

Mary Walling Blackburn
Swim to Us

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Hawaii, 1887–1893: A phantom cell materializes from across the open water. The thirteen-member Committee of Safety, comprised of European and US sugar planters, financiers, and the descendents of missionaries, forms a cabal to overthrow indigenous Hawaiian rule. Could the volcanoes have erupted and selectively burned through their ambitions?

San Diego, 1969–1972: Another phantom cell of many phantom cells. This one is situated on another edge of the ocean, 82 years later. The Secret Army Organization, one of many FBI-funded, right-wing paramilitary groups that specifically targets communists, operates in San Diego. They aim and shoot from the curb. The bullet, as intended, goes through the window of Peter's home. He is a Professor of Economics. Inside, a journalist is visiting Peter. Both are Communist-Americans; but only she is shot in the arm. Nearby, salt water laps at the edge of a rail line, one on which government munitions are transported to the port. From the port, the munitions are bound for *Kháng chiến chống Mỹ*,³ the Vietnam War. Might the Rose Canyon Fault Line shiver and San Diego's Mount Soledad slide over the railroad tracks?

Image goes here:

[A graphic of the ocean. It is one that charts global currents, and the commerce they hold – in this case, sneakers. This image communicates the kind of data that includes irradiated floaters floating backwards, body parts dissolving, buoyant waste.]

A graphic designer maps the location of running shoes washed ashore; each site holds a severed but socked human foot. The printed map displays brand logos: a New Balance. Amongst seaweed and seal and whale bones, behold: Nike; Adidas; Reebok; each holds air in its structures and essentially operates as a flotation device. From 2007–2017, authorities count thirteen human feet. By 2020, twenty.⁴ The shoes are memento mori *and* boat. And the logos also float ideologies: Nike being a goddess that celebrates victory in war; Adidas being the portmanteau of a Nazi Cobbler; Reebok being antelope in Afrikaans, which was initially the language of Dutch colonizers of South Africa. A white wave of supremacy ... just visible in the names.

An oceanographer maps the locations of the left-footed running shoes as yet another data set. This set gives not so much a geography of

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consumption and its kill, as it does a firmer sense of a singular ocean current's status – one that is being altered by the collapse of earth's climate. The coastline of British Colombia is served by the Parent Tide, as well as the Oyashio current and its large marine ecosystem (LME). An admixture of cold, saline bottom water delivered by feeder currents nourishes phytoplankton and microzooplankton. This drifting stuff sustains the entire marine food cycle.⁵ Sans left foot.

What you are now reading is published in Autumn and the parent tide quickens, as it always does this time of year. It speedily flows past volcanic forested islands, flows across and around decaying Russian nuclear submarines and depleted fisheries. In the water, the shoes that follow the curve of our human feet is the curve that sorts the left shoe from the right; coves of right footed sneakers are nestled elsewhere.⁶

An engineer is curious about how newer shoe materials translate to large-scale boat building. But the thing itself, composed of a sneaker and its bone, knows *it* has floated away from both the work and the worker, the factory and the market. All parties unconsciously distance themselves from the horror. They consciously breathe in while also forgetting that half of the oxygen in the atmosphere is generated by plankton. But the hiatus – so brief! All feet are state evidence now.

After-image: Yesterday and tomorrow, a beach stroller strolling with his furry bitch recalls the old headline and sneaker graphic. The beach stroller reads the news of the government defunding – or is it refunding? – “Anarchist Cities.” Is removing the mental image from his internal moodboard like washing human shit off the sole of the shoe ... or not? Other walkers feel the sog and heft of bodies caught in the cogs, and remove their own trainers and wade way deep.⁷ Their avant-garde, wealthy, white, elite, Virginia Woolf-style despair (the half-privilege⁸ of drowning oneself in the River Ouse after many days at war with oneself – within a country many years at war) feels out of sync these days – to choose to die without a purpose.

Pre-step, Pre-hensile, Pre-sneaker: Each day, remind the infant not to forget that they staggered onto the veldt from the canopy. Neonate toes will instinctively curl around a finger as if it were a tree limb. Coax the baby to retain that reflex. Grown and shoeless, they might be saved in the pursuit – if they can still cling.

Step Aerobics: After a summer of tear gas, the police have shifted their tactics. They run the protesters, like bulls, through the streets for hours. If they reach them, they bash them with billy clubs.

Six years ago, when my baby was small and sleeping, I walked through a gallery and looked at careful pencil drawings of billyclubs: long, hard, and smooth. In the spring, a friend's message, sent from outside the US, interrupts my remembrance: “ART IS DEAD! I am selling moonshine and muffins to survive. People on the street aren't begging for \$; they are begging for rice.” After reading her message, and while looking at images of the protest, I fear the image and the actuality of a billyclub sticking straight out of an open skull, planted there.

If I see this as it happens, will I, like Tom of Finland, alchemize my fear by drawing an anonymous BORTAC (Border Patrol Tactical Unit) in riot gear with a gigantic erection? Will I cook rice substitute on a bonfire of billyclubs? I understand that our tactics must meet and surpass their tactics. Possible? I hum. I fiddle with the kindling.

Tips:

Prep the psyche for horror.

Inoculate self with a microdose of political trauma each and every day.

Locate the gorgon joke in that which terrorizes.⁹

Do this, in order to protect yourself later: from freezing in the shadow of a drone one moonlit night; tripping in panic as the piggies attempt lockdown; weeping tears without teargas.

More Tips:

Under a Helicopter Sky, everyone is heading away from the anonymous militarized beings outfitted with visors and long sticks. All are fleeing.

Try to refer to the fleeing as a work-out to delay the shock of having survived, the shock of the realization of what lengths the state will go to to quash rebellions.

Research BORTAC's training regime:

The grueling BSTC, which may last over a month, begins with physical testing involving push-ups, sit-ups, pull-ups, a 1.5

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mile run and a pistol qualification. Candidates who pass the initial testing must then complete a timed, six- mile ruck march with a weighted pack. Additional testing is performed for swimming, treading water, and drown-proofing.

After completing the entire testing phase, candidates undergo weeks of intense training in small unit tactics, operational planning, advanced weapon skills, defensive tactics, and airmobile operations. Before graduating and putting the BORTAC wings on their uniforms, candidates must demonstrate the ability to function in a team environment under stress and sleep deprivation conditions.¹⁰

Another Tip:

Alternate running shoes to avoid injury.

For example, wear Women's Fate 9, by Newton, on Thursday. Allbirds¹¹ on Friday ... and so on.

Luxury products burrow into this text – products with high marks on their carbon footprints but abysmal marks on their labor conduct. A Saloman Predict Soc in Lunar Rock floats out to sea. A handmade shoe washes in.

The handmade one is central in the obscured history of weaponized footwear in English class warfare. Cobblers crafting, printing, and distributing political verse asserted allegiance outside of a voting system (and today, in either a Cumbria, UK or Lawrence, USA New Balance manufacturing facility, someone please be versifying by way of Signal). Who knew that we once had had the capability of shoeing our own feet before we stampeded? Clap-clap.

In industrializing Europe, there were factory workers who lobbed wooden clogs in protest. This October, what could be initiated by a boot hurled in the American strawberry¹² processing plant? Cough cough (goes the worker). Bang-Clatter (goes the boot). I pick strawberry because a strawberry cannot be lobbed like the stinking boot – as might a turnip or potato. I pick strawberry because it is small and sweet. It contrasts nicely with company charges against dissenting workers, which are always amplified and foul, claiming that the worker has weaponized the berry and harmed the nation and some CEO. And then, what if a desperate one,

sometimes called a scab, replaces the sick or dead worker at the factory? Instead of sorting out our moral obligations to all workers, should we instead imagine the scented Kenner Original Strawberry Shortcake doll as scab? Her plastic hair stinks like artificial fruit ... or maybe it's a soil fumigant, like Chloropicrin, that dusts the strawberry fields.^{13 14}

A shoeless and swollen foot begs protection: protection from the punishing wheel, hoof, axe, cargo, boiling water, or frozen field. But there is an alternative: a sockless tootsie that does not only beg for mercy. This tootsie demands to be healed from every exposure – viral, toxic, and environmental; this tootsie stops her shit labor altogether and says: Cure this.¹⁵

Anyone! Press deeply the tootsie on the ball of the foot between the big toe and the little toe, where the lung meridian expresses itself. Find the tender spot. This is one attempt to temporarily relieve chest pain.

Step One: White, Stop Being Someone

In the '90s strata, I was the nanny – the nanny for the children of the head archeologist at an archeological field school. That year there was a human skeleton in the midden, located on the outskirts of the village ... its infant skull drifted apart and all other delicate bones scattered, over and through time. In my mind, something like an animation illustrating immensity unfurled ... baby bones floating through space, settling in different eddies of matter. Was it oceanlike? Yes. At that same site, I watched an enormous sunburnt man dislodge the tiniest seashell bead from a heap of dust, hundreds of miles from the sea.

Now, in strata 2020, after the cytokine squall – both national and personal – parts of my brain seem to have floated away from one another ... and I am suspended in an immensity that is something distinctly different from “being Someone.” Could this be a backdoor through and out of capitalism? For all whites to cease being *Someone*? I paw at the ground. The exit should be a trapdoor. A chute with no return.

Someone trying it out ... *Squatting in Nothing.*

If a white, elite Reader-Scroller imagines this act of ceasing to be *white-Someone* [that is actively deaccessioning their name with (white) capital]: What does that imagining look like? If this imagining solely results in their own collective intestinal shifts (that bodily release after removing the shit of narcissism), then that reader is imagining wrong. If the White Scroller imagines that this process involves one losing oneself in a seemingly productive fashion, by way of crossfit cults and boutique reefer ... then the White Scroller is stoned and will be stoned.¹⁶

Dear White Elite Scroller: also, if you, when imagining the cessation of you being Someone, are conjuring the absolutes of fascism (the cell and the grave), make another mental U-turn.

Trick or Tip?

If one of our dead fighters has no identity, traceable or visible, then when they are felled there is no face to photoshop stitch to far right propaganda.

Let me provide a fresh example of the obverse: A photo of Michael Reinhoehl's head was attached to an anonymous nude male shortly after his death. The GIF winces and throbs as this Frankenstein is spanked by another nude male. Within the image, maybe there is a stone hearth and a flickering fire; this must be a Far-Right skin flick. I have witnessed a shift: Reinhoehl mutating from free agent to property to commodity to .gif ... gift to the Right. Now, behind the supine left ... is that the head of the dead aggressor, Jay Bishop? Should I jack off or weep? I distance myself, like the beachcomber stumbling upon an ocean-delivered left foot. Will there be a flood of foots and heads? If the future is both strewn with corpses and still wired to the internet, it is important to figure out how to see around this digital version of the smuggler's head on the pike.

For your own emotional integrity, float past any personal identification with bodies, literally or digitally dismembered, by the Right: in *The Someones*, the Alt-Right has virtually and joyfully repurposed the surface of anti-fascists to intimidate those who resist white supremacy.

There is no branding cosmos we can stitch to the

politics of ceasing to be Someone. Consider this a productive image failure. Vaster unproductive imaging failures keep us tethered to our devouring present; see, corny illustration of galaxies catenating around black holes.¹⁷ 'Artists' impressions' derail any sense of an operative immensity outside of monetary value – a realization which is desperately needed. So, instead, in the vacuum of the cavum, auscultate the black hole's shadow. Hear light bend in the center ... the radio loud and superluminous body of an entity with no surface, OMFG ... that SMBH.

Can Big Data be half-shucked off by Deep Listening? I recall a now vanished curator pontificating in a bar in Brooklyn (circa 2018) that sound art was seemingly the only relevant art form at this point. Later, in the endless spring of 2020, half-dead with Covid, in a sleepless delirium, the rain finally came down and I followed the sound into sleep.

Florida Yahoo News reports a man cloaked as the Grim Reaper stalking its sandy beaches. I know it is a human in that costume, a no one impersonating Someone who, uh, makes us no one – or rather, alerts us to impending nothing. But for the first time in my life, in March, the Grim Reaper possesses a kind of pop – could even be described as approachable! GR is no longer a cartoonish animation, but a three-dimensional carapace that allows death to feel less abstract. The Grim Reaper's fresh presence makes it seem as if it is clear that I really am finally dying. I silently laugh with the musty, morgued one, then, alternately, I take a moment to admire how fabric can flow over stealth and speed – flow over an ending.

Against the grain of American life, I didn't use the rope of the self to climb out of death. My heart was shorting out; the brain was spacious. Without a self, or out of my self, I jumped out of death. Now, less of a self seems left to dip into the Data Lake¹⁸ that surrounds something I did call me. This Data Lake is not unlike a singular, contiguous sea wrapping around the medieval world. Those ancient maps feel like inauthentic steampunk jokes, but still, we are encircled by our data wastestream.

Glug glug ... A youtube video of an 8-millimeter home movie of Adrienne Kennedy, then a young playwright, bundled up and seated on a lounge chair on the deck of The RMS Queen Mary. It is 1960. Her hair is bound in a white scarf and she wears a long, pale trench coat. She holds three unopened books on her lap. The wind whips, riffing through them and her clothing. She walks the deck as her child plays shuffleboard. Her

partner is shooting and his camera finds the surface of the water, cresting waves. She is bound east for a newly liberated Ghana. She will write An American Negro in the Funnyhouse while abroad ...

I smell brine. The ocean is on the move. Stacks of art catalogs in the studio apartment are spotted with mold. We keep seeing the ocean throughout the day, glimpsed between buildings when we hit the streets; the cobblestones are purple.

Glub glub ... Elska Cry Dead Traa Gaa Obadeea scrolling through an online Shetlandic dictionary, its language made in the remains of an ancient and broken sea kingdom, words describing bitter working dangers on their cold cliff-bound islands, sonic combinations that keep the guffaw and the gotchya intact. Yitter Yallicrack Uppadogga Tattie-Craa: the last is a children's toy – a potato with seagull feathers stuck here and there blub blub blub an island of pedophiles who market their honey on a crude internet "shop" ... uh uh uh ... a white American missionary, swimming off the coast of Borikén, is devoured by a shark; o sea dog, you did the dirty work of removing the colonizer and her social practice from our midsts.¹⁹

Offline, I see a white shepherd, with many names and owned by no one, paddling through the swells. He is not eaten and he hauls himself ashore.

... Ug ug ug ... winnowing through the photos of Mississippi Instagrammers, attempting to locate the bored Americans shooting dolphins for sport ... gug gug ... we log on to Hulu and watch Mati Diop's Atlantique (2019). I zone into the pink darkening of the shore, where eros and illness operate in the wake of necropolitics. The plot hinges on dead workers seeking out their compensation after drowning in a storm that interrupts their migration north. I see vengeance meted out only when the dead repurpose living bodies; unpinned identities, dead and alive, float outside of state punishment. No spirits plasticuffed, ooo oooo ... where is the innocent rich man? Oooo oooooo oooo oo.

Night falls: Hundreds of ruby throated hummingbirds are flying nonstop, traversing the Gulf of Mexico. I like to imagine Forrest Bess, seated, maimed (bleeding or healing) on a quay, listening to the thrum; a painting, beside the painter's body, is drying. Since then, fossil-fueled hurricanes have destroyed the place where a queer one practiced a radical bloodlet.

Night fell: Beside an erupting volcano, a young girl floated in a small boat several miles out to sea, unconscious.²⁰

At the base of the mountain, labor camp sugarcane was cut and covered by a ground glass tuff. When she awoke, the girl and the rescuers stitched together their present; it included 30,000 dead, and evacuees delivered to Dominica. But just before that, the girl had taken refuge in a boat her brother kept tethered in a sea cave. Further explosion propelled the craft from the cavern. Later, in the autumn of this same year, the psychoanalytic movement begins with a freshly tenured Sigmund Freud holding weekly salons in his Viennese home: *Psychologische Mittwochs-Gesellschaft*. Black coffee and cake and cigars – Caribbean colonial spoils – fuel the Wednesday discourse on pathology, power, the female body, and the unconscious. They puff; they feel good and they feel nausea. The Wednesday Psychological Society represses the origins of their sustenance, and they do it anxiously, hysterically. If they play Tarot, Someone will draw a card festooned with crude drawing of a Girl and Volcano.

I skim general human-interest internet posts about the 1902 eruption of Montagne Pelee. They tend to focus on Ludger Sylbarus, AKA Louise-Auguste Cypris. He is found damaged but alive in an underground jail cell. This contemporary fascination with Cypris is sometimes to the exclusion of Havrila de Fila, the girl who survives by her own right, or another adult male survivor who later died of wounds. There are people who still cling to a narrative that features a human saved by imprisonment. Later, Cypris/Sylbarus tours with Barnum and Bailey; the circus advert reads: "the only living object that survived the Silent City of Death." De Fila disappears from the historic record. She finds herself returning to no one; unlike Cypris, she is not subject to becoming the White's Black Someone. In other words, she eludes the fate of becoming a second *Living Object*, scrutinized by an audience – whether circus or academic.

Twenty years later, Frantz Fanon is born on this same island. As a toddler, F. feels the stratovolcano erupt (1929). In this event, catastrophe is evaded. It simply feeds the soil. Later, that fertile soil is helplessly contaminated: banana pesticides, American tourists, therapists, volcanologists scholars on vacation. Stick to the beachy edges? In vain, I search Fanon's works for specific mention of the girl and the volcano (Havivra Da Ifile, Mount Pelee, French-occupied Martinique), for the double

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catastrophe of the island's forced labor camps (aka plantations) and volcanic eruption as incorporated into the pathopsychology of colonization. Away, does Fanon's mind drift to a childhood mountain communicating- not unlike Mount Tam talking to Anna Halprin after many murders on its flanks? The mountain murmurs subsonic: can a geological process provide a model for obliterating an oppressive structure?²¹

Fanon's position at the Blida-Joinville Psychiatric Clinic required that he treat the psyches of French torturers in between rounds of torture. The soldier-patients have lost their minds while plundering and torturing members of the Algerian resistance, chasing down the guerilla units of the FLN by helicopter, burning villagers until they speak, and so on ... So Fanon repeatedly descends into another kind of crater; noxious fumes spew from mental fissures and he is to fix that spume, to alchemize shell shock, and transform some of their sensations into sensations they can accept. He quits all that. The doctor turns in the opposite direction ... to collectively heal those who have been tortured by these same colonizers. And Dr. Fanon remains in volcanic terrain; 240 hot springs stud the country. Can survivors be coaxed into a restorative stillness by soaking in the water heated by magma?

Lately, I have been fantasizing that all the North American mountains we have perceived as benign will begin to communicate their dissent: hundreds of rock climbers, still attached to ropes, hurled from *Daxpitcheeqasáao*.²² Faces shear off Stone Mountain and *Thunǰkášila Šákpe*.²³ When I explain, at dinner, that I think geological formations possess a sort of animist intersubjectivity, my child interrogates me:

"You want Monadnock to blow?"
"Sure."

The mountain has been communicating telepathically: *Stone walls are track marks. Wolves are dead. Time to go.*

A fantasy flexes both ways – anti-imperial or specific: Pleasures and horrors can swivel out from the same juncture, unreal or lived. The story and its bodies are buoyant. Underwater, another being's mouth – kelp, selkie, storm kelpie, sapien – gently suckles at the tube between human legs. Reverse this state ... to genitals, simply gone (snapping turtle, sated), scubadiver-circumciser (tank on, knife out).

[Redacted Image and Caption]

Behold beheaded noggin with Airinum mask

(\$99).]

Slick noggins are spiked now, in a nostalgic reverse of the populace piked in the eighteenth century. That was done in order to maintain certain economic orders, and this is done to unmake that economic order. Our contemporary pikers, in earbuds, tap into a cellular memory of the Cornish tea smugglers skewered at the behest of the East India Company (EIC).²⁴ Our new multitude elides actors who play Marie Antionette with Marie Antionette.

Our mob elides elite citizens coiffed and clothed and housed like influencers – for actors – and actors for influencers ... Mobs of No Ones dispatch with *The Someones* who rule.

Yes, its heads again, decorating a gate rusted by salty seas.

Out of frame: breakers breaking on the shore.

A friend has shot some Super 8 film of the house of Filiberto Ojeda Rios. Cell photos are posted online with remarks: "We found the marks of bullets and blood we expected but also cocoa trees full of fruit, a beautiful sunset light and a special tranquility in which we imagine listening to his trumpet." To re-sound. To rewind the assassination. Where I live for now, white garden club ladies at the annual garden sale boast that the proffered tomato plant "is the descendent of those grown by Thomas Jefferson" – rather, by chattel slaves at Monticello. There is another possibility: a North American synthesis of agriculture and nationalism that operates otherwise, where the fruit is gathered from Filberto's yard; these seeds travel; another kind of nationalist pridefully cultivates Ojeda Rios cocoa trees in San Juan, Charlotte Amalie, and Miami.²⁵

The same morning the friend posts photos of Ojeda Rojas's house, I was reading up on right-wing paramilitary groups covertly funded by the US government. I hone in on one of many, on this one operating in PR: a phantom cell comprised of Cubans funded by the FBI.

"Is it the one that killed Ojeda Rios, the ones who watched him bleed to death?"

"It is the FBI."

The dovetail in research feels odd. Is Uncle Sam's severed phallus strung between my friend and myself? Maybe the connection is less communicable by the symbolic. Perhaps we both hope to publicly humiliate the neoliberal hold. To laugh and scold and refuse it any dignity, any erotic charge – any merit, any pleasure, any

future.

Are we fools to think that a fact in the form of a film, a text, and a drawing can be a tomato, boot, or brick hurled at the occupiers? The question is, always: What will it take to disoccupy²⁶ – and will it take my life, too?

Tip:

This Covid Autumn, it might be a provident thing to lose your astrological sign, your name, your place of birth. Appear useless and untraceable – like rounded sea bricks.

Sea brick, sea brick, what can you do ... your own self an orphan heft in your own hand?

Last night ... a friend fresh from protest. The friend studs the conversation with “What did you say?” A flash bang went off close to their head. Today, I crudely sign: *Colors; Egg; Dolphin*. It isn’t sufficient. This is a daymare: all my fighting friends emerging from the smoke with ruined eardrums. My ASL classes begin in several weeks and with rheumatic claws I will slash at the air in front of the screen so that I can begin to communicate with

~~Someones: all the ones who ceased building and protecting careers, who ceased with writing and illustrating the disaster~~

Instead: In the hands of ghosts, tear gas canisters became pucks. In the hands of ghosts, strangers’ wounds are cleaned out with certain flowers that coagulate the blood.

Conjure screen ghosts. Sign to the screen ghost that there is rest and medicine if a ghost needs it. The ghost signs back: You know that yarrow powder coagulates the blood but you did not know that red yarrow does not. You sign: Fuck! Did you pour it in a ghost’s wound and the wound just kept pouring?

In a letter, Finnish comic book artist and novelist Tove Jansson writes that she is going over to the ghost side. She also names it the border. She means she will dedicate herself to love and sex with women. At this point, lesbianism is illegal in Finland. She sneaks through the connected attics of the buildings in her block to get to her lover at the other end. Later, they design a one-room cabin on a skerry in the Gulf; a foundation

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is blasted into the rock. Seabirds scatter. A window is built into each wall, and each faces the sea. Ghosts, sucking and holding, must know who is approaching. When the ghosts felt vulnerable to winter and returned to the city, the soldiers training in the archipelago broke in. Again. Technically, no one is at war.

There is a decorated veteran in their same city – also ghost. Touko Vallo Laaksonen carefully draws the lawless soldiers, not vandalizing homes but opening pants and asses. Each signed Tom of Finland.

STEP TWO: RALLY THE SPAWN OF NON-REPRODUCTIVE SEX

The dried spores of the Wolf’s foot clubmoss explode when gathered in high densities.

On the cool, dark floor of the forest, my hand handles lacy, alive parts without caution; the plant is benign at this juncture. No death by flash. But just wait for the necromancy; it rolls out.

Early magicians in the North American understories were collecting the reproductive material of Bear’s Paw (*Diphasiastrum digitatum*) and Princess Pine (*Lycopodium clavatum*). They would set blazing fireballs across rural stages, circus tents, and rented town halls, claiming these flames were a visitation from the dead.

Pay them and ... behold a fireball that issues a burning great-patriarch!

I am the two-headed sperm that made haste to the ovum – monstrous and lucky!

Believe them and ...

Behold a second fireball! It is issued forth from the afterlife. Prior to my great great uncle Edward’s iteration as fireball, he materialized in the photograph – he seemed to be living in the photo, locking eyes with the viewer while he sat there, close to his relaxed big blonde man friend. But on the magician’s stage, my side-patriarch not only globes into fire but hisses, too. Edward says:

*If you subscribe to the mystic notion that every non-reproductive fuck still begats a spirit – potent and active in the air above us – then the atmosphere is thick with my babies:
furtive queer things with my continous black brow and wine-dark nipples and his cornsilk*

hair; these furious and poor demons
crumbling your coercive sentimentality, your
kitchen island, your photograph of the
private beach. Spirit babies born of blowjob
pregnancies, like errant cupids, crash your
plague-born microschools.

Tots from Sodom, like motorized Chuckies,
dismantle the white yacht engines of your
floating commune ... that one for
heteronormative half-victims of capitalism
who have fashioned their getaway. My
spawn, my sprites will redraw your
supplicating drawings of capitalist
catastrophe into a peachy surface ... they'll
carve into your cork tree, your earpod, your
collectors' embedded (pinkish) floating
device ... their blade stuck in your gallerist's
pate.

The ones who are fighting in Covid Spring
and Covid Summer experience the nightly battles
as unreal. An old tool for unseating the real is
linked to Wolf's foot clubmoss, AKA Princess
pine.

At some point, early American photographers
headed to the local chemist to purchase *yellow
baby powder*. Boom and flash – a memento mori,
ma'am (an illuminated soldier corpse | babe in
pine coffin). Later, lycopodium powder was
transformed into fingerprint powder (to nab and
cage) ... Today the spore, as a waterproofing
agent, dusts the surface of medical gloves and
condoms (a protected fist buried in the body,
tender or carceral).

*We burn you. We reproduce you. We track you. We
fuck you.*

Thus spoke the plant or the state? I hear this in
the pre-echo of their groove.

This country's governing bodies use of the
botanical is buried in the deathly objects severed
from their origin.

Tear gas also begins as a plant to powder.

Its origin story is inseparable from riot control.
Roll back to 1918. Whose gas? Who's gassed? The
same companies invent the gases along with the
gas masks, poison, and antidote – package deal,
then as now.

Some herbalists will speak of the plant as an
ally: Whose ally? Imagine a "pig" lisping
vegetative allegiance to *capsicum* – while gloved,

gassing, photographing, targeting the herbal
medics on the street. If the cop acknowledges
the plant *as central* to their weapon, it is still
highly unlikely that this will become the
transformation some seek. Just like the real pig
gets lit on fermented apples, the real cop can
toke or bake – and still love the slop of mud or
blood.

Note: In the revolting cities, white-owned
dispensaries line the former skidrows. I can't
locate the sites of the SROs with their maze of
weeviled rooms, peopled by runaways and ex-
cons and madams; my mother, my aunt, my
grandfather walked them in the '60s and '70s.
But last year, I saw legal herbs nestled between
crystals in lit glass displays. All those years, with
scale and baggie, were stoners longing for a
Shopping Experience? Here, a shopboy indicates
several herbs that are grown without chemical
intervention. Here is the one he recommends:
Squat in the Melt.

For sixty days, the capsicum or cs gas – from
pepper plant to powder to aerosol to liquid – has
run down hair and skin, leaf blower and hockey
stick, pavement and sewer ... to river, then
ocean? Someone memes: What if the tear gas
that soaks my clothes, is laundered out, draining
into the wastewater system? I follow up as if I am
the poster's Dear Abby: "The daughter of a
retired wastewater management plant states
that it will break down, but her dad is partial to
Round-Up." I remember the sunlight in this same
man's pear trees, sprayed.

Last year, it seemed that the earth was well
enough if we squinted: a blazing fireball
radiating above us. This deathly summer, the
reports roll in, dear reader, and the ecologists
caution that the tear gas has entered the
watershed. But it doesn't just wash away; it also
drifts.

It drifts into the nearby houses, wending through
cracks.

Necromancer: conjure the queer spirit babies
with leaf blowers?!

Tear gas reassembles itself, re-aerosolizing if the
floors and furniture are not properly
decontaminated. Rag it right, before your period
pours, protester. Some menstrual cycles will be
disrupted.

*Like a news flash but anchored to the past: at the
terminus of the Bonus March of 1932, where
hungry and jobless WWI veterans and their
families protested the withholding of a promised*

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monetary compensation for their service, General MacArthur ordered cavalry and infantry men to enter a DC encampment and disperse them with bayonets and adamite. Adamite is another lachrymer – you get tears, yes, but also vomit. During the attack, one woman protester miscarries. **REPRODUCTIVE PROTESTERS WILL NOT BEGAT PROTESTORS: the recipe for this outcome includes gas and blood.**

But how shall protestors persist from generation to generation? Parthogenesis?

Years after another suppression and the following decontamination – Someone – cigar or e-cigarette dangling from craw – will throw a dirty rag in the corner. Baby Anarchists will rustle in the dried folds their iridescent afterbirth jammed in the seams of the empire.

This feels like the ending. But the damage has not ceased.

How does improvement or rescue function in a hyper-capitalist zone ... and what happens when a buoy is cast into a white human-thing that has no interiority?

The Uprisings surge. Fires burn and safes melt. And zines are printed. And the government archivist has collected them all, accessioned with a face mask emblazoned with the Trinacria: three bent human legs in a rotational spiral around a Gorgoneian head with wheat chaffs for ears and golden snakes for hair. I hear Medusa's face isn't so much a face, as a trick vulva – hear it curse ... like a sailor. I hear that Hélène Cixous writes: "*You only have to look at the Medusa straight on to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing.*"²⁷

We float, be it through space or in spit. We float in the antumbra, the lighter part of the shadow cast by the occluding object. The object? In astronomy, the moon. In psychology? Braid the half-light of the half-life of trauma into the shadow of our Zombie reach. In other words, us half-dead ones rotate past our own deadness into a star spangled murk.²⁸

(The luminescent muck of the Data Swamp: Is it fetid or is it ferment? It's where you teach your child the dead-man's float.)

Stepping stone

The coyote algorithm includes skirting the industrialized shoreline. This is because *Canis latrans* have a calculus – geographical and

nocturnal – as to how to eat, fuck, and den without being murdered. Take a cue from the animals; at dusk, release your adolescent without record out onto your block. Frame it as play: "This is a video game, kid. You got to determine the best route through our port city *but one that is* without detection. If you are sighted by another human being it is Game Over." "Who is my avatar?" asks Kid Gamer who knows they must operate in absolute anonymity.

Hand the kid a fresh sketch of Tom of Moominland: a mutant queer figurine rising out of our raw fascism and escalating slaughter of transpeople. Moomin's snout and Tom's phallus have shifted shape in response to climate fluctuation.

"Why is Tom of Moominland wearing a tankini?" "It is an aquatic mission. The goal is to reach the shore, bandage the dolphin, ride to the tankard filled with veggie oil, and eat and rest to begin the fight again; also, stop them from ... mining the moon."²⁹

If the moon goes, there goes menses and tides.

There goes *adulescens cryptid*, loping and low, towards the shore.

x

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Mary Walling Blackburn was born in Orange, California. Walling Blackburn's work engages a wide spectrum of materials that probe and intensify the historic, ecological, and class-born brutalities of North American life. Recent publications include *Quaestiones Perversas* (Pioneer Works, Brooklyn, 2017) co-written with Beatriz E. Balanta; "Gina and the Stars" published by Tamawuj, an off-site publishing platform for the Sharjah Biennial 13, and "Slowness," a performance text in the sound-based web publication *Ear | Wave | Event*. Walling Blackburn is the founder of the Anhoek School, a pedagogical experiment, and WMYN, a pirate feminist radio station, whose writing has been featured in publications including *Afterall*, *BOMB*, *Cabinet*, *e-flux journal*, *Grey Room*, *Grafter's Quarterly*, *Pastelegram*, and *Women and Performance*. Group exhibitions and events include Beta-Local, San Juan, Puerto Rico; New Museum, NY; Art in General, NY; Sculpture Center, NY; Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY and Centre Pompidou, Paris and Tate Modern, London.

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1

A certain gentleness that Tender Ones require takes time; it requires a circuitry, a circling around trauma. But here, images will surge forward because the earth's hourglass has shattered. It was only belatedly that we committed to a strategy akin to a gentle fisting – in other words, engaging in a process that requires patience and slowness, and a desire to reimagine the limit. Me and you both, Baby – we hope we have not exceeded the possibilities of a gradual and peaceful return to sinuous anarchisms, local and mutual. Moreover, this text will unfurl without trigger warnings, because the United States of America is always giving head to its own gun barrel; its pistol suck includes old phantom cells and official armed forces, militarized police, right-wing militias, campus public safety officers, private security guards, self-deputized wing nuts, and even, legislatively speaking, mass shooters. Obvi, the Capitalist State is so turned on by its own crisis that it doesn't taste the endings, the materials, their motion. So let the contaminating images fly forward ... as some of them might allow for unspeakable resistance.

2

Longing for a fictional compendium, *The Philosophy of Spit*, which would include "Let's Spit on Hegel" by Rivolta Feminile, and also a tract that references Tefnut, the Egyptian goddess of moisture, who was spat out like saliva by Ra. According to spells carved into the interior surfaces of Unis' pyramid, she is lion-headed and human-bodied, and pure waters drip from her vulva. Splosh.

3

While living briefly in Vietnam in the '90s, I quickly realized that the war initiated by the US (1954–1972) was referred to as the American War. *Kháng chiến chống Mỹ* translates to "Resistance War Against America," another designation.

4

See <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/dec/13/canada-human-foot-british-columbia>. For decades, my research included forensic remains in relation to femicide. These sneakers and their feet disrupt a repeated narrative of intimate dismemberment and insist on an analysis that imbrocates global states as animated by capitalism. *Sally sells single sneakers at the seashore*.

5

For more detail on the Parent Tide, see https://wedocs.unep.org/bits/tream/handle/20.500.11822/8814/GIWA_regional_assessment_31_Oyashio_current.pdf?amp%3BisAllowed=&sequence=3.

6

It is a trick to not be intoxicated by the material patterning and to remain focused on ascertaining the scope of global supply chains; their connection to necropolitics and the ways to cease their machinations. Phil A. Neel does a worthy job of that here: <https://libcom.org/library/swoosh-phil-neel-china-nike-production>.

7

On March 28, 1941, Woolf, loaded her coat pockets with rocks, not to be a floater, and walked into the River Ouse.

8

It was a privilege because this type of person killing themselves circulates in a realm where no one else, kith or kin, neighbor or conspirator, materially or spiritually depends on them to exist. The people they surround themselves with all live within equal economic security and political confidence.

9

The violent joke and/or laughing at violence is a tactic practiced by the miscreants in my family. Filthy, angry, heartbreaking humor is incubated in the home. It helps me, my aunts, nieces, cousins ... survive the bad jobs, incarceration, sickness, drug addiction, evictions, and so on ... of our family members. When my aunt kicks a knife from my cousin's hand, we laugh and marvel at my aunt's skill ... we smirk-cry when a cousin born in jail is named "Liberty" ... we guffaw when a neighbor plants cannabis in the sheriff's yard, in a state where it remains illegal.

10

See <https://www.cbp.gov/sites/default/files/documents/Border%20Patrol%20Tactical%20Unit.pdf>.

11

Allbirds receives high marks on its carbon footprint but not on its labor conduct. "There is no evidence it has a Code of Conduct. It sources its final stage of production from countries with extreme risk of labour abuse. There is no evidence it ensures payment of a living wage in its supply" https://directory.goodonyou.eco/brand/allbirds?_ga=2.209894805.1235551413.1601148752-1127630246.1601148752.

12

I also choose strawberries as they will still be late-harvested when this text is published. I choose strawberries because my grandmother and her siblings and my great grandparents and their siblings worked in Salinas and Visalia fields as migrant workers where strawberries are also cultivated. My family was harvesting cotton, not berries. My mother was born in Salinas. There are no stories of their dissent; no boot in the face of the landowner. No joke.

13
See this authoritative text on California strawberry industry workers: Miriam J. Wells, *Strawberry Fields: Politics, Class, and Work in California Agriculture* (Cornell University Press, 1996).

14
In the 1980s, one of the few plastic-molded action figure lines marketed towards young girls produced the Strawberry Shortcake Series by Kenner. The dolls contain a spectrum of gender and racial affronts. Yet is hard to resist an attempt at imagining an alternate universe where the membership of the United Farm Workers of America does not shrink in the 1980s; and in this moderately improved universe, instead of cartoon parades and housewarmings, Blueberry Muffin, Orange Blossom, Strawberry Shortcake, Apple Dumplin, Plum Puddin, Raspberry Tart, Almond Teacake and their animal familiars take on agricultural union grievances and crush villainous corporate henchmen ... like ... Purple Pie Man and Sour Grapes. Yes, Purple Pie Man communicates a kind of pansexual, mediterranean-by-way-of-Burn ing Man vibe in very tight pants. He has a moustache insert that is easily misplaced. Yes, Sour Grapes, a tall, black, blue-and-purple tressed, high Femme villain with a snake side kick is nothing short of an age-old sexist reprisal of Medusa operating on the interlaced seam of race and gender. How does an ideologically careless child play hard with the dolls who straddle the seam? I don't know. The surviving figurines are very susceptible to mold.

15
In early October 2020, in Salinas, California, stronger Covid measures were required, as workers were felled by Covid and smoke from the fires.

16
In a scattered, dissociative way, I recall a never-worn souvenir T-shirt in the giveaway bin ... It read: **I GOT STONED IN GAZA**. It included a cartoon drawing of a wall – the wall of apartheid. The gifted T-shirt operates within a contagion heuristic. It's implicit violence contaminates even an ocean apart from what the Israeli government refers to as a security barrier. Who wears this?

17
A couple links to artist depictions of black holes as disseminated by NASA: <https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/spa-ceimages/details.php?id= pia22085> and <https://www.jpl.nasa.gov/spa-ceimages/details.php?id= pia16695>. Moreover, a general overview of black hole illustration over time: <https://www.discovermagazine.com/the-sciences/the-decade-s-long-struggle-to-draw-a-realistic-black-hole#.XMCPPr-tKIL8>.

18
Define data lake. Online? You are in it; your wake, your waste, your piss in the pool, collected and monetized.

19
Thanks to Ramón Miranda Beltrán here. In conversation at a studio visit at Beta-Local, I was speaking of Social Practice as missionary work and Beltrán was clear that one must go further in that qualification of Social Practice as part of Colonialism's unfinished violences. Later, online, I located a newspaper clipping reporting the shark attack and subsequent death of a US missionary in early twentieth century San Juan.

20
Roiling turbulent flows of gas, ash, and rock can reach a speed of 700 km per hour.

21
Fanon returned to Martinique shortly before accepting the appointment in Algeria. Reportedly, he no longer felt at ease there. Can a part of him be or not be the girl expelled from home by forces beyond her control?

22
In Kiowa, this butte or latholithic is named *Daxpitcheeasáao*. In Lakota, it is called *Mathó Thípila*. Kiowa, Lakota, Crow, and Cheyenne nations have requested that its name be restored and that rock climbers cease scaling a holy site. It is currently operated as a monument by the National Park services under the name Devil's Tower. Nearly 5,000 rock climbers ascend the site each year.

23
This is the name of the mountain in Lakota. It is also called Mount Rushmore.

24
The price of tea in England, managed by the EIC, also known as "The Company," exceeded the domestic budget of local worker households. These workers were just becoming incorporated into an expanded colonial economic structure that included the liquidation of land held in common. Smuggling operations that studded remote coastlines provided tea at a lower cost, allowing disadvantaged laborers access to a new energy drink that enhanced their ability to work in worsening conditions. "The Company" was not a purveyor of tea and spices alone. Its own imbrication in both the Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean chattel slave trades began in 1621, when EIC transported 22 enslaved people from India to Batavia. This was six years prior to what's generally recorded as "the first English slaving voyage across the Atlantic." After destroying indigenous systems of governance, the European company states engineered a

flow of labor and goods that resulted in enslaved peoples producing, for example, cloves, nutmeg and tea sold in the UK.

25
After reading the draft of this essay, S. writes that she actually did pocket and plant the cocoa. My fantasy was in fact a reality.

26
Utilizing this term as coined by Tosquelles.

27
Hélène Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa," in *Feminisms: An Anthology of Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. Diane Prince Herndl and Robyn R. Warhol (Rutgers University Press, 1997), 355.

28
Made spacious by dementia, Silvia Campos haltingly wrote *La Promesa*; it is a slender, purple novella. When the libraries were closed down in the beginning of the pandemic, it was next to my bed. There was no returning it. In *La Promesa*, the protagonist, crossing the Atlantic eastward by cruise ship, is accidentally hurled overboard. As she swims eastward, she attempts to remember everything. Is she wearing running shoes? Her brand is extinct. But ultimately, I don't remember the book ... only the feel of drowning in my lungs. I can't verify the plot or the details. The book is now back in the library, circulating. I want to check if the floater is apolitical. Is that a dealbreaker these days? Still, after all of this, I will see the vague lines of our erasing selves in her stroke.

29
I don't imagine you believe them when the various corporation-states (not so different from colonial era trading companies) announce that they would stop extraction of rare earths at 1% of total lunar mass.

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