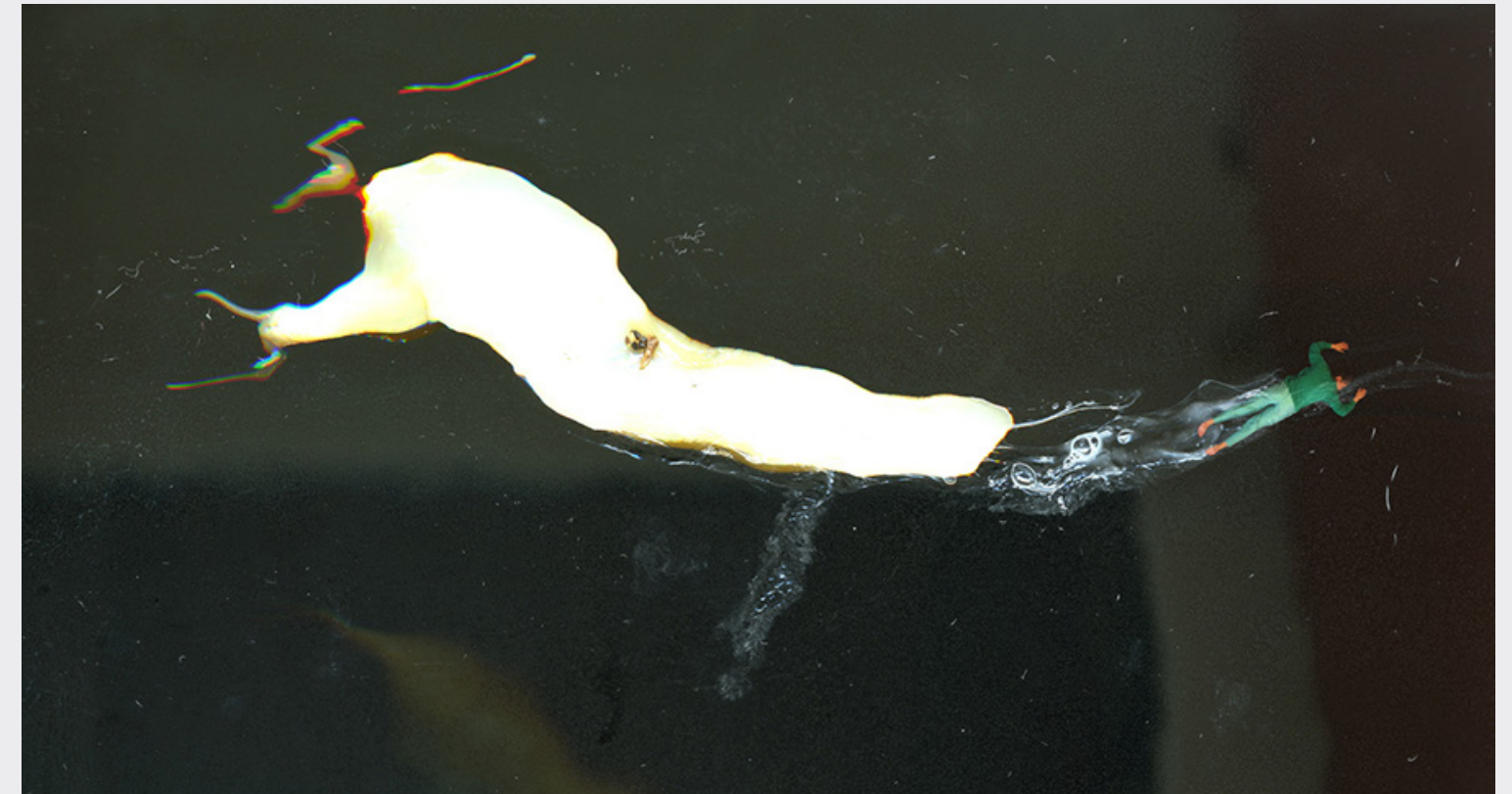
The temporal proposition of patience seems at odds with recovery: patience is rooted in a present-tense practice that moves with a belief in an afterward, while recovery weaves connective tissue that reaches from the now to somewhere else, backward in time.

If patience is configured as beingness in a state of delay, then can it also be a silent expression of belief that holds between a small speck of light, far away, and the surrounding void of unknowing that calls itself the unspooling hours of days?

Life seems to unfold only in this moment of pivot, impossibly extended, an interstitial space that has become all things. The proportions are off.

Patience, perhaps obviously, is the only way to reach any kind of afterward, and patience will come, either invited or imposed. I would do well to orient myself to its gestures. Conversely, cruelly, recovery cannot be promised or enforced. The least I can do is orient myself to its possibility, a practice that tends to social life as much as it does to personal well-being.

Recovery as Lagging



Kara Ditte Hansen, *Recovery as Lagging*, 2020. Single-channel video, 02:01 min. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

Recovery as Memory

There are different languages in which to offer an explanation of recovery: the scientific and its offer of careful measures; the social and its obligations of mutual assuredness; the political and its promises of security and aid. In the tongue of poetry, consider (as others have before) that it is by keeping a memory of a virus that a body becomes immune.¹

Memory is the mutated and calcified remains of encounter. The imperfect memory, the distorted memory—these become metaphors for the question of whether or not exposure will confer immunity as it has sometimes done so before, in other times, for other illnesses. The metaphors available for perfect recall are less obvious, foremost because it is understood that every history, as a collection of memories either personal or collective, is necessarily insufficient to the events it intends to describe. But there are interventions and alignments to be made that, in making a history more complex, get closer to the spirits of encounter that make up its mattering. It might be that these recalibrations that look back critically can stand in relation to some future moment when vaccine circulates among us, a kind of knowledge that has welcomed all cracks in its logic for the strength that an address confers.

These days, in this interstitial space where the scientific, social, and political contours of recovery are not yet fully understood, where it still might be possible to bear upon their practice and shape, perhaps poetry can afford an exceptional space to tend to memories that have yet to come, to conjure momentum that will accept nothing less than to recall a future otherwise than the past we've left behind.

Click each image to view videos.

¹ Claire Fontaine, “Letters against Separation: Claire Fontaine in Italy,” *e-flux conversations*, March 26, 2020, <https://conversations.e-flux.com/letters-against-separation-claire-fontaine-in-italy/9701>.

Kara Ditte Hansen is a visual artist and organizer based in Vancouver. Her work combines film, video installation, sculpture, social practice, and performance. She received a BFA from Emily Carr University of Art and Design in 2013. Thereafter, she participated in the thematic residency *Confuse the Cat* led by Michael Portnoy and Kira Nova at the Banff Centre. She is a founding member of the collective non-profit organization Duplex Artists’ Society, a gallery and studio space that

has been supporting emerging artists through exhibitions, talks, performances, and readings since 2015. Now she is in the process of completing her first film, *An Event So Fast* (2020).

cheyanne turions is the curator at SFU Galleries (Burnaby and Vancouver). She volunteered this text in solidarity with her collaborator, Kara Ditte Hansen, as well as *TILTING* contributors and the Blackwood.

The Ill-fated Class of 2020

Alex Cameron

The isolation of performers is what most personally breaks me about this pandemic.

The generation most affected is mine:
The generation that is just now graduating from university
Following years of education,
Following years of building professional experience and practice,
We are now scrambling.

On the outside I am calm. Perhaps the pandemic is a chance for me to breathe.
But uncertainty surrounds my calm like icy winds.

Do I even have to tell you I set this year up to be a big one?
We followed forged paths—precious advice for
springboarding ourselves into the professional sphere
lining up opportunities
living as creatives
We followed forged paths—to a creative world that no longer exists.
We must forge our own, somehow.

Audiences to play to, dissipated in an instant.
Friends and colleagues to perform for, alongside, together—isolated.

Conventional artistic wisdom says we are independent by nature.
But the craft of performance is twined among endless moving parts.
Writers. Directors. Agents. Unions.
Peers.
Audiences.
Bodies.
Closeness.
Attention.
Without them, who are we? Who am I?

These parts exist in systems.
Artistic work participates in many machines of labour
Machines we expect to function, in the name of betterment,
But the system is not designed for this:
Machines, separate from their fuel, grind themselves to stop.
If the system's design has not conceived this, we must redraw the blueprints.
Do we have a choice otherwise?

We will be only the first generation of many to be shaken.

No one is “non-essential.”
Yet while people turn to the comfort of art
We see news of funding and response benefits
Promises of relief for some
Exclusions for others
that spiral them further into isolation.

How can you compete—how can you emerge—in an oppressive system?
Groomed and governed by the system of education
That serves as a trial run for the labour system.
A labour system we are watching leave artists behind.

The generation most affected is mine:
For us to sustain ourselves, we must reject.

We must rebuild.

Our education is not ending. It is beginning.

We will set the stage.

The isolation of performers is what most personally steels me about this pandemic.



Right: Poetry performance by Alex Cameron during Global Climate Strike week at the University of Toronto Mississauga, September 19, 2019. PHOTO: BLACKWOOD GALLERY.

Alex Cameron is a theatre, visual, and performance artist based in the Greater Toronto Area, and a graduate of the ill-fated 2019–20 school year at University of Toronto Mississauga. Cameron has performed in Tarragon Theatre's Young Playwrights Acting Unit and the Toronto Fringe Festival, and creates digital video remixes using pre-existing and original footage. Cameron explores and is interested in artwork that is contemporary and post-modern—work that can only exist and have been created with the tools and perspective of today.

```

3 2
4 #/
5 pragma solidity 0.6.0;
6 contract Monument {
7     string public inscription =
8         . ;E#####L
9         G#####;
10        K#####Gt,,;fN#####j
11        :#####f
12        f#####E#####
13        i#####:####j W###.
14        #####:j###:##G: E###
15        #####.#####. E###
16        ##### W###.###
17        #####L#####L#####
18        #####:##i.:jK#####.KW###.K###:
19        #####G# ..:##.#####EW###.###W
20        j#####:##.#####jW###:.,###
21        KW#E .#.....#####:###:W###
22        ###:.....#####:###:..f###:
23        ###:.....###i.....#####;###j
24        ##W:.....D##:.....###:.....##E
25        ###:.....#####:.....##
26        E#::.....##j#.....#####G#
27        ##:.....##K.#.....#####f##
28        DK.....#####E###.###:.....i##
29        #:.....j##t K#W##L:..#W.....:##
30        #.....:##.#####:##G:##
31        KD.....W.....#####
32        #.....#i.....:##:###
33        E###.##K:.....###:###;##t
34        #####f.....W:.....###;.....:##.##
35        #####NK.#:.....#####.##W.##
36        #.....#.#####.E.G##.#K
37        #.....W.....KD.....##t.##
38        #;.....:t.....##.##i
39        #.....i.....#####.###.##
40        W.....:##.##
41        #t.....#####.##W.##
42        #.....L##..L#K
43        #.....#####W.....i.....#####j.....#.#
44        #.....#####E.....###.D#####
45        #.....#####W.....##L#####
46        #.....tLGDK#####f#####
47        #.....#####W.....:##L#####
48        #.....#####.###f:#####
49        #.....#####K.....##G.##.##D.##.##
50        #.....#####K.....##G.##.W##.##
51        #.....#####.##G.##E#####
52        #.....#####.##L#####
53        #.....#####.##f#####
54        #.....#####i.....:##f.#####K#i.....i##
55        #.....#t#####.##f.W###.##.i##
56        #.....#####:##j..G##.j##
57        #.....#####:##j..t##.f##
58        :#.....#####:##t.##.f##
59        #.....G#W#####:##.##L##
60        #.....:##.#####:##.##G##
61        #K.....:##.##.WF.##.G##
62        #:.....:##.##.##.D##
63        WW:.....:##.##.D##
64        :L#L.....:##.##.D##
65        ##E:.....:##.##.E##
66        #:.....:##.##.##W
67        #:.....:##.##.##
68        #:.....W##.##K
69        #:.....:##D.##
70        #:.....G##.##E##
71        #:.....D#W#
72        #:.....G##
73        #:.....L#
74        #:.....K#
75        #:.....#
76        #:.....#
77        #:.....#
78        #:.....#
79        #:.....#
80        #:.....#
81        #j.....#
82        Kf.....#
83        DL.....李文亮 (1986-2020) ,男, 辽宁省锦州市人
84        LE.....武汉大学临床医学专业毕业, 武汉市中心医院眼科医生
85        fK.....#
86        iW.....李文亮最早于2019年12月30日向外界发出
87        #;.....新型冠状病毒 (2019-nCov) 防护预警, 是疫情“吹哨人”.
88        :#.....同时也是被公安机关以造谣为由训诫的“武汉八君子”之一
89        #.....#
90        #.....2020年2月7日凌晨 W##.##
91        #.....李文亮医生因感染新型冠状病毒, 病重抢救无效去世. 享年34岁 W##.##
92        #.....#
93        #.....截至2020年2月7日9点49分 W##.##
94        #.....全国新型冠状病毒感染者 W##.:##
95        #.....确诊31211人, 疑似26359人, 死亡637人 W##.##
96        #.....为众人抱薪者, 不可使其冻毙于风雪 W##.##
97        #.....为自由开道者, 不可令其困厄于荆棘 W##.;##
98        #.....#
99        #.....训诫部分内容如下: W##.;##
100        #.....“我们希望你冷静下来好好反思, 并郑重告诫你: W##.i##
101        #.....如果你固执己见, 不思悔改, 继续进行违法活动. W##.i##
102        #.....你将会受到法律的制裁! 你听明白了吗?” K##.i##
103        #.....彼时之言, 恰是李文亮医生用生命的代价对在位之人、对整个社会的训诫 K##.t##
104        #.....#
105        #.....素人不暇自哀, 而后人哀之 K##.j##
106        #.....后人哀之而不鉴之, 亦使后人而复哀后人也 K##.j##
107        #.....#
108        #.....#
109        #.....#
110        #.....#
111        #.....#
112        #.....#
113        #.....#
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```

This Text is a Monument

Mark Dudiak



“Someone has just created a smart contract on Ethereum with source codes in the shape of a monument in memory of Dr. Li Wenliang, the whistleblower of China’s coronavirus outbreak, who died of the disease.”¹

Visit his memorial here:
<https://etherscan.io/address/0x6e46d3ab7335fffb0d14927e0b418cc08fe60505#code>

Ethereum² is an open-source, blockchain-based, distributed computing platform. It is the underlying framework for Ether, an emerging publicly traded global cryptocurrency. What makes Ethereum different from other blockchain protocols such as Bitcoin is that it allows users to generate cryptographically secure “smart contracts,” which verify and enforce credible transactions between one or more entities with-

out the need for third-party validation by a financial institution. Ethereum’s collaborative infrastructure guarantees the viability of smart contracts, ensuring that no centralized authority can unilaterally suppress, delete, or alter data held therein. Information found in an Ethereum smart contract cannot be censored unless access to the entire network is restricted.

Dr. Li Wenliang was one of the first medical professionals to publicly warn Chinese citizens that Wuhan was facing a very serious outbreak of a new infectious disease. Shortly after he spoke out, his comments were removed from online platforms and he was reprimanded by government officials for speaking out in a manner critical of the state. After he died from COVID-19 on February 7, 2020, Chinese authorities attempted to suppress the incident and moved to restrict information about the

doctor, his work, and his death. Dr. Li might never have received a public memorial had two anonymous users not written all of this information into the unique Ethereum smart contract that now serves as his virtual tombstone.

The purpose of a memorial is to bind an event, identity, or ideology to a specific geographic site indefinitely. It is important in most cultures that people should reside somewhere after they have passed—we want our ancestors to be in a place we can go to remember them. People often talk about their need to lay loved ones to rest in order to find closure for their grief. It is not unusual for families to engage in extraordinary, sometimes risky efforts to retrieve the remains of a relative so that they can be “properly” interred in a knowable place. A memorial locates the deceased in time; it stops them from being completely

Memorial to Dr. Li Wenliang on Ethereum. COURTESY THE ARTIST.
 Facing page: Funeral plot inscription, Carrowarty Cemetery, Ireland. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

李文亮 (1986–2020), 男, 辽宁省锦州市人
武汉大学临床医学专业毕业, 武汉市中心医院眼科医生
Li Wenliang (1986–2020), male, native of Jinzhou, Liaoning Province
Graduated in clinical medicine from Wuhan University,
ophthalmologist of Wuhan Central Hospital

李文亮最早于2019年12月30日向外界发出
新型冠状病毒 (2019-nCov) 防护预警, 是疫情“吹哨人”
同时也是被公安机关以造谣之由训诫的“武汉八君子”之一

Li Wenliang issued warning of the novel coronavirus to the outside world as
early as December 30, 2019. He is the “whistleblower” of the epidemic.
Meanwhile he is one of the “Eight Gentlemen of Wuhan” accused by the public
security bureau of spreading rumours.

2020年2月7日凌晨

李文亮医生因感染新型冠状病毒, 病重经抢救无效去世, 享年34岁
Early morning, February 7, 2020

Dr. Wenliang Li died of the coronavirus after failed resuscitation at the age of 34.

截至2020年2月7日9点49分
全国新型冠状病毒感染者
确诊31211人, 疑似26359人, 死亡637人
As of 9:49 on February 7, 2020

The number of people diagnosed with coronavirus amounts to
31,211. Suspected cases total 26,359. 637 deaths.

为众人抱薪者, 不可使其冻毙于风雪
为自由开道者, 不可令其困厄于荆棘

Don't let those who collect firewood for others die from the frost.
Don't let those who clear the path to freedom suffer from thorns and prickles.

训诫部分内容如下

“我们希望你能冷静下来好好反思, 并郑重告诫你
如果你固执己见, 不思悔改, 继续进行违法活动
你将会受到法律的制裁! 你明白了吗?”

彼时之言, 恰是李文亮医生用生命的代价对在位之人, 对整个社会的训诫

He was reprimanded as follows:

“We hope you could calm down and reflect. You are being warned seriously.
If you still insist on your opinion without repentance and continue the illegal
activities, you will be punished by law! Do you understand?”

What they said at the time was exactly what Dr. Li Wenliang said to the
incumbent and to society.

秦人不暇自哀, 而后人哀之
后人哀之而不鉴之, 亦使后人而复哀后人也
The Rulers of Ch'in had not a moment

To lament their fate,
Those who came after
Lamented it.

When those who come after
Lament but do not learn,
Then they too will merely provide
Fresh cause for lamentation
From those who come after them.

2020年2月7日
February 7, 2020

lost. Whether survivors visit the grave is
not as important as knowing that there
is a place where the dead can be found.

It seems inevitable that our survival will be-
come more fraught as the negative effects
of climate change and population growth
intensify. As we adapt to the future, me-
morial traditions will also have to evolve.

One can imagine a scenario where urban
cemeteries would be pressured to close
and redevelop due to a logic of “produc-
tive” or “optimized” use of scarce city space.
In such a scenario, how could ritual situ-
ate the memory of an individual at an in-
dexical virtual “place” online? As the cur-
rent state of lockdown persists globally,
projections suggest that our lives will in-
creasingly be lived within a digital public
sphere. Can we bind identity, memory, or
ideology to a specific location within a vir-
tual space? Social media platforms such
as Facebook have attempted to do some-
thing like this by allowing a deceased user's
profile to be converted into a “memorial-
ized account.” This means that Facebook
prevents data from being removed or added
to the timeline of the deceased while still
reminding their friends to wish them a
happy birthday or anniversary. These
“death pages” do serve as a kind of living
memorial in the short term: they preserve
all of the things that an individual chose

to share about themselves and they are
publicly viewable—but the question is, for
how long? The existence of these sites is
wholly predicated on whether Facebook
continues to maintain them and whether
the platform itself will survive in the long
term. Anyone who has lost content to a
system update or technical glitch knows
that all of the information saved to the
network remains there solely at the dis-
cretion of Facebook.

This is what makes the monument to Dr.
Li so interesting. His tombstone was cre-
ated on a specific date, at a specific time,
and has been situated in a unique virtual
“place.” Barring server failure or techno-
logical obsolescence, it cannot be lost, al-
tered, or deleted without the consent of its
creators. Just like real tombs situate an
individual within the landscape, this me-
morial is sited within a network whose
design makes it as stable and unchanging
as possible. If we are moving into a future
where the majority of our public lives un-
fold in dynamic virtual environments, can
we rely on these kinds of strategies to cre-
ate islands of certainty within the digital
stream? Though it consists of fewer than
150 lines of text, this monument does what
its physical antecedents do: it situates the
memory of Dr. Li in an unchanging pub-
lic context where he can be mourned by
anyone who chooses to visit.

1 Wolfie Zhao, “China's Coronavirus Whistleblower Is Now Memorialized on Ethereum,” Coindesk, February 7, 2020, <https://www.coindesk.com/chinas-coronavirus-whistleblower-is-now-memorialized-on-ethereum>.

2 See Ethereum white paper: <https://github.com/ethereum/wiki/wiki/White-Paper> Last accessed 14 April 2020.

Special thanks to Lily Chen, Ho Ki Pang, and Josephine Li who helped to translate the monument's inscription.

Below: Blank gravestone, Cimetière Notre-Dame-des-Neiges, Montréal. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

Mark Dudiak is a Toronto artist who creates videos, installations, and paintings about invisible forces and their influence on the built environment. His work explores contemporary existential concerns such as loneliness, collective anxiety, transhumanism, and artificial intelligence. He holds a BFA from Emily Carr University of Art and Design and an MFA from Concordia University. Dudiak has exhibited across Canada and internationally at venues including ZK/U, Berlin; Projet Pangée, Montréal; Access Gallery, Vancouver; and Nuit Blanche, Toronto.



Endurance is Not Resistance

Olivia Klevorn

If there is one overarching principle of endurance-building, this is it. Call it gradual adaptation. That is, be consistent, be patient, and build up slowly. The gradual-adaptation principle is deeply rooted in human physiology and has worked for about a billion runners since Paleolithic man started stalking wild animals in East Africa 150,000 years ago. It still works today.

—*Boost Your Endurance*, runnersworld.com

The meaning of capitalism will be subject to precapitalistic meanings, and the conflict expressed in such a confrontation will be one in which man is seen as the aim of production, and not production as the aim of man.

—Michael T. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America*¹

I could not tell you why I began running as an adult.

It was a possession, or I was becoming the person my habits amounted to, spirit dripping out of mouth in sweat.

A girl I follow on Instagram says, “I’m a runner now.”

Running is an identity and then, as modernity demands, a productive obsession, easy to commend.

A runner maintains their mileage, their bankrolls, their pace, their injury, and debt. A runner seeks gold to quench the industrialist’s tastes. A runner seizes opportunity without cost. A runner sees the horizon line. A runner uses all available resources. A runner knows what they deserve. A runner keeps going no matter what.

Running is a conquest and then, as modernity demands, an act of destiny, made manifest.

A runner makes progress. A runner thinks it feels good to “get out.” But a runner is no “runaway.” A runner comes by choice. A runner is possessive of place. A runner eschews violence and needs the police. A runner picks all names. A runner speaks “in general.” A runner reconciles history. A runner finds total comfort in total control. A runner has a good sense of direction. A runner does not feel chains as long as most movement is free. A runner keeps going no matter what.

Running is an endurance exercise and then, as modernity demands, work.

A runner believes suffering is inevitable and recursive. A runner believes they are suffering. A runner believes oppression is inevitable and recursive. A runner believes they are oppressed. A runner believes struggling is inevitable and recursive. A runner believes they are struggling.

A runner keeps going no matter what.

I begin to see the need for everything I mock. I run more than 300 miles and buy a pair of shoes with soles so thick I want to gnaw through them just to “get my money’s worth.” I begin to consider wind and humidity, and their relation to sweat. I monitor the rain. I time meals. I time sleep. I time the distance from one castle to another. I learn about degenerative conditions and chronic conditions, conditions of muscle and conditions of bone. I learn how to pre-wrap. I learn how to ice. I am introduced as “a runner.” I plan to stay with a girl for the weekend and bring my running shoes in a plastic bag. I learn the paths. I learn the trails. I make playlists. I sign up for a traditional man-versus-horse relay. I shower in warm water tempered by cold sweat. I take naps.

I become ignorant.

I am writing in the context of capitalism and America.

We have been taught that assigning metrics is not infliction. It is naturalized to consider life in relation to quantities.

My grandfather died at fifty-one. The cancer was aggressive, a sprinter. It killed him in less than six months. The speed was related to stress. He worked thirty years for the same company. My grandmother lives on his unused vacation days.

My father retired. When I call, his voice is reedy and unfocused. I ask if he’s just been on a run. He says no. We get to talking about the economy. His new voice, pallid, passive, exhausted, wastes itself on a victory lap. “It will keep going. It will be back where it was.”

An eleven-year-old runs 100 times or more around the track and imagination is lost in numbers.

She did not know she could stand on the edge of a lake as sun rose over imaginary kingdoms, and rankled republics.

She did not know, in quiet streets, her ragged breath could leave winter air in tatters, rip, smear, and drag, flag after violent flag.

She did not know she was angry. Can you imagine? She just kept going. Can you imagine?

Running injuries are often progressive. Ruptures result from hundreds of miles and hours of impact accreting. Lives can be changed for months or years due to such grave injuries.

One morning I woke up and my ankle was swollen purple. Applying pressure felt like stepping on lines of live wire electrified with pain. I hopped to see a friend who lived across the hall. Her father was a doctor. She picked up my foot. She moved it back and forth. “You should probably go to the hospital.” As an American, I asked, “Are you sure?” And as an American she sighed and said “Yes.” It was a grave injury. I understood.

There are books, shows, podcasts, chats, magazines, and Facebook pages dedicated to runners’ precautions. There are symptoms that progress from chronic to constant to malignant. There are rules of decency, of pace, of empathy, of gait and kindness. But to endure is the runner’s greatest gift, to act nobly, to supersede being human and finish the race.

How often do you become indebted to a twisted intent and its unending demands?

How many conquerors were rebels made miniscule by calculations of selfishness?

How much pain are you willing to accept before everything must change?

Imagine waking to disaster. Imagine you cannot move from privacy for six to twelve weeks. Imagine you can believe it is boring. Imagine terror visits your kitchen at night. Imagine you try to bake it with lemon and turmeric. Imagine it refuses. Imagine it is a maelstrom. Imagine it is relentless. Imagine it shadows the walls and shivers the lights. Imagine you are sad. Imagine you miss horizons you’ve never seen. Imagine you are considering hysteria. Imagine pressing your finger on a button for disaster like a morphine drip you mainline while watching the news. Imagine no one you know is sick. Imagine memory is a rainbow you watch fading down the wall. Imagine waking to disaster. Imagine it is a maelstrom. Imagine it tears the roof off your house. Imagine you are drenched in myth and fact. Stocks are sold. Cops are out. No one can breathe. Inhale once on each pose. Imagine waking to disaster. Imagine relief is the wreckage of the past. Imagine you cannot go forward. Imagine you cannot go back. Imagine your pockets are empty. Imagine your neighbours do not offer. Imagine your home is stolen land. Imagine waking to disaster. Imagine vowing to put on “real pants.” Imagine going to the park. Imagine the first sun in weeks. Imagine counting on the commons. Imagine you stop counting them. Imagine waking to disaster.

Do not endure. Resist.

¹ Michael T. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 11.

Olivia Klevorn is a queer mixed-race writer and performer born in Chicago. She and her partner recently moved to Toronto from London, UK. Her work examines a wide range of cultural topics concerning injustice and inequality in our time. She has a master’s degree in visual anthropology from the University of Oxford and is chaotic good.

Pandemic, Time for a Transversal Political Imagination

Ali Ahadi

I: Symptoms

With the omnipresence of the term “symptom” these days, it seems that a plausible escape from the deep horror of this pandemic would be to conduct a symptomatic reading of it. Attributed to Louis Althusser, this method of reading literary and historical texts focuses not on what a text evidently expresses, but on what it is unable to. For Althusser, fundamental ideological presuppositions in the socio-historical context in which a text is realized repress certain facts from representation. To make these repressed facts explicit, symptomatic reading identifies “the invisible problematic contained in the paradox of an answer which does not correspond to any question posed.”¹

Reading our situation in a symptomatic mode requires conceiving of all pandemic-related news as a whole, and as a text—albeit a hysterical one—and then attempting to identify what this text does not say. Before anything else, a symptomatic reading of the pandemic demands the isolation of affects produced by the multiplicity of news sources (media reports, state addresses, medical advice, and economic analyses), so that something at the level of thought, and not fear and panic, can emerge. In a lecture given two days after Donald Trump was elected president, Alain Badiou reminded us of the detriment of affects:

Philosophy teaches us that none of these affects is in any way a good response... We must therefore think beyond these inevitable affects, beyond fear, disappointment, and depression—what we must do that would not be subject to the negative affects but that would take place on the level of thought, action, and political resoluteness.²

Under “normal” circumstances, we might tend to attribute negative affect to individual inadequacies. In the time of collective horror, however, it should be much less difficult (yet more urgent) to remember that “thinking” would be impossible without conceiving of affect as the concealment of the true reason behind the horror.

From this vantage point, we can regard “thought” as something like a break—

something that is not always with us but may only contingently befall us. If we consider all that we encounter (through our hearing and seeing) relating to the pandemic as what constitutes the doxa of this situation (that is, public opinion and common belief), thinking would therefore only be possible in our search for the *paradoxes* of our situation. Paradox comes from the Greek roots *para* (a modifying prefix meaning beside, beyond and contrary) and *doxa* (accepted opinion, from *dokein*, “to seem, appear and accept”). We can then consider a paradox as that which confronts public opinion, insofar as it counters and goes beyond a situation’s doxa. In other words, a real paradox is a break in the chain of significations governing a situation.

II: Mutations

Since the global outbreak of COVID-19, we have witnessed a radical manifestation of a particular form of unilateral state-citizen relationship. This relationship is being built on a very specific form of language-use and rhetoric, an assemblage whose determination is to produce an affect and a doxa. On the one hand, the products of this assemblage aim to build trust in people who are dependent—now more than ever—on the voice of the state; and, on the other hand, they repress the representation of the absolute contradictions within the system. State orders to stay at home as much as possible—producing affects such as “feeling safe,” and rhetoric such as “things are in our control” and “now, time to get back to work”—are all indicative of the state’s desire to maintain the subjugation of social life and the preservation of work conditions.

Other instances of such language-use fall within the activities of the media vector within the ideological state apparatus: spanning from reports of states ambivalently assuring bailout packages to the obscure-yet-charming analyses excusing states for prioritizing the market. Demonstrating this obfuscation is the poor media coverage of science papers. Many of these papers reproach the prioritization of the market by states, which has resulted in slower responses and inefficient mitigation strategies instead of more severe policies such as on-time lockdown, and thus increased the potential of future crises.³

From the point of view of the corporate-driven global economy, this language-use has to absolutely refuse to represent the underlying paradoxes of the market-driven system (the true driver behind the crisis).⁴ Given the withering away of state-owned businesses and the financial precarity imposed through neoliberal hegemony, a massive precarious workforce (including migrant workers, retail employees, sessional instructors, artists, and others) that cannot afford to “stay home” is actually the group to whom the state directs its call to “get back to work.” This is despite their return being tantamount to their subjection to contamination. Trump’s voice echoes here: “Our people want to work. They want to go back. They have to go back.”⁵ So too do comments from Texas lieutenant governor Dan Patrick, who, in an embodiment of the Freudian slip of the system, proclaimed, “Older people would rather die than let COVID-19 harm the US economy.”⁶ This infantilizing language-use is a determined tactic to keep this precarious workforce acquiescent to the emerging increase in the surveillance of citizens and control of “the social.” States will also take advantage of the declared “state of emergency” to elevate this tactic to the level of strategy—that is, to subdue any potential organizing activity (such as a general strike) by this group. The sovereigns employ such rhetoric with the cognizance that a colossal workforce with a disrupted social consciousness and understanding of work-concept are an immediate threat to the global work-subjectivity governing them.

I propose we can, through a symptomatic approach, begin to see a metabolic relationship between COVID-19 and the hegemonic global neoliberal economy. If it is true that the genome of COVID-19 has the chance of undergoing a mutation with every body it interacts with, why not speculate the same is the case with the vertical genome of the neoliberal socio-economic apparatus? Can we speculate that, on an economic level, this pandemic is suggesting a transformation in “reproduction of the relations of production”??

We can perhaps think of instances of such reproduction of the relations of production through the rapid shifts now

taking place within the entrepreneurial, educational, and even cultural sectors as they transition to online and remote work. These sectors are proud of how quickly they absorbed the transition, given that these creative tactics prevent disruption of the provision of “public service.” Yet beneath the surface, what is happening could also be thought of as a manoeuvre to exercise the economic efficacy of this online transition, and examine the subjective capacity for both employees and consumers to sustain this paradigm.

Another instance of this transformation engages the public dissemination of art. Many exhibitions are postponed, while many others consider online platforms to present their products. On the commercial level, Art Basel Hong Kong launched their fair online, and many others may follow. Digitally produced, digitally seen, digitally sold artworks may see greater market demand, for they are more compatible with the online mode of cultural merchandising—that is, turning cultural capital into monetary value through digital vectors.⁸

Similar speculative questions could be posed to educational services. Is online teaching here to stay, or will it at least contribute strongly to the educational economy in the near future? What might be the economic repercussions associated with this transition? Can we think of it in terms of a devaluation of the workforce and the elimination of many side jobs that were once needed for a single class to take place offline? Or can we consider it in terms of the growth of consumption and increasing of surplus value through the scaling-up of online classrooms, while the sessional instructor’s wage remains unraised?

We don’t know how long these exercises for reproduction of the relations of production will last. We may not have definitive answers for these questions. But it is imperative to not allow the effect of the pandemic to prevent us from our critical speculations.

III: Disruptions

This pandemic does seem to offer some promising traits. It is clear that “capitalist time” has been disrupted—albeit temporarily. Governments’ anxious use of rhetoric promising the return to “normal” can be understood as an effort to restore this very capitalist time. We know that such a disruption not only engages the human/labour time—necessary for on-time production and circulation so that value will be safeguarded—but it also consists of engaging the capitalist notion of “futurity.”

What could be more threatening and devaluing to capital than a different notion of time, which the pandemic might now enable us to imagine? In this imagining, we have an opportunity to

disrupt some of the notions that play a key role in the constitution of capitalist time, including the crucial notion of the Other.

By now, it’s been an essential and long-standing characteristic of the neoliberal economy to assign the Other a central role in the production of subjectivities that accelerate both the distribution of the global workforce and the construction of a specific notion of futurity for those within it. This notion of futurity involves the production of a desire for the subjects (members of the workforce) by which they become attuned with the working condition. This desire is dispensed through a discourse that advertises the notion of “progress” and the possibility of “job promotion.”

What is it that we actually desire when we desire to make progress or to get promoted? Desire must correspond to an object that exists for that desire, an object that constantly exacts full recognition from the subject. Our masters are exemplary instances of such objects: the boss, the promoted colleague, the tenured faculty member, the internationally acknowledged artist, and in one word, the Other. We must therefore understand that desiring the Other in this sense—that is, wanting to become the Other—means desiring a possibility for the self in the “future” and the reality of my Other in their “present.” It is at the intersection of these present and future temporalities that the capitalist notion of futurity is produced.

With the pandemic time unsettling such a notion of futurity, and with its imposition of uncertainty on people, this dialectic of desiring of the Other and struggling for recognition seems to have been adjourned. With both the material and mental circumstances ushered in by the pandemic, can we seize on this situation as a singular chance to reflect on the Other through the existence of the same (a precarious “lack of infection”), rather than through the economy of differences so upheld by neoliberalism and cloaked in the rhetoric of multiculturalism?

Is the pandemic not a time to think of the Other, otherwise? Through relinquishing the discourse of “difference,” can we grasp what we are all being made to serve, and discover methods for organizing ourselves to disrupt this service?

I think we can do this by avoiding the voice of our masters, by evading the true virus that is language, by abandoning our habitual online “drifting” on the products of the media assemblage, and, instead, by thinking of the underlying paradoxes of this situation infecting us in the same way. We can do this because there are so many of us sitting inside and imagining the possibility of a different time and action.

¹ Louis Althusser and Étienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* (London: New Left Books, 1975).

² Alain Badiou, “Two Days After the Election of Trump,” in *Trump* (Cambridge: Polity, 2019).

³ For a comprehensive elaboration on state reluctance to enforce on time sever strategies, see Tomas Pueyo, “Coronavirus: The Hammer and the Dance,” *Medium*, March 19, 2020, <https://medium.com/@tomaspueyo/coronavirus-the-hammer-and-the-dance-be9337092b56>.

⁴ David Harvey recently elaborated on some of these systemic contradictions: “Capital modifies the environmental conditions of its own reproduction but does so in a context of unintended consequences [...] Forty years of neoliberalism across North and South America and Europe had left the public totally exposed and ill-prepared to face a public health crisis of this sort [...] In many parts of the supposed ‘civilized’ world, local governments and regional/state authorities, which invariably form the front line of defense in public health and safety emergencies of this kind, had been starved of funding thanks to a policy of austerity designed to fund tax cuts and subsidies to the Jcorporations and the rich.” See David Harvey, “Anti-Capitalist Politics in the Time of Covid-19,” *Jacobin*, March 2020, <https://jacobinmag.com/2020/03/david-harvey-coronavirus-political-economy-disruptions>.

⁵ Libby Cathey, “Coronavirus government response updates: Trump envisions county-by-county risk assessments in new guidelines,” *ABC News*, March 26, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/coronavirus-government-response-updates-mnuchin-jobless-claims-report/story?id=69811625>.

⁶ Lois Beckett, “Older people would rather die than let Covid-19 harm US economy – Texas official,” *The Guardian*, March 24, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/24/older-people-would-rather-die-than-let-covid-19-lockdown-harm-us-economy-texas-official-dan-patrick>.

⁷ Louis Althusser, *On the Reproduction of Capitalism: Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* (New York: Verso Books, 2014).

⁸ With such potential transformations, we can also think of McKenzie Wark’s theory of “digital provenance and the artwork as derivative” coming to full realization. One would even argue that such theory can even fall short of encapsulating a potential paradigm shift in artistic production, wherein the market demands artworks whose provenance and derivative are digital. See McKenzie Wark, “Digital Provenance and the Artwork as Derivative,” *e-flux* 77 (November 2016).

Ali Ahadi is a Vancouver-based artist and writer. His interdisciplinary practice spans from site-specific ephemeral installations to sculpture, photo-, and video-based works, writing and translation. His work is constituted through addressing the problems of presentation and representation, monstrosity and demonstration, and, finally, the relationships between aesthetics and contingent forms of abstractions. Ahadi has participated in a body of solo and group exhibitions internationally, including his recent solo exhibition at the Ag Galerie of Tehran, entitled *Shit Yes Academy* (Goh Ballet Academy). In 2012 he received his MFA in visual arts from the University of British Columbia, where he is currently a visual art instructor and a PhD candidate in interdisciplinary studies with central focus on continental philosophy and visual arts.

Wake Work and the Coronavirus Pandemic

Beverly Bain

Black people everywhere and anywhere we are, still produce in, into, and through the wake an insistence on existing: we insist Black being into the wake.
—Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*¹

Christina Sharpe, in her seminal text, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, engages *wake work*—which she describes as a mode of inhabiting and imagining life in the wake of slavery—as a form of consciousness. Sharpe wants us to be fully aware of Black life as liveable and breathable, even as it is bound up with Black death. She wants us to track the “phenomena that disproportionately and devastatingly affect Black peoples” and reveal, in the face of Black imminent and imminent death, “the ways we resist, rupture and disrupt that immanence and imminence aesthetically and materially.”²

The coronavirus pandemic lays bare the corrosive effects of the racist, gendered neoliberal capitalist state on Black, racialized, and Indigenous bodies. In majority-Black US counties, the *Washington Post* reported in April, Blacks have three times the rate of infection and almost six times the rate of death, compared to majority-white counties.³

In Canada—a nation that bolsters whiteness in times of crises—Black workers (especially Black women), make up a disproportionate number of those in low-paying, frontline, and now-deemed essential jobs.⁴ These include roles as personal support workers (PSWs), registered practical nurses (RPNs), nursing assistants, orderlies, janitorial staff, and grocery clerks. In nursing homes and long term care facilities (workplaces where COVID-19 infection and death rates have been extremely high) Black and racialized women make up a significant percentage of population working in these jobs—25% of workers in nursing and residential care facilities and 27% of home healthcare workers.⁵

Black health and feminist advocates, researchers, and frontline workers have been “keeping watch” since the onset of the pandemic, taking notes, and listening to Black and racialized people on the frontline who are forced to work without adequate protection from the virus. They have heard from Black families who have been told to pay \$500 to receive care in Ontario emergency departments⁶ and they have documented daily threats of eviction and harassment by landlords.⁷

Defenders of Black life have also noted the effects of ongoing cuts to health care and affordable housing; rising incarceration rates; high unemployment; poverty, racism, and gender discrimination; and in-

tensified policing that has led to Black people being carded, beaten, arrested, and fined. Black people living in the afterlife of slavery and Indigenous people under white settler colonialism are “constituted through and by a continued vulnerability”⁸ to interminable violence and death. Recently, the Canadian government confirmed 164 people on First Nations reserves were infected with the coronavirus, with seventeen hospitalized and two dead.⁹

These stories and statistics approach a representation of contemporary conditions for Black and racialized people under COVID-19—but they only begin to reveal the historical contours of Black life against Black death. Tiffany Lethabo King tells us that while genocide and slavery have “distinct feelings at the stress points and instantiations of Black fungibility and Native genocide, the violence moves as one.”¹⁰ Achille Mbembe, in his work on necropolitics, argues that what we have witnessed over the course of history is how particular nation states have exercised their ultimate will over who shall live and who shall die. He argues that racism facilitates the expansion of necropolitics and a necroeconomy, both of which precisely manage and subjugate bodies through exposure to deadly dangers and risks.¹¹

In this time when the nation chooses to refer to the pandemic as the “great equalizer,” vast populations of Black, Indigenous, and racialized people globally have already been managed through death across decades of racist, white, settler-colonial, and neoliberal capitalist policies and practices.

Those who have been witnessing, accounting, and writing of Black lives in peril here in Canada during this pandemic are performing a form of wake work, care for those on the frontlines, at risk and/or left to die. This form of care insists on revealing Black and racialized resistance to this enforced death as well. This resistance takes form in Black and racialized women refusing to work without Personal Protective Equipment (PPE);¹² racialized PSWs publicly demanding that they not be scapegoated for staffing shortages in long-term care;¹³ Black men in immigration detention centres and prisons initiating hunger strikes to call attention to lack of safety conditions.¹⁴ All of them insist on visible, liveable, and breathable lives.

So living in and through this disaster that is COVID-19 there is the possibility of life even as death may be imminent for many Black, Indigenous, and racialized people. In as much as we remain vulnerable to that overwhelming force which is death, “we are not only known to ourselves and each other by that force.”¹⁵

1 Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2016), 11.

2 Ibid, 13.

3 Reis Thebault, Andrew Ba Tran, and Vanessa Williams, “The coronavirus is infecting and killing black Americans at an alarmingly high rate,” *Washington Post*, April 7, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2020/04/07/coronavirus-is-infecting-killing-black-americans-an-alarmingly-high-rate-post-analysis-shows/?arc404=true>.

4 “Statement from Black Health Leaders on COVID-19’s impact on Black Communities in Ontario,” *Alliance for Healthier Communities*, April 2, 2020, <https://www.allianceon.org/news/Statement-Black-Health-Leaders-COVID-19s-impact-Black-Communities-Ontario>.

Sheila Block and Simran Dhunna, “Face to face with COVID-19: How do we care for care workers?,” *Behind the Numbers*, April 16, 2020, <http://behindthenumbers.ca/2020/04/06/face-to-face-with-covid-19-how-do-we-care-for-care-workers/>.

6 Shree Paradkar, “Unlike Canadians, Americans at least know how Black people are faring with COVID-19 (very badly),” April 8, 2020, <https://www.thestar.com/opinion/2020/04/08/unlike-canadians-americans-at-least-know-how-black-people-are-faring-with-covid-19-very-badly.html>.

7 “Harassing behaviour from landlords reported as May 1 approaches,” *Toronto CityNews*, April 25, 2020, <https://toronto.citynews.ca/video/2020/04/25/harassing-behaviour-from-landlords-reported-as-may-1-approaches/>.

8 Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 14.

9 “Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Indigenous Communities,” Government of Canada Indigenous Services, May 7, 2020, <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1581964230816/1581964277298>.

10 Tiffany Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals: Offshore Formations of Black and Native Studies* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2019), x.

11 Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics,” trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 11–40.

12 See Bryann Aguilar, “Dozens of TTC bus operators refuse to work due to lack of PPE,” *CP24*, April 15, 2020, <https://www.cp24.com/news/dozens-of-ttc-bus-operators-refuse-to-work-due-to-lack-of-ppe-1.4898133>, and Tom Blackwell, “Canadian nurses treating COVID-19 patients cite unsafe-work laws to demand N95 masks,” *National Post*, March 31, 2020, <https://nationalpost.com/health/canadian-nurses-working-with-covid-19-patients-demand-legal-right-to-wear-n95-masks>.

13 “Personal support worker speaks out after deadly outbreak,” *CityNews Toronto*, April 16, 2020, <https://toronto.citynews.ca/video/2020/04/16/personal-support-worker-speaks-out-after-deadly-outbreak>.

14 Brittany Henriques, “Coronavirus: Four men continue hunger strike at immigration detention centre in Laval,” *Global News*, March 28, 2020, <https://globalnews.ca/news/6746367/coronavirus-immigrants-hunger-strike-laval>.

15 Sharpe, *In the Wake*, 134.

Beverly Bain teaches at the University of Toronto. She volunteered this text in solidarity with *TILT/ING* contributors and the Blackwood.

When your people are sick

Jayda Marley

I am forced to see this pandemic through an Afro-Indigenous lens

We fight for our land, they ignore us

Middle class people spread sickness, they send us all home & drown us in news of death,
They give names and heartfelt stories to their loved ones lost

Everyone forgets the missing and murdered women who never made the news stories
Everyone forgets Wet’suwet’en and their people

Everyone is suddenly happy be “inconvenienced”
Everyone says “it is for the health of the people”
Everyone says “stay home, take care of each other”
Everyone says “we are in this together”

Everyone says “government funding, we all deserve it”

We fight for our land, they call us:

“People who don’t know forgiveness”
“A disease,”
“Leftovers of a rotting history,”
“Ungrateful.”

Surviving off of “government funding, they do not deserve it.”

They post their Amazon sage on day 5 of Social Distancing
They post their selfies on day 6 with an Amazon dreamcatcher in the background
They call this “healing”

When our people are sick they send body bags to the reserves
They call this reparations

When your people are sick they rush to find a cure
They call this a good use of medical funding

Doug Ford says no school, praise him
Justin Trudeau says no rent, praise him
Government officials find sympathy only in things that can affect the ones they love directly

Forget clean water
Forget green land
Forget human rights
Forget Indigenous communities
Forget it all

Indigenous youth block railroad tracks on their own Land:

“Jail them,”
“Burn them,”
“Kill them,”
“End them like you tried to end their Ancestors,”
“Run the trains straight through”

You ignore the Indigenous youth who protect the Land we all benefit from
But flip society upside down when your people are becoming ill

If our Land is sick we will never truly heal
There is no healing without clean water
There is no healing without clean air
There is no healing without Indigenous youth.

Visit the SDUK microsite to hear a spoken word recording of this poem.

Jayda Marley is a nineteen-year-old nationally acclaimed Queer Afro-Indigenous spoken word poet, youth activist, and community healer from Tkaronto. She works with the Community Healing Project and is a youth facilitator and event organizer with One Mic Educators and Develop me youth. As a former competing poet, Jayda holds the first place national championship title of Voices of Today 2018. She is also the founder and creative director of the new open mic series For the Queer Coloured Girls After Me. Whether you catch Jayda at an open mic around the city, or on bigger platforms such as Pride Toronto, Nuit Blanche, and even Parliament Hill, she is sure to captivate every crowd she touches with her words. When she isn’t performing, she is waist-deep in a book or teaching youth across Turtle Island how to use their voices using spoken word and activism.



Lynn Hutchinson Lee, *slaughter| drown| serve| eat*, 2015. Acrylic on wood panel. COURTESY THE ARTIST.



Lynn Hutchinson Lee, *precarious labour: cook| harvest| balance*, 2015. Acrylic on wood panel. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

Metanoia

Lynn Hutchinson Lee

Lynn Hutchinson Lee is a Toronto-based multimedia artist. Her spoken word *Five Songs for Daddy* was in chirikli collective's sound installation *Canada Without Shadows* at the Roma Pavilion, 54th Venice Biennale, Italy; BAK, Utrecht, Netherlands; Romania's National Museum of Contemporary Art; and Art Gallery of York University's Audio Out. Her installation *metanoia* was exhibited at Hamilton's Workers' Arts and Heritage Centre. Selected writing appears in *The Food of My People* and *CLI-FI: Canadian Tales of Climate Change* (Exile Editions); *Romani Women in Canada: Spectrum of the Blue Water* (Inanna); and *Romani Folio* (Drunken Boat International Journal of Literature and the Arts).

On Representing the Crisis: A Response to *Metanoia*

Laura Tibi

As the COVID-19 crisis lays bare capitalism's innate injustices and reliance on the exploitation of enslaved peoples, immigrants, prisoners, and undervalued workers, I cannot help but wonder: What will become of our society? Will our apathy persist, or will the virus finally push us to take responsibility, acknowledge our role as passive perpetrators, and become critical, accountable citizens? Despite the nauseating bouts of performative activism and empty gestures of gratitude that the virus has unleashed, there seems to be a resurgent commitment to issues of class and solidarity gaining traction. Lynn Hutchinson Lee's paintings evocatively capture the shifting moral impulse of our era by mobilizing a historical visual idiom to represent a contemporary problem. In doing so, she reminds us that the crisis is not an empirically new phenomenon, but rather an explosive accumulation of centuries of violence, dependency, and exploitation.

The triptych composition she adopts, typically found in altarpieces, is especially

fitting considering the biblical proportion of the events unfolding. (While moralizing narratives around the virus run rampant, we must remember it is a non-living being with no religious convictions or ethical commitments.) Formally and thematically, Hutchinson Lee's paintings are more reminiscent of the social realist style found in early- to mid- twentieth century Mexican murals—those of Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco—than of religious painting. *Precarious labour: cook| harvest| balance* notably picks up on the motif of the factory worker, much like Rivera's *Detroit Industry* mural, who toils at a never-ending assembly line to barely make ends meet. But unlike the industrious, collaborative mood of Rivera's rugged labourers, Hutchinson Lee's workers are isolated and detached, signifying what Karl Marx referred to in *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* as *Entfremdung* or capitalist alienation. The menacing presence of overhead video surveillance reminds us that, despite the isolation of Hutchinson Lee's workers, they are not completely alone, but in observed seclusion. On the one hand, the cameras act as a stand-in for supervision; on the other, they represent a more generalized, now exacerbated, panoptic surveillance

in service of permanent and automated control.¹ In the central panel, we see the figure of a woman of colour balancing on a rope suspended above the sublime backdrop of waterfalls—the artist's personification of the precarious conditions of migrant workers throughout the Niagara region, and the disproportionate effects of the current crisis on migrant workers from across the Global South.

If precarious labour represents the dangers of working amid a pandemic, then *slaughter| drown| serve| eat* points to its political correlative: the *longue durée* of overproduction and mass consumption. In the latter tableau, the precarity of industrial work is framed as a distant, Othered place: always elsewhere and never that which immediately concerns us. We are instead supplied with an abstraction of labour through intentionally irrational spaces and dizzying perspectival logics. The visual legibility and utopian promise of social realism is now supplanted by a hellish Boschian dystopia complete with flooded streets, floating pigs, and a disturbing display of glut. What I find most unsettling is the untouched feast in the central panel. Upon closer inspection, we see a scorpion served on a bed of red

cabbage and a rat garnished with lettuce. Equally grotesque are the anthropomorphic dogs crawling in the far-left corner. By injecting such surreal, repulsive images into a portrait of wealth and privilege, Hutchinson Lee emphasizes the obscenity of social inequality. When viewed next to *precarious labour*, it becomes clear that the current crisis is part of a longstanding economic, social, political, and environmental problem that is endemic to capitalism. The subtle incorporation of pause and play buttons evokes questions of historicity, temporality, and duration. And while we all want to know when this nightmare will end, what we really need to consider is: How will we otherwise move forward? This may not be the last pandemic we experience in our lifetimes, but if we ever want to undo a system premised on centuries of violence and injustice, we need, at the very least, to implement more critical, tactical, and active approaches. We can begin this lengthy but necessary process of unlearning, unbecoming, and undoing by representing and understanding the crisis through and against history.

¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books), 201–2.

Laura Tibi is an art historian and Community Engagement Assistant at the Blackwood.

“the future is ritual”

shaina sarah isles evero fedelin agbayani

I suggest this as a revision to “the future is vegan,” a sign I spotted in a café in Puerto Princesa, Palawan, with my soul sister Andrea in mid-February just before the COVID-19 crisis emerges in the Philippines.

For five weeks, I journey with five pilipinx sisters under divinely appointed neurological exactitudes with Ate J, a ritualist-healer. What initially brought me to her a month before was my own “sickness,” an autoimmune disorder that I had been diagnosed with in my late teens and which, over the past several years, has blessed me with the enlightenment that can sometimes only come from suffering and the divinely ordained task of healing ourselves by remembering our inner medicines. I met her after asking my dear friend Maria to connect me to a healer working with herbs and cosmologies indigenous to our ancestral archipelago.

Ate J is ordained to be of service through embodying teachings received from a lineage of Indigenous teachers in Pilipinas and directly from her *diwatas*, or spirit guides. The *baylan* is one Visayan name for this role, which also has many other names within the more than 171 languages that exist across the several thousand islands of the Philippines, bordered and named after King Philip of Spain. It happened to be that at the time I met Ate J, she was guided to share teachings in particular astrological and arithmetical conditions—five women, five weeks, starting on the new moon.

In my own journey of recognizing my body’s biodynamic relations as a microcosm of earthly and cosmological cycles, a teaching continues to surface: healing individually and collectively inevitably entails returning to and respecting natural law, the “original instructions” still articulated in Indigenous epistemologies (ways of knowing) that honour divinely perfect patterns—constellation systems—of balance. Adrienne Maree Brown articulates these divine patterns of self-organization in *Emergent Strategy*.¹ Observing these patterns in our natural world, we devise strategies to survive and thrive in relation to our natural ecosystems. If every cell and organism operates in-

herently harmonious and perfect ways in relation to one another, why do we get sick?

As an immunocompromised pilipinx woman of working-class upbringing navigating political science at McGill University, through seven years of both thriving and almost dropping out, there became no question for me that the imbalances, sicknesses, and inequities woven into our institutions and systems—whether political, academic, socio-political, racial, heteropatriarchal, governmental, or spiritual—will surface in our bodies if we do not address them.

What crystallized for me while in Palawan is how many—or perhaps most—of us not born into Indigenous communities have forgotten the rituals that preserve divine harmony in all our relations. Rituals—in planting, harvesting, or sacrificing animals for nourishment, for example—create the time and space required to consummate the divine covenants we have made with creator and spirit worlds to honour balance and reciprocity with all our relations on the earthly and other dimensional planes. They are the vessels through which harmony, balance, and reciprocity are embodied. Rituals not only ensure harmony and balance between creation and consumption, but also serve as a placeholder for relationships to the creative sources that nourish us.

Institutionalizing the forgetting of these rituals, through demonizing them and dispossessing peoples from the land and Indigeneity, is necessary for capitalist-colonialist systems of accumulation to thrive. These systems of extractivism, where the Earth is treated as a laboratory for the purpose of endless accumulation, depend on industrializing ritual-less consumption. The rituals of baylans, and many other Indigenous ritualists throughout time and space, have been castigated as demonic savagery in order to justify stealing land from uncivilized peoples who need to be brought into modernity. As ritual-centred land traditions are threatened under capitalist-colonialist industrialization, so become locality, intimacy, equity, vitality, and reciprocity within our food systems.

During our time in Palawan, we visited mountain forests that have been significantly impacted by palm tree extraction; connected with a *katutubo* (Indigenous) Palaw’an community in the south; and had the honour of experiencing rituals of connection to the spirits of the land, waters, and elements that were still being maintained, allowing for humans to honour our covenants to the spirit world, and to embody gratitude and reciprocity in the way we harvest, hunt, live, and connect with medicines when we are sick.

As Taj Vitales, a member of the Facebook group “Anito: The Precolonial, Polytheistic Beliefs & Practices of the Philippines,” describes:

“Pag-anito/pagdiwata against illnesses are among the most common rituals practiced by Pre-Hispanic indigenous communities in the Philippines. The purpose of these is always to appease the spirits or anitos/diwatas who are capable of bringing illnesses to the community. For me it’s always a reminder of remembering their presence, their role, and their place in the society. In short, don’t forget them.”²

Currently, Indigenous groups in the Cordillera region of northern Luzon alongside other groups across the archipelago are invoking traditional rituals to protect their communities against COVID-19.³

Levi Sucre Romero, a BriBri Indigenous person from Costa Rica and co-coordinator of the Mesoamerican Alliance of Peoples and Forests, notes, “In our communities, we have respected a certain biodiversity that protects us today. We plant what we eat, and we have the resources and knowledge needed to get through times like this, and this is what we are trying to tell the rest of the world.”

Says Romero, “The coronavirus reminds us that the balance of the Earth is in danger, and we need to maintain our delicate balance of diversity.” He adds, “More than 25 per cent of medicine comes from forests. If we lose our forests, we lose our medicines, too.”⁴

epidemiology

the branch of medicine that deals with the incidence, distribution, and possible control of diseases and other factors relating to health.

When I began reflecting more holistically on my autoimmune disorder, it dawned on me that my body was gifting me with teachings about what was happening on mama Earth. Within biomedical understandings of autoimmune disorders, immune cells attack the very tissues they are meant to protect. They are unable to discern between healthy cells and foreign invaders such as pathogens, bacteria, or viruses, creating a reactionary coping response that treats all cells as invaders.

The traumas enfolded in my flesh surfacing as autoimmune disorder were birthed in the racialized, working-class, industrialized conditions of food access that colonialism and capitalism thrive on—that is, access to food without connection to the food’s rituals, stories, and lands. As I began to understand how traumatized my body was from ingesting foods carrying soul wounds from dispirited growing and harvesting practices, I also began to understand why, at times, almost anything I put in my body was causing me inflammation. I was experiencing even the most “clean” foods as triggering foreign invaders.

All life carries sacred genealogies encoded with memories of ritual and reciprocity governed by systems of natural law. In Indigenous traditions, foods such as dairy and corn are harvested with specific rituals to honour the spirits of the food and the land. This nurtures their inherent medicine. Cows are sacred in Ayurveda, where in rituals of care in preparing ghee and milk can make them medicinal. Mayan and Haudenosaunee traditions and relations with corn are rooted in ancestral wisdoms and processes of stewardship that are inherently intertwined with spirit. Tobacco is a sacred medicine in numerous Indigenous traditions. Yet these sacred beings are often inflammatory for the immunocompromised after generations of their preparation and usage shifting away from original instructions of reciprocity, thus creating the conditions for them to become sources of sickness and addiction. In industrialized food systems, ritualistic care is

forgotten and systemically erased. With COVID-19, it is being made evident how mass-industrialized and colonized food systems enable habitat destruction and erase Indigenous knowledges and relations with traditional foods in the race to prioritize profit over respect for biodiversity, health, and well-being.

~ seven ~

Reflecting on my own temporalities during this COVID-19 isolation, I am awed by the reminders of sacred cycles of seven. Ushering in my twenty-eighth year on this earth, I have been gifted with teachings by my sister Krysta and elder Nati on seven-year life cycles of the spirit. Many of us have received Indigenous teachings from the Haudenosaunee on honouring seven generations. Of particular salience to my healing journey are teachings gifted in relation to our seven bodies, some of whom we can lose under certain conditions that cause the weakening of our immune systems. I had the honour of partaking in a ritual held by Ate J to call back my wholeness and alignment with all my selves and ancestors in a good way, thus strengthening the body’s immunity and capacity to be protected against illness and harm. This ritual has and continues to support my healing journey.

As we move forward with our hearts open toward the next seven generations and the countless sevens of generations whose shoulders we stand on, I hope we can envision a cosmology of care rooted in the original instructions that honour spiritual integrity through remembrance of all our covenants with the spirit world. Remembering these covenants will be absolutely vital as we continue to experience pandemics and the inequitable biopolitical distribution of power, life, and death that they reveal so rawly within “the broader virus of empire,” as named by pilipinx sister JL Umipig.

May we be good death doulas to this era of genocide and masculine colonial domination. As these paradigms rot and collapse, I pray that we revitalize the rituals to call our whole selves back to reciprocal relations with the Earth, creator, and one another. May we remember all our relations in all directions of time and space in divine ritual.

1 Adrienne Maree Brown, *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* (Chico, California: AK Press), 2017.

2 Anito: The Precolonial, Polytheistic Beliefs & Practices of the Philippines, Facebook group, accessed March 2020, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/130806320595058/>.

3 Karlston Lapniten, “In a Philippine indigenous stronghold, traditions keep COVID-19 at bay,” *Mongabay*, April 21, 2020, <https://news.mongabay.com/2020/04/in-a-philippine-indigenous-stronghold-traditions-keep-covid-19-at-bay/>.

4 Emilee Gilpin, “COVID-19 crisis tells world what Indigenous Peoples have been saying for thousands of years,” *National Observer*, March 25, 2020, <https://www.nationalobserver.com/2020/03/24/news/covid-19-crisis-tells-world-what-indigenous-peoples-have-been-saying-thousands-years>.

shaina sarah isles evero fedelin agbayani (sha) is a queer pilipinx divine femmenomenologist grateful to be born in scarborough, dish with one spoon and two-row wampum treaty territory originally stewarded by original caretakers including the wyandot, petun, seneca, missisauga of the credit, and haudenosaunee first nations. grateful to live via a lineage of alchemists, broom-wielders, live-in caregivers, cleaners, and cooks from lands including ilocos sur, romblon, mindoro, quezon, and batangas, she finds solace in the solitude sanctioned by her unique immunity, diagnosed as she is with auto-immune disorder. she is grateful to experience “sickness” as a divine invitation to heal through recovering original cosmologies of reciprocity and care.



Video still from *Migrant Dreams*
(Director: Min Sook Lee), 2016.
COURTESY THE DIRECTOR.

Essential Work = Essential Worker: Will COVID-19 Force a Revaluation of Migrant Labour?

Emily Cadotte

Canada consistently relies on migrant labour for two vital employment sectors: care work and food production. According to the federal government, migrant work is considered temporary. In practice, however, it is a permanent fixture of the labour market. Canada's Seasonal Agriculture Worker Program (SAWP) has been partnering with Mexico and several Caribbean countries for more than fifty years, with the farming season lasting up to eight months and most workers returning to the same farm year after year. Care workers, usually arriving from Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines, often work weeks without days off and dedicate years of physical and emotional labour to the families they care for. This labour is essential, not only to the Canadian economy, but also to Canadian public health.

The Migrant Workers Alliance for Change (MWAC) acknowledges migrant work as essential and seeks fair treatment for the essential workers who provide it. The MWAC was established in 2008 in a joint campaign to end recruitment fees for care workers and migrant farm workers, who were seen at the time as disparate groups. The alliance is a democratic coalition of self-organized migrants and has grown to be associated with more than twenty activist agencies and service providers working in and across the Greater Toronto Area and Ontario. Their team of five staff each specialize in the needs of different migrant-driven sectors, including care workers, seasonal farm workers, and migrant students.

The MWAC prioritizes two branches of collective organizing: first, the coordination of policy proposals and campaign development; and second, training and resources, including “know your rights” materials and legal supports that advocate self-organizing among migrant workers. In spring 2019 the group led the production of a comprehensive policy proposal, co-signed by several Canadian advocacy groups from Prince Edward Island's FCJ Refugee Centre to Okanagan's Sanctuary Health. The proposal's recommendations are ambitious but grounded in the knowledge and experience of the workers the agency supports. MWAC seeks permanent resident status for all migrant workers upon arrival, citing the classic National Occupation Classification (NOC) system, which grants such status to highly educated migrants. Permanent residency upon arrival allows for immediate access to healthcare and the accompani-

ment of family members to Canada.

In the absence of these measures, alternative recommendations include open or occupation-specific work permits that would allow workers the freedom to seek work from another employer should they need to leave a hostile or abusive work environment (currently workers must seek permission from their current employer to leave their post and find work elsewhere, which MWAC likens to indentured labour). Many of these recommendations would ensure proper healthcare for migrant workers, and thus mitigate the larger public health emergency.¹

The COVID-19 crisis is fundamentally affecting both major migrant-driven work sectors (agriculture and child/elder care). Many care workers, due to bureaucratic challenges around acquiring proper documentation, work under the table—as such they have no labour protections and are ineligible for government supports such as Employment Insurance (EI) and the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, but are nonetheless being asked to leave their positions unpaid as employers are mandated to work from home. These are workers who provide essential care to Canadians every day, but now find they are unable to care for their financial—and therefore mental and physical—well-being. The irony here is palpable, as the essentialness of the work is not made commensurate with the essentialness of the worker, who continues to face severe policing and is denied the prospect of citizenship.

Seasonal farm workers make contributions to EI but are often ineligible for it. This season, migrant farm workers are asked by the Canadian government to self-isolate upon arrival for a paid period of fourteen days, measures that farmers will receive a government benefit for. However, many of the accommodations workers are put up in do not allow for suitable social distancing. While some employers are explicitly heeding the government's calls for isolation, others are expecting workers to begin the season immediately upon arrival, informing their employees that they will owe for this period later on.²

In the *Toronto Star*, MWAC executive director Syed Hussan reacted to these unfair expectations and illegal practices by employers, stating that permanent residences and a national housing standard

are the bare minimum in order to remedy this unjust treatment. The recent COVID-19 outbreak in a Kelowna, British Columbia, nursery, where sixty-three temporary foreign workers and twelve local workers were exposed to the virus, will likely not be the last agricultural workplace to be infected based on substandard living quarters.³ Migrant workers are already at greater health risks due to systemic racism, precarious immigration status, and limited access to healthcare. In some of the federal migrant labour programs, temporary seasonal workers are ineligible for healthcare until having worked in the country for three months. These risks are further exacerbated during a global pandemic—granting permanent resident status upon arrival could alleviate many of them.

The MWAC also acts as the secretariat and coordinating body to the Migrant Rights Network (MRN; established in 2018) whose expanded scope includes all non-permanent residents. The MRN's membership is now approaching fifty groups nationwide, and it has collectively released new priorities in light of the current epidemic: healthcare for all, regardless of immigration status; worker protection from reprisal of taking time off, and access to government emergency benefits; an immediate moratorium on detentions and deportations; support for the community via unfettered access to social supports like food banks; and the belief that “those who know, lead”: migrant-led organizations and communities know what is best for them, and policy makers should look to these groups in legislating. Their networked approach to organizing empowers each group to be autonomous in its decision-making and informed by local communities, while also allowing for a united front in efforts to lobby Canadian legislators. Hussan explains that central to MWAC's structure is the democratic participation of the workers the group represents.⁴ He likens the organization to a union, where each local can determine effective strategies for their own workplaces—structures that he says are prevalent in the Global South.

Migrant work touches many facets of the Canadian economy, from the fruit belts of the Okanagan Valley and Niagara to affluent homes in Calgary, Montreal, or Toronto. In spite of its ubiquity, most migrant workers face tiered notions of residency, with possibilities for citizenship becoming increasingly scarce. The MWAC's

first campaign against recruitment fees back in 2008 was won—first for care workers, then for migrant farm workers—through the radical merging of two underrepresented workforce populations that shared a common goal. This highly collaborative ethos is standard among many migrant-rights organizations and has proven to be a useful strategy in the past. In this moment, the MWAC and the MRN are mired in unknowns as they continue to work with their communities in unprecedented circumstances. Through shared resources and networked approaches, they remain hopeful that all non-residents will emerge from this crisis with stronger protections for their dignity and safety, using this critical moment as a flashpoint to reimagine a future where those providing essential work are themselves deemed essential.

Min Sook Lee (previous spread) is an Assistant Professor at OCAD University, with a research and practice focus on the critical intersections of art and social change in labour, border politics, migration and social justice movements. Lee's most recent feature, *Migrant Dreams* tells the under-told story of migrant workers in Canada. In 2017, *Migrant Dreams* was awarded Best Labour Documentary by the Canadian Journalists Association, and garnered the prestigious Canadian Hillman Prize which honours journalists whose work identifies important social and economic issues in Canada.

1 At time of writing, the Government of Canada has suggested temporary foreign workers should receive medical coverage equivalent to residents of Canada. See item #8 in “Frequently asked questions: Changes to the Temporary Foreign Worker program regarding COVID-19,” <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/services/foreign-workers/employer-compliance/covid-faq.html>

2 Sara Mojtehdzadeh, “Migrant farm workers from Jamaica are being forced to sign COVID-19 waivers,” *Toronto Star*, April 13, 2020, <https://www.thestar.com/business/2020/04/13/migrant-farm-workers-fear-exposure-to-covid-19.html>

3 Nick Eagland, “COVID-19: Kelowna nursery outbreak likely won't be last for migrant workers, advocates warn,” *Vancouver Sun*, April 2, 2020, <https://vancouversun.com/news/local-news/covid-19-kelowna-nursery-outbreak-likely-wont-be-last-for-migrant-workers-advocates-warn/>

4 Syed Hussan, Email conversation with author, April 21, 2020.

Emily Cadotte has worked as an arts administrator at *C Magazine*, Blackwood Gallery, and the Thames Art Gallery. She is a master's candidate at OCAD University and completed her BFA at Concordia University. Emily's current research investigates the internal bureaucracies of art institutions and their impact on cultural production within the Canadian context. She has presented at conferences at OCAD University, and published reviews in *Canadian Art*.

New Heuristics

Jesse LeCavalier

In 2018, the Maersk Venta was the first container ship to navigate the Northern Sea Route. Receding ice driven by global warming allowed the vessel to make the journey in almost half the time it would otherwise take. Supply chain managers and shipping conglomerates rejoiced.

In 2020, supply chain managers and shipping conglomerates braced themselves for the consequences of a global demand shock as images of empty shelves triggered panicked hoarding. The general public, suddenly and jarringly, was confronted with the realities of the actual existing supply chain and the brittle workings of the logistics industry. Significantly, as has been said in other parts of this publication and elsewhere, precarious forms of logistical labor are at last getting more recognition—both as heroic forms of essential service and as an increasingly visible and powerful bloc. Such coverage has also drawn attention to the physical, spatial, and environmental aspects of logistics—how and where logistics takes place. The logistics industry has a general allergy to the modern city of congestion, adjacency, and collectivity, and instead privileges control, predictability, measurement, and division. Corporate logistics produces an over-specified version of the world that dreams of isolated consumers and leaves as little room for chance as possible. In other words, logistics has been priming large portions of the population for quarantine conditions for years.

The exposure of the logistics industry during the current global pandemic triggers an urgent reckoning with governmentality and the spatial dimensions that underpin it. Approaches to security, territory, and population—concepts central to logistics—demand to be reconsidered in light of the current failures of the nation as political and geographic concept. Mainstream media coverage of government response to logistics-industry pressures tends to frame the issue as a matter of economic recovery (“when can we reopen?”) versus public health (“how long can we stay closed?”). Only rarely are the underpinning assumptions of this binary questioned. When public health and economic well-being are seen as mutually exclusive, one might be prompted to question the conditions that gave rise to and perpetuate such a situation. The logistics industry, one hand, has been waiting for this moment. Amazon's stock value has increased almost thirty percent, partly as a reflection of the company's infrastructural disposition and its ability to operate under social-distancing regulations. Any number of predatory ventures of the gig economy are also thriving in this context but, like Amazon, they succeed at the expense of economic diversity and with a

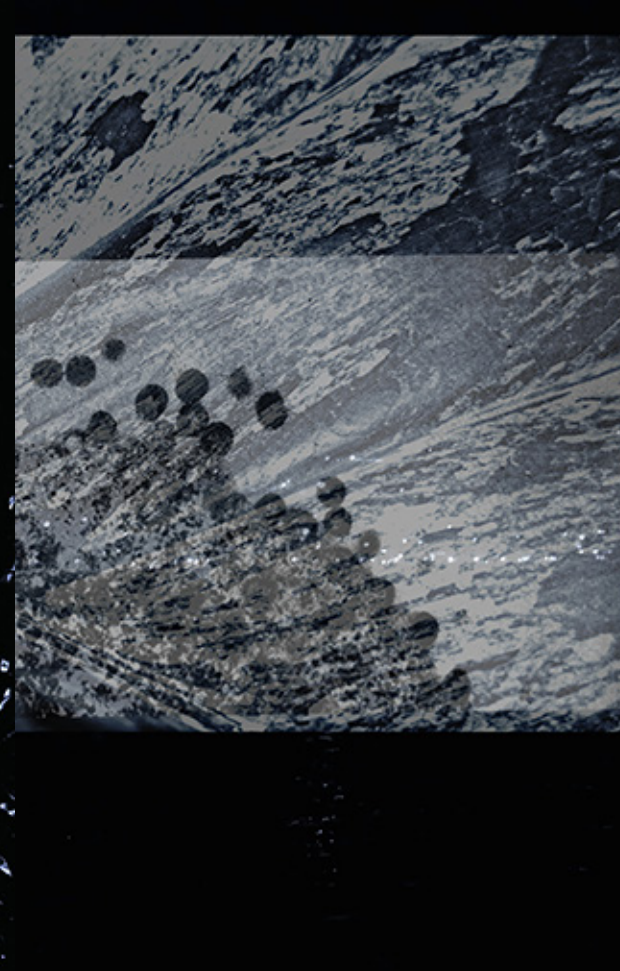
monocultural horizon as the outcome. Amazon relies on publicly funded infrastructure as a way of externalizing many of its expenses, and yet it is benefiting tremendously from governmental guidelines that restrict the public from using that same infrastructure.

How can we find ways to hold Amazon and related companies accountable in situations like these? Advocating for necessary protection and support of their workers is a crucial starting point, and I think it can extend into larger measures that consider the conditions that allowed Amazon to exist in the first place. In other words, the logistics industry in its current situation will not rescue us, because it is a direct outcome of the same world-system as COVID-19. Furthermore, averting the crisis of a global pandemic does little to address the crisis of climate change—one that the logistics industry is actively accelerating. One of our tasks ought to be a search for heuristic tools that help us develop models of territoriality, affiliation, and determination outside of the epistemological conditions responsible for our current crises.

Jesse LeCavalier teaches at the University of Toronto. He volunteered this text in solidarity with *TILT/ING* contributors and the Blackwood.



Gian Cruz, *(séro)TROPICAL(e)_n°4*, 2018. Inkjet print on cotton paper. COURTESY THE ARTIST.



Gian Cruz, *(séro)TROPICAL(e)_n°9*, 2018. Inkjet print on cotton paper. COURTESY THE ARTIST.

(séro)TROPICAL(e)

Gian Cruz

Gian Cruz's *(séro)TROPICAL(e)* series negotiates the tropics as a potent site of resistance: against colonial exploitation of land and bodies, and the naturalization of cissexism and heterosexuality. Cruz's images, imagined as atypical and performative self-portraits of the artist in relation to surpassing AIDS-related health complications in early 2015, picture the intersections of the bodily, the viral, and the ecological. In so doing, they render HIV/AIDS narratives visible in the context of contemporary Southeast Asian art (specifically in the Philippines), while contending with the emergence of pandemics as colonial phenomena driven by natural resource extraction and the erasure of Indigenous traditions. Cruz's work evokes the reverberating and persistent ecologies of infectious disease in the Philippines throughout the Spanish colonial era, where increased maritime trade, destruction and disruption of vital ecosystems via colonial agricultural policies, and military intervention in food systems rendered Filipinx populations vulnerable

to waves of disease. At once, colonization uprooted pre-colonial social systems—where societies were governed by *babaylans* or shamans that could be male, female, gay, or trans—overwriting traditional understandings of gender and sexuality with Western ones. In the context of both contemporary and historical pandemics and rising anti-Asian racism, Cruz reflects on the viral disease's lack of inherent meaning or intention. Rather, a virus's human contexts and their conditions of social inclusion and exclusion ascribe meaning to it and advance its dangerous potential.

How might the tropics then emerge not only in resistance to colonial sexual ideologies, but also as alternatives to Occidental terminologies and lexicons of queerness? *(séro)TROPICAL(e)* offers decolonial queer ecologies¹ as a way to both carve out regionally specific queer imaginaries, and to face the non-linear trauma of the HIV/AIDS and COVID-19 pandemics. As artist and writer Theodore Kerr articu-

lates, "By comparing COVID-19 to AIDS, people are finding a way to work out their emerging fears regarding the present health scare as well as to deal with ongoing HIV-related trauma."² While many comparisons between COVID-19 and the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s are being made today, these narratives often ignore the persistence of the AIDS crisis beyond a Euro-American context—including its emergence as a pandemic in the Philippines. Cruz asks: How might we confront unresolved traumas from ever-multiplying pandemics that farcically alter the quotidian? *(séro)TROPICAL(e)* begins to find an answer by attending to the peripheries of queer identity and queer struggle. In doing so, Cruz visualizes tropicity as an elsewhere—not a romantic escape or a search for a universalizing redefinition of queerness, but a site for situated knowledges about fluid and non-binary perceptions of gender. More than this, *(séro)TROPICAL(e)* imagines a site for future elsewheres beyond Capitalocene ideologies.

1 Following the work of Colombian transgender biologist Brigitte L. G. Baptiste.

2 Theodore Kerr, "How to Live With a Virus: The COVID-19 pandemic becomes a part of our ongoing understanding of HIV," *POZ*, March 23, 2020, <https://www.poz.com/article/live-virus>.

Gian Cruz, born in Manila, the Philippines, is an emerging artist whose artistic practice is heavily rooted in photography and integrates his institutional work and background in art theory and criticism. Cruz's work is central to the volatility of the image in contemporary culture and the multiple discourses that come along with it. He often extends his photographic work toward a more complex, multidisciplinary orientation integrating performance, translation, history, literature, ecology, cinema, HIV/AIDS activism, and several other fields and contexts that engage with his current preoccupations as an artist.



Gian Cruz,
(séro)TROPICAL(e)_n°5, 2018.
Inkjet print on cotton paper.
COURTESY THE ARTIST.