

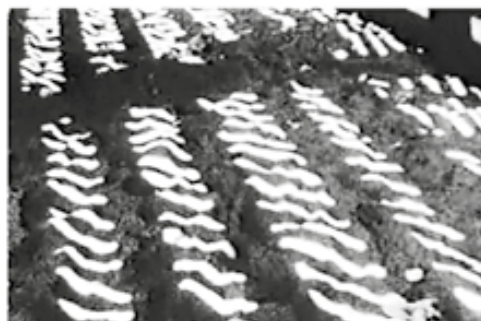
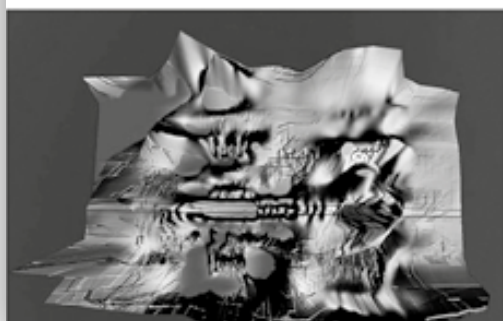
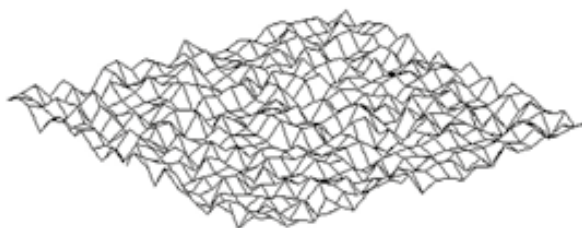
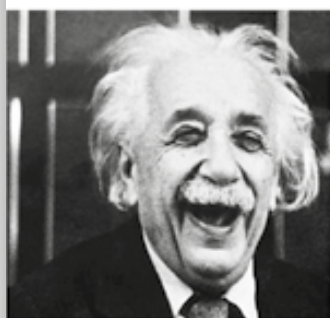
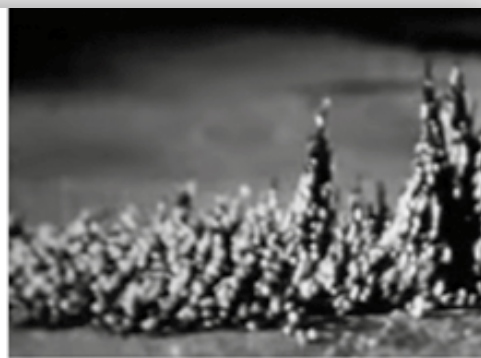
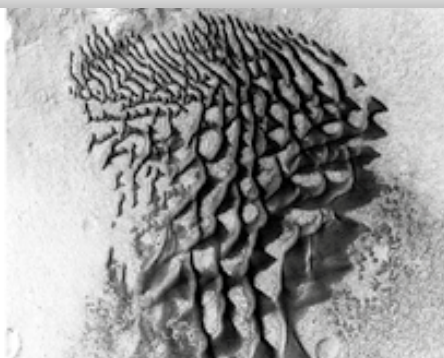
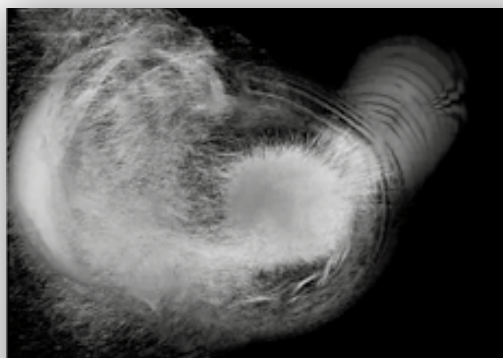
laughter-matter(ing)

Non-Knowledge, Laughter and the Moving Image

Annika Larsson

12

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- ← Annika Larsson, *Montage (Alien Laughter)*, Non-Knowledge, Laughter and the Moving Image, 2022
- ↓ Annika Larsson, *Montage (Dance of Disorder)*, Non-Knowledge, Laughter and the Moving Image, 2022
- ↘ Annika Larsson, *Montage (Technologies of Laughter)*, Non-Knowledge, Laughter and the Moving Image, 2022

In Samuel R. Delany's story »Among the Blobs« from 1976, Joe, one of the story's protagonists, accidentally bumps into another passenger on a shaky New York subway train: »To one side of his back was, not a pain nor even a feeling, but rather a sensational ghost, an unformed blob, where she had lurched against his army jacket, or he had backed into her tweed. ›Are you alright?‹ She probably couldn't hear him because of the subway car's roar. Joe turned, because after all all he had done was bumping into her a little, or she had bumped him. But I could have smiled, he thought.« 001

The Blob here, a sensational ghost between two interconnected bodies, is in many ways not far from theoretical physicist and feminist theorist Karen Barad's rethinking of the notion of the void. They state: »The quantum theory of touching is radically different from the classical explanation. Actually, it is radically queer.« 002 In classical physics, particles, fields and the void are separate elements. 003 In quantum field theory, however, »a physical particle does not simply reside in the vacuum as an independent entity, but rather is inseparable from the vacuum.« 004 From the point of view of classical physics, the vacuum has no matter and no energy. However, within quantum field theory, »the void is a spectral realm with a ghostly existence,« 005 where the indeterminacy principle allows for fluctuations. »In fact,« Barad states, »this indeterminacy is responsible not only for the void not being nothing (while not being something), but it may in fact be the source of all that is, a womb that births existence.« 006 Georges Bataille might have been after something similar in his writings on laughter. In his famous lecture »Non-knowledge, Laughter and Tears« from 1953 he suggests that »the laughable is not only unknown, but unknowable.« 007 Rather than thinking of laughter as something accidental, Bataille highlights it as essential. »We would laugh, not for a reason that we would not happen to know, for lack of information, or for want of sufficient penetration, but because the unknown makes us laugh.« 008 In contrast to beliefs that laughter is a human expression after a feeling of happiness, confusion, or even contempt or disgust, neuroscientist Antonio Damasio points out that conscious feelings are rather its later byproduct. 009 Instead we could perhaps locate laughter in between bodies or as a participant force in the processes of mattering, »as a direct feeling of the virtual: the sensation of invisible forces acting on a body—a direct inarticulate sensation of change.« 010



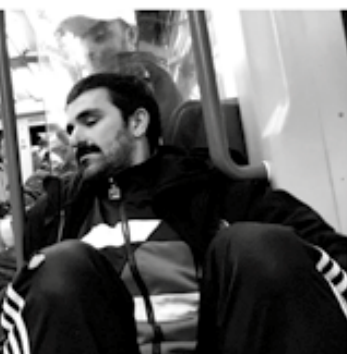
Bataille asserts that despite our »exercise of knowledge, the world is likewise situated completely out of the reach of this exercise, and even that not only the world, but the being that we are, is out of reach.« 011 To know nothing, or at least to be aware that one cannot know everything is also the topic of a text by Raqs Media Collective, which starts by asking the question »What would happen if one placed a bet on the idea that ›knowing nothing,‹ the knowledge of nothingness, is the basis of wisdom?« 012 As in many ancient ways of knowing and acting, »the universe is neither one, totally knowable thing« nor »is everything just random, pointless and chaotic.« 013

»Joe had been moving all this time through the late rush-hour crowds, which crowds we have not mentioned till now because he was just about to separate himself from them. Joe thought of these crowds as a Blob, to which he was by and large indifferent. Neither the Blob nor Joe's indifference, however, were impregnable to analysis. There were the men, of whom he was vaguely resentful, because if he stood too close to one in the crush, or sat too close to one on a subway seat—too much body contact—they might suspect he was not a heterosexual lustful-panting-monster, and the grapevine had it they could get hostile toward the other kind. There were the women, of whom he was vaguely resentful, because, since everyone knew all men were heterosexual lustful-panting-monsters, if he bumped one or brushed one (not to mention stood



too near or sat too close) he had to apologize, be ap-
pallingly polite, and generally
come on far more deferentially
than any normal human
should be expected to to
establish that, indeed, he was
not a heterosexual lustful-
panting-monster.« 014

»What is recognition?« asks
Hito Steyerl in her text »Sea
of Data,« recalling the famous
scene of (self)-recognition de-
scribed by Louis Althusser as
a policeman hails someone in
the street by yelling »Hey
you!« In that moment, she
continues, »the person is sup-
posed to recognize himself
both as subject (you) and as



subjected to the policeman's authority (hey!).« 015 In
other words, within this formula »the categories of
knowledge, control, and privilege are established with
one single gesture.« 016 However, her main point is that
today, in a sea of data and with algorithmic governance,
things are more complicated. 017 Indeed, as philosopher
and media studies scholar Luciana Parisi also brings
up, »machine vision requires no

perceptual response or recognition
of the world.« 018 Instead, code
becomes »the ordered system of
cognitions making things happen
in the world, both among humans
who can (sometimes) understand
the code and those who cannot.« 019
Consequently, the ghost is also the
code that runs in our machines. 020

The performative role of our ma-
chines is also brought up by Barad,
who observes that »apparatuses are
the material conditions of possibility
and impossibility of mattering; they
enact what matters and what is
excluded from mattering.« 021

Barad points out that »representa-
tionalism is so deeply entrenched
within Western culture that it has



- 001 Samuel R. Delany, »Among the Blobs,« 1976, in:
Samuel R. Delany, *Aye, and Gomorrah*, Knopf Dou-
bleday Publishing Group, 2003: 273–279.
- 002 Karen Barad, »Nature's Queer Performativity,« in:
Qui Parle, vol. 19, no. 2, 2011: 121–58.
- 003 Karen Barad, »On Touching—the Inhuman That
Therefore I Am,« in: *differences*, vol. 23, no. 3: 206–
223.
- 004 Karen Barad, *What Is the Measure of Nothingness?*
Infinity, Virtuality, Justice, Hatje Cantz, 2012: 14.
- 005 Ibid.
- 006 Ibid.
- 007 Georges Bataille, »Non-knowledge, Laughter &
Tears,« in: Georges Bataille, *The Unfinished System
of Non-knowledge*, University of Minnesota Press,
2004: 135.
- 008 Ibid.
- 009 Antonio R. Damasio, *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sor-
row, and the Feeling Brain*, Harcourt, 2003: 188.
- 010 Bernd Herzogenrath, *Deleuze/Guattari & Ecology*,
Palgrave Macmillan, 2009: 190.
- 011 See note 7.
- 012 Raqs Media Collective, »Making bets while knowing
nothing,« in: Eva Ebersberger, Daniela Zyman (eds.),
*Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, The Commis-
sions Book*, Sternberg Press, 2020: 1176.
- 013 Ibid.
- 014 See note 1.
- 015 Hito Steyerl: »A Sea of Data: Pattern Recognition
and Corporate Animism (Forked Version),« in: Cle-
mens Apprich, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, Florian
Cramer et al. (eds.): *Pattern Discrimination*, meson
press, 2018: 1–22.
- 016 Ibid.
- 017 Ibid.
- 018 Luciana Parisi, »Negative optics in vision machi-
nes,« in: *AI & Society*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2021: 1–13.
- 019 N. Katherine Hayles, »Traumas of Code,« in: *Criti-
cal Inquiry*, vol. 33, no. 1, 2006: 136–157.
- 020 Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, »On ›Sourcery,‹ or Code
as Fetish,« in: *Configurations*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2008:
299–324.
- 021 Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quan-
tum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and
Meaning*, Duke University Press, 2007: 148.



taken on a common sense appeal.«⁰²² It also has a history, they continue, that can be traced back to Democritus's atomic theory, from which there emerges the possibility of a gap between representations and represented, but also to the Cartesian division between »internal« and »external« that breaks along the line of the knowing subject.⁰²³ This is also touched on in Denise Ferreira da Silva's and Arjuna Neuman's film *Four Waters Deep Implicancy*, which concludes: »by containing air, water, earth, fire in geometric forms, Plato outlines a mode of thinking that reduces the basis of existing and knowing to lethal abstractions.«⁰²⁴

»Critique is presumed to require distance, reflection is presumed to require distance, but distance is a resource administered unequally—I wear my past in my hair and carry it as stains on my teeth. I look at it from a vantage point far away—and feel it tickling under my skin.«⁰²⁵

»In the system of knowledge,« writer and philosopher Paul B. Preciado declares, »we are human or animal. Man or woman. Living or dead. We are the colonizer or the colonized. Living organism or machine. We have been divided by the norm. Cut in half and forced to remain of one side or the other of the rift.«⁰²⁶

The so common question »Are you a human being?« appearing in the captcha (the Completely Automated Public Turing test to tell Computers and Humans Apart), could be contrasted with another question that the Jamaican writer and cultural theorist Sylvia Wynter asks: »hat does it mean to be human?«⁰²⁷ Aristotle's famous dictum of man »being the only animal that laughs«⁰²⁸

could perhaps also be reconceived if we return to the fact that he did not mention this in the context of his »philosophy of humor,« and instead it appears in his text »On the Parts of Animals,« while discussing the function of the diaphragm. Here he states that »to be tickled is to be set in laughter« and »that man alone is affected by tickling is due firstly to the delicacy of his skin.«⁰²⁹ In other words, that human bodies are responsive to touch—that they are affected by other bodies and affect other bodies. We know today that responsiveness to tickling is not unique to the human, but exists among other species too. Equally our sensing machines are participating

in the act of tickling through touch pads, sensors, and vibration feedback. In fact, if we look around us, we would discover many forms of affective tickling that take place between and inside organisms, bodies, technologies, and environments. Perhaps it is even time to question the classical assumption that we cannot tickle ourselves to laughter, by following Karen Barad and Donna Haraway, as they ask: »Whom and what do we touch when we touch electrons?«⁰³⁰ Because, as Barad points out, »matter... cannot help touching itself, and in this self-touching it comes in contact with the infinite alterity that it is.«⁰³¹ According to them, polymorphous perversity among self-touching particles is norm rather than the exception, thus putting filth, dirt, muck, grime, mud, mire, sludge, slime, and ooze at the core of life, rather than in the margins.

»Wenn ihr wüßtet, wir dreckig ihr seid. Prost! If only you all knew how filthy you are. Cheers!«⁰³²

In the traditional modern Western philosophical approach, »difference is seen as to-be-captured, to-be-assimilated, and, eventually, to-be-wholly-eradicated.«⁰³³ The notion of value serves here as a divider, where some things can be destroyed, while others are protected, as Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman also point out in their film.⁰³⁴ This is also present in Ferreira da Silva's theoretical writing, where she exposes the violence housed in knowledge and mathematical reasoning, and where she asks: »Why don't black lives matter?«⁰³⁵ A similar cri-

tique can be found in Jack Halberstam's book *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire*, where he shows how »the processes of zombification« »result in what Ruthie Gilmore has called »premature« death for Black people, near extinction for certain animals, homelessness for poor people, and bare life for the incarcerated, the undocumented, and the animals with whom we live«. But where he also points out that »this zombification produces not a hard and fast distinction between life and death, but new balancing acts between bio- and necropolitical regimes.«⁰³⁶ Here he follows Jane Bennett's vibrant materialism through which »we can understand the activity of living as a force that does not fully coincide with any specific body« which »can contest the earth-destroying fantasies of conquest and consumption that coexist with humancentric visions of a universe populated by live subjects and dead or zombie objects.«⁰³⁷

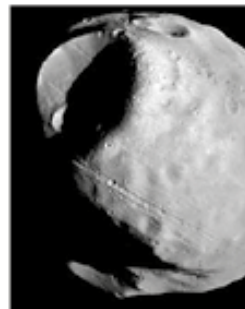
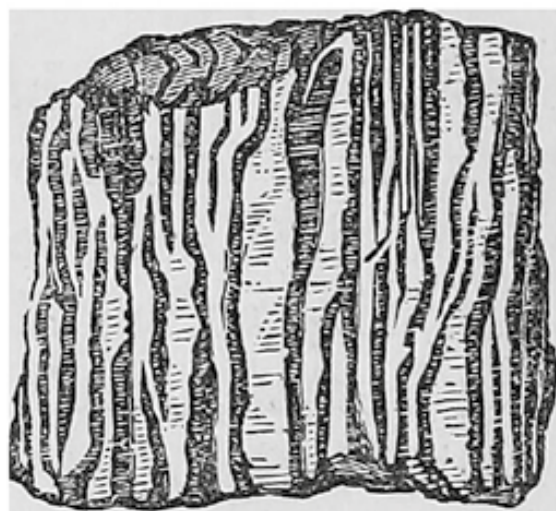
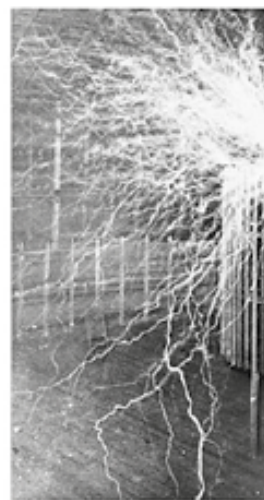
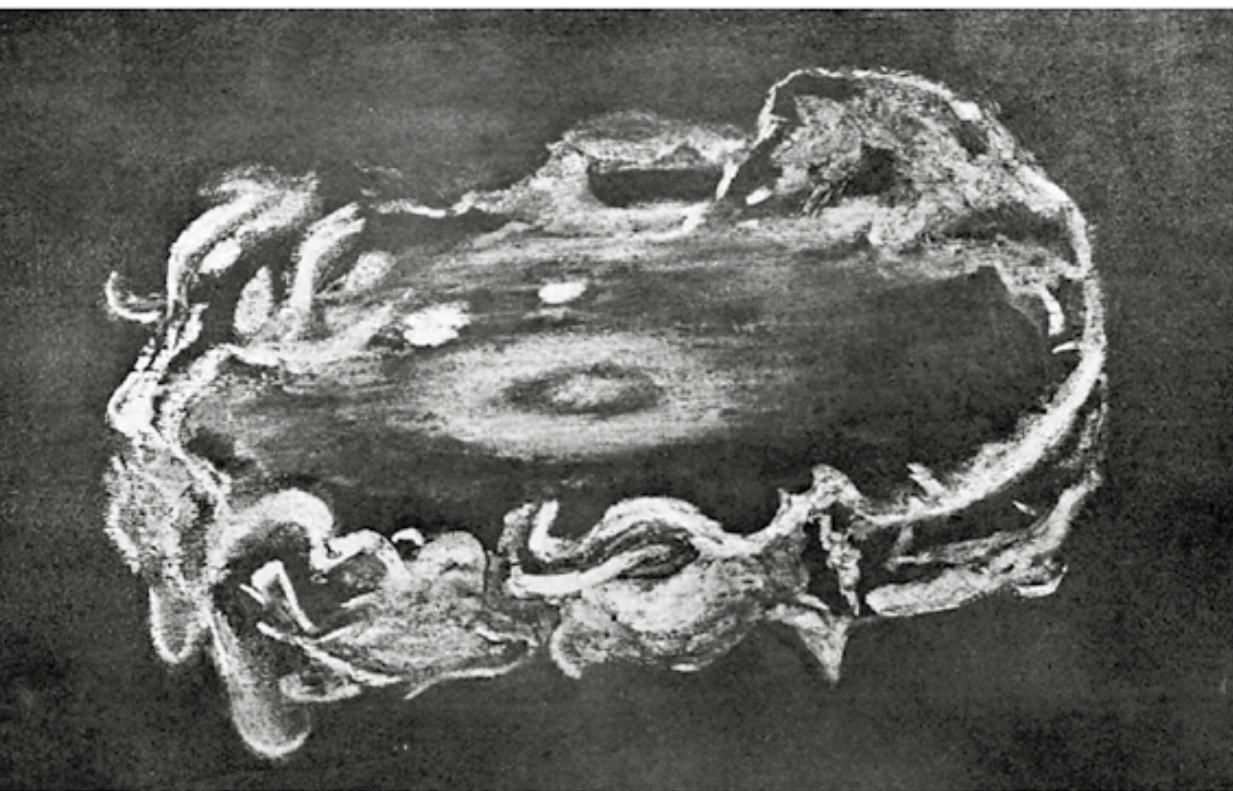
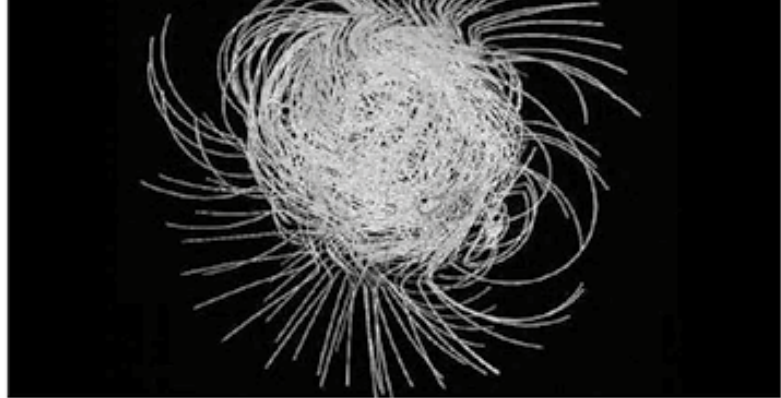
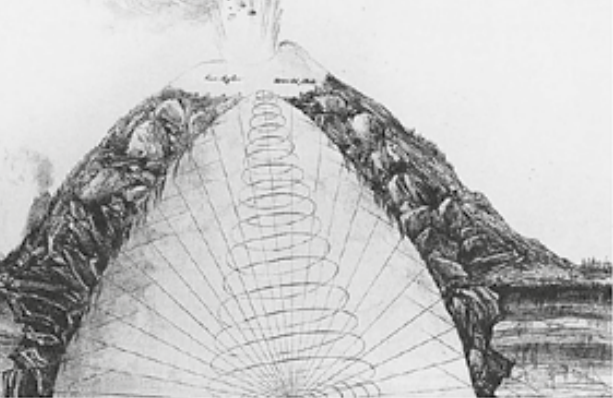
Elizabeth A. Povinelli, professor of anthropology and gender studies and one of the founding members of the Karrabing Film Collective, brings the bio- and necropolitical forms of »governances of difference« even further with the concept of geontopower, a mode of late liberal governance which operates not only through life and death but through the governance of Life and Nonlife.⁰³⁸ Through the figures of the Desert, the Animist, and the Virus she shows how late liberalism uses different ontologies of human and nonhuman arrangements of existence for the purpose of extractive capital and settler liberalism.⁰³⁹ She states: »We can think of these figures as a collection of governing ghosts who exist in between two worlds«⁰⁴⁰ and points out that »capitalism has a unique relation to the Desert, the Animist, and the Virus insofar as Capitalism sees all things as having the potential to create profit; that is, nothing is inherently inert, everything is vital from the point of view of capitalization.«⁰⁴¹ Thus geontopower exercises a form of governance and killing around life and non-life that especially hits communities and people who »refuse to say that soil, rock, river, sand, water, shore and air is not part of the »inert other« over which humans rule, but rather part of a system of obligated relations.«⁰⁴²

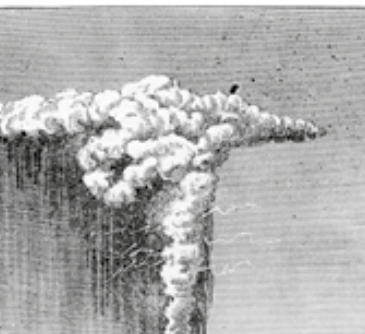
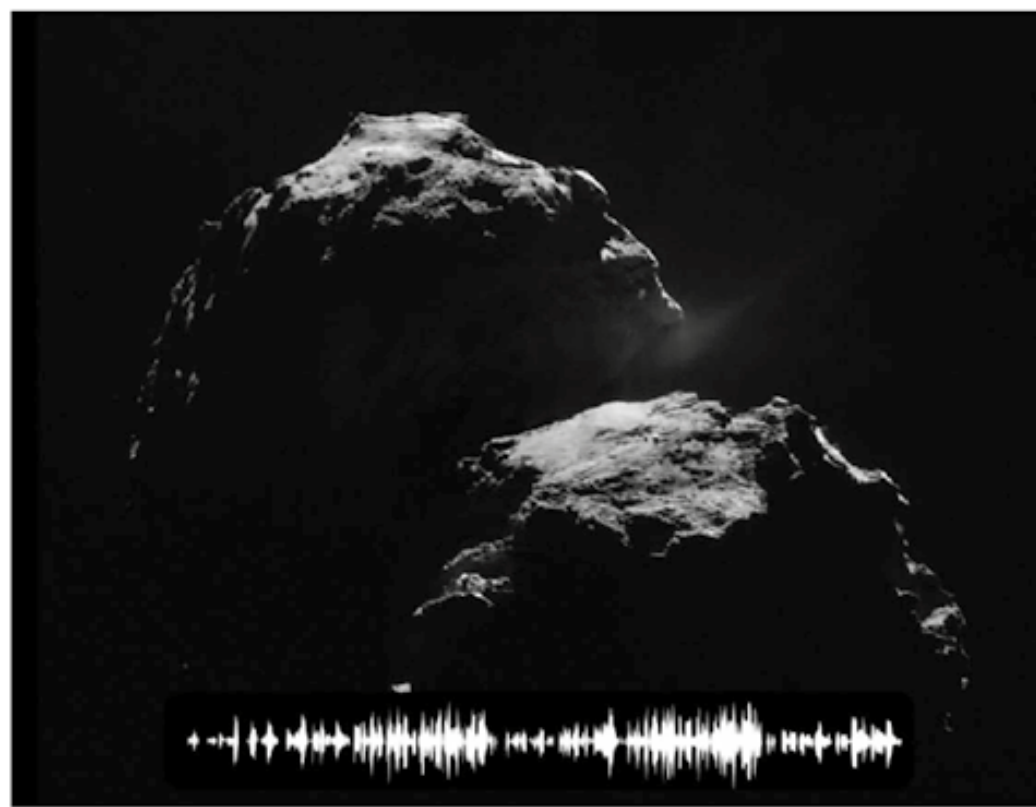
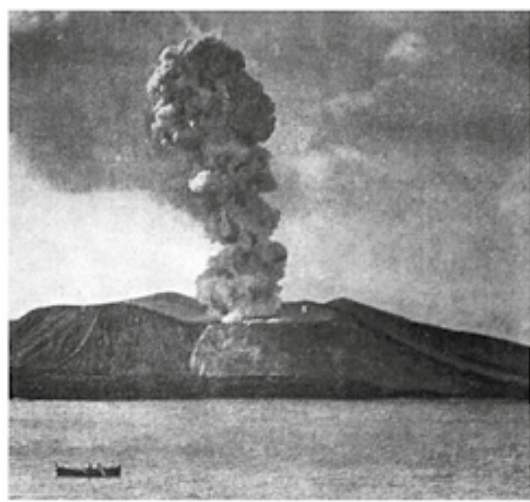
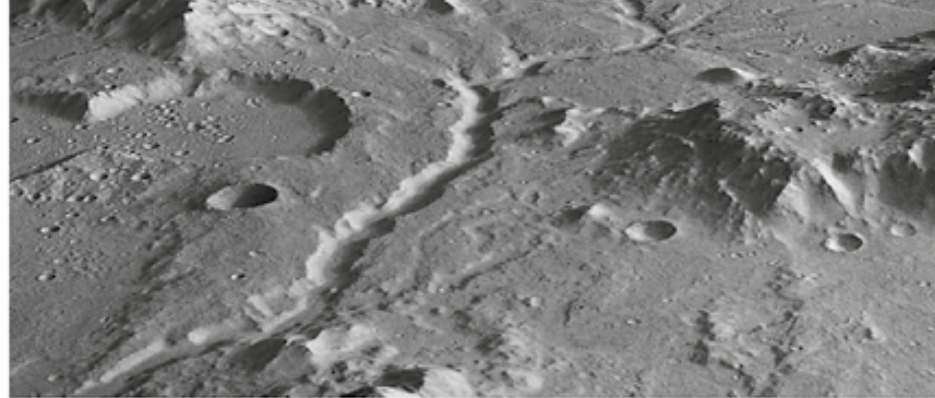
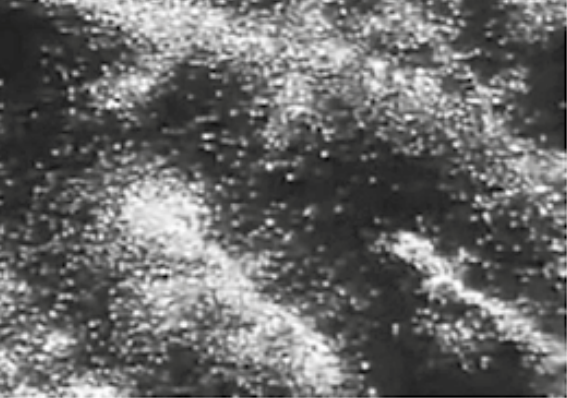
»We're stuck in the middle of nowhere. We can get land but we can't start the motor,«⁰⁴³ states one member of the Karrabing Film Collective in their film *Wutharr, Saltwater Dreams*, a film which brings up the impossibility of ongoingness for their Indigenous community in the Northern Territory of Australia, as it is ruled by neoliberal

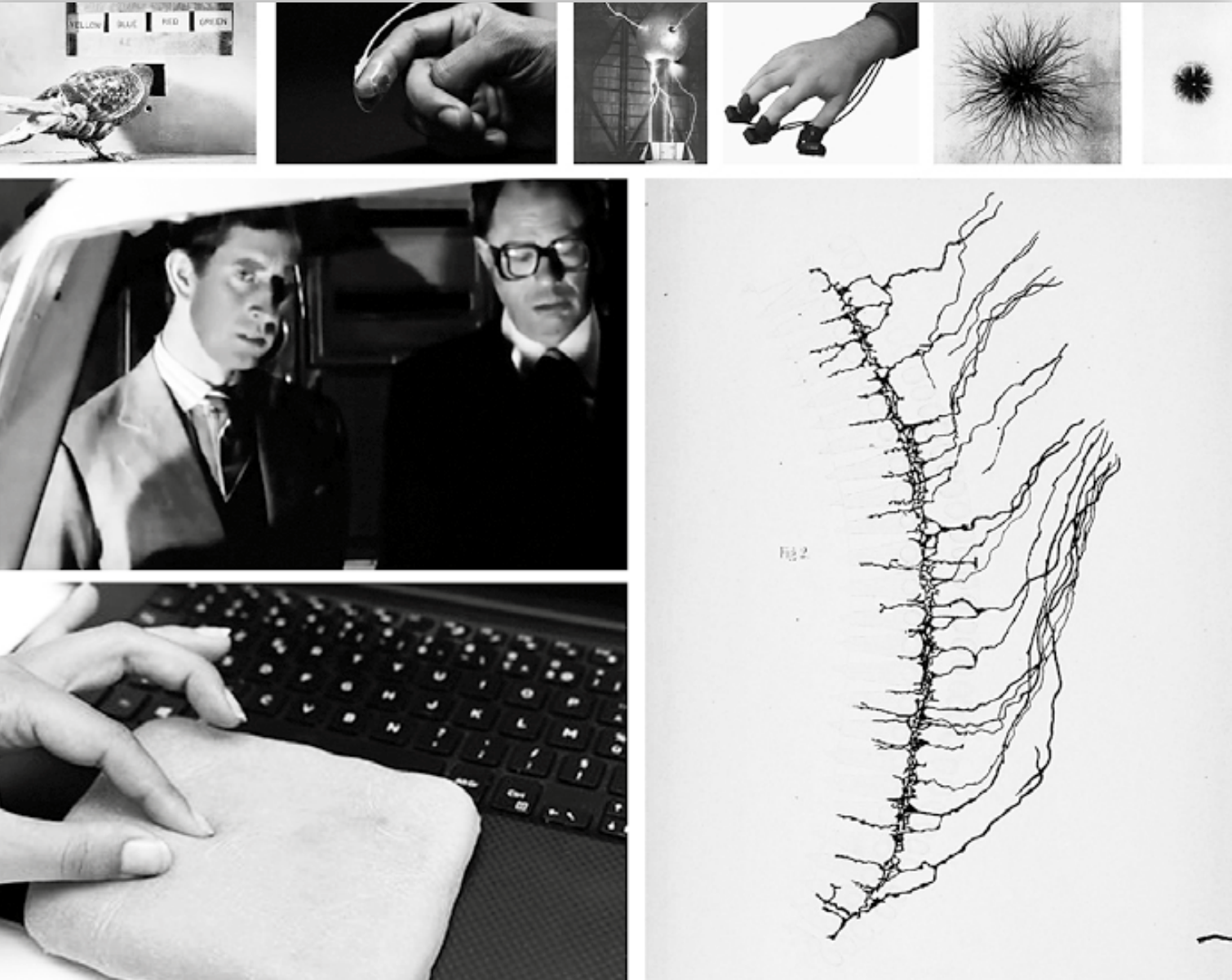
- 022 Karen Barad, »Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter,« in: *Signs*, vol. 28, no. 3, 2003: 801–31.
- 023 Ibid.
- 024 Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman, *4 Waters Deep Implicancy*, 2018, 8:14 min. (total duration 29:10 min.).
- 025 Vika Kirchenbauer, *The Capacity for Adequate Anger*, 2021: 14:18 min. (total duration: 15:08 min.).
- 026 Paul B Preciado, *An Apartment on Uranus: Chronicles of the Crossing*, MIT Press, 2020: 27.
- 027 Sylvia Wynter, »Proud Flesh Inter/Views,« in: *New Afrikan Journal of Culture, Politics & Consciousness*.
- 028 »On the Parts of Animals,« K. Paul, Trench & Company, 1882: 84.
- 029 Ibid.
- 030 See note 3.
- 031 Ibid.
- 032 Ming Wong, *Lerne Deutsch mit Petra von Kant (Learn German with Petra von Kant)*, 2007: 4:20 min. (total duration 9:58 min.).
- 033 Evelien Geerts, Iris van der Tuin, *Diffraction & Reading Diffractively*, in: *Matter: Journal of New Materialist Research*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2021: 174.
- 034 See note 24.
- 035 Denise Ferreira da Silva, »1 (life) ÷ 0 (blackness) = ∞ – ∞ or ∞ / ∞: On Matter Beyond the Equation of Value,« in: *e-flux*, issue 79, 2017 (<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/79/94686/1-life-o-blackness-or-on-matter-beyond-the-equation-of-value/>, last visited 26 October 2022).
- 036 Ibid.
- 037 Jack Halberstam, *Wild Things: The Disorder of Desire*, Duke University Press, 2020: 118.
- 038 Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*, Duke University Press, 2016: 16.
- 039 Ibid.
- 040 Ibid.
- 041 Ibid.
- 042 Ibid.
- 043 Karrabing Film Collective, *Wutharr Saltwater Dreams*, 2016: 25:43 min. (total duration: 28:53 min.).



Prost!
Cheers!







politics and late liberal settler colonialism. Departing from a concrete situation—a motor failure—what unfolds are three different explanations, from three members of the collective. Rather than standing in opposition, these different positions form a set of entangled currents of their reality.⁰⁴⁴ Here the Karabing as a practice is refusing the self-other division through the »otherwise«, a place which is neither the self nor the other, but »the other to the other«, a place of being simultaneously same and different.⁰⁴⁵ Within this opens an ethical horizon for difference but without separability, which also Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman talk about in their film.⁰⁴⁶ »Many voices speak here in the interstices, a cacophony

of always already reiteratively intra-acting stories. These are entangled tales. Each is diffractively threaded through and enfolded in the other. Is that not in the nature of touching? Is touching not by its very nature always already an involution, invitation, invisitation, wanted or unwanted, of the stranger within?«⁰⁴⁷ Raqs Media Collective also explores this entanglement of time, matter, and meaning in their film *The Blood of Stars*, which starts with a quote from astrobiologist Jill Tarter: »The iron in the hemoglobin molecules in the blood in your right hand came from a star that blew up 8 billion years ago. The iron in your left hand came from another star.«⁰⁴⁸ Reflecting on a similar thought, the art-

ist and filmmaker Ester Martin Bergsmark states: »I get very fascinated by all these layers and all these times within me. All the different voices that shape me. [...] In the midst of moments of terror, in the hopelessness and powerlessness, there is a longing, perhaps even desire. There is erotics. There is a voice under.«⁰⁴⁹ We find a resembling thread in Satch Hoyt's artistic research project »Afro-Sonic Mapping,« where sonic, tactile, and olfactory senses are activated through memory, imagination, and multi-sensory perception and where he declares: »Think of a fluid sensorial blueprint where nothing is heard but everything is said—the silence between the notes. I call it Black Sonic Sensory Perception.«⁰⁵⁰ Again, if we, together with Barad, »listen carefully, we can hear the whispered murmurings of infinity immanent in even the smallest details.«⁰⁵¹

tremolo exercise:

tremble from a to b

tremble from lung to knee

tremble from a to e

tremble from a to earth⁰⁵²

»Tremors.« Steve Reinke and James Richards call out in their film *When We Were Monsters*, continuing: »It is time to leave the old fourfold behind. The old fourfold of earth, heavens, gods and souls. The earth is ungrounded. The heavens are shifting. The gods are hiding, and souls just hover there mindlessly mewling, yearning and yearning, endlessly thirsting.«⁰⁵³

»The voice that trembles in me is the voice of the border. We understand the world better,« Édouard Glissant writes, »when we tremble with it, for the world trembles in every direction.«⁰⁵⁴

It is also somewhere here in the middle of this text that »the camera starts to shake, the whole set shakes, and bells ring ominously as Francis Francine (as himself) continues to shake the breast of Delicious Dolores (played by Sheila Bick),«⁰⁵⁵ and images start to sweat, »AND THE TEXT STARTED TO SLAP, SLAP, SLAP,«⁰⁵⁶ huckling, chortling, guffawing, giggling, tittering, sniggering, snickering, cackling, howling, roaring, tee-heering, bursting, roaring, convulsing, dissolving, splitting, doubling up. This double place is also present in Delany's writing, where characters, places, words, and sentences oscillate between spaces, meaning, and times. We also find it in Liv Fontaine's artistic practice, as when one of her multiple

- 044 Elizabeth A. Povinelli, Vivian Ziherl, »Wutharr: Salt-water Dreams,« conversation on 7 October 2017 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-s3qJgUcIo>, last visited 26 October 2022) 54:50 min. (total duration 1:06:16 min.).
- 045 Ibid.
- 046 See note 24.
- 047 See note 3.
- 048 Raqs Media Collective, *The Blood of Stars*, 2017: 0:23 min. (total duration 12:53 min.).
- 049 Ester Martin Bergsmark, extract from text around *Voice Under*, ongoing PHD project, Stockholm University of Arts, 2022.
- 050 Satch Hoyt, »Black Sonic Sensory Perception – The Long Crescendo,« in: Paz Guevara, Satch Hoyt, Haus der Kulturen der Welt (eds.), *Afro-Sonic Mapping: Tracing Aural Histories Via Sonic Transmigrations*, Archive Books, 2022: 112–114.
- 051 See note 4.
- 052 Augustin Maurs, *Nothing More*, extract from musical score, 2022.
- 053 Steve Reinke, James Richards, *When We Were Monsters*, 2020: 2:32 min. (total duration 20:46 min.).
- 054 Paul B Preciado, Charlotte Mandell, *An Apartment of Uranus*, Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2019: 34.
- 055 José B. Segebre, *Shaking Laughter Out: Jack Smith's Decomposing Creatures**, 2019: 7.
- 056 Laure Prouvost, *It, Heat, Hit*, 2010: from 0:25 excerpt (total duration 7 min.) <https://youtu.be/yYnpOcBjsNc>.

personas states: »My name is Venus flytrap. Spinning stories of contradiction, feminism and fiction. About the righteous and the sick. My name is seething caldron where hot thoughts meet small talk made worse by unshakeable conditions of worth.«⁰⁵⁷ Within these practices, complexity, far from being accidental, is a desired outcome. Physical chemist Ilya Prigogine and chemist and philosopher Isabelle Stengers argue in a similar way against the traditional stability, order, and uniformity of classical science, where they envision entropy as an engine driving the world toward increasing complexity rather than toward death.⁰⁵⁸

Laughter has often been described as being thrown into some sort of oscillating condition by certain types of contradictions. In the early days of cybernetics, Gregory Bateson and his colleagues speculated about the conditions under which a machine could start to laugh: »it would laugh whenever the input and the coding did not match properly,«⁰⁵⁹ they concluded. Within this discussion, they were even prepared to say that an electric buzzer is laughing, as it has no stable state.⁰⁶⁰

Cybernetics, as Norbert Wiener defined it in 1948, is »the science of control and communications in the animal and machine.« Cybernetics comes from a Greek word meaning »the art of steering«—a form of governance and control based on predicting the future. Noise plays a double role here, as it is both what drives the endless optimization of these capture systems, as well as what is simultaneously sought to be eliminated. »Fear is the anticipatory reality in the present of a threatening future. It is the felt reality of the nonexistent, looming present as the affective fact of the matter.«⁰⁶¹

The lurking fear from the unknown has also been a driving narrative for most horror and science fiction films, often with a creeping Blob as its main protagonist, »sticky, thick, and mutable,«⁰⁶² threatening the human civilization. »The shock effect in these films is often generated through the display of partially digested victims suspended within a gelatinous ooze. These blobs are neither singular nor multiple since they have no discrete envelope.«⁰⁶³ An alien amoebic Blob is also present in Samuel R. Delany's story: »Bat was dubious and alert, with the belly feeling that is both anxiety and enthusiasm. His would be the first human encounter with the Blob—which had been reported flûтчүлáting (a form of communication? digestion? play?) in sector E-3.«⁰⁶⁴ Bat D, (entangled with Joe, but in another space-time), armed

with his death laser, approaches sector E-3, while closely observed, though from a safe distance, by the members of the Galactic Council, all while manipulating their computers in an attempt to grasp the blob's strange ontological order.⁰⁶⁵

And here Delany's story starts to really wobble and diffract: the Fort—with its white porcelain and transparent south wall recalling the scientific laboratory—becomes a public toilet and cruising site, the Galactic Council members and/or scientists become toilet visitors, Bat blurs into Joe and Joe merges into Bat, fumes of toxic antiseptics intermingle with urine and unbreathable fumes from another Galaxy in a different time, the clean becomes dirty, the dirty clean. An incoming policeman smiles and nods back at Joe as they bump into each other at the entrance of the public toilet and cruising site, before apparently remembering himself and frowning (a hint to Althusser?).⁰⁶⁶

In contrast to classic science-fiction narratives, Joe neither gets killed, nor does he kill the Blob. Instead it turns into a sexual encounter:

»She was without him. She was within him. She rolled through him. She flowed around him.«⁰⁶⁷

After letting out an enormous howl and plunging through the safety glass of Fort Sumpter VII's north wall, the Blob withdraws, flûтчүлáting (a method of transportation? reproduction? art?) across the black sands, making her erratic path—»too much« according to one of the council members, who gets scared and runs, while another applauds.⁰⁶⁸

In her essay »Telling Is Listening,« the science fiction author Ursula K. Le Guin writes about how communication is often seen as a one-way transportation of meaning from A to B. To oppose this normative and limiting idea, she advocates for another image of communication: two amoebas having sex. When two amoebas exchange genetic »information,« »they literally give each other inner bits of their bodies.«⁰⁶⁹

Karen Barad teaches us that »objectivity means being accountable for marks on bodies, that is, specific materializations in their differential mattering. We are responsible for the cuts that we help enact not because we do the choosing (neither do we escape responsibility because »we« are »chosen« by them), but because we are an agential part of the material becoming of the universe. ... Indeed, ethics cannot be about responding to the other as if the other is the radical outside to the self.«⁰⁷⁰

What new forms could emerge when we re-situate ourselves as spontaneously responsive, moving, embodied living beings? What roles do unruly (laughing, vibrating, noise making) moving images, machines, bodies, energies, times and matter play in the world making? How could these non-human and non-conscious agencies challenge our notion of human agency and lead us to other places of power where meaning and matter are intertwined? What new worlds and futures could open up if we accept the possibility of not knowing?

E.I. The Blob is a noisemaking image-organism sensitive to sound and touch, created inside my research project in order to explore new and less hierarchical ways of thinking, being, and acting with the moving image. Its name could stand for Earthificial Intelligence, or simply a mispronunciation or confusion of the acronyms A.I. or E.T., although mostly it goes under the nickname the Blob. As a (non-human) player-character-ghost, the blob has allowed me to rethink the relation to the moving image, to it as an intra-active vibrant body. It has also opened up ways to rethink laughter beyond human laughter, towards it as an unruly force, that participates in the processes of mattering and change. With the Blob I am looking for ways to open up for human, image and machine social relations, where situated forms of response-ability exist. Perhaps the throbbing of unknowable laughter between organisms, bodies, and technologies, systems and times can help us understand how unstable and inhuman we actually are, that we are neither outside the world nor free (to participate or laugh when we decide to), but rather that we are interconnected with everything around us and inside us.



- 057 Liv Fontaine, *A gaping hole in the morning is a gaping hole at night*, extract from text manuscript, 2022.
- 058 N. Katherine Hayles, *Chaos and Order: Complex Dynamics in Literature and Science*, University of Chicago Press, 1991: 13.
- 059 Gregory Bateson, »The Position of Humor in Human Communication«, Macy Conferences 1952, (<http://134.184.131.111/Books/Bateson-humor.pdf>, last visited 26 October 2022).
- 060 Ibid.
- 061 Brian Massumi, »The Future Birth of the Affective Fact«, in: Brian Massumi, *Ontopower: War, Powers, and the State of Perception*. Duke University Press, 2015: 191.
- 062 Greg Lynn, *Folds, Bodies & Blobs: Collected Essays*, La Lettre Volée, 1998: 170.
- 063 Ibid.
- 064 See note 1.
- 065 Ibid.
- 066 Ibid.
- 067 Ibid.
- 068 Ibid.
- 069 Ursula K. Le Guin, *Telling is Listening*, from *The Wave in the Mind*, Shambhala, 2004: 185–189.
- 070 See note 22.

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Note: This text is a polyphonic montage, indebted to the many artists and thinkers who have resonated with me throughout the project.