

**THE LONDON  
INTERDISCIPLINARY  
SCHOOL**



# THE ART OF NOTICING

**Encountering Ecosystems  
2026 Undergraduate Showcase**

Creative work and text by second- and third-year  
Bachelor of Arts and Sciences (BASc) students

Catalogue compiled and edited  
by DR ASH BROCKWELL



## FOREWORD

DR ASH BROCKWELL  
Module Lead, 'Encountering  
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Research and Practice'

### **Noticing and naming long-forgotten kin**

There is a magic – a revolutionary magic – in noticing what we have been trained to ignore.

Colonial education treats all living beings, other than humans, as undifferentiated nature. We are often told that 'nature' is good for our mental health, and that we should therefore invest time and money in connecting with it. But, as noted by the Austrian philosopher Martin Buber [1], an 'I-It' relationship creates distance and treats the other party as an object, resulting in a mere illusion of connection – 'monologue disguised as dialogue'. By contrast, an 'I-Thou' relationship is based on genuine dialogue, rooted in deep listening and mutual respect. The seemingly archaic 'I-Thou' is a direct translation of the German 'Ich-Du', highlighting the intimate form of 'you' that's used to address family and close friends.

When we set out in search of meaningful connection, the first step is a recognition that our local 'green spaces' are not, after all, an amorphous green blur for us to rush through on our way to somewhere else. We shift from 'walking through' to 'walking in', and perhaps, given time and patience, 'walking with' the living beings who inhabit these places. We learn to recognise individuals: *this* tree with a hole in the trunk, *this* bird that makes a harsh cawing sound and that one with a melodic song, these lichens dwelling on the gravestones in the cemetery. Then the next step is learning to name them.

Naming is, of course, a human invention that is not without its cost. When we name 'habitats' and 'species', we create and impose boundaries to make them legible, measurable, countable, and in many cases marketable [2]. These boundaries are ultimately a figment of the colonial imagination. They mask the dynamic complexity of the unseen interactions that are constantly making, unmaking, and re-making bodies. As the Nigerian poet Ben Okri articulates it in his award-winning novel *Astonishing the Gods* [3], 'Names have a way of making things disappear'.

Indeed, in some Indigenous languages, there are no 'things' – in the sense that English-speakers

typically understand them – at all. Last year, I had the privilege of listening to Narciso, a *mama* [medicine person] and emissary of the Kogi people in Colombia [4], explaining that the Kogi language has no nouns, only verbs: all is process. The same linguistic phenomenon is described by Professor Robin Wall Kimmerer, an academic, ecologist, and citizen member of the Potawatomi Nation [5]. Kimmerer explains that the literal meaning of the Potawatomi word for 'bay', for example, is 'being-a-bay', as though this aspect or dimension of Life (or, perhaps, of Goddess?) is only temporarily taking the form of a bay and might adopt a different shape tomorrow. Yet we should not dismiss naming out of hand. To those of us who have been miseducated by modernity's norms from early childhood, the granting of a name is an important starting point: a first tentative step towards relationality. A name says, 'I see you' (or, to those who are audible but invisible, 'I hear you') and 'I recognise you'. We move from indifference, to acknowledgement, to affection, and perhaps to love. Once we've named someone, we can no longer pretend that they don't exist.

The development of 'AI' and machine learning tools has revolutionized this naming process. The attribution of binomial ('Latin' or 'scientific') names, which once demanded years of study – learning from experts, examining specimens, poring over field guides, using identification keys – can now

be accomplished with a few taps on a smartphone. Non-commercial apps like iNaturalist [6] and Merlin [7] make citizen science accessible to people with no prior training. Of course, the challenge is to achieve this without making expert botanists and ornithologists redundant!

As several of the contributors to this exhibition attest, there is genuine joy to be found in discovering the identities of the birds who sing daily in the local park – even if you never see them. We feel the thrill of unlocking a hidden mystery, as well as a real and growing sense of kinship with these hitherto unnoticed neighbours.

The module that underpins this exhibition is unique within the UK higher education sector. Our overarching goal is not to teach and learn quantitative and qualitative research methods as an end in themselves, but as means to an end: fostering a genuine emotional connection with/in a local ecosystem. As such, Encountering Ecosystems entails an interweaving of theoretical concepts, regular fieldwork, and creative practice, grounded in a recognition that achieving intimacy demands a commitment of time and heart-led presence. This manifests throughout the module in several different ways:

- Recognising that every species exists within their own perceptual world or *Umwelt*: their ability to experience and make sense of their surroundings is different from ours, in ways we cannot fully comprehend, but in no way inferior to ours [8-9].

- Remembering (re-membering) simple protocols of reciprocity – asking permission, waiting for a response, expressing gratitude, offering something in return.

- Paying attention to our own bodies – moving, in the words of eco-artist and educator Becky Lyon [10], ‘from fieldwork to feelwork’ – and the sensations that embodied ecological encounters entail.

- Foregrounding myth, folk song, ritual, and ceremony, as mediators between the human world and other ways of being. Through ancient tales of selkies, mermaids, shapeshifting goddesses, and other hybrid creatures that blur the lines between human and animal, both-at-once and yet neither, we discover that the boundaries of our own selfhood are not as solid as they once seemed. We remember (or re-member) that we are all not just human, but ‘being-human’ and inter-being with myriad other beings.

- Learning the languages spoken by Land, River, Goldfinch, Lichen, and Daffodil: languages comprised not of words, but of energy, of essence, of metaphor and embodied knowing [11]. This evokes the words of the pioneering nineteenth-century educator Anne Sullivan (cited by her most famous pupil, Helen Keller): ‘The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen nor even touched but just felt in the heart’ [12].

I’m incredibly proud of this year’s cohort of students, and I’ve publicly admitted to being moved to tears by some of the work showcased in this exhibition. I hope you find a similar joy in engaging with the artefacts and short films, participating actively in the installations when invited, and perhaps even venturing out into your own neighbourhood to encounter the living inhabitants in new ways.

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## ARTEFACTS AND INSTALLATIONS

# CAILLEACH: PANSEXUAL TECHNOSHAMANIC RHODIE BASHER

ADETOBI ADENIJI

*Mixed media installation: plywood, printed graphics, NFC crystals, QR codes*



Lochs are liminal spaces. Victor Turner described liminality as a threshold condition, betwixt and between fixed states, in which ordinary structures dissolve and transformation becomes possible (1). In Gaelic cosmology, bodies of water occupy precisely this threshold, functioning as portals for human imagination where the boundaries between the known and the unknowable become porous. Cardney Loch in Perthshire, Scotland, is one such threshold. It is a small loch bordered by birch, alder and Scots pine, home to brown trout and visiting osprey, and for over forty years it has been my grandfather's favourite place to sit and eat lunch. But liminal spaces are fragile. The spread of *Rhododendron ponticum*, an invasive species introduced as a Victorian ornamental, has closed the path to his fishing spot entirely. Where there was once a walk through native woodland, there is now a wall of dark, waxy foliage blocking 95% of sunlight and secreting allelopathic toxins that suppress native germination (2). The loch's liminal quality, its openness to more than one kind of world, is being strangled by a monoculture. This installation responds to that strangling through what I am calling eco-mythical activism: a practice that combines direct ecological intervention with mythological reimagining. The project draws on several intersecting frameworks:

- Animism, as rearticulated by Graham Harvey, proposes that the world is full of persons, only some of whom are human (3), positioning the loch and its species as active participants in the work rather than inert resources.

- Decoloniality provides a lens for understanding *R. ponticum* itself: a species transported across continents by imperial estate owners who valued its purple flowers without considering the ecological consequences, a botanical echo of colonial displacement and monoculture (4).

- Jakob von Uexküll's Umwelt theory, which holds that every organism inhabits its own perceptual world shaped by its sensory capacities (5), underpins the creative ambition of the project. If a game can offer players an unfamiliar Umwelt, a way of perceiving the loch through non-human rhythms, it might shift how they relate to the place.

The installation takes the form of a three-sided freestanding plywood box, each face addressing a different dimension of the work.

The front face presents a 21-card reading drawn from Suzanne Treister's *HEXEN 5* tarot, a contemporary deck that maps the major systems, technologies and crises of the present onto the structure of the tarot (6).

The 21 cards are arranged in a 3x7 grid that functions simultaneously as a navigational map of what some theorists call the metacrisis and as a user interface for the game I am developing, CAILLEACH: Pansexual Technoshamanic Rhodie Basher. At the centre sits The World card, whose focal concept is Astrocognition, the capacity to think at a planetary and cosmic scale. Surrounding it are cards addressing climate change (Death), blockchain (The Fool), post-truth epistemology (Wheel of Fortune), ethics (Judgement) and more. Alongside the grid are QR codes linking to Treister's full HEXEN 5.0 archive, to Pink Floyd's Time as an invitation to dwell with the map at a different pace, and an actor-network theatre diagram I created during an earlier research-through-design project combining the Tate Britain collection with Treister's HEXEN 2.0 deck.

The right face turns to the ecosystem directly. Here there is a photograph of Cardney Loch, a detailed account of *R. ponticum*'s effects on biodiversity and soil chemistry, and my proposed regeneration plan: cut, burn onsite for potash, return the ash to neutralise acidified soil, and replant native species in stages. MacLean et al.'s thirty-year study found that native communities effected by *R. ponticum* are unlikely to recover without active intervention (2). Beside this sits the "A Right to Bash" poster, explaining the ecological rationale for rhodie removal

to walkers and landowners, grounded in Scotland's Land Reform Act 2003 (7). Above it is a political party flyer for The Ethereal Party, a speculative political formation emerging from this research, using disorienting visual imagery alongside six QR codes linking to podcasts, music and video. Three additional HEXEN 5 cards are pinned here: the Ten of Chalices (Gaia theory, with Lovelock and Margulis), the Knave of Chalices (Rewilding) and the Knight of Chalices (Donna Haraway), whose cyborg theory (8) provides the conceptual foundation for reimagining the Cailleach as a techno-mystic figure rather than a nostalgic one.

The left face presents Pyrosome, a novel blockchain technology I have been developing for the Arcade of the Contemporary. The name comes from *Pyrosoma atlanticum*, a colonial tunicate whose individual zooids link to form a single bioluminescent body of fire. I have mapped this biological structure isomorphically onto the blockchain: each physical NFC crystal (an NTAG215 tag with 504 bytes, attached to a geological crystal) functions as a zooid, carrying a chain hash, session history and anonymous identity. The technology is designed as a post-capitalist arcade currency, allowing users to save game states, maintain wallet balances and track visits using a physical object they carry rather than a digital account they do not control.

My methods sit at the intersection of serious game development and what I am calling a HEXEN 5 tarot practice: a research-through-design approach in which Treister's cards operate as semiotic actors within the design process, shaping decisions about game mechanics, narrative structure and interface architecture. The tarot practice led to the 21-card reading, which in turn generated the game's thematic structure. Alongside this, I conducted primary fieldwork at Cardney Loch: ecological surveying, photographic documentation and direct action in the form of physical rhododendron removal. The rhodie bashing is not separate from the creative practice. It is the creative practice in its most material form.

The Cailleach is the old Gaelic goddess of winter who shapes the landscape by dropping boulders from her creel. In this project she wears a blue spiral mask borrowed from Naruto's Obito Uchiha, carries a chainsaw, and navigates by tarot and shapeshifting. She is pansexual in the oldest sense: Pan, the god of the wild, of all things, whose name means everything. Her desire is for the whole living world. She is technoshamanic after Treister's Moon, where Technomysticism, Cosmotronics and Technoshamanic Systems spiral together as proof that the spiritual and the technological were never separate. She is a rhodie basher because the path to the loch is blocked and someone has to clear it.

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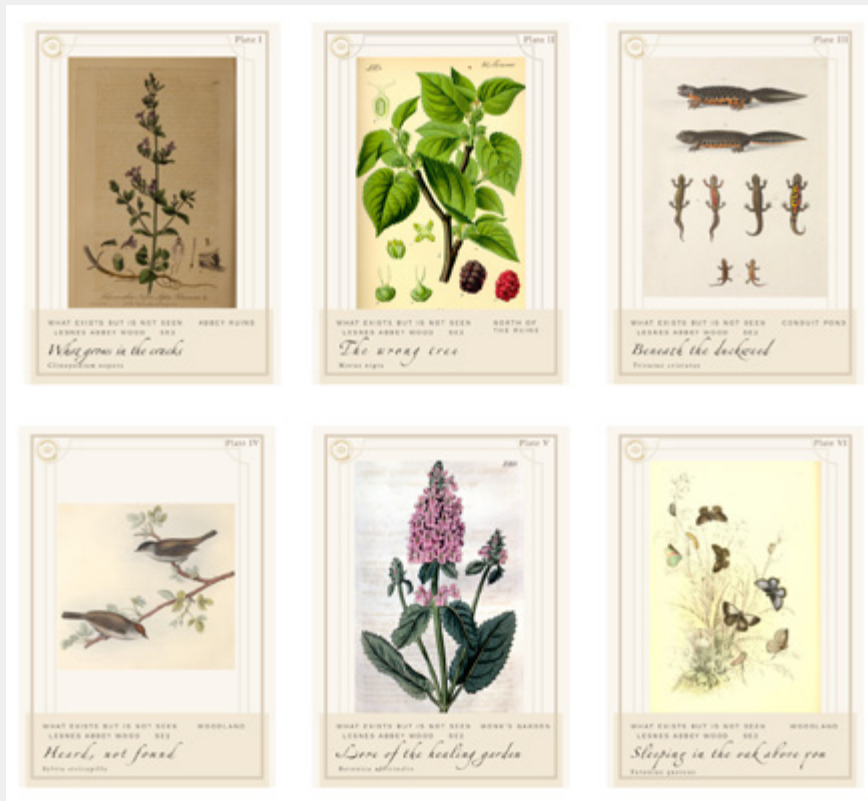
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# WHAT EXISTS BUT IS NOT SEEN

## Ontopoetics and the Invisible Lives of Lesnes Abbey Woods

ELLA COCKMAN

*Digital print on card with botanical illustration*



In 1178, Richard de Luci founded an Augustinian abbey in what is now Abbey Wood, southeast London, as an act of penance for his role in the murder of Thomas Becket. [1,2] The building no longer remains. What exists is rubble, ancient woodland, and a geological record so significant that the site holds SSSI status for its Eocene fossil beds. [1,3] Standing in Lesnes Abbey Woods, you are surrounded by presences that are not visible: 906 invertebrate species moving through soil and bark [4], mycelial networks threading the ground beneath your feet, centuries of penitence and loss compressed into stone. This exhibition submission takes that invisibility as its central problem.

### ONTOPOETICS AS SUPERCONCEPT

The philosopher Freya Mathews proposes the term onto-poetics to describe a form of engagement with the world understood as having its own psycho-active dimension, a capacity to respond to human address not in words but in what she calls a “language of things”: resonance, image, sensation, the symbolic arrangement of the concrete.[5] Ontopoetics rests on a broadly panpsychist premise: that reality is suffused with something approximating interiority, a dimension of meaning that can be called forth through ceremony, invocation, or poetic attention.[5] This is not a rejection of scientific knowledge but a challenge to

its sufficiency. If the world speaks in a concretised, particularised language, the researcher must find ways to listen in kind, through practices of embodied, reciprocal attention rather than extraction.

The biologist Jakob von Uexküll developed the concept of the *umwelt* to describe the subjective perceptual world that each organism constructs through its specific sensory capacities and embodied existence.[6] For von Uexküll, there is no single objective environment shared by all living beings: each organism inhabits its own bubble of meaningful signals, shaped by what it can detect, what it responds to, and what carries significance for its form of life.[6] Von Uexküll names precisely why the invisible lives of Lesnes are not merely difficult to see but constitutively other; they inhabit worlds structured by entirely different perceptual keys. Umwelt theory and onto-poetics work as complementary orientations: the former explains why the gap exists between human perception and the lives of the woodland; the latter offers a practice for responding to that gap with poetic reciprocity, addressing the place in terms that allow it to answer back.

These two superconcepts frame what this project attempts to do. Lesnes Abbey Woods was approached through four distinct registers of

knowing, each revealing different aspects of what exists there, and each encountering different limits.

#### FOUR REGISTERS OF KNOWING

The first register is remote quantitative analysis. Using QGIS and Sentinel-2 satellite imagery, the site was mapped spatially: 35 hectares, 86% vegetation cover, an NDVI range of 0.20 to 0.90, indicating dense ancient woodland. [3,7,8] This data is persistent and scalable and, in Persson et al.'s terms, vulnerable to ontological reversal: the risk that the diagram becomes more real than the forest it represents. [9] The NDVI data tells us the woodland is biologically rich. It cannot tell us what it feels like to stand inside it.

The second register is a secondary qualitative study of cultural history and political ecology. Lesnes has been shaped by an ownership timeline stretching from Augustinian monks through private estates to the London Borough of Bexley, [1,2] holds protected status under four separate designations, [1,3] and carries local folklore, the ghost monk, the founding penance, and the Lore of the Wild audio walk that already attempts to make invisible histories audible. [2,10] This register reveals the site as a palimpsest: layers of human meaning and care deposited over nine centuries, none of them visible on the surface.

The third and most methodologically significant register is systematic soundscape mapping. Drawing on Pijanowski et al.'s tripartite framework, biophony, geophony, and anthrophony [11], sounds at three locations were documented, classified, and mapped: the Abbey Entrance, Conduit Pond, and the Woodland Interior. Decibel readings were taken alongside ten-minute Merlin Bird ID recordings, and the BirdNET Analyser was used for post-hoc spectrogram analysis. This tri-source method made divergences between automated and embodied perception visible and analytically productive. Sit-with field notes, drawing on Reason's practice of concentrated, reciprocal attention to place, [12] were gathered immediately after each session. The soundscape maps are hand-drawn, a deliberate choice. The observer is present in the map in a way that a rendered diagram is not; the maker's act of listening is inscribed in every mark, connecting the maps to Pauline Oliveros's Sonic Meditations XVIII and XIII [13]. Following Csordas [14], the body is the existential ground of cultural experience: what the ear registered and the hand recorded is not incidental to the research but constitutive of it.

The fourth register is the creative synthesis itself, the postcard series. Combining the hand-drawn soundscape maps, botanical illustration plates drawn from the site's documented species, sit-with field note fragments, and cultural history, the postcards hold these different registers in tension rather than resolving them. They do not argue that embodied experience is more real than satellite data, or that folklore supersedes ecology; they hold them alongside each other, allowing the gaps between them to remain visible. The postcard format was chosen because it enacts these gaps rather than merely describing them. Each card addresses a species the researcher did not see performing the *umwelt* condition directly: these are perceptual worlds that could be documented but not entered. The act of addressing an absent presence through the postcard form connects to Mathews's ontopoetic practice of speaking to the world: the card reaches toward the species; the species, by definition, does not reach back. [5,6]

#### WHAT EXISTS BUT IS NOT SEEN

Lesnes Abbey Woods is constituted largely by presences that escape measurement: the fossil record compressed in geology, mycelia threading soil no instrument visited, the grief of a twelfth-century founder, the anthroponic train cutting through birdsong at the woodland edge.

Ontopoetics provides the conceptual vocabulary for taking these presences seriously as knowledge. *Umwelt* theory reminds us that those presences are not merely hidden from us but genuinely other, structured by perceptual worlds we cannot enter but can only gesture toward. The postcard series is a record of an attempt to address the place and to attend carefully to what was responded to.

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# REVONTULET BY MOONLIGHT, LOOKING

ROWAN DAMASCHIN

*Found materials,  
paper mâché,  
acrylic*



There is a fox that lives in the closed off patch of trash outside my house. I have photographed her many times. He sleeps to the sounds of children playing in the park next-door. They pick up the food thrown from the flats above me to the grass behind the community hall, sometimes some bread and sometimes chicken bones. She has companions in foxes, old mattresses, broken electric bikes and the moon.

Every dusk and night I searched for you, we spent under the same light of the moon.

This work is a diptych. Neither mask is the subject alone. I try to propose an encounter to you. The moment at dusk when a human, a fox and the moon share a street and, what does it mean to be in the presence of another kind of world?

The concept of the Umwelt, developed by the Baltic German biologist Jakob von Uexküll, offers one answer.(1) Von Uexküll proposed that every organism inhabits its own species-specific perceptual and functional world. This world is structured by what that organism can sense and act upon and bounded by what it can not.(2) The fox does not experience London as a City as I do. No transit route, no residential zone, our accessibilities are desires run at levels which merge very rarely. She experiences London as a network of scent corridors, territorial markings, foraging sites, den approaches and escape routes imperceptible to the human umwelt. The behaviours we note as undesirable, the ripped binbags, the 3am screaming, the dug-up garden and mess are all entirely coherent acts from within the fox's umwelt. Feeding, Communicating, Sheltering, Playing, Living.

Umwelt theory arose within the European tradition of phenomenological biology. It insists that the non-human world is not merely a downgraded or simplistic version of the human one, but instead a fully elaborate world. Oh, how to see in the ultraviolet, be guided by the magnetic poles, to speak in songs that echo for miles.

Another idea coming from another direction also approaches this threshold of beings in tandem. Enrique Salmon, fed from Rarámuri indigenous knowledge, introduced me to kincentric ecology. Here, the understanding is that all life shares the same breath, and the humans are kin to the non-human, not masters, not above, not just observers. (3) Knowledge then stems from our continued relationships, not objective study.

There is a contrast from these two frameworks that I think make a harmony. Von Uexküll maps the foxes' world from its environment, from the outside in, as a scientist charts a territory, a map of the unwalkable seabed. Salmon begins from in the inside, from the very matter of being, we are already kin. One concept comes from European phenomenological biology, and the other from Mexican indigenous relational ontology. Both see the foxes' own world, but from different

viewpoints. My moon mask embodies the second approach, not a subject of study but a companion in the dark, already present, already shared. And the fox from the first, a step towards acknowledging the boundaries of our worlds.

A structural narrative analysis of fox stories across cultures reveals that the relationship between the fox and the moon is not an accident.

In the Peruvian tradition recorded by Enriqueta Herrera Grey, the fox weaves a grass rope and climbs to the moon and now watches us from above.(4) In Chinese Jin Dynasty mythologies, fox spirits are Yin creatures who cultivate their powers using moonlight, divine messengers, healers, shamanic women and Deities of the sky.(5) In Japan, stories from the Edo Period tell of kitsunebi, the glowing lights of the fox's breath on a moonless night that was an auspicious or perilous symbol, and to never follow their lights as it may be a trick.(6) In the Finnish tradition of Tulikettu, the aurora borealis is the fox's tail striking mountains and trees as the sky fox runs through the night. (7)

Across these stories, the fox and moon are not separate presences. The fox revels in the moonlight, it is the moonlight, worshipping the moon, ascending to it, creating it, fed by it. In these stories the fox is a liminal

creature, of dusk and dark. Sometimes a trickster, a lover, a divine being and sometimes a teacher. Story arc diagrams show a pattern in the tales told: that our disdain for the fox as a dirty, mange-ridden creature of scraps is an anomaly, one we have forced upon it with our cities and our trash.

The fieldwork that shaped this piece took place in east London, bounded by the distance my feet could take me, I wanted the boundary of my field-site to reflect that of a fox. I met the fox many times. Sometimes I just waited in the dark. A freelisting exercise with 16 participants produced a salience table of 'urban undesirables'. The fox ranked fourth (S = 0.37, frequency 10/16, average rank 4.1). Consistently coded as undesirable, but with more variation than the rat or pigeon. Even in the data, the fox occupies a liminal position. And the moon, which appeared in none of the freelists, was present at every fieldwork session. It is not in the salience data. It does not need to be.

The fox and moon masks are not representations. They act to me as threshold objects. Material markers

of an attempt to cross from one work to another, and the failure of this crossing and the companions found in failure. The fox acknowledges there are worlds that are not yours, and the moon is to acknowledge that both worlds share something as they're bathed in light.

In the Peruvian story the fox goes up to the moon and stays, looking back down at us. Maybe my story says that you can go out into the dark seeking one kind of company and find yourself surrounded by kin, by worlds other than yours, together.

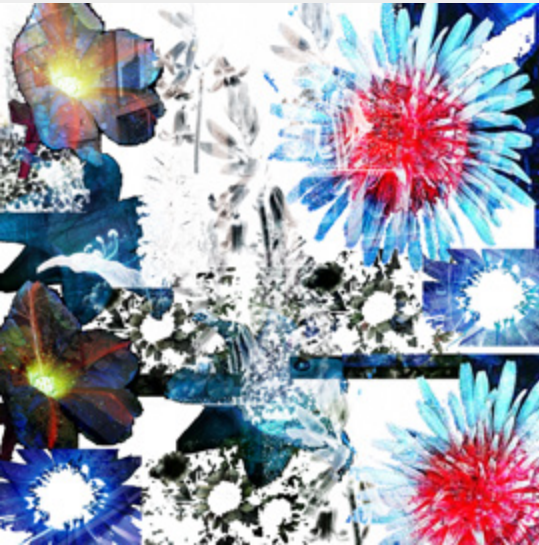
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# THE UNREAD CITY

ANNA DOUCHOVA

*Mixed media installation*



## OPENING

She was not there. I visited the familiar forty-square-metre courtyard of X+Why three times, always at twelve noon. I was looking for *Osmia bicornis* L. (Megachilidae), more commonly known as the red mason bee. I have seen her around here before, in the summer months, but this time she was absent.

On each visit, I walked the perimeter of the courtyard slowly, attempting to navigate as she does, to attend to what she might attend to. However, a major difference stood out: for me the space was coherent, legible, complete, it existed entirely within my sensory world. Within hers, I knew it was unread.

This is not a natural absence. It is a designed one. Every surface here was a decision. None included her. To notice this, is already to begin to answer.

## UMWELT: FIRST DEFINITION

Jakob von Uexküll proposed that every organism inhabits a species-specific perceptual world, an Umwelt, constituted by signals relevant to its survival (1). The same environment contains multiple Umwelten, each one largely inaccessible to the others. Standing in the X+Why courtyard, I assumed I was perceiving a place. But through this lens, I now understand I was only perceiving my Umwelt. What an *Osmia bicornis* L. (Megachilidae) would perceive is not a reduced version of what lay in front of me, but a different world entirely: structured through ultraviolet gradients, polarised light, and textures legible as nesting cues. Uexküll's insight is not that animals perceive less, but that they perceive elsewhere.

## UMWELT: SECOND DEFINITION + CONTRASTING

Kalevi Kull extends this concept, arguing that organisms do not simply detect environments, they read them (2). The bee is not a sensor but an interpreter of signs, such as ultraviolet patterns, scent, texture, which only contain meaning within her perceptual system.

Ed Yong similarly believes that animal senses are not inferior to human perception but fundamentally different modes of engaging with the same physical world (3).

This distinction shapes my work. The UV patterns and tactile surfaces produced are not stimuli for response but her attempts to write, partially, in a language she already reads.

## TSING: THE ART OF NOTICING

Anna Tsing defines noticing as the deliberate removal of modernist perceptual filters. This denotes the tendency to see only what aligns with human intentions, to attend to the more-than-human world (5). Where Uexküll emphasises the bounded nature of Umwelten, Tsing reframes the problem as ethical: the impossibility of full access does not remove responsibility to try. Within this frame, the built environment appears not actively hostile but perceptually narrow. Designed within human sensory registers, it renders other species absent through inattention. The X+Why courtyard exemplifies this condition: not hostile by intent, but uninhabitable by design.

## CONCEPTS IN PRACTICE

These frameworks informed both my concept and method. Fieldwork was conducted as a practice of noticing: three sessions of multispecies ethnography in which I attempted to attend to the courtyard as the bee might, rather than as a human observer. Following Reason's protocols for ceremonial engagement

(7), I used meditation, drawing, and a polarised lens to approximate aspects of her perceptual world, attending to light, texture, and spatial organisation beyond habitual human registers. My intention was to shift from observation to relation, honouring the bee as a relational presence rather than an absent subject. Yet my attempts remained necessarily limited. Uexküll's Umwelt cannot be entered from outside. This limitation became a finding rather than a failure. The impossibility of full translation is central to my work. The five artefacts enact this as a sequence. The UV print makes her perceptual field partially visible; the polarised lens makes her navigation partially operable; the texture translates visual signs into a tactile surface for human reading; the cavity layer renders her spatial scale; and the facade section holds the architectural proposition open.

The most generative finding emerged through drawing and prototyping this cavity: the disparity between human and bee spatial scale. Viewing the courtyard through 6-8 mm apertures made perceptually immediate how differently space is structured at her scale. This informed the UV print and texture artefact.

Together, the artefacts mirror my ethnographic process, moving from seeing, to navigating, to touching, to inhabiting, to proposing. Each step is an attempt at translation; none is

complete. Andrés Jaque argues that trans-species architecture must operate as negotiation rather than resolution (6). This installation stages that negotiation.

I also conducted biodiversity monitoring, across the same site, on the same days. I divided the courtyard into eight quadrats, with two random sampling points per quadrat ( $n = 16$ ). I recorded soil pH, temperature, wind speed, vegetation height, and percentage cover, alongside species identification, using iNaturalist. No flowering species were present; ground cover consisted of moss and early foliage. No bees were observed. Secondary data addressed bee perception and morphometry. Spectral reflectance data for bee-visited species in the wider ecosystem, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* (L.) Chouard (Asparagaceae), *Hyacinthoides hispanica* (Mill.) Rothm. (Asparagaceae), *Buddleja davidii* Franch. (Scrophulariaceae), and *Taraxacum officinale* F.H.Wigg. (Asteraceae), were sourced from UV surveys (10) and hymenopteran vision literature (8,9).

These informed the translation of nectar guide geometries into surface relief and determined the cavity dimensions (6-8 mm apertures; 60-80 mm depth).

Neither dataset can confirm whether these translations are legible within

bee umwelt. That verification would require the bee herself. She did not come.

#### THE FIVE ARTEFACTS

The installation consists of five translation attempts, each moving closer to bee Umwelt while maintaining a distance that cannot be resolved. Suspended elements enact the simultaneity of perceptual worlds. The composite UV print overlays ultraviolet floral imagery with the visible courtyard, making perceptual difference spatial.

The polarised lens renders the e-vector navigation system briefly accessible, exposing human perceptual limits. The 3D texture translates floral sign systems into touch. The cavity layer renders her spatial scale at human size, reorganising perception when viewed through it.

The facade section remains unresolved. Jaque argues that trans-species architecture must resist the illusion of full translation (6). This object does not resolve the problem.

The wall of text, titled *The Unread City*, functions as a sixth artefact, printed on transparent acrylic and occupying the same perceptual field as the work it describes.

#### CLOSING

Every surface in the courtyard was a decision. Together, they produced a space fluent only in human Umwelt, not through malice, but through inattention.

Tsing frames noticing as a form of opposition (5): attending to the more-than-human world is already political. 'The Unread City' does not resolve this condition. The facade remains a section cut.

But noticing, attending to her absence, measuring her scale, attempting her navigation, is where design responsibility begins.

She has been here all along. We simply have not built for her.

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# LOST BUGS

ANNA KRAWIEC

*Printed photographs*



## INTRODUCTION

The Lost Bugs research project has been inspired by the documented declining abundance of insects in their natural habitats. Bugs used to be ever-present in our daily, childhood lives but now we struggle to stumble upon them. Currently 41% of insect species are threatened with extinction [1]. The unnoticed collapse of bugs has been induced by, among other things, the increased use of pesticide use, habitat loss, and climate change [1]. The loss of insects threatens an interruption of biological “tree of life” [2] on a wide scale.

While bugs’ ecological and environmental importance has been widely researched, the cultural significance of insects remains understudied. In order to bridge that gap, this project combines biodiversity monitoring of a local habitat (Alexandra Palace Park), multispecies ethnography, as well as a survey collecting participants childhood stories relating to bugs. The findings of this study resulted in creation of a “Bug Hotel” – a structure designed to provide shelter, nesting, and hibernation spaces for insects and invertebrates.

## QUANTITATIVE METHOD

To analyse the difference in biodiversity, data from 5 different sites has been collected over 3 days. A statistical analysis (PERMANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis Tests) has been performed to analyse the difference in biodiversity across locations and days. While no significant change in insect communities’ diversity has been found the limitations of the study might have influenced the result. The data collection has been conducted from mid- to late March when low temperature could have influenced lack of insects’ presence. The lack of diversity also confirms the study’s original inspiration – the recognised decline of insects despite warm temperatures [3] could have resulted in not statistically significant result. To conclude, the biodiversity monitoring method has confirmed that there are barely any bugs to discover, even in their natural habitats.

## QUALITATIVE METHOD

A multispecies ethnography takes the lives and point of view of other-than-human animals and focuses on the entanglement of different species’ lives [4]. This allows to consider observed species not as an object of study but a conversation partner which provides a unique perspective into observed species behaviour and ecological

importance. Through this introduction to other way the world can be inhabited humans get a chance to reconsider the unrightful claim to the environment.

When conducting my conversation with various bugs (mosquitoes, true velvet mites, and bumblebees among others) the first thing that resurfaced was the human superiority. That feeling was quickly followed by uneasiness and disgust, portraying a vast contrast to my childhood memories of bugs: the time spent in their presence as companions and friends, enjoying their existence and appreciating the enjoyment they could provide. And that is when the perceived dominance of humans resurfaced – if I was admiring or appreciating an insect it was because it was useful to me. Whether it be their beauty (ladybugs, butterflies), using them to tackle boredom (playing with grasshoppers and worms on my terms) there was never much consideration for the needs and feelings of the smaller creatures. Going over my memories, I have realised how the disgust and hatred was not innate but learned, my (even if superficial) positive memories overtaken by more negative ones with time.

Similar sentiment has been displayed by participants of the “Lost Bugs” survey, who remarked

on disappearance of bugs from our everyday lives, having happy memories full of admiration early on, with apprehension and hate emerging later in life. Even participants that recognised the environmental significance of insects could not look beyond the feeling of antipathy when thinking about bugs.

## SUPERCONCEPT

To remedy the loss of connection to our smaller kin I have focused my project on the concept of rewilding. While monitoring insect biodiversity in Ally Pally Park a noteworthy use of pesticides has been apparent. Even our parks are riddled with poison traps and toxins leaving the wilderness no other place to go. Our nature spaces have become more sanitised leaving to space for other species existence. Rewilding being an ambitious approach to conservation with an emphasis on increasing biodiversity and reducing the impact of human interventions [5] supports the ecological gap identified by my project. Not only have bugs become less present in the environment, they have lost their cultural significance in our lives. By bringing back variety and life to our local habitats and resisting the urge to control nature we ought to give nature space to find its own way back [6]. This project has been used as a way of advocating for the return to the wild, placing the responsibility of extinction but also reintroduction on humans.

## PHYSICAL ARTEFACT

As a result of this project a Bug Hotel has been created – a wooden structure, made fully out of biodegradable materials, designed to provide shelter and encourage reintroduction of insects. It has been installed in the old deer enclosure part of the Alexandra Palace Park which is now used by a school to introduce children to nature. I, together with the Ally Pally Team and the teacher that runs the garden school have agreed it to be a perfect location for the Bug Hotel – which not only will promote the biodiversity but encourage children to learn about insects as well. We are hoping for that to improve the cultural significance of insects for the next generations that are starting to lose the connection with bugs.

## CONCLUSION

Insects have been proven to be disappearing from our habitats, but we miss many because we do not pay attention to them. They are still around us and we can still help them. Many have been lost because they are deemed too insignificant or a nuisance. That can be counteracted by reassembling our given place in nature – side by side with our insect kin. Providing them with spaces to thrive and acknowledging they deserve to live as much as we humans do.

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# ENCOUNTERING THE DAFFODIL

ROSE MCKELVIE

*Participatory installation:  
handmade crepe paper daffodils,  
flower bed, secret note jar*



Each year, just as winter begins to feel endless and the promise of summer seems distant, the daffodils appear, scientifically known as *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* L. (Amaryllidaceae). Across open fields of grass and forest floors, they erupt from the soil like golden trumpets, announcing to the world that the seasons are shifting once again.

My encounter with the daffodils this year began in Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park. Although I had noticed them starting to bloom during my daily cycle to university, sitting with them more intentionally felt different. What had previously blended into the background landscape suddenly became the centre of my attention. Upon leaving the space I felt such a sense of joy, hope and calm, that I knew I had to return and learn more from this species. So, I continued visiting to the park each week, spending time with these flowers and their surrounding habitat.

## CONCEPTUAL GROUNDING

My experience with this species is best understood through the lens of intersubjectivity, which describes how meaning emerges through relationships between beings; Husserl (1) introduced the concept to explain how individuals recognise one another as subjects within a shared lifeworld. Building on this, Merleau-Ponty (2) argued that intersubjectivity is fundamentally embodied, arising through shared sensory engagement with the world. Finally, Buber (3) frames these relational encounters through his distinction between I–It and I–Thou. In an I–It relationship, the world appears as a collection of objects to be used, analysed, or possessed. In contrast, an I–Thou encounter occurs when beings are met as presences rather than objects.

Initially, the daffodils existed for me as an It: beautiful objects that could be picked, displayed, and privately enjoyed. Yet for this project, instead of bringing them into my home, I began spending time with them in their home. This reframing prompted the central question of the project: What does it mean to encounter a flower as a subject in its own world, rather than as an object within mine?

## METHODS

Over several weeks, I experimented with a range of tools. Drawing on multispecies ethnography (4), I observed the flowers and their surrounding ecosystem while engaging in creative practices such as free writing, poetry, letter writing, drawing, and moments of deep listening. These practices functioned as methods of attention, encouraging slower forms of noticing, knowledge co-creation, and reflection. Rather than following fixed methodological protocols, I adopted a practice-based approach to inquiry, in which understanding emerges through situated, relational engagement (5). Alongside this, I employed biodiversity monitoring to better understand the flowers' ecological context. Using equipment such as quadrats, soil pH readers, and wind speed monitors, I gathered data on their surrounding environment. I also took measurements of the flowers themselves and collected information about the different varieties in the area, for the purpose of my creative piece. Whilst these methods provided a more objective understanding of the daffodils' habitat, they also highlighted a contrast between analytical observation and relational encounter, revealing different ways of knowing the same environment. This tension became generative within the artwork itself, which brings these

modes of knowing into dialogue: the structured measurements guided the form, and variation of the handmade flowers, whilst the more embodied ethnographic practices shaped the crafting and the way people are invited to engage with the installation. In this way, my piece does not resolve the distinction between objectivity and relationality, but holds them together, inviting viewers to experience both simultaneously.

## REFLECTIONS

The curiosity I felt in the park extended beyond the site itself, prompting me to further explore the cultural meanings associated with flowers. Flowers are among the most symbolically charged objects humans exchange, often used to communicate emotions such as love, apology, celebration, and remembrance (6). Historically, they have functioned as a symbolic language (7); in the nineteenth century, floriography assigned specific meanings to different species, transforming floral arrangements into coded messages. Within this tradition, the daffodil is commonly associated with renewal, rebirth, and the arrival of spring. Yet these beautiful meanings exist in tandem with a largely invisible and destructive industry (8,9): The global flower trade frequently relies on monoculture farming, intensive pesticide use, heavy water consumption, and long-distance transportation. Many flowers travel

thousands of miles before being briefly enjoyed and discarded. This disposability is reflected not only at the global scale but in my everyday encounters: finding bunches of daffodils reduced to 35p in Tesco, making them the cheapest item in the shop, made visible how readily living beings are commodified, devalued, and rendered expendable within consumer systems. What appears as a simple, cheerful object is in fact sadly embedded within extractive processes that prioritise efficiency and profit over ecological care.

This confrontation prompted me to reflect on how extractivism has become a dominant mode of relating to the more-than-human world; this term reflects a breakdown of intersubjective relation, where plants are reduced to objects for human use (10), aligning with what Buber describes as an I–It mode of encounter (3). In contrast, my artwork seeks to foster reciprocity, emerging through intersubjective encounters that reframe the relationship between humans and the more-than-human world as one of mutual exchange, grounded in care, attentiveness, and respect (11).

## THE ARTWORK

My work encapsulates this journey in a participatory installation. The piece takes the form of a communal flower bed and crepe paper daffodils, each of

which I lovingly handmade. Rather than picking or purchasing flowers as objects of consumption, visitors are invited to take a daffodil, sit with it and then plant it in the communal plant bed. They may also write a secret note of reflection, if they wish.

This process draws on the principles of craftivism (12), which combines craft and activism through slow, attentive acts of making. In contrast to the speed and disposability of industrial flower production, crafting a paper flower took time, patience, and care. The process of folding the paper and shaping each petal became a meditative extension of my multispecies ethnography practise and a provocation to dominant narratives that frame flowers as disposable commodities.

Through this process, the daffodils become more than a fleeting symbol of spring or something to be picked, bought or sold. They become a gentle challenge: to move beyond consuming flowers as objects, and instead encounter them as subjects, foregrounding reciprocity.

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# THE GREAT TIT TAKES A BREAK

ZHAHLA MOHAMED

*Oil pastel on card*



I have been visiting the pond at Haggerston Park for years as it has provided me with a sense of solace and a place of reflection during my time living in London. Before taking this module I was unaware of the birds I was encountering in this space. Bird song calmed me every time I visited this pond, but I was unaware of the birds that were in this space, except from when they would fly past the pond or when the odd pigeon or magpie would be close by.

This larger-than-scale oil pastels of one of the birds I have seen at Haggerston Park allow the viewer to see the great tit for longer than I did. When at the pond I noticed that my interactions with these birds were fleeting. Through using oil pastels, I have been able to capture the moments I had with the great tit in a way that is no longer fleeting and allows the viewer to pay closer attention to the colours and distinct features of it, hopefully deepening the connection with the bird. By engaging with the great tit for a longer period of time, and with the great tit being drawn at a larger scale, the viewer might more easily be able to see the bird, and therefore more birds as kin.

Kincentricity is a view where humans and nature are seen as part of an extended ecological family that shares ancestry and origins (1). Turning to indigenous knowledge, Salmon argues that the English language cannot express and explain the term kincentric ecology as well as indigenous language speakers can and so the concept of iwigara, the belief that 'all life shares the same breath', held by the Raramuri communicates the concept of kincentricity from a different lens (2). I spent time at the pond conducting multispecies ethnography, where I practiced deep listening with the landscape and noticed the landscape and my relationship with the birds, plants, water and people that would interact with it.

Using raster data, vector data and biodiversity related data collected online I was also able to gain an understanding of the wider habitat and other birds that are found in Haggerston Park and Haggerston Pond. Using Merlin Bird ID during my visits to the pond I was able to identify which birds were present near me in the pond.

Great tit, *Parus major*, a common garden bird that can be found all over the UK all year long. Its bird song is often compared to the sound of a bike pump or of sounding similar to 'teacher, teacher' Male birds have a thicker black streak running down their chest than female birds and the thicker the streak the more attractive the bird is to potential partners. They begin to claim nesting sites in January but start building their nests in March or April filling them with moss, twigs and grass, lined with feathers and down.

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# MAYBE GOD IS A GOLDFINCH

SHAYLEE NEVELING

*Mixed media: oil and acrylic on wood*



“Maybe God Is a Goldfinch” is a depiction of *Carduelis carduelis* (L., 1758), more commonly known as Eurasian Goldfinch.

I repeatedly hear the Goldfinches’ song, and yet, I have never seen them.

The Eurasian goldfinch I noticed, has a beautiful, entropic song which I hear follow me when I follow them. In my fieldwork I would often take my phone with me to use the bird song recognition app, Merlin. Through Merlin I became aware of species like Goldfinch who were regularly present in my day-to-day life, in this tiny corner of London we share. Merlin allowed me to engage in Deep listening. Deep listening was coined by Pauline Oliveros (1) as:

“Listening in every possible way to everything possible to hear no matter what you are doing. Such intense listening includes the sounds of daily life, of nature, or one’s own thoughts as well as musical sounds”.

Oliveros first wrote sonic meditations as a group work tool rather than an individual tool for relational practice. Since then, she has expanded her work and now discusses multiple definitions of deep listening (2) including one which:

“Involves going below the surface of what is heard [...] to connect with the acoustic environment, all that inhabits it. and all that there is”.

I found her mode of distinguishing between hearing-as-passive, and listening-as-active, as a helpful framework for my encounters with birds. Through this process of Deep Listening, I began to articulate these feelings of frustration I was having about the Goldfinch, leading me to question:

“What does it mean to know a bird by sound, but not by sight?”

“How common is this way of knowing?”

In my quantitative enquiry, I hypothesised that “People will recognise bird song by sound more often than they will be able to name the bird whose song they recognise”- and I was correct. I asked 10 students in LIS to listen to 10 different bird song recordings and mark: 1, Recognised/

Not recognised; 2, Name Known/ Name not known. Of these 100 data entries, bird song was recognised 81 times, but only correctly named 24 times. This means that most people are already listening to bird song and are recognising it, but they can’t name who they hear.

My fascination with Goldfinch peaked here since they were the most recognised and most un-named bird of all 10 species, with 9/10 participants recognising their song but not one person able to correctly name them.

I believe in Goldfinch, though I have never seen them - akin to a feeling we tend to describe as: Faith. I believe this not to be a coincidence, because to my surprise, the Goldfinch has played a large role in Christian folklore (3). The goldfinch tried to remove a thorn from Jesus’ crown during his crucifixion, and the distinct red on their face comes from the blood of Christ (5). Since then, Goldfinch has been depicted in many Renaissance and Dutch golden age art to represent divinity (4)

Thus, this painting is my divine iconography which I have created from secondary photography (Credit: Jose Luis Barros) of the Eurasian Goldfinch and my own conceptualisations

of them based off their song. I have chosen to use a triptych, which is a picture on three panels, typically used as an altarpiece. This choice has been made so that the bird may represent a symbol of divinity and redemption, though without the presence of Christ or the cross. This is intentional, as in Renaissance art the goldfinch is typically depicted as being held by Jesus as a child in a fist-like-grip (4) – like a smaller part of a larger picture. My painting aims to disrupt what highly westernised peoples expect to see in a triptych. As a woman who has been raised in a Christian household but actively rejects the ways in which Christian texts have been misused to cause epistemicide of some of the most valuable knowledge structures in our world, it was important to me to represent the difference between Christianity-in-practice and Christianity as an institution of empire. Thus, my painting does not depict man-made structures but rather acts to represent the goldfinch in its own holy right. In doing so I attempt to represent a living being in a living world; not a living being in a human world.

The outer of the triptych doors displays a soundscape as captured in my Merlin recordings, with the goldfinch bird song depicted visually. I have developed a kinship with Goldfinch,

one characterised by awe, through listening and learning to recognise their distinct song.

The final layer of this work is the velvet curtain, often used in churches to separate spaces, often placed in front of the altarpiece so that when you worship, you must pass the curtains. This veil demonstrates the stepping into a liminal space which must be very intentionally accessed, as I have done through practicing the ceremonies described by Peter Reason in learning how land speaks. These ceremonies taught me how to conduct myself when entering spaces which are not my own.

Through this work I hope you can replicate my own fieldwork process through interaction. The intentional act of opening the curtains; ‘hearing’ the bird; seeing the bird, acts to represent the intention needed to deeply listen. Only when you have done all three, can you learn how to see birds.

Finally, I ask:

What would it mean if we assumed that the omniscient and omnipotent were not human-like but rather were

other living species, like birds? When, in my experience, Christians talk of God, they speak of God being all around us. Perhaps he does not solely exist in an unknown space in the sky, but perhaps God is literally embedded in the living intelligence of birds all around us. I hope that the act of ceremony becomes an innate reaction when looking at this work that should ignite an unconscious desire to respect living beings in a living world, but also to reflect on the depictions we have been taught to worship.

I digress. Maybe God is a goldfinch.

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# BOUND IN BLUE

LIAM O'BRIEN

*Acrylic on repurposed canvas, embroidered lace  
offcuts, documentary photography sewn throughout*



At the southern edges of Epping Forest, Wanstead Park holds a variety of habitats where the political and the natural is woven erratically into the tapestry of its ecological past. For locals this site is considered the centre of where Epping Forest meets east London in earnest. For me, Wanstead Park is where I was inspired to create this piece that attempts to capture the bonds and tensions between wildlife and society.

## POLITICAL ECOLOGY

The land of Wanstead Park has been under the management of the City of London Corporation via the conditions of the Epping Forest Act which was adopted in 1878. For historical reasons the style of management differs from that of the rest of the Forest, and the by-laws are different from the rest of Epping Forest (1). The rest of Epping Forest is designated as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) whereas Wanstead Park

is a Grade II Registered Park & Garden\*(1). This detail encompasses what makes Wanstead Park so unique: the deep entanglement of the political, historical and cultural context surrounding the site and its ecology today. What is the reason for the distinction and what does it tell us about the axiological approach to nature management in London? To understand the influences of Wanstead Park it is important to go back to its roots in aristocratic ownership. From the late 1600s to the early 1800s Wanstead Park was part of a landscaping area on the estate of Wanstead House, an immense mansion which was owned by the Child/Tylney family who came to such wealth through Sir Josiah Child, Governor of the East India Company (2-4). His son, Richard Child, put his fortune to work on the land and created the lakes and gardens still present in part today. The original design included nine artificial lakes of which only The Basin, Heronry Pond, Perch Pond and Ornamental Waters still remain (2). Although the Ornamental Waters only remains in part as it does not maintain water levels for much of the year, allowing you to walk on the dry bed of what was once a grand canal (1). This ecological decay mirrors the social tragedy of its final private owner, Catherine Tylney-Long. Her marriage to the spendthrift William Wellesley Pole led to the house being sold off and demolished in the 1820s

(2, 4). For the next 50 years, the grounds sat in a state of limbo between public and private utility until the 1871 protests, where 30,000 people asserted their right to the land by dismantling Henry Wellesley's (Earl Cowley) enclosures. This grassroots victory directly paved the way for the Epping Forest Act of 1878, transforming a symbol of aristocratic dominance over nature into a park for the people, managed by the City of London.

Through these embedded interests in the land from layered eras of ownership and management, it becomes apparent how in the modern day these tensions are still present. Despite the fact that the space is managed by the same authority, it is not managed by the same motivations. As a site with 'Heritage at Risk' status, the park is still under the influence of its human-designed aesthetic, holding the delicate balance between value for society and value for nature.

## SITTING WITH SWANS

The political ecology of Wanstead Park reveals a site shaped by layered human intentions. The ponds themselves are not natural features but engineered ones, designed by Richard Child to express wealth and aesthetic control over land (4). Beyond that, they are increasingly under threat from Blue-green algae blooms (5, 6). Yet within these man-made waters, the Mute Swan and other waterfowl remain.

They inhabit a reality structured by human decisions they had no part in making. This tension between human-designed space and the non-human life within it became the reason for my multispecies ethnographic inquiry.

The concept of Umwelt, as defined by Von Uexküll and developed on by Van Dyck (7), holds that each organism inhabits a distinct perceptual world shaped by its unique sensory system and evolutionary history. The swan at Perch Pond and the human visitor standing at its shore occupy the same physical space but different experienced realities. Where the visitor perceives a heritage landscape of civic and aesthetic value, the swan perceives territorial boundaries and threat, particularly during nesting season (8). Neither reality is wholly understandable, but each has the capacity for different awareness. This recognition allows for a cultural reimagining of the wildlife that is closest to us.

Intersubjectivity offered me a framework for navigating this gap without resorting to reductionism. Intersubjectivity asks us to recognise the other as a subject with its own agency, intentions, and emotional life (9). Applied to my ethnographic photography process, this meant approaching the swan not as an object

within the human perceptual field but as a being with its own relationship to these politically and ecologically contested waters.

My photographic and sketch-based practice attempted to hold this tension productively. Instead of capturing wildfowl in moments of human-facilitated interaction such as the bread-feeding rituals that flatten them into passive recipients of human generosity. I sought images of autonomous life: preening, diving, foraging. Sketching from these photographs slowed the process further, creating a dependence on the subject, an acknowledgement of the other's agency in shaping the representation (10).

What emerged was not understanding but something more modest and perhaps more honest: a sustained awareness of co-presence (11-13). In this entanglement I was reminded of a story and wrote the attached poem for the Children of Lir (14).

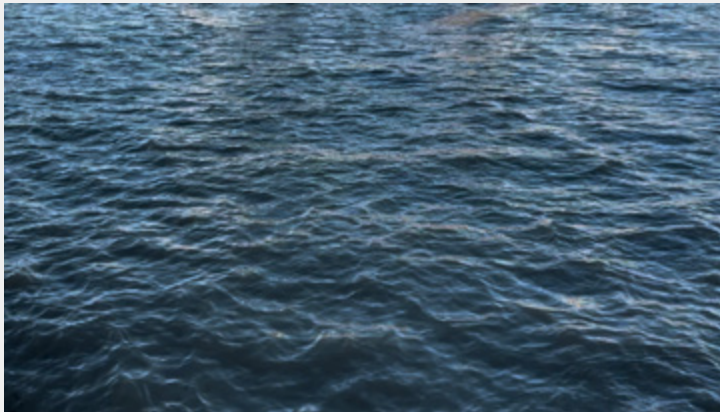
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# SHE BORE IT WELL: A TIDAL TALE OF SURREY QUAYS

FLORRIE ANN CONNELL

*Digital video*



When I hear that the human body is 70% water, I scoff - I'm sure mine is much more. I am instinctively drawn to and comforted by water, and being with kin always feels like home. I have immemorably experienced different bodies of water as different types of friends - some I fear, some I long for, some I wouldn't necessarily want to stay out for a second pint with. This exhibition piece is a letter to an acquaintance, Surrey Quays, who I got to know a lot better over the last few months after she came to my rescue at a time of need.

The relationship I have built around Surrey Quays is water-centric, but it also recognises the area as a habitat rather than elemental - so my interactions and research practices expanded beyond water to explore land, air, and everything between. Some elements of this process, like birding, were able to engage with all three of those main elements at the same time. Watching a black-headed gull, *Chroicocephalus ridibundus* (Laridae) leave its earth-bound scavenging to glide through the ether and undulate upon the waves was a reminder that we are all elemental and interconnected, interwoven and in constant communication with each other - while deeply reliant on H<sub>2</sub>O. This form of interconnectedness is key to the kincentric approach that I embraced in my research; described by Senos et al. (1) as 'a view of humans and nature as part of an extended ecological family that shares ancestry and origins' (2, p.202). I didn't arrive at Surrey Quays as an observer of nature - I arrived as a sister.

I primarily used water sampling as a way of acknowledging the differentiation between 6 different sections within the habitat in terms of their physical,

chemical and biological properties (total dissolved solids (TDS), electrical conductivity (EC), salts, pH and oxidation-reduction potential (ORP)). Through the combination of water testing and background research I felt the presence of a ruthless history of contamination and containment in the docks, which I experienced as the suffering of the water. This was not a metaphorical experience; it was a recognition of the habitat's animism - like all matter, it has life, consciousness and spirit (3). As a response to this, I built a narrative mythology that forefronted different experiential and emotional characteristics of the collected water bodies to reflect their sovereignty and to tell this story. This methodology of myth-making embraces a mythopoeic approach (the practice of understanding and creating meaning through the exploration of myth) (4, 5) and meant I was able to engage with this broad range of data types and ways of knowing while situating them as equals within the narrative.

I developed a fluid approach to multispecies ethnography. Relating to the water as a friend, I treated her much like one - I went to seek advice,

to hold space and to practice rituals. I understood that ritual has always drawn humans to her - to wash, to fish, to cry, to bathe - and I wanted to actively participate in this communication with her and to link myself into her timeline through this type of ritual inquiry, a practice well described by Peter Reason (6).

I also wanted to listen to her speak and tried to gently understand her story. I recognise that I relate to her as feminine, and in my mythology it was important to characterise her story as firstly woman, but also nonhuman. With a little bit of mythological artistic license I personified her, but intentionally referenced the arc of her life with a duality of woman and not (hu)man - explicitly outside the bounds of (hu)manity. At the same time, it would have been deficient to tell her story without telling how my species has affected her. The title 'she bore it well' is a multipart reference - primarily to both the literal digging of trenches by King Canute that is rumoured to have broken through her marshes in 1016, and to the unrecognised sacrifices that are endured by both women and nature in sustaining human life.

Where I had previously overlooked her potential as a truly kindred friend - she lacked the wildness I typically seek - deepening my relationship with intentionality and deep listening helped me understand what she has endured, what she holds and why she is as she stands. If I had seen in her a lack of spirit, I now understand what has shaped her shine. Through the everyday sounds and imagery collected during my practices with her, I wanted to show her breadth, her mundanity, her kin and her reality, as both contrast and complement to the written narrative.

I wanted to communicate her life in a way that might allow others to connect and respect her as I have grown to. It felt wrong to go through such a deep exploration with her and then to not at least attempt to invoke a call to arms for her protection. In the final lines I make an ode to eco-mythic activism that seeks to communicate to the audience that in the case of impending ecological crisis, our experiences with our kin will overlap, but be experienced differently (7) - and despite all of the destruction we've caused as humans in the name of progress and gains - we might well be the first to go.

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# VOCAL MORNINGS

## MODESTAS GALLIUNAS

*Digital video*



Pauline Oliveros defines: “Deep Listening is a practice that is intended to heighten and expand consciousness of sound in as many dimensions of awareness and attentional dynamics as humanly possible” [1]. Their definition expands sensory possibilities through embodied attention and focus to the present. Traditionally, the perception of our surroundings is constructed predominantly by visual means. We attach images to where sounds come from and attach meaning and character first by their visual details, and only second or not at all to their sonic details. However, my relationship with sound as a lifelong musician has detached me from convention. I built a practice of attaching meaning to the emotions that composed sounds are capable of. Deep listening resonates with these experiences and has inspired perhaps the opposite effect that Oliveros intended. Instead of composing and designing sounds with complete intentionality, the concept of deep listening suggested an approach which surrendered me to my time with Wanstead Park. I listened, felt, mapped, journalled, and allowed the sonic landscape to have

its own voice, resulting in the piece titled ‘Vocal Mornings’.

Given Wanstead Park’s proximity to busy roads, it was difficult to form a connection to purely non-human sound producers. Entanglement helped resolve this disturbance and introduced the lack of need to escape from my own species’ activity to appreciate the habitat. Karen Barad reflects “To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair.” [2]. Through deep listening the concept of entanglement could not be ignored – the sonic behaviour of the space was harmonious and relative to a symphony. Birds responded to each other and to human passers-by, nearby traffic filled the space with a vibrant ambience, crows sang sharply at unpredictable intervals to introduce tension and interest. By giving the space time to speak to me, I realised the space was reminiscent of a concert hall and the inhabitants were parts of an orchestra.

As I spent more time in Wanstead Park, I started to consider the origins of sound production here and its history. Human intervention likely shaped the ground I did my research in, and this ecosystem shaped the human conditions around it. Looking at a differing definition of entanglement from quantum physics, Erwin Schrödinger describes how, when two systems inter-

act, “they can no longer be described in the same way as before,” expanding that this concept does not just unite systems, but also transforms each in the process [3]. While Barad focuses on how things cannot exist independently, Schrödinger instead highlights how interaction changes the systems involved. Sounds were made harmoniously, transactionally, consequentially. The sounds made by a church bell, an overhead plane, or from a duck landing in a pond, all had the opportunity to chain to another being’s choice and ability to produce a given sound.

Given a philosophical reasoning for detaching my own intentionality, I needed a systematic way of letting Wanstead Park speak to me. A sequential mixed-methods approach was adopted to reduce subjectivity and still result in rich qualitative insights.

I started with gathering secondary quantitative data to understand the broader ecological context of the geography I was exploring. This involved understanding the proportions of different groups of species present at the site I was interested in. I then mapped the specific area I would focus on and marked an even spread of 14 sites where I would execute deep listening. This helped me keep in mind who I was listening to, and who I was not due to hundreds of species not being ‘vocal’. This raised a critical question: whether

focusing on vocal sound privileged certain species while excluding others whose presence is not sonically dominant. This was resolved by sampling audio of and purposing the rustle of leaves, moss, and the snapping of loose branches as they were walked on, and the flow of water. This allowed for major ecological contributors to the space to have their own voice too.

Following this, I spent an hour at 7am for 14 days at each of the identified sites soundscape mapping what the surroundings were vocalising. This process was informed by the soundscape mapping practices of Angela Viora where sound was translated through the body and realised on paper [4]. Although I initially considered excluding emotional attachment to sounds as they are subjective experiences, I then reflected that given these sounds were making me feel something as a response to what I was hearing, I was empathising with what Wanstead Park was telling me. Following this judgement, my maps became richer in symbolism, and I found myself becoming entangled with the park. Residents of this space would respond or move as I passed by, and I began to depend on the routine of grounding my mornings with practicing empathy.

On each day, I collected 1 minute audio samples to conduct some light data analysis to extend and evaluate my soundscape maps. This involved converting these audio clips into spectrograms and placing them alongside my maps to see resemblances and comparing frequency distributions to my interpretations of how frequency could be visualised. This confirmed my mapping to be consistent enough with quantitatively measured sonic behaviour to give me confidence to re-interpret, or perhaps translate, the voice of Wanstead Park into music.

In this process, the work began to lose its sense of singular authorship. It is equally inaccurate to describe it as a collaboration. Rather, through deep listening, the piece emerges from a state of entangled authorship. Human and non-human input is not separable. The music is born from the relationship itself.

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# SHALL I COMPARE THEE TO A SUMMER'S DAY... OR SHOULD I LICHEN YOU TO A

hybrid colony of algae or cyanobacteria living symbiotically among filaments of multiple fungus species, along with bacteria embedded in the cortex or “skin”, in a mutualistic relationship<sup>1</sup>

**AARON LARKIN-JONES**

*Digital video*



1 - Figure 1: Structure of a lichen  
a, d, e: Protective layers.  
b: Photobiont colony.  
c: Fungal filaments



As hinted in the title, lichen is a mutualistic relationship between a fungus (mycobiont) and an algae or cyanobacteria (Photobiont)<sup>2</sup>. The fungal filaments provide structure and protection, gathering moisture from the air while the photobionts generate carbohydrates through photosynthesis<sup>3</sup>.

There are over 20,000 recorded species of lichen and they are often thought to be one of the oldest living things<sup>4</sup>, lichen can be used to date other structures through lichenometry<sup>5</sup>, as well as indicators of air quality due to their high sensitivity to environmental change<sup>6</sup>.

This investigation explores lichen in the urban context of Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park (THCP), considering its physical presence and how our ability to meaningfully interact with our immediate environment is influenced by our attention to it. Parallels are drawn between lichen systems and economic models, focusing on how the relationship between mycobionts and photobionts reflects the relationship between an economy and natural resources in a Degrowth Economic Model (DEM). This work culminates in a video that contrasts destructive human activity with the more balanced coexistence of lichen and other species in the park

There are many misunderstandings about what the DEM is, many assume it means to totally deviate from any current economic systems and revert to a pre-industrial model of living.

This is not true. The DEM refers to an economy where economic growth is contained with the restraints of resource availability and the carrying capacity\* of the environment<sup>7</sup>. It seems obvious that this should be the case, however many economic models (and unfortunately the dominant economic models) assume infinite resources and therefore infinite growth.

It is a fundamental truth that to be able to learn from something you must be aware of it, so naturally my first step was to investigate awareness of lichen. Salience refers to the degree an object or thing will capture our attention, using this concept I used a combination of iNaturalist<sup>8</sup> data and geospatial analysis using QGIS<sup>9</sup>. I compared the observations of lichen and moss (as its often mistaken for lichen) in the park (see the attached map) and then carried out a quadrat study (counting the number of times a species is present in a fixed, 1m2 space) to balance observations against relative species abundance. The final figures were 0.3 for moss and 0.03 for lichen, where a lower number indicates lower salience. To put the attention being paid to lichen into context, the total observations of lichen in the park before this study was 3 (shown in orange), while observations of moss species was 15 (shown in green). I contributed an additional 30 lichen identifications (shown in blue) after the analysis. Footage of some of these observations can be seen in the video product.

As the principal idea behind this project is what we can learn from lichen when we interact with it in a meaningful way, I went and spent some time with lichen. This is a qualitative method called multispecies ethnography, recording and analysing thoughts and feelings that may arise from these interactions<sup>11</sup>.

The initial feeling that arose was boredom. At first glance, most species of headstone dwelling lichen resemble splashes of dull paint, in an assortment of greens, greys and yellows. The colours of individual lichens seem monotone. It isn't until you look closer that the variance of colour and convoluted web of shapes reveals itself. Lichen does not lend itself to photographs or drawings, but I attempted anyways.

I spent some time sitting and writing down whatever I was thinking at that time. At first, I struggled with a key concept in multispecies ethnography, the idea of treating non-human entities as sentient. Imposing sentience felt reductive, as if I needed it to be more like me to connect. I realised later that the lichen probably didn't mind. It wasn't about making it more like me but treating it as an equal. I don't have a superior right to exist, and I came to the realisation I didn't know much about lichen.

After some research, I spent the next day observing and sitting. Not having something to do was harder at first but allowed me to think more deeply and pay more attention to my immediate environment. While doing this I noticed the contrast between the speed at which humans exist and lichens exist. Lichen is one of the slowest growing lifeforms, some species growing as little as <1mm per year. A lichen 10cm across could be 100+ years old. It doesn't rush about. Another thing stood out; the unassuming exterior hides an intricate biology. The biology of a lichen is comparable to an economy, insofar as it has growth and resources, the photobiont can be compared against natural resources and the mycobiont the economy, the mycobiont uses carbohydrates generated through photosynthesis by the photobiont and in return provides structure and support, alongside water and nutrients from the surroundings<sup>\*12</sup>. This relationship differs from human economies, we take far more than we give. The slower, balanced growth of lichen reflects principles in the degrowth economic model

From my time at THCP I witnessed a mutualistic coexistence between human society and non-human life. The park operates on principles of balance: carefully managed between care and promoting ecological complexity and

conservation. The park does not exist in a vacuum either. The community shows deep care for the space through volunteering and events, it can be compared to a larger, structural ecosystem where humans give to and receive within the ecological limits. This reflects lichen biology on a macro scale, a system built on sustainability, reciprocity and limited extraction. An ideal example of a degrowth economy at work.

The video product was created as a culmination of this realisation, contrasting ecological destruction and climate disasters in the first section accompanied by the dramatic and sombre Requiem K. by Mozart, with the serenity and peace of the lichen and the park to Debussy's Clair de Lune. Drawing from biology and history it highlights how both natural and urban systems operate within limits of a wider, urban context.

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# LEARNING TO SEE A SWAN

ANTWONE MARTIN

*Digital video*



Learning to See a Swan' is a short digital video based on repeated observation of a swan in a river habitat near Tottenham Marshes. The work begins with a familiar image of the swan as calm and solitary, but this perception is disrupted through direct observation of repeated, selective chasing behaviour directed towards Canada geese. What initially appears to be a simple interaction becomes, over time, a patterned and relational process involving multiple species, spatial movement, and environmental conditions. The piece therefore does not represent the swan as an isolated subject but demonstrates how perception changes through sustained attention. It argues that understanding emerges not from seeing more detail, but from learning to see differently.

My initial interpretation of the encounter was shaped by prior assumptions about swans as calm and largely passive within shared environments. When the swan returned to a feeding area where a human was distributing food among multiple birds, I interpreted its movement towards other birds as food-driven behaviour. This reading appeared reasonable given the feeding activity and the clustering of different species in a confined space. However, that explanation became increasingly inadequate as the swan repeatedly initiated chase behaviour directed specifically towards Canada geese, even in the absence of visible food competition. The behaviour was not isolated or incidental, but patterned and

selective across multiple instances. This shift marked a transition from seeing the swan as reacting to immediate stimuli to recognising it as actively shaping interactions within the river environment.

Ecological literacy in this project does not simply mean learning facts about a species or becoming more knowledgeable about a habitat in the abstract sense. Rather, it refers to a shift in perception that emerges through repeated, situated encounters. Persson et al argue that ecological literacy is developed through place, pace, and "tuning", and that it depends on cultivating "the sensitivity to see and hear in the first place" rather than merely identifying what is already visible (1). They also emphasise that practical, hands-on, and time-consuming forms of attention should be understood as foundational rather than secondary to ecological understanding (1). This concept is therefore particularly appropriate for my work, because the project is not centred on what a swan is in general, but on how my understanding of this swan changed through sustained observation in a specific river setting near Tottenham Marshes. What initially appeared as a familiar and readable animal gradually became more complex: not simply a calm presence in the water, but an active participant in patterned interactions with Canada geese, human feeding practices, and the movement of the river itself. In

this sense, the project also aligns with Redvers et al's emphasis on tangible, contextual lived experiences and on learning to move between different nested levels of relation, from individual encounter to wider ecological system (2). Ecological literacy is the most useful concept for describing that change, because what developed here was not just more information, but a different way of seeing.

Quantitatively, the project was informed by structured observation of repeated chase events across the footage. Rather than treating the encounter as a single dramatic moment, I focused on identifying patterns in the swan's behaviour: the recurrence of pursuit, the consistency of the target species, the swan's repeated return to the feeding area, and the way other birds altered their movement in response. This method was important because it turned an initially confusing scene into something more legible. What first appeared chaotic or reactive became recognisable as repetitive and selective behaviour sustained across multiple instances. In this sense, the quantitative element was not used as detached measurement for its own sake, but as a way of slowing perception down and making repetition visible. It showed that the

encounter was not simply about one chase, but about a series of relational events unfolding across time and space. This supports Persson et al's argument that ecological understanding depends not only on identification, but on forms of attentive practice that make ecological relations perceptible through sustained engagement (1).

Qualitatively, the project relied on fieldnotes and close descriptive attention to posture, movement, spacing, and atmosphere within the river environment. These methods captured dimensions of the encounter that structured observation alone could not fully represent, including the swan's raised wings, the angle of its neck during pursuit, the failed attempt of a Canada goose to leave the water, and the wider tension that developed across the river as other birds adjusted their position. This qualitative material was important because it recorded not only what happened, but how the encounter was perceived and reinterpreted over time. While the quantitative element revealed repetition and selectivity, the qualitative element captured the shift in attention through which those patterns became meaningful. In this way, the project aligns with Persson et al's emphasis on "tuning" as a process of learning to see and hear differently through repeated encounter, rather than simply gathering information about

a species (1). The qualitative method therefore helped turn the swan from an object of observation into a more relational ecological presence. Video was the most appropriate medium for this project because it preserved movement, repetition, and shifting spatial relations in a way that a still image or prose description could not. The subtitles guide the viewer through the shift from assumption to recognition without pretending to resolve the swan's motives. In this sense, the piece is designed for both specialist and non-specialist audiences: it communicates observable behavioural patterns while also reflecting on how ecological understanding emerges through attention. The swan remains the focus, but the final work presents it as part of a dynamic river system rather than an isolated figure.

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# WHAT A DAY (FLOW STATE FREESTYLE)

## A BLEND OF SOUND, SIGHT AND SPACE

LAMAR MILLER

*Digital video*



This spoken word piece is an audio reflection of the relationship that I have built with the bird species within the Brent Reservoir (Welsh harp) in northwest London [1]. As a native northwest Londoner, the reservoir falls under the radar when discussing large-scale accessible habitats in the geographical point of the city. Especially as the city moves towards greater urbanisation to address its growing population, the reservoir must gain the recognition it deserves to underscore the importance of nature. This song aims to feel the intense thrill I feel from immersing myself within a habitat; to then feel inspired to develop a kinship with birds or any accessible ecosystem and inspire the use of onto-poetics when detailing lived experiences within an ecosystem.

The Brent Reservoir (Welsh Harp) is a habitat in Northwest London, located between the London boroughs of Brent and Barnet [1], with a history of just under 200 years [2]. The site of special

scientific interest is maintained by the Canal & River Trust [1], where rowing, sailing and canoeing occur frequently [2], utilising most of the wetlands, whilst ensuring there is protection for species within the habitat. My first encounter with the habitat was in 2011, on a primary school trip, as part of a geography initiative to have children explore local environments. I remember being in awe of how all the species lived amongst one another, whilst naturally gravitating towards their own species when navigating the habitat, a habitat I most often observed among the bird species. My younger self posed the question of what it means to be of a different species, both humans and animals, yet belong within the space.

As a Black British northwest Londoner who did not grow up deeply immersed in Western ecosystems, the process of familiarising myself with a habitat required immense self-exploration, to understand how and why this is, which further put into question my ontology, if I do not connect with all living beings. The disconnect that I had with ecosystems is what drew me to explore kinship within my habitat [Brent Welsh Harp Reservoir], which was done through encountering birds, to discover what it means for them to live within the habitat, to be where they are from, but

also to explore onto-poetics of being immersed within the habitat over the course of 10 weeks.

Kinship is the deep connection between individuals, where belonging is placed before the biological connection of blood [3]. This reflects the song's conceptual focus, as it not only acknowledges the presence of birds within the habitat but also values their role in shaping visitors' sense of belonging, consistently providing a warm reception and a very sincere goodbye. The development of the community here is what makes those who visit the habitat belong, as I believe we need to visit the habitat to encounter birds as much as they need to see their home is being respected and taken care of. This not only signals the importance that both living beings have within an ecosystem, but also how kinship is not built upon complexity [4], but rather a united purpose in fulfilling what is best for connections made.

Onto-poetics, although a concept which details the communicative presence within the world to provide it meaning [5], was done in practice to divert away from what we see, but what we hear, which would play a role in what we feel, given the

deepened connection between the Brent Reservoir and me. A connection that hopes to grow over time to understand how best to support the birds within the habitat and to know that they are greatly appreciated. If not for this concept, I am certain that a voice would not be heard on behalf of the species [Birds], given the minimal documented encounters/experiences by visitors within the ecosystem. Although I have actively ensured their best interests are in mind when conducting my research, I still question the effectiveness of a poetic outcome of their presence, as I did not directly interact with them. However, this may be a catalyst for better understanding their lives within their habitat.

The inspirations behind the song are the following songs by Santan Dave: “Environment” [6], “Three Rivers” [7], and “My 27th Birthday” [8], each detailing his contemporary thoughts and emotions in the context of his position in the world. The reflective state that he is in to evoke hope for change, whilst appreciating how his world has gone on top shape him, is reflected in the structure of the song I created. I was inclined to go with a much lighter-hearted tone compared to my inspirations, to capture the outcome of the positive reflexive process I endured. The production

of the song is heavily influenced by the sounds of nature, with its smooth jazz-inspired chords a reflection of the ease brought to us from immersing ourselves in nature. The sample track, “A Day In the Park” by Michael Urbaniak [9], further amplifies the awe I felt, underscoring how memorable it is to build kinship in the Brent reservoir (Welsh Harp).

Developing a kinship with the birds in the habitat allowed me to see the balance we hold there. Exploring this through the onto-poetics of somewhere we both can call home. Which puts into question how our worlds play out differently but look the same? Or even why it is that we belong within the same ecosystem? Questions that I hope I’ve created guidance to answer, all in the hope of allowing others to see the world the way that I have, with the help of birds, to never get lost from where we call home.

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# FERAL

DIGBY PRATT

*Poem with digital video*

For I recall a time gone by,  
When I did fly for you,  
A messenger, companion  
A bond was formed so true.

Through wind and rain, across the world  
I ferried your words free,  
Until that day, when I returned  
And you'd forsaken me.

"Feral, mangy, pest you are,  
you rat that flies on wings!"  
"But you created me!", I say,  
"I cannot change these things."

Do you think I choose to rest  
on spikes that pierce my feet?  
Or find whatever food I can  
In the places that you meet?

That bond we made, I must obey  
Despite how you have changed.  
For if to nature I returned,  
I fear I'd go deranged.

And so on this grim ledge I'll stay,  
Silent, waiting for your call.  
Until the time for you has gone,  
And all these buildings fall.



Having moved to London from the east coast of Alba, I have spent most of my time here trying to find pieces of the connection I have at home. Canada Dock and Sowerth Park have become the steadfast features of my daily life that keep me going. They are inhabited by many things - weeds, foxes, bugs, cats, people - but I find myself drawn, as I always have been, to birds.

I was obsessed with birds as a child and devoured book after book, wanting to know everything about them. That obsession faded, then returned here in London, perhaps out of need. The avian life in this city is unexpectedly rich if you look around, from the ring-necked parakeet, *Psittacula krameri* (Scopoli, 1769), to the mute swan, *Cygnus olor* (Gmelin, 1789). But it was not until I began formally recording species that I noticed how consistently I overlooked one: *Columba livia* (Gmelin, 1789) - the feral pigeon.

Compared to the wood pigeon, *Columba palumbus* (Linnaeus, 1758), that I know from home, the feral pigeons of London are visibly different. They are less healthy, often missing digits, and survive on scraps. Without thinking about it I had developed a relationship with these birds built entirely on contempt. They irritated me - their brashness, their refusal to acknowledge the potential threat I posed. Other species flee but pigeons do not. I had constructed a power dynamic in which their indifference seemed almost offensive. Upon noticing this, I wanted

to examine it. Where did this feeling come from? And why do I blame the pigeon?

The word feral is instructive. Derived from the Latin for wild animal, *fera*, its English meaning carries something more specific: once domesticated, now abandoned. Feral pigeons are not wild birds that have encroached upon human space. They are descendants of domesticated rock doves, selectively bred for over 5,000 years as messengers, food, and companions, who now live "independently from, and often unwanted by, humans" (1). They did not choose the ledge below Canada Water station. They chose the closest available "cliff face" - because we built that niche, then withdrew from it, then named them pests for surviving in it. In 2003, Mayor Ken Livingstone made it illegal to feed pigeons in Trafalgar Square, describing them as "rats with wings" - a phrase that said nothing about the birds, and everything about a £25 million renovation project (2).

Two conceptual frameworks help to articulate this. The first is Enrique Salmón's theory of kincentric ecology. Salmón defines kincentric ecology as the awareness that "life in any environment is viable only when humans view the life surrounding them as kin," and that "without human recognition of their role in the complexities of life in a place, the life suffers and loses its sustainability" (3). Reciprocity, in this framework, is

not sentiment - it is the practical and ethical foundation of coexistence. The feral pigeon is the consequence of reciprocity abandoned: we created its dependence, discarded it, and then reframed our own negligence as the animal's flaw. The second framework is Jakob von Uexküll's concept of Umwelt - the idea that every organism inhabits its own distinct perceptual world, shaped by its own sensory capacities and the meanings those senses assign to its environment (4). Recognising the Umwelt of another species requires you to suspend the assumption that our perceptual world is the only one. For the pigeon, the station canopy might be a cliff face, and the dropped pastry is just a forest floor find.

Where these two concepts speak to the same problem from different angles is where the argument of Feral lives. Umwelt theory asks us to enter the pigeon's world on its own terms, as an act of perceptual imagination. Kincentric ecology asks us to step back further and to recognise that our failure to maintain our relationship has consequences. Together they reframe the question entirely: the pigeon is not a problem to be managed. It is evidence of a broken reciprocity, surviving inside its own Umwelt with complete coherence, while we stand outside it applying the wrong

vocabulary.

This idea reminded me of a folk song I have known for a while. Twa Corbies, a Scottish ballad first published in Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* in 1810, is told from the perspective of two ravens discussing how to strip a fallen knight's corpse (5). The knight has been abandoned by his hawk, his hound, and his lady. The song does not judge the corbies. They are creatures operating entirely within their own Umwelt, in a world that has already moved on from the man they are eating. The narrative arc moves from equilibrium, through abandonment, to a kind of bleak resolution: the wind will blow over his bones for evermore, and the corbies will have lined their nest. The parallel to *Columba livia* is clear. The corbie and the feral pigeon inhabit the same structural position in the human imagination - the unwanted scavenger misjudged for simply surviving.

Feral is a spoken word poem, with footage from Canada Dock serving as its backdrop. The poem is written in the first person, from the perspective of the feral pigeon itself. It is a creative enactment of Umwelt theory, inhabiting the bird's perceptual world from inside. The pigeon of the poem recalls its history as messenger and companion, the reciprocal relationship Salmón's framework would recognise as

kincentric, before naming the moment of betrayal and the language that followed it: feral, mangy, pest.

The imagery is drawn directly from fieldwork. The anti-pigeon spikes observed across Canada Dock and Southwark Park - infrastructure designed to make the bird's survival harder in the environment we built for it - appear in the poem as an image of broken reciprocity. The behavioural frequency data, distribution counts, and field notes informed the poem's meaning, through the quality of attention that comes from watching something carefully. The footage does not illustrate the poem so much as accompany it: Canada Dock framed behind the words as the place where this thinking happened. The poem ends not with resolution but with endurance - the pigeon on its ledge, waiting, until the buildings fall. The bond persists, even when only one side still honours it.

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# BODY: ANCESTRAL // UNARCHIVED

BELLA WOLSEY

*Digital video*



View from home. Southleigh Woods, Warminster

I spy with my little eye, a line of pine trees pinned above my roof. Southleigh Woods, whose name is derived from its location to the South of Warminster, Wiltshire [1], has been an extension of my garden since I could first walk its bluebell paths in Spring. Nestled in this wood is a mystical phenomenon known as Robin Hood's Bower. The Bower, close to the eastern side of the wood, is an ancient

earthwork enclosure that dates to the Iron Age [2]. Guided by Rosemarie Anderson's intuitive inquiry [3] and a terrapsychological instinct for place [4], "body: ancestral // unarchived" is set in the wider habitat of Southleigh Woods, with the Bower and the river Wylde as key presences, synthesised using the superconcepts of liminality and the Otherworld.

Liminality, as theorised by Victor Turner in *The Ritual Process* (1969) [5], refers to a threshold state in which a person or place is no longer its former self but not yet what it will become. I am drawn to liminality because Southleigh has always felt to me like a place that exists slightly outside of ordinary time, where something unnameable is at play in the gaps between trees. The film does not attempt to explain this feeling but to inhabit it.

The Celtic concept of the Otherworld names this same state from within indigenous cosmology: a belief in other dimensions coexisting within ours, spirits present in trees, rivers, and the in-between spaces of nature [6]. Robin Hood's Bower is one such place. Its purpose remains ambiguous, its archaeology silent on the question of what rituals it held [7]. This gap in the archives is the very quality of liminal spaces: they resist documentation and embody presence.

The *Araucaria araucana* (pehuén) trees that populate the Bower carry their own ancestral memory. Sacred to

the Pehuenche people of Chile, who describe it as "a tree that God left on earth" [8], the pehuén is venerated by praying in its shade, placing offerings, and whispering confessions [9]. I recognised these indigenous roots in my body when I first lowered my camera inside the Bower.

A methodology of intuitive inquiry [3] became the leading framework for the film, as well as a primary qualitative method. Anderson describes intuitive inquiry as a hermeneutical research method in which the researcher's somatic and felt responses to a topic are treated as legitimate data [3]. This looked like visits to Southleigh without my phone, no measuring, just unconfined attention. I experienced what nature connection practitioners call a "sit spot" practice [10], attuning to the finer details of the ecosystem, training my body to receive not project. This practice aligns with what philosopher Freya Mathews terms *ontopoetics*: the idea that nature holds communicative presence, and that meaning can flow toward the researcher as much as from them [11]. I recognise that intuitive inquiry carries risks of subjectivity and self-confirmation, which the quantitative layer was in part designed to address. Environmental monitoring apps *iNaturalist* and *Merlin* became my main tools for documenting species counts and birdsong. Initially I feared conducting quantitative data collection might force a reductionistic way of relating to

such a poignant habitat, however it deepened the connection in ways I had not anticipated. Häggström's phenomenological research finds that childhood experiences play a crucial role in adult experiences of forests, and that being-in-the-forest produces an embodied intersubjective experience in which the self becomes entangled with the more-than-human world [12]. This resonated with my own fieldwork: collecting soundscapes and species counts illuminated the shifts in entanglement I experience at different locations within Southleigh. I was always intrigued by being greeted by a robin at the entrance to the woods, and replaying samples of its song knowing its recognition as a messenger for the Otherworld [13] felt like confirmation of liminal pockets I experience in the forest.

I did not anticipate how this sonic layer of the research would outlast the project itself. My relationship to the avian world feels like it is only just beginning. Where I once moved through Southleigh noticing birdsong but often opting for RNB through my AirPods, I now move through it more consciously. This shift from surface awareness to deeper listening is itself a reflexive finding: the quantitative method enhanced the quality of my qualitative attention in ways I had not predicted, which Anderson would

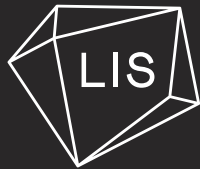
recognise as one of intuitive inquiry's transformative cycles [3].

The music in the film deliberately mirrors this awakening. Ambient, psychedelic hip-hop playing inside Robin Hood's Bower signifies my initial attachment to the familiar and the liminal context of this quadrant. The Bower has always held incongruous presences simultaneously, from Iron Age enclosure to aristocratic whim to teenage gathering place [7]. Selecting melodies that mimic what current youth blast on speakers in a Celtic sacred space enacts liminality [5]. The contrast between contemporary sonic experience, birdsong, and calm melodic frequencies is liminality made audible. Emerging research suggests that altered states of consciousness produce overlapping psychological mechanisms with deep nature immersion, including blurring the boundary between self and environment to heighten kinship with the natural world [14]. Letheby argues that when self-focused cognitive constraints are loosened, "starting to build relations with plants or with the entire living world becomes not only possible but probable" [14]. I experienced the woods and the Bower more intimately at times, noticing details I had previously moved past and feeling a psycho-spiritual openness that deepened the film's portrayal of Southleigh.

The river offered its own threshold. Cold water immersion produced what I can only describe as a natural high, a state of heightened presence and clarity. I recorded the water temperature as a quantitative data point (11°C), but the numbers alone cannot capture what fifteen minutes of immersion generated. One day the river called me in, and I followed. The film reflects this structurally; the music drowns as I submerge and returns as I surface. The contemporary world goes underwater and comes back changed.

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